

Microsoft in Flanders New research centre on e-health

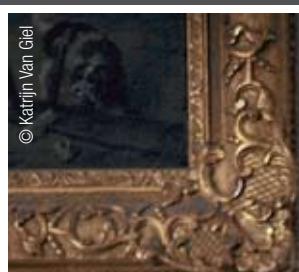
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Peter Swinnen The Flemish government's very own architect

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Reviving the romance

How one remarkable collection is changing how we see the history of art in the low countries

LISA BRADSHAW

“Sometimes it was very philosophical and emotional. But it was also often just a range of anecdotes about old times. It was instantly successful.” Jef Rademakers is talking about the 1970s television show he developed called *Klasgenoten* (*Classmates*). But he could be talking about the obsession for which he left television, moved to another country and changed his entire life: painting of the Romantic period. In what is a remarkable and unexpected story, Rademakers’ collection of romantic art from the Netherlands and Belgium – a period that had been swept under the rug by both collectors and curators – has become a sensation. Seventy of his 100 pieces are now on show at the M Museum in Leuven in an exhibition titled *A Romantic View: The Rademakers Collection*.

Rademakers (pictured) is Dutch but moved to Brasschaat, Antwerp province, 20 years ago to make his break from his life’s work as complete physically as it was mentally. In his time as a director and producer, he worked on more than 1,000 TV programmes. After two decades in the business, “I was fed up,” he tells me. He started, he says, “as a sort of artist,” who, like all artists, “wanted to share my feelings with the world.”

It was the late 1960s, when TV was “much more experimental,” says Rademakers, “and I just wanted to get my ideas on television. But it really changed. It has become not so much an artistic medium

as a money-making medium. And I didn’t like that anymore.”

Klasgenoten, in which a Dutch celebrity is reunited with classmates from long ago, is still running in the Netherlands. Rademakers’ production company sold the format to several European countries; there was also a Flemish version for many years.

“It made me rich,” says Rademakers, matter of factly. And that gave him the freedom to leave it all behind for something entirely different.

Falling in love with romanticism

The Romantic period of art, from the late 18th century through to about 1870, is typified by humans’ relationship with nature and with each other, by commoners rather than kings and by religious themes more about architecture and patrons than about angels and crucifixion. Having won its revolution in 1830, much of the new state of Belgium’s romance painting depicted important historical moments both before and after independence.

But it’s the former that appealed most to Rademakers – the often humorous social scenes and idyllic landscapes that have in fact been shunned by art history as simplistic and in poor taste. Although the works were very popular in their time, it seems that for future academics and critics, the precise realism of Neoclassicism was a tough act to follow.

► *continued on page 5*

Hard times for butterflies

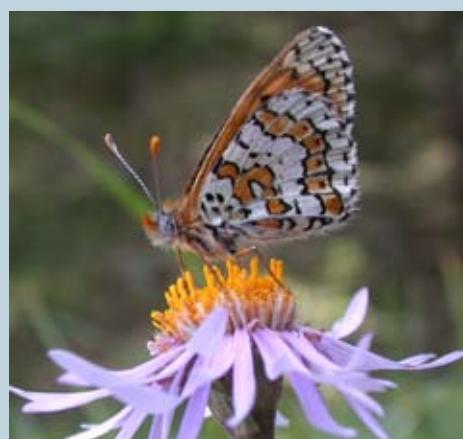
Two out of three of the butterfly species which existed in Flanders at the beginning of the 20th century have since disappeared, according to a study by the Institute for Nature and Forestry Research (INBO).

One hundred years ago Flanders had 67 native species, of which 19 have disappeared, and 25 more are under threat. The main causes are fertiliser and pesticide use, the disappearance of many species of flowers, and the increasing fragmentation of the landscape.

The study was based on data collected between 1830 and 2010, with the majority of recent information from volunteers who report their sightings –

not limited to butterflies – to the website www.waarnemingen.be. “With the help of this treasure-trove of information, we can not only see which species are currently present in Flanders, but also how their spread in the last ten years has changed, two important criteria in determining the chances of a species surviving,” a spokesman for the INBO said.

Comparison with the last survey in 1999 shows the negative trend is well-established: Four species died out between 1999 and 2003, and 12 species are worse off. “It is not for nothing that they call the Low Countries the most butterfly-unfriendly region in Europe,” the INBO said.



The Glanville Fritillary (*Melitaea cinxia*) is one of the vanished species

Crisis, again

Flemish nationalists dismiss proposal for government formation

ALAN HOPE

Unforgiveable, unacceptable, False, exaggerated, a caricature, lies and omissions. To judge by the cascade of reactions to the latest proposals for government negotiations, 13 months without a government have not softened the parties’ attitudes towards each other. With the eyes of the world upon Belgium, including those of the all-important credit rating agencies, the situation now looks as intractable as it ever did.

As reported last week, French-speaking socialist party leader Elio Di Rupo, appointed as *formateur* by the King to look for grounds for negotiation, presented a 100-page document that was more like a government programme than a discussion document. It covered five main areas of reform: budget, state reform, social affairs, regional financing and a number of miscellaneous provisions.

► *continued on page 3*

FACE OF FLANDERS



ALAN HOPE

Yves Desmet

It's not difficult to have an opinion, as any pub philosopher or Facebook denizen will prove. The trick for the professionally opinionated is to have a reasoned opinion day after day, on so many different subjects.

Yves Desmet is one of the best in the opinion game: He's been doing it in Flemish daily *De Morgen* since 2006, prior to which he was their political editor, prior to which the editor-in-chief from 1994 to 2001. Now he's about to bring his opinions to the table – literally – as one of the new judges on the next series of *Mijn Restaurant!*, which begins on VTM in the autumn. It's a formidable task. The three previous seasons of the reality show, in which aspiring couples try to set up and run a new gourmet restaurant, have been marked by disaster, with couples splitting up, restaurants going broke and even, in one tragic case, the suicide of a chef who had been unmercifully put through the mincer by the previous panel of judges.

Desmet is one of four new judges, who include a food writer, an interior architect and a marketing expert. "I'm a real hobby-cook," Desmet told

Vacature magazine last year, going on to explain that he likes to spend his €6,000 monthly salary on books and kitchen gadgets, including a coveted Thermojet, which he describes as a food processor/food warming combo.

Desmet graduated in communications from the Free University of Brussels (VUB) in 1981 and started as a freelance journalist before joining the staff of *De Morgen* and later *Humo*, the two pillars of the left-leaning media in Flanders. That's earned him the title, in the biting satirical columns of Koen Meulenaere in *Knack*, of "the loft-socialist in command at *De Morgen*" – a reference to Desmet's apartment in Mechelen and possibly also to its impressively furnished kitchen.

Peter Goossens, the three-star chef who's leaving the jury of *Mijn Restaurant!*, says that Desmet is a "culinary expert" despite his amateur status. He's also no stranger to TV, and to VTM in particular, where he hosted a political talk-show from 2001 to 2006. The six new couples vying for the prize in *Mijn Restaurant!* can expect an expert grilling.

FLANDERS TODAY

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FLANDERS TODAY

JULY 13, 2011

News in brief

Thieves **stole a rhino head** from a display at the Natural History Museum in Brussels, the second time such an article has been stolen in Belgium in less than a month. The three men carrying the head were pursued by museum guards but managed to escape. One of the men who stole a rhino head in Liège last month explained they wanted it for the ivory in its horn – however rhino-horn, prized as an aphrodisiac in Chinese lore, is made of keratin, not ivory.

The **murder of a 42-year-old Antwerp man** in Rotterdam in 1994 took a new turn last week when a local man turned himself in to police and confessed the shooting. Paul Nieto, a known fraudster, was gunned down as he left a supermarket in Rotterdam. Despite testimony from many eye-witnesses, the killing was never solved.

The French-speaking public broadcaster RTBF did not go too far in its reports on the funeral of former **Vlaams Belang politician Marie-Rose Morel** in February this year, the Council for Journalism Ethics has decided. The broadcaster was accused of breaching Morel's privacy and making pejorative statements about the Flemish. The council said the reports had contained inaccuracies, but no breach of ethics.

The municipality of Diepenbeek in Limburg province has installed a

system to **warn residents by SMS of any emergency situation**, such as a gas leak, fire or flooding. Local people will be able to sign up for the alert system. Meanwhile, the federal parliament's infrastructure committee has approved a system to allow members of the public to contact emergency services by SMS. The service is aimed at the country's 400,000 people with hearing difficulties or speech disorders. Similar systems in other EU countries account for 0.5% of SMS traffic – the equivalent of 25 million of the annual total of five billion text messages sent in Belgium every year.

A **free bus service laid on by Brussels Airport** to bring passengers from Antwerp to the airport to avoid works on the Vilvoorde viaduct has been scrapped after only around 100 people a day made use of the bus, far fewer than the airport authorities had predicted and a tiny proportion of the 35,000 passengers who pass through the airport every day.

People sentenced to up to eight months in prison will in future be able to **serve their time under house arrest**, federal justice minister Stefaan De Clerck has ordered. Since the 1990s, sentences of under six months have involved no real jail time, after measures introduced to ease prison overcrowding. Prisoners under house arrest will be subject to telephone checks using voice recognition technology to ensure they only leave home to work or to take classes.

Children in the town of Hulshout, Antwerp province, found themselves confined to their homes after a 1.8-metre **tiger python escaped from a terrarium** owned by a local resident. The male python, who weighs about 10kg, lived in the glass cage with a female but escaped on 28 June and has not been seen since. The snake is thought to be hiding out in a woodpile in the area until the temperatures go up, when he will again become active. The python is not venomous, though it can deliver a painful bite.

A **man wanted for a 2009 sexual assault** on a 12-year-old boy in Evergem, East Flanders, has been turned over to the Belgian authorities after being arrested in the US state of Florida. Andy Vertoont entered the US on a 90-day tourist visa shortly after the incident and was arrested by Ocala police and the US immigration authorities in November last year.

Greenpeace has announced a rock festival to take place in Vilvoorde on 11 September in protest at plans by the Flemish government to **broaden the Brussels Ring**. The free concert will feature Johan Verminnen, Yevgeni, Stash, Jim Cole, Patrick Riguille & Friends, Suarez and Jaune Toujours.

→ www.rockthering.be

OFFSIDE

Flanders abroad

Imagine the shopping list: Devos Lemmens mayonnaise, mustard and pickles; chocolate spread from Nutella, Cote d'Or and Kwatta; biscuits from Delacre, Jules de Strooper and Lotus; dark and light brown sugar from Tienen and Candico. Not to mention cheese, cold meats, mussels, *witloof*, stewing steak, *speculoos* and, of course, beer.

That is what you can expect to find in the shopping-trolley of an expat Fleming – a Flemish person who now lives in another country and is home on a visit. That's the conclusion of Ann Deckers, a student of political and social sciences at Antwerp University, who for her Master's thesis conducted a survey among the half-million or so Flemings who now live abroad.

Deckers queried 1,100 Flemings abroad with questions about how they keep in touch with home, what contacts with other expats do they have and how does their consumption reflect their cultural identity, old and new?

Most have moved abroad for work reasons or because of work commitments of a partner. As many as 85% make trips back home at least once a year, and often more, usually to visit family and friends. And when Flemings abroad come home, they go shopping: 90% bring products back from Flanders to their new home.

Some products are very specific and may not be available in exile. Others, like meat, cheese and charcuterie may be available but not in the



desired form. Still others, like Belgian beers, are increasingly following the expats out into the wide world.

One respondent to the survey found that being Flemish abroad imposed its own responsibility: "I think I've become more Belgian since I've been abroad. They don't have a mistaken folkloric image of Belgium, like they do in our neighbouring countries; they have no image at all. So in a way my new environment is discovering my country through me – what a responsibility!"

ALAN HOPE

Making a splash

1,600 people across Flanders took the plunge on Sunday to call for cleaner waterways, and against growing pollution by factories, agriculture and ordinary homes



© Shutterstock

ANJA OTTE

De Wever's "no" only consolidates his popularity

→ continued from page 1

The package, as might be expected from a negotiating document, had something good and something bad for everyone – or almost everyone.

Seven parties reacted more or less positively to Di Rupo's note – the "Yes, but" response as it was characterised. They included Open VLD, the Flemish socialists and Groen!, as well as the four French-speaking parties: greens, socialists, liberals and centre democrats. Then it was the turn of Bart De Wever on behalf of his N-VA, the big winner in last June's elections on the Flemish side. De Wever's response was not a qualified yes, nor was it a qualified no. In a lengthy press conference, distilled into a 10-page rebuttal complete with pie-charts and bar-graphs, De Wever demolished Di Rupo's note, not on principle alone, but backed by close argument and supporting figures. "A lot of work has gone into this note, and that alone deserves respect," De Wever said, before going on to make what commentators agreed was "matchwood" of Di Rupo's edifice.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



257,000

websites registered in 2010 with the .be domain, nearly 10% more than in 2009. There are now 1.15 million .be sites

101,772

tonnes of used household equipment turned over last year to Recupel, the agency that recycles and disposes of electrical waste. On average, each person disposes of 9.8 kg a year, but buys 22kg of new equipment

6,977,955

vehicles passed through the Liefkenshoek toll tunnel near Antwerp in 2010, including 2.5 million trucks

€1,038,000

paid last year by the Flemish government to the Liefkenshoek tunnel's operators in compensation for when the tunnel is made toll-free to cope with traffic conditions on the Antwerp Ring

8.8%

of young people in Flanders want Belgium to be split, according to the Centre for Political Studies of the Catholic University of Leuven. Just over half, however, want the regions to have more autonomy



© Belga

themselves a period of reflection, at least until after 11 June – the Flemish national holiday.

In the meantime, De Wever's isolationist stance seems to have done him no harm in the eyes of potential voters: according to a poll conducted by the newspaper *Gazet Van Antwerpen*, 70% said he was right to reject Di Rupo's note, while 40% supported new elections, and 43% thought it was time for Belgium to split. *Het Laatste Nieuws*, meanwhile found 54% of respondents to its own separate poll stood behind De Wever's no-vote.

The crowd in Kortrijk during the commemoration on Sunday of the *Guldensporenslag* (The Battle of the Golden Spurs), the legendary battle of 1302 when a Flemish foot army defeated the French, definitely didn't seem to blame De Wever, whom they welcomed with cheering and applause. "I cannot agree to so-called big reforms that would in reality do nothing more than tinker in the margins," he told them. "The French-speaking parties have every right to defend the status quo, but they don't have the right to impose it on the Flemish majority." ♦

New approach to domestic violence

Antwerp province is to take a revolutionary new approach to the problem of domestic violence starting next year, the public prosecutor for the area announced. The system known as CO3, or Client Organisation 3, takes a three-pronged approach to the problem, from the point of view of police and the justice system, aid organisations, and the local authority.

Under the system, prosecutor Herman Dams explained, each case of domestic violence would be examined from the three points of view to determine the action required, whether it was therapeutic or judicial. The aim is to get away from the old system where each agency operated in isolation from the others. "That time is over," said Dams. "We will sit down with all the parties together and get to work on finding a solution to the problems of the whole family."

The project will start with about 100 case files in the Antwerp area, with a view to extending to the whole

province later. The number of reports of domestic violence doubled in Antwerp between 2007 and 2010, for three main reasons, Dams said: an increase in violence in society, a greater readiness of victims to make a report, and better training of police officers, who now file a report for every incident.

Across the country, the increase in cases over the same period was 11.7%, justice minister Stefaan De Clerck reported in an answer to senator Sabine De Bethune. In 2010 there were a total of 50,095 reports, 3.9% more than in 2009. Over the three-year period, the judicial area with most reports was Ghent with 11.4% of the national total, followed by Dendermonde and Charleroi. The most common cause of reports were assaults, custody problems and stalking. Only one report in 10 ever reaches the courts, with 73% of those ending in a conviction. ♦



© Technopolis

Technopolis, the hands-on science and technology museum in Mechelen, is to receive a grant of €6.85 million for extensions to the facilities. The museum, aimed especially at children and young people, will receive a new learning centre for teachers, an Innovation and Challenge Centre for young people aged 14 to 18, and a mini-Flanders for children aged eight to 13. The Flemish government last week gave the go-ahead to the funding package, which includes just over €3 million from the government, €2.7 million from the EU and over €1 million from Antwerp province. The work should be completed in 2013.

FIFTH COLUMN

The big no

Most international media have given up on explaining the political gridlock in this country. There are only so many crisis moments you can go through before some solution is found, they believe. Not in this country, though, which is going through yet another very deep crisis, more than a year after the federal elections that have yet to result in a government.

Last week began on an optimistic note, as formateur Elio Di Rupo, of the socialist PS, the winner on the French speaking side, produced a formal proposal to shape a government. Before this, Di Rupo had been sulking for months, as an earlier attempt failed last year, thwarting his hopes of becoming prime minister.

The document he proposed surprised many. Commentators saw Di Rupo behave like a future prime minister for the first time since June 2010. Not only did he come up with a proposal to split the BHV constituency – a taboo to many French speakers – he even suggested a swifter "activation" of the unemployed by making their support digressive – a taboo to his own party.

The outcome, however, did not bring a government any closer. The Flemish nationalist N-VA, winner of the elections in Flanders, fiercely rejected the document, stating that the proposed cuts and revenues would hit its middle class voters excessively. In doing so, N-VA – still in a winning mood, with its leader Bart De Wever now enjoying pop star adoration – not only distanced itself even further from potential coalition partner PS, it also left the other Flemish parties in disarray.

Take the Open VLD liberals. Normally they would be the ones to voice the criticism N-VA did, had they not conditionally agreed to the Di Rupo document earlier. After this, all they could do was to ask for a government without N-VA, the party they had been flirting with for months.

Even more troubled are the Christian democrats. They said neither yes nor no to the Di Rupo note. Instead they awaited N-VA's no, whereupon they pronounced further talks pointless. In the days that followed, CD&V leaders such as Kris Peeters tried to redress this painful demonstration of his party's irrelevance, but the damage was done. CD&V seems spineless now, hiding once more behind De Wever's broad back. All of this leaves the country more divided than ever. The divisions run not just between Flemish and French speakers, but within Flanders itself, where N-VA is reviled as much as loved.



BRUSSELS

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



SCHAERBEEK

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



WATERMAEL-BOITSFORT

Dansaert area



MERQEN

BRUSSELS



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WOLUWE SAINT-LAMBERT



ANDERLECHT

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- 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m² and 1 flat of 30 m²
- 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m² and 1 flat of 30 m²
- 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m²

SAINT-GILLES



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UCCLE

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



ANDERLECHT

Godeaux - Bemel area, house 3 façades of +/- 240m², completely renovated in 2004, living room 42m², fully equipped kitchen (microwave oven / dishwasher / fridge / ...), breakfast corner, 4 bedrooms, closets, wooden floors, bathroom, toilet, Jacuzzi, 2 shower rooms, garage + space in front of the house, garden, terrace, alarm system, security door, airconditioning.



FOREST

villa 4 facades of 300m², completely renovated in 2000, living room, wooden floors, fireplace, separate dining room, fully equipped kitchen, breakfast area, laundry room, 4 bedrooms, wooden floors, office area, bathroom, shower room, cellar, garden 5 acres, nice terrace, garage 2 or 3 cars, alarm system.

Reviving the romance

Rademakers' collection tells the story of an entire way of life

→ continued from page 1

Which isn't to say there are no famed Romantics – England (William Blake, William Hogarth) and France (Eugene Delacroix) are particularly respected in the genre.

But not the low countries. The regions that produced Rubens and Rembrandt and later Van Gogh and Van Mieghem prefer to forget entirely about that embarrassing provincial period in-between. It's just these simple aspects of Romanticism that makes the art appealing to Rademakers, who, after moving to Flanders, focused his energies on collecting Romantic paintings from the low countries.

"When you look around this exhibition in Leuven, you get the idea of a whole period, of a whole way of life," he says. "That romantic way of life – the relationship to nature, to love, to God, to animals – everything in the thinking of Western European people changed in that period, and the collection more or less tells that story."

Rademakers is well aware of the reputation of the period but says that view doesn't hold up all over the world. "Russia, Germany and the Scandinavian countries – the period of Romanticism was their first real important modern art period. Romanticism there is looked at as the beginning of a new way of life, a new way of thinking about life. People here say it's the kind of art that attracts older people. They don't say that in Russia."

And that is why the Hermitage came knocking at Rademakers' door.

An offer you can't refuse

The curator of the famous St Petersburg museum was introduced to Rademakers at the opening of an exhibition in the Netherlands. "He asked if he could see my collection. I didn't really believe he would come to my house in Braaschaat."

But he did. Then he selected 70 of Rademakers' 100 paintings for a show in the Hermitage. Last Autumn, more than 100,000 people came to see it. Then it went to the Hague, which drew 51,000. After its run at M Museum, it will make several stops in Germany before going to Helsinki and Tallinn. "The Hermitage of course makes a magic sound in the ears of curators," smiles Rademakers.

It would be an understatement to say that the collector is satisfied. "People say that what came in-between the Golden Age and the Impressionists couldn't possibly be important. But now that view is going to change."

Real people in the real world

The collection is made up of Belgian and Dutch works from between 1806 and 1870 and is split into several themes, including "In the Light of the Moon and Candle", a mesmerising selection of night scenes. The absence of artificial lighting of course meant the nights were longer – and more mysterious, more enveloping. A stand-out is "Nocturnal View of the Ice" by Jan Baptist Tetar Van Elven, who was born in Amsterdam but studied in both Antwerp and Brussels. The brave few villagers still on the ice past twilight skate with lanterns, braving the unknown darkness.

The natural world is given further power in the paintings of "A Tribute to Nature", in which people at once benefit from and are ravaged by uncontrollable forces. The collection would not be complete without the low countries master of the genre, Barend Cornelis Koekkoek. Here there are three, my favourite being "Eifel Landscape with Little Church" (1845). (Born in a Dutch fishing village, Koekkoek settled in Germany.)

Koekkoek's structure of placing humans on one side and filling the rest of the painting with an expanse of land and far-off places was hugely influential, and I would argue that some of Koekkoek's followers surpassed his work, particularly Johann Bernhard Klombeck. Though born on the German side of the border in Cleves, he was considered a member of the Dutch school, and the details of the characters peppering his "Winter Landscape with Horse", for instance, are vivid and lively.

But it's the "Daily Life" room that is destined to steal the show at *A Romantic View*. Domestic imagery bring a sudden sense of recognition even to the modern viewer, while the still-lifes offer a rare burst of colour. Ghent-born David De Noter's "Ornate Still Life" (1847) is the richest, with its fruit, flowers, lobster and goose for dinner.

Adriaan Wulffaert of the Dutch province of Zeeland provides one of the most strikingly timeless images: "The Bridal Couple Bid Farewell" (1838) shows a young woman leaving her rural home, some of her family looking happy for her, some sorry to see her go. The horses are ready; the groom tugs on one of her arms impatiently, while the mother hangs onto the other. The bride's face is both happy and sad.

Basile De Loose excels in these kinds of familial emotions, as the artist with the most



© Rademakers Collection

"Village Fair" is one of the highlights of *A Romantic View*, detailing social situations in a brand new Belgium

works in the exhibition. The Flemish painter found much favour in his lifetime with his portraiture and amusing scenes of every-day life. "Making Waffles" finds a child asking for more from the little cast-iron waffle maker above the fire; one boy attacks another around a kitchen table full of playing cards in "The Card Player"; A beautifully dressed mother and daughter inspect lace in "A Visit to the Seamstress".

The exhibition gives pride of place to De Loose's "Village Fair" (1838), in which a young man, pulling out his coin pouch, touches the cheek of a pretty musician, while a clearly jealous blonde keeps a close watch. Above the scene flies the Belgian flag.

The Belgian revolution was, of course, begun by a worked-up crowd, not by soldiers, not by officials. De Loose's work seems to suggest that the new Belgian state isn't made up of politicians; it's made up of people.

The Flemish daily *De Standaard* ran a headline saying that *A Romantic View* is "art, with a spoonful of sugar". That's OK, says Rademakers: "I think it's exactly the sugar that we need."♦

A Romantic View

Until 4 September

M Museum

L Vanderkelenstraat 28, Leuven

→ www.mleuven.be



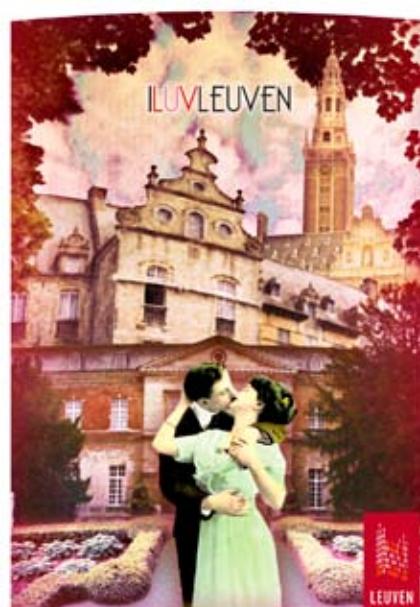
© Rademakers Collection

I Luv Leuven

In collaboration with the Romantic View exhibition at Museum M, the city of Leuven has put together packages and events designed to bring all you couples a little closer. They have also published the cute little booklet "I Luv Leuven", which provides walking and cycling maps of sites, all with a sultry little story behind them.

Did you know, for instance, that a young Erasmus fled from his desires for a fellow monk, becoming a humanist and devoting his life to education? Or that the city's 18th-century Augustinian nuns used to greet their visitors with less than innocent kisses? Or that the Holy Ghost College, Leuven's only remaining male-only student house, used to be a brothel? Pick up the book at the tourist office in the Naamsestraat.

→ www.leuven.be/hartjezomer



A detail from BC Koekkoek's "Eifel Landscape with Little Church"

Of electronic health

Microsoft sets up digital innovation centre in Flanders

ANDY FURNIERE

A short conversation in Silicon Valley, the Mecca of high-tech in the United States, can have far-reaching consequences. After meeting top executives from Microsoft late last year, Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters brought the software giant to Flanders. Later this year, he will cut the ribbon of a Microsoft Innovation Centre (MIC) in Kortrijk and Genk, the first of its kind specialising in e-health, digital applications for the health sector. MICs are high-tech hubs where governments, academics and companies work together to stimulate ICT-driven innovation. There are a total of 94 such centres worldwide, two of which are located in Belgium (one in Wallonia and one in Brussels). The Flemish MIC will be number 95 and the first to focus on ICT-applications for the health sector – a choice that corresponds with Flanders' Care, the health care plan of the Flemish government that encourages innovative actors in the health sector to adopt a more entrepreneurial mentality. "We're killing three birds with one stone," says Peeters. "We're supporting young enterprises, stimulating employment and bringing digital innovations to the health sector."

Peter Raeymaekers, coordinator of Flanders' Care, says that "this kind of boost of the industry is essential. A new scanner is not developed just because academics deem it necessary, but also because companies see commercial opportunities. The same is true for innovations in e-health."

Digital safe

Still, the MIC is not just a commercial project. "The main goal has to be to provide service to the health sector," says Johan Hellings, president of the Flanders' Care advisory committee and CEO of Icoru, the Flemish

umbrella organisation of hospitals with public partners. "Its innovations will have to be available to all Flemish organisations, not just the happy few who can afford it."

Security is another essential criterion that has to be fulfilled, stresses Hellings. "Digital applications can greatly facilitate the work of health-care organisations, but the privacy of the patient's records has to be guaranteed." Microsoft will present its plans in further detail to the Flemish health-care sector at a conference in November. "But from what we know for the moment, it looks very positive," says Hellings. "I don't expect any problems for the MIC to be approved and receive a Flanders' Care label." The Flanders' Care label is awarded to projects and initiatives that explicitly fit within the mission of the government's health-care plan. Until now, none has been given. "We take our time to investigate every aspect of proposals," says Raeymaekers. "It has to be a true quality label."

Raeymaekers likes to see Flanders' Care as an engine for Europe. "We keep in close contact with the European Commission and try to spread our message to other European regions," he says. "They are looking for solutions to the same challenge of modernising the health sector. Flanders can provide them with some."

Innovation in e-health is not a novelty here. More than two years ago, the federal government launched an e-health platform that facilitates cooperation between different actors in the health sector. Doctors and health insurance funds, for example, are now able to exchange electronic patient data by accessing a sort of digital safe where patient privacy is assured, says Frank Robben, CEO of the platform. "Nobody can access the files without proving that they have the right permission."

Robben is enthusiastic about the dynamics that a big name like Microsoft can create. But he is also careful and hopes that the company will invest in systems that can work with all kinds of software, not just those from Microsoft.

Stop the brain drain

Kortrijk and Genk have been chosen as locations for the centre because there are companies there with useful expertise in the ICT sector. In Kortrijk, there is a concentration of cyber-security knowledge and in Genk are companies that specialise in gaming. Both cities already cooperate in a project to further develop gaming technology. Besides, Kortrijk and Genk are strategically located in the respective technology triangles of Kortrijk-Rijsel-Doornik and Eindhoven-Leuven-Aachen. For the cities, the coming of Microsoft should be a means to stop the brain drain of skilled workers to other provinces. "The prestige of Microsoft should convince our graduates to set up their enterprises here in our region," says Lieven Lybeer, mayor of Kortrijk. In Genk, the project will start in the city centre but after a year move to the new site of C-mine, where there is more space for multimedia companies.

"C-mine become a concentration of creativity and innovation," says Wim Dries, mayor of Genk. "It is the ideal location for the Microsoft centre and hopefully for many spin-off enterprises."

Philippe Rogge, General Manager of Microsoft Flanders, points to the employment chances the centre will create. The office of minister-president Peeters counts on the MIC to create up to 40 companies and 400 new jobs.♦

⇒ www.flanderscare.be
⇒ www.ehealth.fgov.be



Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters looks on as Microsoft signs the contract

IN THE HOUSE

What's being said in the Flemish Parliament

Local Flemish TV broadcasters should be assured of a more stable future under plans announced to the Flemish parliament by media minister Ingrid Lieten. From next year, the stations will operate under five-yearly charters, instead of the existing system of annual subsidy rounds, better allowing them to plan for the future. Until 2009 the local stations were on the whole profitable, but the economic crisis struck and saw them faced with depleted funds and a smaller audience. Compared to 2009, income in 2010 was down by an average of 15%. In the new session in the autumn, Lieten plans to start work on a negotiated policy plan for the next five years to deal with questions like financing, news journalism, subtitling of programmes and attracting new audiences.

•

The parliament also gave almost unanimous support to plans to help avoid flooding in vulnerable areas when severe weather hits, such as happened last November and January. The plans include avoiding wherever possible that open ground is paved over, so that rainwater can enter the ground immediately instead of running off and causing floods, as well as new tighter rules on new construction in flood-sensitive areas. The cost of flooding is estimated at between €100 and €200 million a year in Flanders.

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To mark his last session as a Brussels member of the parliament sitting for Open VLD, Sven Gatz received a standing ovation from his fellow members, and a fulsome tribute from speaker Jan Peumans, who praised him for his "efforts for Brussels, his drive as a faction leader, and his desire to seek consensus". Gatz, who is leaving to become director of the Belgian Brewers' federation, was also praised for his "punk qualities," with the speaker describing him as "a liberal in a suit but no tie". Gatz's place will be taken by 41-year-old Khadija Zamouri.

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Last week's sitting was the last plenary session of the Flemish parliament before the summer recess, after what speaker Jan Peumans described as "another busy year" in which a record number of questions had been put to ministers. The new season is scheduled to begin on 26 September. This column will therefore return in October.

Flanders performs better in two studies

Companies are “more flexible and alert”

ALAN HOPE

Flemish companies are better at growing bigger than their equivalents in the rest of Western Europe, according to a study by the Growth Management Impulse Centre for Small Companies at the Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School. Among the reasons for the difference are that Flemish companies are more proactive, alert and flexible, allowing them to respond more quickly to market changes, good and bad.

According to Hans Crijns, professor of entrepreneurship at Vlerick, “Just as good footballers can use both feet, and top teams are strong in both defence and attack, good businesses need to use both strategies too. And Flemish companies that are growing have mastered these methods better than their counterparts, both in Western Europe and the rest of the world, by being sharper and more alert.”

Among the other findings of the study:

- Most companies think the crisis is now over, with 74% satisfied at how they are performing – a better result than even before the crisis in 2007;
- 73% said sales have increased, and
- 78% reported increased profits;
- 88% were positive and hopeful about the next two years, another return to pre-crisis levels of confidence;
- 33% have made an acquisition in the past year, a sign of improved business confidence.

The survey was carried out among 80 owner-managed companies in Flanders, in conjunction with Ernst & Young and KBC.

Meanwhile another survey carried out by the TNO research centre in Delft in the Netherlands found the so-called Flemish Diamond – the area bounded by Brussels, Leuven, Antwerp



© Shutterstock

and Ghent – is in fifth place among European regions for wealth, with an average economic worth of €36,500 per resident. The study looked at 20 of the biggest city-regions in Europe – the Diamond has a population of more than four million people. Ahead on the list were Munich, Copenhagen, Paris and Dublin. Flanders meanwhile

came ahead of the Dutch Randstad (an area bounded roughly by Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and the Hague, with seven million inhabitants), Stockholm and Frankfurt.

Flanders also had the fourth lowest negative growth in 2009 at the time of the economic crisis, with -2.9%, coming behind Paris, Lisbon and Prague. ♦

Dutch and Flemish to work together

Flanders and the Netherlands are to join forces to market themselves jointly as a single economic region, under the name of Deltaregio, following a meeting last week in Hingene in Antwerp province between Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters and Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte (pictured, left).

While the two governments plan shortly to send out into the world the first joint trade mission, the cooperation will rest heavily on the marketing of Dutch and Flemish ports to major overseas users, such as China. Not that the plan will bring an end to the stiff competition between Antwerp and Rotterdam. “We will continue to compete,” said Peeters, “but we will compete smartly: that means cooperating where possible, and competing where we have to.”



© imageglobe.be

prime importance to the harbour of Ghent, joined to Terneuzen by a canal. The sticking point remains the Dutch insistence that Flanders pay Dutch VAT

on top of the bill, something Flanders is refusing to do. A final decision is expected in October. ♦

Archaic employment rules must go, says court

The Constitutional Court last week gave the government two years to abolish the archaic but still troublesome difference between “workers” and “employees” in Belgian industrial relations. According to the court, the current system enshrines a form of discrimination which must be removed.

Under Belgian employment law, virtually alone now among industrialised nations, personnel fall under one of two categories: worker and employee. The difference dates back to the 19th century; workers were manual labourers, on the whole, while employees worked indoors on clerical or administrative tasks.

The differences are more concrete, and extend to areas such as holiday entitlement, overtime pay, sick-leave and the requirement to give notice of redundancy. Workers, for example, can be sacked at shorter notice, a reflection of a time when companies wished to retain the ability to lay off workers according to economic circumstances. One of the

Food news

A pig farm in Herentals in Antwerp province plans to install the country's first automatic vending machines selling pork products. The vending machines in Noorderwijk, Olen, Herenthout and Wiekevorst will carry vacuum-packed meat and other preparations. The machines are fitted with a special temperature control system which notifies the owners by SMS each time the temperature rises by one degree, and which blocks the machine when the temperature reaches 7 degrees. The first machines are due to start working later this month.

Supermarket chain Lidl has withdrawn Spanish Nicola potatoes from stores because samples showed high levels of residue of fosthiazate, a pesticide used to tackle parasitic worms in crops. The problem relates only to 2.5kg bags sold by Lidl, which food inspectors have warned consumers not to use. Other batches of the popular Nicola potato are not affected.

The Farmers' Union has called on the federal government to declare the unseasonably dry weather earlier this year

as a natural disaster, to allow farmers and



© Shutterstock

growers to claim compensation. Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, whose portfolio includes agriculture, has already said Flanders will make use of permission given by the EU for the region to pay out about €110,000 in subsidies earlier than usual, but the farmers are now seeking additional support for the losses they suffered as a result of the drought. ♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Accountancy • PwC

Karel De Baere has been appointed chairman of accountancy consultants PricewaterhouseCoopers Belgium for an initial term of five years. He replaces Roger Heijens. De Baere studied in Antwerp and has worked for PwC since 1982, becoming partner in 1997. He has been head of risk assurance services since last year.

Airport services • Menzies

British-based Menzies has called for an independent audit of the award of contracts for baggage handling at Brussels Airport, after the last decision was suspended by a Brussels court. Menzies failed to win any contracts, which went to incumbent Flightcare and newcomer Swissport. The action to suspend all new contracts was brought by Aviapartner, which lost its existing licence.

Autos • Volvo

Geert Bruyneel, managing director of Volvo Ghent, has been appointed chairman of Agoria Automobiel, the sector federation representing the automobile industry. Bruyneel, 51, replaces Urbain Vandeurzen, who moves on to chair the private equity investment firm Gimv.

Biotech • UCB

Brussels-based biopharmaceutical company UCB joined American partner Amgen to organise a scientific experiment on board the last-ever space shuttle mission, due to take off last weekend. The experiment involves 30 mice in a study into the effects of space travel on bone density, which could lead to treatments for osteoporosis.

Cement • VVM

West Flemish cement manufacturer VVM, which has production facilities in Antwerp and Ghent, is reported to have been taken over by Ireland's CRH for an undisclosed sum. VVM is a family-owned business that made €53.5 million in sales last year. CRH owns the DIY store chain Gamma and last year bought up Sax Sanitair, based in Melle, East Flanders.

Lighting • 2B Delighted

Roeselare-based 2B Delighted, the partnership behind lighting specialists Waver & Ducré, has filed an application for bankruptcy protection with the commercial tribunal in Kortrijk. The company said it was suffering the effects of a dip in the international market for specialist lighting. A bid last year by KBC to seek outside investors for a capital injection was unsuccessful.

Power • GeoSea

GeoSea, a subsidiary of dredging and shipping group Deme, based in Zwijndrecht, Antwerp province, is partnering with German shipbuilder Hochteif for the construction of ships capable of installing and maintaining offshore wind turbines. GeoSea takes over a 50% share of a joint venture with Beluga, specialised in heavy-lifting shipping, after Beluga was forced to sell because of financial difficulties. No price was disclosed.



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Keeping it fresh

Flemish government architect Peter Swinnen reflects on his first year in office

NICOLAS DE MOY

The design of schools, social housing, care homes or cross-border spatial planning are not exactly projects that get hearts racing, but one man and his team are on a mission to change that. His name is Peter Swinnen and he is the Vlaamse Bouwmeester, or Flemish government architect.

Literally meaning "master of the building", the agency was set up in 1999 to develop quality architecture and foster a debate among politicians and other decision-makers to create a single, coherent building culture in Flanders.

After the enormous work of Bob van Reeth, first-ever *bouwmeester*, pushed further by his successor Marcel Smets, it is now up to the youngest government architect yet to "keep it fresh," he says, and to promote the Flemish building and planning culture on the international scene. "We have to dare to choose," he says.

Young and exotic

Swinnen, a tall, broad-shouldered man who wouldn't be out of place on stage with Nick Cave, has been in office for one year this month. "At first, I didn't want the job," he says. "It wasn't on my wish list, and I was busy with my own, young architecture practice [51N4E, see *Flanders Today*, 15 June]. But then I thought to myself: This is my duty."

"What is the scale of Europe? The problem is that there isn't one"

He says it was odd to suddenly go from the private side of the planning to the public sphere. "I liked that the Flemish government decided to take on somebody really young." Swinnen is in his late 30s – any younger wouldn't have been possible, he says. "It means that they really wanted to keep things fresh." Also, being from



Peter Swinnen wouldn't be out of place on stage with Nick Cave

© Martin Hogeboom

Brussels, "it feels kind of exotic being Flemish *bouwmeester*," he says.

Swinnen's predecessors quickly managed to set up the agency with a good amount of enthusiasm and energy. He, too, feels that he can be outward-looking and bring new perspectives to the development of architecture and the planning policies of the Flemish government. "It is not a solitary job," he says. "You have to be able to explain yourself in a public context, to question policies, to venture into different parts of governance."

Authorities often look at him as if he were something of a one-man show, he says, when it really is the work of a team. "Before you know it, people bestow you with certain powers," he says, "powers I don't always want. I always have to be aware, always be on my guard."

Enlightenment

The first year in office has been slow, says Swinnen, even though they've managed to take a couple of initiatives. For starters, rearranging the team has been one of his proudest achievements. "It is something that can't be seen from the outside, but it was a crucial effort for the survival of the office."

A second, more tangible output of the first year is a booklet of about 50 pages, in Dutch, French and English, laying out his ideas about what he calls an enlightened building culture. "It is very important that the booklet is small," he says, "crucial even. It needs to have the right meaning, weight, character. Every word is important."

The carefully crafted pamphlet is full of positive intentions and well-researched discourses. It goes from the importance of daring to choose an urban identity and a master plan to the future of the Belgian population and its effect on the urban environment. It covers imagining the Flanders of 2020 or even of the 22nd century to coming to grips with the real estate policies of the Flemish government and the commissioned art that accompanies new buildings. The *Seven Memos for an Enlightened Building Culture* help you imagine how the built environment can or should be shaped.

The last and most daring initiative is that of an open studio, an office where "there will be things on show, permanently, where partners can be invited and take part in discussions. It is something that is crucial for the way we want to work." It took Swinnen a while to convince the government, but he finally got the OK. "It will be the first time in 12 years that the *bouwmeester* is open to the public."

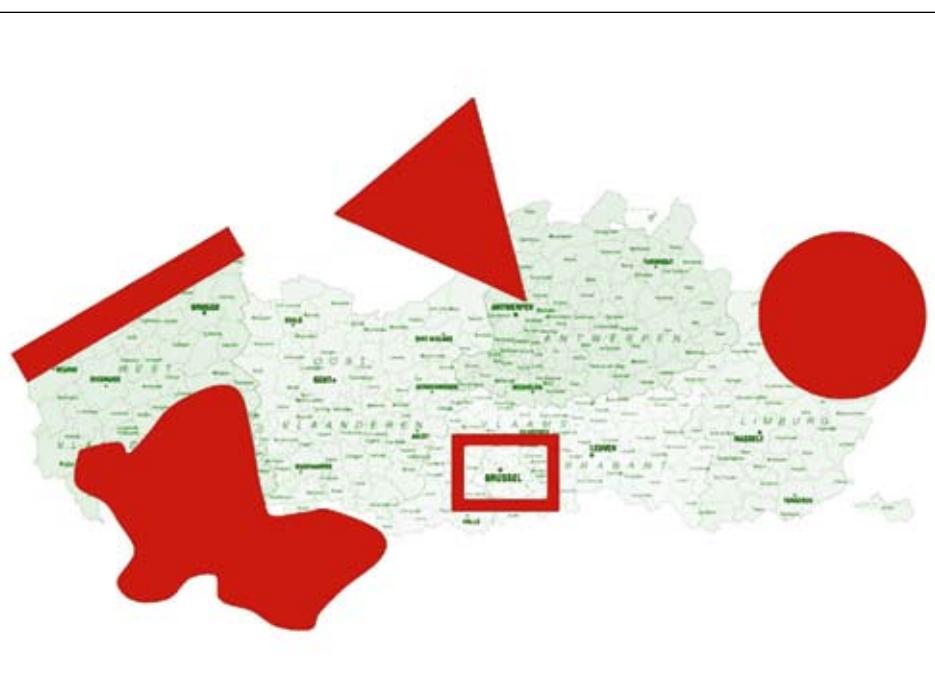
Looking further

Spatial planning has been stigmatised for a long time, Swinnen says, and it is time to think outside the box. He wants to emphasise cross-border cooperation more than buildings alone. For most European countries, working with neighbouring regions is a matter of economic survival. Hence the idea to invite teams of architects and planners to come up with ideas about cross-border planning, to choose the best and send them to the Venice Biennale in 2012. "This will not be a bunch of images of beautiful buildings," Swinnen says, "but rather text and context about the scale of Europe and understanding its future. Really, what is the scale of Europe? The problem with Europe is that it doesn't have one."

Venice is only a first step. Swinnen and his team plan to publish new ideas about cross-border spatial planning and the Flemish reality by 2014. "It will be the first time that spatial planning will be debated within a political, cross-border context."

Are we seeing the return of visionaries who think beyond borders? As spatial planning and the future role of Flanders in Europe will be the subject of a heated debate in Venice next year, we can expect to hear much more from the new, forward-looking *bouwmeester*.♦

→ www.vlaamsebouwmeester.be



Spatial planning in Flanders should consider cross-border regions, Swinnen says

Two daddies and a mommy

Ghent's University Hospital approves conception through surrogacy for gay couples

SABINE CLAPPERT

Ghent University Hospital (UZ Gent) recently announced that it will support gay couples wishing to conceive a child with the help of a surrogate mother.

Lesbian couples in Belgium have been able to expand their families through artificial insemination for a while, but gay men have been left to fend for themselves, sometimes with dramatic consequences. In the news this spring was Baby Samuel, who was conceived using the sperm of a Belgian man and born to a Ukrainian surrogate mother. Because of a lack of surrogacy laws in Belgium, authorities would not let the child into the country. By the time the Belgian consulate finally agreed to provide Samuel with a passport and let him fly over to his two fathers, he had spent the first two years of his life in a Ukrainian orphanage.

"There is no legal framework yet, so we have to be very careful"

"There is no legal framework yet," says Petra De Sutter, head of the fertility clinic of the UZ Ghent, "so we have to be very careful. The decision raises quite a few ethical and practical concerns."

The exact nature of these concerns, though, remains guesswork. "We do not wish to go beyond the initial press statement," De

Sutter says after being pressed for further information, "so as not to add fuel to the fire of what is a controversial topic."

One contentious discussion point is the origin of the egg, which decides the biological mother. Should it be that of the surrogate mother, who carries the child, or should it be the egg of an anonymous donor?

If the surrogate is the biological mother, "should the distance between her and the hopeful parents be as large as possible, or is it perhaps better for the child to maintain contact with its biological mother?" wonders the university's statement. "Perhaps the child will need a mother figure at a certain age."

Also, will there be a sufficient number of surrogate mothers available to satisfy demand? De Sutter says she receives about one request a week from gay men hoping to become fathers. "The responsibility to find a surrogate mother and an egg donor if needed is that of the future parents," she says in an interview with *Het Laatste Nieuws*. "The hospital cannot take care of that."

The UZ Ghent now officially supports women acting as surrogate mothers for gay couples, but the legal context in Belgium remains murky. Most parents who have a child via a surrogate who is also the biological mother adopt the child, which is possible once the baby is two months old, with the full consent of the surrogate.

There is no specific law in Belgium covering the practice of surrogate motherhood. There is a law, however, that holds to the principle



Male couples have a tough time legally becoming dads in Belgium

© FancyNee/Corbis

that the human body may not be traded or be the subject of a legally binding contract. Any such contract between a surrogate mother and future parents – whether gay or not – is therefore not legally binding.

Because of the lack of a surrogacy law here and restrictive laws in many other European countries, many gay couples turn to the US to have children. The US is widely considered to be the preferable country for surrogacy among Europeans because of its solid legal conditions

and good medical care. Almost every US state permits compensated surrogacy, and no appeals court has ever awarded custody to a gestational carrier.

"Surrogacy has not been legally approved, and gay couples deciding to have children in this way should know that," says federal minister of justice, Stefaan De Clerck. "Physicians who are involved in these procedures should inform their patients of that."♦

The book squad • Sector presents holiday reading to Flemish ministers

PHILIP EBELS

Flemish book sellers last week presented minister-president Kris Peeters with a gift basket containing two books for every one of the nine ministers in government. "We wanted to draw attention to our sector," says Geert Joris, director of boek.be, the umbrella organisation of book sellers, publishers and importers in Flanders, "and to give Peeters an update of what we've been doing."

To lobby, for short. They made a number of policy recommendations, such as to include e-books on the list of products with a reduced value added tax and to further the development of an online, government-run e-book archive, which Joris expects to be up and running sometime next year.

It is the fourth year in a row that boek.be has provided our policymakers with some essential holiday reading. Peeters, for example, received *Het vredesfront* (The Peace Front) by Peter Vermeersch, a book that tries to answer the question of whether "people with different backgrounds, language and religion are doomed never to get along".

No pun intended, says Joris. "We didn't think of Belgium when we chose that book," he says. "It is a book about ethnic conflicts, and we don't consider ourselves as being from different ethnicities."

Flanders is the only region in Europe, according to Joris, where book sales have gone up in the last year, not down. "We don't compete with each other as much as they do in other countries," he explains. "We all try to sell as many books as possible, together."

Canadian novelist Yann Martel used to send his prime minister a book every two weeks in reaction to the conservative government's stingy art policies. The prime minister, he felt, "is deluded by busyness". Books would allow him some much-needed "stillness" in order to see the bigger picture.

Nothing of the sorts is the agenda of boek.be. "We don't want to educate our ministers," says Joris. "It is just that they must read a lot to be able to make the right decisions. We like to remind them – and the public – that a book is more than a product. It provides context; it gives people a good feeling. It is emotion."♦

→ www.boek.be

What did they get?

Kris Peeters, minister-president and minister of economy and foreign affairs

- *Het vredesfront* (The Peace Front) by Peter Vermeersch
- *De Koning* (The King) by Kader Abdolah

Hilde Crevits, mobility and public works

- *Nachtdanser* (Night Dancer) by Chika Unigwe
- *Kwiskids, op reis in België* (Kwiskids, Travelling Through Belgium) by Christine Claessens

Geert Bourgeois, interior affairs and tourism

- *Van tornos tot toerisme: ontstaan en evolutie* (From Tornos to Tourism: Origin and Evolution) by Karel Demeulemeester
- *De verzwegen Boon* (Boon Withheld) by Pol Hoste

Ingrid Lieten, innovation, media, poverty reduction

- *Communicatie: een eerste inkijk* (Communication: A First Look) by Cia Muylle
- *Ervaringsdeskundigen in armoede en sociale uitsluiting* (Experts by Experience in Poverty and Social Exclusion) by MT Casman, et al

Philippe Muyters, budget, work, sports

- *The Origins of Political Order* by Francis Fukuyama
- *La trahison de la finance* (The Treason of the Financial World) by Georges Ugeux

Joke Schauvliege, environment and culture

- *Cultuurcentra op zoek naar een divers publiek* (Cultural Centres Looking for a Diverse Audience) by Julie Badisco, et al
- *Het gelijk van de schrijver* (The Writer is Always Right) by publishing house Houtekiet

Pascal Smet, education, equal opportunities, youth

- *Edushock: breinoptimizer voor leren in de toekomst* (Edushock: Brain Optimizer for Learning in the Future) by Dirk de Boe, et al
- Access to www.leernijk.be, an online database for education professionals

Freya Van den Bossche, energy, housing, cities

- *Lessen in goed wonen* (Lessons in Good Housing) by Fredie Flore
- *Maatschappelijke verantwoord ondernemen* (Social Corporate Responsibility) by Marijke de Prins, et al

Jo Vandeurzen, well-being, public health, family

- *Ondersteuning van mensen met ernstige meervoudige beperkingen* (Support of People with Severe Multiple Handicaps) by Bea Maes et al
- *En ze leefden nog lang en gezond* (And They Lived Long and Healthy) by Luc Bonneux



This is no yoga

Flemish students take to African dance for stress relief

COURTNEY DAVIS

Sun salutations to a pounding rhythm, 15 students strike a warrior pose before bending to the floor and assuming the cat position with arched backs. Shouts of "Breathe in, breathe out" are heard over the din of live drummers banging away in the corner. Welcome to African dance.

The pounding drums get louder and faster, and the floor begins to vibrate. Everyone starts to hop. There's a lot of bouncing, bounding and bending. Arms go up, bodies go down sweeping the floor, reaching to the ceiling. Once the big dips and leg extensions are mastered, arms are added. Outstretched, loose, embracing.

This is a dance that needs the entire body. It isn't necessarily graceful or refined but instead powerful and energetic. It uses every muscle and bone. Not just to keep a beat, but to be the beat, to be one with the music.

It's no surprise that a few minutes in, everyone is sweating, happy to take a water break. It's an impressive workout and yet everyone is smiling. This is the kind of dance where the more you give and the crazier the movements, the better it looks and feels. Students grin when they perfect a step, smile when they recognise the introduction of a favourite move or laugh when they mess up a sequence entirely. It certainly helps that instructor Reintje Callebaut's most commonly repeated advice is: "Smile!"

"I rush here from work, complaining in the car about deadlines and co-workers," says Tinne Bros, 29. "But after class I have completely forgotten about anything that was upsetting me. I'm happy. It changes from negative to positive. I have really found my thing. It clears my mind." It certainly makes sense to Callebaut. "Students forget to have fun sometimes," she says. "They focus so hard that they lose the joy they're supposed to have. A quick reminder to smile, and then they relax and usually do the move a lot better."

She says that African dance is more natural to the body than it is to the head. "We use our head too much," she says. "We think too much. I work to get people out of their heads and onto the dance floor."

Another student, Lotte, 26, concurs. "In the beginning, it is very difficult to learn," she says. "We're taught as young girls to move our bodies in a defined, feminine way. The basis of African dance is very different. Initially, I felt funny, but now I get it. It is about getting really low, getting down, getting to your core and your roots. There is great power in this dance. It brings out your emotions. There is a real release. That is what is lovely; it comes from your inside."

For Callebaut, African dance is more than a release; it is a language. "I have been to Africa many times, learned a number of dances and mixed them all up. Some people don't like that, but I'm not African. I know that when I did a Susu dance in Benin, people there loved it. Because I was speaking the language of African dance."

It seems that here in Belgium a few more people speak the same language.♦



© Danshuis De Ingang

Reintje Callebaut in the midst of an African move

Dance palace: De Ingang

Whether you want to swing, tap or tango, there's one place that teaches nearly every shimmy shimmy shake there is. Reintje Callebaut is one of the founders of Danshuis De Ingang in Ghent. "We're busy all day long with only dance." The self-professed "creative mind of a golden trio", she works with Elze Bogaerts, who she describes as the visionary, and Sven Schoukens, who has a handle on the practical organisation. "Together," she says, "our aim is to have a wide range of world dances. It is our specialty."

Schoukens, a non-dancer, says his goals are socially inclined. "Our name has the word *huis* in it," he says. "Not school, but house. That is because it isn't

about competition, tests or performance. We're a non-profit social organisation. We want to do more than just organise dance classes. We want to turn people on to the culture of a dance. Plus it's a really nice atmosphere. We bring people together."

That they do: The house has 1,800 members, 25 teachers and 110 classes a week. Starting from a small space near the Dampoort train station in Ghent, they have since grown to a beautiful location with multiple dance rooms featuring wooden floors, mirrored walls and a café.

► www.de-ingang.be

STREEKPRODUCT SERIES

ALAN HOPE

Flemish Brabant speciality shops

Perhaps as a resident of Brussels, Brabant has always seemed to me the most diverse of Belgium's provinces, its two parts – Flemish and Walloon – the vestiges of what was once a huge and powerful Duchy including cities like Leuven, Antwerp, Mechelen, Breda and Den Bosch. Brabant also has the largest number of recognised regional products (35, compared to 34 each from Antwerp and East Flanders) as well as a strong and dynamic marketing for local products at the provincial level.

To bring them all together in one place, the province now has three shops dedicated to regional delicacies, in Grimbergen, Halle and more recently Jezus-Eik. We visited the shop in Grimbergen and found a veritable Aladdin's Cave of products from the area, many of them quite unexpected. It's hard to know where to start, though perhaps prudent not to start with the shelves of bottles, featuring everything from coffee liqueur from Halle to genever

from Lennik in flavours ranging from passion fruit to vanilla to pear. There are of course the local beers, not least Grimbergen itself, or for those travelling home this summer, a 12-bottle selection of Pajottenland's Pride beers, in a handy wooden carrier.

One whole wall is taken up with jams from Haacht, and another with honey from Opwijk and Steenhuffel. Faced with such an embarrassment of riches, we picked three products for home tasting. Honey with walnuts from beekeeper Walter Grooten in Steenhuffel has something of baklava about it. The walnuts have a bitter edge to the taste, cutting the sweetness of the liquid honey, which has an acacia-like character. They also provide a perfect texture, and look like tiny reptile-brains in some sort of suspension. It's hard not to eat them all at one sitting.

Nuts also feature in one of the cheeses from Affligem, also famed for its beer.

This is a Gouda-like ball of about 12cm by 6cm. The cheese is slightly matured, which gives it body enough to support the hazelnut chips embedded throughout. Again, texture is the thing here; I might have longed for more robust chunks, but they would probably have made the cheese impossible to cut.

Finally, advocaat made with grape juice from Huldenberg, right in the middle of the Flemish grape-growing area around Hoeilaart and Overijse. I'm not an advocaat fan, but I consulted a Dutch-born expert, who was unable to discern much difference from the standard stuff, made with brandy. Attention: this is the thick sort of advocaat, made for spooning onto waffles, pancakes or other desserts. It packs quite a kick.

The Grimbergen shop can be found along with others in Flanders by going to www.streekproduct.be and clicking on "links".

► www.streekproduct.be



Honey and walnuts: the perfect combination

© Shutterstock

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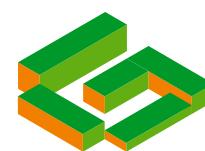
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GOSSELIN MOVING
BELGIUM - MEMBER GOSSELIN GROUP

Agenda

Suspicious Landscapes • 16 July to 14 August →

The possibilities and mysteries of landscapes in an exhibition both indoors and out in Bruges' Genthof
→ www.genthof.be

FLANDERS TODAY
JULY 13, 2011



© Stad Gent

The people's party GENTSE FEESTEN

LISA BRADSHAW

Thumbing through a Time Out travel guide to Belgium recently, I came across an entry on the Gentse Feesten that was glowing (naturally) but also expressed a sense of amazement. Despite more than one million visitors (and growing), blaring rock bands until 4.00 and every kind of drink imaginable until 6.00, there is never any trouble, the book exclaims. "Not a punch, not a brawl, nothing trashed – except the good people of Ghent, who know how to behave even when beer-soaked."

I hadn't considered this before, but indeed. Try setting hundreds of thousands free in the centre of Manchester and leaving them a week in the heat and the beer. The most dangerous episode ever to happen at the Gentse Feesten was the explosion a few years ago of the "spit burger", a beloved stand of the Feesten's most excellent fare. Flames and smoke shot into the air, and people ran screaming. (Find it on YouTube under "Gent is burning".)

A few hours later, a shiny new spit burger stand took its place, and the incident became anecdotal. "Why I remember when the spit burger exploded back in '08..." But, as a resident of the city, what amazes me most about the Gentse Feesten is the people I see there – people I never see in the city centre. The folk. The *Gentenaar*

who lives on the outskirts of town, rarely ventures into its centre, doesn't normally go to a music festival and certainly not to the theatre. But during the Gentse Feesten, they not only show up to eat and drink and listen to cover bands, they go to the theatre. Because it's their kind of theatre: Gentse Feesten is many things, and one of them is a theatre festival. And much of that theatre is in Ghent dialect. Getting a ticket to one of the more popular indoor performances during the Gentse Feesten is like trying to score one for Prince.

The Gentse Feesten in fact began in the 19th century as a celebration thrown by the city for its labourers. It seemed that every district of the city held a traditional Sunday feast, with too much eating, drinking and general bawdiness – to the point that absenteeism at factories on Mondays was at an alarming level. The city outlawed the Sunday parties, but decided to pacify citizens by throwing one big, free party a year.

Still on the Gentse Feesten website are the words: "Cultural Folk Feast". So once a year, in a city more known for its intellectuals, artsy atmosphere and university students, the folk are out in force. Which isn't too say that the Gentse Feesten is homogenous. Quite the opposite. There's enough to choose from: about 12 outdoor stages

across the city centre with live music, the country's biggest street theatre festival, a puppet buskers festival, the techno festival 10 Days Off, a comedy festival and a theatre festival at dozens of venues across town. Everything outdoors is free; indoor performances often require a ticket, and it's best to get them in advance on the website or from the venue itself.

Like any festival, there are highlights, such as Gabriel Rios and Nouvelle Vague on 16 July or Steak Number Eight and Intergalactic Lovers on 23 July. But just wandering around the Gentse Feesten, discovering its habits and its quirks – its out-of-the-way beach, its favourite spots for impromptu street theatre, its stages where you, too, can dance, its little offshoot festivals, its spit burger.

Now in its 168th year, the Gentse Feesten has become the biggest festival of its kind in Europe. And all because the *Gentenaars* liked to party more than they liked to work.♦

16-25 July
Across Ghent
→ www.gentsefeesten.be

MORE FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

Parkpop → Kruidtuin, Mechelen →

Dour Folk Festival → Festival site, Dour

Bruxellons 2011 → Karreveld Castle, Brussels



Antwerp

Deurne Openluchttheater Rivierenhof

Turnhoutsebaan 232; 070.222.192

www.openluchttheater

JUL 15 13.00 Budzillus. 19.00 Multikulti

Berlijn + The Metropole Ska Jazz Orchestra

JUL 16 19.00 Stef Bos + Yevgeni

JUL 20 19.00 Absynthe Minded + Justin

Nozuka

Het Stadsmagazijn

Keistraat 5-7; 03.292.63.80

Until JUL 29 Croque Musique, terrace

concerts with lunch

Kelly's Irish Pub

Keyserlei 27

www.kellys.be

JUL 15 20.00 Basically Basic

JUL 16 20.00 Olly the Quartz

Brussels

Fuse

Blaesstraat 208; 02.511.97.89

www.fuse.be

JUL 16 23.00 Wildfamily presents: Lee Foss,

Igor Vicente, Don Collins, Pierre, Deg

Recyclart

Brussels - Chapelle train station

25 Rue des Ursulines ; 02.502.57.34

www.recycleart.be

JUL 14 22.00 Viudmoth

JUL 15 23.30 Yaaba Funk + Filastine +

Harmonious Thelonious

JUL 21 23.00 Rebel Up Soundclash #4: Global

Lo-Fi & Folkpop

Ghent

Dok

Koopvaardijlaan 13

www.dokgent.be

JUL 16-AUG 31 Dok beach, open daily with

free entertainment, plus breakfast, picnic

lunches and more

White Cat

Drongenhof 40; 09.223.22.27

www.white-cat.be

JUL 15 22.00 Tropical Out There with Frankie

Francis

Zebrastraat

Zebrastraat

www.zebrastraat.be

JUL 16 18.00 Gabriel Rios

Hasselt

Muziekodroom

Bootstraat 9; 011.23.13.13

www.muziekodroom.be

JUL 21 22.00 Summer Camp #1 - Drum 'n

Bass



Jazz & Blues

Brussels

Roodebeek Park

Roodebeeksteenweg 314; 02.761.60.15

www.wolubilis.be

JUL 17 16.00 Muziek de Singe, jazz manouche

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45

www.themusicvillage.com

Until AUG 27 21.00 Brussels Village Festival,

jazz & Latino festival

Until JUL 16 21.00 The Swing Dealers

JUL 19-23 Zizalie Quintet



World & Folk

Brussels

Art Base

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20

www.art-base.be

JUL 17 18.00 Sitar-Sarod Jugalbandi, Indian

raga

DON'T MISS

Weg van Klassiek!

26-28 August

Across Pajottenland

Classical music and glowing hills go hand in hand during Weg van Klassiek!, a festival of classical music and nature in Pajottenland, a green, idyllic stretch of land east of Brussels. Nine different concerts will be given on nine different locations, including churches, mansions and castles. Nature is the festival's encompassing theme and concert-goers are encouraged to travel from location to location, by foot, bicycle, or horse wagon while guides talk about local animal life.

→ www.wegvanklassiek.be



Classical & New Music

Brussels

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00

www.bozar.be

JUL 20 20.00 Belgian National Orchestra conducted by Andrey Boreyko with Anna Vinnitskaya, Denis Kozhukhin, piano: Rachmaninov, Ravel (free; prelude to the Belgian National Day)



Visual Arts

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

Until SEP 18 Collection XVII: If you shoot a bullet in a vacuum, will it keep travelling forever?, selected works and films by British artist Emily Wardill

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, including works by Emile Claus, James Ensor and Marc Chagall

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

Agenda

Photo Museum

Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00

www.fotomuseum.be

Until SEP 25 Insight, photos by Elke Andreas Boon, Elinor Carucci, Alexandra Cool and Jacques Sonck

Plantin-Moretus Museum

Vrijdagmarkt 22; 03.221.14.50

www.museumplantinmoretus.be

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

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

Site Oud Sint-Jan

Mariastraat 38; 050.47.61.00

www.expo-brugge.be

Permanent From Pablo Picasso to Joan Miró, permanent exhibition of more than 100 works by Picasso, plus works by Henri Matisse, Marc Chagall, Joan Miró, more

Brussels

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

Until JAN 15 2012 Bob De Moor & De Zee, comic strips by the Antwerp artist and Hergé colleague, who was passionate about the sea

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 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

Until SEP 11 Young Belgian Painters Award 2011, works by the 10 finalists in the prestigious art competition

Until SEP 18 The Power of Fantasy: Modern and Contemporary Art from Poland, works by more than 30 contemporary Polish artists

Until SEP 25 Beyond the Document, works by 14 contemporary Belgian photographers

Brussels Expo

Belgiëplein 1; 070.25.20.20

www.kingtributbrussels.be

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

CIVA

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.71

www.civa.be

Until SEP 25 Transforming Landscapes, the work of Norwegian architectural firm Reiulf Ramstad

Until OCT 2 Brussel, een sterk staaltje van engineering (Brussels, Engineering Prowess), the world of engineers in the Brussels region

Charliermuseum

Kunstlaan 16; 02.218.53.82

www.charliermuseum.be

Until SEP 30 A Hard Existence, paintings of

farmers, fishermen, servants and other manual labourers by late 19th- and early 20th-century artists

City Hall

Grote Markt; 02.279.64.24

www.brupass.be

Until SEP 25 Barok onthuld (Baroque Unveiled), a new way of looking at sculpture in Brussels and Belgium

Costume and Lace Museum

Violettestraat 12; 02.213.44.50

Until SEP 25 Midsummer Night's Dreams, textile works by Diane Didier

Until DEC 31 Hand-made 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

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 the Dukes of Brabant

Grote Markt 19

www.this-is-belgium.be

Until AUG 30 This is Belgium - A Signature of Excellence, chronological interactive journey through Belgium's history and heritage by way of the country's best brands

Interactive Media Art Laboratory

Koelmijnlaan 30; 02.410.30.93

www.imal.org

Until JUL 15 Waterwheel, web performance and real-time media mixing laboratory by Suzon Fuks, on the theme of water

Until AUG 19 Danse, Pouacre & Çavachute, installations by Véronika Usova

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Minimstraat 21; 02.512.19.63

www.mjbjm.org

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

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32

www.botanique.be

Until 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

Museum van Elsene

Jean Van Volsemstraat 71; 02.515.64.22

www.museumvanelsene.be

Until SEP 4 Explosion: Graffiti art in Brussels, 25 years of urban art including works by both pioneers and contemporary artists

Press Club Brussels

Froissartstraat 45; 02.213.00.40

www.europeandemocracy.org

Until JUL 15 Voices on the Rise: Afghan Women Making the News, a photojournalism project presenting the challenges and achievements of women in Afghanistan

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

Sint-Gorikshallen

Sint-Goriksplein 23; 02.502.44.24

www.sintgorikshallen.be

Until AUG 29 1000 voetschrapers, photos of

old boot scrapers still outside some Brussels doors, by Christophe H with texts by Laurence Rosier

ULB - Campus de Solbosch

Paul Hegerlaan 22-24; 02.650.37.65

www.ulb.ac.be/culture

Until JUL 16 Les Voyageurs du Savoir (The Travellers of Knowledge), interviews and portraits of international students

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

Ghent

Design Museum

Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99

www.designmuseumgent.be

Until OCT 16 Esprit Porcelaine, contemporary porcelain from Limoges

Until OCT 16 Die Essenz der Dinge: Design and the Art of Reduction

Until OCT 16 Johanna Dahm: Rings, ring designs by the Swiss artist

Dr Guislain Museum

Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95

www.museumdrguislain.be

Until SEP 4 In the Margin: Belgian Documentary Photography, work that documents the deviant, the extraordinary, the unnoticed, the 'other'

SUMMER MUSIC FESTIVALS

Cathedral Concerts: Organ concerts
Until AUG 30 Tues, 20.00 at St Michael and Gudula's Cathedral, Sinter-Goedeleplein
www.cathedralestmichel.be

Ecran Total: 22nd edition of the summer film festival
Until SEP 13 at Cinema Arenberg
www.arenberg.be

Zuid Fun Fair: 130th edition of the annual fun fair with rides and games
JUL 15-AUG 21 stretching from Hallepoort to the end of Zuidlaan
02.279.25.31, www.kermis-feest.be

Open-Air Cinema: Free open-air film screenings
Until AUG 31 Wed 22.00 at Wolubilis, Paul-Henri Spaaklaan 1
www.wolubilis.be

K-Nal (F)estival: First-ever summer festival with music, photography and culinary adventures
Until AUG 27 Thurs-Sat at K-NAL, Havenlaan 1
0474.04.00.00, www.k-nal.be

Midis-Minimes: Lunchtime concerts covering a wide range of repertoires, from world music to Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic and contemporary
Until AUG 31 at the Royal Music Conservatory, Regentschapstraat 30
www.midis-minimes.be

National Ball: Annual ball on the eve of Belgium's National Day with music by Laura Lynn, Compagnons de la Chanson, Lou & The Hollywood Bananas, choreographies to learn followed by public dance plus DJs Florent and The Planes
JUL 20 19.00-1.00 at Vossenplein

Poland's EU Presidency: Poland takes the six-month helm of the European Union Council for the first time, featuring a major programme of cultural events
Until DEC 31 across Belgium
<http://culturepolonaise.eu>

Recyclart Holidays: Free summer activities on Thursday & Friday evenings featuring concerts, screenings, communal bread making, workshops and more
Until AUG 5 at Recyclart, Ursulinenstraat 25
02.502.57.34, www.recycleart.be

Ghent

Festival of Ghent: 168th annual cultural folk festival with concerts, parties, performances and much more
JUL 16-25 across Ghent
www.gentsefeesten.be

Knokke-Heist

Cartoon Festival: 50th anniversary of the festival featuring more than 300 cartoons from all over the world
JUL 17-SEP 18 at the Casino beach pavilion
www.cartoonfestival.be

Leuven

M-idzomer: Festival of concerts, comedy, dance, literature, exhibitions, more
JUL 28-31 at M Museum, Vanderkelenstraat 28
016.27.29.29, www.m-idzomer.be

Zomer van Sint-Pieter: Lunch-time concerts, a sister event to the Midis-Minimes festival in Brussels
Until AUG 26 at Saint Peter's Church, Grote Markt
www.zomer-van-sint-pieter.be

Ostend

Geronimo Stilton's Fantasia: Giga Grote Muiscal under a circus tent on the beach
Until JUL 17 17.00/18.30/19.00 at Kursaal (Casino), Monacoplein 1
070.22.56.00, www.sherpa.be

Mamma Mia!: Musical (in English with subtitles in Dutch & French)
JUL 19-AUG 14 at Kursaal (Casino), Monacoplein 1
070.22.56.00, www.sherpa.be

Kunstenfestival Watou: Third annual arts festival with artists and curators bring together word and image through a variety of media
Until SEP 11 at venues across Watou
www.watou2011.be

Antwerp

Jazz Middelheim: 30th edition of the open-air jazz festival featuring Toots Thielemans, Brussels Jazz Orchestra with Bert Joris, Lady Linn & Her Magnificent Seven, Allen Toussaint & Marc Ribot Duo and Liberation Music Orchestra

AUG 12-15 at Park Den Brandt
www.jazzmiddelheim.be

Sfinks Mixed Festival: Open-air festival of world music, dance, film and circus featuring AfroCubism, Emir Kusturica & The No Smoking Orchestra, Alpha Blondy & Solar Sytem, Hindi Zahra, Bomba Estéreo, Ballet Royal du Cambodge and Khaira Arby

JUL 29-31 at Molenveld, Boechout
03.455.69.44, www.sfinks.be

Bruges

MAfestival: During its stopover in Bruges, the Festival of Flanders explores the theme of "Testament". Guests include the Bl'ndman ensemble, harpsichordist Christophe Rousset, singer Lucilla Galeazzi and cellist Roel Dieltiens

AUG 5-13 at venues across Bruges and Lissewege
www.mafestival.be

Brussels

Bruksellive: Free festival in the shadow of the Atomium featuring The Cinematic Orchestra, Vismets, STIJN & friends, Benji B, SX, Drums are for Parades, Phaeleh, Title & Delvis, Onda Sonora, Head full of Flames and more

JUL 30 at The Green Theatre, Ossegem Park
www.bruksellive.be

Brussels Summer Festival: Tenth edition of the annual festival featuring a diverse music programme by Jamie Cullum, Caravan Creek, The Hong Kong Dong, Xaman-Ek, Baden Baden, Ian Kelly, Tailors of Panama, Harvey Quint, more. Plus film screenings, open-door museum events, street theatre, sound and light show

AUG 12-21 in venues around the city
www.bsf.be

Brussels Village Festival: 7th edition of the summer jazz & Latino festival with 45 live concerts featuring one band each week
Until AUG 27 Tues-Sat at The Music Village, Steenstraat 50
02.513.13.45, www.themusicvillage.com

Royal Park Music Festival 2011: Series of free Sunday jazz concerts featuring Michel Maini Quartet, Fanny Bériaux and South London Jazz Orchestra

Until JUL 31 Sun, 11.00 & 15.00 at Warande Park
www.travers.be

Dranouter

Folk Dranouter: Flanders' purest folk festival featuring Kayam, Band of Gypsies, Zule Max, Ozark Henry, The Leisure Society, Kayam, Grant Lee Buffalo, Rodrigo y Gabriela, The Jayhawks, Sons of Noel and Adrian, An Pierlé & White Velvet, Salvatore Adamo, Ben Harper and more
AUG 4-7 at Festivalterrein Dranouter, Koudeketstraat
www.folkdranouter.be

Eeklo

Helden in het Park: Free outdoor world music festival

JUL 28-AUG 18 at Heldenpark
www.n9.be

Geel

Reggae Geel: Reggae festival featuring Herb Alize it, General Degree, Kingstep, The Mighty Jah Observer, Blackboard Jungle Sound, Jah Shaka, more

AUG 5-6 at Festivalterrein Geel, Zandstraat
www.reggaegeel.com

Ghent

Gent Jazz Festival: Annual jazz festival featuring Angus & Julia Stone, BB King, Steven De Bruyn, Tony Gyselinck & Roland, Gotan Project, Sing The Truth, Jef Neve Trio, Raphael Saadiq, Mavis Staples, Sonny Rollins, Daniel Lanois' Black Dub, Morcheeba and more

Until JUL 17 at De Bijloke, Godshuizenlaan
www.gentjazz.com

Gentse Feesten: Ghent's infamous annual 10-day, 24-hour-a-day street party featuring a dozen stages in outdoor squares with live music all day and night, plus Ten Days Off, a massive techno festival in the arts centre Vooruit. Also a Dutch-language theatre festival, a street-theatre festival and a puppet buskers festival

JUL 16-25 throughout the city centre
www.gentsefeesten.be

Sint-Baafsabdijconcerten: Five concerts bring Baroque, classical, world sounds and jazz to the beautiful abbey, featuring viola da gamba player Philippe Pierlot, violinist Lorenzo Gatto, pianist and harpsichordist Alexei Lubimov and Palestinian oud player Moneim Adwan

JUL 17-21 at Saint Bavo's Abbey
www.debijloke.be

Kiewit (Limburg)

Pukkelpop: One of Belgium's biggest rock festivals featuring Foo Fighters, Thirty Seconds to Mars, Rise Against, Skunk Anansie, Paul Kalkbrenner, Fleet Foxes, Eminem, Deftones, Bloody Beetroots Death Crew 77, Within Temptation, The Offspring, dEUS, Duck Sauce, Trentemøller, Lykki Li, Das Pop, The View, Stromae and many more

AUG 18-20 at Festivalweide Kiewit, Kempische Steenweg
www.pukkelpop.be

Leuven (Flemish Brabant)

Markrock: Free Belgian rock and pop festival featuring Intergalactic Lover, Willow, Gorki, K's Choice, Zornik, The Galacticos and more

AUG 12-14 at Oude Markt, Leuven
www.markrock.be

Lokeren (East Flanders)

Lokerse Feesten: Rock festival featuring Lady Linn & Her Magnificent Seven, Balthazar, The Heartbreaks, Roger Daltrey performing The Who's Tommy, 2ManyDJs, Arsenal, Daan, The Subs, Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings, North Mississippi Allstars Duo, Goose, Kelis, Primal Scream, Das Pop

Ozark Henry, Joe Cocker, Robert Plant & The Band of Joy, Paolo Nutini, Gabriel Rios, Triggerfinger and more
JUL 29-AUG 7 at Festivalterrein Lokeren
www.lokersefeesten.be

Mechelen (Antwerp)

Maanrock: 15th edition of the free rock festival with line-up including Fixxes, The Van Jets, Mintzov, Das Pop, Arid, Hermanos Inglesos, Mama's Jasje, Leki & The Sweet Mints, The Magical Flying Thunderbirds, De Kreuners, Clouseau and more

AUG 20 & 21 in the city centre
www.maanrock.be

Oudenaarde

Feest in het Park: Outdoor music festival featuring Flip Kowlier, Hermanos Inglesos, Sean Paul, Kruder & Dorfmeister, Pete Doherty, Arno, Triggerfinger, more
AUG 11-14 at Festivalterrein Donkervijvers
www.feestinhetpark.be

Peer (Limburg)

Blues Peer: Classic blues festival featuring Belgian Blues All Stars, The Black Crowes, Triggerfinger, The Paladins, Last Call, Charlie Cruz & The Lost Souls, Brian Setzer's Rockabilly Riot, Ray Manzarek & Robby Krieger of The Doors, King King and The Catsmokes and more

JUL 15-17 at Festivalterrein Peer, Deusterstraat
www.brbf.be

Tienen (Flemish Brabant)

Suikerrock: 25th edition of the rock festival featuring De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig, Zornik, Moby, Basement Jaxx, Heather Nova, Soul Sister, Tom Jones, Tom Dice, Natalia, The Baseballs, Triggerfinger, Iggy & The Stooges, Deep Purple, Roxette and more

JUL 28-31 in the centre of Tienen
www.suikerrock.be

FESTIVAL SPOTLIGHT

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

Blues Peer

15-17 July

More! More! More! The past decade the big Flemish music festivals have been programming more and more bands on a growing number of stages. But some of the more traditional festivals still opt for just one stage and breaks between the concerts.

Blues Peer (formerly the Belgian Rhythm & Blues Festival) is aware that more doesn't necessarily mean better. It's also an exception in that its scope hasn't broadened drastically since its inception in 1985. Blues Peer deals in blues, bluesy rock, roots music – and that's it. Headliners this year are southern rock veterans The Black Crowes (on Saturday) and Brian Setzer's Rockabilly Riot (on Sunday). The former can't afford a weak moment because they'll be playing after the Antwerp power trio Triggerfinger. You might have seen them at Werchter or Cactus, and you'll get plenty other chances this summer, but still: It's always hugely exciting when Ruben Block charges his guitar (*pictured*), Lange Polle lashes out at his bass and Mario Gossens lets his drums rumble.

Forty years after the untimely death of lizard king Jim Morrison, keyboard player Ray Manzarek and guitarist Robby Krieger are still going strong. For almost 10 years now, they've been reviving the songs of The Doors, with different vocalists. This time around Hawkwind frontman Dave Brock has the impossible task of filling Morrison's shoes. But "Riders on the Storm", "Light My Fire" and so many others still remain amazing songs, of course. Blues Peer, named after the Limburg city in the northeast of the country starts on Friday with a local opening night. Especially for the festival, members from El Fish, The Seatsniffers and The Electric King – three bands that are internationally renowned – form the Belgian Blues All Stars. To some, this might sound like a bad joke, but believe me it ain't. I'm pretty sure they'll set the standard for the next two days.

→ www.brbf.be



bite

Huisbrouwerij 't Pakhuis

Antwerp's trendy museum area 't Zuid (the South) today bears little resemblance to the run-down strip of port warehouses it once was. Investment in the area really got going in the 1980s, when artists moved into the then affordable housing and took an interest in restoring and protecting its unique architecture. Cultural institutes soon followed, with modern art and photography museums moving in, as well as a number of galleries, music venues and trendy restaurants.

One such restaurant is 't Pakhuis, also known as Antwerp's one and only house brewery. It was an obvious choice for a place to meet with a group of visiting executive MBA students from the US who had earlier let on that they just might be interested in sampling Belgian beer.

The tables are set up in the brewing room, complete with copper kettles and plenty of exposed brick and wood. The designers of this space, back in 1996, managed to give it an overall cosy and vintage feel while also keeping it airy and minimalist.

My dining companions want to know all about Belgian cuisine, traditions and specialities. And I'm in luck, as just about every typical dish I mention is also listed on the extensive menu, from shrimp croquettes to stewed rabbit. Many of the restaurant's

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dishes are prepared using one of their three house brews: Antwerps Blond, Antwerps Bruin and Nen Bangelijke ("frightful one", thanks to a 9.5% alcohol content).

We each order something different, and eight dishes arrive at our table in no time, with obvious attention given to their presentation. There's one massive serving of vegetarian quiche with leeks and courgette in a flaky, buttery crust. Next to this, a mound of fresh salad takes up half the plate.

Another diner tucks into his duo of house-made croquettes – one shrimp and one cheese – good-sized fritters with creamy filling, served with the requisite fried parsley, a lemon wedge and a bowl of fries with mayonnaise (for which we were charged extra).

I decide to branch out of my usual dining routine and order Scampis 't Pakhuis, but regret it straight away. My prawns are meaty and plentiful, but their sauce made from shrimp bisque, red peppers, cream and Nen Bangelijke beer is too oily and overpowering. The salad is on top of the warm dish, leaving the lettuce to go soggy.

Fortunately, the rest of the table seems more content. One tucks into one of my all-time favourites – salad with goat cheese and bacon and, in this case, king prawns, too. The thick bacon surrounds warm, gooey

ROBYN BOYLE



Your Bite correspondent, second from left, and a group of MBA students from the US at Antwerp's 't Pakhuis

goat cheese while the salad in a thyme and honey dressing provides crisp refreshment. Next to me, an order of monkfish and rolled sole fillets looks very promising in its lovely creamy *witloof* sauce made with Antwerps Blond beer and served with caramelised *witloof*, some diced red pepper and a dusting of freshly ground black pepper.

Another of our dining companions goes the simple route with a Croque Monsieur and a bowl of cream of tomato soup. The classic grilled sandwich is made up of quality whole wheat mash bread with flavourful smoked ham and 't Pakhuis cheese. This also comes with a fresh salad.

As accompaniment to the main dishes, you

have a choice between fries, croquettes, puree, rice or potatoes *au gratin*. "When in Rome," someone said, and we all naturally opted for fries and a house brew with our meals.

→ www.pakhuis.info

→ Vlaamse Kaai 76, Antwerp
03.238.12.40

⌚ Daily, 11.00-23.00
Sundays from 12.00

€ Mains: €16-€23

★ A wide selection of Belgian classics
inside a working brewery

TALKING SPORTS

Van Den Broeck and Boonen crashes prove Tour's toughness

He might have been a long shot for the title, but as the fifth placed finisher in last year's Tour de France, Jurgen Van Den Broeck, the 28-year-old Herentals-born rider, was expected to be near the top. But not in this crash-strewn year. On Sunday, the Omega-Pharma-Lotto rider was caught in a massive pile-up on a dark and humid blind corner during the descent of a seemingly unimportant climb at about 100km from the finish of Stage 9.

After receiving some treatment Van Den Broeck tried to continue the race but quickly found out that wasn't possible. On the slopes of the Col du Perthus he dropped himself on the ground while angrily shaking his head. After being brought over to the hospital Van den Broeck was diagnosed with a collapsed lung, three broken ribs and a broken shoulder blade.

Sunday's insanity is the latest incident in an extraordinary opening nine days, in which 18 riders have crashed out of the race. That includes former world champion Tom Boonen, who pulled out of the Tour during Friday's seventh stage after failing to recover from the injuries he sustained two days earlier. Boonen, who won the green jersey for the best sprinter in 2007, got off his bike and went into his Quick Step team car with 127km left in the 218km ride from Le Mans. Last Wednesday, he was among no less than six riders from his Quick-Step team - based in Wevelgem, near Kortrijk - who hit the asphalt, with Sylvain Chavanel and Gert Steegmans also needing heavy treatment for bruises and scrapes. Van Den Broeck's Omega Pharma-Lotto team - based in Waregem, in West Flanders - will now have to focus on winning the green jersey for Philippe Gilbert. Gilbert won the first stage of this year's Tour but only wore the yellow



LEO CENDROWICZ

jersey for one day, before he was dethroned. He is currently heading the points classification with a solid lead over Spanish sprinter Jose Joaquin Rojas and Britain's Mark Cavendish. Van Den Broeck and Boonen's crashes prove that in this most grueling of sporting tests, an extraordinary feat of endurance, there is no space for mistakes: the Tour is already settling down to a familiar pattern, with Spain's Alberto Contador and Luxembourg's Schleck brothers poised to lock in the top spots.

But when it comes to the biggest prize, while the Flemish may occasionally flutter near the front, they have still some way to go before they become real contenders. At least for now, anyway.

THE LAST WORD . . .

Easier said than done

"Belgium knows what it needs to do, but can't do it."

Professor Luk Van Wasenhove of the Paris business school Insead

Under consideration

"There simply aren't any jobs for a philosopher."

New graduate Gert Meyers on job prospects, in *De Standaard*

Wise words

"Numquam minus solus, quam cum solus." (Never less alone than when alone)

Bart De Wever accepts his isolation, in the words of Cicero

Dressing down

"I'm not sure I would dare to wear a really expensive ring these days."

Multi-millionaire Leopold Lippens, mayor of Knokke, where jewel thieves have been on the rampage

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #189

Feature

Enough with all the music festivals; it's time for theatre. Theater Aan Zee, an unlikely festival of theatre in coastal Ostend later this month, deserves all the attention we're giving it

Focus

Brussels wants to be gay capital of Europe but struggles with its image. Exactly how gay-friendly or unfriendly is our capital city?

Focus

Who is Joke Schauvliege? She is Flemish environment minister and talks with our reporter.