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An agreement has been reached regarding night-time aircraft coming and going from Brussels Airport, ending a decade-long dispute between the airport in Zaventem and local residents



In Ward's head..... 9

Understanding kids with autism is the subject of a new children's book by first-time author Ellen Verspeeten that explains why autistic kids often skip recess and need to do separate homework



Getting to know Geo..... 10

One of Brussels' best-kept secrets, the late artist Geo De Vlamynck's delightful studio, is open to visitors. This mosaic artist and painter is the subject of the first in our series of little-known artist museums in Flanders



In their shoes

Belgium's illustrious history of shoe manufacturing lends extra meaning to an already extraordinary museum

LISA BRADSHAW

It is in the middle of farm land in rural East Flanders, and it is a shoe museum. People tended to smirk when I told them that this is where I was going to spend my afternoon. But Shoes or No Shoes proved to be one of the most ambitious and beautifully-designed museums in Flanders. And, although it is solely (get it?) dedicated to shoes, you could even call it diverse. It is a collection that sometimes made me laugh, sometimes made me ponder the importance of shared objects and, just once, brought me to tears. Over a pair of shoes.

It started with cobblers in Antwerp. Veerle Swenters and Pierre Bogaerts wanted to invest in original art for their shoe-repair business, but they didn't have a huge budget. They came up with the idea of requesting pairs of shoes from artists. This was the early 1990s, before websites and email, so they wrote 1,000 letters and sent them off across the globe. "Please send us the shoes in which you create your art."

And they did. Cardboard packages of shoes began pouring in – from Europe, Asia, the Americas. Many artists simply did as they were told – sent a pair of shoes they wear to work (often splattered with paint, clay or other substances). But a huge number –

completely of their own accord – made art projects out of their shoes. It's this spontaneity that sets the collection at Shoes and No Shoes apart and so completely convinces the visitor of the driving need of artists to create something unique out of something ordinary.

German mixed-media artist Rolf Rose covered his shoes in what appears to be melted plastic. Dutch painter Walter Dahn planted candles on both his toes. The late Flemish artist Urbain Mulders covered his shoes with maps of the world, just as he used to do with a variety of objects. A stuffed rat pokes out of the shoe of Dutch artist Berend Strik, while German painter Thomas Kamin-sky's shoe is strapped down with wire, like Gulliver. Flemish artist Jan Fabre coloured ballet slippers with a blue ink pen, a reference to dance, for which he is famous, and to his ink-pen art, for which he is infamous.

"Mostly they are old shoes, worn down with wear," says museum spokesperson Lode Uytterschaut. "So they really love these objects." Hence the name of the museum, Shoes or No Shoes, suggesting the question: are they still even shoes?

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Sick girl's hopes pinned on US as drug proves "ineffective"

ALAN HOPE

Eight-year-old Sandra Massart will not be receiving the experimental medicine that could arrest a degenerative disease, the company that makes the drug has told her family. Her father William, who raised €1 million to pay for the medication, is now pinning his hopes on a new American treatment. Sandra suffers from Metachromatic Leukodystrophy (MLD), in which a genetic lack of a particular enzyme leads to a build-up of waste products in nerve cells, destroying their protective sheath. The most common form of the disease emerges in late infancy.

There is currently no cure, but Massart, who lives in Temse, East Flanders, saw promise in the drug Metazym, produced by a small Danish company, Zymenex, which was undergoing clinical trials at the time. The company promised to let him have the drug providing he could pay for it. Thanks to his fund-raising efforts and the generosity of many ordinary

people in Belgium, he raised the money, but by that time Zymenex had sold the patent and the drug to Shire, a pharmaceutical giant based in Basingstoke, England. Shire refused to sell Massart the drugs, claiming their production was only enough for the 12 children involved in the official trial. But they promised to review their decision later. Last week, the Massart family was informed that Shire was stopping development of the drug because of disappointing test results. Metazym was not effective enough, said a company spokesman.

Massart has now turned his attention to the US, where a new treatment has shown promise in not only arresting the progress of MLD, but reversing some effects. Sandra is on the waiting list and now awaits the approval of the Food and Drug Administration for the therapy to go ahead. ♦

➡ <http://nl.netlog.com/groups/SandraMassart>

Carrefour slashes stores

Unions fear worst is yet to come

Carrefour plans to close 14 hypermarkets and seven supermarkets in Belgium, with the loss of more than 1,600 jobs, the supermarket chain announced last week. The French-owned company, which has suffered a constant loss of market share and claims a €40 million loss over the last nine years since it arrived on the Belgian scene, will also sell 20 stores to the Walloon group Mestdagh and seven more to franchisees.

Unions feared the cuts were only the beginning and immediately announced strike action that saw all Carrefour stores closed and picketed at the weekend. Politicians

condemned the French group's decision and called for a viable social plan to deal with laid-off workers. Unions promised "a long and hard fight" to oppose closures.

"For six months I've been holding our stores up to the light," said company CEO Gérard Lavinay. "The stores we have marked for closure could not be saved; the cancer was too deep. Nothing short of a doubling of turnover could offer any hope."

He blamed the cost of staff, which Carrefour claims is 29% higher than the competition pays – a claim both unions and outside experts denied, laying the blame instead at Carrefour management's own door. ♦

➡ special report: page 6



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News in brief

The Flemish Parliament last week approved a resolution calling for the **removal of nuclear weapons** across the world. The resolution calls on the federal government to work within Nato for the removal of nuclear weapons – a plea that last week received the support of former prime ministers Guy Verhofstadt and Jean-Luc Dehaene, former EU commissioner Louis Michel and former Nato secretary-general Willy Claes.

The University of Ghent will this week give away a **prize of a full year's tuition** to a "creative-thinking" student as part of a campaign run by advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi. On four consecutive days, a challenge will appear on the campaign website. The student who best solves the puzzle will receive the prize, which also includes a studio apartment, a laptop, a GSM, a cinema season ticket and one hot meal a day for a year. www.stuntbrein.be

Antwerp-based **boxer Sugar Jackson** has been cleared of misconduct by the Flemish Doping Tribunal following his failure to fill in his whereabouts last year. Professional sportsmen and women are obliged to report their locations when on tour to allow random drug testing. Jackson claimed never to have received a letter informing him he was now one of Flanders' 713 top athletes and, therefore, subject to the system. Jackson's 19 March bout against American Randall Bailey in Lotto Arena can now go ahead.

The state security service has advised the justice minister that sending sensitive information by email using a **BlackBerry smartphone** is unsafe, and may even be illegal. The agency has recommended that the devices should no longer be used by ministers and senior civil servants, following talks with the Canadian operator RIM, who admitted their network was not secure enough for mail traffic classified as "restricted". All of BlackBerry's traffic in Europe passes through servers in the UK.

Flemish astronaut Frank De Winne discussed the death of Michael Jackson with his wife Lena while he was in space and once asked her to turn the webcam round so he could watch the Ronde Van Vlaanderen on TV, she has revealed in a new book about their six-month separation while Frank commanded the International Space Station.



"Mind-reading" technology will help patients communicate

Scientists at the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL) have developed an apparatus that reads the thoughts of patients who are unable to speak or to type on a conventional keyboard.

The scientific facts, of course, don't quite live up to the promise of that headline. The so-called Mind Speller, developed by a team of researchers under Professor Marc Van Hulle of the university's neurophysiology department, is essentially a swim-cap with electrodes attached to an electro-encephalograph (EEG) machine. The patient looks at a set of signs – letters, numbers and punctuation marks – and the machine "reads" whichever sign has been selected.

The patient is then able to build up words and sentences, one letter at a time, which can be read from a screen or transformed into speech. At a later stage, the team wants to integrate word-completion and the sort of predictive text function already common on mobile phones.

The device was developed for Professor Van Hulle by IMEC in Leuven, the country's largest research centre for nanotechnology. The apparatus has been tested on 12 patients with encouraging results.

It was also tested last week by a volunteer, Het Nieuwsblad reporter Inge Bosschaerts, who described the experiment as a success, albeit one that requires concentration and takes a long time to produce results.

Van Hulle promised to introduce improvements and replace the swim-cap with a sort of diadem containing the essential components. "We hope to have the set on the market within two years," he said. The price will be around €200.

The Mind Speller was last week awarded the annual Swift Prize, which recognises organisations using communication and information technologies, worth €50,000.

"I prepared myself for our weekly video conferences," Lena Clarke De Winne said. "Sometimes I put on some make-up, and I always picked a different part of the house to talk to him, so he could see into my life." www.davidsfonds.be

An 18-year-old girl who claimed to have been **abducted in Mechelen** by two men and held for 20 hours invented the tale and was with her boyfriend, investigators said. Police found her original story inconsistent and interviewed her a second time, when she admitted

the truth. She said she was afraid to tell her parents that she had been with her boyfriend all night.

Belgium is in the middle of the European average for **road accident fatalities** but scores less well than its neighbouring countries, according to the latest figures from Eurostat, the EU's statistics agency. Belgium comes 15th in a table of 27, with 101 deaths per million inhabitants. Malta had the lowest rate at 29 deaths, while Lithuania is worst at 218. Belgium's neighbours all did better: France (75), Germany (60), the UK (50) and the Netherlands (43).

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More weeks for dad

The Flemish women's rights organisation VOK has called for an increase in paternity leave to keep pace with the four extra weeks of maternity leave proposed by the European Parliament. At present, new mothers get 16 weeks leave, while fathers get only two weeks



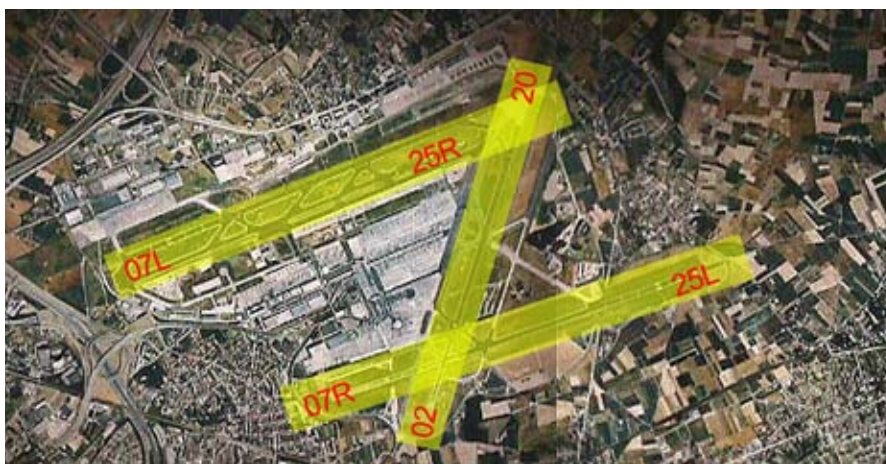
Agreement reached on aircraft noise

After 10 years of dispute, Brussels Airport changes its take-off schedule

An agreement was reached last week over night-time noise nuisance caused by planes taking off and landing at Brussels Airport, which should bring an end to 10 years of dispute. The agreement will harmonise wind-speed limits, which are currently different for the various runways. There will also be more use made of the route over the Willebroek canal, which involves less nuisance to residential areas. In addition, take-offs involving a leftward turn over Brussels will be spread out, as will take-offs from runway 25R to the southeast, while take-offs from runway 07R to the southeast will be adapted so as to pass over less heavily populated areas. At the same time, a limit of

16,000 night-flights per year and restrictions on older aircraft taking off and landing by day, will be maintained in a new law to be drawn up. Both measures were agreed during previous rounds of negotiation but were never enshrined in law.

The agreement has achieved what long seemed impossible to imagine: support from Flemish and French-speaking interests, which have been in conflict for the past decade in an effort to defend the interests of their own constituencies. Belgian prime minister Yves Leterme praised the "outstanding work" of secretary of state for mobility, Etienne Schouppe. The agreement came as a welcome relief from the pressure on him, as former head of the rail authority NMBS, over the Buizingen train disaster last month.



The three main runways at Brussels Airport, each of which can be used in both directions depending on wind direction

According to Leterme, the new deal strikes a balance between the desires of residents and the airport in Zaventem. It was largely due to new rules on night-time noise that courier company DHL moved its European operations to Leipzig in 2008. Despite the negative economic impact, its relocation also saw the departure of many older and noisier aircraft, making the new agreement easier to reach. Residents themselves were less

impressed. The group Actie Noordrand said it was "disappointed" by "good principles being applied to every region but the Noordrand (northern outskirts). We retain flights which are heading to the south, but which are unnecessarily diverted via the north. That whole principle clashes with the normal criteria of safety, capacity, economy and ecology," the group said. ♦

THE WEEK
IN FIGURES

23.46%

pay gap between men and women, according to figures from the finance ministry. Last week, in the run-up to Equal Pay Day on 26 March, the socialist union ABVV and zij-kant, the socialist women's movement, launched a campaign against the gap

274

cases of missing persons over the age of 60 in 2009, an increase of 36% over the previous year. The missing person was found safe and well in 214 cases; the remaining 60 people were found dead. The total number of missing persons was 1,527.

338

candidates last year took the exam to enter the senior magistracy, but only 24 passed, the High Council for Justice revealed. A lack of knowledge of Dutch is one of the main problems preventing a higher pass rate

€1.59 million

cost of damage done to more than 4,700 road signs by accidents on Flanders' roads last year. About €1 million was recovered from insurers. East Flanders, with 1,557 cases, was the worst affected, followed closely by Antwerp.

8,540

candidates for social housing who were sent to Dutch courses under a new law that obliges tenants to be willing to obtain knowledge of the language. In all, 33,115 people applied for social housing

Flanders returns from Vancouver empty handed

LEO CENDROWICZ

There were no Olympic miracles for the Flemish hopes who travelled to Vancouver last month: none of them came within a whisker of a medal. The head of the Belgian Olympic delegation, Eddy De Smedt, admitted that the team failed to live up to expectations.

Pieter Gysel came closest to the podium with his ninth place finish in the 1500m short-track skating event. But, despite promising to do better in other events, he failed to make it out of the heats in the 1000m and only reached the quarter-finals in the 500m.

This year's Belgian flag-bearer, 2009 European Figure Skating bronze medalist Kevin Van der Perren, wearing an eye-catching skeleton outfit, came 12th in the short programme, but fell to 17th in the free skating part of the event. In the women's slalom, Karen Persyn came 27th but said she was happy



Elfje Willemssen (left) and Eva Willemarck were a hit with the public

to finish in the top 30. In the men's slalom, Jeroen Van den Bogaert trailed in 42nd and Bart Mollin skied off course and did not finish his run. Belgians are talking, though, about bobsleigh duo Elfje Willemssen and

Eva Willemarck. Considering they only tried the sport for the first time two-and-a-half years ago, a 14th place proved surprising and exciting for the women and the rest of the country. ♦

➔ www.olympic.be

E-cards to take place of meal vouchers

Every year in Belgium, 1.3 million workers receive 250 million *maaltijdcheques*, or meal vouchers, from their employers. But these will soon be a thing of the past, after the government agreed last week to approve the introduction of an electronic version, which could be in operation by the end of the year. The two companies that run meal-voucher systems, Sodexho and Accor Services, are currently developing their own individual e-payment systems which would allow various payment methods, such as a dedicated payment card similar to Proton, credits tied to the electronic identity card or payments by SMS.

According to the minister for administrative simplification, Vincent Van Quickenborne, the new system would avoid the common problems of people losing their vouchers or neglecting to use them before their expiry date. In addition, a payment card would make it possible to pay the exact amount required, getting around the problem of change. Businesses, however, greeted the news with the suspicion that it might lead to higher costs. "New additional costs are unacceptable," said Karel Van Eetvelt, managing director of Unizo, which represents the self-employed in Flanders. "That would cause tradespeople to opt out and

undermine the whole system. At least now there's a certain fixed cost per transaction."

Businesses used to accepting the paper cheques face another problem, according to NSZ, which also represents small businesses. "About half of all small businesses and catering establishments have no payment terminal," a spokesperson said.

Paper cheques will still continue for a transitional period, Van Quickenborne said. A system involving paper cheques as well as various forms of electronic payment methods is anything but simplified, business representatives said. ♦

FIFTH
COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

Time to cross
that bridge

Last week saw yet another proposal for the "third Scheldt crossing" aimed at alleviating traffic congestion in and around Antwerp. The new proposal is unique in that industrials and activists worked on it together. Most politicians have welcomed it, yet this will probably not be the final solution to the problem.

It is up to the Flemish government to decide on the new Scheldt crossing. Will it involve the BAM solution, which includes the much-debated Oosterweel viaduct? Or will it be the Arup/Sum route, which uses tunnels as an alternative? This in itself is an extremely hard decision to make, but it is complicated further by the fact that there is a lot at stake for every coalition party.

CD&V, for instance, wants to see its minister-president Kris Peeters succeed. He has vowed to solve this issue personally. Peeters wants to be seen as a doer, not a doubter. He faces one major problem, though. In a referendum, the people of Antwerp voted down the BAM solution and the Oosterweel link (named the "Lange Wapper", a reference to an old Flemish legend about a giant), which his party favours. Can he brush the will of the people aside?

Then there is the socialist party sp.a, which includes Antwerp mayor Patrick Janssens. For a long time, Janssens backed the Lange Wapper. Amidst growing protest, he spoke the words: "Walk and don't look back." (In fact, if quizzed, the chances are that more Antwerp people will associate this quote with Janssens rather than reggae singer Peter Tosh.)

However, shortly before the Antwerp referendum, he changed his mind and is now the most outspoken opponent of the BAM option. Changing his mind again will be tricky. Not only would Janssens lose face, but he also stands to lose the support of the Antwerp population.

The Flemish nationalist party N-VA is also involved, as party president Bart De Wever, another Antwerp resident, is one of the most outspoken supporters of the Lange Wapper. Oddly enough, he opposed it at first because of its many flaws, which makes him the exact opposite of Janssens. After a fierce clash between Janssens and De Wever last week, the Flemish government has opted to resolve the issue discreetly. At this point, a typical "Belgian compromise" – in which no-one loses out too obviously – seems a long way off. But who knows what bridge might cross these troubled waters?

➔ www.bamnv.be



FLANDERS TODAY

We want to hear from you!

Since its launch in October 2007, *Flanders Today* has seen a spectacular increase in the number of readers and subscribers and now has a **weekly circulation of 24,000 copies**.

We regularly receive feedback and comments from our readers, but we would like to know more about you and gather information on your needs and expectations regarding *Flanders Today*. We would also like to know your level of satisfaction with the newspaper, along with its e-newsletter and website.

Your opinion really matters and helps us to shape the content. So please go to **www.flanderstoday.eu/survey** to fill out the readership survey. This should take no more than 10 minutes and will help us to make *Flanders Today* an even better newspaper.

If you complete the survey, you can also participate in a competition for the chance to **win one of three vouchers of Vlaanderen Vakantieland** (worth €100 each), **one of five yearly subscriptions to Brussels Unlimited and The Bulletin** (worth €85 each) or **one of 10 Bongo gift boxes** (worth €25 each).

Thank you and good luck!

Lisa Bradshaw
Deputy Editor

Derek Blyth
Editor-in-chief

www.flanderstoday.eu/survey



THE BULLETIN

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TWO MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES TO BE WON

Tariq Malik Del Campo, Sales & Business Development Manager
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Managing successfully within a globalised world

"Vlerick really gives you added value; it is a true learning experience"

Tariq Malik Del Campo successfully completed the International Management Programme in October 2009.

Tariq Malik Del Campo: "Shortly after I moved from Spain to Belgium in 1991 I started working for Ericsson Belgium. As manager of the Ericsson training department I was responsible for organising training sessions for both employees who needed technical training as well as customers who were offered end-user training. Since 1997 I have been working for Ericsson Sweden.

Because of my career origins as training manager education has always been close to my heart. Keeping oneself updated academically and developing adequate skills is the only way to remain competitive and self-confident in a rapidly changing and ever more international business environment. This globalisation is what kept me on my toes and drew me in my mid-life back to the books. I realised that what got me to the point I was in my career was not enough to successfully keep me there.

The high recommendations of a friend who was following a management programme at Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School and the excellent Financial Times rankings were what attracted me to the School. Because of my international working environment I chose to follow the International Management Programme. Not only did it offer me the possibility to refresh some of the principles I had learned previously in an MBA course, but also to view disciplines such as strategy, HR Management and leadership from a completely different angle. The hands-on experience and real case studies combined with simulations and role modelling, proved to be an extremely effective and rich way to learn and develop. Vlerick really gives you added value; it is a true learning experience.

As for the future, time will tell how I can experiment with this newly gathered knowledge and where it will take me on a career level. However, the programme has certainly made me feel more comfortable in handling the international relationships and differences in doing business. Finally, by taking this course at a later stage in my career I was able to blend together my collected experience in the business world with this fresh knowledge in a way that I feel has leveraged my performance."



In their shoes

Belgium used to be at the fore of European shoe manufacturing

➔ continued from page 1

Some of the collection belongs to artists who died before the 1990s, which suggests someone else leant a hand. It's not noted who put together Danish painter Jens Jensen's wood-box diorama, containing pair of brown suede shoes, a pot with brushes, some scribbled notes and bits of coloured paper – all apparently Jensen's.

But it's the piece of Portuguese José de Guimaraes that takes your breath. Beneath framed glass hanging on the wall, his cowboy boot is nearly hidden at the bottom of a sea of pink confetti, green glitter, blue stones, sand and human-like figures made from cement. It looks like the happy dream of a 20-year-old glamour boy rather than the 50-something artist he was at the time.

Sometimes the letters that accompanied the shoes are more interesting than the shoes themselves. British photographer Boyd Webb wrote: "Although a sparkling piece of kit, these yellow shoes, they do not fit (They come from Istanbul)". British video pioneer David Hall notes that "this old boot was worn in the late sixties when I first made sculpture in it, then wandered around with my cine-camera in it, then used my video equipment in it. It is very much an old transitional boot."

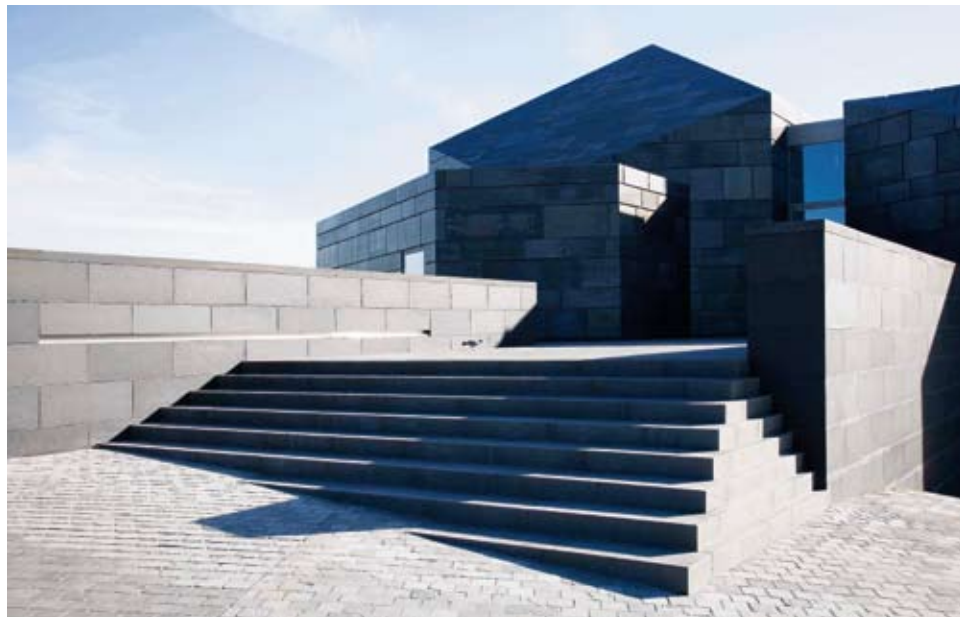
As much as these common objects that everyone owns can trace a history of contemporary art, the second collection of the museum is an anthropological history of footwear. The museum's ethnographic collection is the largest in the world (authenticated by the *Guinness Book of Records*), clocking in at 4,000 pairs of shoes from 155 countries.

The collection is broken down by region and comes from William Habraken, a Dutch shoe wholesaler. For more than 30 years, Habraken travelled to remote areas, collecting shoes from as many ethnicities as possible. "Most of the shoes you see in the collection he got from the culture wearing them," says Uytterschaut. "When he sold his company, he did nothing else but travel, looking up ancient cultures and trying to get their shoes. He rode sled dogs; he traded his knife with a Nigerian tribal chief for his century-old shoes." Habraken's specimens from Peru are among the oldest, but the very oldest – from 100 BC – he found in a cave in Nevada.

Even your drive up to the museum is an experience. Shoes or No Shoes is on the top of a hill along a country road in the tiny village of Kruishoutem, just south of Deinze. The building was actually built in the 1970s by architect Christiaan Vander Plaetse for the artist Emile Veranneman, who had a gallery there. It had fallen into disrepair, and Uytterschaut, an architect, was called in to redesign it for Shoes or No Shoes. He renovated the inside and covered the entire outside in lead.

Lying as it does in farmland, it looks like a futuristic utopia. "The landscape out here is always alive, like the sea," says Uytterschaut. "The building also had to live, and lead lives. It changes colour over the years but also over the day, depending on the sun. Buildings of white plaster, you can put them anywhere, but I feel that this building can only be there, on top of that hill." ♦

➔ www.shoesornoshoes.com



Shoes or No Shoes, impressive outside as well as in



Funeral shoes from 13th-century China, part of the ethnographic collection

Rising from the ashes

Flemish designers pick up the pieces of a near-extinct industry

STÉPHANIE DUVAL



© Reporters/Johannes vande Voorde

Which country springs to mind when you think of shoes? Italy? China perhaps, if you look at the label of the shoes you're wearing now.

However, there used to be a time when "Belgium" would have immediately sprung to mind. As once the textile industry flourished within our borders, so did shoe production. Unfortunately, both industries met the same fate during the 20th century, as they couldn't possibly compete with the cheap alternatives offered by Asia and Eastern Europe.

In the 19th century, most of the shoe production in Belgium took place in West Flanders, with more than 40% centred in Izegem, about 12 kilometres southwest of Kortrijk. As early as the 18th century, this region was renowned for its superb craftsmanship and innovative shoe design. From all over Europe, members of royal families came here to order a unique pair of shoes. Business was thriving, and many of the smaller ateliers grew into large factories, giving birth to an entire industry.

By the mid-20th century, competition started coming from Italy but also from China and from low-wage countries in Eastern Europe. Belgian producers were faced with

an impossible dilemma: stay true to their identity and keep making expensive, high-quality shoes, while making less and less money, or switch to mass production.

Most of them chose the second option but failed miserably at gaining an advantage on the competition, as their methods of production were not suited to their new mission.

Of the 600 producers that were active in Izegem, only one is still in business today. Mareno is one of the three remaining Belgian shoe producers, which are all located in Flanders: Bonne Shoe in Waarschoot and Ambiorix in Tongeren are the other two.

All three are still around because they stuck with their original strengths: making high-end, quality shoes. Gradually, these three resilient companies made a niche for themselves, offering something no country in Eastern Europe or China could reproduce quickly or cheaply.

But the competition remains tough, as Belgians are at a significant disadvantage because of strict regulations in Europe. For example, they can't use substances (such as glue) that can be unhealthy, so they have to use more expensive alternatives. Yet

Chinese factories can import their products into Europe without any regard for these same regulations.

Considering these economic difficulties and adding in the lack of a formal education in Flanders for aspiring shoe designers, you'd think there would be no innovation in shoe design left here at all. Fortunately, that's not entirely true. At least three Flemish women have made their passion into their full-time job, with a little creativity and a lot of entrepreneurial spirit.

Ellen Verbeek started off with a collection of handbags, because she couldn't find a proper course in shoe design in Belgium. But refusing to let go of her interest, she travelled south and spent some time at a little Italian factory, watching and learning. She launched her own shoe collection in 2005.

Nathalie Verlinden learned how to sculpt at Sint-Lucas art school in Ghent, then took a course in Brussels at Brucemo, which taught her the technical side of cobblery. Additionally, she took a few courses in the ateliers of secondary school Stella Maris in Antwerp.

➔ continued on page 11

"The shoe industry will never return to Belgium": designer Nathalie Verlinden

End of the supermarket line

Carrefour's decline was nine years in the making

ALAN HOPE

Some 60 Carrefour shops across the country were closed by wildcat strike action on Friday, 26 February. The following day, the entire network was closed, in an action Carrefour Belgium CEO Gérard Lavinay said would cost the company €14 million.

Unions were ready to take a tough line, fearing this "social bloodbath" will only be the start. They are afraid that Carrefour's intention is to hand over the remains of the business in Belgium to franchise holders. "They're thinning down the company to make it easier to take over," warned Chris Van Droogenbroeck of white-collar union LBC.

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters met with Lavinay last week to be briefed on the company's plans. Following the half-hour meeting, a stony-faced Peeters declined to comment on the restructuring itself, but stressed his government's desire for as few lay-offs as possible.

Regional aid worth nearly €530,000 promised by the Flemish government to assist in training of Carrefour staff has been blocked, Peeters said. "We give strategic training support to allow people to learn, not to see them sacked," he said. The company will also have to repay €84.6 million in tax breaks ruled illegal by the EU.

Most experts argued that Carrefour was in trouble as a result of its own inability to comprehend the nature of the Belgian market. The company was accused of failing to take account of the specific characteristics of consumer behaviour in Belgium, or the specificities of the two language communities, instead treating the entire territory as "an out of hand Département du Nord," according to Ivan Sabbe, a member of the Flemish parliament who used to be CEO of Lidl Belgium.

"As well as a thought-out marketing strategy, every retail company has to have a clear concept," Sabbe wrote in an opinion column for *De Tijd* newspaper. "But every concept, however strong the company may be internationally, has to be adapted to local needs," he said. If the Delhaize concept was "shopping as a pleasurable experience," and the Colruyt concept was "quality without frills," Carrefour was neither. "People



Supermarket trolleys block the doors of the Carrefour store in Drogenbos, one of those slated for closure

know why they go shopping at Colruyt or Delhaize," said BBTk union representative Jan De Weghe. "Nobody knows why they go shopping at Carrefour. That's commercial incompetence."

The hypermarket concept, imported from France, "is under pressure," said Gino Van Ossel, retail marketing professor at Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School. "Their non-food is suffering from the competition from specialised shops. On sports articles, they run up against sports supermarkets like Decathlon, and for clothes against JBC."

Dominique Nuytten, formerly director of neighbourhood supermarkets for GB and later Carrefour, explained: "The model of the French hypermarket doesn't really apply to this country. Belgium, and especially Flanders, is used to a completely different retail landscape than France. Here, the local shop and the supermarket are much more emphatically present on the market."

In the years since Carrefour moved into the Belgian market in July 2000, taking over the GB supermarket chain from GB-

Inno-BM, it has had four CEOs, all imports from Paris. Most senior executive positions were also filled by French imports who regard a job here as a stepping-stone to better things in France.

The ignorance of cultural differences, according to one commentator, recalled the case of Wal-Mart, the world's biggest retailer, which moved into Germany in 1998 expecting to encounter no resistance from heavy discounters like Lidl and Aldi. Instead, the American giant was forced to leave in 2006, having sold off all of its supermarkets to another competitor, Metro, at a loss of €1 billion.

From a Flemish point of view, the company remains resolutely French, with few or no top executives speaking a word of Dutch. It may be an accident that all of the seven supermarkets marked for closure and nine of the 14 hypermarkets are in Flanders. By contrast, the hypermarkets and supermarkets which will be taken over by Mestdagh, should that deal go ahead, are all in Wallonia or Brussels.

The criticism didn't only come from the Flemish side. Federal labour minister Joëlle Milquet

said, "I was personally shocked by the extent of Carrefour's restructuring, especially since this is not a case of restructuring as a result of the crisis, but as a result of a strategic error."

The Walloon union CNE, meanwhile, accused Carrefour of "throwing workers away like old Kleenex" and thinking only of shareholders' interests. "What is happening here is very arrogant," the union's Myriam Delmée said. "The only solution offered is the closure of shops and the sacking of workers. The real problem, the continuing decline in turnover, is not even addressed," she said.

Unions and management at Carrefour were due to meet on 3 March to discuss the closures plan.

• Meanwhile in France, Carrefour last week won the coveted Top Employer award for the second year in a row. "This award is a reward for our engagement to our personnel policy and proves our commitment to all of our staff," a Carrefour spokesperson said. ♦

CARREFOUR IN FIGURES



14
hypermarkets to close out of a total of 57, with a loss of 1,352 jobs

7
supermarkets to close out of the 61 owned by Carrefour (another 317 are franchised), with 320 jobs lost

1,672
jobs to disappear right away

2,992
more jobs under threat in other supermarkets and in the company's Belgian HQ in Evre

3
hypermarkets and 11 supermarkets to be sold to the Walloon Mestdagh group, which runs Champion supermarkets. Some 1,795 workers affected with an immediate loss of 10-15% of pay. Carrefour staff salaries frozen

3 percentage points
of market share lost if the plan goes ahead, putting Carrefour, once market leader, in third place behind Delhaize and Colruyt

colruyt aims high

Discount retailer Colruyt has opened a new distribution centre in Beersel measuring 24,000 square metres (employees get around in little electric cars). It will be joined in July by another – 35,000 square metres – which will provide work for 370 new staff initially, rising later to 670, for an investment of €54 million.

In the course of this year, according

to CEO Jef Colruyt, the company intends to create 3,000 jobs. "At that point we'll have reached our ceiling," he said. "There can't be much more growth than that."

Colruyt could single-handedly solve the problem of Carrefour's mass redundancies. "The Carrefour workers who want to will know how to find us," remarked Jef Colruyt. The com-

pany has doubled its workforce from 10,000 to just over 20,000 since 2000, but it employs younger people on average and demands efficiency, cost-control and, where appropriate, bilingual staff.

Bad news came last week from Ternat, however, where 270 workers at a distribution centre learned their jobs are to go. Logistics Ternat – which had been

blockaded by staff, affecting deliveries to Carrefour hypermarkets – is owned by Kühne + Nagel, with Carrefour as its sole client. The company said some of the workers could be transferred to its other operations at Nivelles and Kontich. However Kontich's own future could be in jeopardy: it also has Carrefour as sole client, and the contract runs out in June this year.

Signs of buyers' market as property sales go up

Survey reveals the most expensive and the cheapest places to buy

ALAN HOPE

One half of all people looking to buy a house, apartment or plot of land in Belgium have postponed their purchase as a result of the economic crisis. However, despite the crisis, more property transactions are taking place, according to a survey carried out by the Royal Federation of Belgian Notaries (KFBN). In January, the number of property transactions rose by 11.6% compared to December last year, representing an increase of nearly 21% on the same period in 2009. In the last quarter of 2009, in fact, business was back to the levels achieved before the crisis started. The KFBN notices no major increase in prices, which may be because sellers are showing more flexibility in order to ensure sales.

According to a survey carried out by iVox for *Het Nieuwsblad*, the number of people looking to buy has fallen by 13.5% since last year, with one in four hoping for price cuts, while one in two is actually expecting prices to increase. On the contrary, according to one real estate expert, the current situation is a buyers' market, which will put pressure on prices to stay level, if not to fall. Houses are currently staying on the market for an average of five months and apartments for seven months – twice as long as two years ago, in both cases.

The most expensive places in which to buy houses are Brussels (except for Anderlecht and



© Reporters

neighbouring areas in the west of the city), a string of towns northeast of Antwerp from Kalmthout to Malle, the border town of Hoogstraten, Oud-Turnhout in Antwerp province and Meeuwen-Gruitrode in Limburg. The most expensive apartments are to be found in Knokke-Heist; Ledegem, near Kortrijk, and Sint-Martens-Latem and De Pinte, both south of Ghent.

The cheapest homes are in Borgloon in Limburg; Tienen and Landen in Flemish Brabant;

Geraardsbergen and Ronse in East Flanders; Langemark-Poelkapelle in West Flanders; and Niel in Antwerp. Finally, the cheapest apartments are to be found in Diksmuide and Ardooie in West Flanders; Nevele and Wortegem-Petegem in East Flanders, Lille and Geel in Antwerp; Bekkevoort and Zoutleeuw in Flemish Brabant; Bocholt in Limburg; and Anderlecht and Jette in Brussels. ♦

→ www.notaris.be

Top banker Chaffart dies

Fred Chaffart, former top banker and executive, has died after a long illness. He was 74. Chaffart (pictured) was CEO of Generale Bank in 1998 when it became the target of a takeover by Fortis. He opposed the takeover but failed to prevent it. One year later, he was called in by the government as crisis manager during the dioxin scandal, and in 2001 he became the last-ever chairman of the national airline Sabena.



Chaffart went on to be deputy chairman of media company Corelio, which publishes *Flanders Today*, until last year. "I consulted him regularly over important, sometimes difficult decisions," said Corelio CEO Thomas Leyssen. "In that sense, for me, he was something of a confidant." Chaffart began his working life as a sales representative for his parents' paint company, which he later took over. After a number of positions with companies like Proctor and Gamble, he became commercial director at the sugar processor Tiense Suiker, where he worked his way up to managing director. He stayed until

1990, when he moved over to Generale Maatschaappij and later Generale Bank. When ABN Amro and Fortis were fighting to see who would take over Generale, Chaffart favoured ABN Amro, although his first choice was to keep the bank's independence. Fortis won that battle, and Chaffart resigned. "In all these years I have never felt a hint of bitterness in him, even though what happened back then must have pained him," said former board member André Bergen, now CEO of KBC. "But he was never a man to be bitter." Chaffart leaves a wife and two adults children. ♦

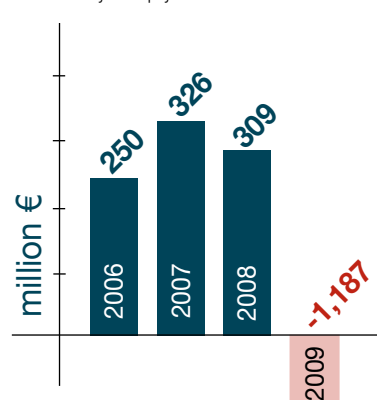
Taxman pays out more, and faster

The tax authorities for the first time paid out more in rebates last year than they gathered in supplementary payments, it was revealed last week. Because of the Belgian system of quarterly pre-payments of estimated tax liability, some people have already paid more than they owe when they submit their tax declarations, while others are left owing more. In the past, it has been normal for those expecting a rebate to have to wait well into the next year before getting it, especially if the sums involved were large.

In the months between August and December last year, however, the tax authorities took in €913 million from people who still owed, but paid out rebates of €2.1 billion. That's a reversal of the trend of the last few years, when the balance was positive in favour of the government (see chart).

The apparent treasury deficit, of course, is only notional: it does not take account of the sums paid by taxpayers in pre-payment. If anything, the large size of the rebates involved suggests taxpayers are overestimating their own liability, leading to overpayments that require rebates. One reason for the improved speed in pay-outs, meanwhile, is the new Tax-on-Web system of online declarations. As a result, 3.4 million people received their final bill before the end of the year, compared to only 104 people five years ago. Another 1.6m got their bills (or

The treasury take: payments minus rebates 2006-2009



their rebates) in January and February this year.

One suggestion that has been raised is that the government deals with rebates speedily in order to include them in the budget for 2009, a year which was already written off as a budget disaster. As a consequence of the early rebates, the year 2010 will be spared the effect.

• Cases of tax fraud are never out of time, the Constitutional Court said last week, in a ruling that could see prosecutors offices across the country reopening a number of important cases. The principle of timing-out is common in Belgian law: for most offences, proceedings cannot be brought after a certain time limit. The court was ruling in the case of computer company ATC, where allegations of VAT fraud came to light in 1995 but are only now approaching the prosecution stage. ♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Air transport • Brussels Airlines

Brussels Airlines will launch flights to Accra, Lome, Cotonou and Ouagadougou in Western Africa using a new Airbus 330 in July. The new operations, costing €10 million, entail the hiring of 110 additional personnel, including 12 pilots and 50 cabin crew.

Banking • BNP Paribas

French banking group BNP Paribas will relocate four of its international banking departments in Brussels. The decision affects Corporate and Transaction Banking Europe (CTBE), the Global Cash Management branch, Trade Services and Global Factoring.

Cinema • Paramount

Hollywood film studio Paramount Pictures has confirmed that Steven Spielberg will film significant parts of the second Tintin film in Flanders. The move allows Paramount to benefit from Belgium's favourable tax shelter regime. Spielberg is expected to be scouting for locations in Bruges for two weeks in May.

Finances • Bank of China

Bank of China is planning to open a branch office in Brussels as part of its strategy to develop its activities in Europe, following the increasing role of Chinese investments in Belgium. Another financial institution, the Industrial and Construction Bank of China (ICBC), is said to be considering a similar move.

Investment • Ranking

Flanders has been ranked as Europe's seventh most attractive region for foreign investment, according to the UK publication *FDI Magazine*.

Retail • Marks & Spencer

Marks & Spencer, one of the UK's largest retailers, is planning to re-launch its activities in Belgium later this year, nearly 10 years after closing its four Belgian stores (two in Antwerp and one each in Brussels and Liège).

Shipping • CMB

Antwerp-based shipping group CMB has ordered five 32,000-tonne bulk carriers worth \$135 million (€100 million) from the Chinese Jiangsu shipyard. In addition, the company has converted an earlier order of three tankers to bulk carriers.

Trade • Trade Mission

The Flemish government trade mission to California has led to the signing of several cooperation agreements between US and Flanders-based companies in the renewable energies and ICT sectors. The Californian Electric Power Research Institute will work with Limburg-based Energyville and Epri, while Imec in Leuven and SkyScan in Kontich are to collaborate with Intel and the San-Jose Bio centre.

"Softcore with a little soft gore"

Offscreen brings exploitation to a cinema near you

IAN MUNDELL

Exploitation films are usually low budget affairs, with acting and production values to match. But in the early 1970s, two Japanese studios decided to throw substantial amounts of money into making films that would previously have been beneath their dignity.

"In the 1970s, box office numbers were going down, with television coming up, so the studios decided to make pictures that would pull in audiences by showing things you couldn't show on the small screen," explains Micha Pletinckx of Marcel, one of the organisers behind the Offscreen Film Festival. A selection of these films is one of the highlights of this year's festival, which runs in Brussels over three weekends in March.

If you haven't seen them, or only caught their echo in the films of western devotees such as Quentin Tarantino, then they are definitely worth checking out. With highly stylised violence, strong female characters and an approach to sex that favours blood and bondage, they have an atmosphere quite unlike anything else. "The filmmakers were usually trying to reproduce manga style, and really going wild with it," Pletinckx says, referring to Japan's long tradition of adult comic books. "The studios allowed them a lot of liberty."

Among the best are the first three *Female Convict Scorpion* films, directed by Shunya Ito and starring the highly charismatic Meiko Kaji as a woman trying to escape from prison and take revenge on the corrupt police detective who set her up. Visually and thematically, they have an approach to the women-in-prison genre that still feels fresh.

Other sub-genres on show include the girl-gang, with Kaji again turning up in *Stray Cat Rock: Sex Hunter*, with a story that also deals with prejudice against mixed-race Japanese and US military bases in Japan. Then there is organised crime, in films such as *Female Yakuza Tale: Inquisition and Torture* and *Sex & Fury*. While the titles need to be taken with a pinch of salt, sometimes they are pretty good descriptions of what you are going to see. Screenings begin at the Nova Cinema, with 35mm prints flown in fresh from Japan, complete with English subtitles.

Sometimes the titles are pretty good descriptions of what you are going to see

For those who prefer their exploitation without polish, Offscreen pays tribute to Spanish sleaze master Jess Franco, who will appear in person along with long-time muse Lina Romay. With nearly 200 films to his name, Franco is famous for his female convicts, lesbian vampires and a shaky aesthetic memorably described by one critic as "softcore with a little soft gore". There's a double bill of *Vampyros Lesbos* and the English version of *Succubus* at the Bozar, while Nova offers a weekend that includes Franco's vision of the spy movie in *Midnight Party*, science fiction in *Shin-*



Revenge is sweet: *Female Convict Scorpion*

ing Sex and religious instruction in *Love Letters of a Portuguese Nun*. You can work out what *Ilsa, the Wicked Warden* is about without any help from me.

A rather different genre is explored in Offscreen's other main theme this year, the spaghetti western. These emerged in the 1960s when European directors took the Hollywood western, stripped it down to its bare bones, supercharged the violence and let it loose on an unsuspecting world. Eventually Hollywood followed suit, producing its own down-and-dirty westerns in the 1970s.

The genre was pioneered by Italian directors such as Sergio Leone, shooting in Spain with holidaying stars like Clint Eastwood, Lee Van Cleef and Eli Wallach, or locals masquerading under anglicised names. This retrospective includes Leone's classics *For A Few Dollars More* and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, plus less celebrated titles like the violently gothic *Django Kill... If You Live, Shoot!* and the snow-bound *The Great Silence*. Look out for the faces of Orson Welles, Klaus Kinski, Ringo Starr and even Pier Paolo Pasolini behind the gun smoke. Offscreen has found the perfect connoisseur to introduce these films, in the shape

of British director Alex Cox, who recently wrote a book on the genre. Cinematek is taking advantage of his presence to present a selection of his films, such as the excellent *Repo Man* and *Sid and Nancy*, plus the spaghetti-tinged *Straight To Hell* and *Walker*. Last year's sequel, *Repo Chick*, screens at Nova.

For a change of pace, there will be an evening of animation by Bruce Bickford. Best known for the claymation videos he produced for Frank Zappa in the 1970s and 1980s, he is still working and will present a selection of his work on 11 March.

Finally, Offscreen brings us new films such as Hirokazu Kore-Eda's *Air Doll*, Dominic Murphy's *White Lightnin'*, Jesper Ganslandt's *The Ape* and Toshiaki Toyoda's *The Blood of Rebirth*. A few films from Offscreen will also show in Antwerp's Cinema Zuid. ♦

4-21 March
Across Brussels
www.offscreen.be

CULTURE NEWS

Restoration work on the enormous ceiling painting "The Gods on Mount Olympus" has been completed, Erfgoed Vlaanderen (Flanders Heritage) announced last week. The painting, which measures 65 square metres and weighs 500kg, was removed in 2008 from the ceiling of the ground floor of the 18th-century Hofkamer building in Antwerp. It was housed in the nearby ING bank, where it could be visited by the public while undergoing restorations. Renovation work is still being carried out in the Hofkamer, so the painting will be moved to the Rubens study centre, the Rubenianum. Restorers say the work is now returned to its original 1772 condition, with brighter colours and improved perspective. Some overpainting has also been removed.

Five Flemish authors are among the 14 names on the long-list for this year's **Golden Owl prize** for Dutch-language literature: Saskia De Coster (*Dit is van mij*), Peter Terrin (*De bewaker*), Tom Lanoye (*Sprakeloos*), Hilde Keteleer (*Puinvrouw in Berlijn*), and Bart Meuleman (*De donkere kant van de zon*). The winner of the €25,000 prize will be announced in April.

The **Paleis op de Meir** in Antwerp will open later than expected because of "unforeseen circumstances" during the renovation work. The palace, once occupied by Napoleon, was due to open in March, housing a museum, a brasserie and a branch of the Bruges chocolate shop The Chocolate Line. The opening will now take place in May.

The Federation of Belgian Cinemas (FCB) last week announced its support for a **boycott of the new Tim Burton** film *Alice in Wonderland* in protest at the decision by Disney to release the film on DVD after only three months in the cinemas, contrary to an informal agreement between film producers and cinema operators stating a four-month delay. The FCB represents UGC, Utopolis and other chains; independent operators Kinepolis also support the boycott, which is also being staged in Italy, the UK and the Netherlands.



Alice not in Kinepolis

Simply extraordinary

A first-time author's book about an autistic child gets classrooms talking

ALAN HOPE

Ward is special. He can draw and count really well, but he's not like the other kids in the class. Sometimes that causes problems. His friend is Noor. Noor doesn't understand why Ward is the way he is. But she doesn't mind. She likes him all the same.

Ward is the main character in a new book by Ellen Verspeeten called *Gewoon buitengewoon* (*Simply Extraordinary*). It's her first children's book, and its aim is to explain a little about autism. The book tells the story of an autistic boy in the mainstream school system, the problems he's likely to encounter and a couple of the ways difficulties can be managed.

"The book actually came about as part of my thesis," Verspeeten explains. "I was studying orthopedagogy at the University of Ghent." (Orthopedagogy is pedagogical science as applied to cases of handicap.)

"My thesis was on children with autism in ordinary schools, based on three children I had been observing, and I came up with the idea of the book as a tool for

making the problem a subject for discussion, not only by the [autistic] children themselves, but also by other children."

In the book, the school makes a number of arrangements to accommodate Ward: he has a desk away from the others, is allowed to stay indoors during recess and does different homework from the rest of the class. Sometimes the children protest at this special treatment, and that's the occasion to explain why it's required. Ward's friend Noor is his advocate, arguing his case in front of the others.

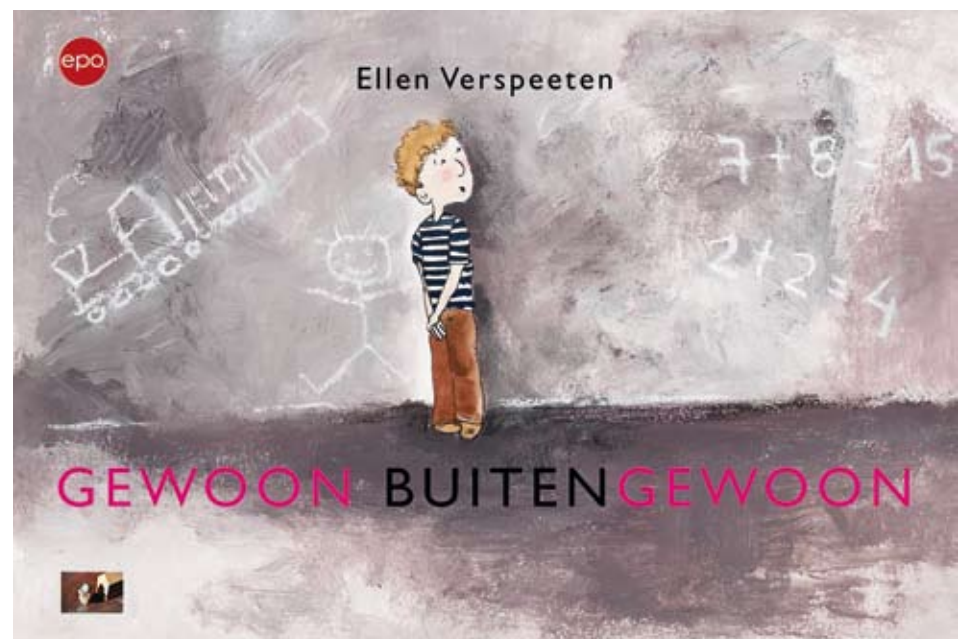
"As I was observing the real children, who were in the first to the third year of primary school, it became clear there were a number of common misunderstandings and questions," Verspeeten says. "I showed it to the children I was working with, and they were amazed to see themselves in Ward."

In fact, Ward is something of an Identikit of the typical autistic child. Autism is a disorder with a spectrum, ranging from the severely handicapped to the high-functioning and even intellectually gifted. There are three basic defining characteristics: a lack of social skills typified by an inability to make eye contact; lack of communication skills in all but the high-functioning; and repetitive behaviour. Ward has all of these, as well as some sensory hypersensitivity – he cannot stand the noise of the school bell – which is another common trait.

Verspeeten wrote the book in collaboration with Autisme Centraal, a Ghent-based study and support group. They've provided a section of the book aimed at teachers, which provides material for general consideration but also for discussion in class should one of the story's situations arise. "The integration of chil-



Author Ellen Verspeeten



dren with autism into the normal schools is an absolute priority for us," says Jos Valkenborg, director of Autisme Centraal.

The book is illustrated by Michael Roher. "I knew I wanted it to be illustrated in a particular way," Verspeeten says. "It turns out I knew someone who was very good at that sort of thing – a pen friend I've known for years." Roher's style is faux-naïf, drawings that look like they might have been drawn by children themselves; superficially unsophisticated but in fact extremely subtle in their effect.

Verspeeten is now working for an organisation in Wetteren, East Flanders, called De Kangoeroe, which works with young children with motor handicaps and non-congenital or degenerative brain lesions.

Alone, with my world

"There are thousands of different stories going through my head to make up my own epic," writes Wessel Broekhuis from Amsterdam, whose first book, *Alleen met mijn wereld* (*Alone with My World*) will publish later this month. Wessel is 16 and is autistic. He's also the singer and lyricist for a heavy metal band. "But there has to be a reason for writing, of course. For

me, that's the thing that has differentiated me from others since I was born – my autism," says Wessel. "It seemed worthwhile to write my experiences down. If you're an autist like me, it might help you on the road to a happier life. My life these days is pretty close to perfect, and, who knows, I may be able to help you to achieve what I've achieved, because each day I'm more proud of myself than the last."

He has every reason to be. It's hard to believe this book was written by a 16-year-old, let alone one who would be considered by most people as handicapped in some way. Its artless charm is infectious, and if Wessel ever gets around to writing his epic, it's going to be worth seeing. The subtitle is *How I Learned to Live with Autism*. That's clearly something more of us could try to do. ♦

→ www.autismecentraal.com

Gewoon Buitengewoon and Alleen met mijn wereld are both published by EPO

→ www.epo.be

Fresh Fiction

New on the bookshelves in Dutch

REBECCA BENOOT

Huis van de aanrakingen (The House of Touch) • Peter Verhelst

It's been five years since his last monumental and bewildering work *Zwerm*, but Golden Owl winner Peter Verhelst is back with a mesmerising and intricately constructed new novel, *Huis van de aanrakingen*. He intertwines several stories that are scattered throughout time and space involving archaeologists and geishas searching for the meaning of life, love and a place to call home. Using his typical poetic language and illusive style, Verhelst has created a novel full of tender longing and infinite chaos.

Meer dan een minnaar (More Than a Lover) • Oscar van den Boogaard

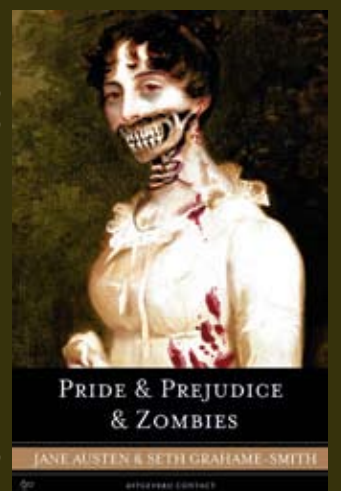
Love, freedom and adultery are the main themes in Dutch author Oscar Van Den Boogaard's new novel, *Meer dan een minnaar*, a touching yet slightly confusing tale about family, self discovery and the individual quest for happiness. The sinking of the Herald of Free Enterprise in 1987 sets several events in motion that will change the course of these characters' lives for better or worse. Filled with heart and humour, it is an eloquent story that is both frighteningly familiar and emotionally complex in portraying the influential nature of our choices.

Het bloed kruipt (Blood's a Rover) • James Ellroy

James Ellroy's *Underworld USA* trilogy finally comes to a close with the publication of *Het bloed kruipt*. This final look into American history focuses on the social and political upheaval from 1968 to 1972 and features players such as Richard Nixon, Howard Hughes and J Edgar Hoover. It is a dazzling historical novel, combining fact and fiction, which also incorporates an intriguing maze of story lines, a few dozen colourful characters, ranging from macho cops to gorgeous femmes fatales and Ellroy's accustomed dash of hard-boiled detective fiction.

Pride & Prejudice & Zombies • Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith

In 2009, Quirk Classics revolutionised classic fiction by adding zombies to *Pride and Prejudice*, sea monsters to *Sense and Sensibility* and by turning *Anna Karenina* into an android. These contemporary adaptations, which use the well-known text as their basis and simply add some exceptionally funny and frightening details, have become a phenomenon. In this kick-ass version, a plague has fallen on Meryton, bringing the dead back to life. Our beloved heroine Elizabeth Bennet wages war against the zombies until Darcy get in the way. *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies*, the first in the series, has now finally been translated into Dutch.



Traces of a life

Discover Geo De Vlamynck in the first of our four-part series on little-known artist studios and museums

ANNA JENKINSON

Just down the road from the Schaarbeek cultural centre is a much less well-known building, the home and studio of the late Geo De Vlamynck. Pressing the doorbell of the unassuming brick-terraced house, I wondered whether I had the right address. An elderly gentleman finally peered round the door and led me through the entrance hall, where paint was peeling off the walls. He handed me over to his wife and promptly disappeared.

Not the most auspicious of starts. But then as I entered the spacious ground-floor room at the back of the house, I felt like I'd walked into a treasure chest. Mosaics, stained-glass windows, ceramics, paintings and drawings fill De Vlamynck's studio. Picture frames line the shelves like enormous books in one corner, pots of colourful paint lie in another, and scattered all around are scrolls of paper, easels and trestles.

"This is where he used to spend his time painting and creating," explains Danièle Olivier-De Vlamynck, who turns out to be the artist's daughter and who also used to live in the house. Her father was born in 1897 in Bruges, later moving to the Brussels commune of Schaarbeek where he spent most of his adult life. De Vlamynck lived and worked in this house and studio at Grondwetstraat 7 until his death in 1980.

A champion of the decorative arts, De Vlamynck not only painted but made frescoes, mosaics and stained glass. There was hardly a discipline within arts and design that he didn't turn his hand to. He went to art college in Bruges, spent the years of the First World War at the Slade School of Fine Art in London, then continued his studies at the Royal Academy of Arts in Brussels, where he later became a professor. Among his students were the artists Nicolas de Staël and Maurice Wyckaert.

One of the works in the Schaarbeek atelier is a draft for the fresco that de Staël and De Vlamynck created together for the Glass Art Pavilion at the 1935 International Exposition in Brussels. Such collaborations were not unusual, as De Vlamynck would regularly invite his students round to share creative ideas and work together.

The studio-house is one of the oldest still standing in Brussels. It was built in 1862 for the sculptor Jacques-Philippe De Haen and was home to many an artist, including the Belgian painter Eugène Smits, before De Vlamynck bought it in 1924. It's not hard to see why the space would be an inspiration, with its high ceilings and a large window stretching the height of the room and overlooking the back garden.

Today the house belongs to the artist's daughter and her husband. Their plans to preserve his work and keep his memory alive started in 1992 when they helped organise a large exhibition, "an homage to De Vlamynck" as his son-in-law puts it, held in Brussels' town hall on the Grote Markt. From there came the idea to set up the Friends of Geo De Vlamynck association and later, in the 1990s, to turn his former home and studio into a museum.

Public mosaics

De Vlamynck is arguably best known for his frescoes (paintings on walls or ceilings) and mosaics (patterns made from pieces of ceramic or other materials), techniques he had the opportunity to study first hand in Italy in the early 1920s after winning a first prize and travel bursary in a competition at the Royal Academy of Arts.

This is also a decade when the decorative arts were gaining



De Vlamynck's "De eenzaam" ("The Recluse"), oil on canvas, 1925

visibility. Back in Brussels, Henry van de Velde won approval in 1926 to set up La Cambre institute for decorative arts, which gave architecture and associated arts as important a place as the more traditional fine arts. De Vlamynck, who met van de Velde at this time and also enrolled at the institute, created a fresco for the entrance hall to La Cambre.

Unfortunately, the La Cambre fresco no longer exists. But one of De Vlamynck's best-known mosaics is at the Neptunium swimming pool in Schaarbeek. Measuring 15 metres long and 2.7 metres high, the aquatic-themed work still dominates the entrance to the post-war modernist building. Plans and preliminary drafts of sections of the mosaic, which depicts swimmers and sea life, can be seen in his studio.

Some of his work was done abroad – frescoes for a hotel in the

Czech spa city of Carlsbad, for instance – but most were in his home country. He painted a mural for the pre-history section of the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels' Jubelpark and made a stained-glass window in the Virgin Chapel on the first floor of the Koekelberg basilica.

He also designed stained-glass windows for the Carmelite convent in Jambes, not far from Namur, and murals for the nearby Saint Symphorien church. For the abbey of Clairefontaine in Cordemois, he created frescoes and stained glass. Many of these pieces have since been lost as buildings have been converted. But not all of them, and a good starting point to discover De Vlamynck's work is his home and studio in Schaarbeek. ♦

→ www.geodevlamynck.com



Geo De Vlamynck's studio in Schaarbeek

GUIDED VISITS

As part of efforts to share the heritage of Geo De Vlamynck with the public, his daughter, Danièle Olivier-De Vlamynck, and her husband have set up guided visits that take in three buildings associated with the artist.

The tour starts at the De Vlamynck house and studio, where you can admire his hand-drawn sketches, paintings and mosaics and peer out the enormous picture window to the garden. From there, the walk continues to the Neptunium swimming pool to see his aquatic mosaic in the entrance, before rounding off at the Espace Geo De Vlamynck on Renkinstraat, where a retrospective of his paintings is on show to tour participants.

The tours usually take place on the second Sunday of every month and must be reserved in advance at 02.215.01.26, where the phone will most probably be answered by De Vlamynck's daughter or son-in-law. The cost of the tour is €7.50, and it lasts about three hours. It is also possible to arrange a visit just to the house and studio.

Get in the swish

A clothing exchange event in Ghent has women spending very little for an armload of fashion

COURTNEY DAVIS

“No pushing, no running, no grabbing. Everyone remain calm.” It is not every day that one is greeted with such severe announcements while shopping. But this is no ordinary retail experience; it’s Swishing. It could be compared to shopping on testosterone: aggressive and prone to angry outbursts – but with big results.

At Swishing, each attendee brings rarely worn items and supplants them with quasi-new and inexpensive finds. Last week, about 100 women arrived at Cream, an urban fashion shop in Ghent, to attend the fifth Swishing event in Flanders. Participants paid €8 for the privilege of swapping clothes with strangers.

The Swishing party concept was borrowed from London’s Lucy Shea, Swishing founder, and can now be found in cities around the globe. It first came to Flanders last June courtesy of a trio of young women, including Alexia Coppens.

The concept of this newest fashion craze is simple: bring in five items of clothes and trade them for five different items of clothes. “After handing in up to five items, you get a slip of paper noting this amount, which is presented upon exiting to ensure you’ve taken your fair share,” explains Coppens. “Then, you get a raffle ticket, hang up your clothes and wait for an hour or so while we collect, sort and display all the clothes. I followed the Swishing founder’s rules and plans almost exactly.”

The waiting period is important as it allows ample opportunity for the handful of small business operators to lure the women killing time with an array of goodies: makeovers with all natural products; crafts and jewellery; an expert on colouring providing free consultations. All vendors are locally based and/or feature environmentally friendly products.

Coppens, 26, has yet to figure out a way to make money from the concept, but for now continues to do it based on her own drive for sustainability. “The people who come are motivated because it is affordable not because it is green,” she says. “But that is the reason why I do it.”

Although the organising trio tried having a men’s Swishing this time around, only about six guys showed up. They’re not certain if they’ll try it again, but they do plan themed Swishing, such as for pregnant women and for kids.



Expert swishers scope out their desired pieces and dash for the prize

As ladies sipped free RoomeR cocktails and nibbled on fresh-baked brownies, Coppens’ co-host shouted out the rules: “You have half an hour to peruse and try on the clothes but not take anything. When the time is up, everyone is to wait on the side. At the designated time, every woman can enter this room *slowly*, take one single item of clothing, then leave.” This is where she starts mentioning the daunting guidelines of no running, grabbing or screaming.

This process is repeated five times and, in the end, everyone has the same access to the same clothes as the choices slowly dwindle down.

The crowd tittered at her warnings, but it soon became clear that they wouldn’t be heeded. From the start, it’s mayhem. Racks organized by size were quickly rearranged. Dressing rooms

were full and mirrors crowded. Women were trying on and taking off various items in quick succession. Shoulders were bumped, hips jostled and elbows manoeuvred for access.

There appeared to be a strategy – find something you liked and hold on to it for dear life. This meant not putting it back on the rack, even though this tactic was earlier noted as “illegal”. Some went so far as to hide their nuggets of Swishing gold by placing their large winter jackets over their arms.

“This isn’t a relaxing shopping spree,” Alexia admits. “Only about half the women come back. But it’s still growing, and we’ve got a lot of interest. We’re constantly getting requests to hold Swishing events.”

After the room is cleared, everyone was arranged along the edge of the room, their eyes on the exact location they placed their favou-

rite item. Those without previous Swishing experience found themselves on the outer ring and eventually out of luck. Despite the clear warnings, everyone made an immediate and mad dash towards the hapless racks of clothes. The pushing, grabbing and speed were impressive. In the end, steely-eyed shopping warriors would hold their prizes tight and march out triumphantly.

Afterwards, the mostly empty racks were picked clean, leaving behind a few forlorn tank tops and ill-fitting dresses now destined for charity. The lonely sight somehow encompassed the beauty of swishing. Everyone starts with nothing and yet leaves happy, laden down with new fashion finds. Something out of nothing is pretty special. ♦

➔ www.swishing.be



Ellen Verbeek’s strappy summer collection

Rising from the ashes

➔ continued from page 5

So did Els Proost, who originally started out at the fashion department of the Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, but eventually ended up in the ateliers of famed Flemish designer Dries Van Noten and other world-renowned fashion houses, where she helped design shoe collections. She opened up her own shoe shop, Elsa, in Antwerp, and launched a shoe collection under the same name.

If these three women had only today decided they wanted to design shoes, they would have had it a lot easier. About five years ago, shoe and handbag designer Anne Poesen was recruited to teach the first Belgian course for shoe design at the Academy for Fine

Arts in Sint-Niklaas. Poesen received her education in civil engineering and architecture at the Catholic University of Leuven, after which she enrolled in the Footwear Modelist Degree course at the Ars Arpel Institute in Milan. In Sint-Niklaas, she has moulded the shoe design course into exactly what was missing in Belgium: combining creative stimulation with technical knowledge.

Though a little help from outside is still a necessary ingredient in all three of the designers’ businesses. “I tried to produce my collection in Belgium,” says Verlinden, “but there just aren’t enough factories anymore. I don’t think the shoe industry will ever return

to Belgium – not if you see how hard it’s become to compete.”

If you can’t beat them, you have to join them – but the Belgians are keeping their identity intact this time around. Asked what sets Belgian shoes apart from the rest, Verlinden answers: “Belgian style is lauded for its quality. We work with good materials and an eye for detail.”

“The Belgian look is powerful and very innovative,” adds Verbeek. It turns out the shoe industry really did follow in the textile industry’s footsteps: production in Flanders has been all but quelled, but the world still looks to the region for state-of-the-art creativity. ♦



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Imágenes del Mexicano

REBECCA BENOOT

As the cornerstone exhibition at Bozar's massive Mexico Festival, *Imágenes del Mexicano* has the daunting task of depicting Mexico's complicated history and vibrant culture in 150 works from native as well as international artists. Mexico's rich heritage and perpetual quest for its own identity creates a fascinating and diverse experience that incorporates paintings, photography, movies and sculpture. The emphasis, however, lies on portraits: the many faces of Mexico's population collectively create both a realistic and soulful interpretation of the country's social and cultural voyage. You start with its pre-Columbian past, illustrated by a unique collection of Aztec sculptures and Olmec heads. These symbolic representations of important themes of religious worship and day-to-day life lead us to the next stage, race and class in one of Spain's new colonies. The caste or *castas* system was a very important part of society, resulting in opposing portraits of 16th-century aristocrats and Mexico's indigenous peoples. As more immigrants started coming to the blossoming country, certain stereotypes, such as the image of the rural, working-class

peasant, were created. These stereotypes would become an important part of Mexican folklore, and of *Imágenes del Mexicano*, as they also promote the cultural nationalism that led this ever-changing country further down the road towards independence. Besides highlighting several historical changes, the exhibition also has a keen eye for the social. An entire room is dedicated to death (La Calaca) and another to the funeral portrait, which is a specific genre in 19th-century Mexican art. Death is an important part of life in Mexican culture and should be celebrated, not mourned. As we get closer to the images of contemporary Mexico, photographs and film are scattered across the exhibition, mixing a 3,000 year-old heritage and a continuously evolving future. One of the most engaging installations is master Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein's *¡Que Viva Mexico!*, an allegorical evocation of the Mexican Revolution. Another highlight is Tina Modotti's photo series of the women from the Tehuantepec isthmus, which gives a raw yet elegant depiction of every-day life. Finally, the modern gallery of Mexican portraits offers a multi-

faceted view of the present-day Mexican identity. These portraits, which are vibrant yet often dark and brooding, shed light on Mexico's psychological and cultural development. Occasionally adding surreal sentiment to the equation, these works by Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros, to name a few, are engaging and enlightening. ♦



Until 25 April
Centre for Fine Arts (Bozar)
Ravensteinstraat 23
Brussels

→ www.bozar.be



MORE MEXICO FESTIVAL AT BOZAR

Frida Kahlo y su mundo

Mexico workshops for kids

Danza Contemporánea Mexicana



Aalst

CC De Werf
Molenstraat 51; 053.73.28.12
www.ccdewerf.be
MAR 6 19.00 Cizin + Blackdown + 7SinZ

Alseberg

CC De Meent
Gemeenveldstraat 34; 02.359.16.00
www.demeent.be
MAR 5-6 20.15 De Nieuwe Snaar

Antwerp

Arenbergschouwburg
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
www.arenbergschouwburg.be
MAR 3 20.30 Boenox

Bourla

Komedieplaats 18; 03.224.88.44
www.toneelhuis.be
MAR 3 20.00 Stijn

CC Berchem

Driekoningstraat 126; 03.286.88.20
www.ccberchem.be
MAR 5 20.30 Rajae El Mouhandiz + Brazzaville + Jochen Otten + more

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
MAR 6 20.30 Radio Modern with The Revolutionaries

Petrol

Herbouvillekaai 21; 03.226.49.63
www.petrolclub.be
MAR 5 23.00 D.I.M. + Surkin + Mowgli + The Odd Word
MAR 6 20.00 Humo's Rock Rally semi-finals

Queen Elisabeth Hall

Koningin Astridplein 26; 0900.26.060,
www.fccc.be
MAR 11 20.00 The Four Tops & The Temptations

Trix

Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00
www.trixonline.be
MAR 8 19.30 Angie Stone

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be
MAR 3 20.00 The Scene. The Soft Pack
MAR 6 17.00 The Antlers. Groove Armada
MAR 10 20.00 Freaky Age
MAR 11 20.00 Musee Mecanique

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
www.fuse.be
MAR 6 23.00 Minus Label Night: Troy Pierce + Marc Houle + Ambivalent + Nico Purman + more

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15
www.cirque-royal.org
MAR 6 20.00 Michel Delpech
MAR 7 20.00 Joss Stone
MAR 10 20.00 The Ultimate Phil Collins Show
MAR 11 20.30 Michaël Grégorio

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
Concerts at 20.00:
MAR 3 Hockey
MAR 4 Peter Von Poehl
MAR 5 Invasion + Memory Tapes
MAR 6 Girls
MAR 8 Shy Child
MAR 9 The Tallest Man on Earth

Magasin 4

Havenlaan 51B; 02.223.34.74
www.magasin4.be
MAR 4 19.30 Buenas Ondas
MAR 5 19.30 Enthroned + Emptiness + Psalm
MAR 6 20.00 Sidilarsen + Komah + Silent
MAR 11 19.00 Senser + Shargath

Maison des Musiques

Lebeastraat 39; 02.550.13.20
www.vkconcerts.be
MAR 10 20.15 Moon on Earth + Bosque Brown

DON'T MISS

International Women's Day

8 March

Across Brussels & Flanders

You'll find events related to International Women's Day – officially on 8 March – all month, but the majority will happen this weekend, such as the Women's World March, starting at the Beurs in Brussels, and *De rok vertelt* (*The Skirt Talks*), a theatre performances of nine monologues in Ghent on women's multi-cultural experiences.



© Shutterstock

→ www.vrouwenraad.be

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusicvillage.com
MAR 4 12.30 Saf
MAR 11 12.30 Ingrid Mank

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseulaan 208; 0900.00.991
www.forestnational.be
MAR 3 20.30 Pascal Obispo
MAR 4 20.00 Chris Rea
MAR 6 20.00 Florent Pagny
MAR 8 20.30 Lara Fabian
MAR 10 20.00 Spandau Ballet

Eeklo

N9 Villa
Molenstraat 165; 09.377.93.94
www.n9.be
MAR 6 21.00 Jean Blaute & Eric Melaerts

Ghent

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01
www.handelsbeurs.be
MAR 6 20.15 Filip Jordens: Tribute to Brel

Kinky Star

Vlaammarkt 9; 09.223.48.45
www.kinkystar.com
MAR 7 21.00 The Catatonics

Kuipke

Citadelpark; 070.75.0070 www.pesco.be
MAR 6 20.30 Milk Inc + DJ Wout

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
MAR 4 19.30 Le Peuple de l'Herbe

Hasselt

Cultuurcentrum
Kunstlaan 5; 011.24.32.07 www.ccha.be
MAR 7 20.00 Axelle Red

Muziekodroom

Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13
www.muziekodroom.be
MAR 6 21.00 Vermin Twins + The Rott Childs
MAR 11 20.30 Hokie Joint

Kortrijk

De Kreun
Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44
www.dekreun.be
MAR 5 20.00 Russian Circles + l'Objet
MAR 6 20.00 Nosaj Thing + Dorian Concept + Infiniteskills + Lefto

Leuven

Club Silo
Vaartkom 39; 016.22.06.03

MAR 5 22.00-7.00 Roots of Minimal with Sebastian Mullaert aka Minilogue + mk ULTRA + Raphael Klaps + Yannick Thiry

Het Depot

Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
www.hetdepot.be
MAR 5 20.00 Le Peuple de L'Herbe



Antwerp

Arenbergschouwburg

Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
www.arenbergschouwburg.be
MAR 5 20.30 Franco Saint De Bakker

De Hopper

Leopold De Waelstraat 2; 03.248.49.33
www.cafehopper.be
MAR 7 16.00 Frank De Wolf Trio
MAR 8 21.00 Stijn Wauters Trio

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
MAR 3 20.30 Dee Dee Bridgewater

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be
MAR 8 20.00 Dee Dee Bridgewater

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78
Concerts at 20.30:
MAR 3 F, B and I **MAR 4** Jazz Station
Big Band **MAR 6** Zigomatik **MAR 10**
Wolke **MAR 11** Marc Lelangue

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusicvillage.com
Concerts at 21.00:
MAR 4 Manu Domergue + The
Etienne Richard Trio **MAR 5** The Phil
& Quill Project **MAR 6** The Belgian
Swing College Band **MAR 8** Joachim
Caffonnette Trio **MAR 9** Pat Baileys
invites...Rhum & Coca-Cola **MAR 10**
A musical support to Tibet **MAR 11**
Adam Rafferty



Antwerp

CC Berchem

Driekoningenstraat 126; 03.286.88.20
www.ccberchem.be

MAR 10 20.30 De kleuren Van de
Velde, homage to Wannes Van de Velde

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
MAR 10 20.30 Boubacar Traoré

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be
MAR 5 20.30 Fredy Massamba (Congo
Brazzaville)

Brussels

Art Base

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20
www.art-base.be
MAR 7 13.30 Ranajit Sengupta,
classical Indian music

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
MAR 6 21.00 Les Fils de Teuhpu
(France)

Espace Senghor

Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40
www.senghor.be
MAR 6 20.30 Damadaka - la
Tammuriata napolitaine (Italy), music
and dance

Eeklo

CC De Herbakker

Pastoor De Nevestraat 10; 09.218.27.27
www.ccdeherbakker.be
MAR 3 15.00 Koen Crucke & Willy
Claes



Antwerp

Amuz

Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28
www.amuz.be
MAR 7 15.00 Les Muffatti conducted
by Peter Van Heyghen: Arcangelo
Corelli, Georg Muffat, Johann
Christoph Pelz
MAR 11 21.00 Benjamin Alard,
harpsichord: Bach's Clavier-Übung

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
www.desingel.be
MAR 9 20.00 Lecture/recital by
Maarten Quanten, musicologist and
Stefan Prinz, piano: spatiality, pauses
and movement in serial music (in
Dutch)

MAR 10 18.00 E-XXI conducted by
Filip Rathé: Jérôme Combier, Luc
Brewaey, Gyorgy Kurtag. 20.00 Spatial
concert by Ensemble Cairn conducted
by Guillaume Bourgogne, with
Donatienne Michel-Dansac, soprano:
Fabien Levy, Pierre Jodlowski, Oliver
Schneller, more
MAR 11 20.00 Requiem for a Dying
Planet: two films by Werner Herzog
featuring live music composed and
played by Ernst Reijseger, cello, with
Mola Sylla, percussion and voice;
Cuncordu e Tenore de Oroisei, vocal
ensemble

Bruges

Concertgebouw

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
www.concertgebouw.be
MAR 3 20.00 Anima Eterna Brugge
conducted by Jos van Immerseel,
with Thomas Bauer, baritone; Sergei
Istomin, cello: Franck, Dukas, more
MAR 6 20.00 Koor Vagantes
Morborum and City of Brussels
Orchestra conducted by Bart Naessens:
Brahms' Ein deutsches Requiem
MAR 7 15.00 Benjamin Alard,
harpsichord: Bach

Brussels

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
MAR 5 20.00 Belgian National
Orchestra conducted by Vladimir
Fedoseyev, with Anna Vinnitskaya,
piano: Sofia Gubaidulina, Schumann,
Prokofiev
MAR 7 11.00 Arne Deforce, cello:
Berio, Brewaey, more
MAR 11 20.00 Belgian National
Orchestra conducted by Teodor
Currentzis, with Elisabeth Leonskaya,
piano: Grieg, Tchaikovsky

Espace Toots

Stuckensstraat 125; 02.241.15.83
www.centrecultureldevere.be
MAR 5 20.00 Marie Baudot, Nathalie
De Spiegeleir, Fabio Schinazi,
piano; Amélie Debecq, flute; Anne
Debaisieux, cello: Chopin

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20
www.flagey.be
MAR 5 12.30 Experimental music
by Catalan ensemble S'Acobla 20.15
Ensemble BCN 216 conducted by
Ernest Martinez Izquierdo: Hector
Parra, Ramon Humet, more **MAR 6**
20.15 Brussels Philharmonic conducted
by Michel Tabachnik, with Jan
Michiels, piano: Brahms, Xenakis **MAR**
7 20.15 Ictus conducted by Georges-
Elie Octors and François Deppe: Jean-
Luc Fafchamps' Soufi word II **MAR 8**
20.15 Quatuor Danel: Benoît Mernier,
Ligeti, Catherine Seba

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

Musical Instruments Museum

Hofberg 2; 02.545.01.30 www.mim.be
MAR 7 11.00 Trio Grumiaux: Joseph
Jongen, Beethoven

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
MAR 10 12.40 André De Groote,
piano: Beethoven

Royal Music Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37
www.kcb.be
MAR 3 Olivier de Spiegeleir, piano:
Schumann, Chopin **MAR 6** Zehetmair
Quartet: string quartets by Bruckner,
Heinz Holliger, Beethoven **MAR 8** The
Rare Fruits Council: consort music by
David Pohle, Samuel Scheidt, more
MAR 9-10 Julia Fischer, violin: Bach's
Sonatas and Partitas **MAR 11** Andreas
Staier, harpsichord: Bach's Goldberg
Variations

Ghent

De Bijloke

Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2, 09.233.68.78
www.debijloke.be
MAR 4 20.00 Zehetmair Quartet:
string quartets by Mozart, Heinz
Holliger, Schumann
MAR 7 16.00 Het ongelooflijke verhaal
van Marie (The Unbelievable Story of
Mary): a children's performance based
on Edvard Grieg's Peer Gynt Suite with
actors and deFilharmonie conducted
by Martyn Brabbins. Preceded by a
workshop at 13.00



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

Kaaitheater

Saintelettesquare 19; 02.201.59.59
www.kaaitheater.be
MAR 4 20.30 Hypermusic Prologue:
a projective opera in seven planes by
composer Hector Parra and physicist
Lisa Randall

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20 March

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Museum on Kunstberg (*pic-
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ry lurking behind every façade
and cobblestone. After dinner
at the sophisticated Kwint, you
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to hear the celebrated French
pianist Hélène Grimaud per-
form Schumann's concerto
with the Brussels Philharmoni-
c. All that for €60 per person
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this price, you'll probably want
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Elsene on 30 April.

→ www.brusselsphilharmonic.be



Antwerp

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be
MAR 10 20.30 Babemba,
choreographed by Serge Aimé
Coulbaly

Brussels

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
MAR 7 19.00 Radi in One Man Show,
choreographed by Anne et ses Filles

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39
www.demunt.be
MAR 9 20.00 danceXmusic:
choreography by Thomas Hauert, John
Jasperse and Salva Sanchis to live music
by Debussy, John Cage, more



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)



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Antwerp

Arenbergschouwburg

Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
www.arenbergschouwburg.be
MAR 4 20.30 Henk Rijckaert in Karton (Cardboard), stand-up comedy (in Dutch)
MAR 9 20.15 Tom Lanoye in one-man-show Woest (in Dutch)
MAR 10-13 20.15 Kommil Foo in Wolf (in Dutch)

Bourla

Komedieplaats 18; 03.224.88.44
www.toneelhuis.be
MAR 11-27 20.00 De Filmfabriek in De Indringer (The Intruder), directed by Peter Missotten (in Dutch)

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
www.desingel.be
MAR 6-7 16.00 Toneelgroep Amsterdam in Zomertrilogie (Summer Trilogy) by Carlo Goldoni, directed by Ivo van Hove (in Dutch)
MAR 11-13 20.00 Troubleyn in De Keizer van het Verlies (The Emperor of Loss), directed by Jan Fabre (in Dutch)

Fakkelteater

Reyndersstraat 7; 03.232.14.69
www.fakkelteater.be
MAR 6-7 15.00/20.30 Cabaret Follies in Tiits & Ass, drag queen cabaret

Ardoorie

Cultuurkapel De Schaduw

Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82
www.deschaduw.net
MAR 5-13 20.30 tg BIT in TIK, written and staged by Steven Duyck (in Dutch)

Bruges

English Theatre of Bruges

Walplein 23; 050.68.79.45
www.tematema.com
MAR 9-13 20.00 Gambolling Arena Theatre Company in I Wish You Love (In English)

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 Ruëll (in Dutch with English surtitles)

Brussels

Beursschouwburg

August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50
www.beursschouwburg.be
MAR 5-6 16.00/20.30 Mightysociety in Hoe ook ik vergrijsde maar me jonger voelde dan ooit (Although I Was Only Getting Greyer, I Felt Younger Than Ever), written and staged by Eric De Vroedt (in Dutch)

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
MAR 9 12.40 Toneelgroep Maastricht in Geloof, Liefde, Hoop (Faith, Love, Hope) by Ödön von Horvath, directed by Domien Van der Meiren (in Dutch)

KVS Bol

Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.00

www.kvs.be

MAR 6 20.00 Tom Lanoye in one-man-show Woest (in Dutch)

KVS Box

Arduinkaai 9; 02.210.11.12
www.kvs.be
Until MAR 13 20.30 Bezette stad (Occupied City), (poetry/theatre/beatbox and rap, in Dutch and French with Dutch and French surtitles)

The Warehouse Studio

Waelhemstraat 69a; 0477.408.704
www.theatreinbrussels.com
MAR 9-13 20.00 English Comedy Club in Three Tall Women by Edward Albee, directed by Janet Middleton (in English)

Ghent

Capitole

Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5; 0900.69.00 www.capitolegent.be
MAR 5-7 15.00/20.00 Chicago, musical (in Dutch)



Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)

Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60
www.muhka.be
Until MAY 2 Animism, Part 1, installations, photos and film exploring the collective practices of humans and non-humans and the ensuing relationships

Extra City

Tulpstraat 79; 03.677.16.55
www.extracity.org
Until MAY 2 Animism, Part Two (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 Keyser
Until MAY 16 Bamako Encounters 2009: Borders, contemporary African photography biennial

Brussels

Argos Centre for Art and Media

Werfstraat 13; 02.229.00.03
www.argosarts.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 Mexican Modernisms, 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
Until MAY 9 El Greco: Domenikos Theotokopoulos 1900, more than 40 works by the Spanish Renaissance painter

De Loge Architectuurmuseum

Kluisstraat 86; 02.642.24.62

www.aam.be

Until JUNE 6 Paris-Brussels: Two centuries of architectural affinities, photographs

Royal Museums of Art and History

Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11
www.kmkg-mrah.be
Until MAR 14 Vier Doornikse wandtapijten uit Pastrana (Four Tournai Tapestries from Pastrana), historically important tapestries originating from the Belgian city of Tournai and restored in Spain (marking the EU Spanish presidency)
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-taxis.com
Until MAR 28 John Fitzgerald Kennedy: The American Dream, photographs, audio-visual documents and objects relating to the assassinated US president www.jfk-expo.be
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
Until JUNE 6 Richard Hutten, furniture, interiors and objects by the Dutch designer
Until JUNE 6 The Scandinavian Touch in Belgian Furniture 1951-1966

Hasselt

Cultuurcentrum

Kunstlaan 5; 011.22.99.31 www.ccha.be
Until APR 11 Yvan Theys: Verborgen schatten (Hidden Treasures), paintings
Until APR 11 Marnik Neven: Moment, drawings, paintings, sculpture, digital animations
Until APR 11 Kumi Oguro, photographs

Literair Museum

Bampslaan 35; 011.22.26.24
www.literairmuseum.be
MAR 7 - MAY 15 Een vreemd land (A strange land) by Shaun Tan, prints and books

Leuven

STUK

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
www.stuk.be
Until MAR 21 Alfredo Jaar: The Sound of Silence, installations by the New York-based Chilean artist

Sint-Martens-Latem

Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens

Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23
www.museumdd.be
Until APR 11 Anselm Reyle, sculpture and painting by the German artist
Until APR 11 Ellen De Meutter, paintings by the Belgian artist
Until APR 11 Kristien Daem: Picture this!, photos of architecture by the Belgian photographer



Antwerp

4-Ever Young: dance party for 40-plussers with music from the '80s and '90s
MAR 11 from 20.00 at La Riva, Londenstraat 52
03.225.01.02, www.midlifeparty.be

Brussels

International Women's Day: Events marking the century-old day of celebration of the achievements of women and political action in the continued struggle for social and economic equity worldwide
MAR 6-8, across Brussels and Flanders
www.vrouwenraad.be

Batibouw: Belgium's biggest building, renovation and decor fair
Until MAR 7 at Brussels Expo, Heysel
02.474.89.81, www.batibouw.com

Boekenbeurs Brussel: 40th annual book fair with more than 1,400 publishers, numerous authors and a wide variety of literature for sale
MAR 4-8 at Tour & Taxis, Havenlaan 86C
02.290.44.31 www.flb.be

Erotica festival: Adult erotica fair featuring stands, performances and shopping
MAR 4-APR 2 at Cellars of Cureghem, Ropsy Chaudronstraat 24
02.528.19.00 www.cavesdecureghem.be

Night of the Brussels Museums: Late opening of 20 of Brussels museums, with concerts, dance parties and special tours. One of Brussels' most popular annual events
MAR 6 19.00-1.00 across Brussels
www.museumnightfever.be

Open University Info Session: Learn more about the Open University Business School MBA programme
MAR 4 18.00-20.00 at The Open University, Emile Duraylaan 38
010.45.63.75, www.open.ac.uk

Saskia De Coster on Canada: Literary evening with writer De Coster reading aloud her experiences from a month-long stay in Winnipeg (in Dutch)
MAR 3 20.30 at Beursschouwburg, A. Ortsstraat 20-28
02.212.19.30 www.deburen.eu

Ghent

Ateljee: Recycling fair featuring retro exhibition items
MAR 6 at Flanders Expo, Maaltekouter
09.241.92.11 www.ateljee.info

Second Place 2010 & Home Improvement: Belgian second-home show
MAR 5-7 at Flanders Expo, Maaltekouter 1
09.241.92.11 www.secondplace.be



REBECCA BENOOT

© Jan Smets

Pavillon Belge Grote Markt 26 Mechelen

The Grote Markt in Mechelen is not only an extraordinary location due to the abundance of mediaeval architecture, it is also the proud host of two UNESCO World Heritage site – the belfries of both city hall and Sint-Rumbold's cathedral. On the corner of the Grote Markt and Mechelen's main shopping street, Bruul, you find Pavillon Belge, one of the lucky taverns that gets to reside in this square – certainly one of Flanders' most beautiful.

With a terrace that overlooks the Grote Markt, the Pavillon is very popular with both locals and tourists for good reason: it combines all of the charms of a good old-fashioned Flemish café.

Nearly the entire interior consists of wood, from the floor to the ceiling, with a grand wooden bar in the centre as the *pièce de resistance*. On entering, you are immediately struck by the huge fireplace (which is, sadly, no longer being used). Just above it, however, sits an impressive selection of figurines of saints and of local folk heroes, adding a typical Mechlinian touch, reinforced by the wide variety of local beers on the menu, like the Maneblusser with its Rumbold's tower logo.

Football fans love the Pavillon as they can watch matches on a large, flat-screen TV. Although multiple wooden barrels are tapped, and a rather spectacular refrigerator with glass doors reveals hundreds of beer bottles, this place is still a quiet and cosy joint, where you can also enjoy a strong cup of coffee, served in a funky, technicoloured cup, with pancakes if you please.

The music, like the interior, is dated, but that doesn't stop the youngsters from popping in for one of the six beers on tap. A wide variety of *apéritifs* rounds out the menu, also making the Pavillon a stop-off for a drink before (or after) dining at one of the many restaurants on the Grote Markt.



FACE OF FLANDERS

STÉPHANIE DUVAL

LISA BRADSHAW

Kaat Debo

"As an applied art, fashion is part of everyone's life," Kaat Debo recently told *L'Officiel* magazine. "It can provide an insight into a city, a country or a society." Fashion, in other words, is not something to lock up in an ivory tower, but rather something that connects many different aspects of life.

Debo, 33, officially became the director of the Antwerp Fashion Museum (MoMu) on 1 March – more than a year after she was named acting director. She already has eight years of experience in both fashion and museums. She started her career at MoMu in 2001, when it first opened its doors, as a scientific assistant researching exhibition policy. Afterwards, she was appointed the museum's curator.

Debo's passion for research marks her influential presence in the Flemish fashion world. It is exactly the vision of fashion as an anthropological aspect that has made the exhibitions at MoMu under her supervision such inspiring and intriguing experiences, rather than straightforward showcases of only one layer of the fashion industry: its clothes.

MoMu has garnered international attention with many of its exhibitions, thanks to a groundbreaking, all-round approach. Whether it's the elusive Belgian designer Véronique Branquinho finally opening up and letting people into her mysterious world or the sheer technical genius of patterns and the process of patternmaking, MoMu creates a world of wonder that is not only informative, but downright exciting. And it has Debo to thank for it.

In the future, the director wants to further play out the MoMu's trump card: its magnificent themed expositions, some of which have been travelling around the world since last year. She also aims to develop the main collection of the museum, making it an additional attraction.



© Ludo Marten

But Debo wants to go even further than that. On a meta-level, she wants to investigate the role of museums in contemporary society and pinpoint how MoMu can adapt to that while continuing to pioneer in not just the fashion museum sector, but the museum industry as a whole.

Thanks to this, Debo has positioned herself right at the top of something you could call "the intellectual fashion scene" in a relatively short period of time. While working at MoMu, she has also filled the position of editor-in-chief of *A Magazine*, which is commissioned by a different fashion designer every six months. Her introductions to the magazine and to catalogues published to accompany the exhibitions, are another way for Debo to share her vast knowledge of and smart take on fashion.

bite

SHARON LIGHT

Pazzo

It was here in the pages of this very paper where I saw that Ingrid Nevens of Antwerp's Pazzo restaurant had been selected the Bru Lady Chef of the Year. My course of action was immediately clear: reservations were made, and I was off to taste the food of the champion.

This small restaurant was packed on a Tuesday night; we got a few of the last seats, which put us at the counter. This was far more refined than it sounded; the setting was modern and elegant, yet relaxed and informal.

For starters, we opted for specials: one, a barely-seared salmon prepared "Pazzo style" and served with sushi accompaniments; the other a sashimi of Australian Kingfish with granny smith cream and white celery in a vinaigrette.

The latter was featured on the Lady Chef menu, where Nevens was asked by the contest promoters to work with Kingfish. Not only did she work with it, she excelled. The sashimi had a light, fresh taste, complimented by tart apple. The salmon starter was equally special – seared delicately to give a slight cooked taste that did not overpower the raw salmon flavour. If this was "Pazzo style", I knew I was in good hands.

On to mains. One dish featured a large, and gorgeous, grilled sole. Seasoned with little more than pepper, the fish was firm and flavourful. It was accompanied only by a rucola salad dotted with grapefruit and cashews and a small pot of green curry dressing, which we enjoyed both on the salad and the fish.

Contact Bite at flandersbite@gmail.com



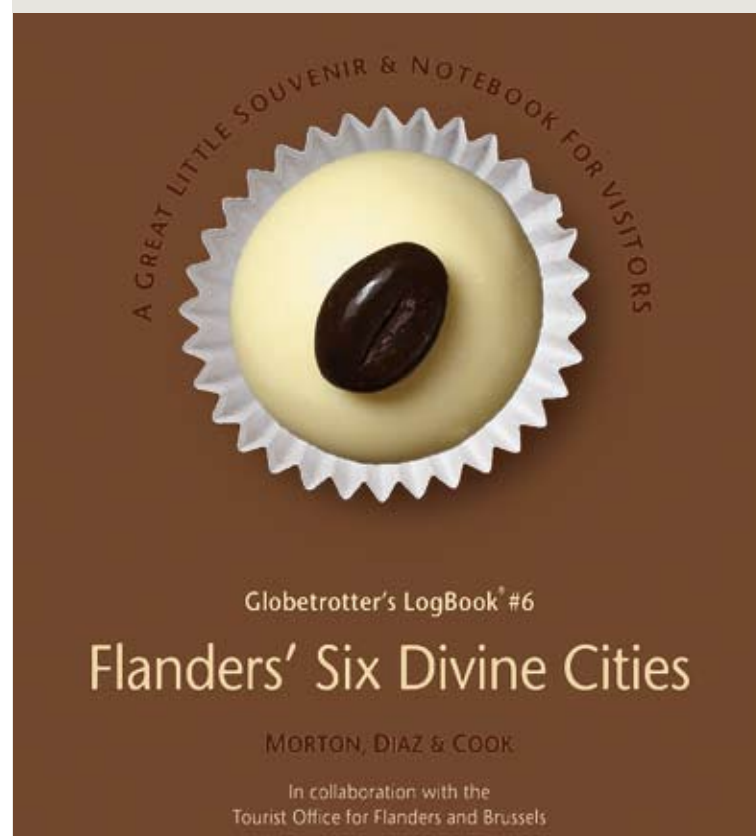
Pazzo also features a special truffle menu, which is difficult to resist – and why would you want to? A simple *al dente* tagliatelle was dressed in a cream sauce (you can also opt for olive oil) and shaved, fresh truffles. Just the right size, it was so simple and so delicious.

The truffle theme continued into dessert, with a truffle ice cream topped, again, with fresh truffles. This confirmed my belief that mushrooms + dessert is a highly underrated combination. My husband was transported; I was lucky to steal a few bites. Meanwhile, I settled in for a liquorice ice cream, topped with bits of a fig-almond paste and surrounded by pieces of pineapple and papaya. I never would have thought to combine these ingredients, but I'm glad I had the chance.

Pazzo is both a restaurant and a wine bar, and they feature an extensive and reputable wine list to compliment your meal. Our dinner clocked in at €135 for the two of us, which was money well spent for the friendly service and outstanding cuisine.

→ www.pazzo.be

Flanders' Six Divine Cities



Carrying around a big guidebook immediately marks you as a tourist, and it's even worse when you're visiting an unfamiliar town right in the country in which you live. "I'm not a tourist; I've just never been to Mechelen," you feel like explaining to passers-by.

This is why Globetrotters, a publishing company situated in Dilbeek, just west of the Brussels ring road, makes "Logbooks" that are small enough to fit in your pocket. Their first few are not actually guidebooks but convenient places to record important travel information. The first, *Countries of the World*, has basic statistics about hundreds of countries, including capital city and time zone, plus a place to record your flight info and jot down notes. They also have a *Vaccination Register* and a *Trip Notebook*. The most recent one, though, is called *Flanders' Six Divine Cities*

and is a succinct guidebook to Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges, Leuven and Mechelen. Its compact size means it's discreet, but it's also surprisingly packed with information. It covers the main tourist attractions in each town but also a little insider information, like where to go to get away from crowds in Antwerp and little-known buildings in Mechelen where political events took place that helped decide the future of what would come to be known as Belgium.

All the books are in English and are available around the world. "Almost all the logbooks I sell are gift-wrapped," says company founder Giedo Claes, "because they are such great welcome gifts for visitors." Every logbook also comes with its own identity code, which you can use to register at the Globetrotters website to interact with other travellers.

→ www.globetrotterslogbook.com

Win a copy!

Win a free copy of *Flanders' Six Divine Cities* by answering this simple question: Globetrotters has six logbooks. What is the name of #2? (Hint: it helps to visit the website)

Send an email with your answer to editorial@flandersbites.com with "Divine" in the subject line by Tuesday, 9 March. Winners will be notified by 10 March.

THE LAST WORD...

Smart style

"At home I wear jeans and an old sweater, but that's not appropriate for a minister. Black is my suit; you're always good with black, whether it's a breakfast meeting or a dinner."

Interior minister Annemie Turtelboom, who is often singled out in the press as one of the more stylish government ministers

Not a terrorist?

"I am not a terrorist, and I am not a murderer. I was tortured." Abdelkader Belliraj from Evergem, now serving life in a Moroccan jail, who says his confession was coerced

Working parent

"I want to put an end to the myth that you can only be a good minister if you see your children for an hour on Sundays."

Flemish minister Freya Van den Bossche, who returned from maternity leave to criticism that she had been away too long

Van Rompuy retorts

"Pathetic."

EU president Herman Van Rompuy, responding to the attack on him last week by British MEP Nigel Farage