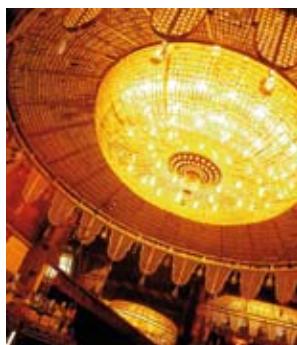


Treasures to Tripoli 2

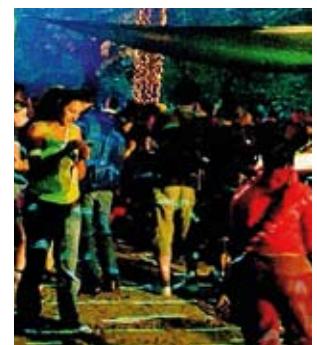
The Royal Museum for Central Africa is considering postponing or even cancelling the *GEO-Graphics* tour of African art to Africa this autumn unless suitable exhibition halls can be found


Hasselt high-life 8

Our Portrait of a City this week puts Hasselt in the limelight – a place where the Limburg capital feels right at home


Fairy fest 13

Supposedly it's staged by *Ancienne Belgique*, but we think the *Feeërieën* might just show up every year by magic, its mellow folk and trance-like experimental piano wafting across the Brussels night



The holy trinity

Do you have several hours, a car and barrelful of patience? Then you can get a hold of the best beer in the world



trinity

MELISSA MAKI

Oh, the infamy of Westvleteren. Although the general public outside of Belgium have never even heard of this West Flemish brew, let alone tasted it, beer connoisseurs worldwide covet it. Several years ago, the internet helped elevate the beer to further international acclaim – much to the chagrin of its brewers. Westvleteren is a beer made by the Trappist monks of the Saint Sixtus abbey in Westvleteren, a subdivision of the village of Vleteren, near Ypres. In 2005, the Westvleteren 12 beer was deemed the “best in the world” by ratebeer.com, a popular website for beer fans. A barrage of articles around the globe followed, leading to a huge spike in demand for the beer.

You would think this type of attention

would be a dream for the brewer. But the monks of Westvleteren are not amused. The Saint Sixtus monks have been producing the same amount of beer – 4,800 hectolitres – every year since 1945. Despite the heavy increase in demand, they refuse to up production.

Monks have a long tradition of brewing to support themselves, but they aren't in it for the profit. Says Marc Bode of Saint Sixtus: “We brew to live, but we don't live to brew.” In order to receive the label “Trappist”, a beer has to meet specific criteria, including earnings from sales going back into the business or to charity – no profits allowed. There are only seven Trappist beers in the world, and six of them are in Belgium. (The seventh is in the Netherlands.)

► *continued on page 5*

Clijsters claims Cincinnati crown

LEO CENDROWICZ

Flemish tennis star Kim Clijsters fought back from three match points to beat Maria Sharapova in the final of the \$2 million Cincinnati Women's Open on Sunday, 15 August.

Clijsters, who made her return to tennis at this event one year after a two-year break from the sport, was staring defeat in the face after losing her first set of the tournament and trailing 3-5 in the second. But the Russian passed up three championship points, and Clijsters rallied – after a 74-minute rain delay to nick the second set on the tie-break en route to a 2-6 7-6 6-2 victory.

Now ranked world number three, Clijsters admitted that the turnaround was

unexpected. “I'm a little confused. I was so close to losing, then this dark cloud came, and it changed,” she said. “I guess I forgot my serve back in the hotel, so I went back quickly to get it.”

The victory gave Clijsters her 38th career singles title, having already taken crowns in 2010 at Brisbane and Miami.

Earlier, Flemish player Yanina Wickmayer was beaten in the quarter-finals by Russian teenager Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 7-5 3-6 6-1. Leading 5-1 in the opening set on a heat-baked court, the 12th seeded Wickmayer soon began suffering in the oppressive humidity, allowing Pavlyuchenkova to rally back. ♦

Breast cancer rates highest in Europe Increased screenings mean more cancers detected

ALAN HOPE

Belgium has the highest rate of breast cancer in Europe, according to the latest research by scientists from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of the World Health Organisation. The figures appear in an article published in the *British Medical Journal*, which looked back at mortality figures from breast cancer in 30 European countries.

The study showed a reduction of 19% in mortality from breast cancer overall between 1989 and 2006. For individual countries, the trend ranged from a 45% fall in Iceland to a

17% increase in Romania. In 15 countries, the fall was over 20%, but these tended to be countries where the initial rate was higher. About 9,700 women in Belgium are diagnosed with breast cancer every year, or 109 per 100,000, compared to 93.5 10 years ago. Some 2,500 die of the disease every year. The rate of diagnosis is higher than any other country but, as experts reacting to the figures explained, that is not necessarily a sign Belgium is doing something wrong – it may in fact be a sign of doing something right.

► *continued on page 3*

OFFSIDE

African art tour under threat

© MPAC Tervuren



The Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren is having second thoughts about a plan to send some of its collection abroad – to Africa, where it originally came from.

The exhibition *GEO-Graphics: A Map of Art Practices in Africa* is currently showing at Bozar in Brussels as part of the Visionary Africa festival. The show includes 220 top pieces from the museum's permanent collection and from private collections. The original plan was to take the show on tour from November, travelling to Libya, Ethiopia and Burkina Faso.

But the museum is concerned that there are as yet no suitable places available for showing the works, most of them made of wood. "There are all sorts of rules regarding humidity, temperature and light," explained *GEO-Graphics* curator Anne-Marie Boutiaux. "Security is also very important, and no simple matter. Even in Europe it's not easy to find appropriate locations."

Tripoli, the capital of Libya and the first planned stop, appears to have no suitable exhibition spaces at all, prompting the organisers of the tour to investigate the possibility of a government building to host the show.

"This collection is made up of top-class pieces worth an enormous amount of money," said the Africa museum's director, Guido Gryseels. "Up to now, there have been no concrete proposals on where the pieces are to be shown. Without guarantees, we're not prepared just to let these pieces go off."

In addition, Boutiaux notes that the pieces are "extremely expensive to insure and to transport". The European Commission has made a grant of €300,000, but it won't be enough. The original ambitious plans may have to be cut back. "If we do send sculptures, it's probably going to be a couple just as an example. We'll certainly show a series of photos, and we may send some contemporary art works," Boutiaux said.

The last time art works were sent from Belgium to Africa was in the 1960s, during the reign of Zaire's dictator Mobutu. Some of the sculptures on loan to the national museum in Kinshasa were stolen and never recovered.

→ www.africamuseum.be

FLANDERS TODAY

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FLANDERS TODAY
AUGUST 18, 2010

News in brief

Agreements with Morocco, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Albania to allow **prisoners in Belgium** to serve their sentences in their homelands are not having the desired effect of reducing prison numbers, according to figures from the justice ministry. To date, not one prisoner has been transferred, as the partner countries have failed to ratify the agreements. The latest agreement was signed on 29 July with Albania and should affect about 35 prisoners in Belgian jails. Belgium also has other agreements with countries, such as Brazil, Hong Kong and Thailand, where transfer is voluntary, but only 51 prisoners have transferred since 2005 – half of them to the Netherlands.

Researcher at the University of Antwerp have developed a **vaccine for acute myeloid leukaemia** (AML) in adults, using cells from the patient's own immune system. The research, which took 10 years, showed promising results in 50% of patients with a high risk of relapse, pushing average survival times to 52 months. AML is a cancer of the blood cells affecting mainly people over 60 and treated with chemotherapy. The new vaccine tackles the high rates of return of the cancer.

A man of Pakistani origin died in June of an infection caused by so-called **super bacteria**, which is resistant to antibiotics, the Free University of Brussels (VUB) hospital has revealed. The

bacteria, which originates from the Indian subcontinent, produce a protein that makes conventional antibiotics useless. They can only be tackled with colistin, which can be toxic to the kidneys and nervous system at the high doses used. The man lived in Brussels but was hospitalised with an open leg wound while visiting Pakistan. It is likely he was infected during his hospital stay.

ING Bank has sent a letter to its clients aged over 60 apologising for the plan to **limit their cashpoint withdrawals** to €1,000 a week. "As the bank that listens, we couldn't ignore your reaction," chairman Eric Dralans writes in the letter. However ING is now trying to revive the proposal within the sectororganisation Febelfin. "We're seeing a large increase in bank-card fraud, particularly involving older customers," Dralans told *De Standaard*. "However, the solution we proposed wasn't the right one."

Despite not winning any medals, **Flemish swimmers smashed Belgian records** at the Budapest European Swimming Championships. The best finish was Kim Janssens, who took fifth in the final of the 50m breaststroke. In her semi-final, the 19-year-old set a Belgian record, with 31.55 seconds. The 4x100m women's medley, featuring Jasmin Verhaegen, Elise Matthysen, Kimberly Buys and Annelies De Maré, came in seventh, nearly

10 seconds behind the British winning team. Kimberly Buys, meanwhile, broke the Belgian 100m backstroke record.

An officer of the Brussels police opened fire last week on a **bull running** free in the Haren neighbourhood. Two bulls had escaped from their stall, and one of them charged at the police. Two shots were fired, one of which injured the bull slightly. The animals were later returned to their stall by the owner.

Police in Antwerp were last week called to a disturbance in the Den Brandt park, to find two **ice-cream vendors** battling it out with sauce bottles over a sales pitch. The competing vendors held a heated discussion over the rights to a sales spot, tempers became heated and the cherry-sauce started to fly. Police were able to calm them down, and no arrests were made. (And no-one was injured.)

A student in Antwerp has posted a video on YouTube to reveal a **security problem** involving the bike racks installed by the city. In the video, Tuur Buys shows how by simply removing the screw-on cap from the bike-stand, a chained-up bike can be detached from the rack. Antwerp city has already been notified, a spokesman said. New racks will be installed later in the year.

FACE OF FLANDERS

Sebastiaan Engelborghs, et al

Two Flemish researchers lead a team that has announced a new technique to determine the likelihood of someone developing Alzheimer's disease before symptoms have begun.

Professor Sebastiaan Engelborghs (pictured) and Professor Peter De Deyn of the memory clinic of the University of Antwerp, worked with colleagues in Sweden and the US, as well as from Ghent University and bio-tech company Innogenetics, on a method of diagnosing Alzheimer's in patients in which symptoms are not yet determined, or where the patient is suffering only mild memory impairment, such as may be considered normal in many older people.

According to the article in the latest issue of the US medical journal *Archives of Neurology*, more than 400 older people were examined: 100 already diagnosed with Alzheimer's, 114 with no visible cognitive dysfunction and 196 with mild memory impairment. The research identified a combination of three proteins in the subjects' cerebro-spinal fluid, which allowed researchers to identify which patients were suffering from Alzheimer's with 90% certainty. For patients with slight cognitive problems, the rate was 72%, and for the control group 36%.

When the results were combined with research on known Alzheimer's patients, the research group was able to build a model that can now with almost 100% certainty predict who will go on to develop Alzheimer's.

"We have already used the predictive test on a large scale in a research context," Professor De Deyn said. "Patients were not given the results, but now that the predictive value of the test is clear, it could be introduced clinically." Test kits have now been developed by Innogenetics.



The team was keen to make one thing clear: this research does not provide a cure for Alzheimer's, only a diagnosis. And some parties, among them the Flemish League against Alzheimer's, argue that many people would prefer not to know if they are going to develop the disease, particularly at the current level of treatment.

"A predictive test like this raises a certain number of ethical objections," a league spokesman said. "Not everyone wants to know. That's also true for a number of inherited forms of Alzheimer's: when the disease appears, family members are asked if they are interested in genetic screening. A great many people decline to be tested."

→ <http://archneur.ama-assn.org>



Breast cancer in Belgium: not more cases, but more cases detected

continued from page 1

"Breast cancer is a typical disease of prosperity," said Erik Van Limbergen, head of oncology at Leuven University Hospital. Cancer as a whole is generally a disease of middle age to later life, which means that as life spans increase, so do cancer rates. Modern western lifestyles are also a factor: being overweight is considered an important risk factor for breast cancer. Other hypotheses concern oestrogen and oestrogen-like compounds in the water supply, consumed by humans and by the animals that humans eat. Western women also tend to have fewer children, and have them later in life – both factors which increase the risk of breast cancer. Another factor influencing the rates of breast cancer is the prevalence of screening: an increase in screenings reveals more cases of breast cancer. The Flemish Health and Care Agency provides free screening every two years to all women aged between 50 and 69. While increased screening has an immediate effect on the numbers of patients diagnosed, it produces only a delayed effect on mortality fig-

ures. A woman diagnosed with a serious tumour including metastases could, with treatment, live for five years. A woman who undergoes screening and has a small tumour whose growth is arrested – half of all tumours caught by screening are under one centimetre and never develop symptoms – only becomes a cut in mortality rates later. It takes several years, in other words, before the effects of screening show up in the figures.

Screening is viewed by many oncologists as the most serious carcinogenic activity. When the Netherlands introduced a tough screening programme, incidences of breast cancer rose by 50-60%. The reason is that most cancers detected would never have been fatal, even if left alone. A woman with a small tumour becomes a cancer statistic, while another with exactly the same tumour, but who is never screened, is not.

At the same time, groups considered to be high-risk for breast cancer, such as lower income groups and immigrant women, tend to be less likely to show up for screening. ♦

► www.iarc.fr



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THE WEEK IN FIGURES



4,470,001

people working in Belgium in 2010, the highest number ever. However, unemployment has grown to 420,484

120,000

new workers needed in the health-care sector. Half of the jobs would be new positions, with the other half vacancies created by the departure of staff. The government is developing a plan to attract more young people and other under-represented groups to the sector

90th

place for Ghent University in a ranking of universities worldwide by Jiao Tong University in Shanghai. Ghent is the highest-placed Belgian university, with the Catholic University of Leuven, Antwerp University and the Free University of Brussels (VUB) further down the top-500 list

25 tonnes

of books and documents stored in the attic of a school in Hamont-Achel, Limburg province, causing structural problems for the building. The 75 metres of bookshelves will have to be re-housed

3x

more carbon dioxide emissions as a result of badly timed traffic lights in the Brussels region, according to motoring organisation Touring. Carbon monoxide emissions also go up by 10%. The organisation described the organisation of Brussels' traffic lights as "how not to do it"

Busiest man in Flanders: "Maybe it's time to cut back a bit"

Josef Dauwe, known as Jef, is officially the hardest-working man in Flanders, following the annual publication last week of the register of interests of politicians and senior civil servants. Dauwe (pictured), from Dendermonde in East Flanders, is a member of the province's governing council responsible for archives, small businesses, heritage and the environment. He is also a director of the Festival of Flanders and the Roger Raveel foundation, chairman of the Lebbeke local history circle, director of the National Orchestra, a member of the Flemish Heraldic Council and chairman of the Mid-East Flanders Woodland Group.

And that's only the start: in all, Dauwe holds 55 official positions, more than any other public figure in Flanders. "I knew there were a lot of them," the 64-year-old said, "but I'm surprised I'm top of the list. I consider it an honour. But maybe it's time to cut back a bit. I've discovered that it's not always possible to give your best at everything."

Dauwe attributes his work ethic to early learning of the proverb "Idle hands are the Devil's playthings". He sees his public service as giving back to society in return for what he has received. Few of his posts are paid work.

The recipe for keeping up with such a formidable workload: "Little sleep and hard work," he says. "I get up in the morning at 4.30, and I make sure I'm in bed by midnight. I work



© Belga

towards peaks of concentration and keep meetings as short as possible. That way you can get a lot done."

Dauwe is not, however, the national champion. That honour goes to the French speaker Jean-Pascal Labille with 59 posts, among them chairman of the board of the employment agency Forem, director of the RTBF and member of the board of numerous hospitals.

A total of 7,700 politicians and senior civil servants are required by law to register their employment, paid or unpaid, with the Court of Auditors. This year 331 have so far failed to do so, running the risk of a fine of up to €5,500. ♦

Wet weather washes out festivals

Unseasonably wet weather last week washed away a religious parade in Hasselt that takes place only once every seven years. The Virga Jesse festivities date back to the 14th century and have been organised every seven years since 1682. The festival includes a parade in which 2,000 people enact religious tableaux, but that part had to

be cancelled at the weekend due to flooding.

Meanwhile in Oudenaarde, East Flanders, 2,000 visitors camping at the Feest in het Park site were evacuated by emergency services on the orders of the municipal authorities. The festival ended on Sunday, but many visitors had decided to camp over until Monday.

As rainfall continued on Monday, there were reports of heavy delays on the Brussels Ring and in the city's tunnels. Train traffic to Ostend was affected by ground subsidence at Drongen. And in Torhout, four cyclists were injured when the branch of a tree fell on them as they listened to a tour guide. ♦



© Belga

Holidaymakers on the beach at Duinbergen near Knokke were last week unexpectedly entertained by a performing visitor. The Spinner dolphin (*Stenella longirostris*) is more usually found in tropical waters but is occasionally seen in the Bay of Biscay and the English Channel. Normally they travel in small schools, but the visitor to Duinbergen, who was nicknamed Rudolf, appeared to have gone off on his own. The species, sometimes called the long-snouted dolphin, is known for its acrobatic leaps from the water while hunting. "How long he stays around will depend on the food he finds," said Jan Haelteren of the government's North Sea agency. Police instructed the coast guards to keep boats and windsurfers away from Rudolf on pain of heavy fines.

CULTURE NEWS

The nominations have been announced for the first-ever **Flemish Film Awards**, to be awarded during the Ostend Film Festival next month. Felix Van Groeningen's *De Helaasheid der dingen* (*The Misfortunates*) leads the field with seven nominations, including best film, director and actor (Koen De Graeve). Other films in the running include *Lost Persons Area*, with six nominations, and *My Queen Karo*, with five.

Randy Newman and Paul McCartney are among the nominees for the annual **World Soundtrack Awards**, which will be given out at the Flanders International Film Festival in October. The films competing for original score and original song include *Avatar*, *Fantastic Mr Fox*, *How to Train Your Dragon* and *Sherlock Holmes*.

Flemish TV production house Eyeworks has called off a deal to film 14-year-old round-the-world **sailor Laura Dekker**, after failure to agree with Dekker's representatives over payment terms. The project was to have included a documentary, regular reports on her progress and press representation.

Jorgen Oosterwaal, editor in chief of weekly magazine *Humo* since 2001, has resigned, effective 1 September. Oosterwaal has shared the top job with Sam De Graeve since May this year, when the magazine was taken over by TV producers Woestijnvis. He will continue as an external consultant for the magazine.

Flemish minister for heritage Geert Bourgeois last week announced the award of €3.48 million for the restoration of **former mining sites** in Beringen and Genk, both in Limburg province. The works at Beringen concern the coal-washing facility, a protected monument, and the baths complex. At the C-Mine site at Genk, the former stables will be turned into workshops, offices and lofts at a cost of €1.49 million. Pithead buildings will also be restored.

Antoinette Beumer, who is directing the Dutch remake of the smash-hit Flemish film *Loft*, has returned to work after she broke her jaw and both arms when a scaffolding collapsed on the set. Her place was taken during her absence by Eric Van Looy, director of the original version. Danny Elsen, cameraman on both productions, has also gone back to work, after suffering a broken foot in the same incident.

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GOSSELIN MOVING

BELGIUM - MEMBER GOSSELIN GROUP

The holy trinity

Westvleteren is a perfect argument for quality over quantity

→ *continued from page 1*

Saint Sixtus does not sell its beer to cafes, restaurants, supermarkets or any retail outlets. You can buy Westvleteren at the abbey, but only by appointment. And appointments are difficult to come by.

To get an appointment, you must call the "beer phone number"; but the line is nearly always busy. I gave the calling assignment to my beer partner-in-crime. He got through to the line after two hours of compulsive dialling, from two cell phones at once.

You then have to drive to the abbey to pick up your beer. You are entitled to one case (24 bottles) per car per month (they record your license plate number).

To their credit, the monks keep the beer affordable. Westvleteren costs about the same as any good Belgian beer; one case of Westvleteren 12 (the strongest) costs €38 – crate and bottle deposits are extra. The beer comes in a wooden crate and is unlabeled. The only thing that distinguishes the beer as Westvleteren is the cap.

Is it worth the effort?

The brewery at Saint Sixtus produces three different types of beer, named for their alcohol levels (6, 8 or 12 degrees). All of the beers have rave reviews on the prestigious sites ratebeer.com and beeradvocate.com. The Westvleteren 12 continues to be number one on ratebeer.com's Top 50, and the 8 (a dubbel) comes in at 18.

The 12 accounts for half of the beer produced at Saint Sixtus. It is an Abt, or abbot, beer, otherwise known as a "quadruple" (rather than the more common "dubbel" or "tripel"). Quadrupels are strong, dark beers with approximately four times the "normal" amount of malt, giving them some sweetness.

Westvleteren 12 has a stunning level of complexity and richness that you just can't get from a dubbel or a tripel. And since it's a strong beer, it ages well, much like a fine wine. I've tasted both young

and old bottles of the 12 and was amazed at how much the aging process enhances the flavour and character of this beer.

Is it the best beer in the world? This idea is obviously arguable, particularly as this heavy, rich, sweet style of beer does not appeal to everyone. But anyone who has experience with beer tasting knows that it is an extraordinary beer.

Danny Van Tricht, Flemish author of the informative beer blog TrappistBier Beleven offers some insight. "What makes Westvleteren – and other Trappist beers – so special is they don't brew in a hurry," he says. "The production process is not forced at all. I'm sure large breweries force it for commercial reasons."

How an abbey became a brewery

In 1815, Jan-Baptist Victoor decided to leave Poperinge, buy a parcel of land in the Saint Sixtus woods and live as a hermit. He spent 15 years alone before four monks from France came to join him. They formed a new Cistercian monastery that would eventually become the Trappist Abbey at Saint Sixtus.

The beginning of the beer brewing coincided with the abbey's construction, in 1870. Initially, the monks brewed a beer of low alcohol (2°) for the workers. Twenty years later, the monks of Saint Sixtus got advice from the Abbey of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Westmalle to start commercial beer production. Westvleteren beer as we know it today owes its origins to the expertise of the Westmalle brewers; it began with their yeast, too. The Saint Sixtus monks now brew 75 times per year. Though the abbey and brewery aren't open to the public, those who are interested in learning more about the lives of the Saint Sixtus monks can visit the Claustrum, a permanent exhibition located in the meeting centre of the In De Vrede café next door. ♦

→ www.sintsixtus.be



Inside the Saint Sixtus brewery

© Saint Sixtus Abbey

The Flemish Trappists

Don't be fooled by imitators – there are only seven Trappist beers in the world

Despite the fact that many Belgian beers have "religious" themes, most of them are not connected to an abbey. And even if they are, "abbey" does not mean "Trappist". If it's called an "abbey beer", it is either affiliated with a real abbey that allows its name to be used or simply made in the style of a Trappist – generally with a "dubbel" and a "tripel" beer. Dubbels are brown and brewed with double the malt of most beer, and tripels are lighter (in colour if not in alcohol content) and brewed with three times the malt.

Of the approximately 170 Trappist monasteries in the world, seven brew beer. Six of them are in Belgium. For the beer to be blessed with a Trappist designation, the brewery must obey stringent guidelines. Monks must be involved in the brewing process, for example, and profits from sales have to go back into the abbey or to charity.

The International Trappist Association, headquartered in Vleteren, works to guarantee the quality and authenticity of Trappist products and protect the economic interests of the Trappist monasteries. There are two other beer-brewing abbeys in Flanders that have been bestowed the "Trappist" distinction.

Westmalle The Abbey of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Westmalle, Antwerp province, offers two types of beer: a dubbel and a tripel. Their beers are sold widely in stores and on menus. Like the other two Trappist brewers, they do not offer public tours, but if you happen to be in the neighbourhood, you can buy Trappist cheese directly from the monks. Café Trappisten is conveniently located across the street from the abbey, where you can get both the tripel and dubbel from the cask.

→ www.trappistwestmalle.be

Achel The Saint Benedictus abbey in Achel, Limburg province, began brewing again in 1998 after an 84-year hiatus. They brew an 8, an Extra-Brown 8 and both a brown and a golden 5. The 8s are available commercially, while the 5s are only available at the on-site café.

→ www.achelsekluis.org



© Saint Sixtus

Drinking Westvleteren – without an appointment

If you don't see yourself getting an appointment with the Saint Sixtus abbey to buy a case of Westvleteren, you can still partake in the fruits of the monks' labour. In de Vrede café is right across the street from the abbey. You find all three of the beers on tap, as well as a store where you can buy abbey pâté, cheese and other regional products. If you are lucky, the gift shop might even have some beer in stock. Though it comes at a price, in special gift packs, complete with Westvleteren beer glasses.

The monks discourage third-party resale, but once in a while you can find a café or retail outlet that has gone through the dogged process of acquiring Westvleteren and are offering it up to customers. Just be prepared to pay for it. Last year, I bought my first bottle of Westvleteren 12 in Brussels' Beer Planet for €8. More recently, my visiting American friends paid €17 to drink a bottle at a café outside of Ghent. While that's a ridiculous price, a bottle of Westvleteren 12 on eBay will set you back twice that amount.

→ www.indevrede.be



Our happy dialler picks up his crate of Westvleteren 12

Good work if you can get it: outside the Saint Sixtus brewery in Westvleteren

♦5

Diamonds in the rough

The Indian diamond community is struggling with new dangers of the 21st century

KARISHMA BHANSALI MEHTA

More than 80% of the world's rough diamonds and 50% of its polished pass through Antwerp every year. The pedestrian-only streets of the diamond quarter house 1,800 companies, four diamond exchanges, a diamond grading facility, two specialised banks – ABN AMRO and the Antwerp Diamond Bank – and government institutions like the Antwerp World Diamond Centre (AWDC), the industry's representative body.

However, in the years following EU integration – from the terrorist attacks of 9/11 to the global economic crisis that hit in 2008 – Antwerp has had to constantly reinvent itself to stay competitive.

The *laissez faire* attitude of the government that initially attracted the business here gradually disappeared, as did flexibility on taxes, customs processes and transfer of funds. The Indian diamond community began to get politically involved to make sure they had an adequate legal and fiscal framework.

Right now, some 500 Indian families involved in the diamond trade consider Antwerp home, and Indian are responsible for 60% of the diamond trade worldwide. In the last few years, government raids in the office of many diamantaires threatened the functioning of the business and raised questions as to whether it could even continue to function in Antwerp.

Marc Huybrechts, the Honorary Consul General of the Republic of India in Antwerp, claims that traders have been "harassed" by police officers during raids last year when diamond stocks were seized. In one well-publicised case, a diamantaire died during a search. "They went too far and even caused a bankruptcy to a diamond trading company," says Huybrechts. "If you chase the traders away, you are doing harm to Antwerp."

This scandal, coupled with the rise of the industry in Dubai, where they are offered a 30-year tax holiday and state of the art infrastructure, has put Antwerp in a precarious position.

But many traders still believe in staying right here. "Nothing will replace Antwerp," says Aarjav Mehta of Aarjav

diamonds. While he admits that it's a fast-growing industry in the east, he says that "during the recession, Antwerp was injured the least of all the world diamond centres because of the strong base of capital we have here."

Mehta also sees advantages in being based in Europe. "The success ratio in Antwerp is much better than New York City. We are back to 70 to 80% of 2008 levels. It is easy to do business here because everything is official and all communities operate in an equal, neutral manner."

While global diamond demand is still generated by the US and Europe, the AWDC has acknowledged that the natural progression of the business is headed eastward. "With the far east, we are facing the reality of an economy that is not affected by crisis, while the traditional markets of the US, Japan and Europe are stagnating," says AWDC CEO Freddy Hanard. Antwerp is relentlessly putting efforts in strengthening ties with the east, especially China and Hong Kong, as they are Antwerp's first export destination for polished diamonds.

To that end, AWDC has formed a partnership with the Shanghai Diamond Exchange to develop and support China's diamond infrastructure.

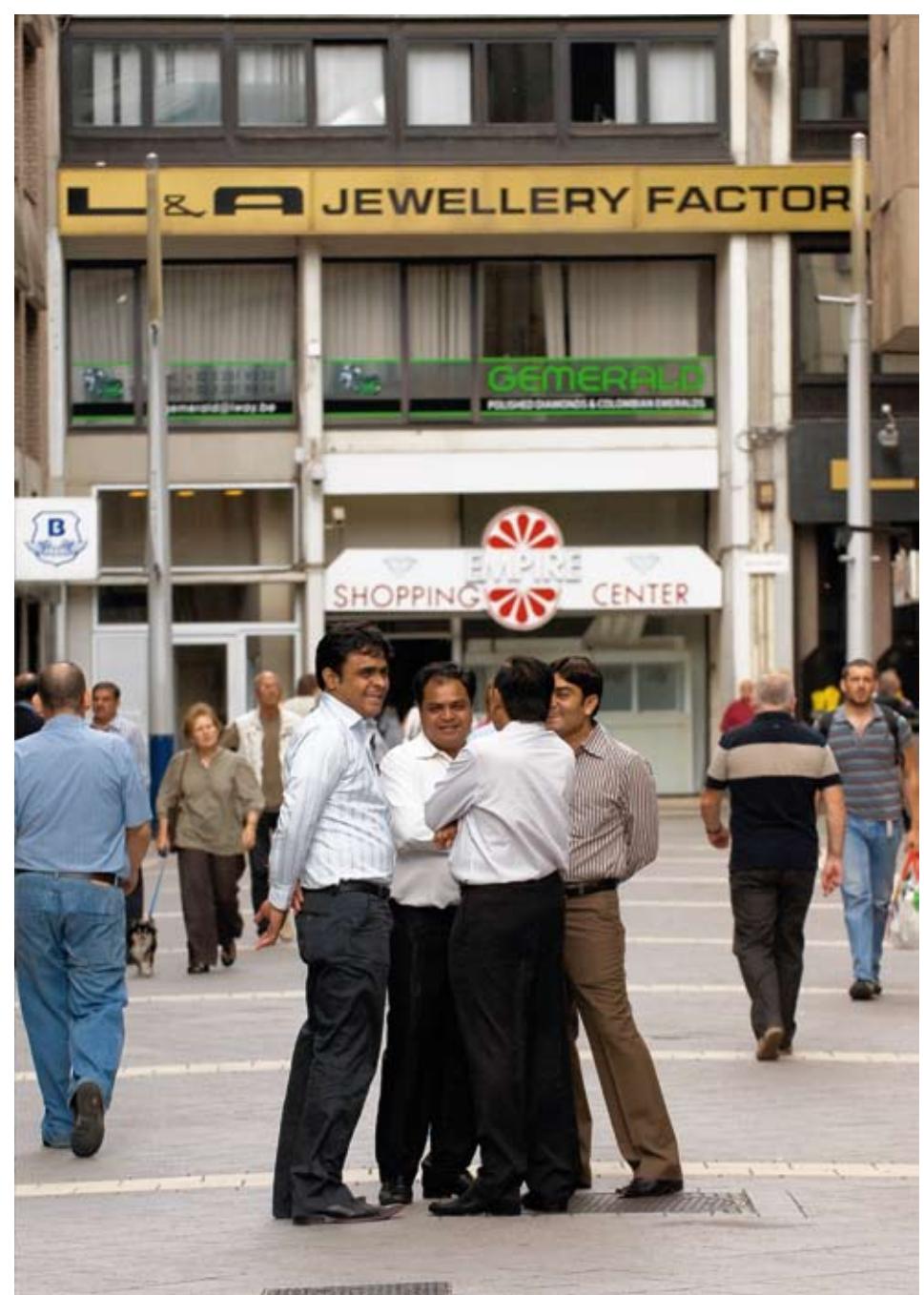
Security threats

But perhaps the most serious threat to the diamond community in Antwerp is the rising tide of violent robberies. What were once straight robberies in many Indian residences have turned into high-profile tiger kidnappings by professionally organised crime gangs.

In the last few months, there have been repeated incidents of both robberies and tiger kidnappings. A community that moved here in the early 1970s when Antwerp was a safe haven is paralysed with fear as it copes with changing times.

"Not one criminal has been caught yet. We are now constantly looking over our shoulders," says Mehta.

The AWDC is in regular communication with the Antwerp and the federal police to help inform and educate the commu-



© Jack Fisch/REPORTERS

Some Indians in the business would like to see Antwerp's diamond district cordoned off for security reasons

nity. Despite presentations on how to better enforce security at home and at work and to identify criminals, the sector seems to lack faith in the measures the police are taking.

"We need CCTV cameras like they have in London to track criminals," states Chetan Choksi of Diminco, "and the whole diamond market should be cordoned off like they have done in Tel Aviv if they want the sector to continue to thrive."

Peter Muyshondt is the commissioner of the branch of Antwerp police in charge of security in the diamond sector said. "At this time, there is no real structured diamond sector," he admits. "We have three streets with lots of different players, and some buildings are more secure than others."

Muyshondt is aiming towards a more consistent structure through security parameters, but he says that it is easier to work with an organised sector like a bank, where everything is clearly defined. "This is not the case with the diamond zone," he says.

The Antwerp police have developed an information and data collection procedure, accessible on the AWDC website,

for people to directly communicate suspicious activity to the police. At this point, it has received no response from the business community, and crimes are still rampant.

"People need to give us the benefit of the doubt," says Muyshondt, adding that an increase in the level of vigilance and communication with the police is essential to securing the sector. "It's not possible to have a police officer outside every home and on every street corner. Optimum security will only be achieved if players in the market re-evaluate their ways of doing business and stop bringing high value goods into their homes. Otherwise we are just waiting for the next tiger kidnapping." ♦

→ www.awdc.be

1 September

The Indian community opens its new Jain Temple and meditation centre in Antwerp



Belgacom complains about tariffs

New regulations make access to broadband one of the cheapest in Europe

ALAN HOPE

Telecommunications giant Belgacom has complained that outside operators will pay less for access to their network for broadband internet than operators in neighbouring countries, under new rules announced last week by the regulator for postal and telecoms services BIPT.

The new charges involve access to the superfast VDSL2 broadband network, offering download speeds of more than 20 megabytes a second, which Belgacom was obliged to open up to its competitors in 2008. The BIPT rejected Belgacom's argument that open access would undermine the competitive edge the company expected to gain from developing the network and make their investment retroactively un-economic. The main reduction comes in the cost of access to what is called "raw copper" – the physical infrastructure of the network, without bundled products or services such as telephony. That goes down from €9.29 to €7.57 per line per month. Belgacom claims this tariff is now one of the cheapest in Europe – and less than in any neighbouring country.

The company called the tariff "drastic" and claimed the BIPT's measures would affect Belgacom negatively, while its main competitor Telenet, being a cable company, would not be affected.

For ADSL – the most common form of broadband access used in homes – the tariff falls from €14.32 to €12.51 per line per month. For the



© Shutterstock

new VDSL2, meanwhile, the tariff will be €13.85. That cannot be compared to a previous official rate since there has so far been none applied, but it is cheaper for third parties than the slower ADSL line is now.

"The completion of the regulation of the VDSL2 offer gives new hope for more competition on the Belgian broadband market," said Luc Hindryckx,

chairman of the BIPT Council. "The operators now have all the elements they need to develop a product to offer to the market. The ball is in their court. Lower prices and a possibly larger offer will benefit the end-user."

Belgacom has not said yet whether it will appeal the tariffs. ♦

Under sentence of death, Opel Antwerp stays in profit

Despite the decision last year by General Motors (GM) to close the plant, Opel Antwerp made a profit of €11.91 million last year. The figures, reported last week by *De Tijd* newspaper, come from the annual report of General Motors Belgium.

The figures stayed in the black despite falling demand for the factory's Astra model, which led to periods of temporary redundancy, and despite the industrial unrest that followed the announcement that the plant was to close.

The positive results show that the decision was "purely political", according to union representative Rudi Hennes. "With Opel, GM has slaughtered the goose that lays the golden eggs," he commented. ♦

Islamic bank planned

A Brussels economist is planning to set up Belgium's first Islamic bank. Last week, economist and financial consultant Mohamed Boulif told the financial newspaper *L'Echo* that he would consider going to the banks of Qatar and Kuwait for capital.

Islamic banking is based on Sharia law, which essentially forbids usury, or the charging of interest on loans. Interest is allowed to be charged in limited circumstances.

Unlike most Western banks, Islamic banking operates in terms of profit-and-loss sharing: customers become stakeholders, depending on whether they are in credit or debit to the bank. Sharia bankd bears a strong resemblance in practice to the cooperative banks that have existed in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom since the 19th century.

The other guiding principle of Islamic banking is that it must not invest in businesses whose aims are in direct opposition to the principles of Sharia, ruling out, for instance, companies which trade in arms, alcohol, pornography or pork.

Boulif will wait until a new government is in place before announcing a timeline for the bank, but said that he has already had talks with the banking industry regulator, CBFA. ♦

Over-45s feel discriminated against

People over the age of 45 feel more discriminated against than other age groups, especially at work, according to a report from the Centre for Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Racism. Last year the centre took 86 complaints concerning age discrimination. The law making it an offence to discriminate on the basis of age came into force in 2007.

One in three of complaints came from young people, who felt belittled or insulted at work. In one complaint, a 20-year-old said that the landlord of a holiday home refused to rent to him because of previous bad experience with young people. This sort of discrimination is also against the law, the centre said. ♦

VRT takes in more, pays out less

The Flemish public broadcaster VRT earned €4.5 million from digital TV services, such as those allowing viewers to catch up with programmes already broadcast, according to the answer to a written question put to Flanders' media minister Ingrid Lieten. The services were introduced on digital TV by Telenet in 2005 and by Belgacom TV in 2006. The reporting period concerns 2007-2009, Lieten said.

In 2008 digital services income – only for various on-screen interactive services, not for the provision of digital TV itself – was up by as much as 96% on the previous year. By 2009, some services had dropped below 2007 levels.

Meanwhile, another written answer from Lieten to parliament member Carl Decaluwe revealed that prize money on quiz shows broadcast by the VRT fell from a total of €660,000 in 2007 to €390,000 in 2008, and then less steeply to just over €375,000 in 2009. The biggest spender was the daily quiz show *Blokken*, which paid out nearly €173,000. *Blokken*, presented by Ben Crabbé (pictured) is a steady performer at the top of the VRT's – and the region's – ratings charts. ♦



© VRT

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Banking • ING

ING customers have been warned not to follow the instructions contained in an email purporting to come from the "Fraud & Scam division" of the bank's Dutch headquarters. The spam mail claims a security hole has been discovered in home-banking operations and asks customers to provide login details. These are then stolen by the fraudsters in what is known as "phishing". The culprits, thought to have sent a similar email to clients in the Netherlands in July, have not been traced.

Banking • KBC

American property developer Base Village Owner is suing Leuven-based KBC and three other European banks in a New York court for a total of \$406 million (€309 million), alleging that the banks defaulted on promised financing for apartments, shops and a hotel complex in March 2007. The four European banks, the complaint says, withdrew after the collapse of Lehman Brothers, which was also involved in financing the project.

Commodities • Boerenbond

The Boerenbond (Farming Union) last week issued a plea to end financial speculation on raw materials prices, following a number of recent price increases. Wheat prices are now at their highest level for two years as a result of "unethical and unacceptable" speculation, the union said.

Entertainment • Studio 100

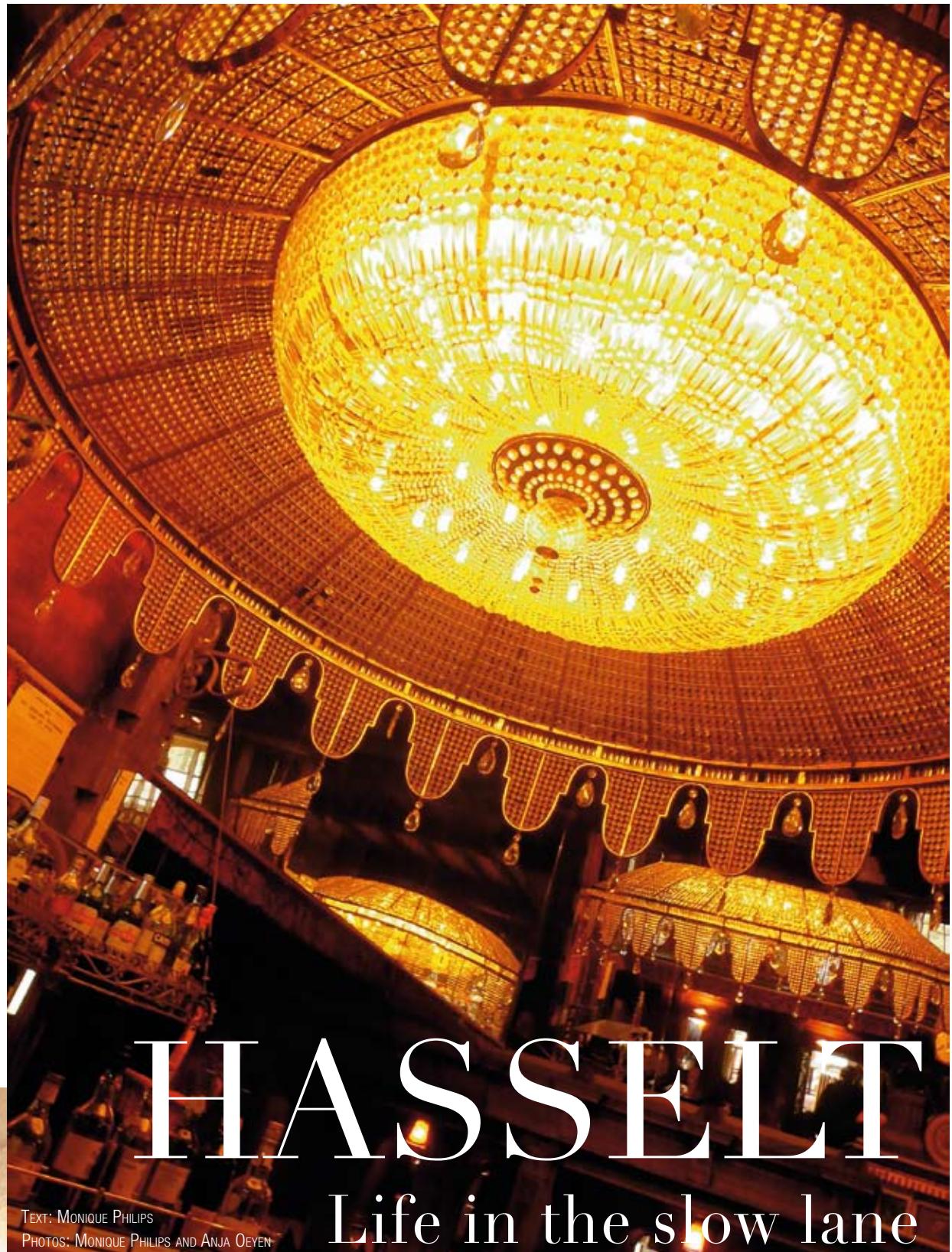
Multimedia entertainment group Studio 100 is preparing to take its Plopsaland theme parks to Germany, as part of a further phase of integration following the takeover of EM Entertainment in 2008. Last week Studio 100 reported net profits of €6.6 million on sales for 2009 of €132.4 million.

Supermarkets • Colruyt

Supermarket chain Colruyt has cancelled contracts with 20 non-food suppliers on ethical grounds after more than 100 social audits carried out in China, Thailand and Vietnam. According to Colruyt, working conditions at the companies concerned do not meet minimum standards or the products – mainly household products, toys and school materials – fail to conform to European safety standards.

Tourism • Club Med

Tourism group Club Med has announced a three-year plan of "intensive cooperation" with Brussels Airlines from April of next year. The agreement should provide the airline with 50,000 extra passengers a year flying out of Zaventem. Club Med will also target Flemish customers by providing Dutch-speaking tour representatives at 12 of its holiday destinations.



HASSELT

Life in the slow lane

TEXT: MONIQUE PHILIPS
PHOTOS: MONIQUE PHILIPS AND ANJA OEYEN



Hasselt resembles an off-white meringue cake. Picture perfect. You might find it a tad too sweet, and its centre might turn out to be hollow rather than hiding an exotic delicacy. But never mind, there's plenty of colourful topping to go with it, around the outskirts of town. As the local saying goes, you need at least three servings of Hasselt to make up your mind.

Trying to peg down Hasselt is a tough job. Its split personality escapes all cliché. Life is a bit slower-paced in this small city, but Hasselt is extremely posh as well. Even Antwerp's fashionistas descend on Hasselt's shopping streets like little ants. Clothes and shoes, preferably by local designers, is what they are looking for. Names and labels, darling. If Eddy Monsoon had to pick a Belgian town to live in, she'd do great in Hasselt.

The hippest, most stylish participants of national events invariably drove in from Limburg. Be it for a beauty contest, Gothic get-together or a culinary TV show, these youngsters look the part. At the cemetery, adults die smiling, dressed in a tuxedo, while the infants fly off to heaven in golden dresses.

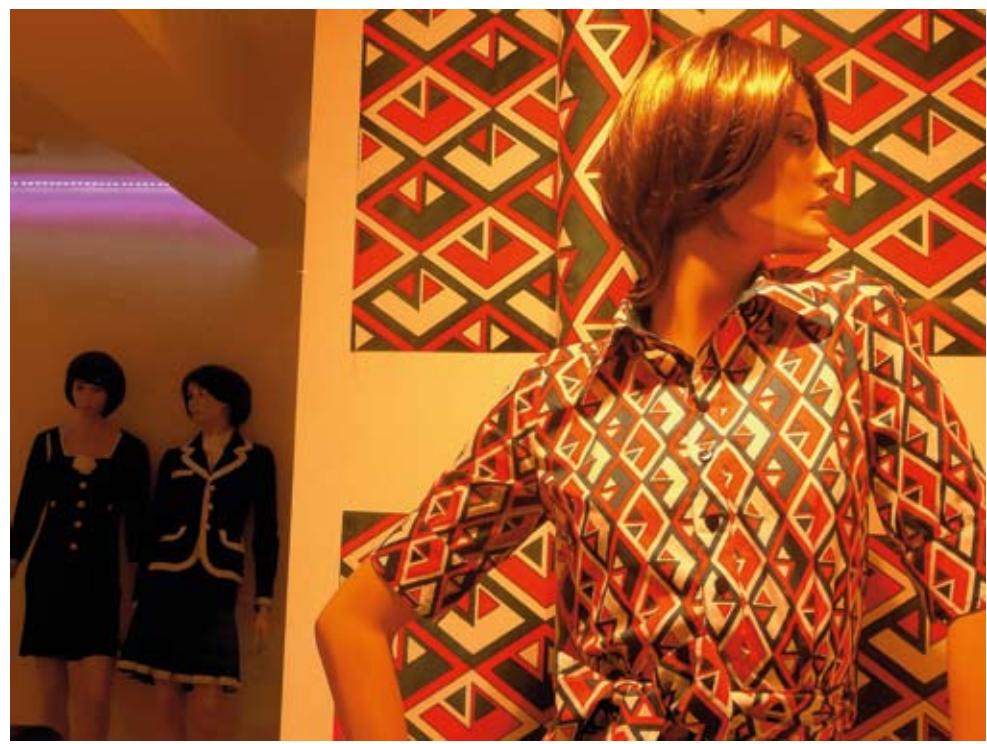
Yet even with Hasselt being so highly mainstream, so desperate to get things aesthetically right, there's definitely a whiff of anarchy in the air. Just like art, which isn't made in posh galleries, life also needs a jumbled studio. So while at one end of the Kanaalkom, Hasselt's marina, arise the new shiny blocks of flats ("The Blue Boulevard"), the other side hasn't been touched. The abandoned site of the former gelatine factory has become a kind of "free zone" for



adventurous artists and architects, including top-rank exhibition by the local CIAP collective.

Hasselt's proud. Of being the home of the well-known 19th-century priest Valentinus Paquay, better known as "het Heilig Paterke", or the little holy father, but of historically being a socialist stronghold as well. Hasselt's public transport is free, and the city invests a lot of funds in what they modestly call "catching up".

Gastronomically, Hasselt has always been way out front. Perched on the border between the lush hills of Haspengouw and the heath of the Kempen, the city is ideally positioned to combine



the best produce of the two areas. Sturdy farms in the south bring in the fruit, dairy and meat to exhilarate the Hasselt's spoiled pallet, while the north provides the ingredients to make the famous jenever. No coffee is served without a chocolate or a Hasseltse Speculoos biscuit. Head east on the N75 towards Genk to see how the mines have risen from their ashes or to rummage in The Queen of the South's scrap yard. Relax, and take time to make up your mind about Hasselt. In the meantime, treasure your Limburg friends because they are your ticket to the good life. ♦

“Massively malty, slightly warming”

San Francisco businesses bring the best of Belgium to Americans

COURTNEY DAVIS

Heading down the steps of the Belgian beer house La Trappe, I'm loving the big round tables and brick arches. Cool and dark, there are side rooms for private conversations, large benches for the crowds and a few stools at the bar overlooking the impressive range of 19 beers on tap. The glut of choices for places to sit competes with the 49-page beer menu featuring an overwhelming amount of information.

You may opt for the Urthel Samaranth Quadrupel, thoroughly described as “dusky, deep brown, sweet and faintly spicy with notes of dried fruit, nuts, chocolate and marzipan. On the palate, it's big and bold, massively malty and slightly warming from the alcohol with a dry finish”. Or perhaps you'll go for one of the beers from the obscure Bruges brewery 't Smisje, which produces 1.5 barrels a year.

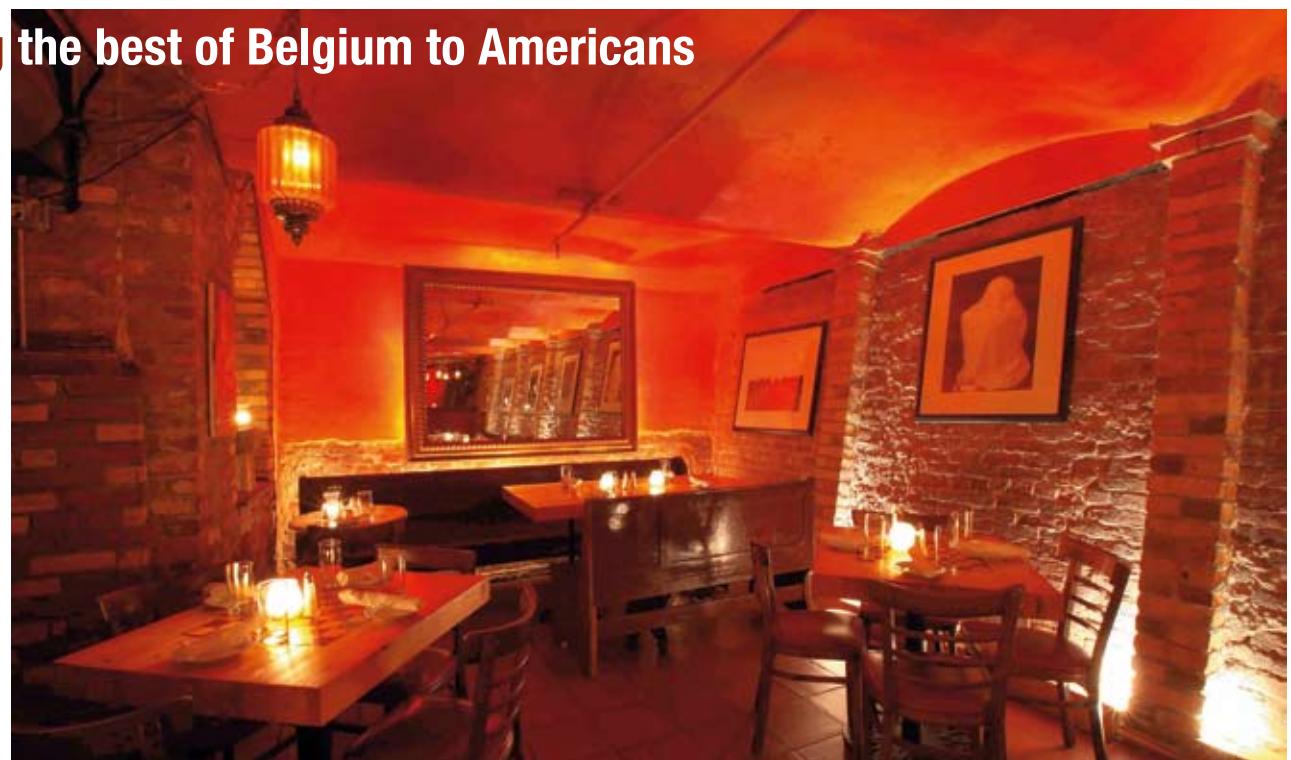
Café co-owner Michael Moore prefers Westmalle Dubbel or Oud Beersel's Oude Geuze. But as he has tried every beer he sells, he's happy to offer other suggestions. “Afligem and Grimbergen Dubbel are beers that I tend to tap more since they are easy to drink for people just learning about Belgians.”

Learning about Belgians? Well, it makes sense when you learn that La Trappe is in the heart of San Francisco, California.

Moore opened the café with Michael Azzalini, whose family owned the building near Fisherman's Wharf since 1928. Azzalini studied in Italy and visited Belgium often, where he discovered beer and cafés he could see being well-received stateside – which it has been.

“At first we assumed that an ‘all beer’ kind of place would bring a good amount of men, but we were very wrong,” smiles Moore. “There are a lot of women that know and appreciate beer a great deal.” Moore also ensures repeat visits by changing the beer on tap every three days.

Although they are a specialty café, they don't bother to advertise. “Our largest customer base is the locals around us. But because



La Trappe has all the trappings

we are a few blocks from the main tourist area, we do see more tourists during the summer, which is always a pleasant change in conversation.”

Belgian beer seems to be a trend in this trend-setting city: The same week La Trappe opened in 2007, so did two other Belgian cafés. “The city has had a great deal of wine-focused restaurants, so as brewers and the general public became more aware of craft beer made in the US, they also became more aware of foreign beers,” Moore reasons. “It was a perfect time to open and educate people.” La Trappe shows its American side, though, with a distinct lack of outdoor seating and “Belgian style” beers from Italy, Canada, the US

and other places around the globe. “There are some really amazing beers being produced here in the states, including sour beers reminiscent of traditional Belgian lambics,” explains Moore. “Strong ales in this country have also become increasingly good as more of the Belgian influence of balance over extreme flavour becomes more popular.”

The Belgian influence isn't just in the beer. La Trappe has a full menu with mussels and fries, waterzooi, rabbit stew and *carbonnade à la flamande* made with Delirium Nocturnum and St Bernardus 12.♦

→ www.latrappcafe.com



So California: Frijtz doesn't exactly resemble a typical Belgian friterie

Frietjes à la Francisco

But La Trappe isn't the only one taking advantage of America's love of Belgian food and drink; so is Santiago Rodriguez. He is the owner of Frijtz, a Belgian *friet* eatery with two locations in San Francisco. Two years in the running, these airy and bright fry spots have mussels, Belgian beers and *pannenkoeken* (crepes) on their menus; but their claim to fame comes in a cone.

Like in Belgium, the fries are thick cut and fried twice, then served fresh and hot in cone, with a choice of 20 different sauces. But most of the similarities end there. Bright and airy, these restaurants are definitely California, not traditional *frituur*. Also unlike a proper Belgian *frituur*, there is no case of fried goodies to select from or even the same sauces. My favourite, *stoverij*, is

missing. But in its stead are some flavour combinations that made eating the fries more of a gourmet experience than a Belgian one.

Customers get to choose two sauces but can pay for additional choices: curry ketchup (a familiar option) plus chipotle, lemon saffron, peanut yogurt or white truffle artichoke. (Ketchup and mayonnaise were smartly available for free, as being charged for those two condiments would have most Americans heading for the door.)

The two clocks on the wall at Frijtz display the time for both Brussels and San Francisco. After eating my fill of fries, it is the perfect time to go back to La Trappe and sample the most popular choices there, too.♦

→ www.frijzfries.com

Antwerp is European Youth Capital

The port city has been chosen by the European Youth Forum for 2011

Antwerp has been named the European Youth Capital of 2011, a designation bestowed by the European Youth Forum partially as a recognition of the already active participation of young people in a city, but also as an impetus to organise events and activities – political, social and educational.

The organisation of the Youth Capital year is based on a bottom up approach: the Youth Forum awards the title, the city's youth and infrastructure decide where to take it. Youth associations,

employers and cultural centres want to focus on a variety of themes during the Youth Capital year – officially from March to November – from music to creative economy to living together. “A crucial element in the preparation of the event is the on-line tool inviting children and young people to submit their dreams, plans and ideas for the Youth Capital year,” says Axel Dingemans, project coordinator of the event. “The city of Antwerp wants to inspire and invite youngsters to realise

their plans for a young city.” An English-language option is also available on the website.

The European Youth Forum is a platform of 99 national youth councils and non-governmental organisations from across Europe which works to empower young people to participate in the shaping of Europe and of their own communities.♦

→ www.aeyc2011.be



On the waterfront

The best way to see Flanders' river city is from the river

ALAN HOPE

There's no better way of discovering a city than your own personal guide, like a friend who lives there. Short of that, the best advice is always: join a tour. All right, you'll be rubbing shoulders with the tourists, but be honest, that's really what you are for the day.

Antwerp is a river city *par excellence*, so the ideal way to capture its essence is to see it from the water. The first thing that strikes you is how the river splits the city. At the level of the old town, it's 500 metres to the other side, which is so distant that the best name they could come up with for the built-up area is Linkeroever – Left Bank.

Then you notice how much the city was built on, not just beside, the water. Up and down the quays are the remains of old locks and sluices that led to channels into the town, before they were closed up when the right bank was rationalised in the 20th century. Before then, the old town had a network of arteries and veins

running through it, in addition to the massive aorta at its centre.

The boat company **Flandria** used to run a ferry from the right to the left bank, before the pedestrian tunnel was built and before the metro came along. Now they operate boat trips. There are two comprehensive visits of the port lasting 1.5 or 2.5 hours. Having a 12-year-old in tow, we opted for the shorter, 50-minute cruise, which costs a mere €5 and covers the waterfront from the Kennedy Tunnel upstream to the entrance to the main network of docks. The cruise is just long enough for the recorded commentary to describe what there is to see in four languages while still holding your attention. The best part, though, is simply soaking up the atmosphere of what it is that makes a river city live: the wind, the smell, the sound of barges ploughing through the murky water. ♦

→ www.flandria.nu



© Shutterstock

Meanwhile, on dry land ...

The **Antwerp Diamond Bus** is, like its Brussels counterpart, a hop-on/hop-off service. You buy a ticket, and it's good for 24 hours, allowing you to get off at any of the stops that may interest you and catch a later bus. Buses run from the Keyserlei outside the Central station and stop at the city park, Groenplaats, the Fine Arts Museum, Sint-Jansvliet and Steenplein on the waterfront. You also get a recorded commentary in eight languages.

→ www.antwerpen.be

Antwerp by Bike offers a choice of three guided tours on weekends until the end of September, leaving at 13.45 from Steenplein. One of them, covering the city's statues, is available only on request.

Each of the two main tours lasts three hours and covers 18 kilometres. They are €15, or €8 if you bring your own bike.

→ www.antwerpbybike.be

The Tourist Tram, which also operates in Hasselt, Maastricht and Tongeren, would look more at home trundling round a theme park than braving the streets of a metropolis. But it's cheap and convenient: €5 and leaves every hour on the hour from Groenplaats.

→ www.touristram.be

The **Antwerp Horse Tram** is a double-decker carriage pulled by two beautiful draft horses, which leaves every hour on the hour opposite the Tourist Information

office on Grote Markt. The trip lasts 40 minutes and only costs €5, but there's one catch: It's extremely popular, so you may well find yourself waiting a long time to get a spot on the top deck.

→ www.werkendtrekpaard.be

Finally, from the ancient power of the horse to the latest high-tech means of transport: a two-hour trip around the city by **Segway**, a revolutionary two-wheeler you navigate by shifting your body weight. Ten minutes of training, the organisers promise, will be enough to get you on the road. The tours, which cost a whopping €38, run until 26 September and cover 17 sites and monuments.

→ www.belgium-segwaytour.com

→ Find more Antwerp tourist info at www.visitantwerpen.be

If you think that sand sculpture consists of a bunch of overgrown children making castles with big moats, then you have never been to Blankenberge for the annual Sand Sculpture Festival. You will indeed find towers and columns, but they will be on replicas of Big Ben, Sagrada Familia and the Colosseum.

This year's theme is Around the World, and it is made up of 100 wonders of the world, both man-made and natural. The Parthenon is perfectly to scale, the Transfiguration Church has all of its 22 domes, and the faces of Mount Rushmore look just like the ones in South Dakota, save for their size.

But these monuments don't exist in a vacuum; they are woven into whole landscapes of their countries: brown bears and matryoshka dolls, Abba and Pippi Longstocking, Flamenco dancers. It's a pretty appropriate theme for sculptors who hail from all over the world, including China, Mexico, Belgium, Russia and Spain.

Sand artists are sculptors, and their work displays the fine details you expect from much sturdier material. In fact, many of these sculptors work in stone or marble when they're not moulding sand. This festival is one of the best of its kind in Europe, and sand sculptors line up to take part.

The artists used a list of cultural and natural heritage sites from UNESCO to make their choices, and the work is

so realistic, school students were bussed to the festival when it opened in late May to "see the world".

Working in a field that is so easily related to childhood, sand sculptors generally have a sense of humour about their work, which shows up here and there in added touches. It's wise to let your eye linger over each scene. The festival has a walking path, partially indoor to protect the delicate work, and partially outdoor, since this is summer at the beach, after all.

And this year there's something new: some of the sculptors have coloured their sand to add a bit of contrast to the otherwise monotone shade of the 80 truckloads of sand brought from caves in Belgium. (Sea sand in fact is far more difficult to sculpt.)

At the end of your travels, you'll find a traditional cafe *spiegeltent* (mirror tent), with mahogany seats and French crystal chandeliers. Sit right down – it's not made of sand. ♦

Until 31 August

Koning Albert I laan 115
Blankenberge
(free parking on site)

→ www.zandsculptuur.be

Sublime sand

LISA BRADSHAW

There's still time to see Blankenberge's annual Sand Sculpture Festival



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Feeërieën

SAFFINA RANA

I first discovered Feeërieën last year while marvelling at a very pink sunset on an after-dinner stroll through Brussels' Warande Park with my partner. A sudden, rather mystical sound of piano notes seemed to rise up out of the clump of trees to our left. Then a playful violin joined in, so we headed towards it. The trees glistened with little fairy lights, a green streak of parrots cried out overhead, and the whole thing took on a magical feel against the darkening magenta sky. We reached the bandstand to find a slim man bobbing away furiously in front of a grand piano, its innards exposed and revealing large swathes of masking tape stuck over the chords. A couple of violinists and a cellist sat facing him, waiting. Pink and green lights hit his face as it grew darker, and a transfixed crowd hunched on benches or sat on the ground hugging their knees. We sat down with them and let ourselves be carried by the moment. It was the experimental German pianist Hauschka, and we were hooked. This year this enchanted little five-night gathering opens with the beautiful rhythmic folk rock of the Leuven four-piece Isbells. Joining them to shake things up with their melodic indie rock and bittersweet lyrics are Marble Sounds, a Belgian band signed to the same independent Zealrecords label as

Isbells and which shares one of its guitarists, Gianni Marzo.

In fact, this year's Feeërieën, which is absolutely free, is a great way to discover bands with cult followings in Belgium. The indie folk-rock with quirky lyrics continues with Belgian nine-piece The Bear that Wasn't (with the added dimension of cello and violins) and Flemish popster Flip Kowlier, who sings in West Flemish dialect. But for haunting contemporary classical, don't miss Die Anarchistische Abendunterhaltung (DAAU) on 24 August. The newer compositions weave together strands of clarinet, accordion, cello and double bass that carry you far away. "There is no better way to listen to our music than lying down with your eyes closed," says accordion player Roel Van Camp. I couldn't agree more.

DAAU emerged from the fertile Antwerp scene of the early 1990s that also spawned dEUS and Zita Swoon. Since then it has been reborn from a six-piece to a four-piece, moving to more minimalist compositions born of emotion and improvisation.

International offerings include the Norwegian duo Susanna and the Magical Orchestra, sounding uncannily like Kate Bush. They're billed with warbling American singer-songwriter Josephine Foster and her acoustic guitar. If that's too

unplugged for you, retreat to the buzz of the beer tent and come back the following night when you can expect a slightly more up-tempo evening of enigmatic soul, synths and drum machines as Germany's Raz Ohara and the Odd Orchestra take to the bandstand to close the festival. ♦

23-27 August

Warende Park
Koningsstraat & Paleizenplein
Brussels

→ www.abconcerts.be

MORE MUSIC FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

Maanrock → Mechelen city centre

Pukkelpop → Kiewit festival site (Hasselt)

Brussels Summer Festival → across Brussels



Antwerp

Café Capital

Rubenslei 37 – Stadspark;
www.cafecapital.be
Until SEP 9 18.00-5.00 Bar Jeudi: food lounge, exhibitions, music and dance parties every Thursday

Jolly Joker

Rijnkaai 14; www.jollyjoker.be
AUG 20 21.00 Antwerp Roots Night + La Femme Belge + The Belbouchos + DJ Ungawa and Hans Mortelmans (part of De Stad van Elschoot)

Openluchttheater Rivierenhof

Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192,
www.openluchttheater.be
AUG 19 20.30 Little Feat
AUG 21 20.30 Gabriel Rios with Jef Neve & Kobe Proesmans

Brussels

Café Merlo

Baksteenkaai 80; 0474.77.47.44
AUG 18 20.30 Fred Lani and SuperSlinger

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
www.recycleart.be
AUG 19 20.00 Balkan Hotsteppers
AUG 20 22.00 Boris Viande 23.30 Mazal 00.45 Kermesz à l'Est 2.15 Boom Pam 3.30 Boris Viande

Ghent

Kinky Star

Vlasmarkt 9; 09.223.48.45
www.kinkystar.com
AUG 22 21.00 Needle & the Pain Reaction
AUG 24 21.00 5z

Hasselt

Muziekodroom

Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13
www.muziekodroom.be
AUG 26 20.00 Hatebreed



Antwerp

Buster

Kaasrui 1; 03.232.51.53
www.busterpodium.be
AUG 18 21.00 Playtime Session
AUG 19 21.00 Buster BabL Jam

Café Hopper

Leopold de Waelstraat 2; 03.248.49.33
www.cafehopper.be
AUG 23 21.00 Joppe Bestevaar Trio

Brussels

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusivillage.com
Until AUG 21 20.30 The New Orleans Zhulus
AUG 24-31 20.30 Léon Friends



Brussels

St Michael and St Gudula Cathedral

Sinter-Goedeleplein; 02.507.82.00
www.cathedralestmichel.be
AUG 24 20.00 Satu Marc Philharmonic Orchestra, Landesregierung Choir, Wuppertal Symphonic Choir and Hilden Oratorio Choir, conducted by Franz Lamprecht: Verdi's Requiem

Antwerp

DON'T MISS

Het Theater Festival

26 August to 4 September
Across Antwerp

This popular fest switches between Antwerp and Brussels, and this year it's the port city's turn to host. An excellent initiative, it's made up of a juried selection of the most innovative Dutch-language theatre pieces from the last year, all in one city over 10 days. The rabid fans snatch up tickets quickly, so reserve now, and might we suggest Joost Vandecasteele's *Otaku* and Wunderbaum's *Rail Gourmet* (pictured).



→ www.theaterfestival.be

© Thomas Dhaniens



Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
www.desingel.be
AUG 21-22 15.00/20.00 Monteverdi's L'Orfeo performed by children and teenagers, conducted by Nicolas Achten, staged by Wouter Van Looy, concept by Muziektheater Transparant (in the original Italian with Dutch surtitles)



Antwerp

HetPaleis

Theaterplein 1; 03.202.83.11
www.hetpaleis.be
AUG 18-28 20.00 Compagnie Cecilia in Schöne Blumen, written and directed by Arne Sierens (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, heart-shaped jewellery

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
Until OCT 3 Jongbloed!, electronic music, mixed media/video, graphic design and photos by nine young artists inspired by the Closing Time exhibition

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

Atomium
Heysel Park; 02.475.45.75
www.atomium.be
Until AUG 31 BE.WELCOME: Belgium and Immigration, interactive exhibition on the migration experience in Belgium

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

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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 the Nadaar photography collective
Until SEP 19 Brussels: A City with a View, interactive exhibition focusing on Jean-Baptiste Bonnecroix's 17th-century painting Gezicht op Brussel, showing panoramas of the city

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

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?, 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 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

DON'T MISS

Zin in Zomer

Until 30 August
Across Limburg

Good old Limburg. Flying in the face of the music festival mania that grips Flanders and Brussels this time of year, they are launching a literary festival. And why not. Staged in Sint-Truiden, Genk and Hasselt, Zin in Zomer (Feel Like Summer) invites authors and journalists to read and discuss all kinds of texts, plus throws in a little performance. Sample a taste of actress Pascale Platel's future stage roles, for instance, or hear Thomas Rosenboom read from his new book about a veterinarian in the middle of a meadow surrounded by chickens and pigs. Most events are open-air, weather permitting. Oh, and probably because they were worried no one would come otherwise, many events include live music.

► www.zininzomer.be

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
Minimstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
www.mjbjm.org
Until OCT 3 Bericht aan de bevolking: De joodse geschiedenis op affiches (Message to the People: Jewish History in Posters), more than 250 documents from the museum's collection

Royal Museum of the Armed Forces
Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33
www.legermuseum.be
Until AUG 31 Andreas Magdanz: Camp Vogelsang, large-format photos of the Rhineland training camp in North Westphalia by the German photographer
Until OCT 30 Lislö 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

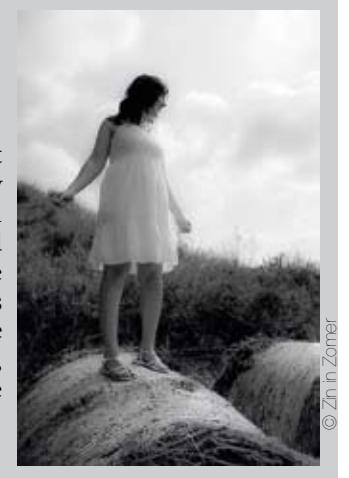
Until SEP 5 Art and Finance in Europe, new look at masters of the 17th century with 20 works from the museum's collection, including Seghers, Breughel, Francken, Rembrandt and Rubens

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 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, interactive installation by Scottish artist Paul Morris

Deurle
Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens
Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23
www.museumdd.be
Until SEP 19 Biennale van de



Until OCT 31 Stan Wannet: De Hondenmepper, moving installations and robotics by the artist-in-residence
AUG 20-OCT 31 Wout Hoeboer (1910-1983): Dandy Dada, retrospective of the surrealist Dutch painter

Kortrijk

Museum Kortrijk 1302
Houtmarkt-Begijnpark; 056.27.78.50,
www.kortrijk1302.be
Until JAN 9 2011 OnGELOOFlijk: van hemel, hel en halleluja (UnBELIEFable: 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 late artist, a member of the Young British Artists movement

Machelen-Zulte

Het Roger Raveel Museum
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

Neerpelt

Musica
Toekomstlaan 5B; 011.61.05.10
www.musica.be
Until SEP 5 Good Vibrations: Summer in Your Ears, international exhibition of sound-art installations at various locations between the train station and provincial park Dommelhof

Ostend

Japanese Garden
Koningspark; 059.70.11.99
www.krisdewitte.com
Until OCT 3 Kris Dewitte: Set & Still, photos from Belgian film sets by the Flemish photographer
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

Openlucht cinema



Antwerp

Feestfilms: Part of the Zomer van Antwerpen, these party-themed open-air screenings are under a covered hangar at the port

Until AUG 22 in Hangar 19A, Scheldekaaien

→ www.zva.be

Brussels

Filmotek: Open-air screenings of international shorts and features, video art and selections from Atelier 340's archives

Fri-Sat until SEP 11 at Atelier 340 Muzeum, de Rivierendreef 340

→ www.atelier340muzeum.be

Camera Belgica: Screenings of Belgian film classics. Coming up: Le Maître de musique (pictured) and Brussels by Night

Fridays until AUG 27 on the terrace at BELvue Museum, Paleizenplein 7

→ www.belvue.be

Cinemusik: Music documentaries in the open-air, preceded by DJs and followed by concerts

Thursdays until AUG 20

→ www.recyclart.be

Geraardsbergen

Openluchtcinema: Open-air cinema preceded by live concerts

Wednesdays until AUG 18 at 20.00 on Stationsplein

→ www.openluchtcinema.be

Ghent

Viewmaster010: Outdoor film screenings with "machine" as theme, plus live music, DJs and a bar. Coming up: Blade Runner and Metropolis, the latter with live improvisation by Kaboom Karavan

Fridays until AUG 27 at ACEC site, Dok Noord 4

→ www.viewmaster010.be

Mechelen

Drive-In Movies: Open-air cinema with free entry for those driving antique cars. Avant-premieres and a cava bar. Coming up: Prince of Persia and Knight & Day

Thurs-Sat until AUG 28 at Sportpark De Nekker

→ www.utopolis.be

Tervuren

Royal Museum for Central Africa
Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11 www.africamuseum.be

Until SEP 30 Bonjour Congo, photographs and documents from Brusselaars on the presence of the Congo in Brussels

Until JAN 9 2011 Congo River: 4,700 Kilometres Bursting with Nature and Culture, interactive exhibition on the lifeblood of Congo, from source to mouth

Until JAN 9 2011 100 Years in 100 Photographs, outdoor exhibition celebrating the 100th anniversary of the African Museum building

Until JAN 9 2011 Indépendance! Congolese Tell Their Stories of 50 Years of Independence, multi-media exhibition looks at the Democratic Republic of Congo from independence to today

Ypres

In Flanders Fields Museum

Grote Markt 34; 057.239.220

www.inflandersfields.be
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

Festival of Flanders: Seven international music festivals fill the streets, squares and waterways with guerilla and organised concerts, from classical and mediaeval to traditional world and modern regional music

Until OCT 24 across Brussels and Flanders www.festival.be

Zin in Zomer: Literary festival in Limburg with open-air readings, interviews, music and more

Until AUG 30 in Genk, Hasselt and Sint-Truiden www.zininzomer.be

Antwerp

De Stad van Elsschot: Months-long celebration of 20th-century Antwerp author Willem Elsschot on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his death, featuring theatre, film and Dicht bij Elsschot, the first public exhibition of his complete archives

Until DEC 31 across Antwerp www.destadvanelsschot.be

Het Theaterfestival '10: Annual theatre festival bringing together a jury's choice of the most innovative Dutch-language productions from the past season in Flanders and the Netherlands, from children's theatre to dance theatre, from mime to theatrical installations. The traditional State Of The Union is given this year by Flemish performance artist Benjamin Verdonck

AUG 26-SEP 4 at deSingel, Toneelhuis and Monty www.theaterfestival.be

Laus Polyphoniae: Antwerp leg of the Festival of Flanders devoted to early music. This year's edition, Manu Scriptum (Hand-Written) revolves around 12 polyphony manuscripts from the period 1050-1550

AUG 21-29 at Amuz, Kamenstraat 81 03.248.28.28, www.amuz.be

Plage Theater: Street theatre festival for amateur groups organised by Linkeroever Leef

AUG 22 14.30 on the Wandeldijk of Sint-Annastrand www.plagetheater.be

Zomer van Antwerpen: Annual summer-long festival with parties, concerts, circus acts, theatre, film, BBQs and more

Until AUG 29 across the city www.zva.be

Blankenberge

Sand Sculpture Festival: Annual event of the world's top sand sculptors, this year

going Around the World, with sculptures of 100 wonders of the world

Until AUG 31 at Duinse Polders, Koning Albert I laan www.zandsculptuur.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

Brussels

Apéros Urbains: Weekly aperitif plus after-parties at one of three partner clubs: Fuse, K-Nal and the Vaudeville; free entrance to clubs 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 events where you can learn a new choreography in 45 minutes

Until AUG 28 across Brussels 0476.47.03.67, www.balmoderne.be

Boterhammen in het Park: Free outdoor lunchtime festival of Flemish and Dutch rock and pop music, including Els De Schepper, Fixxes, Koomil Foo, Raymond van het Groenewoud, more

AUG 23-27 at Warande Park www.abconcerts.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

Brussels Summer Festival: Outdoor festival with music, street theatre, and Classissimo, a classical music programme

Until AUG 22 across Brussels www.brusselsummerfestival.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 with classics, reprisals, a Chris Marker cycle and a focus on John Cassavetes

Until SEP 14 at Cinema Arenberg, Koninginngelagelij 26 02.512.80.63, www.arenberg.be

Feeëriën 2010: Free outdoor festival with a diverse musical programme, including Marble Sounds, Isbells, Amatorski, more

AUG 23-27 20.00 at Warande Park www.abconcerts.be

Festivaeria: Outdoor festival providing a platform for young artists, with musicians, singers, DJs, dancers, bodypainters, jugglers, photographers and street theatre artists

Until SEP 18 at Jubelpark www.myspace.com/playnewconcept

International Brigitines Festival: Annual theatre and dance festival promoting new and original choreographies. The theme of the 2010 edition is 'Societies of the Night'

AUG 18-SEP 4 at Les Brigitines, Korte Brigittenstraat 1 www.brigitines.be

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

Until AUG 27 at Miniemerkerk, Miniemerstraat 62, and the Royal Conservatory, Regentschapsstraat 30 www.midis-minimes.be

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

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 Groenestraat 37 09.227.99.94, www.parkkaffee.be

Hasselt

Pukkelpop: Belgium's second-biggest outdoor rock festival, with more than 200 performers on eight stages including Iron Maiden, Placebo, The Prodigy, Kate Nash, more

AUG 19-21 in Kiewit, near Hasselt www.pukkelpop.be

Virga Jessefeesten: 45th edition of the seven-yearly cultural heritage festival celebrating Hasselt's centuries of generations, with atmospheric lighting and decoration, concerts and a parade reflecting the festival's Christian origins

Until AUG 29 at Lombaardstraat 3 www.hasselt.eu

Heusden-Zolder

"Z" Old Timers Trophy: Car rally and parade with more than 60 cars made before 1980

AUG 21 8.30-16.30 at Kasteel Vogelsand, Terlaemenlaan 1 02.537.78.75, www.z-trophy.be

Knokke-Heist

International Cartoon Festival: Annual festival, this year featuring the work of Flemish cartoonists Jonas Geirnaert and Jan De Maesschalck, plus Press Cartoon prize competition

Until SEP 12 at Rubensplein www.cartoonfestival.be

Leuven

Zomer van Sint-Pieter: Lunchtime classical concerts every weekday

Until AUG 26 at 12.15 across the city www.zomer-van-sint-pieter.be

Mechelen

Maanrock: 15th edition of the free festival featuring Raymond van het Groenewoud, Tom Dice, Mama's Jasje, Leki & The Sweet Mints, more

AUG 21-22 across Mechelen www.maanrock.be

Ostend

Cirque du Soleil: The world-famous Canadian circus returns to the coast with the show Varekai

Until AUG 29 20.00 under the big top at Napoleon Fort, Fortstraat 059.70.11.99 www.cirquedusoleil.com

Fin d'Saison: The coast city's annual end-of-summer event, with unique and original street theatre, musical performances and puppet shows staged in the cabins on the beach. Followed by a concert of folk music in Gent dialect and the Bal Populaire

AUG 29 from 10.00 across Ostend www.uitinoostende.be

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 designation to highlight culture in certain Flemish cities. Circus, parades, performances, exhibitions and more, all year long

Until DEC 31 across Ostend <a

ROBYN BOYLE

bite



Moriaanschoofd

Expect the unexpected. When reserving a table at this 400-year-old farmhouse restaurant in the tiny village of Mullem in the Flemish Ardennes, you'd think you're in for a traditional dining experience with good old-fashioned Flemish fare and no surprises. Instead, you walk into what looks like the set of one of Clint Eastwood's westerns: everywhere wood, a roaring open fire, saloon shelves lined with whisky, candles burning, a Winchester rifle and a giant bison head mounted on the wall. Far from tacky, the restaurant is designed with great care and good taste; it exudes warmth. The American West theme continues, from the hospitality right down to the menu. Our server, the owner Joris-Igor Houwen, was so enthusiastic and knowledgeable that I actually left my dinner choice up to him. Meat lovers like me are sure to have difficulty choosing from the more than a dozen variations of flame-grilled goodness, including marinated spare-ribs, choice cuts of steak and lamb. And for more adventurous eaters, there's bison meat, kangaroo, ostrich, springbok and crocodile. In the meantime, one thing everybody at our table did not hesitate to order was the carpaccio starter – paper-thin slices of the reddest beef I have ever seen, topped with a subtle mixture of olive oil, parmesan cheese slivers, peppery rocket salad and tasty bits of tomato. Waiting for our main course was one of the highlights of the evening, as we watched them fire up the wood grill located in the centre of the dining room. Chef and grillmaster Norma Adriatico, also Joris-Igor's wife, kept watch over the fire as it slowly seared and smoked our dinners. The smell and the sound of sizzling revved up our appetites.

Contact Bite at flandersbite@gmail.com

Everything arrived on wooden planks adorned with a salad creation – more of a work of art – with lettuce and carrots and dressing popping out of a tomato. We all eyed one friend's "Gringo Steak", a serious portion of *côte à l'os*, criss-crossed with light grill marks. Another friend took the suggested "Fish Papillote", a folded parcel that released a swirl of steam when opened, revealing rolled fillets of sole and salmon in a cream sauce with a scattering of grey shrimp.

A third was more than pleased with her "Lambs Chumps", a juicy 300-gramme lamb brochette. Finally, my hearty "Texas Steak" was a nice surprise, thick and perfectly cooked, served with a side of homemade Béarnaise sauce. Enter one big bowl of fries, also made fresh, and the meal was complete.

Later on the lights dimmed and the Americana music got louder, so our party had no choice but to stay a bit longer and enjoy. We wisely decided to resist the temptation to dabble in the impressive whisky selection, opting for a round of local beers. In the end it was after midnight when we finally headed home – a sure sign of how welcome we felt.

In case you over-indulge, no worries; the restaurant is also a hotel and in the morning you can have breakfast on the bright veranda or outdoor patio with a view over the hilly landscape.

Moriaanschoofd 27, Mullem (Oudenaarde)

Wed-Sat from 18.00; Sun 12.00-15.00 and from 18.00

Country grill – in the country – with a unique Wild West interior

→ www.moriaanschoofd.be

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #144

Feature

Fort Napoleon on the Flemish coast was built by its namesake as a defensive base – but never used. Follow along on the fascinating history of the fort and find out what's going on inside it now

Flanders Creativity

The final in our monthly series on the creative minds of Flanders look at the best and the brightest in design, from chairs made with one square of felt to grass-growing dolls in Hasselt

Arts

In a special issue devoted to Ostend, we look at the upcoming Ostend Film Festival, examine it from all angles a la photo essay and find out what is going on in the City of Culture

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



‘woonwagen’

Downsizing has its attractions. For some, moving to a smaller place when the kids leave home has many advantages. Others

want to go further, sell up and buy *een woonwagen* – a mobile home. You'll have seen these out on the roads during the summer and probably thought of the freedom you'd have if you could stop almost where you liked to spend the night in your cosy all-in-one home on wheels.

Okay, few have gone the whole hog and upped sticks to live on wheels, though there are those who grew up on the move. For *ronderizende woonwagenbewoners* – travellers who live in mobile homes, there are only a few *doortrekkersterreinen* – parking sites in Flanders. And these

were only built as the result of the *woonwagen* being defined some years ago as *een volwaardige woning* – a recognised living unit in the Flemish regulation governing residential areas, *de Wooncode* – the "Living Code".

It's reckoned that fewer than 2,000 people live permanently on the move in a *woonwagen* in Flanders.

This shortage of sites has meant that groups of travellers, especially from abroad, have found sites for themselves, resulting in headlines in the papers recently such as "*Zigeuners moeten weide in Wingene verlaten*" – Gypsies must leave meadow in Wingene".

Perhaps they were doing no harm, but with 250

foreign *woonwagens* camping in his field, it's not surprising the farmer went to court to get them moved on.

The charms of life on the road often find their way into song. As Henk Damen sings: *In een woonwagen ben ik geboren, daar voel ik mij blij* – In a caravan I was born, there I feel (myself) happy. And the next line happily ends with *vrij* – free, unlike those who live in flats where *De een die kent die andere niet* – The one doesn't know the other. Henk, being Dutch, means caravan when he sings about his *woonwagen*.

Many *woonwagens* are not built to be mobile. I've found one to buy for €42,000. It looks quite static with not a wheel in sight. One disadvantage is that it's sold *zonder staanplaats* – without a pitch. It seems to have everything else including *twee ruime slaapkamers* – two spacious bedrooms and *een ruime badkamer* – a spacious bathroom. That's a lot of space to squeeze inside its 13x8 metre walls.

Perhaps I'll stick to the occasional local trip in a *woonwagen* pulled by two magnificent *Brabantse trekpaarden* – Brabant draught horses. These giants make easy work of hauling the replica of a *zigeunerwagen*, and those aboard surely soon go along with Henk Damen's words that *een woonwagen blijft voor altijd het liefste plekje voor mij* – a caravan is always the dearest spot for me.

THE LAST WORD . . .

Body of evidence

"However beautiful the women may be, it's the image I make of them that interests me, really."

Jos Brands, a body painter from Antwerp, who last week practised his skills on several Miss Universe candidates in Las Vegas

Common ground

"We had a youth club called De Pukkels (the pimples) because we wanted to work with young people and express something they all had in common, but that had nothing to do with ideology."

Chokri Mahassine, who started the annual Pukkelpop festival 25 years ago

Not joining

"I have not requested a membership card from the N-VA."

Count Henri d'Udekem d'Acoz, uncle of Princess Mathilde, responding to rumours that he was joining the party of Bart De Wever

Shrine scare

"A bomb alert here is very unusual."

Father Mark Kemseke, who had to evacuate a group of Flemish pilgrims from the grotto of Lourdes after a bomb threat