

Person or party? 6

In part two of our election series, our political analyst explains the difference between the parties and the people – and how to vote for one or the other



Beauty of music 8

House of the Sleeping Beauties features an energetic score and jaw-dropping visuals. Composer Kris Defoort tells us about writing an opera one note at a time



Meeting Magritte 13

Finally, the long-awaited Magritte Museum opens in Brussels' Fine Arts Museum. Our critic takes a peek at the well-known and the obscure and challenges you not to find something new in the work of Belgium's master Surrealist



Final frontiers

From space travel to biotech to robotics, engineering technologies in Flanders are changing the world

ALAN HOPE

As you read these words, Frank De Winne is making history from a custom-made seat in a spacecraft on top of a Soyuz rocket in Kazakhstan. In fact, he'll make history a few times over. But perhaps the biggest distinction is that De Winne will be the first-ever European to command the International Space Station (ISS).

The boyish 48-year-old from Ghent was a star pilot before being selected for astronaut training in 1998. He will serve as third flight engineer under commander Genady Padalka before taking over command of the ISS in October for the two months that remain of his mission. Dirk Frimout was the first Belgian ever in space, but De Winne is the first to go twice, the first Fleming, the

first honorary doctor from the University of Hasselt and the first viscount – a title he received based on his achievements in the space programme.

De Winne, however, is representing the European Space Agency (ESA) this time around, so he will not, as he did on his first space trip in 2002, be carrying out any work on behalf of Belgian scientists. But Belgium, and in particular Flanders, is active in other aspects of space exploration.

→ *Continued on page 5*

The International Space Station passes over the Dutch coast and the Scheldt estuary. Antwerp can be seen at centre right, with Ghent under it, at the end of the Terneuzen-Ghent canal.



Artist's impression © ESA

Bats seek belfries

Churches called upon to help in bat housing shortage

The Flemish Nature and Woodland Agency has put out a call to churches, looking for attics that can be made bat-friendly to tackle an accommodation problem. Bats in Flanders are suffering from a general shortage of habitat, as formerly draughty attics are insulated with more and more efficiency.

Of particular concern to the nature protection agency is the lack of summer quarters for bats. Summer is the time when bats give birth to and raise their young (one baby a year), and safe quarters where babies can be left while mother goes

out hunting are essential.

However, modern building and renovation standards mean that church attics are no longer accessible. Even in older buildings, access has usually been closed off to prevent pigeons from nesting. Now the government agency, together with information centre Natuurpunt, is asking for churches to come forward to have their attics made more accessible to bats.

Ninove in East Flanders has so far set the best example. Three churches have had most openings in their

roofs closed up to keep pigeons out but have opened up six-centimetre holes higher in the roof to allow bats to enter. The changes are too recent to demonstrate if they are attracting bats, but the agency is hopeful.

Neighbours of the churches in Ninove have, however, noticed a reduction in the nuisance caused by pigeons, and they should soon reap one of the benefits of the presence of bats: the creatures typically consume thousands of flies and mosquitoes every night.

→ www.bataction.be

Prisoners to move to Dutch jail

Overcrowding forces export of 500 inmates

ALAN HOPE

Belgium will send 500 of its prison inmates to Tilburg in the Netherlands, under an agreement reached between the two governments last week.

Belgium has a serious shortage of prison space – about 2,000 too few places for the number of detainees. The Netherlands, on the other hand, has about the same amount of spare capacity – 14,000 places for 12,000 prisoners. To accommodate the Belgian prisoners, the Dutch will empty the 681-person Tilburg prison, which

is close enough to the border to minimise the inconvenience to prisoners' families. Belgium will fill the prison with 500 of its own detainees.

The move will only happen once details are sorted out between the Dutch parliament as well as the seven parliaments in Belgium, which is likely to happen by the end of the year.

The deal allows a number of Dutch prison guards to keep their jobs. The Dutch government is closing

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FLANDERS TODAY

Independent Newsweekly

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FLANDERS TODAY
 MAY 27, 2009

News in brief

Public broadcaster één last week announced its 2008-2009 figures, calling it "the best season we have ever had". A loss of €6 million was no reason for long faces: that's €1 million less of a deficit than last year, and €7 million less than was earlier forecast. Merchandising and licensing, as well as income from online services and SMS voting, added up to €67.9 million, more – for the first time – than from advertising at €63.7 million.

Local and federal police will increase their presence this summer at the **Nekker sport and recreation centre** in Mechelen, in an effort to combat problems with gangs of youths, most of them from Brussels, who ran amok in the park last year, causing damage and upsetting visitors. Police will be backed up by private security guards and stewards from the city. "They'll either have to behave or go somewhere else," Mechelen mayor Bart Somers said.

An exhibition of paintings by the 15th-century **Flemish artist Rogier Van der Weyden** has sold 10,000 tickets, despite the fact that it does not open until September and that the museum hosting it is not yet fully constructed. Tickets to the show at the new M city museum in Leuven have been on sale since April, and about one-third of the sales so far have come from other countries, mainly on behalf of groups. Weekends for the duration of the show, which runs until 6 December, are nearly sold out.

A **Limburg wine** last week caught the attention of one of the world's top culinary stars. Heston Blumenthal, chef of the Fat Duck restaurant in Bray, Berkshire, England, and regularly voted second-best chef in the world (after Ferran Adrià of El Bulli in Catalonia) was in Flanders to take part in the reality show *Mijn Restaurant!* While dining at one of the competing restaurants in Sint-Truiden, he tasted the local Clos d'Opleeuw chardonnay and immediately ordered two bottles: one to drink right away and one to take back to the Fat Duck. The vineyard, run by Peter Colemont, only produces 3,000 bottles a year. "I take the compliment more as a spiritual vindication because it's not as if I need the publicity," Colemont said. "As a small producer, my stock always flies out the door."

Mass release of balloons at private parties or public protests is

Flemish films win at Cannes

Flemish director Caroline Strubbe has won the SACD award at the Cannes Film Festival for her very first feature film *Lost Persons Area*. The award is for the best screenplay and is handed out as part of Critics' Week at Cannes, which finished up on 24 May. It's the second year in a row that a Flemish film has won the coveted screenwriting prize, even though it's only the third Flemish film to ever be chosen to screen as part of Critics' Week in its 45-year history. Last year, *Aanrijding in Moscou* (*Moscow, Belgium*) won the same award, which comes with a €2,500 cash prize.

Lost Persons Area (photo below) follows the lives of a family of three living in an industrial wasteland, maintaining the power lines and supervising the group of on-site workers. The wife dreams of a better life than serving the men in the canteen, while the nine-year-old daughter avoids school, and the appearance of a Hungarian worker shakes everybody up. The film releases in Belgium in September.

Felix van Groeningen's new film, meanwhile, *De Helaasheid der dingen* (*The Misfortunates*), received a Special Mention in the Art Cinema Award category of Cannes' Directors' Fortnight. The Art Cinema Award is given out by art-house cinema programmers across Europe. The much-anticipated new Flemish film stars Koen De Graeve (*Los, Loft*) as one of four no-good, unemployed, beer-swilling uncles to a 13-year-old boy trying to navigate his way through life in the same house with them.

De Helaasheid der dingen is based on the novel by Flemish novelist Dimitri Verhulst and opens in Belgium this autumn.



a threat to marine life, according to research by Francis Kerckhof, a marine biologist with the Royal Belgian Institute for Natural Sciences. Once released, the balloons go up to a height of eight kilometres, where air pressure causes them to explode into small pieces, most of which fall into the sea. Sea birds, turtles and sea mammals are attracted to the pieces, which look like food. However, when swallowed, they block the digestive passages and cause the animal to starve to death – "a terrible death," said Kerckhof.

Beach orientation poles, used at the Belgian coast to help lost children find their way back to their parents, will be introduced at the French resort of Cannes this year. The poles, which use easily-recognised symbols like trains and teddy bears, were invented by Dominiek Vervaecke of Oudenburg and are provided to municipalities at the Flemish coast for free, thanks to sponsoring by KBC bank.

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scored two goals on the evening of 23 May in the Koning Boudewijn stadium in Brussels to give KRC Genk victory over KV Mechelen in the Belgian Cup. "It pains my heart," said Ogunjimi, who started as a junior with Mechelen



Dutch and Flemish first in line for prison move

ALAN HOPE

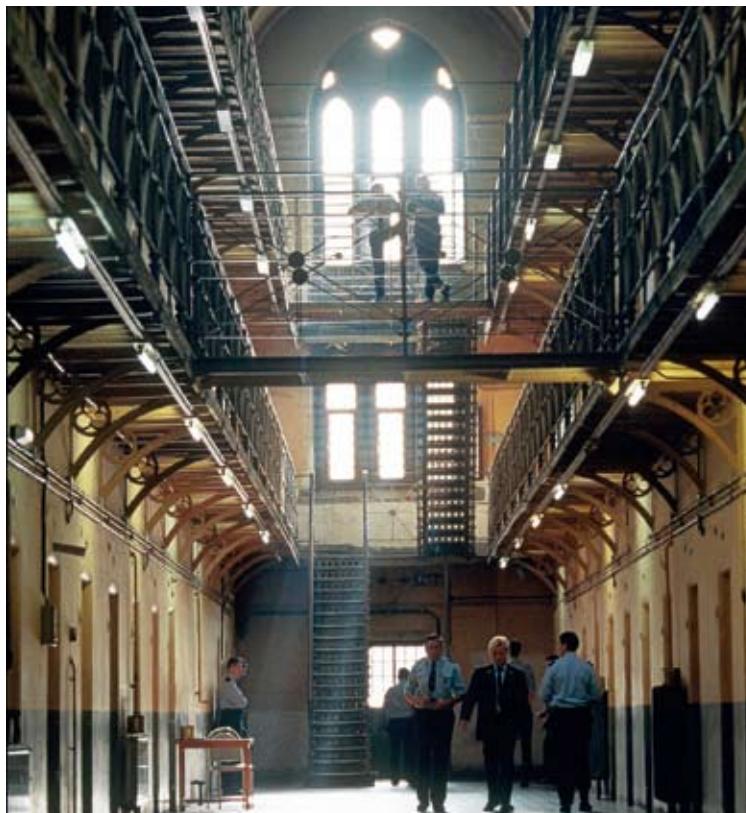
→ *Continued from page 1*

eight prisons across the country, with 12,000 prison officers' jobs at risk, due to a fall in crime. Dutch officers will continue to operate the prison in Tilburg, but Belgian law will apply, and the director will be a Belgian. The federal government here will pay €30 million a year, which works out to about €164 a day for each of the 500 prisoners. The prisoners themselves will be long-term convicts, mainly Dutch-speaking, with none of them on remand or close to release. About 190 are Dutch nationals serving time in Belgian jails, and it's expected that they will be first in line for a transfer.

Belgian prison officers' unions have opposed the plan, calling instead for the prison in either Tongeren or Saint Hubert to be re-opened. The ACOD union also proposed renting two Dutch prison boats, which could be

moored in Antwerp and staffed by Belgian personnel. "This is cheaper, simpler and could be done quickly," a union representative said. "And it does something for employment here."

The situation in Belgium's jails was highlighted last week when it was revealed that Ypres' prison currently holds 109 prisoners, despite having a nominal capacity of only 55. Also, Bruges' prison has 751 inmates for a capacity of 632. Throughout the system, the situation of men sleeping on a mattress on the floor of a two-man cell is commonplace. Alternatives are beset with difficulties: while there are 748 offenders now on release under electronic surveillance, the waiting list of those suitable for that programme is now over 1,300. While there are enough ankle-bands to go round, there is a shortage of staff to monitor the system.



Sint-Gillis prison in Brussels is antiquated and overcrowded

In 2008, 13 prisoners in the Belgian penitentiary system committed suicide – a phenomenon closely correlated with overcrowding.

Also in 2008, the number of escapes went up to 62 from 40 in 2007. Only 49 of the escapees were re-arrested. ♦

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

Lost money

€173.6 million

The value of old Belgian franc (BF) notes still not returned seven years after the introduction of the euro, according to the latest figures from the National Bank

15.8 million

actual notes still not accounted for, consisting of:

9.8 million

with a face value of 100 BF

2.7 million

worth 200 BF

1 million

worth 500 BF

1.1 million

worth 1,000 BF

1 million

worth 2,000 BF

200,000

of the rare 10,000 BF notes

7.1 million

50-centime coins

20.7 million

coins of one franc

31.5 million

coins of 5 BF

74.9 million

coins of 20 BF

43.4 million

coins of 50 BF

€56,832

raised by a charity action in 2005 when people turned in old Belgian francs

Meise coffee plant honoured

A new species of coffee plant found in Cameroon by a French expedition and described by Dr Piet Stoffelen of the National Botanic Gardens of Belgium in Meise has been voted one of the 10 most important new species of 2009 by the International Institute for Species Exploration (IISE) in Arizona. The beans produced by *Coffea charrieriana* are naturally caffeine free.

The researchers at Meise are

taxonomical experts in the field of plants of the coffee family, spokesman Koen Es explained. Taxonomy is the science of describing species correctly and according to internationally-agreed rules so that other scientists can recognise them. Not only do the garden's researchers take part in expeditions to places like Central Africa and Madagascar, they also work on comparing the DNA of ostensibly new species with the garden's four-million-specimen

collection of dried plants and 18,000-specimen collection of living plants.

Among the other new species chosen for the IISE top 10 are a "mother fish" found in fossil form and named after the BBC's David Attenborough; a "ghost slug" with teeth-like blades found in a garden in Wales; and the smallest seahorse ever found, only 13 millimetres long. ♦

→ www.plantentuinmeise.be

Rock Werchter coming to you live

Public broadcaster Canvas will air a live selection from the final day of this year's Rock Werchter festival under an agreement with promoters Live Nation. The two are currently holding discussions to determine which of the concerts taking place that day – Sunday, 5 July – will be aired live. The festival itself is sold out of day tickets for Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Sunday's bill features Metallica, Kaiser Chiefs, Black Eyed Peas and Nine Inch Nails, as well as local acts Milk Inc., Lady Linn and De Jeugd van Tegenwoordig.

"We want to make an effort with rock and pop," said the channel's network manager Jan Stevens. "And because what you could call the best festival in the world is taking place in our backyard, it seemed only logical to get around the table with those people."

Canvas has snatched Rock Werchter from under the nose of music channel

TMF and will now have first rights to coverage, as well as the right to most coverage for the next three years. Canvas was able to offer "a larger and more diverse public", Live Nation said.

The Canvas broadcast will be three-and-a-half hours, featuring interviews, performances and reporting. ♦

→ www.rockwerchter.be



FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

Three mayors

Well, they've done it again. Kraainem, Linkebeek and Wezembeek-Oppem – three Flemish communes on the edge of Brussels with a largely French-speaking population – have sent out polling cards in French. Again.

This violates the language laws, which state that the official language of Flanders is Dutch. This means all official documents have to be drawn up in Dutch. An exception is made for the "facility communes" near the language border, where French-speaking inhabitants can ask to be served in French. On this, everyone agrees. But how these facilities should work remains a stumbling block.

In the so-called Peeters circular, the Flemish government states that citizens wanting French translations should ask for them one document at a time. The idea was that, in time, these people would learn Dutch. But it didn't work out that way.

The local French-speaking politicians have not helped either. They insist that citizens should declare that they want their documents in French just once. For this, the Flemish government has rapped their knuckles time and time again. It is also the reason why the three communes are still without mayors, as Flemish interior minister Marino Keulen (Open VLD) refused to appoint the proposed candidates.

As we have seen this many times before, most people in Flanders react rather indifferently to the spectacle. Francophones in and around Brussels have always seemed to care a lot more, defending the "three mayors" with a passion. But attitudes are changing. While the three mayors were still a major issue during the failed institutional talks between Dutch and French speakers last year, the francophones themselves have become wary of them. Three parties – Christian democrats, socialists and greens – have denounced their latest move, which they have called illegal. They claim that it is campaigning by the small, radical party FDF at taxpayers' expense. Well, that's something new.

In Flanders, this latest step is, again, considered illegal. It does not matter that the polling cards were not sent by the three communes themselves, but by the bilingual Brussels commune Sint-Lambrechts-Woluwe (where FDF party president Olivier Maingain is mayor). Even if you send them from China, in Chinese, it is still illegal, argues the constitutionalist Paul Van Orshoven.

Still, international law researchers from the Catholic University of Leuven are looking at this and related issues. Just to be sure. In the meantime, Flanders has hired an image manager to explain this type of incident abroad. Just to be sure, again.

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Final frontiers

European Space Agency launches world's largest telescope into space

→ Continued from page 1

Not two weeks before the launch of De Winne's rocket, which is scheduled for 27 May, the day Flanders Today publishes, another launch took place from the European spaceport in Kourou, French Guyana. An Ariane-5 rocket lifted off with the infrared telescope Herschel and the cosmic background mapper Planck on board. The ESA described it as "two of the most ambitious missions ever".

Herschel, named after the German-British scientist who discovered infrared radiation in 1800, is the largest space telescope ever at 3.5 metres across (Hubble is 2.4). It will allow astronomers, including a team at the Catholic University of Leuven, to study the creation of galaxies and solar systems.

Planck's job is to analyse background cosmic radiation, which scientists believe is the residual radiation from the Big Bang - a sort of "afterglow" from the emergence of the universe.

On board Herschel is a special cooling system that uses 2,000 litres of superfluid helium to maintain a temperature of -271°C. The crucial equipment employed to monitor and maintain the system was built by Thalia Alenia Space Antwerp. The parent company also constructed and fitted other equipment for the two satellites.

"The delivery and launch of Herschel and Planck represent for us the high point of eight



Frank De Winne

years of intensive teamwork with the ESA," said Thalia CEO Reynald Seznec. "We are now working on studies concerning future astronomical and astrophysical missions within the framework of the ESA's Cosmic Vision programme."

Back at the ISS, Thalia Alenia Space Antwerp is also responsible for communications equipment in the Automated Transport Vehicle (ATV), which brings the space station its supplies, and later, as explained by De Winne on YouTube, is "used as a giant trashcan". Filled with ISS rubbish, the whole thing burns up on re-entry to the earth's atmosphere.

Flemish fingerprints are indeed all over the ATVs: Space Applications Services of Zaventem have been working on the ATV project since 1994, and their contributions range from ground processing to rendezvous and docking operations. Space Appli-

cations are also heavily involved in the space shuttle Columbus.

AeroGo of Ekeren, near Antwerp, meanwhile, supply the air cushions used to transport the ATV on the ground. The 28 Flemish companies involved in space research are worth a total of €200 million in sales, according to figures released earlier this month at the annual Space Days in Leuven.

Finally, the Flemish company Verhaert Space from Kruibeke, near Ghent, is supplying equipment for two of De Winne's experiments, both concerned with water purification on manned space flights. Verhaert will also supply equipment for two experiments suggested by Flemish schools and chosen from more than 60 applications. An experiment on surface tension and capillary action in liquids came from the class of teacher Jef Luyten of the Rozenberg secondary school in Mol, while an experiment to measure mass in zero gravity was the idea of the class of Mieke Recour at the Onze-Lieve-Vrouw College in Ostend. Both schools will carry out the same experiments in normal gravity to provide control data for evaluating the results.

"These experiments are relatively simple from a technical point of view," said Kyun Thibaut of Verhaert. "The biggest challenge in the development of these instruments is the extremely short delivery time for numerous reviews, tests and safety inspections to be carried out." ♦

→ www.esa.int

Poplars as green fuel

Flanders' latest breakthrough in biotech courts controversy

DENZIL WALTON

Many a struggling dinner party has been brought to life - or a premature end - with the injection of the word "bio-fuels".

Their proponents see them as vital for helping stop the world's reliance on fossil fuels and for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Their critics claim that first generation bio-fuels, such as bio-ethanol from corn or bio-diesel from rapeseed oil, have reduced global food production, distorted market prices and exacerbated water shortages. Doubts have even been raised as to their environmental benefits, when total carbon emissions from production and transport are taken into account.

Supporters of bio-fuels maintain that a more viable solution is on the horizon: second-generation bio-fuels produced from non-food crops such as trees. Trees can be cultivated with very little energy input. If grown on marginal lands, they do not compete with food production. Today, however, it is still relatively difficult to produce bio-ethanol efficiently from wood.

The reason is the presence of the adhesive lignin, which complicates the conversion of wood into bio-ethanol. However, genetic engineering conducted at the Flanders Institute for Biotechnology (VIB) has resulted in the development of poplar trees with about 20% less lignin. Greenhouse tests have shown that up to 50% more bio-ethanol can be produced from the wood of these poplars.

The next step was a field trial, as it is well-known that plants behave differently in a greenhouse than they do in nature. To the VIB's dismay, the Belgian government refused to grant permission for a field trial, despite a positive

opinion expressed by the Belgian Biosafety Council.

Recently, after nine months of consultation, the refusal was changed to an authorisation. "Sustainable energy production is one of our most heartfelt aims. That's why we're so pleased that we can now test our trees under practical, real-life conditions," says René Custers, VIB Regulatory Manager. "This is also a milestone for Flanders' biotechnological research. Being allowed to conduct field tests advances the outstanding R&D base in Flanders."

On 6 May, Patricia Ceysens, Flanders' Minister of Economy, Science and Innovation, planted the first of 448 genetically modified poplars in Flanders.

However, arguments look set to continue - and not only at dinner parties. "Genetically engineered, low-lignin poplar trees are a disaster waiting to happen," states Dr Miguel Lovera, chairperson of the Global Forest Coalition. "Poplars can spread their pollen and seeds for up to hundreds of kilometres. Contamination of native poplars throughout Europe would be both inevitable and irreversible if GE poplar plantations are developed."

Nina Holland, meanwhile, of the Corporate Europe Observatory, argues: "Manufacturing agro-fuels from non-food crops like GE trees is not the answer. Non-food agro-fuels will still monopolise land - displacing agriculture and lopping down forests to free up the massive amount of land needed to produce the necessary quantities of fuel."

In other words, don't expect GE poplars to suddenly become popular in the Flemish countryside. ♦

Probo meets public

The green, "huggable robot" impresses both journalists and kids

LISA BRADSHAW

We first introduced readers of Flanders Today to Probo in January of 2008, when the engineers at the Robotics and Multibody Research Group at Brussels Free University (VUB) were still working on the prototype. We had no idea how far that story would go. After we published, scientific journals and websites contacted us from the US, Asia and Eastern Europe asking to republish the article.

The friendly, green "huggable robot" had made his media debut.

The fuss was due to Probo being one-of-a-kind. The development of functioning robots able to communicate emotions is in its infancy, and Probo is the only one in the world designed to interact with children. The team at VUB have spent the last four years perfecting him specifically to befriend

children during long-term hospital stays.

Probo is fitted with receptors that allow him to respond to a child's voice and facial expressions with his own appropriate expressions: happy, sad, angry, confused. A video screen in his stomach shows videos that explain surgeries or other procedures that a child might have to endure in a hospital.

Probo was introduced at a press conference last month and to the general public on 16 May at Technopolis science museum in Mechelen. Currently, the robot is controlled by an operator using Robotic User Interface, but gradually more and more artificial intelligence components will be implemented to increase his autonomy. For that, researchers need a couple more years. ♦

→ <http://probo.vub.ac.be>



Who to choose?

Your voting card has arrived in the post, but you don't know who to pick on the list. Here's how to tell the personalities from the policies

ANJA OTTE

Voters are just as often won over by personalities as they are by party programmes. As a result, nearly every well-known politician in the land is taking part in the upcoming regional and European elections, with the exception of prime minister Herman Van Rompuy. So who to choose?

In Belgium, voters can either vote for a party by checking the box at the top of a list, or they can vote for an individual candidate within one list, thereby giving that candidate a better chance of getting elected. In practice, the higher up a list a candidate is ranked, the better his or her chances of getting elected.

Observers complain about the high number of "fake candidates" who have no intention of taking up their seat should they be elected. Jean-Marie Dedecker, for instance, has announced that he will not be going to the European Parliament, while Frank Vanhecke of Vlaams Belang will definitely stay in that assembly and relinquish his seat in the Flemish Parliament. The only reason their names are on the list is their personal popularity. The electorate, for their part, does not seem to mind all that much.

CD&V

Jean-Luc Dehaene (EP) is a formidable candidate, and not just because of his size. His no-nonsense style as prime minister (1992-1999) makes him one of the most popular Belgian politicians to this day. He combines a sound political approach with a folksy style. He has kissed sea lions and sat on mechanical bulls, as well as pulling off the last great state reform and bringing this country within the eurozone by tightening its budget. The socialists have attacked him for his chairmanship of the financial group Dexia, but that does not seem to have stuck. He campaigns along with his son **Tom Dehaene** (Flemish Brabant).

Kris Peeters (Antwerp), who is blessed with excellent rhetorical skills and good looks, is set to succeed himself as minister-president. As he became a minister in the Flemish government without having participated in elections, this is his big test now. Before he entered politics, he was the spokesperson for the small businesses organisation Unizo.

The former prime minister **Yves Leterme** (West Flanders and EP) and **Jo Vandeurzen** (Limburg), who both resigned over the government handling of Fortis, hope that a popular vote will prove them right after all. In the 2007 federal elections Yves Leterme got 800,000 votes. Can he repeat this record?

Open VLD

Guy Verhofstadt (EP) is the equal of Jean-Luc Dehaene in political stature. After he left office as prime minister, he kept quiet for about a year. Then he returned, with new glasses, an increased love of books and a new vision on the future of Europe. The come-back kid of Belgian politics is widely considered the best debater and campaigner of the lot. As the most popular politician of his generation, he is the biggest asset for his party.

Dirk Van Mechelen (Antwerp) is an unlikely challenger for Kris Peeters. He has a good track record as finance



© Belga

and budget minister, but he lacks charisma. As the main mouthpiece for liberal issues, he has demanded a doubling of the tax cut for people with full time jobs.

And then there is **Jean-Jacques De Gucht** (East-Flanders), only 25 and the son of foreign minister Karel De Gucht. He has his eye on the culture portfolio in the next Flemish government.

SPA

Flemish minister **Kathleen Van Brempt** (EP) has a hard time positioning herself between the two heavyweights Dehaene and Verhofstadt. She has earned good marks in the European Parliament, though, where she fought off the so-called "ports ruling", which would have cost many Antwerp dockers their jobs. Now she pleads for a ring of windmills in the North Sea as a source of alternative energy.

While most of his comrades long for some time in opposition, **Frank Vandenbroucke** (Flemish Brabant), the stern but effective labour and education minister, strongly defends the socialist achievements in government. He has a "daring plan" to combat the economic crisis with government investments.

There is also **John Crombez** (West-Flanders), a newcomer who aims to step into Johan Vande Lanotte's shoes but has blundered by pleading for deficit spending.

N-VA

Party president **Bart De Wever** (Antwerp) hopes to seduce voters who are disappointed by the lack of progress on state reform. He is one of the very few Belgian politicians who openly call themselves "conservative". He is a clever debater with a sharp wit, and his popularity shot up after he took part in the top-rating TV quiz show De Slimste mens ter wereld.

And then there is **Geert Bourgeois** (West Flanders), who resigned as Flemish minister of media and foreign policy after the cartel between CD&V and N-VA fell apart, and **Jan Peumans** (Limburg), voted "best Flemish parliamentarian" by the press.

Groen!

Party president **Mieke Vogels** (Antwerp) has been around for so long that she is nicknamed Moeke ("Mum") Vogels. Her good-humoured nature makes her one of the few

ecologists who really appeal to the public at large. She was Flemish welfare minister from 1999 to 2003, after which her party was all but eradicated. Now she hopes for a result of 10%. Also in the running are former documentary maker **Luckas Van Der Taelen** (Brussels) and respected MEP **Bart Staes**.

Vlaams Belang

Foul-mouthed **Filip Dewinter** (Antwerp) has been the main man for Vlaams Belang for ages, but with the rise of N-VA and LDD, his popularity seems to have lost some momentum. He tries to turn the tide by playing on the theme that has served him best: immigrants and Islam.

Also on the list is **Marie-Rose Morel** (EP), the member of the Flemish Parliament who fell out of grace after she prevented Jean-Marie Dedecker from joining Vlaams Belang. Shortly after, she was diagnosed with a possibly lethal cancer, which brought her some media exposure and a lot of sympathy. This might even get her elected into the European Parliament from the normally "not electable" last place on the list.

LDL

Former judo coach **Jean-Marie Dedecker** (West Flanders and EP) started his own party after he was thrown out of Open VLD. Following a number of scandals, he has become the most talked-about politician of this campaign. He plays on the popular anti-politics sentiment to such an extent that he has been accused of being a populist. Also in the running is **Derk-Jan Eppink** (EP), the former journalist who will take up Dedecker's seat in the European Parliament.

SLP

Geert Lambert (West-Flanders) of the new SLP gained attention with a very negative campaign directed towards SPA, the party he has depended on for years before his own party Spirit disintegrated.

PvdA

Tine Van Rompuy (Flemish Brabant), sister of prime minister Herman and Flemish parliamentarian Eric, goes her own way, by standing as a candidate for the extreme left-wing PvdA. ♦

→ www.politics.be

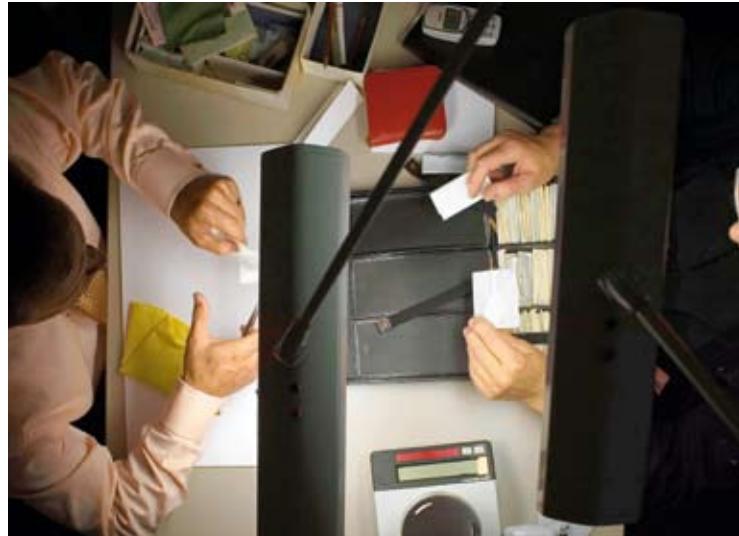
Diamond industry pleads for bail-out

ALAN HOPE

The Antwerp diamond industry needs a rapid infusion of €1 billion to help it survive the severe effects of the economic crisis, according to the Antwerp World Diamond Centre (AWDC), the industry's representative body. Last week the industry called on the Flemish government to grant it a €200 million guarantee as an aid to convincing the banks to lend the sector the money it needs.

The Antwerp diamond sector is currently sitting on stocks of diamonds worth an estimated €4 billion, more than enough to allow the industry to ride out the crisis. The trouble is, banks who lend to the industry will not take stocks as surety, but only lend on the basis of payments outstanding on orders.

However, as even the rich tighten their belts in the current recession, sales of diamonds are down, and payment on those being sold is uncertain. "The diamond dealers themselves are no longer sure when or if they might be paid," said AWDC spokesman Philip Claes. "In such



uncertain circumstances, the banks refuse to give any credit."

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters visited the AWDC last week and heard a plea for a guarantee system of €200 million, which the Flemish government would put up to allow the industry to borrow the money it needs to improve liquidity.

He also received a briefing on a plan

the body is proposing to break the deadlock. This would involve the creation of a Diamond Warehouse, which would essentially be a pawn shop for diamonds. Dealers would deposit their stones at the warehouse, and the lending banks would lend money on a portion of the diamonds' worth, as determined by the AWDC.

The plan has the approval of both the trade and the banks, but it still has to

be approved by the financial industry regulator, the Banking, Finance and Insurance Commission (CBFA).

Peeters is said to be keen on the idea of government guarantees but reluctant to make any promises at this stage. The diamond industry is likely to press its case by referring to government support for the banks and the car industry. "What's good for the banking sector and the automobile sector ought to be good for the diamond sector," Claes said. "The guarantee is not a cash injection or a subsidy. We are convinced our current problems are temporary, and that the diamond trade will get back to its normal level by the end of 2010."

Half of the world's cut diamonds, and 80% of rough diamonds, make their way through Antwerp at some point. The industry here employs 8,000 people, 7,000 of them dealers and the rest in processing. The industry claims another 26,000 are employed indirectly. ♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Aerospace • Le Bourget

The Flanders Investment and Trade representation at the prestigious Le Bourget Paris Air Show will include up to 15 Flemish aerospace companies.

Ferries • Norfolkline

Scottish Viking, the car-carrying ferry operated by the UK-based Norfolkline, last week inaugurated its new service of three 18-hour routes a week between Zeebrugge and Rosyth in Scotland.



Imaging • Barco

The Kortrijk-based imaging technology group Barco will supply 10,000 digital projectors to Kodak to help the US firm develop its digital cinema activities worldwide. Plans include installing the equipment in all movie theatres in the US.

Media • De Morgen

Unions at *De Morgen* newspaper have threatened further industrial action over planned job cuts at the paper, it was announced last week. The loss of 13 journalists' jobs led to a one-day strike on 19 May, and no paper was published on 20 May, the first time the paper has missed an edition in its 30-year history. The cuts affect top names like investigative reporter Georges Timmerman, head of sport Hans Vandeweghe and photographer Filip Claus.

Supermarkets • Delhaize

The country's second-largest retailer is buying the remaining 34.7% that it doesn't own of its Greek affiliate Alfa-Beta. The move marks the final step in Delhaize's foray into the Greek retailing market it entered in 1992 when Alfa-Beta operated a mere 20 stores against over 200 today. In addition, the company is expected to open an additional 16 outlets this year alone.

Wealth management • Meeschaert

Meeschaert, the French "family office" wealth management company, has set up operation in Brussels.

Wine • Meerdæl

Meerdæl Chardonnay, a sparkling wine produced near Leuven, has won one of the five Great Gold Medals at the Valencia World Wine competition. It's the first time a local wine has won an international award. ♦

Leuven is new Flemish games centre

Leuven has won a three-horse race to become the new centre of the Flemish computer-gaming industry, after an announcement last week by innovation minister Patricia Ceysens that the Flemish government will invest €250,000 in a new business centre in the university town.

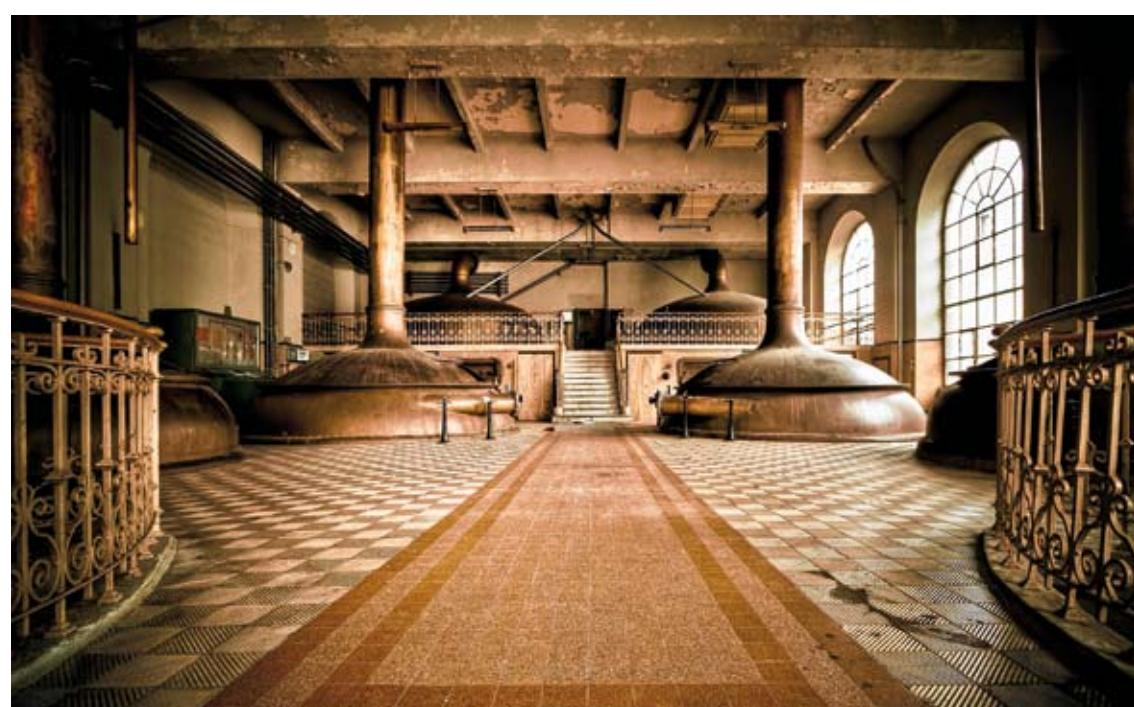
The subsidy will go to the creation of an "incubation centre" called Creative Minds in the former Stella Artois brewery De Hoorn. The centre will provide a base for a number of small, recently established games companies. At the same time, outside of the games centre, the premises will provide space for other creative professionals, artists, exhibition

space and restaurants.

The centre will offer new companies opportunities they would be unable to access on their own, the government hopes. One example given is a motion-capture (or mocap) installation, which allows games designers to incorporate realistic movements into their games. One such installation would be prohibitively expensive for a start-up but, if shared by a number of on-site companies, could become more affordable.

The Flemish government put the idea of the creation of an incubation centre out to tender and received interested replies

from candidates. Kortrijk, where a new bachelor's programme has been set up in digital arts and entertainment, was first to apply. It was followed by Genk, where a business park for the creative industries is already being set up in former mining areas. But it was Leuven that carried off the prize, as a result of links to the Catholic University of Leuven and the Groep T college. "It would be great for the industry if we could set up an incubator in the three cities," commented Pieter Goiris, director of Boondoggle, which does marketing for the city of Leuven. "Genk, Kortrijk and Leuven would form a perfect triangle." ♦



Opel Antwerp future in the balance

The future of Opel in Europe, including Opel Antwerp, was being decided in Germany this week. As *Flanders Today* went to press, the government of Angela Merkel was discussing its participation in shoring up the company if it is to become independent of its US-based parent.

Merkel is considering two bids for the takeover of Opel, one from Italian car manufacturer Fiat, and another from Canadian auto-parts maker Magna, which is in partnership with Sberbank of Russia. Another potential bidder, the Belgian capital fund RHJ, is not apparently being taken as a serious contender.

According to reports last week, the Germans tended to favour the Magna bid, which calls for an investment of €1.1 billion, some of which would be guaranteed by the German federal government. Fiat then reportedly sweetened its own offer, promising to limit job losses to 2,000 – from 25,000 to 23,000 – and cutting the state aid it would require from €7 billion to €6 billion.

The improved bids from both sides were being considered in Bonn on Monday, though any decision taken this week is unlikely to be final. The German government is concerned that both rescue plans involve hefty government guarantees. ♦



Sleeping beauty

A new opera about death and brothels, composed by the very un-crazy Kris Defoort

ANDREW McILROY

I'm nervous about meeting Kris Defoort, for aren't all composers supposed to be deranged? Schumann ended up in a lunatic asylum, Beethoven was notoriously bad tempered, Handel threw sopranos out of windows. Also, I've just been to see Defoort's new opera, *House of Sleeping Beauties*, a story of geriatric lust and nymphet beauty set to an energetically tense music. And I know next to nothing about Defoort's first love, jazz. Will he throw me out of a window?

Luckily, he lives on the ground floor. Plus, he is one of the most pleasant artists I've ever interviewed. We sit in his back garden in Sint-Gillis, in the sun.

His family was musical. His father taught music and conducted a choir, and his brother is Bart Defoort, a saxophonist and composer. But his own first steps were largely untrained. "I just played stuff," he says. "Rock bands, composed a youth mass that owed a bit to the Beatles."

He attended the Antwerp Music Academy but finds it a wonder he graduated at all. "I just went to the classes I liked," he laughs. Defoort clearly loves music, lives for it perhaps. I suspect he would have agreed with Alban Berg's famous statement to Gershwin, who was nervous about playing something too "show-tuney" for the master. "Mr Gershwin, music is music."

"Music is all one language," Defoort confirms, stirring his green tea. "I was afraid when I was younger that I'd just end up becoming a sort of Flemish Gershwin. Now I think it would be great!" He doesn't have much time for the division between high and low music: jazz, pop, folk and classical are all influences and all joys. "You can hear the jazz in *Sleeping Beauties* if you listen," he says.

The music for *Sleeping Beauties* might be considered severe to many ears, but it has a strong melodic line and recognisable themes. It is a good introduction to contemporary opera – a nice length, visually arresting, magnificent voices and music that ranges from hopping discordance to baroque exuberance.

Anyone who saw Defoort's last opera, *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors*, will want to see this one, which is the fruit of another intense collaboration between Defoort as composer and Guy Cassiers from Antwerp's Toneelhuis as director. Based on the book by Nobel Prize winner Yasunari Kawabata, *Sleeping Beauties* concerns an old man who

visits a brothel in which customers are only allowed to lie next to the drugged and sleeping virgins.

This is opera as multidisciplinary theatre – dance, music, acrobatics and video. The intense inner life of the anti-hero Eguchi is conveyed through the music and text but also through the abstract architecture of the scenography, where reality (the tatami-covered floor of the brothel) and fantasy (the sleeping girl floating over the stage) convey state of mind as much as action.

In opera, there is usually a libretto, which the composer writes music to and which the director brings to life on stage. But *Sleeping Beauties* was from the start a hand-in-hand collaboration. "Guy has such amazing energy!" explains Defoort. "And after *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors*, we know how to work together. But it was a very difficult project." Defoort himself insisted on something "with bigger themes, poetic, more abstract."

Cassiers, he says, "would suggest things musically, and I'd tell him what I felt about certain visual ideas, and he'd turn it into reality. We are both prepared to be very naïve about the other person's skill set."

Their working processes are however very different. "Guy overloads at the start and then takes things out," says Defoort, "whereas I start from a white page and write down everything line-by-line out of my head. And then it's finished. Someone asked me when I first heard *Sleeping Beauties* played by an orchestra what changes I wanted to make, and I said 'none'. I had already heard it."

The new opera, which premiered in Brussels' De Munt this month and now goes on to Antwerp and Ghent, may end up being an international hit. It has the glossy feel to it that definitely lifts it out of the provincial and into the global. The powerhouse behind the production is LOD, a music theatre production team based in Ghent, where Defoort is a resident conductor.

As nervously noted earlier, Defoort is a jazz musician, and his fingers are constantly itching to get back to his group, Dreamtime. His jazz is fluid and accessible: I recently received a marvellous introduction to it at Bozar, where Defoort and other musicians provided live accompaniment to the silent Belgian film *l'Hirondelle et la Mésange*. He has plans to play more, and he has several collaborations in the pipeline.



Kris Defoort (right, foreground) and Guy Cassiers adapted *House of the Sleeping Beauties* (above) from a Japanese novel

And another opera? "Three years," he states. "Right now, if I have any time at all, I want to spend it with my music and with my kids."

I'm not sure if I can define Defoort as a Flemish composer. Of course he's Flemish through and through – born in Bruges, educated in Antwerp. But "I'm Belgian," he says, "with strong Flemish roots. The Belgian character is both cosmopolitan and provincial; I like that. I'd never want to be called a BV (Bekende Vlamingen, or Famous Fleming). "But," he laughs out loud, "I wouldn't mind being a BB – Bekende Brusseleer!"

Defoort notes that "the real tragedy is the same here as all over. It's all about crowds, fame and celebrity." It's true that, apart from notable successes like Hooverphonic, the Flemish music scene has not burst into worldwide attention like its dance and visual art. "The music scene is less unified here, and, as a result, no-one takes us seriously."

I ask him where he feels most comfortable in Belgium, and he hesitates before saying "Brussels, of course, and then – well there's the country roads of Bruges, out towards Dijksmuide, the flatness, the sky. And then the Hautes Fagnes. Yes, these are my favourite places."

On reflection, these places share something very Belgian: their



quiet beauty, the understated but powerful landscapes of north and south. He smiles again, and I think that's rather what he is like himself – authentic, un-showy, anchored. No, I wouldn't call Kris Defoort a famous Flemish composer. But I'm pretty damn sure he's on his way to being a famous European one. ♦

House of the Sleeping Beauties

3-5 June, deSingel, Antwerp

→ www.desingel.be

20 June, Vlaamse Opera, Ghent

→ www.vlaamseopera.be

© Maarten Vervaeke

© Kurt Van der Est



“Et tu”

After three years of renovations, the new and improved Gallo-Roman Museum has finally reopened its doors

DENZIL WALTON

It's certainly impressive. Spacious, airy, atmospheric, with an excellent mix of the traditional and the new, and all in a superb location smack dab in the centre of the historical city of Tongeren. The result is that the new Gallo-Roman Museum is easily as good as the best archaeological museums in Europe.

It came with a hefty price tag. With the help of Europe and Flanders, the Province of Limburg invested €19 million in the reconstruction. But it was a much-needed investment. The old museum was simply overrun by visitors. Designed to accommodate 20,000 a year, by 2005 it was attracting five times that many. Three years after the original museum closed to the public, a new museum opened last week.

Limburg's provincial authorities had grand ideas. "The building project set out to do more than provide a

museum, important as that is; it was also an urban project designed to give the city a new dynamic," says Gilbert Van Baelen, executive of the Province of Limburg. "The new path that runs right round the basilica and the adjoining museum square has created a new part of Tongeren. Plus, the building is perfectly integrated into the historical heart of the city."

The presence of a Gallo-Roman Museum in the oldest city in the country also gives a real boost to the identity of the city and region as a whole. So, in addition to the investment it made in the building, the province has provided substantial resources to promote and run the museum.

The new museum building was designed by architects De Gregorio & Partners. Together with designer Niek Kortekaas, De Gregorio was



Tongeren is called "the oldest city in Belgium" for good reason. Its history began when Roman legions passed through the region. But they didn't have it all their own way. In 54 BC, they met fierce resistance from local tribes, particularly from Ambiorix, leader of the Eburones. Ambiorix famously led his warriors to a resounding victory over one of Julius Caesar's legions.

But it was short-lived. The Romans fought back, and Ambiorix fled, eventually to re-appear in 1866 on Tongeren's market square as a three-metre bronze statue.

Flushed with success, the Romans put up a winter camp near the little-known village of Atuatuca. They must have liked it, as the Roman Empire made it into a permanent settlement, called Atuatuca Tungrorum. Thanks mainly to its location at the junction of some important Roman roads, Atuatuca Tungrorum expanded into one of the largest towns in northern Gaul.

It had typical Roman public and private buildings, streets, and a monumental town wall, remnants of which can still be seen. One of the highlights of the Gallo-Roman museum is a scale-model of Tongeren in 150 AD. It clearly shows the extent of the town walls as well as the ancient aqueduct.

→ www.tongeren.be

also responsible for designing the permanent exhibition.

The museum team was given the opportunity to work with the architectural team to reinterpret the building. "We thought long and hard about the way we wanted visitors to feel in the museum and how we wanted them to use the space," says museum director Carmen Willems. "The priority was to make it a beautiful place to view objects from the past. We worked together to come up with the best possible way of dividing and arranging the spaces and paid great attention to visitor flow and atmosphere."

This is evident from the layout. Covering four floors, it leads visitors on a journey of exploration through the lives of the people in the region from pre-history to the early Middle Ages.

"It's no accident that our motto is: 'What follows is intrinsically linked to what went before,'" explains museum coordinator Bart Distelmans. "These words were spoken by the Roman emperor and philosopher Marcus Aurelius, and they were our inspiration when building the exhibition." The story is illustrated with 2,200 authentic objects as well as by text, interactive animations, films,

evocative reconstruction drawings, lifelike figures and scale-models. In this way, the museum hopes to meet the needs and expectations of different types of visitor.

The collections are extremely diverse. Highlights include a selection of bronze axes from 800 BC; gold coins used by the Eburones (the local tribe that defeated one of Julius Caesar's legions); early Roman sculptures; and a fourth-century Christian tomb. Children will probably be enticed by the interactive touch-screens, the short movies of how to make and throw spears and the lifelike representation of a successful Neanderthal hunt.

The new museum will continue to expand its educational activities. A great deal of work is being done on new temporary exhibitions, which helped establish the reputation of the previous museum. The first exhibition planned is *Ambiorix, King of the Eburones*.

The Gallo-Roman Museum is well worth a visit, although the full multi-language capabilities are not yet up and running. So unless your knowledge of Dutch is good, you might want to wait until the English, French and German guidebooks are available in mid June. ♦

→ www.galloromeinsmuseum.be



Right under your nose

Only Antwerp could support not one – but two – moustache clubs

LISA BRADSHAW

“Everybody meets everybody on this square,” says Willy Dupon, as he lifts his De Koninck beer, or “bolleke” as the people of Antwerp say, to his lips. We’re sitting on the city’s Grote Markt, with its assembly of *bruine kroegen*, or “brown cafes” – those simple, folky drinking establishments that don’t cater to tourists or try to be fancy. This is where real life happens, insists Dupon.

The 71-year-old ran such a place until six years ago. It was called De Snor, or The Moustache, and it was here that, in 1978, he started the Snorrenclub Antwerpen, or the Moustache Club of Antwerp.

Pretty silly, you say? Yes. Publicity stunt for the bar? Maybe. But over the last three decades, Willy has appeared on national and international television, including the BBC. He’s been in newspaper articles too many times to count. He hobnobs with the rich and famous moustaches of Belgium – jazz master Toots Thielemans, for instance, and *FC De Kampioenen* star Marijn Devalck. He was featured in the comic strip *Kiekeboe*, is called on by the city to host events and is currently featured in a photography exhibition.

Oh, and he founded his own country: the Republic of Snoravia.

“Most people think that we must be pretty proud of these things under our noses,” smiles Dupon. “But mostly it’s an excuse to come together and have fun.”

Like any group, even though one thing defines it, connections are made far beyond that border. And the public adores them. In costumes that resemble a barbershop quartet, they are official representatives of the city – sometimes turning up to greet crowds at festivals or to welcome shoppers to Antwerp’s Meir on the first day of the sales.

Dupon began organising The Moustache of the Year award almost immediately after founding the club, and there have been some big Belgian names over the years, including Toots Thielemans, comedian Leo Martin and television weatherman Frank Deboosere – who since shaved off his moustache. “A deserter,” sighs Dupon.

In 1987, Dupon led a hardy band of



Willy Dupon (second from left) and other members of the European Moustache Club of Antwerp, with their mascot, Fred. The photo is from the exhibition *Schoon volk*, which runs through the summer at Atlas, Carnotstraat 110, Antwerp

moustache-wearers to the Voeren region, the only Flemish piece of land not actually in Flanders. Located between the Netherlands and Wallonia but officially considered Limburg Province, the Voeren region has been an infamous source of political strife, particularly since it used to belong to the province of Liège and about one-quarter of its people are Dutch.

I prefer Brad Pitt to Fidel Castro, and I think most women do, too”

Tired of the constant arguments over who should control the Voeren, Dupon decided to take matters into his own hands: he hung a plaque in the middle of a rural area (which, aside from a harbour, is most of the Voeren) and pronounced it Snoravia. Every June, he and the other 27 members of the club make a pilgrimage. “I’ve done it for 17 years,” he says. “Every year, the

plaque disappears, and every year we come back and put it up again.”

Since Snoravia is so close to Maastricht, the annual journey finds them also visiting the Dutch city’s statue of d’Artagnan, the central character from the novel *The Three Musketeers*. “He had a huge

Antwerpen, or European Moustache Club of Antwerp. Many members went with him. “There are enough moustaches to support two clubs,” he states.

With no more control over the Moustache of the Year, now he chooses the Moustache of the City every other year. The last one was former boxing champion Jean-Pierre Coopman. For next year, Dupon has his eye on the food critic Dirk de Prins, host of the Radio 2 show *Kook* and appearing right now on the popular Flemish reality TV show *Mijn Restaurant!*

He has also just organised Brussels’ new moustache club, which launched at the end of last year. Brussels’ moustached mayor Freddy Thielemans immediately declared he would be honorary president.

Although you won’t find a lot of young people in the European Moustache

Club (the youngest member is 50), you will find a few women. I immediately ask if they have to have moustaches; Dupon finds this very funny. “No, they just like us,” he explains. Any man who wants to join, though, of course has to have a moustache. But absolutely no beards are allowed. “It’s the typical British style; you can’t have anything on your chin.”

There are moustache clubs in nearly every European country, and the beard situation appears to be a source of contention. “When I go to moustache competitions, there are clubs from all over the world,” explains Dupon. “You see the Germans coming, and the Italians, they have beards down to here – like Santa Claus. It’s too much. When you see a fine looking man with a nice moustache, it’s a whole different thing. I prefer Brad Pitt to Fidel Castro. I think most women do, too.” ♦

► www.bloggen.be/snor



Hey, there's my house!

The famous 250-year-old Ferraris Atlas is reprinted

ALISTAIR MACLEAN

The Royal Library of Belgium at the foot of Kunstberg near Brussels' Central Station is well worth a visit these days. In the small bookshop is an enormous lectern holding one of the largest books you will have ever seen.

On display is the Ferraris Atlas reproduced in a book measuring 40 x 50 centimetres and weighing 11 kilograms.

The 608-page tome, published with the support of the Flemish authorities, gives an 18th-century view of Belgium in the form of 1:20,000 double-page maps and an informative introduction in Dutch and in French. You can even buy your own; it comes with a handle on the side for "easy" carrying.

In 1777, director-general of the artillery, Joseph-Jean de Ferraris completed the mapping of the then Dutch Netherlands. As head of the military school of mathematics in Mechelen, he set his students to work triangulating the country from the French border to the bishopric of Liège.

Ferraris had persuaded his masters

that they needed a detailed military atlas to properly control the Dutch Netherlands. The detail of the original is astonishing. It is twice as large as the reproduction now on sale: 1:11,520, or "une pouce de France pour 160 toises" – one French inch for 160 toises, which is about six feet.

The original is made up of 275 hand-drawn coloured sheets

that was made for Charles of Lorraine, Ferraris' protector, was removed to Vienna when the Austrians abandoned the country in 1794. Smaller copies were sold for private use to recoup some of the costs, but by the end of the 18th century, the three originals had been moved to foreign capitals. One of the smaller commercial atlases was used by Napoleon,

one of the original three atlases. Following the First World War, Austria was subject to claims for war reparations, and one of the demands of Belgium was the return of Charles of Lorraine's atlas. Today it holds pride of place in the Royal Belgian Library, and it is this original which was used to produce the present publication.

If you turn to the page where you now live, you will probably find fields. The most urban of names are shown in 1777 as hamlets among lanes and forests. The maps were drawn for an army to use, and you get the feeling of hanging over the edge of a hot-air balloon basket as you look down on to the green fields below. Of course, churches and castles are depicted, as are high roads and sunken lanes.

There you can see hedges and orchards, windmills both wooden and of stone and the defensive walls around farms. If you look carefully, you can find gallows, sites of skirmishes and even archery practice poles. And for such a bucolic age, you can get the feel of the origins of the industrial explosion of the 19th century in villages with small mines and steel

works.

If you have a big enough coffee table, the Ferraris Atlas is a must. ♦

De Grote Atlas van Ferraris is available from Lannoo Publishers for a reduced price of €129. The price rises to €150 in July.

→ www.lannoo.be

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Look carefully, and you can find gallows, sites of skirmishes and even archery practice poles

and measures 30 x 22 metres. Three originals were made. One was intended for the Austrian emperor but ended up via Ferraris' daughter in the possession of the Dutch king, Willem I, and is today kept in the National Archive in The Hague. The second copy was delivered to the court chancellery in Vienna and forms part of the Austrian Kriegsarchiv, or War Archive; the third copy, which

and we can speculate whether Wellington had his own copy at the battle of Waterloo.

The commercial atlas was reprinted at the birth of Belgium in 1831 and, as the present frontiers were not fixed until 1839, contained Dutch Limburg and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

It was not until 1919 that Belgium had the opportunity to regain

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→ www.klara.be



FLANDERS TODAY
MAY 27, 2009



Meeting Monsieur Magritte

IAN MUNDELL

The Magritte Museum, which opened this week in Brussels, has a difficult balancing act to perform. It wants to get away from the clichés of one of the world's best known Surrealists – the apples in place of faces, the men in bowler hats – and explore the full range of the Belgian artist's heritage. Yet it also aspires to be a tourist attraction that will put Brussels on the map, in which case it needs to give the postcard-buying public what it wants.

The new museum's parent, the Royal Museum of Fine Arts, is well-placed to achieve the first goal, since it has the largest, most comprehensive René Magritte collection in the world. The second goal is harder, because many of the most famous paintings are in other hands. It might be fairer to mount a warning sign over the door: This Is Not a Museum with a Pipe.

If you are looking for Magritte's Greatest Hits there is just enough here to satisfy. There are two versions of "The Empire of

Lights", showing a daylight sky above a house shrouded in night, and the sky-shaded nude "Black Magic". Expansive dreamscapes such as "The Battle of Argonne" and "The Domain of Arnheim" are impressive up close, as is "Blood Will Tell", showing a tree with doors opening in its trunk. Being in the presence of these paintings, however familiar their images, raises hairs on the back of the neck.

Many works have been loaned from private collections, filling gaps in the museum's own holdings and allowing the curators to explore Magritte's love of variations on a theme. Among the most enjoyable are the two versions of "Scheherazade" (photo above), all face and no body for a change, and the bird-plants in "Treasure Island", "The Companions of Fear" and "The Flavour of Tears".

The museum is organised chronologically over three floors, with the early years at the top of the building highlighting Magritte's

work as a commercial artist and amateur photographer. Artistic treats from the early years include "The Subjugated Reader" from 1928, a woman physically shocked by the book in her hands.

And if you think you know Magritte, there are intriguing surprises to be found in his vibrant "Surrealism in full sunlight" paintings from the war years and the gaudy "vache" pictures, painted in a flurry of activity in 1948 to annoy the Parisian art world and satisfy the artist's need to do something different. Hat's off, I say.

The Magritte Museum

Regentschapstraat 3,
Brussels

→ www.musee-magritte-museum.be



MORE BELGIAN ARTISTS THIS WEEK

Alfred Stevens → [Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels](#) →
Vegetal City → [Museum of Art and History, Brussels](#)
Peter Buggenhouts → [Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle](#)



MAY 26 20.00 Fear Falls Burning +
Sun O)))



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

Borgerhout
De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40,
www.deroma.be
MAY 30 20.30 Roland Van
Campenhout

Brussels
Archiduc
Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52,
www.archiduc.net
MAY 30 17.00 Bai Kamara Jr with
Valve

Art Base
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20,
www.art-base.be
MAY 29 21.00 Solania Barbosa y
TresTresTres
MAY 30 21.00 Takis Mendis & Sergiani
MAY 31 17.00 Les Promeneurs, Pierre-Yves Kremer & friends. 20.30 Les Offs

Biberium
Cantertuin 55; 0476.31.60.17
MAY 29 20.00 The Rock Blues Band
MAY 30 20.00 Strangle the Parrot
MAY 31 20.00 Rolling Bottle

Café Central
Borgval 14; 02.513.73.08
MAY 29 21.00 PaNoPTiCoN
MAY 30 21.00 Lawrence Wasser

Café Dada
Violettestraat 34; 0484.50.83.80
MAY 29 20.00 Galvanise
MAY 30 20.00 Vinta Sinté
MAY 31 19.00 Le Duo des Nonnes

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

Elton John

13 October
Sportpaleis, Antwerp

Many a smarmy critic would rather make fun of Elton John these days than pay to see him in concert. OK, he's getting up there in years, he's put on a few pounds and some of his post-1980s songs are questionable ("Good England's Rose" was, let's face it, never a good idea). But this is ELTON JOHN, people! Biggest chart-topper solo British artist in history! Stalwart of the radio of your youth! Platform shoes, crazy glasses! And he gets most of those glasses in Belgium. Did you know that?

→ www.livenation.be



• Agenda •

De Valera's
Flageyplein 17
MAY 29 21.00 Helman's Blues Trio
MAY 30 21.00 Valera's Jazz Trio

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,
www.flagey.be
MAY 29 20.00/22.00 Greg Lamy
Quartet 21.00/23.00 Philip Catherine
Trio
MAY 30 20.00/22.00 No Vibrato
21.00/23.00 Youth Jazz Orchestra

Jazz Station
Leuvensesteenweg 193-195;
02.733.13.78
MAY 27 20.30 Animus Anima
MAY 29 21.00 Artet 22.30 Groove
Things
MAY 30 21.00 Pascal Mohy Trio 22.30
Charles Loos/Julie Jaroszewski Trio

Le Grand Café
Anspachlaan 78
MAY 29-30 21.00 Squeeze Me with
Renaud Patigny

Michael Collins
Baljuwstraat 1
MAY 29 21.00 Michael's Jazz Trio

Monk
Sint-Katelijnestraat 42
MAY 29 23.30 After-Jazz Dance Party
MAY 30 midnight Egon with Jeroen
Van Herzele

Sass'n Jazz
Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78,
www.sazznjazz.be
MAY 27 20.30 Mr Pringle's **MAY**
28 20.30 Jam Session **MAY 29** 20.30
Yochka 22.30 Moving Tones **MAY 30**
20.30 Sibel 22.30 Moving Tones **MAY**
31 20.30 Jam Session 22.00 Symmetrio
+ Jam Session

Sounds Jazz Club
Tulpstraat 28; 02.512.92.50,
www.soundsjazzclub.be
MAY 27 22.00 Chamaquindo, salsa
MAY 29-30 22.00 Da Romeo and the
Crazy Moondog Band

Stekerlapatte
Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81,
www.stekerlapatte.be
MAY 29 21.00 Melanie De Biasio &
Pascal Mohy Duo
MAY 30 21.00 Jean-Paul Estiévenart &
Eve Beuvens Duo

The Cotton Club - Grand Casino
Duquesnoystraat 14; 02.289.68.66

MAY 30 22.00 Valve with Bai kamara Jr
MAY 31 22.00 The Vintage Jazz Cats

The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
MAY 27 20.30 Adrien Volant Quartet
MAY 29-30 20.30 Peter King & the
New Look Trio



Antwerp

Zuiderpershuis
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00,
www.zuiderpershuis.be
MAY 27 20.30 Binary Orchid
(Icelandic/Dutch)
MAY 28 20.30 Shinichi Kinoshita,
shamisen (Japan)
MAY 29 20.30 Grupo Tambo
(Colombia)

Brussels

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be
MAY 28 19.00 Charango concert
with Ernesto Cavour & Alfredo Coca
(Bolivia)



Bruges

Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02,
www.concertgebouw.be
MAY 28-29 20.00 Kuijken String
Quartet: Haydn

Brussels

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be
Until MAY 30 20.00 Queen Elisabeth
Violin Competition 2009 Final with the
Belgian National Orchestra conducted
by Gilbert Varga
MAY 31 11.00 Camilla Kjøll, violin;

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www.vlaamseopera.be
MAY 28 20.00 Royal Ballet of Flanders
in Artifact, choreographed by William
Forsythe

Brussels

Atomium
Heysel Park; 02.475.45.75,
www.atomium.be
MAY 31 10.30-12.30 Square Dance
with Dancing Hearts dance club

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be
MAY 30-31 16.00/19.00 Movimento
dance school in Palace
JUNE 3 20.30 Korean Screens, four
solos created for Korean dancers by
Belgian choreographers

Kaaitheater
Sainctelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59,
www.kaaitheater.be
MAY 29-30 Zulu Nation Belgium &
Lezarts Urbains, hip-hop dance festival



Aalst

De Werf
Molenstraat 51; 053.73.28.12,
www.ccdewerf.be
JUNE 3 20.00 Laat mij zingen (Let Me
Sing) by Ingeborg, musical show (in
Dutch)

Antwerp

Stadsschouwburg
Theaterplein 1; 0900.69.900,
www.sherpa.be
MAY 28-31 15.00/20.00 Anatevka
(Fiddler on the Roof), musical (in
Dutch)
JUNE 4-14 Sunset Boulevard, musical
(in Dutch)



Bruges

De Werf
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29
MAY 28-30 20.30 Jong Wilt, carte
blanche to Gilles De Schryver (in
Dutch)

Brussels

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,

FLANDERS TODAY
MAY 27, 2009

DON'T MISS

Brussels Jazz Marathon

29-31 May

Even if jazz isn't your scene, daddy-o, all sorts turn out for this annual festival when 125 – that's 1-2-5 – performances around the city are free, as in no cash payments whatsoever is required. Outside, inside and all those marginal places in between play host to the coolest jazz cats from across our blue, blue planet, including Jennifer Scavuzzo, Matthew Bourne and Jef Neve. And because this is Brussels, where we'll all multi-culti, you'll find soul, blues and Latin mixed up all up inside it.

www.brusselsjazzmarathon.be



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 Haydn; in Dutch)

Woluwe-Saint-Pierre Cultural Centre

Charles Thielemanslaan 93;
02.773.05.80, <http://feats2009.theatreinbrussels.com>
MAY 29-JUNE 1 20.00 The English
Comedy Club hosts FEATS, the
international English-language theatre
festival

Ghent

Capitole
Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5;
0900.69.00, www.capitolegent.be
JUNE 4-7 15.00/20.00 Anatevka
(Fiddler on the Roof), musical (in
Dutch)



Antwerp

Fotomuseum
Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00
Until JUNE 7 Jimmy Kets – Brightside,
photographs
Until JUNE 7 Erwin Olaf: EyeCandy,
retrospective of the Dutch
photographer's cutting-edge work
Until JUNE 7 Yang Fudong: East of
Que Village, video installation

Middelheim Museum
Middelheimlaan 6; 03.827.15.34
MAY 30-SEP 27 Chris Burden, videos,
sculptures and installations by the
contemporary American artist, plus
live performance on 30 May at 20.00

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Nieuw Internationaal Cultureel Centrum

Tulpstraat 79; 03.216.07.71
Until JUNE 21 De Doorgeefshow, curated by Koen Theyx, with works by contemporary artists Felix de Boeck, Nico Dockx, Jodi and Joëlle Tuerlinck, among others

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

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09
Until JUNE 14 Goya, Redon, Ensor: Grotesque paintings and drawings

Zilverbureau Sterckshof

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

Bruges

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

De Bond

Buitenhof 1; 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

Belvue Museum
Paleizenplein 7; 02.511.44.25, www.belvue.be

Until MAY 31 Boy or Girl... Destiny for a Lifetime? Belgium 1830-2000, the evolution of perceptions of masculinity and femininity in Belgium

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
Until JUNE 30 N.i.c.h.e. 360 architekten, scale models by Jan Mannaerts and Stephane Beel
Until SEP 13 Jan De Cock: Repromotion, exhibition circuit featuring sculptures and photographs by the contemporary Belgian artist
Until SEP 13 Sophie Calle, photographs, audio and video works, by the contemporary French artist
Until SEP 13 Disorder, sculptures and paintings by conceptual artist Bernar Venet and comic strips about the art world by Jacques Charlier

CCNOA

Bvd Barthélémy 5; 02.502.69.12, www.ccnoa.org
Until JUNE 14 Terence Haggerty: wall painting by the British artist
MAY 28-JUNE 14 Simon Ingram, installation

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 Loge Architectuur museum

Kluisstraat 86; 02.649.86.65
Until AUG 2 Louise Bossut, Nicolas

Van Brande and Olivier Thieffry: (reflect)3, photographs of shops, cafés and other commercial venues in Brussels

De Markten

Oude Graanmarkt 5; 02.512.34.25, www.demarkten.be
Until MAY 31 Clinamen, group show of paintings, drawings, 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

IJzerenkruijsstraat 99; 02.552.40.43
Until JUNE 13 The World of Roger Raveel, paintings by the contemporary Belgian artist

Folklore Museum

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

Fondation pour l'Architecture

Klusstraat 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

ISELP

Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70
Until JUNE 6 Dorothée Van Biesen, textiles
Until JUNE 6 Romina Remmo, paintings
Until JULY 25 Dress code, clothing

Jewish Museum of Belgium

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

Maison Pelgrims

Parmastraat 69; 02.534.56.05
MAY 28-JUNE 14 Michel Doutreligne: Gammes et Amalgames, acrylics on paper 2004-2009

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

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

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

STIB Headquarters

Koloniënstraat 62; 02.515.20.52
MAY 29-SEP 26 Metro Art Memory, retrospective and genesis of 80 art works in the Brussels' metro, with models, drawings and sketches by Pierre Alechinsky, Paul Delvaux and

Hergé, among others

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 Belgian 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 Bugenhouts, sculptures and installations by the Flemish 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), work 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 made from recycled materials by Swiss outsider artist François Burland
Until SEP 13 Unknown Secrets, paintings by Serbian outsider artist Goran Djurovic
MAY 29-SEP 13 Mens: Andere culturen als amusement (People: Other Cultures as Amusement)

Museum of Fine Arts

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 Léon Frederic, Constant Permeke, Constantin Meunier and Henry Van de Velde

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03, www.smak.be
Until 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, video installations redefining what it can mean to be a woman in a fast-evolving world

Until AUG 23 Beyond The Picturesque, interpretations of landscape in contemporary art

Until AUG 23 Extra: Meteoriti, sculptures by Bishan Bassiri

Witte Zaal

Posteernestraat 64; 09.225.42.90
MAY 29-JULY 4 The Ornamental Body, from prison tattoo to body paintings, with photographs and lightboxes

Hasselt

Modemuseum
Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.23.96.21
MAY 30-OCT 31 In Her Shoes, trends and evolution of women's shoe design, from 1900 to contemporary designers

Knokke

CC Scharpoord
Meerlaan 32; 050.63.04.30, www.fotofestival.be
Until JUNE 7 International Photography Festival, local and international photography show and competition, plus installations on the theme of the relationship between still and moving images

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 Dheudene, 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



Opera XXI: New biennial festival of contemporary opera and musical theatre
JUNE 3-23 across Antwerp and Ghent www.operaxxi.be

Brussels

Brussels Jazz Marathon: Annual jazz festival with performances by Belgian and international musicians
MAY 29-31 in 140 clubs, cafes and outdoor venues www.brusselsjazzmarathon.be

EuroFeria Andaluza 2009: Spanish cultural fair with Andalucian folkloric activities, equestrian show, music, dance and regional gastronomy
JUNE 4-7 at Atomium, Heysel Park www.euroferia.net

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

La Feria de Cali: Colombian cultural festival celebrating the city of Cali with concerts, exhibitions, dance, gastronomy, film and parties

MAY 30-JUNE 1 at Espace Senghor, Waversesteenweg 366 02.230.31.40, www.senghor.be or www.alalata.be

Kleine Zavel art fairs

JUNE 3-9 Three annual international art fairs in and around Kleine Zavel: Brussels Non European Art Fair (www.bruneaf.be), Brussels Oriental Art Fair (www.boaf.be) and Brussels Ancient Art Fair (www.baaf.be)

Ghent

Jazz Sur l'Herbe: Open-air jazz festival with free concerts on Thursdays and Fridays throughout May
Until MAY 29 at the kiosk in Citadelpark www.jazzsurherbe.be

CAFE SPOTLIGHT

REBECCA BENOOT



De Foyer

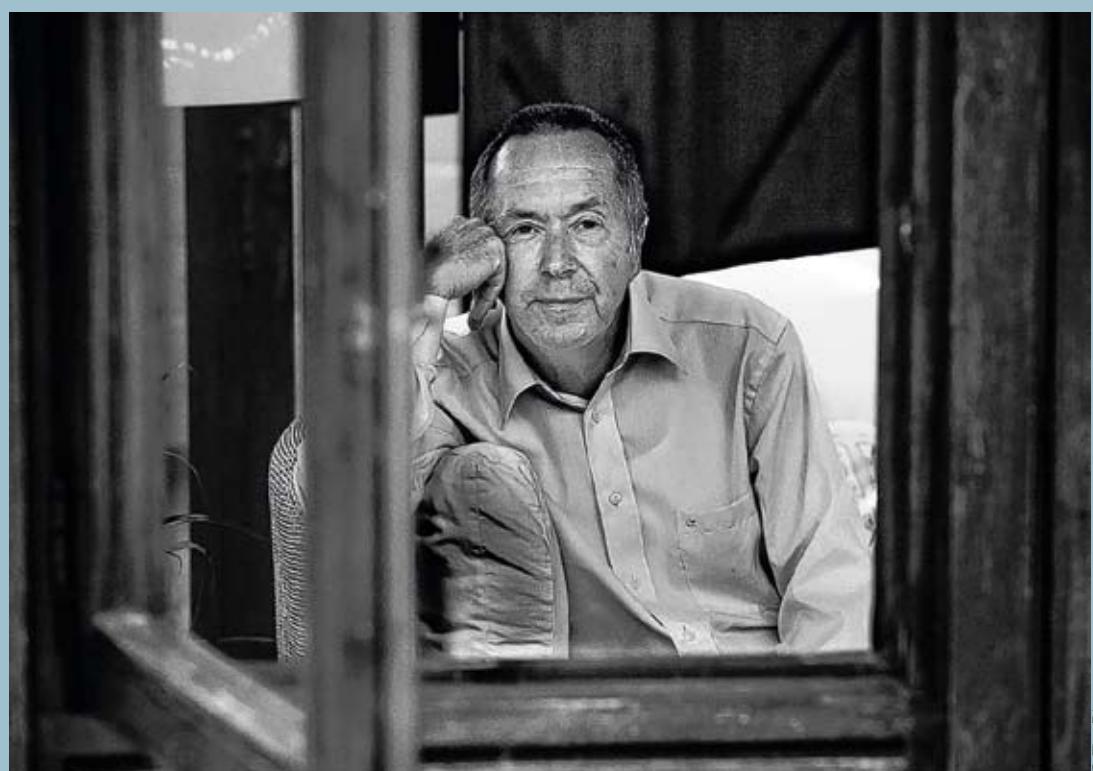
Komedieplaats 18
Antwerp

It's bold, it's beautiful, and it's sadly often overlooked by the non-theatre-going crowd (shame on you). De Foyer is situated on the first floor of the Bourla theatre in the heart of Antwerp and is a majestic café that still exudes all the style and elegance of the theatre's heyday.

The Bourla itself was built in 1827 by Belgian architect Pierre Bruno Bourla and houses the renowned theatre company Het Toneelhuis. De Foyer was added in 1989 under the gorgeous dome, topped with stained glass and intricately decorated with angels, flowers and fruit. The high ceiling, tall and graceful windows with classic red velvet drapes and predominant gold touches add a very decadent and nostalgic neoclassicist atmosphere.

Due to its authentic elements and overall grandeur, emphasised by the stunning *Phantom of the Opera*-like crystal chandelier, it is the perfect location for a good old-fashioned afternoon tea or a delectable brunch. Feast your eyes on the glorious dessert trays. (For those of us up to the challenge, there is a highly recommended all-you-can-eat formula.)

FACE OF FLANDERS



ALAN HOPE

Luc Huyse

On 27 May, as Flanders Today is published, the annual Ark Prize of the Free Word will be awarded in Antwerp to Luc Huyse, a sociologist and emeritus professor at the Catholic University of Leuven. The prize, which comes with no big cash handout, will be handed over by last year's winner, archaeologist and columnist David Van Reybrouck.

The Ark Prize is given in support of freedom of speech, and was born out of protest, in 1951, when Flemish writer Marnix Gijsen was rejected

the citation as "independent, profound research" that extends the boundaries of the discipline and which he communicates in "clear texts, accessible to all". He is praised for his "coherent, socially committed point of view regarding national and international challenges".

His work has two main areas of focus: a critique of the particularly Dutch/Flemish idea of *verzuiling* and the field of justice in societies emerging from violent conflict.

Verzuiling (from *zuil*, a pillar) is the vertical structuring of society around certain ideologies. In the Netherlands, religious denomination was earlier a key factor in how one navigated society. In Belgium, to this day, affiliation with the church or a political party will deter-

with books. My mother was a domestic servant for a well-off, French-speaking family in the Kortrijk area. The combination of those two things must have opened up some windows on the world to me."

His recent work on national questions (he writes for *De Standaard* as well as continuing to teach and publish articles) includes themes like "anecdottis" in the media, Belgium's post-war recovery, and *kiezerbedrog* (voter betrayal), when political parties put up big names to lead electoral lists, fully aware that the "stars" have no intention of taking up their seats.

Huyse is equally critical of received ideas. In his landmark book *Traditional Justice and Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: Learning from African Experiences* (written in English), he looks at the whole question of dealing with those responsible for heinous crimes during violent conflicts. The book looks at five cases in Africa, but the principles also apply to the former Yugoslavia, or countries emerging from dictatorship.

The book examines the arguments in favour of various measures currently available, from amnesty all the way up to criminal prosecutions – such as those being carried out by international tribunals in The Hague and Aruba.

Is it appropriate for thinkers and professors to get mixed up in politics? Huyse thinks it is. "It's logical that intellectuals will sometimes have a direct effect on politics," he told *Knack* magazine on being voted the second most influential intellectual in Flanders (moral philosopher Etienne Vermeersch was first). "Otherwise it's as if we are allowed to have a head but no body."

→ www.kuleuven.ac.be

mine your union allegiance, the school your kids go to (including the Catholic University of Leuven) and the scout troop they join, your job prospects and even the newspaper you read.

In an interview with the Leuven University newspaper, Huyse identified his social background as the key to his interest: "I'm from a working class family, and it was certainly not expected that I would carry on with my studies, though I was, in a certain way, predestined for cultural or, let's say, socio-logical, work. My father was a printer's assistant, so I grew up

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



Blokken →

There's a downside to everything. Take being a student: for many, it's the first time away from home surrounded by thousands of people your own age and no school teachers telling you what to do but only distant lecturers. And the freedom to study when you like. But there's the rub. You've managed to attend enough lectures, but looming ahead are the exams.

At this point you are supposed to shut yourself up in your room, get your nose into your books and start cramming – *blokken*. The problem for today's students is all the temptations: Facebook, msn, sms and all the rest.

To put these temptations behind them, many students come together for support. In Ghent during *de blokperiode* students queue in the early morning for a seat in university buildings, such as de Boekentoren and de Therminal: *samen studeren helpt het leed te verzachten* – studying together helps relieve the pain. Apart from collective suffering, there is *de verbondenheid* – solidarity and *sociale controle*. Group cramming has become so popular that Ghent University is looking for 500 more places. Students also come from local colleges and even other universities. The university is happy to accommodate as many as possible: the more students cram, the better the results.

"Collectief blokken is natuurlijk een nieuw fenomeen" – Collective cramming is of

course a new phenomenon, says the university's director of student affairs. Perhaps, but many of you will have done something similar. The difference may be that students arrange to meet up to study together through electronic means.

When students all acquired laptops, it was thought that university libraries would soon become redundant. *Integendeel, zo blijkt* – the opposite, so it appears. The typical architecture of a library (with a cafeteria) is conducive to studying. That's the explanation given by someone working in de Boekentoren "*want echt gezellig is het hier niet*" – because it isn't particularly cosy here.

And the rules are as they should be in a library: *je mag alleen water drinken* – you're only allowed to drink water; *je moet muisstil zijn* – you must be as quiet as a mouse; and if you speak too loud, *je wordt op de vingers getikt* – you will be rapped over your knuckles. Literally? I wonder.

An overfull library is not to everyone's taste. Apparently, the professors complain that they can't consult a book during *de blokperiode* in peace. Yeah, students are such a nuisance.

Some need a change of air to cram. For €70 you can spend a week at a study camp in the Ardennes. For that, students get *kost* – food, *inwoonst* – accommodation and *ontspanning* – relaxation; and what often makes the difference, lots of discipline.

The last word → → →

Château Guy

"I went to a big wine fair in Italy, and there were so many exhibitors I thought to myself, what kind of idiot would want to make more wine? But I'm crazy about wine. I want to do it myself, to make something that's good. And I like to look at a vineyard."

Guy Verhofstadt, former prime minister and owner of a vineyard in Tuscany, interviewed in *Het Nieuwsblad*

Love of his life

"I don't have any need for gears. My

love for Marie-Louiseke drives me forward."

Hendrik, aged 83, who cycles 53 km every day from Ostend to Bruges and back to tend the grave of his beloved, who died in 2005

Deaf doctorate

"I want deaf children to have role models of deaf adults in the universities. I want the deaf to realise: you might be deaf, but you can be what you want to be."

Goedele De Clerck, the first researcher ever to defend her doctoral thesis in sign language at the University of Ghent