



World-class explorer Dixie Dansercoer

## Saving the world you've seen

Dixie Dansercoer's next expedition could be his most ambitious yet

Denzil Walton

Last year, he crossed the frozen Arctic Ocean from Siberia to Greenland – on skis. A total of 1,800 kilometres in 106 days. In May this year, he returned from an eight-month sailing, windsurfing,

kite-surfing, climbing and canoeing expedition to the Antarctic Peninsula.

For 2009, Dixie Dansercoer isn't intending to sit in his Huldenberg home with his feet up. He is busy planning his next – and possibly

most ambitious – project yet: (*Ant*) *Arctic Matters*.

This will be a different kind of expedition for Dansercoer. It's a travelling art and educational exhibition that he is sending around the world in an attempt to raise public

awareness of the consequences of climate change.

"The importance of the polar regions for the world's climate is undeniable," says the Flemish explorer and endurance athlete. "These areas represent a barome-

ter of our climate and the world's health. The conservation of the polar regions is essential for the preservation of our planet. Unfortunately, this issue is all-too-often not given the attention it

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### Region and city clash over Heizel plans

Report calls for conversion to EU offices

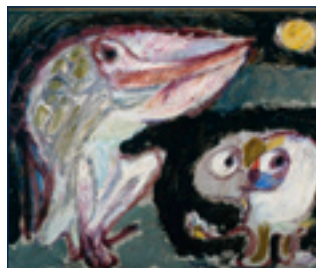
Brussels City is facing a clash with Brussels Region over plans to site a new national football stadium. Meanwhile, popular attractions at Heizel, such as Océade and Kinopolis, could vanish if a planned expansion of office capacity in the area is carried out.

The north of Brussels is currently suffering from a shortage of office space, exacerbated by growing demand from the EU institutions. There is also no major shopping area in the north of the capital to attract the relatively rich inhabitants of Flemish Brabant and Antwerp.

But recently a number of projects have been announced. In June this year developers Uplace announced the arrival of an advanced complex of 190,000 square metres featuring shops and entertainment, apartments and offices, to open in 2012.

Earlier this month, contractor Equilis, a subsidiary of Charleroi-based Mestdagh, announced a major shopping centre running alongside the Brussels canal near the Van Praet bridge. This project, called Just Under the Sky, would cost €130 million, cover an area of 25,000 square

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#### Arts

The Cobra revolution brought together artists from Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam, and the other two cities have museums dedicated to the subject. What about us?

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'Tis the season for kids' movies. From special events to multiplex cinemas, we'll help you pick the right ones.

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#### Interview

Iconic songs, gravelly voice, infamous, erm, habits. As our interview proves, there's no Belgian quite like Arno.

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

## Museumnacht in Ghent

Ghent is a stunner of a city at any time, but it looks its best after dark when the streets are calm and the buildings floodlit. With this in mind, make a note to visit on 4 December when eight museums are keeping their doors open until 1.00 to mark the city's second Museum Night.

The aim of this event – which also takes place in other cities on different dates – is to encourage people to visit their local museums out of normal hours and for free. Cities make the evenings a bit more memorable by laying on events, concerts, readings and anything else that enters the curators' minds.

In Ghent, the folklore museum Huis van Alijn is setting aside the night for some marathon board games to mark the launch of its new exhibition *Aan de speltafel!* (*Off to play!*) By letting visitors loose on some rare historic games from a private collection, adults have a chance to rediscover childhood favourites, while their kids can switch off their Wifis for one night and find out how to play games that don't need TV screens.

South of the centre, the Museum of Fine Arts is recreating an Italian architectural fantasy based on the etchings of Piranesi (currently on show in

the museum). How this will turn out remains to be seen, but they plan bold effects, like turning the museum courtyard into a typical Italian market square. There will also be dance, music and wine, so how can it go wrong?

At the other end of town, the Museum of Industrial Archaeology and Textiles has teamed up with the sassy Ghent lingerie firm La Fille d'O to transform the museum into a sensual show that looks into the history of underwear from its functional early days to modern stuff designed by local seductress Murielle Scherre.

Those who want to explore the darker side of the night should head to the Dr Guislain Museum, where they'll be showing theatre fragments and film clips in the museum cafe on the theme of lunacy. You can then wander off through the corridors and rooms of this lugubrious former psychiatric institute to look at the current exhibition on madness. Unless, of course, you think that would be complete lunacy.

Derek Blyth

online

[www.gent.be/museumnacht](http://www.gent.be/museumnacht)



A night at the museum: lingerie from Ghent

## Flanders Today

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Editor: Derek Blyth  
Deputy editor: Lisa Bradshaw  
News editor: Alan Hope  
Agenda: Sarah Crew  
Picture research: Esther Bourrée  
Prepress: Nancy Temmerman  
Contributors: Marie Dumont, Stéphanie Duval, Sharon Light, Alistair MacLean, Marc Maes, Ian Mundell, Anja Otte, Monique Philips, Saffina Rana, Leander Schaerlaeckens, Steven Tate, Christophe Verbiest, Denzil Walton, Rory Watson  
Project manager: Pascale Zoetaert  
Publisher: VUM  
NV Vlaamse Uitgeversmaatschappij  
Gossetlaan 28, 1702 Groot-Bijgaarden  
Editorial address: Waterloosesteenweg 1038

1180 Brussels  
Tel.: 02.373.99.09 – Fax: 02.375.98.22  
E-mail: [editorial@flanderstoday.eu](mailto:editorial@flanderstoday.eu)  
Subscriptions: France Lycops  
Tel: 02.373.83.59  
E-mail: [subscriptions@flanderstoday.eu](mailto:subscriptions@flanderstoday.eu)  
Advertising: Evelyne Fregonese  
Tel. 02.373.83.57  
E-mail: [advertising@flanderstoday.eu](mailto:advertising@flanderstoday.eu)  
Verantwoordelijke uitgever: Derek Blyth



## FACE OF FLANDERS



Frank Abbeels/Bejo

## Zwarte Piet

When Sinterklaas arrives in Flanders a few weeks before he delivers gifts to all the good little boys and girls on 6 December, he is accompanied by his helper, Zwarte Piet, or Black Pete. If you are among the masses cheering on the pair, you are probably Flemish. Foreigners are often just confused – because Zwarte Piet is played by a white person in blackface, a big afro wig and brightly coloured red lips.

In most places in the world, this manifestation of black ethnicity does not go down well. Anchored in minstrel theatre that exaggerated physical characteristics for entertainment, it is the consummate symbol of institutionalised racism. But in the Netherlands and Flanders, it's a long-held tradition fiercely protected by those who do not need outsiders telling them how they should represent the characters they hold dear.

"I understand that people are judging this because he is a caricature. I think there is a seed of racism in Zwarte Piet," says An van Dienderen, a cultural anthropologist and researcher at Ghent University. "But it's not as simple as that."

That is certainly true enough. Even trying to start at the beginning, you'll find that Zwarte Piet's origins are all mixed up. "He is usually identified as a Moor," explains Rik Pinxten, a professor of anthropology at Ghent University, "and people say that a Moor is a black person, which is not correct. Moorish is North African, so he's really Islamic."

"The black figure is an addition of the 19th century," confirms Stefaan Top, a folklore professor emeritus from the University of Leuven. "Saint Nicholas was the symbol of goodness, and when you have good, you have evil. Evil was represented by a black figure, a devil. By the 19th century, there was no longer any discussion about the devil, but a black man."

But the evil image has been tough for Zwarte Piet to shake and has reinforced the idea of black-man-as-evil. "It's not just aesthetics," confirms Van Dienderen. "He has a bad reputation. He's the one who puts the bad kids into the sack, while Saint Nicholas does all the good stuff."

But Wouter Van Bellingen, an alderman from – coincidentally – Sint-Niklaas, notes that there has been a Zwarte Piet evolution in the last decade. "In the past, Zwarte Piet was the person who punished the children, but it's not like that anymore. Children used to be afraid of him, but he has changed. He's not scary, he's just the assistant of Saint Nicholas."

Van Bellingen, who is black, used to be called "Zwarte Piet" by children in supermarkets and other public places, "but in the last few years, I don't hear that anymore," he says. "Children see more and more multicultural diversity, and they can make the distinction between Zwarte Piet and the black people they see on the street."

Flemish and Dutch people, he says, see blackface "as multiculturalism." They don't translate the features of Zwarte Piet as racist because a multicultural society is historically new to them. "Here in Belgium, there was no slavery. The Belgian colonies were very far away, and there were no people of colour here. Only after decolonisation did people of colour really start arriving, but in Britain and America, that past is very different, and I can see why they would be offended by Zwarte Piet."

Van Bellingham isn't sure the evolution is over. "It could be that in 30 years, Zwarte Piet changes again."

Van Dienderen agrees. "In general, we don't have a lot of problems with the Zwarte Piet image, but in other parts of the world they are really shocked by it," she says. "When you experience other cultures, you see the problems in your own. We forget about critical analysis. Maybe we need foreigners to remind us of this."

Lisa Bradshaw

TALKING DUTCH  
notes on language

Sinterklaas

## Sinterklaas

It was the middle of November, and we were driving along the Mechelsesteenweg to, of course, Mechelen for a spot of lunch and a look round the shops. The monotony of the familiar road was broken by someone waving from the pavement. He was dressed in green velvet, a curly black wig and his face was blacked up. "Zwarte Piet!" exclaimed the others in the car – Black Pete, Sinterklaas' right-hand man, was on the loose on the outskirts of Mechelen.

You can live here for years and still not get it right. "What's he doing here? It's three weeks until 6 December" (when Sinterklaas delivers presents to the young and good). Sighs of exasperation from the back. "The Sint arrives today, don't you know?" Something to remember.

Well, I forgot about it again until I was flipping through the only paper published here on a Sunday, called, of course, *De Zondag*. And there was an article headed *Duizenden kinderen verwelkomen Sinterklaas* – Thousands of children welcome Saint Nicholas. Of course! The Saint arrives well in advance of 6 December so that children can give him drawings and wish lists and so he can check that they have been *braaf* – good.

So he landed in Antwerp from Spain (if this seems a bit complicated, ask locally for a detailed explanation) and proceeded to the town hall, where he was welcomed by the mayor of Antwerp, Patrick Janssens. There is Patrick pictured beside Sinterklaas wearing his mayoral sash and a piece of clothing that I never thought ever to see around his neck: *een das* – a tie. It makes the man almost unrecognisable. Such is the power of the Saint in this land.

Sinterklaas, a diplomat as well as a disciplinarian, praised the quality of the water in the River Scheldt and even gave some words of encouragement to the less than successful local football clubs. Then he came to the heart of the matter and addressed the children massed in the square. "*Er zijn dit jaar geen stoute kinderen!*" – This year there are no bad children! (I imagine this instant judgment was aimed only at those present.)

"*Binnenkort komen ik en de Pieten weer op bezoek met cadeautjes* – Soon I and the Petes will be visiting with presents." Then *snoep* – sweets rained down on the upstretched hands. Pictured between the holy man and the buttoned-up mayor is Bart Peeters, who takes the part of Zwarte Piet in the glorious *Dag Sinterklaas* – Hello Saint Nicholas, shown on TV in the lead-up to the great day.

So your kids should be composing letters to present in person to the man in red, or leave a glass of something warming near the fireplace for the Sint and a carrot for *Slecht Weer Vandaag* – Bad Weather Today, the Sint's white horse. This must certainly be done on the eve of 6 December, when the sound of *Slecht Weer Vandaag* can be faintly heard clip-clopping across the roofs.

Alistair MacLean



Somebody's got to do it: Arctic explorers take measurements and samples, plus photos of landscapes never seen before

# Avoiding global meltdown

Continued from page 1

deserves."

To give it the necessary attention, Dansercoer is converting 12 containers (each 12 metres long) into a travelling exhibition on the theme of climate change. It will set out from Bruges towards the end of 2009 for a three-year trip around the world on board a cargo ship. The containers have been converted by various Flemish artists, and each focuses on a particular topic.

"Over the years, I have written books, made movies and given talks to share my polar experiences and bring the destruction of the polar environment to people's attention," Dansercoer says. "It was time for a new way of communicating, using new tools like art. I want to provide a unique sensory and audio-visual experience to highlight the fragile character of the polar regions."

That fragile character is well documented. Global warming is heating the Arctic almost twice as fast as the rest of the planet. By 2100, temperatures could increase from four to seven degrees Celsius. Siberia and Alaska have already warmed by two to three degrees since the 1950s. Sea ice around the North Pole could almost disappear during

the summer by the end of the century. The extent of the ice has already shrunk by 15% to 20% in the past 30 years. A thaw threatens the livelihoods of millions of people and could wipe out polar bears.

Of course, such a large-scale enterprise is bound to attract criticism concerning the CO<sub>2</sub> that *(Ant)Arctic Matters* will generate on its journey around the globe. "We will be taking a number of steps to reduce our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions," he says. "The company CO<sub>2</sub> Logic will also compensate our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, using offsetting techniques to obtain the required neutrality. And we intend to be completely open and inform the public of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions generated by the project."

Dansercoer, 46, says he sees a parallel with the achievements of Al Gore. Despite Gore generating a significant carbon footprint due to his worldwide travels, he has significantly increased public and governmental awareness to environmental issues and has helped reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

*(Ant)Arctic Matters* is also reducing its environmental impact by using durable, recyclable and environmentally friendly materials. In addition, visitors will be invited to ride bikes and run on treadmills to generate power for the exhibition's energy needs. "This will make the visitor aware of the project's energy needs and will also give them a feeling of contributing to a commodity that we rarely focus on," says Dansercoer. Energy will also be collected from solar panels placed on the containers and portable windmills located in the ports where the exhibition will dock.

The core artists are already hard at work. The container entitled "Virtual Collection" is being designed by photographer Frank Nicolai. "It will be a hands-on experience, using interfaces such as the mouse, keyboards, webcams, drawing pads and other electronic devices," says Nicolai. "Through these interfaces, each visitor will be able to interact with digital art elements on computers to modify and manipulate

them. The goal is to provide a unique artistic and interactive experience."

Sculptor Freddy Cappon's container is called "Inuit Controversy" and features a number of sculptures grouped under themes like Inuit of the Past, Today's Inuit and Igloo, all exhibited under an inflatable igloo tent. "Inuit communities are confronted with a rapid intrusion of modern technology and its associated complications," says Cappon. "During this period of adaptation, the ice is melting, fish are less abundant and caribou are harder to catch. These proud people are thus extremely vulnerable."

Bart Van Huyck, meanwhile, will use music to describe the different features of the *(Ant)Arctic* environment, which he divides into below and above the ice. "You'll be able to hear the harmonious 'music' of animals and nature below the ice," the musician explains. "Above the ice, the destructive 'noise' produced by man will prevail and make it very difficult to appreciate the symphony of natural sounds."

Other artists signed up for the project are filmmaker Didier Volkaert, graphic designer Ludwig Desmet and photographer Hermann Vanaerschot. All the artists are Flemish, mainly because Dansercoer wanted partners who were within easy reach: "I didn't want a virtual relationship with the artists. I like to share ideas face-to-face. For example, I took three of them to north Sweden so they could experience the Arctic for themselves."

Julie Brown, Dansercoer's wife, fellow explorer and author of a number of books on their expeditions, will provide the creative texts around the various themes that fuel *(Ant)Arctic Matters*.

Dansercoer's current major challenge is to finalise funding for the expedition, a task that has been made more difficult due to the recent financial crisis. He sighs with exasperation when he considers the billions of euros put up by governments to rescue financial institutions compared to the much smaller amounts designated to save the planet.

But the world-famous Belgian remains optimistic that the scheduled departure date will be met, and is enthusiastic about the final goal. "I want to show the whole world the crucial importance of protecting our superb polar regions and demonstrate some practical ways in which we can all make a contribution."

online

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

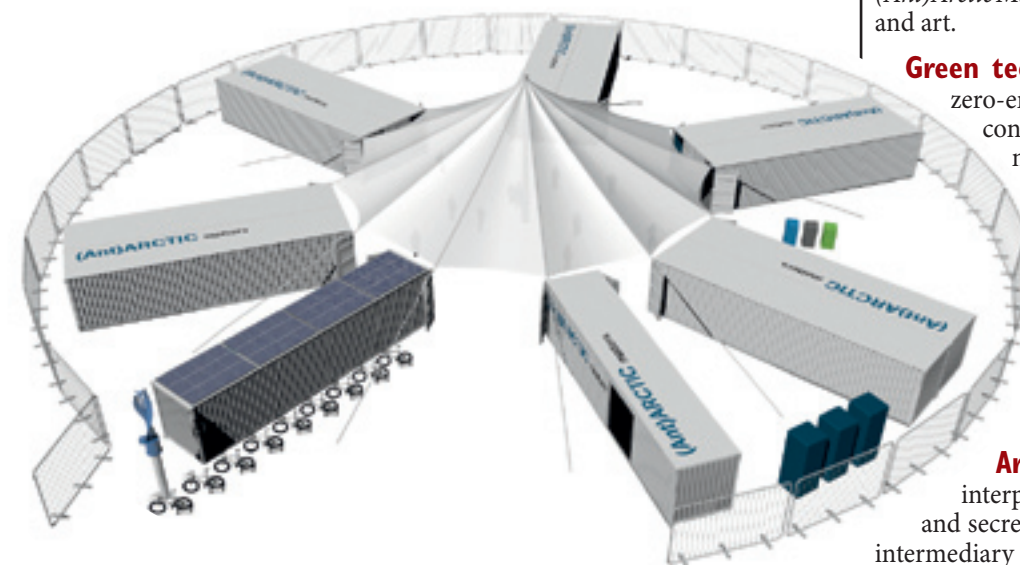
## Axis of art

*(Ant)Arctic Matters* comes together through a combination of: green technology, global collaboration and art.

**Green tech** • This part emphasise the quest for durable energy solutions, while striving for zero-emissions throughout the whole project. A selection of innovative and environmentally conscious companies and partners will deliver the knowledge and all the materials needed for all aspects of the project. The mission is to strive for zero-emission in a 100% transparent way, which means keeping clear records of all CO<sub>2</sub> produced, and communicating these figures to the public.

**Global collaboration** • In such a global project, the interaction, collaboration and exchange of ideas with other cultures is vital. By means of an artist-in-residence system, the project will involve and collaborate with at least one local artist per exhibition location. At the same time, *(Ant)Arctic Matters* will donate a part of the profit generated by the exhibition's entrance fee to help a local organisation at each port realise an ecological project.

**Art** • The exhibition will be challenging and eye opening, with artists giving their interpretations of the polar regions. The ultimate mission is to share the intensely unique and secretive polar ambiance, and let visitors become one with this fragile world through the intermediary of art.



*(Ant)Arctic Matters* is arranged in a circle of barge containers under one pole – with plenty of room to park your bike

INTERVIEW • Marino Keulen

# Mayors asked to respect the law

The Flemish home affairs minister Marino Keulen (Open VLD) last week again refused to appoint the three candidate mayors in the Flemish municipalities of Wezembeek-Oppeem, Linkebeek and Kraainem. With the Council of Europe expected to speak out this week on the case, Keulen tells *Flanders Today* that he is "flabbergasted" by the international attention the case has received.

**Could you first explain what exactly the three candidate mayors did wrong?**

They have systematically broken the law. They did so during the elections in 2006 when they failed to organise them in compliance with the language laws. They also do so repeatedly when they allow council meetings to be held in French. They are systematically refusing to obey the laws and decrees of the Flemish government and have turned opposition to the Flemish authorities into a national sport. Their non-appointment is a result of this endless conflict.

**If the majority of the residents in a commune speak French, why can't the council meetings use their language?**

Belgium is a complex country. We have made an agreement that Dutch should be used as an official language in Flanders and French in Wallonia. In Brussels, both languages can be used. This agreement is just a cog in the machine. These are the rules of the game that were agreed long ago at the federal level.

**So the non-appointment has nothing to do with the fact that these three mayors are French speaking?**

Not at all. I have nothing against these people. All they have to do is comply with the law. I have already appointed three other French-speaking mayors in Wemmel, Sint-Genesius-Rode and Drogenbos. And I have also refused to appoint a Dutch-speaking mayor in Westerlo, Antwerp province, because he is involved in a judiciary procedure.

**All the while, you claim to be giving the candidate mayors of Wezembeek-Oppeem, Kraainem and**

**Linkebeek a second chance. In what sense, exactly?**

I have asked them to organise the regional elections in June 2009 according to the law. This would create a new situation and imply a constructive attitude on the part of the candidate-mayors. I would then look at the case again.

**You had the full support of the Flemish government when you refused to appoint the mayors a second time, yet there was still some debate about the decision.**

There was discussion about the timing of my decision. Some people wanted it postponed, but I saw no reason to do that, as the procedure was finished. Minister-president Kris Peeters has stated time and time again that the appointment of the mayors stands apart from the current discussions on state reform.

**Do you understand the angry reactions from the French-speaking parties?**

Not really. I don't see why this should put an end to the institutional discussions, since state reform will benefit Wallonia and Brussels as well as Flanders.

**Meanwhile, the Council of Europe is looking over your shoulder. How do you feel about that?**

It is not correct. If the candidate-mayors do not agree with my decision, they should take the case to the Council of State [the Belgian supreme court]. By refusing to do so, they are skipping an essential step in the procedure, since legally the Council of State is the only institution that can reverse my decision.

**Are you happy with the way this situation has developed?**



I regret that this incident has made it to the international stage, especially because the people responsible have failed to put it in the right context and never mention the option of the Council of State. They always say that the three people involved were elected as mayors. They were not; they were elected as council members. They also never mention that I have appointed three other French speakers as mayors.

**What about the Council of Europe?**

I provided the Council of Europe research mission with a report on the situation in three languages – English, French and Dutch – yet they seem not to have read it. One member of the mission told me that, no matter what, he personally believed that I should appoint the three candidate mayors. That is what you get if you isolate one fact and neglect to consider the agreements between Dutch and French speakers in Belgium.

**Initially, you had planned to send a lawyer to the Council of Europe. Why?**

Because this is essentially a legal case. In the end we have decided to send an elected representative, Fons Borginon, who is also judicially well-grounded. We have to make sure that, whatever the Council of Europe decides, it does not result in political interference in a legal procedure, should the three decide to take their case to the Coun-

cil of State after all.

**Does it bother you that this case may harm the image of Flanders abroad?**

Yes, it does. Flanders is an open region, and international contacts are the oxygen of our economy. In addition, we are an exemplary region in Europe in many areas such as integration of foreigners. Over 15,000 people of foreign origin are taking language and professional courses in Flanders. The image of Flanders that is being circulated does not square with its generosity or its culture of diversity and multiculturalism. This is so unfair!

**How can this be solved?**

The image of Flanders is partly due to the fact that we have an extreme-right party with 20% of the votes. This has an impact on our international credibility. Another factor is the French-speaking media in Belgium, which is often the only source for foreign reporters. Some of the French-speaking newspapers are very militant; they insist on representing the Flemish periphery as a part of Brussels, which it is not. The third factor is our own attitude. We always believe that the rest of the world will understand us in the end. It does not work that way. Even a superpower like the United States has to invest in international communications.

**Interview by Anja Otte**

## Nature situation in Flanders improving, but slowly

Flanders is attracting new species of flora and fauna, despite the fact that the region's population is living beyond its ecological means, concludes the latest annual report from the Institute for Nature and Woodland Research (INBO).

In the last five years, 25 new species of plant and animal have made Flanders their habitat, bringing the total number of "incomers" since 1900 to more than 900. About 400 plants and 80 animals have formed sustainable populations here. But that's not always good news: foreign species can represent a threat to indigenous species, and battling their entry costs more and more as the mobility of humans increases.

Water quality in the region is steadily improving, even though there is still a lot

of work to do, INBO reports. "The biodiversity of fresh water courses is improving," the report says. "But things were so bad it could only get better." For example, eels have been reported returning to the Zenne. Fish populations are growing in rivers and streams, in part thanks to water purification efforts.

But the average Fleming is using up ecological resources at an unsustainable rate, the INBO report warns. Measured by ecological footprint – the area of land needed to grow the resources used by each person – the population of Flanders is living beyond its means, by consuming more than it can produce. Of all the resources consumed in Flanders, 59% are produced outside the region.

An increasing awareness of environ-



mental questions is not evident, INBO says. Fewer people are visiting nature and woodland sites, despite there being more than ever open to the public. The number of people who said they had never visited a nature site is growing. Individual envi-

ronmental organisations are having mixed fortunes: WWF, Natuurpunt and the bird protection charity Vogelbescherming are attracting more new members, while Greenpeace is losing members, the report says.



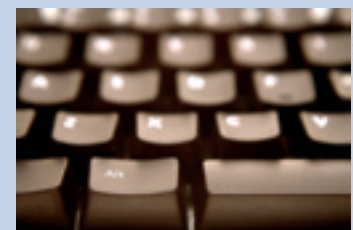
**PHOTO OF THE WEEK** ● Monday, 1 December, was World Aids Day, marked here by one of the hundreds of entries for a competition run by Sensoa, the sexual information organisation. The aim of the competition was to make an

advertisement with the red ribbon as the central theme, showing how HIV affects all strata of society and stressing the importance of solidarity and safe sex.

A selection of 90 of the entries can be seen in the Wereld

van Kina section of the Schoolmuseum in Ghent until 13 January, entry free. Our photo of the week this week, not strictly a photo, was designed by Kato Reynders, aged 16, from Betekom, Flemish Brabant.

## FIFTH COLUMN



## Anciaux' antics

The Flemish minister for culture, Bert Anciaux, is one of the 10 most popular politicians in Flanders. The public knows him by his first name and see him as a family man who is not afraid to show his emotions. He is passionate – tearful at times – about his political projects. These days, however, his political future is uncertain, and Anciaux is thinking about what to do next.

Anciaux' ideas are often too big for the small parties to which he belongs. At the same time, he makes sure that they never harm his personal career. (One commentator called him “mostly an anciauxist” because of this.) Anciaux dreams of a large left-wing movement, which includes not just his own party, but progressives of all sort. This contributed to the split-up of the Volksunie – the party that Anciaux, with a lot of youthful enthusiasm, once saved from electoral irrelevance but which finally proved too small for him.

Next came Spirit, an even smaller party, but closer to Anciaux's ideas. When it formed a cartel with the socialists, Anciaux's dream seemed to come closer. But Spirit eventually became so small that it was no longer a real political force – it was only Anciaux himself who still counted. Last week, Flanders witnessed the death throes of Spirit, under its new name VI.Pro. After Bettina Geysen resigned as party president, VI.Pro. experienced an existential crisis. Representatives were asked to vote on two separate options: should VI.Pro remain an independent party, but with the risk of going down completely at the next elections? Or should it merge into a new left-wing alliance which would include the socialists as well? So far, since the new alliance exists only inside Anciaux's head, this option was understood as a hostile takeover, and it was voted down.

Since he lost the vote, Anciaux has been publicly pondering what to do. Sticking with VI.Pro seems impossible. Some of his closest allies, Koen T'Sijen en Faoud Ahidar, have slammed the doors on that party already. VI.Pro party president ad interim Nelly Maes is trying to rush Anciaux to a decision, but he had still not made up his mind as this publication went to the press. But one thing he is sure of: he wants to remain a minister in the Flemish government. Defecting to the socialists would seem the logical next step, but Anciaux has repeated time and again that he is “not a socialist”. He also hates the label of “traitor” that comes with defecting. The conclusion is quite bitter for Bert Anciaux. His big ideas have left two parties in ruins, yet his big dream is further away than ever. Right-wing parties are attracting more voters than ever, while the left is nowhere.

Anja Otte

## THE WEEK IN FLANDERS

## Wednesday 26 November

● Flemish public broadcaster VRT announced the loss of 150 jobs among its 2,600 staff. The cuts will be achieved by “natural wastage,” with no redundancies, the organisation said. The cuts are intended to contribute €21 million to planned savings of €72 million by 2011. ● The municipal authorities in the coastal town of De Panne introduced a curfew on alcohol on the street between 22.00 and 10.00, to tackle the problem of drunken youths, some of them from France. They are accused of causing vandalism and noise disturbances. ● Two prominent Flemish philosophers were among those who signed a petition protesting at the publication in weekly news magazine *Knack* of emails between former Vlaams Belang chairman Frank Vanhecke and party representative Marie-Rose Morel. Publication of the mails, which were intended to prove a long-standing affair between the two, has “no social relevance whatsoever,” the petition argued.

## Thursday 27 November

● Ghent is the winner of this year's Eurocities Award, announced last week in The Hague. The prize was awarded for the initiative Gentinfo, the central point for information on city services. Other awards went to Espoo in Finland and Newcastle in England.

## Friday 28 November

● Parents of children attending Antwerp city pre-schools have complained after an order was issued to remove the cross from depictions of Sinterklaas. The move, which also includes getting rid of crèche scenes under the Christmas tree, is intended to treat the celebration as a secular occasion with no religious significance, said the director of city education, Frank Noten. ● A court in Zwolle in the Netherlands has ordered a couple who bought a baby in Ghent to turn the child over to child protection services in Overijssel. The baby was sold in Jan Palfijn hospital in Ghent in July, shortly after it was born. ● The city of Ghent is hoping to amend its regulations on public collections for charity in time for the Music for Life event organised by Studio Brussel from 19 December. The current rules, described as “Kafkaesque,” include the requirement that a list of names of charity collectors be lodged with bailiffs and for all actions to be registered with the Red Cross. ● A Ghent man went on trial for the murder of his wife and three other women in a so-called honour killing in November 2004. Osman Calli suspected his 23-year-old wife of cheating on him and went on a rampage, killing his wife, his sister, his ex-girlfriend and her new boyfriend's mother, as well as injuring two

other people. Calli claims his honour had been injured. “I had no other choice,” he told police. ● Dr Gunther von Hagen, the anatomist-impresario who brought the *Body Worlds* exhibition to Brussels, is to install a plastinated reindeer on the Christmas market in Leuven on 12 and 13 December. The display will then move on to City 2 in Brussels and then to the *Body Worlds* exhibition in the Kuregem Cellars, Anderlecht.

## Weekend 29 and 30 November

● Members of the Open Vld Flemish liberal party have proposed making English the third official administrative language in Brussels. “It is better to make a practice institutional rather than deny the reality,” commented Flemish parliament party leader Sven Gatz, pointing to figures which show English is now more prevalent than Dutch in the capital. ● Police in Ypres have brought charges against 32 Indian and Pakistani people suspected of forming a network to organise marriages of convenience. The gang is thought to have recruited poor women from Portugal to get residence permits for Indian men. ● The exhibition of 14 warriors from the terracotta army of Chinese emperor X'ian, currently showing in Maaseik, Limburg province, last week welcomed its 50,000th visitor.

## Monday 1 December

● The federal prosecutor plans to take legal action against 21 people on charges of criminal conspiracy, racism and terrorism. The men, including several soldiers, are members of Blood, Homeland, Honour and Faith (BBET), an extreme right-wing organisation. The suspects are alleged to have planned terrorist actions against Filip Dewinter, Abou Jahjah and the National Bank. ● More than one-third of dental patients are postponing expensive treatments, according to a poll among the readers of the professional magazine *De Tandartsenkrant*. The main reason given is financial. But the total number of dental treatments rose in the first half of the year by nearly 15%. ● Charges have been dropped against *De Morgen* journalist Douglas De Coninck, accused by the Bruges prosecutor of being the leader of a gang that vandalised a statue of King Leopold II. De Coninck interviewed members of the gang and was later charged when he refused to reveal details of his sources.

## Breaking news

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[www.flanderstoday.eu](http://www.flanderstoday.eu)  
under “press room”

## BUSINESS FLASH

### Aircraft • Sabca

The Lummen-based aircraft equipment producer Sabca Limburg has won a €60 million contract to supply the horizontal tail parts of the future Gulfstream G650 business jet as of next year.

### Biotech • Galapagos

The Mechelen-based biotechnology company Galapagos has signed a partnership agreement with the German Morphosys to develop a new range of antibody medicines to treat rheumatism and arthritis.

### Biotech • Omrix

The Belgo-American biotechnology company Omrix Biopharmaceuticals, which has its European headquarters in Sint-Genesius-Rode, has been acquired by the US Johnson and Johnson pharmaceutical company for €340 million. The company specialises in blood staunching and immunology products.

### Chemicals • Evonik

The German chemical group Evonik is to invest up to €90 million in its Antwerp plant to expand the capacity to produce Isobutene, a chemical product used in tyres.

### Foam • Recticel

The Brussels-based polyurethane foam producer Recticel is to acquire the bulk of the flexible foam operation of Norwegian Brekke Industrier for €13.6 million. The move will give Recticel a dominant position in the Nordic countries as Brekke has three affiliates in Norway, Finland and Estonia.

### Food • Quick

The Brussels-based fast food chain Quick inaugurated its second restaurant in Catalonia, Spain, last week. It plans to open up to 10 franchised outlets in this region of Europe over the next couple of years.

### Minerals • Sibelco

The Antwerp-based sand and industrial minerals company Sibelco has acquired a 51% stake in the Ukrainian Silika Holding, owner of the country's largest sand deposit. Sibelco has some 250 affiliates worldwide.

### Rail • Bombardier

The coach and railway equipment producer Bombardier Bruges has won a subcontract worth €168 million to build trains for the future Brussels Regional Express network.

### Telecom • Belgacom

The telecommunications company Belgacom has sold its Telindus China affiliate to Easynet, a subsidiary of the British BSkyB media group. The move is part of Belgacom's plan to focus its international communication networks developments on the European continent. Meanwhile, the company was very successful last week with a €100 million bond that was underwritten in less than 24 hours. The money will help to finance the company's future development.

## Attractions under threat from Europe?

Continued from page 1

metres and be ready in 2013. A series of glass pavilions including walls of vegetation and a view over the water, the centre will feature shop spaces of 500 square metres and one mega-store of 8,000 square metres, which will not, the company said, be a food store.

Now a report prepared by study bureau EXCS for Brussels City that was leaked last week shows how the Heizel area could become a new European centre with anywhere between 50,000 and 100,000 square metres of shops and offices – but this would require the demolition of Kinopolis, Océade, Mini-Europe and the planetarium. A number of these businesses, led by Kinopolis, will be facing a renewal of their lease in 2010.

Plans for a new stadium on the site, perhaps to be occupied by RSC Anderlecht, have been rejected by Brussels mayor Freddie Thielemans, while Brus-



The Just Under the Sky project aims to form a link between outskirts and city

sels City is pushing forward with plans to build a new stadium on the site of the old Schaarbeek railway yards (which actually lie within Brussels City). That would leave the Koning Boudewijn stadium to be demolished, making space for the European complex.

The idea of making Heizel available to Europe has angered Brussels regional budget minister Guy Vanhengel, who also published the leaked report. "After a great

deal of negotiation, the Brussels government offered Europe two sites for the extension of their office space," he said, referring to the railway yards and another project at Delta in Oudergem. "These two sites are the property of the region, and nothing would have to be demolished. Brussels Region was not informed of the City's plans, let alone consulted." At no point in the EXCS report, he went on, is there mention of the fact that two alternative sites

have been proposed.

"This is a provisional study," mayor Thielemans said. He added that the cabinet of Brussels minister-president Charles Picqué was aware of the study being carried out, even if his budget minister was not. The chairman of EXCS, in fact, is Picqué's former cabinet chief.

online  
[www.vanhengel.info](http://www.vanhengel.info)

## Flanders brand is "lively", says survey

Flanders is regarded by the public as the "liveliest" of the four regional brands – Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels and Belgium – according to an online survey of more than 10,000 people carried out by Vlerick Brand Management Centre, a research centre linked to Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School.

The centre was carrying out a brand-awareness survey and included Belgian regional brands for the first time. Not unexpectedly, people tended to favour their home region and to attribute it a stronger personality, as expressed by various characteristics such as liveliness, simplicity and emotional appeal.

Flanders was considered the liveliest of the four and was rated highly for its established quality. Belgium, on the other hand, showed a less well-developed personality, described as "greyer" than the home regions. Wallonia was described as less aggressive and an unchanging value.

The survey showed that media companies are the blue-chip stocks when it comes to brand awareness. Financial newspaper *De Tijd* placed first as an established value, followed by Radio 1 and Canvas. Q-Music was described as the liveliest brand, followed by Studio Brussel. Free newspaper *Metro* was simplest, above *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui* and *Het Laatste Nieuws*. Aggressiveness was best exemplified by car brands such as Porsche, Alfa Romeo and BMW, but TF1, Brussels, *Humo* and *La Dernière Heure* were also described as aggressive.



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**It happens every year.** December. The same month, the same holidays. But, whether you're needing to buy gifts for Sinterklaas, Christmas, Hanukkah or New Year, it always seems to sneak up much faster than expected.

Shopping does not have to be a chore. We know this to be true because we had a blast finding some of the most unique products at the best shops in Flanders. In the following pages, we tell you all about it. We hope you enjoy your day of shopping as much as we did.

# GIFT GUIDE

## Flanders wrapped up

Tired of giving the same old wool sweaters for the holidays? Extremis designers, based in Alveringem, West Flanders, suggests you give the DollyPop sheepskin bottle cover instead. Though a wool sweater keeps you warm, this fuzzy cover keeps your pre-cooled bottles cold. Pop it over chilled champagne for a perfect gift for a holiday party host.

The Design Flanders Gallery in downtown Brussels (Kanselarijstraat 19) sells not only the DollyPop but a host of other Flemish-designed items from €5 to €500 until 31 December. Under the title Design Verpakt (Design Packaged), you'll find numerous uncommon gifts like felt-covered bowls by Stefanie Van Nieuwenhove (who delights in green) and the beautiful bird brooch by Hanna Vanneste.



Tom Langst

# 20 things to buy



## 1 Eva Solo teapot • €35

This curvy glass teapot would be eye-catching on its own, but in its made-to-measure jacket, it's downright adorable. Just try not to be jealous that none of your coats fit this well.

## 2 Lili webcam • €28.99

Did you think webcams were boring technical stuff? Think again, because this one looks so cute, you'll want to



talk to it even when Skype is turned off. Extra bonus: Lili is a fair trade product.

## 3 The "bolletje" bra • €39.95

Lingerie can be a tricky gift, but Indulge Industries makes it easier with products that manage to be both elegant and cute as hell. That means they're good for a range of ages. Now if you can just get the size right...



## 4 Box of Delights • €5.20

You can never go wrong with Belgian chocolates, but for a more unusual selection, indulge your loved ones with this finely-decorated box of mouth-watering artisan pralines.

## 5 Vanity Fair Portraits • €60

Ninety-five years of iconic photography in one big book. Politicians, musicians, actors, business moguls and models all posed for the lenses of the world's most talented photographers, such as Annie Leibovitz and Mario Testino.

## 6 Kids' wall decor • €29.75

Specially designed by kidsLAB, choosing between these different wall stickers is nearly impossible. But I would go with the City Skyline to turn your kid's room into a little Manhattan.



## 7 Malin+Goetz • Prices vary



We're a huge fan of this product line, which is very hard to get in Belgium. The travel sets are an excellent gift idea, as are the dark rum and mojito candles, whose scent you'll indeed drink up.

## 8 Waffle maker • €329

The latest Kitchen Aid model will brighten up any kitchen and the face of the lucky recipient when they think of all those lovely Belgian waffles they can make.

## 9 Design-a-Tray • €55

Pop in pictures of their nearest and dearest or favourite scenes and give someone a cool, designer treat they can savour with coffee and cake all year round.

## 10 ArtShot • from €65

Choose your own frame for a unique photograph, like the one by German photographer Thomas Herbrich (famed for turning the world as we see it upside down) of elephants crossing a tiny bridge over a deep chasm. Plenty of other crazy scenes on offer.

## 11 Sushi set • €33.55

Sure to satisfy your creative impulses and, if you succeed, your stomach. Cook & Book in Brussels provides all the fixings for a make-your-own sushi evening, from sets with chopsticks, rolling mats, and how-to books to the nori and vinegar.

## 12 Bags by OllyMolly • €14-€72

These fun and funky bags come in many different sizes and are made of recycled paper. They are all hand-made by women in the local communities of South Africa's Western Cape.



## 13 Fusion Box • €11

A six-pack of exotic blends from Chocolate Line, with the chilli-chocolate the most alarming, yet the most perfect, combination. Those Aztecs were clearly on to something. There's also cola, cabernet sauvignon, lemon-grass and more.

## 14 Lilliputiens collection • Prices vary

These fabric-based toys are creative and sweet as can be. The games evolve with the child, so when they outgrow it, a new set of rules is introduced. And you can feel proud about supporting this Belgian company, too – they ensure good working conditions at their manufactur-



## 15 Sint-Lambertusdrèpke • €3.50

This year's special edition brew from the Jenever Museum is an intriguing blend of coriander, mint, Melissa, fennel and other herbs that still manages to taste sweet on the lips. One of the finest jeneveres the museum has ever produced, but you can only buy it in Hasselt.



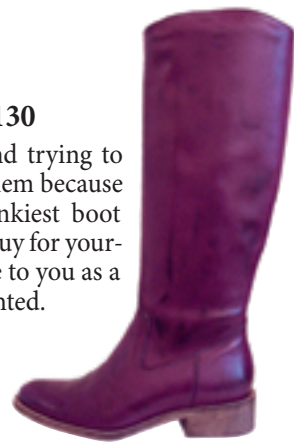
## 16 Any Way the Wind Blows • probably around €6



If there's a movie buff on your list, take it upon yourself to catch them up on classic Flemish films. We recommend André Delvaux's *De Man die zijn haar kort liet knippen* (1965) and Hugo Claus' *Het Sacrament* (1990), but especially *Any Way the Wind Blows* (2003), the only feature film ever made by Flemish musician Tom Barman.

## 17 Lazamani boots • €130

Amani is a Dutch brand trying to sound Italian, but we forgive them because they produce this season's funkier boot colours, which you might not buy for yourself, but which if someone gave to you as a present, you'd be secretly delighted.



## 18 Globe Trotter • €45

Every desk should have a proper lamp, and the colourful ones by Pylones will mark you out to your colleagues as someone whose style is to be taken seriously. The flowers are pretty, but the clouds speak of a man of vision.

## 19 Sim earrings • €60-€90

Jewellery stocks change with the season, and earrings stand out at the moment. This collection includes gold and silver studded with pearls. So perfect for everyday wear, you may need to buy her several pairs.



## 20 A crate of Westvleteren • €25-€36

Since Belgium's finest Trappist has to be purchased directly from the brewery, most people have never even tasted it, which makes it one valuable gift. Call 070.21.00.475 or visit [www.sintsixtus.be](http://www.sintsixtus.be) to check availability and reserve your beer. (Hint: this is what *Flanders Today* would like this year in case anyone feels like sending it along to our offices.)

# 20 places to buy them

## 1 W80 • Brussels

You know that friend with the super-modern house where you always walk around asking "Where did you get that?" W80 just may be the answer. Trendy, colourful housewares for the stylish set. *Washingtonstraat 80 or Xavier De Buestraat 64*

## 2 Whazup • Brussels

The big annual question: What do I get the person who seems to have everything? Look no further than this fantastic gizmo shop, which introduces you to technological gadgets you didn't even know existed, but you'll want to have immediately. *Kartuizerstraat 14*

## 3 Lingeriet • Ghent

It's tough to find quality bras at good prices, but this boutique in Ghent is right on the money. Sensational underthings by Indulge Industries, Implicite and Hot Milk, which specialises in sexy maternity lingerie. *Sint Pietersnieuwstraat 94*

## 4 Passion Chocolat • Brussels

The name says it all: this tiny, homely artisan shop has a selection to satisfy all chocolate epicures. Savour the festive atmosphere and munch away on the free samples. *Pater Eudore Devroyestraat 197*



## 5 Copyright • Antwerp/Ghent

The place to go for coffee table books on art, design, fashion and photography. But be warned: you'll need several hours to browse through the immense and varied selection. *Antwerp: Nationalestraat 28a, Ghent: Jakobijnenstraat 8b*

## 6 kidsLAB • Merksem (Antwerp)

Imagine a place where you can buy everything for kids: from toys to clothes to bedding to decoration. kidsLAB even has a children's hairdresser and its own collection of super cute interior design. *Bredabaan 970*

## 7 Magnolia • Antwerp

Magnolia is the one boudoir where you can find the perfect gift for even the most seriously addicted of beauty devotees. Only exclusive brands and high-quality miracle products end up on the beautiful shelves. *Volksstraat 28*



## 8 International Home of Cooking • Brussels

From wooden spoons to ovens, this funky new shop in the centre has everything you could possibly buy to treat keen chefs. It's the sister shop of Antwerp's Kookhuis. *Leopoldstraat 3*

## 9 Depot Design • Brussels

Designer chic at affordable prices and accessories for all the rooms in the house make this warehouse-style shop in the trendy canal-side quarter a must-see for more offbeat present buying. *Henegouwen kaai 19*

## 10 Yellow Korner • Brussels

With its wide range of artists, both contemporary and classic, there is something for everyone on your gift list in this print and frame shop. Although limited editions, prices are good, too. *Lebeauststraat 69*

## 11 Cook & Book • Brussels

Is there anything Cook & Book doesn't have? Books (including English-language), DVDs, CDs, wine, games, knick-knacks, kitchenware and delicious surprises. It's one-stop-shopping. *Paul Hymanslaan 251*



## 12 Bamboo Ethic and the City • Brussels

A beautiful and concise selection of jewellery, housewares, candles, beauty products and clothes for your green friends, Bamboo's global collection supports Fair Trade initiatives without sacrificing style. *Emile Bouillotstraat 3*

## 13 Chocolate Line • Bruges

Chocolatier Dominique Persoone is so *haute cuisine* he's in the stratosphere. Think about pralines filled with a ganache of peas and wasabi. Or tequila, lime and salt. *Simon Stevinplein 19*

## 14 Bettywood • Mechelen

Welcome to the anti-Barbie: Bettywood is the place to be for every kid on your list (and maybe some of the adults). Makes you feel good about childhood again – wooden toys, arts and crafts projects, plus more challenging games for the older kids. *Geitestraat 19*



## 15 The Jenever Museum Cafe • Hasselt

To heck with the chocolates, bring out the alcohol. The eponymous museum in Hasselt has an excellent selection of jenever organised by region and the country's most reliable experts on hand to help you pick your bottles. *Witte Nonnenstraat 19*

## 16 De Kaft • Ghent

It's a book, CD and DVD shop in one, where used and new intermingle happily. From the obscure to the popular in all genres, and a special corner for English books. Upstairs are the DVDs (and videos, remember videos?), where you'll find a mishmash of titles, including old Flemish films. *Kortrijksepoortstraat 44*



## 17 La Bottega • Hasselt

This home to shoes, clothes and bags for men, women and children is as gorgeous as it is massive. It even outgrew itself and had to expand some of its shoe collection to a small space next door, which is where you'll find the Lazamani boots on the facing page. Perfectly chosen merchandise and incredibly friendly service. *Paardsdemerstraat 7*

## 18 The Pakjeshuis • Leuven

Shop here for gifts for people who already have too much stuff. Who needs an inflatable litter bin? Nobody. But you want one anyway, don't you? *Mechelsestraat 30*

## 19 Gallery 21 • Brussels

Some women cannot get enough jewellery, and Gallery 21 has a small selection of exquisite pieces, including one that will be Just Right. If you don't know anyone who will love this stuff, you're not keeping the right kind of company. *Guldenhoofdstraat 5*

## 20 Saint Sixtus Abbey • Westvleteren

This abbey in West Flanders is where they make limited batches of the phenomenal Westvleteren Trappist beer, which can only be purchased here. But you can also tour the abbey and the grounds, the site of religious orders since the 13th century. *Donkerstraat 12*

## And if all else fails...

Let the gift certificate save your skin this gift-giving season. You can get them from a ton of shops, of course, but might we suggest one of the performance venues around town, like Bozar, Kaaaitheater or KVS, which all have season tickets or gift checks for sale. The performance you'll be buying someone might just stay in their mind forever.

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Reaching out while the city burns: from Cobra artist Constant's *La Guerra* series

from across the city. These included the sculptors Olivier Strebelle and Reinhoud D'Haese, the poet and filmmaker Luc De Heusch (then working under the pseudonym Luc Zangrie) and graphic artist Michel Olyff.

A number of other local artists came to be associated with Cobra, including the Danish-born photographer Serge Vandercam and Flemish artists Jan Cox and a young Hugo Claus, who contributed both as a painter and as a poet, collaborating with Appel and Alechinsky.

In later years, Alechinsky wryly commented that he actually painted relatively little at the time, therefore avoiding the production of much mediocre work. True or not, it's Alechinsky who stands out among the Belgians in this exhibition. The sinuous shapes of his mature style are already present, as is his liking for compartmentalised images.

Particularly engaging is a series of etchings of different trades – fireman, seamstress, priest, unknown soldier – in which each figure is made up of the tools of the trade. It may be coincidence, but they remind me of the statues of the trades that surround the Kleine Zavel square, a stone's throw from the museum.

In contrast, Noiret hardly features at all in the exhibition, while Dotremont lurks in the background as a collaborator and editor (you can flip through copies of the Cobra journal on a computer terminal). He only came into his own as an artist after Cobra when he started to paint logograms, stylised word-shapes inspired by his travels in Lapland and the Far East.

The Danish Jorn, the most mature of the founding artists at the time, has the strongest style during this period. His paintings feature people with mask-like faces and dark caricatures of animals that become increas-

ingly distant from recognised species. They end up looking like woodland spirits or the sort of beast a child might have as an imaginary friend.

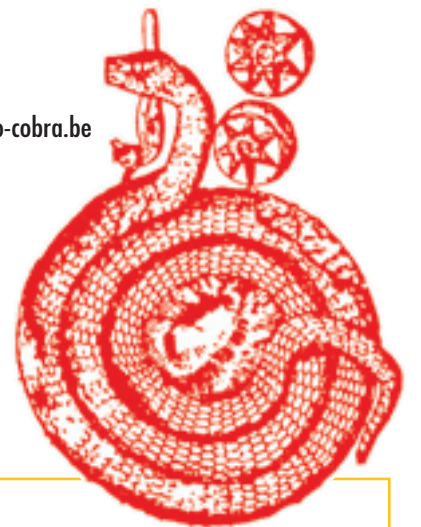
The child's view is also apparent in Appel's work, particularly in his series of paintings *Questioning Children*, said to be inspired by the children he encountered in ruined German cities immediately after the war. There is something eerie about their blank eyes looking out of the canvas that stops them simply being childish images. This mark of the war can also be seen in Constant's canvases, his figures slowly developing an exaggerated, extended hand reaching out to the viewer while buildings burn in the background.

Of the other artists associated with the movement, the exhibition has a particularly strong selection by the Dane Carl-Henning Pedersen, who worked in bright, thickly applied oils. With figures and animals apparently floating in space, you can see why people called him the Scandinavian Chagall.

Sometimes, however, Cobra's interest in childish immediacy produces pictures that are better suited to the fridge magnet than the frame. Other work seems caught between all the ideas the artists have rejected and the influences that still held sway, such as Picasso, Klee and Miro. Many of the younger Cobra artists, in their 20s at the time, are clearly only just beginning their creative journeys.

*Cobra, until 15 February, Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Regenschapsstraat 3, Brussels*

online  
[www.expo-cobra.be](http://www.expo-cobra.be)



# Sign of the snake

## Bringing an iconic arts movement back to Brussels

Ian Mundell

Brussels sometimes struggles to assert its place in the history of the Cobra art movement, which was named for the three cities of its founders – Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam. The Netherlands has its Cobra museum, while Denmark has specialist galleries in Copenhagen and Silkeborg. What about us?

The Royal Museums of Fine Arts in Brussels is doing its best to redress the balance. Last year it mounted a massive retrospective devoted to Pierre Alechinsky, one of the busiest Belgian Cobra artists. Now it has a show focused on Cobra's brief official existence – from 1948 to 1951 – to celebrate the movement's 60th anniversary.

Cobra began life as a reaction against the French surrealist movement and, in particular, against its main theorist, André Breton, who was distancing the movement from its Marxist roots. Cobra artists wanted their work to remain revolutionary. They also wanted nothing to do with the realism that remained at the centre of establishment art, nor the cold abstraction that was becoming the official opposition.

Instead, they strove for spontaneity, finding

inspiration in images created by children, in graffiti or in masks from African and Pacific cultures. They favoured vivid colours and broad brush strokes – or moved away from traditional painting materials altogether.

This continued a line of thought that had been developing in Denmark for some years and had inspired the creation of the Dutch Experimental Group earlier in 1948. Hence the presence of Asger Jorn of Copenhagen among the Cobra founders, along with Constant Nieuwenhuys (known simply as Constant), Karel Appel and Guillaume Cornelis van Beverloo (known as Corneille), all from Amsterdam.

The Belgian founders are harder to place. Christian Dotremont and Joseph Noiret were both essentially writers at the time, immersed in surrealism. But it was Dotremont who wrote the first Cobra manifesto and became the editor of its journal, and both he and Noiret collaborated with other Cobra artists, providing verses and slogans that became incorporated in paintings.

Alongside them was Pierre Alechinsky. He joined the movement in 1949 and established the Ateliers du Marais in a ramshackle building in Broekstraat. The communal house and workshop attracted Cobra-minded artists

## What the Cobra did next

The current exhibition at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts ends with some of the later collaborations between Cobra artists, in particular between Belgian members. However, if you want to see more of what the movement's key figures did next, you only have to go down the road to Bozar.

The exhibition *Cobra & Co* brings together more than 100 engravings and prints produced by the movement from its founding years up to the 1990s. Here you can see the work that Pierre Alechinsky and others produced in the Ateliers du Marais and also the logograms that became Christian Dotremont's life work. Particularly striking are the vivid lithographs of Karel Appel and the aquatints produced by Serge Vandercam and Reinhoud D'Haese (who by this time only ever went by "Reinoud").

If you want even more Cobra, then a trip to Amsterdam is in order. To mark the 60th anniversary, the Cobra museum in the suburb of Amstelveen is mounting a show with the provocative title *Knoeiërs, Kladders, Verlakkers*, recalling the contemporary view that the movement was full of "scribblers, daubers and cheaters". It includes more than 70 major works from the 1940s and '50s, among them the large paintings by Constant, Appel and Eugène Brands shown at the first international Cobra exhibition in Amsterdam in 1949.

*Cobra & Co, until 4 January, Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23, Brussels*

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

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## GOSSELIN moving

BELGIUM - MEMBER GOSSELIN GROUP

# Parent's little helper

Pick the right movies for your kids this holiday season

Lisa Bradshaw

It's not always easy to find a movie appropriate for children under 13, but in December there is a wealth of choice. It's no coincidence, of course – for half the month, kids are out of school, and parents usually have ample holiday time. And, unlike the summer, the freezing cold is demanding indoor entertainment.

But, like in any other category of the arts, some are better than others. Let's take a look at what the December winds have blown in, shall we?

## Sinterklaas en het Geheim van het Grote Boek

This one has been out for a few weeks but is still playing in many Flemish cities. Translated in English as *Saint Nicholas and the Secret of the Big Book*, it's the latest in a series of several *Sinterklaas* films by Dutch writer/director Martijn van Nellestijn.

It seems that in his efforts to obtain the newly required "roof driving license", Sinterklaas has fallen off a roof! He winds up in the hospital, and the evil Dr Brein seizes the opportunity to get rid of the gift-giving saint. It appears that she wants to take over the job for herself (not least of all, in order to get to live in his big, beautiful castle).

Robert-Jan Wik and Pamela Teves reprise their roles as Sinterklaas and Dr Brein, and they are both delightful – he as a wise and soft spoken gentleman and she with an outraged craziness reminiscent of *101 Dalmatians'* Cruella De Vil. "I don't just look like Sinterklaas, I am Sinterklaas!" she menacingly exclaims to a clutch of Zwarte Piets.

In true Dutch fashion, the film contains not one but many of Sinterklaas' helpers, Zwarte Piet. Though Flanders pretty much sticks to just one manifestation of this character, the Netherlands has multiplied them through the years, bestowing different personality traits and talents on each one, much like the idea of Santa Claus' elves. If your child is familiar with the black-faced, big-haired Zwarte Piet, there should be no questions. If this is new to your child, the tradition might need a bit of an explanation before the movie. (For more on Zwarte Piet, see page 2.)

**Bottom line:** This Dutch-language film will

be fun for kids under 11 but probably too juvenile for those older. Parents will not exactly suffer but may find themselves looking at their watches.

## Niko

Niko is a young reindeer, whose father is a member of Santa's elite "Flying Forces" – which is the reason, according to Niko's mum, that he's never met him. Niko wants to learn to fly like his dad, but there's one problem: he has vertigo. He takes secret lessons anyway, from a flying squirrel, who advises him to just "glide" instead. "It's like falling but slower," he says. "I'm great at falling!" responds Niko.

This cute humour pervades Finnish director Michael Hegner's movie, which eventually finds Niko off in search of his father, accompanied by the squirrel and a sassy weasel – and a gang of hungry wolves. If it sounds a bit like *Ice Age* and *Rudolph* wrapped up with a bow, well, there are certainly comparisons to be made. *Niko* was a favourite at film fests aimed at children this year and pulled down the two biggest awards at Amsterdam's Cinekid. The original version is in English, and there is also a dubbed Dutch version.

**Bottom line:** A reindeer death by wolf might bother some little children, but this is a funny and warm animation that will appeal to all ages.

## Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa

The intrepid heroes from the New York Zoo are back for their second instalment. This time Alex (the lion), Marty (the zebra), Melman (the giraffe) and Gloria (the hippopotamus) only get as far as an African savannah before their penguin-made aircraft crash lands. Another series of misadventures ensues. All the original voices return, including Ben Stiller, Chris Rock and Sasha Baron Cohen. The film is being shown in



The story of a young reindeer who wants to become a member of Santa's "Flying Forces", *Niko* is our top pick for your kids this month

its original English, plus Dutch and French dubbed versions.

**Bottom line:** If you and/or your children liked the first *Madagascar*, you'll like this one: it's just as good, even if it feels a little like the same movie all over again.

## Piet Piraat en het Zwaard van Zilvertand

"Children love Piet Piraat" says the press kit for the third big-screen adventure of the pirate crew, who can be found every day on Flemish television channel Ketnet. And it's true; Flemish children turn up the TV and shush their parents so they can hear every word uttered by the calm and thoughtful captain and his band of less-than-scary pirates.

Translated to *Pirate Pete and the Sword of Silvertooth*, this instalment finds them searching for treasure – an old joke from the series since they never, ever find any – so that Piet can get into the *Pirate Encyclopaedia* like all the most important pirates. They indeed find an island with treasure – but discover that a mean pirate got there first and is making children find the treasure for him.

Although there's nothing wrong with Piet Piraat movies, the production values are not really improved from the TV series, nor are the stories any more interesting – they're just longer. It begs the question: why pay to

see it?

**Bottom Line:** Harmless fun for kids under 10 who are happy to sit through 80 minutes of what they see on TV every day. Parents should take a book and one of those little reading lights.

## Blinker en de Blixvaten

We haven't seen Blinker and the rest of the unorthodox Van Steen family since 2000, but you'll notice Blinker hasn't aged any – he's sort of like Nancy Drew that way. His parents have, though, and his dad is still played by prolific TV actor Warre Borgmans, who clearly relishes the role of slapstick "paps" in this third big-screen adventure.

Based on the books by Flemish author Marc De Bel, Blinker gets into all kinds of trouble – this time with nasty corporate types trying to dump toxic waste in Ostend, where Blinker and his family are on holiday. (Blinker's dad is a lifeguard for the summer, which provides plenty of comic relief.) Blinker gets his first kiss in this one, which, to the Flemish, is about on par with Harry Potter's.

**Bottom Line:** Well-acted, Dutch-language family adventure that will appeal to older children and young teens. Blinker in danger and gunfights may be a bit much for little kids.

## Het Klein Sprookje Laban

This would have probably gone over better during Halloween, but what the heck. Swedish director/ animator Per Ahlin's series of shorts featuring the little ghost Laban have been pulled together for one screening. They are utterly charming stories about the anxiety of a ghost who himself is afraid of the dark and who's simply not very good at scaring people. Dutch dubbed version.

**Bottom Line:** Great for kids between 3 and 8, especially as it's only 45 minutes long and addresses issues of being scared and unsure.

Not all of these films are playing quite yet, so keep your eye on local listings in the coming weeks.



## Films for good children

Sunday mornings at Bozar in Brussels always offer something great for kids, and this Sunday they'll be showing several *Little Mole* films, followed by a visit with Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet. The *Little Mole* series by Czechoslovakian writer/director Zdenek Miler are short animated adventures featuring the title character and his woodland friends. Lovely, simple stories good for very little children, they are without dialogue, so language issues disappear.

7 December, 11.00, Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 3, Brussels

online  
www.bozar.be

Classical & New Music

Antwerp

**Amuz**  
Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28  
**DEC 6** 21.00 Lucidarium: La istoria de Purim, Jewish music and poetry in Renaissance Italy

**deSingel**  
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be  
**DEC 3** 20.00 Richard Goode, piano: Bach, Chopin **DEC 4** 20.00 Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest, conducted by James Conlon: Mahler's Symphony No 10  
**DEC 6** 18.00 L'Esprit Messiaen **DEC 10** 20.00 Sabine Meyer, clarinet with Ensemble Collage: Beethoven, Brahms

Bruges

**Concertgebouw**  
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02, www.concertgebouw.be  
**DEC 3** 20.00 Orkest De Volharding, conducted by Jussi Jaatinen: new music by several Flemish composers

Brussels

**Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)**  
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be  
**DEC 3** 20.00 Folia Pianistica (organised by the Centre for Turkey in Europe and Association of Artists for Peace)  
**DEC 4-24** Mozart vs Mozart, musical comedy show with Christophe Gillis and Bernard Vancraeynest  
**DEC 5** 20.00 Akademie für alte Musik Berlin and Vocalconsort Berlin, conducted by Marcus Creed: Handel's Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne  
**DEC 6** 19.30 Carols for Christmas, conducted by Philippe Lambert, with Orchestre Symphonique des Etudiants de Louvain-la-Neuve and local children's choirs: Christmas carols  
**DEC 7** 15.00 Belgian National Orchestra and Choir of the Brussels Conservatories, conducted by Stefan Blunier: Lekeu, Stravinsky, Ravel

De Munt

Don't miss



**Cecilia Bartoli**  
13 December, 20.00, Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23, Brussels. Tickets from 02.507.82.00 or www.bozar.be

Celebrated Italian mezzo Cecilia Bartoli presents Rossini next week in Brussels. Nicknamed the Queen of Agility for her coloratura skills, Bartoli had been expected to perform Rossini when she toured last year in an homage to the famous diva Maria Malibran, who performed many of the composer's works. But that programme concentrated on other things, creating a demand that the new programme – a departure for the artist – aims to satisfy. With piano accompaniment by Sergio Ciomei, the evening also features works by Bellini, Donizetti and Malibran.

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39, www.demunt.be  
**DEC 5** 12.30 Ludovit Ludha, tenor; David Miller, forte piano: Czech songs

**Flagey**  
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be  
**DEC 4** 20.15 Jean Fürst & Bénédicte Davin: Bério, Davin & Wathieu, Fürst  
**DEC 5** 12.30 Peter Petrov, piano: Mussorgsky (Piknikmusik)  
**DEC 6** 20.30 Soldiers: Poets at the Front: music and poetry (in English with French and Dutch translation)  
**DEC 7** 18.00 Brussels Capital Orchestra, conducted by Robert Janssens, with La Badinerie, Il Diletto Vocale, Ré Bécarre and Brussels' Children's Choir: Mozart's Great Mass, Thielemans-Devreese's Ballade pour Damien, Janssens' Amen

**Musical Instruments Museum**  
Hofberg 2; 0475.76.23.32, astoriconcerts@skynet.be  
**DEC 7** 11.00 Jean-Claude Vanden Eynden, piano: Beethoven, Lysight, Ravel

**Royal Music Conservatory**  
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37  
Concerts at 20.00:  
**DEC 3** Royal Music Conservatory Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Endré Kleve  
**DEC 10** B'Rock with Vittorio Ghielmi, conductor and viola da gamba; Julien Martin, flute: Telemann, Uri Caine

**Ghent**  
**De Bijloke**  
Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, 09.233.68.78, www.debijloke.be  
**DEC 4-6** 20.30 Gloria, Christmas songs by Dick van der Harst

Tervuren

**German Evangelical Church**  
Sint Janskerk, Markt, www.internationalchorame.com  
**DEC 7** 20.00 International Chorale of Brussels and Friends-in-Music instrumental ensemble, conducted by Pam Clements: Vaughan Williams' Hodie

Opera

**Brussels**  
**De Munt**  
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39, www.demunt.be  
**DEC 5-21** 15.00/19.00 Rusalka by Dvorak with De Munt Symphony Orchestra

Jazz & blues

**Bruges**  
**De Werf**  
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29  
**DEC 5** 20.30 Mike Mainieri & Marnix Busstra Trio

**Brussels**  
**34°Sud**  
Mutualiteitstraat 34; 0475.81.85.59  
**DEC 5** 19.30 Jean-François Maljean, piano; Alain Rinallo, bass; Domenico Greco-Ferlisi, percussion; Silvano Macaluso, guitar

**Art Base**  
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20  
**DEC 7** 17.00 Hot Air, conducted by Steven De Mesmaeker: jazz, blues, gospel and a-capella

**De Maalbeek Cultural Centre**  
Hoornstraat 97; 02.734.84.43  
**DEC 10** 20.00 Jazz Cat Rally

**Flagey**  
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be  
**DEC 5** 20.15 Jef Neve Trio

**Jazz Station**  
Leuvensesteenweg 193-195; 02.733.13.78  
Concerts at 20.30:  
**DEC 3** Acous-trees Quintet **DEC 4** Jazz Station Big Band **DEC 5** Lidlboj **DEC**

**6** 18.00 Jean-François Maljean Quintet **DEC 10** Saxkartel with Tutu Puoane

**Sass'n Jazz**  
Koningsstraat 241; www.sazznjazz.be  
**DEC 4** 20.30 Barsabruxa Reunion **DEC 6** 20.30 Moyera T'Chavera

**Sounds Jazz Club**  
Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50, www.soundsjazzclub.be  
Concerts at 22.00:  
**DEC 3** Caribe Con K, Caribbean music  
**DEC 4** Tribute to Pierre Van Dormael  
**DEC 5** Zoshia with Peter Van Huffel  
**DEC 6** Barca-Bruxa Connection **DEC 8** Master Session **DEC 9** Da Romeo & The Crazy Moondog Band

**The Music Village**  
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45  
**DEC 3** 20.30 Attic  
**DEC 5-6** 20.30 Bob Malach Quartet  
**DEC 8-13** 20.30 Voices Now: Brussels International Young Jazz Singers Competition

Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul

Antwerp

**Sportpaleis**  
Schijnpootweg 119; 0900.26.060  
**DEC 5-20** 20.30 Clouseau Crescendo

Borgerhout

**Luchtbal Cultuurcentrum**  
Columbiestraat 8; 03.543.90.30, www.ccluchtbal.org  
**DEC 3** 19.00 Flogging Molly  
**DEC 5** 21.00 To the Bone

**Hof Ter Lo**  
Noordersingel 30; 03.543.90.30  
**DEC 3** 19.00 Eastpack Antidote Tour: Flogging Molly + Street Dogs + Skindred + Time Again

Brussels

**Ancienne Belgique**  
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24  
Concerts at 20.00:  
**DEC 4** Shit & Shine **DEC 6** Alter Bridge. TV Bu + Dragons of Zynth  
**DEC 7** The Roots **DEC 10** Arno (Amnesty International concert)

**Atelier 210**  
Sint-Pieterssteenweg 210; 02.732.25.98, www.atelier210.be  
**DEC 4** 20.00 Volt Selector + Masaladosa  
**DEC 5** 20.00 Too Much & The White Nots + The Vagabonds + Nestor  
**DEC 6** 20.00 Debout sur le zinc

**Beursschouwburg**  
Auguste Ortstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be  
**DEC 3** 20.30 Sukilove  
**DEC 10** 20.30 Diasporasounds #1/ Tirana-Brussel

**Bozar**  
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be  
**DEC 5** 23.00 Electro Statik Dancin': Argenis Brito + Bukkador & Fischbeck + Darko

**Fuse**  
Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89  
**DEC 6** 23.00 Deetron. Danton Eeprom

**Halles de Schaerbeek**  
Koninklijke Sinte-Mariastraat 22; 02.218.21.07  
**DEC 6** 20.00 Jamie Lidell

**Koninklijk Circus**  
Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15  
**DEC 3** 20.00 Share the World concert: Natacha Atlas & The Mazeeka Ensemble, Dani Klein and more  
**DEC 9** 20.00 The Do  
**DEC 10** 20.00 Stanislas

**Le Botanique**  
Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32  
Concerts at 20.00:  
**DEC 6** The Whip. Miko Miko **DEC 7** Yacht + Abe Vigoda **DEC 8** Land of Talk + Think about Life **DEC 9** The Subs + A Brand + Malibu Stacy. Ratatat  
**DEC 10** Austin Lace

VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07, www.vkconcerts.be  
**DEC 3** 20.15 Jennifer Gentle + The Dodos  
**DEC 10** 20.00 Jarring Effects label night: Brain Damage + High Tone

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991  
**DEC 10-11** 20.00 dEUS + Expatriate

Ghent

**Handelsbeurs**  
Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01, www.handelsbeurs.be  
**DEC 9** 20.00 Gunter Lamoot  
**DEC 10** 20.00 Pete Murray

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060, www.vooruit.be  
**DEC 10** 20.00 Isis + Guapo + DJ SVN

Hasselt

**Muziekodroom**  
Bootstraat 9; www.muziekodroom.be  
**DEC 5** 19.00 Have Heart + Ceremony + Carpathian + Cruel Hand + Never Healed  
**DEC 6** 20.00 Cherry Poppin' Daddies

Kortrijk

**Budascoop**  
Kapucijnenstraat 10; www.dekreun.be  
**DEC 4** 20.00 Valgeir Sigurdsson  
**DEC 5** 22.00 DJ Buscemi & friends

De Kreun

Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44, www.dekreun.be  
**DEC 6** 20.00 Made in Kortrijk Party: DJ Lotto + 4 Tits + One Man Party + Fredo & Thang

Leuven

**Het Depot**  
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03  
**DEC 3** 20.00 Stereo MC's

World, folk

Antwerp

**Zuiderpershuis**  
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00, www.zuiderpershuis.be  
**DEC 7** 15.00 Southern Wind

Brussels

**Art Base**  
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20  
**DEC 5** 21.00 Luis Graca Reis, songs from Brazil, Portugal, Cape Verde

**Atelier 210**  
Sint-Pieterssteenweg 210; 02.732.25.98, www.atelier210.be  
**DEC 3** 21.00 What the folk! series: Iza

**Atelier de la Dolce Vita**  
Liefdadigheidstraat 37a; 02.223.46.75, www.atelierdolcevita.be  
**DEC 5** 20.00 Manu Hermia, Barbara Wiernik and Fabrice Collet

**Espace Senghor**  
Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40, www.senghor.be  
**DEC 9** 20.30 Omar Sosa (jazz, African and Latin)

**Stekerlapatte**  
Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81, www.stekerlapatte.be  
**DEC 4** 21.30 Wladimir Anselme

**Theatre La Roseraie**  
Alsebergsesteenweg 1299; 02.376.46.45, info@roseraie.org  
**DEC 6** 20.30 O'Tchalai (gypsy)

**Théâtre Molière**  
Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00, www.muziekpublique.be  
**DEC 6** 20.00 N'Faly Kouyate & Danyakan  
**DEC 10** 12.30 Aline Alinopoulos & Marcel Marcelsson et leurs poussins

Leopoldsborg

**CC Leopoldsborg**  
Kastanjedreef 1; 011.34.65.48, www.ccleopoldsborg.be  
**DEC 7** 20.15 Maria Juncal (flamenco)

Dance

Antwerp

**deSingel**  
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be  
**DEC 4** 20.00 La Danseuse malade, choreographed by Boris Charmatz

Monty

Montignystraat 3-5; 03.238.91.81, www.monty.be  
**DEC 5-6** 20.30 Impure Company in God Exists, the Mother is Present, But They No Longer Care, choreographed and staged by Hooman Sharifi

Theater 't Eilandje

Kattendijk-Westkaai 16; www.flandersballet.be  
**Until DEC 6** 20.00 Royal Ballet of Flanders in Coupe Maison 3, choreography by members of the company

Brussels

**KVS Bol**  
Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.12, www.kvs.be  
**Until DEC 7** 20.00 Ultima Vez in Menske, choreographed by Wim Vandekeybus, with live music performed by Daan

Kaaitheater

Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59, www.kaaitheater.be  
**Until DEC 6** 20.30 Damaged Goods in All Together Now

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15  
**DEC 5-7** 20.00/15.00 Swan Lake by the Moscow City Ballet

Les Brigittines

Korte Brigittinenstraat; 02.506.43.00, www.brigittines.be  
**DEC 9-11** 20.30 P.A.R.T.S. in Trust me, choreographed by Mia Lawrence

Théâtre Varia

Scepterstraat 78; 02.640.82.58  
**DEC 9-13** 19.30/20.00 V.- Nightmares, choreographed by Thierry Smits, based on and accompanied by Vivaldi's The Four Seasons

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991  
**DEC 30** 19.30 Saint Petersburg Ballet in The Nutcracker, with music by the Ukraine National Philharmonic

Theatre

Ardoois

**Cultuurkapel De Schaduw**  
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82, www.deschaduw.net  
**DEC 7** 20.00 De Nacht van Margaretha van Oostenrijk (in Dutch)

Antwerp

**Zuiderpershuis**  
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00, www.zuiderpershuis.be  
**DEC 6** 20.30 Plan B, with The Game and Haytham Safia (music/theatre) in Dutch, part of Masarat Palestine Festival)

Bruges

**De Werf**  
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29  
**DEC 6** 20.30 Union Suspecte and Abattoir Fermé in They Eat People (in Dutch, part of The Messenger Festival)

Brussels

**KVS Bol**  
Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.12, www.kvs.be  
**Until DEC 6** 20.30, 15.00 Gewonnen brood by Pol Hoste (in French and Dutch with French and Dutch surtitles)

Scarabaeus Theatre

Hollestraat 19-27; 02.649.79.16  
**DEC 9-14** 15.00/20.00 English Comedy Club in A Christmas Carol

Ghent

**Theater Tinnenpot**  
Tinnenpotstraat 21; 09.225.18.60,  
www.tinnenpot.be  
**Until DEC 7** 20.00 De Jossen by Tom  
Lanoye (in Dutch)

Visual arts

Aalst

**Centrum for Hedendaagse Kunst**  
(Centre for Contemporary Art)  
Houtkaai; 053.70.97.73  
**Until DEC 20** Rocaille/  
Gereedschapskist & Le Vase-entrepôt,  
new sculptures by contemporary artist  
Freek Wambacq

Antwerp

**Contemporary Art Museum**  
(MuHKA)  
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.260.99.99,  
www.muhka.be  
**Until DEC 7** Broodthaers & friends,  
works by Belgian artist Marcel  
Broodthaers shown with works by  
Panamarenko, Robert Filliou, Bernd  
Lohaus, Guy Rombouts and Walter  
Swennen  
**Until JAN 4** The Order of Things,  
group show questioning the use of  
archival images with works by various  
artists

**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 61; 03.828.13.50,  
www.middelheimmuseum.be  
**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

**Zilvermuseum Sterckshof**  
Cornelissenlaan; 03.360.52.52  
**Until JAN 18** Fifties Silver, Belgian civil  
and religious silver design from 1950  
to 1970

Bilzen

**Landcommanderij Alden Biesen**  
Kasteelstraat 6; 089.51.93.42  
**Until DEC 14** Limburg in 't geweer, 300  
years of military history in Limburg  
province, with paintings, drawings,  
weapons and models

Bruges

**Groeningemuseum**  
Dijver 12; 050.44.87.43  
**Until DEC 31** Leuven Loans, 15th-  
and 16th-century paintings and  
woodcarvings from Leuven's Van der  
Kelen-Mertens museum  
**Until JAN 4** Stradanus: Artist at  
the Medici Court, retrospective of  
Bruges-born artist Johannes Stradanus,  
with paintings, drawings, prints and  
tapestries

Brussels

**Argos Centre for Art and Media**  
Werfstraat 13; 02.229.00.03,  
www.argosarts.org  
**Until JAN 3** Interstitial Zones, 15 artists  
offer a critical alternative to the mass  
media's coverage of modern history

deBuren

Leopoldstraat 6; 02.212.19.30,  
www.deburen.eu  
**Until DEC 12** World One Minute  
Brussels, 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  
(Reflecting the World), photographs,

video 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 DEC 21** Ware Liefde! (True  
Love!), group show

Design Flanders

Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.227.60.60  
**Until DEC 31** Design Verpakt,  
jewellery and objects by contemporary  
Flemish designers, on sale for the  
holidays

**Flemish Cultural Centre Op-Weule**  
Sint-Lambertusstraat 95  
**Until DEC 7** Parallel Worlds, work  
by Polish photographer Ola Jezowska  
Minarik

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

**ING Cultural Centre**  
Koningsplein 6; 02.547.22.92  
**Until MAR 15** Oceania: Signs of Ritual,  
Symbols of Authority, sculptures,  
masks, artefacts, weapons and  
utilitarian objects from Melanesia,  
Polynesia and Micronesia

**Jewish Museum of Belgium**  
Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63  
**Until DEC 28** Inedit, Stephen Sack's  
photographs of Idel Ianchelevici's  
sculptures

**Royal Museum of Art and History**  
Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11  
**Until MAR 8** Continental Superstar,  
mechanical 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 by 19th-  
century Belgian artist Constantin  
Meunier  
**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  
**Until FEB 15** CoBrA, major  
retrospective on the 60th anniversary of  
the foundation of the Cobra movement

**Tour & Taxis**  
Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49  
**Until MAR 31** That's Opera: 200  
Years of Italian Music, a look behind  
the scenes of the making of an  
opera, travelling exhibition by music  
publishers Ricordi

**WIELS**  
Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.347.30.33,  
www.wiels.org  
**Until FEB 22** Un-Scene, works by  
young Belgian artists

Ghent

**Caermersklooster**  
Vrouwebroersstraat 6; 09.269.29.10  
**Until DEC 21** Glans en duister (Glossy  
and Dark), photographs by Eric  
Standaert  
**Until DEC 21** Harold Lloyd, tribute  
to the famous American actor and  
director (1893-1971)

**Design Museum**  
Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99  
**Until JAN 26** 100 years Demeyere,  
stylish cooking utensils by the Belgian  
manufacturer  
**Until JAN 26** Retrospective of German  
Jewellery designer Hermann Jünger  
(1928-2005)

**Kunsthof Sint-Pietersabdij**  
Sint-Pietersplein 9; 09.243.97.30,  
www.gent.be/spa  
**Until MAR 29** Flemish wall tapestries  
from the 15th and 16th centuries

**Museum of Fine Arts**  
Fernand Scribedreef 1 – Citadelpark;  
09.240.07.00, www.mskgent.be  
**Until JAN 18** Giambattista Piranesi,  
prints by the 18th-century Italian  
architect and artist

**Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst**  
(SMAK)  
Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03,  
www.smak.be  
**Until JAN 3** Faux Jumeaux (False  
Twins), carte blanche to Belgian artist  
Michel François  
**Until JAN 18** Anyth\_-, paintings by  
Werner Mannaers

**Witte Zaal**  
Posteernestraat 64; 09.267.96.77,  
www.francekunstart.be  
**Until DEC 6** Moments in Time, show  
exploring the relationship between  
time, image and the surrounding space

**Hasselt**  
**Modemuseum**  
Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.23.96.21  
**Until JAN 4** Ten dans gevraagd  
(Invitation to Dance), dance costumes  
by fashion designers and artists from  
1920 to the present day

**Z33**  
Zuivelmarkt (Beguinage) 33;  
011.29.59.60  
**Until JAN 4** The Great Exhibition  
Part 1: Europe, a project by Ives Maes  
linking world exhibitions to science  
fiction

**Maaseik**  
**Maaseik Museum**  
Lekkerstraat 5; 089.81.92.99  
**Until MAR 31** The Terracotta Army of  
Xian: Treasures of the First Emperors  
of China, warrior sculptures from the  
world-famous Terracotta Army shown  
with 200 artefacts from the Qin and  
Western Han dynasties

**Machelen-Zulte**  
**Het Roger Raveelmuseum**  
Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00  
**Until FEB 22** Ensor & Raveel: Kindred  
Spirits, drawings and paintings by the  
Belgian artists

**Meise**  
**Kasteel van Bouchout, Meise**  
**Botanical Garden**  
Nieuwelaan 38; 02.260.09. 20  
**Until FEB 1** Plantenportretten (Plant  
Portraits), watercolours by the garden's  
illustrators

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

**Tervuren**  
**Royal Museum for Central Africa**  
Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11  
**Until AUG 31** Omo: People & Design,  
Hans Silvester's photographs of south-  
western Ethiopia's nomadic tribes and  
objects from the museum's collection

Festivals & special events

**Antwerp**  
**Antwerp Antiques Open Door Days:**  
Promenade tours among the city's  
antique dealers in the 30th edition of  
the annual event  
**Until DEC 7** across Antwerp  
www.antiquairs-antwerpen.be

**Beurs Voeding & Huiscomfort:**  
International food and home fair with  
Belgian specialties, world wines and  
table, kitchen and house decoration  
**DEC 6-14** at Antwerp Expo, Jan Van

Get your tickets now for...



Karl Fischer

Rusalka

**5-21 December, De Munt, Muntplein, Brussels.**  
*Tickets from 070.23.39.39 or www.demunt.be*

Rusalka: a bewitching feminine creature. Or is that bewitched? It seems that in Czechoslovakia, this mythic figure can be either – or both, which adds an extra layer of intrigue to the title character of Antonín Dvořák's lavish opera of the absurd. The water nymph longs to be human so she can love and be loved by a young prince. But some worlds are not meant to come together. Dvořák adapted the work in 1900, basing it on the libretto by poet Jaroslav Kvapil, and it's been the cornerstone of Czech opera ever since.

Rijswijkklaan 191  
03.260.81.22, www.newfacom.be

**Jewish Culture Festival:** Exhibitions,  
theatre, music and film exploring local  
and international Jewish life  
**Until DEC 2009** across Antwerp  
www.joodscultuurfestival.be

Bruges

**Christmas market:** Numerous festive  
stands and outdoor ice skating  
**Until JAN 4** on Grote Markt and Simon  
Stevinplein  
050.44.80.00

**December Dance 08:** The second  
edition of this festival showcases the  
Quebec dance scene  
**DEC 5-14** across Bruges  
www.decemberdance.be

**Kantlijnen:** A celebration of lace, from  
ancient art to contemporary works  
**Until MAR 14** in venues across Bruges  
www.kantlijnen.be.

**Snow & Ice Sculpture Festival:** A  
glacial fantasy world created by 40  
international ice sculptors, with  
refreshments available from the ice bar  
**Until JAN 11** at the Bruges train station  
square  
www.icesculpture.be

Brussels

**Intimate Strangers:** Mini festival of  
dance, performance, music and video  
curated by choreographer Meg Stuart of  
Damaged Goods company  
**DEC 4-7** at Kaaithater, Kaaistudio's,  
Beursschouwburg and private homes  
www.beursschouwburg.be or  
www.kaaithater.be

**Winter Pret:** Annual Christmas market  
with ice skating rinks, fairground rides  
and sound and light shows  
**Until DEC 28** (skating rink and  
big wheel until JAN 4) on Sint-  
Katelijneplein, Vismarkt, Beurs and  
Grote Markt  
www.winterpret.be

Ghent

**Chritmas market:** annual market and  
outdoor skating rink  
**DEC 7-JAN 6** on Emile Braunplein  
09.233.77.88, www.uitbureau.be

**Etoiles Polaires Montreal Music**  
**Festival:** Focus on the Montreal  
music scene and a new generation of  
musicians

**Until DEC 6** at Vooruit, Sint-  
Pietersnieuwstraat 23  
09.267.28.88, www.vooruit.be

**Kerst & Creatif Beurs:** Christmas craft  
fair  
**DEC 6-7** at Flanders Expo,  
Maaltekouter 1  
09.241.92.11, www.hobbysalon.be

**Kokerello:** Culinary fair with  
demonstrations by Belgian and  
international chefs, gourmet shop,  
cooking utensils and books plus lifestyle  
hall  
**DEC 5-8** at Flanders Expo,  
Maaltekouter 1  
09.241.92.11, www.kokerello.be

**Lineart 2008:** Art fair with works by  
Belgian and international artists  
**DEC 5-9** at Flanders Expo,  
Maaltekouter 1  
09.241.92.11, www.lineart.be

Kortrijk

**Made in Kortrijk:** Multi-disciplinary  
event providing a platform for young  
artists with art, design and textile  
exhibitions, plus concerts  
**DEC 4-7** at NMBS site,  
Magdalenestraat 46  
www.madeinkortrijk.be

Leopoldsborg

**The Peking Acrobats:** Jaw-dropping  
stunts and manoeuvres by Chinese  
acrobats, among them world record  
holders in "human chair stacking"  
**DEC 4** 20.15 at CC Leopoldsborg,  
Kastanjedreef 1  
011.34.65.48, www.ccleopoldsborg.be

Leuven

**International Short Film Festival:**  
featuring a selection of fiction,  
animated, documentary and  
experimental films  
**Until DEC 6** at Stuk, Naamsestraat 96  
016.32.03.20, www.kortfilmfestival.be

Ostend

**Christmas market:** Festive stands and  
outdoor skating rink  
**Until DEC 24** on Wapenplein  
www.eindejaarinoostende.be

Tervuren

**Christmas Bazaar:** Gifts, tombola,  
Santa Grotto and seasonal refreshments  
**DEC 6** 10.00-16.00 at the British School  
of Brussels, Leuvensesteenweg 19

## INTERVIEW

# “God is a cleaning lady who has gone on strike”

What better way to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights than with the rock singer who, more than any of his peers, embodies the concept of artistic freedom in this country. Meet Arno.

“See the fresh flowers over there? When the previous owner sold this place, she insisted on it being stipulated in the paperwork that there must be fresh flowers at all times. Fantastic. That’s Brussels for you.”

We are in L’Archiduc, Brussels’ legendary jazz bar, and Arno is in fine form. This is his local, although you suspect that, to paraphrase The Temptations, wherever he lays his hat is his home. And if trying to keep him in one place is an ungrateful task, trying to stop him going off on a tangent is like nailing jellyfish to the wall. Within minutes, two things become obvious to this journalist: (1) the man gives good quote and (2) it is pointless to repeat the original question hoping for a conventional answer.

Arno Hintjens doesn’t “do” conventional, and chances are he never did. His 1980s band, TC Matic, were impossible to pigeon-hole. Blending white funk and blues with what was then generically known as new wave, they sounded like no one else – and that’s just the music. Arno’s voice is also one in a million; many clichés have been (over)used to describe his gravelly tones and, to be fair, he does sound like a multilingual Tom Waits trying to hail a taxi after a night on the tiles.

French, Dutch, his native Oost-ends dialect and English all feature on TC Matic’s best-known number, “Putain Putain”. Play it in any rock club in Belgium, and the whole place goes mental. The band’s other signature tune “O La La La” is regularly hailed as the greatest Belgian rock single of all time.

Following the demise of TC Matic, Arno made a name for himself in France, where cult status gradually led to mainstream recognition – as well as a *louche* pin-up image. The French can’t get enough of him and see in him a rock’n’roll reincarnation of Jacques Brel.

You would think that this lucrative foray into *chanson* (the song “Les Yeux de Ma Mère” has been known to reduce Hell’s Angels to blubbing wrecks) and his approaching 60th birthday would have somehow mellowed him, but nothing could be further from the truth.

One day you may see him on French national television promoting his latest album, the next he will be involved in some art-house movie or planning a collaboration with traditional Moroccan musicians. The man simply doesn’t know when to stop – and for this we should consider ourselves very lucky.

**You’re about to do a charity concert. Given your profile in Belgium and France, you must be a prime target for charities in search of a headliner or spokesperson.**

“Last month alone I was approached for five charity events. I can’t say yes to everyone, otherwise it would just get farcical.”

**So why did you choose Amnesty International?**

I got a phone call from Amnesty International asking if I would help... I replied that I had

already played for them years ago, but they said: “No no, you played for Amnesty International Europe; we are Amnesty International Belgique Francophone”. I nearly fell off

my chair when I found out that Amnesty had been split in two in Belgium! I said I’d do it because I think it’s good that such events do take place, but, honestly, this is proper Belgian surrealism. I’m half expecting a call from the German-speaking branch of Amnesty Belgium!

*Cue long rant against the narrow mindedness of separatist politicians (“you only need to look at them to realise that it’s because they have small penises”) and the sorry state of mainstream socialism in Belgium (“any old hairdresser is more socialist than the current lot put together!”). Okay then, let us naively try to get back to the origi-*

*nal topic, namely human rights...*

**American voters recently had the choice between someone who is in favour of the death penalty and someone who refuses to condemn it.**

I think it has a lot to do with religion. So many wars are being waged in the name of God... I reckon God should do us all a favour, go back up to Paradise and leave us alone! That’s my master plan [laughs]. Anyway, maybe God is a woman, eh? Maybe God is a cleaning lady. Who is currently on strike. How’s that for a headline huh?! You want another beer? I want to drink to that. [Bursts out laughing and heads for the bar.]

*It’s by now crystal clear that the best policy is to let Arno go with the flow. Besides, it is incredibly enjoyable – an endless succession of juicy anecdotes, quips and non-sequiturs, each punctuated with the dirtiest laugh this side of the Atomium. Arno comes back with beers, and he’s at it right away: “See that guy over there? I suspect he has a mistress”. He leans forward: “I think it’s fantastic!” and we raise our glasses to the potentially lucky fellow.*

*As we casually discuss long-defunct 1980s Brussels rock bands, we both realise that he, a Dutch speaker by birth, is being interviewed by a native French speaker*



Flemish rock god Arno plays at the Ancienne Belgique in Brussels on 10 December, a concert celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Tickets from [www.abconcerts.be](http://www.abconcerts.be)

for an English-language publication. Isn’t Brussels simply wonderful? “Brussels is like an old whore: open to everyone. And I love old whores. In fact I’m an old whore myself!” What a shame that this article only needs one headline.

**You spend your whole life speaking a mixture of many languages. What language do you dream in?**

Good question; I’ve never thought about that. I honestly don’t know; I often don’t even remember what language I was speaking the night before! What I do know is that I dream in black and white. My dreams are like Léon Spilliaert paintings – I’m sure it’s an Ostend thing. [smiles]

We then discuss the comparative merits of Spilliaert and Ostend’s other famous artist, James Ensor. (“Did you know that Bob Dylan’s song ‘Desolation Row’ was inspired by Ensor’s painting ‘Christ’s Entry Into Brussels’?”)

**Finally, what is your preferred, err, bed-time language?**

“Smell is the best bed-time language!” [nods knowingly, bursts out laughing]

What a man.

Interview by PM Doutreligne

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

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Maternitywear Dutchforshop  
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