

Stephan Vanfleteren, p.2

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The China connection

With all eyes on the Beijing Olympics, we take a look at the growing trade links that have developed between China and the port of Antwerp

Marc Maes

The Port of Antwerp has been working hard in recent years to boost its trade contacts with China and bring more cargo

into the EU through the city's docks. As a result, some 1.2 million of the eight million TEUs (standard shipping containers) that passed through Antwerp in 2007

originated in China and other Far East countries.

The Antwerp port authority APA, led by chairman and port alderman Marc Van Peel, recently

launched an "Antwerp meets China" trade mission to boost the port's profile in China. Some 40 port-related companies and 60 official delegates were involved in

this project, representing the logistics sector, Flemish and Belgian authorities and the customs service.

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Business

Don't call us. Belgacom CEO Didier Bellens won't know until August if his contract is to be renewed. But his position as telecoms supremo has become a little more secure in recent weeks.

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Active

Nieuwpoort has been battered about by history, but you wouldn't know it from looking at the town. Lisa Bradshaw shines a light on one of the coast's most appealing resorts.

10

Living

All eyes are on Beijing these days, but we take a nostalgic look at the year when the Olympics came to Antwerp – and the American athletes arrived on a rat-infested ship.

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Environmentalists oppose road expansion plan

Protests at 17-lane Brussels Ring

Alan Hope

Environmental action groups have joined forces to protest at plans by the Flemish government to extend the Brussels Ring to as many as 17 lanes. The section of the road concerned lies north of the E40 in the direction of Leuven at the Sint-Stevens-Woluwe interchange, extending all the way to Groot-Bijgaarden in the west, where the Ring again intersects with the E40 in the direction of Ghent. Between the E19 at Machelen (in the direction of Antwerp) and the A12 at Strombeek-Bever (Antwerp via Boom), the Ring would be

widened from the current six to 10 lanes – three for through-traffic and two for local traffic in each direction. The stretch from the A12 interchange to Groot-Bijgaarden would be increased to 12 lanes (four+two in each direction) while the first stretch, between the E19 and E40, would be extended to 17 lanes (taking into account of the various on- and off-ramps connecting to the two motorways).

The plan is part of the Flemish government's Strategic Action Plan (Start) for improving links to and from the airport.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Karen Knorr

Karen Knorr is a Frankfurt-born photographer now working in London who takes a decadent pleasure in placing incongruous stuffed animals in luscious period interiors. She has created mysterious, haunting tableaux in the overstuffed rooms of English country houses and the brittle interiors of French aristocratic residences, bringing a hint of life to the echoing heritage interiors.

In one series, she set up her surreal tableaux within the renaissance rooms of Chambord Castle on the Loire, while in another she inserted a menagerie of beasts into the sedate rooms of the Carnavalet Museum in Paris.

A major exhibition of Knorr's works is currently on show in the Electriciteitscentrale in Brussels as part of the Summer of Photography. This is the perfect opportunity to examine these beautifully composed and haunting digital images.

The series on show is called *Fables*, and alludes to those old stories by writers like La Fontaine involving devious foxes

and gullible birds. The animals – presumably borrowed for a few hours from a dusty museum – are posed in the interiors like the protagonists of a forgotten morality tale.

In *The Purple Room*, she staged the classical myth of Leda and the Swan in a room of the Museum of Hunting and Nature in Paris, amid classical paintings of hunting scenes. For *The Music Room*, she placed two blue parrots on a harp and perched a couple of small birds on the rope that separates the public from the musical instruments.

The exhibition is being held in a former electricity station that was recently renovated by Brussels commune. In this brutal setting, the strangeness of these works is almost complete.

Derek Blyth

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online

www.brupass.be



Karen Knorr's *The Music Room*

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FACE OF FLANDERS

Stephan Vanfleteren



Stephan Vanfleteren

“I’m a classic black-and-white photographer in the old style,” Stephan Vanfleteren modestly describes himself in a conversation about his latest exhibition, *Vischerskoppen* (Fishermen’s Heads), which is about to add to his reputation among this summer’s visitors to the Belgian coast. “My pictures are never grey.”

Vanfleteren is a portrait photographer for *De Morgen*, whose work is regularly to be seen in the weekend supplement *Zeno*. He’s also a multi award-winner with a series of well-received books to his name, including the monumental *Belgicum*.

The *Vischerskoppen* exhibition takes place simultaneously in four different locations, including Ostend, where giant prints measuring 2.5-3.5 metres square will hang in a working fish market. In Blankenberge, they are showing in the lighthouse – the only one in Belgium open to the public – while in Nieuwpoort they’re being projected to a background of fishermen’s songs. Finally, in Oostduinkerke, the National Fisheries Museum has bought 26 of the prints for the permanent collection.

The pictures are pure Vanfleteren. While he brings a new dimension to photographing the rich and famous for *De Morgen*, he also has a more Diane Arbus-influenced dimension in which he pays attention to the neglected levels of society. In collections such as *Poverty in Belgium* and *Hobos in the USA* he has documented the kinds of faces from which we more usually avert our gaze. The Flemish fishermen fall into that category – a relic of a past time, both in the history of the coast and in his personal life-story.

“I grew up by the sea in Oostduinkerke,” he explains. “Our neighbour two houses away was an old fisherman, and I remember as a kid how he would always go about with his pipe and his cap, in his wooden shoes. His was the first of the fishermen’s portraits, and over the years I found others in Nieuwpoort, Ostend and Zeebrugge. They’re a dying breed, which is why I decided to make their portraits.”

Vanfleteren started off as a news photographer, ready at a moment’s notice to rush to a story and stand around for hours waiting for a shot. “I wanted to find stories that went a little bit deeper. After you’ve taken your fiftieth set of photos of a demonstration outside the parliament in Wetstraat, you’ve had enough of it. I was lucky to get the chance to do something I preferred to do.”

That now consists of assignments for *Zeno*, his trademark large-format pictures accompanying the interviews. The work sometimes takes him farther afield – he travelled through the US with Swiss colleague Robert Huber, both dressed as Elvis Presley, documenting the hilarious results for a book.

“The fishermen’s portraits was a project I started for myself, and carried on at my own rhythm.” The result is a study of timeless human faces whose lines are carved by the sea and the wind, by salt and care. There is a classical feel to these works.

“I like to go deep,” he says. My goal is not to make someone more beautiful, but more strong – to enlarge the typical characteristics about them. Sometimes I just have an impression about a shot, and there’s nothing I can do about it: that’s the way it has to be.”

Alan Hope

online

www.visscherskoppen.be

www.stephanvanfleteren.com

TALKING DUTCH

notes on language



liften

A female police officer, a couple whose marriage was on the rocks, a lorry driver who had never read a book: these people are still very much alive in my memory. This odd mix of people were in fact drivers who gave me a lift when I was a student. Nowadays, hitching is considered too dangerous: central locking doors turns every driver into an abductor; anyone who hitchs must be out to rob you.

So it was with mixed feelings that we let our son hitch to Poland last year. Why not fly? No, he wanted to meet people. He and his friend got to Poland and back in one piece, and were the richer for it. The further east they went the easier the hitching and the greater the hospitality. And in many years’ time, they will no doubt still remember the salesman and his family in Boleslawiec who went out of their way to help the two students.

Hitching is a great way to meet people and exchange ideas in a short time. Now the dangers may have been addressed and *liften* may be making a comeback thanks to *Myoto*, a scheme funded only by sponsors with no subsidies from the government. The name has an echo of the Kyoto environment norms and saving the planet. It’s an attempt to make such concerns my-Kyoto.

The idea is simple: enrol on the website and within a few days you’ll get your *Myoto-liftkaart*. Then when you hitch, you should hold up your red *Myoto* card: *het Myoto-liftkaart vervangt voortaan je duim* – the *Myoto* card now replaces your thumb. Drivers should recognise the card (I suppose there’ll be some campaign advertising the scheme) and feel more inclined to give you a lift. When a car pulls up to give you a lift you should then *sms de nummerplaat naar 2425*. You will then get a confirmation, all of which costs you 70 cents.

Some questions come to mind. *Moet ik iets betalen aan de bestuurder?* No, you pay nothing. *Myoto* drivers will probably get something from the sponsors of the scheme. *Hoe veilig is Myoto?* Well, *Myoto* cannot guarantee that it is 100% safe but the number plate has been registered so they know which car you are in. And of course you can always politely refuse the offer if you have any doubts.

The thinking behind the scheme is more than making hitching safe. The hoped-for knock-on effect will be that in a small way it will help reduce traffic congestion and pollution. More importantly, this scheme attempts to tackle the problem of individualism in society: we zijn tegen het overdadig autosolisme – we are against excessive “car soloism”. *Myoto wil het aangename met het nuttige koppelen* – *Myoto* wants to couple the pleasant with the useful by bringing together people who would normally never say a word to each other and assuring everyone that the other is not a threat.

Alistair MacLean

online

www.myoto.be

FEATURE



Chinese challenge: Antwerp port can handle the biggest container ships

Connecting with China

Continued from page 1

The initiative, which focused on the ports of Shanghai, Ningbo, Tianjin and Beijing, led to the signing of a treaty on mutual exchange of expertise between the APA and China's second port, Ningbo.

In addition, academic contacts are being made between China and Antwerp. The APEC/Flanders Port Training Centre has already trained several thousand Chinese students, many of whom now occupy top positions in China and are seen as "ambassadors" for the port of Antwerp. "We have been able to boost the profile of Antwerp," argues Van Peel, "and made clear that our

port is perfectly capable of receiving ships with a capacity of over 10,000 TEU".

"Seminars, presentations and commercial campaigns – where the port authorities have met Chinese shipping companies – have played a crucial role in this development. We have been able to counter negative rumours that have been circulated by some operators in Rotterdam, and to convince Chinese exporters and investors that Antwerp is the ideal gateway to Europe."

Luc Arnouts, chief commercial officer of APA, claims that the campaign has now reached over 600 shipping professionals. "We have made it clear that Antwerp

is Europe's second biggest port – which is not generally known in China. We have also explained that we offer a congestion-free port with plenty of room for new developments, and that we are able to receive the biggest container vessels. But this is just the beginning of our work."

Despite the growing importance of Far Eastern shippers, Arnouts argues that European companies still control a large volume of traffic flow. "They decide which port will take delivery," he says. "That means that our efforts to boost Antwerp's share in traffic between Asia and Europe must be directed to both Chinese and European companies."

He adds that Chinese companies are still confused about the single market in Europe. "I sometimes have the impression that the Chinese shippers don't realise that Hamburg and Antwerp are part of the European Union or that there are identical tax and import rates throughout the EU. That means that a shipment for the German Ruhr area can be moved through any port, the same customs regulations applying." He points out that Michael van Giel, regional director of the Antwerp Customs services, went on the China mission to inform local shippers about EU customs regulations.

Looking to the future, Arnouts stresses the importance of ongoing contacts with the authorities in China. "We must go back there and see how things evolve. We also plan to look at southern China this autumn – particularly the port of Shenzhen."

China in figures

€11.1 billion

Total amount of bilateral trade between China and Belgium in 2007, almost double the figure of previous years.

100

Number of cultural events scheduled for Europaia in 2009, which focuses on China.

3

Number of Confucius institutes set up in Belgium for teaching the Chinese language. They are based in Brussels, Leuven and Liège.

4

Number of direct flights weekly from Brussels to Beijing, operated by China Hainan Airlines.

20

Number of terracotta statues of horsemen and warriors to go on display in Maaseik, Limburg province, in an exhibition this autumn. The soldiers are part of an 8000-strong army discovered by Chinese peasants in 1974. They were originally buried in the tomb of the first Chinese Emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi, in the third century BC.

Experts join China task force

Bruno Van Den Broeck, who recently retired as CEO of China Ocean Shipping Company Belgium (COSCO), has been recruited to the APA China Team. Jan Van Der Borght, former vice president of the Burger Group is also joining the team. Van Der Borght will be based in Shanghai, while Van Den Broeck will work in the Antwerp office. "Our main aim is to boost the image of the port of Antwerp and make the Chinese shipping industry aware of what we can offer," explains Van Den Broeck.

With some 18 years of experience in the Belgium-China shipping business, Van Den Broeck has seen production shift from the West to the Far East, which has had an impact on the handling capacity of Western European ports. "Rotterdam and Hamburg are overwhelmed with cargo coming from the Far East. They don't have the handling capacity, which results in long delays, whereas the port of Antwerp has spare capacity for the coming five years. This is a crucial element in our campaign to win extra traffic from China."

Despite its advantages, Antwerp is facing fierce competition from Rotterdam. Van Den Broeck is convinced that "tradition" has a lot to do with it. "The Dutch go a long way back – the Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie [Dutch East India Company] was a milestone in the development

of Far East trade and Rotterdam is a name that people recognise. However, when Hamburg and Rotterdam were facing a dip a few years ago, we saw shipping companies opting for Antwerp – it was a huge success."

Bruno Van Den Broeck stresses the importance of up-to-date and objective information on the port of Antwerp as one of the key elements in reinforcing Antwerp's position as first port of call for incoming cargo from China. "Most carriers operate their biggest tonnage capacities on the East-West route," he says, "And we [at COSCO] have vessels with a capacity of over 10,000 TEU arriving in Antwerp every week. The Deurganckdock is giving Antwerp an edge over any other port in the Hamburg/Le Havre range. We have the capacity, knowhow and infrastructure to discharge this type of ship."

"The Antwerp Port Authority's China task force is a multidisciplinary delegation composed of port experts, customs and logistics experts, and tax specialists. They are currently targeting well-defined regions to underline Antwerp's strong points as first port of call in Europe," Van Den Broeck argues.



Antwerp's small Chinatown is close to the Centraal Station



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ING 

More roadways means more cars, say protestors

Continued from page 1

The broadening of the Ring would affect traffic using the country's main east-west motorway to the coast and Germany, as well as the main northern link to and from Antwerp and the Netherlands. Other features of the plan include the Diabolo rail link serving the airport, the regional express network GEN, and De Lijn bus routes.

The plan is being opposed by environmental groups such as Bond Beter Leefmilieu, Greenpeace and the Cyclists' Union, which have formed a consortium called Modal Shift. The group complains that the Environmental Effect Report was published without publicity two weeks ago while the country was in the middle of a political crisis. And the publicity given to the report last week came in the middle of the holidays – both circumstances calculated by the government, the protestors say, to minimise public debate.

Another complaint concerns the lack of alternatives being studied. "What we are getting here is concrete on top of more concrete," commented Maarten Roels of the Brussels Environmental Council (Bral). He compared the plan to the Oosterweel Link in Antwerp, which has provoked widespread public rejection while greatly exceeding its spending forecasts. The Ring-widening plan would, Roels said, "cost at least €1 billion".

The protestors also point to studies carried out elsewhere, for example in Amsterdam, which show that increasing the capacity of roads simply attracts more traffic, with congestion levels rapidly returning to their pre-widening levels – the so-called induced traffic effect.

Modal Shift argues that the plan will divert attention and resources away from other projects involving public transport, like the Diabolo link and the GEN, in favour of motorists and the haulage industry. This has been strenuously denied by the two ministers most concerned with the plan: Hilde Crevits (environment and public works) and Kathleen Van Brempt (mobility). Crevits pointed out that the plan is only at the consultation stage, and is far from definitive.

Meanwhile a few voices have been raised in support. The mayors of Zaventem and Machelen welcomed the plans. According to Zaventem mayor Francis Vermeiren, the road-widening could even be good for the environment, "because cars standing in traffic jams produce fine particulates. And let's not forget that driving in traffic jams creates a great deal of stress."



How the Ring might look after widening to 12 lanes

The organisation for small businesses, Unizo, also welcomed the plan. Today's mobility problems have to be tackled in any way possible, the organisation said in a statement. And if traffic flows could be improved by structural means, that was important for both the economy and the environment, Unizo said.

Interested parties have until 18 August to comment on the report. Work on the first phase of the plan is not expected to begin before 2010.

online

www.mervlaanderen.be

FIFTH COLUMN



Opposition Man

One of the speakers who confronted Yves Leterme in parliament last week was Jean-Marie Dedecker, the ultimate Opposition Man. Dedecker is well-known as a successful judo coach. In fact, one of the athletes he won a gold medal with in Atlanta, Ulla Werbrouck, is now a member of parliament for his own Lijst Dedecker. In judo Dedecker was not without adversaries, but he was far from the controversial figure he became once he entered politics. At the request of former prime minister Guy Verhofstadt he joined the liberal VLD. In 1999 Dedecker was elected senator, with a massive vote at the ballot box. His romance with Verhofstadt did not last. In 2006, the VLD party leaders judged Dedecker, who had been wreaking havoc in party ranks for months, too much of a liability. They kicked him out.

The man from Ostend then made a short detour to N-VA, the small nationalist party whose bosses had begun to notice Dedecker's appeal to their own voters. But his individualist ideas proved too much for CD&V (N-VA's larger partner), and pretty soon he was out on the streets again. After Vlaams Belang bungled its own attempt to take in Dedecker, he found himself where he most prefers to be: alone, misunderstood and rejected by every other party.

Dedecker then formed his own party, named Lijst Dedecker for easy recognition, though he himself preferred the name Gezon Verstand (Common Sense). He surprised everyone by getting six of his party elected in the 2007 election. In the meantime, former and present MPs have defected to Lijst Dedecker from Vlaams Belang, VLD and, most recently, CD&V.

The appeal of Dedecker lies in his frank way of speaking out. He is the voice of the (disgruntled) man in the street. Opposition Man speaks out against taxes. Against speed limits. Against the smoking ban in restaurants. Against government meddling. Against francophone politicians holding back a dynamic Flanders... Although his style is reminiscent of Vlaams Belang, the party he occasionally flirts with, the racial issue doesn't interest him. He is definitely not a racist. Nor is he a pure conservative. Populist is the term sometimes used (although that very term has also been used for the socialist Steve Stevaert, his exact opposite).

Opinion polls show that the 2007 election result was not a one-off. Lijst Dedecker seems to be heading for an election result of over 10%. There is no telling where Dedecker is going next. Some people even believe he will be the driving force of a Forza Flandria, a nearly mythical large new party which would incorporate (parts of) Vlaams Belang, N-VA and maybe even CD&V.

This thought alone scares the wits out some people – Flemish and francophone – in the governing majority. He may be Opposition Man forever, but that does not mean Dedecker has no impact.

Anja Otte

Anja Otte is a freelance Flemish journalist whose work regularly appears in *De Standaard*.

Gentse Feesten inferno was "narrow escape"



Two people, one man and one woman, who were seriously injured when the food stand they were working on at the Gentse Feesten caught fire, left hospital last week. The accident happened when a gas canister developed a leak, caught fire and then exploded. Five other people, also staff of the stand, were slightly injured. The accident happened around 05.00 on the Goudenleeuwenplein. Amateur video of the incident, uploaded to YouTube, shows flames as high as the neighbouring buildings.

According to a preliminary investigation by the fire service, the accident happened after the stand's operator knocked over the gas canister while trying to exit a parking-space. The gas began to leak, and came in contact with a pilot light on one of the cookers. The food stand was completely

destroyed.

Ghent alderman Lieven Decaluwe thanked the emergency services for their rapid response, without which other gas canisters might have been affected, increasing the risk of more casualties. "We realise we had a lucky escape," he said. Fire inspectors later visited other stands using gas to check installations.

Meanwhile a 22-year-old Dutchman's condition was described as "critical" after he dived into water at the Baudelopark in the Feesten zone, and struck his head on a mooring post.

Half a million visitors were expected to attend the Feesten, which lasted until Monday. Two of the awaited guests, prime minister Yves Leterme and his predecessor Guy Verhofstadt, were unable to attend the opening parade.

New golf courses planned

The Flemish government last week gave its approval to three new golf courses, at Knokke-Zoute at the coast, at Schilde near Antwerp and at Sint-Gillis-Waas in East Flanders.

According to the Flemish golfing association VVG, the new courses are needed to cope with the growing interest in the game. At present about 25,000 people in the region play, with 1,250 new players coming up every year. "We've got a lot of ground to make up," said VVG chair Philippe Roberti. "A far greater percentage of the population in our neighbour countries plays. In Holland 300,000 people play golf."

The new courses will be obliged, under the terms of their planning permission, to operate "democratic tariffs" to ensure maximum accessibility. Roberti welcomed the need to be more open. "Ten or twenty years ago the sport was more snobbish," he said. "But more and more clubs these days are accessible. I compare it to a car. If you want to, you can spend an awful lot of money in the dearest part of the market. But nearly everyone can afford a cheaper model."

The new course at Schilde will involve the felling of up to 65 hectares of tree plantation, whose owners are switching businesses to run the course. The course will be laid out in an ecologically sound fashion, Stefan Costermans of the company Torfheide said. While part will run through a nature reserve, an area three times larger will be set aside in compensation nearby.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

€373,000

Amount budgeted for pocket money for all handicapped youngsters in Belgian institutions. Children between six and eight will get €5.15 a month, rising to €51.25 for those between 18 and 21.

22,465

Number of complaints made to the telecoms ombudsman in 2007, double the figure for 2003. The main problems were premium-rate SMS services and dodgy sales tactics by cold-callers.

83/77

Life expectancy for girls and boys respectively, born in Belgium in 2006, according to the Flemish care and health agency. The figures are up by four months and three months on last year.

15%

Percentage of Belgians who don't stop working even when they're on holiday, according to a poll by employment agency Monster. The French at 32% and Spanish at 31% found it even more difficult to leave the job behind.

30-50,000

Number of Belgian holidaymakers who complain each year to their tour operator, according to figures from the Belgian industry association. This represents about 1% of customers. All but 143 complaints last year were resolved without recourse to the Commission set up to rule on disputes.

€620,000

Damages to be paid by a veterinarian after a lawsuit lasting 15 years. The doctor was found to be negligent in treating the celebrated racing stallion Prizrak, which died as a result. The damages are the largest to be awarded in such cases, which are usually settled out of court.

1,365

Number of babies born last year to girls aged between 10 and 19, according to the Centre for Relationships and Pregnancy Issues (CRZ). The figure is 152 more than in 2006. One in four babies was born to a girl below the age of sexual consent, which is 18 in Belgium. The youngest new mother was 13 years old, but only 1% of all teenage mothers were under 15.

10.4 million

Number of customers visiting Kinepolis cinemas in the first half of 2008 – 2.7% lower than the same period last year. Overall, the number of cinema visits has fallen 6.7% nationwide.

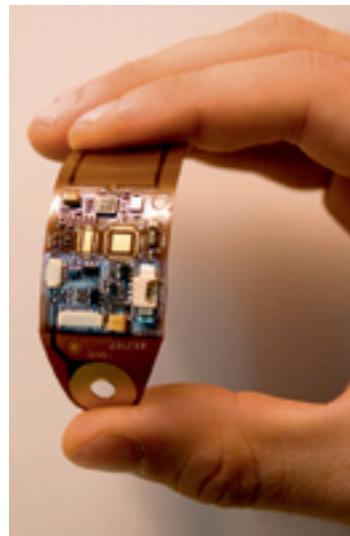


Researchers develop wearable heart monitor

Researchers at the Leuven-based nano-technology centre IMEC have developed a heart monitor which can be incorporated into flexible material and function as a plaster. The monitor is designed to keep the hearts of cardiac patients under constant surveillance.

The electrocardiogram (ECG) plaster was developed as part of a multi-national programme of research into wireless sensor systems for such applications as sleep research, brain monitoring in cases of severe epilepsy, and heart-monitoring. Partners in the research project include Alcatel-Lucent, Bekaert, Philips and Texas Instruments. The Human ++ Programme, as it is called, has been running since 2002 and involves a joint venture between IMEC and the Dutch organisation for applied scientific research TNO.

Unlike a previous version, the ECG-plaster not only measures heart rates, but also processes the data and sends the results by a wireless link to a receiver. This leads to longer battery-life and less inconvenience to the patient, IMEC said. The appliance is now being tested on patients, and should reach the market in about two years.



NEWS FLASH



A 23-year-old Antwerp woman was attacked and bitten by a black bear while jogging in Banff nature park in the Canadian Rockies. Charisse D'hamers, who lives and works in Calgary, tried to remain calm but the 150-kilo bear kept advancing on her. "I tried shouting and growling back at him," she said. "But he didn't seem to be impressed." She was taken by helicopter to hospital where she was treated for six minor bite-wounds.

Four British youths have been charged with criminal damage relating to an arson attack on one of the wooden elephants exhibited outside the Africa Museum in Tervuren, police said. Three of the youths are under-age. The oldest of them will appear in court, while the three minors will receive a warning from the youth magistrate. The elephants are the work of South African artist Andries Botha.

The Koksijde air-sea rescue service last week airlifted four crew members of a 52-foot sailing ship in difficulties off the coast at Bredene. The twin-mast Lucia, registered in Ostend, had earlier begun taking in water for an unknown reason. The yacht sank with only the masts showing above water. The coastguard is now looking into ways of removing the wreck, which is currently surrounded by marker-buoys.

The number of people turning to the Antwerp social assistance agency (OCMW) increased by 20% in the first three months of this year, it was announced. Most new candidates were applying for a heating-oil grant to help them through the winter months, the organisation said. At the same time, the number of people living entirely on benefits rose to 4,208. The average time taken between a request for assistance and the first payment rose slightly to 25 days.

A 22-year-old Romanian who caused a road accident in which a woman and four children died was sentenced last week to the maximum five years in prison allowed by the law. Aurel A., who was under the influence of ecstasy at the time, was also banned from driving for life. The father of one of the victims, whose ex-wife also died, later committed suicide as a result of his grief, leaving a surviving 15-year-old daughter alone.

Digital TV appliances issued by Telenet use twice as much electricity as those used by Belgacom, according to the environmental organisation Bond Beter Leefmilieu (BBL). The two companies account for all of the country's digital TV. The cost of running a Belgacom appliance comes to €23.53, while the one used by Telenet costs €44. If every home in the country had digital TV, it would take 60 wind turbines to provide enough electricity just to keep all the various digiboxes and modems on stand-by, BBL said.

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Bellens' fate to be decided by end of August

Belgacom chief executive Didier Bellens will have to wait until August 28 to find out if his term of office will be renewed. Government ministers met last week to consider Bellens' position without reaching a conclusion.

The CEO is in a delicate position after 10 out of 15 board members expressed their lack of confidence in his management. He had failed to show a spirit of innovation, they complained, and had not improved the company's profile in Europe or globally. However events have since tempered that analysis, in particular the spectacular

share-price nosedive of Fortis after the take-over of ABN Amro, which led to the resignation of CEO Jean-Paul Votron. Bellens' lack of foreign ambition, recently a black mark against him, now looks more like fiduciary prudence.

Bellens' contract runs out in February and contains a clause according to which he must be informed at least six months before that date if his contract is not going to be renewed. Otherwise he becomes entitled to a dividend of three years' salary – worth about €8 million – and a further year's pay if he is obliged to sign a non-disclosure agreement.

An American executive-search company, Russell Reynolds, was brought in to sound out possible replacements. According to one report, Bellens was the only candidate actually interviewed, although



at least five possible Belgians candidates have been identified, as well as several foreigners. The government has been the majority shareholder in the group since privatisation.

Following the ministerial discussions, a compromise could be on the way, reports said. Bellens could be returned to his post for a further term until 2015 on the condition that he would take a cut in his €3.57 million salary, which he has expressed a willingness to do. That would require, however, something of a purge among the dissenting members of the board – among them Fortis chairman Maurice Lippens. That is something the CD&V party of Yves Leterme could be willing to envisage, as it would open up spaces on the board for party members, thus far not represented at the highest level.

Business failure rate could get worse, Unizo warns

A total of 916 businesses went bust in June this year, an increase of more than 25% on the year before, according to figures released by the economy ministry. The figure is also 60 higher than the previous record month of June 2005.

The organisation for the self-employed, Unizo, immediately called on the government to cut the costs of doing business. But at the same time Unizo chairman Karel Van Eetvelt pointed out that the rise was partly due to an increase in the number of start-ups: "Last year a record number of 70,000 businesses started up, so it's logical there would also be a record number of failures now," he said in a statement. According to Unizo figures, one in four businesses fail to make it to the end of their first year of trading.

Unizo has warned that the situation could get worse as the year goes on. "Smaller companies in particular are suffering under increased prices for raw materials, wages and energy," Van Eetvelt said. "And, unlike larger companies, they usually cannot pass those costs on to customers."

The organisation called for a reduction in the costs of social charges. A 2% pay increase, for example, might give the worker an extra €27 a month, but it would cost the employer €79.

One-quarter of business software is illegal

One-quarter of all the software installed on business computers in Belgium is illegal, according to claims by the Business Software Alliance (BSA) which represents major software houses such as Microsoft, Adobe and Symantec. The use of unlicensed software cost local developers and dealers some €152 million in 2007, the organisation said.

Not all illegal software consists of pirate copies bought on blank CDs from dodgy dealers. Most infractions concern companies where one licence has been bought and paid for, but the software is then used on more machines than the licence allows. Taking company software home to install it on the domestic PC can also be a breach of the licence, the BSA points out.

Companies found to be in breach of licences, meanwhile, paid out an average of €66,000 each in damages last year, the BSA said, representing almost twice as much as the average of €31,500 claimed just two years ago. This reflects a greater effort to crack down on the problem, the BSA chairman Jacco Brand said.

The organisation carries out spot-checks on the premises of companies suspected of using pirated software – though only on the authority of a judge and in the presence of a bailiff and a court-designated expert. The BSA also operates a scheme which gives 10% of any damages resulting from a prosecution back to the whistle-blower as a reward.

For companies concerned that they might not be in order with their various software licences, the BSA offers free audit software to be downloaded from its site.

online

www.bedrijfsrisico.be

BUSINESS FLASH



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E-Leven

Internet service provider (ISP) E-Leven was last week declared bankrupt by the Brussels commercial court. The company was mainly active in Brussels, Ghent and Louvain-la-Neuve, and targeted students with its ADSL2+ technology. Last year more than 5,000 customers were left without connections after Belgacom, which leases the technology to E-Leven, pulled the plug over payments. An administrator has been appointed to find a taker for remaining ADSL customers.

Mobile-for

Mobile-for, which runs SMS-paid parking in seven Flemish towns, has been taken over by Belgacom, the telecoms giant announced. Mobile-for allows motorists to pay for parking with a simple text-message in Hasselt, Tienen, Lokeren, Wetteren, Turnhout and Diest, as well as market-leader Antwerp, where the service now accounts for 30% of all paid parking places.

Barco

West-Flanders technology group Barco could cut up to 113 jobs, one-third of them in Belgium, in an effort to implement cost savings of €30 million after disappointing second-quarter results. The group employs 3,750 people in Belgium, the US, India and China.

Delhaize

Supermarket chain Delhaize issued a profits warning last week after earnings fell 22% in the second quarter, a fact the group blamed on the poor economic climate, reduced customer spending and the increased attraction of cost-cutters like Aldi and Colruyt. Annual growth was now forecast at 3-4.5%, down on an earlier forecast of 4-5.5%. Shares fell 8% on the news.

Daikin scraps 500 temp contracts

Ostend-based air conditioning manufacturers Daikin will not renew 500 temporary staff contracts this year as a result of falling demand. The company employs temporary workers between February and August to cope with demand for AC units. For the last four years those contracts have been extended because of increased demand, but that demand has not materialised this year, the company said. "These are not lay-offs," a union representative said. "At the start of next season everyone will be taken on again."

NHV

Noordzee Helikopters Vlaanderen (NHV) has engaged ING bank to help find a partner to manage the company's forecast growth. The Ostend company specialises in transporting personnel to oil- and gas-fields. ING will examine possible takeover prospects, as well as joint ventures. "We're growing enormously, and can hardly cope with the work," said CEO Eric Van Hal.

Sun Travel

An estimated 56 Belgian families were stranded in Turkey after Dutch-based tour operator Sun Travel went bust, according to the Dutch organisation SGR, which operates a guarantee system for the country's travel industry. In all about 250 families were affected by the bankruptcy.

Maenhout

Knokke-based chocolatier Maenhout has introduced a new praline made with mare's milk to mark the city's hosting of the Cavalia equine spectacle. The praline combines dark chocolate, mare's milk and crystallised blood-orange. The company has previously experimented with pralines using cucumber and cardamom.

Base

Mobile phone operator Base saw its customer base pass three million for the first time last quarter, an increase of 20% on the same time last year, the company announced. Earnings were up 10% to €171 million. The good results were partly due to a change in the way charges are settled between mobile operators, which worked in Mobistar's favour.



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Steven Tate

As fewer and fewer people are wearing them, watches have become something of a luxury item: fashion houses flog designer timepieces for the label conscious, while high-end Swiss watchmakers handcraft exquisite watches for the growing class of watch snobs. The Watch and Clock Museum (Horlogerie Museum) in Mechelen provides a fascinating look at the historical developments that have taken timepieces from luxury items to essential possessions and back again to luxury items today. With over 1,000 items on display, the Museum manages to be both entertaining and informative – and well worth your time, if you'll pardon the pun.

The two-floor museum is housed in a 16th century building that in the 1800s became the workshop of Willem Geets, the world-famous artist from Mechelen. For some years after his death in 1919, the house was an antique shop, but it fell into disuse for half a century before Jozef Op de Beeck rescued it from dilapidation in 1983 to open the museum. The place maintains the atmosphere of a workshop – which it is, as Jozef continues his four-decade career in watch repairing and restoration, while daughter Elke assists him.

"Clocks have been integrated into many items around the house and office: DVD players, computers, coffee makers, GSMS – so it's easy to forget how treasured they were at one point," says Jozef. "Before the industrial revolution, watches were something only the rich could afford," adds Elke. "They were useful, but they were also a status symbol – much like a Bentley is today. Men whipping out their pocket watches was a way of flashing their wealth."

In those days, the poor relied on church bells to know the time – and the merchant class would spend three months' salary on a house clock, normally a simple but sturdy timepiece in brass or copper whose chime was loud enough to be heard throughout the whole house. "These clocks would then be passed down from generation to generation."

The Industrial Revolution made mass production of watches possible, but they could still prove too expensive for the burgeoning working class. So in 1855 the German watch-maker Georges Frederic Roskopf decided to produce an affordable pocket watch for the labourer which would only cost one week's salary. His Roskopf watches lasted well into the early 20th century, with technological advances bringing the price steadily down.

Even though the Industrial Revolution meant pocket watches were more affordable, not everyone who could buy one was eager to do so. The Chinese market proved especially difficult because, in the 1800s, many people were superstitious. "The idea that a machine could regulate time frightened some people," says Jozef, showing me a Chinese pocket watch from the time. "The Swiss company Bovet & Fleurier had an idea – they put razor sharp spikes inside a spinning wheel within the watch mechanism. These would spin when the watch was functioning to keep evil spirits out." The idea caught on with the Chinese and Bovet & Fleurier for a time was the only successful watch-manufacturer in China.

The next revolution in watches was the introduction of quartz in the 1970s. Suddenly, watches became very inexpensive: "Sometimes it's cheaper to buy a new watch than to replace the battery," says Elke.

Digital also became the rage. "But digital watches had existed in the 18th and 19th century," says Elke, explaining that the term "digital" refers to any watch face that represents the time in numerals rather than with minute and hour hands. "But the original digital watches were harder to read because light was not as abundant as it is now," she says. "Reading a digital watch by candlelight in 1860 strained the eyes."

The museum contains many curiosities. The "mystery clocks" have hands mounted on transparent plates of glass with no visible mechanisms to move the hands, so they appear to move by magic.

Time on their hands

The Clock and Watch Museum in Mechelen is run by a father and daughter team. So how do they keep it ticking over?

"The first of these was created by Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin – a 19th century French illusionist whose father was a watchmaker," explains Elke. "Magic wasn't a respectable business, so he combined his father's line of work with his passion for illusion." Houdin was in fact the inspiration for American magician Ehrich Weiss to change his name – to Houdini.

Then there are the pocket watches with mechanisms that keep "revolutionary time". Elke explains, "After the French Revolution in the 18th century, the metric system was introduced for weights and measures. But many people don't realise that the same was attempted with time. A new system was created that would have 100 minutes in an hour, 20 hours in a day, 30 days in a month and 360 days in a year." Unfortunately, the switch proved too difficult for people to work out, so mankind stayed with the system that we use today. But the decimal watches look as normal as the other

watches on display, until inspected closely. Some even feature two faces for *l'heure ordinaire* (standard time) and *l'heure révolutionnaire* (revolutionary time).

A prototype for the first speaking clock, invented by the German Bernhard Hiller, is also on display. Intended to help the deaf tell time, the machine (which had a cylinder made of beeswax and a megaphone speaker) proved too expensive for mass production and Hiller went bankrupt.

As well as telling the history of timekeeping, the museum provides information and advice on modern watches and clocks. "Designer watches are basically bracelets that keep time," Elke says. "Very often, even in watches from some very expensive jewellery houses, there is a quartz mechanism that costs about €15, which means that everything you pay above that is for the design." Of the specialist watchmakers, Jozef says, "Many of them are very good. A Rolex can last a lifetime if it's taken into a watchmaker to be

cleaned every two years. But most people will only take a watch to watchmaker if it stops running. A quality watch is a mechanical device that needs maintenance. People will take their car in to be serviced regularly even if there's no problem, but they neglect their watches." With a personal collection of more than 3,000 watches in addition to the museum's collection, Jozef has a time-consuming passion.

Clock and Watch Museum (Horlogerie Museum), Lange Schipstraat 13, 2800 Mechelen, telephone 015.211.894. Open Tuesday to Saturday from noon to 6 pm. Call ahead for guided tours.

online
www.horlogeriemuseum.be



A night at the museum: clocks that glow in the dark



Lisa Bradshaw

On the Flemish coast, you'll often run across towns with two designations, like "Nieuwpoort-Bad" and "Nieuwpoort-Dorp". This just means that the town is split into two distinct parts, with the beach side of it (*bad*) separated from the old village centre (*dorp*) by a kilometre or two of generally residential streets.

One of the incredibly friendly locals in Nieuwpoort recently said to me, as he was running down a list of must-do activities: "Of course, there is our historical centre." What? I had been to the town of about 11,000 people on the southern stretch of the Flemish coast several times before – and had never made it past the beach.

Not that that's such a bad thing: Nieuwpoort's fantastically windswept western pier, which reaches far out into the sea, keeps giving me a reason to go back. I go straight to the end and peer over the side, while the grey waves crash up towards me. It never fails to make me feel like I'm just a *little* too far away from the safety of land.

Besides, city centres in beach towns are not always that interesting. These towns know where the tourists are, and it's the streets near the beach where they have sunk the investments.

But not Nieuwpoort. Although it's solidly a beach town, with two piers, a lighthouse and a giant sculpture of a turtle, the authorities are strategically connecting the beachfront with the marina and the centre to bring formerly disparate parts of the city together.

In most towns, "historic" means buildings that date from the 19th century and earlier, nicely preserved. In Nieuwpoort, the word stubbornly refers to the town's ability to pull itself up by its bootstraps and rebuild every square inch in authentic historical style after enduring some of the worst beatings Flemish history has meted out. Indeed, the people of Nieuwpoort are a proud bunch, and they have very good reason to be.

The city has existed at least since the early 12th century. Being a port town, it was constantly the target of military ambitions. It was ransacked by the French – twice in the 13th century and once in the 14th. In 1383, the French-speakers of Ghent set the city aflame and did so again 100 years later, along with militias from Bruges.

In 1600, the famous Battle of Nieuwpoort set the Dutch against the Spanish during the Eighty Years War. The Dutch were tactically victorious, but the battle taught them that the local Flemish were no loyalists. Nieuwpoort then saw French invasion twice in the 17th century and three times in the 18th century, with an occupation of the town during the French Revolution.

The buildings of the town's

To the lighthouse

More than any other town on the Flemish coast, Nieuwpoort stands as a testament to resilience. In part five of our beach series, we meet the town that stubbornly continues to reinvent itself

Marktplein in the centre survived the centuries to lesser and greater degrees. But the First World War finally did them in. The church of Onze-Lieve-Vrouw, the original of which dates from 1165, was completely destroyed except for the carillon tower, which had been added in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Municipal Hall, meanwhile, which had been destroyed on a number of occasions, was reduced to rubble once again. The

city effectively halted the advance of the Germans by flooding the area between the Ijzer and the tram lines in 1914. As a result, it remained the front line for the rest of the war.

When I finally entered Nieuwpoort's Marktplein on a recent visit, I couldn't believe my eyes. It's one of the most striking in Belgium, certainly for a town of this size. The church, a mix of Roman and Gothic styles, stands on the north-

east side, bells resounding from its neo-Gothic tower. The exquisite Renaissance Municipal Hall is at the south next to the town hall, resplendent in Flemish Neo-Renaissance style. And yet it was all built in the 1920s when the city embarked on massive projects to restore all the buildings they had lost. Only the tower came later, finished in the early 1950s with a brand new carillon of 67 bells.

The day I was on the market square happened to be the Day of the Fisherman, and locals were quaffing cool beer and warm shrimp stew in the mid-afternoon sunshine. There was live music, games for the kids and simple plywood tables balanced on trestles. It was a pure Flemish folk festival set in a square whose recent history many of the participants can still remember all too well. When I stood below the tower while the bells played, the sound was deafening.

Nieuwpoort is the most fun to manoeuvre in one big circle. The city has made this easy by creating a promenade along the Ijzer channel. Near the city centre, the River Ijzer and a number of other waterways come together to form the channel, which then flows west into the North Sea. Completed in 2004, the promenade is a beautifully designed walk with benches and viewpoints along the way and romantic lighting at dusk.

The promenade starts at the beachfront and ends, unfortunately, in an industrial area, but the area in between offers pleasant views of the channel and the nature reserve on the other side of the water. You can reach the Ijzermonding reserve on a little boat that ferries passengers (and bikes) across the channel near the beachfront all day. Be warned, however, that the water becomes too low around 12.30, so you can't get back until about 14.00. You're not trapped, though, if you feel like a walk or a bike ride. A trail takes you through the nature reserve (there is a map at the tourist office), and you can keep on travelling through farmland where the local farmers sell fresh berries.

You eventually find yourself at Nieuwpoort's marina on the north side of the Ijzer channel. With space for 2,000 boats, it's the largest marina in northern Europe. You can wind your way back over to the promenade from





On the waterfront: the promenade is romantic at dusk

here, taking a look on the way at the massive King Albert I monument, a commemoration of World War One veterans who halted the advance of the Germans in Nieuwpoort. Constructed in 1938, the massive circular monument comprises 20 columns of brick supporting a ring girder far above the figure of Albert on horseback. On the first Sunday of every August (this year on 3 August), there is a National Homage to King Albert and the heroes of the Ijzer.

From here you can see the renovation of the quay area, which separates the city centre from the Ijzer channel. Taking advantage of construction work needed in any case to improve the drainage of the area, the city will make the channel and marina visible to the terraces lining the Kaaï. Though it's an eyesore now, the project will be more attractive when it is completed next summer.

Also in this area is the Vismijn, or fish auction, where buyers

used to holler out prices to pick up the freshest fish for their restaurants and markets. Nowadays it's all done electronically, but it's still interesting to watch – though you have to be an early riser. The best action happens between 7.00 and 8.00, but if you are too late for that you can take a guided tour of the building.

Also along the promenade, close to the beach side, is the Prins Maurits Park (named after the general who led the Dutch side in the Battle of Nieuwpoort). Inside this park is the "Idea Garden", which consists of 18 separate gardens designed to provide inspiration for planning your own landscaped area at home. The Japanese garden is the largest and provides by far the best ambience. It's a very easy place to lose track of time.

The alternative route from Nieuwpoort Bad to Nieuwpoort Dorp takes you meandering through the city. You should plan your route to pass the Kinderboerderij, or Chil-

dren's Farm. Alongside the requisite goats, rabbits and ponds with ducks, there are caged birds and an outdoor eating area where the chickens roam around the tables, delighting the kids.

But what of the sand and sea? I haven't forgotten. Nieuwpoort is, after all, a coastal town, and there are some points that set it off from the many others along the Flemish coast, including not one but two piers, one that juts out to an impressive 543 metres. They flank the Ijzer channel where it flows into the sea, and the eastern pier is only accessible by crossing the channel on a little boat. This is also how you access Nieuwpoort's utterly charming lighthouse, striped in red and white and shooting out red flashes at night.

Along Nieuwpoort's boardwalk is its newest icon: a huge turtle being ridden by a man, who guides it with reins as if it is a horse. The glowing gold sculpture is by Jan Fabre, placed as part of the triennial coastal exhibition Beaufort in 2003. After the exhibition, the city couldn't bear to part with it and bought it from the famous Flemish artist. It was a clever move on the part of a resort that is constantly reinventing itself.

To make your way around Nieuwpoort, there are maps at the tourist office, but you're better off with the one inside their Nieuwpoort 2008 booklet, which is free.

online

www.nieuwpoort.be

Where to eat

Like every coastal town across the world, Nieuwpoort hosts a multitude of eateries along its beachfront, some better than others. But the best options in town are actually on the edge of the city centre on Kaaï. This quayside is lined with restaurants, but the two best are **La Maree** at number 28 and the slightly more expensive **Bistro du Port** at number 8. They both offer excellent seafood and are Nieuwpoort's best bet for mussels. At Bistro du Port, the cod literally melts in your mouth.

If you're in Nieuwpoort for more than one day, though, make time to travel a couple of kilometres inland to the next-door village of Sint-Joris, where you will find **Pizzeria Friulana** at Brugsesteenweg 54. The interior reflects its former function as a farmhouse, but the back garden beckons. If it's sunny, this is where everybody who has ever discovered the place returns again and again for the outstanding service and the best Italian food outside of Bologna. The father of the Friulana family comes from Italy, and his wife and children serve pasta and pizza cooked to perfection by dad himself. It's really worth the trip.

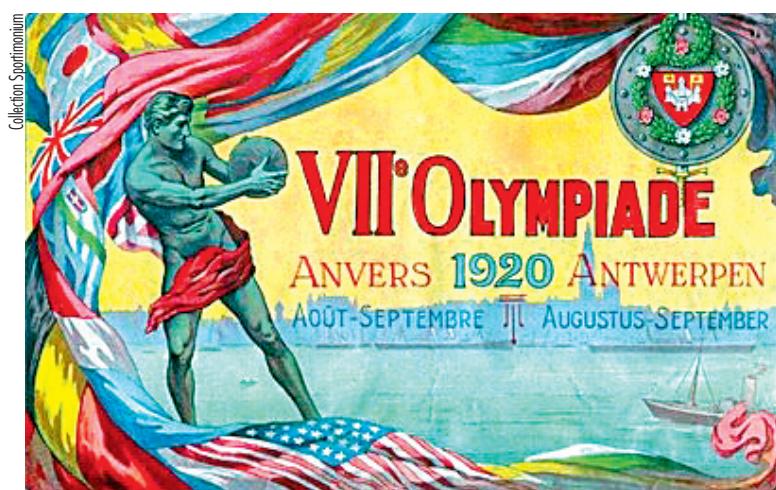


Jan Fabre's *Searching for Utopia*

The Nieuwpoort Giants

The 1489 battle between the people of Nieuwpoort and French-speaking invaders from Ghent and Bruges is a legend in the town because the women, called on by their city leader Jan Turpin, fought and died along with the men. Turpin later argued that this unity saved the city. With a long history of carnival celebrations, the city began making giants, more and more of them women, to commemorate this bravery.

But the biggest is the one named Jan Turpin. Made in 1963, he is all of 10.6 metres – the largest carnival giant in Europe. It takes 24 people to carry him, which they do during occasional celebrations, including the biennial Giant's Procession. Mark your calendar now for 12 July, 2009.



Original poster from the Antwerp 1920 Olympic Games

Leo Cendrowicz

Less than two years after the signing of the Armistice to end the First World War, the strongest and fastest men and women of their generation gathered in Antwerp for a festival of sport and culture.

One of the most remarkable episodes in Belgian history, the Antwerp Olympic Games of 1920 aimed to draw a line under a war that had devastated the country. But the Antwerp Olympics were also extraordinary because they were thrown together with unprecedented speed. In April 1919, just 12 months before the Games were set to begin, the International Olympic Committee named Antwerp as the host of the seventh Olympiad of the modern era.

While Belgium had been suggested as host nation as far

back as 1912, the First World War interrupted the entire Olympic process (the 1916 Games in Berlin were understandably cancelled). Brussels was originally named, but before the war broke out Royal Beerschot Football Club persuaded the authorities to switch to Antwerp, arguing that the proud city of Rubens was more suited to the Olympic culture.

Confirming Antwerp was a huge risk. Even in those days, Olympic Games took at least four years to organise, and that was without taking into account that the host nation had been ravaged by a war of unprecedented savagery and destruction. In Ypres (Ieper), the site of some of the bloodiest fighting just a few years earlier had still not been completely cleared of weapons and bodies. Indeed, many

served as soldiers in the Allied forces.

But the Belgians began work almost immediately. The first stone of the transformed Beerschot Stadium, the oldest football field in Belgium, was laid by mayor Jan De Vos on July 4, 1919. "Thanks to the late decision, the organisation of the games relied more on bravado and inspiration than on sound planning," said Roland Renson, author of *The Reborn Games*. "With so little time, many things went wrong."

Nor could organisers count on local support to boost the event. "Many people in Antwerp were unhappy about the Games," says Renson, who is also chairman of Sportimonium, the Sports Museum of Flanders, based in Hofstade-Zemst, near Mechelen. "They had other concerns at the time. And the Olympics were

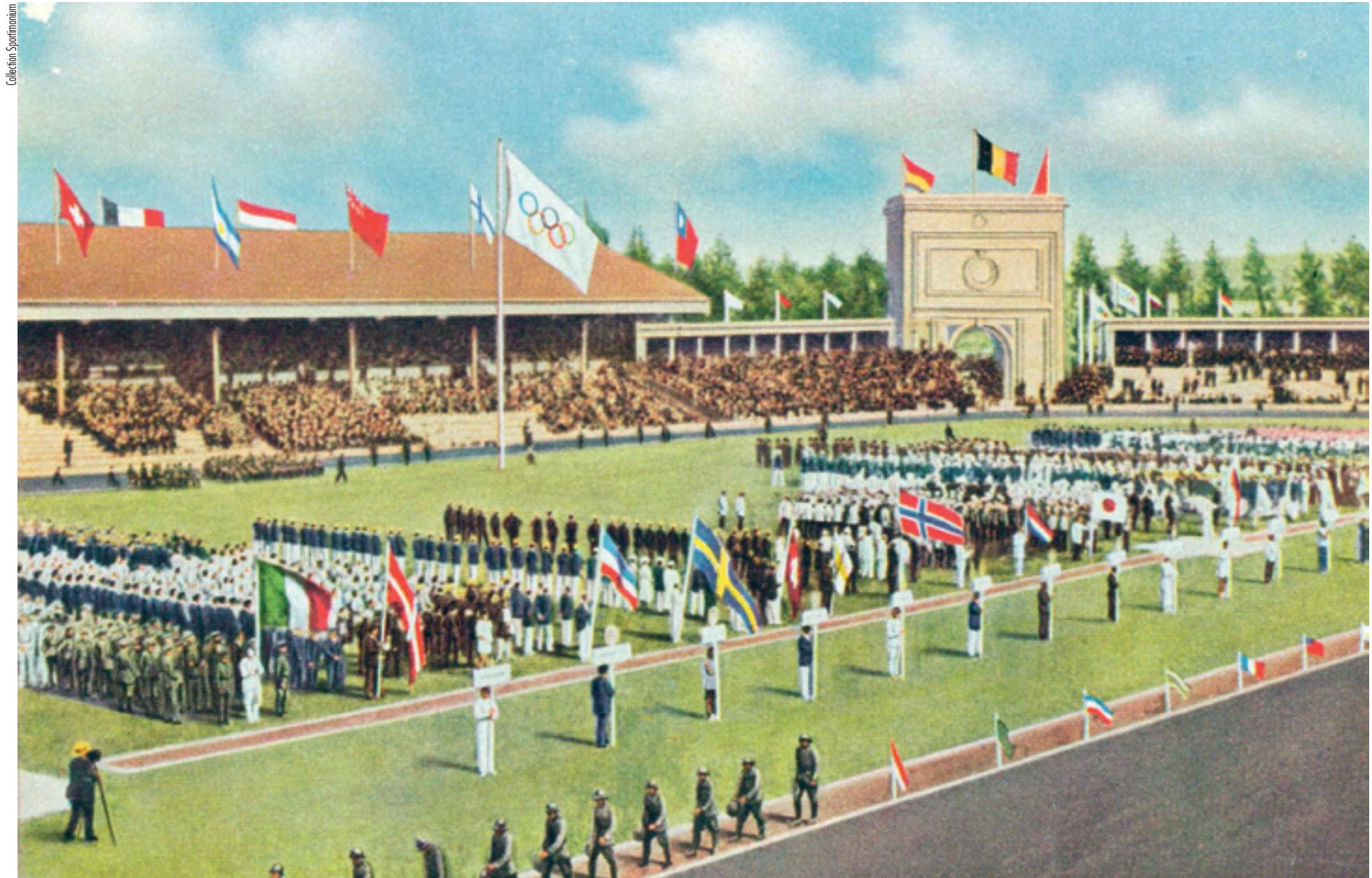
still considered an elite activity. As a result there were a lot of empty seats in the stadium."

In total, there were 29 nations, and 2,626 athletes – of whom only 65 were women – competing for 154 events in 22 sports. The Games lasted almost five months, ending on September 12, as they combined both winter and summer events. There were some unexpected events on the program, including polo, rugby, the tug of war, and korfball (a Dutch team game similar to netball). But perhaps the most unusual of Olympic disciplines were the art competitions: medals were awarded in five categories (architecture, literature, music, painting and sculpture) for works inspired by sport-related themes.

The games were officially opened on April 20 by King Albert I and began with a Catholic mass honor-

ing athletes killed in the war. There were a number of firsts at the opening ceremony. The first flight of white doves, symbolising peace and brotherhood, was released – ironically accompanied by the firing of a gun salute. The first Olympic oath was pronounced by former war pilot Victor Boin, a freestyle swimmer, water polo player and épée fencer. And Antwerp saw the first use of the Olympic flag with the five rings signifying the union of five continents.

Most of the events were held in the newly-constructed stadium. But boxing and wrestling were staged in the auditorium of the Antwerp Zoological Society, near the central train station. The swimming and diving competitions were held in the moat that surrounded the ancient city, with spectators on benches erected on the ancient ramparts. Rowing was



At the opening ceremony each delegation marched behind a banner carrying the name of their country in French.

held at the end of the Willebroeck canal near Brussels, amid reservoirs, oil storage tanks and factories. Yachting was moved to Ostend, and some shooting events held at the Beverloo army camp, 60km away (except for running deer shooting and trapshooting, which were held near Antwerp).

However, there were inevitably problems. Rain left ruts and depressions on the track surface in the stadium, causing the runners constant problems. And it rained almost constantly during those August days of 1920.

The water for the swimming and diving events was dank, dark and, at just 10°C, frigid: divers brought woolen stocking, socks and mufflers to keep warm and gave each other rubdowns between dives, while several water-polo players were pulled out of the water on the verge of hypothermia.

But the event showcased some spectacular sporting displays. From Italian Nedo Nadi's five fencing golds and Finland's legendary Paavo Nurmi (who won the first three of his nine Olympic running gold medals), to French tennis ace Suzanne Lenglen's almost perfect title win and Finland's Jonni Myyrä's record-smashing javelin throw. The games also included Britain's 1500m silver medallist Philip Noel-Baker, who later went on to become an MP and nuclear disarmament activist (and in 1959 became the only Olympian ever to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize).

In the final medal count,



Ice hockey took off for the first time as an Olympic event at the Antwerp games. The winning Canadian team was made up entirely of players from the Winnipeg Falcons, all but one of them Icelandic immigrants who had previously won the Canadian amateur championships

Belgium came fifth with 14 golds, 11 silvers and 11 bronzes (behind the US, Sweden, Great Britain and Finland). By far the most important of the gold medals was in football: Belgium won the final after Czechoslovakia stormed off the pitch. In an era before the World Cup, they could legitimately claim the title of world champions.

But the football triumph was, unfortunately, one of the only upsides to the Olympics as far as the public was concerned. Antwerp lost money on the event – although it is by no means the only Olympic city to do so – and few thought of

the intangible benefits like boosting local pride.

But if the games felt like an indulgence in 1920, they would come to be appreciated in time for helping to relaunch the Olympics. Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic movement, was effusive in his gratitude. "Belgium has now succeeded in setting a record of intelligent and rapid organisation or – if I am allowed to speak in less academic but more expressive terms – a new record for its skill in improvisation."



High Olympic Society: Alfred Verdyck, secretary of the Organising Committee, far left, accompanies Baron Pierre de Coubertin, IOC president; William May Garland, from the City of Los Angeles (making a bid for the 1924 Games); king Albert I of Belgium; and count Henri de Baillet-Latour, president of the Organising Committee. At the back, behind King Albert, American scoutmaster James E. West.

Americans in Antwerp

The United States dominated the medals in 1920, as in most Olympics. Yet for the American athletes, the Antwerp experience turned out to be an ordeal.

It began well enough, with a glorious send-off from the Manhattan Opera House in New York. But the US athletes were quickly brought down to earth when they boarded their boat, the Princess Matoika, in Hoboken New Jersey, on a pier where the coffins of 1,800 American war dead were being unloaded. They also faced hostility from the locals, with the Antwerp sports magazine Sport-revue saying the athletes were misbehaving in the city's bars and "mingling with Venus-kittens."

Princess Matoika was a rusted old German troop ship that had been handed over to the Americans as part of the country's war reparations. It was transformed into a makeshift – but clearly ineffective – gymnasium: decks were covered with cork to make a track for the runners, ropes attached to javelins and discs that were thrown out to sea, and a hose-filled tank for the swimmers. The crossing took two weeks, an eternity for the men quartered below in the stinking, rat-infested hold.

When the team finally reached Antwerp, there was no accommodation for the 272 men. They refused to stay on the ship, effec-

Classical & New Music**Brussels****Miniemenkerk**

Miniemenstraat 62; 02.511.93.84,

www.minimes.net

AUG 4 Arte-Latino: traditional music from the Andes**AUG 5** Sept mesures de soie: Purcell sonatas**AUG 6** Osmosis: Beethoven, Mayr, Devienne**Royal Music Conservatory**

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37

JULY 31 Tomoko Taguchi, soprano; Philippe Riga, piano: Debussy, Berg, Poulenc**AUG 1** Kryptos Quartet: Shostakovich's string quartet No 3 op 73**AUG 7** Paul De Clerck, viola; Jean-Philippe Collard-Neven, piano: Schumann's Märchenbilder op 113**Alter****Kasteel van Poeke**

Kasteelstraat 26

AUG 3 11.00 A Brass Promenade**Bruges****MaZ**

Magdalenstraat 27; 050.33.20.14

JULY 31-AUG 1 20.00 The Magic Flute by Mozart with the Charlemagne Orchestra, conducted by Bartholomeus**Get your tickets now for...****Sarah Bettens****November 18,***Ancienne Belgique, Anspachlaan 110, Brussels. Tickets from 02.548.24.24 or www.abconcerts.be.*

Sarah Bettens lives in Tennessee these days, but the Flemish singer comes back to her home country regularly to perform in front of her loyal fans. She is coming back again in November for a tour that looks set to sell out months in advance. Titled "Never Say Goodbye," the show takes a nostalgic turn as Bettens rummages around in her stacks of 1960s and 1970s vinyl for inspiration. Along with her favourite oldies, she has added some of her own compositions, sung in that trademark husky voice that so enthrals her audiences.

During the tour, which takes in 23 venues in Belgium, the Netherlands and France, Bettens will be joined on stage by Ghent musician Tom Kestens. Together they promise to generate new sounds inspired by old songs that have become part of our cultural memory by the likes of Marvin Gaye, Gloria Gaynor and Bill Withers.

Henri Van de Velde; staged by David Paul

AUG 1 15.00 Cendrillon by Massenet with the Charlemagne Orchestra, conducted by David Miller; staged by Eric Gobin

Jazz & blues**Brussels****Bizon**

Karerbrug 7; 02.502.46.99, www.cafebizon.com

AUG 4 21.30 Blues Jam Session hosted by Eric Moens**The Music Village**

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45

Concerts at 20.30:

Until AUG 2 Jasmine Nelson Quartet**AUG 5-9** Bernard Guyot Quartet**Antwerp****Buster**

Kaasrui 1; 03.232.51.53

AUG 1 22.00 Galore**Cafe Mambo**

Vlaamarkt 3

Wednesdays until AUG 27 21.00

Marcelo Moncada Quartet

Deurne**Openluchttheater Rivierenhof**

Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192, www.openluchttheater.be

AUG 2 19.00 Music Maker & Roland, blues**Hoboken****Park Broydenborg**

Broydenborg

JULY 30 20.30 Sonbacan**Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul****Brussels****Maison du Peuple**

Sint-Gillisvoordeplein 37-39; www.muziekpubliek.be

JULY 30 19.30 Jean Yves Evrard (guitar); Eric Thielemans (drums)**Antwerp****Buster**

Kaasrui 1; 03.232.51.53

JULY 31 21.30 Open jam session for all musicians; Bring your instrument**AUG 2** 22.00 Dave: rock, funk and new wave**Café d'Anvers**

Verversrui 15; 03.226.38.70, www.cafe-d-anvers.com

Parties at 23.00:

JULY 31 DJs Ralf, Serom and Asfalte**AUG 1** DJs Prinz, Cube and Lin**AUG 2** Davide Squillace**Deurne****Openluchttheater Rivierenhof**

Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192,

www.openluchttheater.be

Concerts at 20.30:

JULY 31 The Valerie Solanas + Guido Belcanto, Vitalski, Lady Angelina & Martin Jansen**AUG 6** Eva De Roovere-Isabelle A.**AUG 7** Mint + Sarah Bettens**World, folk****Brussels****Art Base**

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20

AUG 1 21.00 Marina y Mariano, with Silvia Abalos and Marinita (Mexico)**Live Music Café**

Anspachlaan 90-92,

www.live-music-cafe.be

Concerts at 22.00:

Until AUG 21 Dju-Bebe**Until AUG 27** Puchó (Cuba)**Until AUG 30** Kalema and K-Tribe**Antwerp****Willemok**

Napoleonkaai, www.fiebre.be

AUG 2 16.00 Das Mestizo Boot:

Antwerp Gipsy Ska Orkestra & Hubert Von Goisern featuring Zap Mama

Dance**Brussels****Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)**

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,

www.bozar.be

AUG 6 20.00 Abhinava Dance Company presents Sampradaya, Indian dance**Visual arts****Brussels****Atomium**

Atomium Square; 02.475.47.72,

www.atomium.be

Until OCT 19 Expo 58: Between Utopia and Reality, documents, plans, objects, films, photographs and scale models of Expo 58**Until OCT 19** Lucien De Roeck's Star, exhibition on the design of the famous symbol of Expo 58**Until OCT 19** The Pavilion of Temporary Happiness, built from 33,000 drink crates to house screenings and exhibitions about World Fairs (near the Atomium on Louis Steensplein)**Belgian Comic Strip Centre**

Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80,

www.stripmuseum.be

Until NOV 16 Smurf for All, All for Smurf, original drawings and documents celebrating the famous characters created 50 years ago by Belgian comic strip artist Pierre Culliford, known as Peyo**Belvue Museum**

Paleizenplein 7; 02.511.44.25,

www.belvue.be

Until AUG 31 Today's China, contemporary Chinese art (free entrance)**Until SEP 14** Magritte and Mariën, My Accomplices, sketches photographs and correspondence between Jacqueline Nonkels, Marcel Mariën, René and Georgette Magritte, as well as an accompanying collection of Surrealist works including poetry and literature held by the King Boudewijn Foundation**Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)**

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,

www.bozar.be

Until AUG 8 Sony World Photography Awards, a selection from 70,000 photographs from 178 countries (part of the Summer of Photography)**Until AUG 24** Architecture in the Pictures/Flanders Architectural Yearbook, photographs of 37 projects offering an overview of architectural developments in Flanders in 2006 and 2007**Until SEP 14** It's Not Only Rock 'n' Roll, Baby!, art works by musicians, including Alan Vega, Brian Eno, Laurie Anderson, Patti Smith, Pete Doherty and Yoko Ono**Until SEP 21** Sioux in Paradise, sculptures, installations, video, models and drawings by Johan Muyle**Until SEP 21** Mapas abiertos/Opening maps, overview of contemporary Caribbean, Central and South-American photography (part of the Summer of Photography)**CIVA**

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.71,

www.civa.be

Until SEP 19 Documents on the gardens designed by René Pechère and Jacques Boulanger-François for Expo 58**Costume and Lace Museum**

Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50

Until SEP 30 Profiel, textile creations by Isabelle Marquet**Until DEC 30** Van New Look tot Expo 58, women's fashion from the time of Belgium's 1958 World's Fair, with evening gowns, wedding dresses, cocktail dresses, suits, coats and accessories**De Elektriciteitscentrale European Centre for Contemporary Art**

Sint-Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.31

Until SEP 28 Fables, photographs by Karen Knorr**De Loge Architectuur museum**

Kluisstraat 86; 02.649.86.65

Until SEP 28 Belgique/Belgique 58, architectural and decorative forms at the time of Brussels' 1958 World's Fair, with drawings, photographs, models, posters and furniture**Design Flanders**

Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.227.60.60

Until AUG 17 De Nieuwe Oogst (The New Harvest), contemporary Flemish design**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 Belgian designer Christophe Gevers (1928-2007)**Goethe Institute**

Belliardstraat 54; 02.230.77.25

Until SEP 12 (closed JULY 21-AUG 15) Works by German photographers Kathrin Ahlt and Felix Dobbert (part of the Summer of Photography)**Huis der Hertogen van Brabant**

Grote Markt 19; 02.540.85.10

Until AUG An exhibition of over 200 works by Salvador Dalí, to mark the 20th anniversary of his death**ING Cultural Centre**

Fotomuseum
Waalse Kaaï 47; 03.242.93.00
Until SEP 14 Focus on sports, a selection of the best sports photographs from the Belga agency (part of the Summer of Photography)
Until SEP 14 Guy Bourdin, retrospective of work by the French photographer (1928-1991), famous for his contributions to fashion and advertising (part of the Summer of Photography)
Until SEP 14 Summertime, photographs by Verne

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 TOUte NUe, retrospective of the Belgian designer marking the 10th anniversary of her fashion label

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

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

Deurle
Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens
Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23
Until SEP 21 The Joy of Looking, painting biennale with works by Philip Akkerman, Georg Baselitz, Jean Brusselmans, Francis Picabia and Roger Raveel, among others (see also Roger Raveel Museum in Machelen-Zulte)

Ghent
Caermersklooster
Vrouwebroersstraat 6; 09.269.29.10
Until SEP 14 Disappearing Worlds, photographs of indigenous peoples in Australia, New Guinea and South Africa by Danish anthropologist Jens Bjerre
Until SEP 14 Eighty-four, in pek op papier, large format drawings by Richard Simoens

Design Museum
Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99
Until OCT 12 Design from the 1950s and 1960s
Until OCT 12 Design with a smile, designs with a surrealist touch
Until OCT 12 Hommage to Hans Wegner, exhibition in recognition of the contributions of the famous Danish designer
Until OCT 12 Helena Schepens: Perpetuum Mobile, designs by the Flemish silver- and goldsmith

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

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)
Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03, www.smak.be
Until SEP 21 Electrified, installations combining visual, sound and electronic arts, by Ronald Kuivila and Edwin van der Heide

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 Alamb fleurics, olfactory installation by Flemish artist Peter De Cupere

Z33
Zuivelmarkt (Beguinage) 33; 011.29.59.60
Until AUG 17 Bridge, installation by Michael Cross
Until SEP 29 1% Water, art and design relating to global water issues

Kemzeke

Verbeke Foundation, Westakker
Hulsterstraat Noord; www.verbekefoundation.com
Until NOV 16 Vision in Motion – Motion in Vision, new exhibition of moving art

Machelen-Zulte

Het Roger Raveelmuseum
Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00
Until SEP 21 The Joy of Looking, painting biennale with works by Georg Baselitz, Jean Dubuffet, Asger Jorn, Constant Permeke, Robert Rauschenberg and Roger Raveel, among others (see also Dhondt-Dhaenens Museum in Deurle)

Mechelen

Congres en Erfgoedcentrum Lamot
Van Beethovenstraat 8-10; 015.29.49.00
Until SEP 14 Van Pijl tot paviljoen, 20 models of the pavilions at Brussels' 1958 World's Fair

Cultuurcentrum

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

Ostend

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

Ypres

In Flanders Fields 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
Until NOV 12 Off the record, work by artist-in-residence Wendy Morris

Festivals & special events

Belgium Roller Parade
Until SEP 29 Weekly rollerskating parades in Brussels and other towns www.belgiumrollers.com

Summer of Photography:
Contemporary photography festival
Until SEP 14 in venues across Belgium 02.507.82.00, www.summerofphotography.be

Brussels

Brussels Beach: Beach on the banks of the canal, with sand, palm trees, deckchairs for hire, beach sports and entertainment for all the family
Until AUG 17 at Sainctelettesquare 02.279.50.49, www.bruxelleslesbains.be

Ca rebondit sur cour Festival: Festival of string and Baroque ranging from world and jazz to French chanson, classical and traditional, all on the theme of water
Until AUG 30 at Rode Klooster, Oudergem 02.223.46.75, www.atelierdolcevita.be

Ecran Total Festival: Film festival showing a wide variety of films, including classics, reprises, documentaries, Japanese New Wave and animation

Don't miss this week



Marcos López/Bozar

Mapas Abiertos/Opening Maps

Until 21 September, Bozar, www.bozar.be

It sounds like an exhibition of cartography, but *Mapas Abiertos* is in fact a wide-ranging and inspiring exhibition of contemporary Latin American photography. A highlight of the Summer of Photography biennale, this outstanding show brings together more than 200 photographers from South America and the Caribbean. Assembled by Spanish curator Alejandro Castellote, it is (at least for the non-Spanish-speaking world) an eye-opener of an exhibition that reveals a wealth of creative talent, technical skill and off-beat humour. While there are common themes like religion, Americana and motherhood, there are also utterly original visions to be seen. Marcos López's *Roast in Mendiola*, above, offers a jokey contemporary take on the solemn religiosity of The Last Supper, while Robert Stephenson offers a scintillating vision of modern Latin American city life. Catch it while it's in town.

and a live "sunset" show every night on the Scheldt waterfront

JULY-AUG in venues and public spaces across the city 03.224.85.28, www.zomervanantwerpen.be

Bruges

Intermezzo Opera Festival 2008:

Festival and competition with young artists from several countries performing in gala performances and concerts

Until AUG 2 in the Concertgebouw and the Magdalenaalzaal Theater www.intermezzofoundation.org

Klinkers 2008: Global festival of music, dance and outdoor film. World musicians include Oloodium, Amparano, Milow, Melingo, Roy Paci. Benenwork-Ballroom Brugge is a free dance event at locations in the city centre

UNTIL AUG 9 in Bruges; www.klinkers-brugge.be

MAfestival – Festival of Flanders

AUG 1-9 The Bruges leg of the festival explores 16th- and 17th-century English music and its relationship to contemporary politics. It includes Hark!, a mini-festival on **AUG 3** in venues across the city 050.33.22.83, www.mafestival.be

Zandfeesten:

Flanders' biggest flea market

AUG 3, www.hgk-bruggewest.com

Dranouter

Dranouter Folk Festival: Folk music festival. Musicians include Tori Amos, Arid, Martha Wainwright, Jef Neve, Billy Bragg and Suzanne Vega
AUG 1-3 under the banner The New Tradition at Dranouter, West Flanders www.folkdranouter.be

Ghent

Tokyo Drums: Japanese music show
Until NOV 5 at Capitole, Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5 0900.69.00

Knokke-Heist

Cavalia: equestrian show
Until AUG 31 at Knokke-Heist train station, under big top 0900.69.001, www.sherpa.be

Leuven

Zomer van Sint-Pieter (Summer of Saint Peter): Weekday lunchtime performances, outdoor film screenings

Until AUG 29 12.15 at Sint-Pieterskerk, Grote Markt and 30CC-Wagehuys, Brusselsestraat 63 016.23.84.27, www.midis-minimes.be

Lokeren

Fonnefeesten: Music festival
AUG 1-10 at the Oude Vismijn www.fonnefeesten.be

Lokerse Feesten: Festival including The Buzzcocks, The Sex Pistols, Sonic Youth, Siouxsie, Massive Attack, Macy Gray and Grace Jones
AUG 1-10 in Lokeren, East Flanders www.lokersefeesten.be

Mariakerke (Ghent)

Parkkaffee: Music, shows and children's entertainment in the park
Until AUG 31 at Parkkaffee, Groenstaakstraat 37 09.227.99.94, www.parkkaffee.be

Mechelen

Prime Drive-In: Music, cocktails and drive-in movies on Friday and Saturday evenings
Until AUG 16 20.00 at Sportpark De Nekker www.utopolis.be

Ostend

Theater Aan Zee: Festival of music and theatre featuring playwright and director Arne Sierens and musician Gabriel Rios. Each will present old and new work and invite other artists to this platform for emerging theatrical and musical talent in Flanders and the Netherlands. The festival also includes street theatre, family activities and other children's entertainment
Until AUG 9 in the city of Ostend; www.theateraanzee.be

Turnhout

Turnhoutse VRIJ-dagen: Free music festival with Don McLean, Soulsister, Ketnet Band, Helmut Lotti and special guests

Fridays until AUG 29 20.30 (kids programme from 15.30) on the Grote Markt www.turnhoutsevrijdagen.be

Watou

Poëziezomer (Poetry summer): Festival of contemporary art, architecture and poetry
Until SEP 7 in indoor and outdoor venues across the village of Watou in West Flanders www.poeziezomerswatou.be

INTERVIEW

Bruno Van Eetvelde

Bruno Van Eetvelde is press and communications manager at the Lokersefeesten Music Festival. He talks about what he likes about it and why people keep going back.

How long has Lokersefeesten been around?

The festival started out as a folk festival 34 years ago - when I was barely born. It was just an event with local talent playing, free to the public, all very relaxed.

How has it changed?

Over the years it's begun to attract an audience from all over Belgium and abroad. Now we have a larger roster of acts, many of them foreign. This year, there's the Sex Pistols, Isabelle A., Graces Jones, Massive Attack, Alanis Morissette, Macy Gray, N*E*R*D, Felix Da Housecat and a whole lot more. We like to have something on for everyone - not to just attract young people and not just older people. Despite getting bigger - and having to charge at the door (because the acts have to get paid, after all) - Lokersefeesten is still really laid back. Sometimes, you go up to a bar to order a beer and the bartender is busy grooving to the music - so you might have to wait for the tune to end to get your beer. But it's cool, and nobody gets stressed. They understand that that's what Lokersefeesten is about.

And are you out there with the crowd dancing to the music?

Sometimes I'll take 10 minutes and go out and catch a performance of some act I really like - but then I have to get back to work. But I'm normally backstage at my office getting through paperwork and scheduling. I supervise 60 people, so there's always something that

has to be done.

How is Lokersefeesten different from other festivals?

We have only one stage. Other festivals program a huge list of acts and have them playing on three or more stages simultaneously - which can be a drag if two bands you want to see are playing at the same time. Our bands start playing at about 8 pm, which can mean some late nights. It's also important to remember that almost everyone working on the festival is a volunteer - so that means 600 to 700 people are involved because they really want to be, not because they're getting paid. It really is a family affair here, sometimes literally: there is one couple who met working here 30 years ago, got married and had children...and now they are working here with their children - and their children's partners, too. And they're not at all unusual.

How did you get involved?

This is my 16th year working at the Lokersefeesten. I come from Lokeren originally, so it really is like coming home. My day job is as a business process manager in Brussels, but I come back every year to chip in.

Your job means dealing not only with the press and your staff, but also with the musical artists. Any horror stories of diva behaviour?

Not really. Dealing with the artists themselves is okay, but sometimes the managers can be more



Paul De Moerbeke

And the aftermath?

Well, the mess does have to be cleaned up, equipment has to be stored. I usually end up with a lot of the equipment stashed away in my house - so much that I can't even watch TV in my living room. But they often find somewhere to transfer the equipment when I've had enough of it being in my place.

And then it's "see you next year"?

Not at all. We normally organise a party in October to thank everyone who volunteered - and as hundreds were involved, you can imagine how large the party is. Then there's a New Year's drink, so we tend to see each other at least a few times outside of the festival, which is a good thing. Although the vibe at the festival is relaxed and friendly, we're still at work - so we don't get to catch up with each other and talk the way we do at New Year and in October.

Do you go to music festivals when you're off-duty?

I do. I particularly liked the Cactus Festival this year, which had the B-52s, Youssou N'Dour, Bootsy Collins, the Dap Kings (who played on the Amy Winehouse album): it was fun. I can enjoy a festival just like the average person, but I also like looking at it from a professional standpoint: how well is it organised, how do they handle the things I handle. On some level, I do evaluate them - but if the music's good, I get into it.

Interview by Steven Tate

THE LAST WORD

what they're saying in Flanders

In praise of Caesar

"Every child has his idols. In my class all the children wanted to be footballers. My hero was Julius Caesar. By the time I was twelve I knew I wasn't like the others."

Bart De Wever
Leader of Flemish nationalist party NV-A in an interview with *La Libre Belgique*

A silver lining

"The exceptionally good quality [of sea water off the coast] is mainly due to the weather. It rained a lot, which dilutes the pollution in the sea. Above all we've been spared heavy storms, which can result in sewer water coming undiluted to the sea."

Mie Van den Kerchove
of the Flemish Environment Agency

Olympic hopes

"The cyclists traditionally get a medal. I can see Jos Lansink doing well in the showjumping. Evi Van Acker is in with a chance in the sailing, like Tia Hellebaut and the 4x100m team in the athletics."

Jacques Rogge
IOC chairman
picks possible Belgian medals in the Beijing Olympics

BeijingOlympics **BorgloonHorse**
Show **AmericanFootball** **Koksijde**
MoviePiracy **Weer** **AntillesFestival**

next week in Flanders Today