

Branding Flanders

Competition for a new symbol

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Saving the Belgian draft horse

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Seeing blue

The second in
Gust Van den Berghe's trilogy

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Older and wiser

Flemish agencies are taking steps to get more people over 50 back into the workforce

ANDY FURNIERE

Getting people over 50 back into the workforce has always been a challenge, but never as much as it is today. According to a recent study by Luc Sels of the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL), more than 450,000 jobs will be vacant in Flanders by 2015, a 36% rise compared to 2010. "Where will we find the people for these jobs?" he asked at a recent meeting at VBO, the Belgian Employers Union. Not in the classic reserve of those aged 20 to 49, he says. "We should forget about fixed retirement ages. Instead, we should think in terms of career length. People should work for at least 45 years, irrespective of when they start."

It is generally believed that the Generation Pact, the 2005 law that was meant to discourage early retirement and provide incentives to continue working until the legal retirement age of 65, has failed. According to the National Labour Council, the number of early retirees over 55 has risen 6% since 2006. Some blame the unions, and some blame recruitment policies of companies. According to statistics from the Flemish Department for Work and Social Economy, only 7.8% of people hired in Flanders in the first half of 2011 were over 50. That's one of the lowest scores in Europe. Re-employment chances for people over 50 in Norway, for instance, are eight

times higher. Companies, on the other hand, argue that the salary demands of people over 50 are simply too high. "Employers and trade unions are going to have to stop passing the hot potato to each other," says Jan Denys, spokesman of recruitment firm Randstad and author of the book *Wie werkt nog na 50?* (Who Still Works After 50?). "Pointing the finger at each other will not solve the shortage on the labour market."

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World champion silver for Antwerp teen

This Thursday, 13 October, 17-year-old Jessy Druyts will be honoured by her local council in Wilrijk, a municipality of Antwerp. Then on Friday, she'll be given similar honours by the Antwerp city council.

The reason for all the fuss is that Jessy is making a name for herself as one of the best young cyclists in a country that takes cycling very seriously indeed. On 23 September in Copenhagen, she took silver in the junior category of the cycling world championships, just behind the British Lucy Garner. This is Jessy's first season as a junior. The race had been led by a German and an Italian, but in the last kilometre

they fell away, allowing a pack of riders to come through, led by Garner, also 17, and closely followed by Jessy. At the end of the final sprint, Garner was just 10m ahead.

"I never expected this," Jessy (pictured) told Sporza TV after the race. "I came to get some experience but felt great all the way. I was unlucky in the sprint; I was just about to take off when someone rode up against my back wheel. My gears were broken, and I couldn't change gear. I thought, there goes my Top Ten place. But I kept going and took silver. If that hadn't happened, I would have won the race."



Government buys Dexia

Flemish municipalities assess impact of bank bail-out

ALAN HOPE

The Federation of Flemish Investors has called for all Dexia shareholders to be treated equally following the nationalisation of Dexia Bank Belgium at the weekend. According to some estimates, the bank's crash, which led to the government bail-out, has already cost every person in Flanders as much as €554 through their municipal shareholding, with further costs to come.

The Belgian state took full possession of the Belgian part of the embattled Dexia Bank for €4 billion. Dexia Bank Belgium (DBB) now comes into government ownership

following a weekend of meetings lasting into early Monday morning.

Dexia Bank has been troubled recently by growing concern at the bank's solvability. The bank, like many others, is exposed to a large quantity of debt from Greece, Italy and struggling municipal authorities in the US. While the credit market in Europe as a whole is being squeezed, making it harder for banks to borrow money to finance their daily business, Dexia was the victim of a crisis of confidence on the part of other banks, which forced it to turn to the government.

➤ continued on page 5



© Baba

YM Dangre

The award of this year's Debut Prize for first novelists to YM Dangre cannot all have been about his Byronic good looks. But Dangre, who beat eight other nominees to the prize for a first work by a Flemish author – becoming the youngest-ever winner – impressed only part of the jury.

Dangre's novel *Vulkaankracht* (*The Power of the Volcano*) is audacious in that the author, 23 years old and still studying French and Dutch literature at the University of Antwerp, takes as his protagonist a young woman called Séverine, who goes through two relationships, while trying to escape the baleful presence in her life of a mentally unbalanced mother, hysterical and distant – the volcano of the title.

The jury of the Debut Prize – €6,200 and an €800 Mont Blanc pen – described Dangre (who uses his initials because he doesn't like his forename Yannick) as "a promising young writer who merits our good wishes". For the critics, Dangre's experiment is on the whole a success.

For jury president Dirk Leyman, however, the success is qualified. At the opening of this year's Boekenbeurs (book fair) in Antwerp, Leyman spoke of

the book as "not an impeccable novel", which was "overfilled" and with dialogue that "often falters".

The criticism was aimed more at publishers than at Dangre. Publishers, Leyman said, invest too little time in new writers. The critique is not particular to Flemish houses; it's long been the complaint of critics and writers themselves: The time, effort and experience needed to provide serious editorial support eat into profits of the corporations that now run virtually all of the major imprints. Editorial concerns are a luxury the shareholders cannot afford to indulge.

For Leyman, many of the novels submitted for the prize were "too long" or "showed faults which should have been remedied". YM Dangre need not worry too much. Flanders is a small literary world, and he is now a shining star. His book will undoubtedly sell with or without the jacket photo.

His career now depends on his second novel, on which he is now working. "I'd love to live from my writing, but I'm realistic enough to see that that's not going to happen right away," he told *De Standaard* in an interview. Success seems not yet to have gone to his pretty head.

FLANDERS TODAY

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FLANDERS TODAY
OCTOBER 12, 2011

News in brief

The Catholic University of Leuven will replace its planned online lectures with **live streaming video conferences**, following protests from students. The number of students in the social sciences faculty has grown too large for existing lecture halls, so students will now be divided between two auditoria: one where the teacher will give a live lecture, and another where overspill students can watch the lecture live on video in the presence of an assistant who will help students maintain contact with the professor in the other room.

Brussels taxis have scored an "acceptable" on a Europe-wide survey carried out by mobility organisations. Anonymous inspectors carried out checks on taxis in 22 cities, testing prices, route knowledge, friendliness and adherence to road rules. Barcelona topped the chart with 84.61%, Brussels achieved 73.2% and Ljubljana came last with 53.08%. Brussels was average regarding fares, with €16.10 for the test ride, compared to €31.35 in Zurich and only €7.98 in Lisbon.

This year's **Flemish Culture Prize for Visual Arts** goes to the team of Jos De Gruyter and Harald Thys, whose work includes performances, videos and installations. The pair, the prize jury said, "have a sharp eye for the banal and the absurd" while "the universe they have created shows great sensitivity to the world as a whole." The prize includes €12,500 and an artwork by the Zwalm-based sculptor Johan Tahon.

Plans to **renovate the Havenlaan in Brussels** have been shelved after a judge last week suspended the project's planning permission,

OFFSIDE

Ladies of the land

According to the words of the old children's song, the first desire of the farmer is a wife. The song goes on: "The wife wants a child."

What that ignores is that many farmers are women, and what they want most is more say in the running not only of the farm, but in the whole business of farming.

That, at any rate, is the view of the Cattle Improvement Cooperative (CRV), based in the Netherlands and with activities in Flanders. CRV publishes the magazines *Veeteelt* (Livestock Farming) and *VeeteeltVlees* (Livestock Farming and Meat) and, since last week, *De Boerin* (The Woman Farmer).

"Women look at business in a different way from men," the company said in a statement. "New points of view are good for debate and bring innovative ideas and solutions." The magazine aims to make women more aware of the cattle improvement business, and vice versa. It will also be a forum for women farmers to talk to each other and exchange experience and know-how. On 11 October, the first CRV Women's Day in Flanders took place in Temse, East Flanders. Coincidentally, last week also saw the launch of a new prize for "female talent in the countryside". "Women have for generations made their mark

following protests from local and environmental groups at the removal of plane trees and the street's original cobblestones. According to the judge, the current plans for the works do not match the original permit received, and the project lacks an environmental impact study. The Brussels Region will now examine possible legal options, "but the prospects for our plans do not look good," said public works minister Brigitte Grouwels.

The nature and woodlands agency ANB will set **200 sheep loose to graze back grass** growing on heathland near Mechelen that was damaged in a fire in May this year. The heathland is recovering from the damage to about 10 hectares, but typical flora is in danger of being hampered by purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea*), an extremely invasive species. The sheep will graze the affected area for 10 days to allow heath plants more space and light to become well established.

The **remains of two First World War soldiers** have been uncovered during an investigative dig on the site of a planned business park in Ypres, close to the First World War front line, announced the West Flanders Intercommunal, which is carrying out the building works. The site has also revealed several unexploded munitions. Experts will now try to identify the two men.

Singer **Selah Sue** has won a European Border Breakers Award, given to young musical talent in Europe for performances outside of their own borders. The awards to the Leuven-born singer, whose given name is Sanne Putseys, and 10 other young musicians will be given out in January. Members of the public can meanwhile vote for their own favourites on the website.

→ www.ebba-awards.eu

Archaeologists working in Sint-Dimpna, a municipality of Geel in Antwerp province, have **unearthed traces of a settlement** dating back to the Iron Age, as well as another site from the early Middle Ages. The latter find allows historians to date the establishment of the village to the 8th to 11th century. Previous evidence suggested a later origin, around the 13th century.

The Brussels opera house De Munt has been voted **Opera House of the Year** by an international jury commissioned by the German magazine *Opernwelt*. De Munt's production of *Les Huguenots* by Giacomo Meyerbeer was also crowned production of the year. Director Peter De Caluwe said: "This recognition is enormously important to this country. The title, similar to what the Oscars mean to the film industry, places De Munt in the vanguard of opera houses in Europe."

Three people who were **contaminated by radioactivity** in an accident at the Belgoprocess plant in Dessel, Antwerp province, will suffer no lasting effects, the nearby Study Centre for Nuclear Energy has determined. The accident happened when a container holding a very small quantity of plutonium fell to the floor during an inspection of technical equipment. At no time did any radioactivity leave the building, the processing plant said. The three will continue under observation and undergo a decontamination procedure.

ALAN HOPE



on daily life in Flanders, working for values such as authenticity, sustainability and thoughtfulness in Flanders' eating, living and caring culture," say contest organisers. "But for too long their contribution has been less visible than it ought to be."

The competition involves three prizes: from KVLV, a group of women involved in agriculture and horticulture, for the most talented woman working for the improvement of rural life; from Cera bank for the most fruitful cooperative work; and from the Flemish government for the best innovative idea. Each prize is worth €2,000, and entries can be made until mid-October, with the winners to be announced next March.

→ www.talentophetplatteland.be

Choppers for the chop →

Federal mobility minister Etienne Schoupe is to introduce new rules restricting privately owned helicopters from taking off and landing on open ground, such as fields and gardens



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Final agreements reached on BHV

New rules on magistrates and courts in Brussels periphery

ALAN HOPE

The issue of the district of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde (BHV) has been definitively settled, after a long session by government negotiators last week. Three weeks ago, agreements were reached on the electoral district of BHV, which is now subject to new rules on voting in elections. This time, agreement has been reached on the judicial arrondissement of BHV and concerns the organisation of the courts.

The magistrature in the area will be split along geographical lines: in Brussels, a bilingual system for the 19 municipalities of the capital; a Dutch-speaking system in Halle-Vilvoorde, including the facility municipalities. Those are the six communes in the Flemish periphery of Brussels whose French-speaking residents enjoy certain language rights. For them, the Halle-Vilvoorde system will include five bilingual magistrates on detachment from Brussels.

Within Brussels, the division between French- and Dutch-

speaking magistrates and courts will be 80/20, with one-third of magistrates bilingual instead of the current ratio of two-thirds. The same ratio of bilingual magistrates will apply in Halle-Vilvoorde. There, the French-speaking secondees will be used when two French-speaking parties oppose each other.

The Dutch-speaking bar welcomed the agreement as bringing the magistrature closer to the people it serves. The presence of bilingual magistrates "keeps the contact between the communities alive," the Dutch-speaking Order of Advocates said. "Those contacts must not be allowed to disappear."

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters told the Flemish Parliament that he would refrain from comment until all of the texts of the negotiators' agreements were released. In the meantime, he saw no element which seemed to go against previous agreements. The N-VA, however, warned that any breach of the existing language laws would be "a major problem" for the party, which forms part of the Flemish coalition.

Parliament from four years to five
In another dossier, the negotiators agreed to extend the life of the federal parliament from four years to five years. Some parties clashed over the question of simultaneous elections. In 2014, federal and



CD&V president Wouter Beke opposes simultaneous federal and regional elections

regional elections will fall together by chance, but since regional legislatures are already elected for five years, that could mean in the future that elections always coincide.

That's not good news to those representatives in Flanders, who fear that their election campaign will be overshadowed by federal elections if the two happen at the same time. Wouter Beke, president of CD&V, which heads the Flemish coalition, said: "Each level of government has to be judged by the voter on its own performance: Has it done well or has it not done well? That applies to municipalities, provinces, Flanders and Europe," he told VRT at the weekend.

The negotiators also agreed to put

an end to the practice whereby a leading politician is presented to the electorate for their vote-winning capacities, only to decline to take up the seat after the election. In future, any politician who leads a party list must be prepared to take their seat. Finally, new federal ministers will appear before the parliament to lay out their vision of policy before starting the job, and all ministers will receive a cut in pay of 5%.

As *Flanders Today* went to press, chief negotiator Elio Di Rupo was due to visit the king to report on progress on the state reform aspects of his talks, before picking up negotiations again on the social-economic positions of the new federal government.♦

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



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municipalities in Flanders have obtained a Fair Trade label from development agencies Max Havelaar, Oxfam Wereldwinkels, Vredesielanden and 11.11.11. With 100 or so still pending, Flanders now stands in second place among 23 countries after the UK

11%

fewer apartment bookings and 9% fewer hotel reservations recorded at the Flemish coast this summer, mainly because of poor weather

67th

place for the Catholic University of Leuven in the annual Times Higher Education rankings of world universities, up 52 places from 119 last year. The KUL stands at number 17 in Europe

13,800

square metres of solar panels, providing enough energy for 1,500 families, came onstream last week in the port area of Brussels, at a cost of €3.5 million

€37,164

fine and 14-month driving ban for a Romanian man who was flashed speeding in central Antwerp 136 times between April 2010 and February this year

New look for Flemish lion?

Is the Flemish lion too aggressive? That's what some marketing experts think, and last week minister-president Kris Peeters launched a new competition to find something more positive. The Flemish flag depicts a black lion rampant on a field of yellow, showing red claws and tongue. Given its origins in warfare and heraldry, it's no surprise it carries stern tones: The lion was a popular beast for armies to rally behind and also features on the national flags of Scotland, England and Sri Lanka, among others. However attack and bloodlust are no longer the blazons behind which the modern Flemish government wants to go into the world. In the

Flemish parliament last weekend, Peeters launched a competition during the symposium The Value of Symbols, to develop "an original creative idea or suggestions to support the positive image of Flanders and her symbols at home and abroad." To give contestants a nudge in one possible direction, the instructions noted that "the integration of the Flemish lion in your concept could be an asset." The competition is open to anyone over the age of 18 and enrolled this year at a Flemish educational institution. The prize is worth €2,500 – and the honour of seeing your work represent Flanders.♦

→ www.symboolvlaanderen.eu



© Bob Moi

Bart De Wever, president of the N-VA, is still the region's most popular politician, according to a poll carried out by TNS Media for *De Standaard* and the VRT. De Wever (pictured) won the preference votes of 45% of those polled, narrowly in front of Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters at 42%. In third place came socialist senator Johan Vande Lanotte (31%), acting prime minister Yves Leterme (30%) and Frank Vandenbroucke, the socialist minister of State who recently quit politics (27%).

Ninove police chief considered for federal post

The head of the local police force in Ninove, East Flanders, could be on track to become the first woman to head the federal police, it was revealed last week. Christine De Bolle, 41, was the first woman ever to head up a local police force when she took the Ninove job in 2001. Now she has achieved the top place in a round of tests to find the next commissioner-general of the federal police. There are now five women in charge of local police corps. De Bolle almost didn't join the police at all. She applied at the age of 18 but was slightly short of the minimum height requirement,

so went to study law instead. Eventually the law on height changed, and she was able to fulfil what had been a childhood dream. Her law degree took her to the judicial service of what would become the new federal police. "It's a historic moment," commented Gwen Merckx, another local police chief and chair of the Network of Belgian Policewomen. "Catherine will be an asset to the force. The average police chief is a man of 52, and at the very top it's no different. That a young mother is arriving at the top is a complete about-face." De Bolle herself said: "I have been informed of the results of

the selection committee and await the further continuation of the procedure." The result of the selection is expected in November, but insiders said it was highly unlikely the candidate with the best test scores would be overlooked.

The job as commissioner-general of the federal police became vacant on the resignation of Fernand Koekelberg, 56, after allegations of mismanagement and misuse of funds on an official trip to Qatar. Koekelberg is also a candidate to succeed himself and came fifth in the list of admitted candidates.♦

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

How Flemish are we?

If elections were held today, N-VA would get 35% of the vote, a recent poll by *De Standaard* and VRT shows. In Flanders, with its divided political landscape, that would be a spectacular result.

Part of the explanation lies in the same poll. The share of Vlaams Belang, the ultra-right wing party that once received up to one in four votes, has shrunk to 8%. Part of Vlaams Belang's electorate has moved to N-VA (which is just as nationalist but without the Islam obsession). These votes are often called "protest votes", a loud but vague signal by people who abhor politics of any kind.

Do the polls indicate that the Flemish have become more (Flemish) nationalist? Another new poll challenges this. No less than 73% percent of the Flemish said they were proud to be... Belgian. Even more said they would not like to see Flanders become independent (which is the ultimate goal of N-VA).

This may seem contradictory but says a lot about our layered (rather than fixed) identity. In Flanders, many people feel Flemish first, Belgian next. Or the other way round. Or, in the case of residents of the city of Antwerp or the province of Limburg, that first and the rest (in whatever order) next. An identity like an onion – you can't get more Flemish than that.

The question of Flemish identity is hotly debated these days. What seems obvious to us – that Flanders is rich in culture, social, open, innovative and internationally oriented – is not always clear to the outside world. For this reason, minister-president Kris Peeters has organised a competition in which students are asked to provide Flanders with fitting symbols (aside from its slightly aggressive-looking lion). This competition is aptly named the Grand Prix Kris Peeters – which sounds so Flemish that it can easily be confused with a bike race.

But back to N-VA's success. This week we will find out what parties will form the new federal government. That N-VA will not be one of them was already known, but the question remains whether the greens will. If not, the Di Rupo government has no majority in Flanders. If the greens are in, the left is represented more than the election result in Flanders warrant.

In either case, N-VA wins. The Flemish lion still roars.

Older and wiser

Employers are beginning to recognise advantages of hiring over 50s

► *continued from page 1*

Trade unions should drop their taboo on abolishing early retirement schemes, he says, but employers should drop their prejudices against people over 50. "They often see them as too expensive, unwilling to learn and looking forward to retirement. But most of them are motivated to make a new start and prepared to earn less money."

The right chair

Flemish minister of employment, Philippe Muyters, agrees. Just before the summer, he launched a campaign called De Juiste Stoel, or The Right Chair, to encourage people over 50 to find a job and employers to hire them. "It has become something of a tradition," he says of the high unemployment rate among the over-50s.

"There was a time when the government gave older employees the possibility to retire early to make room for the then many unemployed young people," Muyters told *Flanders Today* at the start of the campaign last June. "But the situation has changed. Today, Flanders has one of the lowest youth unemployment rates in Europe. But one of the highest for people over 50."

Also, he said, companies often focus on traditional qualifications and overlook the experience of the mature. "Being a parent, for example, teaches you things that you don't learn anywhere else. Those are competences that can be useful to an employer. I think we should focus less on diplomas and more on personal competences."

Welcome to the 50+ club

Flemish employment and training agency VDAB runs what they call the Active 50+ policy. Local 50+ clubs offer those between 50 and 55 who've been unemployed longer than three months guidance in their quest for a new job. "Trade unions are increasingly participating in our information campaigns," says Luc Vanborm, the VDAB 50+ coordinator. "And employers, too, are beginning to realise the advantages of hiring people over 50, not just for their working experience but also for the fiscal opportunities it brings." Companies are eligible for subsidies from the Flemish government when they hire somebody over 50, and there are also reductions in social security contributions.

"Every morning when I hear the alarm, it's like music to my ears"

Els De Backere, a consultant at the local VDAB in Roeselare, West Flanders (and herself over 50) says that "employers are slowly starting to appreciate that people over 50 are less likely to switch jobs than young people at the start of their careers."

Part of the problem lies with job seekers themselves feeling out of the loop. "After losing their job, many wonder what they still have to offer to a company at their age." De Backere's job is to teach people how to start applying again, and much of it, she says, is psychological motivation.

The path to re-employment

Martine Decaestecker is 53 and has been unemployed since July this year. "I was lost when, after working there for almost 35 years, the company shut down. But after hearing stories at the VDAB and getting some advice, I recently started applying for jobs again. I'm confident that soon, I'll be at work."

It can, however, take time. Mieke Samyn, also 53 and a former member of the 50+ club, testifies on her 18-month search. "I took courses to become a school bus driver; I passed exams at a rest-home. All to no avail." Eventually she found a job as cleaner at a furniture company.

Guido Degrauwe also found a job with help of VDAB Roeselare. After a successful career as a manager in the textile industry, the 57-year-old suffered a serious back injury and had to undergo an operation and months of rehabilitation. Coached by the VDAB, he started applying for jobs again, three times a week, three months long. But in spite of his experience and a diploma in industrial engineering, employers didn't respond.

"I didn't have high salary demands," he says, "but still



nobody would hire me. It was frustrating not being able to get even a modest function. Nobody ever told me to my face that I was old – that would constitute discrimination – but I just felt that my age was an obstacle."

After more than 35 job interviews, Degrauwe was finally offered the post of unit chief at a manufacturer of metal parts for trucks and heavy duty machines. Today, two months later, he's being considered for a promotion. "Not that it's my ambition to climb up the ladder again and earn more money," he confirms. "I was once the boss of 220 employees; now I just enjoy making myself useful. Every morning when I hear the alarm, it's like music to my ears."

Convinced companies

It is still rare to find a company with an explicit policy of recruiting people over 50. One pioneer was Daikin, a manufacturer of air conditioners and heating systems in Ostend. Ten years ago, the company ran a campaign for people over 50 to help out from February to July, when demand peaks for air conditioners. Many of them later signed a full-time contract.

"They bring more maturity to the factory floor," explains Human Resources manager Hans Lingier. More than one-fifth of the 1,600 Daikin employees are over 50. "Of the 40 people we hired in June, about half were over 50, some over 60," says Lingier.

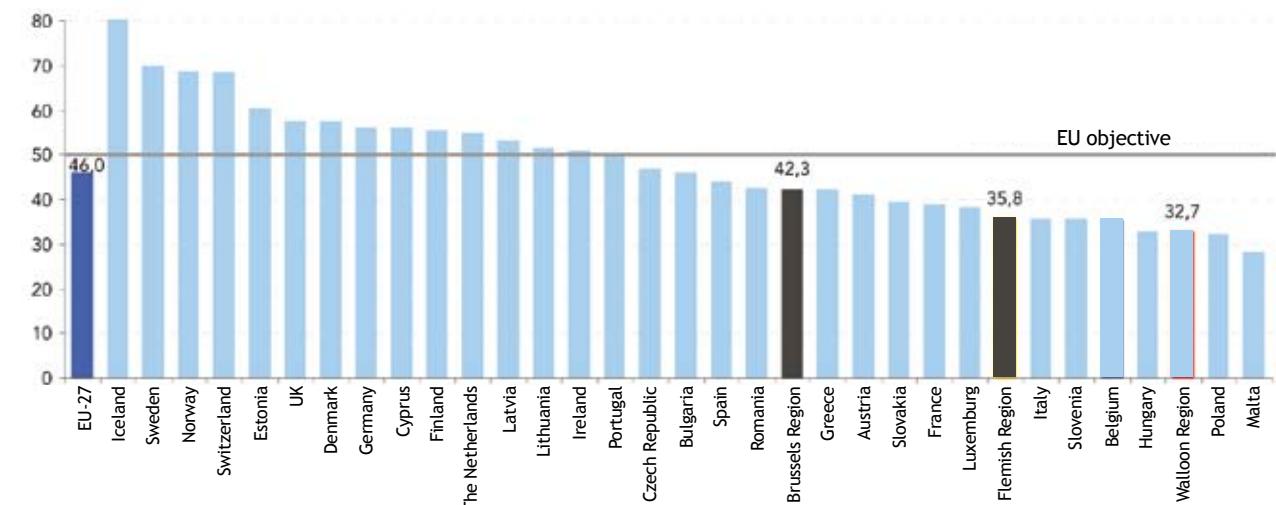
One of them is Roger Swyngedauw, 61. He had quit being a baker when he was almost 50 years old and for many years couldn't find a steady job. "I could only find temporary assignments until I read about the Daikin campaign and got hired immediately," he says. "I'll be happy to remain here until I retire at 65."

Electrotech, a manufacturer of electric panels in Wingene, West Flanders has gone even further. They've begun hiring only people over 50. "We used to have prejudices against people over 50. We used to think that they would want to round off their careers at a relaxed pace," says company head Filip Van Nieuwenhuyze. "Until at the beginning of this year, when we hired two employees of 58 and 57 years old. We are now convinced that they are the best option because of their motivation, experience and loyalty."♦

→ www.vdab.be
→ www.dejuistestoei.be



Rate of employed aged 55 to 64 in EU and Efta member states, with Belgium split up by region



Source: Belgian Ministry of Economy, ADSEI, EAK 2009, adaptation Steunpunt WSE

Dexia customers “can feel 200% reassured,” says Leterme

→ continued from page 1

Prime minister Yves Leterme (CD&V) said the move was intended to shelter DBB from risks faced by the Dexia group. “All of the bank’s clients – public authorities as well as private savers – will be able to carry on making use of the bank’s services, whether to make deposits or to borrow working capital,” he said. “Dexia bank has been rescued from a hazardous environment. We have acquired 100% of the shares, so savers and customers can feel 200% reassured.”

As well as the nationalisation of DBB, the governments of Belgium, France and Luxembourg will provide state guarantees of €90 billion for up to 10 years for the parts of Dexia left behind. Belgium will contribute 60.5%, France 36.5% and Luxembourg 3% – a possible bill for Belgium of €45 billion. In return, they will receive an immediate dividend of €450 million in total – €270 for Belgium.

In response to a criticism that his government had been fleeced, Leterme countered: “I hear the same complaint from the French side.”

The deal was done “for a fair price,” according to a statement by Leterme and finance minister Didier Reynders. The dividends that will be paid out while the state continues to stand guarantor will also ensure, Reynders said, “that the taxpayer will not suffer too much discomfort”. According to his estimate, the entire deal will add just one percentage point to Belgium’s debt burden, from 97% of GDP to 98%.

“Suggesting that this will cost us nothing is

stuff and nonsense,” said Paul De Grauwe, professor of economics at the Catholic University of Leuven. “The cost price of €4 billion alone will incur interest charges of €160 million a year, and the guarantees will damage Belgium’s credit worthiness.”

Flanders holds nearly 40%

Flemish municipalities are now looking at how many shares they own in the Communal Holding company (GH), which owns 14.1% of the Dexia Group. Municipalities in Flanders hold 39.8% of GH, compared to 19.2% by Brussels and 32.2% by Wallonia. The GH has its Dexia shares booked at a value of €8.50; however, last week the value had dropped to barely €1 per share, a loss that has already effectively been incurred by the municipalities.

By one rough estimate, based on how much of the shares of DBB each municipality owns through GH, the loss incurred by the average person in Flanders is about €63 for each share the municipality owns.

Exposure ranges from 0.65 shares per inhabitant in Aartselaar, Antwerp province, all the way up to 8.83 shares per inhabitant in Ostend. In the middle ground are the city of Antwerp (4.29) and Niel (3.44) in Antwerp province, Pepingen in Flemish Brabant (3.47), Voeren in Limburg (3.53), and Menen in West Flanders (3.51). Hurting most will be Ostend, Blankenberge (8.39) and Knokke-Heist (5.23), all in West Flanders, and Herstappe in Limburg, which only has 80 inhabitants but 462 GH



© Belga

Former prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene, chairman of Dexia since the last bail-out in 2008, announcing the agreement on Monday. Dehaene will not continue in his post after nationalisation

shares, or 5.78 per inhabitant. (All figures from the Flemish Association of Cities and Municipalities, VWSG)

In addition, almost all municipalities and local social aid agencies (OCMW) use Dexia for their payroll accounts, as well as subscribing to a host of insurance products specially designed to meet their needs. About half of all municipalities also use Dexia for other banking purposes, such as savings and borrowing.

“The Dexia fiasco will cost the municipalities 2-4% in income,” estimated Flemish economist Geert Noels. “They don’t need to be compensated because that’s the best way to force them finally to cut their spending.”

What the deal includes

The government purchase of Dexia is broadly welcomed, and the next few weeks should bring details, such as the precise

content of what the government is paying for and whether it includes, for instance, property, credit loans still running and, more importantly, bad credit products.

It also remains to be seen how the bail-out will affect the country’s credit rating and if Leterme will be able to make good his promise to treat all shareholders equally. The GH holds 14%, and the holding company Arco, which belongs to the Christian workers’ organisation ACW, have the same amount. Smaller shareholders would lose out if preference were given to either of those large organisations.

Already members of the Arco cooperative have been promised the same sort of state guarantee offered to savers. “If they receive that treatment, that’s fine, but the measure should apply to all,” said Paul Huybrechts of the Flemish Federation of Investors.♦

Solvay Conference marks 100th anniversary

This year’s Solvay Conference, staged sporadically in Brussels, marks the centenary of the first-ever conference in 1911. The International Institutes of Physics and Chemistry have organised a series of events across Brussels in October aimed at both scientists and the general public.

A staged reading of Michael Frayn’s play *Copenhagen*, featuring the British National Theatre player (and Harry Potter star) Fiona Shaw, is already sold out. But tickets are still available for the half-day conference on 23 October on the problems of physics today and its importance for the world at large. The day also includes talks on “Quantum Beauty” and “Einstein and Time in the 21st century”.

For specialists, the main events are a symposium on the importance

of fundamental research on 18 October, and a three-day conference on quantum theory from 19 to 22 October, chaired by 2004 Nobel winner David Gross.

There’s also an exhibition on the history of the Solvay Conferences and the original brain-storming sessions, and a study day, open to all, on the early conferences.

The Brussels-based International Institutes for Physics and Chemistry, founded by Belgian chemist and industrialist Ernest Solvay, is a research institute featuring “curiosity-driven” themes in physics, chemistry and related disciplines. The central activity of the institutes is the periodic organization of the celebrated Solvay Conferences in Physics and Chemistry.♦

→ www.solvayinstitutes.be



© Wikimedia commons

The first Solvay Conference in 1911 was attended by the greatest minds of the time, including Albert Einstein (standing, second from right), Marie Curie (sitting, second from right), Max Planck (standing, second from left), Ernest Rutherford (standing fourth from right) and, of course, Ernest Solvay (seated, third from right)

Healthy growth for diamonds

Polished diamond exports from Antwerp rose by 30% in value in September to €1.22 billion, despite a drop in sales volume of 9%, the Antwerp World Diamond Council said last week. A large part of the increase was sales to Hong Kong, up 20% to €595 million on stable volumes. “What almost certainly would be a factor influencing the September polished diamond export was the massive Hong Kong Jewellery & Gem Fair, which took place at two venues,” AWDC explained in a statement. “Some 88 Belgian companies exhibited at the show, and the goods they shipped to the event are included in the monthly data.”

Imports of polished diamonds increased 32% to €1.14 billion during the month, and imports from Hong Kong alone grew 25% to €445.8 million. At the same time, exports to the US were up 34%, while sales to Switzerland tripled to €101 million.

The September numbers bring the export figure for the year so far €8.27 billion, a rise of 37% on the same period in 2010.♦

Jobs news

The rescue plan for troubled Dexia bank (see p1) will not lead to compulsory job losses for Belgian staff, prime minister Yves Leterme assured trade unions last week. The bank employs nearly 14,000 people in the country.

Car manufacturer Toyota has announced 100 new vacancies at its research and development centre in Zaventem for engineers, administrative workers, marketers and sales staff.

The world’s largest paint producer, AkzoNobel, has announced the loss of 60 jobs at its plant in Vilvoorde, mainly in marketing and sales. A total of 500 people are employed by the company in Vilvoorde and nearby Machelen in Flemish Brabant.

Unions and management at food company Pauwels Sauzen in Oelegem, Antwerp province, are negotiating a new proposal, following an action last

week when workers blocked the factory gates in protest at the dismissal of a union representative and two other workers. Management has now produced a more attractive redundancy package.

Management at Belgocontrol, based in Steenokkerzeel, Flemish Brabant, have given themselves two weeks to negotiate with unions over a restructuring plan in an effort to avoid industrial action. Talks started again on Monday this week, but details of the plan have not been revealed by either side while discussions continue. Belgocontrol is an anonymous state enterprise that controls movements in Belgian airspace and reported losses last year of €20.9 million, with debts up €12 million to €47.6 million. The original plan involved annual spending cuts of 3.5%.♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Autos • Sales up

New car registrations jumped 12% in September, pushing the total so far this year to some 440,000 vehicles. Market leadership changed with Volkswagen just ahead of France’s Renault. Forecast for the year as a whole point to a record 540,000 vehicles registered.

Chemicals • Solvay

Brussels-based chemicals and plastics group Solvay last week inaugurated the world’s largest hydrogen peroxide production unit in Thailand. The plant, with a capacity of some 330,000 tonnes a year, is operated in joint venture with the US-based Dow Chemicals.

Energy • Fluxys

Gas pipeline operator and transport company Fluxys, based in Brussels and with a terminal in Zeebrugge, is paying €860 million to acquire the stake of Italy’s ENI group in two pipeline companies in Germany and Switzerland. This will allow the company to supply Norwegian natural gas to major parts of the south of Europe. The deal brings to €1.5 billion the amount invested by Fluxys outside of Belgium in two years.

Hotels • Marriott

The 10-year-old Brussels Marriott hotel in downtown Brussels has been renovated at a cost of €3 million. The Marriott group, which operates four properties in Brussels, has also recently refurbished the Renaissance Hotel close to the European Parliament.

Insurance • Ageas

Brussels-based insurance group Ageas has sold its German life insurance activities to the local Augur Capital. The company had yearly premiums of some €45 million. It launched its activities in Germany in 2007 under the ill-fated name of Fortis Deutschland.

Insurance • KBC

The insurance affiliate of Flanders largest bank has launched a bid to acquire the outstanding shares of its Bulgarian affiliate DZI. KBC already has a stake of 90% in the company and hopes to acquire the rest for a total of some €13 million.

Ports • Ghent

The Port of Ghent is headed for a record year with traffic for the first nine months up 5.5% to 37.7 million tonnes.

Supermarkets • Delhaize

The Brussels-based Delhaize supermarkets group, with extensive operations in the US, successfully issued €400 million in bonds, significantly more than the expected €250 million. The issue, paying a net interest of 3.94%, was heavily oversubscribed.

Zoological • Zoo & Planckendael

The Antwerp Zoo and its affiliate Planckendael animal park in Mechelen will get a €70 million facelift over the next five years. Projects include the creation of a Zoo Academy for visitors to see biologists and researchers at work and environment-related investments to cut water and energy consumption by 50%.

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Giants of a small region

A bleak future may brighten for the once world-famous Belgian draft horse

SABINE CLAPPAERT

Together with *frietjes*, chocolate and the Atomium, they are this country's biggest icon: the Belgian draft horse.

You don't see them often anymore, but when you do, it's hard to ignore their statuesque, almost prehistoric shape: the muscular round flanks, the broad arch of the neck, the slow, stomping gait.

But their numbers are dwindling fast, and our children's children may only ever see them flickered on a computer screen in a primary school history lesson.

Bred for their gentle character, speed, size and strength, draft horses were once Flanders' most important export product. As far back as 1760, breeders have been perfecting the full-blood Belgian draft horse, breeding specific strains in East Flanders, Antwerp and Henegouwen, such as *den dikken bruinen van de Dender*, the big brown horse from the region of the Dender River.

In Flemish Brabant, they began to interbreed the three strains to create what has become the traditional Belgian-Brabant draft horse. In 1886, the Society of the Belgian Draft Horses was inaugurated.

Amid the rolling hills of Pajottenland, west of Brussels, lies Vollezele, a small, quiet town that was once the bustling centre of the draft horse industry. There were three breeding farms in town, and hundreds of horse breeders – from as far afield as Denmark, Argentina and Russia – used to travel here to buy the famous horses.

The years between the First and Second World Wars marked the heyday of the Belgian draft horse, which was regarded by many as the best breed in the world. During this period, the country counted more than 240,000 of them. Every year, 15,000 were born and 30,000 exported. Vollezele's market swarmed with traders inspecting the hundreds of horses up for sale on any given day.

Today, the town square lies silent. The draft horse has been replaced by tractors. The only proof of the town's glory days is a statue of Brillant, one of Vollezele's world-famous champion horses. Brillant faces the old town hall, today a museum of the Belgian draft horse – open by appointment only.

Louis Van de Vijver, 67, used to breed draft horses, "but we finally quit last year," he says. "The demand has just dwindled over the years. Today, a foal fetches only about €500, which barely covers the costs of insemination and registration."

Van de Vijver still owns 10 mares. They pull the carts he uses to take tourists on traditional *huifkartochten*, or tours of the region, in a 19th-century covered wagon.

Life-long passions die hard, though. "I miss having the little ones around," Van de Vijver admits. "We're not breeding



A parent and young Belgian draft horse enjoy the great outdoors

anymore, but we do have one pregnant mare this year, just to have a foal again."

Flemish subsidies for foals

But there may be hope yet for Flanders' gentle giants. Minister-president Kris Peeters, also minister of agriculture, recently announced that breeders of the Belgian draft horse in Flanders will receive a subsidy for each foal born – fewer than 500 are expected this year. Said Peeters at the recent 125th anniversary of the Belgian draft horse in Brussels: "The sharp decrease in the number of foals born is a threat to the future of the breed." Subsidies have helped the breed survive before. In 1980, there were only an estimated 3,500 draft horses left in Belgium. In 1990, the Flemish government gave breeders a foal subsidy, which swiftly helped increase their numbers to an estimated 6,000 in 2004.

Jan De Boitselier of the Royal Society of the Belgian Draft horse confirms: "Today there are still about 600 active breeders of draft horses in Belgium, of which 75% are located in Flanders. But most of them breed horses as a hobby, and they often have only one or two mares. Very few breeders have more than five foals born per year. Breeding isn't cheap."

De Boitselier owns four draft horses himself. "The harmonious

combination of power, nobility and elegance makes it a truly unique breed," he adds. "The stallions can weigh up to 1,000 kilos, and they radiate power, while the mares are so graceful. A countryside without the unexpected sight of a stocky young foal bounding after its mother? No, I don't want to imagine it!"

Van de Vijver is optimistic. "I've heard that the government will give us a subsidy for each foal," he says, his voice rising an octave. "I've loved these horses since I was a little boy, just after the war." ▶

www.trekpaard.be

Brillant

Belgium's most famous draft horse, Brillant, was born in 1868. When the horse was nine, he was purchased by legendary breeder Remy Van der Schueren of Vollezele, and proved a true show horse, winning countless international titles, among them the first prize at the world exhibition in Paris. The French press wrote: "An extraordinary stallion, Brillant was awarded the first prize as the most beautiful and strongest of all draft horses."

Vrind indicators released • The annual study of the state of Flanders shows Kyoto target in sight

ALAN HOPE

Last week the research department of the Flemish government presented its annual report of Flemish Regional Indicators (Vrind), which paints a portrait of the region through economic and social data.

Presenting the report, which covers 2010, Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters praised the monumental task carried out by the research service – the report is more than 400 pages long, includes information on 700 indicators and contains 800 tables and charts. He stressed those chapters that give an indication of the region's progress towards the sustainable economic development contained in its 2020 Pact and the new strategy laid out in April this year. Those cover most aspects of government policy: social, economic, ecological, energy, mobility, housing, health and materials.

In most of those domains, policy is moving in the right direction, the report concludes. In one case the target has been realised: Greenhouse gas emissions are down 7.7% from 1990, on track to meet Flanders' Kyoto target. In two cases, the stated aims look to be hard to realise: overall energy consumption and access to energy for the poor.

Some highlights from Vrind:

- Flanders is second best in the EU for **equality of pay between men and women**. Only Slovenia has less of a gender pay gap than Flanders, which has a coefficient of less than five compared to an EU average of six.

• Flanders is in the **fifth highest place for disposable income**, after Austria, Germany, the UK and France (and higher than Brussels region). There are variations within the region: Flemish Brabant is the richest province, followed by East Flanders, Antwerp, Limburg and West Flanders.

• The region's **energy consumption** reached 1.693 petajoules in 2010 (1 PJ = 30 million kilowatt hours), an increase of 40% on 1990 and 10% on 2009 – largely as a result of the improvement of the economy after the crisis of that year. The government's action plan foresees a 9% savings in energy by 2016, based on figures from 2001-2005, which now looks difficult to realise.

• The report also points to a "warning light" in the case of the **energy-intensiveness of the economy**. In 2009, the economy's dependence on energy was 11% lower than in 1990; last year the direction reversed, so that the difference compared to 1990 was only 4.5%.

"Did we recover well from the crisis? Remarkably well," Peeters concluded. Last year "presents a very positive image in most respects. However, there is a great deal of uncertainty about 2012, surrounding the new situation we are facing. The report also shows we still have a lot to do, and there is a sense of urgency. We are facing some major challenges." ▶

www.tinyurl.com/vrind2011



Due to a surge in the economy, energy consumption is up

© Eva De Smedt



© Lukas Art

Bruegel-esque figures in "After Mass" by 19th-century Antwerp artist Hendrik Leys, part of *Bruegelland* in Lier

Welcome to Bruegelland

Lier's six-year tribute to the master of the Flemish Renaissance

IAN MUNDELL

Pieter Bruegel the Elder is one of the defining figures of Flemish art, both through his style of painting and his choice of subjects, from folk customs to Flemish landscapes. But Bruegel's place in the popular consciousness owes a great deal to the way other artists, beginning with his son, adapted and transformed his way of looking at the world. Bruegelland long ago declared independence from its founding father, as you can see at an exhibition running at Lier Municipal Museum.

Very little is known about Pieter Bruegel's early life. Working backwards, historians think that he was born between 1525 and 1530 in an unknown village somewhere in Brabant, which then straddled present day Flanders and the Netherlands. His name first appears in the historical record in 1551, assisting in painting an altarpiece for the glovemakers' guild in Mechelen.

Around this time, Bruegel also became a member of the Saint Luke painter's guild in Antwerp and, with the exception of a long journey to Italy in 1552-53, he appears to have lived in the city for much of the following decade.

His work at this time mainly consisted of pen and ink landscapes or religious fantasies in the manner of Hieronymus Bosch. These drawings generally served as models for engravings, although he was also painting similar scenes in oils.

In 1559, he painted his first canvases with multiple characters in a landscape, illustrating themes such as carnival customs or local proverbs, which would become characteristic of his approach.

In 1563, Bruegel married and moved to Brussels. It was here that he would paint some of his most famous landscapes, such as "Hunters in the Snow", in a series linked to the seasons. Later he brought together Flemish landscapes and biblical subjects in paintings such as "Census at Bethlehem" and "Adoration of the Magi in the Snow". At the same time he was painting scenes

of rural life, such as "The Peasant Dance" and "The Peasant Wedding", which emphasised its pleasures but also its hardships.

Bruegel died of unknown causes in Brussels in 1569, barely in his 40s. Many of his paintings were already making their way into prestigious private collections, and in the years following his death there was no decline in demand. The artists who followed responded with copies or variations on his key themes, gradually adapting them to appeal to contemporary fashions.

The children of Bruegel

The *Bruegelland* exhibition in Lier sets out to describe these transitions, drawing mainly on the collection of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp, which is currently closed for renovations. Since the museum has no paintings by Bruegel the Elder to lend out, another man acts as the show's godfather: Felix Timmermans, a writer who lived in Lier all his life and who did much to create the romantic image that we have of Bruegel.

"Timmermans wanted to write a biography of Bruegel, but there is very little historical material, so he had to invent the artist," explains Nico Van Hout, a conservator and curator at the Antwerp museum who organised the Lier exhibition. This book is *Pieter Bruegel, zoo heb ik uit uwe werken geroken* (1928), loosely translated into English in 1930 as *Droll Peter*.

"The image that we have today of Bruegel the Elder is to a large extent due to the work of Timmermans, but this is not a historical view; it's an invented view," continues Van Hout. "And that's a reason to search for the image of Bruegel the Elder through art in Flanders and in Holland."

The exhibition begins with the work of Bruegel's eldest son, also called Pieter, who established a studio towards the end of the 16th century to produce copies of his father's work. Since he was

around five when Bruegel died, there was hardly time for the father to have much direct influence on the son. It is even possible that the younger Bruegel never saw many of the paintings that he was copying, working instead from detailed sketches or other copies.

While he faithfully reproduced the subject matter of the originals, there are other differences. "In general, the rather nuanced and very refined colour schemes of Bruegel the Elder are far more gaudy in the son's versions," Van Hout says. "Perhaps that was to seduce more middle-class buyers in the 17th century, who wanted more colour in their pictures."

There are also variations between the copies, as can be seen with two versions of the celebrated "Netherlandish Proverbs" hanging side by side. One comes from Antwerp, the other from Lier's own collection, and visitors are invited both to spot the differences and decipher figures of speech depicted.

The Flemish soul

Bruegel's imagery was further transformed in the 17th century by painters such as Adriaen Brouwer, Joos Van Craesbeeck and David Teniers the Younger. They emphasised the lower class settings, adopting a patronising tone rather than expressing fellow feelings. Bruegel's moral message was left behind.

"By the time Teniers, Brouwer and Craesbeeck make their paintings, the connoisseurs and art lovers want to buy them because of the bad behaviour depicted in the scenes," says Van Hout. "The distance between their own bourgeois lifestyles and the genre images of the paintings becomes greater and enhances their feelings of superiority."

The exhibition devotes a room to these genre paintings, with their anecdotic scenes from everyday life. Weddings and taverns are common themes for large canvases, while smaller paintings

minutely explore the contours of peasant faces. The style is ever more polished, perhaps reaching a peak in Ferdinand De Braekeleer's slick "A Village Schoolhouse" (1854) and "The Grape Thief" (1850).

While some of these genre artists became society favourites, Bruegel had faded from view. That changed at the end of the 19th century when collectors such as Antwerp's Fritz Mayer van den Bergh rediscovered him, along with art historians charged with filling public museums. And as the century turned, a new generation of painters connected with Bruegel. "People rediscovered not only his subjects but also his earthy palette of colours," says Van Hout. "A link is then made between the Flemish soul, if that exists, and that sort of painting."

One group in particular took Bruegel to heart. "The Flemish expressionists felt inspired by Bruegel," says Van Hout. "In the exhibition you can see that this is not just true of the brownish-whitish colour schemes; they are also depicting his themes. The winter landscapes of Bruegel are suddenly very much in vogue. They are copied and turned into something of their own. The artistic landscape of Bruegel is re-invented in an expressionistic manner."

The exhibition currently concludes with paintings by early 20th-century artists Constant Permeke, Gustave Van De Woestyne and Gustave de Smet that illustrate this reconnection with Bruegel. But more is still to come. *Bruegelland* will stay in Lier until the end of 2017, with a change of focus every six months, including reactions to the Bruegel tradition from contemporary artists.♦

Until 2017

Lier Municipal Museum
Florent Van Cauwenberghstraat 14
→ www.bruegelland.be



Genre painter Ferdinand De Braekeleer's "The Grape Thief" (1850)

Finding Bruegel in Flanders



Detail from Bruegel's "The Census at Bethlehem", on view at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels



Flemish artist Floris Jespers' "Harlequin" (1925) brings the pastoral to the avant-gard

Most of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's great works have ended up in major international museums, so your options for seeing the originals closer to home are limited. The main local collection is in Brussels' Royal Museum of Fine Arts, which has a small but perfect cross-section of his work.

His hellish tendency can be seen in "The Fall of the Rebel Angels" (1562), in which sword-wielding angels expel a hoard of devils and demons from heaven. Meanwhile his atmospheric snowy landscapes are represented by "Winter Landscape with Skaters and Bird Trap" (1565) and "The Census at Bethlehem" (1566), which brings the Nativity to a small Flemish village in the depths of winter. Mary and Joseph arriving in the foreground seem lost in the flurry of activity going on around them, from the census itself to the slaughtering of pigs and people skating on the frozen river.

The same room also features Pieter Bruegel the Younger's 1610 version of "The Census at Bethlehem", one of at least 13 versions he is known to have painted. While the differences in colour and execution stand out, it is perhaps more astonishing that the paintings are so similar, given that the son may never have seen his father's original.

Other work by Bruegel the Elder in the room includes "The Adoration of the Magi" from around 1564, which presents the Bible story in a more oriental setting. Then there is "The Fall of Icarus", still attributed to Bruegel here but, as the museum catalogue notes, probably a copy of a lost original.

This is Bruegel's only known work depicting a subject from Greek mythology, with the hapless Icarus falling into the sea beside a far-from-mythological galleon. In the foreground, a ploughman and a shepherd go about their work without noticing. The painting has claimed an important place in the Bruegel canon for hundreds of years, with well-known poems devoted to it by WH Auden and William Carlos Williams. You can understand the museum's reluctance to let it slip away.

To see Bruegel outside of Brussels, head for the Mayer van den Bergh Museum in Antwerp which has the famous "Dulle Griet" ("Mad Meg"). This painting from around 1562 shows an armour-clad peasant woman, with a sword in one hand and a bread basket in the other, rampaging across a hellish landscape. The style clearly owes something to the religious paintings of Hieronymus Bosch, but the meaning of the tale Bruegel is telling is obscure. Previously owned by Emperor Rudolph II of Prague, the collector Fritz Mayer van den Bergh bought it in 1897 for next to nothing at an auction in Cologne.

Finally, until 15 January, you can see Bruegel's "The Suicide of Saul" (1562), on loan from the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, during the *Imperial Treasures* exhibition in Bruges' Groeninge Museum. This is one of Bruegel's smallest, busiest paintings, showing the Philistine army swarming across a mountainous landscape, while the King of Israel breathes his last on a rocky outcrop to one side. (IM)

A little divinity

Leuven's exhibition of chant manuscripts is beautiful to see – and hear

ANNA JENKINSON

As you approach the exhibition, the sound of Gregorian chants drifts through the corridors. By the time you enter the dimly lit room, the tone has been sublimely set for the display of ancient Flemish manuscripts. The *Divine Sounds* exhibition at Leuven's Museum M comprises a selection of beautifully illuminated chant manuscripts and psalm books dating as far back as the 11th century. The miniatures on their pages make them as much works of art as of music. Take for example a 13th-century psalter with music notation from Bruges' Great Seminary. The small-format book has a rich combination of text and music and exquisite illuminations in blue, red and gold leaf.

In fact, every piece in this exhibition is outstanding for one reason or another. The 1244 Antiphonary of Nazareth, for instance, is one of the oldest preserved manuscripts from a Flemish women's convent, in this case the Cistercian abbey of Nazareth in present-day Lier. A 12th-century manuscript from the Abbey of Sint-Baaf's in Ghent, containing life stories and offices for local saints, is the oldest source of chants in honour of the Ghent saints Livinus and Landoaldus.

And the 13th-century Cistercian Antiphonary, thought to originate from the Ghent Baudloo Abbey, is one of the best preserved Cistercian sources in Flanders; it lies open on a page displaying a letter A, illuminated in blue and red and with figures beautifully painted within the letter.

Gregorian chants, named after Pope Gregory the Great, who, according to legend, was the composer of the chants, were the backbone of daily life in the many abbeys, monasteries and other religious communities

in Flanders. The region played an important role in developing and disseminating the Gregorian chant repertoire. This aspect of Flanders' musical and artistic heritage remains, says the museum, "an unknown, hidden treasure." *Divine Sounds* aims to set that record straight.

The manuscripts also provide an insight into the musical activities and community life in the religious institutions where they were made. The Winter Antiphonary of Tongeren, copied at some point before 1387, contains chants in honour of local and regional saints, such as Maternus, the first bishop of Tongeren. In this way, the document shows that the mediaeval diocese of Liège lay at the crossroads of Romanic and Germanic cultural influences. In short, they are historical documents. As well as delving into history, the exhibition also seeks to bring the music into the 21st century. An audio-visual installation allows you hear the chants being performed by contemporary musical ensembles and to see the singers projected around you.♦

Until 27 November

Museum M

Vanderkelenstraat 28, Leuven

→ www.mleuven.be



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The Black Box Revelation raises the stakes with third album

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

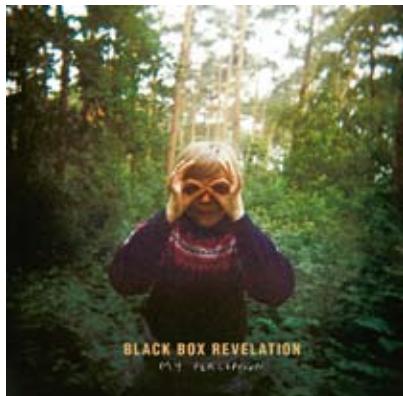
After touring America's west coast, The Black Box Revelation is heading this week towards Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Chicago and Cleveland, before ending its tour next week in New York City. But it isn't over: after a week of gigs in the Benelux, they'll be touring stateside again, the whole month of November.

Make hay while the sun shines! The Black Box Revelation is putting this advice to practise. With their just-released third album *My Perception*, the duo from Dilbeek is aiming high: conquering America. Is it youthful recklessness or do they stand a chance? Now, I'm no fortune-teller, but the signs look promising.

First and foremost, *My Perception* is a collection of fierce rock songs, in the vein of some famous guitar & drums twosomes, like The White Stripes or The Black Keys. Rooted in bluesy rhythms, inspired by classic rock – think The Rolling Stones or Neil Young – and played with zest: It is what makes American music fans tick these days. But as important is the support Black Box Revelation is receiving from its newly found American label Merovee Records, partially owned by talk show star David Letterman. The label is making a considerable investment to make the twosome a household name in United States.

Guitarist and singer Jan Paternoster and drummer Dries Van Dijck have come a long way since they finished second in Humo's Rock Rally, the region's most important rock contest, five years ago. They were, respectively, 17 and 15 years old.

But quite soon, they were putting all their energy into the band. Wasn't it like giving up their youth? Paternoster is clear: "No, it never felt that way."



In fact: "Compared to what's happening now, we were lazy back then," he tells me over the phone from on the road in the US. "These days, we have almost no time outside of the band. I can't even go on holiday with my girlfriend when I want to. So it's encouraging to get loads of good reactions on *My Perception*." (And still on 2010's album *Silver Threats*, which just went gold in Belgium.)

"Hardest to take for me are the countless hours we lose on tour," continues Paternoster (right in photo). "Especially this American tour is very arduous on that level. We drive 700 to 1,000 kilometres for each show." The band seems to ask a lot of sacrifices from both of them. "That's true." But, he adds firmly: "It's still worth it."

After recording two albums on their hometurf, Black Box Revelation travelled to Los Angeles to record *My Perception* with producer Alain Johannes. "It's good to be away from home," to record, says Paternoster, because "you know you're only there with one goal: to make the best album possible. It raises the stakes." And they succeeded with this top-notch album – an overall richer and more polished sound than on their previous two. But that's not all on the production, Paternoster clarifies. "It's our third album: It's logical we're more experienced. If you listen back to our first album, you hear a very naïve band. And we have played live a lot after the previous album, that also helps."

He concludes: "We deal quite easily with stress and outside pressure and don't care about other people's expectations. We're level-headed." Young, but wise.♦

The two Black Box Revelation shows in Brussels next month are sold out. Check their website for other nearby stops

→ www.blackboxrevelation.com

The music page



"We deal quite easily with outside pressure and don't care about other people's expectations"

New music

Maxon Blewitt

June '81 · Dim Dim Records

At the end of the 1990s and the first years of the following decade, Antwerpener Bjorn Eriksson was the guitarist of Zita Swoon. He left the band to start his own project, Maxon Blewitt, and quickly released two albums. But it took five years to come up with the third, *June '81*. The album, which releases towards the end of the month, is inspired by the vague, overexposed Polaroid of a naked woman Eriksson found when he was five, in 1981. He lets his imagination run wild and even travels, in his mind, to Mexicali. But the music is more American than Mexican – rootsy rock with a wailing pedal steel, alternately dreamy and steadily.

→ www.maxonblewitt.com

Hermitage

Schaduwlied · Dandy One Records

Singing in Dutch hasn't always been popular in Flanders, but the times they are a-changin': Bands as diverse as rockers Buurman and spacey popsters Senne Guns are choosing to sing in their mother tongue nowadays. Ghent trio Hermitage opted six years ago for Dutch, but it took them until now to release their first full-length album. Their chansons, written by main man David Van den Hende (aka Divan), have a strong melancholic twist, especially when the piano and the cello take the lead. But mourning about things lost doesn't exclude humour, and a few songs are really funny – although always with a dark side. A few times Hermitage shift to a higher gear, but they're at their best when more restrained.

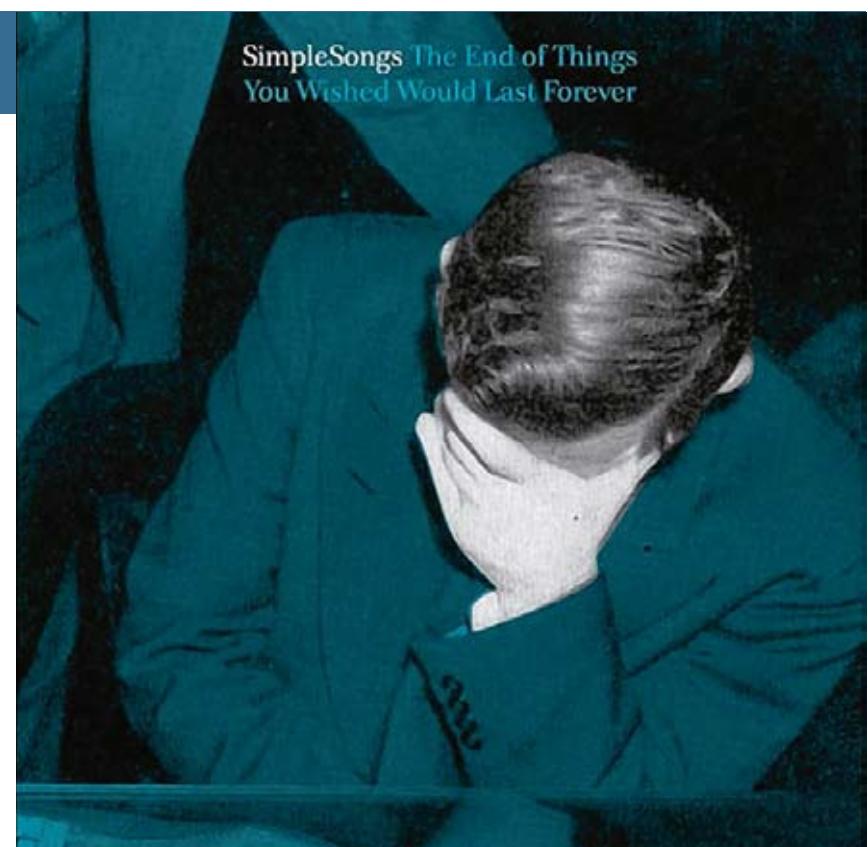
→ www.hermitageweb.be

Peter Bultink

Aux larmes citoyens · Parsifal

The highly underrated Orchestre Du Mouvement Perpetuel released two albums in the previous decade, with mostly francophone songs. On his first solo album, the Ostend bandleader Peter Bultink, doesn't change course. Although you can hear he's not singing in his mother tongue, it's not problematic. The high-octane songs are swinging and funky and beg you to sing along. Some of them are reminiscent of Flemish rock icon Arno, and, after hearing the album, it came as no surprise to read in the liner notes that Serge Feys, Arno's sidekick, has produced *Aux larmes citoyens*. The title, which translates as *To Tears Citizens*, is a pun on *Aux armes, citoyens* (*To arms, citizens*), famous words from the French national hymn *La Marseillaise*.

→ www.peterbultink.com



SimpleSongs

The End of Things You Wished Would Last Forever · I Have a Tiger Records

The eponymously titled full-length debut of SimpleSongs (artist name of Ken Veerman) stayed under the radar last year. Hopefully his new EP, with the melancholy title *The End of Things You Wished Would Last Forever*, won't meet the same fate. Though only 18 minutes, it's an 18 minutes way too good to be neglected. SimpleSongs elegantly navigates from trip-hop ("A Sentence for Life") to minimalist pianotronica ("Underground") to pop ("Cruelty from a Heart of Gold"). Most of the songs thrive on sadness, although there is some sparse light in Veerman's universe. He kept the most sad, and the best song, for last: the short piano lament "We're Hiding It Well". Simple, but far from simplistic, this EP.

→ www.simplesongs.be



BRUSSELS

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



SCHAERBEEK

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



WATERMAEL-BOITSFORT

Dansaert



MERQEN

BRUSSELS



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

WOLUWE SAINT-LAMBERT



ANDERLECHT

Two steps away from the House of Erasme, in a commercial district, this building located on 2 a 13ca proposes: commercial ground floor with workshop 143 m² - 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m² and 1 flat of 30 m² - 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m² and 1 flat of 30 m² - 1 apt 1 bedroom of 66 m²

SAINT-GILLES



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

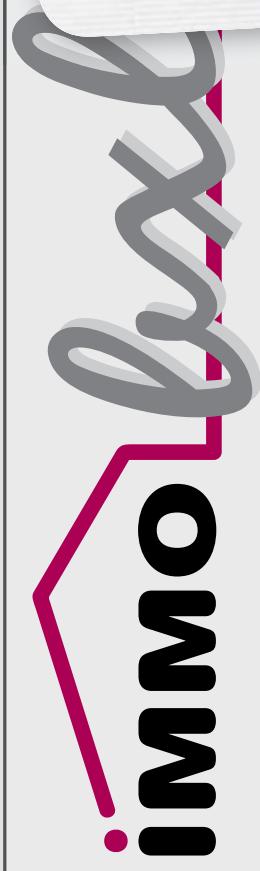
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As an expatriate, would you like to invest or save in Belgium? For the purchase of a property in Belgium, our experts will set out the purchasing and taxation process for you. They can also deal with your mortgage loan, your outstanding loan balance insurance and even your fire insurance. If you

are interested in simple savings plans or more complex schemes such as investments in mutual funds, the ING Expat experts will guide you in your new fiscal environment, on the basis of your investment profile. To find out what ING can do for you, don't hesitate to call us on +32 (0)2 464 66 64.



www.ing.be/expat



UCCLE

which has been totally renovated and reconstructed and was sold to the European Commission. There are different luxurious 1 bedroom apartments for sale with a splendid view over Brussels. All the apartments have been completely renovated and are equipped with a wooden floor, fully equipped kitchen (microwave oven / dishwasher / fridge / ...), videophone, complete bathroom with shower, new window frames with double glazing, security door, airconditioning.



BRUSSELS

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

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



ANDERLECHT

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



FOREST

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

The colour of the unconscious BLUE BIRD



IAN MUNDELL

Few film directors have achieved prominence as rapidly as Gust Van den Berghe. His graduation project from the RITS film school in Brussels, *Little Baby Jesus of Flandr*, was picked up by a producer and successfully submitted to the Cannes Film Festival in 2010. A year later, he had completed his second feature, *Blue Bird*, and that too screened in Cannes.

Now *Blue Bird* is set to make its national debut at the Flanders International Film Festival in Ghent, followed by screenings at Bozar in Brussels and venues around Flanders from 19 October. Both Van den Berghe's films are unusual. *Little Baby Jesus of Flandr* is based on a 1924 Christmas play by Felix Timmermans, in which a group of beggars have a religious encounter while travelling the

Flemish countryside in winter. Van den Berghe shot the story in striking black and white, with a cast of mentally disabled actors.

Blue Bird also has a Flemish literary source, a 1908 play by Maurice Maeterlinck about two children who go on a quest to find the blue bird of happiness. Once again Van den Berghe has made things challenging, shooting the film with non-professional actors in the West African state of Togo. His story is only loosely based on Maeterlinck's play. A small boy and his sister are playing with a blue bird, and when it wanders off, they set out to find it. On the way they meet other kids and their father, but also more fantastical characters, such as their dead grandparents, wood spirits and children waiting to be born. When they return

home, they have subtly changed. They have grown in a day.

In Togo, says Van den Berghe, Maeterlinck's ideas would not seem out of place. "I had to find people who believed in nature in the way that Maeterlinck believed in nature," the Flemish director explains. "I think he really believed in the souls of the forest and so on, and to make this film in Europe would have the wrong connotation. It might even sound as if I was mocking Maeterlinck, and that's definitely not what I wanted."

At the same time, Van den Berghe didn't want to present Africa in a clichéd, exotic way. His solution was to use a wide, narrow image format and filter the light so that everything appears blue. "It's like eyes that are half-closed," he says. "It's an in-between format, just

like the blue is not day, not night, not dream, not reality. It's an unconscious colour."

But it was the children who convinced him that Togo was the right place to film. "The moment you go to their level, you see a whole new society – of younger and older children, leaders and followers, and the games they play. They just hang out, wander the fields or go from house to house. We don't really have that strong community of children here."

Working with these very young actors was a challenge, and Van den Berghe concentrated on getting them to behave in a way that fit the story rather than speaking the lines that we read in the subtitles. "It was about them being themselves, with the language they know," he explains. "I think that's more honest

than making them say something they wouldn't say." Besides which, there is no word in the local language for the colour blue.♦

Blue Bird premiere Flanders

15 October, 20.00

Kinepolis
Ter Platen 12, Ghent

Blue Bird premiere Brussels

17 October, 20.00

Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23

Both screenings are introduced by the director

Mayumana

12-16 October

Koningin Elisabethzaal, Antwerp

PERFORMANCE

Elastic dancers move with feverish excitement while tireless drummers keep the pace. Mayumana is a multicultural dance and percussion troupe from Tel Aviv that will knock your socks off with its newest show, Momentum. Twirling bodies synchronised to the rhythm of ticking clocks and driving drums create a spellbinding performance you won't soon forget. The show has "an infectious beat and physical pyrotechnics to match," according to *The New York Times*. It's been five years since Mayumana last wowed audiences in Antwerp. Seize this opportunity to experience the Momentum. (Robyn Boyle)

www.momentumtheshow.be



MORE PERFORMANCE THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Kohkuma 7°Sud: Burkina Faso's Faso Danse Théâtre in an experimental piece incorporating dance, music and film, choreographed by Serge-Aimé Coulibaly
OCT 19 20.30 at Zuiderpershuis, Waalse Kaai 14
www.zuiderpershuis.be

Brussels

Guantanamo: Union Suspecte in a piece about Guantanamo, directed by Nabil Ben Yadir (in French with Dutch surtitles)
Until OCT 14 20.30 at KVS Bol, Lakensestraat 146
www.kvs.be

The Legend of Ndabaga: Rwandan dance and music show for all ages (surtitles in French, Dutch and English)
OCT 14 20.00 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23
www.bozar.be

Win tickets!

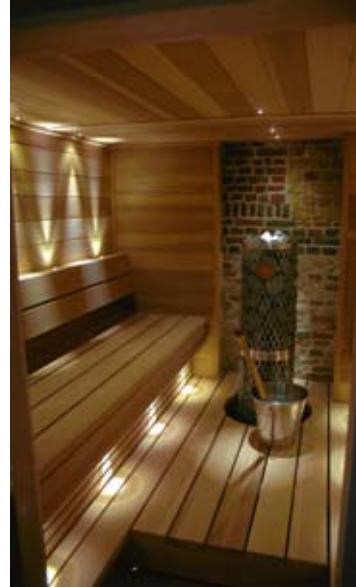
Flanders Today has tickets for Mayumana to give away. To win a pair for the show on Sunday, 16 October, send an email by noon on Friday, 14 October, to editorial@flanderstoday.eu with "Mayumana tickets" in the subject line. Winners will be notified by 14.00 the same day.

Agenda

ACTIVE

What better way to cosy up to autumn than by sweating the day away inside a sultry sauna? The organisers of the third edition of National Sauna Day aim to make everyone aware of the numerous health benefits of a sauna session. Let the dry heat melt your stress away so that you step back into the world feeling invigorated and relaxed. No less than 25 public saunas and wellness centres open their doors for free to the general public, including all the amenities: swimming pools, Jacuzzis, herbal baths, steam rooms, massages and beauty salons. All you have to do is print the voucher from the website and let the relaxation begin. If stripping down to your smalls with other people around is not your cup of tea, there are an additional 15 saunas available for private use that offer one hour free of charge on the condition that you book at least a two-hour session. (RB)

→ www.nationalesaunadag.be



National Sauna Day

20 October
Across Flanders

FAMILY

Brussels is flaunting its reputation as comic book capital of the world with a brand new paradise for comic enthusiasts. The Comic Strip Village is made up of three adjoining houses in the Grote Zavel. A stately bronze statue of Tintin and his faithful fox terrier Milou (Snowy) marks the entrance to the village, where comic devotees can cruise from bookstore to gallery to Comics Cafe, an American-style eatery serving up everything from chicken wings to bagels. Don't miss the grand opening on 15 October or the official re-inauguration of the Tintin statue on 21 October, when you can meet Nat Neujean, the sculptor of the statue commissioned by Hergé in 1975, plus Brussels mayor Freddy Thielemans and other surprise guests. (RB)

→ www.comicscafe.be



© Nat Neujean/B/Neuman/Sabam/Bagim 2011/Hergé/Moulinsart 2011

MORE ACTIVITIES THIS WEEK

Ghent

Culinary walk: A city tour with stops to sample authentic Ghent and East Flemish food and drink
Saturdays until DEC 17
www.vizit.be/gent

Turnhout

Night walk: A night walk in the pond district of Turnhout
OCT 15 19.30-22.00
www.turnhout.be

ALT ROCK

Elbow is one band that seems to feel quite at home in Flanders, enchanting audiences at numerous venues and festivals like Werchter and Pukkelpop. Playing together since they were teenagers, the quintet from Manchester (Guy Garvey, Richard Jupp, Pete Turner and brothers Craig and Mark Potter) has developed a uniquely innovative style that can best be described as musical poetry. Lead singer Garvey's deeply accented and versatile vocals can take most of the credit for the band's success. His soft, throaty sound and mesmerising stage presence awe even the most diverse of crowds, especially when backed by an orchestra.

MORE ROCK THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Bob Dylan & Mark Knopfler: Two rock legends together on one stage
OCT 19 at Sportpaleis
www.sportpaleis.be

Brussels

Crosby and Nash: Folk-rock pioneers David Crosby and Graham Nash, formerly of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, give an intimate concert
OCT 13 20.00 at Koninklijk Circus
www.cirque-royal.org

In addition to winning the prestigious Mercury Music Prize for their fourth album, *The Seldom Seen Kid*, all five of their albums have made the top 20 charts in the UK, and seven of their singles have been in the top 40. Their latest, *Build A Rocket Boys!*, proves that Elbow has what it takes to stay on top by producing consistently great songs. This tour, they share the stage with Australian supporting act Howling Bells, a dynamic group whose style falls under an inimitable genre combining melodic blues and country-goth. The show in Brussels is already sold out, but there are still tickets for the Antwerp stop. (RB)

→ www.sportpaleis.be

Ghent

Admiral Freebee: Flemish singer-songwriter Tom Van Laere performs his 'best of' guitar-heavy tunes with a hint of folk
OCT 12 19.00 at Handelsbeurs, Kouter 29
www.democracy.be

Elbow

6 November, 20.00
Lotto Arena, Antwerp



MUSIC FESTIVAL



The night before Halloween appropriately marks the third annual music festival Sinner's Day, featuring two stages of new wave, EBM, electro, synth-pop, post punk, darkwave and industrial music. The sinister festival has grown in popularity over the years thanks to appearances by such high-caliber groups as The Psychedelic Furs (also present this edition), Echo and the Bunnymen and The Nina Hagen Band. This year's additional stage is a huge bonus as the stellar line-up ensures to draw a crowd, including music legend Patti Smith & Band, The Cult, Recoil, The Mission, Front242 and much more. Get your tickets soon, as new wavers from all over Europe tend to flock to Hasselt for this 13-hour musical onslaught, followed by an after-party by Belgian Club Wave DJs until the wee morning hours. (RB)

→ www.sinnersday.be

Sinner's Day

30 October, noon to 1.00
Ethias Arena, Hasselt

MORE MUSIC FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

Flemish Brabant

Festival of Flanders - Flemish Brabant: The Brabant portion is a highlight of the region-wide festival of classical and new music, featuring Novecento, concerts of music from the 20th century, and Transit, concerts of new music
Until OCT 25 across Flemish Brabant but concentrated in Leuven
www.festivalvlaamsbrabant.be

Leuven

Appeltuinjazzfestival: Jazz festival featuring Tutu Puoane Quartet, Carlo Nardozza Quartet, De Beren Gieren and more
OCT 14-16 at De Appeltuin, Weldadighedsstraat 74
www.appeltuinjazz.be

Comic Strip Village

15 & 21 October opening events
Grote Zavel 8, Brussels

THE FAMILY EVENTS THIS WEEK

Flanders

Library Week: Annual open-library week with special activities and entertainment for the whole family
OCT 15-23 in libraries across Flanders
www.bibliotheek.be

Willebroek (Antwerp province)

Circus Hoetchatcha in August: Circus acts, humour and magic for kids ages five and up (in Dutch)
OCT 16-17 at CC De Ster, Torenstraat 6
www.hoetchatcha.be



PHOTOGRAPHY

Following in the footsteps of 18th-century dissident Alexander Radishchev, whose published criticism of his homeland earned him a one-way ticket to Siberia, Flemish photographer Wim Coudenys made the same trek from St Petersburg to Moscow. He and

Catholic University of Leuven (KUL) Professor Emmanuel Waegemans also documented their cultural-historical and photographic reflections of the country. But instead of banishment, their journey resulted in an insightful book and exhibition. Both grapple with questions

of Russia's imperial past, while Coudenys' photographic reflections contemplate the country's present state. The photos are on display in an exhibition of modern-day Russia as seen through an honest lens, with objectivity and a touch of humour. (RB)



© Wim Coudenys

A Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow

Until 29 October
KUL Library, Leuven

MORE PHOTOGRAPHY THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Lunchboxes: An Intimate Look at Belgian lunchboxes by Brussels photographer Kris Van Beek
Until OCT 29 at Gallerij Ingrid Deuss, Provinciestraat 11
www.krisvanbeek.com

Boechout

Arm België (Poor Belgium): A series of photographs by Flemish photographer Layla Aerts about poverty
Until DEC 14 at Sinks Café, Heuvelstraat 63a
www.sinks.be

Poperinge

Westhoek XL: Exhibition of photos of northern France and West Flanders by Flemish photographer Jan Yperman
Until OCT 30 at Hopmuseum, Gasthuisstraat 71
www.hopmuseum.be

CAFE SPOTLIGHT

JOHN REGA

Nüetnigenough

Lombardstraat 25, Brussels



For an establishment whose very name celebrates gluttony, the Brussels bar-restaurant Nüetnigenough is somehow best defined by what is not on the menu.

For a beer specialist place, the card has just a minimalist 30-something on offer. What you don't see is anything ordinary, apart from a few famous Trappist ales. The emphasis is on the care taken to weed out the obvious rather than simply padding the list.

Normal is not the norm for this downtown storefront framed in Art Nouveau woodwork. Especially not the name, which amuses Brussels dialect speakers while tying the tongues of tourists. Language aside, "The Greedy Glutton" is depicted, deceptively, on the front window with a cartoon of a flat-capped man ready to devour an array of steak, wine, beer and fries.

The "never enough" philosophy is not really about overindulgence, but perfectionism. The motto of "The Brussels brasserie for greedy gluttons and fine beer lovers," puts the emphasis on "good,

small dishes." Nüetnigenough has introduced an updated concept of the *eetcafé*, welcoming guests for a drink or a meal or something in-between.

The kitchen crafts a choice of Belgian classics, such as *stoemp* or Ghent-style meatballs in a wheat beer sauce, alongside some vegetarian offerings and an usual assortment of tapas, like spicy shrimp or terrine of rabbit cooked in gueuze.

Nüetnigenough appropriately offers around a dozen of the classically sour beers and their fruited variations, all from authentic producers in greater Brussels. Another 20 or so range across Belgium's other diverse styles, featuring artisanal brewers including Dupont and De Ranke, alongside their Trappist forebears. Service is amiable, even sociable, as the staff is eager to dispense suggestions and debate the merits of what's on offer. Their dissatisfaction with the everyday is our gain. There can never be too much of a good thing, but we can hardly ask more from Nüetnigenough.

→ www.nuetnigenough.be

The Best of Sarajevo

17-26 October

Antwerp, Mechelen, Turnhout

Serbian director Oleg Novkovic's unique *White White World* is set in contemporary Serbia but presented as classical Greek drama, as the dialogue within the love triangles and drunken violence are often sung rather than spoken. Recommended are *A Trip*, Slovenian director Nejc Gazvoda's road drama that finds three young best friends reliving their past before moving into adulthood, and *Morgen*, a beautifully realised film by Romania's Marian Crisan that finds a struggling farmer taking in a Turkish illegal who is making his way to family in Germany (pictured). (Lisa Bradshaw)

→ www.balkanfestival.be



MORE FILM THIS WEEK

Brussels

Dochouse: Monthly programme of international documentaries, with talks by the filmmakers
Until DEC 6 at Beursschouwburg, A. Ortsstraat 20
www.beursschouwburg.be

Ghent

International Film Festival of Flanders: The region's largest film festival, with hundreds of features, shorts, an exhibition devoted to Ingmar Bergman, film music concerts and the World Soundtrack Awards
Until OCT 22 across Ghent
www.filmfestival.be

bite

ROBYN BOYLE

't Gulden Vlies ★★★

A friend and I show up in the centre of Bruges rather late on a Friday evening. Hungry, but with no recommendation to go on, we wander the maze-like streets around the Burg. Too plain, too fancy, too bright, too busy.

We start to get the sinking feeling that we might have to resort to fries and call it a night. But then it appears: A restaurant I could have easily made up in my mind.

Rather inconspicuous from the outside, 't Gulden Vlies (The Order of the Golden Fleece, a knighthood established in Bruges in 1430) is housed in a super cosy townhouse complete with a traditional Flemish step-gabled façade and cottage pane windows. One peek inside reveals an intimate space with no more than 10 wooden tables and, for decoration, some antique radios and an impressive collection of corks.

The lady of the house, Caroline Verbruggen, gives us a very warm welcome straight away. Her husband and chef Geert Bruggeman runs the kitchen, a one-man show for the past 30 years.

We slide into a corner seat and order two aperitifs: a glass of cava and a bottle of tart Cantillon Gueuze. With these come tasty little wheat crackers with curried tuna mousse to still our hunger while we peruse the menu. It offers a mixture of Flemish classics with a French touch. The trio of three-course menus grabs our attention.

I don't hesitate to order the Suggestion Menu at €29, a real gourmet line-up with a choice between salmon tartare or snails, haddock fillet or stuffed guinea fowl and a panna cotta dessert. My dining companion plumps for the Beer Menu at €19.50 with its choice between North Sea fish soup or cheese and beer croquettes, salmon fillet or Flemish beef stew, spiced rice pudding or chocolate mousse.

Contact Bite at flandersbite@gmail.com

She's glad she ordered the croquettes, two crunchy rolls of melted Herve cheese and BAB 401 beer, a hoppy tripel from Bruges. Next to all this richness is a light salad with a sweet, fruity Liège syrup dressing.

My first course is a work of art: plump garden snails, a thin, crispy pastry balancing on top and a smattering of apple-onion-curry confit. It's a successful combination of contrasting soft and crispy textures with complementary sweet and spicy flavours.

In between courses, we order a half-litre of dry white wine, in anticipation of our poultry and fish mains. It's a fine house wine, crisp and fruity.

My friend's main, fillet of salmon, is perfectly baked with the skin on and perched atop a heap of tangy sorrel potato puree with bits of bacon. This all is surrounded by a moat of lemon butter sauce.

Mine is warm, autumny comfort food: guinea fowl stuffed with tender oyster mushrooms. The moist bird comes served with nutty, dark brown truffle juice. The entire dish evokes thoughts of the woods and falling leaves. And just when I think it can't get any better, I taste the side of camembert mash: lumpy potatoes with a golden bubbly cheese topping. Together with the oven-roasted broccoli, cauliflower and carrots, the plate is simply divine.

Because the whole dining experience is so pleasantly unhurried, we ask to take a small break before they bring on the desserts. And that's how we end up drinking *cafetière* coffee (with its little cookies and chocolates) and eating decadently rich chocolate mousse and creamy almond panna cotta at close to midnight. "No worries," Caroline assures us. "We're open until 2.00."

→ www.tguldenvliest.be



➡ Mallebergplaats 17, Bruges; 050.33.47.09
🕒 Wed-Sun 19.00-2.00
💶 Menus: €16-€30
👉 Rich, honest cooking in a warm and romantic atmosphere

TALKING DUTCH

IJ!

To compound or not to compound. It seems I'm not the only one who's having fun. Leah Barrios "had to chuckle," she writes, "because I have what I call the Dutch disease".

I wrote about the "English disease" last week, the tendency among Dutch speakers not to compound when they should – as in *computerscherm*, computer screen, not *computer scherm*. Leah does it backwards. "Now, when writing in English, I tend to create many new compound words, a bad habit picked up from learning a second language." She's not alone. Taylor Chambres found his spell check – or is it spellcheck? – working overtime after returning to the US from an 18-year stay in Antwerp. "Without realizing it," he writes, "I unconsciously began to compound English nouns. Looked fine to me!" He even went as far as disagreeing with the computer and turned to the dictionary. "I was really startled to find that horsetrainer, bikerider and cargarage were not legitimate English words." OK, *tijd voor iets anders*. Time for something different. But Leah has another concern. She asks about the word *leider*, leader, and how some people say: "met een lange e?" "I tried asking what it meant," says Leah, "but the explanation did not make sense."

Let me have a try, then. First, they



don't ask if the word has a long "e", but if it has a long "ij", pronounced a bit like "eye". (Attention: "ij" in words like *moeilijk*, difficult, or *feestelijk*, festive, has a neutral sound.)

It's a question about spelling. The "ij" and "ei" sounds in Dutch are identical. The first is identified as lang, long, and the second as kort, short. (Some people also say *gestipte ij*, dotted ij.) It is confusing, I agree, also because two words that sound exactly the same can have different meanings. *Leider* comes from *leiden*, to lead. *Lijder* comes from *lijden*, to suffer. *Een lijder*, then, means someone who suffers.

The "ij" is fairly young. It used to go through life as "ii" – until 1804, when they decided that it could be easily confused with "uu", since the letter i didn't always have its signature dot.

Officially, it isn't a letter in itself, even though it is often seen that way. In handwriting (not hand writing?), most people treat it as one. Its capital is IJ, not Ij. The 25th letter of the Dutch alphabet is y, *de Griekse ij*, the Greek ij, but only appears in loanwords (or loan words?), like baby. Kids end the alphabet by singing "iks, ij, zet."

You could even say that it's something of a compound.

Talking Dutch is going digital. Get in touch on Twitter at @talkingdutch

PHILIP EBELS

THE LAST WORD . . .

Tough at the top

"Voilà, on foot in the pouring rain from 16 [his office] to Lambermont [his residence]. Six hellish days. Now two hours sleep and off to Radio 1."

Prime minister Yves Leterme after the Dexia deal, on Twitter

Take five, guys

"There won't be a fifth album in 2012. That'll only come after we've all have time for some fresh air."

The irrepressible Bart Peeters is to take some time away from making music

Apples above

"Steve Jobs is dead. The modernisation of Heaven can begin."

Flemish comedian Geert Hoste

Easy delivery

"I had a dialogue coach, but I was still nervous when I spoke my first lines. I was expecting comments, but nobody said anything. Then all the stress left me, and I could enjoy myself."

Flemish actress Hilde Heijnen is acting in a new BBC drama, *Parade's End*, now filming in Nieuwpoort

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #202

Feature

Fifty years ago this winter, Bobbejaanland opened to the delight of a 1960s crowd of Flemings eager to try out the new, modern amusement park opened by the local singing cowboy, who rode his horse through the villages and sang atop café tables. Who was this Bobbejaan anyway?

Living

I'll bet when you first heard of the College of Europe, the university of European studies, you figured it was in Brussels, right? But, no, it's in Bruges. And the other one is in Poland. How exactly did that happen – and how does this hugely international, modern institution fit into little Bruges' lifestyle?

Arts

It's the event we've all been waiting for... the world premiere of the new *Tintin* movie by Steven Spielberg is next week in Brussels. Besides seeing the red carpet and the celebs, perhaps you'd be interested in knowing how the Flemish influenced the development of the intrepid cartoon reporter and about the movies they've already made about him