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## Wasting away

How Flanders is leading Europe in rubbish disposal

Waste not, want not is a tenet that the Flemish have taken to heart, giving them one of Europe's most sophisticated and effective systems for dealing with rubbish

Emma Davis

For Europe, effective waste management is crucial. Europe's Environment Agency predicts that by 2020, the European Union will produce enough rubbish to cover Luxembourg with a carpet 30 centimetres thick.

Not only do we need to figure out what to do with our waste but how to do it: if handled badly, it pollutes rivers and soil and results in tons of greenhouse gases being pumped into the atmosphere, exacerbating

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### Rock on

It's summertime, and in Flanders that generally means one of two things: pack your suitcase and holiday in Spain or pack your duffel bag and head for the music. "Werchter" and "Pukkelpop" are those

two little words we long to hear when the temperature rises and the days are long.

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### Arts

World-class contemporary art exhibitions and one of a very few places in Vorst you want to hang out on a Saturday night, all wrapped up in an old brewery. Welcome to Wiels.

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### Active

*Sex and the City* makes its glittery Belgian premiere in (where else?) Antwerp. Stéphanie Duval slips on her high heels to see the movie and hit the after-party.

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### Living

Who's the prettiest? According to votes tallied via mobile phone, Limburg province is home to Flanders' nicest village. Denzil Walton spends some time in Oud-Rekem.

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### Night flights set to increase

But "silent nights" could be introduced

Alan Hope

Brussels Airport Company, which operates the national airport at Zaventem, has asked for 12.5% more night-flights than the government intends to allow, it was announced last week. The Flemish government has made it clear the government wants to cap the number of night-flights at 16,000. BAC, whose environmental permit still allows a ceiling of 25,000 flights, wants to bring the current figure up to 18,000, allowing for growth in

charter traffic as well as freight.

The issue of night-flights into and out of Zaventem refuses to go away, just like the noise nuisance itself, which last month spread to Pajottenland, the bucolic area of Brabant between Brussels and Aalst.

Flemish regional deputies, such as Flemish Progressive Jos Bex, have complained that the noise nuisance is "unfairly shared" between Flanders and Brussels, to Flanders' disadvantage, and

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

### Leading the way

In this week's main story, science journalist Emma Davis focuses on rubbish collection in Flanders. It's hardly the most glamorous of topics, but it's an area where Flanders leads the world.

Anyone who comes from the United Kingdom, for example, is astonished at the level of recycling that goes on here. They can't believe that people diligently sort their bottles, newspapers, batteries and garden waste. And it yields results. The average Flemish household currently produces 560 kilos of waste every year, whereas the average family in Scotland throws away 1,160 kilos.

Another area where Flanders leads the world is in organising activities for young people. Take a walk in a Flemish forest any Sunday and you'll come across groups of kids gathering wood to build shelters or dangling from some makeshift rope bridge above a stream. They probably belong to the local Chiro, which, as Alistair MacLean explains this week, is a youth movement dedicated to creating responsible citizens.

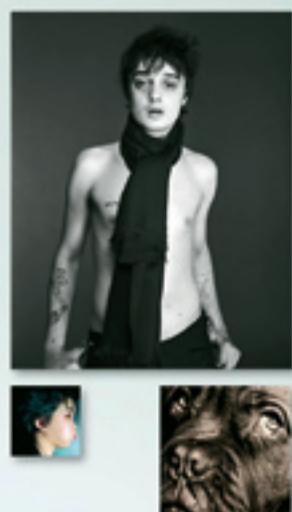
Flanders is also a region where interesting things happen in the arts. The FotoMuseum in Antwerp recently worked with

Getty Images on a unique portrait exhibition called *Face On* in which visitors could upload their own photos onto a wall display, alongside professional photos from the Getty Image bank. The project, which is now moving onto other cities, recently won a European Design Merit Award in the category of promotional site.

On the subject of prizes, we have a story this week by Saffina Rana on the Rock Werchter festival, which dates back to 1973. In 2004, Werchter was voted "the favourite festival" by the International Live Music Conference. It took the award again in 2006 and 2007. Our rock reporter explains why it's such a great event, and also why you might want to watch where you tread.

And tourism, we learned last week, broke all records last year in Flanders. Despite the dismal August weather, some 9.5 million people visited the region in 2007 and spent €22 billion. Most tourists are drawn to the Flemish cities, but some might be persuaded to take a detour to Oud-Rekem, recently voted "the most beautiful village in Flanders." Denzil Walton went there last week to find out what it takes to be a winning village.

**Derek Blyth**



Getty Images



*Face On* mingled professional images with private photos

## Flanders Today

### independent newsweekly

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## FACE OF FLANDERS



**Sara**

For the last nine years, Ghent has been home to "Flikkendag", an annual fan day for the popular TV police show *Flikken*, which is filmed in Ghent. Last September, 125,000 people from across the country showed up.

Television station VTM is panning for gold again with "Saradag", which will take place in Ghent on 21 June. This is unfortunate news for Antwerp, where the hugely popular TV show *Sara* is actually filmed, but VTM has struck a deal with Gent Verwent, a city programme to promote shopping and other services in the capital of East Flanders. And shopping is important where *Sara* is concerned.

The nightly show, which began last September and runs through this month, follows the exploits of Sara, an "ugly duckling" who, after landing a job in the fashion industry, turns into a swan. It's kept from being as vapid as it sounds through the notable talents of Flemish film and TV actress Veerle Baetens. Saradag itself holds little meaning for the 30-year-old (who says she will "probably" be there) compared to the rewarding challenge of portraying the clumsy, shy character for the last several months.

"It was the first time I had to change myself so much – my way of moving and talking and just being," says the star of the Flemish films *Dennis van Rita* and *Windkracht 10: Koksijde Rescue*. "I really had to think about taking the role, but I'm glad I did."

Baetens, who in real life is certainly no ugly duckling, manages to convey Sara's fears and vulnerability both physically and psychologically. She's made her voice much higher and fluttery, and her movements are often nervous and unsure. This took Baetens into completely new waters, which was fine with her. "It's not fun to play yourself," she says. "I hate, for instance, presenting on TV because you're just yourself. I don't like to look at myself as myself; I like to look at myself as another character."

*Sara* is based on the Columbian night-time soap opera *Yo soy Betty, la fea* (*I am Betty, the ugly*), which took the world by storm, enjoying dubbed versions in dozens of territories. It has also inspired a number of locally-produced programmes based on the same concept, including in Germany, Turkey, Russia and, most notably, the United States, where *Ugly Betty* is a huge hit and the winner of numerous television awards.

Baetens credits the central character herself for the show's popularity around the world and here in Flanders. "She's the underdog, and then she becomes successful," the actress says. "That's a story that always works."

Though Baetens started out the show looking like she does in the photo above, the Sara character is now evolving. She's lost her glasses, cut and died her hair and learned how to dress. But Baetens wasn't worried about her image, even in the beginning. "I like loving a character and going all the way," she says. "I'm not a princess actress. The more ugly Sara was, the better. That's serving my character. I would do anything for a character."

**Lisa Bradshaw**

### Online

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

## TALKING DUTCH

### notes on language



Shutterstock

**Chiro**

Sunday afternoons are oases of tranquillity in our house. The absence of the clatter and rumble of our three children strangely fills the ears. And all because they're at the Chiro.

In some countries, kids burn off their energy at a *jeugdbeweging* such as the scouts. In Flanders they often join the local *Chirogroep*.

*De naam Chiro komt van de Griekse letters chi en rho*; these letters correspond to the first three letters of Christus Rex. This Catholic youth movement started up in the 1930s in Flanders and now has a membership of just under 100,000. The Chiro offers *een leerschool voor het leven*. And as a training ground for life, they want to realise the Chiro dream, *de Chirodroom*, which is *een wereld waarin rechtvaardigheid en innerlijkheid centraal staan*, a world in which justice and the inner self are central. By developing the inner self, Chiro aims to counter *oppervlakkig leven en consumeren*, superficial living and consumption.

The main aim of the *jeugdbeweging* is that *iedereen graag gezien wordt*, which means that everyone's loved. Only then can the striving for *rechtvaardigheid en innerlijkheid* be achieved. Which all sounds a bit ... you know. Whatever, the kids love it.

The high point of the year is *het Chirokamp*, 10 days in July when our house empties. To pay for the camp, the kids organise *fuiven* (dances) and restaurant evenings, wash cars or knock on doors around the village to sell waffles.

The kids are divided into various sections, including the strange sounding *rakwi's*, *tito's* en *keti's*, which you probably have to be an insider to understand. The oldest group is the *aspi's*, who are aspiring to be the next leaders.

The leaders have worked their way up through the ranks and usually stay on until they finish their studies. At camp the cooking is often taken care of by the *kookouders*, the "cooking parents", who usually were themselves in Chiro.

Each year has a theme and this year it's music. *Een wereld zonder muziek? Die bestaat niet!* A world without music? That doesn't exist! No doubt all their musical experimentation will make the flames dance in the campfire.

So look out for the Chiro kids: you can recognise them from their red T-shirts and beige shorts and skirts. If they come to your door with a basket of waffles, practise your Dutch and buy some. And if you're the right age and have a smattering of Dutch, it's a great way to spend your Sunday afternoons. Not having grown up in Flanders, I can only report all this second hand. On the Chiro website I read that they want to create *geöngageerde en kritische wereldburgers*, and from the results I've seen I think it does a pretty good job.

**Alistair MacLean**

### online

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

## FEATURE

## Wasting away

*Continued from page 1*

the effects of climate change. Flanders, with its low-lying coastal regions, would take a particular battering from rising sea levels if global temperatures continue their upward trend.

Flanders has, therefore, taken some bold steps to put itself at the head of Europe's league tables in tackling rubbish, starting off with its controversial policy of pay-as-you-throw. Households in Flanders have to pay for their waste. Their rubbish is weighed by collectors and taxed accordingly, giving

households and companies that less is best both for the environment and for the pocket.

"A lot has been done to stimulate citizens to recycle more" says Verheyen. "Every June, we organise a big campaign about composting waste. We scan small and medium-sized enterprises to investigate what opportunities they have to maximise economic profit by using more eco-efficient processes and we subsidise local schemes such as waste-free shopping campaigns or waste-free festivals."

The Flemish authorities want 25% of Flemish households to be

supermarket, their reuse is much cheaper and more eco-friendly than putting them in a bottle bank where the waste is crushed and often ends up being used in road surfacing.

Pushing reuse rather than recycling was behind the ban on tetra pack juice boxes by many schools across Flanders. Tetra packs are a particular problem for the recycling process as their only value is in the cardboard they contain. Separating this from the sheet of aluminium and layer of polyethylene, which are both too thin to reuse, bumps up the cost.

of waste management authorities for the different communes, there are detailed lists of where to throw what, ranging from old CDs to flowerpots, metals and electrical appliances.

Inevitably, humans produce waste that cannot be reused or recycled or that the cost of doing so would outweigh the benefit. For example, plastic bottles that have contained oily products or soaps use up too much energy in the cleaning process to justify putting them through such a system.

In Flanders, each person produces about 150 kilograms

outputs has a tremendous impact on the levels of carbon dioxide reductions," says BBLV's Debrabandere.

**B**ut what is good can always be better. While Flanders is among the good guys in Europe, it has a long way to go to meet the European target for yearly waste of 300 kilograms per capita. In 2004, the figure for the whole of Belgium was 462 kilograms.

"There is still 15% of waste that does not belong there," said Verheyen. "It requires a discipline from each household to stick to what is requested."

Consumers should also be critical and conscious of their purchasing decisions, according to Debrabandere. "They should use products that can be reused or are recyclable and avoid throwaway packaging," he says. "If you buy orange juice, take a one-litre bottle." Ovam pointed out in a recent report that the number of single-use drinks containers on the market has been growing while the number of reusable containers has fallen.

The average Belgian household also receives more free newspapers and advertising than any other country in Europe by weight. These can be recycled, but this is not an environmentally neutral process.

For the distribution sector, the Flemish authorities have set a target that more environmentally-friendly products must be on the shelves and more must be sold in 2015 than in 2008.

Finally, on incineration, there is still about 4.2% of rubbish that is burnt without energy recovery, a waste management method that is as useless from an eco-efficiency point of view as landfill. "There are processes to pre-treat waste before it is burned," explains Debrabandere. "For example, to take out the water which burns at very high energy. We should also be doing more mechanical sorting and when a new incinerator is planned, we should look at where it can be built so that power plants, and even houses, can benefit from it."

Despite the need for improvement, Flanders has nonetheless shown the rest of Europe that radical methods to cut down on waste and to reuse and recycle, as well as an outright ban on those eyesores and environmental hazards called landfills, can be done successfully.

"In general, it is pretty good," concludes Debrabandere. "That doesn't mean it is perfect, but, in comparison to other regions in Europe, it is good."

online  
[www.ovam.be](http://www.ovam.be)

Reporters



Not the best place: recycling bottles is fine, but taking them back to the store is better

consumers the responsibility of thinking before they buy and considering what they can reuse or recycle. Those who cut down on their waste and recycle more, pay less.

The move has indeed caused many dropped jaws with international media holding up Flanders as an example of how far governments can go to engage individuals in creating a better environment. Despite some initial reluctance, Flemish households have embraced the move, and the region now boasts one of the lowest levels of household waste in Europe.

"The figures speak for themselves. We have seen very interesting results in reductions in waste," says Jan Verheyen, spokesman for waste management authority Ovam.

Indeed, in 2006, the total quantity of household waste in Flanders fell 2.9% year-on-year despite a population growth of 0.63% and a rise in output (gross domestic product) of 3%.

Given that prevention is better than cure, waste management groups also run a series of campaigns designed to show

composting by 2015. This involves putting organic waste, such as vegetable peelings, in a tub in the garden and leaving it to decompose and is a cheap alternative to shop-bought fertiliser. Adopting this method, according to Ovam, would keep half of the organic rubbish out of the waste cycle and result in lower emissions of carbon dioxide, a harmful greenhouse gas.

Throwing such so-called "green" waste out for collection results in the production of 426 grams of carbon dioxide per tonne. Sticking it on the compost heap results in just 343 grams of carbon dioxide, making it a much better bet for the environment.

For plastic carrier bags, Flanders has seen a drop of 40% in the space of just three years, keeping 1,140 tons of plastic out of the waste cycle. Ovam targets a further 60% drop by 2009.

After prevention, the next best method of dealing with waste is to exhaust the possibilities for reuse. This is distinct from recycling as it means the product – for example, a glass bottle or piece of furniture – stays in its original form. When you deposit empty bottles at the

"Tetra packs are still the only form of packaging that is recycled at a cost. Sending children to school with one little drink in a tetra pack is unnecessary," says Kristof Debrabandere from environmental group Bond Beter Leefmilieu Vlaanderen (BBLV).

Children must now take their drinks to school in reusable drink bottles, a huge savings for the environment and for parents since buying one large pack or bottle costs much less than the small juice boxes. Flanders wants reuse centres to be selling the equivalent of five kilograms per head of reusable goods by 2015.

**A**fter reuse, waste management specialists turn to recycling. Most communes in Flanders sell bags of different colours for sorting recycling. While many households grumble that it is unclear which products go into which bag, the recovery rate is very high.

According to BBLV calculations, a staggering 83.6% of household packaging in Flanders was recycled in 2007, already way above the European Union target for 2008 of 55%. On the websites

of waste per year that cannot be reused or recycled. Flanders took the forward-thinking decision to ban landfill sites in 2005, which is a welcome relief aesthetically and a boon for the environment as rubbish decomposing on landfills gives off huge amounts of greenhouse gases – in particular methane.

"A landfill is a complete waste. We are basically pouring natural resources into a big hole in the ground," said Debrabandere. This brings Flanders well into line with European Union law on landfill use and it, together with countries like the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, have the lowest use of such sites in Europe.

Instead, Flanders incinerates much of the remaining waste and harnesses the energy generated by the process. This can then be used to power factories, hospitals, schools and even houses. Every year, incineration in Flanders produces 340,000 megawatt hours of electricity, enough to power 140,000 households, according to figures from Ovam.

"Not landfilling and instead incinerating with high energy



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## Night flights set to increase

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some locals suspected that the new low-flying traffic over Pajottenland might be the introduction of a new approach route. Flemish environment minister Hilde Crevits pointed out in a parliamentary response, however, that the recent situation, in which noise has greatly increased over the western approaches to the airport, was a temporary situation. The cause, she said, was a lengthy period of strong east winds in May, which forced the use of runway 07R and, to a lesser extent, 07L. That is a decision purely for Belgocontrol, she said.

And she stressed again the Flemish position that concrete measures involving the use of particular approaches, or limits on the number of night-flights, were something to be worked out as part of a global package between the federal government and the regions. Federal mobility minister Etienne Schouppe – whose home in Liedekerke happens to lie directly under the approach over Pajottenland – recently announced plans to introduce “silent night” restrictions on night flights at weekends, to be followed at some time in the near future by a weekly regime of five “silent nights”. Crevits called the plan “a step towards a global reduction and balanced share-out of noise nuisance around the airport”.

She also rejected a suggestion by Bex for a policy of using the shortest and least polluting take-off route. It is not for the Flemish government to interfere on the subject of the advisability of using one route or another, she said. Again, this was the responsibility of Belgocontrol, and so a federal matter. “It seems logical to me,” Bex told *Flanders Today*. “The shortest route should also be the safest and cause the least nuisance. But logic seems to have deserted them [the government]. They bring in new routes that take the planes over heavily populated areas, where they used to pass over less-populated areas.”

One such is a new corridor which happens to pass over Herent, near Leuven, where Bex lives. “I’m not proposing this so that Herent has less nuisance,” he said. “Everybody ought to accept his share. If I live to the right of the airport 20km away, and you live 20km away on the left side, we should be subject to the same level of nuisance, all other things like safety being equal.”

Bex also raised the question of the way the federal government handles complaints and questions from Flemish residents of areas affected by the problem of aircraft noise. Dutch-speaking callers, he said, have difficulty being serviced in their own language when they call the federal ombudsman’s service for



Jos Bex

the airport. They are constantly redirected or answered in French, he said, and when they do find a civil servant who speaks to them in Dutch, the answers are often couched in technical language including English words. “I’ve tried it myself,” he said. “It’s very difficult. Is it a coincidence that Flemish callers are treated this way? I’ve no experience of the French-speaking side, so I don’t know. But I do wonder,” he said.

## NEWS FLASH



The number of **women in top jobs** in the Flemish government has gone up from 11% in 2005 to 19.5% now, according to civil service minister Geert Bourgeois, in a parliamentary answer to deputy Els Van Weert. But he admitted a lot of progress had to be made before the government’s target of one-third women in senior positions by 2015 could be reached. The minister is now considering a new information campaign involving current top women – several of whom work in his own administration – in an attempt to attract candidates.

A Kortrijk cafe owner who called police because he thought **thieves were breaking in** across the road has been sent a bill for €50 because the scare turned out to be a false alarm. Jan Decoster, co-owner of Chesscafe, saw three men trying to enter his neighbour’s premises on the Havermarkt through the cellar trap-door. When police arrived, they discovered that the three men were friends of the owner. “I find it outrageous,” Decoster commented. A spokesman for Kortrijk police said, “This can’t be right. I advise the man not to pay for the time being”.

Four students from the West Flanders university college in Kortrijk have won a place in the finals of the **world X-Box games**, the Microsoft Imagine Cup, to be held in Paris in July. The four members of the Drunken Puppies team created the game Future Flow, in which players fight to make the world an environmentally better place.

The authorities of the town of Zwolle in the Netherlands have ordered a fountain by Belgian artist Luk Van Soom to be turned off because the jet of water makes too much noise. The statue, depicting an **alien in swimming goggles** shooting a water-cannon, was inaugurated two weeks ago. But residents of nearby houses have complained about the noise, which was measured at 57 decibels – louder than the planning permit allows, and the level at which “community annoyance” is considered to be caused.

Belgium’s only service pump for **hydrogen-powered cars** has been installed on the E19 in Ruisbroek, in a joint project run by Total and BMW costing €1.8 million. Belgium, however, has only three cars which run on hydrogen fuel: a car belonging to the chairman of the Federation of Belgian Enterprise, one reserved for the chairman of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, and one being used by the current EU president, the Slovenian foreign minister. A previous pump in Anderlecht was closed.

## Flemish church seeks restoration funds



The foundation which runs the Flemish church in Rome is appealing for sponsors to help finance the restoration of an important sculpture in their gardens. San Giuliano dei Fiamminghi was established as a hospital in about the eighth century, and later became the meeting-place for pilgrims from the southern Netherlands. Many Flemish people emigrated to Rome in the 15th to 17th centuries, drawn by both classical remnants and Renaissance culture.

The church now houses a statue of a *putto* with lion by the 17th-century artist Francesco Pincelotti (1672-1749), which has suffered damage to its rear side after an accident in a recent storm, with estimated repair costs of €25,000. The foundation’s rector, Hugo Vanermen, said they could not afford to pay such a sum, and insurance will not cover it because it is classed as weather damage – an act of God, so to speak.

**Online**  
[www.sangigliano.org](http://www.sangigliano.org)

## Cardinal received by Pope

Belgian primate Cardinal Godfried Danneels was last week received by Pope Benedict in Rome. Cardinal Danneels turned 75 last week and officially handed in his resignation as Archbishop of Brussels and Mechelen. He continues to hold the office of Cardinal until the age of 80, allowing him to take part in conclaves.

The content of the two men’s discussion was not revealed. But the Pope is likely to maintain Danneels in his post as archbishop until a successor is appointed. According to procedure Papal Nuncio Karl-Jozef Rauber, the Vatican’s ambassador to Belgium, will submit a shortlist of three names to the conference of bishops, which then passes it on to the department of the Curia in Rome dealing with episcopal matters. They put the names in order of preference and pass the list to the Pope, who makes the final decision.

## Pop history series gets green light

Flemish public TV station Canvas is to broadcast a six-part series starting in November on the history of Belgian pop and rock music, according to a report in *De Morgen*. The series will consist of documentaries made by various directors, including Stijn Meuris, front-man of rock outfit Monza. Each episode will centre on one particular musical icon and feature artists from the time or style he or she represents. According to the report, not all of those expected to be involved have been contacted, including record companies whose own archives will, it is hoped, supplement the archive footage of Canvas’s parent, the VRT. A spokesman for Canvas declined to comment, stating it is “too early” to reveal details of the shows.

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

## Family terrorised by baboon

A marauding baboon is ruining the vegetation in the garden of a family in Hoeilaart, according to Peggy Bartholomees, mother of two. The creature has made several visits to their garden, ripping out flowers and plants. On one occasion, Mrs Bartholomees and her son Mike found themselves face to face with the ape, described as “about 90cm tall with light brown fur”. He appeared again the following day: “He seemed to be laughing at me from the roof of the garden shed,” she reported. “My children don’t dare go into the garden, and I’ve had to lock my dog inside.”

It is not known where the animal came from. An animal protection organisation has set up a cage-trap with a sliding door and tasty bait inside. “How long he takes to come into the cage depends on how hungry he is,” a spokesman said. Meanwhile Hoeilaarts’ mayor, Tim Vandendriessche, warned, “Anyone who comes across this ape should contact the police immediately.”



## Police "provoked" clashes with football fans

Clashes between police and football supporters in Antwerp last week were provoked by the police themselves, mayor Patrick Janssens and police chief Eddy Baelemans have admitted.

The fighting took place on Sunday, 1 June following a match between Antwerp and Tubize, which was expected to be a stress-point as both teams needed the result to determine their final classification in the second division. At one point, Antwerp fell behind, and police inside and outside the stadium decided to reinforce their presence by turning out in riot gear. They also closed off exits from the stadium to keep rival fans apart. But instead of

fighting their opponents, the fans turned on the police. Seven officers were injured, one of them seriously, and 13 arrests were made.

Following an investigation of the video footage available of the incident, mayor and police chief last week announced the trouble "could have been avoided". Nothing would have happened if the police had adopted a defensive strategy and kept their distance, they concluded. Both men stressed the importance of the so-called "host policy", which restricts police intervention to cases of serious incidents. Janssens also praised the police for their honesty in admitting their error.

## Leffe honoured for the fourth year

For the fourth year in a row, Leffe Blond, a beer produced by Leuven-based brewing giant InBev, has won a prestigious accolade from the International Taste and Quality Institute, which also praised the company's Leffe Ruby and Leffe 9°. The awards, described as "the label of excellence in food and drink", are given by a vote of over 100 chefs and sommeliers across Europe. Awards were also given to Timmermans for its Framboise Lambic, with Schweppes Belgium picking up awards for soft drinks.



## Nine to be charged in Sabena failure case

An investigating magistrate has sent the Brussels prosecutor's office a list of the names of nine people suspected of crimes in connection with the bankruptcy of national airline Sabena. The names of the suspects have not been revealed. The file will now go before a committal hearing to determine which of the nine will be charged, and what the charges – ranging from money-laundering to tax fraud – will be.

The complaints surround three areas:

- The purchase by Sabena of 34 Airbus A320 aircraft, half of which were not required, shortly before the airline went broke. Two people face charges relating to the sale.
- The sale led to the creation of a number

of alleged shell-companies which later vanished from the bookkeeping. One person is a suspect here.

- A system of bonuses and kickbacks alleged to have been set up through a number of offshore companies, aimed at allowing executives to avoid tax. Six suspects are concerned with this aspect of the investigation.

Meanwhile, the official appointed to administer Sabena's affairs after the bankruptcy in 2001 has announced the recovery of assets worth €500 million. Half of the total has already been paid out to former Sabena staff in compensation, and the rest will go to the state.

## Migrants go where the work is

Economic migrants are not attracted by the social security system of the countries they aim for, nor the level of benefits. Neither are they influenced by anti-discrimination policies or the ease of becoming naturalised, according to research carried out by a team at Leuven University's Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, published in the journal *International Migration Review*.

Instead, the researchers under Professor Marc Hooghe found that migrants (as opposed to refugees) are motivated in their choice of destination quite simply by the availability of work, with a minor role being played by language. But, said Prof Hooghe, it is not yet clear how exactly the mechanisms work – how for example a farmer in Peru finds out that there is work in a particular European country – although family connections and a network of compatriots in the destination country both play a role.

The research project did not take into account illegal immigration, where other factors outside the migrant's control – such as the existence of human trafficking connections with destinations of their own – come into play.

### Online

[www.kuleuven.be/citizenship](http://www.kuleuven.be/citizenship)

## Flanders funding for MRSA fight

Flemish health minister Steven Vanackere has announced a grant of €125,000 to help fight the MRSA bacterium in rest homes. Another €25,000 goes to hospitals.

MRSA – methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus – is a virulent bacterium which is difficult to combat because it has evolved resistance to common antibiotics. It is particularly prevalent in hospitals and nursing homes, and older people are one of the population groups most at risk of severe consequences.

The numbers of cases in Flemish hospitals has fallen by half since 2002-2003. Despite that, one in five residents of a nursing home in the region is estimated to be a carrier of the bacterium – suffering no ill effects but infectious to others. The new measures will include a campaign on the importance of hand-washing, and a handbook on hygiene aimed at all care-giving professionals as well as administrators.



## Football goes to Belgacom

The Football League has sold the rights to television coverage of matches for the next three years to Belgacom TV and the VRT/RTBF. The three broadcasters will pay a total of €44.7 million, or 25% more than the contract that recently expired. The League had demanded €50 million, with national champions Standard threatening to make a deal on its own if the price was not met. Clubs who appear more will be paid more, a part of the deal which convinced Standard to come on board.

## Hallepoort gets a facelift

The Hallepoort, the 600-year-old city gate standing on the Brussels inner ring, has been re-opened following a year-long renovation costing €2.5 million. The building, which once served as a prison, will now house a permanent collection relating to Brussels in its medieval days as a walled city.

The building was originally known as the Opbrusselpoort from the old name for Sint-Gillis, but became popularly known as the Hallepoort because of the large number of pilgrims going to Halle who used it. As a museum, it now falls under the Art and History Museum in the Jubelpark. For the rest of June, special events are being organised at weekends.

### Online

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



# Gen-Probe bids for Innogenetics

Ghent company could end up in US hands

## Alan Hope

A slow and steady attempt by top chemical company Solvay to take over a Ghent-based biotechnology company was thrown into confusion last week when American competitor Gen-Probe launched an unexpected counter-bid. Gen-Probe's €6.10 offer for shares in Innogenetics values the company 6% higher than the Solvay bid. The move was announced by the financial markets regulator CBFA.

Solvay launched its bid in April at a price of €5.75 – a premium of 50% on the market price at the time. The board supported the bid, which has still to be approved by the authorities. In the meantime, Solvay has built up a stake of around 10% on the open stock market.

Belgian law allows counter-bids on market-listed companies providing they are a minimum of 5% higher than the original bid – which the Gen-Probe offer clearly is. It also lays down a number of restrictions on other conditions the bidder can specify, such as actions the target company can take which might affect the value, or the percentage of shares the bidder aims to acquire. According to the BCFA's statement, the Gen-Probe bid is in keeping with those rules.

The counter-bid took market analysts by surprise, but the takeover makes more sense for the Americans than for Solvay. Gen-Probe is active in diagnostic biotechnology products, and, while it is distributed by France's

bioMérieux, it has been seeking a foothold in Europe. With Innogenetics, they not only take over a going concern but also gain an instant channel in Europe for their own products.

The news will be welcomed by beleaguered Innogenetics shareholders, who have had only losses in recent times, largely as a result of subsidiary GenImmune, which lost €9.8 million in the first nine months of last year alone, following the failed attempt to develop a vaccine against hepatitis C. Innogenetics decided to cut off further funding last year and closed GenImmune in May.

The company plans now to concentrate on its diagnostics business, developing, among other things, tests to tell if a particular medication is suitable for a particular patient. Just days ago, the company received a CE kite-mark for a test to detect human papilloma virus, one of the most common sexually-transmitted infections (STI).

Diagnostics is also a central part of Gen-Probe's business, with specialities including tests for HIV and the West Nile virus, as well as the analysis of blood. They are also market leaders in the US in tests for STIs. Although the weak dollar means a European acquisition is an expensive proposition, they can afford it, with sales of €260 million in 2007 and profits of €55 million. Gen-Probe also has a cash fund of €315 million, more than enough to pay the €215 million which their bid would cost.

## Solvay

Compared to the two young upstarts Gen-Probe (established 1983) and Innogenetics (established 1985), Solvay is a grande dame of the chemical industry. The Belgian company was set up by Ernest Solvay in 1861. Born in 1838, he was a man of the age, interested in science and natural history, and at the age of only 23 he and his brother had developed a process for the manufacture of sodium carbonate on an industrial scale. The chemical, which the Solvay process extracted from common salt, is used in glass-making, and in swimming pools to neutralise the acidic effects of chlorine.

His empire later spread to the United States and Russia. Solvay himself, in common with many 19th-century entrepreneurs, had progressive social ideas which he implemented among his workers – including paid holidays, an eight-hour day, social security and pensions – all long before such measures became the norm. And he set up and funded many scientific and philanthropic foundations, including the school of business which still bears his name.

The company now concentrates on three main sectors: pharmaceuticals, including drugs for Parkinson's Disease, schizophrenia and depression; chemicals, mainly bulk chemicals like sodium carbonate and hydrogen peroxide; and plastics, including a special PVC rat (pictured) to be used in microsurgery training, doing away with the need for experiments on animals.

The acquisition of Innogenetics would be a step away from core-business for Solvay. But the two companies are old friends: in 1997 they signed a cooperation agreement which included Solvay's taking a minor stake. Innogenetics carried out research on Solvay's behalf, while Solvay Pharmaceuticals chief Werner Cautreels took a seat on the junior partner's board. Their good relationship meant that when Solvay finally came forward with a bid, it was rapidly approved by the board. Whether that relationship will survive the appeal of Gen-Probe's deeper pockets, however, remains to be seen.



## BUSINESS FLASH



Shutterstock

### Vandemoortele

Vandemoortele, the Ghent-based food group, has acquired Panavi, France's leading deep-frozen bakery and pastry products group. The move strengthens the Flemish company's position on the French market with a share of some 25%. Vandemoortele originally specialised in margarine and edible oils but diversified into frozen bakery products in the mid-1980s.

### Hans Textiel

Hans Textiel, the Dutch textile and apparel retailer, is to close its 30 outlets in Flanders to stem the company's losses.

### Photovoltaic

Photovoltaic, the Tienen-based producer of photovoltaic cells and equipment, which is jointly controlled by France's Suez and Total energy groups, has plans to invest €500 million over the next five years to increase capacity eightfold to some 650 megawatts. The move would make Tienen one of the world's leading producer of photovoltaic cells.

### Guylian

Guylian, the Sint Niklaas-based producer of shell-shaped chocolates, is seeking outside investors to develop its activities. The company, which exports more than 95% of its production, is the largest Belgian chocolates seller in the US, Germany, France, the Netherlands, the UK and Australia.

### Miko

Miko, the Turnhout-based producer of coffee service equipment and packaging, has acquired 51% of the Australian "The Coffee Place" distribution firm.

### Top Brands

Top Brands, the Antwerp-based holding company, which owns the Pizza Hut franchise for Belgium, has plans to open up to 40 additional outlets over the next four years. The firm, which already operates 78 restaurants in the country, is confident that it can significantly increase its home-delivery activities. Top Brands also has plans to develop its Paul bakeries chain and hopes to operate some 50 stores in the country by 2015.



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## CONTEMPORARY ART

## Still on tap

Wiels saves a Brussels landmark with architectural style and cultural flair

Saffina Rana

Ever since the Tate Modern set up home in an abandoned power station, art galleries across the world have been poking into old industrial buildings in search of exciting, new exhibition spaces. Appropriately then, Brussels newest centre for contemporary art has found its home in an abandoned brewery.

When they arrived in 2004, "it was falling down. There were stones falling off," says Dirk Snaauwaert, the founding director of Wiels. But looking inside the building was inspiring. "It was obvious that the three plateaus were fantastic exhibition rooms and that the brewing hall had to become a social space." Aside from that, Wiels wanted to create a meeting place, an auditorium for screenings and lectures and additional spaces for education.

The concrete four-storey monolith is a combination of industrial modernism and Art Deco – and quite a rare example. It was designed by Belgian architect Adrien Blomme in the 1930s specifically for the expansion of the Wielemans-Ceuppens brewery. At the time, the ground floor brewing hall was the largest in Europe, with eight imposing copper vats. Now the original exterior has been painstakingly restored according to period photographs.

After the brewery stopped production in 1988, nobody could decide what to do with the building. Although listed as part

of the country's national heritage, various plans to convert it into government offices, a sports centre and a youth hostel fell through. The building was left derelict, abused by vandals, pigeons and drug addicts.

"Now, everybody that walks into the building goes 'Wow!'" smiles Snaauwaert.

The director is working to establish Wiels internationally as a force in contemporary art. He knows the international circuit well, having served as co-director of the Institut d'Art Contemporain in Villeurbanne-Lyon, as director of the Kunstverein in Munich and as curator for contemporary art exhibitions at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.

However, getting Wiels off the ground was a rough ride. "Realising the project has been a hard three-and-a-half years of pressure and difficulty," Snaauwaert admits. He was immediately plunged into a financial crisis by political wrangling at the federal level and the long period last year when Belgium was trying to establish a new government. "Politically, it was a nightmare. Budget items were on hold for 10 months, and 10 months is a long time if you have to renovate."

The delay meant that some parts of the gallery complex were not ready in time for the opening last year. The panoramic roof terrace, auditorium and artists' studios are only being finished now. And it was only a few weeks ago that

Snaauwaert and his team could move into the building from their makeshift offices across the road.

Yet Snaauwaert has come through it all and is celebrating Wiels' first anniversary with a significant retrospective of work by American artist Mike Kelley. "This is a unique show," he says enthusiastically. "You can't see it in Tokyo or LA, nor in Paris or London. You will never be able to see it anywhere but here. It's one of the most remarked-on shows in the world at the moment, the buzz of the art world." But then there is a pause. "Except in Belgium. It doesn't really register with Belgian people."

Snaauwaert says he doesn't know why since the press coverage has been positive. "Maybe it's a little bit too difficult," he suggests, although neither of us believes it. "For me, he's the guy who reinvented the original strains of surrealism, when it was still revolutionary and not so petit bourgeois, which it has become after the Second World War," he adds.

But Snaauwaert is keen to make an impact with the local community. The gallery is situated in one of the most culturally diverse areas of Brussels. A stone's throw from Zuidstation, the neighbourhood is home to people with Italian, Greek, Portuguese, Brazilian, Slavic, north and west African roots. Several projects have been initiated with local associations, and two sculptures will be commissioned, with the public's help, for local parks.



Belgian architect Adrien Blomme's 1930s fusion of Art Deco and industrialisation has been exactly restored by Wiels from old photographs.

There will also be a collaboration with Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's dance school PARTS, which has its home nearby on Van Volxemlaan. And in July, nine young artists from Europe and America will take up year-long residencies in studios on the top floor of Wiels. If the art in the galleries doesn't inspire them, they can always meditate on the exceptional panoramic view over Brussels.

"We have to try something new,"

Snaauwaert says. "With Brussels as the capital of the EU, being multicultural and a battlefield for nationalisms, we are an experimental testing ground for how artists and culture can play a leading role in decreasing tensions instead of increasing them. We could export the know-how."

online  
[www.wiels.org](http://www.wiels.org)

Master and servant: institutional practices explored in the work of Mike Kelley

### The art of repression: Mike Kelley retrospective

The first thing to catch the eye when you walk into the Mike Kelley exhibition at Wiels is a large, white architectural model. It seems to be made of cardboard and has an other-worldly feel to it. Move in closer and you see it's made of up of several buildings. These are all the schools that Kelley has ever attended, plus the house he grew up in.

The Los Angeles-based artist's intention was to make them entirely from memory, but he soon found that that was harder than it seemed. So, for *Educational Complex Onwards 1995-2008*, he worked from photos and plans for the exteriors and stuck to his memory for the interiors. Anything that he couldn't remember was left blank, and the memory lapses in these blank classrooms and corridors question what it is, if anything, that is being repressed in these institutions. The buildings become symbols of social rules. It makes me shudder.

The piece is an exploration of the role of abused child that Kelley felt was forced on him by reactions to his earlier work. He had used old toys and stuffed animals to explore aspects of child's play, but his critics said that they were really about abuse and Kelley's repressed memories. So he decided to use his memory and autobiography to question cultural practices.

"It's kind of an explosive, rough, raw excavation of occultism and sexuality and repression. Unaltered and in your face," notes Wiels director Dirk Snaauwaert.

The exhibition in particular traces work which stems from fragments of Kelley's high school and art school memories and artefacts such as photographs. These are recycled with materials from other works to produce films, sculptures and tunnelled installations which visitors must crawl through on their hands and knees. Analyse that. **SR**

Until 27 July, Wiels, Van Volxemlaan 354, Brussels



# Rock & roll, baby

Flanders is host to two of Europe's best music fests. And we're not just saying that.

**Saffina Rana**

**A**re you ready to rock? Then pull out your tent and your old Kiss t-shirt and get packing to collect the first meaningful wristband of the summer. Next month's Rock Werchter may not be the most cutting edge music festival in Flanders, but for big names and radio favourites, it can't be beaten. Werchter is known throughout the continent and has won awards for being Europe's best music festival.

The line-up this year at the site just north of Leuven rocks the socks off other festivals like Glastonbury and Roskilde, with which there is always some overlap. Bands on my to-see list include REM, The Chemical Brothers, Beck, The Editors, Hot Chip, Gnarls Barkley, Moby, Kings of Leon, Neil Young, The Raconteurs, Underworld, Sigur Ros and The Kooks. Ok, so I've left off some big timers like Radiohead, Ben Harper and Counting Crows, but they just aren't my cup of tea.

Then there's also Flanders' very own homegrown to take in – dEUS, Soulwax, 2ManyDJs, Tim

Van Hamel, Zita Swoon, Black Box Revelation, Monza and Shameboy.

But where there's pleasure, there's pain, and music festivals in the great outdoors can hurt. Heat-stroke, sunburn, rain, overflowing toilets, missing your favourite bands because you were too drunk, stuck in a long queue or had a bad case of Werchter belly can all be

a hat. You might feel good in flip-flops, but keeping feet covered is better – the risk of being stepped on, stepping onto something sharp or into something horrible is too high, especially in the porta-loos. Wet-wipes are essential for cleaning away all sorts of muck, and they'll keep you fresh after hours of sweaty dancing in the sun. Plas-

tic bags are great for sitting on while waiting around for acts. There is a particular skill set required for camping at a music festival. It includes finding your own tent in the dark in the middle of the night amongst a couple of square kilometres of other similar-looking tents and trying not to be surrounded by hardcore metal fans where you pitch. If you must camp, take a mascot to dangle above your tent which will clearly define it as yours. A torch is, of course, essential, as are the batteries. If you expect sleep, take earplugs. Don't even think about locating your tent close to the toilets unless you have no sense of smell.

To make the most of the musical delights, make a list of the bands you want to see and when they are on and carry it with you. If, like me, you like being right at the front by the mosh pit, get to the stage at least an hour early. It might mean you having to stand through a lesser-loved band and snake your way forward once they're done, but it's worth it.

Don't be shy about pulling faces in protest at latecomers who push in – they know they are in the

wrong and most times will acquiesce. Thinking back to inebriated blokes charging through the crowd during Placebo and The Smashing Pumpkins, linking arms with mates (and strangers) to block those who aren't respecting your space works pretty well and is not aggressive. Most festival-goers, though, are lovely and even quick to apologise when accidentally jostling you.

Smiling at the stage minders and making friendly contact while you're waiting for the gig doesn't hurt, especially if you are after a band's play list, plectrums or drumsticks after the gig – the trophies are more meaningful than buying an overpriced T-shirt.

Some individual days of Rock Werchter are sold out, but full festival passes are still available.

## Remember the three Ws of survival: water, wet-wipes and wellies

avoided with a bit of forethought.

All music festivals do a good job of dehydrating you. The Werchter site is huge. Each day involves kilometres of walking and hours of being out in the elements, often packed like tinned sardines during a gig. It might be a no-brainer, but drinking water throughout the day, especially between beers, will have you jumping about to the headline bands at midnight while those around you are going down like Pete Doherty.

Slap on the sun block and take

tic bags are great for sitting on while waiting around for acts.

Nights get cold, so layer up. Fold-up rain macs are good for downpours, and carrying a few foils of pain killers and indigestion tablets as a talisman against the curse of the fast food stalls works for me.

If you remember nothing else, remember the three Ws of survival: water, wet-wipes and wellies. Everything else you need can be borrowed or traded, and you'll make a few friends in the process.

## The other rock festival

If you can wait until August, Pukkelpop is a more positive experience and – dare I say it – that much more hip. Set in Limburg, near the capital of Hasselt, people are overwhelmingly friendly, the

stages and bands are more accessible, and the queues for everything are much shorter. The toilets are in better condition, and there are lounger shaded areas under the trees with hammocks and hookah corners.

This year, Pukkel has over 140 acts, including Bloc Party, The Killers, The Wombats, The Subways, Get Cape. Wear Cape. Fly, Jamie Liddell, The Ting Tings, The Pigeon Detectives – and the Klaxons dj-ing. It also features old timers such as Mercury Rev, Henry Rollins, The Stereo MCs and The Breeders. Several of the bands that play Werchter will reappear at Pukkel.

It's a great place to check out bands you don't know, on the cheap. To get a feel for them, visit their MySpace links listed at the Pukkelpop website before you go.

A final word of advice: leave your whiney mates at home. To have a really good time and share the memories, go with friends who are as up for it as you are and don't mind any of the discomforts. A nag is a real drag.

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



## dEUS

**W**hat do you mean you've never heard of dEUS? The band is possibly the most famous music act to make it out of Belgium since Jacques Brel. Together for over 15 years, dEUS

(photo) was the first Belgian band to sign onto a British record label (Island) and get regular play on MTV. The group of five will be attacking Werchter with its new album *Vantage Point*, before

embarking on an extensive European tour this autumn. "I can't wait to go on the road again," says frontman Tom Barman on the band's website. "We sound like a damn tight outfit, if you ask me."

If dEUS' 2006 performance is anything to go by – with the whole of Werchter up on its feet singing at one o'clock in the morning – this year will be nothing short of phenomenal.

**online**  
[www.deus.be](http://www.deus.be)

## Soulwax

**S**oulwax is possibly the second most famous Belgian act to make it big internationally. It will be their fifth appearance at Werchter, and they'll also be playing at Pukkelpop. The ever-cute foursome from Ghent originally started out 10 years ago as a heavy rock band but has evolved into electronica and techno remixes since 2005. They'll be playing a mix of new stuff and old at Werchter. The show accompanies the release of the band's film *Part of the Weekend Never Dies*, comprised of 120 concerts and interviews filmed on tour in Europe, Japan, Latin America, the US and Australia.

**online**  
[www.soulwax.com](http://www.soulwax.com)

## NIGHTLIFE

# Sex and the Flemish

Antwerp has always been a city of glitz, so what better place to screen the Belgian premiere of *Sex and the City*?

### Stéphanie Duval

For the past few weeks, it seemed as if the entire world was under the magic spell of *Sex and the City*. When the movie at last premiered in Belgium, hundreds of journalists, celebrities and exuberant fans scrambled down the red carpet to be the first to see their favourite TV screen characters – the sarcastic Miranda, the innocent Charlotte, the ever-confident Samantha and the anxiety-ridden (though fashion conscious) Carrie – back in action.

It was clear from the start that this would be the glamour event of the year. Flemish party animals put on their best finery, with many turning up in groups of four to capture the true *Sex and the City* spirit. Many premiere-goers made laudable efforts to put together outrageous outfits worthy of the film's (and TV show's) famous costume designer Patricia Field. Colourful little hats were the

accessory du moment.

The movie itself easily lived up to the expectations of die-hard fans. The characters returned exactly as we remember them, only a little more mature. The story is full of dramatic and unexpected twists, causing audience members to grope for tissues several times.

And then there was the fashion. A little too much attention paid to strategic product placements, perhaps, and certainly a few too many costume changes, but the outfits were as quirky and outrageously extravagant as everyone had hoped.

After everyone had seen the

movie at the Antwerp UGC cinema, shiny new Mercedes sporting pink stickers whisked guests away to the exclusive after party at the new Stadsfeestzaal. The mall had been transformed into a girl's paradise for the night. Several shops stayed open until well after midnight, and events were organised with surprises and gifts. Paying homage to the imitable Carrie Bradshaw's passion for wedges, pumps and stilettos, shoe boutique Sacha offered guests professional foot massage.

Women happily kicked off their fabulous six-inch heels for that, particularly since afterwards they could try on one pair of shoes on display in the shop. À la Cinderella, if the shoe fit, they could take it home. Perhaps Sacha underestimated a *Sex and the City* fan's ability to spot her own size: dozens of women walked out with a pair of new shoes.

Friis&Company, meanwhile, held a tombola giving away handbags, belts and jewellery, while LG set up a booth where guests could have their picture taken with the four *Sex and the City* stars – or, rather, computer-added images. But there was enough to do and see even without a single celebrity. Celebrity hairdresser De Cliënt dolled up models for a sexy fashion show, and a look-alike contest found four each of Carrie, Samantha, Charlotte and Miranda prepared to face off in a contest to win a trip to New York City.

It's a pity that the party broke up early, but a goodie bag stopped us from complaining. Climbing into the Mercedes once again, with our high heels in one hand and our bag in the other, it almost felt as if *Sex and the City* meant Antwerp tonight.

**Online**  
[www.sexandthecitymovie.com](http://www.sexandthecitymovie.com)



Fashionable foursome: the ladies of *Sex and the City*

# Oh, so pretty

The village of Oud-Rekem has been voted the Prettiest Village in Flanders. We went to see what makes it so perfect

David Muesen



Mist settles on the Aspremont-Lynden castle in Oud-Rekem

## Denzil Walton

**A**nyone following recent competitions in which the public chooses the winner will not be surprised to read that Het Mooiste Dorp, or The Prettiest Village in Flanders, competition was won by Oud-Rekem. Why? Because Oud-Rekem is in Limburg, and Limburgers appear to have an exceptionally strong sense of duty when it comes to voting for their province's treasures.

The first "Most Attractive Town in Flanders" competition was won by Hasselt, capital of Limburg. Last year's competition to choose the Flemish building that most deserved to be restored was won by a small syrup factory in Borgloon, Limburg. The Prettiest Village competition merely followed the trend, with Oud-Rekem polling 35% of the 91,000 votes cast for the five finalists.

Yet Oud-Rekem deserves the accolade because it certainly is a very pretty village and well worth visiting. "Oud-Rekem is a jewel among the villages along the River Maas," says Mark Curvers, Councillor for Tourism

in Lanaken. "It's a beautiful place where time stands still."

After the results were made known, many articles in the Flemish press drew attention to the *Limburggevoel* as a key reason for the province's success in voting competitions. The word refers to the Limburg spirit – a pride in their province that residents display, often competitively. Curvers considers it has been overplayed in the media but accepts that it does exist, and even extends to the Dutch province of Limburg. "Limburger's from both Belgium and the Netherlands voted in huge numbers for Oud-Rekem. A lot of Dutch Limburgers visit the village, and they are just as proud of Oud-Rekem as Belgian Limburgers."

An exceptionally well-coordinated promotional campaign played a key role in Limburg scooping yet another award. The campaign ranged from humorous yet informative videos on YouTube to folders that arrived in over 300,000 letter boxes in Limburg on the final full day of voting. Over the border in the Netherlands, Radio Limburg 1 encouraged its listeners to vote for

Oud-Rekem.

For someone wanting to discover what all the fuss is about, the church of Sint-Pieter's is a good starting point. It dates from 1722 and also serves as village museum, concert hall and tourist office. It sells a very useful guide book which describes a 2.5 kilometre walk through the village.

Situated in the far east of Limburg province near the Dutch border, Oud-Rekem dates back to 1597 when the d'Aspremont-Lynden family built their magnificent moated castle here. In 1623 the village was given the awe-inspiring title of Principality of the Holy Roman Empire. The autonomy that came with it gave Oud-Rekem its own small army, laws and currency – something comparable to Liechtenstein or Andorra today, although on a much smaller scale.

The nobility was overthrown during the French Revolution and the castle damaged by incoming troops. In 1904 the castle was purchased by the Belgian state and for many years housed a psychiatric institution. In 1993 it was bought by real estate company Domein

Reckheim, which embarked on a thorough restoration.

Renovation has indeed been the key activity in the village in recent years, and two buildings in particular highlight the exceptional work that has been done. From 1890 until after the Second World War, the Senden gin distillery in Sint-Pieterstraat

1891. Before the modern pharmacy came into existence, doctors would prepare their medicaments on their own premises, which would necessitate a large stock of bottles, flasks, decanters, vials, retorts and pipettes to make various salves, ointments and herbal remedies.

Walking into the apothecary is like stepping back in time. Everything is neatly arranged just as it was. You almost expect the aging physician to walk through the door and start preparing a tincture of plantain or an infusion of comfrey. It also contains fascinating displays of old pill boxes and medical accessories. "In the late 19th century, a doctor would also be a dentist, so we also have an ancient leather dentist's chair that looks like it's heard a few screams of agony in its time," says owner Patrick Donders, who also runs the Roomse Keizer next door, where, as a qualified herbalist, he is always willing to provide expert advice on homeopathic remedies.

**A**t the end of a day's sightseeing, the village offers a variety of places to eat. Top of the range is Restaurant Poortgebouw on

Groenplaats, which is also an exceptional location for wedding receptions and business dinners (check out the photos on the restaurant's website showing Prince Filip and Princess Mathilde enjoying lunch here in 2006). But the authentic café In de Oude God, alongside the Ucoverpoort village gate, is a much cosier place, with its quaint and secluded terrace overlooking the village stream. Its popularity, though, means you should be prepared to wait for your lunch.

While you do, you can admire the damselflies and dragonflies hawking over the pond on the

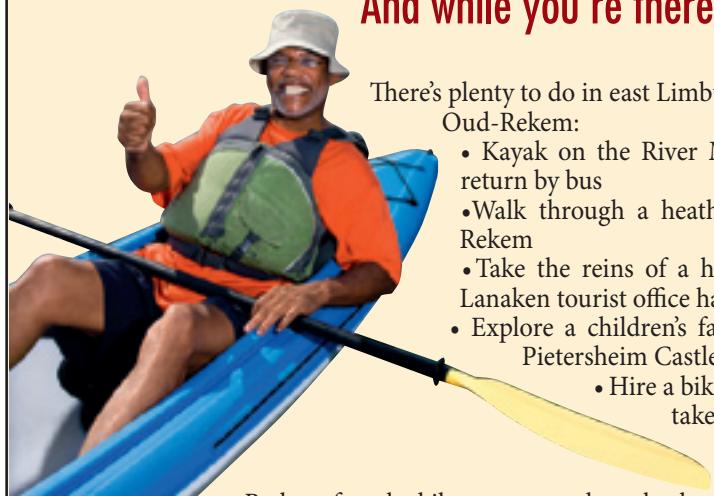
terrace or admire the antique furniture and accessories inside the building, which is one of the village's oldest, dating back to 1630. For a quicker turnaround of equally excellent food, Restaurant Onder de Linden is recommended (and particularly their bacon, mushroom and fried onion sandwich).

To extend your stay in Oud-Rekem, the village has two bed & breakfasts: Auberge Le Bon Vivant and Boven de Galerie. The former is a tastefully-converted convent in Boomgaardstraat; the latter is located in Herenstraat and offers breakfast on the terrace with eggs

from the chickens in the garden.

The village is one of the stops on a 29-kilometre cycle route that starts in nearby Lanaken. It is also a particularly welcome watering-hole for Dutch cyclists, such as Wouter and Lenoor de Bruin: "We have been cycling to Oud-Rekem for years. It's a perfect halfway house," they tell me. The couple cycles along the Maas from Maastricht and stops in the village for a coffee before heading back home. "It's been fascinating to see the changes that have been made in the village," they comment. "What used to be a charming but rather run-down place is now a thriving

**And while you're there...**



There's plenty to do in east Limburg to make the most of your time in Oud-Rekem:

- Kayak on the River Maas – Smeermaas to Meeswijk, with return by bus
- Walk through a heathland nature reserve Ziepdeek Valley, Rekem
- Take the reins of a horse-drawn cart along forest tracks – Lanaken tourist office has the details
- Explore a children's farm, with a playground and a walk – Pietersheim Castle Park, Lanaken
- Hire a bike, buy the Limburg cycling map and take off for the day – Lanaken tourist office can help with the practicalities
- Discover the Hoge Kempen National Park
- Park on foot, by bike or even on horseback – details online at [www.nationalpark.be](http://www.nationalpark.be)
- Visit other pretty villages along the River Maas – Dilsen-Stokkem and Leut, with their castles Ommerstein, Carolinaberg, Ter Motte and Vilain XIIII
- Sample the local liqueur – Waolbertineke, a drink based on bilberries



The Dr Humblé apothecary museum is so authentic, you're tempted to mix a tincture or two

village with a heartbeat."

A passing resident walking her ancient dog hears their comments and agrees: "Oud-Rekem is now definitely on the map. I just hope we don't get over-run by tourists: it would be a shame if our new popularity spoilt the tranquillity of the village." It's a concern shared by Curvers: "Any tourist activities

and events following the village's win will be small scale," he says reassuringly. "The tranquillity of the village is one of the key factors in it being voted the Prettiest Village in Flanders, and it's something that we intend to preserve."

#### online

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

# Window shopping

Antwerp's annual Vitrine has reinvented itself as a music and art extravaganza



#### Stéphanie Duval

This year's Vitrine show in Antwerp is radically different from previous events. Organised by Flanders Fashion Institute, it originally took the form of a walking tour through the city focusing on windows where designers and artists had created theme-inspired installations. The aim was to reach a bigger audience than the fashion in-crowd and give everyone something to look at in the street.

But the organisers this year have asked soundscape designer Senjan Jansen to curate the project. "Last year Vitrine was open to anyone who wanted to participate, so not every installation was of the same quality," explains David Flamée of the fashion institute. "This year, we have a smaller but impressive list of participants from the fashion and art scenes. Together with Jansen, we have made a selection that is representative of what Belgium has to offer right now."

The theme of this year's Vitrine,

which begins on 12 June, is music and sound. Jansen has a strong track record, having been the sound designer on a number of Flemish movies, including *Any way the wind blows*, *Een ander zijn geluk* and *Dagen zonder lief*. He has also done music for numerous dance and theatre performances. He is also the only Belgian who designs original soundtracks for fashion shows for designers such as Bruno Pieters, Haider Ackermann and Christian Wijnants.

Those three designers, in fact, are among the artists participating in Vitrine this year. Others include established designer duo AF Vandervorst and upcoming talents like Heaven Tanudiredja, Il Galantuomo and Elsa.

This year is also the first time that artists have been invited to create an installation. "The link between art and fashion has always been very strong, so it is natural to involve artists as well as designers in the project," says Flamée. Internationally renowned

Belgian photographer Alex Salinas will transform his own photos into music festival style posters and fashion model Hannelore Knuts will showcase a series of her photographs.

Bruno Pieters' installation will probably garner the most attention. The designer plans to project a giant image of a girl onto the walls of the Antwerp KBC Tower. For the first three nights of the project, spectators will see the girl talking, but they won't hear what she has to say.

The Vitrine website includes a map of the tour, which begins at the ModeNatie fashion institute and ends at the temporary Vitrine Café on the Nationalestraat. The café, which will close at the end of the 10-day event, is hosting a lively music programme, including DJs and celebrities like Belgian model Anouck Lepere spinning the turntables.

#### online

[www.ffi.be/vitrine](http://www.ffi.be/vitrine)

**Classical & new music****Brussel****Audergem Cultural Centre**

Vorstlaan 183; 02.660.03.03

**JUNE 15** 20.00 Bruocella Symphony Orchestra: Brahms' Symphony No 3, Double Concerto for Violin and Cello, Academic Festival Overture**Bozar (Paleis voor Schone Kunsten)**Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, [www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)**JUNE 13** 20.00 Belgian National Orchestra Ensemble, conducted by Walter Weller, with Truls Mørk, cello: Bartók's Romanian dances, Dvorak's Concerto for cello and orchestra op 104, Glazunov's Symphony No 5 op 55 **JUNE 15** 11.00 Jeroen Berwaerts, trumpet; Jacques Ammon, piano: Corelli, Henze, Bach, Scelsi, Tchaikovsky, Debussy, Ravel. 20.00 La Monnaie Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Kazushi Ono, with Jan Michiels, piano; Ivo Lybeert, clarinet; Dirk Noyen, bassoon: Strauss's Ein Heldenleben op 40, Duet-Concerto for clarinet, bassoon and string orchestra, Messiaen's Couleurs de la Cité Céleste **JUNE 17** 20.00 Krystian Zimerman, piano: Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Szumanowski**De Munt**

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39

**JUNE 12-14** 20.00 Haydn Amore**Flagey**Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, [www.flagey.be](http://www.flagey.be)**JUNE 13** 12.30 Kryptos Quartet with**Get your tickets now for...****Solisten****13 & 14 September, Abdij Ter Kameren, Emile Duraylaan, Brussels. Tickets from 02.736.01.29 or [www.solisten.be](http://www.solisten.be)**

What a fantastic opportunity to see some of the world's most legendary musicians all in one place – in a diverse enough programme to appeal to nearly anyone and led by genius Flemish composer and conductor Dirk Brossé. The programme at first glance is classical but sports a pop and soul sensibility, particularly with the presence of Sinead O'Conner's (photo) undulating wail and American soul master Billy Paul's saxophonic baritone. Also on the bill of soloists, who have chosen their own programmes to bring to Brussels, are Belgium's own bassbaritone José Van Dam, French violinist Catherine Lara and Taiwanese soprano Lu Yu Cheng. The whole thing is spread across the gorgeous grounds of the Abdij Ter Kameren and is followed by fireworks, and if you reserve this month, you receive a substantial discount on the ticket price. What's not to like?

**Tomoko Honda, piano: Brahms' Quintet with piano op 34****Saint Michael and St Gudula Cathedral**Sinter-Goedeleplein; 02.217.83.45 **JUNE 11** 20.00 Jan Willem Jansen, organ: JS Bach, CPE Bach, Franck, Frescobaldi, Alain**Sint-Bonifatiuskerk**Vredesstraat **JUNE 13-15** Baroque music concert**Bruges****Biekorf**Kuiperstraat 3 **JUNE 14** 20.00 Spring concert by the Noordzee Brassband Brugge**Ghent****De Rode Pomp**Nieuwpoort 59; 09.223.82.89, [www.rodepomp.be](http://www.rodepomp.be) **JUNE 14** 15.00 Viering Walter Vilain**Sint-Niklaaskerk**Cataloniëstraat **JUNE 14** 17.00 Zilveren Nachtegaalconcerten 2008: "Quatre Mains" - Michael and Jozef De Weert**Sint-Truiden****Beginhofkerk Sint-Agnes****JUNE 13** 20.30 Accordone, conducted by Guido Morini, with Marco Beasley, tenor: Scarlatti, Porsile, Rubino, Liguori, Matteis, Morini, Beasley**Opera****Brussels****De Munt**

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39

**Until JUNE 29** La Forza del Destino by Verdi, conducted by Kazushi Ono and Andriy Yurkevych **JUNE 12-14** 20.00 Amore Haydn, lieder and songs by Haydn, conducted by Guy van Waas, staged by Philippe Sireuil**Antwerp****Vlaamse Opera**

Frankrijklei 3; 070.22.02.02

**Until JUNE 20** 18.00

Götterdämmerung, the final opera of Wagner's Ring cycle, conducted by Ivan Törzs, staged by Ivo van Hove

**Jazz & blues****Brussels****Atelier 210**Sint-Pieterssteenweg 210; 02.732.25.98, [www.atelier210.be](http://www.atelier210.be) **JUNE 16** 21.00 Jazz Cats: Unity**Atelier de la Dolce Vita**Liefdadigheidstraat 37a; 02.223.46.75 **JUNE 14** 20.00 Thibaut Dille, accordion. Alexandre Furnelle 4 Strings**Bizon**Karpelbrug 7; 02-502.46.99, [www.cafebizon.com](http://www.cafebizon.com)**JUNE 16** 21.30 Bizon blues jam session, hosted by Alex Lebluy**Jazz Station**Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78 **JUNE 12** 20.30 Slang**JUNE 14** 18.00 Etienne Richard Quartet**Le Caveau du Max**Emile Maxlaan 87; 02.733.17.88 **JUNE 12** 20.30 Sans Set Quartet**Sounds Jazz Club**Tulpstraat 28; 02.512.92.50, [www.soundsjazzclub.be](http://www.soundsjazzclub.be)**JUNE 12** The Singers Night **JUNE 13** 22.00 Jojoba Quartet **JUNE 14** 22.00 Apatliko (popular Greek music) **JUNE 16** 22.00 Master Session **JUNE 17** 22.00 Da Romeo Band **JUNE 18** 22.00 Chamaquiendo, salsa **JUNE 19** 22.00 Pierre De Surgeries**The Music Village**Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45 Concerts at 20.30: **JUNE 11** Ypsilon Quartet **JUNE 13-14** The Sinatra Reunion Big Band **JUNE**18 Radar Trio **JUNE 19** Sabin Todorov Trio**Antwerp****Buster**Kaasru 1; 03.232.51.53 **JUNE 11** 20.00 Glenn Magerman Quartet **JUNE 13** 20.00 Basily Boys **JUNE 14** 20.00 Threeway Attraction**Cafe Mambo**Vlasmarkt 3 **Wednesdays until AUG 27** 21.00 Marcelo Moncada Quartet**Ghent****El Negocito** Brabantdam 121; 0479 567395 **JUNE 11** 21.30 Steven Delannoye Sessions**Opatuur**Citadellaan 17; 09.221.11.36, [www.opatuur.be](http://www.opatuur.be) **JUNE 15** 20.00 Nicolas Kummert, Magic Malik and Nicolas Thys all on saxophone**Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul****Brussels****Ancienne Belgique**Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24 **JUNE 11** 16.30 Now\_Series: General Mindy + Stephen Malkmus & The Jicks **JUNE 14** 20.00 Black Rebel Motorcycle Club**Beursschouwburg**Auguste Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, [www.beursschouwburg.be](http://www.beursschouwburg.be) **JUNE 18** 20.30 Joan as Police Woman **JUNE 19** 20.30 Kat Frankie + Shannon Wright**DNA**Plattestein 18-20; 02.512.59.92 **JUNE 12** 21.00 Plastic Thing**De Kriekelaar**Gallaitstraat 86; 02.245.75.22, [www.dekriekelaar.vgc.be](http://www.dekriekelaar.vgc.be) **JUNE 13** 20.00 Red Meat**Koning Bouwijnstadion**Houba de Strooperlaan; 0900.26.060, [www.proximusgoformusic.be](http://www.proximusgoformusic.be) **JUNE 14** 20.00 Bon Jovi**Koninklijk Circus**Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15 **JUNE 18** 20.00 Duran Duran**Le Botanique**Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32 Concerts at 20.00: **JUNE 11** Midnight Juggernauts **JUNE 12** Victoria Tibblin **JUNE 13** The Pigeon Detectives **JUNE 14** Rokia Traoré **JUNE 17** Machiavel**Phoolan Bar**Luxemburgstraat 43; [www.phoolan.be](http://www.phoolan.be) **JUNE 12** 18.00 Petra Jordan**Recyclart**Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34 **JUNE 11** 20.00 Kris Dane **JUNE 14** 20.00 Melt Banana + Vandal X + Tat2noisact **JUNE 19** 20.00 Battlefields + Amen Ra + Baroness**Schip**Schippersstraat 4, Sint-Jans-Molenbeek **JUNE 11** 20.00 Koen Holtkamp and Pausal, ambient/electronic**Stekerlapatte**Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81, [www.stekerlapatte.be](http://www.stekerlapatte.be) **JUNE 12** 21.30 XX **JUNE 14** 21.30 Attica**VK Club**Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07 Doors open at 19.30: **JUNE 20** 20.00 Meshuggah/The Dillinger Escape Plan/Between the Buried and Me**Vorst-Nationaal**Victor Roussealaan 208; 0900.00.991 **JUNE 14** 20.00 Gigi D'Alessio **JUNE 19** 20.30 John Fogerty**Antwerp****Lotto Arena** Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060 **JUNE 19** 20.30 Marc Anthony**Petrol**Herbouvillekaai 21; 03.226.49.63, [www.petroclub.be](http://www.petroclub.be) **JUNE 14** 23.00 Shit Robot**Ghent****Handelsbeurs** Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01 **JUNE 13** 20.00 The Handsome Family**Kortrijk****De Kreun** Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44 **JUNE 13** 20.00 The Germans + Melt-Banana**World, folk****Brussels** **Atelier de la Dolce Vita** Liefdadigheidstraat 37a; 02.223.46.75 **JUNE 12** 20.00 Steve Louvat**Flagey**Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, [www.flagey.be](http://www.flagey.be) **JUNE 11** 20.15 Silvério Pessoa: electro and acoustic music (Brazil)**Sounds Jazz Club**Tulpstraat 28; 02.512.92.50, [www.soundsjazzclub.be](http://www.soundsjazzclub.be) **JUNE 18** 22.00 Chamaquiendo, salsa **JUNE 25** 22.00 Caribe Con K**The Music Village**Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45 **JUNE 12** 20.45 Urbango**Théâtre Marni**Vergniestraat 25; 02.354.43.68 **JUNE 11** 22.00 Nyanga Fusion**Antwerp****Zuiderpershuis** Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00, [www.zuiderpershuis.be](http://www.zuiderpershuis.be) **JUNE 14** 20.30 Baaba Maal (West Africa)**Dance****Brussels**

250 works by amateur artists selected from a competition organised by TV channel Canvas

**CIVA**  
Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.71,  
www.civa.be

**Until SEP 19** Documents on the gardens designed by René Pechère and Jacques Boulanger-Français 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 Crépin, Jakob Smits and Guillaume Vogels, among others

**Costume and Lace Museum**  
Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50  
**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

**De Markten**  
Oude Graanmarkt 5; 02.512.34.25  
**JUNE 13-JULY 11** Lucas Jodogne and Eric Aupol, photographs

**Design Flanders**  
Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.227.60.60  
**JUNE 13-AUG 17** De Nieuwe Oogst/ The New Harvest, contemporary Flemish design

**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 Photographique Contretype**  
Verbindingslaan 1; 02.538.42.20  
**Until JUNE 15** Un monde inquiétant (A Worrying World), photographs by Julien Coulommier

**Fondation pour l'Architecture**  
Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.80,  
www.fondationpourarchitecture.be  
**Until AUG 17** Gevers Design: Inventaris van een uitvinder (Inventory of an inventor), retrospective of work by Belgian designer Christophe Gevers (1928-2007)

**ISELP**  
Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70  
**Until JUNE 21** De Narcisse à Alice: Miroirs et reflets en question (Questioning Mirrors and Reflections), group show  
**Until AUG 16** N'oublie pas (Do Not Forget), drawings by Virginie de Limbourg  
**Until AUG 16** Ceramics by Pilar Zurimendi

**Jacques Franck Cultural Centre**  
Waterloosesteenweg 94; 02.538.90.20  
**Until JUNE 22** Light my Fire, installations by Djos Janssens

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

**Le Botanique**  
Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32  
**Until JUNE 29** Vodoun/Vodoun: Portraits of Initiates, photographs of voodoo priests by Jean-Dominique Burton  
**Until JUNE 29** Jérôme Considerant, installations

**Museum van Elsene**  
Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.22  
**Until AUG 31** The Belle Epoque, sculpture by Alexandre Charpentier and the museum's collection of posters by Toulouse-Lautrec, among other fin-de-siècle works

**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)erkenning! 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 23** Eugène Ysaye, exhibition on the Belgian violinist and composer, with photographs, letters and instruments  
**Until AUG 24** In de ban van boeken (Under the Spell of Books), Belgian book collectors, 1750 to 1850

**Royal Museum of Fine Arts**  
Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11,  
www.fine-arts-museum.be  
**Until JULY 6** Paintings and sculpture by contemporary South Korean artist Lee Ufan  
**Until SEP 21** The British Royal Collection: From Bruegel to Rubens, more than 50 paintings from the Queen Elizabeth II's collection, with major works by Hans Memling, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Peter Paul Rubens and others, shown alongside masterpieces from the museum's collection  
**Until SEP 21** Expo '58: Contemporary Art at the World Fair revisiting the 1958 exhibition 50 Years of Modern Art  
**Until AUG 31** Plecnik Project, life and professional achievements of Slovene architect Joze Plecnik (1872-1957)

**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

**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 by the American artist

**Antwerp**  
**Contemporary Art Museum (MuHKA)**

Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60  
**Until AUG 17** Die Lucky Bush, contemporary art show curated by Imogen Stidworthy, questioning the physical and social impact of language, with works by John Cage, Jimmie Durham, Gary Hill, Aglaia Konrad and Michelangelo Pistoletto, among others  
**Until AUG 31** Visual art and sound installations by British artist and composer Cornelius Cardew  
**Until SEP 9** Fantasy, intervention by Koen van den Broek

**Extra City**  
Tulpstraat 79; 0484.42.10.70  
**Until JULY 27** Blow Job, site-specific installation by Berlin-based Peter Friedl

**Fotomuseum**  
Waalse Kaa 47; 03.242.93.00  
**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 Elsschots' Kaas: een beeldroman, graphic novel adaptation by Dick Matena

**Middelheim Museum**  
Middelheimlaan 6; 03.827.15.34  
**Until AUG 17** Open air installations by Leo Copers

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

**Bruges**  
**Arentshuis**  
Dijver 16; 050.44.87.11  
**Until AUG 3** Three Bruges Artists: Legillon, Verbrugge and Ledoux, 18th and 19th-century drawings

**Groeningemuseum**  
Dijver 12; 050.44.87.43  
**Until DEC 31** Leuven loans, 15th- and 16th-century paintings and woodcarvings from Leuven's Van der Kelen-Mertens museum

**Ghent**  
**Dr Guislain Museum**  
Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95,  
www.museumdrguislain.be  
**Until SEP 7** Circus or Science: The Roca Collection, anatomical collection from the late 19th and early 20th centuries  
**Until SEP 7** Jean Rustin, retrospective of work by the French painter  
**Until SEP 7** I live in the painting, work by the late Flemish artist Marc Maet

**Design Museum**  
Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99  
**Until JUNE 22** Voices: Contemporary Ceramics Art from Sweden  
**Until JUNE 22** Conversation-conservation, works by French designer Matali Crasset and Belgian ceramist Frank Van Houtte  
**Until JUNE 22** Glass from the Dirk Schrijvers collection

**Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)**  
Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03, www.smak.be  
**Until JUNE 29** Kunst Nu: Wilfredo Prieto, installation by the Cuban artist  
**Until JULY 6** Guillaume Bijl, retrospective of the Flemish artist  
**Until JULY 27** Hors de soi (Outside oneself), installations by Benoît Félix

**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 Alambiflurics, olfactory installation by Peter De Cupere

**Z33**  
Zuivelmarkt (Begijnhof) 33;  
011.29.59.60  
**Until AUG 17** Bridge, installation by Michael Cross

**Machelen-Zulte**  
**Het Roger Raveelmuseum**  
Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00  
**Until JUNE 15** Witte schaduw (White Shadow), drawings by Roger Raveel

**Ostend**  
**Modern Art Museum**  
Romestraat 11; 059.50.81.18  
**Until AUG 31** Georges Vantongerloo:

## Don't miss this week



### FIDE Master Nathan Alfred

**21 June from 13.00**, International Jewish Center, Brussels. For location, contact [info@ijc.be](mailto:info@ijc.be)

Calling all chess enthusiasts! FIDE Master Nathan Alfred challenges all comers in a simultaneous display – playing up to 50 different games at once. The event is hosted by the International Jewish Center, where the soon-to-be Rabbi serves as spiritual leader. After completing his studies in classics at Cambridge University, he spent a year in Budapest perfecting his chess skills before heading back to the UK for rabbinical school. His current chess ranking places him 71st in England, equivalent to being the 23rd best player in Belgium. Up for the challenge? All are welcome to participate or to watch.

**Pionier van de moderne beeldhouwkunst** (Pioneer of Modern Sculpture), retrospective of work by the Flemish artist (1886-1965)

### Poperinge

**Hopmuseum**  
Gasthuisstraat 71; 057.33.79.22, www.hopmuseum.be  
**Until SEP 30** Photo search activities for children

### Waregem

**BE-PART**  
Westerlaan 17; 056.62.94.10  
**Until JUNE 29** Contemporary works by Willy De Sauter and Virginie Bailly

### Ypres

**In Flanders Fields Museum**  
Grote Markt 34; 057.23.92.75  
**Until SEP 7** Man, Culture, War: Multicultural Aspects of the First World War, a panorama of the diverse origins of those who fought in Belgium during WWI

### Festivals & special events

**Belgium Roller Parade**  
**Until SEP 29** Weekly rollerskating parades in Brussels and other towns [www.belgiumrollers.com](http://www.belgiumrollers.com)

### Brussels

**Brosella Folk & Jazz 2008: Free music festival in celebration of the 50th anniversary of Expo58**, including the Flat Earth Society  
**JULY 12-13** at the outdoor Green Theatre, Atomium [www.brosella.be](http://www.brosella.be)

**Circus of Mayhem**: Rock bands perform over two days at two venues  
**JUNE 19-20** at Recylart and VK Club [www.vkconcerts.be](http://www.vkconcerts.be)

**Danse Balsa Marni XII**: Contemporary dance festival promoting young artists  
**Until JUNE 21** at Théâtre de la Balsamine, Théâtre Marni and Espace Senghor [www.balsamine.be](http://www.balsamine.be)

**Fifty Years of Smurfs**: Celebration to remember the 50th anniversary of the ever-popular Smurfs, created by Belgian comic strip author, Peyo  
**Until NOV 16** at Belgisch Centrum van het Beeldverhaal, Zandstraat 20 02.219.19.80, [www.stripmuseum.be](http://www.stripmuseum.be)

**Hallepoort Festival**: Themed activities every weekend in June to celebrate the re-opening of this beautifully-renovated

remnant of Brussels' old city wall  
Hallepoort, Zuidlaan [www.kmkg.be](http://www.kmkg.be)

**Iceland on the Edge**: Icelandic cultural festival including exhibitions, concerts, theatre, dance and film  
**Until JUNE 15** at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23 [www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)

**Manden Cori Festival**: West African percussion and dance festival includes children's performances, entertainment, stands, concert by Sounan and a dance **JUNE 14** 12.30 at Woluwe Saint-Pierre Cultural Centre, Charles Thielemanslaan 93 02.773.05.80, [www.mandingfoli.com](http://www.mandingfoli.com)

**Momentum Performance Art Festival**: Annual international festival includes performances and discussions with visual artists  
**JUNE 12-15** at Bains, Connective, Wiels and Q-02 [www.momentum-festival.org](http://www.momentum-festival.org)

### Antwerp

**Be Creative 2008**: European textile fair **JUNE 12-14** at Antwerp Expo, Jan Van Rijswijkstraat 191 03.260.81.22, [www.antwerpexpo.be](http://www.antwerpexpo.be)

**Rommelant**: Flea market and second hand goods  
**JUNE 14-15** at Antwerp Expo, Jan Van Rijswijkstraat 191 03.260.81.22, [www.antwerpexpo.be](http://www.antwerpexpo.be)

**Vitrine 2008**: Window display promenade in Antwerp city centre. Shop windows and surprise locations display installations by fashion designers and artists on the theme of music/sound.  
**JUNE 12-21** [www ffi.be/vitrine](http://www ffi.be/vitrine)

### Hasselt

**Hasselt in Congo**: Presentation of Hasselt natives who worked in the Congo between 1908 and 1960  
**Until JUNE 29** at Het Stadsmus, Guido Gezellesstraat 2 011.23.98.90, [www.hetstadsmus.be](http://www.hetstadsmus.be)

### Tervuren

**Prom in the Park**: Free concert by musicians from the British School of Brussels  
**JUNE 14** 19.00 in the park of the Central Africa Museum, Leuvensesteenweg 13 02.766.04.48

## INTERVIEW

# Agnes de Man

**R**emember the time when Cindy Crawford was inescapable, Linda Evangelista famously would not get out of bed for less than \$10,000 and Naomi Campbell wasn't best known for cell-phone-related fits? Fashion consumed the media in the 1980s and 90s – and it almost consumed Agnes de Man.

The former designer and stylist worked with the top names in Belgian fashion and advertising for close to two decades before she tired of the surface thrills. Today, she creates art that explores the very thing that fashion avoids like the plague: age, infirmity, mortality. Now on exhibition in Brussels, her papier-mâché figures of elderly people are worlds away from the airbrushed artifice of her former life.

Born into a well-to-do Flemish family, de Man was seduced by fashion in her teens and went to Antwerp to study at the alma mater of Dries Van Noten and Ann Demeulemeester. "I lasted six months," she laughs. "I wanted to dive into fashion, not sit in a classroom."

So she headed for Paris, where she spent two years doing apprenticeships with various designers before returning to Brussels. From there, she dove into designing for different fashion labels, including Danaqué. She also styled fashion shoots, worked as a modelling agent and was a fixture on the fashion scene. It was the 80s: Madonna and Kylie were just starting out, MTV only showed music videos and Belgium was beginning to be known for something other than chocolate, beer and *frietjes*.

The designers de Man didn't work with, she partied with – a party that lasted too long. "It was fun for a while, but, in the end, there was no human contact." She

is careful not to criticise fashion as being shallow, which, she realises, is like criticising water for being wet. "But I outgrew it," she says. "What's fun when you're 20, isn't always fun when you're 20 years older."

A single mother, de Man kissed the fashion world goodbye at 40 and decided to pursue a childhood dream: to be a clown. "My uncle, who was a god to me, was a mime, so the desire was always there."

She went to Liège to study with Christian Moffart, famous for his use of entertainment as therapy for sick children and the elderly. The two-year programme not only purged de Man of all her fashionable desires but also taught her to connect with people in a way alien to her previous peers.

For a decade, she worked mostly in nursing homes, where "many of the elderly are put by families who visit them maybe once or twice a year. I would see them more often than their own children," she sighs. "So performing for the elderly is like entering a relationship." Many suffered dementia and other age-related illnesses, but the appearance of a clown would transport them back to childhood. "Some would be afraid at first but would come closer as time went on," she remembers. "I call it the Saint Nicholas syndrome."

De Man has even taken her show on the road, flying to areas of India damaged by the tsunami. "Clowning isn't part of their culture, so the children there did not know what to make of me," she remembers. "Many of them ran away scared. But after awhile, they got more familiar." De Man had brought a huge box of 200 red noses that she planned to give to the kids one by one. "But when I brought out the first one, the children swarmed around me, each wanting to get one – and then

they started fighting!" In the end, she had to throw the box of noses in the air and leave the children to fend for themselves.

As rewarding as clowning was, after nearly 10 years, it was also draining. "Not the performing but the relationship part," she explains. "I was entertaining old and very ill people, so, in some weeks three people might die who I had bonded with. It takes a lot out of you."

But where entertainment stopped, art began. "I had gathered all these old people inside me, and they needed a way to get out," de Man says. Thus began her foray into papier-mâché. Self-trained, she found inspiration in the imperfections that would have been anathema to her former fashion self.

The ghostly white figures are unsettling at first – but, as with most art, reactions tell more about the viewer than the art itself. "Some people find them gloomy, others find them serene," she says. Created in her studio on the ground floor of her Brussels house, each figure seems to have a soul – a quality evoked by staring into their life-like eyes. "I go to the flea market and buy antique dolls," she says, "and I harvest their eyes for my creations."

For an eye used to six-pack abs, silicone breasts and Botoxed faces in the media, the pot bellies, hunched backs and sagging skin can seem like a grotesque assault on the senses. But de Man is unapologetic. "I love my wrinkles," she says. "I love what I've become because it shows that I have lived. All this plastic surgery and anti-aging products: people no longer look like themselves."

De Man has also found beauty in the very thing that fashion flees. "Fashion is all about keeping up appearances," she says. "One can't be slim enough or rich enough.

Sander Gomme



Agnes de Man and friends at Espace Art 22

But none of that lasts." And by confronting imperfections and mortality, she creates art that will satisfy longer than the latest trend.

**Steven Tate**

*Agnes de Man/Aurélie Gravas, until 26 June, Espace Art 22, Van Aastraat 22, Brussels*

## THE LAST WORD

### what they're saying in Flanders

**"I know more about sport than politics. I once commentated on a football match for Radio 1, and I enjoyed it more than our election victory."**

Prime minister and sport-fan Yves Leterme

**"The media is always so negative. We don't pay enough attention to the fact that we actually have it really easy here."**

Gabriel Fehervari,  
CEO of Alfacam, on plans to set up a new, more positive TV channel

**"I'm following in my father's footsteps. He was a volunteer fireman all his life. He had three daughters and thought it was a shame there was no son to follow him."**

Carien Vercalsteren,  
shift chief of the volunteer fire brigade at Westerlo, one of only 223 women firefighters in Flanders

**Brussels European Film Festival Scherpenheuvel**

**Circus or Science Oosterweel Viaduct Suzan Dani**

**elFonds Secret of Jubelpark Scheepdonck Canal**

**next week in Flanders Today**