



FLANDERS TODAY



Natural History Museum, p.9

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from Antwerp to America

A new museum will tell the story
of two million emigrants

Marc Maes

One hundred years ago, two million people stepped off from the Port of Antwerp and landed in the New World. Three years from now, the Red Star Line memorial museum will open in three historic buildings that processed all of these emigrants on route to America.

The buildings represent a fascinating episode in the history of Antwerp port when Red Star Line shipping was one of the world's great companies. The Red Star buildings, which are protected monuments, were acquired by the city in 2005 and are being restored and renovated. The work is being carried out by the Flemish architectural firm Arcade in partnership with New York architects Beyer Blinder Belle – the same firm that took on the renovation

of the Ellis Island Immigration Museum in New York.

The project known as “Red Star Line, People on the Move” is gaining momentum. A team of specialists and a study group made up of American and Belgian academics have contributed ideas on the historic site, and the City of Antwerp has secured a sponsorship deal with Belgian shipping company CMB to finance part of the cost of building the museum.

“What strikes me most in the Red Star Line project is the duality in the tale,” says Mandy Nauwelaerts, curator of the current Red Star Line exhibition and future curator of the Red Star Line Museum. “You have, on the one hand, prosperity and trade generated by emigration with benefits to

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Collectie Vanden van de Red Star Line



Business

The economic crisis continues as Volvo Trucks in Ghent shuts down its night shift, to the tune of 400 jobs

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Arts

Watching opera in the cinema? Kinepolis teams up with New York Met to put one of the world's great opera houses onscreen in Flanders

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The Flemish castle with the most turbulent history, Gaasbeek has old stories to tell and a new exhibition of contemporary artists

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Flanders digs deep to bail out Dexia

Region uses €500 million war chest

Alan Hope

Flanders region last week dipped into its Future Fund to pay a €500 million contribution to the bail-out of Dexia bank. The Brussels and Walloon governments were forced to take out loans to pay their shares, respectively €350 million and €150 million.

The fund was set up by finance minister Dirk Van Mechelen in 2006 to act as a buffer in difficult economic times. The government transfers a certain sum to the reserves every year, which are invested in blue-chip stocks.

At the beginning of last week, the Fund balance stood at €350 million. When the

Dexia plan was agreed, the region topped up the Fund with €150 million in advanced transfers for this year, based on provisions set aside but not used.

The €500 million will buy up Dexia shares in an attempt to stop the price slide and protect savers and shareholders. However, the government will also be hoping for some profit when Dexia shares recover. “We are thinking about an eventual flow of dividends,” Van Mechelen said. “We are assuming that Dexia will pick up again in the weeks and months to come.” The government has no plans to remain a shareholder in the long term, minister-president Kris Peeters said.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

One year on

It's now one year since we launched *Flanders Today* as a weekly newspaper and website. So we thought it would be a good idea to draw up a list of our 50 favourite things about Flanders. You can find it on page 13.

The only problem was that we ended up with a list that was much longer than 50. We could easily have stretched to 100, or even 1,000. So we had to cut. You won't find the Plantin Moretus Museum, even though this is one of the most gorgeous museums in Europe. You won't find Stephan Vanfleteren, although we consider him one of the best portrait photographers in Belgium.

We would have liked to have mentioned Ancienne Belgique, Veronique Brancin, Werchter, Hasselt's fashion museum, Kloosterstraat in Antwerp and about 990 other things. But we didn't even have space to say a few fond words about our favourite novelist/film director Nic Balthazar.

Fair enough. We have to make

choices. So please don't write to us complaining that we failed to mention somewhere extraordinary. We know. But we're not despairing. We are now starting our second year with a long list of places we urgently want to talk about.

We also have some big themes to cover in the coming months. We have a special Education Issue coming up next week. We're looking at water in the issue after that – where does it come from, is it endless? And we're planning a special report on "Landscapes of War" in our issue of 5 November.

When we started out a year ago, we wondered if we would have enough stories to fill a newspaper every week. Flanders is, after all, a small area of six million people. But we needn't have worried. This is an extraordinary region, packed with interesting places, brimming with creative ideas. We have an embarrassment of riches, more than enough to fill our pages for years to come.

Derek Blyth



Flemish choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and her performance group Rosas was another casualty of cutting from our 50 Best list

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FACE OF FLANDERS



Harry Patch

Harry Patch turned 110 last summer, making him Britain's second oldest person. But that is not why he was awarded Belgium's highest honour at the Belgian embassy in London last month. His knighthood was decided because he is the last British person alive who fought on the Western Front – in the trenches of Ypres – during World War One.

From three million to just one – a sobering thought for the former soldier.

"I don't like it," he told the *Telegraph* last year on the 90th anniversary of Passchendaele. "I sit there and think, and some nights I dream of that first battle. I can't forget it."

Patch was 19 when he was drafted into the war effort and taken from his training as a plumber in Somerset. "Somerset people are not warlike – it is not something in our make-up," Patch wrote in his autobiography, *The Last Fighting Tommy*, which appeared last year, making the centenarian world famous.

After four months, Patch was wounded when a shell hit a group of five British soldiers. His belly ripped open, he was transferred to an army hospital and eventually sent home. "I wasn't told until later that the three behind me had been blown to pieces," he said in an interview last year. "My reaction was terrible, and it's still difficult to explain. It was like losing part of my life. The friendship you have during a war, it's almost like love."

At 110, Patch has outlived both his sons and three wives. Death seems to hover about him like mist. Like many trench survivors, he couldn't talk about his experiences for years – in his case, 80 years. To this day, he can't even sit through a war movie. About 10 years ago, though, when it became apparent there were not many Tommies left, Patch got into the news and kept the media's attention with his modest demeanour, calm voice and articulate speeches.

In 2004, he made headlines in Belgium when he returned to Ypres for a BBC series. "In the sleepy Flanders countryside...it all came back to me," he said. The metres deep mud mixed with blood, the bombardments, "the stench of rotting bodies who would never be buried."

While there, he met a former German soldier, who fought opposite him in Flanders. The pair spoke through an interpreter and famously shook hands. A "nice old chap," Patch told the *Telegraph*. "A pacifist, same as me. Why did they suffer, those millions of men?"

He's been asking that question of politicians lately during a number of speaking engagements, while insisting that young veterans of current conflicts are given what they need by the countries that send them to battle. "The time for really remembering," he says, "is while they are at war or in the years immediately after they return, when they are coping with the shock. That is what upsets me now. It is as if we have not learned the lessons of the war of 90 years ago."

Though gratitude may be coming a bit late for Patch, it has certainly come. At the ceremony on 22 September, Belgian ambassador to Britain Veranneman de Watervliet said that Belgium "has been drawn to the tireless efforts and appeals you have made...in favour of peace and reconciliation among the peoples of Europe. ...I announce with great satisfaction that it has pleased His Majesty King Albert the Second to make you a Knight in the Order of Leopold. Congratulations and many thanks, Harry."

Lisa Bradshaw

TALKING DUTCH
notes on language

jarig

Time flies when you're having fun, and this past year has certainly flown by in this column. This month it is *Flanders Today's* birthday – *Flanders Today is jarig!* And like at any Flemish birthday party, we should all join in the song "*Lang zal hij leven*" – Long May He Live!

This column began a year ago with *wielrennen* – cycle racing, a topic dear to most in Flanders, though a bit of a mystery to me I admitted; the damp autumn had everyone sniffing, so I touched on *snotneus* – runny nose; even semi-taboo subjects such as *sterven* – dying were not ignored, though I did try to ignore the passing years by railing against being classified as a *viertigplusser* – 50 and over.

The list of subjects ranged eclectically from *geluk* (happiness) to *getallen* (numbers) and from *sparboekje* (savings book) to *vluchtmisdrijf* (hit-and-run crime). For any you've missed, take a look at back numbers in the archive section of our website.

So we are one year old – *wij zijn een jaar*. And in another year, we will be two years old. Now this is where the word for year, *jaar*, becomes interesting because the translation of the previous sentence reads *En in nog een jaar zullen wij twee jaar zijn* (not *twee jaren*). The word *jaar* has a plural, *jaren*, but it is used in a general sense: *een paar jaren geleden* – a few years ago; *zo iets duurt jaren* – something like that takes years; *in de laatste jaren* – in recent years; *jaren en jaren* – years on end; *ik werk hier al jaren* – I've been working here for years; *de jaren negentig* – the 1990s.

But as soon as you mention the number of years, you should use *jaar*: *om de vier jaar* – every four years; *zij is twee jaar ouder dan ik* – she is two years older than me; *een kind van zes jaar* – a child of six; *zeven jaar later* – seven years later; one and a half years – *anderhalf jaar*.

And what about the coming year – *de komende jaar*? Well, in this column expect more kaleidoscopic tiles to build up a picture of the Dutch language and of life in Flanders. Your suggestions for words to feature or any comments on what has appeared are welcome: send them to "Talking Dutch" at editorial@flanderstoday.eu.

For a birthday, you need a birthday cake and (in our case) a candle: *een verjaardagstaart en een kaars*. Perhaps a glass of champagne – *een glas champagne*, or two. A burst of *Lang zal hij leven* followed by Derek, our editor, blowing out the candle – *de kaars uitblazen*. I'm sure he'll get the idea when he reads this. And you? You can wish us happy birthday – *prettige verjaardag!*

Alistair MacLean

online

www.vandale.nl

FEATURE



Ellis Island Immigration Museum, New York

Passengers wait their turn to board the Red Star Line. Irving Berlin, Golda Meier and two million others passed through the Port of Antwerp "to seek their fortune in America".

America *via* Antwerp

Continued from page 1

the port, the city and society as a whole. But, on the other hand, you have complaints about emigrants from different cultural backgrounds, the dirt in the streets, the noise at night."

As consultant for the Red Star Line project, Nauwelaerts had unique access to information gathered by the National Maritime Museum and the Friends of Red Star Line Antwerp, along with diaries, ship's logs and other relics that could form the basis for the museum collection.

"The Red Star Line museum will be all about the shipping company and its passengers," she explains. "It begins in 1873 when the company, sailing under the Belgian flag, was founded by Clement-Acton Griscom, an American from Philadelphia. And it ends in 1934, when more than two million emigrants sailed from Antwerp to seek their fortune in America." Beginning in 1880, people came from Germany, Switzerland, Ireland and Luxembourg, as well as a continuous flow of Eastern European emigrants, half of them Jewish.

Among the millions that passed along the Antwerp quays, Nauwelaerts picks out two famous passengers. One was Israel Isidore Baline, the Siberia-born son of a Jewish cantor, who emigrated in 1893 at the age of five. In 1911, he wrote the song "Alexander's Ragtime

Band" that kicked off his career as the composer and songwriter Irving Berlin.

"The US immigration officers often changed original Russian names into English names," she says. "This often happened with the 'steerage passengers', who had to pass medical controls on arrival at Ellis Island."

The other emigrant was Golda Mabovitz, who in 1906 travelled from Ukraine to Milwaukee, where she became a teacher and member of a Zionist organisation. In 1921 she moved to Palestine, where she changed her family name into Meir and eventually became prime minister of Israel.

With up to two sailings a week from Antwerp, each carrying some 1,000 emigrants, the Red Star Line brought enormous benefits to Antwerp. "The emigrants stayed in hotels or in boarding houses of various kinds," explains Nauwelaerts. "On the Rijnkaai, close to the embarkation pier, every house was turned into a cafe. The local businesses also flourished, supplying the Red Star Line with shipping supplies, laundry, linen and staff uniforms. And there was traffic in the other direction as well, since some 30% of emigrants returned to Europe."

The Red Star Line Museum will be located in a complex of buildings near the Rijnkaai and Montevideostraat that were built between 1893 and 1922 as medical control

centres for the emigrants. "As the number of immigrants grew, the US authorities intensified administrative and medical screening," says Nauwelaerts. "In addition to the controls at Ellis Island, Red Star Line carried out a medical check in Antwerp. They originally did this outside on the quays, but later inside one of the three buildings." The second building was used for storing luggage after disinfection, while the most recent building, from 1922, was where passengers were rubbed with benzene and warm vinegar before being sent to the showers, and, if necessary, kept in quarantine.

The shipping news

The city of Antwerp signed an agreement last June with the maritime holding company CMB (Compagnie Maritime Belge) on the financing of the Red Star Line Museum. Over a 36-month period, CMB will pay €2.5 million towards the construction costs, or 16% of the total investment.

The history of CMB goes back to 1895, when the Compagnie Belge Maritime du Congo initiated a regular liner service to the former Belgian Congo. The liner Leopoldville I was the first ship to leave Antwerp under the Belgian flag. Over the years, CMB's activities expanded from the Congo route to America and the Far East. In the 1960s, CMB became involved

in the dry bulk trade and later replaced its liners with container ships.

The idea for the museum "came up during a boat trip on the River Scheldt," explains Marc Saverys, CEO of CMB. "The US ambassador Sam Fox told me that he had discovered that his mother emigrated to the United States through the Port of Antwerp. During the same boat trip, I talked to two Antwerp city aldermen who explained the whole Red Star Line project and persuaded me to play a role in its realisation."

Saverys is pleased to be involved. "After all, CMB is Antwerp's oldest shipping company," he says. The Red Star Line Museum will be built alongside Antwerp's larger city museum project known as the Museum aan de Stroom (MAS), and he hopes that CMB will get its own section in the museum.

In addition, Saverys admires – and even collects – work by the Antwerp artist Eugene Van Mieghem, who depicted scenes of emigration. Erwin Joos, the curator of the Eugene Van Mieghem Museum worked with CMB for more than 15 years "and so spread the Van Mieghem bug," he smiles.

CMB is often approached for sponsorship deals, of course, but they have decided to focus on the new museum. "The Red Star Line museum is a prestigious, long-term project," Saverys says. "We decided to channel our sponsor-

**Do you know
any stories of
emigrants or own
interesting artefacts?
Contact Red Star Line
at 03.206.09.38 or
email redstarline@stad.antwerpen.be**

ship efforts for the next three years in that direction. We have just enjoyed five prosperous years, and we want to give something back to the Antwerp community."

Under the agreement, CMB will maintain links with the museum for 15 years, allowing the company to use it for corporate events, lectures and receptions. "The partnership will allow us to breathe life into the museum," says Saverys. "CMB is not just sponsoring part of the construction, we want to add to the content as well and make the whole appealing to a wide public. The Red Star Line and MAS museums will create a major new tourist attraction."

The exhibition Antwerpen = Amerika = Red Star Line runs until 28 December at the Nationaal Scheepvaartmuseum, Steenplein 1, Antwerp

online
www.nationaalscheepvaartmuseum.be
www.mas.be



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PICTURE OF THE WEEK • DOEL



The remaining residents of the village of Doel live among the rubble of neighbouring houses as the plan to demolish the whole village moves forward. Protestors claim the Flemish government has no plans

to put the land to any use, and the demolition is unnecessary. Musical supporters will put on a performance of *The Creation* by Jozef Haydn in the village church in December, it was announced this week.

THE WEEK IN FLANDERS



Big in Japan: Kris Peeters on charm offensive gets warm welcome

WEDNESDAY 1 OCTOBER

Prime Minister Yves Leterme intervened to stop outgoing Fortis CEO Herman Verwilt from picking up a €5 million golden parachute for less than three months in the job. Later, the French government made the same request over €3.6 million that was due to sacked Dexia boss Axel Miller. ● As the financial sector in Belgium melted down, Kris Peeters was in Japan to sell the Flanders Port Area, a joint venture bringing together the four Flemish ports, to hundreds of Japanese companies. ● Tolerance for gays among young people is rising, according to a study by Leuven University. In fact, tolerance among Muslim youths in particular has doubled since 2006, with four out of 10 of those polled in favour of gay rights now. ● VTM weather woman Jill Peeters won Weather Forecaster of the Year from the European Meteorological Society meeting in Amsterdam.

THURSDAY 2 OCTOBER

Flemish public libraries launched the Digileen scheme which allows anyone to download free music from the library collec-

tion of 101,000 tracks using special software which will delete the tracks after one week. The system is already a hit in the Netherlands. ● Municipalities across Flanders waited anxiously to see what effect the government's rescue plan for Dexia bank would have on share prices and dividends. An inter-communal holding company owns 14% of the bank on behalf of municipalities who depend on dividends for earnings. ● Some 96% of parents are pleased with their children's teachers, according to a study by Ghent University. But teachers see parents as a nuisance, with 50% saying that parents should have more respect, and two in five arguing that parents don't have children's best interests at heart. ● A massive fresco four metres high and dating from the 15th century has been discovered under a layer of distemper in the church of St Michael in Mechelen. The fresco shows St Christopher carrying the Christ-child. ● Telecoms operator Tele2, the Belgian subsidiary of KPN in the Netherlands, has scrapped download limits for its 132,000 Internet customers.

FRIDAY 3 OCTOBER

Despite the financial crisis, Leuven-based KBC bank has become a major sponsor of the planned new MAS museum in Antwerp. The bank will donate €800,000 over five years. ● Flemish culture minister Bert Anciaux has awarded the Flemish Audiovisual Fund an extra €2.85 million on top of its annual subsidy of €13.87 million to support "quality

TV drama" made by independent producers. ● The Roman Catholic church received €43.5 million extra in subsidies in 2007 to help cover losses, it was revealed in a parliamentary answer. Each Belgian taxpayer pays €56 a year in religious subsidies, half of it in salaries. The Catholic church received €600 million in all. ● The government agency which manages property seized by police and courts handed over €28 million to the treasury over the last five



Church gets €600 million

years. Seized articles included a golf course in Canada and a stable of racehorses.

WEEKEND 4-5 OCTOBER

Staff at baggage-handlers Flightcare stopped work at Brussels airport in protest at management's decision to convert overtime worked during the summer into days off, instead of paying. Flights were delayed by up to 90 minutes. ● Axel Miller, the outgoing CEO of troubled Dexia bank, declined to take the premium due to him on leaving his job, following strong pressure from the French government. Miller's contract

would otherwise have entitled him to some €3.6 million. ● Bus drivers for the Flemish transport authority De Lijn complained their buses have outgrown the bus lanes provided for them, according to a poll carried out for Car & Bus Magazine. De Lijn asks for bus-lanes of 3.25m width on 50km/h roads, but buses have grown over the years to 2.55m, making simple manoeuvres like passing cyclists difficult.

MONDAY 6 OCTOBER

Three children abducted by their father and taken to Portugal for nine months were reunited with their mother in Antwerp. ● A report by the Flemish government concluded that the region spends too little on scientific research, compared to EU guidelines drawn up under the Lisbon Treaty. The number of workers undergoing training, at 8%, also falls below European targets of 10%, the report said. ● Antwerp residents have been invited to send in their complaints about the running of the city, with the best entries to be set to music for a DVD to be recorded by a popular choir in April. The plan is the idea of the organisation Liefhebber, part of the Amateur Art House project. ● The production of Daens, the Musical in Berchem near Antwerp, received an eight-minute standing ovation at its première at the weekend, the papers reported.

Breaking news

see www.flanderstoday.eu press room for breaking news

FIFTH COLUMN



Morelleke Forelleke

Things have looked better for Marie-Rose Morel, the former Miss Flanders who became a member of the Flemish Parliament in 2004. Shortly before, Vlaams Blok (VB) had welcomed Morel as a new icon. She was meant to represent the respectable face of Vlaams Blok. (In fact the party changed its name into Vlaams Belang later that year.) Morel immediately set to lure away voters from the N-VA, the party she herself had turned her back on. In those days, Vlaams Belang party president Frank Vanhecke lovingly called her *Morelleke Forelleke*, a pet name that is hard to translate (*my little trout?*). If her political opponents did not take her seriously at first, her slick debating skills soon changed that.

These days, however, headlines no longer focus on Morel's political instinct, but rather on her private life. Readers are presented with sordid details about her messy divorce, as rumors of an affair with Frank Vanhecke (which she vehemently denies) just will not go away. This, combined with a power struggle within the party's highest ranks, prompted *De Standaard* to call her "the Yoko Ono of Vlaams Belang".

A recent book by former VB sympathiser Jurgen Verstrepen has rekindled these old rumors. Back in 2004, Verstrepen supported Morel as the respectable face of VB. Now that he has defected to Lijst Dedecker, Verstrepen does not hesitate to wash Vlaams Belang's dirty linen in public. Morel has announced she will sue Verstrepen, which just reinforces the impression that she is forever on the defensive. No wonder she sympathises with Sarah Palin!

Morel's story is symbolic of the VB saga. For years, this party for the disgruntled attracted voters who were unhappy about just about anything (francophones, immigrants, criminals or politics in general). To the dismay of more traditional parties, it became "the party that never loses an election" and in 2004 gained no less than 24% of the votes.

The first cracks appeared in 2006 in Antwerp, when the mayor Patrick Janssens (Flemish socialist SPA) halted its seemingly unstoppable rise. But now a far greater threat is showing up on Vlaams Belang's horizon: Lijst Dedecker (LDD) and its loudmouth president Jean-Marie Dedecker have become the new champions of the disgruntled. Next to LDD, Vlaams Belang looks like something it abhors – traditional, old school politicians. Opinion polls show that LDD may become even bigger than Vlaams Belang at the 2009 Flemish elections. Anticipating this, Vlaams Belang activist Filip Dewinter now claims a "moral" victory, because more people are warming to the idea of Flemish independence. Just like Morel, he is on the defensive.

Anja Otte

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

Fortis goes French

BNP Paribas takes over Belgian share of stricken bank despite government bail-out

The Belgian banking world was rocked again last weekend after the Belgian-Dutch bank-insurer Fortis was split in two. The Dutch government bought up all of Fortis Nederland at the weekend for a knock-down price of €16.8 billion and the remainder of the group was sold to BNP Paribas for around €14.5 billion, with the Belgian government retaining a controlling share.

The Dutch will also buy back the one-third share in ABN Amro held by Fortis. It was the ABN Amro takeover which started Fortis off on a steady decline which ultimately led to it being bailed out by the three Benelux governments.

At the weekend, the new CEO Filip Dierckx put a brave face on matters, arguing that the cash injection from the Dutch would put what is left of Fortis in a stronger position. As well as the €16.8 billion from The Hague, there remains the €4.7 billion from Brussels agreed last week.

Fortis had gone on suffering for a week even after the three governments stepped in with their rescue plan. According to Dutch finance minister Wouter Bos, Dutch clients had withdrawn large sums from Fortis Nederland, provoking a mini-run. There were also rumours that the bank was still suffering liquidity problems despite the €11 billion rescue.

The Dutch government presented the buy-back of Fortis Nederland as the ultimate rescue. In Belgium, however, it was widely seen as revenge for last year's hostile takeover by Fortis of ABN Amro.

The Paribas package excludes about €10 billion worth of so-called structured products, a high-risk investment portfolio which will be held by Fortis Holding, the federal government and BNP Paribas together.

Fortis Holding remains independent, retaining the international insurance business, parts of the domestic insurance business not sold to Paribas, the cash reserves from the various sales, and the two-



Safe pair of hands? BNP's CEO Baudoin Prot leaves a meeting with Belgian Prime Minister Yves Leterme

thirds share of the structured products portfolio. The board will now decide how to apportion the various cash sums to the remaining shareholders.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

174,330

Number of unemployed in Flanders in September, a 4.5% reduction on the same time last year.

2 million tonnes

Emissions credits bought by the federal government from a green investment project in Hungary. The decision by energy minister Pierre Magnette provoked criticism from environmentalists.

2%

Percentage of childcare workers who are men. The care sector in general wants to employ more men, who currently make up only 20% of those employed.

500

Number of PostPoints so far opened by the Post Office. PostPoints are installed in commercial outlets such as supermarkets and replace conventional post office branches. The latest was opened in a social assistance agency in Sint-Niklaas.

€60,000

Increased guarantee proposed by Febelfin, the organisation which represents the banking industry, to cover savers against banking collapse. At present, the guarantee stands at €20,000 per account per bank.

6%

Fall in sales in the electrical and electronic goods sector in the first eight months of the year. The industry blamed the results on low consumer confidence.

200,000

Number of new houses needed in Flanders by 2020 to accommodate the 469,000 new people who will have moved to the region by then, according to the federal planning office.

10,000

Number of workers in the chemical industry approaching retirement, who will need to be replaced in the next few years, according to industry organisation Essenscia. Some 1,500 existing vacancies cannot be filled because of a shortage of trained personnel.

63%

Proportion of Flemish rivers which fall under the EU maximum level for nitrates of 50mg per litre.

€39.6 million

Total sales last year of fair trade products in Belgian supermarkets and world shops like Oxfam – an increase of 16.5% on last year. Almost half of all fair trade products are sold in supermarkets.

1,100,000

Peak number of viewers of VRT's main news bulletin in the week of the banking crisis in Belgium, well above closest rival VTM on 700,000. Normally the difference is only about 200,000.

50%

Percentage of motorists who turn corners without using indicators, according to a study by the motoring organisation Touring.

897

Number of road deaths in the year to July 2008, a fall of 8.9% and the lowest total since the road-safety barometer was introduced by the road-safety institute BIVV in 2004.

5,878

Reduction in the number of civil servants working for the federal government over the next five years, according to estimates by minister for red tape Vincent Van Quickenborne. The figures are based, he said, on plans by administrative affairs minister Inge Vervotte to replace only some retiring civil servants. In total the government employs 83,871 – about one person in 120.

90°C

Temperature measured on the outside of some microwave ovens by consumer organisation Test-Aankoop – warm enough to cause burns even on brief contact. The organisation said legal norms were too lax.

"Day of action" marked by standstill on roads



Going nowhere: strike action causes road chaos

Monday's day of action, called by trades unions in protest at declining purchasing power, was marked for most working people by 300 km of traffic-jams on the roads. Public transport in Brussels and Flanders joined in the strike, and the trains largely failed to run. The increased number of cars, together with inclement weather, led to chaos.

In Brussels, both Central and South Stations were closed. Trains into Brussels from Mechelen and Denderleeuw were severely hit and no trains ran from Leuven to Brussels, but traffic between Ghent and the coast was almost normal.

Brussels had a limited metro service and no trams, while in Antwerp, Ghent and Limburg, De Lijn buses and trams were at a standstill.

Postal unions reported sorting offices working normally, but customer service in post offices, as well as mail deliveries, were disrupted on a local basis.

Production at Audi Brussels stopped in support of the day of action, but Ford Genk continued as normal. Union pickets blocked the main road approach to Antwerp harbour, stopping morning-shift workers from reaching their work and crippling refinery and chemicals plants. At Zaventem, the day of action had no direct consequences, although some passengers were hit by the lack of trains to the airport.

Rubbish collection in Antwerp was suspended and social workers and rest-home staff maintained a minimum provision. In Antwerp and Brussels, some schools remained closed.

Programmes on VRT radio went ahead, with an interruption just before the 7.00 news in support of the unions.

Small businesses had little or no support for the day of action, according to the Union for the Self-Employed. "The unions are calling for more pay, yet they go and let the economy grind to a halt for a day, making things more difficult for businesses to pay anything," a spokesperson said.

Economic crisis hits Volvo Trucks night shift



Alan Hope

Volvo Trucks in Ghent will shut down its night shift, with the loss of around 400 temporary jobs, the company announced. Volvo blames the cuts on a fall in orders for new trucks caused by the global economic situation. At the same time, Opel in Antwerp will close down its night shift from mid-November, and night-shift workers will move to the two day shifts.

Sales of Volvo trucks in Europe were down by 13% in August, compared to the same period the year before, the fourth month in a row that demand had fallen, and a decline unseen in the last three years. "Since the end of the summer holidays, customers are increasingly holding off from replacing trucks," a spokesperson for Volvo Ghent said. "They are also having trouble arranging the financing for buying new trucks."

The 400 jobs will end in December, and the measure – since it involves the non-renewal of temporary contracts – will cost Volvo very

little. Other night-shift workers with full-time contracts will be transferred to other shifts.

Volvo is also making cuts at home in Sweden, with 610 jobs going in Göteborg and 370 more in Umeå. The company employs 3,000 people in Belgium out of a global workforce of 103,000.

Since 2000, production of trucks at Volvo Ghent has risen from about 30,000 a year to over 40,000, with the increase largely due to rising demand from new EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe. The night shift was added to cope with high demand, but it was never intended to be permanent – hence the reliance on temporary workers.

Meanwhile, at Volvo Cars in Ghent, production is being cut back from a target of 200,000 vehicles at the beginning of the year to 185,000. The move will mean an increase in lay-off days for staff from 30 to 34. For next year, the company plans a target of 209,000, described by one union official as "extremely optimistic. I shouldn't be surprised if that figure is later revised downward," he said.

Record bankruptcies in September

September saw a record number of companies failing, with 927 bankruptcies reported, an increase of 18% on the year before and the highest monthly figure ever, according to the consultancy Graydon. In the third quarter just ended, 1,825 companies went bust, an increase of 15.9%. And in the year to end September there were 6,118, a rise of 9.7% on the January-September period in 2007. At the same time, the number of jobs lost as a result of bankruptcies rose 20% to 14,127.

In Brussels, the situation was even worse, with 51% more jobs lost through bankruptcies, compared to 14.1% in Flanders and 13% in Wallonia. Graydon attributed the increase to the large number of casualties among small businesses in the catering, retail and building sectors, hit by dwindling purchasing power and lower consumer confidence.

Hotels, restaurants and catering suffered the worst of all sectors, with 1,112 failures in nine months – one in 50 active businesses. That was followed by construction, with 908 failures and retail with 829.

Flanders Entertainment Valley takes off

Marc Maes

Three major companies in the Belgian events industry have announced the launch of Flanders Entertainment Valley in Tildonk, Flemish Brabant. The new €2.7 million complex includes 5,000 square metres of warehouse space, 900 square metres of office space and overnight accommodation.

The three companies involved in the project are EML Creative Audio & Visual Solutions, a leading supplier of sound and light rental equipment with subsidiaries in the Netherlands and Spain, stage construction company Stageco (which has worked with stars like the Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd and Tina Turner), and electricity supplier The Powershop.

The aim is to create a one-stop shop for event organisers. While each company remains independent, they hope to be able to work together on some projects.

Competition Council puts brake on Kinopolis expansion

The Competition Council last week reinstated a number of checks on the expansion of cinema chain Kinopolis, stopping short of allowing the company unlimited range to expand. The council was considering an appeal by some of Kinopolis' competitors against its 2007 decision to lift the restrictions imposed 10 years earlier when the group emerged as the biggest cinema operator in the country.

The restrictions included a ban on acquiring other cinema companies and the requirement to seek the council's permission before increasing the number of screens or seats. The company was also forbidden from entering into agreements with film distributors that gave the group preferential access to films before other exhibitors.

When the Competition Council lifted the restrictions last year, competitors UGC, Utopolis and the Federation of Belgian Cinemas lodged an appeal. The court of appeal ordered the council to examine the matter again.

Kinopolis has 11 complexes in Belgium, with 138 screens and over 38,000 seats. The company employs 1,024 here. A spokesperson said they were "not particularly enthusiastic" about the decision. "Naturally, we'd have preferred to see the limits disappear altogether."

BUSINESS FLASH



Car sector

New car registrations rose 3.35% in September to 38,000. The total for the first nine months was 5.29% higher than in 2007, and the industry's federation Febiac expects to beat the 2006 record when some 526,000 cars were sold. The French brand Peugeot is market leader so far this year, with sales up 2.9%, followed by Volkswagen, down 3.5%, and Renault, 16% higher. The fastest growing in the top 15 car brands in Belgium is Fiat, with a 33% surge.

Bridgestone

The Japanese tyre maker Bridgestone and Nippon Yusen Kaisha (NYK), the car shipping group, will invest €15 million in Zeebrugge to develop their distribution capacity in the port area. The move strengthens Zeebrugge's position as the largest Japanese cars entry port and distribution centre in Europe. The decision comes in the wake of a "Flanders Port Area" trade mission led by the region's minister-president Kris Peeters last week in Tokyo.

Belgacom

The country's leading telecommunications company will reduce the number of offices of its Telindus data transfer affiliate in foreign countries from 14 to six. Closures in Germany, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand and China will leave Telindus with activities limited to Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Luxembourg, the UK and Spain.

Air DC

Air DC, which operates flights inside the Democratic Republic of Congo, is to be relaunched with the support of Brussels Airlines. The move will allow the carrier to operate under Belgian inspection and certification rules and paves the way for a development of safe air transport in Congo. In a separate development, the association of Brussels Airlines with Lufthansa will allow the carrier to expand its activities in the UK in partnership with British Midland Airways (BML), another of the German company's affiliates.

Shoeb Fashion

The Dutch clothing and apparel group Shoeb Fashion will open its first Belgian store in Herentals next week. The company, which operates 186 stores across the Netherlands, has plans for up to 30 outlets in Belgium.

Delvaux, the luxury Belgian leather goods producer, will open a shop in Hong Kong. The company has already franchised eight stores in Japan and now expects to develop its activities in Macao and Taiwan.

Accor

The French hotel group Accor is rebranding some of its Belgian hotels under the All Seasons name. The group has plans to increase its presence here and will launch its first All Seasons property near the South Station in Brussels next year.



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MUSIC

Good evening, Brussels

The Flanders Symphony Orchestra wants to woo the capital

Alan Hope

The new season of concerts by the Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen, or Flanders Symphony Orchestra, kicks off this week in Brussels before moving on to Kortrijk, Ghent, Antwerp and Bruges, as the first shot in a campaign to make the orchestra – already hugely popular closer to home – more of a presence in the capital, too.

The orchestra was founded in 1960 as the Westvlaams Orkest, changed its name to the Nieuw-Vlaams Orkest in 1984 and finally adopted its current name in the mid-1990s upon arrival of orchestra manager Dirk Coutigny.

Coutigny's wide-ranging overhaul of the whole organisation included bringing in British conductor David Angus. Under his tutelage, the orchestra began to invest heavily in musical quality. A former choirboy at King's College, Cambridge, and a graduate of the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, Angus had served as chorus director of the Glyndebourne Festival Opera as well as working with Opera North, Scottish Opera and the Brighton Festival.

Angus was described by *Classical Music* magazine as "one of those strangely under-sung conductors who – unlike grand maestros who swan in for a single concert – take on an orchestra long term and work patiently on transformations from the roots upward."

His successor, Etienne Siebens, who came to the job in 2004, would heartily agree. In an interview with the Bruges magazine *Exit*, he compared Angus' style with the conductors of the 1950s and 60s. "In those days a conductor stayed in the job a long time," he said. "Whereas a modern conductor is

always on the lookout for where he can make the most money."

Angus and Coutigny raised standards to the point where the orchestra could compete against larger and better-known groups like the Vlaams Radio Orkest and de Filharmonie of Antwerp.

Still, it can't compete on subsidies: the Bruges orchestra receives the relatively small grant of €1.1 million. The top four orchestras together, which includes the Flanders Symphony Orchestra, received a total of €17.3 million last year.

"Our subsidy is not much, but when you see what we're able to do with it, it's quite impressive," says Stephanie Dierckxsens, manager of communications and sales. She's one of only four full-time staff, all of whom multi-task by taking phone reservations, selling tickets and doing whatever else needs to be done. The city of Bruges, their original home to which they returned in 2004 after an exile in Oostkamp, pays a small subsidy of €70,000.

The overhaul carried out on the orchestra's programming is credited to Coutigny, who developed the idea of what he calls a "project orchestra". The 60 musicians who form the core are all freelance, as are Siebens and the guest conductors. The orchestra draws up a programme and then goes on a mini-tour in Flanders, playing the same concert four to six times. The new season starts with a Rossini overture (*William Tell*) and a Beethoven symphony (the Fifth), which bookend the cello concerto by Henri Vieuxtemps, played by soloist Quirine Viersen.

There are about 10 productions every year, each of which tours around Flanders – and also some-



You've come a long way, baby: conductor Etienne Siebens, right, leads the Bruges-based Flanders Symphony Orchestra

times to the Netherlands, the UK and Germany. Last weekend, the orchestra played in Utrecht. On 18 October they'll be in Amsterdam with three cello concertos and three soloists.

This approach, Dierckxsens says, allows the orchestra to spread the fixed costs of a programme – essentially the rehearsal time required for musicians and soloists – over more than one performance.

"I'm a great advocate of organising your own concerts because it allows orchestras to do their own thing," Coutigny says. "To achieve quality, concerts have to be thoroughly prepared. You need to rehearse sufficiently and play the programme several times to keep it affordable."

The chance to perform a programme more than once may be good for the budget, but it also appears to be good for the audience. The Flanders Symphony Orchestra has come a long way from the days when it was ignored by organisers of local festivals in Bruges. Their homebase, the city's Concertgebouw, seats 1,100 people and, before a single ticket is sold, 700 of those are taken by subscription customers.

That's a solid base even the most large-scale groups these days would kill for. In other cities it's heading the same way: 600 subscribers in Antwerp and 500 in Ghent. So far only 250 in Brussels. That's something that should change very quickly.



Flanders Symphony Orchestra plays at the Royal Conservatory, Brussels at 20.00 on 9 October

online
www.symfonieorkest.be

FILM FREAK

Opera in the Cinema

A negative first reaction – be it from opera buffs or cinephiles – would be understandable. The idea of watching opera on the screen in a cinema seems, well, a little pointless. But last year 8,500 people came through the doors of Kinepolis throughout Flanders for the first season of Opera in the Cinema, so something must be right about it.

And there is. First off, it's not just any old opera, it's The Metropolitan Opera, which you can't exactly see here in Belgium very easily. Secondly, it's a live stream directly from New York. The time difference means we can watch their matinees at 19.00 here.

Utilising digital satellite technology, the sound and visual quality is excellent, and viewers in Europe get what those occupying seats in New York don't – a look behind the scenes, including quick interviews with

the actors, when the camera slips behind the curtain between acts.

So opera lovers are actually lining up to see the entire Met season from right here in Belgium. And this year, Kinepolis has extended the offer to its cinemas in Wallonia and France. In Flanders, subtitles are in English, in Wallonia and France in French. In Brussels, you can choose between either.

It's also a bit more upscale than just catching a flick. "We try to create an opera environment," says Myriam Dassonville of Kinepolis. "It's more like going to the opera than going to the movies." Every screening includes a welcome cocktail and synopsis of the opera.

Those unfamiliar with opera are encouraged to give the programme a try. "The price is quite high to go to the opera when



Karita Mattila rages in The Metropolitan Opera's *Salome*

you're not sure you're going to like it," says Dassonville. "This is a way for those people to become acquainted with opera."

The season begins on 11 October with *Salome* by Richard Strauss. Finnish soprano Karita Mattila was such a hit in the Met's 2004 production – particularly with her unforgettable "Dance of the Seven Veils" – that she reprises the role here. Next month brings the much more contemporary *Doctor Atomic*, John Adams' masterpiece about the atomic bomb, and also *The Damnation of Faust*, a new staging by Robert Lepage of Hector Berlioz's classic tale of good versus evil.

The season runs until March, when the Met ends with *Madame Butterfly*. Each performance, sorry, screening, is €18, but passes for half of the 10 selections are available at a discount.

Lisa Bradshaw

online
www.kinepolis.com/opera

MUSEUM

Force of nature

Brussels natural history museum looks back at the best of 250 years

Alan Hope

This year is being celebrated as the 250th anniversary of the natural history museum in Brussels, or more properly the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences.

And it is, up to a point. The date is perhaps slightly notional. Around 250 years ago a cabinet of curiosities was set up by Charles of Lorraine (1712-1780), the governor-general of the Austrian empire and brother-in-law of Empress Marie-Theresa (twice, in fact – he married her sister, and she was married to his brother).

Charles was a remarkable patron of learning: he not only established what has become the natural history museum, he also set up the Fine Arts Academy, the Royal Chapel and the Royal Academy of Science and Literature. Landmarks of his reign are still to be seen in the Koningsplein, Warandepark and the Martelaarsplein. His statue stands atop one of the buildings on the Grote Markt.

Charles started his collection in 1751, and it was later taken over (after having been plundered in the French invasion of 1794) by the City of Brussels, housed in Charles' former Nassau Palace on what is now Kunstberg. There it grew under the Dutch until Belgium's independence, after which the institute proper was formed under royal patronage in 1846.

The museum has taken the opportunity, whatever the accuracy of the dates, to celebrate its entire history with a new permanent room dedicated to 20 of its landmarks, including:

TIGER ● The stuffed Tasmanian tiger (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*), which became extinct in the 20th century (not to be confused with the Tasmanian Devil, which is merely endangered).

BONE ● The Ishango bone, possibly the world's oldest surviving mathematical artefact. Dated to about 20,000 BC, it was found by Belgian geologist Jean de Heinzelin on the border of Congo and Rwanda, overturning the generally-held view that mathematics had originated in Mesopotamia or Ancient Egypt. It is scored along its length with notches in three columns, which some scientists have suggested were used as a counting tool. Others argue the bone was in fact a calendar.

EXPEDITION ● Logbooks, sketches and manuscripts from the Belgica, the ship which carried researchers from Antwerp to the South Pole in 1897 on the expedition of Adrien de Gerlache, a Hasselt-born naval officer and graduate of the Ostend maritime college. The expedition's crew included Roald Amundsen, who was later to beat Captain Scott to the Pole. The ship, a former Norwegian whaler, was trapped in ice for a year, during which time several of the crew went mad.

TREES ● Specimens from the many fossilised tree stumps found near Hoegaarden in Flemish Brabant. These trees are thought to date back to the Early Eocene period 55 million years ago.

ZOO ● The elephant from the zoo, which used to take up part of Leopoldpark behind the museum and adjoining the European Parliament. The zoo was extremely unpopular, according to reports from the time, but the elephant itself was not: after his death in



1880, the zoo closed, and he was stuffed and brought inside to stand majestically over the staircase to this day.



The Belgica carried an international team of explorers to the South Pole over 100 years ago

But the museum, impressive as it is, is only a shop window for the activities of the Institute of Natural Sciences, which take place on the upper floors of the building. The actual collection of the institute – as opposed to the contents of the museum alone – amount to over 37 million specimens of everything from whalebones to insects (15 million of those) to mineral samples. The Brussels institute, in fact, counts itself among the top 10 scientific collections in the world.

Scientific researchers of various disciplines, together with their counterparts across the world, work on a wide range of projects, including conservation of indigenous antelopes in the Sahel-Sahara region of northern Africa, most of which have been wiped out by encroaching desertification. Five species are threatened with extinction, and one more is in severe danger.

The Modirisk

project, meanwhile aims to map the biodiversity of mosquito species, to track changes in populations and to attempt to forecast the impact of change on the spread of mosquito-borne diseases. The Molarch project studies the genes of plants from ancient lakes to calculate the effect of climate change in the past. This can lead to the creation of models on the likely effects of current climate change.

The SesAseX project, not surprisingly, studies sexual and asexual reproduction, including that of *Ostracoda*, a crustacean also known as the seed shrimp, which uses both methods. The project looks for possible causes why the shrimp would change from one form of reproduction to the other and the implications this might have for many other species.

The technological age has brought its benefits to the institute: collections are increasingly open to anyone with a computer. If a researcher somewhere wants to know how many *Afrocrania kakamegaensis* (a type of beetle) specimens there are in Brussels, for instance, I can tell him that the answer is 10.

The mineral collection is also impressive, counting over 25,000 specimens, only about 1,000 of which are on show in the extensive minerals section of the museum. Some are of types found and described for the first time in Belgium. And for the kid in all of us, there are also 123 meteorites, three of which fell on Belgium.

online

www.naturalsciences.be

CASTLE SERIES



Belgian artist Heidi Voet sprinkles a little rose fairy dust on the path to Gaasbeek Castle in her photo that is part of the castle's inventive new exhibition

Fatal attraction

On the outskirts of Brussels, the beautiful Gaasbeek Castle has had a torrid history



The castle's interior floods with autumn light

Denzil Walton

When Luc Vanackere, Director of Gaasbeek Castle, started telling me about annual visitor numbers, I soon interrupted him. Fifty thousand a year? That can't be right, when one of the smaller castles on the Loire or Rhine gets a quarter of a million – in a bad year. He admitted that the figures are low, but pointed out that they have been lower.

"I started here five years ago when numbers were half that," he says. "There has been a steady increase. But in Flanders we tend to visit castles in France or Bavaria and forget our own magnificent castles – even those on the doorstep of Brussels."

By the end of my visit, the discrepancy seemed even more amazing. Gaasbeek Castle is a gem. What's more, it includes a park, woods, lake, an internationally

renowned museum garden, and it holds special events throughout the year.

The original castle was completed around 1240 by Godfried of Leuven, who probably wondered why he had bothered, so frequently was it attacked and damaged. In 1388, it was in fact destroyed by the people of Brussels. It was rebuilt in the 15th century only for the Spanish to wreck it in 1580. Again rebuilt, this time it was the turn of the French to join in the

Who was the last Marquise?

The identity of the last lady of Gaasbeek Castle has intrigued historians for more than a century. There is no single answer as she was a multi-faceted personality. Born Marie Peyrat in 1840 to a republican journalist and politician, she married Marquis Giammartino Arconati Visconti at the age of 32 and was catapulted into the world of Italian nobility.

The marriage raised eyebrows on account of Marie's humble origins. She

boasted that when she first met her future husband, she only had one dress and a single pair of shoes. Three years later, in 1875, when a mystery illness led to her husband's death, she inherited a vast fortune, palaces in Milan and Florence, a villa on Lake Como...and Gaasbeek Castle. Here, she lavished huge amounts of money on its restoration and decoration.

The Marquise was an avid collector, filling the castle with works of art and items

of furniture from around the world. A sparkling conversationalist at her many dinner parties, she was also a copious letter-writer, corresponding with male politicians, intellectuals, artists, philosophers and noblemen. She had numerous lovers and saw herself as equal to any man. Indeed, she frequently dressed as a man, welcoming her guests in the guise of a 16th-century page. Marquise Marie Arconati Visconti lived this complex and luxurious life until she died in 1923.

fun, razing it nearly to the ground in 1695.

A hundred years later the Arconati Visconti family inherited what was left. For over a century, it remained dilapidated (maybe for fear that if rebuilt, the inevitable would only happen again). Finally, at the end of the 19th century, the castle was completely renovated by the Marquise Marie Arconati Visconti and stocked with a vast collection of art and furniture. "The castle is now a wonderful example of the Romantic view of architecture and interior design," says Vanackere. When the Marquise died in 1923, it was taken over by the Belgian State and turned into a museum.

The interior of Gaasbeek is intimate rather than grand, with numerous small rooms, each with their own delights. It is renowned for its collection of Doornik tapestries, many of which are huge and take up whole walls. During the Flemish Renaissance in the 16th century, Doornik was one of the main centres for tapestry production in Europe. They were woven in wool and silk and were full of bright, contrasting colours. Some 500 years later, the colours are still evident, as in the wonderfully detailed tapestry called "Gypsy Camp".

The Gallery is another room that captures your attention. Worthy of admiration are the intricately carved wood panels, the white sandstone fireplace, the *lit de justice* – an armchair used by the French king – and a Spanish travelling trunk embellished with the scallop motif of Santiago de Compostela. On display is the "Worship of the Kings" by Pieter

Coecke van Aelst, Brueghel's teacher and eventual father-in-law. Another link to Brueghel is the castle's "Tower of Babel" by Maarten Van Valckenborgh, who clearly had Brueghel's version in mind when he painted his own interpretation in 1595.

Equally fascinating is the Marquise's apartment, consisting of a bedroom, a bathroom and a guest room. It contains a painting of her husband on a dromedary and herself dressed as a page. The many mirrors in the bathroom clearly indicate that the Marquise did not have Victorian scruples about seeing the naked body.

When you have finished your tour of the interior, the 50-hectare park awaits. It's full of scenic walks through the woods and alongside the lake. It also contains a number of interesting buildings, such as the tea pavilion, the only building of its kind remaining in the Low Countries. You will also see the house of the priest, who was not allowed to live in the castle but could visit to conduct masses.

Garden lovers won't be able to resist a visit to the 19th-century museum garden. It recalls the era when Belgium was a European leader at creating new varieties of fruit tree, many of which were

exported to the UK and elsewhere. Its vegetable plots and flower gardens are also laid out in authentic 19th-century style. The garden has featured frequently in Belgian and foreign TV programmes like the BBC's *Gardeners' World*. To visit, prior reservation is essential, unless you turn up at 14.00 on a Sunday for a group tour in Dutch.

To renew your energy reserves at the end of the day, pick one of the three restaurants by the car park: Brasserie Egmond, Oud Gaasbeek and Chalet@Gaasbeek. The latter two have play areas for children, including trampolines and play castles.

Gaasbeek frequently holds special events, such as on 31 October when "the castle is open in the evening for a special Halloween experience," says Vanackere. "Rumour has it the castle might well be haunted that evening." On 13 and 14 December, you can enjoy Christmas at the Castle. This year's theme is Austria, so expect lots of music and gastronomic specialties, in a uniquely Romantic environment.

online
www.kasteelvangaasbeek.be



Turn up on Sundays for a tour of Gaasbeek's museum garden, featured on TV internationally

Art seeks Marquise

Work by modern artists chat up Marquise Marie

Marquise Seeks Art is a remarkable exhibition in which nationally and internationally renowned artists reflect the complex personality of the Marquise Marie Arconati Visconti, the last lady of Gaasbeek Castle, in their work. It's a joint venture between the castle and Gynaika, a Brussels-based cultural organisation that focuses on issues such as gender in the art world, diversity of culture, social-artistic projects and the promotion of female artists.

Castle Director Luc Vanackere explains that the exhibits, which run through 23 November, had to be linked to the Marquise, as well as being integrated with the existing artwork in the castle. "There has to be a dialogue between the new and what is always here," he says.

Nowhere is this better portrayed than in the dining room, where the Marquise would have entertained her guests. The table is laid with an attractive China service, based on an original design commissioned by Madame de Pompadour in 1756. However, the image of Louis XV's mistress has been replaced by contemporary images by American photographer Cindy Sherman, who specialises in self-portraits. On the wall, meanwhile, is a painting of a group of Medieval nobles admiring their dazzling queen, but this is no 16th-century queen – it's the Marquise wearing a crown, surrounded by her lovers.

Another fascinating juxtaposition is found in a darkened room where an electric fan fills with air a life-size pregnant Madonna made of transparent packing tape. When the motor stops, the Madonna deflates. Such a harsh view of the importance of religion is counterbalanced when you turn around and see an ornately carved triptych from 1525 of the crucifixion of Christ.

Some of the exhibits may offend the sensitive. One such piece is Tracy Emin's CV – *Cunt Vernacular*. An autobiographical video reveals the messy intimacies of her house while the British artist coldly narrates her life story. We are spared no details, from her childhood in Margate, through her student years, drug abuse, abortions and the destruction of her early work.

The portraits of Dutch photographer Erwin Olaf, who has built a career out of testing the limits of public taste, may also set you thinking. One example is his photograph of a model resembling Jacqueline Kennedy – set immediately after her husband's assassination – with a portion of her husband's brain on her shoulder. Another is the tiara-wearing look-alike of Princess Diana, complete with a bloody wound in which a Mercedes logo is embedded.



Paris-based artist Wang Du gives a new meaning to "behind one's back"

TIRE TRACKS

Bruges to Heist



This bike ride is a peaceful tour along three different canals from the train station in Bruges to the North Sea in Heist, taking in two of Flanders' finest medieval towns along the way.

Start from the Bruges train station by crossing the road and heading east on the bike path. This is a more modern area of the city, yet even here stunning views of the Church of Our Lady reflected in the canals open up at the least expected moments. Follow the path

left away from the road and head north alongside the Bruges Ring Canal.

Stay on the left bank. The path turns into hard-packed dirt now, passing an aged brick medieval tower and arched gate. Further along, low-hanging beech shade the way as you pedal past four wooden windmills dating from the 18th and 19th centuries.

After the last windmill, you come to two bridges over the canal in quick succession. Take the second and cross the major road. Soon, the cars turn away to the left and a car-free path hugs the left side of the canal. This is the 200-hundred-year old Bruges-Sluis canal, and under its arcade of trees it is not hard to imagine what it was like when first built.

Farms and fields mark the way now until another 19th-century windmill announces your arrival in the picturesque village of Damme, a good spot for a break. A host of cafes line the road; the main square and 15th-century *stadhuis* are just over the bridge.

Leaving Damme, continue on the left side of the canal until the junction with the Schipdonk and Leopold canals, the halfway point of the ride. Turn left here. Soon the path is isolated enough to give the feel of riding along a private lane; sheep graze on the median between the two canals. After four more kilometres, the path leads down into farmland and eventually to an intersection with the N376. The signs here say bikes to Heist should go left, but it's a much nicer ride to the right. Cross over the canals and turn left on the other side, following the tow path on the right bank now. In a short while, you reach the Tearoom de Palingpot nestled among the trees – another excellent place for a break. The left side becomes more industrial; this is the beginning of the Port of Bruges-Zeebrugge. A short while further, the trail reaches a set of train tracks and turns to the right. Follow the path to the main road past the weather-worn farmhouse and turn left into Heist. After the rail overpass, turn right towards the train

station.

From here you can easily catch the train back to Bruges or take Bondgenotenlaan through downtown Heist to the North Sea. Once on the coast, it's another few kilometres along the boardwalk to Knokke or just another few meters to a waffle stand.

David Meyer

Distance:
20 kilometres

Difficulty:

Easy. Flat terrain, mostly without cars and with enough architectural beauty in Bruges and Damme alone to recommend it even on a grey day.

Time:
One hour, 15 minutes

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Flanders in 50

Flanders Today turns one year old with this issue – number 50. On this auspicious occasion, we present the 50 best reasons to live in Flanders

1 Sundays at Bozar Special events draw big crowds to exhibitions, silent movies and concerts by rising stars of the music scene in this ultimate Brussels arts centre.

2 Bruges fish market Fish is the only meat left that most people see in its raw state, and the Bruges market is a relic of the past, early in the morning before the mists have cleared.

3 Tom Barman Versatile Flemish musician, film director and all around good sort.

4 In Flanders Fields Museum Sensitive portrayal of the horrors of World War One in the reconstructed cloth hall of Ypres.

5 Groot Begijnhof The simple charm of the Flemish Begijnhof is best seen in Mechelen, with its cobbled lanes, whitewashed houses and creepers climbing the walls.



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6 Arno The 50-something rock & roller is Belgium in a nutshell: popular all over, but nobody ever really understands what he's on about.

7 View from the left bank Stirring look at Antwerp from the far side of the River Scheldt. Get there by walking through the Sint-Anna Tunnel.

8 Rockoxhuis garden An idyllic renaissance garden in a forgotten part of Antwerp. It once belonged to Burgomaster Rockox, a friend of Pieter Paul Rubens.

9 Tik Tak on VRT Children's cartoon series with bright colours and minimal action, which is, psychologists say, perfect for very young minds.

10 Kristien Hemmerechts Acclaimed feminist writer who doesn't pull any punches

11 Fish & Chips Trendy shop for retro clothes from the '50s to the '70s where Antwerp's young hipsters hang out to listen to the in-store DJ playing house and techno.

12 The Crocodile Room Dim quarters at the heart of the Africa Museum with stuffed animals in glass cases, giant bugs and murals showing Congolese landscapes.

13 Children's playground at Kessel-Lo Exciting adventures with high rope bridges, vertiginous ladders and all the fun things that most other parks have banned.

14 Jan Decleir The godfather of Flemish cinema, he's been in more than 80 movies, and we never get tired of seeing him

15 Ons Erfdeel Intelligent Flemish-Dutch cultural organisation, publisher of collections on Dutch and Flemish culture in three languages

16 Antwerp sewers Squelch, squelch. Guided tour through the Antwerp sewers in plastic ponchos and thick rubber boots. Strangely fascinating.

17 Carillon School at Mechelen Ding, dong. Find out the secrets of the carillons that play in the towers of Flanders.

18 Laïs Flemish folk group that sometimes sing like angels and other times sound like Zeebrugge fish wives.

19 Klara A radio station that delivers classical music without condescension. This is what your iPod would sound like if you had impeccable taste.

20 Wijngaardstraat in Bruges A perfect address in Belgium, three feet away from the statue of Jan Van Eyck, where the port was when Bruges was the centre of the country.

21 Dries Van Noten The most stylish of the Antwerp Six, for menswear at least – all boxy jackets, and knitwear to die for, darling.

22 Opus II A clothes shop in Leuven that dresses several women we know, thus improving on perfection. They also support communities in India, so it's all good.

23 Westvleteren beer In a country of beer, it's by far the best one. Made by monks and coveted the world over. They could



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make more and cash in. They don't.

24 FC De Kampioenen Rickety old sitcom set in a football club for losers, endlessly repeated on VRT, to everyone's secret delight.

25 Jean-Luc Dehaene, man of the people Football fan, gourmand, mayor of Vilvoorde, lives in a slightly naff house. He's how Flemings are, not how they imagine themselves to be.

26 Jimmy Kets The funniest press photographer working, with a piercing, sardonic eye on the news. A picture is worth 1000 words, and his are all punchlines.

27 Jommeke Kuifje's adventures were nothing compared to Jommeke's, with his talking parrot, spaced-out pal Filiberke, twin sisters Rozemieke and Annemieke and Professor Gobelijn.

28 Kaas by Willem Elsschot The funniest book in the Dutch language, and it's even available in English. Read it.

29 Tram 44, Tervuren The most beautiful tram ride in Flanders. Take it to the terminus and go for a walk in Tervuren Park.

30 Grote Markt Visiting tourists will tell you it's the most beautiful square in Europe. Believe them.

31 Kim Clijsters She wasn't as perfect a tennis player



as Justine Henin, but she seemed more human, with a hearty smile and a glow to her cheeks. The kind of girl you could meet in any village and fall slightly in love with.

32 Boerderijen They're farms, they're hotels, and there's a ton of them. Smell the hay, play with the bunnies – and you don't have to do any work.

33 Jenever It's the queen of all spirits and comes in a hundred-million flavours. Its museum in Hasselt is top-notch

34 The Cycle Route Interchange Network An ingenious system of well-marked intersections allows you to criss-cross the region without getting (too) lost



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35 Jan Fabre In a country stuffed with them, this avant-garde artist and his luminous green beetle wings is shoulders above the crowd

36 Hof Van Cleve The Kruishoutem restaurant earns its three Michelin stars every year. It would get four if they gave them

37 Gentse Feesten Europe's largest outdoor music and street theatre festival is long and loud, kitsch and bohemian, just like the city that hosts it

38 Car-Free Day In both Brussels and Antwerp, this feel-good day is enthusiastically embraced, even by the biggest gas guzzlers among us

39 The Egyptian Temple in Antwerp Zoo Whoever thought elephants should be housed in a temple was a genius, pure and simple. The Hindus have one elephant god. We should all have one. Each.

40 Tom Lanoye One of the region's best writers who's not translated into English. A curse on London and New York publishers for their lack of nerve.

41 Adoration of the Mystic Lamb The altarpiece in Ghent's Sint-Baaf's Cathedral is



a masterpiece by Hubert and Jan van Eyck and one of the world's first oil paintings

42 Dr Guislain Museum The Museum of Psychiatry in Ghent never ceases to surprise and unnerve with its rotating exhibitions, not to mention its permanent collection

43 Yves Desmet The editor of *De Morgen* goes out of his way to look at things differently, and having him challenge your ideas every morning will make you smarter.

44 Atomium Make fun of it if you will, but it's a quirky, flirty answer to the Eiffel Tower and the Colosseum

45 Belfort in Bruges Flanders is awash in these magnificent towering structures, but the one in Bruges is extra special – and not just because of that scene in *In Bruges*.

46 Thermae Sauna Taking a clue from the Finnish, Flanders has perfectly incorporated the naked sauna ethic. This one in Grimbergen is the perfect mix of corny and chic

47 Witloof The national vegetable is cheap, plentiful and tasty. This winter, steam it, then



Arnoud Wasse/Sinterstock

wrap ham around it, then smother it in cheese sauce and bake it in the oven. Pure Flemish.

48 The Kids Belgium's only punk band, still performing to this day with a wink and a nod rather than a has-been mumble

49 Limburg in the spring We challenge the Japanese to come up with better blossoms.

50 Goedele Liekens The most intelligent beauty queen ever and the sexiest TV presenter in the country. Born in a bigger country, she might well be president by now.

Classical & New Music

Antwerp

Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28
OCT 9 21.00 Choir of the Tikhvin monastery of the Assumption: Russian-Orthodox choral music **OCT 11** 21.00 Daan Vandewalle, piano with video by Jan Boon: Messiaen's Catalogue of Birds **OCT 12** 14.00 & 16.30 Bl!ndman (4x4) sax and Bambuso Sonoro **OCT 14** 21.00 La Chapelle Rhénane conducted by Benoît Haller, tenor with Salomé Haller

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be
Concerts at 20.00:
OCT 9 Spiegel String Quartet: Bankövi, Roels, Prokofiev **OCT 10** deFilharmonie conducted by Edo de Waart: Stravinsky, Adams **OCT 11** Marc-André Hamelin, piano: Ives, Chopin **OCT 15** Film concert: The Man with the Movie Camera, documentary by Dziga Vertov with music by DJ Buscemi

Bruges

Concertgebouw
t Zand 34; 070.22.33.02, www.concertgebouw.be
OCT 9 20.00 Montserrat Figueras with Rolf Lislevand and Adela Gonzales-



In-I

11-13 November, 20.00, De Munt, Leopoldstraat 23, Brussels. Tickets from 070.23.39.39 or www.demunt.be

There is still a scattering of seats available for this pairing of England's hottest choreographer and one of France's best-loved actresses – who is also a dancer, to the surprise of many when this piece premiered in London last month. Akram Khan is no stranger to Belgian audiences, having worked with Rosas dance company and having co-created and performed the critically-acclaimed *Zero Degrees* with Antwerp choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkauoui. Though his work often explores issues of identity, this time it's pure romance when he teams with Juliette Binoche in a theatrical dance piece about love – and lust. Even if it's been bandied about that his acting may not be up to hers, and her dancing may not be up to his, it's still a marvellous pairing that is worth the price of the quickly-dwindling tickets. (Binoche, by the way, also writes poetry and paints.)

Campa: sephardic songs from southern Europe and North Africa
OCT 10 20.00 Peter Wispelway, cello: Britten, Crumb, Kodály

Brussels

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
OCT 8 20.00 National Orchestra of Korea with An Sook-Sun, voice **OCT 9** 20.00 London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Valery Gergiev, with Leonid Kavakos, violin: Prokofiev's Symphony No 1, op 25, Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No 1, op 19, Symphony No 6, op 11 **OCT 12** 15.00 Lille National Orchestra conducted by Jean-Claude Casadesus: Ravel, Messiaen, de Falla **OCT 15** 20.00 New Latin American Philharmonic conducted by Ricardo Araujo, with Anne-Julie Kerhello, soprano: Beethoven's Symphony No 3 op 55, Araujo's Symphony No 1 (new work dedicated to victims of violence in Columbia)

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39
OCT 10-22 La Cenerentola by Rossini conducted by Marc Minkowski, staged by Joan Font

Espace Senghor

Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40, www.senghor.be
OCT 12 11.30 Claude Ledoux: the composer presents his work with performance by Noa Momitani, piano and Nahandove Ensemble

Espace Toots

Stuckensstraat 125; 02.241.15.83
OCT 10 20.00 Fabio Schinazi and Alice Di Piazza, piano; David Roelants, violin; Anne Debaisieux, cello; Schubert, Tchaikovsky, Glière, Huber, Barber

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be
OCT 12 11.30 Teodora Gheorghiu, soprano; Philippe Riga, piano: Mozart, Ravel, Donizetti, Verdi, Rachmaninov

Kapel van de Miniemen

Miniemenstraat 62; 02.507.82.00
OCT 11 20.00 Huelgas Ensemble conducted by Paul Van Nevel: Lassus

Musical Instruments Museum

Hofberg 2; 0900.28.877
OCT 12 11.00 Mozart Festival

Royal Music Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37
Concerts at 20.00:
OCT 8 Ensemble Wien-Berlin with Lars Vogt, piano: Mozart, Dean, Ligeti, Poulenc **OCT 13** Renaud Capuçon, violin; Gérard Caussé, viola; Gautier Capuçon, cello; David Guerrier, French horn; Nicholas Angelich, piano: Brahms' Trio with piano No 3 op 101, Trio for violin, horn and piano op 40, Quartet for piano and strings No 1 op 25 **OCT 14** Ricercar Consort: Barre, Visée, Marais, Hotteterre, Forqueray, Dornel **OCT 15** Orchestre Sturm und Klang conducted by Thomas Van Haeperen: Schnittke, Van Rossum, Shostakovich

Opera

Ghent

Vlaamse Opera
Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02, www.vlaamseopera.be
Until OCT 10 Turandot by Puccini conducted by Patrick Fournillier, with Elisabete Matos, soprano; Zoran Todorovich, tenor

Jazz & blues

Antwerp

Arenberg Theatre
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.22.21.92
OCT 15 20.30 Christian Scott

Brussels

Espace Senghor

Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40, www.senghor.be
OCT 10 20.30 Cécile Broché, electric violin; Etienne Bouyer, saxophone

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193-195; 02.733.13.78
Concerts at 20.30:
OCT 8 Roditi/Ignatzek/Rassinfosse **OCT 9** ADKA Group **OCT 11** 18.00 Guillaume Palomba Quartet **OCT 15** No Vibrato

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15
OCT 10 20.30 Thiefaïne-Personne, blues

Le Caveau du Max

Emile Maxlaan 87; 02.733.17.88
OCT 9 20.30 Natacha Wuyts Quintet

Le Grain d'Orge

Waversesteenweg 142; 02.511.26.47
OCT 10 21.30 The Boogie Woogie Jumpers

Théâtre La Roseraie

Alsebergsesteenweg 1299; 02.376.46.45, info@roseraie.org
OCT 10 21.00 Les Doigts de l'Homme, manouche jazz

Hasselt

Muziekodroom
Bootstraat 9; www.muziekodroom.be
OCT 9 20.30 Sugar Ray & The Bluetones with Monster Mike Welch

Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul

Antwerp

Queen Elisabeth Hall
Koningin Astridplein 26; 0900.26.060
OCT 10 20.30 The Dubliners

Sportpaleis

Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060
Until OCT 17 20.30 Milk Inc

Borgerhout

Hof Ter Lo
Noordersingel 30; 03.543.90.30
OCT 13 19.30 Rockstar Taste of Chaos Tour: Horse the Band + Mucc + As I Lay Dying + Story of the Year + Atreyu

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
Concerts at 20.00:
OCT 8 Dub Inc. **OCT 10** Wigbert & Kimmil Foo **OCT 11** 19.00 Shinedown + Disturbed. 20.00 4AD presents Pelican & Torche (Club Circuit) **OCT 12** John Mayall & The Bluesbreakers. Dijf Sanders **OCT 14** Heather Nova + Scarce **OCT 16** Port O'Brien

Beursschouwburg

Auguste Ortstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be
OCT 11-12 20.30 Tuxedomoon

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
OCT 11 20.00 Film concert: The Man with the Movie Camera, documentary by Dziga Vertov with live musical accompaniment by DJ Buscemi and band 20.30 The Sufi Path of Love: Sheikh Hassan & Friends. 22.00 Statik Dancin Deluxe with Live Showcase

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
OCT 11 23.00 Ricardo Villalobos

Le Botanique

Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
OCT 8 20.00 The Herbaliser. The Redwalls **OCT 9** 20.00 Infadels. Bell*1 + Micah P Hinson

Theatre 140

Eugène Plaskylaan 140; 02.733.97.08
OCT 10 20.30 Stephan Eicher

VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07, www.vkconcerts.be
OCT 8 20.00 EF + Mom + This Will Destroy You **OCT 10** 20.00 Psy'Aviah + Subsonica **OCT 12** 19.30 Jugglin' Discotheque + Sud Sound System **OCT 16** 20.30 Cecilia::Eyes + Cranes

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991
OCT 15 20.00 Sandrine + James Blunt

Ghent

Capitole
Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5; 0900.84.100
OCT 14 20.00 Art Garfunkel

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 09.267.28.28
OCT 12 14.00 Bar d'O & DJ Guy Broeckhove

Hasselt

Muziekodroom
Bootstraat 9, www.muziekodroom.be
OCT 9 Sugar Ray & The Bluetones with Monster Mike Welch

Kortrijk

De Kreun
Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44
OCT 8 20.00 Pelican + Torche + Steak Number Eight
OCT 16 20.00 Ayco Duyster

Leuven

Het Depot
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
OCT 9 20.00 De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig + Aka The Junkies + DJ Willie Wartaal

Stuk

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
OCT 9 20.30 Go_Tell

World, folk

Brussels

Espace Senghor
Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40, www.senghor.be
OCT 11 20.30 Joubran Trio (Palestine)

Théâtre Molière

Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00, www.muziekpublique.be
OCT 11 20.00 Maria Kalaniemi & Olli Varis (Finland)

Leopoldsborg

CC Leopoldsborg
Kastanjedreef 1; 011.34.65.48, www.ccleopoldsborg.be
OCT 9 20.15 Under African Skies

Dance

Brussels

Kaaithater
Saintelettessquare 20; 02.201.59.59, www.kaaithater.be
OCT 10-11 20.30 The Stop Quartet, choreographed and performed by Jonathan Burrows

La Raffinerie

Manchesterstraat 21; 02.410.33.41
OCT 9-11 20.30 Helium, choreographed by Anouk Llaurens

Théâtre les Tanneurs

Huidevettersstraat 75; 02.512.17.84
OCT 8 20.30 Les Ballets C de la B in Aphasiadisiac, choreographed by Ted Stoffer

Leuven

30CC Schouwburg
Bondgenotenlaan 21; 016.20.30.20, www.30CC.be
OCT 15 20.00 Rosas in Steve Reich Evening, tribute to the American minimalist composer, choreographed by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker

Stuk

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
OCT 9 20.30 Kobalt Works in i!2, choreographed by Arco Renz

Theatre

Antwerp

Antwerpen X
Berchem, Antwerpse Ring; 070.344.555, www.daens.be
From OCT 4 Daens: The Musical, music by Dirk Brossé, staged by Frank Van Laeke with Lucas Van Den Eynde, Fabrice Pillet, Free Souffriau (in Dutch with French surtitles)

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be
OCT 9-11 20.00 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)

Het Toneelhuis/Bourla

Komedieplaats 18; 03.224.88.00
OCT 9 20.00 Woest, solo performance by Tom Lanoye (in Dutch)

Beveren

Ter Vesten
Gravenplein 2; 03.750.10.00, www.beveren.be
OCT 11 20.00 Woest, solo performance by Tom Lanoye (in Dutch)

Brussels

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
OCT 14 12.40 Paul Auster/It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing (without dialogue)

KVS Box

Arduinkaai 9; 02.210.11.12, www.kvs.be
Until OCT 11 20.30 Le Jardin, film and dance theatre (in Dutch)
OCT 15-18 20.30 Le Salon, dance theatre (in Dutch)

Kaaistudio's

Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat 81; 02.201.59.59, www.kaaitheater.be
Until OCT 11 20.30 De Parade in Wald, concert theatre (in Dutch)
OCT 15 & 17 20.30 Nature Theatre of Oklahoma in Rambo Solo, written and staged by Pavol Liska and Kelly Cooper, performed by Zachary Oberzan (in English)
OCT 16 & 18 20.30 Nature Theatre of Oklahoma in Romeo and Juliet, written and staged by Pavol Liska and Kelly Cooper (in English)

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15
OCT 14 20.30 Nicolas Canteloup, comedy

The Warehouse Studio Theatre

Waelhemstraat 69a; 010.41.86.57, carolyn.cusack@skynet.be
Until OCT 11 20.00 English Comedy Club in Diana of Dobson's by Cicely Hamilton (in English)

Theatre Saint Michel

Pater Eudore Devroyestraat 2; 0900.40.850, www.ticketnet.be
Until OCT 10 20.00 Hommage à Jacques Brel, musical comedy with Pascal Deman

Herentals

'T Schaliken
Grote Markt 35; 014 28 51 30, www.herentals.be
OCT 12 20.00 Woest, solo performance by Tom Lanoye (in Dutch)

Heusden-Zolder

CC Muze
Dekenstraat 40; 011.80.80.98, www.muze.be
OCT 10 20.15 Woest, solo performance by Tom Lanoye (in Dutch)

Jezus Eik

GC De Bosuil
Witherendreef; 0497.73.93.52, www.marlis.be
OCT 10-12 Marlis Productions in Nunsense, musical comedy (in English)

Leuven

30CC Schouwburg
Bondgenotenlaan 21; 016.20.30.20,
www.30CC.be
OCT 8 20.00 Woest, solo performance
by Tom Lanoye (in Dutch)

Stuk

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
Until OCT 16 20.00 SKaGeN in
DegrotemonD (in Dutch)
OCT 15-16 20.30 Lampe in Isaac and
All the Things He Doesn't Understand,
written and staged by Pieter De Buysser
(in Dutch and English)

Visual arts

Antwerp

**Contemporary Art Museum
(MuHKA)**
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.260.99.99,
www.muhka.be
Until DEC 7 Broodthaers & friends,
works by Belgian artist Marcel
Broodthaers shown with works by
Panamarenko, Robert Filliou, Bernd
Lohaus, Guy Rombouts and Walter
Swennen (www.amuseevous.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

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,
www.desingel.be
Until NOV 2 Construction: Privacy,
Politics, Conflicts & Obsessions, work
by Swiss architect Christian Kerez

Extra City

Tulpstraat 79; 0484.42.10.70
Until NOV 16 Mother's Day,
audiovisual installation by Smadar
Dreyfus

Fotomuseum

Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00
Until JAN 4 Gérald Dauphin,
retrospective of work by the Antwerp
photographer (1938-2007)
Until 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

Bruges

Arentshuis
Dijver 16; 050.44.87.11
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
Until JAN 4 Stradanus (1523-1605),
artist at the Medici court, retrospective
of Bruges-born artist Johannes
Stradanus, with paintings, drawings,
prints and tapestries

Brussels

**ACP House – African Caribbean and
Pacific Group of States**
Georges Henrilaan 451; 02.732.17.37
OCT 8-13 Barbadiana, prints by 14
artists from Barbados

Archief van de Stad Brussel

Huidevettersstraat 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 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,
womens' 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 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 Markten

Oude Graanmarkt 5; 02.512.34.25
Until NOV 2 Dialoog/Dialogue, group
show

Flemish Parliament – De Loketten

IJzerenkruisstraat 299; 02.552.40.43
Until DEC 20 Screenworlds,
contemporary photography from
Flanders, with work by Carl De Keyzer,
Caroline Van Poucke, Jimmy Kets,
Stephan Vanfleteren, Tim Dirven and
Tony Leduc, among others

ISELP

Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70
OCT 10-NOV 29 Hymne, installation
by Claude Lévêque
OCT 10-NOV 29 Jewellery by Isabelle
Carpentier and ceramics by Marie-
Agnès Marlair

Jubelpark

Riddersschaplaan; 0476.78.14.78
Until NOV 30 Michelangelo's Pieta, 120
large-format photographs of the Italian
master's work by Robert Hupka

Justitiepaleis

Poelaertplein; 02.512.19.63
Until OCT 31 Room for Justice, an
exhibition by Lawyers without Borders
on globalisation and justice
Until NOV 11 Corpus Delicti,
contemporary installations, sculpture,
photographs and video art by
Guillaume Bijl, Thierry De Cordier,
Edith Dekyndt, Wim Delvoye Jan
Fabre, Panamarenko and Johan Muyle,
among others (www.corpus-delicti.be)

La Fonderie – Brussels Museum of
Work and Industry

Ransfortstraat 27; 02.410.99.50
Until DEC 7 Sous les palmiers: la mine
(Under the Palm Trees: The Mine)
photographs of miners in

Morocco during the 1960s, by Charles
Henneghien

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 Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11,
www.fine-arts-museum.be
Until JAN 4 Meunier in Séville, 80
paintings made in Spain in 1882 and
1883 by Belgian artist Constantin
Meunier (1831-1905)
Until JAN 18 Landscapes and portraits
by Belgian artist Lismonde

Royal Museum for Central Africa

Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11
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
Until JAN 18 Landscapes and portraits
by Belgian artist Lismonde
Until JAN 25 Breuk en erfenis
(Separation and heritage), show
marking the European Union's French
Presidency, with 1970s works by French
artists

Sint-Gorikshallen

Sint-Goriksplein 1; 02.502.44.24
Until OCT 26 Brussels Architecture
in the 1950s and 60s, photographic
exhibition

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
exploring the relationship between
sex and technology in contemporary
society by Flemish artist Anne-Mie Van
Kerckhoven

Ghent

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

Kemzeke

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

Maaseik

Maaseik Museum
Lekkerstraat 5; 089.81.92.99
Until MAR 31 The Terracotta Army of
Xi'an: Treasures of the First Emperors
of China, 14 life-size sculptures of
warriors from the world-famous
Terracotta Army shown with some 200
artefacts from the Qin and Western
Han dynasties

Mechelen

Cultuurcentrum
Minderbroedersgang 5; 015.29.40.00,
www.cultuurcentrummechelen.be
Until NOV 23 Honorons Honoré,
tribute to 19th-century French

Don't miss...



Longevity in Solitude, Pines, 1871-1878

The Game of Madness

**Until 12 April, 2009, Dr Guislain Museum, Jozef Guislainstraat 43,
Ghent, www.museumdrguislain.be**

In collaboration with the Flanders International Film Festival,
Ghent's Dr Guislain Museum hosts this international, multi-
media exhibition on the portrayal of madness in film and theatre. It's
a massive undertaking, with stage designs, paintings, miniature thea-
tres and contemporary art from more than 50 collections around the
world. You'll find clips from films by David Lynch, Pedro Almodo-
var and Woody Allen, plus filmed theatre pieces featuring the late
Flemish actor Julien Schoenaerts and work by Jan Fabre. Hyster-
ics, psychopaths and neurotics flit in and out of different themes,
including kings and jesters, the monster within, the mental institu-
tion as theatre and the theatre as mental institution. Throughout the
academic year, Ghent's Film Plateau will show several of the exhibi-
tion's featured films, and a few local theatre troupes are also getting in
on the act. It's madness, really.

caricaturist Honoré Daumier, with
works by contemporary Belgian artists

Ostend

Kunstmuseum Aan Zee
Romestraat 11; 059.50.81.18,
www.pmmk.be
Until DEC 15 In the Cherished
Company of Others, drawings,
sculptures, paintings and installations
by Marc Camille Chaimowicz, shown
with works by international artists

Turnhout

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

Ypres

In Flanders Fields Museum
Grote Markt 34; 057.23.92.75
Until NOV 12 Off the record, work by
artist-in-residence Wendy Morris

Festivals & special events

Festival of Flanders: The international
classical and new music festival
celebrates its 50th anniversary with
concerts in every province
Until OCT 29 across Flanders
070.77.00.00, www.festival.be

Antwerp

Quinzaine Française Antwerpen:
Franco-Flemish event promoting
economy, culture and tourism with
concerts, theatre, exhibitions and a
gastronomic fair
OCT 9-22 in Antwerp centre
03.241.04.27, www.tourisme-alsace.com

Bruges

The Messenger: multidisciplinary
festival on immigration and
international culture with exhibitions,
theatre, dance, film, debates and
readings
OCT 10-DEC 10 across Bruges
www.cultuurcentrumbrugge.be

Brussels

Breast Cancer Walk/Run: Annual 10k
run, 5k walk to support the fight against
breast cancer. Volunteers are needed on
the day of the event, contact catherine.
lesent@bordnet.be
OCT 12 10.00 start at Campus ULB
Solbosch, 87 Adolphe Buyllaan,
Building E1
02.541.30.89, www.bcwtr.be

Comics Festival Belgium: includes
an exhibition on Mickey Mouse,
projections of cartoons and workshops
for children
OCT 11-12 at Sint-Gilles town hall
www.comicsfestivalbelgium.com

Korea Festival: Panoramic view of
Korean culture, with exhibitions,
concerts, theatre and children's events
Until FEB 28 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat
23
02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

Masarat Palestine Festival: Theatre,
dance, debates, poetry, music and films
Until NOV 2 at Halles de Schaerbeek,
22 Koninklijke Sinte-Mariastraat 22
02.218.21.07, www.halles.be

Zingaro presents Battuta: Equestrian
show
Until OCT 19 at Tour & Taxis,
Havenlaan 86C
02.549.60.49, www.sherpa.be

Ghent

Flanders International Film Festival:
The 35th edition of the festival that
spotlights world cinema and film music.
Concerts with world-class composers,
exhibitions, parties and special guest
appearances, including actor Woody
Harrelson
Until 18 OCT at Kinepolis and other
venues across Ghent
www.filmfestival.be

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

INTERVIEW

Johan Verminnen

Johan Verminnen is a veteran Flemish singer who appears as an “eyewitness” in the new documentary about Jacques Brel, *J’aime les Belges!*, now available on DVD. Brel died 30 years ago this week.

How did you, as the sole representative of Flanders, come to be involved in the film?

They asked people for testimony about Jacques Brel and what he meant to them. Now, I’m a singer myself, and I write songs. I never knew Brel personally, but I saw him on videos, and he was on the radio. He was a part of my life because I was composing and singing. I’m really influenced by French music. I was born in Wemmel and went to school in Brussels, so half of my friends were French speaking and half were Flemish. Brel was one among many composers who influenced me. Another example was Claude Nougaro, who died recently, who combined poetry and jazz.

Brel was at the top when you were starting out, and you were performing mainly in French. I imagine it would have been hard *not* to be influenced.

Jacques Brel was present all my life on radio and television. There was also Flemish *chanson*, based on the French tradition. People like [Georges] Brassens had a lot of influence on singers in my region. I have a song called “Madeleine la Marollienne” about a woman living in the Marollen, and I never could have written that song if Brel hadn’t existed. But I don’t want to compare myself to the master.

Throughout the film, Brel claims to be a *flamand*. His work was almost entirely in French, so why does he say that?

The connotations of “Flemish” are really important, for example, in

painting. So when you start your career, and you go to Paris, and you say, “I’m Flemish”, people say oh, he’s one of those guys influenced by Breughel and Rubens – which is true. In the song “Les flamandes”, I think you could say he’s describing a painting by Rubens or Breughel. Breughel is really Brabant and Brussels.

Brel was never considered Flemish by people here, though, was he?

Yes, everybody claimed him. The Flemish claimed him because he said he was Flemish. His father was from Flanders. In Brussels, they say he’s a real *Brusseleer* because he lived in Schaarbeek and later in Ukkel, and he sang “Jef” in Brussels [dialect]. In the French-speaking part, they claim him because he expressed himself in French. And in France, they say he played in French movies. Even the Dutch claim Brel because nobody sang about Amsterdam like he did. Everybody likes to claim an artist – when he’s successful.

Brel created a stir with the 1950s song “Les flamandes”. Flemish people reacted angrily at the way they were portrayed, and he was banned from playing in many places in Flanders.

I followed that very closely. The reaction was a real mistake by Flemish people because that song could have been written about “Les bretonnes” without changing a thing. Then you’ve got “Les f...” [a new version of the song on Brel’s final album] where he says, “They piss in two languages”. That’s typically Brel: he’s a provocateur. He didn’t care.



Belpo/Frank Abelen

But he alienated the very people to whom he aspired to belong.

You’ve got radicals in each of the communities, and some of those radicals claimed Brel because of “Le plat pays”, which is a love song to Flanders like no other. But then when he came with “Les flamandes”, they feel attacked in their soul, and they use it politically. What I think Jacques Brel didn’t really understand is that there is a big difference between being *un flamand* and *un flamingant* [a Flemish extremist], and he mixed those up.

Has he been rehabilitated in the last 30 years in Flemish eyes?

He was always accepted by the Flemish. Whether he’s accepted by the *flamingants*, that’s another question. The documentary is called *J’aime les belges*, but there’s not a lot of people today who would make a statement like “I like the Belgians”.

Do you still perform in French?

No, but sometimes when I’m play-

ing in Brussels they ask me to sing in the two languages, which is really easy for them because then they don’t have to pay two artists [laughs]. And in every gig, I sing a song in French, which could be a song by Brel.

You’ve just begun a new tour.

Yes, it’s called SoloZeiler, which means someone who sails alone, a solitary navigator. I’ve been doing my thing for 40 years without changing, without following the latest trends or the newest fashions. I’m always knocking on the same nail. There are six new songs and then there are some surprises, old songs I rearranged and that sort of thing.

Any future recording plans?

I said to myself, when you record, Johan, you have to be careful to have really strong material. Because you release it, and two days later they’re downloading it for free. It has to be something people really want to have at home in the original version. But I’m still working. I did 125 gigs last year in the Netherlands and Belgium.

I live between Ghent and Bruges

– like Brel sang, *entre les tours de Bruges et Gand* – in a small village called Hansbeke. The house was the atelier of a sculptor. When I look out of my window, I can see three kilometres of the canal from Ghent to Bruges and in winter-time, when all the leaves are gone, you can see the tops of the ships. And then I see all of what Brel saw and described, you see the clouds so low. Then you’re in his world. You’re in a real Flemish world. That’s also my world.

What’s your lasting impression of Brel?

I think he could have been a friend, that’s what his daughter always says to me: “If my father had known you, you would have been friends.” That’s a compliment for me.

Interview by Alan Hope

Johan Verminnen presents SoloZeiler and other concerts across Flanders throughout the autumn and winter

online
www.johanverminnen.be

THE LAST WORD

what they’re saying in Flanders

Rumour mill

“Soon I won’t be able to blow my nose without you guys making a news item out of it.”

Guy Verhofstadt
Former Belgian PM
on press speculation that he may stand for the European Parliament

Place your bets

“Virtually all the banks went over to a sort of casino-capitalism, where they played roulette with people’s life savings.”

Caroline Gennez
Socialist SPA president
on the financial crisis

Blown away

“All of a sudden I was standing in front of a work by Kandinsky: a white canvas with a black stripe. I was blown away. I wanted to translate that emotion into clothing.”

Dries Van Noten
Belgian designer
explaining the inspiration for his latest Paris show

EducationinFlanders **Interieur08**
FestivalvandeVrijheid **PaulDeKnop**
LoppenCastle **PinkScreens**
next week in Flanders Today