



Ghent, googled

The university library puts its cultural heritage online
p6

The secrets of Sleen

The Flemish comic legend's first album in English
p8

Bull's-eye

New director takes on the hormone mafia
p9

The floating village

For five weeks in 2010, a team of Belgian scientists caught bugs, saved snakes and listened to frogs along 1,000 kilometres of the Congo River

DENZIL WALTON

On 30 April 2010, a crowd of Congolese gathered on the banks of the Congo River in Kisangani. With great interest they watched two large boats cast off and slowly edge into the main current of the huge river. The decks were piled high with equipment and provisions – and packed with people, too, most of them wearing T-shirts emblazoned with *Boyekoli Ebale Congo* (“Study of the Congo River” in the Lingala language). It was the start of an intrepid expedition organised by the Belgian-

Congolese Congo Biodiversity Initiative to study the plant and animal species of the Congo Basin. The boats, in fact, were not meant to be so crowded. A third vessel – the media boat – didn’t arrive on time. Consequently, two boats – designed to hold 67 zoologists, botanists, hydrologists, geologists, cartographers, archaeologists and linguists – had to find space for journalists and camera crews, and all their equipment. Already a few days later than scheduled, it wasn’t the smooth start that the organisers of *Boyekoli Ebale Congo*

had hoped for. Flemish biologist and expedition co-leader Erik Verheyen calls the overcrowding the project’s biggest challenge.

But considering the journey ahead, that’s possibly not such a bad thing. The great expedition had commenced, and it saw the team of 130 travel from Kisangani to Bumba and back, a five-week, 1,000-kilometer round trip.

“With 130 people, we were like a floating village,” says Verheyen.

→ continued on page 5

Clijsters wins Australian Open

The extraordinary comeback of Flemish tennis player Kim Clijsters took another twist at the weekend when she won her first Australian Open title in Melbourne. Battling from a set down in the final, Clijsters defeated China’s Li Na to clinch her third Grand Slam crown since coming out of retirement in 2009.

Clijsters was initially unsettled by the speed of Li Na’s approach, but the 27-year-old closed the evening with a 3-6, 6-3, 6-3 triumph to nab the shiny silver trophy. Clijsters is now seeded number 2 in the world.

Once engaged to Australia’s leading tennis player Lleyton Hewitt, Clijsters was affectionately known in Melbourne as “Aussie Kim”. After thanking the contribution of her American husband, retired basketball player Bryan Lynch, she told an appreciative

crowd in the Rod Laver Arena: “I now feel you guys can finally call me Aussie Kim because I won the title.”

Clijsters’ post-win tears showed her joy at turning her comeback into a victory march, with back-to-back wins in the US Open and now Melbourne. However, she confessed to an uncertainty as to how much longer she will play beyond the Olympics in London next year. “I do think this will probably be my last full season,” she said. “But I would like to keep going until the Olympics as I’ve never played them.”

Clijsters wasn’t the only Fleming to win in Melbourne: An-Sophie Mestach, 16, won the junior girls’ title, beating Manuela Puig from Puerto Rico 6-4, 6-2. Mestach, from Ghent, is currently junior number two in the world.



© Mick Tsikas / Reuters

Government facilitator resigns

Strongly worded speeches from both sides, as king meets with parties

ALAN HOPE

Belgium was in the international headlines again last week, as yet another attempt to bring the political parties together to form a new government collapsed, and the king called party representatives to the royal palace in Laken to map out what ground there may be for compromise.

Last week, just days after more than 34,000 people marched through the streets of Brussels, royal conciliator Johan Vande Lanotte handed in his resignation after trying to find common ground between the parties for 98 days.

Meanwhile, Belgium edges closer to the world record of the longest time (289 days) for a democratic nation to go without a government. The Brussels protest organisers have promised further actions as the impasse continues.

→ continued on page 3

FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE

Yanaika Skrzyszkowiak



© VMM

The VTM reality show *Mijn Restaurant!* has had an accursed history as far as most of its participants are concerned, with couples breaking up and restaurants shutting down. Last week there was some good news – the runner-up of the first season in 2008, Yanaika Skrzyszkowiak of Exquisa restaurant in Hasselt, was voted Lady Chef of the Year.

At 30, she's the youngest recipient of the award, sponsored by Bru mineral water, in its 21-year history. But, according to Dirk De Prins, editor of the magazine *Culinaire Ambiance*, whose readers vote, together with a panel of food writers, for the winner, it's well-deserved. "The art is to keep everything pure, but be creative at the same time," said De Prins, who is also a member of the *Mijn Restaurant!* jury. "Yanaika manages that extremely well. She puts personality into all of her dishes."

Yanaika and her partner, Stephanie Deneux, were pipped at the post in the final of their season, but they'd been a popular couple throughout, and when the show was over the restaurant went on to do good business. It has received praise from Gault-Millau and from Michelin. Unlike many of the pairs who compete in the show, Yanaika and Stephanie are still together.

"I can't believe how fast we've grown; I never expected it," said Yanaika after the award was announced. "I believe in starting slow and building up. After the fuss surrounding *Mijn Restaurant!* I deliberately took my time and thought carefully about what I wanted." Exquisa was named after one of her greatest loves: the potato. On the menu is tabbouleh of potato, a salsa of potato, potato soup and potato tajine. She was advised, she says, not to concentrate on the potato so much. "They were all wrong, weren't they?"

→ www.restaurant-exquisa.be

News in brief

Postal unions have announced a **one-day strike on 11 February**. Post offices will be closed, and there will be no mail deliveries. The unions are protesting a restructuring plan announced last week without consultation with the workforce. The plan involves changes to sorting office procedures that will lead to the loss of thousands of jobs, unions claim. Industrial action caused postal disruption in Flanders and Brussels last Thursday, and further lightning actions could take place.

Flemish poet Marc Tritsmans has won the fifth **Herman de Coninck Prize** for a Dutch-language poetry collection with his work *Studie van de schaduw* (*Study of the Shadow*). The prize is worth €6,000. He also won the public prize, worth €1,000, for his poem "Uitgesproken" ("Pronounced"). Dutch writer Annemarie Estor won the Debut Prize, also worth €1,000, for her first collection, *Vuurdoorn me* (*Firethorn Me*).

An **arsonist who set fire to cars** in the Kempen region of Antwerp province over recent weeks has been arrested in the Dutch town of Zundert. The man, a 48-year-old Dutchman, had been prosecuted on similar charges by a court in Breda just days before the first fires in Flanders. Dutch police said he was caught setting fire to a van and a shed containing 19 motorcycles, which were destroyed at a cost of millions of euros.

A majority of **sausages contain too much fat**, salt and colourings and are sold under misleading names, according to a report by consumer organisation Test-Aankoop. Half of the samples tested were stored at too



high a temperature, and one in 10 of those contained the listeria bacteria. It was also often unclear what kind of meat the sausages contained.

The controversial **saliva tests** now being administered to drivers to determine the presence of alcohol in the blood is reliable, according to federal mobility minister Etienne Schouppe. The minister ordered a study in response to criticisms about the possibility of false positive results, which showed that 110 of 120 positives were confirmed by blood tests. No driver would be convicted on the evidence of a saliva test alone, he pointed out.

The worst spot in Flanders for **traffic jams is Antwerp**, according to figures presented in the Flemish parliament last week by mobility minister Hilde Crevits. In 2010, the number of traffic jams rose in Antwerp by 20% to 35%, depending on the time of day, compared to a rise of only 10% in and around Brussels.

Despite having no government, Belgium has placed **third in a study on the functioning of democracy** carried out by the University of Zurich. Only Denmark and Finland did better. The study looked at 100 indicators of democracy in 30 countries over the period 1995 to 2005.

The University of Ghent has announced **honorary doctorates** for European Council president Herman Van Rompuy and EU Commission president Manuel Barroso. "This award is a sign of respect for the European philosophy,

which is so deep and so natural in Belgium, in times when it may seem to be called into question," Van Rompuy said.

Airport police and customs officials at Brussels Airport in Zaventem have called for an end to the situation whereby Zaventem is the only major airport in Western Europe without the presence of a **sniffer dog trained to detect explosives**. The authorities are currently examining the possibility of employing a dog that could be used by both services. The railway police, meanwhile, does have an explosives dog, by the name of Charlie.

Transport costs across Brussels and Flanders are rising this month. Rail authority NMBS will raise the price of a standard ticket by 1.02% and season tickets by 1.03%. Flemish transport authority De Lijn will raise its prices by an average of 1.7%, with the cost of the Buzzy Pazz rising by €2, and other passes by €3. Brussels transport authority MIVB is raising prices of tickets by an average of 2.44%, although the prices using an electronic MOBIB pass remain unchanged. A special ticket for passengers caught without a ticket by the new automatic doors at many stations will be introduced at the penalty price of €3.

A **coastal tram was derailed** in Nieuwpoort last weekend while taking a sharp bend, colliding with a fence around construction works and coming to rest on waste ground. The driver was treated for shock. No passengers were on board the vehicle, which was one of two trams that travel the coastal route nightly to keep power lines free of ice.

OFFSIDE

ALAN HOPE

New rules for puppies and pussycats

Foreign breeders of cats and dogs who want to export them to Belgium will be subject to new rules forcing them to bring their facilities up to the level of breeders here. Imported cats and dogs will have to be put in quarantine until the animals and their papers can be checked by a vet. And the government will draw up a white list of countries where they consider the rules are up to Belgium's standards. In other cases, the local authorities will have to provide a certificate of compliance.

→ www.health.belgium.be

FLANDERS TODAY

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"People are beginning to wonder where our country is heading"

→ continued from page 1

Last week, following the resignation of Vande Lanotte, the king called in first the leaders of the two green parties, followed by president of the French-speaking Christian Democrat party Joëlle Milquet and a newcomer to the talks: Open VLD chairman Alexander De Croo, whose party provoked last year's elections by withdrawing from the coalition.

This week, they were followed by the heads of the Flemish socialist party and the CD&V, as well as acting French-speaking liberals president Didier Reynders, whose successor was last week named as Charles Michel. Last but not least, the leaders of the two largest

parties: Bart De Wever of the N-VA and Elio Di Rupo of the French-speaking socialists.

Di Rupo was the first to comment as the news broke, in a speech given to his party's New Year's reception. He launched his proposal for what he called "a government of national unity", which would include all of the parties (except the Flemish Vlaams Belang and Lijst Dedecker). The notion was immediately rejected by N-VA and CD&V. Di Rupo's plan would have placed priority for the new government on putting the country back on its economic and financial feet, leaving state reform for later.

At his own party's Antwerp reception later, N-VA party president Bart De Wever pledged to stand firm. "Back down or go away, that's the choice they're offering us. I have to admit that it's tiring, and I don't know what effect such continuous manipulation of public opinion will have. But I haven't considered giving in for even one second."

The king's next step will be announced at the earliest on Wednesday, 2 February. Suggested options include: A



Twilight of the talks: Johan Vande Lanotte (left) leaves the palace after delivering his resignation

© Reuters

new round of talks, this time including the Open VLD liberals; a new round of talks without the N-VA, seen by the French-speaking side as the main obstacle to progress; extending the powers of the caretaker

government while the impasse continues; a new election. Those options range from nearly impossible (dumping the N-VA) to the undesirable (nobody wants new elections). ♦

Overheard

What they're saying about Belgium

In Paris, **Le Monde** described the latest situation as a "complete blockage of the political system" (ignoring Belgium's several tiers of government)

In a long article on the situation in **The Economist**, the current problems were traced back to the splitting of Leuven University in 1968. Belgium's divisions, the magazine said, could be a dangerous precedent for European unity. No mention was made of the Czech Republic and Slovakia,

former compatriots who co-exist peacefully around the EU table, but *The Economist* was in no doubt where the problems lie: The article was titled "The Trouble with Flanders".

"The perception of Belgium is getting worse," warned Jean Deboutte, in charge of strategy at the federal government's **Debt Agency**. "It doesn't do anymore to say we'll have a government in a few months. People listen politely, but their body language gives

them away. People are seriously beginning to wonder where on earth our country is heading."

"The fact that Vande Lanotte throws in the towel now means that politicians are completely ignoring our demonstration last Sunday," concluded **Felix De Clerck**, one of the organisers of the Shame march through Brussels. "They've understood nothing of our message: that they have to look out for the common good. The next march will have 100,000 demonstrators." ♦

Noise limit proposal for music venues

Representatives from the live music industry met in Brussels last week to hammer out a common reaction to plans to limit noise levels in clubs, concert halls and festivals. The proposal, from Flemish culture minister Joke Schauvliege, would limit music levels to 90, 95 or 100 decibels (dB), according to certain categories. Each category carries a number of increasingly strict obligations, as the noise level rises. Those include information on hearing loss for audiences and the provision of ear plugs.

The aim of the measure, the minister said, is to tackle the growing problem of hearing damage caused by excessively loud music.

"Our proposal has been drawn up on the basis of consultation with specialists and people with a great deal of experience in the area, as well as a study of legislation in other countries," said Schauvliege. The industry as a whole opposes the new limits, which would impose sound level reduction of up to 50%. In other words, the new maximum limit would be half as loud as what audiences experienced at last year's music festivals, responsible for bringing thousands to Brussels and Flanders during the summer months.

Gathering in Brussels' Ancienne Belgique concert hall last week, music promoters were treated

to a demonstration by Flemish drummer Michael Schack. He set up a drum kit with no amplification and proceeded to play a variety of music styles – illustrating that in most cases, it would be impossible for a drummer alone to stay below the new limit.

For festivals, the limits would mean that organisers would have to provide more speakers so those at the back of the audience could hear – a requirement that would be prohibitively expensive for many promoters. The collective response to the proposal, drawn up after last week's meeting, will be announced on 2 February. ♦

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



€58 billion

potential taxes that the government does not collect, according to a study by the Higher Institute for Labour (Hiva). The sum includes tax deductions, allowances and premiums, as well as the lower- or no-tax status allowed certain sectors like scientific research

€750,000

ordered to be paid by the agency that oversees development on the left bank of the Scheldt river, after it ignored a ban by a Ghent court on the demolition of houses in Doel. A number of other cases are outstanding, and lawyers for the residents of Doel estimate total damages could reach into the millions

102,000 tonnes

of used electrical and electronic household appliances gathered last year by Recupel, the organisation responsible for disposal and recycling, up from 99,000 tonnes last year. The main increases were in refrigerators and TV and computer screens

60 seconds

the length of a TV advertisement for Stella Artois to be shown during the Super Bowl the American football championship on 6 February – the first time the prime advertising slot has featured a non-American beer. The slot is expected to reach an audience of 100 million

FIFTH COLUMN

Rough

After Wouter Van Besien of the Flemish green party said yes to the now-famous Vande Lanotte proposal, which he found a good basis from which to continue government formation talks, he felt like a statesman. The feeling only lasted for a couple of hours.

Bart De Wever's N-VA had yet to react to the same document. Chances were that this party would say yes, too. But N-VA answered no. Only minutes later, Van Besien received the first emails. He was a traitor.

Van Besien's story is just one example of what has become known as the "verruwing (or roughening) of the political debate". In the current political crisis, email and the internet have become instruments not just for political discussion, but for name calling and insulting anyone who holds a different opinion.

This roughening is an unwanted side-effect of the dragging on of the formation talks. Paul De Grauwe, an economics professor, experienced it firsthand. "Have often criticized VLD, SP.A and CD&V, never received any hate mail. Now I criticize N-VA, I receive loads," he twittered.

N-VA militants are notorious for their internet guerrilla tactics. This stems back to the times when N-VA started out in 2002-2003. As the traditional media treated the N-VA as the small party it was, its militants resorted to the internet, the only place they felt they were heard.

But it sits uneasy with N-VA's current leading position. The constant media attention party president De Wever now enjoys has not calmed down his supporters – on the contrary. They attack not just political opponents, but also professors, journalists and even pop bands such as Clouseau, who came up with a song called "Leve België" ("Hurray for Belgium"). It looks like a free-for-all for anyone who does not act like a "good Fleming".

N-VA militants are not the only ones guilty of vicious emails and remarks. The other side also uses big words such as "fascism" to attack Flemish nationalists. The political crisis has polarised Flanders just as it has Belgium. Columnist Tom Naegels wrote recently about a deep division between "good and bad" Flemings, as seen by both sides. "Do you hate designer spectacles or sneer at country homes? Do you think the world is ruled by politically correct red or narrow-minded brown?"

Is this how things started in Yugoslavia? *De Standaard* wondered last week.



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The floating village

Belgian and Congolese scientists collaborate to discover hundreds of new plant species

→ continued from page 1

The Congo Basin is home to the second-largest rainforest in the world. Conservation of this region's unique biodiversity is vital, not only for its intrinsic ecological importance but also the crucial role it plays in generating income for national and local economies.

More than 40 million Congolese rely on the forests and rivers of the Congo Basin for their livelihoods. Due to deforestation, poachers and over-fishing, these natural resources are at risk, and the whole eco-system is under threat. To tackle these dangers, sustainable use and management of ecological resources is essential. Fundamental to that process is scientific knowledge.

However, there is very little data available on Congolese biodiversity, with much of it dating back over 50 years. The Congo Biodiversity Initiative was formed to update this knowledge. It's a Belgian-Congolese consortium of four scientific institutions: the University of Kisangani (Congo); the Royal Museum for Central Africa (Tervuren); the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (Brussels); and the National Botanic Garden (Meise). That's why so many people were necessary on those two boats. "There was so much work to do, as much of this area is still largely unknown," says Verheyen, who teaches at Antwerp University. "For example, before the expedition only 185 species of lichen were known in the whole country. We discovered 600 more."

The Congo/Belgian connection

The expedition's objective was to survey the biodiversity in and around the Congo River. From analysing the water quality of the river and its tributaries to examining the aquatic life, the scientists' work in the rainforest extended to the banks of the river. Here they collected native plants and animals.

Taking specimens is essential because conservation is based on knowledge. Correct identification of animals and plants is, therefore, crucial. A new species can not be identified just from photographs. It requires in-depth information from an anatomical example.

The expedition, in fact, was originally intended to last longer. "Initially, we wanted to travel from Kisangani to Kinshasa, but we decided not to do so for two reasons. One was the delay in leaving Kisangani, which meant that the original schedule was always going to be tight. And then we heard of some security issues in Mbandaka that might have prevented us from setting foot on land, so we decided to travel to Bumba and back."

Ultimately, it wasn't a disappointment. "Actually it worked to our advantage," says Verheyen, "as our biological sampling was more in-depth, plus we had time to explore the various tributaries."

The work of the Congo Biodiversity Initiative extends way beyond the expedition; it also includes comprehensive training of local scientific staff. Such investment in researchers aims to support their learning, help them integrate into international scientific networks and ultimately contribute to the long-term sustainable management of the Democratic Republic of Congo's natural resources.

"I was delighted to see the different nationalities collaborate very well together," says Verheyen. "Wherever possible we formed groups made up of both Congolese and Belgians. They all got on amazingly well, both as scientists and as people. And it has to be said that the passion of the Congolese researchers for their work is unequalled in Africa, which played a significant role in the successful outcome of the expedition."

"It has to be said that the passion of the Congolese researchers for their work is unequalled in Africa"

Later this year, a multi-disciplinary Biodiversity Surveillance Centre will open in Kisangani. A place of study and home to the biological collections obtained during the expedition, the centre will be equipped with material to carry out field work and provide accommodation for visiting researchers and students.

"One of its main tasks will be the education and training of zoologists and botanists specialising in Congo's biodiversity and of experts in the sustainable development of forests," explains Verheyen. "The intention is that it becomes a real centre of excellence to monitor the biodiversity of the Congo Basin."

A road map – literally

Boyekoli Ebale Congo 2010 yielded thousands of photos, observations, recordings and samples. It will take months if not years to process all this information. However, the



Herpetologists Zacharie and Zoltan find a snake in a net spread out to catch bats

preliminary results are already impressive.

The rapid integration of high-resolution satellite images with old maps and topographical data collected in the field has already produced new, high-quality maps of the region – an important result as most maps of Congo are more than 40 years old.

More than 1,200 plant species were collected for the herbarium in Yangambi, the new Biodiversity Surveillance Centre in Kisangani and the National Botanic Garden of Belgium. These included 35 orchids, 150 fungi (of which one is a new species) and 750 lichens. Zooplankton, phytoplankton, crustaceans and molluscs were sampled in 150 different places, in habitats with different water quality. Around 6,000 fish were collected at 95 localities using a variety of nets, plus local fishermen. Selected species were screened for the presence of gill parasites, and tissue samples were taken for DNA identification of species.

Tens of thousands of insects and spiders were collected after being trapped with lures – such as pheromones, manure and light – or via fumigation of tree canopies. On our cover, Patrick Grootaert, head of entomology at the Institute of Natural Sciences, gathers insects off a brightly lit sheet at night.

Around 700 amphibians and 150 reptiles (mostly snakes) were caught by hand. More than 100 hours of sound recordings were made of the calls of male frogs to assist in the identification of species.

Using hundreds of snap traps,

live traps and pitfalls, 195 small mammals were collected along the banks of the Congo, mainly mice, rats and shrews of at least 19 species. They include a possible new species of rat and two shrews, which were recorded in Congo for the first time.

Over 22 nights, the team collected 594 bats of 19 species. During the day, using the same nets, 830 birds of 61 species were caught. An important effort of the local scientific community is focussed on gaining insight into the role of fruit-eating bats and birds in the regeneration of the primary rainforest.

Linguists, meanwhile, conducted 82 interviews in nine villages to learn what the people of four languages (and many dialects) could tell them about local traditions and the animals and plants of the region. Some cultural interactions were unforgettable: in one river village that has never had electricity, researchers used a generator to show the children a movie. ♦

→ www.congobiodiv.org

Seeing is believing: photo exhibition



Photographer Kris Pannecoucke, responsible for the photos you see here, travelled along the Congo River with the expedition. In hundreds of photographs, he has captured life on the river: the fieldwork of the scientists; the diverse plant and animal species; the villages and people of the Congo. An exhibition of his work, *Boyekoli Ebale Congo 2010*, can be visited simultaneously at the sites of the three Belgian partners: the Museum of Central Africa, the Royal Museum of Natural Sciences and the National Botanic Garden.

Congo River in Images Until 13 March

Royal Museum of Central Africa, Tervuren
Royal Museum of Natural Sciences, Brussels
National Botanic Garden of Belgium, Meise

Digitisation pays off for Ghent

University librarian ignored the critics and put cultural heritage online

CLAIRE DAVENPORT

The scientific university library in Ghent is gaining world fame – and now a complete renovation – after putting digital scans of its cultural heritage collection online. Ghent's chief librarian ignored the critics and agreed to a scanning deal with Google. Three years on, the scans have not only attracted foreign admirers but also clinched a €41 million renovation of the site.

Ghent agreed to let Google scan 300,000 books belonging to the library's little-known cultural heritage collection. Ghent's collection is one of 40 worldwide, and the first in Belgium, to attract the attention of the "Google men", as librarians dub the company's executives.

"I get so angry with people who say we are selling our soul to a commercial giant," says chief librarian Sylvia Van Peteghem, who has been working at the library for 28 years.

At the outset, Google's foray into digitising everything one-dimensional received a frosty reception, and those taking the company's money stood accused of selling off their cultural souls to a potential monopoly.

In the US, the row even transpired into a protracted lawsuit with authors. EU regulators were also not keen, so the company agreed to scan library books that predate 1870 only because their copyright has expired.

Van Peteghem did not see public money coming their way to preserve and digitise the collection. "I want to see the first university that scans its entire collection just to show it to the world," she says. "That man over there would agree." She points to a bust of Ferdinand van der Haeghen, Ghent University's chief librarian in 1869.

Van der Haeghen famously complained about library stacks being insular. According to Van Peteghem, he thought: "What is the use of collecting books if we just put them on our shelves? We know they are there, but the world doesn't."

And Google has a persuasive commercial argument to lure house-proud librarians into a deal. Its search is very wide because it catches every word, not just metadata (essentially jargon for a limited amount of data). So even if a user is not after one of Ghent's books, they can serendipitously stumble across them, making them "discoverable", a word used by Google.

Libraries with valuable historical gems have more reason than technological progress or critical acclaim to migrate

their books online. In the summer of 2007, a burst water pipe turned 20,000 books from Ghent's historical collection into paper-mâché. Digital scans are also better insurance against theft than the traditional lending of materials.

And the money will follow

Ghent's library has been fighting for a much-needed restoration of its famous building – the *boekentoren*, or book tower, since the 1980s. In June 2009, the board of directors finally agreed to plans to completely restore and renovate the building.

Three million books from the cultural heritage collection will migrate from the 64-meter book tower into an underground repository, and the tower will be reopened to the public by 2017. Van Peteghem is convinced that Google's scans had a lot to do with the board's decision to approve the restoration.

She first met "Mr Google" on a visit to the Seattle Public Library. A deal was struck within weeks as the company was bowled over by Ghent's collection. "They have very interesting books about flora and fauna. The artwork is fabulous, and they look gorgeous on screen", says Philippe Colombet, the Google's Strategic Partnership Development Manager.

He's referring to the *Nederlandsch Bloemwerk*, an 18th-century book valued at €15,000 (pictured). Although the book is infinitely more impressive under your fingertips, Google's scans allow them to be seen by researchers, students and other interested parties anywhere in the world.

Ghent's massive cultural heritage collection is valuable to anyone researching European history. For example, the collection boasts a 12th-century map, which at the time was interpreted as proof that the earth was flat. It sits inside the pages of the *Liber Floridus* encyclopaedia, valued at €40,000.

Some of the most interesting scans are of photographs taken in the 1900s, 1980 and 2003 of the exact same spot to show how the landscape might have changed over 100 years.

The success of digitisation has not been fully measured yet, but anecdotal evidence shows that Ghent's collection is proving a hit. A researcher in Australia requested a scan of a fold-out in a book that he had found through Google's



search. A Stanford scientific research paper cites several books from the collection. The scans have also attracted visitors to the library to see the books in the flesh.

Anecdotal evidence may well be all the library will ever get, as Google does not share statistics on its books search with anyone but its board. Nevertheless, Van Peteghem feels her determination has paid off. Meeting librarians at a recent conference on digital scanning, she found them frantically searching their pockets for business cards to give to the "Google man". ♦

➡ www.lib.ugent.be

Intelligent energy

Flemish scientists are testing out "smart electricity networks" in households across the region

EMMA PORTIER DAVIS

Calling all test bunnies (as the Flemish would say): Scientists from the Catholic University of Leuven (KU Leuven) technology institute Vito want to install electricity meters and smart (low-energy) appliances in 100 homes in Flanders. Their goal: to manage flows more economically and make room for clean energy. As energy has gotten more expensive and looks set to increase even more, with the all-too frequent spikes in oil prices, one solution is to develop so-called smart grids that would direct energy more efficiently and economically, making the most of peaks and troughs in demand.

First thing in the morning when we are having our showers and making breakfast and when just home from work are the busiest times. Having, say, a smart washing machine that can be set up but will only start operating once the peak hours (also the most expensive) are over would help even this out, as well as saving consumers money.

The system would also favour cleaner sources of energy, which typically do not provide the steady stream of power that comes from burning fossil fuels. Even if it seems that the North Sea is always windy, this energy source

also comes in peaks and troughs. The smart appliances would be activated in accordance with these.

Much ink has been spilt by European Union regulators on how to manage this at a European level. KU Leuven and Vito, with the support of the Flemish government and industrial partners, want to bring the technology to households to see how it can seriously be rolled out at a regional level.

"Our ultimate goal is to prove the concept of smart grids and develop the technologies needed for such a demand system," says Peter Tant, a researcher at KU Leuven. We also want to investigate how appreciated such a system would be for the people of Flanders."

The project also has convenience and comfort at its heart, so no need to worry that the washing machine will sit there all day with a pile of dirty clothes. "You can programme it so it finishes by a certain time, and it will then start up at the most energy-efficient moment," said Tant.

Interested households can apply to be test bunnies on the website of Linear Intelligent Networks. ♦

➡ www.linear-smartgrid.be



Electricity metres let you know how much electricity you're using and when

Swissair at fault in Sabena failure

The Swiss airline is accused of “bleeding Sabena dry”

ALAN HOPE

Swissair was responsible for the bankruptcy of the Belgian national airline Sabena in 2001, the appeal court in Brussels ruled last week. Swissair took over Sabena in 1995 and itself declared bankruptcy in 2002, four months after Sabena's fall.

The ruling is an important point of principle, even though the plaintiffs came away virtually empty handed. The administrators of the Sabena bankruptcy, who together with the Belgian state had brought the case, were awarded a provisional total of €18.2 million in damages. They had sued for €3 billion, which includes all of the Sabena liabilities and a portion of damages to the state. The state is awarded €282,000. A final reckoning will take place when the courts have determined the precise amount of Sabena's assets and liabilities.

The story begins in 1995, when Swissair took a stake of just under half the shares of the Belgian national carrier, with the majority remaining in the hands of the state. According to the complaint, Swissair, which had operational control of the airline, bled Sabena dry by, for example, paying top executives huge bonuses through a Bermuda-Luxembourg connection so the transactions never appeared on the books. Swissair also arranged, through a series of straw-man companies, the purchase by Sabena of 24 Airbus A-320 aircraft, twice as many as the airline needed.

In 1997, the two formed SAirGroup, enjoyed a solid reputation, while it bought up minority positions in a number of loss-making airlines across Europe and then writing off the losses instead of counting them on the red side of the balance sheet, which would have given an entirely different picture of the group's financial health. Sabena went bust in 2001 – barely two months after the airline industry suffered the shock of the attacks of 11 September – throwing thousands out of work and leaving Belgium with the embarrassing loss of its national airline.

History of a national airline

Sabena was set up in 1923 by the Belgian state, and the first flight took off from Rotterdam the following year, transiting in Brussels and landing in Strasbourg. Routes



to London, Bremen and Copenhagen were added shortly after. The first Transatlantic flight was in June 1947, and Sabena put some of the first Jumbo jets onto New York and Chicago routes in 1971. The last-ever flight was from Abidjan in Ivory Coast to Brussels via Cotonou in Benin.

Christian Van Buggenhout, appointed by the courts to administer the Sabena bankruptcy, told the court that the airline had gone down not, as was presented at the time, as a result of the crisis in the airline industry, but as a result of a long-term asset-stripping strategy by Swissair.

In addition, Swissair pledged in August 2001 to provide an injection of €430 million to keep Sabena in business, but it never materialised. The reduction of damages to the state reflects the court's opinion that the state acted as a shareholder, rather than a state, and therefore bears a portion of the burden.

In 2009, 36 people were committed to trial, including the last two managing directors of Sabena, the Belgian Pierre Godfroid and the Swiss Paul Reutlinger (now deceased), as well as other senior executives. The airline's auditor, KPMG, along with Axa-Luxembourg, were also indicted.

In an initial ruling in 2003, the court in Brussels had ruled that Swissair had indeed not fulfilled the obligations it had taken on when acquiring Sabena, but had not been responsible for the bankruptcy of the company. The plaintiffs went to appeal, and eight years later, that aspect of the ruling has been overturned.

The Brussels ruling now has to be translated into action by the Swiss courts. Belgium has taken Switzerland to the International Tribunal in the Hague over the question of respecting one another's legal rulings, after a court in Switzerland said no account need be taken of Belgian court decisions.

The Brussels court's ruling now leaves it open to Sabena creditors, including shareholders and employees, to pursue their own remedies in the courts.

The remains of Swissair are now owned by Lufthansa. Delta Air Transport (DAT), a profitable subsidiary, escaped the bankruptcy, and was taken over by SN Air Holding. It was transformed into SN Brussels Airlines, which now, after a merger with Virgin, is known as Brussels Airlines. ♦

Jobs news

Belgacom is to take on 200 technical staff, including telecommunications welders and electricians. The company said it would be opening up another 100 vacancies later in the year.

Dairy producer **FrieslandCampina**, makers of Fristi, Cecemel and Nutroma, is to double production at its factory in Aalter, creating 90 new jobs. The investment is worth €36 million.

International fast food chain **McDonald's** will open two new restaurants in Belgium this year, creating 130 jobs. One of the restaurants will be in Turnhout, while the other location remains

undisclosed. The chain currently has 62 restaurants in Belgium and served 34 million visitors last year.

JLG in Maasmechelen, a manufacturer of industrial lift equipment, is to scrap 109 of its workforce of 297 as a result of poor performance in a climate of tougher competition at a European level, the company said.

The technology industry in Belgium will increase its productivity by 5.5% this year, leading to an increase of 4,700 jobs in the sector, industry federation Agoria said. However, the industry is still recovering from the loss of 30,000 jobs in crisis years 2009-2010.



Freight carrier **DHL** will retain at least 200 of the 788 jobs that were to be lost in Diegem by the company's move of some operations to Leipzig, Bonn and Prague. Three

main services – Aviation Capacity Sales, Global Aviation IT and Business Process Aviation – will remain in Flanders. ♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Air • Etihad

Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways is increasing the frequency of flights between Brussels and the Gulf area from six to eight a week this summer.

Banks • Keytrade

Belgium's leading internet and online banking service, Keytrade, a subsidiary of Landbouwkrediet, is seeking to develop its activities in the Netherlands after successful ventures in Switzerland and Luxembourg. The company expects to get approval from the Dutch central bank shortly.

Biotechnology • Genzyme

US biotech company Genzyme is investing €250 million in Geel to build a state-of-the-art enzyme production unit next to its existing facilities. The new plant, expected to open in 2013, will provide jobs for some 150 workers. Genzyme has been successful in developing Myozyme, a drug component used to cure Pompe, a disease affecting muscular tissues.

Dredging • Deme

Deme, based in Zwijndrecht, Antwerp province, has won a contract to deepen the River Congo between Malela and Boma to allow large container ship to reach the port of Matadi. The dredging company already carried out work at the Congo delta in 1990.

Economy • Confidence

Business confidence in the Belgian economy in January attained its highest level since September 2007, according to the monthly National Bank of Belgium indicator of future business prospects. The manufacturing industry, services and trade sectors further improved while the building industry was slightly lower, affected by the bad weather in December.

Economy • Wealth

The net financial wealth of the Belgian population rose again last year to reach some €717 billion, according to the Belgian National Bank. Each Belgian is said to own an average of €84,000 in liquid assets, one of the highest figures in the world. Meanwhile, the national accounting office announced that the population saved more than 17% of its disposable income last year.

Pipelines • Fabricom

Grimbergen-based industrial piping and maintenance group Fabricom is negotiating a €400 million contract over the next eight years with the Norwegian Gassco company. The deal involves the supply and maintenance of pipelines and equipment to link several offshore platforms supplying the Karsto gas processing unit in Norway. Fabricom is also seeking to develop the capacity of the Zeepipe pipeline supplying the Zeebrugge gas terminal to meet growing demand in Western Europe.

Software • EskoArtwork

Ghent-based graphic software developer EskoArtwork has been sold to the US Danaher industrial company for some €350 million. EskoArtwork was created in 2007 by the merger of the Danish Esko, owners of Barco Graphics, and the local company Artwork Systems.

“Plucked from my imagination”

Marc Sleen, the doyen of comic strip artists, appears in English for the first time

ALAN HOPE

Later this month, comic strip artist Marc Sleen will achieve a first: the publication of one of his albums, *The Ghost of Sand Street*, in English. It's a landmark in his career, and it took him until he was 88 years old to get there. Mind you, he's been rather busy up to this point.

Marcel Honoree Nestor Neels was born in December 1922 in Gentbrugge, the youngest of four boys. His father was a storyteller, and Sleen showed a talent for drawing, taking weekly lessons at the academy in Sint-Niklaas. He went on to study fine arts at Sint-Lukas in Brussels, where he had the ambition of becoming a painter like the artists he admired of the Latem School – a group of expressionists working around the start of the 20th century near Ghent.

“I wanted to be a painter, but by coincidence I was asked in 1944 to be the house artist for *De Standaard*,” Sleen tells me. “It had nothing to do with strips at that point; I had to draw all sorts of things, portraits of writers and artists, caricatures and so on. Later on they said that a strip would be a good thing, and that's where it started.”

So began a career lasting 57 years, and an entry in the Guinness Book of Records as the most prolific comic-strip artist in the world. Before his retirement in 2002, Sleen (a reversal of his surname, which he adopted as his pen-name) had written and drawn 217 albums featuring his comic hero, Nero, not to mention dozens of other one-off works.

“I invented it all myself – the strips, the scenarios. Nobody ever touched them,” he says. “I did it all alone. There are many others, including Hergé [Tintin] and Vandersteen [*Suske en Wiske*], who worked with studios, with writers and colourists. But I did it all alone.”

The pressure, then, to produce a daily strip must have been enormous. “When I started in 1944, there was no television,” Sleen says. “People read the newspaper in a different way than they do now. My mother had to have her paper every day because there was a serial in it, and she was always dying to know what was going to happen next. I made a strip every day with two rows of panels, and always at the end there'd be a cliff-hanger, so people were hanging on for the next day's paper. I worked from day to day. Current events were woven into my scenario.”

Sleen didn't even have the whole story worked out before jumping in. “I never knew at the start of a story how it was going to end,” he smiles. “I knew where the action would take place, but I never knew how the whole story would turn out. I worked every day on a strip that appeared daily for three months, and when that one was done, I had to come up with another.”

In the 1940s, current events came into Flemish strips in a way they don't now. “The news of the day comes into all of my strips,” Sleen confirms. “People have said you can follow events in Belgium through my strips

– strikes, the royal question, political events. But the stories themselves are all fantasy, plucked from my imagination.”

That's a culture that's gone, vanished even before the arrival of the instant-information age. “Times are completely changed,” notes Sleen. “Artists now write well-structured stories and work on them for a year, but it has nothing to do with the news. I was making four in a year. That's the reason there are 217 of them.”

The album *Het spook uit de Zandstraat* (*The Ghost of Sand Street*) was chosen for translation for its symbolic value. When Sleen started drawing, he was working in an office in that very street in Brussels, directly opposite a textile wholesaler, whose imposing building, designed by Victor Horta, is now the home of the Belgian Comic Strip Center. The office where he worked has since vanished, but just up the street, in the former home of the *Presse Socialiste* newspaper, is the Marc Sleen museum. It was opened in 2009 in the presence of the king (who claimed to have learned Dutch by reading Nero albums) and is so far the only museum devoted to a living strip artist in Belgium. Sleen was knighted in 1997.

“The story has come full circle,” says Catharina Kochuyt, who is Marc Sleen's partner and who translated the strip into English. Sleen insists he wrote in Flemish rather than standard Dutch. The translation was “very difficult,” she admits. “I read that album a thousand times over, to absorb the atmosphere, the words, to understand the comments. What you try to do is get as close as possible to the original. So for instance I made the White Sock Gang speak not dialect exactly, but instead of “hanging” they'd say “'anging” and that sort of thing, to give the idea.” ♦

The Ghost of Sand Street is published later this month by Standaard Uitgeverij. It will be available in Standaard bookshops, FNAC and the Comic Strip Center in Brussels



Marc Sleen with a statue of Nero outside the Marc Sleen Museum in Brussels

The Man of Sand Street ♦ The only museum dedicated to him

The Marc Sleen Museum in the Zandstraat, which opened in 2009, came about when Brussels Region decided to buy the artist's archive of more than 15,000 items. The museum is run by a trust that includes representatives of *De Standaard*, the Belgian Comic Strip Center, publishers Standaard Uitgeverij and Sleen.

It's a tiny space, comprising the ground floor and a mezzanine that hosts temporary exhibitions. On the ground floor, visitors are led through the essentials of the Nero canon, from its beginnings – Nero was not even the central character of the first strip he appeared in, but was soon promoted thanks to the interest of readers. “Nero was never meant to be a hero, but he became a hero,” Sleen explains. “He is a perfectly ordinary man, not the sort of hero like Kuifje [Tintin] or Jommeke.”

In fact, Nero is middle-aged, tubby

and balding, full of enthusiasm but not very bright. He has a son, Adhemar, who's a five-year-old genius. “That was didactic for the children: he's a sort of living encyclopaedia – small but unbelievably clever, a university professor.

Nero is in fact two personalities, the father and the son, who complement each other.”

The permanent exhibition, in Dutch, French and English, presents the regular cast of characters who accompany Nero on his journeys, including Madame Pheip, whose pipe-smoke can confound a man's brains, and Detective Van Zwam, who was the original hero of the first strip and discovered Nero in a psychiatric institution, where he believed he was the Roman emperor. (As a tribute to his origins, Nero ever after wore two tiny laurel leaves behind his ears.)

On the mezzanine level, there's



currently an exhibition of uncannily accurate caricatures, which opened in April. In one, Nero beats some pacifists. In another he's bewitched.



ated to a living Belgian strip artist



hibition of Sleen's
urate political
h runs until 3
ero threatens to
sm into Stalin; in
ildered as house

guest Jean-Luc Dehaene (former
Belgian prime minister and a gift
to any caricaturist) watches himself
on TV.

→ www.marc-sleen.be

A second look

Antwerp's famous bookstore awards its annual prize for under-rated books

REBECCA BENOOT

In the shadow of Antwerp's famous cathedral stands a bookstore that is popular not only for its location in a beautiful listed building but for its reputation as an intellectual safe haven in an industry being taken over by romance fiction and celebrity chefs.

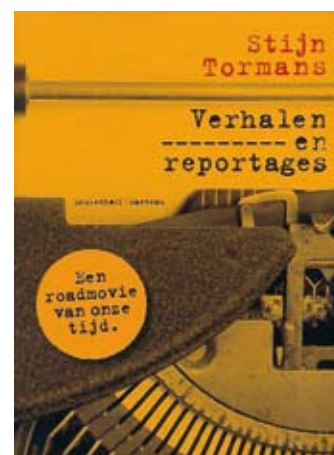
In the shadow of Antwerp's famous cathedral stands a bookstore that is popular not only for its location in a beautiful listed building but for its reputation as an intellectual safe haven in an industry being taken over by romance fiction and celebrity chefs. Independent book stores are dying one by one, but the Groene Waterman has survived for more than 40 years, with its laid back atmosphere and personal service to navigate its excellent local and international stock of literature, philosophy, history and socially relevant topics.

It's also a destination for its programming: Literary debates, author readings, theme nights and book club meetings all take place in its atmospheric mediaeval basement. Named by Flemish literary magazine *Gierik* as the best literary bookstore in Flanders, the Groene Waterman is an Antwerp landmark, a reminder of the pleasures of book buying and exploring. The Groene Waterman also has an annual prize, being debated this very moment, awarded to the author of a work they feel has been overlooked and underrated. (A literary prize generates local press and an increase in sales.) The list of international nominees is also a way to point customers towards the hidden treasures in the wealth of books that were published in Dutch last year. This year's nominations are an eclectic mix of fiction and non-fiction either published or translated into Dutch in 2010; they cover topics from cultural history in Flanders to family sagas in Palestine.

- Stijn Tormans *Verhalen en reportages* (Stories and Reports): a collection of articles written by the *Knack* journalist, who knows how to coax fascinating stories from ordinary people
- Alessandro Baricco *De barbaren* (The Barbarians): another collection of articles, this time by the popular Italian columnist and author
- Elias Khoury *Poort van de zon* (Gate of the Sun): novel by the Lebanese author about a peasant doctor relating stories to keep his dying friend engaged and alive
- Hans Fallada - *Alleen in Berlijn* (Alone in Berlin): new edition of the 1947 novel about a couple's Nazi resistance by the violently troubled, late German author

- Jonathan Lyons - *Het huis der wijsheid* (House of Wisdom: How the Arabs Transformed Western Civilisation): the American journalist's surprisingly riveting story of Baghdad's first Royal Library
- Inge Bertels, Bert de Munck and Herman van Goethem - *Antwerpen, Biografie van een Stad* (Antwerp: Biography of a City): everything you ever wanted to know about the port city, divided by theme

The jury is made up of Groene Waterman staff, VRT journalist Ann de Bie and filmmaker and journalist Marc Didden. You can also cast your own vote until 3 February at www.lezersforum.be. Authors Tormans, Khoury, Lyons and Bertels will be in attendance at the awards ceremony this Friday, when Antwerp's culture alderman, Philip Heylen, will bestow the award, a design by Flemish artist Lebuin D'Haese. The free public ceremony includes readings, interviews and live music and is followed by a reception. ♦



Groene Waterman Award Ceremony

4 February, 20.00

Antwerp City Hall
Grote Markt

→ www.groenewaterman.be

FILM REVIEW ★★★★★

LISA BRADSHAW

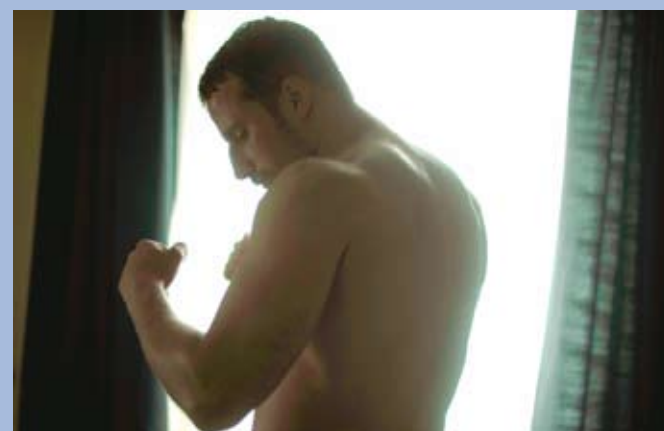
Rundskop

Michaël R Roskam is about to become a *bekende Vlaming* (Flemish celebrity). His debut feature film *Rundskop* (dubbed *Bullhead* in English) is a stylish film noir like nothing really seen in Flanders since three directors collaborated on *Meeuwen sterven in de haven* (Seagulls Die in the Harbour) in 1955.

That film coincidentally starred the late Julien Schoenaerts, father of Matthias Schoenaerts. It's Schoenaerts the younger's turn to embody Flemish tragedy. His role as an unpredictable, violent cattle farmer in *Rundskop* is elevating him in the European film industry to a status not quite yet attained in films like *Loft* or *My Queen Karo*.

Schoenaerts plays Jacky Vanmarsenille, who inherits the family farm in Limburg (and the broad dialect that comes with it, causing the film to be subtitled in Dutch in cinemas). Like other local farmers, Jacky uses illegal hormones to beef up his cattle. Unlike other farmers, he also uses hormones to beef up himself. Locked away in his room with a refrigerator full of vials, he goes through the motions of a boxer, pummelling away at the empty air. A mixture of physical prowess and psychological turbulence, Jacky is a dangerous force to be reckoned with: stop dealing with the Vanmarsenille farm, and you'll feel his fist in your face. Afraid of nothing, in one tense scene he confronts a major player in Belgium's black market hormone trade. The cops, he claims, could be looking at them, right now. "Nobody's looking at me," says a straight-faced criminal. Responds Jacky: "I'm looking at you."

It's dialogue that cuts to the chase and rolls like mafia poetry all at once. Roskam, also the film's screenwriter, grew up in this part of Limburg, not far from the border with Wallonia, and this informs the film as it flits back and forth between regions and



languages, making the most out of each other's wariness – and of Belgium's real-life history in the illegal hormone trade, which culminated in the murder of an agricultural health inspector in the 1990s.

Occasionally this flitting – from grisly violence to comic relief – is jarring. The acting helps: Barbara Sarafian (*Aanridding in Moskou*) is excellent as a tough-talking, eye-rolling police woman, as is Jeroen Perceval (*Dagen zonder lief*), a bundle of nerves as Jacky's old childhood friend – with whom he shares a dark secret.

Rundskop can be ugly stuff, but if you can take it, it's worth it alone to watch Schoenaerts' half-man, half beast, an archetype of pain and anger unleashed. Roskam doesn't quite achieve what he is aiming for in the mythical character, a sort of Belgian Raging Bull. But he comes impressively close.

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Deliciously trashy

Sofie Mollekens sells accessories with a disreputable past

KATRIEN LINDEMANS

An old hose, a car tyre, a few scattered buttons and a paper envelope. Rubbish to most of us. But not to Sofie Mollekens. The Flemish 27-year-old is one of a growing number of designers and entrepreneurs turning rubbish into revenue.

Mollekens spent her honeymoon in Ghana last June. "One of the many things that struck me was the omnipresent trash," she says. "You could see you were approaching a village just by the amount of rubbish next to the roads."

And that's where she learned that one woman's rubbish is another's shiny bangle. "Old glass was being heated in termite mounds and recycled into stunning jewellery," she says. "Via our travel agency, we got in touch with a company called Trashybags, where old plastic bags were turned into trendy and colourful bags."

These projects are a creative way to help keep Ghana clean." Back in Opwijk (Flemish Brabant), Mollekens wanted to do something to help these recycling projects. "My first idea was to help them with their website, but that soon turned out to be a complicated mission. I then decided to start my own web shop, selling a variety of accessories made from recycled materials from all over the world."

The young entrepreneur got in touch with a few designers and companies, converted a part of her house into a stock room and launched her own website in November: Trashilicious. "My tag line is 'fashion with a story' because all the accessories have an interesting past. I'd like people to know the story behind the earrings they fancy or the handbag they choose. That doesn't mean I only focus on the eco-friendly aspect of

my products – how trendy and appealing they look is equally as important."

Browsing the Trashilicious website, you find wallets made from the synthetic material Tyvek, laptop bags made from the inner tubes of a van, a purse made from the plastic wraps of sweets, earrings made from old buttons and – Mollekens' favourite – a shoulder bag made from fire hoses.

Clicking on an item yields a detailed description of its materials and where it comes from. Most of the accessories were made outside Europe, but that might change soon. "I'd love to expand the website with a few Belgian brands as well, and offer local designers a platform for their recycled creations," Mollekens says. "I'd also like to help create things myself."

Visitors to the site are steadily growing, and Mollekens also travels Trashilicious designs to home parties. "I present the accessories and their stories," she says. Although on the website, locals tend to stick to the dark-coloured designs, those who see the products in person branch out in their purchases.

For now, the site is only available in Dutch, but an English version is on the way. She also plans an expansion of her current line of bags, wallets and jewellery, hoping to bring in belts and scarves later this year. "An actual shop seems a bit too limiting, as I don't want to be tied to one area," she says. "But who knows? One day you might find a pop-up Trashilicious in your city." ♦

➔ www.trashilicious.com



Wearing and sharing: Mollekens

Trashilicious at Ecopop

This weekend, you'll find Sofie Mollekens and her Trashilicious accessories at the Ecopop "bio lifestyle fair" in Kortrijk. This huge event gathers eco products and services of all sorts, from cookware, beauty products and information on nature friendly mobility to gardening, banking and even ecological coffins. Visit the different companies or participate in the big swishing

event (where you swap clothes you don't wear anymore with other people). There will be information sessions and exhibitions all weekend long.

5-6 February, 10.00-18.00

**Kortrijk Xpo
Doorniksesteenweg 216**

➔ www.ecopop.be



Birds of a feather ♦ This weekend, the people of Flanders spy on the creatures in the garden

DENZIL WALTON

This weekend (5-6 February), people across Flanders will take part in the annual census of birds by recording which birds fly in and out of their gardens. It's organised by the Flemish nature conservation society Natuurpunt, and the statistics gathered give a useful picture of the current status of garden birds in Flanders. For example, the information can help ecologists spot a declining species and take the first steps to aid recovery.

During last year's census 250,710 birds were counted in 6,227 gardens. The average number of species was 11 per garden, with the average number of birds in a day being 40. The heavy snowfall and the fact that the snow remained on the ground, particularly in the centre of Flanders, brought many blackbirds, starlings and even fieldfares into gardens from neighbouring pastures.

Surprisingly high was the number

of jackdaws, which were present in one in three gardens. The most numerous species was the house sparrow, with an average of nearly eight per garden, followed by the chaffinch and collared dove.

If you want to take part, it's simple; you don't have to be an expert ornithologist, and it's particularly fun for kids. Simply record the highest number of each bird species seen at any one time. It can be in your garden or on your balcony, and either on the Saturday or the Sunday, or both. You don't have to spend all weekend staring out of your window; an hour is sufficient. The morning is the best time to look, when the birds are out and about, feeding after a cold winter's night. If you've been feeding the birds throughout the winter, you probably already have regular visitors. If not, it's not too late to string up a bag of peanuts or a fat ball, or scatter some seeds, all of which

can be obtained from your local supermarket or pet supply shop. I get mine online from Vivara.be – their black sunflower seeds are particularly appreciated by blue, great, coal and crested tits, goldfinches and greenfinches.

But remember – you should note the *maximum number you see at any one time*. So if, for example, you see five chaffinches at 9.00 on Saturday and seven at 10.00 on Sunday, you don't write down 12, but seven.

You can download a form to fill in with your observations from Natuurpunt, where you also send your results. If you are not sure how to tell a blue tit from a great tit or a house sparrow from a tree sparrow, don't worry, you can also download a brochure with colour photographs of the 24 birds you are most likely to see. ♦

➔ www.natuurpunt.be



Many a jackdaw can be found in gardens across Flanders



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© Johan Jacobs

De Nieuwe Snaar

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

De Nieuwe Snaar, a band going on for almost three decades, is Flanders' most captivating cabaret. Although "cabaret" might sound a bit too limited for their wide artistic scope. They combine visual humour, loaded with slapstick and daring acrobatics, with a rich musical palette, varying from folk via fanfare, Balkan and weeping country to chanson. The foursome from Duffel, a small town 20 kilometres south of Antwerp, premiered their 11th show *Foor 11* two years ago in the Ancienne Belgique in Brussels, where they'll play, after more than 150 performances, its final this Saturday. "Foor" is a typically Flemish word to indicate a fairground, and that's how this show defines the world at the start of the third millennium: a big fairground, where opportunities and threats seem to be inseparable. The world-as-a-fair metaphor criticises the overload of information, the desire for instant gratification, the need for adrenaline kicks and the flashing visual culture in which we live. Sounds terrible weighty? Fear not, *Foor 11* is no philosophical discourse. First and foremost it's entertainment, and the thinking can be done afterwards. Or not, if you don't feel the need.

You'll enjoy the action of Geert Vermeulen, who has always been the most energetic member of De Nieuwe Snaar. If he isn't walking on splinters of glass while musing about love, he's showing his skills as a fire-eater. Or he's dressing up as a woman.

De Nieuwe Snaar doesn't shy away from self-criticism: they have an act that mocks the use of trendy world music, whereas they themselves have never been, thanks to influences from the Balkan, more "world" than in this show. But they're not desperately trying to be *en vogue*, it's just a logical next step in their incomparable musical evolution. They long ago crossed out the world "fashionable" from their dictionary. At its heart, De Nieuwe Snaar are a group of great musicians and songwriters, coming up with a vast majority of original material, but sporadically also covering others' songs. They have, for instance, an amazing Dutch version of Richard Thompson's "From Galway to Graceland".

But the most remarkable song of *Foor 11* – the concert and the CD of the same title – is "Geen vrouwen in de groep" ("No Women in the Band"), which, in the end, is mostly

an example of male self-deprecation. As always, there are different levels to the work of De Nieuwe Snaar. *Foor 11* is a fairground attraction with its aim at both heart and brain. ♦

De Nieuwe Snaar
5 February, 20.00
Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110, Brussels
→ www.abconcerts.be

MORE GIGS AT THE AB THIS WEEK

American neo-folk Wooden Wand

American metal A Day to Remember

British guitarist Richard Thompson



Antwerp

Arenbergschouwburg
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
www.arenbergschouwburg.be
FEB 4 20.15 De Nieuwe Snaar - Foor 11
FEB 5 20.30 Ikram Aoulad & Junior Mthombeni

Kelly's Irish Pub

Keyserlei 27; www.kellys.be
FEB 5 22.30 Basically Basic, acoustic covers

Petrol

Herbouvillekaai 21; 03.226.49.63
www.petrolclub.be
FEB 5 23.00 Kamping K: Party like a yeti

Trix

Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00
www.trixonline.be
FEB 2 20.30 The Airborne Toxic Event
FEB 3 20.00 Combichrist + Mortis + Centhron **FEB 4** 21.00 Untitled! Dub Police Label Night featuring Caspa + The Others + Trolley Snatcha + Subscape + J Kenzo + Rod Azlan & Ken Mac **FEB 5** 18.00 Kataklysm + Legion of the Damned + Equilibrium + Manegarm + Milking the Goatmachine **FEB 6** 20.30 The Black Angels + Wall of Death + DJ Gunslinger **FEB 10** 19.30 We are open

Ardooie

Cultuurkapel De Schaduw
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82
www.deschaduw.net
FEB 4 20.30 The Chambrangs

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be
Concerts at 20.00:
FEB 2 Kris De Bruyne, chanson (in Dutch)
FEB 5 De Nieuwe Snaar, chanson/spoken word (in Dutch) **FEB 6** Kiss the Anus of a Black Cat + Ryan Francesconi + Wooden Wand **FEB 7** Richard Thompson Band **FEB 8** Bayside + Pierce The Veil + Adept + A Day to Remember

Beursschouwburg

August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50
www.vkconcerts.be
FEB 5 21.15 Soundbits: Les Talons Gitans + Los Callejeros + DJ Bambu Kollektiv

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
FEB 3 20.30 Silver Junkie CD release

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89 www.fuse.be
FEB 5 23.00 Ostgut Label Night: Ben Klock, Nick Höppner, Evad, Deg. Readymade Presents Moon Harbour Label Night: Mathias Tanzmann, Luna City Express, Dance Machine, Pierre

K-NAL

Havenlaan 1; 0474.04.00.00, www.k-nal.be
FEB 5 23.00 Ivan Smaghe & Fortyfive with Horse Meet Disco@L/S

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
www.botanique.be
Concerts at 20.00:
FEB 8 William Fitzsimmons **FEB 9** Ice Black Birds + Anna Calvi. Nathaniel Rateliff **FEB 10** Broken Records + Freelance Whales

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
www.recyclart.be
FEB 4 21.30 Sheetah et les Weissmuller

VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07
www.vkconcerts.be
FEB 5 20.00 Musth + Okkultokrati + Kylesa

Ghent

Cafe Boom Boom
Overpoortstraat 50; 09.223.22.27
www.democracy.be
FEB 3 20.00 Rauw & Onbesproken

Charlatan

Vlasmarkt 6; 09.224.24.57
www.charlatan.be
FEB 2 20.00 Izzy And The Kesstronics + La Sera
FEB 5 20.00 Maps & Atlases + True Bypass

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be

DON'T MISS!

The Host

4-5 February

Kaaitheater, Brussels

If you like big, inflatable objects with your contemporary dance – and who doesn't – you'll like American choreographer Andros Zins-Browne's *The Host*, a tragi-comic look at the myth of the cowboy, the ultimate manipulator of his environment. Zins-Browne, who studied in Brussels at the PARTS studio, lived on ranches in the US to study the life and culture of the cowboy for this epic look at a world moving ever closer to the apocalypse.



© Raymond Valentijer

→ www.kaaitheater.be

FEB 3 19.30 The Vaseline + Schwervon
FEB 4 22.00 It's... Motor City Drum Ensemble **FEB 5** 22.00 Spunk, holebi party
FEB 9 22.00 Dolorean

Hasselt

Muziekodroom
Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13
www.muziekodroom.be
FEB 10 20.30 Rusty Roots

Kortrijk

De Kreun
Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44
www.dekreun.be
FEB 3 20.00 The Subs
FEB 9 20.00 De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig + Nobody Beats The Drum

Leuven

Het Depot
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
www.hetdepot.be
FEB 4 20.00 Radio Modern presents Rock 'n Roll Spitfire with The Jive Romeros, De Flogees, The Boppin Benviss Brothers, more
FEB 5 18.00 Elektrohasch Label Night with Colour Haze + Hypnos 69
Mechelen

Cultuurcentrum

Minderbroedersgang 5; 015.29.40.00
www.cultuurcentrummechelen.be
FEB 4 20.15 DAAU

Mol

CC't Getouw
Molenhoekstraat 2; 014.33.09.00
www.getouw.be
FEB 3 20.15 Claudia de Breij
FEB 4 12.15 Anton Walgrave and The Nephews
FEB 5 21.00 Motown – 50 Years and More featuring Sandrine, Brahim, Jim Cole and Elke Bruyneel

Waregem Expo

Zuiderlaan 20; www.expowaregem.be
FEB 5 21.00-5.00 Into the 90s party with Alana Dante, Rozalla, X-session, Get Ready, Intothe90s, Wim Weetjens and Stefan Ackermans



Antwerp

Buster
Kaasruil 1; 03.232.51.53
www.busterpodium.be **FEB 2** 22.00 Tribe
FEB 3 20.30 SingersNight **FEB 4** 20.30 Basily Gypsy Band **FEB 8** 20.30 JazzNight.
FEB 9, 21.30 Playtime Session. **FEB 10**, 21.30 Buster Jam

De Hopper

Leopold De Waelstraat 2; 03.248.49.33
www.cafehopper.be **FEB 6** 16.00 Wolf & de Jong
FEB 7-28 21.00 Sander De Winne Quartet

De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
FEB 4 20.30 Jef Neve & Liebrecht Van Beckevoort

Rataplan
Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
www.rataplanvzw.be
FEB 3 20.30 Alexis Thérain & Thibault Dille
FEB 5 20.30 Hamster Axis of the One-Click Panther

Bruges
De Werf
Werfstraat 108; 050.33.05.29
www.dewerf.be
FEB 5 20.30 Emile Parisien QuartetBrussels

Jazz Station
Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78
www.jazzstation.be
FEB 2 20.30 PIXL Trio **FEB 3** 20.00 Jazz Station Big Band **FEB 5** 18.00 Fabian Fiorini Piano Solo **FEB 8** 19.00 Cours d'histoire et de compréhension du jazz (Miles Davis 1/5). **FEB 9** Ben Sluijs/Erik Vermeulen Duo

Le Caveau du Max
Emile Maxlaan 87; 02.733.17.88
www.lemax.be
FEB 10 20.30 Four for Chet

Sounds Jazz Club
Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50
www.soundsjazzclub.be
Concerts at 22.00: **FEB 2** Caribe Con K - Los Soneros del Barrio **FEB 3** Marc Lelange Blues Lab **FEB 4** MDM Quartet **FEB 5** Gilles Repond Quartet. **FEB 7** Master Session **FEB 8** Thys-Lahey Duo **FEB 9** Chamaquiando, salsa **FEB 10** Mess Trio

The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusicvillage.com
Concerts at 21.00:**FEB 3** Thierry Crommen Trio **FEB 4** Fred Delplancq Quartet, Sonny Rollins tribute. **FEB 5** The Jeggap Jazzband. **FEB 9** The Blue Extended

Ghent
Vooruit
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
FEB 10 20.00 Anouar Brahem Quartet

Kortrijk
Concertstudio
Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44
www.dekreun.be
FEB 2 20.15 Quentin Dujardin Quartet

Leuven
Het Depot
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
www.hetdepot.be
FEB 9 20.00 Jef Neve Trio



Antwerp
De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
FEB 5 20.30 Live From Buena Vista: The Havana Lounge
FEB 9 20.30 Gaby Moreno**FEB 10** 20.30 Tutu Puoane: It Began in Africa Brussels

Art Base
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20
www.art-base.be
FEB 3 20.00 Tzigani Gypsy Quartet **FEB 4-5** 20.00 Trio Café Smyrne, music from northeast Mediterranean and Asia Minor

Espace Senghor
Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40
www.senghor.be
FEB 4 20.30 Kareyce Fotso (Cameroon) and Aly Keita (Ivory Coast)

Maison du Peuple
Sint-Gillisvoorplein 37-39; 02.217.26.00
www.maison-du-peuple.be
FEB 4 20.00 Queimada, folk ball with Havelange, Guido Picard, tribal Jâze, Guido Piccard, A Contrabanda

The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusicvillage.com
FEB 2 21.00 Clare Louise

Théâtre Molière
Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00
www.muziekpublieke.be

FEB 5 20.00 Ti-Coca Wanga Nègès (Haiti)
FEB 9 21.30 Ana Harouna solo (Touareg)

Vorst-Nationaal
Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991
www.forestnational.be
FEB 4 20.00 Tiken Jah Fakoly

Wolubilis
Paul Hymanslaan 251; 02.761.60.30
www.wolubilis.be
FEB 8 20.30 Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, voice and fiddle (Ireland)

Ghent
Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
FEB 2 20.15 Amparo Sanchez with Depedro (Spain)
FEB 5 20.15 Daniel Kahn & The Painted Bird + Gregory Page

Hasselt
Cultuurcentrum
Kunstlaan 5; 011.24.32.07 www.ccha.be
FEB 4 20.00 Esmé Bos & Bart Voet - Tu Y Yo

Leopoldsbuurg
CC Leopoldsbuurg
Kastanjedreef 1; 011.34.65.48
www.ccleopoldsbuurg.be
FEB 4 20.15 Johan Verminnen

Mol
Schouwburg Rex
Smallestraat 2; 014.33.09.00
http://getouw.gemeentemol.be
FEB 9 20.15 Koole en Blokhuis – Laagland



Antwerp
Amuz
Kammenstraat 81; 03.292.36.80
www.amuz.be
FEB 4 21.00 Stefanie True, soprano; Michaela Riener, mezzo; Constanze Lee, fortepiano; Robert & Clara Schumann, Madeleine Gräver.
FEB 6 15.00 Capilla Flamenca & HERMESensemble: Adrian Willaert, John Dunstable, Johannes Prioris, Salvatore Sciarrino, more

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
www.desingel.be
FEB 4 20.00 Belcea Quartet: string quartets by Beethoven, Mark-Anthony Turnage
FEB 5 20.00 Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin: Beethoven
FEB 9-10 20.00 Anton Kuerti, piano: Beethoven

Bruges
Concertgebouw
t Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
www.concertgebouw.be
FEB 2 20.00 Lecture performance by Pascal Amoyel & Anima Eterna: Liszt **FEB 3** 20.00 Anima Eterna conducted by Jos van Immerseel, with Pascal Amoyel, piano: Liszt **FEB 5** 20.00 Capilla Flamenca & HERMESensemble: Renaissance Flemish polyphony meets contemporary sounds by Salvatore Sciarrino **FEB 9** 20.00 Zehetmair Quartett: Beethoven, Shostakovich

Brussels
Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
FEB 2 12.40 Jan Sciffr, cello; Hans Ryckelincx, piano; J Jongen, Debussy, more
FEB 3 20.00 Belgian National Orchestra conducted by Dirk Brossé: film music by contemporary Belgian composers
FEB 6 11.00 Romina Lischka, viola da gamba; Sofie Vanden Eynde, theorbo; Raphael Collignon, harpsichord: Marais, F Couperin. 20.00 Belgian National Orchestra conducted by Alessandro Vitiello, with Juan Diego Florez, tenor: Cimarosa, Rossini, Boieldieu, more **FEB 8** 20.00 Le Cercle de l'Harmonie conducted by Jérémie Rohrer, with Alexandra Coku, soprano; Julien Chauvin, violin: Beethoven **FEB 9** 12.40 Alexei Moshkov, Akika Hayakawa, violins; Dmitri Ryabinin, viola; Taras Zanchak, Lesya Demkovych, cello: Beethoven

Kaaithheater
Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59
www.kaaithheater.be
FEB 2 20.30 Ictus conducted by Georges-Elie Octors: Liquid Room 2

Musical Instruments Museum
Hofberg 2; 02.545.01.30 www.mim.be
FEB 6 11.00 Izmir Ensemble: Rachmaninov, Ahmed Adnan Saygun, Ulvi Cemal Erkin

Protestantse Kapel
Museumplein 2; 02.507.82.00
FEB 9 20.00 Céline Frisch, harpsichord: William Byrd, John Bull, Giovanni Picchi, François Sarhan

Wolubilis
Paul Hymanslaan 251; 02.761.60.30
www.wolubilis.be
FEB 7 20.00 Andrew Hardy, violin; Luc Devos, piano: Mendelssohn, Ravel, Busoni

Ghent
Conservatorium
Hoogpoort 64; 09.269.92.92
www.debijloke.be
FEB 4 20.00 Carolyn Sampson, soprano; Kristian Bezuidenhout, piano: Mozart, Schubert, Mendelssohn

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
FEB 9 20.15 Mayu Kishima, violin; Akane Sakai, piano: Mozart, Elgar, Ysaye, Prokofiev
Hoeilaart

Maison de la Musique
Edgar Sohietstraat 41; 02.657.96.52
www.maisondelamusique.be
FEB 3 20.00 Soloists from the Queen Elisabeth College of Music: Bach, Mozart, Chausson
FEB 10 20.00 Trio Avanesyan with Julien Libeer, piano: Liszt, Haydn, Shostakovich

Leuven
30CC Wagehuys
Brusselsestraat 63; 016.23.84.27
www.30CC.be
FEB 6 11.00 Mel Bonis: multimedia show devoted to French composer Mélanie Bonis (1858-1937) with Veerle Peeters, piano; Laura Verlinden, actress; Jan Boon, video



Antwerp
Cinema Zuid
Lakenstraat 14; 03.242.93.57
www.richardwagner.be
FEB 5 20.00 Opera on the big screen: Elektra, staged by Herbert Wernicke, with music by the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Christian Thielemann (in German with German surtitles)

Brussels
De Munt
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39 www.demunt.be
Until FEB 20 15.00/18.00 Wagner's Parsifal conducted by Hartmut Haenchen, directed by Romeo Castellucci, choreographed by Cindy Van Acker (in the original German with Dutch and French surtitles)

Ghent
Capitole
Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5; 0900.69.00
www.capitolegent.be
Until FEB 2 19.30 Die Fledermaus, comedic operetta in three acts by Johann Strauss Jr, directed by Hans Nieuwenhuis (in German with Dutch surtitles)



Antwerp
Peña Al Andalus
Vorstermanstraat 1; 03.830.31.99
www.alandalus.be
FEB 5 21.00 Luz de España, flamenco dance

Stadsschouwburg
Theaterplein 1; 0900.69.900
www.stadsschouwburgantwerpen.be
Until FEB 20 & APR 7-10 Oliver!, the musical

Vlaamse Opera
Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02
www.vlaamseopera.be
FEB 4-12 20.00/15.00 Royal Ballet of Flanders in Ballet Menu, with choreographies by David Dawson, Matjash Mrozewski, Garry Stewart and William Forsythe

DON'T MISS

Between Heaven and Hell

Until 24 April

Royal Museums of Art and History
Brussels

As films and art are quick to remind us: The Middle Ages was a rough time. Between infectious diseases, open sewers and capital punishment, most didn't live past the age of 27. *Between Heaven and Hell: Death in the Middle Ages* pulls out art as well as dead bodies to illustrate the ways in which people lived and died – and the belief systems in place to keep them on the road of the righteous. A fascinating show.

→ www.kmkg.be



Brussels

Kaaistudio's
Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat 81; 02.201.59.59 www.kaaithheater.be
FEB 4-5, 20.30 The Host, choreographed by Andros-Zins-Browne (US/Bel)

Kaaithheater
Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59
www.kaaithheater.be
FEB 10-12 20.30 A Dance for the Newest Age (The Triangle Piece), dance première choreographed by Eleanor Bauer (US/Bel)

Rijke Klaren
Rijke Klarenstraat 24; 02.548.25.80
www.lesrichesclaires.be
Until FEB 5 20.30 Compagnie Nyanga Zam in Je me suis mariée toute seule (I Got Married All By Myself), choreographed by Ebalé Zam

Théâtre Marni
Vergniestraat 25; 02.639.09.80
www.theatremarni.com
FEB 9-19 20.00 Dentro por Fuera/Fuera por Dentro, choreographed by Bud Blumenthal and Manuela Nogales

Ghent

Vooruit
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
FEB 2-3 20.00 Albert Quesada (ex-P.A.R.T.S.) and Vera Tussing in Trilogy. 21.30 Lilia Mestre in Moving You



Antwerp

Arenbergschouwburg
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
www.arenbergschouwburg.be
FEB 5 18.00/20.15 Bert Gabriëls - Pech, stand-up comedy (in Dutch)

Buster
Kaasrui 1; 03.232.51.53
www.busterpodium.be
FEB 5 23.00 Stand-up comedy night with Marc Pairon + Steven Gabriëls (in Dutch)

De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.onemanshow.be
FEB 2 20.00 Youssef El Mousaoui in Child's Play, one-man comedy show (in Dutch)

Den Beulebak
Sint-Nicolaasplaats 10; 03.226.40.68
www.denbeulebak.be
FEB 3-4 20.15 Annemarie Picard in Amerika! by Vanessa van Durme, directed by Pol Goossen (in Dutch)

Fakkelteater
Hoogstraat 12; 070.246.036
www.fakkelteater.be
FEB 4-12 15.00/20.30 Loge 10 in Het opvoeden van Rita (Educating Rita), written by Willy Russel, directed by Bruno Van Heystraeten (in Dutch)
FEB 4-26 20.30 Sébastien De Smet in Geboren worden is erfelijk (Being born is hereditary), written by Herman Brusselmans, directed by Ivan Pecnik (in Dutch)

Fakkelteater Zwarte Zaal
Reynderstraat 7; 03.232.14.69
www.fakkelteater.be

Until JAN 29 20.30 De Speling in Het Atelier (The Studio) by Jean-Claude Grumberg, directed by Ronny Verheyen (in Dutch)
FEB 9 20.30 De Improfeten, improv (in Dutch) with live music

HetPaleis
Theaterplein 1; 03.202.83.11
www.hetpaleis.be
FEB 2 20.15 Ultima Thule in Zijde (Silk), written and directed by Wim De Wulf (ages 12 and up; in Dutch)

t Kwartier
Keistraat 11; 03.231.92.65 www.tkwartier.be
FEB 9 20.00 Bert Kruismans - geen gezeik iedereen rijk, stand-up comedy (in Dutch)

Toneelhuis/Bourla
Komedieplaats 18; 03.224.88.44
www.toneelhuis.be
FEB 2 20.00 Opus XX, monologue by Sofie Decler (in Dutch)
FEB 5 20.00 Het MartHa!tentatief in Polen op Zondag (Poland on Sunday) (in Dutch)

Zuiderpershuis
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be
FEB 2 20.30 Helmer Woudenberg and Ali Kouchiry in Identiteit (Identity), written and directed by Woudenberg Kouchiry (in Dutch)

Brussels

Bronkstheater
Varkensmarkt 15; 02.219.99.21
www.bronks.be
FEB 2 20.00 Arend Pinoy in Talking about Kevin (in Dutch; ages 14 and up)

KVS Bol
Lakensstraat 146; 02.210.11.12
www.kvs.be
Until FEB 5 20.00 KVS & Ro Theater in Dieven (Thieves) by Dea Lohér, directed by Alize Zandwijk (in Dutch with French and English surtitles)
FEB 3 18.00 Dea Lohér and Alize Zandwijk talk to Liet Lenshoek (in Dutch, reservation necessary)
FEB 9-13 20.00/12.30/15.00 Missie (Mission) by David Van Reybrouck, staged by Raven Ruëll (in Dutch with French and English surtitles)

Kaaistudio's
Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat 81; 02.201.59.59 www.kaaithheater.be
FEB 4-6 20.30 Phantasmopolis – all the colors of the dark, written and directed by Stef Lernous (in Dutch)

Theatre de Poche
Gymnasiumweg 1a; 02.649.17.27
www.poche.be
FEB 3-19 20.30 Historia Abierta, multidisciplinary performance with three visual artists from Chile, directed by Lorent Wanson (in Spanish with French surtitles)

Ghent

Capitole
Graaf van Vlaanderenplein 5; 0900.69.00
www.capitolegent.be
Until FEB 27 20.00 Kommil Foo De Luxe, music/cabaret (in Dutch)

NTGent Schouwburg
Sint-Baafsplein 17; 09.225.01.01
www.ntgent.be
Until FEB 19 15.00/20.30 Toneelgroep Amsterdam in Kinderen van de zon (Children of the Sun) by Maxim Gorki, directed by Ivo van Hove (in Dutch)



Antwerp

Antwerp University

Lange Sint-Annastraat 7; 03.286.88.52
www.maroeurope.org
Until FEB 20 Morocco & Europe: Six Centuries of Exchanges, a history of intercultural relations seen through the eyes of diplomats, travellers, artists, writers, more

Central Station

Van Immerseelstraat-Kievitplein;
02.537.68.75 www.artinallofus.be
Until MAR 30 FC De Kampioenen, exhibition on the comedy show, which

WEEK IN FILM

LISA BRADSHAW



Belgian Gay & Lesbian Film Festival

Across Belgium

It's the Silver Jubilee edition of Brussels' big queer film festival, which mostly takes place at Vendôme in Brussels, but also travels around the country a bit, including hosting some screenings in Ghent. The last 25 years have been a history of gay, lesbian, bi and transgender cinema, certainly, but also of the subculture itself, which has gone from secret screenings in basement rooms to *The Kids Are All Right* being nominated for the Oscars.

Still, not all queers are created equal, as evidenced in Uganda last month when a gay rights activist was murdered. It's perfect timing, then, for *Ouganda, au nom de dieu* (Uganda, in the Name of God), a French documentary in which a man tells the chilling story of why he had to flee from his home in Uganda to France. The subject of the documentary, Auf Usaam, is in attendance at the festival.

Also on the programme of more than 30 films is *Role/Play*, which is as sexy as it is heady when two men (real life partners Steve Callahan and Matthew Montgomery) meet at a Palm Springs resort and do the talking after the... well, you know. You'll also find *The Secret Diary of Miss Anne Lister* (pictured), a lavish BBC production based on real-life journals written by a rich 18th-century heiress in code – with good reason. And, yes, the festival will be screening *The Kids Are All Right*. If you haven't seen the family drama starring Annette Bening and Julianne Moore as parents of teens who seek out their sperm-donor dad, now's your chance.

ends this year after 20 years on Flemish television

Until MAY 8 Art in All Of Us, photographs of children around the world by Anthony Asaël and Stéphanie Rabemiarara

Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)

Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60
www.muhka.be
FEB 4-MAY 22 Liam Gillick and Lawrence Weiner - A Syntax of Dependency: a double portrait of the two New York-based artists and their work

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

Faculty for Comparative Studies of Religion

Bist 164; 03.830.51.58
Until FEB 6 Qaoktualuk: The Life and work of Father Andre Vermaut, missionary for the Paulatuk Inuits from 1945-1960, photographs and Inuit objects

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 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
FEB 9-JUNE 5 Hungry Eyes, food photography by Tony Le Duc, Valérie Belin and Dimitry Tsykalov

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09
www.kmska.be
Until APR 30 Museums in the 21st Century. Concepts, Projects, Buildings, the most significant trends in contemporary museum architecture, including 29 projects by internationally renowned architects

Bruges

Bogardenkapel

Katelijnestraat 86; 050.44.30.40
www.bruggeplus.be
Until FEB 6 Johan Verschaeve: Pressure-Spot, paintings by the Flemish artist

Brussels

Argos Centre for Art and Media

Werfstraat 13; 02.229.00.03
www.argosarts.org
Until APR 2 Hans Op de Beeck: Sea of Tranquility, installation by the multi-disciplinary Flemish artist
Until APR 2 Shelly Silver: Here, His, video
Until APR 2 Down Low Up High: Performing the Vernacular, video

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

Designed in Brussels

Lakensstraat 99;
www.designedinbrussels.be
Until FEB 3 101% Designed in Brussels, works by Brussels-based designers Chevalier Masson, Nathalie Dewez, Jean-François D'Or, Lhoas & Lhoas and Hugo Meert

Flemish Parliament - De Loketten

IJzerenkruisstraat 99; 02.227.60.60
www.designvlaanderen.be
Until FEB 26 Henry van de Velde Awards & Labels 2010, works by the design award winners

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

Goethe Institute

Belliardstraat 54; 02.230.77.25
www.goethe.de
Until MAR 25 Stefan Moses: Deutsche

Vita, 50 photographs by the celebrated post-war society photographer

Museum of the National Bank of Belgium

Wildewoudstraat 10; 02.221.22.06
museum@nbb.be
Until JUN 15 Geld en je leven (Money and Your Life), interactive exhibition encouraging youngsters to reflect on their relationship with money (12-16 years)

Royal Museums of Art and History

Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11
www.kmkg-mrah.be
Until APR 24 Tussen hemel en hel (Between Heaven and Hell), exhibition on death in the Middle Ages

Toy Museum

Verenigingstraat 24; 02.219.61.68
www.museedjouet.eu
Until MAR 31 Husa, genie van het houten speelgoed (The Genius of 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
Until APR 3 Zes miljard mensen (Six Billion People), photographic project by Yann Arthus-Bertrand

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 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.gekleurverleden.be
Until APR 25 Gekleurd verleden. Familie in oorlog (Coloured Past. Family at War), stories of World War Two by everyday people in 1944

Museum of Contemporary Art (SMAK)

Citadelapark; 09.221.17.03 www.smak.be
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)

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

Hasselt

Fashion museum

Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.23.96.21
www.modemuseumhasselt.be
Until JUNE 5 Alter Nature: The Future That Never Was, a look at the year 2000, from the point of view of designers from the 1960s and a glance at new possibilities in fashion

Literair Museum

Bampslaen 35; 011.26.17.87
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 APR 10 Certified Copy, works by 20 international artists on reproduction and

cloning

Until APR 10 Mark Verstockett: A Portrait, an overview of the Flemish artist's work in celebration of his 80th birthday
Until APR 10 Trou de Ville, group show featuring press releases, e-mails, videos and photographs on guerilla art

Leuven

Museum M

Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28; 016.27.29.29
www.mleuven.be
Until FEB 13 Katrien Vermeire, nature photographs by the Flemish artist
Until FEB 13 Koenraad Tinel: Flandria Catholica, drawings by the 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.muze.be
Until MAR 27 The Responsive Subject, works by Flemish artist Guy Mees

Venetiaanse Gaanderijen

Zeedijk/Parijsstraat; 050.40.34.38
www.west-vlaanderen.be
Until MAR 13 Visual Arts Competition 2010, recent works by West Flemish artists



Antwerp

Disney on Ice: 100 Years of Magic: Ice-skating show featuring Disney characters
FEB 4-6 times vary at Lotto Arena, Schijnpoortweg 119
0900.26.060, www.disney.be

Wild Wild East Festival: Concerts and performing arts from Asia

FEB 3-5 at Zuiderpershuis, Waalse Kaai 14
www.zuiderpershuis.be

Brussels

Brussels Holiday Show: Travel, holiday and leisure fair. Serbia is the host country
FEB 3-7 10.00-18.00 at Brussels Expo, Heizel
02.474.89.81, www.vakantiesalon.eu

Glittering Prizes: The Mosaics of Ravenna:

Lecture by Christopher Herbert, an authority on Christian Art, sponsored by BRIDFAS (British Decorative and Fine Arts Society)
FEB 9 20.00 at Maison Communal of Woluwe -St-Lambert, Paul Hymanslaan 2
02.782.16.12, www.bridfas.org

Hungary in Focus: Hungarian festival to coincide with the country's presidency

of the European Union, with music, exhibitions, cinema, theatre and literature
Until APR 30 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23
02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be

Norway Now: Festival of contemporary Norwegian culture

Until MAY 25 at Bozar and Ancienne Belgique
www.bozar.be, www.abconcerts.be

Truc-Troc: Exhibition of contemporary art with artists exchanging their work

FEB 4-6 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23
www.tructroc.be

Ghent

Lichtfeest (Candlemas): Pancakes, hot chocolate, glühwein and a fire show for all

ages in the inner courtyard of the "museum of things that (n)ever pass"
FEB 2 17.15-19.00 at Het Huis van Alijn, Kraanlei 65
09.269.23.50, www.huisvanalijn.be

Kortrijk

ECOPOP: Bio/sustainable lifestyle fair

FEB 5-6 10.00-18.00 at Kortrijk Xpo, Doorniksesteenweg 216
www.ecopop.be

CAFE SPOTLIGHT

ANNA JENKINSON



Café Vliissinghe

Blekersstraat 2, Bruges

Café Vliissinghe's claim to fame is that it is the oldest cafe in Bruges and the spot where Flemish painters such as Van Dyck came to sup a glass or two. Rubens is another artist said to have been a regular, apparently often paying for his drinks with one of his paintings.

Above the cafe entrance flies the flag of Bruges, a blue lion against a background of red and white horizontal stripes, and next to it hangs a sign: "Herberghe Vliissinghe 1515". Experts cast doubt on whether it could have been a tavern in the early 16th century, but the owners say that archives show the property dates from 1515, and that's the version they're sticking with.

Inside, you certainly feel like you're taking a step back in time (even if you're not sure which century). Passing through the entrance and up a few steps, you enter the main room, which is filled with dark heavy furniture and has a quaint little bar immediately on your left and a large hearth at the far end. Wood panelling covers the lower half of the walls, while almost every space of the upper half is crammed with framed portraits, coats of arms and paintings.

The cafe, located in the Sint-Anna district, may be just north of the main tourist sights, but its historic tales have made it a popular spot. Finding a seat is not necessarily easy, so be prepared to share one of the long communal tables with fellow drinkers.

It is a place to drop by for a drink or a bite to eat no matter what time of day, with the sign on the door saying it is open until "about midnight". Among the usual range of drinks are three beers on tap, including of course the local Brugse Zot ("the fool of Bruges").

While the warm atmosphere of the interior is a key draw at this time of year, come the summer the outdoor seating in the beer garden is ideal. You could even bring your sketch pad.

→ www.cafevliissinghe.be

ROBYN BOYLE

bite



De Klynhoeve

Given my weakness for places with history, dining at De Klynhoeve was bound to happen. This farmstead in eastern Antwerp province, including garden and orchard, dates back to the Middle Ages, a time when castles kept farms nearby to supply them with all their food needs. It also served as a *tiendenschuur*, the buildings in which the castle lord stored one-tenth of the community's goods, a tax paid in kind.

Today, the farm hasn't strayed too far from its original purpose as it is still filled with fresh and local products. Only difference is that now everyone gets to enjoy them, in the form of lovingly prepared Belgian cuisine.

The renovation of the old farm was carried out in very good taste, leaving all the authentic elements intact that make it so cosy: a large brick open fireplace, high ceiling with wooden crossbeams and majestic chandeliers.

Apparently, these details have not gone overlooked by the locals, as parties without a reservation were kindly being turned away at the door. That could, of course, also have a lot to do with the large portions of comfort food served, from soup and pasta to fish and meat dishes.

We started off with a round of Hopus beers, a strong and bitter blond from Belgian Brewery Lefebvre. Our server poured these into tall glasses and the bottom sediment into a separate shot glass, for those inclined to try a nip of the vitamin-packed yeast.

Our meals arrived shortly thereafter: two juicy strips of honey-glazed spare ribs came on a wooden plank with two dips – one tangy tartar and one sweet barbecue – and a bowl filled with

mixed salad greens, cherry tomatoes, shaved parmesan and balsamic dressing. Another plate, adorned with the same side salad, held a thick cut of medium-done steak and a helping of buttery béarnaise sauce. The dishes, both well cooked, shared a bowl of fries.

My choice, spaghetti Klynhoeve, was a deep bowl of spaghetti buried under a cream sauce, heaps of glazed onions, crispy bacon pieces, mushrooms and fresh parmesan cheese shavings. With a bit of cracked pepper, this dish had just the right balance – firm but tender, rich and salty.

Next time I'm in this area – very near the Dutch border – there are a number of other menu items I'd like to try: ox tongue prepared in Madeira sauce, bouillabaisse with rouille (a Provençal fish stew) or the vegetarian ravioli stuffed with spinach and ricotta with oyster mushrooms and port. Or perhaps I'll try the ice cream, waffles or pancakes in case my visit falls around tea time.

→ www.klynhoeve.be

📍 Kasteelstraat 58, Retie; 014.37.07.14
🕒 Mon, Tue & Thurs 11.00-22.00; Fri-Sun 11.00-22.30
★ Mediaeval farm in a wooded setting with a rustic interior, tasty snacks and hearty Belgian meals

Contact Bite at flandersbite@gmail.com

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #166

Feature

Last month's protest against the non-formation of a government is a sign of public unrest but also a sign of what young people are doing with the internet. We talk to a political economist on what the future holds for this kind of political action

Arts

The Flemish Opera is staging *Hérodiade*, a French opera based on the Biblical Salome, that premiered in Brussels 130 years ago

Living

Our *streekproducten* (regional products) series takes on what many expats consider to be a British speciality: blood sausage

TALKING TV

ALAN HOPE



Smarty pants Kruismans

So, the Very Smartest Person in the World is writer and comedian Bert Kruismans – at least according to the results of the hugely popular quiz of the same name: *De allerslimste mens ter wereld*.

In last week's final, which drew an audience of just under two million (only a bit less than the record audience for the 2009 final) Kruismans came within one second of being beaten by actor Stany Crets, but, as so often happens in the run-up to the crucial moment, Crets choked, and Kruismans was able to top off a flawless performance this season with victory.

Kruismans, 44, has become famous not only for his elaborate Musketeer-like whiskers, but also for crossing the language border to take his one-man show to the audiences of Wallonia, where they enjoy a roasting of all that's Belgian, from a Flemish perspective, delivered in French. At this troubled time in the country's history, he may be the celebrity with the most success at bringing the two sides together. Kruismans' win was no surprise

to the average 1.65 million who watched this season of the show on TV één, which brought back the highest scorers of previous seasons, all of them well-known Flemish personalities, for a clash of the titans. He won every episode in which he took part and displayed a remarkable cross-section of knowledge.

As in early editions of *De slimste mens*, the show scored column inches in all the Flemish papers, every day. The show even reached the ears of the Associated Press and *The Washington Post*, when Bart De Wever took part in the show as government negotiations were breaking down. De Wever, whose appearance in the 2008-2009 season were credited with raising his profile and leading to his election triumph last June, declined to take his place in the final week.

The other final contestant was Eva Brems, professor of human rights law at Ghent University and Groen! party politician. She won a record 11 shows in a row, assuring her a place in the final week.

THE LAST WORD...

Like no one is watching

"Last year when I had to sing my campaign song for the first time, I hardly budged a centimetre on the stage. On Saturday, I danced as if my life depended on it. I'm a new man."

Kristof II was voted Prince Carnaval by the people of Aalst, Flanders' carnival city *par excellence*

Network needed

"By 2018 there will be 1.2 million people living in the Brussels region, so we have to increase the capacity of our network."

Alain Flausch, CEO of the Brussels public transport authority MIVB, is looking for €2 billion in extra subsidies

De slimste mens

"Imagine sending someone with an IQ of 140 into the jungle. He wouldn't get very far, and a native would soon have him figured for an idiot."

Bernard Lernout, a Flemish "brain-trainer", explains why intelligence is more than just IQ tests

Intervention

"Is it now time for a famous international negotiator? As time goes on, the idea seems less and less crazy."

De Morgen proposes a way out of the political stalemate, suggesting interventions from the likes of Henry Kissinger, Tony Blair or Jimmy Carter