

## Pay up for pensions ..... 7

The Belgian government loses €20 billion a year to tax evasion – twice the amount needed to raise pensions by 25%, according to a proposal introduced by socialist trade union ABW



## Mooooove over Hollywood ..... 8

Ever wanted to visit the set of a movie? All champagne and glamour, right? We head to a cattle farm in southern Limburg to see the stars at work in the Flemish film *Rundskop*



## Time travelling ..... 10

Our recreation park series takes us to quite possibly Flanders' finest family location: Bokrijk in Limburg, an open-air museum where you and your kids mingle with the Flemings of 100 years ago



# The little pill that could

Although America lays claim to the world's first oral contraceptive, a Flemish doctor made a better one

SABINE CLAPPAERT

You've probably never heard of Ferdinand "Nand" Peeters. But the unassuming Flemish gynaecologist (pictured) was behind one of the world's most ground-breaking medical developments, the birth-control pill. Peeters' own children only learned in 1995 – 35 years after the fact – about their father's role in developing what is now the most widely-used contraceptive in the world. While the US medical community and media was already heralding "the pill" – which would empower millions of American women and usher in an entire sexual revolution – Dr Peeters was developing a much better version, specifically – unlike the American version – to prevent pregnancy. In recent press stories celebrating the 50th anniversary of the birth-control pill, though, you didn't see mention of him. Apart from the contraceptives section of Dresden's Hygiene Museum – where his children learned about his work – Peeters' contribution to one of the century's most influential inventions is largely forgotten. "My father spent many weekends behind his desk writing dissertations, so of course we knew

that he was involved in various research projects. But that he contributed to the development of the contraceptive pill – that came as a complete surprise to us," says Marc Peeters, the eldest of Ferdinand's six children. As is the case with so many inventions, more than one person would claim to be the father of this brainchild, but it would be least of all Peeters. During the 1950s, numerous scientists developed synthetic female hormones that could be administered orally. In 1957, the American physiologist Gregory Pincus launched Enovid, approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) only as a cure for menstrual disorders. Ignoring the mounting criticism after its initial introduction – some from within his own ranks – that the hormone levels contained in Enovid were too high, causing significant side effects, including nausea, headaches and dizziness, Pincus officially launched Enovid as an oral contraceptive on 23 June, 1960, backed by the full approval of the FDA.

→ continued on page 5



## Full house for new gambling trend

Police and gambling experts have expressed concern over what appears to be a new phenomenon in Flanders: the hire of houses and apartments purely for the hosting of illegal poker tournaments. Last week, police in Zellik, near Asse in Flemish Brabant, raided an illegal game and detained nine men. They also found a pot of nearly €15,000. Some of the men were self-declared problem gamblers who had voluntarily put their names on a register to prevent them from entering the country's casinos and gaming halls. That register, known as the Excluded Persons Information System (EPIS), is kept by the official Gaming Commission, whose spokesman pointed out that "live" poker is only allowed in casinos, although poker machines are available in gaming halls, and poker can also be played online. Players who prefer to avoid the casino can visit

the rented locations, which are used only to organise illegal games. The apartment raided last week contained only a poker table and some chairs. Organisers are thought to make about €500 in one night, although they are risking a jail sentence of up to five years and a fine of €100,000. Some 10,000 people in Belgium have signed up for EPIS, although experts reckon there are about 135,000 people with a gambling addiction. The problem cuts across age and class boundaries. Those considered addicts are those who gamble away at least one-quarter of their monthly income. The players in last week's game were interviewed by police and released. Playing poker in itself is not a crime, but the two organisers will be charged, and the money could be confiscated. ♦

## Belgians eating better, but putting on weight Lack of exercise highlighted by health survey

ALAN HOPE

Belgians are eating more fruit and vegetables, but they're still not getting enough exercise. And they keep on putting on weight. Those are the main conclusions of the latest Health Survey from the Scientific Institute for Public Health (WIV), issued last week and covering the period up to 2008. Two-thirds of the population in Flanders eats fruit every day (compared to 60% in Wallonia and 64% in Brussels). However, only 39% eat two or more portions a day. Women are more conscientious than men, but 15 to 24-year-olds are the worst performers: fewer than half eat fruit (not counting fruit juice) daily. In the age group 55 to 64, the reverse is true: 50% eat at least two portions a day. The Flemish also eat the most vegetables, with 87% consuming fresh vegetables daily,

compared to 83% in Wallonia and 75% in Brussels. Two-thirds of Flemings eat more than 200g a day. Women, again, do slightly better than men (88:86). The average Body Mass Index (BMI) is 25.3, which means that Belgium is too fat. One in three people is overweight, and a further 14% are considered obese. Men (54%) have more of a problem than women (40%), although the two sexes are alike when it comes to obesity. Nearly one in five of young people under the age of 17 is overweight, and 5% are obese. The worst-affected group (22%) is children aged five to nine. In Brussels region, however, the figure is over 25%.

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## OFFSIDE

ALAN HOPE

### Something's up in the sky



Something very odd is going on in Belgian airspace. Two weekends ago, hundreds of prize Dutch racing pigeons were released from a number of sites in Belgium, as one report put it "from Menen to Schaarbeek". In the normal course of events, the birds ought to have reached their homes in the usual time. Instead, many went missing. Some, like a flock of birds from Surhuizum in Friesland, inexplicably turned up hours late. Others are still out there, somewhere.

The ash-cloud from Eyjafjallajökull was blamed by some, as Alistair MacLean reports in this week's "Talking Dutch" (p 16). Others blamed more sinister forces, like organised crime.

The answer may be more mundane. Quite simply, Belgium has little love in its heart for pigeons, even if they are top-class racing specimens worth thousands of euros apiece. Earlier this spring, Diksmuide started an action to rid itself of the birds because their poo was spoiling the city's gables. Brussels has installed three baby peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) chicks in Sint-Jans-Molenbeek whose job it will be to eat the surplus pigeon population. Another peregrine is nesting in Brussels cathedral.

In Mechelen, meanwhile, the problem is fat pigeons. Apparently the people enjoying the terraces of the city's cafes like to feed the pigeons, with the result that the birds have become a nuisance that won't go away. Marina De Bie, the city's Groen! alderwoman for environmental affairs, stressed that feeding the pigeons is against the law and carries a fine of €50 to €250. Fat pigeons get sick more easily and are more likely to make nests in the city.

Moreover, she said, terrace-fed pigeons have a one-sided diet, presumably living on the things café patrons throw down for them, like cookies, chips, peanuts, etc. It doesn't sound like a healthy diet, but, according to Alex Eekelaers, head of the city's environment and agriculture service: "We've noticed in the last few years that the population has grown substantially."

If Dutch pigeon racers are wondering where their expensive birds have gone, the terraces of Mechelen might be the first place to look.

## News in brief

A man caught by police with **nine illegal firearms** in his car has been released from custody by magistrates. The man was accused by his ex-partner of stalking but fled when police came to his home in Melle. After a car chase, he was stopped and the police found the weapons – two machine-guns, a revolver and six pistols. He was detained, but later released by the prosecutor's office "on strict conditions".

The League for Human Rights has nominated nine institutions for its **Big Brother award** – which highlights breaches of privacy. The list includes security cameras in Knokke, the law on retaining communications information, the Passenger Name Records kept by airlines, the Brussels public transport Mobib season ticket, the Antwerp city marriage of convenience investigation squad, credit records maintained by financial institutions and the General Owners and Co-Owners' Syndicate of property owners. A campaign to raise privacy awareness was launched last week in Ghent. The award will be announced in November.

**Belgium has dropped** from 22nd to 25th place in competitiveness, according to the World

Competitiveness Yearbook, issued by the Swiss management institute IMD. The annual survey looks at 327 criteria regarding economic performance, government efficiency, business efficiency and infrastructure.

Brussels city mayor Freddy Thielemans has made it clear there will be **no mustard plants** planted in a field in Neder-Over-Heembeek used by travellers to park their caravans in the summer. The plan, proposed by a Brussels alderman, involved using the plants – which can grow to 1.5m in height – to deter caravan dwellers. But protests came from integration groups and scout troupes, who use the field for recreation. Last week Thielemans told a city council meeting there would be no plantation, but protestors pointed out that the field has already been ploughed, making it impossible for either travellers or scouts to use it this year.

Nine Flemish municipalities will begin a pilot project on 1 July to test a new **"smart" driving licence** to be issued to all new drivers. The new licence, which is similar to the ID card and is fitted with a chip, is intended to make police controls easier. The

project will begin in Liedekerke, Kortrijk, Zottegem, Genk, Denderleeuw, Puurs, Ypres, Beringen and Aarschot, and will be extended in 2011 to finally cover the whole country in 2012. The new licence costs €20.

Children in Flemish schools are more **likely to make fun of each other** over physical appearance than for any other reason, according to research carried out by the British Council. Physical differences were rated the main reason by 49% of pupils, compared to 51% in Italy and higher than every other European country surveyed. Wearing the wrong clothes was highest for 47% in Flanders, but only 8% of pupils considered bullying a problem at school, the lowest national rate and well below the European average of 20%.

→ [www.britishcouncil.org/indie](http://www.britishcouncil.org/indie)

Expats living in Brussels are invited to take part in a confidential survey for the Brussels Information, Documentation and Research centre (Brio) of the Free University of Brussels (VUB), to help determine views on daily life, language practice, leisure activities and contact with neighbours in the capital.

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

## FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE

### Kwinten Castele

Men lie 1,092 times a year (or about three times a day) compared to women's 728 times. The sin of Kwinten Castele, however, was far greater: he'd cheated on his girlfriend, Fanja, he'd been caught out, and he wanted to say that he was sorry.

Kwinten, 27, from Waregem in West Flanders, delivered his message in the modern way: via multimedia. He sent Fanja 50 SMSes a day; he contacted radio stations to announce his regret; he hung a banner across the E17 motorway reading: "Fanja I'm sorry"; and he made the pages of *Het Nieuwsblad* and *De Standaard* with a desperate appeal for forgiveness.

There's a lot to forgive. "I don't think this is going to get sorted out," Fanja told *Het Nieuwsblad*. "This is the third time he's cheated on me. We had something wonderful together, but now Kwinten has broken it."

And how: Fanja went out to dinner with friends, came back to their regular café and found Kwinten upstairs, on a bed, with a Dutch woman he met last year at the Dranouter festival. Neither of them was clothed.

Nothing left at that point, traditionalists will know, than to send a bunch of flowers. And sure enough, that is what set in motion the melting of the maiden's heart. "We had a long talk. We've made up to some extent, but Kwinten still has a long way to go," Fanja told *Het Nieuwsblad*.

And in between revealing Kwinten's weaknesses to the entire world, she expressed some sympathy. "Every time I hear him come on



the radio, and I think of the whole of Flanders laughing at him, I shed tears," she admitted. "It's all so sweet. He's really doing his best." But for now, Fanja is staying with a friend. "It'll be another couple of months," she says, "before all wounds are healed."

## FLANDERS TODAY

Flanders Today, a free weekly English-language newspaper, is an initiative of the Flemish Region and is financially supported by the Flemish authorities.

The logo and the name Flanders Today belong to the Flemish Region (Benelux Beeldmerk nr 815.088). The editorial team of Flanders Today has full editorial autonomy regarding the content of the newspaper and is responsible for all content, as stipulated in the agreement between Corelio Publishing and the Flemish authorities.



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## Health Survey pinpoints eating, drinking, smoking in Belgium

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Brussels scores better, however, when it comes to adults, with only 40% overweight, compared to 47% in Flanders and 49% in Wallonia.

Some other results from the survey:

- Two-thirds in Flanders (66%) eat brown bread daily, women more than men. Children and young people eat the least
- 55% of those under 34 eat fish weekly; the percentage goes up to 67% in those aged 35-44, and 77% in those older
- Men (33%) drink more sugary drinks than women (22%); young people aged 15 to 24 drink even more (46%). 28% of Belgians drink at least one sugary drink a day
- 25% of people smoke, 21% of them every day, an average of 16 cigarettes. About the same percentage have stopped smoking, while half of all people have never smoked. Men (28%) are more likely to smoke than women (21%). Young people show the same feature: 29% of boys and 21% of girls
- One in five people (19%) had not touched a drop of alcohol in the last 12 months. The Flemish (83%) are slightly more likely to drink than

people in Brussels and Wallonia

- 38% of people exercise for at least 30 minutes a day; 16% do more than four hours of sport a week; 26% never take any exercise
  - The Flemish are the most active, with 48% taking half an hour of exercise daily, compared to 29% in Wallonia and only 25% in Brussels
  - Meanwhile, researchers at the Catholic University of Leuven have discovered that a layer of fat is no bad thing if ever you should be sick enough to land in intensive care. At periods of severe illness, changes take place in the structure of body fat making it more effective at absorbing and storing dangerous substances like sugars and fatty acids.
- Overweight brings its own health problems, including an increased susceptibility to diabetes and heart disease. But in the specific case of intensive care during critical illnesses, the team under Dr Lies Langouche and Professor Greet Van den Berghe found a strong link between overweight and better chances of survival. The research appears in the latest issue of *The American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*. ♦



Children and young people still need to be convinced to eat vegetables

→ <http://iph.fgov.be/EPIDEMIO/epinl/index4.htm>

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES



**€12,558**

claimed by the city of Antwerp's social aid department from Fedasil, the federal agency in charge of asylum. The city is requesting repayment of the cost of keeping asylum-seekers in hotels in 2008

**14,000**

cases of hit-and-run in Belgium in 2009, 22% more than the previous year. In 5,500 cases only material damage was involved, with drivers claiming they thought they had 24 hours to report the accident – which is not the case

**€2,750,000**

raised by the sale of cartoon stickers by Red Cross Flanders in its annual sale. The proceeds go to the purchase of materials and equipment for 254 local Red Cross branches

**1,500**

schoolchildren in Brussels' Dutch-speaking schools have not been given places at any of the schools they applied to. Parents had the opportunity to list up to five preferred schools

**85%**

of the population of Brussels in 2020 will have foreign roots, according to research from the Catholic University of Leuven. The number of people of foreign origin, going back three generations, now stands at 68%. In the commune of Sint-Joost, the figure is 91%



The Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels' Jubelpark have put 84 of their treasures online, with photos and information for viewers. Photos can be zoomed and downloaded, and, in some cases, such as the wall tapestries depicting the life of Job, the whole series can be viewed. The range of artworks featured covers prehistory, antiquity, non-European civilisations, the decorative arts and musical instruments. The picture shown here depicts a skull dating from between 2300 and 1600 BC, wearing a silver diadem and found in the El Argar site in south-eastern Spain. Agrarian culture was among the first to adopt individual rather than collective burial. → [www.kmkg.be](http://www.kmkg.be)

## Mega cocktail parties come to Flanders

City authorities in Flanders are concerned at the possibility of mass gatherings of young people to take part in giant street drinking parties. The new trend, inspired by the French *apéritifs géants*, is being fed by Facebook, where groups have sprung up in support of similar events in Brussels, Ghent and Antwerp.

Brussels mayor Freddy Thielemans was last week reported to have decided not to allow a gathering in the centre of the city, close to the Beurs. Meanwhile, in Antwerp, mayor Patrick Janssens, said: "If these young people are planning to drink themselves into a stupor in public, that's something for which we can't possibly give permission."

The gatherings started as congenial affairs, but have taken a more worrying turn lately. Two weeks ago in Nantes, a man died after taking part in an outdoor event. He fell from a bridge, but his death is being blamed on binge drinking, with police reporting that he had consumed "10 to 15 glasses of alcohol". Ghent has already met the phenomenon. Last year the Sint-Pietersplein in the city was the scene of the first Flemish *bolletón* – an open-air drinking party named after the Spanish word for "large bottle". At first, the city authorities considered banning the event, but they let it go ahead. There were no arrests, nobody was picked up for drunkenness and nobody drank themselves into a coma. ♦

## FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

### Any other party

Over the past two decades, the international media has been obsessed with just one party in Flanders: the Vlaams Belang (previously Vlaams Blok) and its mixture of separatism and xenophobia, leading to conclusions about this region being narrow minded and racist. The reports have often missed the point that, even at its peak – with 24% of the votes – most people in Flanders actively detest the Vlaams Belang. This is not a party like any other, was the phrase often used. Because of its anti-immigrant viewpoints, often bordering on the racist, all other Flemish parties created a *cordon sanitaire* around the Vlaams Belang, refusing to enter any government with them. For a long time, this made for even more anti-establishment votes, but it has stood in the way of the party gaining real power. For Vlaams Belang, the days of unlimited growth are over. The campaign in the run-up to the federal elections of 13 June is dominated by another party: N-VA. This column has often described this party as "the small nationalist N-VA", but the upcoming result may make this description unfit. Some polls predict a result of up to 20% and more, making it the largest Flemish party. That is quite spectacular for a party that in 2003 struggled to reach the electoral threshold of 5% and only gained one elected representative. A party that doubted its own chances of survival so much that it teamed up with the Christian Democrats for the 2007 elections. N-VA attracts votes from all traditional parties, as well as from Vlaams Belang, with whom it shares its separatism – but without the xenophobia. The reasons why voters opt for N-VA are various. The most obvious is that they are disgruntled with the attitude of the French speakers in the never-ending talks about BHV and state reform. N-VA also stands for clean politics, with little in the way of compromise. (Although, over the past couple of weeks, it had its share of twists and turns as well, such as suddenly preferring confederalism over separatism, so as not to scare away voters. Or Geert Bourgeois standing for a seat in the House of Representatives, which he will not occupy, as he will remain in the Flemish government.) First and foremost is its leader, Bart De Wever, who has the gift of the gab and has gained a large degree of credibility, comparable to that of CD&V's Yves Leterme in 2007. All of this makes N-VA a party, just like any other. Will the international media pick up on this as well?



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# The little pill that could

## Ferdinand Peeters' social conscience clashed with his religion

→ continued from page 1

While countless women across America eagerly adopted the new contraceptive, Peeters was quietly and diligently working on a study commissioned by German pharmaceutical giant Schering into a similar hormone preparation. Schering, unwilling to openly conduct research into an oral contraception due to Germany's Nazi past, sidestepped the complex situation by commissioning Peeters in neighbouring Flanders to do the research.

In the winter of 1959, Peeters, who was head of gynaecology at the Sint-Elisabeth Hospital in Turnhout, conducted a small-scale study in the rural Kempen areas of Antwerp and Limburg provinces. It would last little more than five months and involve only a handful of participants, yet it would lead to the development of Anovlar – a contraceptive pill that contained much lower hormone levels yet the same effectiveness as Enovid, with far fewer side effects.

Anovlar was introduced in Europe in June of 1961, almost exactly one year after Enovid.

*"I am proud to have been a guinea pig for the birth control pill"*  
Margriet Lievens, 79

### "We'd suffered enough"

That Peeters was the driving force behind the crucial 1959 study that would optimise the hormone levels in the pill was known only to a select medical in-crowd – until *Knack* magazine published a story on him last month.

Peeters was a modest (you can hardly find a photograph of him) and religious man who lived a simple life in Turnhout, where he often saw patients die due to complications of childbirth. His ambitions and work ethic, including his role in the development of the pill, were largely

driven by a social conscience: he strongly believed in a woman's right to control her own fertility in order to protect and preserve her own life.

Margriet Lievens, now 79, was one of the women who took part in Peeters' groundbreaking study. "My husband and I wanted four children so, after we married, we started straight away," she told *Het Nieuwsblad* in a recent interview. "Soon our daughter Ann was born. Almost immediately, I was pregnant again, but this time things went wrong. Our daughter Annemie died shortly after birth. I became pregnant four more times, but things kept going wrong: one baby was still-born, two more died shortly after birth. Finally, our son Joris made it through.

We had already lost four children, and the doctor thought that we'd suffered enough. After the birth of Joris, Dr Peeters made a proposal: he was testing a new medicine that prevents pregnancy. Would I like to try it? I agreed to the proposal because my husband and I didn't want go through the pain of losing yet another baby. I am proud to have been a guinea pig for the birth control pill."

Fifty years later, it is estimated that more than 100 million women worldwide use the pill. In Belgium, more than 60% of women have a prescription. And, while Gregory Pincus is now world-famous, almost nobody has heard of Ferdinand Peeters. Why did Peeters keep quiet about his contribution to such a significant development, even to his own children?

The reason for his decades-long silence can most likely be found in the 1968 "Humanae Vitae" decree by Pope Paul VI, which prohibits all forms of artificial contraceptive. Peeters was a humanist, but he was also a Catholic. In 1964, he presented a lecture at the congress of the Catholic Daughters in Malta on the usefulness of the pill. Its regulation of the menstrual cycle, he argued, enabled couples to more freely use "the rhythm method" – abstinence from sex on certain days (the only family planning method tolerated by the Vatican).



One of the first Anovlar packages produced in West Germany

### Damned if you do

Four years later, Peeters must have struggled with the church's final "Humanae Vitae" ruling on contraception – it classified his invention as immoral. But he didn't fight the church.

"My father led the gynaecology department of a major Catholic hospital. In these situations, it is not always wise to look up controversy by engaging in public battles," explains Marc Peeters. "It's interesting though... years later we found stacks of correspondence that my mother had kept: piles of letters by Catholic clergy attacking my father's views and actions, but also others, from clergy within the church, that were full of praise and support for my father's work."

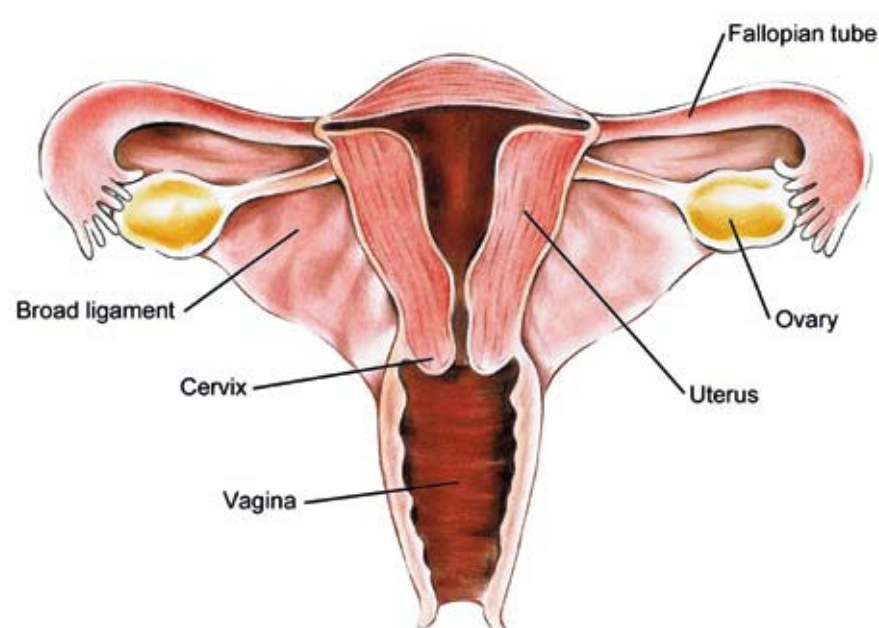
While Peeters' contribution to the development of the pill may today be the one that puts him in the spotlight, his commitment to his profession and to protecting the lives of women didn't stop there. Even less well-known is the fact that he contributed to the development of Rhogam, an injectable blood product used to protect a mother and foetus with incompatible blood types. (Rhogam protects an Rh-positive foetus from

antibodies produced by its Rh-negative mother.)

"Our father was always very enterprising, also as gynaecologist," says Marc Peeters. "He was always using the problems he encountered in his consultancy to record important results: from Rhesus factor incompatibility, painless childbirth or pre- and post natal exercises, to incontinence or the protective properties of hormone treatments after menopause."

Ferdinand Peeters died in 1998 at the age of 80. "When we finally found out that my father had been instrumental in the development of the contraceptive pill, it was unfortunately too late to ask him about it. By then he had suffered a massive stroke that sadly saw him spend the last 10 years of his life unable to walk or talk... we're not even sure he recognised us anymore."

Although Peeters' development of the contraceptive pill – an invention that has irrevocably changed the demographic fibre of western society – has remained a low-key story remembered and told by few, the local press has finally cottoned on to the story. And in 2012, Turnhout is organising a special exhibition in honour of "the stepfather of the pill". ♦



In ovulation, a mature egg is released from the ovary and pushed down the fallopian tube, where it can be fertilised. The birth control pill works with a double whammy: the combination of estrogen and progesterone hormones not only prevents ovulation, it thickens the mucus around the cervix, which makes it difficult for the sperm to enter the uterus

## In search of Flanders' pill-popping pioneers

In 2012, Turnhout will be Flanders' second-ever City of Culture (following Ostend this year). Organisers of the year-long events calendar want to hear from women who took part in Ferdinand Peeters' study in 1959-1960 for inclusion in a special exhibition dedicated to the doctor's instrumental role in developing the first contraceptive dedicated to the prevention of pregnancy.

"They must be between 70 and 90 years old by now," says Karl van den Broeck, editor-in-chief of *Knack* magazine, who is assisting with the exhibition. "There is therefore still a chance that we can find these first 'modern' women of Europe. They deserve a prominent place in the exhibition." Interested parties can contact van den Broeck at [karl.van.den.broeck@knack.be](mailto:karl.van.den.broeck@knack.be) or through the *Knack* office at 02.702.46.51.



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## 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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# Tax evasion costs €20 billion a year

Calculations by the ABVV union based on average family tax returns

ALAN HOPE

Tax fraud is costing the Belgian treasury €20 billion a year, or the equivalent of €800 a month for every pensioner, according to the socialist trade union ABVV. The union was presenting its proposal to raise pensions by one-quarter, which would be possible, chairman Rudy De Leeuw said, if only half of the money lost to tax evasion was collected.

The ABVV estimates are based on research by the Free University of Brussels (VUB), which used two methods of calculating the losses. First, the real incomes of families were compared with the incomes declared on tax returns. For the year 2006, that brought a discrepancy of €20 billion.

The second method compared the theoretical income from VAT (based on goods sold and business done) with the actual receipts, to give a figure of €24 billion.

Fraud, the union said, is costing every man, woman and child in the country €150 a month – ignoring for a second that tax evasion is a widespread problem by no means confined only to the rich and powerful.

According to the union, the problem of tax fraud should be tackled as a priority and as an alternative to cuts in services. Last week a survey carried out by online research bureau iVox for *De Standaard* newspaper revealed that one in five people were prepared to commit tax evasion to increase their income. Men were more ready than women to commit fraud: 25% said they had no objection. About the same number of respondents over 50 was prepared to evade taxes, compared to only 18% in the younger age group.

The *Standaard* survey also revealed:

- 60% of Belgians don't consider themselves rich
- 75% thought financial wealth contributed to happiness
- Half of all Belgians would change jobs to be better off, but only one in four would be prepared to leave the country to work
- Only 30% would be prepared to work more to make more. 65% would choose more free time in preference to more money

Four respondents in 10 refused to divulge how much they make, and those who did were mainly earning €1,200 to €1,800 a month. Two out of three declined to reveal how much they were worth in all.

According to figures released last week by the National Bank, each Belgian is worth €385,000 on average, including the value of the family home and any pension rights they have built up over the years. That figure has come down €5,000 in the last month because of the stock markets cutting into the value of people's hypothetical wealth.

At the end of last year, the country's total wealth of €900 billion was shared among 4.75 million households. This figure represents the sum total of all bank accounts, shareholdings, bonds, investment funds and insurance products, as well as cash in circulation.

Two out of three Belgian families own their own home,



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and 10% have two or more homes. In September last year the total value of property in Belgium came to just over €1 billion.

- Each person in Belgium is going to have to provide €1,000 a year for the hole in the budget for 2012 to be held to 3% of GDP, according to the government's planning bureau. And if a balance budget is to be achieved in 2015, the cost could be double that – €22 billion, or about €2,200 each. ♦

## Super-rich families disappearing

Families may have more assets than they expected on average (see main story), but, for some, families times are particularly hard. In one year, from 2007 to 2008, the number of millionaire families in Belgium fell by 23%. Research by the Economist Intelligence Unit in 2007 revealed that Belgium had 458,000 families – 10% of the total – who owned more than €690,000, the sum required at the exchange rate of the time to qualify as a dollar millionaire.

Now, however, with the weakening of the euro against the dollar, you'd need to have €805,000 to make the dollar millionaire category – €115,000

more, or a growth in wealth of more than 16%. But stock market values have risen again in Europe since the end of 2008, suggesting a recovery of 7% in the number of millionaires.

In the super-millionaire category, according to the so-called Wealth Report from Knight Frank and Citibank, there were last year 46,000 families in this country who had one million dollars or more invested, and who therefore own a good deal more than that in assets. However even the super-rich are an endangered species: in 2008 the Wealth Report estimated the number at 60,000. One in four of those no longer qualify. ♦

## €3,000 for each of us

There are enough bank notes in circulation to give each of us €3,036 on average, according to figures from the National Bank last week. At the end of March, there were 431 million banknotes in circulation, worth €22.16 billion. If that was divided up among everyone in the country over the age of 19, it comes to €3,036.

If all the available notes are shared out equally, each of us will receive:

€5 notes	almost five
€10	nine
€20	12
€50	24
€100	4.5
€200	0.5
€500	1.75

Every day except Sunday, money transports carry an average of 6.6 million notes worth €262 million from National Bank to customers and back again. ♦

## Fortis boss snubs Dutch court

The former CEO of Fortis Bank, Jean-Paul Votron, last week failed to turn up at a court in Utrecht, the Netherlands, where he had been summoned for questioning. Votron, together with former Fortis chairman Maurice Lippens and CFO Gilbert Mittler, had appealed against the summons, but the appeal was rejected on Tuesday, 18 May. Votron, however, decided to appeal to a higher court.

Votron's objection is that he is prepared to be questioned – but only in Belgium and only in French. He has now asked for a rapid decision, his lawyers said, so that the case can proceed with as little delay as possible.

The three Fortis executives are being heard in a case brought by seven Dutch investors who lost fortunes in the collapse of the bank. They are claiming damages of €1.3 million. Votron has not spoken in public about the bank collapse since he resigned in July of 2008. The Dutch financial services regulator earlier this year fined the former Fortis group for market manipulation and for failing to disclose price-sensitive information at the time of the takeover. Fortis had to pay €576,000.

Votron could still face charges of contempt of court, even if his appeal against the hearings were to be allowed. The question revolves around whether the lodging of an appeal suspends the court order summoning him in the first place – a fine legal point on which the two sides are at odds. Lippens and Mittler are due to be heard in June. ♦



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## THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

### Banking • Ogone

Brussels-based Ogone, one of Europe's leading developers of internet and electronic payment systems, has been acquired by the US Summit Partners investment fund.

### Chemicals • Solvay

Solvay is said to be facing stiff opposition from authorities to its plans to take over the Berezniki soda ash production unit in Russia for €160 million. The factory was in fact owned by the Brussels-based Solvay before the Russian revolution in 1917.

### Economy • Coordination centres

The favourable tax regime on coordination centres, which expires next September, is experiencing an unexpected rebirth under the guise of notional interest. Thirteen massive capital injections worth a total of €40 billion from companies such as GDF Suez, Atlas Copco, Volkswagen and Ikea have poured into the country over the last few months to benefit from this legislation. Some 200 coordination centres have been created in Belgium, but the European Union in 2006 forced the Belgian government to abandon the system this year for distorting competition.

### Energy • Colruyt

Discount retailer Colruyt – which owns the Dats 24 network of petrol stations – is to invest heavily in the development of its Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) activities. It will open four stations in Antwerp, Halle, Ninove and Anderlecht.

### Ports • Zeebrugge

The Port of Zeebrugge has signed a sister port agreement with the Taiwan's Keelung port. The deal is expected to boost container traffic between the two ports and is part of Zeebrugge's strategy to seek new partners in Asia.

### Retail • WE

Netherlands-based fashion retailer WE has plans to open up to 10 new outlets over the next four years in Belgium. The company already operates 35 stores in the country.

### Telecommunications • Belgacom

The country's largest telecommunications group Belgacom has acquired a 2.6% stake in the US-based startup Online, which specialises in the "cloud gaming" video business. The move will allow the telecom operator to offer its customers a broad range of video games on demand.



# Meat market

Your correspondent goes knee deep for the story on a film set in Limburg

STORY AND PHOTOS: LISA BRADSHAW

Fortunately, I have a GPS. Otherwise, I'm not sure I would have made it to Velm, a tiny burg belonging to the municipality of Sint-Truiden in southwest Limburg province, let alone to the Schuppen family farm, across railway tracks at the end of a long driveway. That mission accomplished, I then had to get past security. What is this, you ask, some factory farm operation you're trying to infiltrate to prove cruelty to animals in Limburg? Almost. It's the set of a Flemish film. The first thing I see is a man covered in what appears to be manure and blood. That seems cruel, doesn't it? "It's creamed spinach and cookies," smiles Belgian actor Enrico Salamone. His cohort in the movie similarly has a bleeding gash on his forehead. But he's just sitting around drinking coffee.

Immediately after I had arrived with a handful of other reporters, we were led through a huge stable of bellowing cows, and the smell was, shall we say, pungent. Cows also tend to slobber and snort quite a lot. "It's not all glitter and glamour!" says the Kinopolis press contact jauntily. The reporter from *Het Laatste Nieuws* gives me a look like we have just entered the first circle of hell.

You want to know what it's like to be on a film set? A little surreal. The movie is *Rundskop* (or *Beefhead*, which doesn't sound quite so striking in English), and it is being shot in West Flanders and Limburg. It's the debut feature of Flemish director Michaël Roskam, whose handful of short films have won several prizes.

I make a remark to the lead actor, Matthias Schoenaerts, on the intensity of the scenes. "There's worse to come," he says. "This is child's play today."

*Rundskop* is a crime thriller focused on hormone trafficking – a hot topic in Belgium after the 1995 murder of a Flemish veterinary inspector by the hormone mafia. It is well known that Belgian cattle farmers have been coerced and threatened by the powerful syndicate of hormone traders, and the topic makes its way into popular culture, such as in last year's award-winning TV series *Van vlees en bloed* (*Of*

*Flesh and Blood*).

But that aspect of *Rundskop*, both lead actor and director claim, is just the framework on which to hang a more important story – that of two friends, played by Schoenaerts and Flemish actor Jeroen Perceval, who share a terrible secret from their childhood. The characters "used to be friends when they were kids, and then went their separate ways," explains Schoenaerts. "But they run into each other 20 years later, and it's the start of a whole new story. There's a secret that I carry, and he knows about it; it changes my here and now and brings that story right up front."

Schoenaerts, one of Belgium's most popular actors after his roles in *Linkeroever*, *De smaak van De Keyser* and *My Queen Karo*, has himself beefed up for the part. He started a special diet and weight training last summer to prepare for the role. "He's a symbolic character," Schoenaerts explains. "There are a lot of similarities with what he's doing in dealing with the cows; he has the same vulnerabilities and the same unpredictable behaviour. He's a metaphor for a lot of things."

The director drives this message home: "Rundskop isn't a film about the hormone mafia, just like *Hamlet* isn't a story about Danish royalty."

Roskam grew up in the region of Limburg we now find ourselves in, and he's shooting most of the film in the dialect of both this area and the French-speaking area of Wallonia right next door. Throw in a few actors from the Netherlands, and it's quite a coming together of languages and cultures here on the farm.

After a full day of filming, there are two scenes left to go – one with Salamone in quite a state over his filth-covered situation, and one in which Salamone and his friend storm off, and Schoenaerts and Perceval preen around each other like macho adversaries. There is little dialogue in either scene. Everyone – film crew and journalists alike – are delighted by Salamone's appearance and cover their mouths to keep from laughing during one of his scenes. For the final shot, it's all quiet and serious. The crew is in fact



Enrico Salamone covered with goop on the set of *Rundskop*

reacting the way it hopes the audience will react in early 2011 when the film releases. In two hours, the same number of scenes have been shot. I ask Schoenaerts if he gets bored with the interminable time between filming. "No, never!" he insists. I think he's trying to be diplomatic, especially as I see him leaning on trucks, smoking cigarettes between shots. But I determine that he's not lying. He looks concentrated, like he's going over the next scene in his mind, pretty much all the time. When he's not talking to the director (or a pesky journalist), he's not talking at all. Interestingly, those who have less dramatic scenes to get through shoot the breeze like nothing.

But the best part of being on the set is watching the camera crew at work. When "actie!" is yelled, and the camera starts to move atop its dolly, wheeled down a track at the hands of two crew members, you see how a

film is really made. Watching on a monitor the kind of effects achieved through simple, smooth movements is movie education at its finest. The director of photography is Nicolas Karakatsanis, responsible for a number of visually striking Flemish films, including *Small Gods* and *Lost Person's Area*. He's an expert at knowing how to make the simplest of Belgian landscapes appear menacing. This is no Hollywood set out here in Velm – many Flemish filmmakers work with very low budgets, and it shows. There is little equipment, and images flicker on a monitor that appears dangerously close to giving up. But these are the conditions in which the best Flemish films of the last few years – *Small Gods*, *De helaasheid der dingen*, *Aanrijding in Moskou* – were made. When you have the talent, you don't need the frills. ♦



The man who makes Flemish film look like Flemish film: director of photography Nicolas Karakatsanis



Lead actor Matthias Schoenaerts (left) and director Michaël Roskam between takes



LISA BRADSHAW

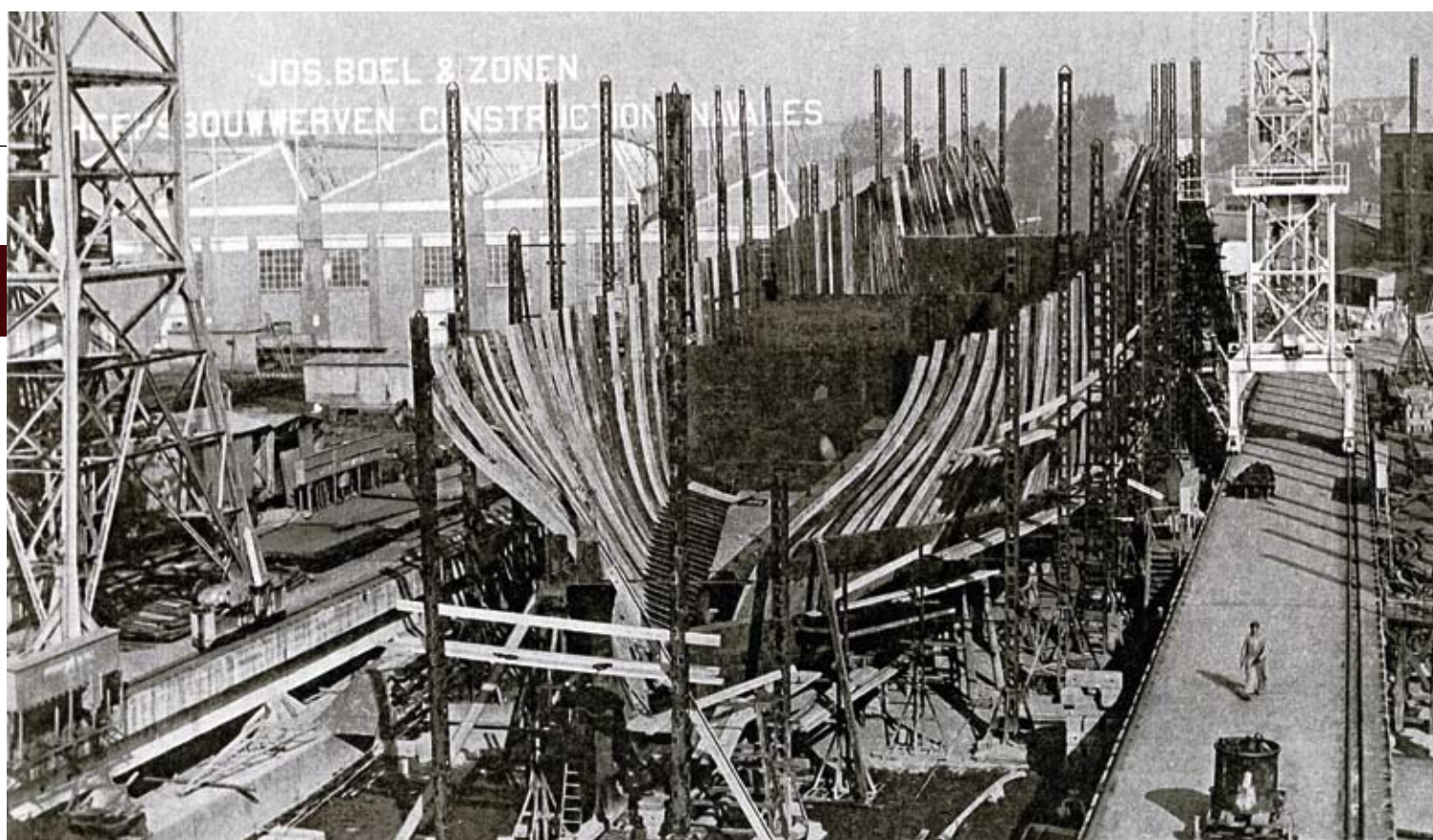
## CULTURE NEWS

The one Flemish film selected to screen at Cannes this year was well received, earning a standing ovation of 10 minutes that brought its filmmaking team to tears. *Little Baby Jesus of Flandr* is an odd little auteur film by Gust Van den Berghe, who in fact made it as his final year student project at Brussels film school RITS. The story involves three friends who find a woman and her new baby in the woods and decide to become wise men to announce the arrival of the child. It is shot in black and white, and the lead characters are played by actors who have Down's Syndrome. The film will open in Brussels and Flanders in December.

Novelist and poet **Jeroen Theunissen** has become the first Flemish writer to be selected by the Halma Network in its three-and-a-half-year history to receive a residence grant. Made up of 27 European literary organisations, Halma selects a few authors every year to spend two months in residency abroad. Theunissen is currently in Slovenia, where he this week gave a reading. In October the 32-year-old, Ghent-based writer and language teacher will head to Poland. He will also be at work on his new novel, which, appropriately enough, is set in different parts of Europe.

Night of the Proms has signed on **Boy George** to perform at this autumn's series of concerts that fuse pop and classical. The annual concerts are a sell-out at Antwerp's Sportpaleis and also travel to Germany and the Netherlands. Boy George will perform with the Netherlands' Il Novecento symphony orchestra under conductor Robert Grosloot.

How does a birthday cake made from lettuce, leek and straw sound? **Kai-Mook** didn't seem at all bothered by the fruit-and-veg concoction put together by the Antwerp Zoo to celebrate the little elephant's first birthday last week. The day was celebrated with a birthday song by schoolchildren for the baby animal that caused a sensation last year as the first elephant ever born in Belgium. Kai-Mook may be only one year old, but she now clocks in at 600 kilos.



# A visual memory

## A Flemish filmmaker's four-hour ode to an extinct industry

IAN MUNDELL

The first time that filmmaker Jan Vromman thought seriously about the Boel shipyards in Temse was when a workers' sit-in was being discussed on the radio. This was in 1995, after the company had been declared bankrupt for the second time.

He decided to go and see for himself. He had to look on a map to see where Temse was (it's on the river Scheldt upstream of Antwerp, close to Sint-Niklaas), and then set off from Brussels full of curiosity about the place where they made ships as long as a street and as tall as an apartment block.

When he got there, the occupying workers didn't let him in. But he returned, made friends with them and started to learn the story of the shipyard. Over the next four years this developed into *As Long as Shipbuilders Keep Singing*, an examination of the ship-building industry in Temse that was coming to an end before his eyes. Completed in 1999, the three-part film, which is four hours in total, is now being revived, with screenings this month around Flanders and the release of a DVD.

Looking back, Vromman sees his lack of knowledge at the beginning of the project as

an advantage. "Innocence is a good position to start with," he says. "It's like a child who sees an amusement park for the first time, and for me the amusement park was the beauty of the ships."

While not from a working class background, he has a long-standing fascination with industry. "I always like to visit factories, whether it's a car production line or a glassworks. It's always an aesthetic experience, apart from all the social and other aspects. Without this aesthetic experience I would never have got through the [Boel] story."

As well as exploring the conflict in 1995, Vromman's film goes back to the origins of the business in 1829, when Antwerp shipwright Bernard Boel set up a workshop on the banks of the Scheldt to build river boats. As the business was handed down from father to son, the Boels went from being artisan workers to overseers and then owners. The shipyards expanded, the materials changed from wood to iron to steel, the vessels from inland boats to ocean-going ships.

But in parallel, the owners diversified, so that the shipyards were just one of their business interests. When competition from Asia became too intense, the shipyard was allowed to go under. The government took over with a Dutch business partner, but the reprieve was short-lived.

The last members of the family firm, Philippe Saverys and his son Nicolaas, feature in the film, explaining their position and the pressures of the increasingly globalised industry. Vromman admits that he was intimidated by the prospect of talking to them, let alone to the politicians, who he interviewed about government support for the shipyards. He only noticed later that this came through in the images, which are more polished than those of the workers.

"It's strange. You feel obliged to put on a technical performance when you talk to a minister, but you improvise when you talk to a worker," Vromman recalls. "All these things speak to the viewer. This kind of static frame for the minister, this supple, direct way of filming people on the shop floor give an emotion to the

film – an emotion that is beyond my control."

As a mark of *Shipbuilders'* subjectivity, Vromman also included himself in the film, not just carrying out interviews but bumbling around in his apartment and trying to get to grips with charts and papers. "I had to show my small position in front of this big question."

Meanwhile there were aspects of the story that were important to him, but which were not about facts and figures or the struggle between the workers and the owners. So throughout the film, which already contains a good deal of singing from the workers and performances by their brass band, he adds his own lyrical reflections on subjects as diverse as hats and helmets, abandoned bicycles and the magazine pin-ups on workshop walls.

"It's like the chorus in Greek tragedy," he explains. "There are some elements that you can't say with a voice-over, things that you feel while you are there. You have to find a form to express these feelings. I also needed to include my love of making images, not just telling a thematic story."

*Shipbuilders* is being released now with the support of the unions, even though they don't come out of it particularly well. One of the film's themes is the long-running and sometimes bitter argument between the charismatic shipyard activists, some of whom had entrenched positions, and the more pragmatic union leaders working at the national level.

Revisiting the conflict is hardly a case of nostalgia. "For a lot of people it was a failure, including the people leading the social struggle. It is always difficult to look back at defeat," Vromman says. "But, on the other hand, there is some pride that this memory is being preserved."

He feels a little odd that this film rather than one of his more creative works should be singled out for attention. "But I also feel proud because it is the work of a documentary maker to make something that has historical value. If you see now where we are with the memory of this industry, it is perhaps the only museum that it has. And an industry also has the right to be commemorated." ♦

**28 May, 20.00**

Film Plateau  
Paddenhoek 3, Ghent  
with director Jan Vromman

**29 May, 16.00**

Cinema Zuid  
Lakenstraat 14, Antwerp

**31 May, 19.00**

Cinema Rits  
Dansaertstraat 70, Brussels

*All screenings of As Long as Shipbuilders Keep Singing include introductions and debates. The film is also available on DVD with English, French and Dutch subtitles*

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



# Where heritage meets playground

## Bokrijk might just be the most fun 550 hectares in Flanders

MELISSA MAKI

**T**he third time's the charm, so they say, and for the third entry in our family recreation series, we take you to a park in Limburg whose attractions are unparalleled. Only at the provincial domain Bokrijk can you mix a round of miniature golf with experiential lessons in Flemish history.

Bokrijk is a 550-hectare park that lies just west of Genk. Count Arnold IV originally owned the estate but in 1252 passed it on to the Cistercian nuns of the Herckenrode Abbey. The nuns cultivated and leased the land to tenant farmers for centuries.

The estate was eventually confiscated from the abbey and sold off during the French Revolution. After that, the property changed hands a number of times, and, in the latter half of the 19th century, a wealthy family bought it. They erected a castle, planted trees and designed many of the gardens and paths that still exist today. In 1938, the province of Limburg acquired the property with the intention of creating a space to merge nature and culture.

It opened in the 1950s and, over the years, the province has built Bokrijk into a major destination. Like many of Belgium's other provincial parks, there is a mini zoo and nice paths for walking and biking. But what sets Bokrijk apart is its exceptional, interactive living history museum.

### The open-air museum

As post-war industry started to shift the face of Flanders, Limburg found the impetus it needed for a massive historical preservation project in the form of an open-air museum at Bokrijk. The idea was to safeguard Flemish agricultural traditions by preserving the old, deteriorating farm buildings.

"Contemporary history may be likened to a cataract, setting up whirlpools of particular violence in the realm of material culture and bringing about profound changes in our way of life," wrote Jozef Weyns, the museum's first curator. "We must therefore make haste to gather sufficient relics of the lives of our forefathers if we are to have the means of recreating the actual setting in which they lived."

Under Weyns' vision, more than 100 Flemish buildings dating from the 11th to the 19th centuries were, over a 20-year period, carefully dismantled and painstakingly reassembled at Bokrijk. The buildings are organised into an extremely realistic village with representation divided into three distinct regions: the Haspengouw, the Kempen and East and West Flanders.

Architecture, furniture and other historical objects tell the story of life as it was lived 100 years ago. But this is also a living museum with re-enactments of every-day life. Visitors can interact with costumed village residents as they work and go about daily chores, whether it's baking bread, herding sheep or making horseshoes. On my visit, I joked with a farmer, was warmly greeted by a baker and chastised by a priest. Depending on the day, children might follow a class with a stern school marm, make pottery on a 19th-century wheel or simply sweep a floor with a hand-made broom.

Bokrijk is renowned among Flemings – every Flemish school kid has made the trek, and it's the destination of a family outing every year or so. In fact, the word "Bokrijk" has entered popular vocabulary to describe anything that is outdated or old-fashioned.

### Less talk, more play

After your heritage experience, head to Bokrijk's outdoor playground – the largest in the country. It provides a wide range of age-appropriate equipment. If you really want to make the kids happy, you can spring for a game of mini-golf, a mini-car ride or – better yet – a pony ride. One area of the playground is specially designed for toddlers: Hopla, based on the popular cartoon rabbit character, is a cheerful little play village with bold primary colours and child-sized furniture.

You can quickly transition from cartoon to actual animal by walking just past the play village. A considerable area is devoted to a variety of barnyard animals including donkeys, rabbits, sheep, goats, and ostriches.

The amount of green space at Bokrijk is remarkable. The domain is home to one of the largest arboreta in Flanders. This scenic, peaceful portion of the park features an assortment of ornamental trees and shrubs and a nature education centre. The collections of rhododendron, holly and bamboo are particularly impressive.

One of the best ways to see the domain, plus the scenic surrounding countryside is by foot. The lovely Bokrijk-Kiewit walking path takes you through a range of stunning scenery. Begin your walk at the Brasserie Het Koetshuis and choose between four colour-coded routes that range from three to 9.5 kilometres. You can find a map of all the



sign posted walking routes in the information centre or the ground's restaurants.

You can also use Limburg's superb cycling network to create a route that explores the domain. Bikes can be rented at the park or the Genk train station by reservation. Check with Bokrijk's information centre or Genk's tourist office for bike maps and route advice.

If you are looking for more of a thrill, try your hand at some extreme sports in Bokrijk's Adventure Park. A challenge course, archery, paintball, mountain biking and ATVs await.

If you're hungry after all of this activity, you can find everything from snacks to gourmet meals at the park's seven different eateries. I recommend the cosy St Gummarus Inn (in the Kempen area of the open-air museum), with its simple, regional dishes and prices to match. ♦

## VISITING BOKRIJK

Getting to Bokrijk on public transport couldn't be easier; it has its own train station (the stop just before Genk). From there it's a short walk to the domain. It's open until 30 September from 10.00 to 18.00 daily. Season's passes are available, and you can buy a guidebook at the information centre with photos, descriptions of the buildings and interesting historical facts. Also check with the information centre at the start of your visit for times and locations of special demonstrations and events, which are ongoing. *Bokrijklaan 1, Genk*

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

## MORE PROVINCIAL DOMAINS IN LIMBURG

**Nieuwenhoven** in Sint-Truiden is a 161-hectare forested area with a castle (pictured), walking routes, a dog park, playground, fishing pond and pub. *Hasseltsesteenweg z/n*

**Rullingen** in Borgloon features a 17th-century, moated castle, a gourmet restaurant, an arboretum and a vast orchard of fruit trees. *Rullingen 1*

**Dommelhof** in Neerpelt is a quiet, wooded area intersected by the Dommel river. Here you'll find interesting cultural experiences like the Klankenbos (Sound Forest), with its unique sound sculptures, and Theater op de Markt, an open-air celebration of theatre. *Toekomstlaan 5*

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





# The pottery wheel of fortune

Vogler studio helps our correspondent channel her creative spirit

ANNA JENKINSON

**I**t's a Monday evening, and I'm starting to feel a little apprehensive. Standing in the Vogler art studio with a glass of white wine in one hand and a slice of homemade apple tart in the other, I'm not quite sure what to expect next.

Until now, Jean Roulet and his fellow sculptors have been having their weekly catch-up over an apéritif. "We've got three hours of hard work ahead of us. We need to get our strength up," Roulet tells me, taking some bread out of the oven. The atmosphere is lively as about a dozen men and women chat away in French and Dutch, some talking about their projects, others about the week's events. Nothing to worry about here, then.

Until the life model arrives. I'm expected to turn a slab of clay into something resembling (or at least inspired by) a naked woman in the middle of the room.

The pottery sessions are just one activity offered by Roulet at his studios in the Brussels commune of Schaarbeek. Across the road from the pottery studio is an artist studio-house with a beautiful sgraffito façade. Roulet bought it about two decades ago and holds drawing classes there.

But I am here for the pottery evening, and, before I know it, I'm wearing a white overall, standing in front a block of clay and wondering how to avoid making a complete fool of myself. "Just cut off a piece of the clay, spread it out as if you're buttering a sandwich, and then start to mould it into the shape

of, say, a back," Roulet says, trying to convince me that I, too, have a creative spirit. I smile nervously. "Have a go. Everyone can create something," he says with a straight face.

I focus on the legs. The model is standing with one leg gently bent, one foot slightly behind the other. I try to create the same effect with my clay. Unfortunately the lower leg falls off. Just as I start thinking "This is never going to work; I'll just quickly cobble something together and slip off home," Roulet comes round and says: "Good, good. Try and make three or four of those, and then we can combine them." Three or four little figurines struggling to hold onto their legs. Great.

The others in the group seem to be lost in their own worlds, with the lively chatter of earlier on now replaced by almost total silence. Every now and again, someone asks if they can spin the large table, on which the model is standing, around a few degrees (the response is usually a few nods and mutters), and then the studio returns to being a space of studied concentration.

"I love having the model there," Roulet tells me later. "Everyone is in the moment, in their own universe, creating their sculptures. You lose yourself."

It takes some getting used to. You may not be the one who has to take off your clothes, but there is something quite intimate about being in an almost silent space, with a life model in the centre of the studio, and being asked to express yourself through the medium of clay. The artists put



© Anna Jenkinson

a lot of themselves and their emotions into their creations, and I'm not surprised when one of the group (Françoise) tells me that there are sometimes tears as people become disheartened or a sculpture collapses.

One of the other artists (Cathy) confides that she often feels as if her sculptures are coming to life in front of her eyes, as if the elasticity of the clay were living skin, and she has minimal control over the form that it takes. "It's like a mystery,"

she says, adding that she would spend all day and night in the studio if she didn't have to look after her grandchildren.

The weekly sessions aren't classes in the strict sense of the word. Roulet describes them as an opportunity for people to come together and explore their creativity. "Art is our toolbox. It allows us to get to know ourselves better in order to better understand the world around us."

By the end of the evening, I

wasn't sure that I understood the world around me any better, but I did have four clay figures, one (unintentionally) larger than the others, that Roulet helped me to join together into a single block. I wasn't convinced that it was worth saving, but Roulet said he would fire it, and I could pass by again to pick it up and maybe add a bit of colour. Whether or not I have the courage to do that remains to be seen. ♦

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

## The 100-year studio



The house at Voglerstraat 17 in Schaarbeek was built at the start of the 20th century for the painter Alfred Ruytinx and has since retained its function as an artists' studio.

One of the most striking features of this listed building is the sgraffito mural on the facade, created in 1906 by Henri Privat-Livemont, a Belgian artist best-known for his Art Nouveau poster designs. The fresco is thought to depict the artist Yvonne Vonnot-Violet, who later lived in the house.

By 1989, when the artist Jean Roulet decided to

buy the house, the mural was in urgent need of restoration. And that's exactly what he set about doing.

Today, Roulet uses the downstairs for drawing classes, while the upstairs studio is packed with his sketches, drawings and paintings. Across the road, he rents more studio space to hold his regular pottery sessions.

Since taking early retirement from secondary school education, Roulet, who studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels, has devoted himself to the Vogler studios.

## Get cracking

SARAH CREW

The Atlantic Canadian Lobster Festival is coming to a town near you

It's time to put on your bib and dig out the crackers with the launch of the Atlantic Canadian Lobster Festival. Until June 20, more than 50 restaurants in Flanders and 27 in Brussels will be serving dishes in celebration of the Canadian New Season lobster.

Although lobster is a classic delicacy for Belgian New Year celebrations, the best seafood restaurants in Brussels have been promoting the New Season lobster since 1999. Produced in the cold, clear waters of Nova Scotia, this hard-shell specialty is harvested at the beginning of spring when its white flesh is at its meatiest. And as Belgium is the biggest European consumer of live Canadian lobster, importing one million kilos a year, last year the Canadian authorities decided to initiate a nationwide feast to promote their number one seafood export.

This year the festival has expanded further into the Flemish region where diners will have the opportunity to enjoy the delicacy at one of 17 participating restaurants along the coast, six in Antwerp, 10 in the Ghent area, 10 in the Kortrijk/



Roeselare region and eight in Limburg province. The 27 restaurants in Brussels include nine in the former fish market area of Sint-Katelijn and Vismarkt.

Lobster is often enjoyed all summer, most frequently boiled up at home and served warm with melted butter, but many of the participating restaurants are headed by master chefs, so expect everything from glorious seafood platters to the most sophisticated and luxurious of lobster preparations.

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



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# Ros Beiaard Ommegang

DENZIL WALTON

The legend of Bayard, a bay horse with supernatural powers, originated in the 12th century French epic poem *Renaud de Montauban*. According to the story, Bayard was a horse of incredible swiftness that belonged to the four sons of King Aymon. If only one of the king's sons mounted Bayard, nothing particularly special happened. However, put all four of them on his back, and the animal is transformed into a Goliath of a horse. This came in extremely useful when the four brothers were on the run from Charlemagne and were able to escape through the Ardennes by sitting on the back of Bayard. Bayard is celebrated far and wide. In Dinant, the Bayard Rock is a large cleft rock formation that was said to have been split by Bayard's mighty hooves as he jumped over the Meuse. (This certainly attracts more tourists than the frankly mundane explanation of it being blown apart by Louis XIV's French troops.) There were even sightings of the beast in England, hence Byard's Leap in Lincolnshire.

However, it's in Flanders that the legend of the Steed Bayard and the Four Knights lives on, and specifically in Dendermonde. Here, the four knights are known as the *vier heemskinderen* and the horse as Ros Beiaard. And every 10 years the legend of this champion horse is celebrated in magnificent style with a huge event: the Ros Beiaard Ommegang. This colourful event has a cast of hundreds – dancers, actors, musicians and a parade of giants. Naturally, the huge replica of Ros Beiaard takes centre stage. The wonder horse weighs in at over 800 kilograms. It's nearly five metres high and measures 5.2 metres from nose to tail. Inside its wooden frame are a group of 12 bearers. Ros Beiaard and its accompanying giants are listed as UNESCO Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. For a solid three hours, no fewer than 20 scenes from the legend of the horse are played out as it canters through the streets of Dendermonde. In pride of place, attempting to look

brave despite their rather precarious position, are the *heemskinderen* – the four gallant young knights. They are chosen by a special council, and for this decade's event the honour has fallen to Maarten, Niels, Dieter and Michiel Van Damme. Hold on tight, boys. ♦



30 May, from 14.30

Grote Markt  
Dendermonde

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

## MORE SPECTACLES THIS WEEK

Walking with Dinosaurs → Brussels Expo →

Murga Parade and World Feast → Leuven centre

Studio 100 band & pirate show → MEC Staf Versluys, Bredene



### Antwerp

**Café Capital**  
Rubenslei 37 - Stadspark;  
[www.cafecapital.be](http://www.cafecapital.be)  
**MAY 29** 23.00-6.30 Where Were You?  
1989 party with Geoffroy Mugwump + Nikolai + Phidel

**De Roma**  
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40  
[www.deroma.be](http://www.deroma.be)  
**MAY 27** 20.30 Souad Massi: Acoustique  
**MAY 28** 20.30 The Scene: Liefde op Doorreis  
**MAY 29** 20.30 Radio Modern with Ding Dong Daddio's

**Kelly's Irish Pub**  
Keyserlei 27; [www.kellys.be](http://www.kellys.be)  
**MAY 28** 21.30 Dirk de Vriendt

**Lotto Arena**  
Schipinpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060  
**MAY 31** 20.00 Pixies

**Rataplan**  
Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40  
[www.rataplanvzw.be](http://www.rataplanvzw.be)  
**MAY 28** 20.30 Hazmat Modine

**Sportpaleis**  
Schipinpoortweg 119; 070.345.345  
[www.sportpaleis.be](http://www.sportpaleis.be)  
**MAY 30** 20.30 Naturally 7 + Michael Bubl 

**Trix**  
Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00  
[www.trixonline.be](http://www.trixonline.be)  
**MAY 27** 20.00 Wolves in the Throne Room + Insomnium + Ghost Brigade  
**MAY 31** 20.00 Micah P Hinson

### Ardoie

**Cultuurkapel De Schaduw**  
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82  
[www.deschaduw.net](http://www.deschaduw.net)  
**MAY 28** 20.30 Elder Tree with Yannick Riviere (free)

### Brussels

**Ancienne Belgique**  
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24  
[www.abconcerts.be](http://www.abconcerts.be)  
**MAY 30** 18.00 Radical Slave + Madensuy + Motorpsycho  
**JUNE 2** 20.00 Trey Songz  
**JUNE 3** 20.00 Benjamin Biolay

**K-NAL**  
Havenlaan 1; 0474.04.00.00 [www.k-nal.be](http://www.k-nal.be)  
**MAY 29** 23.00 Wirspielen Discotheque + Bottin

**Koninklijk Circus**  
Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15  
[www.cirque-royal.org](http://www.cirque-royal.org)  
**MAY 26** 20.00 Coeur de pirate

**La Chocolaterie**  
Van Malderstraat 27; 02.256.03.34  
[www.vkconcerts.be](http://www.vkconcerts.be)  
**MAY 27** 20.00 High Tone

**Le Botanique**  
Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32  
[www.botanique.be](http://www.botanique.be)  
**MAY 28** Ash  
**MAY 30** Lostboy! aka Jim Kerr  
**JUNE 3** Bacon Caravan Creek

**Le Montmartre**  
Boondaalse Steenweg 344;  
[www.lemontmartre.be](http://www.lemontmartre.be)  
**MAY 30** 20.30 Kevin Mulligan Band

**Recyclart**  
Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34  
[www.recyclart.be](http://www.recyclart.be)  
**MAY 27** 21.00 Back Back + Animus Anima + Jamsession Brussels Open

**The Music Village**  
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45  
[www.themusicvillage.com](http://www.themusicvillage.com)  
**JUNE 3** 12.30 Derek, singer-songwriter (in Dutch)

**VK Club**  
Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07  
[www.vkconcerts.be](http://www.vkconcerts.be)  
**MAY 28** 20.30 Andrew Tosh + Michael Rose  
**JUNE 2** 20.00 Masta Ace & Ed Og, Kev

## DON'T MISS

### Flemish Writing Today

3 June  
Passa Porta, Brussels

If you want to learn about Flemish literature, Passa Porta is handing you the opportunity on a silver platter, with this event gathering six contemporary authors and poets, interviewed in English and reading excerpts from their works – in Dutch, but with English translations provided. Among them: Gie Bogaert, Elvis Peeters (pictured), Peter Holvoet-Hanssen and Dimitri Verhulst, whose award-winning book *De helaasheid der dingen* was last year turned into an award-winning film. The authors were chosen to represent a snapshot of the Flemish literary scene across generations. (Though clearly not genders. Ahem.)



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

Brown & Lmno + Camp Lo  
**JUNE 3** 20.00 Support (TBC) + Youngblood Brass Band

**Vorst-Nationaal**  
Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991  
[www.forestnational.be](http://www.forestnational.be)  
**JUNE 2** 20.00 Christophe Willem

### Ghent

**Trefpunt**  
Bij Sint-Jacobs 18; [www.trefpuntvzw.be](http://www.trefpuntvzw.be)  
**MAY 31** 21.00 The Imaginary Friends

### Kortrijk

**De Kreun**  
Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44  
[www.dekreun.be](http://www.dekreun.be)  
**JUNE 3** 20.00 Polvo



### Alsemberg

**CC De Meent**  
Gemeenveldstraat 34; 02.359.16.00  
[www.demeent.be](http://www.demeent.be)  
**MAY 27** 20.15 Hijaz, jazzlab series

### Antwerp

**Buster**  
Kaasrui 1; 03.232.51.53  
[www.busterpodium.be](http://www.busterpodium.be)  
**MAY 26** 21.00 Playtime session with Viktor Perdieus  
**MAY 27** 21.00 Buster Jam

**De Hopper**  
Leopold De Waelstraat 2; 03.248.49.33  
[www.cafehopper.be](http://www.cafehopper.be)  
**MAY 30** 16.00 Yvonne Walter & Guests  
**MAY 31** 21.00 Pieter Baert Trio



## De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40  
www.deroma.be  
**JUNE 2** 20.30 Gwen Cresens, Koen Van Roy and the Tanguedia string quartet: Konkordiaplatz  
**JUNE 3** 20.30 Wim Mertens Ensemble

## Bruges

**De Werf**  
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29  
www.dewerf.be  
**MAY 28** 20.30 Michael Musillami Trio + 3

## Brussels

**Ancienne Belgique**  
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24  
www.abconcerts.be  
**MAY 28** 18.30 Ananke, Marine Horbaczewski, Michel Massot, Raztaboul, Tuur Florizoone (part of Brussels Jazz Marathon)  
**MAY 29** 18.00 La Fanfare de Belgistan, LABtrio, Myrddin De Cauter (part of Brussels Jazz Marathon)

## Archiduc

Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52  
www.archiduc.net  
**Until MAY 29** 17.00 1060  
MAY 30-31 20.00 Santa Macairo Orkestar

## Art Base

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20  
www.art-base.be  
**MAY 29** 20.00 Rebetiko (part of Brussels Jazz Marathon)

## Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78  
www.jazzstation.be  
**MAY 26** 20.30 Zanga with Jonas Knutsson  
**MAY 28** 21.00 Ben Sluijs/Erik Vermeulen duo (part of Brussels Jazz Marathon)  
**MAY 29** 21.00 Carmelo Muriel Quartet (part of Brussels Jazz Marathon)

## Le Caveau du Max

Emile Maxlaan 87; 02.733.17.88  
**JUNE 3** Guy Cabay Quartet

## Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50  
www.soundsjazzclub.be  
**MAY 26** 22.00 Chamaquiando, salsa  
**MAY 27** 21.00 The Singers Night  
**MAY 28** 22.00 Carmelo Muriel Grupo (Spain) with Nono Garcia (part of Brussels Jazz Marathon)  
**MAY 29** Philip Catherine "Organ Trio" (part of Brussels Jazz Marathon)  
**MAY 31** 22.00 Master Session

## The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45  
www.themusicvillage.com  
Concerts at 21.00:  
**MAY 26** Homenagem a os maestros de Bossanova  
**MAY 27** The Nightcrowd Bluesband  
**MAY 28-29** Buster & The Swing (part of Brussels Jazz Marathon)  
**MAY 31** Royal Music Conservatory Jazz Section: Exam concerts

## Viage

Anspachlaan 30; 070.44.34.43  
www.viage.be  
**MAY 30** 20.30 Ndidi O (part of Brussels Jazz Marathon)



## Antwerp

**Zuiderpershuis**  
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00  
www.zuiderpershuis.be  
**MAY 28** 20.30 Congo Groove  
**MAY 29** 20.30 Mahmoud Ahmed with Alemayehu Esheté and Badum's Band  
**JUNE 3** 20.30 Shiyani Ngcobo

## Ghent

**Vooruit**  
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060  
www.vooruit.be  
**MAY 27** 20.00 Goran Bregovic & the Weddings and Funerals Orchestra, gypsy + Mala Vite. 22.00 Jesse Dee, neo-soul (free)  
**MAY 28** 20.00 Micah P Hinson + Timber Timbre, folk  
MAY 29 20.30 Garcia plays Kyuss  
**MAY 30** 20.00 Red Zebra + Aroma di Amore, new wave  
**MAY 31** 20.30 Gentleman and the Evolution, reggae

## Ostend

**Kursaal (Casino)**  
Monacoplein 2; 070.22.56.00  
www.kursaalooostende.be  
**MAY 30** 20.00 Salvatore Adamo



## Antwerp

**deSingel**  
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28  
www.desingel.be  
Concerts at 20.00:  
**MAY 28** 20.00 deFilharmonie conducted by Yutaka Sado, with Kelley Nassief, soprano; Samuel Pissar, narrator; the Vlaamse Radio Koor, Namur Chamber Choir and Flemish Opera Children's Choir: Takemitsu, Britten, Bernstein  
**MAY 31** 20.00 Elisso Wirssaladze, piano: Bach, Chopin

## Bruges

**Concertgebouw**  
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02  
www.concertgebouw.be  
**MAY 29** 20.00 deFilharmonie conducted by Yutaka Sado, with Kelley Nassief, soprano; Samuel Pissar, narrator; Namur

Chamber Choir, Vlaamse Radio Koor, Children's Choir of the Flemish Opera: Takemitsu, Britten, Bernstein

## Duke's Palace Kempinsky Hotel

Prinsenhof 8; 050.44.78.86  
www.concertgebouw  
**MAY 28** 19.30 France Springuel, cello: Bach

## Brussels

**Bozar**  
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00  
www.bozar.be  
**MAY 30** 11.00 Quatuor Modigliani: Haydn, Mendelssohn  
**JUNE 3** 20.00 deFilharmonie conducted by Philippe Herreweghe, with Lise de la Salle, piano: Mozart, Tchaikovsky

## Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20  
www.flagey.be  
**MAY 26** 20.15 Ensemble Musiques Nouvelles: music by American composer David Lang, with light effects by Koert Vermeulen

## Protestantse Kapel

Museumplein 2; 02.507.82.00  
**MAY 27** 20.00 Kris Verhelst, harpsichord; Sophie Gent, violin: sonatas and partitas by Bach

## Théâtre Poème

Schotlandstraat 30; 02.538.63.58  
www.theatrepoeme.be  
**MAY 29-30** 12.30 Johan Schmidt, piano; Thierry Migliorini, voice

## Ghent

**De Bijloke Muziek-centrum**  
Kluyskensstraat 2J; 09.233.68.78  
tickets@bijloke.be  
**MAY 28** 20.00 Daan Vandewalle, piano: Graupner, Stravinsky, more

## Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65  
www.handelsbeurs.be  
**MAY 29** 20.15 Piotr Anderszewski, piano: Bach, Schumann



## Antwerp

**Rataplan**  
Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40  
www.rataplanvzw.be  
**MAY 29** 20.30 Federico Ordoñez, flamenco (preceded by paella dinner at 18.00)

## Brussels

**Kaaithater**  
Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59  
www.kaaitheater.be

**MAY 27-29** 20.30 Pororoca, choreographed by Lia Rodrigues

## Les Brigittines

Korte Brigittinenstraat; 02.506.43.00  
www.brigittines.be  
**MAY 26-28** 20.30 Product of Other Circumstances, choreographed and performed by Xavier Le Roy (in English)



## Antwerp

**Fakkelteater**  
Hoogstraat 12; 03.232.14.69  
www.fakkelteater.be  
**Until MAY 30** 15.00/20.30 Mark Tijsmans, Ben Rottiers, Marijke Hofkens and Ann De Winne in Venetië in de sneeuw (Venice in the snow), directed by Jan Verbist (in Dutch)  
**Until JUNE 13** 15.00/20.30 Ann Van den Broeck in The Musical Songbook, directed by Stany Crets, (music theatre, in Dutch)

## Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00  
www.zuiderpershuis.be  
**MAY 26** 20.30 KIT Tropentheater in They Call Me Nyai Ontosoroh, directed by Wawan Sofwan (in Bahasa Indonesian with English surtitles)  
**JUNE 2** 20.30 Great Escape by Andrew Whaley, directed by Ian White (in English)

## Brussels

**De Markten**  
Oude Graanmarkt 5; 02.512.34.25  
www.demarkten.be  
**MAY 27-28** 20.30/12.30 Van Zilverpapier in The Turner Tapes (Music theatre, in Dutch)

## Théâtre 140

Eugène Plaskyalaan 140; 02.733.97.08  
www.theatre140.be  
**Until MAY 28** 20.30 Otro (or) weknowitsallornnothing (or) ready to, performance by Enrique Diaz & Cristina Moura/Coletivo Improviso (Rio de Janeiro), directed by Moura and Diaz (in Portuguese with Dutch and French surtitles)

## Théâtre des Martyrs

Martelarenplein 22; 02.223.32.08  
www.theatredesmartyrs.be  
**Until MAY 30** 16.00/20.15 Kif-Kif by Pietro Pizzuti, directed by Christine Delmotte (in English)  
**Until JUNE 13** times vary Savannay Bay by Marguerite Duras, directed by Philippe Sireuil (in English)

## Théâtre les Tanneurs

Huidevettersstraat 75; 02.512.17.84  
www.lesanneurs.be  
**Until MAY 29** 18.00/20.30 El pasado es un animal grotesco, written and staged by Mariano Pensotti (in Spanish with Dutch and French surtitles)

## Ghent

**Theater Tinnenpot**  
Tinnenpotstraat 21; 09.225.18.60  
www.tinnenpot.be  
**Until MAY 31** 20.00 Jo Decaluwe in Damiaan, staged by Decaluwe (in Dutch)  
**Until JUNE 23** 20.00 De buitenkant van Meneer Jules (The Outside of Mister Jules), written by Diane Broeckhove, directed by Jan Verbist (in Dutch)

## Kortrijk

**Schouwburg**  
Schouwburgplein 14; 056.23.98.55  
www.cultuurcentrumkortrijk.be  
**JUNE 2-3** 20.15 Wouter Deprez in Je zal alles worden (You'll Become Everything), comedy (in Dutch)



## Antwerp

**Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)**  
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60  
www.muhka.be

## DON'T MISS



## Beerse Art Biennial

**Until 13 June**  
**Across Beerse**

We at *Flanders Today* are suckers for the art parcours, especially if it leads you to hitherto unknown spaces. For most people, that pretty much covers the entire town of Beerse, just west of Turnhout in Antwerp province. With a number of green spaces, this art circuit winds through parks and gardens, as well as churches and museums. With some very creative installations – such as Ronald Van Der Meijs' "Wind Violin" (pictured) – and two dimensional work by artists from Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and France, it's both a day outdoors and a day of contemporary European art.

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

**Until JULY 4** Europe at Large #5, works by Vyacheslav Akhunov, Babi Badalov and Azat Sargsyan, related to the collapse of the USSR

**Until AUG 22** August Orts: Correspondence, work by the four Brussels artists who make up the Auguste Orts production platform on aspects of apparatus (camera movement, editing, sound vs image) and the unstable status of language  
**Until SEP 19** Art Kept Me Out of Jail, performance installations by Jan Fabre

## Extra City

Tulpstraat 79; 0484.42.10.70  
www.extracity.org  
**Until JULY 11** Valérie Mannaerts: Blood Flow, sculptures and installations by the Brussels artist

## Fashion Museum (MoMu)

Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70  
www.momu.be  
**Until AUG 8** BLACK: Masters of Black in Fashion & Costume, historical phases of the colour black, its diversity in hue according to material and masterpieces by contemporary designers

## Photo Museum (FoMu)

**MAY 28 to JUN 20** Alain Van Haver, black-and-white photos by the Flemish photographer  
**MAY 28 to JUN 27** Jacky Lecouturier: Polaroids, series of polaroids of every-day miracles by the Belgian artist  
**MAY 28 to SEP 5** Filip Tas, work by the late Antwerp-based photojournalist, critic and visual arts instructor, who helped usher in a new era of artistic media photography  
**MAY 28 to SEP 5** American Documents, Walker Evans' 1940s Labour Anonymous series and part of Robert Frank's The Americans from the 1950s join several well-known American photographers of the 1970s, including Diane Arbus, Robert Adams, Lewish Baltz and Mitch Epstein

## Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09  
www.kmska.be  
**Until OCT 3** Closing Time, curated by Flemish artist Jan Vanriet, who presents his own work alongside related pieces from the museum's collection



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## Borgloon

### Gasthuiskapel Borgloon

Graethempoot 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, photos and documents examining the complex history of North America  
**Until JUNE 19** Angel Vergara: Monday: Fireworks; Tuesday: Illuminations; Wednesday: Revolution, mixed-media work by the Brussels-based Spanish artist exploring the early days of the Belgian monarchy and its cultural, social-political and economic context  
**Until JUNE 19** Alexander Kluge: Poetics in Between Media, video art by the German film director

### 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

### Belgian Comic Strip Centre

Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80  
www.stripmuseum.be  
**Until AUG 29** Moomin: Tove Jansson's Dreamworld, work by the Finnish illustrator and author

### Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00  
www.bozar.be  
**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  
**Until JUNE 20** El Ángel Exterminador, major 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)

### Hallepoort Museum

Zuidlaan 29; 02.533.34.51  
www.kmkg-mrah.be  
**Until AUG 29** Brussels Calling!, works by 10 Belgian and international artists, who were all lured by the capital at one time or another

### ISELP

Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70  
www.iselp.be  
**Until MAY 29** Eric Van Hove & guests, photographs  
**Until MAY 30** Sophie Palisse: Châteaux de sable, prints  
**Until MAY 30** Marie Beaudry, ceramics, Frédérique Coomans, jewellery  
**Until MAY 30** Monographs by artists, edited by Woluwe-Saint-Lambert Centre Culturel

### 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** Doorsnede (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  
**Until SEP 5** Art and Finance in Europe, new look at masters of the 17th century with 20 works from the museum's collection, including Seghers, Breughel, Francken, Rembrandt and Rubens

### 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 JUNE 6** Do/Redo/Undo, survey of 50 years of performance art captured on video

## Deurle

### Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens

Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23  
www.museumddd.be  
**Until JUNE 20** Sophie von Hellermann & Josh Smith, paintings by the German and American artists  
**Until JUNE 20** Emo Verkerk, paintings by the Dutch artist

## 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

### Dr Guislain Museum

Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95  
www.museumdrguislain.be  
**Until SEP 12** De wereld andersom (The World Inside Out), art brut from the abcd collection in Paris  
**Until SEP 12** Innocent, yet punished, photographs by Lieven Nollet

### Kunstplatform Zebrastraat

Zebrastraat 32/001; www.zebrastraat.be  
**Until JUNE 20** update 3/body sound, group show using sound, light and telecommunications

### 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 20th-century 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 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

## Hasselt

### Fashion Museum

Gasthuisstraat 11; www.modemuseumhasselt.be  
**Until JUNE 6** Ultramegalore, photos, video and installations on the intersection of fashion, art and culture,

curated by Flemish model Hannelore Knuts

## 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) (Pictography: Paintings are Also Drawings and Vice Versa), group show  
**Until JUNE 20** Zulma: Muze, model en madame, drawings, paintings and objects in memory of Roger Raveel's late wife, Zulma De Nijs

## Meise

### National Botanic Garden of Belgium

Nieuwelaan 38; 02.260.09.20  
www.plantentuinmeise.be  
**Until NOV 2** Boxes Brimming with Life, photo installations by Flemish wildlife photographer Tom Linster

## 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

## 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 140,000 Chinese workers in the Second World War



### Recht in uw bakkes (In Your Face):

Four cultural centres team up to host cutting-edge and avant-garde stage productions by young Dutch-language playwrights and artists, including Miet Warlop, Lotte Van Den Berg and Ivo Dimchev  
**MAY 28-29** in Roeselare, Tielt and Ardooie  
www.malpertuis.be

## Beerse

### Beeldenbiënnale Beerse (Image Biennial Beerse):

The 10th edition of the outdoor art concourse, featuring artists from Belgium and neighbouring countries Germany, the Netherlands and France  
**Until JUNE 13** on Fri, Sat and Sun from 14.00-18.00, across Beerse (Antwerp province)  
014.600.779,  
www.beeldenbiennalebeerse.be

## Brussels

### Brussels Jazz Marathon:

Major annual festival of Belgian and international jazz musicians on outdoor stages and in 60 clubs. Four hundred performers, including Ndidi O, Philip Catherine, Jef Neve, Mariana Tootsie, The Valerie Solanas and Zappa Big Band  
**MAY 28-30** across the city  
www.brusselsjazzmarathon.be

### Congo in Brussel:

Tussen hoop en wanhoop (Between Hope and Despair): Talk and reading by former VRT journalist Walter Zinzen  
**MAY 30** 13.30 at De Markten, Oude Graanmarkt 5  
www.demarkten.be

### Danse Balsa Marni Raffinerie & Senghor:

Annual contemporary dance and performance festival  
**JUNE 1-19** in venues across the city  
www.balsamine.be

### Generosity: An Enhancement:

American novelist Richard Powers talks about his new book with Belgian genetic scientist Jean-Jacques Cassiman (in English)  
**MAY 26** 20.30 at Passa Porta, Antoine Dansaertstraat 46  
02.226.04.54, www.passaporta.be

### Jette Organ Festival:

Annual festival featuring concerts every Sunday through May  
**MAY** 16.00 at Sint-Pieterskerk, Kardinaal Mercierplein  
0478.28.31.02, www.kerkjette.be

### KVS <> Congo:

Festival celebrating five years' activity in the Congo and marking the 50th anniversary of the DRC's independence. Both Congolese and Brussels-based Congo performances present theatre, dance, exhibitions, music and talks  
**Until JUNE 15** at KVS, Arduinkaaï 7  
www.kvs.be

### Kunstenfestivaldesarts:

International festival of contemporary performing arts, including exhibitions and film  
**Until MAY 29** in venues across Brussels  
www.kfda.be

### Queen Elisabeth Piano Competition:

International competition to find the most promising young pianist in the world  
**Until JUNE 14** at Brussels Conservatory, Bozar and Musical Instruments Museum  
www.qeimc.be

### Poëziecafé: Iberian Peninsula & Scandinavia:

Readings pairing the hot sun of Federico García Lorca and Rafael Alberti Merello with the cold winters of Gustaf Fröding and Pär Lagerkvist  
**MAY 26**, 14.00-16.00 at De Markten, Oude Graanmarkt 5  
www.demarkten.be

### Stoemp! Brussels Café Concerts:

Free concerts by Flemish musicians in cafes across the city  
**Until JUNE 9**  
www.stoemplive.be

### Walking with Dinosaurs:

arena show of life-size dinosaurs (in Dutch or in French with Dutch surtitles)  
**MAY 26** 14.30 (French with Dutch surtitles) and 18.30 (Dutch) at Brussels Expo, Heysel  
0900.45.045, www.dinosaurlive.be

## Knokke

### International Photography Festival:

Festival featuring Belgian and international artists, including Tim Walker, Cecil Beaton and Paul Nougé  
**Until JUNE 13** across Knokke-Heist  
www.knokke-heist.info

## Mechelen

### Speeldag (Play Day):

The Toy Museum hosts a day of outdoor rides, games, circus tricks and other activities for kids  
**MAY 30** 10.00-18.00 on and around the Grote Markt  
www.speeldag.be

## Meise

### Nature Photography Workshop:

Wildlife photographer Tom Linster leads this workshop in the botanical garden for hands-on practice for both beginners and the learned (in Dutch, English if necessary)  
**MAY 29** 9.30-17.00 at the National Botanic Garden of Belgium  
www.plantentuinmeise.be

### Day of the Park:

20th edition of special day of adventure walks for kids 12 and under, with a backpack full of exercises and games (in Dutch)  
**MAY 30** 9.30-18.30 at the National Botanic Garden of Belgium  
www.plantentuinmeise.be

# CAFE SPOTLIGHT

COURTNEY DAVIS



## 't Latemke

K Maenhoutstraat 1a  
Sint-Martens-Latem

On the roundabout in the centre of a small Flemish village is an average café that stands out for one blatant reason; it is located in the richest town in all of Belgium. 't Latemke is well placed to take in the posh surroundings of Sint-Martens-Latem, situated on the town's main thoroughfares and near a handful of expensive shops.

Big rattan chairs and cushions afford streetside people-watching opportunities in comfort. Space heaters assure outdoor seating no matter the weather. You must jostle for space though – this one of the few places in town to see and be seen.

This small town on the banks of the river Leie is home to about 8,000 and scores of palatial houses. An artist community in the first half of the 20th century, a few nice, little museums represent the town's last remaining creative connection. Today's residents are far less bohemian, with its tiny streets packed with Mercedes and Porsches forced to putter along at village speeds.

't Latemke reveals itself to be far larger than its cottage-like appearance from the front. Interconnecting rooms and a big back terrace seat up to 140 people, but the earthy brown tones and fireplace make it cosy. The front room has tall bar tables and stools, while the remaining space is filled with smaller tables, wooden chairs, and muted wall hangings. Despite the town's opulence, this brasserie is pretty straightforward with offerings and price tags in line with what one expects from a Flemish café.

Though the lunch special of €12 featuring tomato soup and fish brochette with pasta was unimpressive at best, the house wine was served in lovely glasses, and there was no pressure to do more than sit and relax. It is also quite mom-friendly, with a changing station, booster seats and a willingness to heat up our accompanying youngster's baby food.

With the river Leie a mere 100 yards away, this café makes for a perfect bike riding pit-stop on a Sunday. But no matter the day, this is the town where you always wear your Sunday best.

➡ [www.tlatemke.be](http://www.tlatemke.be)



SHARON LIGHT

## bite



## Oostrozebeke Farm

When you are looking for farm-fresh produce – so fresh and farmy that you actually head to the countryside for it – West Flanders is the place to be. I was out there last autumn to conquer a pumpkin patch, and returned for yet another adventure this month.

Our trip meandered past various signs for fresh produce, with one farm advertising *prei* (leeks), another selling *witloof* (chicory). A highlight was undoubtedly the roadside *aardbeienautomaat*, with baskets of fresh strawberries waiting for purchase behind the small glass windows of a vending machine.

But the quest on this occasion was asparagus. We are currently in the midst of asparagus season, which began in March and runs through June. On my West Flanders outing, I was headed for the Oostrozebeke farm run by Kris Bossuyt-Dewitte, selling “Verse Asperges”, with the [www.verseasperges.be](http://www.verseasperges.be) website to match.

The small, industrial shop might be short on charm, but the fresh smell of cut asparagus greets you at the door. There are only two refrigerated cases, boasting a connoisseur's selection of white asparagus.

First, you have to choose your thickness; the asparagus is divided into thin, medium and thick stalks and sold in half-kilo bundles. I also had to consider whether I preferred the asparagus pre-peeled or not. (The answer: buy both.)

A marvellous machine in the shop area peels and washes the asparagus stalks – I suspect it strongly contributed to the lovely aroma of the room, but it is also mesmerising to watch each stalk feed through the machine, leaving behind curls of peels in a fluffy pile.

The peels do not go to waste. We were given a plastic bag-full for free for the soup we would be making later that day. But we also purchased intact “soup asparagus”, the less pretty, more crooked stalks that don't quite make the cut as pristine “white gold”, white asparagus' nickname in northern Europe.

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

Actual soup is also available, along with asparagus croquettes, asparagus tips and green asparagus.

White asparagus is a relatively new addition to my culinary vocabulary. Growing up in America, asparagus was almost invariably green; the white variety was only available on occasion in specialty shops.

I'm not clear why it hasn't made the same impression on the American palate. They are, after all, the same plant, although the white stalks are harvested while still underground, before sunlight activates the chlorophyll, turning the plant green. Undoubtedly there is a scientific explanation linking this biological process to the change in flavour, resulting in a green stem that's more bitter and a white shoot that's more delicate.

My kitchen guru, Mark Bittman, author of *How to Cook Everything* and food columnist for *The New York Times*, just this month suggested a recipe for “asparagus pesto,” replacing the aromatic basil of regular pesto with green asparagus. The recipe could hardly be simpler: cut your asparagus into small chunks (with the peel still on) and boil for 10 minutes. Then purée in a food processor with a clove of garlic, some grated parmesan, pine nuts and lemon juice. Fiddle with the proportions to suit your taste, and use it like you would use any other pesto.

Although Bittman's recipe called for green, my white asparagus served just as well. It was a nice alternative to *Asperges op Vlaamse wijze* – of which I am most certainly a fan, too – and an unusual opportunity to use the white stems without peeling them.

📍 Vlasstraat 7, Oostrozebeke  
🕒 Mon-Fri 16.00-18.30; Sat 10.00-18.00; Sun 10.00-12.00  
★ Fresh (truly) white and green asparagus right off the farm, with a peeling machine to boot

## TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



## duif →

I was feeling quite pleased with myself. The pigeon was secure in a covered washing basket in the boot of the car. The exhausted bird, which had flown in through the open bedroom window, was easy to trap. The ring on its leg showed that it was a racing pigeon – *wedstrijdsduif*, and I was off to the local café frequented by pigeon fanciers – *duivenliefhebbers*.

Once there, I tipped the exhausted flyer onto a table and announced: “*Die is zeker van één van jullie* – This surely belongs to one of you” and persuaded a reluctant local to adopt the bird before smartly leaving.

A sign that winter has done its worst is the start of the solemn early-morning weekend radio incantations of the *weerbericht voor duivenliefhebbers* – weather forecast for pigeon fanciers, as they prepare to release their racers. A recent event will have made this forecast of even more interest.

On a Saturday morning earlier this month, thousands of Dutch pigeons were released in Flanders for a short race north: *het had een ééndagswedstrijd moeten zijn* – it should have been a one-day race. Yet many Dutch *duivenliefhebbers* scanned the evening sky in vain: *honderden vogels kwamen niet terecht* – hundreds of birds didn't arrive at the right place – and they're still missing.

No great loss, you might think, until you realise that *voor*

*sommige duiven had men enkele duizend euro's betaald* – for some pigeons people had paid a few thousand euros.

The Dutch word *duif* gives us the English dove, used mostly figuratively, as in *duiven en haviken* – doves and hawks, whereas pigeon from French is used for the actual avian. Which is unusual: the Germanic word in English is often the physical thing, whereas the French borrowing serves for a specific or figurative use.

Speculation about the *vermist duiven* – missing pigeons – is rife. *Is het de aswolk?* – Is it the ash cloud? *Heeft het iets te maken met een verschuiving in de windrichting?* – Has it something to do with a change in the wind direction? Or perhaps a type of *Bermuda driehoek* – Bermuda triangle – has opened up to swallow racing pigeons.

Meteorological offices in both countries have been asked to investigate. In any case, *het blijft voorlopig gissen* – for the moment it's anyone's guess.

As for the waiting *duivenliefhebbers*, hope springs eternal: “*Sommige duiven dagen plots na maanden op* – Some pigeons suddenly show up months later”. More likely, they will have landed miles off course, and one or two may now be perched on the sill of an open bedroom window and wondering whether to nestle down on that soft bed.

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

## THE LAST WORD...

**Surprise, surprise**  
“Happy Birthday, Mr President.”

Singer Koen Crucke, who popped out of a cake to surprise minister-president Kris Peeters on his birthday

**Star turn**

“This tattoo is not the worst thing I've had to put up with in my life.”

Kimberley Vlaeminck, the girl made famous due to the 56 stars tattooed on her face, at the launch of her autobiography

**Gaga lady**

“After the Madonna concert last year, I said to my boyfriend that I could really see myself in her role. But Gaga is something else; she's even crazier than I am.”

Tanya Dexters, Miss Belgium 1998

**Seeing is believing**  
“It's more beautiful than I expected.”

Daniel Verstichelen of Oudenaarde, 78, who recently saw the sea for the first time, thanks to a group of geriatric nursing students

## NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #132

## Arts

An art parcours as only the fashion capital can do it: Vitrine comes to Antwerp

## Active

'Tis the season for tours: we've done beer, now we bike

## Living

Deep in rural Hageland, in a 17th-century farmhouse, lies a little bit of Japan