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Reut

All that glitters

Diamonds are forever, but Antwerp has to work hard to keep the industry in town

Marc Maes

The *Diamond Divas* exhibition is certainly a glittering affair. It brings together 74 unique items, from silent movie star Gloria Swanson's bracelets to Madonna's marriage tiara. Visitors can also gawp at Sarah Jessica Parker's earrings, designed by none other than Antwerp's Francis Mertens.

The exhibition at Antwerp's Diamond Museum was organised by the Antwerp World Diamond Centre (AWDC), following up on their two crowd-pulling 1990s shows *From the Treasury* and their 2005 *Living Diamonds*, in which they showed how flora and fauna influences diamond jewellery designs.

The goal of *Diamond Divas* is not just to showcase expensive

bling, but to underline the vital importance of the diamond industry to Antwerp's economy. "Diamonds are what we know best here in Antwerp," says Philip Claes, head of corporate affairs at AWDC. "With no less than 80% of all rough diamonds passing through Antwerp and 50% of all polished diamonds, this industry represents a turnover of more than €26.5 billion and direct and indirect employment for almost 30,000 people."

It has taken two years to plan *Diamond Divas*. The AWDC has been in negotiations with jewellery owners, museums, designers, auctioneers, as well as overseeing transport and security measures. The final result offers an astonishing insight into the personalities of the women at the forefront of diamond



Glittering prizes: Antwerp exhibition puts Grace Kelly's diamond collection in the spotlight

jewellery fashions – women with charisma, intelligence and audacity.

The exhibition is staged on three floors of the Diamond Museum because, explains Jennie Baeten, AWDC special events manager, "we have three kinds of 'diamond divas' – the rich and famous, royalty and Hollywood stars." Each theme is reflected in the colour of the display – blue for crowned heads, beige for the rich and famous and a red-carpet shade for the movie stars.

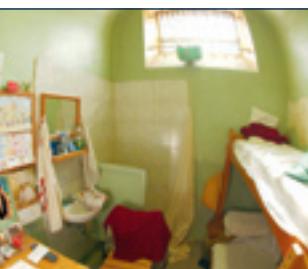
Without a doubt, Grace Kelly is

the star of the show. The Academy-Award winning actress and Princess of Monaco until her death in 1982 is present on all three of the exhibition floors. Five pieces of jewellery are on display: her engagement ring with emerald-cut diamonds (which she wore in the movie *High Society*), the Cartier necklace offered to her by Prince Rainier as a wedding present and a set of three Cartier brooches.

A delegation from the Principality of Monaco attended the exhibition opening on 11 April. A spokes-

person commented to *Flanders Today*: "The Palace of Monaco and his Serene Highness Prince Albert II was enthusiastic on being asked to take part in the exhibition. Princess Grace of Monaco embodied all three of the main themes, and her family gladly lent five jewels because this exhibition clearly fits into their goal of bringing the Principality of Monaco and the legacy of Princess Grace closer to a large international public".

Continued on page 3



Business

A research centre in Borgerhout, near Antwerp, has been monitoring the flow of the River Scheldt for the past 75 years. It's now working on a project to develop new locks on the Panama Canal.

9

Arts

The 800 inhabitants of Ruttel re-enact the story of Saint Evermarus every year. Terrible things could happen if they don't.

11

Active

The old prison in Tongeren is dank, cold and smelly. So why would anyone want to put a museum here?

12

Hoegaarden comes home

Flemish *witbier* back where it belongs

Alan Hope

After an absence of more than two years, when it looked as if a centuries-old brewing tradition had come to a definitive end, the celebrated Hoegaarden white beer, known as *witbier*, has returned to its home town. The beer will begin to be brewed again in June, but visitors to last weekend's National Brewers' Open Day got the chance to inspect the new renovated De Kluis brewery at close quarters.

The decision to move the brewing of *witbier* from Hoegaarden was taken in November 2005 by InBev, its giant Belgo-

Brazilian owner. The decision caused immediate uproar among traditionalists and beer-lovers alike, who lamented the departure of a beer that dates back to at least the 14th century.

To add to the furore, the beer's move to Jupille near Liège was attacked by the company's own experts: it seemed as if the beer itself was protesting, as InBev brewers were unable to get the same world-beating results in Jupille as they were used to in Hoegaarden.

Continued on page 5

EDITOR'S CHOICE



A Belgian engineer and a British Fusilier fix a phone wire in September, 1918

Brave Little Belgium

Ninety years ago, the Allied armies were struggling to win a war that had dragged on for four years. The small Belgian army had spent most of it protected by the flooded Ijzer river, but in the spring of 1918 they were called on to leave the relative safety of their trenches and capture the village of Passchendaele, which had already been taken by the Allies the previous year but subsequently lost to the German army.

The Belgians fought hard to gain the Passchendaele ridge, losing in just a few weeks one third of its total war dead. The graveyards of Belgium are filled with soldiers whose tombs carry dates from the spring of 1918.

This campaign has largely been forgotten by historians, overshadowed by earlier battles involving the French or British Empire armies, such as the Somme or Verdun. This ignorance comes partly from the fact that the military archives documenting the period were moved by the German army to Berlin in the Second World War. After the fall of Berlin, they were seized by the Russian army and taken to the Soviet Union, where they lay under dust for more than 40 years.

The vast collection was

returned to Brussels just a few years ago and researchers at the army museum are still sifting through the files. To mark the 80th anniversary of the Armistice, the Passchendaele Museum in Zonnebeke – built bang on top of the old German trenches – has organised the exhibition *Brave Little Belgium* with some of the repatriated war photographs. One of the most evocative shows a large Belgian dog being used to haul a gun through the mud.

The museum is holding a weekend of activities on 26-27 April devoted to the Belgian army and its role in the final advance to victory. The programme includes a First World War re-enactment by 150 participants from eight countries. The organisers hope to evoke the conditions in the front line by constructing a first-aid post and wheeling out several old guns. There will also be conferences, concerts, a military service and guided walks across the old battlefields. By the end of the weekend, participants should know a lot more about what happened in the closing months of the war.

Derek Blyth

online

www.passchendaele.be



The road from Zonnebeke to Ypres in October, 1918

FACE OF FLANDERS



Bumba

Flanders' newest ambassador to the Middle East is a short little guy in a yellow smock, with a huge head, a red nose and one single tuft of hair. His name is Bumba, and he's rapidly proving to be the biggest international celebrity Flanders has ever produced.

The creation of Flemish TV and film producer Studio 100, Bumba was developed in 2004 to allow the production studio to grab a piece of the under-3 market it had previously all but ignored. Until then, its only toddler-oriented property was *Wizzy & Woppy*, a pair of hysterical mice whose friends are a parrot and a tortoise, all played by adult humans in masks. It may be the most frightening children's show of all time.

Bumba, by contrast, is a sweet plush clown who lives in a circus with his friend Bumbalu, who's also a clown, his other friend Zazati, who's described as either "Chinese" or "a little Asian boy" and various animals: Tumbi the elephant, Pantuf the hippo, Kiwi the bird and Nanadu the bear. Bumba and his friends have fun, occasionally with a message, and they do it all within the space of five minutes.

That kind of simplicity is something TV stations the world over are looking for to cater to the demanding toddler market. Not that anyone wants the little ones to veg out in front of the TV; the appeal is all to do with merchandising. Belgians spend €363 million a year on non-electronic toys or €235 for each little darling. Bumba is only five minutes of telly a day, but he's also a CD Rom, picture books, colouring books, bath-time books, DVDs, biscuits, clothing, shoes, plush toys, plastic toys, bedding, cutlery, beakers and plates.

The world is eating it up. Bumba was quickly a hit here and, because he talks nonsense, he travels very well indeed: first French-speaking Belgium, then Israel and Canada, then Spain and India, and finally the Middle East. Bumba has been bought by Al Jazeera for broadcast to 32 nations.

There's never been anything like it in any Belgian medium. The 1960s series *Herge's Adventures of Tintin* travelled far and wide, but it was a French production. And Studio 100 aims to go further than that milestone. They're now working closely with the BBC on another children's series and have obtained the distribution rights for three BBC properties, as well as a number of German-owned classics, including the 1969 live-action series *Pippi Longstocking*. The company looks set for big things, with Bumba as their figurehead. And what a head it is.

Alan Hope

TALKING DUTCH

notes on language



ik wou dat ik

When you slip into pensive mood, you may ponder over how things might have been: if only I had held on to the rope, I shouldn't have let go, I wish I had held on longer. Life can be a long, sad string of regrets.

You can be equally regretful in Dutch with a little practice. Sometimes I wish I wrote better Dutch: *ik wou dat ik beter Nederlands schreef*. Certainly, I have a few regrets, but really too few to mention. But perhaps others have more to lament. Ever curious, I typed "*ik wou dat ik*" into everyone's favourite search engine to see. This resulted in hundreds upon thousands of hits where people express their wish for the unlikely, if not the impossible.

Some required no further investigation to know what the writers regretted: *ik wou dat ik kon dansen* – clearly someone with two left feet on the dance floor. Same for *ik wou dat ik een diamanten ring voor jou kon kopen* – I suppose it's the thought that counts, though diamonds really are a girl's best friend. Whereas *ik wou dat ik van hem af was* must have been written by someone who has fallen out of love. It translates into the strangely poetic: "I wish that I was from him off".

But what about *ik wou dat ik je kon vergeten*? Why does one want to forget the other? I didn't want to pry so scrolled further. Others hark back to their youth: *ik wou dat ik niet zo dom was geweest te stoppen met pianoles*. Yes, you should have continued with those piano lessons. One oldie despairs: *ik wou dat ik de tijd terug kon draaien* – sorry but you can't turn the clock back.

Other entries are not what they seem. I thought someone was envying a friend's shapely legs with *ik wou dat ik uw benen had*. But then I saw mention of a running club. Similarly, *ik wou dat ik onzichtbaar was* turned out to be a suicidal cry for help and not some childish longing to be invisible. Then I came across some song lyrics. Marcel de Groot sings: *En ik wou dat ik je zeggen kon: ik blijf voor altijd bij je* – I wish I could say to you: I will always be with you. I wouldn't get too close when you sing that, Marcel.

Veldhuis & Kemper sing – and this is where two becomes one and I becomes you – *ik wou juist dat ik jou was*, a song in which he is so desperate to get close to his love that he wishes he were her, which seems to spoil the point.

The strangest was the hit about two little dogs: *ik wou dat ik twee hondjes was, dan kon ik samen spelen* – I wish that I were two little dogs, then I could play together. Perhaps something got lost in the translation, which is regrettable.

Alistair MacLean

Online

www.vandaele.be

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FEATURE

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Blondes prefer diamonds: Marilyn Monroe in a diamond necklace on view at *Diamond Divas*

Antwerp keeps its sparkle

Continued from page 1

The lavish *Diamond Divas* proves that Antwerp is trying once again to position itself as the "diamond capital of the world". But the diamond industry is facing some serious challenges. In the past, Antwerp was regarded as the world's main diamond business centre, but its dominant role has been challenged by African diamond-producing countries entering the manufacturing and sales market (known in the trade as the "beneficiation process").

In addition, De Beers, the world's leading diamond company, has entered into a joint venture with the Botswana government to create the world's largest diamond production company in Gaborone. Named DTC Botswana, this is set to become a huge centre for the manufacturing, sorting and distribution of diamonds.

"We are aware of this change in the market, and it's our mission to respond to this evolution," says Philip Claes of AWDC. "We know what's going on: in the 1960s we had some 30,000 diamond polishers in the greater Antwerp region. Now, with the increasing impact of wages, there are less than 1,000."

Claes also notes that manufacturing has shifted from Antwerp to low-cost countries like India, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. "We cannot compete against them, since Belgium is part of Europe with a well-defined socio-economic climate. But the diamond business is not alone in that position – just take a look at the textile industry."

Diamond polishing activities used to be concentrated in Antwerp and Tel-Aviv, but India is believed to now have one million polishers. "The labour costs in India are four to five times lower than in Africa. As a result, I predict that the African beneficiation process will be a difficult one," he argues.

Antwerp and Tel-Aviv continue to be prime locations for the manufacture of larger stones, while the very small items are cut in India, since the cost of cutting stones diminishes as the weight increases. "Antwerp is relying on its expertise and tradition in manufacturing stones, despite the fact that some of the know-how was exported by Antwerp companies who opened subsidiaries in India or Africa," explains Claes.

He cites the case of the "Lesotho Promise", example the 15th largest

rough diamond ever found (603 carats). The government of Lesotho and GEM Diamond Ltd, who exploit the Letseng mine, opted for Antwerp to tender and manufacture the diamond. "We have the critical mass in Antwerp," Claes says. "The major players for such transactions are based here. That's our strength."

There are other challenges facing Antwerp as well as Tel-Aviv and Mumbai. New York is the point of entry for the United States – the world's biggest consumer market for polished diamonds, with some 50% of all polished diamonds sold there. And Dubai is another rival, offering companies who open offices there a 50-year "tax holiday".

"In these rapidly changing times, Antwerp has the crucial assets for a healthy future," comments Freddy J Hanard, CEO of AWDC. "Alongside the critical mass of manufacturers and buyers, Antwerp is home to over 1,800 registered diamond companies. It offers a transparent market, with an excellent financial backbone made up of specialised banks like ABN Amro and Antwerpse Diamantbank. But Antwerp's main asset is our political, social and economic stability. Antwerp offers a more solid

climate than any other diamond centre."

The Antwerp diamond industry also benefits from substantial government support from the Flemish and federal authorities, as well as from the Province and City of Antwerp. Hanard argues that it is essential to the industry to maintain a healthy legal and fiscal climate, and to strive for the stringent implementation of trade regulations.

"Antwerp played a pioneering role in tackling the problem of conflict diamonds [used to finance African wars] and the fight against money-laundering practices, but we regret to see that these rules have not been so strictly implemented abroad," he says. "The AWDC continues to demand a level playing field to ensure that our diamond companies are not driven to less stringent countries. We punish ourselves and see our clients leave. The government has to realise that the diamond industry is a cornerstone of our economy and makes Antwerp – and Flanders – the shop window for the world."

establish the Kimberley Process – a unique certificate identifying each shipment of rough diamonds and its origin."

Antwerp had already been operating a unique controlling mechanism established after the Second World War. The Diamond Office takes on physical control of each shipment of diamonds: rough, polished and industrial stones. "The control is carried out by experts and based on the shipment's value. It documents the weight and the qualification of the diamonds, and, in case of rough goods, the Kimberley certificate. We're proud to say that this system is the most rigorous in the world and serves as an example to other centres," Claes says. "This counters the suspicion about conflict diamonds that once tainted Antwerp's reputation. Everybody acknowledges that this system is by far the most effective, although I must admit that no system offers perfect security."

Still, in the past, blood diamonds accounted for about 4% of all rough diamonds, which dropped to just 0.2% in 2007, according to European Commission figures.

"The system works, and the Kimberley Process is now promoted internationally by our government as an example of a tool to trace back a number of other natural resources," Claes says. "We have certainly taken our responsibility seriously."

So modern diamond divas like Sarah Jessica Parker can wear their diamonds with a clean conscience.

Diamond Divas, 11 April-8 June, Diamond Museum, Astridplein 19, Antwerp

Online

www.awdc.be
www.diamonddivas.be



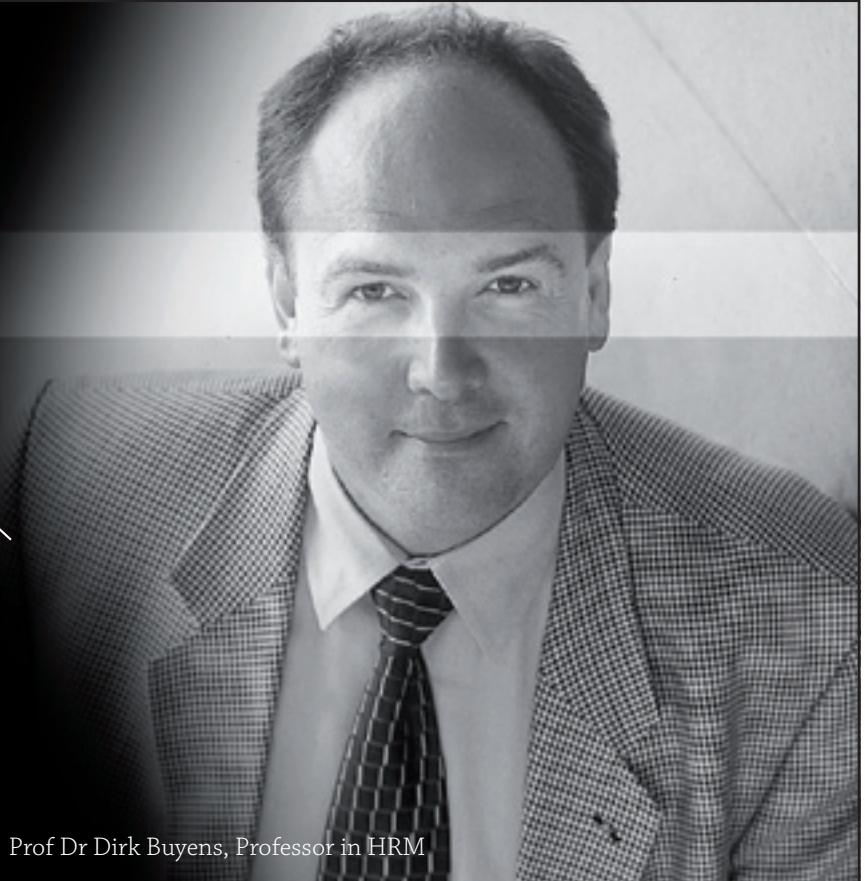
The Moon of Baroda necklace contains a diamond worn by Marilyn Monroe at the premiere of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and in the photograph above

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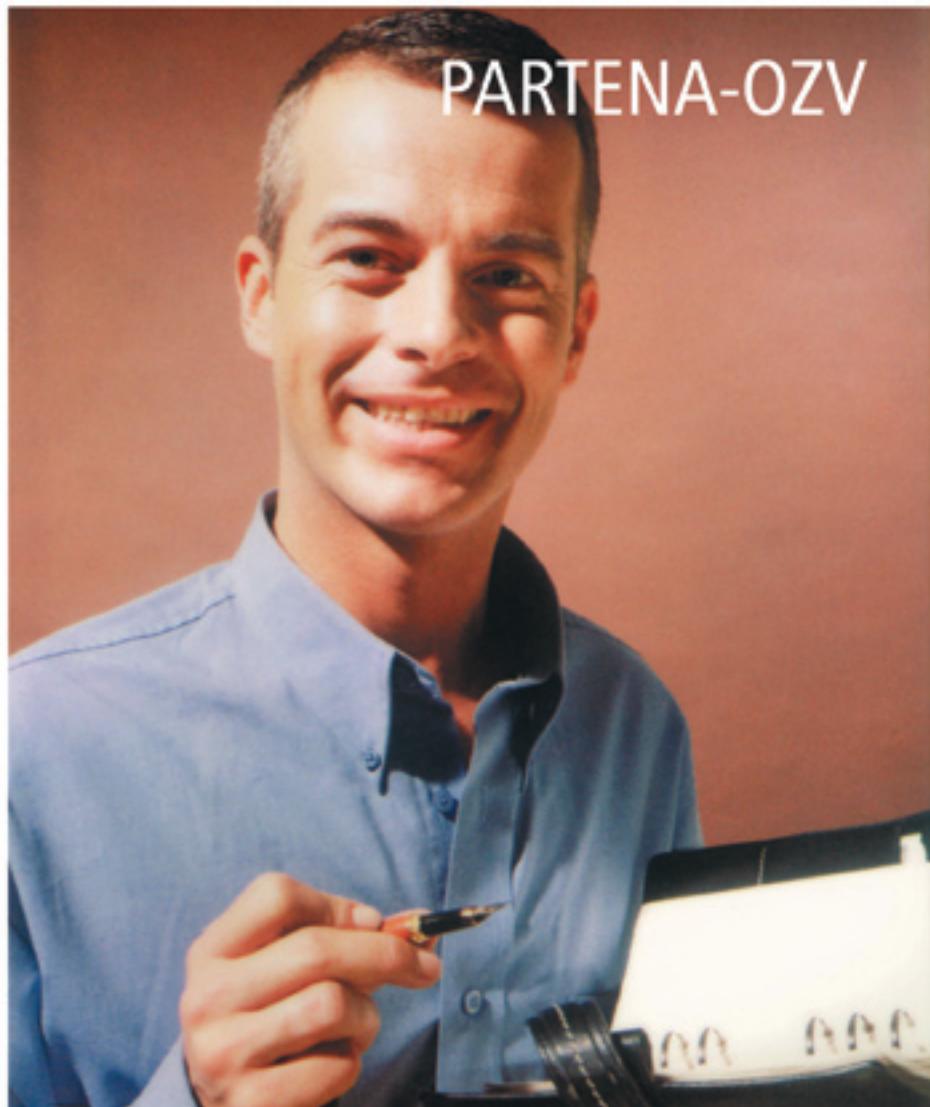
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Join us at our info session! 5 May, 7.30 pm, Leuven Campus

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Beer comes home

Continued from page 1

Production was still in full swing at both sites in January 2006 when InBev insisted the Hoegaarden plant would definitely close, although Jupille could not overcome its production problems. Then in September the company finally relented: the exiled *witbier* would go back home. The town reacted with flags and banners – and a party where beers were sold for 50 cents a glass.

Production will be restored just in time for the summer rush and with capacity increased to one million hectolitres a year. The plant will also begin producing the new Hoegaarden Citroen, with the traditional slice of lemon added in the bottle.

RTL plans move into Flanders

RTL's move into the Flemish TV arena is "a matter of months" away, according to group CEO Gerhard Zeiler. The news from the top of the company confirms long-standing rumours, although the mechanics of the move are still not known. It has long been suspected that RTL might make a bid for VTM, the private station set up in 1989 and owned by VMMa, a joint venture between de Persgroep (*De Morgen*, *Dag Allemaal*) and Roularta (*Knack*, *Q Music*). Both partners made it clear that their shares were not for sale, at which point RTL threatened to buy Vitaya or set up in direct competition to existing stations.

According to Persgroep CEO Christian Van Thillo, the latter option would be "impossible". Existing channels have long-term contracts for TV shows and films in place. A full family broadcaster would need to have a news operation, he said – although VT4 managed for years without one. And the Flemish market is limited in size. "The market is what it is," Van Thillo said. "There is no space left over."

"We certainly want to be present in Flanders in the future," Zeiler said. "That is absolutely necessary to secure our strong position in Belgium. The negotiations are under way."

Theory of evolution

The theory of evolution is not being taught by all teachers in Flanders, according to Ghent University professor Johan Braekman, who has been given the job of making Darwins' theory better-known to the public. Some teachers with religious convictions are refusing to teach evolution, particularly in Limburg province where there is a strong Pentecostal movement. The problem is especially serious in the lower schools, where evolution is not part of the curriculum, but where teachers are able to impress their views on their pupils.

Online transactions up 60% in 2007

Online purchases by Belgians rose by 60% in value in 2007, the biggest rise yet, albeit from a fairly low base. The retail sales federation Fedis, which produced the figures, said the increase demonstrates a growing confidence on the part of consumers in dealing with online payments. Fedis, together with distance selling group BeCommerce, are now asking the government to change the law that forbids sellers from asking for a deposit.

The law as it stands provides for customers in any distance-selling transaction to enjoy a seven-day cooling-off period during which the contract may be cancelled without penalty. The law considers that provision incompatible with the requirement to pay a deposit. Belgium is the only EU country that has this law.

Arguing from the sellers' side, Fedis and BeCommerce maintain that the inability to ask for a deposit puts an enormous burden on the sellers of expensive items, such as televisions and computers, who are forced to deliver their goods with no security of payment whatsoever. The problem has not stopped more sellers from finding their way onto the web: there are now about 2,600 Belgian web-sellers, with an average of two new ones coming online every day.

NEWS FLASH



Barely one in 25 passersby in a street in central Antwerp stopped to look at the art masterpiece on the wall of the building in front of them. The work, from the series *Exhibit*, was a painting by Luc Tuymans, one of Belgium's most celebrated living artists. It was being exhibited as publicity for the launch of a new website by the radio station Klara. The traffic in front of the painting was filmed by a hidden camera. "Art is about passing on ideas, even if it's only for a few seconds," commented Tuymans. The work will stay in place until 25 April and will then be painted over.

Thousands of people in Belgium, mainly women of Middle-Eastern or Asian origins, face so-called "honour" related violence every year, according to an investigation carried out by *Knack* magazine. In most cases, problems revolve around girls having relationships outside the family culture or sexual behaviour and dressing in ways considered too "Western". A senior policeman told the magazine that the federal police "have no expertise" in dealing with the problem.

Beaver population doubles



The population of wild beavers in the area of the Dijle south of Leuven has doubled in the last five years and now stands at 40, according to Mechelen-based forest ranger and beaver expert Jorn Van den Bogaert. Another 10 or so are living in neighbouring Brabant Wallon.

The beavers are the descendants of about 20 that were illegally released in the area of Huldenberg and Oud-Heverlee five years ago. Prior to that, the population had died out following widespread hunting in the 19th century. The creatures are considered a problem because of the damage they cause to dykes, riverbanks and plants.

The city of Leuven has only one homeless person living on the street, a 30-year-old who has been staying in a parking garage for two months after family troubles forced him out of his house. Geert Beuken left home in December last year and lived in a hut in the woods for a time before being brought to a shelter by police. He then moved into the parking garage, where he is allowed to use the shower facilities in an adjacent sports centre. Other homeless people in Leuven are housed by the social assistance authorities.

Interior minister Patrick Dewael has promised more policemen on Brussels public transport to cope with the continuing wave of violence directed at drivers. Local police zones will be questioned on their patrol needs, with extra manpower coming from the reserves of the federal intervention team if necessary. An extra 200 police officers are to be recruited to back up the transport authority's own security service. Last week another driver was attacked on a bus in Molenbeek, receiving minor injuries.

No scientists this year

This year will see no scientists graduating with Masters degrees from Belgian universities. Last year the duration of the Masters course was extended from one to two years, which means students who might have expected to graduate in the summer will now have to study an extra year. It is estimated that the new rule means that about 1,100 highly-educated young people will not be joining the workforce this year – a blow to companies that are having trouble filling job vacancies as it is.

NEWS BRIEFS

Left-leaning Flemish party

Spirit will henceforth be known as VlaamsProgressiven, after the party leaders agreed unanimously to the only alternative proposed. The party also took the opportunity to restate its agenda, which it placed on a footing with the Liberal Democrats in the UK, the PRG in France and the Scottish National Party. The platform consists of eight points which include rent-capping, free child care for all families and a more equitable prices index.

Belgium's roadworks are badly coordinated, leading to delays, accidents and economic costs, according to a study carried out by the motoring organisation VAB and the transport industry federation Fefetra. In one example, lane closures on the E17 direction Ghent coincided with roadworks and tailbacks on all main alternative routes. The VAB reckons the cost of delays for that one road on that one day alone to be €288,300. And that doesn't account for accidents and environmental damage. The two groups called on the Flemish region government to improve coordination, repeating a demand previously accepted by public works minister Kris Peeters, now first minister.

Thomas Claus, the son of the late Flemish writer Hugo Claus, has a novel approaching completion and is on the lookout for a publisher, he revealed last week. Thomas, 44, is the son from Claus' first marriage to actress Elly Overzier. He described the work as "part fiction, part autobiography". He worked on the manuscript over a period of six years, while working part time for courier service DHL.

Former prime minister **Guy Verhofstadt** has been appointed to the board of the Dutch pensions group APG. The group has just agreed a takeover of pension fund Cordares, bringing its number of participants to four million, for a total managed fund of €240 billion. APG said Verhofstadt was chosen – together with former Dutch politician Paul Rosenmöller – because of his understanding of the greying of Europe's population. A spokesman for Verhofstadt said he had taken the post out of conviction and had no plans to collect a number of board seats.

A marketing and strategy blog started two years ago by two friends from Tervuren is up against the *Financial Times* and *Business Week* to win one of this year's prestigious Webbies, the awards for websites given out by the International Academy for Digital Arts and Science. The Futurelab blog began when clients of the consultancy run by Alain Thys and Stefan Kolle began questioning the usefulness of blogs. "It seemed the best way to be able to explain was to start one ourselves," says Kolle.

Universal Music threatens papers over dEUS interview



Universal Music has said it will "take steps" against newspapers *De Morgen* and *Le Soir* for breaking an embargo placed by the company on an interview with pop group dEUS and front-man Tom Barman. According to Universal, all of the journalists who interviewed Barman signed a form stating they would respect the embargo, or risk a fine of €25,000.

De Morgen editor Yves Desmet described the deal as a "stranglehold contract that was a step too far. That's why we published the dEUS piece one symbolic day in advance, after letting our colleagues know what we were doing." Desmet argued that foreign publications that are readily available here had published interviews with the band in the week before the Belgian press were given access. "Universal broke the terms of its own embargo," he said.

Le Soir also published its piece, describing the Universal terms as "an attack on press freedom". Universal points out that no-one was obliged to interview Barman, and so no-one was forced to sign anything. The next stage is not clear. "If need be, we will fight this out in court," Desmet said.

New generic medicines could save €200 million



Belgian producers of generic medicines are standing by to bring new cheap substitutes to market to replace brand-name drugs whose patents are about to expire over the next three years. According to the federation representing the sector, FeBel-Gen, the switch to generic substitutes could save the health-care system a minimum of €200 million a year – and savings could be even greater if GPs would prescribe generics more often.

Generic drugs are compounds which are chemically identical to brand-name drugs, but which cannot be marketed while drug companies hold patents on their inventions, typically for 20 years from the time of applying for a licence, and in practice much less. Generics are cheaper to produce,

because the manufacturer does not need to amortise the costs of basic research and clinical trials. The federation bases its estimates of savings on a "shopping list" of 20 drugs due to come out of patent protection in the next three years, including drugs to fight cancer, high blood pressure and cholesterol.

Research carried out in the United States in 2002, however, showed that the savings in practice are lower than theory would suggest. Makers charge high prices initially, even while undercutting patent-holders. The generics sector is consolidating, meaning fewer companies and less stiff competition. One source of downward pressure on prices, though, will be the Third World: India is already a world leader in the production of generic drugs.

Dewael calls in "frightened" Russian diplomats

Interior minister Patrick Dewael has invited a delegation of diplomats from the Russian embassy in Brussels to explain their concerns over safety in the capital, following reports embassy staff were "frightened" by a recent spate of robberies affecting diplomats' families. The diplomats have complained that "Brussels is more dangerous than Moscow" and that police are reluctant to investigate fully.

The latest incident took place last week, when the wife of the military attache to Nato was the victim of robbers, who blocked her car, smashed the windows and tried to make off with personal items. The woman resisted and sustained minor injuries, and the thieves fled. This is the sixth such incident in three months in the centre of Brussels. "If the Belgian government doesn't take action right away, said embassy spokesman Igor Simininko, "we will be forced to transport our diplomats and their wives through Brussels in armoured cars, accompanied by armed agents."

School-leavers finding it easier than ever to find work

Secondary school graduates have never found work so easily, according to the latest figures from the employment authority VDAB. Only 10.9% of all those who left school between February 2006 and January 2007 (77,766 in all) were still registered as unemployed a year later – 2% lower than a year previously, and an all-time low. And only 3% had had no work experience at all in the year since leaving school, another 2% reduction on the year.

Women on the whole did slightly better than men at finding jobs. The best-performing region was West Flanders, with fewer than 10% still unemployed and only 2% with no work experience. Young people in Limburg found it toughest to get their feet on the career ladder: 13.6% were still jobless at the end of the first year.

Koekelberg teen wins BBC award

Rozeanne Descheemaeker from Koekelberg is the winner of the Belgian final of the BBC Public Speaking Awards 2008, held last weekend in the Flemish Parliament. Rозеanne, aged 17, spoke for five minutes on the topic "Language is a barrier to integration". She now goes on to the international final in London in May, where the theme will be "New Horizons, New Frontiers". The Awards are organised jointly by the BBC and the English Speaking Union. The Flemish final, in collaboration with Telenet, was the first time the awards have come here. Next year the whole of Belgium is due to take part. "Despite the stress, I thought my speech went well," Rозеanne said later. "But still I never thought I would win".



The new Flemish House in New York City will be housed in the new New York Times building on Eighth Avenue in the Times Square area (pictured). The Flemish House, intended to be a focus point for trade and investment, will take up the 44th floor of the new building, designed by celebrity architect Renzo Piano. The premises will also house Flanders Tourism.

The price of printing

While trade is up, the printing industry is worried about the lack of local education

Alan Hope

For the first time in three years, Belgium's printing industry is enjoying a positive trade balance with the rest of the world. With increase exports, growth is approaching three percent. But investment is down by more than 12%, and there are mixed feelings regarding the new generation coming into the business.

That's the slightly nuanced message coming out of a press event staged last week to boost the industry in the lead-up to one of the most important events on its calendar: the two-week Drupa trade show in Dusseldorf, which begins at the end of May.

Drupa only happens once every four years and is known as "the Olympics of the graphic arts industry". The last show attracted 400,000 visitors from 127 countries and nearly 2,000 exhibitors. Germany, logically, is the biggest exhibitor at Drupa this year, with Belgium in 10th place, more than the size of the country might suggest. Belgian companies occupy 3,000 square metres of space, compared to 7,000 for the UK, for example.

Belgium, in fact, is esteemed in the international print world, with a long history in the industry: the first successful professional printer was Christoffel Plantijn, who ran 16 presses and had 70 employees – too many for him to be considered a small business in Flanders today. Even in modern times, the country can claim several honours: at the cutting edge, the Ghent PDF group sets international document standards. And in traditional products, Belgium can be found all over the world. Cartamundi playing cards and half the world's Bibles are all printed in Turnhout.

The industry as a whole – from pre-press to printing proper through to finishing (bookbinding, etc) – saw growth of 2.4% in 2007 compared with 2006, but investment dropped by more



than 12% to €223 million. That's explained, says Jan De Brabanter, secretary of industry federation Febelgra, by the high investment figures in previous years and the life-span of machinery, which means that many businesses simply don't require new large purchases. Those who do are likely to wait for Drupa.

In the meantime, exports grew in value last year by 5.75% to €1.3 million, with imports down by 2.5% to €1.1 million. Most exports go to France (42%) and the Netherlands (28%), while most imports come from the same two countries. The number of businesses in Belgium fell by nine, largely as a result of concentration. The number of jobs stands just short of 16,000, showing a slower rate of reduction than previous years.

Meanwhile, opinions differ on the subject of young people who are expected to take the industry through its next generation. There are two high schools in Flanders offering courses in graphics – in Ghent and in Turnhout – while universities like Ghent produce top-level engineers, according to

Guido Van der Schueren of EskoArtwork. "I would certainly not go abroad looking for people. They may be cheaper, but they are not of higher quality".

Wim Deblauwe of Punch Graphix, on the other hand, thinks it's "very hard to get good people. There are negative connotations associated with the industry. It's a very exciting industry, but you never hear that. We have some of the world's leaders here in Flanders, but they are not appreciated. In what other industry in the world could you get the top three in the world together for an event like this?" He's referring to Agfa, Punch Graphix and EskoArtwork, all present at the event.

"The level of graphics education is not high enough," adds Armin Van der Linden, the president of Febelgra. The industry has come up with a plan to put .05% of the total expenditures on salaries into a fund to support investment in education. "We still have the money in our pockets," he says. But the projects and the candidates did not come forward.

However, Jos Goetelen, in charge of training in graphic and digital media at the Turnhout high school, defends his students. "It's not possible," he says, "to teach every technique from flexography to packaging" in the course of a three-year bachelor's degree and reach the standard businesses require. "We have to go for breadth rather than depth," he says. "It's up to the industry to take the graduates on and train them from there."

Belgian banks face troubled future

Belgium's top three banks – Fortis, KBC and Dexia – face a difficult future with increased write-offs and dwindling revenue, according to a gloomy forecast produced by the French rating bureau Fitch. The report predicts reduced income for 2008 as a result of difficult market conditions, as well as increasing competition in the sector in Belgium – competition described in the report as "merciless".

The continuing effects of the credit crisis will involve further write-offs on bad debts, on top of the €2.4 billion chalked up by the top three in 2007. That echoes a warning given by KBC chairman André Bergen himself in the latest annual report.

Ratings by bureaus like Fitch and Moody's are crucial to banks' credit-worthiness and affect the rates banks are able to obtain on the money markets, either as borrowers or as lenders. That in turn affects the rates offered to customers, competitive position and profitability.

Online
www.drupa.de

BUSINESS FLASH



Shutterstock

Côte d'Or

Côte d'Or, the Halle-based chocolate manufacturer, now part of the US Kraft Food group, has inaugurated a €15 million production line to increase capacity by 30%. The move follows strong sales for chocolate bars, which increased by some 26% last year.

Volvo Europa Truck

Volvo Europa Truck, the Ghent affiliate of the Swedish automotive group, is to invest €15 million to increase capacity on its production of truck cabins. The move is part of the company's decision to expand its facilities, which last year produced 43,504 trucks, roughly 20% more than in 2006. Some 150 additional workers will be hired. Meanwhile, the company is gearing up to develop the production of trucks powered by hybrid engines combining diesel and electricity from the end of 2009.

Aspiravi

Aspiravi, the green energies producer controlled by Flemish municipalities, is seeking a concession in the North Sea to build a €1 billion wind farm. The project, the fourth of its kind on the Belgian seaboard, would be located some 30 kilometres from the coast. Aspiravi already operates 58 wind turbines on land.

Chiquita

US-based banana producer and distributor Chiquita will transfer its European headquarters from Antwerp to the Geneva area of Switzerland. The company blames the unfavourable tax and fiscal environment for the decision. Some 120 workers are affected by the decision.

Colruyt

Halle-based discount retailer Colruyt has inaugurated a €35 million investment in its Vlevico industrial butchery. The new facility, with a capacity of some 33,000 tonnes a year, will supply the group's stores in Belgium.

Martin's Hotels

Martin's Hotels, the Genval-based group that owns eight hotels throughout the country, has acquired the famous Orangerie in Bruges, considered one of the city's great small hotels. The company also has properties in Ghent, Leuven and Brussels.

Innogenetics

The Ghent-based biotechnology company Innogenetics has won a €6 million court case against the US Abbott pharmaceutical company for patents violation. The case goes back to September, 2005 and involves products used in treating hepatitis. Innogenetics will also receive royalties from Abbott on the products it sells.

Brussels Airport

Brussels Airport has had to postpone plans for its low-cost terminal beyond 2009 following the decision by municipalities bordering the airport to force the company to seek environmental and operation permits. Meanwhile, a job fair was organised last weekend at the airport by local companies seeking up to 1,000 workers to fill their vacancies.

Ahlers

Ahlers, the Antwerp-based logistics group, plans to build a €12 million warehouse in St Petersburg to increase storage and handling capacity of its Russian operation by 30% to a total of 42,000 square metres.

Bombardier Brugge

Bombardier Brugge will not close its factory despite losing a contract to build new rolling stock for rail authority NMBS, company boss André Navarri promised. "This is a company with a great deal of expertise in house, where great products are being manufactured," he said.



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ING 

Going with the flow

The Scheldt is a complex waterway with shifting currents and constant hazards. A research centre in Borgerhout has been observing the river for the last 75 years



A river runs through it: scale model of the River Scheldt

Marc Maes

Asprawling industrial building in the Antwerp district of Borgerhout contains a detailed model of the Congo River, along with models of the Port of Zeebrugge, the Scheldt estuary and a planned lock complex on the Panama Canal.

Now in its 75th year, the Flanders Hydraulics Research Centre (WL) was established in 1933 as a laboratory (Waterbouwkundig Laboratorium) to study the impact and influences of human intervention on the river Scheldt's natural system. It now analyses major infrastructure projects, such as dredging operations and the construction of the Deurganckdok, to assess their impact on the

river Scheldt basin. The recent plan to deepen the river – a key element in the expansion of Antwerp port – was also the subject of a long-term research project in WL's labs.

"The original idea behind the centre was to analyse the hydraulic aspects of infrastructure works and predict future scenarios using scale models of river basins, ports and locks," explains Frans Mostaert, the centre's division head. "We still work with scale models, but over the years the gathering of digital information has become much more crucial. The use of specialised software allows us to create realistic simulation systems which can be used to design infrastructure and provide advanced training for river pilots

responsible for shipping manoeuvres."

The deepening of the river Scheldt was preceded by more than eight years of research aimed at predicting the impact of the dredging operations on currents, tides and the ecosystem. WL researchers worked part of the time alongside Dutch colleagues from Delft Hydraulics to make full use of computer models and create sophisticated data based on present and past figures.

"The river is not a static element," explains Mostaert. "We have to take account of many factors such as the rise of the sea level and the extent of dredging work. We also study dangerous river passages on scale models to avoid collisions or accidents. During the deepening of the Scheldt project, we looked for the first time ever at all the factors involved, including economic needs, safety and ecological factors."

The WL falls under the Flemish government's Ministry for Public Works and Mobility. But, despite government backing, the centre is allowed to work with outside organisations such as research companies, engineering and design offices and universities. In the early years, the 130-member

organisation included some 15 engineers and a huge technical staff to build and maintain scale models, take measurements and collect data. In the 1990s, with the introduction of computerised models, staff numbers fell slightly.

"We noticed a shift towards the academic side, with a larger number of engineers and researchers," Mostaert says. In 2000, when they began to cooperate with external partners, they worked with a core team of 65 public servants from the Flemish government. "I'm convinced that this is a bonus, as we have more direct contact with our partners and exchange knowhow with them," says Mostaert.

All kinds of people use the facilities at the research centre. It is visited by students from Antwerp's Higher Maritime Institute, along with harbour pilots and even tug boat captains. The WL has two mock cabins fitted out like a ship's control bridge and equipped with computers to control factors like wind speed, visibility and river traffic.

"We offer the best material in the world," says Mostaert, "including a state-of-the-art simulator cabin." Moreover, the trainees help the WL to develop better models. "The feedback we get from river pilots is crucial."

The research centre continues to monitor some of the world's great ports and waterways, including a new lock complex on the

Panama Canal. "That project is of great international importance," Mostaert argues. "Our scale model allows engineers to study the impact on shipping while the project is still in the planning phase. We're hoping this will put the Flanders Hydraulics Research centre on the international map."

Open day

The Flanders Hydraulics Research Centre is organising a public open day on April 27 to mark its 75th anniversary. The WL was founded in 1933 as a hydraulics laboratory to study the River Scheldt basin. It became an independent hydraulics research service in 1945, carrying out assignments for the government and gathering research work on water engineering. The laboratory was split in 1979 into Flemish and Walloon departments. Eleven years later, the laboratory was taken over by the Flemish Region and merged with the Hydrological Research Service.

Online
www.watlab.be

To our readers

We launched *Flanders Today* in October 2007 with the aim of promoting lively writing on Flanders for a global readership. We want to offer our readers a broad range of stories covering news, business, culture and lifestyle. Over the past months, we have built up an exciting team of writers specialised in areas like science and business, but also passionate about odd areas such as abandoned buildings, folk museums and the Dutch language in Flanders.

Since starting out, we have received a steady stream of feedback from our readers which we have used to shape future issues. But it now seems the right moment to conduct a serious survey to find out what our readers really think about this weekly.

We can't write about every-

thing in a 16-page newspaper, so we have to make choices every week. Maybe you would like us to have more on a certain topic or to suggest a special issue on a specific theme. We'll take note of your points and incorporate them if we can into our long-term strategy.

One of our main goals every week is to encourage readers to go out and discover Flanders for themselves. So we're very pleased that Tourism Flanders-Brussels has agreed to offer our readers five tourism vouchers worth €100 as prizes in our special draw. All you need to do to qualify is fill out the online readers' survey and send it back to us. If you strike lucky, you could soon be enjoying a weekend at Knokke or cycling in the Flemish Ardennes.

Derek Blyth, Editor

Download the survey at
www.flanderstoday.eu

Return forms to:
Email: pr@flanderstoday.eu
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VISUAL ARTS



Seeing the light

Brussels' media centre conserves and catalogues Belgium's visual arts – until the money runs out

Ian Mundell

The new Argos exhibition on migration in Europe ranges far and wide, but its inspiration is just around the corner. "We are very close here to the Petit Château," says Paul Willemesen, curator of the show, referring to the large reception centre for asylum seekers Petit Château/Klein Kasteeltje on Negende Linielaan in Brussels. "If you go out in the street now, you will see people waiting to be picked up for black market jobs."

On top of this everyday contact, Willemesen was also inspired by works in the Argos collection. "We have four artists from Belgium who have done very good work over the years on the subject of migration," he explains. One even gives a voice to people staying in the Klein Kasteeltje centre. "We thought that since we had such interesting work, we should do something with the subject and take it further. What came out was the concept of focusing on Europe, of discussing the European entity."

Argos was established in 1989 as a distributor of artists' films, moving into its first space in 1996. It has changed places twice since then – the last time in 2006 – always remaining close to the canal area around IJzer metro station.

The present exhibition space on Werfstraat has the appearance of a hollowed-out industrial building, although before conversion it housed a pair of commercial galleries. "It's an extremely difficult space," Willemesen concedes. "We have these columns standing all over, and one easily falls into filling these things like small booths. That's something we really wanted to avoid because if you do that, it feels like an art fair."

The scope of Argos' activities has also expanded over the years, with a media library and publishing operation complementing the distribution, collecting and conserving of audiovisual art from Belgium and beyond. It also organises film screenings, symposia and other events, while helping artists realise new projects.

"Our core interest lies in the visual and audio-visual arts and also everything that intersects with these disciplines, like dance and literature, philosophy and critical



Browse and view movies and other visual art at the Argos media library

Moving people, moving images

No Place – Like Home: Perspectives on Migration in Europe has turned Argos into a transit camp, a centre for displaced art works. The majority of the artists featured are not primarily concerned with migration but have engaged with it to a greater or lesser degree in the course of their work. By detaching these pieces from their artistic contexts and grouping them together, curator Paul Willemesen insists on migration as their primary meaning. This creates interactions and sensations never intended by the artists.

Take "Capsular", by the Belgian video artist Herman Asselberghs. He meditates on the narrow stretch of water between Gibraltar and Ceuta, a Spanish enclave on the African coast, and the part this route plays in clandestine migration to Europe. While the migrants themselves are invisible in his work, a tiny monitor to one side of the large screen shows looped CCTV footage of a night in 2005 when hundreds of migrants stormed the fences around Ceuta, scaling them with makeshift ladders. This cheeky footnote is "The Mix-Up", by Spanish artist Miguel Abad.

Similar resonances are produced by juxtaposing pieces dealing with the Italian island of Lampedusa, where European sun seekers cross (but seldom meet) migrants heading north. But perhaps the strangest feeling comes from "Transformation always takes time and energy" by Bulgarian artist Pravdoliub Ivanov. This network of hotplates on the floor of the gallery, each with a simmering pan of water, mirrors the networks of transit camps and border crossings



Ursula Biemann's *Sahara Chronicle*

shown in other works.

Strong as these interactions are, the exhibition's most satisfying work is self-contained, part of the *Sahara Chronicle* by Swiss artist Ursula Biemann. Combining text and aerial surveillance photos, she explains how migrants build boats in the desert dunes before attempting the dangerous sea crossing to the Canary Islands. Provided as kits by traffickers, these boats look the part but are made from the wrong timber. They should be in a gallery, not on the sea.

IM

Until 21 June, Argos, Werfstraat 13, Brussels

theory," explains Willemesen, who was Argos' artistic director from 1996 to 2006, and who has recently taken up the role again.

Argos currently distributes about 900 video art works, while its archives hold 4,000, stretching back to the early days of video art in Belgium in the 1970s and forward to the present day. They include installations, photographs, creative documentaries and film essays.

While some of it can be quite esoteric, Willemesen thinks that the current exhibition *No Place – Like Home* is accessible and interesting to a wider audience. "If we show more visual art-related work, in a way we address a specific community," he says. "But this exhibition is different. If you are not completely into the visual arts, but you are engaged in the subject or interested in it politically, you can get it."

Efforts have been made to reach out to the people who work with migrants or who live in the local community, and Willemesen is pleased that 10 schools are already planning to visit the show.

Argos has not had an easy time financially. Although it works equally with Francophone and Flemish artists, it has never succeeded in persuading the French Community government to open its wallet. The Brussels Capital region makes a small contribution, but the main support comes from the Flemish Community.

When an anticipated rise in this subsidy failed to come through last year, Willemesen's successor as artistic director, Katerina Gregos, left, and the organisation restructured. It closed for a while, partly for building work but also to save money. After *No Place – Like Home* it will close again for the summer, reopening in October to participate in the first Brussels Biennale.

"What we would like to do more is make exhibitions that tour," Willemesen explains, "but in order to do that you have to work two years in advance, and often that time is missing here. Since we have so many functions with a limited staff, we are somewhat handicapped. It is something we can work on in the future if we have more people. That would be nice."

Online
www.argosarts.org

The orders of a saint

The people of Rutten must re-enact the story of Saint Evermarus every year. Or else.

Monique Philips

Rutten, with its many sturdy square-built farmhouses, is a typical Haspengouw village, which benefits from its surrounding fertile fields and rich crops. Once a year, on 1 May, the whole town of 800 gets involved in the oldest re-enactment in the Low Countries: the Sint-Evermarus mystery play.

Historians agree that the play probably has roots in the 7th century and is based on a Celtic ritual, hence the eight pilgrims and the eight lime trees around the chapel (the number 8 symbolising the Celtic calendar). The fact is that the people of Rutten strongly believe that their patron saint, Sint-Evermarus, continues to bring them good fortune and fortitude.

The story goes something like this: On their way home from Santiago de Compostela, the Frisian nobleman Evermarus and his seven companions got lost in the woods around Rutten. The lady of the local castle gave them food and shelter and sent them back on their way, warning them about her Christian-hating husband Hacco. As the latter returned home, he and his gang of highway men, the Haccours, set pursuit and hunted down the pilgrims near a well. They were beheaded and left unburied.

Three hundred years later in 968 the remains of Evermarus were discovered and buried. His head seemed to glow. A chapel was built against the wishes of the local bishop, who refused to enter it, and in his stead talking stags appeared and performed a play. This play



A lone surviving pilgrim beats off the evil Haccours during the Saint Evermarus mystery play in the Limburg village of Rutten

was to be re-enacted every year by the locals on 1 May. And if they don't do it, the stags will.

The play consists of two parts. The first, known as the "Martyr" portion, is acted out near the chapel. Masses are performed three times during the day, and all the actors walk three times around the chapel, carrying a statue of the saint. Seven pilgrims, adorned with Frisian hats and Saint Jacob shells, take a drink from the sacred well and rest, each under one of the lime trees, protected by eight angels. Here they are found by the Haccours and are slain.

The youngest pilgrim manages

to escape to the Black Meadow, where the second part of the story unfolds. He gets to beat Hacco and his horsemen with his cane before being killed himself. Ludwig Bollaers, who graciously left his part as the youngest pilgrim to his brother Stefan, explains how in former days this part of the story provided the perfect occasion for a local with a grudge to give his proverbial enemies a good beating.

Occasionally, the re-enactment is altered in response to current affairs. You can recognise the Haccours by their red coats, white trousers, feathered hats and

Belgian draught horses. A few years ago, when a public order prohibited the transportation of livestock, the Haccours, true to their plight, followed the procession on foot.

Mercifully, Saint Evermarus must have considered this a *hierkracht* (unavoidable circumstance) because, as Bollaers warns, "if something is changed about the play, this can end badly for the person who made the changes. In the 1960s, someone rewrote the play and mangled it badly. Well, he didn't live to see it."

There are other such stories in the consciousness of the

townspeople. One year, one of the actors who played a pilgrim died. "His replacement should step into his exact place, but the one who played Evermarus, who's head of the pilgrims, told him to walk at the end of the line," says Bollaers. "He even took the replacement's shells to put them on the deceased's coffin. The other six pilgrims warned him not to be stubborn, but he went ahead, and he died within the year. On the next May 1, you could hear his voice across the meadow. It still gives me goose bumps."

Indeed, whenever a pilgrim is replaced, legend says you will hear his voice ringing out of the mouth of his successor. Such a replacement and the order of pilgrims are strictly regulated. These particular roles are passed down from father to son, and only to those born in Rutten.

When I asked Bollaers if the actors aren't afraid to do something wrong in the eyes of Saint Evermarus, he laughed heartedly. "That's the way it is," he says.

In the 1960s, the people of Rutten added two figures to open and close the play: the Wild Men. Totally covered in ivy leaves, one of them welcomes the crowds to the play and the other one invites residents to the ensuing fair. Fortunately without any disastrous consequences.

For details on the Evermarus festival, contact the tourist office of Tongeren at 012.39.02.55

Online

www.evermarus.be

FILM FREAK

Nollywood aan de Schelde

Though I would never recommend TV ahead of a real, live cinema, if you don't have the chance to see *Nollywood aan de Schelde* at the Opendoek Film Festival in Turnhout this coming Saturday, you have another opportunity on 30 April on Canvas. The film is an interesting mixture of African culture, immigration issues in Antwerp and the Nigerian film industry – the third largest in the world.

Armed with a Master's Degree in Creative Documentary and plenty of technical experience, Saartje Geerts was contemplating subjects for her first film. She began haunting the African video shops near Antwerp's Central Station, which are chock full of "Nollywood" DVDs. Though Nigeria has almost no cinemas, they are the third largest producer of films, behind the United States

(Hollywood) and India (Bollywood). The movies are released on video and DVD and are now popular all over Africa, as well as with Nigerian immigrants around the world.

Through a video shop owner, Geerts met John Onas Omoregi, a Nigerian immigrant making Nollywood-style films in Antwerp. This was the subject she'd been looking for. She would film Omoregi while he made his next movie.

Then, right before they were to start, Omoregi was arrested on charges of aiding prostitution and human trafficking. "I was really shocked," says Geerts. "I thought I was going to make something about Nollywood and from there about Nigerian immigrants in Antwerp and their typical problems."

Instead, she waited for six

months, while Omoregi was in jail and then another five when he was moved to a detention centre for illegal immigrants. Finally, he was free and began making another movie – about his recent experiences and how he felt that he was unjustly accused. Geerts still made a movie about him making his movie, but all the subjects changed.

Omoregi's film, *Desperate Hearts*, which is now available where Nollywood films are rented or sold, explains his involvement with a young woman he helped immigrate to Antwerp. He rented her a room in his apartment and was accused of being complicit in her prostitution. He claims that, according to the laws of Belgium, he is guilty, but that the law isn't fair. In his film, though, he goes even further.

"He says that girls who come over from Africa already know what they are coming to do," explains Geerts. "Even their parents send them with this knowledge because they are so

desperate to get them to Europe." In Belgian law, prostitutes are seen as victims, but the people who help them are charged as criminals. According to Omoregi, girls know they will be helped by authorities to get them out of prostitution, and it is a strategic method of becoming legalised. "His movie wants to say that the girls are not always victims."

Geerts listened and recorded. "My idea was to let him tell his own story. I didn't challenge what he was saying. But I did go to Nigeria and interviewed different people to see if they really are all desperate to come here." These interviews are also part of the documentary, bringing the story full circle.

Geerts' time in Nigeria might have been the easiest part of filming. Making a movie about someone making a movie

comes with an extra set of challenges, especially when you're from entirely different cultures. "It was a joke during filming that they have two different types of time: African time and Jesus time," says Geerts. "Jesus time is the time you set, and African time is five or six hours later."

Lisa Bradshaw

Online
www.adirector.eu



John Onas Omoregi, right, makes Nollywood movies right here in Antwerp

Jailhouse rock

The old Tongeren prison houses an intriguing mix of history, humanity and the arts

Mon Philips

When in use, the prison in Tongeren was still a rather inconspicuous building, between neighbouring schools, facing the chestnut trees and the swimming pool of Kastanjewal street. Since it was reopened to visitors in 2006, it's finally being noticed. More than 200,000 have passed through the prison gate so far, attracting more visitors than the Gallo-Roman Museum in Belgium's oldest city.

Built in 1844, Tongeren was the first prison in Belgium made up of individual cells. Life was conducted mainly in the cells of 2.5 x 2.8 meters. Only two hours a day were prisoners allowed out, to get some air in the centre courtyard. Designed for one inmate, the cells soon became home to three – one prisoner sleeping on a mattress in the middle of the floor, lodged between the table, toilet and wardrobe. Even now, you can smell that typical jailhouse aroma of too many people and no aeration. Combined with a claustrophobic atmosphere it can really get to you, even just during the tour.

The former penitentiary feels like more than just an empty building or a museum. "We followed our gut feeling, keeping the lives of inmates and personnel central," deputy Jos Claessens told the press during the opening. "Because of that, you are experiencing a prison as they still exist in Belgium today." Indeed, throughout the prison you find videos and photos that illustrate prison life as it is. The frisking of the visitors at the entrance, the preparing of the food (and how to keep it warm, passing 20 barred doors) and the utterly boring life within four walls.

Benny, 29, was sentenced to eight years in jail and remembers



his first day: "When that cell door closed behind me, I totally panicked. That small space really got to me. The door had no handle, and the four walls started to close in on me. The peep hole in the door is like an eye constantly watching you. That door is your only way out, and you wait all day for it to open." Pedro, meanwhile, spent 20 years in Tongeren: "Playboy and Penthouse were allowed but porn wasn't," the 45-year-old explains. Pin-ups covering cell walls helpfully illustrate his point.

More thoughtful photos by Flemish photographer Lieve Blancquaert line the central court and show the last months of the 90

prisoners before they were transferred to the newly built prison in Hasselt in 2005.

Installations by Flemish designer Linde Hermans complete the harrowing picture. She has redecorated some of the 40 cells according to the various feelings that occur when you're doing time. A room covered in mirrors expresses self-confrontation. A fake window overlooking a typical green Belgian landscape reflects the dream of freedom.

Yet the cells that were left unchanged make the biggest impression. You wouldn't dream of spending a week inside, let alone years. The educational services

of the museum offer tailor-made tours, focusing on philosophy, the importance of mail in prison or crime and punishment, adapted for families or groups. Visitors' ongoing and changing impressions during tours can be fascinating. They come in with fixed ideas and leave less sure of them.

The Tongeren prison is, of course, pretty small, and it was relatively easy to keep track of the prisoners. In 160 years, there was only one escape: Niek Bergmans, detained for killing his boyfriend, managed to scale the wall in 2004 by standing on a ping-pong table.

The former prison occasionally doubles as a cultural venue.

During the summer, for instance, it turns into an open-air cinema. As the sun sets, a selection of crime movies is projected in the courtyard. The opening film of this event in 2006 was the popular Flemish movie *De Hel van Tanger*, which was largely shot inside the Tongeren prison. In a series of lectures at the prison, scientists talk about their specific field of expertise: forensic facial reconstructions, forensic psychiatry or high-profile murderers.

Tongeren Prison, Wijngaardstraat 65, Tongeren, free admission

Online

www.gevangenistongeren.be

FOOTPRINT

Zwalmbeek



The Klein Zwitserland hidden in the forest along the Zwalmbeek walk

The Zwalmstreek, situated in the area the Flemish optimistically refer to as "the Flemish Ardennes", is a popular destination on a sunny day – which might surprise you once you make the effort to drive there. It's what you'd call off the beaten path, but locals love it on a Sunday afternoon for many good reasons.

To get to the beginning of the walk that can take you either five or 10 kilometres, head towards Oudenaarde on the N60 and then follow the N439 towards Gavere. Pass through Gavere and Dikkelvenne and follow the signs to Zwalm. Eventually, a little brown sign appears on the right announcing the "Zwalmmolen", and you take the next left.

Take a right at the next Zwalmmolen sign. At the end of the road is De Zwalmmolen, a French/Belgian bistro offering meals worth ordering when you wind up back here at the end of your walk. There is plenty of free parking behind the restaurant and a little info office attached to it, which apparently offers maps of the walk (though I have yet to find it open).

Cross the little bridge and begin your walk, following the signboards for the *Zwalmbeek wandelroute*. It's pretty right away: an island of bricks, remnants of part of an old mill, sits in the middle of a wide area of the meandering Zwalm brook. A little waterfall pours under the bridge. Walk along until you get to a crossroads and go straight across. You can smell the farms all around until you enter a forest,

when the smell of fresh moss and fallen trees take over.

Soon on your left you'll come upon Klein Zwitserland, and it's practically required that you stop for a drink. Let me take this opportunity to say that the Zwalmstreek is a walk for those who like to be social – nodding heads and small talk abound among strangers. This is especially true at the Klein Zwitserland, where people fill terrace tables at the hint of a clear day – even if it's freezing. There is a beautiful pond out front and bright, green grass that glows in the sunlight.

Interrupt your walk again just a bit further to wander into the old Ijzerkotmolen, with its wooden wheel still churning the water. There is a place here to rent bikes and also a *vakantiehuis* should you fancy a stay. Here is the point where you want to turn left if you prefer the shorter version of the walk. Hard cases, though, will be rewarded with beautiful blooming snowdrops, passing by houses offering strawberries and eggs for sale (another opportunity to chat!) and, towards the end, a long winding road that stretches out in front of you through the green, inviting you to discover what lies ahead.

According to a device clipped to the belt of my mother-in-law, we've covered 9.66 km, taken 13,428 steps and burned 573 calories. On to De Zwalmmolen for dessert.

Lisa Bradshaw



Back to school: the Polder Museum in Lillo-Fort

Diamond in the rough

Lillo-Fort is a tiny village of 40 in the middle of a nightmarish industrial zone. And it has one of the most appealing folk museums in Flanders

Marc Maes

One of the most unusual museums in Antwerp province lies in the middle of an industrial zone dominated by chemical giants such as Bayer, Belgian Refining Corporation and BASF. In this forbidding location, you find a quaint polder village called Lillo-Fort on the banks of the River Scheldt.

The main attraction is the Poldermuseum Lillo-Fort, filled with local history and located in the heart of a former 16th-century fortress. Staffed entirely by volunteers, the museum contains a fascinating collection of maps, furniture, implements and utensils used by the former polder population, along with displays devoted to polder villages that disappeared in the wake of the Antwerp port expansion, such as Wilmarsdonk, Oosterweel and Lillo. Lillo-Fort is, in fact, what is left of the original Lillo.

The Polder Museum also contains equipment and tools used by fishermen, farmers and shopkeepers, plus photographs from early 20th-century living rooms,

classrooms and village shops. There is a display of furniture from the home of the Zandvliet painter Nicasius De Keyser, whose paintings can be found in 11 collections across Europe.

Nine years ago, the museum reorganised its collection to make way for thematic exhibitions in the first floor hall. Previous subjects have been as diverse as cycling, local painters, baking and good riding (a local sport in which men on horseback compete to tear the head off a dead goose). This year's exhibition is on brass bands and music.

Five local bands have worked on an exhibition devoted to the history of musical associations in villages like Zandvliet, Berendrecht, Stabroek and Putte. "The brass bands played a essential role in the local cultural life of the last century," explains Frans Yzermans, secretary of the board of the non-profit museum. "No religious or social event was complete without the brass band." The museum consulted old village archives, the Antwerp Polder Documentation

centre and many privately-owned documents to create the exhibition.

Despite its location, the tiny village of Lillo-Fort has become a popular destination for weekend excursions. The surrounding industries have taken the little town to their hearts. Companies like Bayer and BASF support specific projects and help the museum with general expenses, says Yzermans. The Polder Museum is also available as an unusual venue for corporate events. Explains Yzermans: "We have the beautifully-restored Commanders' House just next door. Companies can use that for seminars and receptions. This allows us to survive without having to rely on government support."

Poldermuseum Lillo-Fort, Tolhuisstraat 14. A free ferry plies between Lillo and Doel on Sundays and holidays

Online

www.poldermuseum-lillo-fort.be

Frozen places

The Polder Museum in Lillo-Fort (above) is one of the folk museums described in the book *De Poppen aan het Dansen* (*Dancing Dolls*), published last year to mark the 100th anniversary of the Antwerp Volkskundemuseum. The authors discuss the emergence of folk museums in the late 19th century as a reaction against rapid industrialisation and a sense of rootlessness. They also look into the odd and very Belgian phenomenon of old world villages tacked onto the World Fairs of 1913, 1935 and 1958.

The focus is on Antwerp province, but the writers also look at folk museums elsewhere in the world, such as the Ellis Island Immigration Museum and the Dutch Folk Museum. They end by drawing conclusions for the future Museum aan het Stroom in Antwerp, which will be the new home for the Antwerp folk collection, as well as two other city museums.

De Poppen aan het Dansen contains lively essays by differ-

ent scholars on themes related to folklore collections, but the highlight is a photo essay by Karin Borghouts focusing on museums in Antwerp province. The photographs of still interiors perfectly capture these strange frozen places filled with odd and bizarre objects.

I particularly liked the cluttered shop in Deurne's folk museum and the overstuffed café interior peopled with stiff mannequins in Ostend's De Plate Museum. But the Polder Museum in Lillo-Fort is maybe the most captivating of all, with its portraits of the king and queen, anatomical model and scary nun. The stuff of nightmares.

Maybe you'll never find the time to visit any of these places, and maybe even if you did you'd find that it was closed. But Borghouts' photographs at least show you what you're missing.

Derek Blyth

De Poppen aan het Dansen, edited by Bert de Munck and Werner van Hoof, Vantilt, €25

Classical & new music**Brussels****Atelier de la Dolce Vita**

Liefdadigheidstraat 37a; 02.223.46.75
APR 26 20.00 Florilège concert cycle
 – Ad Libitum: Urszula Padala, violin, Anna Mutkowska, piano; Jean-Philippe Collard-Neven, piano: works by Léos Janacek

Bozar (Paleis voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

Until APR 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

APR 26 20.00 La Monnaie Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Michael Schönwandt, with Akiko Suwanai, violin: Nielsen, Hornerman, Mendelssohn

APR 27 11.00 Trio Chausson: Haydn, Chausson, 18.00 Ukkel European School 50th Anniversary concert with the school's philharmonic and chamber orchestras, choirs and big band

APR 28 20.00 Budapest Festival Orchestra Ensemble, conducted by Iván Fischer, with Miah Persson, soprano: Strauss, Mahler's Symphony No 4

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be

APR 25 12.30 Gabriel Teclu, piano: Enescu, Ravel

APR 30 20.15 International Chamber Music Week closing concert: Salvador Dali Trio

Holy Trinity Church

Kapitein Crespelstraat 29; 02.511.10.28
APR 24 20.00 ANZAC Day concert with St Andrew's Cathedral School Choir (Sydney, Australia)

Kaaitheater

Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59
APR 24 20.30 The Night of Electro-Acoustic Music: 50 years of electronic music with José Manuel Berenguer,

Last chance...**The Goat or Who is Sylvia?**

Until 26 April, Comédie Claude Volter, Gebroeders Legrainlaan 98, Brussels. Tickets from 02.762.09.63 or www.accent-prod.com

You only have four nights left to see the premiere performance of Brussels' new English-language theatre company, Accent Productions, which is staging American playwright Edward Albee's *The Goat or Who is Sylvia?* An often fascinating and profoundly controversial play, it puts the spotlight on middle-aged family man Martin who, at the peak of his prestigious career, confesses that he is in love. With a goat. Questioning notions of morality and honesty from the simple to the sublimely complex, the piece contains some of the Pulitzer Prize-winning author's best dialogue as Martin's wife and son try to get to the bottom of this beastly affair.

Carmen Pardo and Orquestra del Caos (Barcelona) 22.30 The Seventies & Eighties with Orquestra del Caos

Kapel van de Miniem

Miniemstraat 62; 02.507.82.00, www.minimes.net

APR 27 10.30 Chapelle des Minimes Orchestra and Choir: Bach cantatas

APR 30 20.00 Concerto Palatino, conducted by Bruce Dickey and Charles Toet: Porta, Guami, Grillo, A Gabrieli, G Gabrieli

Musical Instruments Museum

Hofberg 2; 0900.28.877

APR 27 11.00 Kryptos Quartet: Kreisler, Ysaye

Royal Music Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.507.82.00

APR 26 20.00 Liebrecht Van Beckvoort, piano: Schumann, Bach, Mendelssohn

APR 29 20.00 Les Plaisirs du Parnasse ensemble: Walther, Westhoff, Bach, Zamboni

Sint-Marcuskerk

de Frélaan 72; 02.331.37.14 or

www.32sonates.be

APR 25 20.00 Olivier De Spiegeleir, piano: Beethoven's sonatas No 19, 11, 29

Theatre Saint Michel

Pater Eudore Devroyestraat 2; 02.732.70.73

APR 27 17.00 Spring concert: Brussels Philharmonic, conducted by Roger Bausier, with Manu Mellaerts, trumpet: De Taeye's Esquisse symphonique, Aroutounian's Concerto for trumpet and orchestra, Rachmaninov's Symphony No 2, op 27

Antwerp**deSingel**

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28

Concerts at 20.00:

APR 24 La Petite Bande conducted by Sigiswald Kuijken: Bach cantatas

APR 25 John Mark Ainsley, tenor, Roger Vignoles, piano: lieder by Britten and Schubert

APR 26 Benjamin Schmid and Hanna Weinmeister, violin, Lars Anders Tomter, viola, Quirine Viersen and Pieter Wispelwey, cello: Schubert and Tanejev string quintets

Bruges**Concertgebouw**

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02

Concerts at 20.00:

APR 25 Academy of Ancient Music, conducted by Richard Egarr: Purcell, Handel, Finzi, Britten

APR 26 Huelgas Ensemble, conducted by Paul Van Nevel: late 14th and early 15th-century music collected by Janus I of Lusigan, French ruler of Cyprus

APR 28 Jos van Immerseel, fortepiano; Midori Seiler, violin: Beethoven sonatas

Ghent**De Bijloke**

Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, 09.269.92.92

APR 26 20.00 La Folata ensemble with Olalla Alemán, soprano: Landini and Zacara

APR 27 15.00 deFilharmonie conducted by Philippe Herreweghe, with Christian Tetzlaff, violin: Brahms, Gade

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01

APR 25 20.15 Yossif Ivanov, violin; Itamar Golan, piano: Bach, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Brahms

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

APR 30 20.00 Lan Cui, piano; Tatiana Trenogina, soprano; Leonid Smorguner, violin; Philippe Riga and Dana Protopopescu, piano: Mozart, Wagner, Verdi, Strauss

Opera**Brussels****De Munt**

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39

Until MAY 2 20.00 Médée by Luigi Cherubini with the Monnaie Choirs and Les Talens Lyriques, conducted by Christophe Rousset

Antwerp**Queen Elisabeth Hall**

Koningin Astridplein 26; 070.22.02.02

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

Until MAY 4 Vlaamse Opera Symphony Orchestra in La Sonnambula by Bellini, conducted by Rani Calderon

Jazz & blues**Brussels****Ancienne Belgique**

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24

APR 26 20.00 Roland

Archiduc

Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52

APR 26 17.00 Les Archidiucs

APR 27 17.00 Arthur Kell Quartet

Brasserie de L'Union

Sint-Gillisvoordeplein 55; 02.538.15.79

APR 27 12.00-15.00 Carson Barnes & friends

Café Belga

Flageyplein; 02.640.35.08

APR 26 22.30 Royal-Paris-Narvalo

Crowne Plaza Hotel

Ginestraat 3; 02.203.62.00

APR 24 20.00 Lupa Luna, folk/chanson

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,

APR 24 21.30 Avishai Cohen Trio

APR 26 20.15 Philip Catherine "Guitars Two"

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78

APR 25 20.30 The Flying Fish Jumps

APR 26 18.00 Anne Wolf Trio **APR 29** 20.30 Babylone **APR 30** 20.30 Sammy's on the Bowery

Le Grain d'Orge

Waversesteenweg 142; 02.511.26.47

APR 25 21.30 The Bluesdealers

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpstraat 28; 02.512.92.50,

www.soundsjazzclub.be

APR 24 21.00 The Singers Night **APR 25** 22.00 Kristen Cornwell Quintet

APR 26 22.00 Babylone **APR 28** 22.00 Master session **APR 29** 22.00 Antonio Segura Group **APR 30** 22.00 Caribe con K – Los Soneros del Barrio, Caribbean music **MAY 1** 22.00 symmEtrio

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45

APR 24 12.30 Lenny en de Wespen

APR 25-26 20.30 Judy Niemack **APR 29** 20.30 Mara & 4Given (Romania)

APR 30 20.30 FOURtune **MAY 1** 20.30 Oscar Lorient, Latino-Cuban music

Borgerhout**De Roma**

Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.235.04.90

APR 30 20.30 Mare Nostrum with

Paolo Fresu, Richard Galliano and Jan Ludgren

Rataplan

Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40

APR 26 20.30 Kurt Van Eeghem

APR 29 20.30 Sabin Todorov Trio

Bruges**De Werf**

Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29

APR 26 20.30 John Marshall & the

Ferdinand Povel Quintet

Gebroeders Legrainlaan 98; 02.762.09.63

Until APR 26 20.30 Accent Productions presents *The Goat or Who Is Sylvia?* by Edward Albee (in English)

KVS Bol

Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.12, www.kvs.be
APR 29-MAY 3 20.00 Kroum by Hanoch Levin, staged by Ruud Gielens (in Dutch with French and English surtitles)

Kaaitheaterstudio's

Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vlaakstraat 81; 02.201.59.59
APR 23 20.30 Hotel Modern presents Kamp, written and performed by Herman Helle (without dialogue)

Scarabaeus Theatre

Hollestraat 19-27; 02.649.79.16
Until APR 26 20.00 Café Théâtre by the American Theatre Company, music and short plays (in English)

Antwerp

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
APR 24-26 20.00 Rimini Protokoll presents Mnemopark (in German and French with Dutch surtitles)

Het Toneelhuis/Bourla

Komedieplaats 18; 032.224.88.44
Until APR 26 20.00 De versie Claus, monologue about the writer Hugo Claus, by and with Josse De Pauw (in Dutch)

Noordtheater

Sint-Nicolaasplaats 3-5; 03.231.20.08
Until APR 26 20.15 The Beauty Queen of Leenane by Martin McDonagh, staged by Marc Van Extergem (in Dutch)

Visual arts

Brussels

Argos Centre for Art and Media
Werfstraat 13; 02 229 00 03, www.argosarts.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
Until OCT 19 Expo 58. Between Utopia and Reality, documents, plans, objects, films, photographs and scale models of Expo 58
Until 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 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

CIVA

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.71, www.civa.be
designed by René Pechère and Jacques Boulanger-François for Expo 58
Until JUNE 10 Shanghai - Brussels: ARCHITopia, recent architectural works in Shanghai

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 Van New Look tot Expo 58, women's fashion from the time of Belgium's 1958 World's Fair, with 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 Architectuur museum

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

Design Flanders

Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.227.60.60
APR 25-JUNE 1 Furniture design, art and architecture by Frans Van Praet

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

Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63, www.mjb-jmb.org
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

Essegemstraat 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)erkenning! 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-mrah.be
Until APR 27 From Gilgamesh to Zenobia, highlights from the museum's collection of Middle Eastern art

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

Diamond Museum

Koningin Astridplein 13-23; 03.202.48.90
Until JUNE 8 Diamond Divas, prestigious collection of diamond jewellery worn by the rich and famous

Fifty-One Fine Art Photography

Zirkstraat 20; 03.289.84.58
Until MAY 3 USA², 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 Elsschots' 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

Buiten Smedenvest 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

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

Maaltebrugkasteel

Kortrijksesteenweg 1023; 09.242.88.22
Until APR 27 Si le monde..., graphic works by Robert Grolsot

Museum Dr Guislain

Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95, www.museumdrguislain.be
Until APR 27 Sick: Between Body and Mind, multimedia exhibition

showcasing the links between mental and physical pain, with work by Félicien Rops, Patrik Vermeulen, Dana Wyse, Léon Spilliaert and many others

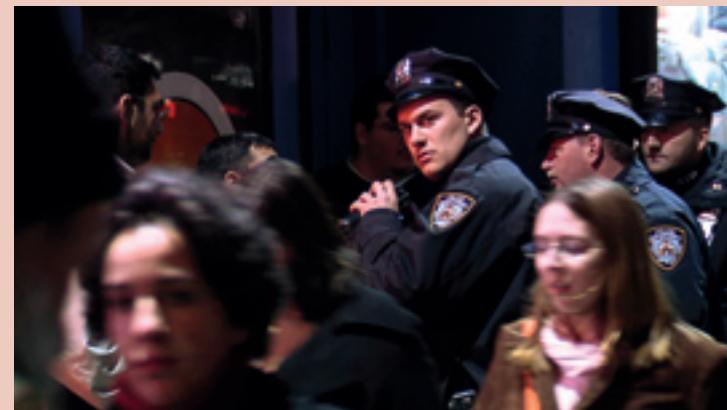
Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03
Until 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)

Don't miss this week



Court Métrage

25 April-4 May, Cinema Vendôme and other venues in Brussels, www.courtmetrage.be

This annual festival gathers together the best of national and international short film and organises them into themed evenings. Good bets are The Best of the Best, which is self explanatory, and a retrospective of Flemish short-filmmaker Nicolas Provost, whose work always contains a rush of urgency, like something unmissable is *juuuust* around the corner. (His latest, *Plot Point*, shot in New York, is pictured above.) There's also screenings especially for young people and especially for adults (Courts Mais Trash). If your attention span is particularly short, attend on 2 and 3 May, when the International Festival of Very Short Films infiltrates the schedule: all movies under three minutes.

Hasselt

Modemuseum

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

National Jenever Museum

Witte Nonnenstraat 19; 011.23.98.60
Until AUG 31 The Orange Bulb Alambiflures, olfactory installation by Peter De Cupere

Z33

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

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 Raveel museum
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
Until AUG 31 Georges Vantongerloo, Pionier van de moderne beeldhouwkunst, retrospective of work by the Belgian artist (1886-1965)

Zonnebeke

Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917
leperstraat 7; 051.77.04.41
APR 26-27 Brave Little Belgium, the role Belgian troops played in WWI

Festivals & special events

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MY FLANDERS

Gabriel Fehervari

Gabriel Fehervari of Alfacam Group is one of Flanders' leading CEOs, turning his Antwerp area-based media technology company into a major international player that went public last year. We ask him the secrets of his success and how he feels about working in China for the Olympic Games

You've been working for 20 years to build Alfacam, which now deploys TV vans worldwide. How did it all start?

I started this company with my wife, Karin Stoop. But we never imagined that we would end up filming the Olympic Games, for example. It snowballed, really. When we bought these buildings for instance, they were way too big for what we intended. But then we built TV facility studios. Some are used by the Flemish public broadcaster VRT for big shows, others we use for our own four HDTV channels of Euro1080. And we've started up smaller locally based companies in Germany, France and now Italy, which can follow up on local events more quickly.

You have Hungarian roots. Do you speak Hungarian?

Absolutely. I was born in Belgium but never lost my mother-tongue. Last week I met the Hungarian President at King Albert's palace in Brussels. My parents fled Hungary in 1957. At one point they considered America, but, fortunately, we ended up in Belgium. My father worked as an engineer for the Cockerill shipyards in Hoboken, where in those days French was the medium of communication. And I learned Dutch, English and German at school.

What are the advantages of a company being based in Flanders?

We are ideally positioned here

to travel in Benelux, Europe and even the world. We only conduct three percent of our business in Flanders. Once you've decided to tackle the hurdle of logistics, it pays off to explore international markets. Nowadays we can just as easily send our Outside Broadcast vans to cover the football championship in Ghana or a Jean-Michel Jarre concert in Switzerland. We sometimes benefit from the Belgian image of being low-profile and modest. We modestly work for our client.

And you said you will be covering the Olympic Games in Beijing?

That's right, and there has been a media fuss around it that I don't really understand. We've already covered the Olympic Games in Turin and Athens. The fact that we got the contract for our single van in Salt Lake City in 2002 was much more spectacular to us than our deal for 20-something vans in China this year. In Salt Lake City, there were more than 3,000 vans to compete with, and we were the only ones who were able to work simultaneously with the American standard and with High Definition cameras. Of course Peking is a much bigger operation, with more vans and personnel involved.

Transporting all your vans so far away in one ship is risky, isn't it?

I can't divulge any specific data on that matter for insurance and political reasons.



C.Bulano/Lettany

How did you feel watching the Olympic flame being tackled in the streets of London?

I think that's a sad business. I'm all for human rights and respecting minorities, but the Olympic Games are a totally independent story; the two shouldn't be mixed.

Now that HDTV has found its way onto the Flanders' market, do you feel that your main goal has been achieved? Or do you stay on the lookout for new markets and techniques?

Of course. Within HDTV, there's still a lot to explore, like wireless HDTV for marathons and other races, which our division Euro-

linx is working on. Our coverage of the Tour of Turkey last week was a scoop, for instance. And new perspectives are opening up all the time. HDTV 3D television for example. And, let's not forget, HDTV hasn't reached its full capacity in Flanders yet. In theory, it's available via cable company Tele-net, but in reality not around the clock.

After your university studies, you wanted to work as a journalist, didn't you?

I tried, yes. At some stage in 1984 a new newspaper hit the stands: the 24-Hours Krant. I was supposed to write for the sports section and start work on 1 September. But by the time I returned from a trip through the Middle East on the 25th, the paper had gone belly-up.

But you do write and are publishing an autobiography this year, I understand.

It's 80% written, but I'm still in doubt whether to publish it or not. I really enjoy writing it, as it forces me to reflect on my life. But the timing of publication and who I want to read it is another matter. So it may be published at the end of this year or after my death, whenever that occurs. The writing in itself has proved to be such an enriching experience because it's made me realise how extremely happy I am as a manager and a family man.

Interview by Monique Philips

online
www.alfacam.com

THE LAST WORD

what they're saying in Flanders

Market mess

"Market fundamentalism – the absolute belief that the market can regulate and correct itself – has infected our economy for nearly 30 years. The credit crisis has shown very clearly that the market cannot regulate itself."

George Soros
Billionaire businessman,
speaking at the Centre for
European Policy Studies in
Brussels

Think global

"Instead of talking about Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde, we ought to be paying more attention to Brussels-Europe-the world."

Thomas Leysen
new head of the employers' organisation VBO

Love at first sight

"My very first pedal-car was my great love, even though my feet didn't even reach the pedals."

Philippe Quatennens
presenter of Autov, Flanders' answer to the BBC's Top Gear

Geel Hooverphonic Getallen Kunst en festival des Arts Docville InFlandersFields

next week in Flanders Today