

It's good to be Queen 8

The Queen Elisabeth Music Competition is one of the longest-running in the world – and one of the toughest. We talk to a Flemish musician who will be competing against the best young pianists from across the globe



It's raining film 9

Spring is an excellent time for film fests in Brussels and Flanders; two kick off this week, and Docville in Leuven has one of its strongest line-ups in years



In the Black 10

Antwerp used to dye the world's clothes black, and now its fashion museum launches a celebration of all things black in fashion – from 17th-century suits to sultry femme fatales to the aprons of Catholic school kids



Leterme resigns

The government of Yves Leterme has fallen for the third time in three years, brought down by an obscure but crucial electoral dispute

ALAN HOPE

Belgium is without a government, after the King accepted the resignation on Monday of prime minister Yves Leterme's government, four days after it was first offered. The news was breaking as Flanders Today went to press, but initial impressions were that federal elections now seem unavoidable. While the royal palace still had not confirmed elections would be held, in political circles the dates of 6 or 13 June were already being pencilled in. The King's decision came after a weekend of attempts by the King, and later for a short time by his appointed negotiator, vice prime minister Didier Reynders, to fathom out where the various parties stood. The final decision last Monday makes it clear there was no room for agreement. The voter will almost certainly now decide.

Last week, the leader of the Open VLD Flemish liberals, Alexander De Croo, surprised everyone by walking out of the government coalition over the future of electoral constituency Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde, after talks the previous evening had failed to reach an accord. Prime minister Yves Leterme's response was to go to the palace to offer the resignation of his government. The king took Leterme's resignation into consideration and

called in the speakers of the chamber and the senate for talks.

Meanwhile, there was chaos in the chamber. At a press conference announcing his party's withdrawal from the government, De Croo (*pictured*) made clear his intent to put a motion for the immediate splitting of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde on the agenda that very day, forcing the issue to a vote. That never happened, as chamber speaker Patrick Dewael cancelled the day's plenary session altogether. Instead, the party leaders in the chamber made an appointment to discuss the question at their regular agenda meeting on Monday.

The issue of Brussels-Halle Vilvoorde, or BHV, is enormously complex and reaches down into the roots of the Belgian state. Halle-Vilvoorde is in Flemish Brabant, the only province that is divided into two constituencies. Brussels a region in itself, like Flanders and Wallonia. But Halle-Vilvoorde is, for the purposes of the courts and elections, tied to Brussels, giving rise to virtually a split personality.

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Government fall out?

Fifth Column special: see page 3



© Yves Herman/Reuters

Only human

A new initiative in Brussels hopes to make the city more liveable through humanising public space

SUKI JENKINS

A celebration of public space is more than just an art event; it is a necessity and a part of the spirit of Brussels. Since the time when Leopold II hired 75 artists and architects to flood the city with fountains, carpet it in parks and plant countless trees (for his beloved mistress, Louise, who was pining for her hometown of Paris), the face of Brussels' public space has been changing. The demise of European neighbourhoods as they were stripped of their beauty during the wars, followed by a post-war panic of building up urban areas in the struggle to house the displaced and regenerate commerce, created an atmosphere of modernistic depression. This made the effect of

aesthetics on the human spirit undeniable as the ugly became uglier and urban living became tougher.

In the past 10 years, we have watched Brussels become a garden of cranes as the city is rejuvenated with architecture and public art, and the spirits of neighbourhoods are lifted. A good example is the simple installation along the canal in Molenbeek of plastic pinwheels – representative colours proudly standing in for the war-fallen windmills of Molenbeek. The border of postcodes 1000 and 1080 is made less daunting in its childlike display.

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OFFSIDE



Fakery on show

Question: what's the difference between a pack of razor blades and a Bumba won at a carnival?

Answer: not much; they've both been seized by police, and they could both do you a nasty injury.

Razor blades and stuffed toys are just two of the products on display at a new exhibition at the Police Museum in Etterbeek showing how the manufacture of counterfeit goods is no longer restricted to Chanel handbags and Rolex watches. Perhaps it's the crisis, but the market for luxury goods is shrinking. And for the fakers, there's just as much money in counterfeiting every-day products.

The models of Bumba – a clown character invented by Studio 100 and popular with the toddler set – were seized from fairground attraction stalls. In this country, a senior officer in charge of the anti-counterfeit squad said, almost the entire market for knock-off soft toys is at fairgrounds. Like many other counterfeit products, they're made in China, which may explain why the resemblance to Flemish favourites is sometimes decidedly approximate.

More importantly, the makers are not always scrupulous in their regard for safety, resulting, for instance, in eyeballs on spikes which can easily detach and present your tiny tot with more than just a choking hazard. In most cases, the paint used on counterfeit toys is unsafe for children and are illegal here. It's not only the kiddies who are in danger. How about some gin made with detergent and anti-freeze? Or cigarettes containing pesticides? And those cheap condoms could end up costing you 18 years of bonded labour.

The exhibition, which was conceived for this year's Heritage Day with its theme of fakes and forgeries, also includes exhibits of false money and documents, including the new electronic ID card.

The Police Museum at Luchtmachtlaan 33 in Etterbeek is open by appointment by emailing museum@polfed.be

News in brief

Brussels is the European **capital of traffic jams**, with 40% of the roads leading into the capital subject to tailbacks on an average day, according to a study carried out by GPS manufacturer Tom Tom. Two Polish cities, Warsaw and Wroclaw, fill out the top three, while London comes fourth.

This year's €25,000 **Golden Owl literary prize** went to Dutch author Cees Nooteboom for a collection of short stories entitled *'s Nachts komen de vossen* (*The Foxes Come at Night*). Flemish author Tom Lanoye, considered a front-runner, had to console himself with the public prize for his memoir *Sprakeloos* (*Speechless*), about his mother's slow decline after the death of his brother in 1980. Flemish author Marita De Sterck, meanwhile, won the Young Readers prize for *De Hondeneters* (*The Dog-Eaters*).

Ultraviolet lights used by retail businesses to check for **counterfeit bank notes** are unreliable and essentially useless, according to the government's anti-counterfeiting service. The talents of fakers have improved to such an extent that the lamps cannot detect a fake note. Last year 27,412 counterfeit banknotes were in circulation in Belgium.

Three men were arrested last week in Turnhout and charged with a total of 52 burglaries after they

were tracked down on the basis of **ear prints** left behind when they apparently listened at doors to ensure no-one was home. Police said ear prints are as unique as fingerprints.

The website of the municipality of Kampenhout in Flemish Brabant was down last week – after the council failed to pay the **web-host bill** of €327.91 for the year. The web host company said they had sent several reminders. Mayor Jean Meeus complained the payment was one day late as a result of the Easter holiday. The site (www.kampenhout.be) was back up by the end of the week.

Government and the private sector last week signed an agreement to set up a centre of excellence in research and training in the **fight against cyber-crime**, to be based in Kortrijk. Justice minister (and Kortrijk mayor) Stefaan De Clerck was joined by interior minister Annemie Turtelboom, as well as representatives from Microsoft, Cisco, Atos Origin and CSC Belgium, together with Febelfin, the representative organisation for the financial industry. The centre is expected to become operational by the end of the year.

One in three **saunas** are filming you in the changing rooms, according to the Belgian Sauna Association.

Although cameras are installed for security reasons and to prevent theft, they are in breach of the rules on privacy, said the Privacy Commission. Cameras in enclosed spaces are governed by strict rules, and separate spaces without surveillance must be provided where clients can undress.

The driver of one of the two trains involved in the **Buizingen crash** in February is back at work and awaiting medical authorisation to chauffeur trains again. Robin Vanden Bemden, 31, was injured in the crash. The other driver, 35-year-old Johan De Keyser, was one of 18 people killed.

Students at the Catholic University of Leuven would give up their free annual bus pass if the money could be spent instead on better **cycle racks and rental bikes**, according to student representatives. Most students only use the pass to travel from Fochplein to the station – barely one kilometre. Providing the student passes costs €650,000 a year, of which €320,000 is provided by the city council.

Pharmacists can now offer an **SMS reminder service** that sends patients a text message to remind them to take their medication. The service follows studies that show 40% to 70% of patients do not always take their medication on time.

→ www.aegate.be

FACE OF FLANDERS

Marc Waer

Just when you thought it was impossible to govern in this land, along comes a leader who's able to sweep aside dissent and, despite opposition, install the perfect form of government.

That at least was the claim of Marc Waer, rector of the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL) last week, announcing the completion of reforms he described as "the BHV of the university". It may not be quite that: the changes are not exactly earth-moving, though they are at least esoteric. Waer has succeeded in gaining approval for a new organisational structure that will give added weight to the university's management committee. The committee, made up largely of non-university staff, was set up specifically to take a management view of the university's affairs. Proponents of the management committee argue that the KUL is an institution with an annual budget of €1.7 billion, employing 18,000 people, making it the equivalent of a very sizable enterprise.

The week started with a letter to Waer signed by 45 professors which attacked the proposed changes. The professors wanted to know whether they had some say in the running of their university or did decisions simply filter down from the top. They pointed out that a stronger management committee went against pledges made by Waer in his election campaign last year, when he stated that management should never take precedence over the university's key roles of research and education.

Waer was elected last year following the resignation



of Marc Vervenne, who had received a negative evaluation from the university's governing body. Under the rule-changes agreed last week, this evaluation process will be scrapped.

"I tried to see them all personally to explain the organisational structure, but they didn't take me up on my offer," Waer said of the protesting professors. "That's a shame, but it's fine; 45 dissatisfied professors out of 1,000 isn't so many." In an op-ed piece in *De Standaard* last week, professor of international economy Paul De Grauwe compared the reforms to the way the old Soviet Union was run.

FLANDERS TODAY

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Flemish and French-speaking sides far apart on BHV issue

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Following a reorganisation of the system in 2002, BHV is the only constituency that does not conform to provincial boundaries, and the only one that straddles a regional divide, as well as a language divide (Brussels is bilingual, while Halle-Vilvoorde is Dutch speaking). BHV is also the only constituency where both Dutch-speaking and French-speaking parties take part in elections, and there lies the big problem. Halle-Vilvoorde is a Flemish area where French-speaking parties operate. At the same time, the municipalities around the edge of Brussels, all of which lie within Halle-Vilvoorde, are steadily becoming more French speaking, as families move out of Brussels. That *verfransing*, or Frenchification, is at the root of the so-called facilities, which allow residents of Kraainem, Wezembeek-Oppem and Linkebeek, for example, to deal with the municipal authorities in French, although the administrations are officially Flemish.

The three mayors

This language mix also lies at the heart of the ongoing problem of the three mayors of those same municipalities, who, despite being the

leaders of the winning lists, cannot take up their functions. This is because the Flemish government will not officially appoint them since they broke the language laws by sending out official electoral papers in French. Their parties refuse to nominate replacements, and the situation is at a stalemate. If BHV were to be split, Brussels-based French-speaking parties could no longer attract votes in Halle-Vilvoorde, where they enjoy a growing electorate. On the other hand, while Flemish parties would still operate in Brussels, they would have a much smaller number of voters than at present, where the capital is part of BHV. Flemish parties together attract only about 15% of all votes in Brussels. French speakers also fear the consequences of a split should Flanders ever decide to declare independence. The language border would then become a national border (the argument goes) and, since Brussels is entirely encased within Flemish Brabant, it would therefore become part of an independent Flanders.

Current situation unconstitutional

Some kind of solution is essential because the Constitutional Court has ruled that the current situation is unconstitutional. A 2007 deadline was avoided by the sort of legalistic trickery that often characterises Belgian politics; today there is simply no further avenue for escape. The issue now is under what terms the agreement will be reached. The Flemish parties could try to steamroller a split through parliament, but their French-speaking counterparts would then issue a set of challenges that would delay a result for years. They would also take such a move as a declaration of war, which could destroy any hope of more far-reaching state reforms for at least a generation.



A decision to decide: Parliament speaker Patrick Dewael

The trouble with a negotiated agreement, on the other hand, is not to give too much away – and the French-speaking side has a lengthy wish-list of concessions. Those range from attaching the facility municipalities to Brussels permanently, the creation of a “corridor” linking Brussels to Walloon-Brabant in the event of a declaration of independence or a “right to registration”, which would allow French-speaking residents of Halle-Vilvoorde to vote for French-speaking candidates in Brussels after a split.

It now appears an election is the only way of cutting through the Gordian knot of BHV. Although it is ironic that the coming election, whenever it might take place, will be unconstitutional as a result of the failure of the BHV issue to be solved.

In the meantime, Belgium faces another crisis: on July 1, the country takes over the presidency of the EU, meaning that the next two months of preparation, and perhaps even longer, will be overshadowed by the lack of a government. Last week former prime minister Wilfried Martens, now a member of the European Parliament, predicted that very problem. “What kind of image do we present to Europe if we have to preside the Union without a government?” he asked. ♦

Bishop resigns over abuse charges

The Roman Catholic bishop of Bruges last week resigned after admitting to the sexual abuse of a minor for an extended period more than two decades ago. It is not known what provoked the admission and resignation of 73-year-old Roger Vangheluwe.

As *Flanders Today* went to press, Vangheluwe (pictured) had retreated into a convent to await news of how his case would be handled. As too many years have passed, he will not face criminal charges, but the prosecutor's office in Bruges has opened a judicial enquiry into the possibility of other offences. At no point did the victim make a complaint to police.

Rik Devillé, a retired priest who has long campaigned against sexual abuse by the clergy, said that in the 1990s he had informed then-Archbishop Cardinal Godfried Danneels of Bishop Vangheluwe's abuse. “But I received no reply,” he said. “What became of my information, I do not know.”

A spokesman for the Cardinal denied the claim, saying that Danneels had only become aware of the news at the beginning of this month. Commentators were quick to point out that the crisis was the most serious the Church in Belgium has ever had to face. Vangheluwe was ordained as a bishop during the period when the abuse was taking place and should not, according to Archbishop André-Joseph Léonard (who recently succeeded Danneels),



have accepted the position. “He ought to have refused, because he knew there were skeletons in the closet,” Léonard said.

The claim that it may have been covered up recalls several cases in the late 1990s, one involving a priest in Sint-Gillis in Brussels and one involving a teacher at a Catholic college. Both were moved by the church to new locations, with no further action taken. In 1998, Cardinal Danneels was unsuccessfully sued for negligence for acts committed by the Sint-Gillis priest.

Archbishop Léonard called on other priests who have a history of sexual abuse of minors to come forward to the committee chaired by leading child psychiatrist, Peter Adriaenssens, as Vangheluwe has done. “And that goes for the victims, too,” he said. “We call on them to make themselves known as much as possible. The time for keeping quiet and covering these matters up has passed,” he said. ♦

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

The sorcerer's apprentice

Shortly after prime minister Yves Leterme offered the resignation of his government to the king last Thursday, MPs from the Flemish nationalist party Vlaams Belang (VB) sang the Flemish anthem, “De Vlaamse Leeuw” (The Flemish Lion), in the otherwise empty House of Representatives chamber.

Images of this impromptu singsong were broadcast around the globe, leaving out essential information, such as the loathing of many people – both Flemish and French-speaking – for the views of the Vlaams Belang. From the images, one might also come to believe that far-right party played some role in the events of the past week. But it did not – as it hardly ever does.

So who caused this crisis? Most people point at Open VLD, the coalition party that withdrew its confidence in the federal government after it once again failed to meet its deadline for resolving institutional talks about the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde (BHV) constituency.

The deadline passed several weeks ago, but still when the 34-year-old Open VLD party president Alexander De Croo decided to act upon it, jaws dropped. Somehow, no-one had taken his ultimatum seriously, maybe because they did not take the inexperienced party president all that seriously either.

So all eyes are now on the young De Croo. He has been called irresponsible, a *leerling-tovenaar*, or sorcerer's apprentice, someone who experiments with powers he has not mastered. Playing with matches next to a powder keg is another metaphor. What prompted De Croo to make this unexpected move? It was certainly not Flemish militancy, which his party Open VLD does not espouse. (In fact, De Croo is the son of former minister Herman De Croo, a staunch supporter of the Belgian state.)

During his campaign for the party presidency, De Croo junior made a point of consistency, as he believed that Open VLD had compromised too much on its principles by taking part in coalition governments. BHV was a first test for Open VLD's newly found consistency.

Moreover, Open VLD has never been too happy in the current federal government, Leterme II. Rather than letting this drag on for another year, it has opted for new elections. The timing seems right. The years of internal disagreement are over, the dissenting party Lijst Dedecker is not living up to expectations, the opinion polls are positive, and De Croo obviously hopes to create some kind of momentum. Still, he is taking a big risk, not just for his party's future, but also for this country's. We'll know soon what the sorcerer's apprentice has conjured up.

Fall-out for Flemish government?

Elections are one way out of this crisis (although they would not solve the matter of BHV and, worse still, they would be unconstitutional because of it). Another option is that the talks are resumed and reach a conclusion. In that case, the bilingual constituency BHV would finally be split, something the Flemish have been after for decades, while the French-speaking parties would receive some compensation. What shape this compensation would take is still part of the negotiations.

If an agreement is found, the crisis will not be over yet, as it inevitably will have an impact on the Flemish government. There is talk of Flanders having to give up its authority over six Flemish municipalities in the Brussels periphery and the introduction of a right to registration whereby French speakers from all over Flemish Brabant could cast their votes in Brussels, rather than in the area where they live.

All of this infuriates the other nationalist party, N-VA, which forms part of the Flemish coalition government and cannot believe that its former partner CD&V might give in on this. “We will not follow them through the valley of shame,” N-VA president Bart De Wever warns. If Flemish authority and the right to voter registration were sacrificed, N-VA would probably leave the Flemish government.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



6,712

complaints and queries reached the office of the Flemish ombudsman in 2009, according to the service's latest annual report. Some 1,400 new cases were opened, about one-third concerning housing. Most of those related to the renovation grant offered by the government.

18%

of children aged between two and seven in Belgium are obese, according to figures from the National Office for Nutrition and Health Planning. For adults, the figure is 14%.

803

full-time students signed up for theology at the Catholic University of Leuven this academic year, mainly students from overseas. Many are priests sent to study by their bishops.

94%

of children are wearing shoes that are too small for them, according to a survey of pre-school kids aged three to 10 in West Flanders. Some 92% of shoes are too narrow.

879

.be domains hacked in the month of April so far, according to security consultants H-Zone, about 15 times more than normal. Part of the problem is an increasing number of sites being hosted on insecure platforms.

Cost-cutting panic or investments in human capital?

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

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Only human

European cities come to Brussels for a collective think-tank on urban space

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The idea of beautifying unused public space was driven home in the last few years in Brussels when the giant tree creation of well-known Belgian designer Arne Quinze stood proud on Waterloostraat between Naamsepoort and Louizaplein. The once-vacant lot in the shadow of the towering installation – called “Cityscape” – became a social meeting point. Always surrounding the piece were sandwich eaters on their lunch hour, young people meeting up, old couples taking a rest on its benches. And to those not schooled in urban spaces, probably the biggest surprise was its role as a late-night safe haven: the effect of humanistic spaces.

One resident of the capital told me: “I didn’t really understand it; I just liked it and was sad to see it go.” Human Cities is looking for more permanent projects with just that kind of impact.

The Human Cities project plans “to contribute to the improvement of the user-friendliness and practices in town design and management through a greater synergy between the many actors who contribute to shape the city, while listening to the citizen’s expectations.” Quite a mouthful. But so is the scale of the project.

May sees the launch of the very first edition of this planned biennial, which will find urban planners, architects, environment scientists and artists from across Europe descending on Brussels. It is more than art and architecture – it is about all aspects of urban living, including green spaces and even dormant ones. Human Cities is a festival of the great outdoors within the city limits.

The Brussels, Flemish and French communities of Belgium are all participating. With all parts of the divided country working together, it is already a step in the right direction to improve urban environments. “Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels!” exclaims Lise Coirier,

manager of design consultancy Pro Materia, editor of *Trends & Living* magazine and director of Human Cities. “Creativity has no borders.”

Cities, as in plural

The project represents “Human Design”, which is supported by the European Commission’s Cultural Program 2007-2013. Urban planners from several European cities are coming to exchange their ideas and promote “user-friendly cities”.

Human Cities is both an event for participants and for the public. Alongside symposiums, conferences and workshops are exhibitions, guided tours, film screenings, performances and a street brunch. Though it’s not confirmed yet, Human Cities is working on a giant crane towering over fine arts palace Bozar, lighting the courtyard of the building itself.

“I watch people through the Pro Materia window every day as they pass on their way to work and again on their way home,” says Coirier as she sweeps her arm towards Bozar. “Their expressions, how they move... they are gray. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if they had something interesting to look at, something to smile about?”

Coirier launched Human Cities in 2006, and it has taken years of research and development. A large-eyed and intense woman, she appears totally dedicated, overflowing with knowledge of all aspects of the complicated journey she is about to make.

“It is about connecting artists, architects, designers, philosophers, sociologist, archaeologists, landscape designers and more. They all bring creativity, insight and [ideas on] participation in public space. This project is special.”

Use it, don’t lose it

But Human Cities isn’t about just decorating the city; it is about making it useable, with urban furniture, for



Flageyplein: furniture, not just benches

instance, and about connecting people to the spaces. Designers who are more accustomed to making furniture for interiors are encouraged to use a similar philosophy outside. Many of the people participating in the project are known in the creative world as “hybrids”. This means someone who participates or is proficient in more than one creative area, discipline or profession.

“It can’t be just reflective and thought-provoking, it must be pragmatic and educated and... work! People must be able to be involved,” Coirier says. “We need to meet [each other] and meet urban objects.”

The problems faced are the same for urban environments from Barcelona to Berlin. Each city’s experts have found different solutions, and it is time to share the conclusions – and to continue to share long after the festival is over.

“Inspiration and ideas for this have been taken from all over the world,” says Coirier. “In New York, they emphasise a sense of ‘play’. We need to take these tools and motivations to ask questions and respond to them,” says Coirier, tapping her fingernail on the table.

She points out the many problems in Brussels. “For example, the water flowing down the Kunstberg. But that is accompanied by logistical problems of money and government and can change from commune to commune,” she explains.

“We actually ran into the problem with the police, who insisted that one of our installations for the festival would have to come down at night after 23:00. Then taken away in a truck and put up again at 9:00 in the morning!” laughs Coirier. “It’s like a human pyramid: you need to get everyone on the same side. If one person in the pyramid doesn’t agree with what is happening, the whole thing collapses.” ♦

Human Cities: Celebrating Public Space

6-16 May
Across Brussels

→ www.humancities.eu



Lise Coirier has a passion for public space

Human Cities encompasses a variety of issues all based on making urban public spaces more usable, safe and inspiring for residents. It’s a conference, then, for professionals working in urban planning, architecture and the visual arts, but also open to the public, as are a number of festival events. Highly recommended are the following events:

Françoise Schein & Marie-Françoise Plissart French architect and sculptor Schein screens her films *Recording Europe on the Town Walls*, a walk through graffiti, and *The Path of Human Rights*, followed by Belgian photographer and filmmaker Plissart, with *Occupation of the Ground*, a perceptive documentary approaching the conflict between the instant snapshot and its durability.

Paolo Inghilleri The environmental sciences professor from Milan discusses how places and towns, through experiences and conflicts, can become urban artefacts.

Jean-Michel Decroly & Olivier Gosselain These professors from the Free University of Brussels (ULB) show the results of their “sensory walks” project, in which they encourages students to use all of their senses to intensely experience the city around them.

Guided tours Even in a city known

for its strong guided tours, these are exceptional. Human Cities invites you for a stroll through the Peter Bos housing development to give perspective on the walkways between the social dwellings, or use your critical eye and search for the unseen borders where the city of Brussels is divided by social, architectural and other boundaries.

Cinematek Human Cities in film provides abstract city visions or travel through night trains, deserted platforms and stations from Essen to Brussels. Chinese director Jia Zhang Ke will be here to introduce his film *Still Life*, winner of the 2006 Golden Lion in Venice, about a man searching for his true love against the backdrop of the Three Gorges dam project, which relocated more than one million people.

Design Of course, art and urban furniture will be on view across the city, from sculpture to benches, some experimental, where you can take a break.

Brunch Partake in outdoor eating and fun activities with the creative partners of Human Cities in the Kunstberg area. There are street performances, too.

“It looks quite ambitious,” says Human Cities director Lise Coirier. “But if we don’t start off with quality in Brussels, we won’t get anywhere!”



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Business counts cost of ash cloud

Ripples of flight ban reach far beyond airlines and tourism

ALAN HOPE

As the recent flight ban caused by the volcanic eruption in Iceland was lifted, business was taking stock of the damage, with consequences ranging from rotting fruit to hundreds of millions of euros in lost business.

The international airline industry lost an estimated €1.3 billion, according to industry representative body IATA, with the big companies losing €300 million a day on Saturday and Sunday at the peak of the crisis. Brussels Airlines said the flight ban had cost it "millions of euros a day". The estimate was based on the cost of the grounding of flights in winter, which ring in at €9 to €10 million a day. "And that's just for a few hours a day, not the complete suspension of all air traffic," said Brussels Airlines spokesman Geert Sciôt.

The shutdown has had tougher economic effects than September 11, and the sector has called for government help. Giovanni Bisignani of IATA described the lack of government reaction as "shameful".

In the hotel sector, meanwhile, April is the number one month for conferences and conventions, and the flight ban saw cancellations running at 20% of bookings – an effect that may continue to be felt even after the ban is lifted.

According to Unizo, which represents the self-employed, one in three businesses in Flanders is suffering some fallout from the ash cloud. Six businesses in 10 had workers or managers stranded offsite, while four in 10

had problems with receiving from suppliers and the delivery of their own goods and services. Unizo set up a 24-hour Service Centre to advise businesses on dealing with problems raised by the situation.

In Antwerp, the import and export of diamonds was brought to a standstill by the flight ban, but the trade in stones carried on within the city, the Antwerp World Diamond Centre said. Diamonds are forever, but the mango season only started three weeks ago, and mangoes are highly perishable. Daily shipments are flown into Belgium every day from the Ivory Coast, but they were left to rot on the tree during the flight ban. A similar fate awaited green beans from Morocco and lobster from Canada.

Meanwhile, Belgian endives and peppers failed to make it to Canada, and meat could not be sent to Dubai. Specialist suppliers described the situation as "disastrous". Starfruit, a company specialised in exotic fruit, said there were problems with passion fruit, lemongrass, baby maize, figs and papayas – which will probably lead to higher prices in the weeks to come.

However, there were positive aspects to the flight ban. The reduction in CO2 from having no planes in the air may only amount to 2%, but the lack of planes was a boon to migratory birds, particularly those who fly at great heights, where they are often involved in collisions with aircraft – known in the aviation industry as "bird strikes". ♦



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The flight ban was bad news for mango growers, good news for geese

Belgians €9 billion richer at end of 2009

Belgian collective wealth increased by €9.3 billion in the last quarter of 2009, according to figures from the National Bank, bringing the total wealth to €715.4 billion.

The increase was largely due to more money in savings, the investment of choice for Belgians in the middle of a crisis and in large part a substitute for spending. While Belgians saved €10.7 billion more in the last quarter, they put less money into current accounts and fixed-term investments. The preference for saving over spending, meanwhile, depressed demand in the economy as a whole, leading to problems for consumer businesses.

A smaller part of the increase was due to the rise in share prices. An increase of €2.5 billion on the value of the stock market brought total gains in wealth to €13.2 billion and total holdings to €900 billion.

However debts also rose in the final quarter, by €3.9 billion to €184.6 billion. The biggest increase was in mortgages. ♦

Clear2Pay acquires French software house

Clear2Pay (C2P), the Zaventem-based company specialised in payment software and e-commerce, has acquired Jware Technologies, which operates out of Caen in Normandy in northern France.

Michel Akkermans, CEO of C2P, said in a statement: "In the current climate, banks more than ever view payments as a vital line of business. They realise that a close look at their payments operations is called for in order to have a broad business overview and to cut out inefficiencies. We are committed to offering financial institutions and other payment providers a single platform that handles all payment transactions".

C2P operates the Open Payment Framework, which has led it from modest beginnings in Mechelen to a position as number three in the world in its field, with a strong position in the European Economic Area, in the US and in China. But the company recognised some gaps in its strategy, Akkermans said, particularly regarding payments by card – an area where Jware was far advanced. C2P had the choice of developing its own platform, he said, or buying one. The acquisition will allow C2P to go forward in the development of ATM systems and mobile payments, an area where the company is already cooperating with Alcatel-Lucent. ♦

Wanted: staff for "bottleneck" professions

The Flemish employment and training agency VDAB has revised its list of so-called bottleneck professions – jobs where it is hard or sometimes impossible to find enough qualified applicants. The new list consists of 194 different jobs, from cleaning staff, secondary school teachers and technicians at the top of the list, to security guards, taxi drivers and life guards.

A job function is defined as a bottleneck by the VDAB if: there is a shortage of applicants leading to the job being advertised for a longer period or over a wider area than normal; if the applicants who do apply are qualitatively inadequate for the job; or if the job is associated with low pay, dirty or dangerous work or inconvenient

hours. The job of cleaner – which tops the list and where there are nearly 20,000 vacancies waiting to be filled – is a perfect example.

Ten jobs have disappeared from the list, including hospital pharmacist, crew on vessels on inland waterways, furniture maker, industrial painter and window cleaner. Some of those jobs are no longer critical because of economy-related lack of demand, while in other cases training policy has increased the quantity and quality of applicants. Many laid-off industrial workers have retrained as forklift truck drivers, for instance, leading to the job being removed from the new list. ♦

→ www.vdab.be/trends



© Shutterstock

Bottleneck jobs: forklift drivers need not apply

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Banking • KBC

KBC bank, Flanders largest financial institution, is close to selling its Luxembourg-based KBL private banking affiliate to the Indian Hinduja group. The sale was forced on the bank as one of the conditions linked to KBC's rescue by public funds early last year. Other bidders for the private banking activities included Exor, the Italian financial group linked to the Agnelli family, and the Brazilian Safra bank.

Casino • Viage

The Brussels company Viage officially inaugurated its new casino last week in the Anspach centre in downtown Brussels. The new facility operates 370 slot machines and 35 gaming tables. It has several restaurants, a 1,000-seat concert hall and two private rooms for high-stakes gamblers.

Economy • Consumer confidence

The country's National Bank consumer confidence index reached its highest level in two years in April. The upturn was the result of an improved economic outlook.

Energy • Belpex

The Belgian electricity brokerage company Belpex has been sold to the Dutch APX-Endex electricity and gas trading company by Elia, Belgium's energy network operator. The move forms part of a plan to set up a unified electricity trading platform in north-west Europe.

Retailing • Veritas

The textile stores group Veritas, which recently inaugurated a flagship store in Antwerp, is to invest €9 million over the next three years in new outlets. The company currently operates more than 60 stores in Brussels and Flanders and plans to open an additional 20.

Technology • Barco

Kortrijk-based Barco, manufacturer of hi-definition TV and digital cinema equipment, sees business booming due to the success of American 3D blockbuster *Avatar*. The company is increasing capacity at its Kuurne production unit following the signing of a contract to supply up to 3,000 digital projectors in Canada, 100 fully-integrated digital cinema units to the Chinese Zhejiang Time Cinema group and 200 projectors to the Jinyi company, also based in China.

Transport • Korean Air

The cargo divisions of Korean Air and Asiana Airlines are set to develop their activities at Brussels Airport. Korean is considering daily cargo flights between Brussels and Seoul, while Asiana expects to push its frequencies from three to seven flights a week. In addition, the Chinese Hainan Airlines is considering setting up its western European hub at Brussels Airport.

Ivory tower

For one month, Brussels is the arena for the most difficult music competition in the world

ALAN HOPE

The field is as big as seven football teams, in which every one is a dazzling striker. They start off with 83, and, at the end of a month, there are only 12 left standing – and that's when the real work begins.

The competitors in the Queen Elisabeth Music Competition are pianists this year. In the three-year cycle, they're followed by singers and violinists before coming round to pianists again. There is also a composition prize given every other year.

The last winning pianist was Russia's Anna Vinnitskaya in 2007. Other distinguished laureates from the competition's history include Soviet violin master David Oistrakh in 1937, Soviet virtuoso pianist Emil Gilels in 1938 (both won the first-ever competitions in their fields), Latvian violinist Gidon Kremer in 1967, Belgian soprano Marie-Noëlle de Callatay in 1988 and Lebanese pianist and composer Abdel Rahman El-Bacha in 1978.

The competition was set up in 1937 by Elisabeth of Bavaria, who was the queen of Belgium from 1909 to 1934, as the wife of King Albert I. She founded the event in the name of star violinist Eugène Ysaÿe, who had dreamed of a competition for young musicians but never realised his goal before his death in 1931. After only two years, the competition disappeared until after the war in 1951. It took Elisabeth's name and patronage and has had an unbroken run since. Singing was added in 1988.

The jury has been presided over since 1996 by Arie Van Lysebeth, a multi-talented Belgian musician and former conductor. The world's greatest performers have sat on the jury over the years, including the US-born violinist Yehudi Menuhin, famous Australian soprano Joan Sutherland, celebrated Belgian bass-baritone José Van Dam and Arthur Rubinstein, considered one of the best pianists of the 20th century.

"I'm like a mother to them"

Apart from the audiences admiring the candidates from afar, there's another section of the population involved in the Queen Elisabeth Competition. Of the 83 candidates who start the competition, 12 will go all the way to the final evening on 29 May – a stay of a month, and too long to expect a budding musician to room in a hotel.

So the candidates, for the most part, stay with local hosts, one of whom is Bernadette De Clerck. She and her late husband, economics professor Louis Philips, welcomed QE competitors for 25 years, as well as opening their house in Sint-Pieters-Rode to young musicians who needed the use of the two grand pianos in the living room.

"We put them up, feed them and ferry them about to their appointments," De Clerck explains. "Basically, we just make sure they have nothing to worry about apart from their performances. We also have to be there to give moral support if they fail."

The opening field of 83 is whittled down to 24 at the end of the first week, so there's plenty of opportunity for disappointment. "I like to feel that I'm like a mother to them. I'm sad when they're eliminated."

The candidates arrive on 29 April. After registering, they visit



The last winner of the Queen Elisabeth Competition in piano, Anna Vinnitskaya

the Royal Conservatory in Brussels to listen to the acoustics and spend 10 minutes deciding which piano they'll play. The next day, there's a drawing of lots to determine the order of play. At the end of a gruelling first week, 59 of them will go home.

"I've only ever had one guest who made it past the first round," De Clerck says. "But the stress is all on the musicians; there's no stress for me. Some of them are more confident than others. The singers seem to have the most aplomb. But these are not little beginners who come to take part in the Queen Elisabeth competition. These are [already] experienced musicians."

Do musicians present particular problems? What about the fabled artistic temperament? "No, musicians have all the same problems as everyone else," smiles De Clerck. "You have to have an open spirit, that's all, to be open to young musicians. Though, to be honest, I'd do the same if it were about young sports people."

Family of six: one piano

For Pieter Thyssens, this year is the first time he's rubbed shoulders with Queen Elisabeth contestants. The doctoral student also lives in Kampenhout, and when De Clerck was looking for an available piano for her Korean contestant, Thyssens was quick to volunteer his family's instrument.

Thyssens is at the Free University of Brussels (VUB), where he's carrying out research on the position of certain elements in the Periodic Table. "I've been playing the piano since I was young. It's the absolutely perfect relaxation for me after a day's work. After chemistry, it's my second passion."

At De Clerck's suggestion, the Thyssens (the father is a piano teacher) contacted the competition to offer their piano. Surprisingly, their demands are not particularly strict. "As long as the piano is a grand, and it's in working order, they're quite happy," he says.

Their shared competitor will stay with De Clerck and have access to the piano during the day. "It's central, in the living room, so there's not much chance of being isolated. There are six people in our house," says Thyssens. "One brother lives in Leuven, and my two younger sisters are at school. Father and I are both at work in the daytime. That only leaves my mother at home. The experience will be a kind of test for us. Maybe the next time we'll take in a musician ourselves." ♦



American conductor Marin Alsop of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra will conduct the Belgian National Orchestra during this year's Queen Elisabeth Competition



Queen Elisabeth, who came from Bavaria and was married to King Albert I, founded what was to become one of the world's most prestigious music competitions in 1937



Belgians often place in the top 10 of the Queen Elisabeth but, aside from composition, none have ever made it to number one. But last year, we came close: Lorenzo Gatto was awarded second place in violin

Home for the QE

Competition is “a high point for every Belgian musician”

For John Gevaert, one of the three Belgian candidates this year, life goes on. When I speak to him, he's making his way home to Sint-Katelijne-Waver from playing a lunch-time concert. Yesterday, he explains, he spent the whole day giving piano lessons at the music academy in Tervuren. “The competition interferes with work,” he jokes. “I've taken a few weeks' vacation.”

The main challenge, the 26-year-old says, is not so much technical as mental. “You have to stay calm and focus and not allow yourself to be distracted by other things that come along. I plan to be practising five to 10 hours a day.”

The demands are in fact enormous: in the first round, every single player has to prepare three études: one each by Chopin, Liszt and Debussy, as well as two others from a list of composers. On top of that, they have to play a prelude and fugue from Bach's *Well Tempered Clavier* and, finally, a work of the candidate's own choice.

“It's one of the hardest competitions in the world, but that's also what makes it so inspiring”

“The entire repertory for the competition comes to about three hours of work that has to be learned by heart,” Gevaert explains. “It's one of the hardest competitions in the world, but that's also what makes it so inspiring. It's also one of the oldest and has a nice history. It's very exceptional.”

Gevaert is no stranger to competition. In fact he was described by Olympic sprinter Kim Gevaert as “extremely competitive”. She should

know, since she's his big sister. Growing up as the youngest of four children, he was also involved in athletics, and Kim took music lessons. It was partly her example that inspired him to take up the piano at the age of seven.

At 15, he started getting interested in classical music. “I'd been taking lessons from the age of seven, but I was only playing pop and jazz, as well as improvising — making up music just to amuse myself. That's unusual for a classical musician, and I think it's given me a different outlook. Later, I really started to listen to classical music, and it was so beautiful; I just wanted to learn all those pieces at once. I haven't stopped since.”

As one of the three Belgians (Stephanie Proot from Ghent and Nicolas Franco from Ciney are the others), Gevaert has a home-team advantage. But doesn't it make it even more intimidating, having watched the gruelling process in previous years, even if only on TV?

Not for Gevaert. “It's more inspiring,” he says. “The Queen Elisabeth competition is a high-point for every Belgian musician. And I'm playing for the home crowd. I feel as if I'm better prepared. I know the venues. I have my family by me — even though they might not be able to take the stress of coming to see me. I can practice on my own piano, and I get to come home every evening.”

Perhaps more than anything else, he has the support of his wife, Katrijn Simoens, herself a pianist who plays four-hand concerts with him as Pianoduo Mephisto, as well as performing with her two sisters in the Simoens Trio. “She's of enormous value to me,” he says. “Her advice and comments help me a great deal. Even just to stop practising and listen to her play the piano in another part of the house is a great inspiration.” ♦

→ www.cmireb.be



John Gevaert will represent Flanders this year at the Queen Elisabeth Competition

© Bert Hulsemans

Going to the QE

All performances of the Queen Elisabeth Competition are open to the public:

First Round: 3-8 May
Semi-Finals: 10-15 May
Royal Conservatory
Regentschapsstraat 30
Brussels

Finals: 24-29 May
Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23
Brussels

→ www.bozar.be

FILM FEST FRENZY

LISA BRADSHAW

Spring brings an influx of film festivals to Flanders and Brussels, all looking to avoid competing with the Flanders International Film Festival in the autumn. This week, the **Opendoek** festival of films on social justice issues continues in Turnhout, while **Docville** in Leuven and the **Brussels Short Film Festival** kick off.

Programmes can be stronger or weaker depending on the year in world cinema, but 2010 has proven to be a good one. Docville is brimming with excellent choices in new documentary covering diverse subjects, from cafe life in Flanders to family life in Ireland to global consumerism and environmental degradation (you'll find those last two are closely related).

Making connections are what the best documentaries do, with an international audience, certainly, but also with other issues, hopefully. *We Live in Public* takes viewers from the pinnacle of American dot.com success to a village in Africa, where a once-famous internet pioneer is now living as far away from technology as he can get.

Human relationships are also at the heart of *Bedankt & Merci* (pictured, above right), which follows four *volkscafe* owners in West Flanders.

Faced with the realities of their own aging, they are simultaneously struggling to keep a cafe culture alive that is slowly fading away. Like the recent Flemish film *Flaxman*, Belgian filmmakers Kat Steppe and Nahid Shaikh patiently record the dying of a way of life.

Similarly nostalgic is *His & Hers*, Irish director Ken Wardrop's first documentary, in which he strings together monologues of rural Irish women, from children to the very old, who all talk about the men in their lives. Although it features many women, it plays like one narrative: individual stories that form a collective of joy, pain and desire.

Both of these films would be better choices than *The Shock Doctrine*, Mat Whitecross and Michael Winterbottom's highly-anticipated adaptation of Naomi Klein's brilliant thesis on capitalist and corporate exploitation of regions in extreme crisis. Their dry and dull handling of what should be a fascinating probing of political and economic connections makes you wish Michael Moore had taken it on instead.

But you don't have to look too far to find that: Moore's latest film *Capitalism: A Love Story* is here and, though it occasionally grates with that desperate Moore attempt at grassroots

radicalism, he again uncovers unseen footage that is eerily relevant today and talks to victims of outlandish corporate conduct — such as those who take out life insurance on their own employees, which often amounts to much, *much* more than the surviving spouse receives. Other big titles are *Food, Inc.*, a harrowingly straightforward look at food production in the US, and *No Impact Man*, which follows the goal of one New York family who spend a year achieving zero impact on the earth, complete with freezing nights of no heat and earthworm compost in the living room of their ninth-floor apartment.

Meanwhile, in Brussels, the best of international short film is back. Germany takes the spotlight, and you'll find some fantastic footage shot by the Ministry of State Security, along with a wealth of other historical shorts combined with contemporary work. There are special screenings of Belgian shorts, plus the highly recommended Short Film Night, where, if you can manage to keep your eyes open, five hours of international shorts screen until 3.00, including Germany's *Hell's Bastards* (pictured, below right), 10 minutes of Hitchcockian spy thrills. ♦



→ www.docville.be
→ www.courtmetrage.be

The Black Theatre

A lightbox shadow puppet theatre created by Antwerp-based designer Helena Lumelsky is for sale at MoMu and at Ra in Antwerp in a limited edition of 200



If you thought women's worship of the Little Black Dress was as arbitrary as next season's it-colour, think again. Black and fashion have been a match made in heaven for centuries, as every generation and every individual finds a new meaning behind the dark and mysterious shade.

Antwerp's Fashion Museum (MoMu) has launched a show that maps the different narratives of black throughout history and brings them together with the vision of modern, influential designers, known for their penchant for black.

This mix is, in short, what makes *Black: Masters of Black in Fashion and Costume* one of its strongest shows. "We didn't want to paint a complete picture of the colour black in the history of fashion and costume but rather wanted to work around a few key moments and themes," explains co-curator Wim Mertens.

In order to portray the link between nobility and black, for example, a portrait of Dutch painter Cornelis van der Voort hangs next to mannequins dressed by contemporary designers Viktor&Rolf and Bernhard Wilhelm. Their black

silhouettes are avant-garde interpretations of the 17th-century fashion worn in earnest in the portrait.

Working together alongside MoMu's staff were Paul Huvenne of the Antwerp's Museum of Fine Arts, Emmanuelle Dirix of Winchester College in London and the Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp and Natalie Ortega, who teaches textile conservation and restoration at the city's Artesis Hogeschool. "It was Ortega who discovered that the dyeing of textiles black was an important industry in Antwerp during the 16th

and 17th century," says Mertens. "That was our historic link with the colour and became our starting point.

The importance of black for many Belgian designers gave MoMu plenty of connections to the present: you'll find designs by Ann Demeulemeester, Raf Simons and Olivier Theyskens in *Black*.

A notice on the wall explains the necessity to work with dimmed lights due to the fragile quality of the fabrics, but it also makes for a suitably dark environment. What is strikingly obvious right from the start is that black isn't as simple as we think – it comes in a multitude of shades.

The first silhouette – a magnificent dress by Riccardo Tisci for Givenchy Couture – embodies this discovery: there are dozens of nuances discernable in the hue. The tulle, the beads, the felt: everything is black, but no two materials have the same shade. It is a testimony to the versatile nature of black.

Wandering further onto the zigzag path of the exhibition, this feature becomes more and more apparent. One corner is devoted to men's fashion in black: once a symbol of a new era, in which men turned their backs on frivolous appearances in favour of a discreet, modest and classy look. Another corner demonstrates the appearance of black in children's clothing – a handy colour for school aprons to disguise ink stains or for Catholic uniforms so as not to deter attention from devoutness.

In the 1980s, black made a surprising comeback in the otherwise flashy, glittery world of fashion, thanks to Japanese designers such as Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons and Junya Watanabe. Suddenly, black is everything but devout: rebellious and gothic, yet always chic. Of course the necessary attention is also devoted to black as the colour of mourning, with a display of mourning jewellery and accessories that questions the true meaning of black. Is it for mourning, or for fashion?

Don't forget good versus evil with its good girl/bad girl appeal: a film noir installation with creamy white-skinned femme fatales emphasises the chiaroscuro effect, which inspired Antwerp-based Helena Lumelsky to design her collection revolving around black. She also created a miniature lightbox theatre, complete with flashlight, transparent scenes and movable figures to depict 20th-century fashion in black and white.

By juxtaposing black with white, the exhibition further investigates the two extremes of colour and the geometrical characteristics of the colours when combined. Gareth Pugh's summer collection for 2009 functions as the perfect illustration, with its white fronts and black backsides.

But perhaps the most interesting part of *Black* is the last chapter, which studies the interplay between colour and light. Visitors are reminded of their first impression as they entered the exhibition: black is never a given. It changes all the time.

"What I learned from this exhibition is that black is a many-layered and intriguing colour that has a different meaning at different moments in time and space," says Mertens. "More than any other colour, black is permeated with different meanings and contexts, and that makes it the strongest colour of all." ♦

MoMu traces the history of our infatuation with the deepest hue

STÉPHANIE DUVAL

THE new BLACK



Black: Masters of Black in Fashion and Costume

Until 8 August
MoMu, 28 Nationalestraat
Antwerp

→ www.momu.be

Shangri-La, part II

Our monthly series on provincial parks take us to a veritable paradise for rec seekers in East Flanders

MELISSA MAKI

You can almost miss Puyenbroeck, which seems almost guarded from the masses. With little signage and long roads leading in, you don't know what you're in for until you get there.

East Flanders is a recreation park heaven, counting seven. But Puyenbroeck is king, a veritable paradise for recreation seekers young and old.

Located in the small municipality of Wachtebeke, about 25 kilometres northeast of Ghent, this expansive, 510-hectare provincial park has endless entertainment opportunities, including a serious sports complex, a beautiful boating lake, pretty paths, cute animals, inventive playgrounds and magnificently manicured gardens.

Both serious and recreational sports enthusiasts will find a plethora of prospects. The 1,800 square-metre sports complex is perfect for a wide range of indoor activities, from badminton and dancing to weight training and swimming. There is an outdoor pool, too – though only open in July and August – and countless other open-air athletic options, including tennis, rugby and a nine-hole golf course that won't break the bank. Central to the domain is the lake, which spans out into a clover leaf shape. It's stocked with fish, and fishing is allowed; on weekends and holidays, you can rent boats to paddle or row around to your heart's content.

Cyclists and walkers will enjoy the park's water- and tree-lined paths. Guided nature tours in Dutch take place every second Sunday; each has a different and often seasonally focused topic. The website of Tourism Waasland has information about extended cycling and walking routes that incorporate parts of the domain, including the two sign-posted walking loops Siesmeers and Zuidlederoute.

The "Living History Park" features an array of animals, but standouts for me were the showy peacocks and little baby goats. The domain is partnered with Steunpunt Levend Erfgoed, an organisation that works to preserve



© Melissa Maki

old and often endangered breeds of Belgian farm animals. You'll see a wide range of native varieties, like Kempen sheep and Belgian draft horses.

Though kids love this zoo, it's often tough to pull them off the imaginatively designed play areas. The giant red climbing structure and water playground are particularly entertaining, but there's also mini golf and a traffic park during the summer, where older kids learn about traffic regulations in a hands-on way, while driving go-carts on a specially designed track.

For visitors with a flower fetish, there's a 23-hectare Bloemenpark (flower park). The gardens are landscaped in English and French style with precisely trimmed hedges and shrubs. In April, daffodils abound. Here you'll also find spewing fountains and a straw maze.

Once the adventure is over, be sure to give yourself a chance to relax and dine al fresco by the lake. The catering complex includes a café and restaurant. You can choose simple snacks like *pannenkoeken* or heartier fare like steak and *frietjes*. Groups can also rent sections of the large dining hall for special events.

If you feel you really don't want to go home, camping and caravanning is available in the domain from until 30 September. ♦



© Melissa Maki

CAN'T DECIDE WHAT TO DO?

Get a lay of the land at Puyenbroeck by taking the charming little tourist "train". The tour takes about 30 minutes and gives you a helpful overview of all that the park has to offer. An all-inclusive ticket lets you ride the train all day and gives you access to mini golf, as well as a bike and a boat.

Castle Puyenbrug, within the domain, hosts the Mola-Het Provinciaal Molencentrum (provincial mill museum). Here, you can find a permanent exhibit and a wealth of information about harnessing the power of wind and water for energy, both in the past and present.

MORE FUN IN EAST FLANDERS

East Flanders is home to more provincial recreation parks than any other province

Het Leen in Eeklo features 260 hectares of forest, including an internationally known arboretum with an extensive collection of trees and shrubs. The park also has 36 kilometres of walking paths, half of which are paved and handicap accessible. *Gentsesteenweg 80, Eeklo*

De Gavers in Geraardsbergen (pictured) is a gem for boaters. Visitors can rent boats to paddle, pedal, sail, row or surf around a 20-hectare lake. Swimmers and sunbathers will enjoy the large beach area, open in July and August. *Onkerzelestraat 280, Geraardsbergen*
www.degavers.be



© Freeco - www.panoramio.com

De Boerekreek in Sint-Jan-in-Eremo is a unique, rural, natural wetland that is the perfect getaway for walkers and cyclists who enjoy quiet, as well as anglers. The on-site sports centre offers classes and sports camps for kids, with activities like riding, sailing and surfing. *132 Sint-Jansstraat, Sint-Jan-in-Eremo*
www.boerekreek.be

Den Blakken in Wetteren hosts lovely ornamental gardens organised by theme as well as a blind garden route for the visually impaired. Their website features recommended cycling and walking routes. *Wegvoeringstraat 308, Wetteren*
www.denblakken.be

Het Gentbos in Merelbeke is a 22-hectare forested area offering guided tours and educational opportunities for kids. *Poelstraat, Merelbeke*

De Roomakker in Tielrode is a small domain made up of three former clay pits and the area surrounding them. This natural area is popular for hiking. *Hofstraat, Tielrode*



© Melissa Maki

HOW TO GET THERE

Cycling is an ideal way to reach Puyenbroeck. You can order the appropriate maps from the province's website: www.tov.be

Lokeren's railway station is the closest one to the domain. Take the Belbus 70 the rest of the way. (Call ahead to reserve at 09.210.94.94).

You can take bus 76 directly from Gent-Sint-Pieters or Gent-Dampoort train stations. It takes about 45 minutes to reach Puyenbroeck.

From 3 July to 12 September, there's scenic cruise from the centre of Lokeren to the domain. Details are available on the domain's website, and you can get tickets at Lokeren's tourist office.

Puyenbroeck

Puyenbrug 1A
Wachtebeke

➔ www.oost-vlaanderen.be



Palace of dreams

After 265 years of bad luck, the Palace on the Meir is finally ready to make its public debut

DENZIL WALTON

The Paleis op de Meir was built out of beer bottles. Ok, not literally, but brewing was the main reason for the great wealth of the Van Susteren family. When his elder brother and sister died at the ages of 22 and 21 respectively, Johan Alexander, the sole surviving member of the family, suddenly became exceptionally wealthy. He decided to invest his inheritance in bricks and mortar, and dreamed of a palatial residence in Antwerp that would stand head and shoulders above the rest.

He turned to architect Jan Pieter van Bourscheit de Jongere (who had built 's-Gravenwezel Castle for Johan's grandfather). The first stones were laid in 1745, but the work proceeded slowly. Like his siblings, Johan died unexpectedly, in 1764, before having an opportunity to live in the palace of his dreams. As he had never married, his wealth was distributed amongst distant relatives, and the building was put up for sale.

It changed hands – and names – a couple of times, becoming first Hof de Fraula and then Hof de Roose. In 1811, its owner, Caroline Roose de Baisy, decided to sell the now magnificently-finished building to a certain Frenchman called Napoleon Bonaparte.

Napoleon loved Antwerp, which between 1792 and 1815 was in French hands. As the Hof de Roose was the most eye-catching building in the port city, he inevitably saw it as a suitable imperial residence. He instigated a detailed programme to redecorate it totally in the French Empire style, employing the architects Pierre Fontaine and François Verly to accomplish this.

Strangely enough, history repeated itself. Just like Johan Alexander van Susteren, Napoleon never got the chance to live in his dream palace. By the time the renovations were completed, the French emperor was in decline. From Elba and then Saint Helena, he could only gaze north and dream of what might have been.

Next to put his stamp on the place was William I of the Netherlands. Antwerp was the ideal location from which to rule the United Netherlands, and the Paleis op de Meir was his favourite dwelling. He refurbished it, but in 1830 it was time for William to pack up his bags and hand the building over to the newly-created Belgian royal family.

Leopold I liked to stay in the palace but had no interest in home-improvement projects. Not so Leopold II, who spent lavishly to introduce central heating, electric lights and a mirrored banqueting hall. During both World Wars, the palace became a popular symbol of patriotism but was rarely visited by the Belgian royals.

The result was that by the late 1960s, the palace had been declared unfit for royal occupation, and in 1969 King Boudewijn handed it over to the Ministry of Flemish Culture. It became firstly an International Cultural Centre; then in 1974 a protected monument; and in 1980 a Centre for Visual Culture.

The end of the 20th century saw the palace languishing and redundant, until Erfgoed Vlaanderen (Heritage Flanders) took over the lease and renovations began in 2001. They dreamed up a remarkable facelift that has breathed new life into this wonderful building. ♦

→ www.paleisopdemeir.be



Heritage Flanders brings another building back to its former glory with the Paleis op de Meir, the former royal palace in Antwerp

Can we have our furniture back?

In the late 1980s, Prince Filip borrowed some pieces of furniture from the Royal Palace of Antwerp. Among the items were a bed made for Napoleon's wife Joséphine, an antique marble fireplace and an exclusive wooden cabinet. Altogether, 150 items were taken, although apparently only 23 chairs and two consoles were used by the Prince to furnish his official residences. The rest ended up in Brussels' Bellevue Museum and Royal Museum for Art and History.

However, when restoration plans were drawn up, the Flemish Government requested that the Prince return the missing items. Despite numerous requests, for years the prince stalled. Finally, in September 2008 an agreement was reached, although it wasn't until last month that the missing pieces of furniture were returned to their original home, where they can now be seen.



Palatial eating

A perfect fit for a gastronomy-obsessed region

STÉPHANIE DUVAL

Anyone who's been to Antwerp's famous shopping street has seen the Paleis op de Meir. After nine years of renovations, the 18th-century building that has been occupied by a French Emperor, a Dutch king and various Belgian royals, will re-open to the public on 8 May.

But the new palace will not just be a feast for the eyes: the elegant interior also houses two new culinary spots that will appeal to *bon vivants*.

The Café Impériale is an upscale brasserie (Brasserie de Luxe, it likes to say), paying homage to one of the building's many illustrious owners, Napoleon. Nothing but the best is good enough, then. The café offers breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner – all in the chic atmosphere and style of a Parisian salon. A patio further accommodates shoppers who like to take a break from their stylish endeavours while soaking up

some sun and sampling a glass of wine.

It is obvious that Café Impériale wishes to bring back a bit of the grandeur for which Antwerp was once known. But it's not just about appearances, especially if you're into desserts (and who isn't?). No less than Roger Van Damme, chef of Antwerp restaurant Het Gebaar and known for his avant-garde take on classic desserts, is in charge of Café Impériale's desserts menu.

And if unconventional, mind-blowing sweets are indeed your thing, there's more good news. The other enviable spot in the 18th-century palace is The Chocolate Line: the first Antwerp chocolaterie by Fabienne De Staerke and Dominique Persoone. The latter is known as Belgian chocolate's *enfant terrible* – a "shock-o-latier", as he's known.

Persoone took Bruges by storm

in 1992, when he opened the first location where you could buy chocolates that taste like olives or cigars, or where you could find chocolate lipstick and chocolate tequila shots. The chocolate chef's gastronomic fantasies haunt those who have ever tasted his clever yet challenging combinations of flavours. Both Flemish triple-Michelin-starred restaurants rely on his assortment of chocolates during coffee.

This is just what goes on on the ground floor. One floor up, the majestic Spiegelzaal – once used by King Leopold II to impress his guests – will house special dinners, presentations, receptions and fashion shows. It could be the dream decor for *grandes fêtes* like we rarely ever see them anymore. ♦

→ www.spiegelzaal.be



The finest of houses for the finest of Belgian specialties: The Chocolate Line



Gustave van de Woestyne

REBECCA BENOOT

Gustave van de Woestyne was a remarkable painter. As one of the representatives of modern art in Belgium, he created stimulating body of work full of daring contradictions. The Fine Arts Museum in Ghent has selected 145 of his paintings, almost half of his oeuvre, to present an exceptional exhibition that not only offers you a complete chronological overview but also incorporates several works that have seldom been exhibited.

Van de Woestyne was the brother of the Flemish poet Karel van de Woestyne and belonged to the so-called First Group of Latem, artists who worked in the East Flemish village of Sint-Martens-Latem on the banks of the Leie, near Ghent. Most of his Flemish contemporaries evolved from Impressionism towards a rural version of Expressionism, but Van de Woestyne's evolution was less linear.

Van de Woestyne's influences were very diverse, ranging from Symbolism to Cubism and from Flemish Primitives to Italian fresco, and back again. The result is a bold and visionary mixture filled with biblical themes, tender portraits, clinical precision and electrifying tension.

The exhibit commences with the impact of his stay at Sint-Martens-Latem and is filled with elegant representations of rural life, portraits of villagers and several religious paintings, which would soon become his trademark. His use of neutral colours with a hint of gold adds a realistic dose of humanity.

Images of friends and family will eventually become a focal point, portrayed with an uncanny sense of control, making the paintings seem treacherously simple (above is "Gaston and his Sister", from 1923). Van de Woestyne turned out to be quite a popular and prolific portrait painter, as he rarely incorporated very much of his subject's surroundings.

He saved that for his landscapes, which are heavily influenced by Symbolism; works created between 1909 and 1913 are a prime example and also considered the best of his work. He believed that nature was something sacred and made several calm and soothing representations of fields and gardens often conceived around a religious subject. After the First World War, however, Expressionist tendencies influenced artistic circles. Although the impact

of Constructive Expressionism and Cubism is clearly visible in the details of Van de Woestyne's later works, the influence of Classicism and Symbolism still prevails, creating a unique and mix of classic and contemporary.

His themes may have been limited, but his styles were eclectic illustrating an impressive scope of creative ingenuity. Van de Woestyne's age-old religious themes especially were representations of Existentialism, loneliness and suffering.

Van de Woestyne is considered an important representative of Symbolism in Belgium, and this striking retrospective complements the current exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels dedicated to this sensuous movement. ♦

Until 27 June
Ghent Fine Arts Museum
Citadelpark
→ www.mskgent.be



Antwerp

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be

APR 28 20.30 Axelle Red for Haiti: benefit concert **APR 30-MAY 12** 15.00/20.30 Hei Pasoep **MAY 5** 20.30 Konono N°1 **MAY 6** 20.30 The Original Elvis Tribute 2010

Lotto Arena

Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be

APR 30 20.00 Editors
MAY 1 21.00 Hardcore Universe

Sportpaleis

Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be

MAY 1 21.00 DJ Tiësto
MAY 5 20.30 Mika

Trix

Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00
www.trixonline.be

APR 30 19.30 Admiral Freebee + Few Bits. Attitude Adjustment **MAY 1** 15.00 The Cassandra Complex + Signal Aout '42 + Spetsnaz + Revco World + Armageddon + Dildos + more 20.00 High Places **MAY 5** 20.00 Third Eye Blind **MAY 6** 20.00 Peter Pan Speedrock

Asse

Jeugdhuis 't Bronneken

Bergestraat 2; www.tuinoptredens.be

MAY 1-2 Tuinoptredens (Garden concerts): Semi-acoustic, open-air rock festival, featuring The Flying Horseman, Stef Kamil Carlens, Willow, Liesa Van Der Aa, The Bony King of Nowhere and Das Pop

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be

APR 28 The Residents **APR 29** Amparo Sanchez. The Peas Project + Howie & Linn **MAY 2** 19.30 The Moon Invaders + The Aggrolites **MAY 3** Boyz II Men **MAY 4** Los Lobos

Belle Vue Café

Henegouwenkaai 43; 02.414.29.07
www.vkconcerts.be

APR 30 20.00 Keiki + Enablers

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be

MAY 2 20.00 Rufus Wainwright

Le Bar du Matin

Alsebergsesteenweg 172; 02.537.71.59 <http://bardumatin.blogspot.com>

APR 29 21.00 Alexander Faem

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
www.botanique.be

Concerts at 20.00:

APR 29 Aury
APR 30 New Young Pony Club

Le Montmartre

Boondaalsesteenweg 344; www.lemontmartre.be

MAY 1 21.00 Peter Welsh Band

Magasin 4

Havenlaan 51B; 02.223.34.74
www.magasin4.be

APR 29 19.00 Monon'serge & Anonymous + Ultra Vomit

Piola Libri

Franklinstraat 66-68; 02.736.93.91
www.piolalibri.be

APR 30 19.00 Death in Plains

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
www.recyclart.be

APR 29 20.30 Led Bib + jam session

Theatre de Poche

Gymnasiumweg 1a; 02.649.17.27
www.poeche.be

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

Couleur Café

25-27 June

Tour & Taxis site
Brussels

Book early for this world music festival so popular that many Belgians put all else on hold, refuse to go on holiday and take off work to nurse those morning-afters that follow the more than 40 concerts over three days. Under the tell-tale brightly coloured big tops on the Tour and Taxi site, this year you'll find Snoop Dogg, legendary French rappers Suprême NTM, reggae master duo Nas & Damian Marley and off-beat Spanish ska group Ska-P (pictured).



→ www.couleurcafe.be

APR 29 20.30 Bai Kamara Jr: benefit concert

VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07
www.vkconcerts.be

MAY 2 20.00 Starfucker + Synthetic Season + BrokeNCYDE

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991
www.forestnational.be

MAY 6 20.00 Vasco Rossi

Ghent

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be

MAY 1 20.15 Kraakpand 4.8: Roosbeef + Bettie Serveert + Sienna Dahlen + Société Anonyme + Creature with the Atom Brain

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be

APR 30 20.00 VOLTA Nacht van de arbeid: Labour Day party featuring Customs, Daan, Meuris, Discobar Galaxie, Tommigun, Trash Radio, and visuals by Monodot VJs

Kortrijk

De Kreun

Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44
www.dekreun.be

APR 30 20.00 Steak Number 8

Leuven

Het Depot

Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
www.hetdepot.be

Concerts at 20.00:

APR 29 De Mens **APR 30** 15 Years Africa Film Festival with Baloji + Jérémie Hakeshimana & Sybille Cishahayo + Dodo Wetshi **MAY 4** The Skatalites **MAY 5** Open mic night **MAY 6** De Kreuners

MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

Mitja Tusek → De Garage, Mechelen

Asian Art Part II → Artiorix, Tongeren

Jan Vanriet: Closing Time → Fine Arts Museum, Antwerp



Antwerp

Buster

Kaasrui 1; 03.232.51.53
www.busterpodium.be
APR 28 21.00 Playtime Session **APR 29** 21.00 Buster Jam, jazz (open to all; bring an instrument) **APR 30** 22.00 Ramses III **MAY 5** 21.00 Playtime Session: Halewynstichting **MAY 6** 21.00 Singers Night

Rataplan

Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
www.rataplanvzw.be
MAY 1 20.30 Jef Neve: Groovething

Bruges

De Werf

Werfstraat 108 ; 050.33.05.29
www.dewerf.be
APR 30 20.30 Cécile Broché, Etienne Bouyer and Chris Joris

Brussels

Art Base

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20
www.art-base.be
APR 30 20.00 De Braave joenges, Brusseleer & blues music (dinner concert at Brasserie Horta, Zandstraat 20)

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78
www.jazzstation.be
APR 28 20.30 L'Ame des poètes

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusicvillage.com
APR 28 21.00 Aimée & Frank De Wolf Trio

Ghent

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
APR 29 20.00 The Prongs, with Thomas Smetryns & Kaffe Matthews
MAY 5 20.00 Tom Wouters' Flick-Flack-Bat + Elephant9



Antwerp

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00

www.zuiderpershuis.be
APR 30 20.30 Victor Démé

Ardoorie

Cultuurkapel De Schaduw
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82
www.deschaduw.net
APR 30 20.30 The new Chapter, reggae

Brussels

Atelier 210

Sint-Pieterssteenweg 210;
02.732.25.98 www.atelier210.be
MAY 5 21.00 What the Folk!: Sinus Georges + Emmanuel

De Kriekelaar

Gallaitstraat 86; 02.735.64.68
http://dekriekelaar.vgc.be
APR 28 20.15 Emilia Kirova & Tzigani

De Maalbeek

Hoornstraat 97; 02.734.84.43
www.muzeikpublieque.be
APR 30 20.00 Zongora & guests in World Ball "Balkanik"



Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
www.desingel.be
MAY 5 20.00 Elias String Quartet with Jonathan Biss, piano: Mozart, Britten, Brahms

Bruges

Concertgebouw

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
www.concertgebouw.be
MAY 2 20.00 La Petite Bande: Vivaldi, Bach, Carolus Hacquart, more

Brussels

Miniemenkerk

Miniemenstraat 62; 02.511.93.84
www.minimes.net
APR 28 20.00 Nederlandse Bachvereniging conducted by Jos van Veldhoven: Schütz, JC Bach, JS Bach, more

Ghent

De Bijloke

Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2 09.233.68.78
www.debijloke.be
APR 30 20.00 B'Rock conducted by Frank Agsteribbe, with Eric Hoeprich, chalumeau: Telemann, Graupner, more

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
APR 29 20.15 Ictus String Quartet: Stravinsky, Levinas, Webern, Ligeti



Ghent

Vlaamse Opera

Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02
www.vlaamseopera.be
APR 30-MAY 6 15.00/19.30 Giasone by Francesco Cavalli, with Christophe Dumaux (Giasone), Katarina Bradic (Medea). Conducted by Federico Maria Sardelli, staged by Mariame Clément (in the original Italian with Dutch and French surtitles)

Mechelen

Utopolis

Spuibeekstraat 5; 015.55.77.33
www.utopolis.be
APR 29 20.00 Opera in Cinema presents Simon Boccanegra by Verdi, with Plácido Domingo, conducted by Daniel Barenboim, staged by Federico Tiezzi; broadcast live from La Scala in Milan (in the original Italian with no subtitles)



Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.27.28
www.desingel.be
MAY 6-8 14.00/20.00 Royal Ballet of Flanders in Artifact, choreographed by William Forsythe

Vlaamse Opera

Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02
www.vlaamseopera.be
APR 30-MAY 2 Times vary Royal Ballet of Flanders in Het Zwanenmeer (Swan Lake) by Tchaikovsky, choreographed by Marcia Haydée

Brussels

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
MAY 5 20.00 Spanish flamenco dancer María Pagés in Autorretrato (Self Portrait), choreographed by Pagés and accompanied by her singers and dancers

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15

www.cirque-royal.org
Until APR 30 20.00 Babel (Words), choreographed by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Damien Jalet (www.lamonnaie.be)

Ghent

Kopergietery

Blekerijstraat 50; 09.266.11.44
MAY 1 20.00 Everland, contemporary dance performances inspired by Michael Jackson, choreographed by Dirk De Lathauwer and Natascha Pire



Antwerp

CC Berchem

Driekoningenstraat 126; 03.286.88.20
www.ccberchem.be
MAY 2 17.00 Theater Asjemenu in 36, based on stories by French writer Georges Polti (in Dutch; free with reservation)

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.27.28
www.desingel.be
APR 29-30 20.00 Rote Fabrik in Platz Mangel, directed by Christoph Marhaler (in German with Dutch and French surtitles)

Fakkelteater

Hoogstraat 12; 03.232.14.69
www.fakkelteater.be
Until JUNE 6 15.00/20.30 Ann Van den Broeck in The Musical Songbook, directed by Stany Crets (music theatre, in Dutch)

Klokhuis Theatre

Parochiaanstraat 4; 0495.31.76.87
www.vlaamsfruit.be
APR 28-MAY 1 20.15 British American Theatrical Society in Don't Dress for Dinner by Marc Camoletti, directed by Liz van Dessel (in English)

Troubleyn Laboratorium

Pastorijstraat 23; 070.22.02.02
www.troubleyn.be
APR 28 & 30 20.00 Vlaamse Opera presents The Rage of Life, composed by Elena Kats-Chernin, written and staged by Igor Bauersima (music theatre)

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be
APR 28 & 29 20.30 Théâtre Brocoli in Missing, directed by Gennaro Pitisci and Medhi Beduin (in French with Dutch surtitles)
MAY 5 20.30 Union Suspecte in 25 Minutes To Go, directed by Ruud Gielens (without dialogue)

Brussels

Atelier 210

Sint-Pieterssteenweg 210; 02.732.25.98
www.atelier210.be
Until MAY 1 20.30 Living Theatre Europe in Green Terror, directed by Gary Brackett (in English)



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
Until SEP 19 Art Kept Me Out of Jail, performance installations by Jan Fabre

Extra City

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

DON'T MISS



Trouble #6

28 April – 2 May

Across Brussels

This annual performance festival offers so much, it is conceivable that it is worth giving up the sunshine for. Based at the Hallen van Schaarbeek, performances are curated for their amusing and/or quirky entertainment value as much as their artistic value: Singaporean Angie Seah shares the sounds of her heart, stomach and other organs, for instance, while Richard Spartos eats and drinks his way into your heart in *An Ode to Brussels from a Fucking American*. German artist Frank Bölter, meanwhile, illustrates the never-ending possibilities of one sheet of paper and a vivid imagination (*pictured*); that one's in Warandepark, so you don't even have to miss the sunshine.

www.halles.be

Fashion Museum (MoMu)

Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70
www.momu.be
Until AUG 8 BLACK: Masters of Black in Fashion & Costume

FotoMuseum

Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00,
www.fotomuseum.be
Until MAY 16 Congo (belge), photographs of contemporary Democratic Republic of Congo by Flemish photographer Carl De Keyzer
Until MAY 16 Congo belge en images, historical photographs of the Belgian Congo, curated by Magnum photographer Carl De Keyzer
Until MAY 16 Bamako Encounters 2009, works by young African photographers

Borgloon

Gasthuiskapel Borgloon

Graethempoort 3; 012.67.36.00
www.artborgloon.be
Until MAY 23 Natura/naturans, group show reflecting nature and renewed life, coupled with guided nature walks

Bruges

Hospitaalmuseum

Mariastraat 38; 050.44.87.11
www.museabrugge.be
Until NOV 7 Ivory in Bruges, rare pieces from museums, churches and monasteries

Brussels

Argos Centre for Art and Media

Werfstraat 13; 02.229.00.03
www.argosarts.org
Until JUNE 19 Andrea Geyer: Spiral Lands Chapter 1/Chapter 2/Chapter 3 with Simon J Ortiz, photographic project examining the history of North America and its people, with a study of the native American Indian Navajo Nation
Until JUNE 19 Angel Vergara: Monday: Fireworks; Tuesday: Illuminations; Wednesday: Revolution, the early days of the Belgian monarchy and its cultural and economic context in mixed



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media by the Brussels-based Spanish artist
Until JUNE 19 Alexander Kluge: Poetics in Between Media art)&(marges Hoogstraat 312-314; 02.511.34.20 www.arthis.org
Until JUNE 27 Musik Oblik, music and visual art project exploring sound and vision (in collaboration with Recyclart; includes concerts and documentaries)

Belgian Comic Strip Centre Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80 www.stripmuseum.be
Until AUG 29 Moomin: Tove Jansson's Dreamworld, comic-strip works by the Finnish illustrator and author

Bozar Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00 www.bozar.be
Until MAY 9 El Greco: Domenikos Theotokopoulos 1900, more than 40 paintings by El Greco
Until JUNE 20 Laurent Ney: Shaping Forces, first monographic exhibition by the Belgian architect-engineer
Until JUNE 20 Junctions: Arno Roncada, work by the Belgian artist paired with selections from Antwerp's FotoMuseum
APR 29-JUNE 20 El Ángel Exterminador, major group show of contemporary Spanish artists exploring the ambivalence between exterior and interior, on the occasion of the EU Spanish presidency (part of El Ángel Exterminador Festival)

De Elektriciteitscentrale (European Centre for Contemporary Art) Sint Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.45
Until MAY 16 Bamako Encounters 2009, photographs and videos on the theme of frontiers: geographical, political, social and religious

De Markten Oude Graanmarkt 5; 02.512.34.25 www.demarkten.be
Until MAY 25 For Your Eyes Only, group show of international women painters, including Antwerp-based Greman artist Katie Heck, New York-based German artist Pia Dehne and American artist Mary Heilmann

Design Flanders Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.227.60.60 www.designflanders.be
Until MAY 22 Ceramic Unica, ceramic art by The Fuping Eleven; photographs by Lydia De Bock

Jewish Museum of Belgium Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63 www.new.mjb-jmb.org
Until MAY 30 Charles Szymkiewicz: Schilder in het bloed (Painter in Blood), paintings by the contemporary Belgian artist

Royal Museums of Art and History Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11 , www.kmkg-mrah.be
Until AUG 29 Isabelle de Borchgrave's I Medici: a Renaissance in Paper, life-size paper replicas of historic garments

Until AUG 29 Intersection, 14 contemporary artists show their work among the museum's permanent collections

Royal Museums of Fine Arts Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11 www.fine-arts-museum.be
Until MAY 30 Marc Mendelson, paintings, drawings and other work by the multi-media British-Belgian artist
Until JUNE 27 Symbolism in Belgium, the evolution of Symbolism from its origins in the Romantic painting of the end of the 19th century, featuring Fernand Knopff, Félicien Rops and Jean Delville, among others

ULB - Building F1 Paul Hégerlaan 22-24 02.650.37.65 www.ulb.ac.be/culture
Until JUNE 30 Selbstdarstellung: Portraits de Grands Singes (Self: Portraits of Great Apes), photographs, paintings and sculpture by artist and scientist Chris Herzfeld exploring the relationships between humans and apes on the occasion of the 175th anniversary of the Free University of Brussels (ULB)

WIELS Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.340.00.50 www.wiels.org
Until MAY 2 Felix Gonzales-Torres: Specific Objects without Specific Form, retrospective of the late Cuban-born American artist

Deurle

Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23 www.museumdd.be
Until JUNE 20 Sophie von Hellermann and Josh Smith, paintings
Until JUNE 20 Emo Verkerk, paintings

Gaasbeek

Gaasbeek Castle Kasteelstraat 40; 02.531.01.30 www.kasteelvangaasbeek.be
Until JUNE 1 Studio Job presents Alter Ego, sculptures inspired by icons from Northern European (art) history

Ghent

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

Kunstplatform Zebrstraat Zebrstraat 32/001; www.zebrstraat.be
Until JUNE 20 Update 3/body sound, group show using sound, light and telecommunications

Museum Dr Guislain Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95 www.museumdrguislain.be
Until MAY 2 From Memory: About Knowing and Forgetting, multi-disciplinary exhibition on memory and dementia in science and art

Museum of Fine Arts Fernand Scribedreef 1 – Citadelpark; 09.240.07.00 www.mskgent.be
Until JUNE 27 Gustave Van de Woestyne, a retrospective of the Flemish painter
Until JUNE 27 Jean Delvin, paintings by the former director of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts

Museum of Modern Art (SMAK) Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03 www.smak.be
Until MAY 16 Loek Grootjans: Leaving Traces, installations by the Dutch artist
Until MAY 16 Koen van den Broek: Curbs & Cracks, paintings by the Flemish artist
Until MAY 16 Collection FAKE?, interpretations of reality
Until JUNE 16 Ed Templeton: the Cemetery of Reason, photographs, paintings and sculpture by the

American artist
Until JUNE 16 Electrified 02: Hacking Public Space, exhibition plus actions in public spaces across Ghent

Grimbergen

CC Strombeek Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43 www.ccstrombeek.be
Until MAY 10 Feel Home, art and design project curated by Design September director Marie Pok

Kortrijk

Museum Kortrijk 1302 Houtmarkt-Begijnpark; 056.27.78.50 www.kortrijk1302.be
Until MAY 16 Miniaturen: Gras dat verder groeit (Thumbnails: Grass That Continues to Grow), group show with works based on texts by Flemish writer Jozef Deleu

Leuven

Museum M Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28; 016.27.29.29 www.mleuven.be
Until MAY 2 Tina Gillen, paintings, mural and works on paper
Until MAY 9 Wellness for Art, insight into the decay, recovery and conservation of several artworks from the M collection

Machelen-Zulte

Het Roger Raveelmuseum Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00 www.rogerraveelmuseum.be
Until JUNE 20 Pictografie: Schilderijen zijn ook tekeningen en vice-versa (Paintings Are Also Drawings and Vice-Versa), paintings

Ostend

Kunstmuseum aan zee (Mu.zee) Romestraat 11; 059.50.81.18, www.pmmk.be
Until AUG 29 Bij Ensor op Bezoek (Visiting Ensor), the world of master Flemish painter James Ensor seen through the eyes of a variety of artists, writers and filmmakers who visited him in Ostend

Turnhout

TRAM 41 Grote Markt 1; 014.44.33.98 www.tram41.be
Until APR 30 China en het kaartspel (China and the Card Game), Chinese printing techniques and card games
Until MAY 2 De eerste onder zijn gelijken (The First Among Equals), printed items from mediaeval Latin schools in the Kempen region

Ypres

In Flanders Fields Museum Grote Markt 34; 057.239.220 www.inflandersfields.be
Until JUNE 6 Gas! Attack, Protection, Care, exhibition on the occasion of the 95th anniversary of the first chemical warfare in the world, during the First World War in West Flanders
Until AUG 15 Toiling for War, films, photos and objects tell the story of the presence of some 140,000 Chinese workers in the First World War



Littéraire Lente (Literary Spring): Festival of readings, lectures and interviews with authors in celebration of Dutch-language literature
Until APR 30 across Flanders www.boek.be

Metalopolis: Kinopolis and Studio Brussel present metal bands on the big screen, including Slipknot, Machine Head and Channel Zero
MAY 5 20.00 in Kinopolis cinemas across Belgium www.kinopolis.be

Week van de Amateur Kunsten (Amateur Art Week): Event for amateur artists and their admirers,

including exhibitions, talks and parties
Until MAY 2 across Flanders www.weekvandeamateurlunten.be

Brussels

Congo Festival: Kinshasa- and Brussels-based artists collaborate on dance, theatre, visual arts and concerts
Until JUNE 15 at KVS Bol, Lakensestraat 146, and KVS Box, Arduinkaai 9 www.kvs.be

El Ángel Exterminador: Festival celebrating the EU's Spanish presidency, with exhibitions, performances, cinema, dance and architecture
APR 29-JUNE 20 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23 www.bozar.be

Royal Greenhouses of Laeken: Annual spring opening to the public of the world-class collection of plants, flowers and tropical trees in the linked glass-and-steel greenhouses
Until MAY 9 at Koninklijke Parklaan 02.551.34.01, www.monarchie.be

Sherko Fatah: The German-born Kurdish writer Sherko Fatah talks about novel We gaan als het donker wordt (We'll Go When it Gets Dark), based on his escape from a Jihad training camp in Iraq (in English)
APR 29 20.00 at Passa Porta, A Dansaertstraat 02.226.04.54, www.passaporta.be

Trouble #6: Annual European performance festival
APR 28-MAY 2 at Hallen van Schaarbeek and other venues across Brussels 02.218.21.07, www.halles.be

Ghent

8 Years Culture Club: Anniversary party featuring Armand Van Helden, Etienne de Crecy, Dada Life, Cash Money, more
APR 30 21.00 at ICC, Citadelpark 0900.00.600, www.cultureclub.be

Groot-Bijgaarden

Floralia 2010: Annual floral exhibition in the castle's 14 hectare-park, featuring more than 500 types of flowers, a 1000 square-metre greenhouse and a flower labyrinth
Until MAY 6 at the Castle of Groot-Bijgaarden, Is Van Beverenstraat 5 0494.47.72.56, www.kasteelgrootbijgaarden.be

Hasselt

Japanese Gardens Koinobori: Japanese festival for children
MAY 2 at Japanese Garden, Gouverneur Verwilghensingel 011.23.52.00, www.hasselt.be

Knokke

International Photography Festival: Professional and amateur photographers come together at this annual festival; the theme this year is "Stars and Models" and features the work of British photographers Tim Walker and Cecil Beaton
Until JUNE 13 across Knokke-Heist www.knokke-heist.info

Mechelen

Radio Modern: Retro dance party, featuring lesson and live music by Apollo Swing and the Mighty Quiffs, plus a beauty boudoir by De Modernettes to get yourself styling
APR 30 from 20.15 at Oude Stadsfeestzaal, Fr De Merodestraat 28 015.294.000 www.ccmechelen.be

Tervuren

100 Years Africa Museum: Celebrations for the 100th anniversary of the Royal Museum for Central Africa, including outdoor market, concerts, kids' entertainment, fireworks and more. Free entrance to the museum on 2 May
APR 30 18.00 at the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Leuvensesteenweg 13 02.769.52.11, www.africamuseum.be



COURTNEY DAVIS

Sirena

Walpoortstraat 1
Ghent

You have only four weeks left to discover Ghent's first pop-up bar. Formerly an overly bright restaurant frequented by retirees, Sirena: Contemporary Pop has been transformed into a creative hotbed with an expiry date of 30 May. Open for only six weeks, this café and bar had its grand opening 15 April and has been attracting artists and designers in hoards ever since.

The corner café is more tall than long with two airy stories of furniture and deco that all scream designer. Hard angles and linear art balance the smooth, space age furniture, all of which was lent for the duration by various sponsors. It is the kind of décor you look at, lust after but can never figure out how to have in your own home.

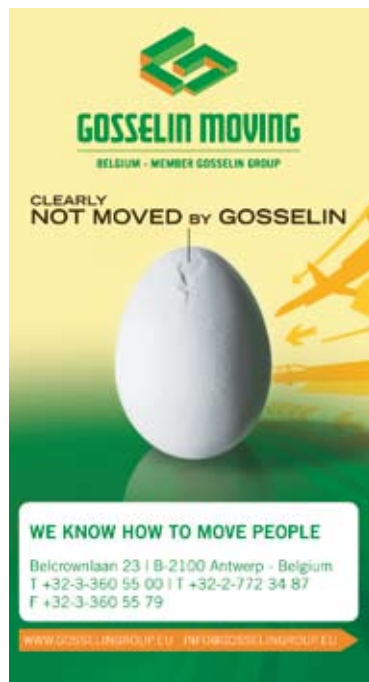
Perhaps it provides the incentive to try – you'll certainly be surrounded by the type to offer ideas. Already, this newly opened café is host to a meeting of the quasi-underground Young Scum, an anti-networking association for creatives under 30.

Sirena's tagline is "once you pop, you can't stop" and as soon as you visit the website, it is easy to get addicted to their in-your-face style that is both visually intriguing yet straightforward. Strong fonts and fun text quickly reveals that the brains behind this newest watering also produce ads and promotions all worthy of being framed.

Outdoor seating makes beer drinking and people watching a breeze, but when darkness falls, come inside for cocktail-laden, smoking-hot good times. With no food on the premises, this hazy bar is making sure every day counts. From hosting weekly radio shows to launching magazines, there is always something going on. DJs, parties, even fashion sales are finding a brief home in the downtown pop up.

But no matter how much you crave this hideout for local talent, be it DJ, designer or drinker, you will have to find an alternative come June when Sirena's call will be heard no more.

→ www.contemporarypop.be



SHARON LIGHT

bite

Up North

Scandinavia in the heart of Brussels

After completing his culinary studies, Norwegian chef Egil Haaseth liked the idea of getting back to his roots but thought that a Norwegian restaurant narrowed his market a bit too much. Up North is therefore a "Scandinavian" restaurant but, as Haaseth explained to me, there is not much variation between Danish, Norwegian and Swedish cuisine.

Going by stereotypes, you might picture a Scandinavian meal as fish, boiled vegetables and fish.

While it is true that this is a cuisine traditionally short on fresh vegetables, chefs are doing a whole lot more with fish and boiled vegetables these days than you might think.

For starters, my friend tried the creamy game soup with reindeer. It was rich and a bit sweet, and, 24 hours later, my friend confessed she had been talking it up to colleagues all day long.

On a whim, I sprung for the trio of herrings. I'm not a big fan of herring, but once had a lovely assortment at a Danish restaurant in London that even I enjoyed. I figured that made it the test of a good Scandinavian restaurant.

Herring #1 was prepared in a cream sauce with onions; herring #2 was described as "traditional" in a sweet, vinegary preparation; herring #3 was in curry sauce, which I thought was a Belgian twist, but it turns out it is actually quite common. On the side was a dark, dense rye bread. If that was the test, Up North passed.

We also tried two of the restaurant's three aquavits – a flavoured Scandinavian spirit: the clear Danish aquavit was dry, the golden Norwegian one more herbaceous. Both were a nice compliment to the strong flavours on our plates.

For mains, we each had (you guessed it) fish and boiled vegetables – but that description belies the elegance of the presentation and the pleasant combinations.

A fennel puree accompanied monkfish along with sweet bites of beets and apples and a langoustine sauce so tasty that my friend was seriously considering licking her plate.

I ordered what the menu called "trout in sour cream", but there was no cream to be seen. The trout was served with potatoes, cauliflower and

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marinated cabbage, a hearty preparation I enjoyed, if not exactly what I was expecting.

For dessert we shared a blueberry jelly roll: spongy white cake with blueberry jelly filling, topped with buttery frosting and featuring tiny cooked blueberries on the side. Light and not too sweet, we gobbled it up.

Up North stays true to Scandinavian style in its décor, with a simple, stylish interior and modern tableware. Although the dining area only seats 24, in the coming warmer months – the first full summer since their August 2009 opening – the restaurant will spill out onto the sidewalk, with the front doors wide open to bring that nice weather to indoor diners, too.

→ www.upnorth.be

- 📍 Hoedenmakerstraat 36, Brussels
- 🕒 Tues to Sat 12.00-14.30 & 19.00-22.30
- ★ A place that gets beyond the stereotypes of fish heads and boiled vegetables, with an intimate, hardwood design in a great location

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



wolk →

Necessity is the mother of invention, and these are interesting times we are going through at the moment. Headlines such as *Aswolk legt half Europa lam* – Ash cloud brings half of Europe to a standstill, and *Europa vleugellam* – Europe paralysed ("wing-lame") tell the tale.

Being left to their own resources has sparked ingenuity in those stranded far from home. Stories abound of how people have managed to make their way home. Take the Stevens family, on holiday in Spain. *De held van de dag* – The hero of the day was brother Pol who *huurde een busje in Gent* – hired a small bus in Ghent and drove 15 hours to pick up the family in Barcelona. I hope they shared the driving on the way back.

Another tale of endurance is told by businessman Philippe, who found himself grounded in Armenia. He managed to get to Moscow, from where he caught a train to Budapest, where his car is! *"Veertien uur later hoop ik veilig en wel in België te arriveren"* – Fourteen hours later, I hope to arrive safe and sound in Belgium.

Outsiders who predict the demise of this small country should heed how a cross-party delegation of nine *kamerleden* – MPs dealt with being stranded in Singapore. Five seats were found on a flight to Athens. So how did they decide who should fly? *Door*

loting – By drawing lots? No, in fact, they applied Belgium's gift to democracy, the D'Hondt system of proportional representation: those *kamerleden* with the most votes got on the plane.

Of course not everyone is *in de wolken* – overjoyed ("in the clouds") at the turn of events. The most unexpectedly unhappy person was the fellow interviewed pottering in his garden in Steenokkerzeel under the empty flight path, complaining that it was unnaturally quiet: *"Ik ben dit niet gewoon"* – I'm not used to this". His neighbours may have had other thoughts: *zij hebben wellicht genoten van de rustige nachten* – they have probably been enjoying the quiet nights.

The source of all the commotion is *as* – ash, which, as any gardener knows, enriches the soil: *in de as zitten veel mineralen en spoorelementen* – in the ash there are many minerals and trace elements, including *koper* – copper and *ijzer* – iron.

All this could not have happened at a better time for *trekvoegels* – migratory birds, which at this time of year are leaving their wintering sites in the south and heading for their *broedgebieden* – breeding grounds in the north of Europe. Instead of running the usual risk of being sucked into jet engines, *hebben zij het luchtruim voor zich alleen* – they have the air space all to themselves. So, dare I say, *de trekvoegels zijn in de wolken*.

→ www.vogelbescherming.be

MEET THE READER

I recently took part in your online survey and thought you might like to hear that *Flanders Today* is also eagerly looked forward to in a far-flung corner of the EU.

Since first visiting Bruges in 2008, I have been very interested in the heritage and other aspects of life in Flanders. We have since returned to Flanders several times on holidays, sometimes staying in Bruges and sometimes in Ostend. I started to learn Dutch to get beyond the tourist clichés (such as how many steps it is to the top of Bruges' Belfry).

The first book I bought in Dutch was an architectural guide to Bruges – not the way most people start to learn, but the relentless tedium of the "Teach Yourself Dutch" genre can be off-putting on its own. I progressed much faster when I was reading about subjects that interested me. It isn't easy to find reading material in Dutch in the UK, as you might expect; I have occasionally struck lucky in obscure corners of charity shops.

The news content of *Flanders Today* is very helpful when reading *De Standaard* or *Het Nieuwsblad* online, as it explains a lot of the background detail, about which we Brits tend to be woefully ignorant.

Obviously I don't get many opportunities to speak Dutch, but I listen to Radio Vlaanderen online. I am also watching the first series of *FC De Kampioenen* on DVD. There are no subtitles, which makes me listen to the dialogue really carefully.

Linden Milner
is a volunteer at an animal shelter in Manchester



THE LAST WORD...

WHAT THE FLEMISH ARE SAYING ABOUT THE BHV CRISIS

The wrong man?

"Didier Reynders as negotiator? You might as well ask for advice on good morals from Marc Dutroux."

Bart De Wever, chairman of the Flemish nationalist party N-VA

Lost for words

"I'm ashamed. I was at a media conference in the Netherlands, and everyone was asking me what this is all about. I didn't know how to explain."

Media personality Goedeke Liekens

Joining Greece

"I share the concern of Mark Eyskens, who fears we may become an unstable country like Greece. Before you know it, you're in a doomsday scenario that ends up with our banks collapsing."

Regi Penxten of electro music group Milk Inc

Flemish asylum seeker

"I'm ashamed, and I'm going to apply for political asylum in Brussels."

Rock star Arno