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#196  
© Luis Jacob & Noam Gonick, Wildflowers of Manitoba, 2007



# Melody of the body

Music, movement and movies meet at the fifth anniversary of Contour

LISA BRADSHAW

Two weeks ago, international visual artists arrived in Mechelen to set up their installations for Contour, the city's biennale of "art of the moving image". Staged in abandoned breweries, former schoolhouses and other intriguing historical locations, Contour is a quirky, inspiring celebration of film and video.

But it's also a little spooky. There is a reason we tend not to wander into dark, empty, unmarked buildings in urban areas – or, frankly, anywhere else. Even if we're intrinsically drawn to what is just beyond our reach, we're more convinced of the benefits of remaining safe and secure – and in the light of day. So when the Contour map leads you down an out-of-the-way

street into the ground-floor room of a 17th-century house, in which you cannot see your hand in front of your face, you might feel the slightest bit hesitant. But just follow the light. Art of the moving image always features light, whether dim or flickering or brightly white. Follow the light and keep your eyes open.

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## Mission: southern Africa • Kris Peeters returns from a whirlwind trip of trade and aid

ANJA OTTE

South Africa is a dream destination for many Flemish, but when minister-president Kris Peeters flies over to southern Africa, holidaying is far from his mind. Peeters, joined by business people, academics and health-care specialists, visited Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Cape Town and Maputo, Mozambique, in just seven days last month on a mission that focused on both trade and aid.

Flanders has many ties with southern Africa: both Mozambique and South Africa are so-called partner countries for development aid; there are economic links; and then there is, of course Afrikaans, a relative of the Dutch language. One of the events attended by Peeters, who is the economy and foreign affairs minister as well as minister-president, was the presentation of the first dictionary Afrikaans-Nederlands/Nederlands-Afrikaans. The dictionary, known as ANNA, was developed by professor Willy Martin of the University of Amsterdam, in collaboration with the University of Hasselt and South African universities.

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Nobel prize-winning activist Desmond Tutu meets with Kris Peeters in South Africa

© Dirk Waem/BELGA

## A place for every child

As kids go back to school, Flanders' faces future teacher shortages

ALAN HOPE

Children in Flanders went back to school last week, with the good news that every Dutch-speaking child in Brussels found a place in a Flemish school. But the bad news is that schools are facing a catastrophic shortage of teachers in just a few years' time.

On 1 September, 1.12 million children in Flanders turned up for the new school year: 260,000 pre-schoolers, 410,000 primary school students and 450,000 secondary school students. The numbers at all levels are up on last year, in particular a rise of 8,000 in the number of pre-schoolers.

In Brussels, some 38,000 pupils at all levels were accommodated

in Dutch-speaking schools, though not necessarily their first choice of school. In past years, the spring has been marked in the city by the sight of parents camping outside their school of preference to try to hook one of the few places open. That problem seemed to have largely disappeared this year.

However, according to Jean-Luc Vanraes, president of the College of the Flemish Community Commission in Brussels, there are no places left for children of parents who are not Dutch speaking but still want to send their children to Flemish schools, despite up to 20 requests a day.

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## FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE



## Guy Verhofstadt

No prophet is accepted in his own country, according to the Gospel of Luke, and former Belgian prime minister Guy Verhofstadt could have reflected on those words last Monday, following his appearance on the Dutch TV programme *Zomergasten* (Summer Guests). Guy Maurice Marie Louise Verhofstadt was born in 1953 in Dendermonde and began his political career at the University of Ghent, the city with which he's been associated ever since. The protégé of leading Ghent liberal Willy Declercq, he joined the city council at the age of 23, was elected to parliament at 32 and became a minister the same year.

From the start, Verhofstadt stood out as a neo-liberal in the mould of Margaret Thatcher, then at the height of her reign. In the 1987 elections, he amassed more personal votes than then prime minister Wilfried Martens, but his PVV party was excluded from the ensuing coalition. In 1999, his party, now called VLD, took over, and Verhofstadt moved into the prime minister's office, which he occupied until March of 2008, when he handed it over to Yves Leterme. Verhofstadt now sits in the European parliament. Despite his personal popularity with the voters, he has always had enemies. Not that you'd

know it to read the praise heaped on him by Dutch commentators last week. *Zomergasten* is an interview show some three hours long, where guests select TV archive footage to illustrate whatever points they've come to make.

Verhofstadt used his time to argue for the European ideal and against the rise of "populism" as represented by Geert Wilders in the Netherlands and, he says, here at home by Bart De Wever. "Such a voice is what is missing in the Netherlands," commented Pieter Hilhorst in the Dutch *Volkscrant*.

Bert Brussen on the news website *nu.nl* further gushed over Verhofstadt's "erudition", his "charming Flemish accent" and his "no-nonsense appearance". Commentator Max Molovich, meanwhile, said that it was "a breath of fresh air to hear a politician who is able not only to say what he thinks, but to give every appearance of having thought it through." The praise was, shall we say, more nuanced in Flanders. However, one good thing has come out of the appearance that should please friends and critics alike: Canvas is reported to be studying plans to adopt the format for Flemish television.

→ <http://en.guyverhofstadt.be>

## News in brief

Police in Oudenaarde, East Flanders, are investigating the **murder of the editor of the local newspaper, *De Beiaard***, at his home in Zottegem on Saturday, 3 September. Antoon De Clercq, 58, who also owns a local printing business, apparently answered his door to a caller who then beat him with a hammer. A motive for the attack is not yet clear.

German automobile manufacturer **BMW has recalled 120,000 cars** worldwide, including 9,326 in Belgium, after problems were discovered with the fuel filter heater. The vehicles concerned are 1-, 5- and 7-Series cars, as well as X3 en X5, built between August 2008 and June 2009.

The relic purporting to be the blood of Christ housed in the Basilica of the Holy Blood in Bruges is now **accessible to visitors with disabilities**, after the city and the fellowship installed a lift in the building. Previously the room where the relic is kept was only accessible via a narrow staircase.

Brewery Huyghe in Melle has won a gold medal at the **International Beverage Competition** in Shenzhen, China, for its *Delirium Nocturnum*. The brewery dates back to 1654 and brews the *Delirium* range, plus *Campus*, *Sint-Idesbald*, *Artevelde* and *Blanche des Neiges*.

A 1618 **painting by Pieter Paul Rubens**, stolen 10 years ago from the fine arts museum in Ghent, has been recovered by Greek police after two men tried to sell it for €1 million to undercover investigators. "The *Calydonian Boar Hunt*" was taken by two armed and masked men in 2001; a second Rubens work they tried to steal had to be left behind.

Antwerp Zoo last week welcomed a new temporary visitor: **12-year-old gorilla Mambale** is from Germany's Hanover Zoo and joins Antwerp's gorilla colony to pick up some child-rearing tips. Mambale has given birth to three young so far, none of whom survived.

Brussels city mayor Freddy Thielemans has promised police will take **tougher action against homophobia** and other forms of discrimination after a lesbian couple was badly beaten on the Lemmonierlaan last week. The case is the second incident of serious anti-gay violence this year, after a man was beaten and strangled in the same area in June. The mayor stressed the need for all incidents, even minor ones, to be reported to the police.

Flemish comic strip heroes *Suske and Wiske* by Willy Vandersteen are now **available for Chinese readers**, after the launch of 10 albums at the book fair in Beijing last week. The characters, known as Susu and Weiwei, were introduced to Chinese readers in one album 15 years ago. The translations received the support of the Flemish Fund for Letters.

A 47-year-old Ninove woman has been arrested for the **theft of seven kilograms of gold** from a safe deposit box in Ninove (East Flanders). The owners were transferring the bullion from one box to another when the key went missing. It was later found in the lock of the box, but the gold, valued at €280,000, was gone. The gold was later recovered in the woman's own safe deposit box.

Federal justice minister **Stefaan De Clerck has reacted angrily** to "political statements" made by Antwerp magistrates in their traditional address marking the start of the new judicial year. Advocate-general Piet Van den Bon spoke of a "benefits culture" that has "taken hold in immigrant communities". Meanwhile, Yves Liegeois, prosecutor-general in Antwerp, said that politicians' neglect of the migration problem signalled "the end of democracy". Political statements, De Clerck said, were "inappropriate" for top magistrates.

**Service cheques should be more expensive**, according to the Christian trade union ACV. At present, a householder buys service checks to pay for domestic work like cleaning, while the worker (or agency employing them) pays tax and social security. But the value of the cheques is well below the going rate for undeclared labour, the ACV said. Federgon, which groups the companies who issue the cheques, said higher costs would mean fewer jobs.

The neighbourhood committee **fighting plans to renovate the Havenlaan** in Brussels has vowed to continue its protest, despite a decision last week by the region's government that the plans will go ahead. Work involves removing the plane trees that line the avenue, as well as lifting most of the cobblestones. A representative of the group said it would follow developments closely and take action at the least irregularity.

## OFFSIDE

ALAN HOPE

## For whom the truck tows

We've all done it: stuck in traffic, cursing the road accident that's holding all of us up. Last week Touring, the organisation that represents motorists, came up with a solution no one else would dare speak out loud.

The biggest problem with road accidents, the organisation said, is not the dead and injured, but the rest of us who lose valuable time in traffic jams: 32 million hours a year (or about three-and-a-half minutes a week per person on average).

Touring's solution is to tow away the cars involved as quickly as possible, even if injured or dead people are still inside. "In the case of fatalities, or people who are only slightly injured, it should be possible," Touring's spokesman, Danny Smagghe, said. "It happens in Germany, why not here? Otherwise we waste so much time. First the police come, then the emergency services, then an expert from the prosecutor's office in the case of fatalities, and only then can the cars be towed away. In some cases the motorway can be closed for hours."

Federal mobility minister Etienne Schouppe responded: "The priority must lie with the care of and respect for victims". Proper procedures for emergency services, police and experts need to come before the frustrations of other drivers, he said. Flemish mobility minister Hilde Crevits echoed the



point: "Care for the victim and the safety of other road users are paramount," she said. "Those will not be compromised."

The fire brigade federation said the proposal "showed a lack of humanity". "Respect for people is not some idle notion," commented Marc Gilbert, the federation's chairman. "We don't treat people like animals." For the police, the idea was also "unacceptable". The socialist party in the federal and the Flemish parliaments called the proposal "complete nonsense".

Touring's spokesman later appeared on TV and withdrew the proposal.

## FLANDERS TODAY

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## Schaarbeek opens first Flemish school in more than 30 years

→ continued from page 1

Vanraes has submitted his plans for Dutch-speaking education in Brussels over the next five years to Flemish education minister Pascal Smet. They include an investment of €40 million and the creation of 5,000 new places by 2015.

In the rest of Flanders, native speakers also all got places, after the investment of €12 million by Smet in pressure areas in Antwerp, Ghent, Halle and Vilvoorde. That involved installing container classes, converting unused rooms in schools to classrooms and moving some younger school children into secondary school premises.

The success in finding places for everyone this year, however, "doesn't mean the capacity problem is solved," said Antwerp's alderman for education, Robert Voorhamme. "Because of demographic developments, we'll soon be facing structural challenges."

The biggest among those challenges is a shortage of 20,000 teachers by as early as

2020. In the coming decade, some 30,000 new teachers are expected to graduate. At the same time, however, the growth in the number of children going to school means an extra 50,000 teachers will be needed. The shortage will be most felt in the pre-schools, where a deficit of 14,000 teachers is forecast. Primary schools will face a 6,000 shortage.

Elsewhere, it was revealed that 30,000 teachers in Belgium as a whole have taken out an insurance policy against violence inside and outside of school. The policy, which costs €25 for one school year, has been offered by Ethias for 12 years, but has seen a burst of growth in recent years. This year's figure is 3,000 more than 2008. At the same time, the education ministry's violence reporting unit said 217 incidents were reported to them in the 2010-2011 school year, an increase of 10% over the previous year.

In Ghent and Antwerp, police will give talks this year to teachers

and staff on how to react in crisis situations. Local police will undergo training on how to handle a crisis in schools.

### More school news

The Brussels' commune of Schaarbeek opened the doors of a Dutch-speaking municipal school for the first time since the only existing one closed in 1978. Also in Schaarbeek, the private bilingual pre-school Pistache welcomed six new children for 40 available places. A French-speaking and a Dutch-speaking teacher will alternate with the class.

In Wezembeek-Oppeem, part of the Flemish belt around Brussels, a planned new school will now open only in 2012 because of delays in obtaining planning permission. About 50 residents lodged objections to the plans, which were turned down by the local council and will now be ruled on by the planning department of Flemish Brabant province.



One small step: Princess Eleonore, daughter of Prince Filip and Princess Mathilde, turns up for her first day of pre-school at Sint-Jan-Berchmans College in Brussels, a Flemish Jesuit school attended by her sister and brothers

About 900 children in Flanders are being home-schooled, including those from a Dutch family who moved here to take advantage of the more flexible regulations. ♦

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES



### 144 hours, 41 minutes

of sunshine in August, described by the Royal Meteorological Institute as "very abnormal". The average for the month is 190 hours. August also saw 22 days of rain, with total rainfall of 189.3mm

### 3,484,648

passengers carried by the coast tram in July and August, 0.5% down on last year thanks to the poor weather, bringing fewer day-trippers to the coast. The busiest day was 3 August with 71,554 passengers

### 32 million hours

spent in traffic jams in Belgium in a year, a loss of productivity worth €610 million, according to motoring organisation Touring

### 750,000

alcohol checks carried out by police every year in Belgium, meaning the average driver runs the risk of a spot-check once every eight years. The government's target is once every three years, with total checks rising to 2.1 million a year

### 9.7%

of people living in Belgium are of foreign origin, with two out of three coming from an EU member state. Italians lead the list with 15.7%, followed by the French and Dutch

## Weather puts a damper on Gordel

This year's edition of the Gordel, the annual cycling and walking event that takes place across the Flemish municipalities surrounding Brussels, saw a 50% decrease in numbers, due largely to poor weather.

Last Sunday's Gordel attracted 43,400 people, a good number for any event, but only half as many as last year. Part of the reason was the rain from the previous night, which left many roads under water; a certain political disillusionment – almost 500 days with no federal government – could also account for a portion of the decrease.

The Gordel (which means "belt") is promoted by Bloso, the Flemish sporting agency. Its origins are political – a message of solidarity among Flemings living in the Flemish belt around the capital, as its municipalities gradually becoming more international.

Among senior politicians, only Flemish sports minister Philippe Muyters and his N-VA colleague Geert Bourgeois, minister for integration and the belt, were present. Representing Brussels was the region's transport minister Brigitte Grouwels. EU Council president Herman Van Rompuy

took part, but his brother Eric, a Flemish parliamentarian, resident of Zaventem and normally a keen Gordel participant, was away on holiday in America.

Traditionally, saboteurs also turn up at the pro-Flemish event, and this year was no different: Route indicators on some of the 600 kilometres of walking and cycling routes were interfered with, and tacks were strewn on roads in Sint-Genesius-Rode and Beersel to puncture bicycle tyres. ♦

→ [www.de-gordel.be](http://www.de-gordel.be)

## New laws to know

### A number of new regulations came into force on 1 September

- Incandescent light-bulbs of 60 watts have disappeared from the shops, following their 75W and 100W counterparts. Next year the 40W and 25W bulbs will also disappear
- Online gaming sites now require a licence
- Anyone involved in the transport of animals must be in possession of a professional certificate issued after a course and examination in animal welfare, which can be checked by Food Safety Agency inspectors at any time
- The minimum pension for the self-employed goes above €1,000 for the first time, to €1,007.14 for a single person
- Taxis in Brussels must now be identical in colour: black background with a yellow checkerboard pattern down the side
- Also in Brussels, owners of a property larger than 500 square metres must obtain an energy performance certificate issued by



For you, the short sleeves are over. Steve McQueen in *The Great Escape*

a recognised engineer before the property can be sold

• Motorcyclists must now be dressed in a jacket with long sleeves and must wear long trousers and boots. When

overtaking other vehicles in a traffic jam, the speed limit is reduced to 50 km/h and limited to the two right lanes ♦

## FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

## Take the money and run

If you want to make a Flemish politician burst out laughing, try uttering the words "political renewal". Political renewal came *en vogue* some 10 years ago, when politicians wanted to regulate their own trade better, to increase their credibility. They looked into their own performance (non-attendance being endemic), the way they combine different jobs and their wages.

Part of our MPs' wages are "retirement bonuses". These make up for the fact that politicians often find it hard to get another job if they have not been re-elected. The bonus covers this risk – generously. After one year in parliament, the bonuses equal an annual salary. This rises up to four years' wages, the maximum. Taking on extra mandates, such as presiding over a committee, increases the bonus even more.

On top of that, MPs can count on a generous full pension after only 20 years of duty. This remnant from the times when the average age a person entered parliament was 45, sits uneasy with the reality that all of us are asked to work longer. The bonuses, too, have become discredited after some notable retirements. When, in 2006, Norbert De Batselier (sp.a) left as president of the Flemish parliament for the National Bank, he was due more than €500,000. He saw nothing wrong with it – although he later dropped his claim on part of the total. Similarly, two years ago in the Walloon Parliament, socialist José Happart made €500,000 simply by leaving.

Both cases caused an outcry, in the press and with MPs themselves. The system of "golden parachutes" was up for reform, they decided. But, as with anything to do with political renewal, much was said, and little was done.

One of the people who spoke up for real political renewal was Sven Gatz (Open VLD). Gatz has always been a politician of the new generation, less interested in functions and money-grabbing. Proof? He did not see politics as a lifetime occupation and recently resigned from the Flemish Parliament to take up a new job.

With the system unchanged, resignation automatically means a bonus. In Gatz's case, this was worth €300,000. A lot of money for someone who did not go one day unemployed. So yes, there was another outcry. But who would give up the bonus in this situation? Would you?

Gatz did. In a statement, he called the situation "ironic, cynical and bitter".

Wouldn't you?





#### 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

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.



#### BRUSSELS



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

#### WOLUWE SAINT-LAMBERT



#### ANDERLECHT

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

#### SAINT-GILLES



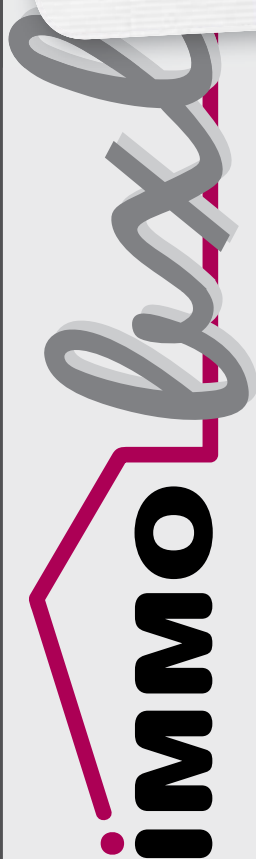
luxurious 1 bedroom apartments for sale with a view over Brussels. All the apartments have been completely renovated and are equipped with a wooden

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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 Cinquantenaire 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.



# Melody of the body

“Through popular music, we have some of our most important shared experiences”

→ continued from page 1

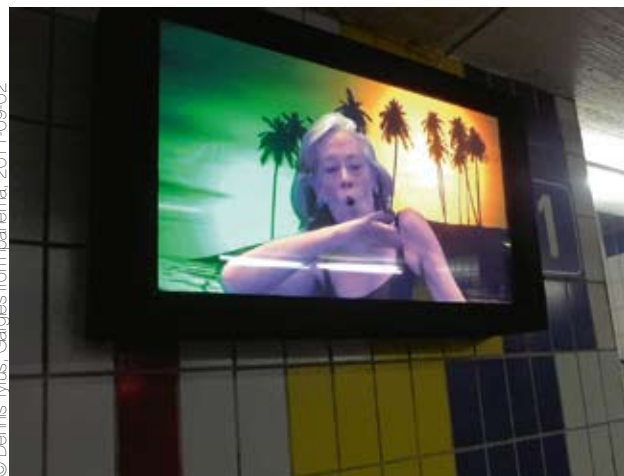
No one would deny that Mechelen is one of Flanders' most beautiful cities, with more Unesco-protected architecture than anywhere else in the country. Its cathedral is suitably majestic, its square a dreamy wonder of mixed architecture. But it was a hole in the ground that drew the attention of visual artists from Canada and the US.

Also known for its archaeological findings, particularly in Sint-Rombout's cathedral, the researchers of Mechelen are now working on the square outside the city's cultural centre. Two skeletons had been half unearthed, their empty eye sockets staring at you through the chain-link fence.

Considering the sometimes unnerving atmosphere of Contour on any a normal day, this was that beloved Belgian surrealism we take in stride, but which proved over the top for artists not used to seeing something like this in the middle of New York. Which isn't to say they weren't delighted – they were, treating the archaeological dig with the same combination of joy and reverence normally reserved for each other's installations.

The sight was particularly relevant for Canadians Luis Jacob and Noam Gonick, whose installation “Wildflowers of Manitoba” (pictured on cover) was located not 100 metres away inside a small room on the top floor of the cultural centre. They utilise a human skull in the 2007 installation, but it was always a fake. Not in Mechelen. The Contour folk found them a real skull dug up in decades past, and it sits proudly under the steel grid dome that encompasses the installation.

The skull connects “Wildflowers of Manitoba” to Flanders, but so does the live actor – the only one at this Contour. He lies across a mattress, reading or daydreaming, listening to a record on the turntable, burning incense, “mellowing out”, as they would have said in the 1970s. It's a decade evoked in both the objects and the dream-like images onscreen above, which is footage of the artists and their friends frolicking commune-like in the Canadian wilds. It's like a view into a room made of idealism and peace.



© Dennis Tyfus, Gargles from Ipanema, 2011-09-02

## Soul train

Contour is a *parcours*, and you're confronted with it even before you buy your ticket, in the Nekkerspoel train station. Nekkerspoel was originally built to get the upper-class into the centre of town with as little walking as possible. Although it's twice as close to the city's centre, most people get off at the much larger Mechelen station, making Nekkerspoel a bit of a forgotten place.

It's a memorable and unexpected location for Renaissance man Dennis Tyfus, an *Antwerpenaar* who dabbles in video art, photography, music, publishing and radio. The multiple screens of his “Gargles from Ipanema” look at you as you make your way down the stairs and down the hallway to the outside. A woman dances in a tropical paradise to the song of the title, while Tyfus' psychedelic patterns make up her background. Its elevator music suggests how we are subliminally affected by sound, and its exotic vision is one far, far away from urban Flanders.

## Beyond reason

Music is central this year to Contour, which sports the title *Sound and Vision: Beyond Reason*. “I'm interested in the way information can be communicated through the body. It seems



© Adam Pendleton, Band, 2009

to me that rock music is a field in which one can readily see that happen,” says Contour curator Anthony Kiendl.

The Canadian is the director of the Plug In Institute for Contemporary Art in Winnipeg and teaches architecture at the University of Manitoba. He's also very interested, he says, “in the viewer's experience. Through popular music, we have some of our most important shared experiences.” He stresses that just because pop and rock music is a thread throughout the works it doesn't “make them flippant or unimportant. Art has a potentially revolutionary role in society – opening up possibilities socially and experientially. People can have a moment of experience where it changes how they see the world.”

This experience, he describes as “intuitive”, as “beyond reason”.

## Art and your body

Contour has been scaled back this year to 10 locations in a compact route. Two years ago, it took all day to see everything at Contour; this year it's three leisurely hours. Brussels-based curator Katerina Gregos raised the bar in 2009 in terms of quality, and Kiendl has risen to that challenge for this fifth edition of Contour, pulling in some of the West's most interesting video artists.

In a space down a long alley behind Mechelen's famous Toy Museum, is a stage holding “Promoting a More Just, Verdant and Harmonious Resolution” by American artist collective Postcommodity. Watch where you step as you view the idyllic images of happy families and fields of flowers because land mines blast loud rock music into your ears, a reflection of the US military's use of the music to make soldiers more aggressive.

Over in the theatre of Sint-Rombout's College, you'll immediately recognise Elvis Presley's “Jailhouse Rock”. Sit down to watch a drawing happen before your eyes of a pen following the precise movements of Elvis' hands during a live performance of the song. French artist Pierre Bismuth, whose invisible hand is drawing the pattern, shows us an image created by the movement of the body.

Later, as you enter the 19th-century Festival Hall, originally part of a girls' school, you're given a device to listen to (in Dutch, English or French). Step inside a dark ballroom and take your place at various stations to learn how closely related humans and plants really are and how plants are affected by – and in fact make – music.

Biology is again broached by Flemish artist Edith Dekyndt – who has the enviable status of being staged in two locations – in “Myodesopsies”. Climb the stairs to the first floor of the house from 1648 that is now home to the Flemish Rheumatism Association to see...a completely blank screen. But if you keep staring, you'll eventually get those spots that float before your eyes – generally when your eyes are closed. Those are myodesopsies, and the theory is that you develop them on your retinas while still in the womb. “It's your history,” Dekyndt says.

Dekyndt brings out one of Contour's most fascinating ideas: Your own body creates the images that you see.

For Kiendl, one of Contour's most profound moments is in the Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. Here is the only older work

in the show: Brion Gysin and Ian Sommerville's “Dreamachine” from 1960s Britain. A cylinder with holes cut in it rotates on a turntable, flashing light like a strobe. Enter a wooden cage and sit in front of it with your eyes closed. “The invention of the Dreamachine happened when Gysin was riding a tram, and it was going past a row of trees, and the light was flashing really quickly, and he closed his eyes and still saw it,” explains Kiendl. Gysin and Sommerville were friends with beat generation writer William Burroughs, and together they explored the worlds of hallucinogenics and the possibilities of future technologies. “It was very important to me that the piece was in the chapel because it indicates this kind of transcendence or out-of-body experience, notes Kiendl.

Before Contour, Kiendl had never visited Belgium, but he began two years ago to scout locations with the Contour staff. A prolific curator, he has seen art *parcours* in varying locations but “loves the extent to which architecture is part of their vision in Mechelen,” he says. “What's unique here are the kinds of buildings that are available and their proximity to each other. It's very special.” ♦



© Brion Gysin & Ian Sommerville, Dreamachine, 1960

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# Mission: Africa • Peeters' mission visits port, health-care providers and the set of *Idols*

→ continued from page 1

A mission like this always has its fun moments: How often do you see Kris Peeters in an attempt at carpet curling? And how about the ever cheerful Desmond Tutu asking the minister-president if our country really needs a government, seeing as we do very well without one.

However, the Southern Africa mission was mostly serious business. Take the carpet curling. The infrastructure for this relatively new sport is produced by a South African and a Flemish company, Debomat from Temse, East Flanders. They have come up with an innovative technique to print on curling carpet. Similarly, Peeters also visited the set of the South African *Idols*, not in search of new singing talent, but to see how the Flemish Alphacam, which has a South African branch since the World Cup, uses one of its high tech trucks to broadcast.

"On economic missions we have to concentrate on what we are good at. That is much more than beer and chocolate", said Belgian ambassador to South Africa Johan Maricou, drawing attention to biotechnology, automotive and banking ICT. South African banks were particularly interested in Flemish technology for security and internet banking, which resulted in useful contacts for members of the Agoria Banking Club present: IT companies BTR Services, Vasco Data Security, Callatay & Wouters and SecurIT.

With four harbours and an important dredging industry, Flemish economic missions always include port contacts. "Durban is becoming increasingly important to Zeebrugge, as Toyota has branches in both," Zeebrugge port president Joachim Coens explains. In 2010, more than 31,000 new cars were shipped between both:

29,000 to Zeebrugge, mostly Toyota, and 2,500 to Durban. This traffic is expected to rise by 23% this year.

## Doctors and nurses

South-Africa, some say, combines the First and the Third Worlds. It is, therefore, along with Malawi and Mozambique, a partner country – countries on which Flanders concentrates its aid efforts, up to €25 million annually per country.

In Limpopo province, Peeters, also Flemish minister for agriculture, felt particularly at home at the LADA-project, which offers support to new landowners through land reform. He got to see seven concrete projects LADA supports, including a crocodile farm.

In Mozambique, Flemish aid focuses on health care. With the Tropical Institute in Antwerp and the Ghent fertility professor Marleen Temmerman, Flanders has plenty of know-how in the field, Peeters points out. With life expectancy in Mozambique no higher than 48 and aids/HIV ravaging whole generations, help is welcome. After some bad experiences in infrastructure, Flanders now opts to invest in human resources: doctors, nurses, midwives.

## Tutu and De Klerk in Flanders Fields

Archbishop Tutu and former South African president Frederik De Klerk, both Nobel Prize winners, will attend a peace conference in Flanders in November of 2013 in remembrance of the First World War.

The centenary of the Great War is 2014-2018. Flanders, the scene of some of the most awful atrocities of the war, plans commemorations every year in November, starting in 2013, with



From left: Port of Antwerp chairman Marc Van Peel, Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters and Port of Zeebrugge managing director Joachim Coens visit the port of Durban on 25 August

a peace conference, to which all living recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize are invited. Both Tutu and de Klerk accepted the personal invitation from Peeters. (The other South African winner, 93-year-old Nelson Mandela, has withdrawn from public life because of his frail health.)

In 2012, the Flemish government plans another notable event: the signing of the Flanders Fields Declaration. This declaration aims at a structural remembrance of the war, of which the last witnesses are rapidly disappearing. The suffering of millions during this war should be permanently commemorated, the declaration states. Education plays an important role in this, as the lessons drawn from the war should be passed

on through the generations. The declaration also calls for further scientific research, not just into the military aspects, but also into the lives of ordinary people.

"We hope to see representatives of 50 countries sign the declaration, soldiers from all of which fought in Flanders fields," says Koen Verlaeck, secretary-general of the Flemish department of foreign affairs. Soldiers "of some countries, such as the UK, the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, are well known, but we even had soldiers from Madagascar and China here. Twelve key embassies who received a draft of the declaration all reacted with enthusiasm."

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## Phone meets city guide

PHILIP EBELS

**Tourism Flanders launches augmented reality app**



City guides are great. But *virtual* city guides are even greater, or so thought Tourism Flanders when earlier this summer they launched their new smart-phone application that allows you to look at statues, restaurants and cathedrals, while at the same time getting a little help to figure out what it is exactly you're looking at. "Augmented reality", they call it, and the English version will be ready in a few weeks.

It all sounds a little sci-fi, but is perfectly understandable in normal-people language. The software from Amsterdam-based company Layar is able to recognise real-life objects through the camera on your phone thanks to so-called visual fingerprints that they've gathered. Your phone's GPS-function helps to narrow down the search. Once the building is recognised, information about it will appear on the screen of your phone, such as name, contact details, opening hours and entrance fees. You'll be able to see, for instance, whether the hotel in front of you has a Jacuzzi or whether the restaurant takes American Express.

The application, dubbed Ontdek Vlaanderen Nu, or Discover Flanders Now, has been available in Dutch since late June and has been downloaded almost 5,000 times. The visual fingerprints of some 28,000 objects have been taken in Flanders and Brussels and grouped into 17 categories and 70 themes, such as sightseeing, sports, shopping and food & drink. The information about them has been gathered from a number of partner organisations, such as restaurant review website resto.be, culture hub Cultuurnet Vlaanderen or publisher Lannoo.

"We were just sitting on this database of tourist information," a Tourism Flanders spokesperson said, "when the occasion more or less presented itself, and we decided to jump on it. The same already exists for New York. The Dutch-language version is something of a pilot. We've seen that it works well and will launch the English-language version soon." The launch will be announced on the organisation's website. You can download the app now at [www.layar.com/layers/tv/all](http://www.layar.com/layers/tv/all).

→ [www.visitflanders.com](http://www.visitflanders.com)



## New deal for start-ups

### Cost of feasibility studies slashed for new businesses

ALAN HOPE

The Flemish government will invest €4.5 million in a project aimed at stimulating entrepreneurship in the region, minister-president Kris Peeters announced last week. The project, named GO4BUSINESS, is aimed particularly at new start-ups. Starting on 1 September, anyone in Flanders wanting to start up a new business will be able to consult their local branch of Voka or Unizo, both organisations that represent small and medium-sized businesses, to get help drawing up a feasibility study. Instead of the usual cost of €900 for the study, starters will pay only €100. The initial phase of the project will last for two years and aims to provide 2,500 studies in that time.

"This is a crucial phase," commented Karel Van Eetvelt, director-general of Unizo. "A lot of people walk around for a long time with 'an idea', but at a

certain point they have to set it down on paper. A well-thought-out, evaluated start is the best key to success."

In 2010, 40,914 new companies were started in Flanders, an increase of 7% over the previous year. But, according to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, only 3.62% of the population in 2010 was starting up a company or had done so in the previous three years. The average for similar regions was 5.74%. At the same time, nearly 62% of people considered their own business a desirable career option. The gap between the two figures, a spokesman for Peeters said, shows the need for stimulus measures.

"In order to see a positive evolution of the number of start-ups in Flanders in the coming years, it's important not only to provide a true picture of entrepreneurship, but also to let people know that creating a business is a viable career choice," said Peeters. "Would-be start-ups have to be provided with



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enough opportunities to inform and prepare themselves properly."

Peeters also announced plans for budding entrepreneurs from particular

target groups, including women, the over-50s, people with a disability and immigrants. ♦

→ [www.starterservice.be](http://www.starterservice.be)

### Probe into Swiss diamond cash

The tax and judicial authorities in Antwerp have begun an investigation into €700 million worth of laundered money, much of it said to have come from diamond traders. The money was discovered in a Swiss subsidiary of the British bank HSBC.

The Swiss investigation has been going on for two years, since a list of the names of account holders was unearthed. According to the Antwerp authorities, 170 named individuals are concerned, most of them in the diamond sector, and including some senior names. The figure, according to the financial daily *De Tijd*, which disclosed the investigation, represents one in four of the traders in Antwerp. "This drags the credibility of the industry right down," the paper said.

A spokesperson for the diamond industry said the sector would do all it could to cooperate with the investigation. "Our desire is for the 185 companies to do business in an honest and proper manner. All we can do it to give as much support as possible to the bodies that exercise control over the business."

Meanwhile Carl Devlies, secretary of state for anti-fraud measures, rejected calls for a special fraud policy for the diamond sector. "We're talking about 25% of the industry, which means that three-quarters are working well, I would say," Devlies said. "We need to create a framework in which fraud can be tackled, but we can't work out a specific policy for each individual sector." ♦

### Jobs news

Maxime Ossieur from Heusden, East Flanders, has been voted **Job Student of the Year** by Unizo, the organisation representing the self-employed. Ossieur, 21, studies business during term and worked during the summer for a local *friet* shop. He defeated candidates from all across Flanders to take the title, worth €1,250 and a BlackBerry donated by Base.

**Unemployment in Flanders** fell in August for the 12th month in a row to 7.2% of the working population, according to labour minister Philippe Muyters. There are now 211,451 people out of work in the region. The number of long-term unemployed (over two years) rose by 0.6%, while the number of those out of work for between one and two years fell by 16%.

Major **transport and shipping companies** in the Antwerp port area will be looking for 4,000 new staff over the next 30 months, according to a survey by the local employers' organisation Voka and the port federation Alfaport. Port companies are suffering a chronic shortage of engineers and logistics experts, the survey said, as well as fork-lift drivers and maintenance mechanics.

**Electronic producer TBP** in Geel, Antwerp province, were last week declared bankrupt after the failure of a restructuring plan to satisfy creditors. The move means the loss of 335 jobs.

Unions and management at **baggage handler Flightcare** have reached an agreement aimed at reducing work pressure, after spontaneous industrial action by workers. The company will take on new staff and set up reserve teams to step in when pressure increases.

Staff at **AGB Ninove**, the town's former technical service, were taken by surprise last week when management decided to impose breath-tests — after one employee had treated his colleagues to some home-made tiramisu. The company operates a zero-tolerance policy for alcohol. None of those tested were positive. Unions said the tests are illegal.

**Flemish government employees** will no longer be given a day off to donate blood, after the Red Cross said some staff were failing to declare risk factors, such as a recent trip to Africa, in order not to lose the day off, which can happen up to four times a year. Future blood donations will take place in government buildings. ♦

### First-time buyers get help from parents

More than one in three young couples entering the housing market for the first time depend on a contribution from their parents to be able to afford the price, according to a survey by property website Immoweb.be and *Netto* magazine. In 36% of cases nationwide, parents helped pay towards a first home for their children. Of those, one in three paid up to 10%, and another one-third helped out with 10-20% of the cost. In Brussels 46% of couples receive help from parents, and one in 10 of those parents paid more than half of the cost.

House prices have been rising for years, the study said, and buyers still consider property a solid investment, particularly in times of economic decline. Nine out of 10 of those polled expected the value of their homes to increase over the next decade. In 1995, the average price of a house was double the annual salary; in 2008, according to a study published earlier this year by ING bank, the proportion had gone up to four times that.

Prices have evened out more recently: the reference price for a house rose in the first half of the year by 2% to €225,000, and an apartment by 1% to €222,500. However inflation in the same period was 3.5%, so those increases are swallowed up. The price of a villa rose by 3% to €370,000. According to *Trends* magazine, which published the price survey, the flat prices are an after-effect of steep increases in recent years. One aspect of house-buying that is firmly on the decrease is the portion of the price paid under the table to avoid taxes. In the 1990s that occurred to varying degrees in 10% of all sales. In the last two years, the number has fallen to 4%. At the same time, the proportion of the price paid under the table has fallen from around 30% in the 1970s to under 10% now. ♦



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## THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

### Audio-visual • Barco

Kortrijk-based manufacturer Barco has signed a joint venture with the China Film Group to produce and service digital cinema projectors in China. The new company has plans to equip all of China's cinemas with digital projectors. Barco has already installed 4,600 projectors in the market and produces some 500 more every month locally.

### Banking • Citibank

France's Credit Mutuel Nord Europe is said to be interested in taking over the activities of Citibank Belgium. Spain's Santander Bank has also apparently made an offer. Rumours of the possible sale of Citibank Belgium started early this year. Credit Mutuel, which owns the local BKCP bank, had already tried to increase its activities by bidding for the Antwerps Beroepskrediet, which was finally sold to Antwerp-based Bank Van Breda.

### Chemicals • Solvay

Brussels-based plastics and chemicals group Solvay has successfully finalised its friendly takeover of France's Rhodia specialty chemicals firm. The Solvay offer of €3.4 billion was accepted by some 94% of Rhodia's shareholders. The funds came from the €5.2 billion sale of Solvay's pharmaceutical activities to the US Abbott company in 2010.

### Financial • The big four

Deloitte, Price Waterhouse Coopers, Ernst and Young and KPMG, otherwise known as the big four in the audit and consulting world, have announced plans to hire some 1,500 employees in Belgium over the coming year. Market leader alone Deloitte seeks 600 staff to meet demand from the financial services world. Total employment in the big four audit firms stood at some 6,250 in June this year.

### Online • GIMV

Flanders public investment company GIMV is investing some €14.5 million in the London-based Ebuzzing company, specialised in seeding branded content through social media.

### Retail • Eddy Merckx Holding

The company partly owned by cycling icon Eddy Merckx, producer of highly competitive racing bicycles, is to launch a range of men shoes next year in a bid to diversify and to capitalise on the world-wide awareness of the name. Now controlled by the Sobradis, the Wetteren-based investment company, Eddy Merckx Holding is considering other diversifications.

### Telecommunications • Option

The Leuven-based wireless telecommunications products and applications developer will take over France's Mobiwire company, a former affiliate of Sagem specialised in tactile interfaces for mobile terminals.





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# Conflict resolutions

Some monuments were the result of war – and some are the cause of them

ANDY FURNIERE

In 1899, the belfry in Kortrijk was threatened with demolition by the authorities because it stood in the way of public demonstrations and parades on the main square. The bell tower, dating from the 13th century and now a Unesco world heritage site, was saved only by the last-minute action of the local population, led by architects and artists.

“We have come a long way since then,” says Benny Buntinx, coordinator of Flanders’ Open Monument Day, “but the challenge now is to create a civil society organisation that encourages citizens to care for their cultural heritage from an early age.”

On 11 September, nearly 400 buildings across Flanders will open their doors for free to reveal their histories and secrets. Curious visitors can choose between different types of monuments, archaeological sites and landscapes. There will be boat trips, bicycle tours, exhibitions, guided walking tours and more.

Fans of military sites will be spoiled this year, conflict being the theme of this 23rd edition of Open Monument Day. Belgium is known as the battlefield of Europe, and with good reason. Mediaeval forts, castles and reinforced farmhouses are strewn around the country. The two World Wars have left their scars on land and in cities with anti-tank channels, bunker lines and bomb shelters.

Many of these sites are relatively unknown. “People will be surprised when they see the Koningshooikt Waver line in Flemish Brabant,” says Buntinx. This is a line of bunkers that runs through five different villages, put up in defence against the German army during the Second World War. In one of these villages, Haacht, visitors can stroll along a channel of several kilometres long, dug out to prevent the advance of German tanks.

In Ursel, East-Flanders, the only way to get into a bomb shelter under the village square is to climb down a tight manhole hidden under an inconspicuous cover. “People walk over the cover every day without knowing that there is a bomb shelter from the Second World War beneath their feet,” smiles Buntinx.

## Conflicts in different shapes

Not all conflicts are met with guns, bombs and tanks. Sometimes a certain style of architecture can also be a means of warfare. The ideological and social conflicts in Flanders of the 19th and early 20th centuries have left behind a rich patrimony, such as statues to honour certain heroes or buildings that reflect a certain identity. During the Flemish school struggle, for example, Catholic organisations built their schools in the Neo-Gothic style, while public schools opted for Art Nouveau and later modernism.



Former military sites usually closed to the public, such as this old aviation base in Asse, are open to visitors during Open Monument Day

Sometimes monuments themselves are the subjects of struggle. They may be threatened with demolition – like the Belfort of Kortrijk – or, more common recently, need renovation and incite discussion about what should happen with them. “As a cultural heritage organisation, we often have conflicts with interest groups, like nature organisations, for example,” explains Buntinx. “Then we have to make compromises. The gallery of the former hippodrome in Sterrebeek, for example, will be torn down to make space for green landscape. Only the royal box will be kept as a monument.”

*“Architecture can also be a means of warfare”*

Finding a new function for an old building can take a long time, especially as you have to adapt it to modern times without destroying its historic character. “Buildings these days have to be far more energy efficient than before, and old constructions are not equipped for that,” says Buntinx. That is partly why the

old sanatorium of Tombeek in Flemish Brabant was in decline for many years, despite its protected status. “Now it will become the location for social housing, even though it is a challenge to supply it with sustainable energy.”

## Our history’s future

Notwithstanding all the conflicts and problems, Buntinx feels that the care for cultural heritage has firmly established itself in society. “Making people aware of the importance of cultural heritage is still our main goal,” he says, “even though we feel that we’ve already achieved that for a great part. Half a million people visit Open Monument Day every year, and many volunteers make the event possible. It proves that heritage care has come to a mature age.”

Together with other Flemish organisations for heritage care, Buntinx and his colleagues are preparing to merge into one big civil society organisation. “That way, we can reach out more to local societies,” he explains. “We’re hoping to make people realise that it’s everybody’s responsibility to care for our heritage. Our duty as a central portal would be to guide the enthusiasm that already exists. With our help, local organisations would be able to raise funds for the protection of a local monument, for example, without looking to the government for help. Moreover, we’d like to stimulate the cooperation between them.”

To get the Flemish more actively involved, Buntinx believes that there should be a separate focus on young people. “The better we educate our youngsters,” he says, “the better they’ll care for our heritage.” That is why he created a competition, called Un(der)cover, for would-be journalists to pen their impressions during Open Monument Day. Photographers can send pictures of a heritage site in a separate competition called Jefmonument. Buntinx: “We may even have to organise a separate event for youngsters in the future.” ♦



Wander around the 14th-century castle in Beersel, Flemish Brabant

## Open Monument Day Flanders: Conflict

11 September

Across Flanders

→ [www.openmonumenten.be](http://www.openmonumenten.be)

## Open Monument Day Brussels:

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Across Brussels

→ [www.monument.irisnet.be](http://www.monument.irisnet.be)



# The man behind the Kiekeboes

## Merho's comic family is about to turn 35

TOON HORSTEN

Who is Flanders' best-selling author? Is it Piet Huysentruyt or Jeroen Meus, the hugely popular TV chefs who both sell more than 100,000 copies of every book they publish? Or is it Pieter Aspe, who writes those popular thrillers situated in Bruges and has sold millions?

No, Flanders' bestselling author is Merho, short for Rob Merhotteit, a comic-book artist who sells 800,000 albums per year – totalling more than Huysentruyt, Meus and Aspe put together. With four new titles every year and constant reprints of the 128 albums published thus far of his popular *Kiekeboes* series, he is by far the most read author in Flanders.

*De Kiekeboes* is what readers in Flanders call a family comic, aiming at an audience from seven to 77. The stories are told and drawn in a clear, bright manner, and the characters have a direct appeal to both children and adults.

Kiekeboe is the surname of a typically Flemish family, with two parents and two children, a boy and a girl – the latter an attractive teenage daughter who is the real protagonist of the series and by far the most popular character of the cast.

### Master and apprentice

Merho is considered to be the only real heir to Willy Vandersteen (1913-1990), the founding father of the Flemish comic book industry. Vandersteen is most famous for his still-publishing *Suske en Wiske* series (first published in English under the rather unfortunate title *Willy and Wanda*, later changed to *Spike and Suzy*). Merho, 62, considers Vandersteen to be his master: It is he who taught him almost everything he knows about the profession.

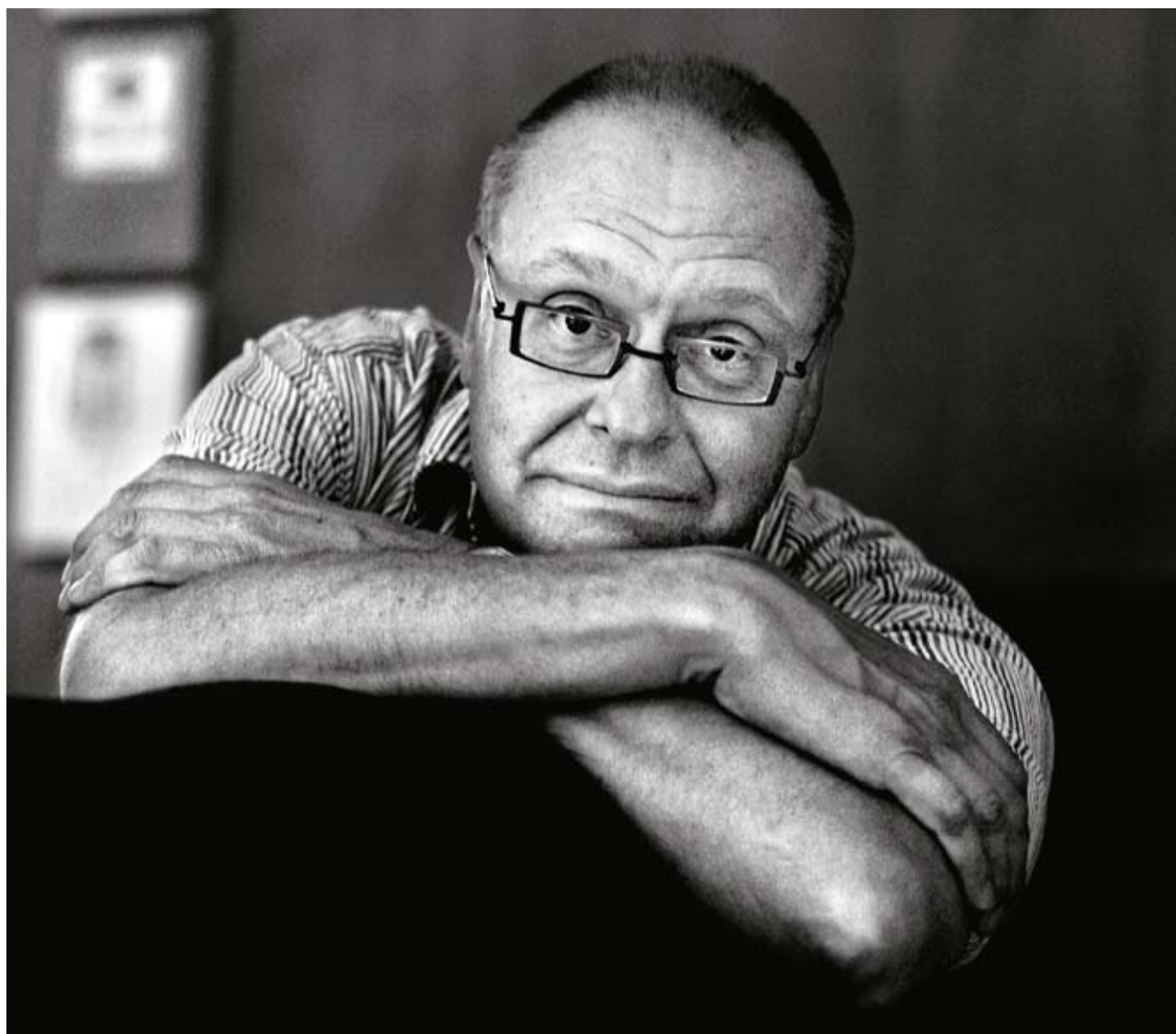
"In the late 1960s, I was studying at the Saint-Lucas art school in Brussels," Merho tells me from his home in Zoersel, a town halfway between Turnhout and Antwerp, where he was born and raised. "All I wanted to make were plain, enjoyable, traditional comics – not exactly *en vogue* in the art schools of those days. Only new and different things were considered to be interesting."

After finishing art school, Merho went to see Vandersteen, who invited him to come and work in his studio. "It was there that I really started my career as a professional comic artist," says Merho. "His studio at the time was more or less a comic book factory, where plenty of comics were being made. When I look back at what we were drawing in those days, I think it looks terrible. But it was the best school I could wish for at the time. Vandersteen never stopped repeating: 'It takes as much time to draw something wrong as it does to draw it right.'"

*"My comic can be seen as an overview of how Flemish society has changed over the past 30 years"*

Merho left Vandersteen's studio in 1977 and began his own comic book series called *Kiekeboe*. The name changed with much media fanfare just last year to *De Kiekeboes* to better reflect the ensemble cast and the shift from the father figure as the centre of attention.

The comic was first published on a daily basis in the newspaper *Het Laatste Nieuws*. "Mine is the last Flemish comic that became popular just by being published in the press," he says. "The ones that came afterwards, like *Urbanus* or *FC De Kampioenen*, were spin-offs of television series or had a popular comedian as a protagonist."



Rob Merhotteit, better known as Merho, is at pains to find a successor to pen *De Kiekeboes*

### A peculiar kind of comic

Merho's penchant for dealing with all kinds of controversial subjects – not just the obvious family situations – is striking. His readers are mainly youngsters, but his work deals with serious social issues like divorce, transexuality, prostitution and even incest. "My comic can be seen as a mirror of Flemish society – as an overview of how Flemish society has changed over the past 30 years," he says. "If I were to start over again, I'd probably make it a mixed family, with children of different fathers and mothers. That is part of children's lives these days, so why shouldn't I be allowed to deal with it? Only once, when I had the father of the family believe that he was fatally ill, did I receive negative reactions. But I had expected that."

Even more typical for *De Kiekeboes* is its particular, rather surreal kind of humour. "I have always liked comedians," Merho says. "My grandfather used to take me to the cinema in Antwerp, where I saw the films of Laurel & Hardy and Charlie Chaplin. Later, I discovered the kind of stand-up comedians we Dutch-speakers refer to with the French word *cabaretiers*. There were only a few back then, like Toon Hermans, and he was from the Netherlands. It wasn't until later that something similar took ground in Flanders as well, with comedians like Urbanus. The virtuosity with which these people play with language – that's my kind of humour!"

It is this particular kind of humour, with an emphasis on puns and playful language, that explains Merho's success. And it makes his comic difficult to imitate. "I publish half a page every day in the newspapers *Gazet van Antwerpen* and *Het Belang van Limburg*," he says. "For the drawings, I have assistance. But it's not easy to find somebody who shares my kind of humour and my way of telling stories. And I have come to realise that these two things are what makes the series popular. I have yet to meet the person who can make a complete *Kiekeboes* story from scratch, jokes and puns included."

Next year, the *Kiekeboes* will celebrate their 35th birthday. Activities begin in December with a new book and exhibition in Turnhout's cultural centre De Warande; both book and exhibition will focus on the relationship between Merho's comics and the arts. "The book will be called Museum K," he says, "a reference to Museum M in Leuven, but with K for Kiekeboes." Museum K will be presented like a real museum, with the book as its catalogue.

"We have designed a building," continues Merho, "with a different department on every floor: painting and sculpture, theatre and cabaret, music, architecture, even lifestyle." ♦

→ [www.dekiekeboes.be](http://www.dekiekeboes.be)



© Standaard Uitgeverij

Still looking good after 35 years: the Kiekeboe family



# Reviving a dying art

## Two guys and a piano aim to perform the complete Schubert song cycle

ALAN HOPE

Nineteenth century Austrian composer Franz Schubert is famous for two things: he liked to go down the *bierkeller* with his mates, and he composed in his short life more than 600 art-songs or *Lieder*, bringing a whole new life to the genre. Two of them, *Die schöne Müllerin* (*The Pretty Miller-Girl*) and *Winterreise* (*Winter Journey*), both set to poems by Wilhelm Müller, are considered masterpieces of the art form.

And they are the bookends to an ambitious series of concerts planned by Irish-born baritone Conor Biggs and pianist Andrew Wise. The pair are performing, over the next nine years, the entire Schubert song book. The project, called Schubertreise, consists of three or four recitals a year across the rolling landscape of Flemish Brabant's Pajottenland: a total of 577 *Lieder*, when all duplicates, variants and unfinished versions are deducted. The next performance is this weekend in Bever.

Biggs was born in Dublin into an artistic family. His mother was an artist and played the violin; his father was a sculptor, and his grandfather had been a concert pianist. Biggs trained in Dublin and London as an organist and pianist and began to sing when he was in his 20s – very young for a bass.

In 1983, he won an organ scholarship to study in Freiburg, where he learned German and discovered the poetry that Schubert has used as texts for his songs. He now makes a living as a singer, mainly for Belgium's most important professional choir, the Vlaams Radio Koor, or Flemish Radio Choir, based at the Flagey cultural centre in Brussels.

The inspiration for Schubertreise was the recent publication of the complete *Lieder*

*"Before a recital I pace up and down like a caged lion, thinking: 'Why didn't I get a job in the civil service?'"*



Heading across Pajottenland: Conor Biggs

arranged for three voices: low, medium and high. Until now, the songs were only published in the key Schubert first published them in. The new edition allows anyone to sing anything, regardless of voice or gender.

"Most male singers would shy away from what they regard as 'women's songs,'" Biggs says. "I don't. I don't think you have to. In the audio book of *The Lord of the Rings*, for example, there's one guy doing all the characters, male and female, and it's utterly convincing. You never think: Why isn't that character being read by a woman?"

It seems a formidable task to learn and perform 577 songs, even more so considering Biggs' refusal to have sheet music in front of him. "I try to prepare up to a year in advance," he explains. "Memory is a funny thing. It's rather like putting down a good wine; you have to keep revisiting it. It puts you under a terrible strain if you memorise something at the last

minute. The song you've memorised usually comes out fine, but then your brain goes into relax mode, and a different song that you know well goes pear-shaped."

He says that he relishes the element of fear. "That's my adrenaline kick. Other people do bungee jumps; I stand on a podium. And of course, as a singer, I can't hide behind an instrument. When I used to play the organ, I'd have my back turned to the audience or be up in a gallery. Now every gesture that's out of place is instantly noticed. There's no hiding place. For me, it's the Everest of the music world. The last hour before a recital I pace up and down like a caged lion, thinking: Why didn't I get a job in the civil service?"

Schubert's *Lieder* are often seen as a specialised sub-genre of classical music. "It's a dying art," says Biggs. "I'm trying to fan some light onto the dying embers, really. The lyrics of the *Lieder* are not in a language people speak anymore;

they need to have the translation in front of them. People are afraid of the unfamiliar and find comfort in what they know."

The series will feature not only recitals, but also food and drink, art exhibitions, calligraphy demonstrations, lectures on the music and on the history of the time. "In this visual age, there isn't anything particularly interesting about one bloke standing on stage with a pianist," Biggs admits. "But consider the bloke as walking a tightrope without a safety net – which is what the feat really represents – and the whole thing suddenly becomes more interesting."♦

### Schubertreise

11 September, 17:00

Rosario B&B

Poreel 10a, Bever

→ [www.schubertreise.be](http://www.schubertreise.be)

## Read any good books lately? • Ghent literature professor puts her preferences in podcasts

LISA BRADSHAW



As an assistant professor in the literature department of English Studies at the University of Ghent, Kate Macdonald has taught a fair number of books in her day. But her latest project is about the books that she *doesn't* teach.

"It has always frustrated me that some of the works I like the best, I cannot teach," she says. "Every literature department outside of the English-speaking world is focused on canonical literature. They have to be. We cannot wallow in the burrows and cul-de-sacs of English literature. That's not what those students are there for."

So while her students are busily preparing essays on *Jane Eyre* or the sonnets of Shakespeare, Macdonald has begun to

record podcasts on the burrows and cul-de-sacs.

Her strategy is simple: talk for about 10 minutes every week about one book that she loves. To narrow her focus, she's choosing books alphabetically, according to the surname of the author. Of her seven podcasts so far, the first was Margery Allingham's *The Beckoning Lady*, the second John Buchan's *The Gap in the Curtain*, and so forth. The books will be from the 19th or 20th centuries and most, but not all, will be originally written in English.

Macdonald, who is British, teaches Flemish students and hopes to introduce them and other Flemings to more English literature through the podcasts.

It shouldn't be too difficult: The casts are conversational and more than a little amusing. During her discussion of the Mexican novel *Like Water for Chocolate*, for instance, in which a daughter, who is also an excellent cook, is condemned by her horrific mother to care for her until the day she dies, MacDonald questions: "Why don't you just poison the old witch?"

The podcasts can be downloaded directly from MacDonald's website or on iTunes. They are as informed as you'd expect from a literature professor, but they're also delightful to listen to. You find yourself taken back to the rousing literary debates of your university days and realise that you miss those very, very much.♦

→ [www.reallylikethisbook.com](http://www.reallylikethisbook.com)



# JOB OPPORTUNITIES

## Sales Assistant - international and dynamic company

Caviar is an Integrated AV Content Provider telling Strong Stories (scripted content through commercials, feature films, TV series, virals ..... ) designed and realized by a pool of great international talents, distributing its products directly & indirectly under different brands through diversified channels (TV, internet, theatre, mobile, PC ...) to the consumers; relying on a strong backbone of Production Facilities

### Description:

Our client, who is market leader in the audiovisual sector, is looking for their office in Brussels a:

### Commercial/Sales Assistant (m/f)

Organizing and following up the sales administration including ordering, invoicing and delivery management

### This includes:

- Processing and following up orders (by e-mail or fax)
- Preparing purchase orders
- Handling invoicing in ERP system
- Giving information regarding price & terms for products
- Preparing price offers to customers
- Managing the shoot planning
- Organizing the planning and preparing necessary documents
- Coordinating between supplier, transporters and customer to ensure a smooth service
- Preparing statistics and forecast figures
- Following up open accounts and overdue payments

### Profile:

- You are fluent in English with a good level of Dutch and French
- You have a good knowledge of MS Office
- You have a first experience as Commercial or Sales Assistant, Customer Service, etc.
- A first experience in an audiovisual sector is a plus
- You are a true problem solver
- You have excellent communication and planning skills
- You are flexible and can take initiative
- You have a driver's license

### We offer:

- An interim contract of 6 months followed by a permanent contract
- An excellent opportunity to work at an international company in full expansion
- A continuous training and great atmosphere
- An attractive salary with extra-legal benefits (luncheon vouchers, transport costs)

Please send your C.V and motivation letter to [info@caviarcontent.com](mailto:info@caviarcontent.com)

## General Accountant with ambition as financial controller

Caviar is an Integrated AV Content Provider telling Strong Stories (scripted content through commercials, feature films, TV series, virals ..... ) designed and realized by a pool of great international talents, distributing its products directly & indirectly under different brands through diversified channels (TV, internet, theatre, mobile, PC ...) to the consumers; relying on a strong backbone of Production Facilities

### Function Description:

- As a right-hand to the Finance Director, your main responsibility is the A to Z Accounting of 1 entity.
- Your main tasks consist of:
  - Vouch invoices for payment. Verify pricing, quantity, taxability, and receipt, obtain approvals as necessary, assign general ledger account codes and cost centers. Take discounts according to company policy.
  - Monitor and collect outstanding accounts receivables and report exceptions.
  - Vouch employee expense reports for payment. Verify supporting receipts and approval, extend report, assign general ledger account codes and cost centers.
  - Resolve problem invoices and expense reports in a timely fashion coordinating with vendors, buyers, employees, and supervisors.
  - Accurately input vouched and approved invoices and expense reports into the Account Payable system.
  - Cut manual and computer checks. Match with vouched invoices and obtain necessary signatures; file vouched invoices.
  - Perform month-end closings and check run on a rotation basis
- Furthermore, you will gain responsibility within the controlling domain as well as extra growth opportunities based on your potential as finance professional.

### Profile:

You have minimum a bachelor degree and 3 to 5 years of experience in accounting. Excel is your playground and knowledge of EPR system is an asset. You have excellent verbal and written communication skills in Dutch and French. You strive for a high level of accuracy and you work efficiently and organized with dependable follow through.

### Offer:

In a nutshell our client offers a learning curve to boost your professional career. You will receive an attractive salary package with interesting fringe benefits and growth opportunities within an international environment.

Please send your C.V. and motivation letter to [info@caviarcontent.com](mailto:info@caviarcontent.com)



## Brussels turns design Mecca, darling

# DESIGN SEPTEMBER

TOM TACK

For the fifth year in a row, Design September turns Brussels into a true design Mecca. A rich and diverse programme of exhibitions, debates, lectures and open doors lets you discover the best of design. International designers such as Arik Levy, Patricia Urquiola, Mario Botta and Inga Sempé give their vision on design at Flagey. To prepare you for this edition, *Flanders Today* presents the Top 5 To-Do List.

### Donna Wilson, Ercol & SCP: A British Design story

On the occasion of Design September 2011, retailer La Fabrika invites London crafts queen Donna Wilson (pictured) to create an installation around her designs, together with British manufacturers Ercol and SCP. Wilson has been described as “a magician with wool” or a “material miracle”. Her work varies from colourful knitted creatures, to quirky homewares to striking upholstered furniture.

→ [www.lafabrika.be](http://www.lafabrika.be)

### Studio Simple: Day Sign

Studio Simple and gallery Valerie Traan present a new version of the Day Sign projects at eco fashion boutique Haleluja. Last January, Studio Simple created one product every day. Inspiration of their daily

design was generated by something that touched them or was “necessary”. All creations are locally produced, using things that surround us, a combination of what’s lost and found and new. The ecological footprint is only a few steps away from where the object is used.

→ [www.haleluja.be](http://www.haleluja.be)

### Elvis Pompilio

The Belgian pioneer in additive manufacturing, .MGX, collaborates with star milliner Elvis Pompilio. Additive Manufacturing is a technique where your designs are printed in three dimensions. .MGX has already collaborated with internationally renowned designers such as Amanda Levete, Patrick Jouin, Arik Levy, Xavier Lust and now also the emblematic Pompilio, who will present a selection of 3D printed designs in the flagship store of .MGX on the Zavel in Brussels.

→ [www.mgxbymaterialise.com](http://www.mgxbymaterialise.com)

### ECAL and Alessi

During Design September, ECAL, the University of Art and Design in Lausanne, Switzerland, shows the results of a workshop with Italian kitchen utensil designer Alessi. At the beginning of the project, CEO Alberto Alessi explained his “formula” that all Alessi products

follow: combining the chemistry between the emotional elements, functionality, communication, price and industrial technology of a design. As a result, the second-year students have conceived a series of new desk and office objects that make the workspace more fun and friendly.

→ [www.designedinbrussels.be](http://www.designedinbrussels.be)

### Living with Ceramics

Ampersand House is a brand new art and design gallery in Brussels. During Design September, this impressive mansion in Sint-Gillis serves as the backdrop for the exhibition *Living with Ceramics*. French artist/ceramist Cathy Coëz uses the architecture of the house directly in her installations. This creates the concept of living with ceramics as more than static vases or sculptures. Coëz sees them as personalities that inhabit a space. There’s also a selection of work by ceramists such as Steen Ipsen, Wouter Dam and Louise Hindsgavl.

→ [www.ampersandhouse.com](http://www.ampersandhouse.com)

Until 30 September  
Across Brussels

→ [www.designseptember.be](http://www.designseptember.be)



## Ganesh Festival

9-11 September  
Stadspark, Antwerp



Just as in all other world cities from Mumbai to New York, the Indian community in Antwerp is gearing up for the annual celebration of Ganesha, one of the main Hindu deities. The colourful multi-cultural folk festival combines prayer, ceremony and traditional dress with music, dance, an Indian market and numerous food and drink stands.

The finale takes place on Sunday evening with a parade carrying the ornate statue of Ganesha, with its elephant head, from the Stadspark to the Steenplein where it will take a holy dip in the water of the River Scheldt. Free vegetarian snacks will be handed out on the occasion. (Robyn Boyle)

→ [www.tinyurl.com/ganeshfest](http://www.tinyurl.com/ganeshfest)

### MORE FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

#### Antwerp

**Hafla Balcanica:** Free world dance and music festival bringing together Arabic and Balkan cultures, with Roma music concerts and performances by Chebaro's Bellydancers, Ell Circo d'Ell Fuego, Bazaar d'Orient, Balkan Hotsteppers and more  
SEP 10 from 18.00 at Het Oude Badhuis, Stuijvenbergplein 38  
03.292.60.00

#### Bilzen (Limburg province)

**Scottish Weekend:** Annual festival celebrating Scottish culture with the European Highland dancing championship, bagpipe competition and folk music by The Dervish Session, Breabach, Michael McGoldrick, Sonerien Du and more  
SEP 9-11 at Alden Biesen, Kasteelstraat 6  
[www.schotsweekend.be](http://www.schotsweekend.be)

#### Liedekerke (Flemish Brabant)

**Tinga Tinga:** Annual world culture festival featuring music by Sens Unique, Donder in 't hooi, Geydi Gonzales, Alaska and more, plus a children's village and international food stands  
SEP 10 12.30 at Pastoriepark, Steinfurtdreef  
[www.tingatinga.be](http://www.tingatinga.be)

#### Turnhout

**De Warande Opening Festival:** Cultural venue De Warande opens its doors for a new season with a fiery festival featuring dance, music, street theatre, circus acts... and lots of fire  
SEP 10-11 at De Warande, Warandestraat 42  
[www.warande.be](http://www.warande.be)





Romance is not dead. Otherwise, the story of Romeo and Juliet would have lost its appeal ages ago. As tickets fly out the door for this week's open-air performance of Shakespeare's famous tragedy, it's hard not to feel the love. To add to the magic, Charles Gounod's famous opera takes place in the courtyard of the mediaeval Ooidonk Castle. Using French director Francois de Carpentries, it's conducted by the Flemish Opera's Yannis Pouspourikas. Bring a blanket along and snuggle up with your loved one. (RB)

→ [www.070.be](http://www.070.be)



© Joseph Jeanmart

## Roméo & Juliette

8-10 September  
Ooidonk Castle, Deinze

### MORE OPERA THIS WEEK

#### Brussels

**Krol Roger (King Roger):** Polish composer Karol Szymanowski's opera from 1924, influenced by his travels through Sicily and North Africa, featuring De Munt Symphony Orchestra, with musical direction by Hartmut Haenchen (in Polish with Dutch and French surtitles)  
**SEP 9-10** at De Munt, Muntplein 6  
[www.demunt.be](http://www.demunt.be)

**Médée:** Luigi Cherubini's tragic opera from 1797, based on Euripides' ancient tragedy, staged by Krzysztof Warlikowski with musical direction by Christophe Rousset (in French with Dutch and French surtitles)  
**Until SEP 22** at De Munt, Muntplein 6  
[www.demunt.be](http://www.demunt.be)

#### Knokke-Heist

**Aïda:** Youth theatre group MILO performs the music written by Elton John and Tim Rice, based on Giuseppe Verdi's opera, staged by Lore Dobbelaere (in Dutch)  
**SEP 14-18** at CC Knokke-Heist, Meerlaan 32  
[www.miloproductions.be](http://www.miloproductions.be)



Culinary comedy might just be the newest genre in stand-up, a response to the rash of cookery programmes, celebrity chefs and best-selling cookbooks that have taken over Flanders of late. And there's no one better to poke fun at the often all-too-serious world of culinary fame than former restaurant owner and improv comic Joost Van Hyfte.

For *Kok (Chef)*, Van Hyfte plucks an unsuspecting couple from the audience, then proceeds to cook a meal for them, all the while spewing anecdotes with amazing speed and wit. Van Hyfte shows life in the kitchen for what it really is, far from the polished version we see on TV or in glossy mags – sometimes raw, other times burned to a crisp. But in this case, the result is always funny. (RB)

→ [www.arenbergschouwburg.be](http://www.arenbergschouwburg.be)

## Poperinge Beer & Hops Festival

16-18 September  
Across Poperinge



The beer in your hand might very well come from the West Flemish town of Poperinge, huddled up against the southern border of Flanders. Or part of it anyway, since it is there that three-quarters of all the country's hops are grown, used to preserve and to add bitterness to the oldest and most popular alcoholic beverage in the world. Reason enough for the locals to hail the holy crop every three years with a beer festival.

Expect to find what comes to mind when you think of a beer festival: rows of long, wooden tables in tents on a square in the centre of town; women carrying pints of lager, one on every finger; greasy grub galore; and German sing-alongs coming from the podium. "For a couple of days, Poperinge breathes the air of Munich," a spokesperson from the city's tourist office says. "The whole town will be decorated and under the spell of the beer festival."

The highlight – aside from the beer – is a street parade across town on Sunday afternoon. Some 10 floats and more than 1,300 extras "tell the story of hops in the world, its friends, its enemies and the history of manual picking." Kids dress up as little hops, and one local beauty will be crowned the Queen of Hops.

The truly interested – and non-hung-over – may even want to freshen up their knowledge at the Poperinge Hops Museum, located in an old distribution centre where guided tours in the morning talk about the healthy and medicinal side of hops. Lovers of different kinds of beer and other regional products should have a look at – and a taste of – the daily marketplace, where local chefs, breweries and other food producers display their goods.

Hops, hops, hops: it's all the people of Poperinge can think of this time of year. They have a song, a game and a mascot – a sweet little ladybird, holding a pint – that still needs a name. You can vote for your favourite on the festival website, choosing between names such as Hoppy, Poppyhoppy or Hopsiepoppsie. Maybe they should also change the name of their town to Hoperinge.

This year marks the festival's 22nd edition. The first was held in 1956, and you can find black-and-white photos of dignified jolly (one stern looking man rides a donkey, backwards) on the website. (Philip Ebels)

→ [www.hoppefeesten.be](http://www.hoppefeesten.be)



### MORE BEER THIS WEEK

#### Lovendegem (East Flanders)

**Workshop beer brewing:** You don't need any special equipment to be able to brew beer, apparently. Everyday kitchen appliances do just fine. Learn all about it and go home with a bottle of your very own brew  
**SEP 14** 14.00-17.00 at Oostveld Kouter 11  
[www.bierbrouwworkshop.be](http://www.bierbrouwworkshop.be)

#### Erpe-Mere (East Flanders)

**Beer tasting:** The people from the Belgian Family Brewers don't only teach you to taste, but also tell the story behind the Tripel Karmeliet, Brugse Zot, Gouden Carolus Classic, De Koninck Tripel, Tripel Karmeliet and the Sint Bernardus Abt 12. Whew!  
**SEP 9** 20.00-midnight in Aaigem (Erpe-Mere)  
<http://bierproefavond.wordpress.com>

#### Kapellen (Antwerp province)

**Beer and cheese tasting:** This is a real tasting, the organiser warns you, so don't drink any alcohol before or even eat anything: You'll have plenty of the eight different kinds of beer and just as many different kinds of cheese  
**SEP 9** at 18.30 in Den Biz, Eikendreef 3  
[www.curieuskapellen.net](http://www.curieuskapellen.net)



## Battlefields and beer with Flanders Today

Flanders Today and WM Tours invite you to join us for a tour of West Flanders' First World War sites with former soldier and battlefield historian Willie Mohan, plus a visit to the famous Poperinge Beer Festival

**17 September**  
**Depart from Brussels at 8.30**  
**Arrive back in Brussels at 22.00**

- **Tyne Cot cemetery, Passchendaele**  
The largest Commonwealth war cemetery in the world
- **Talbot House, Poperinge**  
Legendary sanctuary for British soldiers in Poperinge
- **Poperinge Beer Festival**  
Belgium's most prestigious celebration of its kind
- **St George's Memorial Church, Ypres**  
Built in 1927-1929 for grieving family and survivors
- **In Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres**  
Visit the famous First World War museum before it closes for renovation
- **The Last Post**  
The final salute that is still played every night at the Menin Gate Memorial

Tour is in English

Tour bus departs from Schuman area in Brussels

Cost: €55 - includes transport, guide, entry to Talbot House and lunch

Register by 9 September via email at  
[editorial@flanderstoday.eu](mailto:editorial@flanderstoday.eu)

You'll receive information about payment after you register



## Joost Van Hyfte

1 October, 20.15  
Arenberg, Antwerp



### MORE COMEDY THIS WEEK

#### Antwerp

**My Bitter Half:** Antwerp's British & American Theatrical Society (BATS) and The Circus Cow Collective present this hilarious, heart-wrenching, often confronting play about a couple going through marriage counselling (in English)

SEP 9-10 20.00 at Belfry Theatre, Paardenmarkt 111

0496.25.59.11

www.batsantwerp.be

#### Ghent

**Goeste!** Jo Decaluwe directs and stars in this comical play about eating, drinking and money, based on the work by turn-of-the-20th-century Flemish author Cyriel Buysse. The word *goesting* (desire) once won the prize for the most beautiful word in the Dutch language (in Dutch)

SEP 10 & 17 20.00 at Theater Tinnenpot, Tinnenpotstraat 21

www.tinnenpot.be

#### Grimbergen & Hasselt

**Cucinema:** Slapstick comedy by Laika & Circo Ripopolo combining film, humour and clowning around with delicious food from the set of one chaotic kitchen (in Dutch)

SEP 8-10 20.00 at Cultuurcentrum Hasselt, Kunstlaan 5

SEP 15-17 19.30 at Fenikshof Grimbergen, Abdijstraat 20

www.laika.be

## DUSK 'TIL DAWN

KATRIEN LINDEMANS



## Festiv'halle

8-10 September

De Leide, Halle

Who's up for a free music festival this weekend? Come to De Leide in Halle, on the edge of Pajottenland, and discover local talent at this family-friendly three-day event. You'll find a big tent, food stalls and plenty of activities to keep the kids entertained.

Opening night (Thursday) goes by the name Festibar. The big tent will be split in two. One half is dedicated to work by the up-and-coming local artists Jan Van Keerbergen and Michaël Petermans. The other half is a bar, where you can drink and mingle to live acoustic tunes of a band.

The next day, bring your dancing shoes and/or ear plugs, as the tent becomes a dance temple with an awesome DJ line-up, all also hailing from Flemish Brabant. Electro, house and techno duo Goos'n Diesel start things off at around 20.00. Next in line is K!tch, back on the Festiv'halle stage, after winning last year's DJ contest.

Around 23.00, the crowd is treated to a set by We Are Prostitutes, a moniker DJs Thomas and Steven thought fitting as they are "attention whores who stir a musical molotov cocktail". King DJ takes the stage soon after midnight, with his beloved mix of '70s and '80s dance floor mixes.

Sunday is all about concerts, and there's a lot of Dutch to be heard – not just in cabaret, but also from Belgian Asociality, one of a very few punk bands you're likely to hear sing in Dutch. You'll also hear dub & ska by Bamboo Avenue, cover band Moelparkee and Antwerp's hilarious parody rock group The Clement Peerens Exploitation (pictured). All-round DJ Mickey House, resident at Halle's popular bar De Kelt, is the last one to blast the speakers.

→ [www.festivhalle.be](http://www.festivhalle.be)



## Marni Jazz Festival

Until 16 September

Theatre Marni, Brussels

Jazz has no boundaries. For this edition of its annual in-house festival, Theatre Marni pays tribute to the accordion. No longer confined to the realm of folk music, the squeezebox takes centre stage during energetic performances by young Spanish duo Féten Féten, Argentinean button accordion virtuoso Chango Spasiuk and Belgium's very own Tuur Florizoone, Tric Trac Trio, Anne Niepold and Didier Laloy (pictured). This last musician is leading the revival of the 19th-century diatonic accordion. Laloy, from Brussels, has a dark and moody style; nostalgic, yet strangely comforting. (RB)

→ [www.theatremarni.com](http://www.theatremarni.com)



© Alessia Comu

### MORE JAZZ THIS WEEK

#### Bruges

**September Jazz:** 15th anniversary edition of the free open-air festival. This year's theme is "back to the roots" and features classic international jazz ensembles, including the Abraham Burton Quartet, Vincent Herring Funk Project featuring Richie Goods and the Del Ferro-Vaganee Group

SEP 10 18.30 at Basisschool De Ganzenveer, entrance on Bilkske

www.dewerf.be

#### Geel (Antwerp province)

**Easy Yellowtime Music Festival:** Mellow jazz festival in a park featuring Jack van Poll, Rony Verbiest Trio, Yvonne Walter Quintet, Boogie Boy and more

SEP 11 14.00-23.00 at Busser 30

www.yellowtime.be

#### Mechelen

**Jazzathome:** Annual festival featuring concerts by more than 20 musicians in living rooms, gardens and other unique locations across the city centre, plus concert and after-party at Stadsschouwburg

SEP 18 13.00-19.00 across Mechelen

www.jazzathome.be

## Het Goddelijke Monster

Sundays at 21.20

één

You haven't opened a Flemish newspaper or magazine over the last seven days without seeing the new television series *Het Goddelijke Monster* (*The Divine Monster*) splashed across its pages. Not without reason: After endless postponements, the 10 episodes based on the Monster trilogy by Flemish author Tom Lanoye, has become the most anticipated Flemish drama series ever. Lanoye's award-winning trilogy, published between 1997 and 2002, counts about 1,300 pages altogether, so screenwriter Rik D'hiet (*Flikken*) and director Hans Herbots (*Bo, Windkracht 10: Koksijde Rescue*) decided long ago that it was much too complex for a single movie alone. Shot in 2009 and 2010, the mini-series finally hit the small screens of Flanders this week.

The story follows the trials of the wealthy and politically connected Kortrijk family Deschryver. Eldest daughter Katrien is

the protagonist, and she has been for her entire life somewhat of a jinx: Bad things – very bad – tend to happen to the people around her. An accidental death lands her in custody, and the series spins around her guilt or innocence, her family's secrets and the detective desperate to bring down a family that he equates with everything that is wrong with Belgium.

The first episode, which aired last Sunday, got things off to a rousing start, with the same grotesque humour that peppers Lanoye's books. The author himself, who decided not to be directly involved with the project is reportedly pleased. "In a time of financial crisis," he told *Knack* magazine, "the only way forward is to take risks and do what no one else is doing. Hans, Rik, the actors and the rest of the crew have certainly done that." (Lisa Bradshaw)

→ [www.tinyurl.com/goddelijke](http://www.tinyurl.com/goddelijke)



© NykyN/VRT

### MORE TV THIS WEEK

**HIV+:** TV journalist Kobe Ilse followed five people in Flanders who are HIV positive for one year, and the results are in this new series that breaks through stereotypes and taboos to see how the virus affects every aspect of their lives, from relationships to work to religion  
Mondays at 21.35 on één  
[www.een.be/programmas/hiv+](http://www.een.be/programmas/hiv+)

**Mijn Restaurant!:** The new season of the reality series that finds teams struggling to open and then competing to keep restaurants in spaces across Flanders. This is a series that has launched brilliant careers, as well as caused heartbreak, bankruptcy and broken families. Which is what makes it so popular  
Tues & Thurs at 21.30 on VTM  
[www.vtm.be/mijn-restaurant-2011](http://www.vtm.be/mijn-restaurant-2011)





## bite

ROBYN BOYLE

## De Specht ★★★★★

Having foodie neighbours has a number of advantages. One is the chance to tap into their immense database of knowledge concerning superior local eateries. After months of hearing them slip the words De Specht into every possible conversation, I finally reserved a table at this former fisherman's café.

The indispensable GPS leads us to a rural, wooded area with narrow, winding roads where we pass a couple of barely visible signs pointing the way to the brasserie. (*Specht*, by the way, means woodpecker in Dutch.) When the road reaches a dead end, and you see a few people holding fishing poles crouched around a pond, you have arrived.

Turn the corner to see a gorgeously renovated building, open for two years now. But the whole place has a characteristic vintage feel to it with plenty of rich wood, a cosy fireplace outside and a charming masonry stove.

The terrace stretches out over one of the ponds, and three white swans make their way over to greet us. Meanwhile, the owners' dog and puppy are already making friends with my own dog. This is possibly the most unique welcoming committee I've ever encountered at a restaurant.

The owner, Myriam Van Damme, is also

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warm and friendly as she comes to take our drink orders. She runs the place together with her son, Lieven Van der Poorten, who we quickly discover is a most talented chef.

While waiting for our mains, we notice that the exuberant group of women next to us is out celebrating a birthday. As soon as the sun starts to descend, the owner brings out a large candelabra, places it at the middle of their table and lights each candle. Truly classy.

A lot of effort also goes into presentation, as we see when the dishes arrive on grey slates drizzled with balsamic syrup. The accompanying bowls of salad are spilling over with fresh ingredients, including red onion rings, half sun-dried tomatoes, hardboiled egg quarters and a garnishing of leaf celery. The combination is an explosion of textures and flavours, enhanced by a tangy dressing.

One of my neighbours tucks into an order of bacon-wrapped goat cheese. Hefty slices of salty smoked bacon covered in grill marks and dried herbs, can hardly contain the warm, creamy and pungent cheese. A few slices of sweet mango balance out the dish.

I rarely order chicken in a restaurant because it tends to be dry and lacking



flavour, but my neighbour's chicken brochette is anything but. The plump, moist chunks of poultry are grilled on a skewer and seasoned to perfection with mustard and black pepper.

Our other dining companion is equally pleased with his Italian ham – thick slices of grilled pork that taste predominately of salted butter and rosemary. My own dish is a royal slab of Irish rib-eye steak – tender, juicy and full of flavour thanks to a marbling of fat.

We prolong the summer evening on this dreamy terrace with a round of beers. Eventually we get up to go and, on our

way out the door, the owners point to a sign that reads: Thank you very much, and please come back soon. I did – the very next night.

📍 Spechtbaan 8, Iddergem (Denderleeuw)  
reservation recommended: 0477.44.44.63

🕒 Wed-Fri & Sun, 11.00-22.00; Sat, 15.00-22.00  
(kitchen open: 12.00-14.00 & 18.00-21.00)

💶 Mains: €15-€25

👉 Romantic hidden gem in the middle of nowhere with quality meat dishes and the best of hospitality

## TALKING SPORTS

LEO CENDROWICZ

## Next stop: Olympics

## Field hockey championships puts Belgium in London in 2012

Flanders does cycling well, has some nifty footballers and produced a global icon in tennis star Kim Clijsters; but few other sports get much of a profile across the region. So it is refreshing to see the Flemish make their mark elsewhere, as they did just a few days ago when Belgium reached the semi-finals of the European field hockey championships in Germany.

Belgium, which has adopted the English nickname of the "Red Lions", seemed at one point ready to take Europe by storm. The Lions, however, saw their hopes ended in the semi-finals: they lost 4-2 to the Netherlands in Mönchengladbach.

It was a brave battle against the Dutch, the overwhelming favourites, with three World Cups, two Olympic golds and eight Champions Trophies to their name. By contrast, Belgium has a far less storied record: It has never reached the final of any major championship, and the ledger for any given year is likely to say "did not qualify".

So when Florent Van Aubel (*pictured*) and Simon Gougnard put Belgium 2-1 up, it might have signalled a turn-up for the books. But they failed to maintain the momentum of their initial rush, and, by the second half, the experienced Dutch were able to exert their domination over their tired opponents.

Yet the team – which includes stars Tom Boon, Benjamin Van Hove and Alexandre de Paeuw, as well as captain Maxime Luyckx and keeper David Van Rysselberge – can be proud of its feat. Its showing included a dramatic turnaround against Spain: trailing 0-2, they shocked the Spaniards with three



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goals without reply to win a spectacular tie. Belgium lost the bronze medal play-off match against England but fourth place is more than respectable.

"Belgian hockey has made a huge step forward, and we are now respected by the big countries," said *Gentenaar* Van Aubel. "There is no great difference between Belgium and the Netherlands. We should remain positive: We really shook them."

The semi-final placing also means that Belgium qualifies automatically for next year's Olympic Games in London.

Belgium's women's field hockey team, meanwhile, finished fifth in their parallel European Championships. The Belgium Panthers will still need to survive a qualifying tournament in March of next year before booking their Olympic tickets, but they can also look forward to hosting the next Euros, in 2013.

➡ [www.hockey.be](http://www.hockey.be)

## THE LAST WORD...

## All work and no play

"I carry on gaming just for my own pleasure. I don't want to spend entire days sitting gaming, though a job as gaming journalist would suit me fine."

Jo V Hakim Mansouri, 20, from Ypres represents Belgium in the final of Call of Duty XP 2011 in Los Angeles this week

## Rolling in it

"Freddie broke through and started winning races. Lots of races. The money came streaming in. I used to stash the banknotes carefully in a soup tureen, and it went upstairs with us every evening."

Carine, wife of 1970s cycling star Freddy Maertens, recalls the good old days

## Over-qualified

"These days everyone wants to go on and study for a master's. That's unfortunate for us, as we have more trouble finding moderately educated people than the highly educated."

Elly Kog of KBC bank on degree inflation and the cost in employment

## See no (more) evil

"We've had Dutroux and now the church. Are we now blind to other forms of abuse? I think we might be."

Federal justice minister Stefaan De Clerck, whose career spans both scandals

## NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #197

## Feature

Walter van Bierendonck is a whirlwind of fashion craziness. Whether it's mad-hatter hats, hot pink gabardine trousers or giant belts made of foam, the Flemish designer never fails to entertain. We talk to the man behind the fabric as the Antwerp Fashion Museum stages its first-ever Bierendonck show

## Focus

Thanks to a cooperative agreement, Healthcare Belgium can help patients from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan and share technical expertise with their medical staff. We'll tell you why those countries and what it means for Flemish medicine

## Arts

Flemish director Geoffrey Enthoven, who brought us the films *Meisjes* and *Vidange Perdue*, gets away from the trials of old age in his latest endeavour, instead turning his cameras on the disabled