

## Banking on bolleke ..... 7

Although De Koninck – whose beloved beer is nicknamed *bolleke* – says it's "not for sale", both Heineken and Duval Moortgat have been sniffing around the Antwerp brewery



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Nadar, a collective of Brussels-based photographers, turns the cameras on its city to record the capital's social strata at work, at home and in the streets



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Belgium has more castles per square kilometre than any other country in the world. Our new series on castle walks shows you how to combine a day in nature with a traipse through history



# Congo calling

## Bart De Wever opens talks on new government

Flemish elections winner promises "no endless series of discussions"

ALAN HOPE

Bart De Wever, the leader of the New Flemish Alliance party (N-VA), which triumphed at the general election earlier this month, has been officially given the job of holding talks to explore the formation of a government coalition. De Wever, whose party took seats from almost all of its opponents and whose personal vote rocketed to near-record levels, said he would be carrying out his talks under conditions of "total discretion" and would not be talking to the press. The job he is undertaking is known in Belgian politics as *informateur* in both Dutch and French. The *informateur* is charged with sounding out the parties to discover the likelihood of some of them being able to form a majority coalition. The job is entirely informal; no law or regulation

governs the practice. In fact, the king is not obliged to follow the *informateur* procedure at all and could simply appoint a party leader to form a government following the talks he routinely has with the main figures on the political scene. In practical terms, however, that would not work, given Belgium's relatively huge spread of political parties, divided by ideology and language. In this case, the creation of a coalition government is a matter of the utmost delicacy and diplomacy.

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## The Democratic Republic of Congo celebrates 50 years of independence, while Belgium considers its future role in the former colony

EMMA DAVIS

Relations between Belgium and the Congo have been nothing less than tumultuous, starting from the moment King Leopold II took a fancy to the sprawling central African nation, annexing it as his private property in 1885. In the following years, colonial brutality and oppression, an ill-prepared independence, support for the subsequently corrupt regime of Mobutu Sese Seko and a perception that the Congolese were not quite civilised and should be grateful to colonialists have cast a shadow on relations. When Belgium's King Boudewijn attended the Congo's independence celebrations in 1960, the nation's first prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, decried his references to the benefits of colonial rule, reminding him that the Belgian regime had been one of "humiliating slavery". Nearly 20 years later, foreign affairs minister, now EU trade commissioner, Karel de Gucht repeat-

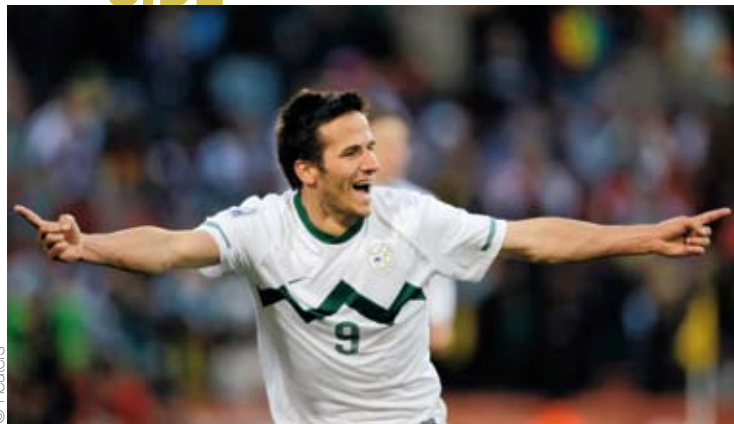
edly clashed with current president Joseph Kabila, asking him tough questions on the lack of governance. Kabila slammed his "master-slave" approach. At the same time, there is a Belgian fascination with the Congo – witness the tsunami of books, films and exhibitions to mark the anniversary of independence. Many had family there and deplore the poverty, war and endemic violence. There is also the question of responsibility towards the former colony and whether – and how much – colonisation has led to the current social and political upheavals. "Every day, people get killed, raped or mutilated. How do we deal with that?" questions Guido Gryseels, director of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, just outside Brussels. "My view is that we have a shared history. We know the country and the Congolese and can really make a difference."

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## OFFSIDE

LEO CENDROWICZ



© Reuters

## Flemish fans have their own World Cup stars

Belgium, you may have noticed, is not at this year's World Cup in South Africa. But that hasn't stopped Flemish football fans from cheering "their" players: the World Cup stars playing for Flemish clubs.

If there is a side that the Flemish might back, it is perhaps tiny Slovenia, where AA Gent's duo of centre-half defender Marko Šuler, 27, and striker Zlatan Ljubijankič, 26 (*pictured*), are two of the surprise packages in South Africa. With a population of just two million, Slovenia is the smallest country in the World Cup, but, even if they lose in Wednesday's crunch match against England, they could still be on their way to the second round. Ljubijankič, who scored in last week's 2-2 draw against the USA, won the journalist's Slovenian Player of the Year Award in 2007.

Flanders might also have a soft spot for the African nation Côte d'Ivoire, whose goalkeeper Boubacar "Copa" Barry has been with Lokeren since 2007. But before that he spent four years at Beveren, which fostered other Ivorian stars, like Emmanuel Eboué, Yaya Touré, Romaric, Arthur Boka and Gervinho.

Another to watch is Paraguay's centre half Antolín Alcaraz, 27: he is on his way to English Premiership side Wigan, but he spent the past three years with Club Brugge, helping his team to two third-places and one second.

Others include Anele Ngcongca, 22, a South African defender playing for his homeland, though he's been with Racing Genk since 2007, helping them win the Belgian Cup last year; Honduras defender Víctor "Muma" Bernárdez, 22, who is well known to Anderlecht fans; and Australian winger Nikita Rukavytsya, who spent much of this season on loan from Dutch champions FC Twente to Roselare, where he scored five goals in 11 games.

And finally, the Flemish themselves have not been absent from the football fields. Belgium's top referee, Frank De Bleckere, has been officiating in South Africa, his first game being last week's Argentina victory over South Korea. Oudenaarde-born De Bleckere, 43, refereed four games in the 2006 World Cup, as well as last year's UEFA Super Cup and the Barcelona semi-final first leg against Inter Milan in this year's Champions League.

→ [www.fifa.com](http://www.fifa.com)

## News in brief

The **Post Office** has a new name and a new logo. No longer do we have to choose between De Post and La Poste (or Die Post in the German-speaking part of Belgium). Now the name is bpost, pronounced bee-post in any language. "The new name represents both of our basic characteristics," said CEO Johnny This at the launch. "We are and will remain a postal company, and we will continue to have strong roots in our home market." The change to the new logo on 1,000 buildings and 6,000 vehicles will be done gradually.



Mystery continues to surround the fate of **six Torah scrolls** stolen from a synagogue in Antwerp at the end of May. Last week, the magazine *Joods Actueel* reported that the scrolls had been recovered, but only three scrolls had been returned safely and it is not clear what had become of the others, or whether a ransom

was paid. The scrolls, one of which survived the Shoah and is thought to be worth about €250,000, belong to a number of Jewish families who loaned them to the synagogue.

The angler fish (*Lophius piscatorius*) has been named **Fish of the Year** for 2010 by the Flanders Agricultural Marketing Board (VLAM). The angler, a member of the monkfish family, is one of the ocean's ugliest creatures, but it is prized by chefs for its lack of fat and its solid flesh. It attracts prey using a lure attached to its head. It also uses its pelvic and pectoral fins to "walk" along the sea bottom where it hides among seaweed and sand to await its prey. VLAM will organise a number of campaigns to market the fish to consumers.

A new drink that claims to lower the amount of alcohol in the blood does not work and is irresponsible, according to the Research and Information Centre for Consumer

Organisations (OIVO). **Outox** was launched last week in France by its Luxemburg-based manufacturer. A study done by Innsbruck University showed that the drink did not lower blood-alcohol levels but merely slowed down the absorption of alcohol by the stomach. The drink would give a false sense of safety to drinkers, especially young people, said OIVO, and encourage them to drink more dangerously.

The new director of Tate Modern in London is **Chris Dercon**, who takes up the post next spring. Dercon was born in Lier, Antwerp province, and studied art history, theatre and film in Leiden and Amsterdam. He worked as an arts journalist, followed by posts in art galleries in New York, Rotterdam and Munich. "Tate Modern is so many different things to so many different people," Dercon said. "I am glad to be able to be part of it."

## FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE

## Bart De Wever

By now, the character and the life Bart De Wever, the N-VA party president who won the recent election in Flanders by a landslide, have been thoroughly dissected. *Flanders Today* gathered together some facts few people know.

- When he was born, his father, a staunch Flemish nationalist, tucked a **membership card for the Volksunie** (the party that preceded the N-VA) in his nappy. De Wever later did the same with his own four children, aged between eight and two.

- His grandfather spent time in prison after the Second World War, suspected of **collaboration with Germany**. His father was later a member of the Flemish Militant Order. Bart first took part in a demonstration for the splitting of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde when he was three years old, hanging from his father's hand.

- His hero at school was **Julius Caesar**, among other notable Romans. He was known at school as "the philosopher".

- As a youth, he was a right-wing conservative, and among his heroes was **Ronald Reagan**. He is nowadays an admirer of the Irish philosopher and historian Edmund Burke and the British columnist Theodore Dalrymple.

- At university, he frittered away his time playing **Risk** in cafes with his friends, doubtless an excellent preparation for a life in politics, but less useful for his law studies, which he abandoned after two years.

- He went on to study history, against the advice of his **brother Bruno**, 11 years his senior and himself a historian, now a professor at Ghent University. Bruno thinks exclusive Flemish claims to the areas around Brussels are nonsense.

- His **sister Karina** lives in Wallonia.



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- He suffers from a morbid **fear of dirt** and doesn't like to be touched. He has also admitted difficulty accepting praise, which causes him to "shrink mentally and physically into myself". He also said: "I don't believe in psychiatry".

- A photo of him at a rally of French right-wing leader **Jean-Marie Le Pen** in 1996 has come back to haunt him. He has been at pains to distance himself from Le Pen's extremism and racism. He did not apologise, however, for his presence at the funeral of Karel Dillen, who set up the Vlaams Blok from the rubble of the Volksunie and who was a good friend of De Wever's father.

- He became N-VA party president in 2004 but only rose to major public recognition through the TV quiz show **De Slimste Mens Ter Wereld**, where his broad knowledge and quick wit were much appreciated. In one round he scored 10 out of 10 identifying photos of animal droppings. His explanation: "You can't have shit thrown at you the whole day long without learning something about it." He narrowly missed winning the series title.

- The ringtone on his mobile phone until recently was the theme music from **The A-Team**.

- The **hyphen** in his party's abbreviation, N-VA, has no significance. It was included to differentiate the new party, in the eyes of search engines, from the Dutch Union for Autism: the Nederlandse Vereniging voor Autisten.

## FLANDERS TODAY



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## Burglaries down (violence up)

The number of criminal offences committed per year is at the same level now as it was 10 years ago, according to the federal police. Vandalism and crimes of violence, though, are on the increase



## De Wever aims to avoid Leterme-style debacle

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The outgoing government of Yves Leterme was composed of five parties – three French-speaking and two Flemish. That government is an example neither De Wever nor the king wish to follow. In June 2007, Leterme's CD&V party, together with cartel partners N-VA, swept to victory in the elections, and Leterme's personal vote of 796,500 was just short of an all-time record. The king asked Didier Reynders of the French-speaking liberals to act as *informateur*, who called on Leterme to form a government. Reynders was forced to resign the job of *informateur* in August 2007 when a formula for a coalition government could not be found. Herman Van Rompuy was brought in as *explorateur* (another type of *informateur*) and concluded that Leterme was the best man for the job. Leterme tried again but had to throw in the towel in December,

at which point former prime minister Guy Verhofstadt stepped in to form an interim government.

The nine months of instability between the elections of 2007 and the moment Leterme finally composed a government had a negative effect not only on Belgium's international image but also on the economy. The alliance now between Flemish nationalist Bart De Wever and Walloon socialist Elio Di Rupo should have even less chance of holding together than past attempts at coalition building. They would be sure to clash on some fundamental issues, like spending cuts. But they also each have a wish-list of issues the other party could be willing to concede.

De Wever is keen to get the job of *informateur* over with as quickly as possible, most likely within two weeks – with “no endless series of discussions,” he said. ♦



Bart De Wever (left) is appointed by the king (centre) and is determined not to spend 200 days putting together a government

THE WEEK  
IN FIGURES

## 42,000

jobs were lost in Belgium between the beginning of the economic crisis at the end of 2008 and the first quarter of 2010, according to a study by ING bank

## 35%

increase in the average hourly wage in Belgium between 1996 and 2007, according to the federal planning office. In Germany over the same period, wages went up by only 20%

## €19.2 billion

in goods exported in March this year, an increase of 25% on March last year, according to figures from the National Bank. The greatest increases were in minerals, chemicals and plastics

## 23,829

complaints made to the federal ombudsman for telecommunications in 2009, a record number. For the first time ever, there was a marked difference between the two language groups: Dutch-speaking complaints went up by 10%, while French-speaking complaints were down by 11%

## 12.5%

of the population were the victims of violence at the hands of their partner or ex-partner in the last 12 months, according to a joint study by Ghent and Liège universities. Nearly 15% of women have been victims of domestic violence and 10.5% of men. [www.igvm-iefh.belgium.be](http://www.igvm-iefh.belgium.be)

## TV tricks newspapers with fake research

A TV production company sent fake press releases to the media for a year before being unmasked by a regional paper, it emerged last week. Woestijnvis, the independent production house that makes award-winning programmes like *Man bijt hond* and *De slimste mens ter wereld*, admitted the deception and claimed it was an experiment in connection with a forthcoming TV series. No further details were given.

The scheme involved a fake press agency, Data Driven, which issued press releases on seemingly offbeat research projects. For example, one release claimed Open VLD supporters enjoyed sexual relations more often than other party supporters. Following the recent election, another claimed

that votes in Flanders spent an average of 27 seconds in the voting booth and that vote counters across the region consumed 17,000 litres of coffee.

All of it was plausible, but none of it was true. Ruben Steegen, a reporter with *Het Belang Van Limburg*, became suspicious when he read the release claiming that a voter's political choice could be determined by studying the clothes he wore. Steegen looked into Data Driven's website and soon found that Woestijnvis was behind it.

Media critics, included politicians, had a field day, arguing that the fact the prank had gone on for a year showed that the media was not doing its job: instead of checking and double-checking sources, newspapers were

accused of lifting press releases wholesale.

The press responded that the economic situation in newsrooms, with fewer staff producing more material for print and online outlets, means proper old-school checking was becoming more and more difficult.

The Council for Journalism said that any journalists taking part in the prank had committed a serious breach of professional ethics by deliberately misleading their colleagues. Pol Deltour, secretary-general of the Flemish Journalists' Union (VWJ), said that the prank had undermined the credibility of the whole Flemish media. The press had its share of the blame, he admitted, but “the principal responsibility lies with Woestijnvis”. ♦

## Belgians big spenders on holiday

Belgians are among Europe's biggest spenders when they go on holiday, according to a survey carried out by the *Wall Street Journal*. Although 23% of people surveyed said they would not be travelling this year, nearly the same amount – 22% – said they planned to spend €500-€1,000 this year, representing more than any other country except the Netherlands (23%) and Sweden (26%).

In the next spending bracket, however, Belgium leads the continent, with 14% saying they would spend between €1,000 and €1,500. In all other higher spending brackets, Belgium also scores at the top of the chart.

The countries taking part were Turkey, Romania, Poland, Hungary,

Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, the UK, Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

The survey also showed that 42% of Europeans would not be travelling anywhere this year; of those who do, more than half will stay in their own country, though only 18% of Belgians plan to stay at home. Exploration and discovery are of interest to 49% of Belgians, far above the European average, with 54% preferring to stick to reading, relaxing and playing games. More than one-third can look forward to two weeks' travelling, with 22% taking three weeks and 17% just one week. ♦

## Flemish ready for Wimbledon

Wimbledon kicked off this week with a sizeable Flemish contingent consisting of Kim Clijsters, Yanina Wickmayer, Kirsten Flipkens, Kristof Vliegen and Xavier Malisse. In a Wimbledon warm-up event last week, US Open champion and world number nine Clijsters crashed out in the quarter-finals of the WTA tournament in Eastbourne as she went down in straight sets to Victoria Azarenka of Belarus. Earlier, Clijsters had beat Wickmayer, the number 15 seed, in the first round of the Eastbourne event. ♦

FIFTH  
COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

## Bijltjesdag

The federal elections brought everything one could have hoped: a short but sharp campaign, a surprising outcome, a clear winner and a totally new political landscape – which carries with it the promise of a fresh start.

One traditional element was lacking, though: *bijltjesdag*. *Bijltjesdag*, or “day of the little axes”, usually takes place the day after the election, when the leaders of the losing parties are sent off to make way for a new generation. With so many losers – Christian Democrats, liberals, socialists and Vlaams Belang – one would expect at least one *bijltjesdag*, but so far we have not seen any. Why not?

With the Christian Democrats (CD&V), the explanation is simple. Prime minister Yves Leterme had stepped aside before the election, leaving it up to Marianne Thyssen, the relatively new party president, to head the national Senate list. Making her a scapegoat now would be one step too far, as her party had lost its credibility in the years before. Leterme, meanwhile, still fancies a ministerial career.

Open VLD's Alexander De Croo, too, had only been party president for less than a year. He can hardly be blamed for the liberals' government record since 1999. Even before the elections, De Croo had started acting as an opposition leader. Let's not talk about the past, he would answer time and time again, when opponents pointed to contradictions between his words and his party's behaviour. Now he can look forward to being a genuine – rather than virtual – opposition leader.

SP.A also hit a historic low on 13 June, but, for some reason, the party does not consider itself a loser in the elections. Hard times await president Caroline Gennez, though. Over the past years, she has managed to control the leftist dissent, and there was some reconciliation with the socialist union, but she estranged many party members when she refused to make Frank Vandenbroucke a minister in the Flemish government. Will he become a federal minister now? That seems unlikely. Gennez may even enter the federal government herself – another way of avoiding *bijltjesdag*.

The far-right Vlaams Belang, another loser, has become almost identical with its leader Filip Dewinter. It is hard to see how anyone could get rid of him. Jean-Marie Dedecker, finally, announced on 14 June that he will no longer act as party president. That leaves his eponymous Lijst Dedecker not only in search of a new leader, but also a new name.



## “We can't forget Congo”

As Belgium continues to ponder its role, it's begun assisting the Congolese with contract negotiations with foreign interests

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According to the UN, the Congo is one of the least developed countries in the world. The International Rescue Committee, an American non-governmental organisation (NGO), estimates that 45,000 Congolese die every day due to violence and disease.

For the Belgian government, the Congo remains a priority, even if economic interests are few. “This is the only place in the world where Belgium is a superpower. Washington, for example, will watch the Belgians on Central Africa,” said Filip Reyntjens, Congo specialist at the University of Antwerp. As Boudewijn's brother and successor King Albert II heads to the Congo capital of Kinshasa for the anniversary celebrations, the question now is how Belgium can best contribute to the nation's development.

### Bloody beginnings

In the Europeans' scramble for new territories, Leopold II's venture paid off big time. With the invention of tyres, the Congo's rubber supplies alone made the king rich. To capitalise on this and other resources, the colonialists instituted a regime of forced labour.

There are no official figures, but estimates of the death toll of the Congolese at the hands of the Belgians during Leopold's rule vary from five to 20 million. Add to that beatings and mutilations, including the famous severing of hands of natives who failed to meet their rubber farming quotas.

*“My view is that we have a shared history. We know the country and the Congolese and can really make a difference.”*

A growing band of human rights observers, notably British consul Roger Casement, lambasted the regime, called – and here's a contradiction in terms – the Congo Free State, for its abuses. Casement brought the situation to the attention of other European powers who pushed the Belgian state to take it over from Leopold and end the terror. Leopold lost the Congo to the Belgian state in 1908, which also marked the end of his reign as king. Congo became known as the Belgian Congo.

Over the next years, Congo saw rapid development, as industrialists, keen to make money out of the country's huge metals and mineral resources, built massive infrastructure. Meanwhile, missionaries brought Christianity, churches, and schools and universities were established.

After the Second World War, it became more and more difficult for colonial powers in Europe to dominate overseas territories were. With 16 other countries in Africa gaining independence in 1960, Belgium was unable to resist the trend.

### Transition mistakes

For Belgium, a lack of preparation of the people, few of whom had been allowed to hold senior posts in the administration, and unwillingness after independence to stay out of Congolese affairs, proved to be two big mistakes.

Segregation in the post-Congo Free State and a lack of workers' rights (and pay) held up the development of a civil society. “The view was that the Congolese must work because they are lazy,” says Mathieu Zana Etambala, who was born in Congo and is a history professor at the Catholic University of Leuven.

After the election of Patrice Lumumba, western powers – Belgium included – feared African nations would fall to communism, which would put a stop to ongoing exploitation of resources. Belgians feared losing Congo's vast resources, in particular from the mining province of Katanga in the south.

After calling in the Soviets to help him eject Belgian diplomats and military, Lumumba was put under house arrest by the Congo state president. Just over a year after coming to power, Lumumba was murdered by a firing squad under the command of the Belgian military. A later Belgian inquiry found that even if Belgium had not directly ordered his murder, it had done nothing to prevent it.

Compounding this interference, western powers welcomed successor Mobutu (famed for grotesque abuses of human rights as well as his leopard-skin hat), turning a blind eye to rife corruption in his regime as he allied himself with them in the Cold War.

“To Belgium, the US and their European allies, the major goal was to keep the Congo on the Western side in the Cold War and keep profits flowing from mines and other European and American interests,” says Adam Hochschild, the American author of the book *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*.

In 1991, with the Cold War over, the west no longer needed Mobutu. This, coupled with the 1990 attack on Lubumbashi University by Mobutu's security staff, killing several students who had demanded liberalisation, saw the western powers back away.

It took 10 years and the “Great War of Africa”, a humanitarian crisis that resulted in the deaths of more than five million, before the west, prompted by Belgium, picked up the gauntlet and pushed Congo to the top of the international political agenda.

“I personally believe that the last 10 years of Belgian diplomacy has done a lot for the Congo,” says Etambala. “If the Congo has survived, that was very much to do with these efforts. The Belgians said: ‘We can't forget Congo’.”

### Redrawing relations

Today, the Congo is still much in need. Diseases such as sleeping sickness had been almost eradicated by the time of independence, but after years of corruption and neglect, medical services are inadequate, and millions are still dying from it, according to medical NGO Memisa.

And yet this is a nation with a huge wealth of natural resources, from cobalt (used in batteries and in alloy form to coat turbine blades for jet engines) to fertile soil for agriculture and a vast water resource for hydro-



Belgian photographer Jean-Dominique Burton's *Kinshasa-Brussels: From Matonge to Matonge* at the Museum for Central Africa explores these neighbourhoods of the same name in both countries' capitals

electric power. “You name it; they have it all,” says the Africa Museum's Gryseels.

Once again, foreign powers are eyeing Congo, with China already building huge swathes of infrastructure. “In colonial times, we woke up and looked towards the Atlantic Ocean. In 2035, we will be looking to the Indian Ocean,” says Etambala.

This may be all the more reason why Belgium has a role to play. The Congo is already looking to Belgians to help them negotiate contracts. Eventually, the Chinese will also look to the Belgians, says Marti Waals, director of Mimesa. “The Chinese are realising how hard it is to do business there.”

There are also fears that new investors are driven only by a lust for wealth at a time when the international community should speak with one voice on the Congo. “There are no conditions in terms of human rights or democracy; this is business with no strings attached,” says the University of Antwerp's Reyntjens.

*Lack of preparation of the people and an unwillingness to stay out of Congolese affairs proved to be big mistakes*

Belgium nonetheless has a thin line to tread with the Congolese. That might be one reason (aside from the political crisis here) why the government, besides sending outgoing prime minister Yves Leterme to accompany the king, is doing little to mark the anniversary.

“I'm very disappointed not more is happening at the government level, although I understand why,” says Gryseels. “Relations are very fragile and can be put to the test at any time.” He adds that he would like to see a roundtable with the Congolese for them to explain their priorities.

A roundtable, which would echo one held in Brussels in January 1960, culminating in the Congolese declaration of independ-

ence, would allow both sides to “evaluate the successes and failure and see what we can learn from them,” he says.

Overcoming the diplomatic minefield would require perhaps another wave of soul-searching on the part of the Belgians (the first was promoted by Hochschild's 1998 book and a consequent national inquiry), who, according to Etambala, need to accept that colonialism was not a normal situation.

“The Belgians give a positive interpretation, saying we founded schools and churches. No white Belgian bore a stone to build them. That work was done by the Congolese, and they were not paid,” he says.

Reyntjens agrees. “Still in the west there is an implicit superiority complex,” he says. “The feeling is that Africans are not grown up.” When it comes to explaining genocide, “people say that's what Africans do, but it's also something we have done – and on a much larger scale.”

### Belgium calling

Nonetheless, Belgium is well-placed to keep the Congo on the international agenda, according to Kris Berwouts, director of Eurac, the European network of NGOs in Africa. Europe's work, for example, “requires deep knowledge of the social-linguistic environment”.

Etambala identifies three key areas where Belgium can contribute towards development: medical supplies, education and the establishment of a civil society. “Civil society is not only about the intellectual and political elite. The Belgians should help us construct this.”

Waals also sees an important role for Belgium in that area. “We have to put together benchmarks with civil society and government – decide what can they do from their side, what we have to bring and then examine and evaluate whether these objectives are achieved,” she says.

For Berwouts, Belgium should, in essence, contribute to an international effort based on “a genuine will to contribute loyally to the country's development and put serious pressure in areas of concern such as human rights, good governance and democratic participation”. ♦





Maintaining an orchestra in one of the world's most troubled countries: *Kinshasa Symphony*, part of Bozar's Visionary Africa festival



Demonstrators urge politicians to send peacekeeping troops to Congo outside EU headquarters in 2008

### The Congo: a timeline

- 1885** King Leopold II, the second king of the Belgians, acquires Congo as his private property, naming it the Congo Free State
- 1908** Under pressure from the international community over reports of grotesque abuses of human rights, the Belgian government takes over Congo for the next 52 years, calling it the Belgian Congo
- 1960** Congo, along with 16 other African nations, wins independence and becomes the Republic of the Congo. Patrice Lumumba is elected prime minister. King Boudewijn of Belgium attends the celebrations. Lumumba is angered by references in the king's speech to the benefits brought by colonialism
- 1961** Lumumba is murdered. Speculation is rife that Belgium, keen to maintain economic interests in the rich mining region of Katanga, supported his killers
- 1965** Joseph-Désiré Mobutu takes over, and his regime maintains a stranglehold on the country for 32 years. He changes the country's name to Zaire and his own to Mobutu Sese Seke.
- 1974** Mobutu invites boxers George Foreman and Mohammad Ali for a match dubbed Rumble in the Jungle; a high point in relations with the outside world
- 1990** Lubumbashi University massacre. Several students are killed as the Zaire government suppresses pro-liberalisation students
- 1991** The Soviet Union collapses. Fears Africa would fall to communism subside. The Congo falls off the western powers' foreign policy agendas
- 1997** Mobutu's regime is overthrown. Laurent-Désiré Kabila becomes president of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
- 2001** Kabila is assassinated. Joseph Kabila becomes DRC's new president
- 2001** Belgian premier Guy Verhofstadt kick-starts relations with the DRC, bringing its people's plight to the attention of international forums
- 2007** Kabila slams Belgian foreign minister Karel de Gucht, maintaining Belgium persists with a master-slave view of their relationship
- 2010** De Gucht, now European Union trade commissioner, is barred from the Congo. King Albert II to attend the 30 June independence celebrations



Workers dig in an open pit at the Chudja gold mine near the village of Kobu in north-eastern Congo. Civil conflict has been driven for more than a decade by the violent struggle for control over the country's vast natural resources

### Congo culture

To mark the anniversary Brussels and Flanders plays host to numerous events this summer

The largest and possibly most comprehensive view on Congo independence and relations with Belgium is at the **Royal Museum of Central Africa** in the form of four new exhibitions, including one on Congolese views on independence and another on the history and biodiversity of the 4,700-kilometre long Congo River. After criticisms that it was stuck in colonial times, the museum's latest exhibitions are a refreshing take on African life and its beautiful natural environment. **Tervuren**

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

Check out the line-up for Bozar's **Visionary Africa** festival, a series of music, exhibitions and performances until 26 September. Highlights include Geo-Graphics: A Map of ART Practices in AFRICA, Past and Present, in which contemporary artists reinterpret old masterpieces, the 50 Years of Music from Congo concert and the documentary *Kinshasa Symphony*. **Brussels**

→ [www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)

Discover contemporary photographer Cedric Gerbehaye's work at his **Congo in Limbo** exhibition at Botanique. From 2007 to 2010, the Belgian snapper visited the Congo on several occasions to capture images of its diversity, paradoxes, tensions and vitality. **Brussels**

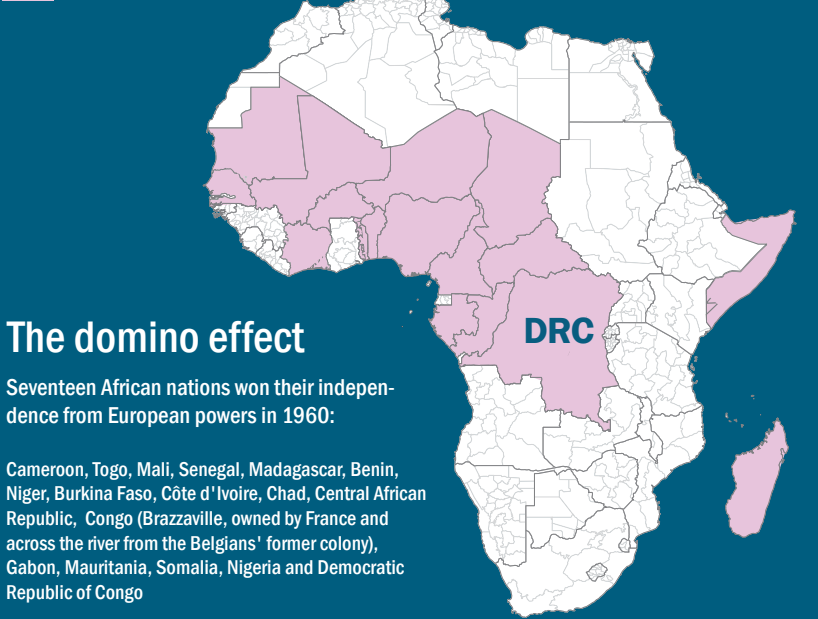
→ [www.botanique.be](http://www.botanique.be)

Moving back in time, the Royal Army Museum hosts the exhibition **Lisolo Na Bisu: The Congolese Soldier in the Force Publique**, which traces the Congolese armed forces from the beginning of colonisation all the way to independence. It illustrates the soldiers' daily lives, from food to punishment, which gradually shaped a collective conscience, paving the way for a national identity. **Brussels**

→ [www.klm-mra.be](http://www.klm-mra.be)

Take a **walking tour** of colonial buildings in Brussels, including the former headquarters of the Congo Free State administration, a Norwegian chalet in Brederodestraat and Jubelpark. Tours are organised by La Fonderie ([www.lafonderie.be](http://www.lafonderie.be)) and Culturama ([www.culturamavzw.be](http://www.culturamavzw.be)). Or visit the **Bonjour Congo in België** show organised by TV station Canvas in the Royal Museum for Central Africa. Journalists called for people across the country to send in photographs of colonial relics and buildings found in Belgium.

gained independence in 1960



© Sebastien Pirlat / Reuters

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• 1500 Halle, Mr Yves Tielemans, Tel 02/363.15.35, [yves@sterckx.be](mailto:yves@sterckx.be)

## Besix wins Utrecht station contract

### New integrated train station will be the biggest in the Netherlands

ALAN HOPE

The Dutch subsidiary of Besix, one of Belgium's largest construction companies, has been awarded the contract to build the new Utrecht Centraal railway station.

The station building is the largest part of the whole project, which also includes the construction of other public transport facilities – the station is served by 72 different bus lines – and renovation of the surrounding area. The contract, announced last week by ProRail, the Dutch rail management authority, is worth €95 million.

Utrecht station, a major hub for rail connections

across the Netherlands, was last rebuilt in 1989 to cope with an anticipated 35 million passengers a year. But those numbers are already up to 200,000 a day, travelling on 900 trains a day, and numbers are expected to rise to above 100 million a year. The new building will also answer one of the main complaints from the public: that the station was never clearly visible from the surrounding area. The new design by architects Benthem Crouwel will provide a large open concourse with an undulating roof, bathed in natural light, linking directly to shops, taxi stands and public transport, as well as the rail

platforms. The platforms will have new glass and steel canopies with solar cells generating about 85,000 kW hours a year, which will be pumped into the national grid. Work is expected to begin in the autumn, to be completed in 2014.

The award of the contract to Besix gives them a head start in competing for a series of other station renovations planned in the Netherlands in the coming years, including Rotterdam, The Hague and Amsterdam Zuid. ♦



The Utrecht station now and the plan for the future

### Antwerp's Bolleke target for takeover?

Antwerp is under attack both from within Flanders and from across the border in the Netherlands. That, at least, is how the city's beer lovers see it. Their beloved *bolleke* – the name for the bulbous glass from which they drink De Koninck beer, hence, the nickname for the beer itself – is the subject of a hostile takeover bid from both Heineken, the Dutch pils giant, and Duvel Moortgat, based in Puurs, Antwerp province.

De Koninck, the company stresses, is not for sale. Bernard Van den Bogaert, who runs the company with his brother Dominique, said last week they were "looking for strategic co-operation" to help increase exports from the current level of 35% to 50%. And he admitted that he had been in discussion with "colleagues" from Duvel Moortgat and Heineken. "I can put everyone's mind at rest," he told *De Standaard*. "I have received no offers."

But the rumours persist. Are the two interlopers eyeing up De Koninck? The company, an Antwerp

institution which still brews in its original building in Berchem, could be a ripe takeover prospect. Once, production stood at 140,000 hectolitres a year. Now they're lucky to reach half of that. The beer market overall is suffering, and De Koninck is no exception.

De Koninck has only half a percent share of the Belgian beer market – not much room for negotiation when things get tough. And it is mostly drunk in cafes, exactly where beer consumption is going down.

But they do have a couple of strong cards: a cast-iron brand loyalty and a portfolio of about 100 cafes and other properties in prize positions in Antwerp. Neither of the two "colleagues" has a beer like De Koninck in their range, which is good news for devotees because it makes it extremely unlikely either Heineken or Duvel Moortgat would mess with the recipe. ♦



### Fortis successor expects huge damages suits

Bank and insurer Fortis, now known as Ageas, looks like it will face massive damages claims from disgruntled shareholders, following the leaking of a confidential report by a panel of Dutch experts into the events in September and October 2008 leading up to the bank being dismantled.

The report found, among other things, that the three top men at the bank – chairman Maurice Lippens, CEO Herman Verwilt and special adviser Gilbert Mittler – failed to communicate crucial new information to shareholders in the two weeks leading up to Fortis' collapse.

"Rather than deliver the strong performance that would have been essential to reduce the chance

that Fortis might fall further into difficulties," the report says, "In the days leading up to and including 26 September, 2008, Fortis performed in a manner that was aimless, incoherent and panic-stricken. In addition, communications with the outside world were of a manner that was insufficient in every way."

Fortis' main problem was not so much the financial crisis, which had begun to break over the banking industry globally several months earlier, but their inability to cope with it. And that was largely due to the acquisition of ABN-Amro by a consortium, including Fortis, Banco Santander and Royal Bank of Scotland, for a total of €72 billion – the largest bank takeover in history. Fortis had paid €24 billion

for the divisions dealing with private banking, asset management and business banking in the Netherlands. As the financial crisis hit, the bank was unable to place certain risky properties it had acquired on the market. The price of the credit needed to raise the asking price took off skyward. The acquisition had left Fortis too weak to fight off the crisis. The announcement that it was moving to a rights issue to raise €8 billion and scrapping the year's dividend led to the share price plummeting. The then-CEO Jean-Paul Votron resigned, but Lippens survived.

In September, the Dutch government stepped in and bought back the Dutch activities of Fortis for €16.8 billion. Later, French bank BNP

Paribas took over control of what was left, in a complicated deal involving equity swaps with the Belgian and Luxembourg governments.

Shareholders have never stopped protesting at the way their holdings, which ought to have been blue-chip stocks, lost their value overnight, leaving many small investors with nothing. Deminor, an advisory bureau that represents a large number of small investors and a few large ones, estimates a total damages claim of €400-500 million.

The court of first instance in Brussels will open the case at the earliest in September. ♦

## THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

### Airlines • Air Canada

Air Canada relaunched its Brussels-Montreal-Toronto daily flights last week after more than 10 years of interruption. The service expects to benefit from connections to Brussels Airlines' extensive European and African route network through the Star Alliance airlines partnership.

### Automotive • Solvay

Brussels-based chemical and plastics group Solvay is planning to sell its 50% stake in Inergy Automotive Systems, a world-leading producer of plastic fuel systems for the automobile industry, located in the Vorst commune of Brussels. The move will boost Solvay's finances as it contemplates potential acquisitions. Meanwhile, the company has dropped plans to acquire the Russian Berezniki Soda ash company because of local opposition.

### Congresses • Brussels

Brussels has become Europe's leading congress centre, overtaking Paris for the first time, according to the Union of International Associations. The city is now ranked second in the world, after Singapore. Some 402 international meetings and congresses were held in Brussels last year, compared to 386 in Paris and 331 in Vienna.

### Construction • Besix

Brussels-based building group Besix has won a €216 million contract to build the 2.4-kilometre long North Manama bridge in Bahrain.

### Energy • Wingas

Wingas, a joint venture between Germany's Basf group and Russia's Gazprom, will start supplying local households, following an agreement with the Nuon gas distribution company. The company seeks to build a 10% market share in the country over the next few years.

### Interiors • Ixina

Italian kitchens producer and distributor Ixina, which opened stores in Bruges, Ghent and Dendermonde this year, is planning to open 12 more in Flanders over the next three years. The company already has 18 outlets in the region.

### Schools • Fortis

BNP-Paribas Fortis, the country's largest financial institution, has signed a €1.7 billion PPP (Private Public Partnership) contract to finance the renovation of some 200 schools in Flanders over the next 30 years.

### Supermarkets • Carrefour

Supermarket chain Carrefour will be reaching out to young people this summer with its double-decker festival bus, which will carry its Carrefour Express range of ready meals to music festivals across Belgium. The bus will also sell fresh bread, non-food items like toiletries and even tents and sleeping bags.



# Throwing the door open

Brussels' annual film festival reels in more European directors



Belgian actress Yolande Moreau gets a welcome chance to cut loose in French horror film *La meute* (The Pack), premiering at the Brussels European Film Festival at Flagey

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

**M**ore than 35 years after the first edition of Brussels' international film festival, it's changing its identity. Again. The festival has altered its mission fairly regularly in the past, although it has been tampering with European cinema since 1998. In 2003, it relocated to Flagey and limited itself to first and second films by European directors.

The festival helped revitalise the Flagey quarter. But artistically it didn't fare well because its DNA wasn't viable: there just aren't enough good first and second films by European directors to establish an entire festival.

Moreover, the Brussels European Film Festival missed the most influential and highly praised European debuts or second films of the past years: *The Lives of Others* by German director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck and Romanian Cristian Mungiu's Golden Palm winner *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*.

This 2010 edition sees the advent of a new festival director, Ivan Corbisier, who broadened the event's spectrum. Every new European film now is eligible for the festival.

Of course, backbiters moan that the new team was mainly hoping to lure more stars and starlets to Brussels, but the list of festival guests proves them wrong. Surely, when gracing the red carpet, Danyael Sugawara, Claudio Casadio and Julie Anson won't be thronged by fans.

The most interesting names in the new competition are Finland's Mika Kaurismäki (not to be confused with his famous brother Aki) and the Hungarian director György Pálfi, whose new film *I'm Not Your Friend*, sadly and surprisingly, has not been successful.

Yet, the Brussels European Film Festival hasn't renounced its mission to discover new directors: the Panorama section presents upcoming talents. The Europe of Genres section, in the meantime, groups a few thrillers and comedies – the kind of films the organiser doesn't feel suitable for the main sections, but, on the other hand, still wants to include in the festival. Hello Sundance is another new section – albeit small. Just two American indie films this year.

But the most popular part of the festival will remain the free open-air screenings, introduced in 2006 to boost attendance. It programs popular recent European cinema like Belgian films *Les Barons* and *De helaasheid der dingen* (The Misfortunates) and British director Richard Curtis' *Good Morning England*.

The festival also presents short films, photo exhibitions, a film quiz and, this looks highly interesting, a master class by Belgian director Jaco Van Dormael, who will also present the director's cut of his latest, underrated picture *Mr Nobody*.

Opening duties go to *Tournée* by French actor-director Mathieu Amalric. The film won, to everyone's surprise, the best directing award in Cannes. I must admit, this time the backbiters might be right. The film features four buxom dancers, and, as we remember from Cannes, they're willing to show off their assets. So, there might be a memorable moment on the red carpet, after all. ♦

**23-30 June**

Flagey  
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→ [www.fffb.be](http://www.fffb.be)

## Âge d'Or & Filmvondsten

It's back on its own, and minus Asia

The day after the Brussels European Film Festival ends, another festival starts, this time at Cinematek: Âge d'Or/Filmvondsten (AO/FV). Like the name suggests, it's actually two festivals. Fifteen years ago, the festivals merged, but their competitions have different goals.

The Âge d'Or Prize, named after the groundbreaking film by Luis Buñuel, is given to a film that "excels in cinematographic non-conformism". The two Filmvondsten prizes want "to encourage the distribution of high quality films": €10,000 goes to the Belgian distributors that release the winning films.

In the past three years, the international festival had been organised in conjunction with the Brussels European Film festival, so we saw a steep raise in European films. AO/FV may not be part of the Brussels European Film Festival anymore, but the European dominance hasn't disappeared. On the contrary, with 67%, this is the most "European" version of AO/FV ever.

Even more amazingly, only nine percent of the films are Asian, an all-time low that doesn't reflect the vibrancy still felt in the Asian cinema. After missing *Oxhide* five years ago, the festival didn't select the second feature by director Liu Jiayin, *Oxhide II*, one of the most daring films in recent years. All in all, Chinese mainland underground cinema has produced some true gems that would have fitted the AO/FV bill nicely.

Moreover, it's out of touch with the lively Korean underground that in recent years has been the source of Âge d'Or films from the likes of Kim Gok or Kim Kyung-mook. The latter's recent *A Cheonggyecheon Dog* is an explicit homage to Buñuel's film.

Luckily, there's also good news. Whereas in recent years, AO/FV had gone the way of the Brussels European Film Festival, shying away from programming established directors in favour of up and comers, this year we see a lot of big shots: Frenchman Jean-Luc Godard, Georgian Otar Iosseliani, Portuguese centenarian Manoel de Oliveira and two world famous documentary directors, Chile's Patricio Guzmán and American Frederick Wiseman.

So, although AO/FV won't appease the hunger of Asian film fans, there might still be enough in store for an interesting festival. **CV**

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



King Boudewijn first visited the Belgian Congo in 1955, shadowed by colonialist filmmaker André Cauvin

## Civilisation offensive • Cinematek's newest DVD release

The past years Cinematek (the popular name for the Royal Belgian Film Archive) has built a solid reputation as the editor of DVD compilations that unlock Belgium's cinematographic heritage, digging out documentaries or newsreel gems.

The World Expo of 1958, the railways or the now defunct national airline Sabena – all of these subjects have led to spectacularly entertaining DVDs. And to concur with the 50th anniversary of Congolese independence, Cinematek has released the beautifully edited two DVD set *Belgisch Congo Belge*.

The 15 colonialist films – one feature, the other shorts – have been made by three directors. The four films by Ernest Genval from the 1920s and '30s – three of them silent – mainly focus on industrial or

commercial activities in the Congo, like the building of a railroad line or the extraction of gold. Some of these films were financed by industrial companies, and they all served as a tool of propaganda.

Gérard De Boe, who fills the first DVD with 10 titles, all but one dating from the 1950s, was by far the most critical of the three. Yet, some of his films were also financed by industry, so at times he also was an instrument in the hands of propaganda.

The main feature on this DVD set is *Bwana Kitoko*, the famous but rarely showed documentary that André Cauvin shot about the first trip king Baudouin made, in 1955, to the then Belgian Congo. But the king's visit is mainly an opportunity to portray the country. Thus, the most interesting part is not the king waving incessantly to the rows of people



# Love immigrants, hate tourists

The Nadaar collective's new book and exhibition on the people of Brussels



A Greek mine worker, long retired but with the relics of a former way of life, photographed by Dieter Telemans

IAN MUNDELL

In *Facing Brussels*, the Nadaar collective has brought together 11 photographers to look at the people who live in the Belgian capital, from the privileged of the country club set to the slum-dwelling poor, from illegal immigrants to the bureaucrats of the European quarter. Each photographer has his or her own project, bringing to it a distinct style.

Eric De Mildt produces intimate images of rail travellers at Brussels' stations, catching them contemplating books, text messages or the departure screens. He makes a virtue of low light to produce atmospheric, grainy shots. One of the best uses reflections in the windows at North Station to build up layers in the image, bringing together people in the train, on the platform and on the descending staircase.

Dieter Telemans makes warm portraits of first-generation immigrants, posing them in their homes or work places. These range from Lisa Pjetri, who fled Albania in 1952 and appears only with a small snapshot of her family in her hands,

to Dimitrios Kynoyalas and his wife, in a front room full of souvenirs of his time working as a miner. There are also more recent arrivals from Burundi, Pakistan and Ecuador, all with tales to tell of family happiness and business success.

Alain Schroeder also brings out the diversity of the capital, with his pictures of religious and cultural celebrations. There are worshippers at a church in the Matonge African quarter, a Turkish wedding and circumcision, people in the street and in restaurants. In a similar vein, Jan Locus has photographed 15 people called Mohammed, apparently now the most common first name in Brussels. This includes the star of the exhibition poster, six-year-old Mohammed El Kbiach, or "Spiderman in his spare time".

A starker side of Brussels can be seen in the pictures of Nick Hannes. He takes us inside the slum apartments of Molenbeek and the Marollen, where people on the margins of society pay over the odds for damp, run down accommodation. Another lives in a squash court, part of an abandoned sports centre,

while a makeshift shelter outside bizarrely incorporates a tarpaulin printed with an image from a graphic novel. Even the shanties here are typically Belgian.

All of these photographers appear to sympathise with the people whose lives they are documenting, and, even in the most difficult cases, the images are respectful and non-judgemental. But several of the photographers have projects that strike me as unsympathetic, or downright hostile. This feeling is particularly strong in the section of the exhibition that mixes up pictures by different photographers so that positive and negative images hang side by side.

So who do we hate? First of all, tourists. Taking the lowest common denominator of Brussels tourism, Tim Dirven has based his project around the Manneken Pis, snapping tourists near the urinat-

ing icon and the various incarnations of it that appear around town. This is accompanied by a contemptuous text by journalist Catherine Vuylsteke, headlined "fast food for the imagination", which condemns visitors for their lack of inquiry into the origins of the statue and its ambiguous authenticity. "They probably don't care," it concludes. And Belgians do?

However you have to hand it to Dirven. He sums up of the tourist cliché perfectly with a larger than life image of an Asian woman with a huge camera in one hand (perversely shooting away from the Manneken Pis) and a vast chocolate covered waffle in the other.

Another group that we are meant to despise are the Eurocrats. The images constructed by Philippe Herbet epitomise the faceless bureaucrat, as he carefully shoots people from behind or focuses on the empty rooms and corridors of the European Commission. The couple of images that do show people head on (which only appear in the book and not the exhibition) are simply labelled "EU staff" rather than giving them a name and a nationality, still less a personal story. The selection is titled "Brussels without Belgians", forgetting that Belgians are as well, if not better, represented in the EU institutions as any other nation.

Hostility closer to home is directed at people around well-heeled Zavel in photos taken by Jimmy Kets, and the out-and-out privileged at the International Club Chateau Saint-Anne at Auderghem by Wim Knapen. These are easy targets, lazily photographed. More surprising is a selection on bourgeois bohemian Brussels by Marine Dricot, described in the text as divided into Dansaert Flemish and Chatelaine French speakers. Like the pictures of Eurocrats these, photographs turn their subjects into faceless bodies, not in over-exposed offices but dark bars and apartments. The irony is that of all the Brussels communities, this is probably the one to which most of the photographers belong. ♦

## is a treasure trove of colonial films

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

welcoming him, but the capturing of the strange-looking okapi animal and the intricate preparation leading up to it.

The pompous tone with which the viewer is addressed might be not unusual for a semi-official documentary from that time, yet it only serves to make you feel like a child. But what really rubs against the grain is the strikingly condescending with which the Congolese are portrayed: all the good things in the country spring from the wise white man. (Except the splendid fauna and flora, although I wouldn't have been surprised if this had been claimed, too.)

This, of course, was not exceptional within colonial powers. Like Grace Winter states in one of the many excellent essays that accompany the DVDs:

"In essence, colonial cinema is a legitimisation of colonisation and the mother country's civilisation offensive."

These films all have their historical importance, but they are, in general, more interesting in their portrayal of the gaze with which Belgium looked at Congo than for their portrayal of the colony itself. We might despise that point of view now, but they are signs of bygone times. And that makes them still worth seeing. ♦

*Belgisch Congo Belge can be purchased in shops or from the Cinematek website*

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

## Facing Brussels

Until 12 September  
BELvue Museum  
Paleizenplein 7, Brussels

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



# The neighbourhood castle

Our new series explores the areas around the record number of castles in Flanders

MELISSA MAKI

Belgium has the densest concentration of castles in the world. The petite country boasts more than 3,000 of these historic structures – that's an average of one castle every 10 square kilometres. So when was the last time you visited your neighbourhood castle?

We've checked out a great number and discovered that visiting the insides of these monumental structures is only half the advantage. The grounds and surrounding areas of castles are often gorgeous landscapes. For the next five weeks, we'll explore the beauty around one castle in each of Flanders' five provinces, by foot or bike. We begin this week in Limburg.

Though you might picture an imposing stone building with turrets and a moat, today's definition of a *kasteel* (castle) is somewhat loose. It can either be a fortified palace or an old country mansion. The age of Belgian castles varies widely, too – some date from the 11th century, but more often they originate in the 18th or 19th centuries.

Many of Belgium's castles are in rural areas with extensive gardens and woodland paths. Often, the buildings themselves are private (as some still serve as residences), but domains surrounding the castles are sometimes open to the public.

Limburgers have a historic castle with a brewery in their midst. The Kasteelbrouwerij Ter Dolen is in Helchteren, a village located about 15 kilometres north of Hasselt.

The moated, Renaissance-style castle was built by the Abbots of Sint-Truiden. Its foundations date back to the 11th century, but it was rebuilt in the 16th. The castle now serves as a bed and breakfast, and its adjoining farm has been turned into a successful brewery.

## The route

Unfortunately and somewhat ironically (since the name, beer label and website all prominently picture the castle), the castle and its gardens are private, cordoned off from the brewery and surrounding by leafy trees. If you want a good view of it, you can book a stay in

the bed and breakfast. Alternatively, arrange a private tour of the brewery and request that it include a walk through the castle gardens. You can buy a map of the eight-kilometre Ter Dolen *wandelroute* (walking route) at the brewery or just follow the white, hexagonal signs marked with a number 4. It's also possible to bike this route. Most of it is paved and connects up with Limburg's extensive *fietsnetwerk* (cycle network). The route takes you through some pretty, forested areas that border Helchteren.

The path begins right outside the brewery on the lovely tree-lined Eikendreef (oak lane). Follow Eikendreef west, and you'll cross the busy N715/Grote Baan and continue in a residential area on Broekstraat. Take a right down the next dirt road and follow the path on the right. A sign indicates that this is a private road, but I was assured by one of the area residents that it was okay. (I soon saw the next route sign and confirmed that I was on the right path.)

After a short while, the road veers left. According to the map, the path runs between Grote Winterbeek and Sonnisbeek here. *Beek* translates to "stream", but the water isn't visible from the path.

Next make a right at Weg naar Spikkelspade, then two left turns – at Heerkensweg and then Loerstraat. The path is paved here for a while and then it turns to dirt. Watch carefully for the signs. Here starts the most beautiful part of the route. The path is lined with leafy deciduous trees and pines in vibrant shades of green. Next the path turns right. As you move onto a dirt path lined with birch, lush scenery envelops you.

You soon head left and hit pavement again. This section of the route is designated as accessible for buggies and wheelchairs (and even the dirt path here is paralleled by a paved bike path).

You'll then cross the busy Helzoldstraat and return to the safety of the woods and a dirt path once on the other side. There are many trees here interspersed with some open fields. Soon there will be a pine forest on your left and a group of houses on the right. You'll cross the N715 again and head back into the



To get a good look at Ter Dolen castle, book a room or a private tour of the brewery, which could just include the castle's gardens if you ask nicely

woods. This area, with its dirt road may be a little bit muddy. You'll pass a pasture with adorable *minipaardjes te koop* (mini ponies for sale) on your left.

Continue on Vennestraat back into a more residential area of town. Make a left at Maastrichtsestraat, Kerkstraat and then Bosstraat, which takes you all the way back to Eikendreef to complete the loop.

## The brewery

The Ter Dolen brewery has a lovely, enclosed courtyard that even includes a little play area for the kids. I advise you to do your walking or biking ride *before* you decide to sit down there because it's the kind of place you'll be tempted to linger in all day.

Ter Dolen makes four beers: Ter Dolen Blond Abbey (6%), Ter Dolen Dark (7%), Ter Dolen Tripel (8%) and Ter Dolen Kriek (4.5%). The blond is a refreshing and slightly sweet session beer, perfect for warm, summer weather drinking. The dark is slightly sweet with a caramely flavour and hints of coffee. But the tripel was my favourite – sweet, malty notes as well as a lemony citrus flavour and some slight, hoppy bitterness.

You can get the usual snacks to go with

your beer, but I recommend the *kaasplank* Ter Dolen. This hearty portion of locally made cheese (ripened with Ter Dolen Blond) is served with spicy mustard. The velvety cheese is rich but mild in taste and pairs nicely with any of the brews.

Every Saturday and Sunday at 15.00 there are brewery tours in Dutch that include historical information about the castle. Groups of 15 or more can book tours in English. ♦

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

## Getting there

The closest rail stop to Ter Dolen is Zolder, which is an easy eight-kilometre bike ride, much of it car-free. Just head towards *knooppunt* (junction) 316 from the station. Then follow path 308 and make a right at junction 309 towards 76. Ter Dolen is located between junctions 309 and 76.

Opportunities for biking abound in the castle's vicinity. Check with the Houthalen-Helchteren tourist office for additional routes

➔ [www.houthalen-helchteren.be](http://www.houthalen-helchteren.be)







The Jet has unique acoustics, thanks to the shape of the room and a remodel in the 1970s

# Brussels' Abbey Road

After nearly 70 years, the famed Jet Studio is being sold

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

A quiet street, just outside the centre of Brussels. Around the corner lies a playground, but, apart from the distant sounds of children, the air is dead quiet on this lazy, sunny afternoon: no car passes, not a single soul in the streets. Out on the pavement, I'd never guess that behind an inconspicuous façade lies Belgium's best-known recording studio, Jet.

In fact, I would have thought I had the address wrong if it hadn't been for the "For Sale" sign adorning the building. The placard might even signal the end of the studio, known as Belgium's answer to Abbey Road. It used to be a theatre for an amateur company until, in 1942, it was turned into a recording studio. Renowned music engineer Staf Verbeeck, present owner of Jet Studio, is my guide.

In 1942, Jet started as the Belgian home studio of the famous record label Decca. "Their artists came to record here, Belgian musicians like Jo Leemans and The Strangers, but also French singers like Édith Piaf. And even The Rolling Stones!" he says.

But don't rush to check the liner notes of your Stones albums. Verbeeck: "It wasn't an official recording. They happened to be in Brussels when they wanted to record a birthday present for one of the members – I think Bill Wyman." And since the Stones were Decca artists, they ended up at Jet.

It was probably on Sunday, 18 October, 1964, the day they landed in Brussels to perform on the popular music TV show *Tienerklanken* (*Teen Sounds*). But at Jet Studio, there are no traces left of the passage of Jagger & Co. "In the early 1970s, Decca went bankrupt, and we have nothing left from before," sighs Verbeeck. "The archive as well as the vintage recording equipment, everything has been sold."

The Jet cellar, though, is well stocked with recordings from the period after that bankruptcy – though, thanks to technology, not from the last few years. "Nowadays at the end of a session, the recordings are transferred to the artist's hard disk," explains Verbeeck. "We keep the recordings for a while, too, but

at one point we have to make space on our hard disks, so we erase it. But in the old days, we recorded on big analogue tapes. Musicians had no use for that at home, so we stocked them."

In the days after the Decca bankruptcy, Jet still saw big names crossing its threshold: Shirley Bassey, who recorded a duet with Alain Delon; French singer and actor Charles Trenet; and, of course, the *fine fleur* of Belgian rock and chanson, from Raymond van het Groenewoud and De Kreuners to K's Choice.

"For some time," Verbeeck remembers vividly, "the music channel TMF recorded its live sessions here, with bands like The Manic Street Preachers and Zita Swoon, who even released *Live at the Jet Studio*."

So...what makes Jet Studio so unique? "I've been told by older musicians that during the first decades, Jet didn't have exceptional acoustics," admits Verbeeck. "But at the beginning of the 1970s, a German guy altered the recording room and gave the place its singular sound. Honestly, I think some luck was involved."

*"Now, with a limited investment of a few thousand euros, you can build your own home studio"*

So, acoustics is not really an exact science, then? "It is, if you're constructing a new building," explains Verbeeck. "If you're altering an existing one, you need a shot of luck. In this case, the luck can probably be defined as the dimensions of the room."

After the bankruptcy of the 1970s, singer Salvatore Adamo, Belgium's commercially most successful artist worldwide, bought Jet Studio. It changed hands once more, and, in 1997, Verbeeck became co-owner. At that

moment he was already a well-established freelance recording and mixing engineer. Three years later, his partner, a financial group, went bankrupt. "I had no choice but to buy them out," he reveals. "If not, I would have been part of the crash. So I got a heavy loan, but running the studio has been tough ever since."

The last years have been particularly difficult since the occupancy rate dropped steeply. Verbeeck tried to attract clients by lowering the day price from €550 to €350. "Our occupancy rate went up again to almost 80 %, a very good figure. But at €350 a day, to break even we needed a full house almost constantly."

## What happened?

Verbeeck points out two reasons why the studio isn't profitable anymore. "First, the technological evolution. With a limited investment of a few thousand euros, you can build a home studio. Consequently, fewer and fewer bands are willing to record in a professional studio. Or they hire it for a day, for instance, to record the drums, which is difficult to do at home."

And of course the second reason is what is hitting the music industry everywhere: downloads. "That turned music almost into a disposable thing," says Verbeeck. "So people don't want to spend too much money on it anymore, and the record companies have less money to spend. Consequently, they almost don't invest in local talent anymore unless it springs from a television show like *Idol*."

Half a million euro, that's the price for the whole building, minus the recording equipment. The huge recording studio itself, where the theatre used to be, lies at the back of the premises. It's linked to a big house that borders the street and contains a second, smaller studio, a kitchen, an office, some rooms to lodge artists and a little flat.

Although Jet is in Koekelberg – not a high-priced area of Brussels – half a million still sounds like a bargain. "It's been estimated at a lot higher, but since nobody took the

bait, I had no choice but to lower the price," Verbeeck concedes.

Indeed, time is ticking. "It has to be sold by the fall," he shares. "If not, I'll be ruined." He really hopes to find a buyer who would keep the studio intact. But he's reached the point that's he's willing to sell to a real estate developer.

But Verbeeck is realistic. If he can't keep Jet commercially alive, how could someone else? "Ideally, I think, the buyer would be a musician who comes to live here and uses it as his own private studio. We had someone who was very interested, but the deal collapsed because he has a young child, and his girlfriend didn't see them living in this neighbourhood."

If worse comes to worst, Verbeeck will never see the inside of Jet again. "Of course, if the studio would be maintained, I'd love to keep working here as a freelance engineer." But he concludes with a sigh: "It's not in my hands anymore." ♦

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



Staf Verbeeck at home in Jet



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## Dansand!

LISA BRADSHAW

Out of adversity comes ingenuity, they say, and Ostend's Dansand! is a pertinent example of that. The biennial that launched in 2008 immediately struck a chord with audiences, who queued up to watch Belgian dancers perform on the sand in front of the North Sea. The adversity part was Ostend's lack of a performance space. Outside of room for 200 in the Vrijstaat O cultural centre and the massive kursaal – more appropriate for Broadway shows than the intimacy of dance – the coastal city has nothing in the way of stages. When Vrijstaat O wanted to launch a contemporary dance festival, they didn't know quite where to turn. Finally, they turned to the horizon.

The beach, they thought, will be our stage. Endless space, completely free and certainly no scheduling conflicts.

To avoid dancers getting their feet all wet, they located the festival site far up the sand, close to the city's signature portico called the Royal Galleries. And to make it slightly less cruel, they put a platform on the beach so the artists wouldn't faint of exhaustion trying to dance in deep sand. (They sprinkled sand on the makeshift stage, though, just for good measure.)

Audiences sit on a grandstand facing the dancers, the sea and, in some cases, the setting sun.

They hired Katleen Van Langendonck of Brussels' Kaaitheater to curate, and she soon

discovered that no dance troupe in the country wanted to say no. And though this year you'll find Antwerp's Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and his company Eastman on the bill, it's mostly a Brussels show. "If you want to do something with contemporary dance in Belgium – or even in Europe – you always go through Brussels," says Pieter Koten of Vrijstaat O. "Brussels and Berlin are the most important cities on the international dance scene."

And the largest city on the Belgian coast specifically wanted to bring Brussels to town. "There's a historical link between the two cities," explains Koten. "Ostend was once called *Bruxelles plage*."

Some choreographers at Dansand! adapt existing performances to the location, but some create brand new, site-specific work for the festival. In those cases, you may never see the works in their original formats ever again. Therefore, it would be advisable to grab tickets to the wanton display that is wildman choreographer Ivo Dimchev's *We.Art.Dog.Come*. The Bulgarian created the piece in Brussels especially to premiere at Dansand! He dances it himself, accompanied by eight dolls, two friends and a dog.

Similarly, Cherkaoui, one of the great stars of Belgian dance, premieres his latest piece, *Rein*, in which he explores the effect of psychological clarity on the body through two Norwegian dancers.

That shows with his previous work *Faun*.

Other highlights include Brussels-based German choreographer Arco Renz with his *P.O.P.E.R.A.*, where opera meets modern dance, and Flemish choreographer Wim Vandekeybus with his troupe Ultima Vez, who present the closing performance of the week, the site-specific *What's the Prediction?* Although it's perhaps not the most convenient time – on a Sunday night – anyone who knows Belgian dance knows this is one not to miss.

Most of those performances take place shaded from public view and require tickets. But many Dansand! performances are free, including the especially intriguing *The Long Piece*, by Les Ballet C de la B's Christine De Smedt and Mette Edvardsen, in which 60 volunteers perform along the coastline for six hours, from low tide to high.

There will also be performances in the Galleries, as well as surprise spots around the city and a photo exhibition. "So if you are in Ostend, you will be confronted by contemporary dance," says Koten. "Whether you like it or not." ♦

**1-4 July**

**Along the coast of Ostend**

→ [www.vrijstaat-o.be](http://www.vrijstaat-o.be)



## MORE DANCE THIS WEEK

**PARTS presents RE:Drumming** → *Vooruit, Ghent*

**Royal Ballet of Flanders** → *Kursaal, Ostend*

**Panaibra Gabriel Canda & Walter Verdin** → *Bozar, Brussels*



### Antwerp

**Rivierenhof open-air theatre**

Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192  
[www.openluchttheater.be](http://www.openluchttheater.be)

**JUN 26** 20.30 Bart Peeters

**JUN 27** 15.00 Kapitein Winokio (age three and up)

**JUN 30** 20.30 Richard Thompson

### Trix

Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00  
[www.trixonline.be](http://www.trixonline.be)

**JUN 25** 22.00 Rampage Drum & Bass party with Netsky

**JUN 30** 20.00 KMFD + Revco World

### Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00  
[www.zuiderpershuis.be](http://www.zuiderpershuis.be)

**JUN 25** 21.00 Foyerfeest with Sindicato Sonico and DJ Matti-vu (free)

### Brussels

#### Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24  
[www.abconcerts.be](http://www.abconcerts.be)

**JUN 24** 20.00 Willie Nelson & Family

#### Art Base

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20  
[www.art-base.be](http://www.art-base.be)

**JUN 25** 20.30 Ten Years Boutik Rock: La Chiva Gantiva + Faustine

Hollander + Victoria Tibblin & Sal Jean

#### Le Bar du Matin

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

**JUN 24** 21.00 Le Comptoir du désir

#### Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34  
[www.recyclart.be](http://www.recyclart.be)

**JUN 24** Recyclart Holidays (free):

18.00 Pain Publik. 19.00 Défilé 3xMajorettes: Les Vedettes + Les Mignonettes + Majorettekete + Fanfare Les Fanfoireux. 21.00 Rat Records presents: De Kleinste Fanfare + Brazzaville Music + Chaos of the haunted spire + Open Jam Session

#### Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991  
[www.forestnational.be](http://www.forestnational.be)

**JUN 29** 20.00 Norah Jones

#### Ghent

##### Charlatan

Vlasmak 6; 09.224.24.57  
[www.charlatan.be](http://www.charlatan.be)

**JUN 24** 22.00 Mauro & The Grooms

#### El Negocito

Brabantdam 121; 0479 567395  
[www.mi-negocio.net](http://www.mi-negocio.net)

**JUN 23** 22.00 Bandwiwok

**JUN 30** 22.00 El Negocito XL: Viper Rosa

#### Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65  
[www.handelsbeurs.be](http://www.handelsbeurs.be)

**JUN 24** 20.15 Van Dyke Parks & Clare and The Reasons

#### Kinky Star

Vlasmak 9; 09.223.48.45  
[www.kinkystar.com](http://www.kinkystar.com)

**JUN 27** 21.00 The Narcotic Daffodils

**JUN 29** 21.00 Frank Shinobi

#### Minus One

Opgeestlenaan 455; 09.223.22.27  
[www.democrazy.be](http://www.democrazy.be)

**JUN 26** 22.00 After 12: Joker & MC Nomad + Jakes + BunZer0 + Science + Mate & Fudge

#### Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060  
[www.vooruit.be](http://www.vooruit.be)

**JUN 23** 19.30 Sticks featuring Rico, Fresku and Winne

#### Kortrijk

##### De Kreun

Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44

## DON'T MISS

### Grensrock

**25-26 June**

**Brouwerspark, Menen**

Sunshine or no, it's time to kick off the summer festival season, which this little gem in West Flanders right on the border with France (*grens* means "border") does every year with aplomb. Five bands each day keep it manageable, and it's all Belgian all the time: metal band Spoil Engine, "retrofuturists" Customs and a wealth of pop and rock, from Daan to the Van Jets to An Pierle. It's a who's who of your local music scene.



© Geradine Jacques

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

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

**JUN 24** 20.00 School's Out featuring The Van Jets + A Plus + Outside The Frame + Overcover + The Cold Facts + Administration **JUN 25** 20.00 Beats of Love featuring MIXHELL + Spacid + Hector & Nate + Ed & Kim **JUN 28** 20.00 Professional Days Festival: Dez Mona + An Pierlé + Roken is Dodelijk **JUN 29** 20.00 Professional Days Festival: Hickey Underworld + Mintzkov + Cercueil



### Antwerp

#### Buster

Kaasrui 1; 03.232.51.53  
[www.busterpodium.be](http://www.busterpodium.be)

**JUN 24** 21.00 Buster Jurassic Jam

**JUN 25** 22.00 The Daniel Mc Brearty Band **JUN 26** 22.00 Planet Echo **JUN 29** 21.30 Stanton in Duo **JUN 30** 21.00 Playtime Session

### Brussels

#### Bizon

Karperbrug 7; 02.502.46.99  
[www.cafebizon.com](http://www.cafebizon.com)

**JUN 28** 21.30 Bizon Blues Jam Session

#### Espace Delvaux

Gratèsstraat 3; 02.663.85.50  
[www.lavenerie.be](http://www.lavenerie.be)

**JUN 25** 20.30 Les Boogie Brothers

#### Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78  
[www.jazzstation.be](http://www.jazzstation.be)

**JUN 23-24** 20.30 Octurn

#### L'Alphabet

Waversesteenweg 1387; 02.662.23.00  
[www.lalphabet.be](http://www.lalphabet.be)

**JUN 26** 20.30 The Swing Dealers

#### Sazz'n Jazz

Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78  
[www.sazznjazz.be](http://www.sazznjazz.be)

**JUN 24** 20.30 Garrett List Master Class

**JUN 25** 21.00 Akin Vardar Showcase

#### Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50  
[www.soundsjazzclub.be](http://www.soundsjazzclub.be)

Concerts at 22.00:

**JUN 23** Chamaquiando, salsa **JUN 24** 21.00 The Singers Night **JUN**



**25** Prize-winners Brussels Jazz Marathon: Metropolitan Quintet + Saxodeon + Raw Kandinsky **JUN 26** Honika Henderson with Domenico Ferlisi, Lorenzo di Maio, Loris Tils, Raphael Debacker **JUN 28** Master Session **JUN 29** Laurent Doumont Soul Tuesdays **JUN 30** Los Soneros del barrio, Caribbean

## The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45  
www.themusicvillage.com  
Concerts at 21.00:  
**JUN 23** The Metropolitan Quintet  
**JUN 24** Kusak/Pop Urban Unit **JUN 25** Laurent Doumont Soul Quartet  
**JUN 26** Cintia Rodriguez **JUN 29** Young Groove Society

## Viage

Anspachlaan 30; 070.44.34.43  
www.viage.be  
**JUN 26** 22.00 Cold Fusion



## Antwerp

**De Roma**  
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40  
www.deroma.be  
**JUN 24** 20.30 Ti-Coca & Wanga-Nègès (Haiti)  
**JUN 25** 20.30 Jaune Toujours (Bel) & Gevende (Turkey)  
**JUN 27** 15.00 De Frivole Framboos

## Openluchttheater Rivierenhof

Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192  
www.openluchttheater.be  
**JUN 24** 20.30 Murga Armada

## Brussels

**Art Base**  
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20  
www.art-base.be  
**JUN 30** 20.00 Dubravko Lapaine, didgeridoo

## Espace Magh

Priemstraat 17; 02.611.87.48  
www.espacemagh.be  
**JUN 26** 20.30 Amazigh Kateb (Algeria)

## Ghent

**De Centrale**  
Kraankindersstraat 2; 09.265.98.28  
www.decentrale.be  
**JUN 24** 20.30 Jaune Toujours & Boban + Marko Markovic Orkestar - Southeast Europe: A Cultural Journey + Tabii Concert **JUN 25** 21.00 Sazz 'n Jazz Quartet (Turkey) **JUN 26** 19.30 Fifty Years Congolese Independence party featuring Afro-Soukous (free)  
**JUN 29** 20.00 Boombal Gent, folk music and dance (www.boombal.be)

## Keizerpark

Keizerpark, Ledeborg; 09.265.98.28  
www.decentrale.be  
**JUN 25** 18.00 Balkan Open Air

Festival with BBQ & Croatian wine.  
18.30 Concert: Gjovalin Nonaj 21.00  
Concert: Va Fan Fahre 22.30 Film: Crossing the Bridge



## Antwerp

### Vlaamse Opera

Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02  
www.vlaamseopera.be  
**JUN 30** 20.00 Vlaamse Opera Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leif Segerstam: Sibelius, Rautavaara, more

## Bruges

### Duke's Palace Kempinsky

Prinsenhof 8; 050.44.78.86  
**JUN 25** 19.30 Sophie Hallynck & Anneleen Lenaerts, harp: César Franck, Bach, John Thomas, more

## Brussels

### Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00  
www.bozar.be  
**JUN 26** 20.00 De Munt Symphony Orchestra conducted by Gerd Albrecht: Bruckner's Symphony No 8  
**JUN 29** 19.00 Akademie für alte Musik Berlin conducted by René Jacobs: Don Chisciotte in Sierra Morena

## Espace Senghor

Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40  
www.senghor.be  
**JUN 26** 15.00 What's Next: short contemporary music concerts by young local performers

## Maison du Peuple

Sint-Gillisvoorplein 37-39; 02.217.26.00  
www.maison-du-peuple.be  
**JUN 24** 20.15 Stéphane Ginsburgh, piano: Beethoven's Diabelli Variations, followed by the screening of Mauricio Kagel's film Ludwig van

## Ghent

### Vlaamse Opera

Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02  
www.vlaamseopera.be  
**JUN 25** 20.00 Vlaamse Opera Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leif Segerstam: Sibelius, Rautavaara, more

## Grimbergen

### CC Strombeek

Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43  
www.ccstrombeek.be  
**JUN 27** 15.00 Kamiel D'Hooge, organ; Rieka Hérie, narrator: 17th- to 20th-century organ music from Flanders and the Netherlands, to poems by Guido Gezelle



## Antwerp

### Vlaamse Opera

Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02  
www.vlaamseopera.be  
**Until JUN 27** 15.00/19.30 Peter Grimes by Benjamin Britten with Jorma Silvasti (Peter) and Judith Howarth (Ellen). Vlaamse Opera Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leif Segerstam and Yannis Pouspourikas, staged by David Alden (in the original English with Dutch surtitles)

## Brussels

### De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39  
www.demunt.be  
**Until JUN 30** 15.00/19.30 Macbeth by Verdi with Scott Hendricks (Macbeth) and Tatiana Serjan/ Lisa Houben (Lady Macbeth). Paul Daniel conducts De Munt Symphony Orchestra and Choirs. Staging by Krzysztof Warlikowski (in the original Italian with Dutch and French surtitles). Introductions in Dutch and French 30 minutes before each performance



## Brussels

### Beursschouwburg

August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,  
www.beursschouwburg.be  
**JUN 24** 20.00 P.A.R.T.S dance school second year students in a selection of solos from Rosas' repertoire: Quatuor No 4 by Bartok and Die Grosse Fuge by Beethoven

## Ostend

### Kursaal (Casino)

Monacoplein 2; 070.22.56.00  
www.kursaalostende.be  
**JUN 24** 20.00 Royal Ballet of Flanders in Impressing the Czar, choreographed by William Forsythe  
**JUN 28** 20.00 Moscow City Ballet in The Sleeping Beauty, choreographed by Marius Petipa



## Antwerp

### Fakkelteater

Hoogstraat 12; 03.232.14.69  
www.fakkelteater.be  
**Until JUN 25** 15.00/20.30 De Speling in The Woman in Black, staged by Jean-François D'hondt (in Dutch)

## Monty

Montignystraat 3; 03.238.64.97  
www.monty.be  
**Until JUN 26** 20.30 tg STAN in Zomergasten, a comedy in four acts based on Maxim Gorky's Summerfolk (in Dutch)

## Ardoorie

### Cultuurkapel De Schaduw

Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82  
www.deschaduw.net  
**JUN 25** 20.30 Henk Rijckaert & Jeroen Pater, stand-up comedy (in Dutch)

## Ghent

### Kopergietery

Blekerijstraat 50; 09.233.70.00  
www.kopergietery.be  
**JUN 26** 20.00 Natascha Pire and Steven Beersmans in Het verdragen van Versailles (The Treaty of Versailles; in Dutch)

## NTGent Schouwburg

Sint-Baafsplein 17; 09.225.01.01  
www.ntgent.be  
**JUN 25-JUL 25** 20.30 Les Ballets C de la B and NTGent in Gardenia, directed by Alain Platel and Frank Van Laecke (in Dutch)

## Theater Tinnenpot

Tinnenpotstraat 21; 09.225.18.60  
www.tinnenpot.be  
**JUN 23** 20.00 De buitenkant van Meneer Jules (The Outside of Mister Jules) by Diane Broeckhove, directed by Jan Verbist (in Dutch)  
**JUN 24 & 28** 15.00/20.00 Jo Decaluwe in Damiaan (in Dutch)



## Antwerp

### Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)

Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60  
www.muhka.be  
**Until JUL 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 JUL 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

## Middelheim Museum

Middelheimlaan 6; 03.828.13.50  
www.middelheimmuseum.be  
**Until SEP 19** New Monuments in the Middelheim Museum, Belgian artists focus on the future of the monument

## Photo Museum (FoMu)

**Until JUN 27** Jacky Lecouturier: Polaroids, series of polaroids of every-day miracles by the Belgian artist  
**Until SEP 5** Filip Tas, work by the late Antwerp-based photojournalist, critic and visual arts instructor, who helped usher in a new era of media photography  
**Until 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

## Ra

Kloosterstraat 13; 03.292.37.80  
www.ra13.be  
**Until JUN 30** Backstage, fashion photographs of shows by students of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts by Sonny Vandevelde

## 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

## DON'T MISS



© Frédéric Andrieu

## Ommegang

**29 June - 1 July**  
**Grote Markt & Grote Zavel**

This event, culminating in a procession and pageant on the Grote Markt of 1,400 in historical costume, has been staged in Brussels in one form or another since the 14th century. Originally it was a religious procession, but since 1549, when it was produced to coincide with Charles V's entry into Brussels to introduce his son (the future Philip II of Spain), it has become both pageant and re-enactment of the royal arrival. Tickets for the grandstand seats in the Grote Markt for the pageant on both 29 June and 1 July are a bit pricey, but let us give you a tip: you can stand on the side of the square and see plenty and enjoy beer handed out by mediaeval carts. After it's all over, onlookers join actors for a bit of impromptu folk dancing on the square.

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

## 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

### Archief en Museum voor het

**Vlaams Leven te Brussel**  
Arduinkaai 28; 02.209.06.01  
www.amvb.be  
**Until AUG 31** Herinnering & Migratie: Erfgoed van nieuwe Brusselaars (Memory & Migration: The Heritage of new Brusselaars), presentation of the stories behind the arrival of 19 new immigrants to Brussels

## art)&(marges

Hoogstraat 312-314; 02.511.34.20  
www.arthis.org  
**Until JUN 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  
**Until JAN 30** The Studio of Franquin: Jijé, Morris and Will, rare documents and drawings show mutual influences between the four comic-strip artists who revolutionised the art form in Europe

## Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00  
www.bozar.be  
**Until SEP 26** GEO-Graphics: Mapping Historical and Contemporary Art Practice in Africa, African objects from Belgian museums come face-to-face with work of contemporary African artists (part of Visionary Africa)  
**JUN 25-OCT 10** A Passage to Asia: 25 Centuries of Exchange between

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Asia and Europe, a selection of 300 objects, including funeral urns, jewellery, semi-precious stones, gold and glass, Buddhist and Hindu images, ivory, manuscripts, textiles and archaeological finds

**De Elektriciteitscentrale**  
Sint Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.45  
**Until OCT 3** Fighting the Box: 20 Belgian Designers, 20 Stories Behind the Products, the relationship between local designers and the international industry

**European Quarter**  
Wetstraat;  
www.thehumanrightsproject.org  
**Until SEP 10** The Human Rights Project, outdoor exhibition of photographs of South Africa by Lukas Maximilian Hüller and Juliane R Hauser

**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 AUG 21** Médium, photographs by Vincen Beeckman

**Jewish Museum of Belgium**  
Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63  
www.mjb-jmb.org  
**Until OCT 3** Bericht aan de bevolking: De joodse geschiedenis op affiches (Message to the People: Jewish History in Posters), more than 250 documents from the museum's collection

**Royal Museum of the Armed Forces**  
Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33  
www.legermuseum.be  
**Until AUG 31** Andreas Magdanz: Camp Vogelsang, large-format photos of the Rhineland training camp in North Westphalia by the German photographer  
**Until OCT 30** Lisolo Na Bisu (Our Story) and Tokopesa saluti (We Salute You), objects, documents photographs and audiovisual material reveal 125 years of Belgo-Congolese military relations

**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 historical garments  
**Until AUG 29** Doorsnede (Intersection), 14 contemporary artists show their work among the museum's permanent collections  
**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

**Royal Museums of Fine Arts**  
Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11  
www.fine-arts-museum.be  
**Until JUN 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, Jean Delville, more

**Sint-Gorikshallen**  
Sint-Goriksplein 25; 02.502.44.24  
www.hallesaintgery.be  
**Until JUN 29** Insecten van de Brusselse Tuinen en Parken, photographs from the Natagora competition of insects from the city's parks and gardens  
**Town Hall**  
Grote Markt; 02.279.64.31  
www.brussels.be  
**Until SEP 19** The Age of Symbolism in Latvia, paintings, etchings and drawings from turn-of-the-20th-century Latvia, including work by Jānis Rozentāls, Vilhelms Purvītis and Jānis Valters

**ULB, Building F1**  
Paul Hégerlaan 22-24; 02.650.37.65  
www.ulb.ac.be/culture  
**Until JUN 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 AUG 15** Rehabilitation, multi-media show by young artists on the theme of architectural renovation

**Gaasbeek**  
**Gaasbeek Castle**  
Kasteelstraat 40; 02.531.01.30  
www.kasteelvangaasbeek.be  
**JUN 26-AUG 8** Theatrum Mundi V -Cythera, drawings and installations by Flemish artist Peter Depelchin

**Ghent**  
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, including work by Adolf Wölfl, Henry Darger and Martin Ramirez  
**Until SEP 12** Innocent, Yet Punished, photographs of mentally ill criminals by Ghent-based photographer Lieven Nollet

**Museum of Fine Arts**  
Fernand Scribbedreef 1 - Citadelpark; 09.240.07.00 www.mskgent.be  
**Until JUN 27** Gustave Van de Woestyne, a retrospective of the 20th-century Flemish painter  
**Until JUN 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 AUG 22** Paolo Chiasera: Ain't No Grave Gonna Hold My Body Down, multi-media work based on concepts such as time and space by the Italian artist  
**Until AUG 22** Simon Gush: 4 For Four, video installation by the South African artist centred on the relationship between David Oistrakh and Sergei Prokofiev  
**Until DEC 3** Inside Installations, 10 installations from the museum's collection

**Verzameld Werk**  
Onderstraat 23a; 09.224.27.12  
www.verzameldwerk.be  
**Until SEP 11** Travelling by Book, exceptional international publications, plus related installations and films

**Hasselt**  
**Literair Museum**  
Bampslaan 35; 011.26.17.87

www.literairmuseum.be  
**Until NOV 7** Tom Schamp: Feest in de stad (Party in the City), work by the Flemish illustrator

**Leuven**  
**Museum M**  
Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28; 016.27.29.29 www.mleuven.be  
**Until AUG 22** Anthony van Dyck: Masterpiece or Copy?, two seemingly identical versions of the painting St Jerome with an Angel by Anthony van Dyck  
**Until AUG 29** Philippe Van Snick, paintings, installations and sculpture by the Flemish artist  
**Until SEP 12** Angus Fairhurst, retrospective of the the late artist, a member of the Young British Artists movement  
**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  
**Until AUG 29** Louise Bourgeois, 14 works by the recently deceased French-American artist from the collection of her Ostend friend and fellow artist Xavier Tricot

**Tervuren**  
**Royal Museum for Central Africa**  
Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11  
www.africamuseum.be  
**Until SEP 30** Bonjour Congo, photographs and documents from Brusselaars on the presence of the Congo in Brussels  
**Until JAN 9, 2011** Congo River: 4,700 Kilometres Bursting with Nature and Culture, interactive exhibition on the lifeblood of Congo, from source to mouth  
**Until JAN 9, 2011** 100 Years in 100 Photographs, outdoor exhibition celebrating the 100th anniversary of the African Museum building  
**Until JAN 9, 2011** Indépendance! Congolese Tell Their Stories of 50 Years of Independence, multi-media exhibition looks at the Democratic Republic of the Congo from independence to today

**Ypres**  
**In Flanders Fields Museum**  
Grote Markt 34; 057.239.220  
www.inflandersfields.be  
**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



**Basilica Festival:** Limburg leg of the classical-oriented Festival of Flanders, featuring grand symphonic concerts in the Tongeren Basilica, intimate recitals by emerging young performers, a Hitchcock film with a live contemporary soundtrack by British composer Joby Talbot and a Day of Early Music on the Alden Biesen estate in Bilzen  
**Until JUL 10** across Limburg  
www.festival.be

**Antwerp**  
**Antwerp Pride:** The port city's annual gay pride festival, with parties, concerts, bus tours and free entry to many of the city's museums  
**JUN 24-27** across Antwerp  
www.antwerppride.com

**Bierpassie Weekend:** Eleventh edition of the free beer festival with more than 100 specialty beers on tap  
**JUN 25-27** on Groenplaats  
www.beerpassion.com

**Murga Parade:** Fourth edition of the costumed music, dance and street theatre parade  
**JUN 26** 14.00-18.00 through the centre of Antwerp  
www.murga.be

**Vitrine:** Fashion/art parcours by Belgian designers in public spaces  
**Until JUN 26** across Antwerp  
www.ffi.be

**Brussels**  
**Couleur Café:** Annual summer world music festival featuring Papa Wemba, Mokoomba, Snoop Dogg and more, plus markets and international cuisine  
**JUN 25-27** at Tour & Taxis, Havenlaan 86  
www.couleurcafe.be

**Czech Street Party:** Annual party with concerts and traditional foods  
**JUN 25** 17.00 in front of Czech House, Carolystraat 15  
02.213.92.89, www.czechrep.be

**Ommegang:** Annual historic pageant re-enacting the entry into Brussels of Emperor Charles V and his court in 1549. This extravaganza opens the cultural programme of Belgium's EU presidency and includes 1,400 participants in period costume, brass bands, horses and falconry displays and a medieval village with jousting, archery and other activities  
**JUN 29-JUL 1** 21.00 on Grote Markt and Grote Zavel  
02.512.19.61, www.ommegang.be

**Out Loud!:** Free films and concerts on the rooftop  
**Until JUN 26** 22.00 at Beursschouwburg, A Ortsstraat 20-28  
02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be

**Plazey - Festival in the Park:** Family-friendly festival featuring concerts by Daan, Raymond van het Groenewoud, Band on the Run and more, plus circus workshops, gourmet food and children's theatre and activities  
**JUN 27-JUL 4** in Elizabeth Park, Koekelberg  
02.412.00.50, www.plazey.be

**Quebec National Day:** Celebration featuring traditional music and dance, regional food and drink, entertainment and comedy, plus chance to win a holiday in Quebec  
**JUN 24 17.00** at Mannekin Pis (in Quebec costume) followed by a party at Sint-Gorikshallen

**Visionary Africa:** Festival of literature, music, performance and exhibitions recognising the 17 African nations celebrating their 50th anniversary of independence  
**Until SEP 26** at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23  
www.bozar.be

**Dessel**  
**Graspop:** Heavy metal festival with 75 bands on four stages, including Aerosmith, Motorhead, Slayer, Stone Temple Pilots, Soulfly, Channel Zero, Slash, Carcass, Kiss, Hatebreed, Killswitch Engage and Amon Amarth  
**JUN 25-27** at Kastelsedijk  
www.graspop.be

**Menen (West Flanders)**  
**Grensrock:** Free outdoor rock music festival featuring all Belgian bands, including the Van Jets, Sound of Stereo, Daan, more  
**JUN 25-26** at Brouwerspark  
www.grensrock.be



© Simon Aughton

## Maison du Peuple

Sint-Gillisvoorplein 39  
Brussels

Voorplein in Sint-Gillis is a nice little square known for its daily markets (except Monday) and its many bars. Maison du Peuple is the largest of those. Located in an old mansion, it was completely renovated into a modern bar in 2008. Long before it became a bar, Maison used to be a gathering place for merchants and politicians. Even Lenin visited the place in 1914.

Every day the bar opens its doors at 8.30, and it never closes until well after midnight. There is more than enough to eat, drink, see and do to keep the many visitors busy. Breakfast (croissant, orange juice and a hot drink) is served until 11.00; the kitchen starts cooking snacks at 12.00 and continues until 22.00.

Check the daily blackboard specials for soups, quiches and salads. Nothing is over €9. You can also create your own meal by picking a few of the available antipasti. To go with the food, Maison has a few nice beers on tap. No typical Stella or Jupiler – instead you'll get the aromatic Bel Pils when you ask for a *pintje*.

Also on tap: Vedett White, Maredsous, La Chouffe and Liefmans Kriek. A further 25 beers are served out of the bottle. The house wine – unlike in many other beer establishments – is decent or try one of the many syrup-flavoured drinks. They have a fun selection, including violet, caramel and Belgian speculoos.

Large windows with open curtains ensure that Maison is flooded with natural light – until reasonably late in the evenings these days. While one exposed brick wall reminds you of its history, the rest is light wood and stainless steel.

The walls of Maison usually feature the work of local painters and photographers. The stage at the back of the bar is called Rox Populi and becomes the scene for aspiring musicians every Friday evening. After the gig, a DJ takes over and spins until morning.

➔ [www.maison-du-peuple.be](http://www.maison-du-peuple.be)

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SHARON LIGHT

## bite



© van Put

## Mr Falafel

Walking around in downtown Brussels, you will certainly be spoiled for shawarma. It seems that everywhere you turn there is some tiny storefront with fluorescent lighting, a table or two and a giant, rotating pile of meat cooking behind the counter. Kebabs also get top billing in these establishments. And almost invariably, falafel is thrown in for good measure – yet it seems like an afterthought, given the scant attention paid to this Middle Eastern gem.

What makes a good falafel? To start, there's the recipe. You need good quality chickpeas, and you need a good mix of herbs and spices. The exact balance of these flavours can – and should – be debated, but most people agree that the presence of garlic, onion, cumin and cilantro is indisputable. (Falafel aficionados: begin disputing). And it must be packed into a chewy, warm pita.

We move on to technique: falafel balls need a crisp, outer shell after deep-frying – but the inside needs to be heated through. Roll your falafel balls too big, and the insides are mushy; too small, and all you've got is crust.

Sauce accompaniment is the next important factor, and an extremely personal one. But whether you like creamy, spicy, fresh or tangy, what you need above all is choice. Any self-respecting falafel dinner has a self-respecting salad bar to match.

Mr Falafel understands this.

It's a tiny snack bar that looks like every other snack bar: small counter, fridge with drinks, ubiquitous fluorescent lighting, a few tables. Except for the word "vegetarian" plastered in large lettering across the front window, there is little that sets it apart.

Once inside, however, you may notice that what's missing is a menu. That is because Mr Falafel does one thing and one thing only. Hence the name.

The only question is: how many sandwiches do you want? They are on the small side – one makes for a snack, take two (or more) for a meal. They cook quickly, so it's easy to start with one and see how your meal evolves. Each one will run you €3.50.

Mr Falafel's got the recipe, he's got the technique, and, oh man, does he have the salad bar. A refrigerated case featuring two dozen salads takes up a substantial part of this small space, and a substantial part of your meal, given that you can make as many trips to the salad bar as you like.

Hummus, tahini and creamy garlic sauce are available by pump; between the spicy pickled peppers, cabbage, tomato-and-red-onion salad, carrots, beets, cucumber, hot sauce and more, it's just you, your falafel and your creativity to make the perfect sandwich.

The owner, Shawkat (*pictured*), is a very friendly Dutch national of Egyptian origin. He's not vegetarian himself, but when he lived in Egypt he ate falafel all the time and just likes the stuff. Mr Falafel opened in late 2008, and I hear a second branch may be in the works. In the meantime, with opening hours from noon to midnight seven days a week, there's plenty of opportunity to get your falafel fix.

- 📍 Lemonnierlaan 53
- 🕒 noon to midnight every day
- ★ The best falafel in Brussels by a man who knows his falafel

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

## NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #136

## Feature

We might not have a prime minister, but as of 1 July, Belgium officially holds the presidency of the European Union. What does that mean, and what will we do with it?

## Active

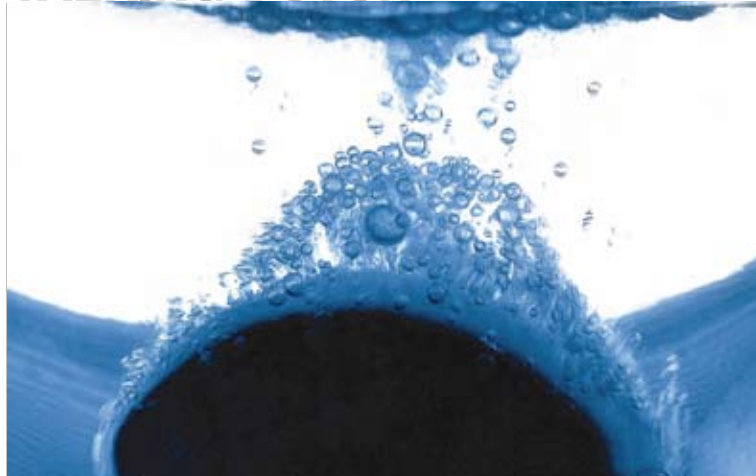
It's the 2010 Flanders Today Summer Festival Guide! Our first ever, woo hoo!!

## Living

If you're afraid of losing your children in the summer festival crowds, choose a rec park or day at a castle instead. We recommend one of each

## TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



## hoofdpijn →

You may be one of the lucky ones whose head is always as clear as a bell. Others of you may suffer from the occasional *hoofdpijn* – headache, self-induced or not, which passes perhaps with the aid of an aspirin.

But don't tell a migraine sufferer that they just have a headache. Migraine affects one in eight of us, though more women than men: *één vrouw op vier, één man op twaalf* – one in four women, one in twelve men. One difference from *hoofdpijn* is that *uw maag van streek is* – your stomach is upset.

The only treatment is to take your medicine and lie down in a darkened room; yet even that may not be enough. Some suggest you should wear *een zonnebril* – a pair of sunglasses, even at night. The reason is that *de kleinste hoeveelheid licht kan de pijn doen toenemen* – the smallest amount of light can make the pain increase. Look cool in bed – let Ray Ban hide the pain.

That may sound improbable, but what about this remedy: *twee kopjes sterke, zwarte koffie drinken* – drink two cups of strong, black coffee. It narrows the *bloedvaten* – blood vessels and *stimuleert je hersenen* – stimulates your brains, though why this should help beats me. And doesn't caffeine provoke the problem?

One remedy that might attract those of you with timelines around your eyes is botox: *een injectie kan de spieren verlammen* – an injection can paralyse the muscles. Sounds like overselling to me, and apparently if you're going through the menopause it's useless (though it will help the wrinkles).

Perhaps better is to get to grips with the migraine yourself. By keeping a migraine calendar you can see if there's a cycle and so almost see it coming. *Herken wat bij jou migraine uitlokt* – Recognise what provokes your migraines. You may have to change your *eetgewoonten* – eating habits. Or the attacks may be caused by stress, *slaapgebrek* – lack of sleep, chocolate, *oude kaas* – mature cheese.

The list goes on: *rode wijn* – red wine, *smaakversterkers* – taste enhancers. *Het kost wat moeite, maar het resultaat loont* – It requires an effort, but the result is worth it.

Sufferers can turn to mother nature. One natural remedy that people have been taking for centuries is *moederkruid* – feverfew ("mother herb"). This you can use knowing that it's safe and that *het nauwelijks bijwerkingen heeft* – it hardly ever has side-effects.

Some suggest getting on your bike: *een fietstocht vermindert je symptomen* – a bike ride reduces your symptoms. Fresh air probably helps, but if all you can see are weird flashing lights inside your head, it might be best to stick to a home trainer. Perhaps the Ray Bans would help.

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

## THE LAST WORD . . .

## Practice makes perfect

"Our Flemish colleagues speak better French than we speak Dutch. They switch over automatically when they hear us grasping for words, which is well-meant, but it's not the way to learn. We have to get more practice."

Paul Magnette, a French-speaking socialist

## Knocking ninety

"It's quite an event to turn 90. You spend so much time in your 80s, and then all of a sudden up pops this nine in front of your nose. I was a little bit shocked."

Flemish writer Aster Berkhof, who recently turned 90 and published his 101st book

## No panic

"Stories about rats springing up to bite you in the throat belong to the land of fables."

Ghent rat-catcher Willy De Vliegher, who is faced with a plague of the beasts coming above ground as a result of extensive roadworks

## Dressing down

"Just one little problem: your clothes are not right. I don't know any more what you had on, but I know I was thinking, that's too bad. Kim is good, but this is bad. Nobody was listening to what you were saying."

Siegfried Bracke, N-VA celebrity and former VRT editor, commenting on newly elected member Kim Geybels for her choice of clothes. He later apologised for overstepping his authority