

Sport City, baby
Ghent is Flanders' first-ever
City of Sport
p3

Nowhere but Bozar
The two best exhibitions of
the spring are in one place
p8

You brew
Local breweries show you how
to make great beer
p11



Better late than never?

The NMBS is installing safety measures and weighing proposals to improve punctuality

ALAN HOPE

Rail passengers know the announcement only too well: Train X to destination Y has an unforeseen delay, please excuse us. It's as much a part of train travel in Belgium as people talking too loud on their GSMS. It's getting worse, and there's no improvement in sight.

Two things happened this month to reinforce the gloomy picture for passengers stranded on a station platform after missing their connection by moments: Infrabel, the division of the rail authority NMBS that controls the rail network, released punctuality figures for 2010, confirming the continuing decline. And a special commission set up

by parliament to look into rail safety published its report, complete with more than 100 recommendations, many of which will affect punctuality – and not in a good way.

A brief history of time keeping

The figures from Infrabel show a fall in the number of trains arriving on time, from 88% in 2009 to 85.7% in 2010. One in seven trains was late by a delay of more than six minutes. Trains arriving less than six minutes late are considered to be on time, even if the delay means you miss your connection – and one in five journeys in Belgium involves at least one change of trains. During the

morning rush hour, the number of late trains goes up to 16.3%, and in the evening rush hour, the figure shoots up to over 20%.

Some destinations are worse than others: Antwerp Central and Bruges both do less well than the average; Gent-Sint-Pieters does slightly better. The main culprits, according to Infrabel, are the malfunctioning of trains (in nearly 46% of cases) and the malfunctioning of infrastructure, such as rails and signals (in 17.5% of cases). Then there are the "third party" causes, such as snow and ice on the rails, international trains breaking down and blocking the way and copper wiring stolen from the system.

► *continued on page 5*

World Cup free for everyone

The matches of the next football World Cup will not be hidden behind a pay-TV wall, the European Court of Justice ruled last week. In a case brought by the football authorities UEFA (representing Europe) and FIFA (the world), the court said that European law allows governments to reserve sporting events of particular public interest for free-to-air transmission. FIFA and UEFA had contested the law after having made agreements with pay-TV channels worth millions of euros. Across Europe, sporting events are major attractions for pay-TV channels. But the court supported the law, which allows each of the 27 EU member states to draw up for themselves a list

of sporting events that they claim have enough public interest that they must be made available to everyone free of charge. In Belgium, that includes several cycling classics and the Ivo Van Damme memorial. Most member states, including Belgium, include World Cup, European Cup and the Olympic Games. The ruling does not, however, automatically hand the rights to the European and World Cup matches over to the public broadcaster: as long as anyone with a normal cable subscription can watch, the law makes no distinction between public broadcasters like Sporza, or commercial channels such as VTM.



We're Number One

Government talks break world record

ALAN HOPE

It may, as all serious commentators agree, be no laughing matter, but last week Flemings took the news that Belgium is now the world record holder for the longest period without a (federal) government in good spirits, with playful and self-mocking actions across the region. Thursday, 17 February, marked the date when negotiations to form a new government reached 249 days, equaling the time taken for the factions in Iraq to agree last year.

The biggest party took place in Ghent on the Sint-Jacobsplein and the adjoining Vlasmarkt, which attracted about 10,000 people. The programme included musicians, comedians, free frieten and a ceremonial handing over of the official world record from "Iraqi diplomats" (see *Face of Flanders*, p2).

Also in Ghent, on the Kouter, a number of people – and not all of them students – removed some or all of their clothing in celebration at the new world record. The festivities – this being party-town Ghent after all – could rely on the presence on stage of pop stars Lady Linn, Sioen and Luc De Vos.

► *continued on page 3*



FACE OF FLANDERS



Edmond Cocquyt, Jr

To mark the new world record for a country without a (national) government, a deputation of two diplomats from the previous record-holder, Iraq, visited Ghent last week to hand over a trophy to the new champions.

You'd think the Iraqi government would have more important things to think about than tongue-in-cheek actions in Flanders; and, of course, you'd be right. The two men were not Iraqi diplomats at all; the event was just the latest in a long line of eye-catching stunts by Edmond Cocquyt, Jr (Cocquyt Sr is himself a local activist and chairman of a local retailers' group). Cocquyt the son was one of the organisers behind the massive *volksfeest*, or people's party, in Ghent to mark the new world record.

In 2008, Cocquyt (photo, right) pretended to set up a new political party, the N-GA or New Ghent Alliance, which claimed unilateral independence from Brussels' "interference". The logo and other party materials looked suspiciously like those of the N-VA, and Cocquyt was listed as "party ideologue". Party policy also included the annexation of Terneuzen in Zeeland and the expulsion of all West Flemings. "Every

revolution needs to have its scapegoats," Cocquyt told *Het Nieuwsblad*. "The West Flemings are just unlucky." Although Cocquyt, 34, is a pillar of Ghent nightlife, he drew up a handy café plan of Leuven, together with local boy Ben Mouling. The twist came when they prominently featured sponsorship from Maes Pils, a sacrilege in the city of InBev. The café plan has since spread to other cities. Cocquyt was also involved in the Ghent version of the Use-It tourist map for young people and is a familiar face around the Gentse Feesten.

Last week, it was a joy to watch as Carl De Vos, the extremely serious political scientist and professor from Ghent University, tried to crack a smile as he acknowledged the record-marking events on the late-night discussion programme *Reyers Laat*. At the same time, Cocquyt, all poker-faced intensity, described how young people were proud that their political representatives had managed to hold out so long, just so Belgium could achieve such an honour.

Belgian surrealism at its best: you think you get the joke, but the joke you get is not the one everyone else is in on.

FLANDERS



FITS YOU

FLANDERS TODAY

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News in brief

Researchers from the University of Ghent and the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology have announced a new vaccine against tuberculosis, a disease that still kills about 1.8 million people worldwide each year. The existing vaccine, known as BCG, is effective in about 80% of cases in children, less in adults. The new vaccine sends out a signal that simulates the disease, triggering a response from the body's own immune system.

Families moving to the province of Flemish Brabant who do not speak Dutch will be issued with a free "language survival kit" to help them prepare for contacts with the welfare and health sectors. The kit contains some handy Dutch phrases, as well as a wider vocabulary, and is intended to encourage the learning of Dutch. It will be available from family organisation Kind & Gezin, from the Huis van het Nederlands (House of Dutch), the non-profit De Rand and the province itself, headquartered in Leuven. According to figures from Kind & Gezin, the number of young families moving into the province who don't speak Dutch went up to 48% in 2009 from 43.4% the year before.

Enterprise minister Vincent Van Quickenborne has asked his IT service to examine the possibility of installing an electronic ID card into the SIM card of everyone's mobile phone. Speaking at the recent Mobile World Congress in Barcelona,

where the Spanish mobile operator Telefonica was displaying the results of a test project, Van Quickenborne said people had little use for the new electronic ID card, since few people possess a card reader.

Holders of a Mobib card, the new travel card used by the Brussels public transport authority MIVB, will be able to use it to rent bikes from Villo! later this year, Brussels transport minister Brigitte Grouwels said last week. The Mobib card already allows access to the Cambio car-sharing scheme.

The Royal Museum for Fine Arts in Brussels last week announced it had acquired a double-sided drawing by Pieter-Paul Rubens at a sale at Christie's in New York. The selling price was not disclosed. The work is the first drawing in the museum's Rubens collection. Dating from 1630, one side shows the Abduction of Hippodamia and Achelous Defeated by Hercules, and the other side two scenes from the Passion of Jesus: Christ Presented to the People and the Ascent of Calvary.

A man who died in a road accident near Aalter last week was identified as a 31-year-old Algerian known to the police under 14 different aliases, police said. The man was a passenger in a car involved in the accident, but carried no papers. When police checked his

fingerprints, registrations of 14 different names emerged. His true identity was established with the help of the Algerian embassy.

Socialist and liberal trade unions have promised a day of action on 4 March in protest at the proposal for a new wages-and-conditions agreement presented by the government last week. The unions oppose a 0.3% cap on wage rises, among other provisions. The exact form of the action to be taken is not clear: "It could take the form of a 24-hour strike," one union representative warned.

A woman who was taken to court over her failure to pay child support learned last week she would not be sentenced as long as she paid off her arrears. The woman had claimed she was penniless, but her partner produced photos from her Facebook profile that showed her on a trip to Rome and using a new laptop.

The statue of a dying Everard 't Serclaes on Brussels' Grote Markt is to be renovated at a cost of €46,000 to repair damage caused by visitors stroking the statue's arm for good luck. 't Serclaes was a city alderman who led the fight to recover the Brabant city of Brussels from Flemish invaders in 1356.

OFFSIDE

When the shooting starts

Calgary, the largest city in the Alberta province of Canada, may not seem obviously related to Flanders, but the Tsuu T'ina Nation Indian reserve outside the city will be standing in for the Flemish countryside next month, when shooting starts on a film called *Four Saints*, by Dutch-born writer and director Jean-Pierre Ibsouts.

The film tells the story of four Allied nurses – Elsie Knocker, Mairi Chisholm, Dorothy Fielding and Helen Gleason – serving in Veurne (then known as Furnes), West Flanders, in the opening months of the First World War. Their job was to rush casualties to the hospital from the front line, some 24 km away. They noticed that many of the wounded, who might otherwise have survived, died of shock as a result of the long and difficult ambulance transport.

The four of them decided to set up a field dressing station at the front line, in defiance not only of direct orders, but also of the bullets and bombs aimed by the Germans at the village of Pervijze (Pervyse), where their hospital was based. Knocker and Chisholm (photo) became known as the "two Madonnas of Pervyse".

"We had, funny enough, over the entrance to the dug-out... a little shrine thing, you see, and that's what the soldiers called us – the two Madonnas of Pervyse – and they felt if they fell into our hands, you see, they had every possible chance," Knocker later said.



© Imperial War Museum

Ibsouts, who now lives in California, originally wrote the story as a screenplay but turned it into the novel *Angels in Flanders*, published last year. "Angels in Flanders marks a unique moment in time when women emerged from their Victorian domesticity to fill positions and occupations vacated by conscripted men, thus launching the 20th century women's emancipation movement that would ultimately grant them full equality," Ibsouts said. The Tsuu T'ina Nation reserve, meanwhile, has played Flanders once before: in Paul Gross' 2007 film *Passchendaele*.

What a boar!

The population of wild boar in Flanders is on the increase, according to the Institute for Nature and Woodland Research, thanks to milder winters and an abundance of food



ANJA OTTE

No government? No worries!

→ continued from page 1

In Brussels, meanwhile, some 1,100 students turned up on the Poelaertplein in front of the Justice Palace to eat *frietens* and celebrate the event. The students were from the city's two free universities, the VUB (Dutch speaking) and the ULB (French speaking). Only about 300 people turned up to the Groenplaats in Antwerp for a record celebration, despite DJ Civalizee Foundation and rock band New Rising Sun. Leuven also took part in the "friet revolutie", as it was known across the region, with students enjoying 300 free portions of the national snack.

Controversial Flemish comedian Geert Hoste appeared on CNN, looking pleased at being able to represent the whole country, to explain that the situation may be politically disastrous, but it was good that the Belgian people could still laugh at themselves.

The record celebrations attracted the attention of more foreign media: ZDF in Germany meditated on what might happen to the German-speaking community if Belgium falls apart. Would it stay with Wallonia, join Luxembourg or become part of Germany? The correspondent for Dutch broadcaster NOS imagined Flanders attaching itself to the Netherlands, which "would not be too bad," he said. French TV

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



32,925
people put to work each day in Belgium by temp agency Randstad, making it the country's biggest employer

€13,923.77
fine received by a 51-year-old woman from Pulderbos for a series of 61 speeding offences in the period of one year

2,570
new jobs created in the catering sector in the first three-quarters of 2010, according to industry federation Horeca Vlaanderen. All but 11 of the jobs were in restaurants

52%
of employees worked through 2010 without taking a single day off sick. The average number of sick days was 1.14, compared to 1.18 the year before

13%
annual growth in research spending until 2014, and 8% after that, required to win back Flanders' position as a growth industry in research and innovation by 2020

station TF1 reported "*la révolution des frites*" was a protest against separatism and for a unified Belgium.

At home, daily paper *De Standaard* saw the funny side: "Finally world champions" read the front page. *De Morgen* took the opposite view: "The Sorrow of Belgium", and others agreed. Financial daily *De Tijd*: "Indifference rules the land". *Het Laatste Nieuws*: "249 Days and nothing in sight". *Het Nieuwsblad*: "The record of shame".

"This is bad for the image of our country," commented caretaker prime minister Yves Leterme. "It is necessary now to make some moves towards a compromise."

Marc Michils of marketers Saatchi & Saatchi agreed. "It's not good for our image if we give the impression of an out-of-control country where anything can happen," he commented. "Social stability is important to be able to judge the investment possibilities of a country." ♦

Belgium's other world records

The **tallest tower of sugar-cubes**, built in Zoersel in November 2009 by Paul Van den Nieuwenhof

The **longest washing line**, measuring over 35 km, was strung out on the beach in Wenduine in August 2007 by Procter & Gamble

The **largest whisky-tasting** took place in Ghent in January 2009, with 2,252 guests

The **largest audience for a tennis match**, 35,681 spectators, watched Kim Clijsters beat Serena Williams in an exhibition match at the Koning Boudewijn stadium in Brussels in July 2010

The **biggest champagne fountain** was built in Wijnegem shopping centre in January 2008, using 43,680 glasses stacked up in 63 levels



© Reuters

If you can't form a government in 249 days, what can you do? A few examples, compiled by *De Standaard*

Produce €230 billion in goods and services

Consume 662 cups of coffee, 55 litres of beer and 27 bottles of wine per person

Recover from six consecutive fractures of a leg or an arm

Get over a broken relationship (for 40% of people)

Almost bring a pregnancy to term, unless you're a hamster, when you've time for 15 litters

Orbit the Earth in the International Space Station about 4,000 times



© Toerisme Gent

Ghent Sports City 2011

Ghent municipal authorities last week kicked off the city's term as Flanders' first-ever City of Sport. The title will be handed out every two years, alternating with City of Culture. "The intention this year is to get all of the people of Ghent involved in sport," said the city's sports alderman Christophe Peeters, launching the event. "More than ever before, we want to bring sport to Ghent, rather than bringing the *Gentenaars* to sport."

Events planned for the year include not only major sporting events at venues like the Blaarmeersen sports park and the new Eddy Merckx cycling centre, but also local initiatives like new basketball courts, jogging routes and open-air fitness equipment. ♦

Dutch line up for Flemish schools

Flemish schools near the Dutch border are facing an influx of new pupils from Dutch homes, with more than 21,800 Dutch students registering in 2010, more than 8,000 of them in primary schools.

The reasons Dutch parents are increasingly opting for Flemish schools are several, school heads explained. While Flemish schools are open to children from the age of 2.5 years, in the Netherlands education only begins at four – day care must be paid until then for working parents. In addition, in Flemish schools, costs of extra-curricular activities for the year, such as museum visits, will not exceed a certain amount, fixed for the moment at €60.

Others have cited another reason: the superior quality

of education in Flemish schools and, in particular, the level of politeness and discipline. According to Kathleen Van Gelder, director of a primary school in Essen, whose centre is barely 600 metres from the Dutch border, parents from the Netherlands "find that we at least teach children politeness and respect. Here they have to say 'Miss' and 'Sir' instead of 'An' or 'Mark'". Now Dutch schools are striking back, with initiatives in Tilburg to encourage parents to send their children to local schools, in Hulst to allow toddlers of 2.5 into pre-school classes and in Roosendaal to force children who were taught in the Flemish system to pass an exam before allowing them into Dutch secondary schools. ♦

FIFTH COLUMN

SP.AM

Who needs WikiLeaks when we have SP.A? So says the green opposition. The Flemish socialists used to have a solid reputation of professionalism and trustworthiness. Now all they seem to do is damage themselves.

Some months ago, Frank Vandenbroucke, one of SP.A's most prominent members, had a delicate phone conversation overheard on the train. Only weeks later, he sent an email critical of his party's views to the wrong address. A political opponent found it in his in-box and promptly forwarded it to the press. In a similar incident last week, Ingrid Lieten, SP.A vice-minister-president, accidentally sent an internal email to her colleagues in the Flemish government.

The email outlines her party's position and the need for a "story" to explain it to the electorate. Even juicier are the descriptions of her colleagues in the Flemish government – the very ones who received the mail. The ministers of CD&V and N-VA "consist of nothing but Teflon and concrete," Lieten wrote. Despite the colourful language, they were not amused. So the Flemish government – one that is up and running in this country – is more divided than one might think. This is especially worrying to minister-president Kris Peeters, CD&V's strong man, who wants to maintain an image of leadership above all.

This also shows just how uncomfortable SP.A sits. It is the ideological opposite of N-VA, which dominates the political debate at the moment. Day by day, the aversion between both parties' presidents, Bart De Wever and Caroline Gennez, becomes clearer, Gennez rarely getting the upper hand.

Although no-one knows where the formation is heading, it looks increasingly unlikely that SP.A will be part of the next federal government. Its French-speaking counterpart PS try to keep SP.A on board, but the Flemish socialists are not eager to be associated with their "old labour" comrades. Being left out at the federal level, SP.A also risks getting kicked out of the Flemish government. Some time in opposition may work wonders for SP.A in the long run, but that does not make it an attractive prospect right now.

SP.A's only ray of hope is Johan Vande Lanotte, who impressed everyone as royal mediator. In a talk show last week, he first cried over his recently deceased mother, only to burst out giggling minutes later. It made him look like a man of flesh and blood. Still, that did not clear the air of the words "Teflon and concrete".



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Better late than never?

It will cost €563 million to make nine out of 10 trains run on time

→ *continued from page 1*



Interior minister Annemie Turtelboom (left) and minister of public enterprises Inge Vervotte lay flowers last week at the new public memorial in Buizingen to victims of last year's train crash

Jochem Goovaerts, spokesman for the NMBS, described 2010 as "an absolutely catastrophic year as far as punctuality is concerned. It's the NMBS' responsibility, and we're not trying to avoid that. The technical problems associated with our trains is a major factor."

However, according to the independent user group TreinTramBus (TTB), the situation is actually even worse than the official figures suggest. Infrabel does not count a train as late if it arrives at its destination on time (or within six minutes of time), whereas it may have been late at any point along the way and made up time later. That's important for passengers: if you miss a connection in Ghent, say, it's little consolation that the train finally made it to Ostend on time.

TTB's method of counting, according to spokesman Jan Vanseveren, paints a different picture. By their way of figuring, only 49% of trains arrived on time, and that number drops to 39.4% at morning rush hour. More than one-third had a delay of up to 15 minutes; 6% were 15 to 20 minutes late, and 7.6% were delayed by more than 20 minutes.

However, says Vanseveren, Infrabel is improving its communications, including the recent introduction of real-time information by internet, teletext and SMS. Above all else, the user group stresses, "the train remains a reliable means of transport. Delays at rush hour on the roads are worse."

Less trains, more timely?

Inge Vervotte, the federal minister for government enterprises (Belgacom, bpost, NMBS) promised "a mix of measures in the short, medium and long term. Since the beginning of 2008, almost €2 billion has been invested in new equipment, almost twice as much as in the 10 years previous. But you don't just pick up new trains from a supermarket shelf. Most of the new trains will be delivered gradually between now and 2016."

One of her suggestions – reducing the load of trains using the bottleneck that is the North-South connection running through central Brussels – caused an immediate stir. Infrabel came forward with a proposal to scrap about 30 rush-hour trains using the connection, which would ease congestion on the line and improve timeliness, but which would have an immediate effect on an estimated 20,000 passengers a day.

TTB described the plan as "panic measures" and questioned the logic. "The number of trains using

the connection has remained constant since 2004," Vanseveren said. "So that can't be the reason why punctuality has dramatically declined."

He also pointed out that the worst time keeping figures come from the Antwerp-Ghent-Kortrijk connection, which has nothing to do with Brussels. "It is of course praiseworthy that Infrabel plans to do something in the short term to improve the lamentable time keeping, but their analysis is largely faulty," he said.

Vervotte later pointed out that the plan was only one of the options she would be considering, and no decision has yet been taken.

Meanwhile, according to a report by consultancy Arthur D Little for the NMBS, the cost of reaching a target of 90% of trains on time by 2015 would amount to €563 million. That includes €297 million for new material, for which the NMBS has already budgeted €258 million.

Safety first

"Before the train disaster in Buizingen, I constantly mentioned the punctuality of the railways as the first duty of the NMBS. Now safety is at number one, with punctuality at number two," said minister Vervotte earlier this month, commenting on the report of a special parliamentary commission set up after the train crash in February last year in which 19 people died and 50 seriously injured.

"You don't just pick up new trains from a supermarket shelf"

– Inge Vervotte

The commission's report, including its 109 recommendations, was approved by the parliament by 82 votes to 35 abstentions. David Geerts, chairman of the commission, said its findings had to be regarded as a "turning point in rail safety in this country. This report is certainly not a finishing point. We will ensure that the commission's work results in concrete measures. Great plans were made in the past, but this time they have to deliver results."

The 325-page report includes testimony from experts, from officials and from politicians, and, while it makes

a raft of recommendations for improving safety, it stops short of laying any blame anywhere specific. "Rail passengers are better served by solutions than by the search for a scapegoat," said Geerts.

Some of the commission's recommendations are already being carried out. That includes the installation of the safety system TBL1+, an automatic braking system that stops 75% of trains passing through a red signal. TBL1+ is a stop-gap on the way to installing the superior EU standard ETCS system.

At the time of the Buizingen accident, only 22 trains from the fleet of 1,021 – or 2% – were equipped with TBL1+. By the end of this year, the figure will have gone up to 64%, the NMBS said. The entire fleet will be equipped by 2013. Also this year, 143 trains will be fitted with ETCS, Goovaerts said. The majority of trains will be fitted by 2023, seven years earlier than originally planned. The only exception are the 370 models, which are too old for ETCS; they will continue to use TBL1+ until they are scrapped.

"TBL+ is not the best system," Vervotte told parliament earlier this month. "But the challenge now is to substantially improve safety in the short term. In the meantime, it is clear that the general installation of the European system ETCS would take 10 years to carry out. We were faced with the choice of the highest level of safety on some lines, or an improved level of safety on all lines."

The official cause of the disaster is still under investigation, but it is suggested that one of the trains ran a red signal. This month we also learned that the number of such instances had risen again in 2010, to 130 from 117 in 2009. None of those incidents led to fatalities. To put the number into perspective, in the whole year, across the whole network, trains were stopped by red signals 13 million times.

According to forecasts, the installation of the two new security systems will help reduce that number of trains going through red, but at a cost to train timeliness. TTB fails to see the logic. "The two problems have nothing to do with each other," Vanseveren says. "Punctuality has gotten worse through the years, but safety has not improved. The two things are not in opposition." ♦



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Prices index to be reconsidered

Inflation brings attack on energy producers over high prices

ALAN HOPE

Belgium's reliance on indexation for so many different processes poses a threat to competitiveness and needs to be overhauled, according to the governor of the National Bank, Guy Quaden, speaking last week. Indexation forms a major stumbling block to acceptance by the country's unions of the government's wages and conditions package, known as the inter-professional accord or IPA. The IPA puts a limit on wage rises of 0.3%, whereas the normal process of indexation would have taken account of inflation, which reached 3% in December.

But it is not only wage indexation that threatens the economy. "It's wage indexation that draws attention from the European Central Bank and other institutions," said Quaden, "but in Belgium there are lots of other indexation mechanisms that are less favourable for the population."

Electricity and gas prices are increased according to the consumer price index, while the prices themselves form part of the basket of goods and services that go to make up the index – a vicious circle that has seen prices here spiralling far beyond the heights reached in neighbouring countries like France, the Netherlands and Germany. Belgian families spend 11.2% of their income on energy costs, compared to the 9.6% average across Europe.

According to government forecasts, consumer prices will rise in 2011 by 2.7%, compared to 2.2% last year. The health index, meanwhile, will go up by 2.4%. Under normal circumstances, the trigger for a rise in public sector pay and pensions will come in June.

The fall-out from a fast-rising index also affects the private sector, which is faced not only with wage demands, but also ends up paying more for energy than their competitors in other countries (see table). Insurance premiums are often linked to the index, as are the prices of train and bus tickets and rental costs, both for private accommodation as for offices and retail premises.

Electrabel under fire

Energy prices are a sore point in more ways than one, and critics have recently become more vocal in attacking the massive profits made by Electrabel and, to a lesser extent, SPE-Luminus. The two providers, critics point out, are free to set prices themselves – unlike in the Netherlands and France, where regulators can put a cap on price increases. Ironically, Electrabel, which holds virtually a monopoly position on the Belgian market, is owned by GDF Suez, whose majority shareholder is the French state. The French government, it is said, has continually refused to accept the sort of price regulation in Belgium that it operates at home, threatening to withdraw Electrabel's headquarters

out of Belgium altogether if Belgium insists, with the loss of thousands of jobs. SPE-Luminus, meanwhile, is owned by Electricité de France (EDF), which also has the French state as its majority shareholder.

There is also the question of the nuclear dividend – the profit that comes to the energy producers from exploitation of nuclear power stations that were written off by the government some years ago. Now, power companies can produce energy at very little cost and sell it at a price that never ceases to rise. The figures concerned vary: Electrabel itself puts the dividend at €652 million a year. The energy regulator CREG estimates somewhere between €2.07 billion and €2.28 billion. The unions, who take the position that some or all of this dividend ought to be reclaimed and funnelled into social projects, put the figure at €2.7 billion. The idea that something must be done about the nuclear dividend is, unusually, supported by the whole range of social partners, from the trade unions to the bosses' federation VBO.



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One solution to the problem of indexation and energy prices would be to remove energy costs from the health index, thus breaking the vicious circle that exists at present, a proposal that Unizo, the organisation that represents small businesses, has said is "certainly open to discussion". The unions, on the other hand, consider such an idea "tinkering with the thermostat" instead of tackling the structural problem of the freedom of the energy providers to set their own prices. ♦

Table: Inflation compared to price hikes

Country	Inflation	Gas price rise	Electricity price rise
Belgium	3.4	20.4	6.0
Germany	1.9	2.5	3.4
France	2.0	13.8	3.1
Netherlands	1.8	6.1	-5.2

Source: National Bank

Mobile phone tariffs to come down

Mobile phone operators Mobistar and Base have failed in an attempt to overturn a ruling by the telecoms regulator to force them to reduce their tariffs. A court in Brussels last week upheld the order by the Belgian Institute for Posts and Telegraphs (BIPT), which obliged the two operators to cut the costs to clients of calling numbers on the other's network.

The decision concerns the so-called mobile termination rates (MTRs), which is the fee one operator charges the other for a call made to the other's network. For years Mobistar and Base have been allowed to charge higher rates than Belgacom, the other main operator on the national mobile scene. That

leeway was allowed them on their entry to the market, in order to offset the massive advantage Belgacom had as the existing state monopoly.

The BIPT called in August for the MTRs to be cut by almost one-half, to 4.92 euro cents for Mobistar (from 9.02) cents, and to 5.68 euro cents for BASE (from 11.43 cents). Belgacom's MTR is currently 4.52 cents. All differences between the operators will disappear in 2013.

Mobistar later said its profits would fall and its dividend be cut as a result of the decision. The company also said it would consider appealing against the decision. ♦



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THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Beer • ABInbev

Leuven-based brewer ABInbev acquired 25% of the Chinese Dalian Daxue brewery from the Japanese Kirin group and then pushed its stake to 100% by buying out the other shareholders. Dalian Daxue is located in north-east China and allows ABInbev to push its capacity in China to 49 million hectolitres of beer for a market share of 11%.

Beverages • Pepsi

US drinks group PepsiCo has sold its Looza fruit juice production unit in Borgloon, Limburg province, to the Konings company, based in Zonhoven, Limburg, and specialised in energy drinks, vegetable juices and alcoholic beverages. The plant was only marginally profitable for Pepsi, while Konings was looking for additional capacity for its own products.

Energy • Eldepasco

Discount retail group Colruyt has acquired a majority stake in the Eldepasco wind farm located off the coast of Zeebrugge. The retailer is already a leading player in the Belwind wind farm programme.

Finance • IMF

The Benelux (Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg) is seeking a seat at the International Monetary Fund in Washington, DC, and hope to be invited at the G20 table in the wake of an international re-shuffling as European influence wanes in favour of fast-developing nations. Both Belgium and The Netherlands already have a seat at the IMF.

Ports • Antwerp

The Port of Antwerp has signed an agreement with the Indian Essar Ports company to develop the port facilities of Hazira and other projects in the Gujarat province.

Property • ING

Dutch banking group ING has sold its real estate assets to the US-based CB Richard Ellis property management and consultancy group. Included in the sale are some of ING's Belgium-based properties worth some €800 million, such as the Wijnegem and Waasland shopping centres, the AG Tower in Brussels' Naamsepoort and several logistics facilities.

Security • Brinks

The receivers of the local Brinks' company, which went bankrupt, are selling assets of the company to some of its competitors. Local Cobeguard have acquired the Ghent-based activities and equipment, while Bpost and security firm G4S have acquired payments management equipment and security vans.

Supermarkets • Albert Heijn

Dutch supermarket Albert Heijn has confirmed plans for up to 200 outlets in Belgium. The company, which opens its first Belgian store in Brasschaat, Antwerp province, next month, has earmarked 5,000 square metres of its Tilburg distribution centre to supply its first Belgian outlets.

Mutual affection

The invaluable relationship between the Low Countries and Venice is on show at Bozar

ANNA JENKINSON

Visitors to Antwerp or the northern Italian town of Bergamo might find it frustrating that the fine arts museums in both places are closed for restoration. But their loss is Brussels' gain, with masterpieces from the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp and the Accademia Carrara in Bergamo on show at Bozar. Much like Bruges' recent exhibition comparing Flemish masters with those from Central Europe, the scope of Bozar's new exhibition is ambitious. *Venetian and Flemish Masters* covers four centuries of paintings ranging from

works by Bellini and Van Eyck, through Titian and Rubens, to Jordaens and Canaletto.

The aim is to highlight the influences that these northern and southern artists had on each other. "The exhibition is a major confrontation between two of the biggest schools of European painting – the Venetian and the Flemish schools – which could not have existed without each other," says curator Giovanni Carlo Federico Villa.

Artistic exchanges between north and south were made possible by maritime, commercial and political connections. In the 15th century, the start of the exhibition's timeline, ships from Venice would arrive in the port of Antwerp laden with goods, including paintings, which would be replaced with other artworks for the return journey.

Artists and patrons would also make the long and arduous journey to familiarise themselves with another region and its culture. In these ways, Giovanni Bellini and Rogier van der Weyden came across each other's works, while Peter Paul Rubens is known to have seen the works of Titian and Veronese.

Venice of the north

Adopting a chronological approach, *Venetian and Flemish Masters* takes you on a journey from the 15th century through to the end of the 18th century. Paintings from the Low Countries, when Antwerp was the financial heart of Europe, are juxtaposed with works from the Republic of Venice, a territory corresponding to the present-day Lombardy-Venetian area centring on Bergamo.

The exhibition starts impressively with Pisanello's "Portrait of Lionello d'Este" (1441), considered to be the world's first modern portrait and described by Bozar as "one of the most famous pictures in all of Italian Renaissance painting". Lionello d'Este, Marchese of Ferrara, is depicted in profile, similar to how a figure would be engraved on a medal. It is perhaps then of little surprise to learn that around this time Pisanello was interested not only in portraiture but also in medal making.

In the same room are portraits from a few decades later by van der Weyden ("Portrait of Philippe de Crois", circa 1460) and Giovanni Bellini ("Portrait of a Young Man, 1475-1480). Instead of depicting their subjects in profile, both artists opt for a three-quarter angle.

Bellini's place in the exhibition is further highlighted through an intervention by contemporary Flemish artist Berline De Bruyckere. Visitors are stopped in their tracks when, wandering through a space filled with 15th-century paintings, they are faced with two modern sculptures of mutilated, naked bodies. The idea is to set up a dialogue between the old and the modern, and De Bruyckere chose to juxtapose two works by Bellini with two of her own works (see separate article).

One of the Bellini paintings, "Pieta: Dead Christ Supported by the Madonna and St John", is an early example of the artist depicting emotion in a way that reflects the influence of van der Weyden, whose works had reached Venice. Like the Bellinis, the Vivarinis were also among the first to incorporate the innovations from north of the Alps into the Venetian tradition.

Influences worked in the other direction, too, with Netherlandish painter Gerard David giving his severe and rigorous work a Venetian spirit through the use of colour, the openness of the landscapes and the corporeality of

the characters, all aspects to be found in contemporary Venetian painting.

Titian transition

As the exhibition moves into the 16th century, the star of the show has to be Titian. A painter of religious subjects, portraits, allegories and scenes from Classical mythology and history, Titian is considered the greatest painter of the Venetian school, the undisputed master of his generation.

Included in the works by Titian is "Orpheus and Eurydice" (circa 1511), with the main characters lost in a dramatic landscape with the colours highlighted through the use of chiaroscuro. The fire in the background is reminiscent of Hieronymus Bosch's paintings, while the gentle light of the sunset recalls Titian's Netherlandish contemporary Joachim Patinir, considered the first landscape painter in the Low Countries.

A century later, and the big name is Rubens, who visited Venice in May of 1600 to study Titian, Veronese and Tintoretto. Rubens' style owes much to what he saw in Venice: painting technique, use of colour and the sheer expanse of the works hanging in Venetian churches and palaces. These Italian artists also influenced the work of Rubens' contemporary Jacob Jordaens, although the latter never made his long-desired trip to Italy. Among the works here is Jordaens' "Bacchus" (1640-1650), one of his many nudes *alla veneziana*.

Bozar acknowledges that the 17th century "saw a widening gap between Venetian culture and the culture of the Low Countries," with the still life proving a popular new genre in Flanders.

The 18th century section, meanwhile, is dominated by Venetian painting, with artists such as Canaletto and Francesco Guardi capturing urban life, both on the canals and on land. Titled "The twilight of Venice", this final chapter of the exhibition is devoted to the Venetian Republic's last decades before its fall to Napoleon in 1797.

A fitting painting is Pietro Longhi's "Ridotto", its characters wearing empty carnival masks, which, as the Bozar puts it "can be interpreted as an allegory of a society in irresistible decline and powerless to imagine a new future for itself".



The Low Countries' first landscape painter: Joachim Patinir's "The Flight into Egypt"

Venetian and Flemish Masters

Until 8 May

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23, Brussels

► www.bozar.be

Two together

Berlinde De Bruyckere's melted bodies reflect

Berlinde De Bruyckere didn't get off to the most promising of starts when Bozar asked her to choose works from its *Venetian and Flemish Masters* exhibition and present her own work in dialogue with them.

The Flemish artist's first choice was Andrea Mantegna's "Mother and Child", but the painting wasn't on the list of available works from the Accademia Carrara in Bergamo. Her next choice was Antonello da Messina's "Crucifixion" from the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp, but it turned out that wasn't available either.

It was time for a meeting with the exhibition's curator, Giovanni Carlo Federico Villa. De Bruyckere, 45, recalls Villa visiting her studio in Ghent and talking about the beauty and iconography in Giovanni Bellini's "Mother and Child". De Bruyckere (pictured below) fell for the painting and realised it would work well with her own work "Pieta". Once that selection was made, De Bruyckere was keen to stick with the same artist for a second pairing. She chose Bellini's "Pieta: Dead Christ Supported by the Madonna and St John", juxtaposing it with her own "Lingam". When you see Bellini's and De Bruyckere's works facing each other, it is actually the contrasts that are immediately striking: 15th-century paintings of sacred subjects opposite 21st-century wax sculptures of mutilated bodies. "Some people will be shocked, but it is not a provocation," says Bozar director Paul Dujardin. Bellini's "Mother and Child" shows the Virgin Mary, with downcast eyes, holding a baby Jesus resting on a tomb-like surface and trying to escape from her arms. Mary's blue cloak with gold thread and the red of the marble are rich and



© Bozar, Yves Genval



Berline De Bruyckere's "Lingam" (above) and Bellini's "Pieta" (right)

the death of Christ at Bozar

ANNA JENKINSON

beautiful, and the playful child is a person full of life. But Mary's face, and the child's struggles presage the suffering and death of Jesus. Opposite, De Bruyckere's "Pieta" is also a work of two parts – an emaciated, mutilated male body lying on a bed of soft, white cushions. "The cushions are like a person taking care of a body," De Bruyckere tells me. For her, the term *pietà* – Italian for "pity" and used to describe works that depict Mary with Christ's dead body – means much more than religious iconography. "In war, when two soldiers take care of each other, this is also a form of *pietà*," she says. "It's two bodies taking care of each other, not just the Virgin and Christ." In this case, the second body takes on an abstract form in the shape of the cushions. The work evokes not only death, but also the fragility of life. Bellini's "Pieta", meanwhile, depicts the dead Christ flanked by the Virgin Mary and St John the Evangelist. At the base of the painting is a wooden plank, on which Bellini has engraved his name, in his traditional signature style, and which acts like a frame keeping the three figures trapped in the picture. The equivalent in De Bruyckere's "Lingam" is the wooden chapel niche in which she has suspended a deformed and headless wax body. The tears of Mary and St John in Bellini's work contrast with the lack of facial expression in De Bruyckere's where the twisted body alone tells the story of horror, injustice and death. Yet both portray wounded flesh and suffering. Both of De Bruyckere's sculptures are made from her usual medium of wax and in her familiar palette of white and cream, with gentle hues of pink and blue. "I feel very much like a painter when I start," she explains. "You see the surface, the different layers of wax on top of each other, like a painting." The technicalities of working with wax are complicated, from making the moulds of bodies to knowing how hot each layer needs to be. This determines how deep they will melt and, therefore, what effect will be created. De Bruyckere has been a name on the international scene for several years now, with her big break coming at the 2003 Venice Biennale, when her sculptures were shown in the Italian Pavilion. She was part of the major exhibition of Flemish artists in Singapore in 2009 and last year won the Flemish Culture Prize in visual arts. She produces 10 to 15 works a year – the number depends on the size of the sculpture, with "Pieta" taking several months and "Lingam" several years. Admittedly, the delay with "Lingam" was largely to do with the difficulty in stripping down the 17th-century chapel niche, removing its beautiful features and reducing it to its essential form – a process that, incidentally, the artist doesn't feel guilty about. De Bruyckere's interventions in the *Venetian and Flemish Masters* exhibition were the result of several years of talks. Originally, De Bruyckere was to confront the old masters in a solo exhibition planned at Bozar for 2012. But the artist was concerned that too many galleries were pursuing this type of show. So now the idea for 2012 is to place De Bruyckere's work in confrontation with contemporary artists, the seed of which has now been planted. The current interventions act like an introduction to next year, she says, a hint that "a huge exhibition is coming." ♦



© Circa 1450, datazione critica, Bergamo, Accademia Carrara

Fade into melancholy

Finally a retrospective for Luc Tuymans

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

After touring four major American museums, Luc Tuymans' *Retrospective* comes home. The exhibition, now at Bozar in Brussels, spans the two-decade period 1978–2008. Curated by Helen Molesworth of the Harvard Art Museum and Madelein Grynsztejn, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, it is – surprisingly – the first comprehensive overview of Tuymans presented in his native country.

Retrospective is no greatest hits; some of the Flemish artist's most striking images are not here. But that's no handicap, since the show proves that some of his lesser-known work is as good as the rest. Furthermore, with just over 70 paintings, *Retrospective* is also no cornucopia. And that's a good thing, too: The paintings don't hang too close to each other.

On the other hand, they are close enough to each other to communicate. And they do, amply. You constantly see echoes between different paintings, even if they've been painted in different time periods.

Tuymans has been coined a conceptual painter: his work adds an extra dimension if you know the ideas that inspired them. For a few decades now, he has been working in series. His most famous was *Mwana Kitoko: Beautiful White Man* – the Belgian entry to the Venice Biennale in 2001 – about the decolonisation of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Presented in its entirety, *Mwana* forms the backbone of *Retrospective*, together with two other reconstituted series (the individual paintings are spread all over the

world and had to be tracked down): *Proper*, about post-9/11 America with an amazing Condoleezza Rice portrait called "The Secretary of State" and *At Random*, a collection of, at first glance, arbitrary accumulated images.

Despite the intellectual basis on which Tuymans' work is grounded – other paintings are lifted from series about, for instance, Jesuits, the Walt Disney Company and Nazi architect Albert Speer – I must admit that years ago I fell in love with his work for its pictorial qualities. The unkempt compositions, the familiar yet uncanny motifs and subjects and, first and foremost, the colours.

It's tempting to say actually the lack of colour, since Tuymans is known for faded tones, with loads of black, brown, gray, beige and white. Even when he uses yellow or red they're drained of their most intense pigments. This way the works exude a deep melancholy, sometimes even sadness.

Of course you can always try to crack the code – the title of the painting might help, although not always. But I have the impression that Tuymans, who, even with two curators at hand, held the reins of this exhibition, wants to adjust his image of conceptual painter.

He didn't want an audio guide that could give background information, and the explanations on the walls of Bozar are kept minimal. Of course, ideally you admire his work on different levels. But if push comes to shove, I prefer Tuymans the painter to Tuymans the thinker. However blasphemous that may sound. ♦



© 2000, Friedrich Christian Flick Collection, photo courtesy David Zwirner, New York

Disappointments

Retrospective includes a compilation of moving images from the first half of the 1980s, when Tuymans had quit painting in favour of filmmaking (on film stock, not on video!). It's a first that Tuymans is putting them in a show, but this is where the exhibition *does* lack some background information. It's just a stream of images with nothing for the visitor to grasp.

Most books on Tuymans prove it's difficult to catch his colours in print. But the *Retrospective* catalogue beats them all, sadly. With colour being so important, I sometimes have the impression of looking at new works. An achievement in itself, of course.

Luc Tuymans: Retrospective

Until 5 May

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23, Brussels

www.bozar.be

Seeing-eye festival

Performatik shows staunch fans of one genre what they're missing

ONAGH DUCKWORTH

Book a hotel room for a one-on-one with deepblue. Have your brain waves translated into sound via an acoustical steel ceiling by Christoph De Boeck. Shadow Pilvi Takala, disguised as an unassuming shopper, around the City 2 mall and witness other consumers' reactions to her transparent carrier bag stuffed full of cash. Or just put your hands together for Audrey Cottin's concert of applause.

Audience interaction is key to Kaaitheater's Performatik festival.

At a first glimpse, the tightly packed programme seems to be a whirlwind tour of what's new and "where-it's-at" on the arts scene in Brussels (and beyond). But Performatik also provides a carefully directed followspot that pinpoints and sheds light on a new generation of artists bravely grappling with the challenge of defining today's ever more complex world.

Gallery as stage (and vice versa)

"I didn't want a theme for it," explains Katrien Van Langendonck, Performatik's programmer, of this second edition of the cross-Brussels festival. "The aim this year is to highlight the inter-relationships between visual arts and performing arts and their practitioners. A lot of artists on the programme are really on the border of the two worlds, and that's where an incredible amount of exciting work can be found. By involving other venues like Wiel's, Beursschouwburg, Argos and so on, we hope to entice our theatre audience into the galleries and vice-versa." Indeed, the questions "Black box or white cube? Performance or exhibition?", the by-lines to the festival's title, aim to encourage us to leave the expectations we usually bring to theatres and galleries in the cloakroom.

During the 10-day festival, we're invited to experience an intriguing mix of installation, film, lectures, performance, science, sound and simulated space travel. The international line-up of artists shows the lesser-known and up-and-coming, rubbing shoulders with established artists such as France's Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and American Ari Benjamin Meyers.

The opening night is a prime example of the cross-fertilisation going on. French choreographer Boris Charmatz, who is currently busy transforming a choreographic centre in Rennes into the first Museum of Dance, will stage an open debate with Cosmin Costinas, the curator of BAK (Base for Contemporary Art) in Utrecht. They'll be discussing Charmatz's latest venture: *expo zero*, destined to become an exhibition without objects.

This is followed by a new offering from Brussels-based Norwegian Mette Edvardsen, who will present a performance where movement and words make invisible objects come to life. The evening continues with a work-in-progress by recently discovered whiz-kid Ivo Dimchev, a Bulgarian artist also based in Brussels. Asked by the renowned Austrian visual artist Franz West to make two videos for his *Adaptives* – "portable sculptures" – Dimchev immediately asked West's permission to create a live performance with the same sculptures. The first results of the projects conclude the hybrid evening.

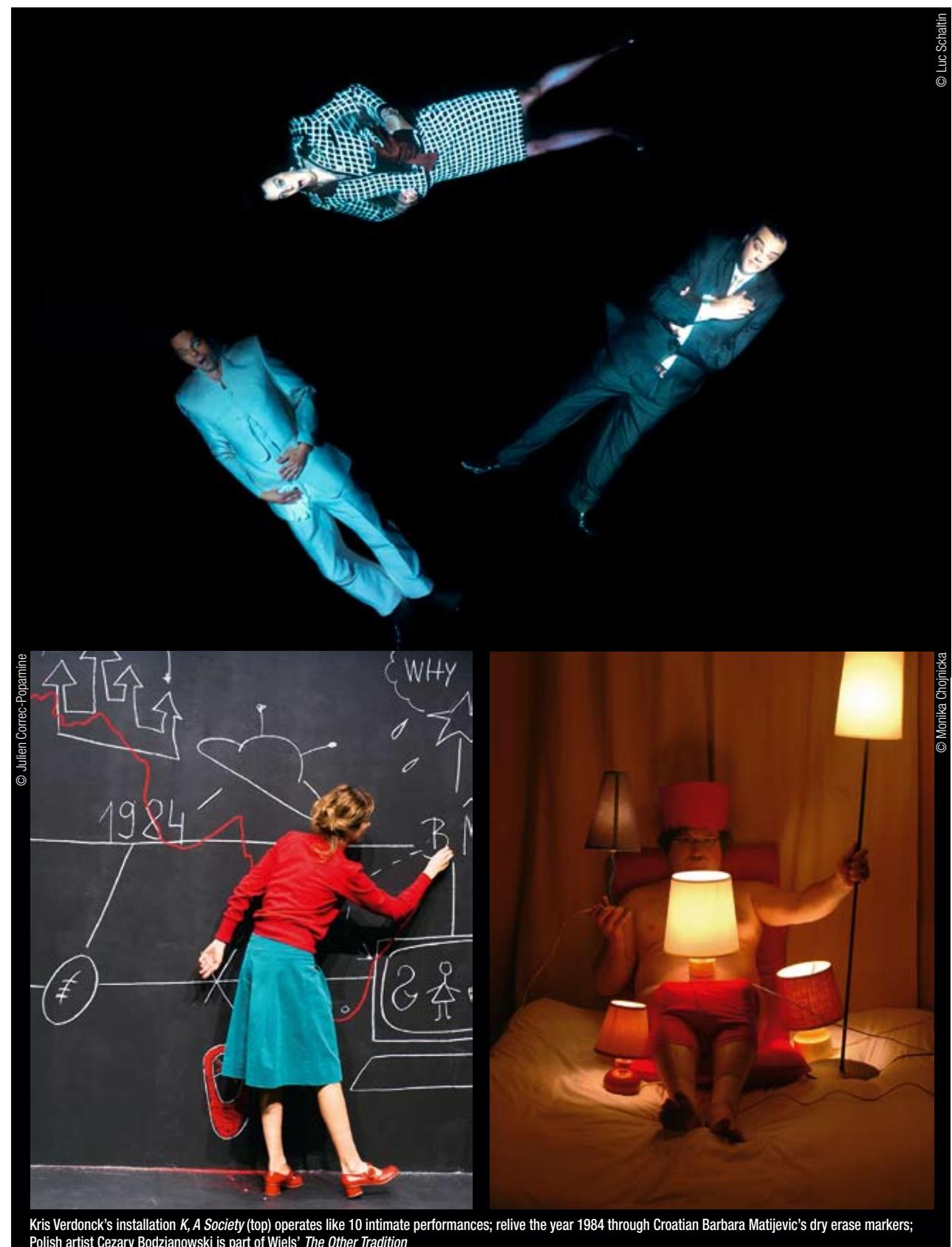
Personal as political (and vice versa)

"Personal narratives frequently offer keys to more universal issues," explains Van Langendonck. "Nowadays it seems too difficult to make blanket generalisations about the state of the wider world. In the age of Facebook, personal opinions abound, and this is reflected in many of the performances."

That trend can be found in another zany piece by Dimchev: *We.art.dog.com* (say the title out loud to get the pun). The work talks about the grand themes of nature, culture, life and death but also features his newly purchased double bed as part of the set, and his own dog in a starring role.

In *I am 1984*, young Italo-Croatian duo Giuseppe Chico and Barbara Matijevic weave Matijevic's own anecdotes and trivia in and out of the political and historical events that took place in the year of the title. Evoking the films, video games, science fiction and sporting events of the day, Matijevic, alone on a stage with only a large whiteboard as backdrop, brings her exposé to life by sketching a giant timeline as she talks.

She has us recall with nostalgia the Sarajevo winter Olympics, Torvill and Dean winning the ice dancing championships and the first dubious Apple Mac ads showing businessmen jumping off cliffs. At the same time we learn of Matijevic's obsession with TV and her girlhood dreams of becoming a ballerina.



Kris Verdonck's installation *K: A Society* (top) operates like 10 intimate performances; relive the year 1984 through Croatian Barbara Matijevic's dry erase markers; Polish artist Cezary Bodzianowski is part of Wiel's *The Other Tradition*

Documented versus immediate

Another highlight is the mixed bill on 1 March at Beursschouwburg. Russian video collective Chto Delat? shows a film about a conflict surrounding the construction of a 403-metre-high tower in St Petersburg. Dutch visual artist Hedwig Houben, who studied in Ghent, talks about the emotions and doubts associated with creating. Swiss fashion designer Christoph Hefti stages a pop concert; and British-born performance artist Zoe Laughlin devises a show for "non-Newtonian fluids and radioactive fruit bowls during which the inanimate is shown to be animate".

The rules of performance and visual art being bent and intertwined can be found in the series of installations at La Raffinerie by one of Kaaitheater's artists-in-residence, Kris Verdonck. The 10 installations of *K: A Society* are all in one location, but, unlike in a conventional gallery, each lasts a predetermined amount of time. Films of king-like creatures singing Wagnerian arias, a businessman lying in water clutching his briefcase or spectacular indoor fireworks displays are to be viewed like mini performances.

"Visual arts audiences tend to regard performance as a side dish. If you're 20 minutes late or miss it entirely but arrive for

the drink, it's not a problem," says Van Langendonck. "In the visual arts world, everything is documented and can therefore be revisited. But in the performance world, it's different – the immediacy and ephemeral nature of the work are part of the experience. If you miss the opening night of a performance, for instance, you've missed an important event."

So, no excuses. Make sure you also catch the exhibition in Wiel's, set up in collaboration with Performatik, that lasts throughout the festival and continues until May. It's a compendium of a whole generation of artists that use live action, interaction and performance as their main media. Seen together, the 11 artists of *The Other Tradition* seem really to be heralding a new genre of contemporary art.

And don't forget during Performatik that we audience members, too, will be playing an important part in the making and changing of art history. *

Performatik

24 February to 5 March
Across Brussels

→ www.kaaitheater.be

The brains behind the beer

Learn from the experts at Brewer for a Day

COURTNEY DAVIS

It's easy to be a beer drinker in Belgium. With over 600 local varieties and flavours, ranging from sweetened kriek to sour gueuze and from light wheat to Trappist ales in practically every café, there's no complaining here.

Even in bio shops, you'll find an ever-growing number of "green" beers, made locally with organic ingredients. While many leave the beer brewing to the experts, there are enough lovers of the beverage who want to take their sipping experience to the next level. This is where Gert Jordens steps in.

As a beer lover and beer brewer, he is spreading his love for the drink by teaching others how to craft a beer as tasty as his famed organic triple. Five years after he first started home brewing in 2001, he launched the Jessenhofke Triple, and it's still both his favourite beer and the public's most popular pick. There is also the blond Jessenhofke Maya and Jessenhofke Bruin available, and nearly 700 outlets across the country selling his small annual batch.

Not many wives would necessarily like their husbands to stink like a brewery, but in the case of Gert, Christel, Sam and Hanne, it's a little different. This family actually has a small brewery in their home. "We brew smaller amounts, so we can try out new flavours and get creative," he says. As a man constantly trying and making new beers, having him work from home seems like a

smart idea.

"Since 2000, a variety of beers are created in our kettles, mostly with herbs that other brewers don't use, like garlic, Hungarian pepper, mustard seeds and pimpnel," Gert explains. He creates new beers in his demo installation in Kuringen, a municipality of Hasselt, but production is done at the Proefbrouwerij in Lochristi, near Ghent.

"I never make the same beer again at home; it is always a change to a previous recipe," he explains. "For example, Zonderik is a beer that was created first in our vessels at home and was launched afterwards on the market. I won't make it again here. I want to create something new, so no repeated batches for me."

Gert has a degree in brewing science from the Hogeschool in Ghent, is a member of the beer guild of Ham and is a certified *zytholoog* (beer sommelier) – thus, supremely qualified to not just make beer, but teach others how to as well.

This is where you come in. Gert hosts Brewer for a Day workshops every few months for €120 per person; the next one is on 13 March. He is in the middle of a fruit beer series at the moment and plans to work with blackberries on that day.

"Most people who attend are beer lovers, and they want to know more about beer," explains Gert. And they will. Attendees start the day early at 8.00 eating left-over beer – a small breakfast is served with bread made



At Jessenhofke, malt is ground by hand

with barley malt left over from the previous batch of beer. The feasting commences at noon, and the day's events are closed at 18.00 again with a shared meal also featuring beer as an ingredient in the preparation. All the food is made and served by Christel. In-between all that eating is some serious beer making. Once the malt is crushed with hand-powered machinery as the first step in the beer-making process, the day's work really begins. Gert goes into detail on the many necessary elements of beer brewing. He explains the theory of all activities: the vessel or kettle the beer is made in, the ingredients, setting up a yeast starter,

cleaning of the installation, etc. All people who attend receive a brewing course with all the discussed information to help facilitate their own beer making at home. They also get to keep the beer they made, though they have to wait six weeks for the beer to ferment properly. Then it is transferred to bottles, with more yeast and sugar added. Finally, six bottles of their own beer is handed over, labelled with a photo of the brewers who attend the course. Sign up for the quarterly newsletter (in English) to learn about new beers and upcoming events.

→ www.jessenhofke.be

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Information Session

Wednesday 2nd March 2011

Radisson Blu Astrid Hotel,
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18.30 – 20.30

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Find Jessenhofke brews at Bio-Planet, other organic food stores and speciality shops

Learning to brew in West Flanders

On the other side of the region, you can learn brewing from Picobrouwerij Alvinne. Founded in 2004 in Kortrijk, Alvinne's brews some great beers. With more than 30 labels and 40,000 litres a year, the two owners are pretty busy making craft Belgian brews, including for export. But they take time out to teach you the magic behind their beer with small, personalised courses, sometimes one-on-one. For only €100, you will learn all you need to know as you go behind the scenes and help them make one of the famed Alvinne brews.

→ www.alvinne.be

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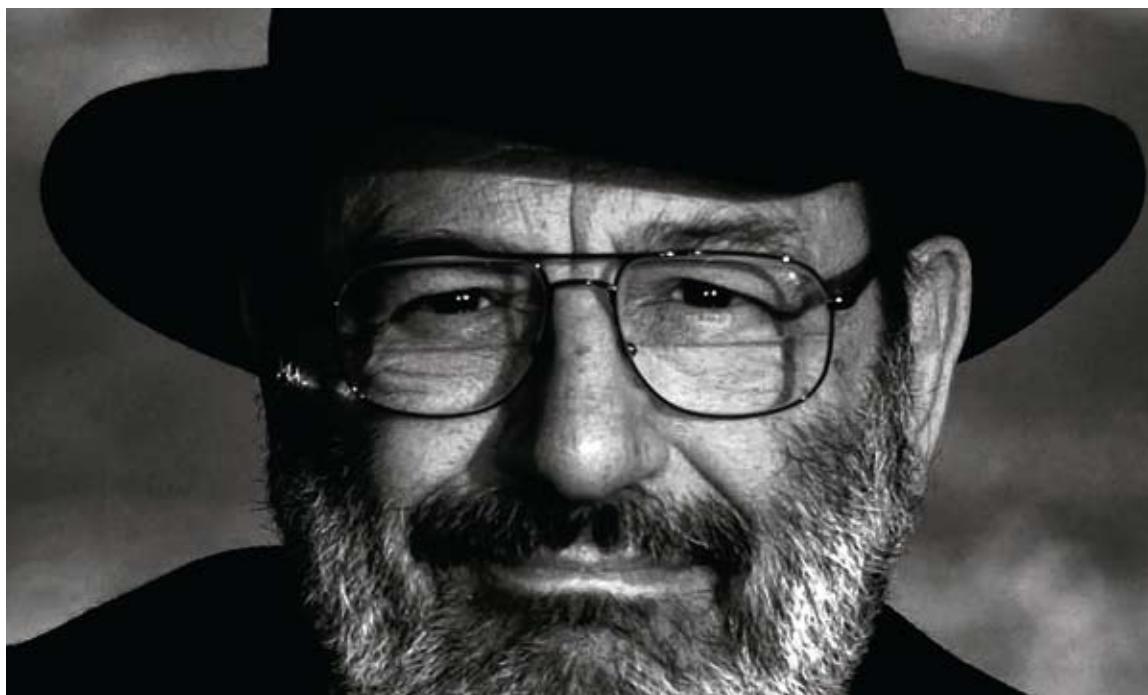
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Mind the Book

REBECCA BENOOT

Two book festivals fell off Flanders' annual calendar last year: Ghent's quirky Zogezegd and Antwerp's socially aware Het Andere Boek, a festival that had been running more than 30 years. As book sales in Flanders continue to be solid, this has been a blow to avid readers of literature and non-fiction.

This month gives us reason to rejoice: it's the premiere of Mind the Book, a provocative three-day lit festival that will take place in Antwerp and Ghent on alternative years, creating a cultural union between the cities' most dynamic cultural centres, the former's deSingel and the latter's Vooruit. This year it's in Antwerp, and, true to Het Andere's legacy, it features a wealth of intellectual debate and political topics, announcing itself with an impressive line-up of international talent, including Afghan politician, activist and writer Fawzia Koofi, British journalist and middle eastern correspondent Robert Fisk and the Italian Umberto Eco, one of the best-known authors and thinkers of our time.

But Mind the Book also adds fiction and children's books, poetry and graphic novels, which opens it up to a wider and younger crowd. Subsidised by the Cities of Antwerp and Ghent – a first – as well as the Flemish Literature Fund, Mind the Book wants to promote openness and collaboration, aspects that are essential to the art and literature scene.

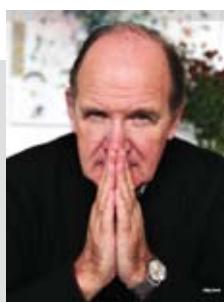
Flemish journalist Jef Lambrecht had to step down from his role as curator for health reasons, and the festival had to be taken on by others less than eight months ago. Still, you can find a clear influence of Lambrecht's main focus – the east – from the middle east to the far east. Mind the Book is split into two main parts – a book fair and literary programme. Talks, interviews and debates are split into themes, ranging from the East, philosophy, contemporary Belgian issues and literary debuts. Many of the biggest names in Flemish literature are on the bill, including Kristien Hemmerechts, Peter Verhelst and Erwin Mortier. The festival kicks off with power on Friday, when local journalist Kristof Clerix interviews French-Colombian politician Ingrid Betancourt, who was famously rescued in 2008 after spending more than six years as a hostage of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. On Saturday, Fawzia Koofi and Robert Fisk will talk about current situations in the Middle East. The 79-year-old Eco, probably best known for his novel *The Name of the Rose*, takes the stage on Sunday with a programme curiously dubbed "Confessions of a Young Novelist".

Mind the Book also incorporates a film programme at Antwerp's Cinema Zuid and related exhibitions at M HKA. The book fair highlights work of the 80 some authors attending but also reaches beyond,

with a selection of current fiction and non-fiction, accompanied by a more specialised fair for collector's items. And finally, don't miss a visit to the Espresso Book Machine. Long-time American publisher Jason Epstein already made history once when he created the trade paperback – the larger size paperbacks that bridged a gap between pocket books and hardcovers. Now, this 83-year-old pioneer is back with a device that looks set to revolutionise the world of publishing. It looks like a big photocopier but transforms digital files into a book in a matter of minutes, something he will personally prove at Mind the Book. The Espresso Book Machine also has a database of over three million books that are no longer in print. Looking towards the future, Epstein tries to answer that vital question: when all print has gone digital, how can we easily get our hands on a good old-fashioned book?

4-6 March

deSingel
Desguinlei 25
Antwerp
→ www.mindthebook.be



MORE LITERATURE THIS WEEK

Het Literaire Pleidooi → De Buren, Brussels

British author Howard Jacobson → Passa Porta, Brussels

Antwerp in Literature → Couwelaar Library, Deurne



DON'T MISS

Georgio "the dove" Valentino

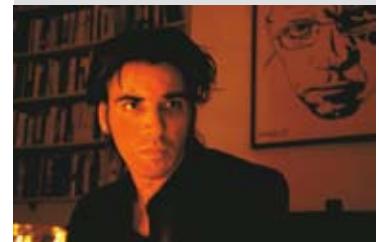
25 February, 22.00

Sazz 'n Jazz, Brussels

26 February, 22.00

Charlatan, Ghent

You're right, it's not his real name. But the Greek-Puerto Rican American knew you'd never be able to pronounce his real name, so he chose something sexy, melancholy and offbeat to be known by – which pretty fully describes this Brussels-based multi-instrumentalist and singer, whose first EP, with songs like "You Wear Wistful Well" and "Suicide Note" recalls Nick Cave. On tranquilisers.



→ www.georgiothedovevalentino.com

© Isabelle Conquier

Hasselt

Muziekodroom

Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13

www.muziekodroom.be

FEB 24 20.00 The Subs

FEB 25 20.30 Tollos

Kortrijk

De Kreun

Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44

www.dekreun.be

Concerts at 20.00:

FEB 25 Black Haven + Oathbreaker + Daggers + Your Highness

FEB 26 SUUNS

MAR 1 The Pains of Being Pure at Heart

Leuven

Het Depot

Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03

www.hetdepot.be

FEB 24 20.00 CpeX

FEB 25 22.00 Discobar Galaxie & special guests



Antwerp

Arenbergschouwburg

Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192

www.arenbergschouwburg.be

FEB 24 20.00 The Writer's Bench presents But Is It Jazz? with Soweto Kinch Quartet and Phyt featuring Erwin Vann

MAR 1 20.30 Carlos Diaz

Buster

Kaasrui 1

03.232.51.53

www.busterpodium.be

FEB 23 21.30 Playtime Session: JNCC

FEB 24 21.30 Jurassic Jam FEB 25 22.00 Le Grand Bateau

FEB 26 22.00 Adhemar

MAR 1 21.30 JazzNight MAR 2 21.30 Playtime Session

De Hopper

Leopold De Waelstraat 2

03.248.49.33

www.cafehopper.be

FEB 27 16.00 Yvonne Walter & guests

FEB 28 21.00 Sander De Winne Quartet

MAR 3 16.00 Mohito

Rataplan

Wijnegemstraat 27

03.292.97.40

www.rataplanvzw.be

MAR 3 20.30 Bos & Voet

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Aanschalaan 110; 02.548.24.24

www.abconcerts.be

MAR 3 20.00 A Tribute to Alan Lomax featuring The Golden Glows and Roland + screening of 'The Land Where the Blues Began'

Café Bonnefooi
Steenstraat 8; 0487.62.22.31
www.bonnefooi.be

MAR 1 22.00 Toine Thys invites...

MAR 2 21.00 F, B and I

Charliermuseum
Kunstlaan 16; 02.218.53.82
www.charliermuseum.be

MAR 1 12.30 Peter Hertmans/Alain Pierre Duo

Espace Senghor
Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40
www.senghor.be

FEB 24 20.30 Majid Bekkas- African Gnaoua Blues

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20
www.flagey.be

FEB 24 20.00 Youth Jazz Orchestra conducted by Pierre Bertrand **FEB 26**

18.00 Daniel Stockart + Cécile Broché
MAR 2 20.30 Toine Thys Trio **MAR 3** 20.00 Jazz Station Big Band

Jazz Station
Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78
www.jazzstation.be

FEB 23 20.30 Caçamba with Osvaldo Hernandez

FEB 24 20.00 Youth Jazz Orchestra conducted by Pierre Bertrand

L'Alphabet
Waversesteenweg 1387; 02.662.23.00
www.lalphabet.be

FEB 26 20.30 Big Noise

Le Caveau du Max
Emile Maxlaan 87; 02.733.17.88
www.lemax.be

MAR 3 20.30 Fred Delplancq Quartet

LR6
Hoogstraat 204; 02.830.21.27

FEB 25 21.00 Jazz 70s Project

Marni Club
Vergniestraat 25; 02.639.09.80

www.theatremarni.com

MAR 1 21.30 Wang Wei featuring Pierre Bernard

Recyclart
Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
www.recycleart.be

FEB 24 21.00 The In Vitro X-Perience

Sounds Jazz Club
Tulpstraat 28; 02.512.92.50
www.soundsjazzclub.be

Concerts at 22.00:

FEB 23 Chamaquiando, salsa **FEB 24** Mess Trio FEB 25-26 Charlier & Souris

FEB 28 Master Session with Michael Blass **MAR 1** Notebook (Nicolas Thys & Dries Lahey Duo) **MAR 2** Caribe Con K

MAR 3 Marc Lelangue Blues Lab

The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45

www.themusicvillage.com

Concerts at 21.00:

FEB 23 Gorgona **FEB 24** Suzanne Folk & Sophie Tassion **FEB 25** Paolo Loveri Trio & Chrystel Wautier **FEB 26** Bart Defoort Quartet **MAR 2** 20.30 Paradigm Junction

Ghent

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65

www.handelsbeurs.be

FEB 24 20.15 Oli Brown Band

FEB 26 20.15 Clement Peerens Explosion

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060

www.vooruit.be

MAR 2-3 20.00 Christian Mendoza Group + Yaron Herman

Kortrijk

Schouwburg
Schouwburgplein 14; 056.23.98.50
www.cultuurcentrumkortrijk.be

FEB 23 20.15 Flat Earth Society



Antwerp

Lotto Arena

Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be

FEB 27 14.30 74th Flemish National Song Festival

MAR 3 19.30 Das Frühlingsfest der Volksmusik

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00

www.zuiderpershuis.be

FEB 24 20.30 Farhôd Qôri Halimov + Mavrigi Bukhara Ensemble (Uzbek)

FEB 25 20.30 Alessandra Leão (Brazil)

Brussels

Art Base

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20

www.art-base.be

FEB 25 20.00 Vinylio, rebetiko (Greece)

FEB 26 20.00 Musicauta (Italy)

La Soupape

A De Wittestraat 26; 02.649.58.88

www.lasoupape.be

FEB 25-26 Karim Gharbi with Eric Bribosia

Ghent

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060

www.vooruit.be

FEB 24 20.00 Ölöf Arnalds + Flying Horseman



Antwerp

Amuz

Kammenstraat 81; 03.292.36.80

www.amuz.be

FEB 26 21.00 Fomer Edding Quartet: Franz Berwald, Beethoven

FEB 27 15.00 Jan Vermeulen, fortepiano: Schubert

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28

www.desingel.be

MAR 3 20.00 Martin Helmchen, piano: Bach, Schoenberg, more

Bruges

Concertgebouw

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02

www.concertgebouw.be

FEB 26 20.00 Stile Antico: Monteverdi, Palestrina, Gregorian chant

FEB 27 15.00 ÁRSIS4: Kurtág, Bartók, 20.00 K&K Philharmoniker & Ballet: dance music by the Strauss family (bookings: 070.25.20.20)

Duke's Palace Kempinsky

Prinsenhof 8; 050.44.78.86

FEB 25 19.30 Marc Grauwels, flute; Christophe Delporte, accordion: Rossini, Bach, more

Brussels

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00

www.bozar.be

FEB 24 20.00 Liège Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Patrick Davin: Mahler

FEB 26 20.00 K&K Philharmoniker conducted by Matthias Georg Kendlinger: dance music by the Strauss family

FEB 27 15.00 Belgian National Orchestra conducted by Ilan Volkov: Ligeti, Rachmaninov, Bartok

20.00 One day of music with the Harmonic Brass

FEB 28 20.00 Flanders Symphony Orchestra conducted by Seikyo Kim: Mendelssohn, Hindemith, Brahms

MAR 1 20.00 Claire Debono, soprano; David Lively, piano: music and letters by Liszt

20.00 Ensemble Orchestral de Bruxelles conducted by Jacques Vanherentals: European Union

Choirs conducted by Dirk De Moor: Beethoven, Mozart, more

MAR 2 12.40 Marie Hallynck, cello; Sophie Hallynck, harp; Gaby Van Riet, flute: Bach, J Jongen, more

20.00 Screening of Fritz Lang's Metropolis, with Gottfried Huppertz's original soundtrack performed by the

original soundtrack performed by the</

FEB 25-APR 30 Mikhail Karasik:
Onder druk van tijd (Pressed for Time),
lithographs

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be

Until MAY 8 Venetian and Flemish
Masters, masterworks from the
Accademia Carrara in Bergamo, Italy,

WEEK IN FILM

LISA BRADSHAW



Ciné Privé

24-26 February
Across Ghent

Not your average film festival, Ghent's Ciné Privé is a fantastic little initiative away from the usual suspects of Ghent's movie scene. With a home-base this year at the city's Botanical Garden, Ciné Privé invades private homes and other unexpected spaces in the neighbourhood for five different screenings over three nights.

Watch short animations in a student house or the *volkscafe* documentary *Bedankt en merci* in an old auditorium in the sciences department of Ghent University. See four short Flemish documentaries together with the directors or the award-winning documentary *Vlasman (Flaxman)* in a nearby apartment building. All screening locations are within walking distance of the event's meeting point (and cafe), where you rendezvous before each screening.

At the meeting point are more fun things to see: One Minute Parcours, the best one-minute Belgian films ever made, and *Tranche d'Immeuble*, a 20-minute 3D movie by Ghent local boy Niko Himschoot that peeps into the way apartment dwellers affect each other's lives.

Ciné Privé is organised by Circa Culture Centre, which also launches Ciné Kadet this year as a separate festival, after its success last year as part of Ciné Privé. It's essentially Ciné Privé for kids. To make it a bit easier on families, the screenings, though still in a variety of locations, are generally within five minutes' walk of the Botanical Garden meeting point. From 2-5 March, the festival includes both newer and older family-friendly movies, like *Paniek in het Dorp* (A Town Called Panic) and *The Neverending Story*. Workshops teach children something about what's growing in the botanical garden or make them into reporters for a day.

→ www.circagent.be

shown alongside Flemish masterpieces from Antwerp's Royal Museum of Fine Arts, spanning the 15th to the 18th centuries

Until MAY 8 Luc Tuymans:
Retrospective, works by the
contemporary Flemish painter

De Markten
Oude Graanmarkt 5; 02.512.34.25
www.demarkten.be

FEB 25-APR 3 Drawing in an Expanded
Field, group show to honour the 300th
anniversary of the Royal Academy of
Fine Arts

Flemish Parliament - De Loketten
IJzerenkruijsstraat 99; 02.227.60.60
www.designvlaanderen.be

Until FEB 26 Henry van de Velde Awards

& Labels 2010, works by the design award

winners

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

Jewish Museum of Belgium
Minimstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
www.mjib-jimb.org

Until MAR 27 David Seymour: Een
humanistisch fotograaf (A Humanist
Photographer), works by the Warsaw-
born Magnum agency photo journalist

Sint-Gorikshallen
Sint-Goriksplein 23; 02.502.44.24
www.sintgorikshallen.be

Until FEB 27 Een stad vol ideeën (A City
Full of Ideas), urban projects for the city
of Lille by architecture students

Until APR 31 Brussels Boutiques: from
Art Nouveau to Present Day, a history of
Brussels shops and window displays

Toy Museum
Verenigingstraat 24; 02.219.61.68
www.musee du jouet.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 APR 3 Zes miljard mensen (Six
Billion People), photo project by Yann
Arthus-Bertrand

VUB - Building F1
Paul Hégerlaan 22-24; 02.650.37.65
www.ulb.ac.be/culture

Until MAR 12 VUB on display: multi-
media show by the university's artists

WIELS
Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.340.00.50
www.wiels.org

Until MAY 15 David Claerbout,
photographs by the Flemish
photographer

Ghent

Kunsthal Sint-Pietersabdij

Sint-Pietersplein 9; 09.243.97.30
www.gekleurdverleden.be

Until APR 25 Gekleurd verleden: Familie
in oorlog (Coloured Past: Family at War),
stories of the Second World War by
everyday people in 1944

Museum of Contemporary Art (SMAK)
Citadelpark; 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

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

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 Verstockt: A Portrait,
an overview of the Flemish artist's work in
celebration of his 80th birthday

Until APR 10 Trou de Ville, group show
featuring press releases, e-mails, videos
and photographs on guerilla art

Kortrijk

Schouwburg

Schouwburgplein 14; 056.23.98.50

www.cultuurcentrumkortrijk.be

FEB 26 20.00 Slow Fashion, works
by local artists, including jewellery,
handbags, lampshades and more (some
items for sale)

Leuven

Museum M

Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28;
016.27.29.29 www.mleuven.be

Until MAR 20 David Shrigley, drawings
and sculptures by the British artist

FEB 24-MAY 15 Freek Wambacq,
installations by the Belgian artist

FEB 24-MAY 22 Pedro Cabrita Reis:
One After Another, A Few Silent
Steps, sculpture, paintings, photos and
installations by the Portuguese artist

Ostend

Kunstmuseum Aan Zee (MuZee)

Romestraat 11; 059.50.81.18

www.muzee.be

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

Venetiaanse Gaanderijen

Zeedijk/Parijsstraat; 050.40.34.38

www.west-vlaanderen.be

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

Ypres

In Flanders Fields Museum

Grote Markt 34; 057.239.220

www.inflandersfields.be

Until NOV 13 Tribute to Donors, a wide
selection of donated works, including
paintings, drawings and photographs



Ars Musica: Contemporary music festival

Until APR 3 across Brussels and Flanders

www.arsmusica.be

Opera in the Cinema: Iphigenie
en Tauride (Iphigenia in Tauris) by
Christoph Willibald Gluck, live via
satellite from the Metropolitan Opera
in New York (in French with Dutch
surtitles)

FEB 26 18.30 at Kinepolis cinemas across
Brussels and Flanders

www.kinepolis.com/opera

Saint Amour: Bella Italia: Mix of
literature, music and film about love,
Italian style

Until FEB 24 across Brussels and
Flanders

www.begeerte.be

Brussels

Affordable Art Fair: Third edition of the
contemporary art fair with more than 100
exhibiting galleries, plus performances by
Jef Aérosol and Alvari, food by chef Yves
Matta and more

FEB 25-28 at Tour & Taxis, Havenlaan
86C

www.affordableartfair.be

Batibouw 2011: International fair for
building, renovation and interior design

FEB 26-MAR 6 at Brussels Expo, Heysel

02.474.89.81, www.batibouw.com

Helden II: Wetenschap: Henriëtte
Louwerse talks with prominent scientists,
author Lia van Gemert and professor
Gustaaf Cornelis about their heroes in the
field of sciences (in English)

MAR 2 19.30 at Rits Café, Damsaertstraat

70

02.212.19.30, www.deburen.eu

DUSK 'TIL DAWN

KATRIEN LINDEMANS



© Dieter Telemans

Museum Night Fever

26 February, Brussels

What do a freak show, graffiti and a ballroom dance initiation have in common? They all feature on the long list of activities of the fourth Museum Night Fever this weekend. About 20 Brussels museums open their doors for the evening for exhibitions, workshops, music and performances. A big unmissable after-party at Bozar rounds off the night (morning).

Twenty doesn't sound daunting, but the list of events is much longer. They all take place between 19.00 and 1.00, and the website has a very clever tool to help you get through the night. Just click on the events you'd like to go to, and then print your personalised plan. And there's no need to figure out how to get from museum A to museum B or struggle with parking: shuttle busses ride you around all evening.

What to expect? Anything but a dull visit to a museum. Budding DJs will demonstrate their skills at the Hallepoort, a guided tour through downtown's Musical Instruments Museum takes you through 8,000 instruments. At Wiels in Vorst, be one of the first visitors to Flemish artist David Claerbout's new exhibition, showing an overview of his work, including video and photography.

Perhaps you're more into hands on. To make and decorate masks, head to the Art & Marges museum in the Marollen. The Royal Army Museum in Jubelpark stages a fashion show where models will wear uniforms of all sorts. Visit the Museum of Fantastic Art in Sint-Gillis and witness a freak show while drinking at the zombie bar, or "relax" with some ballroom dancing at the Museum of the National Bank back in the centre. But make sure you save some energy. From 23.00, DJs will be warming up the dance floor at Bozar. Around midnight, the Liverpool electro foursome Ladytron takes over the decks, relinquishing it eventually to the winner of the Museum Night Fever DJ contest, who's scheduled until 3.00, but who knows? In Bozar's Horta Hall, meanwhile, Muriel Scherre, the Ghent designer behind lingerie brand La Fille d'O, will be responsible for the music all night long. If her beats are as sexy as her products, you should be in for a good time. She is assisted by Part Time Punks who swear by the motto "Think rave, pop, filth and dirty dancing. Think sweat. Think crap. Think lollipop. And now just shut up and dance!"

Prices for Museum Night are good – and all-in ticket is €19 and partial tickets less; you can get them at FNAC, participating museums or online at www.bozar.be.

→ www.museumnightfever.be

JustJAZZit #3: Third edition of the jazz
and improv festival, featuring Michel
Portal and Bojan Z, Michel Massot and
Hélène Labarrière, Flat Earth Society,
more

Until FEB 26 at Beursschouwburg
www.beursschouwburg.be

Offscreen Film Festival: festival of sci-
fi, noir, kung fu and other offbeat and
independent films

Until FEB 27 at Cinema Nova and other
Brussels venues

www.offscreen.be

Performatik

ROBYN BOYLE

bite



AB Resto

The Flemish cultural institution and music temple Ancienne Belgique in Brussels doesn't need an introduction, but their restaurant might. Many people are unaware that they can go to the AB not only for a kicking concert, but for a quality meal as well.

A few years back, the interior got a major facelift. Love it or hate it, the space looks fresher and brighter thanks to straight lines, white paint and fluo lights. My favourite spot is against the back wall because it gives a direct view onto the concert hall bar, so that you are sure to know when the show is about to start.

Lunch is available daily in the form of soup and sandwiches, or soup plus the *dagschotel* (day platter) and coffee/tea for just €12. And on concert evenings dinner is served, a good mix of traditional classics and more modern fusion cuisine.

There is a wide selection of wine available, including some fair trade and organic, plus Champagne and other bubbly. The menu is a bit vague when it comes to beer, listing "Trappist" and "Oude Geuze" without specifying a brewer. But ask your server for a more detailed explanation, as their selection is in fact quite impressive.

I opt for a significantly sour Oud Beersel Oude Geuze; my companion orders a dark and creamy Rochefort 10. To tide us over, the drinks come with a plate of fresh, crusty French bread and butter.

There are only two appetisers on the menu, so we order them both, naturally: Comté cheese croquettes and bacon-wrapped goat cheese. Both dishes arrive on a bed of salad of mixed greens, walnuts, roasted pine nuts and a light dressing.

Contact Bite at flandersbite@gmail.com

This nicely offsets the richness of the melted Comté inside the crisp croquettes and the sharp flavour of the goat cheese oozing out of the warm balsamic-glazed bacon wraps.

Although limited, the main choices are surprisingly diverse: skin-on cod fillet with fennel and sun root, vegetarian dolma with wild rice, steak béarnaise with fries and our true-blue Flemish picks: *tomaat-garnaal* and stewed rabbit.

My plate is in the first instance a feast for the eyes. One oversized tomato is filled, overflowing rather, with little pink North Sea shrimp and yellow cherry tomato halves. It is garden-fresh and light yet filling, especially with the generous helping of thick, fresh-cut fries and mayo on the side.

Across the table, my companion barely needs to cut his plump rabbit thigh as the meat just slides off the bone. Stewed in *kriek* beer and prunes, the rabbit is tender and succulent, the sauce both sweet and tart. Next to this, six piping hot croquettes and a bit of watercress decorate the plate.

If you still have room for dessert, you'll have to check the board for their sweets of the day.

→ www.abconcerts.be

- ➡ Steenstraat 23, Brussels; 02.548.24.55
- 🕒 Mon-Sat, 12.00-14.30 (& 17.30-21.00 on concert nights)
- € Mains: €13-€18
- ★ A great place to fill your stomach with something wholesome pre-concert

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #169

Feature

Antwerp has been named Youth Capital of Europe for 2011. We look at why and what they'll do to prove their youthful excellence

Arts

Our literature writer Rebecca Benoot talks to Flemish author Frederick Morel, who has done the practically unthinkable – written his first novel in English

Back page

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TALKING SPORTS

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Tom Boonen's comeback bid

Tom Boonen is attempting a comeback, although he seems to have been trying to recover his form for years now. The 30-year-old "Tommeke" from Mol, Limburg province, was Belgium's great cycling hope in the 2000s, named as the heir to Eddy Merckx. But after testing positive for cocaine use in 2008 and 2009, his career never quite recovered, and he has struggled to get back to winning.

This month, Boonen opened the season with appearances in two lucrative Arab circuits: he won one stage of the Tour of Qatar and completed the Tour of Oman. But even that was down on last year, when he won three Qatar stages and one in Oman.

Boonen is recovering from a number of setbacks. Last season was affected by crashes in the Tour of California and the Tour de Suisse. He missed the Tour de France and was forced to have knee surgery in July. Any hopes of recovering for the World Championships in September were dashed by a lengthy rehabilitation.

Since then, Boonen has been doing long, intense training sessions on the roads of Monaco, where he is now based. "My morale is good, and I'm very motivated," he

told TV news last autumn. But Boonen has not been the same since his drug bust. While it was not performance-enhancing like EPO (the drug of choice for the cyclists), it is still banned. And the fact that Boonen continued taking it a year after he was first caught, suggested a somewhat distracted temperament.

It was in 2005 that Boonen became the first cyclist to win the Tour of Flanders, Paris-Roubaix and the World Cycling Championship in the same season – and he also won the Belgian Sportsman of the Year award. In 2006, he held the yellow jersey on the Tour de France for four days, and the following year took home the coveted green jersey for sprinters, becoming the first Belgian rider since Eddy Planckaert in 1988 to do so.

This month, he questioned how three-time Tour de France winner Alberto Contador could escape suspension despite a positive doping test last year. It could be that Boonen is outspoken because he distinguishes between recreational drugs and doping. But given his history, he probably would do better to focus on his own form rather than point fingers.

THE LAST WORD . . .

Takeoff and landing

"I was received in Qatar as a head of state. I had to adjust when I got back to Flanders."

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters returns from a trade mission

Explain the inexplicable

"Last year I wrote at least 50 articles on the political crisis. Luckily in our paper we have room for large articles. You try explaining a question like Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde."

Michael Stabenow of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

The bright side

"What should have been a deep point of shame was presented as something, if not to be proud of, then certainly to bring a smile to the face. And it worked amazingly well."

Editorialist Yves Desmet in *De Morgen* over the world record celebrations

Yes, I can

"Anything Obama can do, I can do, too."

Vital Barholere from Berlare, East Flanders, is a candidate in the presidential elections in Congo