

## Right of stay.....3

The last residents of Doel are allowed to stay until at least Spring 2011, at which time the Flemish government intends to reevaluate plans for the village's removal



## The tram that can ..... 11

The tram running up and down the Belgian coast has an illustrious 125-year history, and an even brighter future



## One pleasant path .....12

Around the Castle of Beersel is a walking path that brings you face-to-face with medieval ruins, rural pastures and local delicacies



© IRPA-KIK Brussel

# Virgin Massacres

Forty-seven exquisitely decorated skulls from the treasure chest of the abbey in Herkenrode may or may not be linked to a gothic reliquary in Bruges painted by Hans Memling, locations as disparate as a church in Cologne and London's Gherkin skyscraper, and the medieval massacre of 11,000 virgins. We investigate.

EMMA PORTIER DAVIS

→ story on page 5

## Top academics sound the alarm over funding cuts Flanders could lose hundreds of scientists

ALAN HOPE

Flanders could lose as many as 740 scientific researchers to unemployment or to other countries if the federal government carries out a threat to cut research budgets, the region's top academics have warned. In an outspoken opinion article published last week in *De Standaard*, the rectors of Flanders' five universities – Antwerp, Ghent, the Free University of Brussels (VUB), Leuven and Hasselt – criticised a "lack of vision and courage" and pointed out how governments in France and the United States were choosing precisely this time of crisis to increase investment in research.

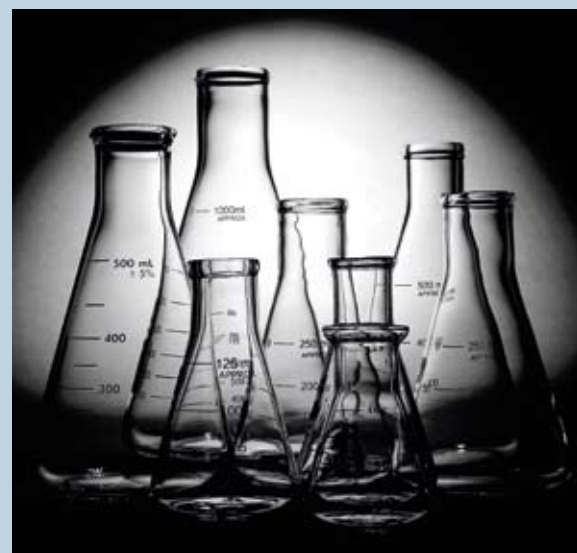
"Despite the constant lip-service paid to the

importance of research and innovation, it is our conclusion that science risks being gradually crippled as a result of shrinking budgets," the article says. "We, the five rectors of the Flemish universities, find ourselves forced into sounding the alarm."

Funding of basic research in Flanders is carried out by the Scientific Research Fund (FWO), which is financed to the tune of 20% by the federal government. The Flemish government, for its part, has already cut this year's financing by €3 million, with further cuts of €4.2 million looming for next year. In their article, the rectors

refer to rumours that the federal government, faced with a €20 billion budget hole, might withdraw their funding for the FWO altogether. That, the rectors say, would represent a loss of some €37 million, which would lead to more than 700 researchers having to stop their work. "Cutting into budgets is a logical reaction in times of crisis," the article says. "But line by line cuts are an option that displays a lack of vision and courage. If there is one sector where more investment is now needed, that is research and innovation."

→ continued on page 3



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## OFFSIDE

ALAN HOPE

## Road signs in Flanders logged



Flanders last week became the first region in the European Union to map every one of its "vertical traffic signals" – traffic lights and signs – when a specially equipped camera car rode the last kilometre of the region's 62,000 km of roads, in Roeselare in West Flanders.

The camera car has been driving around since September 2008. The car, just like the one used for Google Street View, has a 360-degree camera on its roof, which takes a picture every five metres. That's a total of 13 million photographs, all of which are now fed into a Road Signs Database. A full inventory has still to be completed, said a spokeswoman for mobility minister Hilde Crevits, who was present last week for the completion of the camera car's mission. But at the latest count, Flanders has about 1.1 million road signs.

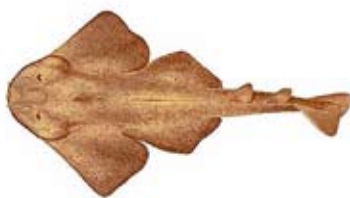
By coincidence, the motoring organisation Touring last week released the results of a survey carried out among 1,600 drivers indicating that there are too many road signs. According to them, 65% of the signs are not clear, because they cannot be seen or because their message is confusing. And 80% of drivers would like all road signs to be standardised across the EU.

One of the purposes of the Road Signs Database will be to cut down the number of signs on the roads. Over the years, signs have grown up like weeds, new signs often placed with no regard to signs already *in situ*. The result is a proliferation of signs, making them difficult to read properly and affecting safety. Our picture, a single frame from the Database, shows the forest of signs at one junction on the Keetberglaan alongside the E34 near Antwerp.

The Database will also be used to rationalise speed limits, with the 13 million photos also able to provide information on other features of the local environment, such as lighting and the width of roads. Some speed restrictions might be lifted if local conditions allow; speed limits could also be lowered, on the basis of local criteria. Two other spin-offs: traffic police will be able to use the map of Flanders' roads when making accident reports. And in the future, details from the database could be entered into GPS navigation systems.

## News in brief

Sea Life Blankenberge last week took delivery of a new resident - the Angel shark (*Squatina squatina*). It measures 60 cm long at present, but can grow to 3 m and weigh 140 kg. Despite two impressive rows of teeth which can crush crabs and shellfish, the shark is not usually dangerous for people. It is also known in English as the fiddle fish, and in Dutch as gitaarhaai, or guitar shark.



Security guards patrolling the premises of brewers InBev in Leuven were last week confronted by a four-inch intruder – a scorpion running loose inside one of the buildings. Guards were able to trap the beast in a plastic bottle, police said, and it was later handed over to animal experts at Planckendaal animal park near Mechelen.

The Dutch-speaking division of the Brussels correctional tribunal came to a standstill last week due to a shortage of security personnel to bring accused people from prison to court. The security service, manned by civilians but aided by the Brussels police, suffers regular delays and postponed trials because of a shortage of manpower. Last Wednesday, the court itself came to a standstill in the trial of 15 Indian men accused of human trafficking, after the service was unable to deliver the accused.

More than half of all Belgians would not be prepared to move house to a new region or country on being

made unemployed, according to a survey carried out by the EU. Across Europe as a whole, 48% of people would move to find a new job, but in Belgium the figure is only 43%, well below the 63% who responded positively when the survey was last carried out in 2005. In fact, only 2.3% of EU citizens live and work in another member state.

The authorities at the City General Hospital in Aalst have apologised to "all mothers" after an emergency room doctor last week called the police in to deal with a woman who was breast-feeding in the corridor while awaiting treatment. The woman, Astrid Janssens, is coordinator of an organisation that advocates free and open breast-feeding. After the incident, she said one policeman told her breast-feeding in public was illegal in Belgium – which is not the case. The hospital management said they did not support the doctor's actions, and apologised "to all mothers who want the best for their child".

The insurance industry in Belgium is expecting a wave of at least 30,000 damages claims following severe weather which crossed the country last week. The value of claims could run to tens of millions of euros, according to industry federation Assuralia. A similar storm in February led to 31,307 claims worth €40 million.

Police and Customs at the port of Antwerp last month seized 477 kg of cocaine in two shipments of containers loaded with bananas. Last year, seizures of cocaine at the port reached 3,632 kg – a figure which has almost been matched in the first half of this year alone. Another 2,000 kg

was seized at South American ports on ships bound for Antwerp.

Two men have been arrested in connection with the theft of copper wire worth €30,000 from properties belonging to the rail authority NMBS. The two are alleged to be the leaders of a gang of Romanians responsible for the thefts along railway lines in and around Brussels. The thefts took place over a period of only two months, and caused damage and delays worth several times the value of the copper.

A race for hitchhiking students between Ghent and Barcelona was won last week by a young couple dressed in wedding clothes. Bert Schelfhout, 26, from Deerlijk and Naïma Vande Walle, 22, from Aalter met two years ago while taking part in another hitchhiking race. "We sweated a lot, but it was worth the trouble," Schelfhout said. The couple wins 40,000 free air kilometres, and plan to visit Australia and New Zealand.

Home owners who want to add a garage or veranda to their homes will no longer need planning permission, as of December 2010, the Flemish government has decided. Contractors only need to declare "smaller works" – extensions of up to 40 square metres – on a form available at all municipalities. No formalities at all are required for free-standing structures like carports, or uncovered structures such as swimming pools and patios.

## FLANDERS TODAY

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## Bart Weekers

The Flemish government last week installed a new ombudsman, the government law specialist Bart Weekers, to deal with the growing number of complaints made by the public against the government.

Weekers is a law graduate, specialised in public law. For the last ten years, he has worked as auditor to the Council of State, the judicial body which oversees the government and the laws it makes. The Council issues an opinion on the constitutionality of all new laws, and can also rule on government orders or actions, overturning or limiting their application.

The Flemish ombudsman's function is described as a bridge between the citizen, the parliament and the administration. The ombudsman's role is to be

impartial, independent and integral in dealing with disputes between the governed – the individual, organisation or company – and the government. According to parliament chairman Jan Peumans, "the parliament's management committee has faith that the new ombudsman will fulfil those requirements".

The reports of the ombudsman's service – issued after a complaint has been found to be grounded – cover a wide range of subjects, from the teaching of deaf children to rent subsidies, student grants, neighbourhood noise and entry into the Canvascollectie art competition. The service dealt with 40,295 complaints in 2009, and has a budget for this year set at €1,875,683.

The ombudsman service has been through a difficult couple of years. In April last year,



Paul Arteel resigned from the job which he had held since September 2008, only the second Flemish ombudsman since the service was created in February 1999. In normal circumstances, the mandate of the ombudsman runs for six years.

Arteel's place was taken over ad interim by Nan Van Zutphen, a member of the service's research staff. Weekers' appointment now follows 15 months later.

ALAN HOPE





## Universities warn of Flemish brain-drain if cuts go ahead

→ continued from page 1

The rectors don't need to travel far for counter examples. In Germany, for instance, the federal government has approved a multi-year plan representing €20 billion in new scientific investment. "France and the United States have also made additional efforts to push up investment," they point out, citing "more than one international study" demonstrating how those countries who make the most research investment stand in the strongest position for economic growth.

In 2010, the number of applications for research grants from the FWO rose by 20%, but at the same time the chances that an application would be successful fell to 22% – meaning that nearly four in five applications are rejected. In neighbouring countries, the success rate is often over 30%. The result is that Flemish research talent is driven out of the country; while Flemish universities are less attractive

to research talent from abroad. Flanders has a respectable and growing reputation to defend, the rectors point out. The number of papers being published by labs in Flemish universities – considered the most important benchmark of academic success – has doubled since the 1990s. Flanders is now in fourth position in Europe, behind the Scandinavian countries and ahead of the Netherlands.

Quality, too, as measured by the number of times Flemish papers are cited by peer researchers, is also on the rise, with Flanders sitting in third place behind the Netherlands and Germany. Patent applications from Flanders have grown from 5% of all EU patents in 1995 to 17% now, with 70% of all patents reaching the marketplace, either via university spin-offs or independent companies.

The article concludes by calling on the federal government negotiators to make a commitment not to abandon the FWO. At the same time, the Flemish government should pump more funds into fundamental research.

• Meanwhile, Ghent University has posted vacancies for 25 top researchers to lead five specialist research groups. As *Flanders Today* reported back in April, the university is to set up specialist groups to carry



Professor Paul De Knop is rector of the VUB and chairman of the FWO

out research in biotechnology for a sustainable economy, infections and immunity, neuroscience, bio-informatics and nano- and biophotonics. The posts were advertised on the Nature Jobs website last week.

No details of salaries were available, but the university's deputy rector in charge of research, Luc Moens, said, "The world's best don't come for the money; they're attracted by the scientific challenge, the area the research group is covering, the people they'll be working with, the expertise that's around them and the infrastructure that's provided. And especially for the ambition the group itself shows."

"They'll be paid according to the existing rates," he added. "It may be that some extras are agreed during discussions, but it's not our intention from the outset to pay them more," he said. According to the announcement, each of the five groups will be funded from university reserves to the tune of €2.5 million. The new researchers will be paid from the university's Special Research Fund (BOF), which is financed by the Flemish government. ♦

*Details of the jobs concerned are published in English at*

→ [www.ugent.be/en/research](http://www.ugent.be/en/research)

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES



### €950 million

spent by Belgians on their pets in 2008, according to economy ministry figures

### 1,974,000

cats and 1,167,000 dogs owned by Belgians in 2008

### 225,636

tax audits carried out in 2009. The self-employed, despite being only 9% of taxpayers, underwent 30% of audits

### 11%

Flemish families postponed medical or dental treatment in 2008 because the cost was too high, according to a new survey. Nationwide the figure was 14%, rising to 26% in Brussels

### 1,620,572

people watched the World Cup final between the Netherlands and Spain on Flemish TV, a 68.4% market share. It was the most watched World Cup match since the Netherlands-Belgium clash in the 1996 championship, watched by over 1.8 million

### 3,466

candidates sat an exam last week for admission to study medicine or dentistry at a Flemish university; 900 more than last year, and an all-time record. The pass rate was just 15.4%. Another exam will be held in August

## Last residents of Doel may stay – at least for now

The remaining residents of the doomed village of Doel on the left bank of the River Scheldt have been given leave to stay in their homes until at least the spring of 2011, a court ruled last week.

The village dates back to the 13th century and gradually grew until the population peaked at 2,500 in 1876. Since then, it has steadily declined until in 2007 there were only some 360 residents left. Landmarks include the 17th-century stone windmill, one of the oldest in the country, and the cooling tower of the nuclear power station built there between 1969 and 1985.

The village has long been threatened by the expansion of the port of Antwerp, and its fate was apparently sealed in June 1999 when the Flemish government announced that Doel had to disappear. Since then, residents have fought to overturn the decision, claiming there is no actual expansion planned which makes the razing of Doel necessary, and no economic reason to consider expanding port facilities in the near future.

The plans, nevertheless, have gone ahead, with the demolition of unoccupied buildings, and an increasing state of siege for those who remain behind – some of whom, it has to be said, were not residents of the village until the protests started.

The organisation in charge of the removal of Doel, the Scheldt Left Bank Agency, began demolishing unoccupied buildings in the village, ostensibly as a safety measure, although most of them were in a perfectly habitable state, and also to prevent squatting by incoming protestors.

The court of appeal in Ghent in March of last year ordered that to stop, and a court in Dendermonde even threatened to fine the agency if it did not comply. Not only were the demolitions against environment laws, they also worsened safety, and had an intimidating effect on remaining residents, the court in Ghent said.

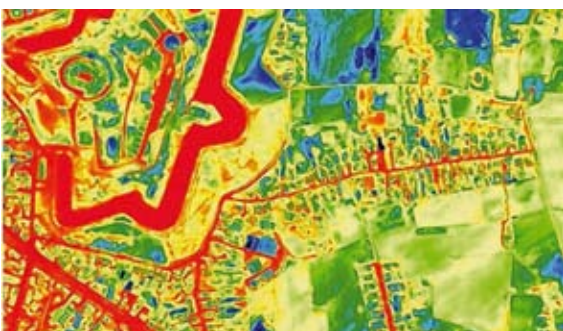


© Paul Mass/Doel 2020

Finally, in August last year, when the official population of the village had dropped to 84 people in 49 households, of whom 45 were original Doelenaars, the right to remain in Doel, which had been granted to people whose houses were sold to the agency and which had been extended in 2007, finally ran out. That leaves only 11 families who did not sell out, and who may remain.

The court has now decided to extend the right of residence until a final judgement, expected in March or April next year. The ban on demolitions is extended, on pain of a €50,000 per day fine. In addition, the Agency is ordered to do more to maintain the empty houses and land in its possession, for example by protecting boarded-up houses against vandals.

"This is not a definitive solution," said Jan Creve, spokesman for protest group Doel 2020. "It's the same story we've heard so many times before. The question is whether the Flemish government is going to go ahead with this war of attrition, or whether it will look for a durable solution. From an economic point of view, there is no urgency in extending the port," he said. ♦



The town of Wommelgem, near Antwerp, as seen by a thermographic camera which flew over the port city and 20 other neighbouring municipalities on four nights in March last year. The full set of images has now been brought together and can be consulted at [zoominopuwadk.antwerpen.be](http://zoominopuwadk.antwerpen.be).

The aim is to allow residents to see clearly how much heat is being lost through the roofs of their houses. Fill in your address and zoom in on your own roof. The "hotter" the image – the scale runs from blue (cold) to red (warm) – the more heat is escaping through the roof. In the above image, the warmest patches are, perhaps surprisingly, the thick growth of trees surrounding the Fort, and the concrete of the streets and roads.

## FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

### Keep it in the family

One of the hardest things to explain about Belgian politics is the fact that there are no national parties. Each language group has its Christian Democrats, its socialists, its liberals, its greens and so on. They are alike in some ways, but different in many aspects. They are called "political families" but, as in real life, you cannot choose your family. You just have to live with them.

This is particularly true of the Christian Democrats, who used to be the bearer of the state, a great unifier. Now both the Flemish CD&V and the French-speaking CDH have embraced the language issue, driving them (and the state) apart. As a result, institutional agreements have become much harder to broker. In fact, CDH's president, Joëlle Milquet, is often called "Madame Non" in Flanders, because of her stubborn resistance to state reform.

SPA and PS are both socialists, but of a very different kind. SPA like to think of themselves as modern social democrats, while PS is more traditional. In Flanders, the latter is associated with decades of economic standstill in Wallonia and with the corruption that comes with having been in power forever. Neither of the clichés is totally true but, still, SPA prefers to keep some distance from its French-speaking relative.

When it really matters, though, SPA and PS tend to stick together. Whenever a federal government is formed, for instance, PS likes to have SPA on board, so as not to have to govern with only right-wing parties from the North. For SPA – now no more than a medium-sized party – having a big relative in the South has often been its lifeline. The previous federal government included PS without SPA – an experiment that seemed to please neither party. By the time this is published, the shape of the new federal government will probably be known. Once again, it looks as if the whole socialist family will be part of it.

What SPA and PS do without saying it out too loudly, the greens have done openly. They have linked their fates: both will enter government or both will remain out, they promised each other. Whether this will work remains to be seen, as both N-VA and PS would rather leave the Flemish Groen! out. With only six percent of the vote, Groen! is not in position to make demands. Kermit, the frog from Sesame Street, knew it all along: it is not easy being green.



# Virgin Massacres

→ continued from page 1

In Brussels' Jubelpark, 47 skulls and a total of 114 assorted bones lie in cabinets in Belgium's Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA). They are undergoing conservation to preserve their delicate coverings and analyses to determine their origin. The question is: could they be the bones of virgin martyrs and their leader Saint Ursula?

According to legend, Ursula was a beautiful princess betrothed to a pagan, who set off on a pilgrimage with an entourage of handmaidens. Reaching Cologne, the virgins met with a violent death at the hands of the Huns after refusing to renounce Christianity. Ursula was shot with an arrow through the heart by their King for scornfully turning down his marriage proposal.

These, at least, are the scant details on which most variants of the tale agree. However, one version paints Ursula as a Cornish princess who set sail for her wedding to the governor of Brittany together with 11,000 virgins. A storm blew their ship into a port in Gaul (now Northern France and Belgium) where she determined to embark on a pilgrimage.

Another casts her as a Breton princess who was to marry the English king's son, Aetherius. Jacobus de Voragine in *The Golden Legend*, wrote that Ursula, opposed to marrying the pagan prince, set tough conditions: he would convert to

Christianity while she made a pilgrimage to Rome. She, meanwhile, converted 11 virgins, instructing each of them to convert 1,000 more.

She may have been accompanied by clergy, her fiancé, even Pope Cyriacus (whose name appears nowhere in papal records but may have been scratched by angry colleagues after he quit Rome for this pilgrimage). Her entourage may have comprised only 11 virgins; she may have been killed in the 3rd century (De Voragine says 238 AD), the 4th or the 7th; she may not have existed at all.

## Ursula Cult

Despite these uncertainties (which prompted the Catholic Church to delist Ursula's feast day – 21 October – from its calendar), Europe is awash with relics. The Saint Ursula Church in Cologne boasts about 1,000 bones, Cologne cathedral a smaller collection, while Palencia cathedral in Spain supposedly has the head of Ursula's companion Cordula who escaped the Huns but, according to De Voragine, repented her cowardice and surrendered the next day.

Aside from bones, a small church once existed in the heart of London near Leadenhall. According to some records, it may have been in possession of one of the three axes used in the massacre. On the

site of that church, which gave its name to the street now stands that feat of modern architecture known as the Gherkin – official address 30 St Mary Axe.

Back in Belgium, the Sint Janshospitaal Museum in Bruges has a collection of works by Hans Memling, a German-born but Flemish School artist. Among these is a gothic reliquary, depicting the legend of Saint Ursula on a wooden house-shaped shrine, which once contained fragments of saintly bones.

On this, she is depicted with an arrow in her hand (she is patron saint of archers as well as students and orphans) and ten virgins, each one representing 1,000 virgins, shielded by her cloak. Six arched scenes on the sides of the shrine depict the legend of Saint Ursula. In Memling's version of the events, Ursula's fiancé and the pope were also massacred.

"An amazing number of Saint Ursula relics have survived. That tells you something about how popular the cult was and how much it appealed to the popular imagination," said Frieda Sorber, a textile historian and curator of the ModeMuseum in Antwerp who has made an in-depth study of the Herkenrode collection.

The relatively small collection of 114 bones found their way to the Abbey of Herkenrode near Hasselt, sometime before the 13th or 14th century and were, according to Sorber, likely to have been a

gift from the Abbot of Sint Truiden, whose niece was the Herkenrode Abbess. "We know he gave her relics from Cologne."

What makes the Herkenrode collection unique is their decoration. "They were wrapped and rewrapped several times. Sometimes I would examine up to five layers. We dated the silk in the oldest layers to the 13th or early 14th century," she said, adding that an abbey needed something to make it popular to pilgrims.

Fanny Van Clevén, head of KIK-IRPA's textile department, who is busy adding the tiniest of stitches, barely visible to the naked eye, to support and repair some of the fine handiwork on the Herkenrode pieces, said each piece is also different in its design, whereas the skulls in Cologne are mostly dressed in red silk and decorated with gold thread.

Meticulously restored skulls may have belonged to Saint Ursula and her legendary troupe of virgins (below, left). One of the masterpieces on display at the Memling Museum in Bruges is the Shrine of Saint Ursula, upon which Flemish school painter Hans Memling depicted the story of Ursula in six panels (below, right, and opposite page).







## Unmasking the legend

Carbon dating of a sample of these bones shows that they could have come from the 4th or 5th century, while a pathologist report shows they had been buried for some time, cleaned and dried in the sun. They could therefore have been among a series excavated sometime in the 12th or 13th century in a Roman graveyard close to the Saint Ursula church in Cologne.

Van Clevén opens a cupboard and pulls out one of the skulls. Part of one is exposed and sun-bleached. She opens a drawer where a range of other bones are encased in delicately embroidered fabric. There's even a finger bone with a nail still visible. The endurance of these relics was, for followers of the Ursula legend, further proof of their origin.

The institute houses a state-of-the-art laboratory and hosts a team of experts including chemists, pathologists, anthropologists and art historians. Its researchers have found that among the bones are those of men and children and even an animal. Van Clevén said: "This is where we see the legend breaking down a little bit."

While the male bones could be explained by the version of the legend which records clergymen and Ursula's fiancé present at the massacre, the presence of animal bones shows that the collection may have, at least in part, been the result of what has been termed by art historians the 'Ursula cult'. This emerged from the 13th to the 15th century, and sparked a flurry of trade in fake relics, which was eventually banned in 1392 by Pope Bonifacius XI.

But the presence of only one animal bone could also be cause for optimism. Sorber said: "What's really nice about this is that in some collections you find lots of animal bones." The collection in Cologne, for example, was said by an eminent surgeon to have contained bones of mastiffs, according to an 1835 edition of the British working class weekly Penny Magazine.

When it comes to questions about the bones' origin and links to the myth, Sorber said: "Those 11,000 virgins never existed but I'm almost positive Ursula existed, that she had a retinue of virgins and that she was murdered by Atilla the Hun." But does that mean the Herkenrode bones belonged to the virgins?

"I was happy we could link these bones to Cologne," said Sorber. "What we historically know is that the bones were excavated and, since most of us can't tell the difference between men's, women's and children's bones, that's how history was made. I don't think in the end it really matters."

She posed a crucial question, "what is authentic?" After all, the carbon dating shows the skulls are exceedingly old and even their decorations hold an interesting history of the nuns' veneration of such objects. Sorber added, "Legends are legends. Even if it's not true, it's a good story and reliquary treasures are a goldmine for textile historians."

I asked her if, despite the numerous fake relics which pervaded Europe during the Middle Ages and the obsession with Ursula (explorer Christopher Columbus even named the British Virgin Islands after the legend), she believed the Herkenrode collection could possibly be those of Saint Ursula and her virgins. Without hesitation, Sorber answered: "Yes, I think so." ♦



## Code Breakers

**XI. M. V.** - Sounds pretty straightforward for anyone who knows their Roman numerals. Yet a misinterpretation of this text could be an explanation as to why the legend of Saint Ursula has taken on such gargantuan proportions.

These Roman numerals, which have been used as a shortening in medieval texts to describe Ursula's entourage, could be interpreted as 11,000 virgins (XI M virgins). It could also stand for eleven (XI) martyred virgins.

Just the thought of gathering such an entourage and trekking across Europe on a pilgrimage would lead to the suspicion that an element of exaggeration may have crept into the tale, perhaps to fuel a thriving trade in Ursula relics.

In the longhand version, there is also room for interpretation.

*Undecim martyres virgines* (eleven martyred virgins) could have been poorly translated as *undecim millia virginum* (eleven thousand virgins).

To confuse matters further, *Undecimilia*, found in some texts, could be translated as 11,000 or it could simply be the name of a single virgin. It might also be the result of a transcription error from *Undicimila*, Latin for 11.

*The collection will be on display in Hasselt's Saint Quintus cathedral from 13 August to 12 September, daily from 9.00 to 16.30. After that, the treasures of Herkenrode will only be available for viewing by arrangement.*



# Bridging pension for Opel workers from age 50

ALAN HOPE

Workers made redundant at Opel Antwerp will be able to claim a bridging pension from the age of 50, the federal labour minister Joëlle Milquet decided last week. The decision is a remarkable departure from normal practice, especially at a time when the government is trying to persuade the workforce that the only chance for economic stability in the future lies in raising the retirement age from 65 to 67 or 68.

The bridging pension is effectively an unemployment benefit which, unlike the standard unemployment benefit, does not decrease according to the length of time the recipient is jobless. But it has been criticised as a state subsidy for redundancies, since the government pays the benefit, while the employer pays a supplement. In other words, the company which has made the workers unemployed pays only the supplement, while the taxpayer has to pay the rest.

When it was first introduced, the bridging pension was only available from the age of 60. But, following the agreement between government, unions and employers known as the Generation Pact, the age at which the bridging pension could apply was lowered to 58. However, another part of the Generation Pact involved phasing out the bridging pension altogether, as most other EU states have done. Yet the latest development with Opel workers appears to have extended its use far beyond any limit ever intended.

In fact, the possibility was written into the Generation Pact from the start: in cases where at least one-third of workers were affected by a major restructuring, the age of 50 could be applied. That is what has happened in the case of Opel. Company and unions agreed to go for the bridging pension back in April.

## Red Market comes to Flanders

Supermarket chain Delhaize last week opened its first Flemish Red Market branch in Opwijk in Flemish Brabant, but the results of the new low-price subsidiary may not be up to expectations.

Red Market is Delhaize's attempt to capture some of the market share of the so-called deep discounters, like Aldi and Lidl, as well as with Colruyt, which is now Delhaize's main competitor in the mainstream supermarket world, following the collapse of Carrefour in Belgium.

The Opwijk store employs only 14 people, due to the use of self-scanning throughout. Unlike Colruyt, Red Market offers no butcher's section, but sells meat products supplied by Delhaize, in an effort to keep down prices. Following the opening last week, a survey made by VTM news of prices in the local area found that Colruyt turned out to be lower on a range of products.

In an interview with De Standaard earlier this month, Jef Colruyt made his aim clear: "Make no mistake, we will go under their prices. We will go down where we have to, and we'll keep going down until the end of the road." ♦



The Red Market store uses 100% self-scanning to cut waiting times

All that was required was for the government to agree.

Younger recipients, such as those at Opel, are technically supposed to be available to the job market up to the age of 58. They will spend six months in counselling to retrain them for other jobs, and subsequently must accept any suitable post or risk being demoted to ordinary unemployed with consequent loss of benefits.

However, according to figures issued by Flemish labour minister Philippe Muyters, only about 7% of recipients of the bridging pension – 115 out of 1,698 in all – found another job between January 2008 and September 2009.

If all 641 workers eligible for the measure were to take advantage of the bridging pension, it would cost the state €88.5 million between now and the time they reach 65 years (when they will receive the normal state pension), according to calculations by human resources consultancy SD Worx. Meanwhile the organisation for small businesses, Unizo, lamented Milquet's decision. "This sort of easy option is damaging for the workers concerned, for those companies with vacancies, and for society as a whole, which will have to carry the cost," said chairman Karel Van Eetvelt.

Unizo's position is that older workers will have to work longer to tackle the greying of the workforce, and to make pensions affordable for society. The organisation will press forward with its own initiatives to encourage employers to take on staff over 50 years old, and calls on the new government to reduce the number of ways for that crucial demographic to exit the workforce.



Opel workers waited anxiously for news of closure last January. The news is better than expected for some of them

• Meanwhile Milquet's ministerial colleague Michel Daerden, the pensions minister, last week took the opportunity to decry her decision before the European Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs committee. Daerden was there to answer questions about the EU Commission's recent Green Paper on pensions, in his role as representative of the Belgian presidency of the EU. Daerden, more strongly than his socialist party colleagues, is a supporter of having people work longer, not necessarily beyond the current maximum age of 65, but at least until that age, which is on average not at present the case: most people retire before the age of 65. But that goal is undermined, he considers, if the bridging pension is already being evoked from the age of 50. "Belgium will have to look again at the bridging pension," the minister told the parliament. "How are we to raise the effective retirement age if we're letting people go at the age of 50?" ♦

## New start-up scheme gets off to slow start

A new scheme to make it easier to start a business has met with a lukewarm response in its first month of operations. Since coming into effect on 1 June, the so-called starters-bvba scheme has had 42 takers – compared to 1,574 partnerships set up in the same period, not to mention the 1,027 sole traders who have set up in business.

The scheme was intended to cut red tape by allowing entrepreneurs to set up in business first, and worry about the financial details later. So, the large capital sum every business previously needed to cover itself for liabilities – currently €18,500 – was waived. Only after five years of trading would the business have to bring its capital up to that level. It would also be required at that time to formulate a proper business plan with the help of a financial adviser.

But businesses appear to be reluctant to take advantage themselves of the opportunity. Even taking into account that the middle of summer may not be the prime time for starting up in business, the scheme's share of the total number

of start-ups – about 1.6% – is considered disappointing.

The main problem is that the new scheme doesn't actually solve the problem that was stopping people in Belgium from setting up new businesses in the first place, explained Marc Van de Werf, coordinator for Zenito, a company which offers services to entrepreneurs. A bvba, or limited liability company, offers business people the protection that their private property will be safe from creditors if the worst should happen. For companies without capital, like the starters-bvba, banks and other lenders will in any case ask for collateral, such as the family home, so the difference is minimal, Van de Werf said. It remains to be seen whether enthusiasm for the scheme will pick up in the coming months. In the first two weeks of July, the total number of starters-bvba start-ups was just nine. ♦

## THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

### Catering • Gate Gourmet

Workers at airline catering company Gate Gourmet in Zaventem went on strike last week after unions and management failed to reach agreement on a social plan affecting about 100 workers the Swiss-based company wants to make redundant. The company, which services Thalys and Thomas Cook, recently lost a contract with Jet Airways.

### Fashion • Dirk Bikkembergs

The Italian tax authorities have presented the Flemish fashion house with a bill for €110 million after it was alleged the designer is using a Luxemburg-based company to avoid paying taxes in Italy. Bikkembergs said the demand was "an unpleasant surprise" and promised to appeal.

### Hotels • Sheraton

The two Sheraton hotels in Brussels and Zaventem, as well as the Meridien, have a new product on offer in minibars – tap-water, priced at €6.50 for 75cl. The water – filtered to remove chemicals but retaining minerals – is marketed as Fresh.

### Insurance • DKV

Medical insurer DKV will have to repay a premium increase introduced without permission, the insurance regulator CBFA has ruled. DKV raised the cost of premiums for hospital insurance for single rooms by 7.84% for this year, despite a fall in the consumer price index last year. Premiums are tied to the index unless special permission is given. The regulator now expects premiums to come back down, and patients who have already paid to be reimbursed.

### Printing • Agfa Graphics

Agfa Graphics, a subsidiary of Mortsels-based Agfa Gevaert, has acquired the US-based Pitman for €80 million, the company announced. Pitman, originally from Chicago, is a distributor of pre-press, inkjet and packaging printing products. The acquisition will give Agfa distribution capabilities in the US, and increase sales from \$200 million to \$500 million.

### Retail • Delhaize

Supermarket chain Delhaize has been granted permission by the Greek stock market authorities to buy up minority shareholdings in Alfa Beta, its Greek subsidiary. Delhaize currently owns 90.87% through a Dutch subsidiary Delned. The company is offering €35.73 a share.

### Textiles • Lee Cooper

The Belgian subsidiary of British jeans-maker Lee Cooper, based in Anderlecht, has declared bankruptcy. The company, which employed 26 people, was placed under administration when the main shareholder pulled out earlier this year. Since then the hunt for a buyer has been fruitless, the administrator said. The bankruptcy also affects 15 sales points across the country in Galeria Inno stores.





1	Ph photography	2	Fa fabric	3	Ar art	4	St style	5	De design	6	Ac architecture						
7	Ma materials	8	Il illustration	9	Fi film	10	Ad art direction	11	Gd graphics	12	Pa paper	13	Mu music	14	Au audio	15	Pe performing arts
16	Pi printing	17	Cw copywriting	18	An animation	19	Id interior design	20	Li literature	21	Ty typography	22	Ca casting	23	Ag advertising	24	Ia interactive art
25	Fo food	26	Tr travel	27	CB city branding	28	Cr crafts	29	Te technology	30	Br branding	31	Ga gaming	32	Na nails	33	E.co eco
34	Re retail	35	So.Mo social media	36	Ar.L artistic styling	37	Lux luxury	38	Wo women	39	Med medical	40	Tf travel				

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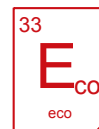
Mapping Flanders

creativity



## Mapping Flanders creativity: selection eco

### LABMEMBER 372



### LEUVEN

Serge de Gheldere

In 2000, Serge founded Futureproofed, a sustainable design consultancy based on one central thought: mainstreaming sustainability. Futureproofed is a small team of seven people that understand issues of climate change and environmental degradation, and transform it into an opportunity for today's shareholders and for future generations.

In 2006, Serge was part of a select group of individuals personally trained by Al Gore to become a global warming presenter. In 2007, Serge made more than 100 presentations of a slideshow that formed the basis of "An Inconvenient Truth." This involved a wide variety of audiences, ranging from ministers and governments to schools and corporations, including IBM, Dexia, Fortis, HP, Picanol, Solvay MBA, Electrolux, Sony, Leaseplan, GE and Yale University.

Serge is also a guest professor at Group T University College. He advises a team on the Vehicle Design Summit consortium that collaborates with Tsinghua University in Beijing, TU Delft, MIT and other teams worldwide to develop a new six-passenger, production-ready car with dramatically-improved life cycle impact. He has also developed a teaching course in which engineers use Natural Capitalism as a thread to explore aspects of holistic engineering such as enterprising and educating. Serge recently became the first alumnus director on Group T's board. Futureproofed works with clients such as Nike, Van Marcke, Ecover, Colruyt, VMMA, Torfs and the European Parliament to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a practical and profitable way. Futureproofed is developing ways to make natural capital — energy, minerals, water, forests and the services they provide — serve up to 10 times more than they do today. In doing this they contribute to the transition to a low carbon economy.  
[www.futureproofed.com](http://www.futureproofed.com)

### LABMEMBER 3900



### DENDERMONDE

Dirk Abbeloos

Dirk Abbeloos is an elected member of the Dendermonde municipal council, and is responsible for nature and local economy. His activities in Dendermonde serve as an example on how to create a growing awareness in green thinking both towards the main public and the industry. Dirk has been invited to Addictlab's brainstorming sessions on urban green.  
[info@addictlab.com](mailto:info@addictlab.com)



### LABPROJECT



### BRUSSELS

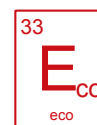
Addictlab / ANB (Agentschap voor Natuur & Bos)

Addictlab.com is running a research project, bringing creative thinkers from different disciplines together to generate ideas for the Flemish governmental body controlling nature and forests in Flanders. Designers, politicians, interior architects: over 60 people have been marshalled to come together and help with ideas on 'how to make our Flemish cities more green'.

The previous page shows the 'treewear', one of the concepts from the urban green research to be published in the next Ad!dict book and exhibited at De Bottelarij.  
[www.debottelarij.com](http://www.debottelarij.com)



### LABMEMBER 4077



### EVERBERG

Caroline Van Marcke

The Van Marcke Group launched the first CO2-neutral expertise centre in Belgium under the name Big Blue.

In November 2009, the Van Marcke Group in Belgium invested €1.2 million to create the first renovated industrial CO2 neutral building in Belgium. The renovated building hosts Big Blue, an information and sales centre devoted to energy-friendly solutions for heating and water. The centre, which enjoys the support of 26 partnering suppliers, is aimed at consumers and professionals, such as installers, architects and engineering consultancy agencies.

Within the climate centre, Van Marcke brings together all the know-how and stakeholders involved in energy-friendly solutions for heating and water: a unique venue in Europe.

The building itself is a prime example of energy-conscious renovation. The former industrial depot, covering 1,500 square metres, was completely renovated, refurbished and converted into a CO2-neutral building.

The building complies with the latest passive-house standards – neither fuel oil nor natural gas is used for heating purposes. All electrical power for heating, ventilation and lighting is derived from solar energy. The water for the sanitary facilities comes from an installation that collects rainwater from the roof and filters it.

The Van Marcke family is the driving force behind Big Blue. For this project, they consulted climate expert Serge De Gheldere, head of FutureProofed.  
[www.bigblue.be](http://www.bigblue.be)  
[www.vanmarcke.be](http://www.vanmarcke.be)



## LABMEMBER 4079



### ANTWERP/EDEGEM

Stefaan Vandist

To explore ways to build sustainable products and services, Stefaan developed a triangle for a powerful afternoon brainstorm. It is based on the idea that there are three ways to market a product:

- The old school marketing fashion: communicate an USP
- The new school practice: engage people to connect to a big ideal
- Challenging the business model: reinventing the way we capture, create and distribute value

If we combine these with three communication agendas – the product, brand and company-level – we end up with a 3X3 model that delivers nine strategic angle points to turn a sustainable project into a success within a community.

[www.trinity-planning.be](http://www.trinity-planning.be)



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## LABMEMBER 4078



### MECHELEN

Wouter Ulburghs

#### The Ecolizer 2.0 tool for introducing ecodesign

In order to make eco-design more accessible to the designer, OVAM (the Public Waste Agency of Flanders) has introduced the Ecolizer, a smart tool that is quick and easy to use in any design process. The first Ecolizer, available in Dutch, was developed in 2005 for designers and product manufacturers as an introduction to eco-design and Life Cycle Thinking, and as a tool to assess the environmental impact of their products. The idea behind the Ecolizer is the fact that, despite the availability of a wealth of academic information and software on eco-design, it is rarely ap-

plied by Flemish designers or businesses. Thanks to its special fan-like design using cards, the Ecolizer brings part of this academic background closer to designers, who can now incorporate environmental criteria into innovative products. The Ecolizer 2.0 is now also available in English.

With the Ecolizer 2.0, OVAM is introducing a scientifically-based tool that increases the eco-friendliness of any product design. In this way, OVAM hopes to provide a dynamic and up-to-date instrument and to inspire businesses and designers, both at home and abroad, to design innovative and environmentally-sound products.

[www.ovam.be/ecolizer/en](http://www.ovam.be/ecolizer/en)

## LABMEMBER 3384



**HASSELT**  
Veerle Verbakel

**recentre**  
centre for  
sustainable  
design



#### REcentre - centre for sustainable design

REcentre is an international expertise centre, active in Belgian and Dutch Limburg and Liège. Its aim is to create awareness for sustainable design in the industry and among designers, the general public and the authorities. For this mission, REcentre relies on an extended network of designers and companies for the distribution and dissemination of knowledge and know-how. REcentre is the result of cooperation between Wallonie Design in Liege, Z33 in Hasselt, NAIM/Bureau Europa in Maastricht and the European Union's Interreg EMR IVa programme.

REcentre also organises training sessions for entrepreneurs to teach them to become their own company's sustainability coach. Its so-called 'Milk the Green Cow' sessions involve a series of workshops in which academic researchers and specialised companies are invited to share best practices, business cases and practical tools. REcentre will publish 30 sustain-

able success stories, and 30 international companies active in the Euregion Meuse-Rhin will show off with their sustainable and profitable products and services.

Sustainable design is also the way to discuss social environmental themes like food, greener cities and water. The project "Water" will provide solutions to questions like "How can we limit water use in the household" and "How can we become aware of the amount of water we consume".

REcentre takes part in drinKraantjeswater, a campaign to stimulate the hard mentality change process of drinking tap water instead of bottled water. To do so, REcentre invited six designers and a group of multidisciplinary sustainability experts to work together in a 'labau' (multidisciplinary workshop with open format around environmental themes). Other projects coming up involve "mine water" and "grey water".

[www.recentre.org](http://www.recentre.org)

Flanders Today and the international creative think tank Addictlab are partnering up to inspire you with the work of Flemish creative minds.

The lab itself has originated from the region's fertile grounds, and the important Flemish selection of today's 4000 creative thinkers from 150 countries is proof of the innovation culture in Flanders.

Flanders Today will be diving in this huge database of people and concepts, and bringing you a selection regularly.

Following Addictlab's adagio 'Creativity is Chemistry', you will discover geniuses from different disciplines, such as art, design, fashion & so many more. This week we're proud to show you talented 'labmembers' active in "eco-thinking".

#1	Transport	March
#2	Art and Photography	April
#3	Social media	May
#4	Fashion	June
#5	Eco	July
#6	Design	August

Do you want to be on these pages? **Are you a Flanders based creative mind?** Then go to [www.addictlab.com](http://www.addictlab.com) & register as a labmember.



# FLANDERS TODAY

**addictlab.com**  
global creative think tank





# Safe to swim

Flanders bathing water statistics show a dramatic improvement but there is still work to be done

© Nils Geylen

EMMA PORTIER DAVIS

On the whole, Flanders has taken much rap for its water quality and with reason: there are still one in four households not connected to an urban waste water treatment facility, and pollutants from the region's abundant farmlands often find themselves in the river basin. Belgium's federal government is in hot water with the European Commission over its failure to bring urban waste water treatment facilities across the country, including at several spots in Flanders, up to EU standards and faces stiff penalties if the country does not clean up its act. The EU's General Court ruled in 2004 that 114 settlements in Flanders did not meet the required standards. One month ago, in a 24 June press release, the Commission said there were still seven sites in Flanders that remained non-compliant and were expected to remain so until the end of 2013, five years after the EU deadline. Separately, Europe's water framework directive contains quality targets to be met by 2015. The Flemish Environment Agency, Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij (VMM), said these would not be met on time. In a recent press release, the Flemish government already noted that "most" sites would meet standards by 2020. For bathing water, however, the region has apparently scored something of a victory. While in 2008, only 15 percent of coastal spots met the EU's recommended guidelines, in 2009, that figure had jumped to 73.8 percent, according to a report by the

European Environment Agency. But the figures, while glowing, are in part attributed to the weather. "We saw quite a significant improvement due to the weather which was very dry," said VMM spokeswoman Mie Van den Kerckhove. The question is to what extent was this huge jump in quality a one-off effect.

## What lies beneath

The Flemish government said in its own press release about the statistics: "The long, dry summer most likely played a role but this result is undoubtedly thanks to the continuous efforts to purify more waste water." For sure, Flanders' waste water treatment company Aquafin has invested heavily in water purification systems and the European Commission praised the region's huge efforts to institute this along the coast. There are still some municipal investment projects to be completed in the coming years. Forenvironmentalists too, the improvements are visible in the bathing water statistics. "We've been lucky with the weather but there have also been some investments in Flanders," said Wim Van Gils from Natuurpunt. Nonetheless, there may need to be further efforts to ensure the improvement is sustainable. Van den Kerckhove said: "We have very good quality but as soon as it rains, it gets worse. These figures show that the water quality is okay as long as the

weather is okay." She explained that the water purification systems overflow during heavy rainfalls due to the inadequacies of the sewers. She added that the region therefore needed to do more work on separating rainwater and waste water. In addition to the negative impact of heavy rain on the water purification systems, Van Gils said that persistent problems with water quality in the inland waters were also contributing to a less than perfect quality at the coast. "Obviously all the water eventually goes out to sea. This means that the quality of the coastal water is influenced by the input from the rivers. What you see at the Belgian coast is that the bathing spots with the best water quality are those which are buffered from the river water."

## Solutions

For Flanders to produce such strong bathing water quality statistics weather regardless, it needs to resolve the overflowing issues by finding ways to separate rainwater from waste water, according to VMM and Natuurpunt. Van Gils said the government had already introduced some sensible policies. It is now, for example, obligatory for new house builds to install a rainwater tank and there are subsidies for house renovations to include one as well. However, he added, "We should also have an obligation to install an infiltration system

so that rainwater goes into the ground and not into the sewer. There could also be some kind of tax on hard surfaces." A justification for such a tax is that Flanders is densely populated. Where there is a high concentration of buildings, notably the case at the coast, there is little permeable ground to soak up rainwater. The result is that much of it ends up in the sewers. Concerning water quality inland, Aquafin, established by the government to upgrade the waste water treatment systems said the cost to connect the remaining 25 percent of households to a treatment facility would be €7.4 billion, €0.7 billion of which would come from the government. Also, in Spring 2008, the government decided to invest a further €100 million per year during seven years "to relieve a bit of the pressure on the municipalities," said Aquafin spokesman Vincent Nuytemans. Van Gils said, however, it was not certain how the rest of the €7.4 billion would be raised as it has to come from the local municipalities. "We have been asking for years now for the politicians to make it clear how this will be financed." As for the bathing water, Van Gils cautioned that even though there had been a fundamental improvement this should not lead to complacency. Referring to an old Flemish saying, he said: "It's not because you see a swallow that Spring is come (*één zwaluw maakt nog geen lente*)."

## Urban agriculture

How one organisation is changing Brussels from concrete jungle to communal garden

KATY HOLLIDAY



Just six months ago the pretty and flourishing garden on Dauwstraat in Anderlecht was a barren wasteland of rubbish and filth. Now it is equipped with a greenhouse, 60 different specimens of fruit trees, a selection of mouth-watering berries and a smorgasbord of veggies. Frédéric Morand, secretary of Eco Innovation (and green thumb enthusiast), tells us that, "in February the site was barely accessible and very dirty." He continues, "With the help of the Anderlecht municipally staff we cleared tonnes of dirt and waste. We started bringing manure, compost and special equipment along with the materials for the greenhouse. Slowly and gradually we started planting. The soil is good and the plants are very healthy." Eco Innovation is a not-for-profit organisation leading Brussels towards greener pastures through a multitude of urban agricultural ventures. They aim to introduce urban roof-top gardens to the capital with a current site proposed for Anderlecht subject to a struc-

tural feasibility report. However, the successful organic private and community garden in Anderlecht is just the beginning of a big community project. Morand explains that the successful 70 square-metre nursery in the midst of the bustle of the city is a "mixed *potagerie*". It provides a quiet oasis where locals, both children and adults, peacefully tend to their plants and chat amongst themselves. Morand says, "There is a section for amateurs (local participants) who can rent a container and we provide the plot, soil, tools and plants." The back of the land is used by Eco Innovation professionals and the produce there is being sold market-style with proceeds creating self-sustainability. The turf belongs to the municipality of Anderlecht. "We don't own the land; we just manage it for them," Frédéric says. In conjunction with Anderlecht and the Brussels government, Eco Innovation will provide ten new gardens across Anderlecht from 2011-2014. "The commune is

very supportive. I'm very thankful to them for investing so much care and attention into what we are doing. There is heavy support from the region," he elaborates. In fact, the commune wants to change the image and reputation of Anderlecht, improving it and potentially creating jobs. Essentially the emphasis on urban renewal and revitalisation for the region will bring the community closer. Eco Innovation are currently looking for partners who can help source land, private or municipally. The option to sponsor a fruit tree is available too. Local consumers and restaurateurs are lining up to get their hands on the local, organic produce. At the moment you can pop into the garden on Dauwstraat where the innovators will sell you fresh food at a reasonable price. ♦

Dauwstraat 14, Anderlecht

→ [www.eco-innovation.net](http://www.eco-innovation.net)



# A utopian vision

Exhibition explores how the world's longest tram line forever changed the Belgian coast

LISA BRADSHAW

The art *parcours* continues to be one of my favourite methods of experiencing art – trekking from one place to another always makes it seem like a treasure hunt, and it opens up a city's architecture or a region's landscapes to being used as part of the installation.

Beaufort is Flanders' ultimate art *parcours*. The outdoor triennale runs up and down the Belgian coast, clear from the tippy-tip in the north to the deep south next to France. It's well attended and easy to take in over a weekend – for one reason: the coast tram. If the coast tram didn't exist, it's very possible that *Beaufort* – a unique platform for extraordinary international artists – wouldn't exist either.

That's because the coast tram – the only De Lijn tram line outside of Antwerp and Ghent – has shaped both structural and cultural development of the coast in ways never considered when it was inaugurated 125 years ago.

To celebrate this anniversary, Ostend hosts *Tram in zicht!* (*Tram in Sight!*), an exhibition dedicated to the coast tram, one of the earliest tram lines in Belgium and, at 67 kilometres, the longest single tram line in the world.

In the 19th century, Belgium became a leader in transport infrastructure, causing the French transport company Colson to exclaim that Belgium had solved the problems that plagued the organisation of secondary railway networks in Europe. Although Britain and the US had a few short-line trams in use, Belgium created the first infrastructure to link several rail stations with the low-weight and limited framework of tram lines. Not only that, it built tram lines from Bruges and Veurne to cheaply transport labourers from their homes in the Polders to the coast – an unprecedented system.

It was on 5 July, 1885, when the very first tram rode along the tracks from Ostend to Middelkerke. Powered by a steam engine, its appearance was not terribly different from the major steam locomotives. (This was Belgium's second steam-powered tram in fact – the Antwerp-Hoogstraten line was already in use.)

The thought behind the coast tram was mostly to transport industrial and agricultural goods, but it soon became apparent that residents of the cities would use the trams to get up and down the coast – and to inland communities.

As additional lengths were added, more

and more travellers began taking the tram. Within two years, so many tourists and residents were onboard that more than twice the number of initial carriages had to be added. Soon tram lines were built between Veurne, Bruges and Ypres to the coast.

Labourers and schoolchildren could buy low-cost passes to ride the tram, but it's clear that the transport agency Nationale Maatschappij van Buurtspoorwegen (NMVB) saw the financial advantages of tourism. Individual tram riders had to pay per mile in first class, but only for a minimum of the equivalent of €0.20. The figure dropped to a minimum of €0.15 in second class, but you had to pay extra for luggage – and your dog (who, rather fairly – or perhaps unkindly – was always charged second-class rates).

The tram was paid for by the Belgian state, together with the province and local municipalities. By 1895, competition reared its ugly head and the state contracted a British company to build its first electric tramline, between Ostend and Middelkerke. Travelers clamoured for more, and electric trams began to replace the steam-powered ones. Eventually, the NMVB bought the electric tram lines and further developed them along the coast. The entire coast was electric not long before the First World War.

The steam trams had run along existing roadways, but as the electric trams replaced them, more thought was put into where to place the tracks. Tracks have been moved through the decades and now take passengers along the main arteries, dipping into city centres. The coast tram has, for instance, brought new life in the beautiful centre square of Nieuwpoort, a 30-minute walk from the sea, but only five minutes by tram. The tram has also had a major impact on coastal development, with new hotels and restaurants vying to be located on tram lines and businesses already in place seeing a surge of business.

The NMVB was broken up in the 1990s into Flemish (De Lijn) and French-speaking (TEC) parts, and De Lijn has been responsible for the coast tram ever since.

The tram lines between polder cities to the coast have now been uprooted, leaving the coast tram as the only "vicinal" – or non-city based – tram line left in Flanders. It was nearly wiped out in the 1950s by the advent of the automobile, but it struggled along until, ironically, it has now become the celebrated saviour of riders looking to escape coastal traffic jams.



## Tram in sight

The *Tram in Sight* exhibition has wisely attempted to keep technical and historical information at the accessible level so that casual visitors will not be overwhelmed with engineering concepts or development politics over the years. (However, for those who are interested in such facts, the exhibition book, *The Coastal Tram*, published in English, Dutch and French, will keep you entertained for hours.)

After the entrance of dozens of model trams and trains seemingly hanging in the air – which is both informative (for train lovers) and artistic (for the rest of us) – you'll find information on the history of the coast tram and a great, metres-long satellite image map of the entire line. Tram maps, schedules and signposts from different decades place you in the past until you reach several rows of old tram seats with headphones. Put them on to hear stories (in Dutch) from tram riders, workers and others for whom the coast tram has some kind of meaning.

In a room all on its own (befitting its visual import), a beautifully restored 19th-century tram car shows the velvety plush first-class passengers were used to. This plush is also visible in the paintings of Paul Delvaux, who lived on the coast for many years until his death in 1994. He was famously obsessed with two things: female nudes and transport, reproducing accurate engineering aspects of both in his surrealist work, nearly

always in the same painting. You'll find just two of his works here, which will leave you wanting more.

Work by the famous outsider artist Willem van Genk is also here; both artists surround objects such as large train models and a huge metal credenza of file drawers once used in an old NMVB office. Open them up to find ancient documents.

The end of the exhibition, though, just might be the most intriguing. Video screens play interviews with Brussels-based visionary architect Luc Schuiten and Georges Allaert, professor of urban planning at the University of Ghent. Coming from different perspectives, they eloquently reach the same conclusion: cars are killing us; get on the tram.

Schuiten additionally has provided drawings of his "Neptunus Plan," a series of extremely small and light-weight tram cars. They are designed for one or two people – hop in and tell it exactly where you want to go. Tracks would be located in all major streets and most small ones. Readily available everywhere and at all hours, the tram cars would effectively replace the automobile.

It sounds too idealistic, but compare it with the "utopian" vision for the coast tram line of the 19th century, displayed earlier in the exhibition. It all came true in less than 100 years. ♦

→ <http://125jaarkustram.delijn.be>





# Better know Beersel

A nature walk through Pajottenland doubles as an introduction to the region's historic, artistic and culinary charms

TEXT AND PHOTOS MELISSA MAKI

For the fifth and final piece in our castle recreation series we take you to Flemish Brabant and the small municipality of Beersel. Here amidst the lush, Senne Valley landscape lies the extraordinary Castle of Beersel.

The Castle of Beersel was built by Godefroid de Hellebeke in the 13th century for the purpose of defending Brussels and Brabant from Flanders. It's one of few remaining examples in Belgium of a military fortress from the Middle Ages.

The Castle of Beersel is truly a formidable architectural structure, with three tall defensive towers that give it an interesting triangular shape. This, along with its incredibly thick brick walls and moat made it a serious stronghold back in the day. The castle is unique in that it was only conquered once - in the uprising of Brusselaars against Maximilian of Austria (Beersel was supporting Maximilian). The castle remains largely unchanged from how it appeared when it was restored towards the end of the 15th century.

In sharp contrast to many Belgian castles, this one is not a private residence and it hasn't been restored to perfection. Part of the castle still lies in ruins, which gives it a slightly creepy and intimidating edge. But something about the castle's rugged state makes it easier to imagine the gory medieval battles that took place there. You can almost picture soldiers using the many machicolations - or openings around the castle to throw stones and pour hot oil onto their attackers.

## Kesterbeekwandeling

The *Kesterbeekwandeling* (Kester brook walk) is a 7.5 kilometre loop through the idyllic Pajottenland countryside with its green, rolling hills and fertile farmland. The walk starts and ends very close to the castle. This is a relatively easy walk but does involve some narrow, uneven paths and hills. About half of the route is paved. If you go at a steady pace, it should take a couple of hours to complete the loop. You can order a map of the Kesterbeekwandeling and five other regional walks (€6) from the Flemish Brabant tourist office: [www.toerismevlaamsbrabant.be](http://www.toerismevlaamsbrabant.be).

I started my walk from the train station, but you can also begin from Herman Teirlinckplein (Beersel's village square). From the station, head east towards Beukenlandschap and then make a right at Karpatten (from the centre, head left on Beukenlandschap and make a left at Karpatten). The route is well marked with white, hexagonal signs that say "Kesterbeek wandelpad" in red lettering.

The route takes you down a narrow path that passes through fields and long, hedged-in corridors. If you are lucky, you might even see some stout Shetland ponies along the way. Soon you'll cross over



Laarheidestraat and then Sanitoriumstraat.

Take a left on Klutstraat. After walking on this paved and tree-lined road (Klutstraat 24) you'll come upon a veritable visual feast. Peek past the fence to view the *tuin der onlusten* (garden of distress), an artistic project of the New Flemish Primitive Art School. This open-air collection of fascinating, vibrantly coloured objects and sculptures makes for a truly unique botanic-artistic experience.

After about half a kilometre, the road bends to the right. Soon you're in the midst of a beautiful valley. You'll pass a pretty meadow and take a meandering footpath. Eventually, make a left on Grote Hertstraat. You'll traverse an old, cobbled road and pass fields of wheat, carrots and potatoes.

Take a left on Begijnbosstraat and head towards the forest. On a hot summer's day, the path through the Begijnenbos will offer a welcome respite; its stately deciduous trees provide ample shade. This is truly a gorgeous and peaceful setting and one of my favourite parts of the walk.

When you arrive at the western edge of the forest, you'll make a right. This is Wortelenberg (Carrot mountain), which is fitting because of the surrounding carrot fields. The road soon becomes Kleine Hertweg. Follow this until you get to Josef Hauwaertstraat and then turn left. The scenery along this quiet and narrow street alternates between residences, pastures and trees.

Soon after Jozef Hauwaertstraat intersects with Ast, you'll pass a noteworthy roadside shop called Hoeve Cuvry ([www.hoevecuvry.be](http://www.hoevecuvry.be)). It's a family business and farm where pigs are naturally raised (without antibiotics or genetically modified feed). Hoeve Cuvry sells fresh pork directly to consumers as well as other tasty local goods like produce, juices and lambic. They also offer farm tours complete with samples of their products and a glass of beer.

Continue to follow the Kesterbeek wandelpad signs. You'll move to a skinny dirt path along pastures lined with a fence. Along this downward slope of the route you have a nice view of Beersel and even Brussels off in the distance.

Around this point, my companion and I came across what appeared to be a very friendly horse. Turns out he was just looking for a handout. There are numerous signs along the walking route asking people not to feed the farm animals. So even if you do encounter such endearing begging, it's best to resist the temptation and heed the warnings.

You'll soon cross Kesterbeeklaan and Kerkhoflaan and continue straight onto a path called Blarenveld (Blister field, maybe appropriately). This trail features a contrast of scenic orchards and greenery amidst houses and office buildings. Follow Blarenveld all the way back to the village and to Beukenschap to complete the loop. ♦



## Local fare and libations

The Pajottenland is renowned as the home of lambic beers. This very distinctive, sour style of beer gets its complex taste from special wild yeasts that are highly concentrated in this particular region of Belgium. A trip to Beersel is the perfect excuse to sample lambic, or geuze or kriel, all of which are made from lambic. Beersel is home to the highly respected lambic blender (and previous lambic brewer) *3 Fonteinen* (Three Fountains). *3 Fonteinen* has a restaurant in the centre of Beersel where you can both drink their brews and try traditional Belgian dishes that incorporate them, like rabbit cooked with geuze and guinea fowl in kriel.

### Herman Teirlinckplein 3, Beersel

If you are just in the mood for a quick bite, there is also a Croissy in town. This French-style bakery chain offers up tasty and reasonably priced sandwiches. Beersel's Croissy sells local products too, like the delicious, organic *Pajottenlander* juice. Try the apple-pear juice; it's outstanding.

### Hoogstraat 6, Beersel



## Visit the castle

With the exception of Mondays, you can visit the castle every day from 1 March to 15 November (10.00 to 12.00 and from 14.00 to 18.00) for €2.50. Guidebooks are available in English. You can also take a virtual tour: [www.clubneptune.be/VISITE.htm](http://www.clubneptune.be/VISITE.htm).

The Beersel Castle is easy to reach by public transport, as it's only a few minutes' walk from the Beersel train station—just west on Lotestraat. Beersel is located between Brussels and Halle. By car, you can reach the castle via the E19, Brussels-Mons, exit 19.





## Heaven, hell and hallelujah

DENZIL WALTON

*onGELOOFlijk! Heaven, hell and hallelujah* is a new exhibition in Kortrijk that takes us on a journey through more than a century and a half of popular religious belief. It focuses on the period between 1850 and 2010, and is predominately, but not exclusively, centred around the religious beliefs of the inhabitants of Kortrijk and its neighbouring towns and villages.

It's a fascinating pilgrimage, from the pious to the unbelievable; from the mundane to the extreme of religious culture. It covers daily devotions and everyday rituals; the worship of saints; body-breaking pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela; and mass healing events. A vast collection of photos, works of art, films, displays, and even the odd relic or two are used to illustrate how religious practices have changed through the years, yet continue to live on in some form or other today. Many of the items on display have been gathered from various religious institutions, museums

and archives. Some of them have rarely been seen in public before. Highlights include the reliquary of the Holy Hair of Christ and the crown of Our Lady of Groeninge. *onGELOOFlijk!* is up-to-date though, with displays on modern religious art, design, fashion and youth culture.

A key theme to the exhibition is the diversity of religious belief in Kortrijk. However, Catholicism is very much at the centre of the exhibition, although it does touch on other traditions like Protestantism or Orthodox Christianity.

It's probably the unusual that will create the most interest. Lieve Blancquaert's photographs of people's religious tattoos, for example. Or a collection of bizarre modern-day trinkets – some of which you may even be tempted to buy in the shop. Or you could try your hand at a computer game in which you can save souls. And *onGELOOFlijk!* is not afraid to cast an eye over the competition: new

gurus and idols from the worlds of sport, music, media and politics all get to show their faces.

In addition, a number of churches, museums and other buildings in Kortrijk are open to the public for the duration of the exhibition with a range of displays, films, concerts or special events in which belief is central. On the agenda are lectures and discussions with, amongst others, Annemie Struyff who presented the popular Flemish TV programme *In Godsnaam*. ♦

### onGELOOFlijk!

Until 9 January 2011  
Museum Kortrijk 1302  
Begijnhofpark, Kortrijk

open every day except Mondays  
from 10.00 to 18.00

→ [www.kortrijk.be/ongelooftlijk](http://www.kortrijk.be/ongelooftlijk)



© Patrice Stabile



#### Antwerp

##### Café Capital

Rubenslei 37 – Stadspark;  
[www.cafecapital.be](http://www.cafecapital.be)  
**Until SEP 9** 18.00-5.00 Bar Jeudi:  
food lounge, exhibitions, music and  
dance parties every Thursday night

##### de shop

Braziliëstraat 1; 03.232.01.03  
[www.destadvanelsschot.be](http://www.destadvanelsschot.be)  
**Until SEP 10** Fridays 22.00 Jolly  
Joker Club

##### Rivierenhof open-air theatre

Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192  
[www.openluchttheater.be](http://www.openluchttheater.be)  
**JUL 23** 20.30 Moonshine Reunion +  
The Baboons

#### Ardoos

##### Cultuurkapel De Schaduw

Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82  
[www.deschaduw.net](http://www.deschaduw.net)  
**JUL 23** 20.30 Yoshimi!

#### Brussels

##### Café Central

Borgwal 14; 02.513.73.08  
[www.lecafececentral.com](http://www.lecafececentral.com)  
**JUL 22** 23.00 Ben Wa **JUL 23** 23.00  
Stubborn, Title, Bill Doris + Cut Me  
show **JUL 29** 23.00 Coeurvert

##### DNA

Plattestein 18-20; 02.512.59.92  
**JUL 23** 20.00 Guns of Brixton

#### Hasselt

##### Muziekodroom

Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13  
[www.muziekodroom.be](http://www.muziekodroom.be)  
**JUL 22-AUG 12** 22.00 Summer Camp  
2010 parties with different music  
styles every Thursday night

#### Ostend

##### Kursaal (Casino)

Monacoplein 2; 070.22.56.00  
[www.kursaalostende.be](http://www.kursaalostende.be)  
**JUL 23** 20.00 Sharleen Spiteri - The  
Voice of TEXAS **JUL 29** 20.00 Shaggy



#### Antwerp

##### Café Hopper

Leopold de Waelstraat 2; 03.248.49.33  
[www.cafehopper.be](http://www.cafehopper.be)  
**JUL 25** 16.00 Yvonne Walter sings  
Lyrische & Ballad

##### De Heksenketel

Pelgrimsstraat 22; 03.283.56.73  
[www.heksenketel.org](http://www.heksenketel.org)  
**JUL 25** 15.00 Daniel McBrearty

##### Den Hopsack

Grote Pieter Potstraat 24;  
[www.denhopsack.be](http://www.denhopsack.be)  
**JUL 24** 21.00 One Man One Guitar  
**JUL 26** 21.00 Jam Manouche

##### Rivierenhof open-air theatre

Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192  
[www.openluchttheater.be](http://www.openluchttheater.be)  
**JUL 28** 20.30 John Butler Trio

#### Brussels

##### The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45  
[www.themusicvillage.com](http://www.themusicvillage.com)  
**Until JUL 24** 20.30 Buster the Swing



#### Brussels

##### Le Bar du Matin

Alsebergsesteenweg 172;

## DON'T MISS

### Jamiroquai

29 July

Suikerrock  
Tienen

Jay Kay is the charismatic leader of Jamiroquai, a name that combines the words 'jam session' and 'Iroquois', after the Native American tribe. The futuristic singer made his breakthrough with the 1996 album *Travelling without moving* and especially hits such as "Virtual Insanity", "Cosmic Girl" and "Alright". More than 20 million sold albums and some five years later, Jamiroquai is making this his summer for a funky comeback.



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

02.537.71.59 <http://bardumatin.blogspot.com>

**JUL 22** 21.00 1060, neo-soul **JUL 23** 22.00 Never ask me this song 'Strictly freshness' **JUL 29** 21.00 Mokoomba, funk (Zim) **JUL 29-AUG 1** 21.00 Brussels Soul Weekender, European DJs

##### Piola Libri

Franklinstraat 66; 02.736.93.91  
[www.piolalibri.be](http://www.piolalibri.be)  
**JUL 23** 19.00 Petra Jordan

##### Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34  
[www.recyclart.be](http://www.recyclart.be)  
**JUL 22** 22.00 RecBEAT **JUL 23** 23.30 Brassafrik (Ghana/Bel), 00.45 Harare (UK/Zim). 2.15 Brassafrik (Ghana/Bel) **JUL 29** 18.00 In Vitro + Skiv Trio + Electric Quartet + Open Jam Session



#### Ghent

##### St Bavo's Abbey

Gandastraat 1; 09.233.68.78  
[www.debijloke.be](http://www.debijloke.be)  
Concerts at 15.00 (part of the Gentse Feesten):  
**JUL 22** 15.00 Skip Sempé, Olivier Fortin, harpsichords: Louis & François Couperin, Rameau, Scarlatti



#### Antwerp

##### Rivierenhof open-air theatre

Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192  
[www.openluchttheater.be](http://www.openluchttheater.be)  
**JUL 27** 15.00 Kapitein Winokio (age three and up). 20.30 Comedy time with Philippe Geubels, Jeroen Leenders, Michael Van Peel and Bert Gabriëls (in Dutch)

#### Bruges

##### The English Theatre of Bruges

Walplein 23; 050.68.79.45  
[www.tematema.com](http://www.tematema.com)  
**JUL 24-25** 20.00 A Night of Chekhov: The Bear and The Proposal

## MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

Devout/Divine - Fashion vs. Religion → Modemuseum, Hasselt →

We zijn goed aangekomen! → Caermersklooster, Ghent

Closing Time → Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp



## Ghent

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



## Antwerp

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

## Diamond Museum

Koningin Astridplein 13-23;  
03.202.48.90 www.diamantmuseum.be  
**Until AUG 31** HarT voor HarD, jewellery in the shape of a heart

## 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 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  
**Until SEP 5** Jacky Lecouturier - POLAROIDs (and others), polaroids by the Belgian photographer

## 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

## Bruges

### Hospitaalmuseum

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

### Kunstcentrum Oud St.-Jan

Mariastraat 38; 050.47.61.00  
www.miro-brugge.be  
**Until OCT 3** Expo Miró, lithographs, ceramics and manuscripts from the surrealist painter Joan Miró

## 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 Brusselsers), presentation of the stories behind the arrival of 19 new immigrants to Brussels

### Atomium

Heysel Park; 02.475.45.75  
www.atomium.be  
**Until AUG 31** BE.WELCOME. Belgium and Immigration, the migration experience in Belgium via an interactive exhibition

### 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

### Belvue Museum

Paleizenplein 7; 02.511.44.25  
www.belvue.be  
**Until SEP 12** Facing Brussels, contrasting views of the city by 11 Francophone and Flemish press photographers  
**Until SEP 19** Brussels, A City with a View, interactive exhibition focusing on Jean-Baptiste Bonnecroy's 17th century painting Gezicht op Brussel, showing panoramas of the city  
**Until AUG 27** 21.30 Camera Belgica, sunset screenings of 20th-century Belgian films on the museum's terrace

### Bibliotheca Wittockiana

Bemelstraat 21; 02.770.53.33  
www.wittockiana.org  
**Until SEP 11** Parti pris: the duo Léon Wuidar and La Pierre d'Alun, books and illustrated bookbindings  
**Until SEP 11** Françoise Clabots, books, objects, prints and drawings

## Polé Polé

### Until 26 July

Graslei – Korenlei, Ghent

If you only visit one stage during the Gentse Feesten, by all means make it the giant colourful one that stretches out across the canal. The public – a mojito-drinking, hip-shaking lot – is literally floating on water. And with all that tropical decor, there is no better place to spend a balmy summer evening than there, to the tune of sexy pop, latin and world music concerts and after-parties hosted by international DJs.

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



## 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)  
**Until OCT 10** A Passage to Asia: 25 Centuries of Exchange between 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

## Brussels Info Place (BIP)

Koningsplein; 02.563.63.99  
www.biponline.be  
**Until DEC 31** Europe in Brussels: fragmented past, shared future?, a video exhibition looking at the European quarter, from its beginnings to the present day (www.europeinbrussels.be)

## 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

## Folklore Museum

Eikstraat 19; 02.514.53.97  
www.brussels.be  
**Until AUG 22** Manneken-Pis: A Very European Member of Brussels, costumes from the wardrobe of the famous Brussels icon, contributed by every member of the EU

## 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, work by Belgian photographer 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

## Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32  
www.botanique.be  
**Until AUG 8** Congo in Limbo, award-winning series by Belgian photographer Cédric Gerbehaye

## 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 Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11  
www.fine-arts-museum.be  
**Until SEP 26** Charles van der Stappen (1843-1910), sculptures by the Belgian artist  
**Until SEP 26** Marcel Broodthaers, modern works with objects from everyday life by the late Belgian artist

## Royal Museums of Art and History

Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11 ,  
www.kmkg-mrah.be  
**Until AUG 29** Isabelle de Borchgrave's I Medici: a Renaissance in Paper, life-size paper replicas of 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

## 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

## 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  
**Until SEP 12** Wangechi Mutu: My Dirty Little Heaven, collages by the New York-based Kenyan artist, Deutsche Bank's Artist of the Year

## Yaruna

Waversesteenweg 214B; 02.512.93.12  
www.anunsroom.com  
**Until OCT 14** Jeanne: A Nun's Room, installation by Scottish artist Paul Morris

## Deurle

### Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens

Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23  
www.museumdd.be  
**Until SEP 19** Biënnale van de Schilderkunst: het sublieme voorbij (Biennale of Painting: The Sublime Past, a subjective look at painting over the last 100 years (also at Roger Raveelmuseum in Machelen-Zulte)

## Gaasbeek

### Gaasbeek Castle

Kasteelstraat 40; 02.531.01.30  
www.kasteelvangaasbeek.be  
**Until AUG 8** Theatrum Mundi V: Cythera, drawings and installations by Flemish artist Peter Depelchin

## Ghent

### Caermersklooster

Vrouwebroersstraat 6; 09.269.29.10  
www.caermersklooster.be  
**Until SEP 5** We zijn goed aangekomen! Vakantiekolonies aan de Belgische kust (1887-1980) (We have arrived! Vacation colonies on the Belgian coast), photo and film-and sound fragments

## Design Museum

Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99  
www.designmuseumgent.be  
**Until OCT 24** Super Normal: Sensations of the Everyday, objects from around the world selected by designers Naoto Fukasawa and Jasper Morrison  
**Until OCT 24** Piet Stockmans: Retrospective, works by the legendary Flemish porcelain designer  
**Until OCT 24** Nilton Cunha: Good Luck, works in silver and Corian by the Flemish designer

## 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 Scribedreef 1 – Citadelpark; 09.240.07.00 www.mskgent.be  
**Until OCT 10** Stijn Cole, contemporary works by the artist in residence

## Museum of Modern Art (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03

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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  
**Until OCT 3** Xanadu! The SMAK collection presented by Hans Theys

## 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

**Fashion Museum (MMH)**  
Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.239.621  
www.modemuseumhasselt.be  
**Until JAN 9 2011** Devout/Divine Fashion vs. Religion, examples of religious symbolism in designs of the past decennia

## 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

## Kortrijk

**Museum Kortrijk 1302**  
Houtmarkt-Begijnpark; 056.27.78.50,  
www.kortrijk1302.be  
**Until JAN 9 2011** OnGELOOFlijk: van hemel, hel en halleluja (UnBELIEVEable: From Heaven, Hell and Hallelujah), religious objects and symbols from the past 500 years

## 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

## Machelen-Zulte

**Het Roger Raveelmuseum**  
Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00  
www.rogerraveelmuseum.be  
**Until SEP 19** Biennale van de Schilderkunst: het sublieme voorbij (Biennale of Painting: The Sublime Past), a subjective look at painting over the last 100 years (also at Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens in Deurle)

## Meise

**National Botanic Garden of Belgium**  
Nieuwelaan 38; 02.260.09.20  
www.plantentuinmeise.be  
**Until OCT 24** 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 Brusselsaars 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 Democratice Republic of Congo from independence to today

## Ypres

**In Flanders Fields Museum**  
Grote Markt 34; 057.239.220  
www.inlandersfields.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  
**Until OCT 10** More Force Than Necessary, photos and films by Brazilian artist-in-residence Rodrigo Braga



**Belgium's EU Presidency:** Belgium takes the helm of the European Union Council for six months and launches a series of events to mark its presidency  
**Until DEC 31** across the country  
www.eu2010.be

## Antwerp

**Parkfeesten Hoboken:** Free outdoor music festival every Wednesday  
**Until JUL 28** 20.00 in Broydenborg Park, Marneflaan 3  
www.hoboken.be

**Zomer van Antwerpen:** Annual outdoor summer festival with parties and concerts, circus acts, performances, films, BBQs and more  
**Until AUG 29** across the city  
www.zva.be

## Brussels

**Apéros Urbains:** Weekly aperitif plus after-parties at one of three partner clubs: Fuse, K-Nal and the Vaudeville; free entrance with purchase of drink at Apéros Urbains  
**Until SEP 3** across the city  
www.aperos.be

**Bal moderne:** Brussels' parks are transformed into dance floors in a series of public dances organised by Bal moderne where you can learn a new choreography in 45 minutes  
**Until AUG 28** across Brussels  
0476.47.03.67, www.balmoderne.be

**Brussels Beach:** A full-fledged beach , with deck chairs, cocktails, food, water sprays, sports, circus acts, concerts, canal cruises and more  
**Until AUG 22** along the Akenkaai on the canal  
www.brusselbad.be

**Bruxellons 2010:** Annual summer theatre festival with an emphasis on comedy  
**Until AUG 30** at Château du Karreveld, Jean de la Hoeselaan 3  
02.724.24.24, www.bruxellons.net

**Ecran Total:** Annual summer film festival featuring more than 70 films  
**Until SEP 14** at Cinema Arenberg, Koninginnegalerij 26  
02.512.80.63, www.arenberg.be

# CAFE SPOTLIGHT

EMMA DAVIS

## Houtsiplou

### Roupppelein 9 Brussels

It's not the trendiest part of town – the outskirts of Brussels city centre, near South Station. Hardly an obvious place to head for a beer and a bite. And yet, there's a funky, bustling bar on Roupppelein that will make you change your mind. It opened two years ago, and I must have walked by a hundred times before it caught my eye. And what a treat, with its quirky decor, including a huge mural of cartoons satirising the rather ridiculous tussle between Francophones and Flemings. "Nobody understands the politics here in Belgium, not even us and we're Belgian," said owner Fouad Benarbia. "We (the three owners) care about art and culture and therefore like to promote artists. One of them made us this fresco." The food is served up with the same degree of eccentricity. Burgers appear on a wooden board with fries on the side in a flower pot. Benarbia, inspired on the burger front by his time living in San Francisco, has added some local twists. The house special is served with gorgonzola and roquette. There's a wide range of vegetarian options as well, including salads, pasta dishes, sandwiches - this is, says Benarbia, a cafe and not a restaurant - and even a tofu burger. Then of course, there's the beer selection, all of them Belgian and many from off-beat brewers. "We go out of town and try beers in different places in the same way some people do with wine. We go and meet producers," said Benarbia, adding that there's no need to serve anything else other than Belgian beer. Well, apart from the wine and the cocktails. Bernarbia said the area was becoming much trendier. "A lot of people told us at first 'don't go there' but they were wrong. There are a lot of changes happening in this neighbourhood, more people are moving here and it's becoming very trendy." If the area puts you off, and bear in mind that this is also the same square where you'll find the famed *Comme chez soi*, then you can always wait until September when the owners will open another branch of Houtsiplou near to Luxemburgplein.

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



**Festivaeria:** Outdoor summer festival providing a platform for young artists with an open stage for musicians, singers, DJs, dancers, bodypainters, jugglers, photographers and street theatre artists  
**Until SEP 18** at Jubelpark  
www.myspace.com/playnewconcept

**Midi Fun Fair:** Annual carnival with rides and games  
**Until AUG 22** from Hallepoort to the end of Zuidlaan  
02.279.25.31, www.kermis-feest.be

**Midis-Minimes:** Lunchtime classical concerts all summer long  
**Until AUG 27** at Miniemenkerk, Miniemenstraat 62, and the Royal Conservatory, Regentschapsstraat 30  
www.midis-minimes.be

**Mini-Europe by Night:** Sound and light show with fireworks and music 'Emotions in Europe'  
**Until AUG 14** 22.30 at Mini-Europe, Bruparck, at the foot of the Atomium  
www.minieurope.com

**Recyclart Holidays:** Free summer activities, including concerts and film screenings  
**Until AUG 19** at Recyclart, Station Brussel Kapellekerk, Ursulinenstraat 25  
02.502.57.34, www.recyclart.be

**Reggae Bus:** Free Reggae, roots and dub music, entertainment and bar  
**Until SEP 4** 15.00-23.00 at Jubelark  
0499.35.23.35

**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

## Ghent

**10 Days Off:** 16th edition of the electronic music festival featuring John Digweed, Joy Orbison, Hot Chip, more

**Until JUL 26** at Vooruit, St Pietersnieuwstraat 23  
www.10daysoff.be

**Gentse Feesten:** 167th edition of the cultural festival combining six international festivals with free concerts, performances, a parade and more  
**Until JUL 26** across the city  
www.gentsefeesten.be

**Parkkaffee:** Cultural festival in the park, with dance and theatre performances, circus and magic acts, children's entertainment, workshops, campfires, concerts, food and more  
**Until AUG 31** at Groenestaakstraat 37  
09.227.99.94, www.parkkaffee.be

## Leuven

**Beleuvenissen:** Outdoor music festival with free concerts every Friday night  
**Until JUL 30** 20.30-23.30 in six locations across the city centre  
016.27.22.54, www.leuven.be

**Colora Festival:** World music festival featuring Bai Kamara Jr, Klezmic Zirkus, Capoeira Vida e Arte, more  
**Until JUL 24** in venues across the city  
www.colora.org

**M-idzomer:** Summer festival combining concerts, comedy, theatre, exhibitions and spoken word. Line-up includes Absynthe Minded, Milow, The Bear That Wasn't, more  
**JUL 29-AUG 1** at M in Leuven, Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28  
016.27.29.29 www.m-idzomer.be

**Zomer van Sint-Pieter:** Lunchtime classical concerts every weekday  
**Until AUG 26** at 12.15 in Sint-Pieterskerk, Grote Markt, and 30CC-Schouwburg, Bondgenotenlaan 21  
www.zomer-van-sint-pieter.be

## Mechelen

**Utopolis:** 15th edition of outdoor drive-in film event with champagne

bar, food and music from 20.00; screenings start at 22.00  
**JUL 23-AUG 28** 20.00 at Spuibekstraat 5  
015.55.77.33 www.utopolis.be

## Ostend

**Cirque du Soleil:** Varekai  
**JUL 29-AUG 29** 20.00 at Big Top, Oosteroever, Fortstraat  
059.70.11.99 www.cirquedusoleil.com

**FuZee!:** Third edition of the cultural festival featuring four Saturdays of international street theatre, fire and light displays, a parade and more  
**Until AUG 28** on the beach  
www.fuzee.be

**Ostend City of Culture:** Flanders' first City of Culture, a biennale designation to highlight culture in certain Flemish cities. Circus, parades, performances, exhibitions and more, all year long  
**Until DEC 31** across Ostend  
http://cultuur.oostende.be

**Zomershow:** Fun summer revues, with singing, dancing and comedy, for the whole family  
**Until AUG 28** at Casino Blankenberge, Zeedijk 150  
www.zomershow.be

## Tienen

**Suikerrock:** 24th edition of the rock music festival featuring Jamiroquai, Seal, The Australian Pink Floyd Show, more  
**JUL 28-AUG 1** at Grote Markt  
016.82.32.55 www.suikerrock.be

## Watou

**Kunstenfestival Watou:** The outdoor arts parcours featuring work by more than 100 artists, writers and poets, focusing on the link between word and image  
**Until SEP 5** in Watou  
www.watou2010.be



ROBYN BOYLE

# bite



## Aba-Jour

Ghent-based Flemish writer Herman Brusselmans called it his number one favourite local café/restaurant. Tourists find their way to it in droves, thanks to a very special mention in Tim Webb's *Good Beer Guide to Belgium and Holland*. And people like myself frequent it because of the security in knowing that it is always open (yes, even on a Monday when almost all other eateries are closed, forcing you to head to the nearest *frietshop*). But that's not the only reason I go there, of course. Last time I entered with a rather large group of hungry friends around 21.30, a brave act that would normally get you little more than some dirty looks from the staff and a swift kick back out the door. Instead we were welcomed to stake our claim on the one and only open table. There in the cosy L-shaped room with views of the canal, the unmistakable sound of Johnny Cash in the background put us immediately at ease as we slid into our wooden seats.

First of all, the service is impeccable. Not friendly, not chatty; but efficient and intuitive. Our waiter could see that we would need some time to look over the hefty menu, all but three pages of which are just drinks. In addition to an impressive selection of beers on tap (Westmalle Dubbel, LaChouffe, Moinette Blonde, Chimay Tripel and, for the moment, Gentse Tripel), they offer the standards (Duvel, Bush, etc), bottles of some of the best Abbey, Trappist and local beers, plus speciality brews (varieties of Old Geuze, Flemish browns and fruit lambics). Each of us ordered a completely different beer, allowing for a sort of impromptu tasting session. Rest assured, non-beer drinkers, there is also a considerable selection of world wines, cocktails and whisky.

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

Deciding what to eat was a bit easier as your choices are basically traditional Flemish cuisine – steak and fries, *stoofvlees* (beef stew), pork tenderloin – or classics like spaghetti, vegetarian pastas, scampis, *croques* (grilled sandwiches), salads. Opting for steak as usual, I couldn't help but feel a tinge of jealousy as I watched my friends' meals arrive: Scampi *diabolique*, fat and succulent-looking scampis covered in a spicy red cream sauce; a giant fresh salad topped with bacon-and-honey-smothered portions of goat cheese; and the real kicker was the enormous plate of dark brown *stoofvlees* made soft and tangy by a combination of Rodenbach and Westmalle Dubbel. But all traces of envy disappeared as I tucked into my entrecote with Roquefort sauce, cooked to slightly pink perfection. At the same time, three large silver bowls arrived, filled to the brim with hot golden *frietten* made fresh by the house, as were the accompanying pots of mayonnaise.

This is the kind of no-nonsense dining experience that keeps people coming back (and packing the place in at weekends, when reservation is recommended): excellent, high-quality ingredients and consistently delectable dishes in a laid-back setting.

→ [www.abajour-gent.com](http://www.abajour-gent.com)

- 📍 Oudburg 20, Ghent
- 🕒 Every day until late. Mon-Fri from 11.00; Sat-Sun from 15.00
- ★ Quintessential Flemish, from the brown pub-like interior right down to the hearty cuisine

## TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



## ‘lanterfanten’

The Italians have given us a phrase that gives off a glow – *dolce far niente*. Yet nowadays if you try to sweetly do nothing someone will be there to tell you to mend your ways. This time of year is supposed to be a season for relaxing and, dare I say it, lolling about. And especially if you're a kid, what can be more fun than doing nothing or very little.

This train of thought was provoked by a large advert in a daily paper of a 5-6 year old boy in a cobbled-together cart with a lap dog harnessed to pull the lad along. He seems to be having a whale of a time with his little whip in hand. It all reminded me of our Jamie at that age, who would string together the most improbable objects from the garden shed, together with the innards of any old radio lying about and give his fantasy free rein.

The headline of the ad reads *Zorg dat uw kinderen zich niet vervelen* – make sure your children don't get bored. And there to be cut out is a coupon giving reduced admittance into a museum or theatre. Nothing wrong with a bit of culture but the boy looks far from bored and the garden he's in is enormous so I doubt his parents would need the handout. Please don't spoil his fun, I thought, leave him in his world.

We should heed more the lyrics of songs such as one by Guus Meeuwis, a Dutch crooner, who suggests: *Als wij vandaag eens niets doen* – If today for once we do nothing, *niet iets van veel belang* – not anything of much importance, *want als je helemaal niets doet* – because if you do nothing at all, *duurt de dag zo lekker lang* – the day lasts so much longer. You can almost feel the day stretching ahead of you. And so different from the hurly-burly of the workplace where ominously “*U bent wat u niet doet*” – You are what you don't do.”

Of course, we all fear that the devil will find work for idle hands, so when we feel like doing nothing, we often feel guilty. It's the way you do nothing that's important: “*Lanterfanten is vaak waardevoller dan niks nuttigs doen*” – Idling is often more valuable than doing nothing useful.” Clearly something to remember when that little voice says “*Ik moet iets anders doen*” – I should be doing something else.” Phrases in my head such as *lekker niets doen* – just doing nothing, *vers stokbrood halen* – fetch a fresh baguette and *in de zon ontbijten* – have breakfast in the sun, should tell you that I'll soon be doing a bit of *lanterfanten* myself.

## THE LAST WORD...

### Gentse Beesten

"The behaviour of party-goers is a growing cause for concern. When people close the door and go out into the crowd, it's as if they leave all decency at home."

Ivan Saerens, one of the organisers of the Gentse Feesten

### Lost and found

"He'll be with some other woman. He'll come back all right."

A police spokesman in 1983, when Ivan Van Heirseele went missing. His remains were found last week in the Ghent-Terneuzen canal, bringing to a close the country's longest missing persons case

### Take a chance on me

"In periods of economic difficulties, people don't dare to take important steps. Now we're past the worst, they're ready to take chances again."

Expert interviewed in *De Standaard*, following new figures showing that 12.5% more people married this spring than in the same period last year

### Morel maze

"I feel 100 kg lighter."

Marie-Rose Morel, a former Miss Flanders, who has left the far-right party Vlaams Belang

## NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #140

### Feature

Find out how the Indian community came to Belgium in the 1960s and eventually took over and globalised the diamond industry

### Arts

Antwerp-based British stand-up comedian Nigel Williams brings his unique brand of comedy to the famed Edinburgh Festival

### Active

Petanque, no longer just an activity for older men in Southern Europe, is quickly gaining ground as a hip and trendy pastime among young people in Flanders