

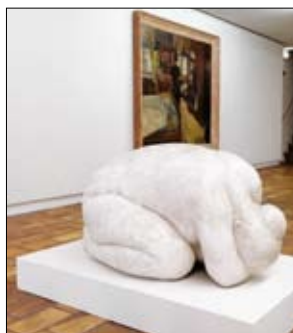
The KBC blues 3

The Belgian government is furious at the board of KBC Bank, which failed to inform it of the extent of its debts or its portfolio of junk credits. A third bailout begins



Two are better than one 8

Ostend's wonderful new Mu.Zee combines the collections of the city and province, plus hosts Beaufort Inside. The move creates a collection of Flemish art unsurpassed anywhere



Made for walking... 10

Flanders' smaller towns are part of a unique new series of tours from Heritage Flanders. Find out which castle Victor Hugo wrote about, which city has the most Art Nouveau and who published the very first book in Flanders



To the polls, people

The country goes to the polls on 7 June to decide who will sit in the regional and European parliaments. Over the next four weeks, Flanders Today looks in depth at the politicians, the parties and the issues that could lead to dramatic changes in the political map of the region.

This week: the Flemish parties

ANJA OTTE

More than eight parties are taking part in the Flemish regional elections this year, and seven of them stand a good chance of getting representatives elected. This trend worries some observers, as it makes it harder to form a stable coalition government, which generally needs at least three parties to gain a majority.

socialists and liberals. The 1980s and '90s saw the rise of two new parties: the greens and the extreme-right Vlaams Blok (now called Vlaams Belang). At the turn of the century, the more moderate nationalist Volksunie fell apart, leaving the N-VA and SLP as remnants of this party. Lijst Dedecker is relatively new and is participating in regional elections for the first time this June.

The three traditional parties in the race are Christian democrats,

→ Continued on page 5

Twittering toddlers keep in touch

Prize-winning project brings internet to day care

Online message application Twitter may have convinced the likes of Oprah and Stephen Fry of its worth, but until now a whole demographic was immovably sceptical: the under-threes. Thanks to an idea developed at the University of Hasselt, toddlers will now be able to keep in touch with their working parents using Twitter.

Sensors and software installed in a Fisher Price activity board allow crèche kids to send pre-programmed messages to the internet, where their parents can keep track while working.

The project, titled "Twoddler", was developed by masters students Gert Vos and

Bart Swennen, together with Johannes Taelman from the Expertise Centre for Digital Media, as one of the 35 applications for the INCA Award of the Interdisciplinary Institute for Broadband Technology (IBBT). The idea, however, first arose as part of the university's Mobile and Pervasive Computing study module.

Twitter is an internet application that allows users to send short messages of up to 140 characters to their "followers", who have signed up to receive them. In Twoddler, each child has a Twitter account set up in his or her name, with the parents signing up as followers.

At the day-care facility, meanwhile, each

child has an activity board where the usual beepers and bells are connected to a variety of sensors which, when triggered, send a programmed message to Twitter. Parents can check up during the day (providing their workplace permits Twitter connections at work – and get "a feeling of presence and connection with their toddler in day care," the team explained.

Patricia Ceysens, minister for science and enterprise, handed over the €5,000 award for the project, which the jury described as "a good, well implemented idea, full of potential." ♦

→ www.tinyurl.com/twoddler

It's an 80 kilo girl!

Kai-Mook is the first-ever elephant born in Belgium

ALAN HOPE

A beautiful bouncing baby girl, slightly hairy and weighing in at 80 kilograms, was born at 8.45 last Sunday to mother Phyto Phyto in the Antwerp Zoo. The country's first elephant birth was followed closely by tens of thousands worldwide via the internet. Kai-Mook's name was chosen from more than 8,000 submissions from members of the public.

The happy event was a long time coming. Not only does an elephant's gestation period last an uncomfortable 22 months, but

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News in brief

Motorists in the Flanders region can now report **bad road conditions** online. The regional agency for roads and traffic, together with the association of Flemish cities and municipalities, last week inaugurated a new website for complaints. The site, www.meldpuntwegen.be, has a database of 80,000 roads, each with a link to the authority responsible for its upkeep. The site handles complaints about potholes, but also obstacles on the road, signals, markings and roadside plants. Footpaths and cycle paths are also covered, although the latter can also be reported direct to www.meldpuntfietspaden.be.

A new **system of parking control** entered into force in Leuven this week, with the introduction of traffic wardens working for the private security company SAT. The 17 new wardens, who have the power to issue parking tickets or call tow trucks for offending vehicles, were last week given a tour by police of the most popular parking spots in the town, such as the St Peter's church facing the town hall. The rules in some streets have also changed: where once a blue parking disc was sufficient, a system of paid parking has been introduced.

Good fences make good neighbours



Nicole Boonen and Lief Van Der Veken, who live next door to each other in Retie, near Turnhout, keep in touch despite an enormous hedge separating their two gardens. "Until recently, we could see over the hedge and have a chat," said Boonen. Suddenly the hedge began to grow, and the two could no longer see each other. "I admit we could have cut the hedge, but we didn't want to," explains Boonen. So they cut a gap in the hedge and built in a window frame, which now also serves to pass things from one side to the other: asparagus from the garden in one direction, chocolate mousse from the kitchen in the other. "Our children also use it," Boonen said. "They crawl through, which is not really the idea."



Election fever

Political posters are sprouting up on public notice boards all over Flanders. The most striking so far comes from the small socialist PVDA party: leading Flemish politicians with red clowns' noses under the headline "Stop the Political Circus". The politicians are, left to right, Bart De Wever of N-VA, former prime minister Yves Leterme, prime minister Herman Van Rompuy and Bart Somers of Open VLD.

Regular light exercise on a **vibrating Power Plate exercise machine** helps get rid of body fat faster than strenuous exercise and dieting, according to research announced last week by physical therapist Dirk Vissers at Antwerp University. Vissers, a doctoral candidate, tested 100 overweight volunteers and found that the Power Plate helped them lose weight more quickly, as well as helping keep it off more effectively. In addition, the Power Plate regime also had more effect on organ fat in the abdomen, more common among men and post-menopausal women and a risk factor for heart disease and diabetes.

FLANDERS TODAY

Independent Newsweekly

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Novelist **Dimitri Verhulst** has won the Dutch Libris Literature Prize, the first Flemish author to do so since Hugo Claus in 1997. Verhulst took the €52,500 prize for his novel *Godverdomse dagen op een godverdomse bol* (*Goddamn days on a goddamned planet*). The book, a spoof history of the world written in what the judges described as "a fireworks display of language", was withdrawn from open sale by some shops because of the blasphemous title, which also presented a problem to news readers on the Dutch TV channel Evangelistische Omroep (EO) when announcing the award.

Flemish green party Groen! has announced that it will take legal action against plans to **build a viaduct** that will run above some neighbourhoods in central Antwerp. The party claims the planning application for the so-called Lange Wapper project, which was submitted recently, was drawn up illegally. Other protesters against the scheme have argued that the official plans were heavily criticised by a study bureau brought in by the government itself to evaluate alternatives.

Cycling star Tom Boonen has been given a reprieve by his QuickStep team after being caught by a drugs test testing positive for cocaine, apparently for the third time. Boonen will have to spend a year in therapy, take urine tests every two weeks and undergo hair analyses three times a year.

Meanwhile the organisers of the Tour de France said he would not be welcome at this year's event. Drugs charges are still pending.

TV Vlaanderen, which provides digital services to 75,000 customers in Flanders, has **accused Belgacom of sabotage** after the station's signal dropped out five times in 10 days. TV Vlaanderen's signal travels to the Netherlands via ADSL by Scarlet before being sent to satellite by the Dutch telecoms company KPN. But Scarlet is owned by Belgacom, a direct competitor of TV Vlaanderen. Scarlet recently announced its intention to offer digital TV services from this summer. "And then all of a sudden we had a problem with our signal," said Kurt Pauwels of TV Vlaanderen.



Baby elephant will remain at zoo



50,000 signed up for news of the long-awaited birth

→ Continued from page 1

Phyo Phyo's labour was prematurely announced. Because of a low hormone reading weeks ago, a special website was set up, complete with webcam, to provide information to a waiting world. Nothing happened.

The final stages arrived for real last weekend. Phyo Phyo's hormones were down, she had taken to sleeping standing up (a sign of approaching labour), and her teats were swollen.

Kai-Mook is the first baby elephant ever to be born in Belgium. In fact, only about one-third of all Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) in European zoos – of which there are about 330 in total – were born in the zoo where they live. The rest are bred in native countries (India, Nepal, Thailand or Bangladesh) and imported or come from circuses, which also import them. As a female, Kaai-Sook's future is safe in Antwerp. A male calf, on the other hand, would eventually have been separated from his mother and gone into the European breeding exchange programme.

Interest in the long-awaited baby elephant's birth took the zoo by surprise, and the webcam, under pressure from 30,000 visitors at one time, missed the vital moments. The calf, whose name, under worldwide elephant breeding requirements, had to begin with a 'K' and sound "Asiatic" was soon on her feet. In her first days she will consume up to 11.5

litres of milk a day. Kai-Mook will be raised by a matriarchal group of mother, adoptive aunt Yu Yu Yin and sister May Tagu. The zoo's elephant compound also includes the unrelated matriarch Dumbo and father Alexander.

Elephant calves have an extraordinarily long childhood, continuing to suckle until they are 10 years old (or until a new baby comes along). Motherhood duties are shared by the adult females in a group: Yu Yu Yin, who lost her last calf at birth, suckled May Tagu along with Phyo Phyo, although she is not related to either. This prolonged dependency is seen as crucial to the creation of the strong social bonds that hold elephant groups together.

The Asian elephant is endangered, with only about 50,000 left in the wild. Antwerp Zoo is preparing a new habitat at Planckendael animal park in Mechelen, which could take up to 14 elephants. Kai-Mook's birth is a small step towards the European target of eight calves a year, which would restock European zoos without recourse to imports.

And she is from good breeding stock; mother Phyo Phyo has given birth to three other calves, two of whom survived. Father Alexander, meanwhile, has fathered three males and no fewer than eight females. ♦

→ www.baby-olifant.be

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

Last week the Flemish government's research service released a 500-page report on the social state of Flanders over the last 50 years, covering a wide range of issues from adult education to home ownership to cancer and depression. A brief glimpse of some of the figures:

**6,161,600**

inhabitants of Flanders in 2008, compared to 5,634,152 in 1981

2,556,974

households in Flanders, the number of which is growing because of more single people (one in eight) and higher divorce rates

80.73 years

life expectancy taking men (78.1) and women (83.3) together, up from 78.03 in 1995

22%

of the population under 19, compared to 30% in 1981. The over-65s went from 14% to 18%, making Flanders the "greyest" region of the country

354,370

people with foreign nationality – 5.8% compared to 4.1% in 1981. Nearly 65% come from an EU member state and 31% from the Netherlands alone

8%

take part in some form of life-long learning, an increase on the 6.9% in 2000, but far short of the target of 12.5% by 2010

72.5%

of men in employment, compared to 58.3% of women

90 %

were "satisfied" with their colleagues; 86.3% with job security; 71.1% with salary, and only 56.4% with promotion prospects

1 in 4

smokers among the population over the age of 15. In 1962, the figure was 40%.

300 grams

of vegetables as a recommended daily allowance (RDA), but Flanders manages only half of that, together with less than half of the RDA for fruit and 35% for milk products, but more than 150% for meat

14%

of seven-year-olds has never been to a dentist. One in 10 has cavities, rising to four in 10 by the age of 12

57%

increase in the quantity of drugs prescribed from 1996 to 2006. 58% of Flemings took medicine of some kind in the last two weeks

Lowering the bar

Federal police need more recruits

Aspirant police officers may in future be diabetic, short-sighted or literally flat-footed, after changes to the selection criteria introduced last week by the justice ministry. They may also be slightly tubbier than before, with the acceptable body mass index (BMI) raised to 26 for women and 30 for men. A BMI of 30 is considered the borderline for obesity, while anything above 25 is considered overweight.

The changes were introduced in an effort to make it easier to recruit new police officers. At present, only about 15% of candidates who begin the unified selection procedure for the federal police are successful. That figure is too low to counter the losses through retirement in the 48,000-strong force. Like most other employment sectors,

the blue is becoming increasingly grey.

At the same time, the police force is looking to employ more women. There are only 13,000 women in the force at the moment and none at all at high levels. Justice minister Guido De Padt attributes some of that deficiency to the fact that women have only been full members of the force since 1981, with most of them joining later in the 1990s.

But he also recognises that women have not been given the same opportunities, so every working group and selection committee will now have at least one female member, while police missions abroad will have at least one female official. ♦

→ www.polfed-fedpol.be

FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

In praise of the Flandrien

Open VLD is struggling through this campaign. The party had hoped that all its candidates would benefit from former prime minister Guy Verhofstadt's charisma, which now seems like a miscalculation.

The sordid affair surrounding serial defector Dirk Vijnck has damaged Open VLD, once the largest Flemish party, which in recent polls scores only 17%. The party suffers another handicap, too, which CD&V detected when it asked: who is Open VLD's candidate to become minister-president? That's a tricky question.

Party president Bart Somers has been suffering from a lack of credibility for years. The Vijnck affair further harmed him. So, exit Somers. And enter... Dirk Van Mechelen.

Van Mechelen has been a well-respected minister in the Flemish government for almost 10 years, but he remains unknown to the public at large. There is a reason for this.

As budget and finance minister, Van Mechelen mostly speaks in numbers. He has neither the rhetorical talent nor the looks of a natural-born politician. Even at his own party congress, when delegates were eager to welcome him as the new liberal Messiah, his speech sounded shaky. Is this the man to challenge Kris Peeters, the current minister-president and obvious candidate to succeed himself?

Apparently so. Open VLD praises Van Mechelen, calling him "a Flandrien", the name of the legendary cycling champions, who won not just because of their talent but because of their hard work. "When the rain is hard and the cobblestones crooked, when there is mud all around and you have your head in the wind, then you do not need a star actor, you need a Flandrien," Verhofstadt said about Van Mechelen. (The "star actor" refers to Kris Peeters, who has in the past been likened to George Clooney.)

For his part, Van Mechelen prefers to talk about issues. One of them is the controversial Oosterweel link, which is designed to connect the left bank of the Scheldt river with the ring road in northern Antwerp. He wants to go ahead with the plans, which makes him one of the very few politicians who have not changed their mind about this issue so far.

Recently Van Mechelen has criticised the socialists for their plans to extend the public transport system and the Christian-democrats because there are still waiting lists for the disabled, despite an increased budget.

But will that be enough for this Flandrien to win the race?



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To the polls

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“Strong in hard times”: CD&V

The Christian-democrats are deeply rooted in Flemish civil society, although possibly less so in the larger cities. Five years ago, CD&V presented itself to the voters as a serious alternative to the rather frivolous “purple” (liberal and socialist) government. CD&V formed a cartel with N-VA, with the still virgin Yves Leterme as its leader. With 26% of the votes, CD&V/N-VA was considered the winner of the election.

Now, 20% is deemed a good result, with the cartel no longer extant and only a minor role left for Yves Leterme, who has become a lot more controversial since his short stint as prime minister. Moreover, CD&V could not keep to its promise of an institutional “big bang”. But CD&V has an excellent trump card: Kris Peeters, the Flemish minister-president, who did quite a good job during the current administration and has no real rivals. The party slogan reads “strong in hard times”.

Losing the message: Open VLD

The campaign so far has been disastrous for Open VLD. It started off well, with full media exposure for Guy Verhofstadt, the charismatic former prime minister, and his new vision on Europe. This all fell to pieces, however, when an agreement between Open VLD president Bart Somers and LDD defector Dirk Vijnck became public. Vijnck, a complete incompetent, was promised another term in parliament or a “well-paid cabinet position”. This was enormously damaging to Bart Somers, who already lacked credibility – and then Vijnck went back to LDD.

Thrown into a panic, the party now points to the many virtues of Dirk Van Mechelen, minister of finance (and one of two vice-minister-presidents) in the Flemish government for more than 10 years. “Who is he?” is what most people ask, despite that decade in the job. Meanwhile, very little attention goes to the liberals’ free market message of lowering taxes, encouraging businesses and a green economy.

Generation gap: SPA

The socialists have been in disarray for quite some time now. Under party president Caroline Gennez, SPA is going through a generation split. Its left wing feels ignored, while the older generation found a (very temporary) name change – after Bert Anciaux joined its ranks – too hard to swallow. SPA also has to balance being an opposition party

on the federal level and a reliable government partner on the Flemish level.

Its main figure is Frank Vandenbroucke, labour and education minister (and the other vice-minister-president), definitely more of a government than an opposition man. SPA wants to counter the economic crisis with a “daring plan” to invest in schools, hospitals and nursing homes, as well as public transport and windmills to supply alternative energy. It is set to lose, though, and hopes for 16%, or 3% less than in 2004.

Celebrity boosted: N-VA

After the break up with CD&V, this is the chance for the small nationalist party N-VA to show what it is worth. It has struggled to get above the electoral threshold of 5% before, but this seems to be less of problem now, with polls at around 7%.

The most important issue for N-VA is institutional change, with more power for Flanders. In this respect, it is “purer” than CD&V, which is more willing to compromise in talks with the French-speakers. As a result, the cartel between the two parties broke up, and N-VA minister Geert Bourgeois last year resigned from the Flemish government. N-VA party president Bart De Wever has recently become surprisingly popular, after he got to show his witty side in TV brains quiz show *De Slimste mens ter wereld*.

Party of one: Groen!

Everyone wants to be green these days, but that does not necessarily mean the Greens will do well at the ballot box. Party president Mieke Vogels dreams of a 10% result for Groen!, similar to that of its francophone counterpart Ecolo, but 7% looks more likely. Vogels herself is the only well-known Groen! candidate, as most other greens in the Flemish Parliament have for various reasons decided not to stand for this election. Then again, people who vote green rarely do so because of the candidates. The ecological program is usually the main motivation. Aside from its classic ecological demands, Groen! also proposes a 32-hour working week.

Whose country? Vlaams Belang

The radical right-wing Vlaams Belang rarely loses an election, as it has been growing in strength for many years. In 2004, it scored a historical 24% of the vote. This time, though, the trend may be curbed. Because of its anti-immigrant views, the other parties have always banned Vlaams Belang from government. It was hoped that this “cordon sanitaire” might make it less attractive, but the opposite was true.

Now, for the first time, Vlaams Belang finds it hard to

present itself as an alternative to traditional parties. There is simply too much competition. Lijst Dedecker is just as anti-establishment, while N-VA is just as nationalist, without the racist undertones. To counter this, Vlaams Belang reverts to the theme that has always been successful for the party: immigrants and Islam. Its slogan: “This is our country”.

Melting pot of parties: LDD

Lijst Dedecker dominates this campaign. Its founder Jean-Marie Dedecker arouses strong feelings: lots of people love him, but even more loathe this loudmouth, who is often accused of populism. Dedecker started his own party in 2006 after he was kicked out of Open VLD – the party he is forever fighting. (He even hired a private detective to look in Open VLD minister Karel De Gucht’s private finances). When defector Dirk Vijnck returned to LDD earlier this month shortly after he had left for Open VLD, this caused even more damage to the latter.

LDD has attracted intellectuals like Professor Boudewijn Bouckaert and former journalist Derk-Jan Eppink, who support its “minimal state” message. However, a lot of opportunists joined LDD, too, which has caused turbulence in party ranks. In the 2007 federal elections LDD surprised everyone by getting five candidates elected. Now a score of around 15% is predicted. At this moment, LDD has three representatives in the Flemish parliament, all of whom have defected from other parties.

But wait! There’s more

Amongst the other, smaller parties, SLP is the most notable. The Sociaal-Liberale Partij is what was left of Spirit after the cartel with SPA went bust and most of its members decided to join the socialists. SLP has a broad programme that appeals to a lot of people. But the chances it will get into the Flemish parliament are slim. Ask anyone about its leader Geert Lambert, and they will tell you about his spectacular weight loss, while only very few people can name his party. SLP has two representatives in the Flemish Parliament, but one of them has decided she is leaving politics.

Then there is PVDA, the Flemish equivalent of the Socialist Workers Party, yet another party that seems unable to break through the electoral threshold of 5%. PVDA gained itself attention in the campaign with its posters showing N-VA celebrity Bart De Wever, former prime minister Yves Leterme and prime minister Herman Van Rompuy with red clowns’ noses, under the headline “Stop the Political Circus” (see photo taken in Ghent on front page). The PVDA candidate that has attracted the most attention is Tine Van Rompuy, the sister of the prime minister and of MP Eric Van Rompuy – both CD&V.

→ www.verkiezingssite.be



The new MAS museum project is part of Antwerp's extensive plans to reinvigorate its waterfront

Flanders is one of the most urbanised regions in Europe, with a network of closely interlinked large- and medium-sized cities and small towns and blurred boundaries between towns and the countryside.

However, contrary to neighbouring, almost equally urbanised Western European countries, Flanders for many years neglected its urban centres. "This was linked to the supremacy of a rural-based Christian Democratic party," explains Maarten Loopmans, Professor of Urbanism at Erasmus University College in Brussels. "In the 1990s, this tradition was converted into an urban policy approach that remained strongly oriented towards social policy and was therefore at odds with the urban entrepreneurialism in other Western European countries."

In neighbouring regions, urban projects became the most important means of transforming a city. Indeed, the "urban project" became a fashionable term, with cities such as London, Lille, Lyon

and Berlin setting the tone.

"Only in 1999, when, for the first time in 50 years, the Christian Democrats resigned from government, did Flanders take a more pro-urban approach," says Loopmans. In 2002, the Flemish government approved the "Decree on subsidies for urban renovation projects," with the aim of significantly and visibly supporting major urban development in Flanders. As a result, Flanders began to discover the wide variety of possibilities in urban projects and how to relate them to the specific Flemish context.

Urban development in Flanders is not seen solely as a means of restoring the health of dilapidated parts of town. It is also a key tool in turning the tide of the exodus from the city, in calling a halt to the processes of segregation and in achieving a social mix at district level.

The Flemish government subsidises urban renovation projects on the basis of seven criteria relating to spatial impact, planning and design, participation

and public/private partnerships. The selection criteria are ambitious and demanding. The projects must significantly improve the general quality of life in a town or district of a town. They must be established in consultation with the inhabitants of the district and with local social partners, and they must be able to demonstrate a minimum financial contribution of 30% from the private sector.

One of the crucial aspects of urban projects is the management role of the town itself. After all, the town must ensure that in addition to economic and financial profitability, the project also achieves social added value. The subsidies for urban renewal have not only provided financial and qualitative incentives for urban projects but also generate a positive dynamic and the necessary recognition.

One of the most important factors behind the striking leap forward in terms of the quality of Flemish urban renovation projects, particularly with regard to design and planning, is the

Shaping up the cities

The "urban project" has finally become fashionable in Flanders

DENZIL WALTON

notion of "concept funding". It is driven by the recognition that smaller towns lack the planning capacity and project experience of the larger towns and cities. These smaller towns were presenting far-reaching and potentially innovative projects but lacked the extra element of quality to attract project subsidies. In such cases, concept funding came to their rescue.

Through concept funding, urban projects can make an appeal for knowledge, experience, talent and financial means to improve a project proposal. "Experts" with greater experience in urban projects are appointed. Together, the parties formulate a more focused description of the issues and select a design agency.

This agency is then put in charge of a design study. The objective

is to explore the urban planning, infrastructural and architectural possibilities for the development of a high-quality urban space. Some of the funding is also used to get advice about communication, participation and the development of efficient forms of public/private partnership.

"The concept funding formula is not unique in Europe; the UK's Single Regeneration Budget is along the same lines," explains Loopmans. "A similar measure was introduced by the Belgian federal government to pay for consultancy for smaller municipalities with limited planning capacity. Concept funding is definitely successful in allowing smaller municipalities without a large planning department to develop good bids." ♦

Find out for yourself

The Flemish region and the Liaison Agency Flanders-Europe (VLEVA) are organising a conference on urban development in Flanders, on 28 May at Flagey in Brussels. "Urban Renewal in Flanders" aims to encourage the exchange of experiences and views on urban development through the examples of three Flemish

towns: Antwerp, Ghent and Deinze. Speakers will present and analyse both successes and failures, and special attention will be given to the financing of development projects. Patrick Janssens, mayor of Antwerp, will brief participants on a decade of spatial policy and urban innovation in his city.

➔ www.vleva.eu

Three lessons in urban renewal

Antwerp

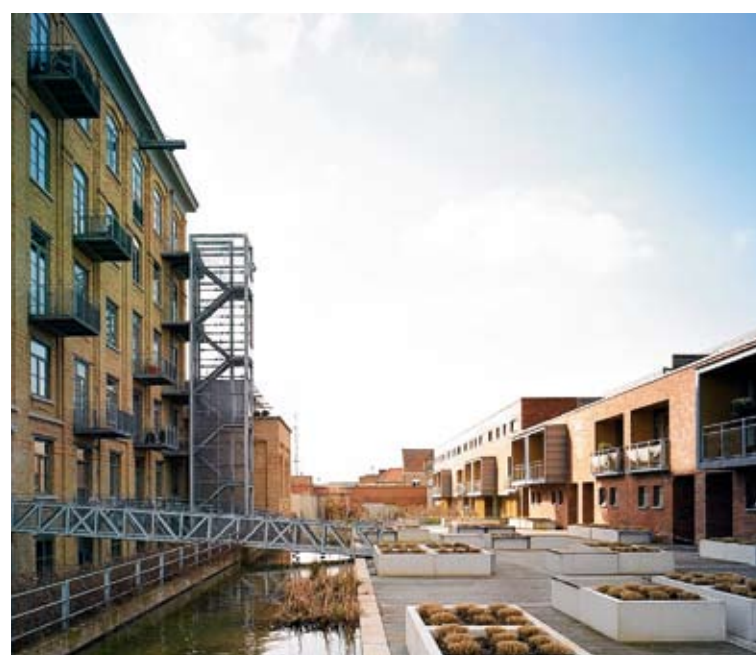
After years of degeneration due to funding problems and a lack of political attention, urban development took a political turn in 1983 due to the merger of the city with eight surrounding municipalities. This fusion stimulated the city government to draw up a global vision for Antwerp. It led to significant changes, in great part owing to considerable investment in urban renewal by the Flemish, Belgian and European governments.

Ghent

The 19th century nucleus of Ghent suffers from all the familiar problems: overcrowding, dense building, poor quality housing, few open spaces, parking problems and a shortage of green spaces. Yet, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, Ghent is addressing these issues and investing in restructuring and revaluation. In addition, special attention is being placed on sustainability, social issues, multiple space usage and the involvement of the local community.

Deinze

Deinze, in East Flanders, is once again turning towards its river, the Leie, with a chain of new developments sprouting up along the waterfront. This small town is faced with enormous challenges to achieve its aims, but the Flemish government is providing the expertise of a larger city to enable its ambitions to be fully realised.



Bringing a lively, modern mix to the mediaeval town of Bruges

Government furious at KBC

Bank committed “unforgivable errors” in junk portfolio

ALAN HOPE

The Flemish region this week sent two representatives to serve on the board of troubled Belgian bank KBC, as part of a bailout plan announced last week. The two will be joined by two representatives of the federal government.

The partial government takeover comes after news last week that KBC, which had seemed to weather the banking crisis relatively well, was in fact still sitting on a portfolio of junk credits, or so-called collateralised debt obligations (CDOs). Those are the high-risk, high-return debt instruments at the root of the troubles of the banking system. Essentially, bankers bought up CDOs in a headlong rush for profit, only to see the credit's high potential for default realised.

It was never supposed to be this way. KBC, formerly Kredietbank, is based in Leuven and is of special interest to the Flemish government. Late last

year, while Fortis was in the process of being broken up and sold off to the French, and Dexia was undergoing a rescue that brought former prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene to the chairmanship, it seemed as if KBC had pulled through unscathed. The majority of the bank's CDO holdings were written off, the €5.4 billion remaining was relatively safe, and CEO André Bergen started the year sounding a positive note.

But, unknown to both the government and the markets, KBC still had a portfolio of CDOs worth either €14 billion or €18 billion, depending on which version you hear. KBC had insured – and then re-insured – the portfolio with the US financial insurer MBIA. Then MBIA restructured, splitting into two parts: one for conventional municipal bonds and one for junk credits. The trouble is, KBC's CDO portfolio is insured with the “bad” MBIA, and the chances of the insurer paying out on defaults

is slim. KBC is one of a number of banks that plans to sue MBIA for effectively ring-fencing its own risk exposure by the split, which they claim is illegal.

Now, for the third time, the government has to step in to bail out KBC. Previously, the aid was minimal: the latest, a cash injection of €2 billion, took place in January. Now KBC has revealed that rather than holding bad debt of €1.6 billion, as it claimed in December, the reality is closer to 10 times that figure.

Last week, concerns over KBC's stability saw the share price drop 23% in two days, as investors awaited what was expected to be disastrous first-quarter results. In a rescue plan put together at an all-night meeting, Flanders would inject €1.5 billion, and the federal government would put up 90% guarantees on bad credit over €3.2 billion and up to €10.4 billion. And both governments



© Belga

The future of CEO André Bergen is not only in the hands of the surgeons

would take two seats on the board.

Budget minister Dirk Van Mechelen, meanwhile, spoke of “unforgivable mistakes” and, in language unexpected from a Liberal, criticised how “striving for maximum profit has resulted in unbounded greed”. Bergen himself was not available for comment; the CEO, aged 58, last week underwent heart bypass surgery in Ghent. ♦



Security measures cost more, but were criticised as “too nonchalant”

Airlines demand €26 million repayment from Brussels Airport

A group of 60 international airlines is claiming repayment of €26 million from Brussels Airport, alleging that the airport unilaterally raised security charges in 2007. The payments made by airlines to the airport, including charges for passenger handling and landing rights, are the result of arduous negotiations every five years.

The airport claims the increase in charges was the result of tighter security measures ordered by European governments, especially the ban on carrying liquids. Now the airlines contend that

the airport should have known about the increased security at the time the new contract was being negotiated.

Meanwhile BIAC, the company that runs the airport, last week advised passengers to arrive earlier for their flights because of new security measures introduced at the weekend. “People should come as early as they would in peak season,” said a spokesman. The tougher measures follow a report that accused the airport of being “too nonchalant” in its procedures. ♦

Electricity costs “unnaturally high” for business

The cost of electricity for businesses in Belgium is “unnaturally high,” according to Peter Claes, the head of the federation of electricity consumers Febeliec. The reasons, he says, are a lack of competition and transparency, as well as a shortage of generating capacity.

The federation polled 285 business users and found that prices have been rising constantly for the last six years. From being one of the cheapest countries in Europe shortly before the market was liberalised, Belgium is now one of the most expensive. The price different is most extreme for larger consumers, who use 100-150 gigawatts a year, because

only Electrabel can supply such large quantities.

Some 80 companies are in that position, accounting for 25% of all electricity used in Belgium, and half of the industrial consumption. For smaller companies, meanwhile, using 10 gigawatts a year, Belgium was the only country in Europe last year where prices went up.

At the same time, Claes refused to rule out a possible legal action by Febeliec against Electrabel, which charged its customers for CO2 emissions for which it had received free rights from the government. The rail authority NMBS has already started an action. ♦

Roularta signs up with Google as ad-sales drop

Falling advertising income led to a 9.6% drop in income in the first quarter of the year for Roularta Media Group, publishers of magazines like Knack and Trends. In interim results published last week, Roularta reported sales down to €181.88 million from €201 million in the first quarter of last year.

Printed media was down 10.6%, and advertising income of magazines down by nearly a quarter. And the company warned that short-term ad bookings give no reason to expect an improvement in the next quarter.

Meanwhile, Roularta announced an agreement with internet search engine Google under which the Belgian media group will sell Google AdWords to local and regional advertisers in Belgium. AdWords allows even small businesses access to an international audience via advertisements appearing on Google's search results, as well as within email application Gmail and Google Maps. According to Roularta, its experience with local and regional newspapers like *De Streekkrant*, *Tam Tam* and *Vlan Immo* has allowed it to build up a network of thousands of advertisers. ♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Airlines • Hewa Bora

Hewa Bora, the Congo-based airline on the European blacklist of unsafe carriers, will resume flights between Brussels and Kinshasa on 30 May. It will use a Boeing 757 aircraft operated by Rak Airways, the fourth largest carrier of the United Arab Emirates.

Biotech • Genzyme

The US bio-tech company Genzyme will invest €46 million in a third bio-reactor on the site of its Geel plant. The new facility, expected to open in 2011, will require the company to hire up to 80 additional employees.

Broadcasting • Exqi

Exqi, the television operator owned by the TV services company Alfacam, has won a three-year contract from the European football association to broadcast up to 190 UEFA Cup games a year. The company is due to broadcast the European final from Istanbul on 20 May.

Energy • EDF

French energy group Electricité de France (EDF) has acquired 51% of SPE, France's second-largest electricity supplier, from the UK-based firm Centrica. SPE operates under the Luminus brand and owns a power station in Harelbeke, near Kortrijk. The move gives French energy firms a virtual monopoly on the country's electricity supply.

Hotels • Ibis

Ibis, the French two-star hotel group owned by Accor, has opened a new hotel in Sint Niklaas. The company, which now has 22 hotels in the country, plans to open another outlet in Ghent, following recent inaugurations in Aalst and Kortrijk.

Pharma • Solvay

Chemical and pharmaceutical products group Solvay has signed a cooperation agreement with Uhde, a research affiliate of Germany's Thyssen Krupp, to develop more efficient chloride and soda ash production methods. Based in Brussels, Solvay is the world leader in the soda ash market.

Pharma • UCB

Belgian pharmaceutical group UCB has won approval from the US Food and Drugs Administration for the sale of Cimzia in the US. Cimzia is used in the treatment of rheumatoid polyarthritis.

Retail • Colruyt

Discount retailing group Colruyt has acquired a majority stake in Mitto, the Merchtem-based company specialising in one-to-one marketing.

Telecoms • Belgacom

Belgian telecommunications company Belgacom has created a new entity called Sahara to develop broadband investment opportunities in Asia, the Middle East and other developing regions.



Sea and be seen

The new Mu.Zee offers the best perspective on Flemish art in the country

IAN MUNDELL

The Kunstmuseum aan Zee in Ostend opened its doors in March, but it has really come into its own in the past month as mission control for Beaufort03, the summer project that scatters art all along the Belgian coast. The Beaufort Inside exhibition is one good reason to pay the museum a visit, but doing justice to its extensive permanent collection requires a return trip.

Mu.Zee, as it's known for short, was created to bring together two complementary Flemish art collections: the collection of mainly 19th-century works owned by the city of Ostend, previously housed in the Museum of Fine Arts, and the more modern collection owned by the Province of West Flanders. Mixed together, they provide an unmatched perspective on Flemish art from 1830 to the present day.

The museum is housed in a former department store at 11 Romestraat, which since the mid-1980s has been home to the Provincial Museum of Modern Art. It is an excellent setting, with Beaufort Inside currently residing on the ground floor, and the rest of the building given over to the permanent collection and temporary shows. The curious back rooms and mezzanine floors of the store mean that you get the feeling of discovering pockets of art, while the larger main floors provide ample space for bigger canvases and sculptures.

The riches of Ensor and Spilliaert

Pride of place goes to two Ostend artists, James Ensor (1860-1949) and Léon Spilliaert (1881-1946), both represented by broad cross-sections of work. Some of Spilliaert's best-known paintings are here, such as "Duizeling, of de tovertrap" from 1908, the theme of vertigo shown through a female figure perched precariously on a set of steps, her veil streaming in the night breeze. There are more of these night scenes and dark self portraits, for which Spilliaert is famous, but there are also less familiar, light-hearted caricatures and positively luminescent landscapes from later in his career.

With Ensor the accent is on his etchings, from street scenes and story illustrations to his notoriously vicious satirical pictures. But there are also well-known paintings, such as his self portrait wearing a woman's hat covered in flowers, and his impressionistic seascapes.

Uniting the two collections at Mu.Zee makes possible some fascinating artistic conversations between generations. In

one particularly pleasing corner you can find Ensor's small "Duivels die me sarren" from 1895, in which he shows himself beset by devils and demons, alongside "Bonjour Monsieur Ensor" by Felix Labisse from 1964, which shows the grandly bearded Ensor being accosted by two dandies on the seafront.

Beside that are two works by Xavier Tricot, another Ostend-born painter, "James Ensor (Erased)" from 1989 and "Ensors graf" from 1996, in which the phantom presence of the great artist is only just visible in the smears of black paint.

And those you never met

Although few other artists in Mu.Zee receive the attention given to Ensor and Spilliaert, the quality of the collection means that one or two works are usually enough to tell you why a painter or sculptor is worth attention and how to situate them in the history of Flemish and European art. This goes for highly individual artists, such as Fred Bervoets or Pjeroo Roobjee, and for those participating in broader artistic movements. There is a fascinating group of Flemish abstract paintings from the 1920s, for example, and a group of hyper-realists from the 1960s and '70s (prepare to double-take at the sight of Jacques Verduyn's "Transistormeisje").

The collection is so broad that you are certain to meet unfamiliar artists – and to come away hungry for more. So, while there is a lack of big name Belgian surrealists (just one painting each from Paul Delvaux and René Magritte), there is a wonderfully distracting room of Marcel Mariën's playful assemblages, including a rock with a suitcase handle labelled "Sisyphus on Holiday" and a hand on a stick in Yves-Klein blue called a "Cultural Backscratcher".

The two Pol Mara canvases from 1962 made me want to see more of his Pop Art work incorporating fragments of photographic images, while lurking in an obscure back room I found the building's concrete frame giving new resonances to a collection of Gilbert Decock's geometric paintings from the 1960s and '70s.

I was also inspired by Jean Brusselmans' stylised landscapes from the 1930s, with their squared-off clouds and radiant suns, and Frits Van Den Berghe's expressionist 1920s bar scenes, in which a cautious man tries to pass a group of large, drunk, naked women on the stairs. A situation familiar to many Flemish drinkers, of course.



A former department store is a fantastic setting for the new Mu.Zee, which features Flemish painters such as Jean Brusselmans (above). Beaufort Inside features photographs, such as the one left of Albert Einstein, Marcel Abraham, Anatole de Monzie and James Ensor in a 1933 Ostend restaurant garden

Beaufort Inside

You've seen art in your swimsuit at Beaufort03, now go inside to see artists in their swimsuits. Some of the most interesting items in *Artists on the Belgian Coast, 1830-1958* are those that reveal famous painters off-guard, just hanging out at the seaside like the rest of us.

Some of these lived on the coast, while others visited to work or relax. There are quirky photos of René Magritte reclining in the dunes with a small pet dog and the usually dour expressionist Constant Permeke paddling happily in the sea. George Grard and friends play darts outside his studio, an idyllic setting near Sint-Idesbald also painted by Paul Delvaux.

As you might expect, there are plenty of seascapes among the paintings and a fascination for the people who worked on the coast. Sometimes this is romantic,

as in Theodore Verstraete's large canvases of fishermen setting off for their boats, sometimes it is closer to anthropology, with several artists painting or sculpting the gnarled heads of elderly working men and women.

The exhibition is good at extending these lines of thought to other sources, such as showing a late 19th-century report about life on the coast, which illustrates comments about drunkenness with a sketch of a mother and daughter carrying the head of the family home after a mid-morning session. A similar exploration reaches into turn-of-the-century tourist posters, contrasting clogs and headscarves with fashionable Parisian bathing dresses. (There is even a strong suggestion that holiday-makers might look forward to romantic entanglements among the dunes.)

There are two highlights in this diverting show. The first are paint-

ings by Floris Jaspers, who presents a remarkable fragmented view of the seafront in "Bonjour Ostende" and "Strand te Oostende" from 1926-27. The sharp lines of fashionable women's hats slice across the scene, while detached male heads float around at calf level, moustaches bristling.

The other is Permeke's wood carving of his own head from 1940, resembling nothing so much as a weathered mooring post, next to the sleek, enigmatic sculpture of his daughter, made by Floris' brother Oscar Jaspers in 1926. Two styles, using very different materials, yet together evoking an artistic life on coast rich in creativity, friendship and family ties. ♦

Kunstmuseum aan Zee
 Romestraat 11, Ostend

➔ www.kunstmuseumaanzee.be

Video killed the radio star

Retrospective at SMAK celebrates 35 years of a great video artist

LISA BRADSHAW

Dara Birnbaum both loves and hates her country. This could be said of many people's feelings about their homelands, but contemporary American artists have spent the last decade being especially pre-occupied with the subject.

With a respect for the freedom to work and disdain for the rhetoric of freedom and with a love/hate relationship with the concepts of political leadership and power, artists – from installation genius Paul McCarthy to the ruthlessly honest graphist Kara Walker – splay their country's ambiguities across the American art landscape.

Video artist Birnbaum does the same – though in a generally more interpretive way – and has been for more than 35 years. Ghent's modern art museum, SMAK, has a long history of supporting Birnbaum's work, and this is the artist's first major exhibition in more than 20 years. A pioneer in video art, Birnbaum's work from the early 1990s could easily have been made yesterday.

Two architectural installations particularly reveal that turn-of-the-millennium politics repeats itself. "Transmission Tower: Sentinel", from 1992, involves an arched vertical pole lined with small monitors that flicker scenes from the 1988 US presidential campaign: George Bush Sr's famous "thousand points of light" speech and the National Student Convention, featuring Allen Ginsberg's recitation of his poem "Hum Bom!"

Right next to it is "Hostage", a more complicated video narrative that she made two years later, in which human firing range targets on Plexiglas are mounted in front of monitors hung



Dara Birnbaum's "Elegy for Donna" playing on a loom near you

from the ceiling that show news footage from the infamous kidnapping and murder of German industrialist Hanns-Martin Schleyer by the Red Army Faction in 1977. Televisions placed at either end of the group of monitors are connected by a laser beam; step in front of the beam, and all action comes to a stop.

While the first installation is a chilling reminder that Americans seem purposefully to use their voting rights to repeat recent tragedy, the second questions our own place – as both victim and perpetrator – in media hype lending a source of power to terrorism. (It's also, on a basic level, a reminder that terrorist rhetoric and

accompanying imagery is nothing new, although fleeting enough to need to be repeated with generational frequency.)

Birnbaum analyses media images in all her work, achieving a sort of "talk back" to popular representations, especially of women. This shot her to notoriety in the 1970s, when the television image became ever more expansive, and she rebelled against the notion of the "passive viewer". Made up of a sort of technological "found art", her most famous works from the period are the short videos "Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman" and "Kiss the Girls: Make Them Cry".

The first takes scenes from the (ultra-cheesy) 1970s TV show *Wonder Woman*, stopping and repeating them, to emphasise that the "power of woman" might not have been quite as important to TV executives as shapely actress Lynda Carter wearing nearly nothing. The second takes images of famous women (and girls) from the popular television game show *Hollywood Squares*, again employing repetition – this time to show how the camera can shape "feminine" gestures and responses.

Although both of these are hugely important to a retrospective on Birnbaum, they are not the most engaging pieces on view. Aside

from the architectural installations, those prizes go to the larger video and sound works, most of which are housed in their own darkened rooms. The most intriguing of these is a piece Birnbaum put together right here in Belgium a few years ago during the video biennial Contour in Mechelen. Having witnessed both an in-studio recording of DJs at Radio Donna and the work of the only manufacturer of traditional tapestries left in Flanders, she constructed an installation in which footage of Donna's DJ Yasmine shows simultaneously on the wall and on the fibres of a large loom. The images appear to be being woven into a tapestry just like the actual Flemish tapestries hanging on the other walls.

Considering that tapestries have been historically used to illustrate upper-class activities and major news items – battles, coronations, hunting parties – the piece simultaneously suggests the new ways in which images are burned into our minds and how fleeting they really are. Video images disappear the moment we stop watching them, usually never to return again. Birnbaum called the piece "Elegy for Donna" – a radio station that went off the air three years later.

Once again, the artist looks into her crystal TV screen and pulls out the future. ♦

Dara Birnbaum: the dark matter of media light

Until 2 August

SMAK, Citadelpark, Ghent

→ www.smak.be

Museum Prize goes to Ghent

The award is a feather in the cap to the re-opened Fine Arts Museum

ALAN HOPE

This year's Museum Prize in Flanders has been awarded to the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent. The museum re-opened two years ago after being closed for four years for renovations. The jury praised the many technical innovations, especially those that aid accessibility.

Next to its permanent collection, the museum recently housed a major exhibition on Italian etcher Pergolesi and now hosts a retrospective of the rural paintings of Flemish Impressionist Emile Claus.

Each year a panel of professional experts awards the €10,000 Museum Prize to one museum in each

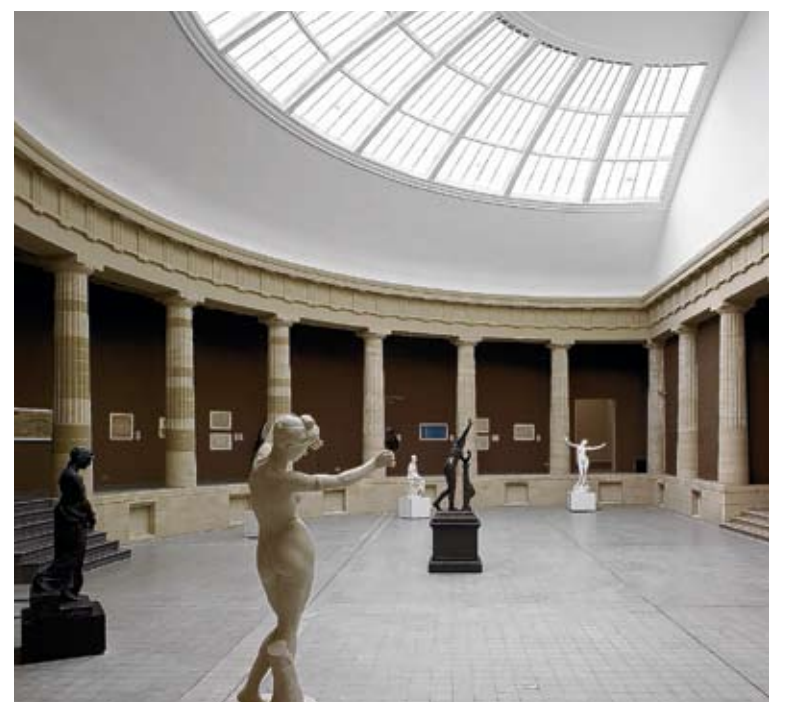
region (Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia) from a short list of five. In addition, members of the public can vote on their favourite, and schoolchildren eight to ten years old were allowed to pick their own choice of best museum in their region. About 6,000 people voted in all. Public and children's prizes are worth €2,500.

The public prize this year went to the Gasthuismuseum in Geel, which offers a social and domestic history of the area, renowned worldwide for its system of foster care for the mentally ill, which dates back to the middle ages. The children's prize was awarded to the Fashion Museum in Antwerp.

In Brussels region, the winner was the BELVue museum, which hosts temporary exhibitions and specialises on information on the royal family. It also offers access to some underground streets dating back to the 19th century. The public prize went to the Erasmus House in Anderlecht, where the philosopher lived in 1521, while the children's prize went to the Strip Museum in central Brussels.

In Wallonia, the public and children alike voted for the Museum of Prehistory in Flémalle. The main prize went to the Photography Museum in Charleroi. ♦

→ www.museumprijis.be



The big winner: Ghent's Museum of Fine Arts

Getting to know you

A new series of tours gets to the nitty-gritty of some elusive Flemish town

LISA BRADSHAW

Titles can make or break tours. “Ghost walk”, for instance, brings in the tourists. “Gastronomy walk” brings in the locals. “Heritage walk”, on the other hand, makes everyone run for cover.

And yet the series Erfgoed

Wandelingen, or Heritage Walks, put together by Erfgoed Vlaanderen (Heritage Flanders) and Klara radio station are lively, fun and packed with interesting information. Unlike other tours, they cover an entire town in depth and offer visits to museums, concerts,

exhibitions or castles as part of the tour. They are day-long events, usually running from 9.00 to 18.00 and cost next to nothing.

A tour takes you through a concise history of a Flemish town, including its social history, architecture and monuments – some of which are not normally open to the public. From town halls to churches to old fisherman’s houses and stories about locals, from labourers to royalty, you’ll find out what surprising circumstances really led to the creation of towns. The special activities, such as an organ concert in Tielt and a reading on Art Deco in Sint-Niklaas, make the tours “a lot more interactive”, explains Bart Jonckheere, public relations manager at Erfgoed Vlaanderen.

“Buildings are static, unmoving. There is a lot of dust on them,” says Jonckheere. “For us it’s important to make them alive. When people walk around

them and hear about what has happened to them throughout the ages, they get to know their own culture, the richness of their local history. In combination with the special activities, you get a total understanding of the character of a place.”

Interestingly, these places do not include Flanders’ larger cities but its smaller ones from the art-mad Genk all the way down to little Hoegaarden, with its population of 5,800 (and apparently more to offer than beer, much to my surprise). Among the list of more than 20 towns, you’ll find some very recognisable names, like Ypres and Tongeren, and some you may have never heard before, like Lokeren, with its 16th century “market patent”, and Heist-op-den-Berg, a town more than 1,000 years old.

“What we have seen is that in cities like Antwerp or Bruges, a lot of opportunities to learn about the

cities already exist,” explains Jonckheere. Getting outside of these Flemish centres gives the heritage organisation a chance to introduce the public to the often fascinating – but little-known – social history and consequential events that have shaped the region.

All that’s left now is to re-name them to reflect the kind of modern heritage organisation that Erfgoed Vlaanderen – with its motto “Future for our past” – really is. Urban tracks? City prints?

Regardless, the walks last through October, so pick your towns and find out just what makes Flanders tick.

The heritage tours are all in Dutch. If this is a problem for you, keep your eyes open for a special English tour organised by Erfgoed Vlaanderen and Flanders Today in September! ♦

➡ www.erfgoedvlaanderen.be



Discover the best of out-of-the-way Flanders during Heritage Walks

TIME AND TIDE

Koksijde’s own private Beaufort

LISA BRADSHAW

When a major annual arts project takes over an area, the fringe

group inevitably emerges.

Right now up and down the Flemish coast is Beaufort03, a contemporary and very popular initiative that marries nature and the arts. Outdoor installations by international artists pop up in the cities and the sands. Enthusiasts debate whether it is best to plan a Beaufort tour or simply happen upon the works while strolling along.

The latter option is definitely going to be the one employed for those who see *Getij-Dingen*, Koksijde’s simple yet engaging outdoor arts project. Unveiled with little fanfare, the installation is made up of works of art attached to 15 already existing tide posts along eight-and-a-half kilometres of the beach in Koksijde and neighbouring towns Sint-Idesbald and Oostuinkerke.

The works are by artists who live or have roots at the Flemish coast and are situated low on the tide poles. When the tide comes in, it swallows them up. Although the works are constructed of tough materials like stone or iron, the effect the tide has on each one is part of a process of constantly changing effects. A bit like Beaufort in its setting, but, in this case, nature is having her way with the art.

“A confrontation with nature, with the temporal process of ebb and flow,” says Ingrid Sinnaeve, the artist who spearheaded the project. “We’re allowing reality itself to affect our work.”

The works will remain on the poles until the end of the year – “through all four seasons”, notes Sinnaeve. The title is a play on the word “tide” (*getij*) and “tidings” (*tijdingen*).



But the word “time” can also be found in the title (*tijd*). An easy symbolism could be applied about the temporary nature of art and the power of the sea, which is wearing away *Getij-Dingen* like so many sandcastles. But

the installation also conveys the message that anything can change – an idea, a plan, knowledge – if you simply leave it on its own awhile. ♦

➡ www.koksijde.be

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From farm to fork

Organic farms are popping up everywhere, but De Kollebloem did it before it was trendy

ROBYN BOYLE

Half of the produce found in kitchens across Belgium today is organically grown, in line with the current European average. But back in the early 1980s, before anyone had even heard of an “organic farm”, Antoine De Paepe started one.

A visionary with a love of nature, De Paepe left his job at the rail services to turn his parents’ one-hectare cow farm in Sint-Lievens-Esse, East Flanders, into a huge vegetable garden. Ten years later, he met Leen Verwimp, and the two combined their passion for healthy, organic food to develop the farm into what it is today: Two-and-a-half hectares of lush, green fields at the edge of the Flemish Ardennes, where over 45 types of seasonal vegetables are grown without using a single pesticide or artificial fertiliser.

Apart from some small farm machinery, De Paepe and Verwimp sow, weed and pick everything by hand. They lay nets over the crops to deter eager birds and plant wildflower borders to lure away insects. Of course, with almost 250 regular clients in the region between Zottegem and Aalst, they also rely on a lot of help from friends and family, including their daughter Inge and organic agriculture student Sam Persoon.

Persoon is a young farmer and full-time partner to the couple,

working right alongside them, day in, day out. He hopes to take over the reins when De Paepe and Verwimp retire. Then there are the many clients who gladly come over on organised weeding days to lend a hand and take an active part in growing their own food.

Farm as supermarket

While most fans of organic food simply buy it in the supermarket, clients with a subscription at De Kollebloem have the added advantage of a personal relationship with the farmers. On Tuesdays, they stop by the farm, or one of its nearby pick-up points, to get their prepared crates filled with vegetables or fruit and bread. (De Kollebloem works together with other local bio-farmers to offer more than just vegetables.)

“That’s what makes this job so interesting – the close contact with the people,” says De Paepe. “They come over to have a chat and pick up their produce, which we’ve spent the day selecting by hand and putting into crates. It just makes the whole process that much more personal.” Even without a subscription, you can stop by the farm and visit its market, with produce, wine, dairy, pasta and other organically produced products.

Ask a consumer why he or she buys organic and you are likely to hear that it tastes better or has

more vitamins. But there are more reasons: “I stepped into a bio-shop the other day, and I was pleasantly surprised by the variety,” says sporadic organic shopper Anniek Chiau. “I like to cook, and organic farms produce a lot of so-called ‘forgotten vegetables’ that I have now learned to integrate into my cooking. Things like parsnip, purslane and white radish, plus a whole range of high-quality regional veg, are now getting attention again. They’re a good way to liven up a recipe.”

People are more and more convinced. Organic purchases in Belgium rose a whopping 25% last year alone. Organic has finally shaken its strictly hippie-vegetarian image and moved into the mainstream as an appropriate food choice for eco- and health-conscious people.

“We prefer to sell directly to our clients for many reasons,” explains Verwimp. “Not the least of which is that it makes the most sense for the environment. Most of the food you see in the big supermarkets has travelled a very long distance to get there.”

Just as important is the fact that buying locally keeps small farmers in business. “And we love what we do,” smiles Verwimp. “We are in tune with the earth.” ♦

→ www.kollebloem.be



© Photos by Robyn Boyle



From top: Sam Persoon, Antoine De Paepe and Leen Verwimp run De Kollebloem; the organic farm’s shop offers their own products, plus others from around the region

Just a bike ride away

Organic is by no means limited to fruit and veg. Dairy, meat, wine, bread and much more can all be produced in an organic way, which means without harmful chemicals or artificial additives. Keep an eye out for the bio-label in supermarkets, stop by a natural food shop or, better yet, plan a weekend outing around a visit to an organic farm. You find them spotted across the Flemish countryside, the perfect finale to a Saturday afternoon bike ride or walk.



For creamy organic goat cheese, head for De Haan on the Flemish coast. ‘t Reigershof has over 200 goats and produces an array of hard and soft cheeses, feta and yoghurt.

→ www.reigershof.be

For organic wine, the place to be is Hageling-Wijnbouw in Tienen, about 20 kilometres southeast of Leuven. The vineyards, winery and cellars are open for visits until mid-August.

→ www.hageling-bio.be

Visit www.biodichtbijhuis.be for a complete overview of all officially recognised organic farms, as well as organic restaurants, shops, markets, butchers and bakers.



A warm welcome to Belgium!

We hope your days here are happy ones.

At KBC we'll be glad to settle you in by providing you a full bank and insurance service.

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Mísia

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

“Love will tear us apart.” Mísia sings the words of Joy Division’s Ian Curtis on her new album *Ruas*, and it might seem baffling to hear her cover this grim new wave band. But it isn’t, really, because in the lyrics she chooses, Portuguese singer Mísia often charts the dark side of love. And a melancholic view on amor is of course one of the characteristics of the musical genre she inhabits, the fado.

The star of Portugal’s national music scene was for decades the divine Amália Rodrigues. After her death nearly 10 years ago, different crown princesses reclaimed her throne – Cristina Branco and Mariza to name but two. But it quickly became clear that Mísia and no one else would be the beacon for fado in the 21st century.

Surprisingly, she started broadening her musical pallet. Or maybe not so surprisingly since Mísia, born and bred in Portugal, has a Spanish mother. Pardon, a Catalan mother.

Her previous album *Drama Box* contained boleros and tangos,

but she even goes a step further on *Ruas*. The first disc of this double CD, *Lisboarium*, she calls “an oniric and imaginary voyage through the streets of Lisbon, its neighbourhoods and its music.” On the second disc, & Tourists (the ampersand is no typo), she meets “artists from other streets in the world, other cultures, but I think they have a fado soul.”

She has recorded that second disc partially with Flemish musicians, like drummer Dirk Jans (De Mens) and guitar player Geoffrey Burton, who was Arno’s right-hand man for years. It’s praiseworthy that Mísia explores other territories, but she has to be careful since her voice doesn’t really go well together with heavy guitars.

Her version of “Love Will Tear Us Apart”, for instance, is far from memorable (and I’m not even talking about her accent). Ditto for her cover of “Hurt” by the industrial rock band Nine Inch Nails, a song that already got a complete, and astonishing, makeover by Johnny Cash.

But whatever she sings, the fado

always resonates in her voice – that wistful fado, as deeply impregnated in the Portuguese psyche as the tango in the Argentinean one or *le chanson* in the French. It’s crystal clear: you can try to get Mísia out of the fado, but you’ll never get the fado out of Mísia.

Mísia

24 May, 20.00
Ancienne Belgique, Brussels

→ www.abconcerts.be



Antwerp

Café d'Anvers

Verversrui 15; 03.226.38.70, www.cafedanvers.com
MAY 21 & 28 23.00 Ralf, Serom & Asfalte

Trix

Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00, www.trixonline.be
MAY 20 20.00 Witchcraft + Graveyard + Hooghwater
MAY 21 20.00 My Hot Pony + The Tabasco Collective + Deaf Cobra
MAY 22 20.00 Jarboe + Alkerdeel + Kingdom

Borgerhout

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 286; 03.292.97.40, www.deroma.be
MAY 20 20.30 Radio Modern with Laura B & The Moonlighters

Rataplan

Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
MAY 28 20.30 Selah Sue

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24, www.abconcerts.be
Concerts at 20.00:
MAY 20 Abe Vigoda MAY 22 Superlijm + Chairlift. Pete Molinari + Dan Auerbach MAY 23 William Fitzsimmons + Sophia MAY 24 Mísia MAY 25 Patrick Watson & The Wooden Arms MAY 26 Tenement Kids + Anti-Flag

Art Base

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20, www.art-base.be
MAY 24 18.00 Je vous déteste

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15, www.cirque-royal.org
MAY 20 20.00 Grégoire

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32, www.botanique.be
MAY 23 20.00 Jason Lytle
MAY 27 20.00 The Drones

L'Os à Moelle

Emile Maxlaan 153; 02.267.10.90, www.osamoelle.be
MAY 21 19.30 Eastern Ska meetss Reggae Downtown
MAY 23 21.00 The Black Dogs play Led Zeppelin

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34, www.recyclart.be
MAY 23 23.00 Kunstenfestivaldesarts closing party with Snooba, Stel-R, Publicist, Mondkopf

VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07, www.vkconcerts.be
MAY 20 20.30 Kong + Dub Trio MAY 24 20.30 Freddy Loco + New York Ska Jazz Ensemble MAY 25 21.30 Biohazard MAY 27 20.00 The Cheek + Dag for Dag + Fight Like Apes

Ghent

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01, www.handelsbeurs.be
MAY 23 20.00 Kraakpand #3.4

Minnemeers

Minnemeers 8; 09.223.22.27
MAY 20 20.00 Hayseed Dixie + I See The Sea + DJ Willie

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060,

www.vooruit.be

MAY 20 21.00 Madensuyu with Frans van Isacker, Peter Vermeersch & Jan Mast

Leuven

STUK

Naamsestraat 96; 016.320.300, www.stuk.be
MAY 28 STUK Eindhoven: Moony, Klunen, The Mixfits, Jules X, Selah Sue

Het Depot

Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
MAY 21 20.00 Philippe Geubels
MAY 22 20.00 Daan + Etienne de Crécy
MAY 23 23.00 Selah Sue + Stephanie McKay + Jimi Tenor & Kabu Kbu



Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be
MAY 27 20.00 Fly

Stadsschouwburg

Theaterplein 1; 0900.69.900, www.sherpa.be
MAY 20 20.00 Big Band concert with Els de Schepper

Brussels

Archiduc

Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52, www.archiduc.net

GET YOUR
TICKETS NOW!

Milk Inc

25-26 September

Sportpaleis,
Antwerp

It's a testament to the concerts of Milk Inc that these two are nearly already sold out. When they are, which should be any day now, that will be 80,000 tickets out the door, for an electronic dance duo that you can see around the country, even this week, at much smaller venues for much smaller prices. But the full concerts are miracles of energised hits, swarms of light and jumping, bumping crowds. Join the party.

→ www.milkinc.be



Until MAY 30 17.00 Bai Kamara Jr with Valve

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193-195; 02.733.13.78
MAY 20 20.30 Kristen Cornwell Stet
MAY 27 20.30 Animus Anima

Sass'n Jazz

Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78,

MORE WORLD MUSIC THIS WEEK

Charango Concert → Bozar, Brussels

Laura Pausini → Vorst-Nationaal, Brussels

Tango Bar → Zaal de Maalbeek, Brussels

www.sazznjazz.be

Concerts at 20.30:

MAY 22 The Elements **MAY 23** Laos Kai Kolonaki **MAY 27** Mr Pringle's **MAY 28** Jam Session

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50, www.soundsjazzclub.be

Concerts at 22.00:

MAY 20 Caribe Con K - Los Soneros del Barrio **MAY 21** Peter Claus Quartet **MAY 22** Alexandre Cavalière & Jazzy Strings **MAY 23** Gilles Repond Quintet **MAY 25** Master Session **MAY 26** Laurent Doumont Soul Band **MAY 27** Chamaquiando, salsa

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45

Concerts at 20.30:

MAY 21 Noche Triunfal **MAY 22** Joe Higham Quartet **MAY 23** Bart Defoort Quartet **MAY 26** Brussels Royal Conservatory Jazz Section Exam Concerts (free) **MAY 27** Adrien Volant Quartet

Théâtre Marni

Vergniestraat 25; 02.639.09.80

MAY 21 20.30 Sal La Rocca Quartet with Steve Houben **MAY 22** 20.30 Olivier Hutman - Rick Margitza Quartet **MAY 23** 20.30 Sabin Todorov Trio + special guest Dani Klein



Antwerp

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00, www.zuiderpershuis.be

MAY 23 20.30 Mikea (Madagascar) **MAY 27** 20.30 Binyard Orchid (Icelandic/Dutch band) **MAY 28** 20.30 Shinichi Kinoshita, shamisen (Japan)

Brussels

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

MAY 28 19.00 Charango concert with Ernesto Cavour, Alfredo Coca & guest (Bolivia)

Sass'n Jazz

Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78,

www.sazznjazz.be

MAY 20 21.00 Okan Murat Öztürk & Hilde De Clercq, traditional Turkish love songs

Théâtre Molière

Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00, www.muziekpublique.be

MAY 20 20.00 Renato Borghetti, Amalgama (Brazil) **MAY 22** 12.30 Introduction to 'Karnatische' music and rhythms by Neyvelij B (India). 20.00 Issa Mbaye Diary Sow (Mauritania/Senegal) **MAY 23** 20.00 Sanjay Subrahmanyam (India)

Ghent

De Bijloke

Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, 09.269.92.92, www.debijloke.be

MAY 20 20.30 Angelo Branduardi

De Centrale

Kraankindersstraat 2; 09.265.98.28, www.decentrale.be

MAY 22 21.30 Los Callejeros



Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be

MAY 20 20.00 Concerto Italiano conducted by Rinaldo Alessandrini: Monteverdi's Vespro per la festa dell'Ascensione **MAY 21-23** 10.00-18.00 Piano masterclasses with Irwin Gage: lieder by Schubert

Bruges

Concertgebouw

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

MAY 22 20.00 Brussels Philharmonic conducted by Michel Tabachnik with Arne Deforce, cello: Webern, Stravinsky, Mahler, Zimmermann **MAY 23** 20.00 Orchestre des Champs-Élysées conducted by Philippe Herreweghe, with Patricia Kopatchinskaja, violin: Haydn, Beethoven **MAY 28-29** 20.00 Kuijken String Quartet: Haydn

Brussels

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

MAY 25-30 20.00 Queen Elisabeth Violin Competition 2009 Final with the Belgian National Orchestra conducted by Gilbert Varga

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be

MAY 23 20.15 Brussels Philharmonic conducted by Michel Tabachnik, with Arne Deforce, cello: Webern, Stravinsky, Mahler, Zimmermann

Minimienkerk

Minimienstraat 62; 02.511.93.84, www.minimes.net

MAY 24 10.30 Minimienkerk Orchestra and Choir conducted by Benoît Jacquemin: Bach

Musical Instruments Museum

Hofberg 2; 02.545.01.30, www.qeimc.be

Until MAY 22 10.00-16.30 Queen Elisabeth Violin Competition 2009: master classes

Royal Music Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37

MAY 20 20.00 Ensemble Baroque de Limoges conducted by Christophe Coin: Marais **MAY 28** 20.00 Musique Royale des Guides conducted by Yves Segers, with Anthony Devriendt, horn: Segers, Shostakovich

Ghent

De Bijloke

Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, 09.269.92.92, www.debijloke.be

MAY 28 20.00 Antonio Tamestit, cello: Bach, Reger, Ligeti



Ghent

Vlaamse Opera

Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02, www.vlaamseopera.be

Until MAY 26 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



Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be

MAY 20 20.00 Le Kwatt/In Situ Productions in More Mouvements für Lachenmann, choreographed concert by Xavier Le Roy

Vlaamse Opera

Frankrijklei 1; 03.202.10.11, www.vlaamseopera.be

MAY 22-28 Royal Ballet of Flanders in Artifact, choreographed by William Forsythe

Brussels

Maalbeek CC

Hoornstraat 97; 02.734.84.43

MAY 23 21.00 Tango Dance with Duo Ranas (tango workshop at 19.00)

Leuven

30CC - Schouwburg

Bondgenotenlaan 21; 016.32.03.20, www.30CC.be

MAY 26 20.00 Les Ballets C de la B in Pitié! by Alain Platel, music by Fabrizio Cassol



Antwerp

Stadsschouwburg

Theaterplein 1; 0900.69.900, www.sherpa.be

MAY 21-23 15.00/20.00 Annie, musical (in Dutch) **MAY 28-31** 15.00/20.00 Anatevka (Fiddler on the Roof), musical (in Dutch)

Brussels

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

Until MAY 27 Mort de chien (The Hair

of the Dog) by Hugo Claus, directed by Philippe Sireuil (in French with Dutch surtitles)

De Markten

Oude Graanmarkt 5; 02.512.34.25, www.demarkten.be

Until JUNE 10 21.30 De Eeuwige Jeugd van Joseph Haydn (The Eternal Youth of Joseph Haydn) (in Dutch)

Les Briggittines

Korte Briggittinenstraat; 02.506.43.00, www.briggittines.be

Until MAY 23 Societas Raffaello Sanzio in Paradiso, installation/performance, staged by Romeo Castellucci (part of Kunstenfestivaldesarts)

Leuven

Stuk

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20, www.stuk.be

MAY 20 20.30 Needlapb, theatre lab by Needcompany



Antwerp

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 Jimmy Kets: Brightside, series showing people amusing themselves by the Flemish photographer **Until JUNE 7** Erwin Olaf: EyeCandy, retrospective of the Dutch photographer **Until JUNE 7** Yang Fudong: East of Que Village, video installation

Plantin-Moretus Museum

Vrijdagmarkt 22; 03.221.14.50

Until JULY 19 In the Wake of Columbus: Antwerp Books and Prints around the World, early books, maps and illustrations printed in Antwerp

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

De Bond

Buiten Smedenvest; 050.44.30.40

Until JUNE 7 Joris Ghekiere: Gradient Dark, recent works by the contemporary Flemish 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, current research and expeditions in the Arctic and Antarctic

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

Until JUNE 30 N.i.c.h.e. 360 architecten, scale models by Jan Mannaers and Stephane Beel **MAY 25-SEP 13** Jan De Cock: Repromotion, sculptures and photographs by the contemporary Flemish artist

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MAY 27-SEP 13 Sophie Calle, photographs, audio and video works by the contemporary French artist
MAY 27-SEP 13 Disorder, sculptures and paintings by conceptual artist Bernar Venet and comic strips about the art world by Jacques Charlier

CCNOA
 Blvd Barthélémy 5; 02.502.69.12, www.ccnua.org
Until JUNE 14 Terence Haggerty: wall painting by the British artist
MAY 28-JUNE 14 Simon Ingram, installation by the New Zealand artist

Costume and Lace Museum
 Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50
Until JUNE 21 Carmen Hoyos-Hoy: Virevoltante/Wervelend, installation

Danish Cultural Institute
 Koningsstraat 35; 02.5230.73.26
Until JULY 5 Knit: Strik, traditional knitting shown alongside new and experimental designs by young Danish designers

De Markten
 Oude Graanmarkt 5; 02.512.34.25, www.demarkten.be
Until MAY 31 Clinamen, group show of paintings, video, sculpture and objects
Until JUNE 28 The Stone Road, photographs

Design Flanders
 Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.227.60.60, www.designflanders.be
Until MAY 30 Je suis dada: Tussen droom en realiteit (I am Dada: Between Dream and Reality), design with a Surrealist touch by contemporary Flemish designers

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

Folklore Museum
 Eikstraat 19; 02.279.64.36
Until JUNE 21 BrusselSe Orgels, didactic exhibition on organs

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

Jewish Museum of Belgium
 Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
Until OCT 15 Een geheugen op papier (A memory on paper), Jewish life in Belgium recorded in historic postcards

Museum van Elsene
 Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.22
Until MAY 30 Paul Delvaux, a selection of works on paper by the 20th-century 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 recently deceased Belgian artist

Pelgrims House
 0472.28.08.70, noelben@gmail.com
MAY 21-24 Apoteker Horror Picture Show, film projections of Doctor Caligarie, Nosferatu, Doctor Mabuse, Frankenstein 1 and more

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

DON'T MISS

FEATS

29 May to 1 June

CC Sint-Pieters-Woluwe

Think Kunstenfestivalde-sarts is the only arts festival in the capital? Not so. The Festival of European Anglo-phone Theatrical Societies (much more easily known as FEATS) is hosted by Brussels this year. Each night features three one-acts in this annual international competition. Theatre groups and supporters from across the continent have been gathering for FEATS since 1976, but this month's festival takes the experience to a whole new level, with workshops, a fringe festival and walking tours, all based out of the Cultural and Congress Centre of Sint-Pieters-Woluwe. Go for a "taster" of one evening – or dive in with a season ticket, giving you access to the whole event.

→ <http://feats2009.theatreinbrussels.com>



Until AUG 23 Alfred Stevens: retrospective of the Belgian artist (1823-1906)
Until SEP 6 Art and Finance in Europe: 16th Century Masterworks in a new light, 20 works from the museum's collection

WIELS
 Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.347.30.33
Until MAY 31 Bruno Serralongue, photographs
Until AUG 2 Luc Tuymans: Against the Day, 20 new paintings by the contemporary Flemish artist

Deurle

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

Ghent

Caermersklooster
 Vrouwebroersstraat 6; 09.269.29.10
Until JUNE 14 Wouter Rawoens: Roest op het IJzeren Gordijn (Rust on the Iron Curtain), photographs by the contemporary Flemish photographer
Until JUNE 14 Frank Steyaert: Het teruggevonden verhaal (The Rediscovered Story), ceramics

Design Museum
 Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99
Until JUNE 1 Connections, a selection of 100 textile objects from the 15th

century to today
Until JUNE 1 Cool Dozen+, 13 chairs and 13 textile objects by Finnish designers
Until JUNE 1 Henry van de Velde, book designs by the Belgian architect (1863-1957)

Dr Guislain Museum
 Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95, www.museumdrguislain.be
Until JUNE 30 Burland Toyland, works from recycled materials by Swiss outsider artist François Burland
Until SEP 13 Unknown Secrets, paintings by Serbian outsider artist Goran Djurovic

Museum of Fine Arts
 Fernand Scribbedreef 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 Constant Permeke, Constantin Meunier and Henry Van de Velde

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)
 Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03, www.smak.be
Until MAY 31 Kunst Nu (Art Now): Where I'm Likely to Find It, installation by Satoru Eguchi
Until AUG 2 Dara Birnbaum retrospective: The Dark Matter of Media Light, installations by the American video artist
Until AUG 23 Beyond The Picturesque, interpretations of landscape in contemporary art
Until AUG 23 Extra: Meteoriti, sculptures by Bizhan Bassiri

Witte Zaal
 Posternestraat 64; 09.225.42.90
Until AUG 23 Beyond The Picturesque, interpretations of landscape in contemporary art with works by various artists

Knokke-Duinbergen

Lagunahal
 Krommedijk 57; 050.63.04.30, www.fotofestival.be
Until JUNE 7 Still/Moving/Still, slide projections by Belgian and international artists (part of International Photo Festival)

Machelen-Zulte

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

Mechelen

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

Waregem

Be Part
 Westerlaan 17; 056.62.94.10
Until JUNE 28 Marcel Broodthaers, Stefaan Dheedene, Richard Venlet: A Buster Keaton, graphic works

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 20th-century Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers



Antwerp

Boeken op het Pleintje: Book market

in the city centre
MAY 23 9.00-17.30 at Sint-Nicolaasplaats
 03.226.40.68, www.denbeulebak.be

Boom

Feria Andaluza: Spanish/Andalusian festival featuring Flamenco dancing, horse dressing and riding, gastronomy and musical traditions
MAY 22-24 at Park De Schorre, Schommelei 1
 03.830.31.99, www.alandalus.be

Brussels

Jette Organ Festival: Series of organ concerts by international musicians
Until JUNE 21 16.00 at Sint-Pieterskerk, Kardinaal Mercierplein
 0478.28.31.02

Kunstenfestivaldesarts: International festival of contemporary performing arts
Until MAY 23 in venues across the city
 www.kunstenfestivaldesarts.be

Ghent

Fiesta Latina: Latino festival with music by Belle Perez, Francesco Palmeri, Los Toros, Don Camilio and Isaac Maine
MAY 23 19.30 at Kuipke, Citadelpark
 070.75.00.70, www.pesco.be

Jazz Sur l'Herbe: free open-air concerts on Thursdays and Fridays
Until MAY 29 in the kiosk at Citadelpark
 www.jazzsurlherbe.be

Knokke-Heist

Foto Festival: International video and photography festival, including the exhibitions World Press Photo and Marcel Broodthaers: Texte et Photos
Until JUNE 7 at Knokke-Heist Cultural Centre, Meerlaan 32
 www.fotofestival.be

Kortemerk

15th Delirium Blues Festival: Featuring Ansley Lister, Snowy White and the White Flames, Little Roger and the Houserockers and more
MAY 21 at De Koter, Ichtegemstraat 2
 0477.61.83.88, www.hd-b.be

Oostrozebeke

22nd Wereldfolkloreade: Folklore festival featuring 200 dancers and musicians from every corner of the world.
MAY 23 at Sportcentrum Mandelmeersen, Ernest Brengierstraat 8. 056.66.60.23, www.wereldfolkloreade.be

Ostend

Belle-Epoquefeesten: Festival with talks on the area's historical significance, parade, flea market, workshops, concerts and more, this featuring a James Ensor theme
MAY 24 from 10.00 in Hippodroomwijk, Velodroomstraat 59
 059.43.64.88, hippodroomwijk@telenet.be

Roosdaal

Kunst in de Luwte: Festival of forgotten art forms such as spoken word, poetry slam and books written by hand
MAY 22-24 at Het Koetshuis, Strijtemplein 15, Strijtem (Roosdaal)
 054.89.49.02, www.kunstindeluwte.be

Sint-Agatha-Berchem

International Folklore Festival Meiboom 2009: Traditional music and dance from Azerbaijan, Armenia, Iran and Russia
Until MAY 22 at Gemeentelijke Feestzaal, Koning Albertlaan 33
 02.465.30.21, www.info-zomaar.be

DUSK 'TIL DAWN

SAFFINA RANA



Your own personal Ascension

There's a big weekend ahead for those who want it, thanks to the national holiday on 21 May. If you're already fed up with the week, go to Bang the Box at Decadance in Ghent tonight (20 May) where Rotterdam DJ and producer Joris Voorn is spinning the decks on his Balance 014 album tour.

Voorn's music has earned him global recognition throughout the decade, and you're in for a blend of crossover electronic dance that fuses deep, soulful house with techno, breakbeat and anything else he cares to throw in.

Chill out on Thursday with the band Milk Inc, who play live at Kokorico in Zomergem. If you've found your feet by the time the band has gone off-stage, stick around for the electro after-party that goes on 'til the sun comes up.

The pace picks up again on Friday night, so dress to impress and head to Antwerp for Electronation at Café d'Anvers or Screw School at Noxx for a heady mix of dance music. Either way, it's all about flaunting it with attitude at both these places to see-and-be-seen in.

If you're not sated by Saturday, Hamburg's Stefan Kozella, DJ Koze, will be reaching the parts other DJs cannot reach with Paul Ritch, Pierre and Deg at Fuse in Brussels.

If that doesn't scratch your dance itch my friend, nothing will.

Wednesday 20th

Bang the Box, Decadance, 76 Overpoortstraat, Ghent

→ www.decadance.be

Thurs 21st

Milk Inc and after party at Kokorico, 22 Grote Baan, Zomergem

→ www.amusez-vous.be

Friday 22nd

Electronation at Café d'Anvers, 15 Verversrui, Antwerp

→ www.cafe-d-anvers.com

Screw School at Noxx, 3 Noordkaai, 2030 Antwerp

→ www.noxxantwerp.be

Saturday 23rd

Fuse, 208 Blaesstraat, Brussels

→ www.fuse.be

FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE

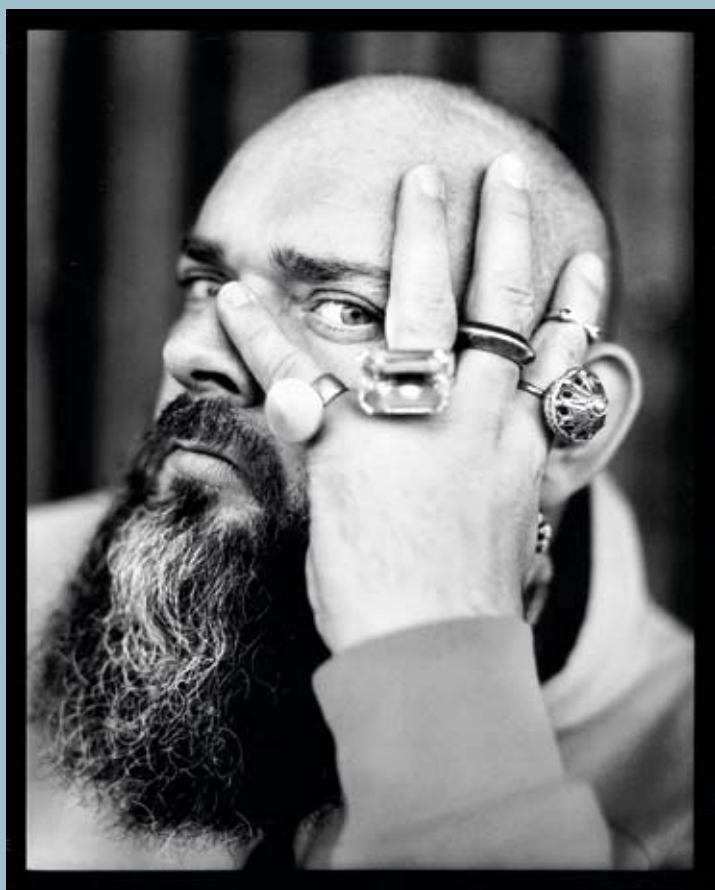
Walter Van Beirendonck

A new book reveals "the eccentric prophet behind the Noddy look" of one of Flanders most intriguing designers

It's been a long time, probably going back to the introduction of the mini-skirt, since fashion designers were considered really controversial. But "controversial" is the claim made in the title of a new book on Walter Van Beirendonck.

One of the celebrated Antwerp Six who put Flanders on the fashion map in the 1980s, Van Beirendonck is, at 52, the Grand Old Man of Flemish fashion. The book is by *De Morgen* fashion journalist Agnes Goyvaerts, who delved into Van Beirendonck's archives and spoke to friends and colleagues as well as the man himself.

Head of the Antwerp Mode-academie, or Fashion Academy, which opened its doors in 1963, it's easy to forget how long he's been around: the Antwerp Six were virtually the birth of Flemish fashion, and Van Beiren-



© Stephan Vanfleteren

who also include Dirk Van Saene, Dries Van Noten, Ann Demeulemeester, Marina Yee and Dirk Bikkembergs, studied together, experimented together and showed together – before eventually going their (mostly) separate ways.

But the name lingers on: the 6 in W6YZ is a reference. Van Beirendonck has said that meeting Dirk Van Saene was one of the defining moments of his life. The two have been partners inside and outside of business for nearly 30 years.

Although he broke through at a time of punk, the book explains

bodysuits and gimp masks.

The author claims that sex is an important influence on Van Beirendonck's work, and it is – a decidedly under-the-counter sort of sex. Nothing wrong with that, and at least it's done with humour, something that marks all of his work, from the baby knitwear modelled by hulking moustachioed men to the tubular hats of his latest collection, which look as if they were made of twisted balloons.

The Face, the London-based magazine that was once the arbiter of all that was trendy, called Van Beirendonck "the eccentric prophet behind the Noddy look", but he's also a cool-headed businessman. For the last three years he has been artistic director for Scapa Sports and, though his designs are playful and cartoony, the job entails overseeing a team of designers and under the guidance of the sales force in a classic corporate structure.

As head of the Fashion Academy, he has overseen the education of the likes of Véronique Branquinho, Raf Simons, Kris Van Assche and Bruno Pieters. He has also designed children's wear for the discount chain JBC, which is about as democratic as it gets. "Fashion is not an art," Van Beirendonck says. "But it's interesting to push the boundaries and ask questions about what can be done – and what can't."

Walter Van Beirendonck: *De controversieelste van de Antwerpse modeontwerpers* (Walter Van Beirendonck: *The most controversial of the Antwerp fashion designers*), published by Houtekiet, €39.95

→ www.waltervanbeirendonck.com

it's easy to forget how long he's been around...perhaps it's because he never grew up

donck graduated in 1980, nearly 30 years ago.

Perhaps it's because he never grew up. While Dries Van Noten and Anne Demeulemeester have all settled into a sort of dignified, mature elegance, Van Beirendonck retains the brash punk edge he had at the start. Take a look at the W6YZ range of shoes he recently designed for Italian company Falco, all acid colours that might seem overstated in a gumball machine.

His winter 2009 menswear collection, dubbed Glow, features a blazer consisting only of yellow piping, a bright orange military jacket tied with rope and a pink Paddington duffle-coat.

The Antwerp Six was one of Flanders' early successful marketing hypotheses. The Six,

that Van Beirendonck's style was shaped at an earlier time, when he used to accompany his mother shopping in 1970s Antwerp. His work does have plenty of Glam and Glitter about it – his pick as top album of all time for Studio Brussel was *Ziggy Stardust*, and his graduation collection had a Jetsons look, with cone-shaped fuzzy skirts and yokes, metallic nails and antennae.

Goyvaerts' book features photos from most of his collections down the years, although, due to the constraints of print, there are sadly just not enough of these. It's a fascinating body of work, even if you sometimes feel you've wandered into the backroom of some fetish bar by mistake: recurring motifs include not only oversized prints in Crayola colours but also latex

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



volksvertegenwoordiger →

My daily paper is becoming more and more like a Russian doll: you think you've separated out the sections but, lo and behold, yet another supplement falls out. This weekend it was the other way round: I thought I was reading the paper only to find the "real" paper was inside *een bijlage* – a supplement.

This supplement was about *volksvertegenwoordigers* ("people's representatives") of the Flemish parliament – in other words members of parliament. On 7 June Flanders goes to the polls – and Flemings have no choice really since voting is compulsory – to elect 124 MPs.

I may have lost some of you by now, but the supplement provided quite interesting reading. I'll leave the politics of it to Anja Otte and her Fifth Column. What I found interesting was the candid end-of-term report card on each of the present deputies, including an appraisal by each one's party leader in parliament.

Some are described as *een zeer harde werker* – a very hard worker; others are ticked off with *er zat meer in* – could have done better. Other comments are either sexist: *het meest charmante parlamentslid* – the most charming member of parliament; or obscure: *hij is onze tandarts* – he is our dentist.

One, who gets a high rating, is described, disparagingly I first thought, as *een oude rot*, which means not an old rotter but an old hand.

The *oude rot's* party loyalty is

commented on: *hij blijft een loyale partijman tot in de kist* – he will remain a loyal party man to the grave ("to the coffin"). Others tow the line less: *soms rebels karakter* – sometimes a rebellious character, which sounds like the nuns' opinion of Maria.

Parliament has all sorts: one is *een beetje een pitbull* – a bit of a pitbull; another *een beetje timide*. Some seem to be in the wrong job: *linguïstisch niet goed, gebrek aan zelfvertrouwen* – linguistically not good, a lack of self-confidence. Some shine: *pet af!* – hats off to him!; others don't: *hij is compleet onzichtbaar* – he is completely invisible. Only one got the maximum rating; several got the minimum.

Politicians and drink are often inseparable: one member who promoted road safety was done in by drink driving; another embarrassed himself by his *openbare dronkenschap in het halfronde* – public drunkenness in the chamber.

Since MPs are allowed to moonlight, many are also mayors in their home towns. It doesn't always work: *het is erg moeilijk voor wie niet in zijn dorp woont om deze man te kennen* – it is very difficult for anyone not from his village to know this man. That's telling him!

Wherever you're from, you could probably pin all these descriptions on your own politicians. On 7 June the voters will decide how different the next Flemish parliament will look.

→ www.standaard.be/rapport

The last word →→→

Girls will be boys

"Girls who want to do this should just do it. Don't let yourself be held back by all those boys. There are also men who become hairdressers, so why not?"

Anne Hurkmans, 18, the only girl in her engineering class in Bree, who beat 67 boys to win the Mecatrophie 2009

Hold your breath

"Apparently he breathed in droplets coughed out by another patient."

Renaat Peleman, chief of medicine at the University of Ghent, on the cause of the country's second case of swine flu

Royal rage

"A shot from a crossbow will bring an end to this human scum; it will be fired from the park during the parade on 21 July."

Death threat against Queen Fabiola sent by an organisation calling itself OEDH Flanders to the newspaper *La Dernière Heure*