

## Decidedly optimistic..... 7

Despite experiencing the current recession, half of all Flemish teenagers would still like to launch their own businesses. The Flanders District of Creativity has a new programme to keep them encouraged



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The famed Culture Prizes of the Flemish Community were handed out to the right people this year, including a theatre group that traipses through abandoned buildings and an artist who twists flesh



## Choc and awe..... 11

It's tough to be a pioneer in the world of Belgian chocolates anymore, but one Bruges man is making international news for his menu of flavours: fried onion, tequila and wasabi – not to mention a chocolate powder you snort up your nose



# Aalst on

## Dust off your fancy dress and stock up on confetti, it's Carnival time

KATRIEN LINDEMANS

Where better to celebrate the few days before Lent than in Aalst – the small Flemish city with the big Carnival reputation. The celebrations date back, in fact, to mediaeval times, but the parades, events and parties as we know them today are this year being organised for the 82nd time. From 14 to 16 February, Aalst paints a picture of tradition, folklore, political takedowns, cross-dressing and a whole lot of beer. The first parade on Day One winds through the city and ends at the Grote Markt, where the last float of the row is set to arrive at 19.45 – seven hours after it started. The people of Aalst take their parades very seriously and go to great lengths to create the most fantastically absurd floats. Every year, political and local events are satirised in the parade – politicians and celebrities are not spared. This tradition goes back to the late medieval period in Aalst, when, during the days before Lent, ceremo-

nies included disguise and inverted role play. If Lent is the sombre period of fasting and moderation, Carnival is the complete opposite. If throughout the year people humbly do what they're told, Carnival is the time they really say and show what they think. Fancy dress allows citizens to speak their minds without the threat of persecution – so it was 500 years ago, and so it is, to an extent, now. Day Two starts with the Broom Dance. The traditionally-dressed Gilles parade through the city, swing their brooms and stamp on the ground in an attempt to chase away evil spirits. While doing so, they beg the gods for a good harvest. Later that day follows the big "onion throw". Not real onions, but onion sweets, thrown from the balcony of the town hall. One hundred of them have a number corresponding to a prize; the lucky visitor who catches the onion with number 1 wins a golden onion designed by a jeweller.

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## Police announce strike plans

Brussels officers protest lack of action in the face of "extreme violence"

ALAN HOPE

Four unions representing police officers in the six Brussels police zones have announced their intention to take strike action starting on 15 February and lasting until 31 March at the longest. The action is a protest at the growth of "extreme violence" against police personnel by criminals, including the use of firearms. In a statement, the un-

ions called for judicial and political leaders to take concrete action and put an end to "endless palaver and empty promises". Police also lament the inadequate support offered to squads on the ground and the lack of cooperation with adjacent zones. The most sensitive issue arising out of recent events is the call for unification of the six po-

lice zones that make up the capital. This debate has turned into a clash between regional and federal politicians and the mayors of the 19 municipalities of Brussels. The socialist sp.a deputy Renaat Landuyt has introduced a bill to join the six zones, a measure also proposed by the Open VLD liberals.

➡ continued on page 3

## School for life

Living within earshot of a school playground may not be the ideal location for many people, but the town of Brasschaat in Antwerp province is going one further: the new buildings for the Mariaburg school will include not only classrooms, a playground and a gym, but also a crèche and 26 apartments.

Brasschaat is one of the most expensive towns in Flanders in which to live; a large number of residents are wealthy Dutch who have moved over the nearby border for tax advantages. According to the town's mayor, Dirk De Kort, the Mariaburg complex will provide affordable housing for young families: apartments are expected to cost between €150,000 and €170,000.

The plan caused some concern regarding the privacy of both apartment dwellers and schoolchildren. De Kort said the architects have found solutions to these problems. The



school's headmistress is guardedly optimistic: "This is a policy decision, and I respect it," said Hilde Rasschaert. "As long as we can reach workable agreements, I see no reason why it couldn't be a success." The town is currently working out a contract with future buyers, while the children are expected to move into the new school after the summer holidays.





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## News in brief

The municipalities in Flanders need to spend at least half a billion euros to bring their **sewers up to standard**, according to sanitation consultant Vlario. Flanders has 40,000 kilometres of sewers, but much of it is in poor repair, with leaks and subsidence a daily problem. In addition, problems with sewers are affecting the condition of roads, according to the road-building research centre at a symposium held last week. Badly maintained sewers under roads are "a ticking time-bomb", delegates heard. One solution could be a rainwater tax: any property owner who allows rainwater to flow into the sewers could pay a levy towards investment in the sewers.

Over the next few weeks, a number of men living in the area of Mol will be invited to give police a **sample of their DNA**, in an effort to unmask a serial rapist responsible for at least six rapes in the last five years and up to 20 in all. The men have been identified on the basis of tips provided by the public since the arrest of Ronald Janssen for three murders in other parts of the country. Giving a DNA sample is not obligatory, unless other evidence offers an investigating magistrate grounds to order one. Police have not revealed how many men are involved.

The bird protection agency Vogelbescherming Vlaanderen (VV) has made a formal complaint against a hairdresser in Kortesseem, near Hasselt, who was shown on TV **shooting sparrows and pigeons**. According to VV, sparrows became a protected species last May. The organisation also criticised the makers of the VRT programme *Man bijt hond* (*Man Bites Dog*) for virtually encouraging an illegal act.

Flanders' **wind energy capacity** has gone up from 130 megawatts (mW) in 2006 to 240 mW now, according to the energy ministry, with growth of a further 100 mW expected this year. The ministry was reacting to a report from the Global Wind Energy Council that put Belgium at the bottom of the Western European table of wind energy producers. Recent legislation has made it easier to install wind turbines in agricultural areas, the ministry said, and a "substantial increase" in the numbers is planned.

**Dredging work in the Westerschelde** approaches to Antwerp harbour will begin on 12 February, three weeks earlier than originally planned, the port authority



© Belga

## Barbie Kim stirs up a storm

Toy company Mattel last week launched a new Barbie doll, immediately serving a double fault over the question of women's body image.

The new Barbie is actually a Kim – it's supposedly modelled on Flemish tennis star Kim Clijsters, though you'd hardly think so to look at it. Like all Barbies, it's only vaguely human in appearance. And unlike Kim, who's always been a rather well-built, strapping Limburg lass, it's stick-thin.

According to An Vandeputte, spokesperson for Eetexpert, the information centre for weight and eating disorders, the doll is a "missed opportunity to portray a realistic role model". In the flesh, Kim is 1m74cm tall and weighs 68kg. The Mattel version has Barbie's characteristic long, long legs and vacant smile.

"The doll is so thin that in reality she wouldn't be able to walk to the net, let alone play tennis," said Vandeputte. "It's a shame that a beautiful woman like Kim Clijsters has been turned into an image so far from reality." Eetexpert is vocal in its opposition to the artificially thin models presented by the media and the fashion industry, which lead girls to have negative self-image and eating disorders.

"We are calling very clearly for diversity in role models," Vandeputte said. "Of course there can be slim dolls, but there should also be more rounded ones, too. You can be beautiful and happy in any body."

Fortunately, the Kim Clijsters doll – complete with daughter Jada – will not be much exposed to little girls. Only one doll has been made, as a tribute by Mattel for Kim herself.

revealed. The dredging, most of it in Dutch waters, is intended to make it easier for large container ships to use the channel regardless of tide. The work will last for 15 months and cost €100 million.

Police are investigating the death of a woman whose **body was washed ashore** at Wenduine last week. The woman, aged 58, comes from Antwerp, and the body showed no signs of violence. Earlier in the week another body, of a 55-year-old Knokke man, washed ashore at Knokke-Heist. That case was judged to be a suicide.

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## FLANDERS TODAY

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## Zero tolerance has zero effect as thieves walk free

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The Flemish minister for Brussels, Pascal Smet, had a heated exchange of words with Brussels Region minister-president Charles Picqué, whom he accused of inaction. Smet also said he was "scandalised" by statements by Brussels mayor Freddie Thielemans, who was seen by many as minimising the problem. The Brussels mayors, most of them French speaking, oppose the unification of the six zones – a policy supported by virtually all Flemish parties. Flemish politicians deny there is a community aspect to the disagreement. Deputy prime-minister Guy Vanhengel, who lives in Evere, said the choice of a single zone was simply common sense. "This is about the safety of all the people of Brussels," he said. "It is not a power grab by the Flemish on Brussels". Both he and Smet have strongly hinted that "reorganisation" will be a condition of any extra financing required by the capital. The French-speaking mayors are also critical of the need for Brussels police officers to be bilingual, which they say makes recruitment

extremely difficult. The rule means that 40% of the officers serving in the city are from elsewhere in the country, as Brussels cannot meet the need.

The police statement also attacks "incomprehensible judicial decisions", which lead to "an atmosphere of impunity" in some areas. That problem raised its head again at the weekend, when four minors accused of bag-snatching in Anderlecht had to be released when there were no places available in the detention centre.

The Brussels prosecutor's office claimed the youth magistrate in charge of the case had phoned around the various centres only to be told there was no room. However, the French community minister responsible for the centres themselves, Evelyne Huytebroeck, said there were five or six places free. Interior minister Annemie Turtelboom "regretted" the release of the thieves. Justice minister Stefaan De Clerck stressed that it was the responsibility of the French community to ensure places were available.



Police feel under fire from growing criminality

Police representatives found the decision objectionable as the police had made considerable efforts to meet demands for zero tolerance in Anderlecht by increasing patrols and making great efforts to ensure coverage of the quarters, like the Kuregem district, that had been described as no-go areas. The policy of zero tolerance is likely to encounter the same problem in the case of adult offenders. The

police may patrol the streets with additional zeal, but the courts are reluctant to respond. According to Luc Hennart, the chief judge of the court of first instance, there are not enough judges to cope with extra cases of street crime. "My judges are already overwhelmed," he said. "And I give priority to fighting serious crime and important financial cases." ♦

## Flemish Catholics reticent about beliefs

Three-quarters of observant Flemish Catholics are hesitant about describe themselves as such, according to a poll of the readers of the magazines *Tertio* and *Kerk & Leven*. Young people in particular are reluctant to let others know about their faith: 86% said they would keep quiet about it among peers.

The figures are worrying for church leaders, since the polls targeted active church-goers rather than those who are only nominally Catholic. "I think they're right," said *Kerk & Leven* editor Bert Claerhout in *De Morgen*. "Certainly for young people, it's not easy to speak up for your beliefs." The problem helps explain why half of the respondents were in favour of Catholic schools, with a return to catechism lessons. ♦

Some other poll findings:

- Three-quarters of respondents thought there were too many "inappropriate newcomers" arriving in Flanders; two-thirds thought immigrants ought to undergo a Belgian citizenship course in their own country before coming here
- Only one-quarter thought the integration of Muslims was a possibility; 58% oppose the hijab and 45% are against minarets
- One-third are in favour of separate schools for boys and girls; 83% are for some sort of compulsory social service for young people
- Almost 90% thought the church should take care of asylum seekers, and 85% favoured taxing the rich more
- Half of all respondents supported euthanasia, but only 35% of young people. 100% of under-40s think old people should be cared for in the family; for the rest the figure was 90%



## Brussels Airport in profit against all odds

Brussels Airport in Zaventem is now one of Europe's most expensive for passengers, next to Schiphol, Charles de Gaulle, Zurich and Athens. Last year, the charges levied per passenger, which airlines pass on in ticket prices, went up by 5.1%. This partly explains why, despite a reduction in the number of passengers and freight, Brussels Airport Company (BAC), which administers Zaventem, saw its profit margin go up last year to 55%. The number of passengers in 2009 fell by 3.1%, mainly because of snowfalls. Freight traffic, at the same time, dropped by 30%, but BAC was able to record pre-tax earn-

ings up 6.9%, which, after deduction of exceptional items, amounted to €40.4 million.

The Australian company Macquarie owns 75% of the shares in BAC, while the Belgian state holds the remaining 25%. Kerry Mather, CEO of Macquarie, is optimistic about Zaventem for the coming year, as Brussels Airlines feels the effects of its entry into the Star Alliance global airline network. In addition, other airlines have announced new routes and extra flights from Brussels: Air Canada will fly to Montreal, United Airlines to Chicago and Hainan Airlines to Shanghai. ♦

## FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

### Poor Flanders?

Over the past couple of weeks, the public broadcasting channel Canvas has been airing *Arm Wallonië* (Poor Wallonia), a documentary series based on the book by journalist Pascal Verbeken, which tells the story of Flemish immigrants in the southern part of Belgium.

From the end of the 19th century up until the 1950s, most of rural Flanders was dirt poor. No less than 500,000 people left for Wallonia, to work in coal mines and steel mills or on large farms. Most of them never returned. At first, the Flemish were looked down upon in Wallonia, but over the years they have completely integrated.

This large-scale migration changed the country. It explains why so many francophone politicians have names that sound Flemish. In the names of (Laurette) Onkelinx and (Didier) Reynders – two French-speaking ministers – one can still hear their ancestors' Limburg roots.

The name of disgraced Walloon minister-president Jean-Claude Van Cauwenberghe has a distinct Flemish ring to it, too. This phenomenon explains the Walloon's attachment to the idea of Belgium (although that sentiment is greater still in Brussels) and the fondness that often exists on a personal level between Walloons and Flemings, no matter how heated the political situation gets.

These days, the economic situation is completely reversed, as the traditional industries of Wallonia have declined (in the same way as they have, for instance, in the north of England), leaving behind an industrial wasteland and massive unemployment, while Flanders has shaped a more modern economic future for itself. As a result, rich Flanders partly "sustains" poor Wallonia these days, which causes a lot of resentment.

Still, that, too, may only be a temporary situation. Geert Noels, a well-respected economist, warns of the "Wallonisation" of Flanders. Yes, we do have a prolific work force and a more modern economy, but Flanders also faces rising unemployment and a growing state sector. Noels fears for the increasing influence of trade unions, a mounting dislike of entrepreneurship and a lack of initiative. At the same time, Wallonia shows small signs of economic recovery, especially in Walloon Brabant.

Noels' warning is not just idle words. Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters more or less echoed them when he warned about complacency. There was a time when Flanders' motto was "what we do ourselves, we do better". Somehow, that does not ring true as much as we would like it to.

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES



### 36,000 – 48,000

Belgians addicted to Lotto and Euro Millions, the two most popular games offered by the National Lottery. The Lottery is currently setting up a training plan for shopkeepers who sell tickets to teach them about the dangers of addiction.

### €254,220

subsidies paid by the provincial governments of Flanders to six mosques in the region in 2009. Sixteen mosques are recognised by the government and can request subsidy.

### 5.3%

increase in crimes reported in Ghent in 2009, bringing the total to more than 33,200 offences. Half of the increase involved noise nuisance. There were also increases in break-ins, thefts from cars and bag-snatching.

### 67%

of people use paper handkerchiefs, according to a survey by Kimberley-Clark, which makes Kleenex. Of the nearly 1,500 Belgians polled, 54% use tissues every day and 92% once a week or more.

### €40,000

the value of a single prize pigeon among 50 stolen by two Romanians sentenced last week to 18 months in prison by a court in Antwerp.





## Get your Aalst on

The floats are impressive, but the cross-dressing locals are still carnival's most popular draw

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Around 14.00, another row of floats glide through the streets of Aalst and, in the evening, all the Carnival groups come together for the award ceremony where the jury chooses the winning floats. Afterwards, the party continues in the bars and in the streets.

Day Three is certainly the favourite Carnival event for many, many *Aalstenaars*: the Parade of the *Voil Jeanettens*, or Dirty Jennies. Men dress up as women and flaunt their stuff to the 80,000 visitors – and stuff they have, the bawdier the better. The costuming, in fact, became so scandalous in the 1990s that the city imposed restrictions on not just clothing but behaviour (which are respected, more or less).

The *Voil Jeanettens* still carry the traditional props used by working-class men 82 years ago. They didn't have money for proper disguises: the next best thing was their wives' old outfits, a pram, a handbag and an umbrella.

Carnival ends the same day at 21.00, with the *popverbranding*, or burning of the doll, in which a specially-made Carnival reveller (male, with handbag and high heels) is set on fire in the Grote Markt. While the remains of the doll still simmer, many *Aalstenaars* start their preparations for Carnival next year. ♦

→ [www.aalst.be](http://www.aalst.be)

### That's *Oilsjt* to you

The *Aalsters* dialect is incredibly difficult to understand, even if you're a native Dutch speaker. If you'd like to get an idea of what it sounds like, tune into online radio *Ajoin* and get blown away by the hundreds of Carnival songs. Practice for your night out.

→ [www.carnaval.oilsjt.be/webradio.html](http://www.carnaval.oilsjt.be/webradio.html)

© Jerry Sprinberg



### Why three days?

Most cities that host a Carnival spend multiple days doing so, traditionally ending on Shrove Tuesday. Aalst's Carnival was first organised by the local federation of bars and shops. Lent was a rough time for their businesses, so Carnival was the ideal moment to sell a lot of booze and food. Nowadays, Carnival still lasts three days in Aalst.





© Jerry Springberg

## Carnival days



When Paul van der Stap set out to photograph local Carnival celebrations in Flanders and North Brabant in the Netherlands, he was surprised by the sense of foreboding he felt in tiny villages just before Carnival. "It was unpleasantly quiet in the streets," he writes in his new photo book *Carnival Days*, with an introduction in both Dutch and English. His photos show a clear connection between pagan celebrations and modern-day affairs, where the floats are wild caricatures and the masks grotesque interpretations of an inner human spirit long suppressed. In Aalst, Van der Stap concentrated on the Parade of the Dirty Jennies (photo above), where the men of the city flaunt both sides of sexuality with unnerving abandon.

[www.verbeelding-fotoboeken.nl](http://www.verbeelding-fotoboeken.nl)



© Jerry Springberg



## Thirteen hours of Aalst

WITH KATRIEN LINDEMANS

Carnival in Aalst equals three days of utter madness. From the afternoon until the early morning, there's always something to do. If you want to plan a visit, but don't know what to expect, here's what happened to me.

18:00

I meet up with friends at the train station in Brussels. We're not leaving until we've all had a pita and greasy fries because we all feel like this is going to be a long night.

19:00

Arrival in Aalst, and I see the first *Voil Jeanetten* chasing each other with cans of hairspray. On the way to the centre, I notice all the shop windows are protected by wooden boards. Hmm.

20:00

I've had my first few pints of Safir beer (previously brewed in Aalst, it's the official beer of their Carnival) and am totally feeling the Carnival vibe. I keep on getting weird looks from people, though, and one of them finally asks me why I'm not dressed up. I tell him I'm dressed up as myself, which seems to make little impression.

22:00

We go from bar to bar, and I'm getting a bit bored with the bitter after-taste of Safir. The bartender asks me what I want to drink and why I'm not dressed up. I again explain that I went as myself. He wants to know who I am, so I shout my name. He seems impressed with my last name and offers me a Lindemans krik on the house.

00:00

A few friends go home on the last train, but the rest of us are having too much fun. We are going to do the Aalst thing and party all night. The official activities are all over now, so everybody heads to the bars or clubs. It's getting really crowded everywhere we go, and people are so drunk.

02:00

We wander through the city in search of our next stop, but it's bloody cold outside. I seriously regret not having dressed up; a furry bear costume would have been welcome. I really don't understand how the *Voil Jeanetten* survive the night wearing not much more than a mini skirt and fish-net stockings.

03:00

We lose track of a few friends and find out an hour later that one of them fell and had to go to a Red Cross booth. True Aalst experience; the *Voil Jeanetten* would be proud. We want to find our injured friend, but don't really know our way around. Many of the local party goers seem a bit lost, too, and give us contradictory travel routes. We have the most insane conversations with people we meet on the way and have great difficulty deciphering their dialect.

05:00

The streets are so dirty, and there are enough empty bottles lying about to make your monthly wage in deposits. But we find the station!

06:00

Everybody is exhausted, and we try our very best not to fall asleep on the train. People on their way to work seem interested about our night out and ask us if we had a good time. We nod.

06:30

Less comprehension on the metro home. I get a sneery look from a young couple, but I don't really care. (I had a great time!)

07:00

I arrive home and catch my reflection in the mirror. A million confetti flakes are caught in my hair; my face has the colour of a grey winter morning. I decide to join Lent this year... I could do with a detox.



© Jerry Springberg



# Cost-cutting panic or investments in human capital?

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

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## Turning teens into entrepreneurs

Study shows half have business ambitions

ALAN HOPE

Half of all teenagers are interested in starting their own business, and this percentage increases when schools undertake initiatives related to entrepreneurial activity, according to a study carried out by the Flanders District of Creativity knowledge centre at the Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School. "Teenagers have a positive view of entrepreneurs," said Flanders DC chairman Lorin Parys. "We're here to give entrepreneurs some encouragement."

Young people also think having their own business is an achievable goal. However, existing programmes to encourage young people to go into business for themselves tend to address this too late in their school careers, said Parys. This is particularly true in the general humanities education section ASO, whose students turn out to be the least interested in becoming business owners. The most entrepreneurial students are to be found in the technical (TSO), professional (BSO) and economy (EHK) streams.

"The study also shows that the more teenagers take part in activities surrounding entrepreneurship, the greater their intention to become entrepreneurs themselves," said Hans Crijns of Vlerick. "The effect is stronger as the contact is more intensive." One in three said they could see themselves running their own business, with boys scoring higher than girls. Four in 10 are already in business in some way, and one in three has a parent who had started or taken over a business.

Some of the main points from the study:

- Most projects in this area aim to increase the business skills of young people, but it is also valuable to work on stimulating their desire to go into business by presenting it as a valid career option.
- Entrepreneurship programmes receive uncommonly good evaluation scores both from students and teaching staff, and students devote substantial amounts of their free time to them.
- Students have a positive image of business people on the whole, with approval ratings increasing when personal contact has been made, even when the contact itself was not particularly positive.
- Four out of five schools have taken part in at least one programme; half of all schools have participated in two or more.
- The benefit of entrepreneurship programmes is not only shown in direct effects, like an increased intention to go into business, but also indirectly, with students more likely to consider themselves creative or more determined to go to work abroad.
- Activities not directly connected with questions of starting or running a business also have a positive effect on entrepreneurial desire: games, event organisation, etc. Such activities also provide a means of breaking down resistance to the idea of running a business.

"Creating more and stronger entrepreneurs is one of the central aims of the economic policy of this government," commented Kris Peeters, Flanders' minister-president and a former chairman of Unizo, the organisation that represents small businesses. "Stimulating entrepreneurship begins in education, all the way from primary school through to university."



The desire to become an entrepreneur has to be encouraged early, according to a new study. This photo from 1909 by Lewis Hine shows Hyman the newsboy, 12 years old and already a three-year career veteran.

Peeters, a graduate of Vlerick, talked about his government's support through the €1.5 million subsidy for projects to bridge the gap between schools and business. "That way we can help to close the gap between education theory and the business world," he said. "We can teach young people crucial attitudes, competencies and skills. But above all, we can give young people a taste for entrepreneurship."

Education minister Pascal Smet, meanwhile, said it was "of essential importance" that business people not only provide material support "but also play an active role in passing on knowledge. I'm thinking, for example, by acting as a coach or mentor or a role model for those taking part in the various projects."

The study covered more than 6,000 students in 200 schools, about half of whom had taken part in entrepreneurship programmes. Also polled were 380 teachers. The researchers received the cooperation of the organisations responsible for 21 projects. ♦

An article by Vlerick based on the study can be downloaded in English from [www.vlerick.com](http://www.vlerick.com) and in Dutch from [www.flandersdc.be](http://www.flandersdc.be).

## De Nul wins Iraq contract

Aalst-based dredging company Jan De Nul has been awarded the contract "after months-long negotiations" to dredge the port of Umm Qasr at the southernmost tip of Iraq close to the border with Kuwait. The port is Iraq's gateway to the Persian Gulf and the world and plays an important role in the traffic of imports and exports.



However, like Antwerp and the Westerschelde, which Jan De Nul will also be dredging (see page 2), the port can only be reached via a narrow channel, which over the years has silted up. The company will deploy two trailer hopper dredgers to deepen the channel to a depth of 12.5 metres. The work is expected to last eight months.

The company has worked in the Gulf region before, dredging for Iran in the past and currently working on contracts for Oman and Dubai. "The situation is a lot better than a few years ago," said Wim Dhont, regional manager. "We've prepared ourselves for every possible scenario." Extreme attention has been paid to the safety of staff, crew and vessels, the company said in a statement. In practice, that means the presence of private security guards, who will keep a low profile. The contract is worth €52 million. ♦

## Antwerp signs cooperation agreements

The Antwerp port authority will make greater efforts to reverse the decline in general cargo going through the port, it was announced last week. General cargo, also known as break bulk cargo, is anything not carried in freight containers and not loaded in bulk. Once the only way of transporting goods, it has been eclipsed somewhat by the arrival of the container. General cargo accounts for 10% of the tonnage going through Antwerp in a year – 15 million tonnes in 2009 – but because it is labour-intensive to handle, it accounts for 40% of the jobs in the port, providing jobs for about 2,400 dockers.

Last week the port authority signed five sectoral agreements on steel; fruit; forest products and roll-on, roll-off cargo, as well as "heavy lift" cargo: objects up to 1,000 tonnes in weight and 100 metres in length, which cannot fit conventional transports and require ad hoc transport planning.

The agreements, which group the port authority with Alfaport Antwerp and its five industry associations, aim to make Antwerp more competitive by raising the port's profile on the world stage. In recent years, Antwerp has lost share in break bulk to other ports, including Rotterdam but also Vlissingen and Dunkirk. Under the agreements, the port authority will organise trade days in the five cargo sectors, while at the same time taking part in international gatherings and conferences in Moscow, Houston, Sao Paulo and Munich. ♦

## THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

### Building • Batibouw

The giant trade show Batibouw returns to Brussels Expo from 27 February to 7 March. The fair traditionally attracts more than 300,000 visitors interested in the latest home building, renovation and decoration trends.

### Conference • World Economic Forum

The regional meeting of the Davos World Economic Forum will be held in Brussels in early May. The meeting is expected to attract about 400 of the area's top business and political figures.

### Economy • Inflation

Inflation rose in January for the first time in seven months. The retail index rose by 0.62%, pushed by higher energy and fresh food costs. The country's planning bureau expects inflation of 1.6% for the year.

### Entertainment • Brussels Casino

Brussels Casino, the €40 million investment by Casinos Austria International, will open officially on 22 April after more than two years of renovation work in the Brussels Anspach centre. It will operate 370 slot machines and 38 playing tables.

### Fashion • Carine Gilson

The rage of London and Paris lingerie lovers, Belgian designer Carine Gilson is to open her first Belgian boutique in Brussels' Dansaertstraat.

### Fashion • Elvis Pompillio

Elvis Pompillio, the famously outrageous Belgian hat designer and fashion icon, will re-open a store in Brussels in April, four years after closing his earlier venture.

### Fitness • Aspiria

The Aspiria fitness club located on Louizalaan in Brussels has been named Europe's best wellness club out of 300 venues surveyed by the European Consumers Choice Association.

### Retail • Winter sales

Fedis, the country's retailing industries federation, issued a victory statement on the back of successful winter sales. The federation notes that turnover rose 3% on average, despite the early days of January being affected by poor weather conditions. Meanwhile, the National Bank indicator of future business trends was higher in January for the 10th consecutive month, helped by strong gains in the manufacturing and services sectors.



# The art of can't

## Disability and communication link forces at BRONKS

SHARON LIGHT

Every town should have a youth theatre. I have many happy memories of my parents taking me to child-friendly productions, and I believe such events go a long way towards giving children appreciation for different ways of thinking and a love of creative expression. Moreover, these shows often offer something for adults, as much as children.

Brussels seems to agree. BRONKS youth theatre was founded in 1991 and nearly one year ago moved into its own building. This week, I was thrilled to attend my first BRONKS performance, *Niet kunnen is een kunst* (*Inability is an Art*).

On the surface, the show is about disabilities. But *Niet kunnen* turns them on their head, asking: what if disabilities were really superpowers?

The production is the brainchild of Jo Jochems and Randi De Vlieghe, winners of the Flemish Culture Prize for Youth Theatre in 2007 and 2008, respectively. Here, they are joined onstage by the blind dancer Saïd Gharbi and the deaf actress Hilde Verhelst.

Although the production never really explains itself, my interpretation is this: a team of three superheroes takes on a clumsy, timid new recruit, putting him through a series of tests to try to make him into superhero material.

On the one hand, *Niet kunnen* explores how we communicate – or fail to communicate – with one another. The blind and deaf may seem to us to face greater challenges in the realm of communication. But what we see onstage shows that we all have hindrances to overcome in communicating and that whatever holds us back, be it physical, mental or emotional, can and must be surmounted.

With different pairings, we find different challenges. Jochems, playing the new recruit, must learn to respond and hold his own in a weight-sharing quasi-dance with the blind Gharbi. Gharbi in turn calms down the deaf Verhelst, who signs her frustration at a game gone awry

– but Verhelst must use her hands on his, or vice versa, to explain herself.

The show's other goal seems to be the casting of these disabilities in a new light. Verhelst's sign language is presented as an art form, as she signs wildly against dramatic backlighting to bellowing orchestrations. It then becomes a superpower as she uses her signs as an invisible force to beat up the three men.

Gharbi, on the other hand, finds his way around the stage with such ease that you can easily forget he is blind. The careful choreography and his own sensitivities to stage space are to be commended in this transformation.

*Niet kunnen* is extremely physical; words and text (in Dutch) are secondary to action and movement. The set is clearly built for the show's physicality – it reminded me of the gym where I went as a child, including cushy mats, large foam tubes and a trampoline. The production also uses music to great effect, particularly in action sequences plucked out of a summer movie blockbuster.

All in all, *Niet kunnen* was creative, thought-provoking, well paced and even moving. Don't make the mistake of thinking that it's just for kids. ♦



© Raymond Valenijer

### Niet kunnen is een kunst

14 February, 15.00, BRONKS Theatre  
Varkensmarkt 15, Brussels

Until 23 March across Flanders

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

## Portrait of the artists

### The Flemish Community announces the annual Culture Prizes

LISA BRADSHAW

Literature and design have their own prestigious awards in Flanders, but the Culture Prizes of the Flemish Community, which were awarded on 1 February in the Kortrijkse Schouwburg, are the highest honours for most areas of arts and culture.

Artists being artists, they sometimes make statements. The composer Luc Brewaeys, who rejected his nomination this year, declared: "I would argue for sustained support for composers, rather than a consolation prize." He made headlines and got the public talking about their own and government's support of the arts.

Ironically, it makes him a perfect nominee for an award that is often successful at choosing artists who see risk-taking as an everyday part of their jobs and who continue to pioneer in art forms that seem like they must have offered everything they could by now. Not only the winners but the nominations for the Culture Prizes offer a clear picture of the names to watch in contemporary Flemish art and culture.

One of the most pleasant surprises this year was the award of Youth Theatre to Studio Orka, a Ghent-based duo formed only three years ago that offers the most inventive site-specific performances Flanders has to offer. This year's *Berninna*, performed in abandoned buildings across Flanders, was a mysterious trip through the home of Russian ghosts. Philippe Van de Velde and Martine Decroos are also illustrators and interior designers, which comes through in slightly unnerving sets that make one feel they are dangerously close to entering a place they shouldn't.

It's hard to imagine a more worthy recipient for the Visual Arts Culture Prize than Berlinde De Bruyckere, who deserves to have her name in lights, like fellow Flemish artists Jan Fabre and Wim Delvoye. She is probably best known for her visceral sculptures of twisted and bending flesh, bodies and half bodies in impossible contortions. Her upended

horse, meanwhile, made all the newspapers last year when it was exhibited as part of the show of Flemish artists at the National Museum of Singapore. Her work is earthy and emotional and embodies vulnerability and loneliness.

It was also very satisfying to see Peter De Graef, up against the more celebrity names of Bart Meuleman and Tom Lanoye, win for Theatre Writing. Having worked with nearly every Flemish theatre company in existence in his three decades both as writer and actor, he is an institution in the most positive sense – he continues to influence by refusing to remain static. His 2008 monologue *Zoals de dingen gaan...* (*As Things Go...*) was a remarkably perceptive treatise on how rewriting one's own biography is all but impossible.

The Lifetime Cultural Service award this year, which is not based on nominees, went to Eric Antonis, who has a long history of organising cultural events in Flanders, including acting as director of deWarende in Turnhout, revitalising a culture centre that looked ready to implode, supervising Antwerp's turn as the European Capital of Culture in 1993 and former Culture City Councillor of Antwerp. ♦

#### Other prizes this year went to:

bOb Van Reeth, Architecture  
Leen van Dijck of Letterenhuis, Cultural Heritage  
Renzo Martens, Film  
David Van Reybrouck, Critique and Essay  
Bert Joris, Music  
Benjamin Verdonck, theatre performance  
Centre for Agrarian History, Food Culture  
Onze Nieuwe Toekomst (Our New Future), Volunteer Organisation

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



Berlinde De Bruyckere's sculpture "We Are All Flesh"

© Mike Bruce



# More than meets the eye

Stefan Annerel's new exhibition is a deceptive mix of simplicity and splendour

REBECCA BENOOT

Photographic reproductions, such as you see on this page, don't do Stefan Annerel's work justice. Sure, pictures capture the vibrant colours and intricate structure, but these are works that have to be encountered face-to-face to truly appreciate their dazzling beauty and hidden depths. For lack of a better word, they have to be experienced.

Four years ago, the Antwerp-based painter accidentally discovered a technique that would make his work and career blossom. "Adding resin to my works made them very glossy and, hence, tactile. It transforms the multiple layers and colours and adds an entirely new dimension," he tells me at the opening of his new show *Counterchange* in Antwerp's Kusseneers Gallery.

That first thing that strikes you about Annerel's works is indeed their unexpected gloss, which is complimented by rich colours and bold, constructivist patterns. They exude sumptuous sophistication despite seeming quite simple. Take a closer look, and you find that this isn't your average two-dimensional canvas.

Annerel work is in multiple layers, turned into a whole due to the resin. They beg to be viewed from different angles; new aspects are revealed, luring you deeper into each painting and into the wonder of their creation.

Annerel's technique is exceptional. "I get my inspiration from advertisements in magazines, pieces of fabric, even very trivial things like the typical pattern of the bag that most people carry their laundry to the launderette in," he explains. "I extract a piece, take it out of its original context and create a collage. By adding several layers of paint, paper or plastic on top, I not only expand its original form but also its colours, creating an illusion of fact and fiction." Finally, he's applies the resin to all of the layers. The resin is what is responsible for a contrast that adds both gloss and an almost tangible depth to the pieces. These two characteristics together make the artist's work very distinguishable.

"If you stare at something like a detail in a photograph long enough, it detaches itself from

its original meaning and gains a whole new one," Annerel continues. This play on reality is also one of the key features in his work. The mundane tidbits that influenced him are not only immortalised but are transformed into an experience reminiscent of a fading memory.

Annerel's works are like mysteries waiting to be unravelled, but at the same time, any true meaning seems to stay beyond our grasp. The result is an enchanting web of multiple associations. Their titles, however, may help guide you in the right direction.

The title *Counterchange* refers to a weaving technique that inspired Annerel to create works that incorporate similar patterns. He transforms a figurative element into an abstract masterpiece with a dash of *trompe l'oeil*.

## Counterchange

Kusseneers Gallery  
De Burburestraat 11  
Antwerp

→ [www.kusseneers.com](http://www.kusseneers.com)

### Also in Antwerp galleries this month

#### A bout de Souffle - Ilse D'Hollander

Geukens & De Vil

In 1997, this talented young painter from Ghent committed suicide. A bout de Souffle offers a selection of her final works, which radiate tranquillity and grace. Titled after the famous Godard film, the pieces are characterised by subtle, almost dancing, lines and overlapping colours. D'Hollander seems to channel her tormented thoughts, as well as the joy of painting, into these powerful pieces.

→ [www.geukensdevil.com](http://www.geukensdevil.com)

#### De Zomer - Nicolas Verhulst

Galerie Van De Weghe

Paintings of luscious landscapes and the essence of nature play the title roles in this almost soothing exhibition with Impressionistic tendencies. The Flemish artist created this collection on location in Ardooie (West Flanders), Oyé (France) and Slawnikowice (Poland) last year. Verhulst goes back to nature, back to basics, even when bringing one of art's oldest and most beloved themes into the 21st century. In an age where anything goes, the Flemish artist bravely proves that the ever-changing glory of nature is something to be cherished forever.

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



## FILM REVIEW

### Bo

LISA BRADSHAW

"The Flemish Brigitte Bardot" blared the headline in *Het Nieuwsblad* a few weeks ago above an interview with Elle-June Henrard. Although the resemblance essentially stops at the lips, Henrard (pictured) is indeed a beautiful young woman, snatched out of secondary school to play the role of a teenager lured into the world of high-class prostitution.

Henrard plays Deborah (Bo for short), a normal 15-year-old girl, who goes to school in Antwerp, lies in the sun with her boyfriend, shops with her girlfriends. But the shopping is a big problem. Bo lives on the wrong side of the tracks – her father is gone, and her mother, grandfather and little brother are barely able to pay the rent in their housing development. Bo just doesn't have the money for the clothes, gadgets and make-up that teenage girls feel impoverished without. She is poor, and she is embarrassed.

Unlike some other teens in the same situation, Bo remains popular by being chatty and exceptionally pretty. And her home life is, if financially stressful, certainly loving.

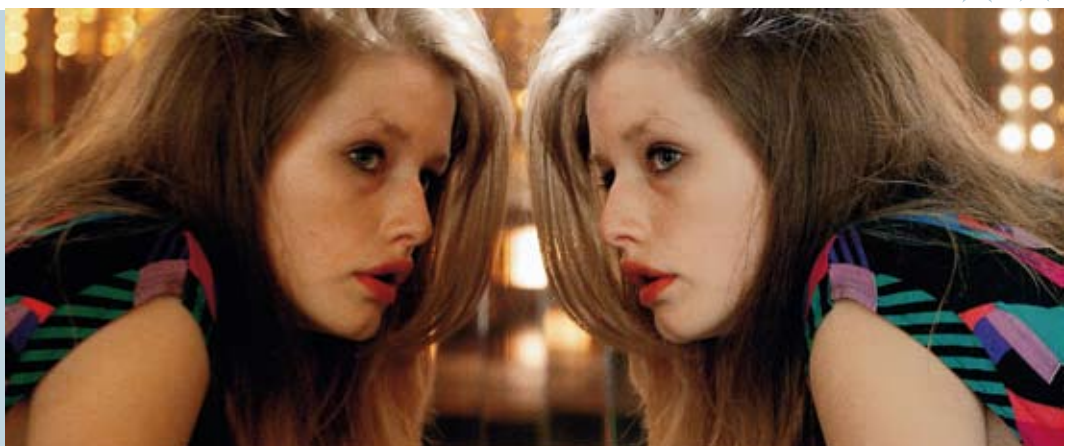
But none of this is enough to keep her from following the advice of a new friend, who always seems to have a lot of money and a lot of fun. She introduces Bo to her pimp, the attractive 20-something Vincent (Thomas Ryckewaert). He sets her up with the right clothes and jewellery, slowly and methodically convincing her to do more and more for the

middle-aged businessmen who make up his clientele.

*Bo* is directed by Hans Herbots, who adapted the Flemish youth novelist Dirk Bracke's *Het Engelenhuis*. Bracke had met several teenage prostitutes when he appeared in an Antwerp juvenile facility to talk about his books. When he wrote this book on youth prostitution, all the girls wanted their names to be in it.

This attitude of pride and independence comes across clearly in *Bo*; even when she is found out and confined to a facility, the title character is simply unwilling to stop the job she must tranquilise herself to endure. Wads of cash – whether offering it to your mother for groceries or buying a pair of designer jeans – is worth it.

Herbots, whose credits include the tepid *Verlengd weekend* and *Windkracht 10: Koksijde Rescue*, does a fine job creating the atmosphere necessary to understand the temp-



tations and naivety that lead to such a situation. He also makes excellent use of Antwerp's left bank, Linkeroever, a popular film location spot for its concrete slabs and the long tunnel that cuts it off from the rest of society.

The film builds gradually but finishes rather quickly; the actors seem to rush through the final half an hour. But they are easy to watch as they move through the actions that illustrate youth prostitution in all its ugly realities. And Henrard, indeed, is not just a pretty face. It is a tough role for a 16-year-old girl, and she manages the subtleties that keep the character caught between childhood and adult desire. Flemish filmmakers are probably lining up with contracts, pens in hand.

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





# Go go, roller girl!

## Americans launch Flanders' first-ever roller derby team

COURTNEY DAVIS

As I strap on my knee pads, elbow pads, wrist guards and helmet, I get the sensation I'm readying for battle. In many ways, this isn't too far from the truth. I'm dressing for roller derby practice.

A full contact, all-female sport on roller skates, derby is the closest I've ever come to violence. Between the hitting, fighting for position and inevitable face time on the ground, no one leaves the floor without feeling like they've just picked a fight with the biggest guy (or gal) in the room.

Yet here I am again, on a Wednesday night in Aalst, lacing my quad skates and cruising onto the floor of the rink, ready for another beating. My friends laugh at attaching the adjective "tough" to my name. Yet two to three times a week, I join a ragtag group of women called the Gent Go-Go Roller Girls and skate, hustle and hit my way to exhaustion.

There is nothing quite like derby. My infatuation began a few years back when I saw my first live bout in Boston. The female-friendly crowd was a peculiar mix of atypical sport fans. There were older lesbian couples, entire families snacking on hot dogs and rockabilly greasers with hair slicked into pompadours. Between the plastic cups of cheap lager, the half-time show featuring a punk rock band and the stunning high intensity skating, I was hooked.

The premise is easy: five women on a team, opposing teams on a track the size of a basketball court, usually marked with tape on the floor. Each team has three defensive "blockers", a "jammer" who scores points and a "pivot", who is both a blocker and sets the pace of the game. A point is scored for every blocker on the opposing team who the jammer passes.

Blockers try to prevent the opposing jammer from skating past them using hip and shoulder checks. Meanwhile, these blockers work to assist their own jammer in getting ahead, with more blocking, hitting and scrambling to create an extra inch of space on the track – all a good skater needs to manoeuvre ahead.

Strong elbows and unfriendly shoving are not allowed – but aren't unheard of. After the two-minute jam ends, the teams have 30 seconds to regroup and switch players. Speed, stamina and toughness: the game lasts an hour and is exhausting.

Two months after watching my first bout, I moved to Belgium and found my skating plans facing a delay. Roller derby did not exist here.

The sport has a long history, dating back to the early 1900s in the United States with races for both men and women that eventually turned into endurance competitions that emphasised physical contact. Throughout the 20th century, roller derby experienced ups and downs, with its heyday in the 1950s and its eventual demise in

the '70s. Its popularity was revived for a short-lived, much-maligned TV spectacle that involved over-the-top theatrics.

Today, roller derby has re-emerged as a woman-only, competitive sport with an emphasis on athleticism, do-it-yourself spirit and a highly enjoyable burlesque element. This is showcased in the generally wild and often sexy gear and the names derby girls take, such as Sleazy Rider, Hurt Copain and Paris Kill-ton.

My name is Grace Smelly. Some of my teammates are Catastro-fie, Bang Bang Barbie, Helbiest (an anagram of Liesbeth) and Julie Jawbreaker.

The Go-Gos are an excellent example, in fact, of how roller derby is still evolving. Although it has been reclaimed as an underground subculture in the US, now, almost 10 years later, it is more mainstream. Ours is not the typical derby team of alternative misfits but rather a diverse group of women drawn to the sport for the sport itself, rather than the associated scene.

Roller derby is growing at an exponential rate. The US Women's Flat Track Association (WFTDA) formed in 2004, had 50 American leagues in 2007 and now has over 78 worldwide, with 34 more leagues in formation. The interest surpasses cultures and languages, with teams all over the UK and Germany, and more forming in Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark. And now, Flanders.

Julie Jawbreaker, an American six-year derby veteran and the Go-Gos coach began playing with the Carolina Rollergirls in 2004. "Since then, derby has exploded, and there are multiple resources available that help speed the process along," she says. "And the level of skill and competition has evolved incredibly. The athleticism has become much more serious. I think that modern-day roller derby is being viewed more as a competitive sport and less as a spectacle on wheels. The edginess still exists, but the bouts are all real."

With a handful of other women, I launched the Go-Go Girls in 2008, having moved to Ghent the year before. With no skating skills, zero derby experience and no idea what gear to buy, we struggled to come together. Julie Jawbreaker's arrival a few months later got the team rolling. With nearly 30 members, we practice three times a week. From endurance skates and speed lines to falling drills and agility tests, our new coach has shaped us into real skaters.

"I like the fact that if you practice, the sport is open to anyone. You can join without any experience with sports or even skating because we'll train you and train you well."

For this brand-new, international team, there is also a social aspect. "Having just moved to Belgium, I had no social circles. I joined the Go-Gos and voilà, almost instantly went from being friendless to being a



Your roving roller derby reporter, Courtney Davis

socialite! And of course, derby is so much fun that you stay in shape without realising you are exercising."

Because no one is very familiar with roller derby in Flanders, the Go-Gos are pioneering in brand-new territory. We have created a logo, website and signed up for insurance. We have monthly meetings, sell merchandise and plan events. The goal is to integrate roller derby into the Flemish vocabulary. Ultimate, we will be able to host visiting teams and build a fan base. The passion of roller derby has caught some Flemish women off guard. Helbiest, a 22-year-old student, was surprised at what was required of her. "It's mind blowing how much time and work goes into running things! But I'm happy I'm able to contribute. I made our event poster from a woodcut, which was nice because I was able to integrate my other passions into my new passion."

Catastro-fie, an architectural project developer known as Sofie by day, didn't join actively but slowly got drawn in. "At first, it was the roller skating that attracted me," the 36-year-old says. "I didn't even know we were talking about derby. I realised that later and by then the group atmosphere and the culture of it were such nice environments that I couldn't leave."

Liesbeth captures the feeling: "It's changing me in a good way. I want to keep on getting better, stronger, faster." ♦

### Derbylicious Party!

Meet the Gent Go-Go Roller Girls at their first Derbylicious Party. DJs, drinks, video clips, plus merchandise for sale and plenty of chance to talk to players, should you be inspired to join the fray of bouting dames. 19 February, from 21.00, Sioux, Platteberg 8, Ghent

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



Julie Jawbreaker (middle) on the move in the US



The Gent Go-Go Roller Girls



# Choc and awe

## On the frontiers of taste with Flanders' own Willy Wonka

ALAN HOPE

Tasting chocolates with Dominique Persoone in his shop on the Simon Stevinplein in Bruges is mood-enhancing, and not just because of the dopamine and serotonin in the chocolate. Persoone (pictured) is the most famous chocolate maker in Bruges, a city of chocolate makers. Among foodies, he's the most famous in the country, and one of only three chocolatiers featured in the Michelin Guide. He's the most adventurous of all of his celebrated neighbours because he's working on a limited playing field: Persoone pairs *everything* with chocolate. Where three-star chef Peter Goossens puts curry in his langoustines, and Dutch master chef Sergio Hermans uses oysters with cockles and sake jus, Persoone pairs both ingredients with chocolate.

"I'm a cook, not a real chocolate maker, so that's why I have a little bit of a different vision of making chocolate and of tastes," he explains. "In the beginning, when you make chocolates with cauliflower or peas or smoked eel, people look at you like, what's going on? But after a while, particularly since we made it into the Michelin Guide, they took us more seriously."

Since starting with a cauliflower praline, his range has expanded in ever more unlikely directions: chocolates with wasabi, olive oil, saffron (see sidebar). He makes chocolates for some of the country's most famous restaurants, including the Comme Chez Soi in Brussels and Hof Van Cleve in Kruishoutem and for Hermans' Oud Sluis. "It's very important to listen to the chefs – to how they see a great flavour combination. And of course the vision of Mr Wynants from Comme Chez Soi and the vision of Sergio Hermans from Oud Sluis are very different."

Persoone also works with Heston Blumenthal of the Fat Duck in England, considered one of the best chefs in the world. And he made his own expeditions to Mexico and other chocolate-producing countries. That brought the rustic recipe of the Aztecs together with molecular gastronomy.

"I really wanted to make the *mole poblano*," he explains, referring to the Mexican chick-

ken and chocolate sauce recipe. "I was thinking, how can I make a chocolate with chicken inside? This is why it's very interesting to work with the great chefs – one of the latest things in the kitchen was a device to make crunchy chips with the skin of chickens or duck. So we took a big fat chicken, took off its skin, boiled it in salted water, dried it and fried it. You get a kind of *kroepoek* made of chicken skin; you smash that up and mix it with the herbs, and you have the mole poblano inside of the chocolate."

It sounds slightly mad. But that madness is in big demand.

Persoone was the only chocolatier invited as a guest to the recent Flemish Primitives event in Bruges, at which food professionals from around the world learn about new techniques in gastronomy and especially food pairing. The event is organised by Bernard Lahousse, founder of the website [www.foodpairing.be](http://www.foodpairing.be), where anyone can find out which two foodstuffs, on the basis of molecular analysis, go together.

Events like the Flemish Primitives allow Persoone to give full rein to his Willy Wonka tendencies: last year he had the audience watch a film of a baby and listen to a baby cry while they ate a praline in the shape of a breast leaking sweet milk. They also tasted a praline containing the essence of cut grass while viewing scenes from an English garden.

Isn't there a danger of innovating for innovation's sake? "The problem is that people are judging before they taste," he responds. "In France when I say I make chocolate with fried onions, their faces go grey. If you're about to eat something, and your brain's already telling you it's going to be disgusting, well, it's going to be disgusting. But if you say hmm, maybe that could be fun, you'll try it and find the right balance between chocolate and the product, whatever it is, tomato or olives let's say."

He sets out a tray with two kinds of chocolate nibs – fragments of the roasted cocoa bean. One is a standard Forestero bean, which makes up 95% of world production.



© Nora Nikowitz

Dominique Persoone's book *Cacao: The Roots of Chocolate* is published in Dutch, English, French and Spanish by Françoise Blouard Éditeur

→ [www.francoiseblouard.com](http://www.francoiseblouard.com)

## Valentine's choice

A selection of the following would be perfect for an intimate little tasting session. Go from the popping cola jelly via the boozy chocs to the hot and spicy exotics.

**The Hof Van Cleve** The praline made for Flemish chef Peter Goossens' three-star restaurant is a long strip that looks, as Persoone says, "like a piece of Kit-Kat". Inside is a jelly of *griotte*, a very sour cherry, on a *ganache* of samba tea. It's a very grown-up, subtle flavour with an expert balance of acid and sweet.

**The Oud Sluis** The chocolate made for Sergio Hermans is more flashy, a bombe filled with ganache of Cabernet Sauvignon vinegar on a bed of pine nuts. The vinegar is strong but not overwhelming, with an almost *digestif* quality.

**The Yuzu ball** Also made for Sergio Hermans, this chocolate has a ball made by the modern technique of spherification, containing an unctuous salve of yuzu, a Japanese citrus fruit of surprising intensity. The other half contains crunchy puffed rice.

**The Chocolate Shooter** Two tiny doses of powdered chocolate laced with mint and ginger. Snuffed up the nose, the immediate effect is to open up the nasal passages, like a pinch of mild snuff. When that dies down, you're left with chocolate on the brain: it's not a taste or a smell, but more like the *idea* of chocolate.

**The Tequila Choc-tail** A chocolate with Maldon salt flakes on one side and a plastic pipette poking out. You lick the salt flakes, squirt the tequila from the pipette into your mouth, then round it all off with the chocolate, which contains the lime, for the old Mexican one-two-three.

**Other highlights** Dark chocolate containing black olive, tomato and basil filling or, in other words, a pizza. Cola chocolate containing cola jelly and pop-rocks. Fried Onions: you might recoil in horror, but it's a delicious *umami* foil to the bitterness of the chocolate. Pralines containing wasabi, chilli, saffron or curry. Chocolate was never meant to be this way, but once you've tried it, it's hard to go back to boring old butter-creams



© Nora Nikowitz



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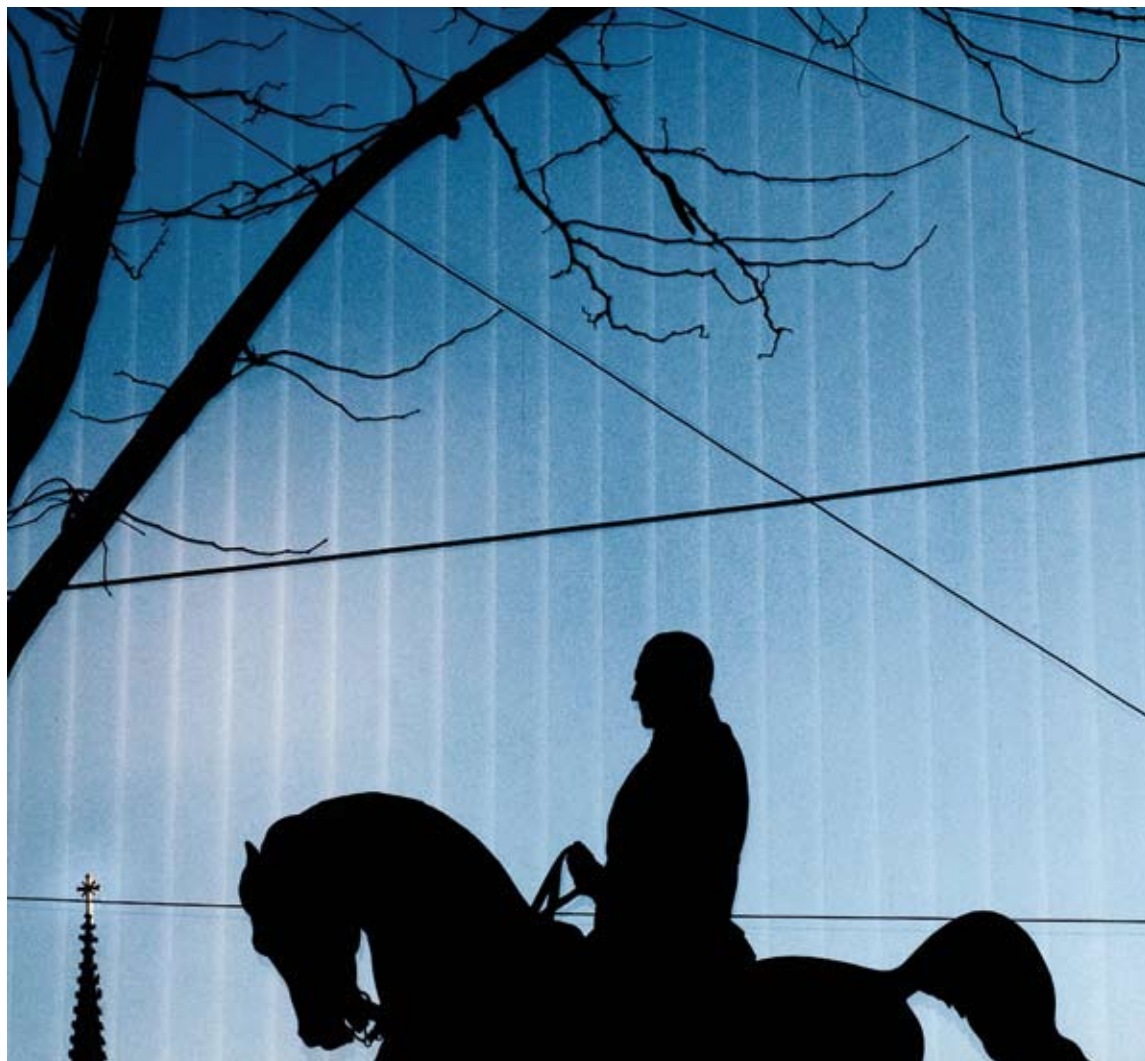
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## GOSSELIN moving

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# Don Carlos

MARIE DUMONT

The longest and blackest of Verdi's operas, *Don Carlos* is also the only one with a – partly – Flemish plot. It's 1559, and the Low Countries are smarting under Spanish rule. Don Carlos, the son of King Philip II of Spain, has just met and fallen in love with the woman he is to marry, the French king's daughter Elisabeth de Valois. When Philip decides to keep Elisabeth for himself, Carlos turns political and existential rebel and joins the cause of the oppressed Flemings.

*Don Carlos* is no obvious masterpiece – it lacks both the lyrical grace of *La Traviata* and the frantic pulse of *Rigoletto*. One of those operas that took ages to compose, underwent countless revisions and never seemed to reach their final form, it wields its charm gradually. Yet many regard it as Verdi's finest, as much for the unnerving, claustrophobic plot that dovetails political interests with private fates, as for the score, a welter of strange harmonies and haunting melodic lines that flow in and out of recitatives and arias.

This production of the Vlaamse Opera is, astonishingly, the first time the work is shown in its entirety in Belgium. The score will be conducted by Alexander Joel (who happens to be pop singer Billy Joel's half-brother). As for the staging, it is the repeat of an infamous production by Peter Konwitschny.

One of Germany's most controversial opera directors, Konwitschny believes that works from the past can and must be reinvented to fit the *Zeitgeist*. He has remained uncharacteristically conservative in his choice of source, opting for the earlier and longer of the work's two versions – the one composed in 1867 for the Paris opera – and keeping two long scenes that are normally cut.

The wackiness is saved for the staging, which explodes standard operatic conventions and will surely touch a chord with the Antwerp public. Nowhere is it more effective than in the scene in Act III in which elegant Spaniards assemble to witness the burning

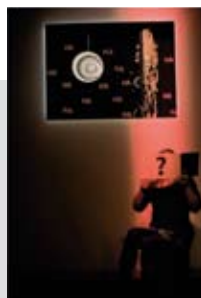
at the stake of a bunch of heretics. Konwitschny drags us headlong into the violence by showing the Spaniards sipping champagne as they wait for the show to begin, looking too close to us for comfort in their tails and evening dresses, and spilling out from the stage into the parterre and foyer.

In comes Carlos (French tenor Jean-Pierre Furlan) with a group of Flemish envoys, interrupting the ceremony by handing out leaflets to the public and pleading for their freedom in one of those rousing patriotic tunes that only Verdi knew how to compose. Never mind that they sing it in French – everyone in the audience will have their heart in their throat. ♦

**12 February to  
13 March**

*Vlaamse Opera  
Frankrijklei 1, Antwerp*

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



## MORE MUSIC THEATRE THIS WEEK

**De Duivel Beduveld, LOD** → *Bozar, Brussels*

**Ruhe, Muziektheater Transparant** → *30CC, Leuven*

**Was will das Weib, Els Dottermans** → *CC Kapellen*



### Alseberg

#### CC De Meent

Gemeenveldstraat 34; 02.359.16.00,  
[www.demeent.be](http://www.demeent.be)  
**FEB 12** 20.15 Tom Pintens

### Antwerp

#### Arenbergschouwburg

Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192,  
[www.arenbergschouwburg.be](http://www.arenbergschouwburg.be)  
**FEB 11** 20.15 Frank Boeijen  
**FEB 16** 20.30 Holly Williams  
**FEB 17** 20.15 Maurice Engelen and friends

### De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40,  
[www.deroma.be](http://www.deroma.be)  
**FEB 10** 20.30 Sioen  
**FEB 14** 20.30 Raymond van het Groenewoud is 60

### Lotto Arena

Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345,  
[www.sportpaleis.be](http://www.sportpaleis.be)  
**FEB 14** 20.00 Stan Van Samang

### Petrol

Herbouvillekaai 21; 03.226.49.63,  
[www.petrolclub.be](http://www.petrolclub.be)  
**FEB 12** 22.00 Kryptic Minds + Kutz + Stenchman + more  
**FEB 13** 21.00 Postman + Pretty Lights + Turntable Dubbers

### Rataplan

Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40,  
[www.rataplanvzw.be](http://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](http://www.trixonline.be)  
**FEB 11** 20.00 The King Khan & BBQ Show + Catacombo  
**FEB 12** 19.30 We Are O'pen featuring Das Pop + Mintzkov + Dez Mona + Bettie Serveert and more  
**FEB 13** 19.30 We Are O'pen featuring Absynthe Minded + Customs + Jef Neve & Groovething + Paranoiacs + School is Cool and more  
**FEB 17** 19.00 Floorpunch + True Colors + Rhythm to the Madness + AYS

### Bornem

#### CC Ter Dilft

Sint-Amandsesteenweg 41; 03.890.69.30,  
[www.terdilft.be](http://www.terdilft.be)  
**FEB 11** 20.30 Utopia  
**FEB 12** 20.30 Yevgueni

### Bruges

#### MaZ

Magdalenastraat 27; 050.44.30.40,  
[www.ccbrugge.be](http://www.ccbrugge.be)  
**FEB 11** 20.00 Maria Timm

### Brussels

#### Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24,  
[www.abconcerts.be](http://www.abconcerts.be)  
Concerts at 20.00:  
**FEB 11** Sarah Jaffe + Midlake **FEB 12** Rachid Taha. Teme Tan + Maria Timm (Coca-Cola sessions) **FEB 13** BB Brunes  
**FEB 16** Between the Buried and Me + August Burns Red + Job for a Cowboy + Lamb of God

#### Beursschouwburg

August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,  
[www.beursschouwburg.be](http://www.beursschouwburg.be)  
**FEB 13** 22.00 Paula Newwoman + Heidi Mortenson

#### Café Bonnefooi

Steenstraat 8; 0487.62.22.31,  
[www.bonnefooi.be](http://www.bonnefooi.be)  
**FEB 10** 22.00 Franciss  
**FEB 14-28** 20.30 The Bonnefooi Acoustic Jam

#### Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89,  
[www.fuse.be](http://www.fuse.be)  
**FEB 13** 23.00 Ostgut Label Night: Marcel Dettmann, Ben Klock. Lessizmore

## GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

### Walking with Dinosaurs

**22-24 May**

**Brussels Expo**

If you couldn't get tickets to this sold-out show last year in Antwerp, here's your second chance. This entertainment extravaganza of life-size dinosaurs foraging, playing and fighting is based on the remarkable BBC series of the same name. The creatures are so authentic looking, jaws drop and little kids freak out.



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

presents Kabale und Liebe, Boris Werner, visuals by Swayways

### Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15,  
[www.cirque-royal.org](http://www.cirque-royal.org)  
**FEB 16** 20.00 S.C.U.M + The Horrors

### Le Bar du Matin

Alsebergsesteenweg 172; 02.537.71.59,  
<http://bardumatin.blogspot.com>  
**FEB 11** 21.00 Dig Up Elvis

### Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34,  
[www.recyclart.be](http://www.recyclart.be)  
**FEB 12** 00.00 That's a Fact presents Liquor Techno: Deg + Peter Van Hoesen aka Vanno + Rem + Bat

### Sazz'n Jazz

Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78,  
[www.sazznjazz.be](http://www.sazznjazz.be)  
**FEB 16** 20.30 Half Asleep + Nancy Elizabeth  
**FEB 17** 20.30 KD Blackbird

### Dendermonde

#### Cultuurcentrum Belgica

Kerkstraat 24; 05.220.26.40,  
[www.ccbelgica.be](http://www.ccbelgica.be)  
**FEB 11** 20.00 Balzaal der Gebroken Harten (Part 2), featuring Guido Belcanto, Lady Angelina, Vitalski and Martin Jansen

### Dilbeek

#### CC Westrand

Kamerijklaan; 02.466.20.30,  
[www.westrand.be](http://www.westrand.be)  
**FEB 13** 20.30 Hommage to Jacques Brel featuring Filip Jordens & Les Chopins du p'tit Matin

### Eeklo

#### N9 Villa

Molenstraat 165; 09.377.93.94, [www.n9.be](http://www.n9.be)  
**FEB 12** 21.00 BJ Scott



## Ghent

**Cafe Video**  
Oude Beestenmarkt 7; [www.cafevideo.be](http://www.cafevideo.be)  
**FEB 10** 21.30 Intergactic Lovers

**Charlatan**  
Vlasmarkt 6; 09.224.24.57,  
[www.charlatan.be](http://www.charlatan.be)  
**FEB 10** 22.00 Bodebrixen  
**FEB 11** 22.00 Lick My Click

**Handelsbeurs**  
Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01,  
[www.handelsbeurs.be](http://www.handelsbeurs.be)  
**FEB 10** 20.15 The Veils

**Vooruit**  
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060,  
[www.vooruit.be](http://www.vooruit.be)  
**FEB 11** 19.30 Club Midi: Tarrus Riley  
with Dean Fraser + I-Octane + Duane  
Stephenson + Pirates Crew 20.00 Clara  
Clara  
**FEB 12** 21.00 Front 242

## Grimbergen

**CC Strombeek**  
Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43,  
[www.ccstrombeek.be](http://www.ccstrombeek.be)  
**FEB 11** 20.30 Will Tura

## Hasselt

**Muziekodroom**  
Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13,  
[www.muziekodroom.be](http://www.muziekodroom.be)  
**FEB 11** 20.00 The Veils 20.30 Blues Lee

## Leuven

**Het Depot**  
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03,  
[www.hetdepot.be](http://www.hetdepot.be)  
**FEB 11** 20.00 Smart  
**FEB 12** 20.00 Customs  
**FEB 13** 20.00 Menaham Street Band +  
Lee Fields & The Expressions

**Sporthal Rijschool**  
Rijschoolstraat 21; 0474.27.95.57,  
[www.boombal.be](http://www.boombal.be)  
**FEB 11** 20.00 Boombal Leuven

**STUK**  
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20,  
[www.stuk.be](http://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](http://www.lierscultuurcentrum.be)  
**FEB 11** 20.15 Sioen

## Mechelen

**CC Mechelen - Kerk**  
Minderbroedersgang 5; 015.294.000  
**FEB 11** 20.15 Johann Johansson &  
Hildur Gudnadottir

## Meise

**GC De Muze**  
Brusselsesteenweg 69; 02.272.00.29,  
[www.demuzevanmeise.be](http://www.demuzevanmeise.be)  
**FEB 11** 20.00 Raymond van het  
Groenewoud - Raymond is 60!

## Overijse

**CC De Bosuil**  
Witherendreef 1; 02.657.31.79,  
[www.debosuil.be](http://www.debosuil.be)  
**FEB 12** 20.30 Kathleen Vandenhoudt

## Turnhout

**De Warande**  
Warandestraat 42; 014.41. 69.91,  
[www.warande.be](http://www.warande.be)  
**FEB 10** 20.15 Johann Johansson



## Antwerp

**Buster**  
Kaasrui 1; 03.232.51.53,  
[www.busterpodium.be](http://www.busterpodium.be)  
**FEB 12** 22.00 Frank De Wolf Trio  
**FEB 13** 22.00 Lamà

**De Hopper**  
Leopold De Waelstraat 2; 03.248.49.33,  
[www.cafehopper.be](http://www.cafehopper.be)  
**FEB 14** 16.00 Merijn Bruneel group  
(free)  
**FEB 15** 21.30 Royal Roost (free)  
**FEB 16** 21.00 Karin Ottelohe Quartet

**Rataplan**  
Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40,  
[www.rataplanvzw.be](http://www.rataplanvzw.be)  
**FEB 12** 20.30 Pascal Mohy Trio

## Bruges

**De Werf**  
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29,  
[www.dewerf.be](http://www.dewerf.be)  
**FEB 13** 20.30 Pascal Mohy Trio

## Brussels

**Jazz Station**  
Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78  
Concerts at 20.30:  
**FEB 10** 4in1 **FEB 11** The Bundle **FEB**  
**13** Pi - 4 **FEB 17** Pixl

**Le Caveau du Max**  
Emile Maxlaan 87; 02.733.17.88,  
[www.lemax.be](http://www.lemax.be)  
**FEB 11** 19.30 Daniel Willem Gypsy  
Jazz Quartet (dinner concert)

**Sazz'n Jazz**  
Koningssstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78,  
[www.sazznjazz.be](http://www.sazznjazz.be)  
**FEB 11** Sara So Far Quartet  
**FEB 12** 20.30 Dan Miller Showcase

## Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50,  
[www.soundsjazzclub.be](http://www.soundsjazzclub.be)  
Concerts at 22.00:  
**FEB 12-13** Pascal Schumacher Quartet  
**FEB 15** Master Session **FEB 16** Laurent  
Dumont **FEB 17** Groove Thing

## The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45,  
[www.themusicvillage.com](http://www.themusicvillage.com)  
Concerts at 21.00:  
**FEB 10** Igor Gehenot Trio **FEB 11** F, B  
and I Trio with Nicola Andrioli **FEB**  
**12** Mahé Parker **FEB 13-14** Elaine  
McKeown & The Swingmasters:  
Billie Holiday Songbook **FEB 16**  
Merijn Bruneel Group **FEB 17** Malte  
Dürsschnabel 4tet

## Diksmuide

**CC Kruispunt**  
Maria Doolaeghestraat 2b; 05.151.91.56,  
[www.cckruispunt.be](http://www.cckruispunt.be)  
**FEB 13** 20.00 Jo Arend and The Swing  
Time Society Big Band

## Ghent

**De Bijloke**  
Kluyskensstraat 2j; 09.233.68.78,  
[www.bijloke.be](http://www.bijloke.be)  
**FEB 10** 20.00 Avishai Cohen Quintet

## Grimbergen

**CC Strombeek**  
Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43,  
[www.ccstrombeek.be](http://www.ccstrombeek.be)  
**FEB 10** 20.30 Michel Bisceglia, jazz  
piano

## Kortrijk

**De Kreun**  
Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44,  
[www.dekreun.be](http://www.dekreun.be)  
**FEB 14** 20.00 Jef Neve presents  
Groovething

## Leuven

**STUK**  
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20,  
[www.stuk.be](http://www.stuk.be)  
**FEB 12** 20.00 & 22.00 Lars Horntveth  
+ Emanon



## Antwerp

**Zuiderpershuis**  
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00,  
[www.zuiderpershuis.be](http://www.zuiderpershuis.be)  
**FEB 11** 20.30 Tartit (Niger)

## Bruges

**De Werf**  
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29,  
[www.dewerf.be](http://www.dewerf.be)  
**FEB 15** 20.30 Percussion Discussion  
Afrika (Uganda)

## Stadsschouwburg

Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.40,  
[www.cultuurcentrumbrugge.be](http://www.cultuurcentrumbrugge.be)  
**FEB 17-18** 20.00 Joost Zweegers

## Brussels

**Art Base**  
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20,  
[www.art-base.be](http://www.art-base.be)  
**FEB 12** 20.00 Necati Celik, Ottoman  
classical music  
**FEB 14** 13.30 Ambertango

## Sazz'n Jazz

Koningssstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78,  
[www.sazznjazz.be](http://www.sazznjazz.be)  
**FEB 13** 21.00 Grup Cemre, traditional  
Turkish music

## Lier

**CC De Mol**  
Aarschotsesteenweg 3; 03.488.06.79,  
[www.lierscultuurcentrum.be](http://www.lierscultuurcentrum.be)  
**FEB 12** 20.15 Juan Carlos Caceres  
(Argentina)



## Antwerp

**Amuz**  
Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28,  
[www.amuz.be](http://www.amuz.be)  
**FEB 12** 21.00 Sophie Gent, violin; Kris  
Verhelst, harpsichord: JS Bach's sonatas  
and partitas  
**FEB 14** 15.00 Dialogos medieval vocal  
ensemble, conducted by Katarina  
Livljanic, and Kantaduri traditional vocal  
ensemble, conducted by Josko Caleta:  
sacred songs from Dalmatia

## deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,  
[www.desingel.be](http://www.desingel.be)  
Concerts at 20.00:  
**FEB 11** Sonia Wieder-Atherton,  
cello; Imogen Cooper, piano: Janacek,  
Mendelssohn, Schumann, more

## Brussels

**Bozar**  
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,  
[www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)  
**FEB 11-12** 20.00 Daniel Barenboim,  
piano: Chopin  
**FEB 14** 11.00 Axel Bosquillon de Jenlis,  
cello; Simona Zajancauskaite, piano:  
Joseph Jongen, Rachmaninov 18.00  
Ensemble Oculum: Morales, Victoria,  
Alonso Lobo

## Minimienkerk

Minimienstraat 62; 02.511.93.84,  
[www.minimes.net](http://www.minimes.net)  
**FEB 10** 20.00 Huelgas Ensemble,  
conducted by Paul Van Nevel, and  
Blindman sax quartet, conducted by Eric  
Sleichim: Renaissance Flemish polyphony  
by Johannes Ghiselin, Pieter Maessens,  
Roland de Lassus and more, plus  
contemporary pieces by John Cage

## Musical Instruments Museum

Hofberg 2; 02.545.01.30, [www.mim.be](http://www.mim.be)  
**FEB 12** 12.30 Singers from the Brussels  
Conservatory: Schubert

## Royal Music Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37,  
[www.kcb.be](http://www.kcb.be)  
**FEB 11** 20.00 Chamber Orchestra of the  
Brussels Conservatory conducted by Paul  
Dombrecht

## Wolubilis

Paul Hymanslaan 251; 02.761.60.30,  
[www.wolubilis.be](http://www.wolubilis.be)  
**FEB 15** 20.00 Jan Michiels, piano;  
Andrew Hardy, violin; Justus Grimm,  
cello: Brahms, Schubert, Beethoven  
(benefit concert)

## DON'T MISS



## Anima

### 12-20 February Flagey, Brussels

Belgium is becoming a hub of  
animating film professionals,  
but this animation festival in  
the capital appeals to average  
movie goers just as easily with  
a rich programme of shorts  
and features in a wide variety  
of animation, from digital and  
hand-drawn cartooning to  
stop-motion and live-action.  
International animation  
has a tough time finding a  
market, so this festival is  
often a film's only stop. Don't  
miss the "It's Belgian" series  
of shorts or the brilliant short  
*Logorama*, in which all life in  
Los Angeles is represented  
by a corporate logo. Try to  
catch the opening Australian  
film *Mary and Max*, the  
story of an Australian girl  
who swaps letters with an  
obese New Yorker with  
Asperger's syndrome  
(voiced by Philip Seymour  
Hoffman). The Village  
Voice calls it a "Claymation  
mini-masterpiece of New  
Globalism".

→ [www.anima2010.eu](http://www.anima2010.eu)

## Ghent

**De Bijloke**  
Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, 09.233.68.78,  
[www.debijloke.be](http://www.debijloke.be)  
**FEB 11** 20.00 Magid El-Bushra,  
countertenor; Simon Linné, lute: lute  
songs by Dowland, Purcell, Thomas  
Campion  
**FEB 13** 20.00 B'Rock and Stile Antico  
conducted by Gary Cooper: court  
masques by John Blow and Matthew  
Locke

## Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01,  
[www.handelsbeurs.be](http://www.handelsbeurs.be)  
**FEB 11** 15.45 Quatuor Mosaïques:  
Johann Benjamin Gross, Haydn, Mozart



## Antwerp

**Vlaamse Opera**  
Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02,  
[www.vlaamseopera.be](http://www.vlaamseopera.be)  
**FEB 12-MAR 13** 15.00/18.30 Don  
Carlos by Giuseppe Verdi, conducted  
by Alexander Joel, staged by Peter  
Konwitschny (in the original French with  
Dutch surtitles)



## Alsemeberg

**CC De Meent**  
Gemeenveldstraat 34; 02.359.16.00,  
[www.demeent.be](http://www.demeent.be)  
**FEB 13** 20.15 Beijing Modern Dance  
Company in Offering

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## Antwerp

### Vlaamse Opera

Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02, [www.vlaamseopera.be](http://www.vlaamseopera.be)  
**FEB 11-13** 20.00 **FEB 14** 15.00 Royal Ballet of Flanders in Grands Egards, with music performed by deFilharmonie, conducted by Benjamin Pope

## Brussels

### De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39, [www.demunt.be](http://www.demunt.be)  
**FEB 16-20** 20.00 Rosas in 3Abschied, choreographed by Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker and Jérôme Bel

### Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15, [www.cirque-royal.org](http://www.cirque-royal.org)  
**FEB 13-14** 15.00/20.00 Romeo and Juliet, music by Sergei Prokofiev (concert/ballet)

## Hasselt

### Cultuurcentrum

Kunstlaan 5; 011.22.99.31, [www.ccha.be](http://www.ccha.be)  
**FEB 10-11** 20.00 Artforum in Kleefkruid, featuring young dancers with physical handicaps, plus live music

## Leuven

### STUK

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20, [www.stuk.be](http://www.stuk.be)  
**FEB 11** 20.30 Martin Nachbar in Urheben Aufheben, choreographed by Dore Hoyer



## Antwerp

### Bourla

Komedieplaats 18; 03.224.884, [www.toneelhuis.be](http://www.toneelhuis.be)  
Performances at 20.00 (in Dutch):  
**FEB 10-11** De Roovers and Bloet in Bakchai, written by Jan Decorte (in Dutch)

### HetPaleis

Theaterplein 1; 03.202.83.11, [www.hetpaleis.be](http://www.hetpaleis.be)  
**Until MAR 19** Sunjata, de leeuwenkoning van Mali (The Lion King of Mali) (ages six and up; in Dutch)

## Ardoorie

### Cultuurkapel De Schaduw

Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82, [www.deschaduw.net](http://www.deschaduw.net)  
**FEB 12-13** 15.00/20.00 Benjamin Serco, Jonah Muylle and Marieke De Maré in Lodewijk De Koningspinguin (the King's Penguin) by Dimitri Leue, plus live music composed by Benjamin Boutreur (ages 8 and up, in Dutch)

## Bruges

### Stadsschouwburg

Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.40, [www.cultuurcentrumbrugge.be](http://www.cultuurcentrumbrugge.be)  
**FEB 11** 20.00 Morag McLaren in Scottish Waffle, music theatre (in English)

## Brussels

### Beursschouwburg

August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, [www.beursschouwburg.be](http://www.beursschouwburg.be)  
**FEB 11-12** 20.30 Deborah Hay and Rachel Krische in The Swimmer + Nicole Beutler presents a remake of Les Sylphides by Mikhail Fokin

### Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, [www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)  
**FEB 16** 12.40 Theater op de middag: LOD presents De duivel beduvelde (The Devil Bedeviled) (in Dutch)

### KVS Bol

Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.00, [www.kvs.be](http://www.kvs.be)  
**Until FEB 17** 20.00 Bruno Vanden Broecke in Missie (Mission) by David Van Reybrouck (in Dutch with English surtitles)

### Scarabaeus Theatre

Hollestraat 19-27; 0475.59.27.03, [www.shaksoc.com](http://www.shaksoc.com)  
**Until FEB 13** 20.00 Shakespeare Society presents A Chaste Maid in Cheapside by Thomas Middleton (in English)  
**FEB 17-20** 20.30 Le Groupe Théâtral des Stagiaires de la Commission Européenne in Invisible Cities by Italo Calvino (in English)

### Woluwe St-Pierre Culturel Centre

Charles Thielemanslaan 93; 02.773.05.88  
**FEB 16** 20.15 Mijn zoon Damiaan with Tine Ruysschaert (in Dutch)

## Diksmuide

### CC Kruispunt

Maria Doolaeghestraat 2b; 05.151.91.56, [www.cckruispunt.be](http://www.cckruispunt.be)  
**FEB 12** 20.00 Gunter Lamoot in Softie, stand-up comedy (in Dutch)

## Dilbeek

### CC Westrand

Kamerijklaan; 02.466.20.30, [www.westrand.be](http://www.westrand.be)  
**FEB 17** 15.00 De Maan and Abattoir Fermé in Nimmermeer, based on short stories by Edgar Allan Poe (ages 8 and up, in Dutch)

## Ghent

### Bij' De Vieze Gasten

Reinaertstraat 125; 09.237.04.07, [www.deviezegasten.org](http://www.deviezegasten.org)  
**FEB 12** 20.30 Mozaik by and with Dahlia Pessemiers (music theatre, in Dutch)

### NTGent Schouwburg

Sint-Baafsplein 17; 09.225.01.01, [www.ntgent.be](http://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.b](http://www.ccstrombeek.b)  
**FEB 12** 20.30 Morag McLaren in Scottish Waffle (music theatre, in English)

## Mechelen

### Stadsschouwburg

Keizerstraat 3; 015.29.40.00  
**FEB 10 & 17** 20.15 Je zal alles worden (You'll Become Everything) by Wouter Deprez (in Dutch)



## Antwerp

### Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)

Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60, [www.muhka.be](http://www.muhka.be)  
**Until MAY 2** Animism, Part 1, installations, photos and film exploring the collective practices of humans and non-humans and the ensuring relationships

### Extra City

Tulpstraat 79; 03.677.16.55, [www.extracity.org](http://www.extracity.org)  
**Until MAY 2** Animism, Part Two, companion show of Part 1 (see above)

### Fashion Museum (MoMu)

Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70, [www.momu.be](http://www.momu.be)  
**Until FEB 21** Delvaux: 180 Years of Belgian Luxury, history of the Belgian leather goods manufacturer

### Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09, [www.kmska.be](http://www.kmska.be)  
**Until FEB 28** Work on Paper, new acrylic paintings by Koen van den Broek

## Bruges

### Bruggemuseum-Gruuthuse

Dijver 17; [www.uitvindingvanbrugge.be](http://www.uitvindingvanbrugge.be)  
**Until APR 25** De uitvinding van Brugge: De stad van Delacenserie (The Discovery of Bruges: The City of Delacenserie), the 19th-century architectural facelift of Bruges by local architect

## Brussels

### art)&(marges

Hoogstraat 312-314; 02.511.34.20, [www.arthis.org](http://www.arthis.org)  
**Until FEB 21** Surprising Dialogues, selection of outsider art from the new museum shown alongside works from fine arts museums in Belgium

### Atomium

Atomium Square; 02.475.47.72, [www.atomium.be](http://www.atomium.be)  
**Until APR 25** Ludic Modernism in Belgium 1955-1963, photographs, posters, models, films and furniture recall the popular architectural style, also known as Spirou or the '58 style

### Beursschouwburg

August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, [www.beursschouwburg.be](http://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](http://www.bozar.be)  
**Until APR 18** Frida Kahlo y su mundo, works by the famous Mexican artist on loan from the Dolores Olmedo Museum  
**Until MAY 9** El Greco: Domenikos Theotokopoulos 1900, more than 40 works by the Spanish Renaissance painter  
**FEB 11-APR 11** Mexican Modernisms, overview of post-war Mexican architecture plus documentary films and contemporary documents  
**FEB 11-APR 11** Mundos Mexicanos, 25 contemporary Mexican photographers  
**FEB 11-APR 25** Imágenes del Mexicano, history of Mexico seen through 150 portraits, including paintings, photos and sculpture

### Free University of Brussels (ULB)

Grand Hall - Building A, Solbosch Campus  
F Rooseveltlaan 50; 02.650.47.35, [www.expopascesoir.be](http://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

### Royal Museum of Art and History

Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11, [www.kmkg-mrah.be](http://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)  
**Until APR 18** Isabelle de Borchgrave's I Medici: a Renaissance in Paper, life-size paper replicas of historic costumes

### Tour & Taxis

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

### WIELS

Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.340.00.50, [www.wiels.org](http://www.wiels.org)  
**Until APR 25** Felix Gonzales-Torres: Specific Objects without Specific Form, retrospective of the late Cuban-born American artist

## Deurle

### Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens

Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23, [www.museumdd.be](http://www.museumdd.be)  
**Until FEB 14** Banks Violette, installations; Sophie Ristelhueber, photographs; Narcisse Tordoir, paintings

## Ghent

### Modern Art Museum (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03, [www.smak.be](http://www.smak.be)  
**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](http://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](http://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

## Leuven

### STUK

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20, [www.stuk.be](http://www.stuk.be)  
**Until FEB 14** Artefact: On Gaps and Silent Documents  
**Until MAR 21** Alfredo Jaar: The Sound of Silence, installations

## Machelen-Zulte

### Het Roger Raveelmuseum

Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00, [www.rogerraveelmuseum.be](http://www.rogerraveelmuseum.be)  
**Until FEB 21** Espace: Raveel en Nederland, paintings



**Carnival:** Carnival celebrations ranging from parades and folklore festivities to giant bonfires  
**Until MAR 14** across the country  
02.504.03.00, [www.toervl.be](http://www.toervl.be)

**Chagrin d'Amour:** Flemish writers, actors and musicians tell tales of love each in their own way during this multimedia performance, featuring Annelies Verbeke, Dimitri Verhulst the Bony King of Nowhere and more  
**Until FEB 12-24** across Flanders and in Brussels  
[www.begeerte.be](http://www.begeerte.be)

## Antwerp

### Chinese New Year:

Free celebration including dragon dancing, music, fireworks and more, followed by a Chinese dinner (reservation required for dinner)  
**FEB 14** from 13.30 at coStA, Sint-Andriesplaats 24  
03.260.80.50, [www.cosintandries.be](http://www.cosintandries.be)

## Bruges

**Come On! Action!:** Festival of music, sound, dance and music theatre created on the spot  
**Until FEB 23** at Concertgebouw, 't Zand 34  
070.22.33.02, [www.concertgebouw.be](http://www.concertgebouw.be)

## Brussels

**Disney on Ice:** Princess Wishes: Ice-skating show  
**FEB 12-14** at Vorst-Nationaal, Victor Rousseaulaan 208  
0900.00.991, [www.forestnational.be](http://www.forestnational.be)

**Re:Move** Dance Festival: festival of reconstructed choreographic works. Includes posthumous tributes to Pina Bausch and Merce Cunningham  
**Until FEB 13** at Kaaitheater, Kaaistudio's and Beursschouwburg  
[www.kaaitheater.be](http://www.kaaitheater.be)

## Ghent

### Belgian Boat Show:

Watersports and recreation fair  
**Until FEB 14** at Flanders Expo, Maaltkeouter 1  
09.241.92.11, [www.belgianboatshow.be](http://www.belgianboatshow.be)

## DUSK 'TIL DAWN

SAFFINA RANA



## Splash it about

Going out in Ghent just gets better and better. If you haven't been down to Waterfront yet for one of their parties or band nights, then you've got the perfect excuse on 13 February.

Perched on the city's recreational Watersportbaan, this hip tapas bar, with its waterfront terrace, opened last year. This Saturday, it hosts a night of techno, dubstep, IDM and breakz as *CTRL Technology* DJs Arrestar, Roebin de Freitas, Nonvio, Kunda and Prime take to the decks until 6.00. Sit at the tile-topped bar and savour the succulent golden fried patatas bravas as the place fills with the buzz of 20- and 30-somethings under the huge multicolour mural of pond life.

And if you, like me, grimace at tacky displays of hearts, flowers and barefaced consumer rip-offs that accompany Valentine's day on 14 February, you'll breathe a sigh of relief that Waterfront seems blissfully unaware of it all.

If you don't know many people in Ghent, first head over to Café den Turk in the heart of the city's centre. This lovely old place dates way back to 1228, easily making it Ghent's oldest bar. Unlike many of the other old timers full of tourists, it's still a local gathering spot, and, if you go in alone feeling sociable, you'll come out knowing several new people.

But if you find the interior of the Turk a little drab, try out the very kitsch Pink Flamingo's. The sassy décor of this collectibles café changes every few months. The upbeat tunes spinning here will put you in the mood for the rest of the night.

Waterfront, 2 Yachtdreef  
Café den Turk, 3 Botermarkt  
Pink Flamingo's, 55 Onderstraat



## FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE

### Michael Jackson

The late lamented King of Pop isn't known for his association with the Low Countries, so it's curious to find an entire population of fans who want to become him. Last week saw the end of one TV show devoted to Jackson wannabes, and there's another one on the way. When Michael sang "You are not alone", he couldn't have imagined how true those words were.

*My Name is Michael* (VTM), which concluded last Saturday, set out to cast the stage musical of the same name, produced by Dutch impresario Albert Verlinde. The show invited contenders to audition for the part of the adult Michael Jackson, as well as for five roles for younger people and children as the younger Michael – the cute one from the TV specials with Diana Ross, before he got all... weird.

Two things were remarkable about the show. First, there were no restrictions on age, sex or skin colour, so the participants included little blond Dutch boys, an adult woman, lots of little girls and one tubby North African bloke, getting on in years.

That variety, in fact, saved the show. The final was between three black men and one white guy, Christophe from Aalst, and the white guy (pictured) won. (He was, in fact, the best.)

The five kids' roles include Laura from Flanders, the precocious Romy from the Netherlands and the impossibly cute Lulu from Zambia. Like most of the children involved, they only found out about Michael when he died.

The other amazing thing was just how many contestants there were: hundreds of them. There's a lot of talent out there.

There had better be, because VT4 is about to



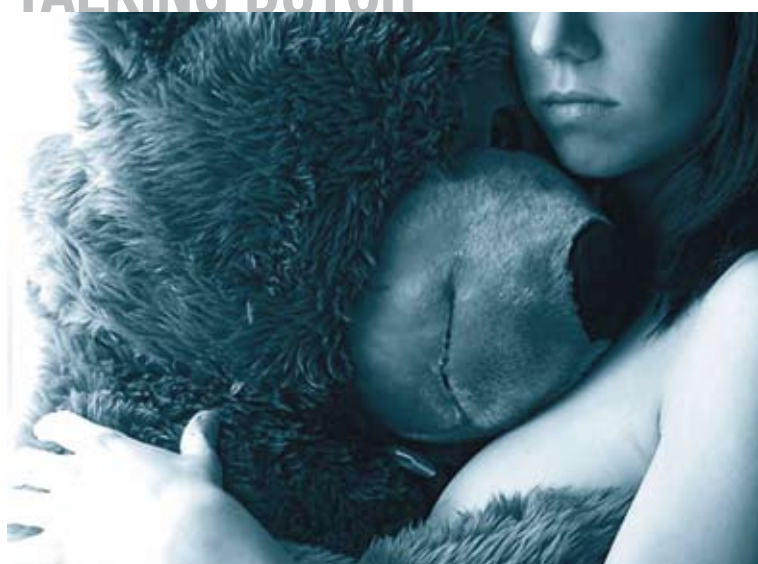
come out with its own Jackson wannabe contest. Based on the BBC series, *Move like Michael Jackson* concentrates on the dancing (the VTM contenders had to sing *and* dance) and offers the prize of "a place on stage" at the official memorial concert in London in June.

The show starts in early March, and VT4 boss Eddy De Wilde admitted to being caught on the hop by VTM's show. His chances of attracting a lot of contenders will be hampered slightly by the fact that VTM made all participants sign a contract saying they wouldn't go on to take part in the VT4 show, on pain of a serious fine.

But there can be no doubting that there will be enough. Flanders is officially Jackson-crazy.

## TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



### knuffelbeer →

You may not have noticed, but the sap is rising. Spring may not be in the air quite yet, but nature is preparing, as are those in love by sending Valentine messages to each other and to the press.

Some messages are signed boringly with "Marc" or "An"; others are more familiar: *knuffelbeer* – cuddly bear; *bolleke* – chubby. Some messages promise a bed of roses: *de laatste Valentijn als jouw verloofde* – the last Valentine as your fiancé; *binnenkort word ik jouw man* – soon I'll be your husband; *het wordt zoals ik beloofde* – it will be as I promised. Ah, promises, promises.

Some write of lasting love: *wat vliegt de tijd snel, bedankt voor de 17 jaar samen* – how time flies, thanks for the 17 years together. The passion is clearly undiminished when she thanks hubby for putting her nightdress iedere avond op de radiator – every night on the radiator. In July, too? Or perhaps I'm missing something.

I see one woman here has made an unbelievable find: *jij bent mijn huis-, tuin- en klusjesman* – you are my house, garden and odd-job man. I hope my wife doesn't read this. The lucky lass continues: *mijn minnaar, mijn kok, mijn chauffeur, mijn verpleger, mijn raadgever* – my lover, my cook, my chauffeur, my nurse, my adviser. She goes on and on and eventually finishes: *jij bent*

*mijn man die alles kan* – you are my man who can do everything. Well, at least for the moment.

One trend in these messages (I've made a study of them) is the increasing use of English. Do the writers think it's more real to write "let's walk together" and "whisper me even death can't do us apart"? Anyway, they're cute.

The real messages are those that fire the imagination. One reads *je bent echt het ijzer van mijn chassis* – you really are the iron in my chassis. And you think, is he a mechanic? And what state is her chassis in? Some are beastly but also revealing: *je bent nog steeds mijn favoriete circusdier* – you are still my favourite circus animal. Does she have him jumping through hoops? And of course *je bent mijn knuffelbeer* – you are my cuddly bear, which could mean that you should really lose those love handles.

Some messages show that distance makes the heart grow fonder. Here Johan is waiting impatiently for Nathalie to return from her Erasmus term: *als je in Italië niet aan een Latin lover blijft plakken* – if you don't get hooked on a Latin lover in Italy.

Surprisingly few messages contain the straightforward *Ik hou van je* – I love you. I suppose the down-to-earth Flemish work on the principle that if I didn't love you, I wouldn't be writing this sentimental tosh.

# bite

SHARON LIGHT

### Chinatown

You may think the New Year has come and gone but, for the Chinese, New Year is just around the corner. On 14 February, the year of the Tiger begins.

China is a hot topic these days, even on a local level, with the Europalia China festival just finishing up its four-month run. While every small village the world over seems to boast at least one Chinese restaurant, only one Belgian city has its own official Chinatown: Antwerp.

Perhaps more aptly called "Chinastreet", Van Wesebekestraat, just a stone's throw from the Central Station, is home to a collection of Asian shops and Chinese restaurants, as well as doctors, travel agents and churches serving the local Chinese population. The street also plays host to an annual Chinese New Year celebration, featuring firecrackers and the requisite Lion Dance.

On Van Wesebekestraat, you'll also find several restaurants worth a visit. City Palace is the largest of the lot. With its fake-Chinese-temple exterior and seating capacity for up to several hundred, this is a far cry from the little Chinese take-away down the street from your home.

I have expat friends who say that City Palace gives them the feeling of an American Chinese restaurant. My go-to Chinese hole-in-the-wall in the United States was quite a bit cosier, but a lot of the same dishes appear on the menu, and I agree: something about the linoleum floors and basic décor smacks of familiarity.

Contact Bite at [flandersbite@gmail.com](mailto:flandersbite@gmail.com)



The food is good, the presentation is absolutely ordinary, and the pricing is very reasonable – pretty much exactly what I look for in a Chinese restaurant. City Palace is popular for Dim Sum, and that part of the menu features an accompanying photo guide to help you make your choice.

Oriental Delight is another local Dim Sum hot spot. The setting is more intimate and more comfortable, and we got a lot farther in terms of communication with the waiters – largely in English.

Oriental Delight received a Gault Millau distinction in 2008, and it does feel a notch above its competitor across the street. But, food-wise, I didn't find a vast difference. It's good quality, good value and worth a return visit.

*The Chinese New Year celebration in Van Wesebekestraat is on 20 February from 13.00*

→ [www.chinatown-antwerpen.be](http://www.chinatown-antwerpen.be)

## THE LAST WORD...

### Born again

"If I could, I'd choose to be born again as a Walloon. They're more relaxed, friendlier. If you go for a walk in my area, south Limburg, they're staring out from behind every curtain."

Jan Peulens, speaker in the Flemish parliament, interviewed in *Le Soir*

### Safety catch

"It is true that the soldier was carrying a weapon without a magazine. That is a security measure to avoid accidents."

Military spokesman, after personnel guarding the Klein Brogel nuclear base were pictured patrolling unarmed as protestors gained entry

### Whose business is it?

"Even if I still earned my living by getting naked, what about it? Everyone has the right to do and not do what he wants."

Diego Van den Reeck, Carnival prince, whose past career as a stripper has finally caught up with him

### Poles apart

"I know it's done elsewhere, but I don't think it's a good idea to take Africans or Poles on here as priests. What's these people's motive? To save our church or to come to Belgium because we have it better than they do?"

Roger Vangheluwe, bishop of Bruges