

Withof closes 7

One of the country's most prestigious Michelin-starred restaurants has announced that it is to close down. So what went wrong at Kasteel Withof?



Luc now 8

Luc Tuymans is admired everywhere – except in Brussels. But this might change now that the capital has finally granted the artist his first-ever show in the city's cutting-edge Wiels art centre.



Glass palaces 10

The greenhouses at Laeken in northern Brussels are among the most beautiful in the world. But they were built by King Leopold using money that was gained from ruthless colonial exploitation.



Business is blooming

April in south Limburg means a riot of colour and a burst of tourism

DENZIL WALTON

There are some sights you just have to see for yourself, when leafing through your neighbour's snaps on Flickr is simply not good enough. The Haspengouw in April is one of them.

For a few weeks each year, this area in the south of Limburg province is a sea of pink and white, as millions of fruit trees burst into blossom simultaneously. This beautiful spectacle draws visitors from all over Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Germany.

Being a well-oiled tourist machine, Limburg makes sure that when all those euro-carrying visitors come to admire the blossom, they'll find other reasons to stay awhile. The possibilities, indeed, are endless.

You can go on specially-devised

walks, cycle rides or car journeys through the most abundant orchards. You can enjoy guided tours around fruit farms and fruit auctions. You can visit companies that liquidise, preserve and bottle fruit. You can walk round fruit museums, stare at fruit art, visit fruit exhibitions, or order a romantic fruit picnic for two under the trees. You can even go on a nocturnal stroll through a candle-lit fruit orchard.

In short, from Sint-Truiden to Borgloon, Gingelom to Nieuwekerken, Heers to Kortesseem, and in every tiny village in between, April in the Haspengouw means one thing: it's blossom time.

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© Toetsme Limburg/Kristen Wintmolders

City archive has unwelcome visitors

Lice, mites and beetles infest state records

The state archives housed in the city of Ghent are infested with a variety of insects and other pests, it was revealed last week. Among the creepy-crawlies found among the centuries-old documents are poultry red mites (*Dermanyssus gallinae*), booklice (*Psocoptera*), silverfish (*Lepisma saccharina*) and the common furniture beetle (*Anobium punctatum*).

The archive is housed in the Geraard de Duivelsteen, a 13th century castle named after the knight and mediaeval building contractor Gheeraert Vilain. The furniture beetles were found in the wood panelling on one of the floors of the archive. According to reports by staff, they can be

seen falling from the panels. However the furniture beetle is only a danger in the larval phase; the adult beetle does not feed.

The Nederschelde or Reep, part of the River Scheldt, used to run past the castle, but was covered over in the 1960s because river traffic moved elsewhere, and the smell of the watercourse became a local nuisance. More recently, the city authorities and the Flemish region have undertaken works to open up the Reep again, but this has led to problems of dampness within the Duivelsteen, leading to mould and infestations.

The state archives of Ghent have been housed in the castle since

1904, when a new wing in neo-Gothic style was built for the purpose. There have been proposals, but no concrete plans, to build a new archive gathering together records from the whole of East Flanders – there are currently branches of the archive in Ronse and Beveren. The idea of moving the present archive to the Zuidertoren office building has also been raised.

According to a report in Het Nieuwsblad, at least two people working in the archive suffered skin rashes and insect bites requiring medical treatment. In all, 15 people including volunteers work in the archive. The archive's management declined to comment on the reports.

De Gucht attacks Dedecker's "Gestapo tactics"

Renegade politician set private eye on minister's family

ALAN HOPE

Party leaders from the opposition and majority alike have united to condemn the decision by Jean-Marie Dedecker, the leader of the Lijst Dedecker party, to employ a female private detective to look into the financial affairs of foreign affairs minister Karel De Gucht, his wife and his son.

Dedecker, the former Olympic judo coach who was once a party colleague of De Gucht (before he teamed up with the N-VA and then created his own party), claims to have highly-placed sources within the justice system who allege that De Gucht had undeclared interests in the sale and leaseback of government

buildings in Veurne.

The main allegation involves a building used by the justice ministry which was sold, Dedecker claims, for a price below its true value, and then leased back by the ministry at the "exorbitant" rate of €1 million a year. In order to substantiate his sources' allegations without being able to bring them forward for reasons of anonymity, Dedecker admits paying a private detective.

The contract, which specified a rate of €18 an hour and expenses of 50c a kilometre, as well as an upfront payment of €3,000, was drawn up

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News in brief

Thieves last week stole a bicycle belonging to the new bishop of Antwerp. Johan Bonny had received the brand-new bicycle as a gift from his family on being made bishop. He was previously rector of the Belgian college in Rome, where he rode a Vespa.

A pharmacist from Middelkerke is under psychiatric supervision in the Sint-Jozef Hospital in Ostend after giving poisoned cheese to her husband and two sons, aged 14 and 12. The woman later repented and drove the victims to the hospital. The woman is said to be depressed.

The longest poem in the world was last week officially unveiled in Antwerp. The work by city poet Joke van Leeuwen, titled Eleven hundred and forty-four metre poem, is displayed on the tiled walls of the Sint-Anna pedestrian tunnel on the left bank of the Scheldt. It measures, as the title says, 1,144 metres.

The first signs of a new plague of the oak processionary caterpillar have been spotted in Limburg province. The caterpillar has hairs which, when they come into contact with the human skin, can cause irritation, and which when inhaled cause symptoms of asthma. In previous years the army has been employed to eradicate the caterpillars, which are still in the larval stage and represent no immediate danger. Last year the provincial government spent €25,000 on a product to remove the pests.

Police and firefighters rushed to answer an alarm in a church in Oordgem in East Flanders last week, interrupting a funeral service. The cause of the alarm was found to be an automatic smoke detector, which had been set off by a censer hung in the vestry while it was still smoking.

A group representing the parents of road accident victims has come out in support of a campaign alerting people to the dangers of MP3 players in traffic. A series of radio ads, launched last week on Studio Brussel, is designed to show how players can be a danger for cyclists and pedestrians. A week earlier, mobility minister Etienne Schouppe called for an investigation into the dangers of MP3 players from the Institute for Road Safety.

The high cost of dying

The average cost of a funeral is between €3,000 and €5,000, according to a survey by funeral specialists DELA. Flanders tends to pay more: €4,010 compared to €3,344 in Wallonia.

According to the company, fixed costs amount to €1,600, including transport of the deceased, use of a hearse and staff costs. Coffins cost between €650 for something "sober" and €2,000 for a more luxurious model.

DELA collected data from the last 30 years from a network of 54 funeral undertakers established in 110 locations. In 1978, a funeral cost the equivalent of €919 to €3,910.

Cremation costs an extra €650. A death notice in the papers can add €1,050, with the sending of 75-150 cards to family and acquaintances adding €150 to €250. Mass cards for Catholics cost about €300-375. The average price does not include a headstone, which can easily cost upward of €2,000.

Other additional costs:

• flowers	€150 to €450
• cars for mourners	€150 each
• a religious or secular service	€150 to €250
• refreshments	€11 to €20
• cost of home help, emotional counselling, notary	up to €1,500



The average cost does not include a headstone

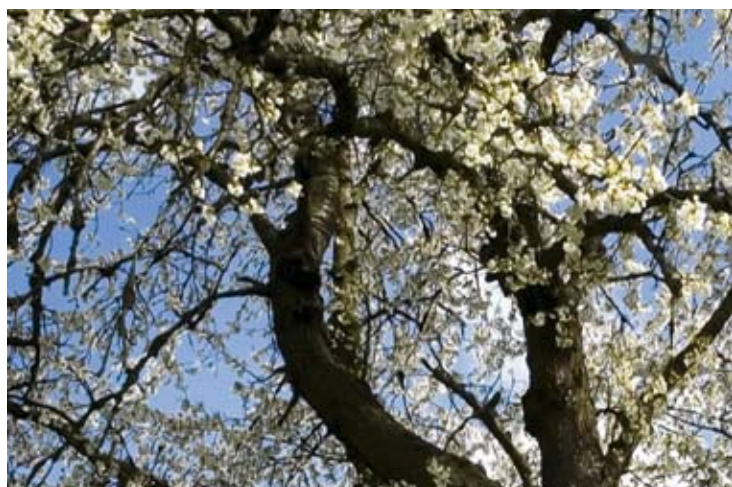
Flanders now has its own dating website for cheating adulterers, with the opening of Second Love, based on a Dutch model. The site advertises itself as "a dating site for men and women who are looking for an exciting affair or an adventure." The site's founder, Erik Drost, says: "How far people are willing to go, from flirting online to real-life dates, is a matter for our members themselves". Full membership costs €69.95 a month.

Child Focus, the charity for missing and exploited children, has replaced its emergency number with the new EU-wide emergency phone number 116.000, which is already in operation in seven countries. The previous number, 110, remains operational for a period.

Last year government inspectors filed 110 complaints against fitness clubs, according to enterprise minister Vincent Van Quickenborne in answer to a parliamentary question. The offences concerned discrimination in accepting clients, difficulties in allowing the cancellation of contracts, and contracts that were automatically extended without the explicit agreement of the customer.

Crime rose in Antwerp last year for the sixth year in a row, with the number of burglaries particularly worrying, police said. The total number of crimes reported went up by 4%, but armed robberies fell 5%, and thefts from cars was down a massive 32%. Bag-snatchings however were up by 28%, and thefts involving violence rose 12%. Burglaries fell, but only by 2%, despite the introduction of various preventive measures. Antwerp mayor Patrick Janssens called the figures "disturbingly high".

About 30 member of the militant Flemish group Taal Aktie Komitee (TAK) were detained by police when they scaled the lion at Waterloo to hang banners. The group were marking out the language barrier in the municipalities around Brussels, and had already demonstrated in Overijse, Genval and Sint-Genesius Rode, where they blocked traffic, before moving on to Waterloo. They climbed the lion with the intention of hanging a protest banner, but the demonstration was broken up by the police.



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Investigation "did not target private life" Dedecker claims

Continued from page 1

between the detective bureau and a company owned by Dedecker. The detective's investigation lasted from November last year until this month, and produced nothing in the way of solid evidence.

"I did not employ a private detective to look into the private life of Mr. De Gucht," Dedecker said. "What he does in his private life is no business of mine. What on earth is so scandalous? I'm fulfilling my role to the full as a member of parliament to scrutinise the government. Somebody has to do it, surely? It is the foundation of our democracy."

"Unheard of," commented De Gucht. "Dedecker is an uncouth lout who wants my hide, and isn't above using Gestapo techniques to

get it." The minister was aware of the detective's activities for some time, he said, but not the reason for them. "Now it appears she picked through all of my bank accounts and my income sources," he said. "And not only mine, also those of my wife and [son] Jean-Jacques."

The detective's report concludes: "Unfortunately I have to inform you that I have been unable to find a link between Karel De Gucht and the justice building in Veurne". Regarding Jean-Jacques De Gucht, the 25-year-old son of the minister, who sits in the Senate for Open VLD, the report had only one line: "In his whole life he has worked only three days officially for Ijsco [an ice-cream delivery company]."

Political reaction was unanimous. CD&V chairperson Mari-

anne Thyssen called it "irresponsible practice that has no place in our political culture." SPA chair Caroline Gennez said, "This has no place in a well-functioning state operating the rule of law." And N-VA leader Bart De Wever accepted Dedecker's point that a member of parliament has the right to exercise scrutiny over the government, but argued Dedecker had acted "not so much out of civic duty, but more as

a way of presenting himself as a sort of Robin Hood."

On another front, the national union of private detectives (who are strictly controlled and licensed in Belgium) said the investigator in the case had committed "a grave error of professional ethics". The detective in the case, if she is in fact registered and licensed, could be investigated by the interior ministry, which governs the profession.

Debt arrears approach €2 billion

As many as half a million Belgians are in debt, representing a total of €1.93 billion, according to figures released last week by the National Bank. In March this year, the number of credit contracts which were in severe arrears – defined by the Bank as a minimum of three months of non-payment – had reached 499,568, representing €1.34 billion in debt, while a further €591 million in housing-related credit, mainly mortgages, was recorded.

The figures are up by 6% and 14% respectively on the situation in September last year, when total arrears totalled €1.78 billion. "The increases have been noticeable since mid-October, when the economic crisis really became known to the public," said Luc Dufresne of the National Bank. "We pointed in January to indications of increasing bad payments in consumer credit. There seems also to have been an increase in arrears in contracts for mortgages since late 2008."

The number of cases of mortgage arrears has risen to 38,400. Since

one household can have – and is indeed likely to have – debts across several contracts, it is not possible to say exactly how many families are represented in the Bank's figures. It is known, however, that there were 344,000 people involved in bad debt at the end of 2008, and that figure is likely to be larger now.

The banks, however, play the evolution down. Market leader Fortis has encountered a small increase in the number of bad mortgage payers, according to De Morgen, while Dexia and KBC have registered "nothing noteworthy". However arrears in consumer credit – personal loans and credit card debts – is more than double that for mortgages. Some will be comforted by an announcement last week from the economics ministry that maximum figures for APR (annual percentage rate, or the true rate of interest on debt repayments) will be revised downwards, which is equivalent to a cut in interest of between 0.5% and 1.5%.

Het Zwin nature park gets three-year facelift



The coastal nature reserve Het Zwin on the border of Belgium and the Netherlands is to receive a three-year makeover at a cost of €16 million. According to plans announced last week by the province of West Flanders, the renovation work will include a new visitors' centre, lookout posts and changes to the layout of the nature reserve.

Het Zwin was originally an arm of the sea which reached inland to Damme, but as the polders were created and the passage silted up, it became no more than a shallow channel whose estuary can now be crossed on foot at ebb tide. The area was turned into Belgium's first nature reserve in 1952. Buildings on the land – a souvenir shop, restaurant and visitors' centre – date from 1930-1950, and most

are dilapidated. These will now be demolished and a single visitors' centre constructed which, the province promises, will perform a major tourist reception role. It will also include sleeping quarters for visiting groups and spaces dedicated to nature education and public information.

A new lookout post offering a 360 degree view of the site – already christened "The Eye" – will be built into the dykes near the estuary. The nature reserve will also be extended beyond its current 120 hectares, with the addition of footpaths and cycle trails, picnic spots and a new dyke, all of which will cost an additional €21 million. Financing will be provided by West Flanders, the municipality of Knokke-Heist and the European Union. The work is intended to be complete in 2012.

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

Private investigations

Jean-Marie Dedecker, the former judo coach who started his own party, just cannot help making the headlines. This time it became known that he has hired a private detective to look into Foreign minister Karel De Gucht's private business affairs. De Gucht (Open VLD) and Dedecker are not just opponents, but downright enemies, since Dedecker was kicked out of Open VLD.

Still, Dedecker claims revenge was not his motive. He says he was tipped off about a conflict of interest surrounding the sale-and lease-back operation of a courthouse, which the federal government decided in 2003 and which would have benefited De Gucht personally. However, the private detective did not dig up anything of the sort. De Gucht calls the accusations "ridiculous" and the investigation into it "Gestapo practices".

This scandal – or rather the lack of it – is nothing new in Belgian politics. What is new is the private detective part. Experts differ on whether this is illegal. Dedecker pleads that, as a member of the opposition, it is his task to check on the government. Moreover, he has lost his faith in the police and justice system. Private investigations are therefore the only option left.

There are, however, some strange details surrounding the contract. One is that Dedecker did not pay the detective in person, but through one of his companies. The other is the fact that the detective also looked into the earnings of De Gucht's wife and son – clearly a breach of their privacy.

Jean-Marie Dedecker enjoys a good fight against the establishment, but after this episode he will find himself more isolated than ever. All the other parties are unanimous in their disapproval. The Christian Democrats speak of "underworld practices". Bart Somers, president of Dedecker's former party Open VLD, states that "true liberals" respect people's privacy. Even N-VA, the party of Bart De Wever (who once said that their party programmes had "90 percent" in common), now says that "a great distance has grown" between the two of them. Filip Dewinter of Vlaams Belang, hardly a man of the establishment himself, adds that he has had to endure "those practices" himself "too often to approve".

Dedecker is usually at his best in the underdog position. However, with a party set to get more than 10% of the vote at the upcoming regional elections, he must also consider what comes next. Who wants to join a coalition with a man like Dedecker, who is now considered reckless and unreliable?

And then there is one other thing. Some months ago, Dedecker announced that he had a scandal up his sleeve, which he would reveal shortly before the elections. Was this it? In that case, we all now know the real victim.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

1,371,687

viewers in Belgium for the final stages of the Paris-Roubaix cycle race on Canvas, as Flemish star Tom Boonen rode to victory. More than one million people watched the entire four-hour coverage of the race – 80% of the TV-watching public at the time.



59 days

of hunger strike brought to an end when the illegal immigrants protesting in a parking lot at the Free University of Brussels (VUB) were given a three-month extension by the government for medical reasons. However, the service for foreigners stressed they had been given an "orange card" for a temporary stay and, in three months' time, will still be required to leave Belgium.

€38.65

average daily cost of maintaining a prisoner released under electronic surveillance, compared to a cost of €102 for those in detention. Some prisoners with ankle bands receive a payment of €21 to encourage the procedure, it was revealed last week.

7

suicides per day on average in Belgium, and 100 attempts, according to the annual report of the Centre for Suicide Prevention (CPZ). The centre's telephone helpline took 9,609 calls in 2008, in addition to 763 online.

189

new buses ordered by the Brussels public transport authority MIVB. The authority had 127 buses delivered in 2006-2007.

44,565

requests for the renovation reimbursement offered by the Flemish region, mainly for exterior woodwork, roofing and sanitary installations. About 70% of applications are approved at an average of €6,292 per request.

€3.9 million

raised in the Lenten campaign run by Broederlijk Delen, the development aid charity, equalling last year's result. Funds were raised this year through sales of the glossy magazine Tilak.

10,672,018

individual doses of medicine taken in 2007 by Alzheimer's patients in Belgium, according to figures from the State Institute for Sickness and Invalidity Insurance (Riziv). Five years earlier, the figure was 975,054, more than 10 times less. There are currently 129,389 Alzheimer's sufferers in the country.

0800 95713

free phone helpline set up by supermarket chain Delhaize to handle enquiries about a product recall of 5-litre bottles labelled demineralised water but in fact containing bleach. The recall concerns lots FAB 7/4/09 6.10.00 to FAB 7/4/09 8.45.00 with label number EAN 5400601500209.



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

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Business is blooming

How Haspengouw's orchards stay on top

Continued from page 1

The local and international success of the Haspengouw fruit industry is a combination of science and soul. A little history will help you more fully appreciate the secret.

There are two main reasons behind the Haspengouw's outstanding quality of fruit. The first is its deep layer of loam resting on a bed of clay. The resulting soil retains its moisture content, making it ideal for growing fruit trees. The second is the tradition of fruit growing that has been passed down through many generations of farm families.

Throughout Belgium, some 8,000 hectares of land are dedicated to the cultivation of apple trees. Last year, for the first time ever, slightly more land was devoted to the cultivation of pears than apples – around 8,200 hectares. Cherry orchards take up less ground, but it's still a significant 1,200 hectares. Nearly two-thirds of these orchards – apple, pear and cherry – are concentrated in the Haspengouw.

Changing the face of fruit

Fruit from the region was already being exported to Germany and England in the 19th century. In the 1920s, fruit growers realised that by joining forces in local co-operatives, they could obtain better prices. After the Second World War, the idea really took off with the creation of co-operative fruit auctions, which have the interests of fruit growers at heart and try to get them the best price for their products. Of course, this price also depends on factors such as supply and demand, the market in general and the time of year.

The Belgian Fruit Auction (BFV), headquartered in Sint-Truiden, is the largest cooperation of fruit growers in the country, with a market share of 50% and more than 1,000 farmers on its books. In 2008, 197 million kilograms of fruit passed through BFV's hands, 97% being apples and pears.

The fruit auction also stores fruit so that it can be offered to consumers at the most appropriate time. Fruit is stored in huge cold rooms in Ultra Low Oxygen (ULO), with temperature, oxygen and CO2 levels set in a balanced combination to halt the fruit's ageing process. The BFV stores 50 million kilograms of apples and pears, which can be preserved for a whole year without a loss in quality.

Haspengouw's fruit farmers are noted for their pioneering spirit. As far back as the 1930s, they were experimenting with traditional orchard structure – moving from mature, tall, widely spaced trees to short-lived dwarf trees that were planted in high-density rows and managed intensively.

Hello, Jonagold

Now, the work of growing new trees and developing new fruit varieties is left to specialist nurseries. One of these is Johan Nicolai NV from Sint-Truiden.

The name Nicolai holds a special place on Flemish fruit farms. In 1969, Jo Nicolai came back from the United States with a new two-coloured apple variety: the Jonagold. Just when the crisis over poor quality Golden Delicious was threatening to damage the fruit industry, the Jonagold revitalised it.

The Jonagold family now accounts for more than 60% of the total number of apple trees grown in the Haspengouw and Nicolai continues to provide high-quality fruit trees for growers in the Haspengouw and beyond. "We produce and sell around one million trees per year," says the company's chief researcher Paul Van Laer.

The farm is also committed to developing new varieties with improved characteristics, which is essential to give consumers a wider choice and new tastes. It also enables varieties to be developed that are more resistant to diseases and pests and, therefore, less

reliant on chemicals.

Nicolai started working with the Laboratory for Fruit Breeding and Biotechnology of the Catholic University of Leuven in 1988, and in 2000 established the independent fruit breeding company Better3Fruit. Two of Better3Fruit's new varieties are already in the shops: Kanzi and Greenstar.

"We created Kanzi by crossing Gala and Braeburn," explains Van Laer. "It's a very tasty, crispy and juicy apple, with a distinctive smooth skin and uniform pink-red colour." The company already has four and half million Kanzi trees in the ground.

Fruit growing these days is a highly complex and technical occupation. Providing valuable scientific support to fruit growers is the research centre pcfruit vzw, based just outside Sint-Truiden. "We carry out applied scientific research and experimental research and collect and disseminate information," says Jef Vercammen, who heads up a department that experiments with pome and stone fruits.

A key phrase heard in the corridors of pcfruit is "integrated pest management", which involves using a variety of complementary strategies to control bugs. "A major focus of pcfruit is looking at how



© Kristien Wirtmolders

natural biological processes and materials can control pests with minimal environmental impact," says Vercammen.

One surprising example is a research project looking at how to encourage earwigs, which can

help control pests such as aphids and psyllids (jumping plant lice). Another is using yeast to control fruit rot on apples and pears.

➔ www.pcfuit.be

Join the party

Ten ways to explore the Haspengouw now

1 Fruit lounge

In the middle of the Haspengouw, enjoy a comfy chair, relaxing music, a fruity cocktail and a gorgeous view over the orchards from the fruit lounge. It's only accessible by bike or on foot. Open every (dry) day from 11.00 to 17.00 at Den Heulen Gracht, Peereleerestraat, Velm

2 Fruit farm

Every day in April various fruit farms in Sint-Truiden, Borgloon and Heers are open to the public

3 Fruit auction

Three fruit auctions in Borgloon and Sint-Truiden are open to the public every Tuesday and Thursday in April. Guided tours start at 10.00

4 Blossom bus

Every day in April a bus leaves Sint-Truiden market square at 14.00 and takes you on a three-hour trip to a variety of fruity sites

5 Blossom blessing

On 26 April, 13.00, Guvelingen church, Diesteresteeweg, Sint-Truiden, followed by a concert and procession

6 Romantic picnic

Book a picnic knapsack and discover your own romantic spot under the shade of a fruit tree

7 Nocturnal walk

Enjoy a candle-lit stroll through the orchards of Porrey's fruit farm, Truilingenstraat 2, Kerkom from 20.00 on 22 and 29 April

8 Taxi bike

Cuddle up with your partner in the back of a taxi bike and let your guide do the hard work on a two-hour trip through the orchards

9 Bugs (the good kind)

Enjoy a little nostalgia by seeing the Haspengouw from behind the steering wheel of an old VW Bug (www.herbietours.be)

10 Vespas (also good)

Hire a Vespa for a day and feel the wind in your hair as you buzz along the country lanes in the Haspengouw (www.vesparoute.com).

If you want to explore the Haspengouw on your own, the tourist office in the centre of Sint-Truiden has all the walking, cycling and motoring maps you might need

➔ www.bloesemfeesten-haspengouw.be





Have your say

Vote for your favourite museum in each of Belgium's three regions. The winners all get cash prizes

→ www.museumprijs.be



Face off: The Fine Arts Museum of Ghent (left) goes up against its equivalent in Brussels (above)

Ghent's Design Museum is tops in layout and (but of course) design, while the Rockoxhuis in Antwerp houses Flemish masters like Pieter Bruegel the Elder

Simply the best

Belgium is awash in museums, but every year a select three rise above all others

ALAN HOPE

A museum should be more than just its collection. This idea becomes abundantly clear when looking at the shortlist for the 2009 Museumprijs, or Museum Prize.

The list comprises five museums in each of the three regions – Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels – and represents a broad range of curatorial interests, from comic strips to fashion to fine art. At least one of the five in each region has to have fewer than five employees, giving a boost to the country's smaller institutions.

The Flemish Five include the Design Museum and Fine Arts Museum in Ghent, the Fashion Museum and Rockoxhuis in Antwerp and the Kunstmuseum aan Zee in Ostend. The Ostend museum, a merging of the collections of the city and the province of West Flanders, just opened last month in the former location of the city's Fine Arts

Museum; no doubt it's hoped that this nomination will give it a little publicity.

One museum from each region will be selected by a professional jury, taking into account the quality of permanent collections and temporary exhibitions but also factors like design of the museum, accessibility for particular groups and initiatives to broaden the museum's public.

Each winner receives €10,000, with a public prize worth €2,500 voted on by visitors to the website. In addition, this year a panel of schoolchildren aged 8 to 10 will vote on the most child-friendly museum in their region, with a prize of €2,500. The public prizes are not limited to the shortlisted museums.

The Fine Arts Museum (MSK) in Ghent has a collection going back to the late Middle Ages and the beginning of the Northern Renaissance, with a "Man of

Sorrows" by a pupil of the Master of Flémalle. There are two works by Hieronymus Bosch, some by Frans Pourbus the Elder and Pieter Bruegel the Elder and a fine collection of Netherlandish Baroque paintings by the likes of Rubens, Van Dyck, Jordaens and Snijders. Other artists represented include Tintoretto, Géricault, Corot, Courbet, Rodin, Ensor, Max Ernst and Magritte.

The MSK is currently showing an exhibition of works by Emile Claus, the leading Belgian representative of Impressionism. The exhibition stresses Claus' attraction to the rustic, bucolic and pastoral, and includes works by some contemporaries like Constant Permeke, Constantin Meunier and Henry van de Velde.

The Design Museum, also in Ghent, has a collection ranging from 17th-century furnishings to Art Nouveau by Horta and Serrurier-Bovy to Art Deco by Le

Corbusier and Gaston Eysselinck. It continues with designs from the 1970s and 1980s, including furniture, glass and ceramics by designers from Belgium and abroad.

Known for its excellent temporary exhibitions, the museum currently hosts three: textiles dating from the 15th century; chairs and textile objects from Finland; and book designs by Henry van de Velde.

The collection of the ModeMuseum, or Fashion Museum, in Antwerp, meanwhile, includes clothing, lace, embroidery, fabrics and tools dating back to the 16th century, but it's the contemporary collection of the famous Antwerp Six that anchor the museum and keep the crowds coming.

The Fashion Museum's temporary exhibitions and the über-cool, glittery openings that accompany them, push it more towards the avant-garde than any of the other Flemish nominations. Right now,

you'll find Paper Fashion, focusing on the consumer-led craze for paper dresses in the 1960s.

The other Antwerp museum on the shortlist is also the obligatory small museum: the fantastically interesting Rockox House. Formerly the residence of Nicolaas Rockox, who bought two adjoining houses in 1603 and had them converted to a single residence, the property was acquired by the Artiëstenfonds in 1949. It was bought by KBC Bank in 1970, which set up the Rockox Foundation.

Rockox was an alderman and mayor of Antwerp, an avid coin collector and a devoted patron of Rubens. He also had his portrait painted on more than one occasion by Anthony Van Dyck. He was a friend of philologist Justus Lipsius, jurist and philosopher Hugo Grotius and the celebrated printers Jan and Baltazar Moretus. The fabric and contents of the house have now been restored to present an authentic replica of a 17th century patrician residence.

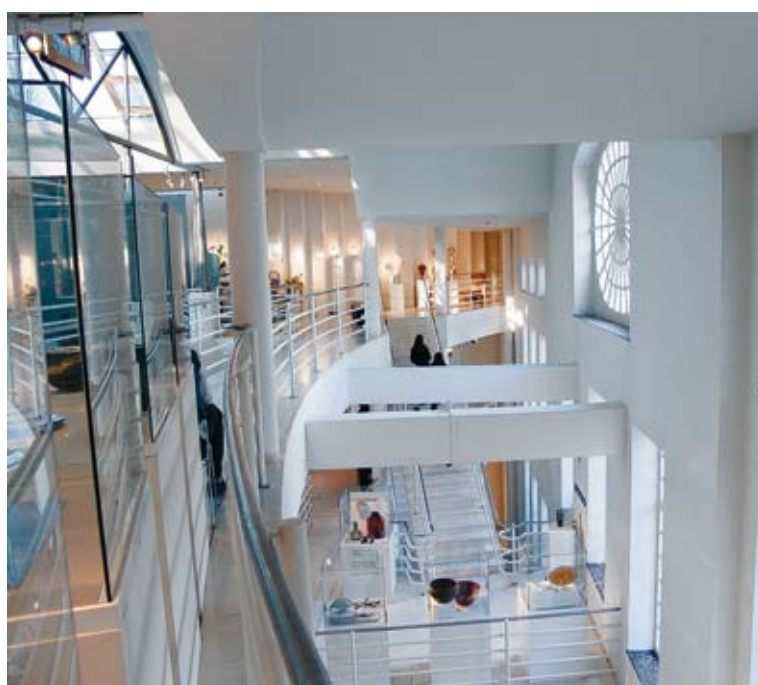
Finally, the Museum aan Zee, or Mu.Zee, is the new museum for the joint collections of the province of West Flanders and the city of Ostend and includes work by many Belgian greats: James Ensor, Léon Spillaert, Constant Permeke, Paul Delvaux, Luc Tuymans and Jan Fabre. Check these pages next month for an in-depth look at the new museum.

Museums chosen in the Brussels Region are a diverse lot: the Strijpmuseum; the Erasmus House in Anderlecht, the Horta Museum in Sint-Gillis, the Museum of Elsene and the BELvue Museum next to the Royal Palace, which contains not only much royalty-related material but also gives access to former streets of Brussels now underground.

Finally, the list in Wallonia is made up of the Cominoise Centre of Ribbon-Making in Komen-Waasten, the Centre for Engraving and the Printed Image in La Louvière, the Viroin Regional Eco-museum in Treignes, the Photography Museum in Charleroi and the Prehistory Museum in Ivoz-Ramet.

Winners will be announced at a ceremony in Brussels' Museum of Fine Arts on 13 May.

→ www.museumprijs.be



© KBC Bank NV/Erwin Donvil Rockoxhuis

Ports refuse to foot the bill

As traffic declines, Flanders' three ports don't want to pay for new locks

ALAN HOPE

The port authorities of Antwerp, Ghent and Zeebrugge are prepared to pay a maximum 15% of the bill for new locks, claiming that more would endanger their competitive position. Representatives of the three ports appeared last week at hearings in the Flemish parliament to discuss the issue.

All three Flemish ports require new locks, which control maritime access to the harbours. The total price is estimated at more than €2 billion, which the government considers too high a burden for the taxpayer.

Minister-president Kris Peeters, whose portfolio includes port policy,

is asking for 51% from Antwerp for a bill of €625 million. Negotiations with Ghent and Zeebrugge are still going on for their bills of €1 billion and €700 million, respectively. The Ghent lock, which is actually in the Netherlands, is also of importance to the port of Terneuzen in Zeeland. The Dutch government will co-finance the lock to the tune of 20%, or €200 million.

The Flemish parliament is considering a new port decree, which is expected to address co-financing by the ports themselves. The document proposes the creation of a limited company covering all three ports, together with subsidiaries for each.



© Port of Antwerp

The port of Antwerp saw its worst fall in traffic in 30 years

Those would be responsible for raising private finance to meet the cost of the locks, once the contributions of the government and the port authorities were taken into account. Later, the port authorities would pay a fee to the limited company for the use of the locks.

Harbour traffic plummets

Harbour traffic in Antwerp fell in the first three months of the year by 20%, the biggest fall in 30 years, according to port director Eddy Bruyninckx. Tonnage fell from 42 million in 2008 to 37 million tonnes this year. The handling of non-containerised freight was particularly badly affected, with a fall of 31%. That sector, Bruyninckx

said, "is especially labour-intensive. Employment in the port of Antwerp is now at an absolute low. We have never had so many unemployed dock workers."

Traffic in Ghent harbour, meanwhile, fell by 24% over the same period, largely as a result of the problems of the steel industry. Traffic in steel and related products fell by a massive 67% but was balanced somewhat by increased traffic in foodstuffs, construction materials and petroleum products. No quarterly figures are available for Zeebrugge, but the situation there, where dependence on the auto industry is high, is not expected to be much better. ♦



The prestigious Kasteel Withof in Brasschaat will close later this year, director Jurgen Lijcops announced. The restaurant-hotel has suffered a catastrophic fall in bookings in the last two months, after a promising start in January. The early-20th century mansion is owned by the Dutch businessman Cornelis den Braven, who made his fortune in sealants and paints, and cost €4.4 million to buy and renovate.

Last year the Withof's restaurant was awarded a Michelin star, which led Den Braven to bring in father-and-son chefs Bernard and Matthieu Pacaud from Paris, who summarily sacked the entire kitchen crew and replaced them with French staff. Prices rose by about 30%, and bookings have suffered. Lunch now costs €75 and the "prestige" menu €300.

As most reports pointed out, those prices are more than at Hof Van Cleve or Oud Sluis – both three-star establishments. "The closure of Kasteel Withof doesn't surprise me," commented two-star chef Bart De Pooter of De Pastorale in Reet. "The restaurant priced itself out of the market."

Force ISPs to push cheaper subscriptions, minister proposes

Internet service providers (ISPs) should be obliged to inform customers if cheaper subscription packages are available, and customers should be allowed to change their subscription at no additional cost, according to minister of business and enterprise Vincent Van Quickenborne.

Last week the quarterly telecommunications price barometer issued by the Belgian Institute for Post and Telecom (BIPT) showed an overall fall in the cost of internet access. The cost of a basic subscription has fallen 35% since 2007 to around €20 a month now.

However, most subscribers have accounts with higher speeds and larger data download limits, and for that part of the market, hardly any price reduction has taken place. Instead of cutting prices, ISPs have increased download limits and pushed up download speeds.

But most customers have no need for the speeds and limits offered, claims Van Quickenborne. "A lot

of people are riding around in a Rolls Royce, whereas a simple Ford would be more than sufficient for their needs," he said. Rather than paying €35 to €42 a month for high-speed packages, many customers could have enough with a simple €20 subscription.

Van Quickenborne now wants to force ISPs to inform customers annually if there is another subscription option that might better suit their needs, taking into account the volume of data downloaded. In addition, the ISP would be obliged to allow the customer to change at no charge. At present, some ISPs ask for up to €50 in "administrative costs" for changes to a subscription.

Another main reason for high prices paid for internet access in Belgium is the virtual duopoly that exists between Belgacom and Telenet. The BIPT, meanwhile, favours opening up the service to new ISPs, the competitive element needed to force prices down. ♦

Brewers launch Mega-Blend Geuze

Eight brewers from the Senne valley and Pajottenland areas of Flemish Brabant have come together to produce the Oude Geuze Mega-Blend 2009, which will be sold in limited edition 75 cl bottles from 26 April. The geuze, described by the producers as "the mother of all beers" is a joint effort by brewers Boon, 3 Fonteinen, De Cam, De Troch, Hanssens, Lindemans, Oud

Beersel and Timmermans.

Geuze is produced by blending young and old lambic beers in a process that allows the sugars in the young lambic to induce a secondary fermentation in the bottle. Lambic itself, particular to the Pajottenland, uses wild yeasts and bacteria from the air for its fermentation, which gives the typi-

cal acidic taste. Lambic is also the base for the production of fruit beers, the most famous of which is kriel.

Lambic probably takes its name from the town of Lembeek. The name "geuze" may derive from the word for "geyser" because of its champagne-like fizz, or from an old Norman word for wheat.

The launch will coincide with a tour of the breweries, organised by the High Council for Artisanal Lambic Beers (HORAL). Each bottle will be numbered and will cost €6, with the exception of the first bottle, numbered 00001, which is currently being auctioned on eBay.

→ www.horal.be

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Aluminium • Aleris

Aluminium producer Aleris announced last week that it will cut its workforce by 770, representing almost half of all jobs in the company. Based in Duffel near Antwerp, Aleris will shut down four of its five production lines due to high production costs in Belgium and the worldwide slump in demand for aluminium. The unions said they were expecting cuts but not on this scale.

Beer • Maes

Flemish brewer Alken-Maes has launched a new lager with a higher strength and more robust taste. The beer will contain 5.2% volume alcohol, compared with the current 4.8%. The company, based in Antwerp province, hopes it can increase the market share of Maes, currently the second most popular beer in Belgium after Jupiler.

Electronics • Philips

The Dutch electronics manufacturer Philips has recalled millions of Senseo coffee makers because of a safety problem. The safety valve designed to release pressurised air from the machine could become blocked by calcium deposits, which might cause an explosion. The company says the risk is just "three in one million" but has recalled all machines manufactured between 2006 and 2008 as a precaution. Some 475,000 faulty machines were sold in Belgium.

Employment • New Europeans

The Belgian government has finally decided to allow all Eastern Europeans to work in the country without a permit. The government had been planning to ask the European Commission for an extension on its restrictive labour policy, which makes it difficult to employ East Europeans, but has now decided to open its labour market to workers from the former Communist countries that joined the EU in 2004.

Transport • Eurostar

Eurostar saw its turnover drop by 5.8% in the first three months of 2009, compared to the previous year, the company announced. The number of passengers dropped over the same period to 1.92 million, as against 2.17 million last year. According to Eurostar the drop was due partly to a fire in September 2008, which resulted in reduced services up until 23 February 2009. But the economic crisis also played a role in the poor results, the company said.

Authentic forgeries of a dilettante

Luc Tuymans stages his first-ever show in Brussels

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

Behind an anonymous garage door in Antwerp's Borgerhout district lies the studio of one of the world's most famous painters. Luc Tuymans' latest exhibition *Against the Day*, with 20 new works, opens this week at Wiels in Brussels.

When he lets me in, I feel like I'm entering the inner sanctum of contemporary art. My heart skips a beat (or two) when I see that all the new paintings, bar one, are hanging against the walls of his studio. While being given a private tour by the artist himself I realise, once again, what a lucky bastard I am.

But there's no time to linger on the fringe benefits of being a journalist; I am here to talk art. Tuymans' works are always based on pre-existing images: Polaroids, film stills, magazine clippings, images found on the internet. All can be the starting point for a painting. He calls them "authentic forgeries".

"No visual output can be original because it's always generated by one's memory," Tuymans says. "It was an enormous shock when I realised that because, as a young artist of not yet 20, I nourished grand notions of art. I figured out the problem quite quickly, but it cost me years before I had the distance – mentally and physically – to work with images in an appropriate manner. I firmly believe a piece of art can only

That would seem to suggest that the paintings only gain significance if one knows the ideas behind them.

"That certainly goes for my work," confirms Tuymans. "That's why I am a painter whose work is rooted in reality and not in the imagination – reality is much more important. I think that this penchant for realism is typically Belgian; this isn't a very romantic country."

Then Tuymans really goes out on a limb: "In the western hemisphere, there has been only one truly great painter: Jan Van Eyck. And not Leonardo da Vinci!" Van Eyck, the 15th-century Netherlandish painter, "was subjected to religious dogmas that reigned over art and science, but he was still able, by way of heightening reality, to disconnect the Christian image from its mimetic representation – a feat that has never been paralleled thereafter." After denying that Belgium is a country of surrealism, calling Magritte "not a true surrealist" and Ensor "not a true expressionist," he states, with calm acceptance: "Like everyone else who came after Van Eyck, I'm just a dilettante."

The Tuymans Tour

Starting this autumn, a large retrospective of Tuymans' work, curated by Helen

"In the western hemisphere, there has been only one truly great painter"

exist if it's a forgery."

But forgery suggests that the paintings are trying to be something they aren't. "Indeed!" he exclaims. "A piece of art is exactly what it isn't. If what you see is what you get, art will never be multi-layered. And univocal art is either propagandist or extremely ostentatious."

It's, like, a concept

Marc Ruyters, the first art critic to ever write about Tuymans and nowadays editor-in-chief of the influential magazine *<H>Art*, called Tuymans' work "conceptual paintings".

Molesworth of Harvard University and Madelein Grynsztejn, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, will tour the United States. From Columbus, Ohio, via San Francisco and Dallas, it ends in Chicago. In 2011 the exhibition will halt at Bozar in Brussels, the artist's first Belgian retrospective.

And *Against the Day* is his first solo exhibition in Brussels, Wiels likes to stress. "That's important, indeed, because Brussels' art circles have for years been biased against me," says Tuymans, who turned 50 last year. "Maybe that will change now."

It was only recently, he says, that the bookshop of the



Luc Tuymans and friend at last year's exhibition in Antwerp's Photo Museum

Museum of Modern Art, housed in Brussels' Museum of Fine Arts complex, sold any books about him, "even though there are 30 titles to choose from". His Antwerp gallery, Zeno X, puts aside works for Brussels museums to no avail. "They were never convinced," he says, "until one day they woke up and had to pay an atrocious amount of money for it."

The reason? "The Francophone Brussels art world blindly follows the Parisian art world, and Paris is the only city in the world where they don't like

my work. I'm considered too German."

With Wiels, says Tuymans, "Brussels, and Belgium for that matter, finally have an institution for contemporary art that could become an international player. Their Mike Kelley exhibition, for instance, was magnificent."

The money will follow

Tuymans has reached the comfortable position of deciding to whom he sells his work. "My galleries and

I work to end up in the right spot. Moreover, we want to counter speculation as much as possible. Call it self-protection. The past 12 years we have sold more to museums and foundations than to individual collectors."

Which means, I suggest, that he probably doesn't get the highest price possible for his paintings. "I think the prices are more than high enough," he responds. "And after the American tour, they'll probably rise even more."

He also points out that being

© Mark Flanders, Belga

Against the Day: down with utopia

Luc Tuymans *Against the Day* is the last part of a triptych, after last year's *Les Revenants* (*The Spirits*) and *Forever: The Management of Magic*. The former used the iconography of the Jesuit Order to ponder power scheming, the latter (which was only staged in New York) was inspired by Walt Disney. But after *Against the Day* has travelled to Sweden, Spain and maybe the Ukraine, Phaidon will publish a book containing the works of five exhibitions.

That will include the three mentioned plus the previous two: *Les Gilles de Binche* (2005) and Tuymans' first Jesuit exhibition (only shown in Japan) *Restoration* (2006). "The link between all of them is utopia," explains Tuymans. "You could already find that, in a mild version, in the folklore of the Gilles. It obviously was present in Walt Disney's work, and the Jesuits have a utopian mindset, too – although it's a hidden agenda."

Does he always start with a theoretical concept? "Not at all. After the Jesuits and Walt Disney, which were already

the idea of a blind skin."

There's another important influence: The spading figure in "Against the Day I" and "II" was inspired by the movie *There Will Be Blood*. "Especially by those amazing first 15 wordless minutes, in which the main character is ploughing the ground with a pick axe," smiles Tuymans.

As for the title of the exhibition, "I borrowed it from Thomas Pynchon's latest novel," says Tuymans. "Pynchon is the man who introduced paranoia in American literature. His *The Crying of Lot 49* about mail distribution companies talked about a proto-internet. And the idea of tearing down utopia is present in all of his work."

I have the impression that Tuymans paints series in function of planned exhibitions. "When I work on a painting, I do think about the group of paintings that will be shown," he says. "But I find it important that each painting can be seen out of context, since most of them end up in museums where they will be shown in radically different

"A piece of art is exactly what it isn't"

partially about virtue, I had been looking for a more disparate idea. I didn't want the new series to follow seamlessly on the previous ones."

So he turned to – however difficult to image – reality television. Virtual images, for lack of a more unifying concept, form the basis of *Against the Day*. Two of the paintings, "Big Brother" and "CCTV" are both based on images from the UK's *Big Brother*. A few paintings are anchored in reality: "iPhone", for instance, a portrait of Tuymans' own shadow. Others clearly have a virtual basis. "Office" is based on an image from a database of office furnishings, but those spaces have never been completely decorated. It's

constellations, which gives them new meanings."

Tuymans puts a great deal of work into each painting before he even starts: looking for the right images and making models or drawings can take several months. Finally, "the moment I start painting, I know what they all will look like." He never uses an easel, favouring a canvas attached to the wall, which is why almost all of his paintings have different dimensions.

"I finish a painting in one day. And it's impossible for me to create it again. Technically I could do it without any problem, but it would feel fake."

→ www.luctuymans.be



Paintings from *Against the Day*: "Map" (above) and "Office"

in a museum is a testament to the value and importance of one's work. Eleven American museums have a painting by Tuymans in their collections, and New York's famous MoMA has four or five.

Does he ever feel inclined to keep a painting to himself? I'm almost sorry I asked. "Never! From a financial point of view, that's actually stupid because if I had, I could capitalise on them now. But I don't have a fetishist relationship with my work. For instance, the new ones already bore me. The only thrilling moment will be the build-up of the exhibition

at Wiels. Because you can never predict beforehand if the paintings will work in the designed space."

Only four years ago Tuymans moved to this spacious studio in Antwerp. "At first I was afraid to move, since I'd been working for 30 years in my previous studio." But that was a small space that limited the size of his paintings. When he wanted to paint a larger work, he had to rent a larger space. And the old studio had other inconveniences: "Leaks, problems with the electricity and no heating. That might sound romantic, but, believe

me, it wasn't." He could have moved to another city, but "I have to travel a lot, and it's always a joy to come back to this megalomaniac village, Antwerp."

Rumour has had it that Tuymans plans to downsize his output. "That's a misconception,"

he says. He's actually in the process of delegating more of the practical matters, which should give him more time to paint, "and hopefully I'll recover some profundity," he says. "I'm curious how a longer incubation period might alter my work." ♦

Against the Day

Wiels, Van Volxemlaan 354, Brussels

22 April – 2 August

Opening reception: 22 April, 18.00 to 21.00

→ www.wiels.org

CULTURE NEWS

The theatre group **Kunst Veredelt in Zomergem**, East Flanders, has received a storm of complaints after sending out a flyer advertising their latest production in the form of a death notice. The play, the story of a young man with Aids, is called *Droom mijn dromen* (Dream My Dreams). Many recipients of the flyer thought it was a genuine death notice. However the result has been spectacular. "Tickets are flying out of the door," the group's chairman said.

Last weekend saw the final episode of **Flikken**, the popular TV police drama set in Ghent. The series, originally produced by VRT, ran for 10 years, and it is said that the producers were so confident of success, they started shooting a second series before the first episode had even been broadcast. On 18 April, a special *Flikken* party was held in Ghent, culminating in a sneak preview in Kinopolis of the last episode, which was shown on Sunday evening.

TV presenter and former Miss Belgium Ilse Demeulemeester will launch her own magazine next month, following in the trend of Oprah Winfrey and Goedele Liekens. As well as being the public face of VT4, Demeulemeester runs interior design shops in Brussels and Antwerp. The magazine, *IDM*, will be published annually and available only to customers of the companies in her "business club", which include Ralph Lauren, La Perla and Jeep.

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Built for a king

Antwerp station, recently restored, was built with Leopold's money

Forget-me-not

The Royal Greenhouses in Laken – open to the public until May 10 – are both a jewel in the crown of Brussels and a reminder of a tragic past

DENZIL WALTON

Leopold II, King of the Belgians between 1865 and 1909, was known as the Builder King. He had a taste for monuments, boulevards and palaces. He is responsible for the Cinquantenaire arch in Brussels, the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, the seafront promenade and race track in Ostend and the Antwerp railway station.

The property of the Royal Palace of Laken was also greatly renovated during his reign. Here, he oversaw the construction of the Japanese Tower and the Chinese Pavilion and expanded the Royal Greenhouses.

For three weeks every spring, these phenomenal glass buildings are open to the public. They are a marvel of 19th-century architecture that house a stunning collection of plants, many of which are now in bloom. You don't have to be a gardening enthusiast to be swept away on a scented tidal wave of admiration for the man whose personal fortune made it all possible.

But before you are, it might be worth considering how the Builder King obtained the wealth that enabled the Royal Greenhouses to be expanded and lavishly stocked.

You are not likely to get the answers in the greenhouses. Nowhere could I find a single reference to the fact that Leopold II became rich as a result of a slave labour regime in the Congo Free State. You could spend a whole day in the Royal Greenhouses without being aware that King Leopold II was a brutal, greedy, colonial ruler.

The Congo Free State existed from 1885 to 1908. It was not a Belgian

colony; it belonged personally to King Leopold II. It was thus the world's only privately owned colony.

It was a vast region: 26 times the size of Belgium itself and covering one-thirteenth of the African continent. Although Leopold II never set foot in his country, he ruled it from Brussels with an iron rod. His private army – the Force Publique – went from village to village, seizing the women and holding them hostage until their husbands had gone into the rain forest and returned with the necessary quota of rubber. Missionaries reported that beatings, rapes and executions by the Force Publique were the norm.

Not surprisingly, life in the Congo Free State became untenable. Whole tribes fled, fields went unharvested, natives starved to death, and disease swept through the ravaged population. Between 1880 and 1920, the population was decimated, from 20 to 10 million.

Meanwhile, the rubber was being shipped back to Belgium and making King Leopold II extremely rich. It was this money that he poured into his building projects.

The Royal Greenhouses existed before the Congo Free State came into being. They were first designed in 1873 and the Winter Garden was completed in 1876. But when the riches from the Congo started rolling in, buildings were added: the Congo House in 1886 and the Palm House in 1892.

At the turn of the century, reports began to leak out of the Congo detailing the atrocities. Public outcry eventually



The glass city: the Royal Greenhouses in Laken by night (top) and by day (above, right), built from the personal riches of King Leopold II (above left)

led to the annexation of the Congo by Belgium in 1908, for which Leopold was handsomely remunerated.

Leopold died exactly 100 years ago in 1909. At the time of his death, he was living in one of the greenhouse buildings: the Palm Pavilion (not open to the public). Here, on 17 December, aged 74, he died, just five days after

marrying the 26-year old prostitute Caroline Lacroix. Nobody reported on the king's state of mind on his death bed and whether he had any regrets. For insight, I asked Adam Hochschild, author of the best selling book *King Leopold's Ghost*:

"As to his state of mind when he died, we can only speculate. I would guess that he felt no guilt whatsoever about anything he had done in the Congo. I would guess that he was proud that he had raised Belgium's status in the imperial world by means of this colony and that, most of all, he was satisfied at how rich he had made himself – both through the profits reaped from the rubber system and through the extraordinary arrogance of making Belgium actually agree to

buy the Congo from him."

All this is not to put you off visiting the Royal Greenhouses. Visit them. Enjoy their splendours. Marvel at the architectural triumphs. Gaze in delight at the beautiful plants.

But don't forget the millions of Congolese who died, directly or indirectly, harvesting the rubber that enabled many of these greenhouses to be built. A nice way to do this is to pay a visit to the temporary exhibition in the greenhouses by the artist Dang of dancing forget-me-nots, the symbol of hope. The objective is to raise awareness of Child Focus, the European centre for missing or sexually exploited children, and its new emergency telephone number: 116000. ♦

What's inside

The seven main buildings of the Royal Greenhouses were constructed by the architect Alphonse Balat in collaboration with his pupil Victor Horta. Looking like a huge glass city, you can walk for a kilometre without going outside, thanks to a network of monumental pavilions, cupolas and wide, covered arcades.

They are the culmination of numerous meetings, letters and plans exchanged between Balat and King Leopold II. They were built entirely of metal and glass, which was a spectacular innovation at the time, and inspired the new Belgian architecture of the day, Art Nouveau. The spectacular Winter Garden is an Art Nouveau jewel and is classed among the greatest greenhouses of the world.

The plant collection is extremely valuable as it includes many rare species. Some of them, most notably the palms in the Palm House and the Congo House, date from Leopold II's original collections.

In the Geranium Gallery, the vault is a flower-covered tunnel composed of fuchsias, heliotropes and Trailing Abutilon (which resembles the Belgian flag). The Subterranean Gallery houses a wide range of ferns, including the gigantic Platycerium staghorn ferns, while a cinnamon tree grows in the Mirror House. The Winter Garden is impressive not only for its massive date palms and banana trees, but for the beautifully landscaped carpets of primroses, Streptocarpus, Cineraria and Salpiglossis.

The Royal Greenhouses

Koninklijke Parklaan, Brussels

Until 10 May

→ www.monarchie.be

Let battle commence

The Ostend Kursaal is the arena for a clash of the Titans

DENZIL WALTON



Forget the Rumble in the Jungle and the posturing of Foreman and Ali. For a true heavyweight contest, come to the Oostende Kursaal the first weekend of May when national champions from all over Europe slug it out in a physically demanding, nerve-racking battle to the death. It's the European Brass Band Championships.

The competition started in 1978 and was for a long time dominated by the English colliery brass bands (who doesn't remember the film *Brassed Off?*). The famous Black Dyke Mills Band under Major Peter Parkes won seven of the first 10 competitions.

Eventually, bands from the continent began to go the distance.

Eikanger Bjorsvik Musikklag from Norway struck knock-out blows in 1988 and 1989, and Flanders' own Brass Band Willebroek won in 1993 and more recently in 2006 and 2007 under the baton of Frans Violet.

The defending champion, though, is The Cory Band from Wales, led by Dr Robert Childs: "We

had been runners-up a number of times, so to win the European Championships was a wonderful achievement," says Childs. "It led to numerous invitations to play at prestigious concerts."

The Cory Band is ready to stamp its authority in the ring once more, although Childs recognises there is an element of luck involved: "The draw is important; no-one wants to play first," he divulges. "And it's not like switching on a CD; some players can have an off-day or get nervous. But if you ask the other bands who they fear the most, The Cory Band would be in their top three."

That's fighting talk, but this year's Belgian representative – Festival Brass Band from Heist-op-den-Berg – is not afraid to lock horns. Formed in 1999 and under the leadership of Manu Mellaerts for the past three years, they have already taken the Belgian brass band scene by storm. In some quarters, the shock they caused at the Belgian championships last November when they became national champions still hasn't sunk in. Could they cause a further upset in Ostend?

"We have some excellent young musicians, so anything is

possible," says Mellaerts. But "we lack the experience of playing in major competitions," he admits. "However, winning isn't everything. We are going to enjoy ourselves in Ostend, play as well as we can and hopefully make Belgium proud of us."

The competition is divided into two energy-sapping rounds. On 1 May all the bands perform the set-piece "From Ancient Times" by Jan Van der Roost. The following day, they play their own choice plus a second set-piece – "Catedrales" by Bert Appermont.

In the evening it's the Grand Gala and awards ceremony. While the adjudicators tot up the points, music is provided by two top bands from Flanders: Cosy Brass Quartet, made up of players from Brass Band Willebroek, and Belgian Brass, an 11-piece professional ensemble. They will be followed by defending champions The Cory Band, who are joined on stage by Stef Pillaert from Melle – European Soloist 2008 – with his euphonium.

Finally, the winning band will be announced, the crowd will go wild and drinks will flow.

➔ www.vlamo.be

fashionista

STÉPHANIE DUVAL

Fashion meets art

The growing popularity of fashion museums begs the question: why does fashion belong in a museum?

For some, it's an easy one: there is no distinction between fashion and art. They describe the work of a designer in lyrical terms and speak of divine inspiration and muses.

Others believe the commercial nature of fashion inherently prevents it from becoming art. "Fashion first and foremost is a profession," says Belgian designer Christophe Coppens, whose work can currently be admired at the SuperStories exhibition in the Hasselt Fashion Museum. "Art remains the highest virtue," he continues, "but fashion might take its inspiration from art."

At any rate, the tension between both plays a role in the lives of quite a few interesting people. It's nearly impossible to label them designers or artists, as they alternately shift



their focus from one to the other – or combine them both.

Marina Yee is one of them. After she graduated from the Antwerp Academy of Fine Arts in 1981, she launched her own label and worked for a variety of other brands. But it quickly became clear that she was not going to follow any traditional path. For a while, she had a tearoom in Brussels, and in 2003 she opened up her own boutique and creative workshop. Not interested in becoming a household name, she rather uses her energy on unique creations.

That is also why this designer – one of the "Antwerp Six" – regularly participates in exhibitions about modern art and design. Recently she created six installations for the Z33 exhibition in Hasselt, under the title *Slow*: her work was as far removed from fashion as possible.

And now, Yee is finally showing the art she's been working on since 1993 with the installation "The Lightworks" at the Annette De Keyser Gallery in Antwerp. On view until 2 May, the works are inspired by photographs, touching on the subjects of innocence, childhood and inhibition: apart from the odd textile print, her artistic work never refers to fashion.

German-born Christoph Broich is also a designer who has always been an artist. From the very start of his career, he designed his own textile prints, and each was unique. Clothing by Broich was described as "collector's items" – something you'd almost rather hang on your wall than wear.

Based in Antwerp after his education at the Academy of Fine Arts, Broich's fascination for textile took on larger and larger proportions, until his experiments turned into veritable works of art. His latex sculptures found their way to galleries in New York and were presented at Futurotextiel 08 in Kortrijk last year. "My art has little or nothing to do with fashion anymore," the 42-year-old says. "I try to lift a garment up to a different dimension."

Broich closed his boutique in Antwerp, preferring to focus on art instead. Though he says fashion and art might not be all that different after all: "It's the same with both disciplines: if you create just for yourself, it's no fun. Your work needs an audience."

➔ www.annettedekeyser.com

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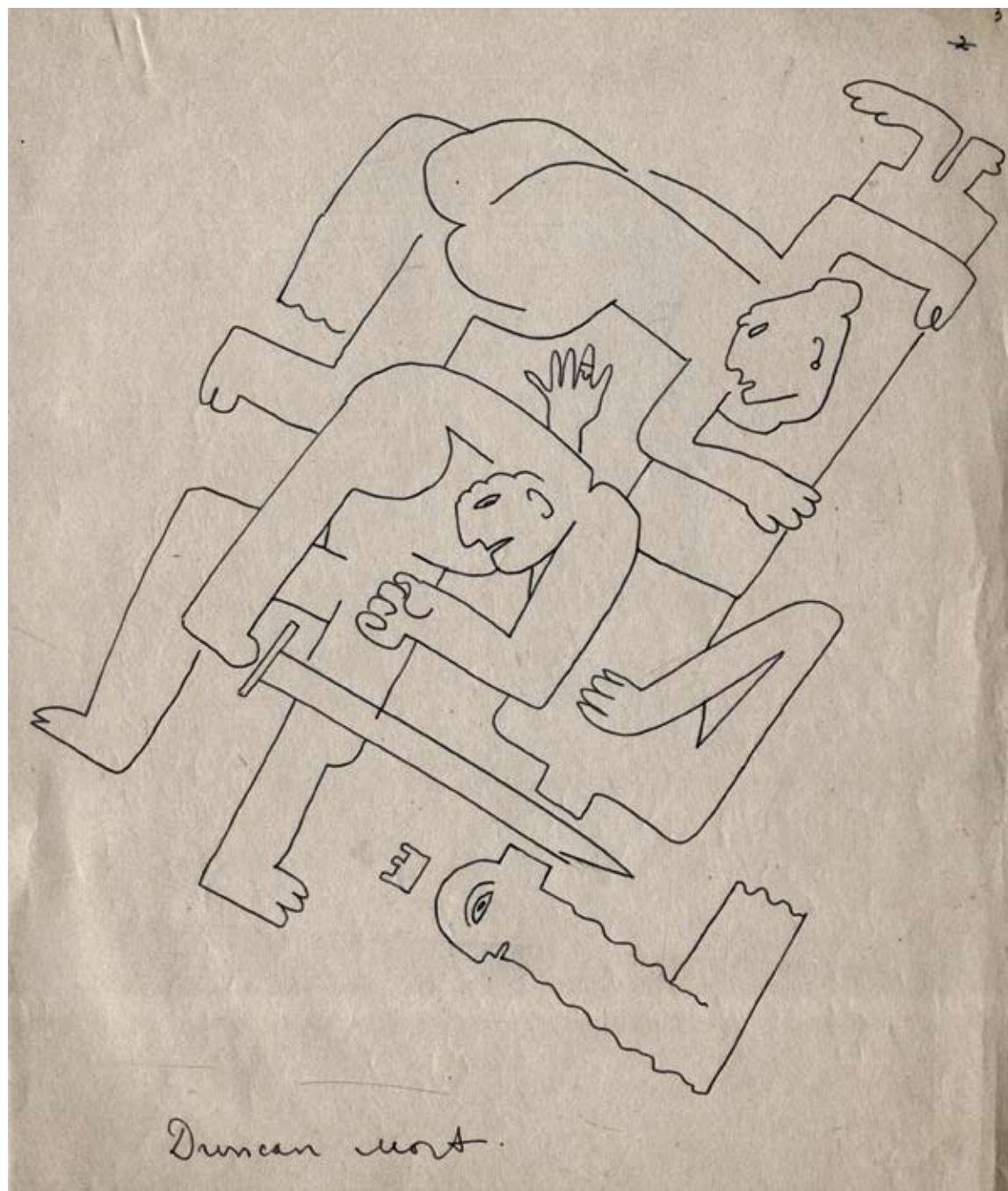


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The Mexican Drawings

IAN MUNDELL

The Mexican Drawings are a curiosity in the career of the celebrated Soviet film director Sergei Eisenstein, and a bizarre viewing experience when gathered together in this exhibition at Extra City in Antwerp.

There are endless permutations for the murder of Duncan in *Macbeth*, for example, the nude figures squared off and wrapped around each other in a sort of Aztec Kama Sutra of death. The Crucifixion receives a similar treatment, along with other Biblical subjects such as St Veronica and Salome.

Eisenstein drew all the time, working out ideas for films or as a way of relaxing and entertaining friends. But the Mexican drawings, carried out in 1931-32, are different – an attempt to work out all the possible permutations for a scene until he had found

its fundamental elements. He describes working rapidly on the Duncan drawings, in a single session, by the end of which he was almost in a trance.

The exhibition curators, Russian professor Oksana Bulgakowa and Extra City artistic director Anselm Franke, see recurring motifs in these drawings, which are based on Mexico's "hybrid imagery", with Eisenstein exploring the "transformation of forms, obscenity, death and violence in a single dynamic line".

The process is similar to the automatic writing of the Surrealists, but there is also a case for seeing it as part of a larger theoretical project: "a study of the historical relationship between rationality, sensual thought and image". But when Eisenstein died in 1948 this theoretical work was

still incomplete.

The film he was working on in Mexico wasn't finished either. Depending on whose version of events you believe, either the Hollywood backers pulled out when they saw the footage or the Soviet authorities refused to let Eisenstein import the negatives once he returned to the USSR. Either way, he wasn't able to edit it himself, and the films that other people put together from the footage (some of which will be screening at MuHKA Media in parallel to the exhibition) are said not to come close.

Extra City
Tulpstraat 79, Antwerp
Until 21 June
→ www.extracity.org



MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

International Foto Festival → CC Scharpoord, Knokke →
Vegetal City → Royal Museum of Art and History, Brussels
Emile Claus and Rural Life → Fine Arts Museum, Ghent



Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be
APR 22 20.00 Christian Tetzlaff, violin; Lars Vogt, piano: Bach, Brahms, Bartók
APR 25 20.00 John Mark Ainsley, tenor; Roger Vignoles, piano: Britten, Schubert
APR 26 15.00 Flanders Symphony Orchestra conducted by Etienne Siebens and Collegium Vocale Gent, with Olga Pasichnyk, soprano; Anna Zander, alto; Colin Balzer, tenor; Matthew Brook, bass: Stravinsky, Haydn
APR 29 20.00 Hagen Quartett with Lukas Hagen and Rainer Schmidt, violin; Veronika Hagen, viola; Clemens Hagen, cello: Beethoven

Bruges

Concertgebouw

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02, www.concertgebouw.be
APR 26 18.00 Spectra Ensemble: Sternenrest by William Boogman, Talea and Solo pour deux by Gérard Grisey

Brussels

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
Concerts at 20.00:
APR 23 Liège Philharmonic conducted by Pascal Rophé, with Robert Levin, piano: Beethoven
APR 25 Frank Peter Zimmermann, violin; Piotr Anderszewski, piano: Beethoven, Szymanowski, Janacek
APR 26 15.00 Belgian National Orchestra conducted by Walter Weller and Czech Philharmonic Choir of Brno, with Gisela Stille, soprano; Manuela Bress, mezzo; Lothar Odinius, tenor; Werner Van Mechelen, bass: Haydn's Symphony No 85, Schubert's Mass No 5
APR 27 Flanders Symphony Orchestra conducted by Etienne Siebens, with Collegium Vocale Gent with Olga Pasichnyk, soprano; Anna Zander, alto; Colin Balzer, tenor; Matthew Brook, bass: Stravinsky, Haydn

APR 28 Ricercar Consort conducted by Philippe Pierlot, with Maria Keohane and Salomé Haller, sopranos; Carlos Mena, alto; Hans Jörg Mammel, tenor; Stephan MacLeod, bass: Bach's Magnificat, Gloria and Cantata BWV 66 Erfreuet euch, ihr Herzen

De Munt
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39, www.demunt.be
APR 24 12.30 La Monnaie Wind Ensemble: Donizetti
Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be
APR 26 11.30 Brunch concert: Aida-Carmen Soanea, viola; Dominique Plancade, piano: Brahms, Schumann, Bartók, Enescu

Miniemenkerk
Miniemenstraat 62; 02.507.82.00, www.minimes.net
APR 26 10.30 Chapelle des Minimes and Choir conducted by Julius Stenzel, with Louisa Petais, alto; Jan Caals, tenor; Patrick Ringal-Saxhelet, bass: Bach cantatas

APR 27 20.30 Namur Chamber Choir and La Fenice Ensemble conducted by narrator Jean Tubéry: works by Orlandus Lassus

Protestantse Kapel
Museumplein 2; 02.507.82.00
APR 24 20.00 Paola Erdas, harpsichord; Rolf Lisleland, theorbe: de Visée, L Couperin, F Couperin, d'Angelbert, D Gaultier, E Gaultier, Corbetta

Royal Music Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37
Concerts at 20.00:

APR 22 Ensemble Musique Nouvelles conducted by Jean-Paul Dessy, with Boyan Vodenitcharov, piano: Kissine Hoeilaart

Maison de la Musique

Edgar Sohiestraat 33; 02.657.96.52, maisondelamusique@skynet.be
APR 30 20.00 Queen Elisabeth Music College soloists: Hrachya Avanesyan, violin; Feng Dan Fang and Dana Protopopescu, piano: Bach



Antwerp

Vlaamse Opera

Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02, www.vlaamseopera.be
APR 28-MAY 10 15.00/20.00 Samson and Delilah by Saint-Saëns, with the Flanders Opera Symphony Orchestra conducted by Tomáš Netopil and Choir conducted by Yannis Pouspourikas, staged by Omri Nitzan and Amir Nizar Zuabi with Torsten Kerl, Marianna Tarasova

Brussels

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39, www.demunt.be

APR 26-29 13.30/15.00/20.00 Little England, Scenes from a Small Island, opera scenes with Prima la Musica conducted by Leo Hussain, staged by Frederic Wake-Walker with soloists from the Queen Elisabeth College of Music

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15, www.cirque-royal.org
Until APR 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



Antwerp

Arenberg

Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
APR 29 20.15 Flat Earth Society Borgerhout

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.292.97.40, www.deroma.be

APR 26 Zondag Jazzdag II: 15.00 Louis Sclavis - Piet Van Bockstal Quartet. 17.00 Bart Van Caenegem's Trondlin Jazz Trio. 20.00 Robin Verheyen International Quartet

Rataplan

Wijnemestraat 27; 03.292.97.40
APR 24-25 20.30 An Evening with Sam, birthday concerts

Brussels

Archiduc

Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52, www.archiduc.net

APR 25 17.00 CO.ntradiction APR 26 17.00 Regular Rules

Beursschouwburg

Auguste Ortstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be

APR 24 20.30 Flat Earth Society APR 25 20.30 MääK's Spirit with Misha Mengelberg

Espace Senghor

Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40, www.senghor.be

APR 22 20.30 Jean-Louis Rassinfosse, double bass; Jean-Philippe Collard-Neven, piano/Rhodes Fender; Fabrice Alleman, saxophone/clarinet; Xavier

Desandre-Navarre, percussion:
Collard-Neven

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be

APR 23-24 20.15/12.30 Louis Sclavis and Piet Van Bockstal
APR 24 19.00 Tribute evening to Miel Vanattenhoven with Josse De Pauw and Eric Thielemans, Fred Van Hove, piano, Brussels Jazz Orchestra and Toots Thielemans, DJ Bigband, Kris Defoort, DJ Grazz hoppa
APR 25 20.15 Dino Saluzzi and Anja Lechner

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193-195;
02.733.13.78

APR 23 20.30 Raf Debacker Trio **APR 25** 18.00 Alexandre Fumelle Orchestra **APR 29** Pettersen/Ploug/Badenhorst Trio **APR 30** The Bundle
Royal Music Conservatory
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37
APR 23 20.00 Fabien Degryse Trio & Peter Hertmans Ensemble conducted by Bart Bouckaert **APR 26** 14.00 Open door jazz day

Sass'n Jazz

Koningsstraat 241; www.sazzn jazz.be
Concerts at 20.30:

APR 22-23 Darwin Case **APR 25** Sibel **APR 30** Jam session

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50, www.soundsjazzclub.be

Concerts at 22.00:

APR 22 Chamaquiando, salsa **APR 23** Basic Borg with Ricardo Luppi **APR 24** Quintet Carre d'As **APR 25** Giovanni Ceccarelli & Ada Montellanico Duo **APR 27** Master session **APR 28** Laurent Doumont Soul Band **APR 29** Chamaquiando, salsa
The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45

Concerts at 20.30:

APR 22 Dës Andras Trio **APR 23** Guillaume Ledent **APR 24** Grzegorz Karnas-Gra_yna Augu_cik **APR 25** The Vintage Jazz Cats **APR 28** Duo Harry Tavitian - Cseray Csaba (Romania) **APR 29** Yves Vermeire Trio + guest Ben Dams
APR 30 Mahé Parker

Ghent

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060, www.vooruit.be

APR 23 20.00 Paavo & Flat Earth Society **APR 29** 20.00 Robin Verheyen International Quartet with Bill

Carrothers
Oudenaarde
CC De Woeker
Woeker 3; 055.30.13.66
APR 24 20.30 No Blues



Antwerp

Petrol

Herbouvillekaai 21; 03.226.49.63, www.petrolclub.be

APR 25 23.00 AB@Petrol: Radioclit + Nid & Sancy + Filthy Dukes
Queen Elisabeth Hall
Koningin Astridplein 26; 0900.26.060
APR 25 20.00 Jackson Browne
Sportpaleis
Schippoortweg 119; 0900.26.060
APR 27 20.30 Lionel Richie
Trix
Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00, www.trixonline.be
APR 22 19.30 Hammerfall **APR 25** 20.00 The Bony Kings of Nowhere + The Paper Hats 22.00 Rampage Feat. Sub Focus + Murdock + Danny Byrd + Original Sin + Bonafide **APR 26** 20.00 Grails + Alexander Tucker

Borgerhout

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.292.97.40, www.deroma.be
Concerts at 20.30:
APR 25 Tone-Clusters **APR 29** Whip & Geoff Farina

Bruges

MaZ

Magdalenastraat 27; 02.548.24.24, www.abconcerts.be
APR 26 20.00 AB Clubcircuit: Wixel + The Bony King of Nowhere
Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24, www.abconcerts.be
Concerts at 20.00:
APR 24 Madeleine Peyroux & Band. It Hugs Back + Radioclit + Holy Fuck
APR 25 Thierry 'Titi' Robin **APR 26** The Right Ons + Eli 'Paperboy' Reed
APR 28 The Neon Judgement + Miss Kittin & The Hacker
Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,

www.bozar.be
APR 29 20.00 Paolo Conte
De Pianofabriek
Fortstraat 35; www.myspace.com/2daysticket
APR 25 18.00 2Daysticket
Le Botanique
Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32, www.botanique.be
APR 22 Second Sex **APR 23** Starving + Priscilla Ahn **APR 30** Mud Flow. The Big Pink.
Recyclart
Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34, www.recyclart.be
APR 25 23.00 Animals on Wheels + Danny Breaks + Analogik + The Wax

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

Simply Red

4 July

Vorst-Nationaal, Brussels

The iconic frontman of the band that in 2009 celebrates 25 years of uninterrupted music-making says that this tour will be their last. But he uses phrases like "kind of decided" and "I intend", so let's not rule out the possibility that Mick Hucknall, who has been leading Simply Red from its early punk origins through 80s pop and soul to 90s dance and jazz, right on into the new century, will be back. But I wouldn't take any chances.

→ www.vorstnationaal.be



Ensemble + 8 Toast + Rony 'n' Suzy + Dr Lazerlyde

Ghent

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01, www.handelsbeurs.be

APR 30 20.00 Sioen

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060, www.vooruit.be

APR 29 22.00 François Breut **APR 30** 20.30 Volta, concert/performance (Nacht van de arbeid)

Hasselt

Muziekodroom

Bootstraat 9; www.muziekodroom.be
Concerts at 20.30:

APR 22 The Spirit That Guides Us **APR 23** Watermelon Slim & The Workers
APR 24 The Airborne Toxic Event

Kortrijk

Concertstudio

Conservatoriumplein 1, www.dekreun.be

APR 22 20.15 Olla Vogala & Soetkin Baptist

De Kreun

Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44, www.dekreun.be

Concerts at 20.00:

APR 24 Air Guitar Belgium Championship **APR 25** Daan **APR 26** Louisa's Daughter + Tomàn + Madensuyu **APR 29** Samiyan + The Gaslamp Killer + Flying Lotus

Leuven

Club Silo

Vaartkom 39; 016.22.06.03

APR 24 23.00 Boys Noize label Night

Het Depot

Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03

APR 28 20.00 Madcon **APR 29** 20.00 Yevgueni

Tervuren

British School of Brussels

Leuvensesteenweg 19 ; 02.344.68.77, bcf.springconcert@gmail.com
APR 26 15.00 BCF Spring Concert featuring Hot Air, Barber Shop Singers, the school choir and instrumentalists, as well as African drums (charity concert in support of the British Charitable Fund)



Antwerp

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00, www.zuiderpershuis.be
Concerts at 20.30:
APR 24 Nancy Vieira (Cape Verde)
APR 25 20.30 Ensemble Samo, traditional music from Tadzjikistan

Borgerhout

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.292.97.40, www.deroma.be
Concerts at 20.30:
APR 23 Alvaro Paños y cuadro, flamenco music and dance
APR 24 Thierry 'Titi' Robin

Brussels

Art Base

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20, www.art-base.be

APR 24 19.00 Silvia Abalos and 'Cantango', Argentinian tango 21.00 Takis Mendis, bouzouki music

Stekerlapatte

Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81, www.stekerlapatte.be
Concerts at 21.30:

APR 23 Oxymore (France) **APR 25** Marenostrum (Sardinia) **APR 30** Erno



Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be

Until APR 25 20.00 Bouge B #2, mini-festival of choreographies by young artists including new and international works

Brussels

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
APR 22 20.00 Material for the Spine: Dance video/talk by American choreographer Steve Paxton, inaugurating Phantom Exhibition (APR 22-MAY 8)

Ghent

Vlaamse Opera

Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02, www.vlaamseopera.be
APR 23-26 14.00/15.00/20.00 The Royal Ballet of Flanders in Swan Lake, choreographed by Marcia Haydée with music by Tchaikovsky performed by Brussels Philharmonic conducted by Benjamin Pope



Antwerp

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00, www.zuiderpershuis.be
APR 28-29 14.00/20.30 Broccoli Théâtre in Gembloux (in Dutch)
Bruges
Magdalenazaal
Magdalenastraat 27; 050.44.30.60
APR 29 15.00 Kopergieterij & Dschungel Wien in Love, staged by Eva Bal and Ives Thuwis (six and up; in Dutch)

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Brussels

KVS Bol

Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.00, www.kvs.be

APR 24-26 15.00/20.00 KVS & Ro Theater in Onschuld (Innocence) by Dea Loher, staged by Alize Zandwijk (in Dutch with English and French surtitles)

Kaaitheater

Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59, www.kaaitheater.be

APR 23-25 20.30 Abattoir Fermé

in Index 1: May You Live to be a Hundred/Snuff (without dialogue)

Tour & Taxis

Havenlaan 86C; 0900.69.001, www.afrika-afrika.com

Until APR 26 Afrika! Afrika!, African circus performers



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

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 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

architekten, 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

Blvd Barthélémy 5; 02.502.69.12, www.ccnua.org

Until JUNE 14 Terence Haggerty: wall painting by British artist

Until MAY 24 Eric Tillinhast, installation

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

Flemish Parlement - De Loketten

IJzerenkruisstraat 99; 02.552.40.43

Until JUNE 13 The World of Roger Raveel, paintings by the contemporary Belgian artist

Folklore Museum

Eikstraat 19; 02.279.64.36

Until JUNE 21 BrusselSe Orgels, didactic exhibition on the theme of the organ

Fondation pour l'Architecture

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.80, www.fondationpourlarchitecture.be

Until OCT 18 De tijd van de boetiek (The Time of the Boutique), window shopping from 1800 to today

Museum van Elsene

Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.22

Until MAY 30 Paul Delvaux, a

selection of works on paper by the late Belgian artist (1897-1994)

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)

Plan B

Kazernestraat 37

Until MAY 9 Aan Tafel/A table, 21 artists' interpretations on the theme in preparation for the Zinneke parade 2010

Royal Army Museum

Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33

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

Royal Museum of Art and History

Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11

Until 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

DON'T MISS

Opendoek Film Festival

24 April – 3 May

Utopolis, Turnhout

This excellent festival in Turnhout brings films with a social relevance together in one programme – from migration to women's rights, from political corruption to bullies at school. There is a lot to choose from this year, including The Elite Squad, Brazilian director José Padilha's violent crime thriller in which Rio's cops wage war on drug lords. It has picked up awards at every festival in which it has screened, including Berlin's prestigious Golden Bear. On the lighter side is Cannes prize winner Tulpan (photo) about a young man training to raise livestock while pursuing the girl of his dreams in Kazakhstan. Opendoek sponsors professional juries, as well as a jury made up of prisoners and one that chooses the best film from the Arab world.

➔ www.opendoek.be



Until MAY 31 Peter Buggenhouts, sculptures and installations by the Belgian artist

Until MAY 31 00 Picture This!

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)

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 (SMAK)

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-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)

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)

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

Festivals & special events
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

DUSK
'TIL DAWN

SAFFINA RANA

Fuse turns 15

at Tour & Taxis
86c Havenlaan

The mother of all techno clubs, Fuse, is celebrating its 15th birthday with an all-night rave on Saturday, 25 April. If large festivals float your boat, and you've ever wanted to experience the Ibiza buzz without burning a huge hole in your pocket, here's your chance.

With a maximum capacity of around 2,000 at the Brussels club, the party is instead being held at Tour & Taxis to accommodate the influx of techno fans anticipated from all over Belgium as well as Germany, France, Britain and the Netherlands.

As you'd expect from one of Europe's leading clubs, there's one helluva line up. The 10 national and international household names hitting the decks include Dave Clarke, Monica Kreuse, Adam Beyer, Anthony Rother and Ricardo Villalobos, as well as residents Deg and Pierre. Fuse will serve up the same award-winning format it has always done – one room dedicated to high-energy techno and a second where deep house gets low down and dirty.

Although Dave Clarke's nose bleed-inducing bleeps are often more than I can bear, the rest will have you with your arms up in the air for hours. Don't miss German DJ Kreuse with her infectious blend of syncopated beats and dreamy vocal mixes that drift in and out of tracks.

With such a big line up, get there early. The Red Cross will be on hand if you happen to overdo it, and if you are prone to late night munchies, there will be food stalls on site.

Tickets in advance at Fnac and Free Record Shop

➔ www.fuse.be

FACE OF FLANDERS

DEREK BLYTH

Marcella Pattyn

The last living member of a religious order that dates back to the Crusades

For many hundreds of years, the *begijnhofs* of Flanders offered women a place where they could live together without being bound by the strict rules of a convent. The quiet, walled communities that they created can still be found in most large Flemish towns, including Antwerp, Ghent and Bruges – and across the border in the Netherlands. But the order itself is just one beating heart away from extinction.

The *begijnhof* is a peculiar mediaeval institution, dating from the 12th century, when women greatly outnumbered men as a result of the Crusades. For many single women who couldn't find a husband, the only choice was to give up all



living in *begijnhofs* according to a way of life that had hardly changed in eight centuries. They were all elderly, single and affectionately regarded by the local community as odd relics of an ancient Catholic world.

for new purposes. In Leuven, they were famously turned into student housing, Diest's was taken over by craft workshops and a restaurant, while Hasselt's crumbling brick buildings were restored by art galleries and small IT businesses.

Now there is just one beguine left in the world. Sister Marcella Pattyn was born in 1920 and, until recently, she lived in the *begijnhof* in Kortrijk, a lovely whitewashed warren of streets bang in the centre of town. But she was finally forced to move into a rest home.

Now blind and in poor health, she understandably doesn't give any interviews. She told a local newspaper that she doesn't want to be seen as an exhibit, but it's hard to see her any other way, as the last member of an order that stretches back to a time when Flemish men died outside the walls of Jerusalem and women had to find a way of living alone in the world.

Gradually, these beguines died off. The last Dutch beguine passed away in 1990, when there were still eight elderly women living in the St Elisabeth Begijnhof in Ghent.

As the *begijnhofs* emptied, the old houses were taken over

their possessions and move to a nunnery. But another option became possible after a priest founded the first *béguinage*, or *begijnhof*, in Liège.

In this unique setting, women settled together in walled communities where each one lived independently in a house with a step gable, a small front garden and a statue of a beloved saint above the entrance. They kept their personal property and, with it, a sense of autonomy.

Some of these women took care of the poor and sick, while others carried on trades like lace-making and baking. For modern commentators, these were prototype feminist communities.

But the world beyond their walls was still governed by laws laid down by the Pope. Upset at the relaxed rules, the Catholic Church declared *begijnhofs* illegal in the 14th century. The order died away completely in Germany but was later revived in Flanders and the Netherlands.

Up until a few years ago, there were still a few surviving women



The beautifully preserved *begijnhof* in Kortrijk is a public place that you can walk or cycle through

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



uitdaging →

What is the worst thing that can happen to you? Losing your job? Your house burning down? If you're able-bodied, it's probably having an accident that lands you in a wheelchair. But what if you are more active than the ordinary office worker? Imagine you're a triathlete, at the top of the world rankings and you fall off your bike as so many times before, but this time you cannot get back to your feet.

Some thoughts lie too deep for tears. How do you deal with such a setback? You are not just set back, but your whole world lies in shards. Do you take to the bottle or buck yourself up? Marc Herremans was such a triathlete, and, in January 2002, he took a tumble from his bike while training in the sun on Lanzarote and lost the power of his legs. What the Flemish athlete did then has been a source of inspiration to many.

His iron man training stood him in good stead: *"er is geen weg terug; elk einde is een nieuw begin"* – there is no way back; every end is a new beginning. *Je mag nooit opgeven; je moet alternatieven zoeken* – You must never give up; you must look for alternatives."

This attitude helped Marc recover to the extent that he could return to triathlete competition. He also offers coaching to motivate staff in companies. He is much in demand these days, inspiring workers to adapt to changing

circumstances and even to regard losing your job as an opportunity.

Coming from anyone else, such talk would be scoffed at, but when Marc compares his accident to a dismissal, losing your job is put into a bit more perspective.

Marc says that, whether we are in or out of work, we all need coaches to inspire us to new heights. This crossover of coaching techniques from sport to the workplace is not new, but the power of Marc's testimony certainly is. He stresses the importance of physical exercise: *een gezonde geest in een gezond lichaam* – a healthy mind in a healthy body.

So when Marc tells an assembled group of pen-pushers that to balance their sedentary jobs they should go running in the evening, the chances are that some will take up the challenge.

Within a year of his accident, Marc completed the gruelling Ironman race in Hawaii, with the help of a tricycle for the running and cycling sections; his arms powered him through the water. Marc's organisation, To Walk Again, encourages those with a handicap to take up sport. The book relating his story has a title that reflects his philosophy: *Ironman op zoek naar een nieuwe uitdaging* – Ironman in search of a new challenge.

→ www.marcherremans.be

The last word →→→

No privacy

"I was planning to put his telephone numbers in this column, together with his email addresses, with the argument: if you don't believe in privacy for others, then you have no right to it for yourself."

Novelist Tom Naegels, commenting on Chris Hölsken and his vigilante website that names paedophiles

Free lunch

"I try to play more or less honestly. I stay sitting until the police arrive." Titus Clarysse, who has eaten in Ghent restaurants without paying 54 times, and been arrested 27 times

Brussels blues

Most Flemish people don't like Brussels, and want nothing to do with the city. And they're not interested in finding out about the city.

Film director Marc Didden (*Brussels by Night*) on drama series *Jes*, set in Brussels

Safer sex

"I sell condoms to allow people to have safe sex. Soon I'll need to sell bulletproof vests so they can drive up the street safely."

Owner of a sex club on Luikersteenweg in Sint-Truiden, following a series of shootings in recent weeks