



JULY 22 2009

INDEPENDENT NEWSWEEKLY

WWW.FLANDERSTODAY.EU

Erkenningsnummer P708816

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

To the polls 3

The people of Antwerp are getting the chance to vote in a referendum on the Oosterweel link, the development plan to connect the ring of Antwerp, which has been much maligned by local groups



The cowboy way... 9

Flemish comic-strip heroes Suske and Wiske head to Texas for their first animated big-screen adventure. Alan Hope finds the CGI animation rather disturbing. Find out what our 11-year-old critics think



Sea life 10

It's the 120th birthday of one of the world's most famous wood-cut artists. Blankenberge celebrates Frans Masereel, born on the shores of the coastal city and forever indebted to it for much of his work



© Darryl Williams

Seaside saviour

Ostend breaks out of its provincial shell with a summer festival that keeps getting better

GEORGIO VALENTINO

Ostend is the quintessential Belgian seaside town, coming out of its winter hibernation every year to entice summer tourists with lengthy stretches of beach, marina facilities and supporting industries (hotels, restaurants, bars and clubs).

Tourism is, of course, a very conservative institution, so it's not surprising to find that tourist Ostend largely resembles any other tourist district at any

other seaside destination. One must cater, so goes the trade's logic, to the lowest common denominators of consumer need: the tourist wants only to sleep well, swim often, eat extravagantly and drink deep.

It needn't always be that way. A little over a decade ago, a handful of enterprising Ostenders imagined a different strategy, one that gives both the town and the tourist a bit more credit. They began from the premise that

culture can be capital. So Theater aan Zee (Theatre at the Sea) first appeared in 1997, dedicated to a provocative brand of street theatre (a performer in those first years was even arrested for disturbing the peace), as well as experimental stage and video productions. Subsequent years found the festival expanding to include music.

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Army distributes antiviral medicine

No cause for panic, say experts

DEREK BLYTH

With a large number of Belgians returning from holidays abroad in the coming weeks, the Belgian army was mobilised last week to deliver face masks and antiviral medicine to 11 locations across the country. Although swine flu is still relatively harmless for most people, the government has significantly stepped up measures to protect millions of Belgians.

Some 30 soldiers were involved in the operation, which used 15 army trucks to distribute 900,000 face masks and 90,000 doses of antiviral medicine. The consignments were initially taken to secret distribution centres, from where they will be delivered to doctors

and local care centres.

Meanwhile, 10 Belgian hospitals have drawn up pandemic plans to prepare staff for a major escalation in swine flu cases over the coming months. The hospitals will segregate those suffering from the virus to avoid spreading infection and appoint specialised doctors to treat patients. The Influenza Commission estimates that the number of infections will peak towards the end of August.

Companies across Belgium are already being urged by the Influenza Commission to prepare for a possible crisis which could, at

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News in brief

Artists aroused

Newly-appointed culture minister Joke Schauvliege landed herself in trouble last week when she admitted in a TV interview that she was not particularly interested in culture. In an interview on the current affairs programme *Terzake* soon after her appointment, she confessed that her most recent theatre visit was "six months ago". She added that it was a production by an amateur theatre company in her home town of Evergem. The remark immediately provoked a storm of protest from eminent Flemish artists such as Tom Lanoye. But the minister insisted that she was the right person to head the culture department. "Do I have to be an art historian to do this job?" she asked.

Quick closed down

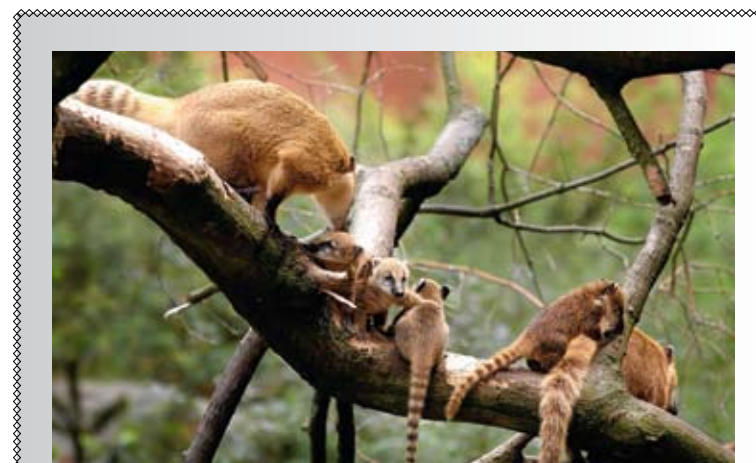
A branch of the Quick fast-food chain at Brussels Zuid station was closed for one day last week on the orders of the federal food agency FAVV. The decision came after a visit by food inspectors, who said they were shocked at the state of the kitchens. "The temperature where the hamburgers were being stored was far too high, and no cleaning had been done in a long time," said Lieve Busschots, spokesperson for the FAVV. The restaurant reopened the following day after some 100 kilos of suspect meat was thrown away and the place cleaned up. Quick is a Belgian group established in 1971 as a rival to McDonald's. It operates 78 restaurants in Belgium, with an annual turnover of €156 million.

The rich list

Flemish families have survived the global crisis better than most in Europe, with one in five currently holding savings of €50,000 or more, compared to a European average of one in 12. The figure for Flanders is the highest in Europe, according to a study by the market research organisation GfK. The Flemish are also keeping ahead of other Belgians, with one-sixth of Flemish families holding savings worth more than €75,000, compared to one in eight in Brussels and one in 12 in Wallonia.

Not so cheap

Belgium is the sixth most expensive country in Europe, according to figures published by the EU statistical office Eurostat. The country is among the most costly for food, alcohol, restaurants and clothes, but cars and electronic goods are cheaper. The report shows that Belgians can save money by buying alcohol and cigarettes in Luxembourg, food in



Baby boom at Antwerp zoo

Barely a day goes by without another excited press release from Antwerp zoo announcing the birth of yet another rare animal. Kai-Mook, the first baby elephant born on Belgian soil, caused a stir back in May and generated press coverage in France, Canada, Switzerland, America and North Africa. Inspired by the massive public response, the zoo has launched a project to construct a new elephant complex in their Planckendael animal park in Mechelen, which they hope to complete in 2012.

Recent birth announcements have also included Humboldt penguins, reindeer and two seal puppies called Eufrazie and Queenie. This was also an exciting year for takins (a Chinese cross between a cow and an antelope), who back in March gave birth for the first time in the zoo's history.

In the reindeer section, mama Floortje and papa Yolf gave birth to a baby named Kisa, while a whopping 10 coati (members of the raccoon family, see photo) have survived birth, and two gentoo penguins were born in early June. In addition, a rare and endangered Congo Peacock, which arrived at the zoo two months ago, has laid eggs.

The birth weights vary enormously, with the baby elephant tipping the scales at 80 kilos, whereas a little baby sloth weighed in at just 557 grams.

The zoo still has to decide what to do with the new animals, a spokesman told *Flanders Today*. "We would obviously like to set some of them free in the wild, but this is a very long process, and the animals would struggle to find food, fight off prey and look after themselves. So for the moment, their futures remains undecided."

► www.zooantwerpen.be



FLANDERS TODAY

Independent Newsweekly

Editor: Derek Blyth

Deputy editor: Lisa Bradshaw

News editor: Alan Hope

Agenda: Sarah Crew, Robyn Boyle

Prepress: Corelio P&P

Contributors: Rebecca Benoot, Stéphanie Duval, Anna Jenkinson, Sharon Light, Alistair MacLean, Marc Maes, Ian Mundell, Anja Otte, Monique Philips, Saffina Rana, Chrisophe Verbiest, Denzil Walton

Project manager: Pascale Zoetaert

Publisher: VUM

NV Vlaamse Uitgeversmaatschappij

Gossetlaan 28, 1702 Groot-Bijgaarden

Editorial address: Gossetlaan 30

1702 Groot-Bijgaarden

Tel.: 02.373.99.09 – Fax: 02.375.98.22

E-mail: editorial@flanderstoday.eu

Subscriptions: France Lycops

Tel: 02.373.83.59

E-mail: subscriptions@flanderstoday.eu

Advertising: Evelynne Fregonese

Tel: 02.373.83.57

E-mail: advertising@flanderstoday.eu

Verantwoordelijke uitgever:

Derek Blyth



THE BIG PICTURE



And then there were nine

Hilde Crevits, the new Flemish minister for mobility, takes her place among the nine ministers of the new Flemish government posing for a group portrait on the Martelaarplein in Brussels last week. Her colleagues are, from left to right, Pascal Smet, Joke Schauvliege, Jo Vandeuren, Geert Bourgeois, Freya Van den Bossche, Kris Peeters, Philippe Muyters and Ingrid Lieten. The government ministries have been reduced from 11 to nine as part of the new government's round of spending cuts

Referendum on Lange Wapper



Patrick Janssens approves referendum

The people of Antwerp will get the chance to vote on the controversial Lange Wapper project which would close the Antwerp ring. Some 66,158 people signed a petition calling for a referendum, which was presented to Antwerp mayor Patrick Janssens by the action group Ademloos (breathless). The mayor agreed to hold a referendum on 18 October, which will be the first in the city's history.

The referendum will ask people to choose between two projects – a combination of tunnel and viaduct (the Lange Wapper) close to the city centre, or a tunnel running from the left bank of the Scheldt to Ekeren, which takes traffic away from the centre of town. The

Beheersmaatschappij Antwerpen Mobiel (BAM) designed the Lange Wapper proposal, while Arup-SUM produced the competing tunnel plan.

The BAM project was recently blocked following an objection from a restaurant owner whose business lay below the proposed viaduct (see *Flanders Today*, 8 July). It has also met with fierce criticism from environmental groups because it leads heavy traffic over residential districts. But the competing tunnel project also has its drawbacks.

The results of the referendum will not be binding, and the final choice rests with the Flemish government. ♦

Army distributes antiviral medicine

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worst, affect 70% of employees. The commission has published a Business Continuity Plan to help companies deal with the pandemic. Using estimates produced by the British government, the commission calculates that between 5 and 35% of employees will fall sick, while roughly the same number again will stay at home to care for sick relatives.

Some companies have already taken the step of offering their own advice to employees. One Belgian bank has encouraged staff to stop shaking hands, operate lift buttons using the knuckle instead of the finger tip and open doors using the elbow instead of the hand.

Belgian railways have ordered 100,000 face masks, while conductors are being issued with disinfectant gel. The operator has drawn up an emergency timetable that it will bring into force if an excessive number of staff phone in sick. One of the country's leading pharmaceutical companies has brought in screening equipment that can measure the temperature of staff as they pass through the entrance door. But Belgian health-care experts are stressing that there is no reason to panic or to cancel plans to attend summer festivals. "You could just as easily contract swine flu at your local supermarket," said one medical expert. ♦

→ www.influenza.be

M&M to open M

Princess Mathilde of Belgium and Princess Maxima of the Netherlands are to attend the opening of the new Leuven city museum M on 20 September. The striking new building designed by Stéphane Beel replaces the old city museum.

The choice of Mathilde and

Maxime was no accident. "We had the idea to invite the two princesses soon after choosing the name," explains museum conservator Veronique Vandekerckhove. "Both of their names begin with an M. We also considered Michael Jackson and Madonna, but the two princesses were more in keeping with our style." ♦

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

Musical chairs

The federal government has been reshuffled again, as foreign minister Karel De Gucht left for the European Commission. One would think that simply replacing him would be enough for the Van Rompuy government to do, but in Belgian politics things are never that easy.

For starters, there was an agreement that a Flemish Christian Democrat would succeed De Gucht, who is a liberal. That way, Yves Leterme, the former prime minister who stood down during the Fortis affair, could re-enter the federal government. He had hoped to become minister for finance, but the French-speaking liberal Didier Reynders refused to give up this department, and so Leterme settled for foreign affairs.

That's easy, right? Well... it would be, were it not for party politics. Since all the regional governments are now in place, it's time for the parties to move around some of their players. Michel Daerden (PS), a colourful and immensely popular Walloon politician known for his fondness for a beer or two, was excluded from the Walloon government, where he had been budget minister, by the Greens. No problem: there is always room in the federal government. "The man who is not good enough for four million Walloons now has to be good enough for six million Flemings," complained Jan Jambon of the nationalist N-VA.

The liberal Open VLD also made some changes in the federal government. They had suffered defeat in the Flemish regional elections and were left out of the Flemish government but did well in Brussels Region. So Guy Vanhengel, the party's leader in Brussels, moved up the ladder and traded in his Brussels portfolio for the vice-premiership in the federal government. To top it all off, Open VLD also moved migration minister Annemie Turtelboom to interior affairs (at the cost of Guido De Padt).

Stoelendans (musical chairs) was once a game for children. Now the term is mostly used in politics, without even a hint of irony. Somehow, we have become used to it.

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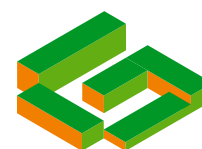
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Seaside shake-up

A curator pairing that guarantees the best of the far-out

→ Continued from page 1

Since 2006, the TAZ committee has practiced a division of labour, annually selecting two central guest curators to represent music and theatre respectively. This year rock singer, national celebrity and native Ostender Arno Hintjens presents an eclectic music programme that reflects the diversity of his current home, Brussels. Jan Goossens, artistic director of Brussels' KVS theatre, brings contemporary performance from Belgium and beyond to the seaside.

The festival committee had been courting Arno for some time. Indeed, being one of Ostend's most famous sons, he was an obvious choice. His tour schedule, however, left little time for a commitment that would stretch across an entire year of planning, meetings, rehearsals and publicity. The singer was finally stirred to action by the symbolic importance of the year 2009, which marks the 60th anniversary of James Ensor's death (and, coincidentally, Arno's birth).

It's clear from this gesture that Arno shares the conviction that his hometown has more to offer than paint-by-numbers tourist "culture". Ostend is a victim of its own success, he tells me across a table in a local café – typecast and unable to break free of the role of predictable seaside resort.

"For many people," says Arno, "this town is just a long street next to a big swimming pool with boats in it." Ostend needs something more if it hopes to compete in the

21st century. His solution – "only culture can save Ostend" – echoes the TAZ creed.

Ensor meets Dylan

Culture is nothing new to Ostend. Arno's nod to Ensor, who lived in Ostend for most of his life, suggests the depth of the town's cultural heritage. The painter's house in Vlaanderenstraat is preserved as a museum and the man himself is interred nearby. In fact, the James Ensor House will serve as backdrop to TAZ's open-

arts. "Theater Aan Zee has been very good in the past at recruiting great performers from Flanders," he explains. "But I wanted to reach out further. Brussels and Ostend are like brother and sister. Let's use that connection."

Arno has resided in the capital for decades now. The city offers a wealth of diversity on which he was keen to capitalise. His TAZ programme highlights rock, jazz, folk and hip-hop. His own showcase, fittingly dubbed Arno's Stoemp, promises new arrange-

"Only culture can save Ostend"

ing concert on 31 July, a choral performance of Bob Dylan's epic "Desolation Row".

Years ago, Arno discovered a Getty Museum catalogue which paired an image of Ensor's famous painting "Christ's Entry into Brussels" and Dylan's infamous lyrics. Arno had just finished describing how forcefully this combination impressed itself on his imagination when we were joined quite fortuitously by another Ostender, the indefatigable Ensor scholar Xavier Tricot, who lends his expertise to exhibitions from Los Angeles to Athens (and evidently spends the occasional afternoon drinking and chatting in Ostend cafés). Arno and Tricot agree that the town doesn't do nearly enough to promote Ensor's legacy.

Arno is not just looking toward local talent, however. He sees TAZ as a forum for international

ments of his extensive rock repertoire, played by the TAZ band and a long list of international guest players.

Given a free hand to select a co-curator, Arno chose Goossens in order to underline the Brussels-Ostend axis and open the door to more international contributions. For his part, Goossens didn't hesitate to accept the invitation. "When Arno calls with a proposition," he confides, "you say 'yes.'" The two had first collaborated in 2006 on a series of coordinated concerts in Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent and Liège.

He's not an Ostender, but Goossens, too, appreciates the correspondence between the two cities. "Ostend shares a lot with Brussels," he observes. "Both are quite small yet cosmopolitan. Both are cities that look outward." For Goossens, this involves engaging artists from



Dream team: Arno (left) and Jan shake up Theater on Zee

other parts of the world. When we spoke, he was in Kinshasa directing a cultural exchange programme. "Brussels is a Congolese city in certain ways," he says, referring to a colonial history that has exercised a profound cultural influence on both sides.

Perhaps Ostend can be a bit Congolese as well. One of Goossens' guests, Faustin Linyekula, will introduce the TAZ audience to *ndombolo*, a form of Congolese pop music in a dance/concert fusion called *More More More... Future*.

It remains to be seen whether Brussels-style cosmopolitanism will take root in Ostend's sandy soil. If it doesn't, it won't be for lack of trying. Theater Aan Zee is offering plenty of spectacles in addition to those hand-picked by the central guests. The TAZ OFF programme features street theatre, comedy, music and family events. The full schedule is quite an eye-ful, stretching as it does across several pages, with performances numbered in the hundreds. ♦

→ www.theateraanzee.be

DON'T MISS AT TAZ

nieuwZwart

1-2 August, Kursaal Ostend

Thanks to central guest Jan Goossens, Theater Aan Zee has scored Flemish choreographer Wim Vandekeybus' *nieuwZwart* ahead of its opening in Brussels in September. Performed by members of his company Ultima Vez, it's an extraterrestrial excursion that is equal parts literature (text by Flemish author Peter Verhelst), live music (Mauro Pawlowski of dEUS) and dance. Goossens and Vandekeybus go way back. In fact, the former's first professional gig was as drama-turge for the latter.



Renée

3 August, Club Terminus

Arno discovered singer/songwriter Renée Sys in the bars of bohemian Brussels. Born and raised in rural Flanders, Sys came to the capital to study film but found that music may be her vocation. As she crafted her first screenplay, she began composing her first songs. Her approach is the same in either instance: one needs to tell a story. Born of thread-bare acoustic guitar arrangements, the songs are filled out with bass, cello, piano and percussion.



Viewmaster

3-17 August, City Hall

Before the advent of computer graphics, special effects required commitment. Pepper's ghost, a late 19th-century stage effect, required the construction of two identical rooms and a light-and-mirror apparatus capable of transposing one on top of the other in real time. Visual artist Laurent Liefoghe and choreographers Heike Langsdorf and Ula Sickle resurrect the illusion for this installation performance.



Soirée Jazz Toots Thielemans Quartet

4 August, Café Koer

Legendary jazz cat Toots Thielemans needs no introduction, but here's one anyway. The Brussels-born Thielemans invented the jazz harmonica some 70 years ago and has since remained its most distinguished proponent. He has collaborated with Ella Fitzgerald, Quincy Jones and Paul Simon and appeared on the soundtracks of such classic films as *Midnight Cowboy* and *The Getaway*.



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Shout it from the rooftops

A Flemish company is encouraging businesses to generate electricity using rooftop solar panels

MARTIN BANKS

Enfinity, an innovative solar power company based near Ghent, is leading the way in encouraging enterprises to produce their own electricity. It develops solar systems and installs them on the roofs of companies which, in turn, harness the electricity produced by the panels for their own use.

"Nothing is endless, but, as an energy source for the earth, the sun is likely to last a few billion years yet," smiles Jurgen Van Damme, Enfinity's marketing officer. Companies using the panels avoid energy transmission and distribution costs. "Increasingly, as nations seek to find alternative sources, we will need to trap this energy that flows daily from the sun."

Formed in 2005, Enfinity has already made its mark globally, and it recently signed a lucrative deal to develop China's largest and first photovoltaic (solar powered) electricity generating station in the country's north-western Gansu province.

"The project is expected to start construction later this year and has to be completed within 18 months," says Enfinity co-founder Gino Van Neer. "Winning this bid is an important milestone for Enfinity's international expansion strategy and will act as an entrance ticket towards the potentially lucrative Asian market."

Further success has come with another recent deal, this time with Lidl, the

leading cut-price supermarket chain. Enfinity will install and maintain solar systems at Lidl's stores and logistics centres throughout Europe. This is a sign, says Van Neer, that the German-based chain intends to focus more on solar technology for generating "environmentally-friendly electricity".

"Enfinity provides extensive regional experience and knowledge of the markets in those countries where the solar systems for Lidl will be constructed," Van Neer explains. "Our experience in the fields of financing, construction and operating, combined with a highly-qualified staff, will contribute to the success of this trans-European project."

Nearer to home, the company has recently installed PV solar panels on the roof of Merckx, a Flemish manufacturer of industrial glue, which Merckx hopes will enable it to "secure a relatively stable electricity price over the next 20 years that is lower than the usual rate."

Enfinity itself has seen major growth in the four years since its launch. Turnover has soared from €200,000 in 2006 to some €83 million last year. Employment at the company, based at Waregem, West Flanders, has now reached 110 employees.

Van Neer said the aim is to triple turnover by the end of 2009 with foreign sales accounting for some 90%



Solar power can supply electricity for thousands of years

of the increase. Despite the economic downturn, he says the company is confident that it can achieve this level of growth through the continued development of solar power projects on company and residential roofs.

There are also plans to exploit the fast-growing demand to generate electricity through wind energy, says Van Neer, whose company has been awarded a "green power" certificate by the Flemish government for its work in the renewable energy sector.

"Access to energy has become a worldwide concern," says Van Neer. "Our planet supplies us with an abundance of wind and, thanks to technological advances, we are now able to transform this resource into green energy."

To achieve this, his company has adopted what he calls a "unique" approach to wind energy with the

creation of a "wind knowledge centre." Staffed by a 12-strong team of experts, the centre supports a variety of initiatives in wind energy.

Enfinity also installs recycled solar panels in third world countries. Van Neer explains: "We help provide lighting for classrooms for evening lessons and women's groups, as well as facilitating refrigeration for medicines – all in places where this was not previously possible or the cost was prohibitive."

Future plans include the installation of solar panels on the roofs of Belgian companies in some 15 municipalities over the next two years. "This will provide 5,500 households with green power," says Van Neer. Several leading companies – including McBride, Weba, BX Textiles and Willy Naessens – are involved in this project.

"At the moment, Enfinity mainly fo-

cuses on solar energy based on PV technology," he says. "But we also increasingly take into account other technologies such as concentrated solar power, wind power and biomass power."

Apart from Belgium, Enfinity is already active in six countries, including Italy, Spain, France, Greece, the United States and Canada, with the number of countries expected to rise to 30 by the end of this year. "Over the next two years, we want to install about 900,000 square metres of solar panels on the roofs of companies in Belgium alone," says Van Neer.

He says that companies that invest in solar power stand to benefit not only economically but also by "communicating an environmentally-friendly" image. "As the saying goes, it is a win-win situation for all concerned." ♦

→ www.enfinity.be

Ahlers expands in China

The Antwerp shipping company Ahlers has opened a seventh office in Xiamen, China, employing five people. The company, which recently celebrated its 100th anni-

versary (see *Flanders Today*, 6 May 2009), entered the China market 15 years ago and has established offices in Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Ningbo, Qingdao, Shanghai

and Tianjin. Chinese operations currently account for 10% of the group's business.

Located southeast China, Xiamen is one of the world's top 20 container ports, handling over five million TEU in 2008. The port expects that overall business turnover in 2010 will exceed 200 million metric tons.

Xiamen is the main port of Fujian province, where large quantities of stone are exported.

Ahlers supplies stone to various importers in Europe and Asia and hopes that its Xiamen operation will improve the service it offers. The Belgian company will also represent various shipping companies, including Nile Dutch, which trades with various African countries. ♦

→ www.ahlers.com



Xiamen port in southeast China is home to Ahlers' latest office

MARC MAES

Buddha Bar coming to Brussels

The achingly hip Buddha Bar concept is coming to Brussels in 2010, according to founder Raymond Visan. "We have found a wonderful location in the centre of Brussels," he told *De Standaard*, refusing to reveal further details.

Visan opened the original Buddha Bar in Paris in 1996. The combination of exotic décor, lounge music and exceptional food brought in a

steady stream of celebrities such as Cameron Diaz and Will Smith. The concept has subsequently spread to other cities like London and New York. The Brussels bar will be a "Little Buddha" which is described as "more casual" and less expensive than Buddha Bars. Other cities to get a Little Buddha include Amsterdam, Stockholm and Geneva. ♦

→ www.buddha-bar.com

UK crisis hits Flemish carpet sector

The carpet sector in Flanders is suffering the effects of the economic downturn more severely than most other industries, according to a report in *De Standaard*. The once-flourishing industry, based mainly in West Flanders, was traditionally heavily dependent on the British market, where most homes are fitted with wall-to-wall carpets. But the collapse in the British property

market has led to a sharp drop in orders.

The Flemish textile group Beaulieu International Group (BIG), recently closed down two subsidiaries in northern France, with the loss of 344 jobs, having already cut 500 jobs in two Flemish plants last year. The company, which now employs about 3,000 people, made a net loss of €64.6 million in 2008. ♦

A new Watou

The annual Poetry Summer of this West Flemish town steps up the visual arts to dazzling effect

SARAH McFADDEN

If you take a map and draw a line due south from De Panne and another one west from Ypres, they will meet at Watou, the western-most point of Belgium. The picturesque village on the French border is surrounded by farmland that's as flat as a pancake, ideally suited to cultivating the hops used to produce Watou's famous brews. Thanks to them, the town is chiefly known as a destination for beer-lovers. The topography and picture-perfect scenery account for its appeal to recreational cyclists.

Both kinds of visitors are joined during the summer months by art trekkers, drawn to the town's annual presentation of contemporary art and literature in multiple, unconventional venues: homes, barns, churches, industrial buildings and the like. Visiting all of the showcases holds out the promise of a good walk or ride (bikes can be rented on site). On foot, the circuit easily fills an afternoon.

Poeziezomer (Poetry Summer), as the event used to be called, was founded in 1980 by the Flemish poet Gwy Mandelinck, who directed the project until last year. When he stepped down, it was feared that the festival might not survive. For the village, to which it contributes regular infusions of fresh energy and considerable business, the prospect of the programme's demise was dire.

A survival plan was devised, and five curators – three from the visual arts and two from literature – were brought on board to organise exhibitions in eight venues. The results are a name change – the current edition is called Watou 2009: Tussen Taal en

Beeld, Verzameled Verhalen #01, ('Watou 2009: Between Language and Image, Collected Stories #01') – and a slight shift in weight from literature to visual art. The upshot is a vibrant plurality of voices and visions, but think polyphony, not cacophony. Curatorial prowess and unusual settings used to full creative advantage give the event unexpected cogency.

The circuit starts, in fact, with a large group show titled *Polyfonie*. Organised by Hans Martens, director of Ghent's Academy of Fine Arts (known as HISK), the exhibition includes works by 28 artists who are either students or new alumni. Because of their high level of achievement, Martens refers to them as participants

The pair of facing urinals will remind some of Duchamp, others of risqué trysts

rather than students, and this show bears out his assessment.

Their works are displayed inside and out of a rickety old farm complex known as Grensland (border). Framing the view, Colin Waeghe's bisected children's swing (supporting frame and swing seat are split down the centre, their two halves separated by about a metre) suggests all manner of division and fragmentation: political, geographical, emotional and psychological.

Behind the building, Masashi Echigo has created a secluded area, its limits defined by a wall made from lining up a great variety of doors found on the property,

which is occasionally used for flea markets. Unchanged by the artist, who has simply anchored them in the ground, some of the doors have inset windows which look out onto the French border. A few have mirrors that reflect your own image and the spot where you stand. Disconcertingly, it's possible to catch both views – forward and backward – in a single glance. One's sense of direction is confounded; space appears to fold into itself. And the motley crew of doors, with their heterogeneous appearances and shared identity, suggests not only that together we stand, but also that it's gateways, not barriers, that are needed in this world. The funny-looking, fragile-seeming wall formed by

the shabby doors seems to point to the ludicrous futility of erecting socio-political fences in the first place. As the window-mirror effect demonstrates, the haven they create is a temporary illusion.

In his video "In the Company Of", HISK alum Simon Gush, who is South African, reminds us that the immigrant experience in this country is anything but smooth. It documents a football game staged on railway tracks running through the Moscou suburb of Ghent by two teams of energetic, uniformed players, all immigrants. Communicating in broken Dutch, they manage to pass the ball, score points and enjoy them-

selves despite the devilish stumbling blocks that traverse their pitch. The ball ricochets in all directions off the rails, which the men hop over adroitly in order not to break a leg: it's amazing that none of them do.

Particularly apposite in its presentation, 2006 HISK laureate Adam Leech's video "Speech Bubble" parodies – in a poetic, mesmerising solo performance by the artist – the hubris, greed and techno-speak that, in 2001, drove the Lernhout & Hauspie speech-recognition technology firm into bankruptcy and its executives into big trouble in a major fraud scandal. Based in Ypres, the company courted investors in West Flanders, and many of them incurred huge losses.

On Watou's main square, dubbed Hugo Clausplein after Flanders' celebrated writer, a proposed master plan for the town and its outlying areas is presented on the first floor of the former town hall. Office Kersten Geers David Van Severen architects, in collaboration with landscape architects Bureau Bas Smets, have come up with an ingenious way to help preserve open spaces and discourage the kind of ribbon development that's becoming ubiquitous in much of the rest of Flanders. Enlightened and non-invasive, the plan, if adopted, might just keep cyclists rolling into Watou for decades to come.

Inside Sint-Bavo's church across the square, a revolving baggage carousel ("Lost Baggage") by the Scandinavian duo Elmgreen & Dragset and a colourful minimalist canopy echoing the transparency and rich palette of stained

glass by Liam Gillick, give a foretaste of the big-name international work on view in a former rest home nearby.

Selected by Dhondt-Dhaenens Museum director Joost Declercq from the Vanmoerkerke collection (a private repository of post-conceptual art kept in Ostend) *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue* is delightful, and anything but restful. The title comes from Barnett Newman's once controversial – and still radically confrontational – painting, and each room in the rest home has been painted in one of those primary colours. Hardly a neutral foil for the art also hanging there. But the works are anything but meek and can compete with any amount of background noise.

American artist Sam Durant's light boxes – illuminated, high-key monochromes overlaid with pithy phrases – are scattered through the building's long corridors and stairwells, like a trail of breadcrumbs to the rest, which include top-notch pieces by Hans-Peter Feldmann, Roni Horn and Jack Pierson, among others. The show extends into the garden, where Elmgreen & Dragset's facing pair of urinals will remind some people of Duchamp, others of risqué trysts.

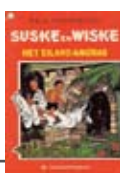
Non-Dutch speakers can enjoy the show's literary components without deciphering a single word. This is especially true of the exhibition curated by writer Peter Verhulst in the outbuildings of a farm on the outskirts of town. Sculptures and large charcoal drawings have narrative qualities that can be appreciated without the slightest assistance from texts.

As for getting the most out of the multitude of the contemporary poems selected by Willy Tibergien and printed on white helium balloons in the brewery, it's probably best to brush up your Dutch beforehand.

→ www.watou2009.be



Liam Gillick's modern yet protective stained glass (above), Masashi Echigo's border-questioning installation (left)



Ride 'em Flemish cowboys

Suske and Wiske become Texas rangers for new movie

ALAN HOPE

There is a concept in robotics known as the “uncanny valley”, which says that the more a robot increases its likeness to a human, the more positive and empathetic the reaction of the onlooker. Until, that is, the likeness becomes almost complete, at which point the reaction suddenly becomes one of fear and revulsion.

The problem of how to overcome the uncanny valley is one that goes beyond robotics: the developers of prosthetic limbs, for example, know that they might be better off making them less realistic. If it approaches the uncanny valley, it risks repelling a potential user or other people.

Filmmakers have also experienced the problem of the uncanny valley. As CGI techniques become more sophisticated, animators push the boundaries of realism – but you can go too far. The biggest surprise in the field came with the release of *The Polar Express* in 2004.

Directed and produced by Robert Zemeckis, whose previous credits include the pioneering animation/live-action mix *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, *The Polar Express* was hailed by the industry and received an Academy Award nomination. But the public felt otherwise, with the animation described as “eerie” and “creepy” and complaining of the characters’ “dead eyes”. Zemeckis had strayed into the uncanny valley.

But what if the likeness to which the animated character is being compared is not a live human but a two-dimensional comic-strip character, like the Suske en Wiske strips of Willy Vandersteen? The answer is: the problems of the uncanny valley remain, as we can see in the new film adaptation *Suske en Wiske en de Texas Ridders* (*Suske and Wiske and the Texas Rangers*) opening today across Flanders.

“Can” does not mean “should”

Flemish comic artist Willy Vandersteen was a protégé of *Tintin* creator Hergé and adopted the latter’s style of *ligne claire* (clear lines), which forgoes pictorial realism, and especially shading, in order to present each panel as a picture with infinite depth of field. Every square packed foreground and background with pictorial information.

So Wiske, one of the leads in Vandersteen’s strips, has hair consisting of a few lines, eyes as black dots and other features just as rudimentary. His best friend, Suske, and the other characters are the same, and in this they resemble Tintin and the cast of the Hergé albums.

Vandersteen produced hundreds of strips in this style up until his death in 1990. Suske and Wiske are perennial favourites: Dutch and Flemish children all have a metre or so of the familiar orange covers on their bookshelves, and the French translations *Bob et Bobette* are almost as popular. The albums are also translated into English as *Spike and Suzy*.

So it seems odd that the two film adaptations of Suske en Wiske have declined to copy Vandersteen’s style, which is so familiar to our eyes (*The Simpsons* are a modern example of *ligne claire*).

In 2004, Rudi Van Den Bossche directed *Suske en Wiske: De duistere diamant* as a live-action film. Now comes a 3-D animation of *De Texas ridders*, a comic-strip album set in Texas in which our young heroes help law enforcement officials catch cowboy bad guys. A clarification: the film is not in 3-D, so no need for funny glasses. But the animation is in 3D, so characters have heads that are spherical, not

just circular. That’s important. Based on the characters we know from the strips, we’re expecting something like the Tintin films or *The Simpsons*. Instead we get an animation more like *Toy Story* or *The Incredibles*.

The bottom line

On the one hand, that’s not a bad thing. The film utilises the very best in cutting-edge rendering techniques; surfaces and textures are uncannily represented, from the rough steel of a steam engine to the wooden beams of a railway track. On the other hand, it’s odd to see 2-D figures animated so completely – odd and slightly unsettling. The uncanny valley is not exactly a nightmarish place, but you wouldn’t want to live there.

That point aside, the film is a ripping adventure for fans of Suske and Wiske, and that’s good news for the producers, who are waiting to see the results of this release before deciding whether to go ahead with more adaptations. Striking animation aside, the film boasts the best voice cast a Flemish director could hope to bring together: prolific actors Peter Van den Begin (*Dirty Mind*, *Buitenspel*) and Stany Crets (*Los*, *Buitenspel*); Lucas Van den Eynde (who played the title role in the musical *Daens*); Sien Eggers (*Van vlees en bloed*), Filip Peeters (*Lof*), Axel Daeseleire (*Flikken*) and kids’ Ketnet favourite Staf Coppens as Suske. New drama graduate Evellen Verhegge voices Wiske.

Dirk Nielandt, who writes scripts for both children and adult programming and was editor of the former *Suske and Wiske Weekly* penned the screenplay, together with Guy Mortier, former editor of *Humo* magazine. The film was directed by producer Mark Mertens ♦

→ www.suskeenwiskefilm.be

Vandersteen in Brussels

There are two exhibitions currently running dedicated to Willy Vandersteen as part of the BD Comic Festival in Brussels. In the Belgisch Centrum van het Beeldverhaal next to Central Station is a small exhibit looking back over the artist’s whole

range of work. In the town hall, meanwhile, on the Grote Markt, there’s a more extensive show dedicated to his Brussels years, when he came to the capital to work for Hergé.

→ www.brusselscomics.com

What the critics say

Oscar and Victor are both 11 years old and fans of the Suske and Wiske comic strips

Flanders Today: What did you think of the film?

Oscar: The film was fine, but the 3-D was a bit strange.

Victor: I thought it was a bit overdone.

FT: Would you say that the story in the movie is a lot like the strip story?

Both: Yes, that was okay

FT: Were the characters the same as you were expecting?

V: Yes. Nearly all of them.

FT: Who wasn’t?

O: Suske and Wiske; they were a little different from the strip. But the same story all the same.

FT: Who was most like his strip character?

O: Lambik.

V: He said *exactly* the same things as in the strip.

FT: And who was the least like their original character?

V: The bad guy.

O: That’s not a main character.

V: It is! He was completely different in the book.

FT: Did you get bored at all?

Both: No.

FT: So the time goes by quickly enough.

V: Not really.

FT: You’re not sitting looking at your watch, though.

Both: No. (*Ed note: Neither has a watch*)

FT: Would you want to watch it again?

Both: Not really.

FT: Once was enough, then.

Both: Yeah.



Warm below the storm

Blankenberge hosts the mysterious and fantastical seascapes of Frans Masereel

LISA BRADSHAW

Psychologists say it's very difficult in later years to match the impressions of our first five years of life. Your mind soaks up the world like a sponge.

Make that a sea sponge, in the case of Frans Masereel.

Masereel lived in Ghent, Paris, Geneva and Nice, but the sea, where he was born, came back in his work for the rest of his life. He lived with his parents in a townhouse on the promenade of Blankenberge until, coincidentally, the age of five.

One of the world's best (and certainly its most prolific) artists of woodcut graphics, Masereel produced more than a thousand of them until his death in the early 1970s. Although he is best known for his socially conscious and anti-war themes, many of which he produced for pacifist magazines, Blankenberge's current exhibition of his work is titled *Masereel and the Sea*. Not only was there no shortage of woodcut graphics to choose from, the show features the Flemish artist's lesser-known watercolours and oil paintings, of which he also produced more than 1,000 in his lifetime.

Woodcut graphics are not an overwhelmingly popular genre of art, but they are breathtaking in the simplicity of their stark contrasts, which belie a complexity in craftsmanship. An image is cut into wood, like a relief, and the raised portion is covered with ink. The finished woodcut is pressed onto paper or other material, leaving behind a printed image. The exhibition includes a piece of wood used for a woodcut so you can understand the process better. Peek around to the back – Masereel used both sides.

Educated at Ghent's Academy of Fine Arts, Masereel relocated to Paris in 1911, where he made his first woodcuts. He was 25 when the First World War broke out, and he fled to Geneva, from where he illustrated the cover of the pacifist *Le Feuille* every single day for three years. That work, plus similar illustrations for *Les Tablettes*, made him a graphic sensation, and he published many of his woodcut albums

during this period – books that told a narrative story using only woodcut graphic images.

A few years after returning to France, Masereel bought a rickety house on a rocky slope in the remote fishing village of Equihen, where he and his wife spent every summer. The hundreds of sea-themed pieces are not the artist's best-known work in woodcuts, and yet they define a number of his preoccupations and pop up in many of his books.

A number of the exhibition's drawings and woodcuts emphasise the wistfulness people feel standing on shore staring out at boats on a seemingly endless horizon. In some, such as the delicate "Wavebreaker" – which Blankenberge Cultural Centre is using on its promotional materials, despite the diminutive size of the original – men take tentative steps towards its mysterious depths.

In the show's most intriguing (and larger) woodcuts, the sea and the cities on its shores seem to negotiate an uneasy relationship, neither really trusting the other. This is most often depicted with Masereel's generous use of sirens – the sometimes noble, sometimes dangerous women of the ocean. In 1955's "Poor Siren", one has been pulled from the water, her hand caught in the massive chain of a ship's anchor, her fish tail dangling helplessly in the night air. Men gather ominously onshore. Conversely, "Poor Fisherman", made a few years later,

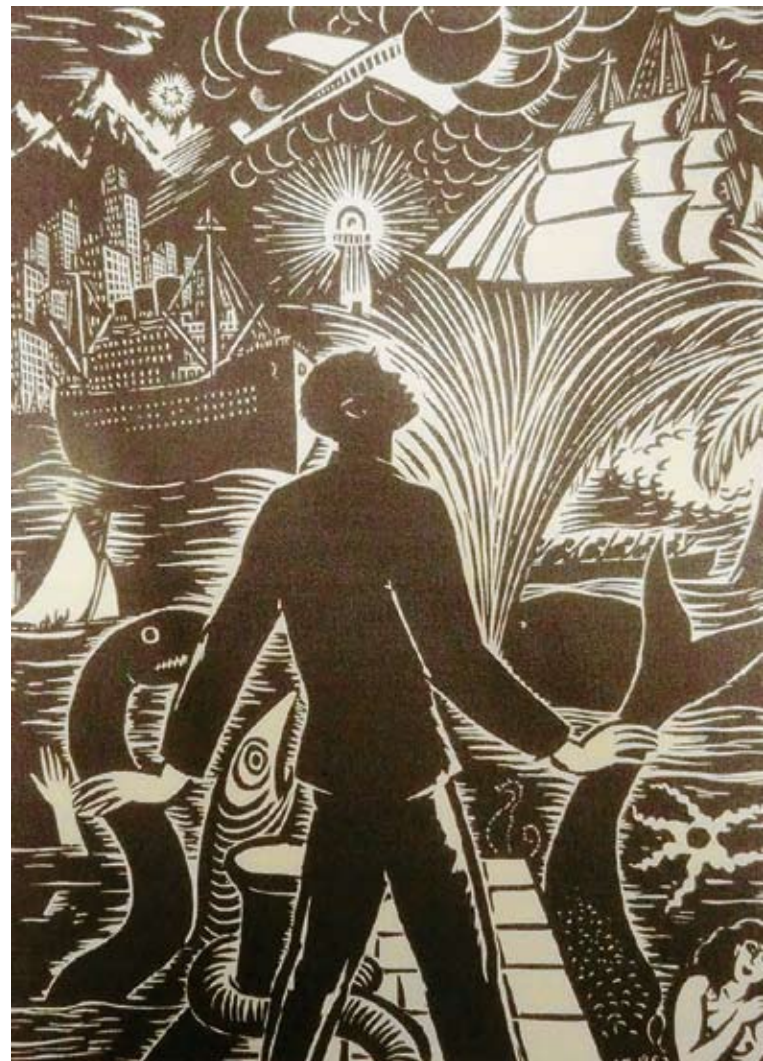
finds larger-than-life sirens towering over a shipwreck, seeking out their victims.

The epitome of this theme has to be "The Wave", one of the exhibition highlights, in which a giant tidal wave carries off an entire city, skyscrapers bobbing in its wake.

But occasionally the city/sea dichotomy produces something playful. "The Aquarium", from 1960, shows what is happening in the harbour of a large city. The marvellous and fantastical – almost *colourful* – creatures are having the time of their lives just beyond the view of those existing above.

In the 1930s, Masereel began a life-long affair with a younger woman, which you could guess from the turn his work takes even if you didn't know it. Since the 1920s, there were the ever-present sirens, but in the next decade and beyond, there are curvy nudes, lounging on the beach, splashing in the water. In two striking woodcuts, they are wading out to sea, but the sea is illustrated by such fine dark lines, it could appear simply as darkness – figures wandering into the void.

These works, from the 1950s and '70s, appear to be a sign that Masereel has come somewhat to terms with his relationship with women. In much of his work from the 1920s, women are often subjects of stark voyeurism, naked worshippers of powerful men or prostitutes, such as in 1928's "The Catch", a disturbing



portrait in which it is unclear what role the woman is playing in her own victimisation.

Masereel's oil paintings fall into landscapes – which are generally clichéd – and people, which are strong and bold, the paint smeared on thickly with a palette knife. Masereel once said that his earliest memory of childhood was running about with an old sailor in Blankenberge who sported a big, gold earring. This series of oils reflects that sort square-jawed, leathery skinned worker, who he became again familiar with in Equihen. But rather than rough and tough, their expressions seem almost fragile, staring down a pint glass, holding their wives like they may never see them again.

As a bit of a bonus gift, the exhibition throws in a few of Masereel's woodcut masterpieces that are not part of his sea images. You'll find "The Boxer", "Spleen" and, my favourite, "The Kiss", in which two people act

out the title leaning across a busy city street from several stories up. A bit further, however, you find the sea version of "The Kiss": in "Somebody Loves Me", two people lean across an ocean from different lands, managing to meet in-between.

It's poignant in its romance, but I'm even more swept away by "The Adventure", where a young man stands on a pier in front of a sea with a shining lighthouse, a ship full of masts pulling alongside, a sea creature surfacing, a siren floating nearby. An airplane flies among bubbly round clouds, stars twinkle, city lights shine. The man watches it all blaze around him like a show of fireworks – every kid's imagination of what the world holds. ♦

Masereel and the Sea

Until 4 October
Casino Blankenberge

→ www.blankenberge.be



The pensive Frans Masereel (far right) shifted moods with the tides to make "The Adventure" (above) and many oil paintings of fisherman (right)



The capital of taste

This summer, Hasselt has a lot more on offer than a nip of jenever

REBECCA BENOOT

Ever since last year's immensely popular television series *De Smaak van de Keyser*, which followed the lives of three generations of women in a jenever distillery in Hasselt, this little, bubbly city has been rediscovered by the Flemish.

Dubbed the Capital of Taste by city officials, Hasselt is known for its sophisticated flavours: in addition to many good restaurants and the infamously delicious jenever, it's a fashion capital (the home of designer Stijn Helsen) and has quaint little shops, picturesque squares and numerous museums.

Seeing as most cities are going all out to lure in the crowds this summer, Hasselt could not just stand by without putting up some competition. It has, with little fanfare, put together an intricately planned programme to keep you entertained even on the rainier summer days.

Every Monday evening, carillons from the Sint-Quintinus Cathedral will chime above while you sip cold beer (or hot coffee) at one of the cosy cafés on the Grote Markt. If that sounds like taking

things too easy, you can always join the roller-skating parade, which leaves the Kolonel Dusartplein at 19.00, whisking you across the city on eight wheels.

The Grote Markt really is the place to be in Hasselt this summer. It's the spot for the über-charming Hasselt Danst every Tuesday night. After a 30-minute lesson by a local dance group, you'll be ready to take centre stage and boogie the night away. A different dance is taught every week, making you an all-around expert by summer's end.

On Wednesdays nights, meanwhile, local orchestra Toeternietoe, aided by several guest musicians, lighten the mood with upbeat melodies on the Molenpoortplein. More free music awaits, this time in Kamermolenpark, with free concerts every Thursday as part of the Parkfeesten series taking place across Flanders. Upcoming shows include Yamundo, a Flemish-Dutch trio delivering sultry, jazzy beats, and Antwerp-based light pop group Mama's Jasje.

Saturdays in Hasselt are dedicated to antiques, with a wonder-



ful little antique market on the Kolonel Dusartplein in the morning, followed by an art fair on the Groenplein (next to the tourist office) in the afternoons. Paintings, sculptures, jewellery, you name it.

Aside from glorious food and drink, Limburg province in general excels in pop and rock music, spitting out one great little garage band after another. We end our week, then, with the Muziekterras, live music on the Leopoldplein with an after-party at C.Bar. But what about Friday? you may be wondering. Well, that's up to you, really – choose from the scads of other ongoing activities in Hasselt this summer. Visit, for example, the surprisingly interesting fairytale exhibit *Zeg Roodkapje, waar ga je heen?* (*Say, Little Red Riding Hood, Where Are You Going?*) in the oft-overlooked

literary museum.

Also bypassed in favour of its competition in Antwerp, Hasselt's fashion museum houses the exhibition *In Her Shoes*, which follows the evolution in women's shoe design from 1900 to the present, illustrated by way of famous creations by well-known (Christian Louboutin, Jimmy Choo, Manolo Blahnik) and lesser-known designers.

What started in Ghent has now moved to Hasselt: Sunday through Thursday from 27 July to 30 August, television celebrity Marcel Vanthilt hosts his new show *Villa Vanthilt* from the "mobile villa" built on the Kolonel Dusartplein. Sit back and relax in the garden of his "estate" and take in the show starting at 22.00.

And let's not forget about Rimpelrock (Wrinkle Rock) on 15 August.

Clouseau, Billy Ocean, Lee Towers, Dana Winner and many more head to the Kiewit in Hasselt to show that summer music festivals are not just for the young. Thousands of 60-plussers turn out for this annual event, waving their arms in the air and hooting at the stage. It's one of Flanders' more surreal summer experiences, and that's saying a lot.

Last but not least, everyone is encouraged to take part in Hasselt's photo competition. If you've had a great time at one of the above-mentioned venues, and you've got the pictures to prove it, send them in via the city's website. Every week a winner will be awarded a gift certificate. Non-winners need not despair – by the end of the summer, all entries will be posted on Hasselt's new website.

→ www.hasselt.be

sports

MARTIN BANKS

Cricket in Flanders



It may not go down too well with the English, but there is compelling evidence that their national summer sport was, in fact, invented in Flanders.

Research published earlier this year indicated that Flemish weavers and shepherds who emigrated from the south of England from the 14th century onwards could have taken the game of cricket along with them.

The findings place Flemish "creckettes" and "weckettes" in the south of England in the mid-16th century, a time that coincides with a painting by the Flemish Master Pieter Bruegel The Elder which is said to show an early form of the game.

Fast forward to 2009, and you find 1,200 members of 17 cricket clubs in Belgium, 13 of them in Flanders. And three new clubs are set to launch later this year, says Martin O'Connor, a native of New Zealand who moved to Flanders in 1991. "Of course, it is still very much a minority sport, but cricket really is flourishing in

Flanders," he says.

The first Belgian Cricket Federation was founded in the early 1900s. The first record of organised cricket, however, can be found in a painting dated 1870, which now hangs in the Pavilion at Lords, the famous home of cricket in London. This shows the opening of the Brussels Cricket Club in 1866 by the Mayor of Brussels.

Next came the Antwerp Football and Cricket Club, founded in 1880 by expatriate British workers. Early in the 20th century, the football and cricket divisions of the club parted company – the football club is now in Belgium's 2nd division, while the cricket side remains one of the country's leading clubs.

From the early 1990s until 1967, both Brussels and Antwerp played in the Dutch league. More and more clubs were formed, and today there are eight cricket grounds in Belgium. An annual sixes competition is held in Ghent, and there are also youth leagues.

As O'Connor says, cricket is now "slowly raising" its image and numbers but still has to compete with a large number of other minority sports. "It's in pretty good shape here, but it can sometimes be difficult trying to promote a sport like cricket, not least because of the recent success and popularity of a sport like tennis," says O'Connor, who makes his home in Geel, Antwerp province.

These days O'Connor is a full time general manager for the Belgian Cricket Federation, which runs the game. He readily admits that the "biggest setback" for the game here was the decision several years ago by the BBC not to broadcast cricket on free-to-air TV.

"That was a real blow," he says. "Even so, we are doing our best to raise the sport's profile, and I'm confident we will."

→ www.cricket-belgium.com

Cost-cutting panic or investments in human capital?

In times like these, where we have to do more with less, there are two types of managers. **Those who cut costs** across the board, and **those who even now choose to continue to invest** prudently. Which type are you? The financial crisis and the uncertain economic situation are confronting managers with new challenges, but all too often they are also driving them to take decisions that are infused with panic and doom-and-gloom. But the ones who are forward-thinking and keep to their own course don't slam on the brakes – instead, they invest in the future.

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If this sounds like you, please send your CV and Motivation Letter to Derek.Blyth@ackroyd.be.



Sand Sculpture Festival

LISA BRADSHAW

It sounds like kid stuff, making castles in the sand and all that. Which is why I was at first embarrassed by how blown away I was with the artistry on display at the Sand Sculpture Festival. From the minute details of a little village to the giant octopus laying waste to a ship at sea, my eyes bulged at the ability of craftspeople to make such life-like images – whole story-telling scenes – out of plain, old sand.

I tried to tell myself that sculptors do such things with stone and copper all the time and that this material was much more pliable. The difference here, I eventually realised, is that it is a massive display they only had six weeks to complete.

The Sand Sculpture Festival, brought to you by the same company that hosts Bruges' Snow and Ice festival in the winter, takes place every year in Blankenberge. The theme this year is, appropriately, pirates, and the sculptures have laid it on thick, with one pirate myth after another laid out before you as you traverse the walkways both indoors and out.

Pirates sit at tables counting their

gold doubloons, little discs of sand that are amusingly scattered everywhere throughout the festival. Ancient island temples decorated with skulls flank natives, who hope to put shipwrecked pirates on the menu. Mermaids pop out of the water (yes, it looks like water), pirates eat their breakfast (of little sand eggs and bangers), Jack Sparrow gazes out to sea. Under a sand table sit sand bags filled with...sand.

Further along, mermaids swim with dolphins, while pirates woo them with beads and shiny jewels, hoping to gain passage to the legendary treasure of Titan. Eventually the sea god himself towers over you, emerging from the depths of a sea cave.

The festival uses 12,600 tonnes of special sand culled from a cave in Wallonia. Last year, the theme was more focused on structures – castles and palaces. This year, with so many figures and faces with expressions, the carvers had to be much more skilled. Thirty-four sculptors came from eight countries to put it all together, includes five Italians who normally work in marble.

If you are silly enough, as was I,

to think that you are going to find a sand festival on the *sand*, let me save you some time. It is located, until 31 August, on Blankenberge's main drag, Koning Albert I laan, as it heads north out of town. Entry is on the right, just past the Sea Life Aquarium.



→ www.zandsculptuur.com

Check out the Festival section for all Flanders' music fests!



Antwerp

Kelly's Irish Pub
Keyserlei 27;
www.kellys.be
JULY 24 21.00 Akim
JULY 25 22.00 Andrew Mavin

Brussels

L'Alphabet
Waversesteenweg 1387; 02.662.23.00,
www.lalphabet.be
JULY 25 20.30 Feelings



Brussels

Café Bonnefooi
Steenstraat 8,
www.bonnefooi.be
JULY 29 20.30 Viktor Abel, piano

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193-195;
02.733.13.78,
www.jazzstation.be
JULY 22 20.00 Minino Garay & Gerardo Di Giusto

Le Bar du Matin

Alsebergsesteenweg 172;
02.537.71.59, <http://bardumatin.blogspot.com/>
JULY 23 21.00 Wild Boar & Bull Brass Band
JULY 30 21.00 Moiano

The Cotton Club - Grand Casino
Duquesnoystraat14; 02.289.68.66,
www.gcb.be
JULY 25 21.30 Ben & Cleo Duo

Sass'n Jazz

Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78,
www.sazznjazz.be
JULY 23 21.30 EinsDreiZweiVier

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45,
www.themusicvillage.com
JULY 21-25 21.00 Greg Houben Trio + guest Mélanie De Biasio
JULY 28-AUG 1 21.00 Toine Thys Organ Trio

Deurne

Openluchttheater Rivierenhof
Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192,
www.openluchttheater.be
JULY 24 20.30 The Belbouchos + Rusty Roots

Ghent

El Negocio
Brabantdam 121; 0479.56.73.95,
www.mi-negocio.net
JULY 22 22.00 The Durgas



Brussels

Café Bonnefooi
Steenstraat 8,
www.bonnefooi.be
JULY 22 22.00 Cachito Pa'Querier

Piola Libri

Franklinstraat 66-68; 02.736.93.91,
www.piolalibri.be

JULY 24 19.00 Les Mange Tout, acoustic electro folk



Brussels

St Michael and St Gudula Cathedral
Sinter-Goedeleplein; 070.22.21.07,
www.ticketnet.be
JULY 22 14.00 Reading Music Centre String Orchestra performs The Power of Music by William Boyce, Concerto in D Minore by Antonio Vivaldi, St Paul's Suite by Holst and more (free)

Ostend

Hazegraskapel
Graaf de Smet de Naeyerlaan 24;
059.51.49.03,
www.orlandus.be
JULY 30 20.00 Luk Bastiaens, organ:
Bach, among others

Sint-Petrus en Pauluskerk

Sint-Petrus en Paulusplein;
059.51.49.03,
www.orlandus.be
JULY 23 20.00 Christian Bacheley, organ: Mendelssohn, Franck, among others

GET YOUR
TICKETS NOW!

Spandau Ballet

3 November, 20.00
Vorst Nationaal,
Brussels

Do you remember the '80s? Sure you do: you wore too much eyeliner, whatever your gender, and bought those leg warmers you now use as door draft stoppers. Spandau Ballet, like you, remembers the '80s and, like you, they now have a much better look. No, they don't have any new material and haven't played together since their break-up in 1990. They are just brashly heading out on a world tour playing the same old stuff. But what stuff it is.

→ www.vorstnationaal.be

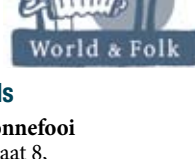


OTHER BEACH FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

Film on the beach → Zeebrugge

Street theatre festival → Koksijde

International Cartoon Festival → Knokke-Heist



Ghent

Capitole
Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5;
0900.69.00,
www.capitolegent.be

JULY 23-25 20.00 Ladies Night, comedy show



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?, photos from the Iraq war

Until SEP 13 Nick Hannes: Red Journey, photographs from Russia
Until SEP 13 De film van mijn leven (The Film of My Life), prize-winners of the Canvas photography contest, plus work by Flemish photographer Lieve Blancquaert

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

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 Frans Masereel, with drawings, 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

CC Brugge

Sint-Jakobsstraat 20-26; 050.44.30.40, www.ccbrugge.be/Nomad
Until SEP 1 Nomad: 40 jaar Roland Patteuw, a walking tour of art by one of Flanders' hardest working curators, with work by Roger Raveel, Dan Van Severen, Raoul De Keyser, Jef Geys and more

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)

Belvue Museum

Paleizenplein 7; 02.511.44.25, www.belvue.be

Until SEPT 20 Be-Arts, works by Félicien Rops, Hugo Claus, Henri Blès and Rik Wouters

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

Until SEP 13 Repromotion, installation of sculptures and photographs by Belgian contemporary artist Jan De Cock

Until SEP 13 Young Belgian Painters Award 2009, works by the finalists
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

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 Flemish 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

Until 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

De Elektriciteitscentrale (European Centre for Contemporary Art)

Sint Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.35
Until SEP 27 Nothing is Permanent, exhibition of contemporary art from the 1970s to today, selected by long-time Brussels gallery owner Albert Baronian

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

Elsene Museum

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

European Economic and Social Committee

Belliardstraat 99 - 6th floor; 02.546.86.78

Until AUG 31 My Europe, art and design by 40 contemporary Czech 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), 200 years of shop windows and interiors

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

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.226.12.57, www.botanique.be

Until AUG 9 Stephan Vanfleteren: Belgicum, black-and-white photographs by the contemporary Flemish artist

Until AUG 9 From Belgium, 25 Belgian photographers illustrate "their" Belgium in celebration of Botanique's 25th anniversary. Free outdoor exhibition

MIVB Headquarters

Kolonienstraat 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, a 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 19th-century Belgian painter

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

Until SEP 13 Ben Cain: The Making of the Means, large-scale installation by the former artist in residence

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 as seen through the eyes of female photographers.

Deurle

Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens

Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23, www.museumdd.be

Until SEP 13 When the mood strikes... Wilfried & Yannicke Cooreman's collection of contemporary art, with works by Franz West, Thomas Schütte, Jean-Marc Bustamante and Jan Vercruyse among others
Until SEP 13 Robert Devriendt, paintings

Gaasbeek

Gaasbeek Castle

Kasteelstraat 40; 02.531.01.30, www.kasteelvangaasbeek.be

Until AUG 16 Paul & Cie: Oriental Traces in Gaasbeek, a look at Paul Arconati (1754-1821), eccentric resident of Gaasbeek Castle and fervent admirer of Napoleon

Ghent

Design Museum

Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99, <http://design.museum.gent.be/>

Until OCT 11 Yrjö Kukkapuro, retrospective of the Finnish designer, from the late 1950s to the present day
Until OCT 11 Ceramics by Raoul Dufy, 1877-1904, works by the French artist

Until OCT 11 Schoonhoven Silver Award: Poetry in Silver, silverwork 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 De Tientoongestelde Mens: Andere culturen als amusement (Exhibited People: Other Cultures as Entertainment), posters and photographs from carnival shows and asylums that put the physically or mentally handicapped on display

MIAT

Minnemeers 9; 09.269.42.00, www.miat.gent.be

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 17th-century Flemish master
Until SEP 20 Raoul de Keyser, works on paper from the 1960s and '70s oeuvre of 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 Verbeeldt (Represents), sculpture and drawings by the Ghent artist, singer and founder of the legendary Gentse Feesten

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03, www.smak.be

Until AUG 2 Dara Birnbaum: The Dark Matter of Media Light, retrospective of the American

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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 Keyzer: Trinity, photographs on power and violence by the Flemish Magnum agency photographer

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 and other European collections, shown alongside work by contemporary African artists

Ypres

CC Ieper/Lakenhallen
 Grote Markt 34; 057.23.94.80, www.acci.be
Until OCT 4 Wat overblijft (What remains), recycled assemblages by Flemish artist Camiel Van Breedam



Beaufort 03: Art by the Sea: Third edition of the contemporary art triennial, with works by 29 Belgian and international artists
Until OCT 4 at Ostend's Kunstmuseum aan zee and in various outdoor locations along the Belgian coast
 070.22.50.05, www.beaufort03.be

Roller Bike Parade: Four months of rollerblading in the streets with technical staff on hand to help with equipment rental and maintenance
Until SEP 26 in Brussels (every Friday), Antwerp (every Saturday), Koksijde (every Sunday) and Hasselt (every Monday); all parades confirmed or cancelled by 16.00
www.belgiumrollers.com

Palm Parkies: Series of concerts, including BBQ and drinks
Until AUG 26 19.00 in parks across Flanders
www.parkies.net

Antwerp

Jackyland: Concerts every Thursday by local talent, followed by after-parties
Until SEP 10 at Magiq Spiegeltent, Oosterweelsteenweg (Noordkasteel)
www.jackyland.be

Rhythm 'n' Blues Festival: Featuring

DON'T MISS

PleinOPENair

24 July to 8 August
 Across Brussels

Watch cult movies, explore urban history and discover an eclectic range of bands outdoors during the Plein OPENair Festival. Each event takes place at a different off-beat Brussels venue, and all are free. The first, at the magical disused Josaphat train station in Schaerbeek, features oriental-influenced rock from Lyon punk band NED. Films include *They Shoot Horses Don't They?*, a cynical dance film from the late 1960s by the late Sydney Pollack.

→ www.nova-cinema.org



A Living History: The Chicago Blues Legends, The Seatsniffers, Ian Siegal, Matt Schofield, Simon McBride, The Brew and Sammy Cuba
JULY 26 at Maritiem Openlucht Museum, Thonetlaan
 0477.85.38.22, www.kidvanthienenmusic.com

Zomer van Antwerpen: Annual summer arts festival featuring concerts, theatre, circus, open-air film, sunset barbecues and a woodland bar; most events free
Until AUG 30 across Antwerp
 03.224.85.28, www.zva.be

Blankenberge

Comedy Summer 2009: Comedy festival featuring stand-up comedians An Nelissen, Wouter Deprez, Raf Coppens, Iwein Segers and more
Until AUG 14 at Belgium Pier, Zeedijk 261
 0900.00.600, www.comedysummer.be

Sand Sculpture Festival: Annual international sand sculpture festival, this year with a pirate theme
Until AUG 31 at Blankenberge
www.zandsculptuur.be

Bruges

Klinkers: Summer festival featuring free concerts, tango and flamenco dance and a historic pub crawl
JULY 24-AUG 8 in the centre of Bruges
www.klinkers-brugge.be

MA Festival: Modern Times in Early Music: the Bruges leg of the Festival of Flanders includes early music performances and talks
Until AUG 9 in venues across the city
 050.33.22.83, www.mafestival.be

Brussels

Bruksellive: Free outdoor festival with music by Madensuyu, The Sedan Vault, Malibu Stacey, The Hickey Underworld and Lady Linn & Her Magnificent Seven
JULY 25 at Osseghem Park, Atomium

www.bruksellive.be

Bruparck: Four themed family weekends, including music and dance activities, acrobatics, pirate shows, comic strips, Knights of the Round Table and more
Until AUG 23 at Bruparck, Eeuwfeestlaan 20, Heysel
www.bruparck.com

Brussels Beach: Urban beach with sand, concerts, beach sports, family entertainment and 50 straw huts selling exotic food and drink
Until AUG 23 on the banks of the Akenkaai (Saintelettesquare)
 02.279.50.49, www.brusselbad.be

Brussels by Water: Guided boat tours and other activities in the port of Brussels and surrounding rivers and canals
Until SEP with departures from Brussels, Vilvoorde and Halle
 02.203.64.06, www.brusselsbywater.be

Bruxellons 2009: Annual theatre festival featuring popular theatre, music, cabaret and a children's programme, plus buffet and bar
JULY 23-SEP 26 at Château du Karreveld, Jean de la Hoeselaan 3
 02.724.24.24, www.bruxellons.net

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

Mini-Europe by Night: Sound and light show with fireworks
Until AUG 15 22.30 at Bruparck, Eeuwfeestlaan 20
www.minieurope.com

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

Ghent

Gentse Feesten (The Ghent Festivals): The largest music and street theatre festival in Europe returns to the capital of East Flanders. Includes more than a dozen outdoor stages, the International Puppet Buskers Festival and 10 Days Off techno fest, plus a number of special tours, comedy shows, debates and other side events
Until JULY 27 across Ghent
 0900.00.600, www.gentsefeesten.be

Parkkaffee: Activities in the park for the whole family, including live music, circus workshops, tarot card readings, campfire and food and drink
Until AUG 31 at Parkkaffee, Groenestaakstraat 37, Mariakerke
 09.227.99.94, www.parkkaffee.be

Hasselt

Muscadet Aperitiefconcerten: Outdoor music ensembles, choirs and orchestras every Sunday morning
Until AUG 30 11.00 at Het Stadsmus, Guido Gezellestraat 2
 011.23.98.90, www.hetstadsmus.be

Knokke-Heist

International Cartoon Festival: Annual event this year highlights the increasing role of internet and television in cartoons. Includes Press Cartoon Belgium and guest cartoonist Kevin Kallagher
Until SEP 27 at Lagunahall, Krommedijk
 050.630.430, www.cartoonfestival.be

Kneistival: Music festival featuring Lady Linn & Her Magnificent Seven, Kim Wilde, Level 42, Sioen, Tom Helsen, Stijn, Sweet Coffee and more
Until JULY 24 at Heldenplein
www.knokke-heist.be

Kortemark

Irie Vibes Roots Festival: Summer reggae festival featuring Lille Roots & Dub Family, Weedingdub & Zion, King Shiloh, Afrikan Simba, Jah Healing and more
JULY 24-25 at Kronevoordestraat 8610, Handzame (West Flanders)
www.greenforward.be/irievibe

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

Lommel

Lommel Leeft 2009: Free concerts in parks and public squares
Until AUG 27 in Lommel (Limburg province)
 011.39.97.99, www.lommelleeft.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

Ostend

Theater aan zee: Multidisciplinary arts festival curated by Arno Hijntens and Jan Goossens of Brussels' KVS theatre. Music, theatre, literature, exhibitions and family events
Until AUG 8 across Ostend
 059.56.20.16, www.theateraanzee.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
Until AUG 21 20.00 at Bruulpark, Ronse (East Flanders)
 055.23.27.94, www.bruulronse.be

Sint-Niklaas

Popmart: Electronic and rock music festival featuring Fredo & Thang, Nid & Sancy and Dog Eat Dog, among others
JULY 24-25 on the Grote Markt
www.popmart.be

Tervuren

Beeldig Tervuren: Guided walk exploring Tervuren's large number of diverse sculpture, including lions, sphinxes, mythical women, memorials, monuments, historical figures and fountains in the city's streets, squares and parks
JULY 26 14.00 departure from information office, Markt 7
www.tervuren.be

Waregem

Gothic Festival: Line-up includes Psy'Aviah, FabrikC, Santa Hates You, Ashbury Heights, Zeromancer, Noisuf-X, KMFDM, Rotersand, Diary of Dreams and Die Form
JULY 24 at Waregem Expo, Zuiderlaan 20
www.gothicfestival.be

Watou

Watou 2009: Tussen Taal en Beeld: Annual festival of contemporary art, architecture and poetry. This year's title

EMMA PORTIER DAVIS

CAFE SPOTLIGHT



Le Stoumelings

Londenplein, Brussels

The exterior may be non-descript, but this stalwart of the tiny Londenplein near the European quarter of Brussels is a hidden gem of a bar. Long before the square was renovated and populated with trendy restaurants, Le Stoumelings was serving up an eclectic menu of drinks to those lucky few in the know.

In essence, it's a typical brown café with wooden décor and ageing posters peeling off the walls. But herein lies its charm as it strikes a sharp contrast with its city-slicker neighbours. On sunny days, there's a terrace which is perfect for after-work drinks, but it's later in the evening when it gets dark that this dingy, yet cosy, little hideout comes into its own.

The beer list thankfully extends beyond the ubiquitous InBev brands with a selection of some of Belgium's best. And while it looks a far cry from a cocktail bar, it serves a wicked mojito.

While funky modern tracks emanate from surrounding bars, Le Stoumelings regularly holds concerts of what Tibetan owner Pam describes as "acoustic rock ... but more soft". Its name, meanwhile, derives from *Bruxellois* dialect for, appropriately, business affairs that are done under the table, hidden away from prying eyes.

is Tussen Taal en Beeld: Verzamelde Verhalen (Between Language and Image: Collected Stories), which looks at the relationship between image and language
Until SEP 6 in indoor and outdoor venues across Watou (West Flanders)
 059.56.45.98, www.watou2009.be

Zulte

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

FACE OF FLANDERS

DEREK BLYTH



Nicolaes Van Bambeeck

Rembrandt's "Portrait of Nicolaes van Bambeeck" hangs in the Brussels Museum of Fine Arts, reunited with the Dutch artist's portrait of Nicolaes' wife Agatha Bas. That's reason enough to visit the museum but, as a further incentive, the Belgian painting has finally been cleaned of six layers of varnish accumulated since the work was completed in 1641.

The couple were last reunited in Amsterdam in 1991, having been separated since 1814, with the husband going to Brussels and the wife ending up in the British Royal Collection in Buckingham Palace. Art critics are looking afresh at the portrait of Nicolaes following an acclaimed restoration by the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage. "This is a unique

opportunity to see two masterpieces by Rembrandt hanging next to one another," said Liesbeth De Belie, scientific adviser at the Fine Arts Museum.

The exhibition includes a selection of drawings by Rembrandt and of works by his students, along with an account of the restoration.

► www.fine-arts-museum.be

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



vegetariër →

Cooking for a family would be relatively simple if everyone ate what was put in front of them. More and more families are having to cope with one or more wayward members who have become *vegetariërs* – vegetarians. If you're really unlucky, then you'll have another child who demands meat every day. Daily, there are concerns about cross-contamination – worries about veggie burgers that too closely resemble meat and which stock cubes ended up in the soup.

A solution would be if we all gave up meat, which I'm happy to do as long as I can have an occasional steak. Tobias Leenaert has taken this much further. He has persuaded the city of Ghent to promote Thursday as a meat-free day, including removing meat from school menus, the first city in the world to do so. It was a great stunt, which drew the attention of the world's press and television on the first Thursday.

Sao Paolo is planning to follow suit soon, and thousands of US mayors have been approached to do the same. Now Macca and Yoko Ono have jumped on Tobias' bandwagon, calling for meat-free Mondays. But as with many prophets, Tobias Leenaert was not immediately recognised in his own land: Flemish TV channels ignored the launch day.

Tobias suspects that vested interests are at work in Flanders. The authorities are keen to promote *spaarlampen* (energy-saving bulbs) and *openbaar vervoer* (public transport) but

say nothing about *minder vlees eten* – eating less meat. When it was suggested that Leuven become the second *Veggiedag* city in Flanders, *de Boerenbond* – the Farmers Union – protested vehemently.

On *Donderdag Veggiedag*, vegetarian dishes are the day's special in Ghent town hall canteens and schools. Restaurants similarly promote non-meat dishes. It seems a gentle way of putting across the message. As Tobias says, "*Eet geen vlees*" is *een te moeilijke boodschap* – "Eat no meat" is too difficult a message. "*Minder vlees eten*" is *veel haalbaarder* – "Eat less meat" is much more feasible.

Being a vegetarian in Flanders still means that you have to deal with questions like "*Waarom eet je eigenlijk vegetarisch?*" – Why do you actually eat vegetarian? Most carnivores can't imagine that people do it because they don't like the taste. Another question vegetarians face is: "*Zijn die schoenen van leer?*" Are those leather shoes? (though less so in this sneaker world).

Tobias has set up the *Ethisch Vegetarisch Alternatief* to inform people about the benefits of vegetarian food. He doesn't preach about animal rights or frighten passers-by with photos of abattoirs. He believes his simple message speaks for itself. He hopes his *Veggiedag* spreads and that beef steak finally becomes an issue on the political agenda.

► www.vegetarisme.be

bite

COURTNEY DAVIS



El Negocito

It's easy to miss El Negocito, a gem of a place outshined by its neighbours in the nearby red light district of Ghent. Directly across from a triple-X movie theatre, it's an assuming venue with a barely legible chalkboard sign in Spanish.

The facade is indicative of the interior. The furniture is scratched, the ceiling has large holes, the décor is absent minded at best. Yet the ambiance is both social and intimate, a place where it's hard not to feel immediately comfortable.

El Negocito is an ideal combination of dive bar, jazz joint and Latin American home cooking. Open every day from 18.00, some nights find the place rocking to its peeling ceiling from which a contrasting glass chandelier wobbles with the beat.

The owner Roger, from Bruges, opened El Negocito

in 2005 and uses it as a showcase for local music. Ranging from surfer rock to avant-garde jazz, Roger is thrilled to be providing an opportunity and community for musicians to play. El Negocito's website is updated weekly and features the programme schedule; a detailed listing that seems more appropriate for a concert hall than this tiny 40-person cafe.

Despite all this, I come for the food. Full of smoke and the smell of fresh-made salsa, this place reeks of authenticity. The menu reflects the chef's Chilean heritage with offerings like ceviche, pastel de choclo and a variety of South American steaks. I'm hard pressed, though, to order anything except the basic fried fish. So simple, yet superbly cooked; light, fresh and delicious. The empanadas are cheap and filling and the fresh salsa that comes with every meal is the best (and hottest) I've had in Belgium.

I also like the fact that there are actual grape and country options for wines as opposed to the ubiquitous red/white. El Negocito buys its wine with a focus on South American and fair trade/organic. The house specialty drink – a frothy concoction that involves pisco and, oddly, egg whites. There are many types pisco, a South American liquor distilled from grapes, as well as two beers on tap and a host of bottle options at some of the lowest prices in Gent. Roger insists that this café isn't about making a lot of money but about making music and maintaining a connection to Chile.

► www.mi-negocio.net/elnegocito

The last word →→→

Regulating the banks

"There are regulations for milk, bread and fruit, but not for financial products. People don't understand that."

Guy Verhofstadt, former Belgian prime minister, now head of the liberal group in the European Parliament

Art attack

"Don't protect bad Belgian art" Headline in *The Economist*, arguing for the closure of the Wiertz Museum in Brussels

Food frenzy

"People in their 30s come home after a long day at work and lose control over their eating habits."

An Vandepotte, therapist specialising in eating disorders, on the 30-something generation

Down in the dumps

"If we had had regional and federal elections on the same day, I would not be here today."

Prime minister Herman Van Rompuy, reflecting on his declining popularity