

Yasmine dead at 37 2

Flemish singer and TV star Yasmine committed suicide last week. The former host of *De Rode Loper* was suffering from a break-up with her wife, Marianne Dupon



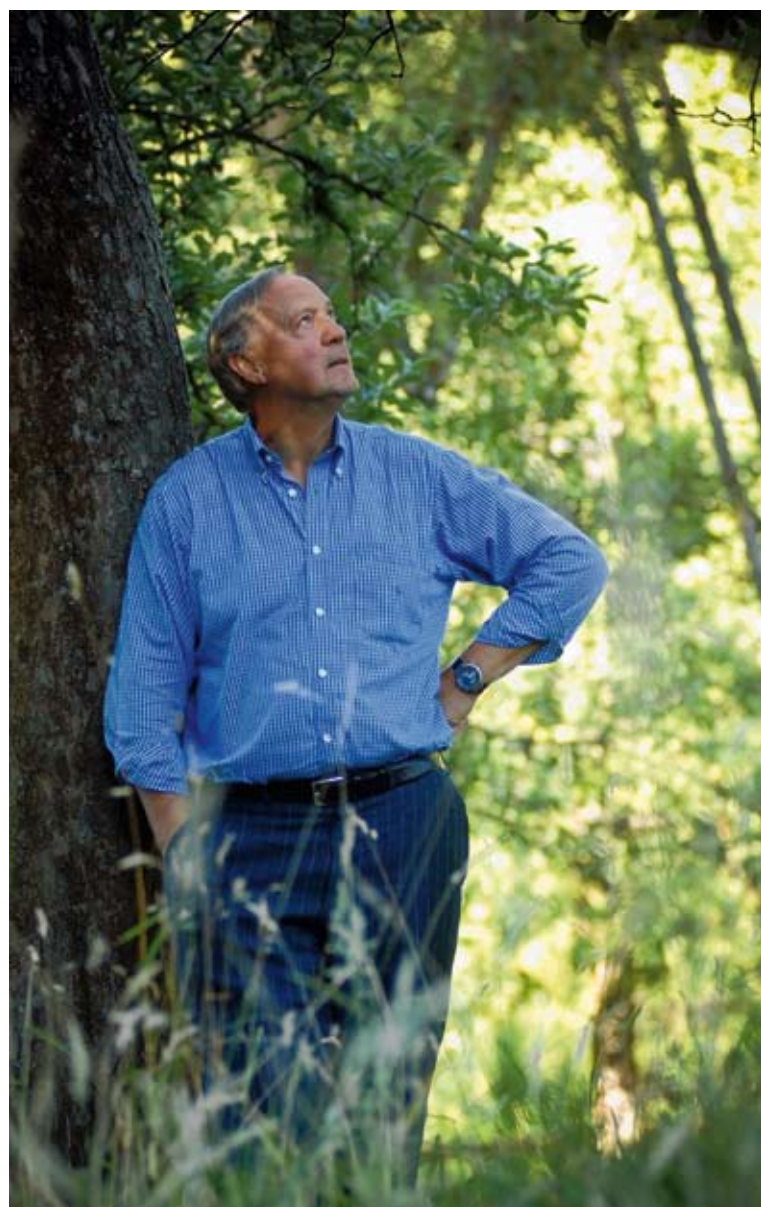
Pretty in pink..... 8

Mega Mindy is outrageously popular among the little girls of Flanders, who watch her on TV, don her bright pink costume and shout "stop, thief" at family members. Now the masked hero stars in her first feature film



Festival frenzy..... 9

Belgium is awash in summer music festivals, from the giant multi-stages of Werchter to the tiny squares of Flemish villages. Music critic Christophe Verbiest picks his top three



The Constant Gardener

Long-time politician Karel Van Miert dies in his cherry orchard

ALAN HOPE

If he could have chosen to die anywhere, one obituarist wrote, it would have been in the orchard he cared for so much. Karel Van Miert died on 22 June while tending the cherry trees at his home in Beersel. At first, it appeared he had fallen from a ladder, but the cause of death was later determined to have been a heart attack.

Van Miert was born in 1942, in Oud-Turnhout, in the region of Antwerp province known as the Kempen. The eldest of nine children of a poor Catholic family, he quit school at 14 and worked on the family farm, then became an electrician's apprentice before finally resuming his education. At 20, he went to the University

of Ghent, where he studied international relations. His thesis, with uncanny prescience, was on the supranational role of the European Commission.

With this background, he ought to have gone on to Leuven and adopted the politics of the CVP (now CD&V). But something, perhaps his experience of seeing people work punishingly hard for little return, turned him towards the socialist party – at the time a single party straddling both sides of the language divide. By his own account, he lost his faith when he saw the hypocrisy of the people who "tried to saddle us with all sorts of principles which they themselves did not live by."

Van Miert was a contemporary of

Willy Claes and Louis Tobback, themselves the product of poor backgrounds, and together they helped bring about a split in the socialist party. Van Miert would go on to lead the Flemish wing for 12 years.

It was a great time for the socialists (SP), culminating in the 28% score obtained in the federal elections of 1984 – better than anything before or since. Under Van Miert, it cut some of its ties to the unions and began to turn its attention outwards. Van Miert became a committed European, sitting in the European Parliament from 1979 to 1985.

→ Continued on page 3

Riding the wave

We take it for granted, this avant-garde art, this strange and challenging work that infiltrates the theatres of Flanders. But it was not always so

JACQUELINE FLETCHER

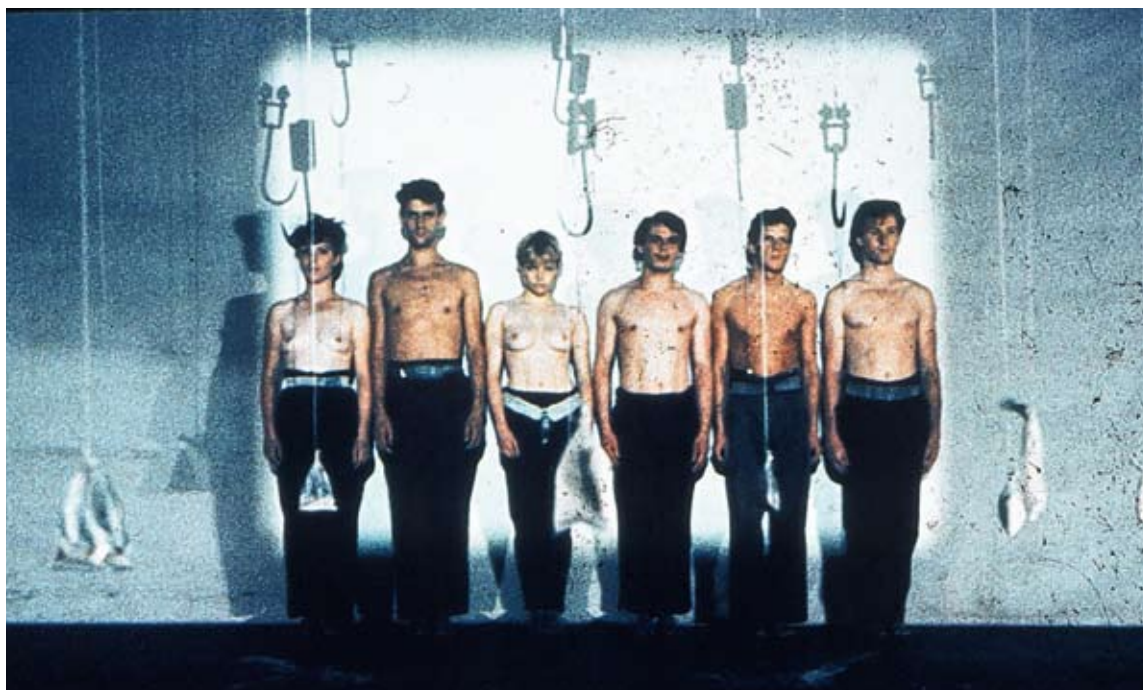
At festivals and biennales across the globe, you find their names: Jan Fabre, Jan Lauwers, Guy Cassiers, Ivo van Hove, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Alain Platel. They are the children of "the Flemish Wave", and they have inspired a new generation which continues the innovation and eclecticism that has become characteristic of the Flemish performing arts.

The term Flemish Wave was coined during the 1980s to describe the work of this radical group of Belgian choreographers and theatre-makers, who began not just pushing, but eradicating, the boundaries of a moribund

local tradition. They have now not only changed the face of the Flemish arts scene but influenced it the world over.

Rebellion first came, naturally enough, in the 1960s. And it came (ahem) from a Frenchman. The public response to companies visiting the Brussels World Exhibition in 1958 prompted a daring new development. The then-director of De Munt asked Maurice Béjart, a controversial French dancer/choreographer, to form a new company here in Brussels. In 1961, Ballet du XXe Siècle, or Ballet of the Twentieth Century, was born.

→ Continued on page 5



Jan Fabre's company Troubelyn in *This Is Theatre Like It Was To Be Expected and Foreseen* (1982), which changed the face of Belgian performing arts

CONTENTS

News 2-3

- ♦ News in brief
- ♦ Pirates release crew of Flemish dredger
- ♦ The week in figures
- ♦ Fifth Column

Feature 5

- ♦ The Flemish wave: theatre has never been the same

Focus 6

- ♦ Flemish companies at international festivals

Business 7

- ♦ North Sea windmills up and running
- ♦ Biz profile: Digix
- ♦ Week in Business

Arts 8-9

- ♦ Pink power: Mega Mindy's first film
- ♦ Sifting through the music fests

Active 10

- ♦ Coronation celebration in Tongeren
- ♦ Culture news

Living 11

- ♦ Fashion shows introduce tomorrow's star designers

Agenda 13-15

- ♦ Three pages of arts and events

Back page 16

- ♦ Face of Flanders: Jasper Erkens, boy wonder
- ♦ Talking Dutch: *badjas* – our language expert looks at advertising
- ♦ The Last Word: what they're saying in Flanders

News in brief

An extension of the **smoking ban** to cover all cafes seemed less likely to be introduced last week after several parties withdrew support. At present the ban covers only cafes where cooked food is served, but many support a full ban. Some cafes have given up serving food to escape the ban. Nathalie Muylle, the CD&V politician who has proposed the bill, said she was disappointed that economic motives were considered more important than health.

Nine prisoners in Hasselt have started legal action against the prison's authorities because short-ages are forcing them to **wear the same underpants** for days at a time. While the prisoners accept they have to serve their punishment, their lawyer said, they demand to be able to do so with some dignity.

Anyone caught throwing a cigarette butt to the ground in Blankenberge this summer could face a fine of up to €125, under a new tougher **littering policy** in the coastal town. The same goes for vomit, dog faeces and other rubbish. And feeding seagulls is also illegal, the city council said.

Justice minister Stefaan De Clerck **is to cut months off of the sentences** of some convicted criminals to allow them to be released before the summer weather takes hold. De Clerck said that this will ease prison overcrowding and reduce the risk of riots, which happen more often in hot weather.

The authorities at Brussels National Airport have warned of **long delays** this summer as a result of increased security measures, including asking passengers to remove their shoes. Departing passengers should turn up two hours before take-off, a spokesman said, and three hours before long-haul flights.

The country's first-ever **blind judge** took the oath of office last week before the Antwerp court of appeal. Bart Hagen, 32, is from Turnhout and served his judicial internship in Mechelen. He is now appointed to a five-year term in the court of first instance in the Antwerp-Limburg jurisdiction. Hagen will have an assistant and voice software to transcribe his case files into speech.



© Reporters

Flemish TV personality Yasmine takes her own life

Flemish pop singer and television presenter Yasmine committed suicide on 25 June. She was 37.

Yasmine, whose given name was Hilde Rens, had been part of the Flemish music and media scene for 18 years, since her debut album *Mooi zo (Beautiful That Way)* in 1991. She went on to make 10 more albums, including *Yasmine houdt woord (Yasmine Keeps Her Word)*, a compilation of poetry set to music, which released last February.

A singer of Dutch lyrics, Yasmine was particularly known for translating the songs of Leonard Cohen in her 2004 album *Vandaag (het morgen van gisteren)*, or *Today (The Tomorrow of Yesterday)*. Critics and fans alike were impressed with her ability to portray the famous Canadian songwriter's lyrics with an equal degree of empathy and passion. She surprised and impressed again with *Licht ontvlambaar (Highly Flammable)* in 2006, her first authentic rock album.

Directly following her first record, Yasmine popped up on TV, first as the host of *Tien om te Zien (Ten to See)*, a sort of Flemish *Top of the Pops*. She was on television almost constantly, either singing or hosting, and was extremely popular as a co-host of *De Rode loper* for seven years. She was also a long-time DJ for Radio Donna and wrote columns in both *De Morgen* and *Het Nieuwsblad*.

But Yasmine was equally well known for being an out lesbian, one of a very few out Flemish celebrities. She became a role model for the gay and lesbian community and was voted Most Important Belgian Holebi (a term for Homosexual, Lesbian and Bisexual) in 2005.

In 2003, Yasmine married Marianne Dupon, under a shower of flashbulbs. Dupon, who had become famous locally for winning the Flemish version of *The Mole*, gave birth to the couple's daughter two years ago. Dupon left Yasmine last April for another woman, taking their daughter with her, and Yasmine is reported to have been despondent. Her colleagues and fans alike noticed a dramatic weight loss, though the celebrity did not slow down her daily television appearances.

Yasmine had been staying with her sister in Kontich, between Mechelen and Antwerp, after the separation with Dupon. When her sister arrived home on 25 June and could not find Yasmine, she eventually called the police, who discovered Yasmine's body nearby. She had hanged herself from a tree.

In the 24 hours after her death, reactions from friends, colleagues and journalists have poured in. All knew Yasmine was suffering but did not see this coming out of the normally cheerful and emotionally strong woman. *De Morgen* published two pages of reactions and tributes. Bart Steenhaut, journalist and friend of Yasmine, wrote an open letter to her: "The idea that we will not see each other anymore is incomprehensible. If Leonard Cohen sings in Antwerp: 'Hey, That's No Way to Say Goodbye', I'll think of you. And hope that you have really – *really* – made the right decision for yourself. A kiss, a hug. And sleep well."

www.yasmine.be



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The number of dollar millionaires in Belgium fell more than 17% to 59,600 last year. The collapse of two major banks, Fortis and Dexia, was largely to blame



Karel Van Miert dies at 67

→ Continued from page 1

In the 1980s, Van Miert was a prominent critic of the decision to site cruise missiles on Belgian soil, leading to fierce protests, which at one point brought 400,000 people onto the streets of Brussels. In 1988, however, he changed his position on the missiles (though he never admitted doing so) to allow the SP to form part of the new government coalition under prime minister Wilfried Martens.

The following year, Van Miert became a member of the European Commission under Jacques Delors, where he was responsible for transport. There, his quiet determination and command of his portfolio led to him being entrusted in 1993 with competition policy. The committed social-

ist was now the man corporate Europe feared the most. Under his defiant leadership, the commission took on companies like Boeing, Coca-Cola, Alitalia, Volkswagen and WorldCom.

The end came in 1999, when the Santer commission, the third in which Van Miert had served, was brought down by the shady affairs of French commissioner Edith Cresson. The European Parliament voted the whole commission out, and Van Miert, who was never under any suspicion, was part of the collective departure.

He had brushed up against corruption before. In the last year of his chairmanship of the party, in 1988, the defence ministry under Walloon socialist Guy Coëme took kickbacks in the purchase of a fleet of helicopters from the Italian manufacturer Agusta. Some of the

money made its way to the Flemish party. Frank Vandenbroucke, who succeeded Van Miert to the chairmanship, resigned as foreign minister, and Willy Claes, Van Miert's old mentor, resigned as secretary-general of Nato.

Van Miert himself was above suspicion, but the position of party national secretary Carla Galle, who was by then his partner, was less clear. Van Miert defended her, and split with his old comrades. The breach lasted years, until Steve Stevaert as incoming party chairman in 2003 reached out to him.

"Yesterday I lost a friend and a comrade," Stevaert commented when the news of Van Miert's death broke. Stevaert was only one of the many political figures from all over the spectrum who reacted along the same lines. Van Miert

was "a personal friend," said prime minister Herman Van Rompuy. He was "a good, personal friend," said former prime minister Wilfried Martens. For EU Commissioner Louis Michel, he was "a true pillar of European construction." Guy Verhofstadt found him "a visionary."

In his last days, other than several lucrative company directorships, he was a gardener. His garden was his paradise, with 200 fruit trees, including many heirloom varieties, and an equally rich vegetable garden with dozens of strains of tomatoes and squash.

Van Miert, who as a minister of state was entitled to a state funeral, was cremated at the weekend in the presence of only a small group of family and close friends. ♦

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

Fighting federalism

Prime minister Herman Van Rompuy (CD&V) has introduced one of those phrases that tends to stick around: "fighting federalism". He used the term in a specific context: since Europe rejected the Belgian budget, the federal government will need all the help it can get to redress this. Not just this once, but for the years to come.

With the Brussels and Walloon regions permanently struggling for money, Van Rompuy looks to Flanders for help. Nothing unusual so far. However, his warning that there is "no room for fighting federalism" indicates that he is not too sure that Flanders will lend a helping hand this time. Now that is new.

In Belgium, there is no hierarchy between the federal and regional level and that of the communities. In theory that is – in the past, the regions and communities have always been "co-operative". As they were usually governed by the same parties that also made up the federal coalition, they always did what was expected of them.

Things have changed, though. With competences such as Education, Employment and Economy and more means flowing to the regional level, it has become harder and harder to shove the regions and communities aside. The 2004 Flemish government agreement even included a passage about Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde, the bilingual constituency Flanders wants to see split. In that case, Flanders was telling the federal level what to do, a remarkable reversal of roles.

What worries Van Rompuy most is the "assertive Flemish policy" (best to remember that phrase, too) the nationalist N-VA wants to introduce. This boils down to Flanders assuming its competences to a maximum degree and basically telling the federal government to back off.

The Flemish government starving out the federal government; it probably won't come this far. CD&V and SP.A, set to be part of the Flemish coalition, will not let this happen because, for one, the federal level is responsible for the legal pensions being paid out. Also CD&V has nothing to gain with an open struggle between its two leaders, Van Rompuy and minister-president Kris Peeters.

As Marianne Thyssen, the CD&V party president, said: the federal government, that's us, too.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

The non-profit organisation Kind & Gezin (Child and Family) last week released its 2008 report on the state of children in Flanders



70,187

babies born in Flanders in 2008, up 4.1% from 2007 and the first time in 18 years that the total has passed 70,000

20,983

children born in Antwerp province, where the increase was 4.4%

79.7%

babies were of Belgian origin, followed by Morocco, Turkey and the Netherlands

28 years

average age of a Flemish woman when she has her first child. Half of all women surveyed thought the age should be slightly lower: between 21 and 25

1.82

average number of children per woman

65%

Number of newborns that are breast-fed

198,249

children under 3 in the region, representing 3.22% of the population

2

ideal number of children for the majority of Flemish men and women (more than 60%), followed by three, then one, four and none

46.9%

Number of first births for the mother in 2008, while 35% were second and 12% were third children

110.5

Flanders birth index for 2008 (2000=100), continuing a steady climb. Countries under 100 include Germany, the Netherlands and Portugal. Ireland tops the EU list at 147.3



The Flemish-owned dredger Pompei and its crew have been released by the Somali pirates who have had control of them for more than two months

Pirates release Belgian hostages

The crew of a Belgian ship held hostage by Somali pirates has been released after the payment of a ransom. The crew of the Pompei, a stone dredger owned by the Aalst-based Jan de Nul Group, was this week heading for a safe port, where they would be met by a team of six detectives from the Brussels police. Crimes committed on board Belgian-registered vessels in international waters fall within the jurisdiction of the Belgian legal system.

Members of the crew were reported to be healthy and unhurt after 71 days of captivity, during which time a negotiator brought in by the dredging company dealt with the ransom negotiations. The pirates' first demand was €8 million, later parlayed down to a figure thought to be €2 million. The money was dropped off in the sea on Sunday, 28 June.

The Pompei was sailing from Dubai to Durban in South Africa when it was attacked by pirates in a small motorboat, 185 kilometres north of

the Seychelles and 1,350 kilometres off the Somali coast – a distance that was, ironically, considered safe from pirates.

The ship's Dutch captain radioed the departure of the last of the pirates on Sunday morning just before 6.00. Later, one of the two Flemish officers on board contacted his wife by satellite phone to assure her all was well. "He sounded emotional," she said. "Happy, too, but tired."

A six-man team of Belgian investigators made immediate preparations to meet the crew, which also includes four Croatians and three Filipinos, when they arrived at a specified location, thought to be the Port of Salalah in Oman. The crew will be interviewed and the ship searched for evidence.

"There are hopeful signs that we may be able to identify the pirates," said federal prosecutor Johan Delmulle. "If not all of them, then some at least." ♦

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Riding the wave

The very first alternative company blasted the door open for young Flemish artists

➔ *Continued from page 1*

Béart brought to the capital the scintillating eclecticism inherent in the culture of his native Marseille and an intellectual curiosity inherited from his philosopher father. In searching for dance that would express the *zeitgeist*, he liberated it from deadly traditions.

Béjart, who died in 2007, was interdisciplinary in his literary, musical and scenographic sources. He was also a visionary, who perhaps anticipated globalisation. Moreover, he set the tone for the liberation of the body and the mind and the independence of the creative imagination. This rich diversity remains characteristic of Flemish performing arts.

There was no turning back. By the 1970s, prospective theatre-makers rejected the conventional conservatoire training and opted for academies of fine arts. Jan Fabre, Jan Lauwers and Guy Cassiers created their first work in the margins – in the streets or in small theatres – integrating text with movement and making a strong visual impact. Meanwhile, Josse de Pauw (who recently finished a tour of his show *De Versie Claus*) brought Jacques Lecoq's style of physical theatre to Flanders.

In dance, Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker formed Rosas, and Jan Lauwers gathered together a collective, first called Epigonontheater and later Needcompany. Both are now famous, at home and abroad.

Dance flourished largely in Brussels, where established theatres could provide the necessary stages. However, the existence of many small theatres throughout Flanders ensured fledgling theatre-makers the spaces and audiences necessary for ongoing experimentation. The rapid growth of festivals and networks facilitated the cross-fertilisation of new work.

While home-grown talent was being nurtured, touring circuits and festivals were also bringing the international avant-garde to Belgian cities. Young dancers were influenced by the German neo-expressionists (such as Pina Bausch), American postmodern dance and Japanese butoh.

An army of one

Undoubtedly, Jan Fabre is the most controversial of the Flemish Wave. Multi-disciplinary is an understatement (let alone multi-talented); his art installations, theatre and dance (sometimes in combination) have been presented for the last 25 years at interna-

tional festivals, including Documenta, Avignon and the Venice Biennale (where right now his monumental installation of a half-buried brain is turning heads).

Fabre is also the only contemporary artist in the world to have had a solo show among the permanent collection at the Louvre and was the Avignon Festival's Artistic Associate in 2005. His work elicits both booing and standing ovations; dubbed an *enfant terrible*, he was recently awarded an honorary doctorate by Antwerp University.

The 50-year-old began by performing his own pieces in his parents' home in a working-class neighbourhood of Antwerp. His performances are radical rejections of representational theatre.

work ranges from political street theatre through to Shakespeare adaptations. Like Fabre, he does it all: performance, choreography, writing, film, installations. He has exhibited at Bozar and worked closely with Brussels' excellent Kaaaitheater. In 1999, he created the Needlab to present work-in-progress. Members of the collective, in particular Ellen Grace Barkin and Vivianne de Muynck, create independent work of a staggering versatility. Their award-winning trilogy *Sad Face/ Happy Face* will be featured at the Avignon Festival this month. (See story, page 6)

Last year at the Festival d'Automne in Paris, I experienced one of the most frightening moments in the theatre in my 40-year career. In

opera, *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, based on the novel by Nobel-Prize-winning author Yasanuri Kawabata, recently premiered in De Munt in Brussels before embarking on a world tour. He will soon be directing Wagner's *Ring der Nibelungen* in Milan's La Scala and in Berlin.

Appointed artistic director of the Ro Theatre in Rotterdam in 1999, Cassiers returned to his native Antwerp three years ago as artistic director of Toneelhuis. Immediately, he dispensed with the usual format for municipal theatres and invited six performing artists, including Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Wayn Traub and Benjamin Verdonck, to join him as the core creative team, thus securing support for their projects.

into collaborations with performers and artists such as Britain's Akram Khan and Anthony Gormley. His six-month collaboration with Chinese Shaolin monks led last year to the award-winning *Sutra*, which is indicative of his quest for a personal and theatrical exploration of identity through a unity of mind and body.

And then there's Wim Vandekeybus. His vision, translated into risky performances, is based on those animal instincts our bodies have forgotten through secure daily routines. His dancers push themselves quite literally to the brink of danger; the threat to the body is averted when the imagination is liberated and trust in the group is re-established. Vandekeybus' work is invigorat-



Wim Vandekeybus' brilliant theatre/dance fusion Menske took a post-apocalyptic trip through underground Brussels

a non-narrative blend of movement, text and visually stunning scenography, striving to expose theatrical conventions and negate the illusion of reality.

He can seduce and enchant while provoking and repelling. Nudity and bodily fluids often shock, but, throughout his oeuvre, Fabre is concerned with exploring the vulnerability and discipline of the body. In his dance pieces, he expresses the disparity between the idealised, civilised and controlled body and, alternatively, the unstable, undisciplined body subsumed in desires.

Fabre's sculptures made from green incandescent exoskeletons of beetles reflect his preoccupation with human fragility. He famously covered a ceiling and chandelier of the Royal Palace in Brussels with the self-same organic material.

Theatre meets performance art

Pioneer status is also easily applied to Jan Lauwers, whose

a new piece called *Mephisto For Ever*, the character of Heinrich Himmler was delivering a speech, spitting outraged into a microphone. Behind him, on a huge screen, his face was projected in Warholesque fashion – first one face, then two, four; the image replicated rapidly, and the rancorous little dictators proliferated until I squirmed, as if they would overwhelm me, the theatre, society, the world. At the same time, a shrill, electronic humming grew in intensity as the man screeched even louder. Director Guy Cassiers had captured our fears in a nutshell.

A graduate of Antwerp's Academy of Fine Arts, Cassiers' powerful blend of direction and visual technology seeks to give audiences a profound and sensual experience. A lover of literature, his stage adaptations include *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, *Anna Karenina* and a Proust cycle.

Cassiers, 48, is one of the most exciting directors working in Europe at the moment. His new

Cassiers takes advantage of his role as the director of one of Flanders' most important theatres for new work both to stimulate talent and reflect the social, cultural and political preoccupations of his community.

The next wave

Toneelhuis' *Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui* embodies the characteristics of the new Flemish Wave of choreographers, while retaining a unique vision and a very individual approach to the body. Like his colleagues, he has embarked on a continuous quest for new formal languages, interdisciplinary approaches and multicultural sources.

A Moroccan-Flemish mix, Cherkaoui is comfortable with difference and new quests. Trained at De Keersmaekers' school PARTS, he later choreographed for Alain Platel's *Les Ballets C de la B*. Cherkaoui is a wanderer, happy producing work in Monte Carlo, Geneva or London and entering

ing in its acrobatic virtuosity and spectacular physical energy, not to mention the sense of risk.

Last, but not least, Alain Platel has played a major role in stimulating interdisciplinary performance in Belgium. He founded the socially-committed Les Ballets C de la B in 1984, allowing young choreographers to explore new movement-based languages. Watching Platel's magnificent *Pietà* was like seeing a canvas by Hieronymus Bosch come to life.

The success of the Flemish Wave is due to talent, vision and Belgium's visual arts culture, not to mention its surreal humour. But, equally, it owes its existence to the growth of a Flemish Wave of alternative management and production. A supportive infrastructure facilitated marginal works, while decentralisation of theatre spaces enhanced touring, dissemination and collaboration. ♦

➡ See accompanying story on page 6

➡ **www.vti.be**

Catching the wave

As music festivals take over Flanders, theatre companies are moving out – to the biggest international performance festivals in Europe

There is a town on the banks of the Rhone enclosed within mediaeval ramparts, boasting an awesome 14th-century papal palace, crumbling Renaissance churches, decaying Italianate residences and a general air of faded glory. For three weeks every year, Avignon is transformed into the most vibrant, daring and bustling performance festival in Europe, host to the alumni of the avant-garde and co-producer of major new works.

The Avignon Festival is 63 years old but has kept abreast of artistic trends, often generating controversies that engender fury among audiences, the press and cultural critics. One such year was 2005, when the Artistic Associate, Jan Fabre, was criticised for an audacious programme of interdisciplinary postmodern performance and dance, replete with nudity and violence, and, moreover, for inviting his chums from the Flemish Wave to join him at the most important cultural event in Europe.

The press were foaming at the mouth, and audiences complained that the festival had betrayed the ideals of its founder, the saintly Jean Vilar, a post-war theatre-maker whose innovations retained the tenets of classical theatre. Books were written; reports made for national television; panels of experts debated the issues.

In short, it was wonderful.

Fabre's festival precipitated a long-overdue scrutiny of the crucial issues affecting the arts. What responsibilities should the cultural industry be fulfilling towards the taxpayer? Should corporate sponsorship be allowed to dictate to the arts? Who are the audiences? Is art entertainment? Should festivals play an educational role in developing public taste for new art forms?

In Avignon, audiences are participants. Press conferences are open to the general public; visitors confront the artists at special events; and debates on the state of the arts and its role take place on an almost daily basis. Avignon School of Art becomes a dedicated audience zone, where one can relax with the reviews or lie down and have a snooze.

The 2005 furore was a storm in a teacup. The Flemish Wave may have arrived *en masse*, but Avignon is host every year to such names as Wim Vandekeybus, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Guy Cassiers, Kris Verdonck, Alain Platel, Jan Decorte, Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, Benjamin Verdonck, and Fabre himself. They are making some of the most exciting work in Europe at the moment, and Avignon simply programmes the best.

This year, Jan Lauwers' multi-

lingual and multidisciplinary *Sad Face/Happy Face* trilogy is on offer in its entirety (*Isabella's Room*, *The Lobster Shop*, *The Stag's House*). Devised by the remarkably dynamic Needcompany, written and directed by Lauwers, and with a magnificent performance from Viviane de Muynck, *Isabella's Room* has become a legend, touring throughout Europe for several years (see the clip on YouTube). *The Lobster Shop*, meanwhile, was one of the festival's hits in 2006.

Jan Fabre's contribution this year, *The Orgy of Tolerance* – which caused some Flemish audiences members to walk out and has generated controversy in Paris – will be onstage in Avignon before moving to Vienna in August. Johan Simons and Paul Koek (a Dutch/Flemish team) have a new musical theatre production of Odön van Horvath's *Casimir et Caroline*.

Scintillating performance in the balmy air of the late evening in an open-air cloister or papal palace, days spent lounging on terraces under blue skies or wandering twisting streets and visiting extra-curricular (and free) activities. If you can see yourself there, then come to Avignon – and let Flemish artists know just how you feel about them.

JAQUELINE FLETCHER

→ www.festival-avignon.com

Next stop, Edinburgh

"Homecoming" is one of the themes running through this year's Edinburgh International Festival, and so *The Return of Ulysses* couldn't be more appropriate.

The festival's director saw the Royal Ballet of Flanders' production in Antwerp, loved it and invited the company to bring it to Edinburgh. It will be the first time the production, which premiered in 2006, is staged abroad.

The ballet is an original creation by choreographer Christian Spuck and is loosely based on Homer's *The Odyssey*. The story is told from the perspective of Penelope, who has been waiting 20 years for her husband Ulysses to return from fighting in the Trojan Wars. However, when Ulysses finally comes back, his wife doesn't recognise him.

"How absurd is that?" asks Kathryn Bennetts, artistic director of the Royal Ballet. The story is a way for Spuck to express life's absurdities, and it's told with humour – "a bit tongue-in-cheek," Bennetts says.

The entire company of 52 dancers will go to Edinburgh, where they will be joined by Welsh soprano Elin Manahan Thomas, who Bennetts describes as "a real draw". The Scottish Chamber Orchestra will play the Henry Purcell music that accompanies the ballet.

Collaboration seems to be the flavour of the day in Edinburgh, in fact: the Collegium Vocale Gent will also join forces with the Champs-Élysées Orchestra and the choir of Chigiana Siena Academy to perform Felix Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. Rehearsals for the project, which coincides with the anniversary of Mendelssohn's birth, will start in early July and then the oratorio will be performed across Europe during the summer, including at Edinburgh.

The conductor is Philippe Herreweghe, and he is the driving force behind the collaboration. Herreweghe founded the Ghent-based choir in 1970 and the Champs-Élysées Orchestra in 1991; these are "his ensembles, his children," said Jens Van Durme, a spokesperson for Collegium Vocale Gent. Every year the choir and the orchestra come together for at least one project.

This year, Ghent-born Herreweghe has broadened the choir's horizons even further by starting a new collaboration with the Chigiana music academy in the Italian town of Siena. The conductor will hold master classes on *Elijah* – students will follow the rehearsals, and new singers will work under Herreweghe for the first time. This co-operation helps achieve one of the conductor's goals: to work on a larger repertoire for both choir and orchestra.

The Royal Ballet of Flanders and Collegium Vocale Gent are internationally known ensembles and touring is a regular part of their work. Edinburgh, however, is more than just one more stop in their hectic schedules. "There's a tremendous atmosphere in the city," which is packed with "arts-minded people," says Van Durme. "It's an honour to be there; you know that not everyone is invited."

Unfortunately for the musicians and dancers, there isn't much, if any, time for catching other events and shows. It's more a matter of soaking up the atmosphere. Still, there will be a few lucky singers from Collegium Vocale Gent who will be able to explore what else is on offer since they perform a concert of Haydn songs before the rest of the group arrives.

For Bennetts, an Australian, it will be the second time that the Royal Ballet of Flanders is going to Edinburgh under her directorship. She's also a big fan of the festival, but if she could change one thing about it? The weather could be a bit kinder this time, she says. ♦

ANNA JENKINSON

→ www.eif.co.uk



The Royal Ballet of Flanders takes the cheeky *Return of Ulysses* to Edinburgh (above); Needcompany performs the entire *Sad Face/Happy Face* trilogy at Avignon (left)

North Sea wind energy switches on

Thorntonbank turbines break new ground

The first six electricity-generating windmills came into service last week off the North Sea coast of Blankenberge. Operating company C-Power claimed a triple world record: these are not only the largest wind turbines in the world, they also have the deepest foundations in the sea bed and are installed farther out to sea than any other – 28.7 kilometres out on the Thornton sandbank.

The start-up of the turbines is some six months later than originally planned, largely as a result of weather conditions. The turbine park will produce 1,000 gigawatt hours of electricity a year, enough to provide for 600,000 people, C-Power said.

Because wind is a clean and renewable energy source, the turbines will represent a savings in CO2 emissions of 450,000 tonnes a year, or the carbon equivalent of a strip of forest 15 kilometres wide running the full length of the coastline.

The turbines themselves, considered an eyesore in other locations, will barely be visible on the horizon. This is despite their being 198 metres tall at the highest point – as high as a 45-storey building and nearly double



The new energy-producing windmills off the Flemish coast will save 450,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year

the height of the Atomium.

The construction was a challenge: first, a four-metre layer had to be scraped from the sandbank 27 metres below the surface. Then, a metre-layer of small stones had to be laid down, followed by a 3,000-tonne hollow concrete construction shaped like a champagne bottle, filled with another 3,000 tonnes of sand. The windmills were built on top of this – in the neck of the bottle, as it were.

The windmills are connected to Ostend by a cable 38 kilometres long and 22 centimetres thick, weighing a total of 3,000 tonnes and buried two metres in the sea floor. Laying the cable was the hardest part, project leader Luc Ponnet said. "We really underestimated what a rubbish-tip the bottom of the sea is off our coast. It's unbelievable what's dumped out there – from concrete blocks to steel constructions." ♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Banking • Dexia

A French couple has officially requested that parliamentary immunity be lifted for newly-elected MEP Jean-Luc Dehaene to allow him to answer charges of giving out misleading information about Dexia. In addition to Dehaene, who is Dexia's chairman, four other current or former Dexia executives have been summoned. As a member of the European Parliament, Dehaene enjoys immunity from prosecution.

Beer • Beck's

The German beer group, part of the AB-Inbev empire, is attracting interest from Germany's Oetker food group, said to have made a €1 billion offer. AB-Inbev has declined the unsolicited bid, claiming that Beck's is worth much more.

Bio-fuels • Alcofina

Ackermans & Van Haaren, the Antwerp-based holding company, has acquired a minority stake in Alcofina, the world's leading ethanol trading company. The move has been sparked by the growing interest in ethanol as a component in bio-fuels.

Cars • Consumer Report

Belgium is no longer one of the best European countries to buy a car, according to figures released by the European Consumer Centre. Due to currency fluctuations, Britain, Sweden and Poland have become the cheapest, followed by Finland, the first of the euro-zone group.

Energy • Electrabel

Belgium's largest energy group plans to invest €1.2 billion to build a coal and bio-mass fired power station near Rotterdam.

Fuel • Inergy Automotive

Inergy Automotive, the affiliate of the Brussels-based Solvay group, is building two car fuel supply systems production units in China and India. The first, near Beijing, is on the site of a large Hyundai assembling plant, while the other, close to Chennai, will supply a Japanese car manufacturer.

Port • Stevedoring International

Antwerp Stevedoring International has inaugurated the country's first "All Weather Terminal" in Antwerp. The new €29 million facility includes a covered berthing for the loading of weather sensitive products such as steel. The company expects to invest a total of €45 million to develop a 300,000 square-metre terminal.

Supermarkets • Colruyt

The Halle-based discount supermarket group is poised to become the country's largest retailer in 2009, ahead of Carrefour and Delhaize. The company expects to open additional stores this year and is seeking to hire up to 1,500 more employees.

Profile

DEREK BLYTH



Dan Seidman

Digix

Dan Seidman gave up the blue skies of South Africa to start up a digital marketing business in Antwerp. It sounds like a sentence gone backwards, doesn't it? But "after 10 years in Johannesburg, I'd had my fill of excitement," says Dan Seidman. "I miss my swimming pool and the 330 days of sunshine a year, but I sleep soundly at night. That is priceless."

The Canada-born businessman could have moved anywhere in the world, but he eventually settled on Antwerp. "I have always liked the town," he says. "It has a cool vibe." And, more importantly, he feels secure there. "You can walk through the centre of town at 2.00 and feel safe."

He set up Digix, which, besides digital marketing, does communications strategies. "I was the first to have Bluetooth platforms up and running in Antwerp."

Digix specialises in marketing campaigns using Bluetooth-enabled platforms at major events like Batibouw, Business Solutions, Antwerp Pride and Tour & Taxis. "Almost everyone has Bluetooth on their phones here, but it has not been used much so far.

With Bluetooth, people arriving at a trade fair can receive information on their phones, watch short video clips or let their children play games that are sent by event organisers. And it's all free.

Seidman has now built up a list of customers, including former Miss Belgium Ilse de Meulemeester. She is Seidman's brand ambassador with several collaboration projects for the brands she represents like Gervi, Nescafe and Veuve Cliquot.

He recently scored a first in Belgium by sending out a *Star Trek* movie preview using Blue-

tooth at the Brussels Festival of Fantasy Film.

Unlike some foreign entrepreneurs, Seidman isn't too concerned about the red tape in Belgium. "There is a lot of paperwork to get through," he admits, "but the system works. It took four months to get everything in order, but I now have a BVBA [or private limited company]. People take that seriously. It means that your company is properly capitalised."

Even the high tax rate doesn't particularly get to him. "Taxes are higher in Belgium, but you get something in return. Where in Africa taxes disappear into a black hole, here you have a very good health service and excellent public transport. So you see where the money goes."

→ www.digix.be



The power of pink

Mega Mindy isn't the perfect role model, but she's the best Flemish girls have at the moment

ALAN HOPE

There's one good thing about Mega Mindy – and it's a really big thing: she's a hero for little girls, in a world that offers them little more than frothy princesses and K3.

Mega Mindy is the star of the Studio 100 TV series and of the new film *Het Geheim van Mega Mindy* (*The Secret of Mega Mindy*), which opens this week across Flanders to certain success.

Free Souffriau

If Free Souffriau hadn't been born of flesh and blood, Studio 100 would have had to invent her.

She graduated from the Antwerp City Ballet Institute, by which time she already had roles in musicals like *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Sound of Music* and *The Wizard of Oz*, and others followed regularly. In 2005 she was diagnosed with cancer of the lymphatic system, but the following year she was already back to work – on stage in *Pinocchio* and on TV in *Mega Mindy*.



She began to perform as herself in the TV show *Steracteur, Sterartiest*, in which actors get up and sing. Since she had a slight advantage over most of her competitors, she won easily, raising €35,000 for a cancer charity.

In another TV show, *Zo is er maar één*, presented by the late lamented Yasmine (see page 2), Souffriau performed songs by Ann Christy, a Flemish singer of the 1970s who died of cancer in 1984, reaching the final. The experience encouraged her to record a CD of covers of Ann Christy songs, which she then took on tour around the region. Last year she starred opposite Jelle Cleymans in the smash-hit musical *Daens*.

Souffriau, 29, married a work colleague: Miguel Wiels is a composer for Studio 100 as well as being the long-time accompanist of Koen Crucke (Alberto from *Samson en Gert*) and the house pianist for channel één. The couple has a one-year-old son, whose name is Wolf.

→ www.freesouffriau.be

The story goes like this: Mieke is a police officer in a small town, who lives with her Opa and Oma (grandpa and grandma). She's painfully timid and in love with fellow officer Toby. There's a crime wave in town, but, luckily, when things get too much for the cops, Mieke transforms into a superhero with super strength, teleportation and cutting wisecracks.

That's basically the plot of every episode, and in the film the only difference is that there is a gang of baddies on the loose, freed from jail by Miss Volta, a villain with a heart like the core of a nuclear reactor. She incapacitates people with her Van Der Graaf-type apparatus, allowing her to steal untold riches.

Miss Volta is another very good thing. She's played by the flamboyantly-named Yolande Cabau van Kasbergen, and it's an in-joke that will go over the kids' heads that she speaks with

a Dutch accent sharp enough to slice your Gouda. She's brunette to Mindy's blonde, and shows a deal more décolleté, which is all the evidence we need that she's a bad 'un. The male characters are virtually extras. The commissioner is an imbecile; the bad guys about as gangstery as the Anthill Mob.

And then there's Toby. He's my one objection to the otherwise positive message of Mega Mindy, which is basically this: It's okay to have lovely hair and dress in pink so long as you're also kicking ass. He's the fatal flaw in the whole gorgeous feminist construction.

Because it turns out that Mega Mindy is not primarily concerned with fighting crime: her first concern is to get Toby. It appears that Studio 100 doesn't really want little girls to grow up proactive, independent and strong at all – they only want them to fall in love.

Toby, who's played by Louis Talpe, is attractive enough, but he's not good enough for Mindy for two reasons: 1) he's incompetent; 2) he's a work colleague. Hello? That's always a recipe for disaster.

I'll let you in on the secret of Mega Mindy: it's not that inside every shy little girl is a superhero waiting to come out, it's that she doesn't want Toby to know she's really only Mieke deep down.

Studio 100 will rake it in for the short time it takes for every little girl in Flanders to see it. Not one of them will mind that the screenplay (with five names attached, or three more than it took to write *Citizen Kane*) is a rehash of any episode of the TV series. It'll be enough that there will be a whole new range of merchandising, from bathrobes to sticking plasters to lunchboxes to costumes. ♦

→ www.studio100.be

Colouring contest!

Colour in our image of Mega Mindy for the chance to win a family ticket for four entries to *Het Geheim van Mega Mindy*. Winners will be chosen in five age categories: 0-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12 and over 12 (this includes you parents, so fire up those crayons).

Mail entry with age noted to:

Mega Mindy contest
Flanders Today
Gossetlaan 30
1702 Groot-Bijgaarden

All entries received by 8 July will be considered. Winners will be notified by 9 July.

Good taste, no thorns

The Cactus Festival in Bruges has survived the worst calamities, from prosecution for noise pollution to a flood. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger

CHRISOPHE VERBIEST

Going to the Cactus Festival in 2003, I wondered, like thousands of other music fans travelling to Bruges' Minnewaterpark, if I was going to hear the music. The festival had just been ordered to pay a fine of €3,750 to the owners of two neighbouring hotels who complained about the inconveniences caused by the event: people using their lawn as a public toilet, for instance, and noise pollution.

In the end the dispute was settled out of court before the appeal, but the whole business led to more vigilance about the volume of the music.

In the conflict, the sympathy vote went almost unanimously to Cactus. Not surprising — it always had a good reputation among music fans and (most) inhabitants of Bruges alike. Few festivals are so ideally situated: not the never-ending, impersonal pasture of Rock Werchter, neither the enclosed city squares of Marktrock in Leuven, but the nice Minnewaterpark with trees and a pond. It's situated at the outskirts of town, near the train station.

Where, from the second half of the

1990s on, most big Flemish festivals added a second stage — and sometimes a third, a fourth... — and shortened the length of the openings acts, Cactus still opts for one stage and almost never programs concerts of less than an hour. Which means that there are breaks between the concerts! Without music! Call me old-fashioned, but not to have to run from one stage to the other comes as a relief.

Not that there was any possibility to run during the accursed edition of 1998. Three days of pouring rain had turned the Minnewaterpark into a pool of mud in which the brave patrons still present were sinking slowly but steadily. It almost led to a financial catastrophe, but the festival overcame the problems and nowadays is safe and sound.

Against all odds, Cuban veteran Compay Segundo and Brazilian singer Marisa Monte warmed, with sizzling performances, the hearts of those brave ones. That must have been on Sunday, traditionally the world music day of the festival. At least, until a few years ago, because the division between world music and pop has now

been given up.

Although Cactus hasn't much world music in store anymore. That's a pity, but fans of adventurous rock have loads to look forward to. Don't be late on Sunday, for instance, since Japanese opening act Mono have amazing noisy soundscapes in store. Later that day, Calexico serves a tasty mélange of Americana, tex mex and mariachi, and The Magic Numbers transport you back to the Summer of Love.

Maybe you prefer, on Saturday, the searing rock of The Gutter Twins (aka Mark Lanegan and Greg "Afghan Whigs" Dulli) or the dreamy songs of Joan As Police Woman.

The top acts this year are Tracy Chapman, Paul Weller and Joss Stone. Those names reveal that Cactus (the name refers to the pub that, at the beginning of the 1980s, was the home of a radical-left action committee) isn't really the thorniest festival in Flanders; but it's never less than succulent. ♦

10-12 July

→ www.cactusfestival.be



Novastar rips it up at Cactus (above); La Cherga, a Balkan band that Sfinks calls "urban Gypsy dancefloor-killers" (below)

Best of the rest

The best music fests aren't necessarily the biggest

Sfinks Festival

Sfinks Festival in Boechout, a small village south of Antwerp, is one of Europe's most renowned world music festivals. It started out in 1976 as a folk fest, but from 1982 on it expanded its musical range. At a time when the term "world music" had still to come into vogue, it presented Manu Dibango and Youssou N'Dour.

With the growing interest in the genre in the 1990s, the festival boomed, but a few years ago Sfinks deliberately toned down. They still have a few big names on the line-up — this year, for instance, Natacha Atlas — but the festival is mainly looking for unknown talent.

If you're unfamiliar with, say, the dance music of Les Espoirs de Coronthie from Guinea or the ritualistic performances of Deba from Mayotte (the French overseas collectivity north of Madagascar), this plunge into the unknown turns Sfinks into the most adventurous big festival in Flanders.

Thanks to the Kidz Village, a widely varied world cultures market, where you can buy anything from sandals to musical instruments, and the presence of all flavours of the world cuisine, it's also a lot more than just a musical journey.

24-26 July

→ www.sfinks.be

Lokerse Feesten

Probably no other festival in Flanders, brings together such a diversity of acts as the Lokerse Feesten (in Lokeren, East Flanders). This is facilitated by the nature of the festival: it takes place during 10 consecutive evenings with three or four names on the bill.

So one evening the focus lies on dance acts, the next on British indie rock, and so on — although the connection is, at times, a bit loose (Novastar and Los Lobos, someone?). The Lokese Feesten has been around for 35 years, making it one of Flanders' longest-running music fests.

For awhile, the focus was on Belgian acts with some foreign names as a bonus. But since the beginning of this century, the orientation slowly changed. This has largely been due to marketing: two years ago, Marktrock in Leuven, also in August, chose for a more modest line-up, so the Lokerse Feesten makes sure it's the place to be for more mainstream pop acts that lack the hipness factor needed for Rock Werchter or aren't alternative enough for Pukkelpop. Think: Ray Davies, David Byrne, Simple Minds or Belgian veterans The Scabs.

31 July - 9 August

→ www.lokersefeesten.be



CULTURE
NEWS

An exhibition of works by Ostend artist **James Ensor** opened last weekend at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City. The show, which features some of the artist's best-known works, runs until 21 September, after which it moves to the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.

Flemish author **Saskia De Coster** faces charges for impersonating the former chairman of the farmers' organisation, the Boerenbond, when she wrote an opinion piece for *De Standaard* newspaper in September of last year. The piece was in reply to a defence of meat production by the current Boerenbond president. De Coster, who used to write a monthly column for the newspaper, faces a fine and a possible prison sentence.

A new cinema has opened at the Belgium Pier, Blankenberge's famous landmark. It is thought to be the only cinema in the world located under sea level. The cinema will show 3D and digital films. Playing this week: *Coraline* and *Transformers 2*.

The planned new **Museum aan de Stroom (MAS)** in Antwerp will open four months later than planned, culture alderman Philip Heylen announced last week. The delay, until April 2011, is caused by the difficulty of placing some glass elements of the new building's construction. Meanwhile, plans to open the new **Leuven city museum M** with a major show of the works of Rogier Van der Weyden could be affected if humidity measurements are not accepted by other museums. Most of the works of the 15th-century Flemish master are on loan from other museums, which insist on humidity measurements for the past year. "But in our case that's not possible," the exhibition's curator Veronique Vandekerckhove said.

Lara Mennes from Antwerp won this year's **Young Belgian Painters Award** for her photographs of former Limburg mining installations (below). The €25,000 prize was awarded last week at Bozar. Two of the nominated artists this year were from Brussels and the other four from elsewhere in Flanders. The ING prize, worth €12,500, went to the "mapping" paintings of Jeroen Hollander, also from Antwerp.



There's something about Mary

Three-quarter million people will descend on Tongeren next week for a procession that only takes place every seven years

DENZIL WALTON

It's a busy year for Tongeren. In May, the city's new Gallo-Roman museum finally opened to great acclaim. This month, its seven-yearly Coronation Celebration takes place. It's a week of religious fervour surrounding the veneration of the Virgin Mary that is expected to attract 700,000 visitors.

The roots of the Coronation date back centuries and are linked to the town's preoccupation with the mother of Jesus. It all started when Saint Maternus built a church in Tongeren in the 4th century AD, known as *Prima cis Alpes Beatae Virginis consecrata*, or the first church north of the Alps devoted to Mary.

Not surprisingly, the church built up quite a collection of holy relics. These include what priests claimed were a piece from the cross of Christ and a fragment of Mary's veil. From the 14th century onwards, Tongeren's relics have been displayed over a period of 16 days in July every seven years – an event that drew vast numbers of pilgrims from all over northwestern Europe. The celebrations culminated in a solemn procession in which the relics were carried around the town.

Also featuring strongly in the processions was a statue depicting Mary as "Cause of Our Joy". Cut from walnut, it weighs 70 kilograms and stands 1.6 metres tall. In 1889, Pope Leo XIII proclaimed that the statue should be crowned. Since then, this event has been marked by the Coronation

Celebration, which is known far beyond Flanders. In 2002, Tongeren welcomed more than half a million visitors during the week of celebrations.

Preparations for this year's event, which takes place from 5 to 12 July, began back in 2005 and involve more than 3,000 of the town's citizens. The coronation procession will pass through the streets of Tongeren four times: on 5 and 12 July at 15.00 and on 7 and 10 July at 19.00.

A key element of the procession is its account of the story of Mary – a sort of moving play. However, it was a recurring disappointment for the crowds of onlookers that they could only see a small portion of the performance as the procession passed by. So in 1960, the play was put on stage for the first time and was a huge success.

This year the play will be performed four times on the Grote Markt. Using texts from the Gospels supported by a huge sound and light installation, the story of Mary will be acted out from a large open-air platform. The coronation choir formed especially for the occasion from various local choirs will perform a new coronation mass composed by Kurt Bikkembergs.

Since 1960, the Coronation Celebration has told the story of Mary, but from a different angle and with a new theme each seven years. The Coronation theme is linked to what people are experiencing at the time. Thus, in 1988, amidst a feeling of despondency, the theme was "A sign

of Hope". In 1995, the organisers felt that society needed more humanity, gentleness and fairness, so the theme was "More Humanity with Mary". The 2002 theme was "Mary rejoices our hearts". For the 17th edition of the Coronation festivities this month, the Coronation Committee chose the theme "United around Mary".

"It is clear that our society needs unity and respect for everyone," says Georges Willemaers, chairman of the Coronation Committee. "Our community should form a single whole, since every culture and religious community should respect the individuality and the diversity of other cultures and religions. Mary remains familiar as a figure who gathers many people around her. The simple witness of Mary can contribute to a better coexistence in our contemporary society."

To many, of course, such ultra-veneration of Mary – arising from the 6th century Cult of the Virgin Mary – will appear rather over the top and mystifying. But for many devout Catholics, as well as the religiously neutral, the Coronation Celebration is a unique opportunity to witness one of Flanders' great religious spectacles, within the remarkable setting of Belgium's oldest town and featuring a cast of thousands. ♦

The coronation procession and evening play can be attended free of charge, but places on the tribune for the procession, or seats for the play, should be reserved in advance.

➡ www.kroningsfeesten.be

Showtime

The graduates of Flanders' fashion schools present their final collections

STÉPHANIE DUVAL

Whoever still doubts the importance or popularity of fashion in Flanders was living on a different planet these last few weeks. One after the other, Flanders' many fashion schools showcased their newest talent during spectacular – if occasionally long-winded – catwalk shows.

Thousands of fashion lovers, family, friends and journalists took to the halls of fashion academia to catch a glimpse of the next generation of Flemish designers. Notebook in hand, I sat with the other fashion journos in the front row at each and every one to make a distinction between the schools (is Antwerp *really* the best?) and to predict the next big thing.

Visiting all of the graduate shows at the end of the year is a task not to be taken lightly. Traditionally, every single student of every year gets to present what they have accomplished, so the shows tend to last up to four hours. Moreover, the themes of the different grade levels are the same almost everywhere: first-year students focus on volume and shape within one particular garment; second-years create a collection based on historical costumes; third years base theirs on ethnic costumes. It isn't until the graduates finally take the stage that you see truly free and boundless inspiration – the very identity of these new designers.

Luckily, patience was rewarded.

First up was La Cambre, the only school offering an extensive five-year education in fashion design. Yet the Brussels school is still often ranked second in place after Antwerp. La Cambre was founded in 1926 by Henry Van de Velde as an art school. Its fashion department didn't originate until the 1980s, at a time when Antwerp's first alumni – the infamous Antwerp Six – were already taking the world by storm.

This somewhat explains La Cambre's reputation of runner-up. But the school has been catching up lately, as more and more of its graduates start their own labels to critical acclaim. Sandrina Fasoli,

Cathy Pill and Valeria Sinouchkina's Girls from OMSK are recent examples.

La Cambre's style is sometimes regarded as too much on the artistic side, too out of touch with the fashion world. But in recent years, students have started designing actual clothes instead of works of art, many of which can be worn straight off the catwalk. It's a slightly more commercial approach, and the younger students are still struggling with this a little, but the graduates are clearly attuned to this delicate balance. Mansour Badjoko wa Lileko in particular made a very fashionable and wearable menswear collection, and we could definitely see Lucile Puton's designs end up in avant-garde boutiques.

In the same weekend, the students of Sint-Niklaas Academy of Fine Art showcased their work. Going from one show to the other, the difference for the spectator could not be greater. Whereas the atmosphere at La Cambre was rather dark, a little mysterious and generally very serious, the vibe at Sint-Niklaas was much lighter and more spirited. The fashion department at this academy offers part-time schooling, so its students all have jobs and lives outside of their passion for fashion. To them, this is an extra, a way to channel creativity, and the show felt like the apotheosis of that creative outlet.

And yet the level of the work in Sint-Niklaas far exceeds expectations of those who consider their education more a hobby than a calling. In the final year, Lore Janssen dazzled the audience with digital prints of pearls on her unequivocally feminine styles. And the third year is looking very promising: Joëlle Meerbergen and Michiel Aerts are names to remember next year. Berit De Geyter was the lone student finishing her extra fifth year, showing a collection of bathing suits both humorous and elegant.

Fun though we had, what we're all really waiting for is the show at Antwerp's Royal Academy of Fine Arts. It's no secret that these

students invest a lot of money in their final collections, and they are backed by Antwerp-Sixer Dries Van Noten, who donates copious amounts of luxurious fabric each year.

This doesn't mean the creations of these students are therefore somehow better or more imaginative, but it does mean their collections almost always look like they cost a million. Admittedly, it's hard to remain objective when watching models swathed in expensive silk and wool swish by.

But even focusing only on the work itself, Antwerp never truly disappoints. Their schooling is such that they leave the academy true designers. But this year we were rather surprised by a sort of tameness on the catwalk. Normally one conceptual silhouette after the other walks by – the kind of designs that are rarely considered actual clothes. This year, we were jotting down feverishly which silhouettes we wanted to add to our wardrobes.

Puffy designs from first-year Eva Pollet in Ghent (above); smart shops will pick up Stefanie Bösl's chic styles (right); classical music meets fashion in Antwerp graduate Six Lee's line (below)



© Photos by Jeroen P. Visser

Perhaps making wearable clothing is how this generation of students hopes to attract the attention of future buyers and get a head start at their own clothing lines. If that is the case, we hope to find the wonderful geometric shaping of Alexandra Verschueren and the chic dresses of Stefanie Bösl in shops this fall.

Last in line was the Ghent Academy of Fine Art. I'll be the first to admit it must be tough to be the closing act, but we were a little disappointed after this show. Almost like an anti-climax, the students and models were not particularly enthusiastic after the show, nor was the audience. Perhaps it was because some of

the collections were downright uninspiring or ill put together?

But then again, some of them were exciting and promising: Sarah Bos, for instance, who's already inked a deal with Ghent pop band Soulwax to design a special series of shoes and who is in the process of starting up her own brand with Cleo Baele. And Han Mannaert we won't forget because she's made the most covetable stockings we'll see all year.

Too bad there's not some kind of initiative or shop that sells the work of these graduates. We're pretty sure we'd break the bank in order to own a unique piece made by tomorrow's top designers. ♦





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

***Take advantage of our ING Expat Convenience Services
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Many banking services are available to expatriates living in Belgium but there is nothing you need to know about making such arrangements. That's a task for the ING Convenience Services experts. Your bank accounts and cards can be ready for you the moment you arrive in Belgium. ING's Expat Services have 40 years of experience to help make your stay in Belgium as financially smooth as possible.



Hasselt Dances

Every Tuesday evening in July and August, Hasselt's Grote Markt is alive with the sound of live music and swishing feet. Learn the dance, then do the dance

→ www.uitinhasselt.be



De Gulden Ontsporing

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

On 11 July, 1302, near Kortrijk, a Flemish army of mainly foot soldiers slashed the French cavalry. The exploit is known as De Gulden Sporenslag, or The Battle of the Golden Spurs. In 1973, 11 July was chosen as the Day of the Flemish Community.

You can have no feast in Flanders without song and dance, and, for the second year in a row, the team of the Ancienne Belgique (AB) is the motor behind the musical activities in Brussels: De Gulden Ontsporing (a play on words that loosely translates as the Golden Debauchery).

It culminates in the evening with the AB Supersterrenshow (Superstars show) on the Grote Markt. A big band will accompany a slice of quite different singers: from white soul man Paul Michiel via rock singer Sioen to *chansonnière* Mira. Peter Van de Veire, the first Flemish DJ for whom a radio station (MNM) was created, is the master of ceremonies.

But already in the afternoon, will the centre of Brussels be turned into a big musical playground. Brass bands will set the Spanjeplein on fire. At the Sint-Katelijneplein, there's a competition in which 20 candidates play one song. The winner gets to record

it the following weekend at the AB studio, and then the song will be broadcast on Monday on FM Brussel.

You might hear the future during this contest, but you will most certainly catch a glimpse of it if you visit one of the 14 pubs or clubs in downtown Brussels that present a total of 25 acts, mostly young and debuting artists. Take your pick and hope you're fortunate!

If, on the other hand, you like to have more security, there are a few household names, like singer-songwriter Frank Vander linden, the noisy and poppy solo artist BoyShouting, the ditto band Star Club West or the unorthodox chamber quartet (bassoon, cello, oboe & double bass) Boenox.

Moreover, you can see musical theatre in the streets around the Beurs and the city hall, while DJ Siggy Ztardust spins the whole afternoon at De Markten.

Let the debauching begin.



11 July

Across Brussels
Happy Flemish day!

→ www.deguldenontsporing.be

MORE OUTDOOR FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

Beleuvenissen → Leuven

Brussels XL → Flagey Summer Festival, Brussels

Ommegang → Pageant and mediaeval village, Brussels



Antwerp

Queen Elisabeth Hall

Koningin Astridplein 26; 0900.26.060,
www.fccc.be

JULY 9 20.00 Burt Bacharach

Sportpaleis

Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060,
www.sportpaleis.be

JULY 4 20.30 Leonard Cohen (sold out)

JULY 9 20.30 Britney Spears

Ardoioe

Cultuurkapel De Schadu

Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82,
www.deschadu.net

JULY 3 20.30 Tinfoil

Brussels

Kitty O'Shea's

Karel de Grotelaan,
www.grievousangels.eu

JULY 3 21.30 The Grievous Angels unplugged

La Porte Noire

Cellebroersstraat,
www.grievousangels.eu

JULY 9 22.00 The Grievous Angels unplugged

La Tentation

Lakensestraat 28; 02.223.22.75,
www.latentation.org

JULY 4 22.00 Buzz on Your Lips

VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07,
www.vkconcerts.be

JULY 9 20.15 Ward 21 + Beenie Man

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991,
www.vorstnationaal.be

JULY 4 20.00 Simply Red

JULY 7 20.00 Crosby, Stills & Nash

Deurne

Openluchttheater Rivierenhof

Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192,
www.openluchttheater.be

JULY 3 20.30 Township Fever

Ghent

Complex

Grote Baan 108,
www.complex.be

JULY 4 22.00 Opening of Beach

season with DJs Demionak, Dany Bpm, Mistery, Q-IC, Davoodi, Dark-E, Ronald V

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060,
www.vooruit.be

JULY 6 20.00 Method Man & Redman



Ardoioe

cc 't Hofland

Oude Lichterveldsestraat 13;
0479.80.94.82,
www.deschadu.net

JULY 2 20.30 The Midnight Groove Gang

Brussels

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45,
www.themusicvillage.com

Doors open from 19.00:

JULY 7-11 21.00 The Swing Dealers

Théâtre Molière

Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00,

www.muzeikpublieque.be

JULY 2 20.00 Rudy Linka (Czech Rep) and Bobo Stenson (Sweden)

Ghent

El Negocito

Brabantdam 121; 0479.56.73.95,
www.mi-negocio.net

JULY 8 22.00 Sindicato Sonico

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060,
www.vooruit.be

JULY 2 22.00 Boomfanfare



Bruges

Concertgebouw

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

JULY 8 20.15 Kodo One Earth Tour

- Ekkyo: Trans-border heartbeat

drummers of Japan

GET YOUR
TICKETS NOW!

Jazz

Middelheim

Opening night,
13 August

Park Den Brandt,
Antwerp

A trio of musical heavyweights you normally have to pay three admissions to see come together on stage to open this annual first-rate jazz festival. Laurie Anderson, Lou Reed and John Zorn recreate their act "Improvisations" thus far only seen in New York's avant-garde performance space The Stone. Add Octurn and Flat Earth Society to this lineup, and it's an unforgettable night of rock and jazz fusion. Now just pray this weather holds out.

→ www.jazzmiddelheim.be



Brussels

Art Base

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

JULY 3 21.00 Beto Caletti (Brazil)

JULY 6 21.00 François and The Atlas Mountains + Luq

Sass'n Jazz

Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78,
www.sazznjazz.be

JULY 3 21.00 Yusuf Albayrak (Turkey)

JULY 4 21.00 Alle Turca (Turkey)

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45,
www.themusicvillage.com

Doors open from 19.00:

Until JULY 4 21.00 Ray Cabrera y Sus

Amigos (Cuba)

Théâtre Molière

Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00,
www.muziekpublieke.be
JULY 2 20.00 Rudy Linka (Czech Rep)
and Bobo Stenson (Sweden)

**Bruges****Concertgebouw**

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02,
www.concertgebouw.be
JULY 4 20.00 Flemish Radio Orchestra
(Brussels Philharmonic) conducted
by Michel Tabachnik, with Nino
Gvetadze, piano: Brahms
JULY 5 20.00 Royal Symphonic Band
Vooruit Harelbeke

St Michael and St Gudula Cathedral

Sinter-Goedeleplein; 070.22.21.07,
www.ticketnet.be
JULY 7 20.00 Mario Perestegi, organ:
Franck, Gigout, Bach, Mendelssohn

Ghent**Vlaamse Opera**

Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02,
www.vlaamseopera.be
JULY 3 20.00 Laureate concerts of
the Flanders Opera studio, young
musicians accompanied by the
Symphonic Flemish Opera Orchestra
conducted by Yannis Pouspourikas

**Bruges****Concertgebouw**

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02,
www.concertgebouw.be
JULY 9 20.00 Wim Helsen, comedy

Deurne**Openluchttheater Rivierenhof**

Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192,
www.openluchttheater.be
JULY 9 20.30 Alex Agnew, comedy

Ostend**Kursaal (Casino)**

Monacoplein 2; 070.22.56.00,
www.momentumtheshow.be
JULY 9-19 13.30/18.30/20.00
Mayumana "Momentum" show, with
international performers

**Antwerp****Cathedral of Our Lady**

Handschoenmarkt; 03.213.99.51,
www.dekathedraal.be
Until NOV 15 Reunion: From
Quinten Metsys to Peter Paul Rubens,
masterpieces from the Royal Museum
of Fine Arts return to the cathedral

Fotomuseum

Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00,
www.fotomuseum.be
Until SEP 13 Fotografie in België
tijdens het Interbellum (Photography
in Belgium Between the Wars)
Until SEP 13 Theatres of the Real,
contemporary British photography
Until SEP 13 Geert van Kesteren:
Baghdad Calling/Why Mister, Why?
photo-reportage
Until SEP 13 Nick Hannes: Red
Journey, photographs from Russia in
2008

Middelheim Museum

Middelheimlaan 6; 03.827.15.34,
www.middelheimmuseum.be
Until SEP 27 Chris Burden, videos,
sculpture and installations by the
contemporary American artist

Modemuseum (MoMu)

Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70,
www.momu.be
Until AUG 16 Paper Fashion, garments
made of paper and related materials
concentrating on the 1960s

Plantin-Moretus Museum

Vrijdagmarkt 22; 03.221.14.50, http://
museum.antwerpen.be
Until JULY 19 In the Wake of
Columbus: Antwerp Books and Prints
around the World, early books, maps
and illustrations printed in Antwerp

Rockox House

Keizerstraat 12; 03.201.92.50,
www.rockoxhuis.be
Until NOV 15 A Gift to God, private
patronage of religious art during
Antwerp's Golden Age

Blankenberge**Cultuurcentrum Casino**

Zeedijk 150; 050.43.20.43, http://
cultuur.blankenberge.be/
Until OCT 4 Masereel en de zee
(Masereel and the Sea), retrospective
on the 120th birthday of the
Blankenberge-born Franz Masereel,
with etchings, wood cuts, paintings and
ceramics

Bruges**Arentshuis**

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

Groeningemuseum

Dijver 12; 050.44.87.43,
www.brugge.be
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**Belgian Comic Strip Centre**

20 Rue des Sables (02.219.19.80),
www.comicscenter.net
Until SEP 27 Arithmetics of Troy,
comic strips by Christophe Arleston
(part of Brussels BD Comic Strip
festival)

Bibliotheca Wittockiana

Bemelstraat 23; 02.770.53.33,
www.wittockiana.org
Until OCT 10 The Premises of Comic
Strip, 19th-century strips, with works
by Rodolphe Töpffer, Caran d'Ache,
Benjamin Rabier and Fred Isly, among
others (part of Brussels BD Comic
Strip festival)

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be
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

Until SEP 13 Portraits of Artists: 80
Years of the Centre for Fine Arts in
Pictures
Until SEP 13 Young Belgian Painters
Award 2009, works by the finalists

CCNOA

Barthélémylaan 5; 02.502.69.12,
www.ccnoa.org
Until JULY 5 Greet Billet, video works
and installations by the contemporary
Belgian artist

City Hall

Grote Markt; 02.279.64.35,
www.brussel.be/artdet.cfm/4440
Until SEP 27 The Brussels Epic of
Willy Vandersteen, works by the
Belgian comic-strip artist (part of
Brussels BD Comic Strip festival)

Costume and Lace Museum

Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50,
www.brucity.be
Until SEP 29 stoffen & +, textile works
by Marie Beguin, Kathrin Laurent and
Charlotte Walry

Czech Centre

Troonstraat 60; 02.213.94.30
JULY 8-SEP 10 Jiru: Two generations
of photographers, prints by Czech
Vaclav Jiru and his nephew Jiri Jiru,
who, upon his return to the Czech
Republic after living in Brussels for 20
years, became President Vaclav Havel's
official photographer

Danish Cultural Institute

Koningsstraat 35; 02.5230.73.26,
www.dkibenelux.org
Until JULY 5 Knit: Strik, traditional
knitting shown alongside new and
experimental designs by young Danish
designers

De Loge Architectuurmuseum

Kluisstraat 86; 02.649.86.65,
www.aam.be
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 JULY 11 Julien Coulommier,
photographs

Elsene Museum

Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.21
Until SEP 13 Fading, works by 40
contemporary Belgian artists

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

Hallepoort

Zuidlaan; 02.534.15.18
Until OCT 25 Archeologie om de
hoek (Archaeology around the corner),
archaeological finds in Brussels over the
past 20 years

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63,
www.new.mjb-jmb.org
Until OCT 15 Een geheugen op papier
(A memory on paper), Jewish life in
Belgium recorded in historic postcards

La Fonderie – Museum of Labour and Industry

Ransfortstraat 27; 02.410.99.50,
www.lafonderie.be
Until JULY 12 Piemonte industria,
archival photographs selected by
Niccolò Biddau documenting a century
of industry in Northern Italy

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.226.12.57,
www.botanique.be
Until JULY 12 Overview, a look at four
years of View Photography Magazine
Until AUG 9 Stephan Vanfleteren:
Belgium, black and white photographs
by the contemporary Belgian artist
Until AUG 9 From Belgium, 25
Belgian photographers illustrate "their"
Belgium in celebration of Bontanique's
25th anniversary. Free outdoor
exhibition

MIVB Headquarters

Koloniënstraat 62; 02.515.20.52
Until SEP 26 Metro Art Memory,
retrospective and genesis of 80 works
in the Brussels' metro, with models,
drawings and sketches by Pierre
Alechinsky, Paul Delvaux and Hergé,
among others

René Magritte Museum

Esseghestraat 135; 02.428.26.26,
www.magrittemuseum.be
Until JULY 31 Paintings by Liège-born
artist Francine Holley

Royal Museum of Art and History

Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11,
www.kmkg-mrah.be
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 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, works from the museum's
collection

WIELS

Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.347.30.33,
www.wiels.org
Until AUG 2 Luc Tuymans: Against
the Day, 20 new paintings by the
contemporary Flemish artist

World Bank Brussels

Marnixlaan 17; 02.552.00.32
Until OCT 31 In the Eyes of a Woman:
Roma Portraits, the lives of various
Roma communities

Deurle**Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens**

Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23,
www.museumdd.be
Until SEP 13 When the mood strikes...
Wilfried & Yannick Cooreman's
collection of contemporary art, with
works by Franz West, Thomas Schütte,
Jean-Marc Bustamante and Jan

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Vercruyse among others
Until SEP 13 Robert Devriendt, paintings

Gaasbeek

Castle
Kasteelstraat 40; 02.531.01.30, www.kasteelvangaasbeek.be
Until AUG 16 Paul & Cie, a look at Paul Arconati Visconti (1754-1821), eccentric resident of Gaasbeek Castle and fervent admirer of Napoleon Bonaparte

Ghent

Design Museum
Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99, <http://design.museum.gent.be/>
JULY 4-OCT 11 Yrjö Kukkapuro, retrospective of the Finnish designer, from the late 1950s until the present day
JULY 4-OCT 11 Ceramics by Raoul Dufy, 1877-1904, works by the French artist on loan from private collections and museums
JULY 4-OCT 11 Schoonhoven Silver Award: Poetry in Silver, silverware competition with 55 international artists

Dr Guislain Museum
Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95, www.museumdrguislain.be
Until SEP 13 Burland Toyland, works made from recycled materials by Swiss outsider artist François Burland
Until SEP 13 Unknown Secrets, paintings by Serbian artist Goran Djurović
Until SEP 13 Mens: Andere culturen als amusement (People: Other Cultures as Amusement)

MIAT
Minnemeers 9; 09.269.42.00, www.miat.gent.be
Until AUG 1 Turkish Textile Workers in Ghent, text and photographs
Until AUG 23 Felt: From Tradition to Modern Art, work by István Vidák
Until OCT 18 Ghent on porcelain cards from 1840-1865

Museum of Fine Arts
Fernand Scribedreef 1 – Citadelpark; 09.240.07.00, www.mskgent.be
Until JULY 31 Jan Janssens, paintings by the Flemish master (1590 -1650)
Until SEP 20 Raoul de Keyser, Artist in residence, works on paper (1964-1979) by the contemporary Belgian artist

Sint-Pietersabdij
Sint-Pietersplein 9; 09.243.97.30, www.gent.be/spa
Until SEPT 6 Walder De Mulder, photos of conductors, photographers and other artists from the 1960s to the 1990s by the Ghent-based photojournalist
Until SEPT 6 Walter De Buck Verbeelddt (Visualises), sculpture and drawings by the Ghent artist, singer and founder of the legendary Gentse Feesten

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMK)
Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03, www.smak.be
Until AUG 2 Dara Birnbaum: The Dark Matter of Media Light, retrospective of the American contemporary video artist
Until AUG 2 Navid Nuur: The Value of Void
Until AUG 23 Beyond The Picturesque: Interpretations of Landscape in Contemporary Art
Until AUG 23 Meteoriti, sculptures by Bizhan Bassiri
Until AUG 30 Carl De Keyser: Trinity, photographs on power and violence by the Flemish Magnum agency photographer

Witte Zaal
Posternestraat 64; 09.225.42.90, www.wittezaal.be
Until JULY 4 The Ornamental Body:

DON'T MISS

Belgium

Until 9 Augustus
La Botanique, Brussels

If you haven't heard of Stephan Vanfleteren, then you must be fresh off the turnip truck. Welcome to Belgium and, hey, would you like to become familiar with one of the best in the crop of original, creative, internationally celebrated photographers the country seems to produce like bunnies? This group of photos illustrating his personal view of the country really hits home that "quirky" label. It's tough to find a better introduction to Vanfleteren – or to Belgium.

➡ www.botanique.be



From Inmate Tattoo to Body Paintings, with photographs by Mariette Michaud and works by 5 artists

Hasselt

Modemuseum
Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.23.96.21, www.modemuseumhasselt.be
Until OCT 31 In Her Shoes, trends and evolution of women's shoe design, from 1900 to contemporary designers

Kemzeke (Stekene)

Verbeke Foundation
Westakkers 03.789.22.07, www.verbekefoundation.com
Until NOV 15 Artificial Nature, outdoor sculpture and installations by contemporary Belgian and European artists

Mechelen

Speelgoedmuseum (Toy Museum)
Nekkerspoelstraat 21; 015.55.70.75, www.speelgoedmuseum.be
Until JAN 3 Thirty-five years of Playmobil

Tervuren

Royal Museum for Central Africa
Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11, www.africamuseum.be
Until AUG 31 Omo: People & Design, functional objects made and used by the Omo people of southwestern Ethiopia
Until JAN 3 Persona: Ritual Masks and Contemporary Art, masks from the museum's collection and other European museums and private collections, shown alongside works by contemporary African artists



Palm Parkies: Series of concerts in

parks across Flanders, including BBQ and drinks
Until AUG 26 19.00 across Flanders www.parkies.net
Antwerp

Zomer van Antwerpen: Annual summer arts festival features free concerts, circus workshops, film screenings alongside the River Scheldt, sunset barbecues and a woodland bar; most events free
Until AUG 30 across Antwerp 03.224.85.28, www.zva.be

Bruges

Cactus Festival: Outdoor music festival, featuring Tracy Chapman, Michael Franti & Spearhead, Bunny Wailer, Selah Sue, Paul Weller, Novastar, Black Box Revelation, Joss Stone, Lamb, Calxico and more
JULY 10-12 at Minnewaterpark, Bargeplein, Bruges
www.cactusfestival.be

Brussels

Bozar family events:
Until SEP 13 In Search of Sophie Calle: Family Kit. Follow the clues in the exhibition by French artist Sophie Calle (In Dutch and French)
JULY 6-AUG 28 Summer workshops in contemporary art (ages six to 12; in Dutch and French)
02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

Brosella Folk & Jazz: Annual free outdoor festival with concerts and family entertainment
JULY 11-12 15.00-23.00 at Théâtre de Verdure, Ossegem Park
www.brosella.be

Brussels XL Flagey Summer Festival: A slew of events, most of them outdoors and largely free. Rock and classical concerts, open-air film screenings, kids' activities and a birthday bash for the Belga Café
Until JULY 5 in and around Flagey, Heilig Kruisplein
02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be

Burundi Heart of Africa: Concerts, exhibitions and dance from Burundi, marking the 47th anniversary of the independence of Burundi
JULY 4 18.00 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23
02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

Midi-Minimes Festival: Classical music festival with short, lunch-time concerts grouped according to historical period. Festival guest: Cellist Sigiswald Kuijken
Until AUG 28 12.15 at Miniemenkerk, Miniemenstraat 62, and Royal Conservatory, Regentschapsstraat 30
02.512.30.79, www.midis-minimes.be

Ommegang: Annual historical pageant reenacting the entry into Brussels of Charles V and his court in 1549. More than 1,000 participants in period costume, brass bands, horses and falconry displays. Mediaeval village in Zavelplein with jousting, archery and other activities
Until JULY 2 from 14.30 mediaeval village; **JUNE 30 & JULY 2** 21.00 pageant on the Grote Markt
02.512.19.61, www.ommegang.be

Plazey - Festival in the Park: Free festival with concerts, entertainment, gourmet food and children's activities
JULY 4-5 in Elisabeth Park, Koekelberg
02.412.00.50, www.plazey.be

Royal Museum of Fine Arts family events:
JULY 7 14.00 Het mysterie Magritte
Until AUG 28 Workshops for children and teenagers (ages six to 13; in Dutch)
02.508.33.33, www.fine-arts-museum.be

Ghent

Ghent Jazz Festival: Blend of young talent and world-renowned musicians at this annual international jazz festival (formerly Blue Note Records Festival). Features BB King, Nina Simone tribute with Dianne Reeves, George Benson, McCoy Tyner Trio, Christian Scott, Joe Jackson, Marianne Faithfull, Lady Linn & Her Magnificent Seven, Jamie Cullum, the Brussels Jazz Orchestra International Composition Contest and more
JULY 8-19 at De Bijloke, J Kluyskensstraat 2
www.gentjazz.com

Leuven

Zomer van Sint-Pieter: Classical music festival with short, lunch-time concerts grouped according to historical period. Sister festival to Brussels' Midi-Minimes
Until Aug 28 across Leuven
016.23.84.27, www.zomer-van-sint-pieter.be

Mechelen

Parkpop: Concerts by pop, rock, blues, salsa, reggae, disco or soul groups every Thursday evening
Until AUG 27 20.30 in de Kruidtuin, Bruul 129
015.29.78.68, www.parkpop.be

Middelkerke

Rosé aan zee: Some 20 wine farmers from the Bordeaux region provide information and tastings of their rosé wine; followed by a lounge party on the west side of the casino
JULY 4-5 11.00 at Strand Westkant Casino, Epernayplein
059.30.03.68, toerisme@middelkerke.be

Ronse

Bruul 2009: Free summer music festival with performances every Friday, featuring Raymond Van Het Groenewoud, Sons of Queen, Sois Belle, Paul Severs and Freddy Birset
JULY 3-AUG 21 20.00 at Bruulpark, Ronse (East Flanders)
055.23.27.94, www.bruulronse.be

Werchter

Rock Werchter 2009: The 35th edition of the giant rock festival still has tickets left for the Thursday shows, featuring The Prodigy, Oasis, Placebo, Dave Matthews Band, Lily Allen and more
JULY 2-5 at Festival Park, Werchter (Flemish Brabant)
www.rockwerchter.be

Zottegem

Zoetegemfestival: Series of summer music and cultural festivals including Park op Stelten and Rock Zottegem
Until JULY 12 in Zottegem (East Flanders)
09.364.64.61, <http://zottegem.be/cultuurflitsen>

Zulte

Hoeverock: Fourth edition of this free rock/blues festival, featuring concerts every Tuesday
JULY 7-AUG 25 19.30 in Het Gouden Hof, D'hoeystraat 32, Olsene (East Flanders)
<http://hoeverock.wordpress.com>

DUSK 'TIL DAWN

SAFFINA RANA



Four Tet

Cafe Capital

37 Rubenslei, Antwerp

There's something special happening in Antwerp on Friday. Depending on his mood, the lovely Kieren Hebden, aka Four Tet, will be fusing electronica, jazz, hip hop, techno and folk with live instrumentation on stage during his DJ set.

It's easy to lose yourself in the layers of his melodious and heady mix. But don't take my word for it, you can see how it grabs you at Capital on 3 July when he comes down from his residency at Plastic People in London to play a special one-off set.

Radiohead loves him. He has opened for their gigs and recorded their remixes, as well as remixes for Bloc Party, Aphex Twin, Steve Reich, Thom Yorke and Badly Drawn Boy, amongst others. Leave the week behind and join the artsy crowd for a drink on the club terrace, surrounded by the Stadspark trees, before heading into the cavernous main room.

Capital is going all out this summer, opening on Thursdays for chill lounge sounds, VJs, expos, food and boules and the new Saturday night Spark, which will bring in international DJs (like Theo Parrish from Detroit on 11 July).

To celebrate its seventh birthday, Capital hosts a BBQ and live jazz on the terrace on 18 July before Belgian DJs Spiritcatcher, Fanklub DeeJays and Tralerkids rip up the floors inside with their uplifting mix of tech-house and electronica, until dawn.

Don't wait to get your ticket on the door for Four Tet. They are available for €9 from FNAC or www.fnac.be.

➡ www.cafecapital.be

FACE OF FLANDERS

SAFFINA RANA

Jasper Erkens

This weekend, Jasper Erkens will become the youngest-ever performer at Rock Werchter

Only 16 but with a voice much older, angel-faced singer-songwriter Jasper Erkens will be the youngest artist ever to perform at Rock Werchter when he takes the stage on 4 July.

Werchter has been voted the best music festival in Europe several times over, and the honour of performing usually goes to artists at the pinnacle of their career or who are part of the global pop establishment, like Placebo and Oasis, headlining this year.

Having only released his debut album *The Brighter Story* in March, Erkens doesn't fit that bill yet. But he's on his way. With the number-one hit "Waiting Like a Dog" and his new single "Stay Alive" steadily creeping up the Belgian charts, he sells out gigs in Flanders replete with hordes of screaming teenage girls.

"I wouldn't be a boy if I didn't like them," he tells me. "I have lots of female fans and, for them, it's not all about my music. Sometimes I think to myself, 'do I do this for me, do I do this for the music, or do I do this to be an icon?' I don't know. But sometimes it's really fun."

Erkens is keen to show he is more than just a pretty face. "Magazine



gering audience for Erkens. "It will just be me and my guitar, so I think I will be a little nervous," he notes.

But he intends to make the most of his backstage pass and will be rushing back from playing a gig in Tervuren the same day, to hang out with Kings of Leon.

Erkens has been performing since his parents gave him a guitar when he was 11. "I just

music as a future. "That was the moment when I thought, right, I wanna be a musician."

But the juggling act with school is taxing. "It's kind of difficult and really mental," says Erkens. "Sometimes I have to study, sometimes I have to perform – the change is really difficult. But I still succeed both in school and in music. I want to make my money with music."

Having just discovered American singer-songwriter Terence Trent D'Arby in his father's record collection, Erkens is also currently listening to Kings of Leon and Nick Drake. But his real inspiration comes from Irish rock musician Damien Rice. "He made me make music," says Erkens. "When I heard his music, I thought, oh right, I have to finish my songs, I have to write good lyrics, I have to perform them on stage in front of an audience. He's my springboard."

Erkens composes his own songs, with one eye on the audience, starting with a riff and a feeling. "I write about something that really happened or maybe I will make up a story. Suppose I got dumped by somebody – it's never happened to me, but just suppose. I'd start with a sad feeling," he says.

He keeps his other eye on the future. "I really like producing songs. Maybe I will study production," he says. "Producing is something I can really see myself doing when I'm old. When I'm 18."

→ www.jaspererkens.be

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



badjas →

If you've just started out learning Dutch, you'll have soon discovered to your relief that thank you is *dank u* and, even easier, sorry is *sorry*. This makes Dutch seem a piece of cake for the English speaker.

But you probably want to function a bit beyond thanking and apologising. What about asking who has taken something belonging to you, say your pen? (I know that's pretty boring.) Until recently you would have had to learn: *Wie heeft mijn pen weggenomen?* But not any more. Now the learner has a much better chance of reclaiming pens or any object at all by asking: Hey! Who took my *badjas*? A *badjas* is a bathrobe ("bath jacket"), but, thanks to the popularity of a TV ad, you can use this expression for any missing object.

The ad is for Belgacom TV and features Flemish actor Reinert D'haene, who apparently finds it the most natural thing in the world that he shares a house with Nicole Kidman and Robert De Niro. He asks them where his bathrobe is so he can answer the door for a delivery of pastries. He does this in a mishmash of Dutch and English. De Niro is not helpful, which provokes D'haene to say, when he eventually finds his *badjas*: *Hola, hola, subiet no koffiekoeken* for you, hé! – Just you wait (I know, it's a poor attempt at translating *hola, hola*), soon no pastries for you!

→ <http://tourneegenerale.canvas.be>

D'haene then opens the door to be handed the daily paper by paper boy Dustin Hoffman, just as the pastries arrive in the car from *Back to the Future*.

It's brilliantly done and promotes the company's message that the stars of Hollywood will feel at home in your house if you simply sign up with Belgacom.

One English speaker who is learning Dutch in the best way possible is Ray Cokes, a presenter from the early days of MTV. Ray has teamed up with Jean Blaute to make a TV series on Canvas about Belgian beer called *Tournée Générale*. Jean is a record producer who pops up in a variety of TV shows. In the first episode, Ray landed in Ostend and was whisked away by Jean in a VW camper van to visit the first brewery, De Struise Brouwers, The Sturdy Brewers (recently voted by Ratebeer the best brewer in the world). Soon Ray was building his Dutch vocabulary as he learned the names of the beers.

Flemish viewers must have gasped when the twosome moved down the road and were admitted to the holy of holies in the brewing world, the Sint-Sixtus Abbey at Westvleteren, where they met the Cistercian monks who brew the world-famous Trappist beer. Watch in the coming weeks (on Tuesday or Friday evenings) as Ray's Dutch expands along with his knowledge of Belgian beer.

The last word →→→

Destructive urge

"I'm capable of quite destructive lyrics. Deep down, sadness attracts me more than happiness, or anything funny or comfortable."

Yasmine, Flemish singer, who took her own life last week (see page 2), speaking in 2004

Real people

"These aren't professional catwalk models. They can take a bit of pressure, which is more than you can say for the skinny models I worked with last year, and who fell over in a faint after the show."

Antwerp designer Walter Van Beirendonck on his Paris show

featuring some XXL models with beards, tattoos and in bellies

Botellon bill

"I even went there myself for a time, and it was very congenial."

Ghent mayor Daniel Termont on the first Flemish *botellón* spontaneous party held last week, which led to a €1,250 bill for cleaning up the square

Second thoughts

"We didn't want to ruin the image of Ghent as a hospitable city. This sort of event absolutely has its place here."

Termont one day later, having withdrawn the clean-up bill following widespread protests

"Suppose I got dumped by somebody – it's never happened to me, but just suppose. I'd start with a sad feeling"

covers and posters in magazines make me a sort of youth idol, but now I want to prove that it's not only what I'm about. I want to prove I'm a real musician," he says.

Playing at Werchter is the perfect opportunity, although it has taken him by surprise. "A year ago I was nowhere," he says. "Now Werchter contacted me! Nobody says no to Werchter," he laughs. "Many bands really are jealous."

Erkens, who lives in Diest, will be opening the Marquee, the smaller of the two stages, on Saturday. The line-up, which includes Franz Ferdinand, Grace Jones and Kings of Leon, sold out last month, and an estimated crowd of 80,000 will be there. Even if a fraction of the crowd heads for the Marquee, it'll still be a stag-

took every opportunity to play," he explains. "I played in front of my family and my friends, and I played on the streets."

Fate intervened. He was discovered busking on the street and offered a gig as a support act in Peer, just east of his hometown. "Once, when I was singing, somebody came up to me and said: 'I've got a concert for you.' It was my first concert. I was really excited. It was really nice. I was about 12 or 13."

But things really only took off when Erkens' voice broke. Hearing his new voice, friends and family encouraged him to enter music competitions. When he came in second in *Humo* magazine's career-making Rock Rally last year, he started considering