



Screenworlds, p.9



Hardy swimmers plunge into the canal at Damme during the annual Damme-Brugge swimming event

Taking the plunge

Flanders must act on water quality before it is too late, experts say

Emma Davis

Walking along a river in Flanders is hardly the most savoury of activ-

ities considering that only 70% of households in the region are connected to an urban waste water treatment facility. For the

rest, a few have septic tanks while the others dump their waste water directly into the rivers.

As if that was not bad enough,

industrial plants are chucking out pollutants into the water supply, most notably the metals industry, and agriculture is adding its

bit to the mix as chemicals used to spray crops and the feed given to farm animals find their way into

Continued on page 3



Business

Antwerp has just been voted one of the world's 10 best cities by the editors of the Lonely Planet guides. Well, that's what we've been saying all along. Now it's official.

7



Arts

Erik De Vree paints in a very traditional style that goes back to the Flemish Masters and Rembrandt. He's the first living artist to be exhibited in the beautiful Mayer van den Bergh Museum in Antwerp and that's just where he belongs.

9



Active

Beauvoorde Castle near Veurne looks like a perfect example of a 17th-century Flemish castle. Only it isn't. It was built by a Flemish aristocrat with an eye for the romance of the past. We stroll around the interior.

11

Kaupthing accounts could be reopened soon

Talks in Reykjavik bring "hopeful" signs

Alan Hope

The Luxembourg subsidiary of the troubled Icelandic bank Kaupthing is expected to be operational again soon, according to Belgian prime minister Yves Leterme, speaking at the weekend after discussions in Reykjavik with Iceland's prime minister Gier Haarde.

Government intervention in the affairs of the bank looks unlikely at the moment, but a buyer is now being sought with the help of consultants PriceWaterhouse-Coopers for the 20,000 Belgian accounts held at Kaupthing. However, the assets are

likely to remain frozen for the next couple of weeks.

Belgian savers make up the majority of the 23,000 account-holders with Kaupthing Luxembourg, which is suffering the repercussions of the world financial crisis. The bank's location in Luxembourg has reduced the likelihood of a rescue plan coming from Belgium, while the Luxembourg government's willingness to intervene was tempered by the fact that a tiny number of those affected are from Luxembourg.

Continued on page 8

EDITOR'S NOTES

DME Awards

When you think of design, you may not immediately think of Flanders. You possibly think more about countries like Italy or Finland or the Netherlands. But this small region doesn't do too badly in the design stakes.

If you need proof, just check out this year's DME (Design Management Europe) awards. These are given to large and small European companies that use creative design to improve their business. That means the award is not just about the product but also about boosting productivity.

The 2008 awards were handed out recently in Cardiff to 39 different companies. The winners ranged from big organisations like the UK's Virgin Atlantic to micro companies like Senz Umbrellas of the Netherlands.

The UK grabbed the biggest number of awards and honourable mentions, but Flanders came a close second. The region netted six awards and mentions – twice as many as last year – which put the region ahead of the Netherlands and Denmark (both on three), Finland with two and Italy, which, despite its design talent, gained just one award.

The Flemish company Vlaem-sch, based in Houthalen, gained

a mention in the “micro companies” category for quirky design pieces such as Moose that sell at affordable prices. Another award – this one in the “small companies” category – went to Curana, a bicycle manufacturer based in Roeselaere that has expanded its activities into developing innovative cycling equipment.

Flanders also scored two separate awards in the “non-profit” category. One went to the West Flanders College Howest in Kortrijk for running courses that encourage designers to work alongside engineers in creating new products. The other went to the Interieur Foundation, which organises the funky design biennial in Kortrijk (reviewed last week in *Flanders Today*).

The Eliet company also scooped an award in the “first time design project” category for neatly-designed garden products such as wood chippers. And the wild people at Extremis gained an award to put on their shelf for their sustainable furniture, like the Gargantua bench pictured below.

online

www.designmanagementeuropa.com



Benchmark of excellence: Gargantua by Extremis takes public furniture to a new level

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FACE OF FLANDERS



Tim Birex/Reporters

Jean-Luc Dehaene

When Dexia bank became the latest major financial institution to suffer the effects of the global meltdown, the government brought in a man known as the “master-plumber”. And it took no-one by surprise that a man with no experience in banking should be the one to turn to in a crisis. “Not a single banker has yet expressed any doubts about Dehaene’s arrival,” said his former spokeswoman in government, who had preceded him to Dexia.

Jean-Luc Dehaene was prime minister between 1992 and 1999, and presided over the most fundamental institutional reforms ever seen in this country – as well as the Dutroux affair. He saw Belgium turn into a thoroughly federal state, and he stood four-square with the victims of police blunders and swore to them their case would be pursued to the limits.

That was the sort of skill the government was looking for when they brought in Dehaene to chair the Dexia board. He has revealed this strength on several previous occasions: in 1999 when he was named one of the three “wise men” whose job it was to draw up a new EU constitution, and again when he was brought in to try to put together a government behind Yves Leterme in the days following the 2007 elections.

Jean-Luc Dehaene was born in Montpellier in August 1940, and grew up in Bruges. He attended a Jesuit school in Aalst, and read law at Leuven university before going on to Namur to read economics and improve his French.

Dehaene sits on the boards of four other major companies: Leuven-based biotechnology start-up Thrombogenics; Lotus Bakeries; mining giant Umicore and brewer InBev. His personal network is quite simply unrivalled and he has a foothold in a huge range of sectors including the Christian movement, the trade unions and the scouting movement. He also has old friends in the network of apparatchiks who run government via the cabinets.

In addition, Dehaene is a senior figure at the municipal level, having served as mayor of Vilvoorde from 2000 to 2007. The European institutions are his home-ground as well and he narrowly missed becoming Commission president in 1994 when his nomination was vetoed by John Major, leaving the way open for the disastrous Santer Commission.

All of those contacts will be at the service of Dexia. It is said that when Leterme wants to contact German chancellor Angela Merkel he goes through channels, whereas Dehaene just picks up his mobile phone. Dexia is the bank of the municipalities and the Flemish government. It's also the sponsor of Dehaene's beloved Club Brugge. The job could have been designed specially for him.

But there are a few dissenting voices. Leuven university economics professor Paul De Grauwe commented: “Even this Brabant dray-horse can't drag Dexia out of the mud.” This view was supported when shares fell 12% on the day of his nomination. “It's only Dehaene,” pointed out another analyst. “It's only one man.”

The Dehaene effect, however, seems now to have taken hold. His banking experience was never the point; he's there as a weighty figure intended to restore confidence. “There was no need for a banker at this time,” one editorial said. “What was needed was someone who can take care of the shareholders. He's there to clear up the mess, negotiate what comes next, and then leave again.”

Alan Hope

online

www.jean-lucdehaene.eu

TALKING DUTCH

notes on language



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gezond

Let's start with an impossible question. What is the connection between a horse and a fish? Well, they are both examples of good health, the one in English, the other in Dutch: as healthy as a horse translates as *zo gezond als een vis*. For sickness, both languages agree you can be as sick as a dog – *zo ziek als een hond*.

We all want to be healthy, wealthy and wise but the old advice on achieving this by going to bed early no longer seems to be enough.

Now to be healthy you have to take action when you're awake too. So at work I see a notice saying *Laat de lift voor één dagje hangen en pak de trap* – Let the lift be for one day and take the stairs. Sound advice no doubt. And with the word “sound” we can link up with the Dutch word for healthy – *gezond*, which often translates as sound. So if you are *lichamelijk gezond* you are physically fit or sound; and if you have *een gezonde geest in een gezond lichaam* then you have a sound mind in a sound body. If you find your lost kitten *gezond en wel* then pussy is safe and sound.

When walking through the town the other day I saw people crowding round a stand where bags were being distributed. Clearly no money was being exchanged so I joined the short queue to be given a bag of fruit and veg. On the side of the bag was the logo, inevitably but sadly in English: All Day Long, followed by *Groenten en fruit, da's de klok rond genieten* – Vegetables and fruit (strange order), that's round-the-clock pleasure. It may be for some I suppose. The text begins with *We zijn het er allemaal over eens: elke dag voldoende groenten en fruit eten, is gewoon gezond* – We are all agreed: eating fruit and vegetables each day is simply healthy. It isn't clear who the “we” are; it then goes on to make you feel guilty for not eating so many grams of fruit a day. Healthy messages sometimes confuse: we are told butter is bad for you, then later the opposite. Perhaps the answer is to eat what you like in moderation – *met mate*.

If your health does decline, you can always move to the country for health reasons – *om gezondheidsredenen naar het platteland verhuizen*. If you're feeling run down, you may need *de gezonde berglucht om weer gezond te worden* – healthy mountain air to recover your health. Hopefully you will return the picture of health – *een toonbeeld van gezondheid*.

And you will now surely have noticed what you say in Dutch when someone sneezes: *gezondheid!* – *gesundheid!*

But now I should turn my attention to *de kiwi, banaan en peer* from that bag to attain my daily intake of fruit. After all, who doesn't want to be as fit as a fish?

Alistair MacLean

online

www.alldaylong.be

FEATURE

Michael Merne



Geneva-based photographer Michael Merne took this photograph of the Ghent waterfront during a visit to Flanders. View his other pictures at www.michaelmphoto.com

Flanders' liquid assets

Continued from page 1

the system.

Something stinks about water policy in Flanders. The quality is way below European standards and the region faces a future of shortages if it does not address issues of sustainability.

There was some effort to clean up the water in the late 1990s, but while the region made improvements (particularly with regard to treatment of waste water from industrial processes) the project to bring water quality up to scratch has been relegated to a back burner.

"In the 1990s, the quality of the water in the rivers was very bad. There was no life in the rivers," says Jo Van Cauwenberghe, director of Green Belgium. "Now you can see fishermen and people kayaking but, having said that, there has been no evolution since then. We went from very bad to simply bad and now it is staying bad."

Poor water quality has a huge impact on the economic prosperity of a region because of the extra costs for purification. "So long as the quality is bad you can't use it," said Wim Van Gils, a water campaigner from environmental organisation Bond Beter Leefmilieu Vlaanderen. "It is difficult to make water for drinking or for industrial production."

While agriculture causes a certain degree of the pollution, it is also a victim. "The problem is that bad water floods farmland, too. There is then not only the effect from flooding, but pollution gets

into the soil," said Van Gils.

Aside from these existing problems, poor water looks bad and smells bad and is an inhospitable environment for humans and wildlife. Areas which could be developed into beautiful recreation parks or tourist attractions are left to languish. After all, who wants to spend their day wandering by a polluted, smelly river.

Belgium's poor record on this front has brought it into conflict with European Union regulators because it is in breach of the framework directive on waste water management, which aims to bring all waters in Europe up to a certain standard by 2015.

Belgium has already been sued in the EU's highest court for its failure to transpose the directive into its own law, something all member states were obliged to do. Now Flanders region is facing up to the fact that it could face further EU legal action. "None of the three regions fully comply with that directive. So a new European Court of Justice procedure is looming," said Belgian lawyer Wim Vandenberghe from DLA Piper.

Aside from failure to comply with transposing the law, Flanders is likely to be in breach of its standards. "The EU water waste framework directive has targets for 2015. We are never going to meet those. There are some possibilities for extension in the framework and probably we will have to use them. We are so far from where we should be," said Van Gils.

The problem for Flanders' water policy is that it is not high up on

the political agenda. Van Cauwenberghe explained that while the European law has been put into Belgian law, there is as yet no legal framework outlining how the law should be applied in practice.

Van Cauwenberghe said water policy is being overshadowed by other issues on the agenda, most notably the hot political topic of climate change. "Water policy is not the biggest political priority. If you talk about climate change, there is a lot of effort in this area – for example insulation of houses – but in the case of water, not a lot is happening."

Alongside the effort to comply with the European law, the Flemish Parliament has adopted a resolution to address the issue of water quality. In this, it acknowledges that it is technically and financially impossible for the region to sanitise all waste water by 2015 and that it therefore will not make the European target.

The resolution, from March 5 of this year, asks the Flemish government to do everything possible to make the necessary investments to improve water waste management and support local actors. But while the resolution is a welcome sign for environmentalists, they are sceptical about it leading to concrete policy.

"We need to have the Flemish government expand on this resolution, which is really just an expression of wishes. We need them to really work on the terrain," said Van Gils, who added that tackling water quality, with its implied

costs for industry, would be politically too sensitive ahead of the regional elections next year.

Van Gils said that different water companies – run by the municipalities in Flanders – have different standards. Some perform better than others. "It would be great to have binding planning for the municipalities. Nothing happens if they don't do their job well. There are municipalities who have been doing practically nothing. There should be a 'what happens if you don't do it' clause. Otherwise it won't happen."

The other crucial question is money. According to Van Gils, the region is going to need to stump up a lot more money for its water. "The amount people pay today in Flanders is not enough even for simple maintenance of the existing network," he said, adding that the entire system needs a health check.

"We went from very bad to simply bad and now it is staying bad."

Water quality as an end in itself is important enough. But it also has huge implications for water sustainability. Without the one, the other is much tougher to achieve. While it might seem that Belgium, with its rainy weather, is in no danger of running short of water, the climate, say environmentalists, belies the reality.

"We have a terrible water management policy. Twenty percent of the surface area of Belgium is non-permeable and so the water just goes into the street. There is always too much or too little. When we have five days of rain, you know there will be floods, but after one week of strong sun we have problems again," said Philippe Weiller, campaigner from WWF Belgium.

In Flanders, a lot of water is over-exploited, especially groundwater (water which is found beneath the ground surface and makes up about 20 percent of the world's water supply). The easiest thing for industry is to drill a hole and pump the water. The poorer the quality of the surface water – the water that we can see in rivers – the more people turn to ground water to meet their needs.

According to a recent study by the Flemish environment agency (Milieu Rapport Vlaanderen), Flanders should be cutting its use of ground water by 75% if it is to avoid a reduction in the groundwater table. This means that for every 100 litres being pumped up today, only 25 litres of those are being pumped up in a sustainable way. "In quite a lot of regions, we need to make sure we will still have groundwater in a few decades," said Van Gils.

The problem will be exacerbated by the effects of climate change. As temperatures rise, the base levels of rivers are expected to go down, in some scenarios by as much as 70%, meaning that Flanders becomes even more reliant on ground water. The goal of reducing ground water use by 75% would then become even harder to reach.

Already, the region is having difficulties with its water resources. Under an agreement with the Netherlands, Flanders should be providing the Ghent canal, which stretches all the way to the Dutch port of Terneuzen, with a fixed cubic measurement of freshwater to make sure it does not become too salty with seawater.

Flanders missed this target in the summers of 2003 and 2004. The summer of 2003 saw an intense heatwave in Western Europe, seen by many as a sign of things to come on our warming planet.

"It is essential for the port of Ghent," says Van Gils. "This is the only gateway for big ships, while some big company's get their production or cooling water from this canal. But it is also important for the agriculture in the region."

Although the effects of climate change are already visible, serious water shortages would take some time to materialise, making the problem a hard thing for decision-makers to grasp.

Van Gils said: "It is not easy to tell people now that you can't have a permit because of what will happen in the future. We could have a very big water problem in a few decades, though, so we need a sustainable ground water table and we need climate change adaptation."

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Bart De Pauw



PHOTO OF THE WEEK • BRUSSELS • The Grote Markt in Brussels glows in the dark under a network of illuminated cables installed by the French light artist Yann

Kersalé. The 1,500 bulbs create a pattern of dotted lines intended to symbolise the people of Europe coming together on the main square of the capital of Europe, the artist said.

The work was funded by France, which currently holds the presidency of the European Union.

FIFTH COLUMN



Old news

Loft is not just the successful new Flemish film by Bart De Pauw en Erik van Looy. The word *loft* is also used in Flemish politics, more specifically in the compound *loft socialist*. A loft socialist is a trendy youngish social-democrat who is as far removed from the working class as possible. Are loft socialists the reason that the SPA – the Flemish socialist party – is in so much trouble? Partly. There are a good number of reasons why the SPA, who in 2003 still received 23% of the votes, have shrunk away to a measly 14% in recent opinion polls. For one thing, the SPA needs some time to adjust to being in opposition, having been in government since 1988. Another reason is that Labour parties throughout Europe are going through some rough times. This inevitably leads to internal bickering. SPA also has to cope with an unclear leadership: Caroline Gennez, who became president after the SPA's electoral defeat in 2007, lacks support from within. And, although she is an excellent debater, she has yet to win the hearts of the general public.

Somehow the SPA has become old news. Names like Peter Vanvelthoven, Bruno Tobback and Freya Vandenbossche, though still quite young, seem to have been around forever. Not only have they had their turn as ministers, before them their fathers (Louis, Louis and Luc) have so too! Flanders basically seems bored with them, especially when there are relatively new and seemingly more exiting parties such as Lijst Dedecker and N-VA around. This goes to show how fast things can change in Flemish politics. Only five years ago, everything about SPA seemed new and exiting. The party had a new name (adding the A for *anders*, different), a new shape (a cartel with Spirit, which has since changed its name to VI.Pro) and a new leadership, with Patrick Janssens, Steve Stevaert, Johan Vande Lanotte and Frank Vandenbroucke, who eventually became known as the *Teletubbies*. Can it get any more cute?

The popularity of Steve Stevaert, a former pub owner with a peculiar Limburg accent, matched that of a pop star. His simple message of making services such as public transport free (*gratis*, a word he repeated endlessly) made him the object of both admiration and ridicule. And, although there was a well thought out ideology behind this *gratis*-obsession, Stevaert was called a populist.

Well, how ironic. These days the coming man is Jean-Marie Dedecker. His ultra liberalism puts him at exactly the opposite end of the political spectrum, but that does not seem to stop SPA's traditional working class electorate from turning to him in droves. And what is he called? A populist. But, unlike Steve Stevaert, it is hard to imagine Jean-Marie Dedecker living in a loft.

Anja Otte

THE WEEK IN FLANDERS

WEDNESDAY 15 OCT

Former Evergem resident Abdelkader Belliraj, in prison in Morocco on suspicion of terrorism, has admitted a series of connections to Al Qaeda, Abu Nidal and even a dinner with Osama bin Laden himself, according to statements made to Moroccan investigators and reported by *De Morgen*. • Insurance company Ethias has pledged to make an *ex gratia* payment of about €92 million to people who paid for investment products from the now-bankrupt Lehman Brothers and brokered by Ethias. • About 160 owners of holiday chalets across Flanders have complained at receiving orders calling for building work to be carried out, and in one case for the chalet to be demolished. The orders date back as far as the late 1980s, and have never been enforced. In many cases, the current owners bought the properties having no idea any order was in force. • Flemish ministers for mobility and public works have agreed a new system of weight sensors to help make freight traffic on the roads safer. Nine weight checkpoints will be installed across the region, as well as 10 new checkpoints to measure distances travelled. The project will cost €8.4 million. • Bruges city authorities are to spend €36,000 on improving fire safety at the famed belltower on the central Markt square. Camera security and better evacuation facilities will be installed, and water-pipes leading to the top

renovated. A tourist was recently evacuated from the tower after he had taken ill, but only with some difficulty, the city said. • Leuven-based brewer InBev is to postpone a planned capital increase of €6.4 billion as a result of conditions on the financial markets. But the takeover of Anheuser-Busch, brewer of Budweiser, will go ahead with bridging loans, the company said. • One of the candidates in the rumour-plagued Miss Belgian Beauty competition was revealed



to be an undercover journalist working for the girlie magazine *P Magazine*. The final at the weekend was won by Yoni Mous, 22, from Edegem.

THURSDAY 16 OCT

Only one Flemish school in four still has a machine selling sweets, education minister Frank Vandenbroucke said. But the government has no plans to ban them, choosing instead to support the promotion of healthy eating and the provision of fruit. • A 35-year-old Brussels man went on trial charged with defrauding Belgacom of €739,000 while employed by the company to maintain a database of payments to suppliers. The man is alleged to have siphoned off payments to accounts of his

own.

FRIDAY 17 OCT

A Flemish man of 24 working as a volunteer among street children in Honduras was murdered in a possible robbery. Thorsten Zwaenepoel was travelling alone near the border with Guatemala. • A requirement imposed by the city of Vilvoorde that applicants to buy former public housing should be able to speak Dutch is not a breach of the constitution, Flemish Brabant province governor Lodewijk De Witte said. The houses will be sold off next month. • Around 65,000 people in Flanders used the services of a *pro Deo* lawyer in 2007, out of more than 138,000 nationwide. The service cost the public purse €52.6 million, and involved 87,000 lawyers. The justice ministry is to budget an additional €5.8 million this year to make the service even more accessible.

WEEKEND 18-19 OCT

A European report claimed that 52% of fruit on sale in Belgium contains pesticide residues. But the federal Food Safety

Agency argued that fruit was still safe, with only 5.8% of all fruit and vegetables in 2007 found to be above the safety limit. • The Flemish government will provide insurance cover for parents who take part in the *Duurzaam naar*

school programme to encourage green ways of bringing children to school, mobility minister Kathleen Van Brempt said.

MONDAY 20 OCT

A Chardonnay from Scherpenheuvel was chosen as best Belgian wine by an international jury of wine-makers from France, Germany, Spain, Chile and Australia. Wines from Sint-Pieters-Rode and Vliermaal won in the red and sparkling categories. • Jean-Luc Dehaene turned down a salary of €400,000 when he took over the chair of the board of Dexia bank. "I took over the chairmanship to help, not out of lust for profit," Dehaene said. He asked the bank's remuneration committee to propose a lower salary. • As many as 90,000 families in Flanders are having trouble keeping ahead of their debts, according to social services minister Steven Vanackere. Antwerp has the largest problem with 22,369 cases, followed by East and West Flanders. • TV personality Goedele Liekens is to take legal action against broadcasting company SBS Belgium after the company scrapped her contract. Liekens is accused of using her appearance on a VRT show to promote her magazine Goedele.

Breaking news
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Survey paints grim picture of life of poverty

Poor people live in cramped housing, have few friends, rarely go on holiday and cannot afford the luxury of computer, car and sometimes even TV. Those are the sombre conclusions of a study into poverty carried out by the government's economics service, which paints a clear, if depressing, picture of life below the poverty line.

The study defines poverty as disposable income of less than €860 a month in the case of single people, or €1,805 for families with two children. That definition accounts for one in seven Belgians, or 14.7% of the population. The poor are more likely to rent accommodation than own a home. Employment makes a huge difference: only 4% of workers is poor, compared to 20% of pensioners, and 31% of the unemployed.

Poor people are more likely to be women; while the population as a whole is split almost exactly evenly between men and women, the population of poor people includes 54% of women. At the

same time, the poor are weighted towards single people. In fact, divorce and separation can often be the direct cause of a descent into poverty, particularly for women with small children.

Nearly one-third of those said they had trouble paying their heating bill, compared to one in 10 of the population in general. More than one in 10 felt their housing was too cramped, with fewer than one room per person. Nearly 6% lacked even basic amenities like warm water, a shower or even a private toilet. One-third were unable to afford to have friends for dinner once a month, and almost the same number have no visitors at all. Nearly two out of three couldn't afford an annual holiday.

The survey revealed an interesting fact unrelated to poverty. More than half of the well-off part of the population – 55% – hasn't been to a museum or exhibition in the last year, and 50% haven't been to the cinema. The figures for poor people are only slightly higher: 77% and 70%.



• **BENEFITS** One in 10 people in Flanders receives welfare benefits, but they are not enough to live on, according to a study by the Union

of Cities and Communes. In every case but one, the benefits paid in Belgium are below the poverty line established by the Euro-

pean Union. Only couples with no children, who receive €474 a month each, get more than the minimum €430.

Students working to meet costs, study shows

Half of all students in higher education in Flanders have to work during term-time to supplement both personal expenses and study costs, according to a survey carried out for *De Standaard*. Students in colleges of higher education are slightly more likely to work than those in universities.

On average, students work 9.2 hours a week, and earn an average of €341 a month. Apart from those cases – 14% of the total according to the poll – involving families in financial difficulties who nevertheless don't qualify for tuition support, most students are working to supplement their own personal budget. Men work to go out, and women work to go shopping, the study found. Other popular spending choices include travel, clothing, mobile phone-bills and petrol.

"Students want to try everything, and they've no wish to cut back on their living standards," commented Ellen

Meyens of Start People, an employment agency which has dealings with working students. "That takes a lot of money, but parents are not prepared to hand it out just like that."

The *Standaard* study also found that about half of all students follow their parents' advice closely when it comes to choosing a field of study. Only 18% are planning to follow part of their studies in another country and more than 60% stay at home during term. Some 70% of students said they were "very pleased or rather pleased" with individual supervision of their studies.

Meanwhile parents of students in secondary education complained at rising costs. For the average student in a career-oriented secondary school, the cost per year is €978, according to a survey by the Higher Labour Institute. In general humanities the cost goes up to €1,018, and in an art-oriented school to €1,255. But within careers educa-

tion there are wide differences. At the lower end, students in construction cost only €826 on average. At the higher end, students following a tourism syllabus cost as much as €1,464 a year.

The costs are made up of three main elements:

- books and equipment, including a computer (€667);
- school activities including day-trips (€104);
- travel costs (€70).

Prices have barely risen since a similar study was carried out in 1999, suggesting schools have made a major effort to keep costs down, education minister Frank Vandenbroucke said. And despite parents' complaints, he has no intention of introducing a cap on the amounts parents are asked to pay, as now exists in primary schools in Flanders. The variety of course in the secondary system, he said, made it "too complex" to make a cap feasible.

Turkey and America win big prizes at film festival



A scene from Grand Prize-winner *The Market*

Lisa Bradshaw

America, Turkey and Iran won the big prizes at the Flanders International Film Festival in Ghent – perfect for an event with an even bigger world view this year than usual. The festival has a special focus on film music, and the professional jury awarded the Grand Prize for the Best Film to *The Market*, a droll Turkish drama by British director Ben Hopkins about the ups and downs of free trade – generally of the underground variety.

The Georges Delerue Prize for Best Music went to *Two-Legged Horse* by Iranian director Samira Makhmalbaf. Other prize-winners were Sylvie Verheyde for her screenplay for the French film *Stella* and Danish filmmaker Bent Hamer for his direction of new film *O'Horten*.

The international jury awarded the prize for the best short film to Flemish director Danny De Vent for *Zwemles* (*Swimming Lesson*). The only Flemish feature at the festival also won a prize: the very first Jo Röpcke Award – which will be presented

every year by Knack magazine for the best Flemish film of the year – was awarded to Fien Troch for her new movie *Unspoken*.

On the final evening, Ghent hosted the World Soundtrack Awards (WSA), now the most prestigious film music awards ceremony in the world. The big prize of Film Composer of the Year went to the American James Newton Howard, who has composed music for no less than 13 movies over the last year, including *The Water Horse*, *Charlie Wilson's War* and *The Dark Knight*. German-born Marc Streitenfeld, who scored *American Gangster* and *Body of Lies*, won Discovery of the Year, which has become a benchmark in the industry for predicting future Oscar winners.

The WSA included performance of film music by the Flemish Radio Orchestra led by conductor Dirk Brossé, and a Lifetime Achievement Award for Angelo Badalamenti (*Blue Velvet*, *Wait Until Spring, Bandini*), which was presented by British singing legend Marianne Faithfull.

Unions picket new hypermarket over conditions

Shop-workers' unions have begun picketing the new Carrefour hypermarket in Bruges, due to open this week, protesting at what they claimed were lower wages and reduced working conditions for staff working there. At the same time, group executive director Marc Oursin said the store was expected to bring in €60 million in sales in a year – an unusually high target for a hypermarket.

Carrefour has spent around €10 million on the new 10,000 square metre store, which will be one of the biggest in the country. In addition, the group has invested €100 million since the beginning of 2007 on store renovations nationwide. Yet last year saw growth of only 1.4% in hypermarket business. Carrefour is losing market share to discounters such as Colruyt and Aldi, and hypermarkets in general are losing business as shoppers prefer to leave the car at home and shop in smaller local supermarkets like the GB Express chain, or the Delhaize equivalents Proxy and Delhaize City. "There is still a place for a shop that offers everything under one roof," said Oursin. "We have noticed a slight improvement recently. The loss of market share has been limited."

Carrefour now has 56 hypermarkets in Belgium, out of 600 stores in all (the Express stores are franchise operations). Oursin recognised the strong growth of discount competitors: "Every time purchasing power is talked about, they get free publicity," he said. But Carrefour intends to fight back with the development of its own-brand range to respond to consumers' desire for cheaper groceries, and with expansion. Next year the company plans to open 10 new supermarkets and 60 Express stores – although it complained last week that the tightening of credit by banks was



hitting potential franchisees.

Meanwhile unions were protesting at Carrefour's method of establishing pay and working conditions for staff at the new hypermarket. Instead of negotiating with the usual committee for hypermarkets, Carrefour is opening the new Bruges store under a separate partnership and negotiating conditions with the union committee responsible for middle-sized, independent stores. As a result, staff will work a six-day week (instead of 4.5), earn 25% less, and work on 39 Sundays in the year. Last week the company's HQ in Evere was also picketed, and unions have threatened tougher action if their demands are not met.

Antwerp in "top 10 world cities"

Derek Blyth

Antwerp has made it onto a list of the world's top 10 cities compiled by the backpacker travel guide company Lonely Planet. The Flemish port was the only Belgian city on the list, which was published in the company's Best in Travel 2009 guide.

Consumption is apparently the main reason for visiting Antwerp, according to the author Ryan Ver Berkmoes. Among the "life-changing experiences" in visiting Antwerp, he mentions: "Proclaiming 'I've found my

favourite beer at the Beerhuis Kulminator," as well as "buying a cheap diamond at a gem mart next to the train station, and then hightailing it."

But the author goes on to say: "there's much more to this city than the world's best variety of beer". He goes on to list some of the city's cultural highlights such as MoMu, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts and the Cathedral. The guide also recommends eating *frietjes* at one of the city's 200 *frituren* and visiting the Sunday antique market on Hoogstraat.

The aim of the top 10 cities list, says Lonely

Planet travel editor Tom Hall, is to list "places that are just too good to ignore, have been growing in popularity but still offer something off the beaten path, or classic places that deserve a new look." He continues: "Antwerp is becoming known as a stylish city, a design hotspot and one of the fastest emerging art destinations in western Europe so we thought it was time it was put on the map."

The other top 10 cities were Beirut, Chicago, Glasgow, Lisbon, Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Shanghai, Warsaw and Zurich.

THE CRISIS

Job losses continue

The world financial crisis is spilling over into the real world and Flanders with its strong export-oriented open economy is feeling the pain. Over 5,000 jobs have been lost since early July and the rate is now accelerating with an average of some 200 workers a day heading for the dole queues since the beginning of October.

Hardest hit is the electronics and technology sector with 300 jobs cut at Agfa-Gevaert in Antwerp, 300 at EDS in Mechelen and a further 160 at the Philips plant in Turnhout. The internet sector is also hurting, with eBay currently considering the closure of its Brussels office as part of a Europe-wide restructuring plan.

The important car and truck industry is rapidly decelerating with night shifts being culled in Ghent at Volvo Cars and Volvo Trucks with the loss of some 650 jobs for the two companies. Over in Antwerp province, Daf Trucks, in Westerlo, is reducing employment by 250 people. Opel, in Antwerp, has already reduced employment by up to 450 people by not renewing temporary work contracts in September and the national federation of the car and truck industry is warning that further cuts are in the pipeline.

The Flemish textile sector has also been hard hit because of declining demand, with several companies closing or in deep restructuring. The carpeting and floor covering sector is expected to lose one thousand posts, with 148 axed at Domo in Zwijnaarde, almost 400 in the BIG plants of Ninove and Wielsbeke, and more than 350 at the UCO Sportswear unit near Ghent. Meanwhile, Bekaert Textiles and the Spin group are making almost 600 workers redundant in the Kortrijk area. And the recent bankruptcy of the Ralos company added some 260 people to the unemployment figures.

In the pharmaceutical industry, recent redundancy plans affected Brussels-based UCB where over 550 jobs will go, while Janssen Pharmaceutica, the affiliate of the US Johnson and Johnson company, is reducing employment by 150 barely one year after a drastic restructuring that slimmed the firm's workforce by 600 in its plants at Geel, Beerse and Olen.

Nystar, the zinc producer and smelter with production units in Balen and Overpelt, announced last week it was reducing its workforce by 200 as a result of the significant fall in the zinc price worldwide.

The building sector, which up until recently was a rock of stability, is starting to experience a downturn, as Meise-based Moens, a public works contractor, filed for bankruptcy last week with the loss of 126 jobs.

Meanwhile, the major realignment of the banking sector in Belgium is likely to have a significant impact on employment. Fortis bank was recently bailed out by the government and sold to the French BNP-Paribas, while Dexia was recapitalised by the Belgian, French and Luxembourg authorities. The crisis has now hit the Flemish bank KBC, which posted a €900 million euro loss in the third quarter.



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Finance ministers promise to step in for Kaupthing clients

Continued from page 1

Finance minister Didier Reynders, together with his Icelandic counterpart, claimed there is growing interest in a takeover from a foreign bank. But getting interested parties to move towards a deal may require incentives, such as extending the state guarantee on savings to include Kaupthing customers. Buyers on the other hand may be put off by the small number of customers, the interest rate of 4.25 + 2% offered by the bank, and the fact that the customers are what one source called "bargain-hunters"

rather than long-term savers.

According to Laurent Garzaniti, one of Kaupthing's Belgian clients, "the chances are looking relatively hopeful" that a solution may be reached. Some agreement appears to have been reached at a political level, he said. "It would be a slap in the face to Luxembourg to let a bank go under. We are talking about people who put their money in a savings account. It's a matter of saving the confidence in the banking industry."

Prime minister Jean-Claude Juncker has already made it clear that any impression that his government only supported

banks with mainly Luxembourg clients would be a "fatal blow" to the country's position as a financial centre.

Luxembourg has already made a move by increasing its own guarantee on savings from €20,000 to €100,000 – but the increase is not retroactive. If Kaupthing were to go bankrupt – a possibility that has receded, if not disappeared – the two governments would contribute a sum to be determined at the time, Luxembourg finance minister Luc Frieden has promised. "If no buyer can be found, the Belgian and Luxembourg governments will try to work out

a solution so that savers get back more than €20,000," he told journalists. "We have no information on how that would work in practice," said Garzaniti. "The priority for us right now is to get the bank up and running."

The EU, meanwhile, has agreed to step in, together with the International Monetary Fund, to help Iceland out of its current difficulties. A hotline in Belgium has been set up by Kaupthing bank to help answer customer questions: 02 533 1600.

online
www.kaupthing.be

BUSINESS FLASH



BMI

BMI, the former British Midland Airways, has signed a code share agreement with SN Brussels Airlines, on its Brussels-UK routes. The move will increase frequencies offered by both airlines to 28 daily flights to eight cities in Britain from October 26.

Euronav

The Antwerp-based shipping and storage company is investing 500 million dollars in partnership with the US Overseas Shipbuilding company to develop its Floating Storage and Offloading project. The plan is to acquire and transform two large tankers into storage facilities anchored near oil platforms in the Gulf area.

Delhaize

The supermarket group is to open a new chain of discount supermarkets, beginning in January with a store in Namur province. The new chain, whose name has not been revealed, will be unlike existing discounters such as Aldi and Lidl, sources told *Le Soir*.

Omega Pharma

The pharmaceuticals company reported increased sales in the third quarter of the year, up 10% to €182.5 million. The rise, higher than the 6.4% forecast by analysts, was largely due to internal growth, the company said. Belgian activities alone accounted for a 21% increase in turnover, which was balanced somewhat by only 3% growth in France.

Fortis

A Dutch lawyer representing Fortis investors has filed suit in a Dutch court against three former senior executives personally, allowing any damages to be paid by the three men individually. According to Hendrik Jan Bos, the three – chairman Maurice Lippens, CEO Jean-Paul Votron and CFO Gilbert Mittler – "said everything was going well with Fortis, while they knew it was not so".

Brussels Airport

A planned airline tax of €10 on European flights and €40 on other overseas flights would turn Zaventem into one of the most expensive airports in Europe and threaten thousands of jobs, according to Wilfried Van Assche, CEO of Brussels Airport. At the end of last year there were 21,000 people working at the airport. The measure could also drive many holidaymakers to other airports in neighbouring countries.

InBev

Mexican beer brewer Modelo has started legal action to stop InBev becoming its new partner. Modelo is 50% owned by Anheuser-Busch, which is currently in the process of being taken over by Leuven-based InBev. However a clause in the Modelo-AB contract states that AB may not sell its shares to a competitor in the beer market without first offering them to Modelo shareholders.

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ING 

EXHIBITION

Beyond the backyard

Flemish photographers take on the world

Lisa Bradshaw

You get a taste of this exhibition before you even enter the building: large-scale photographs decorate the windows of the Flemish Parliament building on Ijzerenkruisstraat. To entice you inside, they've chosen the most provocative and the most playful – both of which you find in abundance at *Screenworlds*, an exhibition of projected photographs by Flemish artists.

The show is made up of eight large screens hanging from the ceiling, each of which projects a series of photos taken by a selection of Flemish photographers – there are 51 photographers in all and more than 500 photos.

Contributors to *Screenworlds* range from the famous – Jimmy Kets, Stephan Vanfleteren, Carl De Keyser – to the slightly lesser known, such as Arno Roncada, who lovingly reflects empty spaces where people have ceased to exist, and Franky Verdickt, who pairs his photos of empty spaces with those of people who just might belong there.

Some artists have six or seven photos, while others show 20 or more, but the show as a whole demonstrates the diversity of Flemish photography – from landscapes to portraits to the ever-

present fashion arena. It also makes evident the Flemish penchant for working outside Belgium and for blurring the boundaries between art and media photography, an approach spearheaded by photographers at *De Morgen* newspaper 20 years ago.

The photographers have been carefully chosen, so *Screenworlds* has no trouble offering quality work, but food photographer Tony Le Duc is easily a stand-out. His photographs of restaurant dishes have appeared in nearly every media source throughout the Benelux, and his shots in books about wine, chocolate and home-made creations by the housewives of Belgium are famous. But here he concentrates on more creative junctures – lipsticked mouths with sweet jellies dripping out the sides and extreme close-ups of food, rendering them almost unrecognisable. Le Duc's red meat is a landscape with a river of blood running through it; his baked goods are mountainsides of dry and cracked canyons.

The screens in the exhibition are nicely arranged so that you can sit in front of just one or step back to see them all at once – photos switching constantly to create a somewhat dreamy view of moving images. This standpoint is in fact



A glimpse of other realities through the eyes of Flemish photographers

emotionally moving – a view of the entire world from right here at home.

De Morgen newspaper recently criticised the exhibition for showing all Flemish photographers but almost no images of Flanders itself. To this I would say: so what? *Screenworlds*, like its name, is not

about this tiny part of the planet – it's about a world view through the eyes of Flemish people.

Christophe Ruys, director of Antwerp's photo museum and curator of this exhibition, once told me that one of the specifics of Flemish photographers is that most of their work is shot outside Flan-

ders. Perhaps we should be glad, rather than critical, that Flemish photographers are so willing to look beyond their own backyard.

online

www.vlaamsparlament.be

ART

Speechless things speak for themselves

Living artist exhibits amongst old masters

Marc Maes

Alongside a collection of 17th-century still lifes by Dutch and Flemish artists such as Roelof Koets at the Mayer van den Bergh museum, hang the paintings of modern day painter Eric De Vree. De Vree's work forms part of the

new exhibition at the museum entitled *De Sprakeloosheid der Dinghen*, (The Speechlessness of Things).

Eric De Vree, 42, was born in Zandvliet, one of Antwerp's polder villages, in 1966, and began painting at the age of 20. His father, Albert De Vree, was a landscape artist and etcher who gave his son a classical

artistic education – including a grounding in Rembrandt's clair-obscur techniques.

De Vree describes his work as 'atmospheric still life'. "I find inspiration in everyday objects like tools, personal things left by deceased relatives, fruits and vegetables," he explains. "It's not that difficult to convey emotion or character in a painting; it's just a matter of combining the right colours and techniques. But atmospheric still life is all about touching the spectator with everyday objects. Take the example of an old hammer and some rusty nails: if your painting manages to make people aware of the environment and the man who worked with the tool, then that is atmospheric."

For the exhibition, De Vree was invited to pick one of the items in Fritz Mayer van den Bergh's collection and base a still life on it. He opted for a medieval shoe – a unique piece of heritage. The exhibition also includes a painting of Eric's football shoes and an educational video showing "the making of".

"You could consider the shoe as quite banal," he says, "but I think that the contrast between the 1460 shoe and the used football shoes has a powerful impact."

De Vree is the first living artist to have his work displayed

in the Mayer van den Bergh museum. Because of the low level of interest in Belgium for his style of painting, his works are distributed across Europe by galleries in London. "There's no platform for classical paintings here," says De Vree, "and classical craftsmanship is not taught in academies or art schools. I learned from observing and experimenting. I studied the old masters, their use of light and the structure of the paintings. I'm glad that the museum decided to organise this exhibition."

Hans Nieuwdorp, director of Antwerp Art Museums and curator of the Mayer van den Bergh museum, took the initiative to invite De Vree to exhibit. He says De Vree's oeuvre is continuing a traditional art tradition based on realism. He is, says Nieuwdorp: "a contemporary painter whose works could well have been painted in the 17th century. The careful composition and eye for detail, the realistic approach to depth and clair-obscur represent a revival of the essential criteria for old works of art."

He adds: "His constant attention to the story behind the object takes the painted object and its story into the realm of timelessness."

online

www.museummayervandenbergh.be



If the shoe fits: medieval footwear that inspired Eric De Vree

FILM

The Unusual suspects

The lofty ambitions of a new Flemish thriller

Christophe Verbiest

Loft, directed by Erik Van Looy, is by far the most anticipated Flemish film of the year. It has been five years since his last film *De Zaak Alzheimer* (released in the USA as *The Memory of a Killer*), and if that's anything to go by, it will be big – with ticket sales of 750,000 in Belgium, *De Zaak Alzheimer* ranks as number four in the list of Flemish all-time box office hits.

According to the Belgian poster, though, the film is not solely *his*. “A film by Bart De Pauw and Erik Van Looy”, it reads, while international posters only mention Van Looy. Bart De Pauw has been a prolific force in Belgian television for the last 15 years. His work ranges from writing and acting in the youth series *Buiten de zone* to the soap *Het Geslacht De Pauw*. According to Van Looy, he played an extensive part in making the film. “Bart has not only scripted the film, but has also been involved in the whole process of making it, up to the point of being present while shooting. But we stuck to clear rules: I was in charge on the set.”

“Anyway, I have my doubts about the idea that a film belongs to a director,” says Van Looy. “*Chinatown* is as much a film by screenwriter Robert Towne as by director Roman Polanski. There's also a pragmatic reason: Bart is a very well-known media personality, so

his presence will help in promoting the movie. Since he isn't known abroad, the posters for the international market will just state ‘A film by Erik Van Looy.’”

After the success of *De Zaak Alzheimer*, Van Looy was aggressively courted by Hollywood. However, in the end he refused all other scripts in favour of *Loft*. The Flemish press lapped it up a year ago, and the resulting headline read: “I had to choose between Jessica Alba and Bart De Pauw.”

Hollywood is already interested in remaking *Loft*. According to Van Looy, the script was sent off to several American production companies just before filming, and has generated a lot of interest. “Just the fact that they have shown an interest in *Loft* is already gratifying. For both Bart and me it feels like Wonderland,” he says.

One of the interested producers has already sent the screenplay of *Loft* to Matthew Fox, one of the lead actors in the popular American series *Lost*, who has apparently indicated he'd like to star in a remake. “I take it for what it's worth, of course, but I'm inclined to believe the rumour, since why should he bother to say so if he didn't like it,” says Van Looy. However, putting things into perspective, he adds: “The screenplays of *De Zaak Alzheimer*, *Toto le héros* and *Iedereen Beroemd!* (the Oscar-nominated *Every-*



Loft: the yuppie's gothic mansion

body Famous!) have all been sold in America, but none of them have been remade.”

And would Van Looy be interested in directing the remake himself? “Yes!” he answers without hesitation. “For one thing, I'm vastly disappointed, generally, by the American scripts I keep receiving. Filming in Hollywood, also, is a big adventure, so I would be more confident working with a script I already know thoroughly.”

Van Looy has already thought about his dream cast. “There are two possibilities. Either it becomes a big studio film of let's say 80 million dollars, and then it'll be a cast like *Ocean's Eleven*, so you can guess the names, right?” While the likes of Brad Pitt and George Clooney spring to mind, he continues: “Or it'll be produced by the independent branch of the studio system, a 25 million dollar film, which would be made with a

cast like *The Usual Suspects*.” He's clear about what he'd prefer: “The main characters are antiheroes, and I'm not sure we can get away with that if we have big shots in the cast. And I would regret changing the script. But please, let's stop daydreaming!”

online
www.loftdefilm.be

REVIEW

An amicable arrangement



“The sheer nothingness of male friendship”

Five friends share a loft where they can cheat on their wives. One morning the body of a young woman is lying on the bed. Who has used the loft the night before?

Who has killed her? Since there are only five keys to the front door, it's pretty clear that one of the five is the culprit. After an intense beginning, *Loft* jumps to

the year before to explain how the five have arrived at their unusual arrangement.

From then on the film very naturally leaps through time, pushing these two main storylines to one culmination point. For two hours we're confronted with questions of adultery, faithfulness and guilt – and with the sheer nothingness of male friendship. *Loft* is a very male film – the female characters are defined as the wife/girlfriend of the five male leads. Women, according to *Loft*, are generally victims that undergo situations.

Think after the film about what has happened, and it all sounds incredible, but making the implausible look plausible –

suspension of disbelief, Hitchcock used to call this (or did you find the storyline of *Vertigo* easy to swallow?) – is the ultimate challenge for a thriller director and Erik Van Looy succeeds. Until the last fifteen minutes, that is.

To reassure himself that we're able to understand all the plot twists, he starts inserting short flashbacks of things we have seen before, but that by now have gained a new meaning. So, an intelligent viewer wouldn't do that automatically? And then there's the epilogue in which we get a glimpse of the future: the shattered lives are restored as much as possible, which is not only unnecessary and somewhat moralistic; it also breaks the mysterious tension Van Looy had carefully crafted.

The secret behind this otherwise excellent film is a great mastery of all the visual parameters: the marvellously subdued interior cinematography – the loft is the yuppie counterpart of a gothic mansion – and the ominously moving camera (which fortu-

nately never becomes a cheap shoulder camera aesthetic). There's also the fast editing which never feels like a gimmick and the bizarre but efficient sound effects (we can hear blood).

Most of the actors are top notch (especially Koen De Bouw, Filip Peeters and Bruno Vanden Broecke), yet two of them spoil the fun: Matthias Schoenaerts' laboured pseudo-method acting is completely out of place and Veerle Baetens tries so hard to incarnate a *femme fatale* she achieves the contrary.

Despite his visual talents, Van Looy isn't a David Fincher or Christopher Nolan (yet?), let alone a Johnny To (*Election 1 & 2*) – those directors would have been able to lift *Loft* to a higher plane. *Loft* is a well-constructed film that lacks some emotional profundity – and the clichéd strings-ridden soundtrack is no help either. In the end, it's a thriller that appeals more to the mind than to the heart. But you won't be bored for a second, that's for sure.

Christophe Verbiest

CASTLE SERIES

True romance

Beauvoorde Castle near Veurne appears to be a perfect example of a 17th century castle, both inside and outside. Yet it was created in the late 19th century through the romantic vision of one man.

Denzil Walton

In 1875, at the tender age of 22, wealthy nobleman Arthur Merghelynck fell in love. The object of his desire was not a local beauty, but a ruined castle in the tiny village of Wulveringem, West Flanders. He was attracted by its picturesque setting, but also by its potential to fulfil his grand scheme.

Merghelynck was an incurable romantic who resented the increasing industrialisation of Flanders. He wanted to cherish the atmosphere, style and romance of the past, and in particular the 17th century. Setting eyes on the remains of Beauvoorde Castle, he saw the possibility of realising his dream.

Over the next 27 years, he methodically and lovingly rebuilt and restored Beauvoorde Castle, and filled its many rooms. "Searching the length and breadth of Flanders, he purchased original Flemish furniture and art from collectors and auctions," says castle coordinator Annemie Morisse. "What he was unable to find, he had reproduced. The result is a seventeenth century castle fully furnished in the style of that period."

In his 40's, while restoring the castle, Merghelynck fell in love again. This time it was with a local beauty. Led by love yet again, he was not interested in a financially advantageous or politically correct marriage. Instead, in 1895 he married Julienne Flyps, the waitress who served him his aperitif in his favourite café in Ypres. It was a union that divided his family. Before Merghelynck died in 1908 – only a few years after the castle was completed, he stipulated that Beauvoorde should remain his widow's residence until her death, after which it and all its belongings were to be given to the Belgian state. His wishes have been respected, and this unique heritage site is now open to the public.

You can see the oldest wing of the castle from the inner courtyard. It dates back to 1617, and a coat of arms over the door displays the name of the owners of the time,

the De Bryarde family. The castle was De Bryardes family home until they moved to Ghent in 1662, after which it gradually decayed until Merghelynck appeared on the scene over 200 years later.

On entering the hall, you'd be forgiven for presuming that the portraits on display are of Merghelynck's relations. They're not. The family feud which erupted after his marriage led to Merghelynck refusing to hang family portraits in his castle. Instead, he preferred to buy the portraits of unknown nobles to rest his gaze upon. Similarly, the family trees, heraldic emblems and coats of arms belong to families Merghelynck might have wished to be a part of. Together they create an apparition of 17th century luxuriance and history.

From 1885 until his death, Merghelynck was Mayor of Wulveringem, and the council met in the Knights' Hall. With its gilded leather wallpaper, suits of armour and Spanish chairs provided by the Society of the Crucified Saviour in Veurne, it would have been an imposing room to discuss the business of a small agricultural village. A 17th century cooler sits next to the fireplace – the precursor of the refrigerator. Made of marble and filled with ice from a nearby ice cellar, it would have kept their drinks cool. It's easy to imagine the councillors retiring to the smoking room next door after a council meeting.

"Visitors are always amazed by the number of stoups [holy water fonts] scattered throughout the castle," says Morisse. "Merghelynck was a keen collector of them. There are more present in the chapel, which was built to house his religious artefacts. However, it was never consecrated and the couple attended the village church." The chapel also boasts a heavily-decorated gravestone adorned with no fewer than 17 coats of arms, and a triptych dating from 1549.

Upstairs, the Burgundian Room contains a polished Belgian bluestone fireplace dating back to 1618 – a remnant of the original building. Along the long walls, the

ebony cushion chests (so-called because the covering on them looks like cushions) are slightly out of place since they are not Flemish but originate from the northern Netherlands. Their simpler, austere designs contrast with the lavishly-decorated Flemish furniture in the castle.

The dining room is notable for its valuable secretaire or bureau; a desk with many small drawers and mirrors. "Note the fine paintings on its doors and its ebony finish," remarks Morisse. "Secretaires



Romancing the stone: a perfect 17th century interior

were designed more for prestige than functionality, although they were useful for hiding secret documents or precious gemstones." The final room to visit is the kitchen, where the fireplace tiles were made locally in Poperinge.

A walk around the grounds should ward off any lingering castle ghosts you may have picked up inside. The garden, designed in a French style by international garden expert Edouard Pynaert in 1877, features snowberries surrounded by limes. Pynaert ran a horticultural centre in Ghent and landscaped gardens in France, Russia, Portugal and Germany. In 2005 the castle orchard was given a new lease of life with the introduction of 35 fruit trees, many of them traditional West Flanders' varieties. "Most

of them are apple trees, but the orchard also contains a mulberry bush, pear, plum, walnut and cherry trees," explains Morisse. "The orchard is managed organically, and the apple harvest makes a refreshing Château de Beauvoorde apple juice."

Castle Beauvoorde is administered by Erfgoed Vlaanderen. It is open until the end of October, Thursdays to Sundays, 14.00 to 17.30, and throughout the winter on Sunday afternoons. An excellent audio guide in Dutch, English, French or German leads you through every room of the castle.

online

www.kasteelbeauvoorde.be



Talking Heads: Johan Tahon has created works for the garden

4 THINGS TO DO

1. TASTE

For somewhere to eat, try 't Potje Pâté in nearby Alveringem. In 1980 local butcher Jan Missiaen started "De Veurn' Ambachtse" and from the beginning he used traditional artisanal methods rather than industrial processes to make his pâtés, terrines, foie gras and verrines (desserts). In 2001 he opened the 't Potje Pâté restaurant. Not surprisingly, its specialities are pâtés of all types served with home-baked bread, farm-produced cheeses and washed down with locally-brewed beers. Sandwiches, salads, steaks are also available, while the *dagschotel* (dish of the day) is good value for money. www.deveurnambachtse.be

2. DRINK

De Snoek in Fortem is an authentic brewery and malt-house dating from the 19th century. It takes you back to the pre-in-

dustrial time of hot ovens, steamy breweries and chilly fermenting cellars. In the ancient Brouwershof you can sample traditional brews. www.desnoek.be

3. SEE

At Bachten de Kupe in Izenberge you can walk around a traditional West Flanders farmhouse, barn, wagon shed, cowshed and stables, all equipped with authentic furniture and tools. www.bachtendekupe.net

4. TOUCH

Located in Beveren, this treasure trove of unearthed pottery discovered in the region dates back to prehistoric times but has a particular focus on the Roman and Middle Ages. It also contains a fascinating collection of clay pipes. www.rohardushof.be

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MUSIC

Boterhammen and Brahms

Lunchtime concerts to feed the soul

Marie Dumont

Tired of the office canteen? Every Friday at 12.30 sharp, a discreet crowd of pensioners and office workers on their lunch-break trickle into the grandiose foyer of De Munt in Brussels for what must be one of the opera house's best kept secrets: small but bewitching lunchtime concerts dedicated mostly to chamber music and played almost entirely by members of De Munt's permanent orchestra.

The Concertini were launched in 1981 as Muzikale Ontmoetingen concerts by the director Gerard Mortier, in a bid to help the venue's orchestra musicians supplement their meagre incomes. Happily, economic hardship is no longer an incentive as salaries have since improved. But the musicians have kept up the habit, grateful for the opportunity to come out of the pit and play a repertoire they wouldn't otherwise get to perform – string quartets by Haydn and Britten, songs by Schubert and Fauré, and occasionally a contemporary piece for a small ensemble. "For them, it's another way of making music altogether, and they love it," says Reinder Pols, who has been in charge of the concerts since 1984.

The Munt is no isolated case. Many venues in Brussels and Flanders organise similar confidential events which are not only affordable, as tickets normally cost less than a tenner, but also fit neatly into a lunch break, leaving you plenty of time to get back to the office in time for that crucial two o'clock meeting. Although far from the glitz of evening performances, these interludes give classical music a refreshingly human, approachable face: the musicians are mostly

young or local performers who will happily chat about their work over a sandwich or a drink. The concertgoers become regulars. They are surprisingly open to unfamiliar repertoires, a bit like people who trustingly order the *dagschootel* at their local restaurant because they know they've never been disappointed.

So where else can you go for a lunchtime concert?

In Antwerp, try the Middagconcerten held every Friday at noon at the Kolveniershof, or the lunchtime concerts organised on Wednesdays by the Flemish Opera on Frankrijklei, which are repeated on Fridays at its sister venue in Ghent.

Meanwhile, if you can get to the Kunstberg area of Brussels at lunchtime, you are spoilt for choice. Aside from classical and jazz freebies several times a week at the Musical Instruments Museum, there are also concerts every Wednesday at the Fine Arts Museum. They take their inspiration from concerts launched by pianist Myra Hess at London's National Gallery during World War II, presenting an overview of chamber music from baroque times to the present day, with an emphasis on Belgian composers. You may find it hard resisting the temptation to take the rest of the day off, as the €6 ticket also gives

you free access to the museum's permanent collections. The series will mark its 2,000th concert on 29 October, with a star appearance by cellist Marie Hallynck and pianist Muhiddin Durruoglu-Demiriz in duets by Brahms and Britten.

Brussels' flagship classical venue Bozar regularly invites musicians

tions itself as a laboratory for the concerts and musicians of tomorrow. Performances are essentially open rehearsals or works in progress, and musicians range from Max Vandervorst, who plays his own eccentric compositions on discarded objects (31 October), to bright young soloists from the Queen Elisabeth music school in Waterloo.

Too busy to sneak off from work in the middle of the day? Not to worry, midday concerts also take place on Sundays, albeit a tad earlier, and some include breakfast or brunch. The weekly BozarSundaysGood Morning series has long been a favourite with families – tiny tots are taken

care of in musical workshops so their parents and elder siblings can relax at concerts by emerging young classical performers from around the world.

Over at Flagey, Un Dimanche Matin is already quite popular despite being only in its second season and focuses on Romanian musicians – the next concert, a violin piano duet featuring young exiled players Remus Azoitei and Eduard Stan, is scheduled for 30 November.

The regular Sunday fixture for the last three decades at the plush Astoria hotel has decamped to the Musical Instruments Museum while the hotel is undergoing renovations. Meanwhile in the Marolles, the Miniemen church has for more than 25 years hosted

online

Concertini, Brussel
www.demunt.be

Middagconcerten, Antwerp
www.middagconcerten.be

Flemish Opera
www.vlaamseopera.be

Musical Instruments Museum
www.mim.fgov.be

Fine Arts Museum
www.concertsdemidi.be

Belgian National Orchestra
www.nob-onb.be

Bozar
www.bozar.be

Albertine Library
www.kbr.be

Flagey
www.flagey.be

Astoria
www.astoria-concerts.be

Miniemen Church
www.minimes.be



Lunch break grandeur: the foyer of De Munt

from the Belgian National Orchestra to have a go at chamber music in its small Terarken auditorium at lunchtimes. Like their colleagues at De Munt, these musicians are more than happy to take a break from their usual repertoire, and the results will often take your breath away. Alternatively, take a short stroll across René Pechère's formal gardens and climb up to the music section on the fourth floor of the Albertine Library, where occasional short concerts feature some of Belgium's finest musicians and use scores from the library's impressive collection.

Another venue worth investigating is Flagey, whose PikNikMusik series on Fridays cultivates an eclectic, edgy approach, and posi-

its monthly, semi-professional performances of Bach cantatas just before Sunday mass at 10.30am. "The place is always packed," says fan Roberta Mills, who seldom misses a concert. "There are people standing in the aisles and babies in pushchairs. Classical music has never felt more alive."

TYRE TRACKS

Tervuren to Leuven

Cycling along the banks of the Voer river from Tervuren to Leuven offers a bucolic excursion between the two Flemish Brabant towns. Begin by taking the lane that runs the length of Tervuren Park. The lakes on the right are particularly beautiful in autumn, with the changing leaves reflected in the water, while ducks, geese, and swans crowd the banks. After about five minutes, notice the Royal Museum for Central Africa, built for the 1897 World's Fair, on the left.

After two kilometres, you reach the parking area and exit the park. Turn right and then left onto the dirt path along the Voer. This winding woodland trail has recently been renewed, offering an exceptional path for cycling.

Two kilometres further on, the trail curves to the left onto a residential road. Turn right and take this road until it ends, rejoining the path along the Voer. Small family farms appear on the right. After several road

crossings, the trail merges again with the main road. Bike signs here confusingly point both right and left to Leuven. Ignore them and go straight ahead, continuing along the Voer. The path widens here, turning to red gravel and then a wider cobblestone road. A lake can just be seen on the right behind a bank of trees.

As the road turns uphill, bear right. The path meanders along the edges of some small farms and gardens. It now seems a long way from Brussels. Once the path ends, turn left onto Dorpsstraat and follow it under the road, turning right onto Groendaal, then left onto Egenhovenstraat, past the white stone Romanesque Church of Saint Peter, built in the tenth century and the oldest surviving church in Flemish Brabant.

Turn right after the school onto Paardenstraat and follow the bike path to the left into a vast cornfield. When you reach the road, turn left, then take the second right onto the residential Rotspoelstraat. At

the bottom of the hill, the road becomes another cobblestone cycle path and enters Leuven, passing some of the newer buildings belonging to the 583-year-old university. Turn right at the T-junction, and then at the lights take the path to the left across the road on the far side of the fence. Bikes outnumber cars in Leuven, and secluded paths crisscross the city, making it without a doubt one of the most bike-friendly places in Flanders.

Follow signs for the centre. Beyond the ring road and botanical gardens, turn right onto Brusselstraat and you're almost there. Now take the pedestrian street up the short hill to the Grote Markt, and pause to admire the gothic marvels of the town hall and St. Peter's church. The cafes around the square offer the chance to enjoy Leuven's famous Stella Artois or another Belgian brew.

Dave Meyer

Gothic Halloween
in Gaasbeek Castle

Friday October 31, 2008
Access from 7 pm to 9.30 pm
Tickets: € 4
Entrance free of charge for spooky children under 7
Bring pocket lamp and boots!

kasteel van gaasbeek info: 02 531 01 30 or www.kasteelvangasbeek.be
Kasteelstraat 40, 1750 Gaasbeek

Classical & New Music

Antwerp

Amuz

Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28
OCT 26 15.00 Les Muffatti conducted by Peter Van Heyghen, with Lauren Armishaw, soprano: Corelli, Valentini and Handel

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be
 Concerts at 20.00:
OCT 23 Till Fellner, piano: Beethoven sonatas
OCT 25 Florestan Trio: Saint-Saëns, Fauré, Ravel
OCT 30 Le Concert d'Astrée conducted by Emmanuelle Haïm, with Magali Léger, soprano: Handel

Bruges

Concertgebouw

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02, www.concertgebouw.be
 Until **OCT 24** 20.00 Concert series of Beethoven's orchestral music with Anima Eterna, conducted by Jos van Immerseel
OCT 26 20.00 Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté and Ensemble Musique Nouvelles conducted by Jean-Paul Dessy, in Khoom by Giacinto Scelsi: choreographed and staged by Nicole Mossoux and Patrick Bonté (dance/music)

Brussels

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
 Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

OCT 24 20.00 50th anniversary of the European Union Choirs and the European Institutions: Belgian National Orchestra and European Union Choirs conducted by Theodor Guschlbauer: Mendelssohn's Elias
OCT 25 20.00 Anima Eterna conducted by Jos van Immerseel: Beethoven
OCT 26 11.00 Katrina Crichton, cello: Bach, Hindemith, Jolas, Henze, Laporte, Khouri
OCT 30 12.30 Yana Dukanov, Ara Simonyan and Arman Simonyan, violin; Dmitri Ryabinin, viola; Olsi Leka, cello; Sergei Gorlenko and Gergana Terzyiska, double bass: Komitas, Frolov, Bottesini

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39
OCT 22 20.00 La Cenerentola by Rossini conducted by Marc Minkowski, staged by Joan Font
OCT 26 20.00 Christian Gerhaher, baritone; Gerold Huber, piano: Beethoven, Haas, Mozart, Mahler

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be
OCT 31 12.30 Max Vandervorst: Symphonie d'Objets Abandonnés

Royal Library

Kunstberg; 02.519.57.51, www.kbr.be
OCT 24 12.30 Ronald Van Spaendonck, clarinet; Dominique Cornil, piano: Brahms, Lysight, Poulenc

Royal Music Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37

Concerts at 20.00:
OCT 23 Prometheus Ensemble conducted by Etienne Siebens: Kurtág, Schumann, Holliger
OCT 25 Le Choeur de la vallée and Carpe Cantorem conducted by David Baltuch: Mozart's Coronation Mass
OCT 26 15.30 Le Choeur de la vallée and Choeur de la Noucelles conducted by David Baltuch: Mozart's Coronation Mass
OCT 28 Gautier Capuçon, cello; Nicholas Angelich, piano: Brahms
OCT 30 Young European Strings Chamber Orchestra (Ireland) conducted by Ronald Masin: Vivaldi, Bach, Sarasate, Deane/Sheahan, Tchaikovsky

Saint Michael and St Gudula Cathedral

Sint-Goedeleplein; 02.217.83.45
OCT 23 20.00 Stefan Johannes Bleicher, organ: Purcell, Bach, Hosokawa (Brussels International Organ Week)

Wolubilis

Paul Hymanslaan 251; 02.761.60.30, www.wolubilis.be
OCT 28 20.00 La Roza Enflorese: Sephardic music

Jazz & blues

Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be
 Concerts at 20.00:
OCT 22 Dave Douglas Magic Circle
OCT 29 Marc Ribot Trio
Borgerhout
De Roma
 Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.292.97.50, www.deroma.be
OCT 23 20.30 Brad Mehldau Trio

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
 Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
OCT 23 20.00 Dave Holland Quintet

Beursschouwburg

Auguste Ortstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be
OCT 26 20.30 Trio Grande & Matthew Bourne **OCT 29** 20.30 Iswhat?! with Hamid Drake **OCT 30** 20.30 Free Desmyter Quartet

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
OCT 30 20.00 Ornette Coleman with Al McDowell, Anthony Falanga, Dernardo Coleman

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193-195; 02.733.13.78
 Concerts at 20.30:
OCT 22 Mélanie De Biasio **OCT 23** Fada **OCT 25** 18.00 Jazz et Saké **OCT 29** Hijaz Quintet

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15
OCT 27 20.30 Omara Portuondo

Le Grain d'Orge

Waverssesteenweg 142; 02.511.26.47
OCT 24 21.30 Bluesdealers

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50, www.soundsjazzclub.be
 Concerts at 22.00:
OCT 24 4in1 **OCT 25** Philip Catherine solo **OCT 27** Master Session **OCT 28** Da Romeo & The Crazy Moondog Band **OCT 29** Chamaquiando, salsa **OCT 30** 21.00 The Singers Night

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
 Concerts at 20.30:
OCT 22 Peter Claus Quartet **OCT 23** Alexandre Tripoli Quartet **OCT 24** Sam Newsome & Lucian Ban Ensemble **OCT 25** Olivier Collette Quartet with Phil Abraham **OCT 28** The Elements Quartet **OCT 29** JazZey **NOV 1** Dirk Van der Linden Trio with Bob DeVos

Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul

Antwerp

Lotto Arena

Schijspoortweg 119; 0900.26.060
OCT 27 20.00 Keane
OCT 31-NOV 1 20.00 De Kreuners

Sportpaleis

Schijspoortweg 119; 0900.26.060
OCT 24-NOV 8 20.30 Night of the Proms – classical/pop line-up with Simple Minds, Live, Sinéad O'Connor, John Miles, Il Novecento, Igudesman & Joo, Angels in Harlem Gospel Choir
OCT 28 20.30 Alicia Keys

Borgerhout

Hof Ter Lo

Noordersingel 30; 03.543.90.30
OCT 25 18.00 Oldschool Rockabilly Psychosis Night: The Mudmen + The Boppin' Kids + The Rattlers + Frenzy + The Meteors

Luchtbal Cultuurcentrum

Columbiestraat 8; 03.543.90.30, www.ccluchtbal.org
OCT 30 21.00 Emile Autumn + Halloween afterparty

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
 Concerts at 20.00:
OCT 22 Arthur H **OCT 26** Lambchop
OCT 27 Ladysmith Black Mambazo.
 Ryan Shaw **OCT 28** Blake + Saybia

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
OCT 25 23.00 Jeff Mills. Efdemin

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15
OCT 22 20.30 Noa

Le Botanique

Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
 Concerts at 20.00:
OCT 23 Thalia Zedek **OCT 28** Coming Soon **OCT 29** The Zcerts + Blood Red Shoes. Alister **OCT 30** Asian Dub Foundation

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34, www.recyclart.be
OCT 25 22.00 Shadowboxing night: Sensational + Spectre + Kouhei + Beat Drunk + DJs, break beat, hip-hop, dub and drum 'n' bass

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991
 Concerts at 20.00:
OCT 25 Lorie **OCT 29** BB Brunes

Ghent

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01
OCT 23 20.00 The Godfathers **OCT 24** 20.00 Amanda Palmer

NTGent Minnemeers

Minnemeers 8; 09.223.22.27
OCT 25 20.00 The Rones + The Hickey Underworld + The Bronx

Leuven

Het Depot

Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
 Concerts at 20.00:
OCT 23 Marcos Valle with Wanda Sáa **OCT 25** Brant Bjork and the Bros + Los Natas + Hypnos 69 + My Sleeping **OCT 30** Marcos Valle with Wanda Sá

Ostend

Kursaal (Casino)

Monacoplein; 0900.69.900, www.musichall.be
OCT 28 20.00 The Moody Blues

World, folk

Antwerp

Zuiderpershuis
 Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00, www.zuiderpershuis.be
OCT 30 20.30 Kayhan Kalhor & Madjid Khaladj (Iran)

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
OCT 24 N'Faly Kouyaté + Seun Kuti & Fela's Egypt 80

Art Base

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20
OCT 24 21.00 Mahabub Khan, Sattar Khan and Maya Saperia: Indian music and dance

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be
OCT 30 20.15 Kudsi Erguner & Ensemble, Sufi music

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50, www.soundsjazzclub.be
 Concerts at 22.00:
OCT 22 Caribe Con K, Caribbean music **OCT 23** Antonio Segura 'Flamenko Project'

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
OCT 30 20.30 Cyntia Rodriguez Latin Combo

Kortrijk

De Kortrijkse Schouwburg

Schouwburgplein 14; www.dekreun.be
OCT 23 20.00 Vieux Farka Touré

Dance

Antwerp

Vlaamse Opera

Frankrijklei 3; 070.22.02.02
 Until **OCT 23** Royal Ballet of Flanders in Sleeping Beauty, conducted by Benjamin Pope, choreographed by Marcia Haydée and staged by Pablo Nuñez

Brussels

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39, www.demunt.be
OCT 28-31 20.00 Sutra, new work choreographed by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

Theatre

Aalst

De Werf

Molenstraat 51; 053.73.28.12, www.ccdewerf.be
OCT 22 20.00 Woest, solo performance by Tom Lanoye (in Dutch)

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 (in Dutch with French surtitles)

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be
 Until **OCT 25** 20.00 Sportivo Teatral in La Pesca, written and staged by Ricardo Bartis (in Spanish with Dutch and French surtitles)

Brussels

KVS Bol

Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.12, www.kvs.be
 Until **NOV 1** 20.00 (OCT 26 15.00) De Radicle verliezers, written and staged by Raven Ruëll (in Dutch)

KVS Box

Arduinkaai 9; 02.210.11.12, www.kvs.be
 Until **OCT 25** 20.30 Le Sous Sol, dance theatre (Peeping Tom Trilogy, without dialogue)

Kaaistudio's

Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat 81; 02.201.59.59, www.kaaithheater.be
OCT 24-25 20.30 Maison Dahl Bonnema and Needcompany in The Ballad of Ricky and Ronny, pop opera (in English with French and Dutch surtitles)

Get your tickets now for...



The Pigeon Detectives

4 November, Muziekodroom Club, Hasselt.
 Tickets from www.muziekodroom.be

After playing every music festival known to man this summer, those five rowdy young lads from Leeds will be back in Belgium twanging their way through the rousing, anthemic, shout-em-out-at-the-top-of-your-voice tunes from their first two albums.

The toe-stomping riffs of *Take her back* and contagious chorus of *I'm not sorry*, both from the first album *Wait For Me* are best enjoyed live with lead singer Matt Bowman belting them out, hair flying, while attempting Mick Jagger-style scissor jumps.

Released in May this year, their second album *Emergency* stamped into the British album charts at number three and has since gone platinum. If you haven't yet caught yourself swaggering along to *This is an emergency* or *Keep on your dress* being played on Belgian radio stations, don't expect a change of direction. It's more of the same twangy indie rock that got them noticed in 2006 – a little bit Kaiser Chief's and a little bit Arctic Monkeys, with a little bit of cynicism thrown in. The melodies may not be painstakingly crafted or intricately woven, but the sheer energy of their compositions and their roaring stage performance blows off the cobwebs after a hard day at work. Catch them while they are still on top of their game.

online

www.thepigeondetectives.com

Kaaithheater

Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59, www.kaaithheater.be
OCT 23 20.30 Wolfskers by Jeroen Olyslaegers, Cassiers, Erwin Jans (in Dutch)
OCT 24-25 20.30 Atropa. De wraak van de vrede (The Revenge of Peace) by Tom Lanoye (in Dutch)

Théâtre Marni

Vergniestraat 25; 0486.78.65.58, www.atc-brussels.com
OCT 28-NOV 1 20.00 American Theatre Company in Best Man by Gore Vidal (in English)

Mechelen

TheAtriumM

Onder den Toren 9; 015.33.03.70, www.theatrium.be
OCT 24-25 Supervrouw with Els de Schepper, one-woman comedy show (in Dutch)

Tongeren

CC De Velinx

Dijk 111; 012.39.38.00
OCT 23 20.30 Woest, solo performance by Tom Lanoye (in Dutch)

Visual arts

Aalst

Stedelijk Museum 't Gasthuys

Oude Vismarkt 13; 053.73.23.40
Until NOV 23 Van Propo tot nu, show in two locations on the theme of art in a social and political context, with works by Marcel Mariën, Panamarenko, Roger Somville, Marcel Broodthaers and Roger Raveel, among others

Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum (MuHKA)

Leuvenstraat 32; 03.260.99.99, www.muhka.be
Until DEC 7 Broodthaers & friends, works by Belgian surrealist 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

Middelheim Museum

Middelheimlaan 6; 03.827.15.34
Until DEC 14 Rodin: Balzac, story of a masterwork, tribute to the French sculptor's famous work

Modemuseum (MoMu)

Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70, www.momu.be
Until FEB 8 Maison Martin Margiela (20) The Exhibition, celebrating the

20th anniversary of the fashion house

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
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

Archief van de Stad Brussel

Huidevettersstraat 65; 02.219.43.74
Until DEC 24 Daily life in Brussels during the 1950s

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

Bibliotheca Wittockiana

Bemelstraat 23; 02.770.53.33
Until FEB 28 25 Years of Passion Hand-crafted bookbindings since the Renaissance, from the Wittockiana's collection

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

Cityscape

Guldenvlieslaan
OCT 24-NOV 1 States of Mind: young American photography, exhibition of the works of seven young American photographers

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

deBuren

Leopoldstraat 6; 02.212.19.30, www.deburen.eu
Until DEC 12 World One Minutes Brussels, touring exhibition of the best one-minute videos from 90 countries

De Elektriciteitscentrale European Centre for Contemporary Art

Sint Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.35
Until JAN 11 Réfléchir le monde, show of photographs, videos and installations by contemporary French artists on the occasion of the European Union's French Presidency

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
Until NOV 29 Hymne, installation by Claude Lévêque
Until NOV 29 La Concubine, photographs by Stephanie Friedli
Until NOV 29 Jewellery by Isabelle Carpentier and ceramics by Marie-Agnès Marlair

Jubelpark

Ridderschaplaan; 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 (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

Royal Museum of Art and History

Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11
Until MAR 8 Continental Superstar, 16 organs from the Ghysels collection, with recreated dance floor, bar and lighting

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
Until JAN 25 Breuk en erfenis (Separation and Heritage), show marking the European Union's French Presidency, with 1970s works by French artists

Saint Michael and St Gudula Cathedral

Sint-Goedeleplein; 02.217.83.45
Until NOV 24 Septiformis, paintings, photographs, installations and video works by several 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

Thüringen Lander Representation in Brussels

Square Vergote 39; 02.737.04.05
Until NOV 7 European Insights, the dynastic relations between Belgium and the duchies of Saxe Coburg and Gotha

Tour & Taxis

Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49
Until NOV 3 World Press Photo, prize-winning images from the international photo-journalism contest
Until APR 26 It's our Earth!, interactive exhibition on sustainable development

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

Don't miss this week



Brussels Accessible Art Fair

October 23-26, 57 Froissartstraat, Brussels, www.accessibleartfair.com

Contemporary art doesn't need to cost millions if you know where to look. And just as well, too, you might think, given the perilous state of the global economy. The Accessible Art Fair in Brussels is organising a timely exhibition of works by 15 international artists who are based in Brussels and sell at prices that don't rival Fortis' losses. There are pieces to buy in different media, including photography, painting, sculpture and prints. Among the exhibitors is Tony Clerkson whose "Brussels Helicopter," above, shows an unexpected view of Brussels from the top of the lift in the Marollen district. Prices range from €50 at the ultra-affordable end of the market to €3,000 for those who still have cash to spill on such luxuries as art.

Deurle

Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens

Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23
Until NOV 23 CAP.MAX, installation in the museum's garden by Emilio López-Menchero
Until NOV 30 Works by American artist Kara Walker
Until NOV 30 Works by Belgian artist Kris Martin

Ghent

Caermersklooster

Vrouwebroersstraat 6; 09.269.29.10
Until DEC 21 Glans en duister, photographs by Eric Standaert
Until DEC 21 Harold Lloyd, tribute to the American actor and director

Dr. Guislain Museum

Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95, www.museumdrguislain.be
Until APR 12 The Game of Madness: On Lunacy in Film and Theatre, representations of madness in film, plays, paintings and contemporary art, with works by James Ensor, Jan Fabre, Hugo Claus, Fernand Khnopff and Dirk Braeckman, among others

Museum of Fine Arts

Fernand Scribedreef 1 – Citadelpark; 09.240.07.00, www.mskgent.be
Until JAN 18 Giambattista Piranesi, prints by the Italian architect and artist (1720-1778), from the Ghent University Print Collection in collaboration with the Royal Library of Belgium

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03
(Every first Friday of the month free entrance from 18.00 to 22.00)
Until JAN 3 Faux Jumeaux, carte blanche to Belgian artist Michel François
Until JAN 18 Anyth, paintings by Werner Mannaers
Until NOV 23 Coming People, works by young artists

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

Mechelen

Cultuurcentrum

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

Ypres

In Flanders Fields Museum

Grote Markt 34; 057.23.92.75
Until OCT 29 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
Until OCT 29 across Flanders 070.77.00.00, www.festival.be

INTERVIEW

Geert De Weyer

Geert de Weyer has enjoyed the privilege of being one of Flanders best-respected comic strip journalists for over 18 years, not least because of his tendency to write about worldwide abuses of power. His new book *100 Stripklassiekers* highlights an emerging generation of Flemish comic book authors that De Weyer has named the *kus-mi-jn-kloten* or “kiss-my-ass” generation, who write from their heart and do their own thing.

How do you distinguish a good comic from a bad one?

Well, don't just leaf through them, scanning them for beautifully-drawn pictures, because looks can be deceiving and scripts disappointing. You can really feel it when a comic book has a soul. As a comic book journalist, I read thousands of comics. I receive so much garbage. I would wipe my butt with them if the paper was better suited for it. Others sail close to certain commercial winds and are often weak. Yet once in a while you'll read something by someone who has put his heart and soul into it. You can feel the difference.

You've coined the term *waspoederstrips* (washing powder comics) to describe the Flemish phenomenon of promoting Flemish celebrities like Kim Clijsters through comics. The name comes from the actual strips included in washing powder boxes in the 1980s. How do these comics fit into the scene?

They don't. They are mere by-products that have more in common with soaps than with art. Which is why 'graphic novel' works so well as a distinguishing term. Contrary to common belief, there is a gigantic difference in comic books.

The artistic freedom of comic book authors has become enormous.

No longer bound by the confining rules of publishers and comic papers, they've left behind the mandatory 46 pages, panels, colors and standard book format.

Which is great! If you look at my book, which covers the classics from 1905 until now, you'll notice that the comic books that have survived are made by exactly those authors who were free to do their own thing. More commercial comics seldom become classics. And the current influence of the graphic novel is becoming ever more evident. Even *Batman*, a classic American superhero, evolved from a comic-character into a graphic novel character, a dark knight, a flawed hero, a troubled man.

From your lectures, I have gathered that I'm a nostalgic reader who almost exclusively reads childhood comics for relaxation. But graphic novels, the newer type of comic books you refer to, ask for more attentive reading. Are they worth the effort?

The original purpose of comic books was indeed easy escapism. They were either adventurous or funny, and many still are. But you should choose a type of comic book according to the moment. It's the same as when you choose to see a blockbuster or an art movie – which you can compare to a graphic novel. The only difference being that film is seen as a fully-fledged art form, whereas funnies remain 'just' funnies.

Every year you publish *Stripjaar*, a thick 150-page book which includes an overview of the year's world comic trends. What are your predictions for the future?

There will be more graphic novels and more literary publishers producing them. More young



Sjoerd Vanheeren

artists will draw graphic novels. And more and more artistic genres will find each other. Look at how many comics are being turned into films. Dick Maten's *Paris 25/44*, a graphic novel on Hemingway and Sartre will hit the screen soon. But also theatre plays – Joann Sfar's *De Kat van de Rabbijn*, and musicals like *Spider-Man* are being churned out. As the stories in graphic novels get better, comics are actively being screened for good scripts. The influence of the Japanese manga will increase too. France experienced a manga influx for 20 years, whereas Belgium for only three years. I predict that if Ketnet, the official children's TV channel, shows animes (the screen version of mangas), the manga success will increase. Even Franquin's *Robbedoes*, a typical Franco-Belgian comic hero, shows the influence of manga drawings. And

it works well. And, remarkably, a new generation of Flemish comic writers is gaining international appeal. If promoted well, they have a good chance of getting across the borders.

You once stated that one should promote the comic book in Flanders, rather than the Flemish comic book in Flanders.

That's right. At the time I was artistic director of Strip Turnhout, the biggest comic book festival in Belgium. Looking at the history of the once-so-important Belgian comic, you would have to admit that it was undeniably the Walloon comic writers, like Franquin, Hergé and Peyo, who made Belgium great. Unfortunately, spite and jealousy led Flemish writers to turn their back on the interna-

tional scene and remain plodding around in Flemish clay for a Flemish market. Sure, there have been gigantically good Flemish comics, but the Walloon comic was the indisputable top. You've still got this thoroughly Flemish generation, which isn't able or willing to leave their turf.

But, as you stated, there is a new Flemish generation which is able to jump borders.

Yes, they do their own thing, regardless of the Flemish market. They want to make more universal strips and that's exactly why we should promote them abroad. It's precisely by exporting this new style of Flemish comics that we could make Flemish comic books great.

In your lectures you also mention a second generation, in between the first Flanders-based generation and the recent generation of graphic novelists. Who are they?

They are the ones who aren't usually considered to be Flemish because they work abroad. For example Morris who contrary to common belief is Flemish. His *Lucky Luke* is in fact the highest-selling Belgian comic – not *Tintin*. Yet Morris never got interviews, prizes or exhibitions in Flanders. Jealousy played a big part in all this. And when the “Vlaamse cultuurprijs voor strips” [the Flemish cultural prize for comic strips, also known as the Comic Oscars] went to William Vance in 2005, there was a big uproar, ‘He isn't Flemish, he doesn't count, he lives in Spain.’ So yes, I advocate the promotion of comics in Flanders, as well as the promotion of the new generation of Flemish comic writers in the world.

100 Stripklassiekers by Geert de Weyer is published by Atlas this month.

Interview by Monique Philips

THE LAST WORD

what they're saying in Flanders

Tough times

“There were days when I got two to three hours sleep at the most. On Wednesday at the dinner with European government leaders I wasn't the only one sitting yawning at eight-thirty in the evening.”

Yves Leterme
Belgian prime minister on the stresses of the financial crisis

Mission impossible

“Two years with six people in a tiny dark space. Even the most stable scientist would go nuts in those circumstances.”

Nancy Vermeulen
Flemish candidate astronaut musing at the European Mars Conference in Antwerp

Unhealthy obsession

“In America it was impossible to insure myself and my children enough. US companies don't care a bit for the health of their clients. Everything is profit.”

Barbara Calder from Colorado
who is uprooting her family to get treatment for a rare genetic disorder in Ghent

ImagesofAmerica Peiling Stercks
hofCastle PersonalShoppers Pale
stineFestival

next week in Flanders Today