

Employers gone wild 7

Last Friday, about 30,000 demonstrators stopped traffic in Brussels to complain about jobs. And this time it wasn't just the unions



Kahlo in Brussels 8

Mexico's most famous artistic, political and sexual revolutionary comes to the capital in a show specially selected from the Dolores Olmedo museum



De Win is the winner 16

The final nail-biting episode of *De slimste mens* found TV journalist Linda De Win beating her competitor with his own strategy – and a bit of salad dressing



Naughty nights

Burlesque comes to Belgium courtesy of Radio Modern



COURTNEY DAVIS

In a cold room on a Sunday afternoon, a group of half-naked women with heavily made up faces watch as a tall, regal and impossibly sexy woman wriggles and spirals in a modern belly dance. Instead of applause at the end of her performance, she turns expectantly towards a thin woman who has been sitting in the corner, watching her tight lipped. Obviously not impressed, Miss Deena Ray delivers some hard-hitting advice to the girl adorned in a peacock headdress and gold-bead harem pants; she wants to know why the performer still has her top on.

This is burlesque. Performer and teacher Miss Deena Ray is guiding a handful of specially-selected women as they create Belgium's very first burlesque dance troop, to be called Schoon Madammen (Beautiful Madams).

It's the brainchild of Radio Modern, the retro dance party organiser whose popularity shot through the roof last year, with sell-out crowds all over Flanders, particularly in their home base of Ghent. Radio Modern has brilliantly capital-

ised on the band wagon of romanticising the dance days of yore: from rockabilly pompadours and petticoats to the Charleston and the lindy hop. Now they are launching a new party theme: Ne Vuilen Avond (A Naughty Evening), which reaches back even further, with 1920s and '30s carnival flair – think sword swallows, acrobats, magicians and, of course, burlesque.

What is burlesque – exactly?

Commonly associated with Moulin Rouge can-can girls, theatrical burlesque spread throughout Europe in the 18th century as a musical act mixed with political satire. In England, it became a form of comedic theatre, throwing low-blow punch lines at high brow art, often performed by female leads.

This gained in popularity in the US in the 1900s as it evolved into more bawdy humour, eventually incorporating strip-tease. This vaudeville showmanship became a performance

genre that encompassed a handful of common elements: humour, music, a theme utilising props and costumes and a strip routine.

The 21st century brings us “neo-burlesque”, and various subcultures have merged to form this new take on old art. Neo-burlesque combines a feminist approach with a celebration of all kinds of beauty and body types and a healthy appreciation for pin ups and old-school sexiness.

Aside from the seductive quality of the retro culture, Goth music has also heavily influenced the new burlesque. Known for its pale-faced, black-adorned, sulking teenage fans, its inclination towards frilly Victorian shirts, corsets and dramatic make-up helps fuel the burlesque fire. Goth rocker Marilyn Manson was briefly married briefly to Dita Von Teese, who has been dubbed by the *Los Angeles Times* as the “queen of the new burlesque Renaissance”.

➡ continued on page 5

Black marks for bread, pita and ice cream from consumer study

The consumer organisation Test-Aankoop last week released its Food Balance Sheet for 2009, which presents a sombre picture of food production and distribution in Belgium. Of the 927 products and sales points inspected, 42%, or 388, received a failing grade. Some of the main points of the report:

Croissants: too much saturated fat, up to 34g per 100g

Vegetables: 73% of samples contained too many nitrates

Bread: one loaf in four has more salt than permitted by law

Pita: less than 25% provide information about type of meat, which is often fatty, of poor quality and a mixture of meats, including pork

Ice cream: one in three samples was contaminated by bacteria

Soft ice: 62% of samples had a “poor” or “very poor” level of bacteria

Alsace wine: too much sulphite in 22 of the 65 samples. “The label often provides the wine-lover with more publicity than real information,” the report said

Smoked salmon: More than half of the 27 samples failed the taste test

Meanwhile on the bright side:

Honey: only two samples in 21 contained traces of antibiotics, compared to 65% in 2003

Light lemonade: no traces of benzene found, compared to three prod-

ucts in 2007, when levels were 20 times higher than the limits for drinking water



Calls for “zero tolerance” on crime

Brussels policeman shot by robbers during car chase

ALAN HOPE

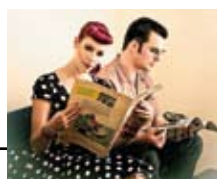
The justice and interior ministers are due to present a plan today (3 February) to clamp down on crime in Brussels, following widespread calls for “zero tolerance” in response to continuing unrest last week in Anderlecht, including the shooting of a police officer in an attempted hold-up. On Monday, 1 February, justice minister Stefaan De Clerck met with the Brussels prosecutor; at the same time, the police chief for Brussels-Elsene met with magistrates and with Brussels mayor Freddy Thielemans. One aspect of the new policy is certain to be an increase in cooperation between the various police zones in the capital.

According to police union representative Jan Schonkeren, some parts of the city

have become impossible to police. Heavy firearms are more common, another union representative said, with a rifle of the Kalashnikov type now available to buy for €50 in some areas. This is particularly a cause for concern as the bulletproof vests issued to police are not resistant against that sort of weapon.

The latest incident took place during the attempted robbery of a Western Union office on the Adolphe Maxlaan in central Brussels. The men fled on the arrival of police and were pursued by a patrol car. Their vehicle collided with another car, and they then ran off, firing at police. One officer was hit three times in the leg.

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News in brief

The Flemish bar is investigating a **complaint against Antwerp lawyer** Paul Quirynen relating to comments he made about alleged serial killer Ronald Janssen. Quirynen was reported to have been approached to assist in Janssen's defence, a request he declined to accept, he said, because he would have been required "to throw my principles overboard". Quirynen denied he had claimed that Janssen showed no remorse when interviewed.

A complaint by entertainment **production house Studio 100** against subsidies paid to a competitor has been rejected by the Council of State. The non-profit Musical van Vlaanderen, run by the chief executive of Music Hall, Geert Allaert, was granted a subsidy by former culture minister Bert Anciaux worth €2.45 million over three years. The complaint by Studio 100 and contemporary music foundation Stihmul alleged unfair competition and has delayed a Musical van Vlaanderen production.

The Ghent prosecutor's office has been asked by the city to carry out an investigation into a couple who admitted on TV that they had entered a **marriage of convenience**. Linsey Daman, born in Flanders, told the VRT religious documentary series *In Godsnaam* (*In God's Name*) that her husband, Algerian-born Abdelali Jahoub, had married her using false documents in order to succeed with an asylum request. The couple met on a Muslim dating website and married just 12 days later.

The **Bokrijk open-air museum** in Limburg province will be the setting for a new youth series from the makers of *Fata Morgana* and *Katarakt*. The provincial domain, which preserves aspects of Flemish daily life from the 17th century to the 1950s, will be the background for a contemporary mystery story. "In Hollywood, they would pay a fortune for such a setting," said screenwriter Dirk Nielandt.

Ghent and Mortsel (in Antwerp province) will be the site of a pilot project for a new research project looking at **pollution caused by chlorine** in cities. Chlorine, in pure form a poisonous gas, is used in solvents in the dry-cleaning and printing industries. It is also in acid rain, PCBs and CFCs, responsible for the depletion of the ozone layer. The CityChlor project launched last week by the Flemish Public Waste Materials Agency (OVAM) will involve nine other western European agencies, which will research new methods of clean up and share their results.

Lady Chef of the Year
is culinary world traveller

Ingrid Neven, a 30-year-old Limburger who runs a restaurant in Antwerp, is the new Bru Lady Chef of 2010. Chosen by the readers of the Flemish magazine *Culinary Ambiance*, Neven is the youngest title holder in the award's 20-year history.

At the age of 15, Neven started training at the hotel school in Herk-de-Stad, before a career that took her to Antwerp, Vroenhoeven and Maastricht. In Vroenhoeven she met chef Hans Snijders, who would later put her in contact with William Wouters, who needed a chef for his restaurant Pazzo in Antwerp.

The two still work together, at the head of a brigade of 12, serving what Neven describes as "the world on a female plate". Sample dishes from the menu include burrata salad with grilled pumpkin; tartare of scallops with Granny Smith apples, *shiso* and crunchy garlic; pigs' cheeks braised with sweet chili and celeriac puree; grilled sea bream in a *nage* of thyme and winter vegetables; and ravioli of chocolate with confit of orange.

The theme of this year's Bru prize, Travel and Discovery, "works perfectly for me," Neven says. The menu prepared for the sponsors of the Bru prize went from Scotland to England to Japan to Australia, the whole accompanied by South African wines. "For what goes onto the plate, I go on a voyage of discovery in the city, where you find all sorts of nationalities next to each other. I love fusion, or cross-cooking – combining different cuisines. Cooking is really my thing."

The menu of this year's Lady Chef

Sashimi of Australian Kingfish, Granny Smith cream, celery and vinaigrette of pickled ginger

Scots mussels Japanese-style, salad of white cabbage and wakame, seaweed jelly and miso mayonnaise

Neck of English lamb in a crust of cashew nuts and panko, puree of young carrots with *ras el hanout*, chutney of raisins and capers, saffron *beurre blanc*

→ www.pazzo.be

A series of **four oil paintings** by Jan Breughel the Younger was sold last week at Christie's in New York for \$2.2 million (€1.5m). The paintings, depicting the four elements, were owned by the estate of King Leopold III. The sale caused some controversy, with one nationalist (N-VA) member of the Flemish parliament calling for action to keep the works in the country. The royal palace, however, claimed the sale was a private matter.

Train tickets may now be bought using **ecocheques**, the rail authority NMBS announced last week. Ecocheques are offered by some employers as part of a remuneration package, although the number of places that accept them remains limited. Some 550,000 people have so far received ecocheques worth a total of €110 million. Regular train tickets can be paid for with the cheques but not season tickets. And no change can be given.

Three snack food manufacturers are **challenging the smoking ban** in cafes before the Constitutional Court, claiming that the law, which forbids smoking anywhere that serves snacks, has caused their business to drop off by 60%. The companies claim many cafes prefer to give up serving food altogether rather than impose the ban.



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Thieves who broke into a brasserie and adjoining beauty salon in Zulte-Machelen last week decided to make an evening of it by holding a boozy party in the sauna, leaving towels all over the floor and wolfing down the restaurant's entire stock of pralines



Single police zone proposed to tackle trouble areas in the capital

continued from page 1

Three men in their early 20s were arrested shortly afterwards in an apartment building in Laken. One of them confessed to being the driver of the vehicle. They were held on charges of armed robbery, attempted murder and conspiracy. Two Kalashnikov-style firearms were seized, although it is not yet clear if the weapons were those used in the robbery.

The robbery followed a fatal shooting in Molenbeek, in which a man who was trying to rob a Lidl supermarket was shot dead by police. He later turned out to be an escaped criminal, who was also armed with a Kalashnikov-type weapon. His shooting led to several days and nights of local unrest, with clashes between youth and police and damage to parked cars and bus shelters.

Then last week the industrial college ISIB said it was moving from the troubled Kuregem quarter of Anderlecht to central Brussels, following repeated muggings of students going to and from the school.

Vice prime minister Guy Vanhengel called for the creation of a single police zone for Brussels, while interior minister Annemie Turtelboom (like Vanhengel a member of the Flemish liberals Open VLD) pointed out that the law already allows for the zones to come together on a temporary basis. The party's leaders in the Brussels and Flemish parliaments, Els Ampe and Sven Gatz, called for a conference on security in the capital and a single political voice to determine security policy. Brussels minister-president Charles Picqué is a supporter of the idea of a single police zone, but the mayors of the 19 municipalities are not expected to surrender without a fight what remains of their traditional hold over police control.

A security conference was described as "not the most appropriate response" by Flemish nationalist party N-VA: "For years, the criticism of Brussels security has been that there is too much talk and not enough action," said deputy Ben Weyts. A conference would simply



Police examine the getaway car, its windscreen riddled with bullet-holes

be more of the same, he said. De Clerck, meanwhile, gave qualified support to calls for zero tolerance. "For certain parts of Brussels, a zero tolerance policy is needed for a certain period of time," he said. The problem goes further than street thugs alone, he said, and called for reforms to the courts system to allow, for instance, for suspects to

be dealt with rapidly.

Groen! member Luckas Vander Taelen, who has written extensively about living in one of the city's troubled areas, supported calls for zero tolerance. "We have to get back to a situation in Brussels where you can walk in the street without having a knife put to your throat," he said. ♦

Flemish beaten in cyclo-cross

LEO CENDROWICZ

The Flemish cyclo-cross riders who have dominated the sport in recent years were handed a shock defeat at the Cyclo-Cross World Championships in Tabor, Czech Republic, on Sunday. Klaas Vantornout and Sven Nys trailed in second and third respectively, behind the winner, Czech local boy Zdenek Stybar. Defending champion, Bonheide-born Niels Albert was nowhere to be seen and eventually retired with two laps remaining.

The terrain proved particularly treacherous for Nys – winner in 2005 and five-time bronze medalist – who at one point fell off his bicycle and was sprawled face down in the mud. ♦



"When the fire brigade pulled that 13-year-old girl alive from under the rubble at about 13.30, my hopes were raised a little. Anything was still possible. I was wavering between hope and despair." Guy Storms, an advertising director from Heusden-Zolder, Limburg province, describes his feelings while he waited for news of his daughter Vicky, 24, and her boyfriend Alexis Robert, also 24. Both young people were found dead in the ruins of number 18 Rue Léopold in Liège, which collapsed after a gas explosion during the early morning hours of 26 January. Rescue workers told how they had spoken to Vicky and Alexis and given them oxygen before being forced to withdraw as further collapse threatened. However, the young couple managed to direct rescuers to Elena Saive, a neighbour child, who was then rescued. "Alexis kept my daughter's spirits up," said Serge Saive, Elena's father. "He calmed her down until she could be brought out by the firemen. And now he's dead. I'm torn between joy that Elena made it out and an enormous sorrow that Alexis didn't survive."

School might install cameras in classrooms

A school in Hoegaarden, Flemish Brabant, is considering installing CCTV cameras in every classroom to protect teachers from violent incidents provoked by students, the school's director revealed last week.

Chantal Celis was reacting to publicity given to a video-clip uploaded to YouTube in which a teacher from a school in Bruges apparently strikes a student after a snowball fight. Teachers' representatives said the Bruges teacher was provoked by the students, one of whom filmed the incident on a mobile phone.

Celis is director of the Mariadal technical school, where last year a teacher was filmed in a brick-laying class turning a boy upside down and ducking his head into a bucket of mortar. That incident, she said, later turned out to be a set up by students to provide an entertaining video clip.

"I've been in education for 30 years, and it's never been as bad as it is today," Celis said. "Young people think anything goes."

Students edit the films to give the desired impression but fail to show the events leading up to the incident, she said. "For that reason we are considering putting cameras in classrooms that film everything. We're currently gathering information on all the possibilities, although we find it very regrettable that we have to resort to such drastic measures."

"The decision on whether to put cameras in classrooms is for the school themselves to take," commented education minister Pascal Smet. "We don't want to treat all schools the same. There are problem schools that take initiatives to tackle their situation, and, if the school takes such a decision, we have to understand where it comes from." ♦

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

A lively speaker

The Flemish Parliament is a stately institution that takes itself very seriously. Its speakers (or presidents) have in the past all shared a certain unobtrusiveness. They were criticised for being too discrete, but that seemed part of the job. This made the Flemish Parliament often a dull place, which rarely saw heated debate. So when Jan Peumans (N-VA) took over as speaker, the first thing he resolved to do was to liven things up.

Peumans is a colorful character and a staunch Flemish nationalist. Shortly before the regional elections, political journalists voted him "best Flemish MP", which filled him with pride. When the nationalist party N-VA entered the Flemish government, Peumans was a ministerial hopeful, but in the end his party put forward the newcomer Philippe Muyters. This saddened Peumans, but not for long. There was, after all, work to be done in the Flemish Parliament.

And indeed, ever since Peumans took over as speaker, the debate has become a lot more animated, its main subject being... Peumans himself.

The speaker enraged the opposition and embarrassed the majority when he described the quality of some parliamentary interventions as very poor. His remedy? Elocution lessons for those MPs who feel they need them. His colleagues also blame Peumans for being overly zealous, as he often scraps parliamentary questions he feels are inappropriate. But his enthusiasm for improving the quality of the discussions finally turned against him.

Last week, Peumans again took centre stage when he refused to attend the annual reception at the Royal Palace, on the grounds that this was against his republican principles. He had arranged to be replaced, but protocol ruled this out. In the end, the Flemish Parliament remained unrepresented. Peumans felt unjustly treated – by "one single civil servant" – as he did everything in his power to stop this from becoming a major incident. Still, an incident it became. Sven Gatz, leader of the opposition party Open VLD, reproached him for a "Boudewijn complex" – a reference to the Belgian king who refused to sign an abortion law for reasons of conscience. The speaker of the Flemish Parliament, like the King, is not just a person, with personal beliefs, but also an Institution, and should act accordingly.

It is too soon to tell whether Peumans (unintentionally) has done the Flemish Parliament more harm than good. He has, however, succeeded in one thing. The media no longer dismiss the assembly as a boring, technocratic place, since the next incident involving the speaker is always just around the corner.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



97

people still missing out of the 1,575 who disappeared in 2008, according to the Missing Persons unit of the federal police.

€89,000,000,000

sum to be borrowed this year on capital markets by the Belgian state, making Belgium the biggest borrower in Europe. The high level of borrowing – equivalent to over 25% of GDP – is due to state support of the banks

87,285

low-income people who enjoyed a day-trip or longer holiday with the help of the Flemish government's Holiday Participation support unit. The SV was launched nine years ago as a co-operation between government, social organisations and the tourist sector

48%

Percentage of Catholics in Belgium who are "positive" or "very positive" towards same-sex marriage, according to a poll by the newspaper *Le Soir*

€13,704,280

annual cost of the monarchy in Belgium, according to research by the Free University of Brussels (VUB). Belgium sits in the financial middle of European monarchies, compared to the UK at €46.6 million and Luxembourg at €8.75m



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Naughty nights

Radio Modern will premiere new burlesque troupe at "Vuilen Avond" party

→ continued from page 1

Belgium, meet burlesque

In Belgium, it was Radio Modern that stepped up to the plate. Public relations manager Jill Mathieu, with her Bettie-Page hair cut, multiple piercings and day job as editor of the alternative magazine *Vice*, was the ideal candidate to spearhead the project. Having seen already a number of burlesque shows in Europe, she and Radio Modern's creative director eventually came up with the carnival-themed night. The only hiccup was that burlesque dancing. While steadily gaining fans and acts across Europe (most notably London, Amsterdam and Berlin), it had failed to make its way to Belgium.

Knowing that burlesque was a core element of a successful 20s cabaret-style party, Mathieu began to search for performers. But there simply were none. "We didn't intend to be pioneers, but we also didn't see the sense in waiting for it to happen," Mathieu says. "Someone had to do it."

A solution was created in the form of a contest: women chosen to participate would be given three free workshops in burlesque, perform their own act in front of a crowd, and the winning shows will be incorporated into Ne Vuilen Avond.

Mastering the bump and grind

More than 100 women applied for contest, submitting photos and filling out forms describing their motivations and any assets, such as an ability to sing or tap dance. They were chosen not on looks but on style, stresses Mathieu. "We turned away a number of models. That's not what we wanted. Burlesque isn't about having the perfect body. It's actually the imperfections that are interesting."

Seventeen of the 24 women chosen decided to compete. They took crash courses in theatre, drama and stage presence and were whittled down to 14. The second round went over practical aspects. (Tip: don't put on your gloves until right before your act, otherwise your hands get sweaty, and the gloves are too difficult to pull off). They learned some basic burlesque moves like the "bump and grind", and soon the 14 became nine. Of these, all or very few could make it into Schoon Madammen, depending on the jury's decision after the performance finale.

Which brings us back to Deena Ray. The Dutch burlesque performer was brought in to teach two classes on the art of the strip tease. She's happy about the rise in popularity of this performance art. "I was a pole dancer for 10 years, but this is seen as trashy," says the 34-year-old. "Burlesque is exciting – it's playing and experimenting. It combines all the elements I like: athleticism, theatre and an expression of my talents. It's trying to express my sexuality in a creative way." At the behest of Mathieu, she now is guiding the nine Flemish women as they create and finesse their own routines, each startlingly unique and crafted completely on their own.

The commitment of participants is apparent. They cobbled together their own costumes and props and chose their own music, choices that are often unusual. Lisa Deere, a petite 28-year-old makeup artist, plays up her sweet, innocent look with pink ribbons, glitter and a song about candy. Her outfit is pieced together with pins and Velcro, featuring a tutu from Oxfam and an old prom dress she's cut to size for her small waist.

She laughingly relates her boyfriend's reaction to what she's doing – "the more you keep on the better" – but his support is evident in her props. He provided the enormous rotating cake stand upon



Backstage burlesque: learning the ropes before the final judgement

which she sits. "He made it for me from an old kitchen table," she says. She repeats the best piece of advice she has received so far: "Dance for the women. The men are always happy to see us, but you have to be more creative for the women."

Miss Flexy Lexsy, meanwhile, a 26-year-old accountant from Ghent, kicks, splits and stretches her way across the stage. Another woman in her 30s plays a tired housewife putting the laundry out, while another presents a comedic act playing a detective. Each act has a strong DIY ethic.

Mathieu is also putting together an act of her own. "I'm not a very creative person, but I really want to make something all on my own. You pick the song and the theme, you source and make the costumes and the props, and you create the choreography. You find the thing you do best and use it." Before I can even get the question out, she adds: "I don't know what it is I do best, but I want to find out. This is something I *had* to try." ♦

Come inside, come inside

Experience burlesque with Radio Modern

6 February Alas! The very first **Ne Vuilen Avond** is sold out! CC Mechelen won't know what hit it during this premiere of Radio Modern's new party with a carnival atmosphere and burlesque performances.

19 February Schoon Madammen voor Ne Vuilen Avond: The Finale. A juried competition to choose the women who will become Schoon Madammen. 22.00, Vooruit, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23, Ghent

12 March The second **Ne Vuilen Avond** but the first to feature the new Schoon Madammen revue! From 20.00, Vooruit, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23, Ghent

6 February to 6 March Ne Vuilen Expo: Exhibition of pin-up and burlesque photos, free entry. CC Mechelen, Minderbroedersgang 5

→ www.cultuurcentrummechelen.be

Nifty fifties and swinging forties: Radio Modern

Hailing themselves as a nostalgic trip to the 1940s and '50s, the Ghent-based Radio Modern hosts sell-out retro dance parties all over Flanders. Started three years ago by Ben Moulin, a well-known DJ and VJ, the swing dance party has evolved into a full-on production with lines out the door and around the corner.

In a smart bit of marketing, Radio Modern coaxes in those on the fence, who want to dance but don't think they look the part: you can get your hair and make-up done in 1940s style, with pin curls and red lipstick, right at the event. Rockabilly vendors sell their wares as dance teachers leads the crowd through some basic swing dance moves. In another room, live performers (often the über popular Lady Linn) croon jazz favourites. Eventually, DJs spin tracks into the late hours.

Radio Modern crowds are an interesting blend of trend followers, dance addicts and rockabilly scene-sters – but mostly just people who want to have a good time.

→ www.radiomodern.be



© Vincent Stock

©Tom De Nies

Two worlds for a new one

Anny Van Hecke left rural East Flanders 35 years ago for the capital of Ecuador

LAWRENCE DE GEEST

Protests on Avenue Eloy Alfaro in Quito are slowing traffic, and Anny Van Hecke-Ortiz can only watch. "They're protesting at the president, Rafael Correa," she says. "I was the one who approved his scholarship to study for his Master's degree in Belgium, years ago. And now he's president. He always was a charmer."

Correa completed that Master's in 1991 in Louvain before returning to Ecuador. Anny, a *flamenca* (Spanish for "Fleming") now works in administration and finance for Belgian Technical Corporation (BTC), a Belgian agency for development cooperation. She has been living in Ecuador's capital for 37 years – or 13 Ecuadorian presidents and three constitutions.

President Correa's "Magna Carta" of 2008 is the most recent constitution and the most ambitious; it is the first in the world to guarantee rights for the environment. Still, protests – which often resemble parades – are nonetheless frequent. "Since before and after independence, it's been one big identity crisis," says Anny. "Not unlike Belgium." Apart from eccentric politics, Ecuador and Belgium don't have much in common. "It took me two years to adjust to life here, and at times it's still difficult," says Anny, who went to the South American republic by boat after getting married to her Ecuadorian husband Eduardo in 1972. "You need a lot of patience, especially in the field of development. Paperwork, emails, even relationships are slower."

"I was the one who approved his scholarship to study in Belgium years ago. And now he's the president of Ecuador"

Her first post was with the General Direction of Development Corporation as administrator of an irrigation project, followed by other positions in the same organisation and in the Belgian Embassy (since relocated to Peru). She then moved to the Flemish Association of Development Corporation, until settling with BTC in 2000, where she oversees healthcare and rural development projects in Ecuador.

Ecuador and Latin America as a whole have gone through phases of military juntas (1970s), crippling debt (1980s, the "Lost Decade"), huge growth and recessions (1990s



Anny Van Hecke-Ortiz at home in Quito

and "The Washington Consensus") and, in Ecuador, dollarization (2000s). Still, economists and politicians win and lose elections arguing which methods of development are best.

"It's strange to think about developing a country when you realise how hard it is just to develop your own life," Anny says. "There is always a conflict between desires for risk and for security, and the most confusing times are when you think you can have both. I grew up in Oosterzele, studied in Wetteren, and now I'm working in administration in Quito. You can make plans, but maybe it's best to just follow surprises."

Anny and Eduardo – a psychologist who wears a Panama hat and claims to be able to diagnosis patients just by looking at them – say that living in another country is like dating someone from another country. "You have to be willing to learn from one another without forgetting yourself," Eduardo says from their home in north Quito, while listening to his favourite Flemish song, "El Bandido" by Will Tura. "When I'm in Spain, I joke with people by saying that I'm Belgian. But when I hear Ecuadorians speaking with Catalan or Andalucian accents, I wonder if

they really believe that makes them Spanish."

Anny nods in agreement. "Identity is something you discover, not something you make."

Still, says Eduardo, "I know what I like and don't like: Will Tura and steak *saignant*."

And Anny? "Tea from the Andean flower *pisipura* and steak *presque bien cuit*."

Quito, a metropolis shaped like the banana that it exports, and Ecuador, one of the most bio-diverse countries in the world, still struggle to develop in one direction. But Anny and Eduardo's home is less Sebastian de Benalcazar and more Michel de Montaigne, who once wrote: "The only things I find rewarding (if anything is) are variety and the enjoyment of diversity."

In the couple's salon, Will Tura sings alongside records of Eduardo's uncle; in their garden, raspberries grow alongside native banana passion fruit; in their library, Ernest Hemingway leans against José Martí; and everywhere are photos of their children, Christian, Dominique and Sebastian. *E pluribus Unum*, as their dollar bill says – from many, one. ♦

→ www.btcctb.org

Vlamingen in de wereld



A home back home

Flemings living abroad have an organisation devoted to their welfare

LISA BRADSHAW

In relationships, it's easier to make a clean break than to drag the separation out forever. Talking to Walter Thiebaut of Vlamingen in de Wereld (Flemings in the World), I realise now that this is true for all kinds of relationships, including the one you have with your country.

"Immigration has changed," he explains from his office in Schaarbeek. "In the beginning of the 20th century, when people left for Detroit, for instance, they went there to start a new life; the intention was never to come back. Today, people go work for a company, and they come back a few years later."

Although at the outset this sounds easier, "the problems that are linked to that are more complicated," explains Thiebaut. He is the president of the organisation that, for more than 40 years, has been helping ease the emigration pains of Flemish people. "Social security, pensions, where do I pay my taxes... we help people with these questions," he says – questions that arise be-

cause the link to their homelands are not broken, they are simply on hold.

If you become a member of the organisation – €50 a year – you are also entitled to legal assistance should you run into trouble in your host country. "It's about taking care of your people who have migrated," says Thiebaut.

To that end, Vlamingen in de Wereld also communicates the needs of their members to authorities. For instance, they were largely responsible for the law allowing Belgians to obtain double nationalities. They are now working to change the law that allows Flemings to only vote in federal elections and not regional elections when they are abroad. And eventually, they even hope to have a representative in parliament. "In France, people living abroad have five seats in parliament!" exclaims Thiebaut. "I would like to see Flanders have at least one representative looking after the Flemish abroad."

How many would be represented, though, is not

readily apparent. Until 1999, Belgians abroad did not have to register at a Belgian embassy to vote. So "people just left," explains Thiebaut, and the foreign ministry doesn't know how many never came back. In the last election, 120,000 Belgians abroad voted, but the ministry estimates that the total number abroad is about half a million. That would mean about 250,000 Flemish live abroad. Vlamingen in de Wereld have 35,000 in their database.

In fact, when a catastrophe happens, like the tsunami of 2004 or the recent earthquake in Haiti, the news agencies call Vlamingen in de Wereld to get contact information for Flemings living in the affected area. These emigrants are an excellent source of first-hand information for local news. But they also know that, in such an emergency, someone back home has their backs. ♦

→ www.viwb.be

Unions and employers call for more jobs

But “gulf has never been wider” says one union activist

ALAN HOPE

Between 26,000 and 35,000 demonstrators took to the streets of Brussels last week to send “an urgent signal” of the demand by trade unions for more jobs and more respect for their members.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the barricades, a group of organisations representing employers issued a manifesto and a petition demanding they be allowed to run their businesses as free entrepreneurs.

Both sides claim to have the same goal in mind: the recovery of the economy and the stimulation of employment. But the positions are father apart than that claim would suggest.

“Enterprise is the motor of the economy; why put on the brakes?” was the message of the advertising campaign by the bosses, made up of 11 organisations, including the Federation of Belgian Enterprises (VBO), self-employed organisation Unizo and Flemish enterprise organisation Voka. As *Flanders Today* went to press, more than 22,000 people had signed the petition, which contained the following demands:

- A return to competitiveness by allowing businesses to be consulted before new laws are introduced that affect employment costs or conditions;
- A review of the conditions for workers and salaried employees, with a view to bringing them together into one single status. Companies would have more flexibility in laying people off, but the government would also remove the tax burden on redundancy payments and make more of an effort to put those laid off back into jobs;
- A change to the current system, where the over-55s – the most experienced workers – are better off not working than working
- Stimulation for entrepreneurship and for the greening of the economy

“We want to see labourers being brought up to the level of salaried employees”

As for the unions, they are calling for a change to the law on “dismissal rights”, or the rules that govern how much notice workers are entitled to in the case of redundancies – or the pay in lieu of notice. As socialist union ABVV chairman Rudy De Leeuw explained, unless a worker is employed under a more advantageous collective employment agreement negotiated with the employer, the legal minimum is 56 calendar days for a worker with 20 years’ service.

“Workers should get a minimum of three months for every five years worked,” De Leeuw said. “We want to see a levelling upward, with labourers being brought up to the level of salaried employees.” The issue is of crucial importance in a climate of lay-offs, such as those planned at Opel Antwerp and those narrowly avoided at AB InBev in Leuven.

The Brussels demonstration involved the three national unions: ACV (Christian), ABVV (socialist) and ACLVB (liberal). “We felt we urgently had to send out a signal,” commented ACV chairman Luc Cortebeek. Among the crowd were workers from Opel Antwerp, who had travelled to Brussels in 17 coaches. At their



Opel workers were out in strength during demonstrations on 29 January in Brussels

head was ABVV shop steward Rudi Kennes, who has led the opposition to the closure of Opel Antwerp and who was for a time carried on the shoulders of his comrades during the march.

Unions called for a dialogue with employers, asking them to submit “substantial” proposals for creating jobs, in contrast to what ACLVB leader Jan Vercamst called “the anorexia strategy”: “They are slimming so drastically that the health of the economy is being endangered.”

“Regrettable reactions”

“The negative reactions of the unions are regrettable,” said Thomas Leysen, chairman of the Federation of Belgian Enterprise (VBO). “I can only repeat that our call was not intended as a provocation. It’s a positive message: give entrepreneurs the space to run their businesses, and they will. At the same time, we are ready for a debate about the reform of the labour market and the revival of our economy. I don’t understand their reaction, really.”

The idea that employers are happy to get rid of workers, either for the sake of their own bonuses or the enrichment of shareholders, is false, according to former VBO chairman Luc Van Steenkiste, writing in an opinion piece in *De Standaard*. “This is a land where solidarity with co-workers is in the blood, a solidarity that has to be balanced against the interests of the shareholders,” he commented. “The vast majority of Belgian company leaders, whether they’re owners or managers for foreign companies, are sick to their stomachs when they have to let people go. They do it as a last resort, with a heart full of dread, when there is no other option.”

“For employers, a change to dismissal rights is a central point,” said VBO director-general Pieter Timmermans in an interview with *Jobat* magazine. “Our economy is made up in large part of small businesses, and sometimes they too sadly have to lay people off. For employers like that, it’s just not practical to have to pay someone 20 or 30 months’ salary. And so it can happen that they don’t lay anyone off and, within a couple of months or years later, they have to close the doors entirely.”

Concluded De Leeuw: “It seems as if no social dialogue on this question is possible; the gulf has never been wider.”

Flemish labour minister Philippe Muyters promised a “tailor-made” policy on jobs, whereby “every job-seeker will be approached according to his needs”. The rapid return to employment of all those who lose their jobs, he said, was a priority. “We hope, both through training and negotiation, to get as many people back to work as possible. It’s a great shame that not everyone gets that impression.” ♦

→ www.laatonsondernemen.be



VBO chairman Thomas Leysen: “our call was not intended as a provocation”

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Airports • Handling

Aviapartner, the airport handling firm based at Brussels Airport, is to take over the bankrupt French SAT handling company, which has operations at the Bordeaux and La Rochelle airports. The move also strengthens Aviapartner’s activities at the Nantes, Toulouse and Marseille airports.

Autos • European Motor Show

The bi-annual European Motor Show Brussels, which came to a close on 27 January, attracted 606,000 visitors, 45,000 less than two years ago. Sales, however, were brisk; most exhibitors reported positive figures.

Autos • Volvo

Volvo Trucks, the Ghent-based assembling affiliate of the Swedish truck and bus manufacturer, plans to hire 140 additional workers for its cabin-trim production line to meet demand.

Globalisation • KOF Index

Belgium is again the world’s most globalised country according to the KOF Index of Globalisation published by a Zurich research and technology think tank. It was already first last year and in 2007 joint first together with Ireland and Austria.

Hotels • Mercure

Mercure, the French four-star hotel company owned by the Accor group, is to open a new hotel near Brussels South railway station later this year. It will also take over two existing hotels in Brussels and Leuven.

Metals • Nyrstar

Nyrstar, the zinc refiner and mining group based in Balen, Antwerp province, has signed a €240 million contract to acquire 1.25 million tonnes of zinc concentrate over 10 years from the Finnish Talvivaara company.

Printing • Agfa Graphics

Agfa Graphics, the pre-press and printing equipment affiliate of Antwerp-based Agfa company, has set up a joint venture in China with the Shenzhen Brothers company to develop its sales of graphic products in Asia. Agfa expects sales in the new company to top the €200 million mark annually.

Supermarkets • Colruyt

Halle-based retailer Colruyt is investing €60 million in a distribution centre in Wallonia to meet growing demand and contribute to the development of its Northern France activities. The firm has also taken over the Bornem-based Foodinvest catering company, the country’s third largest in the field.



Painting body and soul

An exquisite selection of works by Frida Kahlo comes to Brussels

SAFFINA RANA

So many of the best-known works of iconic 20th-century artists show no trace of the personal events that marked their lives. This isn't the case with the oeuvres of Frida Kahlo, arguably Mexico's most famous artistic, political and sexual revolutionary.

The largest collection of her work celebrates the bicentenary of Mexico's independence and the centenary of its revolution at Bozar in Brussels. The 19 canvases, six drawings and one etching form a unique part of Frida Kahlo's personal biography, in which she lays bare the most mentally and physically-taxing periods of her life. In September of 1925, the 18-year-old Frida, studying to go to medical school, was seriously injured during a bus accident in Mexico City. Pierced by a pole, her pelvis, spine and right leg were shattered.

It wasn't the first physical trauma she had faced – polio at the age of six had left her with a deformed right leg and a limp. But being bed-ridden in a plaster corset for months forced her to abandon thoughts of studying medicine, and, out of boredom as much as anything, she started painting on the plaster. Amongst the projection of fantastic photographs that accompany the collection, one shows her lying on her back straining with concentration to paint a hammer and sickle on the front of her corset – symbols of communism adopted in Russia only a few years before.

Her father, a photographer, brought her paints and canvas. With a mirror hanging above her bed, she began to observe herself. The accident left her unable to bear children and led to several miscarriages, anorexia and 32 torturous surgical operations over 30 years. A series of self portraits reflects these realities and makes up more than one-third of her entire body of work.

The world according to Kahlo

Walking into *Frida Kahlo y su mundo* (*Friday Kahlo and Her World*), you are at once thrown into the complexities of these moments. "El camion" ("The Bus"), a painting of a bus shelter, greets you as you enter the semi-darkness, with Frida sitting at the end of a bench alongside a cross-section of Mexican society, waiting for the bus. Painted four years after the accident, she shows herself in a dress that falls above her knees and a red scarf that flutters in the air around her neck – almost a snapshot of her last carefree moments.

An instant later, reflected in a vast mirror, you catch the penetrating gaze of an older Frida in her late 30s. It doesn't matter if you don't know about her several miscarriages

and the infidelities of her husband at this point. She holds your stare, asserting her identity in traditional Mexican clothing and poised with her indigenous pets. This self-portrait painted in 1945 is a favourite of Bozar director Paul Dujardin. "You really feel her need to paint," he says.

The collection also contains "La Columna Rota" ("The Broken Column"), one of her most famous paintings from 1944, when she was forced to spend five months in constant pain in a steel corset. She stands in a barren landscape, her hair down and her body split open, revealing a crumbling column that replaces her spine. Nails pierce her naked skin, but she looks straight ahead through her tears, challenging herself and us to examine her situation.

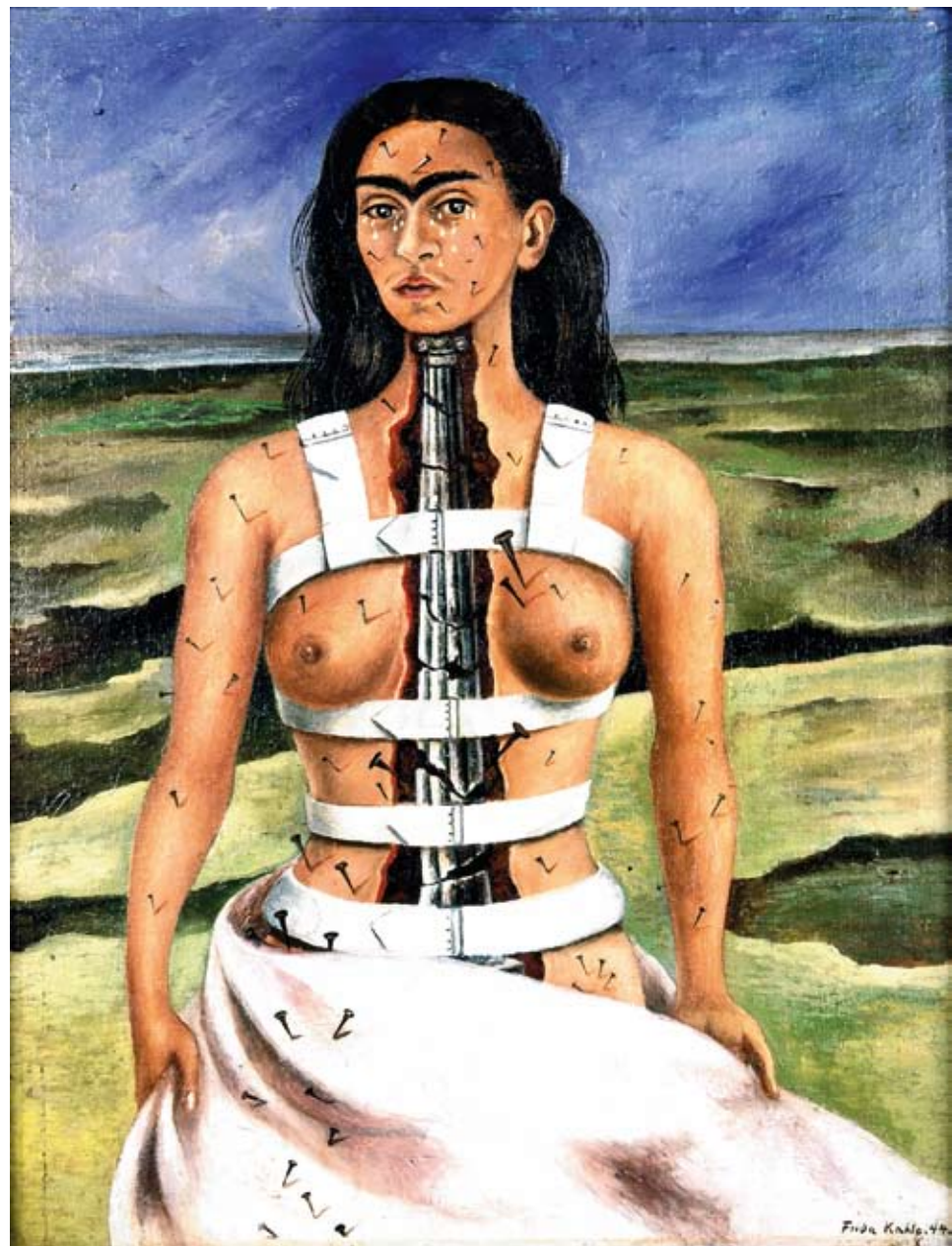
It glows in a pool of light and seems to hover in the air a few centimetres in front of the tall, slanted canvas wall. The collection's seminal works are all hung from canvases like this one, propped up against Bozar's own walls. Supported by a steel cross frame and backed by mirrors, you catch your reaction to the work just as Frida would have caught her own reaction. The presentation is no accident. Brussels architect Peter Swinnen was chosen specifically for the task of staging the collection. "We wanted to create a labyrinth for people to discover the work without all crowding around the same piece," he tells me. Having seen the collection at its home – a rambling stone *hacienda* museum surrounded by lush gardens in the hot Mexican sun – "We didn't want to transport Mexico here," he says. "It felt incongruous. The idea was to make the work autonomous."

The Olmedo collection

The collection comes from the Dolores Olmedo Museum in Xochimilco but originally belonged to Frida's friend and neighbour Eduardo Morillo Saffa, whose portrait is on display. Dolores was at school with Frida and also knew the artist Diego Rivera, whom Frida married in 1929.

As Dolores became a successful business woman, she started collecting Rivera's work. However, Frida and Dolores fell out as teenagers. "People think my mother didn't like Frida because of Rivera. It's not true," her son Carlos Phillips Olmedo tells me just before the exhibition's opening. "My mother didn't like Frida because of Alejandro Gómez Arias, her first boyfriend, who then also became Frida's first boyfriend." It seems the jilted Dolores avoided Frida, even though they were part of the same social circles, throughout their lives.

Rivera slept with other women whilst married to Frida, and she reciprocated with lovers of both sexes, including, most notably, Josephine Baker and Leon Trotsky. But according to Carlos, Dolores and Rivera were only ever friends. "People say they were other things, but that's not true," he adds with a laugh. "My mother met Rivera in 1926. He painted her while she was engaged to my father. She didn't see him again until 1954 when Frida died." After Frida's death, Rivera persuaded Dolores of the importance of the Saffa collection, and she bought 28 of the 30 or so pieces, later swapping two for pieces of Rivera's work. Carlos tells me that "La mascara de la locura" ("The Mask of Madness") touches him profoundly "because she didn't want to show herself crying," he says. Painted in 1944, it



"The Broken Column", 1944

© Colección Museo Dolores Olmedo, Xochimilco, México

shows Frida concealing her face behind a purple-haired mask – a caricature of a conflicted figure from Mexican history. "She wasn't afraid to show herself crying in the other paintings; she wasn't afraid of anything," adds Carlos. But here, covering her face serves to unmask her vulnerability. ♦



"My nurse and I", 1937

© Colección Museo Dolores Olmedo, Xochimilco, México



Frida Kahlo in her garden at Coyoacán, 1952

Frida Kahlo y su mundo

Until 18 April
Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23
Brussels

Daily admission restricted to avoid overcrowding;
advance booking advised

→ www.bozar.be

The design criminals

There's something a little different going on in Antwerp's new Studio Job

ANNA JENKINSON

Job Smeets and Nynke Tynagel say their new exhibition space in Antwerp will be a possibility for them to introduce their work to Belgium. The comment is rather surprising coming from a design couple who have been working together for a decade, have had about 200 exhibitions around the world, including London's Victoria and Albert Museum and New York's Guggenheim and Museum of Modern Art, and have gathered numerous accolades, such as *Designers of the Year* awarded by the style bible *Wallpaper**.

"We might not fit in with the Belgians' idea of design," Smeets tells me. "Belgian design is often strict and minimalist, function is very present, and it's sometimes more related to interior design or architecture."

In contrast, Smeets and Tynagel combine art and design in a way that can be best described as the decorative arts, using materials as diverse as bronze, stained glass, iron and ceramic. Form does play a part, but the couple are playing with that idea rather than necessarily creating usable objects. Rules and slogans such as "form follows function" and "less is more" are duly dispensed with. As they put it, referring to the famous essay by Austrian architect Adolf Loos: "If ornament is a crime, we are design criminals. For sure."

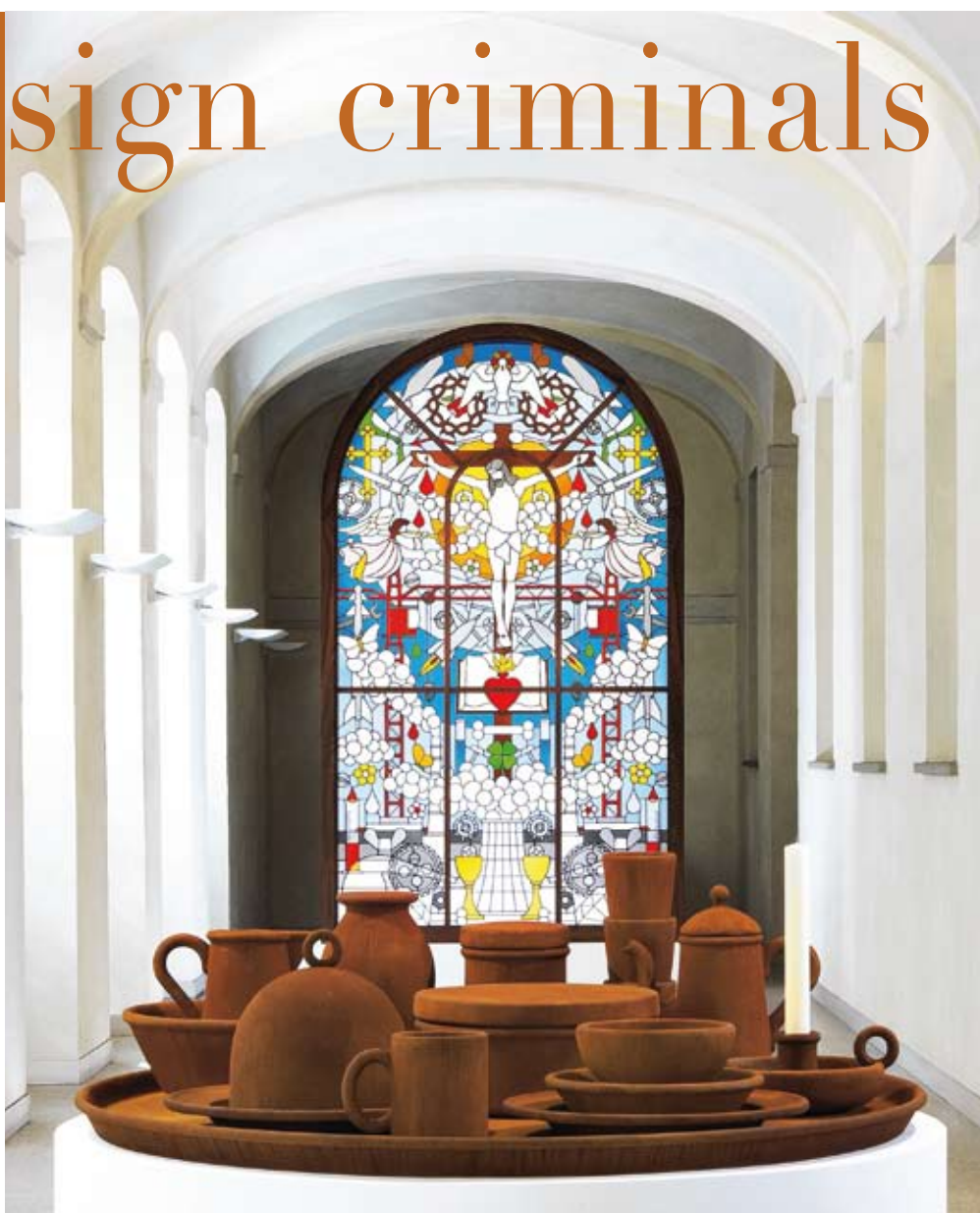
The design criminals, who work under the name Studio Job, opened their gallery last month with a collection of nine works they made between 2006 and 2009, brought together for the first time and appropriately entitled *The Birth*.

"We wanted to create an exhibition space that's nearly perfect, and I think we've done that," says Smeets, the Belgian half of the Belgian-Dutch duo who met at the Design Academy Eindhoven in the 1990s. "It's more like a temple for us. It's somewhere to come and sit down, somewhere sacred."

Split onto two levels, the gallery's plain, white walls are like an empty canvas against which the works can be carefully placed. Any traces of the site's original use as a cigar factory are long gone. It's now open, contemplative.

Perhaps this should be no surprise for a couple who, although belonging to no religion, love visiting churches. They enjoy the vast space inside, the colours and light of stained glass and the fact that a few hundred years ago they were so "crazy and expressive" in their creations.

"When we visit new cities, we always have a list of churches to visit," Tynagel says, whose list of favourites includes Sainte-Chapelle in



The Flemish Primitives meet propaganda in "The Crucifixion" and "The Last Supper"

Paris. "In three days, we might visit, say, 30 churches." The couple are such fans of stained glass windows that they designed one for their home: it depicts a portrait of themselves and acts as the divide between their living space and their workshops.

Two stained-glass windows are also at the heart of the new exhibition. One of them, "The Birth", is circular and has the Madonna and child at its centre. At first glance it looks like a traditional rose window found in a Catholic church. But look more closely, and you see that the traditional religious icon is surrounded by images from today's world, such as test tubes and rockets. The other window is "The Crucifixion", where similar images, ranging from nuclear plants and bombs to diamonds and four-leaf clovers, surround the central image of Jesus on the cross.

"We want to create our own contemporary landscape," Smeets says, making a comparison with the Flemish Primitives and other artists in bygone centuries who took historical events as their theme and then placed them in a contemporary context.

"Their objects tell us more about their time than the work's theme," asserts Smeets. "When Rubens looked at his world, he saw beautiful forests, but we see this."

It is this landscape that unites many of the couple's seemingly distinct pieces. Whether it is a bronze cabinet carved with rockets, tools and insects or a ceramic pyramid with swastikas, skull and bones painted by hand, the designers' pieces almost always depict aspects of modern society.

Acting as a bridge between "The Birth" and "The Crucifixion" are two dinner services with the title "The Last

Supper", one of ceramic, the other a larger sculpture of the same set made from corroded foundry iron.

The seed for this idea was planted on a trip to Moscow in the summer of 2008. Rummag-ing around a small flea market, they found a white ceramic dinner service, whose chunky form and thick round edges appealed to them. When they picked up the cups and plates and looked underneath, they found they were all stamped with the Nazi swastika. Possible connections started to form in their minds: they consider religion to be a form of propaganda and so hit upon the idea of combining the Nazi china and religion.

"There has to be a reason to come to a shape," Smeets says. "We always search for the perfect form."

Over the next few months, the couple set to work designing the hand-painted ceramic set, whose shape is directly inspired from the Nazi pieces, and the monumental iron sculpture whose surface looks like a coating of cocoa powder. That finish was in fact "a present from nature; we left the iron out in the rain to achieve this effect," says Tynagel. Her partner adds: "Yes, it's nice to use nature as your servant."

With the brightly coloured "Crucifixion" mounted up on a frame and the iron sculpture of "The Last Supper" placed in front of it, it becomes almost like an altar: the two working in perfect harmony.

"We can exhibit however we want," Smeets says, looking round the gallery with a smile. "We have created our own castle." ♦

The Birth

Until 19 March

Studio Job

Begijnenvest 8, Antwerp

03.232.25.15

office@studiojob.be

CULTURE NEWS



© Koen Broos

Paul Bogaert (pictured) has won the 2010 **Herman De Coninck Prize** for best poetry collection. His work *de Slalom soft* is one long, continual poem that won over the judges with its amusing narrative about a subtropical paradise and its lifeguard, personal coaches, drowned bodies and office workers. Bogaert, 41, has previously published three well-regarded collections and won the Poetry Prize from the province of East Flanders for his first collection, *Welcome Hygiëne* (1996). Bogaert's "everyday language doesn't hunt for effect, big emotions or powerful images," wrote the jury in their decision. "It glides by unemphatically [and] in *de Slalom soft* is spat, panted, swallowed." Other prize winners were Andy Fierens for best debut collection, *Grote smerige vlinder (Big Dirty Butterfly)*, and Roel Richelieu Van Londersele, whose "Mats" won the Public Prize for best poem.

The **Trappist monks of Westvleteren**, famous for their award-winning, hard-to-get beer, recently took a second job in order to fund renovations of their cloister. Five monks and the organist have recorded the CD *Triduum Paschale: Pasen in polyfonie en abdjzang (Paschal Triduum: Easter in Polyphony and Abbey Vocals)* together with the polyphony ensemble Capilla Flamenca and vocal group Ensemble Psallentes, both based in Leuven. The CD is available in shops now and, don't worry, beer production has not been interrupted.

If the working man will not go to the art, the art will come to the working man. This is the thought behind *Getting Down to the Nitty Gritty*, a series of gigantic photos mounted in the windows of the (ironically) empty office building on Ursulinenstraat in Brussels, freely visible to train commuters travelling between South and Central stations. The exhibition, up until 28 February, is the work of the young photographers' group Outlandish and Belgian photographer Pierre Debroux and features work by, among others, Jimmy Kets and Anouk Kruithof.



King and Queen of the castle: Job Smeets and Nynke Tynagel

The ultimate pilgrimage

Follow me, brothers and sisters, down the path, to the beer

MELISSA MAKI

Our four-part *winterwandeling* (winter walking) series has taken us all around Flanders. We've traversed flooded wetlands and snowy forests. We've walked among redwoods and wintering birds. Now we will go where every good Fleming goes after a long trek: to the cafe.

Westmalle: you know it as one of Belgium's best brews, but it's also the name of the village and the abbey in Antwerp province where the renowned Trappist beer is made.

The Westmalle Abbey was originally founded in 1794 by a group of Cistercian monks fleeing the French revolution. It's now one of only seven abbeys in the world to produce Trappist beer. For a brewery to be blessed with the Trappist title, it has to meet strict standards. Monks must be involved in the brewing process, for example, and profits from sales have to go back into the company or to charity.

Westmalle is perhaps lesser known for its scenery than for its beer, but the beautiful, eight-kilometre Trappistenpad walking route around the Westmalle Abbey and through the surrounding farmland and Molenbos forest will not disappoint.

Begin at the brick entrance road to the abbey, across from the Café Trappisten. Here you'll find a posted map for the Trappistenpad and also the Trappistenroute – a 44-kilometre bike path that starts here as well. You'll see the walled-off complex of monastery buildings to your right in the distance, behind a line of trees.

The walking route is relatively well marked with orange arrows. But you can buy "Wandelen in Malle" a series of eight walking routes in the area, including the Trappistenpad, at the Malle tourist office. The map is not terribly detailed but will help keep you on track. It also describes (in Dutch) what you'll see along the way and gives you some historical context for the walk. Parking is available at Café Trappisten, and they have a map of the route as well.

On your left as you set out, you'll see the Sint-Bernarduskapel – a tiny chapel built by the abbey in 1947 after it was spared in the Second World War. Two fighter planes crashed near here, and there is a memorial plaque inside the chapel dedicated to those who lost their lives.

Next you'll pass the main entrance and gateway to the abbey, where you have a nice view of the clock tower. The abbey complex also includes a cheese-making facility and farm, as well as the brewery.

The abbey is closed to the public, but if you knock on the big, wooden door at this entrance, you can buy traditionally made Trappist cheese directly from monks (except on Sundays and holidays). The semi-hard, unpasteurised cheese is made by the monks themselves and contains all natural ingredients, including full-cream milk from the abbey's own cows. You can choose from *jong* or *oude* (young or old), but you have to buy at least 1.5 kilos. Still, at €9 per kilo, it's a delicious bargain.

The tree-lined path eventually turns into a dirt road and you pass some fields, where you might see horses or sheep and certainly farmhouses. You'll pass the gates of the old Lizzie Marsily Sanatorium for tuberculosis patients (now a rest home for the elderly). Soon you'll be deeper in the Molenbos, a 175-hectare forest with a number of marked footpaths.

A short, side trail on the right (past two stone, pagoda-style columns) takes you to the site of a late 18th-century chapel where those who were ill or in need of comfort would come to pray. The chapel was destroyed long ago, but it still features a statue of the Virgin Mary and is considered a sacred place.

On my recent visit, the surrounding forest was carpeted with fallen, golden-brown leaves. Stately, deciduous trees line much of the walk, but the forest is also peppered with conifers and bright green moss, providing a pretty contrast of colours.

Eventually the landscape turns back to farmland. After about three hours, the walking loop returns you to the other side of the monastery complex, near the brewery.

The trail was easy but muddy in some spots, so appropriate footwear is essential. It's possible to bring a buggy on this walk (as two of my friends can attest), just make sure it's of the sturdy, big-wheeled variety. And if you bring a dog, make sure it's on-leash. ♦



All things Trappist

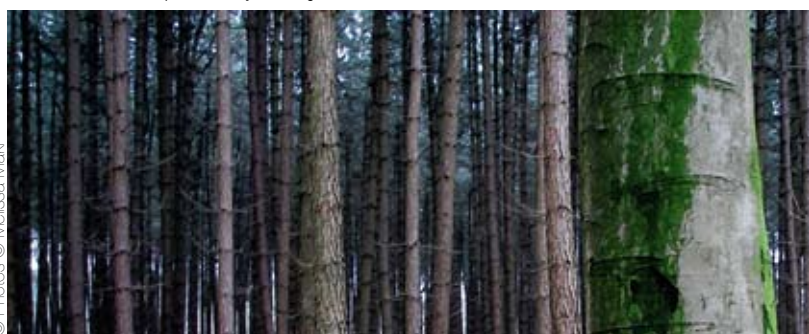
You can't leave Westmalle without sampling the fruits of the monks' labour. Café Trappisten is, wouldn't you know it, conveniently located across the road from the entrance to the abbey and has Westmalle brews on tap. Here you can sample the complex and fruity tripel, often referred to as "the mother of all tripels," or the darker and richer dubbel.

If you can't decide, order a "half & half" which combines the two. While you enjoy the beer, you can also watch a movie about how it was brewed (just ask your server to set it up).

If you've worked up an appetite on the walk, you are in luck. The extensive menu at Café Trappisten features several hearty items like *stoofvlees* (beef stew), prepared with Trappist beer using "grandmother's recipe." Westmalle's Trappist cheese is also prominent in the menu, with items like the Trappist croque, cheese croquettes and quiche, or the decadent macaroni and Trappist cheese with ham.



The Sint-Bernardus chapel, both a symbol of gratitude and a memorial



▶▶ GETTING THERE

You can get directly to the start of the walk on public transport. From Franklin Rooseveltplaats in Antwerp, take bus 410 "Antwerpen – Turnhout." It's about a 35-minute ride to Westmalle. Ask the driver to drop you off at the Café Trappisten.

▼▼ ONCE YOU'RE THERE

Café Trappisten

Antwerpsesteenweg 487

Westmalle

Open daily from 10:00 until midnight

→ www.trappisten.be

Westmalle Abbey

→ www.trappistewestmalle.be

Tourism Malle

Antwerpsesteenweg 246

Westmalle

→ www.toerisme-malle.be

Don't plan

Designers Wouters & Hendrix celebrate 25 years of leading the way in jewellery design

STÉPHANIE DUVAL

In 1985, Wouters & Hendrix were pioneers. Today, it is hard to imagine the Belgian jewellery industry without them. But the Antwerp designer duo also has die-hard fans internationally; you'll find their rings on the fingers of Cybill Shephard, and their bracelets gracing the wrists of Steven Tyler, not to mention some pretty crazy celebrity scenes in Japan.

To celebrate their 25th anniversary, Katrin Wouters and Karen Hendrix stuffed three suitcases with memories, souvenirs and old jewellery. They function as dollhouses, miniature versions of the Wouters & Hendrix universe, that will travel around the world. In February, you can see one of the treasure chests at the Bozar shop, where you can also buy special Valentine jewellery and a little book about Wouters&Hendrix's quarter-century of jewellery design.

After 25 years, do you still enjoy yourselves?

Karen: Oh, we make sure we do; otherwise we'd stop. We're always looking for new challenges. We're so impulsive; we don't really plan our future. There is just always something that crosses our paths.

When you started your own jewellery label, did you ever think you'd make it this far?

Karen: We didn't, and I don't think you can. There are two ways of starting a business. Either you study the economics and devise a strategy, a plan and goals. Or you start idealistically, like we did. We just started making the jewellery we wanted to make.

How has the jewellery industry in Belgium changed over the past quarter-century?

Karen: When we started, there was no one like us. It was pretty rough in the beginning because very few people believed in us. They thought our designs were strange. But then there was the rising fame of Belgian fashion design, and we fit in there perfectly. That helped us a lot.

Do you think you've cleared the path for the dozens of creative jewellery designers Flanders has spawned over the past decade?

Karen: I'm pretty sure of that. Both Katrin and I studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, where everything was about creativity. We used the experience to do something commercial, which was not done back then. But I think the challenge of making something commercial that is still exactly what you want to make, is as much an art as the creation of unique pieces.

And yet here you are showcasing 25 years of jewellery design at Bozar, a museum. Is your jewellery not considered art?

Karen: A while ago, a magazine published an article about us under the title "Making jewellery is not art, it's a craft" and I think



Karen Hendrix (left) and Katrin Wouters in their attic stuffed with past dreams and future possibilities

that is nicely put. You want your creations to be good, and you put your heart and soul into it, but I think an artist works in a different way. In the end, it's a commercial product, so should we call it art?

Why is the exhibition so spread out instead of being all here in Belgium?

Karen: We have a lot of international clients, so we didn't like the idea of doing one big exhibition in one place. Also, jewellery is so much more intimate than a big expo. That's why we chose for the dollhouse-like suitcases that travel the world.

Katrin: We wanted to share our world with as many people as possible. That's why we added pictures, invitations, stuff we collected from flea markets... That's a weakness of ours: every market we go to, we come back with a giant bag filled to the brim. Luckily we have a large attic to store everything!

I heard a rock band helped out with your new book.

Katrin: We worked with Aarich Jespers, the drummer of Zita Swoon, and his brother Jelle. Creative people from other disciplines bring a completely new way of looking at things.

Karen: The book tells our story through pictures, with very little text: our first fair, our first designs.

I flip through the book and stop at a page with a picture of a Japanese girl, her fingernails brightly painted with the initials W&H.

Katrin: That girl brought all of her

Wouters & Hendrix jewellery to us in a leather bundle, and she wanted us to put our signatures on it. We don't have that in Europe – the crying and the wanting to touch you, the utter and absolute fandom!

I hear you are designing now for Belgian diamond label Baunat.

Karen: Two years ago, we started our own gold collection. We wanted to start working with gold because it needs a different approach: it's more timeless, less fashion-trendy. It's also much closer to diamonds. It's a wonderful challenge, designing with diamonds, but it's something that needs a huge investment if a designer were to do that on their own.

With this much success, do you have any dreams left?

Katrin: We want to further develop this gold collection and work with diamonds more often. Next to that, we hope we'll be able to continue doing all this with as much gusto as ever. ♦

**25 years
Wouters & Hendrix**

Until 28 February
Bozar Shop, 15 Ravenstein-
straat
Brussels

→ www.bozar.be



Happy Valentine's Day

The Wouters & Hendrix jewellery selected to be sold exclusively at Bozar is sentimental and romantic: a brooch with a Bambi, a pair of earrings and a necklace with a red rose. "In a way, these are examples of what Wouters & Hendrix stand for," explains Karen Hendrix. "By bringing the iconography of the Bambi and the heart together, you create a kind of rebus," adds Wouters. "We love that everyone has their own associations and memories attached to these symbols."

→ www.wouters-hendrix.com



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New York Sleeps

German photographer takes "the city that never sleeps" and slowly rocks it into a quiet slumber with his black-and-white photos that seem to make New York stand still. At Fifty One Fine Art Photography until 6 March → www.gallery51.com



20 Dresses for Europe

KATRIEN LINDEMANS

Though many would agree that a beautiful dress is a piece of art, would you ever associate it with a book? It's a challenge that *20 Dresses for Europe* has taken on with aplomb.

Twenty designers from Spain, Belgium and Hungary were asked to create a dress in dialogue with the work of an important writer from their respective countries (or, in the case of Spain, language). For instance: Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Hugo Claus, Amélie Nothomb and Magda Szabó.

It's a dialogue between designer and author, then, but also between the three countries, one which currently holds the presidency of the European Union (Spain) and the others the next two in line.

After the great success of similar exhibitions in Tokyo, Beijing, Istanbul and Milan, Brussels' city hall now hosts this intriguing

show with dresses belonging to one of four literary categories: Latin American, Female, Characters or Poetry. The dresses are stunning in themselves, but get a whole new dimension when linked to a passage or a poem. It's hard to decide where to look first: at the dress and guess the book, or at the passage on which the dress was based and see how the designer interpreted it.

Seeing such a tangible display of the emotions from García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* or what Flemish designer Anna Heylen does with fabric to illustrate a Stefan Hertmans poem is sometimes poignant and, in nearly every case, reveals how cultures view their own literature. My personal favourite was the wild, curvy frills of grey tulle by Spanish designer Amaya Arzuaga, whose take on Maria Zambrano's *Delirium and*

Destiny: A Spaniard in Her Twenties seems spot on.

Chances are you will fall in love with a dress, and, although most of them are one-of-a-kind, some local designers made a few extras, available in their own stores. ♦

Until 4 April

Brussels City Hall
Grote Markt

→ <http://bruselas.cervantes.es>



MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

Felix Gonzalez-Torres → *Wiels, Brussels*

Boys and Girls: Destination Known? → *Atlas, Antwerp*

Armand Heins: Etcher, lithographer and printer → *MIAT, Ghent*



Aalst

De Werf

Molenstraat 51; 053.73.28.12,
www.ccdewerf.be
FEB 4 20.00 Te Gek!?

Antwerp

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40,
www.deroma.be
FEB 7 15.00 Liliane St Pierre, Sophie van
Everdingen & Astrid Nijgh
FEB 10 20.30 Sioen

Petrol

Herbouvillekaai 21; 03.226.49.63,
www.petrolclub.be
FEB 5 23.00 Die & Break + The Nitwits +
Netsky + Murdock + more
FEB 6 23.00 Drop The Lime + Hot City +
Partyharders + The Oddword

Rataplan

Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40,
www.rataplanvzw.be
FEB 11 20.30 Valentine concert with
Esmé Bos and Bart Voet

Trix

Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00,
www.trixonline.be
FEB 5 20.00 Dandyliar + Sir Yes Sir +
Bert Dockx (Haiti benefit) FEB 6 20.00
Brett Anderson + SimpleSongs FEB 8
19.30 Saint Vitus + Bigele + Centurions
Ghost + Priestess + Serpentcult
FEB 9 19.30 Lacuna Coil + Dommin FEB
11 20.00 The King Khan & BBQ Show +
Catacombo

Bruges

MaZ

Magdalenastraat 27; 050.44.30.40,
www.ccbrugge.be
FEB 11 20.00 Maria Timm

Stadsschouwburg

Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.40,
www.cultuurcentrumbrugge.be
FEB 6 20.00 Balzaal der Gebroken Harten
(Part 2), featuring Guido Belcanto, Lady
Angelina, Vitalski and Martin Jansen
FEB 9 20.00 Richard Hawley

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24,
www.abconcerts.be
FEB 4 12.30 Senne Guns (free) FEB 5
20.00 Buffy Sainte-Marie FEB 6 15.00 The
Dillinger Escape Plan FEB 7 20.00 Tom
Dice + Maurice Engelen (Praga Khan) &
Friends FEB 9 20.00 Jukebox the Ghost +
Adam Green

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15,
www.cirque-royal.org
FEB 5 20.00 Emmanuel Moire

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
Concerts at 20.00:
FEB 6 Grand Archives. Da Silva
FEB 10-13 Boutik Rock

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991,
www.forestnational.be
FEB 5 19.00 Machine Head FEB 6 19.00
Ghinzu FEB 8 20.00 Charlie Winston
FEB 9 20.00 Ne-Yo

Deinze

De Rekkeling

Désiré Delcroixstraat 1A; 0476.374.230
FEB 5 20.30 Jean Blaute and Eric Melaerts

Dendermonde

Cultuurcentrum Belgica
Kerkstraat 24; 05.220.26.40,
www.ccbelgica.be
FEB 11 20.00 Balzaal der Gebroken
Harten (Part 2), featuring Guido Belcanto,
Lady Angelina, Vitalski and Martin
Jansen

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

Humo's Rock Rally

28 March, from 15.00

Ancienne Belgique Brussels

Novastar, das pop and The Van Jets: they all earned eternal fame in Flanders by winning the Rock Rally, a bi-annual contest organised by the weekly magazine *Humo* since 1978. Despite the growing importance of viral marketing, in the past decade the Rock Rally was still the most important promotion tool for beginning rock musicians in Flanders. Want to hear the sound of the future? The winner this year will be crowned after three preliminary rounds that bring the more than 1,000(!) candidates down to 10.



→ www.abconcerts.be

Diksmuide

Muziekclub 4AD

Kleine Dijk; 051.50.56.92, www.4ad.be
FEB 7 20.30 The Black Angels + Needle &
The Pain Reaction

Dilbeek

CC Westrand

Kamerijklaan; 02.466.20.30,
www.westrand.be
FEB 4 20.30 Axelle Red

Eeklo

CC De Herbakker

Pastoor De Nevestraat 10; 09.218.27.27,
www.ccdeherbakker.be
FEB 5 20.30 Venus In Flames
FEB 6 20.30 Sioen

Ghent

Cafe Video

Oude Beestenmarkt 7; www.cafevideo.be
FEB 10 21.30 Intergatic Lovers

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01,
www.handelsbeurs.be
FEB 10 20.15 The Veils

Kinky Star

Vlasmarkt 9; 09.223.48.45,
www.kinkystar.com
Free concerts at 21.00:
FEB 5 BoyShouting FEB 6 JonGeduld:
Vancouver FEB 7 The Dad Horse
Experience FEB 9 Zwendel

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060,
www.vooruit.be
FEB 3 21.30 Club Midi: Mary&Me FEB
6 20.00 Novastar FEB 7 19.30 Club
Midi: Wallace Vanborn (CD release) +
Penguins Know Why + Mr Snu & Sir
Matthew

Grimbergen

CC Strombeek
Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43,
www.ccstrombeek.be
FEB 5 20.30 Hannelore Bedert &
BUURMAN

Kortrijk

De Kreun
Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44,
www.dekreun.be
FEB 5 22.00 Hot in Town party with
Raggamuffin Whiteman + Groove
Station + Samurai Movement + Turntable
Dubbers feat MC Fragga

Leuven

Het Depot
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03,
www.hetdepot.be
FEB 6 20.00 Humo's rock rally, pre-
selection
FEB 11 20.00 Smart

Sporthal Rijschool
Rijschoolstraat 21; 0474.27.95.57,
www.boombal.be
FEB 11 20.00 Boombal Leuven

STUK

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20,
www.stuk.be
FEB 11 21.30 Clark + AKS featuring
Selah Sue + DEPOTAX

Lier

CC De Mol
Aarschotsesteenweg 3; 03.488.06.79,
www.lierscultuurcentrum.be
FEB 6 20.15 The Crab Four
FEB 7 12.00 Ivann Vermeer
FEB 11 20.15 Sioen

Maasmechelen

CC Maasmechelen
Koninginnelaan 42; 089.76.97.97,
www.ccmaasmechelen.be
FEB 7 20.15 Novastar & Joost Zweegers

Meise

GC De Muze
Brusselsesteenweg 69; 02.272.00.29,
www.demuzevanmeise.be
FEB 7 16.00 Ballroom Quartet
FEB 11 20.00 Raymond van het
Groenewoud - Raymond is 60!

Opwijk

Nijdrop
Doortstraat 4; 052.35.61.65,
www.nijdrop.be
FEB 5 20.00 Humo's rock rally, pre-
selection

Overijse

CC De Bosuil
Witherendreef 1; 02.657.31.79,
www.debosuil.be
FEB 5 20.30 Johan Verminnen

Ternat

CC De Ploter
Kerkstraat 4; 02.582.44.33,
www.ccdeploter.be
FEB 4 20.30 Filip Jordens & Les Chopins
du p'tit Matin: Tribute to Brel



Antwerp

Arenbergschouburg
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
FEB 7 20.30 Christian Scott

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40,
www.deroma.be
FEB 4 20.30 Avishai Cohen Quintet
FEB 5 20.30 Beverly Jo Scott

Bruges

De Werf
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29,
www.dewerf.be
FEB 3 20.30 The Belgian Swing Jazz
Orchestra
FEB 8 20.00 Filip Demeyere & The
Vintage Jazz Cats

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24,
www.abconcerts.be
FEB 8 20.00 Christian Scott

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
FEB 9 20.00 Pat Metheny

Royal Music Conservatory
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37,
www.kcb.be
FEB 4 20.00 Nathalie Lories Trio

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50,
www.soundsjazzclub.be
Concerts at 22.00:
FEB 4 Julien Tassin Trio - tribute
to Jimi Hendrix **FEB 5** Casarano &
Bardoscia Duo **FEB 6** Brussels Rhythm
& Blues: The Witness **FEB 8** Master
Session **FEB 9** Laurent Doumont Soul
Tuesdays **FEB 10** CLos Soneros del
Barrio, Caribbean

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45,
www.themusicvillage.com
Concerts at 21.00:
FEB 4 Patricia Baileys invites... **FEB 5** A
Musical Tribute to Paolo Radoni **FEB 6**
Bob Mover **FEB 10** Igor Gehenot Trio

Dendermonde

Honky Tonk Jazz Club
Leopold II-laan; www.honkytonk.be
FEB 6 21.00 The Freddy Saget All Stars

Ghent

De Bijloke
Kluyskensstraat 2J; 09.233.68.78,
www.bijloke.be
FEB 10 20.00 Avishai Cohen Quintet

De Centrale

Kraankindersstraat 2; 09.265.98.28,
www.decentrale.be
FEB 7 20.00 Augusto Pirodda, jazz
piano

El Negocito

Brabantdam 121; 0479.56.73.95,
www.mi-negocio.net
FEB 4-5 20.00/22.00 Basic Borg, feat
Riccardo Luppi + Backback
FEB 6 20.00 Barcella & Van Herzeele
Duo
FEB 9 22.00 Manuel Hermia Trio



Antwerp

Arenbergschouburg
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
FEB 5 20.15 Kleinkunsteiland, featuring
Lucas Van den Eynde, Jelle Cleymans,
Maggie Mc Neal and Kathleen
Vandenhoudt

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40,
www.deroma.be
FEB 3 20.30 Raquel Tavares, fado
(Portugal)

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00,
www.zuiderpershuis.be
FEB 11 20.30 Tartit (Niger)

Bruges

Stadsschouwburg
Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.40,
www.cultuurcentrumbrugge.be
FEB 7 20.00 Tenores di Bitti (Sardinia)

Brussels

Art Base
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20,
www.art-base.be
FEB 6 20.00 Marcelo Delacroix (Brazil)

Piola Libri

Franklinstraat 66-68; 02.736.93.91,
www.piolalibri.be
Concerts at 19.00:
FEB 4 Dany Greggio
FEB 5 Peppe Voltarelli

FEB 9 Carola Duo, bossanova

Wolubilis

Paul Hymanslaan 251; 02.761.60.30,
www.wolubilis.be
FEB 2 20.30 Raquel Tavares, fado
(Portugal)

Ghent

De Centrale
Kraankindersstraat 2; 09.265.98.28,
www.decentrale.be
FEB 5 21.30 Ballroom Quartet, electro-
acoustic roots
FEB 6 20.00 Yom, klezmer clarinet



Antwerp

Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28,
www.amuz.be
FEB 6 21.00 Akademia, conducted by
Françoise Laserre: Schütz's Musikalische
Exequien
FEB 7 15.00 Guido De Neve, violin; Jan
Michiels, piano: sonatas by Debussy,
Janacek, Enescu

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,
www.desingel.be
FEB 3 20.00 Steven Osborne & Paul
Lewis: piano: four-hand piano pieces by
Schubert
FEB 5 20.00 DeFilharmonie conducted
by Paul Watkins, with Simone Lamsma,
violin: Britten, Corigliano, Bernstein
FEB 11 20.00 Sonia Wieder-Atherton,
cello; Imogen Cooper, piano: Janacek,
Mendelssohn, Schumann, more

Bruges

Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02,
www.concertgebouw.be
FEB 5 20.00 Chanticleer, vocal ensemble:
from Renaissance composers Clément
Janequin and Orlando Gibbons to
contemporary works by Ligeti, Chen Yi,
Shawn Crouch to folk songs and negro
spirituals
FEB 6 20.00 DeFilharmonie conducted
by Paul Watkins, with Simone Lamsma,
violin: Britten, Corigliano, Bernstein

Brussels

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be
FEB 7 11.00 Sitkovetsky Trio: piano trios
by Beethoven and Mendelssohn 15.00
Belgian National Orchestra conducted
by Andrew Litton: William Walton,
Shostakovich
FEB 8 20.00 Symphony Orchestra of
Flanders conducted by David Angus,
with Jean-Claude Vanden Eynden, piano:
Brahms, Strauss, Mozart

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,
www.flagey.be
FEB 5 12.30 Thibaut Lenaerts, tenor;
Kimiko Nishi, pianoforte: Schumann's
Dichterliebe song cycle 20.15 Anima
Eterna conducted by Jos van Immerseel:
Chopin, Schubert

Miniemenkerk

Miniemenstraat 62; 02.511.93.84,
www.minimes.net
FEB 4 20.00 Ricercar Consort conducted
by Philippe Pierlot, with Nuria Rial and
Céline Scheen, sopranos: Henry Du
Mont, Monteverdi
FEB 9 20.00 Collegium Vocale Gent
conducted by Philippe Herreweghe:
"Musica per Santa Barbara" - motets and
masses by Palestrina, Giaches de Wert,
Monteverdi
FEB 10 20.00 Huelgas Ensemble
conducted by Paul Van Nevel &
Blindman sax quartet conducted by
Eric Sleichim: Renaissance Flemish
polyphony, plus contemporary pieces by
John Cage

Royal Music Conservatory
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37,
www.kcb.be

DON'T MISS



TO BE OR NOT TO.be

7 February, from 13.00
Bozar, Brussels

It often takes the arts to bring the seemingly disparate parts of this country together. In this case film. Under the organisation of the Flemish Audio Visual Fund and French television channel RTBF, three documentaries out of Flanders and three out of Wallonia were made by directors with only one word as their guide: "Belgium". The six films that resulted will be shown on TV throughout the year, but this premiere at Bozar offers the opportunity to see them all at once. It starts at 13.00 and finishes up around 22.00, but if that's a bit too big a commitment, you can buy a ticket for a single screening, too.

→ www.bozar.be

FEB 3 20.00 Bläserensemble Sabine Meyer: Beethoven, Toshio Hosokawa, Mozart
FEB 8 20.00 Meta4, Finnish string quartet: Szymanowski, Schubert, Jaakko Kuusisto

Ghent

De Bijloke
Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, 09.233.68.78,
www.debijloke.be
FEB 4 20.00 Edding String Quartet, with Nicola Boud, clarinet: Mozart
FEB 5 20.00 Brussels Philharmonic, Flemish Radio Choir & Accentus, conducted by Laurence Equilbey: Schumann's Paradise and the Peri
FEB 6 20.00 Scherzi Musicali conducted by Nicolas Achten: Giovanni Felices Sances

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01,
www.handelsbeurs.be
FEB 3 20.15 Edding String Quartet, with Nicola Boud, clarinet: Mozart
FEB 6 20.15 Ictus: Telegrams from the Nose, musical theater, video and installation retracing the final stages of a famous trial under Stalin; featuring poems by Daniil Harms, music by François Sarhan and animation by William Kentridge



Brussels

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be
FEB 6 20.00 El retablo de Maese Pedro, one-act children's opera by Manuel de Falla conducted by Josep Vicent, staging by Enrique Lanz featuring giant puppets. With Frank Agsteribbe, harpsichord, and De Munt Chamber Orchestra. De Falla's harpsichord concerto will also be performed



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De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39, www.demunt.be
FEB 4 20.00 Elektra by Richard Strauss, directed by Guy Joosten, with Evelyn Herltzius/Nadine Secunde, sopranos (Elektra) and De Munt Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Lothar Koenigs



Aalst

De Werf
Molenstraat 51; 053.73.28.12, www.ccdewerf.be
FEB 6 20.00 Les SlovaKs Dance Collective

Antwerp

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be
FEB 4-6 20.00 Emanuel Gat Dance in Silent Ballet/WinterVariations

Vlaamse Opera

Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02, www.vlaamseopera.be
Until FEB 14 Royal Ballet of Flanders in Grands Egards, music performed by deFilharmonie, conducted by Benjamin Pope

Hasselt

Cultuurcentrum
Kunstlaan 5; 011.22.99.31, www.ccha.be
FEB 4 20.00 Rosas in The Song, choreographed by Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker
FEB 10-11 20.00 Artforum in Kleefkruid, featuring young dancers with physical handicaps and live music

Koksijde

Casino
Casinoplein 10-11; 058.53.29.86, www.casinokoksijde.be
FEB 6 20.00 Passerelle in WeAllGo & SlowShow

Leuven

STUK
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20, www.stuk.be
FEB 11 20.30 Martin Nachbar in Urheben Aufheben, choreographed by Dore Hoyer

Roeselare

CC De Spil
Spilleboutdreef 1; 051.26.57.00, www.despil.be
FEB 4 20.00 Vuyani Dance Theatre in Beautiful Me, choreographed by Gregory Vuyani Maqoma



Aalst

De Werf
Molenstraat 51; 053.73.28.12, www.ccdewerf.be
FEB 5 20.00 Bloet and de Roovers in Bakchai, staged by Jan Decorte (in Dutch)
FEB 7 15.00 Abattoir Fermé & DE MAAN in Nimmermeer, staged by Stéf Lernous (ages 10 and up; in Dutch)

Antwerp

Berchem Cultuurcentrum
Driekoningenstraat 126; 03.286.88.20, www.ccbe.be
FEB 9 14.30 de fluistercompagnie in Getelde Dagen (Counted Days), directed by Walter van den Broeck (in Dutch)

Bourla

Komedieplaats 18; 03.224.884, www.toneelhuis.be
FEB 5 20.00 Muziektheater Transparant in Pour vos beaux yeux, music theatre (in Dutch)
FEB 8-9 20.00 De Roovers in Ca brule (in Dutch)

Bornem

CC Ter Dilft
Sint-Amandsesteenweg 41-43; 03.890.69.30, www.terdilft.be
FEB 5 20.30 Els Dottermans in Was will das Weib?, music theatre

Bruges

De Werf
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29, www.dewerf.be
FEB 6 20.30 Firma Rieks Swarte in Nachtschade, directed by Gienke Deuten (in Dutch)

Stadsschouwburg

Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.40, www.cultuurcentrumbrugge.be
FEB 11 20.00 Morag McLaren in Scottish Waffle, music theatre

Brussels

Everna GC
Sint-Vincentiusstraat 30; 02.247.03.40, everna.vgc.be
FEB 5 20.00 Kamagurka Geneest! (Kamagurka Heals!), comedy (in Dutch)

KVS Bol

Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.00, www.kvs.be
Until FEB 17 15.00/20.00 Bruno Vanden Broecke in Missie, written by David Van Reybrouck (in Dutch with English surtitles)

Scarabaeus Theatre

Hollestraat 19-27; 0475.59.27.03, www.shaksoc.be
FEB 9-13 20.00 A Chaste Maid in Cheapside by Thomas Middleton (in English)

Ghent

NTGent Schouwburg
Sint-Baafsplein 17; 09.225.01.01, www.ntgent.be
Until APR 2 20.30 Els Dottermans in Was will das Weib? (music theatre, in Dutch)

Grimbergen

CC Strombeek
Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43, www.ccstrombeek.be
FEB 4 20.30 Villanella & Cinderella in Falsch!, directed by Hanneke Pauwe (in Dutch)

Hamme

CC Jan Tervaert
Kaaiplein 34; 052.48.09.48, www.jantervaert.be
FEB 8 20.15 Els De Schepper in Roddelt (in Dutch)

Mechelen

Stadsschouwburg
Keizerstraat 3; 015.29.40.00
FEB 10 & 17 20.15 Je zal alles worden (She Shall Become Everything), by Wouter Deprez (in Dutch)



Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60, www.muhka.be
Until MAY 2 Animism, part 1, installations, photos and film exploring the collective practices of humans and non-humans and the ensuing relationships

Extra City

Tulpstraat 79; 03.677.16.55, www.extracity.org
Until MAY 2 Animism, part two of the show at M HKA (see above)

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09, www.kmska.be
Until FEB 28 Work on paper, new acrylic paintings by Koen van den Broek

Brussels

art)&(marges
Hoogstraat 312-314; 02.511.34.20, www.arthis.org
Until FEB 21 Surprising Dialogues, selection of outsider art shown alongside works from fine arts museums in Belgium

Beursschouwburg

August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be
Until FEB 26 I Wasn't Born Yesterday, Deary: A Trip in the Eye of Guy Maddin, photographs by Michèle Matyn of the Canadian town of Winnipeg, home to cult film director Guy Maddin

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
Until APR 18 Frida Kahlo y su mundo, works by the famous Mexican artist on loan from the Dolores Olmedo Museum
FEB 4-MAY 9 El Greco: Domenikos Theotokopoulos 1900, more than 40 works by the Spanish Renaissance painter

Free University of Brussels (ULB)

Grand Hall - Building A, Solbosch Campus
F Rooseveltlaan 50; 02.650.47.35, www.expopascesoir.be
Until MAY 30 Vanavond niet schat? (Not tonight, honey?), exhibition on the history of sexuality since the 19th century, from a scientific perspective

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
Until FEB 21 Arno Stern: Retrospective, some 50 works by the French artist known for founding Expression Semiology

Royal Museum of Art and History

Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11, www.kmkg-mrah.be
Until MAR 14 Vier Doornikse wandtapijten uit Pastrana (Four Tournai Tapestries from Pastrana), historically important tapestries originating from the Belgian city of Tournai and restored in Spain (marking the EU Spanish presidency)

Tour & Taxis

Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49, www.tour-taxis.com
Until MAR 28 John Fitzgerald Kennedy: The American Dream, photographs, documents and objects related to the assassinated US president (www.jfk-expo.be)

WIELS

Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.340.00.50, www.wiels.org
Until APR 25 Felix Gonzales-Torres: Specific Objects without Specific Form, retrospective of the late Cuban-American artist

Deurle

Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens
Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23, www.museumdd.be
Until FEB 14 Banks Violette instllations; Sophie Ristelhueber, photographs; Narcisse Tordoir, paintings

Ghent

Design Museum
Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99, www.designmuseumgent.be
Until FEB 7 Siegfried De Buck, jewellery designer and silversmith
Until FEB 7 Artel (1908-1935), Czech cubism in daily life
Until FEB 7 Disappeared from the GDR, crockery design from 50 years ago by Christa Petroff-Bohne

Museum of Fine Arts

Fernand Scribdeef 1 - Citadelpark; 09.240.07.00, www.mskgent.be
Until FEB 7 Max Beckmann, prints and paintings from the collection of the Von der Heydt Museum in Wuppertal
Until FEB 7 Fernand Léger's Le Grand Déjeuner, masterpiece painting on loan from the Museum of Modern Art in New York

Modern Art Museum (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03, www.smak.be
Until FEB 7 Ben Benaouisse: Jan Fabre

revisited, performance art

Until MAR 14 GAGARIN The Artists in their Own Words, a collection of texts by participating artists
Until MAY 16 Loek Grootjans: Leaving Traces, installations
Until MAY 16 Koen van den Broek: Curbs & Cracks, photographs and paintings

Grimbergen

CC Strombeek
Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43, www.ccstrombeek.be
Until FEB 21 Witte schaduw (White Shadow), drawings by Roger Raveel

Hasselt

Cultuurcentrum
Kunstlaan 5; 011.22.99.31, www.ccha.be
Until FEB 21 Witte schaduw (White Shadow), drawings by Roger Raveel
Until FEB 21 Paul D'Haese: Dagblind, photographs and installations
Until FEB 21 MarieAnge, crafts based on photographs from psychiatric wards



Antwerp

Nuff Said: Stand-up comedy, spoken word, literature and live music by Brazzaville
FEB 5 20.30 at Berchem CC, Driekoningenstraat 126
03.286.88.20, www.ccbe.be

Bruges

Come On! Action!: Festival of improvisational music, dance and theatre
FEB 9-23 at Concertgebouw, 't Zand 34
070.22.33.02, www.concertgebouw.be

Brussels

Affordable Art Fair: Contemporary art works under €5,000
FEB 5-8 at Tour & Taxis, Havenlaan 86C
www.affordableartfair.be

Brussels Holiday Show: More than 700 exhibitors offer advice, literature and information for planning your holiday. This year's guest of honour is Greece.
FEB 4-8 10.00-18.00 at Brussels Expo, Heysel
02.474.89.81, www.bruexpo.be
www.salondesvacances.eu

Aanverwanten: Literary Evening with Jan De Cock: First episode of the new series Aanverwanten (Relatives) by Het beschrijf, hosted by Chantal Pattyn
FEB 9 20.00 at Passa Porta, Antoine Dansaertstraat 46
02.226.04.54, www.passaporta.be

Vrak Festival N° 2: Multidisciplinary arts festival promoting young artists, with performance, installations, screenings, concerts and talks
FEB 4-7 across Elsene commune
www.llasbl.be

Ghent

International Malt Whisky Festival: Annual whisky fair with experts from around the world, tastings, bar, shop, entertainment and food. Ticket to Whisky Festival also gives access to the Scottish Fair
FEB 5-7 at ICC Gent, Van Rysselbergheedreef 2 - Citadelpark
09.227.51.71, www.whiskyfestival.be

Scottish Fair: 32nd annual festival celebrating Scotland, including bagpipe concerts, traditional dance, cooking workshops, wellness, whisky bar, kilt fashion show, plus Scottish products for sale
FEB 5-7 10.00-18.00 at ICC Gent, Van Rysselbergheedreef 2 - Citadelpark
09.220.76.30, www.schotsebeurs.be

CAFE SPOTLIGHT

ANNA JENKINSON



't oost

The café 't oost had caught my eye several times as I walked from Bruges train station along Oostmeers and towards the city's centre. So when a Flemish friend suggested going there for lunch, saying it was one of her favourite new spots, I jumped at the offer.

All the food is made from fresh ingredients, and the owners, Jan and Katelijne, are more than willing to explain (in Dutch, French or English) what is in the quiches and pies or which soups are available that day. The drinks menu is just as long, with the choice ranging from freshly-squeezed fruit and vegetable juices to wine and beer, including the local brew Straffe Hendrik and the West Flemish Sint-Bernardus. Warm drinks include just about every type of tea, coffee or hot chocolate you can imagine. And there are plenty of desserts, too.

With its tiled floors, exposed-brick walls and pine tables, the atmosphere is warm and relaxed. This is a place where you could just as easily while away several hours by yourself as meet up with friends. Newspapers are laid out on a central table to browse through over coffee, or there's a map of the world on the wall if you'd rather dream about future travels.

Alternatively, bring your laptop and catch up on emails; there's free wifi for customers. The cafe not only has its own website but also a Facebook page where it boasts about 150 fans.

't oost (which means "the east") just opened last summer, offering breakfast and lunch, including take away. Breakfasts can be the basic coffee/tea and croissant/chocolatekoek to a rather more substantial brunch, including cheese, smoked salmon and a glass of cava.

A five-minute walk from the station, 't oost is a handy place to stop off if you've time to spare. Be warned though you may lose track of time, so don't miss your train!

→ www.t-oost.be

FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE

Linda De Win

Linda De Win is *De slimste mens ter wereld*, having snatched the title in the final episode of the popular quiz show from pop star Bent Van Looy and *De Standaard* editor Peter Vandermeersch.

De slimste mens is in many ways the most match-fixed quiz-show on TV: the contestants are chosen from among the ranks of the "bekende Vlamingen" (well-known Flemish), with this year the addition of two Dutch guests and one Walloon politician. The presenter is a movie director famous for his laugh. The jury who comment on questions and competitors is made up of comedians. It's a long way from the highbrow British quiz *University Challenge*.

Linda De Win, who presents *Villa politica* on the VRT, had the temerity to be a woman of 53. She refused to flutter her eyelashes, even in the presence of love-object Erik Van Looy, the quiz-master. She seemed too keen on winning, it was said, though anyone looking at the clips will see only a hesitant and nervous player. The fact that she walked all over male competitors to rack up a record-equalling 11 appearances ensured that she would make enemies: there were even Facebook groups devoted to hating her. One of them called for her death.

In the last episode, she competed against the beloved Van Looy and against the extremely tactical Vandermeersch. Linda beat Peter in the



final using his own strategy against him (letting on-air seconds tick silently by). She won the final question by remembering that Paul Newman puts out his own salad dressing.

Hers is another victory for women and for journalists (the 2007 winner was Annelies Rutten of *Het Nieuwsblad*), and especially for VRT journalists (the 2009 winner was her colleague Freek Braeckman). It's also a victory for underdogs everywhere, and we at *Flanders Today* salute her.

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



bedrieger →

We all love a conman – *bedrieger*, as long as we're not the ones being conned. The 26-year-old Abdelkarim Serhani, and his entourage, has been living the life of Riley staying at expensive hotels and borrowing *peperdure* – very expensive cars, and *dit alles zonder achteraf voor de rekening op te draaien* – all this without later footing the bill. He was up to his tricks at the recent *Autosalon* – Motor Show in Brussels, where he almost managed to "test-drive" a Rolls Royce before being rumbled.

How does he do it? *Serhani geeft zich uit voor de zoon van een Arabische prins* – Serhani poses as the son of an Arab prince. He is in fact a former student nurse from Elsene in Brussels (though sometimes a police cadet from France, depending on who he's talking to).

I translated *geeft zich uit voor* with "poses as"; I could have written "passes himself off as". This is an example of how the word *zich* – oneself often doesn't appear in English. Here are more: *de verkoper voelde zich door de "prins" bedrogen* – the salesman felt (himself to be) conned by the "prince"; *hij schaamt zich niet voor zijn gedrag* – he isn't ashamed (of himself) of his behaviour.

Let's leave Abdelkarim to his fate for the moment and try out some more reflexive verbs. Being a carefree type, I can write *ik maak*

me nooit zorgen – I never worry. Having a memory like a sieve, I can confess that *ik herinner mij dat niet* – I don't remember that. Being indecisive, I can say that *ik heb mij bedacht* – I've changed my mind. It being a long week, *ik verheug mij op het weekend* – I'm looking forward to the weekend.

Some *zich* verbs in Dutch are expressed with "get" in English: *zich aankleden* – to get dressed, *zich klaarmaken* – to get ready. Other times, it depends on the meaning. *Hij stelde zich voor* – he introduced himself; but *dat kan ik mij best voorstellen* means I can just imagine.

Once you start looking into Serhani's background, you find a trail of trickery across the globe. He's even known on remote Hamilton Island, where he was dubbed King Con after leaving behind enormous bills. They know him in Sydney, where he was arrested; incredibly, he was given bail. He says he thought up the wheeze after watching Eddie Murphy in the movie *Coming to America* and turned the role on its head. He even taunts the police on YouTube to catch him if they can.

So if you're bored – *als je je verveelt*, look up Abdelkarim on the internet. Feeling sorry for the charming *bedrieger*? *Maak je geen zorgen* – don't worry, he'll probably sweet-talk the police into giving him bail and lending him a car to get home.

bite

SHARON LIGHT

Potiron

For some, the Michelin guide is a culinary bible – and while it's true that Michelin recommends a selection of restaurants where you are more-or-less guaranteed a fine dining experience, I guess my tastes are often a little too exotic for them.

But that's not to say that on principle I avoid Michelin restaurants; on occasion, I even turn to them when seeking out a special meal. Which was how I ended up at Potiron in the unassuming village of Kasterlee in Antwerp province.

Potiron has what I find the most exciting distinction in the Michelin guide: the Bib Gourmand. These restaurants offer "good quality cuisine for under 35 Euro" (not including drinks). A Michelin-recommended restaurant I can afford? No further convincing required.

Potiron's décor is sleek and modern, with beautiful place settings and a mix of neutral colours. The lighting is soft, but the tables are well lit; you have a clear view of what you're eating, and it's a view worth having.

The menu features half a dozen fish dishes and the same number of meats. A good-size vegetarian menu is available on request. In some finer restaurants, the menu reads more like a shopping list – each dish itemising the full breadth of the ingredients, and each ingredient bearing its own adjective. Here the menu is descriptive but direct, and even the relatively short summaries are enough to make your decision a difficult one.

Despite the name, pumpkin did not feature prominently in the menu, although we couldn't resist the pumpkin soup starter.

An herb salad and homemade loempia completed our first courses, accompanied by a bottle of Pinot Blanc from their largely French-and-Italian-dominated



wine list, and everyone was delighted with all of it.

It is worth noting that, although the service was friendly, dishes came out slowly (our main courses in particular), and the waiting staff was not as attentive as I would expect – to the point that we had to chase them down several times with our requests.

But the arrival of our main dishes was cause for celebration. We were feeling fishy, trying the plaice, dorade and cod. The accompaniments were hearty, including *stoemp* and delicately-roasted vegetables. The plates were finished off with tasteful and tasty flourishes – a drizzle of fruit-based sauce or a single crisp made of beetroot. The portions were generous, and we were all struck by how well the disparate flavours in each dish came together so nicely.

The desserts followed suit; I was particularly impressed by a pineapple carpaccio with crumbled speculoos and a scoop of ice cream that was purportedly pear but tasted more of lemon – whatever it was, it worked. Along with a fine herbal tea, it was a fresh and inventive ending to a delicious meal, which rang up at a very reasonable (for Michelin) €182, including a bottle of wine and other drinks. Just be sure you have time to enjoy it: our evening was three-and-a-half hours long.

Contact Bite at flandersbite@gmail.com

→ www.potiron.be

THE LAST WORD...

Chill wind

"February will no doubt have more winter surprises in store, and even the first days of March could be wintry."

Weatherman Frank Deboosere, who sees no end in sight

Tweet nothings

"Like every hype, Twitter was over-praised in its initial phase. But people are fed up with it now."

Trend-watcher Pieter Baert on Twitter, which has only 30,000 users in Belgium

Baby comes first...

"I'll do a lot for politics, but not give up my children. That's where I draw the line."

Social economy minister Freya Van den Bossche, who has been criticised for taking her full 16-week maternity leave entitlement

...but the price is high

"Male ministers who become fathers are back at their desks the same day. If women don't do that, they're made to feel guilty."

Kathleen Van Brempt, former minister and mother