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Welcome to Camelot

Hundreds of Belgians discover
the joys of "anti-squatting"

TEXT: JORIS VERDONCK • PHOTOS: PAULINE NIKS

Three happy campers recline in a rumpled sofa atop an Antwerp high-rise. They are laughing and chattering like they own the place, yet their scruffy shirts and cheap beer hardly suggest the assets required to land such a premium piece of real estate. They are not builders taking a break, nor tourists come to enjoy this quiet roof with a view. What they are is a band of handpicked vassals of a little-known organisation called Camelot, a Dutch firm that is colonising Europe at breakneck speed. The company, whose Belgian branch was formerly called Lancelot but now carries the same Camelot name, has posted dapper sentries like these in empty buildings across the land in a bid to protect the properties against squatters, vandals and neglect. For their unsung heroism, the caretakers are rewarded with a fully serviced living arrangement at a rock-bottom rent. Stroll through the streets of any city in Belgium, and you will find these keepers of residential progress barbecuing in abandoned castles, cycling through the corridors of disused hospitals or playing football

in the underground car parks of anonymous government buildings. One motley crew even took over an empty amusement park. With the flick of a light switch, they dash the hopes of burglars and gate-crashers alike. They might also transform a concrete eyesore into a lush flower garden simply because they want to.

*Camelot taps
into our shared
desire for living
large*

Overseeing the transition from ruins to riches, it is no wonder that Camelot's system has flourished like it has.

"It has been great fun so far," says Jonas, a 29-year-old architect and guitar aficionado who has agreed to take me on a little tour of the Antwerp office building he calls home (pictured). "Everyone here gets along really well."

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Complaints over French-language songs in metro

Politicians take note: Brussels public transport authority MIVB has found a novel solution to the everlasting differences between the French-speaking and the Dutch-speaking interests in the capital: Ignore both of them.

At least, that is, when it comes to music in the stations of the metro and pre-metro. Once, music was provided in the form of muzak, also known as "elevator music", familiar to anyone who was ever put on hold by a customer service desk.

Then MIVB decided to play songs from the international hit parade in the metro stations, but that presented one problem: While there are often songs in French

that make it to the charts, the same is rarely true for songs in Dutch. Every time a song came on in French, reported a spokesperson for the MIVB, there were "dozens" of complaints from overlooked Dutch speakers.

The solution was to remove all source of conflict by playing only songs in English (70% of the time), Italian (15%) and Spanish (15%). "No Jacques Brel in Jacques Brel station!" tweeted the English-Flemish comedian Nigel Williams. The rule came as a surprise to Brigitte Grouwels, Brussels minister for transport. "I understand the MIVB's desire to stay neutral, but the existing rule leads to home-grown musicians having

less chance of being heard than foreign artists," she noted. The MIVB is now considering a proposal to give both French and Dutch a 10% share each, while leaving English on 70%, with Italian and Spanish sharing the rest. After 21.00, meanwhile, the metro will switch over to classical music (regardless of nationality). There is still a place for Bizet in Bizet station. ♦



© William Murphy / Wikimedia Commons

Worst natural disaster ever

Famed nature reserve "may never be the same" after fire

ALAN HOPE

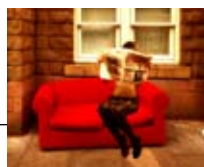
A fire that destroyed more than 600 hectares of heathland in the area of Kalmthout in Antwerp province last week is the worst ecological disaster ever to strike Flanders, the Nature and Woodland Agency (ANB) announced. The area affected is the largest ever but more important is the exceptional natural importance of the reserve known as the Kalmthoutse Heide, which stretches across the Flemish-Dutch border and is important for plant life, fauna and as a brooding place for migratory birds.

Because of the destruction of deep plant roots and seeds, ANB said, the recovery of the areas of dry and wet heath could take years, and it is unlikely the area will ever return to the state it was before the fire, which started on Wednesday, 25

May, and took two days to bring under control. A fire in 1996 was less extensive, but heathland affected was still not recovered completely before fire struck again last week.

"We're going to see a different sort of heath returning," said Dirk Bogaert of ANB. The first plants to return will be grasses that grow quickly and that pose a threat to the recovery of the characteristic heath plants — low-growing woody shrubs such as heathers, bog asphodel, cottongrass and the protected spotted orchid. In all probability, the familiar vistas of purple heather of the Kalmthoutse Heide may be gone forever, replaced by the green of grass.

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FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE



© Bas Bogaerts

Dr Arne Decramer

Sometimes becoming a hero means being at the right place at the right time. Arne Decramer just happened to be on call at the Sacred Heart Hospital in Roeselare, West Flanders, when a call came in from the medical emergency team from Menen of a serious accident. Virginie Samain, 29, was working with her husband installing fence posts when the front loader of their tractor came down on her hand, slicing it off at the wrist. Dr Decramer, 34, is something of an expert in this situation, having studied microsurgery in Paris. He was able to give the emergency services on the ground a crucial piece of advice: putting the severed body part on ice is a myth. You must first, he explained, wrap it in a sterile bandage, then put it in a bag, then put that bag on ice. When Samain and her hand reached the hospital, the situation looked as good as the circumstances would allow. "The hand had been cut off as if by a guillotine," Dr Decramer said. "That was a blessing in

disguise. Had it been a blunt trauma, the procedure would have been more complicated." As it was, the operation took 12 hours to complete, with the operating room staff taking shifts. But Dr Decramer was there almost the whole time. "I went to grab something to eat and once or twice I stepped away from the table for a short break. But time plays a crucial role. The circulation has to be re-established as quickly as possible." And it was. Samain reports that the hand is painful, which is a good sign, but that sometimes it feels as if it's someone else's hand. According to Dr Decramer, the progress she's made is very positive, and, though it will take at least a year of rehabilitation, the signs are good that she could make a full recovery. A heroic intervention, indeed, but not one that's likely to be repeated soon. "The last such procedure here in Roeselare goes back to 1971," he says. "And that one didn't work out."

News in brief

The newly opened **MAS city museum in Antwerp** has already **suffered its first theft**. A 16th-century powder horn, once used for carrying gunpowder and showing scenes of battle was stolen from its wall display on 26 May. Worked in horn, metal, wood and silver, the horn is valued at €5,000 and has been the property of the city for more than 100 years. After the theft was discovered, visitors leaving the building were searched and the security cameras checked. Cameras confirmed that an "older man" took the horn, but he has so far not been identified. Extra security cameras are to be introduced.

Flemish cycling legend **Eddy Merckx** last week received an **honorary doctorate** from the Free University of Brussels (VUB). The award was made in recognition of his professional achievements, as well as the charity work he has carried out since leaving the sport. Also honoured were Ghent professor Marleen Temmerman, who campaigns for women's health in Africa; Ronald Levy, an American oncology expert from Stanford University; Greek physicist Costas Soukoulis; and American law professor Donald L. Horowitz, who specialises in ethnic conflicts. "This is a very great honour," Merckx said. "I feel a little bit small compared to these other people."

Police searching the Heulebeek stream in Wevelgem, West Flanders, last week discovered further **body parts belonging to murder victim Caroline Vyncke**, whose dismembered remains were found in the area in April. Vyncke's boyfriend is in custody in connection with the murder.

The federal food safety agency has advised members of the public to **wash all vegetables carefully** before cooking, and especially before eating them raw, after a bacteria traced to cucumbers, lettuce and tomatoes contaminated with the EHEC bacteria poisoned hundreds in Germany, including 10 fatalities. On Monday, imports of cucumbers from Spain were stopped.

The visually impaired will now be able to download their **daily audio-newspaper online**, with the launch of a new website by Kamelego, part of Corelio media group. The new service, which previously only provided *De Standaard* and *Het Nieuwsblad*, was launched last week by Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters.

→ www.anderslezen.be

This year's **Open Monument Day** will be built around the theme of conflict, the organisers announced. The event takes place on 11 September in cities and villages across Flanders, with the ability to visit properties normally off-limits, such as courts, bunkers and trenches and fortified farmhouses and castles.

→ www.openmonumenten.be

The family of the **murdered nanny Oulematou Niangadou**, who was shot in an Antwerp street by Hans Van Themsche in May 2006, are to receive compensation of €57,500 for her death. The decision was made last week by the Victims' Aid Fund, which had previously refused a payment because she was in Belgium illegally. A separate application to an employment tribunal for compensation, considering the killing as work-related, is still pending.

Residents in Eel, part of the municipality of Ravels in Antwerp province, have lodged more than 1,300 **objections to plans by the Dutch pig-farming company Bruvarko** to install a new production plant. The plant, intended to house 5,000 pigs, has made two previous attempts at planning permission in the last three years. Locals argue that an industrial facility has no place in an area of small family farms.

The **Antwerp branch of the Lycée Français** will begin teaching programmes in both French and Dutch from September, in response to a growing demand for bilingual education. The school is part of the French system, one of 460 French schools in other countries. Last year they began curricula in English and French.

The Belgian law banning the clothing that conceals the face, ostensibly meaning the Muslim burqa, has reached the end of its legislative process and will come into force 10 days after it is published in the government's official journal. The Senate had threatened to delay the measure, but the deadline for bringing the bill onto the floor of the Senate passed without action being taken. Belgium thus becomes the second European country, after France, to **ban the burqa**.

OFFSIDE

Not the end of the world

"I'd like to donate my body to science," the horn player Gonzo of The Muppets once said, to which his colleague Rowlf replied: "With your body it would be donated to science fiction."

Joking aside, about 60 people a year donate their bodies to the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL), where the sign still points the way to the *Schola Anatomica Andrae Vesalii*. It's named after Vesalius, the great pioneer of the study of anatomy, who studied in Leuven in the early 16th century. Nowadays they call themselves the Anatomy Skills Centre, and they've just launched a new website explaining how you, too, can leave your body to science when your time comes to shuffle off this mortal coil.

You might think there isn't much more to find out about anatomy that we haven't already learned over the last 500 years. "Nothing could be further from the truth," explains Professor Paul Herijgers, the cardiac surgeon in charge of the centre. "Anatomy may be studied on the dead, but the discipline is alive and well." Not only is anatomy research crucial to the development of new techniques such as endoscopic surgery, it also has to be taught to students of medicine, dentistry and biomedical sciences, as well as to doctors furthering their skills. One of the latest developments at the centre is the use of plastination, the technique made famous by the German doctor Gunther



"The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp" by Rembrandt, 1632

von Hagens in his travelling show *Body Worlds*. That allows the centre to make durable models of body parts based on the real thing, with all their forms and colours preserved. The first thing you need to know about leaving your body to science is that you need to put it in writing. The website has a model will for the purpose, currently only in Dutch. Give one copy to our nearest and dearest and send the other to the KUL, and that's the legal niceties taken care of. The second thing you need to know is that there's no money in it. But you can't take it with you anyway.

→ www.med.kuleuven.be/anatomie

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.

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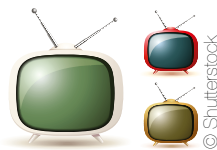
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Investigation into failed communications during fire

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As *Flanders Today* went to press, the cause of the fire still remained unknown. Fire fighters equipped with water tankers and helicopters were brought in from all available stations in the province, as well as from Flemish Brabant and Limburg, augmented by about 550 fire service personnel from the Netherlands, which partly owns the 3,500 hectare reserve. Together they fought for two days against a fire that spread rapidly because of dry conditions and a strong wind. The fire was finally brought under control on Friday, and the disaster plan was stepped back from provincial to municipal level. Federal interior minister Annemie Turtelboom has demanded an investigation into problems experienced on Wednesday evening with the relatively new telecommunications system known as Astrid, which broke down during operations, hampering the coordination of fire-fighting efforts.

A spokesman for the company that provides the system pointed out that the area of the park is known to have less than ideal coverage for communications. However it appears Astrid technicians had refused, under the terms of their contracts, to remedy problems that had

shown up outside of working hours. "This is unacceptable and must never happen again," the minister said.

Taking stock

The Kalmthout reserve, an area of about 2,000 hectares, is now closed to the public. Members of the Institute for Nature and Forestry Research, meanwhile, are taking inventory of the numbers of woodlark and nightjar nests and members of the nature group Hyla are investigating the impact on reptiles and amphibians.

Of particular concern was the situation of the smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*), a threatened species. The group found five dead smooth snakes, but also six survivors, which have now been taken to an unaffected area to be released. Toad, butterfly and spider populations have also suffered severe losses.

The cost of the damage is estimated at €2 to €3 million euros. On Sunday, Flemish environment minister Joke Schauvliege promised the Flemish government would contribute to the cost. "The ANB has an annual budget of some €80 million at its disposal," she told VRT television. "If it's necessary to

provide extra resources...we have to find them. With 600 hectares gone, we have to see to it that the damage can be fixed quickly."

Antwerp province again raised its nature alert to red, after a brief period following rain on Thursday had seen it go down to orange. At the weekend, 30 fire fighters were still in the area carrying out active control measures, along with two tankers from the civil protection service, forest rangers and mounted police. Damping of the area with fire hoses as a precaution against fire breaking out again is likely to continue until the end of this week. A group of about 100 people who live close to the area returned to their homes after being evacuated because of a smoke cloud caused by winds on Thursday.

In Limburg province, which recently suffered its own smaller fires, the nature alert is also at its highest level, with 60,000 hectares of woodland across the province closed to the public. Weather forecasters have predicted the current dry spell will continue until the middle of June. ♦



Fire fighters tackle the blaze in northern Antwerp province as a Dutch fire helicopter passes overhead

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



28,573

residence permits approved in 2009 for family members of people already living in Belgium, most of them from the EU. The federal government last week agreed on stricter rules for the system

18 years

driving ban for a Blankenberge man who persistently drove without insurance, using false number plates. He was also sentenced to 21 months in jail

98.6%

of Brussels metro trains were on time in 2010, compared to 91% of trams and only 84% of buses. The transport authority MIVB took in €220 million in ticket sales

25,678

people in Belgium consulted an expert in 2010 to try to help them stop smoking, compared to 1,935 in 2009. The total ban on smoking in cafés, which comes into force on 1 July, is expected to push the figure up further

25%

of children in Flanders live in a home without warm water, a toilet, central heating or bathing facilities, according to the latest poverty figures from Decenniumdoelinden, a group of 13 organisations that works with the poor

Anger over eco protest action

Scientists and politicians have reacted angrily to an action by ecological demonstrators last weekend that severely damaged a field of experimental potatoes growing in Wetteren, East Flanders. Around 250 supporters of the Field Liberation Movement (FLM) took part, and 40 were arrested after clashes with police. One-third of the crop of genetically modified potatoes was destroyed.

"This is a scientific disaster," said Jo Bury of the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology (VIB), which was overseeing the project together with the University of Ghent and the Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research (ILVO). "We have to conclude that the democratic process is not working and that even the police could not hold back the vandals. We may be taking legal steps." The damage could cause the project to be set back a year, he added.

The demonstrators ripped potato plants from the ground and scattered a white powder over the field. Researchers are trying to determine

if it was pesticide, which would completely destroy the experiment. Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, whose portfolio includes agriculture, said he was "angry and disappointed". N-VA, meanwhile, attacked the Wetteren mayor and police for their "weak performance". The demonstration had been announced in advance, and the municipality had surrounded the field with barbed wire. About 65 police in riot gear were at the scene.

The FLM called the action "a peaceful success". "The long-term consequences of genetically modified organisms are absolutely unknown, their introduction is irreversible, and, for the time being, they do no more than tackle the symptoms of the problems in our agriculture and food production," the group stated in a press release.

Although green party Groen! condemned the action, its member of parliament Bart Staes called the action an example of "civil disobedience" and "a form of democratic struggle". ♦

Call for medical tests after 20km death

A leading sports physician has called for all participants in running events to be subject to medical tests before being allowed to register, after a 25-year-old Ghent man collapsed and died during last weekend's popular 20km run through Brussels.

According to Chris Goossens, a Flemish sports medicine specialist, a mandatory medical certificate of health would help exclude those at high risk of suffering any complications as a result of the race. Sunday's victim, whose name has not

been released, apparently suffered from a pre-existing heart condition.

You wouldn't get them all, but you could weed out the black and grey zones," Goossens said. He pointed out that the Paris Marathon, in which 30,000 people took part in April, already uses such a system.

Sunday's run through Brussels also attracted 30,000 participants. Emergency services were called out 13 times to transport people to hospitals, while the Red Cross intervened in 540 cases. ♦

Outpouring of awards

This year's King Boudewijn International Development Prize

has been awarded to Denis Mukwege, a 56-year-old gynaecologist who works with the victims of rape in war-torn eastern Congo. He is estimated to have treated 21,000 women in the region's ongoing conflict and is a world expert on physical trauma caused by gang rape. "Through his work as a doctor and advocate, Dr Mukwege is shining a spotlight on one of the most pervasive and pernicious human rights abuses in the world – violence against women," the prize citation said. The award, worth €150,000, was handed over by Queen Fabiola, King Boudewijn's widow, in the presence of members of the royal family.

This year's Teacher of the Year

is Emmy Wouters, who teaches the fifth year at the Ter Beuke primary school in Kessel-Lo, near Leuven. The prize was organised by Klasse, a group of magazines aimed at teachers, parents and children, based on the votes of readers. The award ceremony involved 200 nominated teachers from across Flanders. "She gives each of us a lot of attention, and she has so much patience!" one of Wouters' pupils said.

Olivier Jacobs, barman at the Café Theatre in Ghent, won the Benelux heat of the Diageo **World Class Bartender Contest** and will go on to take part in the international final in India in July. ♦

Protest against OETC subsidy cut

Several hundred parents and children protested last week outside Flemish education minister Pascal Smet's office in Brussels and handed over a petition signed by 4,300 people calling for a reversal of the decision to cut subsidies to a multi-lingual education project.

A group of international academics specialised in language and education wrote an open letter to Smet to protest the decision to shut down the project. Education in Own Language and Culture (OETC), which includes academics from the Netherlands, the UK, Denmark and Finland, credits the education project, run by Foyer in Brussels, with tangible success over the years in attracting interest from the international community.

The OETC also warned Smet of the dangers of "homogenisation and monolingualism" if the policy of supporting only schools that teach in the local language is pursued. Started 30 years ago, OETC provides services for Turkish-, Spanish- and

Italian-speaking children from six primary schools in Brussels to take part of their lessons in their mother tongue. Foyer claims that 90% of its pupils go on to graduate secondary school – a better result than their contemporaries achieve without OETC.

Smet was not convinced by the results of the project and recently cut off future subsidies. The letter from academics warns that the tendency towards monolingualism "is doomed to fail both in its long-term purposes and its short-term goals," perpetuating "overt and covert forms of inequality in education, leading to predictable outcomes in which speakers of minority languages have to overcome additional obstacles on the road to academic achievement. The tremendous human, intellectual and academic potential they represent is not fully used, and our knowledge economy dismisses the opportunities they potentially offer." ♦

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GOSSELIN moving

BELGIUM - MEMBER GOSSELIN GROUP

Welcome to Camelot

Unique rental scheme eases the burden of maintaining an empty building

→ continued from page 1

The Camelot concept is brilliantly simple: Young city dwellers, facing today's inflated and saturated housing market, are able to lease acres of space for the proverbial tuppence. Councils and companies, tangled up in the red tape of urban development and wary of the risks that come with unoccupied buildings, see their disused infrastructure lovingly chaperoned until further notice. Likewise, private owners can breathe easy until their property is sold.

Camelot brokers the deal, providing legal housing for its tenants and safeguarding its clients from the fees, fines and headaches that vacant properties inevitably beget.

This has been the business acumen of Camelot Europe, which has been reaping the rewards of this award-winning "anti-squatting" scheme since 1993. The company is now active in six countries, with about 200 staff. There are currently 75 sites being rented across Belgium. They operate under one simple motto: "Make Space Pay".

Home sweet home

Jonas' apartment (or "condo" as he likes to call it) consists of a whopping 2,500 square feet of former office space, neatly divided into separate spaces. Jonas is particularly proud of his fully equipped kitchen, which he built himself from scraps he scavenged from old cubicles in a nearby corridor.

Besides a cavernous bedroom, a living room, a meeting room and a makeshift library (with a working copier courtesy of the city's social services who used to occupy the building), he is the temporary proprietor of a large foyer-cum-dancehall as well as a furnished studio, where he likes to compose new riffs.

Seeing that there is enough room here to accommodate an entire symphonic orchestra, or about half the Tate Gallery, it is no surprise that Camelot is a particularly popular landlord among aspiring artists and musicians looking to broaden their horizons and workspaces. Five of the residents here play instruments, paint or like to tinker in their private laboratories, and they can do so without worrying about the volume of their power tools. Jonas' neighbour, for instance, constructed his own darkroom.

Jonas shows me the toilet facilities next. There is one for every floor, which is shared by two people. Ever mindful of health and safety, Camelot makes sure its tenants have



Camelot is a particularly popular landlord among aspiring artists and musicians looking to broaden their horizons and workspaces

Residents of large floors create their own cosy living spaces

showers and toilets, even if it means having to fit them. They also are guaranteed heating and electricity.

These amenities are included in the monthly rent, which ranges from €180 to €250 per person, a sum even the most strapped adventurers are able to afford. After taxes and inflation, it is fair to say that King Arthur himself probably never had it this good.

Room for a pony

With such a vast and enticing playground at their disposal, the Camelot party I am visiting has not been hard-pressed to come up with new and original ideas for their domain. They oversee: a recreation room (table tennis, snooker, darts, assorted games), a furnished balcony (for summer picnics), a mobile archery course, a bike shop, a basketball court, croquet and pétanque pitches, a multi-purpose parking lot and the aforementioned rooftop hideaway,

with priceless panoramas of the city and its world-renowned Central Station.

I am flabbergasted, and more than a tad jealous, when Jonas relates tales of Camelot brethren holding paintball marathons in an empty school in Brussels or sumptuous banquets in a mansion on the outskirts of Ghent.

"But don't get me wrong," he says, quoting Camelot's previous and still popular moniker: "*Camelot is not all fun and games*." If you want to live here, you have to meet their standards. And there are some strict rules once you're in and surprise visits from the staff, who run a tight ship."

Camelot hands out info cards "that explain how to keep the building and surroundings in mint condition. Which is only fair, because one rotten apple spoils it for the whole basket," says Jonas. "If you step out of line too many times, you're off their list. But that hasn't happened here because the thing regulates itself, really. Once Camelot and the owner have taken you on board, you want to stay there, so you want to keep everything clean and comfy."

Martina Vaessen of Camelot agrees: Belgians have been a safe bet so far. "We haven't had any problems," she says. "The relationship with our sitting tenants is seamless, mainly because our company relies on transparency and fair play."

By the time we return to the roof – or "tanning booth" as the resident women like to call it – Jonas is preaching to the converted.

Tapping into secret desires

The ISO-certified Camelot also sub-lets vacant lots to event planners and film crews, along with screening and maintaining a network of responsible lodgers.

By putting affordable fairy-tale homes and former office buildings on the rental market,

Camelot has tapped into our shared desire for living large, to be kings and queens for a day, or to feel like we're sneaking around somewhere after hours. Camelot has flung open otherwise gated properties, effectively socialising the high-end niche of real estate in the very act of conserving it. Call it the twin boons of business development and myth.

If it were up to Jonas and his mates, of course, they would never leave this place. When the day does come – when a given lease expires or a site is sold, reassigned or scheduled for demolition – Camelot tries to put up its renters in tenures elsewhere. "But that would be the tragic end of our little clique," says Jonas as he cracks open another can of beer. "So here's to warding off the spectre of the inevitable."

I raise my drink and return the sentiment, enjoying the picturesque skyline as it streaks off into gossamer hues of red. Looking around at the seemingly careless faces of these young captains of luxury, I resolve to start hunting for vacant dwellings in the morning. Anyone who supplies Camelot with leads they can close has six months of free living to look forward to.

And who wouldn't swear fealty to this type of royal realty?♦

On the Belgian portion of the Camelot website, you can browse through the properties currently available and register as a candidate occupant.

→ <http://be-nl.cameloteurope.com>



Jonas in his little bit of heaven

Diamonds go ethical

New UN centre in Antwerp aims to educate the diamond business

MARC MAES

Diamonds have not always had a pristine reputation, having been long associated with child labour and the funding of armed conflict. That is why on 23 May, the United Nations, together with the Antwerp diamond industry and the City of Antwerp, have opened a training centre for corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The International Training Centre on Corporate Opportunities (ITCCO), in the historical Rodenborch building on the Grote Markt, will provide training to the global diamond and jewellery trade on running ethical businesses.

Antwerp first announced its nomination for such a centre last year at the World Expo in Shanghai. "There are a number of reasons why the United Nations picked Antwerp for the ITCCO training centre," says George Brys, CEO of HRD Antwerp, a representative of the diamond industry. "First, we already provide courses in CSR and specialised classes in ethical management. Second, we are planning to share our expertise with the world – to allow people from outside of Antwerp or even abroad to enrol in our polisher training programmes."

A third reason is that Antwerp's diamond industry, Brys says, has served as an example. It took a leading role in establishing the so-called Kimberly certification scheme, designed to certify the origin of rough diamonds, and introduced its own certificate for high quality goods.

Companies have been implementing CSR for some time now, often hiring consultants to help. "In Antwerp, there are some 1,800 diamond companies, many of them small business units who find it difficult to attract CSR specialists," Brys explains. "The ITCCO centre will help these businesses find the right people." Antwerp being the world's second largest chemical industry cluster, and Europe's second largest port, Brys reckons that the UN will extend their CSR programmes to other



A diamond polisher at work at the newly-opened training centre

sectors as well.

Ludo van Campenhout, Antwerp's alderman responsible for the diamond industry, says there are several factors that contributed to the realisation of the ITCCO centre. "There is the pressure from end-users in the diamond and jewellery trade, who increasingly demand their purchases to be made without the use of child labour," he says. "Also, the UN is encouraging businesses worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies with their so-called Global Compact guidelines. Finally, the City of Antwerp has the ambition to become the world leader in the rough diamonds trade." He says that the ITCCO centre provides the UN with a "pied à terre, helping them to spread the CSR message in a professional way."

The Rodenborch building itself is multi-functional and available to the various partners in the project. It has an exhibition room for diamonds and jewellery and an

information centre explaining what CSR is all about. It also highlights the role of the UN, and the Diamond Industry Trust will be there to promote the job of diamond cutter and polisher.

The inauguration took place in the presence of Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters and Carlos Lopes, under-secretary-general of the UN and managing director of its training and research institute. Just for the occasion, Antwerp cathedral's carillon played the song "Diamonds are Forever", and children waved little flags of all of the 192 UN member states.

The ITCCO centre is now hosting a diamond and jewellery exhibition until 16 June, after which the city will begin with the restoration of the building, to be finished by September. The first activities are scheduled for October. ♦

→ www.unitar.org

IN THE HOUSE

ALAN HOPE

What's being said in the Flemish Parliament

The newly renamed **Wallo-Brux Federation (formerly the French Community)** "does not exist" as far as minister-president Kris Peeters is concerned, and any invitations or communications in that name will be ignored, he told members of the Flemish parliament meeting last week. Earlier in the week, the Walloon Parliament of the French Community approved a resolution to change the name of the community, something Peeters called "a bizarre proposal" that represents "a danger to the stability of the country". Brussels remains "of essential importance" for Flanders, he said, and he would do everything possible to bring the two regions closer together.

Companies need to take more account of **experience and skills that potential employees have acquired elsewhere** than in education and training, according to Flemish labour minister Philippe Muyters. That would include, he suggested, competence gained by becoming a parent. For the last five years, "skills otherwise acquired" have been accepted across many sectors, but only 2,700 applicants have asked to have that kind of experience considered. Meanwhile, the Flemish employment agency VDAB reports 55,000 job vacancies, 11% of which have been impossible to fill due to a lack of candidates with the right qualifications. Muyters promised discussions with employers and unions to look at ways to have less traditional qualifications better recognised.

ANDY FURNIERE

On Greek coffee and Belgian fries • New Master's study in Brussels provides food for thought

Belgians are famous Burgundians, who happily spend large chunks of their free time eating and cooking. Specialties such as fries, chocolate, beers and waffles are the unmistakable proof. Yet for years in Belgian academic circles, food history specialist Peter Scholliers of the Free University of Brussels (VUB) was mockingly called "the potato historian".

But times have changed. Today, the VUB, in cooperation with the French-speaking ULB, teaches history students how food on the table has shaped people's lives throughout history. They will be able to graduate with a Master's degree in Food History and Culture.

"It may sound like a cliché," says Scholliers, "but we are what we eat." The founder of the new course published the 2008 book "Food Culture in Belgium". True to his earlier nickname, the historian claims that he would have never been born if it weren't for the introduction of

the potato in Europe. The potato lifted the curse of endemic hunger and allowed the population of the 19th century to grow. "The history of food is the history of the world." As an assignment, students in the course had to bring back a food item or a drink they felt epitomises their culture. A Greek girl brought a cup of strong coffee, but was infuriated when a Turkish student claimed that it was typically Turkish. "It shows how much we identify with our food," says Scholliers. "In the same way, Belgians can be frustrated about the name French fries."

Food seems to highlight tendencies in global society, such as the recent trend of eating locally as a reaction to a global market. "There are many people in the United States who only eat what has been cultivated within a 50-kilometre perimeter," says Scholliers. "In Belgium, things are not so extreme, but many of the top restaurants put more and

more local dishes on their menus, such as *waterzooi* [a classic stew traditionally from Ghent]. People look for authenticity in a world that seems to have become much smaller in the last decades."

The Master's degree itself is an example of globalisation. Except for those at the ULB, all the courses

are in English. "Not just because there are students of many different nationalities," claims Scholliers. "We even speak English when all the students have Dutch as a mother tongue. That way, we prepare them for the international job market." ♦

→ www.vub.ac.be/HIST



Farmers and growers are facing losses that could amount to €100 million because of the extended dry spell of this year's spring and its effect on crops, according to Open VLD member Karlos Callens, in a question to Kris Peeters, responsible for agriculture. What measures did the government plan? Peeters explained that an EU committee was due to take a decision in July on a proposal to make **advance payments of certain subsidies and premiums to farmers**, to help them through their difficulties. For Flanders, that could amount to pay-outs of some €249 million. As soon as the decision is made, he said, the government was ready to put the system in action. An attempt to bring in a system of insurance policies against bad weather, Peeters said, had come to nothing because of "lack of interest" on the part of the insurance industry.

Fraud suspected in theme park closure

The European Commission is investigating misuse of EU subsidies

ALAN HOPE

The European Commission anti-fraud unit, known as Olaf, is investigating allegations of fraudulent use of EU subsidies in the construction of the ill-fated Land Van Ooit theme park in Tongeren, Limburg province, which went bankrupt in 2007. According to an Olaf spokesman, the investigation has been going on for some months. Investigators are looking into how €1.5 million in subsidies from the European Regional Development Fund found their way into the Land Van Ooit project and whether the grant-giving authority was misled in the process.

Het Land Van Ooit (The Land of Long Ago) is a Dutch concept; the main park in Drunen, the Netherlands, is run by the Taminiau family. The theme is a sort of Roman-mediaeval fantasy, with the big selling point that within the gates of the park, children are in charge and may tell their parents what to do.

The Dutch park was set up in 1989 by Marc Taminiau, who had been a director of the nearby fairy-tale theme park De Efteling. The Dutch Land Van Ooit also went broke in 2007, partly due to bad publicity from the Tongeren closure.

The first trumpets were sounded announcing the arrival of a Flemish counterpart to the Dutch park in 1998, and the project received the enthusiastic support of Tongeren mayor Patrick Dewael – who later went on to become Flemish minister-president, federal interior minister and speaker of the chamber of representatives. Concrete plans for the



The closed park in Tongeren, much of which is still intact

park emerged in 2003, but a 2005 feasibility study by the finance ministry suggested that the park was not viable and called plans “irresponsible”.

The closure of Ooit Tongeren, which had only been open for 74 days, is reckoned to be the biggest tourism flop Flanders has ever experienced. A total of €20 million in public money

– including the €1.5 million in EU subsidies and €13 million from the Limburg Strategic Investment Agency – was lost. Meanwhile members of the Taminiau family have been charged by Tongeren magistrates with false documentation, misuse of company property and fraudulent bankruptcy. Trial on those charges is due to begin in October. ♦

New chemical plant for Antwerp?

Chemical company BASF is due to announce shortly whether its plans to build the world's largest production plant for toluene diisocyanate (TDI) will go ahead in Antwerp or in Ludwigshafen, Germany. The new plant is expected to provide 100 new jobs.

TDI is an important chemical in the manufacture of polyurethane foams such as those used in furniture and car seats. Worldwide consumption is increasing constantly, largely as a result of the rising standard of living in many developing countries.

Both Antwerp and Ludwigshafen are what BASF calls “combined” sites – where production is integrated on one site or closely linked to production elsewhere. “Production plants at large sites are closely interlinked, creating efficient value chains that extend

from basic chemicals right through to high-value-added products such as coatings and crop protection agents,” reads the company's website. TDI requires a complicated six-stage manufacturing process, all of which could be integrated in the new site, helping reduce costs. However TDI is also an extremely hazardous chemical, whose vapours can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and skin. It is known to be a cause of asthma. The state of New Jersey lists it as an extremely hazardous substance which can cause death or disability. Only 24 companies worldwide produce TDI or its sister chemical MDI (diphenylmethane diisocyanate), and all of them are members of the International Isocyanate Institute, which promotes safe handling. ♦

→ www.basf.be



West Flemish officials accused of corruption

A mayor, a municipal secretary, 20 city officials and a number of private-sector contractors have been indicted for trial in a case of alleged corruption with the city works department of the province of West Flanders. Former municipal secretary Marc Verhaeghe is accused of accepting hospitality, holidays and a helicopter trip from contractor Georges Jacobs, former director of real estate company Compagnie La Zoute, in return for favours.

Seven officials of the city works department are accused of taking bribes to approve planning permission. The former mayor of Wielsbeke, Noël Demeulenaere, is

unusually accused of both active and passive corruption: for allegedly both taking and offering bribes. The case first came to light in 2006. A number of suspects, including Jacobs and Demeulenaere, spent some time in jail on remand, only to be released later. Five officials from the Bruges office of city works were sacked, leading to serious delays in processing applications for building permits, which took two years to return to normal.

The suspects concerned have two weeks to appeal against their indictment, after which a trial date will be set. ♦

Jobs news

“Bottleneck jobs” are what they used to be

The majority of so-called “bottleneck jobs” – where employers have chronic problems filling vacancies – are no different today than they were 20 years ago, according to figures from the employment and training agency VDAB. Bottleneck jobs are those for which special training subsidies are available for prospective applicants, and where employers are more easily allowed to employ candidates from outside the EU. The VDAB lists 224 jobs in 98 categories in its 2010 list, an increase of 30 and 19 respectively.

Although other jobs arrive on the list – such as cleaning staff, train drivers and restaurant staff – jobs that were crying out for qualified staff in 1990 are still suffering from the same dearth of applicants. Nurse, mechanic, engineer and IT technician remain on the list, along with almost all others from 20 years ago. In 2010, that meant more than 2,200 vacancies advertised to the VDAB could not be filled.

In some cases, the jobs in question suffer an image problem: dirty, boring, ill-paid, lacking prospects for promotion. But changes in education have also had an effect: The tendency for parents to steer their children towards the humanities has robbed

the professional and technical sectors of graduates who might otherwise have gone on to pursue some of the careers on the list.

Engineering is, meanwhile, considered to be the **most attractive job in Belgium**, according to a survey by Randstad. Nearly three out of four people would recommend the job to family or friends. In second place came architect, followed by veterinarian, doctor and professor. At the other end of the scale, the least attractive job was considered to be a packer on a factory production line. Also on the black list: doorman, fisherman, shoemaker and assembly-line worker.

The non-profit Atelier Groot Eiland, which helps put the socially disadvantaged to work, has been awarded the **Poverty and Social Exclusion prize** by Welfare Care, another non-profit. The Atelier provides training courses to long-term unemployed, and runs its own training wood-shop and restaurant. More than 80% of its trainees go on to find regular work. The prize, an artwork and a cheque for €12,500, was handed over by Flemish poverty minister Ingrid Lieten. ♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Banking • KBC

Flanders largest financial institution is still trying to sell assets to meet conditions imposed by the EU for its state-engineered rescue at the height of the financial crisis. After failing to sell its KBL private banking activities, the bank is considering the sale of some of its Polish interests in Kredyt Bank and its Warta insurance affiliate. KBC's plan calls for a reduction of 25% of its balance sheet total.

Brewing • Oud Beersel

The Oud Beersel brewery in Flemish Brabant won a gold medal for its Oude Kriek at the recent Australian International Beer Awards. The brewery also won the silver for its Oude Geuze and a bronze for the Bersalis Kadet.

Energy • Itochu

The Japanese Itochu energy group has acquired a 33% stake worth some €48 million in the Tessenderlo gas-fired power station from the French GDF Suez. The move is part of GDF's efforts to gain EU approval for merging with the UK's International Power group.

Handling • Swissport

The Zurich-based Swissport group is bidding for the Brussels Airport passenger and cargo handling contract. The Swiss company is in competition with the existing handlers Aviapartner and Flightcare and with other outsiders, including the Turkish Celebi and the UK's Menzies.

Investments • Ernst&Young

Foreign investments increased 9% last year in Belgium, with Flanders almost doubling the number of its projects to 108 against 64 in 2009, according to the recently released “E&Y Foreign Investments” annual survey. The region has especially capitalised on the Antwerp port area. The result puts Belgium in sixth position in Europe behind the UK, France, Germany and Spain. Also, the IMD sponsored “World Competitiveness Index” ranks Belgium in 23rd position, an improvement on last year's 25th. Meanwhile, the American Chamber of Commerce in Belgium (Amcham) last week presented its annual “Priorities for a Prosperous Belgium” recommendations. Key points include lowering the corporate tax rate, adjusting the wage indexation to protect a base salary, increasing the number of older workers and increasing support for R&D and innovation.

Ports • Antwerp

The Port of Antwerp authority is bidding to acquire up to 33% of the German port of Duisburg facilities on the Rhine. The move would allow Antwerp to develop its inland traffic to Germany.

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Lust for design

From a Brussels bus stop to 20,000 leagues under the sea

KATRIEN LINDEMANS

From his workshop in the Brussels commune of Oudergem, designer Xavier Lust has been collaborating with a few leading Italian design labels: the result is the Algae.MGX lamp, its tubular arms reaching towards the sky. Lust began his career in 1992, after studying interior design at Saint-Luc in Brussels. He opened his own studio that same year. "In the beginning, I spent too much time on the production of my designs and not enough on the creation," he tells me during a little celebration to launch his lamp on the local market. "But working with my hands, I discovered a new technique to bend metal. It was a breakthrough in my career and also the start of my collaboration with Italian design labels."

In 2001, Lust (*pictured right*) designed his signature piece "Le Banc", a metal bench manufactured by Italian brand MDF. "Le Banc" is the perfect example of contemporary design's first commandment: Make more with less. "I believe the shape is in the material," says Lust. "I look at the nature of the material and try to shape it into something else."

For "Le Banc", Lust took a flat sheet of metal and bent it into a bench. "Design doesn't have to be complicated, and I like shapes to be authentic," he says. The simple design appealed to Brussels city planners, who bought them up to install in public places.

For his funky new lamp, the designer collaborated with .MGX, the design division of 3D printing company Materialise. It was inspired, he says, by Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. "I drew a sketch of a lamp shaped like algae," he explains. "Then followed the intensive project of realising it using the stereo-lithography technique. The lamp had to be both ornamental and functional, so I decided to integrate LED lighting. Making this lamp, I started with an idea and a technique, rather than with the material. A different approach



Xavier Lust designed the new tram and bus stops for MIVB, which will begin to appear later this year

to what I'm used to, but the result combined both tradition and innovation, which I always try to do."

For Fashion and Design Brussels in 2006, he was asked to create urban furniture for Brussels' Kunstberg. His design incorporates his earlier benches but adds a table, all formed with a single piece of metal. Lust has also designed the future tram and bus shelters for the Brussels public transport company MIVB. "I'm proud to have won that competition because my designs will be visible throughout my own city," he says. "It's a mix of classic and contemporary, appealing to a large section of the public. I've also tried to make it as vandalism-proof as possible, by using pierced metal to avoid graffiti tags and stickers. The booths are see-through all the way, making them a safer place to wait."

Lust always feels that his last project is his best one. "If I don't feel what I'm doing at the moment is better than anything I've created before, it's probably not worth doing," he says. "I hope one day to be able to combine all my different skills into one big project: a large-scale hotel, preferably in Asia or India." ♦

→ www.xavierlust.com



The Algae.MGX lamp was inspired by Jules Verne



.MGX: the only shop of its kind

Until 4 July, The .MGX store near Grote Zavel is hosting a small exhibition featuring a selection of interior designs by Xavier Lust. You'll see the famous Sumo Sofa, metal trays, candle holders, ice buckets and his first lamp made with 3D technology, Gamete. MGX.

.MGX is the first shop in the world devoted to 3D printed design. Everything you see in the store was developed with innovative Magics software and rolled out of a special kind of printer. All objects were once nothing more than a .mgx file on a computer, hence the name of the shop.

The 3D technique was developed by Leuven-based company Materialise, who developed the process for the medical sector. The 3D software is, for instance, frequently used for medical and dental image processing or surgery simulation. It didn't take long before other industries started using this development for their own purposes.

Once the 3D images are created, they can be printed with technologies such as stereolithography and selective laser sintering. The actual printing happens in Leuven, but in the .MGX store (and on their website) is a video showing how it's done. All creations are hand-finished by the designers.

Lamps, fruit bowls, statues, in shapes you wouldn't think possible. A visit to .MGX is like peeking into the future.

→ www.mgxbymaterialise.com

A Scheldt symphony Eighty years of Antwerp on film

IAN MUNDELL

In the early days of cinema there was a craze for "city symphonies", silent films that created dynamic portraits of places such as Berlin, New York and Amsterdam. Images of the urban landscape and people at work or play were arranged into symphonic movements intended to reflect a day in the life of the city – its grandeur, its poetry or even its weather.

Flemish cities seem to have missed out on this cinematic fad, but *Antwerp: A City Caught on Film* goes some way to filling the gap. Produced by Cinematek, this new DVD brings together images of the city from 1897 to 1970, drawn from newsreels, publicity films, and even home movies.

The material is organised into four themes rather than musical movements, although there is delightful "day in the life" beginning to the collection. This is an animated advert from the 1920s showing two men celebrating the night before they leave Antwerp for the Congo. One catches the boat the next morning

because he trusted his Tam Tam alarm clock, while the other is left standing on the dock. This is part of the section devoted to the Port of Antwerp, which also includes the DVD's earliest film, a view of the city from an arriving boat shot by one of the Lumière brothers' globe-trotting cameramen. If this view of the right bank of the Scheldt looks remarkably familiar, it's a shock later on to see images from 1953 in which the left bank is still undeveloped.

After the port is a section on politics, agitation and propaganda, which covers films from the Christian right, the socialist left, the Nazi occupation and the liberation. Then there are films on personal life, the arts, sport and entertainment, including a selection from nearly 30 years of home movies shot by one family.

The DVD, subtitled in English, Dutch and French, comes with a beautifully produced trilingual book. This includes a perceptive essay from historian Henk de Smaele, who



Catwalk show of Antwerp's famous fashion school in 1967

not only puts the images into context but also meditates on how much they can tell us. His comments on the gaps and deceptions in the material are particularly interesting, from

the absence of Antwerp's Jewish community (even in a film on the diamond trade!) to the popularity of the "Roman salute" before it was adopted by the fascists. ♦

→ www.cinematek.be

LIER: AN UNDISCOVERED MINI-BRUGES

Nature, history and art, bundled up in a small mediaeval town near Antwerp

TEXT AND PHOTOS: MONIQUE PHILIPS

Lier is a laid back little town, where they've managed to find the perfect balance. They eat pies and drink beer by the litres, but equally enjoy shedding some weight afterward playing city golf or cycling along waterways and Unesco heritage.

The Grote Markt in Lier is currently undergoing a big makeover to accommodate the celebrations for the town's 800th anniversary in 2012; but don't let that stop you from visiting the town, just a few kilometres south-east of Antwerp.

For a city with a mere 33,000 inhabitants, Lier is densely packed with shops, cafés, history and parks, all bundled into a highly enjoyable package. The highlights are conveniently located within strolling distance of each other. A river runs through, making Lier a lovely place to live in and a favourite destination for small groups of friends looking for a chill-out weekend in a cosy setting.

Most noticeable in Lier is the water. Rivers surround the city like a moat, one stretch cutting right through the middle of town. Paths run along the two rivers Grote Nete and Kleine Nete, making for great cycling, while the former city walls have been revamped to create a five km circular park, De Vest, sporting yet another well-used walking and cycling path.

A great spot to take a breather is the former lock house, Het Spuihuisje. Spanning a bridge, you're invited to ride or walk through to get to the other side. A bit further up is a large wilderness area on the site of a former gasworks. To find such an expanse of forests and ponds, with exotic birds such as wading herons, within city walls in Flanders is unusual and fantastic. Unfortunately, the area is going to be the site of a new car park in the near future, as Lier is planning to expand its inner-city pedestrian zone.

Royal love

From the Spuihuisje, it is a hop and a skip to a more traditional beauty and history spot: the Aragon Bridge. Philip the Handsome had arranged to meet his future wife, Joanna of Castile and Aragon, here for the first time in 1496. They were supposed to get married the next day, in the process pairing Spain with the Low Countries. But the moment they laid eyes on each other, they couldn't wait and got married on the spot by a passing priest. In the meantime, crowds had gathered on the adjacent wooden bridge to catch a glimpse of the royal couple, leading to the inevitable: The bridge collapsed, and the onlookers tumbled into the river.

Broken limbs have been nurtured for centuries in the church of Lier's patron saint Gummarus, who became known for healing everything broken, even marriages. He is said to have tied his belt around the two halves of a felled tree, restoring it to life. To this day, local tradition dictates that every year around 11 October, a priest places the Saint Gummarus belt on the shoulders of pilgrims in need of repair.

The church, nicknamed De Pepperpot, would be a rather gloomy

place, if it weren't for its colourful and ancient stained glass windows. Outside, a series of odd looking gargoyle-like figures envelop the façade and look you straight in the eye. On Sundays, you can join a city tour and climb the tower, past its clockwork and bells, on your way to a panorama view of the city.

This is the part of town where cobbled streets lead off in every direction, each bringing architectural delights. While the towering gothic Sint-Gummarus church is on one side of the waterway that cuts through town, the Grote Markt, the central square, with its Unesco World Heritage belfry, lies on the other – a beautiful separation of church and state. Lier definitely has more than its fair share of churches, cloisters and monasteries.

Lierke Plezierke

But its people are not as ancient as its buildings. You don't have to go far to find the flourishing nightlife in Lier. Just off the Grote Markt with its many sunny terraces, you find the Eikelstraat, an alleyway lined on both sides with popular cafés and Lier's second Unesco World Heritage site, the 13th-century *begijnhof*, at the end. Once a refuge for poor women, it is now a tranquil and pretty maze of cobblestone streets. The enclosed area is only accessible through its gates. The small houses don't have numbers, but names. There is De Gestolen Live Vrouw, the stolen, sweet woman, or De Engelbewaarder, the guardian angel, who lives next door to Saint Alice and the Four Evangelists.

Next door to the *begijnhof* you can embark on a leisurely 40-minute boat trip up and down the river in former eel-fishing barges. Or you can cross the river once more and visit the Timmermans-Opsomerhouse Museum where you'll find out more about Lier's famous inhabitants. Most notable is Felix Timmermans, a prolific 20th-century writer-painter. He is best known for creating the character Pallieter (1916), an epicurean hero, who seized the day in every way he could. The people of Lier have adopted his catch phrase "Lierke Plezierke", which is not easily translatable but essentially suggests the people of Lier know how to have a good time.

And what a surprise to come eye to eye with a genuine Breughel. Most works of Flemish Renaissance painter Pieter Breughel the Elder have ended up in Vienna, but the city museum Wuyts-Van Campen & Baron Caroly has managed to hang on to "De Verkeerde Wereld", which Breughel painted in 1559 and depicts 16th-century rural life in 70 "Flemish Proverbs" (the English title of the painting). It doesn't matter how many cookie jars you've seen with Breughel's work on them, it is still a thrill to see the real thing.

Another world-famous artist on display here whose work you've undoubtedly seen, even if you might not have heard his name, is ornamental blacksmith Louis van Boeckel. He forged the gate that surrounds the White House in Washington.

A third museum that might tickle your fancy is De Kleine Wereld,

Holiday at home

If you've decided to forgo a big summer holiday this year, that doesn't mean you have to spend summer days at home on your concrete terrace. This month in Flanders Today, we'll show you the best places in Flanders to while away a week



The Small World, a doll museum, assembled by a mother and daughter, which showcases doll houses, once status symbols for the bourgeoisie. The Academy of Fine Arts in Lier, meanwhile, still teaches the traditional art of lace making.

According to legend, the city of Lier was once given the opportunity by John II, Duke of Brabant, to choose between a city university or a cattle market. Guess what the 13th-century *Lierenaars* chose? *Schapenkoppen* has remained the nickname for the inhabitants ever since – sheep heads.

Jane Bull, a relatively new *schapenkop*, sums up Lier pretty accurately: "On weekends, Lier is a lovely city to walk around in. I think people like it because it is something of a 'mini-Bruges' but still largely undiscovered by tourists."

Breughel could have painted a 71st proverb: Have your *Lierse* pie and eat it, too. ♦

➡ www.toerismelier.be



Water is everywhere in Lier, a little-known mediaeval town near Antwerp

From bugs to hot shots

The Little Gym offers gymnastics for children and their parents



Carlos Buchanan balances a toddler on the balance beam at the Antwerp branch of The Little Gym

DIANA ABIOL

Driving on the E17 from Ghent to Antwerp at 8.30 on a Wednesday morning is not exactly my idea of fun, but I had good reason: My 22-month-old son had an appointment at the gym, and I was not allowed to be late. We were off to explore The Little Gym, a child development concept first created in 1976 by South African Robin Wes.

What immediately struck me on arrival at the modern and colourful building was that everyone was having *so* much fun. The little ones were all stimulated and excited, the staff were very smiley, and the parents were either happily engaged in the activities or sitting back having coffee in the reception area, watching their kids enjoy themselves.

But the one person who might have been having the most fun was Carlos Buchanan, the director. His energy and enthusiasm had all eight little toddlers totally engaged as he conducted the “exploration section” of the class “Beasts and Super Beasts”, in which my son and I were booked.

During our 45-minute session, Buchanan had the children focussed on exploring the gymnastic equipment, including a spring board, balance beam and soft climbing frame. The group was for toddlers aged 19 to 36 months, and the parents were all encouraged to participate. Each activity lasted for around 10 minutes before changing to something new, such as ball throwing and catching or bubble chasing.

The group we joined was well into its 22-week programme. But gate-crashers like us are also welcome at The Little Gym, whose policy is to let everyone try out one free class. “We are very happy if people come and have a try because that way, they get to experience firsthand the safe and nurturing environment we provide,” explains Buchanan. “We don’t offer single classes. Members need to sign up for a full semester, because it is an age-specific curriculum with weekly lessons, each aimed at mastering something new.”

The Little Gym now has 300 centres worldwide, and the Antwerp location is the seventh to open in Belgium. The weekly sessions are split into age groups, from Bugs (four to 10 months), Birds (10-18 months), Beasts and Super Beasts (19-36 months), Funny Bugs (three to four years), Giggle Worms (four to six years) and Flips and Hot Shots (six to 12 years). The concept is simple and based around

gymnastics. But what makes The Little Gym special is its focus on developing a child’s mind through new experiences. The children remain motivated through a mixture of co-ordination, balance, flexibility and listening. I was really impressed with how my son was immediately drawn into the group and encouraged to line up and take his turn to try the spring board. He even did his first-ever somersault with the help of Carlos.

I have been searching for somewhere to take my son where he has the freedom to play, try new things and be encouraged to experiment, but in a safe environment. The Little Gym is certainly the right place. “It is about education and experience,” explains Buchanan, who has been working at The Little Gym for seven years now. “We teach the same method in all our centres. It is meant to bring children and parents together through experience and play, and to stimulate their imagination and confidence. Parents love to be able to share play time with their kids; to see their reaction is really great.”

Local mum Jane brings her two daughters every week and says that she has seen a big difference in their confidence. “I wanted to do something together with my children that was stimulating for their minds and active at the same time. I think it is very important for their development,” she says.

The Little Gym also organises Summer Camps for children aged three to 10 years. The programme is designed to stimulate physical and locomotive development and provides a wide range of activities with a different theme every week. The camps run from Monday to Friday, and children can come either all day or just for a morning or an afternoon session. There are plans to open more centres in Belgium and I am pleased to see that Ghent is next on the list. No more early morning trips on the E17 for us. ♦

➔ www.thelittlegym.be

Special offer

The Little Gym is offering readers of *Flanders Today* a special offer: Book three camp sessions and get the fourth for free. Contact Carlos Buchanan on 03.889.94.44.

© Diana Abiol



Het Spuihuisje, a former lock house perched on top of a bridge



The people from Lier are also known as *schapenkoppen*, or sheep heads

WHAT TO SEE

- De Begijnhof**, a Unesco-recognised, 13th-century, inner-city courtyard, where houses have names, not numbers
- De Grote Markt**, the town’s central square, with its Unesco-recognised belfry
- Breughel painting** “De Verkeerde Wereld” at the city museum
- Church of Sint-Gummarus**, with a tower offering a panorama view of the city
- Academy of Fine Arts**, where they teach the traditional art of lace making

WHERE TO EAT

The young chefs of Lier have created a wonderfully tasty pallet of modern dishes using local products and beers. There are several top restaurants, but to have a simple sturdy sandwich or snack, head to the quiet corner near the Zimmertoren, a tower in the centre of town with a cosmic clockwork, or to Zuster Agnes, an honest bistro with a sunny terrace.

WHAT TO DRINK

The local beer Caves

WHEN TO GO

On weekends. Talk to the tourist office about their bike rental options or take a boat ride. There is a food market every Saturday.

GLOSSARY

- Liers Vlaaike**: local herbal cup cake
- Hoppas**: goodies to go with a local beer
- Kak van Maria**: candy apple
- Bier pallet**: a selection of three local beers

travelling in Flanders



A warm welcome to Belgium!

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putting people first



Illustration from *Het circus van Dottore Fausto*, a winner in the youth book category

Beauty and the book BEST DESIGNED BOOKS

REBECCA BENOOT

Formerly known as the Plantin-Moretus Prize, De Best Vormgegeven Boeken (Best Designed Books), is awarded to graphic designers, illustrators and typographers for turning a simple text into a seductive thing of beauty. In this digital age when books are slowly moving towards extinction, design has become ever-more important. No screen, no matter how ingenious the device, can ever match the timeless and tactile qualities of a book filled with intricate drawings and detail. That said, if books want to live on as objects, they'll have to make an effort. And book design in Flanders has, really starting to boom this past decade with a focus not only on graphic design but also on typography and format. Though it has a new name, the prize is inspired by the two men (Christoffel Plantin and Jan Moretus) who were responsible for putting Flemish printing on the map by creating some of the most exquisite books in the world during the 16th century. Best Designed Books wants to show that every kind of book is able to combine form and content into an object that is a joy to see, to own and, of course, to read. Awards are handed out in eight categories:

literature, schoolbooks, art and museum catalogues, photography, business and science, special interest, children and young people and a debut prize to reward up-and-coming talent. Some categories have more than one winner, and this year 18 prizes were handed out, all of which are now part of a small exhibition in Ghent's Design Museum. Before leafing through the winning books in the old part of the museum (which is a stunning example of 18th-century Flemish architecture), you can watch a short film in which the winners explain the concept behind their designs. Highlights include *In stukken* (In Pieces), a collection of Eric de Volder's plays. Only 500 copies were printed, all signed by de Volder, who died shortly after the book was published. Stan van Steendam rightfully deserved this award for the design of this collector's item in which each play is presented in a completely unique layout and font, to lend atmosphere to the specific content.

The judges were also unanimous when it came to *Gal*, *Een halve eeuw op het scherp van de snee* (*Gal: Half a Century on the Cutting Edge*) designed by Filip Coopman, a vibrant

retrospective of Flemish political cartoonist and commentator Gerard Alsteens (better known as Gal). Severien van Dam finally, was awarded the Debut Prize for her graduation project *Van de Vos Reynaerde en andere teksten* (*Reynaerde the Fox and Other Texts*), a collection of five mediaeval Flemish stories turned into contemporary paperbacks and presented in a playful box-set. The contest also has the ever-popular Public's Choice Award for best book cover. This year's winner was *Brooddoos, een verhaal in veertien sneetjes* (*Lunchbox: A Story in Fourteen Slices*). Designer Katleen Miller made Dimitri Leue's story about bullying this season's must have children's book. The luxury edition is in the form of a lunchbox that contains not just the winning book, but two more. Part of Miller's prize is the chance to design a stamp for bpost, which will appear in 2013. ♦

Until 13 June

Design Museum Ghent
Jan Breydelstraat 5

→ www.design.museum.gent.be

MORE BOOKS ON SHOW THIS WEEK

Soldier's Letters → *Het Letterenhuis, Antwerp* →

Illustrator Leo Timmers → *Literary Museum, Hasselt*

The Michel Wittock Fund → *Wittockiana Library, Brussels*



Antwerp

Sportpaleis

Schijnpoortweg 119; 070.345.345
www.sportpaleis.be
JUN 4 Neil Diamond

Trix

Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00
www.trixonline.be
JUN 2 20.00 Frantic Flinstones + Hellsonics
JUN 3 20.00 Mayday Parade + Versaemerge + Not Advised
JUN 9 20.00 Danzig

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24
www.abconcerts.be
JUN 4 20.00 Public Image Ltd
JUN 5 20.00 The Sonics + Thee Oh Sees + Chain & The Gang + Rock Ahoy Party

Beursschouwburg

August Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50
www.beursschouwburg.be
JUN 3 21.00 The Sea + The Beautiful Band
JUN 4 21.00 The Rott Childs + Electric) noise(machine

Café Central

Borgval 14; 0486.72.26.24
www.lecafecentral.com
JUN 2 21.00 Brian Wolff - A Boy and His Tuba
JUN 6 21.00 Fujako + HHY and The Macumbas
JUN 7 21.00 Jozef Dumoulin + Lidlboj

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89
www.fuse.be
JUN 1 23.00 Dave Angel + Mark Broom + Steve Cop
JUN 4 23.00 Raph & Naïf

Koninklijk Circus

Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15
www.cirque-royal.org
JUN 7 20.00 Haris Alexiou

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
www.botanique.be
Concerts at 20.00:
JUN 1 Last day of Les Nuits de Botanique
2011 pop/rock festival **JUN 2** Katy B **JUN 3** Ours + (sold out) Moby **JUN 4** Catherine Ringer **JUN 6** Emily Jane White + Scarlett O'Hanna **JUN 7** Mathilde Renault **JUN 8** The Cave Singers + Bachelorette

Magasin 4

Havenlaan 51B; 02.223.34.74
www.magasin4.be
JUN 3 20.00 Civet + The Agitators + The Alleyways, more

Piola Libri

Franklinstraat 66-68; 02.736.93.91
www.piolalibri.be
JUN 8 19.00 Another Belgian Band

Recyclart

Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34
www.recyclart.be
JUN 1 21.00 Les Poubelles

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Rousseaulaan 208; 0900.00.991
www.forestnational.be
JUN 2 20.00 Yusuf (Cat Stevens)
JUN 9 20.00 Katie Melua

Ghent

Charlatan

Vlasmarkt 6; 09.224.24.57
www.charlatan.be
JUN 1 20.00 Crystal Stilts + Too Tangled

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
JUN 1 22.00 Zebedeus, new wave classic party
JUN 9 21.00 The Raveonettes + Giana Factory

Kortrijk

De Kreun

Conservatoriumplein 1; 056.37.06.44
www.dekreun.be
JUN 2 22.00 Gaslamp Killer + Illum Sphere + Mate & Fudge, more

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

Wu-Tang Clan

29 June, 19.30

Vooruit, Ghent

Remember the Wu-Tang Clan? The highly influential hip-hop group of no less than nine 20-somethings from New York who rocked the scene in the early '90s with their scruffy sound and audio samples from martial arts films, is back with a new, aptly called "Rebirth Tour". Let's see if the now 40-somethings are as rugged and wild as before.



→ www.vooruit.be

Sint-Niklaas

OJC Kompas

Driekoningenstraat 48; 03.776.72.70
www.ojckompas.be
JUN 3 21.00 The Exploding Boy + SX (Beati Mortui & Duister Gefluister)



Bruges

Stadsschouwburg

Vlamingstraat 29; 050.44.30.60
www.ccbrugge.be
JUN 1 19.30 Dhafer Youssef Quartet

Brussels

Art Base

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20
www.art-base.be
JUN 5 18.00 Kurta Environment

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
www.botanique.be
JUN 7 20.00 Mathilde Renault Solo

Le Cercle des Voyageurs

Lievevroubroersstraat 18; 02.514.39.49
www.lecercledesvoyageurs.com
JUN 7 19.30 Ivan Paduart Solo

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50
www.soundsjazzclub.be
Concerts at 22.00:
JUN 2 Marc Lelange & The Heavy Muffuletta's **JUN 3-4** Bruno Castellucci Quartet **JUN 6** Master Session Michael Bass **JUN 7** Borderline Quartet

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusicvillage.com
JUN 2 20.30 Sergio Lemos et Goiabada **JUN 3-4** 21.00 Denise King **JUN 7** 20.30 Fatik Trio **JUN 8** 20.30 Wawaron Quartet

Théâtre Molière

Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00
www.muziekpublieke.be
JUN 8 20.00 Hazmat Modine

Ghent

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
JUN 3 21.00 Owiny Sigoma Band + Gilles Peterson

Agenda



Bruges

Concertgebouw

‘t Zand 34; 050.44.30.60
www.emmylouharris.com
JUN 2 20.00 Emmylou Harris and her Red Dirt Boys

Brussels

Art Base

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20
www.art-base.be
JUN 3 20.00 Lámekân (Turkey)
JUN 4 20.00 Sofia Tassara, tango Argentino
JUN 9 20.00 Kawa Brothers (Rajasthan)

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
JUN 3 20.00 Sami Yusuf J

Sazz'n Jazz

Koningsstraat 241; 0475.78.23.78
www.sazznjazz.be
JUN 2 18.00 Zade

Tour & Taxis

Havenlaan 86C; 070.660.601
www.ticketnet.be
JUN 3 21.00 Nicola Testa

Ghent

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
JUN 4 20.00 De Basboot
JUN 8 20.00 Wye Oak



Antwerp

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28
www.desingel.be
JUN 5 20.00 Vlaamse Opera Symphony Orchestra conducted by Dmitri Jurowski: gala concert with the six laureates of this year's Queen Elisabeth singing competition

Bruges

Concertgebouw

‘t Zand 34; 070.22.33.02
www.concertgebouw.be
JUN 1 20.00 Huelgas Ensemble conducted by Paul Van Nevel: Perotinus, Leoninus
JUN 3-5 Hölderlin weekend: lectures and concerts devoted to the music of Beethoven, Schumann, Helmut Lachenmann, Luigi Nono and the works of 19th-century poet and philosopher Friedrich Hölderlin

Brussels

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00
www.bozar.be
JUN 4 20.00 Thomas Hampson, baritone: Mahler
JUN 4 20.00 Gundecha Brothers, dhrupad Indian classical vocalists
JUN 5 11.00 Camille Thomas, cello; Beatrice Berrut, piano: Joseph Jongen, Beethoven, more

Chapelle de Linthout

Oude Lindelaan 2; 0477.65.65.01
www.laudantes.com
JUN 9 20.30 Laudantes Consort conducted by Guy Janssens: Cristobal de Morales, Thomas Tallis

Espace Senghor

Waverssesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40
www.senghor.be
JUN 5 11.30 Focus: Stephan Dunkelman

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20
www.flagey.be
JUN 5 11.00 Ensemble Oxalys: Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf. 14.00 Belgian National Orchestra conducted by Kwamé Ryan with Lorenzo Gatto, violin; Lise Berthaud, viola: Beethoven, Mozart

Ghent

De Bijloke

Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2; 09.269.92.92
www.debijloke.be
JUN 4 20.00 Vlaamse Opera Symphony Orchestra conducted by Dmitri Jurowski: gala concert with the six laureates of this year's Queen Elisabeth singing competition



Antwerp

Vlaamse Opera

Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02
www.vlaamseopera.be
Until 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)



Brussels

Kaaistudio's

Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat 81; 02.201.59.59
www.kaaitheater.be
JUN 9-10 20.30 Solid Gold and Jolie, choreographed by Ula Sickle

Kaaitheater

Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59
www.kaaitheater.be
JUN 3-4 20.30 Neige, choreographed by Michèle Anne De Mey

Ghent

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060
www.vooruit.be
JUN 3-4 20.00 Cirque Composé
JUN 7-11 20.00 Company Vertical Road, choreographed by Akram Khan



Antwerp

La Riva Nightclub

Londenstraat 52; 03.225.01.02
www.lariva.be
JUN 5 19.00 Croisière! Welcome Aboard For A Teasing Journey, burlesque dinner show

Toneelhuis/Bourla

Komedieplaats 18; 03.224.88.44
www.toneelhuis.be
Until 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

KVS Bol

Lakensstraat 146; 02.210.11.12
www.kvs.be
JUN 7-16 20.30 Weg by Josse De Pauw (in Dutch)

Théâtre les Tanneurs

Huidevettersstraat 75; 02.512.17.84
www.lestanneurs.be
JUN 3-4 18.30/20.30 Groupenfonctione in We Can Be Heroes, collective musical performance at Vossenplein



Aalst

Network Centrum for Hedendaagse Kunst

Houtkaai; 053.70.97.73
www.network-art.be
Until JUN 19 Sander Buyck: West Bank Walls, photos of Palestine by the Flemish photographer

Antwerp

Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)

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

Koningin Fabiolazaal

Jezusstraat 28; 03.203.42.04
www.provant.be
Until JAN 8 2012 The Moderns, top pieces from the Royal Museum of Fine Arts (KMSKA), including works by Emile Claus, James Ensor and Marc Chagall

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
Until 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

Photo Museum (FoMu)

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

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

Hooftvunderlei 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

Blankenberge

Belle Epoque Centrum

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

Bruges

Raakpunt

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

Stadshallen

Markt 7; 050.44.82.82
www.ccbrugge.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

DON'T MISS

Polymor Films

3-17 June

Bozar, Brussels



Bozar gives *carte blanche* to Brussels-based film collective Polymor, which presents the diverse work of its members and a special evening devoted to Flemish director Laurent Van Lancker (*Surya, From Eloquence to Dawn*). Most films are spoken or subtitled in English.

→ www.bozar.be

www.argosarts.org

Until JUN 18 What Will Come, videos and installations by contemporary Spanish artist Jordi Colomer
Until JUN 18 Mise en abîme: 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 Antwerp-based artist

art)&(marges

Hoogstraat 312-314; 02.511.34.20
www.artsetmarges.be
Until JUN 5 Mad about Hungary, drawings by patients from Pécs psychiatric institution

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

Belgian Comic Strip Centre

Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80
www.stripmuseum.be
Until OCT 2 The Publiart Adventure, comic strip in advertising

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 Vanesch: Junctions, work by the Belgian photographer alongside select work from Antwerp's Photo Museum
Until SEP 4 51N4E: Double or Nothing, sketches by the Brussels architecture firm
Until SEP 11 Jeff Wall: The Crooked Path, works by the Canadian photographer together with prose responding to the work
JUN 8-SEP 11 Young Belgian Painters Award 2011, works by the 10 finalists in the prestigious art competition with awards ceremony on 8 June

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
JUN 8-SEP 25 Le Baroque Dévoilé, a new way of looking at sculpture in Brussels and Belgium, by various artists

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 Elektriciteitscentrale

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

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 influential 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, work by the Catalan artist

ISELP

Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70
www.iselp.be
Until JUL 9 Laurence Dervaux, installations by the Belgian artist

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
www.mjb-jmb.org
Until AUG 28 After Images, multidisciplinary show by contemporary American artists

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
www.botanique.be
JUN 8-AUG 14 Sarah Moon: Coincidences, photos by the British fashion photographer and filmmaker

Marc Sleen Museum

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

Royal Museum of the Armed Forces

Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33
www.legermuseum.be
Until SEP 4 1945-2002: Belgian soldiers in Germany, rare photographs documenting 60 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries
Until OCT 16 War&Game(s), photographs by Virginie Cornet and toys from the period of the First World War

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11
www.fine-arts-museum.be
Until JUN 5 Walter Leblanc, kinetic and optical works by the late Flemish artist
Until JUN 26 A selection of the most important artworks from the 19th- and 20th-century collection, including Salvador Dalí, 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

LISA BRADSHAW



Millennium Film Festival 8-14 June

Flagey & Vendôme, Brussels

The year 2015 must have seemed so far away at the dawn of the 21st century. The Millennium International Documentary Film Festival does much to show the extent of progress made on the UN's eight Millennium Development Goals, which concern global issues such as climate change, women's rights, poverty and education, and were intended to be reached just four short years from now.

The festival kicks off with *Todos Vós Sodes Capitáns (You Are All Captains)*, a 2010 Cannes FIPRESCI prize winner, in which a Spanish director living in Tangiers attempts to document a group of schoolchildren, who turn the tables in sometimes-uncomfortable, often amusing ways.

Also on the bill is *Sanya & Sparrow*, a sympathetic look at the lives of two quarry workers in Russia; *Méodies en sous-sol*, a Belgian film about immigrants who play music in Brussels metro stations; and *Human Terrain*, a two-pronged documentary that explores the American military's recent adaptation of cultural awareness in counter-insurgency strategies and one academic's recruitment into the "Human Terrain" programme. The festival also includes conferences and a series devoted to the work of Dutch documentarian Johan van der Keuken. Subtitles vary, so check listings.

→ www.festivalmillenium.org

Sint-Gorikshallen

Sint-Goriksplein 23; 02.502.44.24
www.sintgorikshallen.be
JUN 3-29 Bruxelles Urbanitude, photos of urban landscapes in Brussels by Alain Trelu

Tour & Taxis

Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49
www.tour-taxis.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
JUN 8-19 Ivan Good, paintings of Ostend by the Flemish artist

Villa Empain

Franklin Rooseveltlaan 67; 02.627.52.30
www.villaempain.com
Until SEP 25 Of Women's Modesty and Anger; rituals, wigs, clothing, make-up and more constraints that determined the life of women for centuries

WIELS

Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.340.00.50
www.wiels.org
Until AUG 14 Charlotte Beaudry: Get Drunk, paintings, drawings and videos by the Brussels-based artist
Until AUG 14 Nasreen Mohamedi: 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
Scheepenhuisstraat 17; 0495.50.96.86
www.angels-ghosts.com
Until JUN 4 Moby: Destroyed, photographs of life on the road 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

Dr Guislain Museum

Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95
www.museumdrguislain.be
JUN 2-SEP 4 In the Margin: Belgian Documentary Photography; work that documents the deviant, the extraordinary, the unnoticed, the 'other'

Museum of Contemporary Art (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03
www.smak.be
Until JUN 5 Joy and Disaster, work by contemporary Hungarian artists
Until JUN 5 Carlos Rodríguez-Méndez: Agua Caliente (Hot Water), gigantic minimalist sculpture by the Spanish artist
Until JUN 5 MARCEL: The Marcel Broodthaers Room, work by the late Belgian artist
Until JUL 3 Michaël Sailstorfer: Raum und Zeit (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 theatre maker and artist

Kemzeke

Verbeke Foundation
Westakker; 03.789.22.07
www.verbekefoundation.com
Until JUN 12 Tom Woestenborghs: Salvation Can Be Found in the Illusion of Involvement, installations, prints and drawings by the Flemish artist

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

Mechelen

Exhibition Halls
Minderbroedersgang 5; 015.29.40.00
www.cultuurcentrummechelen.be
Until JUN 5 Jan Dibbets 3X, photographs of conceptual works by the Dutch artist (also in Knokke-Heist at www.whiteoutstudio.be)

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 Omswervingen (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 Balaji & 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



Bruges

The Procession of the Holy Blood: Unesco-recognised procession in honour of the blood of Christ
JUN 2 14.30 across Bruges
www.holyblood.com

Brussels

APWA Charity Bazaar: Asia Pacific Women's Association annual bazaar featuring regional cooking, crafts, gifts and entertainment, plus tombola prizes. Allproceeds go to charities in Indonesia, the South Pacific and Belgium
JUN 4 10.30-17.00 at Woluwe Cultural Centre, Charles Thielemanslaan
02.673.80.07, www.embassyofpakistan.be

Ommegang Sunday: Charles V and his court are back for a family day in Renaissance Brussels, featuring the annual Ommegang parade and pageant in the Grote Markt, plus a day of crafts, music, dance and games. The parade and pageant is staged again on **JUN 7**
JUN 5 10.00-18.00 at Coudenberg Palace, Paleizenplein 7
070.22.04.92, www.coudenberg.com

D Festival: Formerly Danse Balsa Marni, a contemporary dance and performance festival
Until JUN 23 at Théâtre Marni, Vergniestraat 25
02.639.09.81, www.theatremarni.com

Falcons for Everyone: Discover the peregrine falcons roosting atop the Cathedral of St Michael and St Gudula as they learn to fly, 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

Polymor Films: Four evenings of poetic and political film screenings, featuring four documentary premiers, all by the Brussels-based film collective
JUNE 3-17 20.00 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23
www.polymorfilms.be

Pot Belge: Bilingual poetry evening with francophone and Dutch-speaking writers, including Vincent Tholomé, Pascal Lederq, Andy Fierens and Michaël Vandenbril, presented by Antoine Boute
JUN 8 20.00 at Passa Porta, Antoine Dansaertstraat 46
02.226.04.54, www.passaporta.be

Stoemp!: Series of free live concerts in cafés across Brussels
Until JUN 7
www.stoemply.be
Ghent
Radio Ultra Modern: Electronic swing dance party
JUN 4 20.15 at Handelsbeurs, Kouter 29
09.265.91.65, www.radiomodern.be

Huizingen

Woefdag: Fourth annual event for dog lovers featuring demonstrations by police dogs, special breed clubs and pre-selections for the Euro Dog Show in November
JUN 2 14.30 at Provinciaal Domein Huizingen
www.woef.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

Meise

Ikebana workshops: Japanese flower arrangement
JUN 2-5 14.00 at National Botanic Garden of Belgium, Nieuwelaan 38
02.260.09.20, www.plantentuinmeise.be

DUSK 'TIL DAWN

KATRIEN LINDEMANS



CeleGayTion

4 June

Ethias Arena, Hasselt

Get set for the biggest gay party of the year. Queers and their friends are invited to party all night long and witness the honouring of the first male and female "gay icon of the year".

The DJ line-up promises a night of commercial dance fun. A bit of '90s glam onstage, with the American Robin S. You'll remember her from her big hit "Show Me Love", very applicable to the event. DJ F.R.A.N.K, the man behind "Summer Jam" will be there, too, with some of his older hits and his latest tune "Discotex".

Les Frères Gaultier, meanwhile, love all things decadent and luxurious. When they're behind the decks, expect some forgotten oldies from the '80s and '90s, disco nouveau and R&B. Flemish DJ Sven Van Hees will balance out the evening with his special blend of lounge and groove. There will also be a few surprise acts and live go-go dancers (natch).

But CeleGayTion doesn't want to be just a big commercial event. That's why the organisers teamed up with non-profit initiative Wel Jong, Niet Hetero (Young and Not Hetero). Together they've launched the election of the first male and female gay icon of the year. The nominees are queer Flemish celebrities: red-carpet reporter Showbizz Bart, writer Bart Moeyaert, *Idool* contestant Falko De Bolster, singer-actor Timo Descamps, singer Bart Kaëll, actress Truus Druyts, radio presenters Alexandra Potvin (JOE FM) and Karolien Debecker (MNM) and chef Yanaïka Skrzyszowskiak. Cast your vote via

→ www.weljongniethetero.be

The doors to CeleGayTion open at 22.00, and the dress code is "stylish". To get into the mood, visit the iTunes website and download the theme song "You Make Me Feel Good", specially made for the event by DJ Gaylliano. Tickets are €37.50 from Free Record Shop.

→ www.celegaytion.com

bite

ROBYN BOYLE

Strawberries

Fruit is not something I go out of my way to find. Unless, of course, we're talking about strawberries – the oh-so-pretty, shiny red berries that smell almost as good as they taste and send juice dripping down your arm when perfectly ripe. For strawberries, I'll slam on the brakes at the first sight of a stand or vending machine alongside the road. Or pull on my hiking shoes to go in search of the nearest sign that reads: "Aardbeien te koop".

Strawberries this year are easier – and cheaper – to find than usual

Strawberry season got an early start this spring, encouraged by the remarkably warm weather, which is also responsible for the fruit being extra sweet. As a result, there is an over-abundance of the crop, meaning it is easier – and cheaper – to find than usual. A

Contact Bite at flandersbite@gmail.com

standard case holding about 25 large strawberries costs on average €2. In years past, with less favourable weather, one could expect to pay as much as €12 for a case, giving strawberries a reputation as a luxury product.

This year, however, strawberries are everywhere. And their versatility makes it easy to incorporate them into so many meals. For breakfast, try slicing a few strawberries on top of French toast or mix them into a bowl of cottage cheese or creamy yoghurt. Add the berries to a spinach salad for a healthy lunch. When it's time for an aperitif, surprise guests with a blended strawberry cocktail. Dessert options are endless with things like strawberry pie, soufflé, sorbet and the classic favourite: chocolate-covered strawberries.

A little history...

The strawberry goes back some 50 million years to the time of the Bronze age, but it wasn't until the 14th century that people took them from the wild to plant in their gardens,

though mostly for medicinal or decorative purposes. The strawberry has American roots. About 250 years ago, French explorer Amédée-François Frézier brought back specimens from Chile and crossed them with plants from the US state of Virginia and European plants to create the big, juicy strawberries we know today.

Strawberry happenings

Melsele (Beveren), East Flanders: Aardbeifeesten, Flanders' biggest strawberry festival has been running since 1963. 1-6 June

→ www.aardbeifeesten.be

Landegem (Nevele), East Flanders: Die Soete Beese, folk festival around the strawberry since 1966. 5 June, 8.00-15.00

→ <http://tinyurl.com/Soetebeese>

Hoogstraten, Antwerp province: Aardbeienwandeling, 6 km walk through the strawberry fields of the lovely little town. 7 August, 14.00

→ www.hoogstraten.be



© Robyn Boyle

TALKING SPORTS

LEO CENDROWICZ

Belgium's big night

For football's national side, there has not been a night like this for almost a decade, when Belgium beat the Czech Republic in a play-off to secure a place in the 2002 World Cup. Since then, the Red Devils have not come near to qualifying for a major tournament.

But on 3 June in Brussels, Belgium plays Turkey in a make-or-break qualifier for the Poland/Ukraine Euro 2012, which could put them back on the big stage. And, make no mistake, Flanders' players are driving the Belgian revival.

Indeed, Belgium is going through a remarkable transformation, mainly thanks to its sharp youth. They reached the semi-finals of the European Under-21 Championship in 2007 and the semis of the Beijing Olympics the year after. Now the youngsters are making their mark on the senior squad, managed by Limburger Georges Leekens, and it includes rising Flemish stars like Anderlecht's 18-year-old prodigy Romelu Lukaku, Racing Genk's 22-year-old marksman Jelle Vossen, Arsenal's 25-year-old Thomas Vermaelen and Manchester City's 25-year-old defender Vincent Kompany.

Fulham's Moussa Dembele, 23; Twente striker Nacer Chadli, 21; and Genk's Marvin Ogunjimi, 23, are also currently breaking into the side.

Belgium is unbeaten in four Group A fixtures since losing a 3-2 thriller in Istanbul in September and will be looking to extend the sequence when Turkey arrive in Brussels. If they can, it could mean playing at the Euro 2012 finals a year from now and then, who knows? They have the potential to surpass their predecessors in 1980, who reached the final of the Euros that year.



© Charles Platiau / REUTERS

Clijsters' shock exit

Since winning the Australian Open in January, injuries have blighted Kim Clijsters' season, including a wedding party dance-floor sprain. But a second round French Open defeat last week to unfancied 20-year-old Dutch player Arantxa Rus was still a shock, as Clijsters (pictured) came into Paris with a 15-match winning streak in Grand Slams.

Hampered by a heavily strapped ankle and from not having played on clay all year, Clijsters' movement – one of her great assets – seemed compromised, but she insisted afterwards that her ankle felt fine. "It had nothing to do with it," she said, before making an unusual admission: "I started doubting myself a bit, and that's the wrong attitude to have, especially on clay."

This is Clijsters' earliest ever exit from Roland Garros since her debut in 2000. If she is ever to win Paris – and she reached the final in 2001 and 2003 – she will have to recover dramatically next year, which is set to be the year she retires.

THE LAST WORD...

Wake up call

"Why has God allowed it to go so far? We ask ourselves the same question. But it's up to the Lord to decide how and when he reacts."

A group of Catholic Charismatics met in Koekelberg to pray for the future of the country

Holidays in Spain?

"Van Eyck painted things in perfect detail. He must have seen that fruit somewhere."

Dirk Huylebrouck of Sint-Lucas art school has confirmed that the fruit held by Eve in "The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb" altarpiece is the citrus fruit called Limonium pomum Adami

No reason to panic

"I don't want to minimise the situation, but the Grimsvötn has erupted three times since 1996, without anyone even noticing."

Brussels Airport spokesperson Jan Van der Cruyssen puts the latest Icelandic ash cloud into perspective

Ulti-meat-um

"Morrissey has the right to be a vegetarian, but the people of Lokeren also have the right to their delicious Lokerse horse-flesh sausage."

Filip Anthuenis, mayor of Lokeren, on news that alternative rock legend Morrissey will only appear at the Lokerse Feesten festival if all food served is vegetarian

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #183

Feature

As our business page indicated this week, more young people are interested in humanities than in the service sector when it comes to education. The Flemish government is planning a thorough review of arts education in Flanders, and we'll tell you what that means for music and arts academies

Arts

The much-anticipated Museum Prize is almost upon us, with Ghent enjoying a whopping three nominations out of five in Flanders. We'll tell you which institutions won and why

Living

Next up in our Travelling in Flanders series: Sint-Truiden, the jewel of Limburg province