

Go Ghent

Capital of East Flanders makes
Lonely Planet's Top Ten Cities list
p10



© Johanna Geron/BELGA

Brigitte Grouwels has one of the toughest jobs in Belgium – minister in charge of Brussels transport

LEO CENDROWICZ

From her 13th floor corner office in the Botanic building near Rogierplein, Brigitte Grouwels surveys the spectacular view. "Come and look here," she says, pointing out the railway line running next to the building, heading to Brussels North station.

Ahead is the busy inner ring road, as it descends into the tunnel at City 2 shopping centre. And to the side are the Botanical Gardens of Brussels, a park that Grouwels, 57, gazes upon wistfully. "It's beautiful, but people don't know about it," she says.

It is, in a way, an illustration of the political challenges facing Grouwels. She is the Brussels Region's minister responsible for public works and transport, and her job is to ensure that people and goods move efficiently around the city, while

respecting the environment and cutting congestion.

However, her mission has been somewhat sidetracked recently. Two weekends ago, the minister – a member of the Christian Democrat party (CD&V) – hit the headlines when she was barracked by angry taxi drivers protesting her plans for new taxi livery (pictured).

The furious mob lobbed eggs at the minister – although none hit the target – and used their vehicles to blockade the area around Central Station where she was making her presentation. Grouwels shrugs. "I don't think I was ever in danger – but I'm not easily intimidated anyway," she says.

Barely mentioned in the aftermath was the actual proposal to give a smart, new look to Brussels taxis: they will have a black base, with a black and mango-yellow chequered band

along the side. "Scientific studies show that yellow is the most visible colour," she says. "The idea is to improve the quality of Brussels taxis and make taxi rides a better experience."

The minister also agreed to raise the tariffs a little if the drivers agreed to raise the quality of the taxis. "People think our prices are high, but, in fact, comparisons with other European cities show they are actually relatively low," she notes. "But there are a number of people who drive taxis without a license, and we said we would reinforce controls. This prompted protests from those who work 'in the black.'" Regardless of the hullabaloo, the taxi rebranding is just a small element of her portfolio. Her ambition is nothing less than a transformation of the capital's streets. She aims to cut Brussels road traffic by 20% by 2018, from a 2001 baseline.

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Extra pay for police under scrutiny

Police officer may be the least sexy job there is, according to a poll published at the weekend by *Jobat* magazine, but it turns out to be pretty handsomely paid. Police chiefs this week met in Brussels to discuss the system of pay supplements operating in the federal force. These are additional sums available for extra skills or onerous duties like running a breath-test checkpoint on the motorway at night.

Some police officers are so adept at playing the system that they're able to make as much as €3,000 extra a month before taxes – or more than the average officer's basic pay.

"In all there are 62 different varieties of remuneration in the police force,"

explains Armand Grootaers, police chief of the West Limburg zone. "Most require a special knowledge or ability. They may be combined with one another. In that way, some police are able to supplement their monthly pay up to €3,000, and so earn more than their superiors."

Some officers plan their careers in relation to this, selecting services that bring in the extra money. Interior minister Annemie Turtelboom promised to look more closely at the system to determine which supplements were still justified. "During the reform of the police 10 years ago, basic pay was agreed upon," she told VRT radio. "But nothing happened regarding the system of supplementary payments."

Archbishop Léonard under fire

The spokesperson for the head of Belgium's Catholic church resigns amid continuing controversy

ALAN HOPE

Archbishop André Léonard was hit by a pie in the face last week as the congregation in the Brussels' cathedral looked on. It was the latest in a series of setbacks for the controversial Catholic bishop, who recently caused outrage by describing AIDS as "a sort of immanent justice".

On 4 November, the country's bishops met in an emergency session to "build towards the revival of the church," according to a statement.

The public relations nightmare of Léonard and his further controversial statements on gays and abuse by priests came to a head earlier that week, when his Flemish spokesman, Jürgen Mettepenningen, took the unusual step of calling a press conference to announce his resignation.

"During the recent period, Monsignor Léonard sometimes behaved like a driver going the wrong way on a motorway, who thinks that everyone else is going the wrong way," Mettepenningen said. He served as Léonard's GPS, he said, carrying on with the driving metaphor.

"Too often I had to make it clear that the route needed to be reconsidered, but if the driver... is blind to the accidents he causes on the road, then the GPS needn't wait until it is turned off, it should stop working because it has become superfluous. The driver believes only in himself."

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OFFSIDE

ALAN HOPE

Culinary institution to close after three generations



It's been in the family for three generations, but there will be no fourth – 't Oud Konijntje in Waregem, West Flanders, will close on 22 December. For Flemish food critic Willem Asaert, it's the loss of "a real institution". For family-run restaurants in Flanders, he says, it's "the writing on the wall".

Patricia Desmedt, 51, is Flanders' only female Michelin-starred chef. She started in 1978 in the kitchen alongside her mother, Thérèse, who had already picked up a first Michelin star in 1968. Two years into the partnership, Michelin awarded them a second star, which they kept until 2008, when the French company took one back. That was a blow, but the prestigious Gault-Millau guide still rates the restaurant an excellent 18/20.

It wasn't always that way. 't Oud Konijntje (pictured) was started by the current generation's grandparents as a simple affair, serving traditional fare like bread with *plattekaas*, eels in green sauce, roast chicken. The generation of Thérèse and John Desmedt lifted the level to greater gastronomic heights, a tradition that has been maintained by Patricia, her older sister Anne-Marie and their brother Frank, the restaurant's *sommelier*.

"It had to happen sooner or later," explains Anne-Marie. "We've always done this with pleasure, up to the last, but there is no one to succeed us. So we've decided to end it all with dignity."

"It was a very difficult decision," says Frank. "Everyone wants their own children to take over the business, but then you forget how tough it is. All of our children are settled. But it's a decision we arrived at unanimously, and we're standing by it." These days, when TV audiences are treated to star chefs on a nightly basis, the stakes are even higher. "You have to prove yourself every day, at lunchtime and in the evening, without the slightest compromise," Patricia said. "But that doesn't bother you if you love your job."

For industry federation Ho.Re.Ca Vlaanderen, the problem is symptomatic of the shortage of family members willing to take over top restaurants. "The problem of succession is our biggest concern," says chairman Frank De Haes. "Children and other family members are seldom willing to take over a family business and work hard every day under the same social conditions. The new generation has a different outlook on the work-family balance."

→ www.oudkonijntje.be

News in brief

Belgian independent rail workers union OVS has announced **strike action for Monday, 15 November**, in protest at the new timetable due to come into force in December. The action is expected to be limited to trains running through Antwerp but could cause delays for trains across the country.

Flemish public transport authority De Lijn will integrate **routes, stops and timetables into Google Maps** in 2011, mobility minister Hilde Crevits said. Brussels transport authority MIVB is already on Google Maps. Stations and stops will, when clicked, provide information about the next two buses or trams due, with a link back to the MIVB for more details. The feature also allows users to plan their routes. The network of De Lijn's routes is much more extensive and includes not only urban areas but also rural Flanders.

A family doctor in East Flanders was sentenced last week to eight months suspended and fined €2,750 for allowing a **patient to drive under the influence** of drugs, leading to a fatal accident. The driver had called the doctor in panic after taking an overdose of pills in a suicide attempt. The doctor advised

him to go to the hospital and have his stomach pumped. The man got in his car and on the way lost consciousness, killing a 24-year-old driver of a moped. In the trial in Dendermonde, the doctor, who was not named, claimed the patient had shown no signs of drowsiness and that he, in any case, had not told him to drive himself to the hospital. The driver in the case received the same sentence, together with a one-year ban on driving.

Police unions have rejected demands by federal mobility secretary Etienne Schouppe to **increase the number of saliva tests** carried out on road users because, they say, there is a shortage of officers trained in the procedure. The controversial tests are designed to detect the use of drugs such as amphetamines and cannabis. Schouppe wants the number of checks to go up to 1,000 a month by the end of the year. In cases where the tests have been carried out since their introduction last month, one in three samples has turned out positive.

The **dolphin shows** at the Boudewijn Seapark in Bruges were stopped last week after concerns for the health of 12-year-old dolphin Yotta. She recently experienced a miscarriage

that left her on the brink of death and is not yet fit enough to take part in the park's shows. The closure means a loss of €3,000 to €4,000 a day.

The **newspaper in its current form will become extinct** in Belgium in 2026, the same year as in South Korea and metropolitan Russia, according to predictions on a new website by trend-spotter and futurist Ross Dawson. Newspapers in Belgium will survive longer than in the UK (2019), Spain (2024) and Switzerland (2025), but will vanish before those in the Netherlands (2027), France (2029) and Germany (2030). Their place will be taken by digital news media, tablet computers and mobile applications.

→ www.rossdawsonblog.com

Anglers are being encouraged to report instances of **fish poaching** with a new website set up to tackle the problem. "Anglers are subject to strict rules about what fish they may catch and how large they have to be," explained Mark Hoedemakers, chairman of the Union of Belgian Carp Fishermen. His association, he said, encouraged its members to catch and release, but the poachers "couldn't care less about that".

→ www.meldpuntvisstrokerij.be

FACE OF FLANDERS

ANJA OTTE

Carina Van Cauter

A recent Chamber debate on setting up a parliamentary commission to look into child abuse in the Catholic Church seemed quite predictable – until Carina Van Cauter, a relatively unknown backbencher, stood up to speak. The Flemish liberal from Herzele, East Flanders, stunned everyone when she spoke of being abducted at the age of 10. "I decided to wake them all up," she said afterwards.

Van Cauter does not go into details when speaking about her childhood experience. Instead, she quotes newspaper clippings from the time: "Little Carina thanks her life to a passing cyclist," or "World cycling champion's daughter falls into the hands of a sadist."

The newspaper articles, now yellow with age, tell how Van Cauter was abducted in Wemmel, north of Brussels, and managed to escape hours later, near the Atomium.

"I never meant to tell this story in parliament," she says. "But I was the fourth speaker in a row. What was there to add? I decide to bring in a human touch. This type of abuse could happen to any of us or to our children. The population expects a lot from this commission."

Cheerful, determined and successful, Van Cauter shares a legal practice with her husband, the mayor of Herzele, in addition to her political career. She speaks about the past in a matter-of-fact way. "I find it easy to talk about it, as long as I don't go into the actual facts," she says. "I was only 10. What does a 10-year-old know about dying? But I was afraid I would never see my parents again, and I fought for my life – literally."

One of the most stunning aspects of Van Cauter's story is the justice systems' response when, in 1994, Van Cauter requested the



files on her case. She received a letter with just one sentence, telling her all files from 1972 had been destroyed. "It shows we have come a long way since, with a unified police force, a victim support service and a central database."

In the 1970s, she explains, "cases like mine were looked upon as rarities. No-one was aware that there is a system behind abuse, either in the perpetrator's personality or relationships."

At Van Cauter's request, the parliamentary commission will not only look into abuse in the church, but also in other relationships of authority such as education, sports or care for the disabled.

→ www.carinavancauter.be

FLANDERS TODAY

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Calls beginning to come for archbishop resignation

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Mettepenningen's decision came after he had agreed with the archbishop for two months of "radio silence", meaning no more public statements until Christmas. The idea was to limit the damage to the Léonard – and the church's – image, after severe criticism following Léonard's descriptions of homosexuality as "a form of human sexuality that has developed in the wrong direction" and arguments that elderly priests accused of sexually abusing children are better left unprosecuted. Mettepenningen was Léonard's Dutch-speaking spokesperson (there is also a French-speaking one) and only served in the post for three months. A theologian and church historian from the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL), he and Léonard occupy different wings of the church: Mettepenningen's opinions, including a positive view of the ordination of women, were not those of his superior. In an interview in *De Morgen*

at the weekend, he recalled Léonard's response: "I respect the fact you have an opinion, and I respect that you are a man of debate. I am too, and I think we will be able to build something worthwhile together."

However, Léonard's later public statements, while not unexpected from a man who was expected to follow a much more conservative line than his predecessor, Cardinal Godfried Danneels, did not seem as if they had been cleared with a spokesman.

Mettepenningen soon saw that his attempts to impose a period of no-comment were futile, he said. "Monsignor Léonard is clearly not happy with the media silence that he accepted. If he cannot stick to the agreements made, and if there is not 100% trust, then I had a major problem. And this is where it stops."

The former spokesperson also took the opportunity to question Léonard's commitment to his role as head of Belgium's Catholic church. "At the level of the bishops' conferences in particular, he shows himself to be anything but a leader," Mettepenningen said, citing Léonard's absence at most bishops' meetings over the last few months and his refusal to call a special meeting after the police raids of the archiepiscopal palace in Mechelen last June by magistrates investigating child abuse allegations.

"It is not for me to say the man should resign, but it would have been better had someone else occupied the post," continued Mettepenningen. "The



"He is anything but a leader": Jürgen Mettepenningen (left) and Archbishop Léonard

newspapers say he is isolated and, yes, I think that is the case. Almost everyone in the church is against him."

Johan Bonny of Antwerp was the only bishop to make a public comment after Mettepenningen's resignation. "Right now the Belgian church is like a boat sailing in stormy waters. But this is the boat with which we're going to have to make it through the storm. I'm not saying we need to throw Jonah out of the boat, but we do need to communicate better."

Bert Claerhout, editor of Catholic magazine *Kerk en Leven*, said: "You might expect someone like [Léonard] would give some consideration to his role – am I a force for unity or for division in the church? For the time being he would appear to be the latter, and that is

immensely sad."

Meanwhile Gabriel Ringlet, the former deputy rector of the country's other Catholic university, the Catholic University of Louvain (UCL) in Louvain-la-Neuve, explicitly called for Léonard to resign. "He should make the move; it would be a fine gesture on his part." A petition is being distributed among UCL staff calling for the archbishop to resign, though rector Bruno Delvaux said the university did not support the petition.

As for the pie-thrower, his identity is unknown. Video footage show a young man dressed in black with long hair tied back in a pony tail. The archbishop does not wish to make a formal complaint, according to his remaining spokesperson. ♦

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

The smartest person

Many Flemish voters put all their hopes in Bart De Wever of the nationalist party N-VA – either to finally bring an end to the institutional muddle that has immobilised Belgian politics for years or to stand firm in face of his unyielding French-speaking colleagues. (Alas, these two objectives may be mutually exclusive.)

The most popular politician in Flanders is a man who rarely smiles, who praises the virtues of conservatism and who tends to speak in Latin quotes. How did this youngish grump find his way into Flemish hearts?

Journalists had come to appreciate De Wever long before he shot to fame because of his frankness and authenticity. But it was a television quiz show *De slimste mens ter wereld* (*The Smartest Person in the World*) that started De Wever off on the road to fame.

That De Wever should have participated in this show was anything but obvious. Geert Bourgeois, who preceded him as president of the N-VA, abhorred the idea of politicians taking part in popular TV programmes. How the man who succeeded him shot to unexpected heights precisely because of one of these shows is just one of the finer ironies of this story.

Even before he took part in *De slimste mens*, De Wever was secretly convinced that he indeed was the cleverest person in the world, mastering not only ancient military history but also the entire Abba back catalogue. However, during his first appearance in the quiz he failed miserably. He was offered another chance the following year, making it through to the final in early 2009.

Although he lost to news anchor Freek Braekman, the darling of Flanders, De Wever was nonetheless the real winner of *De slimste mens*. He had by now become a familiar face to thousands of voters – and this provided the foundation for his massive 2010 election victory.

Now the makers of *De slimste mens* want to add a final series of the quiz, *De allerslimste mens* (*The Smartest of All*), in which the finalists from all the previous seasons compete for the ultimate title. Again, there was some doubt about whether De Wever would take part. The timing is a bit odd, after all. Surely he should be busy negotiating the formation of new federal government, rather than appearing in some light-hearted entertainment?

Still, De Wever has agreed to appear yet again in the popular show. Is this one more signal that new elections are on the way?

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



1,329,331

days lost to sick-leave in 2009 among federal civil servants, an average of 6.63 per 100 working days per employee. In the private sector, the average is 5.58 days

20

times more statins – drugs used to lower cholesterol – consumed now than 12 years ago, according to the Federal Information Centre for Health Care (KCE). More than 80% of Belgians aged between 35 and 74 have raised cholesterol levels

70%

Increase in pirated software detection this year in comparison to last year, according to the Business Software Alliance. One in four software packages in use in Belgian businesses is thought to be unlicensed

4,100

Toyota cars recalled in Belgium after faults found in the steering system of the iQ model. More than 135,000 of the cars are being recalled in Europe and Japan

364,496

people unable to keep up on loan repayments in October, a new record, representing a total debt burden of €3.38 billion, according to the Centre for Private Credit. Last year nearly 80,000 who had been on the list managed to clear their debts

Remains of First World War soldiers uncovered

The remains of six British soldiers who died in the First World War have been uncovered in a field in Komen-Waasten, a Belgian village close to the French border. The discovery took place during an excavation by Patrick Roelens, an amateur archaeologist who works with various organisations to excavate many of the battle sites of the war, including the Plugstreet Project, which uncovered the body of an Australian soldier two years ago.

About 10 bodies a year are uncovered in Belgian battlefield sites, but the latest find is unusual because it involves so many men in one place. The remains, which have not been identified, are being kept at the Belgian military base at Langemark-Poelkapelle before being turned over to the Commonwealth War

Graves Commission. They will in turn take up the matter with the British ministry of defence, which is responsible for identifying the men, if that proves possible.

Komen-Waasten, known as Comines-Warneton to the French-speaking majority of this exclave of Wallonia bordered on one side by France and on the other by West Flanders, was on the front line of the First World War. Both villages were completely destroyed in the fighting, but not before Kaiser Wilhelm had paid a visit to his troops in 1915, and a young Adolf Hitler served in the area, staying several times in Comines. Not far away in Ploegsteert (which gives the Plugstreet project its name), Winston Churchill was stationed, while the village was still part of Warneton. ♦



trio.be

What the Belgian presidency of the EU is up to this week

The Flemish departments of economy, science and innovation will this week preside over an international conference on strategic energy technology – the development and implementation of low-carbon energy sources, seen as being indispensable if Europe is to achieve its energy and climate-change targets by 2020 and 2050. The Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET-Plan) conference will bring together a wide variety of stakeholders from business, research, finance and government to be informed on the progress of the plan. The conference will also discuss extending the plan to international cooperation outside the EU, and the Smart Cities initiative, an innovation network for the whole North Sea area.

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Getting Brussels moving

Brigitte Grouwels' portfolio ranges from building bridges and rebranding taxis to digging train tunnels and unloading barges

→ continued from page 1

It's a tall order in any urban situation, but Brussels is particularly chronic: although the public transport system is effective, road traffic can be infernal. Just last week, research revealed that peak-time drivers in Brussels spend 65 hours a year on average in traffic – more than the average 54 hours a year spent by Londoners (though less than those in Paris at 70). Antwerp pushes Brussels close with 64 hours annually.

"There are too many cars here; people are suffocating," she says adamantly. "Cars take space, and that prevents us from improving the actual streets. But you cannot motivate drivers to leave their vehicles at home unless they have good alternatives. That is why we need good, reliable public transport."

Her mobility philosophy is based on the Dutch STOP acronym: *stappen* (walking), *trappen* (cycling), *openbaar vervoer* (public transport) and, only at the end, *privé* (private cars). She is, naturally, a keen supporter of European Mobility Week, which takes place every September, culminating in car-free Sunday, where motor vehicles are banned from downtown Brussels.

In June, she unveiled a €2.4 billion, four-year programme of investment in public works and transport that aims to green the capital's public spaces, lay down more bike and bus lanes, extend at least four tram lines and make public transport easier for people with reduced mobility (which means not just disabled persons, but the aged and children).

Show me the money

"I would like more money," she says straightforwardly. "We can see what is needed to improve transport in Brussels, to boost mobility and to create nice public spaces. But we only have a limited budget."

Indeed, transport accounts for between 20% and 25% of the overall Brussels budget. Public transport alone cost €488 million this year, although Grouwels' four-year investment plan includes funds from the EU and from Beliris, the joint federal/Brussels Region agency.

Still, she says it's not enough. She offers the example of Meiserplein. "Place Meiser, or rather Place Misère," she says. "It's not so much a square as a crossing. It's such a mess. There were studies on how to solve this problem, but the most obvious solution – which would involve a tunnel – would cost €200 million, and we simply don't have that money."

Grouwels is also hoping that GEN/RER, the regional express rail network project, will reduce the number of commuters from outside Brussels who use their cars to come into the city. The project will gradually be rolled out over the next decade, but two GEN/RER stations have already been built – Weststation and Simonis – both of which are also metro stations.

Work on the Schuman GEN/RER station has been going on for two years and will take at least another two, but Grouwels says that, out of sight, a huge tunnel has already been built to Josaphat Park, without disturbing anyone above ground. "When it is done, it will look fantastic," she says. "But it takes time. These are difficult works in a crowded city. We are not in Paris or London, where you have huge streets and broad avenues."

Another conundrum is how to find an alternative to the ring road around Brussels, which is nearing capacity. A proposal for a 15-kilometre tunnel under the city is improbable, but simply widening the road is difficult, too, and almost impossible at the Vilvoorde viaduct.

But road and public transport are only part of Grouwels' portfolio as minister. She also has the Port of Brussels in her remit. Back in June, she announced plans for a €1.5 billion investment in the Port of Brussels, to overhaul the canal, with revamps for the

"We will eventually ban big trucks from the centre, as they destroy roads and cause traffic jams"



Even foot bridges are part of the portfolio of the Brussels transport minister: the Peterbos foot and cycle bridge was placed just last month over the Groeninckx de Maylaan in Anderlecht

Buda bridge and the rail bridge near the Redersplein, new security measures and renovation of the canal locks.

In fact, part of this leads back to roads – and congestion. "We want more goods transported on the waterways because that means fewer trucks in Brussels," she explains. "We will eventually ban big trucks from the centre, as they destroy roads and cause traffic jams. This will be like other cities."

Language politics

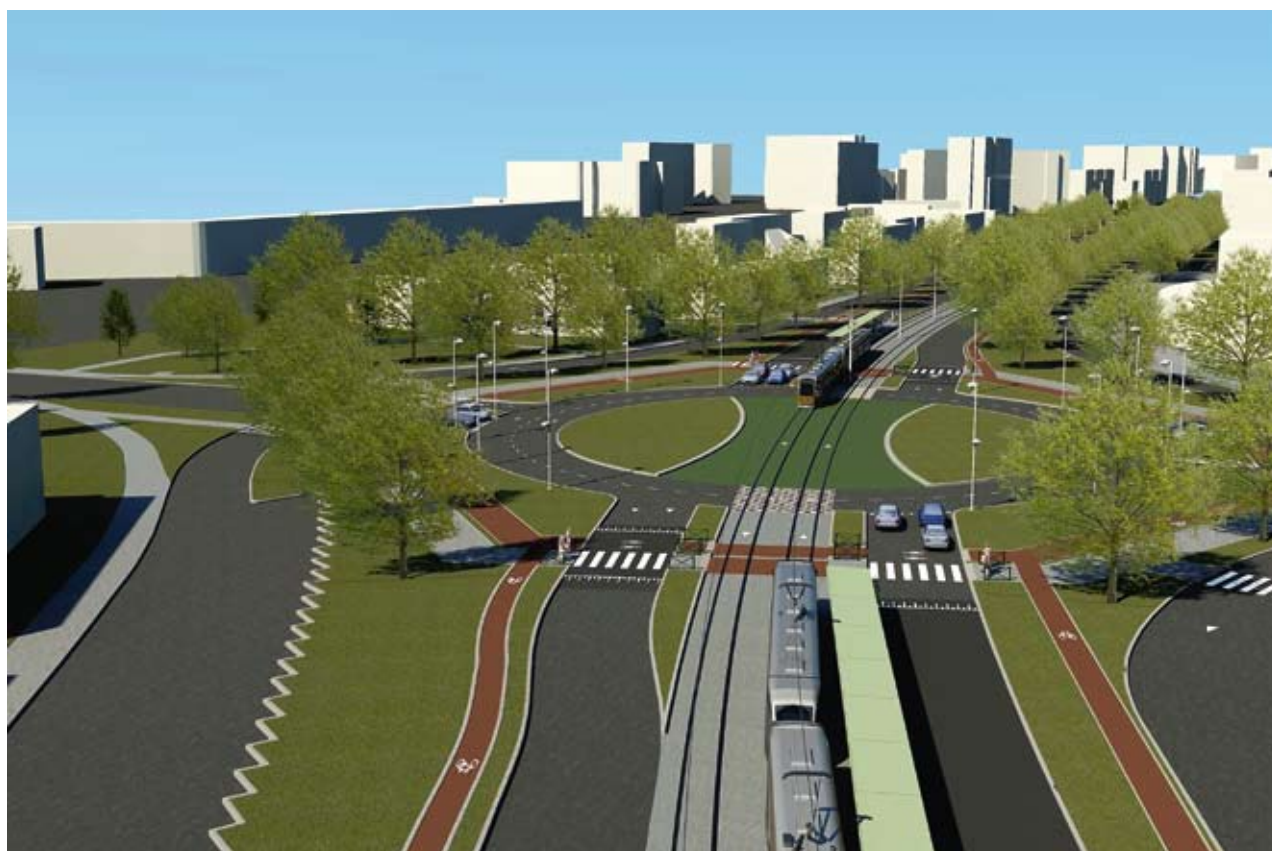
But despite her efforts to improve transport in the capital, Hasselt-born Grouwels has become better known to many in Belgium for her vocal opinions on language. She is one of three Flemish ministers in the eight-member Brussels Region government and is a keen supporter of bilingualism in the city. Her anger about the marginalisation of Dutch in Brussels prompted one of her election slogans – "Minder Frans, meer Brigitte" ("Less French, more Brigitte"), but she says her real cause is bilingualism.

Indeed, Grouwels, who studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and speaks English, French, Dutch, Spanish and German, is far from being the tub-thumping Flemish firebrand of Francophone caricatures. "I want people to learn both Dutch and French," she says. "It would solve so many problems and tensions, especially in Brussels, which is officially bilingual. In fact, even when I was a member of the Flemish Parliament, I argued that we should keep French because you never know where people will go after they leave school." Likewise, Grouwels vehemently disagrees with the recent proposal by Pascal Smet, the Flemish socialist education minister, that English become the second language in Flanders.

She was accused of seeking to create special computer keyboards for Flanders, but this was a distortion of her suggestion that Flanders simply use QWERTY keyboards rather than the French AZERTY. (Curiously, Flanders followed the French in using AZERTY, which is generally only used by French speakers in Europe.)

"You can't buy QWERTY keyboards here," Grouwels maintains. "All I said was that if we want to be open to the world, we should use the QWERTY system, which everyone else uses. But this was interpreted, of course, as an attack on the French."

Grouwels has a husband and three children in their 20s but next week will be celebrating with a much younger crowd, when the Port of Brussels hosts the arrival of Sinterklaas on 17 November. After a long boat trip, he arrives at the Saincteletteplein in Molenbeek, an event expected to draw 2,000 children from across the city. ♦



The Brussels transport ministry plans to redevelop the Leopold III-laan in Evere between Frans Courtenslaan and Hoedemaekers Square in 2011, including the construction of a roundabout at Vrijetijdsaan, providing a smooth ride to Nato headquarters

→ www.brigittegrouwels.com

Making nerds normal

Flemish IT specialist claims we're about halfway through the digital revolution

COURTNEY DAVIS

In his shiny suit and trendy glasses, Peter Hinssen owns the stage. With a PowerPoint backdrop of constantly changing images, he holds the audience captive for well over an hour. Afterwards, the crowd gathers around him, pushing business cards into his hand and asking him to autograph his newest book.

The positive reception is just as unexpected as the laughter, for Hinssen (*pictured*) is no comedian or media personality, he's a Flemish internet technology (IT) lecturer and self-professed nerd. Not to mention that his message is pretty confrontational: He tells a room full of IT professionals that their jobs as they know them are over.

IT in its current incarnation is dead. Welcome to the New Normal.

Also the title of his new book, his second, the New Normal is all about digital elements in our daily lives, from online banking to standard communication. Throughout *The New Normal: Explore the Limits of the Digital World* are references to how society has changed through technology. For example, it is now normal that Facebook being down for two hours earlier this year made headline news on CNN. It is now normal that children often understand technology better than adults. And it is normal that more and more people come home from work and, instead of turning on the TV, go online.

With these changes are questions, assumptions and expectations, which Hinssen tackles in his book and his seminar, both in English. The jokes are far funnier in person, but the book repeatedly makes its point, especially with regard to IT departments.

"Most companies have massive terabytes of storage capacity, back up millions of emails every night and have huge archives of digital content," he writes. "Yet staff can hardly locate anything." It's a common scenario, but solving it is still difficult.

"Management feels that since the issue is about information, it should be handled by the Information Technology people. Although IT people supply

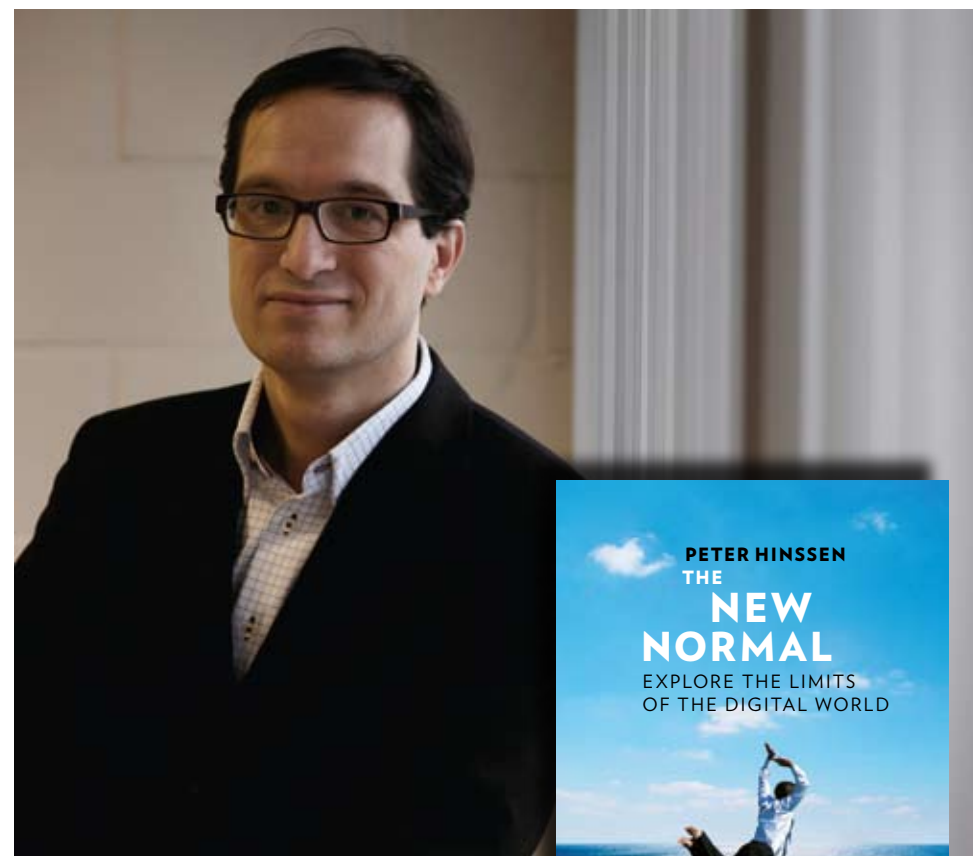
information systems, they think that Management should be responsible for the information being handled and used properly. In the New Normal, our information behaviour adapts faster than we can implement information systems."

Although Hinssen has a profound knowledge of the current situation, he doesn't claim to have all the solutions. He laughs at that, in fact, during his presentation a few weeks ago at The Free University of Brussels (ULB). "Technologists make the worst predictions!" he exclaims before rattling off a list of amusing references: "Bill Gates said 640k ought to be enough for anybody. The IBM chairman said there is a world market for maybe five computers. The head of Digital Equipment thought there would be no reason anyone would want a computer in their home."

He's also quick to point out that we're only halfway into the New Normal and tries to define the various limits at play. He gets pretty technical, showcasing his Master's degrees in Telecommunications and Electronic Engineering.

"Limits are used to put today's digital practices into perspective by comparing them to yesterday and projecting them into tomorrow," he says. "For instance, the limit of length is zero." Before he loses the audience, he applies the idea to a real-life example. "Twenty years ago I wrote a 140-page thesis, now I write a 140-character tweet." Heads nod in understanding. "However, the limit of depth is infinite. I can now Google and Wikipedia any topic, so I can become an expert on most topics. Just look at how people go to the doctor armed with information these days."

While the crowd is in constant agreement, they still don't necessarily understand where they are on the scale of digital transformation. "I often lecture at the London Business School, and my audience is filled with 50- to 60-year-old senior executives – people who know their business well and are extremely



smart but who are not necessarily aware of the digital transition taking place. They are all digital immigrants."

He defines the term "digital immigrants" in his book. "Most of us are still digital immigrants, but we're entering a world where analogue is really the exception." He has a simple test to distinguish between a digital immigrant and a digital native. "I put a camera on a table and ask what it is. If he says 'digital camera', he's a digital immigrant. If he says simply 'camera', he is a digital native. When digital becomes the norm, the adjective 'digital' loses its descriptive meaning. The fact we still continue to use the word is an indicator we're still only halfway through the journey towards the New Normal." ♦

The New Normal: Get Used to IT with Peter Hinssen

30 November, 14.00-21.00
Hotel Pullman
Bessenveldstraat 15, Diegem

→ www.peterhinssen.com

Owning the internet · Flemish companies need to get online to increase the bottom line

Flemish search engine marketing and web design company AIM has come up with a brilliant way to promote their services: short courses on the basics of internet marketing. AIM (Association of Internet Marketing) is taking their show on the road: this month, they are travelling to 25 different locations in Flanders, holding workshops right on their bus. The goal is to provide Flemish businesses the necessary knowledge to promote their companies online.

"The internet is an indispensable part of everyday life," says Valerie De Volder, AIM's marketing manager. "Everyone Googles day in and day out, but we see that most local companies don't use the power of the internet for their own marketing. We think it's simply a knowledge gap for Flemish companies."

While connecting with potential customers has its obvious benefits to AIM, attendees could stand to profit as well, given recent data regarding Belgium's internet marketing. A survey by Interactive Advertising Bureau Belgium showed that online advertising in 2009 was just 10.6% of total media spending,

while it was more than 15% in France, nearly 22% next door in the Netherlands and a whopping 27% in the UK.

Business professionals all agree that the internet is a tool of which companies should be taking more advantage – to increase their customer base, forge business partnerships and further establish their presences in the industry. There are obvious advantages to online advertising: flexibility, less expensive than traditional advertising methods, wider geographic audience and a generally positive rate of return on investment.

But to take advantage of all the web offers, there are some necessary first steps, which is what this class covers. In Dutch and just 90 minutes, it should arm small and mid-sized companies perplexed by social networking with the basics to get started. Subjects include:

- Dos and don'ts of a Facebook campaign
- Website design: beautiful *and* functional
- Email marketing: legal advice; databases; and email design – content and layout



"We're offering this on a bus so we can come to you," explains De Volder. "We don't want people to lose a full day of work or travel a number of hours. We want to keep the barriers to attending minimal."

The price is also right: €49 (excluding VAT). For dates, locations and to sign up, visit the website. **CD**

→ www.misdebusniet.be

Minister steps in to settle Brinks strike

Banks and supermarkets running short of cash

ALAN HOPE

Federal labour minister Joëlle Milquet this week held talks with the management of the Brussels-based security company Brink's as a strike now entering its third week has started having an effect on Belgian banks and supermarkets.

Brink's is responsible for one in five of all money transports in the country, servicing a large number of businesses. Because staff have been on strike since 27 October, cash machines are now running out of funds; Brink's services both ING and BNP Paribas Fortis.

Other major clients, among them Delhaize and Kinopolis, were finding themselves either short of change or buried under mountains of banknotes, as Brink's was unable to bring or remove cash. At one point, police were detailed to guard major retail outlets where cash had built up, making them a target for thieves. Retail federation Fedis called on shoppers to make as much use as

possible of payment cards, while Kinopolis asked film-goers to book tickets online.

Brink's drivers are protesting at the company's plan to change their status from "employee" to "worker" – a legal distinction between white-collar and manual labour that exists only in Belgium and that is considered by many to be discriminatory.

"Worker" status includes fewer rights to redundancy payouts in the case of lay-offs and a shorter period of notice before laying off workers. According to unions, the company's insistence on the change is a signal that they plan to lay off more people at a later date. In the opinion of Roger Blanpain, professor of labour law at the Catholic University of Leuven, the collective switch of status would be illegal.

Brink's has already announced the closure of a transport centre employing 60 people in Strépy in Wallonia and that it will sell off



The picket line at the threatened Brink's base in Strépy

its diamond transport service at Brussels Airport.

Interior minister Annemie Turtelboom told the National Bank to take over money transports where necessary, with federal police protection. Unions accused her of being a strike-breaker, but she pointed out that safety was the government's top priority.

As *Flanders Today* went to press, minister Milquet was due to receive company representatives in her office and to speak afterwards with unions and the industrial arbitration service in an effort to reach a solution that she said should be "sustainable for the budget and acceptable to the employees". ♦

Limburg man is Entrepreneur of the Year

Jo Nelissen, owner of the Bilzen-based refrigeration company ABN, has won Young Creative Entrepreneur of 2010, in a ceremony held in Osaka, Japan. Nelissen (pictured) left behind a field of 109 international candidates to go up in the final last weekend. He was previously winner of the title in Limburg and in Flanders.

The participants were all nominated by their local Junior Chamber International representatives. The JCI in Flanders worked together with Flanders District of Creativity to encourage creative entrepreneurs under 40.

ABN was set up in 1996 and now has three facilities in Flanders and one in the Netherlands, with sales last year of €15 million and a staff of 70. The company provides refrigeration, heating and clean-room technology for shops, offices and factories. ♦



Wanted: Flemish entrepreneurs

Flanders has too few entrepreneurs, according to communications consultant Gunnar Michielssen. So he's touring the region over the next 100 days to try to find 100 new business successes.

"I plan to break down the myths that exist over entrepreneurship," he said. "People have the strangest ideas about it, which leads those who dream of having their own business to give up. My job is to break through that anxiety barrier."

Michielssen is a former copywriter who became a coach for start-ups for Unizo, the organisation that represents the self-employed. He's since moved into communications consultancy for clients like Belgacom, Brico and Van Marcke, and he special weekends in which the owners of 18 start-ups are locked up in a castle for an intensive mutual evaluation of their business plans.

It's his coaching experience he'll be relying on during his 100-day quest, and the timing could not be better. "Whoever starts now and goes about things a little smartly, would normally be established within three

to five years. By that time the economy will have turned around and as an entrepreneur you'll be able to get the best out of your company."

It could turn out to be you, he says, whether you see yourself as an entrepreneur or not. "Doing business is human nature. Look at kids and how they swap and trade their marbles with their classmates. Sometimes it seems as if life revolves around a single choice: do I go into business for myself or do I take a job? So many people go for option two, it seems." ♦

→ www.gunnarmichielssen.be



It could be you

Fish markets merge

The famous *vismijn* (fish market) in Ostend has been taken over by the privately owned Visveiling in Zeebrugge, merging the two markets to create the fifth largest in Europe.

The two markets started operating this week under a single management on two sites. The new company is called Vlaamse Visveiling, headed by the former Farmers' Union chairman, the appropriately named Noel Devisch. The new market expects to handle about 170,000 tonnes of fish a year. The merger will not lead to redundancies, the company said.

"We're turning the page and starting to write what we hope is a success story," said Devisch, referring to the long-standing rivalry between the two fishing ports, each with its own fleet, traders and processors. "This merger and the economies of scale it will provide offer advantages for everyone." The Ostend market will be renovated and expanded, just as the Zeebrugge market was previously, he said.

The two markets will operate a single auction, using the Pan-European Fish Auction system developed in Zeebrugge, which now links the

port to Milford Haven in England and La Rochelle in France. Buyers at the two Flemish ports (and elsewhere) will be able to enter remote bids for fish at either site.

Nieuwpoort mayor, appropriately named Roland Crabbe, announced that his city's fish market could be included in the merger by 2012. Nieuwpoort would first link into the single-auction system before joining Vlaamse Visveiling later. ♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Autos • Audi

German car manufacturer Audi is to invest €270 million to extend production capacity at Audi Brussels, which manufactures the Audi A1. The investment will fund a new assembly line for the A1 five-door, which is due to be launched in 2012. Audi has already spent €300 million since 2007 in converting the former VW Vorst plant for Audi production. The A1 is exclusively made in Belgium.

Beer • AB InBev

Leuven-based brewer AB InBev made a profit of €2.16 billion in the first nine months of the year, less than the €2.35 billion for the same period last year. Production, meanwhile, rose 2.4% to 299 million hectolitres, with major increases in Brazil, Russia and China offset by a decline in consumption in North America and Western Europe.

Entertainment • Studio 100

Flemish entertainment conglomerate Studio 100 has taken over the Holiday Park near Mannheim, Germany, the country's seventh-largest theme park and home to the Expedition G-Force, repeatedly voted the best roller coaster in Europe. The company plans to invest €25 million in the coming four years to introduce their characters Mega Mindy, Samson and Gert, K3 and Kabouter Plop.

Fitness • Passage Fitness First

Health club chain Passage Fitness First has been acquired by the Dutch concern Health City for an undisclosed sum. Passage Fitness, formerly a Belgian company, was later bought by the British group Fitness First. They have now sold their holdings in the Benelux in order to concentrate on the Asian market.

Optical • Pearle

Optician Pearle has been named best retail chain in Belgium, according to consumers voting online in a poll organised by Q&A Research and Consultancy. More than 400,000 voters rated chains on price, service, range of products and customer service.

Research • UCB

Brussels-based chemicals company UCB is Belgium's most knowledge-intensive business concern, according to a survey carried out by the EU Commission. While the company comes first in Belgium for R&D, it is only ranked in 37th place on a European level. Forty Belgian companies made the full list, spending an average of 2% of their income on research. UCB spent €72,300 per employee on research in 2009.



FLANDERS SHINES IN EUROPE SHINES IN FLANDERS



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eu trio.be



Diamonds in the rough

Mystery and intimacy reign in Robert Devriendt's exhibition at Museum M

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

Robert Devriendt's exhibition *Victimes de la passion* (*Victims of Passion*) is filling a few large rooms in Leuven's Museum M. Well, filling might not be the appropriate word. On entering, you notice some specks against the wall, and, if you're not familiar with his work, you might wonder: "Where are the paintings?" Look again, they're there. Yes, those little coloured surfaces are paintings. The biggest paintings in *Victimes* are the size of a postcard. You have to put yourself just a hand away from the works to really admire them (and in doing so, breaching Museum M's house rule to keep at least a 60-centimetre distance from the works on display). They hang in groups, on an almost perfect horizontal line, comprising as little as three and as much as 24 to a group. Devriendt calls them sequences, and it's the sequence that gets titled, not the individual canvasses. *Victimes* contains an amazing total of 176 paintings grouped into 23 sequences. They paintings hang slightly under eye level. "People have to bow their head for the art; I like that," Devriendt smiles. "There might even be a religious side to it."

I meet the *artiste* at the other side of the country, in his studio in some backstreet of Bruges where no tourist has ever set foot.

His paintings are snippets from a bigger story that's never completely spelt out – like shots from a film we'll never see. They're mysterious stills of stuffed animal heads or high heels, with or without a lady's foot, a car in the woods, a lonely house, or (a part) of a human body, dead or alive (and sometimes you really can't tell).

"People are free to interpret my work," says Devriendt. "Because I think it's impossible to precisely express what you want to say. I am not stating that

communication is impossible, but it often goes awry." But then he adds: "Though the titles do give a hint." He clarifies, slightly: "Maybe I want to evoke a mood, more than tell a story." That mood almost always has a tone of unease, best described with that beautiful German word *unheimlich*. "I respect your interpretation, but to me they all seem so...normal. They just show my way of looking at the world." Sequences like "Crimes and Passion" or "Le désir de l'abstraction" indeed are more like a loose collection of recurring visual motifs. But in others, such as the two sequences called "Victimes de la passion" – one subtitled "De fetisjiste", the other "LOVE YOU HATE YOU" – you do see a clear link between the paintings. "If you look at the dates, you'll notice that the recent ones are more narrative. No coincidence, I'm evolving more in that direction."

Scared to be small

Devriendt, 55, has always painted small scale, though never as small as these. "For years, I didn't show them. People have forgotten about this, but in the 1980s painting was scorned. And if you did make paintings, at least they had to be big and wild, and certainly not narrative. I called it macho painting." Some painters, he concludes "want to address the masses. I don't, I'm speaking to individuals. And I don't use catch phrases."

Regardless of the *Zeitgeist*, Devriendt kept on painting. "I can't do otherwise," he concedes. Articulating more precisely what makes him tick is difficult. He tries, though: "I'm painting what I feel is lacking."

But he does have strong advice for budding artists. "Don't become an artist unless you're really, really passionate about it." He pauses. "That might sound very romantic. And I know, some people make art just to earn money. That can

even lead to worthwhile art. But it's not what's pushing me."

Some 20 years ago, Devriendt started from scratch. "I destroyed loads and loads of old paintings and asked myself: If, in a year's time, the bomb falls, what would I like to have painted?" He started working on smaller canvasses. Over time, they became smaller, and he began bringing them together in sequences. His work has been compared to the Flemish Primitives and miniatures, the illustrations of medieval manuscripts. But he doesn't like the latter comparison.



© Le Chasseur de Fétiches, 2009

"The word miniaturist brings up nostalgia," he says. "I don't paint like them." Thematically there's a big difference, indeed. But the comparison is also a way of complimenting him on his technique. "That I accept," he smiles.

"Few people are aware of the energy it takes to make my paintings. If you don't look very well, you might confuse them with photos, so people presume they're painted quickly." *Quod non*. "Sometimes I can pull it off in three, four days, but others take me months to finish. I like to compare them to diamonds that need to be polished time and again." ♦

Victimes de la passion

Until 16 January

Museum M

Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28
Leuven

→ www.mleuven.be



© Stefan Altenburger Photography, Zürich

A forgotten war • Armed Forces Museum shares stories of Belgians who served in Korea

DENZIL WALTON

As an avid fan of the popular TV series *M*A*S*H*, I was delighted to discover the exhibition *Belgians Can Do Too!* at the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History in Brussels.

*M*A*S*H* followed a US Mobile Army Surgical Hospital in the Korean War (1950-53), in which millions of civilians and soldiers lost their lives. To my surprise, Belgium also sent troops to Korea, resulting in more than 100 casualties. The presence and actions of the Belgian-Luxembourg battalion, or BUNC (Belgian United Nations Command), in Korea are commemorated in this show.

Over 3,000 soldiers from Belgium and 84 from Luxembourg volunteered to join the BUNC, making it the largest armed Belgian and Luxembourg mission since the Second World War. The battalion operated on the front line and was involved in dangerous combat. *Belgians Can Do Too!* is the result of close cooperation between the Armed Forces Museum and the Musée National d'Histoire Militaire in Diekirch, Luxembourg. It includes unique items from the National Army Museum (London), the Musée de l'Armée (Paris), the Legermuseum (Delft) and the Australian War Museum (Canberra). Visitors are led along a number of areas that detail the volunteers' lives. Each area discusses a specific theme of the Korean War. The first one provides an overview of its origins. We then follow the BUNC as they prepare, train and board their transport ship Kamina.

We discover how the soldiers' initial skirmishes were fairly light, but were soon followed by heavy fighting – and the first casualties – along the Imjin River. By the end of 1951, the war had become an appalling trench war. Although hostilities ceased in 1953, the battalion stayed in Korea until 1955.

The material on display is exceptionally diverse. Rare collection pieces include a brown beret (symbol of the battalion), a recoilless gun, a Chinese POW suit, a body bag, a soccer cup and a North Korean medal. Rather than letting them seem like meaningless objects, the museum provides the story behind each one. I was also impressed by a walk-through replica of a combat bunker.

There are also fascinating photos and film footage of their time spent in Korea, supported by riveting interviews in which Belgian veterans talk about their experiences. ♦

Belgians Can Do Too!

Until 31 January

Royal Museum of the Armed Forces
Jubelpark 3, Brussels

→ www.klm-mra.be



© KLM-MRA

The ultimate sport

With its roots firmly planted in the counter-culture, a Frisbee-throwing sport is gaining huge ground in Flanders

COURTNEY DAVIS

With floodlights shining down on the field, a group of Flemings and expats are throwing a Frisbee on a Monday night. With darkness creeping in, the steam rising off their bodies is in an indicator of not just how cold it is, but also how hard they're playing. Unlike a casual toss of a Frisbee at the beach, this game has two teams of seven, running, dodging and diving in a sport known simply as Ultimate.

This Frisbee team sport is picking up speed in Belgium – there are 23 teams already, more than half of them in Flanders. "When I helped start the team with a couple of friends four years ago," says Disco Duro founder Pieter Jacobs, "I always had to explain what Ultimate was." Now, he finds that players are showing up knowing the game already.

Disco Duro is one of two teams in Ghent – the other is Gentle, which is now so popular it is no longer accepting new players. They are also so serious and focused, they couldn't stop practice to talk to a lone journalist about their sport.

Jacobs played with Gentle for two years before starting Disco Duro. "Gentle focuses on being good; we focus on having fun," he says. "I do this in my spare time, and I want to always make sure it is fun."

Disco practices weekly, from summer to winter, in rain or in sun, for two hours without a break. "Why would you want a break from something this fun?" asks Jacobs.

At a ritual post-practice beer, team members nod their heads in agreement. With only about 20 people (compared to Gentle's 200+), there is a remarkably strong attendance rate for a cold Monday night. The answer is given before the question is asked: "They come because it's fun."

So what makes it so fun? To start, Ultimate is one of the least expensive sports to play – all that's required for a game is field space and a cheap, plastic disc. Played in mixed teams of both men and women, the aim is get the disc from your end of the field to the other end zone by throwing it to your teammates.

There are a handful of basic rules that makes learning the game relatively easy. Once you catch the disc, one foot must stay planted. This means no running or walking, and you have to throw it within 10 seconds of getting it. If the disc is intercepted or dropped, the defence gets possession of it. Once a disc ends up in the end zone of the opposite side, a point is scored, possession switches, and the game continues up to 15 points. It's a mixture of speed, Frisbee-throwing skill and strategy.

Ultimate's first college team formed in 1970 in the United States. By the late '70s, the sport had crossed the pond to the UK. Originally seen as a counter-culture activity, Ultimate has been steadily attracting more traditional athletes, lifting the level of competitiveness. However, its roots



© Ed Yourdon/flickr

in the hippie lifestyle are still evident in one of its core rules: There are no referees.

In a show of anti-establishment democracy, Ultimate players call each other's fouls. If a player who committed the alleged foul disagrees with the call, the play is redone.

This all helps explain why Ultimate places such a high priority on the Spirit of the Game (SOTG). That's right – the sport actually has an official name for its vibe. While competition is encouraged, it is more important to respect the players and the rules. It is so vital to the success of the competition – which has reached international levels – that awards are handed out at tournaments for the best SOTG.

"We came in second for SOTG in the last tournament we played and got first SOTG in the Ghent tournament," says Jacobs proudly. A teammate chimes in: "We are not going to sacrifice the enjoyment for the win."

As Disco Duro trots onto the field, mud sticking to the cleats, they high-five each other after every point – whether they scored or the other team did. ♦

➔ <http://users.telenet.be/DiscoDuro>

Want to join in on the Frisbee fun?

Ultimate team Disco Duro is organising a free training for people who want to learn to play Ultimate on Monday, 15 November, from 19.00 to 21.00 in Ghent. Email discodurogent@gmail.com to sign up.



© Dienst Toerisme Gent

"Criminally overlooked" • Ghent makes Lonely Planet's list of Top Ten Cities

LISA BRADSHAW

"Who doesn't love a city?" begins Lonely Planet, one of the most popular travel guide publishers in the world, in its Top Ten Cities list for 2011, released last week. The list is seen by millions who visit its website and buy its *Best in Travel* annual guidebook. Some of the cities chosen for 2011 are obvious, like New York; others are surprising, like Iquitos. Number 7 this year is an obvious choice for those of us who live in Belgium, but surprising for everyone else: Ghent.

"Here's a secret within a secret," writes Lonely Planet. "Ghent might just be the best European city you've never thought of visiting, in a country that continues to be criminally overlooked."

We couldn't have said it better ourselves.

"Those who do hop off the train and stroll along the Leie River to the historic centre will have their eyes out on stalks," writes Lonely Planet. "Here hides one of Europe's finest panoramas of water, spires and centuries-old grand houses."

We find it fortunate that the beloved travel

guide says "stroll", as anyone trying to get to those fine panoramas from the station by tram or bus will never make it, due to the massive renovation project in the heart of Ghent's centre, which has been going on for years. But Lonely Planet is careful: "This year the entire centre will emerge from a major programme of rebuilding designed to show off the huge pedestrianised squares."

Although we wouldn't go that much out on a limb with the timing, we can tell you what not to miss the next time you're in Ghent, the seventh most-interesting city of 2011.

Visit: The possibilities are pretty endless, but top of the to-do list is most certainly "The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb", credited with being one of the world's first oil paintings and certainly one of the best examples of the ground-breaking work of the Flemish Primitives. An altarpiece by 15th-century brothers Jan and Hubert Van Eyck, it's best seen while listening to the recorded audio guide available at its home in Sint-Baaf's Cathedral. If the craftsmanship and fascinating

history of this seminal piece doesn't touch you in some way, you have a heart of stone.

Eat: For inexpensive cosiness, there's no beating Keizershof right on Vrijdagmarkt, Ghent's central square. More upscale is Jan Van den Bon, one of Ghent's two Michelin-starred restaurants, located near the city's Citadelpark. The chef is Flemish, his wife is French, and they bring both food traditions together to make creative dishes with traditional ingredients.

Drink: Choosing one place to drink in Ghent is like choosing a favourite strand of hair off your head. But if I must: after 22.00, make your way through the warren of streets in the mediaeval Patershol district until you find Rococo. Candlelit and with a fire burning in its open hearth, the small space is filled with wooden tables where strangers sit together and where the proprietress brings you a complimentary spirit by way of introduction. ♦

➔ www.visitgent.be

Onions and *vlaai*

We discover the culinary delights of this year's host city of the Week van de Smaak

ALAN HOPE

The city of Aalst in East Flanders is famous for two things: onions, a basic but indispensable foodstuff, and carnival, the pre-Lenten festivities that are a way of life in Belgium.

Put the two of those things together – food and festival – and the prospect of Aalst as host city of Week van de Smaak (Week of Taste) seems not only enticing, but almost inevitable.

The “City of Taste” has been preparing its programme since before the announcement in November last year that its bid to follow Hasselt, Kortrijk, Lier and Leuven as stars of Week van de Smaak had been successful, says Ann De Block, a curator at the Aalst city museum.

Aalst is a town with strong social bonds, going back as far as the emancipation of the factory labourers by Adolf Daens, the 19th-century activist-priest, the subject of a popular 1970s novel by Louis Paul Boon, himself an *Aalstenaar*. (The work later became a film and, in 2008, an incredibly successful musical.)

“The town has a very busy social life,” De Block confirms, “built mainly around the groups who work all year to prepare for carnival.”

Aalst's patron saint is St Martin, one of the most popular medieval saints. His name-day falls on 11 November, which is the city's annual Market Day, and also the official launch of the Week van de Smaak. Aalst plans a special market of regional products in its city centre and will introduce the new cookbook *Over vlaaien en ajuinen* (About Pie and Onions).

Activities in Aalst during Week van de Smaak, which begins today, are listed in a pocket-sized brochure that can be picked up at the tourist office – one of the prettiest you'll find anywhere in the country – under the 15th-century Belfort. It's also available free from anywhere that sells food or drink.

No crying over *ajuin*



Aalst was the site of a famous *ajuin* (onion) market in the 19th century, which led to the nickname *Ajuinen* for the townsfolk – originally a mocking insult but now heartily welcomed by the *Aalstenaars*. It was also the centre of the hop-growing industry, so much so that there was a law banning anyone not from the region from selling “Aalst hops” – one of the first instances of a legally protected *appellation d'origine*.

So it's only to be expected that Aalst has taken to the concept of the Week van de Smaak's “hoppas”: *tapas* designed to accompany a good Belgian beer. On 11 November, mayor Ilse Uyttersprot will don her official apron and, with the help of Karel and Ken, winners of



the latest season of reality TV series *Mijn Restaurant!*, put together a special concoction, whose ingredients are top secret. It's free and starts at 11.30.

Karnivale, the winning restaurant of Karel and Ken, is on the Molenstraat, which is to gastronomy in Aalst what Bond Street in London is to jewellers. All day long on 20 November, you can sample special snacks concocted by the various food stores lining the street, from meat to chocolate to authentic *Aalsterse vlaai*, Aalst's single recognised regional product.

It's a pie, it's a cake! No, it's *vlaai*



Only five bakers in Aalst have so far been awarded the right to produce *Aalsterse vlaai*, but many more make it, and it's apparently easy enough to prepare at home. I tasted one from Lowie, one of the five recognised bakers. A kind of pie, it has a mousse-like consistency that's at first is surprisingly unpleasant, particularly if you are expecting something more like a cake.

After the initial surprise, however, the taste is rich and unctuous, heavily influenced by cinnamon, which is in the soft rolls known as *mastellen* that form the basis of the *vlaai*. You also taste mace, which is added to the mix. Other than that, it's sweet and – not surprisingly for a recipe involving one litre of milk – you have to add not only 45 sugar lumps, but also 450 grams of candy syrup. A little goes a long way.

And you can go a long way to get some, with special *vlaai* cycle and walking routes in the area of Aalst. A €1 booklet from the tourist office details the route and stops and includes coupons for reductions on *vlaai*, as well as local beers, afternoon tea and chocolates.

While Michelin-starred chef Wouter Keersmaekers is this year's official host of the Week van de Smaak, Aalst has its own patron, VRT journalist (and scourge of many a politician) Phara De Aguirre. She was born in the city to a family originally from the Basque region of Spain, so she embodies not only the City of Taste but also this year's Country of Taste.

De Aguirre will help judge the two recipe contests *Aalsters potje* and *Cucina del mundo*, as part of the closing events on 21 November. There'll also be a concert by Belle Perez, another Flemish star with Spanish roots. ♦

→ www.aalst.be/stadvandesmaak

Away to Aalst

The full programme of events in Aalst during Week van de Smaak can be found free all over town or downloaded from

→ www.weekvandesmaak.be

Every day offers several options, but here's a few to especially look out for.

- It wouldn't be Aalst without onions, and on closing day, 21 November, there will be 2,000 litres of **free onion soup** on offer at the Grote Markt, which serves as The Ramblas of Aalst.
- “**Forgotten**” **vegetables** are constantly on the menu at the Brasserie Markt on the Grote Markt. On a €40 menu from 11-13 and 15-20 November, you can

taste these overlooked delights and learn a bit more about what to do with them.

→ www.markt12.be

- In **De Soeptrein (Soup Train)**, they will be serving *pap* from 12-20 November at lunchtime (except Sunday). This is what most people survived on during the Middle Ages: a simmering gruel of whatever vegetables were to hand, some grains and a piece of meat if someone trapped a rabbit. I have it on good authority that it won't be quite as austere now as it was then. Every day features something different for €4.

→ www.desoeptrien.be

More smaak!

Next week our Bite correspondent Robyn Boyle will take a look at the Spanish side of the Week van de Smaak. But right this very minute, you can turn to page 16 to see her take on Smaak initiative Expatatas.

Later this month, we'll introduce a new regular series on the best of Flanders' local and regional products, from Veurne to Voeren.

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© Nicolas Provost, courtesy of Argos

Unpacking Argos

IAN MUNDELL

The Argos Centre for Art & Media in Brussels wants you to come and rummage through its archive. For a contemporary art geek like me, the idea is tempting and terrifying in equal measure. Argos has around 2,500 audiovisual works, along with more than 4,000 publications that help put the visuals in context. Where to start? How long have I got? Can I get a season ticket for the coffee machine?

Luckily, Argos is providing some guidance, with a programme of projections that highlights recurrent themes in the collection as well as individual artists with whom it has a special affinity. Exhibits run in a loop for one day only, providing a good reason to keep coming back for this second Open Archive festival.

Thematic programmes run on Wednesdays and Fridays, with subjects ranging from creative choices such as the use of voice-over or symmetry on screen, to political topics such as Palestine and migration, plus philosophical issues such as identity and public space. Individual artists feature on Thursdays, including the inspiring Flemish filmmaker Nicolas Provost (9 December), who works to uncover hidden images in existing films as well as shooting his own material (pictured).

On Saturdays Argos tests your endurance with particularly long works by German director Alexander Kluge, Canadian artist Steve Reinke, British filmmaker

Peter Watkins and Belgian author and director Eric Pauwels. The marathon concludes on 11 December with *De langste dag* (The Longest Day), an intriguing project from Flemish TV pioneer Jef Cornelis. This brings together over six hours of live TV first broadcast from locations around Ghent on 21 June, 1986. Moving from art installations and museums to private homes and the television studio, it poses awkward questions such as "Can television do what art does?"

The one constant in this moveable feast of audio-visual art is an excellent exhibition called *Walking in the Hinterland*, which considers eight artistic responses to geographical non-spaces – locations that have been overlooked, abandoned or actively negated by the powers that be. Highlights include "Dear Adviser" by Brussels-based artist Vincent Meessen, a poetic exploration of Chandigarh, the Indian city planned in the 1950s by Le Corbusier which is either unfinished or falling into disrepair. Over images of a man in suit and bow-tie wandering through the city, we hear fragments of a fable apparently cherished by the architect about a raven that wants to imitate an eagle.

Till Roeskens asked residents of a Palestinian refugee camp to talk about their lives and draw maps. We hear their stories, but only see what they draw, a remarkably

potent way of sharing their point of view. Children show the rooms in their houses, marking in good hiding places. A woman shows the two routes to hospital, depending on whether or not she has a permit for a crucial check point. A man describes how he built up a farm for his family, only to see it bulldozed into the river by Israeli soldiers, a simple arrow on his detailed map showing the event.

Jordi Colomer records a man with a cardboard model of a tower block on a pole running through different cities, like the standard bearer in a cult of urbanisation. Similarly weird and wonderful is "Monuments" by Redmond Entwistle, in which actors playing the artists Dan Graham, Gordon Matta-Clark and Robert Smithson walk around New Jersey intoning wise words and looking at the suburban landscape addressed in their work. It's clumsy and lyrical at the same time, a fascinating art-theory B-movie. ♦

Much of Open Archive is in English or subtitled in English; check the online programme for details

Open Archive #2

Until 12 December
Argos Centre for Art & Media
Werfstraat 13, Brussels

→ www.argosarts.org



The World of Lucas Cranach → **Bozar**

Ensor Revealed → **ING Cultural Centre**

Reinoud (d'Haese) → **Museums of Fine Arts**



Antwerp

Arenbergshouwborg
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
www.arenbergshouwborg.be
NOV 11 20.15 BRZZLL + Gloria
NOV 14 20.30 Aranis
NOV 15 20.30 Sarah Blasko. Kurt Wagner & Courtney Tidwell

Lotto Arena

Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be
NOV 11 20.00 Volbeat

Monty

Montignystraat 3-5; 03.238.91.81
www.monty.be
NOV 15 20.00 Flying Horseman

Sportpaleis

Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be
NOV 13 20.00 Polonaise Festival featuring Willy Sommers, Laura Lynn, John Terra, more

Toneelhuis/Bourla

Komedieplaats 18; 03.224.88.44
www.toneelhuis.be
NOV 17 20.00 Das Pop

Trix

Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00
www.trixonline.be
NOV 10 20.00 De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig + Nobody Beats The Drum
NOV 12 19.30 Wehrmacht + AC4 + Blunt Force Trauma + Furious
NOV 14 20.30 Danko Jones + Young Guns. Peter Pan Speedrock
NOV 15 19.30 Trash Talk + Cerebral Ballzy + Vogue + more.
NOV 17 20.00 Big John Bates & The Voodoo Dollz + The Grave Brothers

Ardoois

Cultuurkapel De Schaduw
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82
www.deschaduw.net
NOV 11 20.00 Carolyn Wonderland + Guy Forsyth

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be
Concerts at 20.00:
NOV 10 Alex Roeka
NOV 11 Liam Gerner + Ryan Bingham & The Dead Horses + Carolina Chocolate Drops
NOV 12 Boston Tea Party + Plasticines + BB Brunes. Wavves
NOV 14 The Gaslight Anthem
NOV 16 Lissie
NOV 17 Mark Ronson & The Business Intl 5tet. Yelle

K-Nal

Havenlaan 1; 0474.04.00.00 www.k-nal.be
NOV 10 23.00 Yuksek & Brodinski (The Krays) + The Magician + The Aiku live + more

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
www.botanique.be
NOV 13 Ben Glover + Mary Gauthier
NOV 16 Yuck
NOV 17 Foo!s Gold. Villagers

Magasin 4

Havenlaan 51B; 02.223.34.74
www.magasin4.be
NOV 10 20.00 Quok + Missing Dog Head
NOV 12 20.00 Japanese New Music Festival
NOV 13 20.00 Chevreuil + Alexis Gideon + Casse Brique + Setting Sun

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
www.recyclart.be
NOV 10 22.00 Redlight + Ramadanman + Science + Grimelock + Bunzero

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991
www.vorstnationaal.be
NOV 16 20.00 Eddy Mitchell
NOV 17 20.00 Amy Macdonald

Geel

Spiegel tent
Dorpsplein, Olen; www.dewerft.be
NOV 13 20.15 Kiki Dee en Carmelo Luggeri

Ghent

Charlatan
Vlasmarkt 6; 09.224.24.57 www.charlatan.be
NOV 16 20.00 The Hundred in the Hands

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
NOV 12 20.15 Meuris
NOV 13 20.15 Isabelle A

GET YOUR
TICKETS NOW!

Ozark Henry

18 March, 20.00
Lotto Arena, Antwerp

If you're one of the thousands who missed out on tickets to one of this Flemish musician's three sold-out shows next month at the Ancienne Belgique, buck up. Here's your second (or rather fourth) chance. After a two-year hiatus from touring, the singer/guitarist/pianist will offer plenty from his just-released sixth studio album *Hvelreki*, which debuted at number 1 in Belgium. With the lyrical intensity of an Eddie Vedder and the tranquilised voice of a Thom Yorke, Piet Goddaer (his real name) embodies modern rock at its frenetically, fushiony finest.



→ www.lottoarena.be

NOV 17 19.30 Monster Magnet + Seventh Void with Members of Type O Negative

Kinky Star

Vlasmarkt 9; 09.223.48.45
www.kinkystar.com
NOV 12 21.00 Morc Labelnight featuring Circle Bros & Edgar Wapenhalter
NOV 13 21.00 Zeto
NOV 14 21.00 The Gallantiers
NOV 15 21.00 Rolo Tomassi
NOV 16 21.00 Romano Nervoso

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
NOV 13 22.00 New Wave Classix party
NOV 14 19.30 Ska Cubano
NOV 17 21.00 Giant Sand: 25th Anniversary Tour + Ionna Kelley

Muziekodroom

Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13
www.muziekodroom.be
NOV 10 20.00 Melissa Auf Der Maur
NOV 12 20.00 Modklub with Daan
NOV 14 20.00 Winds of Plage + Stick To Your Guns + For Today

Kortrijk

De Kreun
Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44
www.dekreun.be
NOV 10 20.00 Shrinebuilder
NOV 12 20.00 On Point Label night featuring JtoheC & The Bad Mothas + Title + Uphigh Collective
NOV 16 20.00 The Residents
NOV 17 20.00 Lady Linn

Leuven

Het Depot
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
www.hetdepot.be
NOV 10 20.00 Brownswood Night: DJ Gilles Peterson + Baloji + LeFTO



Antwerp

Buster
Kaasrui 1; 03.232.51.53
www.busterpodium.be
NOV 10 22.00 Strange Fruit
NOV 11 21.00 Arne Vanhaecke + Buster Jam
NOV 12 22.00 Timescape
NOV 13 22.00 The Nursery Rhyme
NOV 16 22.00 Jo Cassiers & The Club
NOV 17 22.00 Playtime Session

Rataplan
Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
www.rataplanvzw.be
NOV 10 20.30 School Is Cool
NOV 17 20.30 Han Bennink Trio

Brussels

Art Base
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20
www.art-base.be
NOV 12 20.00 Trio Adib Garti

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
NOV 15 20.00 Brad Mehldau Trio

Jazz Station
Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78
NOV 10 20.30 S K R
NOV 13 18.00 Trias
NOV 17 20.30 Pascal Mohy Trio

La Soupape
A De Wittestraat 26; 02.649.58.88
www.lasoupape.be
NOV 12 21.00 Belch' Quartet

Sounds Jazz Club
Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50
www.soundsjazzclub.be
Concerts at 22.00:
NOV 10 Los Soneros del Barrio
NOV 11 Mess Trio
NOV 12 Samy Thiebault
Upnishad Experiences
NOV 13 Jean-Paul Estievenart Quartet
NOV 15 Master Session
NOV 16 Hermia & Tassin Quartet

The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusicvillage.com
Concerts at 21.00:
NOV 10 Joachim Caffonnette Trio
NOV 12 Bart Platteau Quartet
NOV 13 Johan Clement Trio
NOV 17 Mahieu Robert Quartet

Wolubilis
Paul Hymanslaan 251; 02.761.60.30
www.wolubilis.be
NOV 16 20.30 The Music Maker Blues
Revue: The Last Lost Blues Survivors

Hasselt

Muziekodroom
Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13
www.muziekodroom.be
NOV 11 20.00 Mac Arnold & Plate Full
O'Blues



Antwerp

De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
NOV 17 20.30 Rodrigo Leão & Cinema
Ensemble (Portugal)

Rataplan
Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
www.rataplanvzw.be

NOV 12 20.30 Badenhorst, Ploug and
Pettersen, folk

Zuiderpershuis
Walse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be
NOV 12 19.30 Rihla Orchestra
NOV 13 20.30 Fatoum + Natasha Atlas

Brussels

Art Base
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20
www.art-base.be
NOV 14 19.00 Eva Lucia (Denmark)

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
NOV 16 20.00 'AfroCubism' featuring
Eliades Ochoa, Toumani Diabaté, Bassekou
Kouyaté, more

Espace Toots
Stuckensstraat 125; 02.241.15.83
www.centrecultureldevere.be
NOV 12 20.00 Princesse Mansia Mbila and
Renaud Patigny (Congo)

Théâtre Molière
Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00
www.muziekpublieke.be
NOV 12 20.00 Ablaye Cissoko (Senegal)
NOV 13 20.00 Proyecto Sanluca
(Argentina)
NOV 17 13.00 BASTA!

VK Club
Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07
www.vkconcerts.be
NOV 11 21.00 Vieux Farka Toure

Geel

CC de Werft
Werft 32; 014.56.66.66 www.dewerft.be
NOV 12 20.30 Boban I Marko Markovic
Orkestar
NOV 17 20.15 Gerry De Mol and Lieven
Tavernier



Antwerp

Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.292.36.80
www.amuz.be
NOV 11 20.00 Zefiro Torna: Jacopo da
Bologna, Johannes Ciconia, Cristobal de
Morales, more
NOV 13 21.00 Flemish Radio Choir
conducted by Bo Holten: Pierre de la Rue,
Herbert Howells, Bo Holten
NOV 14 15.00 Il Fondamento conducted
by Paul Dombrecht: Purcell, James Paisible,
Thomas Arne, more

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 070.22.02.02
www.desingel.be
NOV 12 20.00 Flanders Opera Chorus
and Orchestra conducted by Yannis
Pouspourikas: Fauré, Poulenc
NOV 17 20.00 Blindman drums and sax

conducted by Eric Sleichim: Matthew
Wright, Eric Sleichim

Bruges

Concertgebouw
t Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
www.concertgebouw.be
NOV 10 20.00 Liber Ensemble: Niccolò
da Perugia, Lorenzo da Firenze, Francesco
Landini, more
NOV 11 20.00 Estonian
Philharmonic Chamber Choir conducted
by Daniel Reuss: Pärt, Mendelssohn,
Gallina, more (part of Baltic Festival)

Brussels

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
NOV 10 12.40 Danel Quartet: Haydn,
Beethoven
NOV 11 20.00 Private
Musique: Monteverdi, more
NOV 12
20.00 Collegium Vocale Gent conducted
by Philippe Herreweghe: Bach, Graupner
NOV 14 11.00 Ensemble Encantar: Adrian
Williaert, Richard Derring, Giovanni
Bassano, more. 20.00 London Philharmonic
Orchestra conducted by Vladimir Jurowski:
Brahms, Beethoven

De Munt
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39 www.demunt.be
NOV 10-13 20.00 De Munt Symphony
Orchestra and Men's Choir conducted by
Leo Hussain: Mozart, Cherubini

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20
www.flagey.be
NOV 13 20.15 Brussels Philharmonic
conducted by Michel Tabachnik: Mozart,
Bruckner

Minimienkerk
Minimienstraat 62; 02.511.93.84
www.minimes.net
NOV 17 20.00 Ricercar Consort conducted
by Philippe Pierlot, viola da gamba:
Sebastian Duron, Antonio de Lites, de
Alessandro Scarlatti

Royal Music Conservatory
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37
www.kcb.be

Until NOV 10 20.00 Artemis Quartett:
Beethoven
NOV 16 20.00 Martin Helmchen, piano:
Bach, Mendelssohn, Beethoven, more

St Michael and St Gudula Cathedral
Sinter-Goedeleplein; 02.507.82.00
www.cathedralemstnichel.be
NOV 13 20.00 Aude Heurtematte, organ:
Louis & François Couperin, Bach, Louis
Marchand, more

Ghent

De Bijloke
Jozef Kluysskensstraat 2 09.233.68.78
www.debijloke.be
NOV 12 20.00 Ensemble Zefiro conducted
by Alfredo Bernardini: Mozart, Rossini
NOV 13 20.00 Flanders Symphony
Orchestra conducted by Seikyo Kim:
Mozart, Schumann

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
NOV 10 20.15 I Solisti del Vento: Poulenc,
Stravinsky, Kirchner

Leuven

30CC - Wagehuys
Brusselsstraat 63; 016.23.84.27
www.30CC.be
NOV 14 11.00 La Roza Enflorese:
Sephardic music

Lemmensinstituut
Herestraat 53; 016.23.39.67
www.lemmens.be
NOV 16 20.00 Telos Ensemble conducted
by Gerard De Clercq and Luc Ponet, organ:
Glass, Hartley, Bach, more



Brussels

De Munt
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39 www.demunt.be
Until NOV 14 15.00/20.00 Janacek's Káťa
Kabanová, conducted by Leo Hussain,
staged by Andrea Breth (in Czech with
Dutch and French surtitles)

Ghent

Vlaamse Opera
Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02
www.vlaamseopera.be
NOV 14-23 15.00/20.00 Mozart's Die
Entführung aus dem Serail (The Abduction from
the Seraglio), conducted by Umberto Benedetti
Michelangeli, staged by Eike Gramss (in Spanish,
English and Arabic with Dutch surtitles)

DON'T MISS

Arrival of Sinterklaas

13 November, 13.45

Scheldekaaie, Antwerp

17 November, 13.30

Sainteletteplein-Akenkaai, Brussels

The man with the candy, gifts and oranges, Sinterklaas, arrives twice in Belgium on his steamboat – once in his old traditional stomping grounds at the Port of Antwerp and now for the third year in the Port of Brussels. If you have children, this Flemish tradition is something they'll be clamouring to see – you really can't get out of it. So in Brussels, let yourself go and take part in group singing, balloon-making clowns and performances, while in Antwerp follow the sint in the holiday parade to the Grote Markt for the annual mayoral speech, plus performances and live music. And don't forget, 6 December is Sinterklaas.

www.antwerpenlokaal.be



www.brusselsbywater.be



Antwerp

Arenbergschouwburg
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
www.arenbergschouwburg.be
NOV 16-17 20.30 Cie 13 in Oluu Agiti,
choreographed by Rosa Mei



Antwerp

De Zwarte Komedie
Leguit 15-17; 03.233.56.78
www.dezwartekomedie.be
Until NOV 13 15.00/21.00 Pieter Klink
and Katrien De Winter in Obama en
Osama (De Vrede), written and directed by
Katrien Scheir (in Dutch)

Fakkeltater Rode Zaal
Hoogstraat 12; 070.246.036
www.fakkeltater.be
Until NOV 28 15.00/20.30 Napoleon,
directed by Jan Verbist (in Dutch)

Fakkeltater Zwarte Zaal
Reynderstraat 7; 070.246.036
www.fakkeltater.be
Until NOV 13 20.30 Tableau nr. 1 in De
kleine dingen (The Little Things) by Enda
Walsh, directed by Robert Siàn (in Dutch)
Until NOV 16 20.30 Mannen komen van
Mars, Vrouwen van Venus (Men are from
Mars, Women are from Venus) by Paul
Dewandre, with Kurt Defrancq, directed by
Jan Verbist (in Dutch)

HetPaleis
Theaterplein 1; 03.202.83.11
www.hetpaleis.be
Until NOV 20 19.00 Aleksej by Frank
Adam, directed by Koen De Sutter (in
Dutch)
NOV 13-20 15.15 Het Banket in Eiland
Lucretia (Lucretia Island) (ages 10 and up;
in Dutch)

Theater aan de Stroom
Ijzerenwaag 6; 070.22.33.30
www.theateraandestroom.be
Until DEC 5 20.30 De Fluistercompagnie
in Stepping Out, directed by Walter Van de
Velde (in Dutch)

Theater aan de Stroom (kleine zaal)
Blancfloerlaan 181; 070.22.33.30
www.theateraandestroom.be
Until DEC 5 20.30 Agnes van God (Agnes
of God) by John Pielmeier, directed by Guy
Thys (in Dutch)

Toneelhuis/Bourla
Komedieplaats 18; 03.224.88.44
www.toneelhuis.be
Until NOV 25 20.00 Lampe and
Olympique Dramatique in Het litteken lip
(Scar Lip) by Pieter De Buysser (in Dutch)

Zuiderkroon
Vlaamse Kaai 81-83; 03.229.18.00
www.zuiderkroon.be
NOV 14 14.00 Deborah De Ridder in Tell
Me On a Sunday, one-woman musical by
Andrew Lloyd Webber, staged by Frank
Van Laecke (in Dutch)

Zuiderpershuis
Walse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be

Until DEC 16 20.30 Chokri Ben Chikha in
Heldendood voor de beschaving: de finale
(Heroic Death for Civilisation: The Finale)
(in Dutch)
NOV 10-11 20.30 Koning Leopolds
alleenspraak (King Leopold's Soliloquy) by
Mark Twain (in Dutch)

Brussels

Halles de Schaarbeek
Koninklijke Sint-Mariastraat 22;
02.218.21.07 www.halles.be
NOV 10-11 16.00 Cie Sweatshop in Sibling,
circus

KVS Bol
Lakensstraat 146; 02.210.11.12 www.kvs.be
Until NOV 11 20.00 Monkey Sandwich,
theatre/film by Wim Vandekeybus (in
English and German with French and
Dutch surtitles)

KVS Box
Arduinkaai 9; 02.210.11.12 www.kvs.be
NOV 13-DEC 4 15.00/20.30 De
Enthousiasten in Van Plato tot Nato (Fom
Plato to Nato) (in Dutch with French and
English surtitles)

The Warehouse Studio
Waelhemstraat 69a; 0475.59.27.03
www.shaksoc.com
Until NOV 13 20.00 Brussels Shakespeare
Society in King John, directed by Stephen
Challens (in English)

Ghent

Vooruit
Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
NOV 10-12 times vary K: A Society,
installation/performance by Kris Verdonck
and A Two Dogs Company (in Dutch)
NOV 17-18 20.00 Vivarium Studio in Big
Bang, directed by Philippe Quesne (in
French with Dutch surtitles)



Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60
www.muhka.be
Until NOV 14 Modern Dialect,
contemporary artists look at the work of late
Flemish architect Renaat Braem
Until JAN 16 Confluence and
Consequence, tapestries by British artist
Craigie Horsfield based on his own
photographs

Diamond Museum
Kon. Astridplein 19-23 (03.202.48.90
www.diamantmuseum.be
Until DEC 31 For Honour & Glory:
Treasures of Napoleon, the pomp and
splendour of Napoleon and Marie-Louise's
jewelry on the occasion of the 200th
anniversary of their arrival in Antwerp

Fashion Museum (MoMu)
Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70
www.momu.be
Until FEB 13 Stephen Jones & The Accent
of Fashion, retrospective of works by the
world-famous British hatmaker

Fotomuseum
Walse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00
www.fotomuseum.be
Until JAN 16 Boris Becker 1984-2009,
photographs by the German modernist
Until JAN 16 Willy Kessels 1930-1960,
photographs by the Flemish modernist



Baltic Festival

11-14 November
Concertgebouw, Bruges

Between 1987 and 1990, the Baltic states initiated a so-called Singing Revolution during the demonstrations that lead up to independence for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Traditional folk songs emphasised the region's shared cultural past but were banned by the Soviet regime, which lends a sense of liberation to this festival, sponsored by the Belgian presidency of the EU. Due to its exceptional quality, Baltic choral is also very popular, both at home and abroad. Here you'll find the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir presenting Mendelssohn and Arvo Pärt; Lithuania's Trys KeturiOSE

trio.be



mixing traditional polyphonic songs with experimental music and video art, weaving together past and present; the Latvian Radio Choir taking on a number of diverse pieces, including John Cage's "Four2" and Kaija Saara's "Tag des Jahrs"; and Latvian violinist Baiba Skride, who won the Queen Elisabeth Competition in 2001.

www.concertgebouw.be

Belgium is supporting a host of events during its presidency of the European Union. Each week, we highlight one. For more, visit www.eutrio.be

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09
www.kmska.be
Until DEC 5 MOOI: Over kwetsbare schoonheid (BEAUTIFUL: On Fragile Beauty), works by 12 artists, including Jan Fabre, Wim Delvoye and David Claerbout, on the definition of beauty (for kids ages 9-12)
Until JAN 23 Anselm Kiefer, works by the contemporary German artist

Bruges

Bruggemuseum-Gruuthuse
Dijver 17; 050.44.87.11
www.museabrugge.be
Until JAN 9 The invention of Bruges: The City of Delacenserie, projects and restorations by 19th-century city architect Louis Delacenserie

De Bond

Buiten Smedenvest 1; 050.44.30.40
www.cbbrugge.be
Until NOV 28 Exhibition Models, installations on the question of identity by Teheran-born artist Chohreh Feyzjou, Benin artist Meschac Gaba and Flemish artist Wesley Meuris

Groeningemuseum

Dijver 12; 050.44.87.43
Until JAN 30 Van Eyck tot Dürer, paintings by Flemish Primitives paired with work by painters from Central Europe who were directly influenced by the Primitives (Part of Brugge Centraal)

Brussels

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
Until NOV 28 Belge 3 fois/3 keer Belgisch, drawings and installations by French artist Catherine Van den Steen illustrating her impressions of Brussels, Antwerp and Liège
Until JAN 23 Gilbert & George: Jack Freak Pictures, major exhibition of the Italian-British artist duo's stylised photographs with British flag iconography
Until JAN 23 The World of Lucas Cranach, work by the leading figure of the German

WEEK IN FILM

LISA BRADSHAW



Sint

Across Brussels and Flanders

If welcoming Sinterklaas and a gaggle of Zwarte Piets into Brussels' or Antwerp's harbour this month isn't really your thing, perhaps you'd be more interested in a slasher flick starring the sint. From the Netherlands comes this most creative tale of the mediaeval bishop known as Saint Nick, who, far from the saintly gift-giver of lore, actually leads a blood-thirsty gang into local villages, burning, pillaging and, in fact, murdering children. Brrrrr. Apparently, the damnable group comes back from the dead when it is a full moon on 5 December. It's wholesome Dutch youth against an unsavoury sint in the ultimate showdown of the holiday season. "Week in film" has not yet seen the movie but is very much looking forward to it, while keeping in mind that, like her Kinopolis popcorn warmed by fluorescent lights, it is a must-do that is in very, very poor taste.

→ www.sintdefilm.com

Renaissance that places him in the artistic context of his time
Until FEB 13 Ensor: Composer and Writer, autographs, publications, documents and photographs by the Flemish Surrealist master James Ensor

ING Cultural Centre

Koningsplein 6; 02.507.82.00 www.bozar.be
Until FEB 13 Ensor Revealed, drawings and paintings illustrate the imaginary and artistic evolution of the Ostend artist on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of his birth

Museum van Elsene

Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.22
www.museumvanelsene.be
Until JAN 16 Paul Delvaux: Starting Points, paintings by the Belgian surrealist shown alongside works by artists who influenced him
Until JAN 16 From Dürer to Jan Fabre: Masterpieces, paintings from the museum's collection including 19th- and 20th-century works by Ensor, Toulouse-Lautrec, Picasso, Miró, more

Pavillon Rodin

Auguste Rodinlaan 8; 02.347.44.68
www.maisonbejarthuis.be
Until NOV 22 Maurice Béjart, parcours libre: Décors et Costumes, works by international designers and artists who have collaborated with the late choreographer Maurice Béjart

Royal Museum of the Armed Forces

Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33
www.legermuseum.be
Until NOV 30 Crazy Flying Machines, drawings by Belgian illustrator Jean Leclercqz

Royal Museums of Art and History

Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11
www.kmkg-mrah.be
Until NOV 30 The Etruscans in Europe, multimedia tour of the Etruscan civilisation from their conquest of Italy to the rest of Europe

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapstraat 3; 02.508.32.11
www.fine-arts-museum.be
Until NOV 28 Javier Marín: De 3 en 3, urban installation by the Mexican sculptor
Until JAN 9 From Delacroix to Kandinsky, Orientalism in Europe, European Orientalist art during the 19th century with paintings, drawings and sculpture
Until FEB 6 Jules Schmalzigaug: A Futurist Belgian, retrospective of paintings by the only Belgian artist involved in the Italian futurist movement before the First World War
Until FEB 6 Reinhoud, tribute to the Belgian sculptor and graphic artist, member of the CoBrA movement, who died in 2007

Tour & Taxis

Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49
www.tour-taxis.com
Until NOV 14 Morocco & Europe: Six Centuries in the Glance of the Other, the 600-year history of immigration and commercial and political relations between Morocco and Europe
Until DEC 5 Art in All of Us, photos from an around-the-world trip by Anthony Asaël and Stéphanie Rabemialafara
www.artinalllofus.be
Until MAY 9 America: It's Also Our History, three centuries of cross-Atlantic relations with frescoes, charts, audiovisual material, installations, objects and artwork

WIELS

Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.340.00.50
www.wiels.org
Until JAN 30 Francis Alijs: A Story of Deception, installations, paintings, drawings, and documents by the Mexico-based Flemish artist

Ghent

Dr Guislain Museum
Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95
www.museumdrguislain.be
Until JAN 27 Bobby Baker Diary Drawings: Mental Illness and Me, more than 150 drawings by the British performance artist illustrate her 10-year journey through psychiatric institutions
Until MAY 8 The Weighty Body: Of Fat and Thin, Perfect or Deranged, a history of fasting for personal, esthetic, religious or economic reasons

Museum of Modern Art (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03 www.smak.be
Until NOV 21 Tegenlicht (Backlight), young visual artists and writers confront famous artists from the literary, arts and music scene
Until DEC 3 Inside Installations, 10 installations from the museum's collection
Until FEB 27 Hareng Saur: Ensor and Contemporary Art, a highlight of the continuing contemporary aspect of work by James Ensor, shown with work by international contemporary artists

Stadsmuseum Gent (STAM)

Bijloke - Godshuizenlaan 2; 09.269.87.90
www.stamgent.be
Until MAY 1 Enlightened City, an examination of how light affects a city through diaries, models, paintings, photographs and installations

Hasselt

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

z33

Zuivelmarkt 33; 011.29.59.60 www.z33.be
Until DEC 12 David Huycke: Re-thinking granulation, sculptures by the Flemish silver designer
Until DEC 12 Toegepast (Applied), works by students selected from Belgian and Dutch design academies

Kasterlee

Frans Masereel Centre
Zaardendijk 20; 014.85.22.50
www.fransmasereelcentrum.be
Until NOV 30 Reunalla/Aan de grens, contemporary Finnish lithography

Knokke-Heist

Cultuurcentrum Scharpoord
Meerlaan 32; 050.630.430
www.congocollectie.be
Until JAN 16 Congo Collection, Congolese sculptures and masks

Kortrijk

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

Leuven

Centrale Bibliotheek
Ladeuzeplein 21; 016.32.46.60
http://bib.kuleuven.be
Until NOV 30 De slaap neemt geen plaats in (Sleep Occupies No Space), photographs, paintings, collages and video on street children in Kinshasa by Flemish photographer and anthropologist Kristien Geenen

Museum M

Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28; 016.27.29.29
www.mleuven.be
Until DEC 5 The Anjou Bible: A Royal Manuscript Revealed, a rare manuscript from the 14th-century court of Naples
Until DEC 5 Matthew Brannon, lithographs and screenprints by the American artist
Until JAN 16 Robert Devriendt: Victimes de la Passion, paintings by the Flemish artist
Until JAN 23 Mayombe: Meesters van de magie (Master of Magic), sculptures and objects from the Congolese collection of the Catholic University of Leuven

Tervuren

Royal Museum for Central Africa
Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11
www.africamuseum.be
Until JAN 9 Congo River: 4,700 Kilometres Bursting with Nature and Culture, interactive exhibition on the lifeblood of Congo, from source to mouth
Until JAN 9 100 Years in 100 Photographs, outdoor exhibition celebrating the 100th anniversary of the African Museum building
Until JAN 9 Indépendance! Congolese Tell Their Stories of 50 Years of Independence, multi-media exhibition looks at the Democratic Republic of Congo from independence to today
Until JAN 9 Congo belge en images, photographs by Carl Dekeyser and Johan Lagae



Opera in the Cinema: Opera from the Met in New York live via satellite on the big screen. This week: Don Pasquale
Until MAY 14 in Kinopolis cinemas across Belgium
www.kinopolis.com/opera

Week van de Smaak: Fifth edition of the Week of Taste with more than 1,200 culinary activities
NOV 11-21 across Brussels and Flanders
www.weekvandesmaak.be

Antwerp

Boekenbeurs: Flanders' largest book fair with dozens of author appearances and thousands of new books for sale
Until NOV 11 10.00-18.00 at Antwerp Expo, Jan Van Rijswijklaan 191
03.260.81.20, www.boekenbeurs.be

International Cat Show: Pure-bred cat show and prize competition
NOV 14 10.00-17.00 at Antwerp Expo, Jan Van Rijswijklaan 191
03.260.81.20, www.bcfvzw.be

Rommelant: Antique and second-hand fair
NOV 13-14 10.00-18.00 at Antwerp Expo, Jan Van Rijswijklaan 191
03.260.81.20, www.rommelant.be

Bruges

Brrr...uges: Open-air concerts, films, performances and more
NOV 15-DEC 22 11.00-20.00 in and around Arentshof
www.bruggeplus.be

Brugge Centraal: Festival celebrating the art and culture of Central Europe, with dance, theatre, music, literature, film and major exhibitions
Until JAN 30 across Bruges
www.bruggecentraal.be

Brussels

Dreams of the Far East: Talk on the history and collection of the Chinese Pavilion in Laken, organised by BRIDFAS (British Decorative and Fine Arts Society of Brussels)
NOV 10 20.00 at Town Hall, Paul Hymanslaan 2, Sint-Lambrechts-Woluwe
02.782.16.12, www.bridfas.org

J L Morin: The American author presents her book Sazzae, and Harvard Square Editions' Voice from the Planet: An Anthology of Living Fiction (in English)
NOV 11 19.00 at Waterstone's, Adolphe Maxlaan 71-75
02.219.27.08, www.harvardsquareeditions.org

Jetherfst: Contemporary dance festival with works created at the Jette Dance Centre
Until NOV 14 at Jette Dance Centre and other venues across Brussels
www.danscentrumjette.be

Museum Nocturnes: Brussels' museums open late, plus guided tours and special events
Until DEC 16 on Thursdays, across the city
http://nocturnes.brusselsmuseums.be

Norway Now: Festival of contemporary Norwegian culture with classical and pop music, literature, architecture, film and graphic design
Until MAY 24 across Brussels
www.abconcerts.be

Proud of Belgium and Proud To Be So: Debate on ideal(ised) images of Belgium with art historian Elsbeth Etty, state minister Marc Eyskens and editors from newspapers Le Soir and De Wereld Morgen (in French, Dutch and English with simultaneous translation)
NOV 10 20.15 at Flagey, Heilig Kruisplein
Reservation recommended:
info@deburen.eu, 02.212.19.30

Skoda Jazz: The 25th edition of this international jazz festival features an all-star line-up, including Herbie Hancock, Toots Thielemans, Philip Catherine, Lady Linn, more
Until NOV 30 across Brussels
www.skodajazz.be

Genk

C-mine Jazz: Festival featuring Hamid Drake & Bindu, Andy Middleton Quartet, Nicolas Kummert, more
NOV 12-13 at C-Mine Cultural Centre, C-Mine 10
www.cminezjazz.com

Ghent

I Love Techno: 15th annual music festival, featuring the world's leading DJs
NOV 13 19.00-7.00 at Flanders Expo, Maaltekoeter 1
www.ilovetechno.be

Uitgelezen: Panel discussion of Haruki Murakami's recent novel 1q84, with actress Barbara Sarafian and lawyer Walter Van Steenbrugge (in Dutch)
NOV 16 20.00 at Vooruit, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23
0900.26.060, www.vooruit.be

CAFE SPOTLIGHT

ROBYN BOYLE



Backdoor "Rock On" Café

Sint-Amandstraat 26, Ghent

I've walked right by this corner pub many times for years, passing it off as just another student cafe, due to its location in the student area of Ghent. But one evening some friends insisted on going, so I followed. Backdoor is now one of my favourite hangouts, a place I can always count on for quality beer and classic rock. The pub's name makes a reference to the blues song by Willie Dixon, "Back Door Man", the lyrics of which are printed on the inside of the menu. Looking around, the place is filled with tips of the hat to rock 'n' roll – posters of legends like Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison, old records, guitars and the centrepiece: a Triumph classic motorcycle seemingly floating between the cafe's two levels. A vast collection of whisk(e)y lines the shelves behind the bar, almost as impressive as the thousands of stacked CDs. For the rest, it's a genuine brown pub – dim-lit and smoky, with wooden floors, tables and chairs. I tend to sit in the same spot whenever possible – the far left corner on the ground floor, because it's cosy and you have a nice overall view of the place. Only recently did I notice the Michigan automobile license plate on the wall above my head – my home state! In fact, there are American auto plates everywhere. But the real reason I come here (besides feeling homesick) is for their beer. There must be a dozen on tap, from rather obscure Belgians like Malheur, Piraat and Augustijn, to real Irish classics like Guinness and Magners Cider. I don't recognise a good many of the bottled beers listed, and there's no explanation provided, so it's always a fun gamble to place an order (which must be done at the bar, by the way; no table service). "One, uh, Bieken, and one Bel... Belgoo Magus, please." But I have yet to be disappointed.

ROBYN BOYLE

bite



Expatatas

Farmers in the High Andes began cultivating them as early as 10,000 years ago; Europeans have only known about them for some 300 years. Since first being introduced to this continent by Spanish explorers, potatoes were a crop that was largely ignored for centuries until people finally started to realise their infinite value – rugged, inexpensive and nutritious.

Within a short period of time, the humble tubers grew to become the European continent's most widespread and versatile food source. And every country has their own beloved way of preparing them.

"Potatoes bind Europeans together; they are eaten everywhere," Flemish culinary journalist Tine Bral explains. "In Southern Europe they are served mostly as a side, just as vegetables are, but in the rest of Europe they are the central ingredient in a variety of dishes."

For Expatatas, an initiative within Week van de Smaak (Week of Taste), which launches today, Bral spoke with 17 interesting expats living in Brussels and Flanders – from restaurant chefs to ambassadors to presidents of local clubs – to find out their favourite potato dish. Then she got them to share the recipes, all of which you can find on the project's website.

Most striking about the dishes, considering that all are based on the same simple ingredient, is their great diversity. They range from the complex and refined "oxtail *parmentier* with *foie gras* and leek ash" of French chef Julien Burlat (pictured) to the wonderfully straightforward "potatoes with sea salt and olive oil" from Portuguese author Jorge Tavares da Silva.

Then there's the favourite British comfort food cottage pie, an oven dish filled with minced meat and a mashed potato crust. Or hearty Bulgarian

potato soup, which incorporates creamy feta cheese and thin strands of vermicelli.

Eastern Europe is quite fond of potato pancakes, particularly in Poland, and Polish culture ambassador Eliza Reis-Kawka offers her version of these thin and crunchy discs, served alongside chunks of stewed pork (an ideal textural contrast). In Romania as well, potatoes can be made into a sort of cookie, either sweet or savoury. For the latter version, Florinela Petcu of Romanian culture organisation Miorita Petcu grates raw potatoes and mixes them with minced beef and spices, then pats flat and bakes to a crisp.

Despite the prominence of pasta in Italian cuisine, one *primo piatto* (first dish) from Northern Italy stands out because it is the only one made with potatoes. I think Gnocchi – soft, thick little dumplings – are best when served under a simple, fresh tomato sauce, but many – including Giancarlo Marcheggiano, director of the European School in Mol – prefers them with a meat-and-veggie ragù.

In Malta, they like to slow cook their potatoes in a pot filled with alternating layers of onion rings and pork chops, seasoned to taste with garlic, salt, pepper, cumin and a generous amount of olive oil. Far away in Hungary they also like to cook slowly, a dish called *krumpl*: stewed potatoes, sausage, bacon, garlic, onion, cumin and plenty of paprika, traditionally prepared outside in a hanging cauldron over a smouldering fire.

Of course Belgium is the leader when it comes to fries and, though no expat, this year's Week van de Smaak patron, Flemish chef Wouter Keersmaekers, offers the perfect recipe for getting those *frietjes* just right.

→ www.expatatas.be

Contact Bite at flandersbite@gmail.com

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



'zwijgen'

One of the mysteries of language is the verbs, and in particular the irregular verbs. Why is the past of take "took" and not "taked"? Why are verbs at one time regular and a couple of centuries later irregular?

To add to the puzzle, why is the verb "help" regular in English and Swedish but irregular in German and Dutch? I ask these questions confident that no one can give an answer. These verbs seem to have a life of their own.

Certainly, you know you're making progress in a language when you start to master the irregulars. One such in Dutch is the verb *zwijgen* – to be silent, which has been much used in the news recently to describe those who made matters worse by talking: *hij had beter gezwegen* – he should have kept silent.

Of course, in some circumstances people impute meaning to silence: *wie zwijgt, stemt toe* – silence lends consent ("he who stays silent, agrees"). But if someone knows how to wisely say nothing, you would say *zij zweeg in alle talen* – she kept mum ("she was silent in all languages").

Since the linguistic traffic was from Dutch to English in the past, English speakers can try to tie in Dutch irregular verbs to English ones: *winnen* – win, *won* – won, *heeft gewonnen* – has won. But often the vocalic parts trip you up: *drinken* and

drink are both irregular but drank is *dronk* and has drunk is *heeft gedronken*.

You have to be imaginative to link up *rijden* – ride and *reed* – rode and *gereden* – ridden. Some give an insight into how English was pronounced long ago: *brennen* means bring and the past is *bracht* – brought. Centuries ago, brought sounded much more like *bracht* than it does today.

Sometimes it looks as if English has pinched one part of the Dutch verb and used it in its own way: take *slapen* – sleep; the past is *sliep* – slept. The verb *zeggen* seems to dither: it has two forms of the past: *hij zei* / *hij zegde* – he said.

As for the most common of verbs *komen* and *gaan*, come and go, some surprises await. The past of *komen* is *kwam* – came, but what happened to the w in English? More predictably, "he has come" translates as *hij is gekomen*.

The verb *gaan* – go – has the past form *ging*, which is reminiscent of the form of gang in Scots and whose place has been usurped by a past form of *wend*, went!

Some of these verbs can be grouped, as they change in the same way. So if you know the parts of *zwijgen*, you can feel at ease with *snijden* – cut, *splijten* – split, *schrijven* – write, *blijven* – stay, and *blijken* – appear.

Nu moet ik zwijgen – time to shut up.

THE LAST WORD...

Going it alone

"A kilometre charge [for trucks on Flanders' roads] can be brought in perfectly easily without the agreement of the Netherlands. Cooperation is desirable, but not essential."

Flemish mobility minister Hilde Crevits

Age no limit

"It's pleasant to have everyone know you. How else would you still get children waving to an old lady?"

Denise De Zutter, 90, from Mariakerke, who is the country's oldest member of Chiro, the Christian scouting organisation

Smart talk

"With the heavy hitters who are taking part, I won't be staying in for long."

Bart De Wever, leader of the Flemish nationalists N-VA, who has decided to take part in an all-star version of the TV quiz show *De slimste mens*

No change

"Young women don't need to panic. In fact, they should be dancing on the tables."

Peter Quaghebeur, director of media group VMMA, which just bought TV station Vitaya, a channel marketed to young women

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #156

Science

We talk to the Flemish researcher who hunts meteorites in the Antarctic

Arts

The massive Brugge Centraal festival features two cornerstone exhibitions; we take a look at them in the next two issues of Flanders Today. First up: Luc Tuymans: A Vision of Central Europe

Active

Come along with us to Spain, dear reader, as we check out the country that is stealing the show during Week van de Smaak