



FLANDERS TODAY

MARCH 04 2009

INDEPENDENT NEWSWEEKLY • WWW.FLANDERTODAY.EU

Erkenningsnummer P708816

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NEWS • BUSINESS • ARTS • ACTIVE • LIVING • AGENDA • INTERVIEW

Metro Museum of Art..... 9

Brussels' metro stations are a hotbed of contemporary art – mostly by local artists and all completely free for the viewing. Political battles may be brewing over new additions, but there is already plenty. We give you our top picks.



Weird museums 10

Welcome to the first in our month-long "weird museums" series, where we plunder the strangest of the region's rich collections of heritage and obscuria.



Letter from America 11

This once-a-month feature looks at the links between the United States and Flanders. This week, we meet a family of 17th-century weavers, who eventually begat beloved American inventor and statesman Benjamin Franklin.



Roleplaying

An intriguing show in Brussels looks at the changing perceptions of gender in Belgium

SHARON LIGHT

I am standing in front of a case of dolls while Els Flour explains something to me that is so obvious, I am ashamed that it never crossed my mind before: in the 19th century, girls' dolls looked like women. It was only around the turn of the 20th century that the "baby doll" was introduced, to reinforce the idea – from an age when girls were practically infants themselves – that a girl's job is to take care of babies.

Although we still see baby dolls today, this issue is part of what made the introduction of Barbie so significant. If you had looked above my head at that precise moment, I swear you would have seen a light bulb floating above.

Flour is an archivist at the Archive Centre on Women's History in Brussels and one of four brains behind a new exhibit in the capital's BELvue museum: *Boy or Girl... Destiny for a Lifetime? Belgium 1830-2000*. Through the lenses of family, education, and work, *Boy or Girl* shows changes and advances in perceptions of masculinity and femininity in Belgium over the past two centuries.

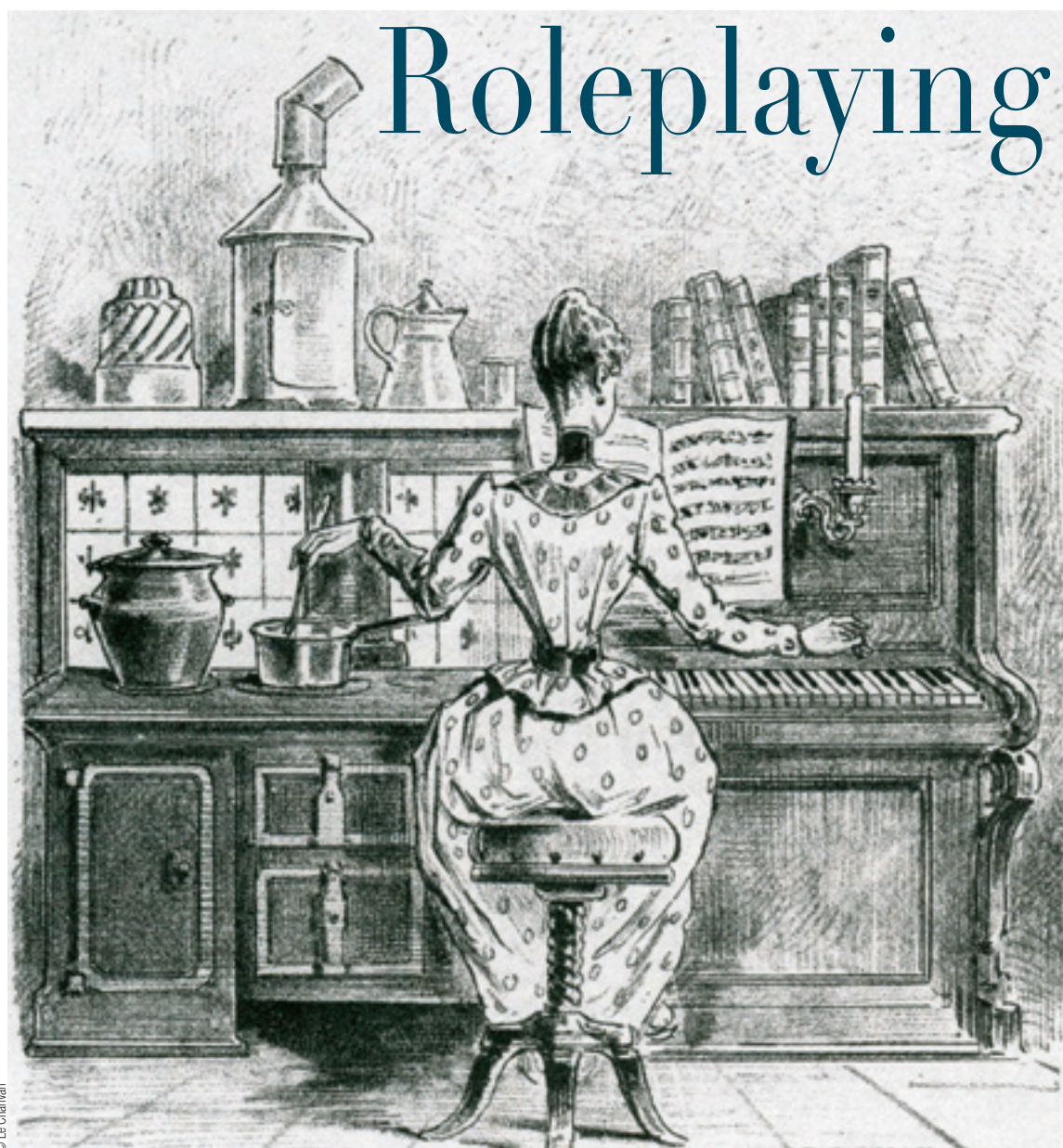
The exhibit begins with classic conceptions of gender – the stairs are lined with phrases such as "Boys don't cry" and "Girls play

with dolls". Then we are introduced to the role of women and men in family life, starting in the early 19th century, with images of women as subordinate to men and showing women working at home, dependent on the independent man.

But the exhibit is also quick to show how these ideas were undermined by reality – drunken men, divorcees, strong women or upper class women who hired nannies to tend to their children.

As we reach more modern times, we see a growing acceptance of gay and lesbian relationships. And there is a quick but fascinating foray into women's fight for trousers: "It used to be that very little boys would be dressed in girls' clothing. That's changing now – from the moment a child is born, they are put into different types of clothes depending on their sex," Flour explains. "By the 1920s, it was common for women to wear men's clothes, but you still don't often see men wearing skirts. Women had to fight for it, but it was easier for them to move into wearing men's clothing, whereas for men to wear women's clothing is seen as a step down on the social scale."

➔ Continued on page 4



Not a new concept: Upper-class women of the 19th century also had to do it all

Opel reveals plan for €3.3 billion bailout

Kris Peeters narrowly escapes diplomatic incident

ALAN HOPE

Opel could be turned into a self-sufficient European company – but only with €6.3 billion in state aid, the company announced last weekend. Moreover, it warned that even that option would still involve cutting costs by nearly €1 billion.

The prospect of a European rescue for General Motors (GM), including the Opel Antwerp plant, started to look distant last week when the Detroit-based parent company announced losses in Europe of €2.2 billion. Governments in Germany and in Flanders had been led to believe that GM would announce a business

plan on 31 March which would allow them to evaluate the chances of a state-supported rescue.

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters led a high-level delegation to Detroit for talks with GM and Ford (which has a manufacturing plant in Genk). Following the meeting with GM, Peeters could say no more than that "no decision has yet been taken to close Opel Antwerp". A more positive sign that the plant might be saved did not emerge from the meeting. Labour minister Frank Vandenbroucke, meanwhile, pointed out

➔ Continued on page 7

Leuven police called in to stop email virus

University employee sets off chain reaction

Leuven University has filed a complaint with the police in an effort to stem the flow of emails from across the world reacting to a fake news story which appeared to carry the University's imprimatur.

The email arrived two years ago on the desk of university employee Chris Mertens, who works in the finance office of the electro-technical department. In the mail, which claimed to come from a hospital in the Netherlands, a link was suggested between breast cancer and the use of deodorant.

Mertens forwarded the mail to "no more than six or seven" friends. Before he knew it, the email had been forwarded to others – now carrying the electronic email signature of Leuven University as well as Mertens' name.

"For about a year and a half, I've been getting about 20 emails a day from people who want to have their say on the subject," Mertens complained. "Some want to know which deodorant they can buy, and some are outright aggressive. I'm not a scientist. I can't speak on the subject of a possible link. I

sent that email out because it was an interesting subject, and it gave food for thought."

Mertens and the university have now filed a complaint to try to stop the flood of emails. But the chances of success are slim since the subject has now attained international proportions. "Today I got a reaction in from Canada," Mertens said last week. "That says something about the reach of a chain letter, doesn't it?" ♦

➔ <http://tinyurl.com/deokul>

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News in brief

Kim De Gelder, the 20-year-old arrested for the killings at the Fabeltjesland crèche in Dendermonde last month, has now been officially detained on suspicion of the murder of a 73-year-old woman in her farmhouse in Vrasene. She was killed a week before De Gelder went on the rampage in Dendermonde, stabbing to death two babies and a care worker. De Gelder denies the charge, his lawyer said.

Fifty illegal aliens from India and Pakistan have been discovered so far this year in and around Ghent's Sint-Pieters station, railway police said. Some 310 were recorded in for 2008, with 210 coming from India and Pakistan. Most were heading from Brussels to the coast with the aim of boarding a boat to Britain, police said.

Researchers at the Catholic University of Leuven, together with the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology, have discovered a gene that appears to stop the development of bowel cancer, according to a paper published in the journal *PLoS Biology*.

The federation of bakers has denied allegations that members fix prices among themselves, after consumer organisation Test-Aankoop filed an official complaint with the competition commission. Bread prices rose by 17% between 2004 and 2008 after price limits were abolished. At the same time, the consumer price index rose by only 12%, Test-Aankoop said. The federation said it was "logical" that prices would be similar in different outlets and denied local price-setting agreements.

Nato and the EU together generate 13-14% of the wealth and employment of the Brussels Region, according to the journal *Brussels Studies*. EU institutions employ up to 41,000 people, and Nato employs 4,000. The presence of the international bodies in the capital accounts for 20,000 lobbyists, 1,400 journalists and over 5,000 diplomats, as well as 4,500 international agencies and companies.

The federal food safety agency last week closed down the visitors' cafeteria of the St Elisabeth hospital in Antwerp. The agency said the cafeteria failed to meet hygiene standards.

Free mortgage insurance for Flanders



The Flemish government has agreed to reinstate free mortgage insurance for anyone who buys, builds or renovates their home, housing minister Marino Keulen announced last week. "Especially in difficult economic times, this could help people to overcome the psychological barriers to investing in their own homes," he said.

The government-guaranteed insurance covers loans for house purchases over €50,000 or renovation over €25,000, for people who have worked for a minimum of 12 months at the time of the loan – whether as an employee or self-employed. If they should then lose their job at any point during the repayment period, the insurance would contribute to paying off the mortgage for three years.

In the first year, the maximum payout is €500 a month, in the second year 80% of the original payment and in the third year 60% of the original payment. The three years can also be split into two periods of 18 months, if the homeowner has worked for at least three months between the two periods.

Unlike a previous system that used to be in place, there is no earnings limit, although the homes of higher-income buyers have to respect stricter energy norms. The value of the house is limited to €320,000 – except in certain expensive municipalities in Flemish Brabant (Kortenberg, Huldenberg, Bertem and Tervuren) where the ceiling is 15% higher.

The insurance scheme is coupled with increased attention to training and readiness to work. People insured under the scheme who lose their jobs will be interviewed by the Flemish training and employment agency VDAB more quickly than usual.

➔ www.bouwenenwonen.be

Prison authorities in Hasselt are investigating the death of a 29-year-old prisoner who died in his cell of a drug overdose. His cellmate was taken ill, possibly from the same cause, but is now stable in hospital. The two were inmates at a new prison in the Limburg city.

A man in Scherpenheuvel-Zichem has been ordered to remove an electric wire installed on the front of his house on the Markt square. The wire was intended to deter men from urinating against his wall.

One in three journalists runs an increased risk of psychological burn-out, according to a study by researchers at the Artevelde University College in Ghent. Marleen Teugels and Elke Van Hoof questioned over 700 journalists, and found that 10% were already suffering from burn-out without even realising it, with another 21% at high risk and 7% who have already been diagnosed. Only two professions run a higher risk: caregivers to the handicapped and chronically ill and company doctors. "There is a time-bomb under our newsrooms," the researchers concluded.



FLANDERS TODAY

Independent Newsweekly



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Cancer charity marks 20th anniversary



This year's campaign poster urges the public to donate small change

The Flemish League Against Cancer last week launched its bi-annual campaign "Kom op tegen kanker" (Come Up Against Cancer) 20 years after it was set up. This year's theme returns to an earlier preoccupation: research into cancer in children. Every year about 300 children in Belgium are diagnosed, with 80% finding a

cure. A priority for funding this year will be clinical tests for possible treatments.

The collection was started in 1989 after radio personality Kathy Lindekens, having lost both of her parents to the disease, expressed the wish for a massive public collection to fund research. "That was in the period of big benefits like Live Aid," she said. "But we didn't have the tradition in Flanders of organising large-scale collections." Nevertheless, the public responded en masse, bringing in a total in the first year of 100 million Belgian francs (€2.5 million). The campaign now happens every two years, with the takings rising to €3.3 million in 1990-91 and €11.6 in 2006-07.

Last week the charity gave details on last year's income and expenditures. Half of the total income came from direct pledges and

one-third from volunteer actions. The Flemish government paid €950,000, or 8.2%, and the sale of apples in schools brought in another 1.5%. On the other side of the ledger, €4.5 million went to psychological support services for cancer sufferers and their families, including helplines and holidays.

The previous campaign was centred on breast cancer, and €2 million was set aside for new initiatives in psychosocial care. Just over €1 million went to child-cancer home care units in Leuven and Ghent. The money given by Flanders region was spent on scientific research. Other areas targeted included palliative care, public information, local coordination, prevention campaigns and self-help groups.

➔ www.tegenkanker.be

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

€1 million

The street value of a haul of cannabis seized by customs officers on board a ferry travelling from Ostend to Ramsgate. The drugs were disguised in false car batteries on a trailer. The smugglers have not been traced.



30-40%

Fall in bookings in the Flemish hotel industry, according to industry representatives HoReCa Vlaanderen. The fall was especially steep in business bookings. The drop in demand has led to a price war among hotels.

1,033

prisoners escaped from Belgian jails last year, including escapes from court and failure to return to custody from home-leave. Interior minister Guido De Padt said the situation was "worrying".

€500,000

a year for the upkeep of the new Flanders House, which opened last week in New York City. "If you're going to do something, you shouldn't do it by halves," commented minister-president Kris Peeters, opening the new agency.

€250

extra in the pay-packets of all working people last week – providing they were resident in Flanders. The "job discount" was a gift to 2.6 million people, with the lower paid receiving €300.

922

fatalities last year on Belgium's roads, 14% less than the previous year and the first time the total has fallen below 1,000 since 1950.

1 in 5

tenants of rental accommodation who think they would be refused a loan to buy their own home, according to a survey by the Building Confederation. Half of all respondents still entertained the ambition, and only 7% had ever been refused in the past.

8 minutes

for Belgacom's help desk to pick up the phone on average, according to a survey by consumer magazine Test-Aankoop. The telecoms giant was the worst performer. Not a single help desk of the seven surveyed received a positive rating from the magazine. Writing a letter didn't help: 70% of questions remained unanswered, though the same proportion of companies managed to send a reply within five days.



A giant blue brain installed on the roof of the Musical Instruments Museum on the Hofberg in Brussels. The brain, entitled "InstruMENTAL", is the work of artists Chris Christoffels and José Roland and was commissioned to mark Museum Night Fever on Saturday, 7 March. "We've long thought that museums have to get rid of their stuffy image. A museum should be presented to the people as a brain-tickling environment," Christoffels said. "When we saw the Musical Instruments Museum, we immediately noticed you could see two shoulders and a head in the roof structure. It was just crying out for a brain."

➔ www.instrumental-mim.be

FIFTH COLUMN

New York, New York

Last week saw the opening in Manhattan of Flanders House, "a unique portal" and "gateway to Flanders", with offices in the prestigious New York Times Building. Present at the official opening were Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, Flemish minister for the economy Patricia Ceysens, and Scala, a Flemish girls' choir. Geert Bourgeois was not invited. The Flanders House was originally his idea, but since he had resigned as a minister in the Flemish government, there was no Big Apple trip for him.

Bourgeois cares a lot about the image of Flanders abroad. As a region, Flanders is responsible for tourism, the economy and exports, he says, all of which Flanders House aims to promote.

However, the opening was not met with unanimous applause. Karel De Gucht, the federal minister for foreign affairs, called it "nothing but a prestige project for Bourgeois". De Gucht argues that Flanders House is "of very limited use". It costs a great deal but will have only a small impact on the image of Flanders.

"If the Flemish government was as strapped for cash as the federal government, it would never even consider a project like this," De Gucht sneered. A better way of putting Flanders on the map, would be to organise a large exhibition of paintings by Ensor, Rubens or Magritte, he argued.

More fundamentally, he raised the question of whether Flanders should have its own diplomacy. He was peeved at Peeters' remark that Belgian diplomats in the US had not done a proper job in informing the Flemish government about the situation at General Motors.

In the end, Peeters felt obliged to defend Flanders House. We are not here to wave flags, he said; our approach is very pragmatic. This, in turn, angered Bourgeois, who, as a nationalist, has been accused in the past of flag waving.

There is something odd going on here. Everyone involved in the dispute is Flemish: Kris Peeters, Karel De Gucht, Geert Bourgeois and even the Belgian ambassador in the US and the consul in New York. The discussion is founded on the old sentiment that Flanders has to emancipate itself, especially in areas like diplomacy, which were traditionally dominated by French speakers.

But somehow Flanders has moved far beyond that. And what is true for New York is also true for Belgian diplomacy: if you can make it there, you can make it anywhere.



Hear me roar

Women and gender in Belgium

→ Continued from page 1

As you move into the “education” section of *Boy or Girl*, you start to see more of the Belgian footprint on the issue. Boys and girls were schooled separately in Belgium through much of the 19th century. Classes were separated, but so were the subjects. Girls learned all about the home, while boys were intro-

nurses, secretaries and mineworkers and shows the progression in attitudes towards women holding these jobs.

One female lawyer in particular is essential to the history of the women's movement in Belgium. Born in 1846, Marie Popelin followed and completed the law course at the Free University of Brussels (ULB) in 1888 only to be denied admission to the Brussels

Feminism is the radical notion that women are people.

~ Professors and authors Cheris Kramarae and Paula Treichler

duced to more complex ideas and improved technology.

In 1864, Isabelle Gatti de Gamond opened the first school where girls received the same education as boys. Within 20 years, other schools were following, and Belgian universities even started accepted women to their ranks.

The strong Catholic education system in Belgium had deeply ingrained both the roles of men and women and the idea of their complementary positions: women were valued but served a different purpose from men. According to Flour, this held Belgium back when other countries made advances in equality. With the beginning of a breakdown of these barriers in the school system came the beginnings of the feminist movement. However, it took advances in women's professional lives – the third part of the exhibit – for the women's movement to formally take shape.

The idea of “the working woman” is actually both an old idea and a familiar reality. “There was only a short period at the end of the 19th century when women were not working,” says Flour. “Generally, they were part of the work force, often doing demanding, physical work, like in factories.” *Boy or Girl* highlights women in various professions, including lawyers,

bar because of her gender.

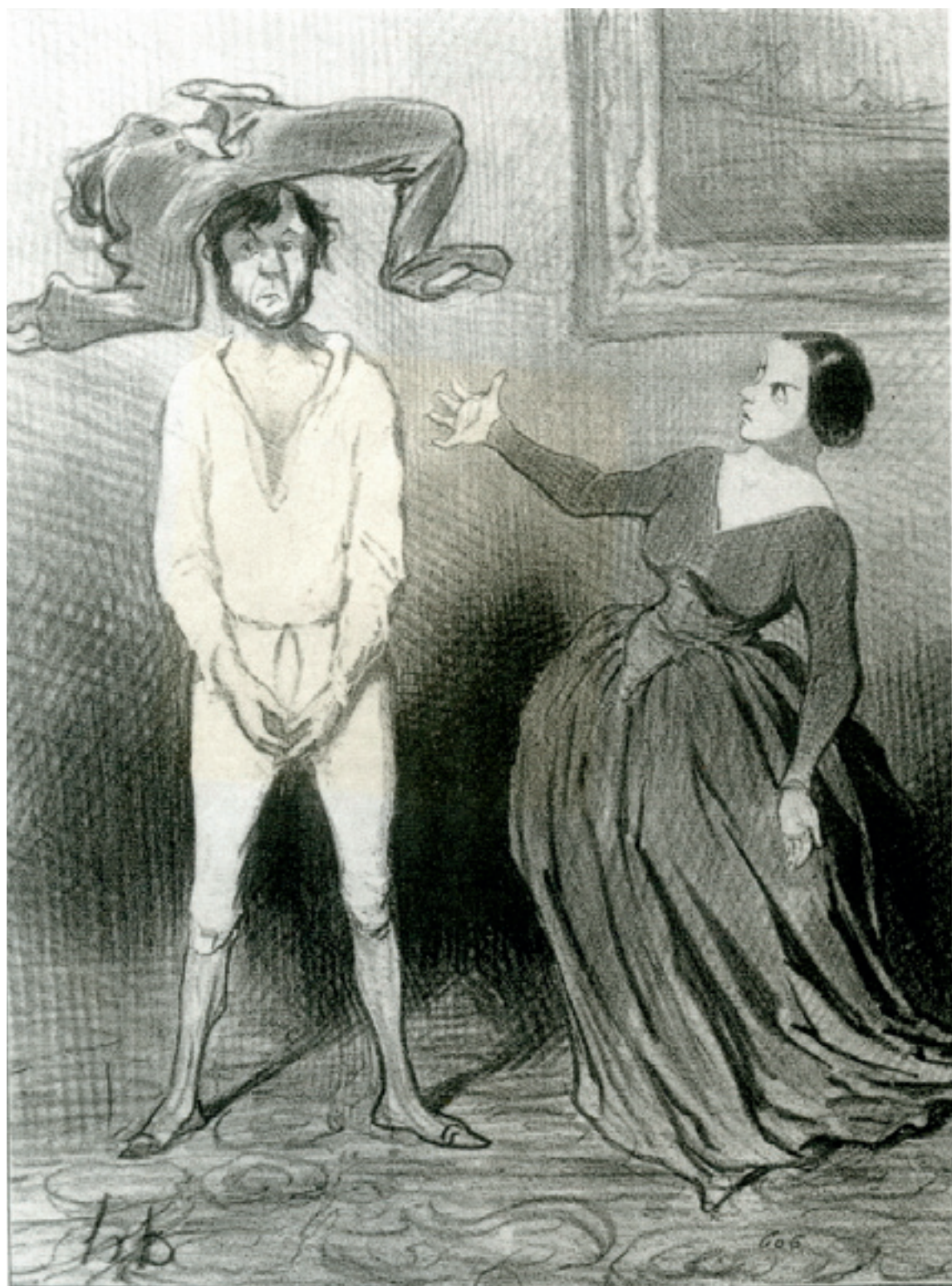
In 1892, she co-founded the Belgian League of Women's Rights, thus kicking off the feminist movement in Belgium (and proving how dangerous it is to deny a woman what she wants). Despite establishing herself as one of Belgium's first feminists, Popelin herself was never admitted to the bar; she died in 1913, and it was not until nearly a decade later that Belgium saw its first female lawyer.

Still, Popelin stirred up a great deal of controversy, and the exhibit includes various cartoons mocking and criticising the idea of a female lawyer who must breast feed while in court and who leaves her motherly duties to her husband to tend to her job. In this sense, professions such as nursing were more amenable to the public perception of a woman's function.

The First World War, in particular, was an important time for nurses. “It became a respected profession,” notes Flour, “but you see women more in the role of caretaker than as a professional.”

Last in the right to vote

In many countries, the First World War became an emancipating time because men were away fighting, and women took their jobs in the



It's clear who doesn't wear the pants in this family

workplace. But in Belgium, the country was officially neutral and, of course, occupied. There were also fewer men in the army, and the German army had dismantled most factories.

Belgium, therefore, ended up with a reverse situation. Men were home and out of work, and women were carrying on with their usual pursuits. Men, like women, were out trying to find food for their families, which undermined the ideas about the man as the head of the household.

Shortly afterwards, the women's suffrage movement began in Belgium. Initially, voting rights were granted solely to mothers and widows of soldiers and civilians killed by the enemy, as well as women imprisoned or condemned by the enemy during the war. Then in 1920, women were given the right to vote – but only at the local level (and excluding prostitutes and “adulterous women”).

Before that time, men could each vote three times in an election, and the discussion of granting the right to women became wrapped up with the “one man, one vote” campaign. The discussion was



A Belgian inter-war advertisement

Smet-Tobback

The under-representation of women in parliament remained a sore point in Belgian politics. This led in 1994 to the introduction of the Smet-Tobback law, which forced parties to include a minimum quota of women on their lists. The rules were applied for the first time in the 13 June 1999 elections, leading to a virtual doubling of the number of women in the House. In Flanders, the number increased from 12 to 20.

The 1999 election brought a new generation of women into politics. Many of them were young, bringing fresh ideas to the political debate.

From *The Belgian House of Representatives: From Revolution to Federalism* (2006), published by the House of Representatives

divided along party lines: Liberals and Socialists were opposed to women's suffrage, but the Catholics were in favour (they suspected that women would vote overwhelmingly Catholic). "One man, one vote" and women's (limited) suffrage were both adopted, but it was not until 1948 that women could vote at all levels of govern-

Justice in Luxembourg ruled in her favour, arguing that this was discrimination on the grounds of sex.

The Flemish Vrouwenoverlegkomitee (Women's Consultation Committee) held Belgium's first Women's Day at about the same time, on 11 November, 1972. With an estimated 11,000 partic-

The thing women have yet to learn is nobody gives you power. You just take it.

~ Roseanne Barr, comedian and TV celebrity

ment, making Belgium one of the last Western countries to give women what is now considered a fundamental right.

Party lines

Party lines similarly disrupted the progression of the women's movement. Rather than a single unified women's movement, Belgium saw women's movements within the Socialist, Liberal and Catholic parties. Marie Popelin attempted to set up a more universal women's party called the General Party of Women, but her efforts failed.

This fragmentation of the Belgian women's movement continued up to the "second feminist wave" in the mid-20th century. Until that time, most feminist activity came from the French-speaking community. Women's issues were rooted in the higher Belgian classes, which were almost exclusively French-speaking in the 19th and early 20th centuries. But the second wave took hold in Flanders slightly earlier and more strongly than in Wallonia.

It was under this second wave that "equal pay for equal work" became a legal issue. Belgian laws were finally established in court in 1968 when air hostess Gabrielle Defrenne brought a case against the national airline Sabena for forcing her to retire at 40, while allowing male colleagues to work to 50. The European Court of

participants, the event became annual, although numbers have dwindled considerably in recent years. They now hover around 1,500.

"When people come, they are glad they came, but it's hard to get them there," admits Four. "They worry that it's all day, and it's all women – but there are also some men who come." In general, she sees a stigma developing as more and more people reject the label of "feminist".

Gender blender

Gender studies have recently made inroads in the academic sphere, but it has run up against the same trends that Flour sees. Universities across Flanders created an inter-university programme in Women's Studies, but Professor Marysa Demoor, chair of Ghent University's Centre for Gender Studies, notes that this has now fallen apart – in a way, for good reason. "Universities tend to have mainstream courses on women and gender issues," she says, and this general interest made a unique programme difficult to sustain. "Students don't need to make the effort to go to Antwerp just to learn gender studies."

Even as gender studies becomes more of the norm, some factors start being taken for granted. Professor Chia Longman, chair of Gender and Diversity Studies at Ghent University, notes a more



Separate and not quite equal: Women push coal at a 19th-century Belgian mine (top); fifty years later, they're still doing the grunt work, but in an office

troubling trend in the mindset of her students. "The outlook is very androgynous. They can't really understand what gender studies are about," she explains. "They see problems of discrimination in other cultures – ultra-religious societies or the Third World – but they don't see it in their own." But when Longman gives them the statistics, "they see how these inequalities creep out, and they become very interested."

Longman's course on "Gender and Diversity" also looks at new conceptions of gender – moving beyond the dichotomy of male/female to explore issues of transgender identities or ideas of a third or fourth gender. In Flanders there have been steps at the governmental level to introduce awareness on these issues.

"Gender in the blender" is a project sponsored by, among others, the province of Flemish Brabant, that aims to assist with gender issues faced by teenagers. Their website includes a variety of resources to

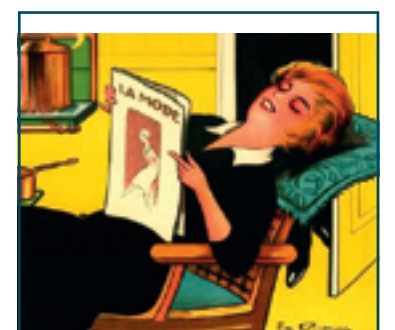
help young people work through questions of gender and identity, including an extensive and engaging series of lessons to be used in classrooms or other settings.

"Everyone is confronted with their own gender identity and with gender norms – social pressure to conform to norms of masculinity and femininity," says Joz Motmans, a researcher at the Policy Research Centre on Equal Opportunities at the University of Antwerp, who interviewed subjects for the project. "We wanted to create solidarity among youngsters and in schools...to [encourage] respect for being different, for being gender variant."

Awareness, then, seems to be at the forefront of a modern gender movement. But as people begin taking for granted how much has been accomplished, there is a danger of losing momentum in achieving more. The BELvue exhibit shows us the remarkable shifts in Belgian society over a relatively short period of time.

Even as we take a moment to rest on our laurels and appreciate it, let it be a reminder of how much we collectively have yet to accomplish. ♦

➡ www.avg-carhif.be



Boy or Girl... Destiny for a Lifetime?

BELvue Museum,
Paleizenplein 7, Brussels

Until 31 May

➡ www.belvue.be



Since its launch in December 2007, *Gender in the Blender*'s materials on gender diversity have been used in schools throughout Flanders

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Talks with GM offer hope but no guarantees

→ Continued from page 1

that the company had given the governments more time. "We have to be careful not to raise too many hopes, but it gives us more time to work on a proposal with the Germans," Peeters reported. GM had promised to make its plans clear by 31 March.

According to the plan, agreed by the Opel board and announced by President of GM Europe Carl-Peter Forster, Opel Europe would require €6.3 billion in aid to allow it to stand on its own two feet until an expected revival of the market in 2011. GM would contribute €3 billion of that, while the European governments would provide the remaining €3.3 billion.

The company would also need to make €950 million in cuts, which unions believe could be carried out without plant closures or forced redundancies. In contrast to other ideas floated, the Opel plan does not involve a complete break with Detroit. Although European Opel would be self-sufficient, GM would continue to hold a partial share, said Forster, while looking for "alliances, shareholdings and other connections" from external partners such as governments.

Antwerp's future

Peeters is keen to make sure that Flanders maintains a strong negotiating position. On Friday he sent a letter from New York

to the representatives of the four German Länder (regions) with GM factories inviting them to meet as quickly as possible. "If [Germany] gives the green light to a stand-alone Opel, it's enormously important for the Antwerp factory that Flanders be involved in the discussions as early as possible," he said.

Antwerp's future seems to lie in the area of research and development – and eventually production – of green cars. But while that might provide a reason to keep the plant open, it is unlikely to be enough to save all of the jobs at risk.

GM plans to cut 47,000 jobs worldwide, with 27,000 of them outside the US. The European car market, meanwhile, is suffering from severe overcapacity. The ABVV union representative at Opel, Rudi Kennes, has gone so far as to admit that even in a best-case scenario, costs and jobs will have to be pruned.

"We have two main demands," Kennes said. "No factories to close and no forced redundancies. But jobs will be lost, through early retirement or golden handshakes. Anyone who believes the opposite will have to be some kind of magician."

In Germany last week, 15,000 people took part in a demonstration in Rüsselheim, where Opel has its European head office. With its five GM plants, Germany



Kris Peeters in New York for the opening of the new Flanders House

has taken the lead in examining the proposal to hive off European operations into a stand-alone entity. Estimates of how big the bill for that would be ranged from €3.3 billion to €9 billion – the latter figure being described by Opel itself as "absurd". In fact, Opel's own figure fell neatly between the two extremes.

According to the EU Commissioner for industry, Günter Verheugen, turning European GM into a stand-alone concern is "not as simple as some people think". And while the Commission was concerned about protecting jobs, he said, the company could not count on unconditional support from governments, as state support is strictly controlled

by EU law.

• Meanwhile Belgium's man in Washington, Ambassador Jan Matthijsen, played down a row between Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters and federal foreign minister Karel De Gucht as "a storm in a teacup". De Gucht was reported to have reacted furiously to criticisms made by Peeters that Belgian diplomats in the US could have done more to keep his government informed about the situation with GM. The notion of a separate Flemish representative, floated briefly by Peeters, was quickly stifled. Peeters was in New York, following his visit to Detroit, to open Flanders House, which will promote Flemish business and culture in the US. ♦

New workers are part time and low paid

Fewer than half of all new entrants to the workforce start with a full-time job, according to research carried out by the Leuven-based research bureau Steunpunt WSE. Of the 164,000 young people who entered the workforce for the first time in 2006, 18.9% were temping and 32.2% had taken a part-time job. Just under half – 48.9% – were starting off in fulltime employment.

The figures are markedly different from those for the workforce as a whole. At the same time, 69% of the total workforce in Flanders of 2.1 million people were working full time, with temp work taking up only 2.8%. More than half of young people (52.9%) were classed as "workers" and 45.5% as "staff". A minimal 1.6% were civil servants. That compares to a total of 37.7% workers in the population as a whole, and 16% civil servants.

The new workers are mostly (52.9%) paid less than €80 a day, with 41.5% getting between €80 and €125, and only the lucky few (5.5%) making more. Nearly half of all workers make €80 to €125 a day, with 21% making less.

• On the other side of the employment picture, the cost of unemployment benefits this year is expected to reach €10.9 billion, an increase of 13.5%, according to the Flemish employers' federation Voka. The organisation estimates an increase of 100,000 in the number of people without work, considerably more than the federal government's projection of 64,000. ♦

Crisis means less waste



The waste incineration plant at Wilrijk

Businesses are producing less waste as a result of the economic crisis, according to the official dumping sites that exist to process waste. One example, the Hooze Maey dump on the A12 in Antwerp port, has been closed for a total of four weeks in recent months, with the amount of industrial waste being delivered there down by 50%. Director Daniël Dirickx estimated that the total for 2009, based on results so far, could be as low as 110,000 tonnes, compared to an earlier forecast of 200,000 tonnes.

There are 14 recognised industrial waste dumps in Flanders, and similar trends are being seen there. "We don't have exact figures yet," said a spokesman for the regional waste

agency Ovam. "But it can happen that we will close all 14 dumps because our incineration ovens are able to process not only the amount of domestic waste delivered, but also industrial waste. And that's of course very satisfying because we want to avoid waste dumping as much as possible." Household waste, by contrast, is not declining in quantity, regardless of the crisis.

The news was welcomed by the Better Environment Union (BBL), who also oppose the dumping of waste. But the respite is only temporary, they warned. "We predict that the amount of industrial waste being brought in will go back up again the minute the economy recovers," a spokesman said. ♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Airport services • Aviapartner

Airport services company Aviapartner was due this week to announce an agreement with its banks that will help bring the company back from the edge of bankruptcy. Last week Aviapartner reached agreement with staff on the withdrawal of 12 vacation days, part of a package designed to avoid redundancies and pay cuts. Aviapartner is suffering from a severe debt burden and a drop in demand as a result of the economic crisis.

Automobiles • Ford

Car manufacturer Ford is to invest €51 million in its production facility in Genk in Limburg. The investment will modernise production of the S-Max, Galaxy and Mondeo. The Flemish government will contribute a further €7 million.

Aviation • Flying Group

The economic crisis is keeping many executive jets on the ground, either because their owners cannot afford them or because they want to avoid conspicuous luxury in hard times, according to Flying Group, which rents out and maintains private jets. The Antwerp-based company announced demand had fallen by as much as 20% since 2007.

Brewing • InBev

AB InBev, the Leuven-based brewer, has announced it is selling Labatt USA to venture capitalists KPS Capital Partners for an undisclosed price. The sale was a condition of the takeover by InBev of Anheuser Busch last year.

Containers • Ghent University

Ghent University last week began interviewing companies from Flanders and elsewhere for the provision of student accommodation in prefabricated containers. The university intends to install 250 container apartments in the academic year 2010-11 to cope with the accommodation shortage. So far 16 possible suppliers have been identified.

Menswear • Dirk Bikkembergs

Flemish fashion designer Dirk Bikkembergs last week opened a store in Milan. The three-storey shop includes an entire apartment which will shortly be occupied by footballer Andrea Vasa. To publicise the opening, a bus with 100 footballers drove through the centre of the fashion Mecca. "Research in Italy showed that many people identified Bikkembergs with football," said commercial director Serge Dewilde. "This kind of shop concept can only strengthen that idea."

Postal services • De Post

De Post should be forced to repay a part of the annual subsidy it receives in compensation for the three-day work stoppage that took place this week, according to Open VLD deputy Ine Somers. She estimated the sum for the three lost days at €1 million.



Marin Kasimir's "Interurbain" at COOVI in Anderlecht

Underground art

Brussels metro stations are decorated with dozens of works by contemporary Belgian artists, creating one of the world's most unique art spaces. But the future is uncertain

IAN MUNDELL

Travel around the metro in Brussels and works of art leap out at you. Literally, sometimes.

When the train pulls into COOVI station, the figures in Marin Kasimir's photographic panorama seem to press in through the windows. And when you step out of the carriage at Graaf van Vlaanderen, life-size human figures suspended high above the rails appear to be caught in an act of collective suicide. Even though the work is called "16 x Icarus", I'm not entirely sure that this is the effect artist Paul van Hoeydocnk had in mind.

There are works of art in most of the metro stations in Brussels, thanks to a policy that began with the birth of the network in the late 1960s. The idea was that art would contribute to the broader aim of having an open, welcoming transport system in which each station had its own identity. Another goal was to bring contemporary art to a public that would not necessarily seek it out in museums and galleries. Evidently, it is hard to achieve all of this at the same time. For example, Stokkel station has a strong visual identity thanks to its parade of characters from the Tintin comic strip, but this is hardly contemporary art. At the other extreme, Félix Roulin's "Sculptures" at Thieffry is impeccably contemporary but seems to be in the process

of consuming passengers rather than welcoming them.

Sometimes you have to actively search for particular pieces, either because they have been tucked away in obscure passages or blend into the background (is it geometric abstraction or just coloured tiling?). But art spotting on the metro is addictive, and there are lots of pieces that are well worth lingering over or travelling out of your way to see.

Deciding what gets in

Choosing art for the metro was initially the job of the national communications ministry, advised by an artistic commission. When the Brussels Capital Region was created in 1989, it became the responsibility of the regional transport minister, who established a new set of advisors, the Artistic Commission of Transport Infrastructures.

This commission has a dozen or so members, most from the art world, including critics, historians and museum directors. There are also representatives of MIVB, which runs the metro, who advise on technical questions and ensure that the art doesn't interfere with passenger safety or train efficiency.

The process of commissioning a work, from the first discussions to its inauguration, typically takes around two years. The first step is for the members of the commis-

sion to think about which artists they would like to invite to propose a work for a particular site. A series of meetings then takes place, during which each artist discusses his or her ideas and presents previous work and proposals for the station in question.

Technical limitations and cost are taken into account, but generally this is done after the conceptual questions have been answered. Once a single candidate is selected, the recommendation is passed to the minister for a final decision.

According to Gita Brys-Schatan, president of the commission and founder of the ISELP art institute in Brussels, the focus is on experienced artists, although younger people may be included if their work has reached a certain maturity.

"Our two main principles are the experience and merit of the artist and if the artist is able to propose a project that relates to the history and sociology of the neighbourhood in which the station is located," Brys-Schatan explains in a telephone interview. "One wouldn't do the same thing, for

instance, in one area where there are luxury boutiques and another where there is a strong immigrant community."

Examples where she thinks this local focus has worked particularly well include Jan Vanriet's "De stad beweegt in de palm van mijn hand" ("The city is moving in the palm of my hand") at De Brouckère, which reproduces visual elements from the neighbourhood, past and present, along the walls of a passage with a moving walkway. Then there is Vincen Beeckman's "Casting" at Anneessens, which covers columns on the platform with a montage of photographs taken in the homes of people living nearby.

And at Noordstation there is Johan Muyle's massive fresco "I promise you (r) a miracle", which includes portraits of 43 contemporary personalities from the arts, theatre, music, literature and cinema. "It's a work that speaks directly to the public and at the same time represents the location – because it's a place of transit, a place of arrival," says Brys-Schatan. "The artist wanted to show everyone who passes through that these are

the personalities of our culture."

Art vs politics

The accessibility of the art is something that is balanced across the network, with easily understood work in some stations allowing the selection of challenging work elsewhere. This is the only aspect, however, where the commission has been able to take a broad view. "After a certain number of years we tried to develop a collective policy – a programme that included the whole of the territory," Brys-Schatan explains. "Unfortunately, it turned out to be impossible because each of the 19 communes has its own hegemony."

As for the ministers, they have accepted the vast majority of the commission's selections. Occasionally, though, they have rejected quite well-known artists or insisted on an artist that the commission doesn't like. (Brys-Schatan is too discrete to name names.)

At present, the future of art on the metro is unclear. There are new works still to be inaugurated, but the commission has been put on hold for the past year while the current transport minister, Pascal Smet, considers whether or not he wants to continue with arrangements as they stand. The assumption is that change is in the air, as indeed it is at Belgica station, where a display about the effects of global warming is being installed, rather than a work of art. ♦

"The artist wanted to show everyone who passes through that these are the personalities of our culture"

Five top stops

Merode "Ensor: Vive la Sociale" (1978) by Roger Raveel

Raveel asks "What did Ensor mean by 'Vive la Sociale'?" referring to a banner in James Ensor's celebrated painting "Christ's Entry into Brussels". The work, which also references Jan Van Eyck's "Lamb of God", provides a fascinating connection with Raveel's Flemish artistic forebears, while proposing a view on society with characteristic touches: a mirror embedded in the painting, a self-portrait, concrete walls and faceless men in flat caps.

Hermann-Debroux "The Fall of Troy" (1978) by Jan Cox

Originally at Rogier, there is something appropriate about this painting's more recent home at the end of line 1B, mounted above a tunnel through which only empty trains pass. The



"Metrorama 78" at Aumale



"The Fall of Troy" at Hermann-Debroux

shapes of ramparts, a horse and a woman's face half-hidden in Cox's fiery colours suggest a distant world of myth, accessible beyond the frontier of the network. But as a warning, there are also a skull and the setting sun.

Naamespoort "Het uiteindelijke Verkeer" (1979) Octave Landuyt

The Flemish artist's huge ceramics suggest four phases of life – birth, love, adulthood and death – but to my eye there is something funereal about all of them. They are like giant *memento mori*, finding death in life and putting it under glass. Yet these hands and faces, like details from a Richard Dadd painting, also have a mesmerising gothic elegance that blends perfectly with the shining surfaces of the ticket hall.

Aumale "Metrorama 78" (1982) by Jean-Paul Laenen

The long platforms of the metro lend themselves to panoramic images, and here sculp-

tor-turned architect Laenen has reconstructed the local neighbourhood with images supplied by the MIVB photographic club. In one direction, the Mechelen-born artist has reproduced the scene of the station under construction, with roads dug up, piles of earth and cobbles everywhere, and houses braced for demolition. In the other direction, there is a more fragmented collage of images evoking local life in the 1970s.

Het Rad "De Cyclus van het Rad" (2003) by Denis De Rudder

In "The Cycle of the Wheel", the Brussels artist provides a different sort of panorama, with eight views of the neighbourhood painted in sinuous strips representing the wandering gaze of the viewer. His flat, realist paintings take us seamlessly from the rooftops to road works, from trees to the water in a canal. The more you look, the more the transitions draw you in. And on the ceiling, a similar view of the trees overhead.

IM

CULTURE NEWS

Benjamin Verdonck has installed a new work in Antwerp-Berchem train station – three blank advertising panels rented from Clear Channel. The conceptual artist says the panels were a protest at the waste of money in the world.

Flemish socialist party sp.a is the most interactive Belgian party on the internet, according to a study by TrendQ, but French-speaking politicians have more presence on Facebook. Elio Di Rupo has over 18,000 "fans", compared to Yves Leterme's 2,278.

Jaap Kruithof, philosopher, teacher and anti-authoritarian, has died at the age of 79. Kruithof helped set up the department of moral philosophy at Ghent University and influenced several generations with his radical positions on matters such as pop music – an instrument of capitalism – and the meat industry.

The Boekenleeuw, the annual prize for the best Flemish children's or youth book, has been awarded to Els Beerten for her book *Allemaal willen we de hemel* (*We All Want the Sky*), set during the Second World War. The Boekenpauze, awarded for the best illustrated book, went to Sabien Clement for her work in Paul De Moor's book *En iedereen ging op zijn mieren zitten*. (*And They All Sat on Their Ants*).

Koko Flanel, the 1990 Flemish film by Stijn Coninx starring Urbanus, is being revived by the Metropolis cinema in Antwerp. This was the most popular Flemish film ever until it was overtaken recently by Erik Van Looy's *Loft*. But with new ticket sales at Metropolis, it could surpass *Loft*'s record. The action was described as "playful" by cinema owners Kinopolis, who have installed a counter on their website to keep track of the total ticket sales of the two rival films. ♦



Koko Flanel

➔ www.kinopolis.com

Deliciously bitter

Mijn Restaurant! begins its second season

This week, the first episode in a new series of *Mijn Restaurant!* (*My Restaurant*) was broadcast on VTM, with the expectation that Flanders, as before, is going to be perched on the edge of its seat for the next few months.

The show is based on an Australian format: *My Restaurant Rules*, which now has a number of versions in Europe. Five pairs of contestants in five cities are given a budget and a building with which to create their dream restaurant. In the first few weeks, we see them develop the setting, employ staff and arrange supplies.

Then the jury is introduced. In *Mijn Restaurant!* it's a three-person team headed by Peter Goossens, chef of Hof Van Cleve, Belgium's top-rated restaurant. He's the equivalent of Gordon Ramsay, short of an F-word or two. Like the British super chef, Goossens is tough, demanding, uncompromising and anything but mealy-mouthed. His fellow jury members are food writer Dirk De Prins and hotel executive Christel Cabanier.

The contestants have to sit through an ordeal that's virtually inhuman in its cruelty, but which makes great television: the jury's comments are recorded and played back to them. The appeal of shows like this is *panem et circenses*, with the bread taking the form of a whole menu. The struggle is gladiatorial, but it's a cut above the usual reality knockouts. These people have talent: they can actually cook and run a restaurant, as most of them have continued to do since. It's nice to watch someone at work who

knows what they're doing.

Not that the cut-throat aspect isn't equally important. Last year's contestants – in Leuven, Hasselt, Ghent, Ostend and Antwerp – were a mixed bag. The final two remaining were a mother-and-son team (who eventually won) and a Hasselt lesbian couple. For most of the season, though, the audience chose to concentrate on a 19-year-old fighting for a restaurant in Ostend with her 20-something boyfriend. Like many a 19-year-old, she thought she knew it all. Under intolerable pressure, she didn't come over very well.

All five restaurants were operating in the black as the series was running; the decision to close one or the other was taken by the public based on the views of the judges – and their own prejudices. This year, however, only the winner will be allowed to stay open. "That way it's all or nothing," said a VTM spokesman. "The losing couples get an huge amount of experience and become immediately well-known. Of course they can open another restaurant under another name"

The series reached a million viewers, which is enormous for Flemish TV. More remarkable still was the press coverage, not only in the *boekskes* but also in respectable newspapers, with articles not only about the programme but also about the private lives of the contestants.

VTM anticipates more of the same this year, and asked TV journalists not to reveal the names of the new contestants

ALAN HOPE



Mother-and-son team Micheline and Jelle of Leuven won the first season of *Mijn Restaurant!*

or the locations of their restaurants – the sort of media silence that's usually associated with kidnap cases. Not that there hasn't been controversy to report: one of the restaurants has already been the subject of legal action since it's installed in a listed building for which there's no permit for rebuilding. The city of Kortrijk has promised to repay the fine VTM will face.

The show is focusing on smaller towns this time around, and chances are participants have been selected with a view to maximum drama. The show is a major success, though, before it even starts. Whether it will add much to the Flemish culinary scene is another question. ♦



Achelse Blauwe, a Limburg cheese, was recently voted “the best cheese in the world” at a competition in Lyon

Passion in Passendale

A uniquely West Flemish view on cheese-making

DENZIL WALTON

Soon after entering De Oude Kaasmakerij, the cheese factory museum in Passendale, you realise it’s a museum with a difference.

You are immediately introduced to Aesop’s fable “The Fox and the Crow” – the one in which the crow has found a piece of cheese but is tricked into dropping it by the flattering fox. Push a button and listen to it being recited in wonderfully incomprehensible West Flemish dialect.

A bit further, posters explain the importance of milk in the human diet. It starts off nice and easy with Romulus and Remus being nourished by the mother wolf. Then there’s a picture of...crikey, what on earth is that old man doing? It’s the legend of the *mammelokker*. A toothless old criminal was thrown into a dungeon in Ghent and sentenced to death by starvation. The only person allowed to visit him was his daughter. She had just given birth, and a daily breastfeed through the bars of his cell kept him alive.

In a review of sensational ways to point out the health benefits of drinking milk, that would be pretty high on the list.

After that, things calm down, although there are still plenty of surprises. Did you know that original mozzarella cheese was made from water buffalo milk? And in medieval Europe milk was not obtained from cows, but goats. Apparently, before the cow was domesticated, it was a fleet-footed, deer-like creature nimbly bounding through the forests. Kind of hard to imagine, but it wasn’t until cows were converted into beasts of burden that it was discovered that a cow supplies much more milk than a goat.

Then you enter a reconstruction of a cheese factory from the 1930s. The original museum building was a 19th-century farmhouse. During the First World War, the Spruytte family fled to Normandy and lived on a farm where cheese was made. After the war, they returned to Passendale and rebuilt their farmhouse.

“They decided to make the most of their new skills and started to make Pont l’Evêque,” explains the museum’s curator Michaël Pector. “By the 1930s, their cheese factory was proving to be a great success, especially as cheese-making was new to this part of Belgium.”

In the 1940s, when they moved production, the building gradually fell into disrepair. In 1995, the old cheese factory and its material were given protected status and restora-

tion began. De Oude Kaasmakerij was officially opened in 2003.

Multilingual displays describe how cheese was made in the 1930s, while TV screens show video clips of modern-day production methods in the Belgomilk cheese factory down the road in the centre of Passendale.

A further fascinating insight can be gained by examining the factory’s home-made milk churn draining rack. When milk was received from the farmers, the churns were emptied into the weighing basin and the weight of milk recorded so that the farmers could be paid. Time is money, so there was no time to wait for the churns to drip dry. At least that’s what they told the farmers.

However, when the farmer left, the supposedly empty milk churns were placed upside down on a rotating rack to drain at leisure into a vat. In effect, it was free milk. A draining milk churn provided about 10 centilitres of milk dregs. Not much, you might think. But with 500 churns passing through the factory each day, that adds up to a daily gain of 50 litres, or 15,000 litres of free milk per year.

Ten litres make one kilogram of cheese, so that’s a lot of cheese made with free milk. “Very West Flemish,” adds Pector with a rueful smile.

Today, milk is subject to all kinds of tests. In the past, as the museum’s rudimentary laboratory shows, the best way to discover whether milk was good or bad was by tasting it. Later in the process, the same cheesemaker would taste a piece of cheese, check its colour, feel its consistency and smell a sample to know how well it was maturing.

The museum invites you to play your own smelling game. Buttons release a series of cheesy odours into tubes, over which you are encouraged to take a deep whiff. They include over-ripe Camembert, Roquefort and goat’s cheese.

Children can participate in a treasure hunt and take their own photographs which will then appear on the museum’s website. Outside they can play a tune on the “churn organ”.

New for 2009 is an exhibition on the Milk Brigade. This was a Belgian promotional campaign that was launched in 1959 to encourage children to drink milk. If they promised to drink one glass every day they would become Milk Brigadiers. It was a huge success. On display are the membership cards, posters and TV commercials. Prizes could be won,



including modern inventions such as transistor radios and cassette players, as well as tickets to the Olympic Games.

Look out for the cute photos of the 500,000th Milk Brigadier, Rudi Meeuwis, who seemed to achieve the status of a minor celebrity. (Not surprisingly, he was a fresh-faced, well educated and perfectly bilingual young boy.)

According to tradition, Cleopatra owed her beauty to daily baths in donkey milk. Cows’ milk can start to congeal with body heat, explains Pector. “Asses milk contains little or no casein so would have been ideal for bathing in, although she would have needed a lot of it.”

At the end of your tour, you come face to face with a full-size and amazingly lifelike model of the beautiful queen reclining naked in her bath, provocatively sponging milk over her perfect breasts. I just love these West Flemish. ♦

➡ www.deoudekaasmakerij.be

Tune in next week for the second in our month-long “Weird Museums” series

Tyre tracks

DAVE MEYER



Touring the Trappist monasteries

Westmalle

The best known of Flanders’ Trappist beers is Westmalle, and, remarkably, for all its global renown, it is still brewed traditionally at the Abbey of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, a pleasant bike ride from the beautiful town of Turnhout.

Begin your cycle tour in front of the city’s

train station by taking two lefts and leaving town to the west along bike route 68. Pass the Turnhout harbour with its impressive array of private boats at anchor. Just beyond, the path breaks off to the left through a quiet alley, then crosses a small road through a residential area, eventually emerging near a pasture with sheep and goats.

Passing under the highway, the path plunges into the forest, a small chateau to the right, pines and birch lining the way. The scenery changes almost constantly on this ride. In a minute, you are out of the forest and passing rows of large, eclectic homes before again heading into the woods, with thick pines blocking out the sun.

The next change comes upon reaching the Dessel-Turnhout-Schoten canal. Turn left, following the dirt path along the south bank past several numbered drawbridges, wandering ducks and signs for cycle cafes.

At bridge 5, switch to path 72, continuing

along the canal through its mix of agricultural and forest scenery until the next small drawbridge and the town of Beerse. Switching to path 71, the mix of scenery continues until the path emerges next to a bend in the river where a long-immobile houseboat floats below the first signs advertising Westmalle beer. Motley flocks of geese mob the trail, moving between the wood and the water. Cross to the north bank on the pedestrian bridge, following signs for path 85. Two million years ago, this area was the coast of the North Sea, the origin of the clays which are now mined here.

At the next crossing, return to the south side, following signs for path 84 and then 66 through more forest and then wide open farms. Crossing a large road, follow path 66 to an even larger road, eventually switching to path 50. This runs along a cobbled carriageway into the town of Westmalle, below the red brick Sint-Martins Church, by far the biggest building

along the route.

Paths 50 and 51 take you through winding, suburban Westmalle. Path 62 then leads through the woods into the grounds surrounding the abbey itself, first noticeable by the rich smell, familiar to many Flemish towns, of beer in the making.

There are many interesting buildings spread over the grounds, and the path ends at a map which can help guide your visit. Most importantly: the café, offering Westmalle’s full range of beers, is to the left. ♦

Distance:

23 kilometres

Difficulty:

Moderate. Good bike paths but a long return trip (particularly if you’ve tasted the Tripel)

Time:

90 min

Letter from America

The Flemish roots of Benjamin Franklin

DAVID BAECKELANDT



Not just American children know Benjamin Franklin: In the recent Oscar winner *Slumdog Millionaire*, one of the questions put to Jamal on the TV quiz show is "Who is on the American €100 bill?" Jamal knows the answer, of course

Benjamin Franklin, as all American schoolchildren quickly learn, is one of America's "Founding Fathers" and his likeness graces the US \$100 bill. Franklin's achievements in science, diplomacy and other areas still stand after centuries. And all this is due to the flight of

hard-working Flemish weavers, who left their homeland with little but a dream for a better life in a new land and the hope to practice their faith.

Not many American schoolchildren know where Benjamin Franklin came from geographically.

Born in Boston, he lived 33 of his final 35 years in Europe. But underlying all of this is a secret to his past: Franklin was born with Flemish DNA.

Like many of the 17th-century transplants to the English colonies in North America, Franklin's Flemish ancestors came from England's second largest city, Norwich, in East Anglia. This is the region of England closest to the North Sea and an historic hotbed of religious dissent. It is also the place where thousands of Flemish Protestant weavers settled after fleeing the persecution of the Spanish Duke of Alva in the late 1560s.

At the same time, economic depression hit East Anglia – partly because of social unrest in Flanders and partly because Spanish wool was replacing English as a preferred raw material. In addition, the Flemish in the "Iepers Kwartier", as the revolutionary area around Ypres was known, had created more technologically advanced weaving skills that offered lighter clothing suitable for summer – more attractive than the scratchy old woollens Norwich's weavers produced.

The town authorities in Norwich were eager to reverse this decline and sought out the aid of the "Dutch Church" in London. In 1565, 24 Flemish and six Walloon master craftsmen were allowed to relocate under favourable condi-

tions to Norwich. Franklin's ancestors were among these religious refugees. While the details of their arrival in Norwich are uncertain, Jan Folger and his future wife, Elisabeth, were both born there. Their son, John, born in 1593, and grandson Peter were also born in Norwich and both listed their profession as weavers (a mostly hereditary profession).

But although the English authorities welcomed these immigrants with their highly sought-after skills, they did not make the Strangers, as they were called, feel at home. Nevertheless, the Stranger population steadily grew in Norwich, from 300 in 1565 to 3,900 by 1571.

When Queen Elizabeth died in 1603, the sentiment towards and treatment of the Strangers worsened. Some fled back across the North Sea, but others saw a better life awaiting in the New World. In 1635, John Folger and other family members boarded the ship 'Abigail' for New England. They were part of a great exodus that emptied out the Eastern Counties of England.

In the New World the Folgers prospered. John, a widower, married Mirabah Gibbs, whose brother-in-law was instrumental in settling Martha's Vineyard in the 1640s. By 1642, John and Mirabah had five acres of land in Watertown, Massachusetts, and



two young daughters. John's only son Peter moved to Nantucket, where he worked as a surveyor, miller, schoolteacher, machinist, blacksmith, eyeglass maker, author, interpreter and preacher.

Peter mastered the Wampanoag language to better preach to the Native Americans around Nantucket, supported religious and ethnic tolerance (in an age of witchcraft trials), Gained the Indians' respect and was adored by his youngest daughter Abiah.

Peter died in 1690, 16 years before Abiah gave birth to Benjamin Franklin. Benjamin would grow up to embody many of his maternal grandfather's Flemish traits of intellectual curiosity, razor-sharp wit and relentless energy. But she must have told him tales of his Flemish grandfather since he wrote in his autobiography of Peter Folger's "decent plainness and manly freedom". ♦

Letter from America is a new monthly feature tracing the historical connections between the United States and Flanders

fashionista

STÉPHANIE DUVAL

Creative crossovers

The mixing and matching of different labels or of fashion with other forms of art has never been so popular. But since when did it become boring for a designer to be confined to one brand? And when did we begin expecting fashion brands to produce all kinds of side products?

It is difficult to pinpoint when all this design pressure began, though the collaboration of high-street chain H&M with high-end designer Karl Lagerfeld in 2004 must have had something to do with it. Before that, such a collaboration was unheard of. Now, it seems the only way for a label to stay cool is to attract a high-profile fashion designer to revitalise their image.

Puma, for example, added a fashion dimension to their sporty style by asking Sergio Rossi to do a special line of sneaker-inspired shoes and by hiring visionary designer Hussein Chalayan as their creative director. Eastpak, the ultra-respectable brand

known for its indestructible backpacks, assigned designer duo Eley Kishimoto to develop a summer collection and has a collaboration with American cult designer Rick Owens waiting in the wings until fall.

Meanwhile, Belgian brand Kipling made a similar arrangement to introduce a capsule collection with Valeria Siniouchkina of Girls from OMSK.

It's not that these designers are repeating their tricks, only for a different label. They are actually branching out into new territory, often not having a line of accessories themselves, or venturing into a different style domain. Nissim Israël of Belgian brand Olivier Strelli, for example, will design stockings for Cete next fall, while this summer he debuts a line of wall decorations for Home Interiors.

This collection of wallpapers takes fashion and applies it to an entirely different field: a strategy other brands have already perfected. G-Star devel-

oped not only a car, a boat, a bike and even a helmet under their brand, dousing these objects in their typical street wear style, but recently they also launched a musical platform, releasing G-Star CDs.

Tommy Hilfiger has been into music for much longer, organising Hilfiger Sessions events all over the world: intimate jam concerts where fashion and music lovers can discover new talent.

But it's not just music: pop culture in all of its forms is inspiring fashion. Why else would Louis Vuitton have asked director Sofia Coppola to design her own line of handbags and shoes for the brand, or would Pepe Jeans have turned to the Andy Warhol foundation for an exclusive collaboration?

Obviously, we haven't seen the last of these creative crossovers, though one can't help but wonder: when will people become wistful for fashion in its purest, most authentic form? ♦



Nissim Israël



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ING 



Dvořák Happening

ALAN HOPE

It's a daunting prospect to spend the entire day in the company of any composer, but then there are not many who have the variety and range of Antonín Dvořák, as visitors to deSingel in Antwerp will find out on Sunday, 8 March. From 11.30 all the way through to 22.00, the arts centre features only works by the 19th-century Bohemian master.

Brahms wrote of Dvořák (pictured above) that he had composed "pretty much everything" and the range on show at deSingel is impressive. The day begins with the overture *In Nature's Realm* with Antwerp's deFilharmonie symphony orchestra, conducted by Libor Pesek. That's followed by the violin concerto by German Isabelle Faust. Next, the Antwerp Conservatory Symphony Orchestra plays the *Slavonic Dances*, the work that made Dvořák's name, conducted by Domonkos Héja.

Next is superstar mezzo Bernarda Fink, the Argentinian-Slovenian who has made a special study of Dvořák's *lieder*, includ-

ing performing with the chamber orchestra of Jozef Suk, the composer's great-great-grandson. She'll be accompanied by British pianist Roger Vignoles.

The G minor piano concerto pairs Russian pianist Alexander Melnikov, a former Queen Elizabeth Prize-winner, with deFilharmonie. Written in 1876, this was the first of the three concertos Dvořák composed, all of which feature in today's programme. (He didn't rate it as highly as the other two.) Dvořák spent years in America, including a stint as director of the National Conservatory of Music in the 1890s. The string quartet titled *American* is performed by the Artis Quartet, who are then joined by Niek De Groot on bass for the string quintet in G. Then

deFilharmonie returns with the Eighth Symphony, a rather cheerful work now overshadowed by the Ninth, *New World*.

Finally, French cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras performs the cello concerto in B minor, the last and greatest of Dvořák's concertos. It contains a tribute to his former pupil Josefina Čermakova, with whom he had fallen in love 20 years previously. She married someone else, and Dvořák married her sister, with whom he had nine children. ♦

deSingel, Desguinlei 25
Antwerp
8 March, 11.30-22.00

www.desingel.be



Hungarian conductor Domonkos Héja

MORE CLASSICAL THIS WEEK

Severin Von Eckardstein ➡ Bozar, Brussels

Patricia Kopatchinskaja ➡ De Bijloke, Ghent

Händel 09 festival ➡ Concertgebouw, Bruges



Antwerp

Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28
MAR 7 21.00 More Maiorum
conducted by Peter Van Heyghen:
Vivaldi's Concerti da camera

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,
www.desingel.be
MAR 4 20.00 Collegium Vocale Gent
Orchestra and Choir conducted by
Philippe Herreweghe: Bach
MAR 4-5 20.00 LOD in Judaspassie,
world première by Pieter De Buysser,
staged by Inne Goris, music by
Dominique Pauwels performed by
B'Rock, conducted by Frank Agsteribbe
MAR 8 11.30 Dvorak Happening:
tribute to the Czech composer Anton
Dvorák (see left)

Bruges

Concertgebouw
t Zand 34; 070.22.33.02,
www.concertgebouw.be
MAR 5 20.00 Flanders Symphony
Orchestra conducted by Etienne
Siebens, with Patricia Kopatchinskaja,
violin: Debussy, Szymanowski,
Mussorgsky

Brussels

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be
MAR 5 20.00 Philharmonia Orchestra
conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen, with
Solveig Kringelborn, soprano; Juha
Uusitalo, bass baritone: Schönberg, von
Zemlinsky
MAR 6-8 15.00/20.00 National
Orchestra of Belgium conducted
by Walter Weller, with Severin von
Eckardstein: Dukas, Ravel, Debussy
MAR 8 11.00 Di Xiao, piano: Ravel,
Messiaen
MAR 10 Arcadi Volodos, piano:
Scriabin, Ravel, Schumann, Liszt

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39,
www.demunt.be
MAR 6 12.30 Concertino: The
Monnaie Malibran string quartet:
Beethoven, Bartók

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,
www.flagey.be
Concerts at 20.15:
MAR 6 Huelgas Ensemble conducted
by Paul Van Nevel: de Rore, Brumel,
Le Jeune, De Monte, Gombert, de
Kerle MAR 10 Ars Musica opening
concert: Les Percussions de Strasbourg
conducted by Lorraine Vaillancourt:
Hugues Dufourt's Erehwon (1972-76)
MAR 11 Jan Michiels, piano: Dufourt,
Schubert, Liszt, Schoenberg MAR
12 Arditti Quartet: Boesmans, Parra,
Djordjevic, Dufourt

Miniemenkerk

Miniemenstraat 62; 02.511.93.84,
www.minimes.net
MAR 11 20.00 Concerto Italiano
conducted by Rinaldo Alessandrini:
Monteverdi (tickets from 02.507.82.00)

Musical Instruments Museum

Hofberg 2; 0475.76.23.32,
www.astoria-concerts.be
MAR 8 11.00 Ingrid Procureur, harp;
Daniel Rubenstein, viola; Nozomi
Kanda, flute: Takemitsu, J Jongen,
Debussy

Royal Conservatory of Brussels
Regentschapstraat 30; 02.213.41.37
Concerts at 20.00:
MAR 4 Baroque de Limoges Ensemble
conducted by Christophe Coin,
with Maria Cristina Kiehr, soprano:
Rebel, Stravinsky, Couperin, more

MAR 5 Gala concert: Brussels
Chamber Orchestra and Brussels
Royal Conservatory String Ensemble
conducted by Ronald Zollman:
Martinu, Dvorak, Bartók MAR
6 Concerto A Cinque, Guitare &
Quatuor à cordes with Hughes
Navez, ten-string guitar and Quatuor
Momentum: Boccherini, Santorsola,
Pujol, Ginastera MAR 9 Elisso
Wirssaladze, piano: Haydn, Schumann
MAR 12 Sophie Karthäuser, soprano;
Jean-Luc Votano, clarinet; David Lively,
piano: Schumann, Schubert, Kalliwoda

Théâtre Marni

Vergniestraat 25; 02.639.09.80
MAR 11 22.30 Eric Sleichim/Dj
Matthew Wright
MAR 12 22.30 Quintet MQK perform
music by Peter Vermeersch

Wolubilis

Paul Hymanslaan 251; 02.761.60.30,
www.wolubilis.be
MAR 9 20.00 Charlemagne
Orchestra for Europe conducted by
Bartholomeus-Henri Van de Velde,
with Justus Grimm, cello: Haydn

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

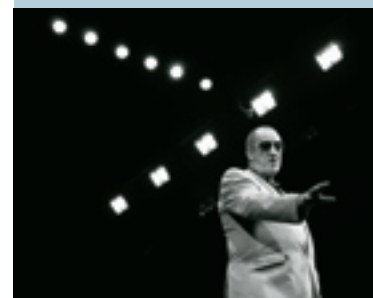
De Versie Claus

27-29 March

Kaaaitheater, Brussels

Little did writer Mark Schaevers and director/actor Josse De Pauw know when they were working on this theatre piece detailing an encounter with Hugo Claus that the famous Flemish author's death would occur one month before opening. It brought a renewed sense of urgency to every line and added emotion among the audience. It's enjoying its premiere in French and a reprisal in its original Dutch this month in Brussels before travelling across Flanders. ♦

www.toneelhuis.be



© Koen Broos

Hoeilaart

Maison de la Musique
Edgar Sohietstraat 33; 02.657.96.52,
maisondelamusique@skynet.be
MAR 6 20.00 Queen Elisabeth Music
Chapel soloists: Trio Con Fuoco with
Nikita Borisoglebsky, violin; Dana
Protopopescu, piano



Ghent

Vlaamse Opera
Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02,
www.vlaamseopera.be
Until MAR 8 15.00/19.30 Mazeppa by
Tchaikovsky with the Flemish Opera

Symphony Orchestra conducted by Dmitri Jurowski, with Nikolai Putilin, baritone and Tatiana Pavlovskaya, soprano



Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be
MAR 6 20.00 Enrico Rava New Quintet with Gianluca Petrella

Stadsschouwburg

Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.60, www.cultuurcentrumbrugge.be
MAR 11 20.00 Massot/Horbaczewski/Florizoone

Brussels

Archiduc

Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52, www.archiduc.net
MAR 8 17.00 Nicolas Kummert, Hervé Samb, Nicolas Thys, Patrick Goraguer

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193-195; 02.733.13.78
Concerts at 20.30:
MAR 4 Barbara Wiernik sextet MAR 5 Jazz Station Big Band MAR 7 18.00 Shhh MAR 11 Sunship

KVS Box

Arduinkaai 9; 02.210.11.12, www.kvs.be
MAR 6 20.30 Octurn

Maison des Musiques

Lebeauststraat 39; 02.550.13.20
MAR 6 12.30 Jean-Paul Estiévenart/Eve Beuvers Duo

Musical Instruments Museum

Hofberg 2; 02.545.01.30 www.mim.fgov.be
MAR 7 20.00 Brunoise (part of Museum Night Fever)

Piola Libri

Franklinstraat 66-68; 02.736.93.91, www.piolalibri.be
MAR 10 19.00 Di Domenico Duo

Sass'n Jazz

Koningsstraat 241; www.sazznjazz.be

Concerts at 20.30:

MAR 4 Bronco MAR 5 & 12 Jam Session MAR 10 Jam Session Bxl Jazz MAR 11 Thomas Champagne

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50, www.soundsjazzclub.be
Concerts at 22.00:
MAR 4 Chamaquiando (salsa) MAR 5 Tassin-Di Maio Quartet MAR 6 Pierre De Surgere Gang + guests MAR 7 Valentine's Day MAR 9 Master Session MAR 10 Laurent Doumont Soul Band MAR 11 Pascal Schumacher-Nicolas Kummert 30th Birthday Party

The Cotton Club - Grand Casino

Duquesnoystraat 14; 02.289.68.66
MAR 7 22.00 Tam Echo Tam

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
Concerts at 20.30:
MAR 5 Stéphanie Blanchoud (chanson) MAR 6 Etienne Richard Quartet + Hilde van Hove MAR 7 The Swing Dealers. Trio Triad with Lynn Cassiers MAR 12 Tomas Sotolongo & Para K Sepas

Leuven

Stuk

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20, www.stuk.be
MAR 8 21.00 JOZ (Jazz op zondag), free concerts every Sunday evening



Antwerp

Lotto Arena

Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060
MAR 6 20.00 Soulsister

Queen Elisabeth Hall

Koningin Astridplein 26; 0900.26.060
MAR 10 20.00 David Byrne

Ardoioe

Cultuurkapel De Schaduw

Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82, www.deschaduw.net
MAR 7 20.00 Sukilove

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24,

www.abconcerts.be

MAR 4 20.00 Luka Bloom & band. Petersonic + School of Seven Bells MAR 5 20.00 De Staat + A Brand MAR 6 20.00 Cactus@AB: Ponytail + The Hickey Underworld

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
MAR 7 23.00 Fuse & Lessizmore presents: The Advent Live, Chic Miniature, Vincent Lemieux

KVS Box

Arduinkaai 9; 02.210.11.12, www.kvs.be
MAR 8 20.30 Zap Mama: Back to a cappella: Marie Daulne, Cécilia Kankonda, Sabine Kabongo, Sylvie Nawasadio, Marie Cavenaile, Zulema Hechavarria Blanco

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15
MAR 4 20.30 Scala sing Pierre Rapsat

Le Botanique

Koningstraat 236; 02.226.12.57
Concerts at 20.00:
MAR 4 Crystal Antlers MAR 5 Saule et Les Pleureurs MAR 7 Joy + Elysian Fields. Josh Tillman MAR 9 Son, Ambulance MAR 10 Titus Andronicus. Zechs Marquise + Omar Rodriguez-Lopez Group MAR 11 Friendly Fires

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34, www.recyclart.be
MAR 7 15.00 Kraak Festival: Waves + Kurt Ville + Köhn + Headwar + Henry Flynt + Geoff Leigh + El-G + Alan Silva & Burton Greene + Valerio Cosi + Ken Butler + Ice Bird Spiral + Vomir + Ame Son + Fabulous Diamonds
MAR 10 20.00 Cult of Luna + Kingdom + General Lee

Stekerlapatte

Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81, www.stekerlapatte.be
MAR 5 21.30 Wrapped In

Ghent

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01, www.handelsbeurs.be
MAR 4 20.00 Arid

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060, www.vooruit.be
MAR 5 21.00 TLP + Richie Spice + Chezidek + Saimn I

DON'T MISS

International Women's Day

8 March Across Flanders

It's International Women's Day on Sunday, and every city in Flanders is celebrating, debating and consciousness raising the whole week long. In Bruges, you'll find exhibitions, workshops, music and readings; in Kortrijk, author and TV personality Annemie Struyf talks about her travels across the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Check the Women's Day website for a complete list of events. ♦

→ www.vrouwendag.be



Hasselt

Muziekodroom

Bootstraat 9; www.muziekodroom.be
MAR 12 20.30 Bryan Lee & The Blues Power Band

Kortrijk

De Kreun

Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44, www.dekreun.be
MAR 6 20.00 Elysian Fields
MAR 12 20.00 Saskia De Coster

Leuven

30CC - Schouwburg

Bondgenotenlaan 21; 016.23.84.27, www.30CC.be

MAR 10 20.00 DI-RECT does Tommy, songs from The Who

Het Depot

Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
MAR 12 20.00 Dada life



Antwerp

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00, www.zuiderpershuis.be
Concerts at 20.30:
MAR 5 TM Krishna (India) MAR 6 Stricat Costel Vasilescu (Romania) MAR 7 Salimata Diabate (Rep of Guinea) MAR 12 Yamandu Costa (Brazil)

Ardoioe

Cultuurkapel De Schaduw

Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82, www.deschaduw.net
MAR 6 20.30 Paddy Murphy's wife

Brussels

Art Base

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20, www.art-base.be
MAR 6 21.00 Solania Barbosa with Trestrestres (Brazil)

Espace Senghor

Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40, www.senghor.be
MAR 12 23.00 Nawal (Comores)

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be
MAR 7 20.15 Souad Massi (Algeria)

Le Bar du Matin

Alsensbergsesteenweg 172; 02.537.71.59
MAR 5 21.00 Pad Brapad Moujika
MAR 12 21.00 Haggis Horns

Stekerlapatte

Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81, www.stekerlapatte.be
MAR 5 21.30 Wrapped In
MAR 7 21.30 Larisa Quartet

Théâtre Molière

Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00, www.muziekpublieke.be
MAR 4 20.00 3MA (Mali, Morocco, Madagascar)

Leuven

Universiteitshal

Naamsestraat 22; 016.324.015, www.boombal.be
MAR 12 20.00 Boombal, dance party with live, modern folk music



Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be
MAR 11-13 20.00 Compagnie DCA in Coeurs croisés, cabaret/striptease choreographed by Philippe Decouflé

Brussels

Kaaitheater

Sainctelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59, www.kaaitheater.be
MAR 4 20.30 Black!... White? choreographed by South African Nelisiwe Xaba
MAR 6-7 20.30 Cie Raimond Hoghe in Boléro Variations
MAR 12-14 20.30 Extraction, choreographed by Marc Vanrunxt, with Eva Kamala Rodenburg

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Koninklijk Circus
Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15,
www.cirque-royal.org
MAR 7 20.30 Rudra Bejart Ballet

Ghent

Capitole
Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5;
070.25.20.20, www.capitolegent.be
MAR 11-14 15.00/20.00 Lord of the Dance, Irish dance show

Hasselt

Grenslandhallen
Gouv. Verwilghensingel 70;
070.25.20.20, www.grenslandhallen.be
MAR 8-9 20.00 Lord of the Dance, Irish dance show



Antwerp

Belfry Little Theatre
Paardenmarkt 111; 0495.31.76.87,
bats_tickets@yahoo.com
MAR 11-16 20.15 BATS in Oscar and the Pink Lady by Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt, adapted and staged by Malinda Coleman

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,
www.desingel.be
MAR 11-13 20.00 Toneelgroep Amsterdam in Kreten & Gefluister, adapted from Ingmar Bergman's Cries and Whispers, staged by Ivo van Hove (in Dutch)

Berchem (Antwerp)

CC Berchem
Driekoningenstraat 126; 03.286.88.20,
www.cerberchem.be
MAR 5 20.30 Datumloze dagen (Dateless Days) (in Dutch)

Brussels

KVS Bol
Lakensstraat 146; 02.210.11.00,
www.kvs.be
MAR 5-14 20.00 KVS & Ro Theater in Het Laatste vuur (The Last Fire) by Dea Loher, staged by Alize Zandwijk (in Dutch with French and English surtitles)

The Warehouse Studio

Waelhemstraat 69a;
www.ecc.theatreinbrussels.com
Until MAR 14 20.00 English Comedy Club in Absurd Person Singular by Alan Ayckbourn

Jesus-Eik

GC De Bosuil
Witherendreef 1; 02.657.31.79
MAR 8 20.30 Impropera, music, comedy and improvisation with David Pearl, Niall Ashdown, Susan Bisatt, Morag McLaren, Pete Furniss and Anthony Ingle (in English)

Meise

GC De Muze van Meise
Brusselsesteenweg 69; 02.268.61.74
MAR 9 20.00 Impropera, music, comedy and improvisation with David Pearl, Niall Ashdown, Susan Bisatt, Morag McLaren, Pete Furniss and Anthony Ingle (in English)



Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum (MuHKA)
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60,
www.muhka.be
Until MAR 27 Le[s] moi[s] de Lizène,

works by Liège artist Jacques Lizène
Until MAR 29 Lonely at the Top: Klankeffecten # 5, works by Juan Pérez Agirregoikoa
Until MAR 29 Insert the Passing of a Perfect Day (Revisited), installations by Katleen Vermeir

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 the alter ego of contemporary Israeli artist Roei Rosen

Bruges

Arentshuis
Dijver 16; 050.44.87.11
Until SEP 27 The Museum of Museums 2009 by contemporary Flemish artist Johan van Geluwe

Brussels

Argos Centre for Art and Media
Werfstraat 13; 02.229.00.03,
www.argosarts.org
Until APR 11 Language Works: Video, Audio and Poetry, works by Vito Acconci
Until APR 11 I'm With You in Rockland, video work by Karl Holmqvist

Atomium

Atomium Square; 02.475.47.72,
www.atomium.be
Until MAY 24 Bi-Polar. From South to North, scientific exhibition on current research and expeditions in the Arctic and the Antarctic

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

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be
Until MAR 8 Reality as a Ruin, photographs from Antwerp's photo museum
Until MAR 15 Image/Construction 3 Cities, Brussels, Bruges and Liège seen in monumental photographic montages
Until APR 19 Robbrecht & Daem: Pacing through Architecture, works by the Ghent-based architects
Until MAY 17 Monumental-size installation by contemporary Italian artist, Maurizio Cattelan (part of Turin festival)
Until MAY 24 From Van Dyck to Bellotto: Splendor at the Court of Savoy, paintings from Turin's Galleria Sabauda, with works by Flemish masters, including Brueghel, Rubens and Van Dyck (part of Turin festival)
Until JUNE 30 N.i.c.h.e. 360 architecten, scale models by Jan Mannaers and Stéphane Beel

Czech Centre

Troonstraat 60; 02.213.94.30
Until MAR 6 The Life and Times of Karel Capek, photographs and documents on the Czech writer and journalist (1890-1938)

De Elektriciteitscentrale European Centre for Contemporary Art

Sint Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.35
Until MAR 20 Moet elke weedheid wel gezegd? (Should Every Cruelty be Said?), work by 102 artists on the theme of Belgium today

Design Flanders

Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.227.60.60
Until MAR 8 Austrian Design, innovation and technology

Fondation pour l'Architecture

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.80,
www.fondationpourlarchitecture.be
Until OCT 18 De tijd van de boetiek (The Time of the Boutique), window shopping from 1800 to today

ING Cultural Centre

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

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
Until APR 19 Robert Capa, retrospective of the work of the Jewish-Hungarian photo reporter (1913-1954) and founder of the Magnum agency

Natural History Museum

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

Royal Army Museum

Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33
Until MAY 3 Tribute to Pierre de Caters, first Belgian aviator, who flew over Belgium 100 years ago

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

Sint-Gorikshallen

Sint-Goriksplein 1; 02.502.44.24
Until APR 5 Archeologie om de hoek (Archeology around the corner), 20 years of archaeological finds in Brussels

Stadhuis

Grote Markt; 02.279.43.50
Until MAY 10 DeKadence: The Bohemian Lands 1880-1914, paintings, drawings, sculptures and photographs

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
Until APR 26 It's our Earth!, interactive exhibition on sustainable development, with interventions by Belgian and international artists

Ghent

Dr Guislain Museum
Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95,
www.museumdrguislain.be
Until APR 12 The Game of Madness: On Lunacy in Film and Theatre, representations of insanity in films, plays, paintings and contemporary art

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

Witte Zaal

Posteernestraat 64; 09.267.96.77,
www.francekunststart.be
Until APR 4 Juliaan Lampens: architectural projects pictured by Jan Kempenaers
Until APR 4 Pieter Vanden Broecke: graphic works

Leuven

Tweebronnen library
Rijschoolstraat 4; 016.22.65.22
Until APR 19 Ceci nest pas la BD flamande (This is Not the Flemish Comic Strip), installation by 20 contemporary Flemish comic illustrators and writers

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

Mechelen

Speelgoedmuseum (Toy Museum)
Nekkerspoelstraat 21; 015.55.70.75,

www.speelgoedmuseum.be
Until MAR 31 Gils, Belgische saga van de elektrische trein (Belgian Saga of the Electric Train)
Until SEP 30 Cowboys and Indians

Tervuren

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

Waregem

Be Part
Westerlaan 17; 056.62.94.10
Until MAR 29 Steve Schepens: Horror 30, installations and videos



Antwerp

Afrika! Afrika!: African circus in the style of Cirque du Soleil
Until MAR 15 at Gedempte Zuiderdokken, Waalse Kaai
0900.69.001, www.afrika-afrika.com

Borgerhout

Circo Roma: Contempoary circus week
MAR 6-14 at De Roma, Turnhoutsebaan 286
03.292.97.40, www.deroma.be

Brussels

Batibouw: The city's renowned international building, renovation and decoration fair
Until MAR 8 at Brussels Expo, Belgiëplein 1
02.474.89.81, www.batibouw.com

Book Fair: The capital's big annual book event with readings, signings and other activities
MAR 5-9 at Tour & Taxis, Portlaan 86C
02.420.60.69, www.flb.be

Disney on Ice: Princesses, ice-skating show

Until MAR 8 at Vorst-Nationaal, Victor Rousseaulaan 208
0900.00.991, www.vorstnationaal.be

International Women's Day: Festival

marking the day (MAR 8) with exhibitions, concerts, dance, theatre, conferences and literature
MAR 7 15.00-midnight at Schaerbeek Cultural Centre, Lochstraat 91-93
02.245.27.25, www.culture1030.com

Karma: Talk on cause and effect (in English)
MAR 12 20.30 at Centre for Diamond Way Buddhism, Goedheidstraat 8
02.538.48.00, www.bvdd.be

Museum Night Fever: Concerts, Djs, guided tours and other festivities
MAR 7 in 14 Brussels museums
02.512.77.80,
www.museumnightfever.be

Turin/Italian Spring: Multidisciplinary festival

showcasing the culture of the Italian city
Until MAY 24 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23
02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

Ghent

The Game is Up! 09: Annual festival in which multidisciplinary artists and experts respond to the challenge of "how to save the world in 10 days" with music and performance projects on global warming, the financial crisis, famine, drought and overpopulation
Until MAR 14 at Voorruit, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23
www.voorruit.be

CAFE SPOTLIGHT

Toone Theatre

Impasse Shuddeveld Brussels EMMA DAVIS



Amid the horrors of Brussels' downtown restaurant district with its homogenous mussels and chips eateries, lies the quirky Toone Theatre bar. It's tucked away in a teeny side street, a welcome relief from the hustle and bustle of the bullying restaurateurs in Korte Beenhouwersstraat.

Aside from serving an excellent, albeit small, range of beers, the bar is home to the Toone puppet theatre. Former stars of the show in their mediaeval costumes hang eerily from the rafters, adding to the dark and mysterious ambience of a place that's been open more than 300 years.

During the day, it's a haven of tranquillity in which to leisurely sup a Trappist beer and savour a rustic sandwich. The only company you are likely to have is the bar staff and the resident cat who makes sudden apparitions, leaping up on to the chair beside you.

By night, the bar is a haunt of many locals, in sharp contrast to its neighbouring hosteleries. It gets quite packed, especially just before the shows, which start at 20.30 from Thursday to Saturday, with an extra performance at 16.00 on Saturday. If you're only interested in a no-strings-attached beer, it's worth arriving well after those times.

The bar, which is open from noon to midnight, can be accessed by either Korte Beenhouwersstraat or Grasmarkt. ♦

➔ www.toone.be

Zaventem

Brussels Airport Region Job Day 2009: Jobs in the airline industry
MAR 7 at Brussels Airport, Sky Hall
02.346.36.00, melody@jobdays.eu

FACE OF FLANDERS

LISA BRADSHAW



Abdinasser Rezkallah

The Muslim Leaders of Tomorrow work for change in a society of banned headscarves and skewed statistics

Although the American Society for Muslim Advancement in New York five years ago chose to call their new conference the Muslim Leaders of Tomorrow (MLT), many of its participants are really the Muslim leaders of today. They are perhaps not presidents of countries, but the members of this international conference is working on issues those leaders are failing to successfully tackle: improving employment options and cross-cultural relationships in their communities and stopping the radicalisation of their young people.

Abdinasser Rezkallah, 29, is one of those future/current leaders, and he attended the MLT world conference last January in Qatar, where the group penned an Open Letter to the World Leaders of Today, which ran as a full page in the *Washington Post* the same day as Barack Obama's presidential inauguration.

"Like Obama says, it's time for change," says Rezkallah. "We decided to tell Obama – and all the leaders of the world – that there are all these people who are taking action to commit to a global society. It's an extended hand to world leaders so they can help Muslim leaders do a better job."

One of the jobs they are trying to do is "prevent the radicalisation of people," explains Rezkallah, who is also a youth worker in Antwerp. And how they plan to accomplish that is to tackle specific problems in different countries. "Every country has its own problems," he says. "In

Europe, it's mostly socio-economic; in the US, where Muslims are better educated, the focus is more on awareness and policy-making."

In Belgium, the biggest problems facing the Muslim community are lack of education and employment and, like in many countries, media representation. Take, for instance, the statistics from a survey that were printed in every Flemish newspaper at the end of January showing that huge percentages of Flemish people believe that Muslims have little respect for the rights of women and that Islam is a "threat to European cultural values" and has "no positive contribution to make to Western culture".

"How are the questions formulated? How are they being asked?" questions Rezkallah. But most importantly, he says, "What is the knowledge of those answering the questions? There

"The acts are the same – the loss of innocent life. It's sad, and it doesn't matter in whose cause it is or from which religion or which culture"

is no monotheistic Islam. Every individual deals with religion in his or her own way."

And statistics, of course, do not tell the whole story. "Would the answers have been different 10 years ago or even five?" asks Rezkallah. "Images are always changing. I wonder how that would be seen if that research was about another group of people. It might have been the same results."

Add to this kind of press coverage, the notion of the "Muslim terrorist". Rezkallah: "When a terrorist is from another part of the world, they are just 'terrorists' or some other name entirely. With us, it's always Muslim first."

The last two years in Flanders have been a particularly volatile time with the infamous

banning of the hijab, the headscarf worn by Muslim women, among public service employees in Antwerp and Ghent.

All of this is part of "a growing Islamophobia in Belgium," says Rezkallah. "All of those things slow down the integration of Muslims in society. It polarises the problem – and the community. If you constantly label them 'Muslim terrorists', then that is what you will get."

This vicious circle has complex causes, but Rezkallah is looking for some simple changes in Belgium. Instead of banning the *hijab* in schools and workplaces, for instance, "recognising the religious holidays of our youth so they can stay home legally would be a step in the right direction", he says. And "if the media would give an accurate view of Muslims, that would help a lot. A whole lot."

Rezkallah is a youth worker

with the Platform of Migrant Youth Associations in Antwerp, an umbrella organisation for migrant youth groups across Flanders. When he was born in Dendermonde to immigrant parents, there were very few groups for migrant youth available in Flanders. Now there are many. "Someone who's active in a youth organisation develops much faster," Rezkallah explains. "He or she learns how to work in a group and uses different skills, finds new interests."

It's another way this Muslim Leader of Tomorrow works towards the goal of social unification. In a youth group, he says, "you feel valued because you are proving your are worth something. It's a place to prove yourself." ♦

→ www.paj.be

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



auto →

The news was of more car workers losing their jobs. I was driving through the rain late one evening with the radio bleating out more bad news. The wipers were hard at work and drowned the radio voice from my mind. My brain re-engaged, as it often does, after an interesting item had just begun.

It was the former boss of Volvo in Ghent dreaming out loud. He saw this as the perfect moment to consider building a Belgian vehicle. A car? exclaimed the interviewer. Not necessarily, but *een voertuig* – a vehicle with a niche. The technology exists already in Flanders and soon perhaps the industrial space, explained Volvo man. The times create the dreams.

Then this morning I heard about Annemie Peeters and Sven Pichal's plans for 5 March. P&P present the morning show on Radio 1 and are whipping up enthusiasm for a carpooling day: they aim to get *zo veel mogelijk Vlamingen* – as many Flemings as possible to carpool. (I suppose non-Flemings can also take part.)

The motto is *Rij met mij!* – Ride with me! and the idea is that you do just that. But where to begin? Well, go to the Radio 1 website and click on the *Rij met mij!* logo. Then click on *schrijf je in via deze link* to register. Then you can put in your details and be matched with other drivers or passengers.

For such campaigns there's always a carrot: *ook zo maak je kans op leuke prijzen* – you have a chance of winning fun prizes. Even if you don't take part, you can have a free breakfast at one of the Carestel motorway service stations and get a present to boot. On one condition: *er moeten minstens twee mensen in de auto zitten* – there must be at least two people in the car. Let's hope this doesn't encourage people to jump in their car just for a free breakfast. That would rather spoil the point.

You could always leave the car at home and get on your bike. Now workers have the right to a mileage allowance if they cycle to and from work. All right, it's per kilometre and is a modest 20 cents, but many a mickle makes a muckle, as they say in Scotland. All you have to do is fill in a form and give it to your employer. You will need to include *een gedetailleerde reisroute* – a detailed itinerary. It doesn't need to be the shortest but should be *de veiligste voor een fiets* – the safest for a bike.

Or you can get in your own car, lock your doors and join the crowds, and if you are still in the jams after 9.00, listen to P&P. ♦

→ www.radio1.be

The last word →→→

Learning from Ella

"Ella Fitzgerald once taught me something. She had no husband and no children. She kept performing because she was in love with the applause. I can understand that."

Boogie Boy Paul Ambach looks back at 60

Criminal act

"A website that identifies paedophiles is unlawful and downright criminal."

Privacy commissioner Willem Debeuckelaere on the arrival in Belgium of a Dutch site that identifies convicted paedophiles

Post pride

"We have our professional pride. My sense of honour comes into play if I can't finish my round in time."

Postal worker, as unions went on strike this week in protest at pressure of work

