



Anatomical Eve, p.2

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Atomium 1958, 2008 – S.A.D.O. – Roland

# When the world was in Brussels

Fifty years ago this week, the greatest exhibition the world had ever seen opened in Brussels

**Leo Cendrowicz**

**O**n April 17, 1958, Belgium's tall, shy King Baudouin, 27, formally opened Expo 58, or the Brussels World's Fair. Under grey skies and a flyover of 50 Belgian air force jets, the bespectacled King proclaimed in French and Dutch: "The aim of this World's Fair is to create an atmosphere of understanding and peace." And for six months, it showcased the brightest and best from around the globe in a spectacular tribute to the new Atomic Age.

Half a century on, it's hard to imagine the millions of visitors to Brussels and the vast park of pavilions, monuments, reflecting pools and splashing fountains spread over the Heysel plateau. Now, the only obvious remnant from that time is the Atomium, the giant steel balls in the sky that once represented gleaming modernity.

But this Thursday, a series of 50th anniversary celebrations will officially be launched. They hark to the moment when Brussels and Belgium shone for the rest of the world, heralding a post-war new era. "Belgium has a certain nostalgia about that period. This was known as the Golden Fifties. We all had a positive view of the world, an optimism about the future," says Henri Simons, director of Atomium Association. "In 1958, Belgium was the 10th most powerful nation on earth – it had colonies and huge mineral resources. So we wanted to show what we could do."

And it had a massive impact. "It kick-started a huge modernisation drive in Brussels," Simons says. "Work began on new buildings, roads, airports. New products arrived: Coca Cola had a big building at the Expo, and it was the first time many people tasted it.



Colour television was shown there, even though it only arrived in living rooms a full 10 years later. It was more than just a fair; it was a moment to place our faith in progress."

Simons, 53, says the event retains a mythical place in the Belgian imagination because it came at a crucial moment: as Europe was still

emerging from the Second World War, as youth culture became a trend and as the first steps were being taken towards European unity. Indeed, the Expo was held just one year after the signing of the Treaty of Rome, the EU's founding document, and Brussels had already been designated as the temporary home for some of the

new European institutions.

"It had a huge impact on people's image of Brussels," Simons says. "Brussels became a real capital city. Before, it was a provincial town, but this – and the arrival of the EU institutions – changed the city, and it became the capital of Europe."

*Continued on page 3*



## Business

Jump Forum helps women to achieve their full potential in the workplace. Saffina Rana profiles the organisation on the eve of its latest Brussels event.

## Arts

Pieter-Jan De Pue set off in 2007 to take photographs in Afghanistan. He finally made it into the country after a month in a Chinese jail. His captivating photographs are now on show in Brussels.

## Living

Everyone knows that Flanders is crazy about fashion, but does it really need two fashion museums? Steven Tate finds out what makes each one different.

## Commission to investigate failed fraud cases

Many trials collapse because they take too long

**Alan Hope**

The federal parliament is to establish a commission of inquiry to investigate why so many important fraud prosecutions in recent years have had to be abandoned. The decision, based on a proposal by minority parties Groen! and Ecolo, was carried unanimously in the Chamber, having been passed by the finance committee earlier.

The problem arises because of the time limits set on prosecutions. Under Belgian law, a prosecution must be brought to court within a certain time limit in all but

the most serious, crimes such as murder. For crimes carrying a sentence of more than five years, the case must be brought within 20 years. For less serious offences, the time limit is reduced to five or 10 years – in other words, the deadline comes sooner.

Several notable cases have hit the headlines recently in which the time limit has expired. One case involved banks helping business clients to set up fake operations in Uruguay, South Korea and Italy so that they could fraudulently escape paying

*Continued on page 5*

## EDITOR'S CHOICE

**The Anatomical Eve**

It's exactly 75 years since the Erasmus House in Brussels was rescued from ruin and turned into a museum devoted to the renaissance scholar Desiderius Erasmus. Even though the scholar stayed here for just a few months, the modest Flemish brick house in Anderlecht's Kapittelstraat has become a pilgrimage destination for his many admirers.

The Erasmus Museum doesn't have a lot of original material – the paintings of Erasmus are all reproductions – but it succeeds in immersing the visitor in the intellectual thought of 16th-century Europe.

The municipality of Anderlecht has marked the 75th anniversary by inviting several contemporary Flemish artists – Jan Fabre among them – to display works of art in the museum. If it seems a bit familiar, that's because Fabre has just done something very similar in the Louvre.

The Erasmus House show is deliciously macabre and dripping with melancholy. The focus of attention is a strange, haunting statue of Eve created in the 17th century as an anatomy model. The top of her skull could be removed to reveal the brain, while the chest was easily detached to reveal stomach, intestines and – turn away now if you

are squeamish – a tiny baby *in utero*.

This disturbing work sets the tone for a captivating exhibition in which Belgian artists let their most melancholy ideas run rampant. Fabre has offered his 2001 sculpture "Umbraculum", a mysterious monkish figure in a cape fleeing the sunlight. It stands in the room known as Erasmus' Study, which is furnished with an antique desk and old paintings.

The death theme is reinforced by a number of items borrowed from the Museum of Natural History in Tournai. The aim is to recreate the mood of the Cabinets of Curiosity – those gloomy collections of skulls, ostrich eggs and other oddities lovingly displayed by Renaissance scholars. The Erasmus House oddities include some 2m-long Narwhal tusks, a deer embryo and a whale's penis.

The exhibition is a further step in the evolution of this extraordinary museum, which has become a place of philosophical reflection as much as a storehouse of old objects. Go while it lasts.

**Derek Blyth**

**online**

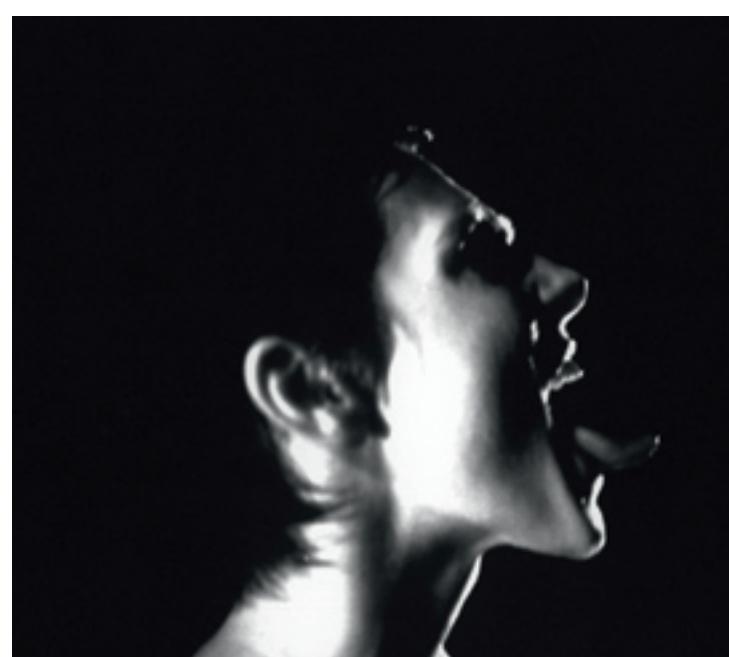
<http://erasmushouse.museum>

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**FACE OF FLANDERS****Angel of Death**

Just when you think you've been there and done that, something can come back and strike you as unique all over again. If you're lucky enough to witness Flemish artist Jan Fabre's current exhibition at the Louvre, you are immediately witness to his ability to rearrange your thinking of old religious masterpieces, for instance. By placing his own work next to them, something in their own context changes.

Closer to home, another Fabre juxtaposition is taking place. Bozar is hosting *Borrowed Time*, an exhibition celebrating a handful of photographers who have immortalised Fabre's theatre productions on film. Fabre paired the photos with his own drawings and sketches to again reassess the visual qualities and impact of both works.

Among the 12 world-famous photographers in *Jan Fabre: Borrowed Time* are Robert Mapplethorpe, Carl De Keyzer, Helmut Newton and Jorge Molder, who photographed Fabre's *Angel of Death*, pictured above. Molder normally creates very specific photographic series that almost tell a story, so single photos by the Portuguese photographer are already a rarity.

Molder's choice of shot in the multi-media *Angel of Death* reflects his own view of the performance as an exploration of the erotic body through metaphors of language. (Fabre pairs the image with a sketch he drew of a naked woman riding a giant snail entitled "As Long as the World Needs a Warrior Soul". The body of the snail corresponds to the face's tongue, and its shell to her head.)

The photos were taken over the last 25 years and in a variety of cities. Mapplethorpe's striking shot of two naked men back-to-back was part of Fabre's *The Power of Theatrical Madness*, which the American artist photographed in 1984. That piece and the collaborative Mapplethorpe/Fabre book of the same name that followed were what launched Fabre into international art celebrity. You can feel Fabre's self-reflection certainly, in this exhibition, but also his gratitude to these other artists who redefined and supported his work through their own imaginations.

You really get three exhibitions in *Borrowed Time*: Fabre's official drawings and sketchbook doodles (in his trademark blue ballpoint pen), photographers' views of Fabre performances and Fabre's interpretation of their interpretations. It's like one of those double mirror effects, where the images keep reflecting back on each other, smaller and smaller, on into infinity.

**Lisa Bradshaw**

Until 18 May, Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23, Brussels

**Online**

[www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)

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**TALKING DUTCH****notes on language****krantenkoppen**

Early in the day, it's not a good idea to tax the brain too much, so before I get on the metro, I often pick up the free newspaper from the stand. I have more than enough time to skim the headlines and read any articles that catch my eye.

I try to disprove the truism that native speakers read the headlines – *krantenkoppen* ("newspaper heads") – to know what's in the article, whereas learners must read the article to understand the headline.

The easiest one today was *Heidi Klum is meest sexy model*, and for those a bit slow on the uptake there was a very illustrative photo. This one I also got straight away: *Debat over toplonen weer in de schijnwerpers* – Debate on top salaries again in the spotlight. Who would be a fat cat these days, eh? So far, so good. Another easy one: *Bush geeft groen licht voor Navo-lidmaatschap Oekraïne* – Bush gives Ukraine green light to join NATO. But then I started to feel stretched when I read: *EADS in nauwe schoentjes*. I can imagine that if the French company is "in tight shoes", it can't be comfortable. I've just checked, and, yes, it is in dire straits.

So, knowing the words doesn't always guarantee that you get the message. What's this one all about? *Europese uitnodiging voor Dalai Lama jaagt China op de kast* – European invitation for Dalai Lama chases China on the cupboard! I imagine that such an invitation would indeed needle China.

Now the tricky ones started coming thick and fast. What's going on here – *Horecazaken massaal op de fles*. Horeca I know: hotels, restaurants, cafés. So hotel and catering businesses massively on the bottle? The photo of a seasoned drinker downing a pint suggests so. Is business flourishing or in the doldrums? I needed to read the article to understand that *op de fles gaan* means to go bust. Of course I now see the link with hitting the bottle, but it was early in the morning.

I was also flummoxed by an article about poor countries at a climate conference headed: *Arme landen eisen boter bij de vis op klimaatconferentie*. Again the words alone don't help: Poor countries demand butter on fish. At first I thought they wanted to have their cake and eat it, too, but no, they want money up front.

The headline that took the biscuit was *Tony Blair knaagt niet meer* – Tony Blair gnaws no more. The article begins with *Tony Blair is dood*: surely the great smiler's demise merits more than 100 words! But no, this TB was a tame artistic rat whose works fetched remarkable amounts.

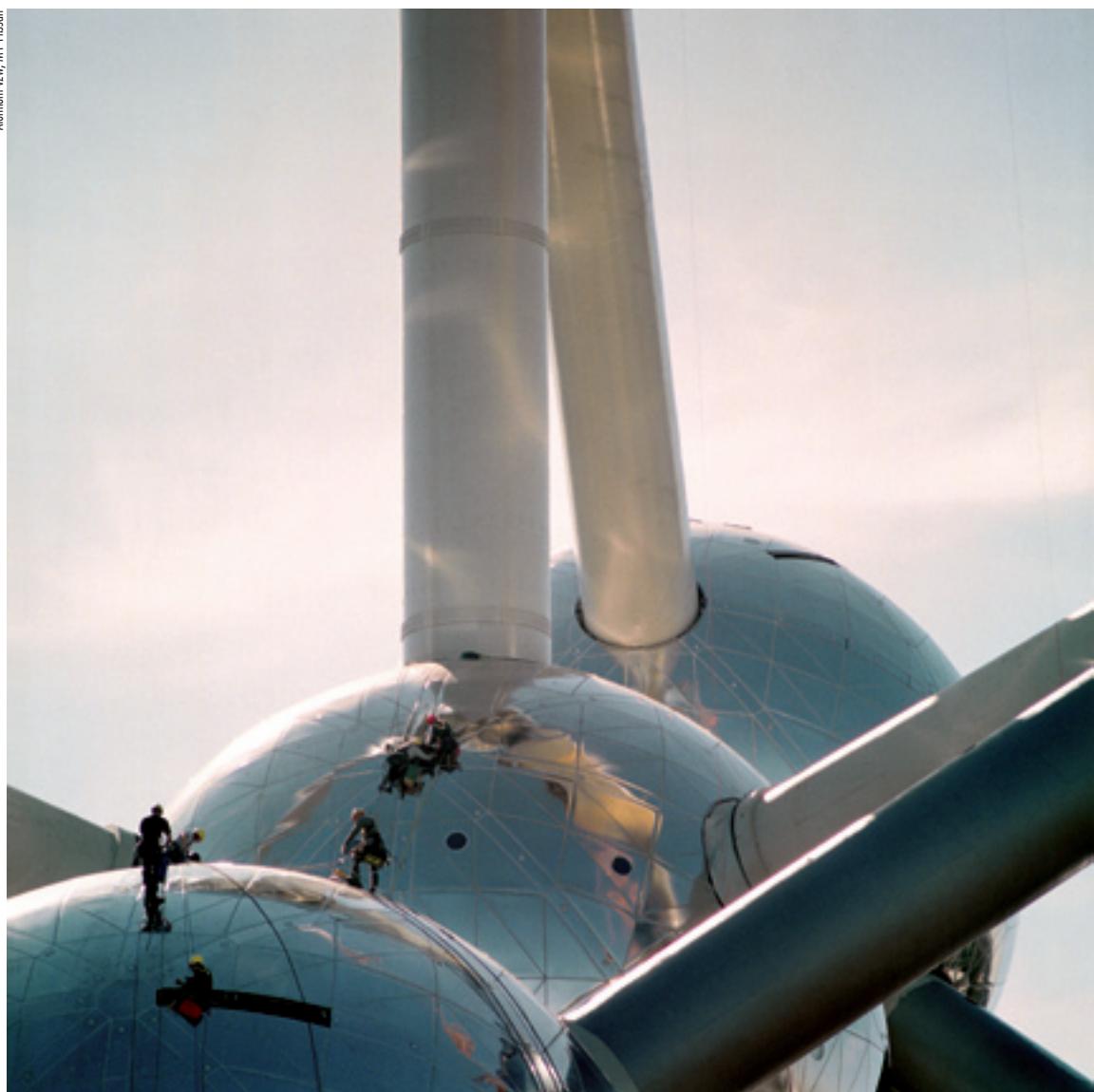
By the time I was crossing the park on my way to the office, I'd come to the conclusion that Dutch speakers like such sayings more than English speakers do. I can just hear my Flemish readers' reaction: *je moet niet alles over één kam scheren* – you mustn't cut everything over one comb. Quite right, too; I shouldn't generalise.

**Alistair MacLean**

**Online**  
[www.metroline.be](http://www.metroline.be)

## FEATURE

Atomium view, M.F. Plissart



Specialised workers with a head for heights renovate the Atomium in this photograph by Marie-François Plissart

# The world in Brussels

Continued from page 1

But why Brussels? Even since the "Great Exhibition" of 1851 in London's Hyde Park, which showcased scientific ingenuity and artistic prowess, international fairs were held irregularly at intervals of between one and 14 years, until the 1939 World's Fair in New York.

The Second World War interrupted the process, but a major revival was considered just the tonic in the post-war reconstruction mood. Brussels was deemed especially proficient in the organisational challenge, having hosted Expos in 1897, 1910 and 1935 (Liège had done so in 1905, and Ghent in 1913). But critically, it wanted the show.

"Nowadays, perhaps these fairs are less important, as we can see other countries and other innovations on television and on the internet," Simons says. "But big projects, like the Expo or the Olympics, provide the dynamic to change. They serve as a target to motivate the troops."

Indeed, the Expo provided the excuse for a radical overhaul of the city. Some 45km of new road surfaces were laid, 7.5km of tunnels dug, construction of the metro began, and Zaventem airport was built. "It was a huge building project. After Brussels, Expos were organised more in the framework of urban renewal," says Simons.

It was a brutal reconstruction, and Simons admits it was only

accepted because of the imperative of the Expo and the mores of the time. "There was a different logic in 1958," he says. "It was a time when the car was king, when progress and happiness were inexorably linked. Now, of course, progress has a different meaning: we think, for example, of sustainable development and global warming. Now, we probably wouldn't build all those tunnels, and we would think about the environmental impact of the works."

**B**ut what of the fair itself? Nearly 15,000 workers spent three years building the two square kilometre site. Some 52 countries took part in the show, spread out over more than 150 pavilions. Most of the Expo 58 constructions were characterised by never-before-seen architecture using modernist boomerang curves and making ingenious use of steel, glass and concrete.

Visitors included Sophia Loren, Audrey Hepburn, Walt Disney and US President Dwight D Eisenhower. On the first day, Expo 58 took in more than 150,000, although the biggest one-day crowd was a massive 713,664. Long before low-cost airlines, Belgium welcomed 41.5 million visitors during the six months of the Expo – five times the country's 1958 population.

The Expo was also a propaganda and prestige battleground



## Best in show

■ The official 50th anniversary celebrations kick off on Thursday, 17 April, with a series of events linked to the theme of "Brussels Happiness". Next to the Atomium, the "Pavilion of Temporary Happiness" has been built with nearly 33,000 yellow Jupiler beer crates. It will house exhibitions examining concepts of progress, universalism and happiness that were the flagship themes of World Fairs.

[www.brussels-expo58.be](http://www.brussels-expo58.be)

■ The Atomium itself will host the exhibition *Between Utopia and Reality*, with material from the General State Archives and the Archives of the City of Brussels, including plans, films, models and other artifacts to take the visitor back to the world of 1958.

[www.atomium.be](http://www.atomium.be)

■ An exhibition at the Royal Museum for Central Africa recalls Belgium's seven pavilions devoted to its former colonies.

[www.africamuseum.be](http://www.africamuseum.be)

■ The Costume and Lace Museum will host *From New Look to Expo 58*, with fashions from an era when fabrics, models and colours became more diversified and luxurious.

[www.brucity.be](http://www.brucity.be)

■ The Museum of Architecture is hosting an exhibition on the architectural and decorative forms of the "58 style", which was characterised by oblique lines and curves.

[www.aam.be](http://www.aam.be)

■ For antique fans, two large 1950s second-hand street markets will be organised close to the Atomium over the weekends of 26-27 April and 23-24 August.

[www.brocante58.be](http://www.brocante58.be)

■ Among the books celebrating the Expo, the most lavish is a 350-page study of the architecture from the Expo that details – with astonishing illustrations – the trailblazing designs of the event. *Moderne architectuur op Expo 58: Voor een humaaner wereld*, by Rika Devos and Mil De Kooning is available in Dutch and French, price €49, from Mercatorfonds.

[www.mercatorfonds.be](http://www.mercatorfonds.be)

■ And finally, as well as the official Expo 58 celebration website ([www.brussels-expo58.be](http://www.brussels-expo58.be)) and the official Atomium website ([www.atomium.be](http://www.atomium.be)), a lovingly-compiled and exhaustive site set up by enthusiast Rudolph Nevi covers nearly every aspect of the event.

[www.users.skynet.be/rentfarm/expo58](http://www.users.skynet.be/rentfarm/expo58)



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## The fraud cases that never go to trial

Continued from page 1

taxes on overseas earnings. That case, worth at least €390 million in lost revenue, lapsed after the time limit expired. A later case involving the Luxembourg subsidiary of the Leuven-based KBC bank saw the bank's chairman unceremoniously arrested and handcuffed. Yet 10 years later the case is still not ready to come to trial, and it could be abandoned if the time deadline is reached. In that case, the guilty parties would walk away from a tax bill amounting to €400 million. In another case, started in 1990, the Belgian state has already been fined €30,000 for failing to bring the accused to trial within a "reasonable" time.

Meanwhile, it was revealed that the Brussels prosecutor's office has a backlog of 296 case files concerning fiscal fraud and related financial crimes. According to the prosecutor's spokesman, this represents more than 1,400 boxes of legal documents. In all, estimates suggest that the loss to the public purse from tax fraud could be as high as €130 billion.

The commission's job will be to determine why this happens so frequently in major fraud cases and what role is played by factors such as lack of

manpower, lack of expertise, competition for other resources or even sabotage from within the administration.

The main problem is that the commission of inquiry will have to work with concrete cases, which will bring them into conflict with the confidentiality rule that protects ongoing investigations. However, parliamentary commissions have had to face that problem in the past – the two commissions on the Brabant Killers were dealing with an investigation under way and, indeed, one that still has not been resolved. And the commission investigating police behaviour in the case of Marc Dutroux and Michel Nihoul concluded its work several years before Dutroux was brought to trial, and Nihoul was acquitted on most of the main charges against him.

The fraud commission will produce a "serious report" within a year, including recommendations for new legislation if this is required. "Improved measures to combat fraud are important for people's sense of justice," argued Groen deputy Stefaan Van Hecke, who proposed the commission of inquiry, along with Ecolo member Jean-Marc Nollet. "It is intolerable that major fraudsters go free simply because of timing."

## Flemish students can grade teachers online

Students in Flemish higher education will later this year get the chance to grade their teachers when a new website comes online. The site is based on a Dutch original which has already issued reports on some 6,500 teachers. Teacher representatives meanwhile said the planned site was a breach of the privacy of staff. "Pupils with problems would do better to talk about it. You cannot reply to anonymous criticism, and you have no way of knowing if it has a basis," said a representative. Another criticised the Dutch system, which encourages students to be outspoken. "Students set themselves up as clients of the school, on an equal footing with teachers. We're not in favour of that." But celebrity professor Rik Torfs, who teaches canon law at Leuven University, said he was happy with the move. "A sandwich bar or a luxury bordello can be reviewed on the Internet, so why not a professor?"

## Some 6,000 schoolchildren are "missing"

Brussels education authorities from both sides of the language divide are looking for 6,000 children between the ages of six and 18 who appear to have vanished from the school rolls. According to the population register, there are 140,000 children of that age living in the region, all of them obliged to attend school or otherwise pursue an education – for example through home-schooling. A total of 126,000 children are registered as attending Dutch- and French-speaking schools, with 8,000 in some other form of education. That leaves a shortfall of 6,000 students. Flemish education minister Frank Vandebruck and his French-speaking counterpart Christian Dupont are to investigate the problem, in the first instance by finding out if the unusually high figure is due to a mistake in the data.

The Flemish government this week launched a campaign to attract young families to live in the region's cities. The campaign mascot, Gusje de Stadsmus (city sparrow) aims to encourage young couples to build an urban nest. In fact, all of Flanders' main cities have seen a recent growth in population, but that is largely due to an influx of Dutch, Moroccan, Turkish and other immigrants. However, among families aged 30-39, the trend is the opposite: they are leaving the cities in worrying numbers. And student towns like Hasselt and Leuven are finding it difficult to hang onto young residents when their studies are over. "A city that stays young is financially healthy," said urban policy minister Marino Keulen. "Because all of those mothers and fathers pay their taxes."

## Lommel company claims breakthrough in tackling hospital virus

Lommel-based cleaning company Chrisal claims that several of its probiotic cleaning products (which use live organisms to compete with disease-carrying organisms) have shown significant success in tackling the hospital bacterium MRSA, methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aurea*. The results come from a study carried out jointly by the University of Ghent, the academic hospital at Lokeren and Ghent University spin-off Avecom. The study claims an 80% reduction in MRSA bacteria present when the so-

called Probiotica in Progress products are used. Coliform bacteria (another cause of hospital infection arising from human faeces) were cut by 50%, while other less common bacteria were reduced by as much as 90%. One-third fewer patients became infected in general, with the figure in danger zones such as geriatric wings and intensive care units falling by up to 60%. The company estimates that the use of probiotic products could save thousands of lives and cut the health-care bill by €50 million.



## McCanns to plead for missing children alarm system

Gerry and Kate McCann, the parents of missing child Maddie, were in Brussels last week to address the European Parliament and call for Europe to set up a continent-wide alarm system for missing children, based on the US Amber Alert. Maddie, then aged almost four, disappeared in May last year in the Portuguese resort of Praia da Luz while her parents were dining with friends. Since then the parents themselves have been designated suspects by the Portuguese authorities. The proposed system would take a missing person's report and immediately notify border police, customs, national police and the media. An alert would then be broadcast to digital notice boards in prominent places. "Time is the greatest enemy in the case of a disappearance," Kate McCann said. "An efficient international alarm system might have been able to help solve Maddie's case."

## Brussels goes for gastronomy

Brussels will organise a Year of Gastronomy in 2012, tourism minister Evelyne Huytebroeck announced last week. The decision follows a poll of 800 Brussels residents, in which a majority named gastronomy as one of the city's major attractions. Previous tourist years have focused on Art Nouveau, fashion and design, and the comic-strip. The tourism sector was expecting 2007 figures for the number of overnight stays in the capital to pass the five-million mark, having reached 4.8 million in 2006.

## Tom Boonen triumphs



Boonen holds aloft the trophy after winning the ride from hell

Flemish former world road race champion Tom Boonen won his second Paris-Roubaix victory last weekend with a breathtaking 200m final sprint in Roubaix's outdoor velodrome that put him ahead of Switzerland's 2006 champion Fabian Cancellara and Italy's Alessandro Ballan. The trio entered the packed cycling arena following a 259km race that includes some of the most gruelling cobbled roads in northern Europe. Ballan led the field on the first lap of the packed velodrome, but Boonen put on a final sprint to cross the finishing line in lead position, crushing rumours that he was losing his form.

## Flemish biologist wins Goldman prize



### Dutch open coffee shop at border despite protests



The burgomaster of Maastricht, Gerd Leers, is to go ahead with a pilot project which would install a Dutch-style "coffee shop" selling marijuana on the Belgian border, despite long-standing objections from neighbouring municipalities and the Belgian government. Leers plans to move the coffee shops out of central Maastricht to tackle related crime (including violence) and relocate them closer to the Belgian border. The new shop at Eijsden – only 10 kilometres from the Belgian border – will be evaluated after three years (and abandoned if there has been no effect on crime in the city).

Hub Broers, burgomaster of the nearby municipality of Voeren, pointed out that criminality would move closer to Belgium with the opening of the coffee shop. Guido Willen of Lanaken, meanwhile, said he was satisfied with the pilot project, since it means no coffee-shops bordering on his own municipality.



Ignace Schops, director of Natuurpunt Vlaanderen and one of the prime movers behind the creation of Belgium's first national park, has been awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize by the San Francisco-based Goldman Fund. The prize – worth \$150,000 (€95,000) – is earmarked for furthering the winner's work in environmental protection.

Schops, a biologist who studies amphibians and reptiles, first began campaigning for a natural reserve in the former coal-mining province of Limburg in 1990, when he brought Natuurpunt Vlaanderen together with the largest coal company in the region to set up the organisation RLKM. He used this as a vehicle to campaign for the creation of a national park that would not only protect the unspoiled Hoge Kempen but also provide jobs and tourist income for the former industrial region.

The campaign raised over €50 million from local, regional, federal and EU funds. Schops took over as head of RLKM in 2004 and steered the proposal through its final stages. Finally, in 2006, the dream became a reality with the official opening of the Hoge Kempen National Park.

The park is credited with the creation of around 400 jobs. Visitor numbers last year at 400,000 were well above initial expectations, as was income. Schops' initial estimate had tourism-related income for local businesses reaching about €24.5 million a year, but that, too, looks to have been too conservative. Last year, delighted at the economic boost the park had brought to the area, a local baker awarded Schops and his team a month's supply of free *Limburgse vlaai* – the renowned local fruit tarts.

### Growing threat of disease after warm winter



The run of mild winters, together with climate change in general, threatens to bring foreign parasites to Belgium, like the Chinese mosquito *Aedes albopictus* and a southern European sand-fly, the *Phlebotomus*, both of which can carry dengue fever, leishmaniasis (a disfiguring skin disease) and the West Nile virus. In addition, the common tick, responsible for spreading Lyme disease, is becoming more plentiful and moving from woodland areas into people's back gardens.

Meanwhile in Limburg, fire brigades have already issued warnings in preparation for a repeat of last year's plague of procession caterpillars, which can trigger an allergic reaction when touched. The province was last year forced to send firemen out with burners to destroy nests. The first of the creatures, so-called because they can be seen at dusk moving in procession to feeding-places, is expected to emerge at the beginning of May.

### Sand festival returns

The popular sand sculpture festival will return to Blankenberge this year after an absence of two years. Some 60 sand artists will begin working with 20,000 tonnes of sand dredged from the River Maas on 15 May to create the palace of Sleeping Beauty and other fairy-tale buildings. The site along the Albert I laan will be open to the public from 1 July to 31 August.

### Brussels Region to open new info centre

Brussels will have its own information centre on the Koningsplein in the elegant Kunstberg quarter. Until now, there was no single place where people could go for information on the various aspects of the region's activities. The former aristocratic residence, once planned to house ministerial offices, will now contain an information office, children's play area, bookshop with books about Brussels and a 30-room hotel for guests of the region as well as performers at the nearby Bozar. The complex will also contain the offices of a number of non-profit organisations concerned with tourism and heritage matters.

## NEWS FLASH

**Belgians paid fines totalling €311 million last year, according to finance minister Didier Reynders, with two-thirds of the total coming from traffic tickets. The figure brings to an end a year-on-year increase in fine income, which topped out at €312 million in 2006. The fall in traffic fines also means a cut in funding for the Road Safety Fund set up to reduce traffic casualties.**

**The prettiest town in Flanders** will be chosen by members of the public in a competition organised by Flanders Tourism. You can participate by sending an SMS to 3238 with the village of your choice from the shortlist (from 19 April) or vote online at [www.vlaanderen-vakantieland.be/hetmooistedorp](http://www.vlaanderen-vakantieland.be/hetmooistedorp). The election coincides with a media campaign featuring TV and magazine reports.

**A new VRT TV series** has aroused the indignation of a number of local celebrities. In the show, *Tomtesteroom*, Tom Waes has to learn a variety of skills in a short period, and last week he was training to be a paparazzi, which involved taking candid shots of politicians and other celebrities. Following complaints, the VRT has now scrapped a website containing photos of well-known Flemish celebrities sent in by viewers to the show.

**Good Morning Week** takes place next month, from 5 to 10 May. The aim is to encourage everyone in Flanders to say good morning to neighbours and total strangers. The initiative is the latest in a line of events organised by the consortium Boodschap Zonder Naam. Launched two years ago, the initiative has so far involved giving unexpected compliments and listening to those around you.

**Intruders** entered the home of deputy prime minister Laurette Onkelinx in Schaerbeek last week and took a mobile phone and the keys to a BMW Cabrio belonging to the law office of her husband, Marc Uyttendaele. The couple were asleep when the homejacking took place and only discovered the break-in when they got up.

**Only about 10 of the prisoners** eligible to serve their sentences in their homelands have elected to do so, justice minister Jo Vandeurzen said. The plan to allow prisoners to be repatriated was once seen as the answer to prison overcrowding.

### Breaking news

Want to know what the Flemish government is doing to get more women into the boardrooms of big companies? Curious to find out why CEOs are earning more in spite of falling share prices? These are just two of the topics covered earlier this week in the daily news section on [www.flanderstoday.eu](http://www.flanderstoday.eu). Subscribe to the Press Room to receive daily breaking news stories in English based on a selection taken from the Flemish press.

# Women who mean business

## A Brussels' forum hosts some of Belgium's most influential professionals

**Saffina Rana**

Some of Belgium and Europe's most powerful women will be gathering in Brussels on 25 and 26 April to share their experiences on how they got to the top of their professions and overcame the career obstacles that their male colleagues just didn't face.

The Jump Forum for Active Women offers two full days of talks, seminars, coaching sessions and networking for working women and those thinking of restarting a career, on subjects such as negotiating salaries, breaking through the glass ceiling, returning to work after a career break, becoming self-employed and achieving a life-work balance.

The impressive line-up of speakers includes Patricia Ceysens, the Flemish minister whose portfolio includes economy, enterprise, science and innovation; Sabine Laruelle, Belgium's federal minister for the Economy and Agriculture; and Belinda Pyke, director of equality and action against discrimination at the European Commission's Department of Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

Also speaking are Avivah Wittenberg-Cox, author of *Why Women Mean Business*, Lulu Wang, author of *Heldere Maan* and Dr Lois Frankel, author of *Nice Girls Don't Get The Corner Office*. But the high-profile speakers are not only women. Steven Vanackere, Flemish Minister for Welfare, Public Health and Family is just one of the men participating.

The pitfalls facing working

women have become more evident in the last five years. A European Commission report published last year found that women in 30 European countries are paid on average 15% less than their male counterparts doing the same job in public sector employment and 25% less in the private sector.

"We have a long way to go in Belgium," explains Christine Van Nuffel, Jump's project director and an expert on female entrepreneurship. "When I ask women if they negotiate their salaries, nine out of 10 reply that they don't. They just accept what they are given."

Being able to talk yourself into a better pay packet doesn't shift the responsibility of employers to offer equal wages, but it is one of the skills women need to cope with today's work culture, says Belgian entrepreneur Isabella Lenarduzzi, the forum's creator. "We need the tools to empower ourselves and exploit our own talents," she says. "Often we have better professional qualifications than men, yet the number of women in high management positions is very, very low."

There are distinct reasons for the under representation of women in management, according to Anne Van Lancker, a Belgian member of the Socialist Group at the European Parliament. Involved in analysing equality issues since 1994, she is one of the 50-strong advisory committee of "wise women" in the forum. "Women work fewer hours when they have children, while men work more. Part-time work also counts against them, so when

it comes to promotion, they hit a glass ceiling," she says. "We really have to encourage men to care more for their children, and take paternity leave."

But that's not the only reason. "Women also tend to network less than men," says Anne. Whereas men will be encouraged to go and socialise after work, women think of others and tend to go home and take care of their families. When it comes to promotion and the glass ceiling, men get through it because of their networks."

That is why networking for women and forums such as Jump have to be encouraged, says Anne. "If women invest less in networks than men, they will never get promoted."

Having women in management positions is better for business, explains entrepreneur Ine Mariën, who is on the board and executive committee of BECI, Brussels Enterprises Commerce and Industry, and chairs the forum's "wise women" advisory committee.

"Surveys carried out by Credit Suisse, Cranfield and Catalyst show that companies with more women in senior management positions perform around 35% better. The total return for shareholders also goes up by roughly the same amount," says Mariën. "Not only that, we have a shortage of labour. Women could make up 50% of the population's workforce. They are already 80% of the consumers, so it makes good business sense for companies to encourage them."

To this end, the forum will be



Women in management is better for business, says Ine Mariën, right. Isabella Lenarduzzi, above left, founded the Jump Forum



running sessions on recruitment and best practices for head-hunters and human resource professionals interested in developing their workforce.

Judging by the success of the first forum held last year, women are already realising that they need to be more proactive. Opened by Princess Mathilde, the forum attracted 1,400 participants. "This year we are expecting anywhere between that and 2,000 participants," says Lenarduzzi.

**Online**  
[www.forumjump.be](http://www.forumjump.be)

Flanders Today readers can take advantage of a €25 reduction of the fee for the Jump Forum. Just insert the code "Flanders Today" when filling out the online registration form.



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## Belgian concerns invest in container terminal at Vlissingen

Ghent-based port services company Sea-Invest and Antwerp freight handler Zuidnatie are to begin a 70/30 joint venture to open a new container port at Vlissingen. The new Scaldia terminal will have a 900-metre-long quay, receiving ships with a draught of up to 14 metres, and the first traffic is expected in 2010. The port, located close to the mouth of the Scheldt, will offer ships a faster turnaround time and avoid the need to sail upriver to Antwerp port. Zeebrugge is also likely to suffer from the competition.

As well as the Scaldia project, Vlissingen has concrete plans for two further terminals – operated by PSA HNN, formerly Hessenatie (another Belgian company now owned by a Singapore company) and Verbrugge. A tender for the last available lot of 48 hectares will be adjudicated early next year.

The total cost of the Scaldia project is estimated at between €95 and €125 million. Traffic is expected to build up over the first two years to one million TEU, or about 500,000 standard containers. In about 2014, according to current estimates, the massive 2km-long Westerschelde Container Terminal (WCT) will come into operation, handling two million TEU a year.

## BUSINESS FLASH

### Colruyt

Colruyt, the Halle-based discount retailing group, is thinking about investing a further €20 million in its Gellingen distribution centre to increase capacity. The company has already decided to expand its Halle facilities to cope with its distribution requirements.

### KBC

KBC Bank, Flanders' largest financial institution, is investing an additional €264 million in its Russian Absolut Bank affiliate to finance its development plans.

### Deme

Deme, the Zwijndrecht-based dredging company, has won a four-year €113 million contract with the Panama Canal authority to broaden and deepen the Pacific side of the canal.

### Paul Smith

Paul Smith, the US "classic with a twist" clothing brand, is to open a store in Antwerp in September this year.

### Delhaize

Delhaize, the country's second largest supermarket group, has acquired 14 supermarkets in Romania to develop its local Mega Image brand. The move will push Delhaize's Romanian network to 36 stores. The company has also finalised the acquisition of 34 Plus Hellas outlets in Greece.

### Shanks

Shanks, the British waste management group, has acquired the Wielsbeke-based Foronex company specialised in wood recycling, for some €13 million. The move will give Shanks a dominant position on the Benelux market where it expects to invest an additional €50 million over the next five years.

### Henco

Henco, the Herentals-based producer of plastic pipes and plumbing accessories, has been acquired by the Dutch Aalberts Industries company.

### Wienerberger

Wienerberger, the leading German brick-making group, is expanding its production facility at Rumst with a €40 million investment programme. The company employs 1,500 people spread over 18 production sites in Belgium and generated 12% of its global turnover, or €300 million, in this country.

### Honda

Japanese carmaker Honda is to open a new €15 million distribution centre for car body parts in Aalst, East Flanders. Honda has earmarked some €4 million to equip the centre with 13,000 square metres of solar energy panels, the largest project of its kind in Belgium.

### Global hotspot

Belgium is 9th in the world in hotspot use by businesses, according to a recent survey by US company iPass. Belgian business users made a total of 22,764 hotspot connections (using wireless internet), or 1% of the world total. The top three countries were the US, Britain and Germany, which together accounted for 75% of global use. There are currently some 2,500 internet hotspots in Belgium, mostly operated by Belgacom and Telenet.

## Belgium third in Tax Misery Index



## Work begins on Ikea at Flanders Expo

The Swedish home furniture and household equipment company has laid the first stone of its new store on the site of Flanders Expo outside Ghent. The new facility, to open at the end of this year, will be the company's largest in Belgium with a floor space of some 23,000 square metres. The company expects to realise sales of more than €100 million in the first year of operation.

The new store could lead to the loss of hundreds of jobs, according to unions representing independent traders. The NSZ union has demanded a review of the existing law which leaves it to local councils to approve the establishment of superstores. The unions argue that the local authorities are often misled by the number of jobs the stores claim they will bring to the area, while paying no attention to the ripple effect on businesses in a wider area.

"Jobs are going to go in the furniture and decoration sector within a wide radius around Ikea," a union spokesperson said. Ikea plans to make the new Ghent store its Belgian flagship operation. Opening is planned for later in the year, but recruitment of 300 new staff will begin this week. Staff will later move from the Ternat store, which is to close. Ikea Belgium boss Staffan Jeppson admitted that competing companies would feel the pinch, but promised that the store would be a net job-winner for the city.

Meanwhile, the company last week reported a worldwide reduction in total sales as a result of slowing economies, and in particular due to the problems in the housing markets in the US and United Kingdom, Spain, Italy and Germany. Speaking in Barcelona, Ikea group president and CEO Anders Dahlvig said the company was better placed than many others to come through the difficult period, thanks to its low prices. Ikea has 260 stores in 37 countries, and Ghent is just one of 20 new stores planned to open in the coming year.

## Veritas looks east for expansion plans

Veritas, the haberdashery chain founded in Antwerp in 1892, is eyeing up targets in Eastern Europe with a view to expansion. At present, the only foreign presence of the Belgian chain is in Luxembourg. "I would prefer to go into the Baltic States," said Verigroup managing director Marc Peeters, "but Poland is also an option". Russia is "the most fascinating market," he said, but its scale is too huge for Veritas' expansion plans. In the Baltic States, on the other hand, "with ten shops we can be big in what we do". The company also plans to open 10 to 15 new stores in the border areas of northern France and southern Netherlands. Veritas expects 10-11% growth this year, with the total number of shops in Belgium rising by ten this year and five the following year to reach 80. The single existing shop in Luxembourg will be joined by five more. "And if we want to reach our target of 6% annual growth," Mr. Peeters said, "we have to look abroad."

Forbes magazine has announced that Belgium is the third worst place in the world for tax-payers, in its annual Tax Misery Index. The index provides a measure of the tax burden on companies, and leads with France and the Netherlands. The index includes employer and employee social security contributions, income tax, corporate tax and VAT, but not property taxes. Belgium on 156 is only slightly behind France on 166 and Holland on 157. At the other end of the scale, the least miserable nations – Qatar, Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates – carry index values of only 12, 18 and 41 respectively. Qatar only has one tax – corporate tax – and that has been cut in the last year, winning Qatar the prime spot. Belgium also comes in third place on a table of total overall tax burden, this time including property taxes, behind Sweden and Denmark.

The Belgian government doesn't deny that the country takes a large slice of earnings in tax, but argues that the proceeds fund the country's transport infrastructure, healthcare, welfare system and childcare.

## FILM

# A world of good

The Open Doek Film Festival presents the most intriguing film prizes in Belgium



Taipei times: Lin Jing-Jie's gentle film debut *The Most Distant Course* follows three urbanites in search of meaning who cross paths amid striking soundscapes

## Lisa Bradshaw

Some film festivals really put their money where their mouths are. The Afrika Film Festival, for instance, currently running in Leuven and other cities, devotes enormous time and energy to promoting black actors in Belgium and ensuring cinema release for a handful of African films. A similar case is Open Doek, which struggles for an audience in Turnout, but is entering its 16th year as an international festival with a focus on movies that explore social issues.

What really sets Open Doek apart is the number and type of juries. There are seven in all, including the typical young persons' jury and professional jury. The winning

film chosen by the professional jury will be shown later on Canvas TV. But Open Doek also hosts the Moussem Jury for the best Arabic film and the Behind the Scenes Jury, made up entirely of prisoners.

"A few years ago, I thought we had to do something as a festival for people who don't have much of a chance to see movies," says Marc Boonen, the festival's director. "In the area around Turnout, there are four prisons." Each prison has one or two jury members, who see the same films as the professional jury and then come together to discuss the films before making a decision about which is the best.

"It's very important to them that they are participating in the festival and can see and discuss good

movies," explains Boonen. "For me, the discussion is always very emotional because I see the impact of this process on them. Last year there was someone who said: 'I hope I'm in jail next year so I can be in the jury again'."

The prison population also offers a diverse international component often missing from other juries. "There is a confrontation between cultures," says Boonen. "It's interesting to hear what an Iranian thinks of a film from Iran. Sometimes we don't always understand what we see; he can give it context."

The Moussem Jury, meanwhile, is made up of members of Moussem, a Belgian centre of Arabic arts and culture. There is also an Amnesty International jury. Open Doek's goal is to promote the best

films with politically-hot themes specifically by awarding them prizes. "People talk about a film when they see it has won something," notes Boonen.

As for the movies, Open Doek presents about 70 mostly-new fiction and documentary features. Possibly to show the trickle-down effects of civil conflict, the best films in competition centre on children. *Son of a Lion* is set squarely in Taliban territory. Among the ethnic Afghan Pashtun people of northwest Pakistan, a boy tries to convince his fundamentalist father to let him leave and pursue an education rather than following him into the gun-making business. The film explores issues of faith without demonising anyone – a surprisingly informed debut

from Australian director Benjamin Gilmour.

*El Camino (The Path)*, meanwhile, is another notable debut by Chilean-Iraqi writer/director about two Nicaraguan children trying to cross the border to Costa Rica to find their mother. *Zimbabwe* is the latest film by Darrell Roodt (*Faith's Corner; Cry, the Beloved Country*) and follows a teenage girl as she travels from her homeland into South Africa to find work after the AIDS-related death of her mother.

The festival, of course, includes plenty of talks and debates: Amnesty International will host a presentation after the screening of *Lemon Tree*, the wonderful new film by Israeli director Eran Riklis (*The Syrian Bride*) which brings the Israeli/Palestinian conflict down to an intimately human level. Flemish nurse Raf Schyvens speaks to the audience after *Confessions of an Innocent Man*, David Paperny's documentary about William Samson, a Canadian who endured nearly three years of torture in a Saudi Arabian prison. Schyvens spent time with Samson in the same prison.

The Flemish entries in Open Doek are also international in nature. *Patrasche, A Dog of Flanders* is Didier Volckaert and An van Dienderen's documentary that looks into the phenomenon of an English novel turned Hollywood movie turned Japanese mini-series that has almost nothing to do with Flanders, where it purports to be set. Highly recommended is Saartje Geerts' short feature *Nollywood aan de Schelde*, which follows a Nigerian who came to Antwerp to make movies and wound up in jail. Now he's making a film to tell his story.

18-27 April, *Utopolis and De Warande*, Turnout. Screenings also in Lier and Tilburg, the Netherlands

## Online

[www.opendoeck.be](http://www.opendoeck.be)

## FILM FREAK

### Western Balkan Film Days

I have to admit to being a little amused by the title of this series. The Brussels calendar is full to bursting with special film programmes and festivals, and this seemed just a tad too much – not to mention too specific. What happened to the rest of the Balkans? I thought.

But there is no disputing the quality of the line-up: you can hardly go wrong with any of the eight movies you choose from the five countries that make up the bulk of the western Balkans (only Montenegro, being a very new republic, had to be left out). Together, the films are not only an excellent survey of desires, emotions and politics in the region, they are well-chosen artistically, and all but one are Belgian premieres.

The purpose of the series lies in the sponsor: the European Commission's DG for Enlargement. "Film Days showcases the region's rich cinematic tradition and allows the viewers to see the Western Balkan countries in a different light and to rethink some of the well-entrenched clichés," says Gisela Gauggel-Robinson of the DG. The Commission wants you to get to know Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – both up for EU membership – a bit better. Eventually, the entire region could be in line to join the EU, and films are accessible ways to tell stories about how a diverse range of people are dealing with recent history.

The festival opens with the new Croatian film *Armin*, which has

gained awards in Europe, Africa and the US for its quietly comedic handling of a father who takes his teenage son from their rural village in Bosnia to Zagreb to audition for a German movie about the Bosnian war. The director, Ognjen Svilicic, will be present to talk about the film and take questions from the audience.

*Shadows*, meanwhile, finds a doctor encountering strange occurrences a year after a near-fatal car accident. Macedonian director Milcho Manchevski (*Before the Rain*) is only somewhat successful at integrating themes of death and responsibility in his new film, but its haunting visions – such as relatives with flickering candles spending the night amongst the graves of loved ones during the Night of the Dead – create a genuinely spooky mood.

Other award-winning highlights include Albanian director Gjergj Xhuvani's satirical 2001



Bosnian villager Ibro pushes his son to succeed in *Armin*, presented by its director on opening night of Western Balkan Film Days

film *Slogans*, in which a new biology teacher in a mountain village must decide the best political slogan for his classroom, and *Grbavica*, Bosnian director Jasmina Zbanic's impressive 2006 debut feature about a mother-daughter relationship undermined by

secrets in post-war Sarajevo.

21-23 April, Flagey, Heilig Kruisplein, Brussels

## Online

[www.flagey.be](http://www.flagey.be)

## EXHIBITION

## The accidental prisoner

A young Flemish photographer set out for Afghanistan and encountered his worst nightmare

**Alan Hope**

When Pieter-Jan De Pue graduated from the Rits film school in Brussels in 2007, he did what many young people do and headed off to exotic lands. But he also did what few young people attempt – he tried to cross the Hindu Kush illegally and wound up spending a month in a Chinese jail.

De Pue, 25, is fresh-faced with red hair, so there was never much chance of him passing unnoticed (disguised as a native like Sir Richard Burton) in the part of the world where he found himself: the Wakhan Corridor in the Pamir mountains, where China, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan meet. The region was both part of the Silk Route and a buffer-zone established by the British Empire to fend off Russia's designs on India.

De Pue's plan was to take photos. He had already done so for charity organisations and thought he could continue the work in Afghanistan, providing photos to charities involved in the country – the Belgian Red Cross, the Dutch Committee on Afghanistan and Solidarité Afghanistan Belgique. In return, he would travel under their auspices, which would hopefully provide him with legitimacy

and protection.

Because of the current situation in the country, the Flemish photographer had the idea to travel via China, enter Afghanistan in the northwest mountains and move downwards to Kabul. He teamed up with a local guide, Gholam Hasan, and set off to cross one of the highest borders in the world.

But the Chinese were on to him, and both men were arrested. They spent some time in an army camp and then a month in jail. Hasan suspected of being Taliban and an opium smuggler, and De Pue suspected of being a spy for the American forces in Afghanistan.

He seems reluctant to go into details when we get to this part of the story. "The circumstances were not very pleasant, but at least we weren't tortured," he says.

When they were released, they made it across the border and travelled on foot and horseback through the Panjshir Valley. It's the people of this region who figure in almost all of the photos that make up *Afghanistan 2007: A Journey in Images*, the exhibition on show until 9 May at the Flemish-Dutch cultural centre deBuren in Brussels.

The Panjshir Valley is sparsely populated by Wakhi and Kyrgyz peoples, farmers and nomads



Pieter-Jan De Pue's *Afghanistan 2007* documents the country's most remote region – and people

living in goatskin huts. It's one of the most desolate landscapes on Earth, in parts almost lunar. "Electricity, telecommunications, modern health care and education don't really exist," De Pue explains.

The people live from agriculture, a subsistence economy that's always on the verge of hunger. Some of the men are attached to the Afghan army, though, in such a remote and unreachable region, the chain of command can hardly be said to be unbroken. The region saw little action in the civil war of the 1990s that followed the Russian withdrawal, but they were allied with the Northern Alliance – assassinated leader Ahmed Shah Massoud was known, among other titles, as the Lion of Panjshir.

The exhibition is made up of two types of images: panoramic shots of the landscape, from the mountains (some of the highest in the world) to the vast featureless plains, and portraits – some candid and open and others clearly staged in deep chiaroscuro. The portraits are immediately gripping. These people may be remote and cut off, but they stare with eyes of people whose ancestors have seen it all, their penetrating gaze (whether a cocky-

looking fighter in camouflage or a four-year-old on a wagon) seeming to bypass the camera and speak directly, person to person.

Guns abound. "Weapons are a part of the outfit. Even women often carry a Kalashnikov," says De Pue. In one picture, an elderly woman wields a look of such imperious authority she might have no need for firearms. "When we visited the village of Moqor, the headman was away. No problem. His wife received us. In the interior of Afghanistan, where women are pretty much invisible, that would have been unthinkable."

So what's next for De Pue, barely out of school and yet with an adventure out of *Midnight Express* meets *The Four Feathers*? He plans to go back to Afghanistan, of course, travelling with a normal visa this time, perhaps as early as the summer. And he's planning a book of his travels – richly illustrated no doubt.

Until 9 May, deBuren, Leopoldstraat 6 (enter on Prinsenstraat), Brussels, entrance free

**Online**

[www.deburen.eu](http://www.deburen.eu)

## THEATRE

## Animal instincts

Brussels' new English theatre company premieres with *The Goat*

**Sarah Crew**

Brussels' first professional English-language theatre company, Accent Productions, has made a bold move in debuting with American playwright Edward Albee's *The Goat or Who is Sylvia?* Albee's Goat has been stalked by controversy since it

opened on Broadway in 2002, despite picking up a Tony Award for Best Play and a slew of other theatrical awards.

At the outset, the play looks like a familiar story of marital breakdown, as world-renowned architect Martin admits to old college-friend Ross that he has fallen

obsessively in love. Martin is celebrating his 50th birthday and is at the peak of his career, having just won a prestigious prize and a massive building project.

Ross, a TV journalist, is in fact trying to conduct an interview with the architect, but Martin is simply too distracted by the object of his affection – one Sylvia. After much wrangling on Ross' part, Martin finally admits that his is no ordinary affair: Sylvia is a goat.

Confession to son Billy and to wife Stevie follows, and her anger and revulsion turn to violent outbursts until the tale reaches its bloody conclusion. This is a family tragedy that, in exploring frequently uncomfortable sexual boundaries, raises questions about the universal issues of deception, morality and sexuality.

Martin and Stevie seemingly accept their 17-year-old son's homosexuality, but the bombshell of Martin's transgression tests the limits of this tolerance. Martin is a man torn between his obsession and his love for his family. His rage at Ross for telling Stevie about his dilemma is centred on his conviction that she does not need to know the truth. He likens his situation to being in a hole from which he cannot climb, which proves to be the play's most poignant moment.

But Albee, author of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, is no

stranger to black humour, and *The Goat* is also very funny, combining the author's characteristic wit with both a playful and obsessive interest in language. When Ross refers to Sylvia as the goat "who you're fucking", Martin immediately retorts: "It's 'whom'!"

Such word play is a common thread running through the play, especially with Martin and Stevie, whose banter reveals the affection in their relationship, thereby rendering its possible demise all the more sad.

Albee, who just celebrated his 80th birthday, is one of the surviving legends of the American stage, ranking alongside fellow dramatists Eugene O'Neill and Arthur Miller. He shot to fame in the early 1960s with plays like *Woolf* and *The American Dream*, following them up with three Pulitzer Prize winners, including 1990's *Three Tall Women*.

The controversy surrounding *The Goat* stems from the nature of Martin's infidelity and the moral issues it raises but ultimately fails to fully address. Critics and audiences remain divided about both the subject matter and dramatic resolution (or lack of it).

It is this which makes it such an audacious choice for Accent Productions, which has dared to leap from the relative safety of English amateur theatre in

Brussels to the more demanding professional world. Its aim to also attract a non-English speaking audience is one of the more difficult hurdles to overcome.

*The Goat*'s director, Liz Merrill, is one of the founding members of Accent, along with husband Michel Didier and Jonathon Sawdon, who undertakes the role of Martin. Sawdon, a British actor, largely succeeds in portraying a man in despair and is more than ably backed up by American John Flanders as the well-meaning but morally-outraged Ross. British actor Daniel Sharman's Billy is well directed in his adolescent angst.

Accent Productions, as befits its name, hopes to be an umbrella for actors of varying backgrounds, so it is unfortunate that Belgian Sibylle du Plessy, despite a plucky performance, failed to maintain the verbal sparring essential for the part of Stevie. This is a shame, as Stevie, a funny and flamboyant character, has some of the best lines in the play.

Still, *The Goat* is a provocative and accessible play, and this is a recommended production as an introduction to Albee's work.

Until 26 April, Comédie Claude Volter, Gebroeders Legrainlaan 98, Brussels. Tickets from 02.762.09.63 or [www.accent-prod.com](http://www.accent-prod.com)



Jonathon Sawdon as Martin and Sibylle du Plessy as Stevie in Accent Productions' *The Goat or Who is Sylvia?*

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# After a fashion

## Flanders' fashion museums trace a history that covers more than just clothes

### Steven Tate

“Fashion is for people without taste,” Coco Chanel once famously said. But to dismiss fashion’s reflection of society would be foolish. As the world changes, so do the clothes we wear – as two museums in Flanders clearly demonstrate. The Hasselt ModeMuseum looks to the past in examining how we evolved to where we are, while the Antwerp ModeMuseum looks to the future.

“The year 1958 holds a special place in the public imagination in Belgium. It was the year of the Brussels World Expo,” says Joannie Dehullu, of the museum, in explaining the current exhibition, *Mode 1750-1958: 200 Years of Fashion History*.

“On the 50th anniversary, we’re taking a look at the centuries leading up to that seminal date in Belgian history.”

Selections for the exhibition were chosen from the museum’s 20,000-piece collection to provide a timeline of European fashion – from Rococo to Empire and through two World Wars to the forward-looking, optimistic 1950s. Computer touch screens allow visitors to change outfits, shoes, wigs and accessories on onscreen models, much like a paper doll.

But it’s not all child’s play. Walking through the exhibition, it’s quickly clear how clothing is evocative of time and space: for

century corset pulled in a woman’s waistline to exaggerate the difference between the feminine and masculine silhouette, but their constriction ran counter to the progress of women in the workplace. (Secretaries passing out because they could not breathe would not do.)

In the 1920s, Coco Chanel was responsible for a revolution in womenswear when she cast aside the hourglass template of women’s fashion for a leaner, more wearer-friendly look. Hopping in and out of motorcars in a hoop skirt was impossible, so women’s clothes had to adapt to transport and changing lifestyles.

The Chanel suit – the boxy jacket and square skirt that has become the uniform for well-to-do ladies who lunch – has not changed much since the designer launched it in 1923. Interestingly, Chanel created it as a response to her own inability to conform to fashion: her boyish figure was at odds with the prevailing “big breasts, tiny waist, big bottom” ideal of her day.

The Second World War pushed women’s fashion further away from frilly womenswear. Trousers, narrow skirts and shoulder pads became fashionable as women headed for the workplace in droves to fill jobs left by men who were away fighting the war. As the middle class grew, more people

**“I dress women – Christian Dior upholsters them.”**

- Coco Chanel

example, the flower-embroidered waistcoats of mid-18th century France speak of a time when men gave themselves over to fashion with a gusto equaling women’s. Before 1750, men were peacocks, adorning themselves in finery both to appeal to the opposite sex and set themselves apart from the pack.

Such vanity began to be considered a feminine trait starting with the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century, when such fripperies became impractical for men heading off to toil in factories and mines. Prior to that, indulging in fashion was an equal opportunity activity among those who could afford it (just as “fashion” as a phenomenon was a wealthy person’s pursuit).

The woman’s place in society changed much more dramatically over the exhibition’s time frame, which accounts for the more extreme variance in dress. As privileged women moved from being mere accessories of their husbands to boasting their own achievements, decorative gave way to practical. The popular 19th-

could participate in the fashion parade – especially with textile mills churning out vast quantities of fabric and the rise of synthetics – which mimicked more expensive, high-end fabrics. (In fact, stockings were originally made of nylon because silk was needed for parachutes during the war.)

The irony of *Mode 1750-1958* is that the more things change, the more they stay the same. In 1750, the wasp waist/full skirt silhouette was the epitome of femininity, and two centuries later, it was back courtesy of Christian Dior, whose New Look capitalised on post-war yearnings for stability cloaked in the nostalgia of clearly-defined gender roles. The nipped-in-at-the-waist cocktail gowns, full skirts and bullet bras inspired by Dior made women look almost like parodies of femininity. Some were not so pleased: Chanel snipped, “I dress women – Christian Dior upholsters them.”

Katharine Hepburn, Joan Crawford and Bette Davis were the top Hollywood actresses in the 1940s, when strong women held society together. In the 50s, with the war

long over, women were back to being accessories – with Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, Sophia Loren and other bombshells serving up a hyper-femininity unthreatening to men. Roles were re-established: girls were girly



Back to the future: the restrictive corset style of the 1880s came back in the restrictive period of the 1950s



again. In addition to the current show, which runs until August, the Hasselt ModeMuseum also hosts a programme of lectures and projects with schools in the area. In the autumn, they will display a collection of costumes for dance productions by major fashion designers from 1920 to the present day. Again, the evolution of fashion will give visitors a frame of reference – this time within a particular genre.



Forest of feet:  
Veronique Branquinho's  
*ToTe NUe* now at  
Antwerp's MoMu

Antwerp, of course, is the major frame of reference when it comes to fashion in Belgium, thanks to the Antwerp Six: Dries Van Noten, Walter Van Beirendonck, Ann Demeulemeester, Dirk Bikkembergs and Dirk Van Saene and Marina Yee (who replaced the original Martin Margiela).

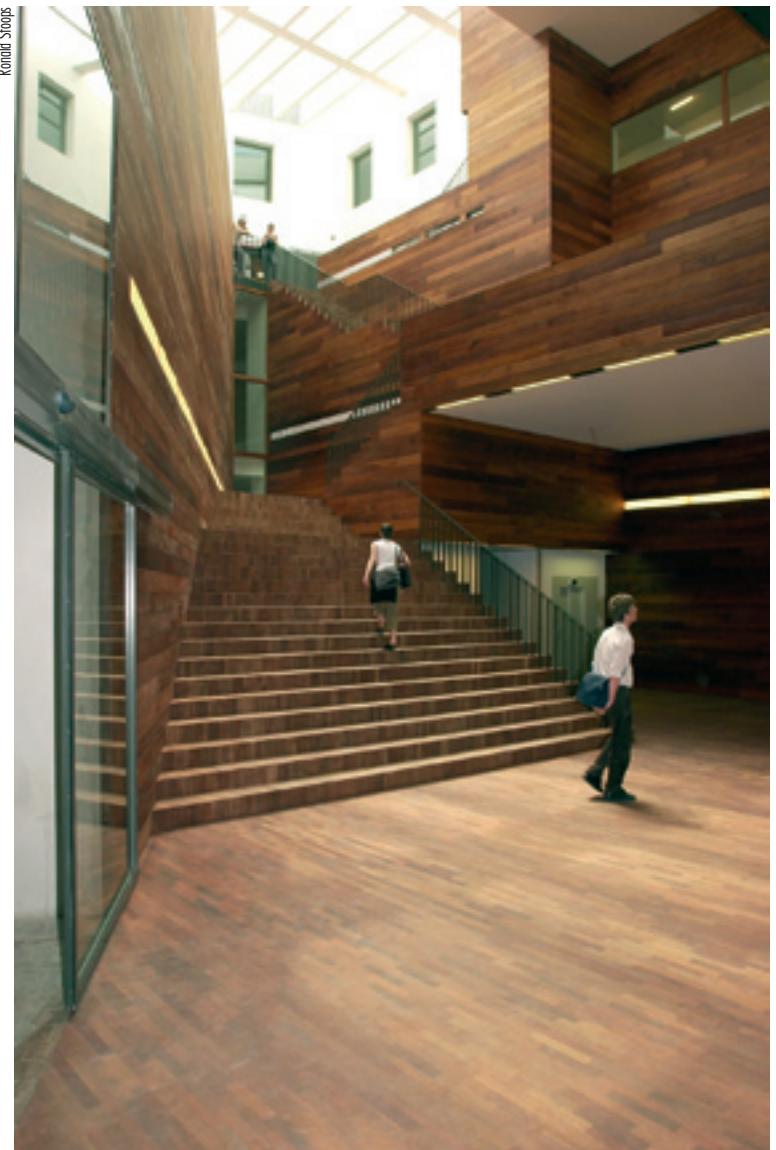
These designers, who graduated together from the fashion department of Antwerp's Royal Academy of Fine Arts in the early 1980s, put the country on the fashion map with their collectively radical new vision. Although it opened seven years after its companion museum in Hasselt, the Antwerp Mode-Museum (or MoMu) has become a prime destination for the international fashion pack.

MoMu sports a permanent collection, as well as a steady supply of thought-provoking temporary exhibitions. The current one features work by Belgian designer Veronique Branquinho (including a forest of dangling shoes and a surreal Twin Peaks-style parlour). Previous designers whose works have been on display include Japanese designer Yohji Yamamoto and Bernhard Willhelm, the Antwerp Fashion Institute-educated German designer.

The museum not only has a permanent collection of work by important Flemish designers (including all the original Antwerp Six) but also historically important pieces dating back five centuries: both ladies' and gentlemen's clothes from the 18th to 20th centuries (from frocks to hats, bonnets, fantasy jewellery, scarves and lingerie), regional clothes from the Antwerp Kempen, lace (both bobbin and needle), embroidery, and religious textiles.

Still, MoMu champions the avant-garde, while influencing the next generation of movers and shakers: on the top floor of the building, known as ModeNatie, is the academy's fashion department, with an international student body

Ronald Stoops



Antwerp's fashion museum is housed in ModeNatie, a collective of fashion hubs, including the Flanders Fashion Institute and A Magazine

(riding up the lift, I heard a group of four different nationalities all conversing in English – which was the mother tongue of none).

As a laboratory for different aspects of design, MoMu features publications, a scientific library, a large public reading room, lectures, conferences, workshops, projects in the MoMu Gallery and film projections in the MoMu Cinema. While New York, London and Paris take a more business-like approach to the fashion industry, Antwerp has yet to become that jaded – as evidenced by the MoMu and the Antwerp fashion scene. "With the exception of Raf Simons and Dirk Bikkembergs, most Antwerp designers stay in Antwerp," one fashion editor recently told me. "And every major designer has a perfume – Viktor & Rolf of Amsterdam have two – but none of the Antwerp designers do."

True, fragrances and cosmetics are a cash cow for designers when clothing sales slump, but Antwerp's prefer to focus on couture, rather than slapping their name on a bottle and collecting a fat licensing fee. It might make more business sense to relocate to Paris, London or Milan, but Dries, Ann, Walter and other top Flemish talent stay close to their roots.

Some might find such an attitude precious, others pretentious. But maybe it's just that they need to be in Antwerp. Whatever the reason, it keeps the Antwerp fashion scene – and MoMu – worth watching.



Computer generation: Bernhard Willhelm's 2007 exhibition, *Total Recall* in MoMu

#### online

[www.modemuseumhasselt.be](http://www.modemuseumhasselt.be)  
[www.momu.be](http://www.momu.be)

**Classical & new music****Brussels**

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

**Until APR 22** 20.00 La Monnaie  
Symphony Orchestra and Choir,  
conducted by Julian Reynolds and Piers  
Maxim: Rossini's Elizabeth, Queen of  
England

**APR 17** 12.30 Sophie Causanschi,  
violin; Mihoko Kusama, viola; Harm  
Van Rheeden, cello; Karel Schoofs,  
oboe: Berkeley, Craems, Britten  
**APR 17-19** 20.00 Budapest Gypsy  
Symphony Orchestra conducted by  
József Lendvai Csócsí: Khachaturian,  
De Sarasate, Brahms, Strauss, Bizet,  
Hungarian gypsy music

**APR 18** 20.00 Queen Elisabeth  
Competition Prizewinner 2005 Sergey  
Khachatryan, violin, accompanied by  
his sister on piano: sonatas by Bach,  
Brahms, Shostakovich

**APR 20** 19.30 Ensemble Matheus:  
Vivaldi's La fida ninfa, RV 714.

**APR 21** 20.00 Koninklijk  
Concertgebouwkoest and Choirs,  
Amsterdam, conducted by Nikolaus  
Harnoncourt: Schumann's Scenes from  
Goethe's Faust

**APR 22** 20.00 De Munt Symphony  
Orchestra and Choir conducted by  
Julian Reynolds and Piers Maxim:  
Rossini's Elizabeth, Queen of England  
**APR 23** 20.00 Brussels Ensemble  
Orchestra and European Union Choirs  
conducted by Dirk De Moor: opera  
arias by Bizet, Gounod, Mendelssohn,  
Mozart

**APR 23-26** 20.30 Capilla Flamenca  
directed by Dirk Snellings, staged by  
Joanna Dudley: promenade concert in  
the galleries of the exhibition Treasures  
Old and New from Wallonia

**De Munt**

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39  
**APR 19 & 22** 20.00 Les Talens Lyriques  
featuring mezzo Joyce DiDonato,  
conducted by Christophe Rousset:  
opera extracts from Hercules, Semele,  
Teseo, Imeneo and others

**Get your tickets now for...**



**Magdalena Kožená & Dorothea Röschmann**

**4 May**, 20.00, De Munt, Muntplein,  
Brussels. Tickets from 070.23.39.39  
or [www.demunt.be](http://www.demunt.be)

**F**resh and richly melodic, Antonín Dvořák's songs rarely feature on concert programmes, not least because Czech is a fiendishly difficult language for non-natives. It's a different story for the glamorous mezzo Magdalena Kožená (photo), a native of Brno, who welcomes the chance now and then to sing in her mother tongue and has a rare talent for bringing this repertoire all the ease and grace that it deserves. She'll be paired with German soprano Dorothea Röschmann in a series of Moravian duets that will bring a flush to your cheeks. Joining them at the piano is the extraordinary accompanist Graham Johnson.

**Espace Toots**

Stuckensstraat 125; 02.241.15.83  
**APR 18** 20.00 Camerata della Quercia  
Orchestra conducted by Isabelle  
Bonesire: Mendelssohn, Rodrigo,  
Tchaikovsky  
**APR 19** 16.00 Camerata della Quercia  
Orchestra conducted by Isabelle  
Bonesire, with Catherine Nowak,  
narrator: Vivaldi's Four Seasons,  
Boccherini's Menuet, Britten's Simple  
Symphony, Dvorak, Kancheli

**Halles de Schaerbeek**

Koninklijke Sinte-Mariastraat 22;  
02.218.21.07  
**APR 18** 20.30 Descrizione Del Diluvio,  
composition by Mauro Lanza, video by  
Paolo Pachini: video-opera based on  
texts by Leonardo Da Vinci

**Kaaitheater**

Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59  
**APR 16** 20.30 Ictus & Octurn: Le  
Grand Gamelan by Bo van der Werf  
**APR 20** 17.00 Accentus Chamber Choir  
with Orchestre National de France  
Soloists: Bruckner, Messiaen, Ligeti,  
Dusapin

**Musical Instruments Museum**

Hofberg 2; 0900.28.877  
**APR 20** 11.00 Liliane Questel,  
piano: Adams, Haydn, Schumann,  
Rachmaninoff  
**APR 27** 11.00 Kryptos Quartet:  
Kreisler, Ysaye

**Royal Music Conservatory**

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.507.82.00  
**APR 16** 20.00 Phantasm violin consort:  
Bach, Purcell, Gibbons, Jenkins, Lawes  
**APR 17** 20.00 Fauré Quartet: Mahler,  
Mozart, Brahms  
**APR 18** 20.00 Caroline Haffner, piano:  
Chopin

**Antwerp**

**deSingel**  
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28  
**APR 16** 20.00 Mosaïques Quartet:  
Beethoven, Webern, Schubert, Lanner  
**APR 19** 20.00 The King's Singers and  
L'Arpeggiata Ensemble conducted by  
Christina Pluhar, with Lucilla Galeazzi,  
voice; Anna Dego, dance: Santiago de  
Murcia's Los Impossibles  
**APR 24** 20.00 La Petite Bande  
conducted by Sigiswald Kuijken: Bach  
cantatas

**Borgerhout**

**De Roma**  
Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.235.04.90  
**APR 20** 20.30 dePhilharmonie  
conducted by Philippe Herreweghe:  
Grieg, Beethoven

**Bruges**

**Concertgebouw**  
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02  
**APR 18** 20.00 The Harp Consort  
conducted by Andrew Lawrence-King:  
Les Travailleurs de la mer, traditional  
music of Guernsey

**Hoeilaart**

**Maison de la Musique**  
Edgar Sohiestraat 41; 02.657.96.52  
**Until MAY 8** Concert series by soloists  
from the Queen Elisabeth College of  
Music

**Leuven**

**Stuk**  
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20  
**APR 16** 19.30 Apsara + Suite: music/  
performance

**Ostend**

**Ostend Kursaal (Casino)**  
Monacoplein; 070.22.56.00,  
www.sherpa.be  
**APR 18** 19.15 Kryptos Quartet:  
Janacek, Jongen, Sibelius, Respighi

**Opera**

**Brussels**  
**De Munt**  
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39  
**Until MAY 2** Médée by Luigi  
Cerubini with the Monnaie Choirs  
and Les Talens Lyriques, conducted by

Christophe Rousset, staged by Krzysztof  
Warlikowski

**Antwerp**

**Queen Elisabeth Hall**  
Koningin Astridplein 26; 0900.26.060  
**APR 24-27** 20.00 Vlaamse Opera  
Symphony Orchestra in La Sonnambula  
by Bellini, conducted by Rani Calderon

**Ghent**

**Vlaamse Opera**  
Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02,  
www.vlaamseopera.be  
**APR 22-MAY 4** Vlaamse Opera  
Symphony Orchestra in La Sonnambula  
by Bellini, conducted by Rani Calderon

**Jazz & blues**

**Brussels**  
**Archiduc**  
Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52  
**APR 19** 17.00 Les Archiducks  
**APR 20** 17.00 Benny Lackner Trio with  
Nick Thys

**Atelier 210**

Sint-Pieterssteenweg 210; 02.732.25.98,  
www.atelier210.be  
**APR 21** 21.00 Cruz Control

**Crowne Plaza Hotel**

Ginestraat 3; 02.203.62.00  
**APR 24** 20.00 Lupa Luna, folk/chanson

**Flagey**

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,  
www.flagey.be  
**APR 24** 21.30 Avishai Cohen Trio

**Jazz Station**

Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78  
**APR 16** 20.30 Chrystel Wautier Trio  
**APR 17** 20.30 Marc Lelangue  
**APR 19** 18.00 Sonicorchestra **APR 23**  
Robin Verheyen and Narcissus Quartet

**Le Botanique**

Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32  
**APR 17** 20.00 Lizz Wright  
**APR 18** 20.00 Trio Grande with  
Matthew Bourne

**Le Grain d'Orge**

Waversesteenweg 142; 02.511.26.47  
**APR 18** 21.30 Fried Flying Chicken  
Wings

**Sounds Jazz Club**

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50,  
www.soundsjazzclub.be

**Concerts**

at 22.00:  
**APR 16** Caribe Con K - Los Soneros  
del Barrio, Caribbean music **APR 17**  
Grimal/Di Domenico/Cabras/Lobo  
**Quartet** **APR 18** Gino Lattuca Quartet  
**APR 19** Laurent Doumont Soul  
band **APR 21** Master Session **APR**  
22 Antonio Segura Group **APR 23**  
Chamaquindo, salsa

**The Music Village**

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45  
**APR 18** 20.45 Chloë Cailleton

**International Quartet**

**APR 19** 20.45 The Zulus New Orleans  
Band  
**APR 24** 12.30 Lenny en de Wespen

**Uccle Cultural Centre**

Rodestraat 47; 02.374.64.84  
**APR 18** 21.00 Jean-Charles De Keyser  
& Bleu Blanc Blues

**Borgerhout**

**De Roma**  
Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.235.04.90  
**APR 17** 20.30 Tutu Puoane

**Bruges**

**De Werf**  
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29  
**APR 19** 20.30 Sabin Todorov Trio

**Stadsschouwburg**

Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.60  
**APR 23** 20.00 Dianne Reeves

**Ghent**

**Vooruit**  
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 09.267.28.28  
**APR 16** 20.00 Tim Berne's Science  
Fiction

**Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul****Brussels**

**Ancienne Belgique**  
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24  
Concerts at 20.00:  
**APR 21** Tiken Jah Fakoly **APR 22**  
KT Tunstall. Freaky Age. **APR 23** Die  
Mannequin + Danko Jones. The Von  
Durden Party Project **APR 24** Moke +  
Deportivo. Go Tell + Mavis Staples

**Belle Vue Café**

Henegouwenkaai 43  
**APR 22** 21.30 The Posies

**Fuse**

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89  
**APR 17** 23.00 I Love Guindaille  
(student party) **APR 18** 23.00 Mad club:  
Marko-Rudy-Crisp **APR 24** 23.00 Miss  
T-Shirt mouillé (student party)

**Koninklijk Circus**

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15  
**APR 18** Star Academy

**APR 22** (new date) Saint André +  
Renan Luce

**Le Botanique**

Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32  
Concerts at 20.00:  
**APR 17** Babylove & The Van Dangos +  
The Toasters **APR 18** Fear Falls Burning  
+ Nadja + Year of No Light **APR 19**  
Merz **APR 21** 65days of static. The Saw  
Doctors

**Recyclart**

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34  
**APR 17** 20.00 Old Time Relijun  
**APR 24** 20.00 The Sadies

**VK Club**

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07  
**APR 19** 15.30 Brussels Metal  
FriEndsTIVAL **APR 20** 21.30 Ian Brown  
**APR 23** 21.30 Dub Incorporation

**Vorst-Nationaal**

Victor Roussealaan 208; 0900.00.991  
**APR 23** 20.00 AaRON

**Antwerp**

**Lotto Arena**  
Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060  
**APR 19** 20.00 Zucchero

**Sportpaleis**

Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060  
**APR 19** 20.30 Bart Peeters

**Het Toneelhuis/Bourla**  
Komedielaan 18; 032.224.88.44  
**APR 22-26** 20.00 De versie Claus, monologue about the writer Hugo Claus, by and with Josse De Pauw (in Dutch)

**Noordteater**  
Sint-Nicolaasplaats 3-5; 03.231.20.08  
**Until APR 26** The Beauty Queen of Leenane by Martin McDonagh, staged by Marc Van Extergem (in Dutch)

**Bruges**  
**De Werf**  
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29, [www.dewerf.be](http://www.dewerf.be)  
**APR 17-18** 20.30 Theatermalpertuis/De Keuns in Dooddoener, staged by Craig Weston (in Dutch)

**Leuven**  
**Stuk**  
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20  
**Until APR 17** 20.30 Toneelhuis in Stille, staged by Lotte van den Berg (in Dutch)  
**APR 17-19** 20.30 Compagnie Cecilia in Soeur Sourire with Marijke Pinoy (in Dutch)

## Visual arts

**Brussels**  
**Argos Centre for Art and Media**  
Werfstraat 13; 02.229.00.03, [www.argoarts.org](http://www.argoarts.org)  
**Until JUNE 21** No Place Like Home: Perspectives on Migration in Europa, Belgian and international artists' videos, photographs and installations

**Atomium**  
Atomium Square; 02.475.47.72, [www.atomium.be](http://www.atomium.be)  
**APR 17-OCT 19** Expo 58. Between Utopia and Reality, documents, plans, objects, films, photographs and scale models of Expo 58  
**APR 17-OCT 19** Lucien De Roeck's Star, design of the famous star symbol of Expo 58

**Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)**  
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.84.44  
**Until APR 25** Dreams of the Sublime and Nowhere, multimedia installations and photographs inspired by Iceland's natural environment  
**Until APR 27** Water Vocal - Endangered II, video and sound installation by Rúrí  
**Until APR 27** Magicians of Nature, Kjarval, Davidsson and Gudni, paintings by three Icelandic artists  
**Until MAY 11** Paul Klee: Theater here, there and everywhere, monographic exhibition on the Berne-based artist (1879-1940)  
**Until MAY 18** Jan Fabre: Borrowed time, photographs of work by the Flemish artist

**Costume and Lace Museum**  
Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50  
**Until MAY 27** Weefsels van het absolute (Absolute Fibres), textiles by outsider artists  
**Until DEC 30** Du New look à l'Expo 58, fashion from the time of Belgium's 1958 World's Fair, with women's evening gowns, wedding dresses, cocktail dresses, suits, coats and accessories

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

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

**Espace Photographique Contretype**  
Verbindingslaan 1; 02.538.42.20  
**Until APR 27** Rhizome oriental-voyage en ex-URSS, photographs by Philippe Herbet

**ISELP**  
Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70  
**Until MAY 31** Récits, paintings by Cécilia Shishan  
**Until MAY 31** Jewellery and ceramics by Axelle Gielen

**Jewish Moroccan Heritage Museum**  
Vander Elstplein 19; 02.343.86.30  
**Until MAY 15** Freud au Maroc: Regards sur l'identité (Looking at Identity), the Dahan-Hirsch collection of art, books and objects illustrating Jewish culture in Morocco

**Jewish Museum of Belgium**  
Minimstraat 21; 02.512.19.63  
**Until JUNE 22** Dicht op de huid (Close to the Skin), paintings by Brussels-based artist Maurice Frydman

**Le Botanique**  
Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32  
**Until MAY 4** L'Histoire au présent (History in the Present), over 300 photographs of the world's conflicts and human suffering by Belgian photojournalist Bruno Stevens

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

**René Magritte Museum**  
Esseghemstraat 135; 02.428.26.26  
**Until JUNE 30** Dreaming of a Future World, paintings and drawings by the Belgian artist Edmond van Dooren

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

**Royal Museums of Art and History**  
Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11, [www.kmkg-mrha.be](http://www.kmkg-mrha.be)

**Until APR 27** From Gilgamesh to Zenobia, highlights from the museum's collection of Middle Eastern art

**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

**Stadhuis**  
Grote Markt; 02.279.43.50  
**Until MAY 18** Slovenian Painting after 1945

**Tour & Taxis**  
Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49  
**Until MAY 12** 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

**WIELS**  
Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.347.30.33  
**Until JULY 27** Mike Kelley Educational Complex Onwards: 1995-2008, retrospective with large-scale installations, sculptures, paintings and photographs

**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  
**Until SEP 9** Fantasy, intervention by Koen van den Broek

**deSingel**  
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28  
**Until MAY 18** Janssens' Works, installation by Ghent architects Bavo Gideon Boie & Matthias Pauwels  
**Until MAY 25** Inside Outside, landscape architecture by Petra Blaisse

**Fifty-One Fine Art Photography**  
Zirkstraat 20; 03.289.84.58  
**Until MAY 3** USA<sup>2</sup>, photographs by Peter Granser and Kate Schermerhorn

**Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten/Royal Museum of Fine Arts**  
Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09  
**Until JUNE 15** Jan Cox: Living One's Art, paintings by the 20th-century Flemish artist  
**Until JUNE 29** Willem Elsschot's Kaas: een beeldroman, graphic novel adaptation by Dick Matena

**MoMu**  
Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70  
**Until AUG 17** Moi, Véronique. Branquinho TouTe NUe, retrospective of the Belgian designer marking the 10th anniversary of her fashion label

**Bruges**  
**Arentshuis**  
Dijver 16  
**Until AUG 3** Three Bruges Artists: Legillon, Verbrugge and Ledoux, 18th and 19th-century drawings

**De Bond**  
Buitensmedenvest 1; 050.44.30.48  
**Until MAY 5** Indonésie, works by Emilio López-Menchero

**Groeningemuseum**  
Dijver 12; 050.44.87.43  
**Until MAY 12** The Lively Baroque: Bozzetti from Austria, painted sketches and models for large-scale paintings

**Eupen**  
**Ikob**  
In den Loten 3; 087.56.01.10  
**Until APR 20** The Ikob Collection, contemporary works by Edmond Jamar, Guillaume Bijl, Ellen Brusselmans, Yves Zurstrassen, Jacques Charlier and Ronny Delrue and others

**Ghent**  
**Design Museum**  
Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99  
**Until APR 27** Challenging the Chatelaine, contemporary objects by 78 international designers  
**Until APR 27** Verleidelijke eenvoud (Seductive Simplicity), silver and ceramic works by Nedda El-Asmar, Belgian Designer of the Year 2007  
**Until APR 27** Times through Teaware, 100 years of Taiwanese tea culture  
**Until APR 27** 20 years Theo-design, colourful and eccentric eyeglass frames

**Maaltebruggekasteel**  
Kortrijkssesteenweg 1023; 09.242.88.22  
**Until APR 27** Si le monde..., graphic works by Robert Grolot

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

**Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)**  
Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03  
**Until JUNE 29** Kunst Nu: Wilfredo Prieto, installation by the Cuban artist  
**Until JULY 6** Guillaume Bijl, major retrospective

**Grimbergen**  
**Strombeek-Bever Cultural Centre**  
Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43  
**Until MAY 8** How to Paint a Horse, paintings by Antwerp artist Walter Swennen (see also Mechelen)

**Hasselt**  
**Modemuseum**  
Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.23.96.21  
**Until AUG 31** Looks: Mode 1750-1958, Two-hundred years of fashion history

**Z33**  
Zuivelmarkt (Begijnhof) 33; 011.29.59.60  
**Until APR 27** 10th International Triennial of Political Posters

## Don't miss this week



### Courtisane Festival

**21-27 April**, Vooruit, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23, Ghent, [www.courtisane.be](http://www.courtisane.be)

Ghent's fantastic short film and visual arts festival is back in Vooruit, a building well-suited to the fractured, visceral nature of the event. Short fiction, documentary and experimental films are combined with audio-visual performances and all grouped into themes like Changes, pieces exploring political or social evolutions; Stories Untold, a very fun evening of works that re-edit familiar film scenes or traditions; and Home Ground, which includes Flemish filmmaker Sofie Benoof's *Fronterismo* (photo), a look at a desolate area between the United States and Mexico and its singularly unique locals. Don't miss An Evening on Stick Figures by Japanese shadow artist Kanta Horio and An Evening on the In-between, in which American Bruce McClure crosses four whirring 16mm projectors, turning buttons, pulling levers and fitting lenses to create wholly unique images before your very eyes.

**Until MAY 25** Place@Space: (re)shaping everyday life, installations by Paul Casier, Ryoji Ikeda, Limite Azero, Alice Miceli and others

### Knokke

**Absolute Art Gallery**  
Kustlaan 285; 050.62.22.40  
**Until APR 30** De magie van de regen (The Magic of Rain), photographs by Dalia Nosratabadi

### Machelen-Zulte

**Het Roger Raveelmuseum**  
Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00  
**Until JUNE 15** Witte schaduw, drawings by Roger Raveel

### Mechelen

**De Garage**  
Onder den Toren 12; 015.29.40.00  
**Until MAY 11** How to Paint a Horse, paintings by Antwerp artist Walter Swennen (see also Grimbergen)

### Ostend

**Modern Art Museum**  
Romestraat 11; 059.50.81.18  
**APR 19-AUG 31** Georges Vantongerloo. Pionier van de moderne beeldhouwkunst, retrospective of work by the Belgian artist (1886-1965)

### Waregem

**BE-PART**  
Westerlaan 17; 056.62.94.10  
**Until APR 20** Paintings, video and photographs by Helmut Stallaerts

### Festivals & special events

**Ars Musica 2008:** International contemporary music festival creating a platform for new artistic expression

**Until APR 25** in venues across Brussels, Liège and Bruges  
02.507.82.00, [www.arsmusica.be](http://www.arsmusica.be)

**VW Spring Sessions 2008:** Annual festival of jazz, rock, world music and DJs

**Until JUNE 5** in venues across Belgium  
[www.springsessions.be](http://www.springsessions.be)

### Brussels

**Art Brussels:** International contemporary art fair  
**APR 18-21** at Brussels Expo, Belgiëplein 1  
[www.artbrussels.be](http://www.artbrussels.be)

**Belgium 1 Point Festival:** More than 50 artists present work on the theme of Belgium with visual arts, theatre, dance and concerts

**Until APR 19** at Huis der Kunsten, Haachtsesteenweg 147  
02.240.34.99, [www.belgium1point.be](http://www.belgium1point.be)

**Carte blanche-Faustin Linyekula:** The Congolese choreographer presents a dance programme with artists from Europe and Africa, plus a film and an installation

**APR 22-26** at KVS, Arduinkaaï 7  
02.210.11.12, [www.kvs.be](http://www.kvs.be)

**Circus R-M Malter:** week-long circus  
**Until APR 20** at Laeken Park (next to the Atomium)  
02.550.03.50, [www.beursschouwburg.be](http://www.beursschouwburg.be)

**Domino '08:** Ancienne Belgique's annual festival of concerts, DJs and films by emerging artists and genres, with an emphasis on new weird folk music and Americana

**Until APR 17** at Ancienne Belgique, Anspachlaan 110  
02.548.24.24, [www.dominofestival.be](http://www.dominofestival.be)

### Bilzen

**Internationaal Vertelfestival:** Storytelling festival, with an English Story Night on 18 April

**APR 18-20** at Landcommanderij Alden Biesen, Kasteelstraat 6  
089.51.93.43, [www.alden-biesen.be](http://www.alden-biesen.be)

### Antwerp

**Zanzibara Festival:** Festival promoting Swahili culture, with dance, music, films and conferences

**Until APR 20** at Zuiderpershuis, Waalse Kaai 14  
03.248.01.00, [www.zuiderpershuis.be](http://www.zuiderpershuis.be)

### Evergem

**Ingeborg Sergeant** presents Laat mij zingen, a musical theatre performance with pianist Patrick Hamilton

**APR 19** at Cultuurcentrum Evergem, Weststraat 31  
09.358.51.00, [cultuurcentrum](mailto:cultuurcentrum@evergem.be)

## MY FLANDERS

# Luc Janssens

**Dr Luc Janssens is a veterinary surgeon at Antwerp's Anubis Animal Hospital. We ask him about neglect of cats and dogs and the latest in animal surgery**

## How long does it take to become a specialised veterinary surgeon?

Twelve years. The normal degree takes six years, with an additional six years of specialization – including an internship, a residency and a preparatory year for the exam. There are many different areas in which one can specialize, including pathology, dermatology, anesthesiology, internal medicine and surgery. Towards the end of standard veterinary degree, a student can either do one year as an intern at a university veterinary facility or train for two years at one of the four private clinics in Europe that serve as training centres for future veterinary surgeons. My clinic is one of them. The student must also write two articles on their field of study. After that, they have to wait one year before sitting the exam at the European College of Veterinary Surgery – and only 50% pass it the first time. Many have to take it two or three or times before they finally pass. This system has been in place since the early 1990s, but I started out much earlier. I did do six years of study, then an additional five to get my PhD at the University of Utrecht.

## Just what is the average lifespan for a dog and a cat in Belgium?

Generally speaking, 12 years for a dog and 15 years for a cat – but there are a lot of factors. House-cats that rarely go outside live longer, as they are not exposed to dangers like traffic and other cats. The feline immunodeficiency virus – often referred to as feline

Aids – is transmitted from one cat to another through bites, which happen when cats are fighting. So a cat that never goes outside isn't at risk.

## What kinds of injuries and ailments do you see most with cats and dogs?

Because cats go out alone and roam, most of the time it's trauma from traffic and fights with other cats. With dogs, it's genetic problems, arthritis, problems with the vertebral column and tumors. Just as there has been a lot of medical progress in treating humans, the treatment of animals has also evolved – although it lags a bit behind human medicine. There have been developments in arthroscopy and laparoscopy – examining joints and organs through surgery using minimal incisions and micro-cameras. There are also CT scans and other methods for diagnosis and treatment.

## All this sounds pretty expensive...

But people are willing to pay. Over the last 10 years, with television shows like *Vets in Practice*, people are more aware of what's available to treat their pets – and they're willing to pay the costs in Flanders. There is a cultural difference, though, between the Dutch, the Flemish and the Walloons, and some have said that it parallels differences in religion. In Protestant countries, people have the attitude that when they take a pet into their home, they are responsible for the animal's care until it dies. In the Netherlands, if a dog

gets sick and has to have an expensive operation, the family will say, "Well, we won't go on holiday this year because we have to pay for the operation". It's the same in Britain and the US. The Flemish are less like this but still more than the Walloons. In Flanders, there are quite a number of well-equipped animal hospitals with seven or eight veterinarians, including some specialists. In Wallonia, there are fewer such places.

## Do the Flemish insure their pets?

Not really, because there are only a few pet insurance companies here – and the premiums are so low that the payout is minimal. The Netherlands has a few large companies dealing in pet insurance, and the system is very well developed in Britain.

## Are more people owning exotic animals in Flanders?

Somewhat. Snakes and other reptiles are becoming popular, although I don't know anyone with a pot-bellied pig. Anyway, I only treat dogs and cats – so if someone had a python problem, I would refer the owner and pet to a specialist. I don't know of any pig specialists, so I would probably recommend a vet dealing in livestock.

## Do you ever see abused animals?

Sometimes, but it's more a matter of neglect than abuse. It is rare that someone leaves the cat home alone while he goes on holiday. More often, someone who neglects his dog or cat is usually someone who doesn't take very good care of



himself: he doesn't bathe for weeks or eat right, lives in horrible conditions – so of course, he's not aware of the care a pet needs.

## Ever seen a crazy person living in a house filled with cats?

It happens, but more common are two types of people with too many animals: the one who takes the best care of his animals, feeding them and treating them like kings – this person isn't into people and prefers the company of animals, so he might be considered bizarre. The other is another borderline character who breeds cheap, non-pedigree puppies or kittens for sale and ends up with too many.

## Regarding abused or neglected animals, is the law in Flanders sufficient?

It could be better. I like the English system: in Britain, there are two magazines – *Dog World* and *Our Dogs* – which publish the names of people caught abusing or neglecting their dogs. In Britain, if someone is convicted of mistreating or neglecting his pet, he is forbidden from ever owning a pet again – and no one in his household can have a pet. In many cases, it's elderly people suffering from dementia who mean no harm – but if they can't take care of themselves, they're no good for a pet. Unfortunately, Flanders lacks the same kind of prohibition.

**Interview by Steven Tate**

## THE LAST WORD

### what they're saying in Flanders

#### Word power

"A lack of knowledge of languages like French or Dutch in Belgium is a source of social inequality."

**Yves Leterme**  
prime minister  
defending the wooncode on  
Euronews

#### The taxman cometh

"Officially we don't exist here, but the tax authorities managed to find us. I would happily pay tax if it meant I could stay in the country."

**Anonymous illegal immigrant**  
on receiving a tax declaration

#### Unexpected success

"We never expected such a success. They were lining up to the corner of the street. All waiting patiently in line."

**Guy Prieels**  
art gallery owner  
on the opening of an exhibition  
by Delphine Boël

**DiamondsinAntwerp** **ArgosMedia**  
**Centre** **CourtMetrage** **Evermarus**  
**Tongerenprison** **Graphicinnovati**  
**ons** **Zalmstreek** **PolderMuseum**  
**next week in Flanders Today**