



Nordic Neverland

From warriors to queens, democrats to design gurus, Flanders is awash with Northern influence

p8

Government talks remain deadlocked

Threat of new elections looms as options run out

ALAN HOPE

The search for a solution to Belgium's political impasse goes on as N-VA's Bart De Wever becomes an international celebrity, and the darkening clouds of economic speculation loom on the horizon.

Last week Flemish socialist Johan Vande Lanotte, the latest in a long line of negotiators appointed by the king to bring the parties together, handed in his resignation. This followed the rejection of his document establishing a basis for further talks by CD&V under newly elected president Wouter Beke and by the

nationalist N-VA. Other parties, notably on the French-speaking side, expressed a desire to carry on talking, although their reactions to Vande Lanotte's document were almost as negative as the two Flemish parties.

As the document was presented, De Wever was appearing on Flemish TV as a participant in the quiz show *De allerslimste mens ter wereld* (*The Very Smartest Person in the World*). That story was picked up by the Associated Press and carried by international newspapers such as The *Washington Post*. De Wever, in what he

described as a "blow below the belt", was likened to Nero.

Vande Lanotte's reaction, meanwhile, was to prepare his resignation letter and get ready to bring it to the king, together with his evaluation of matters as they currently stand among the seven parties. That should have taken place on Monday, but instead the meeting was postponed until Tuesday, after *Flanders Today* had gone to press, because of the ill health of Vande Lanotte's mother.

Economists have warned that the continued political stalemate could increase the danger

of speculators, launching the sort of attack on the Belgian economy that was seen in the cases of Greece and Ireland. But Axel Miller, chairman of investment bankers Petercam, said the situation is not similar as most Belgian debt is held by Belgian investors.

Meanwhile, Goldman Sachs, in a report on the economies of Europe, said Belgium's strong financial structures would help keep interest rates down. To the question, "Will Belgium split up?" the report answers, "Probably not."

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The Year ahead

Jitters over the depreciating euro and the threat of a credit downgrade were serious preoccupations as last year drew to a close. But what will 2011 bring to Flanders?

DEREK BLYTH ♦ EMMA PORTIER DAVIS ♦ ESTHER KING

Putting back the financial fizz

Economically speaking, it seems there is hardly any reason to hope for a Happy New Year with European economic turbulence still rocking the markets, but economists are surprisingly bullish about Flanders. "Despite the state of public finance, the economic prospects of Flanders are good and similar to those of the core euro-zone countries," said Carsten Brzenski from ING. Indeed, many economists are optimistic that the drop in the currency will broaden economic recovery in Flanders and have a positive effect on the European economy in general.

Flanders' export-oriented economy is well-suited to profit from a low euro. "The weak euro is definitely good news for exporters," said Etienne de Callataÿ of Degroof Bank.

With many of these destined for Germany, the region stands to benefit indirectly from a likely pick-up in the German economy. Initially, the trade balance with non-European countries will be negative as imports – notably of commodities such as oil and gas – become more expensive, said Bart Van Craeynest from KBC. So Flanders could lose initially, but the weak euro will eventually bolster the economy.

For jobs, the future is relatively rosy with labour markets recovering from the recession. Economists say they expect employment growth, albeit at a slightly lower rate than in 2010. But a worrying trend is beginning to surface as Flemish entrepreneurs are having difficulties recruiting adequate personnel.

"Specific skill sets are needed for jobs, and one can begin to see businesses having problems finding the right people in the labour market. It will likely become an important issue during the recovery," said Van Craeynest.

Our American partners expect continued improvement and economic growth across the board in Belgium this year, "maybe in the industrial sector in particular," said the American Chamber of Commerce. The climate for investment and merger and acquisition activity is also positive, with non-financial corporations coming out of the recession cash-rich. The hope of the American Chamber of Commerce is that a new federal government in Belgium will also reinforce the positive trends in the national economy.

Short-term gains from the weak euro could nevertheless result in long-term pain. "All in all, the weak euro is good news for us now, but in the long run a strong currency remains desirable since it goes hand in hand with strong economic performance," said de Callataÿ. Indeed, growth for the national economy could be lower in 2011. The National Bank of Belgium's provisional growth figure for 2010 is 2.1%, but its forecast for 2011 is only 1.8%. Despite the lower figures, high government debt, failure to form a new government and weaker currency, economists seem to agree there is still cause for optimism in the economic trend forecasts for Flanders in 2011. EK

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Cool for Doel



© hester

They might be living in a doomed town, but the people of Doel know how to throw a party. First there was the Doelse Feesten last August, and now residents are planning to hold a *friet* party to which thousands of supporters are invited.

Doel is a tiny town on the left bank of the Scheldt estuary, north of Antwerp. Pending a court decision, the few remaining residents are facing eviction, after which the town will be demolished. (See *Flanders Today*, 8 December).

So the village has no future, and, to make matters worse, it has no *frituur*. Doel (pictured above) is one of 1,626 municipalities across Belgium with no proper place to buy a *bakje frieten* and a dollop of mayonnaise.

The figures come from Vandemoortele, the Ghent-based company that makes cooking oil for frying fries. It recently organised a competition among the *frituur*-free villages to see which one could muster the most support.

The winner was Doel, where just over 40 people, including squatters, are still living. The residents are forced to travel 13.8 km to reach a *frituur*.

Doel managed to muster a healthy 3,521 votes, beating Pollinkhove (West Flanders, population 620 and 1.5 km to *frituur*) and Heindonk (Antwerp province, population 700, 2.3 km to the *frituur*).

The three top winners will now receive a visit from the Vandemoortele mobile *frietkot*, where residents and voters can enjoy free *frituur* and free cooking oil from the sponsors.

For Jan Creve, one of the leading activists fighting for Doel's future, the prize is proof that the town still holds an attraction for people, while the victory is a testament to "the widespread support Doel enjoys across Flanders".

ALAN HOPE

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FLANDERS TODAY
JANUARY 12, 2011

News in brief

Minister-president Kris Peeters has expressed regret that he took part in a **mountain climbing expedition** instead of attending a debate in the Flemish Parliament on the region's budget. Peeters was part of an expedition of asthma sufferers that set out to climb Aconcagua (6,962m) in Argentina but did not complete the climb after suffering altitude sickness. "I wouldn't do it again," he said on his return. "The next time there's a debate on the budget, I'll be there."

The Flemish League against Cancer (VLK) has criticised the **government's smoking policy**, pointing out that the number of smokers fell between 2004 and 2008 by only 3% and still stands at more than one in four adults. The government has also not done enough to enforce the smoking ban in public places, most notably in cafes, the league argues.

The large quantities of road salt used during the end-of-year cold weather is **contaminating groundwater** and putting birds at risk, according to the bird protection group Vogelbescherming Vlaanderen. Householders have been asked to put out a bowl of fresh drinking water in gardens and balconies to help the birds.

Turkish and Arab schoolchildren should be allowed to celebrate their own community festivals with days off school, according to Flemish education minister Pascal Smet. The two groups of Muslims do not always mark the main holidays on the same day, and Turkish representatives have claimed that the Muslim Executive, which sets the official holidays, is too heavily weighted towards the Arab community.

The **contemporary arts centre** Wiels in Brussels has been granted a €1.5 million credit guarantee by the Brussels Region to allow it to raise money to pay bills and rent. The centre is still waiting for a renovation subsidy of €2.7 million and has run into financial difficulties without the grant.

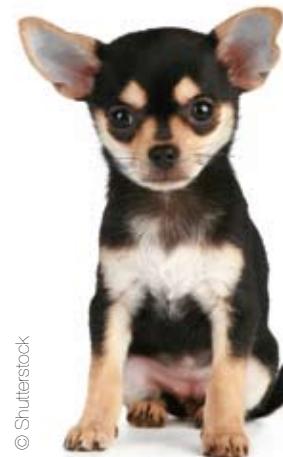
The statue of **Mannekin Pis** in Brussels was "censored" last week by protesters in response to a new tough media law introduced



© Reuters

in Hungary, which now holds the presidency of the European Council. To mark the hand-over from Belgium, Mannekin Pis was dressed in the uniform of a Hungarian Hussar.

The chihuahua was the **most popular breed of dog in Belgium** in 2010, with 12,539 bought, according to the government's identification and registration office. The Jack Russell came second at 8,685.



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after the roof collapsed at the end of December. The new church complex will also include a community centre, but the location has yet to be decided. The 72-year-old church was the cause of a major traffic bottleneck in the town, which can be tackled if the church is rebuilt in another location.

Scientists at the European Institute for Public Health and Consumer Protection in Ispra, Italy, have developed a technique to **verify the authenticity of Trappist beers** and protect against counterfeits. Belgium produces six of Europe's seven recognised Trappist beers, three of them in Flanders (Westmalle, Achel and Westvleteren).

Prison officers protested at **Christmas gifts given to prisoners** in Hasselt. The prisoners received five weeks' free television and €10 each in phone credits. A prison officer said the action, costing more than €17,000, was a scandal given the state of Belgium's prisons.

A man who found a **disused safe containing €300,000** in cash in a former Dexia bank in Ghent has complained at the €10,000 reward offered by the bank. Speaking via a lawyer, builder Kaya Ferhat said a 10% reward would have been more appropriate, given that a less honest finder might have kept the lot.

The **centre of Leuven will become a 30km/h zone** from the end of January, the city announced. The restrictions will apply to all streets within the Ring and could extend to outer areas later.

Ghent university researcher Freija Descamps saw in the **New Year at the South Pole**, as the only Flemish member of a team working on the IceCube telescope, the world's largest. On her Cold Life blog, she described the festivities as the team joined German and Austrian skiers racing to the Pole. "It was a rather surreal party, with people standing between tents and trucks. In big polar coats and with warm hats, neck-gaiters, gloves and happy-new-year tiaras! :)" It was nice to meet the adventurous skiers and their entourage." <http://coldlife.blog.foreach.com>



Cold Life

The **church in Lutselus**, part of the municipality of Diepenbeek, Limburg province, will be rebuilt with insurance money. The entire building had to be demolished

FLANDERS TODAY

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A colony of 218 top racing pigeons was sold for €1.4 million after the Limburg owner died. One single bird went to a Chinese bidder for €156,000



ANJA OTTE

Market jitters, while king weighs options

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The king now has several options, according to experts.

Put Vande Lanotte back to work. The socialist has already made it clear he's gone as far as he can go, so it's unlikely he would agree. Apart from anything else, his mother's condition is not improving, so he would probably rather be available to provide family support than deal with a stubborn group of negotiators.

Put Vande Lanotte in a room with French-speaking socialist Elio Di Rupo and De Wever to hammer out a solution. De Wever has expressed a willingness to talk alone with Di Rupo, who in turn prefers the option of wider talks.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



1,559
centenarians living in Belgium, four times more than in 1990

19,941
asylum applications submitted in 2010, 16% higher than in 2009, according to figures from the Commissariat General for Refugees

49 hours
during which motoring organisation Touring recorded more than 300 km of tailbacks on the country's roads in 2010, compared to 24 hours in 2009, and barely eight hours in 2008. The record was set on 10 February, when snow caused 948 km of traffic jams

11,095
people last year turned in their car number plates in return for a season ticket from public transport authority De Lijn. In February, the duration of the ticket was cut from three years to one

1,727,208
people bought tickets for a Clouseau concert at the Sportpaleis in Antwerp since the group began its annual holiday concerts in 2000. In 2004, the series ran to 18 shows, twice as many as this year's run, which has just ended and which the duo says will be the last

Call on De Wever to come up with a solution, as he has hinted he might like to do. The plan also has the support of the French-speaking parties, who see the advantage of putting De Wever on the spot. But De Wever is not keen to walk into a trap, and he already had a turn as negotiator shortly after the elections.

Ask CD&V and N-VA to take over the search for a solution, since they were the two parties who rejected Vande Lanotte's document.

Call new elections. The political parties could halt the whole process and prepare for new elections. After more than 210 days of stalemate, the country is the object of international scorn at its inability to form a government.

It's anyone's guess how the electorate would react to being asked to vote again after doing so just last June, while there has been no shadow of a government in the meantime. N-VA might pick up votes to give it a stronger position; it might just as easily lose votes if De Wever is blamed for intransigence. The PS of Elio Di Rupo might hang onto its votes or gain a few. None of the



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other parties is likely to relish the prospect of new elections. And, with likely the same faces around the table, new elections do not guarantee better success.

In the longer term, with the talks seemingly stalled for good, there are few options left:

Institute an emergency government that would have larger powers than the current caretaker government to allow it to carry out certain functions that have been suspended, mainly on matters of budget.

Continue to seek a government by involving other parties. Essentially, that means the French-speaking liberals MR and Flanders' Open VLD. The trouble is that Open VLD torpedoed the last Leterme government, and both liberal parties took a beating in the elections that followed. It would be hard for the other parties to put them up as a way out of the impasse. ♦

*What they said:
see The Last Word, p16*

Changes in the law

New regulations and tariffs came into force in Belgium on 1 January. Here's our top 10

- 1 Belgacom has raised some of its rates for fixed internet and fixed and mobile calls, by between 0.5% and 2.5%. The company said the average household would pay an extra €0.38 a month.
- 2 The Flemish water supply company VMW, supplying 170 municipalities, raised its tariffs by 3.11%.
- 3 The price of an ordinary postage stamp rises from €.69 to €.71 (or €0.61 when bought in multiples of 10). A stamp for postage within Europe rises by €.03 to €1.03, while international letters go up by €.05 to €1.20.
- 4 Eco-cheques can now be used to buy bio food, as well as other environmentally conscious products. Also added to the list of approved purchases: electric scooters and tickets for train travel.
- 5 Bank transfers, even within Belgium, must now be carried out using the standard EU form, which includes IBAN number and BIC code. The old orange *virement* is no more.
- 6 Cigarette packets, in addition to grisly photos, must now also carry the telephone number (0800 111 00) and web address (www.tabakstop.be) of Tabakstop, which aims to help smokers quit.
- 7 Tobacco companies are banned from carrying out experiments on live animals. All experiments across sectors must be approved on the condition there is no other alternatives available, but health minister Laurette Onkelinx has said she will not consider any application from the tobacco industry.
- 8 Producers of *foie gras* are now obliged to house their geese (or ducks) in roomier common holding stalls, rather than small individual cages.
- 9 The threshold for tax deduction of charitable gifts goes up from €30 to €40.
- 10 The charge for a Catholic church wedding will rise by €50 to €250, while a prayer service for the dead goes up to €75. The rate for an ordinary Mass is now €15.



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Good to know

2011 is the European year of Volunteer Work, as well as the International Year of Chemistry, the International Year of Woodland and the United Nations Year of People of African Origin

FIFTH COLUMN

Man at the top

Shortly before Christmas, all eyes were on Kris Peeters. The Flemish minister-president had agreed to climb Aconcagua, a mountain in Argentina, accompanied by a number of asthma patients. Unfortunately, this charitable mission coincided with the debate on the budget in the Flemish parliament.

Peeters had conferred with the leaders of the opposition, he said, but they later denied giving him the go-ahead. Instead, they accused him of contempt for the parliament. "The higher the monkey climbs, the more it shows its behind," said Sven Gatz of the liberal party Open VLD, quoting the French philosopher Montaigne. To make matters worse, Peeters was forced to abandon the Argentinean mission because of altitude sickness.

Upon his return, Peeters was one of the leading figures in the CD&V party who studied the document presented by mediator Johan Vande Lanotte (SP.A). This was meant to provide the basis for further discussions in the long-running process to form a new federal government.

Vande Lanotte asked the parties involved to give a simple "yes" or "no" to the text. The Flemish Christian democrats were one of the first to react. No-one had expected a clear "yes" from them, since the party was notorious for saying "on the one hand... on the other hand...", but a "yes, but" seemed probable. The answer turned out to be a "no" – or rather a "no unless..."

Given the party's history of upholding the Belgian state, this answer blew many peoples' minds, if only because of its clarity. Many party members could not believe that their party would be the one to stand in the way of an agreement. A number of party officials who had discussed the text even said that this was not the answer they had agreed on.

By the next day, clarity had made way for confusion. Party president Wouter Beke had apparently wanted Vande Lanotte to continue his talks – the exact opposite of what he had said the day before.

So what had happened? After the official party meeting, CD&V's answer was formulated by a small group known as the G4 – Wouter Beke, prime minister Yves Leterme, vice-prime minister Steven Vanackere and Kris Peeters.

Peeters had been particularly wary of the document, fearing it would cost Flanders money (which Vande Lanotte denies). The G4 therefore changed the "yes but" into a "no unless" – with the known consequences. Kris Peeters may not have made it to the top of the Aconcagua, but he has definitely made it to the top of his party.

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The Year Ahead

Gloom about the recession is being replaced by a mood of optimism across almost every sector in Flanders

→ continued from page 1



Fashion Brights

Often a bellwether for the economy, fashion looks set to dazzle in 2011, with the dreary Belgian winter failing to dampen designers' spirit. This year promises the return of bright sparkling colours and eclectic prints. You can already feel that ice slowly melting. The technicolour trend has taken the fashion world by storm and fluorescent colours are firmly back in the spotlight. Sticking around are striped prints, with broad verticals. And anything goes in 2011, so mix and match these with horizontals. "Different prints and colours can all be combined, everything is possible," says style guru Lies Vangeel of the Flanders Fashion Institute in Antwerp.

Vangeel also predicts a major revival of

bell-bottom pants and suggests we get ready to welcome back high-waisted, wide-legged trousers and A-line skirts as well, adorned with colourful, 70s-inspired prints. Accessorise with platform shoes, waistcoats and cat eye sunglasses.

Lace is still bang on trend for women and the only way to wear a miniskirt this year will be under a long sheer skirt. The maxi trend is here to stay, so keep an eye out for long skirts and dresses.

And men, be warned: your closet is being raided by trend-following women. Your favourite vests, trousers, ties and bowties, may mysteriously go missing. The good news is that this year's menswear promises to be colourful, so accept that dark blazer as a lost cause

and get your hands on a pair of coloured shoes instead.

And the colour of the season will be a bold orangey-red, already appearing on the runways and hitting the streets near you soon. For those with a taste for softer colours, white, beiges and browns are sticking around, too. The look of 2011 should be a "mix of elegance and casual, never trashy," advises style consultant Linda Van Waesberge.

Shop to your heart's content during the sales, and be on the lookout for new collections coming in at the end of January. Van Waesberge recommends Rue Blanche's "fresh and beautiful" summer collection, and Delvaux's special spring collection featuring Flemish designer Dirk Van Saene. **EK**

Cleaner transport

The auto show begins on 15 January so expect to see some shiny, new cars purring along the Flemish roads before too long. Probably more environmentally-friendly cars too. The hot favourite at the Heysel show is likely to be the Fiat 500 TwinAir, which is the latest effort by its Italian developers to meet CO2 emission limits laid down by the European Commission.

Last year, with the closure of Antwerp's Opel factory, the future of the car-making industry in Flanders itself looked decidedly bleak. But worry not. The Volkswagen factory in eastern Brussels has just had a €300-million refit and will be turning out some 500 units of the Audi A1 every day to meet expected demand for the company's first upmarket small car. Meanwhile, over in Genk, the Ford factory will soon be producing a new version of the company's Galaxy people carrier, although some drivers with kids in

tow may find themselves tempted by the sporty S-Max version. While the car show is all about getting people into cars, the Flemish authorities are doing all they can to get people out of cars. It seems likely that the surge in Cambio car-share vehicles will continue in 2010 due to support from rail operator NMBS. Figures released by Flemish transport minister Hilde Crevits show that the Cambio car pool in Flanders grew from 53 to 126 vehicles over the past three years, while registered users rose from 1,368 to 2,994. Hardly mega figures, but at least a small sign that some people are converting to the sharing concept.

As well as featuring more prominently in the auto show, we're likely to spot a few more electric cars out and about in 2011 as the authorities slowly adapt the road network to the cleaner energy source. The rail authority NMBS is giving a boost to electric cars by

launching a project in cooperation with Siemens that will see electricity charging stations installed outside main rail stations. The pilot project was launched recently in Ghent with Flemish film director Nic Balthazar injecting some cool into the experiment. "Thirteen years ago, I was one of the first to test drive a hydrogen-fuelled car," he told reporters. "Let's hope this experiment is more successful!" A few years from now, your every journey could begin at a railway station, according to NMBS spokesman Jannie Haek. "In our opinion, future mobility isn't about just using a car, or just using the train," he said recently. "We want the station to offer a whole menu of options, depending on what a person needs at that particular time, whether it's a bike from Max Mobi, a car from Cambio, or a tram, bus or train." **DB**



City Shape-Ups



The opening of the MAS museum in Antwerp on 17 May looks set to be the big urban event of 2011. Everyone will be there. You'll see. The bold design and superb waterfront location is likely to win instant praise in the international press and bring tourists flooding to the narrow streets of northern Antwerp. You can expect loft apartment prices to head steadily upwards as fashionable new cafes and restaurants cluster around the museum and in the nearby Eilandje district. This will be bad news, of course, for Het Zuid, which used to be the fashionable place to live but could well suffer from the closure of the Fine Arts Museum for the next 18 months. Some upmarket restaurants in Zuid might find it hard to break even without the steady flow of art visitors, who

will be heading instead to MAS to see the Old Masters formerly hung in the fine arts building.

Elsewhere in Flanders, interesting developments are happening in station quarters as a result of rail operator NMBS's massive investment in its main stations. Antwerp station has already won worldwide praise for its exciting blend of old and new, while Central Station in Brussels has benefitted from a major renovation. The aim is to turn stations into urban hubs where people will meet and shop as well as waiting for the delayed train to Hasselt. This has worked well in Antwerp, although many of the shops in the Brussels station remain unoccupied.

But these transformations cause immense disruption, turning stations into no-go areas

for several years. So it's going to take eight long years before Gent Sint Pieters station emerges from scaffolding as a "station for the 21st century". Until it does, it's unlikely that many will be meeting for a coffee in the station cafe.

You might also notice some changes in Ypres and around in 2011 as the Flemish government pushes ahead with its plan to invest in the Westhoek in preparation for the 100th anniversary of the First World War. The aim of generating tourist income out of the First World War has been criticised in the Flemish press, so you can be fairly confident that any development to be carried out with careful respect for the past. Expect smart new B&Bs and inspiring visitors' centres, rather than a new rash of chocolate and beer shops. **DB**

From the river to the tap

Although the region scored some recent successes on the environment front with Flemish minister Joke Schauvliege helping to usher in a global deal on biodiversity, closer to home the government will have to turn its attention to water. A major part of the environment ministry's budget will be dedicated to this in 2011.

With floods and, at the same time, ironically, water shortages, improving policy in this area, which is also heralded by environmentalists as the next big topic to take up globally, will become increasingly dominant on the Flemish agenda.

According to environmentalists, funding and active policies to solve water policies are still sorely lacking in Flanders. Last November saw serious flooding in Antwerp, East Flanders and Flemish

Brabant, and the region's rivers have yet to meet European quality standards.

The government target for half of Flanders' water bodies to be ecologically "good" by 2020 is on shaky ground. "There is a big gap between the government's ambitions and what is happening in the field. It is very clear that if we go on like this we're not going to meet our target," said Wim Van Gils from Natuurpunt.

To address water issues, the government is introducing the Flemish Manure Action Plan 2011-2014. A principal cause of pollution is the countless pig farms across the region. Nitrates from feed get washed into the rivers.

It will also invest half a billion euro in sewage and water treatment works, seek alternative sources of water to meet shortages and introduce measures

to minimise the damage caused by flooding.

Looking outside of Flanders and in response to the growing need to address global water shortages, the government said it would invest over €700,000 in international water projects, including the construction of water facilities in countries like Mali and Uganda.

The government hopes to export its local knowledge to the international context. This marks a good start to a new year and "well-invested money", says Van Gils. Nonetheless, he adds: "It is very clear that we are underestimating the consequences of our water problems. They will have an important ecological and economic impact on Flanders." **ED/EK**



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No more sales?

Enjoy the January sales while they last: official sales periods as we know them in Belgium are probably on the way out

ALAN HOPE

Last week, a court in Brussels declined to fine the clothing chain Zeb for breach of the law on the legal respite period preceding the annual January sales. The commercial tribunal in Kortrijk initially refused to fine Zeb, but the Court of Appeal has asked the European Court for a ruling on whether, as Zeb claims, the respite period is in breach of EU law.

Belgium has the most complicated system of regulating sales in Europe. In countries like Germany, the Netherlands and the UK, there are no rules, with shopkeepers free to cut prices at any time. France has two official sales periods, organised according to districts. In Belgium, however, the two sales periods are not only fixed by date – from 3 to 31 January and from 1 to 31 July – they are also each preceded by a six-week respite period, during which no price reductions can be offered (but

only in stores selling clothing and leather goods).

That was the law that Zeb was accused of breaking, when the chain decided to go ahead with price reductions after the respite period had started. "The sales laws don't exist for us anymore," commented Zeb CEO Luc Van Mol on 17 December. "What good is it to the customer if he can only get a bargain from 3 January. He wants a winter coat or some new clothes for the holidays now."

The organisations Unizo and NSZ, which represent small businesses, filed for an interim judgement, with a fine of €10,000 for every further breach. But the court found they had no standing, and the interim judgement went in Zeb's favour.

Times have changed. In 2002, clothing supplier Pecotex was fined €25,000 per breach in a case exactly like Zeb's. Since then, too, the respite period, which used to cover retail sales



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Racing for a bargain in Belgium: a thing of the past?

of all sorts, has been cut back to the two sectors mentioned. Once the respite period disappears, the official start dates for the sales periods also effectively disappear, as the major retailers will start offering price reductions earlier and earlier, forcing smaller retailers to do likewise. That, essentially, is the reason why Unizo and NSZ are

in favour of retaining the respite period. "For most self-employed [retailers], the sales law means the difference between profit and loss," wrote Luc Ardies of Unizo in *De Morgen*. Not only will smaller retailers be pushed into bigger reductions, he said, but consumers will never know which reductions are genuine. ♦

Business roundup

Mobile phone operator Base has begun selling **iPhones**, despite a supposed exclusivity agreement between manufacturer Apple and rival operator Mobistar. Base claims that it is allowed to do so under the European right to free movement of goods. Its parent company KPN has the right to sell iPhones in the Netherlands, which Base interprets as giving it a right to sell them in Belgium. The matter has yet to be tested in the courts.

A record number of companies **went bankrupt in 2010**, according to research bureau Graydon. In all, 9,953 businesses closed their doors in Belgium, an increase of 4.6% on 2009, leading to the loss of more than 24,000 jobs.

The **Plopsa theme parks** operated by Flemish multimedia empire Studio 100 last year welcomed more than two million visitors. The parks are located in De Panne, Hasselt and Coo in Belgium and in Coevorden in the Netherlands (pictured).



The number of **job vacancies** reported to the Flemish employment and training agency VDAB in 2010 rose to 262,280, a 20.5% increase on the crisis year of 2009. The months of October and November were peak periods, while job openings in December slipped back slightly.

Tractebel, the former Belgian energy giant, has been split in two by its French owners, the conglomerate GDF Suez, with international activities hived off to London, while the remaining business is now controlled by GDF Suez Belgium. GDF Suez took over Tractebel in 2003.

Freddy J Hannard, CEO of the Antwerp World Diamond Centre, is stepping down after four years in the job. Hannard "took the AWDC successfully through the many changes and challenges the diamond sector has had to face," said chairman Nishit Parikh. He will be replaced by current deputy Ari Epstein.

Insurance fraud costs the average family €150 each year in increased premiums, according to industry federation Assuralia. One in four car jackings is strongly suspected of being staged to claim insurance, a report said.

An Verhulst of Tervuren became one of the country's most successful businesswomen at the New Year, when she was appointed head of professional products at cosmetic giant L'Oréal, as well as joining the company's management committee. In a 20-year career with the company, Verhulst has worked in the Netherlands, Brazil and the US. She also was responsible for setting up the Hairdressers Against Aids action.

Belgium's biggest travel company, Wemmel-based **Best Tours**, has been taken over by Swiss tour operator Kuoni, for a sum thought to be around €750,000. Previously in the week, Best Tours had declared bankruptcy. Kuoni, which aims to use Best Tours to flesh out its presence in the mid-range of the holiday market – today it is more concentrated on high-end tours – said all 35 employees of Best Tours would keep their jobs.

The Flemish **technology industry** exported a value of €3.4 billion, 56% more in 2010, to the emerging markets of the so-called BRIC countries – Brazil, Russia, India and China – according to industry federation Agoria. Worldwide, Flemish tech exports were up 11%, with total tech exports realising some €47 billion, or about one-third of the region's total exports.



THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Autos • Sales

New car registrations in Belgium reached their highest ever level last year, coming close to 550,000. Best-selling vehicles included the Renault Mégane, followed by Volkswagen's Golf and Citroën's Berlingo. Distributors attribute the success to premiums for low-pollution vehicles and public grants to take older cars off the roads. Auto organisation Febiac said it expected a drop of 5% in 2011 as these incentives could be cut.

Banking • KBC

Flanders largest bank has sold its US-based Life Settlement portfolio activities to the Fortress Investment Group. The move is part of KBC's efforts to lower the volatility of its financial products department.

Health • Arseus

Waregem-based Arseus, which specialises in health services and products, has acquired Devroe, a surgery instruments and equipments distributor located in Vichte, near Kortrijk.

Pharmaceuticals • UCB

Brussels-based pharmaceutical group UCB is to invest €250 million in a new production facility at its plant in Bulle, Switzerland. The new unit will meet demand for its best-selling Cimzia anti-polyarthritis drug.

Ports • Zeebrugge

Traffic at the Port of Zeebrugge rose 11% last year to reach a record 50 million tonnes. Roll-on roll-off traffic was 31% higher, while the number of trucks handled by the port topped one million.

Property • Allianz

German insurance group Allianz has acquired the South City building complex near Brussels South train station for €70 million. The project for the 18,000-square-metre complex includes a 142-room hotel, which is expected to open in March under the Park Inn brand.

Supermarkets • Colruyt

Halle-based discount retailing group Colruyt is to relocate its meat processing facility to Leuze, near Ronse. The new facility is expected to employ up to 300 workers when fully operational.

Telecommunications • 3G

A fourth player is expected to enter the mobile telephone market in the spring following the government's decision to sell a fourth licence for Belgium's third generation network. Flanders-based Telenet and Voo, which operates in Wallonia and Brussels, have expressed an interest in bidding. Analysts estimate that the renewal this year of existing licences to Belgacom, Mobistar and Base for the period 2015-2021 could bring a further €430 million into the state coffers.

Transport • Reibel

Brussels-based transport and logistics group Reibel has won a United Nations contract worth €15 million to repatriate equipment belonging to the UN peacekeeping mission in Chad and the Central African Republic. The mission, known as Minurcat, ended recently.

They came across the sea

From warriors to queens, democrats and design gurus, Flanders is awash with Nordic influence

EMILY VON SYDOW

Ever since the Vikings used the City of Bruges as a depository for their loot, there has been a strong connection between Flanders and the Nordic countries. Today, the connection is more civilised, but there is still something left of the Viking heritage in the way these Northerners are perceived.

Historically, as well as this connection with Bruges (which derives its name from the Norwegian for landing stage – *brygge*), the port of Antwerp saw a strong representation by Nordic shippers. Once the Dutch lifted their blockade of the River Schelde in 1868, these sailors were able to gain access to this part of the North Sea.

They also found a home from home and do so to this day at the Finnish Seaman's Mission and the Nordic Seamen's Churches of Norway, Sweden and Finland. These Antwerp havens host Christmas bazaars which are a must for anyone into Nordic crafts and food.

Aside from these seafarers, Henric Weyde, a retired EU official from Sweden, highlights another influence: the 14th century Saint Birgitta or Bridget, founder of the order of the Holy Saviour and at least five Brigittine monasteries in Belgium. A chapel on Korte Brigittinestraat in downtown Brussels has now been turned into an arts centre – les Brigittines – where meditative prayers have been exchanged for expressive performing arts.

In more recent times, there remains a strong sense of connection. One reason for this, according to Godelieve Laureys, professor of Swedish linguistics at the University of Ghent's Skandinavistiek department, is the continued popularity, particularly among older generations, of Queen Astrid, the Swedish princess who married the future King Leopold III in 1926.

Astrid was thought to have brought Northern style simplicity to the formal Belgian court and was adored for her great beauty and warm displays of kindness as well as a hitherto unknown capacity for "ordinariness" among royals.

When she was killed in a car accident in 1935, a year after her husband was crowned King, the outpouring of sorrow was on a scale that can only be compared to that witnessed when Britain's Princess Diana, former wife of today's crown prince Charles, was killed, also in a car crash, in 1997.



This Swedish design house brought minimalist urban elegance to clothing, scoring a hit with Flemish fashionistas

Nonetheless, one could better talk about a Nordic presence rather than an influence, according to Laureys. A Fleming with a very slight accent but perfectly mastered Swedish, she wrote her doctoral thesis on the adverbial construction in Swedish.

The Nordic influence in European politics in general, for example, is minimal, she says, while the presence of the Nordics in Flanders is strong. "The Nordic countries are little known, but well liked." The same basic facts – it's cold, home to Ikea and so on – are always circulated in Belgium about the Nordics, clichés that are repeated on the rare occasions these countries are mentioned in the Belgian news.

Gory literature

One throwback to the darker perceptions of our Nordic friends is visible at the institute. Laureys says that her department has grown in recent years by about 10 to 15 percent to some 130 students, something which she attributes to the Millennium effect. Having sold some 45 million copies worldwide, the Millennium trilogy of crime novels by the late Stieg Larsson is just barely trailing that of the other big number Swedish publication, the IKEA-catalogue, published in 175 million copies worldwide.

One would think that the gory and violent crimes imagined by Larsson would put people off Scandinavia. His books do not exactly read as a tourist brochure but it seems there is a definite fascination with the contrast between the image of the dream society of democracy and equal rights, and the corrupt hell of criminal networks described in the crime stories by a whole group of Scandinavian writers.

"The crime stories are a real challenge to the image of Scandinavia," says Laureys whose institute teaches Swedish as the main language then Danish, Norwegian and Finnish as accessory studies. Finnish belongs to a different language family while Icelandic, the original Nordic language, is also taught at the university but not as a subject of its own.

Shifting influences

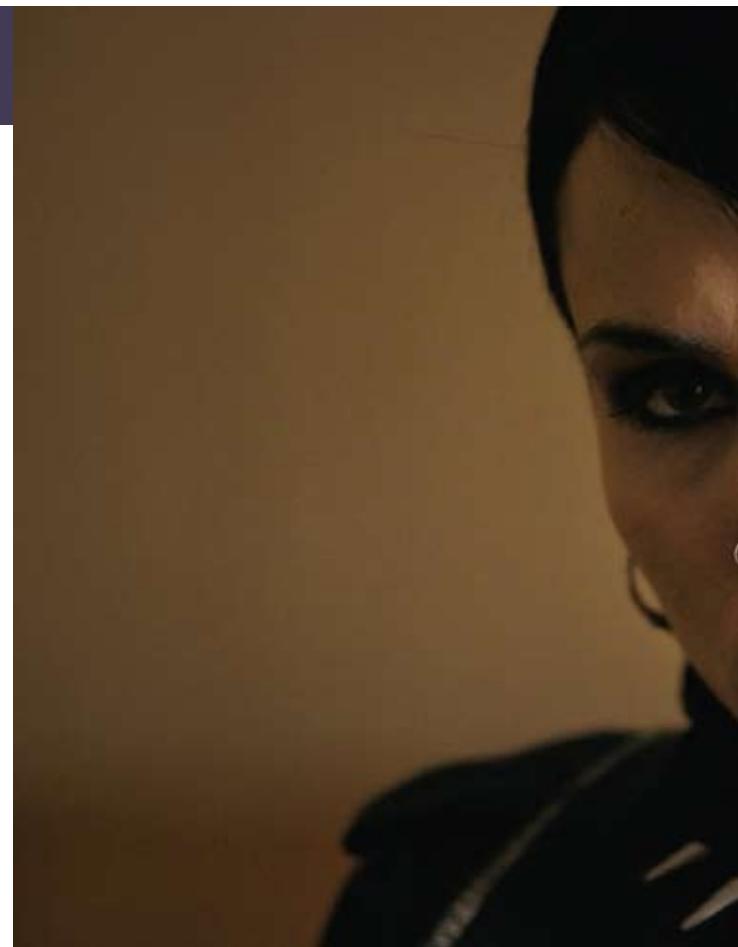
Sweden was once the domineering country and influencer among the Nordic countries in Flanders. Among the big export industries and production sites, can be found many old Swedish brands, like Volvo. Although the cars are no longer a Swedish brand (this division was sold to Ford and then to China's Zhejiang Geely Holding Group), there is a strong connection thanks to the Volvo factories in Ghent.

Fashion brand Filippa K has had a big impact in the region with stores now in Antwerp, Hasselt, and Brussels. Meanwhile H&M, which has 63 branches across the country, and its sister brand Cos, with two shops in Brussels and one in Antwerp, are taking the market by storm. In 2009, H&M sales in Belgium amounted to 350 million euros.

However, its influence in other areas has been overshadowed in recent years by its Nordic neighbours. There is no Swedish successor to film director Ingmar Bergman but instead Danish movies have come to the fore, especially the Dogma school, which boasts directors such as Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, says Laureys.

Finnish excellence in, for example, educational policy, not to mention its ubiquitous mobile telephony company Nokia, have turned the country into a powerful player while Norway makes its presence known in Flanders through cultural events like *Norway Now* (a big festival of photography, music and performing arts), which runs at Bozar until June 2011.

Norway, having chosen twice to stay outside the European Union, has had to create other ways of making its presence heard and seen and experienced. The future of these events, which do rely to a certain extent on diplomatic representation in Belgium, will, in future, be more cumbersome to achieve, as Sweden and Norway have decided to close their bilateral Belgian embassies. The cultural attaches at the embassies to the EU will have to divide their efforts between European questions and the bilateral bonds. That may make it even more difficult to overcome the image of doom and gloom in the North, transmitted to the Flemish readers of the thrillers. Nonetheless, for those interested in classical music with a distinct Nordic sound, the concerts in Antwerp, Bruges and Brussels with Finland's Sibelius and Norway's Grieg on the programme, will be a highlight.



Democracy and Design

Democracy is almost interchangeable with Nordic political society. According to interior designer and gallery owner Gilberte Claes, democracy and transparency are also key words in the influence of Scandinavian design on Belgium. Claes was a curator of the exhibition at the Design museum in Ghent last spring, "Scandinavian Touch in Belgian Furniture 1951-1966". It was in 1951 that the specific concept of Scandinavian Design was coined at the Triennale di Milano, the Italian design museum. Scandinavian design, almost synonymous to Danish when it came to furniture, was soon picked up by American interior designers as "Danish Modern".

Together with designer colleague Luc van de Wouwer, Claes chose pieces for the exhibition of Scandinavian furniture, representative of what became known as "modern social furniture". These basically echoed the desire to create modern, transparent, clean and democratic homes, reflecting the new democratic and egalitarian society of the North. What specifically inspired was the Danish unique combination of craftsmanship, form and function, according to Claes. Belgian furniture producers such as Van den Berghe - Pauvers and Belform were keen to reproduce Belgian versions of the modern social furniture. It's ironic that these pieces are now sold for thousands of euros. They didn't remain democratic and accessible for long. The designers in Flanders also produced their series in limited numbers and not for the broad public.



The original people's princess Queen Astrid with her children Princess Joséphine-Charlotte and Baudouïn



Award-winning Swedish actress Noomi Rapace shows a dark side of Sweden in the first film of the Millennium trilogy



The port of Zeebrugge welcomes ships of a more friendly nature these days

According to Claes, Danish design stands out for its respect for craftsmanship and the very simple forms. "The Danish designers were less commercial. Their craftsmanship was very inspiring. They had real character and a closeness to nature. Their craft showed a respect for the wood. Together with the functionality, this was something very attractive to the designers of Flanders."

Swedish design was much more commercial and is now forever connected to the flatpacked, self-assembly furniture, says Claes. Four of the six Belgian IKEA stores are in Flanders. Finnish design, on the other hand, much lauded for its audacity elsewhere, is regarded as too brash, too stark to fit in to the aesthetics of Flanders. "The design from Finland is much stronger in colour and less refined," he says.

However, among the Finns, a mention must go to Eero Saarinen and the architect Alvar Aalto as important inspiration to Flemish life style, according to Trui Moerkerke, editor-in-chief of Flemish weekly Knack Weekend. "Together with Arne Jacobsen and Hans Wegner, designs by the Finns can be found in the most trendy design shops in, like 't Casteelken in Rumbeke and Donum in Hasselt and Antwerp," she says, adding "We run Scandinavian interior stories from time to time, because they appeal to our readers."

All of this aside, the greatest gift from the Nordics to Flanders and to Europe as a whole is the principle of transparency. "It's such an obvious tool with which to strengthen democracy," says Laureys. "So I'd like to see more of Sweden, a stronger Swedish presence in Europe," she concludes. ♦



Finnish photographer Elina Brotherus' is resident artist at Espace Photographique Contretype in Brussels. See examples of her work there until 23 January

© Elina Brotherus, "La Fille", Extract from the series "The New Painting"



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(tip: www.flanderstoday.eu)
- 2 What is "Flanders Shines in Europe shines in Flanders" and what does it aim to achieve?
(tip: www.xpats.com)
- 3 BONUS QUESTION: How many people will respond to this competition?

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Away with the past

Koenraad Tinel's latest exhibition of drawings tells a story of post-war Flanders

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

Thanks to his 2009 book of drawings *Scheisseimer* (German for shit bucket), Ghent-born artist Koenraad Tinel became the talk of the town in the Flemish art world. Now, with his exhibition *Flandria Catholica*, a cathartic exercise for Tinel about his life in post-war Flanders, he wants to tell a new story.

Tinel was born into a right-wing Flemish nationalist family which in 1940 received the German occupier as the saviour. Encouraged by their father, his two older brothers, still adolescents, went to fight with the Germans. One of them was among the last defenders of Hitler's bunker in Berlin.

After the liberation of Belgium, the family had to flee to Germany. Upon their return, Tinel's father and brothers were jailed. *Flandria Catholica*, at the Museum M in Leuven, is his portrayal of his adolescence living in a family with almost no means.

While walking with the artist through the exhibition, which consists of one room with the drawings hanging, in rows of three next to each other, he says: "Drawing this was a way to get rid of my past. It had a therapeutic effect. I think this goes for every artist. If not, why would you do it?"

Tinel was only six years old, an innocent bystander, when the Second World War broke out. "It's quite exceptional that a child from a collaborating family digs up such a history. I didn't want to justify anything, certainly not, only share my impressions. I'm not a Flemish nationalist. I've never been, for that matter. More so, I adhere to no ideology or religion. I only believe in people."

After the success of *Scheisseimer*, his

desire to tell a story in drawings resurfaced, but in a different way. "This new series is less narrative. It's more an impression of Flanders between 1946 and 1952," he adds. The exhibition comprises almost 200 pictures out of the 700 he made in only four months. "I'm a very fast drawer. Also, when I start, I don't stop. One idea leads to another through association."

In *Flandria Catholica*, Tinel portrays post-war Flanders as a depressing place to live, dominated, oppressed even, by the Catholic Church. Although it's no reckoning, the exhibition contains a few sexual caricatures. "Of course I'm critical of the heavy Catholic and Flemish nationalist weight I felt back then. But all in all, I'm lenient, I'm not aiming for revenge."

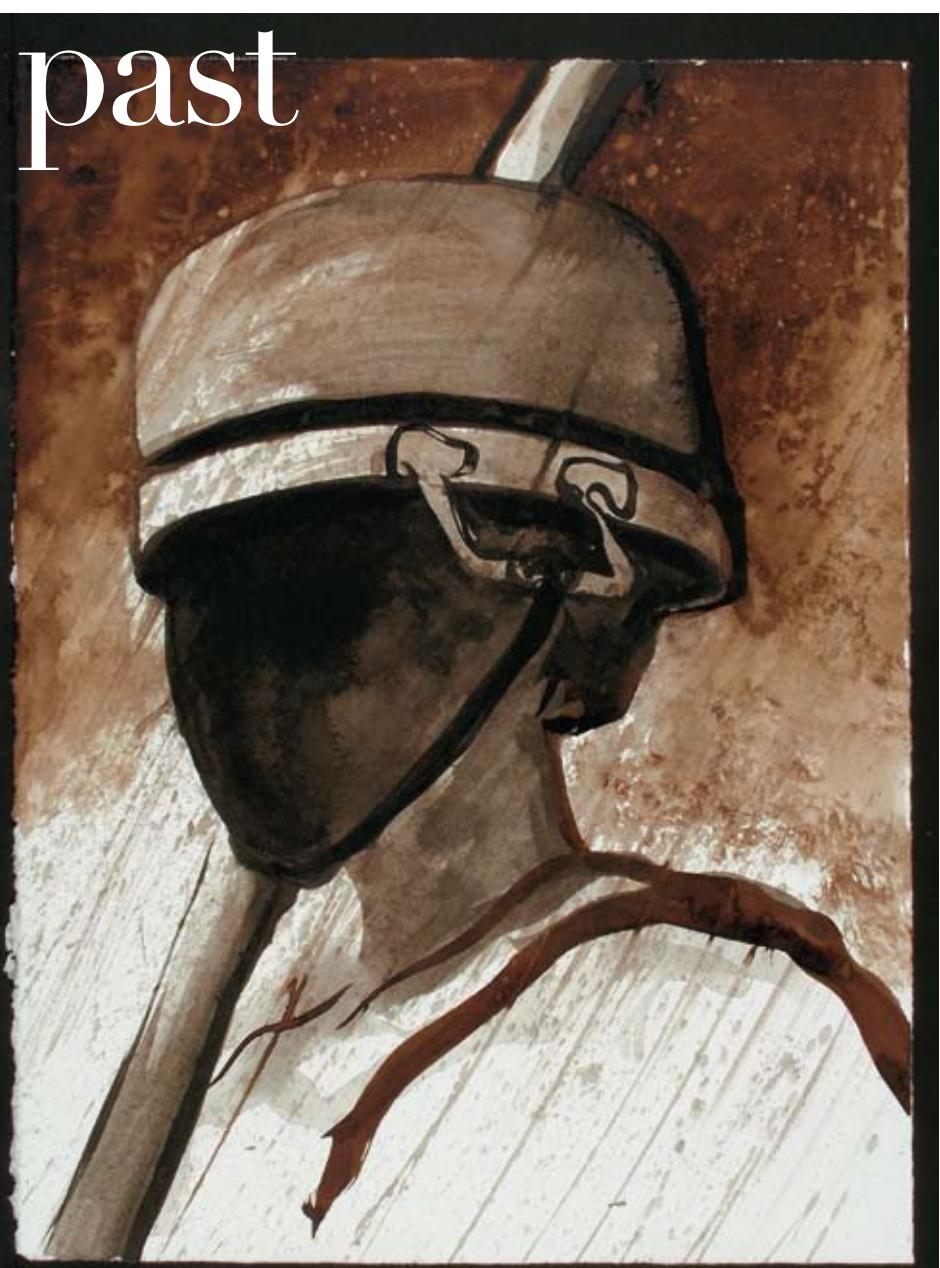
Chuckling, he remembers: "As an adolescent, I, like many of my friends, idealistically dreamt of a life as a priest or a missionary. But I had a problem: like all young blokes I masturbated. A mortal sin, as you might know. So, no religious life for me."

Returning to a more serious note, he says: "Back from Germany, we lived in a destitute neighbourhood. It was a miserable life." He points to a drawing of a small room with six mattresses lying in a row. "That was the bedroom. The house had one more room." There's a drawing of that one, too, with also a table and few cupboards, also some musical instruments. "We were poor, but my mother immediately hired a piano for me and a violin for my sister."

Tinel's mother was a skilled singer and pianist herself, whereas his father was a sculptor. "He mainly worked for churches and made very bigoted works. I was no fan of his."

Apart from an image of a dying Christ in which we see some specks of red, Tinel deliberately chooses a limited palette of black, grey and brown. However, it's amazing how many different tones those colours have in his drawings. "Being able to paint using all the existent colours is something really amazing. I adore it! Sadly, it's a talent I didn't master. But by exploring the different tones of brown and black I can perfectly express what I want to say."

When *Scheisseimer* was published, it looked like Tinel, who had been leading the



Tinel deliberately chooses a limited palette of black, grey and brown

sculpture department at the Sint-Lucas art school in Brussels for more than 25 years, was radically changing course. But that's not the case. Years earlier, he had already started illustrating mythological stories and fairy tales and working with modern writers such as Isaac Babel. The stories about his life during wartime first crept up in conversations with friends. "They encouraged me to write them down. I'm no writer, I remonstrated, I'm an artist. So they encouraged me to draw these stories. And that's what I did. I drew for months and months, I completely emptied myself."

At first, nothing happened with the drawings, stashed away in Tinel's attic. But after seeing Flemish author David Van Reybrouck, a good friend of his, moved to tears by them, he hosted in a small attic a spectacle for friends and players from the art world: he told his story, whilst projecting the drawings. That's how *Scheisseimer* eventually became a monologue, with which he toured Flanders.

For the moment, Tinel is omnipresent in Leuven. You can find a few of his sculptures in public places in the city and, besides *Flandria Catholica*, there's a second, as interesting exhibition, at the Cypress Galerie: *Prima Mater* collects a selection of recent drawings and sculptures of women.

"They're not inspired by one woman in particular; I'm trying to catch the essence of femininity." The anonymous, sometimes amputated women are paired with a series called *Het vertrek* (The

smallest room), with drawings of toilets. "One day, I suddenly felt an urge to draw toilets. I made more than 200 of them, this is only a very small selection." Since the artist, despite his age, is still bursting with energy, I ask him whether there's another series of drawings in the making. "As matter of fact, I'm working on drawings about the 30 years that I've been living in Gooik. I finished 150 already."

But that still leaves some uncharted territory, he points out, namely his life as a student in Brussels. "I studied in French, I was a stranger in the city, I discovered loads of other cultures and new art. After the petty life in Ghent, the real world finally opened its doors for me. I'm sure that'll be a source of inspiration, one day."♦



Tinel portrays post-war Flanders as an oppressive place dominated by the Catholic Church

Flandria Catholica

Until 13 February
Museum M, Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28
Leuven

→ www.mleuven.be

Prima Mater

Until 20 February
Cypres Galerie, Vaartstraat 131
Leuven

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

Transylvania TIE

With vampires all the rage, Theatre in English produces a dazzling rendition of a campy comedy

EMMA PORTIER DAVIS

It's about 10.30 on a Saturday morning and, in desperate need of coffee, I wonder how I found myself in a dimly lit, somnolent studio in deepest, darkest Laken. But then the children's acting group Theatre in English-Theatre in Education (TIE) springs into life, belting out the opening number from their upcoming take on the fantastically camp *Dracula Spectacula*.

Bang. I'm awake.

I'm not only awake because the room is filled with characters from the living dead; I'm dragged into consciousness by the vivid portrayals of these aspiring actors - who range in age from seven to late teens - of the colourful characters from British playwrights John Gardiner's and Andrew Parr's off-the-wall 1970s hit musical.

Dracula Spectacula tells the tale of the aptly-named American schoolteacher Miss Nadia Naive (in this production with a charming Southern drawl), who takes her charges on a trip to Transylvania. After a colourful plane journey, our protagonists arrive to be greeted by a host of bizarre characters, familiar to us all from the vampire stories of old.

It's the latest production to be staged by the Brussels-based amateur dramatics group TIE, which was set up in 1999 and has gone from six members gathering in a warehouse in Schaerbeek to 200 members exploring the world of acting under the guardianship of teachers Lynne Vaughan and the late Michael Coburg.

The principal goal of TIE is not to turn out a troupe of actors fit for Broadway but to bring children together in an environment where they can learn to communicate better and develop self assurance. "This is not a stage school but a youth theatre," explains Vaughan.

"We want to give them the confidence to stand up and get out there."

At each session, the teachers start with exercises to help the children get to know each other. A favourite ploy to entice self-conscious teenagers out of their shells is to make them run around saying "Huggy Bear" and, at the teacher's signal, form group hugs. "It's all about breaking down barriers," says Lorenda Elliott, a parent and administrator.

The games are nonetheless instructive in the art of acting: anyone who hesitates too long in a game is out. "In theatre, concentration is absolutely vital," says Vaughan. Along with diction and breathing exercises, there are a lot of games associated with skill building such as miming working with inanimate items, like a piece of clay.

After the warm-up, the focus shifts to the latest dramatic production and TIE students have, over the years, embraced the toughest of topics, including last year's *Take Away* by Jackie Kay, about drugs. "These are things children cannot always talk about at home," says Vaughan. They've also done the dark tale of clinical depression *4.48 Psychosis*, British playwright Sarah Kane's last piece in 1999, after which she committed suicide.

Ready for Lamda

During the summer period, the group explores different types of acting, such as melodrama, naturalism and pantomime. "Most of those who go on to study drama or theatre realise how much they learned," says Vaughan, who nevertheless stresses that she tells aspiring actors to get an alternative career path lined up first.

For those who do aspire to the world of stage, TIE offers a helping hand each year by preparing candidates for the London Academy of Music

and Dramatic Art (Lamda) examinations. This is the UK's leading examination board in the field, and points scored in its test count towards university entrance.

But Vaughan underlines that TIE welcomes all abilities and wants to provide children with a place where they can make new friends from a wide range of nationalities and ages. Roughly half of the students have English as their mother tongue, and the group boasts a few Belgians whose parents are keen for them to improve their English.

This broad range of talent is evidenced in the rehearsal where all of the children are delightfully expressive, with some showing a glaring talent for the stage - albeit from time to time in an unstructured way. But don't be put off. This is leagues above a cutesy school play where only the parents could be charmed by the level of acting.

Dracula Spectacula is set to be a riotous and lively performance. Watch out for the drunken pilot, the all-singing, all-dancing Transylvanian Airways hostesses and the very sweet Miss Naïve. ♦

CULTURE NEWS



A painting made live on stage by Flemish actor **Mathias Schoenaerts** (*Loft, My Queen Karo*) and actors from Turnhout's Theater Stap, has fetched €2,500 on eBay. Schoenaerts and his crew put the large-scale work (*pictured*) together during Studio's Brussel's Music for Life festival in Antwerp's Groenplaats, a week-long radio show to raise funds for African children whose parents have died of AIDS. There were 72 bidders, and proceeds go to Music for Life.

Not content with being a one-hit wonder, Flemish singer Tom Waes, who tortured us with his irritatingly catchy summer hit *Dos cervezas (Two beers)*, is back with the appropriately entitled new number: *Eén is geen (One is Nothing)*. In his latest track, Waes extols the virtues of having at least two of everything, citing golfer Tiger Woods lack of contentment with one woman and even the joys of orgies. He cheekily tells us too how he had broken his promise never more to sing "but I could not control myself".

The Belgian Union of Film Critics have awarded their **Grand Prize for best film of the year** to American director Tom Ford's *A Single Man*. The story of a 1960s university professor (Colin Firth) who cannot publicly mourn the death of his male partner is the directorial debut of fashion designer Ford. The film was chosen "for the quality of its humanist and stylistic levels," said the union in a statement. Last month, the union awarded *Mr Nobody* by Jaco Van Dormael the award for the best Belgian film of the year.

N-VA nationalist party leader Bart De Wever is laying waste to the competition on *De allerslimste mens ter wereld* (*The Very Smartest Person in the World*), an all-star edition of TV één's incredibly popular *Slimste mens ter wereld*. Back for his third evening in the tough but fun quiz show as *Flanders Today* went to press, De Wever has withstood both local international criticism for taking part in the show during a national political crisis centred on the inability of French and Dutch speakers to form a government for more than six months. "I challenge you to find anyone who can claim that my participation has set back one appointment for even one minute," reacted De Wever, whose party shot to the forefront of Flemish politics after he came in second in the *Slimste mens* season that ended in 2009.



The cast of *Dracula Spectacula* bring to life their makeshift plane



Slapstick & Comedy

IAN MUNDELL

Watching silent movies with live piano accompaniment is one of the highlights of a visit to the Cinematek in Brussels. But it's even more impressive when you find out that, as they play along in the darkened theatre to comic greats like Charlie Chaplin, the pianists may be seeing the film for the first time.

"People ask me afterwards: 'Was that the music for the film?' I say: 'No, I haven't seen the film, I was just improvising,'" says Hilde Nash, who is accompanying Cinematek's Slapstick & Comedy series, also featuring movies starring Buster Keaton, Laurel and Hardy, alongside less well-known comics, such as flapper Colleen Moore.

To call it "just improvising" is rather modest. Apart from a two-line summary to tell her what the film is about, Nash, one of the seven pianists who play at the Cinematek's daily silent film screenings, has only her experience to fall back on when the lights go down.

"You have certain techniques, colours, chords and rhythms," she explains. "You have certain patterns that come again, but most of all you have to have a gut feeling of trust."

Nash has been accompanying films for a little over eight years, beginning in her hometown of

Antwerp. "I'd finished my studies and was wondering what I was going to do, hopefully as a music therapist but also as a musician," she recalls. "One day I walked into the film museum in Antwerp and asked if they needed any more pianists."

They said yes, and after a short audition she was taken on. "I still play in Antwerp, but they don't do many silent movies. At the Cinematek they do silent movies every day, and now I play here four or five times a month."

With their quick-fire gags and manic pacing, the latest series of movies demands close attention from the pianist. "With slapstick, you try to stay very close to the picture," Nash says. "You can see the jokes coming most of the time, and you try to react to what is happening."

Her playing has classical rather than jazz roots. "I'm influenced by my classical studies, for instance how you use chords and how you go to a crescendo and bring it down again," she explains.

And when she is accompanying a film for the second or third time, she says she is able to add more depth to the music.

"You know more of the story, and maybe you can reflect the psychology of the characters," she says. "You can do more with themes and rhythms. Perhaps the

listener doesn't hear it, but for myself, I know I can give more if I know the story."

For listeners, this extra dimension is clear with the more famous performers. "With Charlie Chaplin there is always a melancholy in his films, and I try to let that come out in the music, whereas with Laurel and Hardy, it is totally different. It is real slapstick and really happy music."

How the audience behaves is also a factor. People coming in late can be a distraction, while general hilarity can push a performance along. Nash says her main focus, however, is the screen. "I'm aware that the audience is there, but I'm nearly inside the movie. Sometimes I even move with the characters." Even for films that have not aged so well, accompanying them is rewarding. "It helps, of course, if it's a good film. Sometimes, when they are a bit boring, you think: I can't save the film, I'm sorry! But even then it's a challenge to make a painting, to bring out colours with the music. I love it."

Until 25 February

Cinematek
Baron Hortastraat 9
Brussels

www.cinematek.be



MORE CINEMA THIS WEEK

Kinshasa Symphony → *Flagey, Brussels*

Psychoanalysis and Film seminar → *Film Plateau, Ghent*

Aus dem Leben der Hildegard von Bingen → *Cinema Zed, Leuven*



Antwerp

De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
JAN 15 20.30 New Year's Ball with Antwerp city poet Peter Holvoet-Hanssen and concerts by Eddy et les Vedettes, Guido Belcanto and Will Ferdy
JAN 16 15.00 Jack Million Band with Glenn Miller & The Army Air Force Band

Kelly's Irish Pub
Keyserlei 27; www.kellys.be
JAN 14 22.00 Basically Basic, acoustic covers

Lotto Arena
Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be
JAN 14 20.00 ABBA The Concert

Sportpaleis
Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be
JAN 14-22 20.30 Natalia meets Anastacia

Trix
Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00
www.trixonline.be
JAN 13 20.30 Wolf People
JAN 14 20.30 Arno Hintjens
JAN 18 20.30 Mauro Pawlowski

Bruges
Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
www.concertgebouw.be
JAN 15 20.00 Lamour en cage / Deux Indécis et amis, French chanson

Brussels
Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be
JAN 19 20.00 Indochine
JAN 20 19.00 Architects + The Devil Wears Prada + Bring Me the Horizon. Lasse Marhaug + Maja Ratkje

Beursschouwburg
August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be
JAN 12 20.30 S.H.O.W. presents film concert with Wolf People

Le Botanique
Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
www.botanique.be
JAN 12 20.00 Graffiti 6
JAN 15 20.00 Cecilia::Eyes + I Like Trains
JAN 19 20.00 Freaksville night: Leatitia Sadier + MiamMonster + Loved Drones + more

Magasin 4
Havenlaan 51B; 02.223.34.74,
www.magasin4.be
JAN 14 20.00 Fuxx Fixxtion: Japanther + ZZ + Carusella + Mater Suspiria Vision + Shellshag + Becoming Real + more

Viage
Anspachlaan 30; 070.44.34.43
www.viage.be
JAN 16 20.30 Patrick Fiori

Ghent
Vooruit
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060 www.vooruit.be
JAN 13 20.00 Gesloten hart (Wannes Van de Velde tribute) with Lucas Van den Eynde, Kathleen Vandenhoudt, Tiny Bertels and Tom Vanstiphout
JAN 19 20.00 Hautekiet & De Leeuw

Hasselt
Muziekodroom
Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13
www.muziekodroom.be
JAN 13 20.30 The Wildcards
JAN 15 19.30 Terror + First Blood + 50 Lions + Backtrack

Maaseik
Cultuurcentrum Achterolmen
Van Eycklaan 72; 089.56.99.56
www.achterolmen.be
JAN 15 20.15 Kiki Dee & Carmelo Luggeri

Ostend
Kursaal (Casino)
Monacoplein 2; 070.22.56.00
www.kursaalostende.be

JAN 14 20.00 Dionne Warwick
JAN 16 20.00 Kiki Dee & Carmelo Luggeri

Wemmel

De Zandloper
Kaasmarkt 75; 02.460.73.24
www.dezandloper.be
JAN 13 20.00 Soulsister



Antwerp

Buster
Kaasru 1; 03.232.51.53
www.busterpodium.be
JAN 13 22.00 Jam* *f **JAN 14** 22.00 Phynt
JAN 15 22.00 Sandaloop **JAN 18** 20.30 JazzNight **JAN 19** 21.30 Playtime Session
JAN 20 21.30 Buster BabL Jam

De Hopper
Leopold De Waelstraat 2; 03.248.49.33 www.cafehopper.be
JAN 16 16.00 Harry Happel & guests
JAN 17 21.00 Marjan Van Rompay Group

De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
JAN 13 20.30 Toots Thielemans Quartet

Luchtbal Cultuurcentrum
Columbiestraat 8; 03.543.90.30
www.ccluchtbal.be
JAN 13 14.00 Anti-Rimpeltour

Nova
Schijfstraat 105; 03.259.04.20
www.nova-kiel.be
JAN 13 20.15 Radio Muzak

Rataplan
Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
www.rataplanvzw.be
JAN 13 20.30 Quentin Dujardin Quartet

Bruges

De Werf
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29
www.dewerf.be
JAN 15 20.30 Hamster Axis of the One-Click Panther + Chad McCullough & the Bram Weijters Quartet

Brussels

Jazz Station
Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78 www.jazzstation.be
JAN 12 20.30 LM3
JAN 15 18.00 20km de jazz
JAN 19 20.30 Acous-Trees

Sounds Jazz Club
Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50
www.soundsjazzclub.be
Concerts at 22.00:
JAN 12 Chamaquiendo, salsa **JAN 13** Mess Trio **JAN 14-15** Pascal Schumacher Quartet
JAN 17 Master Session **JAN 18** Nicolas Thys - Dries Lahey Duo **JAN 19** Caribe con K
JAN 20 Golden 80s

Ghent

White Cat
Drongenhof 40; 09.223.22.27
www.white-cat.be
JAN 15 20.00 Jazzman Gerald, Let's Boogaloo tour



Antwerp

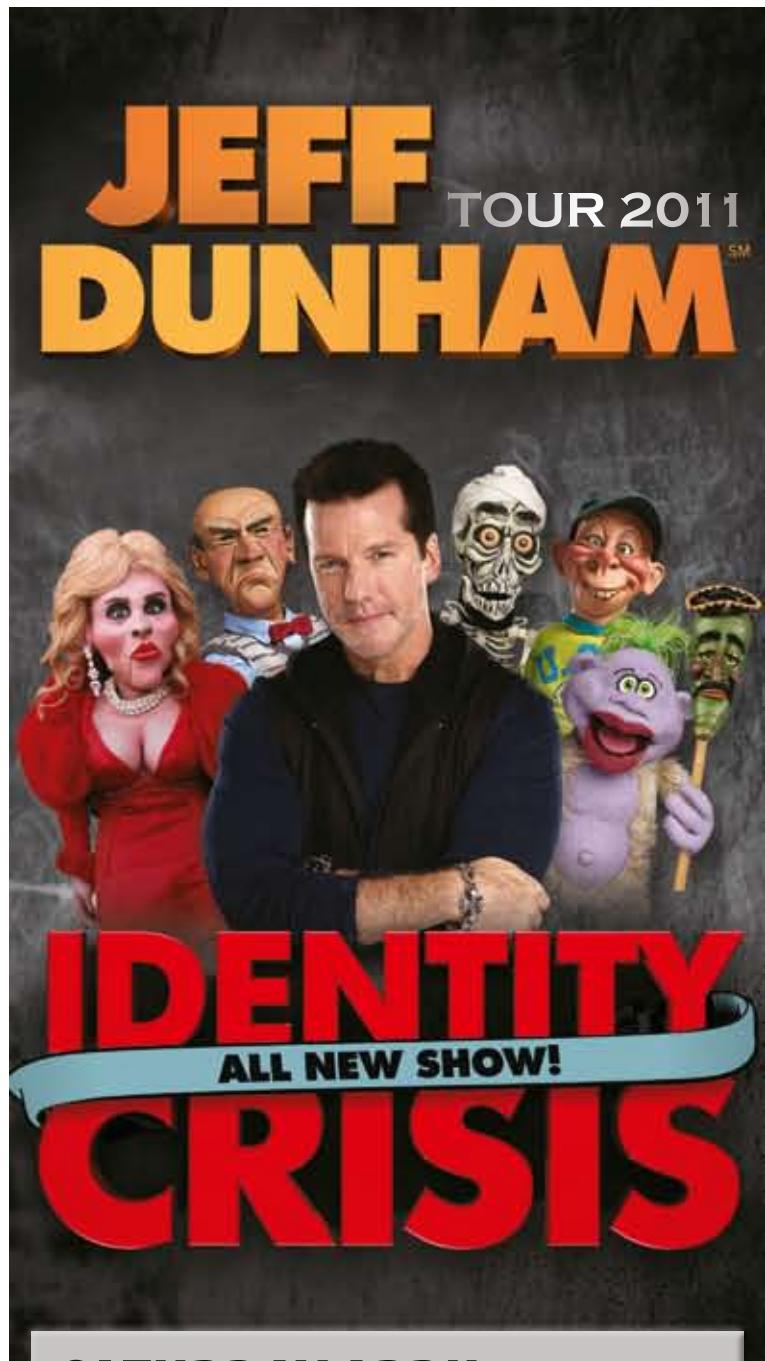
Rataplan
Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
www.rataplanvzw.be
JAN 14 20.30 Balimurphy

Zuiderpershuis
Waalse Kaa 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be
JAN 20 20.30 Ebo Taylor

Brussels

Art Base
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20
www.art-base.be
JAN 14 20.00 Maria Cangiano, Argentinian tango

VK Club
Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07
www.vkconcerts.be
JAN 20 16.00 New Year celebration with La Chiva Gantiva (Col/Chile/Bel)



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Agenda



Antwerp

Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.292.36.80
www.amuz.be
JAN 16 15.00 Carlos Bruneel, flute; Bart Van Caenegem, fortepiano; Janos Bruneel, double-bass: jazz and classical fusion

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
www.desingel.be
JAN 14 20.00 Sophie Daneman, soprano; Christine Stotijn, mezzo; Joseph Breinl, piano: Purcell, Mendelssohn, Schumann, more
JAN 15 20.00 LOD & B'Rock conducted by Frank Agsteribbe: Monteverdi

JAN 19-20 20.00 Graham Johnson, piano; Geraldine McGreevy, soprano; Robin Tritschler, tenor: lecture recital on Schubert's Lieder

Vlaamse Opera
Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02
www.vlaamseopera.be
JAN 15 & 20 20.00 Flanders Opera Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Alberto Zedda & Yannis Pouspourikas: Rossini's Stabat Mater

Bruges
Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
www.concertgebouw.be
JAN 14 20.00 Pierre-Laurent Aimard, piano: Liszt, Wagner, more
JAN 16 15.00 Trio Otono: Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn

Brussels
Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
JAN 13 12.30 Dimitri Baeteman, oboe; Filip Handschoewerker, violin; Mihoko Kusama, viola; Harm Van Rheeden, cello: Britten, Mozart, Arnold. 20.00 DeFilharmonie conducted by Philippe Herreweghe, with Michael Nagy, baritone: Hans Rott, Mahler **JAN 15** from 10.00 Klara in het Paleis: Flemish classical radio station Klara invites listeners for a day of concerts, film screenings, exhibitions, talks, etc **JAN 16** 11.00 Apollon Musagete Quartett: Schubert, Jacob ter Veldhuis **JAN 19** 12.40 Trio Carlo Van Neste: Brahms, Haydn. 20.00 London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Valery Gergiev: Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky **JAN 20** 20.00 Prague Symphony Orchestra, soloists and choirs conducted by Peter Chromczak: Beethoven, Carl Orff

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20
www.flagey.be
JAN 14 20.15 Flemish Radio Choir with Stéphane De May, piano; Karen Lemaire, soprano; Noëlle Schepens, alto; Ivan Goossens, tenor; Conor Biggs, bass: Dvorák's Stabat Mater

Musical Instruments Museum
Hofberg 2; 02.545.01.30 www.mim.be
JAN 16 11.00 Elise Caluwaerts, soprano; Kim Van den Brempt, piano: Schumann, Wim Hendrickx, R Strauss

Royal Music Conservatory
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37
www.kmc.be
JAN 15 20.00 Quatuor Modigliani with Nicolas Baldeyrou, clarinet: Haydn, Mendelssohn, Mozart
JAN 17 20.00 Alexei Lubimov, fortepiano: Schubert, Beethoven

Ghent
Conservatorium
Hoogpoort 64; 09.269.92.92
www.debijloke.be
JAN 14 20.00 Aviv Quartet: Haydn, Shostakovich, Brahms

De Bijloke
Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2 09.233.68.78
www.debijloke.be
Concerts at 20.00:
JAN 13 Le Concert Spirituel conducted by Hervé Niquet; Jean Gilles, André

Campra **JAN 14** Flanders Symphony Orchestra conducted by Jonas Alber, with Isabelle Faust, violin: Wagner, Stravinsky, Rachmaninov **JAN 15** DeFilharmonie conducted by Philippe Herreweghe: Hans Rott, Mahler **JAN 18** Flanders Opera Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Alberto Zedda & Yannis Pouspourikas: Rossini's Stabat Mater

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
JAN 13 20.15 Paul De Clerck, viola; Claire Chevallier, piano: Bach/Hosokawa, Reger, Hindemith, more



Antwerp

Cinema Zuid
Lakenstraat 14; 03.242.93.57
www.cinemazuid.be
JAN 15 20.00 Giuseppe Verdi's Rigoletto on the big screen, directed by Nikolaus Lehnhoff (in the original Italian with subtitles in English)

Ghent

Vlaamse Opera
Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02
www.vlaamseopera.be
JAN 14-19 15.00/18.30 Rossini's Semiramide directed by Nigel Lowery, conducted by Alberto Zedda (in the original Italian with Dutch subtitles)



Antwerp

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
www.desingel.be
JAN 13-15 20.00 La La La Human Steps, choreographed by Édouard Lock

Brussels

Espace Delvaux
Gratésstraat 3; 02.663.85.50
www.lavenerie.be
JAN 20-22 20.30 Sources, hip-hop dance and music, directed by Olivier Battesti

Kaaistudio's

Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat 81; 02.201.59.59 www.kaaitheater.be
JAN 13-15 20.30 Damaged Goods in Atelier, choreographed by Meg Stuart

Ghent

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
JAN 15 20.15 Finale Schoon Madammen featuring Rebelles, burlesque show

Hasselt

Cultuurcentrum
Kunstlaan 5; 011.24.32.07 www.ccha.be
JAN 14 20.00 Rosas danst Rosas (Rosas Dances Rosas), choreographed by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker

Leuven

30CC - Schouwburg
Bondgenotenlaan 21; 016.22.21.13
www.30CC.be
JAN 12-13 20.00 Rosas in En Attendant, choreographed by Teresa De Keersmaeker

STUK

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
www.stuk.be
JAN 19-20 20.30 Rosas in Not About Everything & Montage For Three, choreographed by Daniel Linehan



Antwerp

Fakkelteater Zwarre Zaal

FLANDERS TODAY
JANUARY 12, 2011

Reynderstraat 7; 03.232.14.69
www.fakkelteater.be
JAN 14-15 20.30 Vreak Holebitheater in Virus (in Dutch)

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

Toneelhuis/Bourla
Komiedieplaats 18; 03.224.88.44
www.toneelhuis.be
Until JAN 15 20.00 Les ballets C de la B in Gardenia, directed by Alain Platel en Frank Van Laecke (in French, Dutch and English)

Zuidkroon
Vlaamse Kaai 81-83; 03.229.18.00
www.zuidkroon.be
Until JAN 13-16 20.00 Productiehuis 3Pees in Zus, directed by An Nelissen (in Dutch)

Zuidpershuis
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuidpershuis.be
JAN 14-15 20.30 Action Zoo Humain in De Finale: Heldendoor voor de beschaving (The Final: heroic death for civilisation), directed by Chokri Ben Chikha (in Dutch)

Brussels
Bronkstheater
Varkensmarkt 15; 02.218.20.15
www.bronks.be
JAN 20-22 20.00 Loo(:)ozer, directed by Zouou Ben Chikha

De Markten
Oude Graanmarkt 5; 02.512.34.25
www.demarkten.be
JAN 21-22 20.30 Hout, written and directed by Abke Haring (in Dutch)

International School of Brussels
Kattenberg 19; 02.661.42.11
www.theatreinenglish.be
JAN 15-16 14.30 & 19.30 TIE in Dracula Spectacula by John Gardiner and Andrew Parr (in English)

KVS Bol
Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.12 www.kvs.be
Until JAN 16 15.00 Barkstad, directed by Guy Dermul (in Dutch with French and English subtitles)

Kaaitheater
Sainctelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59
www.kaaitheater.be
JAN 14-15 20.30 Black 'n' Blues: a Minstrel Show by Mark Tompkins (in English)

Dilbeek
Westrand Cultuurcentrum
Kameriklaan; 02.466.20.30
www.westrand.be
JAN 13 20.30 Sylvie Huysman in Ontspringen, die dans, multi-media performance (in Dutch)

Ghent
NTGent Schouwburg
Sint-Baafsplaat 17; 09.225.01.01
www.ntgent.be
JAN 16 20.30 Frans Woyzeck by Georg Büchner, directed by the late Eric De Volder (in Dutch)

Visual Arts
Antwerp
Antwerpen-Centraal Station
Van Immerseelstraat-Kievitplein; 02.537.68.75 www.artinallotus.be
Until MAY 8 Art in All Of Us, photographs of children around the world by Anthony Asael and Stéphanie Rabemafara

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

DON'T MISS Winterjazz

19-30 January

Flagey & Théâtre Marni
Brussels

The jazz festival formerly known as Marni is back for its fourth year at Flagey. With an emphasis on voice and big band, the festival kicks off with American crooner Robin McKelle's Motown-style covers of the likes of Willie Dixon, Leonard Cohen and the Bee Gees. Don't miss the Tutu Puoane Quartet, fronted by the sublime voice of South African vocalist Tutu Puoane (pictured), a star in the making. Belgium's own Steve Houben closes the festival, right before the late-night after-party with DJ Viktor French.



→ www.winterjazz.be

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

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

Maagdenhuismuseum
Lange Gasthuisstraat 33; 03.338.26.20 ocmw
antwerpen.be/Maagdenhuismuseum
Until APR 3 Kanttekeningen, a glimpse into the history of lace production in Antwerp

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
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 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

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

Marc Sleen Museum

Zandstraat 33; 02.219.19.80
www.marc-sleen.be

Until APR 4 Marc Sleen and Brussels, comic strips by the Belgian artist

Museum van Elsene

Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.22
www.museumvanelsene.be

Until JAN 16 Paul Delvaux: Starting Points, paintings by the Belgian surrealist shown alongside works by artists who influenced him

Until JAN 16 From Dürer to Jan Fabre: Masterpieces, paintings from the museum's collection including 19th- and 20th-century works by Ensor, Toulouse-Lautrec, Picasso, Miró, more

Until JAN 16 Prix Marie-Louise Rousseau 2010, works by 1st prize-winner Annabelle Guetatra and 2nd prize-winner Jens Hesse

Natural Science Museum

Vautierstraat 29; 02.627.42.38
www.naturalsciences.be

Until MAR 20 Destination Mars, interactive exhibition on the planet Mars in three themed sections: The Imaginary, The Planet and Exploration

Royal Museum of the Armed Forces

Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33
www.legermuseum.be

Until JAN 31 Belgians Can Do Too! Het Belgisch-Luxemburgs bataljon in Korea, Belgian military operations in the Korean War

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11
www.fine-arts-museum.be

Until FEB 6 Jules Schmalzigaug: A Futurist Belgian, retrospective of paintings by the only Belgian artist involved in the Italian futurist movement before the First World War

Until FEB 6 Reinhoud, tribute to the Belgian

sculptor and graphic artist, member of the CoBrA movement, who died in 2007

Sint-Gorikshallen

Sint-Goriksplein 23; 02.502.44.24
www.sintgorikshallen.be

Until JAN 31 Bruges & Venice, photographs comparing the history and art of the two cities by Luc Teper

Toy Museum

Verenigingstraat 24; 02.219.61.68
www.musee du jouet.eu

Until JAN 31 Het dier in het speelgoed, animal toys

Until MAR 31 Husa, genie van het houten speelgoed, wooden toys

Tour & Taxis

Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49
www.tour-taxis.com

Until MAY 9 America: It's Also Our History, three centuries of cross-Atlantic relations with frescoes, charts, audiovisual material, installations, objects and artwork

WIELS

Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.340.00.50
www.wiels.org

Until JAN 30 Francis Alÿs: A Story of Deception, installations, video, paintings, drawings, and documents by the Mexico-based, Antwerp-born artist

Ghent

Design Museum

Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99
www.designmuseumgent.be

Until FEB 27 .03 Maarten Van Severen: The History of an Icon, models, prototypes, drawings and photographs of the development of the "03" chair by the Flemish designer

Until FEB 27 Art Nouveau and Art Deco from the Netherlands, a selection of objects from the Drents Museum Assen collection

Dr Guislain Museum

Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95
www.museumdrguislain.be

Until JAN 27 Bob Baker Diary Drawings: Mental Illness and Me, more than 150 drawings by the British performance artist illustrate her 10-year journey through psychiatric institutions

Until MAY 8 The Weighty Body: Of Fat and Thin, Perfect or Deranged, a history of fasting for personal, esthetic, religious or economic reasons

Kunsthal Sint-Pietersabdij

Sint-Pietersplein 9; 09.243.97.30
www.gekleurdverleden.be

Until APR 25 Gekleurd verleden: Familie in oorlog (Coloured Past: Family at War), stories of World War Two, told by everyday people

Museum of Contemporary Art (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03 www.smak.be

Until JAN 30 Paul Hendrikse: A Vague Uneasiness, works by the Dutch artist

Until FEB 27 Hareng Saur: Ensor and Contemporary Art, spotlight on the continuing contemporary aspect of work by James Ensor, shown with work by international contemporary artists

Until MAR 27 Inside Installations, 10 installations from the museum's collection

Until MAR 27 Adrian Ghenie, paintings by the Romanian artist

Stadsmuseum Gent (STAM)

Bijloke - Godshuizenlaan 2; 09.269.87.90
www.stamgent.be

Until MAY 1 Enlightened City, an examination of how light affects a city through diaries, models, paintings, photographs and installations

Hasselt

Literair Museum

Bampsalaan 35; 01.216.17.87

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

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

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 guerrilla art

Knokke-Heist

Cultuurcentrum Scharpoord

Meerlaan 32; 050.630.430

www.congocollectie.be

Until JAN 16 Congo Collection, Congolese sculptures and masks

Leuven

Museum M

Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28; 016.27.29.29

www.mleuven.be

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

Until MAR 27 The Responsive Subject, works by Flemish artist Guy Mees

Venetiaanse Gaanderijen

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www.west-vlaanderen.be

Until MAR 13 Visual Arts Competition 2010, recent works by West Flemish artists



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Snow and Ice: Snow and ice sculpture festival</p

ROBYN BOYLE

bite



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diVino

I usually avoid restaurants on New Year's Eve for fear of one-off price inflation, but when friends suggested this little piece of the Mediterranean in Ostend, I threw caution to the wind and joined in. It did help knowing there was a set menu available for a reasonable €45 (excluding wine).

Our group of 12 and two other, smaller groups were all that could fit into the cosy space. All around us were reminders of a slower, warmer way of life: ochre walls lined with bottles of wine, wooden tables, candlelight and an open kitchen visible from our table. Here we dined for four long, lovely hours.

Before I could even place the napkin on my lap, a festive glass of bubbly and a plate of appetite-whetting *amuse-bouches* arrived. This was a spoonful of rich, creamy pâté, three ready-to-eat tiger prawns and a teaser bowl of fish soup. Very *Oostends*.

The wine list is extensive, covering Australia, France, Spain, Italy and more. So it took some time before we finally agreed on a bottle of dry white from Chile. This turned out to be the right choice – light and crisp and a nice complement to our starter of smoked salmon with fresh dill and onion and a side serving of tangy slaw made from celery root.

For the main course, there was a choice between tagliatelle and scallops or monkfish in a curry sauce with apples and rice – simple, yet elegant dishes. The tagliatelle came in two heaps of undoubtedly fresh pasta – one black and one cream coloured. Next to this, separate piles of carrots and leeks, and even an adorable, miniature *witloof* made for a colourful and

appetising presentation. But it was the scallops that stole the spotlight, perfectly cooked in what must have been loads of butter and dressed with almond slivers. They were a good size but still satisfyingly firm, with a mild, creamy flavour that teetered between sweet and savoury.

Four bottles of wine later, we were all ready for our coffees (though some did ask for an Irish version). When, at last, the grand finale was there – crème brûlée or chocolate mousse – the table fell silent. I had three scoops of fluffy, rich and utterly sweet mousse which came with a smattering of crème anglaise and a generous dollop of whipped cream. According to others, the crème brûlée was equally divine, but I find that hard to believe.

Out for post-dinner drinks downtown, we ran into the owner, Nathalie Van Audekerke. She had enlisted help for this particular evening, but on a normal day she runs the place all by herself. It was her passion for cooking that prompted her to open the restaurant 11 years ago. You might call it a hobby that got out of hand. Lucky for us.

→ www.wijnbistrodivino.be

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NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #163

Feature

The annual Henry Van de Velde awards put the spotlight on Flemish designers. How do they pick the winners and who is Henry Van de Velde anyway?

Arts

The Flemish Audio-Visual Fund hands out its wild cards – grants to student directors to make their very first feature films

Living

Don't you wish you were soaking up some rays by the Mediterranean sea right now? We don't have the weather, but we will tell you how these southern countries have left their mark on Flanders

MAD MAYHEM

Belgium's first-ever roller derby bout

EMMA PORTIER DAVIS



It's tough and sexy at the same time. The Gent Go-Go Roller Girls' first national bout this Saturday is likely to have you on the edge of your seat, not only with its fast-paced action but awe at their grace, girly get-ups, and capacity for a healthy bit of violence.

Go-Go Roller Girls, established in 2008, gave this minority sport a foothold in Flanders. Invented in late 19th-century America as races, the 1950s brought a theatrical element to roller derby, and the sport was incredibly popular into the 1970s. It has had a resurgence in the last decade in the US among modern, young women, who embrace the cross-over between fierce competition and skimpy fishnets – derby is known for its sexy brand of uniforms.

Go-Go Roller Girls have played Stuttgart and are preparing for battle against the Berlin Bombshells. But before that, we get a chance to see them on home turf when the league's two teams face each other for their first-ever local bout.

For those uninitiated in roller derby – played on quad skates – a bout consists of two teams of five players. There are four blockers on each team who try to stop

the other team's "jammer" from getting through and scoring points.

"It combines femininity with the roughness and toughness of sport," explains player Aagje Vanden Bussche. "If you've had a sucky date, for example, you can really take it out on the track. In a good way."

If it all sounds a bit too violent, there are strict rules. No elbows, no kicking and no "unfriendly" shoving. Watch the two teams – the Mad Megs (who get their name from Ghent's famous canon) and the Belles of Mayhem – keep their elbows down as they weave between each other. "We are going to show everyone for the first time what we have been working on and why we are so obsessed with this sport," says Vanden Bussche.

After that, comes the obligatory, and legendary, after party.

15 January, 19.00

Hoge Wal Sport Centre
Guldensporenlaan 34
Ertvelde

→ www.gentgogorollergirls.be

THE LAST WORD . . .
WHAT THE POLITICIANS ARE SAYING

From the horse's mouth

"You can lead a horse to the water, but you cannot make it drink."

Negotiator Johan Vande Lanotte, in English, following the rejection of his latest proposal

Yes is no

"I tried to make an honest evaluation. I wasn't going to play strategic games like some parties who say 'Yes' but mean 'No'."

Wouter Beke, CD&V chairman

Yes, but

"The French-speakers put on a great piece of theatre. They waited for a reaction from the two Flemish parties and then switched from 'No' to 'Yes, but'. Which turns out to be the same thing."

Bart De Wever, chairman of Flemish nationalist N-VA, interviewed on *Terzake*

No, no, no

"I don't understand any more. I don't understand this way of doing politics at all any more."

Caroline Gennez, socialist party chair