



FLANDERS TODAY

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NEWS ♦ BUSINESS ♦ ARTS ♦ ACTIVE ♦ LIVING ♦ AGENDA ♦ INTERVIEW

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Thousands go to Keukenhof in the Netherlands to admire the bulb fields, but you can save yourself the trek by taking a trip to Groot-Bijgaarden, just five minutes out of Brussels



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Włodzimierz Lubański was Poland's greatest footballer until he was injured in a game. But how did he end up playing for Lokeren?



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Shared lives

As space becomes more scarce, the Flemish government is promoting group housing schemes

DENZIL WALTON

Flanders is bursting at the seams. Its population density already stands at a chock-a-block 456 inhabitants per square kilometre. In other words, we are more squashed together than people in Japan (339 per sq km) or India (336 per sq km).

With its population growing at an annual rate of 0.13%, Flanders is only going to become more densely populated in the coming years. And, with the associated continual expansion of cities, towns and roads, the big dilemma facing the Flemish government is how to fit more and more people into less and less space.

It's a conundrum that housing minister Marino Keulen is keen to address. His latest initiative is Wonen in Meervoud, or Living in Plural, a scheme to promote group housing projects throughout the region. "Its overall goal is to open

people's eyes to the many significant advantages of group housing," says Keulen. "These include cost savings through economies of scale, more effective use of energy, a reduced carbon footprint and a pleasant neighbourhood – with total respect for the privacy of residents."

Group housing takes a number of forms but basically describes residential architecture that accommodates the group rather than the unit and so is somewhat public as well as private. The apartment block is the most common form of group housing. It could also encompass the conversion of a disused factory into upmarket lofts or an old school or monastery into a co-housing project.

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Four hurt as hospital procedure goes wrong

Caustic product used in place of water

Four people are being treated in a Brussels hospital for severe burns after having their colons washed out by a caustic cleaning product. It may sound like a dubious medical procedure from the days of Samuel Pepys or the latest unspeakable internet fad. But in fact it was a routine examination gone wrong, carried out at the Brugmann hospital in Brussels two weeks ago.

The patients affected were among 15 who underwent routine colonoscopies at the University Nursing Centre of the hospital at the Paul Brien site in Schaarbeek. The procedure involves the introduction of a camera into the colon via the rectum, and it is used

to detect the presence of abnormalities within the large intestine. In normal circumstances, the "eye" of the camera is constantly laved with distilled water to keep it free of debris while it transmits pictures to the computer where staff can watch what is going on. However, in the Paul Brien case, the water was replaced with glutaraldehyde, a colourless liquid used to sterilise medical equipment, which is toxic and a severe irritant to skin, eyes and lungs.

Two patients came back to the hospital two days after the procedure complaining of severe pain. The other patients who had been treated at the same time were interviewed and

admitted for tests, when it emerged that four in all had suffered damage to the colon. According to one report, one of the patients, a young woman, has had a colostomy put in place.

The hospital is now investigating how the glutaraldehyde came to be used instead of distilled water. At the same time, a complaint has been filed with the Brussels prosecutor's office against persons unknown, in the event that it turns out to be an act of sabotage. Meanwhile, the hospital has promised both treatment and compensation to those affected, none of whom has so far lodged a complaint. ♦

Belgian banks reveal big bonuses

Moves to curb payouts look futile

ALAN HOPE

Jean-Paul Votron, the former CEO of Fortis who resigned in disgrace after his bank's share price collapsed, pocketed total pay and bonuses of €6.3 million in 2008, the company's annual report has revealed. Public reaction to the news, not least among shareholders who lost their entire investment, has now led politicians to look for ways to curb the excesses of top businessmen rewarding themselves and their colleagues.

To make matters worse, Votron's package included a bonus of €2.5 million related to the takeover of the Dutch bank ABN Amro, which cost Fortis €24 billion and put the bank's finances in such a

state that the markets deserted it, allowing the share price to go into free fall. As a direct result, the Dutch government took ABN Amro back as part of its share of the Fortis bail-out – for less than Fortis had paid.

Votron also received a bonus of about €1.9 million for the value he added to Fortis shares during his four-year tenure as CEO. That takes account only of the high point on the share-price curve during the period and not the record depths to which the price plunged while Votron still held the reins – and while he contin-

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News in brief

A 59-year-old Ostend GP is under investigation after he allegedly prescribed up to 500 doses of the so-called "date rape drug" Rohypnol to a Yugoslav family. The drugs are thought to have made their way onto the black market, where it is a favourite of heroin addicts. Dr Johan De Pauw claims he was forced to write the prescriptions under duress. "I'm actually a victim," he said.

A court in Tongeren last week issued an exclusion order banning a 20-year-old Riemst man found guilty of threatening behaviour from coming within 10 metres of his victim. The man was charged with sending threatening text messages, the culmination of a campaign of bullying that had gone on for years. If he comes within the 10-metre exclusion zone, he will be fined €100.

An illegal immigrant attempting to board a ship in Ostend harbour was killed last week when he fell into the water and was pulled into the ship's screw. The man, who has not been identified, is thought to have been trying to cross to England. The ship had arrived in Ostend from Ramsgate but was not sailing back to England at the time. Ostend harbour authorities now fear a repeat of last summer, when floods of immigrants passed through the town in the hope of finding passage to the UK.

Doctors will now be able to inform the partners of HIV patients of their medical status in cases where the patient refuses to take protective measures, the Order of Physicians has declared. Since the appearance of HIV/Aids in the early 1980s, doctors have been prevented by confidentiality laws from informing the partners of infected patients, leading to a certain number of new infections.

The 93-year-old Antwerp woman who went on a hunger strike after her plea for euthanasia was rejected has died in a rest home in Merksem. Amelie Van Esbeen's request was granted after her case doctor withdrew and another physician took over.

A final year law student at the Catholic University of Leuven has won the 2009 prize for excellence in European business law skills offered by London law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer. Anneleen Straetemans wins a traineeship with the company and a cash prize.

Police chief again in hot water

Federal police chief Fernand Koekelberg could face suspension this week after a complaint from interior minister Guido De Padt. Koekelberg is alleged to have held back on a complaint about the minister himself instead of passing it straight to the prosecutor's office.

The anonymous complaint alleges that De Padt diverted funds from the social aid agency in Geraardsbergen, which De Padt chaired before becoming a minister representing his party Open-VLD. Koekelberg received the letter on 19 February. When he presented it to De Padt on 11 March, he informed the minister that he intended to take the matter no further. De Padt ordered him to pass the letter on to the prosecutor.

Now De Padt has alleged Koekelberg failed in his duty by not turning the letter over immediately. He claims Koekelberg's position was "suspicious" and suggested he might use the letter as a means of putting pressure on the minister. Koekelberg, who was on sick leave as Flanders Today went to press, faces suspension and a disciplinary procedure.

Koekelberg's lawyer claimed the latest complaint was a "lynching". Koekelberg came under fire in September last year when it was revealed he had promoted his secretary to a senior – and lucrative – position for which she was not qualified. That case is still ongoing but exceedingly slowly.

Koekelberg's defence this time is that he did not want to take part in a rumour mill based on an anonymous and unfounded complaint. His lawyer pointed out that the police chief would have been attacked equally had his decision gone the other way.

The lawyer also noted the odd coincidence that the anonymous letter only came to light a day after Koekelberg received a glowing evaluation by a panel of independent experts, who interviewed top figures in the police and justice systems.

Staff from the Sea Life nature attraction in Blankenberge will train members of the local police and fire services to distinguish healthy seals from sick ones. As more seals appear on the North Sea coast, the number of reports of beached seals rises, leading to call-outs for Sea Life personnel – often for no reason. The training should allow emergency services to make an initial determination before raising the alarm.

200,000 Belgians are living in housing conditions without basic sanitary facilities, such as bath, shower, toilet or warm water, according to figures from the federal economics ministry. That's 2.1% of the population as a whole, but 5.4% of those living under the poverty line. One in four poor people have no central heating, with the same percentage complaining about a lack of space (see also *Slumming*, page 6 this week).

An 18-month-old golden retriever called Femke has taken up residence in a nursing home in Zemst. Femke is part of an initiative based on research that shows that the presence of companion animals improves the quality of life for long-stay hospital patients and rest-home residents. Her upkeep is paid for by the local authority.

Students are using black lights to cheat in exams, according to education authorities in Flanders. The black lights, which emit ultraviolet light, are used to reveal writing on previously prepared papers that appear blank to the naked eye. The black light is the latest technology to fall into the hands of the cheats: authorities have already detected the use of GSMs and MP3 players to bring illicit information into the exam room.

Flemish environment minister Hilde Crevits has promised action to tackle the problem of the fox tapeworm (*Echinococcus multilocularis*), which has been detected in Flanders for the first time. The parasite can be a danger to humans, causing the often-fatal liver disease alveolar echinococcosis. Foxes spread the eggs in their faeces, and humans can be infected by eating brambles, for example, that have been infested.

The Post Office is to open branches in city centres on Saturday afternoons from this week, something that has hitherto only been tried in Brussels. The branches affected are in Antwerp Groenplaats; Bruges Markt; Brussels De Brouckère and South Station; Ghent, Leuven and Hasselt Centre.



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The system allowing motorists to pay for parking by mobile phone in Ghent has been suspended because of problems in NCS Crandy, the company running the operation.



Vlaams Belanger complains of censorship

A Vlaams Belang Euro-MP has complained of censorship and book burning after his biography of former French president François Mitterrand was reported to be withdrawn from some bookshops.

Not that there's anything wrong with the book. The biography has been widely praised by reviewers in the Dutch-speaking media in Flanders and the Netherlands and described as "detailed" and "scientific". But that was when reviewers thought the author's name was Vincent Gounod.

In fact, his name is Koen Dillen, and he is MEP for the Vlaams Belang, as well as being the son of VB founder (when it was still Vlaams Blok) Karel Dillen. He's an enthusiastic follower of the French political scene who has written a column in the Flemish-nationalist magazine 't Pallieterke for the last 15 years. Two years ago he wrote a biography of current French president Nicolas Sarkozy – that time under the pseudonym Maarten van der Roest.

Dillen's complaint came after reports that the Antwerp bookshop De Groene Waterman had taken his book off the shelves in reaction to the revelation of its true authorship. Diane Vangeneugden, the shop's general manager, denied the charge. "We didn't take it off the shelves because we never had it on the shelves," she told Flanders Today. "We bought one copy at the request of a customer, and then the story of the pseudonym came out, and we decided not to order any more. It's our opinion that this is not an acceptable use of a pseudonym in a politically polarised country like Belgium."

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

5,000

prostitutes working the streets of Brussels, according to research from the Erasmus University College Brussels and the Catholic University of Leuven. As many as one in three are men.



99,000

more unemployed by the end of the year, according to the High Council for Employment. Of those, 59,000 will be a direct result of the economic crisis, with the rest accounted for by the growth of the working population.

28

people killed in 2008 on level crossings, from a total of 70 accidents. Rail infrastructure agency Infrabel has started a new awareness-raising campaign stressing the dangers of ignoring safety rules.

3

seconds between hearing an approaching train and its arrival at a crossing. "That's a very short time to take risks," an Infrabel spokesman said.

35%

increase in adoptions in Flanders of children from other countries, from 182 in 2007 to 244 last year. In other parts of the country the figure fell by 30%.

8,355

complaints to De Post of lost items of mail in 2008 – a mere 0.038% of the total number of items carried. The lost mail was tracked down in 40% of cases.

5,500

calls to internet chat helplines in 2008, involving 200 volunteers. 60% of the callers are under 21 years.

58

TV appearances by Yves Leterme in popular programmes such as VRT's De Rode Loper. Leterme leads the political field ahead of culture minister Bert Anciaux (46) and former parliament speaker Herman De Croo (35).

38

bridges in Flanders require renovation – 23 of them as a top priority. Of those, 13 can be repaired, while 10 need to be demolished and rebuilt. The biggest cause of damage is water, which attacks both concrete and steel. Bridges in Flanders are inspected every three years.

€7 million

in financing expected to be agreed by Flanders to quintuple the capacity of the Flemish Supercomputer Centre to 50 teraflops – or 50 trillion floating point operations (calculations) per second. The centre is operated by the five Flemish universities.



Thirteen oversized photos by Flemish photographer Stefan Vanfleteren were last week unveiled as permanent exhibits in the newly renovated Weststation stop on the Brussels metro. Vanfleteren, who works for De Morgen and has also been published in Flanders Today, worked together with fashion stylist Linda Van Waesberge to make portraits of ordinary Brussels people dressed in designs by top fashion names. The photo shows Polish writer Grazyna Plebanek with handbags by Delvaux. Also in the station, on another level, is a 95-metre-long collage by Verviers artist Yves Zurstrassen, entitled "A Beautiful Day".

Bio-friet and veggies take over Flanders

"We eat *friet* every day, and still we're not fat," claims Kathleen Merckx, who, together with her husband Hans De Bruck, opened the country's first bio chips van last week. The mobile Biofrituur Merel will be present at bio-markets in Brussels Muntplein (Wednesday), Wetteren (Thursday) and Ghent's Groentemarkt (Friday) and is based in Landskouter.

"I hadn't had *friet* for years because I always felt sick afterwards," Merckx explained. "But over time, you want some. We wondered why there was no bio-*frituur*, then we started up our own." The fryer uses coconut oil, which does not leave an identifiable taste. "The taste is a bit different because bio-*friet* have much more of a taste of potatoes and less taste of fat."

The van also sells veggie-chips made with carrot, parsnip and potatoes, vegetable croquettes with mushrooms and tofu and a special bio-roll containing seitan. Even the salt is natural, untouched by any chemical treatment. "I'm most proud of my breaded celeriac," Merckx boasts.

→ www.denatuurfrituurmerel.be

Girls who "stole" bread from dumpster stay in jail

Two teenage environmental protestors who took bread from a waste container outside a supermarket have been charged with theft and will remain locked up in prison, a court ruled at the weekend. The two, who have refused to cooperate with police and have given no personal details, were arrested in the car park of an AD Delhaize in Assebroek, near where green protestors are holding up tree-felling work in the Lappersfortbos, West Flanders. In a canvas bag hanging on one of their bikes police found about 70 bread rolls, which they claim were taken from a waste container.

According to the group's lawyer, the protestors are members of the freegan, an anti-consumerist movement that lives off of what others throw in the garbage. "That food was thrown away, and we're recycling it," one of the protestors said. "What on earth is wrong with that?"

The accused also claim that the rolls came from a Delhaize in Zedelgem that had given permission to take leftovers – something the Delhaize manager denied. "They can't take any discarded food away here," he said. "Imagine if someone got sick from eating it."

The prosecutor in Bruges defended the decision to lock up the two teens. "It's true these are pretty minor offences," said Bruges prosecutor Jean-Marie Berckvens said. "Still, it's illegal. I have every respect for alternative lifestyles, but that doesn't give them rights other people don't have."

FIFTH COLUMN

Three friends

Who needs political enemies when you have political friends. This old saying pops up in Belgium whenever politicians feel betrayed by their own party colleagues. Last week the Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant* published yet another interview with Yves Leterme (CD&V). And what did the former prime minister say? That he has very few friends in politics. "No more than three in my own party".

Political observers all agree that former ministers Jo Vandeuren and Inge Vervotte, who both resigned at the same time Leterme did, are definitely friends of his. But who is Leterme's third friend, everyone wondered.

Old political culture

Minister for Justice Stefaan De Cleck (CD&V), meanwhile, made the headlines last week when he asked local authorities for the names and addresses of people who are this year celebrating 50 or more years of marriage. De Cleck just wanted to congratulate these people on their anniversaries. But he overlooked the fact that privacy laws forbid giving out such information.

Was this a mistake? Definitely. A huge mistake? Hardly. Still, the incident caused a stir for two reasons.

One: It reeks of what is known as "old political culture": a non-transparent form of politics, with backroom deals, old boys' networks and *diensbetoen*. This last word is tough to translate. Literally, it means "rendering service" to citizens. It's got quite a bad reputation, though, as it refers to essentially a mild form of corruption.

Up until the 1990s, it was considered quite normal to ask a local politician for help in getting permits or social housing, for instance, in return for votes. In the '90s, however, "new political culture" became a buzz word in Flemish politics. It was hoped that "new political culture", and the transparency it offered, would stop the rise of the extreme right. It never did, but since then requests like De Clerck's are definitely not made.

Two: The justice department faces a deep crisis. Only last week, a Genk judge complained that the lights in his offices had been out of use for months, as different departments could not agree on whose task it was to fix them. More serious is the overcrowding of our prisons. Rioting and mass escapes are predicted as soon as the weather gets sunnier. This, and not anniversary wishes, is what should keep a minister of justice occupied.



All you need to know about banking services on arriving in Belgium

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Shared lives

→ Continued from page 1

Community housing is another form of group housing, providing affordable rents to people on low incomes, as well as those with special needs. Examples include subsidised social housing, service apartments and the recently lauded kangaroo housing scheme in Brasschat, in which young people and the elderly live communally under one roof.

The concept of group housing is in contrast to the familiar model of plot housing. In plot housing, each owner is free to build their house on a discrete piece of developed land to their own taste, as long as they keep within the stipulated building legislation. Infrastructural facilities such as roads, drainage, electricity and water supply are provided to each individual plot.

In group housing, the idea of private ownership of land does not apply in the same way, and houses, as well as facilities, are provided co-operatively. This results in a certain amount of standardisation in house designs and types. Inevitably, every homeowner's precise requirements may not be fully translated into the house they eventually inhabit, as common rules have to be respected. Moreover, since every house is not necessarily surrounded by a privately owned garden, there may be a loss of privacy for the individual dwelling.

“Group housing offers an economical way to live in the city, while preventing people from becoming socially isolated.”

The Flemish have historically valued their own patch of ground in which they reign supreme, so this loss of privacy is a potential stumbling block. But Keulen still believes that the concept of group housing will catch on in Flanders: “I am convinced it will, as long as we ensure that group housing projects pay special attention to the privacy of residents.”

Wonen in Meervoud (WIM) has been put together by a team of academics, architects, town planners and communication experts. One of the partners is the Research Group of Urban Architecture from the Catholic University of Leuven, where Professor André Loeckx thinks that the key to the success of the project is the quality of the group housing.

“Group housing has been around for years in the form of apartments,” says Loeckx. “However, although the technical quality of past group housing projects has

been sufficient, the quality of life from a social point of view has frequently been inferior. What I like about the WIM initiative is that it will encourage architects to design group housing schemes as high-quality living environments that residents are proud to call home.”

Group housing could be of interest to all age ranges, from families with young children to the elderly. “Older people are selling their houses in the countryside and moving into cities or towns because of the proximity of services such as medical care, shops and transport,” explains Loeckx. “Group housing offers them an economical way to live in the city that prevents them from being socially isolated.”

Younger people with new families are also being attracted to group housing. “For too long, houses in the city have not been designed with young children in mind,” adds Loeckx. “Group housing, with its focus on providing communal, secure play areas, is an extremely attractive option for young parents wanting to live in the city.”

Another of the WIM partners is the Leuven-based architecture and planning bureau, bv bvba, where Marc Martens is keen to emphasise the many and varied benefits of group housing. “There is a significant cost benefit to someone building under a group housing

project compared to an equivalent house constructed individually. Contractors like builders, plumbers, electricians and decorators can all be employed to work on a number of houses at the same time, thus driving down costs in material, labour and transport.”

The environmental benefits, too, should not be underestimated. These vary from project to project, but, thanks to common construction techniques and the use of the latest technology, group housing projects are likely to be significantly more energy efficient than individual houses.

An integral element of the campaign to promote group housing is the WIM Architectural Prize. “The objectives are to put group housing in the spotlight and to stimulate interest among architects and project developers, inspiring their creativity to design attractive, functional, environmentally-friendly group housing



Co-housing projects provide both privacy and communal areas

Getting a grip on co-housing

The hippie commune of the 1960s meets the 21st century

Co-housing is one of many forms of group housing. It is a style of living that brings individuals and families together in groups to share common goals and activities. At the same time, families enjoy their own self-contained accommodation and personal space.

Co-housing communities are frequently established to compensate for the alienating effects of modern life where neighbours don't recognise each other and where day-to-day contact is minimal. They offer particular benefits for children, and older people can also find companionship and mutual support in such communities.

The main features of co-housing communities:

- They are set up and run by their members
- Members are consciously committed to living as a community
- Developments are designed to encourage social contact and a sense of neighbourhood
- Common space facilitates host shared activities like community meals. Other amenities such as laundries, heating systems, guest rooms and transport may also be shared.

Ghent appears to be leading the way in Flanders in regards to co-housing projects. Building permission has been granted for a new one in the Ekkergem neighbourhood of the city centre, and prospective co-owners are already signing up. Two existing buildings will be converted into nine low-energy houses measuring 100-140 square metres and surrounding a communal garden and pavilion. Cycle sheds and garages are included. Estimated completion of the project is early 2011.

In Vinderhout on the northwest outskirts of the city, a project of 20 low-energy houses between 50 and 180 square metres is in the planning stages. Every house will have its own private terrace and shares a garden, sports zone and pavilion. The communal space has been more clearly defined than in Ekkergem, with the shared pavilion including a kitchen, a dining room for up to 100, games room, reading room, TV room, laundry, cycle sheds and workshops. The participants in the co-housing project are also divided into work groups that include architecture, ecology, social activities, finance and communication.

→ www.cohousingplatform.be

projects,” says Keulen.

The WIM Architectural Prize was launched during this year's Batibouw exhibition of construction, decoration and innovation in Brussels. Architects and project developers have until 1 May to submit group housing projects that have been realised in the last 10 years. As well as meeting the requirements of group housing,

they must be architecturally innovative and inspiring, and should reflect a high standard of living. The judges will also be looking at cost reductions and energy savings in the areas of insulation, lighting and the use of utilities. The winners will be announced in the summer.

The best entries in the contest will be collated into a book to be

published in September. Examples of successful group housing projects from around the world will be included. The result will hopefully be inspirational to Flemings interested in putting the theory of group housing into practice. ♦

→ www.woneninmeervoud.be



© Belga

Slumming

Bad landlords in Flanders are being shut down in greater numbers

ALAN HOPE

The Flemish authorities dealt with twice as many cases of slum landlords last year compared to 2007, according to figures presented to the Flemish parliament by housing minister Marino Keulen. But the news is good, according to Keulen, because the increase is due to the improved functioning of the region's Housing Inspectorate, which enforces the Housing Code on minimum standards of safety, hygiene and health provisions.

The 24-strong inspectorate reported nearly 1,500 "living units" where the code had been breached in 2008. Most cases involved apartments or houses that had been divided up into several rental units, bedsits or studio flats.

The cases involved 384 landlords and 442 separate buildings, each building containing on average just over three rental units. The year before, 757 total cases were reported in 264 buildings. But the number of inspectors has doubled, leading to more investigations.

Poverty contributes to a climate in which slum landlords can prosper. Research at the University of Antwerp estimated that 15% of people in Belgium are living below the poverty line. About 180,000 families are living in circumstances making them eligible for social housing, but the housing stock just isn't there.

The poorest are therefore often pushed into the grasp of the slumlords, who may offer the only

available rented accommodation they can afford – much of it of shocking quality, with risks to hygiene, health and safety. The majority of breaches uncovered by the Inspectorate concerned single rented rooms, where electrical faults were the main cause of problems, followed by damp and poorly maintained gas heaters, with the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning.

In most cases, the threat of a court order to repair the problems is enough to bring about an improvement, but in 44 cases last year the matter went as far as the courts.

In some cases, the Inspectorate can declare a building uninhabitable, which is supposed to act as a shock to the landlord – the tenants have to move out, and the owner has to pay a tax on the empty building as well as a "slum tax".

If an owner sells an uninhabitable building, the new owner has two years to bring everything up to standard, with the possible grant of an extension for a further two years. In addition, the new owner will be excused the tax on empty buildings.

One house on Viaduct Dam in Antwerp was declared uninhabitable in 2004, and the owner simply bricked up the entrance and left the building to rot. The tax in itself, explains city council member Frank Hosteaux, is not enough of a disincentive. The law only steps in when landlords

continue to rent the uninhabitable premises, he said. In the case of abandonment, the procedure often takes years during which nothing is done about the deteriorating building.

For those who are eventually found guilty, the fines are often minimal. One woman found guilty of renting out slum apartments that brought her an income of €26,000 a month was fined €12,500. In May last year two men who rented

a slum apartment where a little girl suffocated to death as a result of a faulty gas heater were each fined €2,750 and given an 18-month suspended sentence.

There does exist a provision in the law for the city to take over a building for a period of time in order to bring it up to standard and then rent it out to recoup the costs. After that has been done, the building reverts to the original owner. But the provision – the

so-called social management right – has only ever been used twice, both times in Antwerp.

The Flemish government recently published a brochure in 16 languages listing agencies where the victims of slum landlords can receive advice or legal help. The booklet lists local offices of the Housing Inspectorate, plus tenants' associations, legal advice centres and welfare agencies in each of the region's provinces.

Fungus, gas and damp, oh my Slumlord cases in Flanders last year

► In April last year, police carried out **dawn raids** on three buildings in Schaarbeek being rented out to illegal aliens. In one, four apartments had been split up into 13 different units. Despite "glaring irregularities", including faulty gas installations, the buildings were declared habitable, and the tenants carry on living there.

► In June, a 46-year-old man in Antwerp was fined €22,000 and had €13,700 in rent income seized after he was found guilty of renting out rooms in a building in Everaertsstraat that had previously been declared uninhabitable because of damp and fungus. The tenants, who pay between €250 and €375 per month, included **a family from Cameroon** with two young children. The owner himself, who is claiming unemployment, lived on the first floor.

► An apartment building in Volkenbondstraat in Niel was declared uninhabitable in July and the residents given three months to vacate. Inspectors found **fungus** growing on the walls of the six apartments.

► In September, three houses in Ghent were closed because of the danger of **suffocation, electrocution and explosion** from gas water heaters, electrical wiring and gas appliances. Nineteen tenants, one Belgian and 18 Bulgarian, were paying €200 a month rent. The three houses had already been declared uninhabitable, an order which the 44-year-old landlord ignored.

► Also in September, 16 Bulgarians living in rooms in the Erasmusstraat and Queteletstraat in Ghent were found **emergency housing** after inspectors closed the premises they were renting.

► Last spring, the **Krotspotteam** (Slum-Spotting Team) on Antwerp city council announced it had inspected just over 10,700 rentals in four inner-city areas and found that 60% were in breach of the Housing Code. In 83% of cases the landlord undertook to repair the faults. In the rest, a procedure was started with the Housing Inspectorate to have the premises declared uninhabitable – which happened in 5% of the cases.

Resentment at pay-offs for top executives

→ Continued from page 1

ued to reassure shareholders and account holders that all was well. When he arrived in the job, Fortis shares stood at about €16; when he left they were at €9.45 and would fall much further. Votron thus received a bonus of about €290,000 for every euro of value lost.

In the Netherlands, meanwhile, the CEO of ABN Amro received a remuneration package worth more than €8 million, it was also announced last week. His former financial director got €3.8 million in pay and bonuses.

The former CFO of Fortis, Gilbert Mittler, also received a package worth €4 million on his departure, despite his role in the bank's collapse. In addition, he continues to demand an extra pension contribution of around €900,000, which was added to his contract shortly before his departure. Interim Fortis chairman Jan-Michiël Hessels had refused to approve the pay-out, but he has now been replaced.

Shareholders are still engaged in a legal battle to try to wrestle the maximum worth for their holdings from the wreckage of the bank, with little hope of gaining more than pennies per share, even in a best-case scenario.

A proposed new law would restrict the severance bonus of top executives to one year's salary, which in Votron's case comes to €1.3 million. However, other remunerations such as takeover bonuses and value-added premiums, are not covered by the law, which still has to pass and which is expected to encounter opposition from liberals.

Other measures are difficult to envisage. The main source of resentment with Fortis – as in the UK with Royal Bank of Scotland and in



Jean-Paul Votron (left) and Gilbert Mittler

the US with AIG – is that executives whose companies have relied on the taxpayer for their rescue continue to reward themselves royally, even as the effects of their time in office devastate the economy at large and take a mortal toll on people who will never earn €6.3 million in a lifetime (see below).

Groen! party deputy Stefaan Van Hecke called the bonuses "a middle finger stuck up to all those affected by the economic crisis". Socialist member Bruno Tuybens called the bonuses "perverse". Both men have launched proposals for legislation, but neither has much chance of success. Either the measures are too little, too late, or they are an unwelcome interference by politicians in the affairs of business.

The fact that many politicians also hold positions on the boards of companies may also be a factor.

• Herman Verwilt, who took over the running of Fortis on Jean-Paul Votron's departure and before the government stepped in, was technically entitled to a severance bonus of about €5 million but declined to take more than €800,000. At the other severely affected bank, Dexia, outgoing CEO Axel Miller was originally reported to have declined the €3.6 million to which his contract entitled him. Reports at the weekend, however, suggest that he has taken part of the package. Exactly how much will be revealed when the bank publishes its annual report in about a week. ♦

Record 1,000 companies failed in one month

A record number of businesses went broke in the first quarter of the year, according to figures released last week by the Antwerp-based research bureau Graydon. In the first three months of this year, 2,570 companies went bankrupt, including headline names like the Ostend Queen restaurant.

In March alone, more than 1,000 businesses went bust, 284 more than the same time in 2008. Flanders accounted for 509 of those; a massive increase of 56% on the period.

Also in this year's first quarter, 6,249 people lost their jobs as a result of companies going under, 3,561 of them in Flanders – an increase of 80%. Nationwide, the increase in jobless totals was the biggest since 2003.

According to Graydon, the large numbers of jobs lost comes as a result of the increasing levels of bankruptcy among NV companies – usually bigger than the sole-trader or bvba company. The bureau also identified one of the main victims of bankruptcies: companies that had high levels of short-term debt. In a crisis economy, companies with mounting debts are more likely to lose the confidence of suppliers, who then cut off supplies making it impossible to trade – which in turn does no good to the company's results.

"The large majority of failing companies had been for some time in structural difficulties," said Eric Van den Broele of Graydon. The crisis intensifies the wave of bankruptcies, he explained, but is a direct cause of only a limited number.

The sector hardest hit in the first quarter was construction, which saw 413 companies going out of business, a rise of 37%. Construction accounted for 16% of all failures, second only to the hotel and catering industry at 19%. Other sectors affected:

- Retail sales 14%
- Wholesale 10%
- Business services 9%
- Haulage 5%
- Motor trade and garages 3%



The restaurant and catering sector was hardest hit

European Opel factories in the hands of US banks

General Motors (GM), the parent company of the troubled Antwerp auto manufacturer Opel, has mortgaged all of the European subsidiary's factories and real estate with American banks, it was revealed at the weekend. The news comes as a blow to the Antwerp plant and to hopes that the European operations of GM might attract investors.

GM has already ceded a number of patents in Opel products to the US government in return for state assistance. Now that that property has also been mortgaged, the European wing of the company has become "worthless", according to the German business magazine *Focus*. Germany, with four Opel plants, has led the way in seeking a rescue plan for European GM.

Opel recently announced its requirements in order to become a self-sufficient concern, independent of the US parent: €3.3 billion in state aid, to enable it to attract outside investors for the long-term future. With the latest revelations that Opel is mortgaged to the hilt, the search for investors seems hopeless. And the governments involved, including Germany, Spain and Flanders, have made it clear that they do not want to become owners of the new European GM but want to pass it over to new private-sector owners.

Those are still hanging on the line, according to an optimistic evaluation by chairman of the enterprise board of Opel, Klaus Franz. "There are ongoing talks with a number of interested investors," he said at the weekend. According to the weekly newspaper *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, meanwhile, investors from Abu Dhabi have shown an interest in Opel, following their recent acquisition of a large stake in Daimler.

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Airlines • Brussels Airlines

Brussels Airlines last week inaugurated a new service to Vilnius, Lithuania. The four flights a week form part of the airline's summer schedule, which also includes new services to Palermo and Seville. Meanwhile, the company is expanding its network in Britain with flights to Edinburgh, Leeds and East Midlands airports, operated in partnership with BMI.

Biotech • Devgen

The Zwijnaarden-based biotechnology company Devgen has renewed its research and development agreement with Japan's Sumitomo Chemical Company for three years.

Cars • Crisis

New car sales in Belgium dropped 12% in March to some 50,000 vehicles, which was not as bad as some industry experts had predicted. The market leader was Renault, followed by Volkswagen and Peugeot. Most brands lost sales in the country apart from Ford, which saw sales rise by almost 6%; Audi (up 7%); and Nissan (20% higher). The hardest hit companies were Mercedes, down 33%, and Toyota, which saw a 29% fall.

Cars • Melexis

The Ypres-based company Melexis, which manufactures semi-conductors and sensors for the car industry, is set to acquire the Vision Business activities of the US Sensata company, which specialises in control and electrical management solutions.

Hotels • BHA

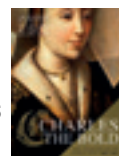
The Brussels Hotels Association is launching a campaign to encourage local residents and people who work in the city to spend a night in a Brussels hotel. The rates range from €100 for a double room with breakfast in a five-star hotel, to €60 in a three-star hotel. The deal covers the weekends of 17-18 April, 5-6 June and 26-27 June.

Investment • GIMV

Flemish government investment company GIMV plans to invest €75 million to obtain a minority stake in Vandemoortele, the food products company. GIMV also spent €25 million at the end of last year to finance the development of Electrawinds, the green energy producer.

Restaurants • Lunch Garden

The restaurant group Lunch Garden is being taken over by the Dutch H2 private equity fund for up to €50 million. Lunch Garden restaurants are often located on the premises of Carrefour supermarkets and were part of the Carestel group until 2004, when they were the subject of a management buyout.



Lost and found

The treasures that Charles the Bold lost to the Swiss in 1477 return to Flanders

DENZIL WALTON

Imagine that, for some strange reason, the whole of the Royal Collection of King Albert II had to be moved out of the Royal Palace of Brussels. The vast range of *objets d'art*, sculptures, paintings, tapestries, furniture, silverware and porcelain is labelled, packaged and loaded into trucks. It heads out of the palace gates...and disappears. Imagine the national anguish and fury at the loss of such irreplaceable treasures.

This actually happened on 5 January, 1477. And it was equally devastating.

On that night, Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, was defeated and killed at the Battle of Grandson, on the shores of Lake Neuchâtel. The victors – the Swiss Confederation – pounced gleefully on the *Burgunderbeute*, or Burgundy Booty, an inestimable collection of the Duke's personal possessions. The scale and sheer quality was exceptional, mainly due to Charles' habit of taking his personal possessions with him wherever he went.

Overnight, the Duke's treasure disappeared: artillery, tents, flags, banners, armour, weapons, textiles, tapestries, religious objects, jewellery, books and earthenware. The years after the battle saw a flourishing – albeit illegal – trade in these items. Pieces became spread across Switzerland, and many became lost. Other artefacts turned up centuries later in the depositories of Swiss museums.

The largest such collection was pulled together at the Historisches Museum in Bern. Thanks to the co-operation of this museum, the Burgundy Booty has left Switzerland for the first time since 1477 and is on display in Bruges during the exhibition *Charles the Bold: The Splendour of Burgundy*.

The man

Charles the Bold was born in Dijon on 10 November, 1433, the eldest son of Philip the Good and Isabella of Portugal. For the most part, he grew up in the Burgundian Netherlands, where he lived with his mother. As a young boy of seven, he married Catharina of France, the daughter of Charles VII, but she died soon afterwards.

In 1454, Charles married Isabella of Bourbon. Their only child, Mary of Burgundy, was born in 1457, and Isabella died the following decade. Charles soon married the English Princess Margaret of York. This marriage was celebrated with great pomp and splendour in Bruges, but the couple remained childless.

As Duke of a Burgundian empire that had grown to become one of the most powerful states in all of Europe, Charles' aim was to geographically unite the northern and southern territories of his realm. To achieve this, he transformed his military force into a professional army. His soldiers wore the finest suits of armour that money could buy. Workshops at home and abroad were employed to craft weapons and armour of exceptional quality. He went from one military victory to the next, and

quickly increased the extent of his territory. However, it was not to last.

For a full year – from 1474 to 1475 – he laid siege to Neuss (in modern Germany), but under pressure from the army of Frederick III, Charles and his troops were eventually forced to withdraw. The following year, Charles suffered two major defeats at the hands of the army of the Swiss Confederation, finally meeting his death on 5 January 1477 at Grandson.

The cache

Charles the Bold is being held in Bruges' two most eminent museums, the Groeninge Museum and the Bruggemuseum. It displays magnificent suits of armour and ceremonial weapons; liturgical robes, breviaries and reliquaries; rare documents; banners and other heraldic objects.

Notable is the Millefleurs tapestry with its exceptionally ornate details of 30 flowering plants and its remarkably high density of silk thread that gives the tapestry a luminescent sheen.

Equally impressive is the chain of the Order of the Golden Fleece, one of the most important status symbols in the Burgundian court. It could only be worn by members of this prestigious order of chivalry.

An ornate game board, which could be used for both chess and backgammon, illustrates a number of the court's leisure activities. The playing area is bordered in ivory, into which a number of scenes have been cut, showing the main recreational pursuits of the aristocracy: hawking, sword dancing, concerts, deer hunting and jousting.

In addition to the Burgundy Booty, the exhibition includes artwork from museums and churches around the world, temporarily gathered to evoke the golden age of the House of Burgundy. ♦



Portrait of Charles the Bold as a young man by an unknown painter

© Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien

Found and lost

Where is the body of Charles the Bold?

It is no coincidence that part of the *Charles the Bold* exhibition is in the choir of the Church of Our Lady, for that is where the Duke was finally laid to rest, alongside his daughter and successor, Mary of Burgundy.

However, recovering his body was both difficult and unpleasant, as reported by the Italian page Colonna, who, after a long search, located the Duke's body on the battlefield: "Charles the Bold's body is frozen in a pond and is horribly mutilated. A halberd has split his skull in two. Lances are protruding from his loins and belly. His face has already been eaten away by wolves. I was only able to recognise him by his long nails and by the scars of previous battles."

Charles' opponent, Duke René II of Lorraine, regarded the body as a trophy of war and buried it in Nancy. In 1550 the remains were transferred to the Netherlands. Three years later, Charles the Bold was finally interred in the tomb in Bruges. At the command of his great-great grandson, Philip II, a new mausoleum was built for Charles alone. However, while excavations in the choir revealed the last vestiges of Mary's skeleton, no trace was found of either Charles the Bold or his coffin.



Charles the Bold

Groeninge Museum & Bruggemuseum, Bruges

Until 21 July

→ www.kareldestoute.be

Masking the inhuman in us all

Antwerp's Fine Arts Museum links three masters of the grotesque

REBECCA BENOOT

Goya, Redon, Ensor. At first glance, these three renowned painters have very little in common. But when you delve a little deeper into these eclectic oeuvres, you'll notice their mutual fascination and depiction of the grotesque is a remarkable theme that links these three diverse artists and forms the basis of this extraordinary exhibition in Antwerp.

On entering the show at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts, you're confronted with a line from Victor Hugo's *Cromwell*: "The grotesque will play the role of the beast in man". A taste of things to come.

All three artists were each in his own right pioneers of modern art. Goya portrayed inner turmoil and the horror of his era, Redon became one of the leading symbolists with his bizarre and fantastical drawings, and Ensor, slowly but surely, banished all realism from his colourful and very expressive paintings.

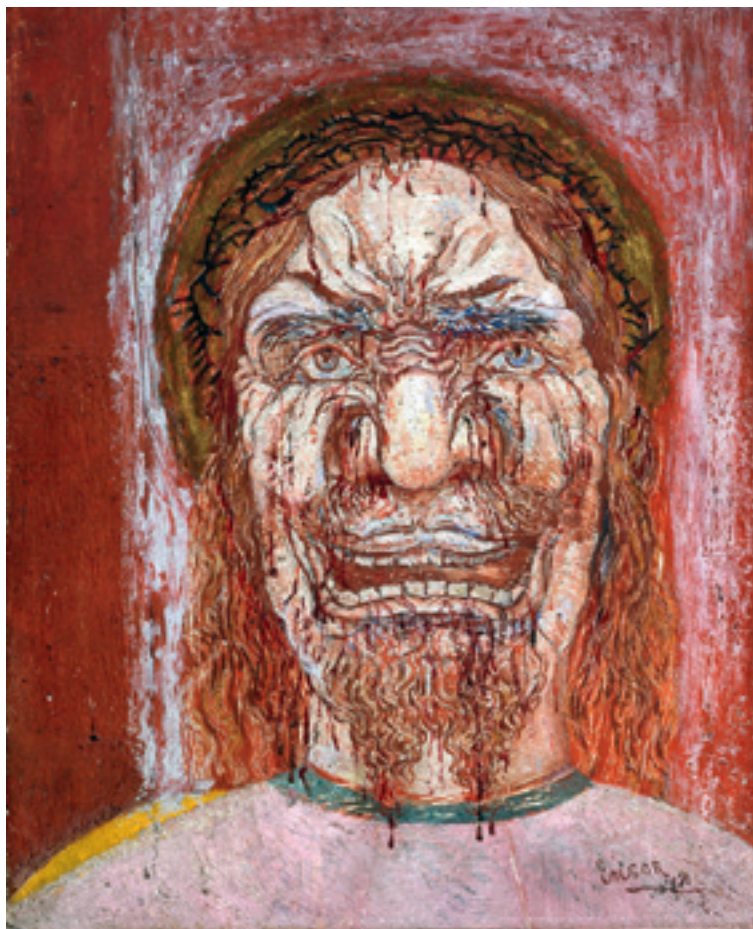
The influence of Goya, a former 18th-century Spanish court painter, on the 19th century Redon and Ensor was immense. They were inspired by his morbid and absurd combinations of demons, devils and anguish. An entire room is dedicated to his sinister etchings of human *Folly*, where Goya portrays the darker side of human nature

in all its shapes and sizes, often covered up with masks – a notion that was revived in Ensor's later work.

The exhibition alternates light rooms with darker ones, suggesting that you are entering the belly of the beast. Redon figures heavily in the darker, more intimate spaces. The French painter and printmaker's work is simple yet symbolic, melancholy yet surreal. The morbid constructions enhance the monster-filled dream world of this mad genius – a place both brutal and surprisingly peaceful.

Finally, our own Belgian Ensor, whose love for bright colours and masks have made him legendary. Not only masks but also faces are hidden in the most surprising places in his drawings and vivid paintings. He sought to emphasise the ornamental aspect of the grotesque, literally masking the hidden truths of humanity. Together with Redon, he is also responsible for the highlight of the exhibition, a series of disquieting drawings inspired by the works of Edgar Allen Poe.

The Museum of Fine Arts, which already holds the majority of Ensor's work, gathered many of the other paintings, drawings and prints from around the globe. *Goya, Redon, Ensor* is an ideal run up to the 2010 Ensor Year.



Goya, Redon, Ensor

Royal Museum of Fine Arts - Leopold De Waelplaats, Antwerp

Until 14 June

→ www.kmska.be

new music

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

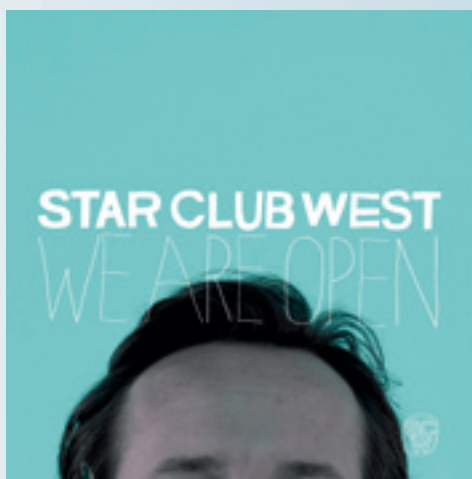
Star Club West

Inneke 23 & The Lipstick Painters

We've said this before, and it's still true: the last few years, Ghent has become Flanders' rock capital. It's a position that, during the 1990s, was proudly held by Antwerp. But that doesn't mean 't Stad, as its denizens like to call it, is no source of good music anymore. On the contrary! Star Club West and Inneke 23 & The Lipstick Painters serve as Antwerp exhibits A and B.

Will their fourth album *We Are Open* help Star Club West rise from being unsung heroes to, at least, cult status? They deserve it, that's for sure. Sparkling melodies are countered by buzzing sounds – a jamming transmitter in "It Is Working" and do we *really* hear a typewriter in "54"? – that always result in catchy tunes.

Star Club West gravitates around the songs of Nico Jacobs, who is partial to krautrock, the repetitive German music from the 1970s. That is never more blatant than in the hypnotising, slowly disintegrating closing song "What about that Lofi Ghost Track". An amazing effort, since even the sonic thunderstorm can't oust the melancholy that's always present in Star Club West tunes. Apart from the one misfire "Brilliant in Our Bites", *We*



Are Open is top-notch.

Another too-little-known from Antwerp's underground scene is Inneke 23, who used to be in de Bossen, a threesome that specialised in trashy garage rock (their amazing "Speed Queen" is for sale on iTunes). A decade ago, de Bossen was invited by BBC Radio One for the legendary Peel Sessions, but their management didn't find it appropriate since their record hadn't been released

in the UK yet. How wrong can you be? The momentum for de Bossen dwindled almost as quickly as it had risen, and the band more or less imploded.

But Inneke 23 kept on making music, and, backed by The Lipstick Painters, she has just released her second album *Charcoal*. It's an enchanting collection of country rock, and it comes as no surprise that Inneke 23 honours, in "Star Car", Gram Parsons, the long-deceased but not forgotten master of the genre.

She even manages to smuggle him into her cover of the The Stranglers' punk anthem "No More Heroes", in which she also praises Flemish author Louis Paul Boon (as Louis Paul Bonnie!). Admittedly, her accent with the English lyrics is sometimes a bit, erm, unusual, but hey, most people from Antwerp even have an accent in their native Dutch. It doesn't matter, anyway; *Charcoal* is a collection of heartfelt songs. That's what counts.

→ www.starclubwest.be

→ www.inneke23.be

CULTURE NEWS

ALAN HOPE

The *FC De Kampioenen* movie has been cancelled, the VRT announced. Apparently some of the actors concerned found the screenplay not up to their expectations. "The story just wasn't good enough," said Herman Verbruggen, who plays Markske. A spokeswoman from VRT said: "If we can't count on the whole-hearted commitment of the entire team, then it makes no sense to launch a movie project," said a spokeswoman for the VRT. The scriptwriter, Koen Vermeiren, has already written 20 episodes of the long-running Flemish sitcom.

Disco and New Wave diva **Grace Jones** has been added to the bill of Rock Werchter, organisers announced. Jones, now 60, recently released her first record in 20 years and played a well-received show at the Ancienne Belgique in Brussels.

The new **Leuven city museum M** has cancelled a preview opening on 25 and 26 April in order to allow building work to continue. The White Opening was intended to give an advance look at the building before its official opening in September. But much work still needs to be done before a visit from the international museums commission in May, whose opinion is crucial for M's ability to organise future international exhibitions.

Schoolchildren and students will be able to take De Lijn busses and trams to **cultural events for free**, announced the Flemish education and mobility ministries.



The **replacement for Kathleen Aerts** (above), who recently announced her departure from the kiddy-pop group K3, will be decided on a new reality TV series, a co-operation between Studio 100, which founded and sponsors K3, and broadcaster VTM. Aerts is leaving the group after 10 years to pursue a solo career.

Flemish director **Stijn Coninx** won two awards for his new film *Soeur Sourire* at the Valenciennes film festival last month in northern France. The film, about the life of the singing nun Jeanine Deckers, opens in Belgian cinemas on 6 May.



LISA BRADSHAW

Snakes on a beach

Blankenberge's serpentarium is one of the most popular of its kind in Europe

Ten years ago, Marnick Croes had to choose between his job and the 200 reptiles living in his home. He went with the reptiles.

Croes had been obsessed with all things scaly since he was very young. He had a book on animals that he was too little to read, but he looked at the pictures. "I always went back to the snakes, crocodiles and sharks," he says.

The snakes found their way into his Blankenberge home, along with lizards and frogs. Eventually, he had so many, he was spending eight hours a day caring for them (and breeding the rats to feed them) — this in addition to his full-time job as a floor supervisor in a factory. "I did it for 10 years," says Croes. "I had no social life, and I could never go on holiday. Who would volunteer to look after 200 reptiles? Some of them were venomous."

Something had to change. Croes had done an educational exhibition at a nearby theme park with his reptiles and dreamed of opening a serpentarium — or reptile zoo. In what sounds like quite a long shot, he went to the mayor's office and pitched the idea of a serpentarium in Blankenberge with him in charge. The city liked the idea: a year-round, all-weather attraction in a beach town that depends on tourists. With the city's help, Croes opened the serpentarium with his own collection in 1998.

The serpentarium is now re-opened after several months of renovations, and it also has a new owner, having been purchased by the KMDA, the organisation that owns the Antwerp Zoo and Planckendael animal park in Mechelen.

The attraction on Blankenberge's boardwalk pulls in 70,000 visitors a year, about 20,000 more than any other serpent zoo in Europe. Croes attributes this to the natural atmosphere: built out of concrete that looks like real stones and boulders and decorated top to bottom in artificial greenery, this is the royal treatment for such animals, who are usually lined up in plain glass terrariums, and for visitors, who feel like they are wandering through the jungle. Terrariums are built into the concrete walls, adding to a more natural atmosphere.

Plants have to be artificial because the reptiles "destroy everything," explains Croes. "Real plants with cobras are a disaster."

This is fairly evident with the articulated python, the largest such snake in the serpentarium. Six metres long is enough to make an impression, but it's their girth that is really astonishing. The two weigh about 100 kilograms each and "eat four rabbits in one meal, every two weeks".

But this is not the snake to be afraid of: that honour goes to the Black Mamba, "the fastest, most dangerous snake in the world," says Croes. "In nature, when you run away, other snakes just stay put. But the mamba goes after you. It's the only snake that will keep on attacking."

The serpentarium's mamba is a lot of fun — very active during the day and following your movements as it slithers around behind the glass.

Still, though, even the mamba is not the most venomous snake at the serpentarium. The Death Adder packs a more powerful bite. It's smaller and doesn't move very fast, which is why it doesn't have a mamba-size reputation.

The serpentarium is also home to a number of lizards and frogs, from the teeny to the massive. Each comes with an info card in Dutch, French and German, and the names of the creatures are usually also in English. Many of them are



Meet them in Blankenberge: one of the genus known as "death vipers", the most venomous snakes in the world; the Asia-derived Big-headed turtle and the African Black-tailed scorpion

animals you will never have seen before and certainly cannot find anywhere else in Belgium. This includes one of Croes' favourites, the Sun-gazer, a spiny lizard from South Africa that wields its tail like a club to ward off predators.

One of my favourites is the Giant Leaf Frog from the Amazon Rainforest — one of those species that people lick because its mildly poisonous skin secretions make you high. I'm more interested in the way it looks, though — completely angular, with this huge mouth that is always frowning and eyes that are droopy. It looks like it's had a bit too much of its own skin secretions the night before.

The serpentarium is also home to a few small crocodiles who co-habit with large turtles. ("Crocodiles won't eat turtles unless they can swallow them whole," assures Croes.) They have a lovely watery habitat to themselves, not far from an open-air iguana house. The serpentarium diversifies its exhibits to appeal to visitors, and it works fantastically. They have also chosen a mix of day- and night-dwellers, so something is always awake and moving around.

Most such zoos also house spiders and scorpions, so this serpentarium followed suit. There

is an impressive array of tarantulas from different parts of the world, including the Mexican Blonde, which is an expert web-spinner. "It's a home; they live in them," Croes explains. "The webs can be beautiful sometimes, very big with different compartments."

Whatever you do, don't miss the Bird Spider. That shouldn't be too hard since it's 20 centimetres leg to leg.

I am delighted with Croes' response to my question "has anything ever escaped?" One time, yes

— a gecko. The brightly coloured lizards with the suction feet are very fast and can run on any surface — hence, very difficult to catch. It ran around loose inside the serpentarium for a year — feeding on crickets that sometimes escape from tarantula cages — until Croes finally caught it. "But I thought about him running loose for a whole year, and I couldn't put him back. So I let him go."

And he runs around the serpentarium to this very day. ♦

Inside the Serpentarium

The prettiest: This prize easily goes to the black widow spider that, rather than just a simple red dot like most of her kind, seems to glow with a red luminescence over her whole little, round body.

The biggest: The articulated python. Six metres long and 100 kilos. Eats four rabbits per meal. The biggest tarantula, meanwhile, is the Bird Spider, named after what it is capable of catching and eating.

The deadliest: The Black Mamba snake. The only snake in the world that will chase you down and attack you over and over. You do not stand a chance.

Coming to you live

Mega-stars no longer overlook Belgium thanks to one concert promoter

MARTIN BANKS

What do Tina Turner, Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones and the Eagles have in common? Apart from being major rock stars, they are also appearing on stage in Belgium this year. For this, we have Live Nation to thank.

Live Nation is the concert promoter that's also behind Rock Werchter, the famous annual jamboree that has become one of Europe's biggest summer festivals, with revellers flocking from across Europe (albeit usually to a soggy field). Among this year's headliners are Dave Matthews, Oasis and Metallica.

Held just outside of Leuven for the past 35 years, Rock Werchter has been voted "Best Festival

Europe's most respected entertainment executives. Concerts and festivals promoted by Live Nation attract some of the biggest names in modern rock, including Coldplay, Portishead and The Smashing Pumpkins, as well as long-time rock heavyweights like Neil Young, Paul Simon and The Rolling Stones.

"Belgium is now a significant live entertainment market in Europe," says Live Nation press coordinator Nele Bigaré. "I think we can take pride in helping achieve this."

She can say that again.

Formed in 2005 by a spin off from Clear Channel Communications, Live Nation last year promoted or produced over 30,000 events

to accounting, media and production.

"Here in Belgium, we have an enthusiastic team wanting to organise the best concerts and festivals," says Bigaré. The organisation's goal – "to bring the best international artists to our country" – has resulted in the booking of Madonna's Sticky & Sweet tour – the first time the queen of pop will perform in Belgium in her 25-year career.

"Live Nation is actually the largest producer of live music concerts in the world," says Nele, "producing more than 16,000 concerts for 1,500 artists in 57 countries every year. The company sells over 45 million concert tickets a year."

Live Nation's international promotions teams are spread across 17 countries and book a genre-crossing range of both local and international artists, from up-and-coming club acts to stadium-filling superstars. "Our objectives for festivals are simple: create the best line-up and environment for fans and provide a great experience for the artist. Live Nation represents some of the world's most respected artists, and we are committed to building and sustaining artists' careers. I think Flemish people should feel proud that, musically, we have put Flanders on the map."

➡ www.livenation.be



Thanks to Live Nation, Madonna will perform in Belgium for the first time

"Musically, we have put Flanders on the map"

in the World" by the international concert industry four times. Part of a Los Angeles-based parent company, Live Nation Belgium has a 35-strong team based near Antwerp and also organises other big annual events like Werchter's TW Classic, I Love Techno in Ghent and the metal festival Graspop in Dessel.

Herman Schueremans, the company's managing director, is probably the Belgium's leading concert promoter and one of

globally, including concerts, theatre, car shows and other events, with a total attendance exceeding 70 million.

Worldwide, it owns or operates well over 100 venues and, in October 2007, signed a \$120 million, 10-year partnership contract with Madonna. In 2008, Live Nation Belgium alone promoted over 200 concerts and welcomed 1.5 million to its music festivals. The company is responsible for everything from booking, marketing and ticketing,

fashionista

STÉPHANIE DUVAL



Nailing it at Noxx: IncuFashion's models walk the walk

IncuFashion

Do you still think fashion shows are only for the eyes of the rich and famous or fashion journalists? A group of Antwerp students is doing its best to prove you wrong with IncuFashion.

The second edition of the "fashion show by and for young people" took place recently in the Antwerp dance temple Noxx. Dance floors made way for a giant catwalk, and dancers exchanged for striking models.

"A lot of Antwerp's young people are immensely interested in fashion, but they never get the opportunity to see a live catwalk show," says Michiel Sallaets, one of the eight enterprising students who organised the fashion show cum party. "We want to offer them a fashionable experience made to fit in with their limited finances."

Who said today's youth was a lazy and unimaginative bunch? With virtually no budget to speak of, the group (who cheekily refer to themselves as the "new Antwerp 8") put together show that was as slick as something done by a top designer paying top rates.

Every member of the team had a specific task to complete, from public relations to the casting of models, from securing a location to recruiting boutiques to participate.

This year, six stores lent their clothes: from the classy Privilege to the edgy Fish & Chips. Each boutique was given its own little show within a show, and a seamless transition from one to another was guaranteed through dance and hip-hop acts.

The models strutted down the catwalk with the confidence of career models, although in fact all of them were students or other young people with a passion for fashion. "We gave them some training and invited scouts from modelling agencies to come and take a look on the night," says Sallaets.

IncuFashion hopes eventually to become a major networking tool for young talent in the fashion world. Both aspiring models and young designers should be able to showcase their talent and get in touch with people who can help further their careers. To this end, a file is kept for each model, so that agencies can obtain the records of the girls or boys that interest them.

The Antwerp 8 are already making plans for next year's edition, which might take place in Brussels at the vast Vorst Nationaal. This creative generation is definitely thinking big.

➡ www.incufashion.be

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Health Academy Antwerp
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www.worldclass.be

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Spring in Groot-Bijgaarden

DENZIL WALTON

Come April, a constant stream of excited garden enthusiasts will be making their way north to Keukenhof in the Netherlands to see the amazing bulb displays. Now, don't get me wrong, Keukenhof is exceptional. But it's also a long way from anywhere in Flanders. A round trip of 500 kilometres translates into five hours sitting in a car.

But only five minutes out of Brussels, the castle at Groot-Bijgaarden is offering a closer, Flemish alternative. Its 14-hectare park is planted with more than one-and-a-half million bulbs for its annual International Flower Exhibition.

You'll find no fewer than 300 different varieties of tulips, divided into early, mid-season and late flowering varieties. (Gardening experts might like to know that they are also sub-divided into classic triumph, botanic tulips, lily flowers, viridiflora, parrots and multi-flora.)

Also present in huge numbers are narcissuses and daffodils, including rare varieties such as the papillon narcissus, as well as grape hyacinths, violets, azaleas and rhododendrons.

It's the sixth flower exhibition organised at the castle, and new for this year is the Virgin's Garden,

composed of white tulips, narcissuses, hyacinths and other white flowers, surrounded by white amelanchiers. Inside the park's massive, newly restored greenhouse flower arrangements will change weekly.

The castle's chapel will be open as well, where stunning floral arrangement of amaryllis, tulips, freesias and orchids are on display. Even the dungeon gets a flowery makeover.

If you're still hankering after the Real Thing of Keukenhof, keep in mind that the flower exhibition in Groot-Bijgaarden has been designed and implemented by Maarten and Pieter Bakker, descendants of the famous Dutch bulb producers. Moreover, they scoured the Netherlands to find the most interesting and unusual bulbs. So, in effect, it's like a bit of Holland in Flanders.

Castle of Groot-Bijgaarden

Isidoor Van Beverenstraat 5

Daily from 9 April to 7 May, 10.00 to 18.00

www.grandbigard.be

MORE SPRING THIS WEEK

Children's Farm [Rivierenhof, Antwerp](#)

Magnolia walk [National Botanical Garden, Meise](#)

Beach & dune guided walk [Bredene](#)



Bruges

Concertgebouw

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02,
www.concertgebouw.be

Concerts at 20.00:

APR 8 Arne Deforce, cello; Yutaka Oya, piano; Richard Barrett, electronics; Jan Huylebroeck, timpani, with Aquarius choir conducted by Marc Michael De Smet: Rihm, Zimmerman, Beckett, Barrett
 APR 9 Prometheus Ensemble conducted by Robin Engelen, in an homage to György Ligeti, with Jan Michiels, piano; Geert De Bièvre, cello: Bartók, Ligeti
 APR 10 Brussels Philharmonic conducted by Michel Tabachni: Varèse, Dillon, Stravinsky
 APR 16 Cord' & Vento Ensemble with Erik Bosgraaf, recorder; Izhar Elias, baroque guitar; Alessandro Pianu, harpsichord: Jacob Van Eyck

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24,
www.abconcerts.be

APR 8 19.00 Fennesz, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Jon Hopkins

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39,
www.demunt.be

APR 17 12.30 Ilse Eerens, soprano; Inge Spinette, fortepiano: Mahler, Berg, Franckenstein



Brussels

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtstraat 81; 02.218.20.15,
www.cirque-royal.org

APR 14-28 15.00/20.00 Lucia di Lammermoor by Donizetti, with De Munt Symphony Orchestra conducted by Julian Reynolds and choirs conducted by Piers Maxim; staged by Guy Joosten

Ghent

Vlaamse Opera

Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02,
www.vlaamseopera.be

APR 9 19.30 Così fan tutte by Mozart with the Flemish Symphony Orchestra conducted by Attilio Cremonesi, staged by Guy Joosten



Brussels

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193-195;
 02.733.13.78

APR 8 20.30 Chris Mentens Jazz Van
 APR 11 20.30 Manuel Hermia Quartet
 APR 15 20.30 Chris Joris Experience
 APR 18 18.00 Corpo

Sass'n Jazz

Koningsstraat 241; www.sazznjazz.be

Concerts at 20.30:

APR 8 Project 204 APR 9 LM3 + Jam Session APR 10-12 Franco Luciano Group APR 11 Coco Royal APR 15 Antoine Gueuning Trio APR 16 LM3 + Jam Session

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50,

www.soundsjazzclub.be

APR 8 22.00 Chamaquiando, salsa
 APR 9 21.00 The Singers Night
 APR 10 22.00 Yutaka Shiina Quartet
 APR 11 22.00 Alain-Pierre Acoustic-Trees Quintet
 APR 13 22.00 Master Session
 APR 14 22.00 Laurent Doumont Soul Band
 APR 15 22.00 Chamaquiando, salsa
 APR 16 22.00 Julien Tassin Quartet

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45

Concerts at 20.30:

APR 8 Ruby APR 9 Alberto Moreno Trio
 APR 10 Marie-Laure Béraud & Charles Loos Trio
 APR 11 Alexandre Cavaliere and Jazzy Strings
 APR 15 Sara So Far Quartet
 APR 16 Elle Yana Band

Théâtre Marni

Vergniestraat 25; 02.639.09.80

APR 7 21.30 Sébastien Llado Quartet

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

I'll Remember April

23-25 April

Flagey, Brussels

Although he was a composer and pianist, the playing of instruments was not what Miel Vanattenhoven was known for: rather, it was the promoting of jazz, his passion. Flagey hosts a musical homage to the man (below, right, with Toots Thielemans) who founded and ran the Jazz Middelheim Festival for 20 years, hosted radio jazz programmes and encouraged young artists until his death last spring.

www.flagey.be



Antwerp

Noxx

Straatsburgdok 3,
www.noxxantwerp.be

APR 17 20.00 Busta Rhymes

Sportpaleis

Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060

APR 10 20.30 Akon

APR 18 20.30 Simply Red

Borgerhout

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.292.97.40,
www.deroma.be

APR 17 20.30 Tom Vanstiphout

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24,
www.abconcerts.be

Concerts at 20.00:

APR 9 Voodoo Trance Sound System + Tim Exile + Venetian Squares + Squarepusher
 APR 10

Disko Drunkards + Rustie + Hudson Mohawke + Blk Jks + A Certain Ratio
APR 11 Svarte Greiner + Xela + Nico Muhly, Comfort + Babils + de portables
APR 12 Tiny Masters of Today + Handsome Furs + Health + Mono **APR 13** The Notwist **APR 14** The New Wine + The Invisible + Micachu and The Shapes + The Whitest Boy Alive **APR 15** Creature with the Atom Brain **APR 16** Razorlight

Gemeentehuis van Schaarbeek
 Colignonplein; 02.513.38.18
APR 8 20.00 Tribute to Jacques Brel by Le Triolet de Bruxelles

Le Botanique
 Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32, www.botanique.be
APR 18 Little Axe with Bernard Fowler

Recyclart
 Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34, www.recyclart.be
APR 9 20.00 Dynamic Band + Nestor **APR 10** 20.00 Los Marolles - The Eye of the Tiger
APR 11 21.30 Sexy Sushi + Covox + Aux Raus + Kanji Kinetic + Genuine Guy + Discoballistic + La Biur + Mers

VK Club
 Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07, www.vkconcerts.be
APR 9 20.30 Pablo Moses + U-Roy
APR 15 20.00 Black Heart Rebellion + Kiss the Anus of a Black Cat + A Storm of Light

Ghent
Handelsbeurs
 Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01, www.handelsbeurs.be
APR 18 20.00 Kraakpand #3.3

Vooruit
 St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060, www.vooruit.be
APR 9 22.00 Ice Cube **APR 13** 20.30 Trixie Whitley + Mocky **APR 15** 20.00 Ghinzu **APR 16** 22.00 Monsters of Cockrockdisco

Hasselt
Ethias Arena - Grenslandhallen
 Gouv. Verwilghensingel 70; 070.34.50.50, www.ilovethe90s.be
APR 11 23.00-6.00 I Love the 90s party

Muziekodroom
 Bootstraat 9; www.muziekodroom.be
APR 12 20.00 Trixie Whitley + Mocky

Kortrijk
De Kreun
 Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44, www.dekreun.be
APR 9 20.00 U-Roy & Pablo Moses
APR 16 20.00 Tom Helsen

Leuven
Het Depot
 Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
APR 9 20.00 The Subways
APR 11 20.00 ...And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead



Antwerp
Queen Elisabeth Hall
 Koningin Astridplein 26; 0900.26.060
APR 9 20.00 Golden Gospel Singers
APR 14 20.00 Celtic Super Night: Lúnasa with Karan Casey, Martin Hayes & Dennis Cahill and Máirtín O'Connor Trio

Zuiderpershuis
 Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00, www.zuiderpershuis.be
APR 9 20.30 Divna, Byzantine, Serbian, Bulgarian and Russian songs
APR 16 20.30 Lais Lenski
APR 17 20.30 Daby Toure (Mauritania)

Brussels
Art Base
 Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20, www.art-base.be
APR 11 21.00 Franco Luciani, Argentinian music

Stekerlapatte
 Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81, www.stekerlapatte.be
APR 9 21.30 Jeanne Garraud & Vanesa Garcia



Roeselare
 De Spil CC

H Spilleboutdreef 1; 051.265.700, www.despil.be
APR 17 20.00 Origine by choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui



Antwerp
Stadsschouwburg
 Theaterplein 1; 0900.69.900, www.sherpa.be
Until APR 19 Elisabeth, the musical (in Dutch)

Brussels
KVS Bol
 Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.00, www.kvs.be
Until APR 11 20.00 Missie (Mission) by David Van Reybrouck, performed by Bruno Vanden Broecke (in Dutch with English and French surtitles)

Kaaistudio's
 Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat 81; 02.201.59.59, www.kaaitheater.be
APR 16 20.30 Theatre and dance critic Pieter T'Jonck in lecture demonstration on theatricality (in English; free entrance, reserve in advance)

Ghent
Capitole
 Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5; 0900.69.00, www.capitolegent.be
APR 10-11 15.00/20.00 Annie, musical (in Dutch)

Vooruit
 St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; www.vooruit.be
Until APR 11 20.00 De Versie Claus (The Claus Version) by and with Josse De Pauw (in Dutch)

Leuven
Zaal Ons Huis
 Goudbloemstraat 28; 016.20.30.20, www.stuk.be
Until APR 11 20.00 Compagnie Cecilia in The Broken Circle Breakdown featuring The Cover-Ups of Alabama, theatre with country music



Antwerp
deSingel
 Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be
Until MAY 3 Architectuur als grens (Architecture as border), works by Brussels-based architects Kersten Geers and David Van Severen

Extra City
 Tulpstraat 79; 0484.42.10.70
Until JUNE 20 Sergei Eisenstein: The Mexican Drawings, 1930s sketches by the master Russian filmmaker during his stay in Mexico

Fotomuseum
 Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00
Until JUNE 7 Erwin Olaf: EyeCandy, retrospective of the Dutch photographer's cutting-edge work
Until JUNE 7 Yang Fudong: East of Que Village, video installation
Until SEP 13 Photography in Belgium during the Interbellum

Modemuseum (MoMu)
 Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70, www.momu.be
Until AUG 16 Paper Fashion, the use of paper and related materials in modern and contemporary fashion and 1960s paper dresses from the Atopos collection

Royal Museum of Fine Arts
 Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09
Until MAY 10 Camiel Van Breedam: Collages 2002-2008, recent works on paper by the contemporary Belgian artist
Until JUNE 14 Goya, Redon, Ensor: Grotesque paintings and drawings

Zilvermuseum Sterckshof
 Cornelissenlaan; 03.360.52.52
Until JUNE 21 Van Kempen, van zilversmid tot fabrikant (from Silversmith to Manufacturer), silverware by the Dutch designers since the 19th century

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

Bogardenkapel
 Katelijnestraat 86; 050.44.30.40
Until APR 26 Manor Grunewald: Believe it or not, paintings by the contemporary Belgian artist

Groeningemuseum
 Dijver 12; 050.44.87.43
Until JULY 21 Charles the Bold: The Splendour of Burgundy, Flemish Primitive paintings, armour, tapestries, manuscripts, fine gold and silverware that were stolen from the Burgundian court in the 15th century

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 Antarctic

Belgian Comic Strip Centre
 Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80, www.stripmuseum.be
Until MAY 17 Czechriculum Vitae, Czech history and legends in comic strips by contemporary Czech artists
Until JUNE 7 20 years of Manga in Europe, Japanese comic strips

Belvue Museum
 Paleizenplein 7; 02.511.44.25, www.belvue.be
Until MAY 31 Boy or Girl...Destiny for a Lifetime? Belgium 1830-2000, the evolution of perceptions of masculinity and femininity in Belgium over the past two centuries

Bibliotheca Wittockiana
 Bemelstraat 23; 02.770.53.33
Until MAY 30 Bibliotheca Durantiana: Bookbinding by Modern and Contemporary Artists

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
 Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
Until APR 19 Robbrecht & Daem: Pacing through Architecture, works by the Ghent-based architects
Until MAY 3 A4 - Louise Herlemont: Sans object, installations and photographs
Until MAY 17 Monumental installation by contemporary Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan (part of Turin Festival)
Until MAY 17 United Artists of Italy, 150 portraits of Italian artists by 22 photographers (part of Turin Festival)
Until MAY 24 From Van Dyck to Bellotto: Splendour 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 Stephane Beel
Until SEP 13 Portraits of Artists: 80 Years of the Centre for Fine Arts in Pictures, portraits of Victor Horta, Prokofiev, Stravinsky, Magritte, Braque and Léger, among others

CCNOA (Centre for Contemporary Non-Objective Art)
 Boulevard Barthélemylaan 5; 02.502.69.12, www.ccnoa.org
Until APR 19 Things 1. # 3/4, works by contemporary artists from the Hisk in Ghent: Ruth Sacks, Bastiaan Schevers, Joris Van De Moortel and Frederik Van

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Simaey
Until APR 19 Paintings, murals and installations by Esther Stocker
Until APR 19 Paintings by Gracia Khouw

Costume and Lace Museum
Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50
Until JUNE 21 Carmen Hoyos-Hoy: Virevoltante/Wervelend, installation
Until DEC 29 Van new look tot Expo 58, fashion from the time of Belgium's 1958 World's Fair

Creative Space Kreon
Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.768.25.10
Until APR 30 Thalen & Thalen with Meil Lee: Living Silver, contemporary silverware and jewellery

Design Flanders
Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.227.60.60, www.designflanders.be
Until APR 26 Zilveren Sterckhof opdrachten 1996-2008, silver works by 13 Flemish designers commissioned by Antwerp's Silver Museum
Until APR 26 Krehky, Design from Tsjechië, works in glass and porcelain by contemporary Czech designers

Espace Architecture La Cambre
Flageyplein 19 ; 02.642.24.50
Until MAY 31 Tel Aviv's White City, early 20th-century architecture in the Israeli capital, a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site

Flemish Parliament - De Loketten
IJzerenkruisstraat 99; 02.552.40.43
Until JUNE 13 The World of Roger Raveel, paintings by the contemporary Belgian artist

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

ISELP
Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70
Until APR 18 Buildings Extension, installation by Sylvie Macias Diaz
Until JUNE 6 Dorothée Van Biesen, textiles
Until JUNE 6 Romina Remmo, paintings

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

Museum van Elsene
Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.22
Until MAY 30 Tribute to Pierre de Caters, first Belgian aviator, who flew over Belgium 100 years ago
Until MAY 30 L'Oeil de la rue, drawings and prints by Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen (1859-1923)
Until MAY 30 Jacques Guilmot, sculptures by the late Belgian artist (1927-2008)

Royal Army Museum
Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33
Until MAY 30 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 AUG 30 Vegetal City, how to reconcile city and nature, the vision for a sustainable future by Belgian architect Luc Schuiten

Royal Museum of Fine Arts
Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11, www.fine-arts-museum.be
Until JUNE 30 Brussels Comics: Frames of Reference, 20 contemporary Belgian comic strip artists and works by those who have influenced them

Stadhuis
Grote Markt; 02.279.43.50
Until MAY 10 DeKadence: The

Bohemian Lands 1880-1914, paintings, drawings, sculptures and photographs

Deurle

Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens
Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23
Until MAY 31 Wade Guyton, monochrome images on canvas by the contemporary American artist
Until MAY 31 Peter Buggenhouts, sculptures and installations by the Belgian artist
Until MAY 31 00 Picture This!

DON'T MISS Death rides at the Atomium

Daily, until 11 April

Is it just me or does the term "death ride" immediately make you want to take part? Either you or someone you're watching might tumble to their death off the top of the Atomium. Wow! You would be a Belgian legend forever. My guess is that's it's all much safer than that, and it will only *feel like* you are going to die as you whiz down a wire from the top ball all the way to the ground.

On offer again in July and August

➡ www.belventura.be



Francesco Gennari, installation by the Italian artist

Ghent

Design Museum
Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99
Until JUNE 1 Connections, a selection of 100 textile objects from the 15th century to the present day
Until JUNE 1 Cool Dozen+, 13 chairs and 13 textile objects by Finnish designers
Until JUNE 1 Henry van de Velde, book designs by the Belgian architect (1863-1957)

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

Museum of Fine Arts
Fernand Scribedreef 1 – Citadelpark; 09.240.07.00, www.mskgent.be
Until JUNE 21 Emile Claus and Rural Life, paintings by the Belgian Impressionist (1849-1924) shown alongside works by his contemporaries, including Alfred William Finch, Léon Frederic, Constant Permeke, Constantin Meunier and Henry Van de Velde

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMK)
Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03, www.smak.be
Until AUG 2 Dara Birnbaum retrospective: The Dark Matter of Media Light, video installations redefining what it can mean to be a woman in a fast-evolving world
Until AUG 23 Beyond The Picturesque, interpretations of landscape in

contemporary art, with works by Marcel Berlangier, Damien De Lepeleire and Jan Kempenaers, among others
Until MAY 31 Kunst Nu (Art Now): Where I'm Likely to Find It, installation by Satoru Eguchi

Knokke

Hotel Approach
Kustlaan 172; 0496.62.50.00,
Until MAY 24 Kunst ontmoet Kunst 14 (Art Meets Art 14): Joël De Rore, paintings; Laurent Geers, sculptures; Willy Ketelslagers, paintings; Jos Kuppens, marble and granite

Knokke-Duinbergen

Lagunahal
Krommedijk 57; 050.63.04.30, www.fotofestival.be
Until JUNE 7 Still/Moving/Still, slide projection of photographs by Belgian and international photographers

Knokke-Heist

Cultuurcentrum Scharpoord
Meerlaan 32; 050.63.04.30, www.fotofestival.be
Until MAY 3 International Photography Competition
Until JUNE 7 Marcel Broodthaers: Texte et Photos, photographs and documents by the Belgian artist (1924-1976)

Leuven

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

Machelen-Zulte

Het Roger Raveelmuseum
Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00
Until JUNE 14 Objectschilderijen, works by various artists

Mechelen

Speelgoedmuseum (Toy Museum)
Nekkerspoelstraat 21; 015.55.70.75, www.speelgoedmuseum.be
Until SEP 30 Cowboys and Indians

Ostend

Kunstmuseum Aan Zee
Romestraat 11; 070.22.50.05, www.beaufort03.be
Until OCT 4 Beaufort 03 - Art by the Sea: Third edition of the contemporary art triennial, with outdoor installations and sculptures by 29 Belgian and international artists along the Flemish coast

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 south-western Ethiopia's nomadic tribes and objects from the museum's collection

Ypres

Ikob
Loten 3; 087.56.01.10
Until JUNE 21 Angebot + Nachfrage: Bring It All Home, paintings by contemporary Dutch artist Loek Groothans and installations by Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers (1924-1976)



Ars Musica 2009: 20th edition of the contemporary classical music festival featuring emerging musicians and composers, plus tributes to established modernists Ligeti, Dufourt and Pousseur
Until APR 10 at venues across the country
02.641.10.20, www.arsmusica.be

Beaufort 03 - Art by the Sea: Third edition of the contemporary art triennial, with works by 29 Belgian and international artists
Until OCT 4 at Ostend's Kunstmuseum aan Zee, as well as outdoor installations and sculptures along the Flemish coast
070.22.50.05, www.beaufort03.be

Antwerp

Easter Edge Festival: Cultural festival on Easter Sunday, featuring concerts by The Glimmers, Briskey and more. Party, short films, games, readings and food
APR 12 at Petrol Club, d'Herbouvillekaai 25
www.cuttingedge.be

Een Blik OpP...Tim Van Steenberghe: Live interview with the Flemish designer Tim Van Steenberghe about his two passions: fashion and theatre. Includes fashion show and film projections.
APR 8 20.00 at Bourlaschouwburg, Komedieplaats 18
03.224.88.44, www.toneelhuis.be

Saxonly: International Saxophone Festival: Concerts, workshops, readings and master classes
APR 15-18 at deSingel, Desguinlei 25
www.saxonly.be

Brussels

Balkan Trafik Festival 2009: Weekend of activities by artists from the Balkan countries. Music, dance and film from Jewish and Roma minorities, plus exclusive new works, workshops and wine bars
APR 16-18 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23
www.bozar.be

Brussels 2009 BD Comic Strip: Exhibitions, events and installations
Until DEC 31 in several Brussels museums and other venues
www.brusselscomics.com

Easter Egg Hunt: Annual Easter egg hunt at Bruparck including "super" eggs containing tickets to films at Kinepolis and other events around the park, plus face painting, workshops and other children's activities
APR 12-13 in Bruparck Village
www.bruparck.com

Street Forms: Street art festival and platform for urban culture, featuring hip-hop, film, art and performing arts
Until APR 17 at Huis van de Culturen, Belgradostraat 120
02.534.56.05, www.stgillesculture.irisnet.be

Turin/Italian Spring: Multidisciplinary festival showcasing the culture of the Italian city Turin
Until MAY 24 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23
02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

Ghent

Beestjes & Baasjes: Pet fair
APR 11-13 at Flanders Expo, Maaltekuoter 1
09.241.92.11, www.beestjesenbaasjes.be

Groot-Bijgaarden

Spring in Groot-Bijgaarden: Floral exhibition with 300 varieties of tulips and other spring blooms
Until MAY 7 at the park and castle of Groot-Bijgaarden, Isabelle Van Beverenstraat 5
0494.47.72.56, www.grandbigard.be

Hasselt

SuperStories: Contemporary art, fashion and design triennial with five exhibitions presenting more than 100 works by Belgian and international artists and designers
Until MAY 10 across Hasselt
011.29.59.77, www.superstories.be

Mechelen

City Visions: Large-scale programme of events, exhibitions and projects

DUSK 'TIL DAWN

SAFFINA RANA



Never on a Sunday

Never partied from dawn 'til dusk on a Sunday night? This week, with a whole national day of rest to recuperate after Easter Sunday, it's not as naughty as it sounds. And with over two dozen dedicated parties on in Flanders, you're spoilt for choice on where to work off those chocolate eggs.

Head over to Sunnyside Up at Silo in Leuven for some deep, warm, foot-stomping dirty house, soul and hip-hop after a hard day chasing the white rabbit. American DJ Karizma (pictured above) will be joining Raoul, Massimo da Costa and TiNo on the decks.

Or you can always track back through three decades of pioneering electronic dance music at Backspin in Café Capital in Antwerp. Stekker, Will O'Brien & Nikolai will spin everything from early electro and new wave to new beat, acid and trance.

After a day of lace-making, guild houses and the gorgeous gothic church of Saint Gummarus (the patron saint of lumberjacks) in Lier, jack it up all night at the Carat Reunion. Belgian master of rave Yves Deruyter will be one of nine DJs taking it higher during Illusion.

Large helpings of disco, meanwhile, will be served up at the gay tea dance at Le You in Brussels from 20.00. It gets hot and crowded in this lovely retro club so be sure to wear something you can slip off easily to Diana Ross or Abba. You don't have to be a dancing queen to get in, though – all are welcome.

➡ Leuven: www.silo.be.
➡ Antwerp: www.cafecapital.be.
➡ Lier: www.illusion.be.
➡ Brussels: www.leyou.be

devoted to the question of spirituality in contemporary society and the future of the city in recognition of the 450th anniversary of the archbishopric at Mechelen
Until JUNE 21 across Mechelen
www.stadsvisionen.be, 070.22.28.00

FACE OF FLANDERS

RORY WATSON



Still Poland's best-ever: Włodzimierz Lubański in the 1970s and today, an assistant coach at KSC Lokeren

Włodzimierz Lubański

Lokeren, just outside of Ghent, has been home for over 30 years to arguably Poland's best-ever footballer

In 1975, football club KSC Lokeren helped Włodzimierz Lubański pick up the threads of his career, first as a player and now as assistant coach, after he suffered a horrific leg injury while in his prime.

The tragic watershed in Lubański's life came when the forward was captaining Poland against England in 1973. His leg was broken in a fierce tackle by the England fullback Roy McFarland. "It was a very difficult period for me, my family and everyone who knew me," Lubański says. "I was off the pitch for over a year and had two operations."

When he started playing again, he found the critical comparisons between his play before and after the injury intolerable, and he began looking to clubs outside Poland. It was 1975, and Ladislav Novak, a former Czech international, was a trainer at Lokeren. Lubański had met him before at European Cup games. "That contact was very important for me," he says.

But those early days in a small Flemish town were far from easy. Lubański spoke Polish and some Russian and English, but no Dutch. It made normal communication impossible, especially as he was the only non Dutch-speaking player on the club's books. However, he soon made friends with many Polish soldiers who had stayed in Lokeren after the end of the Second World War.

Lubański's other major obstacle was high expectations. As the all-time lead goal scorer in Poland, "Everyone was looking

to me to score goals, and I wasn't ready; I was still recovering from my injury," he explains.

After a few months, Lubański, his wife and their six-year old daughter had settled in, and his old form returned. "It was another type of life, but it was good because people accepted us," he tells me. "That was very important, and it was not easy because we came from a Communist country and everyone at the time considered it to be another kind of Europe."

During his eight seasons at Lokeren, Lubański scored about 100 goals, and the club's fortunes soared. It played in the Europa Cup four times and held its own against the leading teams of the day – Anderlecht, Club Brugge and Standard Liège – regularly

"I really believe that football is one way of breaking down political divides"

finishing in the top four.

Lubański's goal-scoring feats also benefited his home country. "Journalists would write about this Polish player scoring goals, and it was a success not only for me but also for Poland," he says. "Because at the time not everyone knew where Poland was and what was happening there. So, while I was doing a good job as a footballer, I was also doing a good job for Poland. I really believe that football is one way of breaking down political divides."

He hopes he will be able to serve his country again in the run up to the 2012 European championships, which will be held jointly in Poland and Ukraine. "I was born in Poland, my career started there, and my heart beats for Poland," he says. "With a huge event like Europe 2012, it would be an honour and a pleasure if I

could do something for Polish football."

Whetting the public's appetite for those championships in three years' time has already begun. Lubański was alongside his fellow Silesian and MEP Jerzy Buzek when the former Polish prime minister recently presented the prestigious forthcoming event to politicians, former football internationalists and senior officials in the European Parliament.

Lubański followed his eight years at Lokeren with a successful three-year stint in France's second division before returning to the Flemish club in 1985, gaining the necessary qualifications to work as a coach, trainer and FIFA agent. Now assistant coach, he reflects on how the environment has changed in the past 30 years.

"When I came here, there were visa controls. Now Europe is open, and people can travel as they wish.

I am working with players from up to seven countries, including African ones."

Lubański represented his country on 80 occasions, scoring 50 goals in the Polish colours. He made his first appearance on the national team at the age of 16 in 1963 and captained the side that won gold in the 1972 Munich Olympics.

Without his devastating injury, Lubański, considered the most outstanding Polish player of the past 50 years, would almost certainly not have come to Flanders. It not only changed the course of his life, but gave him the mental strength to make a fresh start. "My boyhood dream of playing in the national side had come true and then, with this injury, my dream was over. But in the end, it gave me the power to do good things, and I always look on the positive side."

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



tafelschuimer →

It's beyond words; there are no words to describe it. Sometimes we are at a loss for words and need to create new words to capture a novel activity. Newborn words have to fight to survive and, if they have no further use, they die.

This should reassure those who are bristling at the latest neologism of the Flemish authorities to get people off their backsides. Those over 50, *viijftigplussers* – "fifty plussers" are being encouraged to *sportelen*, that is to take up sport. Or, rather, a little bit of this and a little bit of that sport. Clearly, they cannot be trusted with the real thing.

Words created by the group that specifically needs them have a better chance of making it to the dictionary. This may be the case of the words used by restaurateurs in Ghent, who have gotten to know a certain Titus Clarysse. Titus has fallen on hard times and, though only in his 30s, is unable to find work. He lives on welfare, has little money and, unlike many, gets bored watching TV every evening. He also has a healthy appetite but wants to avoid soup kitchens because he doesn't want to run into old friends who had a bad influence on him.

On more than 50 occasions, Titus has settled down to a substantial meal in one of Ghent's many fine restaurants.

He likes to start with a couple of aperitifs to sharpen the taste buds before going through the menu. The restaurateurs call such freeloaders *tafelschuimers* – table skimmers, or *eetpiraten* – food pirates.

Titus knows what will happen when the bill arrives, but this doesn't dull his appetite. He calmly hands over a credit card, which the machine refuses, and the police are called. He is fined or given a prison sentence of some weeks, but he has no money to pay the fine, and sentences under six months are not carried out.

A pretty good deal for Titus, it seems, but his luck is about to run out. Such short-term sentences can now be accumulated, which, to the relief of the restaurateurs, means that he would end up in prison if he collects more than six months' worth.

Titus has become part of the folklore of the restaurant scene in Ghent. As one restaurant owner put it: "*Waarom is hij bij mij nog niet geweest?*" – Why has he not been here yet? *Ik kan de publiciteit gebruiken* – I could do with the publicity."

Titus the *tafelschuimer* may soon be out of circulation, though. If his lawyer has his way, he will not be languishing behind bars but instead working at the back of a restaurant kitchen paying off his debt to society washing dishes.

The last word →→→

Kuwaitstraat

"I don't know the exact number of plates still to be delivered, but it's a lot. Kuwait has about 2.5 million inhabitants spread over a couple of hundred thousand houses."

Steve Schepers, whose Diest company Cosign won a contract to put address numbers on every house in Kuwait

Last letter

"We are on our way into the unknown. Greetings, and see you soon."

A letter written by Antwerp tailor Izak Alternhaus as he was transported to Auschwitz, which just arrived after 65 years

Euros preferred

"Amateur players can change clubs every year, and they no longer want to play for a pistolet and a pintje."

Amateur club SK Nieuwkapelle has disbanded its first team because it can no longer afford the players

Tomb raider

"This is the first and last time I wear my Lara Croft outfit. I'm not going out in the street in it again."

Eighteen-year-old Ben caused a three-hour manhunt when he was seen walking the streets in fancy dress, complete with toy guns