

"Worst is still to come" 7

While Opel Antwerp hangs its hopes on the production of new SUVs, courier company DHL cuts nearly 900 jobs in Flanders. Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters says 44,000 jobs will be lost over the next two years



Gossiping with Els 8

Els de Schepper is a one-woman wonder: she sings, she acts, she writes and, right now, she performs her one-woman show across Flanders. Stéphanie Duval asks her about language, gossip mags and the moral of the story



To buy or not to buy 12

Love it or hate it, *foie gras* continues to be a popular hors d'oeuvre during the holiday season. Our food correspondent visits a duck farm in West Flanders where livers are fattened and chats with GAIA over ethics



He's back

Yves Leterme becomes prime minister of Belgium. Again.

ALAN HOPE

Belgium has a new prime minister, and, as happens so often in Belgium, it's the return of an old prime minister. On Wednesday, 25 November, Yves Leterme and his team of ministers swore the oath of allegiance to the King, installing Leterme as prime minister for the second time.

Leterme's resurrection came as a result of the elevation of Herman Van Rompuy to President of the European Council, after not quite a year in the prime minister's job. Van Rompuy left with a reputation as a conciliator, able to bring different views together. But his term in office was marked by one more thing: the decision not to pursue state reform, something on which Leterme had staked his reputation.

With Van Rompuy's departure, Leterme, 49, now takes up office in Wetstraat 16 to find that 800-pound gorilla still sitting in an anteroom waiting for him.

Leterme's apparent automatic succession to the job is a mystery to many people. The Christian Democrat (CD&V) prime minister tried to resign once last year

when his constitutional project foundered, but the King refused to accept. He resigned for real last December when it was alleged that he had exercised undue influence over judicial proceedings over the sale of Fortis Bank.

In fact, there is an aspect of monarchical succession to the process: CD&V are the leading party in the governing coalition, so they have the right to provide the PM. Leterme is still riding the wave of the 800,000 votes he garnered in June 2007, after a term as minister-president of Flanders. That phenomenal score, together with the fact that no other candidates emerged, saw him returned to the head office.

The question of state reform, including the deeply divisive issue of splitting the electoral district Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde, remains to be addressed, but Leterme won't be addressing it directly. His party wanted to keep him at arm's length from the issue; other parties wanted him to be directly involved.

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The Queen's art

Why do the marginal and fringe artists keep coming to Ostend?

KAREN VAN GODTSENHOVEN

Last summer, we ran a story on the show of James Ensor that was staged in New York's iconic Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). "Urban avant-gardist or small-town loony?" asked the *New York Times*.

Good question, and not just about Ensor. The city of Ostend (apart from being the "Queen of Sea Resorts") has always hosted many such avant-garde loonies, who come and go and sometimes stay. Ostend continues to attract contemporary artists, like Charlotte Mutsaers and Frans Malschaert, who both left the Netherlands to live here. And of course the largest city on the Belgian coast was famously home to Marvin Gaye when the troubled singer washed up on shore at the behest of his manager to dry out and pull himself together.

With somewhat of a bluesy atmosphere, set against the backdrop of the North Sea, Ostend

has traditionally welcomed both tourists and artists, loners and socialites. In the winter, the true beauty of the empty shores and the coastal light effects that attracted artists like Léon Spilliaert are better visible. A few steps away, the art galleries, art cafes and Ostend's fine arts museum, the Mu.zée, are alive with activity year-round.

A few cups of coffee with the art in-crowd later, it's clear why Ostend has become such a haven for painters, writers and singers, each with their very own style. They are bound to Ostend by two things – their love of the North Sea and the city's inhabitants, who tend to take care of your needs first and ask questions later.

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© Charlotte Mutsaers



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News in brief

Flemish astronaut **Frank De Winne**, the only European ever to have taken command of the International Space Station (ISS), handed over the helm last week to Jeffrey Williams of the US, 46 days after assuming command and a few days short of the end of his command. De Winne requested to be relieved earlier in order to allow the change-over to take place while one of the longest-serving crew members, Nicole Stott, was still on board. As *Flanders Today* went to press, De Winne was scheduled to be headed back to earth.

Police and nature experts last week took possession of **two male tigers** belonging to a circus in Bree, Limburg province. Mayor Jaak Gabriels decided to intervene after complaints that the accommodation of Tango and Ginger was unsuitable and unsafe; some bars on the cages were reported to be held in place with wire, and one of the tigers was able to reach through the bars and injure another. The two tigers are now in separate cages at the Nature Help Centre in Opglabbeek.

Potato growers are facing the loss of massive amounts of this year's crop because an unusually warm autumn has caused potatoes to begin sprouting much earlier than normal. The problem affects crops not being kept in climate-controlled storage. In a normal year, sprouting would only begin in about February or March, when most of the harvest has been sold. This year, potatoes were taken from the ground in August instead of September because of the summer drought. Then, warm temperatures in September and October advanced the process.

Prison officers are to be equipped with **baton, handcuffs and protective clothing**, including a helmet, following strike action taken in response to violence in prisons. In high-security wings in Lantim and Bruges, they will also be issued pepper spray. "The aim is to better prepare prison staff for possible aggression," a spokesman for the prisons authority said. Last week, the first courses in conflict management began in the two prisons.

Baggage handlers at Brussels and Ostend airports have begun a campaign to protest **overloaded suitcases**, which lead to back pain and other problems. Transport union BTB calculated that one handler deals with 150 cases per flight, each weighing 15 to 20 kilograms, a daily total of 10 tonnes. The union is asking passengers to pack less and to spread it out among more than one suitcase.

What's in a name?



Andy Warhol may have made art-market history last week with the sale of one of his prints, "Eight Elvises", for more than \$100 million, but Wayne Traub (*pictured*) was having a landmark sale of his own in Antwerp. With a performance of the final part of his Wayne Wash trilogy, Traub, one of the artists-in-residence at Het Toneelhuis (see *Flanders Today*, 4 November), put up for sale not only a selection of artefacts from his career but also his name. At an auction in the Bourla theatre, conducted by the venerable auctioneer Mon Bernaerts, the name Wayne Traub went under the hammer.

He does, luckily, have a reserve – his birth name Geert Bové, given to him by his parents when he was born in Brussels in December, 1972. His mother's surname was Wayntraub, and when Traub, a filmmaker by training but a man of the theatre by inclination, wrote his *Manifesto for an Animal Theatre* at the age of 24, he imagined theatre itself as a character called Wayne Traub and the stage as his own body.

"Dramatist" is a more apt word than "playwright" because Traub's drama encompasses not only the theatre but film, dance, music and sometimes more: at one performance he invited members of the audience to express their opinions about him, there and then.

The Wayne Wash trilogy, which was launched in 2002 with the piece *Maria-Dolores*, continued in 2004 with *Jean-Baptiste* and concluded last week with *Maria-Magdalena*. The evening of the sale – which included sketchbooks, costumes and props – was followed by a concert by Gabriel Rios, who played a role in the production.

The artist's name, by the way, fetched a price of €550, and the sale in total raised €9,000, which goes to Traub's new artistic company – or rather Bové's.



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Editor: Derek Blyth

Deputy editor: Lisa Bradshaw

News editor: Alan Hope

Agenda: Sarah Crew, Robyn Boyle

Art director: Michel Didier

Prepress: Corelio P&P

Contributors: Rebecca Benoot, Robyn Boyle, Courtney Davis, Emma Portier Davis, Stéphanie Duval, Anna Jenkinson, Sharon Light, Katrien Lindemans, Alistair MacLean, Marc Maes, Ian Mundell, Anja Otte, Saffina Rana, Chrisophe Verbiest

Project manager: Pascale Zoetaert

Publisher: VUM

NV Vlaamse Uitgeversmaatschappij

Gossetlaan 30, 1702 Groot-Bijgaarden

Editorial address: Gossetlaan 30

1702 Groot-Bijgaarden

Tel.: 02.373.99.09 – Fax: 02.375.98.22

E-mail: editorial@flanderstoday.eu

Subscriptions: France Lycops

Tel: 02.373.83.59

E-mail: subscriptions@flanderstoday.eu

Advertising: Evelynne Fregonese

Tel: 02.373.83.57

E-mail: advertising@flanderstoday.euVerantwoordelijke uitgever:
Derek Blyth

Correction

In our issue of 25 November, we referred to Herman van Rompuy as the new president of the EU's Council of Ministers. He is in fact president of the European Council, the assembly of the 27 EU leaders. The Council of Ministers, sometimes called the Council, is composed of 27 ministers from the member states responsible for a particular policy area (such as agriculture or trade). This body does not have a single president; the role is rotated between the member states, with each occupying the position for six months. Sweden is currently president of the Council until the end of 2009, when Spain will take over. In the second half of 2010, Belgium takes over the Council presidency from Spain. As a result, both the president of the European Council and the Council of Ministers will be Belgian and, in all likelihood, Flemish.



© VRT

Former PM Jean-Luc Dehaene will handle the sensitive subject of BHV for Leterme

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In typical Belgian style, a compromise was reached. CD&V's Jean-Luc Dehaene, the nation's most gifted political fixer (and former prime minister), will carry out an investigation of the issues, with the remit to speak to whomever he chooses on whatever subject he chooses. He will report to a committee, including the presidents of the five coalition parties and chaired by Leterme, thus bringing him into the process.

Dehaene's involvement fuels the fire of criticism aimed at the return of Leterme to the nation's top post. It shows a failure of his party's trust, say critics, that he is being

returned to office with the main issue of his premiership outsourced to a more imposing figure.

"There are other priorities now," explained CD&V president Marianne Thyssen. "The economic crisis has had severe consequences. We still have to take care of the effects of that. And from 1 July, 2010, Belgium controls the presidency of the EU. Our country cannot afford to look bad because of an unstable government."

"Leterme is getting a second chance," outgoing PM Van Rompuy told RTBF news. "We hope he can succeed, for himself as well as for the country."

• Leterme's new team, at least for the time being, is almost exactly the same as the old team. Steven Vanackere, a fellow West Fleming, replaces Leterme as Foreign Minister. Vanackere moves over from the civil service and government affairs ministry, where his place has been taken by Inge Vervotte, who held the position previously but resigned in protest at the treatment of Jo Vandeuren and Leterme over the Fortis affair. Vandeuren ended up as health and welfare minister – a job previously held by both Steven Vanackere and Inge Vervotte. ♦

De Gucht brings second top EU job home to Flanders

For the second time in as many weeks, a Flemish politician has been given a senior job in the European Union: last week former foreign minister Karel De Gucht, now an EU Commissioner, was given the important trade portfolio by Commission president José Manuel Barroso. The portfolio was previously held by Catherine Ashton, who went on to become High Representative for foreign affairs, and before her by fellow British Labour politician Peter Mandelson.

But aside perhaps from competition, where the Commission has the power to fine offending companies, trade is the most important job a commissioner can hold. The EU was founded on trade cooperation, and the Commission speaks for the 27 member states in world trade talks. Whereas the new president of the European Council may not "stop traffic" in Washington or Beijing, they always know when the trade commissioner, representing 500 million people and GDP on a par with the US, comes calling.

"Now I have the chance to really get behind the wheel instead of looking on from the sidelines," De Gucht commented. "Trade is an extraordinary responsibility; I take part in international negotiations on behalf of the member states."

Former prime minister and fellow liberal Guy Verhofstadt welcomed the news, saying: "De Gucht has the ability to do the post of trade commissioner justice. As foreign

minister, he of course gained the experience. Now he's part of the team that has to find the answers to the world's economic and financial crisis." Liberals hold eight of the Commission's 27 posts, fewer than the 13 Christian-Democrats but more than the six Socialists.

The Flemish papers took pleasure in the fact that once again a Belgian politician had won a major post at the expense of their Dutch counterpart: Van Rompuy was selected over Jan Peter Balkenende, and De Gucht's elevation came at the same time as Dutch commissioner Neelie Kroes lost competition to the Spaniard Joaquín Almunia. "Belgium 2, Netherlands 0" one headline read. "But this is not a contest," Verhofstadt said. "All decisions are taken in the interests of Europe." ♦



© European Parliament

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



24%

drop in the number of British tourists coming to Bruges, thanks to a weak pound. Ghent saw 21% fewer British visitors and Ostend 8% fewer

€900 million

to be paid out by the government in interest charges after its takeover of part of the ailing Fortis Bank

2 months

waiting time for a course of professional help to stop smoking, which is now partly reimbursed by health insurers. The response has been so enthusiastic, the 90 recognised therapists in Flanders are now overwhelmed

23-46%

of the staff of rest homes in the Antwerp area are of immigrant origin, according to a survey by minority organisation De Acht and Artesis College. The survey found 20% of residents complained of being treated by foreigners, while 10% made racist remarks

75

requests in nine months for the premium being offered by the Flemish government for the installation of a soot filter on car engines. In the Netherlands, a similar programme attracted 10,000 takers

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

A monolith no more

As a journalist at *De Standaard*, I was once sent by my editor to a breakfast with Dutch parliamentarians, who had requested a meeting with a member of the Flemish press to inform them more closely on the functioning of our federal parliament. This got me slightly worried. Should I consult the old textbooks about the finer details of special double majorities, just in case they asked?

Don't worry, my boss said. They may speak our language, but they are still foreign. They will only have two questions. Will Belgium fall apart soon? And what about the Vlaams Blok? Sure enough, that was exactly what they wanted to know. The answer to question one was easy ("no"), but number two was a harder nut to crack.

Since the 1980s, politicians, journalists and academics alike have wondered why the foul-mouthed, far-right party now called Vlaams Belang (after a name change due to some associated organisations being condemned for racism) was so successful. This was especially a question in the beginning when migration and Islam were hardly an issue, and the nationalist element was virtually absent from the politics of the time.

There is still no simple explanation, but one thing did stand out: Vlaams Belang was never a party like all the others. To the outside world, Vlaams Blok/Belang never saw any of the traditional infighting or internal discussion. It was much like a monolithic...erm...block, whose message always sounded in unison. (To the extent that one MP even stated in a hilarious TV interview: "My own personal opinion? That you have to ask Filip Dewinter...").

But the monolith has started to crumble. The past couple of weeks we have seen party president Bruno Valckeniers trying to get members to agree to a softer approach, making Vlaams Belang "radical but respectable", only to be rebuffed by party strong man Filip Dewinter. Vlaams Belang has even had personnel trouble: Marie-Rose Morel – once destined to become the party's leading lady and very popular with the electorate – has become almost an outcast within party ranks, causing former president Frank Vanhecke to resign from the party's board.

All of a sudden, Vlaams Belang looks just like any other party. What has changed?

Well, for one, Vlaams Belang has lost the Flemish election, the first defeat in 14 elections! Somehow, it seems to have lost much of its relevance, too. Or is there another reason why very few foreign observers have asked about Vlaams Belang lately?



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STERCKX N.V. 1640 Rhode-St.Genèse, St. Genesius-Rode, Mr Philip Van de Walle, Tel 02/359.94.85, philip@sterckx.be • 1500 Halle, Mr Yves Tielemans, Tel 02/363.15.35, yves@sterckx.be

The Queen's art

Contemporary artists keep Ensor's surreal spirit alive

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“All you need to do for the city to love you is to have an open mind,” says Zakia, who runs the Beau-Site art salon and café. “And then the maze of friends will weave itself.”

It echoes Gaye, one of the town's most unlikely foreign residents, who lived here for a couple of years in the early 1980s before his death: “I'm black, I'm famous, and I was in trouble when I got here. Still, the people here can see through all of that. They accept me the way I am.”

This open-mindedness might be one of the crucial factors that has always drawn artists to the city – not only “coastal” painters but others like contemporary artists Roger Raveel, Luc Tuymans, Panamarenko and Jan Fabre, plus writers like Hugo Claus. Ghent-based author Herman Brusselmans, too, has stayed for long periods in Ostend to work and set his famously gritty novel *Ex-Drummer* in the city.

The surreal air

“Although Ensor is Ostend, and Ostend is Ensor, we have a broad collection of Belgian artworks from 1830 to the present day because so many artists have been here,” says Phillip Vandenbossche, the curator of Mu.zée (formerly the PMMK), which this year became the official fine arts museum of both the province and the city. But the city's artistic life still starts and ends with the artist who was obsessed with allegory and the grotesque. With a life and work that bridged the 19th and 20th centuries and provided an immeasurable influence on both surrealism and expressionism, Ensor was featured in New York earlier this year and now in Paris' Musée d'Orsay until next February. Mu.zée, too, is working on what will be the largest Ensor show ever staged to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the artist's birth in 2010.

“Unlike Knokke, where art is sold by the pound, Ostend is a city where art is made”

Death, the sea and inner turmoil were Ensor's biggest themes, taken up by Belgian contemporaries Willy Schlobach and Alfred William Finch and, later on, by Léon Spilliaert and Constant Permeke.

And, of course, by today's artists, too. Political satire and a critique of the bourgeoisie were omnipresent in Ensor's work, and his outcry against the “vile vivisectors” is an inspiration to Charlotte Mutsaers. She is also, like Ensor, a famous defender of Ostend's cultural heritage. The city's seaside Venetian Galleries is hosting *Aangespoeld met pen en penseel* (*Washed Up with Pen and Brush*), a Mutsaers retrospective. It is a celebration of her vivid imagery, her love for Ostend, her life as an artist and activist and her childlike enthusiasm.

Mutsaers arrived in Ostend from the Netherlands on a boat about 25 years ago. She is omnipresent in Ostend, easily recognisable by her bright red lipstick and energetic little fox terrier.

As a painter, she was part of the “New Figuration” movement of the 1960s and '70s, which returned from abstractions to figures but kept the expressionist language form. Her paintings seem closely linked to the playful yet not-completely-abstract work of Karel Appel. Absurdity and decidedly weird

objects, plants and people run through her work: rabbits, pine trees, mushrooms, cucumbers, Christmas trees and the sea find their place in both her paintings and her literature. She takes a stand in her work against the cooking of live animals like lobsters.

Mutsaers' produced her final series of paintings in 1990 to focus on writing. She has published several books in the nearly 20 years since.

The exhibition includes her life's work (*that's one of her paintings on our front cover*), favourite objects, pets, a reproduction of her workspace and pinpoints the biographical themes and issues that have shaped her work, both good and bad.

Her love for Ostend is evident in her last novel *Koetsier Herfst* (2008), in which she meticulously describes what it's like to arrive in Ostend by train, the market and the people of the fish stalls. This love has nothing to do with the local art scene, she says, but with city life in itself, that of the stubborn fishermen, the kitsch of the tourists, the elderly people in the tearooms and the continuous presence of the sea.

Searching for Eve

Another “washed-up” artist in Ostend is Frans Malschaert, a painter and sculptor who you can find at home at the Beau-Site art salon right on the esplanade. He single-handedly renovated the Art Deco building that houses his gallery, workspace, house and art salon-cum-café. To Malschaert, who refers to himself as a “technical engineer” or “artisan” rather than an artist, technical skills are very important.

His portraits are dynamic and vivid but also rather anatomical, something on which he prides himself. He is not a part of the “art gallery” scene but adores the city. “Unlike Knokke, where art is sold by the pound, Ostend is a city where art is made,” he says, adding, “Any kind of art. The city's atmosphere just oozes with art, even in the smallest shop window.” Originally from Knokke, in fact, he spent most of his life in Maastricht and Amsterdam. His latest project, “Searching for Eve,” involves a 19-metre-high arch (it's already been built with 380,000 kilos of steel in the port of Maastricht), on which three figures – a man, woman and child – meet on the arc. The piece, which will be shown in turn in the waters of Malschaert's three cities, symbolise what the cities mean to him: Ostend for survival, Maastricht for childbirth and Amsterdam for play.

He shows me the models in his workspace. Because he builds the figures from the inside out, with lifelike anatomical tissue, the space is full of skeletons, cables and bolts: very Doctor Frankenstein (and more than a little Ensor). But there's no gothic story behind it. Malschaert's work is a playful take on art and life, fuelled by the energy of the sea: “Even when I don't see her, I know the sea is always there, and she gives me the will to create. Birth and creation are very important in my work, and, to me, the sea symbolises both.” Although the city's cultural PR is still very focused “on the casino and the mega spectacles,” notes Zakia, Ostend continues to add to its cultural context, with the tri-annual Beaufort art installation festival, Theater aan zee and the new Ostend Film Festival. It also has plans to renovate its old post building as a centre for cultural non-profits.

As a whole, Ostend might just be ready to reach its goal of being known as a “city of culture” by the year 2012. ♦



Painter turned writer Charlotte Mutsaers is an outspoken advocate of Ostend's cultural heritage

Washed Up with Pen and Brush: Charlotte Mutsaers retrospective

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→ www.charlottemutsaers.nl

Where to find it all

Art residence Beau-Site
Vlaanderenstraat 45
→ www.malschaertvisualart.com

Vrijstaat 0 art centre
Zeedijk 10
→ www.vrijstaat-o.be

Mu.zée, Romestraat 11
→ www.pmmk.be

The Perfume of Ostend



A great way to discover James Ensor's Ostend is to do the audio walk, which is available at the tourist office for €7, together with an entry ticket to the artist's old house and the Mu.zée. You wander around Ensor's (and Permeke's and Spilliaert's) Ostend, through a maze of little streets and galleries. The walk is called “The Perfume of Ostend”, and the triangle of sound, smell and images make for a perfect intake of the city's atmosphere.

→ www.toerisme-oostende.be

The return of *De slimste mens*

Celebrity quiz unites presidents and professors for eighth season

ALAN HOPE

Quiz shows are a staple of TV and regularly draw large audiences the world over. But not many quiz shows can lay claim to having contestants who include the prime minister, the President of Europe and those two brothers out of Clouseau.

This week, on 7 December, sees the start of a new season of *De slimste mens ter wereld* (*The Smartest Person in the World*), which is guaranteed not only to keep the nation from staying out too late for the next few weeks but also to harvest countless column inches in every Flemish newspaper, with daily blow-by-blow accounts of the previous evening's events.

The format of the show on channel één is simple: three contestants per evening battle for two places in the next evening. (One new player comes in every night.) In the end, the three who performed the best come back for a final showdown. The questions are brain-teasers rather than straight-answer questions: we're looking for relationships or connections rather than rote knowledge. That approach allows the contestants, even if they don't know the answer, to nevertheless give a good account of themselves.

The host is Erik Van Looy, an award-winning film director (*Loft*), who appears to be having a ball. In the past, he's had a sidekick in the form of either egghead editorialist Marc Reynebeau (who once toured in a Roller with Johnny Rotten) or canon law professor Rik Torfs, both of whom offered commentary on the proceedings that managed to be both catty and waspish.

This year, the one-man sidekick has been replaced by a nine-member jury, featuring stand-up comedians Philippe Geubels and Gunter Lamoot, ex-minister Mark Eyskens, cartoonist Kamagurka, actor Frank Focketyn, Leuven mayor Louis Tobback, actress Sien Eggers, Humo editor emeritus Guy Mortier and comedy actor Urbanus.

Apparently, however, it's not the format that ensures the success: the same concept was tried in the Netherlands and Turkey, where it pretty much flopped. The show's popularity is really down to its extremely high BV content – *Bekende Vlamingen*, or well-known Flemish people. The level is extremely high and very diverse.

Top politicians who have taken part include new prime minister Yves Leterme, then-prime minister and Europe's new president Herman Van Rompuy, new foreign minister Steven Vanackere, Antwerp mayor Patrick Janssens, N-VA party leader Bart De Wever and Brussels mayor Freddy Thielemans, among many more. Notable by their absence: anyone from the current Flemish government, none of whom has ever taken part.

As well as politicians, the three contestant places are filled every evening by actors, comics, singers, TV presenters, journalists, writers and musicians.



Film director Erik Van Looy is back to host the eighth season of *De slimste mens ter wereld*

© Bart Mulschoot/WRT 2008

This year there's been some controversy over the lack of women in the jury: only one in nine. But Annelies Rutten, a journalist with *Het Nieuwsblad*, and to date the only woman to have won *De slimste mens*, in 2007, says the show is actually making progress. "There are now 10 women out of 28 candidates; in my year, there were only eight," she says. "I think Woestijnvis [the producer] does its best to find women candidates. You see quite a few women in other quizzes, too; the old cliché says that men are more competitive than women and more able to retain useless information. But while I was taking part in *De slimste mens*, I wasn't immune to the competition bug. If you're there, it's because you want to win."

Kristl Strubbe, meanwhile, TV presenter and alderperson in Mechelen, who took part in the 2004 season, thinks there is a bias. "It's a missed opportunity," she says. "There are so many smart women out there, with a great sense of humour. It strikes me that there's a certain 'jobs for the boys' aspect to Woestijnvis that plays a role here." Still, Strubbe admits that women might just have less of an interest in taking part in quiz shows than men. "I don't

know many women who feel the need to show off their general knowledge and fabulous memory."

This year includes second runs by actress Maaïke Cafmeyer, TV presenter Marcel Valhilt and top editor Peter Vandemeersch, as well as first tries from actor Koen De Graeve (*De helaasheid der dingen*), flu czar Marc Van Ranst and TV producer Bruno Wyndaele. It's a bit of a reunion for Wyndaele; he served as the host of the first season of the show.

Flanders Today's tip for the top: stand-up Wim Helsen. The jury this year includes three comedians, a comic actor and a cartoonist. More importantly, the series has been won twice by a stand-up comedian, once by a comic journalist and once by a comic actor. ♦

➔ www.deslimstemens.be

De slimste title

The first series of *De slimste mens* was won by Alain Grootaers (pictured), a former TV journalist and comic commentator, who now lives near Malaga in Andalucia, from where he takes off on regular world trips with his wife and daughter. Has winning the show brought him untold success?

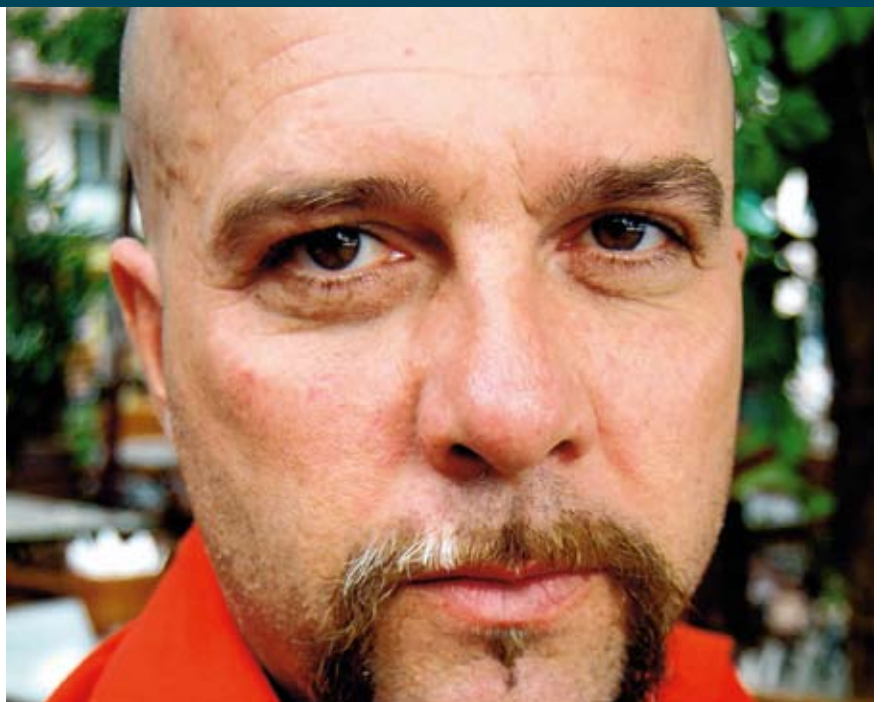
"In Flanders people don't like smart people, otherwise we wouldn't have the politicians we're stuck with," he tells me. "So when you win the show, everybody really hates you and smirks in cafés that you're not as smart as you think you are. Some people really do think that you actually believe yourself that you're the 'smartest person in the world'. It's just a silly show, with probably the smartest name in the history of game shows. If it weren't for the show, I would still be living in the south of Spain, but I would be having wine and

tapas now, instead of answering your questions." In *De Slimste Mens*, politicians play against sports personalities and journalists, comedians and actors. Above all, there's a high level of public participation. Perhaps the show could be turned into a new forum for democracy?

"Good idea," agrees Grootaers. "Let's make the winner of the show prime minister. It can't get worse than Leterme, and certainly would be a lot funnier." But people from certain professions never seems to take part. No scientists, doctors or top businessmen. On the other hand, there are plenty of journalists and politicians.

"I call *De slimste mens* ideal for idiot-savants, and a lot of them seem to be journalists," notes Grootaers. "I think most scientists are way too smart to read the papers or bother to memorise the capital of Madagascar. That's Antananarivo. It's stronger than me, sorry about that."

➔ www.nopasaran.be



Sharp rise in job losses

As DHL cuts jobs and Opel Antwerp struggles to survive, Peeters warns of worse to come

ALAN HOPE

Courier company DHL last week decided to pull its European headquarters out of Diegem, near Zaventem, with the loss of nearly 900 jobs. DHL, which is partly owned by Deutsche Post, had already moved a large part of its operation to Leipzig with the loss of more than 1,000 jobs, after political and legal pressure on noise nuisance caused by night flights. The world coordination centre moved from Diegem to Bonn in 2004.

DHL will maintain a local office in the Brussels area, but 523 people will be let go from the current head office in Diegem. A further 231 jobs will be lost at the sorting centre DHL Aviation, and 34 more at European Air Transport (EAT), which covers Europe and part of the Middle East and North Africa. Unions at DHL Aviation are already in discussions over 94 redundancies previously announced.

However, DHL stressed that the Brussels hub would remain an important part of the network, and the job losses would not affect the number of flights out of Brussels or the futures of crew and maintenance personnel.

After hearing the announcement, Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters immediately contacted DHL for talks. He later referred to an offer by the company for laid-off workers to move to jobs in Bonn, Leipzig and Prague as "an extraordinarily cynical message to the workers affected". In a newspaper interview at the weekend, Peeters regretted that the company had not consulted with his government before announcing its plans and said that "the economic motive for moving the headquarters from Brussels to Bonn completely escapes me."

Employers' organisation Voka said that the DHL decision was "a severe blow" to jobs in the Brussels region; one in



Exit strategy: DHL quits Diegem in surprise move

three of the employees in the logistics sector at Zaventem live in Brussels. Voka director-general Karel Lowette said that the government had made little use of its own "Start-plan" for Zaventem, which was intended to make the airport more economically diverse.

Peeters was also busy last week with another sensitive industrial dossier: the future of Opel Antwerp, following the decision by parent company General Motors (GM) not to sell its European business. Last week, GM Europe boss Nick Reilly said the future of the plant was still "uncertain".

Opel Antwerp is now focusing its efforts on winning a bid to manufacture two new SUVs in order to ensure the plant's survival. In April last year, then-CEO Carl-Peter Forster promised this deal, but GM has subsequently back-pedalled. Unions are now threatening legal

action if the SUV production – which they see as a firm commitment – does not materialise. Opel Antwerp employs 2,300 workers, and if the SUV production line comes to Antwerp, only 750 jobs will have to go.

"Following Opel and DHL, there will be other cases to come," Peeters told *De Standaard*. "The crisis in the labour market is a major one, and the worst is still to come. Flanders will lose 44,000 jobs in the next two years, and anyone who thought the economy would be business as usual is on the wrong track."

The solution, he said, was not to act defensively but to build economic policies to help create jobs – and carry those policies out. "The Start-plan exists," he said, before pointing out that the plan for airport development is at the moment at a standstill because of a pending legal objection from a family in Meise.

According to Jan Scheers of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), Belgium is likely to lose more head offices in the future. The reasons are political, fiscal and economic, but governments have paid little or no attention to warnings "because politicians are more concerned with themselves," he said. The tax system and the effect it has on wage costs, he continued, is of crucial importance.

The exodus of head offices is "the result of years of imbalances," according to economist Geert Noels. "Belgium thought it had a sort of natural right to certain activities, but that was simply an overestimate of its own powers of attraction. For a long time we were more attractive than other countries, but because of a variety of aspects, such as high costs, a change in market focus or social unrest, we lost that advantageous position," he said.

Peeters, who once headed the small business organisation Unizo, called for a plan to transform Flanders. "Flanders has gotten a little bit lazy and work-shy," he said. "We have to speed up the process of transforming our industry because we are competing with our neighbours, and we can't allow any more time to be lost."

• Meanwhile, talks between unions and management of chemicals company Bayer broke down last week when unions rejected new terms regarding restructuring. Bayer employs 842 people, but the Antwerp facility is competing with another Bayer factory in Urdingen, Germany, over how to achieve an annual cut of 200,000 tonnes in the production of polycarbonate, a common plastic that has suffered in recent years from a sharp fall in demand. Bayer Antwerp produces 230,000 tonnes, while Urdingen makes 300,000 tonnes a year. ♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Autos • Auto 5

The French-owned car maintenance and supplies company Auto 5 will open up to 19 additional garages in Belgium in the next five years. The company recently opened new outlets in Wilrijk and Herent.

Banking • Dexia

Dexia, the Belgo-French bank specialised in the financing of local authorities, is considering the sale of its activities in Italy, Spain, Slovakia, the US and the UK to reduce its balance sheet total to 50% and restore profitability. Rumours of a possible merger between Dexia and France's Société Générale have again surfaced.

Banking • Van Lanschot

Van Lanschot Bankiers, the Dutch private banking group, is said to be interested in developing its activities in Belgium, taking advantage of the decision of several local players to sell their private banking portfolios.

Biotech • Movetis

Movetis, the biotechnology affiliate of Janssen Pharmaceutica, will be floated on the stock market on 4 December, the largest IPO locally in the past two years. The company expects to raise up to €97 million. Janssen Pharmaceutica is owned by US-based Johnson and Johnson.

Healthcare • Agfa

Agfa Healthcare, the medical imaging affiliate of the Mortsel-based Agfa group, is to acquire the German Insight Agents company, specialised in contrast media development, for up to €10 million.

Mining • Nyrstar

Zinc processing and mining company Nyrstar is to close one of its French affiliates, GM Metal, and transfer production capacity to Balen, Antwerp province, its main production centre.

Supermarkets • Delhaize

Brussels-based supermarket group Delhaize, which has extensive activities in the US, has failed in its bid to acquire the South Carolina-based Bi-Lo retailer. Bi-Lo, which operates under Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings, needs new funds, but two investment groups have made offers believed to be higher than Delhaize's.

Telecoms • Mobistar

Mobistar, the Belgian affiliate of France Telecom and the country's second-largest mobile phone operator, has acquired the KPN's Belgium business activities and network for some €65 million.

Telecoms • Telenet

Telecommunication and TV cable company Telenet is opening an additional call centre in Herentals in February. The company already operates three such centres in Mechelen, Aalst and Sint-Truiden. The new facility will employ up to 100 people.



Staff at Opel Antwerp meet last week to find out GM's plans

The Twelve Days of Dance

Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker programmes a veritable history of contemporary dance in Bruges

ANNE JENKINSON

“I hate themes,” says Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker, a direct response to my question about what threads might be running through December Dance.

The Brussels dame of modern dance is the curator of this year's edition of the annual festival in Bruges. The programme includes well-known names such as De Keersmaecker's own company, Rosas, alongside less-established troupes, presenting contemporary dance inspired by everything from hip-hop to classical ballet, with earlier works showing one night, Belgian premières the next.

“I wanted to have a wide selection, with many performances of historical importance in order to offer a perspective of contemporary dance that helps people gain an intense and broad outlook,” says De Keersmaecker. All the choreographers and performances chosen take dance seriously, combining “craftsmanship and reflection” to create something new or different.

Works in the festival span several decades. The earliest is by American choreographer Trisha Brown. Her 1979 *Glacial Decoy* is part of a mixed bill that also includes a work from the 1990s and her 2009 piece, *L'amour au théâtre*.

One choreographer whose work De Keersmaecker had particularly hoped to include in the festival was Pina Bausch, who died in June this year. Before Bausch died, De Keersmaecker had gone to great lengths to secure one of her works – unfortunately without success. The programme does pay tribute to the German choreographer, however, through French choreographer Jérôme Bel's *Lutz Förster*, a solo work Bel created in honour of Förster, a dancer who worked with Bausch for many years.

De Keersmaecker's ideal festival programme would also have included a recent work by William Forsythe. Still, the American choreographer's *Artifact*, created in 1984 for the Frankfurt Ballet, is on the bill.



“Dance must question my reality”:
Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker

Aside from periods, styles of dance are also extremely varied. Bel's *The show must go on* is extravagant and rebellious, backed by the music of Queen, Tina Turner and other rock bands. Brazilian Bruno Beltrão uses the language of hip-hop and street dance as inspiration for his latest work *H3*. And then there are works that use classical music by composers like Bach, Beethoven and Jean-Philippe Rameau.

De Keersmaecker was approached about being

this year's festival curator by Samme Raeymaecker, the artistic coordinator of December Dance. “My first reaction was ‘I’m a choreographer, not a programme planner,’” she says. “But a festival is an exceptional opportunity to bring together work by choreographers and creators who are close to your heart and share them with an audience.”

It also allows you to include repertoire that would be much more difficult to fit into normal programming during the year, which is what makes December Dance so valuable for an audience.

De Keersmaecker's own work is also part of December Dance; her latest piece *The Song* will be performed, and De Keersmaecker herself will dance in *Rosas danst Rosas*, the production that launched her company in 1983.

This new performance of a piece created more than a quarter-century ago ties in directly with De Keersmaecker's idea of bringing together historical performances, enabling today's audience and dancers to look back and see how the work fits into the history of contemporary dance. It also allows spectators to reflect on then and now and how things have changed in the intervening time.

“The performance obviously has traces of 1983, of everything that happened at that time. But I do not think that the piece has lost its relevance,” the choreographer says. “Our perception obviously changes over 25 years. The world is no longer the same, and you cannot clear your head of all that has happened in dance during that time.”

De Keersmaecker has also put her imprint on the festival's programme by including students, past and present, from PARTS (Performing Arts Research and Training Studios), the dance school she set up almost 15 years ago. Current students will dance as part of December Dance Platform on 5 and 6 December, while former students Charlotte Vanden Eynde and Salva Sanchis will present their own work.



Flemish dancer Eva Dewaele performs in William Forsythe's timeless *Artifact* during December Dance

When De Keersmaecker looks at a dancer or performance, she is searching for several things. “A good dancer is someone who combines natural expression and sharp reflection and an extremely articulated physicality.” A good performance needs to have an interaction between the performer and the audience, allowing communication in both directions, she says. “A performance that uses dance as a tool to reveal other things, questions my reality and expresses a desire for change is a good dance performance to me.”

December Dance also features debates, film, a photo exhibition and a seminar for dance professionals. There will be an opportunity to hear more about De Keersmaecker's views when, along with other artists, she speaks at a forum on the final day of the festival.

In between everything else, De Keersmaecker hopes to catch some of the performances. She will be seeing some of the works for the first time because they hadn't had their premières when she chose them. What will the curator herself be attending?

“I'll be looking out for the new work from Nature Theater of Oklahoma and for Charlotte Vanden Eynde,” she says. “And I haven't even seen *Self Unfinished* by Xavier Le Roy yet. And then there's Jérôme Bel's *Lutz Förster*...well, the whole programme really. It will be an intense period in Bruges.”

And that's exactly how a relationship with dance should be. ♦

December Dance

Until 13 December

Across Bruges

→ www.decemberdance.be

Life is good for you

A show of little-known work by the world's leading photographers in Antwerp

SAFFINA RANA

There's a small collection of gems hidden behind the Grote Markt in Antwerp: 24 prints that have graced the likes of the Guggenheim Museum in New York and Fondation Cartier in Paris line the walls of an unassuming gallery at number 20 Zirkstraat.

The photographers are some of the most internationally-reputed of the 20th century, and you're bound to recognise their names: from William Klein and Garry Winogrand, to Seydou Keita, Irving Penn and Diane Arbus. But the images on show aren't their most ubiquitous or their most celebrated. In fact, you probably won't have seen them before. And devoid of any explanatory notes or anecdotes alongside, at first glance this small collection can appear rather underwhelming.

But take your time, and you'll be rewarded with an intriguing glimpse into human nature and the past. My absolute favourite is a black-and-white shot taken by William Klein in New York that hangs opposite the gallery's door and packs an immediate punch. The menacing face of a small boy juts out above the blurred barrel of a gun pointed directly at you, and a little girl behind him turns around to look, her face contorted in fear.

It's an aggressive moment, a showdown between camera and firearm, full of melodrama. The lines between child's play and reality are blurred, and it depicts a lesson in violence learned in childhood.

Klein captured this moment on the streets of Manhattan in 1955, revisiting where he had grown up nearly 30 years before, a poor Jewish boy in an Irish neighbourhood. It was his first trip back after living it up in Paris, spending his post-war years studying at the Sorbonne and painting. Encouraged in Paris by the painter Fernand Leger to reject conformity, Klein went in search of the rawest of images. His gritty snapshots documenting New York street life shocked the sleek aesthetics of the establishment, not only with their content, but also with their appearance. They were often blurred or out of focus, taken at a wide angle and using fast film, resulting in a grainy appearance.

They were considered crude and earned Klein such a bad reputation that no one would touch his work in the US. "They all said, 'This is shit, this is not New York, we can't publish this!' and I didn't get anywhere," he says in an interview with critic Jared Rapfogel for the magazine *Cinéaste* in September of last year.

Klein took his photos back to Paris. Championed by filmmaker Chris Marker, they were published in 1956 by Editions du Seuil, where Marker was an editor, after he threatened to resign over the issue. The book, entitled *New York (Life is good and good for you in New York)*, went on to win the Nadar photography

prize the same year and set Western photography on a new course. Klein went on to shoot for *Vogue* and to become a filmmaker.

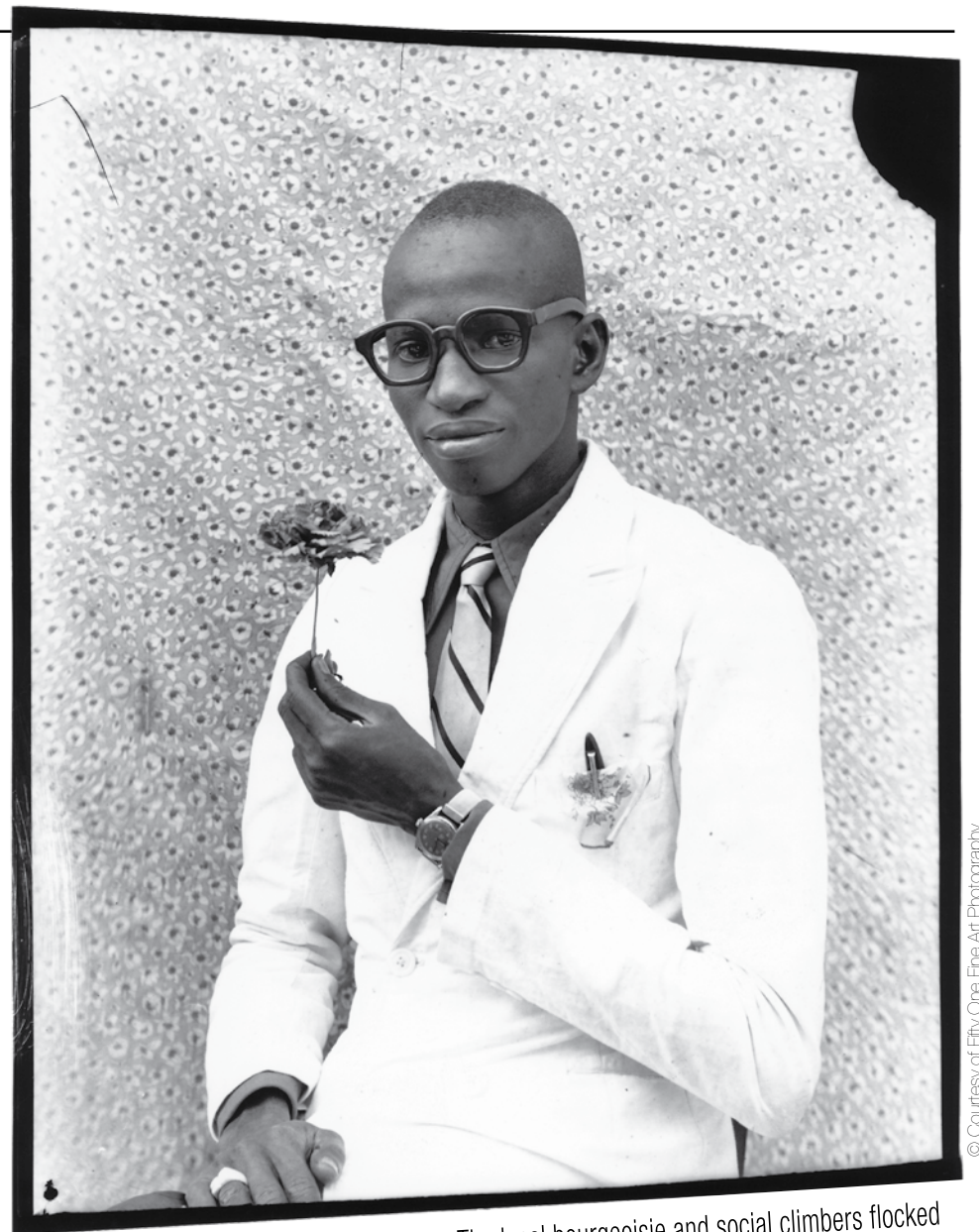
Garry Winogrand was also a native New Yorker and born the same year as Klein, 1928. He became a compulsive chronicler of American life and is particularly revered for his street photography of the 1960s and '70s. He'd roam the alleys of New York, looking for human drama and rapidly shooting off roll after roll of film. Producing endless superlative shots, Winogrand developed an eye for capturing the tragicomic narratives of everyday life that were played out on the streets.

His one photograph in the collection is a good example and comes from a series published in 1975 entitled *Women are Beautiful*. A man stands talking to a young woman dressed in fishnet tights and a short all-in-one jersey in the middle of the street. He's obviously interested in her, leaning in, perhaps trying to chat her up. Although animated in conversation, her body language is more ambiguous as she stands with one arm crossed over her abdomen. Close to us in the foreground, an older woman with sunglasses passes by, appearing to comment on the situation behind her.

Winogrand would often wait years before developing his film. On his death in 1984, he left more than 2,500 rolls of undeveloped film – a total of 432,000 photos he took but never saw.

In contrast, Croatian-born Frank Horvat is famous for holding back and refusing the images he doesn't want. This is not only to save on film but to let the image he wants to see take shape. His photograph in the basement of the gallery is one such lyrical moment, capturing pedestrians dodging through the mayhem of traffic on the Champs Elysées in Paris, 1956.

Seydou Keita's portrait of an elegant young guy poised with a flower (pictured) induces an immediate smile. Keita was a legend in Mali 30 years before his work was ever introduced to the West in



© Courtesy of Fifty One Fine Art Photography

the 1990s. The local bourgeoisie and social climbers flocked to his studio to have their portraits taken.

In this one, taken in Bamako in 1959, the young man's jaunty oversized glasses, gold ring, striped tie and white blazer with a fountain pen and handkerchief protruding from the breast pocket playfully suggest a high-performing graduate with a decadent secret lifestyle.

But since Keita provided a myriad of props for his sitters, we will never really know how true that suggestion is. ♦

Masters of Photography

Until 16 January
Fifty One Fine Art Photography
Zirkstraat 20, Antwerp

→ www.gallery51.com

WORKING IT



The third edition of an exciting, if sporadic, Brussels festival

KATRIEN LINDEMANS

I Need a Witness to Perform, *How to Spell a Piece* and *A Brave Search for Reality* are only three of the 20-something intriguing titles that are part of what makes this Brussels performance festival unique.

The other part is what all the performers of Working Title #3 have in common: they are all homeless. Well, in a manner of speaking. They are all associated with Workspace Brussels (WSB), an organisation that supports artists by finding them a space to work on their own productions. This usually comes with basic equipment, advice and a platform for communication and presentation.

WSB is affiliated with a wide range of European partners and attracts a varied mix of artists in the capital. At any given time, at least 15 artists are ready to perform (with finished or in-progress works) and a Working Title festival is organised to show their work to the public. Because artists work outside a structured company or group, their work is often very personal, experimental, risky – or all three.

For this third edition, *Ultima Vez* – the Brussels-based contemporary dance company of Flemish choreographer Wim

Vandekeybus – teamed up with WSB and introduces the work of eight young international dancers. These dancers belong to Le Jardin d'Europe, a coalition of European dance institutions that organised a dance festival for upcoming talent last year in Vienna.

Those performances are now also part of Working Title #3. A professional jury will award the best of those with the Prix Jardin d'Europe on the final day of the festival. The Critical Endeavour Project will further fund all performances reviewed by a group of young European journalists, coached by professional dance critics Pieter T'Jonck and Anna Tilroe.

And, possibly the best news for you: tickets to performances are never more than €5, when they cost anything at all. ♦

Working Title #3

3-12 December
Across Brussels

→ www.workspacebrussels.be



Flemish-Brabant & Leuven, one big painting

Scattered all over the world, and now temporarily united in M, the brand new museum in Leuven: more than 100 unique works by and about Rogier van der Weyden. And there is much more to see in Leuven, the capital of Flemish Brabant. In this student city you will find a rich cultural heritage, the beautiful beguinage and the oldest university of the Low Lands. Moreover, Leuven is an excellent operating base from which to discover the rest of Flemish Brabant, with its breathtaking scenery and delicious regional cuisine.

For more information please go to www.leuven.be/welcome



Cost-cutting panic or investments in human capital?

In times like these, where we have to do more with less, there are two types of managers. **Those who cut costs** across the board, and **those who even now choose to continue to invest** prudently. Which type are you? The financial crisis and the uncertain economic situation are confronting managers with new challenges, but all too often they are also driving them to take decisions that are infused with panic and doom-and-gloom. But the ones who are forward-thinking and keep to their own course don't slam on the brakes – instead, they invest in the future.

Knowledge determines your competitive power

An organisation that wants to maintain and strengthen its competitive position in the global economy must be powered by a well-oiled knowledge engine. Your workforce is your greatest capital and lifelong learning is an absolute necessity. The acquired knowledge flows back into your company and your knowledge capital grows larger and larger, increasing your competitiveness. This will keep you competitive in the rapidly changing economic context. We call this 'learning with impact'.

Investing in training: costs versus benefits

Too often, training is still regarded as a cost instead of an investment. However, companies that view their personnel policy from a strategic standpoint continue – even when the economy becomes a serious challenge – to invest in training programmes for their most strategic employees. Investing in talent and training now guarantees you a significant jump on the competition when the economy gets going again.

Vlerick, your partner in tailor-made training programmes

Those who have participated in a Vlerick training programme are undoubtedly better prepared than other employees to take on today's challenges. Via in-company programmes – focused on the development of individual employees as well as on organisational development – Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School offers you a collaborative project fully tailored to your needs. Thanks to in-depth knowledge of both local and international economic environments and years of

experience in training management talent, the School can develop a specially adapted management training programme for every organisation, in each phase of its development, targeting the most diverse aspects of its business.

More info on our management programmes?

Consult www.vlerick.be



**Vlerick Leuven Gent
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Larger than life

The first comedian to ever play Lotto Arena, Els de Schepper takes on vanity projects and gossip rags in her new one-woman show

STÉPHANIE DUVAL

Even if the name Els De Schepper doesn't ring a bell, chances are her wisecracking smile and flaming red hair will seem familiar. After all, Flanders' queen of comedy has been around for almost 20 years now and is currently staging her 10th one-woman show, *Els de Schepper Roddelt!* (*Els de Schepper Gossips!*).

Never one to enter a room quietly, she promoted the new show by publishing a magazine called *Els*, a spoof of one-name magazines centred around celebrity (such as *Oprah* or *Goedele*). Aside from placing a scratch-off patch right over her bare rump on the cover, she made sure to include herself on every single page.

It was a satirical performance, which is what De Schepper does best. She has acted in Flemish television series, written two books and even sang as part of the Belgian pre-selections for the Eurovision Song Festival three years ago. A creative busy body, to be sure, but it's the live performances her fans are lining up to see – exceptionally enthusiastic fans at that.

The magazine promo was also a clever intro to the subject of her show. This time out, De Schepper talks about gossip. She even gossips a little herself, though mostly about herself. It's typical of a comedian to be self-effacing, but very few succeed in doing so with a hearty laugh rather than dark cynicism. De Schepper does, easily, because she is genuinely fun. She also admits to being the slightest bit insane, so we shouldn't be surprised when, during her show, De Schepper's multiple personalities all get their say.

We tried to pin one of them down for an interview.

How well do we get to know the real Els de Schepper when we see you on stage?

You'll get to know me more than if I were an actress playing a role. I write my own shows, and I write from my own experience, about what touches me. You'll get to know a certain side of me.

You tell a lot about yourself in your books. *Het heeft zin* (*It Makes Sense*) and *De ziel die haar naam uitkoos* (*The Soul Who Chose Her Own Name*) are two very personal accounts about your search for meaning.

Those books were a conscious choice to reveal more about myself. They gave me the opportunity to explain what I want to say, to place it in a context. That is something gossip magazines don't do; they are about polarising. I use that in my show, too, but I use polarisation to bring nuance. In my shows, I look at a subject from every angle, and I allow people to choose for themselves how to think about something.

Do you feel it is your responsibility to address difficult subjects and add a moral to your shows?

No. But it's stronger than myself. I always put something in there. With *Roddelt!* I start with "gossiping is healthy" and I end with "speak through your heart". I live between two poles, and I want to shed light on every aspect in between.

Communication is the main theme of this show, and we see you parading on stage in outfits expressing different words. How important is language to you?

Even when I was a kid, I was always writing little stories. And

I love dialects! I've had many discussions with our director about my dialect. I don't speak perfect Dutch, but should I? I think it's a little cold, distant, and that's the opposite of what I want. My shows should create a feeling of "us" between the audience and me. I talk about things I hope people will recognise. So we decided I should speak Flemish. And my team and I are still always very conscious of every word, every sentence. We can go on for hours. There will be something wrong with a sentence grammatically, but I'll insist on keeping it because of the rhythm or because a certain word better expresses what I want to say. Language and words are like music to me, and a show is a score.

Do you speak other languages?

Even when I listen to the radio in the car, I always choose a channel that has a lot of talking. I like listening to other languages: English, German, French... I don't speak them fluently, but I like their rhythm, and I try to learn new words. I'm furious with the cable company for not broadcasting BBC's subtitles anymore. Now how am I supposed to learn new words?

During *Roddelt!* I almost got the feeling I was in a *Cirque du Soleil* production because of the sometimes magical combination of music, clowns and absurdist images.

I'm a big fan of René Magritte, so the touch of magical realism, the absurd, it's definitely inspired by him. I've also always been the clown with two sides: happy and sad. I've always combined those feelings. And I'm lucky to be able to combine singing and speaking. Not a lot of comedians can do that. So I'm able to express different sides of myself.

Your shows tend to have a very intimate atmosphere, which was perhaps easier to achieve in smaller venues than the Lotto Arena, where *Roddelt!* premiered last month.

I usually perform before 1,000 to 2,000 people. This was the first time in front of such a big audience, and it was the first time ever a comedian performed in a concert hall in Belgium. But I think the Lotto Arena was the ideal venue for this. Everyone is still relatively close to the stage. And the funny thing is, after the shows I got lots of comments from people who said they felt closer to me than ever because of the big screens we put up next to the stage. The camera zoomed in on me, so everyone saw me in way more detail than ever!

Now that you are performing your 10th one-woman show, are you looking back on your career?

I don't look back that often. I don't like to watch myself. I tend to be overly critical and perfectionist, and I always go "Oh my god, I looked so good, and back then I thought I didn't!" [laughs] But I do see a big evolution. I work on my jokes more now. And I have gained a lot more self-confidence. The ingredients stay the same: I'm interested in the little things, the everyday. I don't think about the big currents, I think about the little stories, which I then try to turn into a universal story. ♦

Els de Schepper Roddelt!

Until March 2010

Across Flanders

➡ www.elsdeschepper.eu



Friendly faux

While animal rights group GAIA ships its alternative out for the holidays, a foie gras producer in West Flanders wonders what all the fuss is about

COURTNEY DAVIS

Foie gras, French for “fat liver”, is made from the cooked liver of a duck or goose that has been specifically fattened – and it gets hearts racing. From the culinary die-hards who wax poetic at its mention to the animal lovers who are appalled at the thought of it, foie gras rarely gets a middle-of-the-road response.

Buttery and delicious, the famous flavour seems too good to be true. And in some ways it is: to get such a rich and decadent meat, one has to force feed the duck an excess of food for an extended period of time – a process known as gavage – so that the liver is engorged, enlarged and fatty.

This process has many people, and not just vegetarians, opposed to eating or buying foie gras. Banned from production in a number of EU countries and the recipient of the ire of animal rights groups across the globe, foie gras persists in Belgium’s culinary traditions despite the disdain from neighbouring countries Germany, the UK and the Netherlands.

Belgium not only eats foie gras but also produces it, placing it among few countries in the world that do so, including France, Spain, Hungary and China.

Filip Callemeyn and his wife, Veerle Van Dousselaere, have been making foie gras in Bekegem, West Flanders, for exactly 20 years. “Our little village is now known by our foie gras; people come from all over the country to buy it,” says Callemeyn.

Originally from a family of cow and pig farmers, Callemeyn chose to specialise in foie gras production after taking courses in France. Bekegemse Foie Gras covers every aspect of production, with the couple overseeing more than 30,000 ducks a year.

They receive 1,200 day-old Mallard ducklings every two weeks. The ducks

stay under a heat lamp for a couple of weeks and then wander the farm for the next three months. Grass and grain fed during that period, Callemeyn begins to ready the ducks for the infamous gavage by only feeding grains at certain times, encouraging the bird’s natural inclination to binge.

Up to this point, the ducks have had a pretty good life. But their last two weeks are staunchly different.

Ducks are placed in small, individual cages and force fed twice a day. That means 600 feedings an hour, or about 10 birds a minute. Callemeyn starts out with smaller amounts and gradually increases to 350 grams twice a day – a little more than 10% of their body weight.

The cages prevent movement so the ducks can gain weight, and they also facilitate the feeding process, which increases production. On 1 January, 2011, a European ban against cages goes into effect. This means that Callemeyn will have to go into a pen with a stool and hand pick each duck to feed it, significantly delaying the process.

He also says the requirement will increase the stress of the bird. “We don’t let visitors come to see our ducks because they are easily stressed. They know who we are and are comfortable with us. I imagine when I come in to the pen and have to chase a duck to feed it, all the remaining ducks will be scared and running away.”

“Plus, ducks are aggressive and fight each other. Geese are social birds and can go in communal pens but ducks are not meant to socialize in groups. Not having cages seems like it will increase the stress for the ducks.”

When asked if gavage stresses the birds, Van Dousselaere says she doesn’t think so, but it is obvious they are tired of the questions. They shake their heads at the mention of the vid-

eos showing gavage, indicating that only the most disturbing images are shown and feature outdated methods and instruments. For them, there really is no issue.

“You can’t compare a duck to a human. Ducks don’t have a gag reflex and are built to gorge. We stimulate a natural process that occurs every fall,” says Callemeyn. He is referring to ducks and geese natural tendency to overeat in the autumn months to ready their bodies for the harsh winter and migration ahead. Gavage, of course, makes foie gras available year round.

Foie gras for the 21st century

Eduardo Sousa, a farmer in Spain, is attempting to change the playing field of foie gras by producing it without gavage. The topic of a talk by famous New York chef Dan Barber on the TED website, word is spreading of the farmer who makes foie gras only after the birds have naturally gorged.

This solution has Belgium’s animal rights organisation GAIA completely satisfied. “If gavage stops, we stop,” says GAIA director Ann De Greef. “In 2011, the cages will be eliminated through the EU’s recommendation. The only other aspect of foie gras that we disagree with is the gavage. We are not interested in if people eat meat or not. We care about how the animals are raised, and we think gavage is torture.”

In response to the ongoing feeding practice, GAIA launched an alternative to foie gras called, cutely, faux gras. Last year 3,500 tins were created and sold within a week of production, despite a lack of distributor. This year, they are taking the campaign up a notch, producing 30,000 tins and distributing them through Carrefour, Lidl and a number of bio shops for the holiday season.



Filip Callemeyn and Veerle Van Dousselaere have made Bekegem synonymous with foie gras

“We have worked since the existence of GAIA against foie gras,” says De Greef. “We are happy to make an alternative; if it replaces a single foie gras purchase, it is a victory for animal rights.”

A victory for animals, but not likely to convince foie gras fans. The tin (€3.99) opens to reveal a pasty, peach-coloured pâté with a distinct difference in smell and texture from foie gras. Faux gras tastes a bit sweet, with a clove and cinnamon dessert-like flavour to it. While creamy, it simply isn’t foie gras.

The concept is appealing, but no foie gras lover would be satisfied, so it’s hard to see how it slows the sale of the real thing.

Truth be told, foie gras persists because there isn’t anything quite like its melt-in-your-mouth delicacy, and there lies the conundrum. It’s a dish so reliably good that Belgium’s best restaurants feature it on their menus, including both Flanders’ triple Miche-



A goose being force fed on a farm in France

lin-starred restaurants: Karmeliet in Bruges has a €52 marble of goose liver with sweet and sour vegetables and green apple jelly starter, and Hof Van Cleve in Kruishoutem has a main course of wild pheasant with celeriac and foie gras for €75. ♦

Bekegemse Foie Gras

The Bekegemse Foie Gras recipe is simple: duck liver, salt and pepper. Their secret to making Belgium’s favourite foie gras is in the cooking time and temperature. Products are cooked at a lower temperature, making them extremely rich and creamy. But not long lasting – unlike French versions in tins or glass, this foie gras is shrink wrapped and should be eaten within a week. The Bereide Eendenlever (ready-to-eat duck liver) is €85.10 a kilo, and they recommend about 50 grams per person, served with an onion confit or their own port jelly and paired with a sweet white wine.

Or buy Faux Gras, the only alternative on the market, offered by animal rights group GAIA. While it doesn’t taste remotely the same, it is 100% guilt free.

→ www.fauxgras.be

→ www.bekegemsefoiegras.be





Into the Light

SAFFINA RANA

If you're bored of the same old municipal Christmas lights being switched on year after year, get over to south Antwerp and check out the light shows and open-air installations that a collection of 19 Belgian and international artists are offering the city.

Look up at the trees outside the Museum of Fine Arts on Leopold De Waelplaats, and, instead of fairy lights, you'll find brightly-lit neon slogans hanging from their branches. They have been made especially for the occasion by Swiss artist Marie José Burki, who lives in Brussels. The branches will be posing neon questions like, *How is it when I'm not here?* By offering up these philosophical musings to passersby, perhaps Burki is wryly alluding to advertising slogans and posters that generally fill public spaces such as this.

Catch the slightly macabre animated geometrical figures of Antwerp artist Bart Stolle hugging the windows of Zeno X Gallery at number 16 De Wael-

plaats. Or become disoriented by the peal and reverberation of a myriad of contemporary and medieval bells, a sound and video installation on the square by Antwerp artist Cel Crabeels.

Although designed to counteract the lack of daylight during the darkest days of the year, the show also continues indoors at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of Contemporary Art (M HKA) and the five participating galleries that lie between the two.

A number of film screenings also join the anti-traditionalist fun. The première of Brussels filmmaker Nicholas Provost's new short film *Long live the new flesh* will run continually between 19.00 and 22.00 on 2 December at Cinema Zuid. Provost merges distinct moments from old horror films to tell another gruesome tale beyond the violence on screen.

On 12 December, it will be the turn of the poetic short *Apolo-*

Shaun Gladwell (*pictured*), which combines anonymous bikers in the Australian outback and road kill kangaroos with Shamanistic apology and burial rituals.

Until 12 December

In and around the
Museum of Fine Arts and
the Museum of Contemporary Art (M HKA)
Antwerp

→ www.errorne.be



Antwerp

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40, www.deroma.be
DEC 3 20.30 Guido Belcanto, Vitali, Lady Angelina and Martinus Wolf

Petrol

Herbouvillekaai 21; 03.226.49.63, www.petrolclub.be
DEC 5 22.00 Absynthe Minded, Landfill, Discobar à moeder, Nils Holgerffun, Louis Katorz

Rataplan

Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
DEC 3 20.30 The Bony King of Nowhere

Sportpaleis

Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345, www.sportpaleis.be
DEC 4-18 16.00/20.30 Clouseau Speciale
DEC 6 20.00 Placebo

Trix

Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00, www.trixonline.be
DEC 2 19.00 Satyricon + Shining + Negura Bunget + Dark Fortress **DEC 3** 20.00 Engineers + Deadsets **DEC 4** 19.30 US Bombs + The Heartaches + Reno Divorse + The Unsubs **DEC 5** 19.00 Isis + Circle + Keelhaul 20.00 Emily Jane White + Isbells **DEC 6** 19.00 Sonata Arctica

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24, www.abconcerts.be
Concerts at 20.00:
DEC 2 Axelle Red **DEC 3** Naomi Shelton and the Gospel Queens. Lynn Verlayne (free) **DEC 3** Daan **DEC 4-5** The Moon Invaders **DEC 5** Nekkawedstrijd: de finale (in Dutch) **DEC 7** Coca-Cola Sessions: Lucy Lucy! + Bikinians **DEC 9** Thought Forms + Beak

Beursschouwburg

August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be
DEC 5 19.30 And So I Watch You From Afar

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89, www.fuse.be
DEC 5 23.00 Psychogene. DEG-Pierre

Indigo Studios

Van Volxemlaan 388; 02.534.75.72, www.indigostudios.be
DEC 7 20.30 Indigo Sessions with Stéphane Mercier & Coco Royal

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.226.12.57
Concerts at 20.00:
DEC 2 Brightblack Morning Light. Emily Jane White **DEC 3** The Field **DEC 5** Julian Plenti. William Fitzsimmons **DEC 6** Horse Feathers + Wildbirds & Peacedrums **DEC 7** CASS McCOMBS **DEC 8** Pep's. The Sore Losers + Hulk **DEC 9** The Temper Trap **DEC 10** Nits. Hallo Kosmo

VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07, www.vkconcerts.be
DEC 2 20.00 Vernal Veinyard + Living Colour
DEC 6 20.00 Fireworks + Broadway Calls + Set Your Goals

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991
DEC 8 20.00 Superbus
DEC 9 20.00 Akon, with Cardinal Offishall and Colby O Donis
DEC 10-12 20.00 André Rieu

Ghent

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01, www.handelsbeurs.be
DEC 5 20.30 Kraakpand 4.5 featuring Horse Feathers, Sukilove, Manngold and

GET YOUR
TICKETS NOW!

Jamie Cullum

9 June, 2010; 20.00
Vorst Nationaal
Brussels

It might seem premature, but we assure you it isn't. If you want to see jazz wonder boy Jamie Cullum at Vorst-Nationaal next June, we suggest you reserve by the end of the year. And you won't be sorry. Whether or not you are even familiar with his addictive blend of alt-rock and jazz, Cullum is simply one of the best entertainers on the planet. His youthful, playboy look as he pounds on the keyboard or sprints across the stage in jacket and tennis shoes or jumps from the top of his grand piano, which he happens to play with the precision of a master – it all comes together for one of the most energising nights you'll spend next summer.



→ www.vorstnationaal.be

Federico Aubele

DEC 10 20.00 Frank Vander Linden

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060, www.vooruit.be
DEC 6 20.30 The Mars Volta
DEC 8 20.00 Brightblack Morning Light + Cass McCombs

Hasselt

Muziekodroom

Bootsstraat 9; www.muziekodroom.be
DEC 5 20.30 Ricky Warwick + Therapy?
DEC 6 20.00 Duysteravond with William Fitzsimmons
DEC 10 20.30 Boyd Small Band

Kortrijk

De Kreun

Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44, www.dekreun.be
Concerts at 20.00:
DEC 4 Chali 2NA **DEC 5** Anti-Pop Consortium: Thavius Beck + DJ Afrojaws + rockumentary Out of Focus **DEC 6** The Maple Room + Rentokil + A Wilhelm Scream **DEC 10** Porn + The Melvins + DJ Rock4

Leuven

Het Depot

Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
Concerts at 20.00:
DEC 3 Múm + Ansatz der Maschine
DEC 10 The Raveonettes

Stuk

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20, www.stuk.be

MORE INSTALLATIONS THIS WEEK

Faux Jumeaux (False Twins) → SMAK, Ghent

Ann Veronica Janssens: Serendipity → Wiels, Brussels

Don't Feed the Artist → Hallen van Schaarbeek, Brussels

DEC 10-11 22.30 Slapwel Records label night: Steinbrüchel + Peter Broderick + Wouter van Veldhoven

Ostend

Kursaal (Casino)
Monacoplein 2; 070.22.56.00,
www.kursaalooostende.be
DEC 4 15.00 Axelle Red
DEC 5 20.00 Natalia



Antwerp

Arenbergschouwburg
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192,
www.arenbergschouwburg.be
DEC 2 20.15 Bansuricollectif

Buster
Kaasrui 1; 03.232.51.53,
www.busterpodium.be
DEC 2 21.00 Jazz jam hosted by Natasha Kelly

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,
www.desingel.be
DEC 2 20.00 Craig Taborn Trio

Bruges

De Werf
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29,
www.dewerf.be
DEC 7 20.30 Simon Nabatov Quintet

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24,
www.abconcerts.be
DEC 8 20.00 Marcus Miller: Tutu revisited

Jazz Station
Leuvensesteenweg 193-195; 02.733.13.78
DEC 2 20.30 Gare au Jazz: There is an Eiffel There
DEC 5 20.30 Pieter Claus Quartet

Le Bar du Matin
Alsebergsesteenweg 172; 02.537.71.59,
http://bardumatin.blogspot.com
DEC 4 21.00 Erik Rico

Sounds Jazz Club
Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50,
www.soundsjazzclub.be
Concerts at 22.00:
DEC 2 Caribe con K, Los Soneros des barrio, Caribbean **DEC 3** Marc Demuth & Sofia Ribeiro Duo **DEC 4** Stéphane Mercier Quartet **DEC 5** MP4 **DEC 7** Master Session **DEC 8** Sylvain Luc Solo **DEC 9** Chamaquiando, salsa **DEC 10** 21.00 The Singer's Night

Théâtre 140
Eugène Plaskyalaan 140; 02.733.97.08,
www.theatre140.be
DEC 2 20.30 Zaza Fournier and Claire Denamur

The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45,
www.themusicvillage.com
DEC 2 20.30 Dapoerka **DEC 3** 20.30 The Chris Joris Quartet with Eric Person **DEC 4** 21.00 Rey Cabrera Trio de Voces **DEC 5** 21.00 The New Orleans Roof Jazzmen **DEC 9** 20.30 Lennart Van Praet Trio **DEC 10** 20.30 Bloody Mary with drummer Anne Pacey

Ghent

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01,
www.handelsbeurs.be
DEC 3 20.15 Bart Defoort & Emanuele Cisi Quintet + Pascal Schumacher Quartet

Vooruit
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060,
www.vooruit.be
DEC 8 20.00 Moker



Antwerp

Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28,
www.amuz.be
DEC 6 15.00 Ghada Shbeir (Lebanon)

De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40,
www.deroma.be
DEC 5 20.30 Assunta Mano (Italy)

Brussels

Art Base
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20,
www.art-base.be
DEC 4 20.00 Ambertango, tango

Espace Senghor
Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40,
www.senghor.be
DEC 4 20.30 Tony Allen (Nigeria), Afrobeat

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,
www.flagey.be
DEC 5 20.15 Christina Branco, flamenco

Stekerlapatte
Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81,
www.stekerlapatte.be
DEC 3 20.00 Zongora
DEC 10 20.00 Eric Bribosia

Théâtre 140
Eugène Plaskyalaan 140; 02.733.97.08,

www.theatre140.be
DEC 2 20.30 Zaza Fournier and Claire Denamur



Antwerp

Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28,
www.amuz.be
DEC 4 21.00 HERMESensemble & Capella di Voce conducted by Koen Kessels: Wim Henderickx, Karel Goeyvaerts, Giacinto Scelsi

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,
www.desingel.be
Concerts at 20.00:
DEC 3 Rotterdam Philharmonic conducted by Christoph Meier, with Ekatarina Gubanova, mezzo: Wagner **DEC 4** Juliane Banse, soprano; Martin Helmchen, piano: Schubert **DEC 5** Loutten Compagny/Capella Angelica conducted by Wolfgang Katschner, with Heidi Maria Taubert, soprano; Christoph Prégardien, tenor: Bertali, Rosenmüller, Buxtehude, more **DEC 9** Pavel Haas Quartet with Veronika Jaruskova and Eva Karova, violin; Pavel Nikl, viola; Peter Jarusek, cello: Schubert, Sjostakovitsj, Smetana

Queen Elisabeth Hall
Koningin Astridplein 26; 0900.26.060,
www.fccc.be
DEC 4 20.00 deFilharmonie conducted by Jaap van Zweden: Brahms **DEC 5** 20.00 Il Fondamento conducted by Paul Dombrecht: Händel **DEC 9** 20.00 Orchestre d'Auvergne conducted by Arie van Beek, with Anna Kasyan, soprano: Handel

Brussels

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be
DEC 2 21.00 Addio, mio dolce amor: Puccini opera arias **DEC 3** 12.30 Baudoin Giaux, flute; Bram Nolf, oboe; Roeland Hendrickx and Ivo Hadermann, horn; Luc Loubry, bassoon: Haydn, Reicha, Jongen, more 20.00 deFilharmonie conducted by Jaap van Zweden, with François-Frédéric Guy, piano: Franck **DEC 4** 20.00 Music for Pleasure and Les Plaisirs Symphoniques orchestras, La Badinerie and Il Diletto Vocale choruses conducted by Daniel Lipnik, with Aurélie Moreels and Inez Carsauw, soloists: Pergolesi, Mendelssohn, Cherubini (benefit concert; www.louvaindev.org) **DEC 7** 20.00 Marinsky Chorus conducted by Andrei Petrenko: Rachmaninov, Russian folksongs and

Christmas songs

Espace Senghor
Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40,
www.senghor.be
DEC 5 20.15 Fabio Schinazi and Alice di Piazza, piano: 19th- and 20th-century Russian music

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,
www.flagey.be
DEC 3 20.15 Ictus Ensemble: Michael Levinas (One.Only.One concert)

Miniemenkerk
Miniemenstraat 62; 02.511.93.84,
www.minimes.net
DEC 5 20.00 Les Agréments and Namur Chamber Choir conducted by Peter Van Heyghen: Kuhnau, Knüpfer, Schelle

Protestantse Kapel
Museumplein 2; 02.507.82.00
DEC 2 20.00 Lars Ulrik Mortensen, harpsichord: Buxtehude

Royal Library
Kunstberg; 02.519.57.51, www.kbr.be
DEC 4 12.30 Marie Hallynck, cello; Muhiddin Dürrioglu, piano: Dürrioglu, Marsick, Saint-Saëns

Royal Music Conservatory
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37,
www.kcb.be
DEC 2 19.00 Eufonia 2009 lute competition prizewinners concert **DEC 8** 20.00 Jordi Savall and Philippe Pierlot, viola da gamba; Pierre Hantaï, harpsichord; Rolf Lislevand, theorbo: Marais, Sainte-Colombe, Couperin **DEC 9** 20.00 Danel String Quartet: Haydn, Weinberg, Beethoven **DEC 10** 20.00 Lisa Batiashvili, violin; Milana Chernyavska: Debussy, Saint-Saëns, Bacri, Franck

Ghent

Conservatorium
Hoogpoort 64; 09.269.20.74,
tickets@debijloke.be
DEC 3 20.00 Lipkind Quartet with Gwendolyn Masin and Sandrine Cantoreggi, violin; Ilya Hoffman, viola; Gavriel Lipkind, cello: Rachmaninov, Stravinski, Dvorák, more

Hasselt

Cultuurcentrum
Kunstlaan 5; 011.22.99.33, www.ccha.be
3 DEC Musica Culina: an evening of gastronomy and music, with Guido De Neve, violin: Bach



Brussels

De Munt
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39, www.demunt.be
Until DEC 22 15.00/18.00 Christoph Willibald Gluck's Iphigénie en Aulide and Iphigénie en Tauride, conducted by Christophe Rousset, directed by Pierre Audi

Ghent

Vlaamse Opera
Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02, www.vlaamseopera.be
Until 9 DEC Madame Butterfly by Puccini, conducted by Muhai Tang, directed by Robert Carsen (in the original Italian with surtitles in Dutch)



Antwerp

CC Berchem
Driekoninginnenstraat 126; 03.286.88.20,
www.ccberchem.be
DEC 4 20.30 Zoo in Accords, choreographed by Thomas Hauert

DON'T MISS MuntPunt

4-5 December Muntplein, Brussels

Try moving an entire library. That's what the staff of the Flemish public library, the Hoofdstedelijke Openbare Bibliotheek (lovingly known as HOB), did last week in Brussels' Muntplein. Now it's in a temporary location on the square while the main building undergoes massive renovations, part of a two-year plan to revamp the entire square. A party on the plein this Friday offers a chance to visit the library's new digs, live music, film and the introduction of the new MuntPunt concept. On Saturday, the fun starts early with a street run, followed by kids' activities (Sinterklaas is in the neighbourhood) and refreshments and ends late with the FM Brussel party (see Dusk 'til Dawn, opposite page).



→ www.muntpunt.be

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,
www.desingel.be
DEC 2-5 20.00 NieuwZwart, choreographed by Wim Vandekeybus

Bruges

Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02,
www.concertgebouw.be
DEC 3 20.00 Works BY 3/1 choreographed by Jean Luc Ducourt

Brussels

Halles de Schaarbeek
Koninklijke Sinte-Mariastraat 22; 0900.26.060, www.halles.be
DEC 4 21.30 Loin, choreographed and staged by Rachid Ouramdane
DEC 5-6 20.30 Collision(s), dance/performance, choreographed and staged by Isabella Soupарт

Kaaistudio's
Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat 81; 02.201.59.59, www.kaaitheater.be
DEC 4-5 20.30 Every Now and Then, performance by Mette Edvardsen and Philippe Beloul (without dialogue)

Koninklijk Circus
Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15,
www.cirque-royal.org
DEC 3-4 20.00 National Opera and Ballet of Moldova in Swan Lake

KVS Box
Arduinkaai 9; 02.210.11.12, www.kvs.be
Until DEC 5 20.30 Peeping Tom in 32 Rue Vandenbranden, choreographed and staged by Gabriela Carrizo and Franck Chartier



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Rijke Klaren

Rijke Klarenstraat 24; 02.548.25.80, www.lesrichesclaires.be
DEC 4-6 20.30 Plume et poil, choreographed by Greglox and Salwa, staged by Michelle Crown

Leuven

30CC - Schouwburg

Bondgenotenlaan 21; 016.32.03.20, www.30CC.be
DEC 9 22.00 Damaged Goods in Do Animals Cry choreographed by Meg Stuart



Antwerp

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00, www.zuiderpershuis.be
DEC 3 20.30 Union Suspecte in Carnival of Guilt (in Dutch)

Berchem

CC Berchem

Driekoningestraat 126; 03.286.88.20, www.ccberchem.be
DEC 8-9 20.30 Kommil Foo in Wolf, Flemish cabaret (in Dutch)

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24, www.abconcerts.be
DEC 3 20.45 Raf Coppens, comedy (in Dutch)

Kaaithheater

Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59, www.kaaithheater.be
DEC 9-10 20.30 Troubleyn in Orgy of Tolerance, staged by Jan Fabre (in English)

Théâtre Mercelis

Mercelisstraat 13; 0477.408.704, www.theatreinbrussels.com
DEC 8-12 15.00/20.00 English Comedy Club in The Cherry Orchard by Anton Chekhov, directed by Malinda Coleman (in English)

Théâtre National

Emile Jacqmainlaan 115; 02.203.41.55, www.theatrenational.be
DEC 4-6 15.00/19.30 (A)pollonia, based on texts by Euripides, Aeschylus and Hanna Krall, directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski (in Polish with French and Dutch surtitles)

Leuven

Stuk

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20, www.stuk.be
DEC 9-11 20.00 SKaGeN in DegrotemonD, directed by Valentijn Dhaenens (in Dutch)



Aalst

Stedelijk Museum 't Gasthuys

Oude Vismarkt 13; 053.73.23.40, www.aalst.be/museum
Until DEC 23 Leerloerij Schotte: Heden versus Verleden (Present versus Past), photos of an abandoned tannery before its conversion, by Henk van Rensbergen

Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)

Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60,

www.muhka.be

Until JAN 3 Textiles: Art and the Social Fabric, installations, sculptures, film, flags and banners

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09, www.kmska.be
Until JAN 17 In the Footsteps of Bartók: Lajos Vajda and Hungarian Surrealism, first retrospective in Europe of the 20th-century Hungarian artist

Zilvermuseum Sterckshof

Cornelissenlaan; 03.360.52.52
Until JAN 10 Coral and Bells: A Collection of Rattles, silver and gold rattles and jingle bells decorated with precious stones, shown alongside miniatures and children's portraits

Bruges

Bruggemuseum-Gruuthuse

Dijver 17; www.uitvindingvanbrugge.be
Until APR 25 De uitvinding van Brugge: De stad van Delacenserie (The Discovery of Bruges: The City of Delacenserie), the 19th-century architectural facelift of Bruges, thanks to local architect Louis Delacenserie

Brussels

Atomium

Heysel Park; 02.475.45.75, www.atomium.be
Until DEC 13 Africa: Fast forward, joint exhibition at the Atomium and Central Africa Museum, Tervuren, on the African continent today

Belgian Comic Strip Centre

Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80, www.stripmuseum.be
Until DEC 13 Kazuo Kamimura: Lorsque nous vivions ensemble (When We Lived Together), focus on the Japanese manga artist

Beursschouwburg

August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be
Until DEC 19 Out of Bounds, video group show curated by Christel Tsilibaris

Bozar (Paleis voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
Until JAN 3 Portraits of Artists: 80 Years of the Centre for Fine Arts in Pictures
Until JAN 3 Sexties, comic-strip illustrations and texts by Guido Crepax, Paul Cuvelier, Jean-Claude Forest and Guy Peelaert

Costume and Lace Museum

Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50
Until DEC 29 Grada: Mystery Writing by Women, Croatian women's ancestral art of embroidery applied to contemporary fashion and utensils

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78
Until DEC 4 Daniel Detilleux: Digital Vibrations in Music, steel sculptures in collaboration with Jean Kluger and Christian Soete

KVS

Arduinkaai 9; 02.210.11.12, www.kvs.be
Until DEC 17 Nuit Américaine, photographs of the America west by Flemish photographer Peter De Bruyne

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11, www.fine-arts-museum.be
Until JAN 31 Delvaux and the Ancient World, some 60 paintings and drawings by the Belgian artist
Until JAN 31 The Art of Gaming, works from the collection of the National Lottery on the occasion of its 75th anniversary

Royal Museum of the Armed Forces

Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33, www.legermuseum.be
Until FEB 28 Aanvalleuh!, works by Belgian comic strip artists
Until APR 11 Dieren in de oorlog (Animals in the War), archive photos and films of animals affected by the First World War

Geel

Gasthuismuseum

Gasthuisstraat 1; 014.59.14.43, www.gasthuismuseumgeel.net
Until MAR 31 God of Doctoort?, collection illustrating the history of healing in Geel

Ghent

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03, www.smak.be
Until DEC 6 Klaus Scherübel: Mallarmé, Het Boek, installations
Until DEC 6 Coming People 2009: Forwarding backyards, works by graduating students
Until JAN 10 Michel François, Plans d'évasion, retrospective
Until JAN 31 Faux Jumeaux (False Twins), changing exhibition curated by Michel François
DEC 4-FEB 7 Ben Benaouisse: Jan Fabre revisited, performance art
DEC 4-MAR 14 GAGARIN The Artists in their Own Words, a collection of texts by participating artists

Museum of Fine Arts

Fernand Scribedreef 1 – Citadelpark; 09.240.07.00, www.mskgent.be
Until FEB 7 Max Beckmann, prints and paintings from the collection of the Von der Heydt Museum in Wuppertal
Until FEB 7 Fernand Léger's Le Grand Déjeuner, masterpiece painting on loan from the Museum of Modern Art in New York

Grimbergen

CC Strombeek

Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43, www.ccstrombeek.be
Until DEC 10 **Shot by both Sides**, video installations by Pieter Geenen and Johan Grimonprez

Hasselt

Cultuurcentrum

Kunstlaan 5; 011.22.99.33, www.ccha.be
Until JAN 10 Helikon: Intens en divers (Intense and Diverse), works by the 1960s Hasselt artist collective

Kortrijk

Broelmuseum

Broelkaai 6; 09.269.60.04, www.broelmuseum.be
Until FEB 14 Fantastic Illusions, exhibition exploring how Belgian and Chinese artists build illusory spaces, including The Gate, an installation by Yannick Antoine and Yves Bernard

Leuven

Museum M

Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28; 016.20.09.09, www.mleuven.be
Until DEC 6 Rogier van der Weyden 1400 | 1464 Master of Passions, work by the 15th-century Brussels city painter, the first exhibition in Leuven's new museum

STUK

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20, www.stuk.be
Until JAN 24 Matt Mullican, drawings, sculpture, architectural constructions and performances

Machelen-Zulte

Het Roger Raveelmuseum

Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00, www.rogerraveelmuseum.be
Until FEB 21 Espace: Raveel en Nederland, paintings

Tervuren

Royal Museum for Central Africa

Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11, www.africamuseum.be
Until DEC 13 Africa: Fast forward, the African continent today (see also the Atomium)
Until JAN 3 Persona: Ritual masks and Contemporary Art, 100 masks shown alongside works by contemporary African artists
Until JAN 3 Omo: People & Design, more than 1,000 objects from the Omo valley, south west Ethiopia



Europalia China: Festival celebrating Chinese art and culture, ancient to contemporary, with more than 450 events
Until JAN 30 across the country
www.europalia.eu

Next Festival:

Cross-border contemporary arts festival featuring theatre, dance, visual arts, music and debates
Until DEC 13 at venues in Kortrijk, Tournai and Lille
069.25.30.80, www.nextfestival.eu

Antwerp

Antiques Open House:

Tour of 21 specialist galleries
Until DEC 6 **starting from Amma Tribal** Art, Wolstraat 16
03.232.01.03, www.antwerpen.be

Brussels

BookSwap:

English-language book exchange
DEC 7 20.00 at The Duke Taverne, Aqueductstraat 111
bookswapclub@yahoo.com

Couleur Café 20 Years 'Ze Party': Three rooms of DJs, including Tom Barman and Daan, plus live concerts featuring Selah Sue, Féfé, Omar Perry and more
DEC 5 20.00-5.00 at Tour & Taxis, Havenlaan 86c
www.couleurcafe.be

De gevangenis in debat (The prison in debate):

a series of activities, particularly film, that take a critical look at the justice system
Until DEC 13 at Cinéma Nova, Arenbergstraat 3
www.nova-cinema.org

Modo Bruxellae Designer Sale:

Young Belgian fashion designers sell their one-off creations
DEC 4-5 at Le Palace, Anspachlaan 85
www.modobruxellae.be

Working Title Festival #3:

Third edition of the dance and performance festival by Workspace Brussels
DEC 3-12 across Brussels
www.workspacebrussels.be

DUSK 'TIL DAWN

SAFFINA RANA



FM Brussel Tonight

Apart from other things, Brussels is famous for holding unique parties in unusual and atmospheric places. Over the last year alone, DJs, decks and clubbers have been having it large in railway stations, 19th-century shopping arcades, deconsecrated churches, an abandoned school for sailors, old army barracks, cinemas, cornfields and building sites. The next big thing will take place on 5 December when radio station FM Brussel hosts its party at the Flemish Public Library and in two buses, all next door to De Munt opera house.

There'll be three rooms full of cutting-edge Belgian talent, including Ghent electro-pop combo The Glimmers, D-Jane duo The Jelly Bellies, electro goddess Lady Jane and minimal tech-house guru Darko. The buses parked outside will feature FM Brussel DJs Rim K and Benoit, a chance to play the rock band video game Seriously Playful and a "surprise act". Never again will staying late at the library feel this good.

If you're up for something more internationally renowned, German DJ Mathias Kaden, aka Mr Minimal Samba to aficionados, hits Antwerp the day before on 4 December, with his samba, jazz and Latino infused techno at Cafe D'Anvers. The appearance forms part of his European tour, having released a debut album in October.

But that's not the end of it... On 12 December you have the opportunity to discover Berlin and Hamburg underground electro at Brussels-Congres railway station with an eclectic line-up of DJs at High Needs Low. Or experience the distinctive techno style of superstar DJ Paul Kalkbrenner at Fuse the same night.

With so much choice and so little time, just sleep when you're dead.

➔ www.fmbrussel.be

➔ www.cafe-d-anvers.com

➔ www.fuse.be

FACE OF FLANDERS

LISA BRADSHAW

Investment

If you won the Belgian national lottery, what would you do with the money? You'll have to decide quickly because investment bankers and charities will soon be dialling your number.

Fortunately, there's *Investment*, a new stage production that will help you traverse the rocky road of richness. Several short PowerPoint presentations will lead you through all the many spending possibilities – from giving to Stop Hunger Now to investing in stem cell research. All of the options on show are completely real – even if the performances of them are much more fun than talking to a real investment banker.

And the best part? You'll be holding a lottery ticket right in your hand, which you'll be given at the beginning of the show.

Davis Freeman wrote and staged *Investment* as "a tool to talk about all these things – like how you can invest in a company right here in Belgium that supplies the American military with all its guns." People become alarmed at the responsibility of suddenly having so much money, but "you also have a lot of power," says Freeman. "And we're going to tell you what you can do with all that power."

You'll also find out what €100,000 can buy you, such as four kilos of cocaine, a breast enlargement or a sports car. "What attracts you or doesn't attract you?" questions Freeman. "The idea is not to tell you what you should do but lay out the options to see where you place yourself."



Davis and three other actors (including Jerry Killick, pictured) also do a section on investing in dance and theatre, with accompanying performances to illustrate where your money goes. This includes a scene from Ronald Harwood's emotional play *Taking Sides* about the de-Nazification of artists who stayed in Germany during the war.

"The subjects are about the battle between art and politics," explains Freeman. The 40-year-old came to Belgium 15 years ago "to see what my sister was doing." His sister happens to be choreographer Meg Stuart, founder of Brussels-based company Damaged Goods. Following her lead, he fell in love with the city and never left. Besides being frequently seen on stage in productions by Stuart, Forced Entertainment and Superamas, he founded his own performance group, Random Scream, 10 years ago.

Investment is part of the Working Title festival. For more info on the festival, see page 9

→ www.randomscream.be

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



kruis →

Whether we like it or not, winter is looming with the prospect of gloom for the coming months. Yet, in the middle of November a flicker of brightness landed on our shores with the arrival in Antwerp of *Sinterklaas* – Saint Nicholas on his *stoomboot* – steamboat – all the way from Spain.

From the town-hall balcony he announced that *de kindjes dit jaar erg braaf waren geweest* – this year the little children had been very good. The fact that he declares the same each year could not dampen the enthusiasm of the young crowd. Since then, kiddies have been sending drawings and letters to the Saint with wish-lists of toys and looking forward to their dreams coming true on 6 December.

Inexplicably, the Saint arrived in Schiedam in the Netherlands on the same day. So which was the real *Sinterklaas*? Well, according to some, it depends on the old fellow's mitre: *in Schiedam op de mijter prijkte een kruis* – in Schiedam the mitre was adorned with a cross; *in Antwerpen was dat niet het geval* – in Antwerp that was not the case. The missing cross in Antwerp is all to do with the city's ban on religious symbols. On the quayside, some protested against *de valse sint* – the false saint.

Newspapers have filled many columns with saintly comment. Some claim that the crossless

saint is in fact the true saint: *sinten die een kruis dragen zijn geen echte sinten maar commerciële sinten* – saints that wear a cross aren't real saints but only commercial saints. To back this up, the crossless faction note that bishops and even the pope have no cross on their mitres: *de paus heeft een witte mijter met een omgekeerde T* – the pope has a white mitre with an upside-down T. It's all reminiscent of the Lilliputian smaller-end egg-breaking edict.

The extreme wing of the crossless group even claims that the real saint all those 1700 years ago would not have worn a mitre at all: *mijters zijn pas na de jaar 1000 opgedaagd* – mitres appeared only after the year 1000.

The present confusion arises because (please don't read this aloud if you have children at your feet) *de Sint kan niet overal zijn* – the Saint cannot be everywhere. It was commercial interests that led to the introduction of *de hulpsinten* – the helper saints – and *onnadenkend heeft men een kruis op de mijter getekend* – without thinking, they drew a cross on the mitre. At least they don't blame Coca-Cola.

So you'll have to decide when you meet the *Sint* in the coming days whether he's real or not. You could always try pulling his beard: that's the real test.

bite

SHARON LIGHT

Strofilia

I have always had a soft spot for Greek food. The Greek Orthodox church in my hometown threw an annual Greek festival that attracted thousands of people over several days. My family has many happy memories of indulging in delectable baklava, spanakopita and gyros under a tent in the church parking lot.

Strofilia, in the heart of central Brussels, offers a more refined Greek menu in a more sophisticated, and quite unusual, setting.

When you enter off the Varkensmarkt, the first impression is high modern. The lighting is bright, pink and orange are abundant, natural wood wine boxes decorate the walls, white tables and chairs are set out in a long row.

But head to the back room to enter a completely different setting – and another century. This former wine warehouse from the turn of the last century is now a charming hall with walls of exposed brick and subtle lighting that manages to be both large and cosy. You can also take a spin through their 17th-century cellar, which is reserved for group events and has yet another feel.

Then, of course, there is the food. You choose from a selection of meze; plan on four to five for two people. A few dishes feature special Greek ingredients, such as mastiha, made from the sap of the lentisk tree, which grows only on the Greek island of Chios. The menu recommends enjoying a subset of the meze with ouzo (I recommend it, too), and they also offer a wide variety of Greek wines.

I have visited Strofilia on several occasions and have rarely been disappointed – favourites include their creamy tzatziki and the white tarama spread, enjoyed with airy



bread. They offer fresh green salads, both warm and cold, and Greek cheeses, such as feta and halloumi, in several preparations.

Warm dishes include a lovely grilled fish, meat skewers and a variety of meze involving deep-fried *balletjes*. The portions are small and sharable, and if you plan well, you will easily have room for one of their desserts, along with a strong Greek coffee or tea.

→ www2.resto.be/strofilia

The last word →→→

All Belgians now

"It is a world of coalition deals, quotas and procedural ambushes. We are all Belgians now."

The Economist, reporting on the election of Herman Van Rompuy as the EU's first President

Foam free

"They don't say in so many words that I have to, but I won't be squirting any foam on my food. If that means I don't get a star, so be it."

Jo Bussels, chef of the Radis Noir in Antwerp, attacking the alleged criteria of the Michelin guide's inspectors

Love, actually

"Just because he has a relationship with a woman doesn't make him a bad priest."

A parishioner in Belzele near Ghent, following the transfer of Father Patrick De Baets to another parish because of a love affair

Disgusted

"If all those who are disgusted leave, only those who are disgusting will be left behind."

Marie-Rose Morel, whose close friend Frank Vanhecke has stepped down from the leadership of the far-right party Vlaams Belang