

**Poor man's history**  
Heritage Day uncovers  
social past  
**11**

**Film fest frenzy**  
Cinema choices aplenty  
this week  
**13**



**A place for every child**  
Pascal Smet on schools  
**6**



## Back to the future

Knokke-Heist's photo festival looks at the ever-evolving notion of the portrait

LISA BRADSHAW

Three decades ago a Flemish institution shut its doors, the victim of technology, like tape cassettes or telephone booths. Photo Hall spent 50 years photographing holiday-makers on the Belgian coast, from De Panne to Knokke, developing the film overnight and then selling the photos to the tourists the next day.

As most families had a camera by the 1980s, the once-lucrative business finally shut down. But not before they sold 1,000,000 photographs.

Anyone interested in photography or in local heritage will now be stopping to think: a million photos over five decades in one region. Imagine the history that sits in such a collection.

Johan De Vos imagined this, and it didn't take him long to convince the International Photo Festival of Knokke-Heist to include *Annemieke en de Smarties: Photo Hall 1933-1980* as part of its 2011 programme. The photographer placed ads and contacted friends, colleagues, museums and heritage organisations, who all put the word out: Send us your Photo Hall pictures. They managed to find 1,500.

But the project began with a single photo: the little Annemieke and her roll of candy. "I've known her for many years and was so moved by the photo of her with her box of Smarties," says De Vos (photo left). "Meanwhile, Annemieke has grandchildren, but she still looks like the girl in the photo."

De Vos doesn't just admire Photo Hall photos – he took thousands of them. As a student in the 1960s, he spent four summers working for Photo Hall, which had outlets in nearly every coastal town. "I was out there every day, seven days a week," he tells me. "We were in every city on the coast – for instance, there were three photographers in Knokke, but I was on my own in Zeebrugge. I walked up and down next to the water, on the boardwalk, in the sand, everywhere. And in the evenings, I went to the bars. We were paid for each photo we sold. I earned a lot of money doing that."

De Vos and the other hundreds of photographers who worked for Photo Hall between 1933 and 1980 took 10 or so photos of each subject, from little kids on the beach, to teenage girls in frilly dresses to lovers holding hands on the boardwalk. He directed them to the Photo Hall shop, where they stopped by the next day to see the photos. Most people couldn't resist buying three or four, "and the rest were destroyed," says De Vos.

The exhibition is the dream of anyone who's ever bought a kitsch vintage postcard. Nearly every photo could be one. Muscled young men in snug trunks drape their arms around each other; women in 1950s skirts wade in the sea; little children in sun hats show off their buckets and spades and well-dressed strollers of every decade pose for a family portrait.

► *continued on page 5*

## Flemish stars make international lists

Two influential magazines, two awards to leading Flemings. Last week *Time* magazine issued its annual list of the world's 100 most influential people, which included tennis star **Kim Clijsters**. The Limburger was lauded by former champion Martina Navratilova: "When it comes to having it all, Kim Clijsters offers a great model," she wrote, describing Clijsters' comeback to tennis after having a daughter, to rise even higher than before. "Sure, it's easier to balance work and family when you're making a lot of money. But Kim has turned that balance into an art form. Kim just gets on with it."

Others on the list include American president and First Lady Barack and Michelle Obama, Burmese political dissident Aung San Suu Kyi, German chancellor Angela Merkel and American media icon Oprah Winfrey. Meanwhile, Peter Goossens' three Michelin-star restaurant **Hof Van Cleve** in Kruishoutem, East Flanders (pictured), rose two places to number 15 on the list of the best restaurants in the world published



annually by *Restaurant* magazine. Sergio Herman, chef of Oud Sluis across the border in Zeeland, the Netherlands, and TV show partner of Goossens, came in 17th place. Herman is reported to be planning a new restaurant in Antwerp. The list was headed for the second year in a row by Noma in Copenhagen. ♦

## Body parts of missing woman found

The boyfriend of Caroline Vyncke is picked up for questioning

ALAN HOPE

Bodies parts of a woman discovered last week in the area of Moorsele, a municipality of Wevelgem, West Flanders, are those of Caroline Vyncke, a local woman who has been missing for more than two months. Her boyfriend, identified as Geert V, previously confessed to killing her and is again being questioned by police.

On 16 April, passers-by found a thigh bone wrapped in plastic in the Heulebeek, a stream that passes through a park near the castle in the centre of the town. Extra police and officers of the Civil Protection Service were drafted in to search for more remains. The stream was dammed and

pumped, and on the following Monday divers found a human head, which was soon identified as Vyncke. In the water purification station at Gullegem, about six kilometres away, searchers later discovered the "lower limbs" of a woman.

At the time of the disappearance, the area around the Heulebeek stream was searched, but the water level was higher than now and may have concealed the remains. Police are not, however, ruling out the possibility that the body parts were dumped later, after the area had been searched.

► *continued on page 3*



## FACE OF FLANDERS



ALAN HOPE

### Wouter Vandenhaut

The most important man in Flemish media was last week given what amounts to a *carte blanche* to become even more important still, when a consortium made up of Corelio Media Group (*De Standaard, Het Nieuwsblad, Flanders Today*), Sanoma magazines (*Humo, Flair, Story*) and the holding company De Vijver emerged as the winners of a bidding war to buy up TV stations VT4 and VijfTV (see story p7).

De Vijver is best known as the owner of Woestijnvis, the most innovative and successful production house in Flanders. Wouter Vandenhaut is their managing director.

Vandenhaut, 49, started as a sports journalist with the Flemish public broadcaster, then called BRT, before moving on to work with star producer Mark Uytterhoeven, who was also a sports reporter but soon showed a talent for dreaming up comical and popular show formats.

Uytterhoeven and Vandenhaut were two of the founders of Woestijnvis, whose name comes from a celebrated mistake by a contestant on the Flemish game show *Rad van Fortuin* (*Wheel of Fortune*); the clue was pointing to *woestijnvos* ("desert fox"), but the contestant said *woestijnvis* ("desert fish").

The production company's first hit was *Man bijt hond*, and to many it's still their best: a daily digest of the more offbeat things going on in Flanders, broadcast

just after the news. They also dreamed up *De mol* (*The Mole*), a format that has travelled the world. But the biggest success has been *De slimste mens ter wereld* (*The Smartest Person in the World*), an annual quiz show that features the biggest names on the Flemish scene – from media to entertainment to politics.

Critical success, too, has not eluded Vandenhaut: the series *Van vlees en bloed* (*Of Flesh and Blood*) is considered a high-point of Flemish TV drama; it aired in 2008, the same year that Woestijnvis produced its first feature film, *Loft*, which holds the record for the most tickets sold for any Flemish film and is now undergoing remakes in both the Netherlands and Hollywood.

Corelio and Sanoma, by all accounts, will provide the deep pockets in the latest venture. But they don't know how to run TV stations and have, frankly, enough on their hands to defend their newspaper and magazine businesses against the onslaught of new media.

If there's someone who does know about TV, on the other hand, it's Vandenhaut. Now delivered into the hands of his production company are two TV stations that will allow Vandenhaut, to use Orson Welles' phrase describing the gift of getting to make films, a train set to play with – and the landscape on which to run it.

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

## FLANDERS TODAY

Flanders Today, a free weekly English-language newspaper, is an initiative of the Flemish Region and is financially supported by the Flemish authorities.



The logo and the name Flanders Today belong to the Flemish Region (Benelux Beeldmerk nr 815.088). The editorial team of Flanders Today has full editorial autonomy regarding the content of the newspaper and is responsible for all content, as stipulated in the agreement between Corelio Publishing and the Flemish authorities.

Editor: Lisa Bradshaw

News editor: Alan Hope

Agenda: Robyn Boyle

Art director: Michel Didier

Prepress: Corelio P&P

Contributors: Rebecca Benoot, Robyn Boyle, Leo Cendrowicz, Sabine Clappaert, Claire Davenport, Courtney Davis, Katrien Devulder, Stéphanie Duval, Jacqueline Fletcher, Anna Jenkinson, Katrien Lindemans, Marc Maes, Ian Mundell, Anja Otte, Monique Philips, Christophe Verbiest, Denzil Walton

General manager: Joske Plas

Publisher: Corelio Publishing NV

Editorial address:

Gossetlaan 30

1702 Groot-Bijgaarden

Tel.: 02.373.99.09 – Fax: 02.375.98.22

editorial@flanderstoday.eu

Subscriptions:

subscriptions@flanderstoday.eu

or sign up online at [www.flanderstoday.eu](http://www.flanderstoday.eu)

Advertising: Evelyne Fregonese

02.373.83.57

advertising@flanderstoday.eu

Verantwoordelijke uitgever:

Lisa Bradshaw

## News in brief

Belgium's federal prosecutor is investigating an alleged **breach of privacy laws by Google**. The vehicles used by the internet search company to make photos for the Google Street View service are alleged to have scanned and gathered information on users of unsecured wireless internet connections, which may include email and passwords. Google stored the information without the users' knowledge. Two weeks ago the company was fined €1 million in the Netherlands for the same offense.

according to Flemish transport and waterways minister Hilde Crevits. All 216 public places available to live on the water have been claimed, while a further 90 privately owned spots are also fully booked. There is already a waiting list of more than 120 hopefuls.

allows the authorities to track the owner. The system also avoids the entry of sick animals or sports animals into the food chain. But a study carried out in 2009 showed more than 40% of animals surveyed had no registration, which could mean more than 50,000 cases across the country. "It's often unregistered horses that are abused," Van Noppen said. "That makes it impossible to track down the owner."

From 1 July the entire centre of **Antwerp will become a Zone 30**, where speeds are limited to 30 km/h, the city council announced last week. A large part of the centre already imposes the new limit. Motoring organisation Touring criticised the measure, calling it a "simplistic solution" that motorists would ignore. It was revealed last week that police in Brussels, where a similar Zone 30 exists, only used speed cameras when drivers were clocked at 57 km/h or more.

An armed **hijack of a security transport** carrying Delhaize discount coupons, which took place last week on the Brussels Ring near Zellik is the first of its kind, according to the Brussels prosecutor's office. And with good reason: According to Delhaize, the coupons are of no value whatsoever to the thieves. The serial numbers of the 150,000 coupons, each worth €5, have already been noted and blocked, the company said.

Flanders is **running out of moorings for houseboats**,

One-quarter of the country's **police zones are too small** to remain viable and should be merged with neighbouring zones, federal interior minister Annemie Turtelboom has announced. Belgium has since 2000 been divided into 195 local zones. Turtelboom now considers each zone must have a minimum of 75 officers, which excludes 49 of the total. The restructuring, she said, should be a priority for the incoming government.

**Els Clottemans**, the woman found guilty in October of murder by cutting the cords of a fellow parachutist, will find out on 3 May whether she can appeal her conviction and sentence of 30 years. Clottemans, who has continued to deny her guilt, claims a ruling of the European Court of Human Rights makes evidence of her questioning by police inadmissible, as she was not allowed to have a lawyer present at the time. If the Cassation Court agrees, the entire trial could be thrown out and restarted.

Almost half of all **horses, ponies and donkeys** in Belgium are not registered, according to member of parliament Flor Van Noppen. The registration system involves a passport and a microchip in the neck and

## OFFSIDE

### West coast VIPs

You might think it was a good thing to arrive at the Flemish coast this summer and be given the VIP treatment. But not when you realise that the letters mean (we're not making this up) Very Irritating Police.

The plan is the idea of the police of the West-Coast zone, which includes Koksijde, Nieuwpoort and De Panne. They've come to the conclusion that fine weather brings a host of young people to the beach resorts, who then hang about looking sullen, curling their lips and generally making a nuisance of themselves because they'd probably rather be in the south of France.

The answer, according to the police, is to stalk them like wild animals: Special patrols of officers who apparently have nothing better to do will roam the seafront and identify young troublemakers, then follow them around and thereby stop them – this is the hope, at least – from causing too much annoyance to adults and families. (Who, if you think about it, brought them along in the first place.)

The plan is based on a similar scheme deployed in Rotterdam, a city not exactly known for its bucolic inner-city environment. And it's met with opposition, not only from those who wear



Assume the position

ALAN HOPE

Shutterstock

their baseball caps the wrong way round. "Zero tolerance for youngsters hanging about absolutely does not work," commented Stijn Vivijs of the Institute for Criminology at the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL). The plan has also been condemned by the Flemish Commissioner for Children's Rights. The Flemish Youth Council issued a statement that hit the nail on the head: "Police who set out to annoy these young people will cause more fires than they put out. This will lead to young people, as well as families with children, being driven away."

## Ring my bell

The 19th-century local ballad "Klokke Roeland" will no longer be heard floating from Ghent's belfry. The bell tower's repertoire changes every two years



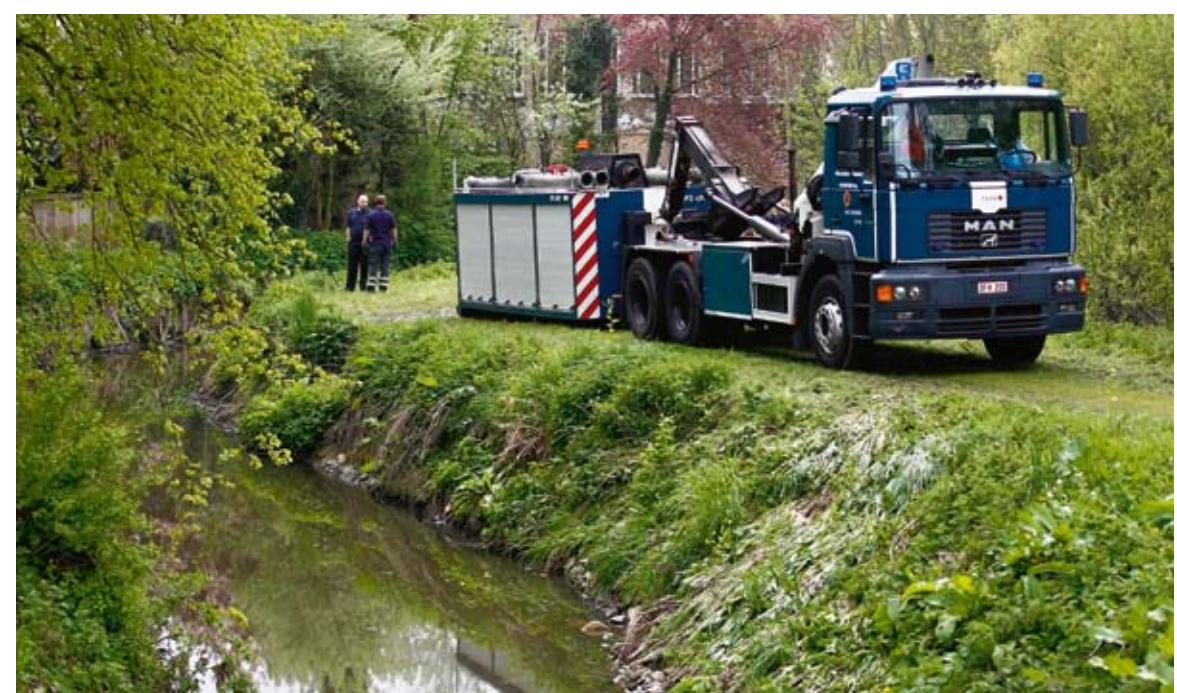
## Vyncke's boyfriend previously confessed to murder

→ continued from page 1

Vyncke (pictured below), 42, was last seen leaving her home, only 300m from the Heulebeek, on 8 February to walk her dog. Local searches were carried out, with no result. Her boyfriend, with whom she lived, was detained for questioning on 19 February and confessed that he had murdered her. He later retracted that confession, saying it had been extracted under duress. A court ordered his release from



detention for lack of material evidence. He then told reporters: "I don't believe Caroline is dead. I think she went away deliberately. This is already the sixth time she's done something like this. I don't want to have any more to do with her." After the discoveries, Geert V's whereabouts were unknown, both to police and to members of his family. According to reports by the Belga news agency, he admitted himself to a psychiatric institution. Last Thursday he re-appeared and, as *Flanders Today* went to press, he was being questioned by investigators. "In the interests of the investigation, no further statements will be issued until there are new developments," a spokeswoman for the prosecutor's office said. ♦



Passers-by found a thigh bone wrapped in plastic in the Heule stream

## Amateur artists take centre stage

Amateur art activities are "a medicine for body and soul" that occupy two million people in Brussels and Flanders and is celebrated every year during the Week of the Amateur Artist (WAK), running until 1 May.

The comment comes from the WAK "godmother", Annabelle Van

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES



5th place for Belgium in the list of most expensive countries in Europe for a postage stamp, at 71c. The EU average is 55c. Belgium is beaten by Norway, Denmark, Finland and Switzerland

16th place for Belgium in the list of countries most unfriendly to animals, according to a Dutch animal-rights group, based on media reports, other organisations and own research. Greece is the worst place to be an animal and Sweden the best

1 in 5 Flemings who drink alcohol think they drink too much, according to a study by the medical insurance group CM. 3.5% said they drink to forget their problems, while 2% can't do without

729 people killed on the roads in Belgium in 2010, a 12% decrease on 2009. The number of injuries also fell by 4.7%

Nieuwenhuyse, a TV presenter who is also a keen amateur photographer and singer. The event was launched last week by singer Mira, and runs until Heritage Day (see p11) with which it will share some activities. The week is being financed by the Flemish government with €6.65 million. "Amateur arts is a thriving sector in Flanders," explained culture minister Joke Schauvliege. A study from 2009 showed that "one in three people are involved in some amateur artistic activity on a weekly basis. WAK is a recognition of the work of those amateur artists, to make it more visible and more accessible."

The Flemish model, meanwhile, has caught the attention of amateur artists in Scotland and the Netherlands, who now plan similar events later in May. "The fact that the WAK has become an export product and gained an international following just shows the strength of the idea and its quality," Schauvliege said. ♦

→ [www.wak.be](http://www.wak.be)

## Nature news

**Four peregrine falcon chicks** hatched last week, the offspring of a pair that has been nesting in the towers of the Cathedral of St Michael and St Gudule in Brussels since 2004. The Museum for Natural Sciences has a webcam installed to view the nest live (pictured), as well as an observation post at the cathedral, manned by ornithologists to explain to the public what is going on. [www.slechtvalken.be](http://www.slechtvalken.be)



Belgium has been officially recognised as the holder of the record for the length of time without a government, as Guinness World Records last week gave its seal of approval. Friday, 22 April, marked exactly a year since Open-VLD left the government coalition, precipitating the resignation of prime minister Yves Leterme. Elections followed, but negotiations to form a new government, as all the world now knows, have yet to produce a result. On a happier note, last week 314 children in Antwerp's Park Spoor Nord set a new world record for number

of people ducking for apples, smashing the previous record of 266 set by the English town of Heywood in 2010. The record required the apples, floating in 50 inflatable paddling pools under the unseasonal April sunshine, to be fished from the water using only the teeth.

"I got 10 apples out of the water," Yuki Bevers, 9, told *Het Nieuwsblad* proudly. "I love apples, and I eat lots of fruit, and I think that's why I did so well, even though it's the first time I've ever done it." ♦



Brussels City council has produced an interactive map showing the location of all ATMs within the city. According to a spokesman, the map was developed after tourists and business visitors reported how hard it was to find cash machines. The site allows users to type in their address to find the closest ATM.

→ [www.brussel.be/6660](http://www.brussel.be/6660)

Forest rangers and fire services were last week placed on orange alert in the **nature reserves in Antwerp province** as a result of a prolonged period of dry weather. While fire watchtowers in the Kalmthoutse Heide were ordered to be permanently manned, so far none of the areas most at risk have been closed to the public. Orange alert is the second-highest level of alert in Antwerp, below red.

In Limburg, red alert signifies the same level of alertness, the highest being double-red. Towers in Maasmechelen, Neerpelt and Eksel were manned, and fire services and a **helicopter were placed on stand-by**. Forest rangers carried out patrols in areas where youth camps were taking place during the school holidays.

**A colony of toads** established in the Kleine Zavel park in Brussels could be under threat from restoration works due to begin in October, environmental organisation Leefmilieu Brussel has warned. The winter period is when the toads are at their most vulnerable, and the effect on the colony needs to be taken into account in the planning of the works, the organisation said.

The Laken park in northern Brussels is suffering a **"plague" of wild rabbits**, whose numbers threaten flora, including a stand of ancient oak trees, under which some rabbits have dug burrows, Leefmilieu Brussel said. "There are hardly any wild rabbits left in other provinces," said Laure-Anne De Beusscher. "It's as if they're all gathering in Brussels. We'd like to see them deported to other provinces." Brussels Airport has also reported an infestation of rabbits, whose numbers have grown to about 4,000. The animals attract birds of prey, which can be a danger to aircraft.

Finally, the new courts building in Ghent is echoing to the patter of tiny feet – of mice. Staff there are reported to have found **evidence of mice** gnawing at foodstuffs kept in offices, as well as droppings in drawers. Employees have been advised not to bring food to work. The senior judge at the court of first instance is to bring in a specialised pest control firm. "I can hardly let a cat loose," judge Ingrid Mallems said. ♦

# CLEARLY NOT MOVED BY GOSSELIN



The items you treasure most deserve the greatest attention when you move. They are treated with the utmost care by those meticulous men sent by Gosselin, who wrap them in that specific Gosselin paper and move them in accordance with the Gosselin master plan specially drawn up for you. Gosselin has over 70 years' experience in VIP treatment. Their service is so impeccable that you will be moved when you see their specialists at work.

Gosselin was the first moving company in Belgium to have achieved FAIM/ISO, the international moving industry's most prestigious accreditation. With their 32 own branches across Europe, Central-Asia and the Caucasus, you will no doubt receive the service you have always been looking for.



lacma



AMSA



## WE KNOW HOW TO MOVE PEOPLE

Belcrownlaan 23 | B-2100 Antwerp - Belgium  
T +32-3-360 55 00 | T +32-2-772 34 87 | F +32-3-360 55 79

WWW.GOSSELINGROUP.EU | INFO@GOSSELINGROUP.EU



**GOSSELIN MOVING**

BELGIUM - MEMBER GOSSELIN GROUP

# Back to the future

## Robert Wilson's "video portraits" are as disturbing as they are delightful

→ continued from page 1

In those days, De Vos, now 69, was a photography student and learned a great deal about technique at Photo Hall, where instruction was given about how to take the photos. He went on to be a photo critic and professor and was director of the Academy of Fine Arts in Sint-Niklaas from 1989 to 2006. He has also published several books about photography.

"Between the 1930s and the 1980s, a lot changed," notes De Vos. "The clothes, the fashion, but also the buildings, the number of cars, the colours, everything changed."

Well, not everything, he admits. "Mother/child relationships and relationships between lovers, that didn't change very much."

The art of photography also changed, of course. "In the beginning, we photographed people walking, but later, everyone posed," says De Vos, remarking on how vacationers began

adapting to the idea of being photographed. "They would make themselves more beautiful for the photograph. It was a way-of-life change."

*Annemieke en de Smarties* is staged in a small space in the Sincfala Museum of local heritage in Heist. Some of the more memorable photos are blown up into poster size but I actually enjoyed the originals more, walking along rows of small images, discovering my favourites, like a couple in a convertible, looking backwards into the camera, and a man seemingly trying to chat up a cardboard cut-out of a woman, both circa 1960.

A video portion shows a fantastic old TV commercial, in which a family makes great fun of the photo-taking abilities of Dad, but then are saved by the pros at Photo Hall.

It's a good exhibition but ultimately too small, considering the wealth of material. It's still a

highlight, though, of the photo festival, as the Sincfala's exhibitions in the festival have been in the past – always offering a slice of local history.

This year's festival in Knokke-Heist is scaled down in general. In past years, it took two days to get through the major exhibitions; this year it's easily done in one, which allows more of a chance to get to the shows hosted by the cities' many participating galleries – often overlooked by visitors to the festival.

Every one of them is keeping the theme in mind: "Future Portraits" investigates how contemporary photographers portray people and how technology affects the process. Rather than setting up an elaborate shots and considering the theatrical elements in advance, photographers now spend more time manipulating the photo after it's been taken. Now, the photo a photographer takes isn't necessarily the same photo we see. ♦

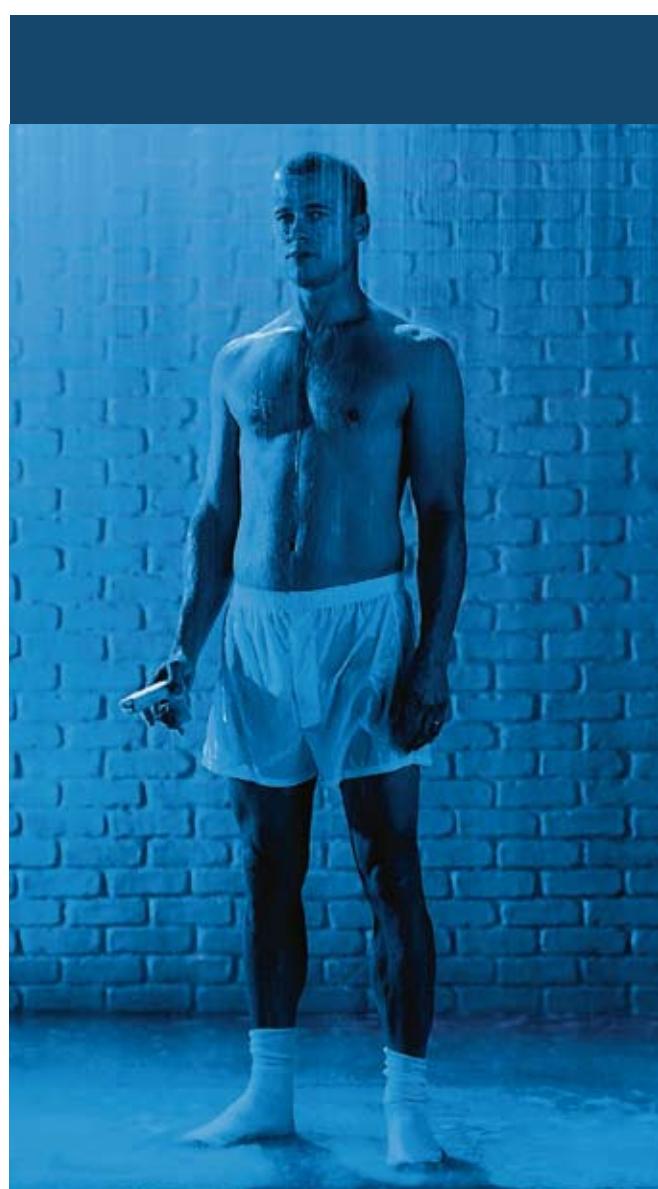
### International Photo Festival of Knokke-Heist

Until 13 June

Across Knokke-Heist

*The World Press Photo exhibition begins on 15 May*

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



### Robert Wilson Video Portraits

The clear star of Knokke-Heist's show is American multi-media artist Robert Wilson. World famous for his beat generation theatrical productions, he is the country's vanguard political theatre playwright. In the last decade he has focused more on visual arts, producing a large number of fascinating "video portraits" starring a variety of celebrities. Some of his most intriguing are in the pavilion built on the beach at Knokke for the festival.

Wilson completely confounds the notions of both portraiture and video. All the same size, the rectangular screens appear at first to simply be photographs – until you notice the wind moving through someone's hair or a slight fidget or, most disconcertingly, the blink of an eye. At one point – particularly with the rather horrific medical scene starring Robert Downey Jr – I felt like I was walking past a portrait in a haunted house.

A soundscape and occasional narration – often by Wilson – is provided with each portrait, and mostly the subjects barely move. Brad Pitt is an exception – he moves, however methodically.

Some portraits are based on previous work: Johnny Depp is an homage to the famous portrait of Marcel Duchamp's feminine alter ego by Man Ray, Isabelle Huppert stands in for Greta Garbo in the iconic photograph by Edward Steichen. Other times Wilson creates his own icon, such as Alan Cumming, so completely regal and self-important in drag, it could be a lost portrait in the secret life of a long-dead emperor.



### World Press Photo

The festival is again this year a stop on the tour of the World Press Photo, an exhibition of the winning photos in the world's most prestigious press photo competition. The winner in 2010 was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine and is destined to go down in history: an Afghan girl whose nose and ears were cut off when she left her abusive husband. The photo above by Italian Riccardo Venturi of the burning of the historic Iron Market in Port-au-Prince, won first prize in the General News Singles category.

**Take note:** the World Press Photo exhibition begins on 15 May.

### Valérie Belin Eyes Wide Shut

French photographer Valérie Belin takes retouching to sci-fi levels, creating portraits of people who have been so heavily manipulated, they appear to be made of rubber. Her political message is pretty clear, and the images are indeed startling, as perfection morphs into the look of a life-size Barbie doll, creating the illusion that it's no longer necessary to even photograph real people when you can simply make them to order on your computer.

Several pieces from Belin's *Black Eyed Susan* series are here, in which the artifice of 1950s sophisticates, with upswept hair and pearl necklaces, are nearly blocked out by an overlay of flowers. Artistically, it's a gorgeous example of the manipulation of two images to become another. Socially, it's a comment on woman as decoration.



# Talking Dutch

Pascal Smet on the tough choices needed to get Dutch-speaking kids into Brussels' Flemish schools

ALAN HOPE

**P**ascal Smet has perhaps the most integrated portfolio in the Flemish government: education, youth, equal opportunities and Brussels affairs, all of which come together in the high-pressure issue of the lack of space in schools.

"The Two weeks ago we reported on the situation: Because of demographic changes, Brussels will need 3,000 extra places in Dutch-speaking schools by 2030. Even without that growth, there are already more than 2,000 children who failed to get a place at one of their five choices in the last registration round.

Now the French-speaking education authorities have accused the Flemish schools of shutting out the children of immigrants and brought a complaint about the Flemish 55% quota for Dutch-speaking children to the Constitutional Court.

"From the introduction of an electronic registration system last year, it was clear that there was a capacity problem" Smet says. "So then there was a rush to create extra places. We found more than 2,000 places in Antwerp in five months; everyone said we could never do it, but we did. In Brussels, we found 350 places."

We're talking in his seventh-floor office high above the Brussels North quarter now taken over by banks, companies and government departments. Smet (sp.a) is tall and rangy, 44 years old but still boyish. He's formidably well prepared: He answers questions in paragraphs, then stops to wait for the next question. Where others hum and haw, he gives an interview that can practically be transcribed straight onto the page.

*"If you offer Dutch-speaking education to people who speak Dutch at home, you have to give them priority"*

He's also boyishly energetic, forever changing position on his office sofa as if being forced to sit still for too long were a kind of detention. If he were in a classroom instead of the minister's office, he'd be either the boy fidgeting at the back or the highly charged teacher bounding back and forth to the blackboard at the front.

It's doubtless that kind of restlessness that took him into politics; he was on the city council in Beveren, East Flanders, at only 22, the start of a career that has included posts as chairmen of the Young Socialists, commissioner-general for refugees, mobility minister in the Brussels regional government and now minister for education and equal opportunities in Flanders.

"Last year, thanks to an investment of about €12 million - €8 million in Antwerp,

a bit more than €3 million in Brussels and then in Halle and Vilvoorde €800,000 - every child had a school place by the time the schools started on 1 September," he continues. "In Flanders in general, there's no capacity problem; the demographic problem is in the cities."

Pupils may find places, but not necessarily at the schools the parents wanted to send them to. This has caused some parents to go as far as to move to the municipalities in the Flemish periphery around Brussels, where they have a better choices for Dutch-language schools.

"Parents here can choose where to send their children," retorts Smet. "In many other European countries, you have to go to school where you live, whereas here it's laid down in the Constitution that you have a free choice. Of course, you have popular schools, and obviously the school won't be able to take everyone. So some parents have to send their children to another school further away. While it's not always possible to give parents their first choice, the vast majority of children do get to go to their first choice of school."

His office provides the figures for last year for Antwerp, where there's also a demographic boom putting huge pressure on school places: Last year 77% of children were admitted to their first choice of school, and 95% found places in one of their top three schools.

#### Discrimination claims

In the capital, the priority given to children from Dutch-speaking homes was recently increased to 55% of the spots available, once siblings have been placed. This has been portrayed, including by the French-speaking education system, as a form of discrimination. Smet is impatient to put the question in perspective.

"French is the dominant language in Brussels, and children who speak another language at home may only come into contact with Dutch during the official school hours - not on the street, not during their free time," he says. "The quality of French education is lower than Flemish education, and the parents of children from other language backgrounds all want to send their children to Flemish schools, with the result that the numbers of actual Dutch-speaking children are diluted. Our schools are open for other children and will stay open for them, but we have to make sure that Dutch-speaking parents have places in Flemish schools, so we've raised the quota to 55%, and we've made it clear that to make it into that quota, you have to actually speak Dutch at home."

Dutch-speaking education, he says, is supposed to be for Dutch speakers in the first instance. "The city is predominantly French speaking," he says. "If you offer Dutch-speaking education to people who speak Dutch at home, you have to give them priority, just as we give priority to children who come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, and just as we give priority to brothers and sisters."



Pascal Smet visits a school in Bredene on the Belgian coast last autumn

At present, only about one in 10 children entering schools in Brussels for the first time comes from a family where Dutch alone is spoken at home. The rules on priority, on the other hand, only require one parent to be Dutch speaking, reflecting the number of bilingual families.

"Proportionally, there are more children from other language backgrounds in Dutch-language schools than there are in French-speaking schools," Smet argues. The complaint from the French side has no foundation, he claims. "I think that they haven't understood the situation correctly."

#### Delays in building schools

The next move is to build more schools, and that has led to a polemic between Smet and Jean-Luc Vanraes, who's responsible for schools within Brussels' Flemish Community Commission (VGC). Vanraes (Open VLD) claims Smet is dragging his feet on a dossier of 17 building plans he submitted for financing. Smet in turn attacked Vanraes and his predecessor Guy Vanhengel, also a liberal, for tackling the problem too late.

"I try to avoid that kind of political game," he says now. "It's more important to solve the problems people have in the interest

of the children." Nevertheless, he has described the plans as "vague". "I'm glad the list is finally there, don't get me wrong, but there are still a lot of points that need to be clarified."

And even when the schools do come, there remains the problem of teachers. Between a third and a fifth of new teachers in the Flemish system leave the profession within five years.

"Across the whole of Flanders," Smet says again, "there's no shortage. There's a shortage of teachers in Brussels, but that has more to do with the particularities of the city. A lot of teachers don't come from Brussels. Even if they study here, they eventually want to go back and live closer to home."

Also in Antwerp, he admits, it's not always easy to keep teachers. "Now in Antwerp they've taken some initiatives to recruit teachers, like visiting schools to encourage students to think about becoming teachers and looking towards the Netherlands to pick up some of their surplus of teachers," he says. "In Brussels, the VGC will have to do something similar to tackle the situation." ♦

► [www.pascalsmet.be](http://www.pascalsmet.be)

© REPORTERS/Edwin Fontaine

# Takeover rocks Flemish media world

## Sale of VT4 and VijfTV "good news for the viewer"

ALAN HOPE

It's being described as the biggest upset in the Flemish media world since the arrival of VTM, the first commercial TV channel, in 1989. Last week, the search for a new owner for Flemish stations VT4 and VijfTV ended with an agreement between the German owners ProSiebenSat 1 and a consortium formed of production house De Vijver, newspaper publisher Corelio and magazine publisher Sanoma. De Vijver takes over the two channels for a price of €175 million. That price is reckoned to be too high by some analysts and by the competition, which included RTL Group and De Persgroep, part-owners of VTM. However, the premium may be worth it just to gain immediate entry to the TV market at such a high level. While both VT4 and VijfTV are junior channels in terms of audience figures, they are both carried into every home in Flanders and Brussels. This offers a potential audience far greater than the other alternative – the creation of digital channels like those of Studio 100. Woestijnvis, the production wing of De Vijver, holds the key to the desired

market penetration. Not only does it have the track record of making both popular and critically acclaimed TV programmes, it also has the competition in something of a chokehold. Until now, the company has made programmes for other broadcasters, mainly the VRT. Now, it's more likely to give preference to its own channels. "Certain things will have to change," commented the VRT's new chief executive, Sandra De Preter. The public broadcaster has sketched out "various scenarios" for the future, which will now be considered in the light of the latest events, she said.

A concern for VTM, meanwhile, is that the two channels will be able to exercise more of an attraction on the shrinking market for TV advertising. "Is the cake big enough?" wondered advertiser André Duval of top agency Duval & Guillaume. "There's always money available for quality, so the advertisers are going to have to make choices."

Flemish media minister Ingrid Lieten welcomed the deal. "The more strong players there are in Flanders, the higher



© Sofie Silbermann/VRT

The 2009 drama series *Van vlees en bloed*, produced by Woestijnvis

the quality, and that's good news for the viewer," she said. Open-VLD senator Bart Tommelein, who specialises in media affairs, agreed that the deal should press existing players like the VRT, the VMMa (which owns VTM) and the independent production houses to perform better. "They should see the new landscape as a challenge, not as a threat," he said.

Groen's media spokesman Bart Caron foreshadowed the problems facing the

VRT: "The public broadcaster will lose a large part of their best programmes, a number of well-known TV faces and especially a great deal of creativity." The deal now has to be formally approved by the Competition Council, but according to economy minister Vincent Van Quickenborne, no problems are foreseen. ♦

## THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

### Airports • Regional

The two Flemish regional airports at Antwerp and Ostend, which deal mainly in business clients, were described last week as "bottomless pits" by Groen! member of parliament Filip Watteuw. The airports have received €100 million in subsidies from the Flemish government over the last decade, but have only turned over €70 million, with annual results in the red on seven occasions over the same period.

### Banking • Dexia

The mayor of the town of Unieux in the Loire region of France has filed a legal claim against Belgian bank Dexia, claiming the bank sold his predecessor "toxic credits" which brought the small town's finances to the brink of bankruptcy. Mayor Christophe Faverjon claims Dexia made the loan without fully explaining the risks involved.

### Chemicals • DuPont

Management and unions at the Mechelen facility of chemicals company DuPont have reached a stalemate in negotiations for a new social contract when talks broke down after more than 10 hours. Unions claim that management is working under a very restricted mandate given by the American parent for the restructuring of the plastics division.

### Cleaning products • Ecover

Dutch-born Philip Malmberg takes over as the new CEO of Ecover, the producer of ecological cleaning products based in Malle, Antwerp province. Malmberg replaces Michael Bremans, who moves on after 10 years to become chairman of Ecover International. Malmberg was financial director of Ecover from 1993 to 2000, before moving on to security firm G4S. He takes up his post on 5 May.

### Electronics • Philips

Unions fear the loss of 300 jobs at the Bruges plant of Dutch electronics giant Philips, following the company's decision to stop making televisions. The Bruges division also includes a research facility, which unions fear could also close. The company has described the claims as "premature". Philips will move all production of television sets to the Chinese company TPV.

### Pharmaceuticals • Janssen

Johnson & Johnson, the US-based parent of Janssen Pharmaceutica in Antwerp, has agreed to pay a fine of \$70 million on Janssen's behalf after allegations in the United Nations that a representative of the company paid bribes to the regime of Saddam Hussein under the Iraqi Oil for Food programme.

### Publishing • De Boeck

Brussels-based publisher De Boeck, owned by the French publisher Editis, has been taken over by investment fund Ergon Capital Partners, a joint venture of Groupe Bruxelles Lambert and ING. De Boeck publishes school and university textbooks and medical and juridical works. No price was disclosed.

### De Vijver

**owned by:** Corelio, Sanoma, Wouter Vandenhoute and Erik Watté (each 33%)  
**owns:** 100% of Desert Fishes, which owns 100% of Woestijnvis and 40% of De Mensen; also owns 100% of VT4 and VijfTV and 50% of Flanders Classics cycle races  
**products:** 49% of *Humo* magazine, TV shows like *De slimste mens ter wereld* and *Man bijt hond*, produced first feature film *Loft* in 2008

### Corelio

**owned by:** Corelio Group, a public company  
**owns:** 33% of De Vijver; 50% of Flanders Classics  
**products:** *De Standaard*, *Het Nieuwsblad*, Nostalgic radio, Ackroyd Publications (*The Bulletin* and *Flanders Today*)

### Sanoma Belgium

**owned by:** Sanoma, a Finnish publishing group  
**owns:** 33% of De Vijver, 51% of *Humo*  
**products:** *Story*, *Flair*, *Libelle*, *Goedele*

### Nuclear profits remain a sore point

The report from the National Bank of Belgium (NBB) on the nuclear windfall profits gained by Electrabel will not be presented to the government until later this week, but it is already causing controversy. Last week *Le Soir* newspaper claimed to have learned that the bank will estimate the profits to be between €750 and €900 million – close to Electrabel's own estimate of €650 million but far away from the sum of around €2 billion estimated by the industry regulator Creg. Creg's director of pricing, Guido Camps, has threatened to resign if the NBB took Electrabel's side.

Now Paul De Grauw, a respected economist and professor at the Catholic University of Leuven, has claimed that the NBB "allowed itself to be used" by taking on the job of drawing up the report in the first place. The nuclear windfall – the profits made by Electrabel and, to a lesser extent, by SPE-Luminus since the write-off of the costs of Belgium's nuclear reactors – is a political question, De Grauw said, and the NBB's involvement risked compromising its independence.

The question is important in determining how much of a windfall tax the government can get the energy producers to pay. Last week finance minister Didier Reynders floated a figure of €500 million. ♦

### Agriculture news

A group representing seven of Europe's largest potato growers has begun legal action against five Belgian farmers and the federal food safety agency for what they claim is a breach of their intellectual property in seed potatoes. Breeders' Trust claims the farmers are growing their own seed potatoes from certain protected varieties, and thereby avoiding paying royalties to the rights owners. The Trust represents growers in the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark who specialise in developing new varieties.



© Shutterstock

**Mink farming is the most profitable** form of livestock farming in the country, according to the chairman of the fur industry federation BEFFA, speaking last week. Belgium has 19 mink farms, all of them in Flanders, producing 150,000 to 200,000 pelts a year – tiny in

comparison to other European producers but potentially highly profitable, with a current margin of about €25-30 a pelt and the prospect of higher profits on the horizon.

The Flemish agricultural sector reduced its **production of greenhouse gases** by 20% between 1990 and 2009, the equivalent of a reduction of two million tonnes of carbon dioxide and more than any other industry, according to figures released last week by the Farmers' Union. Farming produces 4% of the region's CO2 output, 80% of its methane and 50% of its nitrous oxide.

**Farmers in the Voeren area** in the far east of Flanders are harvesting a new crop from their fields – flints, which will be used to build refuges for amphibians. The stones are a perpetual pest to farmers in the area, rising to just under the surface of the soil on a regular basis. Farmers are now using special machinery to clear the flints, which are then used to build pools where amphibians can take refuge during the cold nights. Flint is an excellent retainer of heat, and the stones soak up sunshine during the day, releasing it slowly at night.

Flanders now has 256 **farmers producing bio-crops**, an increase of 14 on last year. The number of hectares of bio-crops went up last year by 4.3%, a "clear increase" for the second year running, according to Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, presenting the figures last week in Rans. However demand for bio products – up 20% – is not being met by an increase in production. The most popular products for consumers are vegetables, fruit and dairy. ♦

# The heart of the matter

**A gruesome real-life killing was the inspiration for the only Flemish author nominated for the Libris Prize**

REBECCA BENOOT

**L**aunched in the 1980s, the Libris Prize for Fiction was modelled on the Booker Prize, and each year it awards €50,000 to the best Dutch-language novel of the previous year. This year, Yves Petry is the only Flemish author nominated for the prize.

Petry's fifth novel, *De maagd Marino* (*The Virgin Marino*), is based on the true story of the "cannibal of Rotenburg", who caused a media frenzy in Germany in 2001 when he emasculated and ate his consenting partner. "I haven't met anyone who doesn't recall the event," Petry says, "and what makes this incident particularly shocking is the willingness of the victim, which plays a vital role in the novel. It makes the murder not a cannibalistic killing but a suicide, as the victim endured it voluntarily and also planned it with his killer, Marino." (Petry has changed the names of the real-life pair.)

Don't be put off by this seemingly gruelling novel. Petry isn't trying to scare you with his detailed yet distant descriptions; he is merely trying to get to the heart of the matter. He was "predominantly interested in their thoughts," he explains. "What drives them? The victim is actually the catalyst in this case; the murderer merely acts out the victim's wishes. He is in fact a bystander because he doesn't particularly take pleasure in the murder."

While trying to make the incomprehensible plausible, Petry also manages to turn these conflicted characters into flesh-and-blood people with genuine depth.

*De maagd Marino* delves straight into the action with the novel's most chilling chapter, in which Marino chains his lover to a wall, amputates his penis and slits his throat. Petry's certainly right. The rest of the novel combines the events leading up to this bloody scene, as well as their consequences for Marino.

The novel's most striking feature, however, is the narrator – the recently deceased Bruno, who is now speaking through Marino, after having been consumed by him. "As a writer, I was able to maintain the perfect balance between involvement and distance using this perspective," Petry continues. "Only the first chapter is written as a

third-person narrator because I thought it would be too confrontational to portray Bruno's thoughts as he was being killed."

#### "Ideas" is a four-letter word

Petry studied mathematics and philosophy before becoming a writer and is often accused of writing a "novel of ideas", a label that has frequently been stamped on *De maagd Marino*. "My characters think about who they are, what they are doing and where they are going, but most people do this, so I wouldn't particularly call my novels philosophical," says Petry. "Characters who just act without considering the consequences don't really appeal to me. The only thing philosophy taught me is that you shouldn't be scared of where your thoughts might take you. You shouldn't be afraid of what you are able to imagine."

*De maagd Marino* is indeed Petry's most accessible work to date and is often considered his breakthrough novel, which is why his nomination for the Libris Prize isn't that surprising. "The importance of such a prize is that the winning book – and author for that matter – acquires more readers," he says. "But on the other hand, I think it's a shame that the winner gets all the glory because all the nominees are worthy contenders. Winning is purely a matter of chance."

Although Petry would love to receive the prize, he is also aware of the downside. "When you win such a prize, the pressure is on to create an equally grand novel as soon as possible. The danger of course, is that you'll start repeating yourself, which is a death sentence for every writer. Writing should be a quest, not a prescribed formula."

Libris winner or not, *De maagd Marino* is a character-driven novel that tries to examine how people are capable of such depravity. Both characters are products of their environment, and, due to Petry's clever narration and clear style, a gruesome tale is infused with compassion, making it almost delicate instead of a gratuitous horror fest, which it might have become in the hands of a lesser writer. ♦

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

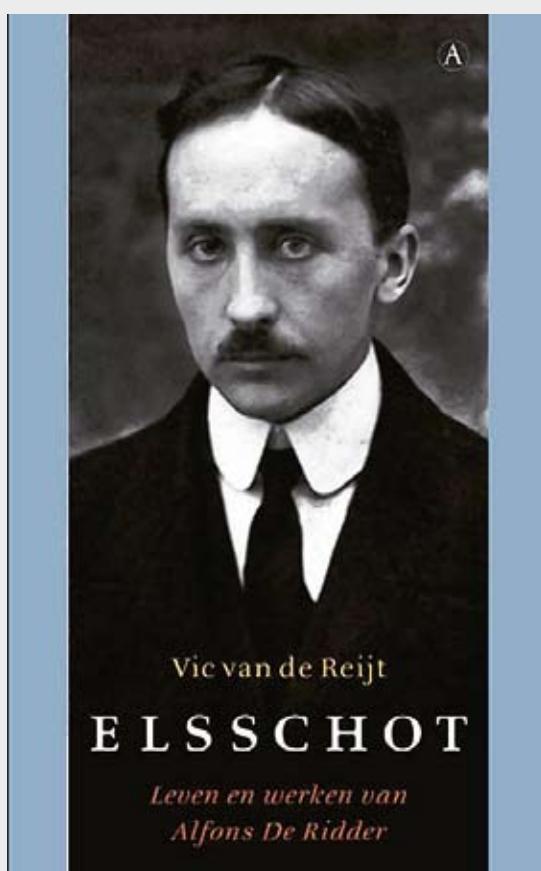
## The books page



Yves Petry is nominated for the Libris Prize, which will be announced on 9 May

*"Winning is purely a matter of chance"*

## Fresh fiction



#### Elsschot: Leven en werken van Alfons de Ridder (Elsschot: The Life and Work of Alfons de Ridder)

Vic van de Reijt

Willem Elsschot was without a doubt Antwerp's most famous writer during the first half of the 20th century. An advertising executive who published under a pen-name, he has not only created some of Flanders' most iconic characters but also captured the *zeitgeist* of Flemish emancipation. His work is still widely read and very relevant. Dutch publisher Vic van de Reijt was the first would-be biographer to get at the wealth of elaborate correspondence Elsschot left behind and has uncovered the man (Alfons De Ridder) behind the legend (Willem Elsschot) in *Elsschot*, the first – and still ultimate – biography.

#### Bittere bloemen (Bitter Flowers)

Jeroen Brouwers

*Bittere bloemen* is reported to be 70-year-old Jeroen Brouwers' last novel, making it one of this spring's most anticipated books. He is one of the most popular and distinguished Dutch authors today and has won every prize possible, both in Belgium and the Netherlands. Illusions, love and solitude are the main themes running through his extensive oeuvre, and through this novel in particular, in which an ex-judge on a cruise to Corsica runs into a former student and realises that social status isn't always a measure for happiness.

#### Van drie tot zes (From Three to Six)

Herman Brusselmans

Herman Brusselmans is one of the few Generation-X authors still around. This *enfant terrible* has written more than 50 novels that are mostly easy-going and highly entertaining. His latest main character, Willem Zundap, is a man who has a steady yet unfulfilling job as a radio host and an equally steady and unfulfilling marriage to a successful woman. He can't help but wonder if his dream girl is still out there. *Van drie tot zes* is filled with love and deceit and is probably Brusselmans' most personal novel to date.

#### Ik noem Roger (I Name Roger)

Louis van Dievel

Here it is: the first book inspired by Belgium's sex abuse scandal. Although it's fiction, you'll find Flemish journalist Louis van Dievel's controversial new novel pretty familiar: A clergyman from a small town in West Flanders is accused of sexually abusing his young nephew. He is forced to resign but determined to keep his head held high. Roger decides to record a clip for YouTube to set the record straight. *Ik noem Roger* is a daring testimony in which van Dievel tries to penetrate the mind of a man whose belief in justice, righteousness and God go beyond the realms of the ordinary.

# Art and soul

## The Kunstenfestivaldesarts is greater than the sum of its parts

JACQUELINE FLETCHER

**S**pring is in the air, and Brussels is a hive of activity, abuzz with preparations for a major event on the international arts calendar: Belgium's very own, very cosmopolitan *Kunstenfestivaldesarts*.

In black-box theatres and white cube galleries, post-industrial buildings and site-specific locations across the city, the festival will be presenting a programme of excellence drawn from Belgium, Europe and beyond.

With 32 productions over the three-week period – dance, theatre, film, opera and installations – many of them premieres, from 15 countries, with workshops, debates, talks and parties galore, the KFDA can hardly be viewed as a modest venture. Yet there is still a warm and inviting reception at the annual event with a name that mixes the Dutch and French languages.

The first edition in 1995 aimed to unite the Flemish and Walloon communities in open and intercultural dialogue, so it seems inevitable that the same spirit of generosity should lie at the heart of KFDA's approach to contemporary multiculturalism. After 16 years, the festival has evolved to embrace innovative

and interdisciplinary work from across the globe and has become a home away from home for many of the individuals and companies who have returned time and again, often in the meantime acquiring a substantial international profile. This year's festival brings together artists from Krakow and Cairo, Toronto and Tokyo, Berlin, Beirut and Buenos Aires, Mexico City and Marrakesh, Reykjavik and Rennes, Delhi, Vienna and Yokohama, not forgetting Ghent, Antwerp, Liège, Brussels and Amsterdam. In this towering Babel of languages, communication is central: The festival functions in three languages, with programmes in English, French and Dutch, and subtitles often in two languages, to assure accessibility for as many people as possible.

### The tortoise and the lizard

If you prefer your arts to have an overtly political edge to them there is Sven Augustijnen's *Spectres*, an exhibition (in Wiel) and film (at KVS) about the assassination 50 years ago of Patrice Lumumba, the newly elected prime minister of the independent Congo. Toshiki Okada, on the other hand, has developed his own inimitable and hilarious style, and his new

show, *The Sonic Life of a Giant Tortoise*, dissects the emotional and spiritual deficiencies of contemporary Japan.

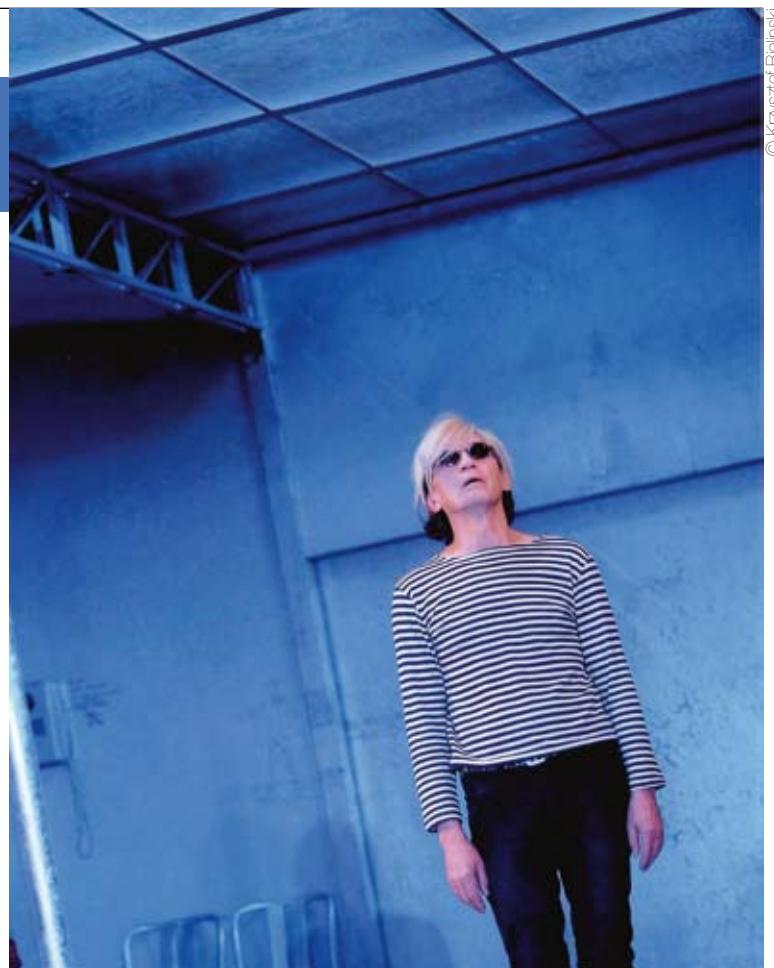
Another old favourite at KFDA is Argentine director Mario Pensotti with *Sometimes I think, I can see you*, a site-specific piece at Kruidtuin metro station. The high-profile French choreographer Boris Charmatz, this year's artistic associate at the Avignon Festival, also returns with *Levée des conflits* (*Suspension of Conflicts*), a new piece for 24 dancers.

New to the KFDA is the living legend of Polish theatre, Krystian Lupa, whose multi-award-winning play *Factory 2* is an imaginary scenario based on Andy Warhol's infamously creative New York studio The Factory. In *Seen at Secundrabad*, Indian director Zuleikha Chaudhari collaborates with the Raqs Media Collective to deconstruct a photograph taken by colonial war photographer Felice Beato in 1857. *Lagartijas tiradas al sol* ("Lizards Stretching in the Sun") arrive in Brussels from Mexico City for the first time with *El Rumor del incendio* (*The Rumour of the Fire*), a very visual show about the legacy of 1960s and '70s rebellions among today's young adults.

### Stirring the soil

On the Belgian front, the father of Flemish theatre Jan Decorte presents his adaptation of Purcell's *The Indian Queen*, a hybrid of theatre and opera reduced to its essentials in Decorte's engagingly unorthodox style. Antwerp's Jozef Wouters and Menno Vandervelde create *Stadium 3* on the Oude Graanmarkt, a construction with a void at its centre, the void in the city waiting to be filled. This event is free, open throughout the festival and will contain the "most insignificant and most important things in life". Prepare to be amazed by a lecture, a conductor playing a silent serenade or sheep shearing. Fabrice Murgia updates a modern masterpiece by Franz-Xavier Kroetz to the age of digital avatars in *Life: Reset/Chronique d'une Ville Epuisée*.

Thomas Hauert's *You've Changed* and Dominique Roodhooft's *Smatch 2* are my hot favourites among this year's Belgian offerings. Hauert's exploration of the vast potential for dance improvisation has always been fascinating, grounded as it is in a study of the body's intelligence and capacity for intuition. His earlier works seem to set up a chain reaction between bodies and with the music that acts like



Polish theatre legend Krystian Lupa's *Factory 2* is an imaginary scenario based on Andy Warhol's New York studio The Factory

gravity, drawing the spectator in as if by centrifugal force.

Roodhooft, on the other hand, combines poetry with politics and philosophy with science in fantastical multimedia creations that engage positively with those discourses of despair that flourish in contemporary societies. *Smatch 1*, which premiered at KFDA in 2009, was set in something like a cross between a sci-fi kitchen and a pet shop. It was wonderfully uplifting, enlightening and hilarious, while pointing out that we have certain responsibilities as communities and individuals towards life on this planet. In *Smatch 2*, a woman goes gardening with a team of thinkers, academics and artists, and, while stirring up the soil for signs of life, we learn about putting down roots when we are in danger of losing everything.

### See a show, get your hair done

The range and scope of creativity at the KFDA is staggering. It is a festival for artists and audiences seeking communication, searching for new perspectives and exploring new avenues of debate. It is a festival of hope that dispenses with post-modern cynicism, and it is a festival for people with an open mind, a ready curiosity and an eagerness for fresh ideas.

But above all, it is a festival for people who delight in imaginative collaborations, when audiences and artists depart together on unconventional journeys and pursue idiosyncratic twists of the imagination to arrive at startling new insights.

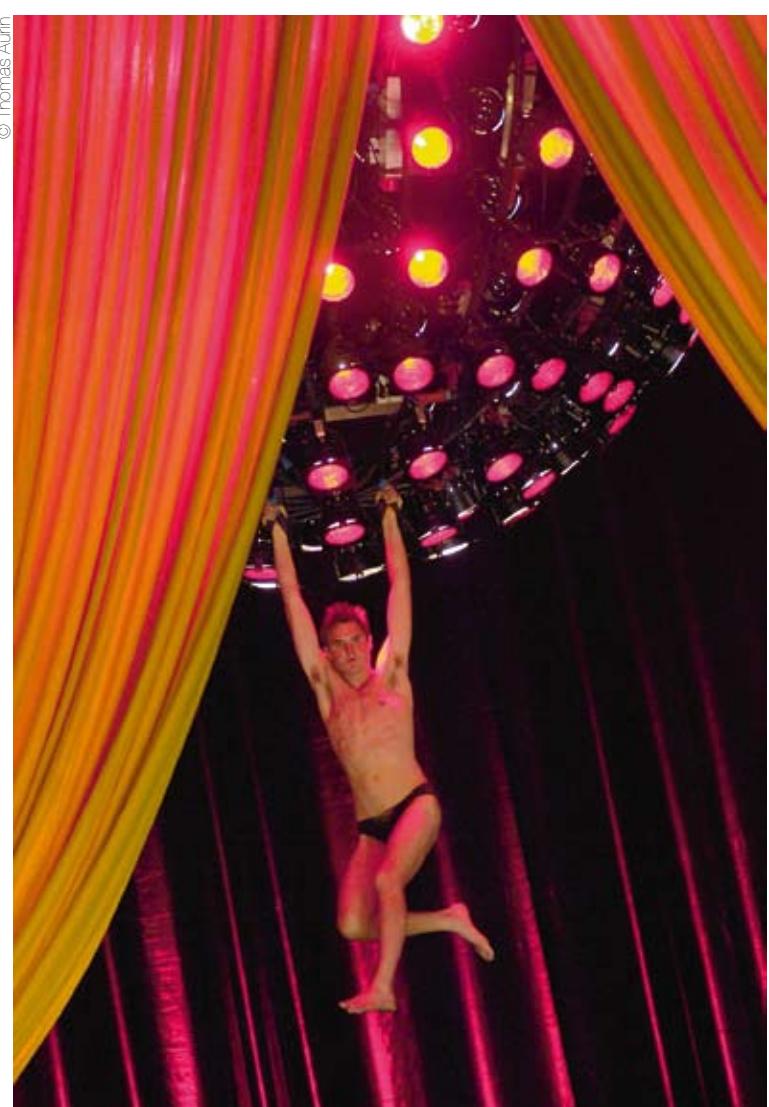
Belgians can be proud of the KFDA. It plays a crucial role in the production and dissemination of new work throughout a large number of affiliated festivals and venues across the globe, and it

also fosters the development of newcomers to the international circuits through NXTSTP, an EU-funded initiative for artists on the brink of a breakthrough.

In remaining true to its origins while expanding its scale, KFDA has become a feast of diversity and generosity opening up channels of communication between participants and spectators who are prepared to broaden their perspectives.

The Festival Centre this year is in the Rits college on Dansaertstraat, a congenial ambience in which to have a coffee, buy tickets, glean further info about events, have dinner courtesy of l'Affaire Culinaire or meet friends after the show to imbibe a few beverages. There are parties three nights a week, and this year there even is an official *Kunstenfestivaldesarts* hairdresser to spruce you up creatively for a show.

What more could any cosmopolitan festival offer? ♦



Fabian Hinrichs is a one-man tour de force in German director René Pollesch's latest piece



Mexico City artist co-op *Lagartijas tiradas al sol* ponders the legacy of 1960s and '70s rebellions

**Kunstenfestivaldesarts**

6-28 May  
Across Brussels

→ [www.kfda.be](http://www.kfda.be)



#### BRUSSELS

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



#### SCHAERBEEK

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



#### WATERMAEL-BOITSFORT

Dansaert area



## MERQEN

#### BRUSSELS



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

#### WOLUWE SAINT-LAMBERT



#### ANDERLECHT

Two steps away from the House of Erasme, in a commercial district, this building located on 2 a 13ca proposes: commercial ground floor with workshop 143 m<sup>2</sup>

- 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m<sup>2</sup> and 1 flat of 30 m<sup>2</sup>
- 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m<sup>2</sup> and 1 flat of 30 m<sup>2</sup>
- 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m<sup>2</sup>

#### SAINT-GILLES



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

# Expat? Visit ING first.

As an expatriate, would you like to invest or save in Belgium? For the purchase of a property in Belgium, our experts will set out the purchasing and taxation process for you. They can also deal with your mortgage loan, your outstanding loan balance insurance and even your fire insurance. If you

are interested in simple savings plans or more complex schemes such as investments in mutual funds, the ING Expat experts will guide you in your new fiscal environment, on the basis of your investment profile. To find out what ING can do for you, don't hesitate to call us on +32 (0)2 464 66 64.



[www.ing.be/expat](http://www.ing.be/expat)



#### UCCLE

which has been totally renovated and reconstructed and was sold to the European Commission. There are different luxurious 1 bedroom apartments for sale with a splendid view over Brussels. All the apartments have been completely renovated and are equipped with a wooden floor, fully equipped kitchen (microwave oven / dishwasher / fridge / ...), videophone, complete bathroom with shower, new window frames with double glazing, security door, airconditioning.



#### BRUSSELS

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

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



#### ANDERLECHT

Godeaux - Bemel area, house 3 façades of +/- 240m\*, completely renovated in 2004, living room 42m\*, fully equipped kitchen (microwave oven / dishwasher / fridge / ...), breakfast corner, 4 bedrooms, closets, wooden floors, bathroom, toilet, Jacuzzi, 2 shower rooms, garage + space in front of the house, garden, terrace, alarm system, security door, airconditioning.



#### FOREST

villa 4 facades of 300m\*, completely renovated in 2000, living room, wooden floors, fireplace, separate dining room, fully equipped kitchen, breakfast area, laundry room, 4 bedrooms, wooden floors, office area, bathroom, shower room, cellar, garden 5 acres, nice terrace, garage 2 or 3 cars, alarm system.

# Poor Flanders

## Heritage Day pays homage to the farmers, fisherman and factory workers who helped shape the region

ALAN HOPE

**H**istory, they say, is written by the victors. And so it was for many years that history was a study of kings and counts and dukes, of dynasties and battles. Only recently has social history received attention, giving a place to those who lived their lives without scribes, but who made up the vast majority of life in the past. Unlike historians, artists and writers have been chroniclers of the poor for longer. Breughel is remembered for his peasants; London has been defined by Dickens; and Paris by the *miserables* of Hugo. Aalst is remembered as the city of Priester Daens, not the powers of the Eighty Years War. What defines the ancient centre of Brussels: the magnificence

of the Justice Palace of Joseph Poelaert or the Marollen district, which was thereby deprived of sunlight and turned the term "architect" into a swear word?

The Flemish region devotes one day a year to the celebration of heritage, and this year the theme of Erfgoeddag (Heritage Day) is "Armoede Troef", which includes the words *armoede* (poverty) and *troef* (treasure or trump-card). On 1 May, fittingly the international day of the worker, the various organisations involved in celebrating Flemish heritage will be organising more than 600 activities in Brussels and across Flanders that give the poor their proper place in history. ♦

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



© Gent, MAT, spinning mill Vooruit, 1926

### FLANDERS TODAY RECOMMENDS

The programme of this year's Heritage Day is too broad to give more than a glimpse, but here's a few highlights from the five corners of Flanders.

**Antwerp**'s Cathedral of Our Lady, for all its magnificence, carries many traces of poverty through the centuries, including carvings of beggars receiving alms, altarpieces from the brotherhoods who looked after the poor and artworks with the theme of the seven acts of Christian mercy – feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, visiting prisoners, sheltering the homeless, attending to the sick and burying the dead. The cathedral is offering a guided tour between 13.00 and 16.00, and continuing until the end of August.

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

In **Mechelen**, some school kids will be putting on a puppet theatre show, using stories of the history of poverty to bring to life the situation facing many today.

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

The Argos Centre for Art and Media in **Brussels** screens three films: *Vivre, j'ai laissé* (I've Left Life Behind) in the Klein Kasteeltje refugee centre; *Scherven van geluk* (Slivers of Happiness) in the troubled inner-city commune of Molenbeek;



© Mechelen, Het Firmament, Meike Misere

and *Boulevard d'Ypres/Ieperlaan*, in which filmmaker Sarah Vanagt paints a portrait of her own street in the canal zone. All films are subtitled in English.

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

The **Marollen** area – the original popular quarter of the capital – features large in the activities of Heritage Day, notably with its own exhibition, running until 26 June, on the history of the area from 1210 to 2010.

→ [www.kmkg-mrah.be/hallepoort](http://www.kmkg-mrah.be/hallepoort)

The folklore museum of **Dendermonde** has organised an original exhibition of piggy banks contributed by the townspeople – the *spaarpot* being emblematic of the thrift of the poor, as well as their hope for the future – until 29 May.

→ <http://tinyurl.com/volkskunde>

The **Ghent**-based movement for people of low income is organising a walking tour of some of the oldest parts of the city, with the related stories ranging from Charlemagne to Walter De Buck, father of the Gentse Feesten. Reserve at lieve.degrande@gmail.com

The city archive of **Leuven** is devoting an exhibition to the work of Renaat Braem (1910-2001), an architect who ushered in a new type of social housing that worked to improve the lives of the poor beyond simply providing them with shelter. His plans for the site of the old Sint-Maartens caserne, destined to house 786 families, offered a new vision of architecture as social tool.

→ [www.leuven.be/archief](http://www.leuven.be/archief)

Don't miss the chance to stroll in the cloisters of the Minderbroeders (Franciscan) order in **Hasselt** and try out the traditional Sint-Hubertus bread rolls, which were once handed out to the poor on St Hubert's day, 3 November, traditionally after the Mass in the Church of Our Lady. Mass is at 11.00, but the rolls, made according to a recipe revived by the city's hotel and baking school, are available all day. *Minderbroedersstraat 19, Hasselt*

The National Jenever Museum, also in **Hasselt**, has until 5 June an exhibition warning of the evils of the demon drink, with works of art by Constantin Meunier and Eugène Van Mieghem.

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



© Hasselt, Jenever Museum, The Art of Drinking

### Sign me a song

Sign me a song Fevlado celebrates anniversary of the recognition of Flemish Sign Language

It's been five years since the Flemish Parliament officially recognised Flemish Sign Language (VGT) as a minority language. Time for the Flemish signing community to celebrate, but also to show that VGT still has a long way to go.

The fifth anniversary of the recognition of VGT will be celebrated with a Sign Festival for children on 28 April and a major event in the Flemish Parliament on 30 April, with workshops about poetry, music and storytelling in VGT, lectures about the future of VGT, a storytelling contest and a festive march through Brussels.

Fevlado (Federatie van Vlaamse Doven Organisaties, or Federation of Flemish Deaf Organisations), which looks after the interests of the 6,000 deaf and about 26,000 hearing users of VGT, is the main organiser of the events. "We want to celebrate the recognition's fifth anniversary, but, at the same time, we want to show the authorities that our community's 'language battle' is far from over," explains Fevlado spokesperson Maartje De Meulder.

Today, VGT is still rarely used in education, a situation that the signing community wants to improve. Further, Fevlado wants to stimulate research into VGT and would like to see VGT on Flemish television. It also wants hearing parents of deaf children

to be properly informed about the possibilities of VGT and to be encouraged to raise their children bilingual.

If you've never been in contact with sign languages, the celebrations are an excellent way to get to know VGT and its users. On 30 April, "anyone who's interested can learn some of the basics of VGT," says De Meulder. "During the march in Brussels, deaf and hearing people will sign a song in VGT. We hope to reach as many people as possible and raise awareness about VGT among the public." ♦

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



Some of Flanders' poorest residents have worked on fishing boats. The **Blankenberge** cultural centre has a tour of the town concentrating on the poverty of fishermen down the ages.

→ <http://cultuur.blankenberge.be>

Members of the maritime heritage group De Scute will be on hand for another tour in **Blankenberge** to pass on the stories handed down by the fishermen and to visit the old fishermen's quarter of the town. De Scute (a dialect word for a small boat) is made up of people who have either been on the boats themselves or come from a fishing background.

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



St. John's provides a caring environment, where students are cherished as individuals, encouraged to reach their unique potential, prepared to think globally with a commitment to justice and challenged to act responsibly in a constantly changing society.

We invite you to come take a look for yourself if this is the school for your family! Make an appointment to tour the school and speak to teachers and students.

**[www.stjohns.be](http://www.stjohns.be)**



**ST. JOHN'S  
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL**

Drève Richelle 146, 1410 Waterloo, Belgium  
Tel. 02/352 06 10, [admissions@stjohns.be](mailto:admissions@stjohns.be)



**Al het stadsnieuws in 3 talen  
Toute l'info régionale en 3 langues  
The local news in 3 languages**

[www.tvbrussel.be](http://www.tvbrussel.be)

## 3x Dibbets

The remarkable time-distance photography of Dutch artist Jan Dibbets is on view at three locations in Flanders  
→ [www.cultuurcentrummechelen.be](http://www.cultuurcentrummechelen.be)



## Battle of the film festivals

# OPENDOEK VS DOCVILLE

IAN MUNDELL

Despair, film buffs of Flanders, because over the next week you will want to be in two places at once. And since the two places are at opposite ends of the region, you'll probably have to choose one or the other.

If you favour the factual, your path lies towards Leuven in the south, where the Docville international documentary festival runs from April 29 to May 7. But if you prefer fiction, head north to Turnhout and the Opendoek festival of world cinema, which runs from April 29 to May 8.

Tactical thinkers will note that Opendoek has a documentary strand, which allows visitors to catch some of Docville's highlights. This includes *Grande Hotel* by Flemish director Lotte Stoops, an engaging portrait of a colonial-era hotel in Mozambique that went from 120 rooms of luxury in the 1950s to a ruin inhabited by 2,600 people in the present. There is also *Stand van de sterren* (*Position Among the Stars*), a portrait of an Indonesian family that picked up prizes recently at both Sundance and the Amsterdam documentary festival.

And yet despite these overlaps, look at all the fine documentaries that you will miss if you go to Turnhout. There's *Inside Job*, which won the best documentary Oscar this year for its investigation of the banking crisis, and *Waste Land*, an Oscar-nominated film about artist Vik Muniz creating portraits of waste pickers from the materials they salvage from

the vast tips of Rio di Janeiro. Docville also has famous documentaries, such as pioneering 3D films *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* by Werner Herzog and *Pina* by Wim Wenders, one about prehistoric cave paintings, the other about contemporary dance. Then there are infamous documentaries such *I'm Still Here*, which recounts the apparent nervous breakdown of actor Joachim Phoenix, and *Catfish*, about an eight-year-old girl who befriends a New York photographer online.

There also are some very special Flemish documentaries, such *Blue Meridian* by Sofie Benoot. This takes a journey down the Mississippi to the sea, contrasting the natural beauty of the river with the hardship of communities emptied by economic migration and natural disasters.

But wait, surely there is more to life than documentaries? At Opendoek you can at least have a laugh, thanks to films such as *Almanya - Wilkommen in Deutschland*, a comedy about three generations of an immigrant family trying to untangle their ideas about Germany and Turkey (*pictured above*), or *Abel*, in which a little Mexican boy decides that, in his father's absence, he is now the head of the family.

On top of that, there are films with a spiritual side, such as Thai film *Eternity*, which explores love, memory and the thin line between this world and the next, and personal dramas such as the

excellent opening film *Nader and Simin - A Separation*, about an Iranian divorce that shifts slowly into a tale of crime and punishment.

Opendoek also gives you a chance to immerse yourself in the rich cinema of Argentina, thanks to a retrospective of work by Pablo Trapero, one of the country's leading directors, and films such as *La Mirada invisible*, which turns a high-school into a microcosm of the country's military dictatorship. Then there's a selection of vintage Argentine genre films, chosen by the slightly twisted people behind Brussels' Offscreen film festival.

If you are still having trouble deciding, there is always the language question. Most of the Opendoek films are subtitled in Dutch, while at Docville English tends to be the language of choice.♦

### Docville

April 29 to May 7  
STUK and other locations  
in Leuven

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

### Opendoek

April 29 to May 8  
Utopolis  
Graatakker 99, Turnhout

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



## MORE FILM THIS WEEK

Zabriskie Point → Film-Plateau, Ghent

Brussels Short Film Festival → Across Brussels

Preview Norwegian Wood + debate → Bozar, Brussels



## Antwerp

De Roma  
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40  
www.deroma.be  
APR 30 19.45 Radio Modern Deluxe party with Ray Collins, Lady Flo, Red Juliet, more

Monty  
Montignystraat 3-5; 03.238.91.81  
www.monty.be  
MAY 1 20.30 Birds That Change Colour

Sportpaleis  
Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345  
www.sportpaleis.be  
APR 28 14.30 Houden van... Griffelrock 2011, featuring Koen Crucke, Dana Winner, Ingeborg, more  
APR 30 20.00 Nekka Nacht with Thé Lau & The Scene, Sarah Bettens, Eva De Roovere, more  
MAY 1 20.30 Sade

Trix  
Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00  
www.trixonline.be  
APR 28 19.00 Blackfield APR 29 20.00 Last Call + Walter Broes APR 30 20.00 Enslaved + Negura Bunget MAY 1 19.30 Tarja

## Brussels

Ancienne Belgique  
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24  
www.abconcerts.be  
Concerts at 20.00:  
APR 27 Medi APR 27-28 Milow + Martin & James APR 28 Bruno Deneckere APR 29 Staff Benda Bilka + Hoquets. Budam + 1060 MAY 1 Dylan Leblanc + Alela Diane and Wild Divine. 22.00 Moddi

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

Koninklijk Circus  
Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15  
www.cirque-royal.org  
MAY 2 20.00 Angus & Julia Stone

LR6  
Hoogstraat 204; 02.830.21.27  
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 27 20.00 Joyce Jonathan  
APR 28 20.00 Rainbow Arabia  
MAY 3 20.00 Sandra Kim

Magasin 4  
Havenlaan 51B; 02.223.34.74  
www.magasin4.be  
APR 28 19.30 W.A.N.E. + 5easydays + The Whale + Obvious

Recyclart  
Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34  
www.recycleart.be  
MAY 4 20.00 Marc Ribot & Ceramic Dog

Ghent  
Charlatan  
Vlasmarkt 6; 09.224.24.57  
www.charlatan.be  
APR 27 20.00 The Cadillac Bombers

De Centrale  
Kraankindersstraat 2; 09.265.98.28  
www.decentrale.be  
MAY 3 19.30 Talvin Singh & Niladri Kumar + OY

Handelsbeurs  
Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65  
www.handelsbeurs.be  
APR 29 20.15 Mintzkov + Ginga  
MAY 4 20.15 Ron Sexsmith + Hannelore Bedert

## Hasselt

Muziekodroom  
Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13  
www.muziekodroom.be  
APR 29 20.00 Steak Number Eight + These Mountains Are Ghosts  
APR 30 20.00 Marble Sounds + I Am Oak

## Kortrijk

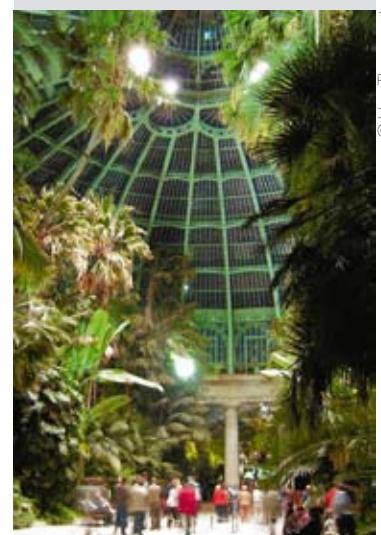
De Kreun  
Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44  
www.dekreun.be

## DON'T MISS

### Royal Greenhouses of Laken

Until 18 May  
Royal Palace, Brussels

For a few short weeks every spring, the greenhouses of the Royal Palace in the Laken area of Brussels are open to the public. The massive 19th-century project was commissioned by King Leopold II, funded by the wealth he amassed in the Congo, which has sullied its reputation through the years. But architect Alphonse Balat's stunning dome designs with their glass and steel offshoots was highly influential in its time and has become one of Brussels' most-recognised monuments. Inside are palm trees, a number of rare and tropical plants and artwork. Just don't walk on the lawn.



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

APR 28 20.00 Mojano & Friends  
APR 30 20.00 Campus + Homer + The Ignored + Vienna  
MAY 4 20.00 Barn Owl + Jefre Cantu-Ledesma

## Leuven

Het Depot  
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03  
www.hetdepot.be  
Concerts at 20.00:  
APR 27 The Sore Losers + Sherman APR 28 The Subs + Teddeddrum APR 30 Tricky MAY 3 Jack Parow + Undefined

Zaal Het Depot  
Kapucijnenvoer 47; 016.22.06.03  
www.hetdepot.be  
APR 29 19.30 Arid + Arquettes



## Antwerp

Rataplan  
Wijngaerstraat 27; 03.292.97.40  
www.rataplanvzw.be  
APR 30 20.30 Koen Nys Quintet

## Brussels

Archiduc  
Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52  
www.archiduc.net  
MAY 1 22.00 Tell Me Why I Do Like Mondays

Atelier 210  
Sint-Pieterssteenweg 210; 02.732.25.98  
www.atelier210.be  
APR 27 21.00 Faustine Hollander  
APR 28 21.00 Misteur Valaire + Pocket Brass Band  
APR 30 21.00 Bot'ox

Flagey  
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20  
www.flagey.be

© Van Thourout

# Agenda

**APR 28** 20.00 Trio Grande + Matthew Bourne  
**APR 29** 19.00 Youth Jazz Orchestra, 20.15 Brussels Jazz Orchestra + Dave Liebman  
**MAY 3** 20.15 VW Spring Sessions: Jef Neve & Liebrecht Vanbeckevoort

**Jazz Station**  
Leuvensesteenweg 193; 02.733.13.78  
www.jazzstation.be  
**APR 30** 18.00 Sofia Ribeiro Quartet

**LR6**  
Hoogstraat 204; 02.830.21.27  
**APR 30** 21.00 Zinneke Swing  
**MAY 1** 15.00 PaNoPTiCoN

**Sounds Jazz Club**  
Tulpstraat 28; 02.512.92.50  
www.soundsjazzclub.be  
Concerts at 22.00:  
**APR 27-28** Octurn 5 **APR 29** Big Band du Conservatoire de Bruxelles **MAY 2** 22.00 Master Session with Erik Vermeulen **MAY 3** 22.00 Notebook (Thys/Lahey)

**The Music Village**  
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45  
www.themusicvillage.com  
**APR 27** 20.30 Wow **APR 28** 20.30 Sander DW Group **APR 29** 21.00 Fabien Degryse Trio featuring John Ruocco **APR 30** 21.00 Steve Houben & Pascal Mohy Trio **MAY 2** 20.30 Exams concerts by students from the Brussels Conservatory Jazz Section **MAY 4** 21.00 Tristano Project

**Théâtre du Méridien**  
Terhulpesteenweg 200; 02.663.32.11  
www.theatredumeridien.be  
**Until APR 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

**Vooruit**  
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060  
www.vooruit.be  
**APR 28** 20.00 Jazz & Beyond deluxe: Sarah Ferri, Mathilde Renault Trio, Eve Beuvens Trio, more



**Antwerp**  
De Roma  
Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40  
www.deroma.be  
**APR 29** 20.00 Folklof IV  
**MAY 1** 15.00 Erik & Sanne, plus special guests RvhG, Johan Verminnen, Pendulum and The Sunsets

**Rataplan**  
Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40  
www.rataplanvzw.be  
**APR 29** 20.30 Dan San

**Zuiderpershuis**  
Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00  
www.zuiderpershuis.be  
**APR 28** 20.30 Desert Slide  
**APR 29** 20.30 Filia

**Bruges**  
Stadsschouwburg  
Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.40  
www.ccbrugge.be  
**MAY 4** 20.00 Loudon Wainwright III

**Brussels**  
Ancienne Belgique  
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24  
www.abconcerts.be  
**MAY 2** 20.00 Loudon Wainwright III



**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 27** 20.00 Ricercar Consort conducted by Philippe Pierlot: Bach's Saint John Passion  
**APR 28** 20.00 Budapest Festival Orchestra conducted by Iván Fischer: Dvorák, Schumann

**Bruges**  
Concertgebouw  
't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02  
www.concertgebouw.be  
**APR 29** 20.00 L'Arpeggiata conducted by Christina Pluhar, theorbo & Baroque harp: Monteverdi

**Brussels**  
Bozar  
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00  
www.bozar.be  
**APR 27** 20.00 Nelson Freire, piano: Mendelssohn, Brahms, more **APR 29** 20.00 Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin: Bach, Webern, Strauss **MAY 1** 11.00 Il' Festino with Dagmar Sáskova, soprano; Manuel de Grange, lute; theorbo, guitar: Etienne Moulinié, Antoine Böësset, more **MAY 2** 20.00 Belorussia Youth Orchestra & Musica Mundi Young Talents conducted by Vladimir Perlin: Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Copland, Elgar **MAY 4** 20.00 Hilary Hahn, violin; Valentina Lisitsa, piano: Tartini, Beethoven more

**Flagey**  
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20  
www.flagey.be  
**APR 29** 12.30 Stéphanie Salmin, Pierre Solot, piano: Schubert, Rossini, Gershwin

**Miniemenkerk**  
Miniemenstraat 62; 02.511.93.84  
www.miniemen.net  
**MAY 1** 10.30 Miniemenkerk Orchestra and Choirs conducted by Jan Caals: Bach

**Royal Music Conservatory**  
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37  
www.kcb.be  
**APR 30** 20.00 Gautier Capucon, cello; Jean-Yves Thibaudet, piano: Schumann, Shostakovich, Beethoven, Grieg

**Ghent**  
De Bijloke  
Jozef Kluyvensstraat 2; 09.269.92.92  
www.debijloke.be  
**APR 28** 20.00 Ronald Brautigam, pianoforte; Yodo Kurashiki, shakuhachi: Beethoven, Kurashiki  
**APR 30** 20.00 Alexander Gavrylyuk, piano: Chopin, Skryabin, Liszt, more



**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**  
De Munt  
Muntplein; 070.23.39.39  
www.demunt.be  
**MAY 3-11** 15.00/20.00 Toshio Hosokawa's Matsukaze conducted by Pablo Heras-Casado, staged and choreographed by Sasha Waltz (in German with surtitles in Dutch and French)

**Espace Senghor**  
Waverssesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40  
www.senghor.be  
**MAY 4** 20.00 Itinéraire du Sel, multimedia opera by Miguel Azguime



**Antwerp**  
Monty  
Montignystraat 3-5; 03.238.91.81  
www.monty.be  
**MAY 4-7** 20.30 tgSTAN in Oogst (Harvest), each evening a different cast/play/ choreography

**Brussels**  
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

**Dilbeek**  
CC Weststrand  
Kamerijklaan; 02.466.20.30  
www.weststrand.be  
**APR 30** 20.30 Ultima Vez in Radical Wrong choreographed by Wim Vandekeybus

**Kortrijk**  
Budascoop  
Kapucijnenvest 10  
www.dekreun.be  
**APR 28** 20.15 Charlotte Vanden Eynde in I'm Sorry It's (Not) A Story  
**APR 29-30** 19.00/20.00/22.00 Benjamin Vandewalle and Erki De Vries in Birdwatching choreographed by Vandewalle

**Mechelen**  
Ic nOna  
Begijnenvest 19-21; 015.20.37.80  
www.nona.be  
**APR 30** 20.30 Caravan Productions in Gnosis#1, choreographed by Vincenzo Carta

**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**  
Fakkeltreter Theatercafé  
Hoogstraat 12; 070.246.036  
www.fakkeltreter.be  
**Until MAY 29** 12.00-14.00 Hotel Vocal: musical theatre (in Dutch)

**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)

**Blankenberge**  
CC Casino  
Zeedijk 150; 050.43.20.43  
www.cultuur.blankenberge.be  
**APR 29** 20.00 Frank Focketyn in Brief aan mijn rechter (Letter to My Judge) by Georges Simenon (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)

**KVS Box**  
Arduinkaaai 9; 02.210.11.12  
www.kvs.be  
**APR 28** 20.30 Global Anatomy by Benjamin Verdonck and Willy Thomas (in Dutch)  
**APR 29** 20.30 Kunstretròk by Dominique Collet (in Dutch)  
**APR 30-MAY 5** 20.00 De Gehangen (The Hanged), written and directed by Josse De Pauw (in Dutch)

**Ghent**  
NTGent Schouwburg  
Sint-Baafsveld 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)

**Kortrijk**  
Budascoop  
Kapucijnenvest 10  
www.dekreun.be  
**APR 28-30** 19.00 K, a society in Frieze + Gossip + Presyncope, three installations/ performances by Kris Verdonck

**Theater Antigone**  
Overleiestraat 47; 056.240.887  
www.antigone.be  
**APR 28-29** 20.15 Theater Tocht in Kassandra (in Dutch)

**Bruges**  
Stadshallen  
Markt 7; 050.44.82.82

## DON'T MISS

### Festival of Flanders Kortrijk

**5-22 May**

Across Kortrijk

The months-long Festival of Flanders, staged in municipalities across the region, kicks off in Kortrijk, with a fantastic programme of baroque, chamber music and fusions of dance and classical. There's a bit of a pre-festival event on 3 May with a lecture on the East's influence on Western classical music, but the festival really starts flexing its muscles on opening night on 5 May with *Love Among the Ruins* by Britain's Hilliard Ensemble (pictured), unsurpassed in the world in the vocal presentation of early and new music. → [www.festivalkortrijk.be](http://www.festivalkortrijk.be)



© Friedrun Reinhold

[www.ccbrugge.be](http://www.ccbrugge.be)

**Until JUN 12** Berni Searle: Interlaced, installations, video and photographs by the South African artist

**Brussels**

**Bozar**

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00

**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 courthouse's modernisation/conservation plan

**APR 27-JUN 12** Maurice Frydman: Plasticité, works made from everyday plastic materials by the contemporary visual artist

**APR 29-JUN 12** Jordi Colomer: What is to Come, film, maquettes, photos and installations by the Spanish contemporary artist (also at Argos)

**APR 29-JUN 24** Jean-Louis Vanesch: Junctions, photos by the Belgian photographer

**Brussels Expo**

Hall 2 - Heysel; 070.25.20.20

[www.kingtutbrussels.be](http://www.kingtutbrussels.be)

**Until 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

**Design Vlaanderen Galerie**

Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.227.60.60

[www.designvlaanderen.be](http://www.designvlaanderen.be)

**Until MAY 20** This is Humin, innovative design projects by 30 companies and 20 designers from across Flanders

**Flemish Parliament - De Loketten**

IJzerenstraat 99; 02.552.40.43

[www.vlaamsparlement.be](http://www.vlaamsparlement.be)

**Until JUL 11** Raoul De Keyser: De dingen die ik zie (The Things I See), drawings and paintings by the Flemish artist

**Tour & Taxis**

Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49

[www.tour-taxis.com](http://www.tour-taxis.com)

**Until APR 30** Ironic Landscapes, photographs by Jos Tontlinger

**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](http://www.thankyoushanghai.com))

**Until JUN 19** Zes miljard mensen (Six Billion People), photo project by Yann Arthus-Bertrand

**White Hotel**

Louizalaan 212

[www.artonpaper.be](http://www.artonpaper.be)

**APR 29-MAY 1** Art On Paper, second edition of the Brussels drawing fair featuring original works on paper from more than 40 Belgian and international galleries

**Deurle**

**Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens**

Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23

[www.museumdd.be](http://www.museumdd.be)

**Until JUN**

**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.lannoevents.be](http://www.lannoevents.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](http://www.designmuseumgent.be)

**Until JUN 13** Fantasy Design, works by young people from Belgium, Denmark, Finland and Spain

**Until JUN 13** L'Objet Sublime, over 300 ceramic works from 1875-1945 France

**Dr Guislain Museum**  
Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95  
[www.museumdrguislain.be](http://www.museumdrguislain.be)

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

**Stadsmuseum Gent (STAM)**  
Bijloke - Godshuizenlaan 2; 09.269.87.90  
[www.stamgent.be](http://www.stamgent.be)

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

#### Leuven

**Museum M**  
Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28; 016.27.29.29  
[www.mleuven.be](http://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 Verhagen: 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](http://www.leuven.be/bibliotheek)

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

#### Mechelen

**Speelgoedmuseum (Toy Museum)**  
Nekkerspoelstraat 21; 015.55.70.75  
[www.speelgoedmuseum.be](http://www.speelgoedmuseum.be)

**Until JAN 8** (2012) Het Circus Kan Beginnen! (Let the Circus Begin!), circus figurines, clowns and maquettes

#### Meise

**National Botanic Garden of Belgium**  
Nieuwelaan 38; 02.260.09.20  
[www.plantentuinmeise.be](http://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 Parvisstraat; 059.80.55.00  
[www.oostende.be/cultuur](http://www.oostende.be/cultuur)

**Until MAY 15** Oostende: (ge)zichten (Ostend: Faces/Views), photographs by Daniel de Kievith and Jef Van Eynde



**Feest van de Folk**: Tenth anniversary of the Muziekmozaïek folk festival  
**Until MAY 7** across Flanders and Brussels  
[www.muziekmozaiek.be](http://www.muziekmozaiek.be)

**Literaire Lente**: Spring literary event featuring readings, films, exhibitions, discounts at bookshops and more  
**Until MAY 1** across Flanders  
[www.boek.be](http://www.boek.be)

**Opera in the Cinema**: Verdi's Il Trovatore live via satellite from the Metropolitan Opera in New York, with refreshments and an introduction (in Dutch)  
**APR 30** across Flanders and Brussels  
[www.kinepolis.com/events](http://www.kinepolis.com/events)

#### Antwerp

**Sci-fi, Fantasy & Horror Convention**: Games, comics, toys, dvds, costumes and more, plus an exhibition, readings, gaming rooms, special effect demos  
**MAY 1** 10.00-17.00 at Antwerp Expo, J Van Rijswijkstraat 191  
03.260.81.22, [www.antwerpconvention.be](http://www.antwerpconvention.be)

LISA BRADSHAW

#### Brussels Short Film Festival

28 April to 8 May

##### Across Brussels

I hate to make the decision even more angst-ridden (see p13), but, if you happen to live in the capital, you might want to spend your precious film hours right in your own city. To convince the average movie-goer that short films are worth the trip, organisers of the annual Brussels Short Film Festival have come up with some terribly clever ideas, such as Night of the Short, a five-hour late-night screening of one short after another, and The Very Short, which screens only films less than three minutes long.

But most of the shorts at the festival are a lot longer, and every screening lasts at least 90 minutes, with four or more films per screening. To make it easy, they are divided into several themes, like films that have won plaudits at festivals around Europe this year, films good for kids, films good for the older generation and all Belgian films. Particularly recommended are Debut Films of the Greats, a series of early work by directors



who went on to be famous. Jaco Van Dormael, Peter Greenaway and Spike Lee are among the dozens on the bill.

This year is a special selection of shorts chosen by the Latin American Cinema and Culture Festival of Biarritz, a reminder that the French city and the commune of Elsene are sister cities. In honour of its presidency of the European Union, Hungary is also given a special place this year. And the festival is not missing out on the current rage of live music performed in front of silent films: opening night at Bozar finds eight films each enjoying an introduction and piano accompaniment by French film restorer Serge Bromberg.

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

#### Brussels

**Art Brussels**: The capital's biggest contemporary art fair, with original work represented by 170 galleries from 25 different countries

**APR 28-MAY 1** 12.00-19.00 at Brussels Expo halls 1 & 3, Belgiaplein 1  
[www.artbrussels.be](http://www.artbrussels.be)

**Brussels Design Market**: Annual design market with clothes, furniture and design objects from the 1950s to the early 1980s

**APR 30-MAY 1** at Tour & Taxis' old harbour station  
[www.brusselsdesignmarket.be](http://www.brusselsdesignmarket.be)

**Heritage Day**: Tenth annual open-door event during which hundreds of museums and organisations offer a wide range of exhibitions, lectures, guided tours, culinary discoveries and many more diverse cultural activities

**MAY 1** 10.00-18.00 across Flanders and Brussels  
[www.erfgoeddag.be](http://www.erfgoeddag.be)

**Laken Royal Greenhouses**: The 19th-century architecturally splendid royal greenhouses are open to the public for a few weeks every spring. See giant palms and ferns from Africa, azaleas, orchids and rare floral plants

**Until MAY 8** via Koninklijk Parklaan  
[www.monarchie.be](http://www.monarchie.be)

**Lieven De Cauter**: Presentation of the Flemish philosopher's new book (in Dutch)

**APR 28** 20.00 at Passa Porta, A  
Dansaertstraat 46  
02.226.04.54, [www.passaporta.be](http://www.passaporta.be)

**May Day**: Day of the Worker celebrations with free concerts and entertainment for the whole family

**MAY 1** 13.00-20.00 at Rouppeplein  
[www.ftgbbruxellesirisnet.be](http://www.ftgbbruxellesirisnet.be)

**Pispotten Festival**: Free day of music to raise awareness of the need for public toilets for the homeless, featuring Jaune Toujours, Narcotic Daffodils, Spookhuisje, more

**APR 27** 13.00-21.30 on Nieuwe Graanmarkt

**Rafik Schami**: The Syrian author talks to Jan Leyers about the Dutch translation of his latest book (in German and Dutch)

**APR 29**, 12.30 at Passa Porta, A  
Dansaertstraat 46  
02.226.04.54, [www.passaporta.be](http://www.passaporta.be)

**Trajector Art Fair**: Art fair in collaboration with Art Brussels featuring 30 international contemporary art spaces, galleries and curators

**APR 30-MAY 1** at Hotel Bloom!, Koningsstraat 250  
[www.trajectorartfair.org](http://www.trajectorartfair.org)

**TROUBLE #7 - Métamorphoses**: European performance arts festival

**APR 27-MAY 1** at Halles de Schaerbeek, Koninklijke Sint-Mariastraat 22  
[www.halles.be](http://www.halles.be)

**Valériane**: Organic food fair featuring more than 150 Belgian producers and specialists of organic food and ecological lifestyles, plus lectures and workshops

**APR 29-MAY 1** 10.00-19.00 at Tour & Taxis, Havenlaan 86C  
[www.valeriane.be](http://www.valeriane.be)

#### Ghent

**Radio Modern Deluxe**: Swing party, with lessons, live music by Hot Club and music hall show

**APR 29** at Vooruit, St Pietersnieuwstraat 23  
[www.radiomodern.be](http://www.radiomodern.be)

**SalonSalon**: New platform for performing and visual arts in rotating locations in Ghent

**APR 28** from 19.00 at Bar Aktion III, Brabantdam 70  
<http://tinyurl.com/salonsalon>

#### Groot-Bijgaarden

**Floralia Brussels**: International exhibition featuring some 500 types of flowers, including 300 tulip varieties

**Until MAY 8** in the park at the Castle of Groot-Bijgaarden  
[www.floralia-brussels.be](http://www.floralia-brussels.be)

#### Leuven

**Taste Festival**: Performing arts festival for young dancers, actors and directors

**Until APR 29** at STUK, Naamsestraat 96  
[www.stuk.be](http://www.stuk.be)



Impat/expat event

## Real Estate in Belgium

Ghent  
Thursday May 19th, 2011

### Interesting investment

The property market in Belgium is stable and diverse. The trend line of the prices shows a continuous increase over time without too much volatility, making it an interesting investment. Buying a property in Belgium is a strong sign towards a mid-to-long term professional commitment, and offers a home base for your family in Belgium.

When leaving Belgium, the property can be rented out or sold.

When buying property in Belgium, the buyer needs sufficient knowledge of the different steps to be taken. There are financial, legal and fiscal implications that might be different for non-Belgian/non-EU nationals, and are necessary to be completely understood.

The Real Estate in Belgium impat/expat event gives you a broad outline of the Real Estate Market in Belgium, and your best ways as an impat/expat to purchase your property in Belgium.

### Programme

- 18.00: Welcome word by Voka Chamber of Commerce East Flanders
- 18.10: Buying a property in Belgium – legal aspects Notary Stein Binnemans
- 18.30: Finding your real estate on the Belgian Market Mr. Ron De Meyer, De Waele Real Estate
- 18.50: Financial implications of buying property in Belgium Mr. Dave Deruytter, ING
- 19.10: Fiscal aspects of real estate purchasing in Belgium Mr. Nico Vanthuyne, Deloitte
- 19.30: Conclusions
- 19.40: Networking reception

### Date

Thursday, May 19th, 2011 – 18-21 PM

### Location

ING, Kouter 173, 9000 Gent

### Participation Fee

Free participation

### How to participate

Voka website: [www.voka.be/oost-Vlaanderen/agenda](http://www.voka.be/oost-Vlaanderen/agenda)  
Mail: [leen.vandermoere@voka.be](mailto:leen.vandermoere@voka.be)  
Tel: 09/266 14 42 (Mrs. Leen Vandermoere )

organised by



supported by



## bite

## Den Trekzak

With the amazing weather of late, I've been touring the Flemish Ardennes on foot. These walks are even better with the promise of a thirst-quenching, hunger-stilling meal at the end. When friends suggest Den Trekzak (The Accordion) in Wortegem-Petegem, I happily followed them to the charming white farmhouse in the middle of the fields.

Despite plenty of seating outside, with a lovely view over green pastures, we chose to dine inside, where there is a an L-shaped combination of bright and airy rooms and a cosier area near the bar, complete with Leuvense stove. On the walls hang weathered accordions, and the atmosphere is comfortable and relaxed.



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

The restaurant has been around for 25 years but changed hands two years ago, taken over by a surprisingly young but dynamic couple: Laurence Delmelle (23) and Jeroom Von Lindt (25). The new owners carry on the tradition of serving large portions of Flemish fare (plus a few global-inspired dishes). The only drawback of the young serving staff is their general lack of knowledge when it comes to what's on the menu.

Fortunately the choices are pretty straightforward. Two friends opt for Tuscany's signature Florentine style steak, incredibly rich and tender beef grilled to just rare and seasoned with olive oil and black pepper. It is served thinly sliced and not with fries (for a change) but with a warm slice of cheese and veggie quiche and some leafy green salad.

Another friend gets his hands dirty on one of the house specialties: ribs, all you can eat. He manages to consume four racks of the juicy grilled pork, almost forgetting his baked potato and salad. Meanwhile, another friend peels the giants scampis atop her dish of *penne a l'arrabiata*. It's covered in a tasty – if not quite tangy enough – tomato sauce, parmesan cheese and fresh parsley. I am uncharacteristically quiet throughout the meal, so pleased as I am with one of the other specialties of the house – ham shank in a grain mustard sauce, a typically Flemish dish that I have yet had the pleasure

ROBYN BOYLE



of trying. The boiled pork literally slides off the bone, its sweetness perfectly offset by the sharp, pungent flavour of the sauce. Next to this are a colourful array of buttery broccoli and carrots and several piping hot and crunchy potato croquettes. Even with each of us drinking two to three beers next to our mains, the bill comes to a mere €25 a head – and that includes the finishing round of tea and coffee (with chocolate pralines and Easter eggs).

Diepestraat 11, Wortegem-Petegem; 056.68.00.

Thurs-Fri 11.30-14.00 & 18.30-22.00; Sat 19.00-22.00; Sun 12.00-22.00

Mains: €10-20

Family-friendly eatery in a setting of rolling fields, specialising in ribs, ham shank and low prices

## TALKING DUTCH

## Tropical tribulations

How I pitied all who drove for days, shuffled along in airport queues or somehow strained to make their way down south for the Easter holidays, as Flanders' beloved weatherman Frank Deboosere promised us tropical temperatures the whole week through.

Belgium was even the hottest place in Europe for a minute or two. Take that, Barcelona! In your face, Rome! The image of five shiny yellow *zonnetjes*, little suns, one for every day of the week, is engraved into my mind. It was going to be *lekker weer*, so much was for sure, the weather was going to be nice.

Well, *lekker*, if you're into that kind of solar assault. Personally, I have never been very close with *de zon*, the sun, who seems to have a particular appetite for my pale skin. And, coincidentally, I'm not a big fan of *zonnebrandcrème* either, of sunscreen, which practically banishes me to *de schaduw*, the shade, my old friend.

People do seem to change though, all of a sudden, with the help of a little *zonneschijn*, sunshine. They shed their gloomy faces and doff their winter garments. Girls



appear in summer dresses, as if out of nowhere. *Waar komen ze toch vandaan?*, the male voice-over of a certain Belgian beer commercial famously wondered, as he saw them frolic around. "But where do they come from?" I still don't know where they come from, but I have a funny feeling that I know where they're going to. Like everybody else who has the chance, they're off to practice Belgium's national sport: *een terrasje doen*, go for drinks on a terrace somewhere. Or, if not *een terrasje*, then most definitely *het park of het strand*, the park or the beach. And who can blame them? It

felt justified somehow, after a particularly long and grimy winter – as most of them are in this neck of the woods. We seem to have skipped *de lente*, spring, and gone straight to *de zomer*, summer. A kind of shock therapy for the chronically undernourished. Vitamine D immersion. What effect will it have on society? We can only wait and see.

Montesquieu used to say that people in colder climates are icy and stiff and that those in warmer climates are hot-tempered and lazy. True or not, it makes a whole lot more sense these days.

PHILIP EBELS

## THE LAST WORD . . .

## Sea snore

"The biggest physical danger you face in the Nieuwpoort zone is dying of boredom."

Editorial, *De Morgen*, on the Very Irritating Police initiative (see p2)

## Favourite things

"The hearty food, the solemnity of World War I trenches, the fairy tale towns sprinkled in the countryside, the sophistication of Brussels."

The special qualities of Belgium, according to travel writer Lea Lane, in *The Huffington Post*

## We have to let you go

"If this country were a company, it would have been bankrupt long ago. In the private sector, all those politicians would have been fired."

Patrick Lefevere, manager of Tom Boonen's QuickStep cycling team

## Capital confusion

"Brussels is a lot more complex than we expected. One crossroad doesn't join four streets, but five or six. We got lost all the time."

Two Dutch designers were asked to study the city's disadvantaged Bloemenhof area for a month

## NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #178

## Feature

You know that Belgium has no federal government, but you still aren't sure why? Political reporter Anja Otte tells us what the problem is and what needs to happen to put an end to the stalemate

## Focus

Buying property anywhere can be an exercise in extreme patience and empty wallets, but doing it in foreign country adds an extra dimension of confusion. That's why one real estate company in Ghent is hosting a seminar on the topic

## Living

It's nearly Mother's Day, so *Flanders Today* found a few mums to chat with about how children have changed their lives and how they feel about their own mothers