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

Catting about 3

What would you do if your cat was stuck up a tree in the freezing cold and waking up the neighbours with mewing? One man in Overijse called the authorities, starting a surreal chain of events



Rock capital 8

Ghent has overtaken Antwerp as Flanders' rock and pop capital, with a new band a minute and the incomparable indie music production house (and bar) Kinky Star



Like beer? 11

Sint-Niklaas will pull in thousands of Belgians – not to mention plenty of international tourists – to its Zythos Beer Festival, the biggest of its kind in the country



#118

© Koen Vanmechelen "Symbiose" 2008



THINK GREAT MINDS

Leuven's M Museum is home to a daring encounter between Flemish scientists and artists

► story on page 5

Brussels public transport rates low

ALAN HOPE

Public transport in Brussels is in 14th place in the European league, according to a survey of 23 cities carried out by EuroTest for the International Automobile Federation (FIA). Munich came first and London 20th, while two East European cities failed to make the grade.

Brussels scored poorly on the lack of night buses on weeknights; information on the Internet that is not user-friendly; and no space for wheelchairs. (Some of the criticism seems mistaken: most buses and all new trams have dedicated spaces for prams, and on trams there are also spaces for wheelchairs.)

On the other hand, Brussels gets points for allowing bikes on trams and metros; for competent and friendly advice at ticket desks; for the range of tickets available, and the value of the 10-trip ticket in particular; and for the faster than average connection time from the outskirts to the centre. Altogether, Brussels received the rating "accept-

able", as did eight other cities, including Paris, Amsterdam and Warsaw. Eleven, among them Copenhagen, Barcelona and Helsinki, were rated "good", and the winner was rated "very good". Two cities, Zagreb and Ljubljana, were given a failing grade.

► www.eurotestmobility.com



Rail bosses answer to parliament

Explanations sought for last week's fatal accident

ALAN HOPE

The three heads of rail services in Belgium were this week summoned before parliament to give the first full briefing on the causes of the train crash at Buizingen on Monday, 15 February. Marc Descheemacker of the NMBS, Luc Lallemand of infrastructure agency Infrabel and Jannie Haek of NMBS-holding, together with the federal minister for government enterprises Inge Vervotte – will face the House of Representative's infrastructure committee to answer questions about the apparent sluggish introduction of safety equipment on the Belgian rail network.

Immediately following the accident, it was reported that one of the two drivers had gone through a red signal, causing the collision. Vervotte and Descheemacker responded that

an investigation was under way and warned against speculation as to the causes of the accident.

However, by the start of this week it was being reported as "99.9% certain" that the cause was indeed what the rail industry calls a Signal Passed at Danger (SPAD). According to experts who have examined data from the signalling centre at Brussels' South Station, the light had been red for a few minutes before the train from Leuven to 's Gravenbrakel passed.

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FLANDERS TODAY

Independent Newsweekly



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Derek Blyth

News in brief

The best barbecue cookbook in the world is written by a restaurant owner from Maldegem in East Flanders, according to the organisers of the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards, which were handed out last week in Paris. Author Peter De Clercq beat nominees from the US and Australia, traditionally the leading barbecue nations, with his book *Basic BBQ*, currently available only in Dutch. "We should be proud," he said. "We may be a small country, but on a culinary level we're among the big boys."

Police in the Meetjesland in the northwest of East Flanders have issued banning orders on a number of teenagers known for **causing trouble at nightclubs and parties**. Last weekend, three youths were detained in custody to prevent them attending the Midnight Fever event in Zomergem, after they entered a 500-metre exclusion zone. The measure is not a judicial sanction, the police chief said, but a preventive public order and safety measure. "It works very well," Johan Geeraert said. "We will be recommending the experiment to all of our colleagues."

Paramount Pictures, which is due to produce the **second *Tintin* film** directed by Steven Spielberg, might decide to film some of the movie in Flanders, media minister Ingrid Lieten said last week. Lieten was on an official visit to California together with Flanders minister-president Kris Peeters, and had an hour-long meeting with Paramount executives. She explained to them the tax shelter system whereby 150% of any investment in the Flemish audio-visual industry is tax-deductible. "The ball is now in their court. How concrete their plans are, I don't know," the minister said. Spielberg's first *Tintin* film is in post-production for the rest of this year.

The nuclear reactor at Mol in Antwerp province is to step up **production of radioactive isotopes** to help cover for possible shortages caused by the closure of a Dutch reactor for maintenance. The isotopes are used in a variety of medical procedures. The supply should begin to dwindle around July, according to the reactor manager at Mol. Last year, a shortage of isotopes forced many hospitals to cut back on treatments in non-essential cases.

The Flemish Audiovisual Fund (VAF) has announced grants

LETTER

We are a group of adult students following a course in English conversation. The most important resource that we use is *Flanders Today*, your fantastic weekly newspaper.

In edition number 112 (13 January), in the article "Living in poverty" by Alan Hope, we have a small problem with the content of this sentence:

"To put it in another way: While people in Flanders are on the whole only as poor as their relatively prosperous neighbours in the Netherlands, single parents are on a similar level to the people of Lebanon or Ghana."

It's possible that we don't understand the correct meaning of these comparisons. We don't believe that a single parent in Belgium, according to your sentence, only earns €300 per year, which is the average income per person in Ghana. That's less than €1 a day. In Lebanon, it is a little bit better: Each person earns, on average, €2,800 per year, or €8 per day.

Yours faithfully,

Jaak Meuris

Author responds:

In the article "Living in poverty", the comparison with Lebanon and Ghana was not meant to measure basic incomes against each other. In Flanders, 28% of single-parent households are below the poverty line. This figure is similar to the numbers living in poverty in Lebanon and Ghana, according to World Bank figures.

In comparing levels of poverty, it is customary to use "Purchasing Power Parity", which make comparisons more valid. A Ghanaian person may earn only €1 a day, but the cost of living there is nothing like that in Flanders, where a single parent in poverty might live on less than €30 a day. Once their spending power is calculated, their situations appear more similar than raw figures suggest.

totalling €675,000 to 22 projects out of the 39 that applied for financing. The main recipients are the animated shorts *Oh Willy!* by Emma De Swaef and *Vol au vent* by Isabel Boultens, which both received €96,000. The documentary *Where is Gary?* by Jean-Baptist Dumont was awarded €92,500.

lines from two to four on line 124 Nijvel to Brussels. The protestors say they are not against GEN but want a response to their concerns over noise and vibrations affecting their properties.

A 60-year-old veteran detective will interview police who worked on the **Annick Van Uytself murder** case between April 2007 and now, to find out if mistakes were made that allowed her killer, Ronald Janssen, to evade arrest. Janssen, who killed a young couple on New Year's Day, figured in a number of the thousands of tips given to police as part of the Uytself case. "The officers worked hard and did well," said detective Johan Trotteyn. "But could they have done better?"



Flanders mourned the death last week of Bob Davidse, better known to several generations as Nonkel Bob, presenter of popular children's TV shows from 1955 to 1985. He was 89. As well as teaching children the campfire song *Vrolijke Vrienden*, which he later said was better-known than the national anthem, Davidse also interviewed The Rolling Stones, and published a best-selling guitar tutor which, according to singer and presenter Bart Peeters, introduced him and many of his peers to the guitar for the first time. The funeral will be held on 25 February in Antwerp Cathedral.

Coke in stock

Four dock workers at the port of Antwerp have been accused of selling part of a load of 80 kilograms of cocaine found in a ship. One man had a stash of €600,000 in his home



© Shutterstock

Government could move faster on rail safety, minister says

continued from page 1

If Belgium's railways had been equipped with the safety systems they promised to install after the last major rail crash in 2001, the driver's alleged error need not have led to a crash. Following the rail accident in Pérot in 2001, the NMBS promised the swift introduction of a safety system called ERTMS, which cuts the power to any train involved in a Signal Passed at Danger. But last week it was revealed that, nine years later, only 25% of tracks are fitted with the system, and only 1% of trains. Over the entire network, only one train in 400 combines both essential elements.

The trains are the responsibility of the NMBS, while the tracks fall under the control of Infrabel. Both pushed responsibility for the delay onto the European Union and the lack of standardised norms; the EU quickly responded with a flat denial. The ERTMS system has been available since 2000 and is already in operation in other EU countries, said rail expert Chris-

tian Faure of the EU Commission.

Countries like the Netherlands and Germany, however, rely mainly on other systems to ensure rail safety. This is what Belgium decided to do in 2006, minister Vervotte said, but not before five years of inactivity which she blamed on "insurmountable technical problems".

According to John Baggen, a public transport specialist from the Technical University of Delft, Belgium has its own system designed to react in cases of Signal Passed at Danger, known as TBL, which in 2007 had been fitted to 1,800 signal locations of the 8,700 on the network. TBL is compatible with the European ERTMS system and, therefore, could easily remain in operation while troubles with ERTMS are sorted out. The NMBS has a target for half of all signals to be equipped by the middle of this year, with the entire network up and ready by 2012.

Minister Vervotte has now said the government would be willing to move faster on installing safety systems, though it's not clear which one. "The impression people are now giving is that a system is standing ready on the shelf that can be bought like in a supermarket. That's not the case,"



© Reuters

The photo of a steely-eyed rescuer coming through the snow with an injured child in his arms made the front pages last week of newspapers across the country and internationally. The man is Filip Van Liedekerke, chief inspector at the local police in Halle and one of the first to respond to the emergency call. "I couldn't imagine at that moment what a catastrophe we'd be walking into," he said later. He and the child's father took turns carrying the girl before handing her over to medical teams. "It's a pity I forgot to ask her name," Van Liedekerke said. In fact, her name is Lena, she is four years old and lives in Soignies. Inspector Van Liedekerke thought she might be seriously hurt, but she escaped with no more than a broken collarbone.

said Vervotte on the Sunday political programme *De zevende dag*. However, she will now be investigating whether speedier progress could be made. Not only would the decision have budget implications, she said, it would also have an impact on services, with some trains having to be withdrawn or stations closed.

• Last week it was revealed that

the driver of the Leuven train, who allegedly ran through a red signal, made a similar mistake a year ago and was suspended for several days before returning to work under supervision. On that occasion, no casualties were involved. The driver has been interviewed by police and maintains that the signal was green. ♦

THE WEEK
IN FIGURES

15,643

new heart patients every year in Belgium, or an average of 43 a day, according to research from the Free University of Brussels (VUB)

1 in 6

Belgians buy counterfeit medication, either online or when travelling, according to a survey carried out for pharmaceutical company Pfizer. The main products are slimming aids and treatments for flu, chronic pain, erectile dysfunction and smoking

40%

reduction expected in the number of people needing to be flown home from skiing holidays because of injuries, according to EuroCross. Most injuries are minor this year as a result of excellent snow conditions

1,010,567

visitors to Europa China, which ran from 8 October to 14 February and featured 50 exhibitions and 450 other events across the country

€121,000

raised for relief in Haiti by a concert at Bozar in Brussels featuring Toots Thielemans, Will Tura, Zap Mama and Helmut Lotti. "Music can't save the world, but we can make a difference," Lotti said

Tia Hellebaut announces comeback

LEO CENDROWICZ

High jump champion Tia Hellebaut has announced her return to athletics, after hanging up her spikes soon after taking the Olympic gold medal in Beijing. As well as hoping to defend her European title in Barcelona this summer, Hellebaut also has her sights set on the London 2012 Olympics.

The Antwerp-born champion – who has also competed in the long jump and pentathlon – made the announcement on her 32nd birthday, eight months after giving birth to daughter Lotte and 14 months after announcing her retirement.

"I was wrestling with a question which I had not dared to ask out loud: 'What you can do in tennis, can you also do in athletics?'" she wrote on her blog. "After my Olympic gold, I had somewhat lost the sense of a challenge, but how about this: to jump two metres as a mother." ♦

Hellebaut said she would assess in April which competitions she would enter. The European Indoor Championships of 2011 in Paris would be the first big target, but she already hopes to be ready to compete at an international level this summer. "I have nothing more to prove, and I will concentrate on my own challenges," she said. "If everything goes well, I want to continue in the sport until the London Olympic Games in 2012."

Hellebaut will be following in the footsteps of tennis stars Kim Clijsters and Justine Henin, who both announced their return to the WTA tour last year. Their comebacks were met with instantaneous success, as Clijsters won the US Open last year in only her third tournament following her return, while Henin reached the Australian Open final last month. ♦



© Belga

Soprano stuck in tree for two days

Soprano the cat got more than she bargained for when she climbed a tree next door to owner Ludwig Paeps' garden on the morning of 7 February – a night out in the freezing cold while two fire brigades argued about the suitability of their ladders. Several hours after seven-month-old Soprano climbed into the tree, the family, who live in Tervuren, became anxious and called the local fire brigade in Overijse, Paeps told *De Standaard*. "They told me she would come down by herself," he reported. "My wife and children were beside themselves. When she was still up there on Monday I called the fire brigade in Zaventem."

Zaventem confirmed that the fire service is indeed available for rescue operations, but since they have no jurisdiction in Tervuren, they referred Paeps back to Overijse. By this time Soprano's mewing had kept neighbours awake, and they had also called Overijse fire brigade. An engine was sent, but the officer in charge decided they didn't have the right kind of ladder and promptly left.

"Nonsense," concluded the Zaventem brigade, who also came to investigate the scene. "Overijse are perfectly capable of doing the job." And they left. Paeps called Overijse a third time and was turned down again. "By this time, I was fed up with the cat-and-mouse

game and called mayor Eulaerts on Tuesday morning." The Tervuren mayor pulled the necessary strings, and in no time Soprano was rescued, after 50 hours in the branches.

"I thought such absurdities were only possible in Eastern bloc countries," Eulaerts said. "This sort of problem belongs to the normal package of services and ought to be sorted out within a reasonable time."

The fire brigade in Overijse were unapologetic. "The operation seemed to us to be impossible because our ladders are unsuitable," said station commander Dirk Decoster. ♦

FIFTH
COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

Mass demonstration

Last weekend, about 200 people gathered at the Beurs in Brussels to re-enact the "White March" for a new film based on Flemish author Tom Lanoye's novel *Het goddelijke monster*. In 1996, no fewer than 400,000 people marched through Brussels to express their disgust at the deeds of the child rapist and murderer Marc Dutroux, their sympathy for the victims and their disbelief at the blundering justice system.

The number of people that took part had not been seen since the early 1980s, when many hundreds of thousands took to the streets of Brussels during peace demonstrations. The peace marches came to mind again last week when four ministers of state, including two former prime ministers, one former head of Nato and one former European commissioner, called for the removal of nuclear weapons from Europe. According to the four – Jean-Luc Dehaene, Guy Verhofstadt, Willy Claes and Louis Michel – the American tactical weapons no longer make any military sense. This is a view current Belgian prime minister Yves Leterme also supports.

The peace demonstrations of the early 1980s were unique for several reasons. For one, the people who marched against the placing of nuclear weapons in Belgium were not just the traditional left-wing "professional demonstrators". They were housewives, elderly people, students and lots and lots of teenagers. For a whole generation, the yearly marches meant the start of their political awareness.

One of their heroes was the recently deceased Karel Van Miert – a fact that was a little understated in the many obituaries. During the anti-nuclear demonstrations, the charismatic Van Miert and his socialist party (in the opposition at the time) managed to reach out beyond their traditional electorate, which helped to end the compartmentalising of Belgian politics that had held sway since the end of the Second World War.

Even at the time, people realised that the peace protest would not stop the nukes being placed in Belgium. (In fact, the American planes carrying them had left before parliament even got a chance to vote on the issue.) Still, there was something significant in the protests. Since then, there has been a lot of talk about the gap between people and politics. These days, people often shrug indifferently about issues that excite politicians. In the early 1980s, though, people did care. The support of the same four politicians would have thrilled the peace demonstrators. Now, their views – like all politics – leave most people indifferent.

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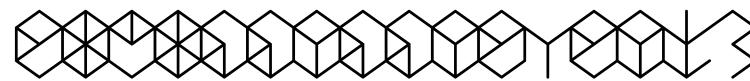


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PARALLELEPIPEDA

Great minds

Art opens up a whole new way of looking at biology

TANIA RABESANDRATANA

"Art imitate science," shouts Flemish visual artist Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven in a Plexiglas work from 1979. This is one of the premises of *Parallelepiped*: artists and scientists are often engrossed in similar questions, which they explore with different tools. Put them together in a room for long enough, and you break down barriers, opening up unexpected creative avenues.

Science and art museums usually work on distinct levels. With art, visitors gaze, contemplate and feel – emotional responses. Science museums, on the contrary, are places where visitors engage in hands-on discovery and learn something specific – educational responses. *Parallelepiped* in Leuven's M Museum caters to all of it, without dumbing anything down. And that is quite an achievement.

"Finding that balance was very hard," confesses Edith Doove, the exhibition's curator. "I wanted to keep both worlds separate; artists stay artists, and scientists scientists." That is one of *Parallelepiped*'s virtues: it gives space to overlaps and crossovers, but doesn't pretend to reinvent disciplines.

"Artists have [more] tools for expressing themselves and showing their work, and this is an art museum, anyway," Doove remarks. So the art remains to the fore; only two out of eight rooms are dedicated to science alone. Visitors of contemporary art will be in for a fulfilling experience, while those who expect a didactic science show may be puzzled at first. There are no buttons to push and hardly a panel to read, but still plenty of scientific food for thought. At least, the curator hopes so: "If [science] students who wouldn't usually go to an art exhibition find the work of these artists interesting, then my goal is reached!"

Parallelepiped focuses strongly on our senses and perceptions, relying on a refreshing but coherent variety of media: drawing, painting, computer-based interactives, video, sound, photography, sculpture, and even a caged animal. The use of text is minimal, but leaflets are available in Dutch and English.

Parallelewat?

Both artists and scientists use languages, codes and references that can be hard to access – to each other, let alone the broader public. This is one of the reasons behind the mouthful of a title. "People try to pronounce it and are finally happy when they get it right," explains Doove. "It's funny, and it's exactly the idea I had in mind."

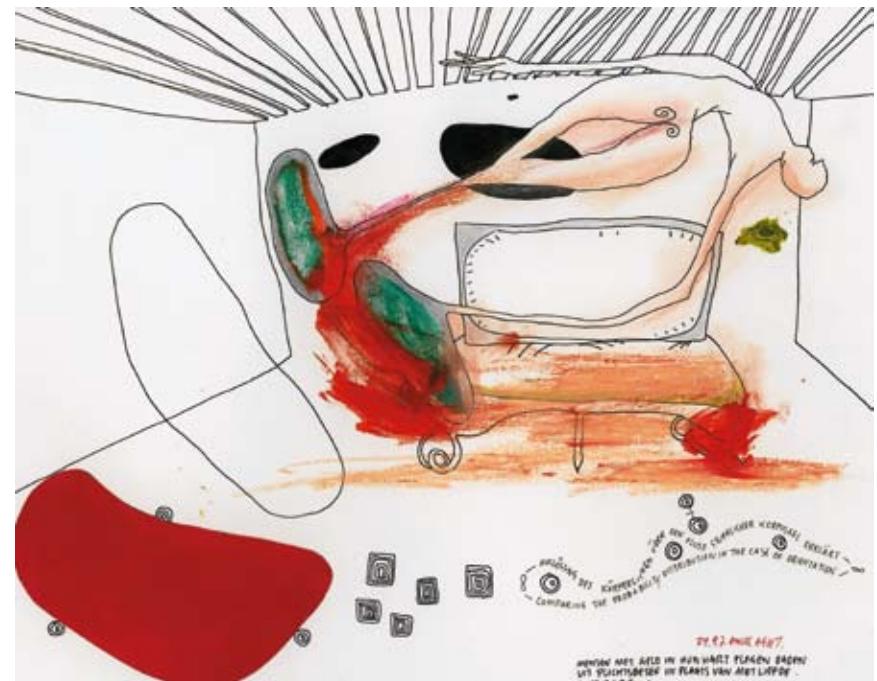
The title also refers to the many parallel collaborations between scientists and artists that gave birth to dynamic, three-dimensional representations. The logo itself spells out the title in an abstract font especially created for the exhibition: a new aesthetic language to decipher.

In the past decades, several so-called "sci-art" projects have attempted to bridge disciplines – with varying success. *Parallelepiped* manages not to fall into two traps: the art is not merely used to illustrate, and the science is more than a loose inspiration. Most works on display stem from genuine, in-depth exchange between artists based in Flanders and scientists from the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL). How did that happen?

The process began in 2007, explains Doove, "and up to the last minute, some new ideas emerged." This luxurious three-year gestation allowed scientists and artists to get to know and understand each other. This time was also necessary to challenge the initial disbelief, usually on the scientists' side.

Importantly, the choice of scientists is centred around biomedical sciences; all the participating researchers have a strong interest in the human body and mind. "I also contacted physicists at the beginning, but they were not so interested," Doove recalls. Those who took part might have been sceptical at first, too, "but they were ready to enter the project and see what would come out of it." Now, they all seem happy to have taken on the challenge of leaving their comfort zones.

The mutual respect between the two disciplines is apparent throughout the exhibition. Results are uneven but generally always thought provoking and often moving. After rooms one and two, which stand clearly apart, rooms three to five are less cohesive, almost a bit messy. In rooms six to eight, the science content grows stronger – incidentally, so does the art. By the end what becomes clear is that in *Parallelepiped*, art doesn't imitate science: it allows the science to matter on its own. ♦

Compare your own gaze to that of the Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven, *Parallelepiped*'s central artist

What's in the box?

Parallelepiped celebrates top-notch Flemish talent from both sides of the art/science border. In order to facilitate dialogue, many artists chosen are doing practice-based PhDs at the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL).

Room 1 The first room is dedicated to the work of Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven, the exhibition's central artist. Van Kerckhoven is most famous for her "cyberfeminist" take on gender, sex and technology. Since the 1970s, her work has been heavily inspired by science and tech, so *Parallelepiped* had plenty to choose from. Kerckhoven's most striking pieces were produced especially for the show, as a result of her dialogue with specialists of experimental psychology and nuclear medicine. "Pluri-form" is a computer interactive that invites the viewer to navigate the "mind map", a series of inter-connected worlds. You'll also find the results of an eye-tracking study, comparing the gaze of the artist on her own drawings to that of an art expert or a novice. An amusing but thoughtful insight into the way we look at art.

Room 2 Computer tests and interactives about optical illusions and the inner workings of our senses, courtesy of Géry d'Ydewalle and Johan Wagemans from the Laboratory for Experimental Psychology at KUL.

Room 3 Installation artist Ruth Loos examines the book in its many guises, questioning perspective through drawings and three-dimensional compositions.

Room 4 A scientific peep into the artist's mind, thanks to brain imaging techniques, courtesy of Koen Van Laere (nuclear medicine) and Johan Wagemans (experimental psychology).

Room 5 Wendy Morris' beautiful animation film is presented with two different soundtracks, together with footnotes.

Room 6 The gracefully subdued work of prolific artist Ronny Delrue was inspired by Koen Van Laere's research on Alzheimer's and degenerative neurological diseases. A sober but powerful account of fading and forgetting, reflecting on the fragility of memory and the instability of identity.

Room 7 This room feels like a futuristic church. Nick Ervinck's monumental print-out presents a nightmarish but stunning rendering of a larynx and its blood vessels "gone wild". The work was inspired by the artist's exchanges with surgeon Pierre Delaere, who performed a science-fictionesque larynx transplant on a patient who first carried the graft in her own forearm for several months.

Room 8 Art meets science wouldn't be complete without the infamous chicken experiments of Koen Vanmechelen. Here's an artist who walks the science talk: In 1998, Vanmechelen began cross-breeding chickens as part of *The Cosmopolitan Chicken Project*, a reflection on genetic manipulation, diversity and identity. Today, Vanmechelen (pictured on page 1) is still working with biologists, and *Parallelepiped* includes the results of another collaborative endeavour: a live rooster in a cage. The artist worked with stomatologist Luc Vrielinck to implant a golden spur on the animal in order to give it more "dignity".

In the background, Flemish composer Carl Van Eynhoven's soundtrack invites the visitor to contemplate the source of his music through the view from the museum's windows: the university carillon.

Parallelepiped

Until 25 April

Guided tours available on request

www.mleuven.be

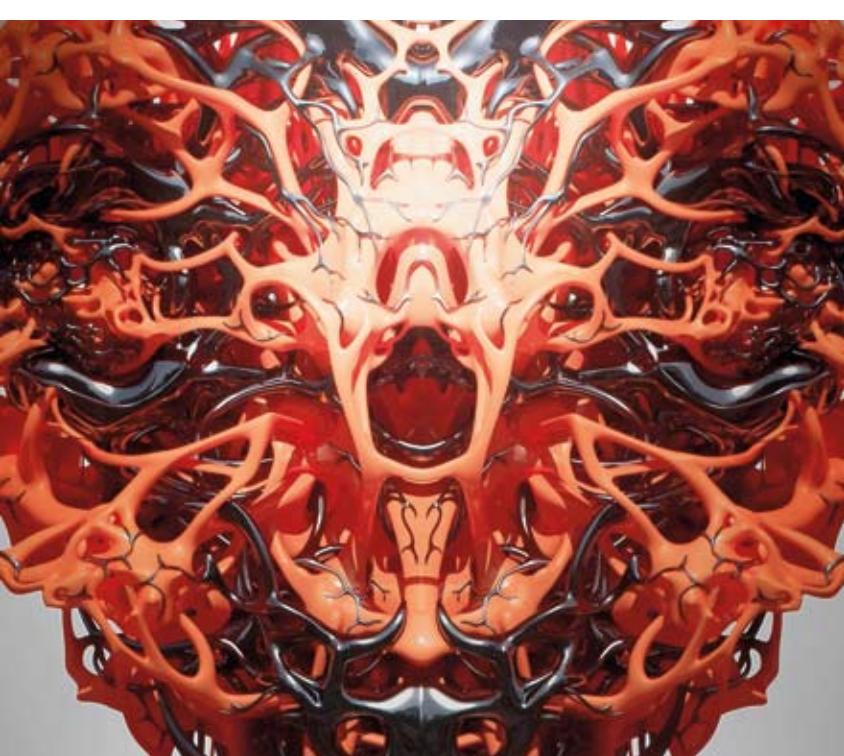
© Kristien Daem

ParallelExtras

25 February Presentation of the exhibition book and debate with artist Ruth Loos and KUL philosopher Volkmar Mühlis. The illustrated *Parallelepiped Boek* compiles essays, mostly in Dutch, by the participating artists and scientists about the process and concepts behind their work. A limited number of copies will be available for sale

25 March Programme on neuroaesthetics with Semir Zeki, professor of neuroaesthetics at University College of London, and psychologists Johan Wagemans and Koen Van Laere

15 April Sound & Film, with experimental psychologist Géry d'Ydewalle, visual artist Wendy Morris and composer Carl Van Eynhoven



Larynx gone wild: Nick Ervinck's piece is inspired by a futuristic surgery by Dr Pierre Delaere

Getting to know you



Digital Week introduces you to the finer points of 21st-century PCing

KATRIEN LINDEMANS

Filling in our tax registration, chatting with people from all over the world, buying an exclusive item from a shop based on another continent. All this is possible with a few clicks of the mouse. But sometimes things go wrong, and we get angry with our computers because "it didn't do what I wanted". Or worse – it did what you didn't want, such as private information suddenly becoming public.

Welcome, then, Digital Week, a series of activities and workshops across Flanders to teach us how to best use our computers and alert us to possible dangers of multimedia. This year is the fifth Digital Week in Flanders, sponsored by Vlaams Steunpunt Nieuwe Geletterdheid (VSNG), the Flemish Organisation for New Literacy. The VSNG stresses the importance of acquiring ICT skills to bridge the digital gap, which is often due to socio-economic differences and needs of a specific job – not everyone works in an environment where computer skills are necessary.

On the other hand, owning a computer doesn't automatically mean knowing what to do with it. About 70% of all Belgian families have a computer, but only 59% use it every day. About 64% of Belgians have access to the internet but mainly use it to send e-mails and look up information.

The organisers of Digital Week are especially encouraging older people and those with few computer skills to learn how to work with a computer. ICT skills can make life a lot easier, for instance, on the job market. But the internet can be a cruel environment too, so they want you to understand just what you're doing every time you click "yes" or "continue".

More than 300 workshops and info sessions hosted by companies, schools, libraries and municipalities will help you gain extra knowledge on multimedia, from "online gaming" and "social websites Twitter and Facebook" to "what to look for when buying a new PC" and "how to protect children from the dangers of the internet". Most of the sessions are free or come at a very low price.

As in last year, spokesperson for Digital Week is Pol Goossen (aka "Frank" in the Flemish drama-soap *Thuis*). Since

2005, he's also been the spokesperson for the Centre of Basic Education. His social engagement, popular alter-ego and age (60) have made him an ideal role model for these campaigns, and he will make a personal appearance at some of the workshops during Digital Week.

To announce the event, the first week of March will feature a commercial on Flemish TV station Eén and several regional TV stations, where a woman (actress Karlijn Sileghem) visits her shrink because she no longer "understands" her computer. Also keep a look out for random keyboards placed in train stations and other public places. They will have a reference to Digital Week and, if you find one, you win a prize.

Digital Week in parliament

Bridging the digital gap is a national issue. That's why Digital Week and the same initiative in Wallonia (La Semaine Numérique) are joining forces to get the attention of federal leaders. On 2 March they will hold a study day in the federal parliament on the digital gap. A similar colloquium will be organized on 9 March in the Flemish parliament, hosted by Ingrid Lieten, the Flemish media minister. This day will be dedicated to the possibilities and challenges of the concept "media literacy" and will consist of a theoretical session and workshops.

The results of these sessions in parliament will be published on the Digital Week website, as well as communicated to



Are you and your computer just not communicating? Attend some workshops at Digital Week

the government. By putting the digital gap on the political agenda and creating awareness, VSNG is working on structural solutions to this social phenomenon. ♦

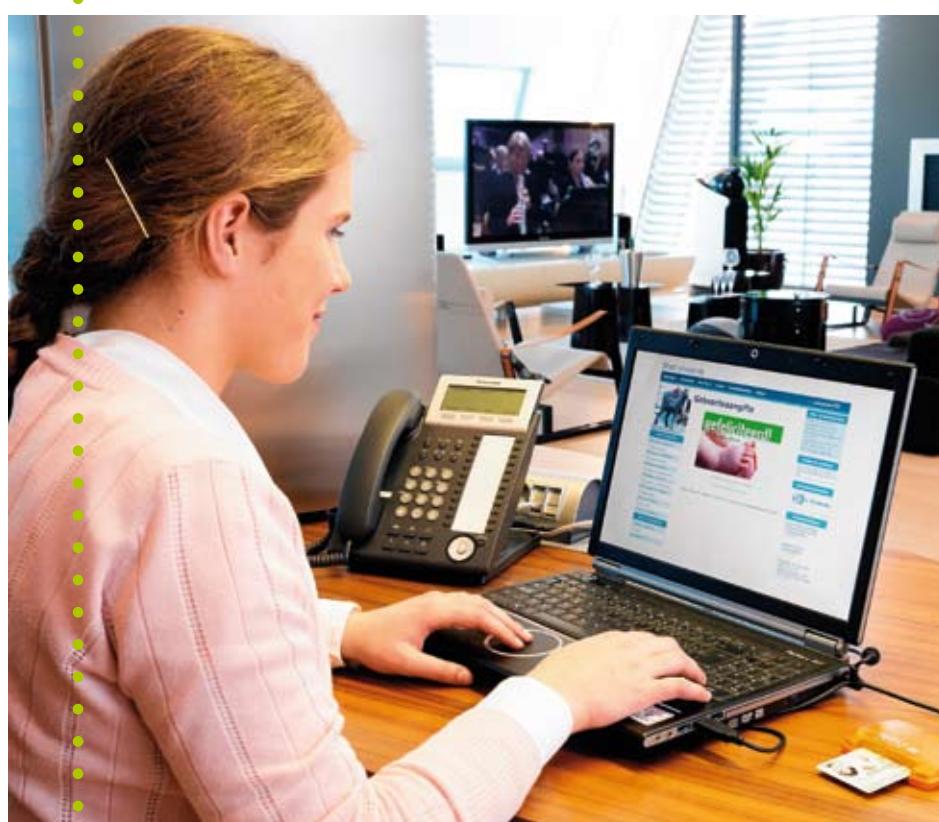
Digital Week

5-12 March
Across Brussels and Flanders

www.digitaleweek.be

Leading the way

Mechelen got its citizens online before anywhere else



ALAN HOPE

Mechelen is the most digital city in Flanders, according to research carried out by the city's Catholic College of Mechelen (KHM). The study shows that 82% of Mechelen's residents have an active internet connection and that the city's website is regularly visited.

"This is the first time in 10 years that such a wide-ranging survey has been carried out in Belgium," commented Kristl Strubbe, the city's alderwoman for ICT. "For years Mechelen has been investing in extending digital communications with its residents. It was one of the first local governments to have a website, an e-counter, a city blog and information pages on digital TV channels."

The city commissioned a survey last year "to consolidate this pioneering role," she explains, and "to find out if the demands of citizens and the supply of digital information from the city were in line with each other."

The city website www.mechelen.be was launched in 1997, well before such initiatives were common. Last year the site welcomed its three million visitor, and the KHM survey shows an average monthly readership of more than 36,000 people, or nearly 45% of the population.

The website was revamped in 2009 and gained an e-counter where residents can go to request official documents like birth certificates, which can be downloaded and printed. And, since each one has an authorised digital signature, the print-outs are perfectly valid for legal use. "The digital

signature is a real step forward," Strubbe said. "You don't have to come to city hall any more, and the city saves money and time."

The various city departments receive about 100,000 document requests every year, she said. The signature, called IntelliStamp, was developed by an Antwerp-based company, Inventive Designers.

The opening of the e-counter in December brought a sudden upsurge in visitors to the website: 8,021 more than usual, or an increase of 21%. The e-counter should be extended, according to 65% of those polled, with 41% agreeing it should also be possible to sign up for activities like classes.

Half of all Mechelaars use the site regularly, with 92% saying they were familiar with it. Mechelen's large online population is above the average for Flanders: 82% use internet regularly and actively, compared to 71% across Flanders as a whole. In Mechelen, 80% have internet at home, compared to 64% across Flanders – perhaps connected to the fact that Telenet, one of the two main internet providers in the country, was started and is still based in Mechelen.

The new generation is even being taught digitally; in the city's De Spiegel primary school, each class is now equipped with an "electronic blackboard" – a computer screen as large as a blackboard – which allows teachers to call up text, graphics, photos and videos. They can also write with a special pen or move screen material around using their fingers. ♦

New wind turbines ready by year end

Belwind is breaking speed records setting up 55 turbines off the Flemish coast

ALAN HOPE

By the end of this year, there should be 55 new wind turbines on the Bligh Bank off of Zeebrugge, built by Belwind in what the company calls "record" time.

"Another six months, and everything will be ready," forecasts Frank Coenen, managing director of Belwind, based in Zaventem. "We're breaking world speed records here, with 56 foundations – 55 for the turbines and one for the high-voltage station," he said. Work started in September last year, and next month they plan to bring the turbines out to sea.

By comparison, another wind energy park on the Flemish coast at Thorntonbank, being constructed by C-Power, has taken nearly three years to install six turbines.

Each of the Belwind turbines, which will be installed 46 kilometres off the coast, produces three megawatts (mW) of energy. The first 55 turbines will be followed later by a further 55, bringing the total capacity to 2,000-2,300 mW.

"These are works of titanic proportions," Coenen said. "The foundations are steel tubes with a diameter of more than five metres. They have to be set up in the sea in one go, and anything can go wrong. Twice it's happened that a foundation tube has fallen over and been lost in the sea. But, all in all, everything is going amazingly smoothly."

The project almost didn't happen at all. The total budget is €614 million and, when the financial crisis was at its height last year, it looked as if Belwind would not be able to raise the necessary financing. The main sponsor at that time, Dutch energy company Econcern, went broke. The Flemish government's investment agency Participatiemaatschappij Vlaanderen was able to step in with the necessary financial guarantees to allow work to proceed.

The Belwind turbines are being assembled by a workforce of 200, and the company will employ 60 to maintain the energy park, which will produce enough electricity to supply 175,000 households. The electricity will be brought to land via 50 kilometres of steel cable. The turbines are 189 metres high from the foundation to the tip of the blade, while the blades themselves describe a circle of 90 metres.♦

→ <http://meewind.nl/belwind>

Shelves empty at Carrefour

Unions representing workers at the Carrefour chain of supermarkets fear job losses will result from an announcement due this week on the company's future in Belgium. Meanwhile, an industrial dispute in which the company is not even involved saw supermarket shelves becoming increasingly empty last week.

Carrefour was due to hold a meeting of its enterprise board on Tuesday, 23 February, to examine the current situation regarding Belgian operations, in particular the 57 hypermarkets it runs here. The French company is the world's second-biggest retailer after Wal-Mart and recently announced profits down more than 70% on the year before.

In June, the company announced restructuring plans involving €4.5 billion of savings across Western Europe, in an effort to stop the continuing loss of market share to competitors Delhaize and Colruyt. In the last quarter of 2009, Carrefour lost 123 basis points to reach a market share of 24.91%, while Colruyt gained 70 points to reach 23.78% and Delhaize rose 62 points to 25.8%. Earlier this month, the company announced a plan to reduce the stock offered in its hypermarkets and rent out the free space that was created, while at the same time returning to the core business of food retailing.

The company employs 16,000 people in Belgium, but unions were looking forward to this week's board meeting with trepidation. "I'm afraid there

are going to be sackings," said Chris Van Droogenbroeck of the Christian union LBC.

"This has all the appearances of a Renault procedure," said socialist union representative Jan De Weghe, referring to the mandatory negotiation of a "social plan" to deal with workers made redundant, brought in when car-maker Renault closed a factory in Vilvoorde.

Meanwhile, the stock in Carrefour hypermarkets was shrinking last week as a dispute involving drivers employed by a haulage company brought deliveries to a standstill. The drivers work for Supertransport, which is based in Ternat, and which has a haulage contract with Carrefour. The dispute concerns the sacking of dispatchers following the introduction of a new computer system.

There were also problems at Logistics Ternat, a division of Kühne & Nagel, which operates three distribution centres for Carrefour, in Ternat, Kontich and Nivelles. Carrefour has made it clear it finds Ternat old-fashioned and surplus to requirements, and the contract with Logistics Ternat is about to run out.

The fear of job losses led staff there to begin industrial action involving a blockade of the loading bay. The Ternat centre supplies the hypermarkets with about 34% of their product range. The 600 other Carrefour shops, such as the smaller GB Express, are not affected.♦



THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Air • Brussels Airport

Chinese carrier Hainan Airlines is starting a three-flights-a-week service between Brussels Airport and Shanghai on May 28. The company already operates four flights a week to Beijing. Other new services at Brussels Airport include a two-flights-a-day connection to Helsinki by Blue1, an SAS affiliate and three flights a week to Vigo in Spain, operated by Vueling.

Catalysts • Umicore

Brussels-based Umicore, the high-tech materials and non-ferrous metals group, is said to be considering a bid for Germany's Süd-Chemie, based in Munich, which specialises in the production of catalytic equipment for industry. Umicore is a market leader in the development of similar products for the automobile sector.

Chemicals • Solvay

Solvay, the chemical and plastics company which last year sold its pharmaceutical division to the US Abbot group, is registering a €1.7 billion book profit on the deal. The Brussels-based company will use part of the money to finance a share buyback scheme and will be looking for non-cyclical acquisitions.

Cinema • Barco

Barco, the Kortrijk-based digital screening equipment producer, is to share in a €65 million financial agreement between Liège-based XDC and KBC, BNP-Fortis and the European Investment Bank. The deal involves converting some 8,000 cinema screens across Europe to digital.

Dredging • Deme

Deme, the Antwerp-based dredging company, will share in the building of a €422 million container terminal in the UK. The new London Gateway port is expected to be inaugurated in 2015.

Energy • Enfinity

Enfinity, the Waregem-based solar energy company, plans to build one of the largest solar power farms in North America in the Canadian province of Ontario. The €100 million Stardale Project will supply some 10,000 households with electricity using 150,000 panels. The company will also open a regional headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia.

Finances • Household wealth

The financial assets of Belgian households have nearly returned to the levels registered at the end of 2007, despite two years of deep economic turmoil which wiped out some €100 billion, according to figures released by the country's National Bank. Assets increased by €72 billion last year to reach a total of €1,700 billion.

Sick leave hits record high

Absenteeism related to illness hit a record high in 2009 as a result of swine flu and stress caused by the economic crisis, according to a survey by human resources bureau SD Worx. The survey looked at 484,232 employees, measuring periods of sick leave of less than one month.

On average, workers were absent for 2.45% of working days, or an average of 6.4 days per person. However, the figure topped 3% in three months: January, February and October. Normally only February sees such high figures, in the middle of the flu season.

Swine flu is partly to blame for the increase, the survey says. Some employees were actually infected, while others took preventive leave, as some companies insisted, to avoid contaminating co-workers. Stress is another major factor; last week another survey put the cost of stress to Flemish businesses at €13 billion a year. The lowest rate of sick leave is in West Flanders at about 2%. Absenteeism has risen by 10% since 2002, the survey showed.♦

→ www.sd.be

When “business” is a four-letter word

Ghent's Kinky Star leads the way in making Ghent an alt music Mecca

SUKI JENKINS

The Vlaasmarkt is a quiet central Ghent square by day but wakes up at 20.00 when the doors to Kinky Star Music Centre rattle open. The black painted interior is brightened up by the smiley, blond director, Luc Waegeman. On a band night, the crowd of relaxed, alternative Ghent dwellers spill out onto the street, creating an inviting atmosphere and reminding everyone that this is how music should be.

These *Gentenaars* have a certain aura about them, perhaps passed down from the time the mediaeval canal water was too infected to drink and all they consumed was beer, including the babies. Only the age limit has changed, and the pub has become Kinky Star.

The upstairs windows are covered in Johnny Berlin posters, CDs are piled up against a decrepit structure and, across from the battered beer fridge, is a wall covered in bands signatures and stickers. Dead centre stands the scrawling of the likes of The Strokes. It feels like anyone worth mentioning from New York City to Brussels has been here.

The seemingly calm Waegeman is a non-stop productivity power machine, which means that Kinky Star isn't just a club. There is the club, with bands and beer, the record label, the radio station, youth programmes and even a Kinky Star Academy. Having studied social work, Waegeman is a master at receiving government funding to keep all of this in motion. He even started a programme for seniors who want to learn guitar. Waegeman is welcome proof that we never have to grow up.

Waegeman started out his musical life in a hippy bar in his home town of Antwerp. At school, he played the drums for theatre, a youth centre and for his first band, Possible Noise. He was also a roadie for well-known Flemish band Gorki and worked at a record store. All very *High Fidelity*.

In 1988, Waegeman headed to Ghent. A couple of short years later, he was working for Bang Records, searching out Flemish music talent. He started from the ground up, learning everything he could, including promoting for Belgian superstar band dEUS. Based on their success in this period, he must have been doing something right. From there, he wanted to produce his own records. Kinky Star was born. Together with then partner Dani Mommens, he exclaimed: “Let's be as independent as we can!” They formed it into a music non-profit organisation.

“All the money was spent on drinks and promoting young bands,” says Waegeman, “If we needed money we got it from the bar.” The bar is still running 70% of the business, along with help from the City of Ghent and the Flemish Region. To this day, Kinky Star is still supporting young bands and new music, having become a miniature department of culture for Ghent.

Apparently, it all wasn't enough. Waegeman began working with Ghent radio station Urgent FM to vigorously pull in other small labels and bands from all over the world.



Luc Waegeman

He started live programming with presenter Greet De Vleeshouwer and the digital promo-master Pieter-Jan De Coen. You guessed it – Kinky Star Radio was born. Play lists include anything from Radiohead to boyShouting to Brutal Orgasm, which are all available on podcast and can land in your email inbox if you wish.

Take a deep breath. Now for the Kinky Star Academy, which is surely the most social of all Waegeman's projects and truly impressive in its heart. It is open to everyone, from the guitar player wanting to hone his or her skills to the mentally challenged kid who wants to play the drums. The students go to the teachers' homes to learn their craft. The teachers don't lose out either; they are officially paid. “We are a go-between. We just get the benefit of seeing it happen and making sure it's done efficiently and within the budget and benefits the teacher, as well,” smiles Waegeman with a shy pride.

Jongeduld, meanwhile, is a programme for teens only. Here, they can learn stage, studio, radio and can even get instruction in making their own demo. How cool is that? On top of the mile-high stack of what Kinky Star can offer, add rehearsal rooms on the Leopold Kazerne Military Site.

They have four spaces, and when they're full, they help set bands up in other practice rooms.

Fans can go to the Kinky Star website and pick up the latest releases. Recommended CDs are Lady Cop, Kapitain Korsakov and Luc's own band, Needle and the Pain Reaction (see sidebar).

Kinky Star is a complete music package, with a non-commercial and all welcoming approach. It is what everyone who has ever worked in the business wishes it was all about, and Waegeman does it in the right way, from the side of good. It is no wonder Ghent has a name for being the alternative music Mecca of Flanders, with people like the Kinky Star crew behind them.

“There is no ‘music business’ side at all,” he smiles, as if being asked the silliest question of all time. “We don't plan ahead more than a month or two and survive on the goodwill of apprentices and volunteers.” His eyes fall to the table after a six-hour interview.

Flanders Today: “Do you sleep?”

Waegeman: “Not that much.” [Laughs] “I'm exhausted, but music is the food for our souls.” ♦

→ www.kinkystar.be



**NEEDLE
AND THE
PAIN REACTION**

Needle and the Pain Reaction is not just a name on the coolest band T-shirts and stickers around (sporting a charming impaled voodoo doll), it is also bass player Luc Waegeman's umpteenth reason to avoid sleeping. Another of the “three-man-Belgian-band” movement and proof the locals know how to make noise in small numbers. The other two Needle boys are Wim Deliveyne (guitar/vocals), a intense, sweating front man, and the happiest long hair around on drums, Peter De Bosschere.

The band started 10 years ago when Deliveyne came to Waegeman, director of Kinky Star Music Centre, asking if he knew any available musicians. He offered himself, even though he had never really played bass. You wouldn't know it now as he pounds the strings, head moving wildly in rhythm. Needle rock, punk and pop, keeping it all under the alternative groove umbrella. The catchy lyrics from

the last albums are so well known the crowd can't help but sing along. More is coming: Deliveyne is (re)writing the lyrics and recording the final guitar and vocals for their third studio album, *Stains*, which should be in stores by May. Needle and the Pain Reaction is an out-and-out enjoyable night of head banging and grooving. A “no-pain reaction” guaranteed until the morning after.

Next gig: 1/3, 21.00, Krawietelke, Graaf Arnulfstraat 1, Ghent

→ www.needle.be

Pop capital

Ghent is breeding bands at an alarming rate

The capital of East Flanders has usurped Antwerp's position as the place to be for rock and pop bands. The artists themselves will tell you it's no surprise: Ghent's counter-culture attitude is nurtured in both art and music schools, and the most avant-garde from both are accommodated by denizens of the city, who proudly embrace their bohemian reputation. Flanders is becoming known internationally for its wealth of pop and rock talent (see page 13), and Ghent is, for the time being, the throne of its kingdom. Here are bands to watch out for from the music Mecca.



Sioen

Sioen isn't a band, but the *nom d'artiste* of Frederik Sioen. Son of a music teacher, Frederik discovered early that could more easily could write songs at a piano than on a guitar, although it is, in his hands, as much a percussive instrument as a melodic one. He was only 21 when he made his first self-released EP, the now heavily sought after S: extravagant songs, not so different from the output of drama queens like Hawksley Workman or Gavin Friday. In the last few years, Sioen has changed gear: invited by Oxfam, he went to South Africa in 2007, which resulted in several tours and the album *Calling up Soweto*, the Flemish answer to Grace-land. **CV**

www.sioen.net

© Mich Leemans

Barbie Bangkok

At times Barbie Bangkok wears its influences (Talking Head, The Kinks) on its sleeves, but its songs are as irresistible as a scoop of ice cream on a hot summer day. Not bad for a band that started out on the wrong track. After a little memorable first EP in 2003, the line-up thinned out to two members, and it took them until 2008 to release their first album, *People and Geometry*. No grand lyrical revelations, but when it comes to silly lyrics, Barbie Bangkok has little competition. And they have one of the best band names in the world, a drunken subversion of Herbie Hancock. **CV**

www.barbiebangkok.com

© Jan Mast



Madensuyu

We almost called The Germans Flanders' most dangerous band, but that honour in fact goes to the twosome Madensuyu (their name is Turkish for mineral water). Their concerts aren't really gigs so much as guerrilla attacks, their records aren't albums but cluster bombs that explode in your face. Their two amazing CDs – *A Field Between* and *D Is Done* – dwell in our pantheon of uncompromising and unyielding pitch-dark rock albums next to *Big Black's Atomizer* and PJ Harvey's *Rid of Me*. Their scarce concerts are an intense, life-altering experience. You get the idea, right? Madensuyu absolutely ain't for sissies. But that's no excuse for missing them. **CV**

www.madensuyu.be

© www.kai-luermann.com



Das Pop

Thanks to lead singer Bent Van Looy's smashing result in the extremely popular television quiz *De slimste mens ter wereld*, Das Pop recently enjoyed a sudden surge of popularity. But Belgium's most British band – there's a clear lineage from The Kinks and Bowie via Blur and Pulp – deserves the attention first and foremost for their music: compact pop songs with bittersweet melodies, driven by zestful drums (played by Van Looy) and adorned with imaginative guitar or piano arabesques. Since winning Humo's Rock Rally in 1998, Das Pop has released three albums, with a six year gap between their second and their eponymous third of last year. **Christophe Verbiest**

www.daspop.com

© Mich Leemans

The Bony King of Nowhere

The Bony King of Nowhere (aka Bram Vanparys) was just 22 when he released his debut *Alas My Love* but already his name had been buzzing around for years, partially because *nu folk* icon Devendra Banhart had great words for him, but also because the few songs the King had unleashed on MySpace made people long for more. Much more. They were not disappointed by the album, a heartfelt collection built around his big trumpet: a dreamy voice that makes people forget their sorrows and feel that life, after all, might be beautiful. On stage, The Bony King is a quintet that wanders from jazz to Radiohead, halting at different stops along the way. **CV**

Next gigs: 1 March, Departuur benefit concert, De Therminal, Hoveniersberg 24, Ghent; 6 March, Musical Instruments Museum, Hofberg 2, Brussels

www.myspace.com/thebonyking

Absynthe Minded

The first time I saw Absynthe Minded, I was in a renovated chapel located In The Middle of Nowhere, East Flanders. And it was filled to capacity with hundreds of 20-somethings who had trekked out from Ghent and Bruges to see the cutest guys play the coolest pop you will currently find in Flanders – I say boldly. I return again and again – albeit in urban settings – to see this fivesome that, because of string instrumentals (violin, cello) mixed in with the normal guitar-driven catchy pop music, edge themselves ahead of the competition with a good-time oldies kind of sound. The Flemish Music Industry Awards this year says it all: Absynthe Minded won Best Song ("Envoi"), Best Album and Best Group. A Studio Brussel poll, meanwhile, called their big hit "My Heroics, Part One" the best song of the decade. **Lisa Bradshaw**

Next gigs: The band's next three shows – in Brussels and Ghent – are sold out, but if you can wait until next month, they'll be at the Chimay Spring Festival (6/3) and at Novarock in Kortrijk (20/3).

www.absyntheminded.be



The Germans



OK, we cheated with this one. The Germans, strictly speaking, are not from Ghent but from a hamlet nearby that even most Flemish people have never heard of: Dikkelvenne. But what the heck, they have scorched the city's stages like few other bands. Their ominous music ranges from acoustic lullabies to mesmerizing *krautrock*, music for which the Germans, the other ones, have invented the word *rücksichtslos*. Their songs are at the same time groovy and horny, incensed and devilish. Last year they followed up their debut *Elf Shot Lame Witch* with the limited vinyl-only release *Grote Menieren/Straffe Madammen*. Yes, stubbornness is their middle name, yet The Germans are a must see. But, please, *don't mention the war*. **CV**

www.myspace.com/thegermanstheband

Conversations with Byars

The man who made an exhibition of himself

IAN MUNDELL

James Lee Byars is in full flow, telling a long anecdote about an improbable encounter in a cafe with someone who said he was a salesman working in the nuclear industry, when the Flemish interviewer interrupts him. "Do you believe everything that people tell you?" Byars looks taken a back, partly at being interrupted, partly at the question. "No... well, yes, on balance, I have to," he replies. "OK," says the interviewer, politely. "Please go on."

Byars, an American artist who died in 1997, liked to include himself in his works, so asking questions seems the natural thing to do. It's a bit like peering at the detail in a painting to see if the brush work will tell you something more about the artist's method or the effect you get when you see it from a distance.

Luckily the interviewer in this 1969 film is not afraid to probe, and the results shed considerable light on the work of this enigmatic conceptual artist. It screens in the current show at Argos in Brussels with two other short films about Byars' work, from 1979 and 1995.

The 1969 film, made by Jef Cornelis for Belgian public broadcaster BRT, consists of conversations with Byars and images of his first solo exhibition on mainland Europe, at the Wide White Space Gallery in Antwerp. At this point, Byars was interested in plurality and structures that brought people together and blur their individuality. "If you are 75 people in one hat, are you one or 75?" he asks cryptically, before the image switches to show him installing slightly baffled Antwerpers into just such a group hat and having them walk through town. He even insists on conducting one conversation wearing a mask that links him to the interviewer.

Slightly more effective is the "Pink Silk Aeroplane for 100", a vast piece of fabric with holes in to accommodate the heads of the "passengers", who are told to sit underneath it with their knees drawn up, in rows of two. It's not clear whether they are there simply to be looked at, as part of what Byars calls a "soft sculpture", or part of the audience as well.

With his long hair, high-domed hat and star-spangled shirt, Byars comes over as wide-eyed visionary, with the same whimsical lilt and sense of wonder in his voice as David Byrne or Douglas Coupland. Listening to him fire off ideas is fascinating – and possibly more engaging than some of his work, which is more to the fore in the other two films. As with all

performance art, you really have to be there.

The 100 Images are in One Second from 1979, also made in Antwerp, presents a rapid run through of his work, while Peter Brosens' *The Death of James Lee Byars* from 1995 shows the artist laying himself out in the window of the Marie Puck Broodthaers Gallery in Brussels, surrounded by gold leaf (pictured). It also explores a work of religious interrogation staged in Cologne called "The White Mass".

Not in the exhibition, but available in the Argos library, is another Cornelis film on Byars called *The World Question Centre*. In this live BRT broadcast, Byars telephoned noted artists, scientists and media figures to ask them what question preoccupied them, and then discussed the answers with people in the studio. This touches on a point that Byars makes in Cornelis' other film, that maybe it would be better to use public art funding to buy TV airtime rather than build museums, essentially establishing a museum on TV. Not for the first time he sounds as if he is way ahead of the internet. From now on, I will always think of Facebook as a whole lot of people sitting with their heads poking through the fabric of a big, pink, silk aeroplane.

Also currently showing at Argos are videos and photographs by Rinko Kawauchi, brightly documenting the minutiae of everyday life in Japan, and thought-provoking installations and videos by Austrian artist Ralo Mayer, inspired by the Biosphere 2 project. This utopian plan to create a sealed, self-sustaining ecosystem in the Arizona desert in the late 1980s failed when the human inhabitants fell out with each other and the oxygen began to run short.

Mayer probes the structures of Biosphere 2 and the blurring of research, science fiction and new age philosophy that



discredited the project in the eyes of the media and the scientific establishment. He produces some intriguing ideas about ecology and how things might have been different if Biosphere 2 had taken place in the age of the internet, climate change awareness and reality television. ♦

Until 27 March

Argos Centre for Art & Media
Werfstraat 13, Brussels

www.argosarts.org

The flax men

The final year in the life of a West Flanders farm



LISA BRADSHAW

Two years ago, the last flax farm in Gullegem, West Flanders, shut its doors. It was run by two brothers, Walter and Wilfer Devos, who still put on their overalls and worked seven days a week despite being well past retirement age.

Brussels-based filmmaker Jan Lapeire grew up just a few hundred metres from the Devos farm. He picked up his camera and headed back to the land of his youth to document the brothers' final flax harvest.

Although he may not have realised it would be the last. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, flax farming made West Flanders rich. But it is labour intensive, and globalisation – including China's entry into the flax market – has decimated the small flax farms in Flanders. Only the large manufacturers remain.

The Devos brothers have, over the last 50 years, stubbornly refused to modernise the farm or to bring it up to environmental codes. If their methods were good enough for their father, they were good enough for them. Hence, the Devos flax farm is a place where time stood still. From the machinery to the clock on the wall, this film could have been shot in the 1970s or the 1950s, and it would have looked exactly the same.

Lapeire did all the camera work himself for

the 75-minute documentary to impose as little as possible on the day-to-day workings of the farm. His methodical, quiet film contains no commentary save that of the brothers and their few workers, as they go about the harvest and process the flax (which is used to make linen and yarn) into beautifully soft strands that look like long, blonde hair.

The brothers struggle to use their cell phones, to repair punctured tires, to sell their harvest over the border in France. All the while, they talk of other flax farmers who have finally given up and the faceless government inspectors who want to close them down. At 73, Walter finally becomes unable to work and admits that he is not handling his retirement well. "Two people in the village have hung themselves – people like me. I'm depressed."

Vlasman (Flaxman) takes awhile to warm up to – you might, in fact, find yourself close to the end before you really begin to appreciate the richness of the material. It is not really a film about flax production, rather it's a film about growing old, giving up a life you have always known and not being able to adjust to another. The Devos brothers feel that they, like their farm, have grown obsolete. ♦

→ www.vlasman.be

Vlasman screens on 28 February at Budascoop in Kortrijk and is available on DVD

Christmas in March

Sint-Niklaas festival features a bounty of Belgian brews

MELISSA MAKI

Saint Nicholas, once the bishop of Myra, and is known the world over for his generosity. But did you know that he's also one of the patron saints of brewers? Appropriately enough, a large number of brewers and beer aficionados will soon be gathering in the saint's namesake city for the biggest beer festival in Belgium.

In the first weekend of March, an estimated 10,000 beer lovers will descend on the small city of Sint-Niklaas in East Flanders for the seventh annual Zythos Beer Festival. Zythos is a national, volunteer organisation that works to promote and protect Belgian beer culture. The confederation of about 30 smaller groups also advocates for beer consumers by, for instance, calling for more accurate labelling of ingredients and for bottling dates.

Dedicated to Belgian beers, this year the festival features 61 breweries and beer firms and, at last count, 288 different beers lined up for sampling. While Belgium has long been famous for its beer, appreciation and interest in tasting specialty beers is still growing.

The third Bruges Beer Festival in November of last year, organized by one of Zythos' daughter organisations, featured nearly as many beers (278) and ended up attracting similar numbers to Zythos – a 25% increase from the previous year. Zythos organisers expect a similar trend in attendance for their event this year.

The Sint-Niklaas festival is unique because of all of the smaller, craft breweries involved.

"Some breweries only come to the Zythos beer festival," says Zythos member Steven Vermeylen. "Like for instance De Dolle Brouwers – you don't see them at other festivals – they only come to ours."

And, since Sint-Niklaas (between Ghent and Antwerp) isn't the tourist destination that is Bruges, people are going there with very specific intentions – to taste beer. The festival attracts a lot of Belgians,

but also brings in beer-lovers from the Netherlands, Britain and France and from much further afield, such as Japan, China and the United States. Vermeylen notes a recent rise in attendees from Denmark and Italy as microbreweries are growing in popularity, and people there are "becoming more and more beer-minded".

Which ale's for you

With such a multitude to choose from, figuring out which brews to sample can be tricky. (Most can't handle them all.) The festival offers a guide that describes the taste, aftertaste, colour and alcohol content of each of the beers. In addition, many of the small brewery stands will be staffed by the brewers themselves, adding to the overall educational experience.

Classic, well-known beers like Westmalle and Orval will be on hand, but the more adventurous can also find choices from newer and more obscure breweries. This year, 11 new breweries and beer firms will be inaugurated into the festival. Three breweries on this list – Den Triest, Hof Ten Dormaal and De Bastogne – were only just established last year.

Those with a more distinguishing palate can sample beers that have been aged for different lengths of time or experience the potential variation in one beer recipe. De Verhuisbrouwerij beer firm (beer firms create recipes but don't brew the beer themselves) teamed up with three breweries to produce three beers based on the same recipe. Tasters will find that, despite this shared formula, variables like equipment and water can really alter the flavour of a beer.

Keep track of what you like because you can vote on your favourite beers. Based on a tally of the people's choice, a consumer's trophy will be given to one of the breweries. Last year, De Dolle's Cosmos Porter took home the prize. ♦

© Reporters/Eureka Side



All Belgian: Find 288 of the country's beers at Zythos

Scoping out Sint-Niklaas

Sint-Niklaas is an underrated little city – even by the citizens. When you ask a few of them what to see there, they tell you to visit Ghent or Antwerp. But if you get your fill of beer during the first weekend of March at Zythos, you can check out Belgium's largest market square there, do some shopping, visit a museum or just take in some pretty scenery.

Sint-Niklaas' Grote Markt is the **largest marketplace** in all of Belgium. Home to the tourist office (at number 45), there are also plenty of cosy cafes and restaurants to duck into along the square, including **Den Antus**, which has friendly staff and a respectable beer menu.

Stationsstraat, which runs between the marketplace and the train station, is a well-known shopping area with a plethora of *winkels* to please shopaholics. Also along Stationsstraat is the city museum, **Salons voor schone kunsten**. The beautiful, old building is the former mansion of a textile manufacturer (and it still houses St Nicholas during his yearly visit). The museum's permanent collection is comprised of Belgian paintings from the 16th to the early 20th centuries, including works by James Ensor and Henri Evenepoel. The museum is currently hosting *Je suis dada*, an exhibition of works by Flemish designers inspired by surrealism.

To get some fresh air away from the crowds, head up Parkstraat to the **Romain De Vidtpark**. Stroll through this pretty park with English and French-style gardens, a pond and a castle. Inside the **Castle Walburg**, built in 1550, you'll find a comfy bistro that overlooks the park.

www.kasteelwalburg.be

Have a few minutes until your train? Pop into the New Flandres Hotel bar on Stationsplein; it has a cosy fireplace and is very close to the station.

→ www.sint-niklaas.be



Walburg Castle in Sint-Niklaas' lovely Romain De Vidtpark. Go inside for a spot of lunch

So you want to go to Zythos

The Zythos Beer Festival includes a drawing for prizes as well as a store to buy merchandise like t-shirts, books and... wait for it...beer. Hungry festival-goers will find cheese and beer-infused snacks like *stoofvlees* and *frieten*. Festival volunteers provide on-site child care.

Entry to the festival is free. You can rent a glass for the day with a €3 deposit (or keep it as a souvenir). Each 15 cl sample is €1.20, regardless of the kind of beer. The festival is held in the Sint-Niklaas Stadsfeestzaal, which is 150 meters from the train station on Leopold II laan.

Saturday, 6 March
12.00 to 00.00

Sunday, 7 March
11.00 to 21.00

→ www.zbf.be



A busy man: The city's namesake, gift-giver and patron saint of brewers

© Melissa Maki

© Melissa Maki

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

Take advantage of our ING Expat Convenience Services
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Richard Hutton

It's a toy, it's a cup. The Dutch designer's objects often have multiple functions and are on display starting Friday at Ghent's Design Museum
 → <http://design.museum.gent.be>



FLANDERS TODAY
 FEBRUARY 24, 2010



Music Brussels Opening party

LISA BRADSHAW

Suki Jenkins is putting her "big American mouth" to work for Belgian music. This Saturday, her new initiative, Music Brussels, officially launches at Churchill's English Pub in the centre of the capital, with a press conference, free CDs, four live bands and an all-night party.

Together with fellow Anglophone Andrew Colby (British), Jenkins launched Music Brussels to encourage, support and promote rock and pop music in Belgium, which she thinks is highly underrated outside of its borders. Jenkins comes from Seattle in the northwest of the US, the country's Mecca of alternative rock.

"I see what is happening here," she tells me. "It's just like what was happening in Seattle. It's a high concentration of talent in one area. But here, it's influenced from everywhere and by multiple languages. And their English is good enough to go to an international level."

She should know. After completing a degree in audio, video and music business in Seattle, she worked as a studio sound engineer and backstage lighting technician before making music videos and booking for clubs. She came to Europe

as a promoter for record companies in Berlin before finally settling in Brussels. Doing some rock journalism here, she was often called upon by FM Brussels for the Anglophone opinion, particularly because she speaks Dutch.

Jenkins found it continually frustrating that there was no one online source of relevant information on Belgian bands. Music Brussels will provide an online database of bands – not just from Brussels, as the name suggests, but from across the country. "We thought, why don't we take out the boundary between Flemish and francophone and just use English as a bridge language?" she explains. "We've been supported enormously by both sides."

She and Colby will also promote concerts and hope to eventually arrange group tours. "I'd like to see more tours of francophone, Flemish and even Belgian-based Anglophone groups together. That's the goal we're working towards. If they work together as a cohesive force, they can really get somewhere."

The opening party is proof of pure Brussels-based diversity: first up is My TV is Dead, an electro pop-rock duo; then Garner, a trio that

Jenkins describes as "intellectual electronica"; followed by the DIPLOMAT, a grindy, bass-driven alt rock trio (*pictured*) and The Vogues, a fivesome that gorgeously mixes 1960s garage and glam.

Music Brussels has already put together its first compilation CD, available at the party. The Belgian music explosion, Jenkins says, is "because of people who put their hearts and souls into it, like [independent promoter] Stage Mania and Kinky Star Music Centre [see story, page 8]. It's how the music industry should be. It's art. Music doesn't have borders, and that's the end of the story." ♦

**27 February
from 19.00**

**Churchill's English Pub
Schildknaapsstraat 29
Brussels**

→ www.musicbrussels.com

MORE PARTIES THIS WEEK

Stealth Bombers → *Trix, Antwerp*

Belgian Championship Beatbox → *Vooruit, Ghent*

Public Remedy: Benefit for Haiti → *Art Cube, Ghent*



© Mathieu Deluc

Rock & Pop

Antwerp

Arenbergschouwburg
 Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
www.arenbergschouwburg.be
FEB 26 20.15 Nicole & Hugo: 40 jaar
FEB 28 20.30 Thus:Owls
MAR 3 20.30 Boenoxx

Bourla

Komedieplaats 18; 03.224.88.44
www.toneelhuis.be
FEB 27 20.00 Die Anarchistische Abendunterhaltung
MAR 3 20.00 Stijn

CC Berchem

Driekoningenstraat 126; 03.286.88.20
www.ccberchem.be
FEB 27 20.30 Bart Voet

CC Ter Dillft

Sint-Amandsesteenweg 41; 03.890.69.30
www.terdillft.be
FEB 26 20.30 Katinka Polderman

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
FEB 24 20.30 Nagelbijter

Lotto Arena

Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be
MAR 1 20.00 Dave Matthews Band

Petrol

Herbouvillekaai 21; 03.226.49.63
www.petrolclub.be
FEB 26 21.00 Eek A Mouse + Civalize Foundation
FEB 27 23.00 Soirée Gainsbourg

Trix

Noorderingel 28; 03.670.09.00
www.trixonline.be
FEB 26 20.00 Emilie Autumn
MAR 1 20.00 Yeasayer

Ardooie

Cultuurkapel De Schaduw
 Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82
www.deschaduw.net
FEB 27 20.30 Blunt

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
 Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be
FEB 26 19.00 AB BOTA: Absynthe Minded + Joy + Dan San + Depotax + Faustine Hollander + Frank Shinobi
MAR 3 20.00 The Scene. The Soft Pack

Café Bonnefooi

Steenstraat 8; 0487.62.22.31
www.bonnefooi.be
Until FEB 28 20.30 The Bonnefooi Acoustic Jam

Café Walvis

Antoine Dansaertstraat 209
www.cafewalvis.be
FEB 25 21.30 Gin Panic

Ecuries de la Maison Haute

Gilsonplein; 02.672.14.39
www.lavenerie.be
FEB 26-27 20.30 Bernard Lhoir with Laurence Waters and Juan Carlos Mellado

Espace Delvaux

Gratésstraat 3; 02.663.85.50
www.lavenerie.be
FEB 25 20.30 Bai Kamara Jr

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89 www.fuse.be
FEB 26 23.00 Drumderground presents: Sub Focus, Mala, Xample
FEB 27 23.00 Paul Ritch live, Kasper & Papol, Gary Beck live

K-NAL

Havenlaan 1; 0479.605.429 www.k-nal.be
FEB 27 23.00-6.00 Libertine Supersport, concerts all night

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15
www.cirque-royal.org

DON'T MISS

WereldWijd-werken

27-28 February

MIAT, Ghent

Ghent's best-kept secret – a surprisingly intriguing museum of industry and textile – is opening its new permanent exhibition this weekend with world coffee and other refreshments. In addition to the museum's already extensive collection of industrial machinery and historical reproductions of shops and a cinema (which shows old movies every month), the museum has added *World-wide Working: Six Generations on Work and Life*. The new exhibition follows six men and women in a Flemish family, showing how automation, consumption, globalisation and more affected the working and social life of each generation.



→ www.miat.gent.be

FEB 26 20.30 Dany Brillant

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
 Concerts at 20.00:
FEB 25 Lights + Owl City. Helgi Hrafn Jonsson + Mugison + Fm Belfast **FEB 26** Le Loup **FEB 27** The Van Jets + Team William + Mary&me + The Bear That Wasn't + more **MAR 3** Hockey **MAR 4** Peter Von Poehl

Magasin 4

Havenlaan 51B; 02.223.34.74
www.magasin4.be
FEB 26 20.00 Generic + Binaire + Five Minutes To Eat Jack **FEB 27** 19.30 aMute + Lapin Machin + more

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
www.recycleart.be
FEB 25 20.30 Knapot + Jam session Brussels Open
FEB 27 21.00 Dubstep & Grime Party: Scuba + Grimelock + Bun-Zero + Sweet Sweat Soundsystem

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusicvillage.com
MAR 4 12.30 Saf

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991
www.forestnational.be
FEB 25 20.00 Tokio Hotel **FEB 26** 20.00 50 Cent **MAR 1** 20.00 Thirty Seconds to Mars **MAR 2-3** 20.30 Pascal Obispo **MAR 4** 20.00 Chris Rea

Eeklo

N9 Villa
 Molenstraat 165; 09.377.93.94 www.n9.be
FEB 27 21.00 Lize Accoe

Ghent

Kinky Star
 Vlaamse Markt 9; 09.223.48.45
www.kinkystar.com
FEB 27 21.00 Paper Fox
FEB 28 21.00 The Curvy Cuties Fanclub **MAR 2** 21.00 Ithak

Vooruit
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
FEB 25 19.30 Dez Mona + Blackie & The Oohoos
MAR 4 19.30 Le Peuple de l'Herbe

Kortrijk
De Kreun
Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44
www.dekreun.be
FEB 26 20.00 Caspar Brötzmann + Hellvete

Leuven
STUK
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
www.stuk.be
FEB 25 20.30 Roadburg

Lier
CC De Mol
Aarschotsesteenweg 3; 03.488.06.79
www.lierscultuurcentrum.be
FEB 24 20.15 Cimmaron



Antwerp
Buster
Kaasru 1; 03.232.51.53
www.busterpodium.be
FEB 24 21.30 Ramsy Irani **FEB 25** 21.30
BabL **FEB 26** 22.00 Fleur **FEB 27** 22.00
The Catatonics

CC Berchem
Driekoningenstraat 126; 03.286.88.20
www.ccberchem.be
MAR 2 14.30 François Glorieux

De Hopper
Leopold De Waelstraat 2; 03.248.49.33
www.cafehopper.be
FEB 28 16.00 Yvonne Walter & Guests
MAR 1-29 21.00 Stijn Wauters Trio
(free)
MAR 2 21.00 Michiel Borstlap Band

De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
FEB 25 20.30 Vasilis Tsabropoulos,
Anja Lechner & UT Gandhi
FEB 26 20.30 Brussels Jazz Orchestra &
Tutu Puaone: Honouring Mama Africa!
MAR 3 20.30 Dee Dee Bridgewater

Rataplan
Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
www.rataplanvzw.be
FEB 26 20.30 Pascal Mohy Trio
FEB 27 20.30 Tricycle
MAR 2 20.30 Ghalia Benali & Bert
Cornelis

't Kwartier
Keistraat 11; 0475.28.66.10
www.tkwartier.be
FEB 26 20.00 Hotel Imun + Jackobond

Ardoorie
Cultuurkapel De Schaduw
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82
www.deschaduw.net
FEB 26 20.30 Roland, Steven de Bruyn
and Tony Gyselinck

Bruges
De Werf
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29
www.dewerf.be
FEB 26 20.30 Määk's Spirit with
Joachim Kühn

Brussels
Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be
MAR 2 Flying Lotus + Jaga Jazzist.
Franco Saint De Bakker

Café Bonnefooi
Steenstraat 8; 0487.62.22.31
www.bonnefooi.be
MAR 1 22.00 Pianobar Bonnefooi with
Lennart van Praet

MAR 2 22.00 Toine Thys with Lander
Gyselinck, Michel Massot & Bert
Hornikx

Jazz Station
Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78
MAR 3 20.30 E, B and I

L'Os à Moelle
Emile Maxlaan 153; 02.267.10.90
www.osamoelle.be
FEB 26 21.00 Kicca & Intrigo

Marni Club
Vergniestraat 25; 02.639.09.80,
www.theatremarni.com
MAR 2 21.30 Bai Kamara Jr Trio

Sazz'n Jazz
Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78
www.sazznjazz.be
FEB 25 20.30 Greg Faravel Trio

Sounds Jazz Club
Tulpstraat 28; 02.512.92.50
www.soundsjazzclub.be
FEB 24 22.00 Los Soneros del Barrio
(Caribbean) **FEB 25** 21.00 The Singers
Night **FEB 26** 22.00 Eve Beuvens Trio
and guests **FEB 27** 22.00 Paolo Loveri
Trio + guest

The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusicvillage.com
FEB 24 21.00 Attic Jazz Quartet **FEB 25**
12.30 Bluesbroeders + Guido Belcanto
+ Willy Willy 21.00 Natacha Wyts
Quintet **FEB 26** 21.00 Julie Jaroszewski/

Charles Loos Trio **FEB 27** 21.00
Hammond Organ **MAR 2** 21.00 Marco
Llano Quartet **MAR 4** 21.00 Manu
Domergue + The Etienne Richard Trio



Antwerp
Zuiderpershuis
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be
FEB 26 20.30 Kudamaloor Janardanan
(India)

Brussels
Art Base
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20
www.art-base.be
FEB 27 20.00 Vinylio, Greek rebetika
FEB 28 13.30 Madera Suena, Latin
American

Atelier 210
Sint-Pieterssteenweg 210; 02.732.25.98
www.atelier210.be
MAR 3 20.00 What the folk! Clare Louise
+ James Levy + Turner Cody
MAR 4 20.30 Dan Miller + Ann Arbor +
Bart Van der Lee + Saule

Espace Magh
Priemstraat 17; 02.611.87.48
www.espacemagh.be
FEB 27 20.30 Turdus Philomelos

Maison du Peuple
Sint-Gillisvoordeplein 37-39; 02.217.26.00
www.maison-du-peuple.be
FEB 26 20.00 Queimada: Andrea
Capezzuoli e compagnia, Bal O'Gadjo,
Hans Quaghebeur, A Contrabanda

Sazz'n Jazz
Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78
www.sazznjazz.be
FEB 26 20.30 Grup Cemre, traditional
Turkish music
FEB 27 20.30 Gursel & Sass'n Jazz
Quartet, Turkish folk

Stekerlapatte
Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81
www.stekerlapatte.be
FEB 25 20.30 Zongora

Eeklo
CC De Herbakker
Pastoor De Nevestraat 10; 09.218.27.27
www.ccdeherbakker.be
FEB 25 20.30 Idol 1900, featuring Walter
De Buck, Wouter Vandenebelle, more
MAR 3 15.00 Koen Cucke & Willy Claes

Ghent
Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01

www.handelsbeurs.be
FEB 24 20.00 Kevin Kinney
FEB 28 20.15 The Grascals



Antwerp
Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28
www.amuz.be
FEB 27 21.00 Tasto Solo, conducted by
Guillermo Perez: dances from the 14th
century
FEB 28 15.00 Hesperion XXI, conducted
by Jordi Savall: Songs of the Sibyl from
Medieval and Renaissance Spain and
Portugal

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
www.desingel.be
FEB 25 20.00 Ars Nova Copenhagen,
conducted by Paul Hillier: Bach

Bruges
Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
www.concertgebouw.be
FEB 26 20.00 Hesperion XXI conducted
by Jordi Savall: Songs of the Sibyl from
Medieval and Renaissance Spain and
Portugal
MAR 3 20.00 Anima Eterna Brugge
conducted by Jos van Immerseel, with
Thomas Bauer, baritone; Sergei Istomin,
cello: Franck, Dukas, Fauré, Ravel

Brussels
Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
FEB 25 12.30 Leo Wouters and Ward
Opsteyn, trumpet; Hubert Biebaut,
horn; Jan Smets, trombone; Stefan Van
Aenrode, tuba: Rossini, Pietro Mascagni,
Corrado Maria Saglietti, more 20.00
Wiener Philharmoniker conducted
by Lorin Maazel: Beethoven, Debussy,
Ravel **FEB 26** 20.00 Belgian National
Orchestra conducted by Walter Weller:
Ligeti, Beethoven, Albert Roussel **FEB**
28 11.00 Amandine Savary, piano:
Bach, Schubert, Dutilleux 15.00 Belgian
National Orchestra conducted by Walter
Weller: Ligeti, Beethoven, Albert Roussel
MAR 2 20.00 Nikolai Znaider, violin;
Robert Kulek, piano: sonatas by Poulenc,
Beethoven, more

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20
www.flagey.be
FEB 26 12.30 Soloists from the Queen
Elisabeth College of Music 20.15
Brussels Philharmonic conducted by
Michel Tabachnik, with Katia Skanavi,
piano: August De Boeck, Rachmaninov,
Tchaikovsky
MAR 1 20.00 Charlemagne Orchestra
for Europe conducted by Bartholomeus-
Henri Van de Velde, with Liu Fang, pipa:
Justin Morgan, Tan Dun, Tchaikovsky

Halles de Schaarbeek
Koninklijke Sinte-Mariastraat 22;
0900.26.060 www.halles.be
MAR 4 20.30 Brussels Philharmonic
conducted by Michel Tabachnik: Wagner,
Gabrieli, more

Miniemens Chapel
Miniemensstraat 62; 02.511.93.84 www.
miniemens.net
FEB 24 20.00 La Capella Reial de
Catalunya and Hesperion XXI conducted
by Jordi Savall, with Montserrat Figueras,
soprano: Songs of the Sibyl from
Medieval and Renaissance Spain and
Portugal
FEB 27 20.00 Les Agrémens and Namur
Chamber Choir conducted by Guy Van
Waas: Lully, Henry Du Mont
FEB 28 10.30 Orchestra and choir of
the Miniemens Chapel conducted by Jan
Caals: Bach's cantatas

Musical Instruments Museum
Hofberg 2; 02.545.01.30 www.mim.be
FEB 26 12.30 Chamber music ensembles
from the Brussels Conservatory: North

DON'T MISS



Radio Muezzin

24-27 February
deSingel, Antwerp

The brilliant Swiss theatre maker Stefan Kaegi brings the second of what he calls "documentary theatre" back to Antwerp. The actors are not professional but average people with some kind of fascinating true story to tell. This time, it's the turn of the muezzins – the Islamic officials of the mosque who call the faithful to prayer. This group is from Cairo and all have work outside of the mosque – from teacher to body builder.

www.desingel.be

and South American chamber music
FEB 27 15.00 Piet Kuijken, Pleyel
fortepiano; Martijn Vink, cello: Chopin's
cello sonata

FEB 28 11.00/14.30 Pianofolia: double
concert featuring four-, six- and eight-
hand piano music played on one or two
instruments by 16 pianists

Rits Café
Antoine Dansaertstraat 70; 02.526.85.01
http://ritscafe.be
MAR 1 21.00 Chamber music ensembles
from the Brussels Conservatory: North
and South American chamber music

Royal Museums of Fine Arts
Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11
www.concertsdemidi.be
MAR 3 12.40 I Solisti del Vento: Mozart's
Gran Partita

Royal Music Conservatory
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37
www.kcb.be
FEB 24 20.00 Ensemble Musiques
Nouvelles conducted by Jean-Paul Dessim:
Julian Carillo, Rogelio Sosa
FEB 25 15.00 Chamber music ensembles
from the Brussels Conservatory: North
and South American chamber music
MAR 3 20.00 Olivier de Spiegeleir, piano:
Schumann, Chopin

St Michael and St Gudula Cathedral
Sinter-Goedeleplein; 02.507.82.00
MAR 1 20.00 Bernard Foccroulle, organ:
Bach

Ghent

De Bijloke
Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, 09.233.68.78
www.debijloke.be
FEB 25 20.00 Richard Egarr, harpsichord:
Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier (book I)
FEB 26 20.00 Stile Antico: motets
by William Byrd, Orlando Gibbons,
Tomas Luis de Victoria and other
Renaissance composers + a new piece
by contemporary British composer John
McCabe

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
FEB 27 20.15 Ellis Wu Duo and MP4
Quartet, musicians from Ghent's
Orpheus Institute: Britten, Shostakovich

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Antwerp

Vlaamse Opera
Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02

www.vlaamseopera.be

Until 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)

Brussels

Kaaithéâtre

Saintelettesquare 19; 02.201.59.59
www.kaaithéâtre.be

MAR 4 20.30 *Hypermusic Prologue*: a projective opera in seven planes by composer Héctor Parra and physicist Lisa Randall



Brussels

Kaaithéâtre

Saintelettesquare 19; 02.201.59.59
www.kaaithéâtre.be

FEB 25-27 20.30 *Needcompany* in This door is too big (for a bear), choreographed by Grace Ellen Barkey



Aalst

CC De Werf

Molenstraat 51; 053.73.28.12

www.ccdewerf.be

MAR 4 20.00 *Union Suspecte* in They Eat People (in Dutch)

Antwerp

CC Berchem

Driekoningenstraat 126; 03.286.88.20

www.ccberchem.be

FEB 24-25 20.30 *Greta Van Langendonck* in Zonder liefde, warme liefde (Without Love, Warm Love) (in Dutch)

CC Ter Dilt

Sint-Amandsesteenweg 41; 03.890.69.30

www.terdilt.be

FEB 24-25 20.30 *Compagnie Cecilia* in The Broken Circle Breakdown featuring the Cover-Ups of Alabama (music theatre; in Dutch)

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28

www.desisngel.be

Until FEB 27 20.00 *Rimini Protokoll* in Radio Muezzin, directed by Stefan Kaegi (in Arabic with Dutch and French surtitles)



Stadsschouwburg
Theaterplein 1; 0900.69.900
www.stadsschouwburgantwerpen.be
FEB 26-28 15.00/20.00 *Chicago*, musical (in Dutch)

Bruges

Stadsschouwburg
Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.40
www.cultuurcentrumbrugge.be
MAR 4-5 20.00 Bruno Vanden Broucke in *Missie* by David Van Reybrouck, directed by Raven Ruell (in Dutch with English surtitles)

Brussels

KVS Box
Arduinkaaï 9; 02.210.11.12
www.kvs.be
FEB 26-MAR 13 20.30 *Bezette stad* (Occupied City), staged by Ruud Gielens (poetry/theatre/beatbox and rap music, in Dutch and French with Dutch and French surtitles)

Kaaistudio's

Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vlaekstraat 81; 02.201.59.59 www.kaaithéâtre.be
FEB 26-27 20.30 *Maatschappij Discordia* in *Over de kunst* (About Art) (in Dutch)

Eeklo

CC De Herbakker
Pastoor De Nevestraat 10; 09.218.27.27
www.ccdeherbakker.be
FEB 24 20.30 *Comedy café* with Dufraing & De Wit, Bruno Bittoun and Frank Tierens (in Dutch)

Ghent

Capitole
Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5; 0900.69.00
www.capitolegent.be
FEB 28 15.00 *Notre-Dame de Paris* by Victor Hugo (musical, in Dutch)

NTGent Schouwburg

Sint-Baafsklein 17; 09.225.01.01
www.ntgent.be
Until FEB 27 20.30 20.00 Bruno Vanden Broecke in *Missie* (Mission) by David Van Reybrouck (in Dutch with English surtitles)

Theater Tinnenpot

Tinnenpotstraat 21; 09.225.18.60
www.tinnenpot.be
FEB 24 20.00 *Jo Decaluwe in Damiaan* (in Dutch)



Antwerp

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

Extra City

Tulpstraat 79; 03.677.16.55
www.extraicity.org
Until MAY 2 *Animism*, Part Two (see above)

Foto Museum

Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00
www.fotomuseum.be
Until MAR 14 *(Kunstenaars)portretten* (Artists Portraits), photographs by Jean-Pierre Stoop
Until MAY 16 *Congo (belge)*, photographs by Flemish Magnum photographer Carl De Keyzer
Until MAY 16 *Bamako Encounters* 2009 - Borders, contemporary African photography biennial

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09
www.kmska.be
Until FEB 28 *Koen van den Broek*: Preview, work on paper by the Flemish artist

Bruges

Bruggemuseum-Gruuthuse
Dijver 17; 050.44.81.11
www.uivindingvbrugge.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 Louis Delacenserie

Brussels

Argos Centre for Art and Media
Werfstraat 13; 02.229.00.03
www.argoarts.org
Until MAR 27 *Rinko Kawauchi: Transient Wonders, Everyday Bliss*, photography, video and slides
Until MAR 27 *Ralo Mayer: Travelling Through Biosphere 2, or Anastylosis of Follies*, multi-media installation
Until MAR 27 *James Lee Byars: From Life to Art and Back Again*, video and interviews with the American artist

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
Until APR 18 *Frida Kahlo y su mundo*, works by the famous Mexican artist on loan from the Dolores Olmedo Museum

Until APR 11 *Mundos Mexicanos*, overview of post-war Mexican architecture, plus documentary films and contemporary documents
Until APR 11 *Mundos Mexicanos*, 25 contemporary Mexican photographers
Until APR 25 *Imágenes del Mexicano*, history of Mexico seen through 150 portraits, including paintings, photos and sculpture

Until APR 25 *El Horizonte del topo* (The Mole's Horizon), video artists
De Loge Architecturmuseum
Kluistraat 86; 02.642.24.62 www.aam.be
FEB 24-JUNE 6 *Paris-Brussels*: Two centuries of architectural affinities, photographs

De Loketten (Flemish Parliament)
IJzerenkruisstraat 299; 02.552.40.43
Until FEB 27 *Henry van de Velde Awards Labels 2009*, award-winning designers

Royal Museum of the Armed Forces
Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33
www.legermuseum.be

Until FEB 28 *Anvalleuh!*, works by Belgian comic strip artists
Until APR 11 *Dieren in de oorlog* (Animals in the War), archive photos and films of animals affected by the First World War

Royal Museums of Art and History
Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11 www.kmkg-mrha.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
Until JUNE 20 *Fairy Tales in the Sand*, drawings, illustrations and prints of the Islamic world

Tour & Taxis

Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49
www.tour-taxi.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)

Until MAY 2 *It's Our Earth 2!* From Kyoto to Copenhagen, interactive exhibition exploring the effects of climate change on the natural world

WIELS

Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.340.00.50
www.wiels.org
Until APR 25 *Felix Gonzales-Torres: Specific Objects without Specific Form*,

retrospective of the late Cuban-born American artist

Until APR 25 *Melvin Moti: From Dust to Dust*, the contemporary Dutch artist's first solo show in Belgium

Geel

Gasthuismuseum

Gasthuisstraat 1; 014.59.14.43

www.gasthuismuseumgeel.net

Until MAR 31 *God of Doctoor?*, collection illustrating the history of healing in Geel

Ghent

Contemporary Art Museum (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03 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 by the Flemish artist

Until MAY 16 *Collection FAKE?*, interpretations of reality

Design Museum

Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99

www.designmuseumgent.be

FEB 26-JUNE 6 *Richard Hutten*, furniture, interiors and objects by the Dutch designer

FEB 27-JUNE 6 *The Scandinavian Touch* in Belgian Furniture 1951-1966

Hasselt

Cultuurcentrum

Kunstlaan 5; 011.22.99.31 www.ccha.be

FEB 27-APR 11 *Yvan Theys: Verborgen schatten* (Hidden Treasures), paintings

FEB 27-APR 11 *Marnik Neven: Moment*, drawings, paintings, sculpture, digital animations

FEB 27-APR 11 *Kumi Oguro*, photographs

Leuven

STUK

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20

[www](http://www.stuk.be)

CONFESIONS OF THE HEART

Two hundred people penned their expressions of love – whether romantic, amusing or brutal – for the Antwerp World Diamond Centre's "Confessions of the Heart" contest. The competition ran throughout January, and entries had to be in Dutch, about love and contain the word "diamond" at least once.

The jury, headed by newly-appointed Antwerp city poet Peter Holvoet-Hanssen, chose five winners, which were printed in the *Gazet van Antwerpen*. From these, readers voted for the public prize winner, while the jury chose its first prize winner.

On 14 February in Antwerp's Central Station, the poem "Inuit" by Hilde Pinnoo, a published poet from Dilbeek (*pictured*), was awarded first prize by the jury. Leen Raats of Hasselt won the public prize. Both poets were awarded a heart-shaped diamond. Below is Pinnoo's poem in the original Dutch and translated into English.

Inuit

Ze staren in de nacht, in facetten
van ijs – hard als diamant en scherp
als scherven – een teveel aan donker
dat hen wakker houdt. Ooit waren er

uren dat ze konden schuilen in de iglo
van zijn mond, tot het dooivuur
van hun wanden droop. Dit noorden zijn ze
kwijt. Wat blijft is een fonkelend verwijt

tegen zwijgende ruggen, handen
zonder vingers en palmen van verlies.
Niemand durft deze dagen nog

te janken, tenzij met de ogen
en de lippen droog, uit angst voor
de ruwe pijn van onsplijtbaar wit.

Talking Dutch by Alistair MacLean will be back on 10 March



They stare in the night, in facets
of ice – hard as diamond and sharp
as shards – an excess of darkness
that keeps them awake. Ever were there

hours that they could take shelter in the igloo
of his mouth, until the thawed water
drained from their walls. They have lost this
north. What remains is a blazing reproach

against silent backs, hands
without fingers and palms of loss.
Nobody dares anymore

to howl, unless with the eyes
and the lips dry, out of angst for
the raw pain of indivisible white.

bite

SHARON LIGHT

Bean Around the World

When it comes to tailoring a food order to your exact specifications, no one will put you in the driver's seat quite like an American espresso bar.

At the most basic level, there's the coffee itself, where you must choose between a half-dozen blends and roasts – not to mention the total number of shots you want. Then there's the proportions of coffee to steamed milk (or milk foam) – the range starts from a milk-less shot of espresso (add extra water to make it Americano), heading up to a milk-heavy latte.

But even milk isn't just milk. Did you want non-fat milk? Soy milk? Would you like a flavour shot? Caramel, almond or raspberry?

Starbucks, the leading American espresso chain, had long been boxed out of Belgium, where the coffee is high quality and served in straightforward, no-nonsense formats. However, in the past year, two branches opened up at Brussels Airport and one opens this week in Antwerp's Central Station.

Perhaps the most disconcerting thing about a Starbucks in Flanders is the sheer volume of the beverages. A "tall" (Starbucks smallest size) is already larger than any coffee I've ever seen in this country. Their larger sizes, up to the enormous 20-ounce "Venti", are practically absurd.

Moreover, as long as they remain in airport and train stations, they will never cultivate the atmosphere for which American Starbucks are known: as meeting places for friends and baby playgroups, and satellite



offices for telecommuters. In Flanders, a Starbucks is no more than a place to grab an espresso before hopping on your transport.

But over in Bruges, Oline Aucoin launched an American-style coffee house last autumn in a storefront smack dab in the city centre (Genthof 5). Aucoin moved to Bruges three years ago, following her Flemish husband. With the opening of Bean Around the World, this native Californian is trying out her restaurant management skills on the Flemish market.

She's sized down her coffees to a more Belgian-friendly quantity, while still happily adapting the drinks to her customers' specifications, à la America. The locals are warming to her range of brews, and the shop attracts a diverse, international crowd who drop in for the cosy atmosphere, friendly service, free Wi-fi, occasional American muffin or brownie and, of course, for the excellent, strong coffee.

Contact *Bite* at flandersbite@gmail.com

FACE OF FLANDERS

LISA BRADSHAW

Hadewijch of Antwerp



Hadewijch is one of those figures from centuries ago that have become mysterious over time – someone who, before paper and ink were easily reproduced, has a history full of holes in both written and oral memories.

Bruno Dumont could be said to be such a director. His movies are still-lives of a particular time and place, with no real commentary to guide you in a certain direction. The inner workings of his characters are left inside; the picture is there, and you have to fill in the emotional blanks.

The French filmmaker's new feature *Hadewijch* brings the life of the 13th-century poet to the attention of contemporary viewers – albeit in pure contemporary style.

The real Hadewijch wrote poems, letters and accounts of spiritual visions, 100 of which we still have today. From these, scholars have pieced together a history: she travelled a great deal between the lower Netherlands and northern Belgium; probably born in what is now Antwerp, she is often referred to as "Hadewijch of Antwerp", and the oldest copies of her work were all discovered in Brussels.

Although she lived a spiritual life, she is not considered to have been a nun because that is inconsistent with travel. But she was probably part of a

*To discover the real Hadewijch, seek out the books *Hadewijch: The Complete Works* and *Hadewijch: Writer-Beguine-Love Mystic**

→ www.tadart.com

THE LAST WORD . . .

Beer challenge

"We have a beer at 13%, our Black Albert, and we're trying to drive it up to 26%, and maybe later to 39%, as a curiosity for beer freaks."

Belgian brewer Carlo Grootaert of De Struise, who is engaged in a race to make the world's strongest beer

Not totally reassuring

"For 90% of UFO sightings there is an earthly explanation."

Frederick Delaere, from the Belgian UFO reporting site www.ufomeldpunt.be

Body beautiful

"Belgium is beautiful. I started my body-building career there. Bruges is also extraordinarily beautiful."

Arnold Schwarzenegger, who last week met Flemish minister Ingrid Lieten

Marching orders

"With a bit of technical work, we'll be able to make it look like a mass scene."

Film director Hans Herbots, after 150 extras turned up to shoot the White March of October 1996, in which 300,000 people took part