



FLANDERS TODAY

THE IRISH ISSUE



James Joyce, p.12

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Page from The Book of Kells

The Grand Project

How the Irish found their roots in a Flemish university town

Derek Blyth

The Irish have been coming to Flanders for hundreds of years. Sometimes they came as mercenary soldiers to fight in the European wars, other times they crossed the sea as missionaries and monks. There are Irish connections in various places, but the links are especially strong in the university town of Leuven where a group of 17th-century scholars embarked on a "grand project" to forge a sense of Irish identity.

The Irish College was founded in 1607 as one of 34 Irish colleges set up in European university towns. "There was no opportunity at that time for the Catholic elite to get an education in Ireland," explains Malachy Vallely, director general of the Leuven Institute for Ireland in Europe (the successor to the Irish College).

The solution was to travel abroad to study at one of the great universities on the Continent such as Aachen, Prague or Rome. An Irish Franciscan called Florence Conroy was given permission to set up a college in Leuven by King Philip III of Spain. The first stone was laid by Archdukes Albert and Isabella, governors of the Spanish Netherlands, on a site near the River Dijle.

"The Irish College at Leuven is central to Irish identity," Vallely argues. The Franciscan friars based there launched a project "that created the basis of Irish cultural identity as we know it to this day."

"There was no sense of a single identity in Ireland in the 17th century," he continues. "The common view in other countries was that they were just a rabble" – a view promoted by the English for their own ends. Instead of a national identity, there were many different local allegiances. "People's loyalties were to regions or powerful families. Moreover, the population was divided into the Celtic Irish, the 'old English' who arrived with the Normans and the 'new English' who travelled to Ireland to increase English influence."

The Leuven friars launched an ambitious plan known as the "grand project" to forge a national identity. One of their achievements was to compile the first dictionary in the Irish language. They also created a simplified Irish grammar and developed the first lead fonts for printing books in Irish, basing the design on the handwriting of one of the friars at Leuven.

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Business

The Irish are the second-biggest investors in the Brussels property market and have substantial holdings across Flanders. So what makes them want to invest in this country?

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Arts

An American musical conductor in Brussels has reconstructed Bach's lost *St Mark Passion*. Our music critic finds out how he did it.

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Active

With stars like Julia Roberts taking up knitting needles, the hobby is rapidly losing its grandmother image. We find out more about knitting circles in Flanders.

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Flemish athletes join Olympic protests

IOC president Jacques Rogge told to "face up to responsibilities"

Alan Hope

A group of Belgian athletes have joined the chorus of sporting voices calling for the International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge to take a stand on the human rights record of China, where the 2008 Games will be held in the summer.

The call was launched last week by Dutch swimmer Pieter van den Hoogenband, who described Rogge as the "paterfamilias of the Olympic movement" and called on him to "face up to his responsibilities".

He was followed by Flemish sprinter Kim Gevaert: "You can't be blind to what is going on in the world. Organising the

Games in a country where human rights are not respected shouldn't and can't be allowed," she said.

Sailing champion Sébastien Godefroid commented, "It would be a good thing if Rogge dared to stick his neck out". Runner Veerle Dejaeghere called Van den Hoogenband's call "a shot in the bullseye": "We athletes can't do much, but someone like Jacques Rogge can. I would be delighted to see him take a stand." Mountain-biker Roel Paulissen agreed: Rogge is the man to add some weight to the balance, although it's a little late in the day".

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

Irish Peace Tower

This week's edition marks St Patrick's Day, 17 March, by looking at the Irish presence in Flanders. Everyone is aware of the Irish pubs that take up some of the best real estate locations in historic Flemish cities. But the Irish presence in Flanders goes far beyond a well-pulled pint served by a cheerful barman from Dublin.

The Irish have been coming to Flanders since at least the eighth century. The patron saint of Mechelen, St Rombout, was an Irish monk murdered near Mechelen by two men after he advised them to change their evil ways. By the 17th century, a sizeable Irish community had settled in the Irish College in Leuven, where they worked on several texts that helped to shape Irish cultural identity.

The Irish also came to this region to fight in the various European wars that scarred the Flemish landscape. Many belonged to the band of Irish soldiers known as the Wild Geese that tramped across 17th-century Europe on behalf of Louis XIV of France. One of them, Patrick Sarsfield, died in Landen, near Sint-Truiden, in 1693. As he lay bleeding to death on foreign soil, he lamented: "Would it were for Ireland."



One quarter of a million Irish soldiers came to Flanders in the First World War to fight in the armies of the British Empire, many of them also wishing that they were dying for their homeland. Some came from Catholic families hostile to the British presence in Ireland, while others were from Protestant families loyal to the throne. They fought alongside one another only once – in the Battle of Messines Ridge in June 1917, when a largely Irish army captured the low ridge south of Ypres, paving the way for the Battle of Passchendaele later in the summer.

The Irish connection was forgotten by most people after the war. But 10 years ago, in a symbolic gesture of reconciliation, Queen Elisabeth II joined the Irish president Mary McAleese to unveil a tower in memory of the Irish dead of the war. The round stone structure was modelled on traditional Irish towers and built partly with stones salvaged from a British army barracks in Tipperary destroyed during the Irish struggle for independence. The ceremony on the bleak ridge nine kilometers south of Ypres was the first public event attended jointly by a British monarch and an Irish president.

The links between Flanders and Ireland may not be the first thing people will be talking about on 17 March, but it is worth remembering the many Irish people who have passed through this region of Europe, picking up something of its culture and language on the way – like James Joyce, the Irish writer who spent a few days in Antwerp, took Dutch lessons in Ostend and sprinkled his utterly baffling novel *Finnegans Wake* with words lovingly culled from the language of the Flemish.

Derek Blyth

Flanders Today

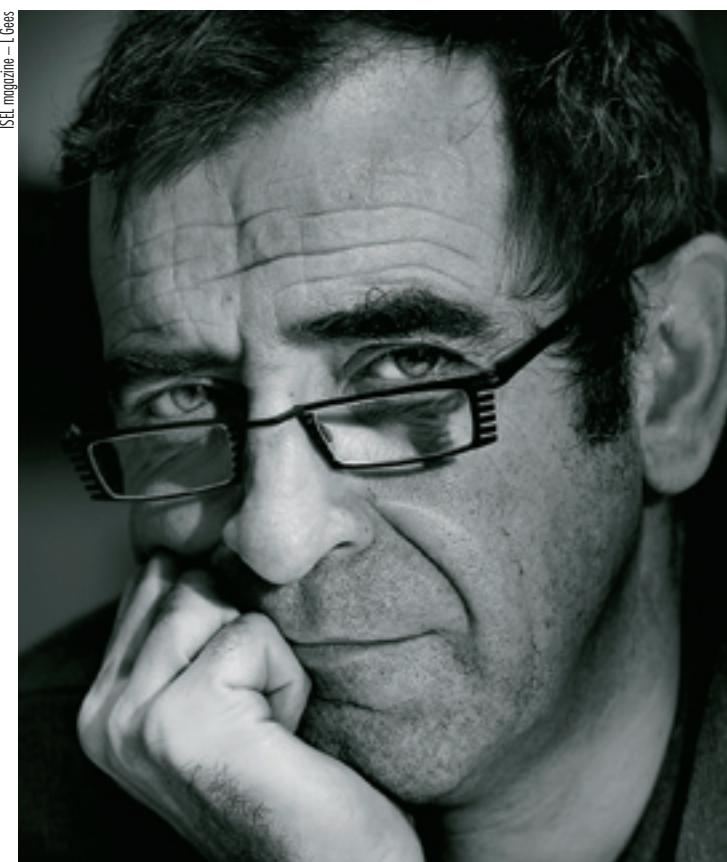
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FACE OF FLANDERS

ISI magazine – 1995



Patrick Hoet

Twenty-five years ago, Patrick Hoet decided he wanted to be a designer instead of an optician. At 19, he nearly went to art school instead of joining the family-owned business in Bruges, "but the shop was there, and the money was more sure than becoming an artist," he says. "But after a few years, I still felt this little art urge biting at me." Fortunately for thousands of faces around the world, that little bite grew into a design company that has transformed the eyewear landscape.

Hoet went to night school, where he studied drawing. In the mid-1980s, "Bruges was the centre of the world for me," he admits. Then Wim Somers, a friend and fellow optician, took him to a show at the fashion academy in Antwerp. "It was 100 kilometres away!" The show itself also made an impression. "I thought, if they can do this, maybe we can do it."

They founded a company called Theo (an anagram of "Hoet") and began making prototypes of Hoet's designs. To drum up interest among buyers, they went off to eyewear trade shows, where they couldn't really afford an official space. "We sold them on the steps of the building or in nearby bars," says Hoet, reflecting that Flemish spirit of creative anarchy. "One time Wim was chased away from a show in New York."

But that kind of treatment didn't last long. Within a few years, Theo's uniquely cool frames were finding their place among retailers and popping up on faces across Belgium and Europe. So playfully stylish and different, they elicit queries from friends and strangers alike. "Where did you get your glasses?" (Bill Gates sports Theo designs, and Elton John has been known to buy up to 10 pair at a time.)

The Design Museum in Ghent is hosting the exhibition *Twenty Years of Theo Design* until 27 April, which highlights some of the company's most important innovations in shapes and materials. They were among the first eyewear designers, for instance, to use titanium and stainless steel and the very first to introduce asymmetrical frames. "We wondered why glasses are always symmetrical since faces are never symmetrical," says Hoet. "Of course, it's easier to make them that way since you really only need to draw half of it. Then you put it in the computer, push a button and you have the whole frame."

But Hoet isn't what you would call a button pusher. After a creative disagreement in the mid 1990s, Somers bought out the company, and Hoet now designs for Theo as a freelancer. He also launched his own line just last year. "I'm creating modern classics," he says. "I'm a little fed up with fashion. It's always asking for new, new, new, but you already have some very good products. Some of them are timeless."

There is a Hoet opticians in Brussels and two in Bruges – one devoted to young people. Most of his time is spent designing, but he might offer his opinion to a customer now and again. Unlike some opticians, he downplays the shape of the face when choosing the right frames. "We talk to people and look at their clothes and jewellery," he says. "We try match the glasses with the personality. That's more important than facial studies."

Lisa Bradshaw

online

www.hoet.be

TALKING DUTCH

notes on language



Shutterstock

boom

Some things you only appreciate when they've gone. Years ago there was a band of poplar trees visible from where I'm sitting now. They swished in the slightest wind and filled that corner of the sky. Fifty houses now cover the ground where those *populieren* once held sway. Not only do we miss their rustle but also we've nothing now to absorb the drone of planes. Fortunately, we have our own *boom*, a spreading oak to shade us on sunny afternoons and a place for the cats to get lost in.

The Dutch word *boom* doesn't give us the word tree. However, *boom* does appear in English as the horizontal spar of a sail and the floating beam (which is related to *boom*) used to contain oil spills. It's one more example to add to the list of Dutch nautical terms taken over by English: others are *ahoy*, *cruise*, *deck*, *mast*, *smuggle* and *yacht*.

I'm not exactly a tree-hugger but I found myself in a situation the other day where I could do my bit for trees. It came about when a colleague tried to sell me a candle. It's hard to refuse in such a situation but I was touched by the story behind the candle and bought one. Edith explained that about 90 hectares of farmland between Hoeilaart and Overijse (south of Brussels) had been purchased by the Flemish authorities to be gradually converted into wooded meadow. So, not a dense forest but *een parkachtige landschap met een afwisseling van open ruimte, struiken en bosjes*, which sounds delightful: a parklike landscape with a mixture of open spaces, bushes and small woods. This will take some 25 years to accomplish and will gradually be opened up to the public.

So what's with the candles? Well, for €7 I got the *kaarsje*, a reduction coupon for a train ticket, a name tag and *een symbolische boom*. So no real tree but just *een boomlabel*. You put your name on the tree label and use the *kortingsbon* to get to Overijse for the planting of one of the new woods on 16 March. The proceeds of the candle sales go to *Kom Op Tegen Kanker*, a campaign organised by the Flemish league against cancer, after which the wood will be inelegantly named: *de Kom Op Tegen Kankerbos*.

So all I have to do is turn up on Sunday with my *boomlabel* and I'll be given *een échte boom te planten*, which I hope my daughter, Kirsty, will plant and name. A great idea. The trees are native to the area: *eik, es en linde* – oak, ash and linden. And in a few years we can return to see how our sapling has grown. *Wat gebeurt er met mijn geld?* Well, the money is used by *Kom Op Tegen Kanker* to help it organise *preventiecampagnes, ondersteuning van patiënten, vakantiekampen voor kinderen, wetenschappelijk onderzoek*. So if you want to help with such support of patients and scientific research, *koop een kaarsje en een boom!*

online

www.komoptegenkanker.be

FEATURE

Shutterstock



The ancient legends of the Irish saints were gathered for the first time by friars living in Leuven

Continued from page 1

The fonts were moulded in the attic of the Plantin printing house in Antwerp and served as the standard for printing books in Irish for the next 350 years.

The Leuven friars were also responsible for writing the first history of Ireland. "The friars decided that you could only have a common sense of identity if you had a common history," Vallely explains. They sent a chronicler back to Ireland to gather all the ancient manuscripts he could find. He travelled around the island with two assistants, collecting manuscripts and making copies of those that couldn't be taken back to Leuven. This formed the basis for *The Annals of the Four*

Masters

scholars". Vallely explains: "The Leuven friars campaigned to get St Patrick recognised by the Catholic Church, so that he could be adopted as a national hero."

All this happened in a plain red-brick college near the banks of the River Dijle, a long way from Ireland. "The Irish College in Leuven just happened to have a number of brilliant men who all came together at a certain time," Vallely explains. "Their political and cultural sense was sharpened here."

scholars". Vallely explains: "The Leuven friars campaigned to get St Patrick recognised by the Catholic Church, so that he could be adopted as a national hero."

No matter what the English thought of those perfidious friars, an Irish identity was gradually emerging in this quiet university town. Most of the leading figures were Franciscan friars, but one woman played an important role in the process. Rosa O'Doherty came to Leuven with her husband, an Irish earl forced to flee the country.

She became the "first Irish ambassador," Vallely says, after she set up a court near Brussels and began to provide Irish people with papers to travel throughout Europe.

Her gravestone still survives in the Irish College chapel, but little else is left of the Irish presence. Many old manuscripts were destroyed when the German army burned Leuven in 1914, and the surviving documents are now stored in the O'Clery Institute of University College Dublin.

But there is still a strong Irish presence in the college. Now known as the Leuven Institute for Ireland in Europe, it organises cultural events and accommodates a steady stream of students from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The corridors and gardens are teeming with students on all types of educational courses, from rural agricultural colleges to competitive MBA programmes. Four hundred years after the first brick was laid down, you can still hear plenty of Irish accents in this part of Leuven.

Online
www.leuveninstitute.eu

IRELAND IN FIGURES

3,522

Number of Irish people living in Belgium, according to the official Belgian population records, but the Irish Club of Belgium estimates 15,000. The statistics show the biggest number (1,824) living in Brussels Region, 842 in Flemish Brabant, 154 in Antwerp district and just one lonely soul registered as living in Oudenaarde district.

€178 million

Total value of sales by Irish companies to Belgium in 2006, according to Enterprise Ireland.

81,000

Number of Belgian tourists visiting Ireland in 2007, according to figures from Tourism Ireland.

online

www.tourismireland.com



The Irish College in Leuven: where the Irish found their roots

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BELGIUM - MEMBER GOSSELIN GROUP



IOC president Jacques Rogge faces mounting criticism

KBC experiments with flexible opening hours

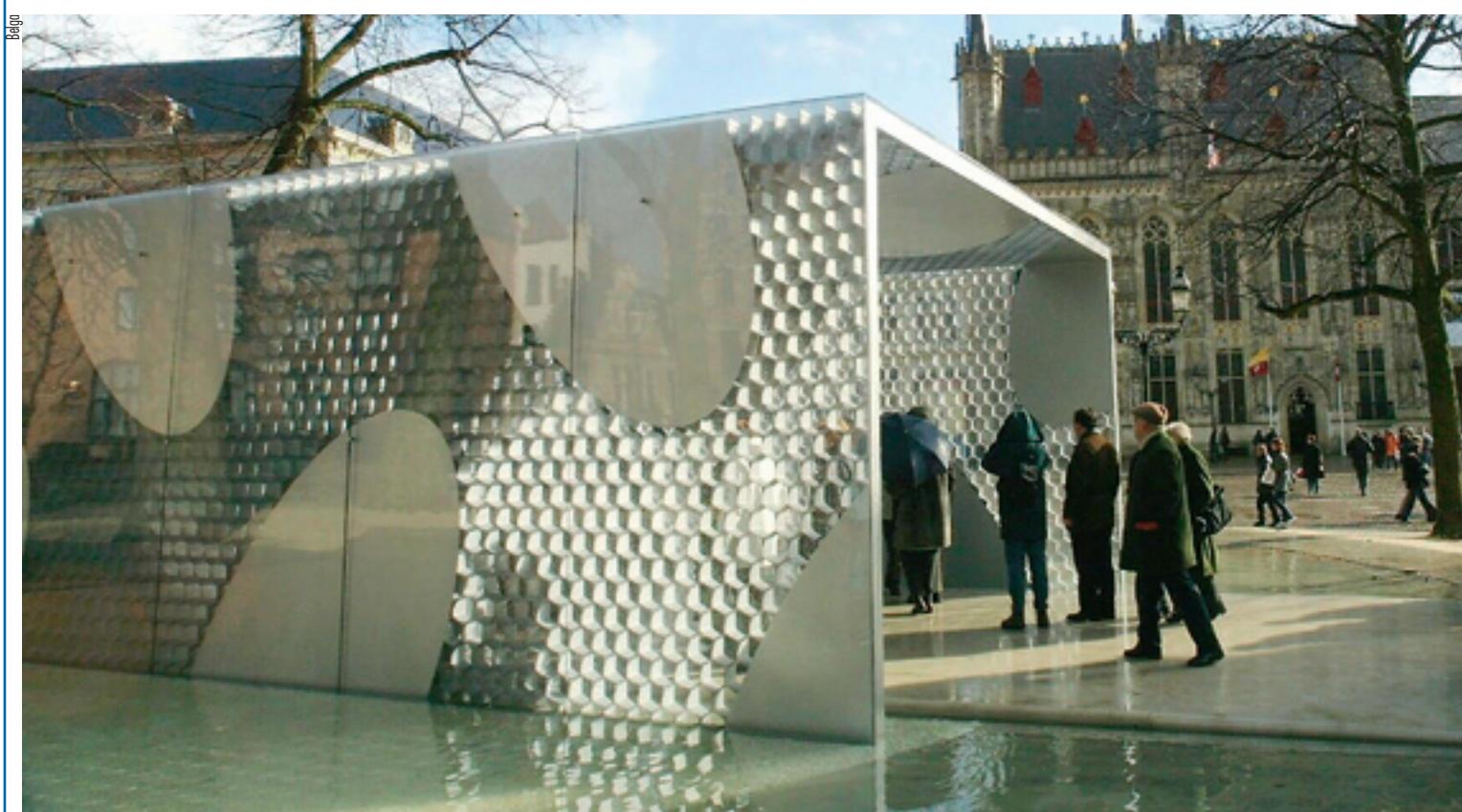
KBC bank is to launch three pilot projects in 30 branches to experiment with changed opening hours, to serve customers outside office hours, including at weekends and in the evening. The plan has the approval of staff unions, and aims to bring customers back into agencies who have steadily drifted away over recent years as a result of the increase in electronic payment systems and ATMs. Banks see the return to the human presence in the agency as an opportunity for the sale of financial products other than traditional banking services. Both ING and Fortis have recently revealed plans to reorganise and extend their network of agencies.

Leuven and Hasselt universities to cooperate closely

The universities of Leuven and Hasselt are to sign an agreement of "broad, intense and preferential cooperation" in the coming weeks. The agreement takes care to stress the particularities and specific identities of the two institutions, but also looks forward to post-2012, when the government has said courses not attracting enough students will have to merge. Leuven hopes the deal will bring an increase in the numbers of Bachelor's graduates from Hasselt studying for a higher degree. Hasselt in return is looking for Leuven to guarantee the educational resources needed to maintain some of its courses.

VRT has €60 million deficit

The Flemish public broadcaster VRT will be facing a deficit of €60 million by 2011, the media expert of CD&V, Carl Decaluwe, said. VRT boss Dirk Wauters recently described the broadcaster's financial situation in 2008-2009 as "manageable" but warned of "structural problems" from 2010 on. But Mr Decaluwe warned that the expected increase in subsidy hinted at by media minister Geert Bourgeois must not become a form of unfair competition against the interests of commercial TV stations. Bourgeois is due to review the VRT's financial plight next month, and faces two options: either cut back on services or seek more money from the government. "The first of those possibilities is not an option," he has said. The VRT declines to comment, other than to point out that Decaluwe "has always been well-informed in the past, and this time is no exception".



Toyo Ito pavilion in Bruges to be restored

The controversial Toyo Ito pavilion in Bruges is to be officially protected, and restored at a cost of €250,000. The pavilion was constructed for the Bruges culture year 2002, but has since fallen into disrepair. A temporary protection order placed on the pavilion by the region last March has now expired. Planning minister Dirk Van Mechelen gave the city two options: extend the protection definitively, or break the pavilion down but pay to restore and replace it in another location. The city opted for the latter, and will now pay 20% of the restoration costs, the rest being split between Flanders region and West Flanders province.

Olympic protests gather momentum

Continued from page 1

Rogge meanwhile expressed confidence that the Games would have "positive consequences" for China. The Chinese authorities would respect the "values of the Games," he said. "On the one hand we believe in their ability to organise major sporting competitions successfully. And on the other, we believe the Games will open a door between China and the rest of the world."

The IOC president also clashed with Ghent University last week when he demanded they withdraw an advertising campaign which featured a flag showing the Olympic rings labelled "Darfur 2020" and the slogan "Durf denken" (dare to think). The campaign draws attention to the role of China in the Sudanese war. According to reports, Rogge, who studied in Ghent, personally called university rector Paul Van Cauwenbergh, but he was on a visit to Africa at the time. Nevertheless, a communications representative later announced that the University had "decided not to use the image any more for the

time being."

Van Cauwenbergh later denied that the IOC's move was censorship. "It was all a misunderstanding," he said on his return from Zambia. "It was never our intention to attack anyone, and certainly not the IOC. We wanted the posters to make students think, and the flag certainly achieved that."

The University's ad agency, Saatchi and Saatchi, claimed it had received permission from the IOC to use the image of the rings, which is a registered trade mark. The IOC denied the claim. "The IOC is for freedom of speech," a spokesman for Rogge said. "On the other hand the IOC's right to the use of Olympic symbols like the rings has to be respected."

Within the University, however, media law lecturer Dirk Voorhoof claimed the use of a trade mark in a spirit of parody was protected by the fair use law, and pointed to examples where courts had ruled in favour of very similar campaigns against trade-mark owners.



Massive biodiesel refinery opens in Ghent

Belgium's biggest refinery for the production of biodiesel was opened at the port of Ghent last week by prime minister Guy Verhofstadt. But the new Bioro plant opened to minimal demand, as oil companies continue to sneer at government excise-reductions for the sale of diesel made in part from plant material, or fatty acids methyl ether (Fame). The plant has an output of 988.5 million litres, but virtually no clients. The industry is now calling on the government to introduce a penalty for diesel producers who do not add biodiesel to their fuel. One of the plant's major backers is the agri-food giant Cargill, which paid €56 million for a rape-seed oil refinery and a power-generation centre for the plant. Biodiesel is quite different from bioethanol. Biodiesel is produced from oil-seeds such as rape, soya or palm, all of which have to be imported and converted. Bioethanol, on the other hand, comes from sugar and starch crops, and can help use up surplus EU production. There is as yet no EU production of bioethanol.

Homeless children in Ghent triple in number

The number of homeless children under the age of 12 in Ghent has tripled since 2006, from 107 to 299, according to Huize Triest, the organisation which takes them in. Most are children of Roma migrants from Eastern Slovakia who are unable to find work and, not being entitled to benefits, end up on the street. Renovations in the city which saw the demolition of former squat-houses have made the situation worse. "We're being overwhelmed on every side," the director of Huize Triest said. The centre has only 16 beds, with acute cases allowed to stay only four nights. "The children are malnourished and cold. Things are so bad I guarantee one of these days a child will die on the streets of Ghent." The city council plans to set up a fund for anti-poverty organisations worth €130,000 – but not until the autumn.

Antwerp diamond quarter to get entry gates

Antwerp's diamond quarter is to be fitted with gates at each of the two main approaches to the area, for use in cases of emergency or increased terrorist threat. The gates will be fitted by the city council and the Diamond High Council, and will remain open in normal circumstances. The entrances to the area are currently fitted with bollards which retract into the ground, but the city said the gates would make it easier to close the area off hermetically.

Cultural heritage prize for Bozar building



The Paleis voor Schone Kunsten building in Brussels has been awarded the annual Cultural Heritage prize by the Belgian Building Awards at this year's Batibouw construction and renovation fair. The award citation mentions Bozar director Paul Dujardin and architect Barbara Van der Wee, and rewards "specially magnificent or coherent renovation work" as well as "people whose work promotes our heritage and urban architectural riches". Bozar, where renovation of the building by Victor Horta has been going on for a decade, won over 128 other projects.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



One in six has foreign roots

One in six Belgian inhabitants – 1.6 million in all – have foreign roots, according to a report on immigration published by the King Baudouin Foundation. Under half – 700,000 – are naturalised "new Belgians", with the rest maintaining their original nationality. 64% come from the member states of the EU, and another 15% from Africa – mainly Morocco and Congo. Every year, the report says, 70,000 new immigrants enter the country legally, with illegal immigration possibly accounting for the same number again. Just over half of the legal immigrants (54%) are from the EU.

National Bank governor paid four times more than US counterpart

Guy Quaden, governor of the National Bank, is paid four times more than his US counterpart, chairman of the Federal Reserve Ben Bernanke, the European Central Bank has revealed. Mr Quaden last year received €467,038, more than the head of the ECB, Jean-Claude Trichet, on €345,252 and nearly four times as much as Mr Bernanke on €124,220. A spokesperson for the National Bank pointed out, however, that different tax regimes make a comparison of gross salaries invalid. The best-paid central bank governor in the world is Joseph Yam, chairman of the Monetary Authority of Hong Kong, who in 2007 was paid €844,155.

Small businesses create 60,000 new jobs

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Belgium created 60,000 new jobs last year, twice as many as in 2006, according to figures from personnel consultancy SD Worx. In Flanders growth was 3.4%, with just over half of all new jobs – 37,000 in all. In Limburg, however, employment grew by a massive 9.1%. Brussels accounted for 7,000 jobs, fewer than Antwerp (10,300) and East Flanders (7,800). Growth in Wallonia was 2.9%, with 14,000 new jobs. Belgium has a total of around 230,000 SMEs, including small family firms, employing over 1.7 million people.

Online
www.sd.be

Women under-represented at top of companies

A total of 57% of Belgian public companies have not a single woman on their board, and only 5.8% of board members are female, far below the EU average of 11%. Flemish equality minister Kathleen Van Brempt has called for one-third of all advisory board posts to be filled by women within eight years. Meanwhile the International Labour Organisation said women are more prevalent in unemployment figures, and have worse-paid jobs with fewer career prospects. Some 52.5% of women are at work, compared to 78.8% of men. The unemployment rate among women is 6.4%, with men on 5.7%.

Breaking news

Want to know how much the subprime crisis has cost Belgian banks so far? Or why old jewellery is fetching record prices these days? These are just two of the topics covered last week in the online version of *Flanders Today*. Subscribe to Press Room to receive daily breaking news stories in English based on a selection taken from the Flemish press.

Online
www.flanderstoday.eu

Top BT man joins Belgacom



Alan Hope

Michel De Coster, head of the BT Benelux subsidiary of the former British Telecom, has been appointed head of the Enterprise Business Unit of Belgacom. In his new job, heading a division which last year achieved a turnover of €2 billion, Zaventem-born De Coster will be targeting exactly the same business clients as before with BT.

De Coster also joins Belgacom's seven-member management committee under chairman Didier Bellens. He declined to comment on the new job, but it is known that he narrowly missed

an important promotion within BT last year. He has led the Benelux office for six years, longer than most country managers stay in the post.

His career in telecommunications began when he graduated in political science from the VUB and declined the academic career that was suggested to him. Instead he went into selling telephone exchanges to small businesses on commission. He went on to work for Bosch Telecom in sales and then in management. His next move was to start-up Colt, which he expanded from a staff of three to a workforce of

170.

His move to Belgacom follows a history of outspoken criticism of the former state utility: he has described it as an ex-monopoly which uses its dominant market position to crush smaller competitors. Belgacom's business tariffs made it impossible for smaller companies like BT and Versatel to compete effectively, he said.

He also clashed with Belgacom, his new employer, over the acquisition in 2005 of Telindus, the Leuven-based IT company. Both BT and Belgacom were in the running to take over the company, with Belgacom emerging the eventual winner.

Aged 45 and married with three children, De Coster is better known as the bass player in the Dutch-singing rock trio De Mens, which he described as a business "whose limitations are also its charms". The group was less of a factor in his desire to stay in Belgium than his family, he said in an interview. However he boasts of never having missed a gig in the 15 years since he set the band up with childhood friend, guitarist and vocalist Frank Vander Linden. "There have been summers when I couldn't go on holiday because we had one festival after another," he told an interviewer. His other hobbies include fast racing cars.

BUSINESS FLASH



Shutterstock

InBev

InBev, the Leuven-based multinational beer group, will concentrate its worldwide marketing efforts on two of its brands, Stella Artois and Beck's. The company's other best-selling brews, such as Leffe, Hoegaarden, Brazil's Brahma and Canada's Labatt Blue, will be relegated to multi-country brands or local status. The move will allow InBev to concentrate additional resources on its truly global brands – Stella available in 80 countries worldwide and Beck's in 120 countries.

Volvo

Volvo, the Ghent-based production unit of the Swedish car group, is launching its XC60 vehicle at the Geneva car show this week. The company expects to sell up to 50,000 of the Ghent-assembled model, 20,000 of them in the United States.

Biox

Biox, the Dutch energy company, is planning to build a palm oil-fired power station in the Port of Antwerp. The company, which is owned by the British International Power group, expects to produce enough electricity for some 140,000 households in the Antwerp area.

Global Hotels & Resorts

Global Hotels & Resorts, the Portuguese hotel group, is to invest some €30 million in renovating the landmark Brussels Astoria Hotel on Koningstraat. The new operators want to upgrade the hotel to five-star status and plan to open additional rooms, reaching a total of 149. A reopening is planned for September 2010, the 100th anniversary of the hotel's construction.

Brussels public transport

MIVB, the Brussels public transport company, is to buy 52 additional articulated Mercedes buses to cope with the fast-growing demand.

Electrawinds

Electrawinds, the Flemish renewable energies company, will build a €90 million power station fired with dried household refuse in Ostend.

International Monetary Fund

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is considering closing its Brussels office and relocating its two staff members to Paris. The move is said to be linked to the appointment of Frenchman Dominique Strauss-Kahn as head of the IMF. The cost of running an office in Paris is significantly more expensive than in Brussels.

Clickair

Clickair, the Spanish low-cost carrier, has launched a two-flights-a-day service between Barcelona and Brussels airport. The airline, which took over the service previously operated by the Spanish national carrier Iberia, hopes to attract business passengers from other airlines such as Brussels Airlines.

Electrabel

Electrabel, the country's largest energy group and an affiliate of the French Suez company, is to invest some €200 million over the next two years in its Doel nuclear power station.

Geox

Geox, the Italian shoe producer, will open its seventh flagship store in Ostend. The company, whose shoes are already distributed in some 450 outlets in Belgium, is developing a range of clothes. This is already available in the local Belgian market.

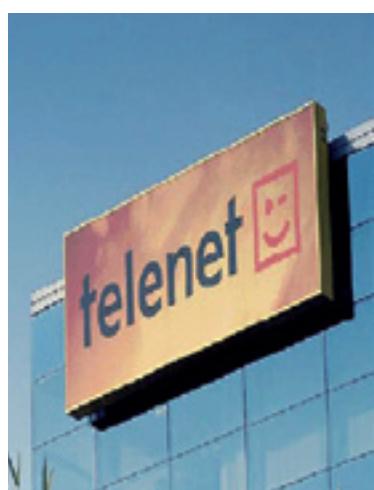
Telenet protests at Scarlet takeover

Belgacom accused of "unfair practises"

Telenet, the Mechelen-based cable TV company, which also provides Internet and phone services, has lodged a complaint against the planned takeover by Belgacom of Scarlet, the third-placed player in the broadband internet market in Belgium. The deal would bring 150,000 new customers – an extra market share of 6.8% to add to Belgacom's current share of 45.8% – tipping the former state monopoly over the 50% mark.

The objection is the latest in a continuing series of attacks by one competitor on the other. Recently, Belgacom lodged its own legal objections to Telenet's takeover of Interkabel, a consortium of Flemish cable operators which accounts for some 800,000 TV customers. Belgacom claims it was considering its own bid; Telenet wonders what the telecom giant would want with a cable-TV network and accuses Belgacom of employing spoiler tactics to stop the takeover from going ahead.

At the root of the clash is the desire of both to dominate the lucrative triple-play market, where one operator provides broadband Internet, telephone and digital TV.



This strategy requires an operator to have access to infrastructure.

Belgacom maintains a monopoly on phone lines, with 105 million ADSL lines. Telenet, which last year took over UPC, reaches into 2.9 million homes and currently delivers Internet to 850,000. Strictly speaking, these are two different sectors, but in reality they are competing on the same terrain.

Last month, Belgacom paid €185 million for its second-largest competitor, Scarlet. If the acquisition were to go ahead without objections from the federal Compe-

tion Council, the slow and painful decade of liberalisation of the market would be set back, and the consequences of lack of competition – higher prices here than in neighbouring countries, with the resulting disincentive for people to go online – would remain unresolved.

The effect goes even further. The Institute for Post and Telecommunications (BIPT) – the independent regulator of the telecoms industry – has long been pressing for Belgacom to open up its VDSL network to competitors. VDSL is the next generation up from ADSL broadband, and Belgacom is keen to keep the network for itself not only because it wants to recoup the massive development costs, but also because it counts on VDSL for any advance in its position in the high-definition digital TV market, where it is in competition with Telenet.

At the weekend, Belgacom announced a 1.5% drop in profits to €958 million for 2007 on turnover down 0.6% to €6.06 billion. Earlier, Telenet had reported profits of €20.7 million, an increase of 20% on sales of €932 million.

AH

THE IRISH ISSUE

PROPERTY

Irish eyes on Brussels

Brussels remains a safe haven in troubled waters



Crown Avenue on Kroonlaan, sold for €120 million.

Gone are the days when Irish workers were building the Brussels metro and seeking comfort in the fast-growing number of Irish pubs. That was the 1970s and this is now. "Property investment is fashionable, both individuals and businesses have made a lot of money in the Irish property market, and it's a type of investment they understand on an international scale," explains Charlotte Field, manager of Enterprise Ireland's Bene-

lux office.

Encouraged by the dramatic property boom in Ireland, Irish investors have been pouring €400 million a year into commercial real estate in Belgium since 2004. Irish investors were second only to Belgians in the Brussels real estate market in 2006, with a total of €509 million invested. This trend is expected to continue unchecked as long as the Brussels property market offers diversification opportunities for wealthy

Irish families capitalising on the economic boom. Irish investors now own nearly 500,000 square metres of office space in Brussels, have significant stakes in hotels and shopping malls and are said to be the third largest foreign investors in this country, behind the German and British property funds. Last year alone, they accounted for some 12% of the total commercial property investment in the country.

Thirsty for quality investments

in this country, Irish investors have snapped up landmark buildings such as the 23,000 square metres IT Tower on Louizalaan close to the Terkameren Bos, the 35,000-square-metre Crown Avenue building on Kroonlaan in Elsene, bought for €120 million, the Olympiades office building in Evere, bought for €40 million, and part-ownership of the Stadfeestzaal in Antwerp. One of the most striking dimensions of the Irish spending spree is that it is mainly private investors – often represented by the private banking arm of the Bank of Ireland – who take the plunge and not the ubiquitous pension funds.

According to property consultant Maxime Xantippe from CB Richard Ellis (CBRE), wealthy Irish families have traditionally invested up to 40% of their resources in real estate. But Ireland's own property market is overheating and the London market (another traditional outlet) lies outside the euro zone. This has led many Irish people to make investments in continental Europe. Brussels, unlike many other European markets, provides a dream situation for an investor – the EU institutions, regional representations and other public authorities are all hungry for office space, providing the reassurance of steady rental revenue streams. In addition, demand from law firms and lobbyists has increased dramatically –

partly as a result of the mammoth fines handed out by the European Competition authorities (which encourage big companies to invest in some sharp legal advice). Again, the fact that Belgian prices are significantly lower than in other European capital adds a further argument for buying in Belgium.

Although European property investors are anxiously waiting to see if the US subprime crisis will spill over and affect the value of their investments, CBRE's Nicolas Orts believes the local market will remain stable this year, providing a kind of safe heaven. The only significant change is that equity buyers will replace leveraged buyers from the US or the UK. The short term issue, however, will be the impact of the credit crunch that is hampering the investors' capacity in finding credit on reasonable terms.

Vincent Querton, head of the Brussels office of US-based property consultancy Jones Lang Lasalle (JLL), also believes that the market is in consolidation mode. He claims that some new Irish deals are in the pipeline but that much depends on the evolution of the worldwide situation. Norbert Muller, one of the firm's partners, sees a trend towards more local joint ventures with Irish partners. He notes that the biggest strength of the Brussels market remains its wealth preservation role in a troubled environment.



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CULTURAL CENTRE

Of pigs and shadows

A cultural centre outside Ardoorie (where?) offers ample reasons to trek into the country

Lisa Bradshaw

I have something in my legs. I don't know what, but they jump." He's referring to pole vaulting, a sport in which he was second in Belgium a few years ago. But you'll find it's an apt metaphor for the rest of Jonah Muylle.

Muylle runs Cultuurkapel De Schaduw, a lively, youthful cafe and centre for music, theatre and exhibition – in Brussels? Antwerp? Ghent? No, well outside a little village called Ardoorie in West Flanders – otherwise known as the middle of nowhere. The longer you drive along the rural highways to get there, the further away it seems to be. When you arrive, there's no parking lot; cars just line up along the narrow country lane. It seems to make no sense at all.

Back in 1994, when Muylle was still in primary school, the now-famous Flemish theatre director Piet Arfeuille bought an old, rundown Catholic school and chapel amid the pig farmers northeast of his hometown of Roeselare. He thought it was quirky and eventually started his first theatre group there, which he called Theater De Schaduw (The Shadow Theatre). He directed plays in the former chapel and also hosted visiting companies.

When Arfeuille decided it was time to move on, 15 volunteers passionate about the vision bought the property and created a non-profit co-op to host theatre. Meanwhile, Muylle, now studying communications in Ghent, had a considerable knack for organising parties. His reputation was such that the co-op, which was having severe financial difficulties, asked him to become artistic co-ordinator of Theater De Schaduw. So, fresh out of college, he moved to the countryside to work for no money. "It was rough the first year," he admits. "I slept in the sacristy."

Certainly, there were reservations. "Everybody close to me said 'What are you doing? Think of

your future! You're crazy, it's in the middle of nowhere!' But I really liked it here, and there were all these volunteers who did this only out of love for art and culture. And suddenly that might stop because of financial problems? I thought I had to do something."

He began booking music and exhibitions, as well as continuing with theatre. With limited profits and even less in the way of government subsidies, he remodelled the bar and invested in sound and recording equipment. Two years ago, at the age of 24, he bought the volunteers out and changed the name to reflect a broader programme. He now lives in the former priest's house with his girlfriend, Liselotte, and their new baby. Liselotte works at the Schaduw, too, free of charge. "We're very idealistic," Muylle says.

They're also full of energy and innovative ideas. The diverse blend of pop, rock, jazz and blues on Friday and Saturday nights has inspired a loyal following among locals from the surrounding towns, and the occasional bigger name brings people in from Kortrijk, Bruges and Ghent. The Flemish pop-fusion band Absynthe Minded, for instance, is sure to sell out. That only means about 300 people but, compared to the average 60 or so on a Saturday night, it's huge. Muylle convinces international bands already playing in the area to book with him, too, and employs a barter system. Absynthe Minded, for instance, recorded its latest album there and will charge Muylle nothing for the concert. Word is spreading. "One day, people will come from Brussels," he says.

Actually, once you've been inside Cultuurkapel De Schaduw, it's easy to want to come back. The warm, circular designs are beguiling. Multi-coloured globes descend from the ceiling, polka-dotted lamps hang over the bar. Aside

from a few cinema-style seats, it's all cafe tables with red stools that shoot up from the ground like calla lilies. The art exhibition changes monthly, but right now, even the paintings have a womb-like psychedelia.

And then there's the roly-poly pig. One of the neighbours bought a girl pig thinking it was a boy, "and it got pregnant and had 18 babies," Muylle smiles. One of those babies found a home in De Schaduw's garden, where he has grown massive. His name is Madou. Every night after the show, they let Madou come in. "He's great," says Muylle. "He lies down, and you can rub his belly. He loves to meet people." And, because "every company needs a logo, Madou became theirs, his oval shadow adorning the programmes and website.

Dedicated to supporting young and unknown artists, both local and international, most of De Schaduw's Friday night shows are free. The crowd varies with the band, but usually ranges from 20-something hipsters to locals celebrating a 50th birthday. Young parents bring their kids, who call Muylle by name and help set out the free snacks.

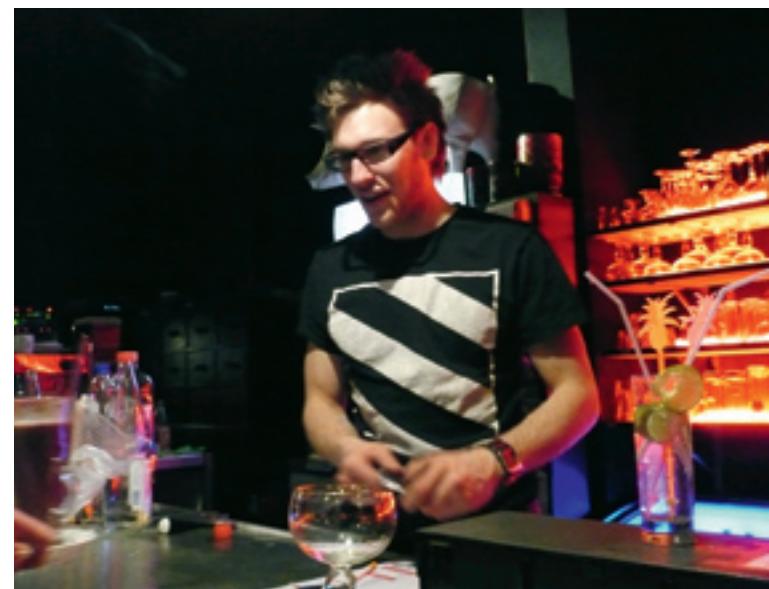
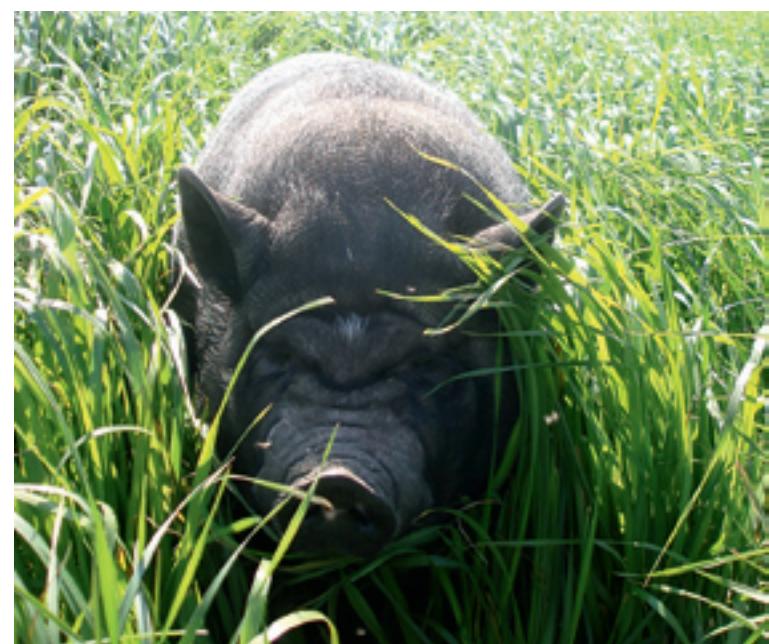
As you might imagine, De Schaduw is just breaking even. Some nights, it loses money. But Muylle believes that "the total concept" will begin to lure the crowds if he can just hold out awhile. "People just have to try it," he encourages. "This place is something different; you can just feel the atmosphere way out here. And we make great cocktails, and the acoustics are really good, and you don't have to stand shoulder to shoulder during a show. We don't have a lot of money, but we have charm." He pauses and looks at me. "And you can meet the pig."

Online

www.deschaduw.net



Above: Cultuurkapel De Schaduw's most urban interior. Below: meet Madou; Jonah Muylle behind the bar; Absynthe Minded play on 28 March



CLASSICAL NOTES

Bach redux

An American musical conductor in Brussels reconstructs the St Mark Passion

Alan Hope

The Kapel van de Miniemens musical ensemble has been producing monthly cantatas by Johann Sebastian Bach since 1981. But for their next performance on 16 March the Brussels choir and orchestra will be stepping outside the usual cycle to perform a work which no longer exists.

We know from the written record that Bach performed a passion according to the Gospel of St Mark in Leipzig on Good Friday in 1731 with a text by Christian Friedrich Henrici (known as Picander). Picander also provided the libretto for Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, generally recognised as one of the greatest masterpieces of music. All of Bach's music for the *St Mark Passion*, though, has been lost. Scholars are now fairly sure that it shared music with a funeral ode (*Trauerode*) composed by Bach for a memorial service in 1727 for Princess Christiane Eberardine, estranged wife of King August II of Poland.

In fact, says Julius Stenzel, who has pieced together the music for the Miniemens concert, the words of Picander's *Passion* text

fit much better to the *Trauer Ode*'s music than the words of the ode itself, by Johann Christoph Gottsched. Bach's music for the event was heavily criticised at the time, notes Stenzel, and the suggestion is that Bach may have composed the *Passion* first, in his head at any rate, before "borrowing" the music to fulfil the funeral commission.

However odd it may seem to us, this was common practice in Bach's time, Stenzel says. Musicologists call it "parodying", but it means simply quoting passages of your own (or indeed someone else's) work.

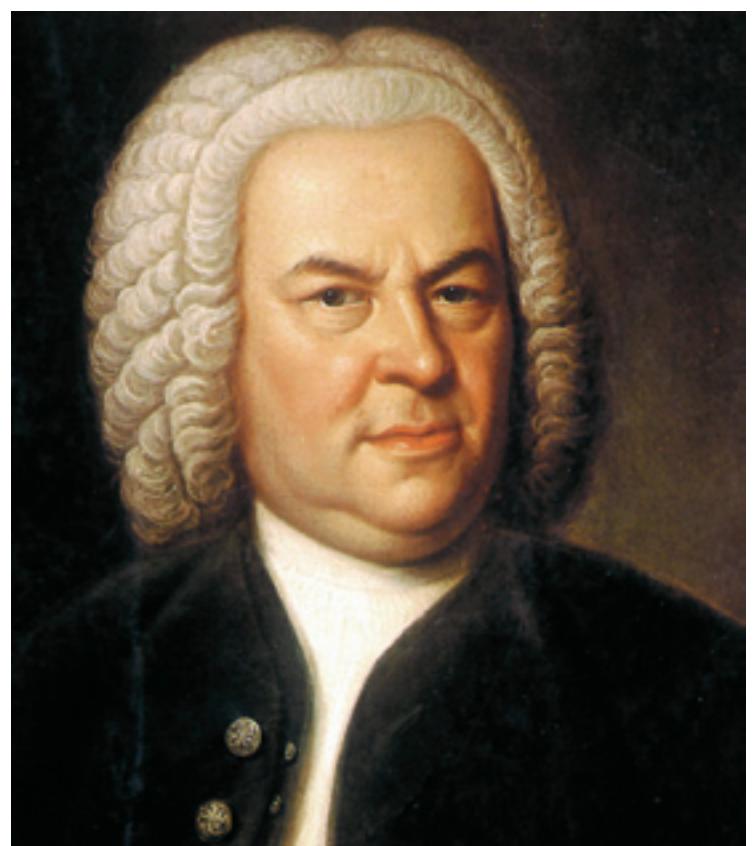
Bach reused instrumental passages in his cantatas, for instance, and took themes from them, in turn, to use in other pieces. He was a working composer and needed to provide new music at the rate of one cantata a month. He set himself the task besides of writing a new cantata for every Sunday and feast day of the church year. According to the listing in his obituary, he in fact succeeded in composing five such cycles, although only the first three have come down to us intact.

Stenzel, an American cellist

and Baroque specialist who has been the Miniemens' musical director since 2005, says his goal in reconstructing the *St Mark Passion* is to "tie together the music of the *Trauerode* and the libretto by Picander," but without adding anything extraneous to the mix.

Several attempts have already been made to reconstruct what Bach is thought to have had in mind, most recently by Dutch conductor Ton Koopman in 1999-2000. That version runs for close to two hours and includes nothing of the *Trauerode*; both recitative and choruses were composed by Koopman in the style of Bach. Others have supplemented the *Trauerode* with parodies from other cantatas, as well as recitatives from a passion by Bach's contemporary, Reinhard Keiser.

"I'm not convinced by a lot of Koopman's choices," Stenzel says. His own version is shorter, lasting barely 40 minutes. There is no recitative, through which the story and the drama of the *Passion* are advanced in the cases of St Matthew and St John; rather, the whole story is told in the arias and choruses. Unusu-



Reconceiving Bach: the Kapel van de Miniemens music ensemble presents the *St Mark Passion*

ally for Bach's passions, there is no Evangelist, the tenor soloist who serves as narrator. "That music was among the parts that were lost," Stenzel says. At no point is the voice of Christ himself heard. "Jesus is spoken of, but never says a word. He exists only in the third person." However, the most important difference between this reconstruction and others, Stenzel says, is that it consists uniquely of music composed by the master himself. "It's all Bach," he says.

"And it's way more intense."

16 March, 10.30, Kapel van de Miniemens, Miniemensstraat 62. Soloists are Reinhilde Bovendaerde (soprano), Regula Boeringer (alto) and Vincent Lesage (tenor). Entrance is free, and a contribution is requested.

Online
www.minimes.be

EXHIBITION

Spirit of the beehive

A Slovenian traditional art form resonates with a modern urgency

Steven Tate

With a population of a little over two million, Slovenia is about the same size as Wales in both people and area. But what it lacks in size, it more than makes up for in biodiversity – from Alps to plains to beech forests. The Carniolan honey bee has found this habitat most hospitable, accounting for a beekeeping tradition that goes

back centuries. *Art and the Beehive*, an exhibition in Brussels folklore museum, pays tribute to a decorative art that blends culture – and apiculture.

These fascinating painted panels that adorned apiaries are unique to Slovenia. Celebrating the beliefs held and the realities lived by Slovenes, the genre emerged in the mid 18th century and peaked between 1820 and 1880 before falling by the wayside



in the early 20th century. More than 50,000 panels were produced employing about 700 different motifs. Religion figures prominently in more than half the panels on exhibit in Brussels: the Ten Commandment tablets; miracles performed by Jesus, as well as the crucifixion and the resurrection; Noah's ark; and various saints, martyrs and icons.

Other pieces feature scenes from everyday Slovene life in the 18th and 19th centuries: men playing cards, women around a boiling cauldron, hunting scenes, wedding feasts and folk dances. Some are humorous, such as the one featuring two women fighting over one man's pair of trousers. A feminist fable? A pumpkin love triangle? Or something more complex? Different interpretations are possible, rendering the images more powerful.

Measuring 12 to 14 cm high and 24 to 30 cm long, these windows on the past were for the most part painted by self-taught peasants in natural pigments and linseed oil. At first sight, they seem naïve and basic – but longer inspection reveals layers of meaning, particularly when placed in a historical context: the craft's beginning coincided with the Enlightenment. What is today Slovenia has, over the past two centuries alone, passed from being French rule to being part of the Austrian empire to partially annexed by Italy to part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to Communist rule to EU membership.

It is also easy, in the current day of medical advances and universal health care, to forget how much death was a part of life – which accounts for the prominence of reli-

gion in people's lives. Throughout Slovenia's turbulent history, its one constant identity has been its heritage – of which beekeeping forms an indelible part.

In 1780, priest Peter Pavel Glavar founded the country's first beekeeping school and a village beekeeping cooperative. Today, the Beekeepers Association of Slovenia has 8,000 members organised in 200 societies. Their activities are more than just a quaint remnant of days gone by: bees are important actors in the food chain. Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) has accounted for a 30 to 90% decrease in honeybees since 2006 in the United States. Less extreme decreases have been noted in Belgium, France and other parts of Europe during the same period. If such trends continue, over 90 crops – including soybeans, pears, cucumbers and cherries – could go the way of the dodo as honeybees are essential to pollinate them. The Slovenes' historical honouring of their hives – with folksy paintings mirroring their lives and beliefs – show that respecting nature is not trendy: it's traditional.

Art and the Beehive is a collaboration between Slovenia's Radovljica Museum of Beekeeping, the Slovenian Embassy in Belgium and the Brussels city council. The show was opened last month by Slovenian Ambassador Borut Trekman and Brussels Mayor Freddy Thielemans. A catalogue accompanying the exhibition is available in Slovenian, English and French.

Until 24 March, Museum of Tradition and Folklore, 19 Eikstraat, Brussels, 02.649.86.65

THE IRISH ISSUE

The art of being Irish

If “beauty is as beauty does”, the Brussels’ Irish are one good-looking bunch

Lisa Bradshaw

No other group in Brussels is quite as organised as the Irish. They have pubs, they have clubs, and they have their own holiday – coming up this March 17. Some of the city’s most prominent Irish residents try to explain just what “Irish” really stands for and why St Patrick’s Day is celebrated the world over.

Ann Douglas, president of the Irish Club

There are 15,000 Irish in Belgium, and the Irish Club has a connection with about 50% of them. Of Brussels’ many expatriate groups, the Irish Club is among the most impressive, with about 1,000 officially-registered members and several satellite groups that operate more or less independently. The Irish Club is now more of an “umbrella organisation,” says its president of three years Ann Douglas, “for the Irish communities living and working in Brussels.”

The club has been around for 37 years, and interest never wanes. “We have a reputation for being a sociable culture,” notes Douglas. “My favourite activity in the Irish club is the opportunity to just sit and talk, to tell stories. There’s a big difference between the Irish and other people, mostly in regard to our sense of humour and the ability to laugh at ourselves. We don’t take ourselves too seriously at all.”

Which explains the unbridled merriment of St Patrick’s Day, which is supposed to be celebrating one of Ireland’s patron saints – the (non-Irish) man who brought Christianity to the island. Far

from stoic religious observances, the Irish like to party. And not just the Irish – across the world even the non-Irish wear green, head to the pub for a Guinness and dance a jig to bagpipes. There are huge parades and festivals. The people of Chicago dye their river green. No other country has a day that receives such international treatment. Why Ireland?

The answer can be traced back through history. In the mid-19th century, Ireland was struck by the potato famine known as “The Great Hunger”. More than a million people died, while a similar number left the country. That was a huge influx all at once, mostly into English-speaking countries. “It was the start of a great dispersion, and they established themselves quickly,” says Douglas. “We’re a good community for integrating, learning the languages, marrying into the local community.” Not to mention bringing their culture with them – a culture that appeals immensely to the majority.

Online

www.irishclub.be



Grainne (front), Jack (back) and the staff of Jack O'Shea's. Grainne's favourite Irish pub: the Hairy Canary, but it's more English than Irish. The others are more like city pubs, and I'm from a small town. The Hairy Canary reminds me of what I'd see at home.



Ann Douglas Favourite Irish pub: At the moment, I like the James Joyce. But I really miss Brian O'Donnell. He's just retired, and he was so eccentric.

Grainne O'Shea, manager of Jack O'Shea's

What do you offer as an Irish butcher that other butchers don't offer? I asked Grainne O'Shea, manager of one of the cornerstones of Brussels' Irish culture. “Good service and good meat,” she replies.

The sister of Jack O'Shea, who opened the Schuman-area shop 10 years ago, says you won't find their Irish Angus beef anywhere else in Belgium. They hang and age the beautifully marbled meat between four and six weeks. The

cattle that provide the beef are pastured outdoors for most of the year in Tipperary where the O'Shea family comes from. They'll help you choose cuts and tell you how to cook it. “We put a lot of effort into making sure people leave happy,” she says.

Part of that is a special effort in customer service, part is typical Irish personality. “We're very down to earth, open and friendly,” says O'Shea. “It stands out as very special to me now when I go home.

People are talking to each other on the bus or in the airport. Other cultures are more reserved, but we really like to get out there.” Though most of the shop's customers are English, there are plenty of Irish coming in to keep O'Shea in touch with her roots. “It happens all over the world, this Irish community. It's a way for people to regroup who really miss the homeland.”

Online

www.jackoshea.com



Denis O'Sullivan Favourite Irish pub: Can I choose two? In FC Irlande, we have the owners of the two best in Brussels, De Valera's and O'Reillys. They play left back and right back on the same team.

Denis O'Sullivan, president of FC Irlande football club

One of the most important things to know about Brussels' Irish football club is that it's not Irish. Well, the people are not all Irish that is – the attitude is. The club was founded nearly 20 years ago and “very quickly, they started involving people from all over,” says Denis O'Sullivan, club president. “We like to hear at our matches people speaking French and Irish and German and Chinese. Now it's become a very important part of what the club is.”

What does it mean, then, to be an Irish club? “We keep the Irish atmosphere,” he explains. “It's

about a feeling.” On the field, that feeling translates into playing hard and being extremely competitive – and then heading off to the pub with the opposing team afterward. “Irish people have found the right balance of doing things well but still making sure we're having fun doing them. We think we're damn lucky to be Irish and thought it would be wonderful to share that with other people.” Besides, he notes, “A group of Irish people who are just hanging out amongst ourselves, that's not really being Irish.”

This brand of sport and attitude

is infectious: the club's five teams number about 150 members. O'Sullivan's team won their division this year for the very first time, playing a phenomenal season with only one loss. They're proud of the record, but “there is nothing that we're more proud of than hearing from other cultures that they feel part Irish because they've become so much part of the club, so much part of the spirit,” says O'Sullivan. “If you could put this in a bottle, you could become very rich.”

Online

www.fcirlande.be

CLUB

A stitch in time

Knitting isn't just for grannies anymore



Vera, left, imparts 45 years of knitting experience to others at Knit Belgium

Steven Tate

With stars like Julia Roberts and Reese Witherspoon "knitting one, pearl two" between Hollywood set shoots, knitting is losing its Old Mother Hubbard image. A new generation is picking up the needles to carry on a tradition that was in danger of dying out. British expats Lizzie Brawley and Helen Simpson foun-

ded Knit Belgium three years ago as a way of indulging in their shared passion for the craft while meeting other people. "It's a very informal group: no dues, no demands – just people getting together who love knitting," Brawley says.

Simpson knitted when she was a child but then dropped it, as many do, when she went to university. She picked it up again a few years

ago when she moved to Ostend to set up house with her Flemish husband. Brawley had arrived in Belgium a few years before, also to live with her Flemish spouse. The two women found each other through the website of Rowan International, the international knitting empire that keeps knitters updated on the latest techniques, yarns and equipment through its books, magazines and worldwide membership. Knit Belgium has grown to 30 members from all over Flanders who trek to Ghent three times a month to swap stories and knitting techniques.

Vanessa van Droogenbroeck doesn't have to travel very far: the Ghent resident lives a few streets away from their usual meeting place, the resto-café 't Lepelblad. Vanessa appreciates the short trip more than most: she's due to give birth to her first child next month. She joined Knit Belgium last October and busies herself with making things to swaddle her newborn. Those more seasoned in the craft, like Vera (knitting for 45 years) and Yvette (50 years), not only offer helpful advice to less experienced knitters, but also warmth

and wisdom. Van Droogenbroeck recently completed a cap and mittens for her unborn son, items that will be "family heirlooms," says Simpson. "That's the wonderful thing about knitting: it's carrying on a tradition and creating a tradition."

As Brits, Brawley and Simpson are in the minority in the group – but they like it that way. "It's a great way for me to practice my Flemish," says Simpson, as Brawley nods. But Van Droogenbroeck disagrees: "It's a great way for me to practice my English." The cross-cultural element is a strong attraction to members joining Knit Belgium: foreigners use it as a way of becoming integrated into Flanders, while the Flemish benefit from having Anglophones explaining the latest books and magazines on knitting, which are most often published in English.

"There are differences in techniques and traditions between the continent and Britain, though," cautions Brawley. Belgians knit with longer needles, anchoring one under the arm while working free-hand with the other. The British, Irish and Americans knit

free-hand with both needles. The widths of the needles can be different, too. "An English pattern for a jumper might call for a 2.75 mm needle, which does not exist on the continent." Like yeast or baking powder in a recipe, something as seemingly inconsequential as a 0.25 mm difference can have a huge effect on the end product.

Although knitting still suffers from a "women only" image, Simpson says that is changing. "There was a time in Belgium when knitting was taught to boys as well as girls in school," she says, noting that her husband had knitting class in primary school. The world-famous Steiner School method teaches knitting to boys and girls to promote relaxation and creativity. And Simpson plans to pass on the tradition to her toddler Nell and her infant son Marius when they're older. Because no mother should play favourites when passing on passion.

Online

www.knitbelgium.blogspot.com

THE IRISH ISSUE

James Joyce

Notes from Gnantwerp

Scholars at the James Joyce Center trace the Dutch (and other oddities) in the Irishman's work

Louise Gulliver

The Irish writer James Joyce spent a mere three days in Antwerp in 1926, which he dubbed "Gnantwerp" because of the mosquitoes, and little more than a few months in Belgium in total, yet his final and most controversial work, *Finnegans Wake*, is riddled with references to the Dutch language. And to riddle was precisely his intention.

Joyce once claimed that scholars would puzzle over his meanings for centuries to come and, sure enough, they are. For the past decade, a team of scholars had gathered in a small modestly-equipped room at the University of Antwerp to compile the world's first linear, multilayered library, tracing the linguistic oddities of Joyce's published work to the sources from which he drew them. Geert Lernout, the scholar leading the project, explains: "In the beginning not many people were interested in our 'Genetic Joyce' theory, but that is now changing.

Our work means theories surrounding Joyce's use of language can be backed up with hard evidence."

During a period spent in Ostend, Joyce took 64 Dutch lessons and he is believed to have made extensive notes for *Finnegans Wake* while in Antwerp. Professor Lernout, who embarked on his Joycean career while studying the use of Dutch in *Finnegans Wake*, explains: "We know that before 1926 any seemingly Dutch references had to have been drawn from other sources because he did not know the language. But it is certain that after this point his use was intentional."

The complexities and double entendres in Joyce's final novel have kept Joyce scholars and enthusiasts busy for decades. After all, what does "taufauf thuartpepatrick" mean, if it means anything at all? And surely "Amorica" can be nothing more than a misspelling of "America". It is commonly agreed that these characteristic anomalies in the Irishman's work are no mere slip of the pen, but the James Joyce Centre in Antwerp goes one step

further and insists that every word has a precise meaning.

"In the beginning, it was difficult to raise much interest in our work here; people were simply not interested in conducting research of this intensity," explains Professor Lernout. "We originally wanted the library to include visual copies of Joyce's original manuscripts, as this has huge implications in terms of the understanding we draw from the text... providing us with concrete theories."

The Antwerp-based Joyce scholars are working on a new volume of *The Finnegans Wake Notebooks at Buffalo*, the first of which was published in 2001 by the Belgian company Brepols. These focus on the *Finnegans Wake* manuscripts and notebooks and provide a catalogue of Joyce's language by tracing words, phrases and theories back to the original text sources from which Joyce drew them. For example, a gospel reference in *Finnegans Wake* can be traced through Joyce's original notes to the *Book of Kells*.

The Antwerp centre has been working on this project for several years. They used to publish three volumes of *Buffalo Notebooks* a year, but the output has been scaled back to one a year, partially due to lack of funding.

Currently there are two Dutch scholars working on the first Dutch translation of *Finnegans Wake*. It is believed that it will be the first truly comprehensive version of the text,

despite it being a translation, as they are working in conjunction with the Antwerp group and filling in inconsistencies and lost parts of the text which have since been discovered in the manuscripts by the Joyce Centre in Antwerp. Or Gnantwerp, if you prefer.

Online

www.antwerpjamesjoycecenter.com



In a Flemish wake: James Joyce followed Dutch lessons and took considerable notes in Flanders



welcome²

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Classical & new music**Brussels**

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

MAR 14 20.00 Belgian National Orchestra Ensemble and Brno Philharmonic Choir, conducted by Walter Weller: Dvorak's Requiem op 89
MAR 16 11.00 Queen Elisabeth College of Music prizewinners. 20.00 Scottish Chamber Orchestra, conducted by David Watkin: Mozart, Haydn, Bach
MAR 17 20.00 Ensemble Intercontemporain, conducted by Pierre Boulez: Mozart's Serenade KV 361, Berg's chamber concert for piano, violin and 13 wind instruments
MAR 18 20.00 Cecilia Bartoli, mezzo with the Kammerorchester Basel, conducted by Julia Schröder: Garcia, Persiani, Mendelssohn, Rossini, Balfé, Hummel, Bériot, Bellini

Espace Senghor
Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40,
www.senghor.be
MAR 19-20 Tribute to Karlheinz Stockhausen

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,
www.flagey.be
MAR 13 20.15 Ictus Ensemble with Natalia Pschenitschnikowa, soprano; Michael Schmid, flute and voice; François Deppe, cello: Helmut Lachenmann's temA, Kurt Schwitters' Ursonate
MAR 14 12.30 Saleem Aboud-Ashkar, piano: surprise programme

Kapel van de Miniemens
Miniemensstraat 62; 02.507.82.00,
www.minimes.net
MAR 13 20.00 Le Concert Brisé with William Dongois, conductor and cornet: Merula, Battista, Rognoni, Pandolfi Mealli, Gabrieli, Castello, Cazzati, Bassano, Storace
MAR 16 10.30 Kapel van de Miniemens Choir and Orchestra conducted by Julius Stenzel, with Reinhilde Bovend'aerde, soprano; Regula Boeninger, alto; Vincent Lesage, tenor: Bach's St Mark Passion BWV 247

Plaza Hotel
Adolphe Maxlaan 118; 02.268.13.01
MAR 18 20.00 Gala concert with Queen Elisabeth College of Music soloists

Royal Museum of Fine Arts
Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11,
www.fine-arts-museum.be
MAR 17 19.30 Alechinsky closing concert with Philippe Terseleer, piano: Beethoven
MAR 19 12.40 Spiegel Quartet: Van Hove, Ravel

Royal Music Conservatory
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.507.82.00
MAR 13 20.00 Brussels Choral Society with Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Eric Delson: Porgy and Bess, West Side Story Concert Suite,

Appalachian Spring, Fern Hill (tickets from 02.241.51.48)

MAR 16 11.45 Jeroen Van Lerberghe, piano: Hummel, Czerny, Mendelssohn
MAR 17 20.00 Charlemagne Chamber Orchestra conducted by Bartholomeus Henri Van de Velde with the Carlo Van Neste Trio: Mahler, Beethoven, Mendelssohn
MAR 18 20.00 Danel Quartet: Prokofiev's String Quartet No 2 op 92, Ledoux's Les Larmes d'un ange, Beethoven's String Quartet No 7, op 59/1
MAR 19 20.00 Alexei Volodin, piano: Schubert, Beethoven, Rachmaninov, Prokofiev.
MAR 20 20.00 Brussels Conservatory Historical Instruments Orchestra conducted by Peter Van Heyghen: Locke, Purcell, Handel

Sint-Marcuskerk
de Frélaan 72; 02.331.37.14 or
www.32sonates.be
MAR 14 20.00 Olivier De Spiegeleir, piano: Beethoven's sonatas No 4, 13, 26, 18

Wolubilis
Paul Hymanslaan 251; 02.761.60.30
MAR 18 20.00 Les XXI with Jean-Luc Votano, clarinet and Pierre Liemans, piano: Brahms, Saint-Saëns, Liemans, Debussy, Cahuzac, Chausson

Antwerp

Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28
MAR 14 21.00 Le Concert Brisé with William Dongois, conductor and cornet: Merula, Battista, Rognoni, Pandolfi Mealli, Gabrieli, Castello, Cazzati, Bassano, Storace
MAR 16 15.00 The Sound of Silence: HERMEnsemble conducted by Koen Kessels: Salvatore Sciarrino, Bram Van Camp, Morton Feldman

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
MAR 16 Sibelius happening: series of concerts devoted to the Finnish composer
MAR 19 20.00 Oxalys with Bojan Vodenitsjarov, piano: Victor Kissine, Steve Houben

Bruges

Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02,
www.concertgebouw.be

MAR 12 20.00 Le Carnaval Baroque with Le Poème Harmonique conducted by Vincent Dumestre, musical theatre
MAR 15 20.00 Orchestre des Champs-Elysées and Collégium Vocale Gent, conducted by Philippe Herreweghe, with Letizia Scherrer, soprano; Markus Werba, baritone: Brahms' A German Requiem, Mahler's Todfeier

Ghent

De Bijloke
Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, 09.269.92.92
MAR 13 20.00 Midori Seiler, violin; Christian Rieger, harpsichord: Bach

16 March, 12.30-21.00: FC Irlande football club hosts St Patrick's Day in Jubelpark, with Gaelic sports, Irish dancing, live music, a barbecue and other activities for the whole family.
www.paddysday.be

17 March: It's the big day! Head to your local pub where you will find some combination of live music, food and drink specials, Irish dancing and tombolas. Brussels is loaded with pubs, and you'll find a Celtic Ireland in Ostend, Antwerp and Bruges, plus Patrick Foley's in Ghent.

MAR 14 20.00 Le Poème Harmonique, conducted by Vincent Dumestre: Charles Tessier's Un voyage en Europe - chamber music from the court of Henri IV
MAR 15 20.00 Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen, conducted by Otto Tausk, with Quirine Viersen, cello: Van Parys, Saint-Saëns, Chausson, Ravel

Hoeilaart

Maison de la Musique
Edgar Sohiestraat 41; 02.657.96.52
MAR 17 20.00 Tomoko Taguchi and Madeleine Colaux, sopranos; Lisa Wastiau and Philippe Riga, piano with Quatuor Kirke quartet: Beethoven, Donizetti, Bellini, Strauss, Ravel, Rachmaninov, Piazzolla
MAR 19 20.00 Quatuor Tercea, Dorinne Mortelmans and Lies Vanderwege, sopranos; Philippe Riga, piano: Mendelssohn, Wolf, Delibes, Barber

Ostend

Ostend Kursaal (Casino)
Monacoplein; 070.22.56.00,
www.sherpa.be
MAR 14 19.15 Véronique Bogaerts, Tomoko Shida, Erica Baeten, Frédéric d'Ursel, violin; Diederik Suys, Thérèse-Marie Gilissen, viola; Marie Hallynck, Sébastien Walnier, cello: Strauss, Brahms, Mendelssohn

Opera

Brussels
De Munt
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39
Until MAR 12 De Munt Symphony Orchestra & Choirs present Wozzeck by Alban Berg, conducted by Mark Wigglesworth

Huis van der Culturen (Sint-Gillis)
Belgradostraat 120; 02.534.56.05
MAR 20 20.00 L'Opera, interactive student project by Nick Hayes and Veronika Mabardi, staged by Max Lebras

Antwerp

Vlaamse Opera
Frankrijklei 3; 070.22.02.02
Until MAR 22 Dialogues des Carmélites by Poulenc, conducted by Jean-Claude Casadesus, with Olga Pasichnyk and Hendrickje Van Kerckhove, sopranos; Christian Tréguier, baritone; Martial Defontaine, tenor

Jazz & blues

Brussels
Bursschouwburg
Auguste Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,
www.bursschouwburg.be
MAR 12 20.30 Ultra Eczema: Dennis Tyfus/Eric Thielemans
MAR 15 20.30 Peter Hertmans Quartet

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,
www.flagey.be
MAR 14 20.15 Brussels Jazz Orchestra with David Linx and Maria João
MAR 20 21.30 Jacques Schwartz-Bart

Jazz Station
Leuvensesteenweg 193-195; 02.733.13.78
Concert at 20.30
MAR 12 Laurent Melnyk Quartet
MAR 15 Yves Peeters Quartet
MAR 19 Michel Vrydag Quartet
MAR 20 Wonderland

Koninklijk Circus
Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15
MAR 20 20.00 Hugh Coltman, soul, folk, blues + Thomas Dutronc, manouche jazz

Le Grain d'Orge
Waverssesteenweg 142; 02.511.26.47
Concerts at 21.30:
MAR 14 The Southside Mojo

Schaerbeek Hotel Communal
Colignonplein; 02.240.34.99
MAR 16 16.00 Tribute to Jean-Louis Rassinfosse with L'Amé des Poètes and Duo Rassinfosse/Collard-Neven

Sounds Jazz Club
Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50,
www.soundsjazzclub.be
MAR 13 21.00 The Singers Night **MAR 14** Greg Lamy Quartet **MAR 15** Zoshia with Peter Van Huffel, saxophone **MAR 17** Master Session **MAR 18** Antonio Segura 'Flamenco Project' **MAR 19** Caribe Con K, Caribbean music

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
Concerts at 20.30:
Until MAR 15 Sinatra Week: **MAR 13** Blue Eyes meets Jobim... **MAR 14** Charles Loos & Julie Jaroszewski **MAR 15** The Swing Dealers **MAR 18** Marius Mihalache & friends (Romania) **MAR 19** Van Nistelrooy Quintet **MAR 20** Algo Asi, flamenco

Antwerp

Luchtbal Cultuurcentrum
Columbiestraat 8; 03.543.90.30
MAR 13 20.30 Wadada Leo Smith

Borgerhout

Rataplan
Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
MAR 20 20.30 Peter Hertmans Quartet

Bruges

De Werf
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29
MAR 15 20.30 Dré Pallemarts

Ghent

Vooruit
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 09.267.28.28
MAR 19 20.00 Peter Hertmans Quartet

Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul

Brussels
Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
MAR 12 20.00 Oddur + Lou Rhodes

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
MAR 15 23.00 Poker Flat Label Night: Steve Bug, Dan Berkson & James What, DJ Pierre. Electric Art presents Orlando Voorn, Sam Ostyn, Trish Van Eynde

Le Botanique

Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
MAR 13 The Moon Invaders + Doreen Shaffer
MAR 14 Menomena
MAR 17 1990s

Recyclart
Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
MAR 12 20.00 Black Dice

VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07
Doors open at 19.30:
MAR 12 20.00 Legoparty + The Hong Kong Dong + Operator Please
MAR 14 20.00 Zucchini Drive + Motek + Giardini di Mirò **MAR 15** 20.00 Beehoven + Dyse + End of a Level Boss + We Insist + Whisper in the Noise

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991
MAR 16 20.00 The Hoosiers + James Blunt

Antwerp

Luchtbal Cultuurcentrum
Columbiestraat 8; 03.543.90.30
MAR 13 20.30 Organic Resonance + Wadada Leo Smith

Sportpaleis

Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060
MAR 14 20.00 The Cure
MAR 19-21 20.30 Anouk

Ghent

Vooruit
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 09.267.28.28
MAR 13 21.30 The Germans with Eugene Chadbourne
MAR 18 22.00 A Whisper in the Noise
MAR 20 20.00 Triggerfinger

Kortrijk

De Kreun
Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44
MAR 13 20.00 On stage with... Isolde Lasoen

Leuven

Het Depot
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
MAR 13 20.00 Zita Swoon

Stuk

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
MAR 17 20.30 Bombee + A Whisper in the Noise

World, folk

Brussels
Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
MAR 20 12.30 Mike & Ivan Smeulders

Beursschouwburg

Auguste Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,
www.beursschouwburg.be
MAR 14 20.30 Diaspora Sounds, non-Western traditional music + Nana Concept: Amina Tcherkich and Lalabrouk Loujabe (Morocco) with Angelique Wilkie and Véronique Delmelle (Belgium)

Espace Senghor

Theatre

Brussels

De Kam Cultural Centre
Beekstraat 172; 0477.40.87.04,
ecickets@yahoo.com
Until MAR 15 20.00 English Comedy Club in Animal Farm by George Orwell (in English)

Kaaitheater
Sainctelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59
MAR 20 20.30 Toneelgroep Amsterdam in Angels in America, Part I by Tony Kushner (in Dutch with French surtitles)

Kaaitheterstudio's
Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat 81; 02.201.59.59
MAR 14-19 20.30 De Parade in Sarajevo, written and staged by Rudi Meulemans (in Dutch)

Antwerp
deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
MAR 15-16 16.00 Toneelgroep in Angels in America, parts 1 and 2 by Tony Kushner, staged by Ivo van Hove (in Dutch)

Zuiderpershuis
Waalse Kaaai 14; 03.248.01.00, www.zuiderpershuis.be
MAR 13 20.30 Is.Man, poetical theatre by Adelheid Roosen (in Dutch)

Bruges
De Werf
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29
MAR 13-14 20.30 De Koe in Burgerlijke Ongehoorzaamheid by and with Stefaan Degand and Nico Sturm (in Dutch)
MAR 20 20.30 Confidantes aan een ezelsoor, written and performed by Frank Adam with music by Johan De Smet & Johnny Smet String Quartet (in Dutch)

Leuven
Stuk
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
MAR 17-18 20.30 SKaGeN in Deurdeurdeur, adapted from the work of Michael Frayn (in Dutch)
MAR 19-20 20.30 't Barre Land in Anatol (in Dutch)

Visual arts

Brussels
Arts en Marge
Hoogstraat 312; 02.511.04.11
Until MAY 17 Allemaal Beestjes (All the Animals), outsider art group show on the theme of real and imaginary animals

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

Bibliotheca Wittockiana
Bemelstraat 23; 02.770.53.33
Until APR 19 Imprint: Russian artist-publishers

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.84.44
Until MAR 30 The Unreal Image: Emblems, Symbols and Metaphors, photographs by Charles Négre, Achille Quinet, Julia Margaret Cameron, Henry Peach Robinson and many others
Until MAR 31 Image/Construction, photographs of architecture by Filip Dujardin
Until APR 25 Dreams of the Sublime and Nowhere: multimedia installations and photographs inspired by Iceland's natural environment
Until APR 27 Magicians of Nature, paintings by three Icelandic artists
Until APR 27 Water Vocal – Endangered II, video and sound installation by Rúri

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 Belgique/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 APR 27 Rhizome oriental-Voyage en ex-URSS, photographs by Philippe Herbet

Fondation pour l'Architecture

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.80, www.fondationpourlarchitecture.be
Until APR 20 Architectuur-landschap, 150 years of Belgian architects' drawings

Goethe Institute

Belliardstraat 58; 02.230.39.70
Until APR 17 Fotoporträts, 50 photographs by winners of the Chamisso 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
Until APR 5 Serrer les dents, works by François Jacob

Jacques Franck Cultural Centre

Waterloosesteenweg 94; 02.538.90.20
Until MAR 23 Spirales, drawings by Aurélie Thiolat and Huis clos and photographs by Catherine Lambermont

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Minimstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
MAR 14-JUNE 22 A fleur de peau, paintings by Maurice Frydman

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

Koninkstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
MAR 14-MAY 4 L'Histoire au présent (History in the Present), over 300 photographs reporting on the world's conflicts and human suffering by Belgian photojournalist Bruno Stevens

Maison du Folklore et des Traditions

Eikstraat 19; 02.514.53.97
Until MAR 24 L'Art et l'Abeille (Art and the Bee Hive), painted bee hives in 18th- and 19th-century Slovenia

Museum van Elsene

Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.22
Until APR 27 Black-Paris, Black-Brussels, 100 years of African, West Indians and Afro-American culture in Paris and contemporary works by Brussels-based artists

Musical Instruments Museum

Hofberg 2; 0900.28.877
Until MAR 16 Ilsa, International Lutherie School Antwerp, exhibition of the 25th anniversary of Antwerp's school of stringed-instrument making

René Magritte Museum

Essegemstraat 135; 02.428.26.26
Until JUNE 30 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 Leopoldorde en Nationale Orden, exhibition on the oldest Belgian military order

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11
Until MAR 30 Alechinsky from A to Y, retrospective of work by the Belgian artist

Until MAR 30 Quadrum: International Magazine of Modern Art, tribute to Ernst Goldschmidt, curator and publisher

Royal Museums of Art and History

Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11, www.kmkg-mrash.be
Until APR 20 Onder dak in China, 2000 years of funerary architecture and furniture from China's Henan museum

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

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 cult science fiction films

Verhaeren Gallery

Gratèsstraat 7; 02.662.16.99
Until MAR 30 Corpus et Terra, photos by Daniel Bastin and Jean-Paul Antoine

Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum (MuHKA)
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60
Until MAY 4 Santhal Family: Positions around an Indian Sculpture, group show of contemporary art relating to a 1938 sculpture by Ramkinkar Baij

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
Until MAR 22 35m³ jonge architectuur, featuring NOA Architecten, Belgian architecture installation

MAR 13-MAY 25 Inside Outside, landscape architecture by Petra Blaisse

Extra City

Tulpstraat 79; 0484.42.10.70
Until MAR 30 Mimétisme, group show of contemporary art

Fifty-One Fine Art Photography

Zirkstraat 20; 03.289.84.58
MAR 13-MAY 3 USA, photographs by Peter Granser and Kate Schermerhorn

Fotomuseum

Waalse Kaa 47; 03.242.93.00, www.fotomuseum.be
Until JUNE 8 Patrick De Spiegelaere, retrospective of the late Flemish photographer (1961-2007)

Until JUNE 8 Provisoria, mixed-media collages by Flemish artist Ria Verhaeghe

Until JUNE 8 Face On, interactive portrait installation

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

Don't miss this week



Picture This!

Until 21 March, deBuren, 6 Leopoldstraat, Brussels, free admission

At what point does the depiction of suffering become exploitation? The question is explored in this exhibition that invites you to watch, or to dare to imagine, people suffering. A short film by Dutch artist Renzo Martens reveals the mechanism of exploitation and makes us question who benefits. We watch the artist set up a neon sign. The words "Please enjoy poverty" glare into the night. Underneath, men and boys from an African village are invited to party. They dance and drink the local brew. "Yes, we are poor," they say. "You can see it. All we want is help." Heather and Patrick Burnett-Rose, meanwhile, juxtapose footage of real brutality with Hollywood images. The up-tempo soundtrack repeats "It's not real, I don't care," as the images get more murderous. We can stop the violence anytime it gets too much by pushing on a big red button. If only real life was like that.

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

Maaltebruggekasteel

Kortrijksesteenweg 1023; 09.242.88.22

Until APR 27 Si le monde..., graphic works by Robert Groslot

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 from the collection of Quebec's National Fine Arts Museum

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)
Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03

Until MAR 16 The Hands of Art, George Wittenborn's collection of drawings, collages and photographs of artists' hands

Hasselt

Modemuseum

Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.23.96.21

Until OCT 31 Looks: Mode 1750-1958, Two-hundred years of the fashion history

Z33

MY FLANDERS

Patrick Foley

Patrick Foley owns several Irish pubs across Flanders. We ask him what prompted the move here and exactly what makes the Irish pub so enduring

What brought you to Flanders in the first place?

I'd been living in London for five or six years, and I'd had enough of it. My older brothers had come with a group of 40 Irish people to renovate the Irish college in Leuven a few years earlier, and they stayed there. So I used to come on weekends. We got an idea to start up an Irish bar, which we did in Leuven. And then we looked for more cities. The first was Ghent, and we were the first Irish pub here. I still live in Ghent and work in the pub, which is called Patrick Foley's. Now we have pubs called Celtic Ireland in Antwerp, Ostend, Bruges and Liège. We've since sold the Leuven pub.

Did you run pubs in Ireland?

No, but when I finished school, I soon went to London and started working in catering. So I've worked in catering all my life.

You opened your first pub 13 years ago and expanded quickly. Did you have any idea you would be so successful?

We didn't really set out to open all these pubs in Flanders, but my brother loves buildings. That's his thing. So he does all the designing and renovating, and I run them. It all gradually just happened. But it's not like in Brussels where there is a community there already. Most of our pubs cater to local Flemish people, and you have to make an effort. We're doing a lot of special things for St Patrick's Day, for instance, like free Irish stew and live music and Irish dancing. In

Brussels, they don't even have to do anything special; they just open the doors, and people come.

You've stayed in Ghent for more than 10 years now, so this seems permanent.

I wouldn't leave for anything. Whether it's the flower market on Sunday or walking around during the summer, it's such a nice place. Even though it has as many students as Leuven now, it has the space for them, and I find it a bit like a village. The buildings are wonderful. Even after 11 years in Ghent, I still look up and see something different on a facade, like a little statue. And I think, jeez, I've been walking past here for ages, and I've never seen that!

Do you speak Dutch?

A small bit. I took classes in Leuven, and I found it very difficult. I've never been good at languages. I've had three private teachers, who've all given up on me. I understand quite a lot, though, and the Flemish speak English, of course. And Dutch and German and French. And they think it's normal. In Ireland, if you spoke four languages, you'd be considered a professor.

Some Irish people criticise Irish pubs for being gimmicky and for not reflecting the real pubs of Ireland. They promote some ideal of "Irish" through green-coloured glasses for foreigners.

There are pubs where they've thrown up an Irish flag, put up a Guinness poster and call it an



Irish pub. But there's more to an Irish pub than that. For instance, my pubs all have at least 50% Irish staff, usually more. In Ghent at the moment, everyone is Irish apart from one person. That's a very important part of the concept. I've been in Irish pubs here with an all-Flemish or international staff, and it's just not the same. It's good to have local people, but it's important to have a balance. You can't possibly open up an Irish bar without an Irish staff. Of course, it's difficult to get them here. At first they're like "Belgium? I don't know..." But I'll pay for their ticket to come and spend a weekend. And then suddenly it's like "okay!" Flanders is a fantastic place for young Irish people because it's still easy to get back home.

In what other ways are you authentically an Irish pub?

We try to offer very good service all the time, and the staff is very friendly. We also invest heavily in our interiors. But a lot of our popularity is down to the food. We offer a huge amount and value for money.

So what's on the menu?

You can get a simple sandwich to something more sophisticated like an Irish rib eye steak, which is really good – top of the line, hormone free. It sells very well. And every Sunday, we have the traditional Irish breakfast: Sausages, tomato, bacon, fried egg, mushrooms, baked beans, white pudding, rusties, toast and butter. A lot of calories, obviously! And then you get really thirsty, and you start drinking Guinness. It's a very dangerous thing [laughs].

What's a rusty?

Fried potato.

You have four pubs in Flemish cities and one in Wallonia. Why not Brussels?

Brussels has never done it for me; I don't see myself there. I much prefer Flanders' smaller cities. I'm happy out here. Right now I'm changing direction, too, and looking into opening other restaurants and maybe small hotels. I don't need to open another Irish pub anywhere.

In fact, I hear you are opening a new restaurant in Zwijnaarde, just outside Ghent.

Yes, it's like a high-end Belgian brasserie and bar. I'm partners with two friends of mine who used to be chefs at the famous Patyntje in Ghent. Do you know Patyntje?

No, but I'm a vegetarian, so I mostly go to vegetarian restaurants.

Well, we'll do vegetarian at our place. Gorgeous things. The restaurant opens in a few weeks, and it's called Zwartefles, which was the name of a well-known bar in the town many years ago. So everyone is expecting a bar, maybe an Irish pub, and it's not going to be that at all. They're in for a shock.

Irish pubs are quite a phenomenon, aren't they? I mean, you find one in every big city the world over. Why is that?

They're like meeting points for the international community. Whether it's High Street or Cape Town, you want to meet other people, you go to the Irish pub. They're just friendly, and people talk to you, and most Irish bars are quite cosy. When people go to Ireland, they always talk about how friendly it is. People keep saying that about the Irish, so it must be true. And I think Irish pubs project that. They give you a good feeling straight away. Trendy bars come and go, but a good Irish pub will always be there.

Interview by Lisa Bradshaw

Online

www.celticireland.be

THE LAST WORD

what they're saying in Flanders

Children in need

"The children are malnourished and cold. Things are so bad I guarantee one of these days a child will die on the streets of Ghent."

Werner Van de Weghe
director of Ghent's Huize Triest centre for the homeless

Rock on

"There have been summers when I couldn't go on holiday because we had one festival gig after another."

Michel De Coster
new head of Belgacom's Enterprise Business Unit, who also happens to be bass player in rock group De Mens

Athletes protest

"We athletes can't do much, but someone like [IOC president] Jacques Rogge can. I would be delighted to see him take a stand."

Veerle Dejaeghere
Flemish athlete
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