



Fast train to China

Antwerp inaugurates new railway

6

Whodunnit

Classic crime in debut novel

9

How do you do?

Exhibition on Brussels from an expat point of view

13



© Tim Drienen / REPORTERS

“I’m a *Homo politicus*”

Jo Vandeurzen
on foster parenting, welfare
and life after politics

page 5

De Clerck in talks after amnesty remarks

Leading Jewish organisation calls for resignation of justice minister

ALAN HOPE

The Simon Wiesenthal Center, a Los Angeles Jewish human rights organisation named after the famous Nazi hunter, last week called for the resignation of Belgium's federal minister of justice, Stefaan De Clerck, after he proposed a debate on an amnesty for wartime collaborators by saying it was “time to forget” the past. De Clerck later explained he had meant to speak of reconciliation (*verzoening*) and forgiveness (*vergeving*) rather than forgetting (*vergeten*). But the statement continues to cause anger, as does the idea of amnesty for collaborators. As *Flanders Today* went to press, De Clerck was due to meet leaders of the Jewish community in Belgium to clarify his position further.

Shimon Samuels, director of international relations for the Wiesenthal

Center, wrote to prime minister Yves Leterme to ask for De Clerck to be dismissed. “No wonder anti-Semitism and other hate crimes grow unchecked in Brussels – ‘The Capital of Europe’ – and across Belgium, when your chief lawman allegedly advocates on national television ‘to forget Nazi crimes, as they lie in the past,’” the letter reads.

The subject came up because of a vote the previous week in the Senate to give consideration to a bill, presented by Vlaams Belang, to grant amnesty to those convicted of collaborating with the enemy during the occupation of Belgium by the Nazis after 1940. Many politicians saw merit in discussing the matter, regardless of whether they would go on to support it.

→ continued on page 3

Blondelle takes second place

Bruges-born tenor Thomas Blondelle took second place in the prestigious Queen Elisabeth Music Competition, behind Korean soprano Hong Haeran. Blondelle was also awarded the prize of the Belgian government. The competition rotates annually between vocals, piano and violin, and Blondelle's second place is the highest ever achieved by a Belgian for vocals. He in fact also holds a place for the highest ever achievement for a Belgian in any of the competitions together with Yossif Ivanov, the Antwerp-born violinist who came second in 2005 and Lorenzo Gatto, the French-speaking Brussels violinist who reached the same level in the 2009 violin competition.

The singing competition was only included in the cycle in 1988, when Belgians Marie-Noëlle De Callatay and Werner Van Mechelen figured in the top nine. Lionel Lhote, from

Bossu came sixth in 2004, winning the prize of the city of Brussels. Liebrecht Vanbeckevoort, a pianist from Mechelen, came sixth in 2007.

The top six laureates of the Queen Elisabeth will give concerts throughout June in Ghent, Antwerp, Brussels, Liège and Mons. The performances of the winners are available as video on demand until September at <http://video.cmireb.be/vod>.

Following the announcement of the result last weekend, Blondelle was ready to race back to Berlin where he is performing with the Deutsche Oper. Blondelle told the VRT: “I think I've just spoken to three hundred million thousand journalists, and they asked the same question five hundred thousand times, so I'll tell you right away: I feel good! It was an enormous surprise. It's all a bit like a dream.”



© CMIREB

Thomas Blondelle earns the highest place ever for a Belgian in vocals at the Queen Elisabeth



FACE OF FLANDERS

LISA BRADSHAW



Matthias Schoenaerts

It made its way around the internet faster than a tourist can buy a waffle: Matthias Schoenaerts is off to the US to star in the Hollywood remake of the hit Flemish film *Loft*. Rarely is a Flemish actor the recipient of such an honour, especially in a film in need of such a strong ensemble cast.

But Eric Van Looy, the Flemish director charged with re-shooting his film in the atmospheric New Orleans, pushed the American producers to consider Schoenaerts. They reviewed his work and were convinced, much to the amazement of a Flanders now bursting with pride.

But the film critics of Belgium are not particularly surprised. It was clear from *Any Way the Wind Blows*, released eight years ago, that Schoenaerts would not disappear from movie screens any time soon. He's got the roots (his father is the late, great actor Julien Schoenaerts), he's got the looks, and he's got the talent. Schoenaerts, 33, is adept at smashing all expectations, as he goes from good guy (*Pulsar*) to bad guy (*Rundskop*) to that jittery place in-between (*My Queen Karo*).

Loft is definitely in the bad guy area. He'll be reprising his role as the youngest member of the film's group of five men, who band together to rent a secret loft apartment to which they bring their mistresses. When one of them finds the bloodied body of a dead woman in the king-size bed (the focal point of the room), members of the group begin to turn on each other.

Of course, it's one thing to speak your native language in a film; it's another to join a group of American actors and speak theirs. Van Looy is unconcerned. "Matthias' English is very good; I know that because he did Robert De Niro imitations on the set," he joked with *Humo* magazine last week. "And I've seen *Rundskop*. If someone can learn Sint-Truidens dialect, he should be a master at English."

The film shoots this summer and should release next year. It's a brilliant chance for Schoenaerts, and if he pulls off the role in the States the same way he did here, it's hard to imagine he'll be satisfied with spending every minute of his future at home in Antwerp.

→ www.loftdefilm.be

News in brief

Flemish education minister Pascal Smet will have talks with the EU Commission to explore the possibility of a new **European School in Ghent**, after businesses in East and West Flanders highlighted the problems of a lack of international education in attracting top talent to the provinces (*Flanders Today*, 11 May). The business sector had called for Flemish government support for a new school offering teaching in English, but Smet pointed out that this would be in conflict with the Flemish government's rules for school funding. "Setting up such a [European] school would apparently be easier to achieve within the rules than a truly international school," Smet said. Supporters of the original international school idea plan to go ahead with private partners.

Oil for Food scandal broke, it was reported last week. A list drawn up by the United Nations included such names as Janssen Pharmaceutica, whose parent company Johnson & Johnson recently paid a fine of \$21 million (€14.7 million) for their involvement in the scandal. Only one investigation is still going on, concerning the Wilrijk-based subsidiary of Swedish tools company Atlas Copco.

The Senate last week unanimously approved a bill to **ban advertising by cosmetic surgeons**, on pain of fines up to €10,000 and a possible three-month prison sentence. In particular, the law forbids "before and after" photographs, and information given must be "credible, objective, relevant, verifiable, discreet and clear".

Badpakje 46 by Flemish filmmaker Wannes Destoop has **won the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival** for short film. The film tells the story of a large-size 13-year-old girl preparing for a swimming competition – a role in which previous unknown Janis Vercaempst created a lasting impression. The film will be shown later in the year on Canvas. The Golden Palm for shorts went to the Korean film *Ghost* by Dahci Ma.

None of the 30 or so Belgian companies alleged to have paid **bribes to the regime of Saddam Hussein** in Iraq have been brought to court by the Belgian justice system in the four years since the

The bomb disposal unit (DOVO) of the army was called to a house in Zellik, Flemish Brabant, last week to **remove three First World War shells** discovered during renovation works. The munitions were found to be no immediate danger, and the area was not evacuated.

An employment tribunal in Antwerp began hearing evidence last week for a claim that the death of Oulematou Niangadou, the 25-year-old nanny of toddler Luna Drowart, was the result of a work-related incident. Both **Niangadou and Drowart were shot to death** in the street by Hans Van Themsche, who had just purchased a gun

before going on a shooting rampage in May 2006. Another woman was injured in the incident. If the case is accepted, Niangadou's family will be entitled to compensation from a state fund. A decision will be delivered in September.

The Flemish government intends to set up a **single reporting agency for all forms of abuse**, including sexual abuse, sports and budget minister Philippe Muyters told the Flemish parliament last week. The agency will have one telephone number for the whole region and will work with existing centres for general welfare and abuse treatment centres, as well as Child Focus. Muyters made the announcement during questions relating to sexual abuse in sports.

Two top Flemish gamers plan to open a **University of Gaming**, offering a one-year course in better strategies and marketing. Bachir Boumaaza and Reese Leysen hope to develop their plans in conjunction with the university in either Ghent or Antwerp. "You can make a real career with gaming," said Leysen. "And whoever doesn't make it in gaming can be a commentator. There are people who make a lot of money by commenting on how the top gamers go about their business." Since the launch of the university's website last week, more than 1,000 inquiries have come in.

→ www.universityofgaming.com

OFFSIDE

ALAN HOPE

Famous last words

You wouldn't think one word here or there would make a world of difference, but that's forgetting about poets, who dole out words as if they were precious jewels, or in some cases, as if they were deadly poison.

Gerard Reve was a Dutch writer and poet with a huge following in Flanders. He was born in Amsterdam, but died in Zulte, East Flanders, and the council there thought it appropriate to erect a monument to their most distinguished adopted son. The plan was hatched to erect a wall with, in bronze letters, the lines of his 1968 poem "Credo". An English translation reads:

Nothing to wait for, nothing to hope for:
There's nothing left to me but darkness and Death
I see it, but I don't falter; whoever You are,
I love you, with all my heart, with all my Blood

There's only one problem: one word too many. In the second line, instead of the words "*er rest mij niets dan duisternis en Dood*" the monument-makers have inserted the word "*anders*" – "*er rest mij niets anders dan duisternis en Dood*".

There's no effect on the meaning of the phrase, but to poetry lovers the additional two syllables are like a pie in the face of Erato. Carlos Alleene, who wrote a standard work on Reve,



was present at the unveiling and immediately spotted the error.

Reve's life-partner, Joop Schaffhuizen, suggested striking out the offending word with a stripe, as Reve would have done in a manuscript. But the Dutch study bureau engaged by the council to create the monument had another idea: carve a rectangular hole in the wall to remove the word, and thereby leave a gap, representing the abyss the poet seems to be contemplating.

The mayor of Zulte thought this would bring "added artistic value" and "make the poem stronger". Schaffhuizen's opinion on that is awaited.

→ www.gerardreve.eigenstart.nl

FLANDERS TODAY



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

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

Editor: Lisa Bradshaw

Deputy Editor: Philip Ebels

News Editor: Alan Hope

Agenda Editor: Robyn Boyle

Art director: Michel Didier

Prepress: Corelio P&P

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

General manager: Joske Plas

Publisher: Corelio Publishing NV

Editorial address:

Gossetlaan 30

1702 Groot-Bijgaarden

Tel.: 02.373.99.09 – Fax: 02.375.98.22

editorial@flandertoday.eu

Subscriptions:

subscriptions@flandertoday.eu

or sign up online at www.flandertoday.eu

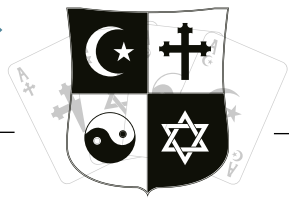
Advertising: Evelyn Fregonese

02.373.83.57

advertising@flandertoday.eu

Verantwoordelijke uitgever:

Lisa Bradshaw



Parties divided over amnesty debate

→ continued from page 1

The question of Belgium's wartime record of collaboration is still a thorny issue and one that divides Flanders and Wallonia. Both sides had collaborators, from the Rexist party in Wallonia to the Flemish National Union (VNV), to the Flemish and Walloon Legions, both divisions of the Waffen-SS. Part of that collaboration took the form of helping deport some 25,000 Belgian Jews, mainly through Mechelen, to Auschwitz. About 1,200 survived. After the war, 400,000 Belgians were investigated as suspected collaborators, with 56,000 of them convicted. The death penalty was exercised in 242 cases. By 1950, only about 2,500 were still in prison; the others had either served their time or been pardoned.

However, prison was not the end of the story: Those

convicted of collaboration also suffered the removal of certain civic rights, including compensation for war damages, the loss of pension years and other matters like the granting of firearms licences for hunting.

The chances of a change to the law on collaborators are slim. While the French-speaking CDH said it would take part in a debate, the French-speaking parties as a whole are against any change in the law. On the Flemish side, the debate was opposed only by Groen!, but N-VA leader Bart De Wever dismissed the idea of new legislation. "If someone came forward tomorrow with a bill to ban the N-VA, then we'd also give it consideration," De Wever said. "You have to be able to debate anything in a democracy." ♦



Forgiving, not forgetting: De Clerck

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

Collective foolishness

Before he became European Commissioner, Karel De Gucht was one of the leading politicians in Flanders. He had a reputation for being very opinionated – "Karel is always right", was often said – but not always equally convincing. It has never stopped him from speaking up.

This weekend, De Gucht lashed out again in an interview with *Het Laatste Nieuws*. He is perplexed by the political crisis that has left Belgium without a federal government for 11 months: "The politicians in power now can govern Europe like no one else. But themselves? Belgium? Alas. This isn't normal, is it?"

According to De Gucht, all Flemish parties are obsessed with the nationalist N-VA, which won the federal elections with 28%. There is nothing mythical about this result, he lectures: not too long ago the Christian-democrats often got 30%, the French-speaking socialist PS still does today. Still, no Flemish party, including De Gucht's own Open VLD, wants to form a government without N-VA, although that is perfectly possible. De Gucht describes this as "collective foolishness".

De Gucht's diatribe comes at an odd time. For months, his own party, which was responsible for the fall of the last government, was completely out of the picture. Recently though, N-VA has announced a preference for Open VLD as a coalition partner, as this would strengthen the right-wing side in government.

N-VA's Bart De Wever believes that each side – Flemish and Frenchspeaking – should decide on its own partners in coalition. He wants to trade in socialists sp.a, which has the support of Elio Di Rupo, the president of the French speaking PS who last week became *informateur*, for the liberals. "Completely incomprehensible," says De Gucht. "It has never been done this way."

De Gucht, who – like N-VA – has always been a critic of PS, still gives some credit to Di Rupo. De Wever simply cannot demand a state reform as well as a right-wing government from him, both being serious concessions on the part of PS, he says. (Socialist Louis Tobback, another elder statesman, says the exact same.) Moreover, with a budget deficit of €17 billion, state reform is not the most pressing problem facing this country, De Gucht says.

Karel may always be right, but it is doubtful that the current "geniuses" – De Gucht's words – will prove him right this time. That leaves only history to tell exactly who was "foolish" at this moment in time.

Rapist commits suicide – twice

A suspected rapist committed suicide last week just as investigators were on the point of arresting him – not once, but twice. Two towns, two separate cases, two different suspects, same ending.

The first case concerns a serial rapist mostly in the area around Mol, Antwerp province, but also in Leuven, Geel, Dessel and Meerhout, between August 2003 and January of last year. The man, identified as Joan S, is suspected of 17 rapes and two

sexual assaults, usually involving girls aged between 16 and 20. In January last year police started a large-scale investigation that involved taking DNA samples from local men between the ages of 30 and 45 in Mol, Balen and Geel. The suspect, who has not been named, gave his sample last week, one of the last selected for testing. Investigators assume he committed suicide knowing he was about to be discovered.

DNA traces were left by the rapist on 12 of the victims, the prosecutor's office at Turnhout said. In the other cases, there were enough similarities to link them to the others.

Forensic labs are now calling

for the extension of the DNA database to include all convicted criminals. At present, only those sentenced to five years or more can be made to give a sample. In the Mol rapist case, members of the public who were selected to give samples did so voluntarily, and their details will not be kept on file.

Belgium's DNA database counts some 20,000 samples, with about 3,000 being added every year. By contrast, in the UK anyone who is arrested may be obliged to give a sample, adding up to a database of three million samples.

Meanwhile, one of the two men suspected of the brutal rape of a 17-year-old girl in Ghent last

September also took his own life last week, after his accomplice threatened to go to the police. The man, identified as Jurgen D, dragged the girl into his studio apartment, tied her up with tape and held her for hours while the two men raped her repeatedly. Later, the accomplice, Robin G, threatened to go to the police unless he received €10,000. He has now been arrested. The basis of the threat has not been explained. Police investigating the suicide discovered evidence including a letter about the blackmail. Up to that point, the investigation had foundered. ♦

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



€260,431.09

to be reclaimed by the state from the families of 174 retired Belgians living abroad who continued to receive a pension after the death of the person concerned

38%

of the prisoners in Flemish jails are foreigners, and one in four of those is not registered. In Brussels, the figure rises to 58%

432

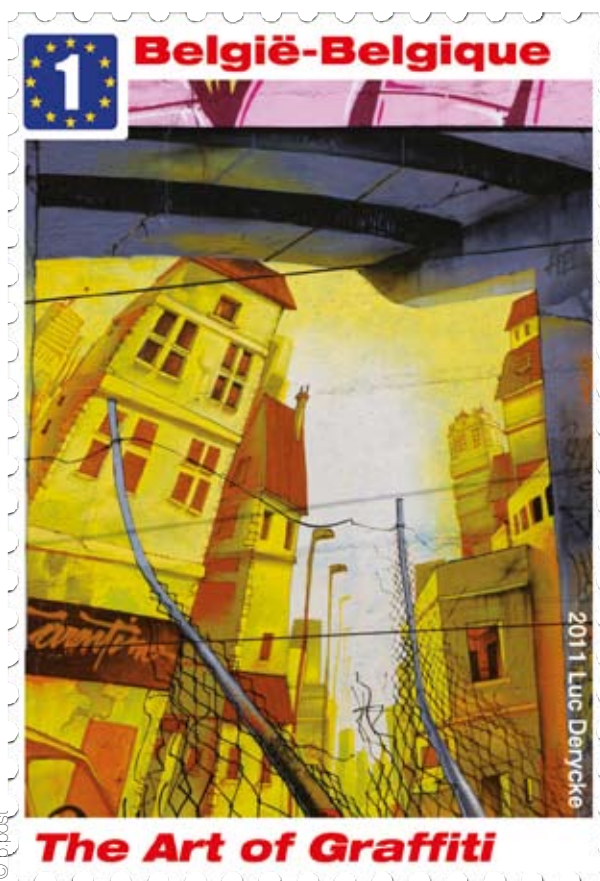
days in prison for an Ostend man who got caught 54 times on the train without a ticket. The man, who claimed he could not afford to pay from his benefits, was sentenced to eight days for each offence

€490,000

in compensation paid by the rail authority NMBS to 35,000 passengers whose trains were late, compared to 16,000 cases in 2009

156,336

dogs registered in 2010, a decrease from the 162,420 in 2009. The Chihuahua is the most popular breed, with nearly 13,500 registrations



Some of the work on the wall of the De Wand tram station in Brussels, the longest known graffiti wall in Europe are being honoured with a set of postage stamps. The graffiti frescoes, which cover a total of 4,500 square metres, are the work of 70 European graffiti artists, supervised by the French-born artist and writer Gaëtan Tarantino.

Minor incident at Doel as nuclear stress-tests approach

Staff at the nuclear power plant at Doel, near Antwerp, were evacuated on Monday for a short time after a cloud of smoke was seen coming from a non-nuclear sector. The incident was soon under control, and the fire service was not required on the scene.

The incident was caused by a short circuit in an electric installation in part of the plant that had been closed down for scheduled maintenance. There was no question of any danger to the reactor itself, a spokesperson said.

The incident comes as the government is considering what form "stress-tests" should take. All nuclear installations in Belgium will have to undergo these tests to meet new safety concerns following the meltdown at the Fukushima plant in Japan. According to the Federal Agency for Nuclear Control (FANC), reactors should be able to withstand not only earthquake and tsunami – unlikely events in this part of the world – but also the shock of an air crash.

If that were the case, some experts say, Doel reactors 1 and 2, the oldest in the country, would have to close. Other possible causes of a disaster that would form part of the tests are loss of electricity (such as caused the cooling systems at Fukushima to close down), digital attacks on the plant's computers and gas leaks from other installations in Antwerp harbour.

Meanwhile, federal interior minister Annemie Turtelboom wrote to the parliament last week to explain that proposals for the stress-tests are an initiative of FANC alone. The government, she said, would reserve the right to adapt the provisions when the decision is made. ♦



FLANDERS TOMORROW

Your window into Flemish science, research and high technology



Smelly fish

A new lab in Leuven unravels the mystery of the brain using the most unlikely of creatures

Most of us are not aware of it, but we are very much influenced by smell. Marketers know this very well. US travel agencies, for example, disperse a coconut smell in their offices to stimulate clients to book trips to sunny destinations. In Flanders, the JBC stores uses perfume at the entrance to get you into the right mood for shopping. But do odours really influence our behaviour?

"It's a fact that smell controls our mood," confirms Emre Yaksi, a senior researcher at the newly opened NERF lab in Leuven. "This is because the part of the brain responsible for processing odours and tastes is situated near the limbic system, which controls our emotions and behaviour."

Yaksi's work focuses on how the brain processes sensory information. His insights can help amnesia patients (who lack a sense of smell), the visual and hearing impaired and even epileptics. This research can also contribute to the development of neuromorphic computers.

And to do all this, Yaksi turns to the zebrafish. These tropical, freshwater fish, named for the stripes across their little bodies, are unique, he explains. "They come with a complete toolbox for brain research. We can study the activity of their brain while they are swimming around."

The trick is to build special proteins into specific parts of the brain. These proteins make the brain visible through a microscope. For example, there are proteins

that can switch brain cells (ie, neurons) on or off just by shining different colours of light on them.

Other proteins can be used to track the activity of large populations of neurons by a change in fluorescence or luminescence. Because the fish are transparent (especially in the larvae stage), they can be studied without the need for surgery.

Yaksi and his team train the fish to recognise specific odours, then "you can present an odour to the fish and look at which part of the brain becomes active. Or we can present two similar odours to see if they can still make this discrimination when certain neurons are switched on or off." But can a fish brain teach us something about the human brain?

Yaksi: "The part of the brain processing odours and taste developed very early in the evolution of the animal kingdom and is pretty much the same now. So information about odour and taste processing in the fish brain can be transferred to some extent to the human brain."

Knowledge about the working of the brain can lead to many unexpected results related to human diseases and therapies, claims Yaksi. "During my PhD, I did an experiment in which I switched off all inhibitory neurons. I saw that my fish were getting epileptic seizures. This could mean that epileptic patients have bad functioning inhibitory neurons."

Researchers at NERF, which stands for Neuroelectronics Research Flanders

and received a grant of €3 million from the Flemish Region, work together with a group from the University Hospital of Leuven that tests drugs for certain kinds of neurological diseases. Again, they use fish to do the screenings.

"We check the effect of a select group of these drugs on the fish's brain. In this way, we gain insight into how the drugs work and prevent the disease. It's possible that we find an effect that we know an existing medicine also has, but that is used today to treat another disease. This would mean that we could avoid going through a whole set of clinical trials as the existing drug has already been tested and approved for use in patients."

So will we ever fully understand the functioning of the human brain? "I believe we can unravel how the early sensory processing is done [visual stimuli, sound, touch, odours and taste]. However, we have a long way to go to understand the high-order computations associated with dreams, social behaviour, decision making etc. We have to begin small, with fish brains for example, and I strongly believe this will lead to great things: the understanding of the fundamental principles behind the functioning of the human brain."

NERF is a joint initiative of imec, VIB and the Catholic University of Leuven

→ www.nerf.be

Published in cooperation with 



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

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

www.stjohns.be



**ST. JOHN'S
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL**

Drève Richelle 146, 1410 Waterloo, Belgium
Tel. 02/352 06 10, admissions@stjohns.be

“We can do better”

Jo Vandeurzen on reforming welfare and foster care

PHILIP EBELS

The fruit basket at the reception desk is a giveaway: This is the ministry of welfare, public health and family. It is the ministry of the Flemish government headed by Jo Vandeurzen, former party president of the Flemish Christian Democrats (CD&V) and former federal minister of justice, who is on his way and will be with you shortly.

Apples, pears and bananas are for the taking next to today's newspapers, all of which talk of a recent scandal in a small town south of Antwerp. It has come to light that a woman had for many years severely maltreated her young foster child. Police had even been contacted by concerned neighbours more than once. The day before, a similar story had also been in the papers.

“That's why I'm late,” Vandeurzen apologises, 45 minutes later. He was held up at the presentation of the 2010 annual report on youth welfare. Its conclusion was that more and more children in Flanders are in need of special care. “Last year, there was almost no press at all,” he says. But this year, they wouldn't let him go.

Is Flemish welfare in such a dire state? “No, I think it is at a reasonable level,” he replies, “but it can do better. We've been working on a new law that should harmonise and simplify things. It now seems that we're taking action after the damage has been done, but we didn't need these incidents to convince us of the fact that our policy toward foster parenting needs improvement.”

Vandeurzen's job title can be summarised as the minister for the sick and the weak – a group in society that is growing fast, he says. “Not only are there more and more old people, we also recognise ever more disorders as being a disability.” These new and modern times of increasing individualisation and the dilution of the family don't help either, he says. “There is less micro-solidarity these days. People increasingly call upon the state for help.” Enough to do then. “We're very busy,” Vandeurzen affirms. “We're pushing through some big reforms in almost every policy area. The whole concept of care is moving from a top-down to a more demand-driven organisation.”

Care on demand, that seems to be the new motto. “We're confronted with social evolutions that demand a reorganisation,” he says. “There's no shortage of things to do.”

Vandeurzen, 53, kind of rolled into politics, like so many of his generation and political colour, after an engaging youth in the scouting movement, which still plays an important role in Flemish society. “There were some people that I admired,” he says, “like the then mayor of Genk, my home town.” The Christian Democrats – at the time the Christian People's Party – have had an absolute majority in Genk, Limburg province, since the Second World War. “They gave me a chance, and I took it.”

“The trick in politics is to know when to stop”

Politics has dictated his life ever since. “I am a *Homo politicus*,” he jokes. He has free time – “enough to go watch Racing Genk win the football championship” – but no real hobbies. “I can't really engage myself,” he explains. “Politics is too capricious. I am seldom at ease in politics; I have to keep moving.”

He still loves what he does, he says, even though he knows there comes an end to everything. “The trick in politics is to know when to stop. And to be able to make that call yourself. I know how important it is to know your position and capabilities. Politics is a team sport. The collective result is more important than that of the individual.”

That almost sounds like someone on his way out. “Not anytime soon, but, yes, it's on my mind. I don't want to be in the situation where others are going to have to



© Eric Heichait / Reporters

come and tell me that it's time to go. I'll try to make my own decision.”

Will this, then, be his last legislature? “Ha!” he laughs. “I'm sure as anything not going to tell you that!”

Rehabilitation for Super Jo

Vandeurzen has had a good run. He became a member of the Belgian parliament in 1993, after having politically matured at the commune of his native Genk. He soon proved to have a strong knowledge of both justice and public health affairs.

In 2004, he became president of the CD&V and led the government negotiations for his party after the federal elections of 2007, which failed over disagreement on Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde. “It would have saved us a lot of trouble if we had been able to reach an agreement then,” he says.

The interim-government that followed appointed Vandeurzen as justice minister. He set out to reform the justice system, “which hasn't evolved along with the federalisation of the Belgian state,” he says. “Until the mid 1990s, until Dutroux [a serial killer who briefly managed to escape], we had a very classical interpretation of the separation of powers: Politics shouldn't meddle in justice affairs. It was only later that we realised we needed to reform.”

But, like every career, there have also been low points.

In December 2008, Vandeurzen resigned after one year as justice minister over accusations of trying to influence the appeal on the sale of Fortis bank. “That was terrible; I felt really bad,” he says. “The insinuation affected me greatly. I resigned because I felt I had lost the authority needed to push through the reforms.” Today, the Belgian justice system is still not perfect, he says. “Much remains to be done.”

But the year after was a good one. Vandeurzen secured electoral victory in Genk in Flemish regional elections, with a large number of preferential votes. “Rehabilitation for Super Jo,” the newspapers wrote the day after. “It took a lot to convince me to run,” Super Jo says, “but afterwards I'm glad I did. It was a beautiful victory for me.”

But the way he talks, his days as a politician seem to be numbered. What does a *Homo politicus* do after his *vita politica*? Is there life after politics?

“Hospitals have always been my first love,” he says, “and they continue to fascinate me.” He once successfully led the merger of two local hospitals. “They're such complex organisations and with a strong social character. People are probably most vulnerable in hospital attire, ready to undergo surgery, surrendered to the hands of strangers.” We shouldn't be surprised then if we find Jo Vandeurzen at the head of some big hospital in Flanders one day. “At the head I don't know,” he says, “but somewhere, yes.” ♦

From Antwerp to China, by train

A new cargo railroad connects the Port of Antwerp with Chongqing

MARC MAES

Earlier this month, executives from the Port of Antwerp came together to inaugurate a new cargo railway to Chongqing, in central China, one of the biggest cities in the world. The project was initiated one year ago by a consortium made up of the Antwerp Port Authority, the Development Authority of the Province of Antwerp (POM) and the Belgian Customs Administration, after a joint trade mission to China.

"We are tapping into a new market with tremendous growth potential"

As from 9 May, Swiss railway company Hupac operates a daily service from Antwerp to the east, through Germany, Poland, the Ukraine, Russia and Mongolia. Chongqing falls at the end of the line. The train can deliver cargo anywhere on the line and pulls into Chongqing at least once a week.

If Belgian customs has its way, the railway will be the first in the world

in which customs is concluded upon departure, avoiding custom stops at every border. That would result in a substantial cut in transport time. Today, a trip along the 10,000-kilometre railroad takes 20 to 25 days. After the summer, it is expected to go down to 15 to 20.

Shipping by sea usually takes double that time. Yet, the new railroad is no competitor to the port, says Marc van Peel, president of the Antwerp Port Authority. Rather, it "reinforces the port as a continental gateway." Its hinterland suddenly sees itself expanded from the nearby regions to the whole of Europe, West Africa and the Americas, whose cargo can now be collected at the terminals of the port for rail shipment to China – and back.

"The Port of Antwerp has always been more than a maritime hub," Van Peel explains. "We are a multi-functional port, with a strong chemical industry base and the vastest concentration of European distribution centres in Europe. I feel that we are tapping into a new market with tremendous growth potential. Chongqing has invested strongly in logistics and infrastructure. It is a hub for the further hinterland of China."

Koen Helsen, president of POM, believes the new rail connection will help position the port in the fast-growing Chinese market. "Our region benefits from this



The first ever train bound for Chongqing, China, left the Port of Antwerp on 9 May

extra reputation for Antwerp in many ways," he says. "Not only can we reinforce our position as a logistical top region and global harbour, we also draw the attention of several Chinese companies with European ambitions. Within foreseeable time, we can expect to welcome sales offices and distribution centres from well-known Chinese brands and companies in our region."

The municipality of Chongqing, 1,500 km west of Shanghai, is under the direct authority of the Chinese central government. The most important transport hub

in central China, the Chongqing Lianglu Cuntan Free Trade Port Area combines inland shipping and air transport.

With an industry sales value of one billion yuan (€100 million) in 2010, Chongqing's industry – mostly chemicals, cars and equipment manufacturing – is experiencing rapid growth.

"Today, information technology is the most important area of development in Chongqing," says Yang Liqiong, deputy director of the Chongqing Economic and Informatization Commission. "With companies like Hewlett Packard and Acer located in the

area, already producing one-third of all laptop computers globally, a number which is expected to grow, we are poised to become the biggest laptop manufacturer in the world."

Chongqing has plenty of product, she continues, to ship to Europe. "What is important to us is the return cargo, reducing the cost and making the connection more competitive and influential," she says. "Our region being an important base for the car industry, we are eyeing automotive parts transport, but also chemicals and luxury goods."♦

→ www.pomantwerpen.be

India calling

Tourism Flanders urges its local offices to adapt to a fast-growing market

ALAN HOPE

Last week, tourism industry professionals from Flanders met to gather information on a tempting new prospect – the large number of tourists from India visiting the region.

It was the latest in a series of information sessions devoted to growing tourism markets that has already covered Russia and China, explains Gorik Kayaert, coordinator of international markets for Tourism Flanders. The aim is to sell Flanders and especially its art cities – Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges, Mechelen and Leuven – to a new group of international tourists and business travellers.

"The session was aimed at our professional partners – local tourism services, tour operators and even one city guide," Kayaert says. "The message for them is that they have to take account of this new market by adapting their strategies to meet the requirements of Indian tourists."

The numbers are impressive. India is one of the world's fastest-growing economies, with annual GDP growth of between 7% and 9% over the last five years. By 2025, India will be the world's fifth-largest consumer market, with Delhi and Mumbai joining the ranks of the world's wealthiest cities. The luxury products market reached €840 million in 2010 and is expected to double to €1.75 billion by 2015.

Among those luxury products is tourism. Indians spent about €11 million on foreign tourism in 2009, a figure that is expected to reach more than €16 million at the end of this year. Meanwhile, a survey of business travellers found that 39% of Indian companies plan to spend more on travel in the years to come. Currently, more than 48 million Indians have valid passports. Europe is the destination for 14% of all India's leisure tourists and 18% of its business travellers. Last year, Indian travellers were good for 86,098 overnight stays in Brussels and Flanders.

Diamonds and chocolate

So what are those new tourists expecting when they get here? In Belgium, confirms Kayaert, "Brussels is by far their favourite destination." The Indian airline Jet Airways is now flying direct to Brussels, and routing its US-bound flights via Zaventem. "We also promote the other art cities," he says. Cities account for 84% of all Indian visitors to Flanders, with the rest of the region seeing 15% and the coast only 1%.

"Indians tend to travel in family groups," explains Pooja Razdan, coordinator of marketing at the Tourism Flanders office in Mumbai, "so that affects the kind of hotel accommodation they're looking for and also the attractions they want to visit." Mini-Europe is hugely popular among Indian visitors, she says, as are the famous Belgian chocolate shops and the chocolate museum in Bruges.

But what about Flanders' other attractions, like beer or food? "Absolutely," says Razdan. "Once they experience the food, they find that there are many vegetarian options." Some 83% of the Indian population is Hindu, and many among them are vegetarians. "Indians are also very big on shopping," Razdan says. "The diamond industry in Antwerp is a major attraction."

The tourism industry here, then, is advised to tailor its product to the growing influx of Indian visitors: Take account of the different religions and customs; provide hotel accommodation aimed at families; bear in mind that while India has about 80 languages, some 180 million Indians speak English well.

"We encourage our partners in the industry to seek advice from our local offices in Delhi and Mumbai," Kayaert says. "With those two cities alone, we have about 66% of the market covered." Tourism Flanders also works with local representatives in four other Indian cities, including Chennai and Kolkata. ♦



Brussels is the number one Belgian destination for tourists from India

© Pascal Broeze / REPORTERS

Flemish innovators win Inventor Awards

Steel wire and medical research honoured by European Patent Office

ALAN HOPE

Two Flemish researchers are among the winners of this year's European Inventor Awards, given by the European Patent Office (EPO).

Civil engineer Ann Lambrechts has worked throughout her career for the steel and speciality materials company Bekaert, based in Kortrijk. She wins the prize in the category Industry for her invention of steel-wire fibres used to reinforce concrete, which give the material more flexibility in construction than the traditional steel rods.

The invention in fact dates back to 1995 but could only be recognised after it had proved its practical worth. "Lambrechts has opened up a whole new world of architectonic possibilities," the EPO said.

We are all familiar with the traditional look of reinforced concrete: The material is cast into the required shapes around a matrix of steel rods. The dimensions, however, and lack of flexibility of the matrix place limits on the final concrete elements. Lambrechts' idea was to replace the steel matrix with small steel fibres, not much larger than an unwound paper-clip, which could be mixed into the concrete, providing the required strength while placing fewer restrictions on the uses.

The main building of the Oceanografica Science park in Valencia, Spain, used the steel-fibre reinforced concrete for its roof, which has a wave-like shape of conjoined parabolas. The concrete skin of the entire roof is only six centimetres thick, something that would have been impossible with traditional methods.

Lambrechts' invention also allowed Dutch celebrity architect Rem Koolhaas to ignore traditional building limitations in his design for the 234-metre tower for the Chinese broadcasting authority CCTV in Beijing. The steel fibres help solve the problem of damage caused



Ann Lambrechts' steel fibres make possible wholly new kinds of concrete architecture

to traditional reinforced concrete over time. The walls of the Gotthard tunnel, meanwhile, which runs through the Alps in Switzerland, were sprayed with fibre-reinforced concrete by robots. Previously, reinforced concrete elements would have to have been brought in and installed by workers, under very dangerous conditions.

Alzheimer's research

Christine Van Broeckhoven won in the category Research, for her work at the University of Antwerp on Alzheimer's disease and other degenerative brain disorders. Her interest was first sparked by Down's Syndrome, which affects chromosome

21, similar to other diseases. Van Broeckhoven's research has led to the development of drugs that could arrest degeneration. The effects of Alzheimer's are estimated to cost the global economy about 1% of GDP per year.

Van Broeckhoven's work is sponsored by the university as well as the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology, which coordinates the work of some 1,200 scientists from 60 countries.

The awards were presented last week in a ceremony at the Academy of Sciences in Budapest; Hungary currently holds the presidency of the EU. ♦

→ www.epo.org

Food news

Vegetarian foods that advertise themselves as "pate", "salami" or "sausage" are misleading consumers into thinking they are meat products, according to Fenavian, the national federation of meat-product manufacturers, who last week filed a complaint with the economy ministry. "If vegetarian products want to win a share of the market, they can't be allowed to do so in conflict with labelling regulations and the laws on product composition," said Fenavian chairman Frans Leroux.

Farmers who sowed winter wheat at the start of the year could find they have no crop to harvest because of the extended spell of dry weather affecting farmers and growers, the Farmers' Union has warned. For the same reason, beet growers are unable to spray crops with herbicides to kill weeds, and bean growers are delaying sowing until the weather changes. On the positive side, the harvest of table grapes in Flanders will be earlier this year, thanks to abundant sunshine in April and May.

Supermarket chain Delhaize has announced the launch of a new range of foods designed for children between five and 10 years old. **The Delhaize Kids range** includes breakfast cereal, pasta sauce (*pictured*) and chicken burgers. Foods are low in salt and contain no colouring or artificial sweeteners. Labelling information, too, is tailored for a child consumer. ♦



Top contractor claimed dole for four years

A 64-year-old building contractor who was sentenced to 18 months in prison for illegally claiming unemployment benefits while carrying out some of the biggest building works in the city of Ghent, is to have a new trial after he turned up last week to listen to the sentence. Didier De Witte had been tried in his absence.

The previous trial found him guilty of presenting himself to the unemployment office as a "work-seeking head of household" between 2005 and 2009 and obtaining between €800 and €900 in benefits

every month. In reality, he was running the contracting firm CCR, based in Heusden, East Flanders. The scam was made possible because De Witte has no official ties with the firm, which is run on paper by his son Thomas.

The company was involved in major building contracts, such as the construction of luxury apartments and hotels in Aalst, Brussels and Ghent. Over the space of four years, his illegally obtained benefits amounted to nearly €40,000. A new trial will begin on 1 June. ♦

Entrepreneurs in the classroom

Primary school in Lier, Antwerp province; a secondary school in Melle, East Flanders, and a project from the University of Antwerp each picked up a prize of €3,000 for their winning entries in the Entrepreneurship Prizes organised by Unizo, the organisation for the self employed.

Pupils from the 't Vestje primary school in Lier first set up a social network on which teachers and pupils from across Flanders could post poems, then they published the poems in two volumes: one for children and one for adults. Students from the Paters Jozefieten college in Melle

invented the Stekker-Trekker, a device that allows the elderly and infirm to pull a plug from a electrical socket without bending over. The project was praised for a realistic approach to real-world problems. Finally, five students studying for a Master's in business engineering at the University of Antwerp are responsible for setting up CapitAnt, a stock market platform for students that offers useful advice for budding stock traders and investors. The platform will now be adopted for lessons in the Applied Economic Science curriculum of the University. ♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Air • Brussels Airlines

Brussels Airlines carried 486,653 passengers in April, a record increase of nearly 46% on the same period last year.

Construction • Liefkenshoek

Work on the Liefkenshoek tunnel, the country's longest at 6,750 metres, reached a landmark following the completion of digging last week by the giant boring machine known as Wiske (after the comic-strip character). The railway tunnel, expected to facilitate transport in the Port of Antwerp area, is due to open in mid-2014.

Dredging • Deme

Deme dredging group, based in Zwijndrecht, Antwerp province, has secured a €415 million contract for the construction of docks and access to the west basin area of the Australian Port of Gladstone, in partnership with the Dutch Van Oord firm. The company had already won a €190 million contract on the site earlier this year.

Drinks • Alken-Maes

Mechelen-based beer group Alken-Maes, a subsidiary of the Netherlands' Heineken, will distribute the Tequila-flavoured Desperado beer on the local market from 1 July.

Energy • Statkraft

Norwegian state-owned energy group Statkraft has created three new financial treasury management companies in Belgium to benefit from the attractive notional interests legislation.

Energy • Dart

The Australian Dart Energy group has invested €10 million in the creation of Limburg Gas to harvest the estimated seven billion cubic metres of gas trapped in the coal seams of Limburg province, near Houthalen and Heusden-Zolder. If Dart's venture is successful, it will supply the gas needs of 175,000 households for 20 years.

Equipment • Lapauw

Kortrijk-based Lapauw has secured a landmark contract to supply industrial washing machines to the Binladin group, one of the oldest construction companies in Saudi Arabia.

Fashion • Bikkembergs

The Antwerp-based Dirk Bikkembergs fashion house has been sold to the Italian Zeis Excelsa group for an undisclosed amount. The new owners plan to open up to 10 Bikkembergs stores in addition to those in Verona and Cannes. Bikkembergs himself stays in charge of the company's creation and design department.

Retail • Hollister

The US Hollister chain, an affiliate of Abercrombie & Fitch, will open two stores in Flanders in the second half of this year – one in Wijnegem, near Antwerp, and the other in the Waasland shopping centre in Sint-Niklaas.

© Het Dorp, Gert Robijns, 2011; photo Jan Belen



It takes a village

Limburg artist recreates – to scale – parts of his hometown

ANNA JENKINSON

It all started a few years ago when the mayor of Sint-Truiden, Limburg province, asked local artist Gert Robijns to come up with an idea for an exhibition. Robijns, whose work has been exhibited overseas as well as in Belgium, faced several challenges.

It had to be local, accessible to many people in the area who aren't particularly familiar with contemporary art. But it also had to be demanding enough for him. "Both the city's region and its context are very 'provincial'. Contemporary art isn't really an issue here," says Robijns. "With this work, I wanted to broaden the town's view on the world."

The result was "Het Dorp" ("The Village"), a life-size replica of the church and presbytery in the village where the artist grew up. "Het Dorp" is located 10 kilometres away from Robijns' hometown of Gotem, on the former military airstrip where the Red Devils stunt team used to be stationed.

"People from Gotem will recognise 'Het Dorp' immediately," says Robijns, who is keen to emphasise that the creation is more than simply a copy of his hometown. "These buildings are the icons of their village. Very local. But I gave the icon a new place. And though this new place is very nearby, it totally shatters the local link."

The location is key, according to the artist. Had it been too far away, the local dimension and introspective concept would have been lost. "Now the local and the global aspects are tied to one another," he explains. "The outside world observes the town, but, at the same time,

the town looks at itself and, by extension, at the surrounding world."

The artist has described the work as somewhere between a sculptural environment and a photograph. At first glance, it looks like a real church and a real house. But then you quickly realise that everything is white – the walls, the roof, the doors – and that that there are no windows.

In fact, it is a steel structure, open at the back and covered in wooden panels on the front and sides to create the facade, with the whole painted white. It also slowly dawns on you that the village is located at the end of a runway, not the usual location for a church. Nor can you go up close to the village; it's fenced off from the footpath by barbed wire and sign saying "Military area".

"Het Dorp" makes us question how we look at objects, places and people. It reminds us of the distance required to look at somewhere (or someone, or oneself) with fresh eyes.

Reactions from passers-by vary from bemusement to indifference, from curious to feelings of local pride. "Lots of people found it a bit odd in the beginning," said one local man on his bike, "but now that they've seen the number of tourists who stop and take pictures, they're okay with it."

"Het Dorp" is the focus of a series of events organised by the artist and the NGO Villarte, including an educational package for children (in Dutch) and a free screening of the film *Lost in Translation* that will take place in "Het Dorp" in August.

An online auction of "Het Dorp" is due to start soon. "I'm not selling it out of pragmatism," Robijns says. "It is more a symbolic act. The sale plays with the idea of how 'Het Dorp', which we consider 'ours', now becomes a property that we have to share with the rest of the world."

It raises the issue of how small villages are often very closed communities and new inhabitants considered as strangers. "The act of putting it up for sale counters that protectionism, both subtly and harshly at the same time," according to the artist.

How to find "Het Dorp"

The GPS coordinates 50.7817862,5.1740136 provided on the website are useful, but a little additional description may be helpful. From Sint-Truiden town centre, take the Naamsesteenweg (N80) south. The structures are at the end of the Brustem airstrip, about five kilometres south of Sint-Truiden and visible from the road. Once "Het Dorp" comes into sight, continue a couple of hundred metres, turn left down a track and park under the trees. If you get to the Kerkom junction, you've gone too far. For cyclists, Het Dorp is between junctions 184 and 185 on the cycle route network. ♦

Until 30 October

Sint-Truiden

→ www.hetdorp2011.be

Raoul De Keyser in De Loketten

LISA BRADSHAW

Raoul De Keyser has been exhibiting his paintings both inside and outside the country since before I was born. Without going into too much detail on that point, his first solo show was in 1965 in a gallery in Wetteren, East Flanders. The same year, a Ghent gallery hosted his work as part of a group show.

A year has not gone by since that didn't find De Keyser's eclectic paintings travelling around the world, from France to Portugal to the UK and US. He's was part of both Documenta and the Venice Biennial in 2007, the same year a major retrospective of his work was shown in Bonn. One of the most prolific Flemish artists alive today, he's the perfect choice for the annual show in the gallery of the Flemish Parliament in Brussels.

De Keyser is not the sort of painter you instantly recognise, as in: "That's a De Keyser". He's more restless than that, going from a distinct influence of the American modernists' abstraction to figuration, and combining them in an infinite number of ways. Curator Robert Hoozee of Ghent's Fine Arts Museum has wisely broken up the show, called *De dingen die ik zie* (*The Things I See*), into five parts, which highlight specific phases in De Keyser's career (which is still ongoing; the painter lives and works in Deinze.).

Ghent architect Robberecht and Daem, meanwhile, have transformed the gallery into a sort of mini-museum for the show, which runs through 11 July.

→ www.vlaamsparlament.be



Raoul De Keyser's "Homage to Brusselmans", 1970

CULTURE NEWS

The Gallo-Roman museum in Tongeren, Limburg province, has been named **European Museum of the Year** by the European Museum Forum on behalf of the Council of Europe. Thirty-two museums in 14 countries, including the Magritte Museum in Brussels, were nominated for the prize, which consists of a one-year stewardship of "The Egg", a sculpture by British modernist icon Henry Moore.

→ www.galloromeinsmuseum.be

Adriaan Raemdonck, curator of the Zwarte Panter gallery in Antwerp, has been awarded the **Culture Prize of Antwerp province** for 2011. "His highly personal commitment to contemporary art...makes him a driving force in the arts and the cultural life of Antwerp province and beyond," commented Ludo Helsen, head of culture for the province.

→ www.dezwartepanter.com

South African singer Tutu Puoane and the **Brussels Jazz Orchestra** have won a South African Music Award for their joint album *Mama Africa* in the category Best Traditional Jazz. The album pays tribute to the singer Miriam Makeba, one of South Africa's most successful artists, who died in 2008. The album, with works arranged by members of the BJO, was released in February 2010.

→ www.brusselsjazzorchestra.com

The **winner of this year's Idool** show on VTM is 20-year-old Kevin Kayirangwa from Antwerp, who defeated long-time favourite Kato Callebaut in a charged finale last week. There was consolation for Callebaut, however: During the series, she met new love Manuel Palomo, a fellow contestant who joined her onstage during her final performance.

→ www.vtm.be/idool

The stunning new Museum aan de Stroom (MAS) in Antwerp has one defect: the roof terrace, with a panoramic view of the port city, is **not accessible to wheelchair users**. The reason, according to a spokesperson, is that the roof was never intended to be open to the public when the plans were drawn up. The MAS has no plans for structural changes; wheelchair users can enjoy the view from the terraces surrounding the building one floor lower.

→ www.mas.be

Classic crime

Antwerp professor Luc Herman goes back to basics with his first novel

REBECCA BENOOT

As a professor of narrative theory and English literature at the University of Antwerp, Luc Herman has realised a lifelong dream, as his first novel appears in bookshops. “I have wanted to write a novel for a very long time,” he says, “and, more specifically, a crime novel because it’s a genre I’m really interested in. As a professor, I usually talk about narrative from the point of view of the consumer, and I’ve realized that it would be great to provide the point of view of the producer for a change.” Flemish crime fiction has been booming the past few years due to authors like Pieter Aspe, Luc Deflo and Stan Lauryssens. Herman (pictured) insists he’s nothing like his peers, who he thinks are all about shock and awe: “The people who get all the attention in Flemish crime fiction write thrillers that do away with the essential pleasures of the genre; they put the emphasis on action, violence and occasionally magic realism. The more successful they become, the more they move away from what I think is interesting in the genre – namely, stimulating your audience to trying to find the solution. So I thought it was time to do something radically different from what they were doing.” Inspired by his academic background, Herman goes back to basics and has written *Nora en de feiten* (*Nora and the Facts*), an old-fashioned whodunit that takes readers on an exhilarating and intellectually stimulating journey. “What’s happening in my novel is that the inspector-in-training finds the solution on the basis of a number of texts,” he says, “and that’s exactly what

happens in one of the stories that many people see as the origin of crime fiction, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” by Edgar Allen Poe. In that story, you have an amateur detective who solves a murder on the basis of newspaper articles. Texts provide the solution, and that’s what I’ve also tried to do. In my book, there’s no violence and not too much action.”

Nora en de Feiten is set in Antwerp, Herman’s hometown, and gives us a clear picture of the city anno 2004, including its growing Polish community. “The local audience is my first audience,” he says, “because the genre can also be used to consider problematic situations in society, such as Michael Connelly does for the region of Los Angeles. He has a great way of making people think about the situation they find themselves in.” The main character, Nora, is a former literature student who uses skills gained during her studies to solve the murder of a Polish cleaning woman. Herman focuses on language as well as the daily aspects of the job, by meshing strict police procedure with structured thought processes; he creates an intriguing combination of crime and literary analysis.

Nora, a woman with both a stressful job and a family, is a breath of fresh air in this predominately male genre. Nora was inspired by a junior colleague of Herman who wanted to become a police inspector. “I’ve tried to play with images that men may have of women and women may have of men,” he explains. “It’s a bit of a palace of mirrors in terms of gender images. Nora could be seen as acting according to a very limited



© Monique Philips

pattern, but I’ve tried to combine that with a number of thematic readings like sexism at work and power struggles, which also sheds light on the character.” By being so analytic (dare I say academic), though, *Nora en de Feiten* lacks the spontaneity and pace that makes contemporary crime novels such page turners. But Herman has succeeded in writing a good old-fashioned and meticulously constructed crime story filled with inside jokes that engages the reader in the puzzle, making his debut stand out from other novels in the genre, which merely aim to entertain. ♦

→ www.vanhalewyck.be

“Those who get all the attention in Flemish crime fiction write thrillers that do away with the essential pleasures of the genre”

Fresh fiction

The Zomer van het Spannende Boek (Summer of the Suspense Book) invades Flemish bookstores from 14 June to 16 August. Special displays will promote the latest local and international crime fiction. Here’s a preview.



Postscriptum

Pieter Aspe

The king of Flemish crime fiction returns with a new case for detective Pieter Van In – a household name in Flanders, especially since the TV drama *Aspe*, based on the character, hit the airwaves in 2004. This time, Van In is investigating the murder of a pilgrim on his way to Santiago de Compostela. His investigation leads to a wealthy family with ties to the Belgian colonial era who are trying to cover up a deep, dark secret. Set in Bruges, like all of Aspe’s novels, *Postscriptum* is filled with greed, revenge and the odd murder.

Iris was haar naam (Iris was Her Name)

Toni Coppers

Former VRT director-turned-novelist Toni Coppers is back with his fourth book starring Brussels’ art crime detective Liese Meerhout. He slowly unravels the mystery surrounding the body of a senior NATO colonel who is found in a ditch in the Sonian Forest wearing a strange piece of jewellery. Satanism, several absurd Belgian laws and the disappearance of a girl give this young detective another chance to prove she’s more than just a pretty face.

Scrabble Man

Bavo Dhooge

Bavo Dhooge is known for his slick thrillers that combine humour, suspense and quirky characters. His latest novel is set in Hollywood, where movie star Benny Benito decides to give up his serious roles in favour of some light entertainment. Although he doesn’t have a funny bone in his body, the audience remains blissfully unaware because he is being held hostage by body double Clint Wilson – who now gets his chance to shine on the silver screen.

Het oog van de naald (The Eye of the Needle)

Jo Claes

In his new novel, Jo Claes starts by killing off a teacher, who was about to become headmistress, in the school basement. *Het oog van de naald*, a reference to Jan Fabre’s infamous monument on the Ladeuzeplein in Leuven, is set in a closed academic environment that’s filled with electrifying tension, a little sexual harassment and several suspects. If that wasn’t enough, the lead inspector of this case also has some personal issues to deal with, like his very own stalker.



BRUSSELS

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



SCHAERBEEK

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



WATERMAEL-BOITSFORT



BRUSSELS



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

WOLUWE SAINT-LAMBERT



ANDERLECHT

Two steps away from the House of Erasme, in a commercial district, this building located on 2 a13ca proposes: commercial ground floor with workshop 143 m²
- 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m² and 1 flat of 30 m²
- 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m² and 1 flat of 30 m²
- 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m²

SAINT-GILLES



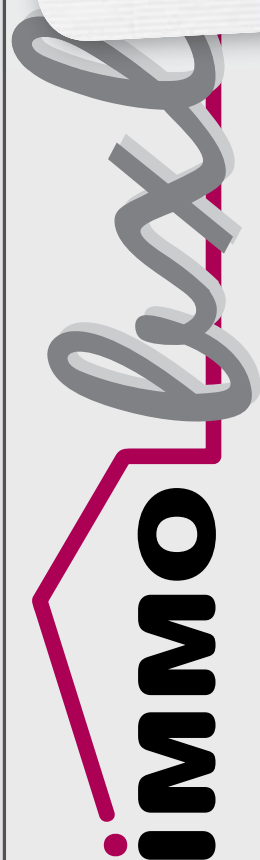
luxurious 1 bedroom apartments for sale with a view over Brussels. All the apartments have been completely renovated and are equipped with a wooden

Expat? Visit ING first.

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

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

www.ing.be/expat



UCCLE

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

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



BRUSSELS

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

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



ANDERLECHT

Godeaux - Bemel area, house 3 façades of +/- 240m², completely renovated in 2004, living room 42m², fully equipped kitchen (microwave oven / dishwasher / fridge /...), breakfast corner, 4 bedrooms, closets, wooden floors, bathroom, toilet,

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



FOREST

villa 4 facades of 300m², completely renovated in 2000, living room, wooden floors, fireplace, separate dining room, fully equipped kitchen, breakfast area, laundry room, 4 bedrooms, wooden floors, office area, bathroom,

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

Welcome to the laboratory

Four Flemish friends experiment their way to being one of the world's best brewers

JAKE SHAW

After two interviews and several beer-runs, I had the feeling that I had established a solid relationship with Carlo Grootaert, one of the four men behind De Struise Brouwers in tiny Oostvleteren, West Flanders – a feeling I saw confirmed shortly after by his oddly intimate email.

“I made a quick trip to Valencia, Spain, and got mugged,” Grootaert wrote me, “my bag stolen from me with my passport and credit cards in it. I was thinking of asking you to lend me some quick funds that I can give back as soon as I get in.” What an honour and a privilege to be invited into the inner circle of one of the beer industry's rising stars.

Grootaert, together with three friends-cum-colleagues, started brewing beer under the name De Struise Brouwers (The Sturdy Brewers) as amateurs in 2001. By 2005, they were brewing commercially, and, in no time, the honours started pouring in.

Popular website ratebeer.com named De Struise the best brewery in the world in 2008. Earlier this year, the same site placed five De Struise beers on its list of the 100 Best Beers in the World (only four other breweries had more).

Sales followed accordingly. De Struise's production in 2010 doubled compared to the year before, and they expect production to double again in 2011. Trying to meet the demand for their beers is “like trying to mop a floor with the water still running,” says Urbain Coutteau, a fellow brewer alongside Grootaert.

“My email's actually been hacked,” Grootaert told me when I called to offer financial assistance after his supposed mishap in Spain. So much for my plans to be a hero. Yet it wouldn't have surprised anyone had Grootaert reached out to a customer for help. The four brewers — Coutteau and Grootaert, along with Peter Braem and Philippe Driessen — are social-networking whizzes and in tune with their clientele.

“We were so hung over the next day, we made an error with the selection of the malts”

When their Facebook page isn't receiving fan feedback (to which one of the brewers will respond within the hour) one of them is offering updates about what beers are currently in the brewing or bottling process. The brewers also read reviews from beer drinkers on public-driven sites like ratebeer, or beeradvocate.com. “Their reviews are very important to us,” Grootaert says.

The stuff of legends

In the most recent edition of his *Good Beer Guide Belgium*, prominent beer writer Tim Webb wrote that if the brewers behind De Struise “did not exist, you probably could not invent them”.

Indeed. For instance, they all had interesting jobs – like army officer, wine seller and ostrich farmer – when they decided to begin tinkering with home brewing. Their first was a *witte*, a wheat beer. Friends and family gave favourable reviews, and the brewers themselves enjoyed the beer as well.

“The second beer we made is actually the same recipe as the *witte*,” Grootaert explains, “except that we were so drunk the night before that we were hung over the next day and made an error with the selection of the malts.”

The accident produced an amber beer, now called Struise Rosse. It looked nothing like the cloudy wheat beer they intended to make. Yet the mistake not only yielded a tasty beer, it provided a sort of revelation. Brewing didn't have to follow strict rules or a recipe. Making beer could be open to experimentation.

That philosophy has guided their brewing ever since and has been fundamental in the creation of the beer that put them on the map. After perfecting the *witte* and *rosse* – “boring beers”, jokes Grootaert, – they wanted to make a “strong, rich brown beer”. But where to start?

The answer came from Grootaert's family heritage. He remembered hearing of an old recipe for a flavourful beer that



Urbain Coutteau shows how to pour

wives would have ready for their fishermen husbands after a day at sea. The four friends created their own interpretation of the beer, resulting in a chocolaty, spiced ale they call Pannepot. The name comes from a type of fishing boat, called a “pot”, combined with the name of the Belgian coastal town where it is indigenous, De Panne.

The beer was first distributed in Denmark, where it was a hit. The confidence boost led to more risky, unconventional beers. In 2007, De Struise developed a brand new type of beer, the Belgian Royal Stout. They call it Black Albert, partly after the Belgian king and partly because – as the label reads – Black Albert “is black as hell”.

The guys at De Struise have since been experimenting with Black Albert. They have aged it over coffee beans to create the Mocha Bomb; aged it in bourbon barrels to create Cuvée Delphine; and they have even run the beer through a frozen

distillation process that doubled the Black Albert's already head-throbbing 13% ABV to 26%.

The result, called the Double Black, “sold out within hours” at its debut at a beer festival, Grootaert says. Like De Struise's dozen-plus other beers, the Black Albert and its variations are bursting with flavour and complexity. They look and taste nothing like traditional beers.

Masters of export

Despite a certain reluctance among Belgian population to adopt De Struise – “We often say that people on our street don't even know there's a brewery here,” Grootaert says – exports (especially to the US) has given De Struise a long shelf life.

And there are, of course, local enthusiasts. Customers steadily stream into De Struise headquarters, and nearly every weekend Grootaert conducts beer seminars, apropos of their brewery's location, a converted schoolhouse.

De Struise used to make all its beer at a nearby brewery but recently opened what the guys call a “laboratory” inside the schoolhouse, where they brew some of their beers and are constantly finding new ways to experiment. With their rate of success, it is certain that at some point the four will get offers from a bigger company to sell their beer.

“No, no. We can't even think about doing something like that,” Grootaert says. “The brewery is our little baby. We take care of it, watch it grow. It is what we do.” ♦

→ www.struisebrouwers.be



Carlo Grootaert explains the ins and outs of beer brewing



Pannepot, named after the fishing boats of De Panne

© Photos by Jake Shaw



Special price

Disneyland PARIS

EXCLUSIVE SPECIAL OFFER for *Flanders Today* readers.
valid for a 1 Day/1 Park visit on Saturday, June 25, 2011:

PRICES:

€30 per adult	normal price €57
€26 per child*	normal price €51

1 day/1 Park ticket gives access to the Disneyland Park
OR the Walt Disney Studios Park.
1 day/2 Park tickets are available for a €5 supplement.
These give access to both parks on the same day, if
booked and paid for up front.

BOOKINGS:
Book through Sima Tours at disneyland@simatours.be
with subject 'Brussels unlimited' or call 070/210079
You will receive an invoice then tickets will be sent on
receipt of payment.

The offer is bookable until 15 days before the visit;
the last day for bookings is Friday, June 10.

* kids from 3 - 11 years
Children under 3 visits for free.

©Disney



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

 www.tvbrussel.be



© Frank Sieben-Thomas

Through the eyes of foreigners How do you do, BRUSSELS?

PHILIP EBELS

There were once four women who lived in Moscow. They were all non-Russian, all from different countries, and all liked to wander about and take photos of the city that surrounded them.

They soon discovered that they all saw the city differently, through the lens of their own nationality. The photo exhibition that followed was an inspiration to Peggy Peltier, a Frenchwoman in Brussels, who imported the idea to her own adoptive city.

"It wasn't easy to find them all," she says about the 48 foreigners she and her Anglo-Japanese colleague have included in the photo exhibition. "Finding foreigners is easy, especially in Brussels, but we wanted them all to be different. Different nationalities, ages, professions, religions. And we wanted to avoid stereotypes."

Hence, there is the Iranian beer maker, the pharmacist from Madagascar, the bike messenger from Finland and the Anglican pastor from Germany (pictured).

Written below the portraits are extracts on why they came to Brussels, what they like or

what surprised them the most. "In Brussels I don't feel like a foreigner," notes the Anglican pastor. "Brussels chose me," says the Brazilian food guru, "it conspired for me to be here."

The Japanese philanthropist was most surprised by Sinterklaas. The Congolese IT analyst likes the pécheresse, a peachy flavoured local beer; the Moroccan gives pride of place to the people of Brussels, who he says "are warm, hospitable and know how to have a good time"; and the Polish rock climber adores "the cherry trees that blossom in early spring."

Almost everybody likes that the city is so international, that "you never feel like a stranger". Nobody is particularly happy, as you might imagine, with the dog poo on the pavement, the weather or the bad drivers.

The exhibition is worth it, especially for foreigners living in Brussels. There is no doubt that you will find a portait with whom you identify. The gallery is a luminous old indoor marketplace, where a small group of ageing men play chess during the day, and people have a drink in the evening.

On Thursday nights until the end of the month, you can have a drink with Ms Peltier herself, her colleague and a bunch of foreigners. Belgians are also allowed. And, important, entrance is free. ♦



Until 31 May

Sint-Gorikshallen
Sint-Goriksplein 23, Brussels

→ www.howdoyoudobrussels.com



Dirk Braeckman → **CC Kortrijk Gallery**

Proud of My Car → **Huis van Alijn, Ghent**

Tony Le Duc's Hungry Eyes → **FoMu, Antwerp**



Antwerp

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
MAY 27 20.30 Moiano & Friends: Flip Kowlier, Pieter Embrechts, Baloji, more

Zuiderkroon

Vlaamse Kaai 81-83; 03.229.18.00
www.zuiderkroon.be
MAY 26 20.00 In De Schaduw Van Brel

Ardoonie

Cultuurkapel De Schaduw

Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82
www.deschaduw.net
MAY 27 20.30 Little Elmo
MAY 28 20.30 Lucid Dream + Les Daniels

Bruges

Cactus Club@MaZ

Magdalenastraat 27; 05.033.20.14
www.cactusmusic.be
MAY 28 22.00 Conscious Sounds featuring Dougie Conscious & King General + Slimmah Sound + Lyrical Benjie + Forward Fever
MAY 29 20.00 Yuko + Dark Dark Dark

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be
Concerts at 20.00:
MAY 25 Jóhann Jóhannsson **MAY 28** The Webb Sisters **MAY 29** Thurston Moore + Disappears **MAY 30** Pete Yorn

Atelier 210

Sint-Pieterssteenweg 210; 02.732.25.98
www.atelier210.be
MAY 26 20.00 Kube + Highsleep With Sloane
MAY 27 20.00 Birdpen
MAY 28 20.00 Jukebox Party

Café Central

Borgval 14; 0486.72.26.24
www.lecafecentral.com
MAY 31 21.00 Rovar 17 + Rhythmsection

Café Kafka

Visverkopersstraat 2; 02.504.99.00
www.stoemplive.be
MAY 26 21.00 Title featuring Delvis

Espace 53

Jubelpark 11; 02.732.22.87
www.brusselshotnights.be
MAY 28 22.30 Brussels Hotnights party featuring Bill Wuyt

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
www.fuse.be
MAY 28 23.00 Lucy & Peter Van Hoesen

Halles de Schaarbeek

Koninklijke Sint-Mariastraat 22; 02.218.21.07
www.halles.be
MAY 27 20.00 Zazie

K-NAL

Havenlaan 1; 0474.04.00.00
www.k-nal.be
MAY 28 23.00 The Revenge

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15
www.cirque-royal.org
MAY 27 20.00 Axelle Red
MAY 28 20.00 Zazie

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
www.botanique.be
Until JUN 1 Les Nuits de Botanique 2011, pop/rock festival

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
www.recyclart.be
MAY 26 21.00 The In Vitro X-perience
MAY 28 23.00 Los Ninos party featuring Justus Kohncke + Black Barbie & Punk Bunny + Mystery Jets + Aguila

Theatre 140

Eugène Plaskyalaan 140; 02.733.97.08
www.theatre140.be
MAY 31 20.30 Jason Beck alias Chilly Gonzales

GET YOUR
TICKETS NOW!

Ozark Henry

23 October, 20.00

Kursaal Ostend

One of Belgium's most famous singer-songwriters teams up with pianist Didier Deruyter for a unique concert for four hands. You'll hear Ozark's greatest hits as well as songs from his latest album bearing a similarly unconventional name, *Hvelreki*.



→ www.kursaalooostende.be

Viage

Anspachlaan 30; 070.44.34.43
www.viage.be
MAY 26 22.00 Steve Jones
MAY 27 22.00 Latin Club featuring Rey Cabrera

VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07
www.vkconcerts.be
MAY 26 20.00 Kill The Young + Walkin' Machine
MAY 27 21.00 Matmos + Oval

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseulaan 208; 0900.00.991
www.forestnational.be
MAY 26 20.00 Christophe Maé

Ghent

Charlatan

Vlasmarkt 6; 09.224.24.57
www.charlatan.be
MAY 31 20.00 Thee Oh Sees

Handelsbeurs

Kouter 29; 09.265.91.65
www.handelsbeurs.be
MAY 27 20.15 Jessica Lea Mayfield
MAY 28 20.15 Balkan Brass Battle

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
MAY 26 20.30 The Antler King
MAY 27 21.00 Wild Boar & Bull Brassband

Hasselt

Muziekodroom

Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13
www.muziekodroom.be
MAY 26 20.30 Voodoo Boogie

Ostend

Kursaal (Casino)

Monacoplein 2; 070.22.56.00
www.kursaalooostende.be
MAY 25 20.00 Motown Music



Antwerp

Buster

Kaasrui 1; 03.232.51.53
www.busterpodium.be
MAY 25 22.00 Pieter Baert Trio

Brussels

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20
www.flagey.be
MAY 25 19.30 Manfred Eicher - Sounds and Silence

Le Chat-Pitre

Notarisstraat 1; 0475.63.11.77
www.myspace.com/chapitre
MAY 25 20.00 Chrystel Wautier Trio

MORE PHOTOGRAPHY THIS WEEK

Agenda

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50
www.soundsjazzclub.be
Concerts at 22.00:
MAY 26 Raphaël Debacker Trio

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusicvillage.com
MAY 25 21.00 Brussels Jazz Quartet
MAY 26 20.30 Roby Lakatos Quartet



Antwerp

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00
www.zuiderpershuis.be
MAY 26 20.30 Razia
MAY 27 20.30 Sulukele Roman Band

Brussels

Art Base

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20
www.art-base.be
MAY 26 20.00 La Sacada Tango Trio (Argentina)
MAY 29 18.00 Shaila Piplapure (India)

Atelier 210

Sint-Pieterssteenweg 210; 02.732.25.98
www.atelier210.be
MAY 25 20.00 What The Folk: Noa Moon

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
MAY 25 20.00 Billy Boyd (Scotland)

Espace Senghor

Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40
www.senghor.be
MAY 27 20.30 Bruxelles Dakar Bamako



Antwerp

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
MAY 26 20.30 Ensor Strijkkwartet: Debussy & Ravel
MAY 29 15.00 Jan Vermeulen solo: integral Schubert sonatas

Brussels

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
MAY 26 20.00 San Francisco Symphony Orchestra conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas: Mahler **MAY 27** 20.00 Brussels Philharmonic conducted by Michel Tabachnik: Berlioz, Strauss **MAY 29** 11.00 Katrjin Simoens, John Gevaert, piano: Grieg, Poulenc, Wagner, Ravel **MAY 30** 20.00 Daniel Barenboim, piano: Schubert

Kerk van Onze-Lieve-Vrouw ter Kapelle

Kapellemarkt; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
MAY 31 20.00 Huelgas Ensemble conducted by Paul Van Nevel: Perotinus, Leoninus

Miniemenkerk

Miniemenstraat 62; 02.511.93.84
www.miniemen.net
MAY 29 10.30 Miniemenkerk Choir and Orchestra conducted by Jacques Vanherenthals: Bach

Ghent

De Bijloke

Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2; 09.269.92.92
www.debijloke.be
MAY 29 15.00 Brussels Philharmonic conducted by Michel Tabachnik: Berlioz, Strauss

Mechelen

Sint Romboutskathedraal

Grote Markt; 070.22.28.00
www.festivalmechelen.be
MAY 28 20.15 Le Concert Spirituel conducted by Hervé Niquet: Vivaldi, Pierre Hugard



Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
www.desingel.be
MAY 26 19.15 & 20.00 L'Intruse (The Intruder), new opera by Dirk D'Ase, conducted by Yannis Pouspourikas, staged by Stef Lernous, with Omar Ebrahim, Hannah Esther Minutillo (in French with surtitles in Dutch)

Vlaamse Opera

Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02
www.vlaamseopera.be
MAY 26-JUN 5 15.00/19.30 Claudio Monteverdi's Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria, conducted by Federico Maria Sardelli, staged by Michael Hampe (in the original Italian with surtitles in Dutch)



Kortrijk

Schouwburg

Schouwburgplein 14; 056.23.98.50
www.cultuurcentrumkortrijk.be
MAY 26 20.15 Peeping Tom in 32, Rue Vandenbranden, choreographed by Gabriela Carrizo and Franck Chartier



Antwerp

De Roma

Turnhoutsebaan 327; 03.292.97.40
www.deroma.be
MAY 28 19.30 't Arsenaal in Vliegen tot de hemel (Fly to Heaven) by Michael De Cock, with music by Brussels Jazz Orchestra (ages six and up; in Dutch)

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
www.desingel.be
MAY 28-29 20.00 LOD in De Gehangenen (The Hanged), written and staged by Josse De Pauw (in Dutch)

Fakkelteater Theatercafé

Hoogstraat 12; 070.246.036
www.fakkelteater.be
Until MAY 29 12.00 Hotel Vocal: musical theatre (in Dutch)

Monty

Montignystraat 3-5; 03.238.91.81
www.monty.be
MAY 28-29 17.00-23.30 Lazarus in Het uur van de waarheid (The Moment of Truth), Kunstwerk (Artwork) and Zo goed als (As Good As) (in Dutch)

Toneelhuis/Bourla

Komedieplaats 18; 03.224.88.44
www.toneelhuis.be
MAY 26-JUN 10 15.00/20.00 Bloed & rozen: Het lied van Jeanne en Gilles (Blood and Roses: The Song of Jeanne and Gilles) by Tom Lanoye, directed by Guy Cassiers (in Dutch)

Brussels

Café Le Silence

70 Stillelaan; 02.343.46.58
candelaershuis@vgc.be
MAY 31 20.00 Tristero in Altijd 'tzelfde (Always the Same), directed by Emma Denis (in Dutch)

KVS Bol

Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.12
www.kvs.be
MAY 26-29 20.00 Desdemona by Toni Morrison, directed by Peter Sellars (in English with surtitles in Dutch and French)

Ghent

Minard Schouwburg

Walpoortstraat 15; 09.225.01.01
www.ntgent.be
MAY 28 20.30 Weg (Way) by Josse De Pauw, with jazz accompaniment by Peter Vermeersch & Pierre Vervloesem

Vlaamse Opera

Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02

www.vlaamseopera.be

MAY 26-27 20.00 LOD in Middle East, directed by Johan Dehollander

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
MAY 26-28 20.00 Troubleyn in Prometheus by Jan Fabre

Hasselt

Ethias Arena - Grenslandhallen

Gouv. Verwilghensingel 70; 070.34.50.50
www.studio100.be
MAY 28 13.00 & 15.15 Piet Piraat (all ages; in Dutch)

Ostend

Kursaal (Casino)

Monacoplein 1; 070.22.56.00
www.studio100.be
MAY 29 13.00 & 15.15 Piet Piraat (all ages; in Dutch)



Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum (MHKA)

Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60
www.muhka.be
Until AUG 21 Ten Oosten van 4°24' (East of 4°24'), group show of artists from the Caucasus, India, China, Iraq, Egypt and more

Extra City

Tulpstraat 79; 03.677.16.55
www.extracity.org
Until JUL 3 Museum of Display, a series of presentations that look at definitions of 'art' and the 'institution' within the scenario of a fictional museum, with works by various artists

Fashion Museum (MoMu)

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

Maagdenhuismuseum

Lange Gasthuisstraat 33; 03.338.26.20
ocmw.antwerpen.be/Maagdenhuismuseum
Until JUN 26 Armoede... of kansen voor iedereen? (Poverty... or Opportunities for All?), images of poverty in Antwerp, from the middle ages to today

Middelheim Museum

Middelheimlaan 6; 03.828.13.50
www.middelheimmuseum.be
MAY 29-SEP 25 Erwin Wurm: Wear me out, open-air display of performative and living sculptures by the Austrian artist

Museum aan de Stroom (MAS)

Hanzestedenplaats 1; 03.338.44.34
www.mas.be
Until 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

NICC

Tulpstraat 79; 03.216.07.71
www.nicc.be
Until JUN 5 Invocations of The Blank Page, group show of works using blank sheets of paper

Plantin-Moretus Museum

Vrijdagmarkt 22; 03.221.14.50
www.museumplantinmoretus.be
Until JUN 5 Playsante huysinghe op eenen hof, prints, drawings, topographic views and books provide a glimpse at the numerous country homes bought up outside of Antwerp in the 16th century
Until AUG 28 Inzichten en Vergezichten (Insights and Panoramic Views), the book and designs of Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven, designer of the light panels for the new MAS Museum

Silver Museum Sterckshof

Hoofvunderlei 160; 03.360.52.52
www.zilvermuseum.be
Until JUN 5 A Touch of Nature, jewellery designed by students from the Provinciaal Instituut Sint-Godelieve
Until JUN 12 Van haarmaald tot schoengespe: Accessoires in goud en zilver (From Hairpin to Shoe Buckle: Accessories in Gold and Silver), 14th- to 20th-century European accessories

DON'T MISS

Über den Wolken

28 May to 5 June

Kievitsnest, Antwerpen



Six Flemish artists are brought together in a diverse exhibition in a desecrated church in Antwerp, just behind the city's zoo, now an event and exhibition space. On show are paintings, sculpture, video, photos and more, all inspired by a curiosity about boundaries and crossroads. The artists have met "somewhere above the clouds" and invite you to "flutter in and allow yourself to be mystified by an intriguing landscape".

→ www.kievitsnest.wordpress.com

Blankenberge

Belle Epoque Centrum

24 Elisabethstraat; 050.42.87.41
www.belle.epoque.blankenberge.be
Until SEP 16 Hasseltse keramiek, Art Nouveau drip glaze pottery

Bruges

Raakpunt

7 Sint Jakobssstraat
www.raakpunt.be
Until JUN 30 Decors, work by Flemish photographer Peter De Bruyne

Site Oud Sint-Jan

Mariastraat 38; 050.47.61.00
www.expo-brugge.be
Permanent From Pablo Picasso to Joan Miró, permanent exhibition of more than 100 works by Picasso, plus works by Henri Matisse, Marc Chagall, Joan Miró, more

Stadshallen

Markt 7; 050.44.82.82
www.ccbbrugge.be
Until JUN 12 Berni Searle: Interlaced, installations, video and photographs by the South African artist

Brussels

Argos Centre for Art and Media

Werfstraat 13; 02.229.00.03
www.argosarts.org
Until JUN 18 What Will Come, videos and installations by contemporary Spanish artist Jordi Colomer
Until JUN 18 Mise en abime: Dismantling the Economics of Television, videos by Richard Serra, Ant Farm, more
Until JUN 18 Ria Pacquée: Westerly Winds, photos, slides, notes and videos by the Belgian artist

Atomium

Atomium Square; 02.475.47.72
www.atomium.be
Until DEC 9 Belgium & Immigration: Understand Better So We Can Better Understand One Another, interactive exhibition on migration to Belgium

Autrique House

Haachtsesteenweg 266; 02.215.66.00
www.autrique.be
Until DEC 31 Victor Horta: A Lost World, works highlighting decisive moments in the career of the architect born in Ghent 150 years ago

Bibliotheca Wittockiana

Bemelstraat 23; 02.770.53.33
www.wittockiana.org
Until OCT 1 Le Fonds Michel Wittock: de la passion au don (The Gift of Passion), collection of remarkable bookbindings from the Renaissance to the present day

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
Until JUN 12 Maurice Frydman: Plasticités, works made from plastic materials by the Brussels-based artist
Until JUN 12 Jordi Colomer: What is to Come, film, maquettes, photos and installations by the contemporary Spanish artist (also at Argos)
Until JUN 24 Jean-Louis Vansch: Junctions, work by the Belgian photographer alongside select work from Antwerp's Photo Museum
MAY 27-SEP 11 Jeff Wall: The Crooked Path, works by the Canadian photographer
MAY 27-SEP 11 Jeff Wall: Talking Paintings, short pieces of prose in response to work by Jeff Wall

Brussels Expo

Belgiëplein 1; 070.25.20.20
www.kingtutbrussels.be
Until NOV 6 Tutankhamun: His Tomb and His Treasures, reconstruction of the Ancient Egyptian king's tomb, with over 1,000 replicas of funerary objects, including amulets, coffers, chairs, weapons, musical instruments and more

CIVA

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.71
www.civa.be
Until OCT 2 Brussel, een sterk staaltje van engineering (Brussels, Engineering Prowess), the world of engineers in the Brussels region

City Hall

Grote Markt; 02.279.64.24
www.brupass.be
Until JUN 11 Deportation and Genocide: A European Tragedy, documentary-style reminder of historical events

Costume and Lace Museum

Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50
Until DEC 31 Handmade clothing and accessories from before the invention of the sewing machine, including patterns, hats by Brussels milliners, men's waistcoats and women's corsets

De Markten

Oude Graanmarkt 5; 02.512.34.25
www.demarkten.be
Until JUN 5 Fred Bervoets, prints by the Flemish artist

Espace Photographique Contretype

Verbindingslaan 1; 02.538.42.20
www.contretype.org
Until JUN 5 Reconstructions: The Feminine Structure of the World/Presence of Women, photos by Hungarian photographers

Flemish Parliament - De Loketten

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

Fondation pour l'Architecture

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.80
www.fondationpourlarchitecture.be
Until AUG 28 Anne Heringer: Building Differently, plans, sketches and photographs by the German architect

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

Jacques Franck Cultural Centre

Waterloosesteenweg 94; 02.538.90.20
www.ccjacquesfranck.be
Until JUN 19 Untitled 5.11, installations by contemporary American artist Peter Downsbrough

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 Fine Arts

Regentschapstraat 3; 02.508.32.11
www.fine-arts-museum.be

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

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

WIELS

Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.340.00.50
www.wiels.org

MAY 28-AUG 14 Charlotte Beaudry: Get Drunk, paintings, drawings and videos by the Belgian artist
MAY 28-AUG 14 Nasreen Mohamedi:

LISA BRADSHAW



Terras Films 1-27 June STUK, Leuven

First of all, Week in Film would like to congratulate Wannes Destoop, whose *Badpakje 46* (*Swimsuit 46*) won the Jury Prize for shorts at the Cannes Film Festival last weekend (*see news brief, p2*). It's a win that should encourage the young Flemish filmmaker, who made it as his final year student project at the Ghent academy of fine arts.

We'll let you know when it is scheduled to screen in Belgium, but in the meantime, the warm weather is drawing us to Leuven – specifically to the garden at STUK, where the first open-air screenings of the season are stage, in co-operation with Cinema ZED.

Terras Films kicks off with the amusing *Scott Pilgrim vs the World*, the video-game-turned-movie that finds the nerdy-ish Scott having to battle his new girl's seven exes in order to walk away with her into the sunset (*pictured*). It's not all fun and games, however; the following night finds *Tropa de Elite* (*Elite Squad*) on the screen, the 2007 Golden Bear winner from Brazil about a SWAT team charged with "cleaning up" some of Rio's toughest hoods ahead of a visit from the pope.

The movies continue to be as quirky and diverse: new Swedish satire *Sound of Noise*; French horror spoof in the American desert *Rubber*; Australian animation *Mary and Max*. Movies show at 22.30 three nights a week and are subtitled in either Dutch or English.

→ www.cinemazed.be

Notes-Reflections on Indian Modernism, paintings, drawings and photographs by the Indian artist

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

A&Gallery

Schepenhuisstraat 17; 0495.50.96.86
www.angels-ghosts.com
Until JUN 4 Moby: Destroyed, photographs by the renowned electronic musician

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, more than 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 Michael Sailstorfer: Raum und Zeit (Space and Time), sculptures by the German artist
Until SEP 18 Jorge Macchi: Music Stands Still, paintings, sculptures, installations and video by the Argentinian artist

Gaasbeek

Gaasbeek Castle

Kasteelstraat 40; 02.531.01.30
www.kasteelvangaasbeek.be
Until JUN 26 Jan De Vliegheer: Schatzkammer, paintings by the Flemish artist

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 theatremaker 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

Kortrijk

Benedengalerie

Hazelaarstraat 7; 056.23.98.50
www.cultuurcentrumkortrijk.be
Until JUN 12 Dirk Braeckman, photos by the Flemish artist

Leuven

Museum M

Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28; 016.27.29.29
www.mleuven.be
Until JUN 12 Gebonden Beelden, rare books
Until SEP 25 Pieter-Jozef Verhaghen: In het spoor van Rubens (In the Footsteps of Rubens), paintings by the 18th-century Flemish artist

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

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 Omszwervingen (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

Kunstmuseum Aan Zee (MuZee)

Romestraat 11; 059.50.81.18
www.muze.be
Until SEP 4 Jean Brusselmans, paintings from the 1930s and 1940s by the Flemish artist

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 Flemish 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



Dag van de buren (Neighbours Day): The Europe-wide initiative that invites local communities to come together
MAY 27 in neighbourhoods across Belgium
02.741.63.20, www.dagvandeburen.be

Dag van het Park: Annual day on which hundreds of parks open up with special activities for all the family, including picnics, games, music and theatre
MAY 29 across Brussels and Flanders
www.dagvanhetpark.be

Antwerp

Boekenfestijn:

One million new books, multimedia and hobby items
MAY 26-29 at Antwerp Expo, J Van Rijswijklaan 191
03.260.81.22, www.boekenfestijn.be

Derek Ogilvie:

Scottish medium (ages 16 and up)
MAY 27-29 14.00/20.00 at Stadsschouwburg Theaterplein 1
0900.69.900, www.stadsschouwburgantwerpen.be

Detectives in the Park: Free guided walks through Hallehof Park in Zoersel, plus detective games, entertainment and workshops for kids
MAY 29 13.30-16.30 at Provinciaal Natuur- en Landschapshuis, Kasteeldreef 55
www.dagvanhetpark.be

Kiwanis International Charity Brunch:

Annual charity event by the English-speaking service club that raises money for children's charities. Features a tombola with prizes,

including holidays abroad

MAY 29 11.00 at The Royal Yacht Club Belgium, Linkeroever
03.383.65.83, j.elewaut@skynet.com

Marc Herremans:

Talk by the handicapped Flemish triathlete
MAY 31 18.00 at Antwerp International School Fine Arts Centre, Veltwijcklaan 180, Ekeren
03.543.93.00, marketing@ais-antwerp.be

Brussels

Brussels Jazz Marathon:

Free jazz festival featuring more than 700 musicians on outdoor stages and in numerous clubs
MAY 27-29 across the city centre
www.brusselsjazzmarathon.be

Checkpoint Festival: Multidisciplinary festival featuring film, exhibitions, concerts, performances, readings, workshops and more on the theme of 'meeting point'
Until MAY 28 at Sazz'n Jazz and La Tentation
www.sazznjazz.be

Detours: Hip-hop culture festival featuring slam, breakdance, graffiti, rap, beatbox, more
MAY 27-29 at Theatre de Poche, Gymnasiumweg 1a
www.poche.be

Falcons for Everyone: Discover the peregrine falcons roosting atop the Cathedral of St Michael and St Gudula, live and in detail thanks to cameras installed within inches of the nest
Until JUN 7 at the front of the Cathedral Sinter-Goedelevoorplein
www.falconsforeveryone.be

Kunstenfestivaldesarts: International festival of contemporary performing arts, dedicated to reflecting the world in which we live via performances, installations and films
Until MAY 29 in venues across the city
www.kfda.be

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

Stoemp!:

Series of free live concerts in Brussels cafés
Until JUN 7 at Bonnefooi, Le Coq, Rits, Kafka, Merlo, Monk, more
www.stoemply.be

Ghent

Jazz Sur l'Herbe: Fourth annual free jazz and improvisation festival, featuring top international musicians, plus food and drink provided by El Negocito
MAY 26-29 at Citadelpark
www.jazzsurlherbe.be

Stealing the Mystic Lamb: American author and art historian Noah Charney presents his new book (in English)
MAY 26 19.00 in the crypt of St. Baaf's Cathedral
promotie.toerisme@gent.be

Uitgelezen Deluxe: Book panel discussion with guests Lieven Scheire and Koen De Poortier (Neveneffecten), Patrick Riguelle & friends (De Laatste Show Band) and author Erwin Mortier (in Dutch)
MAY 31 20.00 at Vooruit, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23
09.267.28.20, www.vooruit.be

Hasselt

Summer Fever 2011: Exclusive ladies' night featuring BMW test drives, manicures, hair styling, makeup, colour advice and more by wellness institute Tim Torfs, followed by after-party (men welcome) with special guest Mister Belgium
JUN 1 18.00 at BMW van Osch, Scheepvaartkaai 14
011.21.15.10, www.vanosch.bmw.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

Leuven

Terrasfilms: Free open-air film screenings
JUN 1-27 at Stuk, Naamsestraat 96
016.32.03.20, www.cinemazed.be/terrasfilms

CAFE SPOTLIGHT

JAKE SHAW



© Jake Shaw

Sint-Pietershof Kraaibosstraat 6, Moen

Death claimed Mark Devenijn in 2007, and it almost took his café, too. But nearly four years on, Sint-Pietershof is alive and well thanks to Devenijn's widow, Lucrèce Decostere. "There was so much beer here," says Decostere (*pictured*), who briefly considered closing Sint-Pietershof. "And then there were the clients."

The beer list, focusing on micro- to mid-size breweries, features selections from the likes of De Ranke, Cantillon and De Dolle. Buried deep in the cellars of Sint-Pietershof are hundreds, if not thousands, of vintage bottles. All of these are off-menu items, and many of them date back as far as the late 1980s.

But the beer might be a sideshow to the café's main attraction, the multi-talented Decostere. Sit down with her for a lesson in Esperanto, a language conceived in the late 1800s intended to facilitate international communication, of which she's perfectly fluent. Or read through her first book of poetry, *Hondstrouw en ander blauw* (*Dog Weddings and Other Blue*), on sale at the café.

And if you're lucky, Decostere will stop what she's doing and break out in song. What started with spontaneous singing while going about her business has transformed into constant requests from customers. "Sometimes I feel like a jukebox," she jokes. Finding Sint-Pietershof, situated in the countryside southeast of Kortrijk, is a challenge. Plugging the address into a GPS will take you to the brink, but the route dead-ends at an old bridge. Turn around, get back on Kraaibosstraat, and take your first right down a gravel road. When you see a derelict red-bricked barn, you're there. Behind that barn is a house: upstairs reside Decostere and her partner, and downstairs sits the café. When paying a visit to Sint-Pietershof, you're quite literally stepping into someone's home. And you're treated with all the hospitality you would expect from a good host.

→ www.lavastamondo.be

bite

ROBYN BOYLE

Da Franco

The room rings with "buona sera" as we enter the cosy interior of this very visible restaurant with a terrace facing Kortrijk's mediaeval belfry. It's a welcome dose of Mediterranean warmth and hospitality on a stormy Sunday evening in West Flanders.

Francesco Cottone, better known as just Franco, grew up in Marsala, Sicily, in a family with six children. He and his brother Giovanni came to Belgium in 1977, where Franco got a job at the same location on the Grote Markt. Ten years later he took over the business which has been known as a standard for authentic Italian cuisine ever since.

While tempted by starters such as beef *carpaccio*, *escargots*, smoked salmon and Prosciutto di Parma, we finally opt for a capricciosa salad: a platter for two covered in leafy romaine, bitter radicchio, carrots and ham strips. Around the edges of the plate are pretty duos of tomato-mozzarella slices and basil leaves topped with hard-boiled egg. With this, our server gives us a bottle of basil-flavoured olive oil, while making that signature Italian hand-to-mouth gesture.

Fortunately, my companion and I both know that we are in the mood for pasta; otherwise, the menu could easily overwhelm. If it's pizza you're after, there are no less than 16 varieties,

from simple tomato-ey margherita to pizza Franco, a combination of tomato, mozzarella, mushroom, salami, artichoke, asparagus and oregano.

Or how about beef tenderloin, veal prepared in every way imaginable, or a classic dish like *saltimbocca* or *osso buco*. If your head's not spinning already, there are still all the seafood choices, from scampi and sole fillet to turbot, monkfish and mixed grill.

But we are resolute and order meat cannelloni and the house tortellini *au gratin*. Even the plethora of other fresh pasta options cannot sway us (although the spinach and salmon lasagne comes close).

While waiting for our mains to arrive, we fill our glasses from the half-litre of house red wine – in a quaint ceramic pitcher – and sop up virgin olive oil with fresh, crusty bread. The place is busy but nonetheless relaxed and comfortable, and there's pleasant music playing in the background; great Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli is the only artist I recognise.

Minutes later, two scorching hot dishes arrive straight out of the oven. My companion has three fat tubes of cannelloni smothered in the creamiest cheese sauce. The pasta itself is al dente, if not too much so, and its meat filling is on the runny side. Fortunately, the

abundant sauce is full of flavour and makes for a good dish on the whole.

My tortellini are lovely little packages with a dab of meat on the inside. They are perfectly cooked – toothable yet tender – and combined with a mixture of Prosciutto, heavy cream, butter and cheese that has bubbled up under the oven grill, giving the pasta a tasty golden crust.

It's strawberry season, so we set our sights on an appropriate dessert. The presentation is a work of art: a scoop each of vanilla and strawberry ice cream take centre stage, surrounded by fresh strawberries, a splash of coulis, a thin waffle cookie, whipped cream and decorative mint leaf wafers. And it tastes as fantastic as it looks.

We order a frosty glass of limoncello and an intense shot of espresso to round off the evening and suddenly find ourselves making the same hand gesture. Bellissimo!

→ www.dafranco.be



- 📍 Grote Markt 9-10, Kortrijk; 056.21.41.95
- 🕒 Daily, 11.30-14.30 & 18.00-23.30
- 💶 Mains: €10-€26
- ★ The full gamut of real Italian pizzas, pastas, salads, meat and fish dishes

Contact Bite at flandersbite@gmail.com

TALKING DUTCH

PHILIP EBELS

What's in a name?

Well, we have a *formateur*: "a politician who is appointed by the head of state to lead the formation of a coalition government, after either a general election or the collapse of a previous government" according to Wikipedia. (There doesn't seem to be an English translation. Is that because English-speaking countries don't usually have coalition governments?) It took a while. The process leading up to this wonderful event began almost a whole year ago, with the appointment of Mr Bart de Wever, leader of the N-VA, the biggest party in the country, as *informateur*, another title without an English-language Wikipedia page. "*Hij onderzoekt de mogelijkheden voor de vorming van een kabinet*," the Dutch version explains. He investigates the possibilities for the formation of a cabinet.

It then moved on to the appointment of Mr Elio di Rupo, leader of the PS, the second biggest party in the country, as *preformateur*, a title without even a Dutch-language Wikipedia page. "*Hij moet het werk afmaken dat is voorbereid*," newspapers wrote on the day in question. He will have to finish the work that has been prepared.

To no avail. Two new faces, one from each party, were appointed *bemiddelaar*, mediator. *Zij moeten het vertrouwen herstellen en de ruziënde partijen verzoenen*. They have to restore trust and reconcile the bickering parties.

Because bickering they were. Until De Wever decided to pull the plug, who then was rewarded with the appointment of *verduidelijker*, somebody who clarifies things (*duidelijk* means clear-cut). His task was *de standpunten dicht bij elkaar brengen*. To bring the viewpoints closer together.

Another *bemiddelaar*, een *informateur* en een *onderhandelaar*, a negotiator, and we arrive where we are today. Back with Di Rupo.

A genuine *formateur*, the first ever since we began



the process of government formation, with the task "*om elk nuttig initiatief te nemen*," of taking any useful initiative. Will it then really happen?

Di Rupo himself doesn't seem very confident. "*Mijn opdracht zal niet eenvoudig zijn*," he said at the press conference after his visit to the king. His task will not be easy. "*Iedereen weet dat de standpunten van de een en de ander nog steeds heel ver uiteen liggen*." Everybody knows that the viewpoints of the one and the other still lie very far apart.

The N-VA didn't bubble over with enthusiasm either. They even questioned the legitimacy of the newest title of their arch enemy. "*Het lijkt mij het werk van een informateur*," said N-VA bigwig Siegfried Bracke on *Terzake* that evening. It looks to me to be the work of an *informateur*.

THE LAST WORD...

Feeling offal

"This is an enormous disappointment, and it's a shame in particular for all those calves who gave up their brains for you."

Top chef Peter Goossens to contestants on the *Hell's Kitchen* TV show who were unable to handle a traditional Belgian delicacy

A star is born

"I'm a little bit of a celebrity now, right?"

Janis Vercaempst from Waregem, newly minted movie star in Cannes (see News in Brief, p2)

Faint praise

"There is enough material here to make an exceptional book, but the state it's now in is just too ramshackle. Two elements are not fully realised: The structure and the writing style."

Literary giant Hugo Claus critiques his friend Guy Verhofstadt's unpublished novel, according to recently published letters

Throwing down the gauntlet

"Give me a building, and I'll start my own school."

Thomas Claerhout, an autistic boy of 12, issues a challenge to education minister Pascal Smet over the lack of suitable school places

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #182

Feature

Rarely have we heard of an initiative that serves two parties so utterly well: the organisation Camelot places residents in abandoned properties. They take care of the buildings in return for cheap rent. We meet some residents and tell you how it works

Arts

Another fascinating DVD from Cinematek: *Antwerpen* shows little-seen footage from newsreels, films and video projects that record several decades of the port city

Living

For those of you who've decided to forgo big travel this year for whatever reason, listen up: It's part one of our June series "Travelling in Flanders"