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Julian Oppenheim

The mysterious Martin Margiela

Peek behind the veil of Europe's most secret design team

Stéphanie Duval

Until February of next year, the Antwerp Fashion Museum (MoMu) is hosting Flanders' most mysterious designer. Martin Margiela is notorious for declining personal interviews and remaining anonymous in any way he can. Consequently, it is not his story you'll find in the exhibition, but that of the Maison Martin Margiela.

Margiela graduated from the Antwerp Royal Academy of Fine Arts in the 1980s, at a time when the fashion world was enthralled by designers and top models with celebrity status. Because he saw what this narcissistic mentality was doing to the private lives of his predecessors, Margiela specifically made the choice to shift the focus of attention away from himself and on to the clothes.

He founded Maison Martin

Margiela together with Jenny Meirens, and from the start the fashion house has profiled itself as a team. Interviews are given through faxes and emails, and questions are always answered in plural. It might not have been a marketing technique, but it sure added to the myth around this extremely talented designer – the famously silent member of the "Antwerp Six".

Maison Martin Margiela is

infused by this concept of anonymity and is always looking for original ways to make a statement. The garments are not signed with the Maison's name, they simply have a white cotton label stitched inside. The effect, however, is double. Even the small, discrete, white stitches, visible on the outside of the garments, have become a status symbol for those in the know.

"To further focus the attention on the clothing instead of on

anything else, the Maison often presents its collections on models made to look incognito," explains Kaat Debo, director of MoMu, where the exhibition opened last weekend. "They comb all of their hair in front of their face, cover their faces with veils or paint a black censoring block over their eyes. Once, the clothes were not even presented on models at all,

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Business

The tech sector is Flanders is mainly foreign owned – led by US car manufacturer Ford. But a leading Belgian technology federation warns that new foreign investments are falling behind.

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Arts

Racism, romance and journalism in Antwerp: new Flemish film has its mouth – and its heart – in the right place.

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Active

Cycling in Flanders has never been easier, thanks to an interchange network that lets you choose your own path and the best cycle cafes.

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New migrants to be taught respect, solidarity and waste recycling

Social orientation course stresses Flemish values

Alan Hope

Flemish society is founded on respect for liberty, solidarity, respect for others, equality and civic responsibility. And the government considers it important to stress that boys and girls be educated equally and allowed the same opportunities, as well as being allowed freedom in choosing a life partner.

That, at any rate, is what some 15,000 newly-arrived immigrants to Flanders will soon be learning, according to a new handbook on social orientation unveiled by integration minister Marino Keulen

last week.

New non-EU residents in Flanders have since 2004 been obliged to go through an integration procedure, with 140 hours of free lessons in Dutch, help in finding work and a course in social orientation. The materials for the latter are a handbook and multimedia pack including DVD and website, developed by educational publisher Van In and film production house Ensemble.

This is the first time the same course has been used region-wide, and it is available

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Fair Promises

It's Design September in Brussels, and so the city is currently overflowing with sleek objects of desire. You can visit design studios dotted around the capital, listen to designers talk about their work and admire contemporary pieces in the spookily deserted Kongres railway station.

The spotlight this year is on the Dutch and the Finns, but the Flemish have their own space near the Sint-Michiels and Sint-Goedele Cathedral where they show off home-grown talent. To mark the September event, Design Flanders has brought together a selection of new works by some of the most exciting new Flemish designers.

Fair Promises is made up of pieces that made a big splash at design fairs across Europe this year, like the Salone del Mobile in Milan and the Maison & Objet in Paris. But they haven't yet made it into the shops, so here's your chance to see some innovative designs before the furnishing companies start turning them out by the thousand.

The designers on show include Nedda El-Asmar, who has produced some understated white cups for Villeroy & Boch. There's also a very large clock by Antwerp designer Anthony Duffeleer that sits in the middle of the floor. The Oclock (what a brilliant name) isn't the result of deep reflection but simply the result of a production process in which white plastic powder goes into a large mould that is rotated in an oven until the plastic sticks to the shell.

Duffeleer argues that this piece is almost a piece of furniture. "It's an object that has an almost obtrusive presence in the room," he says. "And that's the idea. Even if the room is empty, this clock makes it full."

Derek Blyth

Until 26 October, Kanselarijstraat 19, Brussels

online

www.designflanders.be

Design Flanders



Anthony Duffeleers' Oclock

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independent newsweekly

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FACE OF FLANDERS



Barbie Bangkok

A drunken night, some years ago. Four musicians are brainstorming about a band name, but the booze doesn't seem to be an ideal lubricant for that activity. Until someone makes a slip of the tongue, and Herbie Hancock becomes Barbie Bangkok. A catchy name, if ever there was one.

In 2004, the Ghent foursome missed, by a nose, a medal at *Humo* magazine's Rock Rally – the oldest and still most important rock competition in Flanders. The jury predicted "a glorious future" and rightfully so. But, sadly, it has been a silent one.

At the end of 2003, Barbie Bangkok had already released the six-track *Oh My God*, but only now they have followed it with their first full album, *People and Geometry*. After the somewhat unbalanced EP – good songs burdened with too many ideas – *People and Geometry* is a big leap forward. Just listen, for instance, to the transformation of "Hold on" from the ep into "New Delhi" on the album: the song is simpler, more direct – and a lot catchier.

At some moments they're wearing their influences on their sleeves – Talking Heads, The Kinks and Prince to name but a few – but the frisky tunes form the ideal antidote for an autumnal depression.

Barbie Bangkok nowadays is a twosome: Tom Goethals and Laurens Smaghe. They point out there's been a good reason for the big time gap between the two releases. "We started working on the songs, but first Tom had a baby and then the line-up changed and, before we knew it, 12 more months had passed," says Smaghe. With only the two of them left, Goethals and Smaghe divided almost all the instruments between them in the studio, but will be backed up by three extra musicians for live shows.

Smaghe admits that on *Oh My God* "we were unable to bridge the gap between ballads and rock songs." But the new album, he says, "is more coherent. We have opted deliberately for simpler songs and done away with all the dead wood. The music now has a clarity to it, and that's what was needed." Barbie Bangkok's music is also super danceable – a nice result if not exactly a goal.

The pair say they "pondered changing the name because we aren't the same band as four years ago, musically or on the level of personnel." But they decided against it because "commercially, it wouldn't have been very sensible." He smiles, adding: "Well, not that our fan base is *that* big."

But that should change with *People and Geometry*, so they can live up to Rock Rally expectations – and record their next album on a bigger budget. "At one point we were literally out of money. We worked in Amsterdam and had to survive on sandwiches with chocolate spread!" Art before everything, then? "Indeed."

In the 1990s Antwerp lodged most of the Flemish music talent, but this decade the centre of gravity has shifted to Ghent, with riveting new artists like The Germans, Absynthe Minded, Sioen and Mintzakov. And Barbie Bangkok of course.

"I have no conclusive explanation," says Smaghe, "but go to a bar in Ghent and you'll surely meet some other top-notch musicians. Meeting them certainly pushes one to try harder." I have the impression half of Flanders' rock musicians live in this town."

Christophe Verbiest

Barbie Bangkok plays at 15.00 on 20 September at Fnac in Gent and at the Leffingeuren Festival in West Flanders later that night. They play Fnac in Antwerp at 14.00 on 28 September

online

www.barbiebangkok.com

TALKING DUTCH

notes on language



rookvrij

No doubt one of your lingering memories of school is knocking on the staff room door to deliver some late piece of homework. You hear "Come in!" and enter a smoke-filled underworld of clapped-out armchairs occupied by vaguely recognisable, hunched figures puffing away to calm the nerves before facing The Bash Street Gang.

Well, from 1 September, pupils in Flanders face the prospect of being taught by teachers whose frayed nerves will not have been nicotine-soothed. *Scholen volledig rookvrij* – Schools completely smoke free runs a recent headline.

Leerlingen mogen niet meer roken op de speelplaats – Pupils are no longer allowed to smoke in the playground. Well, that's how it used to be until pupils demanded equality with their puffing elders. Now with the extirpation of smoking in full swing, in the same spirit of equality, *een rookkamer voor de leraars is voortaan uit den boze* – a smoking room for the teachers is from now on unacceptable.

Rook and *roken* are words we can easily tie in with other Germanic languages. You can see the connections with other verbs meaning "to smoke": Swedish (*röka*), Norwegian (*røke*), Danish (*ryge*) and German (*rauchen*). The nickname for Edinburgh, Auld Reekie, or Old Smoky stays close to *roken*. And in some parts of Scotland, chimneys still "reek".

In English, you find a link in the related verb "to reek" – *rieken*, which is used in a pejorative or figurative sense: the room reeks of garlic – *de kamer riekt naar look*. For general smells, *ruiken* is more common: *de bloemen ruiken lekker* – the flowers smell nice.

Moving on to another sense – that of taste – again, the Germanic languages all have similar verbs: *smaken* (Dutch), *smaka* (Swedish), *smake* (Norwegian), *smage* (Danish), *schmecken* (German); and English? It's the odd man out, but not completely: it smacks of desperation – *het riekt naar wanhoop*. And with our senses of smell and taste mixed up, we complete this little circle.

If you have a smattering of Dutch, you will know that *bon appetit* is *eet smakelijk* or simply *smakelijk*. At the end of a restaurant meal, the waiter invariably asks: *heeft het gesmaakt?* – did you enjoy your meal? And with the verb *smaken* you will find the same preposition as with *rieken* and *ruiken*: *het smaakt naar kaneel* – it tastes of cinnamon. So what should those smoking teachers do? Well, the simple advice is *stoppen met roken* – stop smoking; or they could cut down – *minder gaan roken*. You could point out the health dangers: *roken is slecht voor de gezondheid* – smoking is bad for your health, though such a comment may be bad for yours. Of course, *stoppen met roken* will be difficult if you smoke like a chimney – *rookt als een schoorsteen*. The big question is whether there will be enough room for everyone behind the bike sheds.

Alistair MacLean

online

www.rookvrij.be

FEATURE

Maison Fust



No less than a revolution: left, the Maison's answer to *haute couture*; above, the paradox of subtle distinctiveness. Below, both people and products reflect the anonymity of the ultimate model – the buyer

collections through its special handmade pieces. "They are the Maison's answer to haute couture: made by hand with enormous attention paid to detail and craftsmanship but made entirely out of throw-away materials," says Debo. "It is a very extreme contrast that has a kind of comical effect: like with the coat made entirely out of paper but with a very luxurious finishing touch."

These showstoppers will be accompanied by a detailed description of the production process, including the time it took to make each piece, drawing all attention back to the core of haute couture and reacting against fast-fashion at the same time. Asserts Debo: "To me, they can almost be considered Marxist critics, reacting against the separation between creation and production and consumption with its resulting alienation."

MoMu worked very closely with Martin Margiela himself on the design of the exhibition. Antwerp scenographer Bob Verhelst was chosen as curator because of his friendship and history with the designer from back at the Antwerp academy. He also worked with Maison for several years.

At times, the spaces of the MoMu remind visitors of the Maison boutiques, which are almost always located in little streets off a city's main shopping drag. The gables never let on what is going on behind them. "The Maison likes to make it a little hard for people to find them," says Debo. "Their approach is not commercial; they don't even put the newest collections in the window. But at the same time their all-white stores attract attention, and it is exactly that kind of attention that they want."

Though you should not expect a chronological overview of the past 20 years, installations incorporating silhouettes from different seasons demonstrate the evolution of the fashion house. "Maison Martin Margiela went in against the ruling image of broad-shouldered silhouettes with tiny waists in the 1980s by introducing very slim designs," explains Debo. "But it has also been the instigator of the new look, returning once again to broad, architectural shoulders."

Though in business since the 1980s, Maison are still considered avant-garde. You can't call them an underground niche brand, but they succeed in marrying their own creative view with a fash-

Where in the world is Martin Margiela?

Martin Margiela was born in 1959 and graduated from the Antwerp Fashion Academy 20 years later. Having studied among the famous Antwerp Six – the handful of the academy's alumni who worked together in the 1980s, all becoming extremely successful – Margiela was at first associated with them. But he chose to break free from his former classmates and left for Paris, where he would work as Jean-Paul Gaultier's assistant from 1984 to 1987.

The following year, he co-founded Maison Martin Margiela, the first collections of which were heralded by the international press as a revolution in fashion. Avant-garde as his creations might be, Margiela was asked to become head designer of the classic Hermès' women's line from 1998 to 2003, further demonstrating his acute tailoring skills.

In 2002, Maison Martin Margiela was taken over by Renzo Rosso, the man behind popular jeans brand Diesel, allowing the Maison more financial room for experimentation. In all these years, not once has Margiela given a personal interview or had his picture taken by the press. He continues to live in anonymity, further nurturing the myth around Maison.

online

www.maisonmartinmargiela.com

ion system that is built on sales. "I think it's admirable that they are able to comment on the industry from the inside out, not as outcasts," Debo concludes. "They have never denied wanting to be a commercially successful company, and yet they have never betrayed their unique personality."

And that is quite a feat.

Maison Martin Margiela, until 8 February, ModeMuseum, Nationalestraat 28, Antwerp

online
www.momu.be



Mysterious maison

Continued from page 1

they were just pictured on posters or held up on their hangers by people in all-white clothes."

At catwalk shows, the entire team of Maison is at the same time made recognisable and anonymous by all wearing the same white cotton work coat – like scientists. "It is also a way of making an abstraction of any hierarchy in the Maison," notes Debo. "They really want to come forward as a team."

Their store and office interiors further play with the concept. "Instead of buying a new interior, the Maison will take over the existing one and just paint the furniture white or wrap it in white voile or cotton," says Debo. The Maison is even known to give clothes the same treatment, wrapping handbags and boots in black voile and sticking black tape all over a jacket.

You can see this for yourself at the exhibition, which touches on several Maison themes. One is the evolution of both the designers and the garments themselves. The team

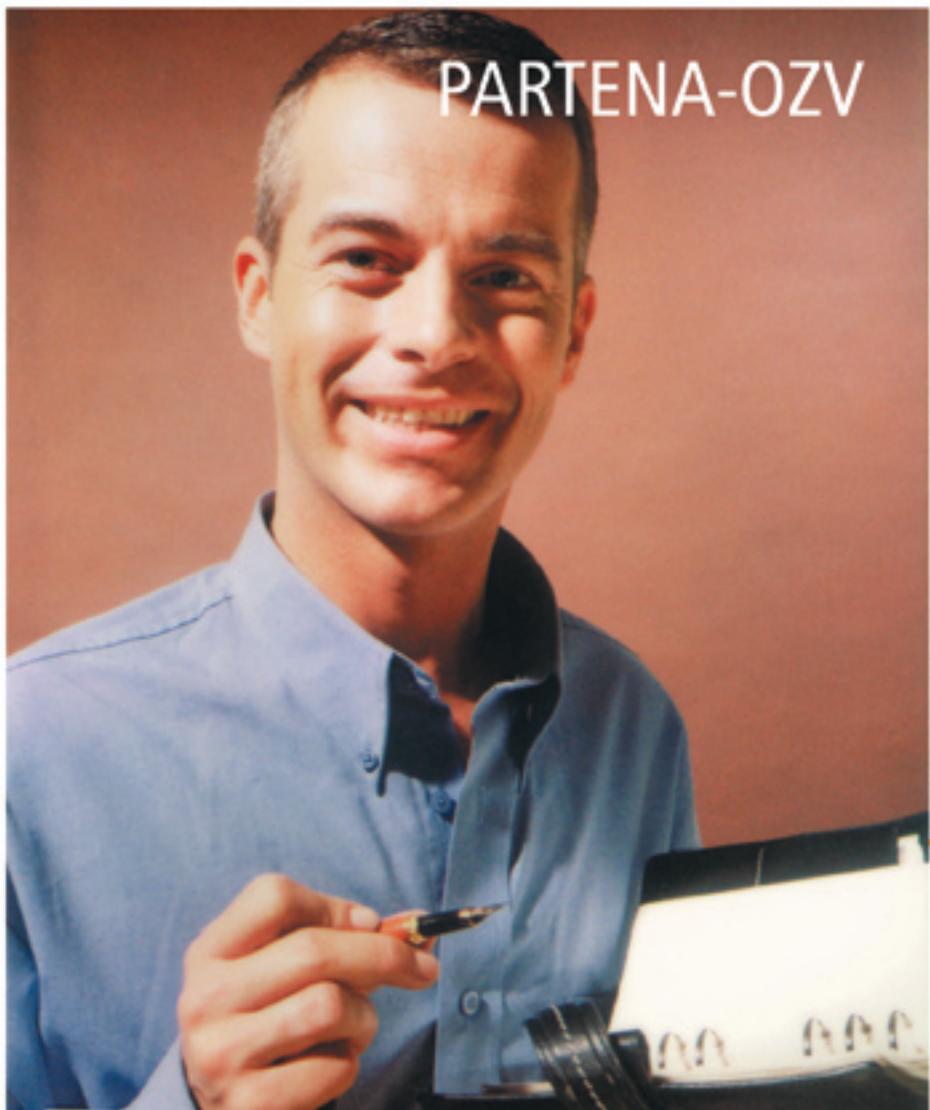
might paint clothing white, for example, so once you start wearing them, the paint starts cracking, the colour changes and the underlying layer becomes visible.

"It is an illustration of their attitude towards time, of not having complete control over everything," says Debo.

The exhibition will also show visitors another side of the design house that is usually restricted to the fashion in-crowd. "Maison Martin Margiela is so much more than their collections," says Debo. "The way they communicate is extraordinary as well." This comes through on the catwalk, something very few people actually get to see but which will be represented at MoMu. "It is the one time designers get to present a complete picture of their universe, so we think that will be very interesting for the public." Next to these images, visitors also get a peek at the original invitations to fashion weeks, sometimes pieces of art in themselves.

Visitors will also see the creative process behind the Maison's

"They can almost be considered Marxist critics, reacting against the separation between creation and production and consumption with its resulting alienation."



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Integration course stresses "values"

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in 13 languages – English, French, Arabic, Farsi, Turkish, Chinese, Thai, Russian, Polish, Spanish, Serbo-Croat, Albanian and Portuguese – because, as Keulen pointed out, those for whom it is intended are only just beginning courses in Dutch. It is also intended to meet the needs of a wide variety of educational levels, from the illiterate to university graduates.

Each course consists of 18 lessons covering everyday topics like public transport, health care and Belgian history. And each chapter is infused with the "norms and values" considered central to Flemish society. Immigrants learn that pre-school education and extramural school activities are central to the Flemish system. The environmental benefits of public transport are stressed, while the chapter on health care includes issues such as sex education, which may be sensitive to immigrants from other cultures.

A spokesman for Keulen explained that with immigration steadily increasing and more diverse, it was more and more important for Flanders to state those values it considers important in order to ensure peaceful integration. The core values were established two years ago by a committee chaired by Marc Bossuyt, emeritus professor in international law at Antwerp University. The committee also included moral philosopher Etienne Vermeersch, canon law specialist Rik Torfs, social scientist Marie-Claire Foblets of Leuven University and Abied Alsulaiman, former coordinator of the Antwerp migration council.

In addition to the practical aspects, an attempt is made to explain the five basic values that are central to Flemish society. These are "not isolated facts, and only take on their real



From left: Etienne Vermeersch, Marc Bossuyt and Marino Keulen

meaning when they are put into practice," the committee said in a statement at the time their report was released. And they drew a distinction between legal norms that can be enforced by law, community values over which there is broad consensus, and social values which enjoy tacit agreement. These, the government points out, are not enforceable, but they are nevertheless values that need to be respected if one is to become integrated in Flemish society.

The free social orientation course book is now being translated and from January studied by the 15,000 people who have so far signed up for an integration package this year. Also from January, the obligation to take a course will extend to immigrants who have been here for some time and are living on

state support. Others who have been here for some time and have little or no use for orientation, can opt to take a test as a way of gaining an exemption. Those tests are still being developed, a spokesman for Keulen said. EU citizens, though not obliged, can take the integration course if they want to, he said. One-third of all those on the course are doing so voluntarily.

Meanwhile there is a lighter side to social orientation. Among the things new arrivals will have explained to them are the Flemish taste for camping (something refugees might find puzzling), which rubbish bins to use when throwing away paper or cooking oil, which bus ticket is best for different types of journeys, and how to react to the sight of two women walking hand-in-hand on the street.

Vandals who desecrated churchyard are seven and eight-year-olds

The culprits responsible for causing damage to over 140 graves in a churchyard in Essene by Affligem are three children, two aged seven and one aged eight, it was revealed at the weekend. The children pushed over gravestones, smashed flower pots and photograph frames and destroyed flower beds. Police were called and discovered damage to 143 gravesites.

One of the children responsible was detained and questioned and gave police the names of the other two. When questioned, they claimed to have acted out of boredom.

As the news broke, families of the deceased arrived at the graveyard en masse to find out if their loved ones' sites had been affected. "There is a great deal of confusion," a local police spokesman said. He confirmed that no action will be taken against the three vandals. "Because of the very young age of the perpetrators, we can assume they have no sense of the full weight of their actions or the impact this will have on relatives."

Contacts will be made between the prosecutor's office and the youth magistrate, however, to determine what if any steps might be taken. It remains a possibility that relatives of the deceased can sue the parents of the children concerned for damages.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



902

Number of children reported missing at the Belgian coast in July and August. The figure is unusually low, even considering the bad weather: in 2003 the number for the same period was 2,482.

16,000

Maximum number of night-flights out of Brussels National airport, according to the environmental permit approved last week by the Flemish Brabant provincial committee. The previous maximum was set at 25,000. The number of departing flights – the main source of noise nuisance – is cut from 10,000 to 5,000.

152g/km

Average CO2 emissions of vehicles in Belgium – 0.7g down on last year, and enough to put the country in fourth place in the EU rankings, after Portugal, Italy and France. But motoring organisation Touring said that the rate of decline in emissions was too slow to reach the target of 130 g/km by 2012.

200,000 tonnes

Contaminated soil removed from the former site of Forges de Clabecq in Vilvoorde. The clean-up was completed last week after two years of work, at a total cost of €14 million. The 10.5 ha site next to the Brussels-Scheldt canal will now be used for housing, industry and recreational activities.

1,054,909

Number of children registered for education on 1 September this year in Flanders. The largest number (724,000) was enrolled in the Catholic school system, slightly down on last year.

\$72 billion

Value of foreign investment in Belgium in 2006, according to a study by Leuven University professor Leo Slewaegen. The figure puts Belgium in fourth place worldwide behind the US, the UK and France.

305,232

Number of Belgians who failed to submit a tax declaration for the year 2006. An additional 334,715 sent in their tax forms but missed the legal deadline.

12%

Number of Flemish boys under the age of 13 who have been drunk at least once, according to figures from the World Health Organisation. Slightly fewer, 11%, drink alcohol at least once a week. Girls drink less, with 7% reporting weekly drinking.

2,010

Number of doctors who have graduated from Flemish universities since 1995, an average of 175 a year. Leuven University alone accounted for 1,158 of the total, followed by Ghent (406), Antwerp (320) and the Free University of Brussels (VUB) with 126.

FIFTH COLUMN



The legacy of the Volksunie

The Volksunie (VU or "People's Union") was a small but influential nationalist party during the final decades of the previous century. It was disbanded in 2001 after months of internal wrangling. But, according to some, it is still one of the most influential forces in Belgian politics. How is that possible? Throughout the party's tumultuous history, its leaders and members have dispersed in every direction. The result is that now every single Flemish party has been "infected" by the Volksunie. Vlaams Belang originated in the 1970s as a radical split from the Volksunie. Open VLD has taken on board many of the VU's leaders, including two former party presidents: Jaak Gabriels and Patrik Vankrunkelsven. Bart Somers, the current party president of Open VLD, has his roots in the Volksunie, as does federal economy minister Vincent Van Quickenborne. The socialist SPA "renewed" itself in 2003 by forming a cartel with Spirit (now renamed VlaamsProgressieven), which comprised the left-wing part of the Volksunie with Bert Anciaux as its rallying point.

Another major element of the Volksunie turned itself into the N-VA, with Geert Bourgeois as its leader. Bourgeois and Anciaux, who were adversaries during the death throes of the Volksunie, now find themselves colleagues as ministers in the Flemish government. And the N-VA has of course allied itself with CD&V, forming the most powerful political force in Flanders. The N-VA has inherited a great deal from the Volksunie. In fact, its militants will tell you that their party is the only true successor of the Volksunie. Like the VU, the N-VA is staunchly nationalist, without being racist. Its members are notorious for their adherence to principle – or obstinacy, as some prefer to call it.

Another characteristic feature is their deep mistrust of the establishment, including their own leaders, whom they easily suspect of selling out. The fact that the current N-VA party president, Bart De Wever, is completely uncontested in his own party (as an opinion poll recently showed) is in that respect no small feat.

All eyes are on the N-VA this weekend as the party meets for an important congress. Will it continue to support the federal government, in spite of the fact that no clear progress has been made on institutional reform? If it does, then the N-VA has to break an election promise. If it opts out, then that might cost Yves Leterme his post as prime minister.

Also in the balance is Geert Bourgeois' portfolio in the Flemish government. Can he stay on? And what is to become of the cartel with CD&V, which has given N-VA political leverage far beyond its electoral weight? These are tough decisions to make if you have the legacy of the Volksunie on your mind.

Anja Otte

NEWS FLASH



This Sunday, 21 September, cars without a permit issued by the local commune will be excluded from the entire Brussels region from 9.00 to 19.00 for **Car-Free Sunday**. Public transport is free, and most communes are planning open-air events. Applications for permits had to be submitted by 17 September. Parking C at Heysel is available for €4 for the whole day, and the NMBS is offering a special train ticket to Brussels for €8.

online

www.autolozezondag.irisnet.be

Ferry company Superfast has **scrapped its service between Zeebrugge and Rosyth** in Scotland, claiming increased fuel prices had made the service unsustainable. The Blue Star I has sailed three times a week since 2002. A second ferry was taken off the service in 2004. Zeebrugge harbour director-general Joachim Coens said the connection had given a boost to tourism in Flanders, which would now likely be lost.

The city of Antwerp has **opened up 5,000 above-ground tombs** to new occupants. The graves, in the famous Schoonselhof and other cemeteries, are city property, but Antwerp has no money to maintain them. Interested parties will be asked for a fee of €1,000 to €3,000, a 25-year concession of €500 and a commitment to restore the tomb. Any remains still in the tombs will be removed.

A group of 12 Flemish **young people travelling in Peru** were held up and robbed by a band of armed men last week. The group, all in their mid-20s, are on a three-week trip. The armed men boarded their tour bus and demanded money, cameras and mobile phones. Other valuables and luggage were not touched.

The **outstanding collection of pre-Colombian art** donated to Flanders by Dora Janssen, the widow of pharmaceutical entrepreneur Paul Janssen, will find its permanent home in the MAS in Antwerp and not, after all, in the Jubelpark Museum in Brussels, culture minister Bert Anciaux has announced. The collection, comprising 315 rare objects, is currently housed in the federal museum in Brussels, where it will stay until 2010 when construction of the MAS, or Museum aan de Stroom, is completed.

The mayor of Damme in West Flanders has been declared **not guilty of negligence** in the death of a man in a traffic accident in 2005. Dirk Bisschop had been sued by the driver involved in the accident, who claimed he had failed in his responsibility to keep the crossroads where the accident occurred safe. The mayor was found liable in first instance and sentenced to three months and a fine. That verdict was overturned by the cassation court, which sent the case to Kortrijk with orders that the mayor be found not guilty.

Antiquated sales law will only be scrapped next summer, government warns



Economy minister Vincent Van Quickenborne and his iPhone.

The government will not be able to comply until next summer with a European order to scrap the rule in Belgium that forbids shops from posting reduced prices in the weeks before the official sales start. According to economy minister Vincent Van Quickenborne, who supports the change, the parliamentary procedure required to amend the law means the new rule will not be ready for the next sales period in January.

The rule states that shops may not advertise reduced prices during the six weeks leading up to the two official sales periods in January and July. However, shops are allowed to cut their prices without saying so. Also forbidden is publicity for the forthcoming sales.

Van Quickenborne argues that the rule lacks transparency. Organisations representing the retail sector, on the other hand, are less keen. The organisation for the self-employed, Unizo said the rule was "for the protection of the consumer" and could be made more flexible without being scrapped. "Europe has clearly said that this sort of

ban has nothing to do with consumer protection, and everything to do with protectionism and limiting competition," Van Quickenborne countered.

The minister, together with consumer representatives from Test-Aankoop, were due to meet EU commissioner Meglena Kuneva this week to discuss the matter. Europe has also called for Belgium to get rid of a €250 ceiling on the value of goods that may be sold door-to-door and to repeal the law on "bundling" – where the sale of one product or service is made conditional on the acceptance of another.

There, too, Van Quickenborne is in favour of the EU view. The law on bundling is what pushed up the price of the iPhone in Belgium, he said, where in other countries Apple could link sales of the phone to a mobile operator contract. The minister himself would not have been affected, however: days before the iPhone went on sale in Belgium he was seen openly using an iPhone obtained abroad and "hacked" to allow it to be used here.



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New office plaza “50% more energy-efficient”

Services growth will bring 20,000 jobs to Mechelen

Alan Hope

The city of Mechelen should be able to offer 20,000 new jobs by the year 2020, according to mayor Bart Somers, speaking last week at the ground-breaking ceremony for a new office complex.

Stephenson Plaza will be what promoters Uplace call “a pioneer in sustainable entrepreneurship”. It will, they said, be the most energy conscious office building in the region. Uplace claims the complex is 50% more efficient than existing office blocks, which average about 140 on the European scale of energy indicators – based on factors such as emissions and insulation. New laws mean buildings now being constructed have to respect a maximum of 100. Stephenson Plaza, meanwhile, comes in at 85.

“Energy-efficient buildings are a sensible choice for ecological and economic reasons,” said Uplace CFO Francis Hendrickx. “An energy-efficient office building reduces businesses’ energy bill substantially.” Stephenson Plaza, he said, would offer a saving of €9 per square metre per year in comparison with other buildings on the market – and even more if energy costs continue their upward trend.

Offices in Stephenson Plaza will cost €135 per square metre per year to rent, which is not the most expensive in Mechelen. The first two blocks, which are 90% occupied, will be completed in May, and the third in November 2009, offering 12,200 square metres of new office space.

In January next year, meanwhile, Uplace intends to begin construction of York Tower in an adjoining lot overlooking the E19. The company, under its former name of Eurinpro, built the EDS tower in the city, as well as another 170,000 square metres of office space.

Stephenson Plaza will, it is estimated, bring 550 new jobs



Stephenson Plaza will open in May (artist's impression)

to the city, with employers like Playmobil (toys), Ordina (ICT, consulting) and Brunel (engineering) already signed up as tenants. The complex is named after George Stephenson, the railway pioneer who built the first rail link on the European mainland in 1835, from Brussels to Mechelen. York Tower, meanwhile, takes its name from Margaret of York (1446-1503), sister of Richard III and third wife of Charles the Bold.

New jobs in Mechelen will inevitably lead to more commuters. According to the city, companies and other employers offer 52,000 jobs, whereas the working population only amounts to 31,690 people.

“Mechelen is the fifth-largest Flemish town after Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges and Leuven,” Somers said, “but it

is Flanders’ third office town.” The city, he pointed out, is easy to reach by car and by public transport. It’s less than 20 minutes by road from Brussels airport. “Mechelen’s central position is an enormous advantage,” agreed Hendrickx. “No other Belgian city has so many people living within a radius of 30 minutes.”

He did not go into detail about where the 20,000 new jobs would come from, but later explained that a large proportion would come to the Arsenaal site behind Mechelen station, a piece of city-owned land earmarked for office development. The project, due to be completed in phases between 2012 and 2018, will also feature a new central railway station and a road bypass to bring traffic from the E19 without passing through the city centre.

Omega sets its sights on the world

Omega Pharma, the East Flanders-based pharmaceuticals company, is setting its sights on global expansion, with plans for new ventures in Australia, Switzerland and the Czech Republic, as well as India. “Our base today is western Europe,” said CEO Marc Coucke at a press conference last week. “Now we’re going out into the world.”

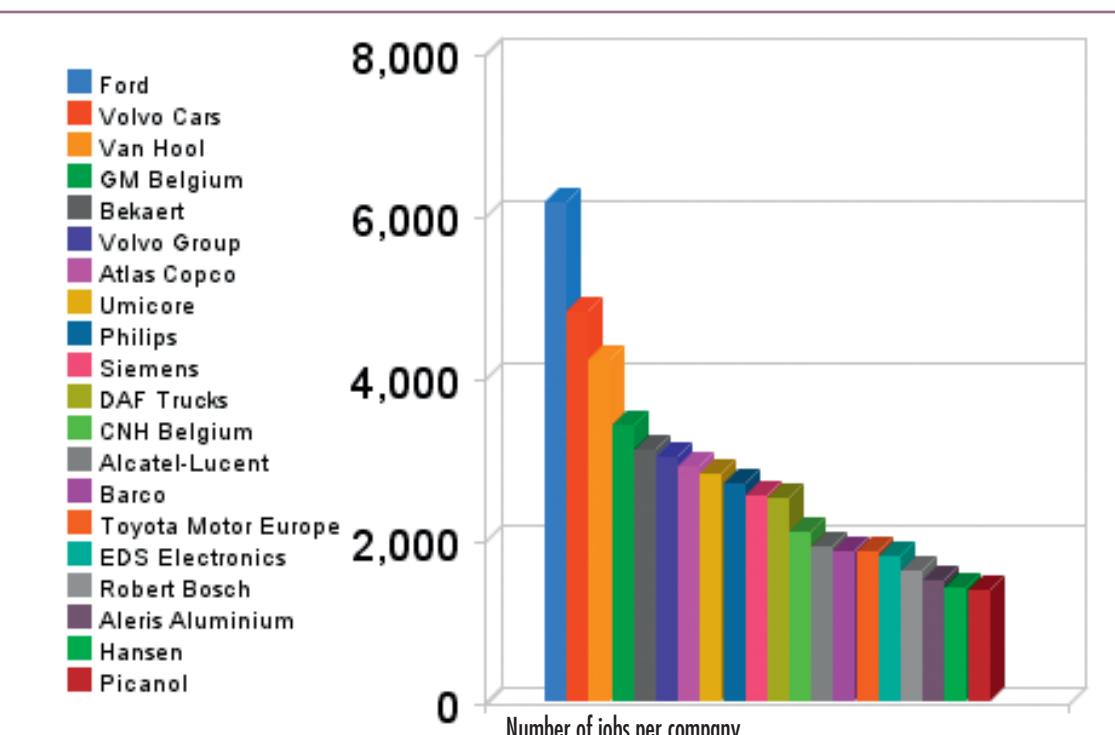
Omega, based in the village of Nazareth south of Ghent, is best known for over the counter (OTC) products like the anti-snoring spray Silence, slimming aid XLS, and home pregnancy testing kit Predictor. Coucke announced three main takeover plans: Australian company Aurora, with sales of €4 million; a 68% majority share in Interdelta from Freiburg in Switzerland; and Czech-based Altermed, both of which had sales of €6 million last year. The bill for the three acquisitions could be as high as €25 million.

Omega, Coucke said, aims to breach the psychological barrier of €1 billion turnover. Although that figure has already been reached once before, in 2006, Omega has since hived off its Arseus division supplying products and services to healthcare professionals, and is now a slimmer company.

But not for much longer. As well as the three takeovers announced, Omega is also on the verge of a 50-50 joint venture with Modi Mundipharma of New Delhi, under which the Indian partner would produce and distribute Omega products in the sub-continent. As *Flanders Today* went to press, details were awaited on the acquisition by Omega of 90% of a Hungarian OTC company with sales of €1.5 million. Growth in Asia and central Europe can reach 10% annually, compared with around 2% in Europe. Omega forecasts its own growth for 2008 at between 3 and 7%.

The company’s new strategy is to concentrate on smaller businesses which it would buy up and then expand. “By coupling innovation with expansion we can go far,” said Coucke. And they will target growth sectors in developing markets: “The first thing the middle class in developing countries do is buy products which promote health. People want to look good.”

However Omega at home intends to keep up its links with pharmacies. Speaking to *De Tijd*, Coucke criticised an agreement with a wholesaler which has permitted the personal care-products chain Kruidvat to stock a number of Omega lines. “Let me make it clear that we did not want our products in there,” he said. “Our Biover natural products [cosmetics, aromatherapy and phytotherapy products] are in the supermarkets, but for the rest we insist on the advice and expertise of a pharmacist.”



Flemish tech sector mainly foreign-owned

Seven out of 10 of the jobs in the Flemish technology sector are with foreign employers, according to a study by technology federation Agoria. Foreigners own 60% of the technology companies operating in Flanders.

However, recent years have seen too little know-how investment from abroad into Flanders, warned Agoria director-general Wilson de Pril. “Foreign businesses create a certain dynamic,” he said. “Associated investments by suppliers, research activities and small businesses follow in their wake.” But Flanders, by not stressing its advantages enough, was at risk of losing the interest of investors.

Agoria’s study covered 350 of its member compa-

nies, each with more than 50 employees. Americans are the biggest employers – led by Ford and General Motors. In total, US companies account for 31.9% of all jobs in the sector. Japanese employers, and lately Indian companies, are increasing their share.

Foreign investment is particularly important in ICT, electronics, the automobile sector and mechanics. Flemish companies dominate the fields of metals and materials, led by Bekaert and Umicore.

Of the list of 25 biggest businesses in the sector in Flanders, fully 20 are foreign-owned. Van Hool, Umicore and Bekaert are the only Flemish representatives in the top 10.

BUSINESS FLASH

**Agio Holland Cigars**

Europe's largest cigar production unit has been opened by Agio Holland Cigars in Westerlo. The new 30,000 square-metre unit, with a capacity of some 800 million cigars a year, will regroup the output of smaller facilities in Geel and Duizel. The tobacco is grown in Sri Lanka and the Dominican Republic and transported to Belgium for processing. Only the company's upmarket brand, Balmoral, is actually hand rolled in the Dominican Republic.

Van Hool

The Lier-based bus and coach producer is to deliver a double-decker bus to New York City for trials. The move is part of a project by the New York authorities to redevelop their public transport system in the wake of the oil crisis. Van Hool already has a strong presence in the US where it exported up to 30% of its output in the early 2000s.

Fortis

The Belgo-Dutch financial institution is considering the sale of its Intertrust wealth management firm and its fund management services company Prime Fund Solution for a total of some €1.7 billion. The move is part of the bank's reorganisation following its controversial acquisition of the Dutch ABN AMRO bank last year.

Metris

The Leuven-based technology company specialised in metrology solutions has won the Flemish government's "Leeuw van de Export 2008" award for its outstanding export achievements in the last year.

T-Groep

The Mechelen-based temp and recruitment firm T-Groep, which is owned by the Flemish government, is to take over the Dutch Luba temp agency. The T-Groep, the country's smallest company in the field with an estimated market share of some 4%, is widely expected to be privatised soon.

Dome Industries

The floor covering group Dome Industries is to close its Zwijnaarde vinyl production unit with the loss of some 140 jobs. Management blames the sector's overcapacity and competition from foreign producers.

Ablynx

The Ghent-based biotechnology company Ablynx has signed an joint research agreement to develop nanobodies against cancer and immunology with Merck Serono, a division of the German Merck pharmaceutical group. The deal could be worth up to €325 million for Ablynx.

Worries over 1,500 new mobile phone masts

Telecommunications operators have asked for permission to install 1,526 new mobile phone masts across the country, it was reported. Already municipalities have given their agreement for 441 of the total.

The new masts are intended to meet the demand for the latest 3G – third generation – technology, which among other things allow Internet access via the mobile phone. "For

ordinary GSM traffic there is already pretty close to 100% coverage," explained a spokesman for Proximus, the mobile phone subsidiary of Belgacom. But an increase in demand for Internet access – current prohibitively expensive for most ordinary phone users – brings the need for more suitable masts. Existing masts can be adapted, but the potential there is no higher than 80% coverage.

However mobile phone masts are the subject

of some health controversy, with the scientific community divided over the risks to people living within range of the masts.

There are already 6,600 masts of between three and 18 antennae in place. According to Proximus, the main mobile phone operators are working together to agree on the conditions of use of each other's masts, to prevent unnecessary growth, something they hope will allay some fears, as well as keep costs down.



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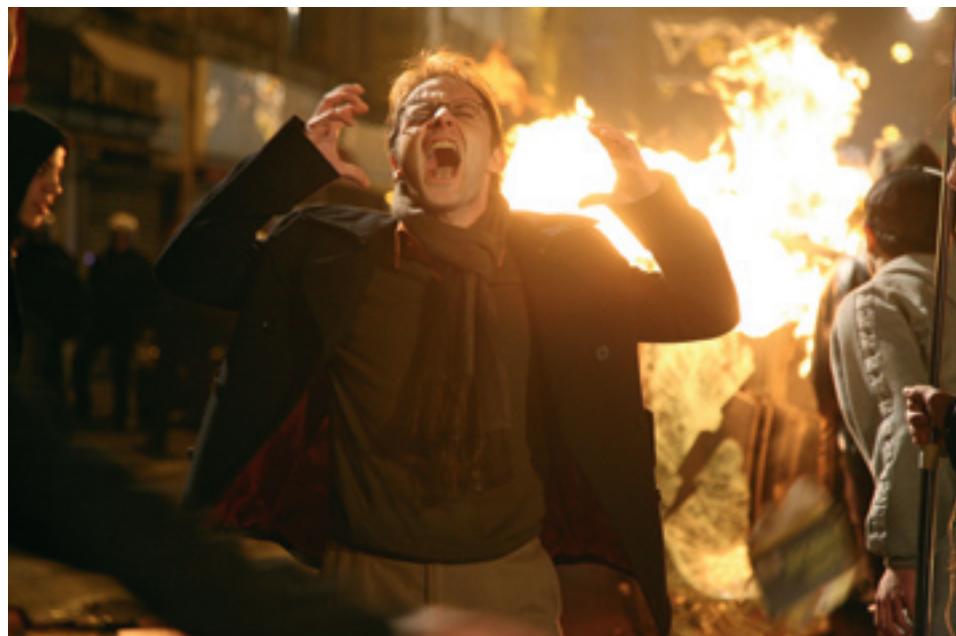
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ING 

FILM

Falling apart in Antwerp

Los is a faithful adaptation of Flemish journalist's novel



When you've no words left: Tom during one of his frequent stepping-out-of-reality moments

Lisa Bradshaw

Tom Naegels is a troubled soul. Although he works for "the most important newspaper in the most important city" in Belgium, his editor at the *Gazet van Antwerpen* keeps handing him the weirdo stories: a man protesting neighbourhood block parties, another who wants to ride his donkey on the motorway. At home, Tom argues with his racist grandfather and tries to avoid buying a house with his girlfriend.

But then the anxiety ridden 20-something finally writes an article that sparks his interest: a support group for immigrants in Antwerp. And one of them is a very pretty girl from Pakistan named Nadia.

Something turns in Tom. He simultaneously becomes involved with Nadia and in

the struggle of Muslims to integrate into a casually racist society. He begins to make connections in the immigrant rights movement, to attend some very cool looking rally/dance party fusions and to doggedly pursue an interview with the movement's leader: a mythical figure called Jamal.

Although this cross-cultural adventure breathes new life into Tom's world, disaster is around the corner: his beloved grandfather has a heart attack while trading insults with immigrants from Eastern Europe. The two events are forever linked in Tom's mind. "Now it's close," he narrates. "Now it's my problem."

Los (*Loose*), which opens in cinemas this week, is an adaptation of a novel of the same name by a real-life journalist of the same name. Tom Naegels, a political column-

ist with *De Standaard*, published the book to critical and popular acclaim in 2005. It's about his actual experiences working for Antwerp's local version of *Het Laatste Nieuws* during the time leading up to the city's riots in 2002, following the police killing of a young Moroccan.

The film is a faithful adaptation; screenwriter Bram Renders wisely lifted much of the novel's snappy dialogue verbatim. Director Jan Verheyen (*Vermist*) is solid with good source material; he also knows how to get the most from his actors, and this is an actors' film. Pepijn Caudron's film debut as Tom is masterful: he breaks onto the screen with a likeable, jittery intensity, directly addressing the audience with beautifully timed wisecracks.

Despite addressing serious issues, the film is indeed laugh-out-loud funny, partly owing to the writing, partly the delivery. Koen De Graeve (*Dagen zonder lief*) plays Tom's best friend, who's always quick with a comment, but never a helpful one. The wonderful Jaak Van Assche (*FC De Kampioenen*) as Tom's grandfather is furious that he can't get a Trappist at the hospital. When Tom tries to convince his new girlfriend not to trust the cook at her work who's asked her to marry him because he only wants sex, she shoots

back, "And you don't want to have sex with me?"

Moroccan actress Sana Mouziane portrays Nadia with the perfect balance of outsider naïveté and the hard-headed stubbornness of someone who's fled an arranged marriage back home. She reminds Tom what his well-meaning liberal background has not taught him.

All of these divergent stories is a bit much for *Los* the film to deal with. The underground movement and its leader Jamal, for instance, are given short shrift, and we're not shown enough evidence to fully comprehend what might lead to a full-fledged riot.

But the need to support integration while holding people accountable that is at the core of Tom's struggle is a concept that comes through loud and clear. As does the simple message that – no matter who thinks they own you – making your own choices is an overwhelming desire that cannot be suppressed.

See our interview with novelist Tom Naegels on page 16.

online

www.los-defilm.be

Verheyen will direct follow up to *Zaak Alzheimer*

Jan Verheyen, the director of *Los*, has been tapped to direct *Dossier K*, the follow-up to Erik Van Looy's smash hit film *De Zaak Alzheimer* (*The Alzheimer Case*). Van Looy was supposed to helm the feature, which begins shooting next spring, but cannot devote the year needed to complete the project due to contract requirements with his production company. *De Zaak Alzheimer* won several awards and still holds the box office record in Belgium for the most admissions when it was released in 2003. So it's good news for Verheyen, as fans will automatically line up to see *Dossier K*. Film critics, on the other hand, are not so sure it's good news: Verheyen's last crime-drama, *Vermist*, left much to be desired and was trounced in reviews. Verheyen is stronger on more personal subjects, such as with *Los* and 2005's *Buitenspel*. Cross your fingers.

THEATRE

Hitting the streets

Brussels' theatre troupe surprises unsuspecting passers-by

Monique Philips

You might recognise Irma Firma from such projects as "How to Survive in a City", in which artists joined forces with biologists to find edible titbits in an urban environment, or "The Walk", in which five farm animals were led on an old-fashioned pilgrimage of 85 kilometres to the sea at De Panne.

It took them three weeks and a lot of effort to get there. Quarrels arose amongst the city-raised artists: "You're feeding your animal crisps!?" And the animals weren't exactly great travelling companions. "A sheep doesn't talk back, whereas you are projecting all your feelings onto it. In fact, the animals were just doing their thing, and us humans were making all the fuss."

Walking is essential in Ann Van de Vyvere's work. "By being on foot you discover so many new possibilities," says the founder of the performance art group Irma Firma. "I especially like investigating the

walking potential of the city." This is helpful to scout out sites, too, since the Brussels-based group regularly initiates surprise appearances in random public places. "By deliberately choosing a specific form and route, we rediscover Brussels. And if we're well prepared, perform consciously and are observed by an accidental audience, a walk becomes a parade, which can inspire our audience to look afresh at their own environment."

Irma Firma's latest piece is called "Salle des Pas Perdus", which was inspired by the movement – and restriction of movement – that "people without papers" experience every day. The first run in the midst of a Saturday shopping crowd in Brussels' Nieuwstraat was nothing short of hilarious. Except for a small crowd of onlookers, you wouldn't have realized anything out of the ordinary was happening.

Gradually the "illegal spotting" took shape as the same handful of walkers passed

by again and again. Are there patterns to be discovered as they drift by aimlessly or walk by briskly or fall on the ground, drawing chalk lines on the pavement, or stand in line for an invisible money dispenser? The

performance aims to explore the obstacles and physical boundaries many immigrants face every day. Let's not forget how easily one outstays one's welcome – whether as a tourist, a guest worker, or even as an artist. After all, between shows a considerable portion of the international dance scene is living and working in Belgium illegally.

Your next chance to see Irma Firma at work is at 58T, a day of entertainment on the rooftop of Parking 58 in Brussels on Car Free Sunday. You can walk all the way to the top to enjoy the show and the



Guerrilla theatre: a common street becomes a playground for performance group Irma Firma

backdrop – the best panoramic view of the capital. Or you might want to applaud the colourful crowd that intends to walk, run or cycle a total of 58 laps around the expansive roof, equalling a very artistic marathon. As Irma Firma would say: Experience the city anew.

58T, 21 September from 14.00, Parking 58, Bisschopsstraat 1, Brussels, www.park58.be

online

www.irmafirma.be

The unbearable lightness of buildings

Brussels invites you to admire some of the city's airy modern architecture



Open doors to a different world: the Erasmus House in Anderlecht

Derek Blyth

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Brussels' first Open Monument Days, so they're doing something special. In fact, they're doing two things. On 20 and 21 September, they are letting people inside some of the best buildings put up in the second half of the 20th century, and they're showing off the 20 most popular buildings from the past two decades.

They've got a problem here. Most post-war architecture is unpopular, some of it deeply so. It doesn't matter whether you are talking about Stalinist towers in Riga or housing blocks in Anderlecht, it all gets branded as ugly modern architecture.

So this is going to be a hard heritage day to sell to the masses. And it doesn't help to have, as one of the weekend's special activities, a bus tour of "unloved towers" – those modern buildings, like the Finance Tower and the Hilton Hotel, that have never really won people's hearts.

You might wonder why modern architecture is so deeply unpopular when the architects set out with such an optimistic agenda. Their aim, as the heritage day brochure explains, was to create light and cheerful buildings that would make Europeans happy after the misery of two world wars. So where did they go wrong? Sometimes it was simply that architects were in a hurry to rebuild bombed-out cities and used cheap materials that aged badly. Other times they got the psychology wrong and created hostile urban areas that encouraged crime or vandalism.

But there are one or two fine buildings that came out of the period. You might enjoy the chance to look inside the quirky concrete dome of the Salon 58 restaurant built for the 1958 World Fair. Or the Art Deco interior of the former Mirano Continental cinema that screened its last film in 1981.

Some of the places that are being revealed this year are truly quirky, like the Anderlecht miniature golf course that was an overwhelming success when it opened in 1959. And the round American Theatre in northern Brussels (another '58 leftover) that was modelled by its architect on the Colosseum.

Unfortunately this year doesn't offer much for those in search of the city's hidden secrets. Most of the buildings on the trail are familiar places that you pass every day. There's the D'Ieteren garage, the Neptunium swimming pool, the North-South rail tunnel. But maybe you'll discover a gem among them.

online

www.monument.irisnet.be

Take 20

So which were the buildings that drew the longest queues over the past 20 years? You probably won't be surprised to find the royal palace on the list, along with other symbolic national buildings. The heritage day crowds clearly love to peek inside the corridors of power, whether it's the federal parliament on the Wetstraat or the Council of State building on the Wetenschapsstraat.

Any building with polished floors and glittering chandeliers will be a sure-fire winner. With its gleaming parquet and neoclassical gilt, the National Audit Office on the Regentschapsstraat fits the bill perfectly. And how could the opera house fail, with its monumental halls and decadent plushness?

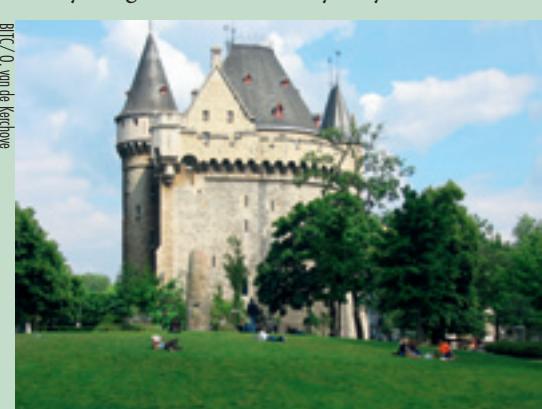
The monument day mob is also drawn by old buildings that have recently been renovated. They arrived in droves one year to view the spectacular interior of the Thurn en Taxis (Tour et Taxis) warehouses. They waited patiently in line another year for a chance to poke around the renovated mediaeval Hallepoort.

Anything with an air of mystery is also bound to be popular. The Freemasons' Temple on Lakenstraat reached the top 20 and so did the gloomy cellars of the 15th-century palace hidden below Koningsplein.

Enthusiasm seems to drop off with the arrival of 20th-century architecture. The 1911 Sociale Voorzorg building on Luchtvartsquare gets onto the list, as does the renovated radio building on Flageyplein, but there are no post-war buildings in the top 20. Where did the architects go wrong?

Get inside the Hallepoort and other classic sites

Thoroughly modern Willy: Willy Van Der Meeren and Léon Palm designed this house in 1959



CYCLING

Pedal power

An ingenious network of cycle paths now covers virtually the whole of Flanders

Denzil Walton

The weekend is approaching, the weather forecast looks reasonable, and you fancy a bike ride. But you're tired of your usual route, and last time you tried a new one you got hopelessly lost. Don't despair; a solution is at hand: the Cycle Route Interchange Network.

The system originated in the Limburg mining industry. Underground junctions were numbered, and arrows indicated the tunnels leading to the next junctions. Mining engineer and cycling enthusiast Hugo Bollen brought the idea above ground and transferred it to cycle routes.

It's therefore no surprise that the first published Interchange Network saw the light of day in Limburg. The concept has now spread throughout virtually all of Flanders and has even been extended to the Netherlands. Importantly, the networks integrate perfectly between regions and countries.

The system allows you to cycle from one numbered interchange to the next. At each interchange, a green-and-white signpost points you in the direction of the two or three next interchanges. This leads to a much more flexible way of cycling around the countryside than following stipulated routes. Now you can mix and match to create your own cycle route.

Obviously before you set out, a little preparation is necessary. You need to buy the cycle network map of the area you want to cycle (ask for the Fietsknooppuntennetwerk). You decide on a starting point and simply write down the numbers of the interchanges you'll use. Distances between each interchange are marked on the map.

So you can add up the kilometres to ensure that the total is manageable. Attach the list of interchanges to your handlebars and off you go.

Sounds easy enough in theory. To put it into practice, I bought the Dijleland Cycle Route Interchange Network map from my local tourist office for €5. The network is so comprehensive that no matter where you live in Flanders you won't be far from an interchange. My nearest was interchange number 34, about one kilometre away. I then simply created my own route by jotting down the interchanges 34, 35, 39, 5, 6, 7 and so on until I had created a pleasant ring.

I totalled 75 kilometres, which was a little too long. No problem, the beauty of the system is that you can easily adjust your route. A few alterations here and there, and I had a more manageable 55-kilometre route.

I got through the test

Broken trail?
If a signpost is missing or damaged, email the details to routedokter@vlaamsbrabant.be

Cycling through Flanders has never been easier: Signs are posted when approaching an interchange and at the interchange itself

with flying colours. All the interchanges were perfectly signed in both directions. I would advise to cross off interchanges as you pass through it, otherwise you can easily forget which interchange you are heading towards. I would also recommend taking the map with you; I encountered slight problems in village centres, where it's easier to miss the signposts than in the open countryside.

So much for signs, what about the

Continued on page 13



De Oude Hansbrug in Keerbergen: a real cycle cafe



TOUCHING BASE

the week in sport



Shutterstock

Baseball

The Brussels Kangaroos lost to the Deurne Spartans 7-2 last Sunday. Since the Merchtem Cats and Antwerp Eagles split their weekend series 3-4 and 11-5, clinching a top-flight spot for the Cats in 2009, the winner of the make-up game on Saturday will decide the eighth and last Division I team.

Standings Promo Division:

Team	Won	Lost
Merchtem Cats	12	3
Brussels Kangaroos	9	5
Deurne Spartans	9	5
Antwerp Eagles	9	6
Beveren Lions	3	12
Louvain la Neuve Phoenix	2	13

Also this weekend, a spot for the European Champions League will be up for grabs in Merksem. The local Royal Greys, Belgian national baseball champions in 2007, will play Bern Cardinals from Switzerland and Kaunas Lituanica from Lithuania, national champions of their respective countries. The winner will play in the Champions League A-poule (also known as the European Cup I) in 2009 against Europe's very best. This Friday Bern and Kaunas will play each other twice. The loser of those games will play the Greys on Saturday at 1.00 and 15.00. The winner of the first matches will play the Greys on Sunday at the same times. Spectators are welcome for these top baseball matches on the Alkstraat field in Merksem. For more information, visit www.royalgreys.be.

Rugby

The second week of National Division I produced the following results:

Boitsfort 18-3 Dendermonde
Ottignies 19-0 Kituro
ASUB 32-10 Soignies
Frameries 26-6 Coq Mosan

Boitsfort and Frameries share the lead with six points apiece after two rounds, each having won both of their games. In Division II the Brussels Barbarians and Anderlecht jumped in front of the pack by winning their second matches:

Visé 29-29 BUC
Kibubu 41-13 Standard
Anderlecht 18-13 Antwerp
Brussels Barbarians 36-24 Laakdal

The Ladies' Division I, meanwhile, looks like this:

Boitsfort 15-3 Dendermonde
Leuven 57-0 Gent
Kituro 0-7 Brussels Barbarians
Mons-Frameries 49-0 Antwerp

The Brussels Barbarians will celebrate their 40th anniversary this Friday and Saturday and invite all former players to attend the festivities. So far, 245 current and former players have registered and are coming from as far away as Japan and Peru. Sign up at www.brusselsbarbarians.com.

Leander Schaerlaeckens



What makes a cycle cafe?

- Bike racks for at least 20 bikes
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- Cycle maps
- Tourist information
- Cycle repair kit
- Address of nearest cycle repair shop



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PARADE

Ghent in 35 lessons

The city celebrates 200 years of the *Floraliën*



Ghent expects 150,000 people for the historical procession on 21 September

Lisa Bradshaw

This year marks the 200th anniversary of one of Flanders' most internationally famous events – and certainly the top event of its kind in Europe – the *Floraliën*. Every five years, this flower, plant and horticulture happening takes over Flanders Expo with its kilometres of blooms, ponds, fountains, stunning cut-flower arrangements and gigantic organic sculptures. It's a work of art for the curious, a how-to lesson for the home gardeners and 10 days of wheeling and dealing for the plant and gardening industry.

Because the schedule of the *Floraliën*

has changed over the years, this bicentennial falls on an off year – the next *Floraliën* doesn't take place until 2010. But the organisation couldn't let this year go by unrecognised and have staged a special classical concert, an exhibition, a congress for professionals and now the *Floraliën Praalstoet*, or grand parade.

One thousand performers will act out 35 mini-plays in a procession that offers a precise history of Ghent, including its *Floraliën*. Along four kilometres of spectators, they'll show highlights of Ghent history, including how Sint-Amandus brought Christianity to the region in 629, Jan and Hubert Van

from all over the world. It means a lot for the town."

The 11,000 seats in the grandstands are already sold out for the 21 September parade, and the *Floraliën* organisation expects 150,000 spectators in total – depending, but of course, on the weather.

online
www.floralien.be



Buy Nudie jeans at Cream in Aalst and Brooklyn in Antwerp

Continued from page 11

paths? I had no problems here, either; most of them consist of country lanes, farm tracks or car-free cycle paths. Particularly scenic were the sections along the Leuven-Mechelen Canal and the meandering River Dijle between Mechelen and Werchter.

One of the beauties of cycling is the opportunity to stop at a wayside café or restaurant and take a breather, and the Cycle Route Interchange Network again comes up trumps in this respect. The map includes a booklet listing no fewer than 52 "cycle-cafés" in the Dijle region. I calculated the halfway point and selected the nearest cycle-café, which happened to be the Oude Hansbrug in Keerbergen.

I was not disappointed. The food was good, the service quick, and the terrace delightfully situated alongside the river. To quench your thirst, the café serves a special-edition Hansbrug beer, which was developed by the Haacht brewery when the ancient bridge over the River Dijle was opened in 2005 after its restoration.

online
www.fietsroute.org
www.fietsroutenetwerk.net

Pedalling out of Brussels

How easy is it to cycle into and out of Brussels? The Dijleland Cycle Route Interchange Network comes with a separate map and directions on how to link up with the Dijleland network from Brussels. It offers two routes, both starting from the Grote Markt. One goes directly east to interchange 46 in the market square in Tervuren. From here, the southern part of the Dijleland network is accessible, covering the fantastic scenery of Overijse, Huldenberg and Bierbeek. The other route is shorter and heads northeast to interchange 91 in Diegem, from where you can launch into the countryside around Kampenhout, Haacht and Mechelen.

Having tried both routes, I can say that it is not nearly as difficult as I imagined. Neither route is signposted, so you are dependent on the large-scale map, which means you need a map holder on your handlebars to help you keep track of the turns, which come thick and fast. Wearing a helmet is also highly recommended.

The trickiest parts were in the centre of Brussels, where delivery vans park on cycle paths and pedestrians step onto them blindly. Tram lines are also a hazard in some areas, but once on the Wetstraat and past Schuman, progress becomes quicker.

Reaching your destination takes around 45-60 minutes, after which you will be in the open countryside and heading for your first cycle-café. From interchange 46 in Tervuren, I recommend heading for Pachthof Stroykens at interchange 8 in Duisburg. From interchange 91 in Diegem, a warm welcome and a comfortable seat awaits you in Hof ten As in Melsbroek. DW

FASHIONISTA



Eco-fashion

I'm sure no one has to tell you anymore what state the planet is in and what you should be doing to try and save it. You might buy local produce, use public transport and maybe even offset your air miles. All of which is great. But if you, like me, are into fashion and beauty, you might want to think about going green in that area as well. And it's not so hard.

Big chain stores are picking up on the green trend fast, launching ecological clothing lines and other products. But certainly their motives might have more to do with the current it-factor of eco-fashion than with any underlying goal. And it's not because a clothing brand suddenly launches a capsule collection of five T-shirts in organic cotton that it is actually helping the planet.

So, if you really want to go green, you'll want to steer clear of the high street and look for more original solutions. Lately a lot of boutique brands have been popping up that are more than just fashionable. They are green in every possible aspect: making use of organic materials, producing clothes in environment-friendly ways and belonging to fair trade organisations.

The most notable labels are the Swedish brand Camilla Norrback, which proves ecological fashion can still be glamorous and luxurious, and the overcool denim label Nudie, which works only with organic cotton. And of course there's always Stella McCartney, who is known for her animal and environment-friendly designs. Visit their websites to find out where to buy.

Furthermore, shops are popping up that are concentrating on ecological fashion and beauty. In Antwerp, you can drop by Yemanja (Aalmoesierstraat 28), where you'll discover hard-to-get brands from Brazil and elsewhere, all focusing on green fashion.

To get your green beauty fix in Antwerp or Brussels, you can go to Cosmeticary, which carries brands such as Patyka and Dr Hauschka. These products aren't just nicer to the environment, they're also better for you, without all the nasty chemicals most beauty products employ. Another great place to shop in Antwerp is Kiehl's (Lombardenvest 80): the brand that encourages recycling, uses as many natural ingredients as possible and has enlisted Brad Pitt's help to launch a 100% bi-degradable body wash. And then there's always vintage shopping and customizing: reviving old clothing items is still the best way to spare the planet and be fashionable at the same time.

It doesn't stop with my favourite – there are many more green goodies to discover and, as always, the internet is a great place to start looking. Need tips? Go to Greenwithglamour.com to find out about the fashionable eco-brands and Stylewillsaveus.com for all the latest green lifestyle trends.

Stéphanie Duval

Classical & New Music**Antwerp****deSingel**

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,
www.desingel.be

SEP 17 20.00 Champ d'Action and Bl!ndman in a tribute to late American composer James Tenney: Tenney, Scelsi, Grisey, Schleim, Verstockt
SEP 24 20.00 The Monnaie Symphony Orchestra conducted by Mark Wigglesworth: Mahler's Symphony No 9, Matthews' Preludes (a selection)
SEP 25 20.00 Boris Berezovsky, piano: Chopin, Liszt

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

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be

SEP 20 20.00 The Monnaie Symphony Orchestra conducted by Mark Wigglesworth: Mahler's Symphony No 9
SEP 21 11.00 Nathan Braude, viola; Ferenc Vizi, piano: Brossé, Shostakovich, Schumann
SEP 24 20.00 Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique and Monteverdi Choir conducted by Sir John Eliot Gardiner: Bach, Brahms

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,
www.flagey.be

SEP 19 12.30 Benjamin Glorieux, cello: Kodály, Lindberg, Chong, Swinnen 20.15 Brussels Philharmonic conducted by Michel Tabachnik, with José Van Dam, baritone: Capelletti, Mahler, Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 6, 'Pathétique'
SEP 20 20.15 Bl!ndman & Bl!ndman 4x4: Secret Masses, new work based on William Byrd's masses
SEP 25 20.15 Ictus Ensemble: Fafchamps, Vivier, Mochizuki

Kaaitheater

Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59,
www.kaaitheater.be
SEP 20 20.30 Film concert: Happy End, animation film by Hans Op de Beeck, Bruno Hardt, Klaas Verpoest with music by Ictus Ensemble, composed by George Aperghis

Musical Instruments Museum

Hofberg 2; 0900.28.877
SEP 21 11.00 Adam Korniszewski, violin; Ewa Korniszewski, piano: Vandermaesbrugge, Enesco

Sint-Marcuskerk

de Frélaan 72; 02.331.37.14 or
www.32sonates.be
SEP 19 20.00 Olivier De Spiegeleir, piano: Beethoven sonatas
SEP 21 10.00 Kleine Cantorij conducted by Jan Peeters: Whitbourn

Wolubilis

Paul Hymanslaan 251; 02.761.60.30
SEP 23 19.00 Les XXI with Francesco Piemontesi (Queen Elisabeth Competition prizewinner 2007) and Andrew Hardy, violin: Mozart, Messiaen, Prokofiev, Brahms

Ghent**de Buurtloods**

Patrijsstraat 10
SEP 20-21 Koninklijke Harmonie Eendracht Sint-Catharina Wondelgem

Opera**Antwerp****Stadsschouwburg**

Theaterplein 1; 077.37.38.39
Until SEP 20 Turandot by Puccini conducted by Patrick Fournillier, with Elisabete Matos, soprano; Zoran Todorovich, tenor

Brussels**De Munt**

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39,
www.demunt.be

Don't miss...**Novecento/Transit**

22 September – 29 October (Novecento); October 24 to 26 (Transit), across Leuven. Tickets from 016.20.30.20 or www.festival.be

Although Arnold Schoenberg (above, with students) died more than 50 years ago, his compositions are still often pigeonholed as "contemporary" and, therefore, off-putting. Novecento, the Leuven-based leg of the Festival of Flanders, attempts to reconcile us to the ineffable beauties of 20th-century music: Schoenberg, of course, a selection of whose piano pieces and Lieder will be performed by soprano Ilse Eerens and pianists Inge Spinette and Jan Michiels; but also Berg, Britten, Stravinsky and even Debussy and Ravel, whose elusive harmonies still daunt more than a few. They will be championed by pianist Abdel Rahman El Bacha, cellist Pieter Wispelwey and the Paris Ensemble Intercontemporain, among others.

Sister festival Transit, meanwhile, also staged in Leuven, is more exploratory and focuses chiefly on figures of today's avant-garde: Belgian Annelies Van Parys and Americans Harvey Sollberger and Peter Adriaansz, with Post-World War II serialist Bernd Alois Zimmermann the most established name on the programme. Performers this time include the famed Arditti Quartet and the New York Music Ensemble.

Until SEP 23 19.00 The Monnaie Opera Orchestra & Chorus in Pelléas et Mélisande by Claude Debussy, conducted by Mark Wigglesworth

Deinze

Kasteel ooidonk
Ooidonkreef 9; 070.222.007,
www.iidefixe.be
Until SEP 20 21.00 Outdoor production of Rossini's The Barber of Seville conducted by Eric Lederhandler, staged by François de Carpentries

Jazz & blues**Antwerp**

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,
www.desingel.be
SEP 19 20.00 Chris Joris Quartet

Borgerhout

De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.235.04.90,
www.deroma.be
SEP 18 20.30 The Clement Brothers

Bruges

De Werf
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29
SEP 20 20.30 Chris Joris Rainbow Quartet
SEP 21 11.00 aRTET (aperitif concert to mark the opening of the new season)

Brussels

Jazz Station
Leuvensesteenweg 193-195; 02.733.13.78
SEP 25 20.30 Rackham

Le Grain d'Orge
Waversesteenweg 142; 02.511.26.47
SEP 19 21.30 Lightnin' Guy & The Mighty Gators

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpstraat 28; 02.512.92.50,
www.soundsjazzclub.be
SEP 25 21.00 The Singers Night

The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
SEP 18 12.30 Stash 20.30 Richard Ruben & Ivan Paduart Trio **SEP 19** 20.30 A tribute to Stan Getz **SEP 20** 20.30 Bart Defoort Quartet **SEP 23** 20.30 Luiza Zan & Slang **SEP 24** 20.30 The Silver Serenade Quintet **SEP 25** 20.30 Trio Trovando

Ghent

Museum voor Schone Kunsten
Citadelpark; www.mskgent.be
SEP 18 19.00 Opatuur meets Mub'Art: Tuur Florizone en Pirly Zurstrassen, accordeon

Leuven

Het Depot
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
SEP 20 20.00 Jef Neve Trio

Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul

Antwerp
Sportpaleis
Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060
SEP 23 20.30 Queen & Paul Rodgers

Studio Imperial

Herrystraat 15; 070.22.33.30,
www.onti.be
SEP 18-21 20.30 Sound-Heim, theatre concert with Chadia Cambie: classical, pop, electro

Borgerhout

Hof Ter Lo
Noordersingel 30; 03.543.90.30
SEP 20 22.00 Stealth Bombers, DJ Hazard, Future Prophecies

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
SEP 17 20.00 Colbie Caillat

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be
SEP 25 20.00 Emmylou Harris

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
SEP 20 23.00 Dave Clarke, DJ Hell, Alan Simms. DJ & Pierre

Halles de Schaerbeek

Koninklijke Sinte-Mariastraat 22; 02.218.21.07
SEP 19 20.30 Reset #5: Edu K & Daniel Haaksman, Zombie Disco Squad, Shit Disco, Dead Kids

Le Botanique

Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
Concerts at 20.00:
SEP 18 Guapo **SEP 20** Ladyhawk + Constantine + 31 Knots **SEP 21** The Futureheads **SEP 22** Wire. The Spiント Band **SEP 23** The Lemonheads **SEP 24** Machiavel. Laïs. The Little Ones **SEP 25** Balimurphy

VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07
Doors open at 19.30:
SEP 17 20.00 Ponytail + Polysics

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Roussealaan 208; 0900.00.991
SEP 20 20.00 Snoop Dogg + Akro

Ghent

Capitole
Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5; 0900.84.100
SEP 19-20 20.00 Bart Peeters

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01
SEP 18 20.15 Wim Mertens Ensemble
SEP 19 20.15 The Charlantans
SEP 25 20.15 Lieven Tavernier

NTGent Minnemeers

Minnemeers 8
SEP 19 20.00 Gram Parsons Tribute: Cowboy Angels featuring Laïs, Daan
SEP 20 20.00 Wire & Duke Garwood 23.00 Dyn-O-Mite Funk & Soul Night

Lokeren

CC Lokeren
Kerkplein 5; 09/340.50.56,
www.lokeren.be/cultuur
SEP 20 20.15 Tribute to Jacques Brel: 30 Years Of Love

World, folk**Antwerp**

Zuiderpershuis
Waalse Kaa 14; 03.248.01.00,
www.zuiderpershuis.be
Concerts at 20.30:
SEP 18 Compañía Maria José Franco, flamenco
SEP 19-20 Zuiderpershuis 15th anniversary celebrations: **SEP 19** Free open door event with performances in locations around the building. Artists include Sam Touzani and Dahlia Pessemiers **SEP 20** Adama Dramé & Foliba + Basekou Kouyaté & Amy Sacko (Burkina Faso/Mali)
SEP 25 Clejani Express, Roma music

Brussels

Espace Senghor
Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40,
www.senghor.be
SEP 19 20.30 Orquesta Típica Imperial (Argentina)

Maison du Peuple

Sint-Gillisvoorde 37-39; 02.217.26.00, www.muziekpublieke.be
SEP 19 20.00 Queimada with Philippe Plard & Philippe Etienne, Rémi Decker, Harakiwi, A Contrabanda, folk ball

Théâtre Molière

Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00,
www.muziekpublieke.be
SEP 24 12.30 Broodje Brussel: Vardan Hovanessian (Armenia)

Ghent

Bij' De Vieze Gasten
Reinaertstraat 125; 09.237.04.07,
www.deviezegasten.org
SEP 18 20.30 Transpiradansa!
SEP 19 20.30 Juan Carlos 'El Brujo', Flamenco

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01
SEP 17 20.00 Maria José Franco, Flamenco

Dance**Antwerp**

Lotto Arena
Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060
SEP 21 15.00 China Impressions, dance and music show

Bruges

Stadsschouwburg
Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.60
SEP 20 20.00 Péplum: music, dance and film extravaganza, choreographed by Nasser Martin-Gousset

Brussels**De Munt**

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39,
www.demunt.be

SEP 19-20 20.00 In Schnee, choreographed and performed by Joachim Schloemer, accompanied by Bach's Cello Suites

Theatre

Bruges

Arentshuis
Dijver 16
Until DEC 7 Günter Brus, retrospective by the avant-garde Austrian, on his 70th birthday

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

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, 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

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
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 Summer of Photography)
SEP 19-OCT 19 Eric Delayen, four installations with video, drawings and photographs

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

The Cellars of Cureghem

Ropsy Chaudronstraat 24; 070.25.20.20, www.cavescureghem.be
Until JAN 11 Körperwelten 4 (Body Worlds 4), anatomical exhibition of human bodies by German scientist Gunther Von Hagens

Costume and Lace Museum

Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50
Until SEP 30 Profiel, textile creations by Isabelle Marquet

De Elektriciteitscentrale European Centre for Contemporary Art

Sint Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.31
Until SEP 28 Fables, photographs by Karen Knorr

Espace Photographique Contretype

Verbindingslaan 1; 02.538.42.20
Until SEP 21 Voyage Out, photographs by Chantal Maes

Hungarian Cultural Centre

Treurenberg 10; 02.209.07.50
Until SEP 26 Borderless Art in a Borderless Town, group show by seven Hungarian and seven Belgian artists

ISELP

Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70
Until SEP 26 White Noise, ceramics by Caroline Andrin and others
Until OCT 11 Daisaku Nagai, paintings
Until OCT 11 Light installation by Françoise De Smet and jewellery by Alice de Wrangel

Jacques Franck Cultural Centre

Waterloosesteenweg 94; 02.538.90.20
Until OCT 5 Peres, video work and

photographs of Gaza by Palestinian photographer Paysir Batniji

Jewish Museum of Belgium
Minimstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
Until OCT 5 One Family, photographs by Vardi Kahana

Le Botanique
Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
Until OCT 12 Retrospective of work by Palestinian photographer Rula Halawani

Royal Army Museum
Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33
Until NOV 30 A Paintbrush in the Barrel, World War One paintings, drawings and etchings by soldiers

Royal Museum of Art and History
Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11
Until SEP 21 Expo '58 through the lens of Gérard Castello-Lopes, photographs of the World's Fair (part of Summer of Photography)
Until SEP 30 België op opticaprenten (Belgium on Optical Prints), some 400 views of Belgian cities dating from the 17th and 18th centuries

Royal Museum of Fine Arts
Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11, www.fine-arts-museum.be
Until SEP 21 The British Royal Collection: From Bruegel to Rubens, more than 50 paintings from the Queen Elizabeth II's collection

Until SEP 21 Expo '58: Contemporary Art at the World Fair, revisiting the 1958 exhibition entitled 50 Years of Modern Art

Until OCT 5 Art and Finance in Europe, 15th-century masterworks highlighting the social and historical representation of money by Rogier van der Weyden and Hans Memling, among others

Royal Museum for Central Africa
Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11
Until SEP 28 Naabas Traditional Chiefs of Burkina Faso, outdoor exhibition of large-scale photographs by Jean-Dominique Burton (part of Summer of Photography)
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

Sint-Gorikshallen
Sint-Goriksplein 1; 02.502.44.24
Until OCT 26 Brussels architecture in the 1950s and 60s, photography

Stadhuis
Grote Markt; 02.279.43.50
Until 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 graphic art, including Fernand Khnopff, Théo Van Rysselberghe, Rik Wouters and others

Théâtre Marni
Vergniestraat 25; 02.354.43.68
Until NOV 4 Visages, photographs by Rui Moreira
Tour & Taxis
Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49
Until OCT 12 Visuele verwarring (Visual uncertainty), works by contemporary Finnish artists

WIELS
Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.347.30.33
Until NOV 2 Kelly Walker, works with appropriated and recycled images
Until NOV 2 Nothing More Natural, drawings, computer and video art exploring the relationship between sex and technology in contemporary society by Belgian artist Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven

Deurle
Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens
Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23
Until SEP 21 The Joy of Looking,

photographs of Gaza by Palestinian photographer Paysir Batniji

painting biennale with works by Philip Akkerman, Georg Baselitz, Jean Brusselmans and Roger Raveel, among others (see also Roger Raveel Museum in Machelen-Zulte)

Ghent

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, work with a surrealist touch

Until OCT 12 Homage 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

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

Witte Zaal
Posteernestraat 64; 09.267.96.77
SEP 19-OCT 24 Die Wasserrüben und der Kohl (Turnips and Cabbage), recent paintings by Ronald Ophuis, Wilfried Vandenhove and Jan Imschoot

Hasselt

Modemuseum
Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.23.96.21
Until OCT 31 Ten dans gevraagd (Invitation to Dance), dance costumes by fashion designers and artists from 1920 to the present day

Z33
Zuivelmarkt (Beguinage) 33; 011.29.59.60
Until SEP 29 1% Water, art and design relating to global water issues

Kemzeke

Verbeke Foundation
Hulsterstraat Noord; www.verbekefoundation.com
Until NOV 16 Vision in Motion – Motion in Vision, 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 and Roger Raveel, among others (see also Dhondt-Dhaenens Museum in Deurle)

Turnhout

Stadhuis/Erfgoedhuis
Grote Markt 1; 014.44.33.98
Until OCT 26 De architecten Taeymans in Turnhout, plans, models and photographs of works by a family of architects, Pieter-Jozef Taeymans and his three sons

Festivals & special events

Brussels

Car-free Day Brussels: Annual car-free day in the centre of the capital with information points, entertainment, environment-awareness activities, a Ravel bike tour and a concert at the Atomium with Helmut Lotti

SEP 21 9.00-19.00 across Brussels 02.204.13.43, www.dimanchesansvoiture.irisnet.be

Design September: International festival of architecture and multidisciplinary design. Includes Designers Open Doors and a film programme

Until SEP 30 across Brussels www.designseptember.be

Elles Tournent: Brussels Women's Film Festival featuring 40 feature and short films made by women

SEP 18-21 at Le Botanique, Koningstraat 236

02.218.37.32, www.ellestournent.be

Sunny Side Up: Beursschouwburg's Car-Free Sunday celebrations include breakfast from 10.30 and live music

from 14.00, plus an alternative designer market and children's entertainment

SEP 21 at Beursschouwburg, Auguste

Ortstraat 20-28 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be

Toernooi General: Joint venture by the national theatres of the Dutch and French-speaking communities. Each theatre will present shows in French and Dutch, projects by theatre students and dance performances

Until SEP 27 at KVS, Ardouinkaai 9, and

Theatre National, Emile Jacqmainlaan

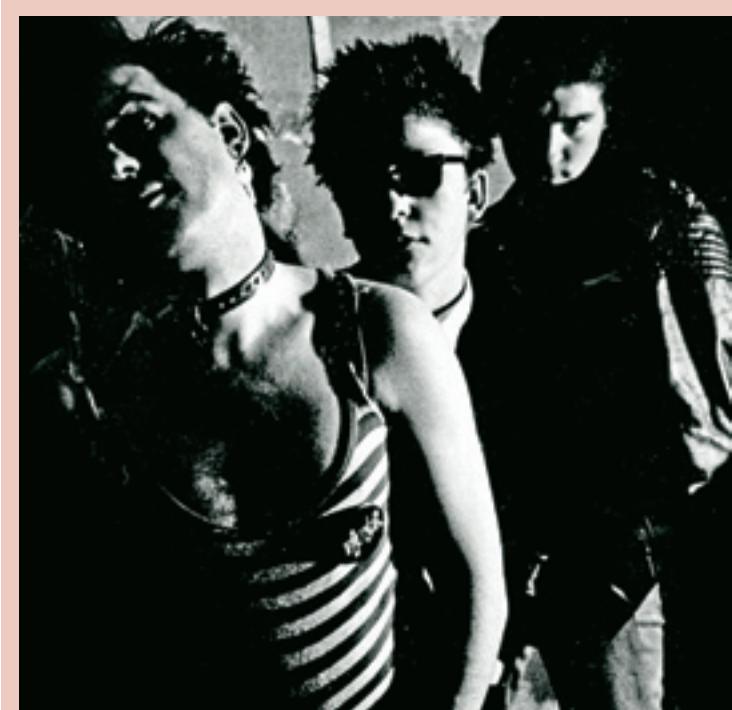
115 056.23.98.55, www.happynewears.be

Zingaro in Battuta: Equestrian show

SEP 20-OCT 19 at Tour & Taxis,

Havenlaan 86C 02.549.60.49, www.sherpa.be

Don't miss this week



The Kids

19 September, 20.00, Ancienne Belgique, Anspachlaan 110, Brussels. Tickets from 02.548.24.24 or www.abconcerts.be

“We're the kids, and we're the first Belgian punk band, and not Chainsaw like you wrongly stated last week in your magazine,” read the letter to the *Humo* office in 1978. “We won't be held back just because you totally ignore us because we don't need your shitty paper.” With those legendary words, The Kids set the tone for their dominance of the Belgian punk scene, producing what most consider the country's first real rock album. Though their mastery of their own instruments was less than perfect, the Antwerp-based foursome screeched the songs “Do You Love the Nazis”, “Bloody Belgium” and “Fascist Cops” during a one-day recording session for their eponymous first album. Their drummer was 12 years old.

Brussels' Ancienne Belgique hosts The Kids this Friday as part of its Rewind series, in which a classic Belgian album is chosen, and the artists invited to play it through, song by song. Some stand faithfully by their originals and some reinvent it – heaven knows what The Kids, now a bit on in years but hardly mellow, might do. You can also see The Kids getting a star on AB's Walk of Fame just next to the venue on Steenstraat at 17.00 the day of the show. “We are almost a normal rock band now. We even have a slow song,” lead singer Ludo Mariman told a music writer in the late 1980s. “We don't spit on the public anymore.”

Well, that's a relief.

Festival Saint-Jazz-ten-Noode 2008

Free annual outdoor jazz festival featuring Belgian and international artists

SEP 20 at Sint-Joostplein www.saintjazz.be

Stars of Europe: Free charity concert sponsored by UNICEF with musicians from across Europe, including Air Traffic, Robyn, Sharleen Spiteri, Thomas Dutronc, Starsailor, Garou, Teatro, Kate Ryan and more

SEP 19 19.00 at Atomium Square,

Heysel www.starsofeurope.be

Tokyo Drums: Japanese music show

Until NOV 5 at Capitole, Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5 0900.69.00

Kortrijk

Happy New Ears: Festival of new music Until SEP 28 at Budascoop,

Kapucijnenvlaanstraat 10, and De Kortrijkse Schouwburg, Schouwburgplein

056.23.98.55, www.happynewears.be

Leffinge (Middelkerke)

Leffingeleuren Festival: The last of the summer outdoor festivals features

Arno, Stereo MC's, Nouvelle Vague, Jon Spencer & Matt Verta-ray, Arsenal,

Zita Swoon, Ladyhawke, Triggerfinger, Girls in Hawaii, Lady Linn and her

Magnificent Seven, Sticky Monster and more

SEP 19-21 next to the Onze-Lieve-Vrouw church

www.leffingeleurenfestival.be

INTERVIEW

Tom Naegels

Tom Naegels is a Flemish journalist and novelist, whose best-selling book *Los* recounts his own experiences working in Antwerp, getting caught up in racial tensions and starting a romance with a Pakistani immigrant. The film version of *Los* releases across Flanders today

I read that you wrote your first story when you were nine years old, and it was about a street kid from Bagdad. So you've been busy with this subject of vulnerable outsiders for some time.

[laughs hysterically] That's a *big* exaggeration. I had no clue at all where Bagdad even was. It was just an exotic name. I made drawings to go with it, and it looks a bit like Borgerhout. No, not even Borgerhout – there were more Moroccans and Arabs in Borgerhout than in my drawings of Bagdad. So don't make me out to be *born* to write about stuff like that.

Okay, but now it's a big theme in your books and in your column in *De Standaard*.

I'm a social novelist; I write novels that portray a society. I did that in *Los* and in my next book, which publishes early next year. I'm still writing about Antwerp – a city, by the way, that ranks number two in the world for the highest number of different nationalities. We have more nationalities than New York or London.

Antwerp has lived through various waves of migration for the last 40 years that have changed the city. What I want to do as a writer is record the stories that come out of that new social fabric. Forty years is a very short time for a society to evolve, so there is a lot of friction, a lot of problems. I try to record as neutrally as I can about how people try to live together in the city of Antwerp.

In my column in *De Standaard*, I write about politics, media and society. I react to what I read in the papers. For instance, the idea of gratuitous violence; I write about that a lot – how people react to that, how the political world reacts to that, how exaggerated reactions are. If I can prove with facts that what all these politicians are saying is hysteria, that's when my column is at its best.

You almost went into academia after studying. Why did you turn to journalism?

I was too interested in the stories behind scientific work. I'm interested in science as long as it tells me a story about the world. I started working as a journalist, which is one of the best decisions I ever made. I knew I wanted to write, but, like a lot of young authors, I didn't really know what to write about. Working as a journalist – especially for a popular newspaper – really showed me how I could find materials, find stories, and make them as relevant as possible.

Your book *Los*, which has just been made into a movie, has a lot of issues in it: immigration, racism, relationship problems, euthanasia. If someone were to ask you what the movie is about, what would you say?

Not only are there a lot of issues, there are a lot of issues that people think are very heavy. They might want to read a book about it [racial conflict], but they definitely don't

Koen Broos



want to spend a nice evening at the cinema with their friends watching it. The director of *Los* is always emphasising that it's a funny film. What I usually say is that it's a romantic comedy with a social aspect. All those themes get hooked onto a classic romantic story.

Flanders is a region where people still don't really like to be confronted by multi-cultural issues. It's there, and we know it's there, but we don't like to talk about it. And we especially don't want our entertainment to be about it. People in the Anglo-Saxon world are less negative about it because there are so many writers and so many films in that setting. I'd like those issues to be a setting, more than a theme.

The book is based on you

specifically, and the main character has your name. Is the film an accurate adaptation?

It is. People kept telling me that it is too difficult a book to make into a film. It has a very passive main character; he's a journalist, watching everything, doubting everything. There is a lot of internal monologue. A film tends to favour characters who do things, who want to achieve something. My character doesn't achieve a thing – on the contrary, he's falling apart.

Really? I think by the end he's achieved quite a lot. He's much clearer about who he is and what he wants.

[smiles] That's what the people who made the film changed about

my book. Novelists tend to favour non-happy endings, whereas filmmakers tend to favour happy endings. But it's still a good adaptation. Most of the scenes come directly from the book. The tone of voice is also very similar, and that was the most important thing to me. The themes can become very polemical; it's easy to make it one-sided. I worked hard to make it as balanced as possible, and it was important to me that the scriptwriter and director would capture the same sort of irony, the same balance between commitment and distance. And I think they've done that very well.

In the book and film, there is an immigrant named Nadia, with whom you had a relationship. Was there really a Nadia?

There was. She's a legal resident in Belgium now. She has a reasonably good job; she's moving on. It's not the ideal life; no asylum seeker ever has the kind of life he or she would have led in their own country if the country had been in normal circumstances. There's always a loss.

Is it totally surreal to see yourself personified onscreen?

When I was writing the book, I was really writing about my grandpa, about my ex-girlfriend, about my mother. I had to explain to them why I sometimes had them do things that they never did, say things that they never said. [That] already separates the characters from the real people. And now there are so many more steps in between – 20 versions of the script, and actors who are interpreting the roles. It's so obvious to everyone that it's not about them anymore. It's actually quite easy to detach myself.

Interview by Lisa Bradshaw

*See our review of *Los* on page 9*

THE LAST WORD

what they're saying in Flanders

No more optimism

"The situation is serious, but there are no easy answers. We have to lose that naive optimism that tells us it'll all go fine by itself."

Yves Leterme
Belgian prime minister
as he prepares for a new round of government negotiations

No comparison

"What I absolutely don't want is for them to compare our son with the killer. I can hear it now: 'They were both young, full of dreams ...' No, no, no."

Françoise de Roy
mother of Joe Van Holsbeeck
as the trial of his killer begins

Curse of celebrity

"Do you know what the worst part is? They send you a free copy whenever they've written something about you."

Iris Vandenkerckhove,
alias celebrity Wendy Van Wanten, who is suing the magazine *Dag Allemaal* for invasion of privacy

Tom Lanoye **Flikkendag** **Meise**

Botanical Garden **Sana Mouziane**

zwerfvuil **Maurice Maeterlinck**

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