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Work is soon to begin on the widening of the Panama Canal, which will need a budget of billions. It has been described as one of the biggest construction projects of the century – and a Flemish company is hoping for a share.



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Bozar in Brussels has given over a sizeable area of exhibition space to a 33-year-old artist. But then the artist is Belgian-born Jan de Cock, who has already been honoured by solo shows in London and New York.



## An apple a day .... 16

When an anonymous letter-writer threatened to kill Queen Fabiola with a crossbow, she cheekily responded by producing an apple. Alistair MacLean reflects on this in his column Talking Dutch.



# Diamond in the rough

How the financial crisis managed to punish even the world's safest haven for diamonds

LEANDER SCHAEFLAECKENS

They say diamonds are forever. True enough, diamonds aren't prone to depreciation. But what if the economy surrounding the diamond market collapses? Nothing is as strong as diamond. So, could something as sturdy as the diamond industry suffer? Could Antwerp's world famous diamond district take a hit? It could. And it has.

On the surface, not much appears to have changed. Storefronts in the biggest cluster of diamond businesses in the world don't look different, nor has the ground split open to reveal the inferno that most other businesses seem to be hurtling towards. Inviting display cases still flaunt diamonds and 24-carat gold behind glass thicker than most walls. And the cobblestones and tiles don't appear any more porous or warm than

before.

Don't be fooled. Things are not well here. Once the venue where 80% of the world's uncut diamonds and 50% of the polished diamonds were traded, Antwerp has seen the export of untreated gemstones in half as a consequence of the crisis.

"The diamond market in Antwerp has most definitely taken a hit as a result of the credit crunch," concedes Philip Claes, spokesman Antwerp World Diamond Center, a regulatory body. "That's not surprising, considering the nature of our product, it's the first thing that gets struck off the list. Diamonds are the embodiment of the luxury product. I wouldn't be surprised if we were one of the last industries to rebound to where we were before the crisis."

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## "Top gangsters" make helicopter jailbreak

Hijackers leave accomplice behind to pick up three robbers

ALAIN HOPE

Three men described as "top gangsters" escaped last week in a spectacular helicopter jailbreak from Bruges prison last Thursday – just hours after the Justice minister, kitted out in full prison officer's uniform, had made an official visit to the jail.

The three men – Ashraf Sekkaki, Abdelhaq Melloul-Khayari and Mohamed Johri – were picked up on the exercise yard of the wing of the prison reserved for long-term male prisoners. The helicopter had been hired by a man and a woman in Diksmuide for a tourist overflight of Bruges, then hijacked at gunpoint. The pilot set down inside the exer-

cise yard, and one of the hijackers was dropped off, police presume because the aircraft would have been too heavy. It then picked up the three escapees and took off.

Soon after, at Aalter near the E40 motorway, the gang carjacked a Mercedes and forced the driver to take them as far as Melle outside Ghent, where she was freed unharmed. As *Flanders Today* went to press, the whereabouts of the escapees and their accomplice were unknown.

News reports have concentrated on Sekkaki, aged 25, who has a record of numerous offences committed as

a minor, and who has not been out of prison since he was first sentenced as an adult at the age of 16 – other than during one of his many escapes from custody, one of which lasted a year. His record includes armed robberies, carjackings and tiger kidnapping, where bank employees are held hostage while their premises are robbed. In 2007 his brother was caught with a rope-ladder and firearm when police raided his home on a tip that Sekkaki was planning an escape by helicopter. Sekkaki himself has always maintained the plan was a joke.

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## Government gives up on Opel Antwerp

"No false hope" as bid favourite plans closure

ALAN HOPE

Flanders' minister-president Kris Peeters last weekend appeared to abandon hope of a rescue for Opel Antwerp, after Magna, the Austrian-Canadian company seen as the last chance of a solution, revealed plans to close the plant. Magna would shut the factory in March next year if its takeover bid is successful, according to a confidential report leaked to the Austrian business weekly *Format*.

The report, entitled *Project BEAM – Future Planning Opel 2014*, covers Magna's plans for the whole of Opel should its bid to take over the European activities of General Motors prove successful. The plan,

*Format* reports, was put to GM and to the German federal government on 17 July in Berlin. Germany has Opel facilities in four of its regions, and has played a major role in the search for a European solution to GM's problems.

The Flemish government, which has been cooperating in the quest, appears to have been sidelined. Last week Flanders wrote demanding a full explanation from Magna. The government has immersed itself fully in an attempt to prevent the closure of Opel Antwerp, and sent a three-man delegation to the US – then-work minister

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## News in brief

**Herman De Croo**, former speaker of the federal parliament, has cancer of the vocal chords, he announced last week. The condition was discovered at an early stage and the prognosis is good, he said. Later he complained that radiotherapy treatments only take place five days a week instead of seven. "I've been known my whole life long for talking too much," he said. "I can't keep quiet. But now I'll have to."

Artist and poet **Marcel van Maele** died last week in hospital in Antwerp. He was 78. Van Maele was one of a group of artists known as the *Zestigers*, a reference to the 1960s, and he was a co-founder of the experimental poetry journal *Labris*. Described as a "master provocateur," he was frequently arrested and spent time in mental institutions, hated working and considered the need to write "a curse".



A **12-metre inflatable duck** travelling through Limburg has been seriously damaged by stormy weather. The duck is an artwork by Dutch artist Florentijn Hofman, and was moored in Hasselt during June and early July (photo). However on its first stop on a tour of Limburg, in Genk, it suffered severe damage after it was picked up by a gust of wind and thrown 50m. "We're going to have him repaired and then get him on his way as quickly as possible," said Ann Vanderheyden of art centre Z33.

**Senior judge Guy Delvoie**, chief magistrate of the Brussels appeal court, will replace Chris Vanden Wyngaert as Belgium's judge at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia for the next 15 months, the foreign ministry announced. Van Den Wyngaert has been appointed to the International Criminal Court. Delvoie hit the headlines when he refused to recuse magistrates looking into the Fortis case, accusing politicians of breaching the separation of powers. That led to the resignations of then-justice minister Jo Vandeuren and prime minister Yves Leterme, coincidentally now at foreign affairs.

**Toots Thielemans** has won the Jazz Award 2009 awarded by the



### Flemish designer wows Amsterdam with tribute to Fabiola

A fashion designer from Genk last week took the Amsterdam fashion world by storm with a collection inspired by the clothes worn in 1958 by Queen Fabiola. Ann Boogaerts, aged 23, won the G-Star Raw Talent Award, worth €10,000 and the chance to appear at New York Fashion Week in September.

Boogaerts is studying at the Academy for Visual Arts in Arnhem, and was one of 14 students selected from academies across the Netherlands to take part in Amsterdam Fashion Week. One of the experts present, Lucas Ossendrijver of the house of Lanvin, said her collection was "very fresh and technically very well made".

"I have a lot of admiration for Fabiola," Boogaerts said later. "She reminds me of my grandmother, always elegant and gracious." The collection included high collars, narrow skirts, embroidery and, for the models, the big hairstyle which has become Fabiola's trademark over the years.

"The designs were deliberately kept very sober," Boogaerts said. "I regularly tried them on myself. That sort of minimalism is typical for Dutch fashion. But with the embroidery work I brought a Belgian accent to the whole. I also love colour. The Dutch are more daring on that front than the Belgians. It's not so common here in Flanders to see a man walking around in red trousers. For my collection, I chose the colours of the Belgian and the Dutch flags."

Boogaerts decided to study in Arnhem after being intimidated by her fellow students at the world-renowned academy in Antwerp. "I was barely 18, and totally different from the others, who had come from all over the world to study in Antwerp. At that point I felt totally out of place, so I completed my first year in Maastricht, then went on to do my second year in Arnhem, which is the Dutch equivalent of Antwerp."

Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. Toots, now aged 87, will accept the award on 11 August. The award, instituted in 2002, is given annually to an artist of international renown.

**Deaf people in Mechelen** will now be able to use a special SMS number to send emergency calls to the police. The system replaces the old fax system in use until now. At present technical difficulties make it impossible for national emergency calls to be sent by SMS, but some local police zones have set up their own projects. The Mechelen number is for the use of registered users only.

### Correction

In the issue of Flanders Today of 22 July we stated that "government ministries have been reduced from 11 to nine as part of the new government's round of spending cuts". We should have said that the number of ministers had been cut to nine (as against ten in the previous administration and a legal maximum of 11). The number of ministries remains unchanged at 13. For details of the nine ministers and their responsibilities go to the press room section of our website [www.flanderstoday.eu](http://www.flanderstoday.eu).



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Publisher: VUM

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## Prison security nets promised but never delivered

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In letters sent to De Morgen newspaper prior to the escape and published last week, Sekkaki claims he is a victim of a system which "spat him out". "I have hate feelings, a sort of constriction in my stomach that shrinks and grows like a tumour," he is quoted as writing. "We carry our imprisonment with us like a sickness. But the 'hospital' does nothing to help its patients. On the contrary it perpetuates their complaint, and injects new germs that will later cause new illnesses to break out."

Melloul-Khayari, aged 42, is associated with the gang of Hassan Maâche, responsible for robbery with extreme violence and specialised in attacking security vans. He is also a recidivist escapee: once he walked out of the front gate of Verviers prison having changed places with his brother.

Johri, meanwhile, is serving five

years for armed robberies of a Lidl supermarket, a bank branch and a toyshop.

Sekkaki was recently transferred from the high-security wing of the prison to the general wing for long-term prisoners. Only the high-security yard is fitted with security cables designed to make a helicopter escape impossible. Bruges was one of five prisons named as priorities by former justice minister Laurette Onkelinx in 2007 for cables or nets following the escape in October of that year from Iltre prison of Nordin Benallal. Last week the prisons directorate blamed the public works department for the lack of progress, pointing out that an application had been submitted to cover other yards in Bruges prison. "But we are not the owners of the building," a spokesman said. "We can only state our priorities and then hope they are carried out."

The escape is embarrassing for the government not only for the fact



Prison officers patrol the perimeter of the prison. Security was tightened at other prisons following the escape

that the promise of escape-proof nets appears to have been shelved, but because the current justice minister, Stefaan De Clerck, was on the scene on the day of the escape. De Clerck was on a visit to the prison on Thursday morning, and for the cameras of the VRT changed into a prison officer's uniform to walk the gangways and see what the job might feel like.

• In other news, the man suspected of being the mastermind behind the biggest-ever diamond heist in Antwerp has been arrested in possession of a quantity of stones. Leonardo Notabartolo, 57, was

stopped at a routine traffic check in Milan, and his brand-new BMW searched after police realised who he was. They found just over one kilo of diamonds hidden in the car in 21 packages. The stones are now being examined to see if they are part of the loot from the robbery of the strongroom of the Antwerp World Diamond Centre on the weekend of St Valentine's in February 2003.

Notabartolo, who served six years in Hasselt prison for the robbery, claims he bought the stones legitimately. The takings from the heist, estimated at €100 million, have never been recovered. ♦

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES

**1,994**

people had their tax debts written off by the tax authorities between the years 2006 and 2009, one in three of all claims for extenuating circumstances, according to an answer to a parliamentary question

**9.1%**

reduction in the number of people flying out of Brussels Airport in June, compared to the same time last year

**7,936,100**

people used the airport in the first half of the year, a million down on the previous year's figure of 8,986,500

**210,440 tonnes**

of freight passed through the airport in the same period, a massive 44% fall over the first half of 2008

**10 years**

the age of a burglar caught red-handed by police in Leuven, in the company of a more hardened criminal – of 13. The older boy was turned over to the youth magistrate, while the 10-year-old, of Albanian origin, was handed over to the Aliens Service

**730,102**

unemployed in Flanders, three-quarters of the national total. Wallonia counted 489,116, and Brussels 126,629

**2011**

the deadline for prime minister Herman Van Rompuy to give up his job, according to his own words in a radio interview. Van Rompuy will take part in the elections of that year, but will not be seeking to succeed himself as PM

**92,739**

firearms turned in by their owners in Flanders under an amnesty launched in June 2006. Only 28,779 were handed in in Wallonia, and 7,041 in Brussels

**28,779**

guns given up in East Flanders, ahead of Antwerp (20,042) and Flemish Brabant (19,920). The weapons in Flanders – 36 truckloads – were taken to ArcelorMittal steel works in Ghent to be destroyed in high-temperature ovens

**€1,268.75**

earned by drug addicts in therapy at De Kiem in Ghent if they stay clean for six months



## Turkish ambassador carpeted over terrorism remarks

New foreign affairs minister Yves Leterme has demanded a full explanation from the Turkish ambassador to Belgium, H.E. Fuat Tanlay, over remarks he made to the Ankara newspaper Hürriyet about the possibility of a terrorist attack in Belgium.

The ambassador, currently on holiday in his homeland, was echoing his government's displeasure with the conduct of the legal case against members of the Turkish extremist movement DHKP-C. That started in 1999 when an apartment occupied by members of the group in Duinbergen was raided by police, and firearms and false documents found.

Seven members of the group, a Marxist extremist organisation, were tried, among them Fehriye Erdal (pictured), who was wanted by Turkey for the murder of a businessman. A request for extradition was denied, to Ankara's fury. The seven, one of whom has since died, were found guilty of various relatively minor offences including forgery and possession of firearms, and sentenced to various prison terms, but that verdict was overturned by the Court of Cassation. The verdict of the court of appeal in Antwerp, which reheard the case, was also overturned by Cassation.

In the meantime, Fehriye Erdal is in the wind: on the day of her sentencing in the original trial



she gave her State Security minders the slip and escaped, never to be seen here since. Her compadres were last week expecting to hear the verdict in the third trial against them for the same offences, but the court in Brussels decided instead to postpone debates until October to allow the indictment to be fine-tuned.

For ambassador Tanlay, this was just the latest sign that the Belgian authorities want to bury the case against the DHKP-C members. "At some point, terrorism will also make an appearance in Belgium," the ambassador was reported to have said. "One day, if God wills it, something will happen to them, and then they will understand what terrorism is." ♦

## FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

### Not too cultured

Maps that show the holiday destinations of our politicians – a traditional newspaper filler for lack of real news during the summer – show that Joke Schauvliege (CD&V) is heading out to France. What will the new Flemish minister for culture be doing there? Our guess: reading.

Critics tore away at Schauvliege, having been minister for just one day. The reason? A lousy TV interview with predictable questions, that Schauvliege nonetheless never saw coming. What was the last book she had read? The last play she had seen? Schauvliege did not produce an answer to the first question, "an amateur play in my home town, six months ago" she said to the latter. "That's culture too", she concluded. It all sounded, well, not very cultured.

Erwin Mortier and Tom Lanoye, two well respected writers, lashed out at her immediately. Would we accept a minister for economy who does not know the difference between deflation and inflation, Lanoye asked. Mortier admitted that he had learned not to expect too much from ministers of culture.

All of that was very predictable too. In 1985, Patrick Dewael, only 30 at the time, became minister for culture. A shock, because up until then, he was mostly known for defending the well-doings of free market politics. When Bert Anciaux (SPA) became minister for culture, the art world reacted skeptical – again – as Anciaux was somewhat of a Peter Pan figure, refusing to grow up. Yet both ended up being respected ministers for culture.

Will that be Joke Schauvliege's fate too? She was not helped by Ludwig Caluwé, her party's spokesperson in the Flemish Parliament (where she had to admit she did not know the painting *Dejeuner sur l'herbe*). In defense of Schauvliege, Caluwé said that there is more than culture with a capital K. Capital mistake that was, since *cultuur* has been spelled with a C for some years now. On Facebook, Schauvliege has her own "hate group" by now, with the name "I have worked hard today, can I now become minister of culture please", referring to her remark that she considered this to be "a reward for all her hard work".

It looks like Joke Schauvliege has more hard work in front of her. She can start by catching up on the reading. Thank God it's the holidays!

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# Diamond in the rough

## Hard times for the diamond industry

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**R**ebounding would require quite the bound indeed. In the period from January until May 2009, export of polished diamonds was down 27% compared to the same time in 2008. Import of polished diamonds was down 31%. The export of uncut diamonds did even worse, dropping precipitously by 50%, while imports of the uncut variety were down 39%.

"The numbers speak volumes," says Claes. "But we are doing better than other hubs such as Tel Aviv and Mumbai. Dubai used to count [as a hub] too, but the party's over, there as well. We're seeing the first bankruptcies in Israel and hundreds of thousands of workers now unemployed in India, where lots of diamonds are cut." Whereas India counted 800,000 diamond cutters before the crisis, they have 500,000 now and many of the small cutting factories have had to shut down for at least a few months.

De Beers noted a drop-off of 60% in demand for uncut diamonds and 30% in that of cut diamonds when compared to the 2008 high-water mark.

### Chief culprit

The lamentable sales can be traced back to the very origin of the financial turmoil: the United States. America purchases 50% of the world's diamonds, mostly between Thanksgiving and Valentine's Day, with a marked peak around Christmas. During that period, demand for the sparkly little status symbols was off by as much as a quarter. This caused a ripple effect throughout the market.

When nobody is buying retail diamonds, sellers start to worry

and reduce their intake from wholesalers, preferring to diminish stock. The ratio tends to be 2:1. That is to say, for every cut diamond the consumer doesn't buy, the retailer reduces his order from the wholesaler by two diamonds, choosing not to replace the diamond he sold and to dip into his stock instead, and probably not replacing the next diamond he sells either. By the time this ripple – now an economic tidal wave with destructive powers – makes it to a hub of uncut diamonds traded by wholesalers, such as Antwerp, a fall in demand for uncut diamonds of 50% is easily achieved – the way it did in Antwerp.

**Diamonds may be a non-essential item, but for Belgium's economy to recover they are paramount.**

"We have tightened our inventory position," confirmed a spokeswoman for Antwerp's Rosy Blue, one of the world's most prominent diamond companies which has a turnover of \$1.8 billion annually. "We admit not having anticipated the tide turning quite so abruptly in the third quarter."

Be that as it may, "the impact on individual enterprises in Antwerp has been very limited so far," says Claes. "I have no knowledge of any bankruptcies, although there were redundancies among the diamond sellers." Estimating job losses is tricky, considering no tally has been made and there are 1,800 registered diamond sellers in Antwerp who employ 8,000 people full-time and indirectly

create jobs for another 26,000 people as insurers, bankers, security guards and drivers, according to the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL). But the market has lost 25,000 jobs, directly and indirectly, since the 1970s, according to Claes, with the exodus of cutters and polishers to markets like Mumbai, Tel Aviv and Dubai.

Diamonds represent 8% of the overall value of Flanders' exports and 5% of Belgium's. It is comfortably the single most common and valuable export to countries outside the EU. What's more, diamonds represent up to 70% of Belgium's trade surplus, in

some years. In 2007, that surplus was worth €3.2 billion, of which €1.6 billion, or 50%, came from diamonds.

### On the mend

Any economic rebirth will have to be seeded in the diamond sector. And pivotal for any renaissance is cash. "In the past weeks, we've explored how to bring more liquidity into the market," explains Claes. "The diamond business is capital-intensive. You need financing from banks who in turn demand collateral. That guarantee is usually given by accounts receivable, unpaid bills in other words. But there's so little trade and thus few receivables and they're not as reliable anymore. The money

takes longer to come through, if it comes through at all."

Banks are understandably reluctant to use this as collateral, which is why the Antwerp World Diamond Centre wants to go back to using the diamond inventory of those seeking a loan as a guarantee. This practice was outlawed in the 1980s because speculation on such stock causes a massive shortfall during market depreciation. But it may have become the only option for resurrecting the market, and one that is endorsed by the banks.

If the value of stock is carefully ascertained and possible depreciation built into the equation, banks have said they're willing to lend the industry up to one billion euro, which should suffice for the financing of a resurgence.

"This shouldn't become the *modus operandi*, but it could provide some relief and shift things into gear," says Claes.

"Diamonds are a store of value," says Rosy Blue. "As rough production diminishes with insufficient new mines being discovered and existing ones becoming depleted, diamonds are sure to remain an excellent store of value."

Should the banking commission approve the scheme, the Flemish government might also kick in €200 million as an added guarantee for the banks, to prevent another round of losses.

Whether it's in anticipation of this impending scheme or thanks to a round of price drops – up to 30% in polished diamonds and 70% on low-quality uncut diamonds – the Antwerp market is already pick-

ing up.

"We're seeing a very slow and careful reopening of the market," says Claes. "The last months, since April, things are getting a little better." Before the crisis, mega producers De Beers delivered sights (a total sum representing all sales to Antwerp) of about \$650 million per month. The period December to March saw those sights slip to just \$100 million and in one case barely \$60 million. The months of April and May witnessed sights of \$200 million, far from a full recovery, but encouraging nonetheless.

"Retail confidence in the USA is now improving, and in the last few weeks we have been seeing stable polished prices. Polished prices had fallen sharply but they have now recovered. Trading volume in both rough and polished goods had decreased to 20% of peak but has now recovered to about 50%," says Rosy Blue.

"It's hard to predict when the market will recover fully," says Claes. "But we think we can be moderately and carefully optimistic. It's heading in the right direction, although we're not expecting full recovery until 2010." Such unbridled exuberance aside, Belgium's recovery, in a funny twist of fate, is in the balance. If it is to recover its ability to buy cheap, essential products, it will first have to figure out how to sell the expensive, non-essentials once again. ♦

→ [www.awdc.be](http://www.awdc.be)



Praying for a speedy recovery: Freddy Hanard, CEO of the Antwerp World Diamond Centre



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# Opel Antwerp: Last chance rescue appears hopeless

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Frank Vandenbroucke, economy minister Patricia Ceysens and Peeters himself. Their bid to represent Antwerp's interests in the face of overwhelming competition from Germany, appears to have been unsuccessful.

The Germans, however, do not get off unscathed. As well as the closure of Opel Antwerp with the loss of 2,300 jobs, the Magna plan foresees the loss of 10,500 jobs across the continent, in addition to €264 million in savings achieved by cutting holiday and end-of-year premiums. Another €329 million would be saved between 2009 and 2014 by the introduction of "more efficiency and synergies".

"Production in Belgium," the plan says, "will be stopped in 2010 for reasons of profitability." Current production at Antwerp stands at 76,000 units. Elsewhere, production (currently at between 50% and 70% of capacity) will be increased to 100%. Total European

production would rise from 1.25 million units in 2009-2010 to 1.6 million by 2014.

The plan also involves the investment of €566 million in Russia between now and 2014, with Russian operations contributing €125 million to profits by that date. Total losses for 2009 are forecast at just under €2 billion, going down next year to €1.6 billion.

"A closure is completely unacceptable," said union representative Rudi Kennes. "Not only for us, but for the European board. We will fight this with every means at our disposal." Magna is one of two bidders still at the table. The other is RHJ, the Brussels-based holding company whose portfolio includes auto-parts manufacturers Asahi Tec and Honsel International Technologies. Leaked several days before Magna's, the RHJ business plan also involves the closure of Opel Antwerp in 2010.

A spokesman for Magna last week said the leaked business plan was not the final version of the document, which has already been sent to GM in its definitive form. The company declined to say what different fate, if any, the new document reserves for Opel Antwerp.

Last week Peeters, together with new minister Ingrid Lieten (public investment) and Philippe Muyters (work), held a meeting with union representatives where it was agreed urgently to seek full details from both Magna and the parent company of RHJ. However in comments made on Friday, Peeters seemed to have bowed to the inevitable. "I'm a realist," he said. "I don't want to give anyone false hopes. We didn't manage to save Opel Antwerp." The only hope the government sees now is an intervention by the EU Commission to look into the role played in the decision by enticements offered by the German state or regions. ♦



The Antwerp plant could close as early as March

## Flemish company in Panama Canal bid

### Jan De Nul is part of a consortium expected to win a contract to widen the famous Panama Canal

MARTIN BANKS

It will need 5,000 workers and a \$50m (€35.2 million) bonus will be paid just for meeting the completion date of 2014. The project to build new locks on the Panama Canal is one of the biggest and most lucrative construction projects in the world – and Jan De Nul, a Flemish-based dredging company with a fast-growing global reputation, is part of a three-company consortium which has bid for the scheme.

The consortium, which also includes Spain's Sacyr Vallehermoso and Italy's Impregilo, significantly undercut its rivals. It expects to be told in the coming weeks that its bid, valued at some €3.12 billion, has been successful.

It's little wonder, then, that Meriel De Decker, communications officer of Jan De Nul Group, is proud of this achievement. "This really is a mega project. It's one of the largest hydraulic schemes for many, many years. To be involved so heavily in one of the most prestigious engineering projects in the world is, rightly, a great source of pride to us. That a Flemish company is involved reflects very well on our expertise, knowledge and experience."

The three firms submitted proposals, costs and technical designs back in March when the whole tendering process was shrouded in secrecy. To allay fears over corruption, the cost estimates were kept in sealed envelopes

in a vault at the government-owned Panama national bank along with the project's target price. Deloitte was hired as a contracting auditor to monitor the technical evaluations.

The envelopes were recently opened in a ceremony in Panama City that was broadcast live on TV. A computer and projector were used to tally points for each bid based on cost and technical specifications. The front-runner scored marginally better than its rivals on technical issues and, even more so, on costs.

The entire project is valued at a cool €5.25 billion with construction of the new locks designed to ensure that trade between Asia and North America continues to pass through the waterway. The project will double the canal's capacity and accommodate a new generation of super-size container ships.

The Jan De Nul bid was well under the Panama canal authority's target price of \$3.48bn and, said De Decker, appeared to meet all the technical requirements. "This event marks a critical milestone for the Panama Canal Authority and Panama – and also, because of its sheer size, for ourselves," said De Decker.

The Flemish company, created in 1938 by its founder Jan De Nul, now enjoys a global reputation as one of the world's top dredging companies. It was most recently in the news fol-



lowing the release of its crew from the vessel Pompei, captured some months ago by Somali pirates. It has a worldwide workforce of 4,500 and its Belgian base is at Hofstade-Aalst, north of Brussels.

The new locks, one on the Atlantic entrance, the other on the Pacific Ocean, will consolidate Central America's position as a gateway for global trade. "As far as shipping is concerned, this is massively important as it is the single biggest shipping infrastructure project since they built the original canal," says De Decker.

The project, which needs 5,000 workers, is due for completion in 2014 to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the original inauguration of the canal, an engineering achievement considered one of the modern

wonders of the world that cost more than over €600 million to build. More than 25,000 workers died during the 10-year construction.

Despite the economic crisis, the 80-kilometre waterway needs widening due to the rise in shipping traffic – which means that there are long queues of vessels waiting to use the canal. Some ships pay large sums to jump the queue – last year the US cruise ship Disney Magic laid out a record \$331,200 (€233,300) to speed its way through the canal.

The canal, which moves about 5% of the world's cargo, relies mainly on container traffic between Asia and the US eastern seaboard. But a new generation of vessels – which measure 1,400 feet in length – cannot fit in the canal, which means that Panama

risks losing them to the Suez canal and US railways which transport containers coast to coast. The longest vessel expected to fit in Panama's planned new lock system is about 1,200ft.

De Decker told *Flanders Today* that the work involves building six new lock chambers, each of which will have a similar size to the famous Berendrecht lock in Antwerp, currently the largest in the world.

"During the five-year construction period, 40 million cubic metres of soil will be excavated and five million cubic metres of concrete will be poured," said De Decker. "Once complete, the capacity of the canal will increase by about 80%."

Although work on the locks will not start until next year, some of the other work is already well under way. Hillsides have been blown up and a six-kilometre access channel on the Pacific side – which will permit passage of vessels three times heavier than the current limit – has nearly been completed.

The biggest headache is the construction of a third set of locks. These will measure 1,400ft long, 180ft wide and have a 50ft draft – all significantly larger dimensions than the present canal. Catch basins will recycle 60% of the water used to fill the locks, in contrast to the present system which flushes it all out to sea. ♦

Opel Antwerp © Belga

© Shutterstock



# High stakes and pink flamingos

We caught up with Brussels artist Jan De Cock while he was preparing the exhibition of his lifetime (so far), on view now at Bozar

SARAH McFADDEN

“I’m risking everything with this show,” says Jan De Cock, referring to *Repromotion*, the complex sculptural installation he had been preparing for Bozar for the past 18 months and which opened on 10 July. The Brussels-born (in 1976) artist switches from Dutch to French and back again as he addresses a group of journalists who have been invited to his studio, which occupies the entirety of a 19th-century former factory in Anderlecht.

Dressed in his usual attire — a bright blue, vintage-style worker’s jacket over wide Japanese carpenter’s trousers and bulbous blue shoes — he gives rapid-fire answers to questions that appear to annoy him and occasionally asks Yves Aupetitallot, director of the Magasin de Grenoble and his show’s gracious curator, to intervene. Taking time out to meet the press while he’s working on deadline was maybe not such a great idea, we imagine him thinking. He’s as nervous as a cat.

De Cock’s career trajectory has been meteoric. In 2003, as a finalist in the Jeune Peinture Belge competition, he garnered local recognition. Two years later, he had a solo show at London’s Tate Modern, and in 2008, he became the first living Belgian to have a solo exhibition at MoMA in New York. All the while, he has been showing his art in this country regularly in his Antwerp gallery Stella Lohaus, and at Sint-Lukas Hogeschool and Bozar in Brussels — as well as in group and solo exhibitions abroad.

The Bozar exhibition marks a turning point in the development of De Cock’s art. Most people like to encounter what they already know, he says, warning that those familiar with his past work may be disconcerted by his new production, which is motivated, he says, by the attempt to represent movement in static sculpture, an aim which is hardly new. It was taken up a century ago by the Futurists. As it turns out, even those with no previous experience of De Cock’s art may be forgiven for feeling perplexed as well as fascinated by the vast array of objects and images which he has orchestrated at Bozar to achieve his end.

We’re standing among some of the freestanding Constructivist-style sculptures which will be included in the show but which, seen alone, give no idea of the complicated orchestration which will associate them, in modules in the final installation, with photographs and stage-like architectural frameworks of white-painted wood panels supported by green metal rails. No two sculptures are alike, but they bear a strong family resemblance. Their flat planes of



unadorned chipboard, some with window-like cut-outs, are joined at a great variety of angles. The resulting dynamism constitutes one of De Cock’s breaks with the past: until now, his formal vocabulary has been limited to orthogonals.

He points to the object which inspired the change: a small-scale reproduction of Antoine Bourdelle’s 1909 *Hercules the Archer* — an athletic figure in bronze with a taut, high-energy diagonal axis. Replicas of other 19th- and early 20th-century sculptures showing similarly straining poses adorn the studio shelves. Many are dispersed through the exhibition, which boasts three monumental castings, on loan from museums, of the Hercules figure. Each of these full-scale works is considered an original, yet each is a reproduction. Slight differences in dimensions, patina and even titles can be noted in the accompanying captions. Late Romanticism (the bronzes) meets modernism (the chipboard works) in a kind of re-enactment of the past.

Photographs constitute the third main element of the installation. Images of ruined buildings in Kosovo, a pair of identical skyscrapers in Sarajevo, Frank Lloyd Wright’s Prairie House, rooms in the George Eastman House (home of the inventor of Kodak film), the auditorium in New York’s MoMA, pink flamingos and art works by Bran-

cusi, Judd, Barnett Newman and himself recur in diverse sizes and pairings throughout the installation. Encountered repeatedly on the gallery walls as well as on the walls of the chipboard sculptures, they too acquire a familiarity as well as an iconic presence. But what really do they signify? It’s possible that each time they appear in this huge puzzle of an exhibition, they mean something else. Or more probably, like characters in a film, they are part of a fragmented narrative.

## Cinematic experience

Each module, or segment of the installation, is accompanied by a caption citing the precise time of execution. In sequences of images, De Cock clocks the time intervals and spatial shifts between one photographic image and another, using photography to drive home the point that perception is relative: the way an object is framed in time and space largely determines the way we see and think about it. Each time it is observed from a different angle, on a different scale, in different light and circumstances, or represented in a different medium such as photography, it is transformed.

It’s no surprise to learn that De Cock has been influenced by the stop-motion images of the 19th-century photographer Eadweard Muybridge, but he claims that he owes an even greater debt to Jean-Luc Godard. He has conceived of

*Repromotion* as a walk-through film. As its first viewer, he reported, “It’s a film that lasts one hour and 32 minutes — a good film. You have to give it time.” The recurring photographic images may indeed trigger flashbacks, but that’s about the limit to this viewer’s cinematic experience of the show. The overall impression is of a carpenter’s workshop or storage space teeming with unfinished projects, possibly for a theatre.

The title, by the way, is compounded from ‘reproduction’, as in the photographs and the bronzes, and ‘motion’, as in the flight of the archers’ unseen arrows, the sculptures’ displacement from the artist’s studio to the exhibition space, and the viewer’s self-propelled movement through the show. Like a movie-house usher of old, *Hercules the Archer* points visitors on their way. Once headed in the right direction, their path through the installation is guided by the chronologically tagged works themselves. “I control everything,” De Cock says, “even the unforeseeable.”

Even spoken in jest, the statement reflects the artist’s outsized ambition. “Bourdelle, Boccioni, Brancusi, Judd. I have the ambition to be the fifth sculptor in that line,” De Cock announced on the show’s opening day. Nothing ventured, nothing gained, but in this particular effort, De Cock’s associative universe, in which the white void framed by the windows of a

bombed-out house in Kosovo is meant to evoke the clean white space of an art gallery and the white screen of a movie theatre, remains very much his singular domain. Enter, by all means, but draw your own conclusions.

“No major French institution would give over the major part of its exhibition space to a 33-year-old artist,” says Aupetitallot. “This is an adventure.” At least the risk is shared.

*Repromotion* is on view at Bozar until September 13. It will be ‘reproduced’ for display in the Magasin, Centre National d’Art Contemporain, Grenoble, France, early in 2010. ♦

→ [www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)



The artist Jan De Cock is as ambitious as he is young



# Melancholy and elegance

## The art of Alfred Stevens reveals depth below the surface

REBECCA BENOOT

Alfred Stevens was a 19th-century Belgian painter who became famous for his vivid and graceful portraits of upper-class Parisian women who appear to have spent their days doing nothing in particular besides simply being beautiful. These elaborate and intricately detailed portraits of society women in their boudoirs may have become his trademark but there is more to Alfred Stevens than meets the eye. The Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels has decided to bring a different view of his *oeuvre* focusing mainly on his contribution to 19th-century European genre painting.

Stevens was born in Brussels in 1823 but spent most of his life (from 1844 onwards) in Paris where he mixed with artists like Eugène Delacroix, Théodore Rousseau, Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas and writer Alexandre Dumas. He even became known as "the Fleming who was more Parisian than most Parisians".

The focus of his work at the beginning of his career was slightly historical with a hint of Romanticism.

But it soon started to tend more towards Realism as the social issues of the time (like the common man or, in Stevens' case, the common woman's burdens), started to trickle through. Once installed in Paris, however, he became influenced by the *Belle Epoque* era and all the luxury it entailed, shifting the focus of his paintings in an entirely new but still very realistic and humane direction.

Upper-class Parisian women of the Second Empire (and later the Third Republic) became the focal point in his works – women who seemed to have nothing better to do than wait for something that might never happen. These paintings are suffused with an air of melancholy and despair, which clashes with their otherwise colourful and ingeniously detailed style.

Stevens was a keen observer of these women's inner and outer states. Not only does he accurately portray their feelings of loneliness and boredom, but he also has a remarkable eye for gestures, facial expressions, habits and even skin tone. The lavish 19th-century salons decorated with silk fabrics

and lacquer in which these women spent their days were perceived as fundamentally shallow, contrasting the superficial beauty of the period with its inner anguish. Stevens did a spectacular job in creating tangible textures and fragrant flowers that produce a truly dramatic and decadent atmosphere, which successfully distracts the viewer from the hidden truth beneath the shiny surface.

His paintings resemble snapshots of crucial moments in the lives of countless women. Stevens often incorporated books and letters in his *oeuvre*, which have the intriguing effect of inviting the spectator to make up stories about what could have happened or better still what is going to happen. Turmoil, sorrow, bad news – all are recurring themes in his work as he depicts women's reactions to these consuming states. Tables also frequently feature in his paintings – symbolising support during particularly dark days.

Although he often portrays these women as divine, even ethereal beings (his *Salomé*, for example, is slightly reminiscent of Khnopff), he



Alfred Stevens' *De dame in het roze* (*The lady in pink*), 1866

also leaves room for the flaws that make them human. These women are strong *femme fatales* (illustrated by the many portraits of his friend, the French stage actress Sarah Bernhardt), but at the same time they are vulnerable. The rare moments when they get to be themselves – behind closed doors and away from prying eyes – are what most fascinate Stevens.

This duality is also emphasised by his love for mirrors, often showing both sides of a woman (front and back representing the inner and outer states), and his suggestion of other rooms through open doors. These doors offer a contrast between the vibrant and hopeful world of high society, and the inner world of a woman locked away with only her memories.

Eastern influences slowly make their way into the portraits as Stevens begins to incorporate Japanese ornaments and clothing, enhancing already sumptuous canvases. His fascination with exoticism forms a separate part of the exhibition, and includes various ornaments and props featured in his works.

During the final stages of his career,

Stevens spent considerable time by the sea in Normandy due to poor health. This resulted in several paintings of harbours and beaches which lack the lustre of his prime.

The exhibition continues on the second floor, where one room is dedicated to his *magnum opus*, *History of the Century* (1789-1889). This collaboration with Henri Gervex was made especially for the World Fair in Paris in 1889 and originally consisted of 18 works – of which only the four seen here have survived. The idea behind this masterpiece was to depict important historical figures from the 19th century like Victor Hugo, Napoleon and Alexandre Dumas.

Henri Gervex was mainly responsible for the main characters while Stevens occupied himself with the portrayal of the women, providing the decorative elements and finishing touches. The panorama is accompanied by a useful who's who for those of us keen to identify the celebrities. For anyone who wants to relish the grandeur and vulnerability of the French *Belle Epoque*, this exhibition is a must. ♦



One of the four remaining panels from *History of the Century*, 1789-1889

→ [www.fine-arts-museum.be](http://www.fine-arts-museum.be)



# Borderlines

In the second in our series on border towns, we look at the rural municipality of Voeren which, despite its peaceful appearance, has witnessed violent demonstrations over language differences

DENZIL WALTON

Last week we looked at Baarle-Hertog, which consists of a number of Belgian enclaves located across the border in the Netherlands. If it seemed that no other Flemish municipality could be more complicated, think again. This week we look at Voeren, a Flemish municipality that belongs to the province of Limburg. However, geographically it is completely isolated from the rest of Limburg. It's actually surrounded by the Netherlands and Wallonia.

The municipality consists of the six villages of 's-Gravenvoeren, Sint-Pieters-Voeren, Sint-Martens-Voeren, Moelingen, Teuven and Remersdal. The total population is a little over 4,000, with 's-Gravenvoeren being the largest and most populated of the six.

The current municipality of Voeren was not established until 1977. Before that date, the six villages were involved in a kind of linguistic tug-of-war, which unfortunately brought violence to this sleepy rural area.

It all started in 1932 when new linguistic laws were introduced in Belgium, which based the linguistic alignment of towns and villages on the results of the 1930 census. As over 80% of the population of the six villages that now make up Voeren spoke Dutch, it was declared to be a Flemish area.

However, when the 1947 census was taken, the results threw up a surprise. The situation had reversed, with the majority of inhabitants (57%) now declaring that they spoke French. This

would have meant a change in the linguistic status of the villages from Dutch-speaking with a French minority into French-speaking with a Dutch minority. Not surprisingly, the results were greatly disputed by the Flemish.

A special parliamentary committee was established and decided to side with the Dutch-speaking minority and ignore the 1947 census results. Instead, it declared that the six villages were to remain Dutch-speaking, but that the French-speaking majority was to be afforded special regulations to practice their language. Throwing oil on the fire, the committee also decided to maintain the government of the six villages under the province of Liège, which of course is French-speaking.

After fierce debate in parliament, the proposal was finally approved but with a significant change in the status of the six villages. They were now to become part of the Dutch-speaking province of Limburg.

Understandably, this switch from Liège to Limburg was poorly received by a large number of the local population because of the region's proximity and economic dependence on Liège, apart from the fact that there were now more French speakers than Dutch speakers in the municipality. Francophones were quite vociferous in their campaigns to return the region to the province of Liège.

The unrest rumbled fairly quietly until 1977 when the six small villages were merged into the present-day



municipality of Voeren. Virtually overnight, opposing Francophone and Flemish politicians could now organise themselves much more effectively as there was one instead of six municipal councils.

Suddenly Voeren became a political and linguistic battleground between the Francophone *Retour à Liège* (Return to Liège) party and the Flemish *Voerbelangen* (Voeren's Best Interests) party. Gangs roamed the streets, defacing place-name signs, and in 1979 violence finally erupted.

On 21 October, what was supposed to be a peaceful march through 's-Gravenvoeren degenerated into a pitched battle between demonstrators and the police. The centre of the village was sealed off, but the demonstrators managed to get in through the woods. Despite a state of emergency, some 70 people occupied the local government offices and pelted the police with empty champagne bottles. The police replied with tear gas and dozens of people were seriously injured. Only after hours of negotiation did the demonstrators withdraw, thereby restoring a measure of peace.

It wasn't to last. In 1983 the Francophone José Happart was installed as mayor of Voeren. The main problem was that he was a French-speaker and yet mayor of a Flemish municipi-

ality. Furthermore, he couldn't speak Dutch, and refused to take a Dutch language test. Happart was dismissed. An appeal against his dismissal was successful, but the constitutional question dragged on for years. Amazingly, on 19 October, 1987, the issues surrounding Happart caused the Belgian national government to fall.

The following year, concessions to the Francophone inhabitants were made and the powers of the provincial government of Limburg were curtailed. The municipality became more autonomous, and the government of Wallonia was allowed to create "facilities" for Francophones in Voeren.

The Flemish refused to lie down without a further struggle and in the 1994 municipal elections the Voerbelangen party made gains. The following year, mayor Happart was forced to leave office. Furthermore, a national court of arbitration declared some of the 1988 concessions, such as the Walloon building rights, unconstitutional.

A further twist occurred in 1999 when EU nationals were given suffrage at the municipal level. This factor was decisive in the 2000 municipal elections because of the high number of Dutch citizens living in Voeren (about 20% of the total population). Voerbelangen won a majority of 53% of the votes and eight out of 15 local

council seats. In 2006 they made further gains and these days a kind of uneasy truce seems to have been settled over Voeren.

Also in 2006, the Flemish Government decided to abolish all official French translations of Flemish municipalities and villages, including municipalities with language facilities. Consequently, the French names of the Voeren municipality and villages will no longer be used on signs and in official documents. Driving through the area, it's obvious that not all the locals agree, as graffiti still adorns place names and road signs.

Despite all its troubles, Voeren is an attractive rural area of Belgium that is well worth visiting. Its small villages and traditional farmhouses are set in rolling hills, orchards, fields, woods and nature reserves. There are plenty of hotels, B&Bs, hostels and camp sites available in the area.

Also surprising, considering its rural location, is the huge number of village festivals and events taking place in Voeren. The reason is simple, and is a heritage of the tug-of-war: many Francophone and Flemish groups are still divided, and therefore organise totally separate events. ♦

→ [www.voerstreek.be](http://www.voerstreek.be)



## Discovering Voeren

A good place to begin is the Voeren Regional Visitor's Centre, Pley 13, 's-Gravenvoeren, which is open every day from 9.00 to 17.00. It includes a cartographical exhibition which traces the history of Voeren back to 3500 B.C. Its nature exhibition describes everything you need to know about the region's geology, fauna, flora, culture, traditions and regional products.

The centre has friendly staff and a wealth of tourist documentation available, covering walking and cycling routes, accommodation possibilities, and interesting places to visit in the region. These

include vineyards, wine cellars, breweries, a mining museum, beekeeping exhibitions and fish farms.

In Teuven you can even take part in something described as the fastest growing outdoor activity in continental Europe: Farmer's Golf. A variation of the classic game, a Farmer's Golf course is laid out on a farm and the objective is to play a round of ten holes in the least number of strokes. The game is played on pastures, over ditches, through forests and, of course, amongst the cows.

→ [www.greenvalley-teuven.be](http://www.greenvalley-teuven.be)

# Hens and stags

## How the Flemish celebrate one last night of freedom

COURTNEY DAVIS

All around the world, people are participating in various pre-wedding traditions and escapades known as bachelor or bachelorette parties, hen nights or stag dos. Recently, just how crazy those parties can get was showcased in the successful film *The Hangover*, a box office hit about a Las Vegas bachelor party gone terribly wrong.

However, if you live in Flanders, you don't need the movie to remind you of this tradition. Summertime in Belgium means one thing: *vrijgezellenfeesten*. A summer-time stroll in most cities is going to be far more entertaining knowing you'll come across of a flock of soon-to-be-married men and women. They are easy to spot, dressed in silly outfits doing random activities, all for the sake of celebrating the engaged couple.

The act of marrying has been around for thousands of years so naturally there are traditions for this rite of passage. Since ancient Greek times, the Spartans were believed to have celebrated the groom's last night before marriage with a feast and, surely, a lot of toasts. In France, the bachelor party is called *enterrement de vie de garçon* which literally means 'burial of the life as a boy'. Happily now, the occasions are more of a reason to celebrate than a cause to cry. Since those heady Greek parties in the fifth century, the

events have grown more raucous and, with the advent of feminism and women's rights, the bride can now also participate in some tacky, humiliating good times.

For many women from the United States and Britain, this means the bride-to-be celebrates with her closest female friends. This can take place in a spa, at a restaurant, or even on a camping trip, but, more often than not, it occurs in bars where matching outfits are worn and excessive alcohol is consumed. For men, the rituals are surprisingly similar, but instead of penis cake and pink feather tiaras, the boys tend to head to the strip bars for equally inebriated and raunchy fare.

In Belgium and most other countries that celebrate this tradition, the best friend or sister of the bride organises the hen party and the best friend or brother of the groom plans the stag party. Usually, the party and all of its details are kept a secret, from the date of the party to the actual planned festivities.

Belgium is not that different from most other countries; booze is a factor and tacky outerwear goes with the territory, but there is a bit more ritual and tradition involved. The first time I saw a Belgian *vrijgezellenfeest*, I couldn't help but stare. They seemed to have taken the tiara and boas to a whole new level. The bride-to-be wasn't just wearing a sash announcing the



based upon. Next, she was quizzed on her area of study (pharmaceuticals) and one of her hobbies (cooking). The day ended quite nicely with private cooking lessons for all and dinner out on the town.

She is now planning a *vrijgezellenfeest* for her best friend. "I've been to several of these celebrations and usually we don't dress stupid because we simply don't like it. I know some people do, but I've seen it once and the girl wasn't happy at all!" Therefore Mado will be equally respectful of her friend's wishes to not look like an idiot. But there will be a test – a citywide hunt for treasure, followed by dinner and dancing.

Not everyone's friends are so kind. Tom, engaged to be married this autumn, was discovered wandering around with a basket of boiled eggs which he was selling off to strangers for drink money. The basket was cemented to his arm with a plaster cast. His outfit, aside from lacking trousers, included balloons on his head and a shirt that read, "I am Lady Tommy, single, hot and ugly!" The fun didn't stop there.

As they made their way around town, on a pub crawl of sorts, at each pit stop his friends would choose a piece of paper at random. These had written items of food and alcohol that Tom would be forced to then eat or drink, whatever it may be – even terrible combinations like *advokaat* (an egg-based liqueur) and paprika chips.

Next time you get approached by a red-faced, bizarrely-dressed person asking an odd question in the hope of some spare change, oblige them and make the journey to being married a little faster. ♦

death of her single days or a T-shirt proclaiming "I'm tying the knot, buy me a shot!" Nope, this poor woman was in a full rubber scuba outfit, with a snorkel on her head and flippers on her feet.

One of the first rules of a Belgian bash is that the person to be married has to wear a striking costume so they are easily recognised. Since then, I've seen countless diaper-clad men, French maids, Hawaiian luaus and, of course, the ever-popular men dressed as women and women dressed as men.

Mado Vandewoestyne, married last year, was happy to forgo the embarrassing outfits. "Luckily for me, my friends knew I thought the costumes were silly," she said. "But they still made me perform a lot of random tasks."

Next on the list of Flemish traditions, hens and stags are forced to do a number of uncomfortable tasks. In some ways, this resembles a treasure hunt or a game show. The bride- or groom-to-be must prove they are really good wife or husband material. In Mado's case, she had to go to each shop in a shopping centre, announce she was a bachelorette and ask if they had anything for her. Her friends planted small presents, along with themselves, in the shops. By the end of her journey through the shopping plaza, Mado had collected a small amount of money and a gang of friends. Then came her next task – making breakfast for everyone as a test of her true wife potential. A little old-fashioned, but that is what tradition is

# fashionista

STÉPHANIE DUVAL



## A Gothic autumn

It's always difficult, smack in the middle of a warm summer, to look at the autumn collections and know which trends will take over the fashion world by then. But it's especially difficult when the predictions are as foreign and mysterious as the one trend that will prevail this winter: Goth.

We've seen the rise of Goth before in the '90s, when the series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and the film *Interview with a Vampire* enthralled audiences all over the world. This year, vampire stories return with a vengeance. In cinemas, there's the film based on Stephanie Meyer's novel *Twilight*. On television, the series *True Blood* is amassing millions of fans. With the rising popularity of Gothic culture this year, the influence of these dark vampire tales on fashion was inevitable.

In fact, many designers are sending models clad in dark silhou-

ettes onto the catwalk. Rodarte dressed them in black knitwear that clung to their arms and legs like cobwebs. Gareth Pugh was inspired by Victorian dress when he designed his autumn collection, and for Givenchy winter will bring us lots of dark leather with a fetishist twist.

Of course the Goth trend has always existed, though it tends to periodically retreat to the background, appealing only to a niche group. But now it seems like fangs and werewolves are well accepted by mainstream audiences, as models in fashion editorials in the world's most-read magazines are made up to look like fictive characters in spooky fairy tales.

The effects of this trend are likely to be reinforced by Michael Jackson's recent death. Magazines are filled with odes to Michael's sartorial taste: expect a lot of band jackets and rhinestones to appear

on the fashion scene shortly. Meanwhile, radio stations rediscover his musical genius, and his album *HIStory* proves to be the favourite to remember him by.

A closer look at the little booklet accompanying the CD reveals the dark side of the King of Pop. And it's not just the pictures in which he dresses up as a werewolf for his song *Thriller*. Other drawings and illustrations allude to his difficult childhood and the nightmares lots of children must endure all over the world.

In a weird twist of fate, a tragic accident could add a whole new dimension to a fashion trend that risked repeating history without adding anything new. Leave it to Michael Jackson, even from beyond his grave, to bring to our attention the injustice and sad stories that may have inspired the Goth trend in the beginning.



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Your role includes assisting the lifestyle editor with sourcing and developing story ideas; researching pictures; producing columns; helping out on the agenda section; and subbing copy. You are renowned for your gift to track down the latest trends before anyone else has even heard of them. You are also thoroughly familiar with Brussels (knowledge of other Belgian cities is a definite plus), and genuinely interested in local fashion, entertainment, restaurants, bars, etc.

If this sounds like you, please send your CV and Motivation Letter to [Derek.Blyth@ackroyd.be](mailto:Derek.Blyth@ackroyd.be).

## 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.

### Knowledge determines your competitive power

An organisation that wants to maintain and strengthen its competitive position in the global economy must be powered by a well-oiled knowledge engine. Your workforce is your greatest capital and lifelong learning is an absolute necessity. The acquired knowledge flows back into your company and your knowledge capital grows larger and larger, increasing your competitiveness. This will keep you competitive in the rapidly changing economic context. We call this 'learning with impact'.

### Investing in training: costs versus benefits

Too often, training is still regarded as a cost instead of an investment. However, companies that view their personnel policy from a strategic standpoint continue – even when the economy becomes a serious challenge – to invest in training programmes for their most strategic employees. Investing in talent and training now guarantees you a significant jump on the competition when the economy gets going again.

### Vlerick, your partner in tailor-made training programmes

Those who have participated in a Vlerick training programme are undoubtedly better prepared than other employees to take on today's challenges. Via in-company programmes – focused on the development of individual employees as well as on organisational development – Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School offers you a collaborative project fully tailored to your needs. Thanks to in-depth knowledge of both local and international economic environments and years of

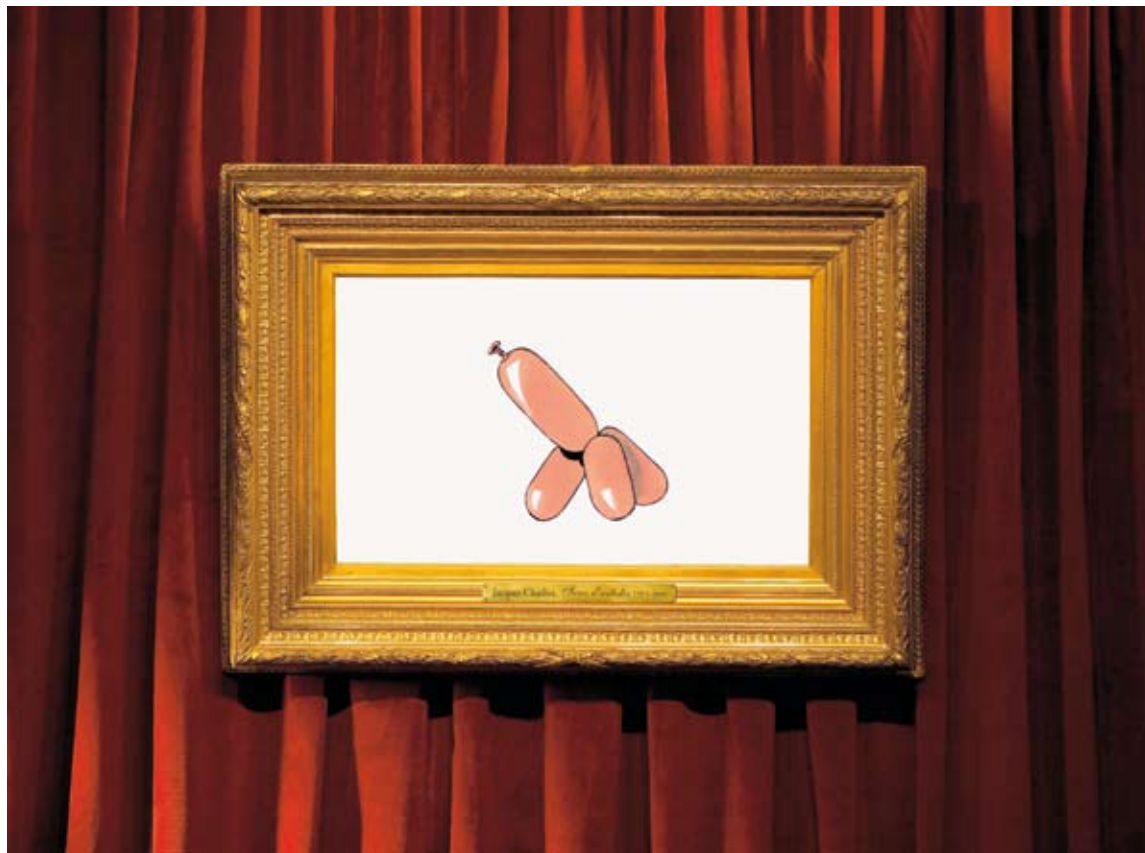
experience in training management talent, the School can develop a specially adapted management training programme for every organisation, in each phase of its development, targeting the most diverse aspects of its business.

**More info on our management programmes?**

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## Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School



# Sex, art and censorship

SARAH MCFADDEN

In a democracy, censorship can't be beat as a generator of free publicity for the very thing it intends to quash. Witness the case of 100 *Sexes d'artistes*, a capricious project by Belgian artist Jacques Charlier which was no sooner rejected from the 'off' programme of the 53rd Venice Biennale (on view until November 22) than it ballooned into a *succès de scandale*. And now it's a cause *celèbre*.

Selected by this country's French-speaking Community as its official representation at the prestigious international art event, Charlier's contribution was to have consisted of 100 posters displayed in public places scattered about the Italian city. Each poster satirizes a celebrated 20th-century artist by using his or her signature forms to create his or her imaginary sexual portrait. Cartoon phalluses abound.

Neither the passersby who risked being offended by Charlier's light satire nor the official who took the

decision to nix its display has been identified. The Biennale's director and president have reportedly passed the buck of responsibility from one to another, and the mayor of Venice isn't talking. With one or two exceptions, the artists targeted by Charlier's comic homage took no objection to the project other than its suppression.

A shame? Yes, for the Serenissima, which was bombarded by jokes about Venice having no balls. But not for Charlier. During the Biennale's press opening, which international journalists attended in droves, he made waves by displaying documentation on the aborted project aboard a boat docked where no one could miss it, and few did.

As the subject of controversy, 100 *Sexes d'artistes* has captured far more attention than it ever would have as a joke for art-world insiders. So far, eight European cities have signed on to exhibit the posters in their streets. Antwerp led the pack in June, and now it's Brus-

sels' turn. You can stumble upon them one by one in the centre of the capital or see all 100 hanging together inside Bozar. Either way, the odds are that you'll shake your head, possibly chuckle, and wonder what the fuss is all about.

→ [www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)



## Brussels

### Archiduc

Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52, [www.archiduc.net](http://www.archiduc.net)  
AUG 1 17.00 Earl Okin

### Café Bonnefooi

Steenstraat 8, [www.bonnefooi.be](http://www.bonnefooi.be)  
JULY 29 20.30 Viktor Abel, piano

### Le Bar du Matin

Alsembergsesteenweg 172; 02.537.71.59, <http://bardumatin.blogspot.com/>  
Concerts at 21.00:  
JULY 30 Moiano

### The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45, [www.themusicvillage.com](http://www.themusicvillage.com)  
Until AUG 1 - 21.00  
Toine Thys Organ Trio



## Brussels

### Sazz 'n' Jazz

Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78, [www.sazznjazz.be](http://www.sazznjazz.be)  
AUG 5 21.00 Gypsy night



## Ostend

### Hazegraskapel

Graaf de Smet de Naeyerlaan 24; 059.51.49.03, [www.orlandus.be](http://www.orlandus.be)  
JULY 30 20.00 Luk Bastiaens, organ:  
Bach, among others



## Antwerp

### Cathedral of Our Lady

Handschoenmarkt; 03.213.99.51, [www.dekathedraal.be](http://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

### Diamond Museum

Koningin Astridplein 13-23; 03.202.48.90, [www.diamantmuseum.be](http://www.diamantmuseum.be)  
Until AUG 31 HRD AWARDS 2009 - A Fairy Tale: diamond jewellery design competition

### Fotomuseum

Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00, [www.fotomuseum.be](http://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 photographs by Flemish photographer Lieve Blancquaert

## Mekanik comic book store

Sint-Jacobsmarkt 73; 0495.48.74.50, [www.art-trek.be](http://www.art-trek.be)  
Until SEP 12 Art Trek 6: Exhibition of work by 14 young graphic and illustrative artists from around the world

## Middelheim Museum

Middelheimlaan 6; 03.827.15.34, [www.middelheimmuseum.be](http://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](http://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](http://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 anniversary of the birth of the Blankenberge-born Franz Masereel, with drawings, wood cuts, paintings and ceramics

GET YOUR  
TICKETS NOW!

## Depeche Mode

23 January, 20.30  
Sportpaleis,  
Antwerp

The British trio has one of music history's best success stories. The once boy band with synthesizers grew up to become a worldwide reference. Depeche Mode is the first electronic band to fill football stadiums with rock fans. Their single *Just Can't Get Enough* proved to be their big breakthrough hit in 1981. But it was the album *Songs Of Faith And Devotion* (1993) that made them really huge, taking over the number one spot on charts everywhere. But they paid a price for their fame. Alan Wilder left the group, while Dave Gahan struggled with drug addiction. Their dark period, thankfully, was followed by a ray of light with the album *Playing The Angel* (2005). With their latest album *Sounds Of The Universe* (2009), the group is at their strongest and most diverse, as they already showed during TW Classic this summer. Don't miss the next opportunity to see Gahan, Gore and Fletcher on stage.

→ [www.sportpaleis.be](http://www.sportpaleis.be)

## MORE ARTS THIS WEEK

HRD Awards: Diamond jewellery design competition

→ Diamond Museum, Antwerp

Masereel and the Sea → Casino, Blankenberge

America from North to South! → KMGK Jubelparkmuseum, Brussels



## 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 Patteeuw: Curator Patteeuw  
shows works by some 25 artists  
including paintings and drawings by  
Roger Raveel, Dan Van Severen and  
Raoul De Keyser alongside creations  
by Jef Geys, Denisa Lehočká and  
Boris Ondrejčka, among others.  
Exhibition locations include Jan  
Garemijnzaal (Belfort, Markt), De  
Bond, Bogardenkapel, Boekhandel  
Raaklijn, Howest - Campus  
Lerarenopleiding, Smedenpoort.  
Guided tours available for groups

## 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** 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  
**Until SEP 13** Repromotion,  
installation of sculptures  
and photographs by Belgian

contemporary artist Jan De Cock

### 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.  
Albert Baronian, Profession: Gallery  
Owner, works by contemporary  
artists

### 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,  
200 years of shop windows and

## DON'T MISS Blankenberge

### This summer Belgian coast

Yes, you read it right, we are  
suggesting the entire city  
of Blankenberge as a "don't  
miss" this week. The coastal  
city that can sometimes  
annoy with its swarms of  
children and scads of mini-  
ature golf is stepping up this  
year to provide some top  
entertainment. Between the  
impressive Sand Sculpture  
Festival; the renovated pier  
with its new underwater  
cinema and special events  
all summer; "The Facade",  
Polish artist Robert Kusmi-  
rowski's fantastic addition  
to the coast-long Beaufort  
exhibition; an outstand-  
ing exhibition of work by  
Frans Masereel; and bean-  
bag chairs lolling next to a  
bar along the sand, this is  
the coast's hottest summer  
destination.

➔ [www.blankenberge.be](http://www.blankenberge.be)



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:  
Belgium, 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

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  
**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 & Yannique  
Cooreman's collection of  
contemporary art, with works by  
Franz West, Thomas Schütte, Jean-  
Marc Bustamente and Jan Vercruysse  
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, a look at  
Paul Arconati Visconti (1754-1821),  
eccentric resident of Gaasbeek Castle  
and fervent admirer of Napoleon  
Bonaparte

## Ghent

### Caermersklooster

Vrouwebroersstraat 6; 09.269.29.10,  
www.caermersklooster.be  
**Until SEP 13** Deftig vermaak,  
ijdel vertier (Distinguished leisure,  
vain diversion), paintings and  
photographs of Ghent's bourgeoisie  
from the mid-19th century to the  
*Belle Epoque*

### 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 until 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, 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** 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 Flemish master  
(1590 -1650)  
**Until SEP 20** Raoul de Keyser, Artist

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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](http://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](http://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

#### Hasselt

##### Modemuseum

Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.23.96.21, [www.modemuseumhasselt.be](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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

#### Ypres

##### CC Ieper – Lakenhallen

Grote Markt 34; 057.23.94.80, [www.acci.be](http://www.acci.be)  
**Until OCT 4** Wat overblijft (What remains), recycled assemblages by 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 as well as outdoor installations and sculptures

in various locations on the Flemish coast 070.22.50.05, [www.beaufort03.be](http://www.beaufort03.be)

**Roller Bike Parade:** Four months of rollerblading in the streets with technical staff on hand to help with rollerblade and 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](http://www.belgiumrollers.com)

**Palm Parkies:** Series of concerts in parks across Flanders, including BBQ and drinks

**Until AUG 26** 19.00 across Flanders [www.parkies.net](http://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](http://www.jackyland.be)

**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](http://www.zva.be)

#### Blankenberge

**Comedy Summer 2009:** Comedy festival featuring stand-up comedians An Nelissen, Wouter Deprez, Raf Coppens, Iwein Segers, Freddy De Vadder, Ygor, Gunter Lamoot and Xander De Rycke  
**Until AUG 14** at Belgium Pier, Zeedijk 261 0900.00.600, [www.comedysummer.be](http://www.comedysummer.be)

**Sand Sculpture Festival:** Annual sand sculpture festival with pirate-themed show including sound, light and water sculpture and a tribute to the late Michael Jackson  
**Until AUG 31** at Blankenberge [www.zandsculptuur.be](http://www.zandsculptuur.be)

**Skatefest:** O'Neill surf, snow, wake & skate festival featuring contests, free surf, snow and wakeboard initiations and music by Amen Ra, Trench Foot, Face Tomorrow, Starfucker and more  
**AUG 1-2** on the beachfront [www.myspace.com/skatefestblankenberge](http://www.myspace.com/skatefestblankenberge)

#### Bruges

**Klinkers:** Cultural summer happening featuring free concerts as well as two paying side events, Klinkers Intiem with a focus on tango and flamenco, and Klinkende Kroegen, a historic pub crawl  
**Until AUG 8** in the centre of Bruges [www.klinkers-brugge.be](http://www.klinkers-brugge.be)

**MAfestival:** Entitled Modern Times in Early Music, the Bruges leg of the Festival of Flanders includes music performances and talks  
**Until AUG 9** in several venues in the city 050.33.22.83, [www.mafestival.be](http://www.mafestival.be)

**Vama Veche:** Free summer festival with films, concerts, barbecues and after-parties  
**Until AUG 3** in Koningin Astridpark [www.vamaveche.be](http://www.vamaveche.be)

#### Brussels

**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](http://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 (Sainctelettesquare) 02.279.50.49, [www.brusselbad.be](http://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](http://www.brusselsbywater.be)

**Bruxellons 2009:** Annual theatre festival featuring popular theatre, music, cabaret and a children's programme, plus buffet and bar  
**Until SEP 26** at Château du Karreveld, Jean de la Hoeselaan 3 02.724.24.24, [www.bruxellons.net](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.fine-arts-museum.be)

#### Geel

**Reggae Geel:** Reggae music festival featuring Lee Scratch Perry, Anthony B, Chakademus & Pliers, Cocoa Tea, Lady Saw, African Head Charge, Glen Washington and Don Carlos, among others  
**JULY 31-AUG 1** at Festival grounds, Zandstraat [www.reggaegeel.com](http://www.reggaegeel.com)

#### Ghent

**Parkkaffee:** Activities in the park for the whole family including live music, magic school, circus workshop, tarot card reading, campfire, plus food and drink  
**Until AUG 31** at Parkkaffee, Groenestaakstraat 37, Mariakerke (Ghent) 09.227.99.94, [www.parkkaffee.be](http://www.parkkaffee.be)

#### Hasselt

**Muscadet – Aperitiefconcerten:** Outdoor live 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](http://www.hetstadsmus.be)

#### Knokke-Heist

**International Cartoon Festival:** Cartoon festival highlighting the increasing role of internet and television in cartoons as well as Press Cartoon Belgium, featuring the best cartoons from the press this year, with guest cartoonist Kevin Kallaughier  
**Until SEP 27** at Lagunahall, Krommedijk, 050.630.430 [www.cartoonfestival.be](http://www.cartoonfestival.be)

#### 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](http://www.zomer-van-sint-pieter.be)

#### Lokeren

**Lokersefeesten:** Summer music festival featuring 2 Many DJs, Fatboy Slim, Das Pop, David Byrne, Lady Linn & Her Magnificent Seven, The Scabs, Novastar, Peter Doherty, Ozark Henry, Cypress Hill, Simple Minds, The Hives and Ray Davies & Band, among others  
**JULY 31-AUG 9** at Festival grounds, Sportlaan and Grote Kaai [www.lokersefeesten.be](http://www.lokersefeesten.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](http://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](http://www.parkpop.be)

#### Ostend

**Theater aan zee:** Multidisciplinary arts festival organised by Royal Flemish Theatre KVS and curated by Arno. Music, theatre, literature, exhibitions and family events  
**Until AUG 8** in venues around Ostend, 059.56.20.16 [www.theateraanzee.be](http://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](http://www.bruulronse.be)

#### Tienen

**Suikerrock:** Summer music festival featuring Lady Linn & Her Magnificent Seven, The Scabs, Simple Minds, Fun Lovin' Criminals and Novastar, among others  
**JULY 31-AUG 2** on the Grote Markt [www.suikerrock.be](http://www.suikerrock.be)

#### Watu

**Poëziezomer:** Annual festival of contemporary art, architecture and poetry. This year's theme is Verzamelde Verhalen (Collected Stories, which looks at the relationship between image and language)  
**Until SEP 6** in indoor and outdoor venues in the village of Watou, near Poperinge 059.56.45.98, [www.watou2009.be](http://www.watou2009.be)

#### Zulte

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

## DUSK 'TIL DAWN

SAFFINA RANA



## Mauresca Fracas Dub

If, like me, you are on the lookout for nightlife that is out of the ordinary, especially on balmy summer evenings, you won't fare better than bobbing up and down to the political raga and reggae of Mauresca Fracas Dub, in the courtyard of one of Brussels' last preserved 19th century factories this weekend.

The soft reggae undertones are just right for swaying to underneath the midnight stars. And for those who understand French, the Montpellier band's compositions speak of surviving urban city life to political land wranglings transforming the coastlines of the south into playgrounds for the bourgeois at the expense of the poorer working classes.

Aptly so. The event will be one of the last to take place at the historical Godin site before it is redeveloped by the Mestdagh group into a giant 50,000 m<sup>2</sup> shopping and wellness complex, complete with 1,740 parking spaces. French industrialist and social reformer Jean-Baptiste André Godin is probably turning in his grave. In 1858 he set up a co-operative factory and housing on the five hectare grounds, which would eventually all be owned by the employees. It lasted over a century, until 1968. Since then, private investors have kept the site running with a small industry recovering car parts and recycling tyres.

Hosted at this disappearing part of Brussels history, the weekend promises to be magical. It's part of the Plein Open Air summer festival run by the Nova cinema co-operative in Brussels. Wedged between the canal and the railways, you can catch a walking tour of the grounds, watch an eclectic programme of films projected onto a huge outdoor screen, dance at the concerts or just chill and enjoy the various beer and fair trade stands selling homemade food and experimental ice-cream flavours like lavender café and pimento in the grounds.

**31 July – 1 Aug**  
Plein Open Air Festival  
Godin fabriek, Brussels  
→ [www.nova-cinema.org](http://www.nova-cinema.org)

## FACE OF FLANDERS

### Michael De Kleine

ALAN HOPE

In the normal way of things, they're delivered by storks who deposit them under a gooseberry bush. Not in Borgerhout in Antwerp. There, the arrival of a new baby is signalled by an alarm from the *vondelingen-schuif* (foundling slide) that's been installed in the offices of the charity *Moeders voor Moeders* (Mothers for Mothers) since 2000. The slide contains a warmed bed for the little one, an envelope containing a letter explaining what's going to happen to the baby, and a piece of a jigsaw puzzle which, if the mother should decide to come forward, will show that she is the real parent.

It happened that way two weekends ago, but for only the second time in nine years it was no false alarm. The foundling slide was occupied, the MvM member on standby found, by a male baby only days old. He was immediately handed over to the city's Public Committee for Social Assistance (OCMW). Given the name Michael (all foundlings in Antwerp are called De Kleine, which means "the little one"), he will be kept in care for four to six weeks, then placed with a foster family with a view to eventual



baby michael © Beiga

adoption if the parent(s) do not come forward to reclaim him.

The foundling slide caused controversy when it was first introduced, with critics – including adoption services and the then-mayor Leona Detiège – claiming it would encourage abuse and "send the wrong message". MvM took the pragmatic view: "It may not be ideal, but better a child in the slide

than in a rubbish bin or on the street," a spokesperson said.

Michael is the second baby left in Borgerhout, following Thomas De Kleine in November 2007. Since 2004, other babies have been left as foundlings in Merksem, and on the platform of Essen station.

Moeders voor Moeders: 0478 813 129. All calls in confidence.

AUTEUR

## TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



### fruit en groenten →

The silly season is upon us. With everyone from builders to politicians heading off on holiday, the newspapers have to find something to fill their columns. So, today I read that the city of Bruges is to investigate whether it should introduce little bags, similar to poo bags for dogs, where people could put their chewed gum or cigarette butts. A fag end in a plastic bag sounds dangerous, but the plan involves airtight bags. I can still smell burning, though.

Yes, the *komkommertijd* is upon us. Apparently, this comes from the no longer used English expression cucumber time, which was the slack summer period when the rich fled to their country estates and left Londoners with only enough income to buy cucumbers.

*Komkommers* are cool, especially in a salad. Now, the Dutch for a salad is *sla*, whose main ingredient is lettuce, which in Dutch is also *sla*. Slice some *tomaten*, perhaps een *ui* – an onion – and you're done. Tomatoes aside, most vegetables are green, so it is no surprise that the Dutch for vegetables is *groenten* ("greens").

Fruit is *fruit*, which rhymes with an Ulsterman's pronunciation of out. Make a salad of this lot: *sinaasappel* – orange; *perzik* – peach; *pruim* – plum; *kruisbes* – gooseberry; *druif* – grape; *bosbes* – bilberry ("wood berry"); *aardbei* – strawberry

("earth berry"); and *appel* – apple. And it is the last that has inspired this week's column, and in particular one Granny Smith.

Most royal families are blessed with a queen mum, and Belgium is no exception. Queen Fabiola is known for having a mind of her own and sometimes rubs people up the wrong way. One person has taken such offence that he wrote to Fabiola threatening to finish her off with a crossbow during the ceremony that marked Belgium's national day last week on 21 July. While the rest of the family paraded through the streets towards the royal stand outside the palace, Fabiola was sitting on her seat waiting patiently for the others to arrive.

You had to feel sorry for the old dear. Security was tight: the loyal subjects who wanted to glimpse the royal podium had their bags searched for crossbows, among other things. The parade passed off in sunshine with no bolt from the blue. As the royal party rose to leave, Fabiola produced from her enormous handbag a green Granny Smith apple, which she held up for a moment tempting our latter-day William Tell to have a shot. If she had shouted: "This is not an apple!", it wouldn't have surprised me more. As my transatlantic cousin, here on a short visit, exclaimed: "What a dame!"

## bite

SHARON LIGHT



What could possibly make for a more refreshing lunch on a summer's day than a fresh salad? I would argue that it makes for the perfect lunch any day, but for those few hot days we get in July and August, it's really a treat.

While many restaurants will offer a selection of salads to satisfy my cravings, a few eateries are making it their *raison d'être*. Enter the build-your-own salad bar. Some dishes are best compiled under the guidance of a chef, but salads are an everyman food: you simply can't mess it up.

You may need to dig a bit, but they are out there. The newest addition to the salad-bar scene also wins big points for its setting. Green Kitchen has just opened at the BELvue Museum. It's a more economical choice than the other museum cafés and, whether sitting indoors behind the three-

story glass wall, or (if the weather obliges) outside in the cosy courtyard, you can easily drink in whatever sunlight Brussels offers up on any given day.

The salad bar itself lets you fill a good-sized bowl with as many ingredients as you wish, and you pay by weight. It's an excellent bonus for the non-committed, as choosing between the vegetables, cheeses, meats and prepared salads (e.g. tabouleh) is not easy. Green Kitchen features another branch in an equally snazzy setting, at *k\_nal* on (you guessed it) the Brussels canal. Moreover, if you and your colleagues are coordinated enough to place an order for a minimum of €25, "Green Attitude," Green Kitchen's catering service, will deliver. In addition to a click-and-mix online salad bar, you can also order a variety of sandwiches and wraps. Green Kitchen is not alone in the world of salad bars. At The Coffee Club, with locations in Brussels and Antwerp, you pick your base salad and then instruct the server which fixins to add. True to its name, The Coffee Club is also a full-service coffee bar, including some lovely desserts. The one I've visited, on Baljuwstraat, doubles as an internet café, for those so inclined. And possibly their best feature is the lovely terrace area in the back – perfect for enjoying your salad on a summer day.

→ [www.green-attitude.be](http://www.green-attitude.be)  
→ [www.thecoffeeclub.be](http://www.thecoffeeclub.be)

### The last word →→→

*Ach, it's a great job, every evening you can go and see something. Baby? Oh, no. She chose to be a minister, so she'll just have to get a babysitter.*  
Stand-up comic Nigel Williams, with advice for cultural greenhorn and new minister Joke Schauvliege

*This problem controls my whole life. Try to imagine that every word hurts, and you have the constant sound of a whistling kettle in your ears. I feel unbelievably bad.*  
29-year-old Dietrich Hectors took his own life last week rather than go on living with severe tinnitus

*Let us remember that the financial system is there to serve the economy, which in turns serves the people. It is important to get back to those basic values.*  
King Albert II in his 21 July speech called for a "more ethical" financial system

*How long does this flu last? I'm unemployed at the moment, and it would be perfect if I could catch it now.*

Timothy Hossfeld, in a chat session with top epidemiologist Marc Van Ranst organised by De Standaard