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2007 Focus Features

Actor Brendan Gleeson takes to the streets of Bruges

The dark side of Bruges

It's a film Flanders' hasn't even seen yet, but *In Bruges* is already boosting the city's image around the world

Alan Hope

There's nothing like a couple of contract killers to boost the tourism profile of a city. And if you can throw in a seedy porno shoot and a fat man taking a nose-dive off the most famous

landmark, so much the better.

That's why the businesses and officials of the city of Bruges are delighted with the new film *In Bruges* by Oscar-winning director Martin McDonagh. Though it's been released in other countries

already, the dark comedy won't reach cinemas here until 2 July.

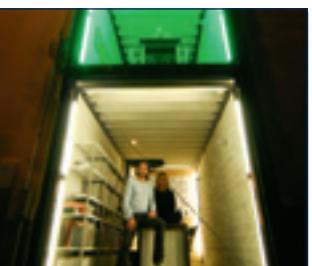
The film was conceived by McDonagh, an Irishman who is mostly known for his award-winning plays. A few years ago, he made a trip to Bruges and found

the city at once charming and oppressive. "While I was there, I had diverging feelings about the place," he said. "I started thinking of two characters who might respond to Bruges in distinct ways,

with specific parts of Bruges for them to interact in and around."

In the story, a hit man named Ray (played by heartthrob Colin Farrell) is hiding out in the city

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Business

The last mine in Limburg closed down in 1982, but they hold untapped reserves of methane that could help Flanders survive the fuel crisis.

Arts

Piano man Jef Neve has hit new heights with his latest album *Soul in a Picture*. Marc Maes charts the rise of this local lad.

Living

It's the narrowest house in Antwerp – and one of the most imaginative buildings in Belgium. Stéphanie Duval visits a glass house that is like a work of art.

Suicide problem must be tackled

Flanders has Europe's second-highest suicide rate

Alan Hope

The Flemish parliament needs to put the problem of youth suicide to the top of the agenda, starting with a fundamental inventory of the steps that are being taken to prevent the problem, according to politicians in the welfare committee of the parliament, led by Open-VLD deputy Anne Marie Hoebeke.

She repeated calls made last month by Open-VLD chairman Bart Somers for a "broad and serious debate" on the psychological problems of children and young people, after therapists warned that they were dealing with growing numbers of

children with suicidal thoughts, increasing cases of self-harm and children as young as seven showing the typical symptoms of burn-out. Therapist An Michiels blamed the stresses of society both indirectly, through parents, and directly in school and described the children as "canaries in the coalmine" that warned of problems in society as a whole.

"There have never been so many measures in place as there are now," Hoebeke said. "Yet the number of burned-out children is higher than ever." Flanders is second only to Finland in the EU, with a suicide

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

Bruges-la-Morte

A gangster film set in Bruges? You must be kidding. But, no, as Alan Hope writes this week, this ancient Flemish city of canals and lace shops has inspired the crime thriller *In Bruges*. Tourists are already flocking to the city in search of the locations used in the movie.

It isn't the first time that Bruges has been teeming with location hunters. In 1892 the Belgian writer Georges Rodenbach's fin-de-siècle novel *Bruges-la-Morte* put the old town on the literary tourist trail. This slim volume illustrated with 35 grainy photographs of canals and crumbling buildings tells the story of Hugh Viane, an English expatriate who settles in Bruges after the death of his wife. "The town, so glorious of old and still so lovely in its decay, became to him the incarnation of his regrets," wrote Rodenbach.

On one of his solitary wanderings through the city, Hugh comes across an actress called Jane Scott, who reminds him of his dead wife. They begin an affair, but the relationship turns sour after Jane mocks Hugh's wife and, in a fit of mad passion, he strangles her with a lock of his wife's hair.

Bruges-la-Morte became one of the most influential novels

of the period; tourists began to visit the old Hanseatic port to savour the mood of decay and ruin evoked by Rodenbach, and Symbolist artists were captivated by the author's hypnotic portrait of a dead city of abandoned stone quays and still canals.

The novel inspired several paintings by Fernand Khnopff, a German opera and, according to some film critics, the plot of Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. Nor has it lost its mesmerising power; the Japanese novelist Yukio Mishima is said to have reread *Bruges-la-Morte* shortly before committing ritual suicide.

Now tourists are coming again to visit the locations of *In Bruges*. Armed with the movie location map published by the tourist office, visitors are hunting out spots like the Jan van Eyckplein and the strange Jeruzalemkerk, both of which also figured in Rodenbach's novel. It seems that the old Flemish town is once again living up to its name as *la morte*.

Derek Blyth

*A new translation of Georges Rodenbach's *Bruges-la-Morte* by Mike Mitchell, with an introduction by Alan Hollinghurst, was published by Dedalus Press in 2005.*



Bruges of sighs: not so peaceful as it looks

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FACE OF FLANDERS



Cathy Berx

Last week Cathy Berx, a university law lecturer and mother of two, was inaugurated as governor of Antwerp province, a job that seems like something left over from Napoleonic times. Berx has hitherto been considered a rising star in her party (CD&V); she is said to have the ear of the prime minister, but she also fought at city council level on mundane matters like secure bike racks under Astridplein (after her own trusty 12-year-old iron steed was stolen last year).

The governor's post is in some ways an antiquated one. Her role is to represent the province at a federal and regional level, as well as to oversee communes and social assistance councils (OCMWs) in the province. In particular, the governor has responsibility for the maintenance of public order and for disaster readiness. That last part, which involves coordinating emergency services in the event of a major rail accident, say, or industrial disaster, is virtually all that remains for the governor of Brussels to do, which is thought to have forced Véronique Paulus de Châtel to step down.

But things are different in Antwerp, where Berx's predecessor, the liberal heavyweight Camille Paulus, held onto his traditional responsibilities, as well as forging new ones like taking charge of Antwerp's mobility plan – something Berx has said she will also make a priority, together with doing something for the poor.

At the age of 39, Berx is the second-youngest governor ever. Jules Malou was 34 when he took the job in 1844, and he stayed only a year before going on to become prime minister. In more recent times, a provincial governor has been tacitly expected to see out his or her career in the post, as Berx's predecessor in Antwerp did. Berx is the only woman governor in Flanders and one of two women governors from a total of 10 in Belgium.

However the idea of the governorship as a swansong may be changing. Steve Stevaert was flying high as a Flemish politician and party chairman when he surprised everyone by stepping sideways to become governor of his beloved Limburg in 2005 at the age of 51. Now Berx has apparently given up a prominent place to move into the governor's post with at least 26 years to go before she retires. Surely she can't be planning on staying there?

Berx is considered a protégé of Yves Leterme and was reputed to have been consulted by him on a regular basis during the interminable discussions that followed the elections last June. Whether or not anyone involved in that debacle can be said to carry away any credit, his trust in her and his raising her to the deputy chair of the CD&V party is a sign she was being groomed for higher things.

But in the world of Belgian coalitions, there are few top spots. In the current government, CD&V has the PM's job and two ministerial seats. Those are filled by Kris Peeters and Inge Vervotte, aged 45 and 30 respectively. Neither of them can be expected to vacate their spot anytime soon.

The governorship has its consolations, though. Not least a salary of some €10,000 net a month, enough to allow Berx to put a tidy sum aside for her still-distant pension. At the same time, she plans to carry on teaching public administrative law at Antwerp University, where her husband is dean of the faculty and professor of European law.

Alan Hope

TALKING DUTCH

notes on language



Rekening

Thankfully, I was sitting down when I opened the utilities bill. I double checked the address, but that didn't help. The Dutch for "bill", *rekening*, does call up images of the final reckoning. Where was all this gas and electricity going? Well, the best way to get most people to change their ways is through their pockets, and I'm no different. But what to do to keep these *energierekeningen* down? As luck would have it, a folder dropped through the letter box this morning with tips on how to use less energy.

- *Zet de verwarming op maximum 19 tot 20°.* Our heating is set at just that.
- *Zet de verwarming lager 's nachts en wanneer u er niet bent.* That seems logical: we turn down the heating at night and when we're not home.
- *Sluit 's nachts de gordijnen.* Again, closing the curtains at night is a habit.
- *Onderhoud uw centrale verwarming.* Yes, every year the man comes and services the boiler.
- *Isolier uw dak.* We had our roof insulated when we converted the attic.
- *Neem liever een snelle douche.* Well, that's what I do anyway. I hate baths and don't linger in the shower.

This list is not helping me much. Let's push on.

- *Wees spaarzaam met water.* Now I must confess to not using water sparingly. I still have the temptation to turn on the tap and then look for my toothbrush. Must try harder.
- *Zet een deksel op de pot.* Is that not what everyone does? That's what pot lids are for.
- *Ontdooi regelmatig het vriesvak.* Here, I must hold up my hand. I don't defrost the freezer compartment often enough.
- *Was aan lage temperatuur. Bij een wasbeurt op 40° bespaart u 70% aan energie tegenover een wasbeurt aan 90°.* Washing at a lower temperature is something we've been doing for years.
- *Beperk het gebruik van de droogkast. Laat uw was buiten drogen.* Very funny. Of course we should limit the use of the tumble dryer, but most of the year you can't dry your washing outside.
- *Zet de 'stand-by'-knop van uw apparaten uit.* Now that is something I've only recently started doing.
- *Koop spaarlampen.* Buy energy-saving bulbs. But not for a reading lamp: they hum. Clearly, this list is not going to restore my fortunes. Perhaps I should have solar panels installed. There are subsidies for *zonnewebels*, but they cost a lot and how long do they last? Or should I go whole hog and have *een passiehuis* built? A little research tells me that *het is mogelijk om een gebouw zo te isoleren dat het nauwelijks verwarming nodig heeft.* So it's possible to insulate a building so that it hardly requires any heating.
- *Perhaps a passive house is the only solution in the long run. But first I need to pay this rekening.*
- **Alistair MacLean**

online

www.milieuadvieswinkel.be

FEATURE

Doing In Bruges

The city of Bruges is so excited about *In Bruges* that – even before anyone here has seen it – they’re offering special packages to tourists from countries where the film is already out.

The tourist office has a locations map featuring many of the sights featured in the film (though it has to be said most of them would be on any tourist map of Bruges anyway). The map also publicises three restaurants and 12 hotels who are taking part in a promotion. According to Chris Meyll, the owner of Cafedraal (in Zilverstraat), the film has already provided huge publicity. “Some scenes were shot here in the dining room. I’ve just taken a reservation from 33 people in Italy who will be coming to eat here,” he says. His restaurant offers a special menu with the chance to win film memorabilia, like posters and T-shirts.

The scene in the dining room of the Hotel Central (on the Markt) was cut from the film, but that hasn’t stopped them from offering film souvenirs along with its special menu of typical Flemish fare.

Other Bruges hotels are laying on a variety of packages. At Martin’s Brugge (Oude Burg) you overnight stay includes a ticket to the Groeningemuseum and a locations map for €67.50 per person. The Prinsenhof (Ontvangersstraat), meanwhile, offers a champagne breakfast, an *In Bruges* dinner, a boat trip, a box of chocolates, a movie map, a guided tour and museum reductions, as well as a two-night stay – all for €460 for a standard room, going up to €685 for a superior deluxe.

The Hotel Heritage (Niklaas Desparsstraat) throws in a horse-drawn carriage ride and a visit to a local brewery for €238 for one night in a standard room, with prices going up for deluxe rooms to the decidedly contract-killer rate of €508.

Even killers find a bit of romance in Bruges: Colin Farrell and Clémence Poésy



Online
www.brugge.be

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on the orders of his boss (Ralph Fiennes, with a very iffy Cockney accent) and being babysat by another contract killer (Brendan Gleeson). Ray becomes more and more morose, partly due to the city’s mediaeval atmosphere. What happens after that can’t be described for fear of spoiling the film, but let’s just say it’s not exactly sweetness and light.

“They organised a private screening in Bruges for the burgomaster and myself and others,” says Jean-Pierre Drubbel, the city’s head of tourism, whose office worked closely with filmmakers. “Of course I was watching it with a professional eye. But I have to say it’s not only a black comedy, it’s also a drama. It stirs up certain emotions in the public.” Programmers at the Sundance Film Festival must have thought so – they chose *In Bruges* as their opening film this

year.

The two-month shoot began in February of 2007. Bieke Janssens, who works for the tourist department’s film office, followed the entire production and is credited in the film as “assistant to Mr Fiennes”. The film, she says, is “priceless publicity for Bruges. The scenes are very pretty. It’s a very good advertisement for the city”.

Fiennes, she says, still keeps in touch. In a statement for the city’s website, the British actor, famous for his roles as German concentration camp commandant Amon Goeth in *Schindler’s List* and American game show contestant Charles Van Doren in *Quiz Show* (both of which accents he managed admirably) writes: “My four weeks spent in Bruges were unforgettable; the city has a unique atmosphere, the sense of history is potent, the people are friendly, and the past comes alive. I would recommend Bruges as a wonder-

ful location for a film. I know our production received great support from the city.”

No wonder. They could hardly have arranged a better travelogue if they’d written the plot themselves. The city, which looks like a film set at the best of times, is one of the movie’s leading players. Gleeson, who starred in McDonagh’s Oscar-winning short film *Six Shooter*, said: “When we arrived here, we met the mayor, and I said, ‘Thanks for lighting our set, Mr Mayor.’ Because that’s what it’s like there; it’s as if somebody built a magnificent movie set and said, go shoot. It’s so picturesque and stunningly romantic to look at.”

Despite that, only one other film has included substantial shooting in the city: *The Nun’s Story* from 1959, An American production starring Audrey Hepburn and directed by Austrian Fred Zinneman. The VTM TV series *Aspe*, based on the crime novels

of Flemish author Pieter Aspe, are also set in Bruges, though they have less obtrusive location shooting. Aspe – real name Pierre Aspeslag – now lives in Blankenberge.

“Aside from one church, we were allowed to film in or outside every single location I wrote into the original script,” says McDonagh. “That says a lot about how helpful the people were.” The exception was the Basilica of the Holy Blood, for which another church substituted. Locations in the film include the Belfry, the Minnewater, the Groeningemuseum – where Ray sees his fate in Bosch’s painting “The Last Judgment” – and the main Markt square.

The film, which is McDonagh’s first full-length feature, also stars French actress Clémence Poésy, who, like Fiennes and Gleeson, was in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*; Belgian actor Jérémie Rénier (of *Fair Play* and *l’Enfant*),

Dutch actress Thelka Reuten and Slovenian-American actor Željko Ivanek, best-known as the DA in *The Practice*.

The city now looks forward to attracting more productions on the back of the *In Bruges* experience. Companies investing in audio-visual productions can retain tax-free income of 150% of the sums invested, according to a tax-incentive scheme which applies nationwide. British producer Graham Broadbent’s own testimonial will not hurt matters any: “I have produced a number of feature films in different parts of the world. I have never been so welcomed as we were in Bruges – by the city, the mayor and the film office. We had the goodwill of the entire city, every day.”

online
www.inbruges.co.uk

Belgium – den of killers?

Photos 2007 Focus Features



Crime boss Ralph Fiennes (left) puts the interiors of Bruges to good use

The movie industry loves serial killers and hit men, way out of proportion to the frequency with which such types show up in real life. *Flanders Today* was unable to unearth any record of a contract killer in real life in Bruges, although the city’s prison did for a time last year play host to Yugoslav killer-for-hire Josef Vas, who was transferred there after trying to escape from Ghent, where he was serving 30 years for three murders. Vas paid a guard in Ghent €15,000 to smuggle in a gun to assist the escape, but the plot was foiled. He got an extra four years on top of his sentence, and the guard got five years.

One of the few confirmed cases of a Belgian contract killer was James Capiau, who was born in Brussels and served in the French Foreign Legion. He was killed in Zagreb in 2001 by the bodyguard

of local mafia boss Veljko Slisko, who Capiau had just assassinated.

In Belgium, though, contract-killers tend to be fakes. Either they’re the victim of a sick joke, like the 17-year-old student in Antwerp whose details were attached to an advertisement on the 2dehands.be website under Holiday Work: “I can do any kind of murder... the more gruesome the better”. The website called in the police.

Or the hit man is a copper in mufti, as Laurent Kusé of Beveren discovered to his cost in 2004 when the man he ordered to kill his wife turned out to be an undercover police officer. Kusé was already on remand for shooting the aforesaid wife in the head, but failing to kill her. He was later sentenced to 25 years, with the failed hiring of the hit man seen as an aggravating factor.



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putting people first

Action needed to fight youth suicide

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total for all age-groups that is 50% higher than the average 27 men and 10 women per 100,000 people. Suicide is the leading cause of death among people in their 20s and 30s and also among men in their 40s. For young people under the age of 20, it is the second-leading cause of death after road accidents.

In September last year, Flemish welfare minister Steven Vanackere announced he was tripling the budget for the region's anti-suicide action plan, from €473,000 in 2006 to €1.55 million. Research from the University of Ghent estimated that one in 10 of all adolescents had self-harmed, often by cutting, or had made a suicide attempt. The figures for teenage suicide in Belgium are two and a half times higher than in the Netherlands. The chatlines and phone-lines that deal with suicide in Flanders take nearly half of all their calls from young people under the age of 18, and 80% of them are girls.

According to research carried out by the education magazine *Klasse*, one in four people in Flanders over the age of 15 has psychological problems, with half of them (13%) in a serious condition, but only one in three receives professional help. For the school population, the figure is around one in three with problems such as depression, behaviour disorders like ADHD, anxiety and sleep problems, while others are living with a parent who has psycho-

logical problems ranging from depression to addiction. Cases among children are more likely to come to light as teachers and other school staff members spot the outward signs, but there is still a stigma attached to psychiatric illness, the magazine said.

Klasse cites a 2006 study which showed that 35% of male secondary school students had thought of suicide at some point, with the proportion of girls as high as 49%. And the magazine launched a four-point plan for what it called "a preventive teaching style":

- Provide security, clarity and structure, with clear rules and sanctions that apply to all and a place to talk about problems, family and friends.
- Emphasise the worth of every student, without discrimination, and provide a sympathetic ear to all.
- Emphasise healthy relationships, use tutors and buddies, fight bullying.
- Take care of the body as well as the mind, with health education, proper nutrition and physical activity.

Copies of the full plan will be supplied to all 180,000 teachers and 20,000 trainee teachers in the Flemish education system.

Online

www.klasse.be

www.zelfmoordpreventie.be



NEWS FLASH



Belgian intelligence services are investigating a number of computer attacks, which they say show all the signs of industrial espionage coming from China. Among the targets were email servers belonging to the federal government, attacked using the virus-like object known as a "Trojan horse", which infiltrates a computer and can then be controlled remotely. According to justice minister Jo Vandeurzen, "China is particularly interested in Belgium because Nato and the EU are based here, and also because we have many links with Africa."

Dental prostheses supplied by Chinese manufacturers contain dangerous substances, including lead, zinc and magnesium, and break more easily than those made here, according to CD&V deputy Raf Terwegen. Dentists are increasingly making use of Chinese-made bridges and plates, which cost as little as half the price of those made here by dental technicians. The EU has begun an investigation into the question, and Terwegen called on health minister Laurette Onkelinx to take action.

The inner ring of Brussels will be a **car-free zone** on 11 May between 9.00 and 19.00. Traffic will continue to circulate over the inner ring itself and in the tunnels, but the area within the ring will be restricted to public transport, taxis, emergency services and other public vehicles, with free parking in Interparking garages around the inner ring. Normally car-free Sunday takes place in September, when roads throughout the Brussels region are affected. Irisfeest, the celebration of the Brussels region, will also take place on 11 May.

The concert that closes the traditional **feast-day of the Flemish community** on 11 July will be broadcast live from the Grote Markt in Brussels by the VRT, following an agreement reached last week with Bert Anciaux, Flemish minister for culture and for Brussels. Last year Anciaux paid VTM €250,000 to broadcast the concert after the VRT declined, claiming Flanders was more than just Brussels. But the broadcast on VRT's channel één will be split between Brussels and the Grote Markt in Sint-Niklaas, where there will be an outside broadcast of the popular singing show *Zo is er maar een*, taking place at the same time.

Limburg highest-rated in poll

Guido Sweeney



Limburg province has the most positive image in Flanders, according to a survey carried out by market research bureau Compagnie. Respondents to the telephone and online poll were asked to rank the provinces according to how green they are, how friendly and conservative, who has the most irritating accent and where would be best to live, work and holiday. Limburg was voted greenest by 63%, with 38% keen to spend the weekend there and 23% willing to go and live there. The people were voted friendliest by 45% of those polled.

The people of Antwerp, on the other hand, have the most annoying accent, according to 30%, while 62% considered Antwerpers to be too arrogant. Antwerp also scored lowest for friendliness and came bottom of the poll as a place to go on holiday, to work or to live.

Away from the two extremes, East Flanders excited the least interest of all provinces, scoring neither high nor low on any aspect. West Flanders, meanwhile, scored high for living and visiting, was considered most conservative and ran Antwerp a very close second for an irritating accent.

Officials on gangster's hit-list kept in the dark

Two Belgian officials are on a hit-list drawn up by French-Canadian gangster Jean-Claude LaCote, currently on the run from justice, but the South African authorities in charge of the case haven't informed anyone here. The list was found by police investigating LaCote's escape from a prison in Johannesburg last month, where he was awaiting trial on charges of fraud. The list is headed by Irish businessman Noel Hanley, a victim of the fraud who used his own money to track LaCote down when police failed. The list also features South African journalist Carine Hartman, two lawyers and a South African detective.

The two Belgian officials have not been named, and their identities were not communicated to the prosecutor's office in Bruges, where LaCote is wanted for the murder of a British man 12 years ago. "We don't know who is concerned," the prosecutor Jean-Marie Berkvens told *Het Laatste Nieuws*. "We were never officially informed about this list. That is unacceptable."

Foster homes sought for old people

The rural home-help group Landelijke Thuiszorg (LT) is looking for volunteers to take in elderly people for day care once a week or more often. The programme includes those who no longer have contact with their own families, and who, for various reasons, cannot be left alone all day. The programme is being funded by the Flemish health ministry to the tune of €75,000. A spokesman said the pilot project would be picked up again when the subsidy runs out in October. A similar project in Antwerp recently had to close because of a lack of funds, while a Dutch project based in Terneuzen operates a similar scheme involving a sister organisation in Ghent. Volunteer families are paid only expenses. "In the last few days we've found about 50 volunteers," said Ann Vanthournout of LT. Volunteers can register at the website of the Catholic Rural Women's organisation KVLV of which LT is a part.

Online

www.kvlv.be

Polio drug could foil terrorists

A new molecule discovered by researchers at the Brussels Free University (VUB) could prevent the spread of polio and also protect whole populations against bio-terrorism using the polio virus. Polio is one of the main bio-agents thought to be at risk of being used by terrorists. The molecule would be used to prevent those already infected from passing the sickness on in their immediate environment in countries where vaccines are too expensive to be widely used. The World Health Organisation had planned to eradicate the disease, which causes paralysis, by the year 2000 through a campaign of vaccinations. But "contrary to what researchers originally thought, it's not so simple to wipe out polio with vaccines alone," said VUB researcher Bert Thys.

Neo Nazis could be prosecuted

The Kortrijk prosecutor is looking into the possibility of a criminal prosecution of neo-Nazi members of the Blood and Honour group who took part in a commemoration of Hitler last month. The investigation follows undercover footage shown on the VRT news programme *Koppen* in which participants listened to music and speeches calling for death to Jews, Muslims and gays, as well as other statements which, the prosecutor said, are in clear breach of racism laws.

The prosecutor was due to meet this week with police, state security (which monitors extremist groups) and senior magistrates to decide if a prosecution was appropriate.

Blood and Honour has been under close scrutiny since last year, when it was revealed that senior members of a related group were serving members of the armed forces. Several planned meetings or concerts have been banned by local authorities, but the 19 April gathering received no advance publicity, in a successful attempt to thwart any official reaction. Some 300 neo-Nazis gathered in Bellingem, coming from France, Germany and the Netherlands as well as Belgium.

The footage was filmed by German undercover journalist Thomas Kuban, who infiltrated the group four years ago and has been tracking their activities ever since. Belgium,



he said, is a "paradise" for neo-Nazis, who are glad to come here from Germany in particular, where their own activities are strictly controlled. In Belgium, by contrast, hate speech is barely considered by the authorities. "The Belgian police do nothing about it," he said on the programme.

According to interior minister Patrick

Dewael, the *Koppen* footage shows "beyond a doubt" that the law has been broken. And he expressed support for a total ban on organisations such as Blood and Honour. Socialist deputy Peter Vanvelthoven has already presented a proposal to ban the organisation by declaring it a private militia – a proposal which has gained the support of Groen! and Open-VLD.

NEWS FLASH



Distant relatives of the late heiress **Marie-Antoinette Carlier** have lodged an objection to her decision to bequeath her fortune to the King Baudouin Foundation. Carlier, who died last October, left land and artworks worth some €200 million to the foundation. Now four children of her father's brother, who went to live in Brazil in 1935, have objected to the will, claiming that Carlier had always expressed the intention to leave her estate to "close family".

The **Belgian Anti-Piracy Foundation** has called for tougher sanctions on new forms of film piracy, after a youth was caught last week in Mechelen recording the new U2 three-dimensional movie on his mobile phone. The practice, common in the US, is rare here, with only three cases last year. The existing penalties go as high as three years in prison and a fine of €550,000. "But high sentences are almost never handed down," the foundation said.

The federal police could take **industrial action** at the end of May if their demands for more resources for pay and benefits are not met. Police union representatives said the action would not aim to inconvenience the public, with a blockade of the port of Antwerp being considered as one option. Police claim they need more money in order to ensure security and maintain road safety. The Brussels Ring could be another target of their actions. "We know that the public will be put out by that," said a union representative, "but we will warn them in advance".

A small group of **protestors** gathered at the weekend outside the centre for asylum-seekers at Merkplas near Turnhout, following the suicide of a man there last week. Ebenizer Folefack Sontsa, 32, came to Belgium from Cameroon three years ago. Last week an attempt was made to repatriate him, which he resisted. Later that day, he was found hanging in his room. An investigation is under way into allegations of violence by police at the airport, including a claim that video footage shot by a bystander was destroyed by police.

Socialist trade union ACOD last week stated its outright opposition to an idea floated by Flemish liberal politician Herman De Croo to allow the private sector a greater role in the **building and running of prisons**. General secretary Guido Rasschaert accused De Croo of preparing "the generalised privatisation of the prison service," including security and personnel.

Campaign seeks to lure Flemish to Brussels



A new campaign launched last week by the Flemish Community Commission (VGC) aims to attract Flemish families to the capital. With the slogan "Word wakker in Brussel!" (Wake up in Brussels), the VGC hopes to convince students and commuters of the attractions of living in the city. Metro stations and public transport (tram lines 24, 25, 92 and 94) will be decorated with images of bathrooms and breakfast tables to extol the virtues of leaving the commute behind. The publicity points potential residents to the *Wonen in Brussel* website, which lists properties to share, rent or buy.

Minister Guy Vanhengel, launching the programme, said the VGC hoped to achieve its aim with a three-pronged approach: making the urban way of life cool for young people, cutting the costs of living in the city to make it easier for young families and making city life more agreeable with an extended metro, more daycare and parking and better crime-fighting policies.

Online
www.woneninbrussel.be

Antwerp needs to grow to meet demand

The port of Antwerp will need to acquire more handling capacity by 2014-2016 if it is to cope with projected growth in container traffic, Eddy Bruyninckx, director of the port, told the Flemish parliament last week. The parliament was holding hearings on a proposal to build a new dock on the left bank of the Scheldt. The Deurganckdok, opened in July 2005, was the last major addition, bringing about six million TEU (equivalent to three million containers) of capacity. It was the third tidal dock to be constructed on the left bank and cost an estimated €3 billion. But the idea of building a new dock, the Saeftinghedorp, is not without its opponents. Bruyninckx and the port's leading civil servant, Marc Van Peel, are both in favour and want work to start as soon as possible. Against them stand those – led by Groen! politicians – who fear an increase in traffic congestion and the environmental effects that will bring.

Online
www.portofantwerp.com

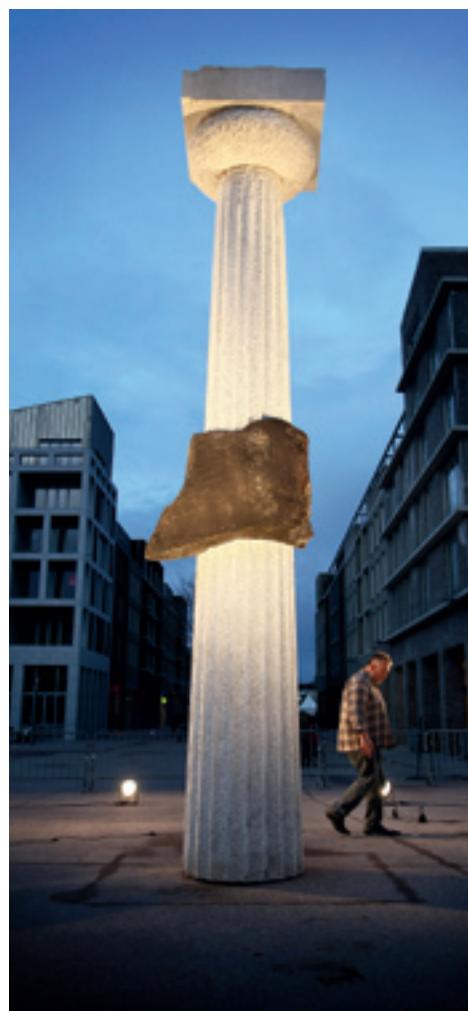
New metro doors "will increase security"

Brussels public transport authority MIVB last week began testing new security doors at metro entrances designed to increase security and cut fare-dodging. Four sets of doors – including sliding panels which only allow access to platforms when a valid ticket has been presented – were installed at Delta station. The supplier of the successful doors will be chosen on the basis of how the doors work in practice, the MIVB said. Installation of new doors will begin this year, but they will only become operational in July of 2009, with the whole network equipped by 2011. The doors are designed to operate with the planned new MOBIB chip-card, which only needs to be passed along a scanner.

Online
www.mivb.be

Monument honours Limburg miners

A monument to the miners of Limburg was unveiled on 1 May on the newly-renovated Stadsplein in Genk. *Colonna di Genk*, by the late Italian artist Luciano Fabero, is in the form of a seven-metre Doric column in Carrara marble, with a slab of volcanic stone, which the artist, who died last year, thought evoked the feeling of coal. The work commemorates all those who came to work in Limburg's mines, many of whom were Italians.



Mining the past

Abandoned coal mines could be reopened to extract methane gas



Leander Schaerlaeckens

Belgium's coal mines once helped to transform the country into a pioneer of industrialisation. But over the years, the depth of coal deposits made it increasingly difficult to compete with international rivals and caused the last Flemish coal mine in Limburg to close in 1992. Wallonia had been forced to abandon its coal industry back in 1983.

But a return to the depths that boosted Belgium to great heights could be imminent as some seven billion cubic meters of methane gas have been identified in the old coal mine concessions. Powered by high fuel prices, methane extraction from former coal mine sites and from coal fumes has become commonplace around the world – in the United States it represents

10% of the gas supply. But it is new to Flanders.

Some of this gas is extracted from groundwater that has seeped into the old mines (abandoned mine methane) but mostly, as will be the case in Flanders, the methane comes from layers of coal in the old mine concessions that haven't been extracted yet (coal bed methane). Now that methane is much more valuable than coal, mines all over Europe are rapidly being reconverted.

To that effect, Albert Frère, Belgium's richest man, wants to descend back into the coal bed layers of Limburg through his holding company Nationale Portefeuille Maatschappij (NPM) in search of the coveted gas. Along with Australian company European Gas Limited (EGL), the 82-

year-old steel magnate turned investor hopes to tap into the billions of cubic meters of methane that is readily accessible.

NPM has invested more than €36 million in EGL through a daughter company, which enabled the Australians to buy the French firm Gazonor, which, like EGL, is a specialist in the extraction of coal bed and coal mine methane. More importantly, Gazonor owns the exploitation rights to four coal mines in Northern France and one in Italy. Together, the consortium hopes to operate in Flanders, too.

The Limburg mines are currently owned by the Limburgse Reconversie Maatschappij (LRM), which was created in 1994 after the last mines had been closed and its workers paid off. The idea was to support the Limburg economy by investing in existing businesses that wanted to convert to another product. LRM was also put in charge of NV Mijnen, under which all mines were assembled in 1968. As such, both Frère's company and the Australians will have to go through the LRM to exploit the mines.

The LRM was surveyed for them by the Vlaamse Instelling voor Technologisch Onderzoek (VITO), which estimates the amount of readily accessible gas (extraction probability of 90% or more) at 7.7 billion cubic meters and thinks the concessions could contain a total of some 31 billion cubic meters (although most of it would be harder to reach).

According to Ben Laenen of VITO, Flanders Region contains some 50 to 55 billion cubic

meters of easily winnable coal bed methane – enough to provide Flanders' gas needs for about a decade. The field in Limburg will be mined only for coal bed methane, since the loose pockets of abandoned mine methane are negligible to the point of being unprofitable.

It will take approximately 15 years to exploit a gas field such as the one in Limburg, Laenen says, meaning the annual output would be less than half a billion cubic meters of gas. Flanders consumes about five billion cubic meters a year meaning that its untapped resources could eventually supply at least 10% of the region's requirement – vastly reducing its need to import and, thus, curbing its sensitivity to global gas prices.

But it could be five years before production even begins; a test-drilling hasn't even been done yet. That alone will take several years – and gauging whether the gas is of sufficient quality and quantity to be profitable will take several more.

"We think the exploitation will be on a small scale," says LRM expert Yves Marchal. "You should think of this project as one with a long-term regional impact that isn't likely to result in pipelines all over Flanders. This industry is beginning to mature elsewhere, but it is still new in Flanders." Miracles shouldn't be expected from the new venture just yet, in other words. But, in time, it could significantly reduce gas prices all over Flanders.

online

www.lrm.be

BUSINESS FLASH



Brussels Airlines

Brussels Airlines is engaged in extensive talks with Germany's Lufthansa to develop joint commercial opportunities that could lead to merger discussions. The Brussels-based carrier, created out of the bankrupt national airline Sabena six years ago, is 29% owned by Virgin Atlantic, Richard Branson's airline, and by 35 of this country's blue-chip companies. Brussels Airlines had made it clear earlier this year that it needed to join one of the world's leading airline alliances – OneWorld, Skyteam or Star Alliance – before the summer to meet the challenges of the slowing economy and the surge in oil prices. In partnering with Lufthansa, the Belgian carrier would join the Star Alliance network that includes United Airlines from the US, Singapore Airlines, Swiss, British Midland and Air Canada.

Besix

Besix, the Brussels-based building group, has won a €1.08 billion contract to build a tram network in Dubai. The service would include 19 stations and is expected to be in operation by 2011.

Lukoil

Lukoil, the Russian oil group that acquired the Jet network of 157 petrol stations in Belgium and Luxembourg, has plans to acquire up to 200 additional outlets over the next three years. The move would make Lukoil the country's leading retailer.

Opel Antwerp

Opel Antwerp, the assembling affiliate of US-based General Motors, has received confirmation that it will be the company's only European production line for SUV vehicles from 2010.

Solvay

Solvay, the chemical and pharmaceuticals company, is to take over the Ghent-based Innogenetics biotechnology company for €177 million. Solvay had been a 6.77% shareholder of Innogenetics since 1997 and was keen to acquire the firm's diagnosing activities to speed up its own development capacity.

Jan de Nul

Jan de Nul, the Antwerp-based dredging company, is on track to book up to €1 billion in contracts in the next few weeks to develop and expand the port of Mesaieed in Qatar and for dredging and construction works in Peru, Trinidad, Brazil, Honduras and Australia.

Van Hool

Van Hool, the Lier-based bus and truck assembler, is believed to be in takeover negotiations with an Indian automotive group. The family-owned company has been building buses since 1947 and is seeking a partner to further develop its activities.



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Fortis board attacked over executive pay

Shareholders of the bank-insurer Fortis expressed their disapproval at last week's Annual General Meeting (AGM) over the level of executive pay, following the revelation last month that managing director Jean-Paul Votron will this year take home €1.3 million in basic salary, up from €750,000 last year. His bonus for 2007 stands at €2.5 million.

"Votron's salary has been brought into line with what other top managers earn in similar banks," chairman Maurice Lippens explained to shareholders. He also pointed out that the board had decided to increase Votron's salary in 2006, but he had declined to accept a raise at the time. The bonus was a reflection, Lippens said, of "outstanding leadership" in the previous year, in which Votron had overseen the takeover of ABN-AMRO, formed a strategic partnership with Chinese holding company Ping An and managed Fortis' response to the credit



Fortis chairman Maurice Lippens (left) and CEO Jean-Paul Votron during the Fortis AGM

crisis. In addition, he said, Votron and other top Fortis executives had been punished by the share's falling price, which

affected the value of their options.

Lippens' explanation did little to calm the audience, who went on to subject him

to two hours of often-hostile questioning. Shareholders criticised the level of Votron's remuneration, as well as the timing. Lippens pointed out that remuneration was a matter for the board and not for the AGM, which had approved the existing policy in 2004 – a policy that remains unchanged, he said. Both Lippens and Votron were confirmed in their posts by the AGM.

During the meeting, Lippens also announced that he had met with controversial Russian businessman Suleiman Kerimov, who had shown exceptional interest in Fortis. Rumours had circulated earlier in the year that Kerimov was buying up Fortis shares at the low price to which they had fallen. Lippens at that time denied knowledge of any buy-up, commenting, "We cannot prevent someone from the mafia buying our shares without our knowledge". Last week he went to considerable lengths to point out that Kerimov, who spent some time in Belgium being treated for severe burns sustained in a car crash in Monaco, was a respectable businessman who was unfairly portrayed as a mafia-boss in some media.

Report lays out highs and lows of Flanders' economy

The productivity and education level of Flanders' workers scores among the top 10 of European regions, according to a new report produced by the Flemish regional government. But at the same time, labour costs and the number of employees over 55 still active in the workforce drags the region down to the lowest of the European rankings. In only eight regions out of the 125 studied were the costs of keeping someone in work higher than in Flanders.

The "benchmarking" report compares 125 regions in Europe according to a series of key indicators, such as per capita GDP, number of start-up companies, growth and investment, patent applications and unemployment. On productivity and education, as well as on the percentage of entrepreneurs in the workforce, Flanders scored among the top three in Europe but leads on no single indicator, unlike regions with which Flanders considers itself equal, such as the Basque region or Bavaria. On most economic aspects, Flanders is neither good nor bad – it falls just out of the top 10, but not too close to the bottom. However, Flanders hits rock-bottom in two areas: the percentage of the adult population in work and the number of over-55s.

Workers vote to elect union reps

Elections started this week to choose union representatives in some 6,000 companies. The three main unions, the Christian ACV, the socialist ABVV and the liberal ACLVB are fielding a total of 141,000 candidates. Elections vary according to the size of the company concerned: in companies of fewer than 50 staff, no elections are necessary. For companies with between 50 and 100 employees, elections take place for representatives to the Committee for Prevention and Protection at Work, which the ACV currently dominates, gaining shares every year at the expense of the ABVV, while the tiny ACLVB remains constant.

In companies with more than 100 employees, in addition to the elections to the Committee, representatives are also elected to sit on the health and safety sub-committees, required for larger enterprises. Social elections, as they are called, take place every four years. Voting runs until 18 May.

Leterme to clear sale of Distrigas with Sarkozy

Prime minister Yves Leterme was expected this week to discuss the final stages of the takeover of Distrigas, when he met French president Nicolas Sarkozy on a visit to Paris. The sale of Distrigas is a condition of approval of the merger of Gaz de France (GDF) and Suez. The shortlist

for acquirer contains three names: EDF of France, Germany's E.ON and Italy's ENI. The last is the favourite with the Belgian government for a number of reasons, not least a bid of around €4 billion, well above Distrigas's current book worth. ENI's arrival would also do more to ensure competition on the Belgian market, with three main players: Suez-GDF, ENI and Belgian-British concern SPE-Centrica.

The discussion is likely also to cover the



value of Distrigas transit contracts for the transport of gas via its network to third parties. Suez values the contracts at €1.2 billion, but the Belgian gas regulator says the contracts are not binding. A compromise has been proposed putting a value of €500 million on the contracts, which, if agreed, would clear the way for the disposal of Distrigas to its new owner, possibly at the end of this month, followed soon after by the merger of GDF and Suez.



Colruyt launches electronic coupons

No-frills supermarket chain Colruyt was due this week to launch its latest breakthrough in cut-price shopping – an electronic card containing all the special offers available to each customer, which can be scanned once at the checkout and takes the place of coupons clipped from newspapers and free-sheets. Colruyt claims that the card is unique in Belgium: unlike fidelity cards, discounts are not accumulated for the future but are given immediately, the company says. In addition, repeat visits will automatically give access to repeat discounts within the period of validity. Customers with privacy concerns, meanwhile, will still be able to use printed coupons. The electronic card replaces a more restricted non-magnetic version of the card launched a year ago.

Proximus staff rebel

Staff at the headquarters of mobile telephone company Proximus turned up for work on Monday to find the entrances blocked by union members protesting at "hidden restructuring" which they alleged was being carried out by parent company Belgacom. The picket consisted of about 35 of the 2,000 employed in the HQ in the North Station area. A "symbolic picket" of a few protestors at the nearby Belgacom tower caused no disruption. The unions claim Proximus departments are being restructured without any plan having been agreed with them first. The action was expected to have the most impact on the customer service section of the building. Another picket is to be organised for 22 May.

Businessman buys back company after ten years

Jos Vaessen, now known as the tough chairman of Genk football club, has paid around €100 million to buy back the company he sold 10 years ago – radiator manufacturer Vasco, now known as The Heating Company (THC). "Figuratively, you could say I have got my baby back," he says. Vaessen set the company up in 1975 and steered it through troubled times to turn it into the market leader. Then in 1998 the American-owned Masco made him an offer he couldn't refuse – around four billion BF, or €100 million in today's money – the sum he has just paid to buy it back. In the meantime, Vaessen has built up another company supplying ceilings, aluminium profiles and lighting. His aim: to double Vasco's sales, which last year reached €140 million. "It was a business decision," he says. "In business there is no place for sentimentality."

EXHIBITION

Other faces

They came from all over to fight in the trenches of Flanders. A new exhibition focuses on the forgotten minorities.



A rare colour photograph showing a group of Spahis from north Africa who served in the French army

Derek Blyth

The First World War was history's first global conflict. The soldiers arrived on crowded ships from small villages in Africa, remote farming communities in New Zealand, windswept fishing ports in Canada. For four years, the fields around Ypres were filled with the most cosmopolitan mixture of people the world had ever seen.

The acclaimed In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres has put together a fascinating exhibition

on the multicultural aspects of the war. *Man, Culture, War* includes photographs, documents and relics of soldiers from the most exotic of places – Senegal, Tunisia, Fiji, Madagascar and Jamaica. Some 50 different ethnic groups are represented in all, including small numbers of Maoris and Eskimos.

A Ghent soldier called Goebbels became intrigued by the different nationalities and peoples that passed through Flanders. He created an album, which forms

the centrepiece of the exhibition, containing photographs, drawings and even puppets. The museum has used these to create an enormous wall display of heads and fabric fragments that reflects the complex origins of the war's participants.

Most of the multinational soldiers came from scattered colonies that were controlled at the time by the French or British. As well as the horrors of trench warfare, they were the subject of racist slurs and tasteless jokes. The

Germans made fun of what they called a "people's circus", while a Flemish priest in Roesbrugge boasted about his success in baptising dozens of "niggers from the island of Madagascar."

There was also the problem of alienation amid a landscape and weather that were totally unfamiliar to most of the soldiers. Even before the Flemish countryside was devastated, it was a cold, bleak place for anyone from a hot climate. The food was different, customs were strange and many could only communicate with others from the same region.

The trenches became a unique melting pot for research purposes. The Germans studied the foreign "types" and made thousands of recordings of voices and music. Meanwhile, the Flemish locals looked on in amazement at the different people that passed through their villages. "Today I saw the first Chinese in a blue linen outfit," wrote a Flemish monk in the Abbey of Sint-Sixtus in West-

vleteren. "I have already seen soldiers from India, from Australia, from Spain, from Algiers, from Scotland wearing skirts, from Ireland, from Transvaal. There is even one from Russia."

It must have been fascinating to observe, but there was a brutal reality was that the multicultural soldiers were sent off to fight in the trenches, and many of them never returned home. All that remains are scattered gravestones in the military cemeteries with inscriptions in Arabic, Hindu, Punjabi or Chinese script. The exhibition in the old cloth hall in Ypres is almost the first attempt to put faces to those strange names from far-off places.

Until 7 September, In Flanders Fields Museum, Lakenhalle, Grote Markt 34, Ypres

online
www.inflandersfields.be



Indian troops in a makeshift trench defending the road at Wytschaete in the autumn of 1914

MUSIC

Jef Neve Trio premieres new album

Jef Neve has done what many jazz pianist can only dream of: broken out across genres, beyond, as he says, the circle of "pure jazz connoisseurs". Neve was the first artist signed to Universal Music in Belgium, which has rewarded him with international sales. "Our public has grown, and a lot of young people are now coming to see our shows," he says.

After two self-produced albums – *Blue Saga* in 2003 and *It's Gone* the following year – Neve signed to Universal in late 2006. With the release of *Nobody is Illegal* early last year, the trio saw its intense indie-jazz sounds selling solidly in 20 countries.

Soul in a Picture is the next stage in the journey for the piano man and Klara radio host, who plays in the Jef Neve Trio with Piet Verbist on bass and Teun Verbruggen on



Fresh pastures: the piano man reaches an international audience

drums. Recorded at the Galaxy Studio in Mol, the new album, which released this week, includes the bonus CD *The Flying Faders* – what Neve calls "a 37-minute impression of improvisations in our studio playground."

The title *Soul in a Picture* came to Neve, he says, when he joined a project initiated by students at the Institute for Audiovisual Arts and Techniques in Brussels. "I was filmed while composing a new song, and I felt something like a breach of privacy, as if they were looking right into my soul."

Throughout the album, Neve incorporates inventive elements: "A Waterfall Never Comes Alone" is inspired by the waterfall at Coo in the Belgian Ardennes, and the piano lead is accompanied by Verbruggen's percussion, triggered to an electronic synthesiser.

Last week, the trio premiered *Soul in a Picture* with a free concert at Klara studios, part of the weekly live series he himself hosts. He's been doing the show since last year. "It was a great chal-

lenge for me, as I'm not a radio man," he says. "I learn a lot, and it's an excellent opportunity to put the spotlight on domestic jazz talent."

Marc Maes

Catch Jef Neve on Fridays from 19.00 to 21.00 on Radio Klara

online
www.jefneve.be

Tour dates

- 7 May Vooruit, Ghent
- 8 May Ancienne Belgique, Brussels
- 9 May De Warande, Turnhout
- 18 May AldJazz festival, Bilzen
- 5 June de Roma, Antwerp

EXHIBITION

Strange archaeology

The Guillaume Bijl exhibition asks questions of the viewer that are hard to ignore



Lonely in a crowd: Bijl's empty spaces emphasise an inherent desolation

Lisa Bradshaw

Pairing unrelated artworks to create whole new interpretations is very popular these days: Flemish artist Jan Fabre currently has shows both in Brussels and Paris doing just that, and Brussels' Argos media centre is employing the same method right now to explore issues of immigration.

Guillaume Bijl is in the same territory but takes a slightly different approach. Since the 1970s, the Antwerp artist has been creating installations of settings taken directly from reality – forcing viewers to reconsider their effects outside of normal reference points.

The 61-year-old's self-titled exhibition at Smak in Ghent brings

together many of his installations from the last 25 years. Some of this, but also new work, makes up the "Flanders Extra Fair" on Smak's ground floor. Viewers walk down a red carpet past gallery after gallery of retail merchandise, organised like a consumer fair. The perfect bedrooms and bathrooms appear before you with brand name items like the Innergetic mattress by Latexco and slogans such as "The feel is the deal".

On the same floor are more of what Bijl calls "formatted environments": perfectly realised offices with a variety of public services. In one, you can sign up for Belgian military service, another is one of those interminable phone centres for making calls. Desks, computers, waiting areas – the offices are

complete except, rather eerily, for the absence of people.

These offices are so realistic that in previous installations outside museums, people wandered in to sign up for driving school lessons or to book a holiday. As an exhibition, however, it becomes clear how lifelessly profit-oriented they are. Bijl's Thomas Cook office, for instance, is so grey and dull, you're overwhelmed by the stark contrast between it and the actual holiday you're going there to book. The wedding planner's office is completely devoid of aesthetic beauty – which is what they are there to sell.

While the consumer fair takes you out of the role of everyday participant, forcing you to consider why and how you participate,

the offices project a complete sense of emptiness and isolation, like you are the only person left on earth. The question then arises: are these the kinds of relics we want future archaeologists to unearth?

This theme of history and archaeology, indeed, runs through the entire show, which continues with the stage from a "Miss Flanders Beauty" contest and an adjoining VIP disco lounge: precise copies of silver-fringed, purple-lighted modern tackiness.

Perhaps the most effective installation on this floor, though, is Bijl's recreation of a cinema simply showing the final 30 minutes of the recent American disaster epic *Deep Impact*. Formulaic and peppered with dialogue so ridiculous, you begin to wonder if it's a real movie or if Bijl managed to convince Morgan Freeman and Elijah Wood to star in a spoof of the genre. But it's real, and in this context, something you might easily sit through in the cinema becomes more clearly recognisable as nationalist propaganda. (I uncomfortably glanced around at the rest of the audience, hoping they wouldn't be able to tell I'm an American.)

The other half of the exhibition is on Smak's first floor, where you'll find many installations in Bijl's Cultural Tourism series. "The Concise History of Prehistoric Man" is made up of three scenes that mirror what you might see in a natural history museum, where we spend time admiring the relics and important evolutions of past generations. Compare this with social-

history-as-spectacle back downstairs, Bijl appears to be saying.

You'll also find Bijl's six "museums", which are brought together for the first time at Smak. Nicely designed to feel like separate buildings, each one carries a theme, like "the Bidet Museum" or "Souvenirs of the 20th Century".

My favourite section, here, though, is the installation titled "The Chair in Art: From 1980 to the Present in the Flemish Ardennes". Poking fun at contrived exhibition themes, Bijl has commissioned all the multi-media works in the room from artists specifically for his "fictional" show. He's made up names to place next to them, but the show includes work by Flemish artists Luc Tuymans and Koen van den Broek. What the artists have contributed to an ironic theme – and how it all adds up to looking like an actual, thoughtfully-curated exhibition – is fascinating.

Although it takes awhile to get comfortable with the form of super-reality Bijl offers, Smak's exhibition is at once a comprehensive and intimate look at a Flemish artist who could be considered a modern archaeologist. Through it, it's easy to understand what Bijl meant when he made his famous statement: "I don't think an artist creates. An artist testifies".

Until 6 July, Smak, Citadelpark, Ghent

Online
www.smak.be

FILM FREAK

Docville

Unless a documentary is made by Al Gore or narrated by George Clooney, it's probably going to be under-released and definitely underrated. Docville steps in for the fourth year now to fill the void.

The festival brings the best of the world's documentaries to Leuven from 10 to 17 May for a week of harrowing Andean mountain journeys, American war protests, Russian delinquents and music from across the globe. Admittedly, some of these films have no trouble finding an audience – like Alex Gibney's Oscar-winning *Taxi to the Dark Side*, a shocking look at America's torture techniques in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo, and *Shine a Light*, Martin Scorsese's masterful homage to the Rolling Stones. But it's also an outlet for other outstanding work you will not see anywhere else.

Mr Untouchable is a stylish portrait of Leroy "Nicky" Barnes, the renowned ringleader of a 1970s New York heroin empire. Director Mark Levin, who so often tackles such subjects, is as seduced by the glamour and the legend as he is wary of it. Barnes has been in the Witness Protection Program after giving up his collaborators 10 years ago, and Levin films him in silhouette surrounding by plush trappings, only adding to the intrigue.

Gonzalo Arijón's *Stranded* tells the story of the two Uruguayan football players who wandered across the snow-covered Andes for 10 weeks after their plane crashed in 1972. Amid a media frenzy, they admitted they had to eat "the bodies of our friends" to survive. *Alone in Four Walls*, meanwhile, is German filmmaker Alexandra Westmeier's poetic

study of boys in a Russian reform school, where one might be spending time for petty theft or for multiple murders.

Both war and music figure heavily in the fest this year and sometimes powerfully intersect such as in *War/Dance* by Sean Fine and Andrea Nix, who have won a number of awards for their portrayal of former Ugandan child soldiers competing in a music and dance festival.

Docville also screens *Sand and Sorrow*, Paul Freedman's film about the devastating situation in the camps of Darfur. It emotionally effective without resorting to tactics, and its beautifully narrated by, er, George Clooney.

LB

Online
www.docville.be



"I have come from a plane that crashed on the mountains": the jaw-dropping story of the Uruguayan football players who survived the Andes

It's a jungle out there

Though much needed, the expansion of Antwerp Zoo is ruffling a few feathers

Monique Philips

The Antwerp zoo, a major attraction for tourists and locals alike, has been hoping to expand for a very long time. Finally, for the first time in its 150-year history, extensive plans have been drawn up to add an extra 1.5 hectares to the animal park. To accommodate the expansion, all the houses in the adjacent Ommeganckstraat and Ploegstraat have been bought up and demolished. All except one.

The zoo is still negotiating with the owner of the last house in the Ommeganckstraat. But Goedele van Hooydonck is determined to stay put. "My grandparents bought this place in 1915. My mother grew up here, and I grew up here. This house will always remain immensely valuable to me," she told the *Gazet van Antwerpen* in 2005 in her one-and-only interview with the press.

In the meantime, the zoo and its architects have been battling neighbourhood associations about noise and the appearance of a construction wall being built to shelter the east side of the zoo during the first phase of expansion. This could all go on awhile: the project is not due to finish until 2020.

The Ghent firm Robbrecht and Daem won the architectural competition to design the zoo expansion. Among its high-profile contracts are the Concertgebouw in Bruges and renovations to both the Flanders Opera house in Antwerp and the Book Tower in Ghent. They call their style New Simplicity, a term taken from late 1970s German composers, who were backing away from the complex avant-garde. Robbrecht

Antwerp Zoo



"And the ceilings should be high..." Zoo expansion architects collaborate with animal keepers to design decidedly non-human dwellings

and Daem use architecture as a means of conversing with other cultural expressions, such as music.

The expansion of the zoo has proved to be a slow and very complicated process. In the middle of an urban residential area next to Central Station, it encompasses a new restaurant and other public facilities but also animal housing. "We had to study all sorts of guidelines and specialist literature in order to guarantee the animals' welfare," explains Sofie Deboutte of Robbrecht and Daem. "We

have never designed for elephants and giraffes before, so we have to hold weekly discussions with the animals' caretakers."

The current source of contention is the long, temporary wall that will soon be erected in the Ommeganckstraat where houses used to back up against the zoo. Neighbours across the street and in nearby streets lashed out against a solid cement wall several hundred metres long. A compromise was reached, and windows will be set in the wall so it won't appear to cut the neighbourhood in two. Passersby will be able to see right into the zoo. "It's a compromise for a two-year building period, but it won't last," explains Deboutte. "After all, the zoo needs the entrance fees. Plus, the giraffes get nervous from all the passing traffic and lights at night."

And then there is the matter of the Rhino Pavilion. Built in 1843, the entire zoo is a protected monument, and its buildings cannot be destroyed. But the pavilion (which actually houses kangaroos) is in the way of development. The zoo could move it, as they have done before with a historical birdhouse. As luck would have it, the Rhino Pavilion is right next to Van Hooydonck's house.

It can't be easy to live in a house surrounded by bulldozers, noise and dust. No wonder the shutters remain closed at number 74. Litter and a mobile toilet clutter the sidewalk, while trucks rumble by. Since 2004, residents in both the Ommeganckstraat and Ploegstraat had lived in uncertainty about when they would have to leave their houses. "Why would I sell?" stated Van Hooydonck to

tees grouped in the area called De Ploeg, explains how the centrally-positioned Provinciestraat serves as a dividing line between two very different districts: the newly built high rise office buildings around the Kievitplein and the residential streets of the Borgerhout district.

The drive through Ommeganckstraat, she argues, is De Ploeg's only link with the city centre. "We're fighting to replace the lost 32 front doors with something better or at least equal," she explains. Though Claeys has been invited to meetings of the zoo project's steering committee, there hasn't been a meeting in quite awhile, she says. "It worries us as we fear the zoo is going ahead with its considerations without us."

The neighbourhood is thrilled about the windows in the temporary wall erected on their corner. "This openness and outlook on trees has given us an immense uplift, and we hope the zoo and the city will grant us these qualities permanently."

Part of the neighbourhood committees' staunch protest is a result of previous disappointments. Kievitplein is considered a city sell out. They were promised a large green space in between a few low blocks, but the place is bare save the welded-steel of the Baobabs art sculpture, dwarfed by tall office blocks.

On the other hand, a very interesting project is underway in the Ploegstraat. Repossessed by squatters, a 1910 Dominican Cloister has become a beehive of social

Monique Philips



Hell no, I won't go: the final house in Ommeganckstraat

ous comments to the media with a burglary at her house.

So, what will happen with the Rhino Pavilion and the last house standing? "As it is, they rather block our plans," admits Deboutte. "But there's still time."

The neighbourhood, though, is rallying around Van Hooydonck, as they all suffer from urban planning going on over their heads. Manu Claeys, spokesman for the seven neighbourhood commit-

tee, with several organisations moving in, including a volkseukken, in which locals can cook, eat and talk together, and plenty of space for cultural activities. Let's hope this communal network continues to provide some human-size counterweight for the cranes circling above.



Architecturally enticing, but the Kievitplein was supposed to be green

online
www.zooantwerpen.be

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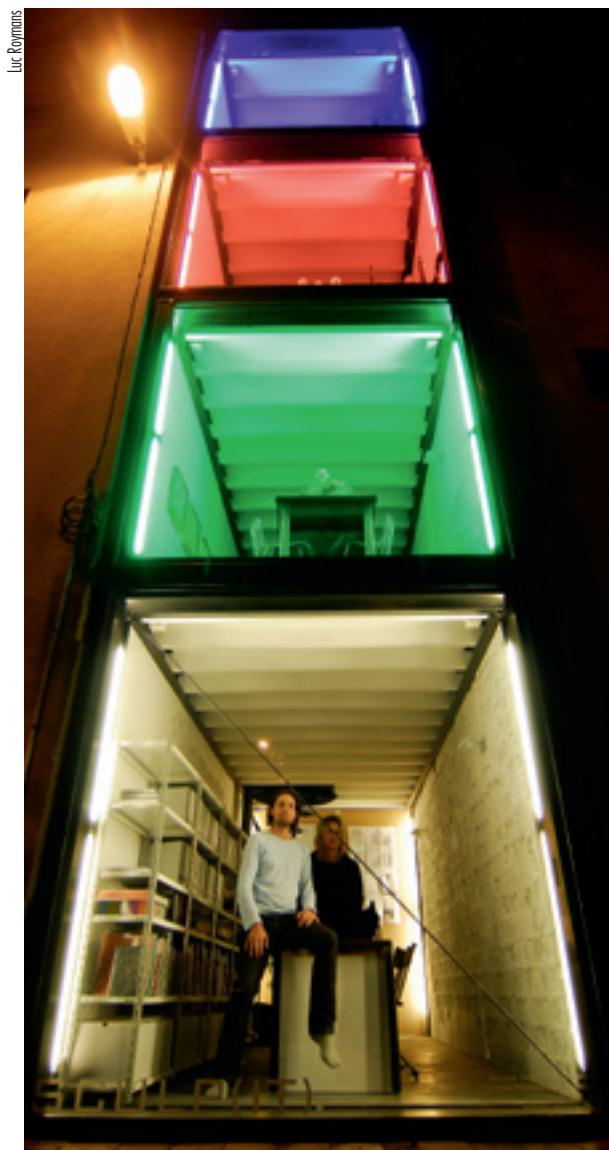
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ARCHITECTURE

Lighting the way

Antwerp architects get back to basics – on more than one level



From founding to national award in one year: the architects of Sculp(IT) and their Antwerp home

Stéphanie Duval

The structure that won this year's Belgian Building Award is hard to miss, even though its gable measures only 2.5 metres. The front of this narrow four-story house in Antwerp's Huikstraat is made entirely of glass, which is now and then illuminated with flamboyant colours – a different colour for each story.

That's because each floor has its own function. "Our office is on the ground floor, while our bedroom is on the top," explains Pieter Peerlings, who, together with his wife Silvia Mertens, founded the architectural company Sculp(IT) just last year. "But we hardly ever use the coloured lights", he continues. "Although the red in the living room is actually quite cosy, it's hard to enjoy a steak under the flashy green lights in the kitchen. Mostly we light up the house to please the neighbours when they're having company over."

In fact, both the lighting and the house itself attracts plenty of attention. "We often see guided groups peering through our windows, especially since we won the award," says Peerlings. Not that he's complaining. The building they designed and now live in has quickly put Sculp(IT) on the map. Clients have had no trouble finding them. Still, they are selective with their projects, says Peerlings. "We try hard to profile ourselves in a certain way so that people know what to expect from us. We don't do traditional; we have our own way of handling things."

The roots of the company can be found in its name. "It refers to sculptures, which link the concepts of archi-

tecture and art," says Mertens. "We think it's necessary to incorporate feelings and atmospheres in our developments, which makes our work somewhat less calculated than traditional architecture and more emotive, like art."

Their house in the Huikstraat posed a few problems to the young architects, but they were confident from the start that they had gold in their hands. "The property was within our budget, which is a rare thing so close to the centre of Antwerp. We were never worried by the proportions of the house, since we've always been convinced it's not the square metres that count but the feel of the space."

The duo has indeed created a home that feels a lot more spacious than you would expect, seeing it from the outside. Glass walls in the front and back help achieve that, as does the tiny, pre-existing plaza out front with a tree, which Peerlings calls "a park made to measure".

He adds that it's an advantage to have all these different floors, instead of one big platform like a normal studio: "Silvia and I are easily able to catch a little alone time. We can have up to three floors between us. It's a sense of privacy you can't get in an apartment."

Thirteen square metres on each floor forced the couple to think creatively about the organisation of their interiors. Kitchen fixtures and the spiral staircase that connects the floors, for instance, are narrower than traditional designs. Creative solutions were especially essential in the bedroom. "It was the last space we had to design, and it had to be all those different things:

bathroom, bedroom and dressing room." The bathtub, which didn't quite fit the small space, found its way to the rooftop, where it functions as a Jacuzzi, as well.

Besides making everything as compact as possible, the couple's motto is clear: "less is more". Everything in the house is absolutely necessary; all the rest was left out. The approach is environmental in the simplest way. "By taking up less space, you automatically reduce your ecological footprint," notes Mertens. "You're not going to do that by incorporating all kinds of expensive technical novelties. It's the basic principles you need to adjust."

Mertens and Peerlings are obviously fans of honest architecture. Every material they used is visible. For example, parts of the walls at the sides of the house had peeled off because of a fire. Rather than strip them, they just painted them white. Because the walls weren't strong enough anymore, the building rests on a metal and wood construction, which was left entirely naked.

"We've been living here since last August, and it's actually proven more comfortable than we had expected. At first we thought of selling the building relatively quickly, but we've let go of that idea", says Peerlings. Their neighbourhood, formerly a red light district, is currently subject to many changes. "There's a lot of building and renovating going on around here, and many young people are moving in," he says. "For the time being, we feel quite at home here."

online

www.sculp.it

FASHION

Something borrowed

Looking for the ultimate dress for a big occasion? Now you can dress to kill without murdering your credit card

Stéphanie Duval

Ann Eyckmans has always been passionate about couture. When she was a little girl, she liked to flip through *Vogue* and show her mother which designs she liked.

A few years ago, Eyckmans attended a costume ball in Antwerp and rented a beautiful Venetian gown for the occasion. That's when the idea hit her. Why not rent out haute couture?

Eyckmans now owns LXP, short for LuxPerience, a unique service boutique for fashionistas on a budget. Instead of buying the designer dresses and handbags you desire, you can rent them for a night, a week or even a month. Her shop in Antwerp's Hopland

street offers luxurious clothes for women by more than 20 designers at a fraction of their original price. Cocktail dresses go for between €50 and €100 per day, while evening gowns are generally between €50 and €180.

It's a fashion addict's dream come true, and when I was invited to experience it for myself, I was off like a shot. The slick interior design by architect Glenn Sestig reflects a chic and modern boudoir. Some of the clothes are displayed downstairs on mannequins, but most of the collection is upstairs.

The first floor is cosy, meant to feel just like home. A large sofa sits in the middle, surrounded by racks filled with stunning designs.

A black screen conceals a large fitting room where customers can discreetly admire themselves in their beautiful, borrowed clothes.

After marvelling at the dresses, I decided to make my way downstairs to inspect the dazzling array of over 30 handbags. Names like Bottega Veneta, Chloé and Hermès cried out for my attention, but in the end I fell in love with an eccentric Chanel trimmed with fur and accented with shimmery silver details. While Eyckmans was wrapping it up, I couldn't believe I was actually going to walk out of a boutique with a Chanel without having first robbed a bank.

During the visit, I noticed that I was not the only one crazy about



Take your pick: rent designer clothes for a fraction of retail at LXP

LXP. Antwerp socialites are flocking there, adoring being able to wear a different dress to every social event. Eyckmans confides that she provided several guests at Antwerp's recent Night of Exclusive with a glamorous party

frock.

It might be borrowed, but it means you can go to the ball.

Online

www.luxperience.be

Classical & new music**Brussels****Bozar (Paleis voor Schone Kunsten)**Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be

Concerts at 20.00

MAY 7 London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Pierre Boulez, with Michelle DeYoung, mezzo; Peter Fried, bass and the BBC singers: Schönberg, Pintscher, Bartók**MAY 8** Ravel's trio, Messiaen's Quatuor pour la fin du temps**MAY 9** Collegium Vocale Gent conducted by Philippe Herreweghe: Bach's Easter and Ascension Oratorios**MAY 14** Alban Berg Quartet: Haydn, Berg, Schubert**MAY 15** deFilharmonie conducted by Josep Pons: Ravel, de Falla, Stravinsky**De Munt**

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39

MAY 9 12.30 Brussels String Quartet: string quartets by Cherubini, Verdi**Espace Senghor**

Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40,

www.senghor.be

MAY 9 19.00 Gilles Gobert: short documentary on the composer by Joachin Thôme, followed by an introduction and performance of extracts from Gobert's Les Sept chants d'Avenir by Ensemble Nahandove with François Emmanuel, narrator**Flagey**Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,
www.flagey.be**MAY 9** 12.30 Michael Frohnmeier, piano: Schubert's Sonata D 960**Kapel van de Miniemens**Miniemensstraat 62; 02.507.82.00,
www.minimes.net**MAY 7** 20.30 Brussels Chamber Choir conducted by Helen Cassano: a capella and contemporary music by Rautavaara, Messiaen, Tavener, Casals, Rachmaninoff, Whitacre**Royal Music Conservatory**

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37

MAY 8-14 Queen Elisabeth Singing Competition 2008**MAY 13** 20.30 Brussels Chamber Choir conducted by Helen Cassano: a capella and contemporary music by Rautavaara, Messiaen, Tavener, Casals, Rachmaninoff, Whitacre**Antwerp****deSingel**

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28

MAY 8 20.00 Collegium Vocale Gent Orkest & Koor conducted by Philippe Herreweghe: Bach's Easter and Ascension Oratorios**MAY 15** 20.00 Power Flower: Champ d'Action in a programme of music linking 1960s ground-breaking musicians, such as Jimi Hendrix and John Cage, with contemporary composers James Tenney, Gavin Bryars and Michael Nyman.**Bruges****Concertgebouw**

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02

MAY 10 20.00 Anima Eterna conducted by Jos van Immerseel, with Rian de Waal, piano: Liszt's First Mephisto Waltz, Grieg's Piano Concerto op 16, Berlioz' Symphony Fantastique op 14 **MAY 14** 20.00 Renaud Capuçon, violin; Gautier Capuçon, cello; Frank Braley, piano: Schubert piano trios**Ghent****De Bijloke**

Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, 09.269.92.92

Concerts at 20.00:

MAY 7 Collegium Vocale Gent Orkest & Koor conducted by Philippe Herreweghe: Bach's Easter and Ascension Oratorios **MAY 9** Il Fondamento and Vlaams Radio Koor conducted by Paul Dombrecht: Zelenka **MAY 15** Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir conducted by Paul Hillier: works by Arvo Pärt and medieval polyphony**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**MAY 8** 20.00 Fumie Onda, piano; Hrachya Avanesyan, violin; Nicholas Van de Velde and Dana Protopopescu, piano: Beethoven, Chopin**Jazz & blues****Brussels****Ancienne Belgique**

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24

MAY 8 20.00 Jef Neve Trio**Beursschouwburg**

Auguste Ortrstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,

www.beursschouwburg.be

MAY 7 20.30 Tutu Puoane Quartet**Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)**

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.84.44

MAY 11 11.00 Film concert: Steamboat Bill, Jr with Buster Keaton (US 1928) with music by Eric Slechim, performed by Bl!ndman**Brasserie de L'Union**

Sint-Gillisvoordeplein 55; 02.538.15.79

MAY 11 12.00-15.00 Carson Barnes & friends**Flagey**

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,

www.flagey.be

MAY 15 21.30 Robin Verheyen International Quartet 'Painting Space'**Jazz Station**

Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78

MAY 7 20.30 Bart Quartier Quintet**MAY 8** 20.30 Jazz Station Big Band**MAY 9** 20.30 The New-Orleans Train Jazzband **MAY 10** 18.00 Christian Mendoza Quartet **MAY 14** 20.30 Gowk **MAY 15** 20.30 KMG'S**La Brocante Thomas**

Blaesstraat 170; 02.512.13.43

MAY 10 12.00-16.00 Carson Barnes & friends**Le Caveau du Max**

Victor Hugo/Emile Max Corner; 02.733.17.88

MAY 8 20.30 Rony Verbiest/Bart Quartier Duo**Maison des Musiques**

Lebeaustraat 39; 02.550.13.20

MAY 9 12.30 Sophie Tassignon & Alexandre Furnelle Duo**Zaal de Maalbeek**

Oudergemlaan 90; 0485.50.57.78

MAY 7 20.00 JazzOlive: Eres Dios Explosion and Djeeboolai**Sounds Jazz Club**

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50,

www.soundsjazzclub.be

MAY 7 22.00 Chamaquiendo, salsa**MAY 8** 21.00 The Singers Night **MAY 9** 22.00 Andy Declerk & Kari Antila Group **MAY 10** 22.00 Walrus **MAY 12** 22.00 Master Session **MAY 13** 22.00 Da Romeo Band **MAY 14** 22.00 Caribe Con K, Caribbean music **MAY 15** 22.00 Sara So Far Quartet**The Music Village**

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45

MAY 7 20.30 Asymétrie **MAY 8** 12.30 Anton Walgraeve **MAY 9** 20.30 Gino Latucca + Ivan Paduart Trio **MAY 10** 20.30 Richard Rousselet Two Trumpets Quintet **MAY 13** 20.30 Royal Conservatory Brussels jazz exams - session 1 **MAY 14** 20.30 Action Reaction **MAY 15** 20.30 Jan Gerfast Blues Band**Borgerhout****De Roma**

Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.235.04.90

MAY 7 20.30 Radiokukaorkest, Stefano Bollani and Fabian Fiorini **MAY 9** 20.30 Brussels Jazz Orchestra with Tutu Puoane & Sara De Bosschere**Luchtbal Cultuurcentrum**

Columbiestraat 110; 03.543.90.30,

www.ccluchtbal.org

MAY 14 20.30 Sylvie Courvoisier**Bruges****De Werf**

Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29

MAY 10 20.30 Robin Verheyen International Quartet**Ghent****Vooruit**

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 09.267.28.28

Concerts at 20.00

MAY 7 Jef Neve Trio**MAY 15** Tutu Puoane Quartet**Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul****Brussels****Ancienne Belgique**

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24

MAY 11 20.00 Toumani Diabaté**Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)**

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00

MAY 12 20.00 Kuban Cossack Chorus, Russian folk music**Flagey**

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,

www.flagey.be

MAY 13 20.15 3MA (Mali, Madagascar & Morocco)**L'Os à Moelle**

Emile Maxlaan 153; 02.267.10.90

Concerts at 20.30:

MAY 7 Dashbox & Nomad Experiment**MAY 8** Elphemerrances **MAY 9**Ministère des affaires populaires & Panopticon **MAY 10** Saltimbanques de fortunes & Zen Zila**Café Dada**

Violettestraat 34; 0484.50.83.80

MAY 9 20.00 Urshey**MAY 10** 20.00 Radar**Fuse**

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89

MAY 10 23.00 Data Punk Label Night**Recyclart**

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34

MAY 10 11.00-20.00 Fête des Ursulines - skatepark event (Los Marolles project)**MAY 11** 14.00-18.00 Disco Kids (Los Marolles project)**VK Club**

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07

MAY 10 19.30 Reggae Festival**Vorst-Nationaal**

Victor Rousseaualaan 208; 0900.00.991

MAY 8 20.00 Portishead**MAY 11** 20.00 Robert Plant & Alison Krauss**Antwerp****deSingel**

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28

MAY 7 20.00 Fado Legends with Pedro Caldeira Cabral and Joaquim Antonio Silva, guitar (Portugal)**Queen Elisabeth Hall**

Boon (in Dutch)
MAY 11-13 20.30 Braakland/
 ZheBilding in Dansen Drinken Betalen
 (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

Arts en Marge

Hoogstraat 312; 02.511.04.11
Until MAY 17 Allemaal Beestjes,
 outsider art group show on the theme
 of real and imaginary animals

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 symbol of Expo 58
Until OCT 19 The Pavilion of
 Temporary Happiness, built from
 33,000 drink crates to house screenings
 and exhibitions about World Fairs (near
 the Atomium on Louis Steensplein)

Box Gallery

Maliestraat 88; 02.537.95.55
Until MAY 17 De la misma carne,
 photographs by Alberto García-Alix

Boycott Gallery

Darwinstraat 33; 0475.51.99.31
Until MAY 10 Photographs by Mikaël
 Falke

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.84.44
Until MAY 25 Paul Klee: Theater Here,
 There and Everywhere, monographic
 exhibition on the Berne-based artist
 (1879-1940)
Until MAY 18 Jan Fabre: Borrowed
 time, work by the Flemish artist
 paired with photographs from his
 performances
Until JUNE 15 Skal: drinking horns,
 richly ornamented drinking horns from
 the Reykjavík museum's collection

CIVA

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.71,
www.civa.be
Until JUNE 10 Shanghai-Brussels:
 ARCHITopia 2, recent architectural
 works in Shanghai
Until SEP 19 Documents on the
 gardens designed by René Pechère and
 Jacques Boulanger-François for Expo 58

Charliermuseum

Kunstlaan 16; 02.507.83.31,
www.charliermuseum.be
Until JUNE 20 Landschap en natuur,
 landscape paintings and drawings,
 with work by Fernand Khnopff, James
 Ensor, Louis Crémén, Jakob Smits and
 Guillaume Vogels, among others

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 Loge Architectuur museum

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

Design Flanders

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

Embassy of Brazil
 Louissalaan 350; 02.640.20.15
Until MAY 23 After School, paintings
 by Brazilian artists

Erasmus House

Kapittelstraat 31; 02.521.13.83
Until JUNE 15 Anatomie van de
 Ijdelen (Anatomy of Vanity), the
 museum's 75th anniversary show, with
 work by Hieronymus Bosch, Jan Fabre,
 Hans Holbein, Marie-Jo Lafontaine,
 Aida Kazarian and Quinten Metsys

Espace Photographe Contretype
 Verbindingslaan 1; 02.538.42.20
Until JUNE 15 Un monde inquiétant,
 photographs by Julien Coulommier

ISELP

Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70
Until MAY 31 Récits (Stories),
 paintings by Cécilia Shishan

Until MAY 31 Jewellery and ceramics
 by Axelle Gielen
Until JUNE 21 De Narcisse à
 Alice: Miroirs et reflets en question
 (Questioning Mirrors and Reflections),
 group show

Instituto Cervantes

Tervurenlaan 64; 02.737.01.90
Until MAY 16 Sin poder dejar de sentir
 (Unable to Stop Feeling), photographs
 by Isaac Montoya

Jewish Moroccan Heritage Museum

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

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Minimstraat 21; 02.512.19.63,
www.mj-b.jmb.org
Until JUNE 22 Dicht op de huid (Close
 to the Skin), paintings by Brussels-
 based artist Maurice Frydman

La Cambre Architecture

Flageyplein 19; 02.640.96.96
Until MAY 17 Corps de Ville (Body of
 the City), photography and architecture
 biennial with works by 20 Belgian and
 French photographers

René Magritte Museum

Essegemstraat 135; 02.428.26.26
Until JUNE 30 Dreaming of a Future
 World, paintings and drawings by the
 Flemish artist Edmond van Dooren

Royal Army Museum

Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33
Until JUNE 29 (H)erkennung! 175 jaar
 Leopoldsorde en Nationale Orden,
 exhibition on the oldest Belgian
 military order
Until NOV 30 A Paintbrush in the
 Barrel, World War One paintings,
 drawings and etchings by soldiers

Royal Library

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

Royal Museum for Central Africa

Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11
Until AUG 31 Knock on Wood!
 Forest and Wood in Africa, thematic
 exhibition on African trees and
 forests and their need for sustainable
 management
Until OCT 19 Expo 58, films and
 photographs, ethnographic objects,
 plants, artwork and animals that
 were displayed in the seven pavilions
 dedicated to the Belgian Congo at
 Brussels' World's Fair in 1958

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!, multi-
 media 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

Wolubilis

Paul Hymanslaan 251; 02.761.60.30
Until MAY 10 Saisir l'invisible (Seizing
 the Invisible), paintings by Jacques
 Zimmermann

Young Gallery/Hotel Conrad

Louisalaan 75b; 02.374.07.04
Until MAY 17 AirCraft, photographs
 by Jeffrey Milstein

Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum
 (MuHKA)
 Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60
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 Blaissé

Diamond Museum

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

Fotomuseum

Waalse Kaa 47; 03.242.93.00
Until JUNE 8 Patrick De Spiegelaere,
 retrospective of the late Flemish
 photographer (1961-2007)
Until JUNE 8 Face On, portrait
 photography
Until JUNE 8 Provisoria, multi-media
 work by Ria Verhaeghe
Until JUNE 22 West, so far,
 photographs by Phil van Duynen

**Koninklijk Museum voor Schone
 Kunsten (Royal Museum of Fine Arts)**
 Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09
Until JUNE 15 Jan Cox: Living One's
 Art, paintings by the 20th-century
 Flemish artist

Until JUNE 29 Willem Elsschot's
 Kaas: een beeldroman, graphic novel
 adaptation by Dick Matena

MoMu

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

Bruges

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

Groeningemuseum

Dijver 12; 050.44.87.43
Until MAY 12 The Lively Baroque:
 Bozzetti from Austria, painted sketches
 and models for large-scale paintings
Until DEC 31 Leuven loans, 15th-
 and 16th-century paintings and
 woodcarvings from Leuven's Van der
 Kelen-Mertens museum

Ghent

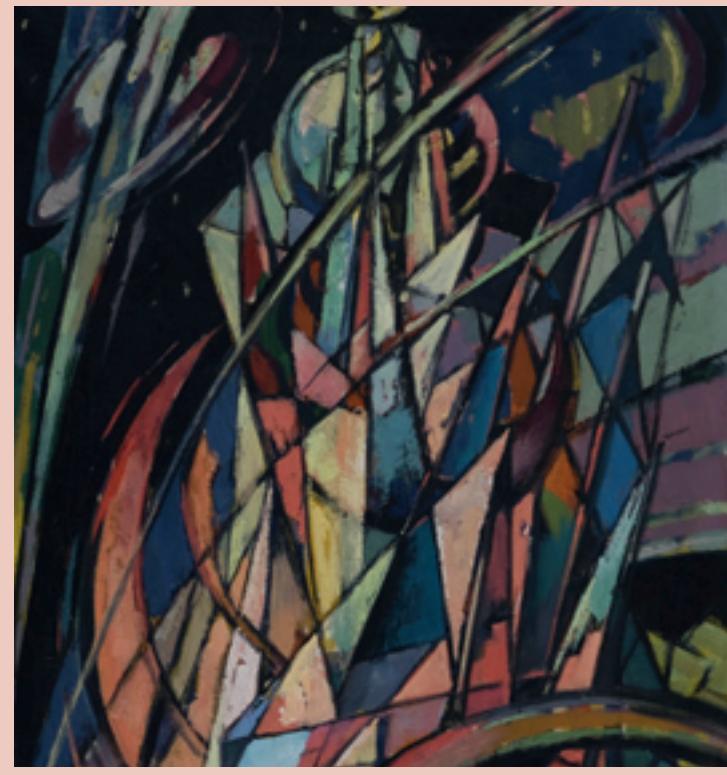
**Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst
 (SMAK)**
 Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03
Until JUNE 29 Kunst Nu: Wilfredo
 Prieto, installation by the Cuban artist

Until JULY 6 Guillaume Bijl,
 retrospective of the Flemish artist

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 Grimbergen)

Don't miss this week



Dreaming of a Future World

Until 30 June, **René Magritte Museum**, Essegemstraat 135, Brussels,
www.magritte museum.be

You'll be happy to know that, despite the title, this show of drawings and paintings has absolutely nothing to do with Expo '58. Rather, it's a retrospective of the abstract work of Antwerp painter Edmond van Dooren, a contemporary of Magritte who, unlike the rest of his brethren, never abandoned pure abstraction. His swirling compositions of luminous colours suggest an enthusiasm for modern life but, occasionally, a certain disquiet for the industrial machine.

Swennen (see also Mechelen)

Hasselt

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

National Jenever Museum
 Witte Nonnenstraat 19; 011.23.98.60
Until AUG 31 The Orange Bulb
 Alambeliers, olfactory installation by
 Peter De Cupere

Z33

Zuivelmarkt (Begijnhof) 33;
 011.29.59.60
Until MAY 25 Place@Space:
 (re)shaping everyday life, installations
 by Paul Casara, Ryoji Ikeda, Limite
 Azero, Alice Miceli and others

Machelen-Zulte

Het Roger Raveelmuseum
 Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00
Until JUNE 15 Witte schaduw (White
 Shadow), 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 (Pioneer of Modern
 Sculpture), retrospective of work by the
 Flemish artist (1886-1965)

Ypres

In Flanders Fields

MY FLANDERS

Danielle Colsoul

Danielle Colsoul is the director of Welzijnszorg, a poverty action association. She talks about the misconceptions – and the truths – of poverty in Belgium

What is your organisation's mission?

Every person has certain inalienable rights: the right to education, to work training, to health, to culture and to recreation. But there are a lot of people who are doing without all those, especially the poor. So we try to help them stand up on their own two feet and fight against social exclusion. We also try to inform the general public, which is often unaware of the problems confronting the poor.

Compared to other places around the world, Belgium has a very generous social welfare system. It's surprising that there are poor people here.

It's true: Belgium in general has a good social safety net. If not, 50% of the population would be in danger of falling below the poverty line – which is €800 per month net for a single person, €1,700 a month for a family of four. As it stands, 15% of Belgians live below the poverty line, which is too many.

How is Welzijnszorg funded?

Ten percent is from the government and the other 90% is from private donations. A lot of those donations came from churches before, but as people are attending church less and less, that source has dropped. Private donations, though, fill the gap. We are affiliated with the Catholic church, but we don't proselytise.

Why did you get involved with this cause?

I was raised by parents who thought it important to have a social conscience toward developing countries, so I studied social work. After graduating, I worked for years on health issues. Welzijnszorg actually came into being almost 40 years ago as an offshoot of Broederlijk Delen, an organisation that deals with poverty in the Third World. People realised that, while it was good to help those suffering in foreign countries, we also had people here at home who needed help. That's what Welzijnszorg is all about. Six years ago, I started volunteering here, and a year ago I came on board as the director.

What has Welzijnszorg achieved over the years?

Well, there are many small, unquantifiable contributions we try to make to people's lives, as well as larger accomplishments. For example, there have recently been problems due to rising fuel costs pushing up people's utility bills. When someone hasn't paid the bill, the electric and gas companies cut the supply to a minimum. That minimum has been raised, thanks to our campaigning, along with other organisations. So now families can burn more than just one light bulb until they get enough money together to pay their bill. In the past, we campaigned for a minimum base income for everyone. Every year, we have a campaign in December to raise awareness on a pressing issue: last year was education, this year will be health. We meet with the government to make requests that they meet certain goals, and we gather public support through petitions.



You've worked with the poor for some time. How has the situation changed over the years?

A decade ago, Welzijnszorg was pretty much the only player in Flanders addressing poverty. Now there are other actors: we work with unions, Catholic hospitals and schools, as well as the government and NGOs. There are networks now that we can take advantage of, which means we can help people more...and help more people.

What are the biggest misconceptions about the poor?

First, there is a tendency to blame people for being poor. They think that people must be poor because of the bad choices they've made in life. But there are many factors that contribute to poverty. Second: they think that all poor people have to do is to decide to get out of their situation, and then they'll be better. But it's far from that simple. I always say that one cannot work *for* the poor; one has to work *with* the poor. That's a large part of our mission – bringing the poor and others together, even on something as simple as a trip to the coast or to a museum, which is a big thing for them.

What difficulties do you encounter with poor people?

It's a challenge to get them to think and act in their long-term best interests. A lot of them have an unhealthy lifestyle, with bad diets and habits like smoking. But it's hard for them to consider long-term implications when they are just trying to make it from day-to-day. So we try to teach them how to cook healthy, inexpensive meals, for example. It's trying to get them to work for the long term, which they don't even think is a possibility.

In terms of alcoholics, drug addicts and the mentally ill who are poor, did poverty bring them to these conditions or is it the other way around?

I don't really explore that because it's not particularly helpful in solving their problems. Again, that leads to blaming someone for his bad situation, rather than trying to help someone get better.

Can the public help?

We are always in need of volunteers and donations. We have a staff of 15 in Brussels and 12 others working throughout Flanders, plus assorted volunteers whose contributions are substantial. But we always need more help.

Interview by Steven Tate

online
www.welzijnszorg.be

THE LAST WORD

what they're saying in Flanders

Creative differences

"I understand that it has to be a sparkling and pleasant programme about books. We'd rather have nothing to do with it. deBuren signed up for a programme about literature."

Dorian Van der Brempt
director of deBuren,
ends cooperation with a VRT
book show

O dierbaar België

"The East-Flemish are the Belgians of Flanders. We don't know our national anthem, and we have nothing to do with chauvinism."

Nic Balthazar
Ghent-born filmmaker,
on the provincial poll

Shut up and bike

"We will not stand for any political statements in Beijing. I don't think you'll get as far as the track wearing one of those badges."

Jacques Rogge
the Flemish International
Olympic Committee chairman,
warns athletes who were
planning a protest

Muziek Paintings from the Royal Collections Walking in Bruegel Country
Kris De Witte Jaap Van Zweden Imec Grote Kreek
next week in Flanders Today