

CEO series

Martine Reynaers on leadership and quotas

6

Across borders

Flanders' special relationship with Unesco

10

White gold

It's asparagus season

16



Ten Flemish women have been appointed ambassadors in the effort to get more women to start their own businesses

LAWRENCE DEGEEST

The American author Kurt Vonnegut once wrote: "Women want people to talk to. And when they're unhappy with a man, they're really saying: 'You aren't enough people.'" The European Commission might agree. Last month it appointed 10 Flemish women business owners as entrepreneurial ambassadors, part of its Ambassadors Network launched in 2009 to foster entrepreneurship among women. The ambassadors speak at schools,

community groups and to the media, as well as address conferences, business networks and employment initiatives.

One of them is Kristel Vereecken, founder of tour company Ghent Authentic. After guiding a Russian family first through her native Ghent – aided by a translating friend – and then through a local bistro's lunch menu, she says that the chief obstruction to women's entrepreneurship is "between their ears".

► *continued on page 5*

"Far, far beyond a scandal"

Former bishop of Bruges admits second case of abuse

ALAN HOPE

The former Bishop of Bruges, Roger Vangheluwe, last week threw the whole history of his case into turmoil by admitting in a television interview that he had abused a second child, also a nephew who was five or six years old.

The interview, recorded in a convent in France where Vangheluwe is staying, came almost a year to the day after he had admitted sexually abusing his nephew from the age of five to 18. That led to his resignation and exile to a series of religious retreats. Two weeks ago, he was ordered by the Vatican to leave Belgium and to engage in spiritual and psychological counselling.

Instead, Vangheluwe gave an interview to VT4 television, in which he confirmed rumours about a second victim. The details came as another shock to Belgium in the ongoing cases of child abuse within the Catholic church coming to light.

As with Vangheluwe's first admission, the crime has now passed the date at which it could be prosecuted, and there are, therefore, no legal consequences.

The interview goes against the orders of the Vatican, which explained last week that counselling was only the first step on the road to a judgement in Rome. The latest revelations, which concern acts Vangheluwe has previously denied in questioning by legal authorities, will now give the Pope new grounds on which to judge the case.

"The Holy See is following the situation attentively, is conscious of the gravity of the situation and is gathering the necessary elements to be able to carry out an in-depth analysis of this problem," said Vatican spokesman Federico Lombardi.

► *continued on page 3*



Roger Vangheluwe during an interview with VT4

FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE



La Esterella

Antwerp has lost a "monument", according to the city's mayor Patrick Janssens. Antwerp alderman Ludo Van Campenhout saw her as "a cathedral". Flemish culture minister Joke Schauvliege described her as "strong as iron". Novelist Tom Lanoye remembers her as "a remarkably strong figure who won hearts everywhere". Esther Lambrechts, or La Esterella, as she was better known, was one of Flanders' most beloved musical figures. Though her career essentially ended in 1960, her death last week at the age of 91 saw an outpouring of love and nostalgia.

Lambrechts was born in Antwerp in 1919 and worked as a seamstress until, in 1942, she was introduced – reluctantly – into the world of music by Russian-born impresario Charley Schleimovitz, who later became her husband and manager. Audiences were taken with her remarkable voice, said to range over three and a half octaves, which allowed her to tackle a broad repertory of jazz and classical material.

She became the first Belgian singer to make a breakthrough in England, with performances for the BBC. Her first recording

contract came in 1953, and she made the conscious decision to concentrate on a Dutch-language repertory. One of her first recordings was a sentimental ballad called "O Lieve Vrouwetoren", an ode to the Antwerp Cathedral of Our Lady. It was her biggest hit. She referred to herself in an interview once as Schleimovitz's "great love, his life's work. He sculpted me." When he died in 1962 she gave up singing and went to work in an office. In 1984, the year the above photo was taken, she made a comeback but never again achieved the heights of previous decades. She made a few star appearances, including one with Lanoye for which he wrote the cathedral's reply to her earlier tribute.

"I am and always will be a singer," she told Wouter Kersbergen, who interviewed her last year for a book about people over 80. "What you do is who you are. I have my identity as long as I'm singing."

La Esterella's funeral took place last weekend in her beloved Antwerp cathedral. Once again, the room was filled to capacity.

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FLANDERS TODAY

APRIL 20, 2011

News in brief

Students in **seasonal jobs** will now be able to work four more days a year and spread out their working hours to suit market demands, the federal government agreed last week. At present students may work during two periods of 23 days – one during term and one during holidays – before being subject to normal tax and social security rules. The new rule allows 50 days with no restrictions.

Internet service providers cannot be obliged to **filter customer downloads** to detect piracy, the European Court of Justice said last week. The court was giving advice in an appeal by Scarlet, now owned by Belgacom, against the performing rights society Sabam. According to the European Court, the filters would be a breach of the right to private correspondence, which is more important than the right to protect intellectual property like songs or films.

Leuven-based brewer AB InBev has risen 18 places in the list of the

world's most popular consumer goods, drawn up by consultants Deloitte. InBev, the only Belgian company in the top 250, rises to 11th place, above Apple, Coca-Cola and Philips.

Prince Laurent last week sent a letter to prime minister Yves Leterme agreeing to the conditions for his future behaviour regarding political contacts. The prince will approve all foreign trips and contacts in advance with the foreign affairs ministry, will refrain from comment on the government or the royal house and will restrict his activities to his environmental foundation. If any of the conditions is broken the government would immediately propose the abolition of his €300,000 annual allowance.

Toerisme Vlaanderen has reacted to criticism in the French-speaking media over its efforts to promote Brussels in Paris as a **Flemish city**. "We've been promoting Flanders and Brussels since 1985. I've not

heard one single complaint from anyone in Brussels that we've brought tourists to the city," a spokesperson said.

The Flemish Opera has engaged the services of former Monty Python **Terry Gilliam**, director of movies like *Brazil* and *Time Bandits*, to direct *The Damnation of Faust* by Hector Berlioz in its 2012-2013 season. The opera is reputed to be extremely difficult to stage and will be co-produced with English National Opera.

The city of Antwerp last week unveiled the **rental bicycles** it will introduce in June. The city will be equipped with 1,000 bikes in 85 rental stations, similar to the Villo system in Brussels. The first half hour is free, and an annual season ticket will cost €35. There are also day passes for tourists and visitors.

→ www.velo-antwerpen.be

Letter to the editor

Dear Editor:

I was born in the German-speaking part of Belgium and raised in Limburg. I have been living in Italy for the past 17 years. Recently, I travelled to Belgium with some Italian friends. The common language between us is French.

In Antwerp, my friends wanted to eat *een zak frieten*. I explained the concept of the *frituur*. When we were ready to order, the man behind the counter asked us to leave because he had enough of 150 years of French "management".

Later that day, we bought some French-language Belgian newspapers, along with *Humo* and *Knack*. The salesperson in the shop muttered (in Antwerp dialect) that I should buy these "French things" in "my part of the country".

I do understand that the spoken language in Flanders is Dutch, but where is respect for other cultures? I had a very open education and never thought that language could be this much of a problem. What I have discovered this time leaves me with a very bitter feeling about my country – a place I do keep close in my heart.

J Aerts
Tuscany

FLANDERS TODAY

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OFFSIDE

The city that never sweeps

Brussels, let's face it, has the reputation of being a dirty city. Tom Pintens lives in the Marollen area, the most proletarian part of town, where people nonetheless express a deep love for Brussels. He was disgusted by the deteriorating state of public cleanliness in town, with the breaking point coming when one of Brussels' comic strip walls, commemorating the fine tradition of Belgian strips, was disfigured recently by a pile of rotting rubbish tipped at the foot of the painting. He did what all protesters do these days, whether they're in the Brussels Vossenplein or Cairo's Tahrir Square: He set up a Facebook page calling on Brussels politicians to do something about the mess. In a short time it's gathered 1,500 followers, among them

Flemish minister of Brussels concerns Pascal Smet, Brussels region ministers Bruno De Lille and Brigitte Grouwels and minister-president Charles Picqué, and Flemish parliamentarian Ann Brusseel, as well as literary star David Van Reybrouck, and, perhaps most important of all, more than a thousand inhabitants of the city who are simply sick of having to hold their noses and dodge around other people's refuse.

"One Saturday I'd had enough," said Pintens. "I took my daughter to the playground in the Warandepark, and it was full of used condoms and cigarette butts. Back home in the Marollen, there was dumped rubbish every 10 metres. This is not the Brussels I want to see my children growing up in."



ALAN HOPE
© Patrick Vanhoucke

Consult the ever-expanding photo archive at the Facebook group at <http://tinyurl.com/67o26bq>. New members welcome.

Wish you were here

About 500 prisoners disappear every year from Belgium's jails by failing to return from penitentiary leave, from a total of about 4,000



Vangheluwe calls abuse "a relationship"

continued from page 1

The Vangheluwe interview met with immediate and unanimous condemnation, not only of the new facts revealed by Vangheluwe but also his demeanour. Appearing relaxed, at times even smiling, the former bishop played down the circumstances of the new abuse revelation, claiming it happened only a few times on "high holidays" and that the victim did not appear to suffer as a result. He insisted there was no "brute sex" involved, that it "was not a question of rape" and that it was more like "a game" and "a relationship". As one prosecutor pointed out, under Belgian law, any sexual contact with a child under the age of 12 is considered rape.

"He's not concerned with how it was for the victim," commented Peter Adriaenssens, child psychiatrist and former chairman of the church committee on child abuse. "Since he decides that this was not abuse, he's also able to decide that the victim didn't suffer as a result. He is a paedophile of the most dangerous

sort – the sort who believes what he says, and so would never dream of repentance."

Bruges prosecutor Jean-Marie Berkvens, who has already interviewed the second victim, said: "This man could not stop himself from interfering with young boys. It wasn't just a few times, as Roger Vangheluwe says. In the period in question, it took place hundreds of times, with the first as well as the second victim. There aren't that many high holidays. His memory is failing him."

Justice minister Stefaan De Clerck, meanwhile, said that Vangheluwe's latest comments are "a slap in the face to his victims and to victims in general. It's baffling. This goes far, far beyond a scandal."

Vangheluwe's successor as Bishop of Bruges, Jozef De Kesel, said he was "shocked and disappointed" at his predecessor's statements. He doubted whether Vangheluwe had any sense of remorse. "He said, 'I am sorry', but I doubt whether he knows what it means," De Kesel said. "We're all bewildered. I'm also a bit angry."

As to what steps can be taken against Vangheluwe, the idea of withdrawing his pension was rejected as a matter outside the government's control. "In theory, the church has no reason to remove the clerical status from former Bishop Roger Vangheluwe," said canon law professor Alphonse Borras of the Catholic University of Louvain (UCL). "There exists a gap in canon law, which means that such a sanction for bishops does not exist."

Last weekend, Vangheluwe was reported to have left the French convent where he was taking refuge. His current whereabouts are not known. ♦

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



2,225,000

calls made to the emergency numbers 100 and 112 in 2009, one-quarter of which were "ghost calls" – mistakes, pranks or other calls for no reason

€100,000

in outstanding bills owed to top Brussels hotels by the federal government. The hotels were used to house visiting dignitaries to a forum held in October as part of the Belgian presidency of the EU

0.5 square km

increase in the surface area of Flanders, after a sandbank in the Baai nature reserve in Heist became permanently attached to land

€9.6 million

in aid agreed by the EU Commission for support for more than 2,000 ex-workers of Opel Antwerp and for several major suppliers of the plant. The money will be used for retraining, outplacement and helping workers start new businesses

79 kg

of fresh fruit and 62 kg of fresh vegetables bought by the average Belgian in a year. That's about 2% more than in 2009, despite a rise in prices. Apples and tomatoes are the most popular

Van Nieuwenhuyzen shooters get 30 years



Nelly Van Nieuwenhuyzen (third from left), mother of the murdered police officer, in court with Officer Van Stalle. Behind him is the second shooting victim Ismael Sacoor

A jury in Brussels took four hours to return a verdict of guilty on three men accused of the fatal shooting of police officer Kitty Van Nieuwenhuyzen, 23, in December 2007. All three accused were sentenced to 30 years in prison, after the jury found there were extenuating circumstances to prevent them handing down the maximum sentence of life.

The murder took place in Lot, part of the municipality of Beersel in Flemish Brabant. The three accused – Nourredine Cheikhni, Galip Kurum en Hassan Lasir – were fleeing from a crime scene in a stolen Volvo; when it broke down, they entered the home of Ismael Sacoor and demanded the keys to his van parked outside, then shot Sacoor three times.

As they emerged, the patrol van containing Van Nieuwenhuyzen and her partner, Peter Van Stalle, 27, was investigating the abandoned Volvo. The men opened fire, killing Van Nieuwenhuyzen instantly. After the

shootings, the three men attempted to escape to Turkey and Morocco.

The three denied the crimes, but DNA evidence placed them all at the scene. The six-week long trial dealt not only with the killing of Van Nieuwenhuyzen and the gunshot injuries to Van Stalle and Sacoor, but also with a long list of other offences. In all, the jury deliberated a set of 219 questions relating to the guilt of the three accused. After the reading of the verdict, the jury returned to deliberate with the judge on the sentences.

While the prosecutor had demanded life for all three, the jury found grounds to apply a lesser sentence. The jury considered their previous records, clear of grave offences, grounds for clemency. A sentence of 30 years allows them to be eligible for release after serving one-third of their sentence. The family of the victim were said to be disappointed at the sentences. One of the accused will appeal. ♦

Gatz quits politics

Sven Gatz, the former Brussels politician who now leads the opposition party Open-VLD in the Flemish parliament, is leaving office after the summer to take up a position as director of the Belgian Brewers' Union. Gatz, 44, will continue to sit on the municipal council in Jette.

Gatz is a *Brusselaar* through and through: Born in Sint-Agatha-Berchem to a Flemish father and French-speaking mother, he grew up in Molenbeek and Sint-Agatha-Berchem and went to school in Jette. He then studied in Leuven and became politically involved with the Volksunie, a party that no longer exists. According to his website, he is a "left-wing liberal".

"I was young when I started in politics; that means I can now get started on the second half of my career," he told brusselnieuws.be. "My passion for beer is well-known." Gatz is in fact known to be a talented home-brewer, as well as an avid champion of Belgian beers. "I'll be defending the interests of the industry and trying to promote a strong product. It's a labour of love... but then, so was politics."

Open-VLD president Alexander de Croo said Gatz's decision was "a loss for politics". ♦

Brussels speed limit theoretical

The inner ring of Brussels may have become a 30 km/h zone, but speeding continues, and police, it was revealed last week, are doing little about it. According to police chiefs in the capital, drivers are only flashed if they are driving at speeds of 57 km/h or more in the 30 zone. Outside of the inner ring, where the speed limit is 50 km/h, police will only flash over 76 km/h.

"We've reached an agreement on this approach with the public prosecutor," the spokesman for the Brussels-West zone (which includes Molenbeek, Jette and Koekelberg) told *De Morgen*. "We have to keep in mind the working capacity of the magistrates. And even with those higher limits, it's still possible to send a tough signal to the hard-line speeders."

Motoring organisation Touring said it was "no more than normal" for police to use a certain margin in deciding whether to flash. "According to our recent measurements, barely one in 100 motorists respects the 30 km/h speed limit. Try fining everyone," Touring said in a statement. "The police are not the ones at fault here, but the politicians who introduce such absurd speed limits in the first place."

In Antwerp, a local prosecutor



confirmed that police there also do not flash speeders in the 30 km/h zone of the city. If the speed limits were to be applied strictly, the city would soon be buried under a mountain of tickets. One exception: the Gasthuis, Blauwtoren and Van Eyck tunnels under the Leien, which have a limit of 30 and where radar is permanently in operation.

In 50 km/h zones, on the other hand, police do flash, but only for speeds of 61 and over, except in the case of special traffic actions.

In Ghent, no margins are in place, but police say they sometimes turn cameras off for reasons of weather, heavy traffic or police capacity. Police in Leuven, meanwhile, operate no margins at all. ♦

FIFTH COLUMN

How long?

Ancient, alive and kicking. This is the tagline of Leuven, the university town and capital of Flemish Brabant. It is also the name of a column by its mayor Louis Tobback (sp.a) in the newspaper *De Morgen*. Tobback – both ancient and alive and kicking – is a respected politician, of the generation of former prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene.

Tobback, now minister of state, was minister of internal affairs for many years, but most people remember him as the outspoken party leader and parliamentary speaker with a raspy voice. When Tobback speaks, he speaks out loud. Like a foghorn, he is hard to ignore.

In his latest column, Tobback took on N-VA and its leader Bart De Wever. How long can they keep us hanging on, he asked. (The actual wording was so strong that the newspaper had to use several asterisks.) The socialist was irritated that N-VA wanted to have a say in the long term budget without being in government. N-VA hopes for a similar role such as Geert Wilders' party in the Netherlands, he says: Taking on no responsibility, but wanting to be heard on everything.

De Wever cannot enter government because his party won't let him, Tobback continued. He hides his incapacity and obstinacy behind his party's partnership with CD&V, which also gives him an aura of respectability and responsibility. Tobback therefore asks that all other parties form a government without N-VA, agreeing on state reform and the split of the BHV constituency, with even more concessions on the part of the French speakers than they have been willing to make so far.

One can agree or disagree with Tobback's analysis, but, in reality, the scenario he wishes for seems to be unfolding. While in theory all Flemish parties want N-VA in government (if only so that it wouldn't become even more successful in opposition), they all slowly distance themselves from it. Open VLD's vice prime minister Guy Vanhengel has called them "a bunch of amateurs". Wouter Van Besien, president of Groen!, speaks of "arrogance". The socialists have long moved away from calling De Wever "a friend".

Within CD&V (N-VA's traditional partner) caretaker prime minister Yves Leterme especially is getting increasingly annoyed by N-VA, which he urges time and time again to "act responsibly".

Whether the French-speaking parties will live up to Tobback's plan, remains to be seen.

ANJA OTTE



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putting people first

Come one, come all

Women are five times less likely than men to start a business

→ continued from page 1

"When I say I have my own business, people are shocked," Vereecken says. "But it's not so difficult. You just have to do it."

Trained in law, Vereecken won a writing contest, which convinced her to pursue screenwriting in New York. After that, she studied to become a licensed tour guide in Ghent. She still splits her year between the two cities and, when tango classes aren't enough, she heads to Buenos Aires. Like many Flemish women, she speaks several languages, but, unlike the rest, she is regularly asked to dinner in each one.

Ghent Authentic isn't like other tour companies, either. Operating since last autumn, specialised tours are its hallmark, attracting diverse clientele. Recently Vereecken guided the president of the University of Kazakhstan and his wife. Then there was an entourage of students from Mumbai specialising in European history, enthralled to hear the owner of a local coffee shop explain how the most important coffee bean in her stock was from India.

Neuroscientists point out that the subconscious coats people, places and objects with emotional significance when it senses a belonging to them. Hence Ghent Authentic's motto: "Think global, feel local."

Especially popular are what Vereecken calls "Business Express" tours, in which business folk can be taken anywhere from churches to chocolate shops when seeking an hour's respite. She reckons her knack for creating customisable tours stems from her friendships.

Whenever a social event was brainstormed, "it was always me organising the details".

And she reckons her company's success stems from its diversity and flexibility. Her staff come from all walks of life. "One is a meteorologist, another an IT manager and another an architect. And it works well."

Use your own strengths

Other Flemish ambassadors share this optimism. Kristien Vermoesen, a freelance journalist who launched public relations firm FINN in 2006, thinks women are frightened off by business circles dominated by men. Nathaly Taillieu, head of safety consultancy DISC Belgium, stresses that women need to stop trying to compete with or emulate male business owners and focus on their own strengths.

But most agree that Belgians in general lack an entrepreneurial spirit. "They tend to be too modest and are sometimes afraid to take risks," says Sarah Vanacker, founder of Belgian Shoes, which has a store in New York.

Taillieu acknowledges that her parents advised her to stick with one company and grow within it. A lack of entrepreneurial spirit can be attributed to several factors, from a country's political and economic atmosphere to its citizens' worldview.

Still, Belgian women are five times less likely to start a business than Belgian men, and just 0.4% of Belgian women are new business owners – one of the lowest proportions in the western world – according to a 2000 study.

"Sometimes they go back to the same bank later because success depends on who is on the other side of the desk"

The idea that women entrepreneurs face more difficulties than men may be scoffed at by the successful, but it's a reality many women have faced.

Looking through the glass ceiling

Bie Schurmans, head of industrial component firm Fomeco in Zwevegem, West Flanders, is one example. Her husband is an entrepreneur. When he bought Fomeco, he needed someone to run it but couldn't believe that his wife – or any woman – was capable. Eventually she changed his mind. But frustrations persist. After consistently receiving no responses to her requests for quotes from vendors, she now signs all correspondence with her last name and first initial only, so they can't tell she is a woman. Research on entrepreneurship has grown since the 1980s. It details greater difficulties for women securing financing and a high risk aversion. One study questioning bank managers found them less inclined to sign off on loans to women, regardless of the business ventures. Another study, by Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School, suggests women entrepreneurs are more afraid of failure than men.

The 2004 book *Women In Management Worldwide: Facts, Figures and Analysis* is bleaker still. Women outnumber men at universities and score better, but they work fewer hours and are more likely to work in the public sector. They are also more likely to earn lower salaries throughout their careers. Claiming seats on a company's board of directors is improbable. Vlerick at one point sponsored training programmes for women managers and entrepreneurs. But these were eventually dropped. Interestingly, this is not new. A 1987 study in Britain was conducted to understand a sharp increase in demand among women for places in small-business courses. Researchers found no apparent differences in financing, education or business launch times between enrolled men and women. The only differences were the ensuing businesses themselves.

According to the study, women-run businesses hired more women employees. They were more labour-intensive and centred on specialities like hairdressing, restaurants, communications and fashion. The British study ultimately saw no strong evidence to support female-specific programmes.

But Anna Danti, a policy officer at the European Commission's Ambassadors Network, maintains that women face unique challenges, especially in securing financing. "Sometimes they go back to the same bank at a different time because it depends on who is on the other side of the desk," she says.

Danti finds this especially surprising since women are generally better at managing debt than men, she says, citing the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, which signs micro-finance loans exclusively to groups of women. Moreover, the average financing needed by

women entrepreneurs in Europe is low, she says – just €10,000 to €20,000. (Vereecken's only financing, received from the Belgian government, is within that range.)

The Ambassadors Network now comprises 270 ambassadors in 22 countries. Danti says that its influence alone has led to the creation of 55 companies in five countries. She sees its primary focus as training women to create business plans and maintain proper accounting.

The value of networks

Women are good at networking, says Danti. "But they aren't as good at using their network professionally."

A 2009 survey led by Ghent University of 125 Belgian start-ups found that those who had friends in banking got better loans. Having a lot of friends in business led to better business deals. Traditionally, women relied on family networks for funding and formation. The Flemish ambassadors are no different. If more Flemish women want to start new businesses, first they need to make new friends.

Networks matter equally for men and women and, according to the survey, raw knowledge isn't as important for entrepreneurship as networks. Improving networks would help women open not only more successful businesses, but more diverse ones as well. But Danti does not yet see networking activity among women increasing. Maybe in the next generation, she says. The Ambassadors Network will try to speed it up.

Meanwhile, Vereecken ponders her future. A full-time investor would be nice, she says, especially to buy office space. She reckons she can break even in one year. Then, maybe, she will franchise throughout Flanders. Though she doesn't imagine staying forever. There is still her script to finish, for example.

Her ambassador life has nonetheless begun promisingly. Her first assignment was to escort a Philippine woman who was receiving an entrepreneurship award from Princess Mathilde. "This woman, who runs a textile shop and has never left her country, flies to Belgium, of all places, and on her first day she meets the princess," says Vereecken. "When she spoke in front of everyone, you could see she felt she was speaking for all the women in her country."

The feeling, it seems, was mutual. "When we spoke, just the two of us," Vereecken adds, "we had so much psychology in common. Entrepreneurs in rich and poor countries, they struggle with the same things." ♦

→ www.tinyurl.com/ambassadorsnetwork

JUMP Forum

For the fifth year, Brussels-based women's business organisation JUMP hosts its forum on women in the workplace on 5 May. This year's theme is leadership, emphasising the search for the perfect leadership style depending on just who you're leading. Speakers include Flemish author and business owner Michele Mees, a partner at FEMCO Female Empowerment Consulting and Coaching, and the UK's Peninah Thomson, co-founder of the FTSE 100 Cross-Company Mentoring Programme and author of *A Woman's Place is in the Boardroom*.

Speakers present in English, Dutch or French, with simultaneous translation in all three languages available. As *Flanders Today* went to press, there were still a few places left in the day-long forum.

→ www.forumjump.eu



Leading by example

Martine Reynaers took over the family aluminium business when she was just 29 and has turned it into a world leader

SABINE CLAPPERT

Martine Reynaers obtained her MBA long before it was trendy for women to do so. She graduated from Insead business school in Paris in 1977. About a decade later, she took charge of Reynaers Aluminium, the company founded by her father in 1965. "I was 29 when I became general manager, but back then we were only a small team of 120 people," she shrugs, as if leading 120 people before your 30th birthday is really no big deal at all.

"The way I manage the company has evolved over the years. At first, I was very hands-on. I had daily contact with almost everyone in the company. But that was easier back then; we were only present in Belgium, the Netherlands and Ireland."

As the company grew, going from a local family concern in Duffel, south of Antwerp, to a multinational with offices across Europe, Africa, India, China and Australia, so Reynaers changed the way she managed it. "Growing the company meant I needed to delegate," she explains. "I have always put great importance on setting clear objectives and regular, detailed financial reporting. Guided by these parameters, managers were then expected to develop their own strategies and make sure they realised their objectives."

"We still hear the excuse that there were no suitable women candidates to be found, which is simply not true"

Much has changed since Reynaers (pictured) first took charge of the company, which specialises in architectural aluminium systems, back in the 1980s. She married a Frenchman and has had four children; in 1992 she became the first female director of the business owners' organisation VOKA; and in 1999 she was appointed to the board of the GIMV, Flanders' foremost private equity and venture capital concern.

From 120 to 1,200

Today, Reynaers heads up a multinational with offices in more than 30 countries, 1,200 employees and a turnover of €280 million. "As the company has evolved, so have I," she says. "I think I am now entering my third phase as leader. My aim today is to inspire and motivate people rather than lead the company operationally. I'm surrounded by a strong team with excellent strategic decision-making capabilities, which enables me to move on in my own development as a leader. Now I want to

take time to listen, to inspire people, to give them room to grow and to cultivate talent."

Realising a career as Reynaers has done is no small feat, and having great leaders as examples helps, she admits. "Frans De Roovere, for many years technical director of Reynaers, taught me to give people room but not to leave them rudderless to do just anything."

Reynaers ticks off many leaders that she has found "inspirational" over the years: Herman Daems, former business consultant and current chairman of GIMV; Eric Van Zele, CEO of Barco and current chairman of the Reynaers board; Jos Daniels, former chairman of KBC Insurance and the Reynaers board.

"The most important lessons I learned from these people include the importance of being able to listen and being open to the opinions of others and the difference between convincing others of a certain point of view and mobilising them to help you realise it."

When I point out that she was one of the first women to be appointed to the board of directors of GIMV, long before gender diversity became a part of the mainstream business lingo, Reynaers is quick to give credit to chairman Daems, who she describes as "a person of very good will who has always placed great importance on having women adequately represented in the organisation".

Thumbs up for quotas

Women – or the lack of them – in senior management functions has been high on the agenda throughout Europe of late, with EU Vice President Viviane Reding urging businesses to ensure gender balance throughout their organisations – as well as at management and board levels. What does Reynaers, one of only a handful of women to inhabit the uppermost echelons of Flemish business, think of the hotly debated quota system?

"I completely support it," she states without hesitation. "Far too few women are making it to the top because they are not given the opportunity to get top management functions. All too often one still hears the excuse that there were no suitable candidates to be found, which is simply not true. Yet including women in the talent pool makes simple business sense. By including women we expand the pool significantly, and, as most business people will tell you: Talent is in short supply."

Finding enough talent, according to Reynaers, is one of the great challenges of the 21st century, and if we continue to exclude women from the talent pool, we are setting ourselves up for failure.

"Talent remains scarce," she continues. "People who have the combination of knowledge, ambition and the drive to deliver results – that is not easy to find. If we don't consider women, which is only the first step in diversity, how will we ever



consider people of different generations, or from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds?"

The 21st century is fraught with challenges for Belgian business, from sky-high wage costs and an unstable European economic climate to the continually changing demands of boisterous emerging markets and the constant pressure on innovation and production costs. What makes a good leader in these uncertain times?

"A good leader remains calm and focused and doesn't lose sight of the long-term goal," says Reynaers. "But that's not always easy, especially in the face of massive financial unrest such as we saw in the second half of 2008. When the global economic crisis first erupted to shake the foundations beneath our feet, there was so much uncertainty. Nobody knew what to expect, and many companies probably focused too much on short-term profitability at the expense of long-term vision."

Keeping the company on course through uncertain times and making sure it continues to flourish is a personal commitment Reynaers appears to take very seriously.

"It is part of who I am," she confides. "I am very result-driven. I don't want to disappoint anybody. Most of our clients are entrepreneurs, hard-working and completely committed to their businesses. I don't ever want to disappoint the trust they have in this company."

Although her company is global, they are still based in Duffel. "I think Flanders is a very interesting region, with many talented people," says Reynaers, "and I want to make a positive contribution to that. This is my heritage. This is where it all began, and I want to give something back to that."♦

► www.reynaers.be

Rail report criticised

NMBS spends €1 million on “obvious” analysis, says union

ALAN HOPE

The rail authority NMBS has described a consultancy report that cost €1 million as “very worthwhile” amid criticisms that it contains nothing that the industry doesn’t already know. The report was commissioned by the NMBS, which operates the trains on Belgium’s railways, and Infrabel, which operates the rail infrastructure. Global consulting firm Arthur D Little was asked to come up with ways in which train punctuality could be improved; the increase in the number

of late trains is seen as one of the most severe problems the industry is facing in the coming years. The resulting report contains more than 100 recommendations, which, according to Jos Digneffe of public workers’ union ACOD, “basically come down to one thing: more cooperation between the NMBS and Infrabel. In other words, the split was a stupid idea.”

Infrabel split off from the NMBS in 2005. “In 2004 93% of trains

were running on time – after that, the figures started falling year after year,” Digneffe says. “Then it all went wrong. The split was the cause of all the problems. I’ve been saying that for years. Apparently it takes €1 million of taxpayers’ money to reinvent the railways. Arthur D Little is being paid for writing down what should have been obvious to everyone.”

“The cost of the study is not as important as its interest,” said a spokesman for the NMBS. “An external

company was brought in so that they could bring their own analysis to the situation, from a whole new angle. We’re too deeply involved here.” The report, according to Infrabel, gives a good oversight, but the company has not waited for its conclusions to begin implementing changes. “We’re hard at work – for example, with the renewal of overhead cables in and around Brussels,” the spokesman said. “We want to see improvements in the short term.” ♦

Ghent withdraws funds from high-bonus banks

After the apparent failure of resolutions against high bonuses for top bankers, passed by the federal and Flemish governments, the city of Ghent last week took its own steps to protest the issue, by withdrawing some €30 million from accounts at KBC and Dexia. The two banks had received government support at the time of the financial crisis in 2009; both have still to pay back some of that aid, and both have recently paid their top executives lavish bonuses. KBC’s Jan Vanhevel received almost €500,000, Dexia’s Pierre Mariani €600,000, not to mention the newly minted “function premium” of €200,000 (see *Flanders Today*, 13 April).

“We’re putting the banks on notice because we as a city administration want to send a powerful signal that we will not stand for unreasonable bonuses for top executives,” explained the city’s alderman for financial affairs, Christophe Peeters. “When it was going badly for the banks, the government intervened using taxpayers’ money, and now that the situation is better, it’s straight back to the bonus culture. We’re not just saying it’s ethically incorrect, we’re doing something about it. This is consumer power, and we’re speaking the language of money,” Peeters said.

The first step is to withdraw money that is held in the two banks in short-term accounts of between one and three months. The council, meanwhile, is said to be considering further steps. Those might include switching longer-term investments to smaller banks or those, like ING, that do not pay out huge bonuses. The city has also asked its legal services to look into the possibility of including an ethical clause in new contracts for banks that handle the city’s payroll, which is worth some €250 million a year. ♦



Voting with the city's wallet: Christophe Peeters

Telenet confuses customers in Balen

Clients of Telenet’s digital TV service in the area of Balen, Antwerp province, were shocked earlier this month to receive a letter asking them to volunteer for an “experiment” that would have them turn in their Telenet smartcard and remote control to see if they could live for a month without their digital TV. “Don’t do it. There are fraudsters at work,” the company’s customer service department told reporter Saskia Van Gestel of *De Standaard*, who received one such letter. “A company is trying to get their hands on smartcards to be able to download films at your expense,” Telenet explained. “We are putting together a file of the complaints of everyone who’s experienced this.”

Jobs news

The month of March saw almost **30,000 job vacancies** reported to the Flemish employment agency VDAB, the highest monthly total for five years, and 13% higher than the same time last year, when the labour market was seen to be starting a recovery. In the first quarter, the numbers were almost a quarter higher than the previous year. The biggest demand is for graduates, engineers, IT technicians and warehouse staff.

Agoria, the industry federation for the technology sector, has launched a **campaign to attract more women into tech jobs**. According to the federation’s own survey, nine out of 10 businesses would be interested in employing more women in technical functions. Agoria plans a special event at Tour & Taxis in Brussels on 25 May.

→ www.agoria.be

The average Belgian **works for just over seven hours a day** – 227 minutes for pay, and 200 minutes unpaid (errands, studying, housework, etc) – the shortest working day of all 34 members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Belgians spend more time relaxing (5.4 hours a day compared to the average of 4.8) but spend less time with their children than almost everyone: 3 hours a day, compared with an average of four hours, and the third-lowest time in the OECD.

→ www.oecd.org/els/social/indicators/SAG



The Schelde brewery in Hoogstraten, Antwerp province, has reached an agreement with the Halve Maan brewery in Bruges to change the name of its Straffe Toeback beer to ‘n Toeback. Halve Maan has been producing the well-known Straffe Hendrik tripel and quadrupel since 1981. Straffe Toeback, on the other hand, is a newcomer to the market, dating from 2009, when customers took part in a competition to find a name. Schelde will now change its marketing materials to reflect the new name and delete the trade name Straffe Toeback from the register.

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Banking • Dexia

Belgo-French Dexia, specialised in the financing of local authorities, has received several takeover proposals for its 66% share in its Israeli-based affiliate. The offer values Dexia’s stake at some €120 million. The move is part of the bank’s restructuring forced by the European Commission for agreeing a rescue package in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

Biotech • Galapagos

The share price of biotech company Galapagos plummeted 24% on the stock market on Friday, 15 April, after an announcement that the company would stop developing their rheumatism remedy GLPG0259, which is in its Phase II clinical trials, a relatively late stage on the road to approval for drugs.

Economy • Savings up

The total amount deposited in savings accounts in Belgium was again higher in February, reaching a record €218 billion. The increase has been uninterrupted since October 2008 when the amount was €142.5 billion.

Property • AG

AG Real Estate, the country’s largest property group, has signed a partnership agreement with the Antwerp-based Vooruitzicht developer to build some 1,050 apartments and 450 houses in Antwerp.

Telecom • Belgacom

The IT services company Telindus, a Belgacom affiliate, has paid €12 million to take over the French Eudasys, a leading data storage company. Meanwhile, Belgacom has taken over The Phone House, a mobile phone retail chain, for €22 million. The takeover of the 114 Phone House shops will bring Belgacom’s services closer to the customer, the company said. The Phone House, a joint venture between Best Buy and Carphone Warehouse, will continue to trade under its own name.

Telecom • Red Bull

The Austrian drinks group Red Bull has signed a partnership agreement with the local Mobistar operator to launch a pre-paid telephone card aimed at the youth market.

Temping • Actief Interim

Actief Interim has been taken over by the Gilde Equity Management Benelux investment fund. Actief operates 51 outlets in Flanders and is one of the largest firms in the temporary work sector.

Textiles • Sioen

Sioen, a leading producer of fine chemicals and high-tech protective clothing, based in Ardooie, East Flanders, is selling its Roland International truck curtains and tarpaulins affiliate to an unnamed local transport group.

Alternative realities

Flanders' fashion museums unravel the past to discover the future

STÉPHANIE DUVAL

One of the most extraordinary aspects of the exhibitions at Flanders' two fashion museums is witnessing that border where fashion ends and art starts. And when that process is reversed, it's all the more fascinating.

Yet controversy on the subject continues. The line between art and fashion is a fine one, say some. The difference between them is irreconcilable, argue others.

Antwerp's Fashion Museum (MoMu) will have you firmly believing in the former. Zooming in on a well-known technique that is growing ever more popular, *Unravel: Knitwear in Fashion* exposes the different identities of knitwear led by a variety of creative visions throughout the history of fashion. Stepping away from the traditional build-up as a chronological timeline, *Unravel* mixes historical pieces with original and modern interpretations.

The museum shows us the work of the first knitting machines, iconic pieces from the 1920s and the revolutionary role knitwear played in the 1960s, as well as groundbreaking work by contemporary designers like Sweden's Sandra Backlund, whose knitwear takes on architectural dimensions, Canada's Mark Fast and Flanders' own Martin Margiela, whose deconstructive approach to knitwear could easily have inspired the title of the exhibition.

Typical of the MoMu is a bit of comedy, this time in the form of Angelo Figus' "Supermarket of Style". The Antwerp Academy alumnus and creative director of Italian fashion trade fair Pitti Filati created



From the *Skinthetic Redux* series by New York design duo KnоЩear

this knitted world of fashionable objects in 2004, to predict the trends of 2006. One wonders whether he had any idea that the foreboding nature of his work would be such that its technique would not reach the height of its influence until 2011.

Back to the future

Looking into the future is also what the designers on show at the Modemuseum

Hasselt did. *Alter Nature: The Future That Never Was* offers a comprehensive view on the work of Pierre Cardin, André Courrèges, Rudi Gernreich and Paco Rabanne, who were all part of the so-called Space Age '60s. Experimenting with new shapes, materials and technologies, they cast a light on what fashion could be in the future and were a tremendous source of inspiration to the generations of designers that followed them.

Technological innovations have remained a huge influence on the way fashion is shaped and interpreted. Most recently, evolutions in biotechnology have contributed to the discovery of new techniques and materials that take nature and ecology into consideration. The exhibition therefore also showcases more modern work by designers who have incorporated a "greener" vision into their designs, including Britain's Christopher Raeburn, who works with recuperated materials, and English eco-warrior Katharine Hamnett.

Hasselt art centres Z33 and CIAP coincidentally have put together projects examining the way nature influences art, focusing on the ecological and ethical philosophies of many contemporary designers. Kenneth Ramaekers, curator of the fashion museum, considers both projects a window on the same theme. "We've supported each other's initiatives, and we've worked together to come out stronger. I think for visitors it's so much more interesting to be able to look at the bigger picture."

And there is even more to admire in Hasselt at the moment, as the main hall of the fashion museum is dedicated to *My Way*, a showcase of the extravagant work

of Antwerp jewellery designer Daniël Von Weinberger. "Daniël works on the border between art, design and fashion," says Ramaekers. "His creations are therefore often included in contemporary art museums."

Von Weinberger was given carte blanche to transform the main hall into his fairytale-like universe, filled with his colourful trademark felt designs. Ramaekers perfectly sums it up: "He is a most extraordinary artist."



Daniël Von Weinberger's "jewellery"

Unravel: Knitwear in Fashion

Until 14 August
MoMu, Nationalestraat 28
Antwerp

→ www.momu.be

Alter Nature: The Future That Never Was My Way: Daniël Von Weinberger

Until 5 June
Modemuseum Hasselt
Gasthuisstraat 11

→ www.modemuseumhasselt.be



British actress Tilda Swinton in Sandra Backlund knitwear



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LUNCH WITH LARGER-THAN-LIFE PENSIONS MINISTER MICHEL HAAKSEN
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Give a little, gain a lot

Flanders has one of the most unique agreements with Unesco in the world

ANNA JENKINSON

On 11 March, when the devastating earthquake and tsunami hit Japan, experts in Ostend sprang into action. That might sound a bit strange, but, though it's a long way from Japan, Ostend is home to a Unesco project office whose work plays a major role in researching and monitoring the world's oceans.

After the earthquake, workers at the Flanders Marine Institute made sure that their online facility for monitoring sea levels around the globe was up-to-date and ready for an anticipated surge in visitors. "There was a crisis atmosphere here in the building," says Jan Mees, director of the institute, which works together with the Unesco office on many projects, including this one, known as the Sea Level Station Monitoring Facility.

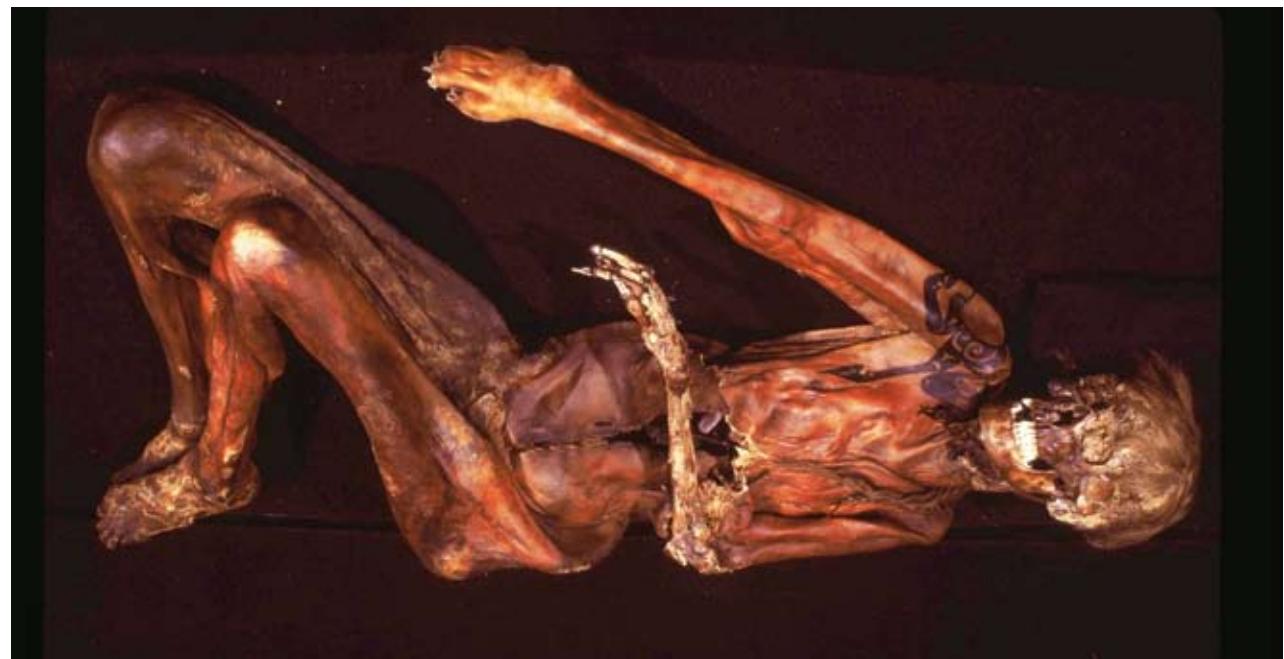
"We heard about the earthquake through the media like everyone else, and then we started closely following the tsunami warning system from Hawaii," Mees says. "There was lots of interaction with the project office, ensuring that the data was coming in and that the system was stable."

The website, which usually receives about 40,000 hits a day, attracted 10 times that amount on 11 March and nearly three million hits the following day as people followed the tsunami news. (www.ioc-sealevelmonitoring.org)

The Sea Level Station Monitoring Facility was established in the wake of the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004. Around the same time, Unesco was looking for an office outside of its home base in Paris for its International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange programme (IODE). As it happened, the Flanders Marine Institute in Ostend had recently moved into a new, modern centre with plenty of space. And so in 2005 the Unesco project office moved in, and the Ostend base was opened.

The Flemish government allocates €600,000 a year to the office, whose activities also include training experts, cooperating with other international organisations and participating in EU projects such as SeaDataNet, a pan-European marine data management infrastructure.

Flanders' backing for Unesco (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) projects is not limited to the marine world. The region supports a wide range of cultural, educational and scientific endeavours, such as the use of photo novels to raise awareness about AIDS in southern Africa, a historical restoration project in Ilha de Moçambique and drawing up an inventory of oral traditions, rituals and traditional skills in African countries to help increase the recognition of their intangible cultural heritage.



Ghent University partnered with Unesco for the project "The Frozen Graves of the Scythians", in which satellite images are used to pinpoint finds in one of the world's most valuable archaeological sites before global warming completely destroys the permafrost that has preserved the sites for more than 2,000 years

In Unesco's Top 10

The partnership between Flanders and Unesco dates back to 1998 when they signed a cooperation agreement. A year later, the Flanders Unesco Science Trust Fund (FUST) was set up to finance scientific projects, and in 2001 the Flemish Unesco Trust Fund (FUT) for other policy areas followed. The Flemish government contributes €1.4 million a year to FUST and €1 million every two years to FUT, making it among the 10 most important bilateral donors of Unesco in terms of Funds-in-Trust extra-budgetary contributions.

"Unesco is one of the most relevant organisations for us," says Kristof Vandenbergh of the Flemish department of foreign affairs, because education and culture are policy areas of the country's communities, rather than federal competences. Science is a mixed competence and therefore also falls within the Flemish Region's powers.

Since the 1993 state reform in Belgium, which established, among other things, the *in foro interno, in foro externo* principle, regions have been able to pursue their own foreign policy in areas for which they are competent. It was this principle that allowed Flanders to sign the agreement with Unesco, one of the latter's rare international agreements with a sub-state entity.

"It was a unique opportunity to establish an international reputation, to put Flanders on the map," Vandenbergh says.

Some may question why Flanders is funding educational, scientific and cultural projects in far-flung corners of the world, while funding here for cultural projects, for instance, is facing cuts. "Some challenges that face us cannot be tackled at a Flemish level or even at a national level," explains Vandenbergh, citing as an example the collection of ocean data, which predicts weather patterns, El Niño, harvests in Africa and tsunamis. "It's our duty to provide expertise and financial means," he says. "For the good of all, the larger goal."

Maintaining urban integrity

The focus of FUT, the more general trust fund, was sharpened last year because the money was being spread too thinly, supporting too many projects in too many places. A 2009 assessment showed the fund's most important aspect to be heritage, including cultural, natural and intangible. So this has become FUT's new focus.

At the same time, the geographical focus was narrowed to countries in the Southern African Development Community, bringing it more in line with the areas in which Flanders does international development work.

One of the FUT's most recent undertakings is its involvement with Unesco's World Heritage Cities project, which aims to tackle the global challenge of how to reconcile modernisations and investments in historic cities. The project seeks to work out a methodology to preserve urban heritage, using African cities (such as Lamu in Kenya, Stonetown in Tanzania and Ilha de Moçambique in Mozambique) as test cases and come up with an instrument that can be applied internationally.

The project is of direct relevance to Flanders, not least because

of the World Heritage status enjoyed by the historical centre of Bruges. As cities develop, civic leaders have to bear in mind how to maintain their historic character and identity or they risk losing their place on the Unesco World Heritage list, which happened to the German city of Dresden in 2009 after building a bridge over the Elbe that experts considered an intrusive element in the landscape.

Making history with Africa

Another new FUT initiative is its leading role in the World Heritage Marine Programme, which aims to preserve natural areas against exploitation and pollution. "Natural reserves are equally important, but underrepresented," says Vandenbergh. Specific threats to marine heritage include coral bleaching, pollution and unsustainable tourism. Flanders focuses on the coastal areas of Southeast Africa, which reinforces the work done under the science trust fund, active in the same region. The marine focus also allows Unesco to use the experts from the Flanders Marine Institute and the IODE project office in Ostend.

One particular IODE project supported by the Flemish Region is the Ocean Data and Information Network for Africa, a project that only started in 2009 but has already produced real results. "For the first time in its history, Africa now has a system to establish tide gauges," explains Mees. Before the network was established, there was a lack of tide data from the African continent, which meant a lack of reliable information about the Indian Ocean. "Now, Africa is an integral part of the tsunami warning system for the Indian Ocean," he notes. "For a small amount of money, we have made a huge difference in parts of the world where few invest."

→ <http://fust.iode.org>

The new website www.unesco.flanders.be will be up and running in the coming week



Flanders has prioritised the protection of marine biology and the monitoring of tides as part of its cooperation agreement with Unesco



Flanders supported the protection, digitisation and distribution of the Nelson Mandela documents as part of the Memory of the World programme

Of flesh and blood

In a few weeks, 1,700 people of Bruges stage the only Unesco-recognised procession in honour of the blood of Christ

DENZIL WALTON

Its cooperation with Unesco has Flanders supporting projects from Africa to Peru, but its own list of Unesco-recognised monuments and heritage is vast. One of the best known is Bruges, whose entire city centre is a Unesco World Heritage Site.

Bruges is also home, every Ascension Day, to the Procession of the Holy Blood, a Unesco-recognised event. The centrepiece of this ceremony, which draws up to 100,000 spectators, is a vial containing the coagulated blood of Christ.

Seriously? How did a 2,000-year-old blood-stained cloth from Jerusalem end up in Bruges?

Circa 33 AD

After the body of Jesus Christ is taken down from the cross, Joseph of Arimathea wipes the Saviour's wounds with a cloth, which he then carefully guards. (In another story, he fills two cruets with the actual blood of Christ, one of them possibly being the cup from the Last Supper – also known as the Holy Grail.)

1150

On 7 April, Thierry of Alsace, a Count of Flanders, arrives in Bruges, accompanied by his wife, Sybilla of Anjou, and Leonius, Abbot of Saint Bertin's abbey of Saint Omar. Thierry has returned from the Holy Land. In his possession is a portion of Joseph's blood-stained cloth. Thierry has received it – with the approval of the patriarch of Jerusalem – from his brother-in-law, Baldwin III of Anjou, King of Jerusalem, as reward for his exceptional heroism. Thierry brings the relic to the Basilus chapel in Bruges, a chapel that he himself had built.

This is one possible source for the relic in Bruges. However, there is another possibility...



United by blood

When Unesco recognised the procession of the Holy Blood as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, it was described as "a ceremony that for centuries has played an important role in expressing the identity of Bruges' inhabitants and in facilitating encounters with people from outside the city. Participants are a representative cross-section of ages, families and communities. Some inhabitants have participated for 40 or 50 years, and émigrés often return for 'Bruges' Finest Day'. The Procession is a vibrant example of how a collective ceremony can unite a city through ritual enactment of its history and beliefs."

Our blood is not alone

Bruges isn't the only city claiming to have a relic of the blood of Christ. There are a few sites in Europe with vials of their own, including the Sant'Andrea Basilica in Mantua, Italy, and the Weingarten abbey in Germany, which also both stage annual processions. Bruges is the only procession recognised as world heritage by Unesco.

1203

During the fourth crusade, Constantinople falls into the hands of the crusaders. Baldwin IX, a Count of Flanders, is chosen as new emperor. He sends looted relics to Flanders, and particularly to Bruges, where his daughters, Johanna and Margaretha, are in charge. Could one of these relics be the Holy Blood of Bruges? The manner in which the rock-crystal flask is cut indicates an origin in Constantinople.

1256

This is the date of the oldest document concerning a relic of the Holy Blood in Bruges. The gap of a century casts doubt on Thierry's story.

1291

The first procession is held to celebrate the relic of the Holy Blood in Bruges, as mentioned in the Charter of the Unloaders' Guild.

1303

As the relic is regarded as property of the city, the procession becomes a civic event. The guilds of Bruges are obliged to participate, as well as artisans, marksmen, city councillors and clergy marching in all their splendour with the relic around the city walls.

1310

The Bruges city council combines the two weeks of festivities around the Holy Blood with the city's month-long Annual Fair, thus immediately swelling the popularity of the event.

1400

The Noble Brotherhood of the Holy Blood is founded. Its purpose is to safeguard the relic and to further its veneration. Its 31 members must be resident in Bruges and be "honourable people". The Provost is recognised by his rich neck chain; the Brothers wear a black silken tabard on which is embroidered a pelican feeding her young with her own blood. This is a symbol of Christ commonly seen in Bruges.

1578

A processional route around the city is agreed, which has been kept to this day. In the 15th and 16th centuries, profane scenes with giants, the mythical Bayard Horse and the so-called chambers of rhetoric (dramatic societies) of Bruges are added to the biblical scenes and mystery plays.

Post-1578

Bruges has a Calvinist regime. The procession is banned, and the relic is taken to a safe place.

Early 17th century

The procession is re-commenced with even greater splendour giving it a triumphal aspect.

1617

The currently used receptacle for the Holy Blood is constructed. It's set with hundreds of precious stones, including the Black Diamond from Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland.



1798-1819

During French rule, the procession is temporarily abolished and the relic transferred to a safe haven.

20th century

A continual variety of changes in the themes and the presentations are introduced as the event increases in international popularity.

2008

Martin McDonagh's hit movie *In Bruges* draws attention to the Holy Blood relic. Two London-based hitmen, in hiding in Bruges, familiarise themselves with local sights, including, in one amusing scene, a visit to the Holy Blood.

2009

The Procession of the Holy Blood in Bruges is added to the Unesco list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

2 June, 2011

The procession is led by the "honourable people" of the Noble Brotherhood of the Holy Blood, accompanied by brass bands, hundreds of tableaux, floats and more than 1,700 citizens re-enacting stories in three parts. The first consists of scenes from the Old and New Testaments; the second shows the 1150 return of Thierry of Alsace to Bruges; the third is the procession of the Holy Blood relic itself.

The relic is carried by two prelates, surrounded by four members of the Noble Brotherhood and attended by dignitaries of church and state. The procession concludes with prayers in several languages. The relic is then enshrined once more in the Basilica of the Holy Blood, where it is displayed each Friday, before and after the mass. ♦

The Procession of the Holy Blood

2 June, from 14.30

Across the centre of Bruges

Special masses and daily displays of the Holy Blood take place in the weeks leading up to the procession. Check the website for details

→ www.holyblood.com

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Great American journey WILLY VLAUTIN

LISA BRADSHAW

Willy Vlautin is an author and musician by trade, but he's a jockey in his soul. It would be easy to mistake him for just another gambler, sitting out of the way behind a monitor at Portland Meadows, a horse racetrack in the US state of Oregon, were it not for the novel he's writing on his laptop at the same time.

New Yorkers might go to a coffee house, but writers from America's wild west are cut from a different cloth.

Vlautin's new book, just translated into Dutch, is partly set right here at this racetrack, a glamorous hotspot in decades past, hosting thousands of the well-heeled from around the region. Now it's faded, with broken-down grandstands and second-rate horses.

The horse in Vlautin's book is called *Lean on Pete*, named after a real-live race horse. "I just love that name," Vlautin said recently in an interview. "And I've won on it a few times."

In *Lean on Pete*, a 15-year-old boy is hired on at the race track to care for horses, which sounds like a dream job but proves to be nothing but disillusioning. As Vlautin himself learned more and more about horse racing, he discovered its seamier side of exploitation and outright abuse of both horses and jockeys. "When

you're a fan, you fall in love with something, and you want to learn more about it," he said. "But sometimes the more you learn about something, the rougher and weirder it gets."

And so it goes for Charley, the teenage son of a single father who moves them around every few months while he skips from warehouse job to warehouse job, goes out on benders and gets in trouble with husbands of loose women. Charley has spent his life fending for himself and yet still longs for a sense of normalcy and security.

Eventually Charley ends up alone – his only friend in the world the race horse *Lean on Pete*. When

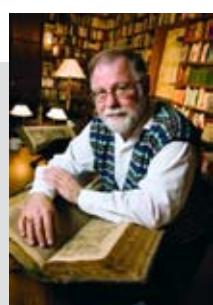
Pete suffers a disease of the legs, Charley knows full well what will happen, so he steals the horse and heads east across rural Oregon, with no money and very little in the way of a plan. His ultimate destination is Wyoming, to find the only relative he's ever known. *Lean on Pete* is his third novel, and Vlautin is regularly compared to John Steinbeck and Flannery O'Connor, authors who live within the margins themselves but seem quite familiar with those on the outside. Charley's journey is peppered with trailer dwellers, truck drivers and the working poor – the kind of people

urbanites in fact forget even exist in modern American society. Vlautin is also a guitarist and lead vocalist of the band Richmond Fontaine, whose lyrics also seem to belong more in a short story than in a song. Their country rock breaks free from the traditions of the genre with occasional trumpet and piano, becoming a kind of orchestral Americana. Both English and Dutch versions of *Lean on Pete* will be available at the Groene Waterman in Antwerp, where Kevin Major of culture website CuttingEdge.be will chat with Vlautin and join the audience listening to him read from the book. He's also promised to bring his guitar. ♦

28 April, 20.00

De Groene Waterman
Wolstraat 7, Antwerp

→ www.borderkitchen.be



MORE LITERATURE THIS WEEK

Alberto Manguel → *Passa Porta*, Brussels

Lieve Hoet (ages 8+) → *'t Uilekot*, Herzele

Steven van Watermeulen → *NTGent*, Ghent

Gorki • 26 April

Ever-popular Flemish rock band Gorki releases its new album *Research & Development* with a concert at the AB → www.abconcerts.be



FLANDERS TODAY
APRIL 20, 2011



Antwerp

Arenbergschouwburg
Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192
www.arenbergschouwburg.be
APR 21 21.00 Blaxtar+ Jadiis
APR 22 20.30 Boyce Avenue

CC Berchem
Driekoningenstraat 126; 03.286.88.44
www.ccbe.be
APR 22 20.30 Boom Boom Pow

Kelly's Irish Pub
Keyserlei 27
www.kellys.be
APR 21-22 22.00 Take the biscuit

Petrol
Herbouvillekaai 21; 03.226.49.63
www.petrolclub.be
APR 22 19.30 Don't Forget Gaza

Sportpaleis
Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be
APR 26 & 28 14.30 Houden van...
Griffelrock 2011, featuring Koen Crucke, Dana Winner, Ingeborg, more

Toneelhuis/Bourla
Komedieplaats 18; 03.224.88.44
www.toneelhuis.be
APR 20 20.00 Jonathan Meese

Trix
Noorderingel 28; 03.670.09.00
www.trixonline.be
APR 20 19.30 J Mascis (Dinosaur Jr) **APR 21** 20.00 Title featuring Delvis + Fete Royal + Mr Crumbone **APR 22** 19.30 Gabriel Rios with Jef Neve and Kobe Proesmans. 20.00 Tom Pintens + Cole Park **APR 23** 15.00 Bodybeats Fest featuring Leather Strip + Motor + Spetsnaz + more **APR 24** 19.00 Kamelot + Evergrey + Amaranthe + Sons of Seasons. 19.30 Nitzer Ebb + Die Krupps **APR 26** 19.30 The Atomic Bitchwax + Naam + Quest for Fire + Mirror Queen **APR 28** 19.00 Blackfield

Bruges

Cactus Club@MaZ
Magdalenstraat 27; 050.33.20.14
www.cactusmusic.be
APR 22 20.00 Intergalactic Lovers + Puggy

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be
Concerts at 20.00:
APR 20 Tom Pintens. Stromae **APR 24** Balthazar **APR 26** Gorki **APR 27** Medi **APR 27-28** Milow + Martin & James **APR 28** Bruno Deneckere

Beursschouwburg
August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50
www.beursschouwburg.be
APR 20 21.00 S.H.O.W.: The Wrong

Café Central
Borgval 14; 0486.72.26.24
www.leafcentral.com
APR 27 21.00 Little Absences

Fuse
Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
www.fuse.be
APR 23 23.00 17 years Fuse party featuring Adam Beyer + Motor City Drum Ensemble + Nathan Oye

K-NAL
Havenlaan 1; 0474.04.00.00
www.k-nal.be
APR 23 23.00 Soulclap vs Wolf & Lamb + Villa

LR6
Hoogstraat 204; 02.830.21.27
APR 22-23 21.00 Mary M
APR 27 20.00 Head in Body + No Pavarotti + Bear Bones + Lay Low

Le Botanique
Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
www.botanique.be
APR 26 Beardyman
APR 27 Joyce Jonathan
APR 28 Rainbow Arabia

Magasin 4
Havenlaan 51B; 02.223.34.74
www.magasin4.be
APR 20 19.00 Oxes + x25x + Maria Goretti

GET YOUR
TICKETS NOW!

Lady Linn and Her Magnificent Seven

19 & 20 May
Brussels & Ghent

Sure to sell out are the two album release parties of this Flemish big band octet with bite, back with its second album, *No Goodbye at All*, which releases later this month. The jumping new single "Cry Baby" finds Lady Linn's (aka Lien De Greef) voice in superb form and suggests the hundreds of thousands of die-hard fans of the first album, which was on the Flemish charts for 106 weeks and went platinum, will not be disappointed.



→ www.ladylinn.be

Quartet **APR 22** 19.30 Pentagram + Rise And Fall + In Solitude + Hypnos **APR 23** 19.30 Brussels Reggae Masters **APR 24** 19.30 Soilent Green + Today is The Day + Rwake + more **APR 26** 19.30 Ovo + Extra Life + Joy as a Toy **APR 28** 19.30 W.A.N.E. + 5easydays + The Whale + Obvious

Recyclart
Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
www.recyclart.be
APR 22 19.00 La Clinik du Dr Poembak + Rambi Bambo + Los Trogos

Tour & Taxis
Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49
www.tour-taxis.com
APR 23 20.00 Heart for Music: Dub FX

VK Club
Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07
www.vkconcerts.be
APR 20 21.00 The Soundtrack Of Our Lives

Vorst-Nationaal
Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991
www.forestnational.be
APR 24 20.00 Cali

Ghent
Charlatan
Vlasmarkt 6; 09.224.24.57
www.charlatan.be
APR 20 20.00 Hannah Peel + Vinz
APR 27 20.00 The Cadillac Bombers

Vooruit
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
APR 26 20.00 Arno

White Cat
Dongenhoof 40; 09.223.22.27
www.white-cat.be
APR 23 21.00 Out There with...Andy Votel

Hasselt
Muziekodroom
Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13
www.muziekodroom.be
APR 22 20.00 Claudia Guaraci + Bab + Barefoot & Shoes

Kortrijk
De Kreun
Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44
www.dekreun.be
APR 26 20.00 Deerhoof

Agenda

FLANDERS TODAY
APRIL 20, 2011

Leuven

Het Depot
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
www.hetdepot.be
APR 27 20.00 The Sore Losers + Sherman
APR 28 20.00 The Subs + Teddiedrum



Antwerp

Buster
Kaasru 1; 03.232.51.53
www.busterpodium.be
APR 19 21.30 The Moonshine Playboys

Rataplan

Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
www.rataplanvzw.be
APR 21 20.30 Robin Verheyen & Aki Rissanen
APR 23 20.30 Tijgers van Eufraat

Brussels

Atelier 210
Sint-Pieterssteenweg 210; 02.732.25.98
www.atelier210.be
APR 27 21.00 Faustine Hollander

Café Roskam

Vlaanderenstraat 9; 02.503.51.54
www.cafe-roskam.be
APR 24 20.00 Mâak's Spirit

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20
www.flagey.be
APR 22 20.00 Mâak's Spirit
APR 28 20.00 Trio Grande + Matthew Bourne

Le Cercle des Voyageurs

Lievevrouwersstraat 18; 02.514.39.49
www.elercledesvoyageurs.com
APR 23 20.00 Mâak's Spirit
APR 26 19.30 Frederik Lebeer

Le Chat-Pitre

Notarisstraat 1; 0475.63.11.77
www.myspace.com/chapitre
APR 20 20.00 Remember Frank?
APR 27 20.00 The Full Monky

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
www.recycleart.be
APR 22 21.00 La Clinique du Docteur Poemback + Rambi Bambo

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50
www.soundsjazzclub.be
Concerts at 22.00:
APR 21 Michel Hatzigeorgiou, 23.30 Mess Trio
APR 22 Remember Frank? **APR 23** Pierre de Surgères and the Groovy Mates
APR 25 Master Session Michael Blass **APR 26** Borderline Quartet APR 27-28 Octurn 5

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusicvillage.com
APR 20 20.30 Ipocontrio **APR 22** 21.00 Erik Bogaerts Quartet **APR 23** 21.00 The N.O. Train Jazz Band **APR 27** 20.30 Wow **APR 28** 20.30 Sander DW Group

Théâtre du Méridien

Terhulpensteenweg 200; 02.663.32.11
www.theatredumeridien.be
APR 26-30 20.30 Manuel Hermia Quintet

Ghent

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
APR 28 20.15 Jef Neve & Pascal Schumacher



Antwerp

De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
APR 21 20.30 Kocani Orkestar
APR 22 20.30 Yevgueni

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be
APR 21 20.30 Gilzene & The Blue Light

Mento Band
APR 22 20.30 Apsilis
APR 23 20.30 Octurn & Gyuto-monks

Brussels

Théâtre Molière
Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00
www.muziekpubliek.be
APR 22 20.00 Zongora (Balkan)
APR 23 20.00 Rosa Zaragoza (Spain) & Hijaz

Ghent

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
APR 23 20.15 Yevgueni

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
APR 21 22.00 Sons of Noel and Adrian
APR 24 20.00 Noche de Amor, latin dance party



Antwerp

De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
APR 28 20.30 Huelgas Ensemble conducted by Paul Van Nevel: The Art of the Cigar, cigar-related music from the 15th to 20th centuries

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
www.desingel.be
APR 23 20.00 Vlaamse Opera orchestra and choirs conducted by Dmitri Jurowski and Yannis Pouspourikas: Beethoven's Missa Solemnis
APR 27 20.00 Ricercar Consort conducted by Philippe Pierlot: Bach's Saint John Passion

Bruges

Concertgebouw
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
www.concertgebouw.be
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 20 20.00 Ricercar Consort conducted by Philippe Pierlot: Bach's Saint John Passion
APR 23 19.30 Octopus Chamber Choir & Baroque Orchestra conducted by Bart Van Reyn: Bach's Saint Matthew Passion
APR 27 20.00 Nelson Freire, piano: Mendelssohn, Brahms, Prokofiev, more

Miniemerk

Miniemerkenstraat 62; 02.511.93.84
www.miniemen.net
APR 22 22.00 Il Suonar Parlante conducted by Vittorio Ghielmi: Mathieu Aubéry

Royal Music Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37
www.kcb.be
APR 26 20.00 Elbipolis Orchestra: Graupner, Telemann, more

Ghent

De Bijloke
Jozef Kluykensstraat 2; 09.269.92.92
www.debijloke.be
APR 22 20.00 Vlaamse Opera orchestra and choirs conducted by Dmitri Jurowski and Yannis Pouspourikas: Beethoven's Missa Solemnis



Antwerp

Vlaamse Opera
Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02
www.vlaamseopera.be
APR 27-MAY 8 15.00/19.00 Richard Strauss' Die Frau ohne Schatten, conducted by Alexander Joel, staged by Marco Marelli (in the original German with surtitles in Dutch)



Brussels

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

Les Brigitines

Korte Brigittenstraat 1; 02.213.86.10
www.brigitines.be
Until APR 23 20.30 David, choreographed by Ayelen Parolin

Théâtre National

Emile Jacqmainlaan 115; 02.203.41.55
www.theatrenational.be
APR 28-30 20.15 Royal Ballet of Flanders in Artifact, choreographed by William Forsythe

Kortrijk

Kunstencentrum Buda
Broeklaai 1B; 056.22.10.01
www.budakortrijk.be
APR 22 20.00 Mylène Benoit, Olivier Normand and Passerelle in ICI, dance

Turnhout

De Warande
Warandestraat 42; 014.41.69.91
www.warande.be
APR 27 20.15 Needcompany in This Door is Too Small (For a Bear), choreographed by Grace Ellen Barkey



Antwerp

Fakkeltreater Theatercafé
Hoogstraat 12; 070.246.036
www.fakkeltreater.be
Until MAY 29 12.00-14.00 Hotel Vocal: musical theatre with Sam Verhoeven, Ann Van den Broeck, Jelle Cleymans, more

Monty

Montignystraat 3-5; 03.238.91.81
www.monty.be
APR 28-30 20.30 mightysoociety9, written and directed by Eric de Vroedt (in Dutch)

Brussels

Bronkstheater
Varkensmarkt 15; 02.219.99.21
www.bronks.be
APR 28 20.00 Lazarus in Het uur van de waarheid (The Hour of Truth) (ages 17 and up; in Dutch)

Dilbeek

Westrand CC
Kamerijklaan; 02.466.20.30
www.westrand.be
APR 21 19.30 Toneelmakerij in Fanny and Alexander, based on the Ingmar Bergman film (ages 8 and up, in Dutch)

Ghent

NTGent Schouwburg
Sint-Baafsklein 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.artinthalofus.be
Until MAY 8 Art in All Of Us, photographs of children around the world by Anthony Asael and Stéphanie Rabemafara

Extra City

Tulpstraat 79; 03.677.16.55
www.extracity.org

DON'T MISS

Art Brussels

28 April to 1 May
Brussels Expo

The biggest contemporary art sale in Belgium found more than 450 international galleries vying for a spot. A final tally of 170 were selected, including around 40 from Belgium, ensuring you can compare the local scene to its worldly counterparts. Whether shopping for just looking, it's the best survey of the state of contemporary art – from photography to painting to sculpture – you'll find this year.

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

Beurschouwburg

August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50

www.beurschouwburg.be
Until MAY 27 Waiting and Watching: South African Moments, four young photographers' images of ordinary South Africans

Biblioteca 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. Talk by Tuymans on APR 28 at 20.00
Until MAY 15 Architecture for Justice: Brussels Courthouse, Imagine the Future!, display of projects submitted for the courthouses 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

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.cjacquesfranck.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)

Marc Sleen Museum
Zandstraat 33; 02.219.19.80
www.marc-sleen.be
Until SEP 25 Nero, Yuri Gagarin and Other Astronauts, space travel in comic strips

Museum van Elsene
Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.22
www.museumvanelsene.be
Until MAY 15 Olivier Debré, lyrical 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 period 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
Regentschapsstraat 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 JUN 26 A selection of the most important artworks from the 19th- and 20th century collection, including Salvador Dalí, Giorgio de Chirico and Paul Delvaux

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

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

Kunstenfestivaldesarts

6-28 May
Across Brussels

The country's most intriguing and influential arts festival is back next month in unexpected locations across Brussels, and if you want your pick of tickets, you'd better get on it. Might we suggest you consider *C'est du chinois* by festival favourite Edit Kaldor, which puts the audience in front of a reality show of sorts where only Mandarin is spoken, or American writer/musician Richard Maxwell's *Neutral Hero*, possibly the world's first country opera.

→ www.kfda.be

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.lanmoo-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.museumndrguislain.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 Michaël 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

Until 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.wiels.org

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.wijenevermuseum.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 Binnenlaan 58A; 050.62.93.63

www.whiteoutstudio.be

Until JUN 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, work by the multi-media 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

Rijsschoolstraat 4; 016.30.08.69

www.leuven.be/bibliotheek

Until MAY 1 Geert De Smet, sketches and sculptures by the Flemish artist

Machelen-Zutte

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-Zutte

Minderbroedersgang 5; 015.29.40.00

www.cultuurcentrummechelen.be

Until JUN 5 Jan Dibbets 3X, photographs of conceptual works by the Dutch artist (also in Grimbergen and Knokke-Heist)

Meise

National Botanic Garden of Belgium

Nieuwelaan 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

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 JUN 13 across Knokke-Heist
www.fotofestival.be

Leuven

bite

Asparagus, Flemish style

Just as hop shoot season nears its end, another "white gold" vegetable hits market shelves and fine restaurant kitchens. White asparagus is here until the end of June, hailing mostly from farms around Mechelen and farther east across Limburg. (In fact, there is a debate going on now as to whether Kinrooi in east Limburg province or Puurs in Antwerp province lays claim to the official "asparagus village" title.)

Politics aside, asparagus is a lovely spring delicacy. The plant's roots dig deep under the earth, while its white spears climb towards the light. Once they reach a length of about 13cm and start to peek their heads above the soil, the spears are ready to be harvested with one sharp whack at their base. This must be done by hand, hence the relatively high cost when compared with other veg (from €6 per kilo).

There are multiple possibilities when it comes to preparing white asparagus as a starter, side or main dish: think of pairing it with other soft, subtle ingredients such as cod, salmon, grey shrimp, ham, poached eggs or a simple mousseline sauce. The key is to keep it simple, so as not to overpower asparagus' mild, earthy flavour.

Asperges op Vlaamse wijze, or Asparagus Flemish style, is easy to make, calls for few ingredients and tastes divine, especially on a sunny Sunday afternoon next to a glass of chilled white wine. Here you also

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have a few variations on the dish (eggs mashed, soft-boiled, poached...), so I tried combining the best aspects into one recipe.

Ingredients (for four):

24 white asparagus stalks
4 eggs (2 hard-boiled and 2 soft-boiled)
Handful of fresh, finely chopped parsley
150g clarified butter (melted, white foam removed)
Nutmeg
Salt and pepper

Preparation:

Although my Flemish neighbours had a good laugh watching me peel asparagus for the first time (in the US, we mostly eat the green version which doesn't require peeling), I got the hang of it pretty quickly – with the help of a special asparagus peeler. Remove the tough outer skin slowly from just under the spear down to the thicker bottom, gently keeping each stalk in place on a flat surface. Keep the peels; they make for a good soup later on. Once you've (finally) finished peeling, bind the asparagus together using kitchen string and tie this to one of the pot handles to keep the bundle in place while boiling. (Unless, of course, you have a tall and narrow asparagus pot designed to keep the stalks upright.) The most important thing is that the delicate spearheads remain

ROBYN BOYLE



above the water, so they are essentially steamed to perfection. Boil the asparagus until soft when pricked with a fork, usually 15-20 minutes depending on their width. While they cook, prepare the trimming. Simply mix the parsley in a pan together with half of the melted butter, a couple of dashes of nutmeg and two peeled, mashed hard-boiled eggs. Don't be afraid to mash

it all together. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Arrange the asparagus on a warmed plate and garnish with the egg and parsley mixture. Slice the soft-boiled eggs in two and place decoratively on top, allowing the yolk to run out. Generously pour hot clarified butter over the entire dish and serve immediately.

TALKING SPORTS

Clijsters' heirs stumble in Fed Cup

Kim Clijsters can't claim direct credit for the new generation of tennis stars emerging from Flanders, but she is undoubtedly an inspiration. Clijsters' decade at the top of the game has put Belgian tennis on the map, and many a young, ambitious wannabe has tried to follow in her footsteps through the pioneering Flemish youth training system.

But this weekend, the Flemish fledglings stumbled, losing to the Czech Republic in the semi-finals of the Fed Cup in Charleroi. Without Clijsters, it seems, they still have some way to go.

Clijsters, the world number two, was due to lead the Belgian Fed Cup team, but earlier this month she was forced to pull out: Already carrying shoulder and wrist complaints, the US Open champion compounded her health problems by badly spraining her ankle at a wedding.

In Clijsters' absence, Belgium was led by 2009 US Open semi-finalist Yanina Wickmayer, ranked 23rd in the world. However, the rest of the team – like Wickmayer, all Flemish – are much further down in the WTA rankings: Kirsten Flipkens is at 106, An-Sophie Mestach at 434 and Alison Van Uytvanck at 604. By contrast, the Czechs were led by the 18th-ranked Petra Kvitova, while the other



LEO CENDROWICZ

three are all within the top 65.

In the event, it was just Wickmayer and Flipkens who played the matches in front of 6,000 fans at the Spiroudome. Both Flipkens and Wickmayer beat Barbora Zahlavova-Strycova in their singles matches, but both lost to Petra Kvitova, leaving the doubles match as the decider.

Mestach and Van Uytvanck had initially been slated for the doubles match, but Wickmayer and Flipkens (pictured) were retained instead. The gamble didn't pay off: the Czechs won that 6-4, 6-4 to set up a November final meeting with Russia in Moscow.

That means no repeat of Madrid in 2001, when

Clijsters – backed by Justine Henin, Els Callens and Laurence Cortois – beat Russia to secure Belgium's only Fed Cup title. (Clijsters was absent when Henin and Flipkens lost the 2006 final against Italy). This year, as hard as they tried, the Flemish could not make up for the absence of their star player.

Despite losing, they can take some comfort. The Czechs that beat them had by far the better-ranked team. And the Flemish are young: While Flipkens is 25, Wickmayer is 21, and both Mestach and Van Uytvanck are just 17. Which suggests that the young tennis talents following in Clijsters' wake could build on this Fed Cup experience.

THE LAST WORD . . .

Revolt!

"First I want to see if the opera is still interesting for a contemporary audience. Then we'll decide if we should programme it in Brussels."

Peter De Caluwé, managing director of De Munt, on the opera *La muette de Portici*, which sparked the revolution in 1830 that led to Belgian independence

In a nutshell

"Belgium is made up of two different countries. We don't read each other's papers, we don't watch each other's TV programmes, we have a different mentality, and we vote in completely different ways."

A reporter for *Joods Actueel* magazine, sums up Belgium

A pretty penny

"A small-time thief who steals, let's say, 20kg of copper a day, which is not so much, can easily make €500 a week, or €2,000 a month."

Carline Huntz-Vandenbossche of Brussels Recycling Metals, on the high price of copper

Bon voyage

"I've always considered myself more of a business leader than a tour operator. It might sound odd, but, to be honest, the destinations don't really interest me much."

Bob Elsen, founder of travel agency Joker

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #177

Feature

The International Photo Festival of Knokke-Heist showcases the world's top artists in photography. We'll tell you how Johnny Depp and Brad Pitt figure in all that

Focus

Last week we told you about the schools crises in Brussels and Antwerp; next week, we talk to Flemish education minister Pascal Smet about the controversial quota changes

Living

Heritage Day comes back to Flanders, with a focus this year on how poverty of past decades has shaped the region we know today