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Retelling the story

Tervuren's Africa Museum throws open the cellar doors before closing for a revamp and a reconsider of its colonial past

EMMA PORTIER DAVIS

It's at least as famous for what it doesn't tell about the Congo as for what it does. To remedy that, the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, just outside of Brussels, will close its doors next July for a three-year renovation. The end goal: to tell the full story of this large, central African nation rather than an ennobled take on Belgium's days as a colonial power. The museum, housed in a palatial building overlooking Tervuren park, was built by King Leopold II to host a 1897 exposition of African curia, showcasing the worthiness

of his forays into the "dark continent" to his people. That's if they weren't already convinced by the wealth amassed through the country's exploitation of Congo's Katanga mines, not to mention its rich rubber resources. About 100 years later and the colonial days far behind, the African Museum still seemed to stand as a monument to Belgium's colonial past and found itself much maligned for its apparent one-sided tale of the Congo. It is seen as highlighting Belgium's halcyon days and ignoring its brutal handling of the natives, which resulted in the estimated death

of as many as 10 million Congolese. The museum has staged a new exhibition in response to what director Guido Gryseels often describes as a new wave of consciousness about Belgium's role in the Congo. But the renovations will take it a step further: The museum will tell a different story of Africa. "Here, we see more of a glorification of the colonial days, and we don't want to do that any longer," explains Sandra Eelen, exhibition designer at the museum. "We want to get rid of the museum's colonial stamp."

Contextualisation

It's a buzzword at the museum when it comes to talk of the renovations. Contextualisation, in practical terms, is about telling the Congolese side of the story. On one wall of a corridor adjoining some of the museum's 20 or so rooms of treasures from the colony, are the names of the Belgians who died there. "Where are the names of the Congolese who died?" Eelen asks. "There were millions; although no one knows exactly how many."

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Pukkelpop makes decision on reimbursements

Festival goers who were affected by the storm at Pukkelpop in Limburg in August can be partially reimbursed for their tickets. Last week the festival management said it would issue food and drink coupons – used on the festival grounds – over the next three years to customers who were in possession of day- or combination tickets when the festival had to be cancelled following the storm in which four people died and many more were injured.

Any other reimbursement model would have bankrupted the festival, said Pukkelpop director Chokri Mahassine. The alternative would have been to pay nothing at all, arguing force majeure. According to Mahassine, Pukkelpop's €3 million in assets is earmarked to pay outstanding bills from this year and to ensure the survival of the festival in the future.

More than 60% of ticket holders said they were happy with the offer made if it meant the survival of the festival.♦



No bail-out for city councils on Dexia losses

Collapse of Municipal Holding will cost Flanders €255 million, says Muyters

ALAN HOPE

The Flemish government will not compensate municipalities in Flanders that suffer losses as a result of the problems of the Municipal Holding (GH), minister-president Kris Peeters said last week. GH is facing liquidation as a result of the collapse of Dexia bank.

In contrast, the Brussels Region decided to treat the Dexia losses by its 19 municipalities as a case of *force majeure*. Councils that fail to meet their budgetary targets as a result of the losses would not be penalised in their grants from the region, minister-president Charles Picqué said. At the same time, councils will be able to take out a total of €26 million in new loans at "very favourable

rates". Writing off the councils' losses will cost the capital region about €8 million.

Peeters made it clear that the situation in Flanders is quite different – the sums involved, for one thing, are much larger. In addition, the provinces and municipalities sat for years in GH as shareholders, accepting the dividends that came along. The Flemish Region did not reap the benefits then, and will not be picking up the check now.

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FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE



Hedd Wyn

The Passchendaele Society, which managed the memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917, has launched an appeal to raise money for a memorial to the men of Wales who died at the Battle of Passchendaele, as well as elsewhere during the conflict. Hedd Wyn has become the most prominent representative of the many Welshmen who volunteered for the First World War and lost their lives in the fields of Flanders.

Hedd Wyn, which means "blessed peace," was the pen name of Welsh poet Ellis Humphrey Evans, born in Trawsfynydd, North Wales, in 1887. The son of sheep farmers, he was a poet from an early age, writing in the Welsh language and winning several competitions.

He volunteered for the war in February of 1917, but returned to Wales on leave to help with the farming. During that time he wrote what is considered his masterpiece, *Yr Arwr (The Hero)*.

Evans was killed on 31 July, 1917 in the battle of Pilkem Ridge, near Ypres. On 6 September, he was elected, under the name of Fleur de Lis, as chief bard at the National Eisteddfod, the Welsh-language poetry competition. When Fleur de Lis was called on to accept the award, no-one

rose, and it was announced that the winner had in fact died on the battlefield two months earlier.

The Battle of Passchendaele took place from July to November 1917 in atrocious conditions that have become symbolic of trench warfare: constant rain, thick mud, bloody slaughter and indeterminate goals. Dead and wounded by the end of the battle came to about half a million: 300,000 on the Allied side and 200,000 on the German side.

Another poet, the Irishman Francis Ledwidge, also died at Passchendaele. One of the German casualties, injured in a British gas attack, was the 28-year-old Adolf Hitler.

The Irish and the Scots both have their own memorial to the fallen of the battles of the Ypres Salient, but the Welsh do not. Erwin Ureel, secretary of the Passchendaele Society, told the BBC: "This was something we had been thinking of for a number of years; we wanted to do something for the Welshmen".

If the appeal is successful, the Welsh monument will be inaugurated in Langemark in 2017, on the anniversary of the battle. There you will already find a plaque to the memory of Hedd Wyn.

FLANDERS TODAY

Flanders Today, a free weekly English-language newspaper, is an initiative of the Flemish Region and is financially supported by the Flemish authorities.



The logo and the name Flanders Today belong to the Flemish Region (Benelux Beeldmerk nr 815.088). The editorial team of Flanders Today has full editorial autonomy regarding the content of the newspaper and is responsible for all content, as stipulated in the agreement between Corelio Publishing and the Flemish authorities.

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FLANDERS TODAY
OCTOBER 26, 2011

News in brief

The three municipal councils controlling the Hazodi police zone (Hasselt, Zonhoven and Diepenbeek) last week decided to set aside €200,000 for a campaign to clean up the image of the police force after allegations of financial mismanagement and harassment. "The few rotten apples who remain must be removed urgently," Hasselt mayor Hilde Claes told a special meeting of the three councils.

Schoolchildren in the fourth year of primary school are to be examined on their ability to navigate street traffic safely while walking, under a new exam developed by the Catholic University of Leuven together with the Flemish Traffic Science Foundation. The children will be presented with a variety of common traffic situations on a prepared street itinerary, and tested to see if they are able to react safely.

→ www.voetgangersexamen.be

The first book ever to be printed in Flanders, the *Speculum conversionis peccatorum* ("A mirror on the conversion of sinners"), dating from 1473, has been restored and digitised by a private sponsor, and is now available to consult online. The book is a moral lesson stressing the value of reading, written by the Carthusian monk Dionysius van Rijckel and printed in Aalst by Dirk Martens.

→ <http://tinyurl.com/peccatorum>

A new rush-hour lane on the E313 in the direction of the Netherlands is a success, cutting 20 to 30 minutes from travelling time for motorists using the Kennedy tunnel, according to the motoring organisation VAB. The lane, an initiative by Flemish mobility minister Hilde Crevits and

normally used as the hard shoulder, comes into use at peak hours to relieve congestion. VAB has now submitted a suggestion to extend the idea to other black-spots, including the E40 from Groot-Bijgaarden to Aalst, the E314 from Leuven to Aarschot and the E19 from Antwerp to St-Job.

Leuven sensation Selah Sue was last week awarded the Constantin Prize in Paris, given to "the revelation of the year" among artists producing albums in France. The 22-year-old's debut album was produced by the French independent label Because Music and has sold more than 100,000 copies in France, as well as 60,000 in Belgium.

The most-caressed statue in Brussels, the relief image of Everard 't Serclaes on the Grote Markt, has been removed from its place for restoration by the Royal Institute for Artistic Heritage. The work by Julien Dillens from 1902 is said to bring good luck to those who stroke the arm, which as a result is suffering from corrosion. Its place will be taken by a replica. 't Serclaes was a 14th century nobleman who helped defend Brussels against an attack by the Flemish duke Lodewijk van Male.

The University of Ghent last week awarded an honorary doctorate to the Moroccan novelist and essayist Tahar Ben Jelloun for his work in fighting racism and discrimination and his pleas for peace and dialogue. Ben Jelloun, formerly a philosophy teacher who wrote for children, now lives in France. The award will be handed over next month at a conference in Ghent against racism.

The mysterious stranger who helped rescue Dutch Pukkelpop fan Eva van Driel when she was trapped under a fallen scaffolding has been identified as 16-year-old Bex Verheyen from Laakdal, Antwerp province. "He saved my life, but because everything happened so fast I couldn't see who he was," Eva said. Bex was identified after Eva launched an appeal in the Flemish media. "I only did what I had to do," Bex said.

The Flemish Youth Council and the socialist trade union ABVV have reacted angrily to a proposal by the Belgian Institute for Road Safety (BIVV) to ban young drivers between 18 and 24 from driving at night. "Pure discrimination," an ABVV statement said. The proposal is based on figures showing that the age group is five times more likely to be involved in an accident than older drivers. "The alternatives like night trains, buses and taxis are either non-existent, insufficient or too expensive for young people," commented Katrien Crispeyn of the youth council. "If there are no alternatives, young people are being exposed to a virtual curfew."

The Flemish journalists' union VVJ is considering a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights over the way its members were treated during the trial of triple murderer Ronald Janssen in Tongeren. Staff of the public broadcaster VRT were excluded from the courtroom by the presiding judge after news broadcasts showed photos of a search of Janssen's house, which had been displayed in open court. Access to press tribunes was severely restricted, and the press was ordered not to publish photos or drawings of Janssen taken or made during the proceedings.

OFFSIDE

Bright eyed and bushy tailed

Recent sightings include a seal, a wild boar and an American mink, but in general, the mammal population of Flanders is made up mainly of the more prosaic squirrel, the hedgehog and the dwarf bat. That's the conclusion of a census of mammals recently organised by the nature conservancy organisation Natuurpunt.

Natuurpunt asked volunteers across Flanders to keep an eye out for 13 mammalian species on the weekend of 15 and 16 October. By Monday morning, they had received reports of 850 sightings of 38 species in 450 different locations. The humble rabbit is the most common wild mammal sighted simply because rabbits live in social groups, but 131 squirrels were seen in 81 different places. Hedgehogs came second (75 in 55 places) and the tiny bat known as the common pipistrelle was third with 66 sightings in 43 locations.

Natuurpunt isn't surprised the squirrel comes top: it commonly takes up residence in gardens and is active during daylight hours, both of which make it easy to spot, the organisation explained. It is also rapidly becoming fearless when faced with humans, partly because of our limited tree-climbing abilities. Gardens are also an important habitat for hedgehogs, where they happily feed on slugs to the delight of gardeners. And bats often move into barns, church towers and even attics. Interestingly, as well as the common red squirrel



(*Sciurus vulgaris*), spotters have also recorded several sightings of a distant relative, the Siberian chipmunk (*Tamias sibiricus*), a much more rare variety. It's been spotted four times in recent days in two places in West Flanders, as well as two locations in Brussels. The European beaver was seen five times recently in East Flanders and Flemish Brabant. Another rarity, the hazel dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) was sighted twice in Limburg, when in fact it should by now have gone into hibernation. The weekend census is a regular event for Natuurpunt, which also tracks reptiles and amphibians, butterflies and birds. Reporting the sightings of any of these, however, can be done at any time via the website www.waarnemingen.be.

ALAN HOPE

© François Van Bawie/Naturpunt

Listen up!

Humans could turn out to have better hearing than cats, after research at KU Leuven showed macaque monkeys, our near relatives, were able to separate frequencies much better than other animals



Government faces choice: slash spending or new debt

continued from page 1

Philippe Muyters, Flanders' budget minister, said the plan to dismantle GH would cost the region €285 million. The region's problem now, he told VRT radio, was to figure out where the money will come from. Flanders has €230 million in its budget for 2012 for new policy spending and a €50 million buffer. The decision, Muyters said, comes down to either cuts in spending or new debt. "We'd rather not have extra debt," he said.

Last week GH was faced with bankruptcy as loans became due that could not be covered. The holding won a few days' grace, and the decision has now been taken that it will undergo what Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters referred to as "controlled liquidation". Under the terms of the agreement reached at the weekend, the federal government, together with the three regions, will cover the €800 to €900 million in GH debts that are not covered by assets.

The three regions pick up half of that sum, with Flanders paying the

largest part at €225 million, and Brussels responsible for €67.5 million. In addition, the regions will write off a total of €120 million in commercial paper they hold on their own behalf. The liquidity of the Holding will be guaranteed by Dexia until 7 December. One effect of opting for a liquidation rather than bankruptcy is that the directors of the holding are not then vulnerable to a legal inquiry into their responsibility for the crisis. Muyters stressed that this was not, however, the reason for the decision and said that there will be an opportunity to question the people involved during hearings in the Flemish parliament into the whole affair. That procedure follows the failure of a proposal to set up an investigative committee in the federal parliament into the Dexia-GH affair, which was voted down by the government parties.

Former prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene, the outgoing chairman of Dexia, will appear at the Flemish parliament hearings to explain his role in the bank's collapse.♦



Philippe Muyters: "We'd rather not have extra debt"

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



26.6%
 of Flanders is built-up area, with 11.7% residential construction. Outside of Brussels, Drogenbos in Flemish Brabant is the most built-up municipality, with 83.7%

€400,000
 paid by the city council of Ostend for a work by the conceptual artist Arne Quinze, consisting of 10 red metal plates. A work in wood by Quinze currently stands outside the Flemish parliament in Brussels

40,944
 speeding motorists this year caught by a single camera, which stands on the Jan Van Rijswijkstraat in Antwerp – an average of five per hour

€50,000
 granted by Pascal Smet, Flemish minister for equal opportunities, to ensure the survival of the Belgian Gay Pride festival, which had been under threat of cancellation for lack of funds

1.6kg
 maximum weight of a handbag to avoid back pain, according to a survey carried out by the socialist women's movement Viva among 4,300 women in Flanders

Life sentence for triple killer

Ronald Janssen, the 40-year-old teacher from Loksbergen, Limburg province, was last week found guilty by a court in Tongeren of nine charges relating to the murders of three young people in 2007 and 2011. A last-minute attempt by his defence counsel to plead against premeditation and reduce the sentence failed: Janssen was found guilty of murder in the first degree and given three life sentences. The month-long trial was marked on several occasions by the emotional reactions of members of the families of the victims to statements made under questioning by Janssen, who confessed to the murder of 18-year-old Annick Van Uytself in 2007 and to the shooting deaths of his neighbour Shana Appeltans, 18, and her 22-year-

old boyfriend Kevin Paulus just after midnight in the first hours of 2 January, 2011. Janssen denied premeditation, although he took loaded guns to speak to Paulus, and he claimed that Van Uytself had gone home with him willingly. The jury believed none of his protest and returned the verdict in a short time. The next day, deliberations on the sentence were similarly rapid. Police said they were opening up a series of unsolved murder cases to see if there might be a connection to Janssen. Jef Vermaessen, the lawyer for the Van Uytself family, said during the trial that Janssen's methods, preparation and skill in covering up Annick's murder suggested it may not have been the first time he had killed.♦

Eco cabs unveiled

Brussels mobility minister Brigitte Grouwels last week welcomed two new vehicles to Brussels' taxi fleet. But these are no ordinary taxis: the papers lie ready every morning, the driver adheres to a strict dress code and drives in a defensive and eco-friendly way, and, most importantly, the car itself produces on average 30% less carbon dioxide than the ordinary taxi. The two vehicles, Toyota Prius models ordered by a company called Eco Taxi, are part of a shipment of 12 to be delivered to the Brussels taxi fleet shortly. (All are equipped to produce less carbon dioxide, but the valet-type service offered by Eco Taxi is up to the driver.)

The use of hybrid taxis fits into the Brussels region's vision for mobility in the city, Grouwels' spokesman explained. A functioning, affordable taxi system is an incentive to families not to buy a second car and sometimes leave the first car at home. The fact that the taxis might also play their part in reducing pollution is an added advantage.

"A company like Eco Taxi can help us achieve our ultimate aim," Grouwels said. "It deserves my full support, and I hope other taxi companies in Brussels follow this example."♦

Thousands of students "work for change"

More than 10,000 school students in the fifth and sixth years of secondary school last week took part in Zuiddag (South Day), in which each of them worked for a day in a business, non-profit or agency, with their wages for the day (a flat sum of €40) being sent to a fund to help out their contemporaries in Tanzania. The day saw some rapid career rises. One young person, standing in for Senate chair Sabine De Bethune, welcomed a Tanzanian delegation to the parliament. Six students were made members of the Flemish parliament for a day and were allowed to air their

thoughts on a new language policy proposal. One lucky girl was able to step into the shoes of environment minister Joke Schauvliege to answer a question from the floor.

The town of Heusden-Zolder put 12 school kids to work, while Tibault Mortier and Stefanie Engelen were allowed jointly to become trainers for the day of football club KVC Westerlo. In the town of Sint-Niklaas, both the mayor and his aldermen handed over their offices for the day to a group of students.

In Leuven, Bérénice Coussement, a fifth-year student of science and maths, was allowed to take over from university rector Mark Waer, himself a respected scientist. The university also found space for librarians, an economics lecturer and the house photographer (although the photo here



Flemish and Tanzanian students on Zuiddag in Leuven

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

Politicians and bankers

Are politicians bankers? Well, if they are, they are not very good ones. This we learn from the Dexia saga, in which politicians were involved at every stage.

In a way, this is logical. Gemeentekrediet, the deposit bank from which Dexia originates, was founded by a liberal politician in the 19th century. It provided loans (*krediet*) to the municipalities (*gemeenten*), which other banks would not give them. The funding came from the public, who took their savings to Gemeentekrediet. The sole shareholders were the municipalities; the board was made up by their representatives.

By the end of the 20th century, banking had changed a great deal. But the political representatives were still there, at Dexia Bank Belgium and the Communal Holding, its shareholder. For the traditional parties (Christian-democrats, socialists, liberals), a place at the Dexia board became something with which they could buy support. Knowledge of banking was not required, it was used as a reward, as a trade-off or as a consolation prize.

Looking back, we see names such as Patrick Janssens (mayor of Antwerp), Karel De Gucht (European commissioner), Frank Beke (former mayor of Ghent) and Wivina Demeester (former minister). De Gucht recently declared that he took his tasks at Dexia very seriously and even warned about some dodgy take-overs. But he was often told: "What does someone who is not a banker know about this?"

At the Communal Holding, a remnant of Gemeentekrediet's original shareholder structure, mis-management was rife. The board members were only interested in the profits, used to boost their communes' budgets. For this reason they even agreed to buy more Dexia shares using money loaned... by Dexia. "We only did what the federal government asked us to do," said Jef Gabriëls, former mayor of Genk, last week. "No-one saw anything wrong with it at the time".

So where has this led us? The Belgian-French Dexia no longer exists, Dexia Bank Belgium has become a state-owned bank, and the Communal Holding has been liquidated rather than declared bankrupt. Parties such as Groen! and N-VA, who never were involved in any of this, demand a parliamentary commission to look into everyone's responsibility. But the traditional parties, all of them implicated in some way, stave this off.

Meanwhile, the communes and federal and regional governments have found an agreement on who will foot the Communal Holding bill. And guess who will? The taxpayers, of course. Let's hope they are represented well.

“We came at the right moment”

China's latest buzzwords are music to the ears of Flemish business on economic mission

ANJA OTTE

Princess Mathilde's timeless beauty and impeccable outfits are enough to turn heads anywhere, but this is especially true for royal-crazy China, where the presence of the princess and her spouse, crown prince Filip, opened doors for more than 400 Belgian business people during an economic mission last week.

The People's Republic of China is the world's fastest-growing economy. This is good news for Flanders, as it hopes to export its products and technologies to the land of the Great Wall. Take the Conference, a Flemish delicacy that is new to the Chinese market and the first foreign-grown pear allowed on the Chinese mainland. The large pears can be preserved quite well, making them fit to survive a five-week boat transport. Some 400 million people on the Chinese east coast can expect to find them in local supermarkets soon.

Green power

An important focus point of the mission was environmental technology. The ways in which China's economic progress has resulted in major environmental problems became very concrete, when prince Filip had to cancel a trip to Tianjin because of smog. "I could never live here, but neither can the Chinese," commented Gwen Declerck of economic daily *De Tijd* in her blog on the China mission. "Pollution kills 1.3 million inhabitants of Chinese cities every year." Chinese authorities are starting to invest in green technologies – of the kind in which Flanders excels.

"Belgian eco solutions leading the way" the Federation of Enterprises in Belgium aptly let some 2.5 million readers of the English edition of the Chinese weekly *The Economic Observer* know in an eight-page supplement. One of the featured companies was Waterleau, based in Herent, Flemish Brabant, which built an incinerator in Zhangjiagang, Jiangsu province. The incinerator burns 300,000 tonnes of household waste, producing 18 megawatt of electricity. This waste-to-energy model has resulted in three new contracts with other cities, which were signed during the mission and which will in the future provide 250,000 Chinese families with "green power".

Supplier base

"Why not innovate together, rather than act as competitors?" assert Peter Demuynck and Bert Mons of the technology federation Agoria in a statement. "In cooperating with China we can gain time in innovation processes because we can engage more engineers than we can find here. This way we also get access to one of the largest markets in world."

Automotive is one of the areas where such a cooperation is possible. This industry represents 10% of Belgium's industrial employment and 10% of the country's total exports. Flanders is not only home to large assembly plants (Volvo, Ford) but also to an abundance of suppliers with often leading-edge technology.

And then there is – of course – Geely, the Chinese holding which acquired Volvo in 2010. Volvo Cars Ghent is Flanders' largest passenger car plant, with a total staff of over 4,000 and an annual output of more than 200,000 cars. No wonder Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, who had to cancel part of his trip because of the events surrounding the Dexia situation, arrived in time to meet Li Shufu, Geely's chairman.

The Flemish government's efforts with Volvo are extensive. It guaranteed a five-year loan worth €198 million to invest in new models to be built in Ghent and provided €2 million strategic training aid in 2010. Indirectly, the Flemish Region also supports Volvo through the innovation agency IWT and the competence centre Flanders' DRIVE, experts in electric and light weight vehicles. In a meeting with Peeters and prince Filip, Geely's Li Shufu confirmed an interest in this country's supplier base and to continue discussing mutual opportunities.

Power train

"The Chinese are very ambitious: 'power train', 'lightweight' and 'electrification' are the buzzwords," says Bert Mons of Agoria Automotive. "This is music to the ears of the [local] companies on this mission. We came at the right moment. Belgian know-how can really take off here."

Punch Powertrain, based in Sint-Truiden, is a success story in this respect. A producer of CVT transmissions and control units and CVT pulleys for passenger cars, it opened a new production line in its Nanjing plant, an investment of €8.5 million. In the Limburg headquarters, some 100 people are responsible for all of Punch Powertrain's R&D. In China, the company, which has clients worldwide, employs 260 people in production.

On her blog, Declerck also recounts the downside of business in China. "When the party is almost over, and the business people are slightly intoxicated, the sad stories come out," she writes. For this reason, the mission's programme also included a seminar on intellectual property rights.♦



© Eric Lainard/BELGA

From left: Brussels minister of international trade Benoît Cexhe, Brussels minister of international relations Jean-Luc Vanraes (red tie), prince Filip, Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters and federal minister of foreign affairs Steven Vanackere arrive for a meeting with the vice president of the People's Republic of China last week during the economic mission

Same neighbours but a new house

Flemish-Dutch culture house deBuren is staying put but getting a make-over

ALAN HOPE

Flemish-Dutch culture house deBuren will continue its nomadic existence for at least another year. Plans for new premises in the centre of Brussels have been shelved; instead, the organisation's old home is to be thoroughly renovated with money from the Flemish government, while DeBuren continues to camp out in temporary premises.

DeBuren (which means "the neighbours") was set up in 2004 in the heart of Brussels as a centre for the language and culture that Flanders and the Netherlands share. The operation is funded by the Flemish and the Dutch foreign and culture ministries, with Flanders responsible for accommodating the space.

In 2006, deBuren presented plans for a new centre, which would extend its existing premises at the corner of the Leopoldstraat and the Prinsenstraat, directly neighbouring the Muntshouwburg. The new design would have included exhibition space, meeting rooms, a reading room and a state-of-the-art auditorium.

The planning permit, applied for in 2007, has not yet been approved. Flemish minister of culture Joke Schauvliege recently told the Flemish parliament: "The problem is the city's urban planning regulations, which require a certain number of

residential units to be included in any office construction project. That requirement is difficult to meet within the concept."

Schauvliege's office considers it unlikely that a permit will ever be granted. "For that reason," she said, "we think it better to look for other solutions than to keep waiting."

DeBuren vacated its original premises in 2009 for offices close by in the Prinsenstraat. In just over a week, it will move to a new space on the nearby Emile Jacqmainlaan, explained one of its programmers, Willem Bongers. In the meantime, the culture ministry has released €1 million for renovation of the old building on the Leopoldstraat, a decision supported by deBuren.

"We weighed up the options," Bongers said, "and it's clear our working resources are not going to get bigger in the years to come. We didn't want to splash out on a huge swimming pool and then find we didn't have enough money to pay a lifeguard."

The offices on the Jacqmainlaan have been rented for one year. Schauvliege expects works on the Leopoldstraat to be complete by the end of 2012, and deBuren is looking forward to returning to its original home by 2013.♦

→ www.deburen.eu



DeBuren's stately residence on Leopoldstraat will be renovated in the coming year

Retelling the story

Secrets of the Africa Museum loom large in *Uncensored*

► *continued from page 1*

One of the museum's more terrifying exhibits is a statue of a leopard man, looming menacingly over his doomed, human prey. Clothed in leopard skin and with lethal hooks attached to their fingertips, these evil characters from the colony have featured in a range of Belgian comics, including *Tintin in the Congo*.

Eelen contextualises: "They did exist. They were mainly killing Congolese who collaborated with the colonialists. But it's a story that has been very blown up and used in many publications. The Congolese hate that we still show this statue. If you tell the whole story, though, then it's okay to still show it."

The plan, she explains, is to work with the Congolese to determine the best way to incorporate their side of the story into the museum. Precise plans about how to do this are still in a preliminary stage. One way will certainly be to show a more contemporary Africa, celebrating its colourful music and dress, for example.

Museum of a museum

Visitors to the museum who have marvel at its glorious architecture and quaint cabinets filled with hunting trophies – from stuffed lions to crocodiles – need not fear; the Africa Museum staff plan to preserve this as a nod to the colonial side of the story and, as Eelen explains, a "museum of a museum".

Intelling both sides of the story of the Congo, notwithstanding the Belgian side, preserving this will show an important piece of the African nation's history. In 1959, the year the Congo won its independence, there were as many as 60,000 Belgians living there. From a Flemish perspective, Culture Minister Joke Schauvliege tells Flanders Today: "The Africa Museum grew out of our colonial past to become a world famous institution. It stands close to us and our cultural history."

The €60 million renovation is being funded by the federal government and will also see a new building marking the entrance. Through this pavilion, visitors will approach the museum from its cellars and updated facilities, including an auditorium for audiovisual displays. For anyone who has found the museum a patch of themes with a different story in each of its galleries as well as remiss in its recount of the colonial past, the new museum, Eelen concludes, will "tell a more comprehensive story".



The renovation of the Africa Museum will take three years and cost €60 million



© Jo Van de Vijver, KMVA

Only 1% of the museum's collection is on show

Behind the scenes at the museum

Before the Africa Museum closes its doors in July 2012 for a three-year renovation, it has opened its cellars, where the majority of its treasures can be found. (Only 1% of its vast collection is normally on show at any given time.) If the galleries that make up its present permanent exhibition look overcrowded with stuffed animals, masks and other art work, that's nothing compared to its underground caverns. Visitors are also treated in this exhibition, titled *Uncensored: Vivid Tales from Behind the Scenes*, to a host of quirky tales about the museum. Who knew that the stuffed elephant that greets visitors is actually composed of two pachyderm? Or that in a downstairs room are hundreds of elephant skulls all telling a tale to the scientists who study them of the history of Africa's changing landscape.

An innocuous looking space above the stairs that descend into this cave of wonders once was home to 16,000 dead snakes. Meanwhile, a live one, brought in as a pet by one of the museum's researchers, escaped from his cage to be eventually found curled cozily around a buffalo head above a heater in the cellar.

The museum also shows some of its more questionable exhibits. An over-excited explorer who came across pieces of a boat in the Congo was convinced he had found the boat of Henry Morgan Stanley, King Leopold II's henchman in the colony who famously voyaged along the Congo River to find Doctor Livingstone. Alas, diaries of Stanley later revealed that his boat was made of wood and Spanish leather, unlike the metal one now on display.

In the permanent exhibition, the museum also reveals some secrets – from the buffalo whose hair was bulked out thanks to a salon in Tervuren to radioactive minerals stored in a bunker. The king of the jungle has something to hide, too. A lion shot by Belgium's Baron Lambert looms out of the grass to hide that he is only half stuffed. He once graced the Baron's living room, where there was apparently not enough space to show him in all his glory.

For the uninitiated, the exhibition will seem rather low impact: red crates dotted seemingly randomly around the museum's permanent exhibition tell the story. However, it's worth taking a guide and/or the trouble to read everything carefully as – while it does little to grab the attention of the casual visitor – it contains a rich, vibrant story of life at the museum. And the cellars, once reached, are a wonder to behold.

The museum, often criticised by scholars and the Congolese for some of its more gory artefacts such as the elephant foot umbrella stand (relegated to the basement), sets the record straight as to whether it harbours a collection of stuffed African humans. Although not on display, as this would flout Congolese tradition, there is the odd mummy or two.♦

Uncensored: *Vivid Tales from Behind the Scenes*

Until 8 July 2012

Royal Museum for Central Africa
Leuvensesteenweg 13, Tervuren

► www.africamuseum.be

Research: The other side of the museum's story

Aside from its celebrated role as a record of Belgium's colonial history, the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren provides a wealth of research material for linguists, historians, sociologists, anthropologists and a host of other academics seeking to unravel secrets of the continent.

Busying away at the labyrinth-like museum and working in close collaboration with institutions in Africa are, for example, climatologists who are examining its scores of elephant skulls. "We have skulls of savannah and wood elephants. Scientists found out that those in the collection we have here are of the same species," explains Sandra Eelen, exhibition designer at the museum.

This allows scientists to extrapolate about the way these mammals moved between landscapes as rises in temperature and changes in land use for, say, agriculture, forced them to switch habitats over time.

Meanwhile, zoologists are busy classifying species. This, says the museum, gives them useful insights into biodiversity in the region and how Africa can better sustain its forests, which are crucial for its ecosystems.

Added to that are the hoards of scientists who, using the museum's archives and work on the ground in Africa, examine colonial history, rituals, languages and music. This allows them to raise awareness of, the museum says, a "more accurate and nuanced image of modern-day Africa".

Who's taking over the business?

Flemish government's new programme helps prepare for the longevity of companies

ANDY FURNIERE

A new four-year master plan of the Flemish government aims to raise awareness among older entrepreneurs to prepare the succession and transfer of their companies in time "to make sure that the enterprises don't also retire and that the employees keep their jobs," explains Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters also minister of the economy. According to a recent study, 129,000 Flemish entrepreneurs are over 50, or 31% of the self-employed. Of them, more than half are over 55. Worryingly, 57% of entrepreneurs who say they want to retire within 10 years don't yet know who will take over their businesses. People over 50 in Flanders employ some 300,000. "If these enterprises are to disappear, so will the jobs of their employees," warns Peeters.

"Many business owners don't discuss the future of their companies because it's emotionally too difficult"

To avoid a worst case scenario, the Flemish Region's Agency for Entrepreneurship is organising a week-long event, aptly called *De Week van de Bedrijfsoverdracht* (The Week of the Enterprise Transfer), with information sessions and workshops all over the region. Some 35,000 entrepreneurs over 55 will receive an invitation to request a free information packet. A similar campaign proved to be successful in the Netherlands, where one out of three notified entrepreneurs asked for such a package.

As part of the master plan, entrepreneurs can call for the help of a special advisor to support them in fiscal, judicial and financial matters and also a coach to tackle emotional obstacles. "We try to involve the families as well in the whole process of transferring an enterprise," explains Patrick Jordens of the Agency for Entrepreneurship. "Many business owners don't discuss the future of their companies with their immediate environment because it's emotionally too difficult." Jordens also says that many entrepreneurs underestimate the time it takes to arrange a transfer. "A period of five to seven years is not a luxury," he says.

Like father, like daughters

One of the entrepreneurs who did start to plan in time is Guido Peleman, founder of Peleman Industries, a company specialized in binding printed documents. The presentation of the master plan was held at his company headquarters in Puurs, Antwerp province. There, he testified of his decision 10 years ago to prepare his two daughters for succeeding him at the head of the company. Brigitte Peleman, 40, runs the American branch in Atlanta, and Esmeralda, 37, is CEO of the Belgian headquarters. "A business owner should think about a possible transfer from the start," says Guido Peleman. "There should be a script ready for whenever something should happen to you."

The Flemish government is providing grants of up to €25,000 to motivate entrepreneurs to draft their own transfer plan. Moreover, Peeters wants to lower the fiscal barriers in place today. By January 2012, for example, he hopes to be able to exempt entrepreneurs from having to pay gift taxes, or, in the case of the premature death of an entrepreneur, to reduce the succession tariffs – all measures that will soon be debated in the Flemish parliament.♦

→ www.vlaio.be



The Bridge of Dreams • A new book relates the cooperation between Flanders and Mozambique

When Hilde Keteler set off for Mozambique earlier this year, her image of the African nation was predominantly one of poverty – a country struggling with the after-effects of a brutal civil war, floods and famine. She was determined, however, to put her pre-conceived notions to one side and explore Mozambique with an open mind. "I set off with a lot of doubts but also with a willingness to bury the images in my head as deep as possible, somewhere in my suitcase underneath the Imodium, the sun cream and the long-sleeved T-shirts to protect against malaria-carrying mosquitoes..." Keteler writes in her new

book *De brug van dromen: Onderweg naar het nieuwe Mozambique* (*The Bridge of Dreams: On the Way to a New Mozambique*).

The book, published this month, was commissioned by the Flemish International Cooperation Agency (FICA) to mark the 10th anniversary of cooperation between Flanders and Mozambique. Keteler said at the launch last week that one of the challenges of writing the book was combining the fascinating stories of the people with factual information about the development projects. It's a challenge she pulls off well.

The journey starts in the capital Maputo in the south, continues on to Tete, a town in the north on the banks of the Zambezi River and returns to Maputo at the end. The book's structure follows the same chronology. Written by Keteler and her partner Emiel Vervliet, the book is packed with stories of the people they meet, both Mozambicans and Flemish aid workers. Woven into the text are details about the history, the culture and the economy of Mozambique, such as the influence of the Portuguese, who arrived in the early 16th century and stayed until independence was declared in 1975. Accompanying the writers were photographers Marc van Vaek and Veronique Schotte, whose images of the people and places form an important part of the book and help evoke the atmosphere of the country.

For Keteler and her team, the bridge across the Zambezi in Tete was a focal point of their journey: in fact, it gave the book its title. On and around this "bridge of dreams", they talked to doctors and teachers, Red Cross volunteers and village heads and priests, as well as shoemakers, bicycle repairmen, prostitutes and money changers. Through these encounters, they start to understand the people's ways of life and see with their own eyes the dominance of the informal economy and the need for more education, health services and infrastructure.

Flanders is just one of many international cooperations with Mozambique. Like many governments, Flanders focuses on its areas of expertise. Health and education have been the contribution of the Flemish for the last decade, and they will remain so in the future. As Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters said at the book launch, which took place on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, the 10-year anniversary in no way marks an end to the cooperation with Mozambique. In fact, an agreement has been signed to continue the



Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters last week presented the book to the ambassador of Mozambique

partnership for "at least the next five years," he noted. Mozambique is one of the poorest countries in the world, but aside from poverty there is also a lot of hope and energy. As Keteler says, a large proportion of the population is made up of young people, and with youth come dreams. Rubio, a 21 year-old football fan, works as a shoe repairer but hopes to become a doctor or an English teacher. Elena, a young mother who works at a food stall, wants to train to be a nurse. Ismael, 16, dreams of becoming a customs officer because he has heard they earn a lot of money: in the meantime, he sells cans of cold drinks to truck drivers.

"What struck me was the country's energy and dynamism," Keteler told me. "Of course there's still a lot of work to do, but Mozambique is on the right track."

→ www.fica.be

Nearly 100 train routes cancelled in Flanders

No strike action yet planned by unions as NMBS strives to save money

ALAN HOPE

The national rail authority NMBS last week announced plans to scrap 193 train routes – 97 starting or ending in Flanders – in an effort to save €110 million. The proposal, which is planned to begin at the end of 2012, instantly met with opposition from politicians, unions and train users.

Routes were cut based on passenger use and whether income from the route was able to cover the energy costs of running it. Among the places hardest-hit in Flanders are Dendermonde, with 11 routes out of Brussels cut, as well as 18 originating in Dendermonde and travelling to Brussels, Sint-Niklaas and Kortrijk, among others. Hasselt loses 12 routes to and from Tongeren, and Herentals loses 10 routes to and from Lier and Mol.

"We know the problems with fine particulates and diesel vehicles," commented Brussels environment minister Evelyne Huytebroeck. "We know we have to reduce the pressure on our roads and expand the availability of public transport, especially to and from Brussels. And what does the NMBS do? It scraps trains. An absurdity." The NMBS counts its passengers once a year – the annual census is going on now – and many of the trains concerned are used by very few

people. For example: two early-morning trains from Aalst making the 16-minute journey to Burst are to go, as well as one in the evening. Those trains carry a total of 22 people. The list reveals the best chance of finding a seat is on the 7.04 from Hasselt to Tongeren, which normally carries only two passengers. "No-one makes decisions like these for pleasure," federal minister of government concerns, Inge Vervotte, told parliament. "But not going through with the plan is not an option."

Alternatives to scrapped trains

Brussels mobility minister Brigitte Grouwels suggested replacing the 32 scrapped trains within the Brussels region with trains of the new regional express network GEN, whose routes will be drawn up next year. That would allow the capital to maintain links with the parts of Flemish Brabant that supply so many workers to the city, she said. Flemish communications consultant Noel Slangen proposed restricting trains to carrying large numbers of passengers between towns and cities, and leaving local areas to be served by light-rail trams using the existing rail network.

Passenger lobby group TreinTramBus (TTB) suggested the NMBS save money



© Willem Decraene

by cutting back within the company, especially in terms of consultants. TTB also joined the trade union ACOD in calling for the government to do something about the NMBS structure, currently composed of NMBS for the vehicles, Infrabel for infrastructure and NMBS Holding, which oversees both. The Holding, ACOD and TTB agree, is superfluous and something many other countries manage without. The plan involves the loss of about

1,000 jobs across the organisation. Jos Digneffe of the ACOD union warned that industrial action in response to the planned cuts "cannot be ruled out. There is a great deal of unrest about the current situation. This could be the proverbial last straw." The liberal trade union VSOA, meanwhile, said it had no actions planned. The union has asked for consultation with the NMBS and said it would wait to see the results.♦

Cleantech Festival shows off innovation

More than 400 people attended the Cleantech Festival in Ghent last week to inspect 13 innovative projects in clean technology – technology that assists in saving energy or otherwise contributes to an improved environment. The festival was staged by a cooperation of businesses and research organisations in Flanders that work towards developing sustainable technologies, products and services. The Flemish government's Environmental and Energy Technology Innovation Platform (MIP) recently put out its third call for projects looking for funding in this field, and some of the contenders were on show – an indication of the direction Flanders

could take in the future in the field of eco-innovation. Among those on show were a project to recycle heat produced in the various activities of the Port of Antwerp and a lo-tech system for recycling the materials in used furniture. Visitors could vote for their favourite among a number of successful applicants for funding in the second round of MIP – a contest won by a project to grow algae for use in the chemical industry from nutrients found in waste water. The Flanders Cleantech Association also showcases Flemish innovation in this area worldwide and will take part next month in the Global Cleantech Cluster forum in Dublin.♦

Cleantech Festival shows off innovation



A civil trial began in Brussels last week against asbestos producer Eternit, based in Kapelle-op-den-Bos, Flemish Brabant. "Environmental victims" of asbestos – people who never came into physical contact with the product but were affected by living in proximity to it – are seeking damages against the producer. One plaintiff is the now-deceased Françoise Jonckheere, who lived for years next to the Eternit factory. Her husband worked there as an engineer and died in 1987 of mesothelioma, a form of cancer usually caused by asbestos. Before Françoise died in 2000 of the same form of cancer, she began a legal action against Eternit, which has now attracted other plaintiffs in the civil suit. Since 2000, two of the Jonckheere's five children, who grew up next to the factory, have also died from mesothelioma.

Belgium banned the use of asbestos (pictured) in 2001, but it is still present in many buildings and can be released into the environment during renovations or demolition. Eternit made asbestos cement, used to make building elements like sewer pipes, chimney flues and roofing tiles. It is now illegal in Belgium to produce asbestos or use it in any products. According to Abeva, the association of asbestos victims, about 800 people die of mesothelioma in Belgium every year.♦

Investment news: New food testing centre, EU approval for port terminal

The Flemish government's ministry for agriculture and fisheries has invested €4 million in a new **Food Plant in Melle**, East Flanders, to be operated by the Research Institute for Agriculture and Fisheries (ILVO). The plant will provide facilities for food and cosmetics manufacturers to test their products before industrial manufacturing. "If we want to feed the nine billion mouths on this earth by 2050, innovation is the key," said a spokesman for Kris Peeters, Flemish minister-president whose portfolio includes agriculture.

The EU commission has approved a plan by the Flemish government to invest €2 million in development of the **Beverdonk container terminal** on the Albert Canal in Grobbendonk, part of Antwerp harbour. The EU will also make available funding for raising the bridges over the canal to allow the passage of heavier container traffic, as well as for a new rail link from Lier to the harbour.

The **University of Ghent** has signed an agreement with Incheon Free Economic Zone in South Korea for the establishment of a branch campus in Songdo, which will offer both undergraduate and graduate studies. The town of Songdo was recently created by the Seoul government as a home for research, innovation and new technologies.♦

Property group **Retail Estates**, based in Ternat, is investing €55 million in the construction of shopping centres in Tongeren and Bruges. The Tongeren centre will include 27 stores and be completed in June 2012. The Bruges centre will have 10 stores. Retail Estates has over 430,000 square metres of shopping facilities in its portfolio in 455 centres.♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Autos • Production

Flanders' car industry increased its production by nearly 19% in the first nine months of this year compared to the same period in 2010. Volvo Ghent and Audi Brussels both had double digit gains while the Genk-based Ford plant saw its output drop slightly.

Banks • Dexia

The dismantling of the Dexia banking group continues with the Qatar National Bank considering a €4.4 billion offer for Denizbank, Dexia's Turkish affiliate and one of its key assets.

Beverages • Starbucks

The US Starbucks coffee bar chain has opened its first store in Flanders outside of a transport hub in Ghent in partnership with the local Autogrill group. The chain already operates five outlets in railway stations in Brussels, Brussels Airport and Antwerp. The new store is located in the Korenmarkt, the heart of Ghent's city centre.

Construction • Besix

The Brussels-based Besix building group has won a €416 million contract to build a 235,000 square-metre shopping centre in Abu Dhabi. The new facility is expected to open in late 2013.

Food service • The Hard Rock Cafe

The US restaurant group Hard Rock Cafe will open an outlet in downtown Brussels early next year. The move comes more than 10 years after the Hard Rock Cafe in Antwerp closed for lack of business.

Insurance • KBC

Flanders' largest financial institution has sold its Fidea insurance affiliate to the US-based JC Flowers investment fund for some €240 million. The move is part of KBC's restructuring imposed by European authorities for approving the bank's rescue in 2008.

Technology • Softkinetic

Brussels-based motion control and video software developer Softkinetic has signed an agreement with the Korean Namuga group to jointly develop interactive motion control panels and equipment for televisions and computers.

Telecom • 4G

Five companies have entered bids to launch the fourth generation of mobile telephony network. They include the three leading local suppliers, Belgacom, Mobistar and KPN, in addition to the Canadian Craig Wireless and the Chinese Datang. Meanwhile, Halle-based discount supermarket Colruyt is to become a mobile telephone operator by offering its customers subscriptions and related telephone services.

Ticketing • Syntigo

The Syntigo affiliate of railway company NMBS, specialised in ticketing and reservation software, has signed a partnership agreement with Korea's Samsung group to build ticketing terminals for railway stations in Eastern Europe, North Africa and Asia.

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THE
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Don Retsin

An introduction into Bruges' hidden world of freemasons, symbolist art and gothic poetry

NICHOLAS HIRST

“Che-bel-vivere!” Willy Retsin, a true *Bruggeling* and professional provocateur, is comparing and contrasting opera across a host of different languages. “You see, it must come from the throat,” he exclaims. “One cannot sing with the lips!” Then he’s off, running into the house to bring back yet another Cuban artefact, old book or prop, again dodging my questions with the sprightliness of a man half his age. Retsin is as mercurial as he is intriguing. Everyone in Bruges knows “Willy” and many a city guide now includes on their tours his huge house-cum-museum, The Luciferum. Accounts abound of his townhouse being opened for wild evenings of music, dancing, drinking and smoking – in rooms strewn with religious icons, grotesque statues and portraits of topless saints, with two black Dobermanns howling outside. As for the locals, some talk about the strange converted animal ambulance he drives around town, others grumble about unauthorised, artistic interventions in public spaces.

But things are changing. Closed on Saturday evening, The Luciferum now opens only on Sundays. Where before revellers and musicians cavorted, now Retsin’s gentle, Peruvian wife serves paellas. The emphasis is now on the Retsin house and its history.

“I want to make the museum more accessible,” says Retsin, throwing on lights and dusting furniture in a wing that has only recently been opened to the public. “This was a Masonic lodge at the time of Napoleon, until it was abandoned by the masons after my ancestor’s death. I’ve restored it to its original state.”

Retsin’s stories are best taken with a pinch of salt. He says that his ancestor, Dr. August Retsin, was a famous 19th-century doctor in Bruges, as well as a freemason detested by the local church, and the first to experiment medically with Cannabis Sativa. He was succeeded as a freemason by his son, Franz Retsin.

Another family member was supposedly the first European to experiment with anaesthetic chloroform. As for the present day Retsins,

Gilbert is an artist in Blankenberge, whose work appears in the museum. Willy, born in the 1940s, is said to have become a cloth tradesmen after studying languages, worked shipping routes in Central America.

Yet the historical significance of the museum as a Masonic Lodge is not immediately apparent. If this is where the freemasons of Bruges used to meet, its present décor, with paintings covering the walls and all manner of objects in the room, is more a symbolist fantasy of mystery, death and decadence. Particularly memorable is a painting showing a sailor screaming in front of a violent sea, or one featuring a masked gentleman against a swirling absinthe-green sky, or yet another where a woman stands in mist while a monkey deals playing cards at her feet.

“It was my ancestor Giles who painted these,” explains Retsin. If the dates (1851 to 1929) correspond to the paintings’ dreamy symbolist aesthetic, they are, nonetheless, hard to reconcile with the appearance in numerous paintings of a stern and elegant Willy Retsin lookalike.



Retsin’s house is no longer a place of endless carousing, but more of a museum



Willy Retsin, a present-day Don Quixote, next to his Peruvian wife

© Hugh Van

Not to be outdone, Retsin returns producing a manuscript-style book, illustrated with the same haunting paintings. “When we cleared out the library, we found an unpublished poem that had been sent to my ancestor by the great American poet Edgar Allan Poe,” he says, emphasising the gothic writer’s name in a rasping, operatic crescendo. The rest of his ancestors’ correspondence, says Retsin, was stolen by the bishop of Bruges and the “Retsin papers” are still kept in the bishopric palace.

“The poem was probably written under the influence of delirium tremens and Cannabis Indica between 1847 and the poet’s death in 1849,” he explains. “I’m looking for an editor.” Retsin’s colourful introduction to the poem describes how Poe died “a madman bitten by a werewolf or a rabid dog.”

The poem is a roller-coaster love story in the gothic style: from otherworldly love – “Reckless Love, a Glow unknown so far upon to Heaven’s Door, became our Part” – to tragic

loss, suicide and Judgment Day – “To late Trespassers, hear the bony Finger knocking on your Door; it’s Mister Blackjack, Death’s Messenger, calling you, the Rich and Poor.”

Perhaps this is a long lost poem of Poe’s, though maybe it’s not. But who cares? When Retsin bellows out these lines in rasping, theatrical voice, dressed in a black suit and top-hat in the company of tortured paintings, the question seems academic.

For Retsin, you sense, prefers the world of fiction to the world of fact. And like a latter-day and gothic Don Quixote, he forcefully imposes this mysterious and highly personal world – with its echoes of freemasonry, of North Coast Belgian symbolism, of empire and pre-Castro Cuba – onto the humdrum of modern-day Bruges life.♦

→ www.lucifernum.be

STREEKPRODUCT SERIES

ALAN HOPE

Potjesvlees

Traditional regional food products fall, on the whole, into two categories, both of them reflecting the needs of ordinary, thrifty people: those which use some form of preservation so that foods produced in plenty can be stored to be used later in times of need, and those that arise out of the economic need to make the very most out of what is produced. The many varieties of dried sausage available in Flanders are an example of the first; blood-sausage and the head-cheese known as *kip-kap* of the second.

In the part of West Flanders known as the Westhoek, the preserved speciality is *potjesvlees*, which is exactly what it sounds like: potted meat. On Flanders Today’s recent Battlefields and Beer tour of First World War sites, we took advantage of a visit to Poperinge to try that delicacy, which the locals

also call *hennepot*.

Potjesvlees is traditionally made of meat from the three K’s: *kalf*, *kip* and *konijn* (veal, chicken and rabbit). The meat is cooked on the bone in a clear stock with vinegar and white wine added, then laid in pots with onion and lemon slices. The broth, which the bones have made gelatinous, is then poured over the meat. When the whole thing is cool, the meat will be encased in the transparent jelly.

Butcher-caterer Luc Sohier makes two kinds: in the individual pots the meat is still on the bone, but he also makes a version for immediate sale where the pieces of 3K meat have been boned out. He assures me the bone-in version is the authentic recipe, and while it’s delicious – eaten cold with whatever salad you prefer, or just with bread – I think the boned-out version might have been slightly more convenient.

There are only 10 butchers that make *potjesvlees*, in Veurne, Alveringem and Poperinge, each with its own special touch and a member of the Order of the Potted Meat. They’ve applied for EU recognition as well as the seal of approval already given by Flanders.

One of the exceptions to the rule of thrift is also a Poperinge speciality: *mazarinetaart*, made by the Sansen bakery since 1800. There’s nothing frugal about this concoction – a yeast-risen cake heavy with eggs and the scent of cinnamon, soaked in a syrup made of butter and sugar. The full-sized cake, still sold in a tin, is said to serve six people, but Sansen also sells a smaller tasting portion for four more. The cake needs to be warmed briefly before eating to allow the syrup to melt and to release the flavours. To be honest, even the



smaller portion was too much for this household. *Mazarinetaart* is reminiscent of those Greek and North African pastries swimming in honey and rosewater: You feel at risk of diabetes just by walking

past the shop. It’s undoubtedly a guilty pleasure for those with a sweet tooth. For us, it was simply too sweet and too buttery.

→ www.streekproduct.be

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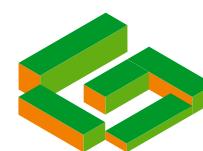
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Celebrating books

The literary event of the year turns 75

REBECCA BENOOT

Every year in November, thousands of Flemings head to Antwerp Expo to get the most hyped novel of the season, to get an early start on their Christmas shopping or to buy the latest books by their favourite authors who just happen to be walking by. The Boekenbeurs is a unique meeting place for writers, publishers and readers who let themselves be enchanted by bountiful books. It is without a doubt Flanders' literary event of the year.

The first Boekenbeurs, or Book Fair, took place in 1932 in the Stadsfeestzaal in Antwerp which has now been transformed into a decadent shopping haven. The initial idea came from the Vereeniging ter Bevordering van het Vlaamsche Boekwezen (VBVB), an organization that at the time set out to promote Flemish books in order to educate people about local Flemish culture and to put Flemish literature on the map.

"In the beginning, the Boekenbeurs was more of an exhibition where people could browse and order but not actually buy books," says Antwerp's alderman of culture Philip Heylen. "It gradually evolved into an all-round experience and is today one of the biggest and most visited events in Flanders."

Boekenbeurs is an entertaining spectacle of debates, interviews, competitions and meet-and-greets. But the main attraction is the abundance of authors who are "the heart of the operation," according to Geert Joris, head of Boek.be, the successor of the VBVB. In 2010 alone, there were 850 authors at the Boekenbeurs to sign books and be interviewed.

Since its inception, the Boekenbeurs has always been a highlight of the autumn and was only cancelled briefly during the Second World War. In 1971, the Stadsfeestzaal in Antwerp had become too small and the fair was moved to its current location at Antwerp Expo where over 100 stalls are displayed on a modest 20,000 square metres, an impressive expansion from its original 2,500. "The growing number of visitors shows us that everyone in Antwerp – and even Flanders – has visited the Boekenbeurs at least once" Heylen adds.

Yet before the first Boekenbeurs in 1932, there were already Tentoontellingen van het Vlaamsche Boek (Exhibitions on the Flemish Book) in cities such as Ostend and Aalst at the end of the 19th century. Those were followed by De Week van het Vlaamsche Boekwezen (The Week of the Flemish Book Industry) in 1929, also organized by the VBVB to promote the general interest in books. All the events leading up to the first edition of the Boekenbeurs,



and its 74 consecutive years, have now been turned into a beautiful exhibit in the Antwerp museum of literature, the Letterenhuis.

"This new exhibition is a time document displaying how we handle books in Flanders and showing us how fashionable they've become," says Heylen. "It also paints a clear picture of the time and the atmosphere in which the Boekenbeurs was able to become the phenomenon it is today." An interesting aspect of the exhibition is the collection of advertisement posters from all 75 editions – a colourful display of not only the evolution of the Boekenbeurs but also of Flemish graphic design, featuring posters by Frans Maseel and Gert Dooreman. You can visit the exhibition free of charge with an entrance ticket of the Boekenbeurs.

This year, Geert Joris expects at least 175,000 visitors at the anniversary edition. The celebrations start on 30 October, when a Murga parade will walk from the Boekenbeurs' original location at the Meir to its current home together with Antwerp's city poet Peter Holvoet Hanssen. This year's highlights are the appearances of international authors such as Santa Montefiore and Craig Thompson, creator of the hot and hyped graphic novel *Habibi*.

Technology will also play a vital role this year, as the first e-pavilion will be created, showing us the future of books.

There are also multiple theme days, like every year, focusing on a particular subject. Joris explains: "We are convinced that books will become multi-media objects and want to emphasise this with a theme day about books and film. It'll

The books page

The Boekenbeurs in 1941, in the ninth year of its now 75-year-old life.

"Everyone in Antwerp – and even Flanders – has visited the Boekenbeurs at least once"

be a pitching event for movie and book producers who'll be able to exchange ideas and do some networking." The Boekenbeurs, in a nutshell, is a winning combination of commercial ingenuity and cultural advancement, and the place to finally meet your favourite Flemish author.♦

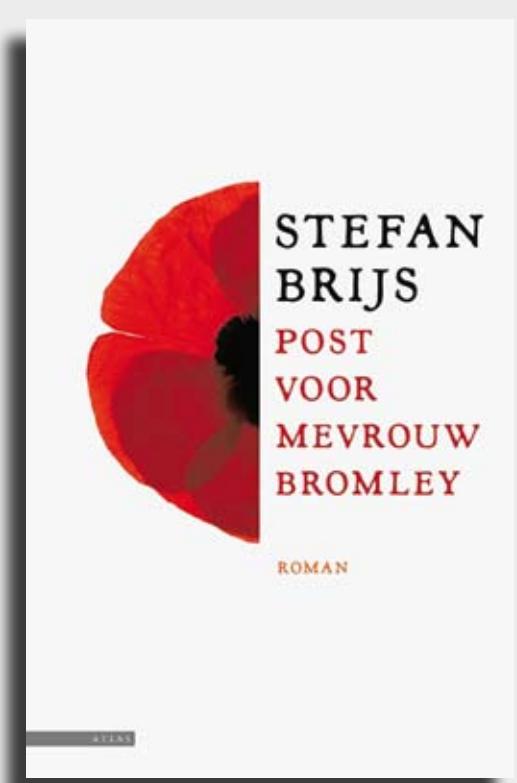
Boekenbeurs

31 October to 11 November

Antwerp Expo
Jan Van Rijswijkstraat 191

→ www.boekenbeurs.be

Fresh fiction (of authors present at the Boekenbeurs)



Sterrenogen (Stars' Eyes)

by Eef Lanoye • WPG

Eef Lanoye is the niece of one of Flanders' most esteemed contemporary authors, Tom Lanoye. Her debut is a collection of 11 saucy stories in which an eclectic cast of women embraces their erotic desires. Her tales are shocking but also liberating and full of smouldering and occasionally graphic sex scenes that, due to her capable craftsmanship, never become cheap or gratuitous. Lanoye believes that in 2011, it's about time that women openly start writing about something we all enjoy but rarely talk about.

Schoolslag (Breakstroke)

by Joseph Pearce • WPG

As a former teacher of Dutch and English at the Onze-Lieve-Vrouw College in Antwerp, Joseph Pearce had quite some experience when it came to the day-to-day life in a prestigious Flemish high school. *Schoolslag* is about a fictional and one-of-a-kind school in Flanders run by the Fathers of the Felix order, where tradition is almost as important as keeping up appearances. This conventional, almost archaic academy is saved from ruins when they are forced to modernize and hire a female teacher – something that results in intrigue, controversy and lots of tongue-in-cheek humour.

Post voor Mevrouw Bromley (Mail for Ms Bromley)

by Stefan Brijs • Atlas

His debut novel *De Engelenmaker* (The Angel Maker) was a smash hit in 2005 and was subsequently released in English. Brijs' highly anticipated new novel is set in London during the First World War where the 17-year-old Martin Bromley is trying his best to join the army, despite his age. Unable to convince his best friend John to join with him, Martin sneaks off, leaving John to pick up the pieces during a time when tensions are rising. *Post voor Mevrouw Bromley* is a captivating novel about hope, courage, friendship and longing.

De Ontsporing (The Derailment)

by Paul Jambers • Linkeroever

The famous Flemish TV journalist Paul Jambers makes his fictional debut with this thriller about a young woman who disappears after contacting a well-known writer who might help her find her father. Filled with flashbacks to 1969, Jambers' novel has the undeniable feel of a journalistic endeavour, due to its clean cut prose and descriptive passages. *De Ontsporing* is about taking responsibility for one's actions and the sometimes devastating consequences of our love lives for future generations.



BRUSSELS

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



SCHAERBEEK

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



WATERMAEL-BOITSFORT

Dansaert area



MERQEN

BRUSSELS



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

WOLUWE SAINT-LAMBERT



ANDERLECHT

Two steps away from the House of Erasme, in a commercial district, this building located on 2 a13ca proposes: commercial ground floor with workshop 143 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

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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.

Brutal beauty

FUERZA BRUTA

COURTNEY DAVIS

It is hard not to revel in the ethereal sensuality of the wet, scantly clad beauties that dive, swim and writhe across the water-filled rooftop overhead. Alternatively playful and languid, they use their entire bodies to stretch and explore the liquid space around them. Welcome to post-modern theatre.

This is Fuerza Bruta, a group that may sound highbrow, but the actual experience is far more emotional. Keeping the audience literally on its feet is just the beginning of how this show engages and enthralts. There isn't a set plot or story line, yet certain themes do arise from the various different scenes that present themselves. Audience participation isn't just encouraged, it's nearly impossible to avoid.

When the clear aquatic roof is unexpectedly lowered, it is both electric and intimate, as the female faces and body parts press down inches from your head. The actors look, smile and reach out – it's impossible not to feel connected.

In the footsteps of Cirque du Soleil, here is a performance that might not make a lot of sense but is utterly beautiful and interesting. It is less circus and acrobatics and more about combining the body with the surroundings. And like Stomp and Blue Man Group, language is not an issue here. Which makes this show a goldmine for international audiences.

Formerly head of De La Guarda, 48-year-old Argentinean Diqui James founded Fuerza Bruta in 2002. The show as it is known now premiered in 2005 and two years later, it made its debut in New York. Now it's making its way to Flanders for the first time. Over half a million people

have already seen the show – this author included – which has travelled as far as Bogotá, Berlin and Moscow.

Fuerza means strength and *Bruta* means brutal – but in the sense of primitive, not aggressive. This primitive, brute force is evident and powerful at certain moments. You can feel the frustration and struggle of the business-suit-wearing actor running on a treadmill, breaking through walls and jumping over furniture that keep appearing before him. And no matter how hard he forces through that wall or how fast he runs, the obstacles keep arising in front of him.

The show features many surprises and yet it is over before you want it to be. No less than 16 performers, original pounding music, intense lights and a non-stop stimulation of the senses make the hour-long show fleeing. It is the kind of a full immersion experience where you leave pondering what it all might have meant. The fact you are soaking wet, covered in confetti and tired from dancing might lend you some clues, but to truly understand Fuerza Bruta, you have to be a part of it.♦



Fuerza Bruta

3-27 November

Waagnatie, Leopolddok 212
Antwerp

→ www.fuerza-bruta.be



HALLOWEEN



Victorian Freak Circus

31 October, 19.00-23.00

Gaasbeek Castle, Gaasbeek (Flemish Brabant)

Forget jack-o'-lanterns and candy. For a really freaky Halloween, get over to Gaasbeek Castle where the grounds will be crawling (sometimes literally) with all kinds of shady characters. There will be carniees putting on freak shows in their tents, lost souls wandering aimlessly about and other mysterious beings in elaborate costume. Get there early to enjoy ongoing craft workshops for kids (ages 5 to 12) from 17.00 to 19.00. Then let the dramatic performers of Zirkus Ravenstein provide you with what promises to be one of your most memorable Halloweens yet. Get your tickets in advance for €8, or for €9 at the door (children under 8 get in free).
(Robyn Boyle)

→ www.kasteelvangaasbeek.be

MORE HALLOWEEN THIS WEEK

Brussels

Halloween Festival: Family fun at the museum featuring a tour of the resident creatures: Dumbo Robot, Terror Alligator and Fire-breathing Dragon, plus snacks and local beer tastings
OCT 29-NOV 6 14.00-17.00 at Musée d'Art Fantastique, Amerikastraat 7
www.fantastic-museum.be

Lichtaart (Kasterlee, Antwerp)

Halloween at Bobbejaanland: Witches, werewolves, zombies and vampires take over the family fun park, plus fireworks on OCT 29
Until NOV 6 at Bobbejaanland, Olensteenweg 45
www.bobbejaanland.be

Wachtebeke (East Flanders)

Halloween in Puyenbroeck: Halloween activities for the whole family in a wooded provincial domain, featuring games, arts and crafts, puppet theatre and more in the afternoon, followed by a torch procession and bonfire after 18.00
OCT 30 15.00-22.30 at Puyenbroeck, Puyenbrug 1a
www.halloweeninpuyenbroeck.be

Agenda



The term “undiscovered gem” is bandied about a little too frequently by opera houses anxious to tout their productions – but it is every bit justified in the case of *Charodeika*, a little-known work that’s about to receive its Belgian première at the Vlaamse Opera.

Charodeika (The Enchantress) is Tchaikovsky’s eighth opera, yet few people have heard of it, let alone heard it. Its first round of performances in 1887 Saint-Petersburg petered out after a couple of weeks, and since then there have been precious few productions in the western world, and even fewer recordings.

That’s a shame, for judging from the few arias available on YouTube and the evergreen plotline, the work promises to be a stunner. The heroine, an inn-keeper called Nastasia, is an alluring mix of Carmen, *La Traviata*’s Violetta and Kat’ja Kabanova – a passionate free-thinker who falls victim to the crushing conformism of those around her. The production, if successful, could combine the grace and ease of Romantic melodrama with the thrill of a première. And there’s a good chance that it will be successful, for the Vlaamse Opera has gone to town on this recreation, securing director Tatjana Gürbaca, a renowned Tchaikovsky expert, as well as a seasoned Russian cast (soprano Tatjana Pavlovskaya, baritone Valery Alexeev, tenor Dmitri Polkopen), while another Russian, conductor-in-residence Dmitri Jurowski, resurrects the score. Be prepared to fall under its spell. (*Marie Dumont*)

→ www.vlaamseopera.be



MORE OPERA THIS WEEK

Aarschot

Het Land van de Glimlach: “The Land of the Smile” is the story of a countess from Vienna who leaves her home town to follow her love to China. By Ludwig Helzer and Fritz Löhner. Music by Franz Lehár.

NOV 5-6 and 12-13 20.00 at CC Het Gasthuis, Gasthuisstraat 22
www.ccgasthuis.be

Alsemberg

Tsja tsja: A lighter and shorter version of *Charodeika* (see left) with a healthy dose of humour. By Herman Steenbrugge.

OCT 26 20.15 at CC De Meent, Gemeenveldstraat 34
www.demeent.be

Brussels

Oedipe: The only opera that tells the complete myth of Oedipus, the Greek king who would fulfil a prophecy by killing his father and marrying his mother. By Romanian composer George Enescu.

OCT 22-NOV 6 20.00 (15.00 on Sundays) at De Munt, Muntplein
www.demunt.be

Dreamsuits

28 October – 12 February 2012
MoMu Fashion Museum, Antwerp

EXHIBITION



Ever wonder who inspired Elvis Presley’s taste for gold suits or Dolly Parton’s preference for heavily ornamented cowgirl outfits? Well, the same person who designed a great deal of Flemish country music pioneer Bobbejaan Schoepen’s wardrobe: Nudie Cohn. The Ukrainian-born “Rodeo Tailor” made a name for himself when he moved to Hollywood in the 1940s and began designing glitzy clothing for all the biggest music icons. Flashy fringe leather jackets, rhinestone-studded cowboy hats and extravagant, hand-embroidered

suits were his claim to fame. Even today, 27 years after his death, Nudie still inspires loads of contemporary musicians, fashion photographers and designers. In this first European exhibition to examine the work of the tailor who revolutionised the clothing of Country & Western music, Antwerp’s Fashion Museum presents pieces out of the personal collection of Bobbejaan and his wife Josée, who were good friends with Nudie. (RB)

→ www.momu.be

FAIR

Countryside

29 October – 1 November, 10.00-19.00
Flanders Expo, Ghent

Country living is hot these days, as more and more people recognise the need for a simpler, more natural lifestyle. This translates to increasing attention to local food, nostalgic interior design choices and an overall appreciation for the “good old days”. At the annual Countryside fair, visitors can immerse themselves in all things pastoral, from unique creations by artisanal craftsmen (candles, paintings, handmade wreaths) to romantic decorations and other ideas to spruce up the home or garden. Flemish agricultural

agency VLAM will be on site presenting traditional Flemish regional products (cured ham, *witloof*, coffee from Antwerp, farmer’s *pâté*), plus a ravishing collection of azalea arrangements put together by local florists. There’s even a hall dedicated to timeless fashion (tweed coats, wool sweaters, sun hats), and another to travel (idyllic B&Bs, farm- and eco-tourism). With more than 300 exhibitors at this edition, there’s no chance of walking away uninspired. (RB)

→ www.countryside.be



MORE FAIRS THIS WEEK

Brussels

Brussels Accessible Art Fair: A close encounter with 50 acclaimed international artists and their work
OCT 28-30 at Hotel Conrad International, Louizalaan 71
www.accessibleartfair.com

Hoogstraten

Oldtimer Fair: 25th jubileum edition of the oldtimer car fair featuring classic cars, motorcycles and parts, plus collectable items such as miniature replicas, keychains, books and more
OCT 29-30 9.30-18.00 at Veilinghallen, Loenhoutseweg 59
www.oldtimerbeurs-hoogstraten.be

Kortrijk

Record and CD Fair: Everything for the music lover and/or collector, featuring vinyl records and CDs, plus DVDs, posters, T-shirts and more
OCT 30 10.00-17.00 at Kortrijk Xpo, Doorniksesteenweg 216
www.kdx.be/en/beurskortrijk.php

MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Hel Looks in Antwerp: A hand-picked selection of the most memorable styles featured in Hel Looks, a blogging project on street styles from Helsinki in cooperation with the City of Helsinki
Until NOV 30 at Designcenter de Winkelhaak, Lange Winkelhaakstraat 26
hel-looks.com/antwerp/

Deurne (Antwerp)

Esthétique Moderne (Modern Esthetics): A look at Belgian silver design between 1885 and 1945 through posters, catalogues, drawings and photographs, from a time when decor and design were considered esthetical and even revolutionary
Until APR 9 2012 at Sterckshof Silver Museum, Hooftvunderlei 160
www.zilvermuseum.be

Ghent

Futiel Textiel? (Futile Textile?): A fascinating look at all the esthetic, religious or political meanings different textiles can carry
Until MAR 25 2012 at MIAT, Minnemeers 9
www.miat.gent.be

Razor Reel Fantastic Film Festival

29 October – 5 November

Kinepolis, Cinema Liberty & Biekorf, Bruges



Gothic Bruges is a fitting location for the fourth edition of the fantastic film festival that sees thousands of cinephiles come out to enjoy some 51 films, 23 shorts, plus appearances by 15 international guests, film workshops, documentaries, after-parties and more. It's not all blood and gore, either. The genres vary greatly and include absurd comedies and action-packed thrillers, plus a whole lot of fantasy, animé and science-fiction. But, yes, horror cult is still the main draw. Stick around (if you dare) after the following films for a drink with the director or a chat with one of the actors present: *The Dead*, *The Wicker Tree*, *Kill List*, *The Divide*, *Bellflower (pictured)* and *Stalker*. The favourite contemporary films to watch out for this year have such laughably insidious titles as *Atrocious*, *The Perfect Host*, *The Devil's Business*, *Inbred* and *Spiderhole of Bereavement*. (RB)

→ www.rrfff.be

MORE FILM THIS WEEK

Brussels

International Independent Film Festival: 38th annual event featuring more than 80 films from all over the world with a focus on New Zealand
NOV 1-6 at Centre Culturel Jacques Franck, Waterloosesteenweg 94
www.centremultimedia.org/fifi

Walter Salles: Screening of the 1998 film *Central do Brasil* in the presence of the Brazilian director, plus some of his not-yet-released short films and a work in progress
NOV 6 19.30 at Flagey, Heilig-Kruisplein
www.flagey.be

WORLD

Ryuichi Sakamoto is a musician who ignores boundaries, between countries and between genres. He once described himself as an "outernationalist". "Being outernational is like Moses in the desert. There's no country. I want to be a citizen of the world." His career has seen him ignore the boundaries between electropop, movie scores, acting, anime and

computer games. In 1996 he broke down another boundary, teaming up with a violinist and a cellist to play music whose inspirations go back to Ravel and Debussy, and now the trio appear at Bozar to revisit older compositions and present new work.

(Alan Hope)

→ www.bozar.be



MORE WORLD MUSIC THIS WEEK

Brussels

Sofia Rei: Originally from Buenos Aires, Argentina, Sofia Rei Koutsovitis's project is grounded in traditional South American rhythms. Chacarera, zamba and vidala from Argentina
OCT 28 20.00 at Art Base, Zandstraat 29
www.art-base.be

Antwerp

Conjunto Angola 70: The Buena Vista Social Club from Angola, as they're called, brings together musicians from the '60s and '70s for a mix of traditional rhythms, Latin grooves and old school merengue
NOV 4 20.30 at Wereldculturencentrum
 Zuiderpershuis, Waalsekaai 14
www.zuiderpershuis.be

JAZZ

Ashley Kahn

31 October, 18.00

Huis 23, Steenstraat 23 (above AB Resto)



Saxophone legend John Coltrane referred to his 1964 album *A Love Supreme* as a "humble offering to God". But as far as everybody else is concerned, it was a godly offering to the canon of jazz. The story of Coltrane's signature album is wrapped up into a critically acclaimed book by American author Ashley Kahn, the reference on this and other jazz masterpieces from Impulse Records including Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue*.

He also wrote *The House That Trane Built: The Story Of Impulse Records*, which makes him a most sought-after speaker on this 50th anniversary of the famous label. Come and hear Kahn give a powerful, music-saturated presentation about Impulse and its long list of influential and innovative jazz artists. Then head over to the AB for a concert by legendary pianist McCoy Tyner, who played with the John Coltrane Quartet in the early 1960s. He is performing a contemporary exploration of Coltrane and Johnny Hartman with the help of two equally cool jazz cats, modern vocalist José James and saxophonist Chris Potter. (RB)

→ www.abconcerts.be

MORE JAZZ THIS WEEK

Borgerhout (Antwerp)

Toots Thielemans & Brazilian Friends: Brussels' most famous jazz musician shares his love for Brazilian music
OCT 30 20.30 at De Roma, Turnhoutsebaan 286
www.deroma.be

Ghent & Turnhout

Phronesis + Ifa Y Xango: Young and explosive London-based piano trio with Danish roots
OCT 26 20.00 at De Bijloke, Bijlokekaai 7, Ghent
OCT 27 20.15 at De Warande, Warandestraat 42, Turnhout
www.debijloke.be
www.warande.be

Leuven

Bert Joris Quartet: Versatile Flemish jazz foursome on trumpet, piano, double bass and drums
OCT 28 20.00 at 30CC Schouwburg, Bondgenotenlaan 21
www.30cc.be

Sakamoto

5 November, 20.00

Bozar, Brussels

CAFE SPOTLIGHT

DIANA GOODWIN

Het Hemelrijk

Hemelrijk 11, Hasselt

If Belgium is heaven for beer lovers, then there's a spot in Hasselt that's heaven on earth.

In a quiet corner of the historic centre, on a tiny street named Hemelrijk, is a café with the same name. Hemelrijk, translated into Latin as Regnum Celestis over the door, means Heavenly Kingdom and most likely comes from the street's proximity to the cathedral, Saint Quintus. According to the owner, there used to be a children's cemetery nearby.

Founded 30 years ago, Het Hemelrijk is known for its extensive beer selection. Cosimo De Noi, the bar's third proprietor, claims to have approximately 630 beers in stock. (I confess, I didn't actually count them.) Once a year, he updates the menu. There are two Beers of the Month on tap; this month they are Kasteel Donker and Gauloise Fruits Rouges.

The menu is helpfully divided into sections: white beer, Trappist beer, abbey beer, blonde and amber, dark, stout, kriek, fruit beer, gueuze and Christmas beer. Most of the beer is Belgian, but there is a small selection of foreign imports. Het Hemelrijk is one of the few places where you can order Westvleteren, that most elusive of the Trappist beers, widely considered the best beer in the world.

In addition to the overwhelming



beer selection, the café offers a large selection of jenevers and whiskeys. The focus is clearly on drinking: the only food on the menu is a small selection of bar snacks. But no one comes here to eat; the beer is the main attraction. De Noi says his customers include many tourists from the United States, England and Germany. The café is charming and attractive, with wooden tables, a bright back section lit by skylights during the day and a baby Grand tucked into one corner. On Sundays, students from the nearby music academy treat patrons to informal performances on the piano.

bite

ROBYN BOYLE

Grade

Grade (pronounced *grah-duh*) may very well be a perfect representation of the city in which it was born 26 years ago. Like Ghent, the brasserie-style restaurant is contemporary chic inside a 19th-century mansion not short on history or charm. It's named after Eugène Grade, the previous owner of the house and lieutenant-general of the nearby Leopoldskazerne, or military barracks.

If it weren't for the influence of one fanatic foodie friend in particular, I might have continued to drive right past this barely noticeable restaurant on the city's ring road. So finally, with a group of five, I make a last-minute reservation on a busy Friday night. My group enjoys an aperitif in the adjoining bar area. Although it's all very sleek and stylish, the atmosphere is nowhere near uptight. We're all relaxed and in good spirits when the friendly waiter comes to take our coats and offer up more drinks.

When we make the move to the considerably cosier dining room, we are enchanted by the regal atmosphere created by high ceilings with decorative mouldings, wooden tables and the soft glow of candles and chandeliers.

Fish, meat and pasta are regulars on the menu. A variable list of suggestions has me drooling over sea bass with fennel and shallots, cod with string beans and cherry

Contact *Bite* at flandersbite@gmail.com

tomatoes and Spanish pork shoulder. Ultimately, though, it's our knowledgeable server who sells me on the *zwezeriken*, or veal sweetbreads.

Because I've never tried this dish, essentially the thymus organ of a young cow, I am understandably hesitant. The sweetbreads and their delectable port sauce arrive on a plate spilling over with chard, a leafy vegetable related to beets. Its seaweed-like texture and earthy bitterness make it the perfect accompaniment to this rich dish, with the veal baked buttery crisp on the outside. To top it off, there are oven-roasted herb potatoes and little golden chanterelle mushrooms.

The fillet of beef tenderloin next to me, meanwhile, is also a hit. My friend enjoys her steak medium-well with a side of homemade Béarnaise sauce. She shares the bowl of hand-cut fries with our other steak lover at the table. His hefty chunk of Irish entrecôte is also cooked perfectly, pink in the middle and full of flavour. Both dishes come with a green salad.

Another friend tucks into half a Belle-Vue lobster, cooked in its own juices for maximum flavour and served in a deep bowl with celery, carrot, onion and potatoes. The meat from the body and tail is delicate yet firm, creamy white in colour with pink tips and slightly sweet.



Finally, our most enthusiastic diner (and reason for coming to Grade) is polishing off a plate of Spanish pork shoulder from the Duroc de Batallé farm, famed for its high-quality meat. This is indeed about as melt-in-your-mouth as pork gets. It's surrounded by thick, warm rounds of white parsley root, rosemary and moist polenta.

The bill comes to €181.50, or about €37 a head. In case you're wondering, that does include six strong beers, four glasses of sparkling wine and water.

As we get ready to leave, a cheery man hands us our coats. "Are you the chef?" I ask, unknowingly. "One of four," he

laughs. Turns out, though, that he's owner, Piet Rogiers, who, commendably, still has both feet planted firmly on the ground notwithstanding Grade's success.

→ www.grade.be

Charles de Kerchovelaan 79, Ghent; 09.224.43.85
Tue-Thurs 12.00-14.00 & 18.30-22.30; Fri-Sat 12.00-14.00 & 18.30-23.30
Mains: €11-€26
Simply delicious, no-nonsense French cuisine in a classy locale with friendly service

TALKING DUTCH

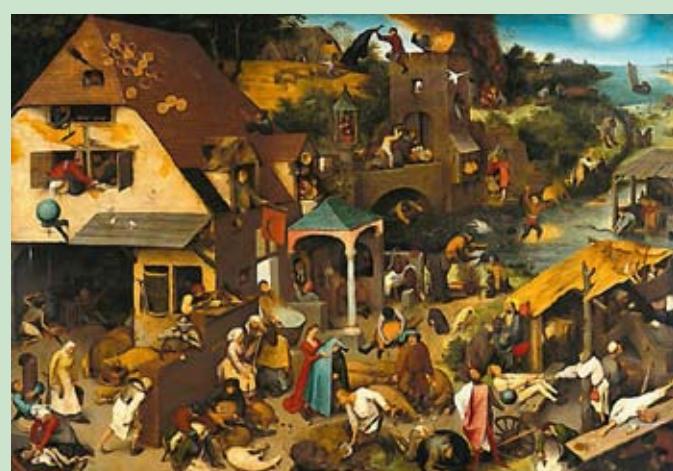
Beter laat dan nooit

More than three months ago, *Flanders Today* reader Vincent Goossens from Mortsel made the suggestion "to dive into the vast and rich collection of Dutch-language proverbs". A good idea, I thought, because proverbs are often difficult to translate and a great way to learn about a language. *Een vreemde taal echt kennen is haar spreekwoorden kennen*, to really know a foreign language is to know its proverbs.

Since then, however, I think that I've dived into a grand total of three. So, here's to making up. *Beter laat dan nooit*, better late than never. Our ancestors, poor buggers, didn't have cloud-computing and relied on more innovative measures to ensure the survival of their collective wisdom. *Al is een spreekwoord nog zo raar, als het rijmt dan is het waar*, a proverb may be strange, but if it rhymes then it's true.

The first book of proverbs in the Dutch language was published in 1480. A century later, Flemish painter Pieter Brueghel the Elder famously depicted no less than 80 proverbs on one single canvas (pictured).

Some are still in use, such as: *Van een mooi bord kan je*



niet eten, you can't eat from a pretty plate – looks alone will get you nowhere. Or: *Lachen als een boer met kiespijn* (which is technically a saying, not a proverb), to laugh like a farmer with a tooth ache – to laugh without actually having fun. Try and find them; they're both on there.

But many have changed over time or disappeared all together. Proverbs typically belong to the realm of popular language and are subject to its dynamic nature. *De tijd kent geen genade*, time knows no mercy.

Among the more commonly used proverbs of today are: *Wie a zegt moet ook b zeggen*, whoever says "a" must also say

"b" – you have to finish what you start. *De appel valt niet ver van de boom*, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree – children often look/act like their parents. Or, one of my favourites: *Al draagt de aap een gouden ring, het is en blijft een lelijk ding*, even when a monkey wears a golden ring, it is and remains an ugly thing – not all who dress well are beautiful.

There are hundreds and most can be found, as usual, on Wikipedia (in Dutch). Some are funny, others are sad. But all are wise somehow. Just like perhaps the most important of them all: *Spreken is zilver, zwijgen is goud*. Talk is silver, silence is golden.

PHILIP EBELS

THE LAST WORD...

New direction

"A lot of young people are still interested in politics, but mostly not in political parties."

Politics lecturer Dave Sinardet of Antwerp University

Weather forecast

"Enjoying a great windy and sunny day at the Belgian coast. Starting to say goodbye to luxury and warmth."

Leuven medical student Sam Deltour, shortly to embark on an expedition across Antarctica

Pastures new

"Giving a new direction to life from time to time is what makes life so fine."

Leuven university professor Paul De Grauwe is to take up a post at the London School of Economics

Hero's welcome

"It's a great honour for us to bring Tintin home."

Steven Spielberg, speaking at the premiere last week in Brussels of *The Adventures of Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn*

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #204

Feature

We've mentioned it here and there in passing, but now feast your eyes on an expanded article about the Maeterlinck Centenary, the 100th anniversary of the awarding of Belgium's one and only Nobel Prize for Literature. We'll tell you about the Ghent-born writer and how you can celebrate his life and work

Focus

The Flemish Region recently signed a protocol on academic diplomacy with the region's top universities and research institutions. University rectors explain the methods being used to pull the best brains of Europe into Flanders

Business

There's an investment opportunity many businesses in Brussels and Flanders still don't know about: The film tax shelter. We'll explain how it works in favour of both businesses and the film industry