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Monique Philips

Artisans at work in the Plaster Cast Workshop of the Royal Museum for Art and History

The secrets of Jubelpark

One of Brussels' landmarks is embarking on an ambitious plan to become the "Central Park of Europe"

Mon Philips

One of the cornerstones of Brussels cultural life is finally being overhauled following years of work on an

ambitious master plan. Since 2001, the King Baudouin Foundation has been working to get some 10 city and federal government agencies around the table to plan a resto-

ration that will bring Jubelpark (Cinquantenaire in French) back to its former glory. It will take another five to eight years to complete the €10 million

project, but changes can already be seen: the fountain near Tervurenlaan is once again shooting jets of water into the air after being repaired for leaks and cosmetically

improved with new border stones and fresh grass. Soon the park's dead trees will be felled and others

Continued on page 4



Business

Telecom giant Belgacom last week launched a bid to buy shares in the Flemish cable operator consortium Interkabel. But what does this mean for rival operator Telenet, which appears to be poised to make its own bid for Interkabel?

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Active

One million pilgrims visit the Flemish shrine of Our Lady of Scherpenheuvel every year in search of a miracle. Steven Tate takes a look at a religious site where faith and kitsch form an uneasy mix.

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Living

Twelve years ago, six people from Ghent set up an archive to preserve the history of gay activism in Belgium. Lisa Bradshaw takes a look at this almost unknown collection of photographs, posters, letters and objects.

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InBev launches Anheuser-Busch takeover bid

Shares rise sharply on both sides of the Atlantic

Alan Hope

Shares in the Leuven-based brewery giant InBev last week shot up following the announcement that the company is to launch a disputed takeover bid for Anheuser-Busch (AB), the top US brewer that produces bestselling brands such as Budweiser and Michelob. Investors pushed share prices up 10% on the first day following the announcement, and AB shares rose 5%, yet stayed under the bid price of \$65 (€53).

The announcement brought to an end weeks of speculation over InBev's

intentions, during which time the company had been reported to be looking not only at AB, but also at the South African SAB Miller. The deal values AB at just under €30 billion and, if it goes ahead, will be the biggest-ever foreign takeover by a Belgian company, easily outstripping last year's €24 billion takeover of ABN Amro by Fortis. The bid price represents a premium of 35% on the average share price before speculation started and 18% over the previous all-time top price reached in October 2004.

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

Mayors for Peace

For the past 90 years, the West Flanders town of Ieper, or Ypres in English, has promoted the idea of peace. After enduring four years of shelling, which emptied the town of inhabitants and reduced everything to rubble, it's hardly surprising that this place considers war a brutal business. Its role in the world now is to show visitors the consequences of modern warfare through its memorials, military cemeteries and war museum.

It then comes as no surprise that the mayor of Ypres, Luc Dehaene, has played a leading role in a campaign to rid the world of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Back in 2003, he was one of six Belgian mayors who joined the organisation Mayors for Peace, set up by the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (whose cities were destroyed by atomic bombs in 1945).

Created in 1982, Mayors for Peace has steadily grown larger and now includes more than 2,270 mayors in 129 countries, with new cities joining at the rate of two per day.

In 2006, Dehaene helped to set up the 2020 Vision Campaign, which seeks to rid the world of nuclear weapons within 12 years. The organisation is based in the city hall (formerly the cloth hall) in Ypres, which was destroyed in 1914-18 (see photo below) but was meticulously rebuilt over the next 50 years.

Pol D'Huyvetter, campaign manager, explained the choice

of Ieper in a phone conversation. "Brussels was the first choice of location, but the administration was slow. As Ypres said it was ready to host the new campaign office, we moved quickly ahead. Ieper had a history of war, so it was the right place to choose."

Belgium currently tops the league table in terms of the number of municipalities participating in the Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision campaign – 317 out of a total of 589 Belgian mayors have joined, representing 53% of the country. In Flanders, over 70% of all mayors have joined. Recent arrivals include the Flemish Brabant town of Liedekerke and the Brussels municipality of Schaerbeek.

As well as signing the charter, many Belgian members have pledged financial support by donating €0.025 per inhabitant to the campaign. It hardly matches the \$1.3 trillion that the United States poured into military spending across the world in 2007, but it at least offers a gesture towards peace.

"The aim is to make 2010 to 2020 the decade of disarmament," explains D'Huyvetter. It's a message that makes a lot of sense when you have visited a town like Ypres.

Derek Blyth

online

www.mayorsforpeace.org
www.2020visioncampaign.org



Ypres cloth hall in flames

FACE OF FLANDERS



Ommegang

The Ommegang doesn't happen until next month, but you should try to book seats now before they are all snapped up. This is one of the greatest processions in Europe, held in one of the most beautiful squares in the world. It has dazzling costumes, authentic Belgian nobles, gaggles of children, parades of stilt walkers and at least one dog.

The name comes from two Dutch words meaning "to walk around", and that's just what it involves. In the early days, this was a procession organised by the city archers that made its way slowly and splendidly from the Zavel to Grote Markt.

In 1549, under the Spanish Hapsburgs, the city of Brussels put on a spectacular Ommegang to entertain Emperor Charles V, who came from Ghent, and his son Philip. The current Ommegang is a reconstruction of this procession based on historical accounts and ancient paintings. It involves more than 1,400 participants, along with horses, giants and several twitchy falcons.

Some of the participants are Belgian aristocrats descended from the nobles who took part in the original procession. Others are locals who have been rehearsing their parts for the best part of a year. The participants take their roles seriously, and each step of the way is carefully choreographed. This is theatre of the highest standard.

The procession reaches a spectacular climax after darkness has fallen, when Flemish stilt walkers stage a fight on the cobbled square. The sky then explodes with fireworks that light up the gilded baroque houses. It's a spectacular experience, even if it all too often rains on the crowd. **DB**

1 and 3 July, 21.00, Grote Markt, Brussels.

online

www.ommegang.be

TALKING DUTCH

notes on language



raad

One thing you shouldn't be too free with is advice. Not everyone appreciates a word from the wise, even though *goede raad komt altijd gelegen* – good advice never goes amiss. Yet papers and magazines are full of how best to lose weight or get a mate. I came across some unusual advice in the edition of *Knack's Weekend* magazine celebrating its 25 years of existence. The whole magazine was devoted 25 year-olds with the usual mix of fashion, music and interviews. My eye was rather caught by the 25 pieces of advice for the target reader: what you should or shouldn't do at the age of 25. Some of the advice followed the traditional agony-aunt line: *zoek uit wat een reeks onenightstands met je doet* – find out what a series of one-night stands does to you. Others were of the the-world-at-your-feet variety: *zet je in als vrijwilliger in een natuurproject in de jungle van Bolivia*. That's right, volunteer for a nature project in Bolivia.

Then came the interesting ones. *Haal een piano in huis* – get a piano, how refreshingly old-fashioned. *Overweeg een cursus stijldansen* – consider a course of ballroom dancing. And why? *Het eerste huwelijksfeest loert om de hoek* – the first wedding party is lurking round the corner. Again, great advice for all those with two left feet.

Some advice pricks the conscience. *Praat met daklozen* – speak with the homeless. One advises you to stop depending on your parents: *Gedaan met één keer laten rinkelen op de GSM van je ouders, zodat ze terugbellen* – no more letting your parents mobile ring once so that they phone you back.

Not all the advice was equally uplifting: *Het wordt tijd om afterworkparty's serieus te nemen*. Yes, the dreaded after-work parties should be taken seriously as the place for getting on in your career.

Some advice was surprising: *Tijd om lichamelijker te worden* – time to get more physical. The suggestion is that you should cuddle your friends and family more, but if that's too much for you: *een schouderklopje of een aai over de bol* – a pat on the back (not shoulder) or stroke someone's head.

One piece of advice was quite touching: *ontdek je ouders als gesprekspartners* – discover your parents as people to speak to. The advice to ask yourself *waarom feestjes zo laat beginnen* arouses suspicions that some of the advice is being given by someone who was 25, well, 25 years ago. I'm not sure the readers would be swayed to be the first to turn up at a party.

The deepest *raad* was: *ontken niet langer maar kom uit voor wat je al lang denkt* – don't deny what you think but come out with it.

All in all, the advice was sound (says he from his high chair); though some was predictable: *leer een nieuw taal* – learn a new language; *geef bloed* – give blood, most was serious and probably quite different from what you would find in English.

Alistair MacLean

online

www.knack.be

Flanders Today

independent newsweekly

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InBev launches Anheuser-Busch takeover bid

Continued from page 1

The announcement immediately stoked InBev shares, although the company has been careful to make it clear that dividends (in recent years as much as 70% of profit has been handed back to shareholders) would suffer as a result of the takeover, which is being financed mainly by debt, in addition to some hiving off of non-core activities and a capital increase of €5.4 billion.

The news was greeted with less excitement Stateside. The governor of Missouri, where AB is based, said he was "extremely distressed" by the announcement. Democrat senator Claire McCaskill said she was "nervous" about the deal and had written to the St Louis-based company to ask them to oppose the InBev offer. Her Republican counterpart, senator Kit Bond, has written to federal Attorney General Michael Mukasey to ask him to scrutinise the deal carefully.

However unwelcome the bid might be – the term being used is "unsolicited" – it is technically not a hostile one. That would involve InBev going over the heads of the board and appealing directly to shareholders. By contrast, InBev CEO Carlos Brito has made it clear that he wants to have the board's support, and intends to leave them in place should his bid succeed.

"We have the highest respect for Anheuser-Busch, its employees and its leadership, who have built the leading brewer in the US and grown the iconic Budweiser brand. Together, we would draw on the collective expertise of both companies' management and employees," Brito said in a statement.

The two companies already work together,

Anheuser-Busch



Anheuser-Busch CEO August A. Busch IV

with AB distributing InBev brands in the US. "We view this combination as a natural next step for both companies, who already enjoy successful partnerships in the US, Canada and South Korea," Brito said.

The company would remain in St Louis, and some AB directors would be invited to join the InBev board. "We would like to draw on the skills and experience of the current Anheuser-Busch directors and would invite a number of your directors to join the Board of the new company. In addition, we would hope to retain key members of the Anheuser-Busch management team at all levels of seniority," Brito said in a letter to AB CEO

August A. Busch IV. (pictured) In addition, all AB breweries in the US would remain open.

So far, AB is being reticent, with a response promised "in a reasonable time". Assuming their reaction is negative, however, their options are limited. In 2004 the company took the decision to adopt a series of good-management principles, including ruling out the use of a so-called "poison pill" defence in the event of a hostile bid. Typically, that would take the form of a new share issue to stockholders which dilutes the holding obtained by the bidder and makes the company vastly more expensive to acquire.

One possible option is a merger with Mexican brewer Grupo Modelo, which produces Corona and which already has close ties to AB – their CEO sits on the AB board, and three AB directors sit on his board. AB already owns 50% of the company, but a full merger would push the cost of a takeover by InBev up by 10 to 15%, analysts said. However, Modelo has made it clear it wishes to remain independent, and also Mexican, which might make a merger with AB unlikely.

The takeover would make the combined company into the world's biggest brewer, with annual production of 460 million hectolitres, sales of €24.3 billion and profits of €6.9 billion. It would also push the new company into the top five of consumer-related businesses, below Procter & Gamble and Nestlé, but ahead of PepsiCo and Coca-Cola.

Meanwhile, online readers of *De Standaard* invited to think of a new name for the merged company came up with a few suggestions: Bitches Brew, Schol!, Stella Bud, Ambush and even a return to Interbrew, the former name of InBev before the last major takeover.

NEWS FLASH



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A group of students from a school in Westmalle have posted a video on YouTube to campaign against the school's policy **forbidding the wearing of shorts**, even in heatwave conditions. The student responsible has been called in to see the director of the St-Jan Berchmanscollege in the famous beer town. "He will not be punished," promised headmaster Alfons Goos. "He himself is unhappy with the way this has grown out of control. He got in over his head."

online

<http://tinyurl.com/69wjms>

More than 40,600 new residents came to live in Flanders during 2007, according to the latest figures from the region's interior minister Marino Keulen. Of those, 12,000 began the required procedure for integration intended for long-term residents, which includes Dutch lessons, social orientation and career advice. Last year the number was lower, at just over 6,500. The rule does not apply to EU citizens, who made up 15,000 of the influx. Just under 13,500 of the total were minors.

Petty criminals in Mechelen will no longer be released without charge simply because of the lack of resources at the prosecutor's office, following a change to the local police laws last week. In future, if the prosecutor is forced to drop cases of petty theft, vandalism, tagging and shoplifting, he or she can decide to impose a fine of up to €250 instead.

Karl-Heinz Lambertz, minister-president of Belgium's German-speaking community, is due to make a speech on 11 July as part of the Bruges celebrations marking the Flemish Community's annual festival. Lambertz, who was invited by senator Pol Van Den Driessche, will call for more autonomy for his region from Wallonia, including some revenue-raising powers.

Spelling rules in the Dutch language will not be changed in 2015 as expected, according to the Taalunie – the body which governs language matters in the Netherlands, Flanders and Suriname. The last spelling overhaul in 2005 led to protests after 2.5% of all words in the official vocabulary underwent a spelling change – changing *paardebloem* to *paardenbloem*, for example. The Taalunie described the changes as a simplification, but has now decided that the spelling is "virtually completely settled".

A woman who dropped off a dead man at the Sint-Maria hospital in Halle last week has been traced and arrested in Mons. The woman brought the man into the emergency room, then left while staff tried in vain to revive him. He is thought to have died of an overdose. The woman is a known addict.

Rachel Agnew wins first Canvascollectie prize

VRT 2008



The competition to find Belgium's best unknown artist has been won by Rachel Agnew, whose painting "To the Funny Farm" (acrylic on canvas) won the public prize worth €10,000 on a special live award programme on Canvas last week. The prize was the culmination of the Canvascollectie project, which invited members of the public – artists, hobbyists and non-artists alike – to enter their own work. The works went through a provincial selection, and then 250 or so – 50 for each province – were put on show in Bozar last month. Since then, visitors have had the chance to inspect the works and to vote for their favourites.

Agnew, the sister of Flemish stand-up comedian Alex, is a former art director in the advertising industry, as well as designing CD sleeves and posters. Her painting, in which she makes a triple appearance, is an indictment of consumerism, she said.

Agnew was the first of three women artists who dominated the public and jury's selections. The jury prizewinner, with a prize of €8,000, was Michèle Matyn for her photo "Oval Tragedy". Second jury choice was Kathleen Huys for her painting "Zonder titel". She wins €6,000.

VRT books show loses another partner

The new books programme planned for the VRT has suffered another defection. Last week the VPRO, the Dutch partner with Canvas in the enterprise, announced it was withdrawing, after it had failed to receive "an objective guarantee that the programme would be as good as we want it to be," according to Peter Van Ingen of VPRO. The broadcaster wanted to start production after the summer with a view to a first airing in February. But Canvas planned to produce a programme in time for the Book Fair in October – too soon for the Dutch to be confident of the results.

The programme, due to be presented by former pop-star turned TV presenter Jan Leyers, has already suffered two severe blows: first when the Dutch-Flemish House deBuren pulled out, claiming it had been expecting a literature programme, while the VRT was planning a books show, and then with the departure of its editor-in-chief Jos Van den Bergh last month. That led to Leyers bringing in people from the external production house Telesaurus, who made his recent series *De weg naar Mekka*, which in turn upset VPRO. "All of a sudden the team is completely different," said Van Ingen.

VPRO will now "have a good look" at how the first series is made in Flanders before deciding whether to collaborate on future series.

FEATURE

Secrets of a city park

Continued from page 1

across the park will be uprooted and replanted to accentuate axes and vistas.

The aim of the plan is to turn the park from a thoroughfare for passing Eurocrats on their way to the metro into a social hub for residents and visitors alike. The planners want to construct a typical Brussels cafe and cover over the Belliard highway tunnel that cuts through the park, thereby restoring the park's original openness and geometry. Ultimately, the idea is to turn the Jubelpark into no less than a "Central Park in the heart of Europe."

Less than humble beginnings

The park dates back to the 50th anniversary of Belgium as an independent country, in 1880, when King Leopold II embarked on a project to turn Brussels into a major European capital. He had impressive palaces built and the Jubelpark laid out. All was financed by the Crown Foundation, which managed Leopold's personal fortunes gathered in his colonisation of the Congo. When Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* describes the main character's visit to Brussels, he speaks of huge, white buildings constructed with blood money. Those would be the Bordiau Halls, named after their architect Gédéon Bordiau.

Though the park and its buildings were home to three major exhibitions, it took 25 years to get the entire Jubelpark project finished to Leopold's personal liking. Planned mainly as an exhibition park for international fairs, the buildings had to be constructed solely from Belgian materials and using only Belgian companies and labour. Bordiau planned to shape the buildings' facade like a crescent based on the South Kensington Museum in London. Leopold, however, envisioning the park as a city gate, wanted a central archway.

The arch took many years and was finally completed by French architect Charles Girault in 1905. Leopold insisted on cutting the metal and glass exhibition halls in two, safeguarding the view through his arches. Now the two separate parts house the Royal War Museum on one side and Autoworld on the other. They frame the Triomfboog, or the Triumphal Arch, one of the city's defining monuments.

Autoworld accommodates the largest and most varied collection of vehicles in the world. In the summer, Jubelpark's inner courtyard is turned into a blockbuster drive-in cinema at weekends. If you show up in a vintage car, you get a reduction.

Around the back of Autoworld, you'll find the intriguing Plaster Cast Workshop of the Royal Museum for Art and History (KMKG). There are only three like it in Europe and, where Paris and

Berlin have caved in to commercial pressure, Brussels' small team of three craftsmen continues with traditional techniques and at lower prices. One veined body part of Michelangelo's David will only set you back €20.

Established under Leopold II, this studio has been working with a stockroom of about 4,000 moulds of original works of art. Rumour has it that the inventory is as chaotic as its warren of shelves looks. Craftsman Thierry de Mulder only partially denies this. "We do know more or less what is here. Due to severe personnel cuts, however, we had to stop keeping an inventory and concentrate on producing," he explains. "At the moment, we're assembling a Farnese Hercules to ship to a museum in America." While larger works can be commissioned via the catalogue on site, small casts are sold through the museum shop upstairs.

The Royal Museum itself wins every visitor over. Did you know there's an entire front of an ancient temple in there? Besides the permanent collection, the museum now hosts temporary exhibitions. Once considered a rather dusty home to antiquities, it's now enjoying an improved reputation as a dynamic centre of art and history under director Dr Anne Cahen-Delhaye.

An inconspicuous side door in the Royal Museum will lead you to the Museum for Blind People. At the moment the temporary exhibition on native American culture allows visitors to touch and feel the objects – a nice change for anyone, blind or not.

Behind closed doors

Werner Adriaenssens, head of the Art Nouveau and Art Deco department of the KMKG, knows pretty much everything about Jubelpark and its adornments. He holds the keys, literally, of the soon-to-be-restored Horta Pavilion, Victor Horta's first public building. With the design of this pseudo-temple, Horta knew that his career as a traditional architect was over. Although it might look like a classic temple, there isn't one straight line in the building. Slightly bent like the foot of a tree, the walls seem to have sprung from the earth organically. It's a classic temple edifice reinvented by Art Nouveau.

Access to a set of keys for this building is indeed special: it was closed to the public three days after its opening in 1898 and has never reopened again. Why? Because it houses the Menschelijke Driften, or the Pavilion of Human Passions. The 12 x 8 metre relief sculpture by Jef Lambeaux (who also sculpted "The Kiss" in Antwerp's Grote Markt) depicting uninhibited nudes in any manner of carnal

Photos by Monique Philips



Goodbye cars: the Belliard Tunnel, which now cuts through Jubelpark, will be completely covered over, depriving car drivers of a fleeting glimpse of the Jubelpark arch



Not for the faint-hearted: Werner Adriaenssens of the Art Nouveau and Art Deco department at the KMKG, in the Pavilion of Human Passions. You, too, can visit it on 26 June

delights. It caused a scandal when it was unveiled and was quickly concealed from public view. To this day, you have to make a special request at the Royal Museum to see it and hope that someone has time to let you in. Otherwise, you can peek through the keyhole.

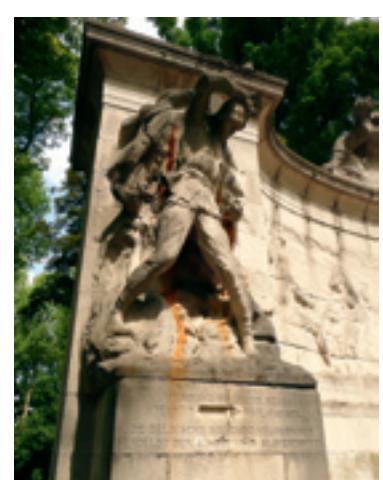
At first, Horta designed the pavilion's facade to be open, serving as a shelter on rainy days. It wasn't until after Lambeaux's death that the famous architect gave in to the sculptor's last wish: a closed front to enhance the natural light coming through the glass roof. Lambeaux was right: even through the keyhole, you'll be startled by how the white Carrara marble catches the light from the glass roof above.

Before the government finally took over the building, it was owned by Saudi Arabia (a gift from King Baudouin). "I can just imagine young Baudouin standing here on a visit to the pavilion with the Saudi King," smiles Adriaenssens. "You know what? I'll let you have this pavilion." Fortunately, the temporary owners rather liked the Lambeaux relief.

Adriaenssens, though, is inclined to deny the work mythical status. "Sure it's large, as Lambeaux intended, but hardly a masterpiece. The relief consists of separate groups rather than forming a whole. Unfortunately Lambeaux never explained his intentions. Even the title isn't his." Still, he continues, "it did work well as a

background for films and theatre, but, unfortunately, that isn't allowed anymore."

The Great Mosque of Brussels stands next to the Horta Pavilion. Originally an 1897 World Fair pavilion in Arabic style, it housed a panoramic painting of Cairo and the Nile – a naturalistic illusion that was once all the rage. A later painting depicted the battle of the Yser in the First World War.



The neglected Congo monument – for Belgian soldiers who died in the Congo – has been a victim of a series of politically-inspired changes of heart. The word "Arabisch" has been removed and put back several times, a source of contention to the members of the mosque a few steps away. The monument's clear colonial pride has also made it an irresistible target for political graffiti



Christophe Poreye, head gardener of Jubelpark: "The park used to be a bit abandoned, but we're working hard to turn it around. Personally, I really like this bit, which we've just laid out near the mosque. We've added some exotic species, which we hope will turn out well."

According to some, the original is securely stored away, according to others cut up and lost. A reconstruction is on display at the park's Royal Army Museum.

The army museum is a huge place with airplanes, tanks, boats and all kinds of military paraphernalia from the Middle Ages onwards. Its international collection attracts all sorts of visitors. People from the American south are interested in Napoleon, Canadians in the extensive First World War sections. The documentation centre on crashed military airplanes is also very popular.

Reconstructions of U-boats, trenches and wartime city streets

make the museum lively and great for taking kids on a rainy day. A mirror "cracked during the fights of 1830", the folding field bed of Leopold I and US cans of corned pork are among the curiosities.

"Of the 100,000 objects on display, my favourite piece is undoubtedly the 1960s Caravelle airplane from Sabena, which dominates the great hall on its 30 metre-high poles," says Diane Vanthemsche, who handles public relations for the army museum. "I used to work for Sabena myself, as did my father for 30 years. He was a pilot, and he flew this particular plane, so it carries a lot of personal emotions for me."

Beyond the army museum in a separate, inconspicuous building lies the Royal Institute for the Study and Conservation of Belgium's Art Heritage, a specialist centre on restoration and the identification of fakes. But that's another story.

The Pavilion of Human Passions will be open to the public on 26 June from 12:45-13:30. For information, call 02.741.72.14

online

www.kbs-frb.be
www.kmkg-mra.be



Diane Vanthemsche of the Royal Army Museum singles out the 1960s Sabena Caravelle airplane. That very plane, in the background, was flown by her father, a former pilot for the now-defunct national airline Sabena

Curator's eye

The experts pick their favourite Jubelpark statues

Jubelpark is full of statues, each with its own story and fan base. "My favourite sculpture in the park is the one by PE Van der Stappen called 'De Stedebouwers'", says Thierry de Mulder of the Royal Museum's plaster cast division (seen in this week's cover photograph). His admiration has a lot to do with its history: known in English as "The City Builders", this sculpture of sleeping workers was delivered in the park near the turn of the last century and nearly caused a riot among the 450 real-life builders slaving away day and night on Leopold II's triumphant arch.

Then there is "The Green Dog". "I always wondered about this statue," notes Werner Adriaenssens, head of the Art Nouveau and Art Deco department of the Royal Museum for Art and History. "A rather ordinary sculpture, really, and a bit of a silly name, too." But now that he knows its history, it's one of his favourites. In 1905, during a national exhibition to celebrate Belgium's 75th anniversary, a mock "Old Brussels" was built in the park. This included a reproduction of an old city square, built around a dog sculpture inspired by Brussels former "Green Dog district" (which vanished after the River Zenne, which used to run through the city, was covered over).

MP



On any given evening, you might run into Brussels resident Laurence Dercy at the park: "My friends come, and we meet at the arcades. They're perfect for outdoor climbing practice."

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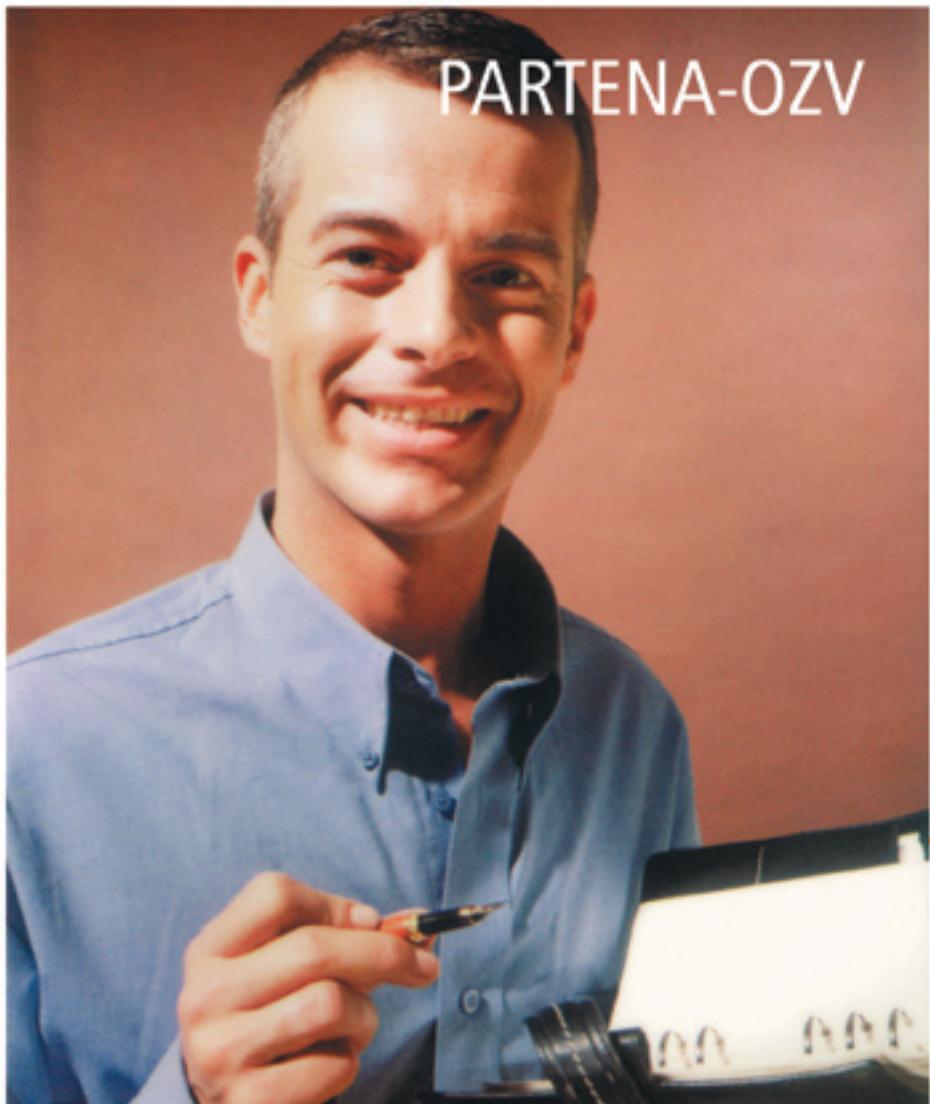
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A family of giraffes – father, mother and three daughters – last week made the trip from Antwerp Zoo down the E19 to Planckendael, where they will take up residence in the park's savannah region. The transport was carried out by a specialist company with a trailer that can be raised up to six metres in height. During the trip, once the animals have become used to the trailer, the roof is lowered to four metres. The giraffes had also been prescribed tranquillisers several days before the journey. They will be housed indoors until the end of the month, when they will join other species on the savannah. Their place in the Egyptian Temple in Antwerp Zoo will be taken up by two female giraffes from Belfast.

Flemish executive takes over at Concertgebouw Amsterdam



Raes is just one of several Flemish executives at the top of Dutch orchestras. Others include Lieven Bertels at the Holland Festival and Tino Haenen at the Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ, a new concert hall on the Amsterdam waterfront. "Belgians don't gaze at their own navels," he explained in an interview with *De Morgen*. "They can work together with others and speak more languages." His appointment in Amsterdam begins on 1 December.

Jan Raes (pictured) has been appointed executive director of the world-famous Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam. Raes was previously artistic director of the Antwerp Conservatory and general manager of deFilharmonie, which he took over in 2000 during a crisis period after having spent years in the pit as a flautist. For the last five years he has been artistic director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic, which also recently lost its musical director, Valery Gergiev.

Student scoops the poker pot

A 23-year-old student at the EHSAL college in Brussels has won \$12,500 (€8,100) playing poker in the World Series of Poker online. But Mathias Smaghe has declined an invitation to take his winnings to the tables of the World Series in Las Vegas to play against the world's best. "In the end, I just took the winnings and put them in my savings account," he said. "I'd rather go on holiday properly than lose all the money I won against professional players in Las Vegas."

The winning match lasted seven hours, with time for a five-minute break every hour. "We started about nine in the evening with something over 1,000 players from around the world," he remembers. "At four in the morning it was over, and I had won \$12,500."

A life as a high-roller seems not to be, so to speak, in the cards. "Until now, I had won about \$500-\$600, which is not so much when you consider I play on average an hour a day. For me, it's pure relaxation. The best way is still to play with friends, at the table with a beer by your side."

Minister to investigate paranormal ads

Vincent Van Quickenborne, minister for economic affairs, has ordered an enquiry into ads offering paranormal services on the website of the Flemish commercial TV station VTM. The investigation has been asked to determine whether the ads are in breach of Belgian law. One SMS service offers a combination of Lottery numbers said to have "most chance of winning". However, Belgian law states that ads may not offer any way to help win in games of chance.

As well as the lottery ads, the investigators will also be looking at the programme Astro-Contact, which offers to match viewers with a variety of alleged healers – another claim which is forbidden under the law on advertising. VTM denies the accusations.

Prize for upstanding politician launched



Friends of the late politician Frank Swaelen (pictured) have inaugurated a biannual prize in his name to be awarded to a "morally upright statesman" (or woman). The prize, a work of art, will be awarded at the start of each second parliamentary year to the political figure who has best demonstrated what the organisers describe as "the classical virtues of knowledge, respect for others, boldness and modesty. Frank Swaelen was the embodiment of those qualities, and the initiative aims to highlight similar political figures," the statement said.

Born in 1930, Swaelen was first active in schools politics. He was first returned to Parliament in 1968, and from 1971 to 1988 was mayor of Hove near Antwerp. He became president (speaker) of the Senate in 1988 and remained until his retirement in 1999. He died in December last year.

NEWS FLASH



Police could revive the old tradition of **souting members of the public**, according to a proposal put forward by the chairman of the standing committee on local police forces, Dirk Van Nuffel. The tradition persisted in some forces until about 10 years ago, and its return would be a sign of "customer-friendliness and respect," he said. Philippe Van Hamme, chair of the police union NSVP, agreed: "It could reduce the gap between police and citizens," he said. "It's a simple gesture but one of great importance."

One in five Dutch people would prefer to live in Flanders, according to a poll carried out for *De Standaard* newspaper. At the same time, only one Fleming in 20 would consider moving across the border to the Netherlands. Only one half of Dutch respondents thought their schools were better, with 38% choosing Flanders, compared with 5% of Flemings who considered Dutch schools superior. Flanders was thought to be the best place to eat by both sides, and all agreed that the Netherlands was a better place to go cycling.

The town of Lommel in Limburg will this weekend play host to a street-festival of "living statues" featuring performance artists who stand still for long periods in city centres across Europe. Entrance is free, and visitors will be able to vote for their favourite among the 50 or so acts taking part, with a prize of €5,000 for the winner.

Dutch lessons in schools could include **tuition in the Brussels dialect**, under a proposal from Koekelberg alderman Robert Delathouwer, who has started a pilot project in his own municipality's Dutch-language schools. Critics claim the dialect is dying out, only being kept artificially alive by initiatives like the Volkstejoëter (People's Theatre) and rock band De Fanfaar, who sing in *het Brussels*. "Dialect is the foundation of the standard language," Delathouwer argues – although there are no figures available on the number of people, French-speaking and Flemish, who still speak the city's dialect.

Rik Vannieuwenhuysse, whose food business was the subject of a hate campaign in 2005 after he refused to sack a Muslim woman who wore a headscarf, is to enter local politics by standing for the Open-VLD at the next communal elections. Vannieuwenhuysse, known as Rik Remmery after the name of his business, took a sabbatical in 2007 to recover from the stress. The culprit, who sent threatening letters, one of them containing a bullet, has never been identified.

Belgacom and Telenet at war

Alan Hope

The continuing hostilities between telecommunications giant (and former state enterprise) Belgacom and upstart Flemish rival Telenet took a turn for the worse last week when Belgacom launched a counter-bid for shares of Interkabel, which had seemed poised to merge with Telenet. This consortium of Flemish cable operators is made up of four small companies – Interelectra, VWEM, PBE and Integan – which are in turn owned by 102 municipalities in Flanders.

The Belgacom bid was an audacious one, valuing the consortium of four small companies at €420 million, or €70 million more than the bid by Mechelen-based Telenet. The rest of the terms are exactly the same as the Telenet bid: an immediate payment of €170 million (or



€240 million in Belgacom's case), followed by €180 million paid over the period until 2042. Belgacom's concentration of its higher bid on the one-off first payment also exaggerates the difference: the communes receive the whole €70 million extra as soon as they sign, a 38% premium on Telenet's offer, on that part of the deal at least.

The move looked certain to upset the progress of Telenet's bid, itself built on an agreement reached between the two companies last year which would bring one-third of Flemish TVs into the Telenet stable.

The agreement with Interkabel was the culmination of eight years of ever-closer cooperation between the two partners. The deal was signed last year, with Telenet paying €350 million to take over the cable companies' TV customers. The deal brought in 710,000 analogue customers and 65,000 digital viewers, and virtually closed the gaps in Telenet's coverage of Flanders. But there were tensions: the two partners found themselves in court over a plan by Interkabel to start offering interactive TV to its digital customers – something which Telenet claimed, successfully, was in breach of an agreement from 1996, when the very idea could hardly have been imagined.

Belgacom found the agreement hard to swallow and began a series of legal steps which aimed to break the agreement. But Belgacom lost in rulings on the only two points so far to have been investigated. As a result, the company has gone for the counter-bid option. Interkabel said it had "taken note" of the bid and promised a statement in a few days.

Telenet, on the other hand, filed an immediate complaint with the Competition Council, accusing Belgacom of abusing its dominant position (Belgacom denies it is dominant in TV) and obstruction of competition. They called the bid announcement "the umpteenth stalling tactic" and accused their rival of "a perverse approach with the sole aim of sowing confusion among the municipalities". They refused, however, to say whether they would consider raising their own bid for Interkabel.

Belgacom is the descendant of the former Telegraphs and Telecommunications Department (RTT). A state utility, it was partially privatised in 1992, with the government retaining a 53.5% stake. This special status – officially an "autonomous state company" – is a continuing bone of contention for competitors, who argue that it gives Belgacom an uncompetitive advantage. And that surely forms part of the Telenet complaint this time: has Belgacom made an uneconomic bid for Interkabel knowing that it will be underwritten by the taxpayer? Is it fair for a company that does not fully experience commercial pressure to compete with those who do?

The appeal to the Competition Council could persuade the municipalities not to go with Belgacom after all, despite its much more attractive offer: the entire action could fail on legal grounds. If Telenet were to threaten to withdraw, leaving the municipalities with nothing, they could decide to go with the safe option, even at a cost of €70 million.

Belgacom TV was launched in 2005 and immediately scored a coup by winning the TV rights to the football first and second classes for three years. Those rights were recently renewed in a one-horse race, with Belgacom and the RTBF/VRT paying €44.7 million.

Telenet, set up in 1996, has had a history of acquisitions ever since. In 2002, it took over one consortium of Flemish cable networks for €1 billion, bidding also for Interkabel, which declined. More buying in 2003 brought in Canal + but failed to bag the major Brussels cable operator Coditel. In 2006, Telenet took over UPC but failed to acquire eight Walloon cable companies.

The time, meanwhile, is pressing. Telenet and Interkabel had planned to iron out all of the details of their agreement by the end of June, to allow the municipalities to give their approval in September. Telenet shares dropped 5% on the stock market on news of the counter-bid, although financial daily *De Tijd* reported that most analysts favoured Telenet's chances of victory.

BUSINESS FLASH



Van Hool

Van Hool, the Lier-based bus and coach manufacturer, has won a contract to supply eight fuel-cell powered buses to the Californian AC Transit public transport company.

Katoen Natie

Katoen Natie, the Antwerp-based trading and handling group, has acquired the Dutch Unicontrol logistics group. The move will significantly strengthen Katoen Natie's position on the coffee and cocoa handling and distribution markets. The company is active in the Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Ghana, Mali and Vietnam. Katoen Natie is also investing €114 million to develop its container handling capacity in the port of Montevideo, Uruguay.

Atenor

Atenor, the Brussels-based construction company, has unveiled plans for a 140-metre skyscraper to be built in the Tour & Taxis quarter, close to the city's canal. The €200 million apartment block, to be inaugurated in 2013 at the earliest, will contribute to the city's international image, according to the company.

Audi

The German car manufacturer Audi will double its €100 million investment in its Vorst assembling unit to increase capacity of the new A1 production line to some 160,000 vehicles a year.

Barco

Barco, the Kortrijk-based electronics and imaging technology group, has acquired the US High End Systems, specialised in automated lighting, for \$55 million. The move will help Barco develop its leadership in providing equipment and technology for covering sporting events and the like.

Gilead Sciences

Gilead Sciences, the US-based biopharmaceutical company, has opened an office in Diegem, near Brussels.

Agfa-Gevaert

Agfa-Gevaert, the Mortsel-based imaging technology company, will invest €15 million in its Brazilian affiliate to increase production of digital printing plates.

Bekaert

Bekaert, the steel wire producer from Zwevegem, will jointly invest €150 million over the coming years to build a steel wire plant in China in partnership with the local company Ansteel. Bekaert already operates five units on China's east coast.

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Operation to deepen Scheldt delayed

The planned deepening of the Scheldt to allow access by larger ships to Antwerp harbour has been postponed after a decision by the Dutch parliament in The Hague. The plan, which would deepen the Schelde to a depth of 13.1 metres, was provisionally agreed in 2005. Since then, Flanders region has been busy dredging the river on its own territory, but work has yet to begin on the Dutch part of the river, which includes the entire estuary from Breskens-Vlissingen to the Belgian border. The Dutch parliament continues to delay its approval for the whole Scheldt package, of which the deepening is only one part.

An agreement was expected last week, but the question has been delayed further, with Dutch MPs now demanding a study on the effects of the deepening on the polders of Zeeland on both sides of the estuary.

The report requested by the Dutch parliament is expected around October, which effectively rules out any start to the dredging in the estuary this year and probably until the spring. Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters contacted the Dutch government for more information. "I have had discussions in the last few days with Jan Peter Balkenende and minister Gerda Verburg, and they recognise the seriousness of the situation," he said in a statement. A solution could be arrived at "pretty quickly," he added.



A satellite view of the Schelde showing Antwerp on the right. The darker areas are the dwindling channels of deeper water

Cities launch GPS for tourists



Isabelle Maenhout, CEO of Navitell, with (from left) Nic Balthazar, Ghent city promotion alderman Lieven Decaluwe and Flemish tourism minister Geert Bourgeois, tries out the new GPS tourist guide

Three Flemish "art cities" – Ghent, Bruges and Mechelen – are to introduce tourist guides by GPS, featuring the voices of celebrity guides like film director Nic Balthazar and TV presenter Roos Van Acker. The guides are a joint project organised by the cities and the Flemish broadcaster VRT, which has provided archive sound-clips, films and images. Financing for the project came from Flanders region, and the GPS devices were manufactured by the Limburg company Navitell, who made something similar for the Expo '58 retrospective at Heizel.

The devices consist of a module with touch-screen and controls, and headphones to listen to commentary, which was recorded by the celebrities. Each tour lasts about two hours and includes about 20 clips.

The GPS screen shows a constantly updated map of your position and the direction you're heading. The Ghent trip is the only one so far equipped with an English version, but the other cities are expected to catch up. The units are being tested until September, when the system should be extended to include Brussels, Antwerp and Leuven.

Mobistar sets its sights on the top

Mobistar, currently the second-largest mobile phone operator in Belgium, aims to topple market-leader Belgacom from its lead position and take over, according to an interview in *Trends* magazine with CEO Benoît Scheen. Mobistar saw an increase of 11% last year in minutes sold and a 33% rise in text messages – growth which, he said, would be confirmed in half-year figures for 2008.

But the company also plans expansion in other areas, including data traffic for smart-phones, buoyed by the decision last month by Apple to sell its popular iPhone through Mobistar. The data traffic by iPhone users will push figures up, as will new Mobistar services to allow TV, advertising and banking by GSM. Mobistar is also active in building Sim-cards into non-phone applications such as payment terminals, trucks and train locomotives. With new applications, Scheen said, the number of Sim-cards in use could triple by the year 2015.

Finally, Mobistar aims to "gnaw away at" the land-line business of competitors, principally Belgacom. New initiatives to provide a premium fixed-line service for professionals should allow the company to achieve a 10% share of the €4 billion fixed-line market, Scheen said.

Visits to WWI sites grow



The number of tourists visiting the World War One battlefields and monuments of West Flanders in 2007 rose by 10% over the previous year, with tourist spending up to €4 million. Last year, a number of commemorative events were organised, including the 90th anniversary of the attack on Passendale, or Passchendaele. According to figures from the economy ministry, the number of overnight stays in the area rose by 13%.

FILM

Euro cocktail

East meets west in the annual event that showcases European cinema

Saffina Rana

The Brussels European Film Festival this year is like Cannes, Berlin and Rotterdam rolled into one. The nine-day event presents a unique opportunity to see films that received critical acclaim at all these world-famous festivals but which are unlikely to get distribution in Belgium.

Like Flageyplein, where it takes place, the festival has had a facelift, and with the reopening of the square amidst open air concerts and fireworks, you won't have to climb over the rubble as in previous years to get to it.

The festival opens on 28 June with the world premiere of French-Lebanese director Hany Tamba's first feature-length film. *Melodrama Habibi* follows the adventures of Bruno, an ageing, clapped-out French singer with a forgotten 1970s hit, making his living as a receptionist in a Paris Hotel. What he doesn't know is that his one-hit wonder is still very much alive in Lebanon, until a businessman invites him to Beirut to perform at his wife's birthday party. In crossing cultures, Bruno begins to rediscover himself and the meaning of the song, against the backdrop of a war-torn part of the world.

The festival gives a push to new talent by showcasing films by first- and second-time directors.



Only human: five sketches of moral dilemmas in modern Swedish life, including silly teenage girls with a webcam, in Ruben Östlund's *Involuntary*

There are 14 entries vying in the festival's competition for over €42,000 worth of prizes, including the €10,000 Iris Award for the best film, put up by the Brussels Capital Region, and €2,500 from the municipality of Elsene for the best performance.

"They are all my favourites because I chose them," grins programmer Dries Notredame. "It's great to have *Melodrama Habibi* as world premiere," he

adds. "I like the contrast between the miserable one-hit wonder and Beirut nowadays – not in civil war but always dangerous to be in, with the conflicts between Palestine and Israel."

comedies."

Notredame notes that filmmaking is really taking off in Eastern Europe. "These guys are like 30 years old – they lived for a little bit in the communist regime

director Juraj Lehotsky that delves into the romantic lives of four people blind from birth. "It's an insight into that world – how they live, how they think, how they dream, what they want to make of their lives," Notredame explains.

Made over the course of five years, it oscillates between observation and portrayals of imaginary worlds generated by the protagonists. It was also the first Slovakian film in 40 years to be accepted at the Cannes film festival.

The second of his top picks is *Involuntary*, a quirky comedy about the nature of group dynamics, by Swedish director Ruben Östlund. The characters vary in age, from teens to their 40s, but each is faced with the dilemma of when to speak out or stay silent. "They are situations that everyone recognises – like someone drunk at a party," says Notredame. "It makes you feel uncomfortable, but in a humorous way."

Notredame is originally from West Flanders, and, before he took up programming for the Brussels festival, he was a programmer for Cinema Novo in Bruges, a festival that screens new films from Asia, Africa and Latin America. He has also worked for a film distribution company. "That's my short career" he tells me. "I'm still young like the directors I select."

Brussels European Film Festival, 28 June-6 July, Flagey, Heilig Kruisplein, Brussels

online
www.fffbe.be

Seeing by series

The Brussels festival is split into programmes to help the undecided

The Brussels European Film Festival will also feature a special screening of six independently made films, chosen for their originality. From road movies to romantic comedies, the films come from France, Greece, the UK, Spain and Germany.

Jointly with the Royal Belgian Film Archive, the festival hosts *Cinédecouvertes*, a programme of 22 films selected from the Cannes, Berlin, Rotterdam, and Toronto film festivals that don't yet have a distributor in Belgium. They will compete for several awards, including the Age d'Or prize for originality, set up as a tribute to Luis Buñuel. Don't worry if you're still perfecting your language skills, most of the competition films are also subtitled in English.

If you aren't familiar with home-grown directors, the festival is hosting a Belgian Talent section where you can catch up with the multiple-award winner *Ben X* by Nic Balthazar, *Dagen zonder lief* by Felix Van Groeningen, *Ultranova* (photo) by Bouli Lanners (director of the new film *Eldorado*) and the excellent *Nue propriété* by Joachim Lafosse, which pulled down an award at Venice in 2006.

If you don't matter if you're absolutely broke, take a thermos and go down to Flageyplein to enjoy the free outdoor screenings and drink in the atmosphere. One of my all time favourites, *Delicatessen*, will be on alongside more recent cinema releases, such as *2 Days in Paris*, *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, and *Control*, the biopic about Joy Division frontman Ian Curtis. **SR**

The annual Brussels festival brings together film from across Europe. "It's cool to have a lot of directors from the east of Europe in the competition, as well as those countries who are already famous for filmmaking, such as France," says Notredame. "After the fall of the iron curtain, you have a new generation of directors from Bosnia, Serbia, Macedonia and also Slovakia who are passionate about making films, with very diverse methods – from intimate minimal dramas to burlesque

then went to high school and have chosen to become film directors. I asked some of them what makes this new generation so interested in and passionate about making films. They said, 'It used to be cool to play in rock bands; now it's cool to be a film director.'

The programmer, when pushed, comes up with two particular favourites in the competition. "They are directors who go a little bit further in filmmaking, try to push the limit," he says. *Blind Loves* is a documentary by Slovakian



The mother of all mothers

Flanders biggest pilgrimage site expertly mixes entertainment and faith

Steven Tate

France has its Lourdes, Brazil has its Aparecida, and Flanders has Our Lady of Scherpenheuvel, the religious shrine that attracts more than one million visitors a year – almost 20 times the population of the municipality it calls home.

In a country where the number of practicing Catholics has long been on the decline, Scherpenheuvel – Belgium's most important Catholic pilgrimage site – remains a source of solace for the devout, as well as a tourist attraction for those eager to see a side of Flanders different from Antwerp, Ghent and other urban centres.

Despite its reverence of traditional values, this area in northeast Flemish Brabant is not time locked in some antiquated era. A new cultural centre was built two years ago that now plays hosts to theatre pieces, local events and concerts of Flemish pop stars. All the modern conveniences are here: excellent public transport system, convenience stores and ATMs. And the townsfolk welcome the onslaught of visitors with hospitality and friendliness unimaginable in other, more visited tourist destinations: if a Parisian had walked half a block with me after I asked directions to point out exactly where I should be going, I would think I was about to be mugged.

Even for a non-Catholic, Scherpenheuvel still has appeal. The park in which the Basilica is situated is placid and restful, with old oaks surrounding the church and benches bracketing its pathways. Stalls and shops lie outside the park gates selling religious trinkets and Scherpenheuvel souvenirs – as well as plastic toy machine guns, footballs, pin-wheels and knock-off Disney merchandise (renamed Dishy). For those feeling a bit peckish, stalls sell sweets like

pepernoten and *moppen*.

Some of the rosaries and Virgin Mary figures on sale border on kitsch, and the funfair atmosphere might seem a distraction from what a religious site should be. But Scherpenheuvel's history is strong enough to outshine a few souvenirs' rhinestones and glitter.

The name "Scherpenheuvel" translates to "steep hill", in reference to the hilltop where pagans would worship in medieval times around a holy oak tree. But Christian miracles are the basis of Scherpenheuvel's significance to the Catholic church. The first, in 1500, centres on a statue of the Virgin Mary that had been erected there. When a shepherd boy try to steal it, the statue itself thwarted the theft by freezing him into place.

The next several decades were a turbulent time, with religious unrest, famine and disease ravaging Europe. The Eighty Years War, which involved 17 provinces in what is now the Netherlands and Flanders revolting against the Spanish Habsburg Empire, started in 1568 – injecting even more uncertainty into the region. Scherpenheuvel became an oasis of faith, drawing legions from the area praying to the statue for holy protection against the violent times as well as recurrences of the Black Plague.

In 1580, the statue of the Virgin Mary disappeared during local conflicts between Protestants from the Netherlands and native Catholics. It would be seven years before a replacement statue was erected – the same one that is there now, occupying the spot where the original statue stood.

The Roman-baroque Basilica that one visits today is the third version built here. A wooden church built in 1587 was replaced first by a stone cathedral in 1603, built with funds from then-governor of the Low Countries Arch-



Vatican approved: the 17th-century Onze-Lieve-Vrouw Basilica of Scherpenheuvel

duke Albert of Austria and his wife, the Archduchess Isabella.

Scherpenheuvel's status as a holy site was solidified when two other major miracles occurred – in either 1603 or 1604, depending on your source. The replacement statue of the Virgin Mary is reputed to have wept tears over the religious unrest between Protestants and Catholics in the Netherlands. Then there was the case of the beggar Hans Clements. Born in the Netherlands with his legs crumpled against his body, he travelled to Scherpenheuvel to pray to the Virgin Mary – who healed him so that he could walk.

Eventually, more than 200 miracles would be attributed to Our Lady of Scherpenheuvel, detailed in 1604 by Philips Numaan, the clerk of the archbishop of Mechelen in the book *Historie der Mirakelen* (*History of Miracles*). Although technically still considered a folk tale, he also reports about the mira-

cles that are recognised by Catholic authorities. Scherpenheuvel's reputation began to spread throughout Western Europe when the book was translated from Dutch into French, Spanish and English.

In 1607, a project was started to turn the whole city into an homage to the Virgin Mary. In 1609, the first stone was laid in the Basilica that stands today, originally intended to be a bastion of Catholic Counter Reformation. In 1927, the Vatican decreed it a "basilica minor".

Today, Western Europe is considerably more peaceful than it was for most of Our Lady of Scherpenheuvel's history – but the church still fills a need for those seeking miracles, as well as spiritual sustenance. The number of worshippers is on the decrease, but the fervour of the remaining devout is anything but diminished. On a recent weekday visit, I found the Basilica so packed to overflowing during afternoon mass that one would have been forgiven for thinking it was a Sunday.

Worshippers from all over Flanders – and a few from the Netherlands and Wallonia – had come to take part in the mass. Wheelchairs holding the handicapped and elderly filled the entrance, with people hanging on every word of Father Leon Van Rompaey. And, as a sign of the times, bank forms were available at the entrance for those who wanted to make contributions.

Scherpenheuvel has managed the fine balancing act of maintaining its Flemish character while remaining relevant and open to others. In today's increasingly media-saturated and globalised world, that in itself is a miracle.

More Mary

A site in East Flanders also pays tribute to the virgin

A pilgrimage site in the little area of east Ghent known as Oostakker is a much quieter affair than Scherpenheuvel but still a big attraction for Flemish Catholics. It's known as "the Lourdes of Flanders" because of its man-made cave, which is small and incredibly serene when it's filled with lit candles, which you can buy at the adjoining gift shop.

The beginnings are Oostakker-Lourdes are quite simple: at the turn of the 19th century, French priest Frans de Plohos, who was ordained in Ghent, built a sanctuary out of sturdy materials to keep himself and other priests safe during the French Revolution.

Sixty years after Plohos' death, a marchioness who owned the land fashioned a cave in the front to give a natural look to her new aquarium. The pious marchioness decorated the opening with a statue of the virgin Mary, and everyone who passed by made it a habit to perform a few Hail Marys. The marchioness opened the site to villagers on Sundays for prayer, and soon healing miracles were said to take place. A church was built and opened in 1877.

The gift shop also sells ceramic "thank you" plaques to the virgin, which are hung on every square centimetre of space along the Way of the Cross and outside the cave. Near the grotto is a little forest to walk in and two restaurants, one with guest rooms above.

Lisa Bradshaw

online

www.basiliekooostakker.be



Tourists, the curious and the faithful can all take a little Scherpenheuvel home with them

online

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Staying power

The Suzan Daniel Fund preserves Belgium's gay and lesbian history

Lisa Bradshaw

“We wanted to save the elements of gay and lesbian culture from disappearing." It's a simple and reason why, 12 years ago, six people from Ghent started Fonds Suzan Daniel. "There was nothing like it in Belgium at the time," explains Anne Ganzevoort, one of the founders. "It was impossible to make a study on anything. I tried to write a paper once, and I had to travel all over."

The archives, partially housed at the Institute of Social History in Ghent, represents the whole of Belgium and contains documents from organisations and individuals. "Photographs, posters, magazines, fliers, letters, flags, condoms, gadgets – everything that has a connection with gay and lesbian culture," says Bart Hellinck, another of the founders. The archives has the same mission as any other. "We think it is important to cherish our history and to remember where we came from – to make visible the differences that have occurred during the course of time."

The non-profit archive, run entirely by volunteers, is named after the woman who, in 1953, founded Belgium's gay and lesbian movement. Suzan Daniel was impressed by what she saw happening in the Netherlands – home to the world's oldest gay and lesbian organisation – and brought it to her hometown of Brussels. Having picked up some skills as an activist in anarchist movements, she set out to increase awareness among the Belgian population of the difficulties facing gay people – legal, social and economic.

But after only one year, Daniel quit in disgust and dissolved the organisation, following incidents of extreme sexism. It seems that the rest of the all-male membership didn't "like being bossed around by a woman," explains Hellinck. Though the movement picked up again a few years later, based on her initial attempt, Daniel never rejoined and was all but forgotten.

Then in the mid 1990s, Hellinck wrote his dissertation on the gay movement in Belgium. "I found reference to this mythical woman," he smiles. Eventually, he tracked her down in Brussels. Not only did Daniel kick-start the gay and lesbian movement, she was also a filmmaker and Belgium's very first female film critic. The board couldn't imagine naming the archives after anyone else.

Though, ironically, "Daniel" is actually a pseudonym – her real name was Suzan De Peus. Activists often took pseudonyms, and Daniel had several depending on what she was working on. Hellinck says the false name reinforces the nature of the archives in preserving history – gays and lesbians had to work inconspicuously to avoid harassment or arrest.

After the archives was founded, Daniel's name began popping up again among young and old in social circles. Her historical importance could no longer be denied and, after her death last year at the age of 89, tributes to her were hosted by gay and lesbian organisations around the country.

Daniel, then, was one person – one story – that was not lost to the past. But many of Belgium's gay histories are, due to yet another irony. Until 1965, there was no discriminatory clause in the country's laws targeting homosexuality. Nearly every other European country had something – from

making it flat out illegal, such as in the UK and Germany, to a difference in the age of consent, such as in the Netherlands and France. "In those countries, there was something to fight against that united them; in Belgium, there was no such thing," Hellinck explains.

Though that might seem like a good thing, it only meant that discrimination was not down on paper. Instead of being arrested for "acts of homosexuality", citizens were arrested for "acts of indecency". Therefore, it's difficult to assess the level of oppression of gays at any given time. Unlike in other countries, there are no police records available to the archives that specifically link homosexuality to arrests. "Belgium is a rather strange country in that respect," notes Hellinck.

What the archives do contain is a wealth of social and political history, including some fascinating personal stories. Sometimes people leave their private collections to the archives after they die.

One such Flemish man called Roger, who worked for an airline, travelled extensively and met a great many people. He also never threw anything away – a goldmine for the archives. A quick peek into a box allowed me to see a letter to him from a Canadian soldier in the 1940s. "Maybe we could be more," the young soldier suggests. The archives publishes a magazine once a year with stories from the archives.

As for the archives themselves, they are spread around in professional archive institutions in Ghent, Leuven and Brussels. This way if any disaster every strikes – a flood or a fire, for instance – most of the archives are still safe.

The only problem the archive now faces is lack of use. Students – even gay students – are often unaware of what the Suzan Daniel Fund has to offer. "There are a lot of young people who take changes for granted," explains Ganzevoort. Hellinck breaks in: "In as far as they realise that something *has* changed."

But those who do approach the archive get invaluable personal advice. Once a gay student came to the archives keen to write his dissertation on a gay theme. Hellinck helped him focus and choose a topic. "He came back later after and told me that his parents didn't like it and preferred him to choose another topic. That was only two years ago." He pauses. "There's still a lot to do."

But the limited number of users doesn't bother the Suzan Daniel Fund. "What is important is that these materials are saved already. If no one wants to get through them today, they will later."

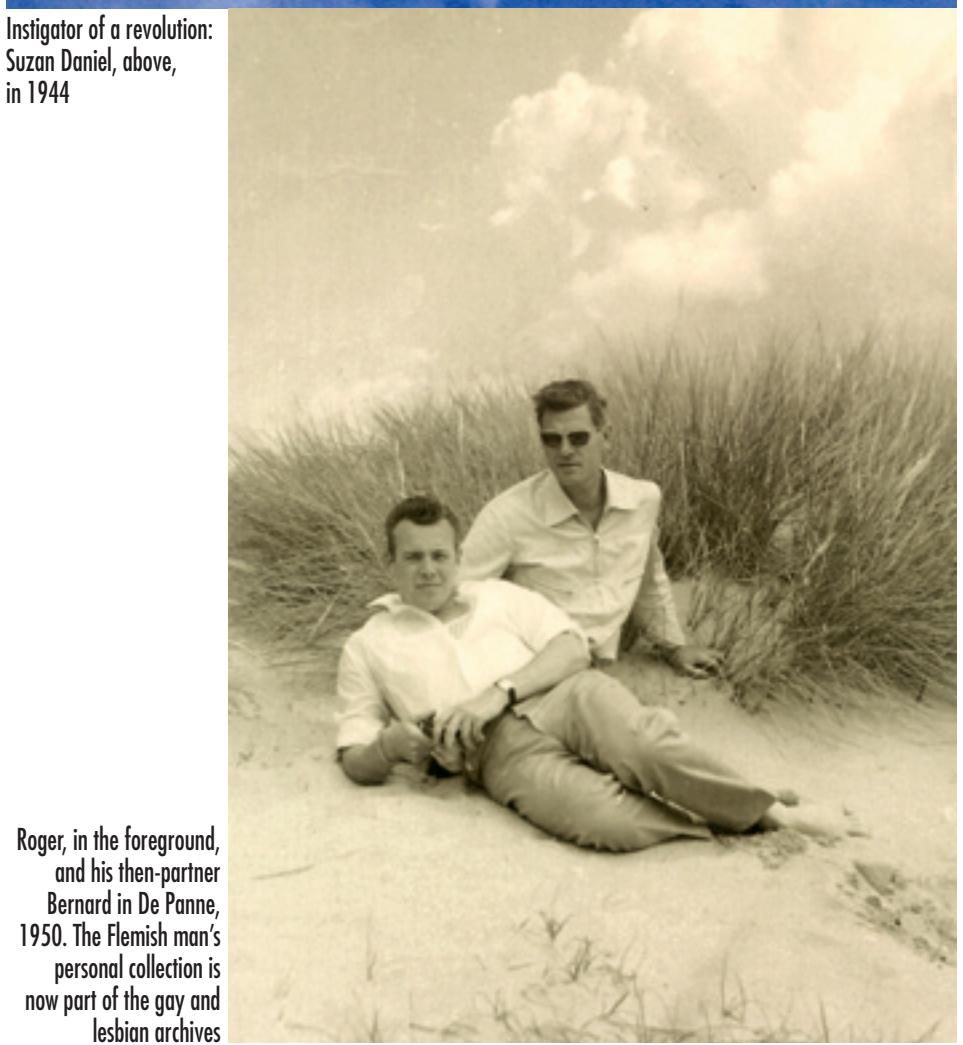
Hellinck is a professional archivist and historian himself. "There are still people who can tell us how they lived their lives 50 years ago, but there is no one left to tell us how it was 100 years ago. We don't have any clue about what it was like for them: how they gave their homosexuality a place in their lives – or in their double lives."

That won't be the case 100 years from now.

online
www.fondssuzandaniel.be



Photos: Collection Fonds Suzan Daniel



Roger, in the foreground, and his then-partner Bernard in De Panne, 1950. The Flemish man's personal collection is now part of the gay and lesbian archives

Classical & new music**Brussel**

Bozar (Paleis voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be
JUNE 22 11.00 Veronika Eberle, violin;
Oliver Schnyder, piano: Beethoven,
Prokofiev

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39
JUNE 21 20.00 La Monnaie Chamber Ensemble, conducted by Dietrich Henschel, with Christoph Prégardien, tenor: contemporary song cycle by Hans Zender, based on Schubert's Winterreise

Kapel van de Miniemen

Miniemstraat 62; 02.507.82.00,
www.minimes.net
JUNE 22 10.30 Kapel van de Miniemen Orchestra and Choir, conducted by Benoît Jacquemin: Bach

Saint Michael and St Gudula Cathedral

Sinter-Goedeleplein; 02.773.06.43
JUNE 20 20.15 World première of the Requiem by Romanian-Belgian composer Marian Mitea, performed by The Brussels Choral Society and accompanied by the Chœur Sammartini and the Ensemble Orchestrade de Bruxelles

Ghent

Conservatorium Ghent
Hoogpoort 64; 09.269.20.74
JUNE 21 20.00 Bruocella Symphony Orchestra: Brahms' Symphony No 3, Double Concerto for Violin and Cello, Academic Festival Overture

Ostend

Kursaal (Casino)
Monacoplein; 070.22.56.00,
www.sherpa.be
JUNE 21 19.15 Belgian National Orchestra: Berlioz, Dallapiccola, Tchaikovsky

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

Get your tickets now for...

**De Gulden Ontsporing**

11 July, across Brussels, www.deguldenontsporing.be

In celebration of the official Flemish Community holiday, this day of music, street theatre, literature and kids' activities livens up Brussels from morning to night. It's named after the "Battle of the Golden Spurs", a bloody clash between the Flemish infantry and the French cavalry in 1302, from which the Flemish were victorious. Indoor and outdoor concerts are being staged across the city, most notably in Grote Markt, where you'll find, among others, master of guitar pop/rock Tom Helsen, Flemish alt-rock goddess Sarah Bettens (in town all the way from her home in the US) and Raymond van het Groenewoud (photo), a self-confessed clown, philosopher, poet and, oh yeah, father of Belgian pop.

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39
Until JUNE 29 19.00 La Forza del Destino by Verdi, conducted by Kazushi Ono and Andriy Yurkevych

Les Brigittines
Korte Brigittenstraat; 02.506.43.00
JUNE 26-28 20.00 En chaussettes sur les quais by Walter Hus, staged by L'Opera des Marolles

Antwerp

Vlaamse Opera
Frankrijklei 3; 070.22.02.02

Until JUNE 20 Götterdämmerung, the final opera of Wagner's Ring cycle, conducted by Ivan Törzs, staged by Ivo van Hove

Jazz & blues**Brussels****Sint Pieterskerk**

Kardinaal Mercierplein; 02.423.13.73
JUNE 20 20.00 Jazz Jette June: PDM Big Band with a Lindy Hop dance demonstration on an outdoor stage, plus concerts in cafes across the commune

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpstraat 28; 02.512.92.50,
www.soundsjazzclub.be

Concerts at 22.00:
JUNE 18 Chamaquindo, salsa **JUNE 19** Pierre De Surgeries **JUNE 20** Augusto Piroddi Quartet **JUNE 21** 21.00 The Witness **JUNE 23** Master Session **JUNE 24** Da Romeo Band

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45

Concerts at 20.30:

JUNE 18 Radar Trio **JUNE 19** Sabin Todorov Trio **JUNE 20** The Modern Jazz Quartet Project **JUNE 21** Marc Demuth Quartet with Sofia Ribeiro **JUNE 25** Martin Mélotte Quartet **JUNE 26** Gypsy Night

Antwerp**Cafe Mambo**

Vlasmarkt 3

Wednesdays until AUG 27 21.00

Marcelo Moncada Quartet

Luchtbla Cultuurcentrum

Columbiestraat 8; 03.543.90.30,

www.ccluchtbla.org
JUNE 21 20.30 John Zorn & Mike Patton

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaa 14; 03.248.01.00,

www.zuiderpershuis.be

JUNE 25 20.30 Jyoti Fitzgerald meets Sandra Callas, jazz/classical music

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

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24

JUNE 25 Monster Magnet

Beursschouwburg

Auguste Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,
www.beursschouwburg.be

JUNE 18 20.30 Joan as Police Woman **JUNE 19** 20.30 Kat Frankie (Australia) + Shannon Wright (US)

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89

Concerts at 23.00:

JUNE 19 Summer Loving: student party **JUNE 20** Mad Club: Jan Van Biesen, Rudy, Nikos **JUNE 21** Lessizmore #19 **JUNE 26** The Ultimate: student party

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15

JUNE 18 20.00 Duran Duran

Le Botanique

Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32

JUNE 21 21.00 10th anniversary concert of the European Network Against Racism, featuring Mousa Largo and Benito Reyes & The People Talking **JUNE 24** 20.00 Elbow

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34

JUNE 19-20 Circus of Mayhem: six rock bands perform over two days. Also at VK Club

Stekerlapatte

Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81,

www.stekerlapatte.be

JUNE 21 21.30 Tasquin Solo

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 Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991

JUNE 19 20.30 John Fogerty

JUNE 21 20.00 Jonas Brothers + Avril Lavigne

Antwerp**Hof Ter Lo**

Noordersingel 30; 03.543.90.30

JUNE 23 18.00 Negative Approach + Municipal Waste + Reproach + Let Down + Blank Stare + Vogue

JUNE 25 20.00 Atmosphere + Kool Keith & Kutmaster Kurt + Brother Ali + Dzl & Meta

JUNE 26 20.00 Reagan Youth + The Adolescents + White Flag + Sunpower

Lotto Arena

Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060

JUNE 19 20.30 Marc Anthony

Petrol

Herbouvillekaai 21; 03.226.49.63,

www.petrolclub.be

JUNE 21 23.00 Monica Electronica + Josz Lebon

Scheld'apen

D'Herbouvillekaai 36; 03.238.23.32,

www.scheldapen.be

JUNE 21 20.00 10th anniversary of Scheld'apen: Capsule + Go_Tell + Elko Blijweert Rudy Trouvé Septet Yobkiss Felix Kubin

World, folk**Brussels****Au Stekerlapatte**

Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81,

www.stekerlapatte.be

JUNE 19 21.30 Ana and Robi, Medi and Val

Bozar

Koningsstraat 10; 070.22.52.29

JUNE 25 20.00 John Cale Acoustimatic Band

JUNE 26 19.00 Sufi Night: Massoumeh ensemble (Pakistan) + Akhawate el-Fane el-Assil ensemble (Morocco) + Aqnazar Alavatov (Tajikistan) + Nour Al-Din Khoarshid ensemble (Syria) + Sheikh Taha ensemble (Egypt)

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpstraat 28; 02.512.92.50,

www.soundsjazzclub.be

Until JUNE 18 22.00 Chamaquiendo, salsa

Until JUNE 25 22.00 Caribe Con K

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45,

www.artenpoche.be

JUNE 22 18.30 L'Art en Poche Sukarma:

Drubesh Chandra Regmi (sitar),

Pramod Upadhyaya (sarangi) & Shyam

Nepali (tabla)

Dance**Brussels****Théâtre de la Balsamine**

Félix Marchallan 1; 02.735.64.68,

www.balsamine.be

JUNE 20-21 19.30 Let's pretend!, multidisciplinary project by Toni

D'Antonio, Jasmina Douieb, Leslie

Mannès and Flore Vanhulst + Leks

(Mating Areas) by Cie Dorina Fauer

JUNE 20-21 21.30 Sie Kommen, choreographed by Louise Vanneste

Théâtre Marni

Vergnieststraat 25; 02.354.43.68

Until JUNE 20 20.30 Sioux, dance,

theatre, music by Collectif Lookatmekid

Théâtre National

Emile Jacqmainlaan 115; 02.203.53.03

JUNE 19-21 20.00 Nederlands Dans Theater

1 in Tar and Feathers, choreographed by Jirí Kylián

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 Elektriciteitscentrale

Sint Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.31
JUNE 20-SEP 28 Fables, photographs by Karen Knorr

De Loge Architecturmuseum

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

De Markten

Oude Graanmarkt 5; 02.512.34.25
Until JULY 11 Lucas Jodogne and Eric Aupol, photographs

Design Flanders

Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.227.60.60
Until AUG 17 De Nieuwe Oogst (The New Harvest), contemporary Flemish design

Erasmus House

Kapittelstraat 31; 02.521.13.83
Until JULY 13 Anatomie van de Ijdelenheden (Anatomy of Vanity), the museum's 75th anniversary show, with works 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 SEP 21 Voyage Out, photographs by Chantal Maes

Fondation pour l'Architecture

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.80,
www.fondationpourlarchitecture.be
Until AUG 17 Gevers Design: Inventaris van een uitvinder (Inventory of an inventor), retrospective of work by Flemish 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)erkennung! 175 jaar Leopoldsorde en Nationale Orden, exhibition on the oldest Belgian military order
Until NOV 30 A Paintbrush in the Barrel, World War One paintings, drawings and etchings by soldiers

Royal Library

Kunstberg; 02.519.58.73
Until AUG 23 Eugène Ysaÿe, 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 from 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 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

Stadhuis

Grote Markt; 02.279.43.50
JUNE 25-SEP 28 Oriental Fascination, Japanese etchings from the Feliks Jasienski collection in Krakow, shown alongside works by 19th- and 20th-century Belgian artists influenced by Japanese graphics, including Fernand Khnopff, Théo Van Rysselberghe and Leon Spilliaert, among others

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 artist Peter Friedl

Fifty-One Fine Art Photography

Zirkstraat 20; 03.289.84.58
Until JUNE 21 Voodoo, photographs by Jean-Dominique Burton

Fotomuseum

Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00
Until JUNE 22 West, so far,

photographs of the American west by Flemish photographer Phil van Duynen

Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten (Royal Museum of Fine Arts)

Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09
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
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 wax models 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 ceramists 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, drawings by Roger Raveel

Mechelen

Cultuurcentrum

Minderbroedersgang 5; 015.29.40.00,
www.cultuurcentrummechelen.be
JUNE 21-SEP 14 Happy Days, collector's items and music of the 1950s recreating the atmosphere of Brussels' 1958 World's Fair

Festivals & special events

Don't miss this week



Jean-Pierre Gobbel

Gevers Design: Inventory of an Inventor

Until 17 August, Fondation pour l'Architecture, Kluisstraat 55, Brussels, www.fondationpourlarchitecture.be

As the title pointedly states, Antwerp-born Christophe Gevers was more than a designer – not finding a precedent for all the methods or styles he wanted, he had to be an innovator. Decades' worth of the Flemish interior architect and product designer's work is to be found throughout Flanders, from the esoteric to the completely pragmatic: Le Cap d'Argent restaurant on Rue Ravenstein in the centre of Brussels (1958), facilities for the Flandria boat tours in Antwerp, the Culture and Congress Centre in Sint-Pieters-Woluwe. A long-time professor at Brussels' famous visual arts school La Cambre, he's also the man who gave us the design for the country's very first fast-food restaurant, Quick. This is the first exhibition of Gevers' work since he died last year at the age of 79.

Ostend

Modern Art Museum

Romestraat 11; 059.50.81.18
Until AUG 31 Georges Vantongerloo: Pionier van de moderne beeldhouwkunst (Pioneer of Modern Sculpture), retrospective of work by the Flemish artist (1886-1965)

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

Brussels

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

Brussels Dog Show: Pedigree dog show with demonstrations based on the theme "education and socialisation"

JUNE 21-22 10.00-18.00 at Brussels Expo, Belgiëplein 1 02.474.89.81, www.brussellexpo.be

Butterfly and Dragonfly Day: nature event includes guided walking, biking and car tours plus children's activities

JUNE 21-22 10.00-17.00 at Experimentele Tuin Jean Massart, Anderghem 02.245.55.00, www.natagora.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

Turnhout

<p

INTERVIEW

Hugo De Greef

Hugo De Greef is the director of Flagey, which is about to host the grand reopening of Flageyplein. Both the Brussels cultural centre and the neighbourhood, he says, are talking off in exciting directions.

It's been a year since you took over Flagey, following a final decision on financing by the various governments involved. How easy has it been for the centre to find its place in the Brussels cultural scene?

The house has a very short history as far as our project is concerned. Of course, the building dates from the 1920s and 30s, but the current cultural project is recent, going back about five years. And in those five years, we have had periods of turbulence on both a political and financial level.

There was a time, 10 or 15 years ago, when all the institutions were very competitive towards one other, but I think we have to face the fact that that's finished. The public is not interested in competing institutions; the public wants to know: "what is happening in my city?" So we have to work towards complementing, not competing. The public needs that – as do the artists.

Flagey is really only known in Brussels. People interested in culture and society in the city know that Flagey is a place for world music and things like that. Our feeling is that it's absolutely not that well known in, let's say, Liège or Arlon or Ypres or Hasselt. That's already a problem, but it's even greater on an international level; no-one in Paris or Amsterdam knows about Flagey, so there's a lot of work to do.

As a brand new institution, it's hard to be innovative without first establishing your presence. Yet your new season's programme

includes one very clear departure from previous practice: a new focus on spoken word.

This is a radio building, and radio for us is not only music but also speaking, discussion, literature – so we are filling in the word aspect, through text, philosophy, reflection, joint projects with Passa Porta and collaboration with a new festival called *Marathon des mots*. The first edition is in October, and we are hosting the opening night at Flagey. So that's something totally new.

Music is the universal language, making it safe ground for an institution that aims to cross language lines. How do you avoid being seen as too Flemish, or too French?

If we want to be a place where communities meet, we have to work together and listen to each other. A good example is the *Radio boeken* project with deBuren, where an author writes a text and reads it for a small audience. It's then recorded and broadcast on the radio. We agreed to do it because of our radio history, but then we said, please do one French writer and one Flemish writer. That's now happening, and the audience is French and Flemish, but the texts are not translated. In the festival of philosophy, we had discussions and debates, and each one happened in one language, not translated.

Flagey is associated with the Flemish Radio Orchestra and Choir. I understand it's your aim to associate with

Maarten van den Abeele



other, younger performers in different disciplines, too.

For the time being, the idea is to have them perform as much as possible. That's all we can do for the moment. The idea – and again this is a question of money – is that we would like to have our own productions. That means a department that could work on publicising ensembles like that. The idea of having our own Flagey Productions is one important thing we want for the future.

The next big milestone is the opening of the Flageyplein in July. That's likely to make a huge impact on Flagey after eight years of disruption caused by the massive roadworks right outside the building.

We are organising the opening festival on behalf of Brussels Region. The square forms part of Flagey: we have five halls in the building, and I think of the square as the sixth. After eight years, we feel everyone is ready to be there when the square is finished. The

parking will be ready, and the area will be totally upgraded. There's a new bar on the corner and four or five new restaurants in Lesbroussart and Vleurgat. It's something that is booming, which will help us, of course.

Within about five years, the people living around here will be changing, I'm sure of it. If you want to buy a house in this corner of the city, already you've missed your chance. You can compare it to developments in other parts of the city. I think it will be like Dansaert. When you see the potential of the Elsensesteenweg, it's really exciting. I'm sure the street running from Naamsepoort to Flagey will become a very important artery.

At the outset you mentioned turbulence, and part of that was over the question of financing by the Flemish, French-speaking and Brussels authorities. Are matters on that score now settled?

We were subsidised for the first time on a structural basis in 2007, and we finished the year with a

slight surplus, which was a good sign – showing that we could work within those limits. The main financial support comes from the two communities – French-speaking and Flemish. With the French-speaking community, we have a *convention* which runs to the end of 2009, and for the Flemish community we will be part of the *kunstendekreet* from 2010, which means the dates on both sides will be the same. The principle is that both communities provide the same level of support, although the Flemish community adds a half-million euro for the residency of the Flemish Radio Orchestra.

Our annual turnover is around €4 million – €2.5 million subsidy, €0.5 million ticket income from the public, €0.5 million from renting the building for private events, and a further €0.5 million from things like sponsorship, merchandising and co-production.

Interview by Alan Hope

online
www.flagey.be

THE LAST WORD

what they're saying in Flanders

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Jean-Luc Dehaene
on the Irish referendum
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Visitor to the forum
of Tom Boonen's website
www.tomboonen.com

"If he decided tomorrow to take back the reins, nobody would stop him."

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