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© Natalie Hill



Food for thought

Researchers at KUL find that comfort foods really do make you feel better

ALAN HOPE

Next time you're feeling down, and you reach for a chocolate bar or a pint of ice cream or that family-sized bag of Doritos, take comfort. You're not being – or you're not only being – greedy and self-indulgent. You're in fact responding to the unconscious needs of your brain cells.

Thanks to a study carried out by the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL), it appears that what we used to think of as pigging-out is in fact more a case of self-medication and neurochemistry. The study was led by Lukas Van Oudenhove (pictured), a psychiatrist with a particular interest in the stomach and its relationship with the digestive tract. It's not as strange an alliance as it sounds: the gut contains so much neural material – more than the spinal cord – it's sometimes referred to as the "little brain". Your gut has about 100 million nerve cells. The association between brain and belly is part of our language: we have "a gut feeling" about something or are "gutted" when things go wrong. At the same time, we "digest" information or find an excuse "hard to swallow". You might start the day feeling "down in the mouth" and finish up feeling like "crap". The whole alimentary tract is a ripe source of metaphor.

More concretely, the adrenalin peak that occurs when you're, say, waiting to see the dentist may cause a dry mouth and sweaty palms, but also a churning in the stomach and even a certain looseness in the bowels. That's a case of the mind influencing the body: Your knowledge of what's going to happen in the dentist's chair affects parts of the body not normally under conscious control.

In the KUL study, published this month in the *Journal of Clinical Investigation (JCI)*, the whole mind-body interaction is turned on its head: The results clearly show that the body can also have a direct effect on the emotions.

The study took 12 healthy volunteers and subjected them to four 40-minute sessions in an fMRI scanner on different days. Later, they were shown photos of people with sad or neutral expressions and played either sad or neutral music.

Ten minutes in, comes the special part of this study. The subjects have already been fitted with nasogastric tubes and now they receive either a saline solution or a solution of fatty acids, such as are found in the sort of foods we're usually counselled to consume in moderation, or not at all.

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Bombs away

The Army's bomb disposal unit, Dovo, disposed of 90 tonnes of bombs, grenades and other munitions in the first half of this year, it was announced last week. Never a day goes by when Dovo isn't being called out to deal with unexploded ordinance, most of it from the two World Wars, and the figures have been roughly the same every year for decades.

"After all this time, the ground is still full of munitions," Dovo sergeant Nicolas Dubasin said. "Every couple of hours something shows up." Belgium's clay soil allowed missiles, bombs and mortar rounds to disappear into the ground if they landed without exploding. They

become unearthed by a process called kinetic sieving, in which the constant activity underground forces small particles to move downward and large objects to be gradually thrust upward. You can achieve the same effect by burying a grape in a bowl of uncooked rice, then shaking it gently: the grape will emerge as if by itself.

Sgt Dubasin sees no end to the work. "During the two wars, there were millions of projectiles fired, and 20% of them failed to explode and stuck in the ground. There are certainly 10,000 of those things in the ground still, just waiting to come out." ♦



Parliament recalled over financial crisis

PM attempts show of confidence against stormy economic background

ALAN HOPE

Members of the federal parliament and Senate were last week recalled from holiday by acting prime minister Yves Leterme in an effort to bring some stability to Belgium's perilous economic situation, after a week that saw the economy rocked by a number of key events. The stated reason for Leterme's call is to hammer out who will draw up the budget for 2012, but the underlying reason is to send out a signal to international financial markets that Belgium is steering a steady course.

"Who makes up the budget is in itself of no importance," Leterme told *De Standaard* at the weekend. "But by the end of August... we have to be able to show we are working on it in a serious manner. And we can only demonstrate that credibly to the outside world if we can show who is doing the work, and what methods they are using to do it. We can't allow ourselves at that moment to wallow in uncertainty. We'll see how it goes' doesn't inspire confidence, and that's what this is all about."

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FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE



Maxim Piessen

For many, even seeing an insect in a photo is closer than they want to get. For Maxim Piessen, 16, it's taken much dedication and thousands of euros of camera equipment to get as close as possible to the beasts, and now his enthusiasm has paid off.

Next month, Maxim, from Kapellen, Antwerp province, will take part in a three-day workshop in the US city of St Louis, given by three of the world's top insect photographers. Their credits include *National Geographic*, *Scientific American* and *Popular Science*, and they have impressive scientific as well as photographic credentials.

Maxim also has a formidable body of work for his age, but the photography is a by-product of his interest in insects. "I never really bothered with normal photography," he told *Flanders Today*. Instead, his interest lies in macro photography, which

requires special equipment to bring the camera in close.

The Bugshot 2011 workshop offers only three coveted places for students. "In May I sent off a letter and a portfolio," he says. The organisers said his work "stood out for the exceptional quality" of his portfolio; they not only waived the €600 fee, they threw in food and lodgings as well.

"I'm sure I'll get to know some new insect species when I'm there," he says. "And I'm looking forward to learning some new macro techniques, like photographing flying insects." Now the only problem is paying for his flight. To raise the cash, he's selling posters of his photos via his website. So if you're looking for a 30 x 20 cm headshot of, say, *Sybilla pretiosa* (the cryptic mantis), there's only one address:

⇒ www.mpke.eu

News in brief

Interior minister Annemie Turtelboom will review the procedures for **police presence at football matches**, after it was revealed that the bill for Jupiler Pro League matches last season came to nearly €5,431,000 – more than €1 million more than the previous season. In total, 23,140 police officers took part in these public order details. The increase was due to more matches taking place, as well as a tendency towards increased violence at some matches.

Only 5% of cafés were in **breach of the new smoking ban** during its first month in July. Inspectors carried out 1,557 checks and found the new law being broken in 81 cafés. Offenders are being issued warnings, with fines to come later for repeat offenders.

Femke Berckmans, the 14-year-old from Zwijndrecht who was found after being **missing for a month**, has told police she was held against her will. Berckmans returned home last week, severely dehydrated and confused, possibly under the influence of drugs. Police are investigating the case.

The body of Charlotte Antoniewicz, 18, who left a party in Sint-Pieters-Woluwe in the early hours of Sunday, 31 July, was found in a suitcase not far from her home. A 30-year-old man from Anderlecht confessed to her murder and appeared before a Brussels court last Friday morning. Friends of Antoniewicz, who comes from Wallonia, are holding a silent march in her memory on 19 August, the date she would have been 19.

Police in Antwerp province have warned they will be carrying out **intensified speed checks** every day at roadworks on the E19 near Kontich, which started last week. Traffic at the works is restricted to two narrow lanes in each direction, at the spot where the road used to branch at the Kontich exit. Speed limits in the area are reduced to 70 km/h. The Flemish government requested the stricter checks to ensure the protection of workers.

Meteorologists warn that the wet July and higher temperatures in August have created the perfect conditions for a **"plague" of mosquitoes** in the coming days. Mosquito larvae hatch in standing water, and the public are advised to clear away rain barrels, buckets and even flowerpots containing pooled water, and to keep doors and windows closed at night.

Only two municipal offices will be open for **weddings on 11 November**, for those who want to choose the date 11/11/11. The day is a public holiday in Belgium, commemorating Armistice Day, but Mechelen and Oudenaarde are making the exception to cater to newly-weds. So far, Mechelen has received two bookings. However, the facility is open only to registered residents of the two towns.

A 15-year-old from Borgerhout, a municipality of Antwerp, received a shock last week when he went to replace his lost identity card to find he'd been **registered as deceased three years ago**. "It's a bit creepy to find out you've been dead by law for three years, and nobody even

noticed," Zeno Maddier said. His mother, meanwhile, has continued to receive child allowance as normal.

Residents of Veldegem, West Flanders, were shaken last week by a small **earthquake** measuring 2.4 on the Richter scale. No damage was caused, but witnesses report hearing a loud bang and feeling the earth tremble. The shock was registered by seismologists at the Royal Observatory in Brussels. Similar small shocks take place several times a year, experts said, at the fault-line which runs under the province.

Dog-owner Karl Vervloet from Bilzen, Limburg province, saw no other option when his Lhasa Apso was **attacked last week by a pitbull** in the grounds of Alden Biesen castle. He took hold of the attacker and bit its nose, forcing it to loosen its hold on his dog, Arca. "It was an instinctive reaction," he explained. "I just knew I had to save Arca." Master and dog are now recovering from bite wounds.

Quick Step and Omega Pharma, the two Flanders-based top tier cycling teams, have announced they will **combine forces to create a super-team** that will take to the road in 2012. Omega Pharma will split from its current sponsorship partner, Belgian state lottery operator Lotto, to form Team Omega Pharma-Quick Step. However, it looks as if they will do so without national champion and world number two, Philippe Gilbert, who has confirmed he is looking for a new team.

OFFSIDE

No appetite for information

As we report elsewhere this week, some kinds of food may not be entirely bad for you after all. However when it comes to giving people nutritional information, a new study from Ghent University suggests people don't really even pay attention.

In the US, fast-food chains like McDonald's are now forced to display nutritional information for all of their menu items. According to Ghent researchers led by Christine Hoefkens and a paper published in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, they might as well not bother.

Ghent U's department of bio-engineering sciences took over the menus of the student canteen, introducing a star system according to the nutritional value of the food, noting if the meals contained too much salt or saturated fat, for instance. A group of 224 students, most of them women between the ages of 18 and 25, kept a diary of the food they ate just before and then after the introduction of the new menus.

The results were surprising, especially given the young, educated sample. The differences between the food eaten before the menu-change and after were for most negligible. A group of 60 students,



just under one in four, did show a tendency towards healthier food. For the rest, there was little or no difference.

"We did expect the participants in this study to be more concerned than the average consumer by nutrition and health," Dr Hoefkens said. "If we got no result from this cohort, there's a good chance there would be even less effect on the general public. It's clear that choices... depend on a number of factors: habits, taste preferences and the choices made by others are apparently stronger influences than... nutritional information."

⇒ www.tinyurl.com/Hoefkens

FLANDERS TODAY



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FSA calls Belgium's economic stability into question

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Leterme was responding to a week of bad news on the national, European and international financial scene. First, the Bel-20 stock market index dropped to under 2,300 points for the first time since 2009 and saw €6.7 billion wiped off the value of shares in a single day. Dexia Bank, in trouble because of the large amount of junk credit it still holds, lost more than €4 billion in the second quarter of this year alone, which included the write-off of junk credit and a sum destined to support the Greek economy. In the same period last year, the bank made a profit of €248 million. At its current share price, the bank is worth €3.2 billion – less than the value of its losses last quarter. Then it was revealed that the UK's financial regulator, the Financial Services Authority, had asked British banks to give details of their exposure to Belgian government debt, which was read as a sign that

the FSA is considering Belgium as a possible next member of the group of toppling economies that already includes Portugal, Ireland and Greece. Belgium's federal debt stood at €351 billion at the end of July.

To make matters worse, the so-called "spread" – the difference between the interest rate for Belgian debt and the standard reference German rate – extended beyond 200 points, effectively making Belgium less credit-worthy. The government's economic planning office blamed the increase on Germany's decision to lower interest rates and argued the larger spread was a Europe-wide problem. The resulting rate of 4.4-4.5% on Belgian paper is perfectly acceptable under current government plans, the agency's Bart De Ketelbutter said. Problems would only arise if the rate jumped to around 7%, "and for Belgium that's still a long way off".

Finally, Standard & Poor's, one of the three main international ratings agencies, last week lowered the rating on US debt from AAA, the highest rating available, which it has always held, to AA+, one notch lower. The move sent a shock wave through the markets worldwide.

As *Flanders Today* went to press, it was announced that the two houses of parliament would reconvene on 5 September. Meanwhile, the demand rekindled the debate about politicians taking the summer off. "A lost year leaves a sour taste, and the march of folly is still not over," tweeted liberal MP Gwendolyn Rutten: "How can we sleep while our beds are burning?" ♦



"We can't allow ourselves to wallow in uncertainty": Yves Leterme

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



189

incidents involving aircraft in Belgian airspace in 2010, a significant increase on the 99 in 2009, as a result of better reporting procedures, according to mobility minister Etienne Schouppe

972km

travelled by the average Belgian by train in 2010, according to the international railways union UIC, putting the country in fifth place after Switzerland, Denmark, France and Austria

420

parking spaces have been lost to the installation of Villo bicycle-hire stations in Brussels, according to the region's transport minister Brigitte Grouwels

1,250

drivers have filed a claim with the Flemish government for damages caused by potholes in the road so far this year, about a quarter more than last year. The total bill for approved claims comes to about €350,000

55.22%

new drivers pass their test the first time after learning from a friend or relative, almost exactly the same figure as those who follow driving school, according to the mobility ministry. More pass the first time in Flanders (56.2%) than in Brussels (50%)

Trickle-down traffic in Flemish countryside

The many roadworks being carried out in Flanders have had a knock-on effect for people living in rural areas. Many motorists find it quicker to leave the motorway behind and find an alternative route through the countryside – much to the chagrin of local farmers and others tired of the increased noise, pollution and nuisance. Road signs indicating that particular routes were only for local or agricultural traffic have had little effect, but now the Flemish government has announced a solution.

The office of minister-president Kris Peeters, whose portfolio includes agriculture, has sent a booklet to all rural municipalities, advising them on possible ways to block the interloping traffic. Among the ideas: Lift up sections of the road surface (which in many rural areas are concrete slabs) and fill them in with sand, so that tractors and farm vehicles can still pass, but ordinary cars will be bogged down, or at least delayed.

The same purpose could also be



served by installing a barrier that can only be opened after first stepping out of the vehicle, or by laying down a concrete block small enough to fit between the wheels of a tractor, but too large to allow a car to pass (pictured).

"The proposals," explained Jan Mosselmans of the Flemish Land Agency (VLM), "are only there to discourage car and motorcycle

traffic. Cyclists, walkers and tractors will actually be served by them. The whole idea is to give local people their place back." However, critics have pointed out that the measures could make some roads impassable in cases of genuine diversions, as well as for emergency services vehicles. ♦

→ www.ipo-online.be

Breast cancer screening "proves its worth"

The Flemish Agency for Care and Health (VAZG) has restated its commitment to breast cancer screening for women between 50 and 69, following reports last week on an international study which called systematic screening into question.

Every year, some 1,300 women die of breast cancer in Flanders, the most common form of cancer among women, and the leading cause of death. Since 2001, the Flemish government has supported routine twice-yearly scans for women aged 50-69. In 2009, more than 182,000 women, or just under half of the target population, turned up for screening. Since 1989, deaths

from breast cancer have fallen by a quarter, and in the developed world, the numbers show a steady decline.

But in an article published in the latest issue of the *British Medical Journal*, a Lyon-based study suggests that screening is useless and that the fall in deaths can better be attributed to improved medical techniques employed once a tumour is detected. The study compared six regions in neighbouring pairs: Sweden and Norway; Northern Ireland and the Republic; and the Netherlands and Flanders. The study found that Flanders and the Netherlands had a similar evolution of breast cancer death

statistics, despite the Dutch introducing routine screening a decade before Flanders.

Opponents of the programme point to the cost – €65 for each scan – as well as the number of false positive results. And for every woman undergoing a scan, there is a risk from exposure to radiation.

But according to the VAZG, between 23% and 30% of breast cancers are detected in an early stage, which means less invasive treatments and a survival rate after five years of up to 93%. "Breast cancer screening proves its worth every year," a spokesperson said. ♦

FIFTH COLUMN

A 10-year-old with a history

CD&V has invited its members to Kortrijk later this month to celebrate the party's 10th birthday. A remarkable YouTube clip to mark the event shows all Flemish Christian-democrat ministers in old-timey slapstick style. (Humour was never CD&V's strong point.)

CD&V holds the two most important political positions in Flanders: that of minister-president (Kris Peeters) and that of prime minister (Yves Leterme, caretaker for longer than he had hoped for). It is, of course, the successor of CVP, the most important political factor in Flemish politics since the Second World War. As a "people's party", CVP united the establishment, employers, workers and farmers.

All of that ended in 1999, when electoral defeat brought a new type of coalition. Liberals and socialists formed the so-called "purple government" without the CVP, their mutual aversion for this traditional party acting as a binding agent.

Being in opposition felt unnatural to the Christian-democrats, and their reaction was one of impotence. Christian-democracy in Flanders was compared to a melting ice floe: doomed to disappear.

It was up to Stefaan De Clerck, current federal minister for justice, to revive the old party. His relentless work and wordy style were ridiculed, from the outside as well as in. We are not going to name our party after a dog, one prominent member said, after "Fides" was suggested as a new name. In the end, it became CD&V, which stands for Christian Democrat & Vlaams. CD&V took until 2004 to catch on. By then the purple magic had worn off, and CD&V had forged a strategic alliance with N-VA, a struggling faction hanging on for dear life. The "cartel" worked: by 2004, CD&V was back in power, with Yves Leterme at the head of the Flemish government.

For a while, Leterme became Flanders' new Messiah: He stood for a less frivolous style, promising "good governance" and an agreement on state reform. As prime minister, though, he fell from grace, failing to deliver on both promises. N-VA, the cuckoo CD&V raised, flew out and replaced the Christian-democrats as the force to be reckoned with.

So where does that leave CD&V? Its future is more uncertain than that of the old CVP ever was, but – as the many who flock to Kortrijk will demonstrate – the ice has far from melted yet. And if a new federal government ever sees the light, this 10-year-old will definitely be in it.

→ www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmImVCPI_FY

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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Food for thought

The body controls the mind when it comes to fatty foods

→ continued from page 1

The subjects have no idea what they've ingested, but the gut knows: Those who had registered increased activity in the emotional centres of the brain – like the thalamus, hypothalamus and cerebellum (see diagram) – on being subjected to sad impulses, underwent a reduction of those emotions, in some cases by more than half. Those who received the saline solution showed no effect. In other words, fatty foods reduce sadness in the brain, even when you don't know you've consumed them. And the effect shown is far

higher than any results achieved by best-selling anti-depressants like Prozac.

Self-medicating with *frietjes*

"We already knew that taste and smell are really important in determining the reward value or the mood-altering properties of foods," explains Dr Van Oudenhove. "But we showed for the first time that, even if you bypass all sensory stimulation, food can still have an influence on vulnerability to sad moods. That's the novel thing here."

The phenomenon of comfort food has been well researched, with the category divided by one study in 2006 into four areas: nostalgic foods, indulgent foods, convenience foods and physical comfort foods. The KUL's finding is simple but revolutionary. It shows that the latter category, being outside conscious control, could be the most important.

In contradiction to the ruling Cartesian paradigm that states that the mind controls the body, this study shows that, in some cases at least, the body is controlling

the mind. The body is sparking a neurochemical appetite for fatty food, over and above the normal desire people have for comfort foods.

Could people who indulge in comfort foods be unconsciously self-medicating, in the same way that pregnant women eat foods that satisfy "cravings" in response to an unconscious demand from their bodies for certain minerals or vitamins? This has been known to happen even if the idea of eating such things as ash, baking powder and even soil is unappetising, or even repulsive, to them.

"It's hard to tell what aspects are all in play; it could be there's a sort of homeostatic urge," says Van Oudenhove, referring to the body's need to restore a balance, in much the same way as cats or dogs eat grass when feeling unwell.

An editorial by scientists from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases in the US accompanies the publication of the study results in the JCI, pointing out the study's limitations – the small sample size and the lack of any demonstration of the mechanism of "gut-brain signalling", as Van Oudenhove calls it.

"That's the next thing to look at," he tells me, accepting the criticisms of his peers. "Before rushing to apply the findings in other patient populations, we need to confirm the findings in a larger sample. We need to look at gender differences, personality features and the way the people involved think about

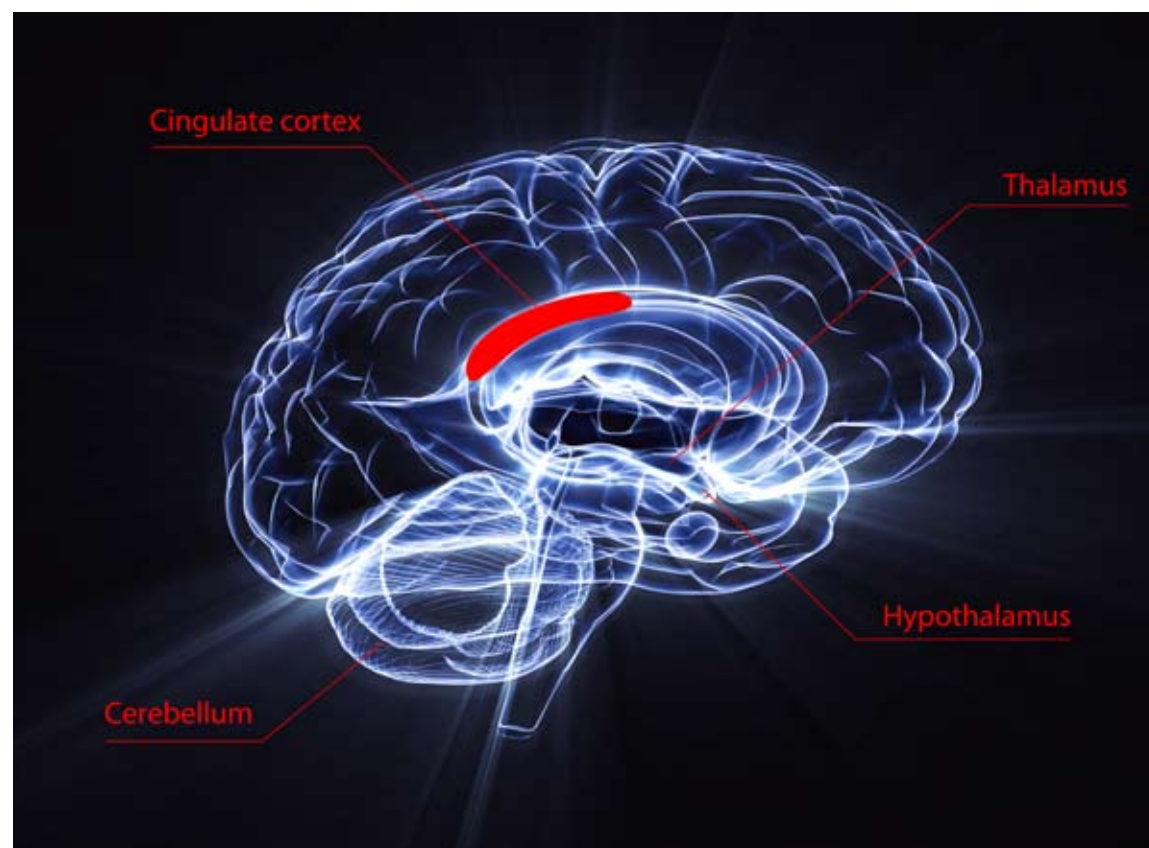
eating. Only then can we look at how these results apply to patients with conditions like depression, obesity and eating disorders."

Responsibility still key

For Greet Vansant, an expert in social medicine and nutrition at KUL, the findings of the Van Oudenhove study don't, for the time being, suggest a new approach to the problem of obesity, which has reached epidemic proportions in the Western world.

"We have to learn to unravel the mechanisms of the way people react to food in certain ways," says Dr Vansant. The notion that the urge to consume "comfort food" might come from the body itself rather than the mind, "doesn't change our advice. The notion of comfort works hand-in-hand with obesity. While comfort may be a drive, we have to help people change their comfort methods. Why eat chocolate when you could eat an apple, or go for a walk, or do something active?" While "we're certainly not about to advise people to eat chocolate when they're feeling down," she says, "we're also not going to ban it because it has its place in the food pyramid. That would have the opposite effect to the one we're looking for. People just have to take responsibility for what they consume." ♦

→ www.jci.org/articles/view/46380



The bottom line

For Belgium's premier **chocolate maker**, the study results confirm what he already suspected. Dominique Persoone of **The Chocolate Line**, with stores in Bruges and Antwerp, staged his own test a few years ago with Bernard Lahousse, the guiding hand behind the Food Pairing movement and the Flemish Primitives restaurant industry events in Bruges. "We wanted to make Valentine hearts filled with an overdose of **endorphins**," says Persoone, referring to the chemicals in the brain that influence emotions. "But it turned out that the body can't absorb high doses. We found that about 10 grams of a Chinese pepper allowed the endorphins to be absorbed, but the effects were too heavy. You could hardly stand up!" But Persoone has discovered something else: "Chocolate sets off the same **hormones** in the body as Prozac. One thing is for sure: Chocolate makes you happy."

→ www.thechocolateline.be



Science confirms what women have always known: Chocolate makes you happy



Turning Robbie into Jaap

A Flemish translation agency finds a niche in “localising” products

LAWRENCE DE GEEST

Though from a country with three official languages and despite a regular influx of foreign invaders, Belgians were not always known for linguistic prowess. The Dutch language was especially resilient to invasion. It survived Latin, Spanish, Italian (when Venetian ducats were *fiat*) and, for a few years, German.

Even cartoon reporter and world traveler Tintin got by with one language. Relying on interpreters wherever he went, the francophone didn't bother learning Dutch until several years after his adventures started publishing. But things changed after the Second World War. Borders opened to the global economy and then to economic and political unions; learning other languages – especially those of your neighbors – became increasingly vital to stay competitive. Flemings have thereon demonstrated a unique ability to not only learn foreign languages quickly, but with subdued accents as well.

An Ballekens, owner of Royal Translations is testament to this trait. “We're such a small country that we've had to adapt to other languages,” she says. “We have to be very imaginative.”

Knowing the locals

Royal Translations was founded after Ballekens left a translator in the UK because she thought she could do it better. She and a team of six native speakers combine for expertise in enough languages to host a football tournament: English, French, German, Dutch, Italian, Russian and Swedish.

They began with small clients in business, medicine and marketing. What sets them apart is their localisation work – the translation of culture as well as language – that has seen them specialise, interestingly, in video game translations. “A sentence you see on paper can mean one or two or three things, even,” Ballekens explains from her office in Ypres. “With video games, the text has to go with the image you see. We get files from game developers, we translate them, and then we insert ‘localised’ text. For example, for France, we have the player speak in the formal form *vous*, but for Dutch and many other languages we use the informal form. Then there are things



© Shutterstock

like how each population writes time, where they put the euro in a figure, and so on. Obviously, we don't want to offend anyone.” Certainly not. That is what makes games that take place in a fantasy world the most difficult assignments. Characters in such games are affectionately endowed with bafflingly complex backgrounds and set forth on never-ending quests. The plots of these games, with their intricate casts, mirror Dostoyevsky novels, and oftentimes it is renaming the characters that is hardest. “Robbie” in America becomes “Jaap” in the Netherlands, “Vanya” in Russia, and, say, “Christophe” in France.

It is the sort of work that Ballekens relishes. “My father spoke French, my mom Dutch, and I always had a passion for languages,” she says.

“Originally I wanted to be a journalist. But in Belgium there is no specific programme for journalism, so people study languages or communications.” After graduating university, she moved to Bath, England, and started her career in translation. It is a field, she says, driven by personality. “Some people I know can translate five or six languages fluently. They must have strong personalities. You can understand that in the context of having to interpret for people who are talking in front of big audiences. And there is a hell of a lot of traveling.” Not to mention the rigor of becoming an interpreter. “To become a fully licensed interpreter, you have to take exams, of which only five or so people a year pass in Belgium.” But, she admits, “it pays well – between €500 and €800 a day.”

Loving language(s)

Translation fees attest to the high demand but also to the difficulties of language learning. Academic linguistics has traditionally split between nature versus nurture in terms of how people learn languages. Nature suggests it is learned by biological processes, potentially through not-completely-understood mechanisms in regions of the brain that facilitate language learning. Nurture conversely suggests that it is learned by one's environment – one reason why people speak in regional accents. There is plentiful research on general language learning predisposition. Most interesting among them is the idea that people with powerful short-term memory and skill at repeating sounds fare better than others. Musical talent is

also often a sign of how well one can learn another language since repeating sounds is akin to repeating notes. Indeed, Ballekens has observed that most of her friends in translation are avidly interested in music, and many play in bands.

Undocumented, though, is how some people learn languages for sheer pleasure. A colourful example is a *Star Trek* fan learning Klingon, the language of one of its principal characters. (Though even here there is the stake of competition for the rightful honor of best *Star Trek* fan that possibly drives such learning. One supposes that only they know.)

Why Flemings in particular demonstrate strong language learning ability is not completely understood, either. There are, of course, some theories. One is that it is common among Northern Europeans. Another is that it's because Flanders is bordered by several languages. And another, as Ballekens proposes, stems from a motivation to compete with more economically powerful countries.

Tintin in America

Meanwhile, Tintin prepares himself for his big cinema outing this autumn, courtesy of Steven Spielberg. American audiences have largely shrugged their shoulders so far. They are used to polymath heroes, rippling with muscle and sexuality. Royal Translations was asked to take a casual look at how Tintin could be localised for America. But Ballekens takes no assignment casually. “We would have had to have done a case study,” she says, “to find out what American youngsters are thinking about and ways to incorporate American culture into the story.”

The request itself illustrates the reputation of her company, and Ballekens admits Royal Translations is growing at a steady pace. Plans are in the works for enhanced localisation techniques. “It is true that it feels like everyone in the world speaks English,” she says, “but even if everyone did, it does not mean they want to speak it instead of their own language.”♦

➔ www.royaltranslations.be

Cold reception for sick-leave proposal

Scrapping of doctor notes would increase absenteeism, says NSZ

ALAN HOPE

Flemish employers' representatives have reacted coolly to a proposal from the Christian Mutualiteit (CM), one of the region's main health insurers, to scrap the need for workers to provide a doctor's note for illnesses that only last one day.

The CM argues that the measure would ease the pressure on family doctors, as well as allow savings for insurers. Every visit to the doctor costs the mutuality €20. The requirement for a note applies to all staff classified as "workers" but to only some "employees" – a distinction that is in the process of being dismantled (see *Flanders Today*, 13 July).

The Belgian Employers' Federation (VBO) said it remained open to the proposal if employers were given other means of checking for fake absenteeism. "If a check were to show that the employee had falsely called in sick, he would have to be liable to a sanction," the organisation said. "That requires guarantees, otherwise anyone could call in sick just to have a day off work."

NSZ, which represents the self-employed, rejecting the CM proposal entirely. "The so-called 'Monday disorder' is not an illusion, it's a bitter reality," said a spokesman.

Scrapping the one-day requirement would lead to even more absenteeism, according to the NSZ, which has lobbied to have it extended to include all employees as well as workers. "Someone who is really ill deserves every support," the union said in a statement. "But someone who just wants to recover from a hard night out or to take a day off under the guise of illness has to do so on his own account."

Unizo, which also represents the self-employed, also rejected the proposal, although it did express some sympathy for the CM's reasoning. But the need for a doctor's note was, the organisation said, one of the few remaining obstacles between "the grey and black zones of absenteeism".

Absences lower in Flanders

According to research recently carried out by Unizo, absenteeism is lower among small businesses in Flanders than in the country as a whole. In Belgium, the average number of sick days a year is 12, while for small Flemish businesses, it is slightly lower. Among small-business employers themselves, 81% report never taking a day off.

"Someone who wants to stay at home



is not going to be put off by the need for a doctor's certificate," said Jochen Bessemans of Voka, the Flemish chamber of commerce. "It's not so difficult to pretend to the doctor that you're not feeling well." Four out of 10 municipalities in Flanders is suffering a shortage of family doctors. In Flanders, 111 municipalities are short of doctors, as are 10 out of Brussels' 19 communes. In Flanders, the shortage is especially serious in mid-sized towns like Geraardsbergen, Ninove, Maaseik, Lokeren and Mortsel.

According to the Syndicate of Flemish GPs, however, the government's figures do not add up. "They're even including

doctors who have died. We are asking for a proper survey based on information from the doctors themselves," said Rufij Baeke, vice-chairman of the Syndicate.

The premium paid to doctors who set up a practice in a municipality where there is a shortage, worth €20,000, is not the correct mechanism to solve the problem, Baeke said. "It may be fine for some people who are coming into the profession, but that's not the problem. The government would do better to make the profession more attractive, for example by cutting the amount of red tape involved and advancing the introduction of computerisation." ♦

Meal vouchers go missing

Small businesses have been advised to be extra careful when sending maaltijdcheques, or meal vouchers, back for reimbursement, after the postal service bpost admitted the disappearance of some €80,000 worth of vouchers. According to Unizo and NSZ, which represent the self-employed, the victims are mainly small businesses like food retailers or restaurants, which have accepted the vouchers in payment and then sent them back to the issuers, Sodexho and Edenred, for reimbursement.

According to the rules of the postal service, cash is not allowed to be sent by ordinary mail, but the confidentiality of mail makes this impossible to enforce. Cash may be sent by registered mail, but the compensation in the event of loss

or theft amounts to only €29 per posting.

There is a third alternative: The so-called mailing with declared value repays losses in full, but is much more expensive to send. According to the postal ombudswoman, businesses are taking a risk by choosing the cheapest option.

Businesses accepting vouchers often have to send back vouchers twice a month, to two different issuers. "Is it any wonder businesses decide to look after the pennies?" asked Lieven Cloots, legal adviser at Unizo.

NSZ, meanwhile, said that "businesses have the right to expect a faultless service from a government enterprise like bpost." And they pointed out that business is the only victim: The postal service has



already been paid, while the issuers still only have to pay out once if the vouchers have been stolen, or not at all if they have been lost.

The government, meanwhile, is looking forward to the introduction of electronic vouchers, which will allow

employees to pay using a smart-card, with shops and restaurants then being reimbursed automatically. In the meantime, the police have been called in to investigate the latest disappearance. ♦

Food news • Pine nuts recalled, processed food prices up



Food manufacturer Damhert of Heusden-Zolder, Limburg province, has **recalled packets of pine nuts** of the brand Biofood, after some packets were found to contain the related variety *Pinus armandii*, which looks like a pine nut but has a bitter taste. The nuts come in a 100g pack with expiry date 06/12 and were sold between September 2010 and April this year. The imposter nuts are of no danger to consumers.

Animal rights organisation Gaia last week carried out an action in Ghent to protest against the **continued use of eggs from battery hens** in processed foods. Although fresh eggs from caged hens have virtually disappeared from shops, there are still 5.5 million hens in Belgium kept in battery cages, which have to be phased out by 2012. Their eggs are still used in products such as pasta, baked goods and mayonnaise. The General Union of Farmers (ABS) pointed out that switching to an alternative system was more labour intensive and costly, though customers were not prepared to pay more.

The **price of processed foods rose** in the second quarter of the year, while inflation in general was lower than in the first quarter, at 3.3% compared to 3.5%, according to the price observatory of the Institute for National Accounts. Rising oil prices contributed 1.8 percentage points to inflation – more than half. The price of fresh food fell, despite rises for meat and fish, largely because the price of fruit was down slightly, and the price of vegetables fell by more than 5%.

Supermarket chain Delhaize has dropped a call for a 5-7% cut in the price of pig meat from suppliers, something farmers' representatives described as "irresponsible". A spokesman for the Pig Producers' Association (VEVA) pointed out that suppliers could only offer lower prices by passing the savings on to producers, who are already suffering difficulties because of higher costs and lower market prices. Instead, Delhaize will now pass on the discount it receives from slaughterhouses to the producers themselves. ♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Development • Uplace

The municipality of Machelen has received eight objections to the planned Uplace retail development, including one from neighbouring Vilvoorde and one from Unizo, the organisation representing the self-employed. Both fear that the development will have a negative effect on nearby commercial centres. Flemish developer Uplace plans a 190,000 square-metre retail, lifestyle and office complex on a former industrial site by the canal in Machelen, including an international hotel.

→ www.uplace.eu

Insurance • Vander Haeghen

Brussels-based insurance company Vander Haeghen is offering a new policy to couples to protect them from rain ruining their wedding day. For a fixed premium, the company will reimburse all non-refundable costs of the wedding being washed out. Given Belgian weather, the premiums are stiff. The company cited an example of a wedding costing €20,000, for which the premium is €7,000.

→ www.vdhunderwriters.be

Leather • Delvaux

Flemish designer Veronique Branquinho has stepped down as the creative director of luxury goods manufacturer Delvaux, days after it was announced that the company has been sold to the Chinese. Branquinho has been in the job since 2009, when she closed down her own business in Antwerp. The takeover had nothing to do with her decision, she said. "It's time for something new."

Publishing • Van Halewyck

Leuven-based publisher Van Halewyck is printing a record 200,000 copies of the first run of the new cookbook by chef Jeroen Meus. *Dagelijkse Kost 2*, named after the chef's television show, appears in September. The first book sold 160,000 copies last spring, making it the fastest-selling book in Flemish publishing history, Van Halewyck said. Meus also runs restaurant Luzine in Leuven.

Security • Securitas

Swedish security company Securitas has become Belgium's biggest security firm after the takeover last week of competitor Cobelguard, pushing G4S into second place. The deal was reported to have cost Securitas €38 million. At the same time, Securitas blamed lower sales and acquisition costs for a drop of 22% in second-quarter profits to €40.5 million.

Tourism • VVR

The Flemish Union of Travel Agencies (VVR) has called for tougher action to be taken against tour organisers who operate without a licence, which they claim is on the increase. Toerisme Vlaanderen issues licences on the government's behalf to travel agents who have proved their financial stability and have taken action, including fines, against 12 illicit agencies in the last four years.



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Taking a breath

The Art of Living Foundation is working to ease stress in prison populations

KATRIEN LINDEMANS

The Art of Living, the worldwide spiritual movement initiated by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, recently celebrated its 30 years of existence with a big World Culture Festival in Berlin. With millions of followers in 151 countries, the foundation is *huge*, with societal goals to curb violence and collaborations with UNESCO.

In Belgium however, The Art of Living is little known and mainly active behind the scenes – literally, behind prison walls.

“Sri Sri Ravi Shankar never had the intention of founding an organisation,” says Katrien Hertog, coordinator of The Art of Living in Belgium. “Some 30 years ago he started teaching breathing classes in India. As his course became so popular, he figured he needed some sort of canteen to give everybody something to eat and drink. Gradually people were coming from very far away, so he built a place where visitors could spend the night.”

It was the first Art of Living centre. The breathing technique *sudarshan kriya* is still the core of The Art of Living. “We get rid of about 80% of the toxins in our system through breathing,” Hertog explains. “A better technique can increase our lung capacity. The technique works on deeper levels as well, by aligning our mind with the present and transforming negative emotions. This is an effective way to enhance stress relief.”

Hertog points to studies done in India investigating the effects of the breathing therapy on depression, blood pressure and cholesterol. “The first results,” says Hertog, “confirm what we’ve been experiencing all the time.”

Hertog, 34, first experienced The Art of Living in 2003 when a friend convinced her to follow a course in Germany. “I didn’t really know what it was about, but I trusted her judgement and went along. After the first session of *sudarshan kriya*, I experienced such a feeling of peace and rest, something I didn’t think even existed. With my background in peace building, I knew this technique could make a difference on a much bigger level.”

Within a year, Hertog began organising Art of Living courses in Brussels.



An Art of Living teacher works with prisoners

Belgian scepticism

Introducing the Art of Living techniques in Belgium turned out to be more challenging than expected. “One reason is that people are quite sceptical about the phenomenon of a guru or master,” says Hertog. “In the East, people are proud to have a teacher; in the West, we seem to think that having a master is a sign of weakness, as if it implies they couldn’t do things by themselves.”

Hertog calls Ravi Shankar “one of the most remarkable people on earth. He has the ability to empower people and bring out their inner strength, while at the same time making them sensitive to others. Having a guru sets you free; it develops and stimulates you.”

Over the last decade, about 600 people have taken part in courses in Art of Living centres in Brussels, Leuven and Antwerp. “They were either dealing with problems of all sorts or looking for something to stimulate their spiritual interests.”

Spread over a few days, Art of Living instructors explain how breath is linked to the body, mind and emotions. “It’s important that people who followed the course continue to practice the techniques at home, but only about one in six sees it through,” says Hertog. That’s unfortunate, especially in our country, with such a high depression and suicide rate.”

Singing in the rain

Amongst the millions worldwide who subscribe to Art of Living techniques are managers of the World Bank, prisoners, politicians and victims of natural disasters. Some people managed to shake off addictions because of the course, others felt empowered after personal misfortune.

“The reason why the movement appeals to so many people is because it’s universal: Everybody breathes, and everybody is looking for a happy life,” Hertog says.

The Art of Living also strives to be holistic, with yoga, breathing and meditation, “but also knowledge, service and celebration,” says Hertog. That was the overall sentiment during the World Cultural Festival in Berlin to honour the movement’s 30th birthday.

About 45,000 attended people attended the event last month. “Sri Sri Ravi Shankar addressed the crowd from the same spot Hitler did so many years ago to preach his hatred campaign.

Everyone in that stadium could feel the possibilities – that the better world we were all longing for is already there, and that it really is possible if only we come together. It was also pouring down with rain that day. At the end, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar said: ‘Singing in the rain, dancing through all obstacles. That’s the art of living.’”

Prison SMART

Hertog is also working on the stress management and rehabilitation programme Prison SMART in prisons in Leuven, Ruiselede and Dendermonde. Worldwide, more than 250,000 prisoners have followed the course. “In Bulgaria, for instance, Prison SMART is running in all the prisons,” Hertog says. “Working with prisoners requires a slightly different and more intensive approach, as you have to deal with a lot of stress, unreleased emotions, addictions and a whole lot of ego.”

But she claims that after a few days of breathing and meditation, “the transformation is enormous. One prisoner told me he experienced freedom and peace for the first time in his life. He’d been working out every day to shake off stress and anger, but it always came back. He said the course has changed him in a way no other therapy ever had.”

One of the organisation’s first “students” in prison, was a man convicted of murder. “He had no idea when or if he’d ever be released, which made him depressed and suicidal,” Hertog explains. “I encouraged everyone I knew to send him a card, making him feel he wasn’t alone. He received more than 400 letters and continued corresponding with one of them in particular. They got married a while ago in the prison, and I was invited to be their witness.”

The prisoner is now writing a book about his experiences. “It’s unbelievable what can happen if you put yourself aside and give something to others,” says Hertog, “without expecting anything back.”♦

The Art of Living operates centres in Brussels, Leuven and Antwerp in English, Dutch and French

→ www.art-of-living.be



“Everybody breathes, and everybody is looking for a happy life”: Katrien Hertog runs Art of Living Belgium

Devil and the deep blue sea

If you're in trouble off the Flemish coast, there's only one number to call

MARC MAES

Sea rescue on the Flemish coast was all pretty people and adventure in the TV series and subsequent movie *Windkracht 10*. And some of that spectacle isn't too far from the truth.

"We're kind of a 100 emergency number, but without ambulances," explains Eva Descamps, head of communications at the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC). "That's where our multiple partners come in – the most spectacular being the rescue boats and helicopters. Our people at the rescue centre decide, pending the situation, who will deal with the incident."

Though the MRCC has only been operating for a few years, Belgium's groundbreaking marine rescue and assistance service launched in 1838 with stations in Nieuwpoort, Ostend, Blankenberge and Knokke. It remains a public service today, contrary to neighbouring countries like the Netherlands, France and the UK, where private concerns take on sea rescue and lifeboat assignments.

The MRCC was established in a 2006 decree regulating shipping traffic in the Belgian part of the North Sea and the river Scheldt estuary. The MRCC is part of the Shipping Assistance Division of what is now the Flemish Region's Maritime and Coastal Agencies.

Room with a view

The MRCC is housed in a beautifully restored part of the Ostend fish market at the Maritiem Plein, sharing the building with the administration of the Ostend Port Control,

with room for an operations centre, video and telecom facilities and a crisis room.

Looking out over the Ostend Port, the MRCC covers some 65 kilometres of Belgian coastline and the intense traffic at Flushing roads, accounting for some 300,000 ship movements per year. This area is one of Europe's most intensive maritime crossroads, with sandbanks, strong tidal currents and unpredictable meteorological conditions.

"MRCC is a permanent point of contact for all kinds of accidents and incidents at sea," explains captain Réjane Gyssens, head of the Shipping Assistance Division. "We monitor the emergency radio frequencies and co-ordinate search-and-rescue assignments, medical assistance and evacuation. The MRCC is also the first point of call for water pollution."

The North Sea is the crossroads for a wide range of maritime activities: Alongside commercial transport (on its way to ports in Zeebrugge, Ghent and Antwerp), dredging activities and fishing vessels, the sea off the Flemish coast is full of obstacles. "We have about 250 registered shipwrecks at a depth between 0 and 40 metres – a paradise for diving, but full of dangers," says Gyssens. "At the Thornton bank are 420 wind generators and high voltage stations – all obstructions for maritime traffic." In addition, "communication cables and pipelines can be damaged during anchorage and fishing".

The MRCC issues safety guidelines for fishing vessels and for the transport of explosives. It has had plenty of learning experiences over the decades. In 1984, the Mont Louis ship, carrying nuclear cargo, collided with the Olau Britannia passenger ferry. In 1987, the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster found 193 passengers drowned, after the ferry capsized off the coast of Zeebrugge.

"Before the Mont Louis incident, we had no idea what cargo a ship was carrying," says Gyssens. "In that case, the drums with uranium hexafluoride landed in the water." Since then, every ship has to draw up a declaration of hazardous goods. The Herald of Free Enterprise stressed the importance of drawing up a North Sea emergency plan.



The Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) is on alert 24 hours a day at the Flemish coast

Swimmer, divers and kitesurfers, oh my

The MRCC never closes – 16 operators share round-the-clock duty, monitoring radio channels and radar displays. It operates as the first point of contact in case of any emergency. Unlike other personnel of the Shipping Assistance Division, staff of the MRCC must have nautical education and sea-going experience. "This helps them to judge the circumstances," notes Gyssens. "They also get specialised training for crisis situations." Interventions have gone up. In 2005, the MRCC logged 97 assignments; 2010 closed with 252 rescue jobs. Beginning last April, the centre began listing sea rescue operations in categories: That month, incidents included merchant marine and professional fishing vessels (17), yachting, kite surfers and private fishing boats (19) and personal accidents with

swimmers, divers and missing persons (35).

"Once we receive a distress call – either by VHF channels, Ostend radio, police or civilians – we assess the situation and dispatch the rescue service," says Gyssens. "The helicopters of the 40th Wing Squadron are perhaps, thanks to the TV series, best known." But the service also calls on rescue sea vessels, the Blankenberge volunteer rescue service, the pilotage services and even the navy.

As people flock to the coast during the summer months, the MRCC campaigns for safety at sea. The highest percentage of incidents occur, says Descamps "in summer, on Sunday afternoons at around 16.00".

"Anyone with a yacht can head to sea," says captain Gyssens; no special training or registration with a local authority is required. "Anyone can sail a ship in sunny weather, but currents, poor visibility and strong winds are a real danger people should be aware of. Everybody at sea should have at least some notion of safety measures."

The MRCC publishes the brochure *Wijzer op het water* (Guide on the Water), which is distributed at aquatic sports clubs. (The English version is available on their website under "Downloads".) They also encourage diving clubs to point out the dangers of wreck diving alongside classic training in things like super-cooling and decompression. ♦



Both sea vessels and helicopters are used to assist those in trouble on the dangerous North Sea

➔ www.scheepvaartbegeleiding.be

© Marc Maes



Captain Réjane Gyssens, head of Shipping Assistance

Not aiming for the stars • Antwerp's Nulsterrenpension offers cheap and fun lodging at festival site

ANDY FURNIERE

Sleeping in a former gas factory may sound less than appealing – but then you haven't seen the Nulsterrenpension (Zero Star Pension) in Antwerp. In this low-budget hostel, you can spend the night in a setting ideal for a David Lynch movie.

The Nulsterrenpension is proud to offer not much luxury, but definitely an original sleeping experience at a low price (€15 per night). The furniture and decor is second-hand, with a final touch added by the local theatre group Lilith. These creative minds have clearly enjoyed themselves placing huge moustaches on family photographs, doll-eyes on portraits and bespectacled giraffe heads on the walls. Every room has a different name on the door, so you have the feeling of being invited by a mysterious Paula or Oscar into their private chamber.

The Nulsterrenpension is set up for the second year as part of city festival Zomer van Antwerpen (Summer of Antwerp). "There are enough expensive hotels with lots of stars in Antwerp," explains Patrick De Groote, artistic director of the summer-long festival. "Many young visitors are glad to find this affordable stay with

a lot of evening entertainment."

You will certainly not spend your evenings watching television at the Nulsterrenpension, as the hostel is located at the Zomerfabriek (Summer Factory). Old caravans, busses and factory sheds serve a new purpose as bars, lounge and restaurant. Visitors can learn about the life stories of African refugees in an extensive video installation, watch a movie in open air or dance to the beats during a DJ session.

From Thursdays to Saturdays a wooden tower designed as a Shakespearean theatre features concerts, comedy and theatre shows. To help them recover from the long nights, the Nulsterrenpension treats its guests in the morning to an organic breakfast. ♦

Until 28 August
Minkelerstraat, Antwerp
➔ www.zva.be



From the cradle to the grave

Flemish artist Natasja Lefevre uncovers the duality of memory in Watou

SABINE CLAPPAERT

Watou – remember the name. Each year, the tiny village in a far-flung corner of West Flanders hosts one of the country's most beguiling summer arts festivals. Between July and September it transforms its most historic buildings and breathtaking hideaways into exhibition spaces.

Surrounding a central theme, writers, poets, painters and other visual artists transform abandoned locations into sacred spaces: the echoing halls of an abandoned convent, the hushed caverns of a gothic church, the stables of an old farmhouse and the cellars of the town's brewery.

"Memory is a way of meeting" Lebanese-American artist Kahlil Gibran famously said. It is also the theme of this year's festival in Watou. "Our entire existence drifts on a universe of memories," writes the festival's steward, Jan Moeyaert.

This year, Moeyaert asked curators and artists "to remember". *Between Language and Image: Collected Stories #3* continues what the Watou festival does best: an organic growth of visions that entwine in mood and content to take us on a journey to a world that we yearn for long after we've driven back to our big-city realities.

One of the most arresting works at this year's festival is the installation "Hope" by ceramic artist Natasja Lefevre. A native of the coastal town Nieuwpoort, Lefevre's haunting installation, which shows 200 pairs of children's boots in a convent prayer room, captures two sides of remembering.

"The duality of our existence fascinates me; I play with the concept in much of my work," says Lefevre. In "Hope" lies a "duality of the recognisable shape and the empty inner space to which the viewer's gaze is constantly drawn. But rubber booties are also symbolic of a child that begins to explore the world. As a child, I loved my booties because I never had to ask anyone to help me tie my shoelaces."

The rows of boots fill a tiny prayer room that faces Watou's graveyard, filled with row upon



Showing the rationale self to the door: Natasja Lefevre

row of tombstones. "There is something haunting about the repetitiveness of the boots, which is repeated in the tombstones," Lefevre explains. "Together they symbolise the beginning and the end of life."

Lefevre isn't a big name in the European art world, a fact that surprises some local critics. Her three installations at Watou could help change that. But Lefevre doesn't subscribe to the "high art", "low art" hierarchy of the established art world. "I never attended art academy," she shrugs dismissively. "I trained as a stone mason and wanted to restore buildings and monuments. Before I knew it, I was restoring the portals and porches of the Sint-Salvator church in Bruges."

Lefevre would work as restorer for five years

before finally putting her hands in clay for the first time. "I loved working with hammer and chisel; I loved the resistance of heavy stone beneath my fingers. It was a job that taught me a lot about myself. I learned that I have somewhat of a photographic memory, that I could look at shapes and effortlessly recreate them later. And it taught me, at a very early age, to channel my youthful explosive energy," she laughs.

But stone masonry is a labour of physical love that eventually extracts its toll on the body. "After five years, I had trouble opening my hands; clenching my fingers around the chisel and the constant cold air on my knuckles began to take its toll," she admits. "When the doctor examined my cramped-up hands, he advised me to take up clay modelling to get them mobile again."

Lefevre's first works in clay date back to 1999. "Before I began working with clay, I was photographing animal cadavers for a series called *Road Kill*," she continues "To me, there is something poetic about the empty shell of a cadaver, the stare of a dead, unseeing eye. The tension between life and death is captured in their shape. With my photos, I wanted to reflect on death as anecdote, present the polarity of life and death."

Lefevre's works in clay continue to explore the duality of existence: the eternal versus the transient, the visible versus the invisible. Her sculptures always strike a balance between the mysterious and the ordinary. "Clay is a completely natural substance. It is closely related to earth as a material, which appeals to me because nature always reduces all her creations to this substance."

Lefevre has three works on display at Watou, all housed in the convent. Clay and metal sculptures make up "3 Figures", while "The Eye Test" centres on a quote from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's famous book *The Little Prince*.

"'Eye Test' is certainly one of my favourite works," shares Lefevre. It reflects on how

we have moved so far from valuing deeper connections, that we live in a reality filled with concrete – material proof of our existence, but which pays little attention to our souls. But the soul always seeks a way to manifest itself."

In "3 Figures", Lefevre places her sculptures, "Seed", "Torsion" and "Capsule" together in a room. "I am fascinated by the tension between works," she explains. "By combining them, I want address the concept of inter-relations. The Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas wrote that being human is, in essence, about relationships. As human beings we have a great need to be in inter-relation with others. Yet on the other hand, communication – the connection of inter-relation – is also so often an illusion."

Asked about the process she follows to develop her sculptures, Lefevre laughs: "As soon as I begin creating, my rational self may leave the room! Then other horses, whom I also keep well-fed, take their place."

The transformative power of creativity has always fascinated her. "Creating is very intuitive. I often begin not knowing where I will end, but I trust the power of this creative process. Compare it to the potential contained within a seed," she adds, "everything still has to happen, but it is all already there."

Like many visual artists, she learns something about herself with each piece. "Everything outside oneself is a mirror – also art. It serves as tools for self-reflection, a mirror to the self that shows us what we must learn about ourselves. And self-reflection is part of taking responsibility for what you make of your life." ♦



"Hope" at summer's greatest art parcours Watou

Art Festival Watou

Until 11 September

Across Watou (West Flanders)

➔ www.watou2011.be



BRUSSELS

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



SCHAERBEEK

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



WATERMAEL-BOITSFORT



BRUSSELS



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

WOLUWE SAINT-LAMBERT



ANDERLECHT

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

SAINT-GILLES



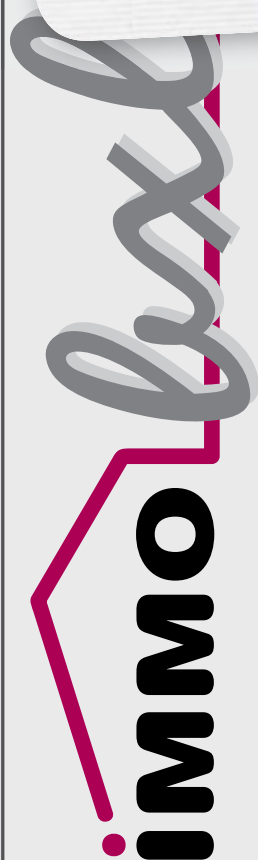
luxurious 1 bedroom apartments for sale with a view over Brussels. All the apartments have been completely renovated and are equipped with a wooden

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UCCLE

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

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



BRUSSELS

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

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



ANDERLECHT

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



FOREST

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

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



More than just a pretty chocolate factory THIS IS BELGIUM

ANDY FURNIERE

Chauvinism is not a brand Belgians are known for, but *This is Belgium* in Brussels' Grote Markt hopes to change this. Through a short trip for the five senses, the exhibition wants to show international visitors that this small country is more than a big chocolate factory.

Your senses get an immediate starter; with the entry ticket come two *speculaas* biscuits from the manufacturer Dandoy. This family-owned shop in Brussels has made its delicacies for almost two centuries, without changing its artisanal methods.

Not surprisingly, chocolate is also in plentiful supply with the brands Côte d'Or, Godiva and Pierre Marcolini.

But there is more than meets the tongue. Feel free to touch the lace made by Brussels' traditional lacemaker Rubrecht and to feast your eyes on the more colourful creations of fashion house Olivier Strelli. Most blinding is the jewellery by designers Tollet and Marie France. Most famous are the handbags of Delvaux, the world's longest-standing luxury leather goods company.

There are surprises, even for a born and bred Belgian. After all the eye-candy, you're overwhelmed

by a delicious aroma that carries you away to the African plains. The scented candles of the Baobab Collection, inspired by the enchanting perfumes and intense colours of African landscapes, are the favourites of curator Stéphanie Reinart: "Everybody is always amazed that Baobab is Belgian. The brand is still quite young [from 2003], but it is already well known and popular internationally. It shows that Belgian know-how keeps producing new world standard products."

Much of the attention is also drawn upon a bath, standing invitingly but empty in the middle of the exhibition. The piece is made by Aquamass, a European leader in the transformation of bathrooms into oases of well-being. You can even order a tailor-made model if you want a bathtub that really fits.

The Belgian standard-bearers in the presentation are Adolphe Sax, inventor of the saxophone, and the famous singer Jacques Brel, who in 2005 was voted "The Greatest Belgian" in history by the Belgian public. Through headphones you can listen to Brel singing about his beloved "plat pays" ("flat land"). Though *This is Belgium* is marketed

to the thousands of foreign tourists who wander around the Grote Markt every day, Reinart hopes to renew the love for the country in its native visitors. Amidst all the political turmoil, we hope to remind Belgians of what this small country has proven in its relatively short existence. "Made in Belgium" is a quality label we should be more proud of," she says.

One of Reinart's main regrets, though, is that Flanders is underrepresented in the exhibition because of difficult negotiations. Indeed, there should be more to taste of Flanders than a Duvel in the concept store, where, among other products, you can buy the adventures of many comic heroes Tintin and Quick & Flupke. Or immerse yourself further in Belgian brands by reading the exhibition book *This is Belgium*. You can even do this in a couch proudly coloured black, yellow and red. ♦

Until 25 August

House of the Dukes of Brabant
Grote Markt, Brussels

→ www.this-is-belgium.be



Antwerp

Hof de Bist

Veltwijcklaan 252, Ekeren
www.cirqueat.be
AUG 13 12.30 Free outdoor music festival with entertainment for kids and concerts by Flip Kowlier, Three Guys and a Horsehead, Charlie Jones' Big Band, Cafe con Leche, more

Sorghvliedt Park

Marneflaan 3, Hoboken
03.292.65.30, www.casalouisa.be
AUG 10, 17 & 24 19.30 Camping Louisa, free open-air concerts and street theatre every Wednesday

Ghent

Dok

Koopvaardijlaan 13
www.dokgent.be
Until AUG 31 Dok beach, open daily with free entertainment, plus breakfast, picnic lunches and more



Brussels

The Music Village

Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
www.themusicvillage.com
Until AUG 27 21.00 Brussels Village Festival, jazz & Latino festival:
Until AUG 13 20.30 Buster and the Swing



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 XVIII: 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

Mekanik Strip Gallery

St.-Jacobsmarkt 73
www.art-trek.be
Until SEP 17 Art Trek 8, eighth edition of the annual group show organised by and for young international graphic artists

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

DON'T MISS

Parkkaffee

Until 31 August

Groenestaakstraat, Ghent

This is one of those magical little places you hope to happen upon when you're rambling about, though setting your GPS is fair enough to get to this cool, little daily event in a wooded area on the outskirts of Ghent. Weekends find the best performances at the outdoor site, but every day are refreshments, tarot readings, kids' activities, hammock lounging and a campfire at 21.00.



→ www.parkkaffee.be

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

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

Bruggemuseum-Gruuthuse

Dijver 17; 050.44.87.43
www.uitgoedebron.info
Until OCT 16 Uit goede bron (Reliable Sources), the history of Bruges and how it grew to be one of the richest Mediaeval merchant cities

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

MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

Fred Bervoets: Work on Paper → *De Notelaer, Hingene*

Vacation Resorts on the Belgian Coast → *Galleries, Ostend*

About Life: The Struggle for Social Security → *Amsab, Ghent*

Agenda

DON'T MISS

Bruegelland

Until 2017

Municipal Museum, Lier

Although the temporary closing of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp is no cause for celebration, its loan programme whereby its vast collection is sheltered by smaller museums around Flanders certainly is. The Municipal Museum of Lier is now the happy temporary owner of some 100 paintings by Pieter Bruegel the Elder and is hosting several related events over the next few weeks, including workshops for kids and a themed walk combining the Flemish master painter with the Flemish master writer Felix Timmermans. The exhibition itself lasts until 2017.

→ www.breugelland.be



WEEK IN FILM

LISA BRADSHAW

PleinOPENair 12-27 August

August is open-air cinema month in Brussels and Flanders, and the creativity of sites keeps each outing unique. Props this month really go to Brussels' PleinOPENair, staged by the hardest-working alternative cinema in the land, Cinema Nova. PleinOPENair is as political as it is entertaining, with organisers luring you into abandoned or otherwise derelict spaces they want you to know about. Noting that city centre spaces they've used in the past are now home to fancy hotels and expensive lofts – the opposite of what the areas needed, claims Cinema Nova – they're now taking to the badlands of Brussels. This year's event is called "Canal" and puts you in areas shaped by – and shaping – Brussels' waterways. Again, many of these areas are set to be taken over by property developers, rather than by the communities that could benefit from them. PleinOPENair hosts walks and an exhibition, but the focus is three weekends of site-specific music and movies, all with a veggie buffet on hand and a bit of a



party attitude. The entertainment matches the site: On 13 August, for instance, you'll find yourself at the Biesterbroekkaai – site of the future Rives project, with high-end offices and luxury apartments – listening to the Belgian/French/Tunisian blends of BooDooRoo and watching Italian film *La Pivellina* (*The Beginner*), in which a family living in a trailer park on the wrong side of Rome take in an abandoned two-year-old they find. The order is the same on the following weekends: a band is followed by a short film and then the feature. At CuroHall in the Kuregem neighbourhood of Anderlecht, you'll see Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*; in Zuunstraat slightly outside of Brussels in Flemish territory, you'll see David Miller's 1962 western *Lonely Are the Brave*.

→ www.nova-cinema.org

PleinOPENair is free as are most other screenings listed below. Subtitles vary with each screening, so check listings carefully.

Antwerp

Cinema Urbana: Summer of Antwerp's hangar-covered cinema on the Scheldt, complete with a bar, piles of sand and movies about surviving the city. Coming soon are *Habana Blues*, *Four Lions* and *The Visitor*
Wed-Sun until AUG 28 at 22.00 at Plantinkaai
www.zva.be

Brussels

Filmotek: Annual garden screenings of shorts film, video art and works from Atelier 340's archives
Saturdays until SEP 9 at 22.00 at Atelier 340 Museum, Rivierendreef 340
www.atelier340muzeum.be

Geraardsbergen

Family Open-Air Cinema: A children's film every evening (in Dutch), followed by one that's a bit more grown up on the grounds of the beautiful Abdij Park. Coming soon are *Caroline*, *Avatar* and

Pirates of the Caribbean 3
Wednesdays until AUG 17 at Abdijstraat
www.openluchtcinema.be

Ghent

Viewmaster: Staged on the banks of the canal that runs from the harbour to the city, once home to docks and industry, now planned for development. Bar, food and DJ ahead of all screenings. Coming attractions are *Tremors*, *Woman in the Dunes* and *The Sheik*
Fridays at sunset until AUG 26 at Koopvaardijlaan
www.viewmaster011.be

Mechelen

Drive-In Movies: An old-fashioned drive-in at the terribly romantic water sports park. Each screening will cost you €5, but if you're driving a car 25 years old or more, you get in for free. Coming up are *Horrible Bosses* and *Conan the Barbarian*
Thu-Sat until AUG 27 at Sportpark De Nekker

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

Charliermuseum

Kunstaal 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

Interactive Media Art Laboratory

Koolmijnen kaai 30; 02.410.30.93
www.imal.org
Until AUG 19 Danse, Pouacre & Çavachute, installations by Véronika Usova

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
www.mjb-jmb.org
Until AUG 28 After Images,

multidisciplinary show by contemporary American artists

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.218.37.32
www.botanique.be
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 Exposition: Graffiti art in Brussels, 25 years of urban art including works by both pioneers and contemporary artists

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

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'

Kunsthall Sint-Pietersabdij

Sint-Pietersplein 9; 09.243.97.30
www.gent.be/spa
Until SEP 18 Bruno Stevens: Ground. Palestina 2000-2010, photographs of the Middle East by the Brussels photographer

Museum of Contemporary Art (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03

www.smak.be

Until AUG 15 Georges Rouault: Miserere, prints by the French artist from between 1922 and 1927
Until SEP 11 Carlos Rodríguez-Méndez: Agua Caliente (Hot Water), a giant minimalist sculpture by the Spanish artist
Until SEP 18 Jorge Macchi: Music Stands Still, paintings, sculptures, installations and video by the Argentinian artist

Hasselt

Het Stadsmus

Guido Gezellestraat 2; 011.23.98.90
www.hasselt.be
Until AUG 28 Hasselt aan Zee: Een eeuw marineschilderkunst (Hasselt on the Sea: A Century of Marine Paintings), works by 20th-century artists inspired by the sea

Kolonel Dusartplein

0478.47.88.02
Until AUG 21 Expo Savanne, life-like installations of East African landscapes including wild animals and local people by Belgian sculptor/taxidermist Dirk Claesen

z33

Zuivelmarkt 33; 011.29.59.60
www.z33.be
Until AUG 21 Kris Verdonck: EXHIBITION #1, installations and videos by the Flemish theatremaker and artist

Jabbeke

Provinciaal Museum Constant Permeke

Gistelsteenweg 341; 059.50.81.18
www.muze.be/nl/permeke
Until NOV 6 Roger Raveel meets Constant Permeke, a selection of works by Roger Raveel from the Mu.ZEE collection in a dialogue with Constant Permeke's oeuvre

Kortrijk

Kortrijk centre

Grote Markt 45; 056.27.74.40
www.kortrijk.be/tentoonstellingen
Until AUG 28 Paradise Lost Paradise, contemporary art parcours throughout the city centre

Leuven

Museum M

Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28; 016.27.29.29
www.mleuven.be
Until AUG 28 De Honderd, the 100 best photos taken by locals from Leuven
Until SEP 25 Pieter-Jozef Verhaghen: In het spoor van Rubens (In the Wake of Rubens), paintings by the 18th-century Flemish artist
Until SEP 4 Through the Romanticist's Eyes, 19th-century Dutch and Belgian paintings from Jef Rademakers' collection
Until SEP 11 Gert Robijns, contemporary art installations by the Flemish artist

Lier

Stedelijk Museum Wuyts-Van Campen

Florent Van Cauwenberghstraat 14
www.bruegelland.be
Until 2017 Bruegelland, paintings by Pieter Bruegel and artists influenced by him (from the permanent collection of Antwerp's Museum of Fine Arts)

Machelen-Zulte

Het Roger Raveelmuseum

Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00
www.rogerraveelmuseum.be
Until OCT 30 Albisola, ceramic works by various artists inspired by the Italian town

Mechelen

Toy Museum

Nekkerspoelstraat 21; 015.55.70.75
www.speelgoedmuseum.be
Until JAN 8 2012 Het circus kan beginnen! (Let the Circus Begin!), figurines, clowns and maquettes

Meise

National Botanic Garden of Belgium
Nieuwelaan 38; 02.260.09.20
www.plantentuinmeise.be
AUG 13-15 Begonia carpet covering the castle's inner courtyard
Until OCT 2 Groene Omszwervingen (Green Detours), works made of leaves and flowers by Sandrine de Borman following her year as artist-in-residence
Until NOV 6 Kriebelbeestjes van het bos (Crawling Bugs in the Woods), photographs of insects by Barbara Cook

Oostduinkerke

Nationaal Visserijmuseum
Pastoor Schmitzstraat 5; 058.51.24.68
www.visserijmuseum.be
Until DEC 31 Zeerotica: Over liefde en lust aan de kust (Searotica: On Love and Lust at the Coast), works on the theme of passion and the sea by Paul Delvaux, Leon Spilliaert, Alois Boudry and Edgard Tytgat, among others

Ostend

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

Tervuren

Royal Museum for Central Africa
Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11
www.africamuseum.be
Until SEP 4 FetishModernity, exhibition created by six European museums exploring the notion of modernity
Until SEP 4 Artists in Residence: Sammy Baloji & Patrick Mudekerezan, arts, sciences and collections

Veurne

Bakery Museum
Albert I-laan 2; 058.31.38.97
www.bakkerijmuseum.be
Until NOV 30 Gekneed als bakker (Kneaded Like a Baker), films, photos and objects illustrating the history of generations of baker families

Ypres

In Flanders Fields Museum
Grote Markt 34; 057.239.220
www.inflandersfields.be
Until NOV 13 Tribute to Donors, a wide selection of donated works, including paintings, drawings and photographs



Antwerp

Taste of Antwerp 2011: 25th edition of the culinary festival featuring more than 25 restaurants, top chefs, caterers and gourmet specialty stores
AUG 18-21 at Gedempte Zuiderdokken, Vlaamse Kaai 1
www.antwerpenproeft.be

World Dance Festival: Performing arts festival
AUG 10-17 at Hotel Ter Elst, Kattenbroek 1
03.289.23.73, www.werelddansfestival.edegem.be

Blankenberge

Sand Sculpture Festival: International sand sculpture festival with a Disneyland Paris theme
Until SEP 12 at Koning Albert I-Laan 116
www.zandsculptuur.be

Bruges

Klinkers 2011: Diverse festival featuring film, comedy, circus, children's activities and open-air concerts by Zap Mama, Sergeant Garcia, Amparo Sanchez, Baloji and The Selector, among others
Until AUG 13 across Bruges
www.klinkers-brugge.be

Brussels

Apéros Urbains: Weekly aperitif every Friday in different areas of the city with live music and after-parties at Fuse, K-Nal and Vaudeville
Until SEP 2 17.00-23.30 across Brussels
www.aperos.be

Bruxellons!: Performing arts festival with theatre, dance, comedy and cabaret
Until SEP 4 at Kasteel Karreveld, Jean de la Hoeselaan 3
02.762.95.02, www.bruxellons.net

Camera Belgica: Thursday evening entertainment including guided museum visits and outdoor film screenings
Until AUG 25 20.00 at Belvue Museum, Paleizenplein 7
www.belvue.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, Regentschapsstraat 30
www.midis-minimes.be

Mini-Europe by Night: Sound and light show with fireworks and music 'Emotions in Europe'
Until AUG 20 Sat, 22.30 at Mini-Europe, Bruparck, at the foot of the Atomium
www.minieurope.com

Royal Palace Visits: **Annual opening to** the public of the Royal Palace, designed

by architect Alphonse Balat for King Leopold II
Until SEP 11 at Royal Palace, Brederodestraat 16
www.monarchie.be

Knokke-Heist

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

Leuven

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

young jazz groups, plus concerts by Jef Neve Trio, Dre Pallemarts Quartet and Eric Melaerts & Jean Blaute
SEP 22-24 at De Bosuil, Witherendreef 1
www.jazzhoeilaart.be

Koolskamp (West Flanders)

Madou Festival: Outdoor festival featuring Soul Vision, Radio Bambu Soundsytem and more, plus djembe workshops, children's entertainment, breakfast and BBQ
AUG 19-20 at Heirweg 32
www.deschaduw.net

Leuven (Flemish Brabant)

Cha Cha Festival: Open-air African culture festival featuring music by Ballet Langi, Ithran, Dizzy Mandjeku & Odemba Ok Jazz All stars, plus gastronomy, fashion, literature, dance, art and storytelling
AUG 20 16.00-23.00 at Zevensprong, Vital Decosterstraat 67
www.banaleuven.be

Colora Festival: World music festival, plus a series of free café concerts
AUG 19-21 at De Zevensprong, Vital Decosterstraat 67, and cafés across the city
www.colora.org

Marktrock: Free 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.marktrock.be

Piknik Musik: Live music by Ben & Nolle, Briz, Raoul Lambert, more, plus sushi, vegetarian and Indian food

Ostend

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

Watou

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

SUMMER MUSIC FESTIVALS

Antwerp

Jazz Middelheim: Open-air jazz festival featuring Toots Thielemans, Brussels Jazz Orchestra with Bert Joris, Lady Linn & Her Magnificent Seven, more
AUG 12-15 at Park Den Brandt
www.jazzmiddelheim.be

Laus Polyphoniae: The Festival of Flanders' Antwerp stint, devoted this year to Portugal, with the Huelgas Ensemble, Jordi Savall and his Capella Reial de Catalunya, fado singers and special concerts for children
AUG 20-28 at Amuz, Kammenstraat 81
www.amuz.be

Open Air #5: Outdoor cultural festival with musical and performative works by various international artists, plus concerts by Peeeseye and Ohno Cooperation
AUG 27 19.00 at Air Antwerpen, Oosterweelsteenweg 3
www.airantwerpen.be

Bruges

MAfestival: Bruges' portion of the Festival of Flanders explores the theme of 'Testament'. Guests include the B!ndman ensemble, harpsichordist Christophe Rousset, singer Lucilla Galeazzi and cellist Roel Dieltiens
Until AUG 13 across Bruges and Lissewege
www.mafestival.be

Brussels

Boterhammen in het Park: Free outdoor lunchtime festival of Flemish and Dutch rock and pop, including Axl Peleman, Eva De Roovere, Johan

Verminnen, Hans Mortelmans, more
AUG 22-26 120.00 at Warande Park
02.548.24.24 or
www.abconcerts.be

Brussels Summer Festival: Diverse programme including Jamie Cullum, Caravan Creek, Tailors of Panama, Harvey Quinnt, more. Plus film screenings, open-door musuem events, street theatre, sound and light show
AUG 12-21 in venues around the city
www.bsfb.be

City Parade: Massive party with DJs and dancing
AUG 27 at Heizel (under the Atomium)
www.cityparade.be

Feeërieën 2011: Free outdoor festival with rock, pop and experimental (see spotlight)
AUG 22-26 19.00 at Warande Park
www.abconcerts.be

Eeklo

Helden in het Park: Free outdoor world music festival
Until AUG 18 at Heldenpark
www.n9.be

Hoogstraten (Antwerp province)

Antilliaanse Feesten: The world's largest Caribbean festival featuring Machel Montano, Fally Ipupa, Manoline, Kuenta y Tambú, Sonambulo, La Pinata, more
AUG 12-13 at Festivalterrien, Blauwbossen
www.antilliaansefeesten.be

Hoeilaart (Flemish Brabant)

Jazz Hoeilaart: International contest for

FESTIVAL SPOTLIGHT

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

Pukkelpop

18 - 20 August

Kiewit Festival site, Hasselt

Anyone who can memorise all the artists present at this year's Pukkelpop festival can get in for free. OK, that's a bit of a lame joke, but still: Chances are small the organisers would have to give away loads of free tickets. It would really be quite a feat to remember the hundreds of artists and bands present at Flanders' most important gathering of alternative music. The headliners on the main stage, of course, are the big names: loud guitar band Foo Fighters, rapper Eminem and Antwerp's finest, dEUS. But the festival line-up lists also tens and tens of bands that not many people know well. From the new British folk crooner Jonathan Jeremiah (a mix between Nick Drake and Scott Walker) via tUnE-yArDs (the moniker of the eccentric American Merrill Garbus) and the new British sensation Anna Calvi (think PJ Harvey and Édith Piaf, at the same time) to the mysterious indie band WU LYF (short for World Unite! Lucifer Youth Foundation). All of them are strongly recommended, as are, to add just a few: the sensational electronics whiz kid James Blake, *noise meisters* Explosions in the Sky, the mesmerising duo The Kills and Blonde Redhead (the best Sonic Youth band not called Sonic Youth).



© Joris Bulckens

One can go completely unprepared to a festival like Pukkelpop, wander the huge area for three long days and let oneself be surprised. But for most, going to Pukkelpop is like going to the supermarket: You'd better make a list beforehand or you might end up with products you never wanted in the first place. And you forget all that great stuff that would have made your life much more enjoyable. But it's up to you to decide, of course. If you already have a ticket, that is; Pukkelpop has been sold out for weeks.

➡ www.pukkelpop.be

bite

ROBYN BOYLE

Da Marianna

I love the Italian culture as much for its scrumptious cuisine as for its nocturnal tendencies. It's not uncommon to find myself searching for a place to eat as late as 22.00, which would normally rule out anything in Belgium except a pita or fries.

But time and again, I can rely on a hearty welcome from the whole big *famiglia* at Restaurant Da Marianna.

Aldo Arnone runs the show in this large space warmed by Mediterranean colours, red tablecloths, ageless furniture and countless bottles of wine. His wife, Marianna Luparello, exudes Italian flair as she tirelessly works the room, balancing runs to the kitchen with lengthy chats to her guests (in French, mind you). They only opened three years ago, but Da Marianna is already an established favourite in the East Flemish town of Kruishoutem.

From past visits, I can attest to the high quality of traditional classics such as veal escalope and lasagne. You'll also find *spaghetti carbonara*, *penne a la crema*, *tagliatelle ai scampi*, *risotto alla Marianna* and *trio di pasta*, a big platter to share between two.

Starters range from various types of Carpaccio (*bresaola* or salted beef, veal,

tuna, salmon), garlic bread, *bruschetta*, *Prosciutto di Parma* with melon, tomato-mozzarella and more.

That said, it is actually the pizza that keeps me – religiously – coming back. Next to the flour-dusted counter where Aldo kneads and tosses dough is a massive wood-fired brick oven. Here they slide in the pizzas using a long-handled peel and take them out again, light and crispy.

Red wine is always a good match for tomatoey pizzas, but out of thirst, my companion and I opt for two cold Ename blondes. The *quattro formaggi* is a good-sized pie loaded with a cheesy foursome of mild mozzarella, creamy stracchino, salty gorgonzola and nutty fontina, seasoned with basil and oregano.

As an antidote to all this melt-in-your-mouth richness, we make our second pizza *a caprese*. It contains all fresh ingredients in a tried-and-true recipe combining the crunch of the crust with the soft elasticity of the mozzarella, sweet basil with peppery rocket, plus parmesan cheese for a sharp, pungent flavour. We add a supplement of ham for good measure. Best of all, the little warm tomatoes release their tangy juices with every bite.



One grappa and one amaretto later, we gladly open our wallets to pay the €36 bill.

Tip: Come on a Monday night and hear a live singer perform Italian favourites, from Andrea Bocelli to Zucchero. If you're lucky, the whole family will pass around the mic.

Find Da Marianna on Facebook

📍 Hoogstraat 42, Kruishoutem
09.328.57.29
🕒 Thurs-Tue, 12.00-14.30
and 18.00-23.00
💶 Mains: €6-€15
★ Authentic Italian pasta, meat and fish dishes and an array of pizzas baked in a wood-fired oven

Contact Bite at flandersbite@gmail.com

TALKING SPORTS

LEO CENDROWICZ

New season, new hopes

The new football season was less than a week old when Anderlecht announced the sale of the century: Teenage sensation Romelu Lukaku had signed with Premier League titans Chelsea. Although the fee for the 18-year-old Antwerp-born striker has yet to be revealed, it is thought to be somewhere between €25 and €30 million, a record for any Belgian player.

The move is remarkable for many reasons, not least because it underlines the potential of a new generation of local talent, now earning recognition in international circles. Other Flemish players ply their trade in the Premier League, including Manchester City's Vincent Kompany, Moussa Dembélé at Fulham and Arsenal's Thomas Vermaelen. Elsewhere there are budding stars like Arne Nils, the 17-year-old son of the former Aston Villa player Luc Nils.

Lukaku became a household name in Belgium when he was top scorer in the 2009-2010 season at age 16. Chelsea is a serious prospect: Premier League champions in 2010 and runners up last season, they are also owned by a Russian zillionaire who had his choice of footballing targets on the market. Yet he chose the boy from Antwerp. Significantly, Chelsea is also making eyes at Racing Genk's 19-year-old Kevin de Bruyne.

What of the rest of Belgian football? Anderlecht has already moved to fill the gap left by Lukaku, signing former Standard Liège star Milan Jovanovic from Liverpool on a free transfer. But although they enjoyed a 3-1 home victory against Mechelen last weekend, Anderlecht lost their first match of the season away against newly promoted Oud Heverlee-Leuven. Still, Anderlecht remain the favourites to regain the title this year,



Bye bye Romelu: Anderlecht loses star player to Chelsea

ahead of perennial runners-up Club Brugge and current champions Genk.

Genk last week beat Partizan Belgrade on aggregate to book a place in the Champions League play-off qualifying phase, where they face Israeli side Maccabi Haifa for the prize of the group phase. But the rumours suggest Genk boss Frank Vercauteren is the mystery "European coach" that Abu Dhabi's Al Jazeera approached last week. His departure could end the tiny club's successful run: Vercauteren, 54, has already managed Mechelen, Anderlecht and the Belgian national team but is thought ready to accept the lucrative job in Abu Dhabi.

Also worth mentioning: While the chances of a Euro 2012 place are just about alive, those already looking to the World Cup in 2014 should be aware that Belgium face at least as tough a task. The qualifying draw put them in a group with Croatia, Serbia, Scotland, Macedonia and Wales. But by then, with Lukaku and the others ripening, it might be time for the new generation to finally prove itself.

THE LAST WORD...

Short memories

"It's difficult to understand why ratings bureaux that were so systematically wrong in the recent past are now paid so much attention."

Paul De Grauwe, economics professor at the Catholic University of Leuven, on the US credit downgrade

Lofty goals

"I want to write history with the club. But first I need to learn from the older players. I'm still young, he :)"

Former Anderlecht footballer Romelu Lukaku tweets upon his arrival at Chelsea

Flanderwood

"The year after a Bollywood film was made in Switzerland, the number of Indian tourists shot up. We want to achieve that, too."

Lea Winkeler of Toerisme Vlaanderen, on news that the Bollywood film *Blood Money* will be filmed in Antwerp

Hate mail

"Like everyone, I receive a lot of spam, but this is undoubtedly the most undesirable email I've ever had."

Chris Janssens, Vlaams Belang member of the Flemish parliament, found himself on the mailing list of Norway killer Anders Breivik

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #193

Feature

The numbers for the use of animals in lab research in Flanders has dropped, but they are still far too high, says animal rights activists. We talk to both sides to find out how animals are being used and why

Arts

Giclée is a new digital method of printing art works that aims to bring high quality reproductions of great works into our homes

Agenda

Have you ever wondered who buys all those fancy hats they sell at Inno? The women of the Koersefeesten. We'll tell you about this annual horse race and festival in Waregem