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## The fast and the furious

Tom Lanoye celebrates his 50th birthday with all of Flanders applauding

**Christophe Verbiest**

“I had been promised that with aging, the amiability would sink in. *Quod non*. I’m still amply hating, mouthing off and writing because I have to: it’s the only thing I’m able to do.”

Flemish author Tom Lanoye, who turned 50 last month amid fanfare and media headlines, is his usual, free-spoken self in the teaser for his new show, appropriately titled *Woest* (*Furious*).

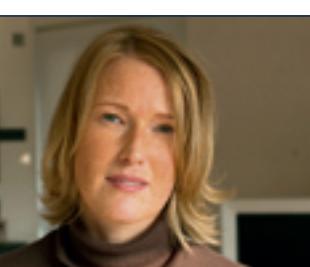
“Don’t get me wrong; I don’t wish to become milder,” he tells me inside KVS, the Brussels’ theatre where *Woest* will open on 3 October. “Getting my dander up is second nature. What’s more rewarding than to wallow in fury?”

Lanoye freely admits that he has a big mouth and a short fuse. “I’m regularly submerged by a haze of red fury, stamping my feet while the froth drips from my lips. And a few moments later I feel immensely embarrassed. It would be great if I was eloquent, too, at those moments, with euphonious phrases sprouting from my mouth, preferably in verse form, alliterations included. Sadly, *that* doesn’t happen.”

Part of this fury is a constant yearning to have a voice in societal debates. Lanoye is probably the most influential Flemish author alive today; there is no end to the variety of his work: novels, plays, poetry, his own one-man shows, essays, short stories, columns in magazines and newspapers. “When I’m writing, I’m thinking the world is lying at my feet, like a wooden push toy that I can manipulate with the tip of my toe,” he says. “But afterwards I realise it’s, at best, the other way around.”

But Lanoye has made a difference. Aside from the impact his work and frequent appearances on television might be having, in 1994, he was the mastermind behind the left-wing union between the Green party (at the time called Agalev, now Groen!) and the Movement for Social Renewal in Antwerp. The collaboration resulted in two alderwomen on the city council – the first time either group won such places in a big Flemish city, bypassing, Lanoye says, “the decrepit socialist party on its left side.”

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### Arts

Maurice Maeterlinck is the only Belgian to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. A new book chronicles the amusement and pathos inherent in the man who brought symbolism to theatre

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### Active

What happens when a federal authority is split between the two regions? Chaos, naturally, but also the business and beauty of everyday life. We look at the National Botanic Garden of Belgium

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### Interview

Deinze designer Veerle Pieters was just voted one of the 50 most influential women bloggers in the world. We find out why.

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### Geert Bourgeois resigns from Flemish government

Flemish nationalist minister follows party line on federal talks

**Alan Hope**

Geert Bourgeois, minister for the media, tourism and foreign relations in the Flemish government, has resigned his post following his party’s refusal to take part in new inter-community negotiations. Bourgeois, the only representative of the Flemish nationalist N-VA party in the government, found his position untenable after his resignation was demanded by both the socialists and the Open VLD liberals.

The Flemish government, under minister-president Kris Peeters, is preparing to sit down to community-to-community

talks with French-speaking representatives from Wallonia and with politicians from both sides of the language divide from Brussels region.

The fact that a Flemish minister is the first casualty of the continuing Belgian political crisis is an accident of circumstances. Bourgeois is the only minister the N-VA has at any level of government. Negotiations over state reform at a federal level have virtually collapsed, and the most hopeful solution to the impasse is for talks between Peeters and his Walloon counter-

*Continued on page 5*

## EDITOR'S NOTES

### Brussels city archives

Deep in the Marollen district of Brussels, another exhibition has just opened to mark the 50th anniversary of Expo '58. Even the most enthusiastic fan of 1950s Belgian style might be getting a tad weary of the theme by now, but this exhibition includes some fascinating new material that makes it worth tracking down.

Titled *In the Intimacy of 1958*, the exhibition is being held in the city archives, a largely forgotten building that was once a drapery store. The building is wonderfully evocative of Old Brussels, but the opening hours aren't really ideal.

This show may not be on the blockbuster scale of the Atomium's 1958 exhibition, but it offers fresh insights into the extraordinary year when Brussels began to transform itself into a modern international city.

It begins by taking the visitor back half a century to a time when the Marollen was a neglected slum district, horse-drawn carts parked on the Grote Markt, women voters barely had any impact in politics, and the Catholic Church played an enormous role in everyday life.

You then witness the deep changes in the everyday life of Brussels people as they shook off grim austerity and old-fashioned morality and began to fashion a more joyous society modelled on the American dream.

With the rise in consumerism, almost every aspect of daily life was deeply transformed, from transport to food, and from clothes to front doors. The exhibition ends with a reconstructed house from 1958, whose three formica-furnished rooms show just how deeply the style transformed everyday life.

**Derek Blyth**

*Brussels city archives, Huidenvettersstraat 65, until 24 December. Open Monday to Friday 8.00-16.00 and Sunday 11.00-17.00. Closed Saturday.*

**online**

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



Living the dream in 1958 style

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### FACE OF FLANDERS



Evenews Film & TV/Monino

### Sana Mouziane

“I thought he was trying to chat me up,” says Sana Mouziane, flashing a dazzling film-star smile.

It's not surprising. When a producer you've never heard of from a country you've never been to walks up to you backstage at a film festival and says, “You're the star of my next movie!” you tend to be sceptical. It was 2007, and this producer was in Montreal winning awards for the Flemish film *Ben X*. Mouziane was there winning awards for the Moroccan film *Samira's Garden*.

Mouziane politely told the producer he could send her the script. It was waiting for her when she checked out of her hotel the next day, with a note: “Please read this; you've got a nine-hour flight.”

The film was called *Los*, and the script was in French. It was about a journalist in Antwerp who falls for an immigrant named Nadia. “I really liked the story, and I fell in love with Nadia,” says Mouziane. The producer, Peter Bouckaert, called her almost immediately to see what she thought. He asked if the director could come to London to meet with her the next day. “Then I realised he was serious,” says the actress.

The director, Jan Verheyen, “turned up in London – on time,” says Mouziane, “and we talked for hours about the character and the movie.” Verheyen called Bouckaert and told him he had made the right choice back in Montreal. “And then he gave me the shock of my life,” Mouziane exclaims. “He said ‘do you know that the movie is in Flemish?’

Moroccan-born Mouziane speaks English, French and four Arabic dialects – she didn't even know what Flemish sounded like. “I thought, oh my gosh, how am I going to do this? In the script there was so much text for Nadia. She one of the main roles!” Another surprise: filming started in two weeks.

But Verheyen and the production team didn't want someone who spoke Dutch well to play Nadia, who's a new immigrant in the film and just learning the language. They arranged for a language coach for Mouziane and went over every word of the script with her. “My hat goes off to them because not knowing whether I was going to be able to learn this script in two weeks was a big risk,” she says. “I really respected them taking that risk.”

The film *Los* opened last week across Flanders, and Mouziane's broken Dutch is front and centre. Based on the novel by Flemish journalist Tom Naegels, it recounts his experiences romancing a Pakistani immigrant and getting involved in race-relations in Antwerp. “It's a very rich plot, which is what attracted me to it,” Mouziane says. “Each character makes you more aware of what's going on around you, of conflicts in life we don't know anything about.”

Mouziane lives in London, where she is also a singer. Having already released several singles, her first full CD is due at the end of this year. She is currently filming an Egyptian soap opera, where she can put one of her native dialects to good use. It's a bit easier than filming in Dutch. But, she says that while making *Los* “it didn't really matter what I was saying, as long as I understand the mood of a scene. As long as Nadia and I become one person, we can go anywhere, we can speak any language.”

**Lisa Bradshaw**

**online**

[www.sanamousiane.com](http://www.sanamousiane.com)

### TALKING DUTCH

#### notes on language



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#### zwerfvuil

You're strolling along enjoying the rare sunshine. A couple approaches (they can be any age or sex you like) and are about to share a cigarette and, oops, one of them tosses the empty pack over his shoulder. What do you do? Make a citizen's arrest? Pretend you saw nothing? Or do you swoop down on the litter-lout, grabbing him by his collar, confronting him with the crumpled fag packet and bark in his ear: *Bang van vuilbakken?* – Afraid of litter bins? The confrontational option (though not the swooping and grabbing, which appears only in the poster) is the one being promoted by an anti-litter campaign in Flanders. It suggests that if you see someone dropping trash on the ground, *vraag hem dan of hij misschien bang is van vuilbakken* – ask him if he is afraid of litter bins. The campaign site predicts that *die persoon zal wel twee keer nadenken voor hij het nogmaals doet* – the person will think twice before he does it again. What it doesn't say is that you should pick your *straatvervuiler* – litter-lout – carefully first.

The site helpfully lists what it considers to be *zwerfvuil* – litter: *sigarettenpeuken, kauwgom, blikjes, plastic flesjes, kranten* – cigarette ends, chewing gum, cans, plastic bottles, newspapers. The word *zwerfvuil* comes from *zwerven* – to wander or roam and *vuil* – dirt. *Zwerf* only appears in compounds: *zwerfkat* – stray cat, *zwerfkapitaal* – floating capital, *zwerfvogel* – migratory bird, *zwerfbal* – quidditch (that's for HP fans).

One of the best ways of stopping people tossing things on the ground is to make the environment litter-free. And that is a part of the campaign that has really taken off. Your local *gemeente* – municipality – can supply all sorts of materials for groups to use to clean up their local area: *vestjes, handschoenen en zakken* – jackets, gloves and sacks. This campaign sees litter as an opportunity for your organisational skills: *laat je organisatietalent de vrije loop en zet je eigen originele zwerfvuilactie op poten* – give your talents free rein and set your own litter campaign on its feet (*op poten zetten* – set it on paws).

Of course, if you pay taxes, you might wonder why the *gemeente* has not been sending street sweepers out to tidy up the mess. Perhaps litter has just got out of hand, and only mass action will work. All over Flanders villages are getting to grips with litter, encouraging locals *om een handje uit de mouwen te steken* – to make an effort (or to “stick a hand out of the sleeves”). Motorists are the target of a poster campaign, rather than irate citizens being encouraged to block the road until the offending *gloeiende peuk of sinaasappelschillen* – glowing fag end or orange peel is retrieved.

**Alistair MacLean**

**online**

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

## FEATURE

Reputas



## Elusive English

Since the death of Hugo Claus earlier this year, Tom Lanoye is the most covered author in the Flemish media. And this "butcher's son with glasses", as his first collection of short stories was called, is without any doubt one of the most important living Flemish writers.

His plays are especially popular in Germany, which recently opened the gates to Central European countries. His latest piece *Atropa* received rave reviews at the recent Avignon Festival in France. One of his key works is *Ten Oorlog*, a reworking of the historical plays in Shakespeare's War of the Roses cycle, in which Lanoye shows a breathtaking mastery of language.

But none of his work has ever been translated into English. You can find some English excerpts from his latest novel *Het Derde Huwelijk* (*The Third Marriage*) on his website – but that's it. "Publishers will tell you that it's easier to sell a foreign car to the Japanese than a foreign novel to an Anglo-Saxon," says Lanoye. Moreover, an art critic of *The Guardian* told him, without irony: "We don't have much patience with foreign writers with names we can't pronounce, like Moeyaert, Hemmerechts or Lanoye." Their loss.

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Six years later, Lanoye himself was a candidate on the Groen! ticket at the district elections in Antwerp. "It was a disastrous but instructive experience," he says. "I know that I'll never be a good enough politician – at least not according to my own standards. I lack the ability to look for compromises, I would have a lot of difficulty obeying the party discipline, and I wouldn't be able to keep my mouth shut up when needed. I don't regret it, since the absence of those talents makes me a good writer and performer."

It came as a surprise that Lanoye's husband, René Los, a former party secretary of the Antwerp division of Groen!, recently characterised him as a social liberal. Lanoye admits it's so. "I was born and bred to be a liberal. I'm the son of shopkeepers and grew up selling sausages and distributing trading stamps. Doing business is my second nature."

The more you talk to Lanoye, the more that shows. Ideologically, he labels himself a social democrat, "although I believe that a partially-regulated market economy is inevitable." Doing away with regulation is a mistake, he says. "That's what they tried in communist countries. But it didn't disappear, it only went underground, with disastrous results."

Lanoye himself is a "multinational", he admits, having started up the public limited company L.A.N.O.Y.E. "I'll be the first one to defend small business owners, but the big capitalists are a completely different story. I find speculating almost immoral."

**"I'm ferociously fighting the romantic view of an artist that people cling to: as a shaman, a genius, suffering from the white plague and dying young"**

You won't hear much talk of market economies in his new show, though. He also promises that, although it was created to commemorate his 50th birthday, it's not a chronological "best of". He already did that 10 years ago with *The Very Best of the Artist Formerly Known as a Young Man*. Instead, for *Woest*, he's bringing in lesser-known material, springing from *Fort Europa*, a play that premiered three years ago in Vienna and has been performed in Germany, France and the Netherlands, but has never been staged in its entirety in Belgium.

"It's theatre, but very in your face – there's no fourth wall," he explains. "Seven metaphorical characters and some anonymous Europeans testify, bring an apologetics or just scold. The advantage is that I can bring the dialogues as one monologue, resulting in a sort of hysterical aria." To that, Lanoye will add parts from a collection of his essays and columns for *Humo* magazine. "I would also have used some parts from my new novel, but it isn't finished yet. Moreo-

ver, it deals with the death of my mother, but last month my father also died, and that has made it too difficult."

In the end *Woest* isn't a monologue – no reading, no acting – but a combination, he says "of everything. It isn't stand-up comedy, but you'll laugh. You'll also have to use your brains."

Lanoye fans are used to that. The author has been both creative and challenging from his first book of poetry, which he self-published when he was 22, through to his many award-winning books and plays, released and staged across Europe. He won the Innovation Prize at the Berlin Theatre Festival in 2000 for *Ten Oorlog*, or *At War*, and last year he was awarded the prestigious Gouden Ganzenveer for Dutch literature – the first Flemish writer ever to win it. His first novel, *Alles moet weg!* (*Everything Must Go!*) was made into a film, and his famous "Monster Trilogy" of novels are all in some stage of film production.

But "my theatre writing is the key to understanding my work," says Lanoye. "The rhetoric and theatricality are always there, but I'm also looking for words that sound good." On the other hand, "my poetry is never cerebral, and a column is, in the end, the written counterpart of cabaret." Theatre allows him to mix the different genres, which he finds satisfying.

With a nod to the businessman inside, Lanoye contends that he is "an author of texts that have to find an audience in as many media as possible." Some years ago, he publicly asserted that he was not a writer but an entrepreneur. "I'm ferociously fighting the roman-

tic view of an artist a lot of people are still clinging to: as a shaman, a genius, suffering from the white plague and dying young – none of this is my goal. And, tell me, why should the marketing of literature be different from the marketing of a rock band, a magazine or a video game? Yes, I am looking for the spotlight! And preferably with a microphone present!"

Still, when your work is public, there's a reputation at stake. This is not lost on Tom Lanoye. "In the end, I'd like to be, first and foremost, an excellent craftsman. Luckily, the urge to write hasn't diminished over the years." He concludes on a rather uncharacteristically modest note: "Well, I think I have some talent too."

*Tom Lanoye premieres Woest on 3 October at KVS in Brussels and stages it across Flanders until 14 November*

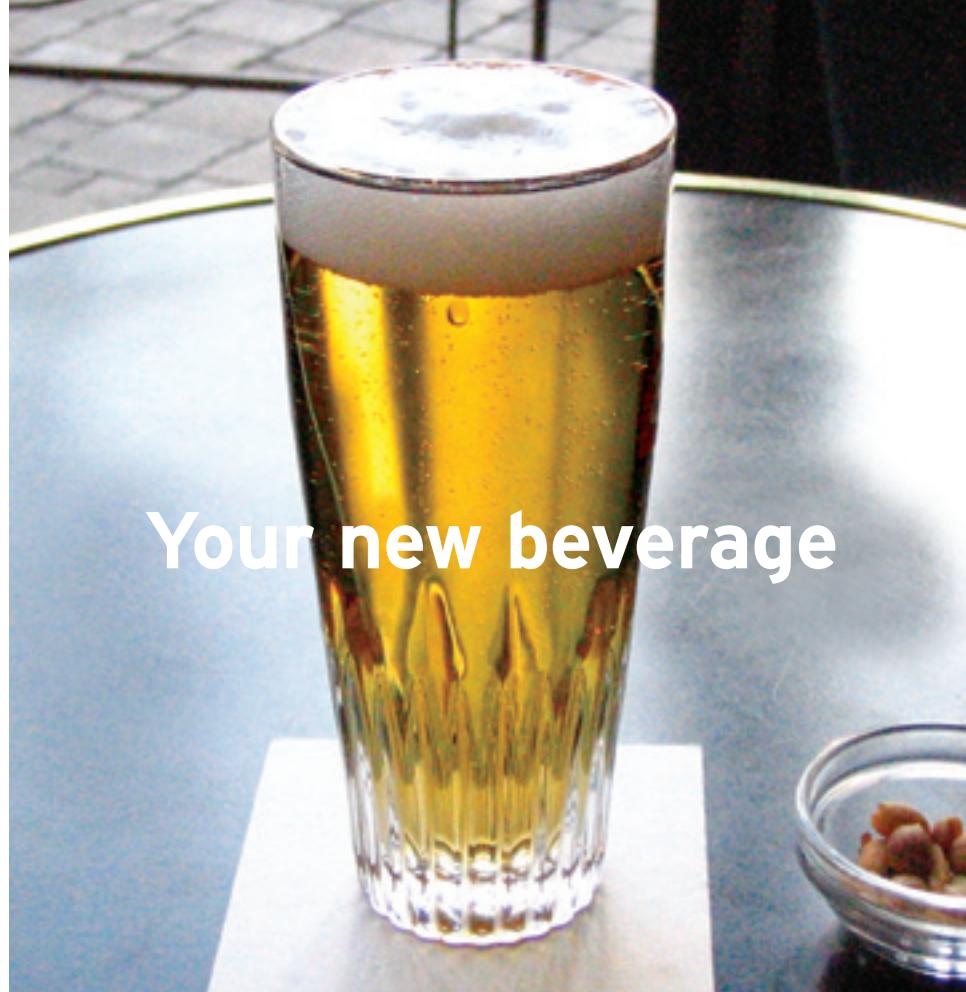
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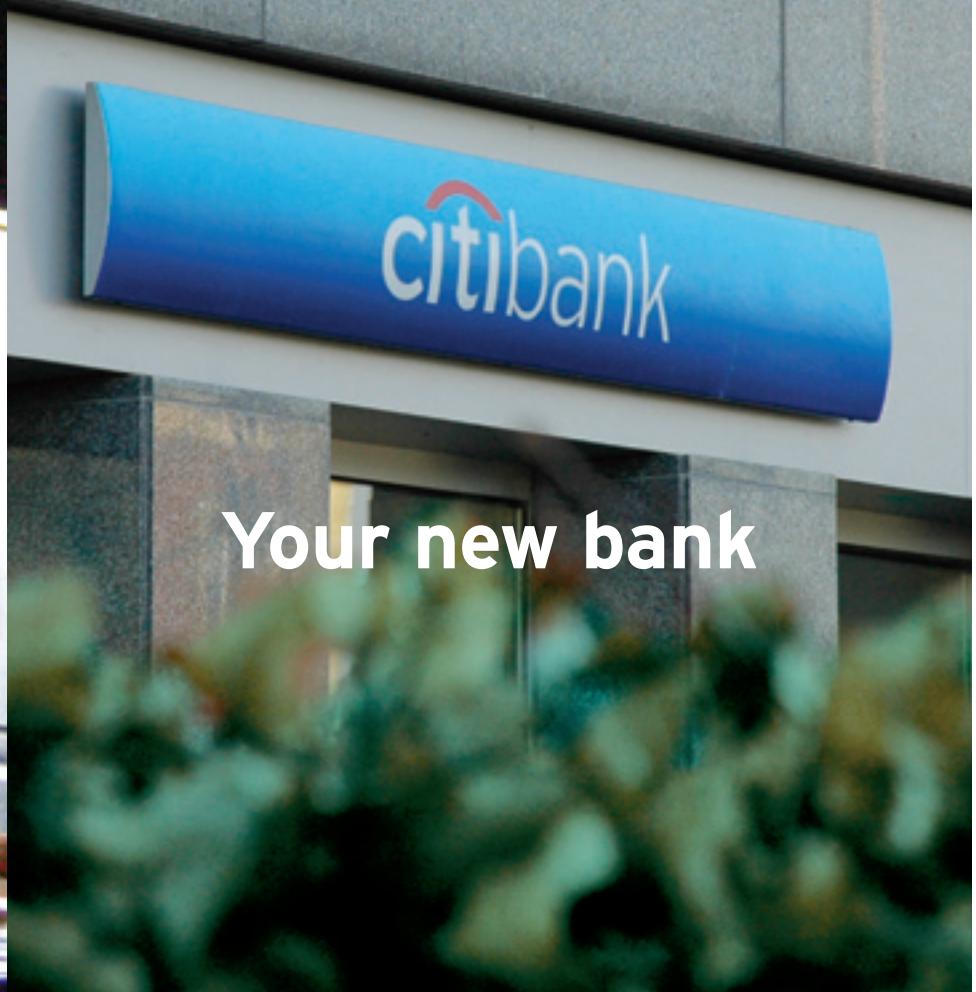
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## Bourgeois departure brings end to cartel

Continued from page 1

part Rudy Demotte. The relations between communities now moves to a community level, but N-VA will not support the move. This puts Bourgeois at odds with Peeters, who fully backs the talks, and also from the rest of his government colleagues, who backed it unanimously.

The resignation is a sign that the political crisis that has affected the federal government for the last 15 months has now reached the Flemish government. The N-VA met in congress this weekend in Ghent where, to loud applause from delegates, the party made it clear its faith in Yves Leterme's government was at an end. A no-confidence motion from party chairman Bart De Wever was passed by 1,596 votes to 10. The cartel forged between

Leterme's CD&V and De Wever's N-VA is broken, and with it any cooperation between Bourgeois and Peeters (CD&V).

Bourgeois also addressed the conference, assuring them that he was not hanging on to a ministerial post simply for the "chauffeur-driven car" that comes with the job, but in order to achieve the party's goals. He was enthusiastically supported from the floor, as was the cartel. By Monday lunchtime, however, Bourgeois was no longer a minister, and the cartel belonged to political history.

"Today we can only conclude that there is no commitment to state reforms before the elections of June 2009, that there is no respect whatever on the French-speaking side, and that there is no commitment on the parliamentary side to split Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde," Bourgeois said, referring to the

controversial topic of the mixed electoral district around the capital.

As well as his resignation, Bourgeois announced that "from his point of view" the cartel was finished. According to CD&V chair Marianne Thyssen, however, "the last word has not been spoken" on that subject. "In the days to come, we will see what is possible. We will not allow ourselves to be railroaded by other parties," she said.

As Bourgeois went in front of the press to announce his decision, his former government partners were meeting without him, and taking the definitive decision to proceed with negotiations with the French-speaking side. And as *Flanders Today* went to press, Peeters was planning to go before the Flemish parliament to make his September policy statement.

## FIFTH COLUMN



### The one government that can't fall

Today is 21 September. The beginning of Fall. The falling of leaves. The government has fallen, too.

Mark Eyskens may not have been the greatest of prime ministers, but announcements like this one – a poem almost – made him legendary. Eyskens pronounced these words after one of the shortest-lived federal governments came to an end.

That was 1981. This is 2008, and things have changed. This time around, it was the Flemish government that was in crisis on 21 September. And it did not fall, for the simple reason that it cannot.

The Flemish government is different from the Belgian federal government in that respect. When the federal government "falls", parliament is disbanded and new elections are called. A new coalition will be formed on the basis of the new election results.

The Flemish Parliament, however, is elected for a fixed term of five years, which means that the elections can be held at the same time as European Parliament elections. The Flemish government needs to have a majority in parliament. If there is a crisis, however, there can be no new elections, and the government has to make do with the one that was elected at the beginning of the term.

This means that a government cannot "fall", no matter how deep the crisis. But it can change in composition. This happened a good number of times during the 1999-2004 term, when there was hardly a year without ministers stepping down and new ministers presenting themselves. Even now, we have a new minister-president (Kris Peeters succeeded Yves Leterme in 2007), but the same members of parliament are still in place.

Last Monday, Kris Peeters faced one of the deepest crises in the history of the Flemish government, after the Flemish nationalist party N-VA decided it would no longer participate in the institutional dialogue with the French speakers, and minister Geert Bourgeois resigned. Both liberals and socialists felt that N-VA minister Bourgeois broke away from an earlier common position taken by the Flemish government. The timing could not have been more difficult for Peeters, as he was due to deliver his September Declaration (the Flemish version of the US president's State of the Union speech) on Monday. A couple of hours before he had to address parliament, Peeters was still unsure if what he was president of was a government or not. Whatever the outcome, "falling" was never an option.

Anja Otte

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

## Lotte and Milan top the name charts

Lotte and Milan are the most popular names in Flanders for new babies born in 2007, according to figures from the federal economy service. Nationwide, the most popular names are Emma – for the fifth year in a row – and Nathan.

New entries into the top 10 in Flanders are Louise and Elise for girls, and Stan, Kobe and Jasper for boys. In Brussels, new arrivals include Lucas and Anas for boys and Clara for girls. In total, 8,475 boys' and 9,719 girls' names were registered.

Some of the more flamboyant choices include Arafat, Pixie, India-Summer, Bilitis, Doedoe, Magnificat and the supremely patriotic Belgiana.

Region	Boys	Girls
Flanders	Milan	Lotte
	Wout	Emma
	Lars	Lore
Brussels	Mohamed	Lina and Sarah
	Adam	Aya
	Rayan	Yasmine
Wallonia	Nathan	Léa
	Lucas	Clara
	Noah	Emma

## Unions call for "day of action" on 6 October

Two of the country's main unions, the Christian ACV and the socialist ABVV, have called a nationwide day of action for Monday, 6 October, to protest at the loss of purchasing power and what the unions called the federal government's "immobility" in dealing with the situation. The organisation representing the employers immediately attacked the plan, describing it as "unfortunate and irresponsible". Meanwhile, prime minister Yves Leterme called for calm.

The plan was launched early last week by the ABVV in response to government inaction and was joined by the ACV a few days later. The liberal union ACLVB later voted to join the action.

Exact plans have so far not been revealed, with the unions leaving it to their various sectors to choose the most fitting protest. But the words "general strike" are being avoided. "We don't want to exhaust all of our options for

the time being," said ACV chairman Luc Cortebeek. "It's always possible to go up another gear. It's not our intention at this time to bring the whole country to a standstill."

That prudence may not be shared by the ACV's socialist counterparts, or even by its own rank and file. "The discontent among the membership is particularly high," Cortebeek said. At the ABVV, meanwhile, opinions tended to favour tough actions, following the tepid response to smaller-scale actions taken in June.

Over the weekend, the likelihood of a rail strike on 6 October increased. Unions at Flanders' public transport authority De Lijn called for a 24-hour strike, and their counterparts in Brussels at the MIVB were considering a similar action.

Unions are accusing employers of refusing to meet their demands for action on purchasing power in order to cut their costs. The employ-

ers, in turn, have reacted to the planned day of action by suspending all negotiations over pay increases and social security. "Not until the unions give a strong enough signal that they can be trusted again, can the negotiations on matters of interest to both parties [unions and employers] be restarted," the employers said in a statement issued jointly by the Federation of Belgian Enterprises and six other employers' organisations.

Open VLD chairman Bart Somers has spoken out against the unions, accusing them of political motives. "How else to explain the fact that the unions will be striking before the policy statement [by Prime Minister Yves Leterme] of 14 October and before even the first talks on salary increases have taken place?" he asked.

Yves Leterme, attending a conference on government and business, warned against "extreme reactions" and called on the partners to keep their *sang froid* and act responsibly.

## Antwerp sewers win heritage prize

The Antwerp *ruien* – an underground system of canals beneath the city – have won this year's Monument Prize, announced at the weekend by building heritage minister Dirk Van Mechelen.

The other nominees, one per province, were the St Trudo church in Peer in Limburg, the Gillade Hall in Aalst in East Flanders, the Sacramental Tower in the St Leonard's church in Zoutleeuw in Brabant and the Villa l'Escale in De Panne in West Flanders. Those five were chosen from a list of 15 proposed in a call for nominations.

Antwerp's *ruien* were originally streams that flowed between the low hills on which the city was built. They came to be used for transport

and as sewers. The city allowed building over the *ruien* for free in the 16th century in an effort to cover them over, which eventually took place in the 19th century. Since last century, their function as sewers has been taken over by a system of pipes within the tunnels.

The *ruien* themselves were open for guided visits at the recent Open Monument Day, bringing Antwerp, Van Mechelen said, "into line with other European culture cities, which are also starting to prize their underground heritage." The prize, worth €12,500, is intended to reward a project which represents a good example of heritage preservation. About 1,600 metres of the *ruien* are now open to the public.



online

<http://tinyurl.com/ruien>

## NEWS FLASH



**A shortage of radioactive isotopes** has led to a 60% reduction in the number of tests such as bone-scans being carried out at Antwerp University hospital. The isotopes are in short supply because the nuclear power stations that supply them are closed for repairs, and the radioactive elements cannot be stored. However, according to Dr Laurens Carp, head of nuclear medicine at the hospital, "the situation is serious, but there is no danger to patients. In some neighbouring countries, waiting lists are always this long."

Parents should be forbidden by law from **smoking in the presence of their children**, even in the family home, according to a discussion paper put forward last week by the Flemish League Against Cancer. The organisation is also looking into the legal possibility of equating smoking in the presence of children with child abuse, which would, they said, allow offending parents to be helped rather than punished.

**Two capuchin monkeys** who escaped from their owner in Bocholt last week remain at large after workers at the nature centre in Opglabbeek failed to catch them. Their male companion was drugged with a tranquilliser dart and captured. The monkeys, native to Central and South America, look cuddly, but centre worker Benjamin Loison warned they "have serious teeth and can deliver a severe bite."

**Sara Geudens**, 25, last week became the **first deaf schoolteacher in Flanders** to have her own class – a group of 6- to 10-year-olds who are also hearing impaired. Geudens, deaf since birth, started training as a jewellery designer but became dissatisfied. After working as a class assistant in the deaf class at Kasterlinden school in Sint-Agatha-Berchem, she decided to train as a teacher. "I know what they're going through," she said of her students. "I can better understand their problems."

Girls aged between 16 and 18 will be reimbursed for the cost of the **vaccine against cervical cancer** under a new measure to be introduced before the end of the year. The repayment, which is already in effect for girls between 12 and 16, will bring the cost to the patient down from €400 to only €32. In the last 10 months, some 115,000 girls have been vaccinated.

**Children should stay in school from 8.00 to 18.00** to help tackle the problem of a shortage of child care, according to a proposal by Groen! chairperson Mieke Vogels. The longer days – based on the model of schools in Rome – would be split up with hours for sport, recreation and creative development. Workers in education, however, rejected the idea, saying that children have a need for out-of-school activities.

## House sellers forced to provide energy audit

Homeowners who put their houses up for sale after 1 November this year will be obliged to provide potential buyers with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) drawn up by a recognised energy auditor. The certificate, which applies to houses in the Flanders Region, will cost €250 and remain valid for 10 years.

Flemish energy minister Hilde Crevits argues that the EPC will act as an incentive to homeowners to make sure their homes are as well-insulated and energy-efficient as possible. The audit takes into account the roof, walls, floor, windows, doors, insulation and orientation. The minister expects some 30,000 certificates – equal to the number of houses sold in a year – to be drawn up in the first 12 months. From January 2009, the EPC will also be required when putting any property up for rent (including studios and holiday lets), adding another 70,000 properties to the total.

In the long term, Crevits said, Flanders aims to build up an energy inventory covering most of the houses in the region, based on their EPCs. This will help the government to decide on policy, she said.



The solar village project in Freiburg, Germany: a model of energy efficient housing

In practice, the energy certificate will be issued by an expert trained to carry out audits. At present only two institutions in the country offer the necessary training – Antwerp High School and Syntra Vlaanderen, the Flemish agency for contracting train-

ing – but one other high school has applied for recognition.

"The certificate gives potential buyers and tenants an insight into the energy efficiency of their home," Crevits said. "It also gives tips on how to improve your energy economy. Lower energy

consumption is not only good for the environment, it's also good for the household budget."

**online**  
[www.energiesparen.be](http://www.energiesparen.be)  
 or freephone 1700

## Zeebrugge ferry saved

Rory Watson

**Mainland Europe's only direct ferry link with Scotland** was removed at the weekend after the Greek parent company Attica closed down its Zeebrugge/Rosyth Superfast service. The company had originally announced in May that it would axe the North Sea crossing, blaming rising fuel prices and a fall in the value of sterling. It also argued that it wanted to concentrate on its core Greek market.

However, the Scottish government maintains that the route, which was opened in May 2002, is of vital strategic importance to Scotland and economically viable. It confirmed at the weekend that "it has attracted interest from a number of potential operators".

Negotiations with a potential new owner are being conducted, by Forth Ports PLC, which owns and manages Rosyth. Its chief executive, Charles Hammond said, "We are optimistic that these negotiations can be concluded in a short space of time. As a result, we will be keeping the Rosyth ferry terminal fully manned and operational." Over the past six years, the luxury ferry has carried almost one million passengers and 200,000 freight units between the Flemish port and Scotland.

## Prince returns borrowed furniture

Prince Filip is to return 150 items of furniture and interior fittings borrowed from the royal palace on the Meir in Antwerp, after controversy over the ownership of the pieces. They include candelabras and clocks, as well as furniture and a bed once slept in by Napoleon.

The palace was built in the 18th century and later redecorated in Empire style on the orders of Napoleon. In 1969 the entire building was handed over by the royal family to Flanders, which then loaned furniture to the royals as well as to some of the nation's museums. Several pieces were taken by Prince Filip in 1995 to furnish his family quarters in Laeken and the royal palace in Brussels.

The Flemish government intends to open the palace as a museum in 2009 and has asked for the furniture to be returned. The palace replied that the furniture belonged to the royal collection, but Flanders persisted. Now, after lengthy discussions between Flemish administrative affairs minister Geert Bourgeois and federal finance minister Didier Reynders, the various pieces have been identified. The prince has promised to return them to Antwerp in time for the museum's opening, although the question of ownership remains unresolved.

## Tobback injured in mountain fall

Former pensions minister Bruno Tobback, socialist deputy and son of the veteran politician Louis, is in stable condition after a severe fall while rock climbing in Austria. Tobback suffered two skull fractures, a concussion, a broken foot and wrist and bruising to ribs and vertebrae when he slipped and fell. He was saved from further injury by the rope attached to his companion.

"It was like a cartoon," he joked afterwards. "But with real pain." Tobback's condition had earlier given cause for concern, especially the development of a subdural haematoma – bleeding into the brain. However doctors said the blood was able to drain away naturally, without the need for surgery.

Tobback, 39, was taken by helicopter to Innsbruck University Hospital, where he was still under observation as *Flanders Today* went to press. He has been climbing for 15 years and, according to reports, took safety advice, seriously. "I can't imagine exactly what happened," he said. "Luckily at no point did I lose consciousness."

## Tax gift for workers

Every working person in Flanders will next year receive a "job discount" worth €250, budget minister Dirk Van Mechelen announced. At a total cost of €700 million, the discount – a tax rebate, in fact – is double the sum paid last year to the region's one million lowest-paid workers. This year they received €200, and their payment could go up next year to as high as €300.

In the meantime, the measure has been extended to include every working person, each of whom will receive €250 regardless of circumstances. That will be paid in one lump sum, unlike the current system where the rebate is paid in monthly instalments. Payment will be made at the end of February. Van Mechelen said the lump sum was easier to administer: the symbolic value of a €250 windfall in every pay packet will also have been considered.

Although the individual sums paid are moderately larger, the total bill has increased fourfold to €717 million, something which brought opposition from some government parties. Van Mechelen's bid was helped by a €1.2 billion surplus with which the Flemish government will finish this, its last pre-election year. The €400 million was made conditional on the realisation of state reform, but this condition was not met by the government.

## Textile firms cut 800 jobs



Beaulieu's Berry Yarns factory in Ninove will close

The carpet manufacturer Beaulieu has blamed the crisis in the British housing market for a slowdown that will result in job losses at the company's tuft division in Wielsbeke near Tielt. The Berry Yarns factory in Ninove, meanwhile, will close, bringing total job cuts to 387, or 15% of the workforce. Elsewhere, UCO Textiles announced the closure of its sportswear plant in Ghent, with the loss of almost 400 jobs.

Unions and management were due to start negotiations on the redundancies this week. Last May Beaulieu International Group decided to close its woven-carpets division altogether, and 100 jobs were lost. A spokesman for the ACV union said they had been promised back then that no more restructuring was envisioned. "We feel disappointed and upset," Eddy De Craemer said.

The company blamed the cutbacks on the effect of the oil price on the cost of materials like polypropylene and polyamide. At the same time, orders for all types of carpet have gone into freefall, as the credit crisis impacts the housing market in the UK – an important market for Beaulieu products. "In the medium term, there is no hope of a turn-around," a company spokesman said.

The job-losses at Beaulieu are the latest in a series of cuts in the floorings sector in Belgium, starting last year when Domo Industries closed its fitted-carpet factory in Sint-Niklaas. The company recently announced the closure of its vinyl division in Zwijnaarde with the loss of 150 jobs. Associated Weavers, meanwhile, cut 42 jobs in its tufted carpets division in Kuurne. Just a few weeks ago, fitted-carpet producer Ralos declared bankruptcy with the loss of 248 jobs at its plant in Dilsen in Limburg.

In Ghent, meanwhile, UCO Textiles said it would close in phases ending in May 2009. The company blamed increased competition from the Far East and a fall in demand. "A worker in Ghent costs us €40,000 a year, and a Romanian worker only €4,000," a spokesperson said.

The sportswear plant produces denim fabric for manufacturers like Diesel and Levi's. Current CEO Philippe Vlerick, of the Vlerick management school family, was awarded the Manager of the Year award by *Trends* magazine last year. He was described then as "an atypical manager who represents a perfect combination of strategic vision, know-how and gut feeling".

Unions, in the meantime, warned that the double blow to the region from Domo and now UCO might only be the beginning. "This is dramatic for employment in Ghent. I'm afraid it may not be over yet," a representative of the ACV union said. "The forecasts for the textile industry are not good, and the area could soon be hit harder still," he said.

## THE BUSINESS WEEK IN FIGURES

### €869 million

The total losses incurred by Belgian banks in the collapse of Lehman Brothers. The banks KBC, Fortis and Dexia all owned Lehman bonds, which may now not be honoured. Dexia had the most exposure, at €500 million; KBC holds €230 in Lehman paper and Fortis €139 million.

### €8.3 billion

The loss in share value suffered by the three above banks in only two days last week, as a result of the worldwide run on stock markets. Fortis lost €4 billion, KBC €2.2 billion and Dexia €2.1 billion.

### €66

The compensation *per diem* proposed for businesses that suffer material loss because of roadworks, under a new law put forward by minister for small businesses Sabine Ruelle. At present the compensation amounts to only €44 per day.

### 1,063,700

The average daily number of readers of *Het Laatste Nieuws*, according to annual figures released last week by the Centre for Media Information (CIM). However, the paper lost 3% of its readers in the past year. Biggest riser was financial daily *De Tijd*, which jumped 29% to a readership of 130,000. Most-read of the quality papers: *De Standaard* with 355,400 readers a day.

### 32,000

The number of students in Flemish technical high schools in 2008 – an increase of 5,000 over the last four years. The so-called "bottleneck" professions account for a large part of the increase, said a spokesperson for the High Schools Council.

### €45 million

The extra investment promised by Audi in the company's plant in Vorst in Brussels, plus production of the new A1 car. The company announced a doubling of its investment in Vorst to €200 million in June.

### €573

The average spending per family on general consumption of food, non-food, goods and services, according to consumer organisation OIVO. The figures are based on a "shopping basket" of 104 products, prices of which are monitored monthly.



### 25,000

The number of extra jobs that could be provided in Belgium as a result of the implementation of the European Union's climate and energy plan, according to research by the Federal Planning Office. The plan includes, among other provisions, a 20% cut in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, 20% less energy consumption and 20% of energy provided from renewable sources.

### 12 megawatts

The increased capacity planned for the wind-turbine park owned by renewable energy concern Aspiravi at Zeebrugge. The company plans to remove the existing 24 Belgian-built turbines, total capacity 8mW, and replace them with 14 more powerful models. The new turbines will be constructed in Denmark. The renovation will cost €20 million.

### 280,000

The number of families ruled to have received an illegal energy subsidy by the Council of State. The court ruled that the legislation enacted to allow the subsidy was not in line with the text published in the official journal. The measure affected low-income families and consisted of a €50 subsidy for electricity and €75 for gas.

### 9.66%

The one-day increase in Bel20 shares last Friday, the second-highest increase in the index's history. Markets were reacting to a decision in Washington to set up a new government-backed bank to guarantee the subprime mortgages, which have led to massive problems in the financial markets.

### €315 million

The total damages being sought by 15,039 investors in Lernout & Hauspie Speech Products, the bankrupt Ypres-based technology firm. The trial of the main executives for fraud that began last May resumed this week.

### 3 months

The period during which short-selling of shares in financial institutions will be forbidden, according to a decision by the financial markets regulator CBFA last week. Shorting, where a trader sells shares he does not own, knowing the price will have fallen by the time the delivery-due date comes around, has been blamed for the precipitous fall in bank share prices over recent days. Regulators in France and the Netherlands have taken similar measures.

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## BUSINESS FLASH

**La Corbeille**

The Westmeerbeek-based fruit and vegetable preserves producer La Corbeille has been acquired by the French Bonduelle, one of Europe's largest firms in the sector. The move is part of Bonduelle's strategy to develop its market share in Belgium.

**Agfa-Gevaert**

The Antwerp-based medical technology company Agfa-Gevaert has won a €95 million contract to supply the French Hopitaux de Paris with an electronic information system to follow patients as they progress through the hospital's network. Some 72,000 users in 43 separate locations will be connected to the system.

**Lanxess**

The German chemical company Lanxess is investing €35 million to develop the capacity of its Antwerp caprolactam production unit.

**Jan De Nul**

The Antwerp-based dredging company Jan De Nul is part of the consortium that has won a €620 million contract to expand the port of Oman. De Nul's role in the project involves the deepening of the port and its access channel and the extension of the breakwaters.

**Belgian railways**

NMBS, the Belgian national railway company, has lost some €3.5 million due to disruptions caused by the fire in the Channel tunnel on Thursday September 11. Traffic was interrupted for several days and repairs are expected to take several weeks. Meanwhile, the company is investing €475 million a year to acquire new rolling stock to meet its yearly 5% passenger growth.

**Audi**

Audi Brussels, the subsidiary of the German automobile company, is to invest an additional €45 million in a testing facility for the new Audi A-1 model to be built in its Vorst production unit from next year.

**De Post**

The Belgian postal operator De Post is rumoured to be close to signing an agreement to take over the Tachimetafores mail and logistics operations of the Greek post office.

**CB Richard Ellis**

CB Richard Ellis, the local subsidiary of the world's leading real estate consultancy, is to acquire the Antwerp-based C&T Retail. The move is part of CBRE's efforts to become the country's market leader in the field, ahead of arch-rival Cushman&Wakefield. CBRE already claims to be the largest consultancy in the office property sector.

**Keyware**

Zaventem-based electronic payment systems provider Keyware has raised €3.85 million in capital with an issue of convertible bonds, falling well short of the €6 million sought. But CEO Stéphane Vandervelde said he was happy with the outcome in light of "the current difficult situation on the financial markets". Keyware provides systems for Visa, MasterCard and Maestro among others.

**Colruyt**

Supermarket chief executive Jef Colruyt has hit out at political inaction, echoing the criticisms of trades unions planning a national strike next month. Speaking in the margins of his company's AGM, Colruyt complained that 50% of the chain's income goes to the treasury rather than being re-invested in the economy. Colruyt issues a profits forecast of €304 million.

## MINDING MY OWN BUSINESS

# Soap opera

Endless experimentation pays off in your bath



Administrative nightmares behind her, Susan Bushe's business is finally taking off

**Denzil Walton**

**T**he scents filling Susan Bushe's kitchen in the grounds of her rural cottage are likely to make you think of more exotic parts of the world than Bekkevoort, near Diest. Briefly, you might think you are standing in a Mediterranean pine forest, a Sicilian herb garden or a Greek olive grove.

The reason is a collection of scented soaps with equally enchanting names: Dalmatian Sage, Citrus Bliss, Lemony Remedy, Poppy Stimulation. You may even be tempted to taste a bar: Belgian Chocolate & Peppermint, for instance.

The range is the culmination of four years' hard work by Bushe, a New Zealander who moved to Flanders a decade ago. She has perfected the ancient craft of handmade soapmaking, and year ago she gained all the necessary certifications to sell her products. Now online sales of The Croft Artisanal Products are booming, and she is finally beginning to realise the fruits of her long labour.

Bushe took up soapmaking because she wanted to start a business she could run from home, even with young children around. "I am a creative person and love making things with my hands," she explains. "I got chatting with a friend in the US who makes soaps. It sounded fascinating. She became my mentor, educating me in the wonderful art and science of soapmaking."

According to Bushe, anyone can make soap – it's basically a simple chemical process, just like baking. However, there's a world of difference between making a bar of soap that dissolves in the bath the first time you use it and one that remains in good condition for months. You have to produce soap that creates sufficient but not too much

lather, stays dry but doesn't crumble, and is pleasantly but not overpoweringly smelly. It all depends on getting the perfect balance of a dozen or so ingredients, plus the best water.

Another similarity with home baking is that Bushe can control what goes into her product. "Some of the chemicals that manufacturers put into soaps are totally unnecessary," she exclaims. "Like sodium lauryl sulphate, or SLS. It's added to liquid soap – even baby soap – because it's cheap and produces a lot of foam. But it's an industrial degreaser used to clean garage floors and car parts."

That caustic substance strips away skin's natural oils, she says, "leading to dry, itchy skin and even rashes." Most adverse reactions to soap are due to SLS. Bushe's soaps contain none, nor do they use animal fats.

Handmade soaps are also superior for their high glycerine content. Glycerine absorbs moisture from the air, keeping the skin shiny and glowing. Mass-produced soaps have a low glycerine content because manufacturers extract it from soap and sell it to companies making expensive cosmetics. Handmade soapmakers like Bushe lack the technology to extract glycerine, which means a glycerine-rich, healthier soap.

Of course, making soap is one thing; selling it is another. Before a single bar can be legally sold in the EU, it has to be certified, which involves a chemist approving every recipe. As Bushe works with over 50 recipes, the administrative workload was so intense and time consuming that it very nearly drove her business under before she even started. "It was a nightmare," she recalls. "On numerous occasions, I very nearly packed it all in."

The first task was to list all the ingredients in each recipe, by percentage, in descending order, according to their INCI (International Nomenclature Cosmetic Ingredient) name. Then, for each ingredient, a product information file had to be prepared, including Material Safety Data Sheets. Finally, the whole information package had to be sent to a chemist to analyse the ingredients for their potential to cause allergic reactions.

Even finding a chemist was difficult: "Some countries have agencies specially set up to do this kind of work, but Belgium doesn't. Eventually I tracked down a certified chemist who successfully validated all my recipes."

At least the EU's regulations for personal care products are among the world's strictest, meaning that Bushe is authorised to sell worldwide. However, certification is expensive, so Croft is unlikely to see its first profits for another two years. With biofuels pushing up the price of raw materials such as palm oil, the payback period could well extend further.

Once certification was received, Bushe had to make a stock of soaps, design and print the packaging and cut and wrap each bar. Her husband constructed a website, and Croft Artisanal Products opened for business one year ago.

Slowly but steadily, sales have increased, with word of mouth proving the best advertisement. A stall at a local Christmas market proved fruitful, and an ethical shop in Diest has started to carry Croft products. The first soapmaking open door weekend proved a great success, attracting over 200 people.

Although Bushe is keen to make a financial success of the business, she's not driven by profit. "I just love making the soap in the first place," she says. "I also get a buzz from seeing people finally find a soap that suits their skin, after years of not being able to use commercial soaps."

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

## What's in the soap

Skin is the body's largest organ. So it makes sense to find out what we are putting on it every day. Do you want to know the effects of coconut, neem and jojoba oil? Or why mango butter and cocoa butter are used? The Croft's Soap Kitchen is open every Wednesday from 16.00 to 19.00, so you can quiz Bushe about her soaps. The next Open Day with soapmaking demonstrations is on 23 November.

## BOOKS

# The life of the writer

## Flanders has been unable to embrace its only winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature

### Lisa Bradshaw

In 1911, the *Gazette van Gent* published the news that Maurice Maeterlinck, born in the city 49 years earlier, had won the Nobel Prize for Literature. It was one sentence, tucked underneath a notice about a new telegraph office.

Maeterlinck was the first – and so far the only – Belgian to win the world's highest literary honour. But Flanders hardly took notice. "Maeterlinck has never been very popular in his own hometown," laments André Capiteyn of Ghent's city archives. "This is still a problem, to say the least. After winning the Nobel Prize, one would think that he would have been a hero!"

But Maeterlinck suffered from that same old problem that dogs Belgium today: he was caught between the French and Flemish sides. Born in the capital of East Flanders in 1862, Maeterlinck was from a wealthy, French-speaking family. It was the language of his education and of all of his work.

But he also spoke the local Flemish dialect, normally reserved for the lower classes, and when he practiced law in his 20s, it was in Dutch. "For the French he was too Flemish, and for the Flemish he was too French," sighs Capiteyn. Maeterlinck's expatriation to France in his 30s, where he lived the rest of his life, certainly didn't win any love from Flanders, either.

The city of Ghent will make up for lost time when it stages a massive celebration of all things Maeterlinck in 2011, the 100th anniversary of the writer's Nobel Prize. But Capiteyn couldn't wait that long. He has recently published *Maeterlinck: A Nobel Prize for Ghent* in both Dutch and French. An English translation will be available in time for the centenary.

As the title suggests, the city wants to reclaim its hold on Maeterlinck, whose plays were the first to transfer symbolism to the theatre. "He was a real citizen of Ghent," maintains Capiteyn. "Maeterlinck is a Flemish name, his roots were in Ghent for

generations, his friends were all here. Without Ghent, he would never have been the person he became."

Because writing was not considered a respectable occupation, Maeterlinck was forced to study law at the University of Ghent, which he hated with a passion. After graduation, he represented clients in Dutch before the magistrate but was once heard to remark: "I lead all my clients directly to prison."

In between losing cases, he would occasionally flit off to Paris. He told his father he was there improving his law practice, "but he went straight to the poets," smiles Capiteyn.

Maeterlinck published his first book of poetry in 1889. Called *Serres chaudes* (*Hothouses*), it established him early as a moody symbolist preoccupied with death, human destiny and "the dark side of fate," says Capiteyn. Later that same year, he self-published his first play, *La Princesse Maleine*, a romantic tragedy void of time or place. He handed out a few dozen copies to friends and relatives, and one of them ended up on the desk of Octave Mirbeau, theatre critic at Paris newspaper *Le Figaro*.

Soon a copy of the paper arrived at the Maeterlinck home with the writer's name emblazoned across the top of the front page. "I know nothing of Mr Maurice Maeterlinck," the article began. "I know not where he comes from and what he looks like.... All I know is that no man is more unknown than he; and I also know that he has made a masterpiece...the most brilliant work of this age....superior in beauty to the most beautiful in Shakespeare."

A stunned Maeterlinck became famous overnight. Though he hated media attention, the 29-year-old was secretly delighted with the *Figaro* write-up because it meant that he could no longer be taken seriously as a lawyer.

His time thus freed up, Maeterlinck produced several more fatalist tragedies

over the next few years, including *Pelléas and Mélisande*, one of his best-known works, largely thanks to fellow symbolist Claude Debussy's famous opera adaptation.

In 1895, Maeterlinck met the French opera singer Georgette Leblanc, who finally convinced him to move to Paris. Always a very sombre fellow, his relationship with her brightened his mood – and the mood of his work. Spirituality and social philosophy crept in, and he began to produce a number of popular volumes of essays based on his own research across a number of country homes in France: *The Life of the Bee*, *The Life of the Ant* and *The Intelligence of Flowers*. They were unexpectedly popular, but none so much as 1909's *L'Oiseau bleu*, or *The Blue Bird*.

The story of two children who make a fantastical voyage across time and space in search of the elusive bluebird was an enormous international success. A stage play, it was performed around the world in both human and marionette form, adapted by Leblanc as a story for children, an inspiration for painters and other artists and made into movies.

It was, indeed, *The Blue Bird* that convinced the board of the Nobel Prize. "It is a simple story," says Capiteyn, "but throughout he goes very deeply into the mysteries of life." The play is what most people link to the writer, "but it's not his most important



This photo of Maeterlinck in Paris was taken at about the time *Le Figaro* made him an overnight sensation

work, particularly in the world of symbolism," Capiteyn maintains. That honour, he says, belongs to Maeterlinck's very first collection, *Hothouses*. "He never surpassed it."

### The Maeterlinck Collection

"Museum" is actually an optimistic word for the collection of obscure curiosities known as the Arnold Vander Haeghen Museum, lodged in an unlikely location in the middle of Ghent's most popular shopping street. Two rooms are devoted to Belgium's only Nobel Prize winner in literature. You must ring the bell to be let in. Despite all this, it's worth it.

Old photographs of Maeterlinck, letters, manuscripts and one hysterical newspaper article from a 1920 copy of the *New York Times* both educate and entertain. A large part of Maeterlinck's private library is here, and two plush purple chairs from his study. The entrance is free, but it's advisable to purchase the guidebook to the exhibition, which is only €1.25 and comes in Dutch, French or English.

## GALLERY

# Absolute power

## Call your local gallery owner an "art dealer" at your own risk

### Stéphanie Duval

There's an ongoing discussion about the right word for someone who has a gallery and sells art. It used to be clear that such a person was an art dealer. But lately many have voiced dissatisfaction with that term, proposing instead the word "gallerist". Far from splitting hairs, the distinction is an important one, according to Yvan De Backer, owner of Absolute Art Gallery.

"My job is not solely about selling the art that is exhibited in my galleries," he says. De Backer is approached by new artists every single day, but rarely does he accept any of them. "There has to be a strong connection between the gallerist and the artist," he maintains.

A gallery with a reputation such as Absolute Art gives an artist not only credibility but an entire support system. "If I choose to work with an artist, I will invest in him, contact my clients about him and generally help him tell his story," De Backer explains. "Of course the end goal is to help an artist sell his work, not to be a museum."

For such commitment to be worthwhile, a gallery needs a clientele that has just the same combination of rational and emotional responses. "A client has to see a work of art and think: 'I really like this, how much is it?' in exactly that order," says De Backer. Absolute Art, with its two locations in Bruges and Knokke, has this kind of clientele. "The two galleries are run by my two sons, who couldn't be more



Absolute Art in Bruges re-opens with a flourish on 20 September

different," De Backer says.

It turns out this is a good thing. The clients in Bruges and Knokke aren't alike, either. "In Bruges we get a lot of tourists, who walk in, fall in love with a work and buy it before they return home. In Knokke, people tend to return time and again."

The two locations, therefore, have a different approach to art. "The more accessible artists find their way to Bruges, where we like to display works that look beautiful, even if you do not fully comprehend them," explains De Backer. In Knokke, you'll find more experimental work.

This distinction will eventually result in a name change later this year for the Bruges location, which re-opens this weekend after a complete renovation with an exhibition of the eerily realistic oil paintings of Ria De Henau.

### online

[www.absoluteartgallery.com](http://www.absoluteartgallery.com)

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BELGIUM - MEMBER GOSSELIN GROUP

## EVENT

# Ghent turns itself in

This weekend is the 10th and final edition of Flikkendag

Robyn Boyle

The popular TV series on channel één about Ghent's police corps will come to an end next year after 10 successful seasons. Therefore, the annual Flikkendag (Cops Day) in Ghent will also benefit from one last hurrah.

It is a phenomenon like no other in Flanders: Some 125,000 descended on Ghent's centre last year, and this Sunday the event is expected to draw more *Flikken* fans than ever before. The Ghent



A look they liked: Patrick Dauwe was a regular extra on *Flikken*

## Flik For a Day

TV show uses real Ghent cops as extras

Patrick Dauwe is Chief Inspector of the Intervention Police in Ghent. Like many other local police officers, he has played a few roles on *Flikken*. "I've been an extra several times – once as a policeman sitting in an office, another time as a gangster who had to push somebody," he says. "It's a lot of waiting and doing the same gestures over and over again. You are busy the whole day for what ends up being only a few seconds of film."

Dauwe was an extra when the show was in its early stages. He had to take holidays from his job and was paid about €40 per day by the production company. Sometimes he travelled to VRT's headquarters in Brussels to do takes in their studios. "I think it's a job like any other – and stressful," he admits. "They have to know their lines and try not to make any mistakes, otherwise, it's 'cut' and start over."

It was an eye opening experience for Dauwe all around. "It was very interesting to see how much is involved in creating the series – lighting, sound, setting – everything that goes into it." Does this real-life cop watch the show? "At first I would watch it to catch a glimpse of myself, but not anymore. Give me Clint Eastwood over *Flikken* any day."

Police and its partners will pull out all the stops to mark the end of this decade-long tradition.

Flikkendag has its humble beginnings in a 1999 open house by the Ghent Police. At that time it was called "Police Dream Day for Kids" and was such a hit that they decided to make it an annual event under the name Flikkendag. Originally held in an historic building on the ring, the day of adventurous activity was moved to the Blaarmeersen (a huge recreational park) for two years before ultimately taking over the city centre.

The event's connection with the TV series was a matter of good luck and timing. Eleven years ago, producer Erwin Provoost came to Ghent's Chief Police Commissioner Steven De Smet with the idea to create a series around the railway police called *Tracks*. The idea quickly evolved into a series dedicated to Ghent's police corps. They decided to empower the generally negative term for police officers, "flikken", by using it as the title. It didn't take long before the actors started participating in the annual Flikkendag activities, and the event and TV show became irrevocably intertwined.

*Flikken* not only became one of Flanders' most popular TV shows, it also served to improve the public's image of the police. Thanks to the series, becoming a police officer in Flanders has never been more attractive to young people.

Certainly one reason for the show's popularity is that people from Ghent get a kick out of seeing shots of their lovely city on TV. And it has boosted tourism, enticing numerous Dutch fans of the show to take weekend trips to Ghent. *Flikken* of course chooses some of the city's most picturesque locations for filming, such as along the waterways and in the historical city centre. These are the same spots where thousands of visitors will turn up to celebrate on



Celebs, cops and crowds; it must be Flikkendag

Sunday.

For those to whom "Cops Day" is an entirely novel concept, what can you expect on Sunday? Well, the first thing you'll notice is all the streets and squares in Ghent buzzing with activity, from dance groups and orchestras to marching bands and parade-goers. Then you will see men and women from the city's emergency services showing off their skills through creative demonstrations with motorcycles, fire trucks and ambulances. Picture geared-out riot patrols and police on horseback and bicycle.

The day is especially exciting for children, though, with a game inviting them to "be a cop for a day" and the military police offering "death rides" from the top of a building. The biggest spectacle, however, is the parade that starts at 14.00 and ends at Sint-Baafsplaat with a gargantuan party.

This year, organisers will roll out the red carpet for actors from the current series as well as familiar faces from previous years. Expect to find crowds of *Flikken* fans of all ages vying for the autographs, and



don't be surprised at the number of people sporting identical baseball caps with "Flikken" emblazoned across the front. It's all part of the fervour that is Flikkendag.

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

## Season 10

What's in store for the *Flikken* team next?

The final season of *Flikken* will see the much-loved characters put to the test on both personal and professional levels. Commissioner John, who plays coach and father to the team of cops, searches for the suspect of a gruesome murder. Emma, who struggled last season after her fatal shooting of an older man, is shaken by an unexpected meeting that causes buried emotions to resurface. Michiel is the cool-blooded cop with a tough exterior, but an intrigued Emma is starting to find out just how complex he really is.

Meanwhile, the rest of the team must do everything they can to prevent Michiel from being suspected of murder. Even after losing her fiancé in a car crash last season, Cat continues to be as solid as a rock for her colleagues. But her relationship with Staf seems to be taking another course. Commissioner-to-be Wilfried convinces Raymond to carry out an investigation that brings him into conflict with Emma, among others, and tensions rise.

The drama just keeps coming as Raymond recognises himself in a father with a drug-addicted son, leading him to take the *Flikken* team straight into a complicated web of nightlife crime.

For those crying into their *Flikken* caps over the finale of their beloved series, stop despairing: TV één launched *Flikken Maastricht* this month. Never before did we realise just how nefarious activity is lurking in Limburg province.



## GARDEN

# A divided plot

## The growing pains of a national garden

Monique Philips

Ever since 2000, when the federal ministry of agriculture ceased to exist and was replaced by Flemish and Walloon counterparts, the National Botanic Garden of Belgium has been in trouble. Situated just four kilometres down the A12 from Brussels, the garden lies in Meise, Flanders. But this does not make it a responsibility of the Flemish region government – it's still national. So, how do you cut a botanic garden into two equal parts?

This isn't, of course, a new problem in Belgium. Examples of sometimes far-fetched solutions are plentiful. For instance, if you'd like to consult the old encyclopaedia in Leuven's university library, you'd better be looking for a word from A to M or you'll find yourself on a train to the University of Louvain-La-Neuve to visit the second part of the set. When, in 1968, the Belgian university split into two separate parts – one Flemish and the other Walloon – so did the contents of their libraries.

The name of this particular world-renowned botanic garden was coined in 1870, but its history is rooted in 1789 when the official decision was made to establish such a place in Brussels – probably to save the remnants of existing collections. At Meise, you can still admire some of the world's oldest potted plants that were acquired at



Autumn is wondrous at the National Botanical Garden of Belgium



The Bouchout Castle in Meise, where Princess Charlotte of Belgium was locked up for more than 50 years (see facing page)

this time, such as the 18th-century Eastern Cape cycads (*Encephalartos altensteinii*), each five metres high and weighing 3,000 kilograms.

By 1830, the garden was obliged to move to another site in Brussels (which is still known today as the Botanique), and in 1930 the ever-

expanding collection found its final place in the adjoining castle grounds of Meise and Bouchout. The whole move would take more about 70 years. Meise Castle has burnt down since, but the orangery, Bouchout castle and many garden follies have survived. Today 10,000 plants are tucked warmly inside

and 8,000 more thrive outside on 92 hectares (in the same climate as your own garden, which you might find inspirational).

While Belgium ranks in the top 10 of botanic gardens worldwide, its gigantic herbarium of 3.5 million specimens resides among the world's top 20. Meise contains dried specimens of plants from the Amazon and Central Africa that are already extinct in the wild, functioning as an important safe house for these species. These are the samples that scientific names and descriptions have been based upon. Scientists from all over the world come to Meise to study some still unclassified specimens stored inside one of numerous cabinets in one of seven halls. A new classification of these species results in great scientific delight.

Past expeditions of Meise-associated scientists have brought home many newly discovered plants, among the most noted the Rubicaceae coffee plant family from Congo. Every cup of coffee you drink is a blend between these Bobusta beans and other (Arabica) beans. Only recently, a naturally decaffeinated coffee plant and a self-pollinating one were discovered.

### Who's picking up the bill?

So, this unique and invaluable collection is the result of a joint historical effort – and to try to get two equally interesting collections out of it is impossible. But leaving it in one piece has been causing a fracas over the last eight years – not least because of the question of funding.

One suggestion is that the park's real estate could become Flemish

while the existing organic collection as it now stands would remain federal. This, however, could prove problematic as future acquisitions and investments would be regarded Flemish. As a result, federal plants might mix with Flemish ones, and then who would own the shoots?

Behind this caricature lies another stumbling block – the future status of the currently French-speaking personnel. This knot couldn't be untied in 2000,



School kids wait for Hercules, the name of the botanical garden's *Amorphophallus titanum*, to blossom. One of the largest flowers in the world, its bloom earlier this month lasted only a few days

and it doesn't look like it will be soon.

And in the meantime, greenhouses are falling to ruin through lack of funding, which is putting some collections of rare plants under threat. The botanical garden's director, Jan Rammeloo, regularly complains in the press about his predicament and pleads for a more European spirit in which his institute should remain indivisible. But, he did admit (at a recent conference on the problems the Chinese are experiencing with fungi on their famous Terracotta Army) that the massive amounts of fungi growing in one of their buildings due to a leaking roof was of educational importance.

If you're looking for a particular species, you can now benefit from Plantcol at [www.plantcol.be](http://www.plantcol.be). Belgian botanical gardens and arboreta have joined their inventories and put them on the internet. So now you know where to look for which plant.

To visitors, however, the grounds look astonishingly well-groomed; plants and trees thrive at Meise thanks to 180 devoted staff members. Major reconstruction works, paid for by the Flemish government, are underway at the Plant Palace, a giant glass complex of 13 interconnecting greenhouses. One of them is the Victoria House, where the world's biggest water lilies, *Victoria Amazonica* and *Victoria Cruziana*, grandly float on an indoor pool.

In the refurbished sections, various climate zones from around the world have been successfully simulated. Smoke molecules are used to set off certain fireproof plants' seeding cycle. You can walk through subtropical rainforests and deserts to reach the Mediterranean, while smelling – and touching and tasting – their various plants.

Another section boasts only edible plants, while a huge showcase offers insight into 500 million years of plant evolution. Still to come is a "monsoon house", a challenging simulation that has to recreate two sets of season per years: dry and wet. This project is being closely watched by other botanical gardens to see if Meise can pull it off.

### And where are the flowers?

Visitors whose only experience of botanical gardens are the royal greenhouses in Laken, open to the public for three weeks every spring, will often wonder in Meise: "Where are the flowers?" Whereas Laken boasts a grand collection of spring bloomers, Meise is a purely botanical garden with solely wild specimens. New plants come straight from the wild or from other botanical gardens that can testify to their origin.

This scientific approach remains apparent throughout the rose garden, the herbarium and the fruticetum, where the layout is directed by educational concerns. Likewise, the medicinal garden is organised according to illness. (Beware when nibbling the Ephedra, which might help you diet but will also damage your nervous system, as recent cases in the United States have shown.)

A leaflet tucked into the official map will inform you which subdivision is particularly beautiful according to the season. If all goes well this autumn, the North American forest – containing maples, ash, tulip trees, sweet gums and various oaks – will delight visitors again with an Indian summer show of colours. To find out more about the scientific work behind the scenes, you might want to join one of the tours. Inside stories will definitely enhance your visit, whatever the season.

online  
[www.br.fgov.be](http://www.br.fgov.be)



Koen Es of the national botanical garden's education department plops his toddler atop the *Victoria amazonica*, the largest water lily in the world. Mark your calendar now for 20 June, 2009, the next baby photo op at the garden

# Bird in a golden cage

An imprisoned princess of Belgium lived out her life at Meise

If you head to the National Botanic Garden of Belgium and its focal point, Bouchout Castle, hoping to find traces of its former royal resident, you'll be disappointed. Nothing reminds the visitor of Charlotte, Princess of Belgium and Empress of Mexico. Yes, Mexico.

History books depict Charlotte, born in 1840 as the only daughter of Belgium's first king, Leopold I, as an impressionable child, bereaved of her mother at the age of 10 and committed to her designated role as a future royal.

European royals regarded the young girl as extremely elegant and very intelligent. When she was 16 and eligible, she fell for 24-year-old Maximilian of Austria, a vibrant character and brother of Franz-Joseph, the Austrian Emperor. When Maximilian was appointed Viceroy of the short-lived region of Venice and Lombardy, they happily lived in Villa Miramar, Trieste, until the region broke free of Austria.

As Maximilian hadn't exactly changed his bachelor ways, he eventually gave Charlotte a venereal disease. The honeymoon was over, and she put an end to what she felt to be physical compliance to an impatient husband. But it didn't stop her from loving him desperately.

In the 1860s, the imperial couple, hesitant but ambitious, accepted the Crown of Mexico offered by Napoleon III. While Charlotte's French grandmother shrieked: "They will be killed!" the rest of the family looked forward to the glitter and wealth of the new exotic empire. A small Belgian army was recruited to join them, and off they all went.

Upon their arrival in Vera Cruz, however, the young couple and their small entourage soon discovered the population wasn't exactly rejoicing to see them. Their first night in the vermin-infested imperial palace in Mexico City was spent on the billiard table. So they took up residence in the nearby Castle of Chapultepec. Maximilian, a liberal, did his best – he dressed like a Mexican and minted new coins. But he soon got into political hot water.

Charlotte (or Mama Carlota as Mexican songs still testify), who organised sumptuous balls in grand European style, was left to reign, while Maximilian took off into the woods and soon took up residence with a mistress. An heir wasn't exactly in sight, and suggestions have been made that the couple resorted to peyote to overcome their sexual frustrations. In the meantime, they adopted a grandson of the former Mexican Emperor – but promptly returned him when his mother publicly claimed they had stolen him from her.

By 1866, the political situation became impossible as the French, contrary to their promises, withdrew their troops from debt-ridden Mexico. Hurriedly, Charlotte travelled to Europe to rally help for her besieged husband. No one was interested, least of all Napoleon III. During her audience with the Pope, she put her finger in his cup of cocoa and expressed her desperate fear of being poisoned by the French and/or Austrians. She confessed to keeping chickens in her bedroom for fear of eating anything else. Based on concerns for her sanity, she was the first and only woman ever allowed to spend the night in the Vatican.

Informed by the Pope, her Austrian family-in-law rushed over and confined Charlotte to the garden house of her former residence at Miramare Castle,



Charlotte, not long before her death, on the grounds at Meise

where she was quickly declared insane. She might have been poisoned, but rumour has long had it that she was pregnant.

In Mexico, things had gone from bad to worse and, after a last battle, Maximilian, who had received a letter from his mama that "emperors do not run", was taken prisoner. The news of Maximilian having been executed at the age of 35 by the new Mexican leader Benito Juárez finally breached Charlotte's forced isolation two years later, as his coffin was shipped home.

When her Belgian sister-in-law, Marie-Henriette, insisted on visiting Charlotte at Miramar, she was appalled by her precarious health and took her home to the palace in Laken, where she soon recovered. Charlotte's brother, King Leopold II, took on the battle over Maximilian's Austrian inheritance, presumably to fund his own Congo campaign, and finally housed Charlotte in the nearby Castle of Bouchout. She would never be able to shake her reputation of being insane.

In the spring of 1869, she wrote hundreds of letters. In some she invited Major Loysel, a former officer in the Mexican army, to come and beat her mercilessly. She plotted their escape, after which she would reign over France "as a man, of course." She had fits of rage in which she slashed paintings and smashed the vases and furniture of Bouchout Castle, which had become her prison.

Time went by, and allegedly she never realised the First World War raged outside the gates, where a sign read: "Here lives Carlota, Empress of Mexico and sister-in-law of our Austrian ally." She continued to live in the secluded castle under the watchful eye of governesses, talking to the dead Maximilian, riding through the park in a carriage. A gardener who got her out of a ditch received a medal. "I know every tree and bush in this park," she sighed.

In the village, locals named her "the mad bird in the golden cage", others questioned her "insanity". Finally, in 1927, Empress Carlota died of pneumonia at the age of 87. By then, everything and everyone, the empires and emperors she had known, were long gone. **MP**

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

**deSingel**  
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,  
[www.desingel.be](http://www.desingel.be)  
**SEP 24** 20.00 The Monnaie Symphony Orchestra conducted by Mark Wigglesworth: Mahler's Symphony No 9  
**SEP 25** 20.00 Boris Berezovsky, piano: Chopin, Liszt  
**SEP 26** 20.00 Frank Peter Zimmermann, violin; Antoine Tamestit, viola; Christian Poltéra, cello; Beethoven string trios

**Bruges**

**Concertgebouw**  
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02,  
[www.concertgebouw.be](http://www.concertgebouw.be)  
Concerts at 20.00:  
**SEP 26** The Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century conducted by Frans Brüggen: Rameau, Chopin  
**SEP 27** La Petite Bande conducted by Sigiswald Kuijken, with Szabolcs Brickner, tenor; Anna Kasyan and Layla Claire, sopranos  
**SEP 28** Muziektheater Transparant in Le Fils des étoiles by Erik Satie and L'Histoire de Babar, le petit éléphant by Poulenc  
**SEP 30** Daan Vandewalle, piano, with video by Jan Boon: Messiaen's Catalogue of Birds

**Brussels**

**Beursschouwburg**  
Auguste Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,  
[www.beursschouwburg.be](http://www.beursschouwburg.be)  
**SEP 27** 20.30 LOD in Hoeveel jaren telt november? (How Many Years Counts November?) composed by Jan Kuijken, staged by Yoris Ven den Houte, film by Hans Spilliaert, based on poems by Pablo Neruda

**Get your tickets now for...****Nunsense**

**10-12 October, 20.00, De Bosuil, Witherendreef 1, Overijse.**  
Tickets from 0497.73.93.52 or [marlisproductions@gmail.com](mailto:marlisproductions@gmail.com)

One of America's best-loved musicals, *Nunsense* went from a planned four-day run back in 1985 to 28 weeks of sold-out shows, and that was just the early cabaret production. The full-length theatre version followed, becoming the second-longest running off-Broadway show in history. (It still holds seventh place). It's easy to see why: *Nunsense* has everything that audiences are looking for in musical comedy: honest laughs, hummable songs and a darkly wry humour.

It seems that 52 nuns among the Little Sisters of Hoboken have been accidentally poisoned by the cook. The remaining few must pay for the burials, so they stage a variety show. Among them are a former chorus girl, a streetwise Brooklynite and a wannabe ballerina, plus poor Sister Mary Amnesia, who lost her memory when a crucifix fell on her head. This production in Overijse is being staged in English by Marlis, the singing duo of Lisa Armetta and Marjolein Gabel, both active for years in the local Brussels musical theatre scene. But be careful: once you see them in *Nunsense*, their performances of Broadway tunes might become habit forming. Ha ha! Get it?

**Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)**

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,  
[www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)  
**SEP 24** 20.00 Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique and Monteverdi Choir conducted by Sir John Eliot Gardiner: Bach, Brahms  
**SEP 27** 20.00 Liège Philharmonic conducted by Pascal Rophé: Beethoven's Symphony No 5, Webern's Im Sommerwind, Debussy's La Mer  
**SEP 28** 11.00 Encantar Ensemble: Guerrero, Compère, Palestrina, Agricola, Festa, Fayifax, Brumel, de Morales  
**SEP 30** 20.00 La Petite Bande conducted by Sigiswald Kuijken  
**OCT 2** 20.00 Budapest Festival Orchestra conducted by Ivan Fischer, with Christianne Stotijn, mezzo; Robert Dean Smith, tenor: Schönberg, Mahler

**Dieleghem Abbey**

Jan Tiebackstraat 14; 02.428.71.03  
**SEP 27** 14.30 Tonino Carlini, tenor; Marie-Christine Helbois, soprano; Alexandre Papazoglakis, piano: opera extracts and songs by Bellini, Donizetti, Tosti, Clara Schumann

**Flagey**

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,  
[www.flagey.be](http://www.flagey.be)

**SEP 25** 20.15 Ictus Ensemble: Fafchamps, Vivier, Mochizuki  
**SEP 26** 12.30 Tetra-lyre Quartet: Dvorák, Martinu  
**SEP 28** 11.30 Andrei Vieru, piano; Laura Buruiana, cello: Vieru, Beethoven, Chopin  
**SEP 29** 20.00 Charlemagne Orchestra for Europe conducted by Bartholomeus-Henri Van de Velde, with Michèle Losier, mezzo: Mahler's Kindertotenlieder, Schumann, Haydn

**Miniemenkerk**

Miniemenstraat 62; 02.511.93.84,  
[www.minimes.net](http://www.minimes.net)

**SEP 28** 10.30 Chapelle des Minimes Orchestra and Choir conducted by Benoît Jacquemin, with Els Crommen, soprano; Regula Boeninger, alto; Ivan

Goossens, tenor: Bach cantatas BWV 105, 78

**Musical Instruments Museum**

Hofberg 2; 0900.28.877  
**SEP 28** 11.00 Luc Dewez, cello; Luc Devos, piano: Franck, Poulenc

**Royal Music Conservatory**

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37  
**SEP 28** 11.45 Jeroen Van Lerberghe, piano: Rachmaninov, Beach, Rowley, Bortkiewicz

**Saint Michael and St Gudula Cathedral**

Sinter-Goedeleplein; 02.217.83.45  
**SEP 28** 10.00 CSsM&G conducted by Kurt Bikkembergs: works by Bikkembergs

**Opera****Ghent**

**Vlaamse Opera**  
Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02,  
[www.vlaamseopera.be](http://www.vlaamseopera.be)  
**SEP 28-OCT 10** Turandot by Puccini conducted by Patrick Fournillier, with Elisabete Matos, soprano; Zoran Todorovich, tenor

**Jazz & blues****Antwerp**

**Café Hopper**  
Leopold de Waelstraat 2  
**SEP 28** 16.00 Yvonne Walter & Guests

**Café Mambo**

Vlaamsstraat 3  
**SEP 24** 20.30 Chilean saxophonist Marcelo Moncada

**Brussels**

**Ancienne Belgique**  
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24  
**OCT 1** 20.00 Matthew Herbert Big Band

**Jazz Station**

Leuvensesteenweg 193-195; 02.733.13.78  
**SEP 25** 20.30 Rackham  
**SEP 27** 18.00 Chroma  
**OCT 1** 20.30 Gare à la fête  
**OCT 2** 20.30 Jazz Station Big Band  
**OCT 8** 20.30 Roditi/Ignatzek/Rassinfosse

**Le Grain d'Orge**

Waversesteenweg 142; 02.511.26.47  
**SEP 26** 21.30 Blue Stuff

**Sounds Jazz Club**

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50,  
[www.soundsjazzclub.be](http://www.soundsjazzclub.be)  
**SEP 25** 21.00 The Singers Night  
**SEP 26-27** 22.00 Stéphane Mercier Quartet  
**SEP 29** 22.00 Master Session  
**SEP 30** 22.00 Da Romeo & The Crazy Moondog Band  
**OCT 1** 22.00 Chamaquindo, salsa  
**OCT 2** 22.00 Marie De Conde & The Mellow Project

**The Music Village**

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45  
**SEP 24** 20.30 The Silver Serenade Quintet  
**SEP 25** 20.30 Trio Trovando  
**SEP 26** 20.30 Mathilde Renault Trio  
**SEP 27** 20.30 Jack Van Poll Trio  
**SEP 28** 20.30 Rallye chantons français (free entrance): 18.00 Alexonor 20.00 Imbert Imbert  
**SEP 30** 20.30 Koala

**Ghent**

**De Centrale**  
Kraankindersstraat 2; 09.265.98.28,  
[www.decentrale.be](http://www.decentrale.be)  
**SEP 28** 20.00 Guitarist Frederik Leroux plays solo

**Herzele**

**'t Uilekot**  
Groenlaan 39; 053.62.64.36,  
[www.uilekot.org](http://www.uilekot.org)  
**SEP 27** 21.00 Blues Lee

**Kortrijk**

**VC Mozaïek**  
Overleiestraat 15a  
**SEP 28** 19.00 New Orleans Jazz by The Superior Dance Band

**Mechelen**

**De Jazz-Zolder**  
Sint-Romboutskerkhof 2, Wollemarkt; 0497.02.93.61  
**SEP 26** 21.00 Wayne Shorter tribute

**Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul****Antwerp**

**Sportpaleis**  
Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060  
**SEP 26-OCT 17** 20.30 Milk Inc  
**SEP 30** 20.30 Bryan Adams

**Borgerhout**

**Luchtbal Cultuurcentrum**  
Columbiastraat 8; 03.543.90.30,  
[www.cluchbal.org](http://www.cluchbal.org)  
**SEP 27** 20.30 Jesse Malin

**Brussels**

**Ancienne Belgique**  
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24  
**SEP 26** 19.00 Rewind: Raymond Van Het Groenewoud plays Nooit Meer Drunken  
**SEP 27** 20.00 Mélée  
**SEP 28** 20.00 Tom Helsen  
**SEP 29** 22.00 Pivot  
**SEP 29-30** 20.00 Killing Joke  
**SEP 30** 22.00 Dead Souls  
**OCT 2** 20.00 Under Byen. Chris Eckman + Steve Wynn & The Dragon Bridge Orchestra

**Art Base**

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20  
**SEP 26** 21.00 Manuel Hermia & Le Murmure de l'Orient

**Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)**  
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,  
[www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)  
**SEP 28** 15.30 Greece, a dance without end (tickets: 02.672.37.04)

**Theatre 140**  
Eugène Plaskyalaan 140; 02.733.97.08  
**OCT 1-4** 20.30 Cie La Guetteur in La Confidence des oiseaux

**World, folk****Antwerp**

**Zuiderpershuis**  
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00,  
[www.zuiderpershuis.be](http://www.zuiderpershuis.be)  
**SEP 25** 20.30 Clejani Express, Roma music

**SEP 26** 20.30 Marockin' Brass with Adama Dramé

**Brussels**

**Théâtre Molière**  
Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00,  
[www.muziekpublique.be](http://www.muziekpublique.be)  
**SEP 24** 12.30 Broodje Brussel: Vardan Hovanessian (Armenia)  
**SEP 26** 20.00 Camaxe (Galicia)  
**SEP 27** 20.00 Adama Dramé & Marockin' Brass (Burkina Faso)

**Dance****Antwerp**

**deSingel**  
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,  
[www.desingel.be](http://www.desingel.be)  
**SEP 25-27** 20.00 Bahok, choreographed by Akram Khan, with music by Nitin Sawhney

**Brussels**

**Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)**  
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,  
[www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)  
**SEP 28** 15.30 Greece, a dance without end (tickets: 02.672.37.04)

**Theatre**

**Théâtre les Tanneurs**  
Huidevettersstraat 75; 02.512.17.84  
**SEP 30-OCT 8** 20.30 Les Ballets C de la B in Aphasiadisiac, choreographed by Ted Stoffer

**Theatre****Antwerp**

**deSingel**  
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,  
[www.desingel.be](http://www.desingel.be)  
**OCT 1-4** 20.00 Troubleyn in Another Sleepy Dusty Delta Day by Jan Fabre (in English)

**Zuiderpershuis**

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00,  
[www.zuiderpershuis.be](http://www.zuiderpershuis.be)  
**SEP 30** 20.30 Avondland, written and staged by Sadettin Kirmiziyüz (in Dutch)

**Ardoorie**

**Cultuurkapel De Schaduw**  
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82,  
[www.deschaduw.net](http://www.deschaduw.net)  
**SEP 26-OCT 5** 20.30 Boefen!, written and staged by Tijs Huys en Pepijn Smit (in Dutch)

**Brussels**

**Kaaistudio's**  
Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vlaekstraat 81; 02.201.59.59, [www.kaaitheater.be](http://www.kaaitheater.be)  
**SEP 26-27** 20.30 Hotel Modern (Rotterdam) in Rococo (without dialogue)

**Kaaitheater**

Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59,  
[www.kaaitheater.be](http://www.kaaitheater.be)  
**SEP 25-27** 20.30 Needcompany in Het Hertenhuis (The Deer House), written and staged by Jan Lauwers (in Dutch, French and English with surtitles in Dutch, French and English)

**Pathé Palace**

Faith Healer by Brian Friel, staged by Peter Reid (in English)

## Visual arts

### Antwerp

**Contemporary Art Museum (MuHKA)**

Leuvenstraat 32; 03.260.99.99, www.muhka.be

**Until NOV 23** Lonely at the top, sound effects work by Dutch artist Jasmina Fekovic, also known as Documentarista

**Until JAN 4** The Order of Things, group show questioning the use of archival images

**Cultuurcentrum Luchtbl**

Columbiestraat 110

**Until OCT 5** Transparency exhibition, a critical look at American military interventions

**deSingel**

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be

**Until NOV 2** Construction: Privacy, Politics, Conflicts & Obsessions, work by Swiss architect Christian Kerez

**Fotomuseum**

Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00

**Until JAN 4** Gérald Dauphin, retrospective of work by the Antwerp photographer (1938-2007)

**SEP 27-JAN 4** Een wereld zonder einde (A World Without End), retrospective of work by Belgian photographer Marie-Françoise Plissart

Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten (Royal Museum of Fine Arts) Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09  
**Until DEC 14** Head on Shoulders: Portrait busts in the Low Countries 1600 - 1800, likenesses of politicians, scientists, philosophers, mythical figures, writers and actresses

**Modemuseum (MoMu)**

Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70, www.momu.be

**Until FEB 8** 20: The Exhibition, a look at design house Maison Martin Margiela

**Until OCT 12** MoMu prize winner Andrea Cammarosano presents CRAZYSSIMO.COM

**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**

**Archief van de Stad Brussel**

Huidenvettersstraat 65; 02.219.43.74

**Until DEC 24** Daily life in Brussels during the 1950s

**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)  
**Until DEC 30** Van New Look tot Expo 58, fashion from the time of Belgium's 1958 World's Fair, with evening gowns, wedding dresses, cocktail dresses, women's suits, coats and accessories

**Belgian Comic Strip Centre**

Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80, www.stripmuseum.be

**Until NOV 16** Smurf for All, All for Smurf: original drawings and documents celebrating the famous

characters created 50 years ago by Belgian comic strip artist Pierre Culliford, known as Peyo

**Belvue Museum**

Paleizenplein 7; 02.511.44.25, www.belvue.be

**Until NOV 30** Broodthaers onomwonden (Broodthaers Outspoken), tribute to Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers (1924-1976), with works by Christoph Büchel & Giovanni Carmine, Wim Delvoye, Fabrice Samyn and Zin Taylor

**Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)**

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

**Until OCT 19** Eric Delayen, installations with video, drawings and photographs

**The Cellars of Cureghem**

Ropsy Chaudronstraat 24; 070.25.20.20, www.cavesdecureghem.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

**Until DEC 30** Van New Look tot Expo 58, women's fashion from the time of Brussels' 1958 World's Fair, with evening gowns, wedding dresses, cocktail dresses, suits, coats and accessories

**De Elektriciteitscentrale European Centre for Contemporary Art**

Sint Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.31

**Until SEP 28** Fables, photographs by Karen Knorr

**De Loge Architecturmuseum**

Kluisstraat 86; 02.649.86.65

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

**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**

Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63

**Until OCT 5** One Family, photographs by Vardi Kahana

**Jubelpark**

Ridderschaplaan; 0476.78.14.78

**Until NOV 30** Michelangelo's Pieta, 120 large-format photographs of the great master's work by Robert Hupka

Justitiaplein

Poelaertplein; 02.512.19.63

**SEP 25-NOV 11** Corpus Delicti, contemporary installations, sculpture, photographs and video art by

Guillaume Bijl, Jacques Charlier, Leo Copers, Patrick Corillon, Thierry De Cordier, Edith Dekyndt, Wim Delvoye Jan Fabre, Panamarenko and Johan Muyle, among others (guided tours, see corpus-delicti.be)

**Le Botanique**

Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32

**Until OCT 12** Retrospective of work by Palestinian photographer Rula Halawani (see also La Maison de la Bande Dessinée)

**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 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 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-Gorikplein 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 Flemish artist Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven

**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

**Witte Zaal**

Posteernestraat 64; 09.267.96.77

**Until 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

**Ostend**

**Modern Art Museum**

## INTERVIEW

# Veerle Pieters

Deinze is home to one of the world's 50 best female bloggers. Web designer Veerle Pieters shares tech information along with her favourite party places in a perfect mix of personal and professional

Flanders may not be that large on the map, but its presence is major in the cyberworld, thanks to Veerle Pieters. The Zeebrugge-born graphic designer was recently named one of the 50 most influential female bloggers in the world by NorthXEast.com, an international website that tracks blogging on the internet.

Pieters' place on the list puts her in the esteemed company of political force of nature Arianna Huffington ([www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com)), Wall Street Journal columnist Kara Swisher ([kara.allthingsd.com](http://kara.allthingsd.com)), Time magazine political writer Ana Marie Cox ([www.wonkette.com](http://www.wonkette.com)) and celebrity uber-blogger Lisa Sugar ([www.popsugar.com](http://www.popsugar.com)).

One of only a handful of Europeans on a list heavy with Americans, 39-year-old Pieters avoids the hot topics of politics, fashion and celebrity. Instead, her blog explores, experiments with and expounds upon web design – making the cyberworld a little more beautiful.

"While other kids were watching TV, I was always off somewhere drawing, so it was pretty obvious that I'd end up in design," she says from her home in Deinze. "But this was a long time before the web." She studied graphic arts at the Artevelde Hogeschool in Ghent, coming of age in design when the internet was just taking off. She adapted easily to the new medium. "The web added the need for functionality," she explains, "but design still has to look good: only now, it also has to be easy to navigate." Despite working in a world of mouse clicks, jpgs and kilobytes, Pieters says she still often starts off a web design with pencil and paper.

Making the leap from school to career in the 1990s, though, was a challenge. An early partnership with a friend in advertising didn't work out. She went solo for a while but decided that she liked the idea of being part of a company.

Pieters then hooked up with Geert Leyseele to form Duoh! in 2000. Partner in life, as well as work, they set up both house and business in Deinze, where they each handle design, with Leyseele handling IT and the financials as well. "He approaches design from a more structural, global perspective, while I come at it more from a creative side," says Pieters.

Duoh! now has a following that stretches from Australia to America, with numerous clients in Europe also availing themselves of the company's expertise. Their experience has been far from the nightmare most people think collaborating and cohabitating with a partner would be. Pulling 12

**"A lot of web pages are cluttered and difficult to navigate. The basis of good design is balance and clarity."**

hour-days, five to six days a week together, Pieters says: "I couldn't imagine working any other way – or with anyone else."

The internet has also made work easier for them in another way: they don't live in Brussels, Antwerp or some other capital, yet Pieters and Leyseele still have a clientele and following that traverses borders and languages. "I am not so off the grid that clients can't visit me," she says, noting Deinze's nearness to



Ghent. And for Taiwanese clients, the talents of Pieters and Leyseele are as accessible online as if they were in Taipei.

Pieters' English-language blog, meanwhile, is an exercise in acquainting the world with her aesthetic – visually and aurally. A fervent disciple of CSS computer language, she finds a way to make what could be esoteric and

of art is knowing when to stop, she says that "a lot of web pages are cluttered, too busy and difficult to navigate." While someone might think a website with bells and whistles galore would be more appealing to visitors, Pieters disagrees. "The eye gets tired if too much is going on. The basis of good design is balance and clarity."

Her clients are mostly businesses either creating or updating their web presence, which means that understanding what they want to articulate and translating that into a website are her main challenges. Aware that her clients lack knowledge of web and computer jargon, Pieters uses easy-to-understand language to glean just what they're trying to say.

Pieters also sees a few differences based on nationality. "Americans do prefer more content on a page, while Europeans might go for more space," she allows. "But it really differs more from customer-to-customer rather than country-to-country."

Just as graphic design has changed drastically from what it was when she was starting out, web design has evolved immensely

since the internet invaded homes and offices. "There are still designers out there using computer code from the 1990s," she sighs, "when advances have expanded what's possible online so much."

But are all advances good things? The rise of the iPod has created a generation of music listeners used to the compressed, inferior sound of the mp3 player. And many professional photographers trained in the old school when film and darkrooms were *de rigueur* lament the digital age: now anyone with a digicam can produce decent photos, thanks to technology.

Does this mean that Pieters' domain will be usurped by amateurs if web design becomes too user-friendly? "Not at all," she says. "There will always be a market for the professionally produced webpage. People used to be afraid that desktop publishing would threaten the publishing world, but it only made it evolve to something better."

**Steven Tate**

**online**

<http://veerle.duoh.com>

## THE LAST WORD

what they're saying in Flanders

### Animal instincts

"We are the world's biggest organiser of sex tourism."

**Rudy Van Eysendeyk**  
Antwerp Zoo director  
on the zoo's breeding  
programme

### Safe as houses?

"The absolute belief that a bank deposit was as safe as you could get is now gone. But that was, in any case, a mistaken idea."

**Koen Schoors**  
economics professor  
at Ghent University

### Blame it on Napoleon

"The main culprit, of course, is Napoleon. If he hadn't lost in 1815, then we'd all be with France. But Leopold I has his share of the blame. He should have spotted right away that it would never work out."

**Raf Coppens**  
comedian  
assigns blame for  
the political crisis

## Ghent International Film Festival

**The Kids** **MadeInKorea** **HorstCastle**

**TheTerracottaArmy**

**DJBuscemi**

**Poezenboot**

**next week in Flanders Today**