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# The blackboard jumble

**Demographic trends show that the lack of places in Brussels' schools is only going to get worse**

ALAN HOPE

The sight of parents camping out at the gates of primary schools in Brussels may be with us for some time to come. The capital's Dutch-speaking schools are suffering a chronic shortage of places, and the coming years promise a population boom that will only aggravate the situation. This week, we look into the causes of the problem and the steps that have been taken so far. Later in the month, we'll be interviewing Flemish education minister Pascal Smet, who also happens to be minister for equal opportunities, youth and Brussels affairs, all of which push into this complex issue.

### Nearing a crisis

The current situation of a critical lack of space in Dutch-speaking schools stems largely from increased demand and a failure in the past to recognise the trend and increase supply. Much of the new demand has come from families where Dutch is not spoken at home. Putting children into a Dutch-speaking school gives them greater opportunities in the bilingual capital.

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## Vansummeren wins Paris-Roubaix

Once again, one of the major cycling races of the season has been won by a surprise Flemish victor. Johan Vansummeren, better known as the hard-working Garmin-Cervélo team stalwart who makes it possible for others to shine, took the 258km Paris-Roubaix into his own hands and won, pushing favourite Fabian Cancellara, who won last year, into second place.

Tom Boonen, also highly rated to win last Sunday's Paris-Roubaix (known as "the hell of the north"), had to drop out after mechanical trouble, followed by a fall only minutes later. Boonen has won the race three times before, and this is the first time he has failed to finish. For Vansummeren, the win is by far the highlight of his career. "Summie" is usually a loyal support rider in the peloton, distinctive by his towering 1m97cm height. It was his luck to be in a group of riders ahead of Cancellara and Norwegian Thor Hushovd, both favourites, but neither of whom were pushing ahead of the others. Vansummeren saw his once-in-a-lifetime chance and entered the Roubaix Velodrome alone, a full 19 seconds ahead of Cancellara.

And the celebrations were only beginning. His first

reaction was to hug his waiting girlfriend, Jasmine Vangrieken, and promptly ask her to marry him. "I said yes," she reported. Asked later at the press conference if he remembered his impetuous proposal, Summie answered: "Yes, and if I ask Yasmine to marry me, it must be a special occasion."



Limburger Johan Vansummeren and his now fiancée

## Nuclear waste imported to Flanders

Treatment plant Belgoprocess is criticised by nuclear watchdog

ALAN HOPE

For the first time in 20 years, the Belgian government has given its approval to the import of foreign nuclear waste. The 120 tonnes of low-radioactive waste from Germany will be treated at the Belgoprocess plant in Dessel, Antwerp province, which was recently the subject of a damning report by the Federal Agency for Nuclear Control (FANC).

The report was issued at the end of 2010 and described conditions at Belgoprocess as "worrying". It criticised the lack of a fire safety plan and concluded that Belgoprocess did not come up to the standards required by the International Atomic Energy Agency. The audit, which Belgoprocess had requested, went virtually unnoticed at the time, until it was revived last week by Groen! parliamentarian Kristof Calvo.

The company lacks basic controls, the audit says, to check whether nuclear waste being delivered for storage or treatment is what the shipping documents say it is. The audit also mentions that the company fails to carry out risk analysis every three years, which is legally required. "Safety culture has to be improved," FANC said. While safety did come up at board meetings, "it did not override all other interests". And FANC's safety reports did not always make it to board level.

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## FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE

## Guido Camps

Last week he was being attacked for agreeing an electricity price-rise that would effectively see people paying for their neighbours' solar panels. This week he's threatening to resign if the government doesn't hit Electrabel hard for its massive nuclear power profits. As an independent regulator, you may assume that if you're getting flak from all sides, you must be doing something right.

Guido Camps, a former executive of Levi Strauss and chemicals and textiles group Domo, is the director of energy pricing at the Commission for Regulation of Electricity and Gas (CREG), the independent regulator of the energy sector. He joined the organisation in 2000 when it was first set up. CREG is who the power companies come to, as Eandis did earlier this month, for approval of a price increase. CREG is also mixed up in the debate about what to do about the huge gains made from nuclear power stations by Electrabel, the largest energy producer in the country, now owned by the French GDF-Suez group. Belgium's nuclear power stations have now been entirely amortised, which means that the costs have been paid by the electricity consumer. Electrabel was the monopoly supplier when that was being done, and the company's operation of the plants, at virtually no capital cost, is



© Belga

a substantial competitive advantage in a now-liberalised energy market. Electrabel is essentially producing nuclear energy using tools paid for by the taxpayer. In the meantime, the consumer has seen little or no downward effect on prices. The government wants to recoup some of the huge earnings now flowing into Electrabel's French-owned coffers – but how huge are they, exactly? That's the big question that last week led to Camps' ultimatum. Electrabel claims its profits from nuclear power amount to no more than €652 million for 2007. CREG puts the figure substantially higher, somewhere around €2 billion. Currently, the National Bank is making its own calculations to determine where the truth lies. If that calculation leans towards Electrabel's version, Camps said last week in an interview with *De Standaard*, "then I've lost all credibility, and I'd better resign."

## News in brief

Members of the Belgian **special forces** have been deployed in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, the Belgian ambassador to the country confirmed. The ministry of defence had earlier declined to comment on operational matters. The troops, thought to number about 10, are employed guarding the embassy and diplomatic staff while unrest in Ivory Coast continues.

Two Belgian UN workers were among the victims of a **plane crash in Congo** last week that killed 28 passengers and four crew members. Jeroen Bervoets, 29, from Brussels, son of former politician Wilfried Bervoets, was working for the UN aid mission Monusco and preparing to observe the coming elections. Kristina Bonnez, 56, from Overijse, was a former senior officer of the federal police before joining the staff of Monusco. The plane broke up on landing in a tropical rainstorm. One passenger survived.

Flemish tennis ace **Kim Clijsters** will miss Belgium's Fed Cup semi-final against the Czech Republic this weekend after being forced to withdraw as a result of shoulder and wrist injuries. She had hoped to be fit in time for the French Open, one of the two major titles, along with Wimbledon, she has never won. However, following an injury to her ankle during a wedding at the weekend, that appearance is also in doubt. Her place in the Fed Cup team will be taken by 17-year-old Alison Van Uytvanck.

The Senate last week approved a proposal to create a public-access internet **database of stolen artworks**, of which there are about

20,000 currently in Belgium. The site would allow dealers, auction houses and buyers to consult the database to see if a particular work was stolen, increasing the chances of recovery and working as a deterrent to thieves.

A man from Sint-Niklaas has been charged by Dutch police after he left a small **baby locked in a car** while he went to a coffee shop in Terneuzen, the Netherlands, to buy cannabis. Police were tipped off by a passer-by and smashed the car window to free the baby, who was overheated. The man was also charged with possession of drugs.

Viral expert Marc Van Ranst of the Catholic University of Leuven has blamed parents who refuse to have their children vaccinated for a sudden **increase in cases of measles**. So far this year there have been 95 cases reported, compared to 40 in the whole of 2010.

The Red Cross in Flanders has called for a change in the law to raise **the maximum age for blood donors** from 65 to 70, to help cope with an increase in demand for transfusions from an ageing population. Every year, about 1,000 active donors in the region have to stop donating when they reach 65. In neighbouring countries like Germany, France and the Netherlands, the age limit is already set at 70.

The **student association Kajira** last week filed a request with Ghent University authorities for official recognition, which would allow them subsidies and access

to university premises. The club, named after a character in the science fiction novels of John Norman, describes its activities as BDSM – bondage, domination, sadism and masochism. "The aim of our association is to make BDSM more socially acceptable, to bring together people of similar interests and allow them to discuss BDSM in an approachable and open manner," the organisation said.

The **Oak Processionary caterpillar**, an annual plague in the area north of Antwerp, has now spread across the whole province, according to a survey carried out by the province's environment department. The caterpillar, the larva of the Oak Processionary moth, has fine bristles all over its body, which cause nettle-like stings when touched. The bristles break off easily and can cause respiratory problems if breathed in from the air. Only two municipalities in Antwerp province remain unaffected by the encroachment, which requires an annual campaign of spraying to combat.

More than 20,000 **designs for a new postage stamp** under the theme "Christmas and New Year" are displayed on a new website, where visitors are invited to vote for their favourite. The designs are the work of schoolchildren, aged six to eight, and visitors can search on the site for specific schools or cities. The two designs with the most votes will be made into stamps, one for national post and one for international. The classes of the winners will win a trip to animal park Planckendael and the postal printing works in Mechelen.

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

## OFFSIDE

ALAN HOPE

## No such thing as a free muffin

In Victor Hugo's classic *Les Misérables*, the destitute Jean Valjean is sent to the galleys for five years for stealing a loaf of bread. In real life, Steven De Geynst, from Temse, Antwerp province, went to court in Dendermonde last week on charges that could see him facing five years in prison for stealing two bags of muffins from a GB supermarket. Whereas Valjean smashed a window to reach his prize, De Geynst simply took the muffins out of a waste container outside the store in Rupelmonde. The offence is aggravated into robbery with violence since he fought with the manager of the shop when he was caught.

The case raises an interesting point of law: Is it possible to steal something that has been thrown away?

De Geynst is a "freecycler", known in the US as "dumpster divers" and in the UK as "skippers". They see the dumping of perfectly edible food by shops as an offence against poverty and hunger and consider it acceptable to raid bins for food and sometimes other products that can still be used. De Geynst started skipping when he was, for a time, homeless. Then he found out how much free food was available, and it became a point of principle. According to the consumer organisation OIVO,



© Shutterstock

Flanders chucks away about 66,000 tonnes of food every year. While the principles of freecycling state you should only take as much as you need, De Geynst started passing the surplus on to food collectives.

His lawyer asked the court last week to consider the question of how goods can be stolen when their owner has clearly given them up and asked for the assault to be seen as the result of provocation. The prosecutor was implacable: "De Geynst can play at Santa Claus all he likes, but he needs to do it with his own property."

A verdict is expected within a month.

→ [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org)

## FLANDERS TODAY

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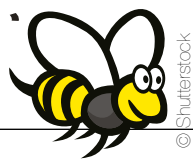
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## Farming lobby refutes pollution claims

The farming lobby has reacted angrily to claims by the Flemish Institute for Technological Research (Vito) that agriculture contributes more fine particulate pollution to the atmosphere than diesel cars. A statement by the Flemish Agrarian Centre (VAC) called the comment "populist" and said it would oppose any new regulations.

The study came as the federal government received notice that Belgium would be taken to the European Court in Luxembourg by the EU Commission for breaching the limits imposed: 50 micrograms of particulates per cubic metre of air, with each measuring post allowed to exceed the limit on 35 occasions.

Earlier this month, the Inter-regional Environmental Cell (Ircel), said nearly half of the measuring posts had exceeded the limit more times in the first quarter than in the whole of 2010. Particulates affect people's breathing and aggravate the greenhouse effect.

Flanders is in line with the EU rules, Flemish environment minister



Joke Schauvliege said. The EU Commission recognised the positive steps Flanders has already taken, she said, and acknowledged new measures on the way, such as a tax on new vehicles determined by each car's environmental performance. Meanwhile, the Vito study pointed to another culprit. "If Belgium wants

to meet the EU's particulates limits, something will have to be done about the ammonia emissions produced in agriculture, mainly by animal fertiliser," it said. "Ammonia plays a key role in the formation of particulates."

"If the impact of agriculture on particulates is so severe, why are

there no limits being exceeded in areas of intensive livestock farming like West Flanders or the Antwerp Kempen?" a spokesman for VAC asked. "We've never yet heard a weatherman warn of peaks of particulate pollution in those areas." ♦

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES



### 263

criminal fugitives recaptured in 2010 by the Fugitive and Asset Search Team (FAST) of the federal police. France was the most popular foreign destination, with 35 cases

### 11,007,020

the official population of Belgium has passed 11 million for the first time. When the country was created in 1830 there were 3.8 million inhabitants

### 128,296

children born in Belgium in 2008, the highest number since 1973

### 1,593

applications in 2010 from those who want to change their names, a record number, according to justice minister Stefaan Declercq: 826 wanted a new first name and 767 a new surname

### €20,000

in subsidies lost by the Muslim Executive, which represents Muslim interests to the federal government, as long as a restructuring plan is not delivered, after justice minister Stefaan Declercq refused to prolong the body's mandate

## "This shouldn't be possible", says Groen's Kristof Calvo

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Belgoprocess, meanwhile, claimed it was operating according to the law. The plant had requested the audit, a spokesman said, to test adherence to future standards. "We don't just have to meet the safety standards of today, we have to know what's in store for the future," he said. "The audit was carried out according to the best practice that will apply tomorrow. ... We score highly on some points, but there are other points where we certainly have some work to do."

Belgoprocess is working on an action plan, which is expected to be ready next month. Calvo says that's not good enough, four months after the audit was produced. "We're not talking here about a garden gate that won't close; these are serious problems," he said. "They are dealing with highly radioactive materials, to which the strictest standards apply. This sort of complaint shouldn't be possible in 2011."

The 120 tonnes of German waste was produced in the medical sector. It will be incinerated, and the waste from that, which remains as radioactive, will then be returned to Germany for permanent storage. According to Belgoprocess, the shipment poses no problem and can be treated safely. The permit to import the waste was the subject of a separate risk analysis and was approved by all of the ministries concerned, FANC and Niras, the national institute for the treatment of radioactive waste and enriched nuclear material.

The treatment of nuclear waste from other countries came to a halt in 1988 when it was revealed that senior staff at the Study Centre for Nuclear Energy, also in Dessel, had falsified the records to cover shipments of waste from Germany. A moratorium was lifted in 2006, but this is the first shipment to have been approved

since then.

Calvo, meanwhile, has also claimed a conflict of interest in regards to the government's representative on the board of FNAC, who is also president of both Niras and Belgoprocess. Nele Roobrouck, who is also a member of the cabinet of federal budget minister Guy Vanhengel, took up her post at Belgoprocess in 2010 and decided to step down as the government's representative in FANC. A replacement could not be legally appointed by the caretaker government, so Roobrouck has remained in place.

"This is just the latest example of the nuclear old boys' club being reinforced by political functionaries," Calvo said. "This woman has gone from FANC, the controller, to Belgoprocess, the controlled. It's a poacher-turned-gamekeeper situation." ♦

## Leterme lays down the law for Laurent

Prince Laurent has agreed to conditions imposed on his behaviour by prime minister Yves Leterme. As *Flanders Today* went to press, it was announced that the exact terms will be made public after the chairmen of the Senate and the Chamber and parliament's foreign affairs committee, have been informed.

But the broad conditions of the agreement have already been made clear: Laurent must get government approval for any contacts with foreign representatives and any trips abroad. He must also avoid involvement in business deals of any sort. In return, his annual allowance of €300,000 will be maintained.

The meeting was arranged following revelations that Laurent had made a trip to the Democratic Republic of Congo against the advice of the government and the king. It later emerged he had also met with a senior diplomat from the Libyan embassy in Brussels. The exact circumstances of both trips and discussions remain unclear, but both are outside the normal remit of a member of the royal family. ♦

## Sex-abuse bishop goes into exile

Roger Vangheluwe, the former bishop of Bruges who admitted sexually abusing a child for many years, has been ordered by the Vatican to leave Belgium and to undergo "spiritual and psychological treatment". According to reports at the weekend, the bishop has already left the country.

The story first came to light when Vangheluwe resigned in April 2010: The victim was his own nephew, the abuse had begun when the child was five and had lasted 13 years. Vangheluwe vanished for several months into the abbey of Westvleteren, while the question of abuse by clergy led to raids on the archiepiscopal palace in Mechelen, the detention of the Papal nuncio, the seizure of Cardinal Godfried Danneels' computer, and police breaking open two graves in the cathedral crypt in a search for evidence.

In the Vatican, meanwhile, the Pope asked the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to investigate the case. Belgium's judicial authorities have concluded that Vangheluwe's offences happened to long ago to be prosecuted. The report of a special parliamentary commission (*Flanders Today*, last week) recommended extending the statute of limitations on crimes of sexual abuse of children from the current 10 years to 15 years. ♦

## FIFTH COLUMN

### Golden skirts

Almost a year after the elections and with no less than nine parties around the table, it's still unsure what the new coalition will look like. Will the next government be centre-right or centre-left? Who knows. One thing is sure, N-VA, the winner of the federal elections in Flanders, is increasingly behaving as a right-wing party. When it was founded in 2001, N-VA did not position itself as either right or left; it was nationalist foremost. That changed with the self-declared conservative Bart De Wever as president. He has even joked that "his real boss is Voka", an employers' organisation.

Although some recent N-VA recruits can be described as left of centre, the party largely follows De Wever's insights on issues such as government intervention and the labour market. An example is N-VA's strong opposition to a proposal to introduce more women on company boards through the use of quotas. The proposal, which was voted in commission by a majority of Christian-democrats, socialists and greens, splits parliament along a sharp left-right line.

In a column, De Wever has outlined some rational arguments against quotas, including the creation of a small class of "golden skirts", who sit on several boards and thus fill in all the required positions. The bottom line, though, is that he dislikes any state intervention (which is why he often clashes bitterly with the socialists).

Dislike of state intervention is traditionally a liberal hallmark in Belgium. Unlike N-VA however, Open VLD seems to have mixed feelings on quotas, due to the presence of women such as Gwendolyn Rutten and Fientje Moerman. Both of them are unwavering in their liberal beliefs, but they remember how similar quotas have helped right the balance between male and female politicians in the past.

They also point out that companies do not seem to mind state intervention when it comes to saving near-bankrupt banks, mostly led by men, or receiving subsidies. They have not been able to convince their party, though, which, with the exception of Rutten, voted against the proposal.

N-VA has announced a number of procedural tactics to block the proposal. The State Council has been asked for advice, the Senate will possibly "evoke" the bill. All of this will probably only delay the bill, which in other times would have ended up on the government table. Without a government, it may now become an issue in the formation of said government. Just what those negotiations needed: another issue in which no compromise can be found.





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# The blackboard jumble

Plans have been submitted to renovate existing schools and build new ones in Brussels

→ continued from page 1

As the competition for school places became fiercer, the Flemish government in 2002 introduced a decree setting out admission criteria for primary schools. Priority was given to the siblings of pupils already at the school; 45% of remaining places were reserved for Dutch-speaking children; and children from disadvantaged groups were also given some priority.

Eventually the situation became especially difficult for first-born children. By the time the places for siblings were taken up, including siblings from families where no Dutch was spoken, there were few spots left for anyone else.

Parents of non-priority kids have to show up in person on a specific day to claim one of the few places left, and it's first-come, first-served. Those camped out in tents and sleeping bags are either parents with an oldest child entering school or those who have moved into the area.

Some of the former cases have in fact decided to vote with their feet and moved house to the Flemish areas around Brussels where they stood more chance of finding places, which diluted the presence of Dutch speakers in the capital even further.

Brussels as a whole is expecting some 200,000

new residents over the next 20 years, many of them immigrants. That will create the need for 15,000 new school places, which, according to the population division, means some 3,000 more places in Dutch-speaking schools.

## Raising the quota

Education minister Pascal Smet recently adapted the decree to raise the quota for Dutch speakers to 55%, earning a legal complaint to the Constitutional Court. The complaint was brought by the French Community. Their schools in Brussels are also short of places, and an earlier request for Dutch-speaking schools to take more children from immigrant families fell on deaf ears.

Brussels minister Jean-Luc Vanraes, responsible for education within the Flemish Community Commission (which represents Flemish people living in Brussels), described the response as "taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut". He was joined by Vic Anciaux, Brussels chairman of the education cooperation platform. "This is a first," Anciaux said. "The Brussels system has been characterised in the past by cooperation between the Flemish and the French-



Getting your kids into the school of your choice is in fact a problem across Flanders: These parents in Haacht, Flemish Brabant, spent two nights outside to be the first to register

speaking networks. It's not always been easy, granted. But this complaint will not simplify matters at all."

The aim of the equal opportunities portion of the 2002 decree was to create a mix of pupils and avoid homogenising areas with all immigrant children or all Flemish children. In practice, that's not working.

In one Brussels school, currently only 1% of the pupils are from a home where both parents are Dutch-speaking; about 10% are from bilingual Dutch-French homes; fully 80% are from homes where French is spoken, but where at least one parent is able to present a certificate of proficiency in Dutch, which allows them access to places reserved for Dutch-speaking children.

According to the school's director: "Some French-speaking parents have a certificate, but they don't speak the language well, and it's certainly not spoken at home," says the school's director. "These parents are welcome, but it's not right that they belong in the priority group."

also don't speak a word of Dutch, making it impossible for them to help.

## The bottom line

The solution to all of these problems would be to build more schools. In an interview published in *De Standaard* last week, Smet pointed out that it's not his job to build schools but to help finance plans made by others, like the municipalities and the Flemish Community Commission.

The first steps have been taken. Earlier this month, Vanraes submitted 17 dossiers to Smet's department for the construction, renovation and expansion of primary schools between now and 2015. The package included plans for new schools in Schaarbeek, Laken and Evere starting this year, as well as renovations and extensions elsewhere. A year later, it includes new schools in Anderlecht and Jette and further expansion projects in Ukkel and Brussels. And by September 2014, new schools in Molenbeek and Sint-Joost-ten-Noode.

*"For years we complained that 'they' didn't want to learn Dutch. Now large numbers of 'them' are coming to our schools, and still we're not happy"*



We're never happy: Sven Gatz

## The case of Antwerp

The country's second-largest city is also facing a schools crisis

Antwerp, too, is suffering from a shortage of places at primary schools. At the end of the second registration period in March, 10,825 children had been signed up, 78% of them in one of the schools their parents selected.

Like in Brussels, children whose siblings already attend a school get to sign up to the same school in January; in March, Dutch-speaking and disadvantaged children get a place. The rest have to wait until the open registration period in May.

While there are in theory more than 2,000 places still open across the city, in some areas the pressure will be on. In terms of six-year-olds arriving at school for the first time, for instance, there are 666 children still awaiting places and only 481 places free. Many will have to take what they can get, regardless of their parents' selections.

In pre-schools, meanwhile, there is an apparent shortage of 265 places.

Also like Brussels, Antwerp is facing a demographic time-bomb: According to figures from the Flemish government's research service, the city will need 20 new primary schools by 2020 and 6,000 extra places in secondary schools by 2025, equivalent to about 60 schools.

According to Robert Voorhamme, the city's alderman for education, Antwerp needs investment of nearly half a billion euro over the next 10 years simply to keep its head above water. "If we want to guarantee a school place for every child in Antwerp, investment will have to be seriously increased," he said. "That half billion euro is only the absolute minimum the city system needs." (AH)

## What's best for the kids

According to a study carried out by researchers at the universities in Ghent, Leuven and Antwerp, the social mix of the school is less important than the economic background of the individual child. The group tested children from schools with a low concentration of immigrants, high concentrations and an even balance. The results were similar across the board, and children who did badly did so for the same reasons. "The support you get at home counts for more than the effect of the school," says sociologist Mieke Van Houtte of the University of Ghent.

The study from the Centre for Language and Education at the Catholic University of Leuven suggested giving children less or no homework – or at least making the homework less dependent on help from parents. Parents in some social groups have themselves not attained a high level of education, but many

Smet was reported as describing the dossiers as "vague" but promised that every project that met the selection criteria would be financed.

"If this government still cares about the position of Dutch in the capital, the only choice is to increase capacity," says Sven Gatz, former member of the Brussels parliament who now leads the liberals (Open VLD) in the Flemish Parliament. "Lack of investment will mean even more Flemish families fleeing the city because the shortage of places offers them only two alternatives: Find a school outside Brussels or go to a French-speaking school. At the same time, you give up on the mission to teach Dutch to children of other language backgrounds – still an important advantage in finding work in the capital. For years we Flemings complained that 'they' didn't want to learn Dutch. Now large numbers of 'them' are coming to our schools, and still we're not happy." ♦



# Fixing it

## Hilde Crevits has ambitious plans for roads and cycle paths in Flanders

ANJA OTTE

**H**ilde Crevits, Flemish minister for mobility and public works, is quite the busy bee. When not inaugurating new cycle paths, she is visiting road works or consulting mayors in the Antwerp province on the Oosterweel link.

She has suffered some recent setbacks, though, as two cold winters gave us monster-size potholes and tipped-over lamp posts. She was “shocked”, she says, when a truck driver lost control of his vehicle after hitting a pothole 10 centimetres deep, causing the death of another driver earlier this month in Waasmunster, East Flanders.

“It’s no secret that in the past new infrastructure received the most attention, as maintenance gets you few votes,” she says. “As a minister, I started off with a plan for repair straight away. An annual inventory of the roads, which used to disappear into some drawer, has now become a veritable instrument for policy. Due to the severe winter weather, I have had to revise my plans; but even with a chronic lack of means, I stick to the timing of 2015-2020.”

By 2015, all highways should be in good order, and by 2020 the same should be true of all regional roads. Crevits (*pictured*) has warned Flemish drivers that extensive roadworks will take place in the next couple of years. “Right now we are working on some 85 sites; by the summer that should be 200.” But her administration, she says, has improved its efficiency, and she offers the E313 between Antwerp and Hasselt as an example. A bridge has to be rebuilt, plus improvements performed on the road and crash barrier, and it will all be done at once. “People will only be held up by these works once.”

Crevits considers herself “lucky” to have all transport infrastructure in her portfolio: roads, waterways, the coast, harbours, regional airports (excluding Brussels Airport), cycle paths and all public transport. “This means that there is a single line in decision making,” she says. “For example, buses and cars have a completely different view on how the flow-through at crossings should happen. Cars are best off with a so-called green wave, while buses want preference at the traffic light. My portfolio makes me responsible for both. In finding an agreement, I can only argue with myself.”

This department is mostly about investing, Crevits says. “My department has seen no budget cuts for two years. The situation

does not allow for that, what with lamp posts falling over. Still, the need for financial injections remains high. The good thing is that one-offs help, too. With €100 or €50 million, I can bring a number of investments to a good end. This means I can use any budgetary leftovers.”

Speaking of lamp posts, what did happen to those on the E19 earlier this year? “The metal inside the posts corroded. The posts are regularly inspected, but from the outside the problem was invisible. We are now investigating and might have to change our inspection procedures accordingly. In the meantime, we’re taking no risks and are removing the lot of them.”

### Give them a reason

The Flemish government has decided to close some major missing links (see sidebar), but will these resolve the congestion around Brussels, Antwerp and on the E40? “I cannot promise that the congestion will disappear,” Crevits admits. “What I hope to do is make people think about their means of transport by providing a range of attractive alternatives. Therefore, we are also investing in new direct public transport lines between and within cities. Ultimately, we should arrive at a situation where people check their mobile phones in the morning to see what the best alternatives are to reach any destination, given the congestion at that moment. Public transport may just be the best option.”

Getting people out of their cars is not a priority per se to Crevits, although she does want people to think about how they organise their mobility. “I believe in offering a range of options,” she says. “In the past, my staff did not think twice about being driven to a meeting. Now they use the bikes that are available. I always return from the Flemish Parliament on foot, a three kilometre walk, which allows me to make some phone calls, enjoy the sunshine and arrive in a good mood.”

But public transport requires adequate infrastructure, she continues. “When it comes to public transport, price is not an obstacle to people, facilities are. People need transport to be frequent and on time, and they need safe parking facilities for cars and bikes at the train station. That is what we should focus on.” Crevits is investing €100 million a year in cycling infrastructure. “Some great cycling paths have dead ends because of highways or waterways. To people who work in places like Zaventem, it

was simply impossible to get to work by bike,” she explains. “We are creating a huge cycling path network and building a number of cycle bridges to cross major roads and rivers. Our focus is on functional cycling: to and from work or school. Over the last three years, we have made huge progress in this area.”

### Pay to play

Meanwhile *rekeningrijden*, or “fee driving” continues to make headlines. The idea of charging for the use of the roads has been a thorny issue for years. “We have reached a turning point,” Crevits says. “The Flanders, Brussels and Walloon regions have agreed on the principle of taxing trucks for the use of our roads. Now we are discussing how this will be organised – which roads, what tariff.”

The aim of these new taxes, Crevits emphasises, is not to generate new income but to spread out the tax base. “Any extra income will be used for mobility infrastructure anyhow, but the real goal is to make our taxation more fair. Our roads are used heavily by foreign drivers; it is only fair that they should contribute. But again, this will make people think that maybe

their transport can be organised with less driving.”

From the way she speaks about these issues, in her ultra-fast West Flemish accent, it is obvious that Crevits enjoys her work. “I am very keen to find out how things work, if only to know why lamp posts fall over. But this job is not just technical; there is also a lot of consultation. Although politicians

always make the final decisions. I like doing just that.”

Crevits not only talks fast, her career is in the fast lane as well. Being elected into parliament only in 2004, she is now a seasoned minister, as well as CD&V’s leading lady. “It all happened at such speed that I haven’t had the time to look back!” ♦

➡ [www.hildecrevits.be](http://www.hildecrevits.be)

## Missing links

The Flemish government has plans for the following new highways.

**West Flanders:** AX, a link between N31 (Bruges) and N49 (Westkapelle)

**East Flanders:** the R4 ring around Ghent will be completed. A new highway will make Ronse more accessible

**Flemish Brabant:** the Brussels ring road will be “optimised. In some places this will mean that it will become wider, but extra capacity is not the goal – safety is,” says Hilde Crevits

**Antwerp:** the Oosterweel-link will close the ring road around Antwerp, while the Kempen region gets a new north-south link.

**Limburg:** a new north-south link is planned

*Flanders Today* spends the next few months talking to Flemish ministers about their priorities and problems. Don’t miss the interview with Pascal Smet, minister of education and equal opportunities, in our 27 April issue



© Frank Abbeloos/BELGA



# National Bank to review bonus policy

## Executive bonuses fell in 2010 due to public outcry

ALAN HOPE

The new governor of the National Bank (NBB) is investigating the bonuses paid out to top banking executives to ensure they fall in line with the rules of the former banking regulator, the CBFA.

Governor Luc Coene was speaking only days after the NBB took over the oversight role previously held by the CBFA, days which have been marked by mounting disquiet at the way top bankers pay themselves and each other huge bonuses. The latest example: Dexia bank CEO Pierre Mariani, it was announced, would be receiving a bonus down from €800,000 to €600,000. Closer inspection revealed that Mariani (*pictured*) was now receiving a "function premium" to account for that missing €200,000. His whole package came to €1.95 million – exactly the same as last year. Dexia received €6.4 billion in fresh

capital from the government in 2008, as well as a credit guarantee, to allow it to borrow money on the markets, worth €150 billion.

The main problem with the bonuses is that the banks in question were all to some extent bailed out by the federal and the Flemish governments in the financial crisis of 2009, and some of the aid still has to be repaid. In addition, trade unions noted that large bonuses for bankers come as a slap in the face to ordinary staff who are being asked to accept caps on pay rises as a result of the economic situation.

Last week Kris Peeters, minister-president of Flanders, whose government had stepped in to support Dexia and KBC, said that he intended to speak to the top executives of the banks personally. According to Coene, that is now his job.

According to a survey carried out



© Beiga

by *De Tijd* newspaper, the average remuneration package paid out to top executives in Belgium fell by 4% in 2010 to €2.07 million, while the companies of the Bel20 index saw their worth increase by 33%. This apparent reserve on the part of CEOs and remuneration committees is at

least partly a result, the newspaper says, of the public outcry at large bonuses. Five bosses made more than €3 million, while the number one spot was held by Carlos Brito of AB InBev, who took home €4.6 million despite suffering a fall in his basic salary of 40%. ♦

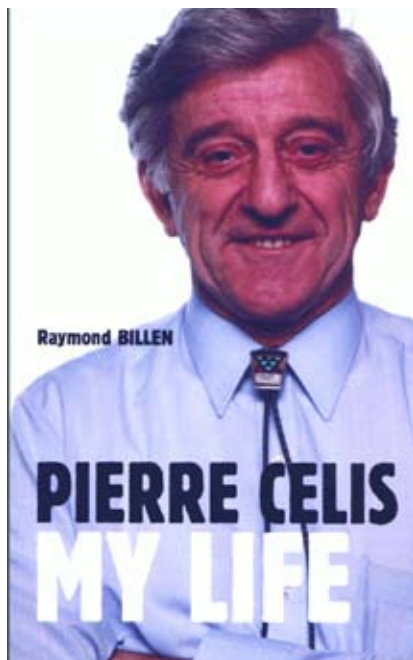
## Father of Hoegaarden beer has died

Pierre Celis, the man who breathed new life into the Hoegaarden white beer, has died at a nursing home in Tienen at the age of 86.

Celis was a milkman in Hoegaarden in the 1960s when he took over the local brewery that produced the beer. Although it had been in existence for centuries, it had always been produced on a local scale and remained a local taste in the Leuven area. Celis had learned how to brew beer from his neighbour, the last man to operate the brewery.

Celis' new brewery was named De Kluis, and his beer Witteke, which he served in jam jars. Celis' marketing skills saw the beer's fame expand first to Brussels and later as far as the United States, especially after De Kluis was taken over by Interbrew (now InBev) in 1985.

Celis went to live in Austin, Texas, in 1991, where he set up a brewery making Celis White, which he even exported back to his homeland. His autobiography *My Life* was published in 2005. He returned to Hoegaarden in 2009. ♦



## Government officials take more sick leave

Sick leave by administration officials costs the Flemish government more than €37 million a year, according to figures contained in a parliamentary answer by government affairs minister Geert Bourgeois. There are 13 Flemish ministries, which together registered 194,337 days of absence due to illness in 2010, about six working days in every 100. That compares with a rate of 4.42 days for the Flemish population as a whole. "Not exactly a performance to be proud of," according to parliament member Marnic De Meulemeester, who tabled the question.

According to Bourgeois, the figure is "on a par with what you might expect from a large organisation, including ones in the private sector". In general, he explained, the larger the organisation, the higher its sick leave rate was likely to be. The Flemish government also has a policy of encouraging workers who are ill to remain at home to prevent making colleagues sick.

Meanwhile, a study carried out by the Neutral Union for the Self-employed (NSZ) has revealed that more people are taking sick days now than five years ago and that workers are more likely to be sick on Monday (44% of all cases) and Friday than any other day. The survey was carried out among staff at 386 small- and medium-sized businesses. ♦

## More fake clothing, but less piracy overall

Inspectors of the economics ministry last year seized more than 19,500 items of counterfeit clothing, more than seven times the 2,700 confiscated the previous year. In total, however, 179,194 counterfeit items were seized in 2010, compared to about 231,000 in 2009, for a total value of €3.7 million. As well as clothing and accessories, toys were popular for counterfeiters. Pirate CDs and DVDs are becoming less popular, as piracy of music and films migrates to the internet. ♦

## Brussels among top cities for millionaires

Brussels moved up one place to rank fifth in real estate consultant Knight Frank's Global Cities Index, part of its annual "Wealth Report", published last week. The list represents the preferred cities of the world's tycoons, according to investment opportunities and influence on global business leaders. New York comes first, followed by London, Paris and Tokyo. Brussels is ahead of Los Angeles, Washington and Beijing. The Capital of Europe is best appreciated for its access to political power and its quality of life. ♦

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

## Plea for new rules for job-students

Students should be able to step into temporary jobs throughout the year when required, according to Unizo, the organisation representing the self-employed. At present, the laws on job-students allow them to work for two periods a year of no longer than 23 days while still maintaining their student status for the payment of tax and social security.

Unizo proposes an annual limit of 50 days, to be

worked at any time. That's in response to a survey among its members that showed that the majority of businesses only make up their mind to take on job-students at the last minute, according to demand. At the coast for example, where 75% of catering businesses use job-student labour during the current Easter break, six out of 10 only went looking for staff one week beforehand. ♦

## THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

### Autos • Sales dip

New car sales dropped 1.24% in March compared to the same month last year. It is the first drop in sales in 17 months.

### Aviation • Abelag

Zaventem-based Abelag Aviation, the country's leading private jet operator, has opened a base at Eindhoven airport in the Netherlands to develop its activities on the Dutch market. The company currently operates 25 aircraft.

### Banking • Dexia

Franco-Belgian bank Dexia, specialised in the financing of local authorities, has sold its 88% stake in the Slovak Banka Slovensko, specialised in real estate and private equity. The move is part of Dexia's restructuring programme following its rescue by the French and Belgian governments during the financial crisis. It has also been reported that the bank borrowed some \$37 billion (€25.7 billion) from the US Federal Reserve at the height of the financial crisis in 2009. The funds have since been repaid.

### Chemicals • Solvay

Brussels-based chemical group Solvay has acquired France's Rhodia speciality chemicals company for some €3.4 billion, almost 50% more than the company's stock market value. The move comes more than a year after Solvay sold its pharmaceutical activities to the US Abbott Laboratories for €4.5 billion in cash. Many analysts hail the decision as a perfect match, as the two firms have complementary activities and geographical spread.

### Food • Ardo

Frozen foods group Ardo, based in Ardooie, East Flanders, has signed a joint venture agreement with the French Bonduelle group to sell some 90,000 tonnes of frozen vegetables on the Spanish market. The new operation will include Bonduelle's Benimodo production unit and Ardo's packaging and distribution centre in Marcilla.

### Telecom • Option

The Leuven-based wireless telecommunications specialist has signed a distribution agreement with the German Avnet Embedded company covering 17 countries. The move allows Option to find new markets for its products and technology.

### Transport • Waterways

The French government has given the go-ahead to dig an inland waterway linking the Seine river to the Scheldt. The €4.2 billion canal, to open in 2017, is expected to increase inland traffic at the Port of Ghent by 15%.



# Life's full of surprises (for a pessimist)

Milow on his new album, infused with Belgian politics and an untimely death

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

At the beginning of 2008, Milow (Jonathan Vandenbroeck) was a singer-songwriter with one hit, "You Don't Know". Three years later, the 30-year-old has played 300 concerts across Europe and sold 650,000 albums and more than one million singles.

It was his cover of 50 Cents' "Ayo Technology" that paved the way to this success. "Knowing that so many people are waiting for a new album calms me down," he surprises me by saying when we meet up in his hometown of Leuven. "I'm not saying that all of those 650,000 people will buy it blindly, but I know most of them will give the album a fair chance."

But they might be confused, because Milow has gone electronic. Dance music it ain't, but the pop songs are infused with electronic sounds, courtesy of Milow's compatriot Arne Van Petegem, who operates under the name Styrofoam. "I could have tried to do the electronics myself," he says. "David Gray [British singer-songwriter] has proven it's possible. But for every David Gray, there are 10 failures. I know my limitations, so I preferred to work with Arne who has been breathing this music for ages."

Although the result is very surprising at first, *North and South* is in fact vintage Milow. "I tried to make an album to please my very diverse audience," he says.

"But it's of course, first and foremost, the album I wanted to make."

I'm not sure what a Berliner or a Madrileño might think of the song "The Kingdom", but the question is whether it might alienate some of his Flemish fans. To my knowledge, it's the first song that openly criticises the political standstill in Belgium. "Where I'm from there's a lack of heroes / Both in politics and song", Milow states. And: "Where I'm from they don't like dreamers / They are told to shut their mouth".

"Foreign journalists have asked me if the song won't lead to vehement reactions," he says. "But I think I'm only stating what a majority of Belgians think. That's why I end the song with 'So I will sing it every day / That this kingdom is still my kingdom / It's encoded in my DNA'. The ambiguous, the illogical and the paradoxical that characterise Belgium have influenced each and every person in this country."

But the main lyrical influence on *North and South* was the death of Milow's father, aged 53, three years ago, just after the release of his second album, *Coming of Age*. It inspired two songs directly and two more indirectly. In "Son", Milow openly describes how he reacted to the tragic event. "I'm trying to fill a void in my life these days / By filling it with work and work / And accomplishments and praise".

"From now on, a dark cloud will hover



over everything I do," he muses. "I'm a pessimist, but I have always succeeded in dealing with the blows I've gotten by singing about them."

Milow, a pessimist? Surely, that must be a joke? "Not at all," he insists, noting that he likes the attitude of Belgian philosophy professor Philippe Van Parijs. "He recently said that if you're a pessimist, life is full of surprises. If you'll allow me to rephrase that: Pessimism is a vaccine against coming misfortunes." ♦

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

## Milow in concert

27 & 28 April, 20.00

Ancienne Belgique  
Anspachlaan 110, Brussels

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

## New music

### Selah Sue

#### Selah Sue

"I was never really into music / 'til I was about nine years old / Now I can't control myself from groovin' / It is time for me to show", 21-year-old Selah Sue confesses on her highly anticipated debut album. Last year she was asked by Prince himself to open for him in Antwerp. Solo, with only an acoustic guitar, the Flemish phenom captivated the whole Sportpaleis. Her music already has folk roots, but with the support of a full band, she's got much more of a funky soul sound. Selah Sue combines a soulful voice with funky ("Crazy Vibes") or ragamuffin (the aptly named "Raggamuffin") rhythms. But the folk "Mommy" (produced by Meshell Ndegeocello!) and the nicely restrained "Summertime" are as impressive. Only when she's bordering R&B ("Just Because I Do"), is she treading water.

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



### Yuko

#### As If We Were Dancing

Three years after their debut *For Times When Ears Are Sore*, Yuko, the band of mainstay Kristof Deneijs, is back with an album as adventurous. At the core, the Flemish band's songs are folk tunes, but each arrangement is distinctively different. The result is a varied, playful, at times danceable but also slightly melancholic album. Sometimes the guitars reign, at other moments the keyboards. Most important: Deneijs has made a leap forward as a vocalist. He already excelled as a whispering singer, but this time around he also excels in more expressive melodies.

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

### Mogil

#### I stillunni hljomar

It's difficult to describe Mogil's universe without being reduced to bromides. The line-up of the Icelandic-Flemish foursome is highly unique – guitar, violin, bass clarinet and a soprano – and so is their music. Around the enchanting voice of Heiða Árnadóttir, the three instrumentalists weave a musical tissue of which folk and jazz are the woof and warp, and they decorate it with some touches of classical. Mogil's second album will only be enjoyed by open-minded music lovers, but they're in for a treat.

→ [www.myspace.com/mogilro](http://www.myspace.com/mogilro)

### Mon-O-Phone

#### The Great Depression of Mr and Ms Phono

Flemish-Dutch twosome Mon-O-Phone – the couple share bed and band – makes its debut with a merciless punch: a dozen electrifying, lustful and sinister songs. Their trump card is the feline voice of Ms Phono, alternately clawing and purring. Mon-o-Phone combines foul-mouthed guitars with fiery synths, a drum computer and playful percussion. The songs range from spacey rock to perverted blues, but the album ends with an almost acoustic, though murky, fairytale. An awesome debut! (CV)

## FESTIVAL

### Nacht van de Blues

30 April, from 18.00

Wuustwezel

For more than a quarter of a century, fans of blues have gathered on the evening before May Day in Wuustwezel, a village in Antwerp province near the Dutch border, for Nacht van de Blues (Night of the Blues). For eight hours, they boogie to six concerts. The line-up reflects the broad variety of music that's labelled "blues": from the furious groovy youngsters Ganashake to the old Dutch master Hans Theessink, who only needs an acoustic guitar, a mouth harp and his rasping voice to absorb an audience, to headliner Stacie Collins, who mixes southern boogie and roots rock.

But our favourite is the Mississippi-born James "Super Chikan" Johnson, who builds his guitars from exhaust pipes, axes and cigar boxes. His highly praised music is much more than a gimmick, though. Deservedly, you'll discover in Wuustwezel. (CV)

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



# Successors to the throne

One hundred years of surrealist Flemish fiction in new English anthology

LISA BRADSHAW

Due to the fierce competition in the global publishing world, Flemish authors – both past and present – are not often translated into English. So *The Dedalus Book of Flemish Fantasy* has not only been a long-time coming, it's one of the only chances you'll get to find works of both contemporary Flemish authors and those of 100 years ago in English.

The new book from Britain's Dedalus publishers is certainly a mixed-bag, which is rather one of its delights. Just when you've slogged through JMH Berckmans' "Just Like Rasputin, We Plod Through Mud and Piss in Search of Kellogg's Cornflakes", which is just as tedious as its title, you come upon Hugo Claus' chilling "Medieval", which you soon realise is written backwards.

That's not terribly surprising for such a book of fantastical fiction, meaning gothic, surreal, futuristic or loaded with magic realism. Flanders, as we know, is a champion of the surreal arts, and now a touch of it – short stories and excerpts – are all in one place, from 19th-century Karel van de Woestijne's story of a boy whose time table matches the course of blood through his veins to the very contemporary Saskia de Coster, who takes a girl named Charlotte on a disparaging journey through a kind of haunted fairy tale.

The book's editor, Eric Dickens, was born to a British father and a Dutch mother. "Dutch literature tends to be more sober, more protestant and realist," he tells me. "For some reason, the Flemings have gone for a lot more experimental stuff. It might be because of the tensions between the Catholic Church and the socialists. That's often in the background."

Most notably in the work of the anti-establishment Ward Ruyslinck, whose books span the 1950s to the 1990s. His story "The Slugs" is a battle of wills between a bailiff and a deacon, the first who swears that the slimy infiltrators he sees are reality, the second who swears that what he sees is psychological: self-imposed punishment for sin.

The book has 23 entries by writers who are generally well known: Louis Paul Boon, Jef

Geeraerts, Felix Timmermans, Peter Verhelst, Kristien Hemmerechts.

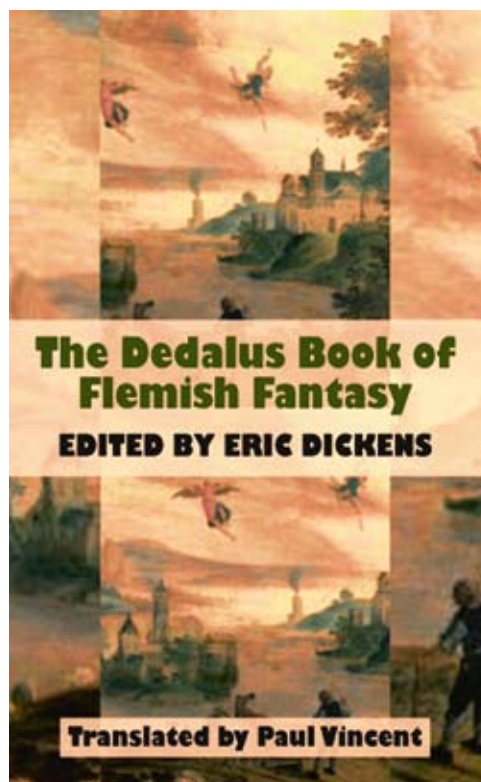
Hemmerechts, you might argue, is not known for flights of fancy. "I wanted to smuggle more mainstream authors in because this is a bit of a showcase for what the Flemish do in literature," admits Dickens, a professional translator who lives in Sweden. "So I wanted big authors. Kristien Hemmerechts doesn't really write fantasy, but she does have some half-real, half-fantasy in this story. She wrote a few stories in English in her younger days when she was living in Wales, but after she switched to Dutch, she was never translated. That's a real shame."

Hemmerechts' short story is, in fact, one of the book's most memorable. The author and professor has suffered great loss in her past and spills it out page by page in a story she titled "Fairy Tale".

Children indeed figure heavily throughout the book – almost always injured, lost or abused. *Flemish Fantasy* almost feels like a history of Belgium's difficult relationship with its children. Boon's "Grim Fairy Tales" finds a girl losing a breast to a hunter in the forest; Hugo Raes' "The Smell of Fresh Linen" has a child horribly burned by a hot stove; Rachida Lamrabet's beautiful "Ammetis The Sleeper" pits an unborn child against the psychosis of its mother.

"Subliminal sadism," notes Dickens. The children, however, occasionally fight back, effectively alternating the roles of parent and child, master and servant. Lamrabet's character, for instance, decides to play dead inside the womb until his mother starts acting normally. In Walter van den Broeck's "Successor to the Throne", an adolescent hides something, completely controlling the emotions of his overbearing father. Play nice, the authors might be saying, or the children will turn against us, and they will be powerful.

The stories in *Flemish Fantasy* are ordered alphabetically by the last name of the author, which makes little sense for the reader, who would generally rather find it in chronological order. There is also no notation as to the year each story



was published or whether it's a short story or an abstract, which some appear to be. In the back, however, is biographical information about each author, which helps place the stories somewhat.

And some of them are gems. Peter Terrin's "Clean-Up or The Adventures of Abdullah and Me" is narrated by an apparently autistic author that recalls the style of British novelist Mark Haddon's famous *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Annelies Verbeke's "Love, Hope and Dwarfs" finds a jilted lover accepting the kindness of a dwarf couple, but takes drastic action when things go sour.

"The early writings in Dutch were based on a French model," says Dickens. "The Flemish were educated in French, and right around 1900, they copied French symbolism. Now, Flemish writers, especially the younger ones, are standing on their own two feet." ♦

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

## The dynamic duo

JACQUELINE FLETCHER

Cherkaoui and Vandekeybus revive *IT 3.0*

What happens when two internationally renowned Flemings team up for a performance inspired by Paul Bowles' short story "The Circular Valley" about a spirit that invades both people and animals? *IT 3.0*, onstage for just four performances this week in Antwerp's Bourla, was born from a remarkable moment of artistic cross-pollination.

It all started on an open-air stage with a donkey. The setting was a Renaissance cloister at the Avignon Festival in 2002, where the young Flemish dancer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui was invited to choose the choreographer of his dreams to create a new piece. Cherkaoui chose his compatriot Wim Vandekeybus, artistic director of the ground-breaking Ultima Vez. And the rest is history. Cherkaoui is now, of course, an award-winning choreographer in his own

right and recently founded his own company, Eastman.

The original *IT 3.0* has been reworked for a modern stage with multimedia technology. Nearly a decade later, the donkey has become part of Vandekeybus' cinematic imagery, but Cherkaoui's protean body still breathes life into the many transformations made by the monk Atlajala, embodying the essence of creatures and ideas alike. His lithe body, with its fluid movements and the ever-circling flow of energy, brings earth and spirit together in an act of pure, corporeal poetry. ♦

13-16 April, 20.00

Toneelhuis/Bourla  
Komiedieplaats 18, Antwerp

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



© Koen Broos

## CULTURE NEWS

A new series of *Mijn Restaurant* will be back in the autumn, but without the now-famous trio of judges that includes *Ambiance* magazine editor Dirk De Prins, Hotel Bloom manager Christel Cabanier and top chef Peter Goossens. VTM promises that the three will turn up as guest advisors; who will replace them to serve as the popular reality show's jury isn't yet known, though the name Sergio Herman, the Dutch chef of three-Michelin star restaurant Oud Sluis, is being bandied about. Herman may be the only replacement as brutal as Goossens, who has been known to reduce contestants to tears.

International Catholic radio station **Radio Maria** has bought up the airwaves and the studios of Exqi FM in Flanders, where a new staff of volunteers hopes to begin broadcasting soon in Dutch. If and when they go on the air depends on a decision by the Flemish Media Regulator, which is not yet known. The station, originally started in 1983 in a small Italian parish, broadcasts talks and interviews around the Catholic faith, masses and both worship and traditional music.

Flemish culture minister Joke Schauvliege announced last week that she will **increase funding for specific artistic and cultural projects** from 3% to 10%. The €96 million culture budget, however, remains the same, which means 7% less funding for cultural organisations' annual operating expenses. This approach "provides more flexibility and more incentive for both artistic innovation and creative productions," she said.

Nic Balthazar, director of the award-winning 2007 film *Ben X* begins shooting his second film next week, mostly in and around Ghent. Titled *Tot Altijd* (*For Always*), the film follows the story of Mario Verstraete, who was the first to use Belgium's law allowing euthanasia in 2002. Verstraete, who had Multiple Sclerosis, was 39 when he died and is being portrayed in the film by two actors: Koen De Graeve (*De helaasheid der dingen*) and TV actor Geert Van Rempelberg (*Code 37*).

The young women of **Scala**, the choir from Aarschot that have gained international fame for their choral take on rock & roll and pop songs, will soon be meeting American talk show host Conan O'Brien when they appear as guests on his late-night talk show on 14 April. The appearance is part of the choir's two-week tour through Canada and the US, where they are well known partially because of a documentary on the public broadcasting network, but mostly because their version of Radiohead's "Creep" was the soundtrack for the trailer of the film *The Social Network*. Scala's first album release last month in the US was followed by a top 10 place on Amazon USA and made the top 20 on iTunes USA.

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





#### BRUSSELS

One of the nicest view over brussels, 15th floor, close to Brussels centre and european institutions by Métro, 2 minutes from Métro Yser, 2 balconies (one with south view on a farmbrussels centre, one with north view on the canal and the atomium.) quiet neighbors, surrounded by parks.



#### SCHAERBEEK

exceptional house at 2 min walking distance from the Rogierplace, near all type of transportation, at 5 min from the Dansaertstreet. large livingroom, 2 bedrooms, 1 bathroom, separate storage/laundry room, 1 toilet, fully furnished kitchen. Nice view and access to large garden.



#### WATERMAEL-BOITSFORT

Dansaert area, metro(Yser) and ring.



#### BRUSSELS



Centre Brussels near Dansaert area: Nice apartment DUPLEX 135m2, 2008 + parking place 1 car. Livingroom +/-30m2- separate diningroom + 16m2- fitted kitchen - 3 bedrooms (20m2;12m2;12m2) bathroom - showerroom - 2wc. Individual gaz heating. Apartment with a lot of light. In good condition. Excellent situation near shops,Dansaert area, metro(Yser) and ring.

#### WOLUWE SAINT-LAMBERT



#### ANDERLECHT

Two steps away from the House of Erasme, in a commercial district, this building located on 2 a13ca proposes: commercial ground floor with workshop 143 m<sup>2</sup>  
- 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m<sup>2</sup> and 1 flat of 30 m<sup>2</sup>  
- 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m<sup>2</sup> and 1 flat of 30 m<sup>2</sup>  
- 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m<sup>2</sup>

#### SAINT-GILLES



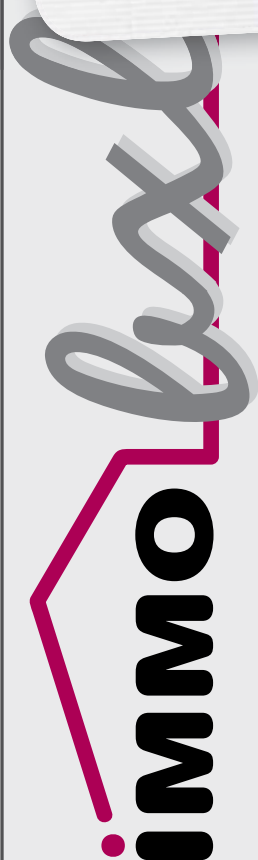
luxurious 1 bedroom apartments for sale with a view over Brussels. All the apartments have been completely renovated and are equipped with a wooden

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#### UCCLE

which has been totally renovated and reconstructed and was sold to the European Commission. There are different luxurious 1 bedroom apartments for sale with a splendid view over Brussels. All the apart-

ments have been completely renovated and are equipped with a wooden floor, fully equipped kitchen (microwave oven / dishwasher / fridge /...), videophone, complete bathroom with shower, new window frames with double glazing, security door, airconditioning.



#### BRUSSELS

Facing the nice Parc Cinquantenaire very spacious 4 bedroom house facing the Parc- 3 bathrooms - fully equipped kitchen - garage. One large and nice living room, 2 quiet bedrooms, kitchen is equipped, all in good conditions. Quiet

neighbors, surrounded by parks. A lot of light. In good condition. Excellent situation near shops, theatre,...



#### ANDERLECHT

Godeaux - Bemel area, house 3 façades of +/- 240m\*, completely renovated in 2004, living room 42m\*, fully equipped kitchen (microwave oven / dishwasher / fridge /...), breakfast corner, 4 bedrooms, closets, wooden floors, bathroom, toilet,

Jacuzzi, 2 shower rooms, garage + space in front of the house, garden, terrace, alarm system, security door, airconditioning.



#### FOREST

villa 4 facades of 300m\*, completely renovated in 2000, living room, wooden floors, fireplace, separate dining room, fully equipped kitchen, breakfast area, laundry room, 4 bedrooms, wooden floors, office area, bathroom,

shower room, cellar, garden 5acres, nice terrace, garage 2 or 3 cars, alarm system.



# Million Euro Baby

## Flanders is home to the European lightweight women's boxing champion

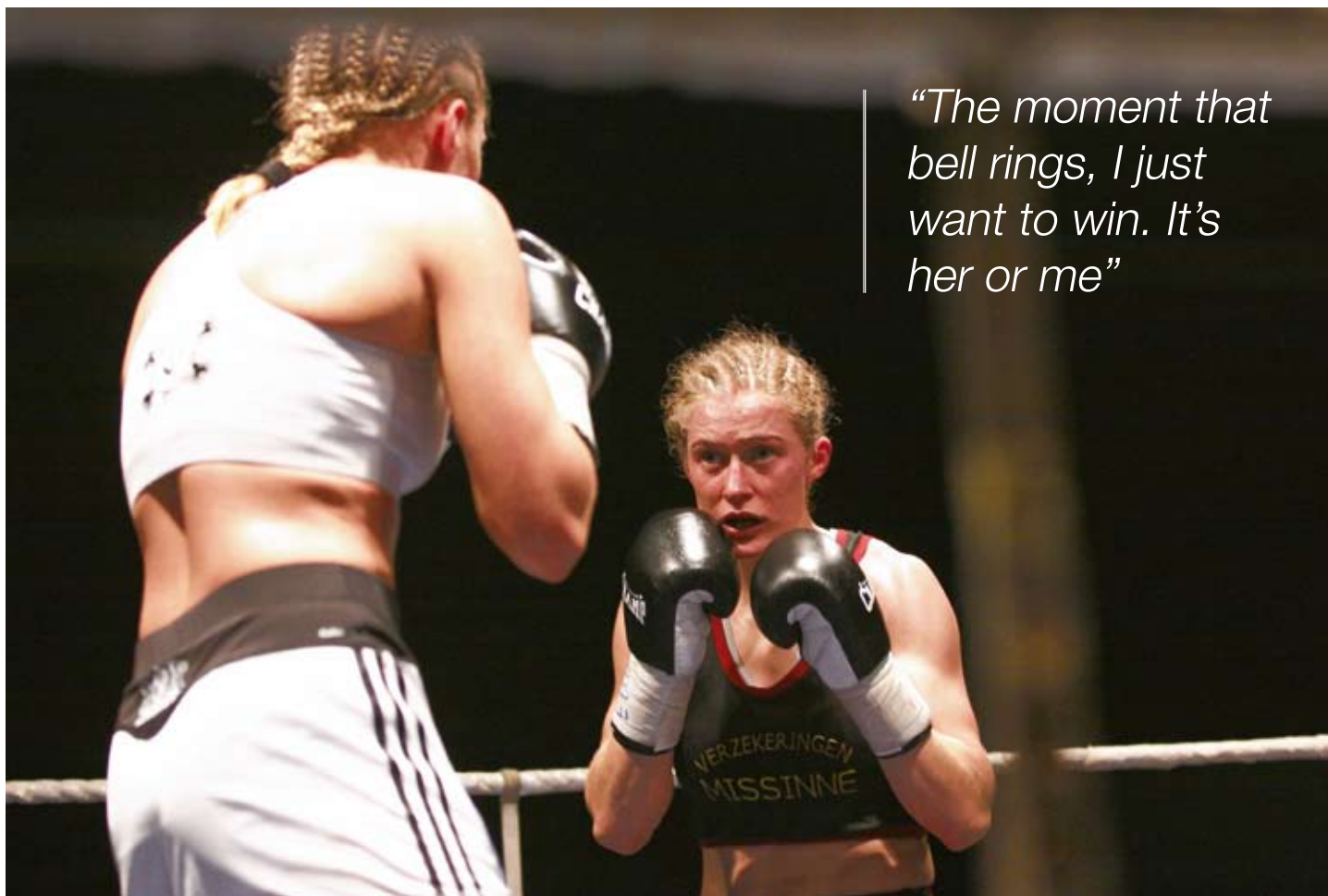
LEO CENDROWICZ

Even today, as Kate Middleton shows, some girls grow up dreaming of becoming princesses. But, like Delfine Persoon, more and more young ladies just want to kick ass.

The young woman from West Flanders last month became the new European lightweight women's boxing champion, after defeating Switzerland's Nicole Boss to take the vacant title. In front of a crowd of 1,000 in Lichtervelde, near Bruges, Persoon spent 10 rounds trying – and often succeeding – to pummel Boss in the face. “It felt good, but I knew I could go further,” she says. “I’ve only been boxing for four years. I can learn more.” Persoon, 26, works with the railway police by day, but fits in a rigorous training schedule. When she enters the ring, she puts all thoughts of public service away and focuses on crushing her opponent. “The moment that bell rings, I just want to win,” she says. “It’s her or me. There are two boxers, and only one can win, so you do everything you can to be that one.”

It didn't start out that way. Her first hobby as a child was ballet, though she never quite latched on to it. Still, if Mohammed Ali's motto “Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee” has any truth to it, these lessons would have helped her eventually. But Persoon, who grew up in Moorslede, near Roeselare, took up judo when she was six and quickly found an aptitude for it. “I liked it,” she says. “We lived in a small town, and there are not many sport facilities there. But judo was one of the few things I could do.”

The first time Persoon entered a judo competition, when she was 12, it was the Belgian championships; she came third. By the time she was 14, her prowess had earned her an invitation to a sports academy in Antwerp, but she only stayed a year. “I was sleeping there, and it was too far from home.” She still became Belgian champion, reaching the semi-finals at the Youth Olympics in Murcia, Spain, in 2001.



Delfine Persoon (right) clinched the title last month in Lichtervelde

When Persoon left school, she studied to become a sports instructor, but it was difficult to find work, and she joined the police academy in 2007. By then, a back injury had forced her to curtail her judo. She briefly tried channelling her energy into tennis, before her police supervisors suggested boxing.

“I didn't want to do it at first,” she says. “and I only started because I wanted to get fit. I soon found out that there is a lot of discipline in boxing.” She was reluctant to tell her parents about the boxing – until a black eye forced her to confess.

Now she trains every day, getting up at 5.00

to go running and spending three hours in the ring every night. She still sometimes fits in judo and is the Belgian police and armed forces champion.

Although she turned professional in 2009 – which means she can't compete in the Olympics – Persoon can't make a living out of boxing. Training and travel come with costs, and “there's not a lot of money in it for women,” she says. Her record is 12 wins out of 13 matches – five of them with a knockout.

By day, she patrols stations and trains in West Flanders, dealing with pickpockets and people wandering onto the tracks. “I am a little bit

*“The moment that bell rings, I just want to win. It's her or me”*

more confident because I know that if there is a problem and someone is aggressive, I can look after myself,” she says. “I'm not scared of anyone.”

Yes, Persoon has seen *Million Dollar Baby*, the Oscar-winning movie about a female boxer starring Hilary Swank. “It's a good film, although it's not a pretty ending,” she says. And she has seen *Rocky* four times. For Persoon, that, more than a royal wedding, is the real fairy tale. ♦

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

## STREEKPRODUCT SERIES

ALAN HOPE

### On the grapevine

When thinking about Flemish food, the first thing that comes to mind is probably not a fragrant bunch of fat grapes. Still, there's a whole swathe of Flemish Brabant where grape-growing is the main form of agriculture, and it's been that way for long enough to have become a regional tradition. Grapes, in these more northerly parts of the world, have long been a luxury product. They didn't travel very well, but they could be grown here, if only by someone with the staff for such a labour-intensive crop, as well as the space to install and run the greenhouses required.

The man credited with starting grape culture in Brabant on an industrial scale is Felix Sohie, who studied horticulture in Vilvoorde in the late 1850s, where he first came into contact with greenhouse techniques. He then went on to work as a gardener for the Baron de Peuthy in the nearby Huldenberg, who had his own greenhouse.

A few years later, Sohie started building greenhouses on the hillsides around Hoeilaart; joined by his three brothers, he soon saw his empire expand to about 300 greenhouses. One of their first innovations

was heating, which allowed them not only to improve the harvest but also to stagger production so that not all vines ripened at the same time. That meant the grapes would hit the market at different times, controlling supply and ensuring that table grapes remained something of a seasonal, luxury product.

The Sohie brothers were soon followed, in nearby Overijse, by the Danhieux brothers, and grape-growing was established in Flemish Brabant. By the time the industry was at its peak, there were upwards of 35,000 greenhouses, from Hoeilaart (now known as the “glass village”) to Huldenberg, Duisburg and Tervuren. The railway station at Groenendaal was built to provide a route to market in Brussels, and a tramline was constructed specifically to bring the grapes to the station.

The grapes are of several varieties, the king of which is the Royal, whose grapes can grow up to 24mm, with a single bunch often topping two kilograms. The closely related Ribier came from England after the Second World War. The Leopold III is a spontaneous mutation of the Royal. These three are black



© www.straatsreuk.be / photo: L. Colet

grapes. The white Muscat grape is sensitive and requires special conditions, and has a typical Muscat flavour.

Brabant grapes are full of flavour and have the advantage of growing nearby, which means they can ripen on the vine before being shipped. The season is around July and August, and the best place to buy them

is either on the spot or at local markets. The denomination “Brabant table grape” is a legally protected *streekproduct*, or regional product, so make sure you're getting the real thing.

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



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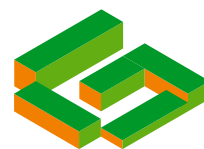
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## Storybook landscapes

# ONCE UPON A FESTIVAL

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

Once upon a time there was a music festival that didn't want to be your run-of-the-mill music festival: not just a succession of concerts and performances. No, this festival aimed for a higher goal: It wanted to be "a total experience".

And so the festival combines art forms and genres and doesn't shy away from bringing together extremes. Moreover, this festival hopes there will be some cross-breeding between the fans of the different genres.

Well, not in a literal sense, of course. (However...) But this festival hopes that the literature fan that comes to listen to Flemish actor Warre Borgmans might fall for the electronic rhythms of µ-Ziq. Or that the patrons favouring the chanson of Jan De Wilde backed by the classical ensemble Prima La Musica will also dance to the ganja tunes of

The Herbaliser. Or...well, you get the picture.

This festival, which runs for three days, likes its experiments, but it isn't completely crazy. So it doesn't mix all its 70 or so acts into one enormous mish-mash. They are divided over four different stages: Body, Spirit, Mind and Soul. The Body stage is the place to dance to live electronic music. (You might want to check out Subscape, one of the British dubstep *meisters*.) In for some raw musical emotions? Then the Soul stage is the place where you'll get your kicks. For instance, with the roots music of Steven De Bruyn, Tony Gyselinck and Roland, with Zion Train's reggae or with The Kilimanjaro Darkjazz Ensemble that crosses orchestral instruments with electronics.

Over on the Mind stage you'll see poetry, theatre, classical music and (short) films. Don't miss

Blindman, the saxophone quartet that will be upgraded with pianos, a cello and percussion. The Spirit stage is only open for camping visitors and is mainly a place to showcase young and upcoming talent.

Once Upon a Festival takes place on the grounds of the castle of Laarne, near Ghent. It might be less revolutionary than the organisers think – I had the experience they're going for more than 20 years ago at the Roskilde Festival in Denmark – but still, its line-up, certainly, makes it worth checking out. ♦

15-17 April

Laarne Castle  
Eekhoekstraat 7, Laarne

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



## MORE FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

**Balkan Trafik Festival** → *Bozar, Brussels*

**BUDA 5 jaar** → *BUDA Kunstencentrum, Kortrijk*

**Brussels Festival of Fantastic Film** → *Tour & Taxis*



### Antwerp

**Arenbergshouwborg**  
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192  
[www.arenbergshouwborg.be](http://www.arenbergshouwborg.be)  
**APR 17** 20.15 Lisa Germano + Rökkoró  
**APR 21** 21.00 Blaxtar+ Jadis

### De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40  
[www.deroma.be](http://www.deroma.be)  
**APR 15** 20.30 Willemsson  
**APR 16** 20.30 Marc Ribot  
**APR 17** 20.30 Score Man

### Toneelhuis/Bourla

Komedieplaats 18; 03.224.88.44  
[www.toneelhuis.be](http://www.toneelhuis.be)  
**APR 16** 22.00 Bourla Beats, DJ party  
**APR 20** 20.00 Jonathan Meese

### Trix

Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00  
[www.trixonline.be](http://www.trixonline.be)  
**APR 13** 20.00 White Hills + Ludicra + Liturgy  
**APR 14** 20.00 Baths  
**APR 15** 19.30 Rotten Sound + Trap Them + more  
**APR 18** 20.00 Dead Meadow + Imaad Wasif + Spindrift  
**APR 20** 19.30 J Mascis (Dinosaur Jr)  
**APR 21** 20.00 Title featuring Delvis + Fete Royal + Mr Crumbone

### Brussels

**Ancienne Belgique**  
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24  
[www.abconcerts.be](http://www.abconcerts.be)  
Concerts at 20.00:  
**APR 13** Trey Songz  
**APR 15** Das Pop  
**APR 17** Asian Dub Foundation  
**APR 20** Tom Pintens, Stromae

### Beursschouwburg

August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50  
[www.beursschouwburg.be](http://www.beursschouwburg.be)  
**APR 20** 21.00 S.H.O.W.: The Wrong

### Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89  
[www.fuse.be](http://www.fuse.be)  
**APR 16** 23.00 Function + Peter Van Hoesen + Jamie Jones + more

### Halles de Schaarbeek

Koninklijke Sint-Mariastraat 22; 02.218.21.07  
[www.halles.be](http://www.halles.be)  
**APR 15** 19.00 Les Panties + OK Cowboy! + Romano Nervoso + Von Durden

### K-NAL

Havenlaan 1; 0474.04.00.00  
[www.k-nal.be](http://www.k-nal.be)  
**APR 16** 23.00 Who Made Who

### LR6

Hoogstraat 204; 02.830.21.27  
**APR 14** 21.00 Ioeillère + Calva

### Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32  
[www.botanique.be](http://www.botanique.be)  
**APR 13** The Young Gods, Smith Westerns  
**APR 14** Conquering Animal Sound  
**APR 15** Carl Barat + Baths  
**APR 16** Rökkoró, Wild Beasts + Villagers  
**APR 19** Does it Offend You, Yeah?, Lisa Germano

### Magasin 4

Havenlaan 51B; 02.223.34.74  
[www.magasin4.be](http://www.magasin4.be)  
**APR 13** 19.00 The Cesarians + Tormenta  
**APR 14** 19.00 Menace Ruine + Aluk Todolo + White Hills  
**APR 15** 20.00 Black Math  
**APR 16** 20.00 The Legendary Pink Dots + Tsuki Moon  
**APR 17** 19.00 Year of No Light plays Vampyr + Microphonics + Alkalys  
**APR 20** 19.00 Oxes + x25x + Maria Goretti Quartet

### The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45  
[www.themusicvillage.com](http://www.themusicvillage.com)  
**APR 14** 12.30 Renee Van Bavel

### Tour & Taxis

Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49  
[www.tour-taxis.com](http://www.tour-taxis.com)  
**APR 16** 19.00 The Soul Project

### VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07  
[www.vkconcerts.be](http://www.vkconcerts.be)  
**APR 17** 21.00 GZA  
**APR 19** 21.00 The Congos + The Abyssinians  
**APR 20** 21.00 The Soundtrack Of Our Lives

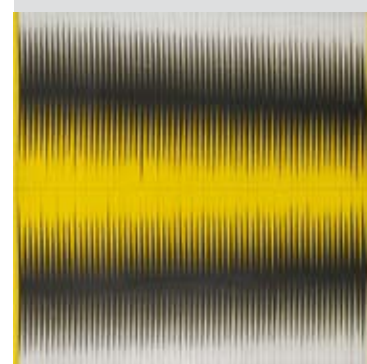
## DON'T MISS

### Walter Leblanc

Until 6 June

Royal Museum of Fine Art  
Brussels

Work by the late Walter Leblanc, a leader in Belgium's optical and kinetic art scene, can be found in museum collections across Europe and in the US. His twisted strings or ribbons on monochrome panels were geometrically perfect and tended towards serenity, a reaction against art that was too emotional and unrefined. These "torsions" also manifested themselves in the Antwerp-born artist's drawings and sculpture, a selection of which is on show here.



→ [www.fine-arts-museum.be](http://www.fine-arts-museum.be)

### Ghent

**Charlatan**  
Vlasmarkt 6; 09.224.24.57  
[www.charlatan.be](http://www.charlatan.be)  
**APR 20** 20.00 Hannah Peel + Vinz

### Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65  
[www.handelsbeurs.be](http://www.handelsbeurs.be)  
**APR 16** 20.15 Zita Swoon Group + Flying Horseman

### Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060  
[www.vooruit.be](http://www.vooruit.be)  
**APR 13** 20.00 Yuko + Conquering Animal Sound  
**APR 15** 20.00 Fischer-Z + The Bollock Brothers

### Leuven

**Het Depot**  
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03  
[www.hetdepot.be](http://www.hetdepot.be)  
**APR 7** 20.00 Josh Ritter and The Royal City Band  
**APR 11** 20.00 Chocolate Genius  
**APR 12** 20.00 Eli 'Paperboy' Reed

### Ostend

**Kursaal (Casino)**  
Monacoplein 2; 070.22.56.00  
[www.kursaalooostende.be](http://www.kursaalooostende.be)  
**APR 16** 20.00 Karma Hotel, diverse music party featuring A Brand, LePto, Buraka Som Sistema, more ([www.karmahotel.be](http://www.karmahotel.be))



### Antwerp

**Buster**  
Kaastrui 1; 03.232.51.53  
[www.busterpodium.be](http://www.busterpodium.be)  
**APR 19** 21.30 The Moonshine Playboys

### Rataplan

Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40  
[www.rataplanvzw.be](http://www.rataplanvzw.be)  
**APR 21** 20.30 Robin Verheyen & Aki Rissanen

### Brussels

**Bozar**  
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00  
[www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)  
**APR 17** 11.00 Trio Giani Lincan, Gypsy jazz  
**APR 19** 20.00 Vijay Iyer and Craig Taborn



**Espace Senghor**  
Waverssesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40  
www.senghor.be  
**APR 14** 20.30 Tigran Hamasyan  
**APR 16** 21.00 Utz

**Jazz Station**  
Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78  
www.jazzstation.be  
**APR 13** 20.30 Fabien Degryse Trio

**Le Cercle des Voyageurs**  
Lievrouwbroersstraat 18; 02.514.39.49  
www.lecercledesvoyageurs.com  
**APR 19** 19.30 Xavier Locus

**Musical Instrument Museum**  
Hofberg 2; 02.545.01.30  
www.mim.be  
**APR 19** 12.30 Robin Verheyen & Aki Rissanen Duo

**Piola Libri**  
Franklinstraat 66-68; 02.736.93.91  
www.piolalibri.be  
**APR 19** 19.00 Aperò Jazz with Pirodda-Menzel Duo

**Recyclart**  
Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34  
www.recyclart.be  
**APR 15** 21.00 Moker

**Sazz'n Jazz**  
Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78  
www.sazznjazz.be  
**Until APR 16** 21.30 Sazz'n Jazz Quartet

**Sounds Jazz Club**  
Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50  
www.soundsjazzclub.be  
Concerts at 22.00:  
**APR 14** Food Sounds System **APR 15-16** Da Romeo & The Crazy Moondog Band  
**APR 18** Master Session Michael Blass **APR 19** Notebook (Thys, Laheye) **APR 21** Michel Hatzigeorgiou. 23.30 Mess Trio

**The Music Village**  
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45  
www.themusicvillage.com  
**APR 13** 20.30 Adam Rafferty **APR 14** 20.30 Greg Houben Quartet meets Pierrick Pedron **APR 15** 21.00 Paolo Marquez Quintet featuring Nilson Matta **APR 16** 21.00 The Boppers Sextet **APR 19** 20.30 Monk By Four **APR 20** 20.30 Ipoconrio

**Hasselt**  
**Muziekodroom**  
Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13  
www.muziekodroom.be  
**APR 14** 20.30 JW Jones Blues Band  
**APR 15** 22.00 Conform



**Antwerp**  
**De Roma**  
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40  
www.deroma.be  
**APR 21** 20.30 Kocani Orkestar

**Zuiderpershuis**  
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00  
www.zuiderpershuis.be  
**APR 15** 20.30 Carmen Souza  
**APR 21** 20.30 Gilzene & The Blue Light Mento Band

**Brussels**  
**Art Base**  
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20  
www.art-base.be  
**APR 15** 20.00 Argentina & Brazil on guitars and cello  
**APR 17** 18.00 Govinda Schlegel & Sarode Arup Sen Gupta, sarode and tabla (India)

**Ghent**  
**Vooruit**  
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060  
www.vooruit.be  
**APR 17** 20.00 Frank Boeijen



**Bruges**  
**Concertgebouw**  
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02  
www.concertgebouw.be

**APR 13** 20.00 Waar is mijn ziel? (Where is My Soul?), musical performance based on Monteverdi's madrigals by Muziektheater Transparant and B'Rock conducted from the harpsichord by Frank Agsteribbe  
**APR 20** 20.00 Anima Eterna Brugge conducted by Jos van Immerseel, organ; with Sergei Istomin, cello: Haydn

## Brussels

**Bozar**  
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00  
www.bozar.be  
**APR 18** 19.30 Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra conducted by Vladimir Fedoseyev: Liszt, Tchaikovsky  
**APR 20** 20.00 Ricercar Consort conducted by Philippe Pierlot: Bach's Saint John Passion

**De Munt**  
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39  
www.demunt.be  
**APR 18** 20.00 Andrea Rost, soprano; Izabella Simon, piano: Liszt, Kodály, Bartók, Ligeti

**Flagey**  
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20  
www.flagey.be  
**APR 15** 20.15 Brussels Philharmonic conducted by Hervé Niquet: Bizet, Victorin Joncières, Gustave Charpentier

**Musical Instrument Museum**  
Hofberg 2; 02.545.01.30  
www.mim.be  
**APR 13** 15.00 Koenraad Sterckx, Gabriel Hollander, piano: Bach, Chopin, Liszt, more

**Zaal Maene**  
Argonnestraat 37; 02.428.45.80  
solskytz@gmail.com  
**APR 16** 13.30 Itzhak Solsky, piano; Marc Tillemans, violin; David Capilla, viola; Maksim Fernandez Samodaiyev, cello; Camille Doore, double bass: Schubert

## Leuven

**Sint-Geertruikerk**  
Halfmaartstraat; 016.23.84.27  
www.30cc.be  
**APR 17** 16.00 La Petite Bande conducted by Sigiswald Kuijken: Bach's Saint John Passion



## Brussels

**De Munt**  
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39  
www.demunt.be  
**Until APR 16** 15.00/20.00 Toshio Hosokawa's Hanjo conducted by Koen Kessels, staged by Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker

## Ghent

**Vlaamse Opera**  
Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02  
www.vlaamseopera.be  
**Until APR 17** 15.00/19.00 Die Frau ohne Schatten by Richard Strauss, conducted by Alexander Joel, staged by Marco Marelli



## Antwerp

**Sportpaleis**  
Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.45.045  
www.sportpaleis.be  
**APR 16** 19.15 Unbreakable World, breakdance championship

**Toneelhuis/Bourla**  
Komedieplaats 18; 03.224.88.44  
www.toneelhuis.be  
**Until APR 16** 20.00 Eastman in IT 3.0, choreographed by Wim Vandekeybus and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

## Brussels

**KVS Box**  
Arduinkaaï 9; 02.210.11.12  
www.kvs.be  
**APR 15-16** 20.00 Close, choreographed by Koen Augustijnen

**Les Briggittines**  
Korte Briggittinnenstraat 1; 02.213.86.10  
www.briggittines.be  
**APR 19-23** 20.30 David, choreographed by Ayelen Parolin



## Antwerp

**Arenbergschouwburg**  
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192  
www.arenbergschouwburg.be  
**APR 14** 20.15 Henk Rijckaert in Het Experiment, stand-up comedy (in Dutch)

**Fakkelteater Theatercafé**  
Hoogstraat 12; 070.246.036  
www.fakkelteater.be  
**APR 17-MAY 29** 12.00-14.00 Hotel Vocal: musical theatre with Sam Verhoeven, Ann Van den Broeck, Jelle Cleymans, more

**HetPaleis**  
Theaterplein 1; 03.202.83.11  
www.hetpaleis.be  
**Until APR 13** 15.15 Walpurgis and HetPaleis in Prinses Turandot, adapted and directed by Hans Schmidt (in Dutch; ages 3 and up)  
**Until APR 16** 20.00 Kakkewieten in Apocalyps Wauw, directed by Adriaan Van den Hoof (in Dutch)

**Stadsschouwburg**  
Theaterplein 1; 0900.69.900  
www.stadsschouwburgantwerpen.be  
**Until APR 17** 14.30/19.30 Oliver!, the musical

**Zuiderpershuis**  
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00  
www.zuiderpershuis.be  
**APR 13-14** 20.30 Secret Gardens by and with Dahlia Pessemiers/Benamar, Yamina Takkatz, more (in Dutch and French)

## Blankenberge

**CC Casino**  
Zeediijk 150; 050.43.20.43  
www.cultuur.blankenberge.be  
**APR 16** 20.00 Henk Rijckaert in Het Experiment, stand-up comedy (in Dutch)

## Bruges

**Stadsschouwburg**  
Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.60  
www.ccbbrugge.be  
**APR 16** 20.00 Freddy De Vadder in Freddy Gaat Naar De Bakker (Freddy Goes to the Bakery), stand-up comedy (in Dutch)

## Brussels

**Bozar**  
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00  
www.bozar.be  
**Until APR 16** 14.00/19.30 Le Journal d'une femme au Kosovo (The Diary of a Woman in Kosovo) by Zenel Laci (in French with surtitles in English and Dutch)

**KVS Bol**  
Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.12  
www.kvs.be  
**APR 15-16** 20.00 Een bruid in de morgen (A Bride in the Morning) by Hugo Claus, directed by Jan Bijvoet and Wim Opbrouck (in Dutch)

**La Maison Blanche**  
Sint-Jobsesteenweg 606  
www.atc.theatreinbrussels.com  
**APR 13-16** 20.00 The American Theatre Company in Café Theatre (in English)

## Dilbeek

**Westrand CC**  
Kamerijklaan; 02.466.20.30  
www.westrand.be  
**APR 21** 19.30 Toneelmakerij in Fanny and Alexander (ages 8 and up, in Dutch)

## Ghent

**NTGent Schouwburg**  
Sint-Baafsplein 17; 09.225.01.01  
www.ntgent.be  
**Until APR 30** 20.30/15.00 Een bruid in de morgen (A Bride in the Morning) by Hugo Claus (in Dutch)



## Antwerp

**Central Station**  
Van Immerseelstraat-Kievitplein; 02.537.68.75  
www.artinallofus.be

## GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

### Queen Elisabeth Competition

5-21 May

Royal Brussels Conservatory & Bozar

There are 98 international candidates who have made it into Belgium's Queen Elisabeth Competition, one of the most prestigious music competitions in the world. This year, voice is the focus, and the world's future opera singers are vying for the jury's attention in Brussels in numerous appearances that are open to the public. If you'd like tickets, particularly for the final evening, buy them now.



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

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

**Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)**  
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60  
www.muhka.be  
**Until MAY 22** Liam Gillick and Lawrence Weiner: A Syntax of Dependency, double portrait of the New York-based artists  
**Until AUG 21** Ten Oosten van 4°24' (East of 4°24'), group show of artists from the Caucasus, India, China, Iraq, Egypt and more

**Extra City**  
Tulpstraat 79; 03.677.16.55  
www.extracity.org  
**Until MAY 1** Museum of Speech, works by contemporary artists, including performative script, film and architecture

**Fashion Museum (MoMu)**  
Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70  
www.momu.be  
**Until AUG 14** Unravel: Knitwear in Fashion, a wide variety of knitted garments and accessories from across the centuries, with a focus on high fashion pieces and their vernacular interpretations

**Photo Museum (FoMu)**  
Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00  
www.fotomuseum.be  
**Until JUN 5** Hungry Eyes, food photography by Tony Le Duc, Valérie Belin and Dimitri Tsykalov  
**Until JUN 5** Julien Maire: Mixed Memory, works from early film and projection projects, including the camera obscura and the magic lantern

**Royal Museum of Fine Arts**  
Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09  
www.kmska.be  
**Until APR 30** Museums in the 21st Century: Concepts, Projects, Buildings, the most significant trends in contemporary museum architecture

**Zilvermuseum Sterckshof**  
Hooftvunderlei 160; 03.360.52.52  
www.provant.be  
**Until JUNE 12** Van haarnaald tot schoengesp: Accessoires in goud en zilver (From Hairpin to Shoe Buckle: Accessories in Gold and Silver), 14th- to 20th-century European accessories

## Bruges

**Stadshallen**  
Markt 7; 050.44.82.82  
www.ccbbrugge.be  
**APR 17-JUN 12** Berni Searle: Interlaced, installations, filmed performances and photographs by the South African artist

## Brussels

**art)&(marges**  
Hoogstraat 312-314; 02.511.34.20  
www.artsetmarges.be  
**Until JUNE 5** Mad about Hungary, drawings by patients from Pécs psychiatric institution

**Atomium**  
Atomium Square; 02.475.47.72  
www.atomium.be  
**Until APR 25** 10.00-18.00 Cosmos: Be a Star: The Universe in 3 Dimensions, study of the solar system from the scientific and geopolitical to the philosophical and artistic

**Autrique House**  
Haachtssesteenweg 266; 02.215.66.00  
www.autrique.be  
**Until DEC 31** Victor Horta, A Lost World,

works highlighting decisive moments in the architectural career of the architect born in Ghent 150 years ago

**Beursschouwburg**  
August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50  
www.beursschouwburg.be  
**Until MAY 27** Waiting and Watching: South African Moments, four young photographers' images of ordinary South Africans

**Bibliotheca Wittockiana**  
Bemelstraat 23; 02.770.53.33  
www.wittockiana.org  
**Until APR 30** Mikhail Karasik: Onder druk van tijd (Pressed for Time), lithographs

**Boekhandel Sint-Hubert**  
Koningsgalerij 2; 02.511.24.12  
www.librairie-saint-hubert.com  
**Until MAY 2** Back in Belgium Baby, paintings by the Paris-based Belgian-American artist

**Bozar**  
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00  
www.bozar.be  
**Until MAY 8** Venetian and Flemish Masters, works from the Accademia Carrara in Bergamo, Italy, 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  
**Until MAY 15** Architecture for Justice: Brussels Courthouse, Imagine the Future!, display of projects submitted for the courthouse's modernisation/conservation plan

**Brussels Expo**  
Hall 2 - Heysel; 070.25.20.20  
www.kingtutbrussels.be  
**APR 20-NOV 6** Tutankhamun: His Tomb and His Treasures, reconstruction of the Ancient Egyptian king's tomb chambers, with over 1,000 replicas of funerary objects including jewellery, amulets, coffers, chairs, weapons, musical instruments and more

**De Elektriciteitscentrale**  
Sint Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.45  
www.deelektriciteitscentrale.be  
**Until AUG 21** Jane Alexander: Security - Surveys (from the Cape of Good Hope), sculptures, installations, photographs and videos by the South African artist

**Design Vlaanderen Galerie**  
Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.227.60.60  
www.designvlaanderen.be  
**Until MAY 20** This is Humin, innovative design projects by 30 companies and 20 designers from across Flanders

**Espace Photographique Contretype**  
Verbindingslaan 1; 02.538.42.20  
www.contretype.org  
**Until APR 24** Miroirs de l'intime (Mirrors of the Intimate), photography group show

**Flemish Parliament - De Loketten**  
IJzerenkruisstraat 99; 02.552.40.43  
www.vlaamsparlement.be  
**Until JUL 11** Raoul De Keyser: De dingen die ik zie (The Things I See), drawings and paintings by the Flemish artist

**ING Cultural Centre**  
Koningsplein 6; 02.547.22.92  
www.ing.be/art  
**Until JUN 19** Joan Miró, the lyrical painter, 120 paintings, etchings, sculptures and drawings by the Catalan artist

**ISELP**  
Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70



www.iselp.be  
**Until APR 30** Véronique Renier: Retrouver le fil, photographs; Vanessa Aerts, jewellery; Paola Ahn, ceramics

**Jacques Franck Cultural Centre**  
Waterloosesteenweg 94; 02.538.90.20  
www.ccjacquesfranck.be  
**Until APR 25** Toiles urbaines (Urban Canvases), paintings drawings, sculptures and installations by street artists

**Le Botanique**  
Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32  
www.botanique.be  
**Until APR 23** Norbert Ghisoland, photographs by the late Belgian photographer (1878-1939)

**Museum of the National Bank of Belgium**  
Wildewoudstraat 10; 02.221.22.06  
**Until JUN 15** Geld en je leven (Money and Your Life), interactive exhibition encouraging youngsters to reflect on their relationship with money (12-16 years)

**Museum van Elsene**  
Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.22  
www.museumvanelsene.be  
**Until MAY 15** Olivier Debré, lyrisch abstract (Lyrical Abstraction), retrospective of the French painter

**Prague House**  
Palmerstonlaan 16; 02.230.94.91  
www.prague-house.eu  
**Until MAY 5** Czech Collage from the Pražská Plynárenská Collection, post-war collages by various Czech artists

**Royal Museum of the Armed Forces**  
Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33  
www.legermuseum.be  
**Until OCT 16** War&Game(s), photographs by Virginie Cornet and toys from the time of the First World War

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

**Royal Museum of Fine Arts**  
Regentschapstraat 3; 02.508.32.11  
www.fine-arts-museum.be  
**Until JUN 5** Walter Leblanc, kinetic and optical works by the late Flemish artist  
**Until JUNE 26** A selection of the most important artworks from the 19th- and 20th century collection, including works by Salvador Dali, Giorgio de Chirico, Paul Delvaux, more

## DON'T MISS

### Oostende: (ge)zichten

**Until 15 May**  
**Venetian Galleries, Ostend**

A profile of Ostend, both past and present, as photographer Daniël de Kievith shows his photos taken during last year's Ostend Culture Capital of Flanders alongside historical photographs of the seaside resort.

→ [www.oostende2010.be](http://www.oostende2010.be)



**Sint-Gorikshallen**  
Sint-Goriksplein 23; 02.502.44.24  
www.sintgorikshallen.be  
**Until MAY 1** Brussels Boutiques: from Art Nouveau to Present Day, a history of Brussels shops and window displays

**Tour & Taxis**  
Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49  
www.tour-taxis.com  
**Until APR 30** Ironic Landscapes, photographs by Jos Tontlinger  
**Until MAY 9** America: It's Also Our History!, three centuries of cross-Atlantic relations with frescoes, charts, audiovisual material, installations, objects and artwork  
**Until MAY 31** From Brussels: Xiè Xiè Shanghai, a look at the Belgian pavilion from the World Expo last year in Shanghai, plus information on business opportunities involving China (www.thankyoushanghai.com)  
**Until JUN 19** Zes miljard mensen (Six Billion People), photo project by Yann Arthus-Bertrand

**WIELS**  
Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.340.00.50  
www.wiels.org  
**Until MAY 15** David Claerbout, photographs by the Flemish photographer

### Deurle

**Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens**  
Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23  
www.museumdd.be  
**Until JUN 5** Christopher Williams, photographs by the American photographer  
**Until JUN 5** On the Way to the Peak of Ecstasy, film projects by Flemish artist Thomas Bogaert  
**Until JUN 5** Picture This: Sophie Kuijken, paintings by the Flemish artist

### Ghent

**Bank van de Arbeid**  
Volderstraat 1; 051.42.42.11  
www.lannoo-events.be  
**Until MAY 6** Lieve Blancquaert: Photographer, retrospective of the Flemish photographer's work over the past 25 years

**Design Museum**  
Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99  
www.designmuseumgent.be  
**Until JUN 13** Fantasy Design, works by young people from Belgium, Denmark, Finland and Spain  
**Until JUN 13** L'Objet Sublime, over 300 ceramic works from 1875-1945 France

**Dr Guislain Museum**  
Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95  
www.museumdrguislain.be  
**Until MAY 8** The Weighty Body: Of Fat and Thin, Perfect or Deranged, a history of fasting for personal, esthetic, religious or economic reasons

**Kunsthal Sint-Pietersabdij**  
Sint-Pietersplein 9; 09.243.97.30  
www.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

**MIAT**  
Minnemeers 9; 09.269.42.00  
www.miat.gent.be  
**Until APR 23** Viva Vélo, photographs by Ghent natives Steven Geirnaert and Heidi Renwa of their 20,000 km bike trip from Hungary to China (www.foto-velo.be)

**Museum of Contemporary Art (SMAK)**  
Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03  
www.smak.be  
**Until JUN 5** Joy and Disaster, group show featuring contemporary Hungarian artists  
**Until JUN 5** Carlos Rodríguez-Méndez: Agua Caliente, Hot Water, gigantic minimalist sculpture by the Spanish artist  
**Until JUN 5** MARCEL: The Marcel Broodthaers Room, work by the Belgian artist  
**Until JUL 3** Michael Sailstorfer: Raum und Zeit, sculptures by the German artist

**Stadsmuseum Gent (STAM)**  
Bijloke - Godshuizenlaan 2; 09.269.87.90  
www.stamgent.be  
**Until MAY 1** Enlightened City, a study of how light affects a city through diaries, models, paintings, photographs and installations

### Grimbergen

**CC Strombeek**  
Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43  
www.ccstrombeek.be  
**APR 15-MAY 15** Jan Dibbets 3X,

photographs of conceptual works by the Dutch artist (also in Mechelen and Knokke-Heist)

### Hasselt

**Fashion museum**  
Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.23.96.21  
www.modemuseumhasselt.be  
**Until JUN 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

**National Jenever Museum**  
Witte Nonnenstraat 19; 011.23.98.60  
www.jenevermuseum.be  
**Until JUN 5** De kunst van het drinken (The Art of Drinking), paintings of drinking scenes by 19th- and 20th-century Belgian artists

### Knokke-Heist

**White-Out Studio**  
Van Bunnanlaan 58A; 050.62.93.63  
www.whiteoutstudio.be  
**APR 16-JUNE 5** Jan Dibbets 3X, photographs of conceptual works by the Dutch artist (also in Grimbergen and Mechelen)

### Leuven

**Museum M**  
Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28; 016.27.29.29  
www.mleuven.be  
**Until MAY 15** Freek Wambacq, installations by the Belgian artist  
**Until MAY 22** Pedro Cabrita Reis: One After Another, A Few Silent Steps, sculpture, paintings, photos and installations by the Portuguese artist  
**Until JUN 12** Gebonden Beelden, rare books  
**Until SEP 25** Pieter-Jozef Verhaghen: In het spoor van Rubens (In the Footsteps of Rubens), paintings by the 18th-century Flemish artist

**Tweebronnen**  
Rijschoolstraat 4; 016.30.08.69  
www.leuven.be/bibliotheek  
**Until MAY 1** Geert De Smet, sketches and sculptures by the Flemish artist

### Machelen-Zulte

**Het Roger Raveelmuseum**  
Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00  
www.rogerraveelmuseum.be  
**Until JUN 19** Tussenruimte: Het onzichtbare zichtbaar maken (Space In-between: Making the Invisible Visible), paintings by Flemish artist Roger Raveel on white frames

### Mechelen

**Exhibition Halls**  
Minderbroedersgang 5; 015.29.40.00  
www.cultuurcentrummechelen.be  
**APR 14-JUNE 5** Jan Dibbets 3X, photographs of conceptual works by the Dutch artist (also in Grimbergen and Knokke-Heist)

### Meise

**National Botanic Garden of Belgium**  
Nieuwelaaan 38; 02.260.09.20  
www.plantentuinmeise.be  
**Until OCT 2** Groene Omzwervingen (Green Detours), works made of leaves and flowers by Sandrine de Borman following her year as artist-in-residence  
**Until NOV 6** Kriebelbeestjes van het bos (Crawling Bugs in the Woods), photographs of insects by Barbara Cook

### Ostend

**Venetian Galleries**  
Corner Zeedijk and Parijsstraat; 059.80.55.00  
www.oostende.be/cultuur  
**Until MAY 15** Oostende: (ge)zichten (Ostend: Faces/Views), photographs by Daniël de Kievith and Jef Van Eynde

### Tervuren

**Royal Museum for Central Africa**  
Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11  
www.africamuseum.be  
**Until SEP 4** FetishModernity, exhibition created by six European museums exploring the notion of modernity

### 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



**Litteraire Lente:** Spring literary event featuring readings, films, exhibitions, discounts at bookshops and more  
**Until MAY 1** across Flanders  
www.boek.be

### Antwerp

**Super Saturday:** Festival of word, music and comedy  
**APR 16** 16.00-2.00 at Arenberg, Arenbergstraat 28  
www.spitspot.be

**Ten Miles & Marathon:** Annual running event with marathon, 10 miles, short- and kids runs  
**APR 17** 9.00-18.00 across Antwerp  
www.apen.be/antwerp-10-miles-2011

### Brussels

**Balkan Trafik Festival:** Fifth edition of the south-east European festival, with concerts, film, workshops, wine bar, electronic music party, Balkan bazaar and more  
**APR 14-17** at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23  
www.balkantrafik.com

**Brussels Toastmasters Club Gala Dinner & Masquerade Ball:** Celebration of the club's 40th anniversary  
**APR 16** 20.00 at La Fabbrica (Tour & Taxis), Havenlaan 86  
www.brusselstoastmasters-40th.be

**EU Sustainable Energy Week:** Conference to showcase the latest innovations in energy efficiency and renewable energy technology, policy and practice through a varied programme of events in Brussels and across Europe  
**Until APR 17** 10.00-18.00 at venues across Brussels  
www.eusew.eu

**Hopla!** Fifth edition of the circus arts festival featuring internationally renowned artists from France  
**APR 16-25** across Brussels  
02.678.09.95, www.hopla-cirk.be

**Kopzorgen? Over de islam in Europa:** Debate on being Muslim in Europe (in Dutch)  
**APR 17** 15.00 at Beursschouwburg, August Ortsstraat 20-28  
02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be

**On Y Danse Tout En Rond:** Theatre, dance, film, video and music festival  
**Until MAY 28** at Beursschouwburg, August Ortsstraat 20-28  
02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be

**Stoemp!** Series of free live concerts in Brussels cafés  
**APR 18-JUNE 7** at Bonnefooi, Le Coq, Rits, Het Goudblommeke in Papier, Het Warm Water, Kafka, Merlo, Monk, Roskam and Walvis  
www.stoemplive.be

**Streven naar het ware leven #2:** Verslaafd aan liefde (Addicted to Love): Reading by Jan Geurtz on the topic of self-acceptance (in Dutch)  
**APR 17** 11.00 at Filosofiehuis Het Zoekend Hert, Koninklijkelaan 43  
0473.68.66.65, www.hetzoekendhert.be

### Groot-Bijgaarden

**Floralia Brussels:** International exhibition featuring some 500 types of flowers, including 300 tulip varieties  
**Until MAY 8** in the park around the Castle of Groot-Bijgaarden  
www.floralia-brussels.be

### Knokke-Heist

**International Photo Festival:** Annual photography festival, with a theme this year of "Future Portraits" and featuring work by Robert Wilson, Valérie Belin, Marc Trivier, Jurgen Klauke and more  
**Until JUNE 13** across Knokke-Heist  
www.fotofestival.be

### Laarne (East Flanders)

**Once Upon a Festival:** Outdoor festival with diverse concerts, performances, a fire village, organic food, more  
**APR 15-17** at Laarne Castle  
www.onceuponafestival.be

## CAFE SPOTLIGHT

ANNA JENKINSON



### Cafe den Artiëst

**Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 21 Leuven**

Leuven's Cafe den Artiëst, which opened in 1947, used to be the hangout of francophone students who referred to themselves as "les artistes". When the local university split into two in 1968, though, the French-speaking students moved to Louvain-la-Neuve, and the bar underwent one of several transformations. This brief history is related to me by the manager, André, who I found enjoying a drink at the bar. "It's not particularly a student place today," says André, who was born and brought up in Leuven.

The customers range from 20-somethings to parents with young kids in tow to an elderly couple in the corner, who didn't look at all out of place. The cafe's atmosphere is welcoming and unpretentious, "like a comfortable pair of jeans", says my own drinking companion.

The decor strikes the same note. The pale, green bar stools are an inviting place to perch while ordering a draught Stella (this is, after all, Leuven, the home of Stella Artois). Behind the bar, the walls are filled with modern abstract paintings in tones of green, grey and black, a big yellow clock and rows and rows of CDs. Fun and relaxed, without trying too hard.

A major attraction is den Artist's location just across the street from the city's main art museum, M. It also boasts an outdoor terrace, which seemed to be one of the last spots to get the sun at the end of the day. As I left, the friendly waitress asked me whether I had tried the pancakes or waffles. When I said I hadn't, she seemed most disappointed. "People from all over, from outside Leuven, come for the pancakes and waffles," she assured me. If you find that beer and pancakes don't really mix, don't worry; there's coffee on the menu, too.



# bite

ROBYN BOYLE

## Dock's Café

Overwhelmed for choice when it comes to dining options in Antwerp, my colleague and I focus on the international port city's strong suit – seafood. Dock's Café, as the name suggests, is situated in the refurbished port area overlooking the River Scheldt, its upper level boasting a view of passing ships on the famous waterway.

Designed by Antoine Pinto, the Portuguese interior architect, chef and number one reference for restaurant design in Belgium (La Quincaillerie, Belga Queen, Pakhuis), the industrial baroque interior is not short of maritime inspiration. The split-level area is broken up by a winding staircase and even a fishbowl captain's table. It's an airy, if not especially cosy, atmosphere. Curved wood, bronze and copper dominate, as does a heavenly smell of the sea via the restaurant's showpiece oyster bar.

The attentive staff immediately switch to English; they are accustomed to tourists, in addition to local regulars. Some of the latter have been coming to Dock's since it opened in 1991, pulled back by the restaurant's unwavering attention to market specialities, organic ingredients and seasonal themes (eg oysters, new-season lobster, hop shoots). There is meat on the menu as well, including their speciality Bresse chicken: organically fed and free range from Le Devant Farm in France.

Contact Bite at [flandersbite@gmail.com](mailto:flandersbite@gmail.com)

My companion plumps for her usual starter of house-made shrimp croquettes, with the welcome option of just one of the sizeable fritters. The initial bite is satisfyingly packed with grey shrimp, but the second lacks the requisite crispiness; the batter is a bit on the heavy side. The suggestion of an accompanying Rodenbach (her first time trying this Flemish red ale) saves the day with oaky-tart refreshment.

I was looking forward to my spring starter of *vitello tonnato* but am surprised (and not pleasantly) to find the veal is raw and minced instead of roasted and sliced. The flavours are all in place, though, thanks to a smooth tuna sauce, tangy capers and parmesan slivers. As with every dish on the menu, my starter is paired with a suggested drink – in this case a fitting glass of crisp, fruity white wine.

Across from me the main dish makes an impressive entrance: red tuna, perfectly seared, alongside wokked veggies and a soy dipping sauce. The bean sprouts offer a good crunch, but the Asian theme stops there. My companion's palate is crying out for tingling chilli and ginger flavours.

I am quite pleased with my main: scallops atop a bed of creamy, *al dente* risotto. The scallops are lightly browned and generously buttered. Celery leaves provide a fresh, sharp taste, while pine nuts add a mild flavour. And the portion is just right, leaving me fully satiated but not stuffed,



like too much risotto will always do.

The dessert or, more specifically, cocktail is a tall glass filled with lime sorbet and vodka. Frosty and zinging, it packs an alcoholic punch and refreshes with its citrusy tang.

The bill is on the steep side – about €65 each. Although the food is perfectly fresh, with top-notch ingredients, it is not terribly inventive. You feel that you are rather paying for the experience and the décor.

➔ [www.docks.be](http://www.docks.be)

📍 Jordaenskaai 7, Antwerp;  
03.226.63.30  
🕒 Mon-Thurs 12.00-14.30 & 18.00-23.00;  
Fri-Sat 12.00-14.30 & 18.00-midnight  
💶 Mains: €15-€40  
★ Trendy French-Italian inspired  
brasserie on the Scheldt specialising  
in seafood and world wines

## TALKING DUTCH

PHILIP EBELS

### Belgium for dummies

You might have already tried to soothe your friends and family back home, panic-stricken by news reports of lawlessness in Belgium. "It's all right, Mum, this is no Ivory Coast. It's a language thing." And then you're trapped. "Well, you know, they speak Dutch in Flanders, French in Wallonia, and they speak both in Brussels, which is kind of part of both, but not really, and..."

Belgian politics remains a mystery even to the most battle-scarred expat resident. That is why last week the Flemish non-profit organisation de Rand, or the Rim – referring to the Brussels periphery – hitched a ride with your favourite English-language newspaper to distribute their new booklet, *Living in Translation*, which aims to unravel the administrative knot of regions and communities, languages and facilities.

"In België mag iedereen de taal spreken die hij of zij wil," it says in chapter one, reassuringly: "In Belgium, people can speak any language they want." You can smell the *maar*, the but, lingering in the air.

"De taal van de overheid is die van het taalgebied," it goes on: "The language of the authorities is that of its language area." In short, you may speak French, English or Swahili, but de *Vlaamse overheid*, the Flemish government, will respond in Dutch.

The leaflet, complete with graphs, tables and cartoons,



makes an effort to explain and justify that stance, which is perceived as rigid by some. It does so by saying that it wants to preserve the Dutch-language character of its territory, notably de *Vlaamse Rand*, which has been subject to *een sterke verfransing*, a strong Frenchification (a word I don't like; it sounds like a disease). That is why the Flemish government compels the use of Dutch in *scholen*, schools, *bedrijven*, companies, or *ziekenhuizen*, hospitals.

"Waarom is België niet gewoon tweetalig?" True, it would save everyone a lot of sweat and tears (no blood, so far) if Belgium would be simply bilingual. But

it's not, the author explains with an almost fatalistic clarity: "*de geschiedenis heeft er anders over beslist*," history has decided otherwise.

*Living in Translation* is informative, comprehensible and a recommended read. It is available in Dutch, German, English and French, and its website is open for any additional questions you might have.

It even makes a genuine effort at objectivity, even though it is manifestly Flemish. In any case, it should make life easier for you next time you're soothing people far, far away.

➔ [www.livingintranslation.be](http://www.livingintranslation.be)

## THE LAST WORD...

### Game, set and ouch

"I really want to make it this year to Roland Garros. The only thing to do is rest."

Kim Clijsters, shortly before attending a wedding, where she injured her ankle

### Last orders

"I was born in beer, and I hope to die in it."

Alain De Laet, CEO of brewer Huyghe, whose *Delirium Tremens* is taking over the world

### Voice of experience

"You can only be really happy if your health doesn't let you down, and you don't end up on your own. To be happy, you also need to be lucky."

Marie-Louise, speaking in *De Morgen*, on research showing that your 70s are now the happiest time of your life

### Highly regarded

"Prince Laurent deserves a higher allowance: Soaps stars also get a raise when they do well and push up the ratings."

*Volkskrant* correspondent Bert Wagendorp

## NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #176

### Feature

Kristel Vereecken of Ghent was recently appointed as a European Female Entrepreneurship Ambassador. What will she be doing to encourage women entrepreneurs?

### Living

While we are all aware of the number of UNESCO heritage sites in Flanders, our journalist Anna Jenkinson has discovered that Flanders is involved in UNESCO programmes all over the world

### Agenda

Willy Vlautin is an author by occupation, but he's a cowboy in his soul. The writer from America's Pacific Northwest presents his new book in Antwerp