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Filip van Dingen, p.10

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Wim Robberechts



A new year, a new look

Two new books present a unique and fascinating perspective on Flanders

Denzil Walton

In the mid-1990s, French photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand embarked on an ambitious project: to create an

image bank of aerial photographs of the earth. The remarkable book that resulted – *The Earth from Above* – was published in 1999 and translated into 24 languages.

It is one of the world's best selling illustrated books with more than six million copies in print. Unsurprisingly, it stimulated publishers around the world to consider simi-

lar books.

One of the latest is *Antwerp: A View from the Sky* by Wim Robberechts. Flying above Antwerp, Robberechts took 6,000

photographs, 140 of which made it to the final book, which covers various aspects of the city such

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Drop a gear

New rules came into force on 1 January that you need to know about. So slow down for smog, check your home's eco rating and be prepared to pay more for your post.

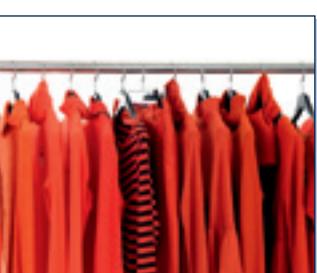
6



Disturbing visions

A new exhibition in Ghent displays Flemish tapestries from palaces and museums throughout Europe. It all seems very respectable until you look more closely and find scenes that look like something from a *Lord of the Rings* movie.

9



Dress sense

You want to look good in these depressed times, so get out and hire a personal shopper. And don't think they only advise women.

13

Prisoners go free because of procedural error

Drug dealers released on a technicality

Alan Hope

Ten criminals involved in four major cases of organised crime, including drugs and human trafficking, were released from prison last week after an appeal court found that there had been serious procedural errors in their prosecution.

The errors concern so-called Special Investigative Methods (BOM), such as undercover work and infiltration, which under Belgian law are strictly regulated. In the cases in question, it appears that no magistrate from the prosecutor's office in Ghent was present when the methods

were being approved – something which is required under the 2003 law.

The men released last week included:

- a 28-year-old Ghent man who led a gang in a failed attempt to break an accomplice out of jail in Dendermonde in March 2007;

- a heroin dealer caught in 2007 in possession of 300 kg of the drug. The investigation later led to the discovery of an equal amount of cocaine;

- seven Indian men sentenced from three to five years for the trafficking of ille-

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Soubron/Neven



Continued from page 1

as tourism, industry, history and infrastructure. The photos offer a perspective of Antwerp and its people that ground-level photography simply cannot.

An aerial view of the magnificent cathedral, for instance, might seem like an obvious shot, but it becomes crystal clear just how much larger this – the largest Gothic church in the Low Countries – really is compared to the rest of the buildings in Antwerp. The 123-meter tower juts so high into the sky, it's visible from miles away and demands renewed respect for its mediaeval builders.

A hammer-shaped pattern in the ground at Deurne airport, meanwhile, is the only remnant left of anti-aircraft guns of the Second World War, while another shot shows that the open-air swimming pool De Molen is as much a place for socialising as for swimming.

Robberechts is a highly experienced aerial photographer and cameraman and is used to leaning out of a helicopter door to get shots. Still, working over Antwerp brought a special set of challenges. "With Deurne airport on

A bird's eye view of the Pukkelpop Festival (above) and the Half Moon swimming pool in Diest

larly wanted to use. "We flew over a large garden party that clearly included at least three generations of family members. The ladies were drinking white wine; the men Leffe beer; and the children were playing in the swimming pool," he recalls. "It was a wonderful Flemish family gathering, and an unmissable photo opportunity." Robberechts contacted the family and got permission to include their photograph in the book (see cover photo).

Robberechts' company also does aerial filming, taking helicopter shots of most of the Formula One Grand Prix events, major

cycle races in Belgium, and the Tour de France. He currently has a film crew in South America covering the 6,000-kilometre Dakar rally.

His next project is closer to home. Currently in pre-production, *Flanders: The Movie* will release towards the end of the year. The movie will be filmed in High Definition with the company's eight gyro-stabilised cameras and will be screened at international exhibitions, events and congresses.

So how come a small company in Diegem, with a full-time staff of only nine, manages to get blue-chip aerial filming contracts such as the Formula One Grand Prix, the Dakar Rally and the Tour de France? "Apart from our experience and skills, it's because we are Flemish!" he exclaims. "Being Flemish means we are multi-lingual and



very adaptable, so can meet the requirements of our clients wherever they are in the world."

International airspace

Another new release, *Flanders from the Air*, includes over 200 photographs covering 10 themes. With its captions in eight languages and introductions in five, it's clearly intended to introduce Flanders to international audiences. Versions are also available in Russian, Chinese, German and Spanish.

The international community was well represented at the book launch in Herentals last month. Recipients of the first three books off the press were Yuanyuan Zhang, newly appointed Ambassador of China in Belgium, Professor Reinhard Bettzuege, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Belgium, and Lucas Boudet, Director of the French Chamber of Commerce. These three, along with the Italian and Russian ambassadors, also contributed to the foreword of the book, where they described their visions

of Flanders.

Flanders from the Air was put together by photographer Marc Soubron and journalist Rik Neven, who throw up some fascinating and often unexpected sights: the conical dome on the roof of the Flemish Centre for Contemporary Glass Art in Lommel, the topiaries in Hasselt Park, the delightfully creative water towers of Bierbeek and Landen, the roller coasters of Bobbejaanland and the design in the Epernayplein in Middelkerke, which can, in fact, only be seen from the air.

The book follows in the footsteps of *Flemish Architecture from the Air* and *Limburg from the Air*, which are produced by the same team. What's perhaps most striking about all these books is their paradox: how expansive certain places and events are – like Wijnegem Shopping Center or the Rock Werchter festival – compared with just how little everything is in relation to the never-ending landscape. Flanders seems big and small at the same time.

Psychological and physical demands of aerial photography

aside, Soubron says his greatest challenge was the unreliable Belgian weather: "The summer of 2008 was disastrous for aerial photography." Despite meticulous planning, the last few outdoor swimming pools in Flanders could not be photographed until the final day of the school vacation.

"Thankfully, 31 August was a sunny day, and the pools were crowded," recalls Soubron. "I don't think an empty swimming pool on a dull, cloudy day would have looked too appealing."

What about an ice and snow storm? Our suggestion for the next book: *Freezing Flanders from the Air*.

online

www.robberechts.tv
www.vlaanderenvanuitdeelucht.be

"It was a wonderful Flemish family gathering, and an unmissable photo opportunity."

Above: "A n t w e r p is heavily regulated," he explains. "Our plans had to be minutely detailed and submitted well in advance." During the flight, the pilot was in constant communication with Deurne's air traffic controllers for any last-minute changes to his flight path.

For most of the photos, permission to publish them was unnecessary, as they involved public places. But Robberechts took a few shots of private homes that he particu-

Win a copy of *Flanders from the Air!* Email editorial@flanderstoday.eu by 19 January with "Flanders from the air" in the subject line. Winners will be notified by 20 January.

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PHOTO OF THE WEEK • A child plays along the frozen edge of the North Sea at De Panne last week, as the country remained in the grip of a week-long cold spell. The freezing temperatures saw peak pollution levels in Brussels and the application of a 90 km/h smog speed limit on most of the region's roads, but on a lighter note, the unusual sight of skating on some of Flanders' lakes. The rail authority NMBS cancelled 6% of its trains because of the weather – more than 700 in all. In Halle, the fountain on the Stationsplein froze solid and

had to be thawed out by council workers using gas burners. In Mechelen last Sunday, about 30 supporters of KV Mechelen went to work to clear the pitch of snow in order to ensure that the crucial match against Anderlecht on 13 January could go ahead. "Supporters had been calling all week to ask if they could lend a hand," said board member Karel Keuleers. "Our supporters are the heart and soul of the club."

FIFTH COLUMN



Changing places

In theory, the Flemish and federal levels are quite separate in the Belgian political system; each one has its own area of responsibility and set of politicians. This means that no matter what crisis hits the federal government, the Flemish government keeps on functioning. In practice, however, the Flemish government – though more stable than the federal – is often affected by federal shake-ups. And so it begins 2009 with a new minister for welfare called Veerle Heeren from the Christian democrat party CD&V.

Heeren replaces Steven Vanackere (CD&V), who joins the federal government under the new prime minister, Herman Van Rompuy (also CD&V). Vanackere is not the first minister to leave the Flemish government this way. Patrick Dewael resigned as minister-president to join the federal government in 2003. Dewael had hoped to become prime minister if his old friend Guy Verhofstadt moved on to become president of the European Union. But Verhofstadt did not become EU president.

At the time, Dewael was criticised by the opposition, but just a couple of years later CD&V's Yves Leterme did the same thing, taking Inge Vervotte with him to the federal government. In the Flemish government, Vervotte was replaced by Vanackere, who is now replaced by Heeren.

This hopping between governments annoys quite a number of members of the Flemish Parliament because it implies that the federal government is in some way superior to the Flemish. Under the Belgian system, the federal and Flemish levels are equal. But that's in theory. The only minister to have made the move in the opposite direction so far is the socialist Frank Vandenbroucke, after he fell out with the French-speaking socialists in the federal government. Since then, Vandenbroucke monitors any attempt by the federal government to interfere in Flemish affairs.

Goodbye, Gino

Flemish member of parliament Gino De Craemer has quit his party (the Flemish nationalist N-VA) for Lijst Dedecker (LDD). De Craemer, who was a member of Vlaams Belang before he joined N-VA, will announce that it was LDD's programme that convinced him to switch parties yet again, but there is always an element of calculation in this type of switch.

De Craemer probably believes that his chances of getting re-elected in June are higher with LDD. Aside from that, there is the money involved. In Belgium, members of parliament give up part of their salary – up to one third – to their party. When they leave that party, they usually cancel these donations and keep the full sum for themselves. De Craemer may not be very steadfast in his convictions, but he does know how to exploit them.

Anja Otte

15 Things you need to know

New laws and regulations were introduced at the beginning of the year. Here are the ones that matter most.

1 The cost of *dienstencheques*, or service cheques, used to pay household help, went up from €7 to €7.50. The lower price cheques will still be valid until expiration.

2 Households in Brussels have to dispose of bottles in bottle banks and not in the white bags provided for general household waste. Offenders run the risk of a fine ranging from €62.50 to €625, although authorities have promised to be lenient in the early period of 2009.

3 The price of a standard postage stamp went up from 54 cents to 59 cents. It is still 1 cent



below the European average, said De Post.

4 Older employees will no longer receive automatic wage increases based on age. All pay grade schemes based on age must be abolished and replaced with schemes based on competence or experience.

5 New traffic rules have been introduced in Brussels to combat air pollution. Speed limits are lowered automatically if pollution levels exceed certain thresholds. There are three grades of pollution: at the lowest level all speed limits are reduced to 50 km/h in the city and 90 km/h on the Ring. If pollution exceeds the second level, then only cars with odd-numbered licence plate numbers are allowed to circulate, while even-numbered cars are banned the next time round. Public transport would be free and trucks banned during rush hour. If the highest level is exceeded, all cars are banned.

6 The legal pension age for women went up from 64 to 65, the same as for men.

7 Farmers born after 1982 must have a drivers licence to drive tractors. Formerly, farmers driving between their farm and fields were exempt.

8 The royal family's annual allowance is now linked to the health indexation, the same as salaries, and not the more beneficial consumer price index. The health index excludes rises in petrol, cigarettes and alcohol.

9 Former telephone monopoly Belgacom slashed its tariffs

for calls to the fixed phone lines of rival companies. These have long been criticised for being abusively high.

10 Anyone who rents out an older house or apartment in Flanders has to supply an energy performance certificate (*energieprestatielijst*), which rates the energy efficiency of the house. The certificate costs €200-€250 and is valid for 10 years. A certificate is also needed when selling a house but not when renting out a newly-built property.

11 Radio Donna, a Flemish pop station, has changed its name to MNM. But its new logo has run into problems with the Mars candy company because of alleged copyright infringement.

12 You can now spend your euros in Slovakia, which joined the EU's single currency zone on 1 January.

13 Child allowance has gone up for self-employed people for their first child, from €74 to €78.

14 The Flemish government will pay out a €500 grant for roof insulation. Both owners and tenants can apply for the grant, which can rise to €1,000 for

those on low incomes.

15 Cats and dogs can no longer be sold in shops but only through officially recog-



nised breeders. The legislation is mainly meant to combat impulse buying of pets that often end up abandoned.

Breaking news
for breaking news, see
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under "press room"

Prosecution blunder: Hundreds more could be freed

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gal aliens through Belgium to the United Kingdom;

• a Geraardsbergen man sentenced to eight years for drug trafficking.

The Ghent prosecutor's office stressed that there is no doubt of the validity of the convictions and that all men are guilty. Essentially, on the question of prosecution presence at the approval of BOMs, Ghent took a different position from other jurisdictions, which the Court of Cassation later ruled was unlawful. In the two other Dutch-speaking jurisdictions, Brussels and Antwerp, magistrates ensured a prosecution magistrate was present at all proceedings.

It later became clear that the government was aware of the problem. Former justice minister Jo Vandeurzen, who resigned last month, had prepared a new law to patch up the difficulty in August last year. But the proposed change never received the approval of his ministerial colleagues and never reached the stage of being laid before parliament.

The Flemish bar, however, issued a statement last week rejecting the idea of a patch-up law, saying a first reading of the law's provisions had given rise to "serious concerns". At the weekend, the prosecutor-general in Ghent announced an appeal against the ruling which liberated the 10 men.

Belp



New justice minister Stefaan De Clerck

Incoming justice minister Stefaan De Clerck said he hoped that might produce a change in the situation in a short time. The authorities will certainly be hoping it does: according to some experts, there are potentially hundreds of convictions that could be affected by the latest ruling.

Last week the various parties were split over where to lay the blame: on the legislators who had written what many feel to be an ambiguous statute or the magistrates whose task it was to put it into practice. Green party Groen! blamed the law for being "written unclearly", whereas Socialist party justice spokesman Renaat Landuyt claimed judges and lawyers had "created confusion".

• Ghent police have apologised over another case of criminals being set free, after three men accused of taking part in a carjacking were released on procedural grounds. The suspects threatened a driver with a knife, threw him from his vehicle then proceeded to drive recklessly through Ghent, causing several road accidents.

• In an unrelated case, one of six suspects accused of forming the Belgian wing of Al Qaeda was released by a court in Brussels. The six were arrested in December and accused of preparing a suicide attack in Belgium or elsewhere. The five remaining suspects were planning to appeal against their continued detention.

News in brief: *Loft* set to break records, justice minister sued

A 31-year-old woman from Merelbeke near Ghent has been sentenced to eight days in prison and fined €148 for sticking up her middle finger at a police officer. The officers had warned the woman about bad parking when she made the gesture, for which she was later charged with the rare offence of criminal defamation. "I can hardly believe that's all that was involved," said a representative of the police union Sypol.be. "Most police officers have such a thick skin that they shrug such things right off." The woman's jail time was suspended.

Police in Flemish Brabant, Dendermonde and Oudenaarde are suspected of having kept valuable firearms for themselves instead of sending them for destruction during official collections, according to reports. Following the introduction of a new firearms law in 2006, police



Police officers keep confiscated weapons

organised the collection of weapons from the public – weapons which should all have been melted down at smelters in Liege and Ghent. But in some cases police officers kept valuable weapons for their own collections or for sale to collectors. "We expected that sort of thing might happen," said governor Lodewijk De Witte of Flemish Brabant, where five cases have so far come to light.

The quality of Flemish drinking water remained stable in the period 2005-2007, according to the latest report from the Flemish Environment Agency VMM. The region achieved a figure of over 99% for conformity to various standards over the three-year period. Most breaches were caused by the bacterium E. coli, lead, nickel and nitrates. However, the amounts by which samples exceeded the limits were very low, the report said, and often the result of a temporary situation.

Flemish films attracted a total of 1,968,418 visitors to cinemas in 2008 – an increase of nearly 70% on the previous year. This is partially due to the success of the film *Loft*, directed by Erik Van Looy from a script by Bart De Pauw, which pulled in 950,000 people so far, bringing it close to toppling the Urbanus hit *Koko Flanel* (seen by 1,082,000 people) from the all-time Number One spot. The

huge increase in audiences for home-grown productions comes as cinema audiences in general fell across the country by 6 to 8%.



Top Flemish film *Loft*

A parliamentary investigative committee set up to look into allegations of political interference in the sale of Fortis bank will be given only two months to deliver its findings, leaders of the majority parties in parliament agreed last week. The establishment of the committee was agreed after former prime minister Yves Leterme admitted that his cabinet chief had made contact with the husband of one of the judges in the case. Leterme resigned over the matter to allow the committee to judge whether he had breached the separation of powers. His justice minister and party colleague Jo Vandeurzen also resigned. However, incoming prime minister Herman Van Rompuy immediately took over Leterme's cabinet chief, installing him as his personal adviser.

The new Justice minister Stefaan De Clerck is being sued by 150 members of the state security services for non-payment of overtime hours going back as far as 2001. According to the union representing the country's secret agents, some cases concern arrears for up to 1,250 hours, and the dossier as a whole has been dragging on for years.

MNM, the new radio station from Flemish public broadcaster VRT that took over Radio Donna at the New Year, has got off to an "encouraging start" in its first week, according to VRT. A poll from Monday to Thursday in the first week showed that 46% of Flemings had listened to the station for at least 15 minutes at some point. The total audience was 40% larger than at similar times under Donna. And the station's website also did well, with 86,000 visitors on the first day of broadcasts.

A bus driver for Flemish public transport authority De Lijn was sacked after testing positive for alcohol – because of a drinking session at home the night before. The 42-year-old driver was stopped by police while driving his bus in Leuven at about lunchtime on Friday. A breathaly-

ser showed his blood alcohol to be 0.88 g/l – with the legal limit set at 0.5. The man claimed to have drunk nothing that day but admitted to drinking a Duvel and a Chimay the previous day, as well as a three-litre case of wine in the evening while watching DVDs. "Our drivers know the rules: anyone caught drunk is immediately dismissed," a De Lijn spokesperson said. "We cannot make any exceptions. The safety of our customers is our first priority."

Doctors now have to specify the cheapest version of a medication – usually the so-called generic version – when prescribing drugs in a range of six categories, according to a new regulation introduced by the federal social affairs minister Laurette Onkelinx. The categories include anti-depressants, cholesterol reducing agents, gastric antacids, blood pressure reduction medication, analgesic/anti-inflammatories and some medication against fungal infections. Exceptions will be allowed only if there is a clinical reason for choosing the more expensive drug.



Social affairs minister Laurette Onkelinx

Confidence in the police is highest among immigrants of Turkish origin, according to research carried out at the University of Hasselt. And Moroccan immigrants have precisely the same level of negative feelings as native Belgians, the figures show. The researchers polled 780 people in the former mining areas of Houthalen-Helchteren and Genk. Confidence of immigrant communities in the police is "essential" to proper policing and to fostering a sense of security among the population, the team said. Just over 60% of Turks had high or very high confidence in the police, dropping to 49% for Belgians and 46% for Moroccans. But the latter two groups responded the same to the rating "little or very little": 22.7%, compared to only 18% among Turks.

Fortis leaves battle over chairmanship to shareholders

The board of Fortis Bank finally this week declined to put its weight behind any of the candidates for the chairmanship of the company, instead sending a list of six names of candidate-directors to the shareholders' meetings in February in Brussels and Utrecht. Shareholders at those meetings will have the opportunity to choose one of the candidates as chairman.

The original choice of the Fortis board to replace departed chairman Maurice Lippens was Viscount Etienne Davignon, a heavyweight of the Belgian business scene and former chairman of Société Générale, the company that later became Fortis. But shareholders meeting in December in the Netherlands and here narrowly rejected his candidacy: among other things, Davignon is seen as too close to Lippens, whose departure was caused by the collapse of the bank's share price, which led to it being taken over – perhaps temporarily – by the French-based BNP Paribas.

Fortis had tried to entice Karel Vinck, another heavyweight with a reputation for stepping in to rescue ailing firms, but Vinck at 70 considers he has enough on his plate. He chairs the agency charged with managing road traffic in Antwerp, and has been asked by the EU to help organise freight traffic. "There just isn't time to do those jobs properly, including Fortis," he said. Fortis also carried out soundings on Thomas Leysen, boss of bosses at the Belgian Enterprise Federation VBO, and Herman Daems of investment company Gimv.

Fortis' main concern may be to shut out the champion of the small shareholder, Georges



Georges Ugeux has the support of small shareholders, but not the present board

Ugeux. His candidacy as chairman is supported by Deminor, the shareholder representative group heavily involved in court action to stop the sale of Fortis to BNP Paribas, as well as to extract damages from the former members of the board, including Lippens. Ugeux is considered a financial expert. His career began at Société Générale, before stints at Morgan Stanley, General Electric and the European Investment Fund. From 1996-2003 he was a senior managing director of the New York Stock Exchange.

This Monday, the Fortis board decided not to endorse any of the six names which will go forward

to shareholders. As well as Ugeux, they are Jan Zegering Hadders, Dirk van Daele, Philippe Casiers, Jozef De May and Andrew Spencer Doman – the latter two supported by Chinese shareholder Ping An. Ludwig Criel and Guy de Selliers de Moranville will be nominated as non-executive directors.

As well as choosing a chairman and directors, shareholders in Brussels and Utrecht will have the opportunity to have their say on the proposed sale to BNP Paribas, after a court ruled that the sale could not go ahead without consulting them.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

30,000

The estimated number of people who took part in demonstrations in Brussels against the Israeli action in Gaza.

500

The number of people reported to have taken part in a pro-Israel demonstration in Antwerp.

100,000

The increase in the number of people out of work expected this year and next by economists as a result of the current economic crisis.

40%

The number of drivers who tested positive for drugs during a police roadside check in Menen in West Flanders. Drugs detected included cannabis, ecstasy and cocaine.

800-1,000

The number of illegal websites featuring child pornography discovered every year by the federal police force's Computer Crime Unit. Under an agreement between the government and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) such sites can be rapidly shut down for Belgian users. The same agreement could later be extended to cover hate sites and fraudulent sites, the government said.

50,000

The number of skaters who took part in a trip on the Damse Vaart between Bruges and Sluis, on the first day on which skating on the waterway was permitted at the weekend. The last time the course could be skated was 12 years ago.

€107 million

The amount spent on medication for children and young people under the age of 18 in 2007, mainly for allergy medication, antibiotics and anti-acne drugs. Children under 2 are the most expensive patients, because of the high cost of vaccines.

More than 100

The number of times Chris Corens has seen the musical Daens, which finishes its successful run in Antwerp next month. But Chris is not a fan with too much time on his hands: he is the show's resident director, who took over from the billed director Frank Van Laecke after the show premiered.

5,219

The number of Belgian-registered websites hacked in 2008, according to the bloggers group Belsec. The peak activity came in August, with 700 sites hacked into during a period of unrest in the Turkish community. Prominent sites affected include phone operator JIM Mobile, broadcaster VTM and carmaker Opel.



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Good News Bad News

US-owned sandwich chain Subway plans to open 25 new shops in Belgium by the end of the year. The company currently has nine outlets; the latest branch opened in Antwerp in December. Subway takings in Europe rose by almost 25% last year to €697 million. In common with other low-cost, fast-food chains like Pizza Hut, Subway is profiting from the current crisis as more people downsize from restaurant meals to something more modest.

World brewing leader InBev is to raise beer prices in March by around 3.5%, the company announced. The rise will cover Jupiler, Stella, Leffe, Belle-Vue and Hoegaarden brands. The increase is the third in a year, after price hikes in February and September last year. The company blamed wage costs for the increase, which comes despite falls in the prices of grain for brewing and oil for shipping.

Account holders with the Belgo-Luxembourg subsidiary of **Icelandic bank Kaupthing** will be guaranteed a repayment of their savings up to a maximum of €100,000 in the event of a bankruptcy. Kaupthing accounts have been frozen since last year. Because the bank is established in Luxembourg, the government guarantee only went as high as €20,000 before last week's agreement, rather than the €100,000 in force in Belgium.

Flemish schools in Brussels will be the object of a campaign designed to sell school students the attractions of a technical or professional education. The campaign, organised by Brussels education minister Guy Vanhengel, will be aimed at elementary schools, and feature the cartoon heroes Suske and Wiske.

The airport of Antwerp saw a slight rise in the number of passengers in 2008, up 1.2% to 176,971. The increase was largely a result of charters, training flights and private flights rather than airline business. The total number of flights rose to 56,000, an increase of 8.7%.

Sales income at the **Mechelen auction**, the country's and Europe's biggest cooperative vegetable auction market, fell by 5.5% in 2008 to €211 million. The volume of vegetables sold, however, remained about the same as in 2007, reflecting a continued drop in the price of vegetables under pressure from discount supermarkets. The price of broccoli dropped 30%, and the price of other commodities, such as asparagus and cucumber, are lower now than they were in 1994.

Dutch telecoms company KPN has shelved plans for an entry into the Belgian digital TV market, according to reports. KPN, which owns mobile phone operator Base, is also active via Tele2/KPN Belgium and Getronics, employing 1,700 and with sales in 2007 of €850 million. Over the last decade, the company has invested about €2 billion in Belgium, but an initial vision of Belgium as a promising telecoms market has not proved accurate, CEO Ad Scheepbouwer said. "We're actually disappointed by our prospects in Belgium," he said. "We might be ready again to invest substantially, but we're not convinced further investment would make any sense because, quite simply, there is no liberalisation process at work in Belgium."

Local authorities to hold onto share of Distrigas

Belgium last week played down the threat of disruption caused by Russia's decision to cut natural gas supplies to the outside world. The Belgian terminal at Zeebrugge could make up the difference and supply neighbouring countries, it was claimed. Meanwhile, the crisis focused attention on the continuing struggle over the ownership of Distrigas, the country's gas supplier.

Russia last week closed four gas pipelines that cross Ukraine to deliver Russian gas to foreign clients, causing an immediate crisis in countries like Bulgaria, Greece and Macedonia and putting pressure on supplies in countries like Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Western Europe is less affected, however, although Belgium still gets 5% of its gas from Russia.

The Zeebrugge terminal could take over the supply for all of Belgium and Western Europe, according to Joachim Coens, CEO of the port management company MBZ. "Our LNG installation and two undersea pipelines are enough to supply Belgium and the whole of Western Europe," he said.

In the meantime, the country's municipali-

ties have decided to retain a minority share in Distrigas of 25% plus one share, down from their current 31.25% share. The Italian energy company ENI is currently buying up privately-owned shares in Distrigas for just over €6.80 a share. The municipalities, acting through the cooperative Publigas, will sell off part of their share in order to strengthen their holding in Fluxys, a gas-transport company. At present Publigas owns 45.22% of Fluxys, but this share will rise to 51.82%.

Because of the strategic importance of gas supplies, the federal government holds a controlling share in Distrigas and Fluxys (which operates the Zeebrugge terminal and an underground reservoir at Loenhout near Antwerp).

Daniel Termont, the Ghent mayor who is also chairman of Publigas, said municipal representatives would meet again before ENI's 19 March deadline to decide if the sale of its 6.25% Distrigas share would be final. The municipalities have to balance the financial risk of not accepting ENI's offer with the need to retain a voice in the nation's gas supply, he explained.



Daniel Termont, chairman of Publigas

Ghent workers face layoffs

As many as 10,000 workers in the Ghent area alone are facing pay cuts of up to 40% as a result of temporary redundancy measures put in place at Volvo Cars, Volvo Trucks, ArcelorMittal and related suppliers. At ArcelorMittal, workers switched over to a four-day week in December, and may face further cutbacks in hours later in the month. On non-working days staff must sign in and they then receive 85% of their normal daily rate. However they also suffer cuts in holiday pay, end of year premiums and luncheon vouchers.

At Volvo Trucks, non-working days pay only 60% of normal rates. Employees in the 1,700-strong workforce were laid off two days a week before Christmas, but idle periods could soon be extended to three days. Meanwhile, the 3,000 workers at Volvo Cars have two non-working days to 19 January. Suppliers are also facing a knock-on effect.

Clothing companies perform badly on workers' rights

Belgian clothing companies are lagging behind other countries in their efforts to improve the situation of factory workers, according to a study carried out by the International Clean Clothing campaign. The study looked at 113 clothing manufacturers worldwide, 33 of them with a presence on the Belgian market.

Of those, in common with many international manufacturers, 29 had set up a voluntary code of conduct, aimed at improving working conditions and built on three main lines:

- responsibility for workers whatever their status, and their representation in major decisions;
- fair wages and decent working conditions according to International Labour Organisation standards;
- the commitment to extend the requirement for a code of conduct to suppliers and subcontractors.

Belgian companies scored poorly on their translation of codes of conduct into prac-

tice, the study found, with no code at all at Prémaman, Mayerline and Cassis and barely any follow-up in JBC and E5 Mode. No company at all could produce a multi-stakeholder initiative, which sets out to share best practice across the industry.

In addition, workers were rarely involved in company policy regarding workers' rights, and consumers were given little or no information on the state of rights within companies. Two areas where existing codes were violated in particular were fair wages and the right to organise. In an increasing number of cases, the study reports, consumers look for information on the social and labour policies of manufacturers when making purchasing decisions. "That's why it's time that an enforceable legal framework is put in place to require more transparency from companies," the study concludes.

online
www.schonekleren.be

Studio 100 bosses honoured

Media company Studio 100 managers Hans Bourlon and Gert Verhulst have been voted Managers of the Year by the readers of *Trends* magazine. Studio 100 produces children's TV hits like *Samson & Gert* and *Kabouter Plop*, as well as managing pop trio K3 and running the Plopsaland theme parks. In the past year, the company took over the German producer EM Entertainment, whose archive includes vintage Pippi Longstocking films, as well as Flying Bark Productions, an Australian animation studio. Studio 100's contract to provide a range of children's programming to television station VRT was prolonged until 2011, and the new Studio 100 TV music channel was launched on the Telenet digital service.

Last year, the company branched out into adult musicals, with a production of *Daens*, based on the book by Louis Paul Boon, which is still running in Antwerp. However, only 10% of the company's income is derived from TV productions, while 40% is generated by theme parks in De Panne, Hasselt and Coo near Stavelot. A fourth park is due to open in the Netherlands this year. Merchandising of TV properties like *Samson* and *Plop* brings in another 18.5% and theatre productions 17%. The total income for 2008 was expected to top €100 million for the first time.

"We are pleasantly surprised," said Bourlon after the award was announced. Verhulst added in a TV interview: "Neither Hans nor myself are the prototype of the typical manager. I'm the only one here without a tie on, for example. If I had known, I would have put one on."



Gert Verhulst (left) and Hans Bourlon receive their award

EXHIBITION



Photo: Patrimonio Nacional, Madrid

Hanging the tapestries

Flanders once produced the world's most stunning tapestries. Now is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see them

Denzil Walton

From the early 15th century, Flanders was renowned for its huge, beautiful, tapestries. Through sumptuous fabrics of wool and silk, threaded with gold and silver, they brought to life contemporary events such as decisive battles, as well as stories from the Old Testament, the life of Christ and the saints, romances of chivalry and ancient myths and legends.

The main weaving centres such as Brussels, Oudenaarde, Mechelen, Bruges and Doornik worked side-by-side with famous painters such as Rubens, Jordaens and Raphael. The great tapestry designers such as Bernard van Orley and Michiel Coxcie were constantly in demand to supply the needs of rich clients.

Flemish tapestries were not just pretty works to decorate your castle walls and show off to your friends; they also had great practical worth, affording much-needed protection against cold and draughts. They were also symbols of power and wealth, due to the expensive material and labour-intensive production processes. Consequently, only the very rich could afford to purchase the best tapestries. The finer the collection, the higher was the standing of the owner.

Tapestries that illustrated sacred stories were often suspended between pillars in churches and monasteries. They appeared in the streets, too, as festive decorations during ceremonies or inaugurations. Their relative ease of portability meant that they also upholstered the tents of generals during their campaigns. Even here, the primary aim was to make an impression on friend and foe alike.

Moreover, on account of the large quantity of gold and silver thread, Flemish tapestries were an excellent investment. In times of need, they could be readily exchanged for

hard cash. Inventories from the 1400s listed tapestries as the most expensive objects of art after jewellery. Paintings and sculptures show up much further down the scale.

The Burgundian dukes were the driving force behind the Flemish tapestry industry. From 1380, Philip the Bold commissioned no fewer than 10 series of tapestries so he could offer them as impressive state gifts. His collections were later expanded by Philip the Good and the last Burgundian duke, Charles the Bold. The Spanish and Hapsburg kings were also fanatical collectors of these spectacular textiles.

In the late 16th century, many of these vast collections passed into the hands of one man: Philip II of Spain. By the time he died in 1598, he owned 701 tapestries. Of these, 183 are in the Royal Palace of Madrid, which holds more than 3,000 tapestries in total, most of them from Flemish workshops.

Here today, gone tomorrow

Until the end of March, a collection of 34 of the best Flemish tapestries from the 15th and 16th centuries is on display in the arts centre of Sint-Pieters Abbey in Ghent. *Flemish Tapestries* has been put together by Professor Fernando Checa from the Complutense University in Madrid and honorary manager of the Prado museum.

The exhibition includes top tapestries lent by the Royal Palace of Madrid, various Spanish cathedrals and famous European museums. "It's a once-in-a-lifetime chance to view the collections of important and prestigious tapestries owned by the Burgundian Court and by the Austrian and Spanish Habsburgers and their retainers," says Checa.

Among the stars of the show are two tapes-



2



3

1 | *The Sacking of Tunis*: eight-metre drama from one of Emperor Charles' conquests

2 | Detail from *The Battle of Zama*: fierce elephants aplenty

3 | Detail from *Saint Michael Vanquishing the Dragon*

tries from the series *The Conquest of Tunis*, designed by Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen and commissioned by Charles V in 1548. They offer a breathtaking 16 metre-wide panorama of the capture of Tunis in North Africa during one of Emperor Charles' innumerable campaigns.

Equally astounding is "The Battle of Zama", which depicts the victory of the Roman general Scipio Africanus over Hannibal, and which is so three-dimensional that the elephants seem like they're about to burst out. Another magnificent example is the *Apocalypse* series, with "Saint Michael Vanquishing the Dragon", inspired

by a famous set of engravings by Albert Dürer.

The works are beautifully displayed in dimmed rooms with LED lighting, which makes the tapestries appear to glow from within and brings the characters and action to life. Audio guides to the exhibition come in five languages, including English.

Until 29 March, Sint-Pieters Abbey, Sint-Pietersplein 9, Ghent

online
www.gent.be/spa

VISUAL ARTS

Human nature

A Flemish artist finds civilisation in the strangest of places



Lisa Bradshaw and Mon Philips

Filip Van Dingen is an artist's artist: the amount of time and travel he puts into a project in no way correlates with its possible financial return, and his extensive list of endeavours invites an expansion of ideas and imagination more than public or media attention.

Let us be the first to tell you that Van Dingen deserves the attention. But his work is difficult to categorise, and much of it takes place outside of Flanders. Right now, he's part of an exhibition in Rio de Janeiro on black culture represented in the west, and he's doing an artist residency at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin, which will result in a mixed-media installation on a famous celebrity of Barcelona – an albino gorilla named Snowflake.

In his eight years on the art scene, he did make all the Flemish newspapers once – for a show in Brooklyn, New York. Part of a post-9/11 exhibition on capitalist symbols, he pressed postage stamps cut into the shape of tears on the faces that adorned pre-euro Belgian franc notes. He once put a waterfall in a lift and another time sold trips to Utopia from a real travel agency – all the while selling visitors' own imaginations back to them.

"Where's the art in that?" people might wonder, he admits. "But I don't care. I want to explore spaces outside of the art context, even if the audience looks a little doubtful. I discover while doing, and that's exactly what interests me."

But viewers of his work discover, too, generally in the form of new perspectives and often new perspectives of each other.

His first project and probably still his most ambitious is *Zonation*, which began in 2001 with a walk through the abandoned property of the old Limburg Zoo in Genk – a place known for housing exotic animals that had been confiscated from black market deals. The zoo had closed five years earlier due to poor conditions for the animals. (Privately owned zoos are now illegal in Belgium.)

Van Dingen found all the empty cages with doors hanging ajar totally surreal. "It was so desolate," he says. "So I set up an investigation to find out what happened to the main protag-

onists of the zoo." With the help of the government, he discovered where a large number of the animals had been sent. Then he set out to find them.

From a safari park in Villajoyosa, Spain, to the Taipei Zoo in Taiwan to the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium in Ohio, the Brussels-based artist visited rhinos, gorillas, Bengal tigers and Kodiak bears in dozens of sites across six continents. With each new zoo, animal park or nature preserve, he discovered entire societies – both human and animal.

"There is so much to analyse: zoo culture, architecture, colonial histories and, of course, the visitors to the zoos," he says. "I observed the way people behave within a zoo using the same methodology that biologists would use to observe the animals: behaviour, movements, feeding patterns."

One of his most pointed discoveries has been that zoos specifically have similar environments no matter where you go in the world. "They are all the same in how they pretend to be in the wild, with this safari look," he says. "In Taiwan or Denmark or Pretoria, it's the same architecture. A brown bear enclosure with stairs, for instance. Brown bears don't need stairs. These are still wild animals, but they are in a relationship with humans, so it's all very civilised, actually."

Zonation is an online research installation and led to *Bobby's Heaven*, a project in Berlin's natural history museum built around the first gorilla to arrive in Berlin in the 1930s. Van Dingen and his partner, Barbara Pereyra, a dancer, have since founded Fantaman Productions, which hosts multi-disciplinary events, and their latest collaboration is *Flota Nfumu*, that all-white gorilla.

Nfumu means "white" in the Fang language of Central West Africa, but *Nfumu*'s new owners at the Barcelona zoo in the 1960s couldn't pronounce it, so they changed it to "Snowflake". The baby gorilla became famous across the west because no one had ever seen an albino gorilla. Like *Bobby* of Berlin, *Snowflake* was an African export that became a European celebrity and, in the process, "lost his real name", notes Van Dingen.

Upon *Snowflake*'s death a few years ago,



An outdoor installation by the children of Equatorial Guinea and Flemish artist Filip Van Dingen

Barcelona children were offered free admittance to the zoo if they drew a picture of the gorilla. Then came along Van Dingen, who took the picture challenge to the children of Equatorial Guinea, where *Snowflake* was born. Children there did drawings and then made boats out of them for a beachside installation.

Van Dingen digitalised all the pictures, and the difference between the sets of drawings is striking. In Spain, "it's always the white gorilla," he says, "but in traffic or in love with a woman. There is an amazing amount of information about what children project onto animals – love, sadness. But actually, these are our emotions." Even the tires the gorilla was shown to swing from were confusing to children in Africa. "They don't even have zoos," explains Van Dingen. The project explores the perception of these children towards nature in their home countries.

This project is also visible online, but you don't have to go to Rio or Dublin to see Van Dingen's work in real life. You only have to walk down Burchtstraat in Leuven, where *Snorkelzone*, a series of large-scale photographs, appears in several holes left by missing windows in the old Stella-Artois brewery building.

FASHIONISTA



Recessionista

Luxury has been redefined during the past few years. True fashionistas have given up dressing in designer wear from head to toe. The new, and more original, thing to do is combine H&M finds with one designer statement piece.

But what happens now that fashion lovers can't even afford that one expensive piece and have to cut back on their trips to the high street? They turn into recessionistas.

The thing about fashion is that it always revolves around the concept of what is "new" or "fresh". Obviously, last season's frocks don't belong to that category. But in a financial crisis, the first expenses to go in any household budget are frivolous expenditures – such as pricey fashion. Now that our ability to buy new clothes is restricted, we are forced to be creative in order to maintain the same exciting flash in our lifestyle. And this is how truly stylish people distinguish themselves. They don't need the designers to do the work for them; they'll design their own dream wardrobe. Bargain shopping turns into a sport, vintage thrifting into an art. Recessionistas don't stop at outlet malls or sales in their usual shops, they will scour the internet for the best buys and affordable vintage exclusives.

Shopping on eBay is just the beginning; professional and fashionable second-hand internet stores are popping up everywhere, and they're the perfect place to find show-stopping pieces.

Recessionistas also know the best place to shop is their own closet. Adjusting the hemline of a skirt, changing the buttons on a blazer or dyeing a shirt in a different colour can make all the difference. All of a sudden, last year's fashion is updated to another season.

Another way of making the most out of what you already have is to exchange things you no longer wear with others. It's not just friends who are raiding each other's closets. Swapping events are organised in many cities to give complete strangers the chance to trade fashion.

Some say fashionistas can be rather shallow, absorbed as they are in appearances and clothes. I say their recent transformation into recessionistas reveals how creative, inventive and optimistic they can actually be, and that they don't need a lot of cash to keep beauty in their lives.

Stéphanie Duval

online

www.designer-vintage.com
www.frugal-fashionistas.com
therecessionista.blogspot.com

online
www.zonation.be
flota-nfumu.blogspot.com

CHURCHES

Secret places of the soul

When a king declared himself an Anglican, the Church of England flourished in Flanders

Denzil Walton

Antwerp did not get to be one of Europe's most important ports by being stubborn. When merchants founded an English church in the 16th-century city, it had no legal footing. But since port authorities greatly benefited from trade with church members, it turned a blind eye to its presence. Anglicanism in Flanders was born.

It wasn't until 1831, though, that the state specified freedom of worship and a salary for Anglican clergy. As soon as it got the green light, the religion got off to a flying start: King Leopold I declared himself an Anglican and regarded the British chaplain in Brussels as his Royal Chaplain. There are now Anglican chaplaincies in Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent, Ieper, Knokke, Ostend and Tervuren.

Antwerp

In Antwerp, the first permanent Anglican Church was established in 1821 in Huidervetersstraat. By the end of the century, the building was too small for all the followers it attracted, so plans for a new church in the south-east of the city were approved. The grand Victorian Gothic revival with its impressive stained glass and many memorials are a reminder of the wealth and influence of the English-speaking community in Antwerp in those days. The building is dedicated to St Boniface, the 8th-century missionary from Devon who did much to evangelise the Netherlands and Germany. The church is currently raising money to begin work on major repairs.

Brussels

Holy Trinity Brussels came much later – in 1958 through the amalgamation of the congregations of Christ Church and the Church of the Resurrection. The detailed histories of all three churches are described in the fascinating book *Anglicans in Brussels* by Roger Cox, which is available from Holy Trinity. The book follows the develop-

ment of Anglican worship in Brussels from after the battle of Waterloo, when the first regular congregations were formed, to the end of the 20th century. It also covers the formation of Holy Trinity as a Pro-Cathedral for the Diocese of Gibraltar in Europe and the establishment of an afternoon service translated into French and led by its African members.

Ghent

St John's Ghent has recently found a new home in a former Carmelite convent. "There is something very special about worshipping in the chapel where daily prayer and worship has been the lifeblood of a community for so many years," says Father Peter Tilley.

Ieper

St George's Memorial Church Ieper, meanwhile, was inaugurated in 1929 to commemorate Commonwealth victims of the First World War in Flanders. Thousands of school students visit the church as part of their history course, and St George's is also open for use by military chaplains of all denominations to conduct memorial services. "Requests continue to be received," says Reverend Canon Ray Jones. Recent applications are from the Order of St John to commemorate over 1,000 members killed in the First World War; the Leicestershire Yeomanry, who will dedicate a memoriam to their dead in 2009; and members from St Andrew's College Grahamstown in South Africa who are due to attend to commemorate their former students. Reverend Jones stresses that St George's is not merely a museum; it's a living church much involved



St Boniface, Flanders' first permanent Anglican Church

in ecumenical work with the Catholic and Protestant churches in Ieper and beyond.

Knokke

Resembling a traditional English-style village church, St George's Knokke dates back to the early 20th century when upper class Brits holidayed in the coastal town. After the First World War it was given by the town to the then large British population. During the Second World War it was used as a stable by the German Army, and it still has some of the mangers where the horses were fed. In recent times there has been no permanent priest, but services are held throughout in the summer for holidaying visitors.

Ostend

The present English Church in Ostend

was built in the 1860s after it was forced to relocate to make way for the post office. Queen Victoria and other heads of state worshipped there in the 19th century. The church is owned by Ostend town council, and an extensive restoration programme is in the planning stage.

Tervuren

The latest Anglican church in Flanders is St Paul's Tervuren, which was planted jointly by Holy Trinity Brussels and All Saints' Waterloo in December 1988 and achieved full independence in 1994.

online
www.europe.anglican.org

TYRE TRACKS



Oudenaarde and the Flemish Ardennes

A tour around (but not over) the hilliest region of Flanders

Most appropriately, this bike tour starts on the Grote Markt in downtown Oudenaarde in front of the Tour of Flanders Museum, official home of the region's famous cycling race. From the front of the museum, follow signs for bike path 40 to a roundabout and then to the left, climbing up and over the River Scheldt. There is a path below along the water's edge – this is where the ride returns to town. For now though, follow a series of bike paths to get out into the countryside. Continue along number 40, then turn right at the T-intersection and follow bike path 18 to another roundabout; go almost all the way around before turning right at the yellow posts. The area here is residential, and Oudenaarde slips away behind as you roll ahead. In front of a house set off from the road with sculpted lions at its gates, the path veers off to pass through a series of gardens and then returns to the road. The hills of the Flemish Ardennes rise ahead, the terrain where the Tour of Flanders

punishes the world's top cyclists each spring. Curving to the right, join the old railway right-of-way, now turned into a beautifully paved bike path. Young trees stretch high on both sides, blocking the wind and giving the trail a secluded feel.

Keep straight, following signs for bike path 5. The trees give way to rich farmland packed thick with corn during the summer. At intersection 5, turn right towards bike path 6. A high ridge is prominent to the left, farms line the way. After another residential stretch, the path crosses a major road to reach the banks of the Scheldt, which is a fraction of its size this far from the North Sea.

Turn to the right along the river. Barges work their way upstream, some having already navigated the waters around Antwerp and Ghent. Birds congregate in the ponds that dot the fields on the right.

Follow signs for path 92 through a more industrial spot, the final destination for many of the barges just seen.

Head under the bridge and back into Oudenaarde. To the right is the 13th-century Maagdendale Abbey and church, their sides as gray as the Flemish winter sky, the clock face on the tower brilliantly golden.

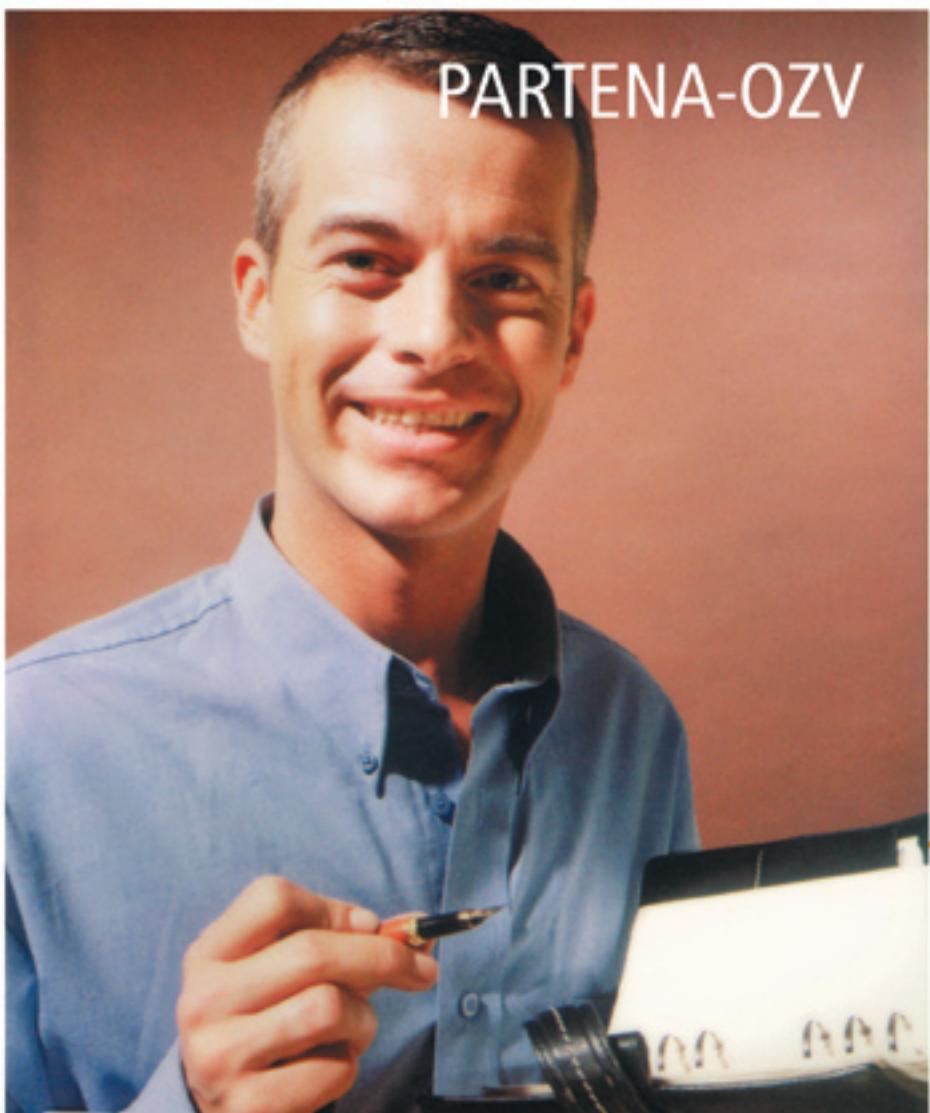
At the third bridge, a blue-sided drawbridge, turn left, crossing the river, and then take the second left onto Broodstraat and back to the Grote Markt where the ride began. There are a host of cafes here, but the cafe at the Tour of Flanders Museum is the only one decorated with photos of the ride you just completed.

Dave Meyer

Distance:
 20 kilometres

Difficulty:
 Moderate. There's a bit of a hill to begin

Time:
 90 minutes



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SHOPPING

Taking it personally

You've seen them on TV, now hire one of your own. Even in a recession, personal shoppers are in demand



Shutterstock

Personal shoppers can help you define your style based on your age, body type – and attitude

Stéphanie Duval

Certainly, it must be something that has flown over from the United States, where you can contract out virtually any task: walking your dog, picking up your groceries, parking your car or... shopping for a new wardrobe. Now, small companies are popping up all over Flanders, willing to take over the agonising chore of scrutinising this season's trends and picking out only those items that are perfectly right for you.

The question remains whether this service, while immensely popular abroad, will appeal to the Flemish. Now especially, budgets are tight, and this extra service might seem more than a little indulgent. And indeed, it proved rather difficult to find people who have enlisted the services of a personal shopper, just to write this article.

The personal stylist phenomenon is definitely not as common as, say, going to a salon for a beauty make-over. While the latter is something most women will contemplate at one time or another, having someone go through your closet, weed out the bad and help you find the good, is not as easy – both financially and psychologically.

However, the personal shoppers and stylists themselves say business is booming. There's an obvious reason for the inconsistency, perfectly explained by Sophie, who has taken to the shops of Ghent with a personal shopper in tow. "I've been given so many compliments on my new look that I don't want to reveal how I put together my new wardrobe," she says. "But maybe one day I'll tell my family and friends."

Karolien doesn't tell everyone she's been shopping with a personal stylist either, because she's afraid some might judge her for this seemingly unnecessary excess. "The truth is that it actually saves you money," she says, "because you stop buying things that you'll never wear, and you learn how to combine the things you already own." And then there are personal priorities coming into play. "I feel it's worth the money because I also enjoy the day out and the extra attention."

Though there are differences between the various services on offer in Flanders, it is safe to say that hiring a personal

shopper or stylist is not exactly cheap – rates can run from €55 per hour to over €300 for a day out. Marie admits that this is the reason she waited over a year to take the plunge: "I've long wanted to work on my personal style and go out to buy new things, but I've always considered it too expensive. You don't just pay a fee for the service, but you end up buying a lot of clothes, too."

Sophie booked her appointment months in advance, allowing her to save up for the shopping spree. "I wasn't worried as much about the fee I had to pay as I was about what I wanted to spend during that one day of shopping", she explains. "I didn't spend more than my regular budget for a new season, but the difference is that I spent it all in two hours' time."

The *Gentenaar* admits that it did make her feel a little uncomfortable at first, as if she had to cross a line. She also bought clothes that were more expensive than she was used to. "But everything I bought is of great quality, fits me perfectly and goes with the rest of my wardrobe," she says. "So I think of it as an investment." That is why next season, Sophie plans to return to her professional shopper, to complete her new wardrobe.

But there's another hurdle to jump if you want to outsource your clothes shopping. Most, if not all, personal shoppers will want to have an initial conversation with a new client to get a good sense of who they are and what they want. They will then go on to point out the things they would change, a process that is not always pleasant. Anyone who's seen the British programme *What Not to Wear* with the ruthless

Trinny and Susannah will understand.

"It was a little embarrassing to have a complete stranger go through my closet and throw out the things she didn't like," says Hilde. But she is quick to add that her personal shopper "was very careful not to hurt my feelings. I really felt like she had my best interests in mind. She was resolute – but respectful." Hilde was impressed enough to re-hire her personal shopper for a second round of shopping.

Laura was quite nervous during her appointment with a personal shopper duo in Antwerp. "I felt like they were X-raying me, and, for some reason, I found it really important what they thought of me," she says. The personal shoppers asked her about her personal life, family and lifestyle in order to better decide what colours and clothing would look best on her. "In a strange way, I felt relieved afterwards," she continues, "because everything they said about me was right. But it was a confronting moment, to say the least."

What is revealing is that, no matter how steep the fees, all these women found the experience rewarding. They keep the tips and advice in mind for future reference, enjoy their improved wardrobes and... slyly take the credit for their recent transformations.

Personal shoppers and stylists used by the women in this article. The first two also take male clients.

Personal Change-s: Gwen and Sil

Personal shopping after colour, style and figure analysis: €330 for six hours
www.change-s.com

Stylinglab: Michèle Mignolet and Sofie Fobe

Personal shopping after colour and style analysis: €200 (excl VAT) for six hours
www.stylinglab.be

My Personal Shopper: Emma Gelaude

Personal shopping: €55 per hour + travel expenses
www.mypersonalshopper.be

Not just for girls

Many personal shoppers take male clients, too. They find that men phone them particularly after a divorce. To look sharp for all those upcoming dates? Apparently not. Says Sofie Fobe of Stylinglab in Antwerp: "Most of them were dressed by their wives and found themselves at a loss after their divorce."

Classical & New Music

Antwerp

Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28
JAN 17 21.00 Brigitte Lesne, voice, harp; Hélène Decarpignies and Emmanuel Vistorky, voice; Viva bianca luna Biffi, fiddle; Pierre Hamon, flutes and bagpipe: French, German and Jewish music from the period of The Plague (1347-1350)
JAN 18 15.00 Il Gardellino: Bach concertos

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be
JAN 16-17 20.00 Lecture recitals: Graham Johnson, piano; Geraldine McGreevy, soprano: Fauré and French songs
JAN 21 20.00 Garret List Ensemble and Aquarius, conducted by Garrett List, Marc Michael De Smet: State of Siege by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish set to music by List (part of Masarat Palestine Festival)

Bruges

Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02, www.concertgebouw.be
JAN 17 20.00 Il Gardellino: Bach
JAN 18 15.00 Edding Kwartet with Nicola Boud, clarinet: Bach, Haydn, Brahms

Brussels

Beursschouwburg
Auguste Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be
JAN 21-22 20.30 Film concert:

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La Calisto

17 February – 1 March, De Munt, Muntplein, Brussels. Tickets from 070.23.39.39 or www.lamonnaie.be

The undisputed highlight of De Munt's opera season is the repeat of a seminal Brussels production that took the music world by storm in 1993, kindling a new interest in Venetian baroque opera and sealing Ghent-born conductor René Jacobs' standing as one of the most exciting baroque specialists of his generation. With its Ovidian plot featuring flawed and promiscuous gods, gorgeous set inspired by the painted ceiling of a Roman villa and exquisite score, this forgotten, 350-year-old, rambling masterpiece comes to life in a surprisingly modern way. Belgian soprano Sophie Karthäuser replaces Maria Bayo in the title role – that of a nymph who Jove seduces by passing himself off as the goddess Diana. Norwegian Johannes Weisser performs the rare feat of singing in a baritone voice when appearing as Jove and in a hilarious falsetto when in disguise. **Marie Dumont**

Muziektheater Transparant in Pour vos beaux yeux with films by Henri Stork and Charles Dekeukeleire and music by Joachim Brackx, Eric Slechim, Jan Van Outryve and Annelies Van Parys, performed by Hermes Ensemble

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

Concerts at 20.00:
JAN 15 Symfonieorkest van Vlaanderen, conducted by Etienne Siebens: Strauss, Korngold, Beethoven
JAN 16 Nikolai Lugansky, piano: Janacek, Prokofiev, Chopin
JAN 19 Russian National Orchestra, conducted by Vladimir Jurowski: Stravinsky, Prokofiev
JAN 20 Russian National Orchestra: Rachmaninov, Prokofiev, Shostakovich
JAN 21 Les Musiciens du Louvre-Grenoble, conducted by Marc Minkowski: Purcell, Handel, Haydn
JAN 22 Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel Gala Concert: Belgian National Orchestra, conducted by Walter Weller: Sibelius, Chopin, Schumann, Verdi

De Munt
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39, www.demunt.be

JAN 16 12.30 Els Van Zundert, flute; Luk Nielandt, oboe; Eric Robberecht and Femke Sonnen, violin; Yves Cortvriend, viola; Sébastien Walnier, cello; Letizia Belmondo, harp: Bax, Britten, Bliss
JAN 17 20.00 Relax, Maestro, Put Your Baton Down: Mark Padmore, tenor; Andrew West, piano; Richard Angas, narrator: poetry by WH Auden, music by Britten, Henze, Lutyens, Bainbridge, Watkins

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be

JAN 14 20.15 New Year's concert: Brussels Philharmonic, conducted by Cristian Orosanu: Dvorak, Smetana, von Suppé, Strauss
JAN 16-FEB 6 12.30 Bach's complete Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin
JAN 19 20.00 Jos Van Immerseel, fortepiano: Haydn's The Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross

Maison du Peuple
Sint-Gillisvoordeplein 37-39; 02.217.26.00, www.maison-du-peuple.be

JAN 16-17 20.15 Russes à la Maison du Peuple with Stephane Ginsburgh (JAN 16) and Philippe Liénard (JAN 17), piano: Mossolov, Prokofiev, Rachmaninov, Scriabin

Musical Instruments Museum
Hofberg 2; 0475.76.23.32, astoriaconcerts@skynet.be

JAN 18 11.00 Paul De Clerck, viola; Jean-Philippe Collard-Neven, piano: Schumann, Mernier, Schubert

Royal Conservatory of Brussels
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37

JAN 15 20.00 Il Gardellino: Bach, Graupner
JAN 19 20.00 Jos van Immerseel, fortepiano: Haydn

JAN 22 20.00 New Year's Concert by Royal Music Conservatory symphony orchestra: Haydn, Mendelssohn

Schaerbeek Hotel Communal

Colignonplein; 02.244.75.11, culture@schaerbeek.irisnet.be
JAN 21 20.00 Ensemble Exploration: Vivaldi

Ghent

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01, www.handelsbeurs.be

JAN 14 20.15 Fauré Quartet: chamber music

Wetteren

CC Nova
Molenstraat 2b; 09.365.20.20, www.ccnova.be
JAN 14 20.00 De Belgische Kamerfilharmonie & Liebrecht Vanbeckevoort: Mozart

Opera

Antwerp

Vlaamse Opera
Frankrijklei 3; 070.22.02.02, www.vlaamseopera.be
JAN 21 20.00 Die Schöpfung, oratorio by Haydn with the Vlaamse Opera Symphony Orchestra conducted by Umberto Benedetti Michelangeli, staged by Stephan Müller

Bruges

Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02, www.concertgebouw.be
JAN 21 20.00 Operation: Orfeo, contemporary opera by Hotel Pro Forma with the Latvian Radio Choir, conducted by Kaspars Putnins

Brussels

De Munt
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39, www.demunt.be
JAN 15-29 15.00/19.00 Death in Venice by Benjamin Britten with La Monnaie Symphony Orchestra and Choirs, conducted by Paul Daniel, staged by Deborah Warner

Ghent

Vlaamse Opera
Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02, www.vlaamseopera.be
Until JAN 18 15.00/20.00 Falstaff by Verdi with Vlaamse Opera Symphony Orchestra and Choir, conducted by Enrique Mazzola, staged by Giorgio Barberio Corsetti
JAN 22 20.00 Die Schöpfung, oratorio by Haydn with the Vlaamse Opera Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Umberto Benedetti Michelangeli

Leuven

Het Depot
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
JAN 14 20.00 Novastar

Jazz & blues

Borgerhout

De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.292.97.40, www.deroma.be
JAN 15 20.30 Rony Verbiest, Antje De Boeck and Jef Neve

Brussels

Archiduc
Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52, www.archiduc.net
JAN 17 17.00 Les Archiduks
JAN 18 17.00 The Nu Band

Beursschouwburg
Auguste Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be
Concerts at 20.30:

JAN 14 Animus Anima JAN 15 Eple Trio JAN 16 Jasper Huysestruyt Trio 22.00 Buffalo Collision with Tim Berne, Ethan Iverson, Hank Roberts, Dave King JAN 17 Octurn. Vice Versa #1 with Matthew Shipp & Bart Maris

Café Bonnefooi

Steenstraat 8, www.bonnefooi.be
JAN 14 21.00 Fred Becker Quartet
JAN 16 22.00 DJ Breakbit

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193-195; 02.733.13.78
Concerts at 20.30:
JAN 14 Henri Greindl Quintet JAN 15 UTZ JAN 21 Bansuricollectif JAN 22 André Donni/Lolo Meier Quartet

Le Caveau du Max

Emile Maxlaan 87; 02.733.17.88
JAN 15 20.30 Opus Swing, manouche jazz

Le Grain d'Orge

Waversesteenweg 142; 02.511.26.47
JAN 16 21.30 Shaggy Dogs

Maison des Musiques

Lebeaustraat 39; 02.550.13.20
JAN 16 12.30 Cryptonique

Westside

Karthuizersstraat 52; 0484.68.93.92, www.w-side.be
JAN 16 21.00 Pilgrimage Party XXXVI with DJ Muffin (Club Terror), DJ X-Pulsiv

Woluwe-Saint-Pierre Cultural Centre
Charles Thielemanslaan 93; 02.773.05.80, www.art-culture.be
JAN 16 20.30 Oli Cima

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpstraat 28; 02.512.92.50, www.soundsjazzclub.be
Concerts at 22.00:
JAN 14 Ester's Birthday Party, jam concert JAN 15 Da Romeo Band JAN 16 Chamaquiando, salsa JAN 17 Ben Dubray Quartet JAN 18 N-K Jazz

JAN 19 Brussels Rhythm'N Blues: The Witness JAN 21 Master Session JAN 22 Da Romeo Band

Musical Instruments Museum

Hofberg 2; 0475.76.23.32, astoriaconcerts@skynet.be
JAN 20 12.30 Jonas Knutsson/Mathilde Renault Duo

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
Concerts at 20.30:
JAN 14 Commander Grek JAN 15 Urbango JAN 16 Robert Jeanne Quartet JAN 17 Warren Vaché - Bill Mays Duo JAN 21 The Smash Trio JAN 22 Philippe Tasquin

Ghent

Bi'j De Vieze Gasten
Reinaertstraat 125; 09.237.04.07, www.deviezegasten.org
JAN 16 20.30 WOFO
JAN 19 20.30 Mr & Mr Mörg

Pop, rock, hip-hop, soul

Ardooe

Cultuurkapel De Schaduw
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82, www.deschaduw.net
JAN 16 20.30 Stanton

Antwerp

De Singer
Bavelstraat 35 (Rijkevorsel), www.ajazzexperience.be
JAN 15 20.30 Frank Vander Linden solo
JAN 17 21.00 Lalalover

Kelly's Irish Pub

Keyserlei 27; www.kellys.be
JAN 16 21.00 Guido Staps

JAN 17 21.00 Steve Jones

Sportpaleis
Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060, www.sportpaleis.be
JAN 22-23 20.30 Tina Turner (sold out, but tickets still available for February shows)

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
JAN 15 20.00 Gorki
JAN 21-22 20.00 Frank Vander Linden

Espace Toots

Stuckensstraat 125; 02.241.15.83
JAN 16 20.00 Un, Deux, Trois Chedid

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
JAN 17 23.00 Marco Bailey, Ortin Cam. Lessizmore #25 presents Ahmet Sisman, Jichael Mackson

Le Bar du Matin

Alsembergsesteenweg 172; 02.537.71.59
JAN 15 21.00 Leslie Nielsen
JAN 22 21.00 Too Much & The White Notes

Le Botanique

Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
JAN 18 20.00 Hjaltalin + Finn
JAN 22 20.00 Casiokids + Of Montreal

Maison des Musiques

Lebeaustraat 39; 02.550.13.20
JAN 16 12.30 Cryptonique

Westside

Karthuizersstraat 52; 0484.68.93.92, www.w-side.be
JAN 16 21.00 Pilgrimage Party XXXVI with DJ Muffin (Club Terror), DJ X-Pulsiv

Ghent

Charlatan
Vlaamsestraat 6; 09.224.24.57, www.charlatan.be

JAN 15 21.30 The Gonks, The Satteliers
JAN 22 21.30 Lefties Soul Connection

De Centrale

Kraankindersstraat 2; 09.265.98.28, www.decentrale.be

JAN 16 20.00 Feryal Öney: Turkmen music project

JAN 17 20.00 Gayda Istanbul: gypsy music from the Balkans

JAN 18 20.00 Tombaz: '20s-'30s tango from Istanbul

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01, www.handelsbeurs.be

Dance

Antwerp

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,
www.desingel.be

JAN 21-22 20.00 Ballet de l'Opéra de Lyon in Limb's Theorem, choreographed by William Forsythe, music by Thom Willems

Brussels

Kaaithéâtre

Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59,
www.kaaithéâtre.be
JAN 15-17 20.30 Headbanger's Wall by Peter Verhelst

Rijke Klaren

Rijke Klarenstraat 24; 02.548.25.80,
www.lesrichesclaires.be
JAN 14-17 20.30 Jardin Secret by Nyanga Zam Compagnie

Woluwe-Saint-Pierre Cultural Centre

Charles Thielemanslaan 93;
02.773.05.80, www.art-culture.be
Until JAN 15 20.30 Brussels Ballet in Barbie Story, choreographed by David Sonnenbluck

Leuven

Stuk

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
JAN 14-15 20.30 Abattoir Fermé in Tourniquet (in Dutch)

JAN 21 20.30 Bloet & Comp Marius in Wintervögelchen by Jan Decorte

Roeselare

Cultureel Centrum De Spil
Spilleboudtreet 1; 051.26.57.00,
www.despil.be
JAN 16 20.00 Double Points: Remains-Two – Emio Greco

Theatre

Antwerp

Antwerpen X
Berchem, Antwerpse Ring; 070.344.555,
www.daens.be
Until FEB 8 Daens: The Musical (in Dutch with French surtitles, extended by popular demand)

Bruges

De Werf
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29,
www.dewerf.be
JAN 15 20.30 Het Zesde Bedrijf in De drie mannen van Ypsilanti (The Three Men from Ypsilanti) (in Dutch)

Brussels

Uccle Cultural Centre
Rodestraat 47; 02.374.64.84
Until JAN 17 20.00 La Framboise Frivole in Furioso! (musical comedy)

Dendermonde

Belgica Theater
Kerkstraat 24; 052.20.26.26,
www.ccbelgica.be
JAN 14 20.00 Het Zesde Bedrijf in De drie mannen van Ypsilanti (The Three Men from Ypsilanti) (in Dutch)

Heusden-Zolder

CC Muze
Dekenstraat 40; 011.80.80.89,
www.muze.be
JAN 16 20.15 Het Zesde Bedrijf in De drie mannen van Ypsilanti (The Three Men from Ypsilanti) (in Dutch)

Roeselare

Cultureel Centrum De Spil
Spilleboudtreet 1; 051.26.57.00,
www.despil.be
JAN 14 20.00 Schudden in Ruis, comedy (in Dutch)
JAN 15 20.00 Emmeken

Visual arts

Antwerp

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,
www.desingel.be
Until FEB 8 Stellproben, five large-scale architectural installations by contemporary Austrian artist Heimo

Zobernig (open during performance nights)

Extra City

Tulpstraat 79; 0484.42.10.70
Until MAR 8 Justine Frank, a retrospective, work by the 20th-century Jewish-Belgian Surrealist, who is an alter ego of contemporary American artist Roeke Rosen

Modemuseum (MoMu)

Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70,
www.momu.be
Until FEB 8 Maison Martin Margiela 20: The Exhibition, celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Antwerp designer's Paris-based fashion house

Zilvermuseum Sterckshof

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

Brussels

Belgian Comic Strip Centre

Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80,
www.stripmuseum.be
Until MAR 8 The New Children's Comic Strips, works by young comic strip artists, including Sfar, Trondheim, Robin, de Bonneval and Guibert

Bibliotheca Wittockiana

Bemelstraat 23; 02.770.53.33
Until FEB 28 25 Years of Passion Shared, hand-crafted bookbindings since the Renaissance

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be
Until JAN 18 The Smile of Buddha: 1600 Years of Buddhist Art in Korea, masterpieces from Korea's National Museum (part of the Made in Korea Festival)

Until JAN 18 Timeless Photography, work by photographer Bien-U Bae (Made in Korea Festival)

Until JAN 18 111 Bowls, ceramics installation by Young-Jae Lee (Made in Korea Festival)

Until FEB 8 Lava II, installation by French artist Jean-Marc Bustamante

Czech Centre

Troonstraat 60; 02.213.94.30
JAN 15-FEB 6 The Martinu Phenomenon, life and work of Czech composer Bohuslav Martinu (1890-1959), with archives and photographs, on the occasion of the European Union's Czech Presidency

Flemish Parliament - De Loketten

IJzerenkruijsstraat 299; 02.552.40.43
Until FEB 21 Creations by winners of the Henry van de Velde Awards & Labels 2008 design competition, including Rotor Group, Atelier Blink, Ann Van Hoey, Xavier Lust, Michael Bihain and many more

Hallepoort

Zuidlaan; 02.534.15.18
Until JAN 31 Design Textile Paradise, works by students of Brussels' Fine Arts Academy, inspired by objects in the museum's collection

ING Cultural Centre

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

ISELP

Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70
Until JAN 17 Africa Report, photographs by Gaël Turine and Cedric Gerbeyhe
Until JAN 31 Ligne rouge, installation by Maria Dukers

Kelders van Cureghem

Ropsy Chaudronstraat 24; 070.25.20.20,
www.cavesdecureghem.be
Until MAR 1 Body Worlds 4 anatomical exhibition of human bodies by German scientist Gunther von Hagens

La Cambre Architecture

Flageyplein 19; 02.640.96.96
Until JAN 25 Lucien De Roeck, drawings, graphic works and models by the creator of the logo of Brussels' 1958 World's Fair

Le Botanique

Koningstraat 236; 02.226.12.57
Until FEB 22 Dark Pool, photographs and video by Belgian artist Marie-Jo Lafontaine, also shown in the Gesù church, in front of Le Botanique
Until FEB 22 Angel, photographs by Marie Le Mounier

Museum van Elsene

Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.22
Until FEB 1 Some 200 drawings by poets and writers, including Marcel Proust, Gustave Flaubert, Charles Baudelaire, Henry Miller and Günter Grass, among others
Until FEB 1 Paul Delvaux, a selection of works on paper by the late Belgian artist (1897-1994)

Natural History Museum

Vautierstraat; 02.627.42.38
Until AUG 30 X-treme, surviving in the most extreme climates and environments

Passa Porta

A Dansaertstraat 46; 02.226.04.54,
www.passaporta.be
Until JAN 25 Greenwich, drawings of chess players at Brussels' Greenwich café by Yvonne Catter

Royal Museum of Art and History

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

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11,
www.fine-arts-museum.be
Until JAN 18 Landscapes and portraits by Belgian artist Lismonde
Until JAN 25 Breuk en erfenis (Separation and Heritage), show marking the European Union's French Presidency, with 1970s works by French artists

Tour & Taxis

Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49
Until MAR 31 That's Opera: 200 Years of Italian Music, a look behind the scenes at the making of an opera, travelling exhibition by music publishers Ricordi
Until APR 26 It's our Earth!, interactive exhibition on sustainable development, with interventions by Belgian and international artists

WIELS

Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.347.30.33,
www.wiels.org

Until FEB 22 Un-Scene, works by young Belgian artists

Ghent

Design Museum

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

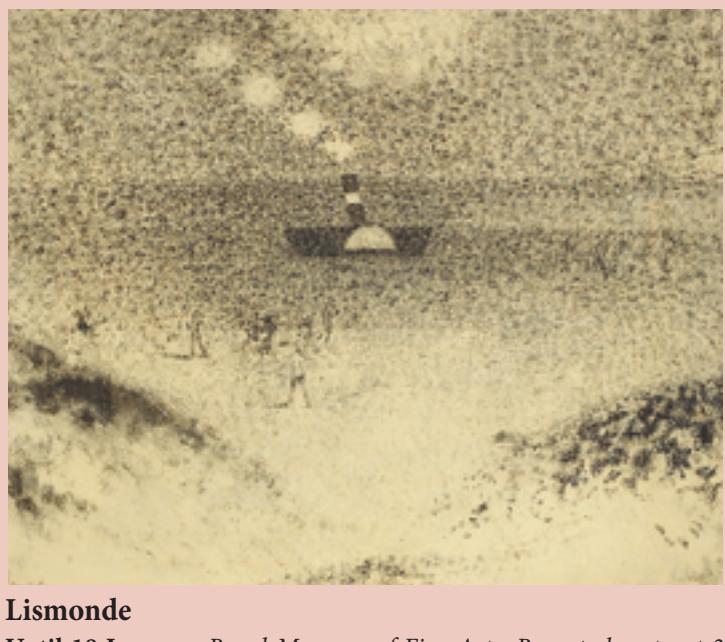
Dr. Guislain Museum

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

Kunsthal Sint-Pietersabdij

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

Don't miss this week



Lismonde

Until 18 January, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Regentschapsstraat 3, Brussels, www.fine-arts-museum.be

It's the final week to catch this exhibition of portraits and landscapes, which celebrates the 100th birthday of Brussels-born artist Jules Lismonde, who died in 2001. Lismonde was an accomplished flutist and struggled with the decision of which direction to take: the resulting works are drawings and paintings inspired by music and architecture (he was also a draftsman). This show is made up of 40 large-scale charcoal drawings that emphasise open spaces and the inherent boundless quality of music. **Lisa Bradshaw**

Museum of Fine Arts

Citadelpark; 09.240.07.00,
www.mskgent.be
Until JAN 18 Giambattista Piranesi, prints by the 18th-century Italian architect and artist

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03,
www.smak.be
Until JAN 18 Anyth_=, paintings by Werner Mannaers

Until FEB 22 The Absence of Mark Manders, installation by the contemporary Dutch artist

Until FEB 22 Pluto, installations by contemporary German artist Max Sudhues

Leuven

Tweebronnen
Rijschoolstraat 49; 016.30.08.69
Until JAN 16 (in)site Sagalassos: Reframed, landscapes, architecture and portraits from the Turkish archaeological dig lead by the Leuven university team, photographed by Bruno Vandermeulen and Danny Veys

Maaseik

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

Machelen-Zulte

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

Mechelen

Speelgoedmuseum
Nekkerspoelstraat 21; 015.55.70.75,
www.speelgoedmuseum.be
Until JAN 31 De beer in al zijn staten (bears)

Until MAR 31 Gils, Belgische saga van de elektrische trein (trains)

Until SEP 30 Cowboys and Indians (toys)

Meise

Kasteel van Bouchout, Meise
Botanical Garden
Nieuwelaan 38; 02.260.09.20
Until FEB 1 Plantenportretten (Plant

Portraits), watercolours by the garden's illustrators

Tervuren

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

Festivals & special events

Antwerp

Bouw & Reno: Building, renovation and property fair
Until JAN 18 at Antwerp Expo, Jan Van R

INTERVIEW

“I hope that plenty of other women will have the guts to do this job”

Erika De Saedeleer is one of five women ship captains in Flanders. She sometimes finds navigating the gender terrain more difficult than piloting the ship.

The nautical world has historically been an exclusively male domain, and Belgium has been no different. It was only 12 years ago that Flanders saw its first woman ship captain. Now it counts five – out of more than 350. Still, that's enough to be one of the world leaders for women in ship piloting.

The Vlaams Loodswezen, or Flemish Pilotage, is a government agency that, among other services, provides piloting services for sea vessels off the Flemish coast, in the River Scheldt and via the Ghent/Terneuzen canal to the Port of Ghent. Employing 357 pilots, it is an autonomous company with a transparent pricing structure.

The first female students enrolled in the Antwerp Maritime Academy in 1980. Three years of classes and 60 months at sea results in a Bachelor's in Nautical Sciences. A fourth year leads to a Master's degree, which allows the student to begin a career that leads to the position of captain.

“There were seven women students in 1984,” remembers Captain Erika De Saedeleer, a pilot on the Ghent/Terneuzen canal. “And that was considered a record.”

That was the year she graduated, and she soon found out that it was not at all easy for any 24-year-old chief mate – let alone a female one – to lead Spanish or Congolese sailors. “My goal was to do my job as an officer, not as a woman,” she explains, “but they didn't feel comfortable receiving orders from a female.” Still today, after more than 20 years in a marine environment, “it has become natural for me, but not quite for some men. Prejudice still exists.”

The glass ceiling and attitude

of sailors on board ships proved too much and, in 1997, De Saedeleer opted for a job as operations manager in the Port of Ghent. Two years later, the Flemish government launched a recruitment campaign for pilotage services. They asked De Saedeleer to come back, which she did. “After two years behind a desk, my first ship as a pilot felt like coming home again; I really missed it,” she says.

She was assigned to pilot between Ghent and Flushing Roads on the Gent/Terneuzen canal, including the Moervaart canal and the Ghent harbour docks. This is different from the Port of Antwerp, where a ship is brought to the locks by the river pilot and then guided to berth by specialised harbour pilots.

“Outsiders may think that navigating in a canal is easy. We say it's difficult because you can't get out,” De Saedeleer says. “The thing is that deep draught cargo ships or tankers cannot pass each other just anywhere in the canal because it's so narrow. Also, with heavy winds, navigating a ship with ballast is not at all simple.”

The Ghent/Terneuzen canal pilots take over the ship from the sea pilot and bring them into port. Though it's supposed to be a one-hour voyage, there are so many ships coming through the Terneuzen locks that it's often over capacity. “Vessels can suffer delays of several hours,” De Saedeleer explains. “Once past the Terneuzen locks, bridges in Sluiskil, Sas van Gent and Zelzate have intensive road traffic and sometimes remain closed because of accidents.”

The Ghent-Terneuzen canal piloting service is carried out by a pool of 26 pilots working in continuous shifts: six days at work, five days off. “The job is quite difficult



Not as easy as it looks: navigating the River Maas

to combine with family life, but it happens all the same. People ask if my job as a pilot can be combined with a family. Why don't they ask the same question when men apply for the job?”

Although the situation “has improved considerably,” after almost 10 years as a captain, De Saedeleer still meet crew members “who consider a female pilot shocking,” she says. “But either they accept my expertise or they don't.”

Sometimes, she says, “they have ‘stay away from this ship’ written all over their faces.” Other times, the crew feels the need to test her knowledge. “Initial reluctance then often changes into exaggerated

compliments when I've performed a difficult manoeuvre,” she says. “I'm just doing my job – bringing a ship from point A to B, with respect for the safety of the vessel, the crew and the environment.”

De Saedeleer hopes that “in 15 to 20 years” tolerance of women pilots will be greatly improved. In the meantime, “I hope that plenty of other women will have the guts to find out what a great and interesting job this is.”

Interview by Marc Maes

online

www.loodswezen.be

MEET THE NEIGHBOURS

Our weekly insight into the Flemish character

Friends

We gained a surprising insight into the Flemish character last week with the publication of a survey showing that 8% of Flemish people don't have any friends. Not a single one, according to a survey of 1,500 people carried out by the Christelijke Mutualiteiten health insurance fund.

The average number of friends is seven, the report says, most of them gained through work. The friendship survey also found that those with the average seven friends had 2.5 “best friends.”

We also learned that one-third of Flemish people claim to have online friends, although one-half of those surveyed considered these to be “superficial”. Flemish men are more likely than women to have virtual friends, it says.

Get a job and get a life

What is clear from this report is that anyone looking to make friends in Flanders needs to get a job. That's where four out of 10 people meet the majority of their friends. The other option is to join a club, which is where one-third of friendships are found. Or you can go out partying, good for another 33%. The Flemish might not have many friends, but they hang onto the ones they've got. Some 30% won't cancel a rendezvous just because the boss asks them to work late, and 90% will stay friends with someone even when they are jealous that the friend is getting a little too intimate with their spouse. Only 2% are willing to sever the friendship because of jealousy.

The report also notes that the average Fleming sees their best friend at least once a week. When they get together, they want to talk about everything, according to four out of five people. The report concludes that 81% of young people believe that friends should support each other in difficult times, compared to 61% of older people – which might be something to talk about next time you see your friend, if you have one.

Derek Blyth

THE LAST WORD

what they're saying in Flanders

Baroque rocks

“I'm not like some colleagues who think everything after Mozart is rubbish. I'm anything but the Ayatollah of Ancient Music.”

Phillipe Herreweghe
baroque specialist
beginning a new season with de Filharmonie

Winter death

“Sir, there's a man lying sleeping in the snow. He looks a bit dead.”

Primary schoolchildren in Leuven who found the body of a man frozen to death in a city park

No kidding

“Nothing has been worked on. Her breasts are neither bigger nor smaller. This is Goedele as she is.”

Danny Illegems
editor of Goedele magazine on Goedele Liekens' appearance as a pin-up on this month's cover

Benjamin Verdonck **Yasmine Wim**

Tellier **White Shadows** **Best Hot**

Chocolate **Stilte**

next week in Flanders Today