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“One for the people”

Antwerp’s long-awaited new city museum opens this weekend with a flourish

MONIQUE PHILIPS

The MAS has been compared to many things. Piled boxes designed to lure in Alice in Wonderland and tell her various stories. A lighthouse that guides people in from across borders.

“Come and meet Antwerp in the world, come and meet the world in Antwerp” is the flag this 15,000 square-metre building sails under, and you can find it in the very heart of the old port, Het Eilandje. The opening festival of the Museum aan de Stroom, or Museum on the Stream – Antwerp’s long-awaited civic pride and joy – is from 13-16 May.

The new city museum is the brainchild of Antwerp’s former culture alderman Eric Anthonis, who quite understandably applauds the Dutch Neutelings Riedijk Architects. “I was immediately won over by their entry for our international architectural competition, as they were the only ones who suggested a tower,” he says. And we all liked the idea of a fourth tower in Antwerp – one for the people.”

The striking design of the building is based on matchboxes piled on top of each other. What works with matchboxes doesn’t work with a building, however, and a central

core had to be built first, from which massive beams were hung that support the separate boxes. Each floor consists of a box that contains a windowless exhibition hall and a glass hallway on one of the outer sides. The glass walls are rippled, which adds an extra dimension to the ever-changing views. Escalators spiral the public right to the top for a magnificent 360-degree view.

The MAS has the only observation deck in Antwerp open to public. The free entry policy – separate from the museum – should ensure a constant flow of visitors to the spiralling hallways, dubbed Wandelboulevard (Walking Boulevard).

“We hope to see lots of people bringing their newspaper or using the multi-media displays. The roof remains open until midnight,” says Steven Thielemans, general director of Museums and Heritage Antwerp. Even to the population of Antwerp, it’s a rare sight to see their city from this high up, and they are suitably amazed. “I can see the ring road. Is Antwerp that small?” questions one visitor during the press event last week. And there’s a river and a port as far as the eye can see.

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“The very basis of modern art was laid right here”

© Sarah Blee

Five Belgians sing their way to semi-finals

Five of Belgium’s 10 entrants for this year’s Queen Elisabeth Music Competition have made it through to the semi-finals. The result is the best for the home country in the competition’s history.

Anneke Luyten (pictured) from Westerlo, Antwerp province, performed works by Richard Strauss and Henri Duparc. Katrien Baerts from Heusden-Zolder, north of Hasselt, sang Zemlinsky and Poulenc; while Stefan Cifolleli, a tenor from Antwerp, brought the audience in the Royal Conservatory work by Schumann and Berlioz.

Another tenor, Thomas Blondelle from Bruges, sang Offenbach and Weill. Finally, Sébastien Parotte, a baritone from Verviers – the only Belgian to have made the singing semi-finals twice (his first was in 2008) – sang works by Mozart and Rachmaninov.

The 24 international semi-finalists, whittled down from 93 total participants, perform this week. The 12 finalists will be announced at the end of the evening session on Wednesday, 11 May.

→ www.cmireb.be

Budget windfall for Flanders

Extra dividends go to schools, roads, research

ALAN HOPE

Flanders has €682 million more to spend this year than expected, thanks to the last two years of budgetary discipline, the region’s government announced last week.

The money will not lead to an immediate spending spree, the government said. Part of it will go towards paying the index-linked increases in the pay of civil servants. Some goes to a reserve to guarantee a balanced budget. And some will be set aside to tackle the problem of the government not paying its bills

on time, which became an issue at the end of last year as private sector suppliers complained.

But still, amid all that budgetary caution, there is good news. The budget windfall will lead to increased spending on a number of pressing issues.

A total of €100 million will be set aside for **roadworks** on the most dangerous places on Flanders’ roads, part of an ongoing campaign that has been budgeted at €100 million a year.

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FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE



Isala Van Diest

For the first time in Belgian history, the Royal Mint has issued a coin bearing the image of a woman who is not of the royal family. Two women, in fact: Isala Van Diest, the country's first woman doctor, and Marie Popelin, the first qualified woman lawyer. Anne Catherine Albertine Isala Van Diest was born in Leuven in 1842, the daughter of a surgeon and obstetrician of progressive views, who, for example, made sure his daughters were educated the same as his son. Van Diest decided to follow her father into the medical profession, but at that time the higher levels of Belgian secondary education were not open to girls, so she went to Germany instead. However, when she returned to Leuven to register at the Catholic University, she was refused, with the rector suggesting she become a midwife instead. In 1874, she went off to Bern in Switzerland, where women were accepted at the university. For her graduation thesis in 1879 she wrote on the hygiene of prisons. She then spent two years in London, where women had been free to practice medicine since 1866. She worked at the New Hospital for Women, where the pioneering feminist

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson was general medical attendant. Van Diest returned to Belgium, studied at the Free University of Brussels (ULB) and was finally, in 1884, allowed to practice, but not before a special royal decree was passed to allow it. Her work largely involved caring for prostitutes and immigrants, which she combined with increasing feminist activity. In 1892, she was active in setting up the Belgian League of Women's Rights. Van Diest retired to Knokke as her sight failed and died there in 1916. Also involved in the setting up of the League was Marie Popelin, born in Schaarbeek in 1846, who worked first as a teacher and school director before studying law at the ULB. When it came to joining the bar, however, she was rejected, as were appeals to the Court of Appeal and the Cassation Court. Nevertheless, her struggle became a *cause célèbre* and helped advance the case of women's education. She died in 1913. The new €2 coin is being issued to commemorate the centenary of International Women's Day. The Royal Mint plans to issue five million of the coins, as well as a collector's edition.

→ www.europemint.eu

News in brief

Michèle Martin, who has served half of her 30-year sentence for her part in the murders committed by her husband, Marc Dutroux, was set to be released from prison as *Flanders Today* went to press. The families of An Marchal and Eefje Lambrecks, two of the victims of the couple, have expressed anger that they were not consulted, as the law allows. An and Eefje, aged 17 and 19, were kidnapped in Ostend in 1995 and were later found dead on one of Dutroux's properties. He also kidnapped and killed two eight-year-olds and kidnapped two other girls who survived. Martin was found guilty of aiding and abetting Dutroux. The prosecutor's office was expected to announce an appeal against the decision, which would mean Martin would stay in prison until the appeal was heard.

Belgium's **King Albert II issued a rare press release** last week to lament the breach of protocol in members of political parties revealing the content of private discussions with the king, details of which appear in a new book on the political crisis. The book reports that the king angrily refused to consider new elections. The press release also states that parts of the book are "manifestly untrue".

Els Clottemans, sentenced to 30 years in prison last year for killing a woman by tampering with her parachute, has had her appeal rejected by the Cassation Court and is now considering taking her case to the European Court of Human Rights. The Cassation Court ruled that Clottemans lodged her appeal against conviction too late, although her lawyer claims the prison

authorities are at fault. The case at the European Court will hinge on the fact that she was interviewed by police as a suspect without the presence of legal counsel.

Limburg province has started **"divorce courses"** to help married couples break up in a manner that will cause the least harm to their children. The initiative follows the suicide last month of a 12-year-old boy who left a note saying he could no longer stand his divorced parents' constant battles.

The rail authority NMBS has **cut the time it will store lost property** from six months to 50 days, after which it will be given away to the non-profit Spullenhulp, which sells goods to raise money for the disadvantaged. Last year 39,385 objects were found in trains and stations, of which only 14,505 were reclaimed by their owners. The main items of lost property were backpacks, luggage, clothing, mobile phones and wallets.

A man accused of stealing two bags of muffins from the garbage of a supermarket in Rupelmonde (*Flanders Today*, 13 April) has been given a six-month suspended sentence. Steven De Geynst describes himself as a **dumpster diver**, who salvages food thrown away by shops because it has reached its sell-by date, despite being fit for consumption. The court ruled that goods can still be stolen even if their owner has thrown them away. De Geynst is considering an appeal.

Archaeologists digging in Oekene, near Roeselare, West Flanders, have uncovered the **remains of a mammoth, a wild horse and a wisent**, or European bison. The find, which also included tool fragments, dates back at least 10,000 years, the oldest find the province has ever seen. The site was discovered in fact in 2009, but was kept quiet until now so as not to alert treasure hunters. The artefacts will be put on show in Galerie Blomme in Roeselare next month.

Three freight containers from Japan that caused an alert in Zeebrugge harbour last week when they were found to be **emitting nuclear radiation** present no danger to workers or to the public, the Federal Agency for Nuclear Control has announced. Routine checking revealed an abnormal level of caesium-137 in one container and two others will low levels of the radiation. All three have now been decontaminated.

Wheelchair users and other disabled people will now be able to plan a trip to the centre of Brussels according to the accessibility of particular streets, with the publication last week of a new city map that grades each street according to the difficulty involved. The map, in book form, is published by Use-It and the disabled persons forum VFG and includes museums, cultural attractions, leisure spots and information on accessible toilet facilities.

→ www.rolstoelplanbrussel.be

OFFSIDE

ALAN HOPE

A cabinet for a table

He was responsible, among other things, for ensuring that all Russian vodka was produced at 40% alcohol and was described by an admiring colleague as "a chemist of genius, first-class physicist, a thorough expert of chemical industry and industry in general, and an original thinker in the field of economy." But he's probably best known for something every school kid ought to know: the periodic table of the elements.

Dmitri Ivanovich Mendeleev was not the first to work on a scientific classification of the elements, but he was the most thorough, and it's his version of the table we're all familiar with today. Familiar, that is, until you see the cabinet unveiled last week at the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL). A monument to Mendeleev's plan, the cabinet measures 2 x 3 metres and contains a sample of every known element.

Well, almost every one. Things like lead were easy to come by, and for most elements there is a sample in pure form, a sample of the ore the element comes from and several objects made from



© KUL / Rob Stevens

it. In the case of lead: genuine American Civil War bullets and some letters from a printing press. Samples of uranium and plutonium, though, were slightly more difficult to come by and aren't on the whole recommended for exposure to visitors to a university. Those sorts of elements are represented by illustrated materials.

The cabinet was created to mark not only the International Year of

Chemistry but also the centenary of the Nobel Prize won by Marie Curie for her discovery of two more elements you won't see: polonium and radium, the latter of which killed her. It's on display in the entrance hall of the Department of Metallurgy and Applied Materials Engineering and will later move to the library on the Arenberg campus.

→ www.mtm.kuleuven.be

FLANDERS TODAY

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Flooding, restoration and research get fresh funding

→ continued from page 1

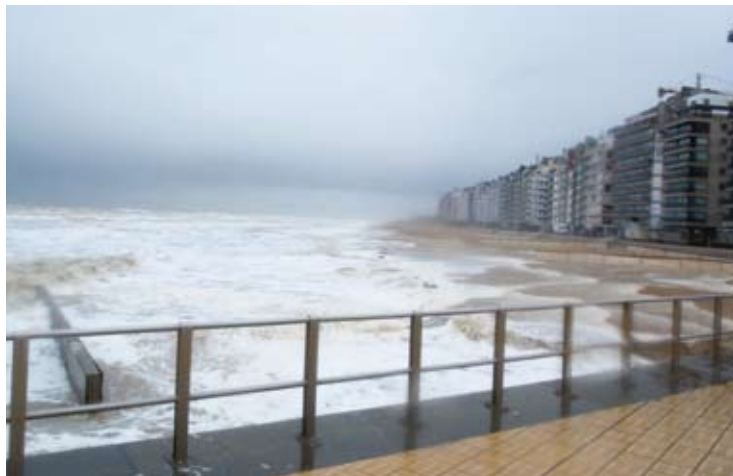
Schools will receive €25 million extra. That will provide, in the short term, 390 new places in Brussels schools to take care of the shortage – estimated at about 500 places – at a cost of €18 million. Over the years to come, 18 new schools in Brussels will provide some 3,200 new places by 2015. Among the new arrivals is a new primary school in Schaarbeek, where there has been no municipal Dutch-speaking school now for 33 years.

Scientific research and development receives extra funding of €65 million, which, according to minister Ingrid Lieten, will make up for the savings suffered by the sector over the last two years. The Fund for Scientific Research (FMO) receives just over €10 million. The aptly-named Odysseus project, intended to attract expatriated Flemish scientists back to the region, will get a top-up of €2 million. The four strategic research centres – the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology (VIB), nano-technology institute IMEC, the Flemish Institute for Technological Research (VITO) and the

Interdisciplinary Institute for BroadBand Technology (IBBT) – will share about €10 million. The Agency for Innovation through Science and Technology gets €10 million for business-related research. The agency will also hand out more than €17 million to outside projects submitted for funding.

At the same time, the government has decided to increase spending on **Research and Development** by €200 million between now and 2014, with a view to reaching a target for R&D spending of 3% of GDP by 2030. According to Lieten, priority will be given to major social challenges such as energy, food, migration and the ageing population.

The job of protecting against the so-called **“thousand-year storm”** (*Flanders Today*, 24 March 2010) receives €23.5 million to widen and strengthen the beaches in: the zone De Haan-Wenduine, the dunes of De Panne and Koksijde, and the Zeeheldenplein in Ostend. Most of the work will be done outside of the tourist season.



Stormy weather: Belgium's coastal defences get €23.5 million

Last week CD&V member of parliament Johan Verstreken warned that as a result of climate change, the sea level at the coast could rise by 1.5 metres, bringing the centre of Ostend and a large part of the city's hinterland under water. The government's own calculations foresee a rise of 30 centimetres by 2050 and 80cm by 2100.

Other spending:
€6 million for efforts against flooding

€10 million for getting older people back into the workforce
€25 million for the restoration of the Park Abbey in Leuven
€2 million for restoration of the Sint-Catharina church in Diest
€250,000 for work on “The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb” altarpiece in Ghent's Sint-Baaf's cathedral
€10 million for the new investment agency for heritage properties
€1 million to tackle child poverty ♦

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



€3.5 million

fine for rail infrastructure agency Infrabel for too many late trains in 2010: only 85.7% of trains arrived on time, meaning less than six minutes late

13,032

mentions of the name of Bart De Wever in the press last year, making him the most talked-about person in 2010, ahead of prime minister Yves Leterme with 8,834 name-checks

86th

place for the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL) in the latest QS World University Rankings, the only Belgian university in the top 100. Cambridge, Harvard and Yale topped the list. Antwerp came 179th, Ghent 192nd and the Free University of Brussels 238th

410g

of methane produced every day by an active dairy cow, pollution equivalent to a car with a CO2 emission of 165g, according to the Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research

369,415

Belgians were in credit arrears at the end of April, up more than 1,400 on the previous month. The total value of the loans stood at €2.9 billion

Wildfire started by abandoned vehicle

A wildfire destroyed 360 hectares of heathland in north-eastern Limburg province at the weekend. The rapid spread of the fire, in the area of Meeuwen-Gruitrode, led to police evacuating residents and the deployment of all of Limburg's fire stations, as well as the civil protection force, the army and firefighting personnel from across the border in Weert, the Netherlands. Police soon discovered that the fire was started by a man trying to tow away his broken-down car. A resident of Houthalen about 16 kilometres away, he called a friend to tow his car to a garage, but a fuel line broke, and the heat of

the engine set the petrol alight. The two eventually abandoned the car about 20 metres from the main road.

The prosecutor's office is carrying out an enquiry because the land on which the burning car was located – a military firing range used by personnel at the nearby base at Kleine Brogel – is not open to traffic.

The area damaged is about one-sixth of the area of the range, and the damage to fauna is still being evaluated. A spokesman for nature conservancy organisation Natuurpunt said the range could recover rapidly if it were to rain regularly over the coming weeks. Nature

reserves in Antwerp province and in Limburg have been on high alert since 2 May, so fire towers were already manned and fire stations ready to respond rapidly.

Meanwhile, in Kasterlee, Antwerp province, a loose firework set off in the Bobbejaanland amusement park was the cause of a fire that was rapidly brought under control by the fire service. Smokers across the region were advised not to throw away their cigarette ends carelessly during warm, dry weather, due to the risk of fires on roadside verges. ♦

Minister accuses court of “lack of common sense”

Federal justice minister Stefaan De Clerck has accused the Council of State of “a stunning lack of common sense” after the court struck down a project to build a new tramline in Antwerp province, even though the work is more than half done.

The Council of State is the country's supreme administrative court, with the function to scrutinise legislation for compatibility with the constitution and other legal texts, including treaties. The court also hears cases brought against decisions of all layers of government, from municipal to federal.

The case against the tramline from Deurne to Wijnegem was brought by the resident of a house situated along the route, who claimed the environmental impact of the new tram had not been sufficiently investigated before the work began, which is required by law. The line is part of the Antwerp Mobility Masterplan, which also included the highly controversial Lange Wapper viaduct, opposition to which led to a city-wide referendum that forced a review of the plan. The government claims the environmental impact study carried out for the entire masterplan also covers the Deurne-Wijnegem tram route, but the Council of State disagreed.

The complaint was lodged in 2007; in the time it has taken to come to a decision, the work is now about two-thirds complete. The mayor of Wijnegem, Leo Carpentier, has insisted the work go ahead, and was due this week to meet with Flemish mobility minister Hilde Crevits and the Antwerp Mobility Management Company. Crevits has referred to the Council of State's ruling as “Kafkaesque”. De Clerck, whose portfolio includes the courts, has



proposed a change to the law to allow the elected government to overrule the Council of State in cases where major public interest supersedes individual interests – for example, in the building of crematoria and prisons. As justice minister, De Clerck must build eight prisons across the country to cope with growing prisoner numbers and overcrowding, but each plan runs up against complaints from individuals, he said.

Meanwhile, the public transport users' group TreinTramBus joined calls for a rapid resolution of the situation to allow the tram route to come into operation next year as planned. “All residents of the area have an interest in creating a more liveable environment with fewer cars,” said spokesman Jan Van Severen. “One tram can carry as many passengers as 150 cars. The extension of the tramline is therefore a good thing for the environment.” ♦

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

Tuybens bashing

Money is to socialists what sex is to Christian-democrats: You're best not seen having too much of it. Bruno Tuybens found this out the hard way last week.

Tuybens entered the political scene in 2005, when he became secretary for government enterprises in the federal government. Before that, he worked as a broker, specialising in ethical investments, at KBC bank. He was also the president of Amnesty International Flanders.

When sp.a was forced into opposition in 2007, Tuybens' ministerial career seemed over before it even began. In parliament, though, he became noted as the man behind the quotas for women on company boards and as a relentless bonus basher. (The English words “basher” and “bashing” having been added to Flemish political jargon recently. They are mostly used in reference to criticising the N-VA, although anyone and anything can be “bashed” these days.)

There is something unethical about large bonuses being paid out to CEOs and board members, Tuybens argued. He coined the phrase “beer bonus” to denote the €2 million-something variable remuneration former prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene receives as a board member at AB InBev.

Tuybens did more than just “bashing”: He was behind two resolutions, by the Flemish and federal parliaments, to curb excessive bonuses from banks still paying back government support.

It was therefore only a matter of time before it was leaked that Tuybens had received a variable remuneration – a bonus, as most people would call it – at KBC, worth €250,000. That is a far cry from the millions Dehaene receives, but to most people it is still a lot.

For Tuybens, the damage is immense. He has lost part of his credibility on the subject, especially since he started off his defence by saying exactly what so-called bonus grabbers usually say: The money, he stated, was the result of a job well done. The news feeds a suspicion many people have about the socialists: that defending the working classes is another way of becoming rich themselves. This is the one thing the Flemish socialists, already losing in popularity, could do without. On Labour Day, sp.a defended bonuses not just for bosses, but for all employees. I did not realise they meant the price of an average family home, one observer joked. One thing is clear about Bruno Tuybens, though: We can hardly say that he is only in politics for the money.

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“One for the people”

MAS combines the collections of four Antwerp museums

→ continued from page 1

A revolution!

Philip Heylen, Antwerp's current alderman for culture and tourism, says the design encourages looking inward to our perhaps slightly forgotten heritage, but without forgetting the world outside. He hopes not just the roof, but the square next to the building will draw visitors. “The world is on fire right now, and those revolutions all take place in squares,” he notes. It's only from the roof of the MAS that you can distinguish the skull-shaped mosaic built into the square in subtle grey tones by celebrated Flemish artist Luc Tuymans. “Dead Skull” refers to the *vanitas* idea, the ultimate fruitlessness of human life. The little hands that seem to hold the deep red tiles from Rajasthan in place each represent a gift from a sponsor. (You can still buy one; they range from €1,000 to €10,000.) Undoubtedly, the whole neighbourhood will benefit from the new museum. Mayor Patrick Janssens sees the MAS as the finishing touch of the first phase of his urban development scheme. “The population of Antwerp is very diverse, and we want to encourage everyone to rediscover or to develop a tight bond with this city, their city.”

The history of Antwerp, in one spot

The MAS combines collections of the formerly scattered city museums, 470,000 pieces from the Ethnographic Museum, the Folklore Museum, the Maritime Museum and the Vleeshuis (Butcher's Hall).

The first floor of the MAS holds the free-entry “Visible Storage”, where the public can catch a glimpse of 180,000 items that tell the story of some prolific local collectors. Go in, open drawers and see restorers at work.

Each exhibition hall is divided into a succession of rooms. You'll get a first feel of the theme on offer in the so-called “Sensory Room”, where music by house composer Eric Sleichim greets you. You leave each exhibition hall through the “Trace Room”, where each visitor is invited to leave a trace, either by putting a message in a bottle or by touching a display of different materials, like copper or silk, to see how, over time, repeated human touch affects them.

The formerly separate museum collections are organised into different themes, one on each floor. I was very much impressed by the imaginative design throughout, the work of Antwerp's B-Architects. The lighting is superb, and the collection of Congolese masks, for instance, stands out beautifully in the section “Displays of Power”.

In the “Metropolis” section, you can see how Antwerp has portrayed itself to the world, for instance by organising World Fairs and Olympic games. A beautiful set of photographs by Flemish photographer Karin Borghouts form the link to the present. In “World Port”, you

can smell the goods that have passed through Antwerp. Sailors, meanwhile, have their own story to tell. The MAS went to the sea port city Matadi, Congo, to collect testimonies on Antwerp. And in a small dictionary for Chinese sailors, you can read the useful phrases: “Have you any marks on your body?” and “Shut down the damper”.

The two-storey “Life and Death” deals with life-confirming death rituals in various cultures and religions. Furthermore, the MAS is extremely proud to be able to present the unequalled collection of Pre-Colombian art owned by Dora Janssen.

MAStpieces

The MAS' current temporary exhibition is titled *Masterpieces in the MAS: Five Centuries of Images in Antwerp* and will run until the end of 2012. It brings together work from the city's Museum of Contemporary Art, Plantin-Moretus Museum and the temporarily closed Royal Museum of Fine Arts.

“We wondered what makes Antwerp different than any other baroque city or any other port,” explains Bart De Baere, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MHKA). The conclusion was the port city's unique insight in the diverse functions of an image. “The very basis of modern art was laid right here,” continues De Baere, “and at three key moments in time, new ideas were shaped here.”

First, the 15th-century Flemish Primitives broke free of the ideoplastic art that preceded them, turning towards reality for inspiration. Next, during the 16th century, Antwerp became a world centre in art, a sort of Hollywood for the Spanish Empire, producing and exporting convincing propaganda images, not only in allegorical paintings but in print and engravings. Religion meets science in the central room, a cabinet of curiosities.

The storyline takes us alternately through black rooms with classical paintings and white rooms with modern counterparts. The Flemish artists on display are indeed the finest; among them Jan Fabre, Luc Tuymans, Raoul De Keyser, Koen van den Broek and David Claerbout. Where the exhibition started off with a beautiful selection of coins, stamped with the noble profiles of kings and emperors, it ends with the zero dollar bills of Brazilian conceptual artist Cildo Meireles, art as an alternative, valuable economy.

Carl Depauw, former curator at the The Rubens House and now the director of MAS, is confident. “This opening is merely the start. We have to continue our efforts and bring dynamic programmes that will hopefully engage visitors for a long time to come.”

Alice in Wonderland will have a ball at the lighthouse. ♦

→ www.mas.be



Wavy windows suggest the *stroom* of the museum's name, a word that means “stream”, “flow” and flux all at once

The MAS Festival

This weekend, 13 to 16 May, finds a whole range of exhibitions, dance, music and theatre in the MAS and across the neighbourhood from early morning until midnight every day. Fireworks will illuminate the MAS site on Saturday at 23:00. Museum entry is free during the festival, but it's best to book in advance by telephone at 078.052.050, in person at the ticket office of the MAS or online. After the festival, access to the observation deck will always be free; entry to the museum is €8, less for seniors and young people.

→ www.openingsfestivalmas.be

The MAS in 10 floors

- ① reception area and MAS café Storm
- ② administrative offices
- ③ visible storage: On Collecting and Collectors
- ④ temporary exhibitions: Masterpieces in the MAS (until 30 December, 2012)
- ⑤ permanent collection: Displays of Power, On Prestige and Symbols
- ⑥ permanent collection: Metropolis, On Here and Elsewhere
- ⑦ permanent collection: World Port, On Trade and Shipping
- ⑧ permanent collection: Life and Death, On Men and Gods
- ⑨ permanent collection: Life and Death, On the Upper- and Underworld
- ⑩ restaurant and reception hall
- ⑪ observation deck (free access)

and two things to know...

- 1 Unlike in many museums, you are allowed to take photos throughout the MAS
- 2 Non-Dutch speakers are advised to buy the MAS guidebook for €7.50 or bring a smart phone, as only labels in Dutch accompany the objects on display



The 10th floor observation deck show residents a view of Antwerp they've never seen before

The patriot

Geert Bourgeois, the Flemish nationalist with the French name and the Greek chin, feels misunderstood.

"We're not the inhuman creatures they say we are"



PHILIP EBELS

For someone who gets out of bed at a quarter past five, Geert Bourgeois looks surprisingly awake, one sunny afternoon in April, as he walks up to welcome his visitor from *Flanders Today*, the newspaper he helped to build some three-and-a-half years ago when he was Flemish foreign minister.

"I don't need a lot of sleep," he admits. "I get up easily, and always try to get some exercise in the morning. I take the stairs instead of the elevator. That wakes me up."

His work day doesn't stop until 23.00. Given the range of his current portfolio, it's not a minute too late. He is not only Flanders' minister of administrative affairs, but also of local and provincial government, of civic integration, of tourism, of heritage and of the Vlaamse Rand (aka the Flemish periphery around Brussels). Not to mention vice-minister president, "which is very interesting, because I get to deal with the overall budget. It is a lot, but it keeps me fresh. I turn a switch every hour."

Dressed in a spotless white shirt and tie but no jacket, he gladly switches to talk-mode. First up is *inburgering*, or civic integration. Like many European countries, Belgium becomes a new home every year to thousands of immigrants, but only recently began "to extend a helping hand," as Bourgeois puts it.

"Many of those people go through a very difficult period," he says, "and sometimes know little or nothing of the country in which they have ended up." He remembers the post-war guest workers who were largely left to fend for themselves, "which was absolutely wrong. We only started in the mid-1990s with voluntary integration courses," he says, "which became mandatory in 2004. Before that, we did nothing."

Civic or social integration is a programme, explains Bourgeois, that helps every newcomer become "a fully-fledged citizen who takes an active part in society. It means learning the language to be able to communicate with your neighbour and government. But it also means accepting a basic set of values – the separation of church and state or the equality between men and women, for example. If you don't accept those, then I say sorry, there is no place here for you." (See article, opposite)

From solitary confinement to top party

Bourgeois, 59, is a Flemish nationalist. He always has been, ever since as a teenager he joined the nationalist Volksunie, until in 2001 it dissolved into several smaller parties, one of which he himself founded and is known today as the Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie, or N-VA, the biggest party in the country after last year's election.

"Yes I'm proud," he says. "We started out in difficult circumstances. The split of the Volksunie was painful, also for me personally. In 2003, I was still all alone in parliament. It fills me with joy that we've done so well."

Not everybody in Belgium feels the same. Much of the French-speaking part of the country, for example, are simply appalled by the surge of the N-VA and of Flemish nationalism in general. "Unrightfully so," Bourgeois says, characteristically calm and eloquent. He was a lawyer in a previous life and is noticeably used to explaining things.

"We believe in humanitarian nationalism, an inclusive ideology based not on bloodline but on citizenship"

"I think it is because we want independence and because nationalism itself has a bad connotation. Perhaps we should present ourselves as Flemish patriots instead of nationalists," he says, only half jokingly. "Patriotism, unlike nationalism, is widely accepted, from the US to France and the Netherlands. But somehow we have a bad reputation."

Also internationally, he often finds himself on the defensive. "It is difficult to explain to international media, who often stay informed through francophone newspapers, that we, the majority of the country, want independence. You'd have to know the history of the country," he says. "But in the eyes of the international community, Belgium remains a Latin country, belonging to the *francité*. Our language

is only small compared to French – a language that I love, by the way, but whose practitioners sometimes do manage to portray us almost as inhuman creatures. Which we are not. We don't believe in ethnic nationalism. We believe in so-called humanitarian nationalism, an inclusive ideology based not on bloodline but on citizenship."

Priority to locals

Something else that may be difficult to explain is the Flemish stance on Brussels, or rather its periphery, one of Bourgeois' many other dossiers. His housing policies there, which aim to maintain the Flemish character of the land by giving priority to locals and Dutch speakers, have not only incited allusions to Nazi Germany (by Olivier Maingain, president of the French-language defending FDF party), but also reprimands of the Council of Europe anti-discrimination commission.

"The local population there are being driven away," Bourgeois says. "The francophone *bourgeoisie* have fled the inner city, driving up land and house prices. That's why we chose to give priority to [locals], not only around Brussels, by the way, but also on the coast or around Antwerp."

He denies the allegation, often voiced in Brussels, that the city finds itself incarcerated, a prisoner of Flemish housing policies. "We live in a free country," he asserts. "We're still a member of the EU, where goods and people can move about freely. You're not expected to pass a language test if you want to come and live in the periphery. That is something that is being cultivated."

These concerns, though, aren't helping the federal government negotiations, famously dragging along for almost a year now, and still no end in sight. "It has become a trench war," Bourgeois agrees. "All we ask for is more responsibility, but the francophones are afraid. I remember saying not long ago that I rate the chance of success at 50%; but I'm afraid that even might have been too optimistic."

Bourgeois himself has no plans to retire. "On the contrary, I think we all should work longer. I lose all my best officials because they leave when they hit 60. I'll be 60 soon, and I feel fine. I'd love to go on for a while," he says. "But you know, I'm from West Flanders, and my motto is 'work and enjoy'."

➔ www.geertbourgeois.be

Getting to know you

Civic integration programme introduces newcomers to Flanders' laws, norms and practicalities

PHILIP EBELS

Hanif came to Belgium with the help of a fellow journalist. He had fled his native Iran after hiding from government forces following the 2009 presidential elections. Today, he lives in Kessel-Lo, near Leuven, and is learning to become Belgian.

Not in a passport kind of way, but rather in a how-do-I-greet-a-stranger or where-do-I-go-to-get-insurance kind of way. One morning, he and his 20-odd classmates discussed, in English, the definition of social integration and what it means to them. A week later, they stepped outside into the centre of town to take pictures of things they believed to be typically "Belgian". Chocolate and fries figured heavily, of course, but also a statue of a naked woman and a surreal sculpture by Flemish artist Jan Fabre of a giant beetle pierced through by a giant needle. "I think it is very good," Hanif said about the social integration course. "I used to have to ask others to help me with my daily chores. Now I feel more independent."

Rachid, an asylum seeker from Somalia who said he left his country because he was being "hunted", is happy to get to know his rights and duties. "I can see this is a peaceful country," he said, putting the Belgian government quarrels painfully into perspective.

Learn how to recycle, get enlightened

It is not only asylum seekers who enrol in the *inburgering*, or civic integration, programme of the Flemish Region. All immigrants can enter the cost-free programme, which consists of a 60-hour social orientation course, a basic Dutch language course and professional guidance.

At the table next to Hanif was a German woman who works for charity and "thought that this was a good way to get to know the country". Those from outside the EU are obliged to enter, with some exceptions, as are certain Belgians born abroad. They have to sign an attendance contract with the Flemish government and will receive a fine if they break it.

Geert Bourgeois, Flemish minister of civic integration, knows that his job title has a ring of political jargon. Civic integration refers to the process of becoming a fully-fledged citizen, he explains in an interview with *Flanders Today* (see page opposite), who takes an active part in society.

Bourgeois believes that too many immigrants today are being left out. "We should live *with* each other," he says, "not alongside each other." He even touches upon the Age of Enlightenment, whose values are enshrined in our society and should be respected by all. "Those are the foundations to which you are expected to subscribe."

Newcomers can be exempt from the social orientation course by passing a test that measures their knowledge of Belgian society. (Have a go yourself on the website of *De Standaard*: www.standaard.be/extra/inburgeringstest.) The test covers simple practical knowledge, like what lights are necessary on a bicycle



Civic integration courses introduce newcomers to Flanders – and to each other

or what kind of garbage is supposed to go into the PMD-bag, as well as social issues and legalities, such as marriage being open to same-sex couples.

The test tries to find out "if people know something about how things work around here," explains Bourgeois. People used to be asked how to prepare proper cauliflower with béchamel sauce, he laughs, which he thinks was "out of touch with reality." Today, he says, civic integration really offers "a basic set of values and know-how in order to be able to make it in that big, new, strange and scary world."

Becoming an integration coach

Something that is supposed to make this unfamiliar world even less scary is Bourgeois' new initiative "Samen inburgeren", or integrating together. Based on a similar project in the Netherlands, it aims to pair up someone new in society with someone less new, who both agree to meet at least once every two weeks. "For a chat, a movie, a trip to the park or to the post office," Bourgeois says, as long as they speak Dutch.

Both Flemings and immigrants who've been here awhile can apply to become an "integration coach", as it has been dubbed.

The idea is that both people learn from each other. "That way," Bourgeois hopes, "prejudice will subside."

An increasing number of people are enrolling in the integration programme. Last year, the number grew by a third compared to the year before. One in three attends voluntarily. Federal minister of employment and equal opportunities Joëlle Milquet has shown a keen interest and has called upon the regional governments of Wallonia and Brussels to take similar steps. (Flanders offers courses in Brussels, but they are not mandatory.)

Hanif and his colleagues were given one last assignment: go to the website of your commune and find the necessary documents for when you have a baby. Some did better than others, but in the end they all seemed to understand the teacher's explanation of what, where and how, something anyone familiar with Belgian bureaucracy would appreciate. ♦

➡ www.inburgering.be

➡ www.sameninburgeren.be

International school for Ghent?

East and West Flanders consider primary and secondary education in English

ALAN HOPE

Next week representatives of business and government will meet at a conference in Ghent to launch a radical new project: the creation of an international school, teaching in English, for people living in East and West Flanders. The project has been a long time in development but has suffered from a lack of support from the Flemish government.

The problem is twofold, explains Wouter Van den Berghe, an expert on international education with Tilkon consultancy. Expats have only two options when coming to work in Flanders: enrol their children in private schools, which can cost up to €30,000 per year for each child, or send them to local schools. The latter option is not attractive for those in Belgium for a limited period of time.

While Flanders tries to promote itself internationally, through initiatives like Flanders in Action (VIA), as a centre of know-how, attempts to attract many professionals to the region founder because of a lack of educational provision.

Attempts to attract professionals to the region founder because of a lack of educational options

Existing international schools are concentrated in Brussels and Antwerp. There are no international education institutions in East or West Flanders. That affects, for example, a company like Bekaert in Kortrijk, which has trouble attracting expats for this very reason.

Bekaert will be sending a representative to the conference, which is organised by the East Flanders Chamber of Commerce, to take part in a panel discussion. The University of Ghent, which has exactly the same problem in trying to attract post-doctoral

students and members of faculty, will also be represented.

According to Sofie Bracke, Ghent alderwoman for innovation and employment, an international school could welcome as many as 400 students if it offered primary and secondary education. "We've carried out a feasibility study and drawn up a business plan," she explains. "But the details will depend on the partners who agree to take part."

Flanders' education minister, Pascal Smet, will have the last word at the conference. "We hope we won't slam the door on the whole idea," Van den Berghe says. Smet's office, meanwhile, declined to comment on the minister's position before the conference.

The conference is on 17 May from 16.00 to 19.00 and is open to the public. Sign up on 09.266.14.42 or online. ♦

➡ www.tinyurl.com/ISghent

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Rich-poor divide decreasing

Belgium is in the rare position of having a narrower wealth gap than 20 years ago

ALAN HOPE

Belgium is one of the few countries in the developed world where the wealth gap between the rich and the poor is smaller now than it was 20 years ago, according to a study released last week by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Across the 34 countries of the OECD, the earnings of the top 10% went up by 2%, while those of the bottom 10% fell by 1.4%. The richest make on average nine times more than the poorest. But in some countries the gap is wider. In Israel and the United States, the average is 14 times more. Mexico, with substantial wealth at the top and profound poverty at the bottom, has a factor of 27, making it almost twice as unequal as its closest rival, the US.

The main reasons for the widening world-wide gulf between rich and poor are: technological advances

bringing greater advantages to the educated and well-paid than to those in low-paid jobs; the proportion of capital in personal wealth – mostly savings and investments – is larger now than 20 years ago, and that also affects the well-off more.

The generalised effect is tempered somewhat in Belgium, the OECD explains, by a relatively high rate of taxation on those earning higher salaries. The encouraging news about Belgium's incomes divide, according to Ivo Marx of the Centre for Social Policy in Antwerp, "doesn't automatically mean there's less poverty in Belgium. Especially for people who live on benefits, the chance of slipping into poverty has risen enormously in recent years. We see that in every Belgian study." ♦

Equity top five

The countries where the gap between the richest 10% and the poorest 10% is smallest

- 1 Turkey
- 2 Greece
- 3 France
- 4 Hungary
- 5 Belgium

Inequity top five

The countries where the gap between the richest 10% and the poorest 10% is greatest

- 1 Mexico
- 2 United States
- 3 Israel
- 4 United Kingdom
- 5 Italy

Food news

A group of news stories this week served up on a plate

Belgian **consumption of fish** rose last year by 1.2%, with fish making up a larger share of protein in people's diets, according to figures from the agricultural marketing agency VLAM. In spite of rising average prices, Belgians last year ate more than 12 kilograms each of fish and shellfish, including 6.6 kg of fresh fish. The country's favourite fish is still the cod, but there was significant growth in consumption of ocean perch, smoked salmon, shrimp and mussels.

Security guards have been stationed in a **field of potatoes** in Wetteren, East Flanders, to prevent damage by possible protestors. The potatoes are a field-test of genetically modified organisms run by the Institute for Agriculture and Fisheries Research (ILVO) and are resistant to potato blight, a disease that costs potato farmers around €55 million a year in lost crops. A group called the Belgian Field Liberation Movement has threatened to destroy part of the crop on 29 May.

The **price of vegetables** has hit rock-bottom, with supply so large that some farmers

are being forced to destroy their own crops, according to the Farmers' Union. Prices for lettuce are halved, broccoli down 45% and other seasonal crops, like cucumbers, red peppers, tomatoes, asparagus and endive are all down 30%. The problem, explained Philippe Appeltans of the union, is that the usual calendar of crops from the south being followed by crops from Belgium has been disrupted. "In the south, growth has been held up by bad weather. Here the warm weather means our harvests are not only huge, but also several weeks too early. The result is a huge supply that sends prices through the floor."

Finally, an international research study headed by researchers from the Catholic University of Leuven has hit headlines across the world with a claim that **salt has little or no effect on hypertension** and heart attacks. In fact, not only is it of little use to cut the amount of salt in the diet, the study led by Professor Jan Staessen said, but those who consume low levels of salt could be more at risk. ♦

Plane sharing takes off

Three private aircraft for €125,000 seems like an attractive proposition for any businessperson, but there is a catch: You'll be sharing the corporate planes with other investors. Everyone's now familiar with car-sharing schemes: Welcome to plane sharing.

The scheme is the idea of NextGen Aviation Group, set up by Tim de Meijer, Maxim Schelfhout and Thomas Brackx and based at Antwerp Airport in Deurne. The idea is as simple as time-share: the company has three single-engine planes – a Cirrus SR22 Turbo for economy, a Daher-Socata TBM850 for speed and a Pilatus PC-12 (pictured) for comfort. For an initial stake of €125,000 you

can become a member of the club, either flying the planes yourself or using a NextGen pilot. The costs thereafter are estimated to be in the region of €200 to €600 a week, depending on the use of the planes.

The company, De Meijer says, is aiming at small and medium-sized companies who can't justify owning their own planes, as well as simple flight enthusiasts. The planes also have the advantage, he explained, of being able to use smaller airports, making them more flexible. With a range of some 2,500 km on one tank of fuel, the whole of the European continent is within reach, according to NextGen. ♦

→ www.nextgen.aero



© Emmanuel Capart

De Graeve wins Vlerick Award

Bert De Graeve, CEO of metals and materials company Bekaert, has been awarded this year's Vlerick Award for business leaders who have brought their company to the top of its sector. De Graeve (pictured) belongs to the group known as the "Alcatel boys" – highly placed executives at the telecoms company in the 1980s who went on, one by one, to fill senior positions at a wide range of other Belgian companies. De Graeve became managing director of the BRTN – as the Flemish public broadcaster was then called – in 1996, before moving to Bekaert in 1992. He became CEO four years later.

De Graeve is credited with turning Bekaert towards growth markets like Russia and China, and the company's performance allowed it to ride the economic crisis with relatively little



damage. Last year, turnover was up by one-third, and profits doubled. Bekaert ended the year as the best-performing share on the Bel20, and *Trends* magazine named De Graeve manager of the year. In January he was made an honorary citizen of Shanghai. ♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Banking • Dexia

Belgo-French banking group Dexia is considering the sale of its insurance and assets management division to meet conditions set by the European Union for allowing its rescue by the French and Belgian governments during the 2008 financial crisis. Dexia had hoped to sell some of its activities in Italy and Spain, but poor market condition are forcing the bank to look at other options.

Building materials • Etex

Brussels-based building materials group Etex is believed to be interested in bidding for France's Lafarge Gypsum affiliate, specialised in plaster boarding. The company already has some experience in the field as it partners with Lafarge in South America for a whole range of plaster-based products and was heavily invested in Gyproc until 2003.

Mining • Nyrstar

The Brussels-based zinc mining and smelting group is considering the acquisition of the Swedish Zinkgruvan mine, owned by Canada's Lundin company. The move would put Nyrstar closer to its goal of 50% of its ore needs covered by its own mines. The company is sitting on a nice cushion of cash following a recent capital increase and the issue of some €500 million in obligations.

Retail • Disney Store

The first Disney Store in Belgium opened in Antwerp last week selling Disney brand products, DVDs and apparel. The new store, equipped with the latest ITouch technology, will recreate characters and the unique environment of the Disney world.

Supermarkets • Colruyt

Discount supermarket Colruyt has sacked 27 of its Asian non-food suppliers for not respecting international employment standards on salaries, working hours, child employment, health and security.

Telecom • Telenet

Mechelen-based cable and telecommunications company Telenet has made a bid for the country's fourth GSM license, said to be worth some €75 million. The move, in partnership with the Liège-based Voo cable company, will strengthen Telenet's "triple play" offer.

Travel • South Station

South Station in Brussels, the country's busiest train station, is on track for a major facelift that would include some 250,000 square metres of offices and 200,000 square metres of housing by 2020. The plans also include increasing the capacity of the underground railway tunnel linking Brussels' South and North Stations. A decision on the more than €1 billion project is expected by the end of this year at the earliest.



Belgian farmers are destroying their own crops

Art for all and all for art

The Accessible Art Fair has filled a gap the market didn't know it had

KATRIEN LINDEMANS

Making art accessible. That's what Stephanie Manasseh has been doing for the last seven years with the Brussels Accessible Art Fair. Meet the 50 artists, browse the works (priced between €50 and €5,000) and maybe walk home the same day with a perfect piece of art for you.

The idea was born not long after Manasseh, a Canadian, arrived in Brussels. "I was pregnant at that time and joined a group for pregnant expats," she explains. "I found out people were really into art but not too fond of galleries. That's when I started my coffee mornings, where I brought artists and art lovers together in a comfortable environment."

The first year, Manasseh found the artists in small galleries and cultural centres. "I could see their talent and wanted to offer them the opportunity to meet possible buyers. At the same time, visitors could talk to the artist directly rather than to the gallery owner."

In 2004, about 200 people came to see the work of nine artists. Last year, those numbers were 5,000 visitors and 50 artists. "Artists can apply to join the fair and are chosen based on their work and their availability during the fair. The artists have to be there all time; that's what makes the fair unique."

To house this mix of Flemish, French-speaking and international artists, Manasseh had to look for a big enough venue. "I chose

the Conrad Hotel because it fits the idea of making luxury accessible," she explains. "The fair is all about breaking down barriers. On top of that, Conrad also has the biggest ballroom in the city."

Personal art shopping

Following the ideology, you don't need to be much of an art connoisseur to enjoy the event. "We have a lot of first-time buyers," Manasseh says. "People can chat with artists and ask them questions about the works, which makes them confident and comfortable. Many of the visitors come back, as well. They trust the quality of the fair, and, in a way, buying art is addictive. Once you get the taste of it, you'll want more."

Expect paintings, pictures and sculptures in all sizes and styles. "Paintings usually sell the best," says Manasseh. Buyers spend an average of €900, but if such a big purchase scares you, Manasseh has a suggestion. "If people see something they like but aren't sure it will match their interior, they can make an appointment, and I'll come round with one or a few works to see if and how they fit. This concept of personal art shopper also works well for people or companies who haven't been to the fair but spotted a work on our website and are keen to see it."

With two Accessible Art Fairs a year in Brussels, a plan to launch it in Antwerp this autumn and a job as personal art shopper, Manasseh has carved out a niche career in the capital of Europe. And, it seems, the world. "The concept is being franchised," she says. "Tel-Aviv and Vienna are already on the agenda, and one day I'd like to add New York, Toronto and India. Wouldn't it just be great to make art accessible to everyone in the world?" ♦

13-15 May

Conrad Hotel

Louizalaan 71, Brussels

→ www.accessibleartfair.com



Bringing art to the world: Stephanie Manasseh



Italian Lisa Borgiani is one of the 50 local and international artists present at the Accessible Art Fair

Your mind is your body (and vice versa)

JACQUELINE FLETCHER

Jan Fabre smashes ever possible boundary at the Netherlands' prestigious Kröller-Müller

After Flemish artist Jan Fabre's huge successes at the Venice Biennale and the Louvre, the exhibition *Hortus/Corpus* at the Kröller-Müller Museum in the Netherlands might seem like a low-key affair, tucked away in the middle of the Dutch nature reserve Hoge Veluwe.

The strength of this exhibition lies in the opportunity to view the work of one of Europe's most remarkable contemporary artists from a different perspective. Whereas in the Louvre, Fabre's sculptures were placed within the framework of a cultural dialogue, alongside the Flemish and German Schools of the Late Middle Ages, this one, as the title indicates, is best perceived in the context of a vast natural space, where it spills out through the museum's plate glass walls, challenging those barriers created by humankind to distinguish itself from its environment.

Fabre has deliberately chosen to juxtapose the sensual aspects of his work with the clinical Calvinism of the building's architecture. As interior and exterior blend into each other, it becomes obvious that the notion of binary polarities – nature and nurture, mind and body, life and death – are false.

A preoccupation with the body is evident throughout. Speckled beetles, their exoskeletons glimmering, trundle like battalions of warriors; bones made from Moreno glass form ossuaries topped with genitalia fashioned from delicate slithers of real bone. Belgium's colonial past is recollected in the stunning "I Had To Demolish a Part of the Ceiling of the Royal Palace Because There Was Something Growing Out of It". A man seated before his microscope ("Me, Dreaming") and an astronaut ("The Old Spiritual Traveller") are constructed entirely from drawing pins speaking of our prickly vulnerability. In the short film "Is the Brain the Most Sexy Part of the Body?" Fabre has a fascinating discussion on creativity with socio-biologist Edward O Wilson.

But secreted away in the woods outside is the most moving piece of

all. One can walk straight past "Sanquis/Mantis Landscape (Battlefield)" unawares or stumble on it like the solitary vestiges of some ancient tragedy long forgotten. Fragments of mediaeval armour lie gleaming, scattered beneath the trees. It recalls carnage now half-hidden among dead leaves but is equally reminiscent of strange hybrid creatures from Hieronymus Bosch, or even the giant prehistoric invertebrates that roamed our forests long before man evolved.

The servant of beauty

Fabre's work is rich in multiple references. He is acutely aware of his role as an artist at the interface between society and the individual, between science and the arts, between the past and the future and between optimism and despair. He is, as he has so often said, "the servant of beauty". In this stimulating exhibition we find a representative cross-section of works that aptly engage the visitor with the quintessential Fabre. We are invited to enjoy the senses, to reflect and to feel, to ponder paradoxes and chuckle at our human imperfections.

The media, who love to rant, have created a persona, the *enfant terrible* obsessed with body fluids and sexuality, but Fabre is an astonishingly erudite artist, a researcher, ever curious, ever generous. Like his sculptural self-portrait "The Man Who Gives a Light", sheltering from the wind on the restaurant terrace, he likes to spread light and warmth.

The Antwerp artist understands human fragility in all its complexity – the fears, the desires and the risks. Despite being at the top of international art fame, he remains modest and humorous in the execution of his ideas, evidenced in another self-portrait: "The Man Who Measured the Clouds" stands on the roof of the Kröller-Müller, on a simple domestic ladder, stretching towards the sky with a short ruler.

It is a symbol of optimism, aspiration, humility and tenderness. ♦



Jan Fabre, on the roof of the Kröller-Müller, measuring clouds

Hortus/Corpus

Until 4 September
Kröller-Müller Museum
Houtkampweg 6
Otterlo, the Netherlands

→ www.kmm.nl

Meet Mrs Brusselmans

The obsessive subjects of a Flemish painter at the Mu.Zee

IAN MUNDELL

Have pity on the painter's wife, for her lot is not an easy one. In the case of Marie-Léonie Frisch -- Mrs Jean Brusselmans -- not only was she constantly called upon to model, but she also had to take in sewing work to support the family when the resulting canvases failed to sell. Still lives depicting their meagre suppers and modest crockery were no more popular. Eventually, Marie succumbed to the cold and other hardships, dying in 1943.

It's difficult to avoid thinking of Marie as you walk around the large exhibition of Brusselmans' later work at Mu.Zee in Ostend. She features in many of the paintings, although more often as a woman in abstract than by name. And as well

as reading about the poverty that pursued the couple, you can see it in paintings such as the *Attic Room* series from 1938-9, which ache with cold and fatigue. It seems that Marie suffered for Brusselmans' art, but without the consolation of pursuing a personal creative obsession.

There's no doubt that Brusselmans was an obsessive. Year after year he painted the same scenes from the window of his studio in Dilbeek, Flemish Brabant. A row of snowscapes feature the same skeletal tree in the foreground, and the same three houses can be seen across the fields in the landscapes. The still lives are equally single-minded, recombining the same elements: a box of matches, a lamp, a paraffin can, a dried herring

or two. Marie does not escape these obsessions, wearing the same checked dress over and over at the artist's request.

Marie and Jean Brusselmans met in Brussels in 1911. We are not told much about her (the artist's wife is to be seen and not heard of), but he was born in the city in 1884, the son of a tailor with a taste for anarchist politics. As a teenager, Brusselmans was apprenticed to a lithographer, while studying art at the Brussels Academy. When he won a prize for landscape painting in 1902, he gave up both job and classes to devote himself to painting.

His early work was influenced by Flemish masters such as Brueghel and Rubens, and then by the French Impressionists. During the First World War he developed his own style of Fauvism, in which assertive brushwork and strong, sometimes contrary colours pushed out realism.

All of these influences can be found in his mature style, evident from the mid-1920s, which flattens the image even further and introduces a sense of geometrical discipline. Everything from the arrangement of figures in a landscape to the brushstrokes that make up a face seems to follow an underlying structure of angles and planes.

Mu.Zee has long-standing interest in Brusselmans because, like a lot of artists of this period, he came to the coast to paint. "Storm" (1938), with its sharp sunburst and regularly undulating waves, is one of the treasures of the museum's permanent collection. There are other sea views here, along with paintings of Ostend's lighthouse, but they are not nearly as impressive.

The painting that comes closest is "Beachscape With Bathers", a huge canvas begun in the 1930s and discovered unfinished after Brusselmans' death in 1953. Five naked figures (all Marie, it seems) appear among the dunes, under a sky of well-rounded clouds. But the dunes also feature items familiar from the still lives and blocks of colour that could be bathing huts or fragments of domestic interior transferred to the coast.

To hang alongside this canvas, Mu.Zee has sought out other nude studies by the artist, in which the same poses are repeated, indoors and out, so that they all seem to be part of the same waking dream. In this way, Brusselmans seems closer to Paul Delvaux than to the Flemish expressionists with whom he is sometimes grouped.

A similar affinity springs to mind when you look at the paintings reworking a footbridge over the canal in Anderlecht. The same house and street lamp feature on the left, a horse passes behind the bridge, and three iconic Brussels landmarks loom improbably in the background: the Cathedral of St Michael and St Gudula, the Town Hall and the Palace of Justice, together with a smoking chimney.

The variation from painting to painting comes in the foreground, with a shifting cast of characters milling around the bridge or, in the case of "Bathing Vagabonds" (1936), diving into the canal. Apparently the scene came from a childhood memory, but across the years it is transformed into a sort of dream theatre.

Wondering what was going through Brusselmans' mind as he obsessively painted these images, while Marie sewed in another room, makes this a fascinating and rewarding exhibition. ♦

Until 4 September

Mu.Zee

Romestraat 11, Ostend

→ www.muzee.be

CULTURE NEWS

Blankenberge is now allowing businesses that rent lounge chairs and cabins to **sell drinks right on the beach**, something that restaurateurs in other beach towns on the Flemish coast have lobbied against. Blankenberge's restaurants on the promenade have reacted positively, "as long as it's only drinks and is sold from stands," said one restaurant manager.

Brussels annual arts festival *Kunstenfestivaldesarts*, which is on now until 28 May, is one of 26 events chosen by the **Culture Programme of the European Union** to receive financial support for the 2011-2013 period out of a total of 674 proposals received. In addition, kfda was among the 18 of the 26 to receive funding in all three years. The award is recognition that the festival of performing arts and exhibition is one of the top arts festivals in Europe.

→ www.kfda.be

About 240,000 people took part in **Flanders' Erfgoeddag** (Heritage Day) on 1 May, a record for the event. An initiative of FARO, the Flemish Association of Cultural Heritage, the theme this year was poverty and the working poor. The record number was "not surprising," commented Flemish culture minister Joke Schauvliege, "because looking back at the past helps us to understand the present."

→ www.erfgoeddag.be

The "Das Brett" has won the **Henry Van de Velde public prize**. By Brussels-based designer Kaspar Hamacher, the Das Brett is a bookshelf that slopes slightly in the middle, so the books support each other and bookends are not needed. "I try to bring meaning to my work in an artistic manner without losing sight of functionality," said Hamacher. The prize is voted on by visitors to the annual Henry Van de Velde exhibition in the Flemish Parliament building. Hamacher receives a trophy and a €2,500 award.

→ www.henryvandevelde.be

The nine life-size **wooden sculptures of elephants** by South Africa artist Andries Botha have become well known in Flanders, having premiered in 2006 as part of the Beaufort exhibition on the coast before being bought up by the Zoological Society of Antwerp and finding a place in front of the entrance to the Antwerp Zoo and then in the gardens of the Royal Museum of Africa in Tervuren. Last week the elephants were again on the move -- to their permanent home at the entrance to Planckendaal animal park in Mechelen. A new habitat for the Antwerp Zoo's elephants is now under construction at Planckendaal and will be ready in 2012.

→ www.kmda.org



"Dame op canapé" ("Woman on Canapé") from 1937, a showcase for Marie and her checked dress



Jean Brusselmans "Tuinen" ("Gardens"), 1934



A warm welcome to Belgium!

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putting people first



© Arjan Christiaens

Magnificent record release LADY LINN

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

Lady Linn and Her Magnificent Seven have written one of the most unusual success stories in Flemish popular music. Three years ago the album *Here We Go Again* catapulted them to the upper region of the charts. The album reached the second spot, charted for more than two years and was certified platinum.

Quite an unusual feat for a band that specialises in (vocal) swing jazz. But its fresh take on an indestructible genre touched a broad audience of music lovers. Consequently, Lady Linn covers the festival field from Rock Werchter – where she played to an astonished but uplifted audience two years ago – to Jazz Middelheim next August, whose organisers bet on her to win a cross-over audience.

That is probably a good stake since Lady Linn and Her Magnificent Seven have, on the brand new album *No Goodbye at All*, broadened their sound. Jazz aficionados shouldn't worry: the band still swings as if playing a steamy juke joint, but they also delve up an acoustic ballad with a slight bossa feel, engage in jiving pop songs and wander the wide world of soul music. But the assets of the orchestra haven't changed: seven excellent (and *très* sharply dressed) male musicians – trumpet, trombone, two saxophones, keyboards, double bass and drums – fronted by charismatic pocket-sized songstress Lien De Greef.

Trained at the Conservatory in Ghent, she sang, almost a decade ago, in the hip-hop outfit Skeemz

and was the voice of electro-pop band Bolchi. Simultaneously she started with Lady Linn and Her Magnificent Seven, interpreting mid 20th-century jazz standards. In 2004, they got their breakthrough in Flanders thanks to the extremely popular open mike slot “Zonder handen” (“No Hands”) in the news show *Man bijt hond*. After a few years, Lady Linn started writing her own songs and recorded, with her seven boys, *Here We Go Again*. The rest, as they say, is history.

But there's a future too, of course, to this story. The national success of *Here We Go Again* did not go unnoticed abroad, and Lady Linn and Her Magnificent Seven were signed by Universal France. The company put them in a Parisian recording studio to work with renowned producer Renaud Letang. He helped them to expand their sound, but will it be enough to establish an international fan base? Time will tell. ♦

19 May, 20.00

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110, Brussels
→ www.abconcerts.be

20 May, 20.15

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29, Ghent
→ www.handelsbeurs.be



Antwerp

Lotto Arena
Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be
MAY 15 20.00 Zucchero

Trix

Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00
www.trixonline.be
MAY 11 19.30 Panic! At the Disco **MAY 13** 20.00 Heavy Metal Kings with Ill Bill + Non Phixion/La Coka Nostra + Vinnie Paz **MAY 15** 19.00 Children of Bodom + Ensiferum + Machinae Supremacy **MAY 17** 19.30 Saxon + Crimes of Passion + Vanderbust **MAY 18** 19.30 Riverside. 20.00 Meat Puppets + The Dandies

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be
Concerts at 20.00:
MAY 11 Gerald De Palmas **MAY 13** Jonathan Jeremiah. Glasvegas **MAY 14** Beatsteaks + DySE **MAY 15** Raphaël **MAY 16** Das Racist + Speed Dial 7 + Kraantje Pappie **MAY 17** Group Doueh **MAY 18** Empyr. Friendly Fires + Braids

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtstraat 81; 02.218.20.15
www.cirque-royal.org
MAY 12 20.00 Congotronics vs Rockers featuring Konono n°1 + Kasai Allstars + Deerhoof, more
MAY 13 Cocoon + Cascadeur + Bony King Of Nowhere **MAY 14** Mélanie Laurent + Joseph Arthur + Laetitia Velma **MAY 15** Katherine + Irma + PlayBoy's Bend **MAY 17** Moriarty + Jacques Duvall + La Fiancée **MAY 18** Animal Collective + Teengirl Fantasy

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
www.botanique.be
Concerts at 20.00:
Les Nuits de Botanique 2011:
MAY 13 Pere Ubu. Florent Marchet + Bertrand Helin + Stéphanie Crayencour. Three Trapped Tigers + Nox. The Black Box Revelation + Great Mountain Fire + Bikinians **MAY 14** An Pierlé + White Velvet + Dan San + Sarah Ferri **MAY 15** An Pierlé + White Velvet + Kiss the Anus of a Black Cat. Villagers + Lucy Lucy! + Dry The River. Micah P Hinson & Mons Orchestra 4t **MAY 17** Vismets + Nasser + Deportivo + Elvis

Black Stars. Akron/Family + Stranded Horse **MAY 18** Gang Gang Dance + Highlife. Black Lips + The Experimental Tropic Blues Band + Young Legionnaire. Asa + Andriya Triana + Madjo. The Brandt Brauer Frick Ensemble

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
www.recyclart.be
MAY 11 19.00 Jaap Blonk
MAY 13 22.30 Stainage Party featuring Joy Orbison + XXXY + Grimelock + more

VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07
www.vkconcerts.be
MAY 13 21.00 Rakim
MAY 14 21.00 Che Sudaka

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseulaan 208; 0900.00.991
www.forestrnational.be
MAY 12-14 20.00 Yannick Noah
MAY 16 20.00 Zucchero

Diksmuide

4AD
Kleine Dijk 57; 051.50.48.94
www.4ad.be
MAY 14 20.30 Pere Ubu

Ghent

Charlatan
Vlasmarkt 6; 09.224.24.57
www.charlatan.be
MAY 11 20.00 Creep + Handsome Furs
MAY 12 20.00 Rauw & Onbesproken + Look & Trees **MAY 17** 20.00 Toro Y Moi + Skeletons **MAY 18** 20.00 Kurt Vile & The Violators + Spindrift

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
MAY 11 20.15 Eva De Roovere
MAY 13 20.15 Susana Baca
MAY 14 20.15 Luka Bloom

Sint-Baafsabdij

Voorhoutkaai/Spanjaardstraat; 09.266.56.60
www.visitgent.be
MAY 14 17.00 Mistlicht Showcase #3: The Bony King of Nowhere + Blackie & the Oohos + Wio + more

White Cat

Drongenhof 40; 09.223.22.27
www.white-cat.be
MAY 14 21.00 Out There with ... Kutmah, The LoopDiggers

Hasselt

Muziekodroom
Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13
www.muziekodroom.be
MAY 12 20.30 Bob Corritore & Dave Riley
MAY 13 20.00 The Galacticos

Kortrijk

De Kreun
Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44
www.dekreun.be
MAY 17 20.30 Emeralds + Manngold
MAY 18 20.30 Akron/Family + Moon Duo + Eric Copeland (Black Dice)

Leuven

Het Depot
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
www.hetdepot.be
MAY 11 20.00 Uurkultuur with Amatorski
MAY 12 20.00 Intergalactic Lovers
MAY 17 20.00 Steak Number Eight

STUK

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20
www.stuk.be
MAY 13 20.30 Reiziger + Musth
MAY 17 20.30 31 Knots + Thank you



Antwerp

Buster
Kaasrui 1; 03.232.51.53
www.busterpodium.be
MAY 12 21.30 Scotch 'n' Soda **MAY 13** 22.00 Thomas Champagne/Ben Prischi **MAY 17** 21.30 JazzNight

DON'T MISS

Multi-Mania '11

24 May
Xpo Kortrijk

Practically any human being with a job and a computer can get something out of Multi-Mania (which is risk free since it's cost free, in any case). The international programme of speakers and presentations is tech oriented but includes practical info in dozens of areas like using social networking, exploring on-line advertising and effective designing. A separate series of talks under the moniker Entrepreneurship Forum brings topics such as “How Do You Market Your Online Start-up on the Cheap?” and “Serious Business Can Be Serious Fun,” which highlights the advantages of starting your business when you're still a student.



→ www.multi-mania.be

MORE JAZZ THIS WEEK

The Bundle → **Jazz Station, Brussels**

Thomas Champagne Trio → **Buster, Antwerp**

Aleksandra Kwasniewska → **The Music Village, Brussels**



Agenda

Felixpakhuis

Godefriduskaai 30; 03.203.03.30
www.felixpakhuis.nu

MAY 13-14 20.00-23.00 Barbleu featuring Jef Neve, Alano Gruarin, De Strijkers van de Filharmonie, Ballet van Vlaanderen and Bikooz

Brussels

Archiduc

Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52
www.archiduc.net

MAY 16 22.00 Tell Me Why I Do Like Mondays

Atelier 210

Sint-Pieterssteenweg 210; 02.732.25.98
www.atelier210.be

MAY 16 20.00 Jazz Cats: Let's Play

Beursschouwburg

August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50
www.beursschouwburg.be

MAY 18 20.00 Brussels Soundpainting Collective

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20
www.flagey.be

MAY 13 20.00 Kartet

Kunsthumaniora Brussel

Karel Bogaerdstraat 4

www.brusselsblues.eu

MAY 12 20.00 Ruf's Blues Caravan 2011 featuring Girls with Guitars, Samantha Fish, Cassie Taylor and Dani Wilde

Le Caveau du Max

Emile Maxlaan 87; 02.733.17.88
www.lemax.be

MAY 12 20.30 Joe Higham Quartet

Le Cercle des Voyageurs

Lievewrouwbroersstraat 18; 02.514.39.49
www.lecercledesvoyageurs.com

MAY 17 21.00 Etienne Richard Solo

Le Chat-Pitre

Notarisstraat 1; 0475.63.11.77
www.myspace.com/chapitre

MAY 11 20.00 Octet Red

Royal Music Conservatory

Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37
www.kcb.be

MAY 11 20.00 Fabrice Alleman New Quartet

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50
www.soundsjazzclub.be

Concerts at 22.00:

MAY 12 The Belgium Jazz Big Band **MAY 13**

Marco Bardoscia Quintet **MAY 14** Brussels

Rhythm & Blues **MAY 16** Master Session

Erik Vermeulen **MAY 17** Notebook (Thys/

Laheye)

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45

www.themusicvillage.com

MAY 11 20.30 Niklas Kraft Quartet **MAY**

13 21.00 Aleksandra & The Belgian Sweets

MAY 14 21.00 Yvonne Walter **MAY 16** 20.30

Exams Concerts **MAY 17** 20.30 MoGin

MAY 18 20.30 Bill Sheffield



Antwerp

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00

www.zuiderpershuis.be

MAY 12-15 20.30 Wait for me featuring Zita Swoon, Mamadou Diabaté and Awa Démé

Brussels

Art Base

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20

www.art-base.be

MAY 14 18.00 Fabrice De Graef, Indian bamboo flute 20.00 Sudaires, cello and piano duo (S America)

Espace Senghor

Waverssesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40

www.senghor.be

MAY 16 20.30 Octurn & Les Moines Chanteurs Tibétains de Gyuto



Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28

www.desingel.be

MAY 18 20.00 Il Giardino Armonico

conducted by Giovanni Antonini: Handel, Geminiani, Vivaldi

Bruges

Concertgebouw

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02

www.concertgebouw.be

MAY 12 20.00 Flanders Symphony Orchestra conducted by Seikyo Kim: Enescu, Mozart, Berlioz

MAY 18 20.00 Eric Le Sage, piano: Schubert, Schumann

Brussels

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00

www.bozar.be

MAY 11 20.00 Sächsische Staatskapelle

Dresden conducted by Christoph

Eschenbach: Schumann, Brahms **MAY**

13 20.00 Flanders Symphony Orchestra

conducted by Seikyo Kim: Enescu, Mozart,

Berlioz **MAY 14** 20.00 Liège Philharmonic

Orchestra conducted by Louis Langrée:

Franck, Saint-Saëns **MAY 15** 15.00 Belgian

National Orchestra conducted by Asher

Fisch: Zoltán Kodály, Alexander Aratjunjan,

more

Espace Senghor

Waverssesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40

www.senghor.be

MAY 18 20.00 Anne Renouprez, soprano;

Eliane Reyes, piano: Debussy

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20

www.flagey.be

MAY 13 12.30 Dominique Huybrechts, viola;

Philippe Gérard, piano: Brahms, Schumann

Kerk van Onze-Lieve-Vrouw ter Kapelle

Kapellemarkt; 02.507.82.00 www.

placedelachapelle.org

MAY 13 20.00 Stile Antico: Palestrina,

Gombert, Lassus, more

Ghent

De Bijloke

Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2; 09.269.92.92

www.debijloke.be

MAY 13 20.00 The King's Consort conducted

by Robert King: Purcell

MAY 14 20.00 Flanders Symphony Orchestra

conducted by Seikyo Kim: Enescu, Mozart,

Berlioz

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65

www.handelsbeurs.be

MAY 17 20.15 Gli Incogniti conducted by

Amandine Beyer, baroque violin: Matteis,

Purcell

Kortrijk

Schouwburg

Schouwburgplein 14; 056.23.98.50

www.cultuurcentrumkortrijk.be

MAY 14 20.15 Brussels Philharmonic

Orchestra: Khatchaturian, Goebbels, Rimski-

Korsakov



Brussels

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39

www.demunt.be

MAY 11 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)

Ghent

Vlaamse Opera

Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02

www.vlaamseopera.be

MAY 13-21 15.00/19.30 Claudio Monteverdi's Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria (The

Return of Ulysses), conducted by Federico

Maria Sardelli, staged by Michael Hampe (in

the original Italian with surtitles in Dutch)



Bruges

Concertgebouw

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02

www.concertgebouw.be

MAY 14 20.00 Diptych: contemporary dance

by José Navas featuring music by Bach played

live by Claire Chevallier, piano

Brussels

Kaaistudio's

Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat 81;

02.201.59.59

www.kaaitheater.be

MAY 13 18.00 Project, Don't Look Now

choreographed by Xavier Le Roy and Mårten

Spångberg

Turnhout

De Warande

Warandestraat 42; 014.41. 69.91

www.warande.be

MAY 11 20.15 Ultima Vez in Radical Wrong,

choreographed by Wim Vandekeybus



Antwerp

Arenbergschouwburg

Arenbergstraat 28; 070.222.192

www.arenbergschouwburg.be

MAY 13-14 20.00 Theatre group Sin in H &

G (grimmiger), directed by Manou Kersting

(in Dutch)

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28

www.desingel.be

MAY 18-21 20.00 Ultima Vez in Monkey

Sandwich, multi-media performance by

Wim Vandekeybus

Fakkelteater Theatercafé

Hoogstraat 12; 070.246.036

www.fakkelteater.be

Until MAY 29 12.00-14.00 Hotel Vocal:

musical theatre (in Dutch)

HetPaleis

Theaterplein 1; 03.202.83.11

www.hetpaleis.be

MAY 14-22 15.00/20.00 Ultima Thule &

HetPaleis in Door de bomen het bos (The

Forest Through the Trees), puppet theatre

(ages 12 and up; in Dutch)

Klokhuis Theatre

Parochiaanstraat 4; 03.231.76.87

www.vlaamsfruit.be

MAY 18 20.30-22.00 Vlaams Fruit in De

Witte Roos, musical theatre (in Dutch)

Monty

Montignystraat 3-5; 03.238.91.81

www.monty.be

MAY 13-14 20.30 't Barre Land in Fantasio by

Alfred de Musset (in Dutch)

Stadsschouwburg

Theaterplein 1; 0900.69.900

www.stadsschouwburgantwerpen.be

MAY 13-14 20.00-22.30 Alex Klaasen in

Toon: De Musical, the work of late cabaratier

Toon Hermans (in Dutch)

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

Chic & Nile Rodgers

13 June, 20.00

Ancienne Belgique, Brussels



“AAaaaa...freak out!” Surely you remember the new dance craze “Le Freak” by Chic? Well, the 1970s is back, as band co-founder Nile Rodgers hits the AB stage with Chic. Rodgers in fact has done some excellent studio work over the last few decades with Madonna, Duran Duran, the B52s and more, which you’ll hear on this tour. But don’t worry, they promise to roll out their ’70s disco machine of hits, too, including “Dance, Dance, Dance”, “Good Times” and “I Want Your Love”. Freak out Brussels!

→ www.abconcerts.be

Kortrijk

Schouwburg

Schouwburgplein 14; 056.23.98.50

www.cultuurcentrumkortrijk.be

MAY 12 20.15 Ultima Vez in Monkey

Sandwich, choreographed by Wim

Vandekeybus

Leuven

STUK

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20

www.stuk.be

MAY 12 20.30 Theater Malpertuis in De

Zaak (The Case), directed by Piet Arfeuille

(in Dutch)

MAY 17-18 20.30 Compagnie Cecilia &

KVS in Vorst-Forest, directed by Titus De

Voogdt and Johan Heldenbergh (in Dutch)



Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)

Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60

www.muhka.be

Until MAY 22 Liam Gillick and Lawrence

Weiner: A Syntax of Dependency, double

portrait of the New York-based artists

Until AUG 21 Ten Oosten van 4°24' (East

of 4°24'), group show of artists from the

Caucasus, India, China, Iraq, Egypt and

more

Koningin Fabiolazaal

Jezusstraat 28; 03.203.42.04

www.provant.be

Until JAN 8 2012 The Moderns, top

pieces from the Royal Museum of Fine

Arts (KMSKA), including works by Emile

Claus, James Ensor and Marc Chagall

Museum aan de Stroom (MAS)

Hanzestedenplaats 1; 03.338.44.34

www.mas.be

MAY 17-DEC 31 Masterpieces in

the MAS: Five Centuries of Images in

Antwerp, the first temporary exhibition in

the new museum shows how Antwerp and

Flanders significantly influenced 16th- and

17th-century Western European imagery

Photo Museum (FoMu)

Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00

www.fotomuseum.be

Until JUN 5 Hungry Eyes, food

photography by Tony Le Duc, Val

design projects by 30 companies and 20 designers from across Flanders

Flemish Parliament - De Loketten

IJzerenkruisstraat 99; 02.552.40.43

www.vlaamsparlement.be

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

House of Folklore and Traditions

Eikstraat 19; 02.279.64.11

culture@brucity.be

Until JUN 26 L'Union fait la frite (Unity is Fried), paintings of Brussels fritkots by Belgian artist Gilles houben

ING Cultural Centre

Koningsplein 6; 02.547.22.92

www.ing.be/art

Until JUN 19 Joan Miró, the lyrical painter, paintings, etchings, sculptures and drawings by the Catalan artist

LISA BRADSHAW

WEEK IN FILM



One World

17-26 May

Across Brussels

What separates the One World festival of human rights documentaries from recent film fests such as Opendoek and Docville? One World is free!

Or almost. Co-sponsored by the Czech Republic's Permanent Representation to the EU, screenings take place in their building, the European Parliament building and Bozar. Only screenings at the latter are paid.

That said, it would not hurt to shell out the €9 to see the festival's opening film *Justice for Sergei*, which tells the story of the 37-year-old tax lawyer who was thrown into prison for uncovering tax fraud within the Russian government. His death under excruciating circumstances led to protests in the streets, but no arrests. This film will be followed by a panel discussion with members of the Russian human rights association AGORA.

Topics in the festival run from xenophobia and racism to censorship of journalists and environmental degradation. Recommended are *The Pipe*, in which an Irish fishing village takes on its government and Shell Oil to stop the construction of a pipeline running from an off-coast oil field across their farmland (pictured above), and *Emergency Shelter*, where we meet a lawyer arrested and beaten on multiple occasions for her defence of businesses destroyed by the wrecking balls of Beijing in the run-up to the 2008 Olympics.

All films are shown with English subtitles, and every one includes a post-screening discussion. Reservations are required for free screenings.

www.oneworld.cz

ISELP

Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70

www.wiselp.be

Until JUL 9 Laurence Dervaux, installations by the Belgian artist

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63

www.mjb-jmb.org

Until AUG 28 After Images, multidisciplinary show by contemporary American artists

Marc Sleen Museum

Zandstraat 33; 02.219.19.80

www.marc-sleen.be

Until SEP 25 Nero, Yuri Gagarin and Other Astronauts, space travel in comic strips

Royal Museum of the Armed Forces

Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33

www.legermuseum.be

Until SEP 4 1945-2002: Belgian soldiers in Germany, rare photographs documenting 60 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries

Until OCT 16 War&Game(s), photographs by Virginie Cornet and toys from the preiod of the First World War

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11

www.fine-arts-museum.be

Until JUN 5 Walter Leblanc, kinetic and optical works by the late Flemish artist

Until JUN 26 A selection of the most important artworks from the 19th- and 20th-century collection, including Salvador Dali, Giorgio de Chirico and Paul Delvaux

Until SEP 4 Art and Finance in Europe: 18th-Century Masterworks in a New Light, 20 major works by Franceso Guardi, Benjami Wolff, Léonard Defrance, more

Sint-Gorikshallen

Sint-Goriksplein 23; 02.502.44.24

www.howdoyoudobrussels.com

Until MAY 31 How Do You Do... Brussels?, photos, interview extracts and mixed media by 48 foreigners living in Brussels

Tour & Taxis

Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49

www.tour-taxis.com

Until MAY 31 From Brussels: Xiè Xiè Shanghai, a look at the Belgian pavilion from the World Expo last year, plus information on business opportunities involving China (www.thankyoushanghai.com)

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

Until JUL 4 America: It's Also Our History!, three centuries of cross-Atlantic relations with frescoes, charts, audiovisual material, installations, objects and artwork

Villa Empain

Franklin Rooseveltlaan 67; 02.627.52.30

www.villaempain.com

Until SEP 25 Of Women's Modesty and Anger, rituals, wigs, clothing, make-up and more constraints that determined the life of women for centuries

Deurle

Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens

Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23

www.museumdd.be

Until JUN 5 Christopher Williams, photographs by the American photographer

Until JUN 5 On the Way to the Peak of Ecstasy, film projects by Flemish artist Thomas Bogaert

Until JUN 5 Picture This: Sophie Kuijken, paintings by the Flemish artist

Ghent

Design Museum

Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99

www.designmuseumgent.be

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

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

Museum of Contemporary Art (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03

www.smak.be

Until JUN 5 Joy and Disaster, work by contemporary Hungarian artists **Until JUN 5** Carlos Rodríguez-Méndez: Agua Caliente (Hot Water), gigantic minimalist sculpture by the Spanish artist **Until JUN 5** MARCEL: The Marcel Broodthaers Room, work by the late Belgian artist **Until JUL 3** Michaël Sailstorfer: Raum und Zeit, sculptures by the German artist **Until SEP 18** Jorge Macchi: Music Stands Still, paintings, sculptures, installations and video by the Argentinian artist

Grimbergen

CC Strombeek

Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43

www.ccstrombeek.be

Until MAY 15 Jan Dibbets 3X, photographs of conceptual works by the Dutch artist (also in Mechelen and Knokke-Heist)

Hasselt

Fashion museum

Gasthuisstraat 11; 011.23.96.21

www.modemuseumhasselt.be

Until JUN 5 Alter Nature: The Future That Never Was, a look at the year 2000 from the point of view of designers from the 1960s and a glance at new possibilities in fashion

National Jenever Museum

Witte Nonnenstraat 19; 011.23.98.60

www.jenevermuseum.be

Until JUN 5 De kunst van het drinken (The Art of Drinking), paintings of drinking scenes by 19th- and 20th-century Belgian artists

z33

Zuivelmarkt 33; 011.29.59.60

www.z33.be

Until AUG 21 Kris Verdonck: EXHIBITION #1, installations and videos by the Flemish theatre maker and artist

Kemzeke

Verbeke Foundation

Westakker; 03.789.22.07

www.verbekefoundation.com

Until JUN 12 Tom Woestenborghs: Salvation Can Be Found in the Illusion of Involvement, installations, prints and drawings by the Flemish artist

Knokke-Heist

White-Out Studio

Van Bunnanlaan 58A; 050.62.93.63

www.whiteoutstudio.be

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

Kortrijk

Benedengalerie

Hazelaarstraat 7; 056.23.98.50

www.cultuurcentrumkortrijk.be

MAY 13-JUN 12 Dirk Braeckman, photos by the Flemish artist

Leuven

Museum M

Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28; 016.27.29.29

www.mleuven.be

Until MAY 15 Freek Wambacq, installations by the Belgian artist

Until MAY 22 Pedro Cabrita Reis: One After Another, A Few Silent Steps, work by the multi-media Portuguese artist

Until JUN 12 Gebonden Beelden, rare books

Machelen-Zulte

Het Roger Raveelmuseum

Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00

www.rogerraveelmuseum.be

Until JUN 19 Tussenruimte: Het onzichtbare zichtbaar maken (Space In-between: Making the Invisible Visible), paintings by Flemish artist Roger Raveel on white frames

Mechelen

Exhibition Halls

Minderbroedersgang 5; 015.29.40.00

www.cultuurcentrummechelen.be

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

Speelgoedmuseum (Toy Museum)

Nekkerspoelstraat 21; 015.55.70.75

www.speelgoedmuseum.be

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

Meise

National Botanic Garden of Belgium

Nieuwelaan 38; 02.260.09.20

www.plantentuinmeise.be

Until OCT 2 Groene Omzwervingen (Green Detours), works made of leaves and flowers by Sandrine de Borman following her year as artist-in-residence

Until NOV 6 Kriebelbeestjes van het bos (Crawling Bugs in the Woods), photographs of insects by Barbara Cook

Ostend

Venetian Galleries

Corner Zeedijk and Parijsstraat; 059.80.55.00

www.oostende.be/cultuur

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

Tervuren

Royal Museum for Central Africa

Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11

www.africamuseum.be

Until SEP 4 FetishModernity, exhibition created by six European museums exploring the notion of modernity

Until SEP 4 Artists in Residence: Sammy Baloji & Patrick Mudekerezan, arts, sciences and collections

Turnhout

De Tweede Helft

Graatakker 5

www.twintigplusnuldrie.be

Until JUN 12 Tom Woestenborghs: Salvation Can Be Found in the Illusion of Indifference, installations, prints and drawings by the Belgian artist

Ypres

In Flanders Fields Museum

Grote Markt 34; 057.239.220

www.inflandersfields.be

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



Opera in the Cinema: Wagner's The Valkyrie live via satellite from the Metropolitan Opera in New York, with refreshments and an introduction (in Dutch)

MAY 14 across Flanders and Brussels
www.kinopolis.com/events

Antwerp

MAS Opening: Grand opening celebrations for the new city museum with theatre and dance performances, concerts, films, exhibitions, guided walks and fireworks
MAY 13-16 at 1 Hanzestedenplaats
078.052.050, www.mas.be

Brussels

Belgian Lesbian and Gay Pride:

Prideweekend with concerts, shows, parties, debates and parade

MAY 13-14 across Brussels

www.thepride.be

Brussels Accessible Art Fair: Free

contemporary art fair

MAY 13-15 at Conrad Hotel, Louizalaan 71

www.accessibleartfair.com

Jam'in Jette: Free outdoor music festival,

featuring concerts, photo exhibition, dance performances, world food stands and kids' village

MAY 14 13.00-1.00 at Graafschap Jettelaan

www.jam-in-jette.be

Kunstenaarsparcours: More than 300

Brussels artists open their doors during this third edition of the free event promoting culture and creativity in the capital

MAY 14-15 10.00-18.00 in Laken and Neder-Over-Heembeek

www.parcoursvisit.be

maelström reEvolution Festival 5:

Literature, poetry, music and performing arts festival

MAY 12-14 at Espace Senghor,

Waverssesteenweg 366

www.festival.net

On Y Danse Tout En Rond: Theatre, dance, film, video and music festival

Until MAY 28 at Beursschouwburg, August Ortsstraat 20-28

02.550.03.50, www.beursschouwburg.be

Ghent

Uitgesproken: Eugene Rogan, author of The

Arabs: A History (in English)

MAY 12 20.00 at Vooruit, Sint-

Pietersnieuwstraat 23

www.vooruit.be

Knokke-Heist

International Photo Festival: Annual photography festival, with a theme this year of "Future Portraits" and featuring work by Robert Wilson, Valérie Belin, Marc Trivier, World Press Photo and more

Until JUN 13 across Knokke-Heist

www.fotofestival.be

CAFE SPOTLIGHT

MONIQUE PHILIPS



Quinten Matsijs

Moriaanstraat 17

Antwerp

According to legend, the Quinten Matsijs is the oldest inn of the Low Countries and has, in fact, some great stories to tell. Since 1565, beer has been served in this quiet backstreet pub.

While things can get busy, the ambience is always very relaxed. The music is turned down low, and no newspapers or other distractions require your attention. Colourful stained glass windows effectively keep the world out, and it is indeed easy to imagine 16th-century citizen fathers dozing off in a corner while their drained pewter tankards and smouldering pipes sit in front of them on the table.

Loaded with literary anecdotes, the reasonably priced menu offers an excellent choice of honest, fresh food. Compliments to the chef are well earned here. You'll even find two Japanese dishes. The signature dish, though, is the *gezoden worst*, a white pork sausage accompanied by thick brown bread and Tierenteyn mustard. It's the perfect snack to go with one of their *many* Belgian beers.

While you eat and drink, have a better look around at the bric-a-brac and framed poems. The Quinten used to be the hangout of several of Antwerp's pen-wielding celebrities. Jos Vandelo (°1925) eternalised the pub with: "*Waar de kraan loopt en de tijd stilstaat*" ("Where the tap flows, and time stops"). And, as another story goes, Paul Van Ostaijen (1896-1928), a rebellious dandy and avant-garde poet, threw a brick through one of the pub's windows, shouting: "*Lang leve de anarchisten!*" The sleepy customers stirred but weren't shaken.

Willem Elsschot (1882-1960), on the other hand, readily acknowledged that the inspiration for his 1946 novel *Het dwaallicht* (*Will o' the Wisp*) came to him on a misty night as he made his way home after a night of cards and booze at the Quinten Matsijs.

If you want to know more about Elsschot, join the Elsschot walking tour (€21) that starts in the Quinten Matsijs every first Sunday of the month (or on request). But feel free to drop in for a hot meal or a cordial anytime.

bite

ROBYN BOYLE

Boelekewis

One of the remarkable things about Brussels is the abruptness with which it ends. Venture just 10 kilometres west, and you step into a world that's not just a little bit rural, but excessively green, hilly and spotted with grandiose castles. Boelekewis (basically meaning "broom") is located near Huizingen Castle's densely wooded domain and boasts a spacious grassy area where children run and play while parents enjoy dinner and drinks on the patio. While none of us have kids in tow, our group still agrees this is the perfect place to soak up the evening sun while trying out what is rumoured to be some very tasty regional food and drink.

Joffrey Heymans and Bart Roose (pictured) are the two young owners who decided to make a go of the business four years ago. Both coming from different backgrounds entirely, the ambitious duo seized a great opportunity when they saw it, turning an empty building into this bustling grill.

They honour local products as much as possible and the favourable location in the Zenne Valley, bordering on Pajottenland, allows them to offer an overwhelming selection of local old geuze, lambic and kriel beers. Some of the dishes here are prepared using these spontaneous fermentation types of beer.

I order a sour Oud Beersel Geuze to sip while perusing the oversized menu.

Finally, after doubting between beef brochette and rabbit made with geuze, in the end it's the *côte à l'os* steak for two that wins me over. Three more friends are thinking the same thing, while two others stray from the pack and order *entrecôte* and all-you-can-eat marinated ribs.

Were we not all so set in our carnivorous ways, there would be plenty of other nice options: giant salads, scampi, fish, mussels, pasta and more.

Our server returns to show us the raw *côte à l'os* steaks, and we are indeed impressed as they appear to be about three centimetres thick and very fresh. When we see the meat again it has been cut from the bone and divided onto four plates, seared until dark brown and left pink and juicy on the inside.

Finicky as we are, we also request four different sauces in which to dabble: béarnaise, green pepper, mushroom and blue cheese. They're all creamy and good – but the green pepper goes faster than the rest. This all is accompanied by salads with a creamy vinaigrette, plus fresh-cut fries and house-made mayonnaise.

At the other end of the long table, one friend has his hands full with the caramel ribs, a sweet, sticky glazed version of the classic dish. The other is barely using his steak knife on a butter-soft piece of *entrecôte*. These also come with salad and fries.



Unable to even think about dessert, we order a variety of after-dinner drinks – *koffie verkeerd* (with steamed milk), potent Italian coffee and fresh mint tea, not forgetting the little chocolates. The bill is surprisingly mild at about €30 apiece. And it's not every day that the leftovers get sent home with you in a special airtight bag.

→ www.boelekewis.be

📍 Alsebergsesteenweg 856
Huizingen (Beersel); 02.380.44.14

🕒 Tue-Fri, 12.00-22.00;
Sat, 18.00-22.00; Sun, 12.00-21.00

€ Mains: €10-€25

★ A green oasis offering giant (though still affordable) portions of grilled meat and more than 40 local beers

Contact Bite at flandersbite@gmail.com

TALKING DUTCH

PHILIP EBELS

Ik burger in



One bright early morning in May, in a classroom in a typically boring government building at the centre of Leuven, I was witness to *inburgering* in action. *Inburgering*, or civic integration, is a programme of the Flemish Region that aims to mold freshly arrived immigrants into *echte Vlamingen*, proper Flemings. *Inburgering* has a different ring to it, and it's not McDonald's or Quick. *Burger* means citizen. It used to refer to the free city folk who had acquired a certain status and political power: *de burgerij*, or *bourgeoisie*. They lived in a *burcht*, a fortified enclosure, rather than out in the open. The head of the city was the *burgemeester*, master of citizens. (*Burgemeester* is still the word for "mayor".)

Inburgering, then, really means something like becoming a citizen. But whereas *Einburgering* in German refers to getting a German passport, *inburgering* in Dutch has a more philosophical connotation. The Flemish minister for *inburgering*, Geert Bourgeois (the name is a coincidence, I'm sure), says in our interview (on page 7) that it means *de taal leren*, to learn the language, and to accept certain *normen en waarden*, norms and values.

The *cursus maatschappelijke oriëntatie*, or training course in social orientation, was being held in

English. Many of the 20 or so people of all shapes and colours, sitting in groups at round tables, could already muster one or two words in Dutch. "Een klein beetje," a Nepalese woman told me, "heel moeilijk." She speaks a little Dutch, but finds it very difficult. Some knew a bit more, like the Indian man next to her, who said: "Ik woon al twee jaar in Vlaanderen en ik werk in een bar." He's been here for two years and works in a bar.

I wondered if they were aware of the "norms and values" intentions behind these early mornings. For now, they were discussing the photos they had taken of things typically Belgian. The teacher, a cheery man in his 30s, said the photos "help them to understand our society, *om goed in te burgeren*." To integrate well. The Flemish make verbs out of everything. People don't play football, *zij voetballen*. (*ik voetbal*, *ik voetbalde*, *ik heb gevoetbald*) They don't spend time on the internet, *zij internetten*, *e-mailen*, *facebooken* and *twitteren*.

Inburgeren is one of those *scheidbare werkwoorden* (separable verbs), where the first syllable separates from the rest when conjugated. And so, our new residents don't "go through the process" of becoming fully-fledged citizens, *zij burgeren in*.

THE LAST WORD...

Home and away

"When you see that a lot of Brussels students stay in bedsits in Leuven, it's obvious that the city has a long way to go. Let them first make sure their own students want to live in Brussels."

André Oosterlinck of the Catholic University of Leuven, on plans by the two free universities in Brussels to promote Brussels as a student city, with a special minister

Labour days

"I see the sun coming up in the morning over my fields, and I'm still there when it goes down again in the evening."

Asparagus farmer Bertrand Andries and the trials of a seasonal product

Hell's kitchen

"The windows and doors are all wide open, but it doesn't help. There's just no way the place can cool down."

Baker Dominique Boonen from Kleine Brogel, Limburg province, had the warmest job in the warmest place on the warmest day of the year in Flanders (so far)

Spoil the child

"Because we wanted to make it as comfortable as possible for the students, we allowed them to bring in food and drinks. But things have got a little out of hand."

The Catholic University of Leuven has banned coffee and soft drinks because of the damage caused to its listed interior

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #180

Feature

Leuven-based wireless tech company Option has not only survived the credit crunch, it's thriving. CEO Jan Callewaert tells us how he's doing it

Arts

Have any of the four Flemish semi-finalists made it through to the finals of the prestigious Queen Elisabeth competition? We'll let you know

Living

Do you want to join in at one of those hip Radio Modern parties but have two left feet? We found a swing dance instructor in Ghent who can help