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# Year in 10



Come along with us, as we visit the best (and maybe a little of the worst) of 2010

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### Anderlecht clings on to Europa League

LEO CENDROWICZ

Anderlecht made a dramatic recovery last week to claim a place in the next stage of the Europa League, where they will meet Amsterdam club Ajax. Going into the last group match three points behind their nearest rivals, Anderlecht defeated Croatian side Hajduk Split 2-0 to leap into second place on goal difference in Group G. That put them above AEK Athens, which lost at home to group winner Zenit St Petersburg 3-0.

The *paars-wit* are the only Belgian side left in European competition, after Gent –needing only a draw to go through – made a fiasco of their final game, losing 3-0 against main rivals Lille. Club Brugge, meanwhile, had long ago been ruled out, winning only three points in their six games and ending at the bottom of their group.

 ➤ [www.uefa.com](http://www.uefa.com)

### Belgium faces credit downgrade

Ratings agency gives country six months to shape up

ALAN HOPE

Belgium could be faced with a downgrading of the rating of its credit-worthiness from "stable" to "negative", one of the world's leading ratings agencies warned last week. According to Standard & Poor, negotiations to form a new government, now six months under way, are creating a climate of instability around government financing, which could lead to rises in interest rates.

Were it not for "strong and competent institutions at regional and federal level," S&P said, a downgrade might already have taken place. In the absence of a new government, the current rating has at most six months to run. If a new government is formed, the agency promises to review the rating in two years. Any downgrade could also have an effect on Flanders' own rating, currently, like the federal state, standing at AA+.

Acting prime minister Yves Leterme said that there was nothing new in the report and no reason for concern or panic. "The report confirms that our economic fundamentals are good and

that the overall economic situation in the country is also good," he said. However, the markets reacted differently, pushing the 10-year interest rate on state bonds up nine base points to 4.09%, making it more expensive for Belgium to get credit on the market.

Another victim of the failure to form a new government could be the railways, as S&P threatened to lower the ratings of both Infrabel, the state-owned company that owns the rail infrastructure, and the rail operator NMBS. The telecom operator Belgacom, which is 51% state-owned, faces a similar prospect. Any rating downgrade would affect the ability of the companies involved to raise money on the capital markets for investment.

 ➤ *continued on page 3*

### Cold comfort



If you were looking for an excuse for staying at home on these blizzardy winter mornings, here it is, from the government's own flu commissar: the workplace is just about the best place you can find for getting sick. Last week, we reported Professor Marc Van Ranst's warning that the flu virus H1N1 is making a comeback. This week we can reveal the best way to avoid it: don't go to work.

According to Van Ranst, you'd have less chance of getting sick rolling around in the snow in a T-shirt than by borrowing a pen from a co-worker, and as for that typical Belgian habit of touring the office shaking hands with everyone when you arrive, well that's almost suicidal.

Writing in the magazine of the employment and training agency VDAB, Van Ranst explains that the peak season for colds and flu is September to April. Parents will be familiar with the phenomenon of the back-to-school cold, when after a summer of running around outside, kids are once more penned up in the classroom just as the cold season is beginning.

While cold symptoms may only last a few days, the period during which you're infectious lasts about two weeks.

Meanwhile, according to an article in *Jobat* magazine, it doesn't help that we turn up the heating in weather like this. Both the lack of fresh air and higher temperatures help infections breed.

The law on workplace health and safety lays down minimum temperatures. If you're involved in heavy labour, you only need the thermostat at 12 degrees.

For light work, the minimum is 18 degrees, and for very light work, which includes most office tasks, 20 degrees. Perfect for a growing virus.

All it takes, a BBC web page explains, is about a dozen viruses to achieve infection, and they usually come from direct contact: you touch your nose or cover your mouth with your hand when you cough, and then deposit the viruses on the keyboard, phone, door handle. The advice is: use a paper handkerchief, and throw it away afterwards. Wash your hands frequently and keep personal contact to a minimum. Better still: stay at home and keep your disease to yourself. See you in April.

**Along with most of the rest of you, Flanders Today is taking a bit of a holiday. We'll back in your mailbox on 12 January**

**Happy holidays from all of us to all of you!**

## FLANDERS TODAY

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Get the news from Flanders online in English and French at [www.flanderstoday.eu](http://www.flanderstoday.eu)



FLANDERS TODAY  
DECEMBER 22, 2010

## News in brief

One of three men held in connection with a **triple murder in Wemmel** last month has admitted firing the shots that severely wounded the girlfriend of one of the murder victims. The girl was left for dead, but immediately raised the alarm after the shootings, as well as giving police a detailed description of one of the killers.

Passengers using Base and Mobistar mobile phone networks will now be able to buy **tickets by SMS** for journeys with Flemish public transport authority De Lijn. The system, which requires users to SMS the letters DL to 4884, has been available to Proximus clients since 2007, with 1.3 million tickets already sold. The SMS-ticket costs €1.30 compared to €2.00 when bought from the driver.

The Brussels transport network MIVB will provide **free public transport on New Year's Eve** from midnight, with the Noctis bus network running from midnight to 5.00, and the metro until 3.30. Trams 3, 33, 92 and 94 will also run after midnight.

Jasiri, an eight-year-old **bonobo** in **Planckendael** animal park, just outside of Mechelen, has died following a severe cold. Jasiri's death will affect the park's breeding programme. Another bonobo, the male Vifijo, was also sick but appears to be recovering. Planckendael now has a group of seven bonobos, who are being carefully monitored by vets.

The city of Brussels has reminded its residents of a **ban on most fireworks** being set off within the city limits, even within private gardens. The ban mainly concerns rockets and bangers, which may be sold but not set off. Other municipal authorities have their own rules.

Jean Lambrechts, the father of Eefje, one of the **victims of Belgian serial killer Marc Dutroux**, has donated his personal archive of the case to the city of Hasselt, where the family lives. The collection consists of a book of condolence cards, photos and other documents. Eefje was kidnapped together with her friend An Marchal in Ostend in August 1995, the only time Dutroux ever struck in Flanders. Their bodies were discovered in September 1996.

The federal government last week confirmed the construction of a **new prison in Haren**, on the outskirts of Brussels. The new prison, intended to relieve some of the overcrowding in Vorst and Sint-Gillis, as well as the women's prison in Berkendaal, will have space for 1,190 male and female prisoners. It should be ready by 2016.

The **body of a woman** who appears to have died in "suspicious circumstances" was last week discovered in Ostend – not by police, but by archaeologists. The woman has been dead for about 400 years and was possibly killed by marauding

Spanish soldiers who overran her family farm.

An **Aston Martin** once owned by the late King Boudewijn will go up for sale through Bonhams' auction house in Paris in February. The 1955 DB2/4 Sports Saloon has a pre-sale estimate price of €200,000-€240,000. The car was described at the time as "an expensive car designed to cater for the connoisseur of sports cars who is not limited by financial considerations", and was one of several fast cars owned by the king.

Flanders' favourite football losers are no more. Last week, filming ended on the **last-ever series of FC De Kampioenen**, a VRT sitcom that has run for 21 years. The final episode will be broadcast in February.

The VTM police series **Code 37** will be remade in English by a Canadian production company. The gritty Ghent-based series stars Veerle Baetens and has picked up nominations for international awards. The English-language version is destined for the North American market. *Code 37* refers to the article of the criminal code dealing with sexual crimes.

## FACE OF FLANDERS

### Timicheg

It's horrific to think of it now, but in 1913 it wasn't considered at all unusual to display foreigners as exotic exhibitions. That's what brought an Igorot tribesman from the Cordillera region of the Philippines to Ghent to take part in the city's 1913 World Fair.

Timicheg was one of about 50 Igorots brought together by an American impresario to tour the world and show off their tribal ways. Ghent's exposition on their tour, which had already taken them to Paris, Brussels, London and Amsterdam. For Timicheg, it was the last.

The Filipino Exhibition Company was described last week as "a colonial freak show" by Andre Capiteyn of the Ghent city archive. "Their self-made Igorot village was a major attraction: the Indians sat there half-naked weaving baskets, pounding rice, carving woodcuts and playing gong music, and once in a while they would perform war dances or hold competitions in spear throwing or tree climbing. If they got cold, they would make a fire by rubbing bamboo sticks together."

But for Timicheg, exposure to the West was to prove fatal. In August of that year he died of tuberculosis, then a common disease in Europe, but unknown in his native region. His fellow villagers keened and wailed to keep evil spirits from troubling his departed soul.

Timicheg was buried in a cemetery in Ghent, and there he remained forgotten until last week, when the Street Names Committee of the city archive decided to name a new passageway after him – the Timicheg Tunnel, which joins Sint-Denijslaan and Koningin Fabiolaalaan as part of the Gent-Sint-Pieters redevelopment project.

The tunnel allows pedestrians and cyclists to pass under the railway tracks near Gent-Sint-Pieters



station (cars will be allowed from 2015). Ghent mayor Daniel Termont and others were said to have opposed the naming, but the committee held firm. "Several street names in the area refer to prominent *Gentenaars* who made fortunes out of the world exposition in 1913," said Capiteyn. "Can we be allowed therefore to give one of the streets the name of a little man who lost his life there in miserable circumstances?"

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

## Worth the wait

Renovations to Antwerp's Fine Arts Museum will take three years longer than estimated. Work on the 19th-century building will be completed in 2017



FLANDERS TODAY  
DECEMBER 22, 2010

## Markets react to announcement, while Leterme advises calm

continued from page 1

The Belgian economy is recovering from the global recession, but the upturn is threatened by market turbulence in the euro zone, according to the International Monetary Fund, which last week published its annual report on Belgium.

Economic growth in 2010 was of the order of 2%, slightly above the euro zone average. The growth was largely due to export trade, which led to an improved trade balance and to the build-up of reserves. The employment market, in addition, is growing faster than unemployment. It also acknowledges that the deficit has

been brought down from 6% of GDP last year to 4.8% now, while debt has grown less quickly than anticipated.

"Belgium had a strong track record of public debt reduction prior to the global financial crisis, high household savings and a strong external position," reads the report. "Nevertheless, the country has been affected by the recent turbulence on financial markets as evidenced by higher interest rate spreads. Financial market concerns about sovereign risks in the euro area, Belgium's high public debt and political uncertainty could dampen confidence, increase financing costs for the economy and undermine the recovery."

Leterme commented: "The IMF



Leterme: "Moving in the right direction"

confirms that the economic results of our country are better than the European average. That means we

made the right choices in recent years and are moving in the right direction."♦

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES



### 10,839,905

inhabitants of Belgium, measured at the beginning of 2010 by the government's general statistics directorate. Flanders accounted for 6,251,983 people (or 57.7% of the total), with 3,498,384 in Wallonia and 1,089,538 in Brussels

### 2,263

Belgians have made a declaration of laundered money in foreign bank accounts to the tax authorities this year, representing a total of €669 million. Banks are now exchanging more information across borders, making the chance of detection greater. Declarations are made, and tax paid on the sums in question, to avoid prosecution

### 46

children failed a language test for admission to Dutch-speaking schools, out of a total of 348 tested. The test is applicable to children from homes where no Dutch is spoken and who have not attended a minimum of 220 half-days in a Dutch-speaking pre-school

### 4/10

environmental offences in Flanders go unprosecuted, according to the latest report from the environmental management agency. The figure, though, has dropped nearly 20%, as offences can now be passed directly to the environment administration, which has the power to levy fines without going through the courts

## Deepening of Westerschelde complete

The port of Antwerp, together with minister-president Kris Peeters and waterways minister Hilde Crevits, last week announced the completion of the dredging in the Westerschelde channel of the Scheldt river. The dredging to deepen the channel at 12 crucial points now allows the new generation of large container ships to navigate all the way from the North Sea to Antwerp, regardless of tides.

The completion of dredging brings to an end a thorny question of relations between Flanders and

the Netherlands. Very little of the channel consists of Belgian waters, and Dutch approval was required to deepen the major part, from the border all the way to the Breskens-Vlissingen crossing.

The Flemish government signed a treaty agreement with the Dutch, but a Dutch court suspended a plan to de-polderise parts of the land along the channel in Zeeland province, a plan opposed by some nature conservancy organisations. The issue gave rise to hard feelings, as it was seen by some as

a move to hamper the ability of the port of Antwerp to compete with Rotterdam. Then the new Dutch government of Mark Rutte came into power and appeared to be on the verge of abandoning the whole treaty.

In the end, though, the work went ahead. Though the question of the polders is still to be solved. The dredging involved the removal of 7.7 million cubic metres of sand and cost €100 million, shared between the two governments. ♦

## Police mistakes in Van UytSEL murder case

Police investigating the murder of Diest teenager Annick Van UytSEL in 2007 made serious errors, which ensured the man accused of the crime, Ronald Janssen, was able to murder at least two other people, the police oversight committee has reported.

Janssen was arrested for the murder of a young couple – Shana Appeltans and Kevin Paulus – who lived near him in Loksbergen, Flemish Brabant, on the night of 1 January, 2010. Police then found links to the murder of Annick, and Janssen confessed to her murder.

It has since emerged that Janssen was identified as a serious suspect in the Van UytSEL case long before. According to a local police officer in Herk-De-Stad, Janssen had been seen acting in a predatory manner at dance clubs in Diest and had been accused by a former girlfriend of rape. He also lived directly under the mobile phone mast where investigators had traced the last phone call made by Annick. But nothing, the report says, was done with this tip. Justice minister Stefaan De Clerck, who ordered the report, reacted furiously to the revelations, not

all of which have yet been made public. "The police failed in their organisation, methodology and their treatment of information," he said. "The anger of the past comes once more to the surface."

De Clerck was also minister of justice at the time the crimes of Charleroi killer Marc Dutroux came to light, after which it was revealed that police had ignored similar evidence against Dutroux, who killed four girls and kidnapped two others. ♦



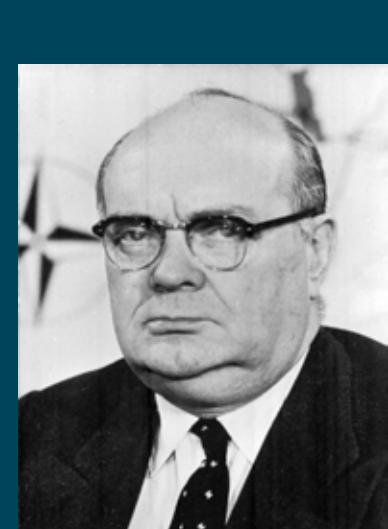
trio.be

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

The history of Belgium's relations with Europe from 1945 to the present is the subject of a new section of the online library known as the CVCE – the Virtual Resource Centre for Information about Europe – to mark this country's presidency of the EU, now drawing to a close.

The new portfolio contains historic documents, many previously unpublished, together with interviews with prominent figures involved in European-Belgian relations since the end of the Second World War.

www.cvce.eu



Former Belgian prime minister Paul-Henri Spaak, one of the architects of the EU

## FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

### Human feelings

The formation of the federal government has been dragging on for so long that it is hard to see how a breakthrough could still be possible. Still, a new element popped up recently: human feelings.

In the past, major agreements between the language communities of this country were forged in hidden-away castles. The negotiators from those days spoke of a sense of complicity between them. As the weeks passed, they came to appreciate each other's personalities, as well as tastes in music and drinks (whisky sometimes being an essential factor in the talks).

This resulted in a kind of tunnel vision: the negotiators came up with an agreement that the outside world found ugly, but was the only possible outcome for everyone involved. These agreements never won beauty prizes, but, hey, this is Belgium. They did the trick for a while – and then a new agreement would have to be found.

This time around, the negotiations of the past three years have been described as a battlefield of human relationships. Statements made off-the-record show that the politicians around the table still view each other as adversaries – as well as caricatures. Elio Di Rupo (PS) is effeminate and hysterical, while Bart De Wever (N-VA) is a fascist, and a coarse one to boot. So much for a sense of complicity.

Still, something seems to have changed. De Wever gave an interview to the German weekly *Der Spiegel*, calling Belgium the "sick man of Europe" and causing predictable outrage. In the Flemish press, the master of biting humour showed his more sensitive side. "Looking back on the past 10 years, I see nothing but meeting rooms and tasteless sandwiches," De Wever said in *Het Laatste Nieuws*. "Are those the best years of my life?"

He had even come to appreciate his main adversary, Di Rupo. A gentleman, he calls him – someone who can only be admired, given his life story. Three years ago, De Wever's N-VA campaigned against the "bow-tying" of Flanders, a reference to Di Rupo's signature neckwear. Knowing what I do now, I would never do that again, De Wever says.

The critical illness of mediator Johan Vande Lanotte's mother, which seemed to have moved De Wever, too, has led to some delays in the talks. By now, no-one minds. Maybe the Christmas spirit will further soften up the negotiators. That way, something good might come out of De Wever's past 10 years after all.



## Person of the Year

Marleen Temmerman



Flemish author, senator, gynaecologist and international women's advocate Marleen Temmerman this year saw her formidable reputation confirmed when the prestigious *British Medical Journal* awarded her its Lifetime Achievement Award. It comes partly because she's head of ob-gyn at Ghent University Hospital, but largely from her work at the International Centre for Reproductive Health (ICRH), which she founded and which fights to bring health care to women in the developing world. "Winning this prize means a lot to me because it is a recognition of our work – not only its scientific worth but also the importance of combining science, social values and responsibility," she said. This year also saw the publication of her book on violence against women, co-written with Els Leye, called *Vrouwen onder druk* (Women Under Pressure). **Alan Hope**

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

## Company of the Year

Belwind



Last year was tough for most businesses, and saw the collapse of about 10,000 companies across Belgium. Belwind, however, closed the year in style with the opening of its off-shore wind turbine farm on the Blighbank, 50km out to sea, the farthest out of any European wind farm. The biggest Belgian wind farm, Belwind consists of 55 turbines producing 165 megawatts – enough electricity for 175,000 homes. And the company plans to go even further. According to chief executive Frank Coenen, financing should be arranged in the spring to double that capacity, for a total investment of some €1.3 billion. **AH**

→ [www.belwind.eu](http://www.belwind.eu)

## Scientist of the Year

Peter Carmeliet



For Peter Carmeliet, November was an excellent month and the perfect way to

top off his year. First it was announced that his research – he is head of the Vesalius Research Centre at the Catholic University of Leuven – was to be one of five projects given grants worth a total of €2.5 million from the European Research Council. Carmeliet studies the supply of energy to blood vessels, work which has implications for new ways of treating tumours. He was subsequently awarded one of the five annual "Flemish Nobel Prizes", as the prize for excellence from the Fund for Scientific Research is known. This was announced in July, but the prize was handed over by the king just last month. Carmeliet now occupies a position at the pinnacle of world-wide medical research. **AH**

→ [www.vrc-lab.be](http://www.vrc-lab.be)

## News Story of the Year

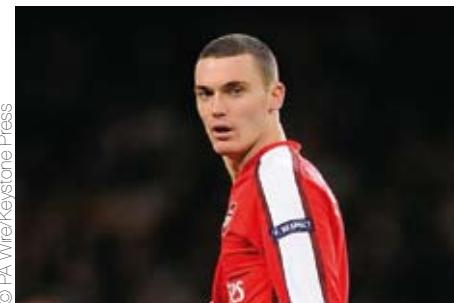
Sexual abuse in the Catholic Church



When the nephew of former bishop of Bruges Roger Vangheluwe (pictured) went public with allegations against his uncle of years of sexual abuse, it blew apart a system of cover-ups within the Catholic Church and exposed the institution to the glaring light of international publicity. As a result, more than 400 victims came forward and had their tragic stories heard for the first time. The revelation of the unthinkable dealt the church in Belgium a blow from which it may never recover. A parliamentary commission looking into the situation will carry on its work in 2011. **AH**

## Sports Figure of the Year

Thomas Vermaelen



It might seem odd to name as Flemish Sports Figure of the Year Thomas Vermaelen, the brilliant Arsenal defender born in Kapellen, near the Dutch border, 25 years ago. He is nursing an Achilles injury and has not played since September. And neither the Gunners nor the Red Devils have come near footballing glory in the past year. Nonetheless, the "Verminator" – as Arsenal fans dub him – is perhaps the first Belgian player in a generation to truly make his mark in the world. Brilliantly precocious, he was already named club captain at Dutch outfit Ajax when he was just 23. Since joining Arsenal in June 2009 for €12 million, he has been the team's most consistent player: he was made Belgian captain last year, scored eight goals in 48 games and named by fellow players in the Premier League as player of the year. **Leo Cendrowicz**

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

## Performance of the Year

Burlesque

Since Burlesque in its "adult entertainment" form sashayed onto the theatre stage in the roaring '20s, fans everywhere have been mesmerised by the female strip tease performances that seductively showcase glitter, feather and a whole lot of skin. This year, Flanders got a taste of this risqué entertainment courtesy of mastermind and dancer Jill Mathieu. Inspired by the success of the 1950s retro-themed

Radio Modern parties, Mathieu (pictured below) brought in some experts to teach the art of burlesque. Flanders' first burlesque troupe, Schoon Madammen (Beautiful Madams) soon followed, with each dancer having her own style. Mathieu then launched the performance event "Ne Vuilen Avond" (roughly, Naughty Nights) to showcase their talents, and it was staged across Flanders. It's now so popular that a new round of dancers will saunter onto the stage in 2011. **Courtney Davis**

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



## Musician of the Year

Jan Swerts



Chances are huge that you haven't heard of Jan Swerts. Despite rave reviews this year in leading Flemish magazines and dailies, his music still stays the best-kept secret of our region. His debut album *Weg (Gone)* was released on a very small label, and he doesn't play live. A one-way ticket to oblivion? Hopefully not, since his deeply melancholic songs – think of Talk Talk's Mark Hollis or the quietest of Michael Nyman – have a highly soothing effect. They range from three to 21 minutes and are centred around a minimalist piano, accompanied by trumpet, violin, clarinet, tuba and double bass, though never all at the same time. "There's comfort in melancholy," the musician quotes Joni Mitchell. From now on comfort is spelled "Jan Swerts". **Christophe Verbiest**

## Artist of the Year

Francis Alÿs



With an impressive retrospective in Tate Modern and Brussels' own Wiels (*A Story of Deception*, still running), 2010 has been the year of Francis Alÿs. Born in Antwerp, but living in Mexico City for almost a quarter of a century, he is primarily known for his interventions in public spaces and the video installations that document those actions. His paintings, drawings and photographs, though, are an essential part of his oeuvre. His work tackles serious political topics, like social injustice in Latin America or the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but, on the other hand, all of his video installations have a playful side. His mastery lies, among other things, in his talent to keep a perfect balance between both. In 2011, *A Story of Deception* will travel to the MoMA in New York. **CV**

## Scrooge of the Year

Aspro Ocio



For weeks we fretted about the health of Yotta, the dolphin at the Boudewijn Seapark in Bruges, who had suffered a still birth and kidney failure, a condition that would normally be fatal. But Seapark owners Aspro Ocio in Madrid were fretting about something else: the bottom line. The story had a happy ending for Yotta: thanks to sleepless nights for her six trainers and to vet Piet De Leander, she's now doing fine and has rejoined the other dolphins. The trainers, however, are facing the loss of their annual Christmas bonus, to make up for the money Aspro lost on cancelled dolphin shows. "What were we supposed to do – let her die?" asked one of the trainers. **AH**

## Word of the year

Persoonlijke assistentietoeslag



Belgian railway NMBS started 2010 with a horrific train crash in which 20 people died. Unions went on strike, and passengers complained about delays and cancellations. The company did nothing to improve its image when it last summer introduced a new €7 fee – the *persoonlijke assistentietoeslag*, or personal assistance supplement – levied on passengers who buy an international ticket at the counter, rather than online. The measure was enormously unpopular and prompted passengers to create the Facebook group "Tegen de 7 euro 'persoonlijke assistentietoeslag' van NMBS", now with nearly 6,500 members. The company later compromised by cutting the supplement to €3.50 for "classic" international trains, but kept it in place for high-speed services operated by Eurostar and Thalys. "This is hardly a concession," said one Facebook member, "since they have drastically cut the number of classic international trains." **Derek Blyth**

## Tweet of the Year

"We have an agreement on treaty amendment."



Herman Van Rompuy, president of the European Council, tweeted these seven words on 16 December at 19.00 to announce a breakthrough in negotiations at the EU Summit. It told Van Rompuy's 3,264 followers that the plan to amend the Lisbon Treaty had been successful. The tweak in the treaty, designed to save the euro from collapse, brought a glimmer of hope to a snow-bound Europe as Belgium's presidency of the European Council neared its end. **DB**

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# Delta Lloyd Bank shifts focus to wealthy

## Belgian subsidiary says it will no longer serve “Aldi clients”

ALAN HOPE

The Dutch-owned Delta Lloyd Bank (DLB) announced last week that is will shift to niche banking in Belgium, in a controversial move that could see thousands of customers forced to find banking services elsewhere. The Belgian subsidiary of DLB held a press conference to address rumours of cutbacks in the branch network. The company explained its new strategy of targeting richer clients – both individuals and companies – and abandoning ambitions of becoming one of Belgium's big banks.

“We're giving up our target of becoming one of the six biggest banks in Belgium,” said CEO Piet Verbrugge. “To achieve that, we would have to take over a Belgian bank, and, in the wake of the crisis, that's no longer attainable.”

Delta Lloyd had been cutting back on its branch network in Belgium over the past three years, from 264 to 228, a reduction of 14%. DLB itself only operates 77 of the agencies; the others are in the hands of independent agents. DLB currently has a share of only 1.6% of the savings market and 3.1% of the credit market, far behind the Big Three (Dexia, BNP Paribas and KBC) but also far behind Argenta and foreign banks like Santander and HSBC.

Now DLB will target only the

wealthy. Individual clients will need to demonstrate the ability to deposit €1,200 in savings a month, while companies will need to have a minimum cash flow of €75,000. Exceptions will be made for business owners and graduates under 35, while existing clients who don't fit the profile will be brought together under one central Brussels office.

DLB's own agents were not pleased at the announcement. Their professional union BZB described Verbrugge's plans as “totally inappropriate”. According to Daniel Nicolaes of the BZB, up to 80% of the bank's 250,000 existing clients will not fit the new profile. DLB's pledge to keep them on its books means they will have to deal with a Brussels office, which many will find inconvenient.

“By removing so many clients, the bank is threatening the existence of a lot of independent banking agents, as well as the incomes of their employees,” Nicolaes said. “The damage to our image is already being clearly felt, and the agents are already feeling the negative effects of [Verbrugge's] statements.”

Meanwhile, consumer organisation Oivo filed a complaint with the Centre for Equal Opportunities, citing the special rules for under-35s as



© Belga

discrimination. Socialist deputy Hans Bonte attacked the plan to hive off the so-called “Aldi clients”. “That form of banking has no place in our economy,” Bonte said. “If every bank followed Delta Lloyd's example and dumped the lower-income groups,

we would need to set up a bank for the poor.”

Verbrugge has denied that his use of the term “Aldi client” to describe those who did not fit the new profile was an insult. “On the contrary, I'm a customer of Aldi myself,” he said. ♦

## Last Opel rolls off assembly line



The last Opel Astra to be manufactured at the company's Antwerp plant last week rolled off the assembly line. With that, production at the factory stopped, and on Friday, 17 December, Opel Antwerp closed.

The closure brings to an end a long struggle to save the jobs of the 1,300 people employed at Opel Antwerp, after parent company General Motors announced last January that it would close the plant, following a year of speculation and rumour. Attempts were made by the Flemish government to change the company's mind and to bring the closure to the attention of European authorities, after it appeared that the German government had offered GM incentives to save factories in Germany from the axe.

In the end, efforts failed to save the company whose origins in Antwerp date back to 1924 and which produced more than 13 million cars. But there was some consolation for the workers when it was revealed that one in three of those who laid off as of 1 January have already found new jobs through the Flemish government's employment and training agency VDAB.

Last week Flanders' minister-president Kris Peeters also said that government-related employers like bpost (formerly De Post), Belgacom and the railway authority NMBS would find jobs wherever possible for former Opel workers. ♦

## Watchdog examines crowdfunding

Banking and finance industry watchdog CBFA is investigating the phenomenon of “crowdfunding” (or “fanfunding”) to ensure that investors are being given the same protections as under other more traditional forms of investment.

The phenomenon started in the 1990s when fans of British rock band Marillion raised the money necessary to finance the band's American tour. The band then went on to finance albums using the same method.

Crowdfunding was used recently to finance a new album by Tom Dice, Belgium's last Eurovision

entrant. It allowed fans to buy a stake in Dice's new album, which was recorded using the money raised. In that case, each €10 stake brought a return of €26, as well as a download copy of the album. The investments were organised by the Belgian crowdfunding company Sonic Angel, and now Flemish actress Veerle Baetens (*Code 37, Zot van A*) has turned to Akamusic to raise funding for her new band Dallas. Similar schemes to support comic-strip artists and writers are also underway in Belgium and the Netherlands.

The CBFA now wants to investigate the terms under

which shares in artists or activities are offered. Trading in shares in more concrete entities, like companies, as well as in invisibles, like futures and derivatives, are strictly regulated, but those same rules may not be being applied in crowdfunding.

“We are studying a number of cases,” a spokesman for the CBFA said. “We wish to avoid leaving the consumer unprotected in a kind of grey area. That risk could exist if crowdfunding deliberately fly under the radar by, for example, keeping the donations received under the ceiling of €50,000.” ♦

## THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

### Automobiles • Volvo

The Ghent-based assembling affiliate of Volvo has received a €200 million loan, guaranteed by the Flemish government, to invest in new equipment and build a new car model on the site. The decision comes weeks after Ford Genk announced investments of some €700 million over 10 years and Audi Brussels received some €200 million for the new Audi A1 model.

### Chemicals • Solvay

Brussels-based plastics and chemicals company Solvay is building an epichlorhydine production unit in Taixing, China, to produce 100,000 tonnes a year. The compound is a major component of Epoxy resin. The unit, to come on stream in 2013, will further strengthen the company's position in Asia. Meanwhile, pharmaceutical group UCB is selling three of its production units in Germany and Italy to the British Aesica group.

### Energy • Belwind

The €614 million Belwind wind farm located on the Blight Bank 46 kilometres off the shore of Zeebrugge was inaugurated last week. The project, with a capacity of 165 megawatts from 55 windmills, is owned in part by the Colruyt group, which stepped in when the Dutch energy group Econcern went bankrupt last year.

### Fast Food • Quick

Market leading fast-food chain Quick is to open a Giant Bar take-away outlet in the centre of Ghent. The company has plans to develop this “hamburger on the go” concept in other cities.

### Property • Market hopes

Real estate consultants Jones Lang LaSalle and CBRE are confident that the office market is on the mend after two difficult years. Take up this year reached some 450,000 square metres, significantly less than the previous average of 550,000 square metres. Both firms, however, point to a gradual improvement, as new projects are helping to reduce the 1.5 million square metres of empty office space in and around Brussels.

### Television • SBS

VT4 and VijfTV, two of Flanders TV channels owned by the German ProSiebenSat1 media group will be sold as part of the parent company's decision to cut its debt. The most likely buyer is Belgian French-language media group RTL, which has been seeking a presence in Flanders for many years.

### Transport • Transurb

Engineering concern Transurb, an affiliate of the national railway company NMBS, has sold a train driving simulator to the Norwegian railways worth €1.8 million. The equipment will help train more than 1,000 drivers. The company, which has already sold 60 simulators worldwide, is in negotiations for further deals in Jamaica and Vietnam.

# Home and Away

A new collaborative graphic novel blends children's storytelling with grown-up emotions

REBECCA BENOOT

Eva Cardon, better known by her pen name Ephameron is a well known Antwerp-based illustrator and photographer, and her new graphic novel *Weg (Gone)* does nothing to tarnish her reputation. Illustrated by Ephameron and co-written with Pieter van Oudheusden, it's a beautifully little gem of a book filled with longing and bewilderment.

The illustrations move you through the story of a young woman who is writing a children's book and runs out of ideas. She decides to take a walk to clear her head. This all seems pretty straightforward, but what makes this book so unusual is the text that accompanies Ephameron's characteristic fragile dream-like drawings – namely, van Oudheusden's story about a bear and a little

fox who embark on an unusual friendship. This unconventional combo of children's tale and grown-up drawings creates an uncanny atmosphere that could have been confusing and disjointed, but winds up poignantly moving.

The authors are also from different worlds: van Oudheusden is an award-winning Dutch author of several children's books and comics, while Eva Cardon is known for her contemplative collages.

"As a writer I am always intrigued by graphic artists," explains van Oudheusden, "whether they are comic strip artists or illustrators or whatever. I always try to look at what they can do within that specific world, and Eva gripped me. I discovered that I had to stick very close to the world she

shows in her drawings and photographs, which is a very personal and intimate, so the story had to be a very personal and intimate as well."

Ephameron and van Oudheusden have worked on projects together before. For this one, "we were brainstorming for quite a while," says Ephameron, "but a project like this grows gradually. One of our previous projects was a children's book for which I did the drawings and Pieter the text, but it didn't work out."

This time the pair looked into their own histories for inspiration. "That's more or less why the main character of *Weg* is working on a children's book," adds van Oudheusden. "Bear and fox are also very close to us. They start out as alter egos because there were things happening in our personal lives that influenced the story. It's a story about loss and finding a sense of meaning."

*Weg* is a fast read, but don't be fooled by its odd simplicity; there is much lurking beneath the surface. "First we wanted to draw two characters playing the scenes that were written," says Ephameron, "but that was too literal and had already been done so many times. So we took it a step further."

The result, as Ephameron puts it, is "an intimate story where you need to read between the lines. I think it's mainly for an audience that likes to be challenged." But it's also a simple, rather magical, story and an excellent last-minute gift item besides. ♦

→ [www.bries.be](http://www.bries.be)



Eva Cardon, aka Ephameron, a self-portrait



Pieter van Oudheusden

© Ephameron

## BOOKSHOP

### Mekanik Strip

Sint-Jacobsmarkt 73  
Antwerp



Founded in 1983, Antwerp's Mekanik Strip was one of the few places in Belgium where comic strip aficionados could get their weekly fix of *Watchmen*, *Spiderman* and *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, which were not only hard to come by here but even harder to back order. Located in the heart of Antwerp, Mekanik is now one of the biggest and most important comic shops in Europe, offering an impressive and eclectic range that includes most European and American comics on the market.

Mekanik also specialises in other aspects of the medium such as figurines, movie memorabilia, manga, DVDs and, of course, graphic novels. Originally located just across the road from their current spot, they expanded in the '90s to include a gallery on the first floor where many local artists, such as Ephameron, and international artists, like American Charles Burns, display their work.

Mekanik prides itself on lending a helping hand to budding illustrators through this exhibition space and through workshops focusing on the art of comics. Even if you've never visited the store, you've seen their work: Many comic strip walls that now grace Antwerp are courtesy of Mekanik. RB

→ [www.ximeralabs.com/mekanik](http://www.ximeralabs.com/mekanik)

## Fresh Fiction · The latest in Flemish graphic novels

### The Man Who Let His Beard Grow

Bries; €19.95

This follow-up to Olivier Schrauwen's 2006 English debut *My Boy*, which was about a father who takes his thumb-sized son on an absurd trip through Flanders, is a multi-layered collection of short stories featuring a wide variety of bearded men. Each story – ranging from the Genesis creation narrative to art classes – has its own style, both visually as narratively. Schrauwen's work is unique in Flanders, with a retro and slightly nonchalant vibe to his surreal tales filled with humour and agony, ultimately resulting in a rich tapestry of humankind. In English, Dutch and French

### Ik zien A geire (I Love You)

Mekanik Strip; €8.95

Frederik Van den Stock's ode to Antwerp is both brooding and vibrant, like the Port City itself. He takes you through the multicultural districts, cafés, eccentricities and quaint little alleys. It is a delightful debut, a combination of Van den Stock's daring drawings and own little musings. The title is a play on words, meaning "I love you" in the Antwerp dialect while at the same time referring to the A in Antwerp. *Ik zien A geire* is also the first graphic novel published by Mekanik strip.

### Playin'/Smilin'/Fightin'/Cookin'

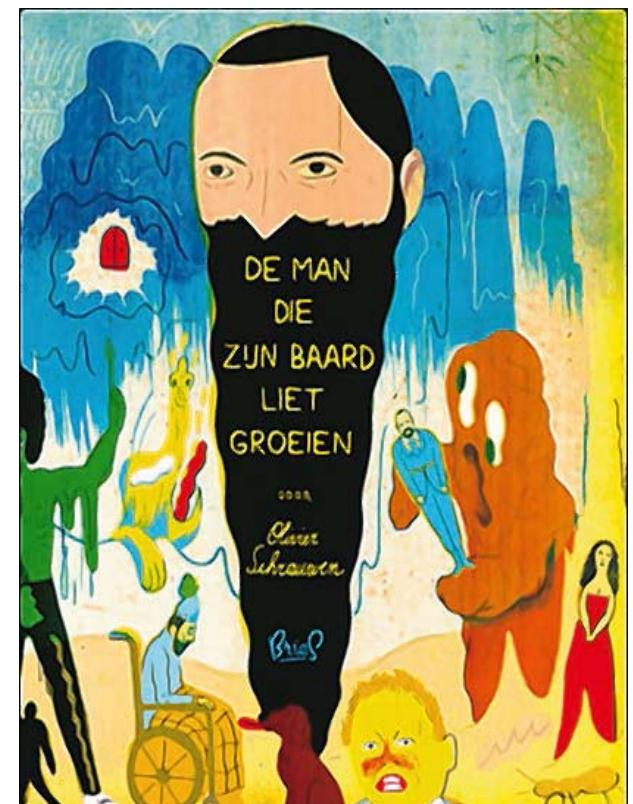
Bries; €19.50

Philip Paquet once again combines his love for illustration and jazz in his own quintessential cinematic black-and-white style. With a little help from writers Gilliom, Tim Vendaux and Stéphane Daniel, he has created a swinging musical masterpiece that captures the liveliness of jazz culture. This sublime publication looks like a jazz EP by the Vertigo Quartet, but in fact contains four little booklets with two fictional and two biographical comic stories about jazz legends Dizzy Gillespie, Charles Mingus, Charlie Parker and Miles Davis.

### De wraak van Bakamé (The Revenge of Bakamé)

Oogachtend; €22.00

Jeroen Janssen has once again teamed up with Pieter van Oudheusden for a colourful satire about a hare called Bakamé who is always the butt of Mpyisi's jokes – Mpyisi being a well-connected hyena who tries to con everyone he meets. Based on several African folktales and slightly reminiscent of our own Reynard the Fox, they have created a hefty book with an impressive scope. Janssen's expressionistic drawing style and van Oudheusden's thrilling tale delve deep into the core of humanity and expose an exhilarating world where darkness, sex and sarcasm reign. RB



# Making safe sexy

STÉPHANIE DUVAL

**O**n 1 December, World AIDS Day, Designers Against AIDS proudly opened the very first International HIV/AIDS Awareness Education Center in Antwerp. The organization will train young people from all over the world to launch AIDS awareness campaigns in their home countries.

When you look at the organization's achievements these past few years, it's hard to believe it all started with one woman. But when Ninette Murk noticed how little her own children really knew about HIV and AIDS, the Flemish fashion editor decided it was time for a new career.

Fed up with the way in which the fashion industry treated people who were HIV-positive, she quit her job and founded the non-profit organisation Beauty Without Irony, through which she launched the international project Designers Against AIDS (DAA) in 2004.

The initiative educates young people about HIV and AIDS, but in a way that speaks to them directly, using music, fashion, design, sports, celebrities, social media and so on. Additionally, the message of the campaigns focuses on prevention, not on the illness. "I

don't think you can keep doing what we do if you focus on illness and death," says Murk. "Prevention is more fun. It's about sex, and sex is good. But you have to be careful."

What drives Murk every day is how AIDS is perceived as being a threat of the past, or is infecting only people in developing countries. While in fact, the ugly truth is that the number of HIV infections in Europe and the United States are rising once again.

"More than 50% of new HIV infections in the western world can be attributed to young people," says Murk. "AIDS is a disaster everywhere, but nowhere is it easier to prevent than here! Condoms are abundantly available."

Surely no message could be any less sexy than safe sex, but DAA has succeeded rather well in turning that around. Murk simply called up the Swedish-based headquarters of clothing retailer H&M to start a collaboration. Initially, they asked celebrities such as Tokio Hotel and Katy Perry to design T-shirts for a special "Fashion Against AIDS" collection, which was then the focus of a global H&M campaign. It not only got people talking about AIDS prevention, but a percentage of earnings was invested into several awareness programs, including DAA.

In May 2011, the increasingly successful Fashion Against AIDS collaboration will launch its fourth edition, but Murk has already started to think ahead. She wanted to make the work of DAA "more sustainable," she explains. "The first thing that popped up was the idea of an education centre where we could teach young people from all over the world how to create HIV prevention

Designers Against AIDS brings young people from around the world to its new education centre



campaigns using pop culture in just the way that we do – with a lot of enthusiasm, idealism, creativity and often a very low budget."

In 2007, DAA purchased a building in the Deurne district of Antwerp. Renovations started in 2008 and finished last month. They collaborated with Antwerp architectural firm B-Bis and enlisted the help of numerous volunteers; cosmetics brand MAC, for example, sent in a team of make-up artists to help paint the house.

Now that the International HIV/AIDS Awareness Education Center is officially opened, it awaits its first students, who arrive in February. Students take part in a six- to eight-week workshop on launching a creative and interactive HIV/AIDS

awareness campaign. "One workshop will teach them how to make a music video, the other how to organise a fashion show," explains Murk. "The students will actually realise such a project here in Belgium and go home with the know-how they need to repeat and improve on the experience."

Murk is already planning to open a second centre in Los Angeles next year – when everything goes well in Belgium, that is. But first: by Valentine's Day, DAA and Belgian leather accessories brand Delvaux will offer a red leather condom case with a cut-out heart, which will be sold in the DAA web shop and at Delvaux retailers. Packing a condom has never been so stylish.♦

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

## The best of DAA

**2008:** the launch of Models Against AIDS. Flemish top model Hannelore Knuts is the official spokesperson

**2008:** sales of sexy bed linens designed by artists like Belgian electronica duo Vive la Fête, Dutch fashion designer Bas Kosters and Belgian-based Spanish filmmaker Javier Barcala

**2008:** the first H&M collaboration, Fashion Against AIDS, supported by the likes of Rihanna and Henrik Vibskov. The second campaign the following year hit H&M stores in 30 countries, or nearly 1,000 stores. The fourth edition of the event launches next May

**October 2010:** *Designers Against AIDS: The First Decade* is published by Ludion

**November 2010:** Knitting Against AIDS takes over Brussels: fashion designers and enthusiasts gather to make and auction special scarves

**December 2010:** the official opening of the International HIV/AIDS Awareness Education Center in Antwerp

**February 2011:** the release of the Delvaux red leather condom case. Happy Valentine's!



Ninette Murk at the opening of the AIDS Awareness Education Center

## Nice in ice · The Snow and Ice Sculpture Festival in Bruges offers some excellent alternatives to snowmen

DENZIL WALTON

When the next batch of snow arrives in Flanders, what about breaking from tradition? Instead of making another boring snowman, why not create something completely different? What about a snow lion or a snow car? Or a snow Arc de Triomphe?

A trip to the ninth edition of the annual Snow and Ice Sculpture Festival in Bruges will certainly give you some ideas. Entitled "Around the World", it will open your eyes to what is possible with a block of frozen water and a hammer and chisel. Oh, and a lot of skill and patience.

Here you will see astounding sculptures carved from ice and snow – real works of art – of UNESCO's cultural and heritage sites, as well as some of the world's most popular tourist attractions. You will come face to face with some international celebrities, too.

Outside Bruges' railway station in a thermally insulated tent, which is kept to a temperature of -50°C, you will be impressed and surprised by what's packed into such a small area. The Notre-Dame cathedral, the Colosseum, Big Ben, Red Square, the Statue of Liberty, Easter Island – they're all there in their frozen glory.

Interspersed are Arabian belly dancers, flamenco artists, bullfighters and even a small orchestra. The stars are also on hand: Madonna, Marilyn Monroe, Michael Jackson, Elvis Presley and assorted Disney characters. You can even find a 1952 Volkswagen Transporter and a 1957 Chevrolet.

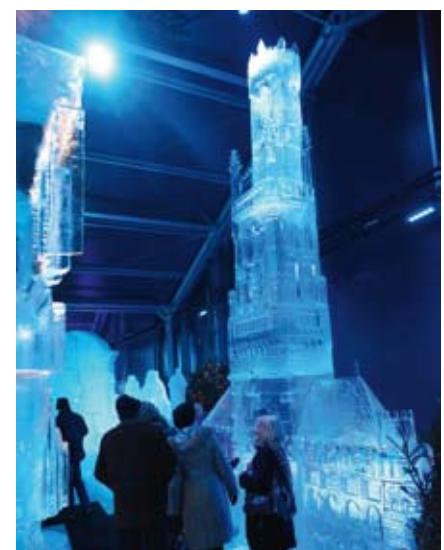
The sculptures are incredibly beautiful and amazingly realistic. They were created from 300 tons of locally made ice by 30 international artists, with each sculpture taking an average of

four weeks to complete. The ice was delivered in two-metre blocks weighing up to two tons.

Snow sculptures, meanwhile, were created by compressing 400 tons of fresh snow, layer by layer, into large wooden moulds. After three days, the moulds were dismantled to leave rock-hard snow blocks, which were then carved into shape. After your trip around the world, you will want to warm up with a hot chocolate or something stronger; the Ice Bar is the perfect destination. Though "warm up" might be an overstatement. The bar itself is literally made of ice, and drinks are served in ice glasses.

The Snow and Ice Sculpture Festival is fun for the whole family, but it's colder than it is outside, so wrap everyone up warmly.♦

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



# Living Grand central

## Austrian architecture, Polish heroes and Czech fashion: if you're looking for Central Europe, look no farther than Flanders

ZSÓFIA GYÖR

**C**entral Europe is a huge area, so it only makes sense that it would have a huge influence on the west. Yet this influence is often minimalised. But it's everywhere in Flanders, from superb Austrian architecture in Mechelen to wild fashion in Bruges.

From the late 15th until the late 18th century, most parts of the Low Countries were under Habsburg rule – arguably the most powerful royal house in Europe until the 18th century. This long period of Austrian reign left a distinct mark on Flemish cities.

One of the earliest examples of Habsburg architecture is the palace of Margaret of Austria, governor of the Habsburg Netherlands, in Mechelen. Margaret settled in the town – which was then the flourishing capital of the Low Countries – in 1507 and commissioned a new palace for her court. The back wing (on Voochtstraat) was built in late Gothic style, while the front building (on Keizerstraat) was one of the first Renaissance buildings erected in Northern Europe.

Even today, the town celebrates this period in its history, most notably with the Ommegang, which commemorates both the arrival of Margaret's father, Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I, and the anniversary of the birth of her nephew, Charles V. Mechelen's Ommegang is grand – a UNESCO recognised heritage event that only happens once every 25 years. (But you only have to wait three years for the next one.)

The palace is not the only place in Mechelen that owes its existence to the Habsburg dynasty. The building that today houses The Jewish Museum of Deportation and Resistance was built as *Kazerne Dossin* (Dossin Barracks) by Empress Maria Theresa of Austria in 1756 and is, in fact, one of the oldest army barracks in Belgium.

The military architects followed precisely the demands laid down by their masters in Vienna. This resulted in the building having a rigid and sober appearance more closely associated with Viennese classicism than the local architecture prevailing at that time, which makes the complex unique in the country.

But the Habsburgs didn't stop at Mechelen. The entire Koningsplein (Royal Square) in Brussels, together with its buildings and Warandepark are also owed to the Austrians. So are the Maria-Theresia College and the De Valk College in Leuven.

Ever wondered why the canals of Bruges are full of

swans? Well, that would be the work of the Austrians, as well. According to legend, Pieter Lanchals, advisor to Maximilian I, was executed in 1488 during the Bruges rebellion. As there were swans in the coat of arms of Lanchals, Maximilian ordered the *Bruggelingen* to keep swans in the town's canals forever, as a posthumous tribute to his murdered advisor.

Though you might be able to put that down to lore, the Habsburg-given nickname of the people of Ghent is based on cold, hard fact. Although native to Ghent, Charles V, heir of the Habsburg Empire, punished city nobles after their 1539 tax revolt by forcing them to walk in front of him through the streets in their nightclothes barefoot, each with a noose around his neck. It was a sober warning. Since this incident, the people of Ghent have been called *stroppendragers*, or noose bearers, and even now, you can buy nooses in the city's souvenir shops.

### Strange beauty in Brussels

When it comes to the Austrian legacy in Brussels, though, it is the Stoclet Palace that first comes to mind. The privately owned Art Nouveau mansion on Tervurenlaan is something that even the Austrians don't have.

Though, they almost did. Belgian engineer and investment banker Adolphe Stoclet and his art-loving wife Suzanne were living in Vienna in 1903. Blown away by the unusual beauty of a house they had seen in a chic residential district, they tracked down Vienna Secession architect Josef Hoffmann and commissioned him and the Wiener Werkstätte (a group of avant-garde artists and craftsmen) to design, build and completely furnish a house and garden for them in Vienna. Unexpectedly – though most fortunately for us – however, the couple had to return to Brussels, so they had the house built here instead.

Hoffmann, a key figure in the aesthetic-artist reform movement in Europe, presented something completely new and unusual through the Stoclet House to the Belgians. Indeed, he installed the very first Vienna Secession art in the country: strong geometrical forms, the simplicity of the façade, the marble slabs with metal mouldings at the corners and the play of light and shadow.

Hoffmann's art permeated everything in and around the house, from the interiors to household objects. It is the interaction of these different parts that create one single artistic unit.



Everything, of course, was 100% Austrian, including the Klimt frescos in the dining room. Belgian builders are said to have been supervised by a member of Hoffmann's team and local traditions completely ignored.

Hoffmann and other figures of the Vienna Secession had a determining influence on the generation of young Belgian architects at the beginning of the 20th Century. Léon Sneyers, the "most Viennese of Belgian architects", devoted his efforts exclusively to promoting the Secession style in Brussels. He opened the shop L'Intérieur on Naamsestraat, where he displayed objects, fabrics and furnishings imported from Austria. He also designed posters and advertising inspired directly by the work of the Secession. You can see his most well-known building, the Marjolaine shop, at number 7 Magdalenasteenweg near the Grote Markt.

Other examples of Vienna Secession influence in Brussels include the Paul Cauchie House at number 5 Frankensteinstraat and Edouard Pelseneer's Les Hiboux at number 53-55 Brugmannlaan, as well as Emile Van Averbeke's Het Liberaal Volkshuis at number 40 Volksstraat in Antwerp. A number of other Belgian architects were equally indebted to the movement, including Henry Van de Velde, Renaat Braem, Fernand Khnopff and Suzanne Stoclet's nephew, Robert Mallet-Stevens.

### Quo Vadis, Poles?

But if Polish author and journalist Maja Wolny is right, there would have been no Belgian architects if it weren't for the Polish, who in fact claim to have facilitated the creation of Belgium itself in 1830. "Russia was against the idea of Belgium," she says, "but since it had to deal with the Poles during the November Uprising the same year, it had to leave Belgium alone. So who knows what could have happened if it hadn't been for the Polish distraction?"

Later, in the second part of the 19th century, Polish nobility filled the aristocratic salons of Belgium. Many descendants remain: the best known is probably Princess Mathilde, wife of Prince Philippe, the heir to the Belgian throne.

The 20th century, more specifically the Second World War, found Polish soldiers again coming to the aid of Belgium, though this time on its own soil. Several towns in West Flanders, including Ypres, were largely liberated by Polish soldiers, who forced out Nazi occupiers.

But Poles in contemporary Flemish society are most recognised not for these heroic deeds, but rather for the services they provide. Polish women, for instance, are considered the most reliable housekeepers – "they totally monopolise the *dienstencheques* [service checks] system in Belgium," laughs Wolny, who was born in Kielce, southern Poland, and now lives in East Flanders.

"But it's not only cleaning ladies we are talking about," the 34-year-old adds. "The other day, I ordered a cab



© IFF Documentaiecentrum

A Polish soldier riding through the Dikkebusseweg in Ypres after the liberation of the Second World War is greeted with flowers by the locals



The palace of Margaret of Austria in Mechelen is one of the earliest examples of Renaissance architecture in Flanders

from a Flemish taxi company to go to the airport, and the car never showed up. I called the company, but they didn't even pick up. With a Polish driver, this would never happen! They would never let a client down; their work ethic is impeccable. Their mentality is that any job, at any time of the day, for however much money, has to be done properly. Maybe in Belgium people are too well-off; they just can't be bothered to do things for €20."

But Wolny, who recently took up the post of director at the National Fisheries Museum in Oostduinkerke, also sees Polish culture seeping into the everyday lives of Flemish people. "In Poland, celebrations and holidays are very special and not at all about consumerism. I notice that more and more people in Flanders start to look at these holidays as inspirations and follow that example."

Like the Austrians, Poles have had a strong influence on



Known now more for service trades than war heroics, the Polish do a brisk business in shops across Brussels, including Polonaise Barytas on the Waterloosesteenweg in Sint-Gillis

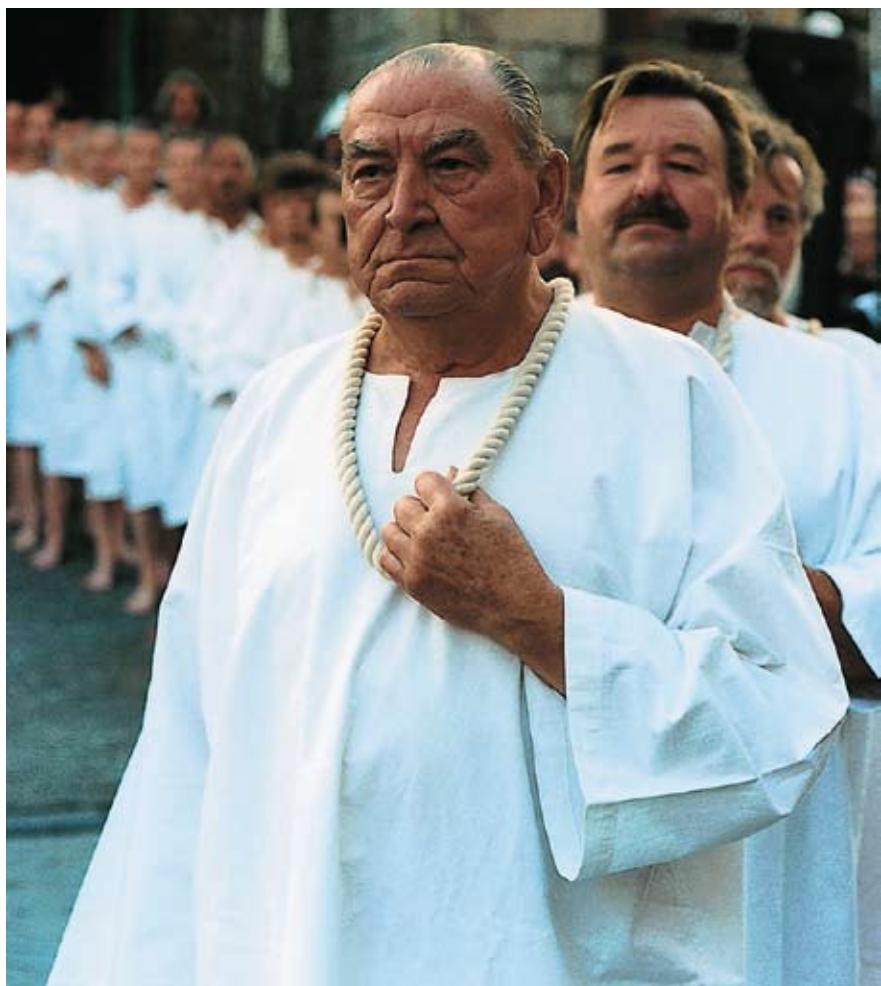
© Dieter Telemans

the arts, as well. Grzegorz Rosiński is the comic book artist who created *Thorgal*, translated in Dutch and currently running in news daily *Metro*. He is credited with having a major influence on the new generation of Flemish comic strip artists. The late Tadeusz Kantor helped guide the 1980s so-called "Flemish wave" in theatre and dance through his avant-garde productions on the 1950s and '60s. Nobel prize winning poet Wisława Szymborska, meanwhile, proffers an irony close to the hearts of both Flemish writers and readers and is very well received in Flanders.

Today there are approximately 100,000 Poles in Belgium, with Brussels and Antwerp being major hubs. In Brussels, the biggest Polish neighbourhood is Schaerbeek; in Antwerp, it's downtown. Both cities run Polish education centres where kids can learn about Polish culture and history.

hardships, and, unlike in Western Europe, people don't hide their feelings there. If you ask a person from Central Europe how they are, they won't just give you the standard 'great'; you can prepare yourself for the truth. This attitude is visibly reflected in their work as well."

And, following the ever-recurring nature of the industry, elements of Eastern European fashion are "in" again. "I'm really happy about it," says Hoffmann. "We can learn so much from traditional clothing, and it's really important that it doesn't disappear as a result of globalisation."♦



When the noblemen of Ghent refused to pay war taxes in 1539, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V forced them to walk the streets barefoot in their nightclothes – with nooses round their necks. The people of Ghent wear the nooses proudly as a sign of their fiery stubbornness during the annual re-enactment

#### What you design is what you are

Central Europe is in fact a big topic this winter, as Bruges hosts its Brugge Centraal festival, dedicated to artists from Central European countries. The hugely popular Party Šaty catwalk event in October showcased folk dresses but also young designers, either from or inspired by Central Europe, who presented ethnic replicas or extraordinarily creative contemporary reinterpretations.

Many of the designers on hand are from the famous fashion department of Antwerp's Fine Arts Academy, including Stefanie Bösl from Germany and Maja Zupančič from Slovenia.

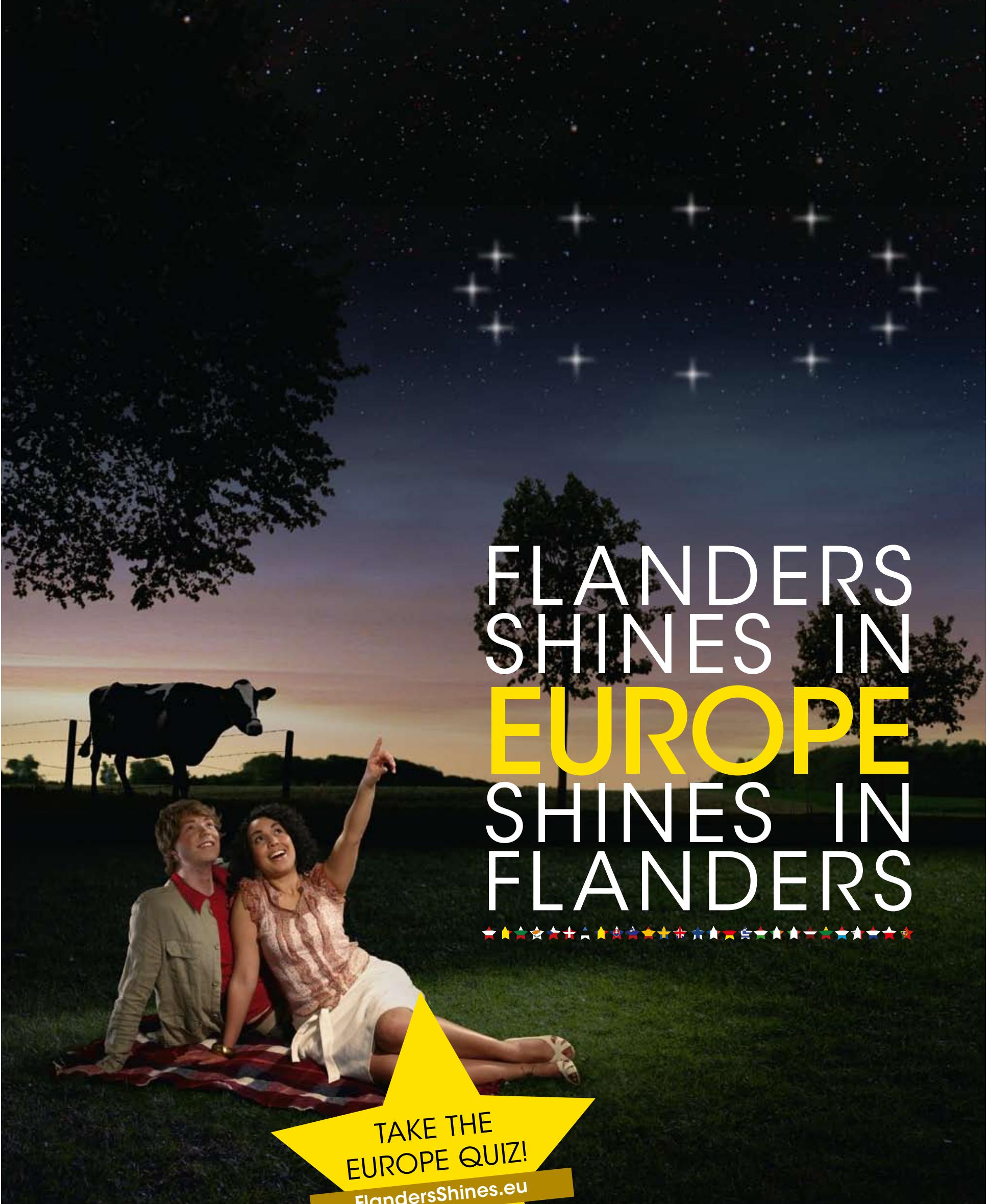
Show co-organiser Lucie Hoffmann says that typical Eastern European aspects are folkloristic patterns or techniques, organic materials, the creation of dark, strong atmospheres and occasional morbid elements. Karolina Piech, Polish fashion student at the Antwerp Academy, was very much influenced by the latter.

"She presented a blood-stained wedding gown at the show", smiles Hoffmann. "Eastern European countries saw many wars and



Fashion folklore revisited at the Party Šaty show, part of Brugge Centraal

© Brugge Centraal



# FLANDERS SHINES IN EUROPE SHINES IN FLANDERS



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# Agenda

## La Bohème

You could do worse for a holiday outing than seeing this new production of one of the world's most famous operas in Brussels' De Munt

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



# Hareng Saur

LISA BRADSHAW

You'll be tempted to roll your eyes upon seeing the word "Ensor" in another exhibition this year. The Ostend-born master of surrealism, expressionism or whatever other moniker you want to apply to an artist who rather defied you to try, has been the focus of two major exhibitions in Belgium this year already.

That's because 2010 was the 150th anniversary of James Ensor's birth, and it's this show staged in both Ghent's Contemporary Arts Museum and across the street at its Museum of Fine Arts that perhaps brings that date into even more perspective than the rest.

*Hareng Saur: Ensor and Contemporary Art* shows Ensor's influence – both direct and indirect – on contemporary artists, focusing on the last decade. Even as a group show of contemporary art, this would be a stunner; combined with some of Ensor's most interesting works, it becomes the country's must-see winter show, powerfully illustrating that Ensor in his time was as shocking and provoking as what we expect from avant-garde artists today. The title of the show, in fact, comes from Ensor's 1891 painting "Squelettes se disputant un hareng saur" ("Skeletons Fighting Over A Smoked Herring"), in which he saw himself as the herring, torn apart by soulless critics.

The show is grouped into rooms by themes dear to Ensor's heart: death, masks, the grotesque, religion (or more particularly Jesus). Occasionally you'll get a direct tribute, such as Flemish artist Guillaume Bijl's large installation "Homage to James Ensor", a glass case containing a skeleton, topped by a disturbingly smiley mask, wooden shoes and rapiers.

Even more amusing is Flanders-born artist Emilio López-Menchero's "Trying to Be James Ensor", in which he photographs himself dressed identically to the master's famous "Self Portrait With a Flowered Hat" (also to be found in the exhibition).

But *Hareng Saur* is not a tribute show, and most of the work is about influence, direct or otherwise. Some of Ensor's famous chalk-on-paper crowd scenes – including "Christ's Entry Into Jerusalem" and "The Cathedral" – are shown with works that depict similar crowds or even "close-ups". German painter Jonathan Meese's electrifying portraits (which could be of Jesus or of himself) – great globs of black and red paint pushing up from the canvas, human hair held in place with a liberal smear of wax – would not be out of place were you to see them through a microscope held up to Ensor's drawings.

It's difficult not to see Ensor, meanwhile, in a new large-scale work by Austrian collective Gelitin,

a photo collage making up a crowd of people, each manipulated in some way with clay – a monstrous nose here, oversized legs there.

Like Ensor, its striking sense of dark humour is at once enchanting and nerve-wracking.

No show of contemporary avant-garde art would be complete without American Paul McCarthy, and he's duly shown here in video wearing a thick mask and boxing gloves, beating the hell out of himself. Across from him is one of American Cindy Sherman's series of *History Portraits*, her own profile in a photo, with a hint of Dutch Baroque – and a huge prosthetic nose.

Ensor refused to leave Ostend during either world war, and two

video installations, including footage of the annual re-enactment of the Battle of Waterloo, question why a people would want to play out such atrocities again and again. Putting this into sharp perspective is German artist Thomas Hirschhorn's astonishing large-scale, mixed-media installation "Substitution 2 (The Unforgettable)", which mixes photographs of war victims – bodies torn asunder and heads half missing – with magazine cut-outs of soldiers and average people blown up to life-size, numbers perched jauntily on their heads like hats, references to the number of dead.

Staged in the beautiful rotunda of the Fine Arts Museum, the installation is surrounded on an upper balcony by Ensor's series of the seven deadly sins.

Hirschhorn's work is a visceral masterpiece but may take a back seat in terms of the talk-of-the-show, a designation that belongs to "Fear and Megalomania in Fifteen Different States" (pictured), a new work by Spanish artist Enrique Marty. Extraordinarily life-like men in business suits bring grotesque inner psyches to the outside, in much the same way Ensor did with a brush.♦

Until 27 February

SMAK & MSK Gent  
Citadelpark, Ghent

→ [www.smak.be](http://www.smak.be)



## MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS MONTH

Ensor: Composer and Writer → Bozar, Brussels

Koenraad Tinel: Flandria Catholica → Museum M, Leuven

Jacques Tati: Deux Temps, Trois Mouvements → Caermersklooster, Ghent

FLANDERS TODAY  
DECEMBER 22, 2010

GET YOUR  
TICKETS NOW!

## Corteo

4-30 January

Groot-Bijgaarden

It's been touring for five years now, but this Cirque du Soleil show has never been staged in Europe – until now. On the site of Brussels Kart Expo, the tell-tale white Grand Chapiteau is going up for shows all month in January. *Corteo* reaches a bit back into the old world for its costumes and general atmosphere, feeling like a 19th-century Italian theatre. Although all the action – acrobatics, comedy, music and general madness – revolves around the funeral of a clown, we're pretty sure it won't turn out to be such a sad story.



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

## Brussels

Café Bonnefooi

Steenstraat 8; 0487.62.22.31

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

DEC 26 22.00 The BF Acoustic Jam by Matt Rose

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50

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

Concerts at 22.00:  
DEC 23 Mess Trio DEC 27 Master Session DEC 28 Tassin & Di Maio Quartet DEC 30 Mess Trio DEC 31 New Year's Eve dance

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45

[www.themusicvillage.com](http://www.themusicvillage.com)

Concerts at 21.00:  
DEC 22 Frank's Poolparty DEC 25 20.30 Charles Loos Trio DEC 29 Volant/Favre/Esposito Trio DEC 30 Rey Cabrera DEC 31 19.00 New Year's Eve party: Buster & The Swing



World & Folk

## Antwerp

CC Deurne

Frans Messingstraat 36; 03.360.85.50

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

DEC 22 20.00 Peter Holvoet-Hanssen and Les Offs

## Brussels

Magic Mirrors

Sint-Katelijneplein; 02.217.29.20

[www.magicmirrors.com](http://www.magicmirrors.com)

DEC 28 20.00 Astoria, Caribbean/Latin American music

DEC 29 20.00 Habana Caliente, Caribbean/Latin American music



Classical & New Music

## Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28

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

DEC 22 20.00 Concerto Köln, Collegium Vocale Gent conducted by Marcus Creed: Bach's Christmas Oratorio

DEC 23 19.00 Concerto Köln, Collegium Vocale Gent conducted by Marcus Creed: Bach's Christmas Oratorio

# Agenda

FLANDERS TODAY  
DECEMBER 22, 2010

## Vlaamse Opera

Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02  
www.vlaamseopera.be  
**DEC 31** 19.00 Vlaamse Opera Orchestra conducted by Dmitri Jurowski with Noëmi Nadelmann, soprano: Strauss, Léhar, Kálmán, more

## Bruges

### Concertgebouw

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02  
www.concertgebouw.be  
**DEC 28** 15.00 Flanders Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ivan Meyermans, with Thomas Vanderveken, presenter: Prokofiev, Britten, Tchaikovsky

## Brussels

### Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00  
www.bozar.be  
**DEC 22** 12.40 Minnemerk Orchestra and Choir conducted by Benoît Jacquemin: Bach 20.00 Les Agrémens conducted by Guy Van Waas: Vivaldi, Johann Adolf Hasse, Geminiano Giacomelli, more

## Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20  
www.flagey.be  
**DEC 22** 20.15 Vlaams Radio Koor conducted by Bo Holten: Christmas carols

## Musical Instruments Museum

Hofberg 2; 02.545.01.30  
www.mim.be  
**DEC 26** 11.00 La Chantanne choir with Aga Winska, soprano: Mozart, Saint-Saëns, Brel

## Royal Music Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37  
www.kcb.be  
**DEC 23** 20.00 B'Rock with Rodolfo Richter, concert master; Raquel Andueza, soprano: Caldara, Corelli, Handel, more

## Ghent

De Bijloke  
Jozef Kluyvensstraat 2 09.233.68.78  
www.debijloke.be  
**DEC 22** 20.00 Nathan Braude, viola; Jean-Claude Van Den Eynden, piano: Penderecki, Shostakovich, Joseph Jongen, more

## Leuven

Lemmensinstituut  
Herestraat 53; 016.23.39.67  
www.lemmens.be  
**DEC 22** 20.00 Lemmensinstituut Choir conducted by Erik Van Nevel: English cathedral music



## Antwerp

### Vlaamse Opera

Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02  
www.vlaamseopera.be  
**DEC 22 & 26** 18.30 Rossini's Semiramide conducted by Alberto Zedda, staged by Nigel Lowery (in the original Italian with Dutch surtitles)

## Brussels

### De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39  
www.demunt.be  
**Until DEC 31** times vary Puccini's La Bohème conducted by Carlo Rizzi/José Miguel Esandi, staged by Andreas Homoki (in the original Italian with Dutch and French surtitles)



## Antwerp

### Fakkelteater Rode Zaal

Hoogstraat 12; 070.246.036  
www.fakkelteater.be  
**Until JAN 2** times vary Mannen komen van Mars, Vrouwen van Venus (Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus; in Dutch)

## Lotto Arena

Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345  
www.sportpaleis.be  
**Until JAN 2** times vary Cirque du Soleil in Saltimbano

## Queen Elisabeth Hall

Koningin Astridplein 26; 0900.26.060  
www.elisabethzaal.be  
**DEC 25-JAN 5** times vary Samson & Gert Christmas show (in Dutch)

## Stadsschouwburg

Theaterplein 1; 0900.69.900  
www.stadsschouwburgantwerpen.be  
**Until FEB 13** 17.00/22.00 Oliver!, the musical (in Dutch)

## Bruges

### Concertgebouw

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02  
www.concertgebouw.be  
**DEC 23** 20.00 Komml Foo de Luxe (in Dutch)

## Stadsschouwburg

Vlaimgstraat 29; 050.44.30.60  
www.ccbrugge.be

**DEC 23** 20.00 Ultima Thule in Stukken van Mensen (Pieces of People), directed by Wim De Wulf (in Dutch)

## Brussels

### Kaaistudio's

Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat 81; 02.201.59.59 www.kaaitheater.be  
**DEC 22-23** 20.30 Noodcompany in Needlap 17 by Jan Lauwers (in English)

## Ghent

### NTGent Schouwburg

Sint-Baafsplaat 17; 09.225.01.01  
www.ntgent.be

**Until JAN 19** 20.30 Frans Woyzeck by Georg Büchner, directed by the late Eric De Volder (in Dutch)



## Antwerp

### Antwerpen-Centraal Station

Van Immerseelstraat-Kievitplein; 02.537.68.75 www.artinallofus.be  
**Until MAY 8** Art in All Of Us, photographs of children around the world by Anthony Asaël and Stéphanie Rabemafara

## Cultuurcentrum Luchtbal

Columbiestraat 110; 03.821.10.29  
www.beeldexpressie.be  
**Until JAN 30** Photo View 2010, works by several Flemish photographers

## Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)

Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60

www.muhka.be  
**Until JAN 16** Confluence and Consequence, tapestries by British artist Craigie Horsfield based on his own photographs  
**Until JAN 30** The State of L3, photos, video and installations by Dutch-Panamanian artist Antonio Jose Guzman and The State of L3 Contemporary Arts & Film

## deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28

www.braem2010.be  
**Until JAN 9** Renaat Braem, sculptures by the Antwerp architect

## Diamond Museum

Koningin Astridplein 13-23; 03.202.48.90  
www.diamantmuseum.be

**Until DEC 31** For Honour & Glory: Treasure of Napoleon, the pomp and splendour of Napoleon and Marie-Louise's jewelry

## Extra City

Tulpstraat 79; 03.677.16.55

www.extracity.org  
**Until FEB 6** Drawing Documents, projects by various artists that explore the medium of the drawing in its relation to memory and the representation of history  
**Until FEB 6** Emre Hüner: Adverse Stability, sculptural objects, drawings and film by the Turkish artist

## 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

## Photo Museum (FoMu)

Waalse 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  
**Until JAN 16** The Full Picture, works by young photographers

## Plantin-Moretus Museum

Vrijdagmarkt 22; 03.221.14.50

www.museumplantinmoretus.be  
**Until JAN 16** Jan I Moretus, documents showing how the 16th-century Flemish printer built Plantin into one of the world's most significant publishing houses

## Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09

www.kmska.be  
**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

## 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 them (Part of Brugge Centraal)

## Brussels

### Atomium

Atomium Square; 02.475.47.72

www.atomium.be  
**Until APR 25** Cosmos: The Universe in 3 Dimensions, study of the solar system from the scientific and geopolitical to the philosophical and artistic

## Belgian Comic Strip Centre

Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80

www.stripmuseum.be  
**Until JAN 9** Nix: Kinky & Cosy, comic-strips works by the Belgian artist Nix  
**Until JAN 30** The Studio of Franquin, Jijé, Morris and Will, rare documents and drawings show mutual influences between the four comic-strip artists who revolutionised the art form in Europe  
**Until MAR 6** European Comic Strip Treasures, original works from the past 100 years by 50 European comic-strip artists

## Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00

www.bozar.be  
**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 Renaissance that places him in the artistic context of his time

**Until JAN 23** Knockin' on Heaven's Door, Flemish artist Wim Delvoye's works inspired by gothic art, including drawings, sculpture and a 17-metre steel tower

**Until FEB 13** Ensor: Composer and Writer, publications, documents and photographs by Flemish master painter James Ensor

## CIVA

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.71

www.civa.be  
**Until FEB 13** Fabrizio Musa.Bruxelles. TXT, digital art in a tribute to Brussels architecture

## Costume and Lace Museum

Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50

**Until DEC 31** Sixties! Liberating Colors, revolutionary fashion  
**Until DEC 31** Matière Haute Couture, work by students integrated into the Spring/Summer 2010 collection of designer Jean-Paul Gaultier

## DON'T MISS

## Lucas Cranach for kids

**6 January, 8.30-17.00**

Bozar, Brussels

Next week begins the two-week *kerstvakantie*, when schools shut down and kids go a bit stir-crazy. Among the many activities in museums and cultural centres designed to keep young people happy, this one rates very high on the adorable metre. Alongside a special tour of the *Lucas Cranach* exhibition designed just for them (in Dutch or French), six- to 12-year-olds get to construct scenes of 16th-century German life, complete with the right little props to create their own 3D mediaeval paintings. Why doesn't Bozar let adults do this?

→ [www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)



© The Melancholy, 1532, Colmar, Musée du Unterlinden

## ING Cultural Centre

Koningsplein 6; 02.507.82.00

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

## Justus Lipsius

Wetstraat 175; www.spullenhulp.be

**Until DEC 31** Fashion & Design: Second Hand Second Life, works by Belgian fashion and object designers made out of recycled clothing, objects and furniture from the Spullenhulp charity

## Magritte Museum

Koningsplein 1; 02 508 32 11,

www.musee-magritte-museum.be  
**Until JAN 2** The painting The Threatened Assassin comes to the museum on loan from MoMA in New York to hang beside its companion piece The Secret Player, bringing Magritte's sole diptych temporarily together

## Museum van Elsene

**Until JAN 9** Devout/Divine: Fashion vs Religion, examples of religious symbolism in designs of the past decennia

**Literair Museum**  
Bampselaan 35; 011.26.17.87  
[www.literairmuseum.be](http://www.literairmuseum.be)

**Until FEB 26** Niet van de poes! De kat in het kinderboek, a collection of children's books and stories about cats

**z33**  
Zuivelmarkt 33; 011.29.59.60  
[www.z33.be](http://www.z33.be)

**Until MAR 13** Alter Nature: We Can, works by international artists about human manipulation of nature

**Kemzeke**

**Verbeke Foundation**  
Westakker; 03.789.22.07  
[www.verbekefoundation.com](http://www.verbekefoundation.com)  
**Until JAN 30** The Cloudknitters: 100 Records, record sleeves decorated by visual artists  
**Until APR 10** Certified Copy, works by 20 international artists on the theme of reproduction and cloning  
**Until APR 10** Mark Verstockt: A Portrait, an overview of the Flemish artist's work in celebration of his 80th birthday  
**Until APR 10** Trou de Ville, group show

featuring press releases, e-mails, videos and photographs on guerilla art

**Knokke-Heist**

**Cultuurcentrum Scharpoord**  
Meerlaan 32; 050.630.430  
[www.congocollectie.be](http://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](http://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**

**Museum M**  
Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28; 016.27.29.29 [www.mleuven.be](http://www.mleuven.be)  
**Until JAN 9** Ozo: Joke Van Leeuwen, works by the Dutch author, poet, illustrator and performer  
**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

**Until FEB 13** Katrien Vermeire, nature photographs by the Flemish artist  
**Until FEB 13** Koenraad Tinel: Flandria Catholica, drawings by te Flemish artist  
**Until MAR 20** David Shrigley, drawings and sculptures by the British artist

**Ostend**

**Kunstmuseum Aan Zee (MuZee)**  
Romestraat 11; 059.50.81.18  
[www.muzee.be](http://www.muzee.be)  
**Until MAR 27** The Responsive Subject, works by Flemish artist Guy Mees

**Venetiaanse Gaanderijen**

Zeedijk/Parisstraat; 050.40.34.38  
[www.west-vlaanderen.be](http://www.west-vlaanderen.be)  
**Until MAR 13** Visual Arts Competition 2010, recent works by West Flemish artists

**Tervuren**

**Royal Museum for Central Africa**  
Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11 [www.africamuseum.be](http://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



**Belgium's EU Presidency:** Belgium takes the helm of the European Union Council for six months, with a cultural programme to mark its presidency

**Until DEC 31** across the country [www.brusselsinternational.be](http://www.brusselsinternational.be)

**Antwerp**

**Cirque du Soleil: Saltimbanco**  
**Until JAN 2** at Lotto Arena, Schijnpoortweg 119

0900.26.060, [www.cirquedusoleil.com](http://www.cirquedusoleil.com)

**Bruges**

**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](http://www.bruggecentraal.be)

**Brussels**

**Armwoede, Pauvreté, Poverty:** Programme of talks, activities, performances and artistic interventions on poverty  
**Until JAN 16** at KVS, Lakensestraat 146 [www.kvs.be](http://www.kvs.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](http://www.abconcerts.be)

## Holidays! .... markets, special events and New Year celebrations

**Aalst**

**Until JAN 9** Sun-Thurs until 22.00; Fri-Sat until 00.00 Covered ice-skating rink and Christmas village, Grote Markt; [www.aalst.be](http://www.aalst.be)

**Antwerp**

**Until JAN 2** Sun-Thurs 11.00-20.00, Fri-Sat 11.00-22.00 (24, 25 & 31 Dec until 17.00) Christmas market and skating rinks, Grote Markt & Steenplein  
**Until DEC 24** Music for Life, Groenplaats JAN 9 11.00-14.00 Mayor's New Year's Drink, Grote Markt  
**JAN 15** from 17.00 Christmas Tree Burning and Fire Show, Linkeroever [www.antwerpen.be](http://www.antwerpen.be)

**Blankenberge**

**Until JAN 9** 10.00-12.00 & 13.30-22.00 Christmas market and covered ice-skating rink, Leopold III-plein  
**DEC 28** 17.00 VTM Christmas Parade [www.blankenberge.be](http://www.blankenberge.be)

**Bokrijk (Genk)**

**DEC 26-30 & JAN 2** 16.00-21.00 Winteravonden, fireworks, music and lighted historic buildings [www.bokrijk.be](http://www.bokrijk.be)

**Brecht**

**DEC 22** 17.00-22.00 Indoor and outdoor Christmas market, Bethaniënlei 5, Sint-Job in't Goor

**Bruges**

**Until DEC 22** Mon & Wed from 19.30 Brrr... ugge Winter Nights, performances in mediaeval atmosphere, Arentshof  
**Until JAN 2** 11.00-19.00 daily Christmas Markets, Markt, Simon Stevinklein & Walplein  
**Until JAN 16** 10.00-19.00 daily Ice Sculpture Festival, train station, [www.icesculpture.be](http://www.icesculpture.be) [www.bruggeplus.be](http://www.bruggeplus.be)

**Brussels**

**Until JAN 2** City Centre Christmas market, Beurs, Sint-Katelijneplein & Vismarkt [www.brussel.be](http://www.brussel.be)

**De Haan**

**Until JAN 9** times vary Ice-skating rink, Oude Loskaai [www.dekust.be](http://www.dekust.be)

**De Panne**

**Until JAN 8** Christmas markets, ice-skating rink, live music, more [www.depanne.be](http://www.depanne.be)

**Ghent**

**Until DEC 30** Mon-Fri 13.00-21.00, Sat-Sun 11.00-21.00 Christmas Market, Sint-Baafsplaat  
**Until JAN 16** Winterdroom Festival, with ice-skating rink, funfair, market and performance tent, Sint-Pietersplein  
**JAN 9** from 11.00 Nieuwjaarsdrink, Sint-Baafsplaat [www.visitgent.be](http://www.visitgent.be)

**Hasselt**

**Until JAN 9** 10.00-22.00 (Winterland cafe open until midnight); DEC 24 until 18.00; **DEC 25 & JAN 1** from 13.00 Christmas market, Kolonel Dusartplein [www.winterland.be](http://www.winterland.be)

**Knokke**

**Until JAN 9** 10.00-22.00 Covered ice-skating rink, Verweeplein [www.knokke-heist.be](http://www.knokke-heist.be)

**Koksijde**

**Until JAN 9** 10.00-21.30; **DEC 24** 14.00-17.30; **DEC 29 & 31** 10.00-17.30 Ice-skating rink, Gemeentehuis  
**DEC 29** 19.00 Light parade and fireworks, from Zeelant at Japans Paviljoenstraat to Zeeplein at Terlinckplein [www.koksijde.be](http://www.koksijde.be)

**Middelkerke**

**DEC 23-JAN 2** Christmas market, Epernayplein [www.middelkerke.be](http://www.middelkerke.be)

**Ostend**

**DEC 26-JAN 3** Christmas Square, Alfons Pieterslaan  
**Until JAN 9** 11.00-18.00/21.00 Ice-skating rink, Wapenplein [www.eindejaarinoostende.be](http://www.eindejaarinoostende.be)

**Roeselare**

**Until JAN 10** 10.00-22.00 Ice-skating rink, ski hill, night shopping and Christmas village [www.centrumroeselare.be](http://www.centrumroeselare.be)

**Sint-Niklaas**

**Until JAN 9** 11.00-23.00; **Fri-Sat until 1.00**; **DEC 24 & 31** 11.00-18.00 Ice-skating rink, Grote Markt [www.sint-niklaas.be](http://www.sint-niklaas.be)

**Sint-Truiden**

**Until JAN 9** 11.30-22.00 Christmas market and ice-skating rink, Groenmarkt (behind Town Hall) [www.toerisme-sint-truiden.be](http://www.toerisme-sint-truiden.be)

**Turnhout**

**Until DEC 30** 13.30-22.00; **DEC 24** until 18.00; **DEC 31** until 1.00 Covered ice-skating rink [www.turnhout.be](http://www.turnhout.be)

**Veurne**

**Until JAN 16** Mon-Thurs 11.00-21.00; Fri-Sun 11.00-22.00; **DEC 24 & 31** 11.00-16.00; **DEC 25 & JAN 1** 14.00-22.00; **JAN 10-16** 11.00-18.00 Covered ice-skating rink and Christmas market, Grote Markt [www.veurne.be](http://www.veurne.be)

**Waregem**

**Until JAN 9** Mon, Tue, Thurs 17.00-21.00; Fri 17.00-22.00; Sat-Sun 11.00-22.00; **DEC 24 & 31** 11.00-16.00; **DEC 25 & JAN 1** 14.00-22.00 Covered ice-skating rink, Park Baron Casier [www.waregem.be](http://www.waregem.be)

**Wetteren**

**Until JAN 9** 10.00-22.00 Ice-skating rink, Markt [www.winterinwetteren.be](http://www.winterinwetteren.be)

**Ypres**

Until DEC 26 Tues-Thurs 16.00-20.00; Fri-Sat 14.00-22.00; Sun 14.00-20.00 Christmas market, Grote Markt [www.kerstmarkt-ieper.be](http://www.kerstmarkt-ieper.be)

**New Year's Eve**

**Aalst**

**De langste nacht:** Dance party featuring Eristoff Nineties and Nillies party and Radio2 Prehistorie Live  
**DEC 31** 22.45, Florahallen, Albrechtlaan 78 [www.lavera-events.be](http://www.lavera-events.be)

**Antwerp**

**Eindejaarsvuurwerk:** Fireworks [www.antwerpen.be](http://www.antwerpen.be)  
**DEC 31** 23.30 on the Scheldt at Zuiderterras [www.antwerpen.be](http://www.antwerpen.be)

**Millennium Nacht:** Dinner, fireworks, live music, dance party and more  
**DEC 31** 19.00-6.00, Hangar 29, Waagnatie, Rijnkaai 150 [www.oudjaar.com](http://www.oudjaar.com)

**So It Begins:** DJs and live music  
**DEC 31** 22.00-6.00, Zappa, August Leyweg 6 [www.awesomeconcepts.be](http://www.awesomeconcepts.be)

**Lucky U:** DJ dance party  
**DEC 31** 21.00-7.00, Antwerp Expo, Jan van Rijswijkstraat 191 [www.luckyu.be](http://www.luckyu.be)

**Oudejaarsavond:** Dinner, concert and afterparty  
**DEC 31** 19.00 Horta Grand Café, Hopland 2 [www.grandcafehorta.be](http://www.grandcafehorta.be)

**New Year's Eve Party:** Gay disco with indoor fireworks, dancers, more  
**DEC 31** 23.00-6.00, Red&Blue, Lange Schipperskapelstraat 11 [www.redandblue.be](http://www.redandblue.be)

**Brussels**

**Fireworks:** Special fireworks display with the colours of the Spanish, Hungarian and Belgian flags  
**DEC 31** 23.00, Kunstberg [www.brussel.be](http://www.brussel.be)

**Ghent**

**Beats of Love:** Electronic music party

ROBYN BOYLE

# bite



## Meet Meat

Steak may be on the menu in 95% of Belgian restaurants, but that doesn't necessarily make it a banal choice. I enjoy a good steak so much that I looked for a place that specialises in it and found Meet Meat in Brussels' Schuman district. To make this reservation, I really had to go out of my comfort zone, setting aside my partiality towards smaller, cosy establishments with old-world charm.

Meet Meat has been around for almost three years and caters to a mostly EU crowd. Its decor is contemporary minimalist, with straight lines, hidden lighting and a whole lot of black and white. The wait staff is efficient and professional, which is not to say overtly friendly. But I keep my focus on the menu; this is an Argentinean steak and wine house, and I intend to sink my teeth into a succulent slab of beef.

The menu options are straight forward: select a steak according to cut (rump, rib eye, sirloin or fillet) and weight (200-500 grams). At the back of the menu, a handy drawing of a cow points out the locations of different cuts. Despite my disdain for an extra charge for sauce, I ordered Archiduc sauce to go with my 250g rib eye, and my companion as well, to go with his 250g sirloin.

You have a choice between fries or jacket potatoes. We took the former, although, in retrospect, the sour cream-filled baked potatoes at the next table looked far more appetising than our slightly stale fries. Fortunately, the plate also included a leafy green salad topped with fried onions and olive oil.

We tucked into our steaks using the razor-sharp knives provided. They might as well have been butter knives. I've never eaten a piece of meat more tender than my companion's medium-done

sirloin. As expected, my rib eye was also extremely soft (but not to compare with the sirloin). It must be the high-quality beef (flown over from Argentina), or the grilling method (hot and fast, the flames never touching the meat), or the combination of the two that make these steaks so exceptionally good.

The perfect accompaniment to this meal was a bottle of Malbec, an Argentinean varietal wine known for its deep violet colour and prune and rhubarb aromas. Our particular bottle, Maestre de Campo, was intense but with a surprisingly smooth finish. Part of the pleasure was sipping from the large bowl-like wine glasses.

On to dessert, then. The cinnamon-infused apple tartlet – crusty and obviously homemade – was served with a little porcelain pitcher of warm and gooey caramel sauce, which nicely offset the scoop of vanilla ice cream.

But I had not a single regret about my choice – crème brûlée in its typical earthenware dish. It passed the sound test, giving off that delightful crackling noise when tapped with a spoon. Underneath the crispy layer of caramelised sugar, the rich custard base, speckled with bits of vanilla bean, was chilled and tasted of fresh eggs and cream.

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

► Stevinstraat 124, Brussels; 02.231.07.42

🕒 Mon-Fri 12.00-14.30 & 19.00-22.00

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## NEXT YEAR IN FLANDERS TODAY

Along with most of the rest of you, Flanders Today is taking a bit of a holiday.

We'll back in your mailbox on 12 January

Happy holidays from all of us to all of you!

2010

## TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



### • vergankelijkheid •

For a few days each year the maple tree burns red in defiance of approaching winter. Now the leaves have fallen, and I pass bare branches. Winter hasn't been able to wait to finish what autumn started, and the summer is a faded memory. Yet of course patience will bring spring and buds and renewal.

But not so with the past, which we feel the urge to preserve. Take the re-laying of Fochplein in the centre of Leuven. When replacing pipes, workmen came across archeological remains, in fact *middeleeuwse kelders* – mediaeval cellars. And when the archeologists start digging, they expect more: *er zouden ook Romeinse restanten kunnen opduiken* – Roman remains could also appear.

This should come as no surprise since *onder elke middeleeuwse stad gaat een schat aan informatie schuil* – under every mediaeval town a treasure of information lies hidden.

But why dig it up? It causes major disruption to local life and business. Some shops on Fochplein hang out hopeful "Winkels bereikbaar" – Shops accessible" – signs but must surely take a hit. That's the view of the town's burgemeester – mayor, Louis Tobback, not one to mince his words.

Tobback hopes the archeologists will at least find *de handtas van ons grootmoeder* – our grandmother's handbag, clearly a family legend and no doubt lost when the centre of Leuven was bombarded in the First

World War, priceless university library and all.

Flemish classicist Luc Devoldere argues in a recent essay that such efforts to preserve ancient remains as *erfgoed* – heritage – may be misplaced. After all, *vergankelijkheid* is *van deze wereld* – transience is of this world. Should we strive to restore *vergane glorie* – faded glory? Should 19th-century facades be retained to front modern offices? Should I consider botox?

Luc recalls a sequence in Fellini's *Roma* where, in a similar fashion to Leuven, workmen uncover a Roman villa. Before their eyes, the frescoes slide off the walls as the air touches them. "*De mens verandert de dingen door zich erin te bewegen*" – People change things by moving among them, claims Devoldere. *Hij wil de dingen redder* – He wants to save things, *en juist door ze te redder* – and just by trying to save them, *maakt hij ze kapot* – he ruins them."

You can argue that you can't prepare for the future unless you know your past. True, but how long should we preserve the past? *Vergankelijkheid* – transience used to ensure that most of the past would fade from memory. Now, we have so many ways of setting our grannies' handbags in aspic.

With this brief nod to *vergankelijkheid* at the end of the old year, I wish my readers all the very best as we turn our back on 2010 and welcome the new year.

## THE LAST WORD . . .

### Slow justice

"The judicial backlog in Belgium is dramatic."

Law professor Hendrik Vuyse, who saw a lawsuit started by his father reach its end after 34 years

### Health check

"No, Belgium is not the sick man of Europe."

International Monetary Fund Belgium expert Erik De Vrijer, contradicting Bart De Wever's recent claim

### Final call

"It was time for it all to come to an end. I'm glad it's over."

Marijn De Valck, star of the long-running Flemish sitcom *FC De Kampioenen*, on her last day on the set

### Not dead yet

"Apparently, the European Union is at death's door. That sort of pessimism is exaggerated. Europe is tough."

Herman Van Rompuy, president of the European Council, on reports of the demise of the euro