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The portico and garden pavilion of the Rubens House feature in many a 17th-century painting, like here in one of Jacob Jordaens' series *Cupid and Psyche* (1640-41)

## The Flemish Italian

**A new exhibition at Rubens House reveals the famous painter as an architect**

ANNA JENKINSON

Peter Paul Rubens is one of the 17th century's best-known painters. Less known, however, is that he was also a connoisseur of architecture. In the first-ever exhibition to be dedicated to the artist's architectural endeavours, the Rubens House in Antwerp has brought together drawings, books and paintings from collections worldwide to tell the story of Rubens, the architect.

*Palazzo Rubens: The Master as Architect* could not take place in a more apt setting. Not only did the museum used to be Rubens' family home, it was actually designed by the artist himself. "A more eloquent testimony of his ideas on architecture is scarcely imaginable," says Ben van Beneden, the curator at Rubens House.

Some of the pieces – valuable architecture books from Rubens' library and works by Michelangelo, Van Dyck and Rubens himself – are from the museum's own collection, others are on loan from the Hermitage, the Louvre or the British Museum.

Room by room, the visitor builds up a picture of where Rubens' architectural inspiration came from, why his opinion as an architectural expert was sought and which buildings he worked on. "We hope the exhibition will be an eye-opener for people to recognise the importance of the Rubens House and of Rubens as an architect," says Van Beneden.

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## Old rivals clash once more

Chess titans Garry Kasparov and Nigel Short will meet again over the chessboard this weekend in Leuven, 18 years after they last clashed. In that world championship match in London (pictured), organised under the auspices of the new chess federation the two men had just set up, Kasparov (*right in photo*) won by six games to one with 13 draws, the largest margin ever in a title match since 1961.

A lot of water has passed under the bridge since then. Short was the national coach for Iran from 2006 to 2007 and now lives in Athens. Kasparov retired from chess in 2005 to take up politics, formed a new political party and almost stood in the Russian presidential elections.

The two men will be playing blitz chess in Leuven's magnificent Town Hall on Sunday, 9 October, a discipline which allows them only minutes to consider their moves. After a scheduled three hours of play, they'll give comments on their games to members of the audience. The whole event will be shown on giant screens in the hall and streamed online at [www.exqisport.be](http://www.exqisport.be)



© Beiga

## Students insist on going to class

**Web-based lectures unpopular as solutions are sought to overcrowding**

ALAN HOPE

Students at the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL) surprised everyone last week when they rejected the opportunity to skip some classes and follow them instead online from home.

The measure was proposed because some first-year classes in the social sciences faculty, including communications and politics, are over-crowded, making it impossible to house everyone in the lecture theatres. The university proposed that students attend a live lecture on alternate weeks and watch a webcast on other weeks.

Days after the suggestion was made, it had to be withdrawn. "We're shocked at the

criticisms from the students," commented Katrijn Malfliet, dean of the faculty. "We knew they had some reservations but never imagined the resistance would be so great. In this climate we are not prepared to go forward with our web lectures proposal, but, rest assured, we continue to support this new form of teaching. They [web lectures] will come, sooner or later."

Meanwhile, a student representative said: "It's a step in the right direction that the web-based lectures are to disappear as an alternative for traditional lectures. But the real problem remains the under-funding of higher education and the consequences for bachelor undergraduates."

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## FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE



## Jan Van Dessel

Belgium's best beer-pourer for 2011 is Jan Van Dessel, who works at the café Den Deugniet (The Rascal) in Oud-Heverlee, Flemish Brabant. Fifty bar staff from across the country took part in the annual event last week at the InBev staff café in Leuven.

Van Dessel will now go on to the Stella Artois World Draught Master 2011 – the world championship for pint-pullers – on 26 October in Buenos Aires. The contest was judged by three notables: current world champion Chris Meyers of the US, his countryman and dedicated beer lover Howard Gutman (who also happens to be the American ambassador to Belgium) and Keith Cuveele, the Belgian champion for 2010 and barman at Den Treffer in Waregem, West Flanders.

Van Dessel, 22 and a student of engineering, impressed the judges with his strict adherence to what InBev calls the "pouring ritual". It has nine steps: the Cleansing, in which the glass is rinsed out with cold water; the Presentation, where the angle of the glass is controlled; the Sacrifice, where the first drops of beer are allowed to fall outside the glass; the

Swirling Alchemy, as the beer fills the glass; the Collar, where the head is allowed to form; the Retreat, where the last drops again fall outside the glass; the Beheading, where the head is scraped off to the level of the rim of the glass; the Judgement, where the thickness of the head (maximum 3cm) is verified as correct; the Last Cleansing, where the sides and foot of the glass are rinsed in clean water; and, finally, the Presentation.

"The secret of a good beer is in the preparation," said Van Dessel. "The glass has to be clean, and the counter needs to be in order." His success he puts down to the environment in which he works. "Our café is famous for pouring good *pintjes*. When we took part in the Hapje Tapje competition in Leuven in preparation for this championship, there were three barmen from Den Deugniet in the top five."

For the first time this year, the public was able to vote for their favourite café – an honour that went to the M-café, attached to the Leuven's city museum. As a prize, they'll be able to treat their visitors to a free Stella.

→ [www.stellaartois.com/wdm2011](http://www.stellaartois.com/wdm2011)

## News in brief

The organisation Ethical Vegetarian Alternative (EVA) has been awarded the 2011 **Flemish Culture Prize for a social-cultural organisation**. Culture minister Joke Schauvliege awarded the prize to the Ghent-based organisation, responsible for the Thursday Veggie Day campaign, which finds schools in the Ghent area serving vegetarian meals to students every Thursday and canteens of city employees doing the same. The campaign was described as "a textbook example of social-cultural working" by the prize committee.

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

Work will resume in November on a **new tram line linking Deurne and Wijnegem** in Antwerp province after changes to the building permit were approved last week. The construction was suspended by the Council of State last May after the project was two-thirds complete, following a complaint from a resident along the planned route.

The **lights on Flanders' motorways** will be switched back on in cases of bad weather, mobility minister Hilde Crevits told the Flemish parliament last week, following concern expressed by motoring organisations Touring and VAB. The government decided in July to turn off the lighting as an energy-saving measure. An exception will now be made when the Royal Meteorological Institute forecasts heavy rain or mist.

The **Flemish Flu Platform** has issued a statement that suggests all pregnant women and those suffering from chronic illnesses be vaccinated against influenza, as the new flu season approaches. Last winter

200,000 people in Flanders were infected with the virus, with this year's figures expected to be slightly down. The advice is aimed at anyone with diabetes, heart or lung problems, as well as the over-65s.

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

**Flemish train conductor Johan Neyrinck** experienced his first late departure in 36 years last week, when passengers on board his Nieuwpoort to Tiel train staged an impromptu party to celebrate his last day in the job, complete with balloons, streamers and music playing over the loudspeaker. "I was completely overwhelmed," commented Neyrinck, who had arrived at work that day with a kilo of pralines to share with his regular passengers.

Next year's **Belgian Pride**, the annual gay, lesbian and transgender celebration in Brussels, is under threat after financial inspectors raised concerns over the imbalance of funding by the country's regional and community authorities. According to documents leaked to the newspaper *Brussel Deze Week*, the Flemish Region and the Flemish Community Commission have together paid €70,000 towards the event, while the Walloon Region and the French Community Commission provided only €9,000. Brussels Region paid €26,500, and Brussels City €13,000. Flemish finance minister Philippe Muyters approved the spending but is unlikely to do so again, the paper said, unless the imbalance is addressed.

Robrecht Wissels of BelgoCatering in Aalst has been selected to represent Belgium in the prestigious **biennale**

**Bocuse d'Or, an international chef championship**, in 2013. Wissels, 30, earned his spurs at Michelin starred restaurants like Comme Chez Soi in Brussels and El Bulli in Catalonia. He took first place last week in a qualifying competition thanks to his refined and innovative approach, according to jury president Peter Goossens. "People think of catering as huge quantities and low standards, but it's not that," said Wissels. "I was brought in to help refine the kitchen, and it's working."

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

A prisoner who escaped last week from a jail in Merkplas, Antwerp province, has been revealed to be a prominent **member of the Albanian mafia** wanted in his own country in connection with a double murder. Belgium's directorate-general for prisons said they were unaware of the status of 31-year-old Dritan Rexhepi, who escaped together with an Italian prisoner and remains at large.

Consumer organisation Test-Aankoop last week surprised beer buffs by naming Schultenbräu, a German beer sold by Aldi supermarkets at only 49 cents for a half-litre can, as the **best beer available in the country** for quality and price.

A **1.8m tiger python**, which escaped from its terrarium in Hulshout, Antwerp province, three months ago, was last week recaptured in a potato field near the town. Noodles, none the worse for his adventure, was captured by police and a town official and taken to the animal shelter in Opglabbeek, Limburg province. He is thought to have been hiding out at a nearby compost heap.

## OFFSIDE

## Flanders, according to Hasbro

Antwerp has taken over from Brussels as the most expensive city in Belgium, but Knokke and Kortrijk have disappeared completely.

That would be front-page news, but don't panic: the changes are limited to the new Belgian edition of Monopoly.

Back in February, toy and game maker Hasbro ran a campaign to get the votes of visitors for the towns and cities they'd like to see on the new Monopoly board. The votes have been tallied, and some people are decidedly unhappy with the results.

Nieuwstraat in Brussels was once the most expensive property on the board, but that honour now goes to Antwerp's Meir shopping street, by 40,885 votes to 40,682. According to Brussels city mayor Freddy Thielemans, that's due to his refusal to solicit the votes of his residents, something, he implies, that Antwerp did. "I think if you were to buy a house here in reality, rather than in Monopoly, things might be different," he said. The changes are the result of the votes of some 236,000 visitors to the website, and the idiosyncrasies of internet voters have caused upsets across the land. Knokke, once one of the most chic of Monopoly properties, has vanished from the board. As has Kortrijk, another rich West Flanders city. "It came as a shock," commented Kortrijk's acting mayor Lieven Lybeer. "I feel a bit



insulted. It's regrettable that we're no longer on the board."

Also gone are the railway stations of old, replaced by the airports at Zaventem, Ostend, Liège and Charleroi – leaving Antwerp out in the cold.

There are some happy newcomers, though: Aalst, Genk and Tongeren make their debuts. Lier and Ypres appear for the first time (albeit in the lower price category). Not that Ypres mayor Luc Dehaene is bothered. "This game gets the attention of a lot of people, who will then think about Ypres," he said. "It's a fantastic promotion for us."

The game went on sale last week, but traditionalists need have no fear: the standard edition of the game will still be available alongside the new democratic version, a Hasbro spokeswoman promised.

ALAN HOPE

## FLANDERS TODAY



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## Students numbers up 13% at VUB

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"We thought, this is all about modern technology, the students will like it," said Jan Van den Bulck, lecturer in communications. "But we apparently over-estimated their attachment to their computers and the internet. We were also trying to be too fair. In past years we've simply allowed the problem to deteriorate. The students were forced to sit pressed together on the stairways, and, in the end, they stayed away of their own accord." Students have not entirely rejected the idea of more interactive lessons carried over modern media to address the over-crowding situation in Leuven. "There are certainly occasions when such a web-based lecture could be useful. We simply found it a pity that this project was started up without any clear discussion with the student representatives. It's good that the university is looking into new forms of teaching to respond to the demands of the present."

Also in Leuven, about 100 people took part in a protest staged during the official opening of the KUL against the sacking of researcher Barbara Van Dyck, who was



Louis Tobback shows students just what it takes to be mayor of Leuven during the Student Welcome fair last week

dismissed after she took part in a protest against genetically modified potatoes in Wetteren last spring.

• Meanwhile, Flanders' other universities welcomed students to the new academic year with music,

parties and summer weather. In Brussels, rector Paul de Knop of the Free University (VUB) responded to critics from Ghent and Leuven who had suggested that the VUB was too small to survive on its own, pointing out a growth in student numbers

this year of 13%. "Brussels has an international name recognition that the other cities envy and that is even stronger than that of Belgium itself," he said. ♦

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES



### 525kg

of waste created by the average resident of Flanders last year, 7kg less than in 2009, according to figures from the public waste management agency Ovam. Limburg province did best, with a reduction of 14kg per person

### 2,196

lost their unemployment benefits temporarily or permanently in the first half of this year in Flanders, after turning down offers of work without a valid reason

### 100,000

households will be supplied with electricity from a new wind turbine park planned on the left bank of the Scheldt in Kallo, a municipality of Beveren in East Flanders. The park will contain 55 turbines and cost €175 million

### 603

official complaints of noise nuisance made in Antwerp last year, up from 20 in 2000

### 2,300

new places in crèches promised for next year by Flemish welfare minister Jo Vandeurzen for children between the ages of three months and 2.5 years

## Agriculture for kids celebrates 25 years

Last week, *plattelandsklassen*, or countryside classes, celebrated 25 years of educating schoolchildren on agriculture and farming.

Children can participate in the programme, which consists of five days of classes in a rural education centre where they experience what life as a farmer is like. Flanders has 16 of these centres offering children excursions in rural areas, including bike rides, visits to agricultural and horticultural farms and bread baking workshops. Last year, more than 5,000 children participated.

To celebrate the 25th anniversary, 600 volunteers of the project were invited to the educational centre Boerekreek in Sint-Jan-in-Eremo, the pristine village in East Flanders where the idea was born. Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, princess Mathilde and chairman of the Boerenbond (Farmers Union) Piet Vanthemse all spoke at the event.

"At the end of these classes, these children will have another view on agriculture," Peeters told *Flanders Today*. "The agricultural sector hopes for more respect from the general population, for a clearer understanding and more objective attitude towards their work."

According to Vanthemse, agricultural classes are intended to somewhat diminish the pressure the agricultural sector has to bear: "These are hard times for agriculture," he says. "Flanders is a highly urbanised and industrialised region with not much open space left. By informing these children, we hope for more understanding and respect for the problems a farmer has to deal with. And maybe some of them will choose to become farmers one day." ♦

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



A warm welcome from the kids of countryside classes

## Science news

### Vaccine against malaria, IgNobel Prize

Researchers at the Institute for Tropical Medicine in Antwerp have developed a **vaccine against malaria**, which kills 781,000 a year and infects about 225 million. The new vaccine, developed in cooperation with a Spanish team, does not stop infection, but diminishes the chance of becoming ill by about 50%.

Luc Warlop, professor at the faculty of economics and business at the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL), has been awarded one of this year's **IgNobel Prizes** for "improbable research that first makes people laugh and then makes them think". Professor Warlop was part of a team of researchers who discovered that people make better financial decisions when they urgently need to go to the toilet than when they are perfectly comfortable. The award was "rather positive," he commented. ♦



Flemish environment minister Joke Schauvliege (*middle*) plants the one millionth tree in Flanders last week, in Herzele, East Flanders, as part of a campaign to restore some of the region's lost woodlands. The 1MB campaign has already attracted the support of companies like Telenet, Umicore and De Lijn, each of which has planted as many as 5,000 trees. Hundreds of ordinary people have also taken part, contributing anything from one tree to hundreds. The campaign is organised by the Agency for Nature and Forests (ANB) and the Association for Forests in Flanders (VBV), with actress Marie Vinck (*Smoorverliefd*) as patron. Minister Schauvliege also revealed a new format for the government's Boswijzer, a database of all forested surfaces in the region.

→ [www.1miljoenbomen.be](http://www.1miljoenbomen.be)

## FIFTH COLUMN

### Different worlds

Communities and regions in Belgium often seem entirely different worlds from the federal state. This has the obvious advantage that we can go without a federal government for over a year, without collapsing into chaos. However, the regions and communities are not completely separate from the federal state: After all, it is all about the same people.

Last week two incidents made this clear.

Kris Peeters is proud to be the minister-president of the Flemish government, which is far more stable than its federal counterpart. He is also proud that his ministers from CD&V, SPA and N-VA have vowed to stay on until the end of the government term.

There are some destabilising factors, though. For one, N-VA did much better than its coalition partners in the federal elections. In theory, this should not affect the Flemish government, but it is hard not to see how this boosts the party's confidence. Moreover, as the largest Flemish party, N-VA no longer participates in the federal government talks.

The effect of all this Peeters found out in the debate about his September Declaration last week. In the Flemish parliament and media, few were interested in next year's budget. The question for Peeters and his ministers from N-VA was: How will the federal agreements on BHV and state reform affect the Flemish government? What if some of the elements go against the Flemish government agreement and the so-called Octopus agreement, which sums up the Flemish parties' demands?

N-VA, which has already derided the federal agreements, is set to make some fuss about this, but it has announced that it will not quit the Flemish government. "If they want to get rid of us, they'll have to kick us out."

Someone who was clearly interested in Flanders' budget was Guy Vanhengel (Open VLD), the caretaker federal budget minister. Of all federal, regional and community levels, Flanders has always been the most disciplined in meeting European and other budgetary norms. This leads to frustration: Why should Flanders put money away, while the others spend, spend, spend?

For this reason and with money on its hands, Flanders decided to spend some more, too. This alarms Vanhengel: If Flanders does not save up, the federal government will have to raise taxes, he warned. And who will be paying them? The Flemish, of course, as they make up the majority of this country.

After all, it is all about the same people, right?

## Tapping into the brain

**New technologies will be able to read your thoughts and emotions**

It's no secret that the human brain consists of billions of cells that together form a complex and highly interconnected network. Even as you read this text, tiny electrical and chemical signals travel across it, driving your thoughts, emotions and movements.

The electrical signals can be captured with electronic sensors such as, for example, the electro-encephalogram systems (EEG) used in hospitals. But they are expensive and bulky instruments that need specialised personnel to operate, so their usage is restricted to highly specialised medical diagnoses of brain pathologies.

Some day in the not-so-distant future, however, you'll be able to go to your local wellness shop or chemist and pick up a comfortable, lightweight, cheap EEG headset. As you put it on, it will immediately start to capture your brain signals. No wires or extra electronics; everything will be in the headset.

"This type of electronics will bring existing medical applications within the reach of everyone," says Julien Penders, head of research in the so-called "body area networks" at imec, Leuven's nanotechnology research centre. "It will allow people with epileptic seizures, for example, to self-monitor at home. It will also allow drivers of cars and trucks to monitor their level of alertness, people at home to monitor their sleep and doctors to monitor patients with anxiety disorders or addictions. Moreover, it will bring brain scanning to hospitals and doctors in remote, rural areas."

Aside from medicine, applications in wellness, gaming, or e-learning will all benefit from affordable, accessible brain scanning. Think of playing a computer game with nothing but your mind.

"For all this to be possible," says Penders, "the headset will have to be easy to use. It will have to be comfortable and to adapt to the shape of your head to allow for the best possible scanning results. It will have to be wireless and send its results to a base station – a doctor's computer, for example, or a game console. And, most importantly, it will need to have a battery life of weeks or even months."

There are four main challenges in developing such an EEG, says Penders. "The first is energy consumption. You cannot have a brain scanner for medical monitoring that stops working every few hours because the batteries are drained. Second, there is the intelligence that is needed: The scanner will have to be able to detect the relatively weak brain signals among the many others that come from the body and its surroundings."

Then there is the challenge of miniaturisation. "Eventually, we want to have small, lightweight sensors that can be carried around, even unnoticed. Just imagine a bus driver who'd be required to wear a drowsiness monitor for eight hours. Pressure, weight and discomfort would all play to its disadvantage. And, finally, it will be a challenge to make this technology available to everyone, to be able to mass manufacture it at a low cost."

→ [www.imec.be](http://www.imec.be)



### The imagination's the limit

Nanotechnology research centre imec regularly unveils new applications. "Most people who know about brain scanning think of intimidating medical devices that bury you under tons of wires," says researcher Julien Penders. "So when we show them our EEG headsets, it really captures the attention and imagination. It makes people dream of what will be possible within a decade."

Recent demonstrations include a monitor that checks the stages of a patient's sleep at home. Tests have shown that such a system could one day replace today's monitoring systems in sleep laboratories. Sleeping in your own bed, in the end, is a more natural experience than sleeping in a laboratory.

"We also helped the Flemish artist Christoph De Boeck to create his work called 'Steel Sky'," Penders explains. Visitors wear an EEG headset that picks up their brain waves and sends them to a computer that is connected to a set of steel plates hanging on the ceiling. The visitors' brain signals move the plates, resulting in a rising and falling soundscape. Quite an eerie experience."

And recently the lab of Neuro- and Psychophysiology at the Catholic University of Leuven used imec's technology to create a headset that helps the wearer to spell words and phrases. The user sits in front of a monitor that flashes alternate rows and columns of characters. If the user recognises the character that he or she intends to use, the EEG monitor picks up the brain waves associated with this recognition. It demonstrates the possibility of a portable device that enables people with speech or language disorders to communicate.



# The Flemish Italian

Rubens' opinion on Baroque architecture was sought from around the region

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Much of Rubens' inspiration came from his stay in Italy from 1600 until 1608, where he not only studied great Italian painters such as Titian, Veronese and Tintoretto, but also observed the country's ancient and contemporary architecture. In the city of Mantua in Lombardy province, he studied the work of 16th-century painter-architect Giulio Romano; while in Rome he familiarised himself with the architecture of Raphael and Michelangelo.

## Building Italy in Flanders

Rubens was instrumental in introducing the Italian artist-architects in the Low Countries, with his own house resembling a Roman *palazzetto*, a small palace. He bought his Antwerp family home in 1610, completely rebuilding the house to his own design and extending it to include an artist's studio, a garden arcade and a garden pavilion. The Italian inspiration for many of the architectural features is highlighted in a pocket-sized gallery guide.

*Palazzo Rubens* contains paintings and drawings of the Rubens House, including three 17th-century images showing how the house must have looked in Rubens's day: two prints by Dutch artist Jacob Harrewijn and a painting by an unknown artist that recently surfaced in England's Buckinghamshire County Museum.

The Rubens House was also often used as a backdrop, not only in paintings by Rubens himself but also by other famous Flemish painters of the period like Van Dyck and Jordaens. In portraits, the architecture lent a sort of dignity to the sitter, as in Van Dyck's painting of Rubens's first wife, Isabella Brant, on loan from the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

## An architectural model for Antwerp

The house we see today is mostly a reconstruction. However, two original elements survive: the portico, built in the style of a triumphal arch that leads into the garden, and the pavilion, the focal point of the garden as you look through the arch. The portico's combination of Italian architectural motifs with highly decorative elements, such as sculptures and ornaments, makes it "perhaps the most virtuoso example of 17th-century secular architecture that has survived north of the Alps," says Van Beneden.

The structures, however, are in urgent need of restoration due to damage caused mainly by acid rain in the last few decades. A tender is currently underway to select an architect, whose job it will be to restore the monument and devise a way to protect it in the future.

Rubens considered the Italian palazzo to be an architectural model for Antwerp. He wanted to do away with what he termed "the barbaric, Gothic architectural style" of his homeland and embrace the style that adhered to the rules of antiquity, like symmetry and proportion, harmony and beauty.

The villas and palaces in the Italian port city of Genoa were also an inspiration in this respect. In 1622, Rubens published his *Palazzi di Genova*, a book filled with illustrations of facades, cross-sections and ground plans of the city's urban palaces, villas and churches. The book, included in the exhibition, was "Rubens' most influential contribution to architecture of the 17th century," according to Van Beneden.

## Touches of Rubens

Around the time Rubens was working on his own house, he was also involved in the design of Antwerp's Carolus Borromeus Church, also known as the Jesuit Church and described by Van Beneden as "the most prestigious and eye-catching building project the city witnessed in those years." It is unclear how large Rubens' contribution was exactly, but it is known that he was responsible for details of the facade, the high altar and the ceiling paintings in the nave (which were destroyed in a fire in the 18th century).

"His thorough knowledge of architecture, based on first-hand experience, must have made him the ideal sounding board for Aguilonius and Huysens [the church's main architects], who had never laid eyes on



Rubens' home, designed by the master himself, pictured here in a drawing by Jacob Harrewijn, is today a museum and the location of the exhibition

either antique or contemporary Roman architecture," says Van Beneden.

Rubens' influence on the architecture of his day also comes across in his correspondence with Constantijn Huygens, secretary to the Prince of Orange. In the 1630s, Huygens designed and built a house for himself in The Hague, which he aimed to be an example of "true architecture" based on the rules of antiquity. Once completed, Huygens sent prints of the house to Rubens for his opinion.

Rubens' correspondence has been lost, but Huygens' letters are on display at the exhibition. They reveal that Rubens had some doubts about the design, saying the facade needed more "dignity and relief" and that it was too simple for a town mansion. Rubens was one of just a small group of European architectural experts whose opinions were sought.

Rubens was commissioned to design the temporary structure for the "Joyous Entry into Antwerp of Cardinal Ferdinand", the new governor of the Netherlands. Elements of the festive structure recalled architectural motifs that Rubens had used in the portico of his own home. Etchings of the designs are included in the show.

## Well-kept secret

The ancient and modern buildings that he saw during his travels in Italy were not the only architectural sources from which Rubens drew his knowledge. He also immersed himself in architectural theory. The most important source for the rules on antiquity was a series of books called *De architectura libri decem* (The Ten Books on Architecture) by the Roman architect Vitruvius from the 1st century BC. It is the only completely preserved handbook on the architectural principles of antiquity and is considered to be the standard reference work. Rubens owned two editions.

By the time you emerge from the exhibition, you wonder how Rubens' involvement in architecture could have remained such a well-kept secret. The buildings he actually designed may only be a few, but his research of the subject, his inclusion of architectural details in his paintings and his extensive redesign of his own home all make a convincing case for Rubens not only to be remembered as a painter but also as an architect. ♦

## Rubens and Antwerp

Rubens' parents abandoned Antwerp for Germany during the Counter-Reformation, and it was in Siegen that the painter was born in 1577. The family went back to Antwerp when Rubens was just 10, and he continued to live there most of his life.

He was a master of the Saint Luke's Guild of Antwerp and at the age of 33 was appointed as court painter to the rulers of the Netherlands, the Archduke Albert and his wife Isabella.

The artist's former family home is now a museum – the Rubens House – and Rubens-themed walks around town are a popular activity for tourists. His masterpieces are scattered across the globe, but many can be seen in Antwerp – at the Museum Plantin-Moretus, the former printing house where Rubens enjoyed both professional and friendly connections, or the Rockox House, the house of Antwerp mayor Nicolaas Rockox, a personal friend and important client of Rubens.

## Rubens Palazzo: The Master as Architect

Until 11 December

Rubens House

Wapper 9, Antwerp

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

# Meeting place with a view

## Flemish-Moroccan culture house celebrates grand opening in the heart of Brussels

ANJA OTTE

Muntplein, in the heart of Brussels, has become decidedly Flemish in recent years. Aside from Muntpunt, home to the Flemish library, and the Flemish-Dutch cultural centre deBuren, last week Daarkom, a new meeting place for the Flemish and Moroccan cultures, opened its doors in the former Gaité Theatre.

"It is important for us to be a meeting place for multiple cultures," says Malaika Khanfar, spokesperson for Daarkom. "Flanders has more than one culture. People from West Flanders view the world differently than people from Limburg. And Morocco, too, has many cultures, like Berber, Jewish, etc. In Arabic, *daarkom* means 'your house'; in Dutch it consists of the words *daar*, there, and *kom*, come. Coming together with others, that's what we're about."

The Muntplein is under heavy construction, and Daarkom's entrance doesn't look very inviting just yet. The Moroccan

and Flemish streamers are rather discreet, and it takes some courage to climb the long black stairs that lead to the first floor (there is a lift, should you need one).

Once there, however, a beautiful surprise lies inside. Daarkom is an architectural gem, with a contemporary, airy feel, created by interior designer Karim Osmani and A2D architects.

The old theatre, the core of the building, has been coated in a box and seems to float in space. The walls look like they're made of paper, but are in fact covered in carved, painted cedar wood. The Moroccan carvings return in pillars, ceilings and furniture throughout the two floors. White and black are the main colours, while in the evening Daarkom glows in a golden light.

"We wanted to avoid a stereotypical image of Morocco, with rugs, water pipes and belly dancers," Khanfar explains. "Visitors of Moroccan origin often compliment us for the way we present a modern version of their culture." She points at the carved ceiling. "This you'll find in many a Moroccan home, but mostly in a round or square shape. Here, the architect decided on an oval to match the table that is underneath. And while in Morocco the ceilings are often painted in the brightest of colours, we left it white."

### "An open house"

Daarkom has been in the making for a few years, but was officially opened in its first permanent location during the last weekend of September by Flemish minister of culture Joke Schauvliege and her Moroccan minister of culture Bensalem Himmich. "Instead of cutting the customary tape, they tied two pieces together," Khanfar says. "Our logo, too, is inspired by the idea of bringing people together: an accolade [music symbol], which stands for connection."

The new space certainly has what it takes. A trendy café overlooking the busy Muntplein and Nieuwstraat is a great place to relax with a mint tea or a cup of coffee (Flemish, served in a Moroccan glass). Low sofas invite the visitor to the lounge area, where a selection of newspapers and magazines is on offer. The meeting room upstairs with its large oval table and matching ceiling is available to rent, as is the workshop space next to it. The spacious and bright hallways function as an exhibition space.

The renovation of the old theatre has taken longer and cost more than was planned, and its spiritual father, Schauvliege's predecessor Bert Anciaux, has had to leave his baby in the hands of others. The programme at this point is limited. But Khanfar looks at the positive side. "Everything is open to us; anything is possible in the future. That's what makes it so exciting."



Young and old, Flemish and Moroccan, all came to have a look during the opening weekend

Music and dancing celebrated the opening weekend, with performances of Flemish musicians Frank Vander Linden and Klaas Delrue and their Moroccan colleagues Nabyla Maan, Hamid Bouchnak en Barry Maroc. Celebrity chefs Albert Verdeyen and Choumicha acted as the jury for a cooking contest. Plans for the future include a monthly event where celebrities will present their favourite books over lunch.

"We're hoping to touch upon all aspects of culture: literature, poetry, theatre, music, but also the art of everyday living, like cooking or fashion," says Khanfar. "Our opening weekend showed that we can reach all kinds of people: young and old, Flemish, Moroccan, Flemish of Moroccan origin and other people also. We really aim to make this an open house."

Daarkom's cultural programme may be limited for the time being, but you'd be well advised to pop in anyway, if only to admire the building from inside. And while you're there, don't forget that coffee or mint tea, with a view. ♦

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



The beautiful space at Daarkom can be booked for meetings

## Building community • Architecture Day looks at how we interact with the built environment

TOM PEETERS

It's an illusion to think that the pending issues of our time – scarcity, pollution, depletion of raw materials – can be solved with technical ingenuity alone. Such is the opinion of Christoph Grafe, the new director of the Flemish Architecture Institute (VAi), who argues in favour of a cultural approach to sustainability. "We don't really need a technological revolution," he says, "but a change in mentality that will make us more creative and more economical in how we deal with our built environment." This Saturday, during the biennial Architecture Day in Flanders, you'll be able to see how this works. More than 100 projects, buildings and public spaces will be open to visitors. There will be guided tours and debates on the hot topics in modern-day architecture, such as sustainability, group housing and the need for user participation during the design process of major city projects. Sustainability is not only about

materials and energy but also about dealing with population growth, something that will have an undeniable impact on our lifestyles. And "let's hope, also on the mentality of our project developers," says landscape architect Denis Dujardin. "They will have to abandon their individualistic culture of allotments in favour of a more social infrastructure that connects people." Flemish architects De Vylder Vinck Taillieu, whose first retrospective exhibition is currently on show in Antwerp's deSingel, has a similar goal. "Architecture is not about a building's energy consumption, but about finding the right place to enjoy the sun in your house," says De Vylder. "We want to bring architecture back to the human desire to be in a pleasant environment. It requires fantasy, but it creates sustainable living as well." You'll be able to visit several buildings designed by the Ghent-based threesome, like the rehearsal rooms

of performance production house LOD and of dance company Les Ballets C de la B, which are housed in Ghent's famous De Bijloke complex. The former hospital site also houses the city museum STAM, the art academy KASK and a concert hall, all designed by different architects. In Antwerp, you can take a look behind the scenes of the 19th-century Bourla Theatre. The former storage room of the building now lodges the offices of Het Toneelhuis, also designed by De Vylder. But for something really unconventional: Two young architects, Thomas Cattrysse and Simon De Waepenaere, invite you on an architectural and anthropological expedition along the E19 motorway. This urban safari takes you from the car park of deSingel to the logistic centre Hazeldonk near the Dutch border and back again. ♦



The former warehouse Kendall in Antwerp is now an office building, designed by the local Stramien architects

**Architecture Day**  
9 October, 10.00-18.00

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

## A million visitors for business

### Behind-the-scenes Open Business Day a huge success

ALAN HOPE

More than one million people forsook the last sunny Sunday of the year last weekend to pay a visit to one of the 500 businesses taking part in Open Bedrijvendag, or Open Businesses Day.

In Flanders, which accounted for 400 of the businesses and more than 750,000 of the visitors, the theme for the 21 edition of the event was Materials in Movement. The theme stressed the need for better recycling and sustainability to prevent waste and improve the use of non-renewable resources. Forty-six companies across the region represented the theme, including five that were awarded prizes by OVAM, the Flemish public waste

management agency. They were steel producers ArcelorMittal of Ghent, interior builders Beneens & Sons of Olen (Antwerp province), waste handlers IOK Afvalbeheer of Mol (Antwerp province), second-hand dealers De Kringwinkel in Antwerp and Van Gansewinkel of Evergem (East Flanders), which turns waste into energy and raw materials and won the award of the public.

Flemish environment minister Joke Schauvliege visited two sites that work on environmental remediation, which concerns the cleaning up of soil and water on polluted sites. One was the former coking plant Carcoke in Zeebrugge, taken out of commission in 2003. Since



then, tens of thousands of tonnes of sediment, debris and polluted soil have been removed, cleaned and recycled. The site is now a

solar and wind-energy park.

The minister also visited the Hoedhaar site in Lokeren, East Flanders, previously polluted with

mercury by factories treating animal fur to produce felt. The site is now intended for new housing. ♦

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

### New impetus for young entrepreneurs

Nearly 62% of people in Flanders think starting up a business is a desirable career option, according to a recent study. The number of start-ups in 2010 was up by 7% to over 41,000, but still many people fail to take the step from dreaming about their own business to starting it.

To help more people cross that threshold, Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters last week launched the Entrepreneurship Plan Competition, aimed at creating a real culture of entrepreneurship in Flanders. There are three separate parts of the competition.

**Plan(k)gas** is aimed at students in the fifth to seventh years of secondary school. The goal is to have 100 groups of students draw up business plans with the help of a network of teachers and business people. They'll take part in breakfast meetings and be able to pitch their business ideas to experts on the "Babbelbus tour", which will descend on 10 Flemish cities.

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

**Battle of Talents** is an existing online game for students at universities and colleges, which has been integrated into the competition as an added stimulus to students. It is hoped that it will create 150 business plans. MBA students and working entrepreneurs act as venture capitalists to coach students in opening their own businesses. Prizes include €25,000 for the best team and €5,000 for the best investor.

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

Bizidee is open to everyone, but with special emphasis on immigrants, women, the over-50s and those without a higher education. Bizidee offers personal customised coaching, and the winner receives €25,000 in start-up capital. ♦

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

### Trial against former Carestel company starts

The trial started in Ghent this week of two companies, including former motorway and airport caterer Carestel, accused of breaching labour laws by employing toilet attendants from Eastern Europe in conditions that have been described as "modern slavery".

The women, according to the Ghent labour authorities, were paid only €3 an hour, barely one-third of the legal minimum wage. They were also forced to work seven days a week on shifts lasting as long as 17 hours.

Their direct employer was Thomaidis Charalampos, the Greek-Kazakh owner of Kronos, which formerly operated several motorway services in Germany. As expected, Charalampos failed to turn up for the start of the trial, having disappeared shortly after a brief period of remand. The case came to light thanks to an anonymous tip from a member of the public in 2008.

The other defendant is Carestel, which was at one time Flanders' biggest operator of motorway and airport services. The company, set up in the 1970s and based in Merelbeke, East Flanders, was taken over by world leader Autogrill in 2007 and the name was dropped in 2010.

Charalampos is accused of recruiting women from Kazakhstan, Moldova and Romania in Germany as cleaning staff and forcing them to sign a contract in German which set out that they were being engaged as freelance operators. This allowed Kronos to escape Belgian laws on remuneration and conditions.

According to the prosecution, Charalampos could not have continued his operation without the active cooperation of Carestel.

Autogrill, meanwhile, argues that it has no control over how its subcontractors run their businesses. "The new management of Autogrill has decided to take no more risks with subcontractors and to take over the running of its toilets within the company," a spokesman said. "We will be investing in automatic doors like those used in railway stations." The new doors, which are coin-operated, should be in operation in motorway services by the end of the year. ♦



### Agriculture news: Incentives to breed draft horses, bad year for flax

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, also minister of agriculture, has announced plans to introduce **premiums for the breeders of the Belgian draft horse**, also known as the Brabant (pictured). The breed was once one of the country's most important export products, selling more than coal and steel combined. But lately numbers have been falling. "The drop in the number of foals is a threat to the future of the breed," Peeters said at an event to mark the 125th anniversary of the first-recorded pedigree of the Brabant.

This year saw one of the **worst harvests of flax**, the raw material for linen, in memory, according to the organisation that represents producers. The dry spring weather interfered with the plant's short growing season, while the rains in June came too late to rectify the situation. As a result, yields barely reached four tonnes per hectare, compared to six or seven tonnes in a normal year.

This year's **InBev-Baillet Latour Prize for the Environment** has been awarded to the Engelendael farm in Sint-Laureins, East Flanders, described as "a perfect example of the symbiosis between ecological and economic activities on private land." The farm, run by Marc Govaert and Nicole van de Bilt, produces arable crops and cherries and provides a habitat for dozens of bird and mammal species, as well as a rambling track and observation post for bird-watchers.

The University of Ghent last week unveiled its **newly renovated research farm**, which features a milking facility for 55 cows, stalls for young cattle, a pig farm and fields of food crops for the use of students of the veterinary and bio-engineering departments. The renovations cost €985,000. ♦



## THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

### Banking - Dexia

Dexia, specialised in the financing of local authorities, is expected to restructure its operations in a bid to restore its financial health after the Belgian branch supplied some €30 billion of deposits funding to the French branch. A solution may come from closer cooperation with France's Banque Postale.

### Banking - KBC

Flanders largest bank seems to be nearing the sale of its Polish banking and insurance activities, despite uncertainties on the financial markets. Poland's Kredyt Bank, 80% owned by KBC, may fall to Spain's Banco Santander while the Warta insurance group has attracted deep interest from Austria's Vienna Insurance Group (VIG). The sale of the bank's Polish activities is part of the plan to refund a €7 billion loan received by KBC from Belgian authorities during the 2008 financial crisis.

### Chemicals - BASF

Germany's BASF chemical group has sold its Antwerp-based fertiliser activities to Russia's EuroChem. The deal, worth some €700 million, includes a similar unit in France. The Antwerp operation employs 330 workers. The sale opens western Europe's fertilisers market to EuroChem, which has cheap access to natural gas resources used in the production process.

### Leather goods - Delvaux

Brussels-based luxury leather goods company Delvaux has been sold to the Hong Kong-based Fung Brands for an undisclosed amount. The founding Schwennicke family, at the helm since 1933, will keep a 20% stake in the business. Delvaux, an institution in the country's luxury scene, produces its leather handbags and accessories in workshops in Brussels, France and Vietnam.

### Office space - Regus

The UK-based leading temporary office space rental company, with offices in Brussels since 1989, is seeking to open additional centres in Antwerp, Kortrijk, Leuven and Mechelen over the next two years to meet demand.

### Retail - Gulden Vlies

The Gulden Vlies shopping centre in downtown Brussels is up for sale following the decision by owners the Gillion family and ING Real Estate. The 12,000 square-metre complex, built in the late 1960s, was recently renovated and is valued at up to €70 million.

### Supermarkets - Colruyt

Halle-based discount retailer Colruyt is to launch an academy to allow its customers to learn, meet and discover the range of its products. Paying clients attend workshops that include cooking classes, wine-tastings, meat carving courses and laundry washing sessions.

# A day in the life

## The Flanders International Film Festival sets the agenda in Ghent this month

LISA BRADSHAW

**I**t's 9.50. I gulp down the rest of my espresso and head to the first film of the day. It's a gritty, German social drama – the kind that make well-meaning friends say: "How do you watch that first thing in the morning?"

**11.45.** Suitably depressed from morning excursion, I shuffle down the tree-lined street for a chocolate croissant. The air is crisp, and the bright, red carpet of Kinopolis is particularly blinding after two hours of darkness (and the gloom of domestic strife).

**12.20.** Find spot directly in centre of cinema for American animation. It's funny and smart, enlightening and stylish. As the credits roll, I feel like jumping into the air with the joy of having seen something brilliant. But I don't.

**13.52.** Meet fellow cinephile for lunch. It's a bit late by Belgian standards, but the next film is Spanish, so really we're early. Ha ha. Restaurant is Italian, overrun with festival goers. Owner is accustomed to the watch-checking impatience of producers and press. "I have a screening at 14.30!"

**15.00.** Retire to festival cafe for coffee and eavesdropping on pompous critics. Smile a lot behind our hands. DJ spins lounge. Nice.

**15.30.** Next screening is at the Sphinx cinema. Meet partner for 30-minute walk to centre. Go through shopping street Veldstraat.

**17.15.** Enter screening of Spanish melodrama €192 poorer.

**19.20.** Forty minutes to get to Studio Skoop for next film. Walk or take the tram? Debate. Take the tram. I thought this tram went to Studio Skoop? Run last kilometre.

**20.00.** Obscure Hungarian documentary *much* better than expected.

**21.30.** Quick walk back to Kinopolis. Meet friend for Israeli film. Dutch subtitles for me, French for my friend. Very convenient. Young first-time directors on hand to introduce the film to the audience.

**00.55.** Boat pub! Just across the street. Floating gently on the canal, we head below deck to encase ourselves in warm, glowy environment and strong Trappists. Discuss film earnestly.

I'm a fan of film festivals in general, but the Flanders International Film Festival in Ghent is the highlight of my movie-going year. The programme is packed; the films are diverse, and so are the venues. Ghent slips in concerts of film music, exhibitions and parties to liven things up.

I'm not the only one taken in: Screenings at the fest are selling out more regularly, and one can barely find a spot, for instance, at movies in the **Plus Parcours** programme – films that appeal to 50-plussers. Introduced by film critic Roel Van Bambost, they are packed full.

Plus Parcours is one of the wise programming choices of Flanders Int'l Film Fest – placing films in categories depending on who *you* are, not on who the films are. So you'll also find films marked **Explore Zone**, of particular interest for young adults, and **Geslacht voor Kinderen**, good for kids.

The other very wise choice was forming the World Soundtrack Academy 15 years ago and then the **World Soundtrack Awards** soon after. The initiative is a two-fold triumph: putting the spotlight on the importance of composers and film music in a way that had never before been achieved, and separating Ghent from the hundreds of annual film festivals across the world.

"It was actually the idea of composers to create an academy, which at this point has 250 members," says Jacques Dubrulle of the festival's board. "The efforts we've made here have put much more worldwide attention on film music."

The Soundtrack Awards include several categories, including Best Composer and Discovery of the Year. It is open to the public and comes with a concert of film music by Brussels Philharmonic, conducted by **Dirk Brossé**, the festival's music director, against the backdrop of film clips. On hand will be several world famous composers, including **Hans Zimmer** (*Inception*, *Rango*), **Howard Shore** (*The Lord of the Rings*, *Eastern Promises*) and **Elliot Goldenthal** (*Frida*, *Batman Forever*).

Other highlights of 2011: A special guest this year is leading French actress **Isabelle Huppert**, who will introduce her new comedy-drama *Mon pire cauchemar* (*My Worst Nightmare*). There is a special focus on films from Scandinavia and a major exhibition devoted to **Ingmar Bergman**. A concert by the **National Orchestra of Belgium** features the music of Bernard Herrmann and Franz Waxman, both inextricably linked with the work of Alfred Hitchcock. ♦

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

## Ten to see



### Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy

Hailed by many as the best film adaptation of a John Le Carre novel, Swedish director Tomas Alfredson's film opens the festival, ahead of a gala reception. Even if you're not into cold war spy movies, the cast – Gary Oldman, Colin Firth, John Hurt and Mark Strong, to name a few – should be enough to get you into the cinema.



### Blue Bird

The young director who brought us *Little Baby Jesus of Flandr* has taken inspiration from another Flemish author of yore: Maurice Maeterlinck. Gust Van den Berghe's take on one of the seminal pieces of symbolist literature couldn't have come at a better time: Ghent is in the midst of celebrations of the 100th anniversary of Maeterlinck's Nobel prize win. Van den Berghe's blue-lensed version took him to Togo, where two children chase the proverbial blue bird, only to discover that the journey is more important than the goal.



### The Help

When a young white nobody in the American south decided to write a novel about African American maids in the 1960s, tongues wagged. But the honest book hit so many nerves it became a sensation – and so has the film. Directed by Tate Taylor, it's informed, amusing and highly relevant.



### Elena

The working-class Elena marries the well-to-do Vladimir later in life. The couple's ongoing conflict about whether Vladimir will financially support the family of Elena's deadbeat son comes to a head when Vladimir gets sick, and Elena takes drastic action. Largely regarded as Russia's greatest contemporary filmmaker, Andrei Zvyagintsev's third film picked up this year's Un Certain Regard Jury Prize at Cannes.



### The King of Devil's Island

The festival has a special focus on film from Scandinavia this year, and you can't go wrong with a drama by Norway's Marius Holst. Based on actual occurrences at an island prison for juvenile offenders in the early 20th century, the film follows the arrival of Erling, who leads a rebellion against the brutal guards.

# ... at FIFF



## Lena

Flemish director Christophe van Rompaey won hearts, minds and multiple international awards with his 2008 debut *Aanrijding in Moskou* (*Moscow Belgium*). His second feature creeps around in much more dangerous territory: A large-sized teenage girl finally gets a real boyfriend and will do anything not to upset the relationship. Disturbing, but bravely so, and a stellar performance from Dutch actress Emma Levie.



## Life in a Day

What a great idea: Make a selection from all the uploads to YouTube on one single day (24 July 2010) and patch them together, making a sort of video time capsule of life in the early 21st century. Culled from 80,000 user uploads across 140 countries, it's a cross-section of life on Earth.



## The Invader

The first feature by 40-something Flemish video artist Nicolas Provost was worth the wait. An African immigrant (Issaka Sawadogo) washes up on an unnamed shore together with other survivors of a sunken boat and winds up in Brussels. His strange experiences there are somewhat based on exploitation but largely based on his own ill-advised actions. As he becomes more volatile and less sympathetic, the tension grows to near unbearable proportions.



## Oranges and Sunshine

Of course it doesn't hurt to be the son of the master of the social drama, Ken Loach, when making your first film, but Jim Loach easily proves his salt here. Starring the brilliantly urgent Emily Watson, the film explores the true story of the more than 100,000 children born to unwed mothers in Britain between 1900 and 1970 who were systematically shipped to orphanages in Australia. Realistic without being bleak, and heart-warming without being sentimental.



## We Need to Talk About Kevin

British actress Tilda Swinton stirs fires within movie-goers who tend to either love her or hate her. No more so than in this film where she stars as an American mother of a teenage boy who goes on a mass shooting spree in his school. Could she have stopped it? Was she a bad mother? Scottish director Lynne Ramsay, director of *Morvern Callar*, makes headlines again with this strong emotional drama.



## Read my lips

### Students learn the fine art of subtitling for the Flanders International Film Festival

IAN MUNDELL

Some of the films that you'll see at the Flanders International Film Festival will be works of art, others will be pure entertainment. But once in a while you will also be watching someone's homework, and in the audience there will be a teacher such as Sabine De Vreese who is paying close attention and awarding marks.

De Vreese is from the faculty of translation studies at University College Ghent, which works with the film festival to provide Dutch subtitles and voice-overs for some films. "We only subtitle films that don't have any Dutch subtitles and that may not be distributed in Belgium afterwards," she says. "We wouldn't want to be in competition with subtitling companies."

The collaboration provides work experience for students on the college's translation and interpreting degrees. Subtitling is an option they can take in their third year, at the point when they are concluding the common Bachelor part of their degree. After that, they go on to specialise with a Master's degree in translation, interpreting or multi-lingual communication.

Subtitling presents special challenges for a translator. Each subtitle can have only two lines, each with a maximum of 33 characters, so the original dialogue has to be reduced without losing its meaning. "You have to be careful with what you leave out so that the viewers always get the essential information," De Vreese explains. "You put in as much as you can."

Translating the register of the spoken language can be tricky, such as the question of whether people are speaking in a formal or an informal way, as can translating swearing and other strong language. A muttered obscenity is one thing, seeing the words written down is another. The translator also has to decipher cultural references and decide whether or not to make local substitutions. Finally, the subtitles have to flow properly, even down to the punctuation.

#### The Sentence is coming!

Former students Kimberley Loir and Karen De Backer agree that the character limit is the greatest challenge. "You can't translate word-for-word; you have to find a translation that is fitting and still short enough..." De Backer says. "...without losing the meaning of what the characters are actually saying," concludes Loir. Clearly a perfect subtitling team.

The students work in pairs with a copy of the film and a transcript of the dialogue that needs to be subtitled. If the original dialogue is not one of the languages

taught in the programme – English, French, German, Spanish, Turkish, Russian or Italian – then the dialogue they receive will have already been translated into one of those languages.

From the films proposed by the festival in 2010, Loir and De Backer chose a challenging English documentary. *The Arbour*, by Clio Barnard, is about the life of Bradford playwright Andrea Dunbar, who died young and left a traumatised family. Even with their excellent English, the students needed the transcript. "Sometimes they talk so fast or you don't understand what they say, and then the text is really useful," says De Backer.

They divided the script between them and translated it at home, getting back together in the college's subtitling suite to complete the difficult task of making everything fit. This meant watching the film over and over. "It's a very emotional film, and there is a lot of trauma. It's not a happy movie," says De Backer.

But the language soon takes over. "After seeing the film so many times, we had our favourite sentences," Loir explains, "and while we were 'spotting' the film in the theatre we would say: Yes! The Sentence is coming!"

This is another aspect of the work experience: At the screening, the students cue or 'spot' the subtitles from the projection booth. "You push a button to make each subtitle appear, and then release it to make it disappear," says De Backer.

"You really have to concentrate," Loir continues. "Everything has to appear on time; otherwise it's really annoying for the people who are watching the film." If you get ahead of the speech, there is no going back. "You have to stay calm when that happens and wait for the next subtitle to appear."

The voice-over projects are slightly different, since the students prepare a text to be read at the same time that the actors speak. Again, they work in pairs, usually dividing characters between them. "They don't act, they just read the dialogue in a very neutral way," De Vreese explains. Relayed to headphones, the translation accompanies the film dialogue rather than replacing it. "If it's done well, it doesn't interfere too much."

This year there will be voice-over for some films in the festival's Ingmar Bergman retrospective, such as *Through a Glass Darkly* and *Winter Light*. Subtitling projects range from documentaries *Senna* and *Life in a Day* to wrestling comedy *Win Win* and Chinese martial arts film *Wu Xia*. ♦



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putting people first

# Isala and Louise

## Portraits of Belgian feminist pioneers at Leuven's Museum M

SABINE CLAPPAERT

Every society is shaped by those who break its mould to forge new paths. The exhibition *Isala & Louise: Two Women, Two Tales* at Leuven's Museum M tells the story of two such Belgian women who dared to defy the rules of 19th-century Europe to forge the paths of their professional passions and demand the equal rights of women.

Isala Van Diest (1842-1916) of Leuven and Brussels-born Louise Heger (1893-1933) were the regions' first female doctor and leading artist, respectively, and the exhibition reflects upon them and their impact on society, as well as the role of women in 19th-century Belgium and Europe.

Van Diest and Heger's life stories are told, warts and all, through carefully selected paintings and sketches by Heger and other artists such as Marie de Roode Heijermans, Cecile Douard, Louise De Hem and Felicien Rops. The works are interspersed with revealing quotes that force the viewer to face the stark restrictions and austere *zeitgeist* that straight-jacketed women at the time.

### Invading the stronghold

At the end of the 19th century, the world of science and art were male strongholds. Men deemed women as lacking the necessary intelligence, competencies and – in the case of art, genius – to be active in these fields. When it came to medicine, men were of the opinion that women, due to their limited intellectual capacities as well as physical and psychological weaknesses, were not suitable to the demands of a job as physician.

That Van Diest's and Heger's careers didn't always run smoothly comes then as no surprise. Van Diest was refused entry to the Catholic University of Leuven in 1873 and turned instead to the University of Bern in Switzerland, which allowed women to enrol in its programmes. There she earned a degree in medicine. Of her determination to study medicine, Van Diest wrote:

*"I choose to study medicine because I realise only too well the moral impact one has as doctor on a female patient. While one soothes their physical suffering, women open their*

*heart to you. I see medicine as a way to help women get out of their dull resignation, to get them to help each other and make them stronger so that they will demand that which they have a right to."*

In May of 1879, the 37-year-old Van Diest graduated, only to be told upon her return to Flanders that her qualifications could not be accepted without passing further exams. The next year, then, she enrolled at the Free University of Brussels – the first year it began accepting female students.

"The female doctor is one of those weeds that have invaded the flora of modern society," wrote physician Charles Fiessinger in his article "The Medical Indaptitude of Women", one of the many quotes that typifies the thinking of the time and which are scattered throughout the exhibition.

Also Louise Heger, though she came from a liberal family that encouraged her studies, struggled to break free from the rules that denied her the freedom to practice her art. One of the few female landscape artists of the time, she travelled to remote locations to find just the right scenes. She was constantly reminded that single women were not encouraged to travel alone. Instead, they should be accompanied by "reputable, trustworthy" men.

As Heger's love for painting grew, she spent an ever-increasing amount of her time and the money she earned as a part-time teacher travelling the country in search of landscapes. This began to worry even her forward-thinking parents, as attests this text by a British former pupil of her mother: "Louise's determination to take up painting as a profession had been a severe trial to her parents. They understood for women the career of a wife, a schoolmistress, a nun – but an artist! That seemed to them full of perils known and unknown."

### Recognising the struggle

"That Isala Van Diest and Louise Heger were exceptional women stands beyond a shadow of doubt," says Annik Altruy of Museum M. "Being a doctor or artist may seem an obvious choice to women today, but it was clearly not so in 19th-century Belgium, when society defined a woman's



A portrait of the young sisters Miranda (left) and Isala Van Diest by Pierre Joseph Steger, circa 1855

role to be that of homemaker and mother. Having a job was unheard of and developing one's identity as a woman outside the home even less so."

Yet both women, who defied convention so adamantly and further fought for the emancipation of women for the rest of their lives, were soon forgotten after their deaths.

"Isala Van Diest always walked in the shadow of other, more vocal feminists of the time like Marie Popelin [the country's first female attorney]," says Julie Carlier, a Ghent University historian who will speak about the life of Van Diest at Museum M in November. "Yet Van Diest devoted herself tirelessly to women's rights throughout her life. Not only did she work as physician at Le Refuge, a halfway house for ex-prostitutes, she was also one of the founding members

of Belgian League for the Rights of Women, Belgium's first feminist organization."

In May of this year, Van Diest, the physician who quietly worked for decades to promote women's rights, was finally accorded the recognition she deserves: Her face graces a new €2 coin issued to commemorate the centenary of International Women's Day.

Heger also waited many years to be recognised for the mastery of her art. At the age of 64, she was made a Knight in the Leopold Order.

Today, more than 70 years after their deaths, Museum M brings Isala Van Diest and Louise Heger back to life, honouring the paths they forged to remind modern-day women of the pioneers that began to pave the way for them more than 100 years ago. ♦



Louise Heger's "View of the Dunes", 1878

Until 27 November

Museum M

Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28  
Leuven

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

• On 27 October, Harvard University professor Sue Lonoff talks about the relationship between the family of Louise Heger and Charlotte and Emily Brontë (In English)

• On 17 November, Ghent University professor Julie Carlier will speak about the life of Isala Van Diest (in Dutch)

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## We have a new face



As one of the key global hubs for politics and business, Brussels is home to a massive international community and for the last five decades, one publication has been their bible - The Bulletin.

After an extensive redesign, The Bulletin is back this September with a brand-new look and a renewed focus on everything the international community needs to know about what is happening in the capital of Europe. The Bulletin will be packed with exclusive interviews, expert analysis and your definitive guide to lifestyle & culture in Brussels and Belgium. The agenda will also be back in The Bulletin, covering the highlights in and around Brussels.

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**THE**  
**Bulletin**

## Cultural cannibalism

# EUROPALIA. BRASIL

KATY DESMOND

For all those who feel like they are trudging out of a chilly, sunless summer into the slow creep of winter, take heart: Europalia brings a bit of South American sunshine to Brussels and Flanders.

The famed international arts festival, held every two years and featuring a different country or region in every edition, takes us to Brazil the whole winter long. In Europalia are exhibitions, performances and other events that examine every aspect of Brazil's cultural heritage – from its music and fine arts to its literature and gastronomy.

Three years in the making and involving the consultation of thousands of artists and experts from across Europe and Brazil, Europalia has grown to the immense proportions of its subject. Belgium and its neighbouring countries will host more than 600 events and exhibit some 2,650 works of art in more than 200 venues.

"Our main goal is to open up the world through culture," explains Kristine De Mulder, the event's general director. "We're trying to show as complete an image as possible of Brazil's artistic world and of what this country can teach us."

While most of us, if asked about Brazil, would be able to name carnival, *bossa nova* or

samba, much of Brazil's deep-rooted cultural history remains unknown in Europe. "There are so many interesting things happening there right now – in dance, theatre, literature and cinema, but also in archaeology and contemporary art," says De Mulder.

Diversity is the driver of this year's festival, a theme which De Mulder says was obvious from the very start of their research. "I think Brazil is a country where diversity is part of life." They even have a word for how they approach incorporating new cultures into their own – *antropofagia*. Coming from the Greek *anthro*, meaning human, and *phagos*, eating, this term describes a kind of cultural cannibalism.

"Brazil is known to swallow the cultures it encounters," De Mulder says, "from the native Indians to the descendants of African slaves, the Japanese, the Arabs, the Europeans, the Chinese. You have all these different cultures and ethnic groups, but in the end they're all Brazilian. And they are very proud to be."

A few must-sees stand out on the vast programme. First and foremost: *Brazil.Brasil* at Bozar. It is what De Mulder calls "a revelation", an exhibition that tells the story of Brazil's search for an identity through art. It



© Olivier Desart Musée, Internat du Carnaval et du Masque Binche

starts at the beginning of the 19th century, when Brazil was a Portuguese colony, and tracks its movements away from the European academy to the creation of a truly national art inspired by the reality and exoticism of Brazilian life.

*Índios no Brasil*, meanwhile, takes a fascinating look at what it means to be an indigenous person in Brazil. "You are not born an Indian," De Mulder

says. "You become an Indian by performing certain rituals and rites throughout your life."

There are no less than 150 concerts scheduled – from classical and contemporary samba to accordion, carnival and *choro*, by some of Brazil's biggest stars – on the stages of Brussels and Flanders.

So where to begin? At Club Brazil, "the beating heart of the festival," as De Mulder calls it.

This colourful event space-cum-information centre at the foot of the Kunstberg will hold concerts every Friday, dance courses on Saturday and endless workshops. "And all for free," De Mulder points out. "Except for the bar." ♦

**Until 15 January**  
Across Brussels and Flanders  
→ [www.europalia.be](http://www.europalia.be)

## PERFORMANCE

## Performances in English

7-15 October

Kaaitheater, Brussels



### MORE PERFORMANCE THIS WEEK

#### Antwerp

**Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui & Eastman:** The Antwerp choreographer and his company perform the new work *Tezuka*, inspired by Japanese manga  
**Until OCT 8** 16.00 & 20.00 at deSingel, Desguinlei 25  
[www.desingel.be](http://www.desingel.be)

#### Ghent

**A Game of You:** Interactive performance by Ghent troupe Ontroerend Goed that seeks to show participants the difference between how others see them and how they see themselves. "Some people come out of this show really happy, and some with a really dark look on their faces," says the company's director  
**OCT 5-9** at Vooruit, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23  
[www.vooruit.be](http://www.vooruit.be)

English-language performances can be few and far between, but not this week when Kaaitheater has us spoiled for choice with three all-English premieres.

First up, the young Parisian dancer and choreographer Noé Soulier combines philosophy with artistic composition. In his new solo *Ideography*, you'll find dance, music and film and juxtaposed with theoretical arguments by the likes of Charles Darwin and Michel Foucault, among others. This lecture/performance (pictured) turns logic on its head and allows the audience to draw its own conclusions. Think of it as a sort of philosophy experiment.

Next is a one-day conference conceptualised by American performer Davis Freeman called *Expanding Energy*. It examines our obsession with energy through four separate performances. In the first, two performers and an engineer explore different definitions of energy, whether kinetic, spiritual, sexual or otherwise. Later on, men in suits analyse the environmental aspect of energy and try to decide whether we will someday have to

cut back on the material prosperity we've become so accustomed to. Afterwards, dinner is served (organic or fast food?) while a group of scientists, politicians, investors and artists put their heads together to tackle the most urgent energy issues. The day draws to a close with an explosion of music and dance, representing the need to take action now.

Finally, Bulgarian performer Ivo Dimchev presents *X-on*, a contemporary dance performance based on a series of portable, minimalist sculptures by Austrian artist Franz West. West created new, larger works to go with Dimchev's work, and he is expected to make an appearance at this Belgian premiere. As usual, Dimchev directs, choreographs, sings and performs in his own piece, and music is the uniting factor between contortionist and work of art. (Robyn Boyle)

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



## MUSIC FESTIVAL

## Arctic Accents Until 22 December Across Brussels & Flanders

The sound of Finland is coming to the Benelux in the form of a long programme of concerts from all different genres. Arctic Accents is an answer to the growing interest in Finnish music in the Benelux region. There's a typically dark, mysterious side to the Finns, reflected in the large number of metal bands in the line-up. But most surprising is the wide range of classical, folk, jazz, rock and pop bands also included. Whatever your Finnish fancy, the website has the full list of events. (RB)



→ [www.arcticaccents.fi](http://www.arcticaccents.fi)

### MORE ARCTIC ACCENTS THIS WEEK

#### Brussels

**The Do:** Four-member Finnish-French indie pop/folk rock band with an irresistible stage presence and infectious pop melodies using keyboards, strings and wind instruments

**OCT 12** at Ancienne Belgique, Anspachlaan 110  
[www.abconcerts.be](http://www.abconcerts.be)

#### Hasselt

**Ghost Brigade:** Charismatic five-piece alternative metal band combining elements from melodic death metal, doom metal, metalcore and progressive metal

**OCT 15** 16.00 at Muziekodroom, Bootstraat 9  
[www.muziekodroom.be](http://www.muziekodroom.be)

#### Vosselaar (Antwerp province)

**Amberian Dawn:** Symphonic six-piece power metal band delivering mythology-driven music that combines different styles of metal with classical influences

**OCT 8** 19.00 at Biebob, Antwerpsesteenweg 84  
[www.biebob.com](http://www.biebob.com)



## POP

### Tori Amos

29 October, 20.00  
Bozar, Brussels

Legendary vocalist/pianist Tori Amos is at it again. This time she'll grace Brussels with her presence at the start of her Night of Hunters tour, in promotion of her 12th album by the same name. Amos is known for her hauntingly beautiful classical-based piano solos and dramatic vocals, both of which are ever-present on the new album. *Night of Hunters*, a concept album produced by renowned German label Deutsche Grammophon, is said to be a modern love story inspired by a journey through Ireland's mythical landscape. Amos has ventured out with many concept albums and tours in the past, but this is her first time sharing the stage with a string quartet. Also joining her is solo artist Mark Hone. Another musical prodigy, Hone has a completely symbiotic relationship with his audience. He is a performer in the true sense, captivating the listener through his colossal yet sensitive voice and theatrical stage persona, making his concert the perfect prelude to fiery Miss Amos. (RB)



### MORE POP THIS WEEK

#### Antwerp

**Fingerprint:** Antwerp pop band, playing plenty from their debut album *Rock Beats Scissors*

**OCT 7** 21.00 at Petrol, d'Herbouvillekaai 25  
[www.petroclub.be](http://www.petroclub.be)

#### Antwerp & Brussels

**George Michael:** The legendary British pop star is making a comeback with *Symphonica: The Orchestral Tour*

**OCT 7** 20.30 at Sportpaleis, Antwerp  
[www.sportpaleis.be](http://www.sportpaleis.be)  
**OCT 8** 20.00 at Vorst Nationaal, Brussels  
[www.vorstnationaal.be](http://www.vorstnationaal.be)

#### Ghent

**An Pierlé:** The Flemish pianist and singer-songwriter performs new work during a solo session

**OCT 7-8** 21.00 at DOKkantine, Koopvaardijlaan 13  
[www.democrazy.be](http://www.democrazy.be)



## ACTIVE

### Beervelde Garden Days

7-9 October, 10.00-17.00  
Beervelde Park, Lochristi

The 50-acre, English-style Beervelde park, just east of Ghent, has been famous for its horticulture since 1873. The domain is a flawlessly manicured stretch of green open space, flourishing trees and flowers and a peaceful pond spanned by a romantic wrought-iron bridge. A charming coach house from the days of yore and a stately villa add to the park's regal feel. Twice a year it opens for Beervelde Garden Days, three days of exquisite exhibits by more than 220 nurserymen, designers and artisans in the field of landscape design. A must for garden

lovers, the quality of the plants and other displayed items is high but their prices relatively low. There's an Out of Africa theme this year, so expect some Africa-inspired decor in the villa, a colonial-era biplane fly-over, a Bonsai booth and demonstrations by falconer Marc Goossens. Children won't have a chance to get bored, as there will be mini-Shetland ponies to pet and tree-climbing courses to follow. (RB)

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



### MORE ACTIVITIES THIS WEEK

#### Brussels, Hasselt & Turnhout

**Info Day - Working Abroad:** Free information session on going to Ghana, Benin or Senegal to study, work, volunteer or learn a foreign language

**OCT 5** 16.00-19.00 at WEP Lounge, Jetselaan 26, Brussels  
**OCT 6** 17.00-20.00 at CC Hasselt, Kunstlaan 5  
**OCT 13** 17.00-20.00 at De Warande, Warandestraat 42, Turnhout  
[www.wep.be](http://www.wep.be)

#### Kortenaken (Flemish Brabant)

**Fair Trade and Farmer's Market:** It's Fair Trade Week, and this market features stands with local products, tastings and entertainment for the whole family

**OCT 8** 14.00-18.00 at Bergendal, Grote Vreunte 57 (Waanrode)  
[www.kortenaken.be](http://www.kortenaken.be)

#### Overpelt (Limburg province)

**Falconry and Countryside Fair:** Birds of prey demonstrations, hunting and sled dog shows, work horses, clay pigeon shooting and more than 70 stands with local food and drink

**OCT 9** 10.00-17.00 at Wedelse Molen, Breugelweg 250  
[www.vepb.be](http://www.vepb.be)

**EXHIBITION**

**Bob Verschueren: Bioadversity**

Until 6 November  
Botanique, Brussels

© Bob Verschueren



“The title of this exhibition rests on the notion that man’s persistent use of nature can only end one way... using it up.” Through a series of elaborate plant installations and miniature vegetal sculptures, Bob Verschueren aims to reunite man and nature, even if only for a moment. The self-taught contemporary land artist from Brussels gained worldwide acclaim as an ephemeral sculptor, as his only materials come from nature and therefore have a fleeting existence. A pine cone, a twig, a leaf – all ordinary objects are rearranged by the artist’s hand, forcing us to look at them differently and, in turn, recognise their (as well as our own) transient quality. Meet the artist on 3 November during Brussels Museums Late Night Opening at Botanique when Verschueren himself **will personally accompany visitors on a tour of his work from 17.30 to 18.30.** (RB)

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

**MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK**

**Ghent**

**Johanna Dahm - Rings:** The exotic jewellery techniques of the Swiss-born artist, active since the 1970s, featuring rings in particular  
**Until 16 OCT** at Design Museum, Jan Breydelstraat 5  
[www.designmuseumgent.be](http://www.designmuseumgent.be)

**Hasselt**

**Prints! Motifs in Costume & Fashion History (1750-2000):** Historical costumes and contemporary fashion design  
**Until JAN 8 2012** at Fashion Museum, Gasthuisstraat 11  
[www.modemuseum.be](http://www.modemuseum.be)

**B'Rock: The Four Seasons**

13-16 October  
Mechelen, Turnhout & Ghent

**CLASSICAL**

It may be the epitome of muzak – its lulling strains heard in elevators and department stores the world over – but Vivaldi’s *The Four Seasons* features relatively rarely on classical concert programmes. Conductors tend to shun it, and it’s easy to see why: How can they make this most hackneyed of pieces ring fresh and new? How can they keep the audience on their toes and stop them from humming along? That’s a challenge Ghent-based ensemble B’Rock is happy, and more than qualified, to take up. Founded just six years ago by musical polymath Frank Agsteribbe (an organist, harpsichordist and conductor who also composes), it has already earned itself a reputation as one of this country’s most promising baroque outfits, delivering performances as passionate and electrifying as they are historically

accurate. An ensemble, in short, that can be trusted to put the rock back into baroque. Under their deft bows, Vivaldi’s four concertos will surely be restored to their original power and brilliance. “We’ve tried for a colourful interpretation,” says Agsteribbe, whose aim is to “tell the story Vivaldi intended to tell us through the music.” If the prospect of hearing this tired gem wrenched from decades of use and abuse is not enough to entice you away from home, note that three lesser-known *concerti grossi* also feature on the programme. One is by Antonio Geminiani, a contemporary of Vivaldi’s, the other two by his English student Charles Avison. This is extraordinarily seductive music – and we guarantee you’ve never heard it while on hold. (Marie Dumont)

→ [www.b-rock.org](http://www.b-rock.org)

**DUSK 'TIL DAWN**

KATRIEN LINDEMANS

**Potemkine**

Hallepoortlaan 2, Brussels

As July and August did not exactly do the summer season justice, this Indian summer is a gift. So where better to spend your evenings than on a terrace with a view? Newbie Potemkine is well on its way to become the hippest spot of Brussels. Think vodka, outdoor movies and exotic blue garden chairs (not necessarily in that order). Potemkine is the latest project of café guru Frédéric Nicolay, the man behind other popular Brussels’ venues like the Belga Café, Zebra and Mappa Mondo. Expectations ran high when rumours had it Nicolay would open a new joint at Hallepoort. The opening night in June saw hundreds of people, and the place has been busy ever since. The name comes from the classic 1925 Russian movie *Battleship Potemkin*, and both movies and Russia play an important role in the bar. Besides having a small cinema that shows films daily,

Potemkine also organises outdoor screenings on the large terrace in the shadow of Hallepoort. As there was no space for a terrace on the pavement in front of the bar, Nicolay got permission to use a part of the little park across the street to use as a terrace. It’s covered in blue chairs and you can get your drinks from a bar on wheels. And Russia? The house brew on tap is Volga, and it’s meant to drink with a shot of vodka. On occasion, the staff will come round with a plate of Russian tomatoes: thin sliced, covered with salt, to be washed down with... more vodka. Clever! Potemkine regularly invites a band or a DJ as well. And if you’re not too tired after a night at the bar, the Noctis night bus stops right in front of the door and takes you to the city centre in no time.

Visit the Potemkine page on Facebook



**MORE CLASSICAL THIS WEEK**

**Bruges**

**La Senna Festeggiante:** Can’t get enough of Vivaldi? Italian ensemble La Risonanza, led by Fabio Bonizzoni, presents this serenade, inspired by Vivaldi’s love of France  
**OCT 8 20.00** at Concertgebouw, ’t Zand 34  
[www.concertgebouw.be](http://www.concertgebouw.be)

**Tongeren**

**Middle East:** The Spectra Ensemble backs an actor and a soprano in this piece by composer Philippe Blasband about the conflict between Israel and Palestine  
**OCT 8 20.30** at CC De Velinx, Dijk 111  
[www.lod.be](http://www.lod.be)

# bite

ROBYN BOYLE

## Chez Fatma ★★★★★

Brussels' Jourdanplein is a favourite lunch spot for many who work in the nearby EU quarter. The square is lined with Italian and Indian eateries, Belgian brasseries and what is rumoured to be one of the city's best *frituurs*, Chez Antoine.

But my company and I are in for something different (and preferably a place without a waiter out front beckoning for us to sit down).

We finally choose Fatma's, mainly for its leafy terrace in this late summer we're currently enjoying and the smiling couple that is too busy serving to be pushy. After all, Fatma and her husband don't need to coerce anyone into eating here; they've been serving up Tunisian specialties to Brussels clientele since 1974.

We are greeted with an array of crunchy pickled vegetables: cucumber, olive, carrot, radish and fennel, to be precise. This makes for an ideal appetiser as the bits of veg are light and salty, stoking the appetite. We order a one-litre carafe of red house wine and are pleased with its smooth character and willingness to take a back seat to the food.

When we see the main dishes coming, no more than 10 minutes later, we rush to create some space on the table. There's one giant ceramic platter of steaming couscous for all three of us, plus one big pot of vegetable stew to share between two, a side of Tunisian *harissa* (hot chilli pepper) sauce and chickpeas and, finally, my very own tagine dish.

Tunisian cuisine uses plenty of olive oil, spices and tomatoes. And the country's traditionally nomadic culture has influenced the cuisine as well, so that they

Contact Bite at [flandersbite@gmail.com](mailto:flandersbite@gmail.com)

incorporate meat – mostly lamb – into their cooking and use tools that can easily be transported. The tagine, for example, is a cone-shaped earthenware pot that is relatively mobile and only needs to be set over a fire to do its magic. Meat, vegetables and a variety of spices slow cook in the bottom of the tagine, while the couscous above steams to aromatic perfection.

My tagine consists of chicken meat falling from the bones, equally tender vegetables (carrots, yellow squash and sugar snap peas) and a mix of spices: I taste saffron, ginger and fresh coriander. There are many lovely flavours and textures in this dish, made only better by the raisin-infused couscous, which I use to soak up the sauce.

One of my dining companions is sliding plump pieces of chicken from two long brochettes onto her plate. You can see the grill marks on the meat, and it has a very distinct smoky flavour. She helps herself to two big scoops from the communal couscous platter and pours a ladle of the vegetable stew over this. Bobbing in the thin, tomato-red broth with a hint of cinnamon are large chunks of courgette, carrot, fennel and potato.

The other diner is eating his stew with a portion of lamb shanks. His Couscous Maison is made with parboiled lamb cooked in its own juices. The flavour of the lamb is primary yet mild and enhanced by a handful of fresh chopped mint.

All of our dishes practically licked clean, we are forced to leave behind the last bit of stew and couscous. The bill comes to just a little more than €20 a head.



© Robyn Boyle

- Jourdanplein 18, Etterbeek (Brussels) 02.230.95.97
- Mon-Fri 12.00-14.30 & 18.30-22.30; Sat 18.30-22.30
- Mains: €13-€19
- Perfectly prepared Tunisian couscous and tagines in the heart of Brussels' European district

## TALKING SPORTS

LEO CENDROWICZ

### Euro 2012: Out of reach?

Over the next few days, Belgian football faces a moment of truth: a double header of qualifying games that will determine whether the Red Devils spend next June playing their part in the European Championships in Poland and Ukraine, or stuck at home watching the show on television.

The matches kick off Friday night with the clash against Kazakhstan at the King Baudouin stadium in Brussels, followed by a daunting tie against Germany at the Esprit Arena in Dusseldorf on Tuesday.

Having earned just three points in eight matches, Kazakhstan should prove an easy opponent. Germany, however, which already has its Euro 2012 ticket thanks to a 100% record in qualifiers so far – plus a record 10 European Championship appearances and three titles – may well dismiss Belgium as cursorily as the Red Devils treat Kazakhstan. But even if the our team produces the goods over those two final qualifiers, the deal might be out of their hands. They are scrapping for the second place play-off spot with Turkey, who are currently two points ahead (they play Germany at home on Friday, followed by Azerbaijan on Tuesday). Betting-wise, this stacks ever heavier odds against Belgium.

It's too soon to write us off, but, nonetheless, we could have easily have been in a more commanding position at this point had the Red Devils not conceded late equalizers in their 4-4 home draw against Austria a year ago, or in their 1-1 draw at Azerbaijan last month. And although Turkey reached the Euro 2008 semi-finals, they have fallen behind since and were eminently beatable this time round – yet still drew 1-1 with Belgium in Brussels, and won 3-2 in Istanbul.



© Belega

It has been said before, but it is still valid: Belgium has a remarkable team of emerging talent, many of whom ply their trade in the cauldron of the English Premier League. That includes Flemish stars like Manchester City's Vincent Kompany, Everton's Marouane Fellaini, Arsenal's Thomas Vermaelen and Chelsea's Romelu Lukaku. Others who have already caught the eyes of Europe's top coaches include Porto's Steven Defour (from Mechelen) and Racing Genk's Kevin De Bruyne.

All that promise now risks missing out on football's second-biggest international stage if Belgium fails to qualify for a major tournament again. It's a long shot, and much strained hope rides on the two ties over the next few days.

But that's what being a football fan is all about.

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

## THE LAST WORD...

### What's in a name?

"If Di Rupo starts without a Flemish majority, I will refuse to address him as prime minister."

N-VA party president Bart De Wever

### Every second counts

"I never untie my shoe-laces. I once calculated how much time I had saved by not having to tie them every day – months!"

Former prime minister Mark Eyskens, quoted in a new biography

### Restricted view

"The visitors are missing a wonderful view of the rolling landscape, with a slagheap in the distance, the basilica of Tongeren and even Maastricht."

Mayor Johan Sauwens of Bilzen fills in the gaps revealed by his town's webcam, which shows only a plague of flies nesting on the screen

### Otherwise engaged

"Unfortunately we have to decline because of the tight recording schedule of our new album."

Maurice Engelen of the group Lords of Acid turns down a private concert for Princess Siribhachudhabhorn of Thailand.

## NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #201

### Feature

It's a subject that creeps back into the headlines with regularity: People over 50 who lose their jobs have a very tough time getting back into the workforce. Lack of skills? Discrimination? Our reporter looks into the problem of unemployment in the older generation

### Living

In our news pages of this issue, you'll see that the Flemish minister of agriculture is offering cash help to those wanting to breed Brabant horses. We talk to a breeder about the Belgian breed and find out what is being done to save it

### Arts

While the fine arts museum of Antwerp is closed, it has graciously leant its collections across the region, drawing attention to smaller museums in Flanders. We go to Lier, where the Bruegelland festival is pulling in visitors