

## Pilot strike

Flemish port traffic brought to a halt



► 4

## Ladybird invasion!

The Harlequin puts native species at risk



► 7

## Happy birthday, Kipling

The trademark Flemish brand turns 25



► 11



# Bullseye

## How to get nominated for an Oscar in five easy steps

Lisa Bradshaw

As you read this, Flemish director Michaël R Roskam is in Hollywood, flashing a smile and pumping the hands of Oscar voters. Interviews, appearances, events, Q&As. He's doing what he's been doing for more than a year now – talking about his movie *Rundskop*, known across the world by its English title *Bullhead*. This Sunday, Belgium will find out if it has won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.



1

### Read a lot of comics

Since his childhood, Michaël R Roskam has been a fan of comics and graphic novels. He thought he would grow up to draw comics himself, but instead he became a painter. Take a good look at his Oscar-nominated film *Bullhead*, and you will see both skills. Roskam doesn't, like so many other filmmakers, tell a story only through the narrative and dialogue. He uses the image to convey emotions, to set a mood, to relate an entire lifetime of rage in one long shot.

Roskam (*pictured*) did not go to film school. "It was from comics," he tells me, "that I understood how editing works. How do you create sense and meaning between two separate images? Some comic artists can make beautiful drawings, but conveying all the little things that happen between one panel and another – not many comics are really good at it. And it's two panels that make a third one. In comics, one plus one equals three. That's how I like to make a film."

Roskam, 39, studied painting at the Sint-Lucas Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels, which further reinforced his filmmaking method. "Not only is painting a lesson in style and light and contrast, it also shows you what you can do with just one frame." It's a reference he constantly drew on while shooting *Bullhead*. "If you don't need to cut the scene, don't cut the scene."



2

### Choose a subject no-one has ever heard of

*Bullhead* is the story of Limburg cattle farmer Jacky Vanmarsenille. Wanting to beef up his cattle, he gets involved in the illegal hormone trade. And he's well suited for it: Threatening anyone who might question his tactics or decline to deal in his meat, he's quite the local thug.

That part of the story is based on actual events that shocked Belgium in the 1990s, when a government meat inspector was murdered by what came to be known as the "hormone mafia". With the EU ban of hormone drugs in meat production in 1989, a black market established itself across Europe and was particularly prevalent in Belgium.

"I knew I wanted to make a film noir, something that was really original and from Belgian soil," explains Roskam. "I didn't want to imitate some Italian mobsters or Russian gangsters because that doesn't really exist in our country. And what we have doesn't really exist in other countries. You can only tell a



FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



Jean-Pierre Coopman

He may have had his problems in recent years, including a run-in with the law in Dendermonde last spring, but this week Jean-Pierre Coopman will be celebrating a remarkable anniversary. On 22 February, 1976, in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Coopman became the only Flemish boxer ever to step into the ring with Muhammad Ali. Coopman was born in Ingelmunster, West Flanders, in 1946. His father died when he was three, and his mother worked long hours in a shoe factory. The children worked, too, picking potatoes and beans for local farmers. Later, he worked for a time as a stone cutter. Coopman only started boxing at the age of 25 but came to the attention of manager Karel De Jager, who helped him climb the ranks of heavyweights. By 1976, Coopman was top of the European rankings. Ali had endured a hard-won victory against Joe Frazier – the legendary Thrilla in Manila – and reportedly asked for an easy opponent. The honour, thanks to his ranking, fell to Coopman, known as the Lion of Flanders. Parts of the fight are available to watch on YouTube and show

Coopman taking heavy punishment to the head in round two, opening up a cut over the left eye. Ali, meanwhile, hardly bothered to put up his guard. After 14 minutes and 46 seconds, and a flurry of punches that sent him to the canvas, Ali picked off an exhausted Coopman with a lethal left jab. Ali later referred to his opponent as “a gentleman”, though he never managed to get his name right, calling him Cooperman. The match brought Coopman four million francs (about €100,000), a sizeable sum at the time. He invested it in a café in Roeselare. The year after the big Ali fight, Coopman became European heavyweight champion, before retiring from the ring in 1980. He now makes a living creating oil paintings of famous boxers. In 1995, he appeared in the Flemish film *Camping Cosmos*, and in 2005, he was voted 509th in the Flemish version of the competition to find the Greatest Ever Belgian. In 2010, the San Juan fight was the subject of an exhibition in the Huis van Alijn museum in Ghent.

News in brief

**A fire in Leuven’s engineering school Groep T** last week destroyed years of work, including two specially customised Citroen 2CVs, one modified to run on bio-fuel and one on electricity. The lab also lost electric scooters, tools and computers. However the project’s data is safe, stored on an off-site server. “We’re all devastated, but we know we have to work on,” said Geert Waeyenberghe, leader of the Intelligent Mobility project.

The Flemish Swimming Federation could face a **€250,000 claim of damages** from Antwerp’s Sportpaleis after last week’s decision to move the European Championships from Antwerp to Hungary. The federation was unable to raise enough interest among sponsors for the event, for which it had booked the Sportpaleis for three weeks in May. The venue’s management now complain that the Sportpaleis will lie empty instead.

Sabam, the performing rights organisation that collects royalties for composers and musicians, is facing **charges of fraud, breach of trust and falsification of accounts**. Also sent for trial by a Brussels court were the organisation’s former chairman and three former financial directors. Sabam is accused of paying bribes to a functionary, as well as mismanagement of the funds collected on behalf of musicians. In a separate ruling, Sabam lost its action to force Flemish social network company Netlog to install filters to prevent the illegal sharing of music and video files. The European Court of Justice said the demand would be an impossible restraint on Netlog’s freedom to do business.

Flemish public transport authority De Lijn is considering **scrapping its six weekend night buses in Ghent**, which would save €40 million a

year. According to a spokesperson, the buses are expensive to operate but are only used by a few dozen passengers. A final decision will be taken in March.

Education minister Pascal Smet last week announced an **extra €1.8 million in financing for higher education** in Brussels, to help compensate for the higher costs in the capital, including transport and housing. The Free University of Brussels (VUB) receives €663,000, and HUB/Ehsal gets €540,000.

The mayor of Hasselt, Hilde Claes, has issued a **ban on a proposed conference organised by the Islamist organisation Hizb ut Tahrir**, due to take place in the city on 4 March. Claes said she was acting on advice from the federal police and the foreign affairs ministry. An association representing the city’s mosques had no knowledge of the event and had distanced itself from the group, she said.

The Flemish parliament last week welcomed 135 teachers from across the region for a day of workshops aimed to help with the teaching of **subjects related to citizenship and democracy**. The teachers were later able to attend the parliament’s regular plenary session and weekly questions period.

Researchers at the University of Antwerp have discovered a gene that may play a major role in the **development of obesity**. The team compared gene profiles drawn from admissions to the hospital. The gene is a so-called lipid sensor, which is believed to have a role in determining where in the body fat particles are stored. According to research team leader Professor Wim Van Hul, further research

is essential, but he described the discovery as “a major step forward”. The team’s results will shortly be published in the journal *Nature*.

A man accused of **taking part in a pirate attack** on the rock-dumper Pompei off the Somali coast in 2009 had his 10-year jail sentence upheld last week by the court of appeals in Brussels. Abdihasan Ahmed was part of a gang who held the crew of the ship, operated by Flemish dredging companies Deme and Jan De Nul, until the end of June, releasing them on payment of a €1.94 million ransom. He was arrested in November 2010 by the frigate Marie-Louise, then part of the anti-pirate fleet patrolling in the area.

Flemish celebrities, including actor and singer Pieter Embrechts and comedian Bart Cannaerts, have joined in a **campaign to encourage eating less meat** during Lent. The campaign was launched last year by 23-year-old Alexia Leysen, daughter of KBC chairman Thomas Leysen.

► [www.dagenzondervlees.be](http://www.dagenzondervlees.be)

Archaeologists last week discovered a four-centimetre tall metal sculpture of a cat holding a charter and a key, which could provide information on the **origins of the triennial Kattenstoet** (Cat Festival) in Ypres. The piece dates from the second half of the 13th century, whereas historians had earlier dated the Kattenstoet, thought to have originated as a fertility rite, to the 14th century. The 43rd Kattenstoet takes place this May.

► [www.kattenstoet.be](http://www.kattenstoet.be)

OFFSIDE

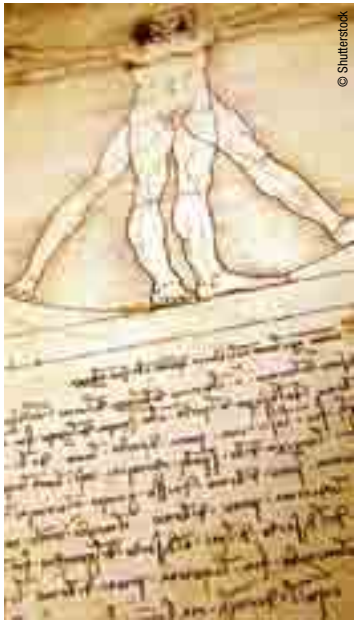
Alan Hope

The Da Vinci caught

Nobody’s perfect, not even the greatest artist ever to put charcoal to paper, who doubled as one of the most brilliant scientific minds in the history of humankind. That simple truth has been proven by professor Dirk Huylebrouck, a mathematician who teaches at the Sint-Lukas architecture school in Ghent, who published his findings on the blunder made by Leonardo da Vinci in the latest issue of *Eos* magazine. The mistake is embarrassingly simple, even if you’re not a mathematical genius. On a page of the Madrid I Codex, dating from 1490, Da Vinci includes a table of multiples of the number two. The mistake comes when he gets to 4,096, which he doubles to 8,092. As the alert reader will have spotted, the correct answer is 8,192. The error goes unnoticed, so that the rest of the table is wrong, too. “We’re talking about an unequivocal

arithmetical mistake...right there in Da Vinci’s own mirror handwriting,” Professor Huylebrouck told *De Standaard*. To make matters worse for poor Da Vinci, the mistake came to light when Huylebrouck was reading another article by Hungarian mathematicians, pointing out another error in the same codex, and indeed on the same page, where the genius who gave us the concept of the Renaissance Man slips up in a table of multiples of three. The truth will out, even after 522 years. It’s not the first time Mr Da Vinci has been found to be in error. In 1988 psycho-historians concluded on the basis of some simple arithmetical errors that he was probably dyslexic. Nor is it the first time Huylebrouck has spotted a glaring error in others’ work. Following the renovation of the Atomium in 2006, he was sharp

enough to notice that one of the nine globes was no longer a perfect sphere.



FLANDERS TODAY

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# Bullseye

A dream team of cast and crew helped propel *Bullhead* to international acclaim

► continued from page 1

universal story by being authentic.” *Bullhead*’s character Jacky becomes more complex – and a bit more sympathetic – as his past unravels, revealing the horrific childhood incident that changed his destiny. He has spent his entire adult life trying to compensate for this tragedy. Jacky is, we come to find – in scenes that are indeed reminiscent of Neoclassical portraiture – himself addicted to hormones. He sits in a darkened room, injecting himself from dozens of vials and tubes. “Audiences – especially in America – understand the feelings, the impotence of this life,” says Roskam. “People feel a familiarity with the film because of the universal aspect of that, but, at the same time, the exoticism works because they don’t know this place. So it’s something strange, yet familiar.”

## Hire Matthias Schoenaerts

**3** To play the hulking Jacky, Flemish actor Matthias Schoenaerts put on 27 kilos, a prosthetic nose and pumped a lot of iron. Already popular in Flanders for roles in films like *Lof* and *Pulsar*, he became the man of the moment. It was a phenomenal performance, and he has been compared to Robert De Niro’s Raging Bull and hailed as Europe’s next big thing. Many international critics who wrote less than glowing reviews about the film still recommended it for Schoenaerts’ performance alone. Roskam could have chosen from a number of good Flemish actors, but no one else even crossed his mind. “I just knew he was the one,” he says. “There was never one split second of doubt.”

## Hire Nicolas Karakatsanis

**4** Although a director of photography can make or break the entire look of a film, it’s a job with few accolades outside of the film industry. Nicolas Karakatsanis has built a solid reputation as someone with a clear understanding of film



Matthias Schoenaerts as the now iconic Jacky Vanmarsenille in *Bullhead*

as an art form and a commitment to long takes rather than a lot of short jumps from character to character. This technique was crucial to the success of *Bullhead*’s dark and brooding atmosphere. “He understands perfectly what I

“You can only tell a universal story by being authentic”

want,” exclaims Roskam. “He thinks the same way as I do. Don’t cut the scene if you don’t need to cut the scene. If you watch the scenes in *Bullhead*, you know full well that

other filmmakers would have cut into the scene because they think they have to.” From the beginning, the pair, plus editor Alain Dessauvage, had a blueprint for the visual style. “We knew if we followed this concept, we would never have problems with the continuity of our style. I think that’s one of the strong points of the movie – it’s consistent in its style and in its rhythm.”

## Remain calm

**5** We knew a week ahead of time that *Bullhead* had made the shortlist for an Oscar nomination. Where was Roskam when the Oscar nominations

were announced? “In my car, driving back from a job.” He purposely timed the drive to coincide with the announcement so that he could be alone and chill out. He didn’t turn on the radio; he’d find out soon enough. “Last year, I discovered a new part of my personality that I wasn’t aware of,” he says. “When things happen to me, my reaction is silence. It’s never excitement or ecstatic behaviour. Every time we hear good news about the film, I’m always calm.” Not that he isn’t happy, he insists, with the course the film has taken – the awards, the attention, the talk of him directing in Hollywood. Ecstasy, however, comes in the form of a good idea. “When I have a good thing happening, and I find something where I’m like, wow, this

is going to work, then I jump out of my chair, and I’m like, ‘yes!’” Also, he admits, he’s moved on. He’s working on new scripts, doing technical work on trailers, getting on with it. With *Bullhead*, which released in Belgium in February of last year, he feels a bit like he’s living in the past. “Other guys who are done with their movies are halfway to the next one, and I have to keep talking about this one!”

*The Academy Awards will be broadcast live in Flanders on PrimeStar and will be free to Telenet digital subscribers. Local start time is 2.30am on Monday, 27 February*

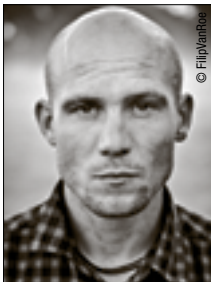
## WITNESS

### Pierre Drouot, Director Flemish Audio-Visual Fund



Pierre Drouot is the general director of the Flemish Audio-Visual Fund, which helps fund and promote Flemish film both at home and abroad. “Although the recognition *Bullhead* has received is unusual for a first film, Michaël Roskam hasn’t come out of nowhere. He has made four shorts, and in the short *Carlo* he proves that he really knows how to direct actors and has a feeling for atmosphere. “One of the things that makes *Bullhead* special is that it’s a subject no one has ever seen in a film before. The film is different; it’s unexpected. Roskam also has a very good sense of tension. And the photography builds up a kind of mystery. In terms of winning the Oscar, we are the underdog. *Bullhead* is the kind of film that gets a lot of attention, but I’m not sure it’s the kind of film that wins that particular prize. There are a few people who told me they think it will win, and I bet all of them a bottle of champagne that it won’t [laughs]. So if I lose, it costs me. But, well, for an Oscar, it’s a small price to pay.”

### Jeroen Perceval, actor



Jeroen Perceval plays one of the leads in *Bullhead* – a double agent whose childhood past comes back to haunt him. “From the moment I saw Michaël Roskam’s short *Carlo*, I knew his first feature would be great. The pure talent in that film just jumped from the screen. During the shooting of *Bullhead*, you could feel that everybody believed in it very much, and that made everybody – from the gaffers to the actors – work very hard and stay very focused. There were magical moments where, after the assistant director yelled ‘cut!’, you could just hear everybody think: ‘Wow, WTF!’ “Michael has the guts and the intelligence to think outside the box. What *Bullhead* is doing now is very good for Belgian film internationally. But it’s not only *Bullhead*. If you take a look at the last 10 years – I’m talking about the Flemish films – a generation of talent rose up that internationally has improved, and continues to improve, the image of Belgian cinema.”



# Strike shuts down Flanders' ports

Protest at pension legislation costs Antwerp port €1 million per hour

Alan Hope

The biggest customer of the port of Antwerp, the freight shipping line MSC, is to "review" its use of the port following last week's work-to-rule by sea and river pilots. MSC is responsible for two-thirds of Antwerp's container traffic. Strike action by pilots and other maritime officials, which restricted pilot services to office hours, virtually paralysed shipping for four days.

In a statement, Geneva-based MSC said it had "no understanding of this and previous union actions by the pilots and will review its future investment policy in Flanders. This is all taking place in a period when the container freight industry is in deep crisis, and we cannot understand how a group of interested parties can behave in such a way."

Meanwhile Antwerp city's alderman for the port, Marc Van Peel, has said he will look into the possibility of imposing a legal obligation on pilots to turn up for work, as well as the option of drafting in "other people with the same competences" during any future industrial action. "Bringing the port to a standstill because of pension problems was inappropriate," he said. Then echoing the wartime words of Winston Churchill: "It is rare that so many

suffer so much damage at the hands of so few."

The action led to serious disruption of port traffic. On Wednesday, 15 February, 20 ships were able to be unloaded at Antwerp and leave the port. About 80 more were stranded either at sea awaiting entry to the port or in the port itself awaiting exit. At Zeebrugge, some ships were reported to have been diverted away, while others were being unloaded, with some delay. A spokesman for the Port of Ghent said they changed their planning so that no ships had to be turned away, being dealt with during office hours, when the pilots were on duty. As the actions last week came to an end, Ghent said it would take up to 48 hours to clear the backlog of shipping, with Antwerp estimating a backlog of 24 hours.

## Sector agreement until 2013

The pilots, who are government employees, guide ships from the open sea into the ports of Flanders, mainly Antwerp, Ghent and Zeebrugge. Together with a number of other maritime officials, they are protesting at plans that require them to work an extra two years before



Ships lying offshore at Zeebrugge unable to get to Antwerp harbour last week

being eligible for retirement at 62. They are also asking for a reduction in irregular working hours in the later years of a pilot's career.

Last week, the opposition in the Flemish parliament joined with the majority in condemning the pilots' action, and even the Christian trade union ACV called for an end to the dispute. Dutch river pilots, who handle about one in four of the ships sailing into Ghent and Antwerp, were said to be "concerned" at the action of their Flemish colleagues. Unlike their Flemish counterparts, Dutch river pilots are independent contractors.

Municipal port manager Eddy

Bruyninckx estimated the cost to the Port of Antwerp at about €1 million an hour. "This has delivered another blow to the reliability of the port," he said.

Flemish mobility minister Hilde Crevits promised the government would try to seek a "quality solution" for the pilots' concerns, including a working group to look into problems raised. "This is not the moment to be coming to the table with additional demands," she noted. "In any case, there is a sector agreement for last year and this year. These questions can be brought up when we discuss the new sector agreement for 2013 and 2014."



Police and civil defence officers comb the woods near Maria-Aalter

## Body found in castle murder case

Police investigating the disappearance of businessman Stijn Saelens found his body last week in a shallow grave in the woods about 100 metres from a chalet owned by one of the suspects in the case. The breakthrough in the case came after investigators from the Bruges prosecutor's office arrested three men, including the father-in-law of the dead man.

Stijn Saelens, owner of the Carpentier castle in Wingene, West Flanders, vanished three weeks ago from his home. Police found a trail of blood and a spent cartridge. The father and brother of his Saelens' wife were detained and questioned but later released. Police also arrested Pierre Serry, a local criminal suspected of being the intermediary in a contract killing.

A search was carried out on a piece of property owned by Serry, lying alongside the E40 motorway near Aalter, East Flanders, where searchers found Saelens' body. Preliminary autopsy results suggest he died of a bullet wound to the right lung. The investigation continues.

## New top cop takes up post

Belgium's new federal police chief, Catherine De Bolle, will take up her position on 29 February, following the collapse of two objections to her appointment. De Bolle becomes the first woman ever to head the police force. She is currently chief of the local police in Ninove, East Flanders.

De Bolle's chances of winning the job looked shaky last month, when her appointment, agreed by the federal government, was challenged by two of her competitors before the Council of State. The challenge, on procedural grounds, could have sent the whole procedure back to the starting blocks.

The Council of State ruled the challenge by one candidate inadmissible. Since the effect of the challenge would be to relaunch the procedure, the candidate had no personal stake in the decision, the court said, since by that time he would be too old to re-apply. The second challenge to De Bolle's appointment was then withdrawn.

"I admit it: It's with pain in my heart that we have to let her go," said Ninove mayor Michel Casteur last week. "Though of course we're proud that one of ours has come so far."

De Bolle, 42, almost didn't make it into the police at all, as she fell slightly short of the minimum 1.68m height requirement then in force. Instead, she studied law at Ghent University, only to join the police force after graduation – and after the height requirement had been scrapped.

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES

**272,281**

children in Flanders took part in last week's action against bullying organised by Ketnet, school magazine *Yeti* and the Flemish anti-bullying network

**38th**

place for Brussels in the rankings of the world's best student cities, drawn up by the British consultancy QS. Brussels is the only Belgian city listed in the top 50. Paris came in first

**99,852**

people signed up for Dutch classes organised by the government of Flanders in 2010-2011, an increase of about 10% on the previous year, according to education minister Pascal Smet

**20%**

increase in water consumption caused by leakages following the recent freeze. Some householders may not be aware they now have a leak, warned Flemish water companies

**7**

special trees recently given protection by the Brussels-Capital Region, bringing the total to over 100. The trees include two English yews, one weeping European beech, two monkey puzzles, one copper beech and one English walnut

## FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

## On the other hand...

Two Christian-democrats dominated the news last weekend. At the Aalst carnival, mayor Ilse Uyttersprot dressed up as a maiden, in reference to the YouTube clip that made her famous. In the clip, she was caught in the act with her boyfriend on top of some Mediterranean tower. The scene was re-enacted endlessly at the Carnival, all of which the mayor accepted in good spirits. The other was Rik Torfs, celebrity professor turned politician. In interview with *De Standaard*, the CD&V senator lashed out at his party, which in his eyes has little profile and less guts. The fact that it does not stand in the local elections in Antwerp and Tongeren, where CD&V joins forces with SPA and Open VLD respectively, he interprets as a lack of courage. CD&V, he says, should stress its Christian roots more (ironically, this will attract more Muslim voters, he believes) and get rid of its ancient structure in which its wings (representing workers, employers and farmers) hold real power. CD&V has struggled with its ideological profile for quite some time. In the Verhofstadt years, some even believed that the party would disappear. It was called a "melting ice floe". Yves Leterme proved this theory wrong, when, in 2007, he revived the party through his personal popularity and a cartel with N-VA. However, with Leterme gone and N-VA having become Flanders' largest party, CD&V has yet to move out of the trouble zone. The Christian-democrats traditionally want to represent society as a whole, often resulting in unclear views. On the one hand this, on the other hand that, is a caricature made of its beliefs. To Torfs, that is not a weakness, but a strength. He calls it "a sign of civilisation", this "capacity for sharp analysis", resulting in "brave conclusions". His words met with mixed reactions. On the one hand, his fellow Christian-democrats saw some truth in them. CD&V's recent past has been tainted by the institutional imbroglio; its present is associated with the federal government's budgetary policy only. On the other hand, Torfs was criticised heavily for the way he spoke out publicly against his own party. If Torfs has problems with the party's profile, why not discuss these internally? The professor acted like a celebrity rather than like a party member, some suggested. Somehow, in spite of their Christian background, most party members preferred the way Ilse Uyttersprot hit the headlines. A brave conclusion, even Torfs should admit.



# From the farm to the future

## A century-old women's organisation shakes off its old-fashioned image

Anna Jenkinson

KVLV may well be the largest women's organisation in Flanders and has recently celebrated its 100th birthday. But the group is all-too aware that it needs to shed its old-fashioned image and attract younger women if it is to thrive in the 21st century.

Some 107,000 women belong to KVLV, or Catholic Organisation of Rural Women. It developed from what was originally the Boerinnenbond, or Women Farmers' Association. Yet an aging membership has fallen from its 1991 peak of 163,000 members and continues to drop. As part of its revitalisation plans, the organisation is making a concerted effort to attract a younger generation and keep abreast of new trends in society. KVLV's new website has a fresh and modern look with plenty of photos of women in their 20s and 30s. And the group's new tagline, "*Vrouwen met vaart*" (Women on the move), is a guiding principle for all its activities, which range from

cooking classes to professional training courses. "Together with other women, you can shape your life and your environment. That leads to becoming stronger and feeling more sure of yourself. That's what KVLV is all about," KVLV president Carla Durllet tells me from the group's headquarters just outside Leuven.

### Rural roots

Over the years, the organisation has changed its name, expanded its membership to include all women (rather than just women farmers) and broadened its range of activities. The key values that differentiate it from other women's groups have, however, been there since the beginning: its focus on rural life and its Christian roots, as well as an emphasis on self-reliance and independence.

But the link with farmers remains strong. The *boerinnen*, who are today referred to as *aggravrouwen* (agricultural women) and include farmers and horticulturalists, may only account for 10% of the organisation's membership, but they still hold a central position. After all, many people still refer to KVLV as "the former Boerinnenbond", reflecting the strength of the brand and how entrenched the group's original name is in the Flemish psyche.

Every leap year, this section of the organisation celebrates Dag van de Agravrouw (Agricultural Women's Day), with the next one falling on 28 February. This year's celebration will kick off with a keynote speech by Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, followed by a focus on using your talents as a springboard to success. In the afternoon will be two workshops from a broad selection



Carla Durllet speaks at KVLV's congress last month, which focused on the future priorities of the organisation

of professional, cultural and social topics, and the event will end with a networking session.

### Ons kookboek

The rural roots of KVLV are also embraced in its renowned *Ons kookboek* (Our Cookbook), which is a traditional wedding present and found in nearly every Flemish kitchen. "It's the cooking bible of Flanders," said Durllet, who puts its success down to its quality, simplicity and completeness.

Last month a congress focussing on the future of KVLV kicked off with young Flemish celebrity chef Jeroen Meus making a recipe from the very first edition of the cookbook, which was published in 1927 with a modest print run of 1,000 copies. Today the book's sales are heading towards three million. It has been translated into French and published in Braille and audio versions.

*Ons Kookboek* provides a key source of income, alongside membership

fees and subsidies from the government of Flanders. KVLV is keen to emphasise, however, that the organisation represents a lot more than one bestseller. The group is there to provide opportunities for all women and to enrich all aspects of their lives, be it through social activities, information evenings, legal advice or practical support.

### Finger on the pulse

Through KVLV's approximately 1,000 groups spread across Flanders, "we have our finger on the pulse" of who today's woman is, says Durllet. Throughout the year, KVLV's branches organise about 54,000 different activities.

Working against KVLV is increased competition for women's time and interest from gyms and sports clubs, computers and television. On the other hand, the organisation has been happy to note in recent years a move away from an overly individualistic and consumer-

focused culture. "We have noticed a new mentality, a search for the authentic," Durllet says, citing an interest among younger women to learn how to use a sewing machine or a general trend of going "back to the land".

KVLV is keen to build on these trends and ensure that it attracts as many younger women as it can. It wants to be seen less as a place for coffee mornings and chit-chat and more as somewhere that emphasises the practical and makes a real difference to women's lives. The organisation has in fact been doing that for years, through, for example, its child-care initiatives and social work actions in rural Flanders as well as community projects in developing countries.

To thrive in the 21st century, it's not so much about the organisation changing what it does as changing people's perceptions. A tough task, but not an impossible one.

► [www.kvlv.be](http://www.kvlv.be)

# Grouwels unveils plans for mobility improvements

The Brussels-Capital Region last week announced a €275 million budget for public works in 2012 aimed at improving mobility. The works – part of the Mobile Brussels plan – include tram and cycle infrastructure and maintenance of roads, tunnels and public spaces.

"With this investment, I want to make a difference for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users, without ignoring the needs of motorists," the city's mobility minister Brigitte Grouwels said. "Together with our partners, I am working towards letting Brussels grow over the coming years into a nicer city to live and work."

The plans involve several major developments. Trams 92 and 94 will be diverted at Koningsplein via Central Station to Treurenberg, to better integrate tram and train. A new tramline will allow easier access to Jette and Ganshoren, while the 62 tramline on Leopold-

III laan will be extended towards the airport, and €83 million will go on new tram rolling stock.

A total of €100,000 is earmarked for a study into a tram connection with Tour & Taxis. Also in the canal area, a bridge would join Picardstraat to the North Station neighbourhood on the other side of the canal. The disputed Havenlaan renovations would be the subject of a new round of discussions with local groups, while €1 million will be spent on improving cycle and footpaths.

Elsensesteenweg in the Elsene commune, the second biggest shopping street in the city, will begin its long-awaited makeover this summer, involving new cycle lanes, bus shelters and benches. Leuvensesteenweg will be resurfaced between Madouplein and Sint-Joostplein, turning it into a pedestrian street, also open to buses. "This will breathe new life into the street, so the area can carry on improving," Grouwels said.



A new tramline will link Koningsplein and Central Station, passing by the Musical Instruments Museum

Works going on in the metro and tunnel complex under Rogierplein in the city centre will be extended, with developments above ground, including the reorganisation of traffic lanes, tree-planting and the installation of a canopy over the

square.

About €16 million will be invested in new cycle-paths on regional roads, as well as improving existing lanes, including on Woluwelaan and the inner ring. Finally, plans to renovate the

Leopold-II tunnel will take a step further as the region draws up detailed specifications, to be presented to potential partners in the public-private development.

ALAN HOPE



THE WEEK  
IN BUSINESS

## Cinema

## ► Kinopolis

Ghent-based multiplex operator Kinopolis had better than expected results in 2011, with a €36.5 million profit despite the lack of a blockbuster film (such as *Avatar* in 2010) to attract viewers. The group acquired cinema advertising company Brightfish in December of last year to diversify its revenues.

## Construction

## ► Besix

Brussels-based building group Besix has won part of a €120 million contract to maintain the rolling stock and infrastructure of the Dubai tram network over the next 13 years in partnership with the French Alstom group. Besix's part of the contract amounts to €52 million. The project is the first-ever tramline in the Gulf region.

## Dredging

## ► Deme

Antwerp-based dredging group Deme has signed one of its largest contracts ever with the €916 million agreement to develop the access channel, manoeuvring area and berths for Chevron's new Wheatstone liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal on Australia's northwest coast.

## Plastics

## ► Solvay

The Brussels-based chemical and plastics group has sold its 50% stake in Pipelife, the Austria-based plastics tubes producer for some €257 million. The buyer is the Wienerberger building products group, which owns the company's other half.

## Property

## ► Loans record

Belgian banks issued a record €27 billion in housing loans last year, a 4.1% increase on 2010. Some 54% of the funds have been used to renovate ageing properties.

## Textiles

## ► Sioen

Industrial textiles group Sioen, based in Ardooie, West Flanders, has sold its Roland International affiliate, specialised in tarpaulins and sliding curtains for trucks and international transport vehicles, to the Dutch Loadlok company.

## Transport

## ► Kiala

The Brussels transport and parcel delivery company, with operations in the Benelux, France and Spain, has been acquired by US-based UPS. Kiala delivers some 145,000 parcels a day to 7,500 addresses.

## New jobs agreement for Flanders

The collaborative effort favours the over 55s and young people without a diploma

Alan Hope

The government of Flanders presented a new employment agreement last week, the product of a collaboration with both employers and trade unions and intended to put more people to work, particularly the over-55s and unskilled young people. For young people, special attention goes to those who leave school without any diploma. They will be offered individual work training and workplace mentoring, with businesses encouraged to create places for them.

"We are making more of an effort for lower-opportunity groups, especially young people with no qualifications, who we want to give a chance through their first work experience to make a better impression on the jobs market," explained Ingrid Lieten, the Flemish minister in charge of tackling poverty. "Private employers, local authorities and non-profits will be encouraged to



On-site mentoring is a priority of Flanders' new jobs policy

"It's a fundamental new step in employment policy"

offer work experience. We will also be offering alternative routes to the jobs market, tailored to the needs of people living in poverty."

For older workers, the agreement provides for an over-50 premium, varying according to age and duration of unemployment, to be

paid to companies that engage staff members over 50. The age until which the newly unemployed have to take part in training and job-seeking is raised from 55 to 58.

"With this agreement we are making an important contribution, even in these financially difficult times, towards increasing employment and tackling the flood of unqualified young people," said Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters. The functioning of our labour market is becoming an increasingly important question, given the

greying of the workforce." The agreement, he said, gives a "boost to our competitiveness".

Flemish labour minister Philippe Muyters, meanwhile, called the agreement "a fundamental new step in employment policy. Together we have chosen a more targeted and individual method of putting people to work. That requires an effort from employers and workers alike, but I am convinced such a fundamental change of direction will help the Flemish labour market prepare for the challenges of the future."

The agreement was reached together with the Social and Economic Council of Flanders (SERV) representing unions and employers. Karel Van Eetvelt, chairman of SERV and director general of Unizo, which represents the self-employed said: "We want this employment agreement to give the over-50s a chance to work and to make it more attractive for employers to take them on. I call on workers and employers to take advantage as much as possible of the chances this agreement offers."

## Antwerp tops charts for FDI strategy

The city of Antwerp has been voted the best small city in Europe for foreign direct investment strategy by the *Financial Times*. In its biennial report "European Regions and Cities of the Future", Antwerp also comes in second place among all cities for attracting investment. The report compares 253 cities and 110 regions on the basis of economic potential, human resources, quality of life, cost-effectiveness and a business-friendly climate.

Antwerp is second only to Berlin for its success in attracting foreign investments; among cities of under 500,000 people, it comes top of the chart. That is a mark of success, according to Antwerp Headquarters, a public-private cooperation between the city of Antwerp and the local Voka chamber of commerce. Antwerp Headquarters has so far attracted 20 companies to the city, good for nearly 400 jobs.

"Foreign investors have a taste for Antwerp, not only because of the presence of the port and a few strong economic clusters, but especially for the exciting character of the city, with its 35,000 students and many knowledge institutions, which breathe life into the city," commented Robert Voorhamme, chairman of Antwerp Headquarters.

"Trend-setting shopping streets have also given us the reputation as the country's leading shopping city," he continued. "A

concentration of cultural institutions makes us unique, and international schools are an attraction for many expats." The FDI award, said Voorhamme, was "a valuable confirmation that Antwerp Headquarters is on the right road, both in attracting investors and in supporting potential investors with the necessary advice and services."

The ratings on FDI strategy take account of the number of staff dedicated to promoting inward investment, information on high growth sectors, incentives available to stimulate investment and the availability of world-class property sites.

Antwerp also came second after Zurich among small cities for economic potential, sixth for quality of life and fourth for business friendliness.

Brussels, meanwhile, came in eighth on economic potential and 10th for human resources among cities with a population over one million. It came in sixth for quality of life, fifth for infrastructure and third for business friendliness. Genk, the only other Flemish city mentioned, came fifth for infrastructure among micro cities (population less than 250,000).

Brussels-Capital Region came 17th overall in the rankings, and eighth for both human resources and quality of life. Flanders was eighth for FDI strategy and 10th for infrastructure.

► [www.kvkaw.be/public\\_docs/FDI.pdf](http://www.kvkaw.be/public_docs/FDI.pdf)

## Prizes awarded for innovation in training

The construction industry federation Bouwunie has awarded its annual Golden Brick prize jointly to the employment and training agency VDAB and FVB Constructiv, the fund for professional training in the construction industry. They won the prize for their "continued investment efforts in diverse, innovative and future-oriented training," the jury said. "Lifelong learning and preparation for such developments as sustainable construction and renovation are major priorities for the sector."

► [www.bouwunie.be](http://www.bouwunie.be)

Jobkanaal, an initiative to promote diversity in recruitment, has awarded prizes for diversity to three companies in Flanders. **Fruit Vanhellemont** in Meensel-Kiezegeem, Flemish Brabant, was voted best small company for its cooperation with a local shelter workshop. Concrete manufacturer **De Bonte** in Waasmunster, East Flanders, won among larger companies for its policy of constantly reviewing its structure to better fit the needs of a diverse workforce. And **Manus**, which employs local youth on clean-up projects, won for its "practical answers to the questions of the day" in providing growth opportunities for its young, largely immigrant, public.

► [www.jobkanaal.be](http://www.jobkanaal.be)

Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT) is on the lookout for two **Export Lions** – Flemish companies who have shown an impressive performance in export trade in the past year. This year, for the first time, the prize is split into two – one for companies with fewer than 50 employees and one for those with more. Applications can be made until 27 April.

► [www.leeuwvandeexport.be](http://www.leeuwvandeexport.be)



# Red alert

## They may be pretty, but an invasion of foreign ladybirds is threatening Flanders' native populations

Alan Hope

Flanders is under attack from a foreign enemy that threatens to wipe out local populations and take their place. The enemy is ruthless, rapacious and able to appear in many forms. On the other hand, it is only 5mm to 7mm long and will keep your garden free of greenfly. The culprit is *Harmonia axyridis*, known in English as the Harlequin ladybird. *Harmonia* is native to a part of the world stretching from the central Asian republics all the way to China and Japan. The very characteristics that present such a problem now are part of the reason it was introduced here artificially in the late 1980s: It has a voracious appetite and was used by commercial growers to tackle aphids and other scale insects in greenhouses, fields and gardens. However, as with some house guests, it proved easier to invite in than to ask to leave. Now *Harmonia* is turning out to be a serious threat to the native ladybirds in regions where it was introduced. According to a study carried out by the Flemish Research Institute for Nature and Forest (Inbo), together with institutions in five other countries over a period of 13 years, native species like the two-spot ladybird (*Adalia bipunctata*) are being wiped out by *Harmonia*. "There are now 30% fewer two-spot ladybirds in Flanders than there were in 1999," says Tim Adriaens of Inbo. "In England, 44% have disappeared." To perform the survey, Inbo, a Flemish government agency, had the help of about 1,000 volunteers, who together gathered about 200,000 sightings of the species. *Harmonia* first made its appearance in Flanders in 2004, and a long-running survey showed its presence in 269 of the 365 one-kilometre squares studied. Over the period of the survey, the presence of six native species of ladybird declined, including *Adalia*. Only two suffered



The many appearances of the Harlequin ladybird

no decline: the 22-spot and the more common seven-spot.

### Two-pronged attack

*Harmonia's* effect on native species is two-fold: The intruder is tough and rapacious and competes successfully with native species for limited food resources. In addition, *Harmonia* is partial to eating the larvae of its competitors and, in the case of the smaller *Adalia*, even adult insects. In a paper published in the journal *Diversity and Distributions*, the study reports that in Europe *Adalia* is "near the threshold of detection", or, in other words, almost too few to count. And *Harmonia* is bringing about a reduction in the biodiversity in Flanders, something that reduces the ability of an ecosystem to react to changes from outside, such as climate change. "The seven-spot ladybird is just about holding its own, probably because it's as big as the Asian species and doesn't live in trees," Adriaens says. "The 22-spot

ladybird is doing better, as it feeds on fungi and doesn't eat aphids. All the rest are in decline." The seven-spot, the paper explains, eats vegetation rather than aphids, so it doesn't compete with *Harmonia*. The 16-spot ladybird, meanwhile, also doesn't compete for food, but its larvae can fall prey to *Harmonia* in times when aphids are scarce, such as in autumn.

### Pest control

The problem is not limited to native ladybirds: *Harmonia* can also be a pest for humans. They hibernate in the winter and use pheromones to attract more of their own kind, so if you've experienced a sudden plague of the beasts in the autumn, it was probably *Harmonia*. It uses a defensive chemical to deter predators and will also deposit it if scared or crushed, leaving a bad smell and a stain. The gatherings seem to be unique to *Harmonia*: otherwise it isn't easy to identify, ranging in colour from red

and orange to yellow and black, and with anything from zero to 20 spots. Occasionally it's been known to bite, though the bite is more irritating than harmful. If confronted with such a home invasion, the experts at the US Department of Agriculture (*Harmonia* is also a problem in the United States) advise using a vacuum cleaner with a nylon stocking tied over the nozzle to collect the ladybirds, rather than allowing them to go into the cleaner's bag. Prevention is better than cure, including closing off cracks in walls and joints where they can enter. Unfortunately, science seems to be some way from a more lasting remedy for the problem. "We can only hope that the natural enemies of our native species develop a taste for the Asian species," Adriaens says. "But it will take some time for evolution to get to grips with that. In the meantime, our local predators are not interested in them at all."

► [www.inbo.be](http://www.inbo.be)

## THE WEEK IN SCI & ED

Researchers at the Institute for Tropical Medicine and the University Hospital of Antwerp have tested a new **therapeutic vaccine against HIV infection**. HIV-positive volunteers were injected with their own white blood cells after the cells were "trained" to recognise HIV and help the immune system battle it. Because HIV transforms very quickly, however, the attacks by the immune system are not yet effective enough to cure HIV.

A smart **neurostimulator has been implanted in an epileptic patient** at Ghent's University Hospital, a first in Europe. The special pacemaker is placed under the collarbone and connects to the vagus or "wandering" nerve, which starts in the brainstem and spreads throughout a substantial part of the body. The neurostimulator reacts to an increase in the heart rate, which often precedes seizures. It stimulates the vagus nerve with small electric shocks and prevents approximately half of all seizures. In one in 10 cases, seizures stop altogether.

VITO, the Flemish Institute for Technological Research, is supporting **pilot projects in innovative health care** with the province of Flemish Brabant and projects that link sustainability in the chemistry and building sectors of Antwerp province. VITO subsidises 66% of a maximum cost of €100,000. Companies can file their applications until 15 May.

Flemish **students need the support of a psychologist** at their university or college more than ever before. A total of 5,000 students are now in some kind of treatment. The most common problems are anxiety about failure, stress and personal crises due to the increasing pressures of higher education.

Since 2009, the number of students beginning to study **nursing and midwifery has increased** by a fifth to more than 3,000 students this academic year. The number of diplomas obtained has risen by almost a quarter.

The Flemish cooking hype has passed to primary schools: 20,000 sixth-year students from 800 Flemish primary schools **have to perform a practical cooking test** to pass the final exams of the Educational Secretariat of the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities. Schools are not obliged to provide these exams. The purpose is to test the knowledge of language, maths and world orientation and – this year – the cooking skills of final-year students. **AF**

► [www.biovill.be](http://www.biovill.be)

## Q&A



### What kind of activity takes place at BioVille?

BioVille is a breeding ground for the development of biomedical companies from creative ideas. NV Life Sciences Development Campus – a joint venture by

Kris Motmans is the director of life sciences incubator BioVille in Limburg province

Limburg investment company LRM, Hasselt University and the province of Limburg – provides laboratories and offices. Apart from infrastructure, they also offer cooperation opportunities through the LifeTechLimburg network, as well as administrative support, so starting companies can concentrate fully on their research. We are located on the university campus at Diepenbeek to inspire students and researchers – with seminars, for example. Furthermore, recruiting businesses are also present at the incubator. In total, 16 enterprises and organisations active in the life sciences sector are working at the incubator, among them four foreign ones.

### What developments has BioVille made possible?

One of BioVille's success stories is the company Amakem, which originated only two years ago on the initiative of three people who had the idea of developing new types of medicines focused on eye diseases. Today, they have gained an investment of €18 million and employ 15 researchers. The enterprise TheraSolve has invented an adhesive plaster, the MemoPatch, with a built-in microprocessor that sends out a tactile signal to discreetly remind patients to take their medication. One company, EMC Medical Instruments, is already producing their cold therapy products, which

reduce the pain and swelling after injury or surgery.

### What are the plans for the near future?

As we have an almost full house after two years, we need to expand earlier than expected. We have already inaugurated a new wing at the beginning of the month, but, after a second building phase – an investment of about €3.5 million – we should have doubled our size to almost 4,000 square metres by the beginning of 2014. A few enterprises from the United States have already shown an interest in joining us.

Andy Furniere



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# The Guide Who Came In From The Cold

Igor Donets immigrated from the Ukraine – and now tells tourists all about Flanders

PM Doutreligne



Igor Donets shares the best of Bruges with a group of tourists

Igor Donets left the Ukraine for Brussels in 2003, in search of a better life. The 31-year-old's knowledge of Flemish cities is now so extensive that he has become Flanders' go-to guide for tourists from the former Soviet Union.

**Moving to a different country is one thing, but to assimilate its cultural riches and heritage to such an extent is pretty rare.** I moved to Belgium hoping to find a good job here, but, by the same token, I am fascinated by history and cultural heritage. I studied tourism management at Ceria in Brussels from 2003 until 2005 and graduated with honours. By the time I started working as a tour guide in 2006, I already had a "day job" – which I still have, incidentally – working for a musical instruments distribution

company. I'm a tourist guide at weekends and occasionally in the evenings.

**Wasn't there a language barrier for you to become a Belgium-based tourist guide?** Coming from eastern Ukraine, my mother tongues are Russian and Ukrainian. When I arrived here, I only spoke limited French, having learnt the basics at the Alliance Française in Ukraine. Understanding it was fine – speaking it was a different matter altogether. But I now speak French and English relatively well, with also a little Polish and Dutch.

**Is Flanders a tourist destination that strikes a particular chord with the Russian people?** Since most cities in Russia and Ukraine are only four centuries old at best, it is fascinating for their tourists

to visit cities with a bit of history about them. Don't forget that the Soviet Union had to endure two World Wars, as well as a communist regime that systematically had old orthodox churches demolished. In those countries, the opportunities to see genuinely old buildings of real cultural significance are, at best, limited. So when I explain to a group of tourists that this building or that town square dates from, say, the 13th century and that it has remained pretty much untouched, I see jaws drop – literally. To people from the former Soviet Union, Flanders offers a window into the Middle Ages. Whereas over here, we tend to take it for granted because it's on our doorstep.

**Do Russian and Ukrainian tourists have preferred itineraries?** Apart from Brussels – which is by far their number one destination – it's

mostly Ghent and Bruges, usually in the same day. Antwerp too, and – less frequently – Damme and Mechelen. I did Tongeren once, too, as well as the Commandery of the Teutonic Order in Alden Biesen. I would say that Bruges is particularly popular at the moment – especially the historic centre, which has managed to keep its late 15th-century aspect intact.

**How would you describe the "typical" Russian tourist?** There are several types. At one end of the spectrum you have the *nouveaux riches* who visit as a family and recruit a guide for the whole day – sometimes several days – to act as their translator in shops and restaurants. And sometimes show them around – even though, very often, they have been here before. At the other end are those who are on a budget, who got themselves a bargain, usually a package holiday in a group of 50 to 60 people. Then you have all those who fit somewhere in-between. But the worldwide recession hit Russia pretty badly, and, as a result, the number of tourists from the East has gone down.

**Any anecdotes of tour-guide life you can share with us?** A few years back I was showing a Russian couple and their seven-year-old son around Brussels on 21 July – Belgium's National Day. We were in the Zavel area, and the Guild of Crossbowmen had a stall there as part of the festivities. All of a sudden the boy shouts: "There's the King!". One of the guild's members did, indeed, look uncannily like Albert II. I took a picture of the boy with the royal look-alike. A few weeks after the family had returned to Russia, I received an email thanking me for my help and saying that the son was now known locally as "the boy who met the King".

► Contact Igor at [igor.donets1@chello.be](mailto:igor.donets1@chello.be)

## EXPAT TIP



**Louise Pattinson** is from Dundee, Scotland and has worked in Antwerp for two years as a data analyst. "Though I live in Antwerp – a city not necessarily known for the modesty of its inhabitants – I find Damme by far the prettiest place in Flanders," says the 28-year-old. "I must have been to Damme at least half a dozen times." Damme is just a few kilometres from Bruges and sees a lot of day-trippers. "Sure, Bruges is amazing, but the number of tourists can be a bit too much at times. My tip is to visit Bruges early to mid-morning, then, weather permitting, hire a bike – less than €10 for three or four hours. Cycling to Damme along the canal path at a leisurely pace will take you 20 minutes. Arriving in Damme is like stepping back in time. Once you've taken in the sights – the town hall, the church, the main square – you can sit down and have lunch in one of the brasseries surrounding the town hall. You haven't experienced Flanders until you've had shrimp croquettes on a terrace in Damme!"



Igor with the Manneken Pis, dressed in the colours of the Ukrainian flag

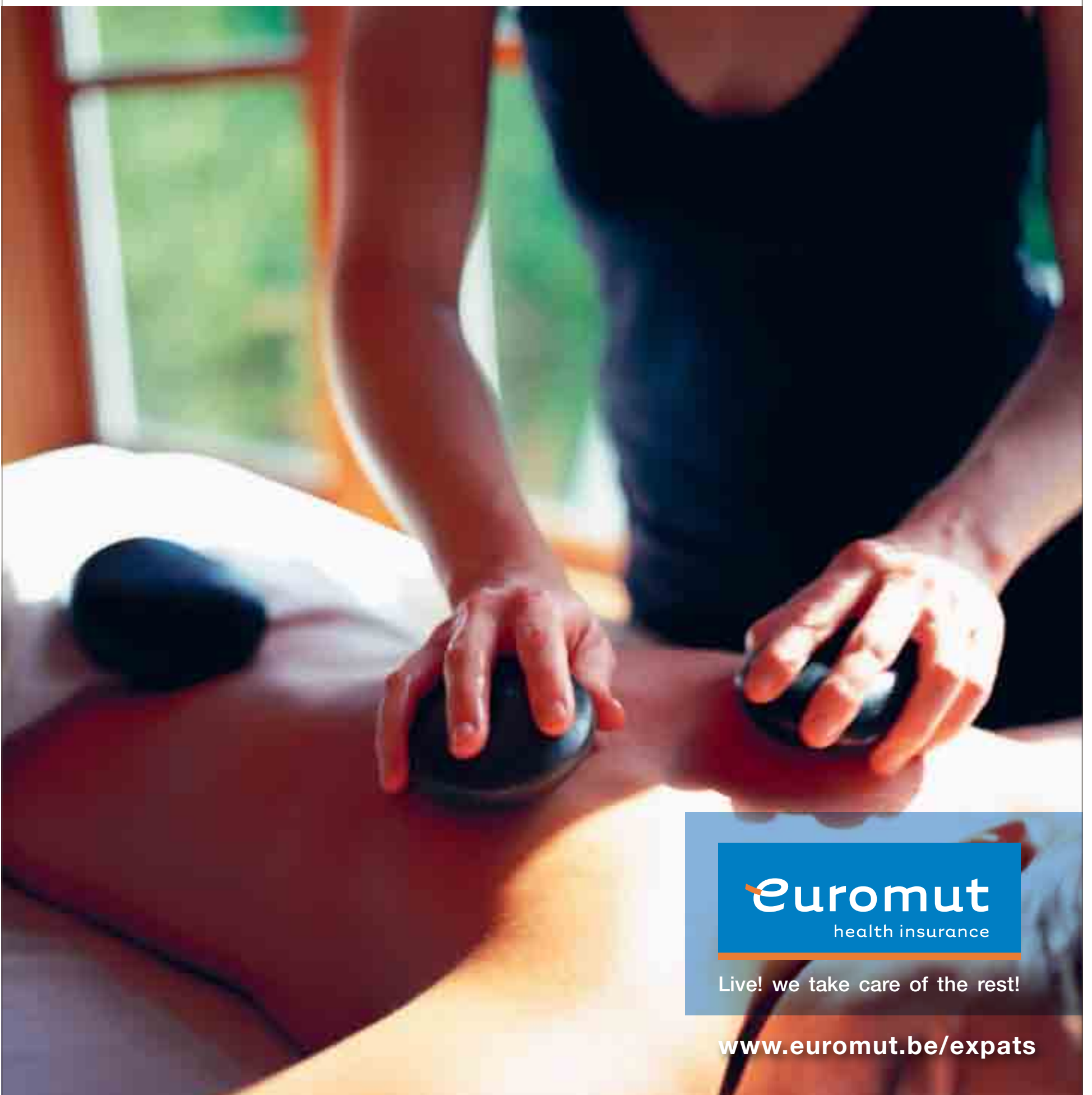


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# 25 years of monkey business

Kipling comes of age as it celebrates a milestone anniversary

Stephanie Duval



© Li Wei x Kipling "Play with Bags" anniversary project 2012

You might raise an eyebrow if someone said that a little monkey was as recognisable as the Manneken Pis when it comes to representing Belgium in the eyes of foreigners. But it doesn't seem so weird to Kipling. For 25 years, this bags and accessories brand has been nothing but proud of its Belgian roots, while it went on to conquer the world with its fuzzy monkey mascot.

Celebrating an important birthday this year, the Antwerp-based company aims to direct attention to its heritage and history but also to point out the lessons it has learned and the strengths it has developed as a local brand with sales across the globe.

So what has made the Kipling brand such a strong one? It's a feat many Flemish labels have tried, yet few have achieved it.

The launch of Kipling may have been a carefully considered business undertaking by three entrepreneurs, but the distinct characteristic that would set their bags apart from competitors came about as an accident.

A mistake in the dying process caused the dye to overheat and crinkle the nylon, thus creating the signature look that is still iconic for Kipling today.

They embraced the mistake, which was the first sign that Kipling would take advantage of its creative environment – the burgeoning Antwerp fashion scene. It went on to adopt a fitting motto: Fashion is too important to take seriously.

The company started bending the rules of conventional luggage and fashion bags and epitomised that attitude by attaching their irreverent mascot – a small, colourful monkey – to each of their bags.

The current head of design, Tina Debo, wants to connect with the history of the company; she asked Xavier Kegels, one of Kipling's founding fathers, what inspired him to use a monkey as a mascot, and he said: "Only a brand that is playful and sees the world through the eyes of a child would do that."

## Timeless appeal

Locally, it didn't take Kipling long to create a loyal following, and it soon became the go-to brand for kids' school bags, backpacks and functional travel luggage. "Interestingly, our



research shows that we tend to lose customers around the time when they start rebelling in their teenage years, but they come back to us once they settle down and start looking for timeless quality again," says Debo. "It's what we think makes us Belgian." And apparently this is exactly what makes the brand so successful abroad, too.

The research to which Debo is referring was conducted over the course of last year. "We worked with the Munich department of American design company IDEO, and together we travelled the world, visiting all our international markets to investigate why our brand is famous," explains Isabel Van den Broeck, head of marketing for Kipling. "Remarkably, all the markets considered Kipling being Belgian as its feature characteristic. It's considered a quality label."

Kipling's headquarters are still in Antwerp, but since 2004 it has been part of the American VF Corporation, which holds numerous other apparel brands. But that hasn't affected that Belgian appeal. "Every brand within the group has its own identity," says Debo. "The support

## A YEAR OF CELEBRATION

Kipling is celebrating its 25th anniversary throughout the year, promoting new projects through a dedicated website. "We have thought of 25 ways in which we can give back to our customer," explains Isabel Van den Broeck, head of marketing. "We started this month with the presentation of our Kipling Classics line: a limited-edition collection of re-issued and edited Kipling styles from 25 years ago."

The brand also invited eight artists from around the world to create artwork inspired by their bags. "We sent them a very open briefing: Do something that makes us smile!" says Van den Broeck. The results of the experiment make up the *Play with Bags* installation in shop windows worldwide (Chinese artist Li Wei's entry is pictured above). The photos can currently be seen in the Inno store window on Brussels' Nieuwstraat. April will see the launch of the Hip Hip Hurray bags at the special birthday price of €25. A gigantic Kipling monkey (of 220 centimetres) will make an appearance at the largest department stores in Europe, and special limited-edition monkey mascots will be unveiled in the autumn.

► [www.25yearskipling.com](http://www.25yearskipling.com)



## KIPLING IN BRIEF

- Founded in 1987 in Antwerp by Vincent Haverbeke, Xavier Kegels and Paul Van De Velde
- Sold to a private owner in 1992
- Sold to VF Corporation, which also holds brands such as Timberland, Wrangler and Lee Jeans, in 2004
- Kipling bags are distributed in 64 countries around the world
- Each season introduces up to 80 different monkeys, each named after a Kipling employee
- During the past five years, Kipling has doubled its worldwide sales figure



might be shared by everyone, but the creative department is our own." Debo and Van den Broeck readily admit Kipling has moved further away from its DNA during the past five years, as the brand wanted to take on a more fashionable approach. "We were moderately successful at that, but we finally realised people weren't expecting those kinds of handbags from us," says Debo. "Our customers don't associate Kipling with trends, as trends are destined to fade away, and Kipling bags are meant to last beyond one fashion season. So we altered our course again."

"If there's one thing we've learned from the past year," adds Van den Broeck, "it's that a successful company can only be famous for one thing – and for us that's nylon. So in terms of materials, we really decided to simplify, and our consumers seem to react positively to that."

## Knowing your audience

Additionally, Kipling also clearly defined the group of women it wanted to reach. "It's not possible to design for every woman, so we thought about when Kipling becomes relevant for women, and that's when they are settling down."

The Kipling customer knows who she is and what she wants and needs. She needs practical solutions to juggle sports, kids, work and love in her life."

The biggest change in Kipling's approach has been to put their customer first. "Tina might be the design director, but she doesn't just design what she likes," explains Van den Broeck. "Before our sales start, her designs have already been presented to small audiences around the world, and we have listened to critical feedback. In fact, we've developed a special concept for this: a girls' night in, to which we invite fans, haters and just generally opinionated people to give us their opinion on ideas, concepts and designs."

Debo: "We think that this approach is fairly unique in the fashion industry."

Van den Broeck and Debo live and breathe the re-energised spirit that is driving Kipling today. "When we look at how Kipling is spread all over the world, we just see this enormous potential for growth," says Van den Broeck. "Our presence is still dormant in many markets, but we have much larger ambitions for our brand."

► [www.kipling.com](http://www.kipling.com)



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# Anthropologist of his own life

## The wondrous world of Patrick Van Caeckenbergh at Museum M

Christophe Verbiest

Twenty years ago, Patrick Van Caeckenbergh was the rising star of the Flemish art scene, crowned with a highly praised presence at the 1993 Venice Biennale. But after his last retrospective exhibition in this country, in 1996, the Aalst-born artist faded from public view.

After he moved to Sint-Kornelis-Horebeke, a tiny hamlet in the Flemish Ardennes, in 1997, critics have often described him as a hermit. "Me being a recluse has become the big cliché," he says. "But I have never been more sociable than since I moved there."

He surely isn't a hermit in my eyes. I meet him at Museum M, where viewers can finally make – or renew – an acquaintance with the 51-year-old artist at the wondrous retrospective *La ruine fructueuse* (The Fertile Ruin). He's in Leuven on this day because he has to cook soup for 120 children from his village, who are visiting the exhibition. The small refectory, walled by a large folding screen, is in fact part of the show.

At the start of the exhibition, a work called "La psychopompe" ("The Psychopump") offers insight into Van Caeckenbergh's roots. This mixed-media sculpture is comprised of 64 photographs of other artists: He calls them "my friends; they form my family tree." Strikingly, only a few (Duchamp, Piranesi) are visual artists. Writers (Gogol, Elsschot) and scientists (Darwin) dominate his artistic pedigree. "When studying at the academy in Ghent, I much more often went with a good friend of mine to his philosophy courses than to the courses I was supposed to follow."

Contemporary art, says Van Caeckenbergh, was appealing because of the endless possibilities. "It received me with the words: 'Come to us, and you can do whatever you want.' I can build a house, without being an architect. I can perform surgery, without being a surgeon. Everything goes!"

### Living in the cigar box

"I don't create many works," Van Caeckenbergh concedes. "Honestly,



Patrick Van Caeckenbergh's "Le Berceau II" is a fascinating collection suggesting domesticity

I'm not very ambitious. My only desire is to be in my cigar box and do whatever I feel like."

Cigar box? That's the nickname for his studio. The entire studio is part of the exhibition; the outside walls are decorated like a cigar box. Inside, it's crammed with books about the most diverse subjects.

"I've a strict schedule. I get up at half past six and prepare breakfast. My wife leaves for work, the children for school, and around 8.00 I enter my cigar box. Until half past three, when I start thinking about what I'll cook for dinner." Seven days a week he goes to his box. It's a necessity; life and work can't be separated.

The cigar box also contains a desk and, surprisingly, a bed. "I couldn't do without it," Van Caeckenbergh insists. "I read a lot, preferably when I lie down." The bed is the place where his ideas germinate.

"I like to draw the parallel with cooking," he says. "At the beginning, I have a big kettle filled with onions, leek, carrots, you name it, which I let boil down until I end with a small

bouillon cube. This can take years."

Less metaphorically speaking: the artist cobbles elements together to make assembled pieces in which he combines drawings, cut-outs and texts.

### Collecting a life

Van Caeckenbergh is an insatiable collector of knowledge. "It's my obsession to see the world in one glance." This desire manifests itself in his avid reading and his endless cuttings of images from magazines and books. "Tesser" ("The Rabbit Hutch") is a small wooden house: its walls are full of hatchways. You're not supposed to open them, but touring the exhibition with the artist does have its advantages. Inside, I see different collections: fire engines, angels, cigar bands. Obsessively collecting becomes a real mania in "Collection de peaux" ("Collections of Skins"): the enormous work fills an entire room and consists of only displays of cut-out pieces of skin, glued onto

cardboard so they can stand on the wrought iron shelves covering the walls.

"When I was five, I found two of my father's porn magazines," says Van Caeckenbergh. "The images gave me an enormous shock: I didn't understand them. And I didn't want to see them, but they were, and are, burnt into my memory. This work is pure therapy. To get rid of the images, I cut out the most abstract parts of naked bodies." The exhibition ends with 29 drawings of old trees, at once photorealistic and gloomily gothic. For the past three years, the artist hasn't made anything else. This looks like a radical change, but it isn't: having some very old, hollow trees in his garden, those drawings are as much a reflection of his life as the other works. It's clear that whatever he does, Patrick Van Caeckenbergh stays the anthropologist and the archaeologist of his own life.

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

## WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

The Rock Werchter music festival has been given permission by the province of Flemish Brabant to remove part of a forest to build a **third stage this year**. Despite the permission, festival director Herman Schueremans says he is still considering a move next year from Werchter in Flemish Brabant to Brustem in Limburg province, where there is more space. Names already conformed for this year's festival, which runs from 28 June to 1 July, include Elbow, The Cure, Selah Sue and dEUS.

► [www.rockwerchter.be](http://www.rockwerchter.be)

The Concertgebouw in Bruges is home to a **new mural by Luc Tuymans**, the only painting by the Flemish artist to find a permanent place in a public space. The mural is based on Tuymans' painting "Angel", owned by a museum in Chicago. The work incorporates a view of the city and will be unveiled in March.

► [www.concertgebouw.be](http://www.concertgebouw.be)

**Comedian Urbanus** will set out on his first tour of cultural centres in Flanders in 11 years in April. The comedian will tour his show *Urbanus Zelf*, which sold out four nights in Antwerp's Sportpaleis last year. The 62-year-old stressed that this was not a farewell tour.

► [www.urbanus.be](http://www.urbanus.be)

Three advertising spots aimed at attracting young people of **immigrant origin to jobs in the media** have been awarded prizes by Kleur je media, a campaign by the public broadcaster VRT and mediarte.be, the social fund of the audiovisual sector. Chaima SaySay and Safia Machbouaa of the Lessius college in Antwerp won in the category TV; Frederik De Clerck, Ine Verhaert and Wederik De Backer of Rits school in Brussels won in radio; and the animation prize went to Nina Mertz of the Media Arts Design faculty of the provincial university college in Limburg.

► [www.mediarte.be](http://www.mediarte.be)

Jazz legend **Toots Thielemans** will perform seven concerts from 30 April to 11 May in Flanders and Brussels to mark his 90th birthday.

► [www.toots90.be](http://www.toots90.be)

## MUSEUM M SAYS GOODBYE TO VERONIQUE VANDEKERCHOVE

"When you saw Veronique talking, you never wondered why art is important. It was crystal clear from what she said and how she said it." Museum M general director Luc Delrue is talking about Veronique Vandekerchove (pictured), the museum's curator and deputy director. She died on 25 January after being hit by a car in Leuven.

After studying art history and archaeology in Leuven, Vandekerchove worked as a scientific researcher at the Museum Vander Kelen-Mertens, the city's former art and heritage

museum. After being appointed its curator in 1998, she succeeded in getting rid of the museum's dusty image. She also fought for its renovation, which eventually led to the new award-winning Museum M.

"Her death also means the loss of a lot of knowledge about artwork," Delrue continues. "She had an incredibly huge network in Leuven, in the economic world and with other museums. The latter is essential to facilitate the loan of works. Thanks to her, we could turn to The National Gallery or the Prado. We now have to re-establish

these contacts."

Museum M isn't searching for a successor. "It won't be possible to find someone who knows our collection better than she did," says Delrue. "Someone with better contacts in the city of Leuven or in the university – impossible. We'll divide her tasks among the current team and see in a few months what we're still lacking."

In the meantime, M will dedicate one of its rooms to Vandekerchove, and the University of Leuven will name a tenured professorship after her. **cv**





# Shedding new light on the cold war Spirits of Internationalism

Catherine Kusters

**S***pirits of Internationalism* takes its name quite seriously: the exhibition is made up of work from six European collections and is spread over two museums in two different countries. M HKA in Antwerp and the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, not far north of Limburg over the Dutch border, want to reevaluate Flemish and Dutch art from the Cold War era and shed new light on the strained international climate of the time.

*Spirits* is the last in a series of exhibitions realised by the collaborative European art network l'Internationale and covers the 30-year period (1956-1986) in which the animosity between the United States and Soviet Union dominated global politics.

Western Europe of course belonged to the American camp, and this became as manifest in art as it did in other fields. With the Doomsday Clock at five minutes to midnight, any bonds that may have existed between artists from east and west were severed. *Spirits* is an attempt to correct that historical disconnection by uniting contemporary art from the Low Countries with that produced in other parts of the world.

M HKA's exhibition is divided into six sections, each built up around one so-called "spirit of internationalism", with titles like "The Concrete", "The Universal" and "The Engaged". These categories were invented to group artists thematically and stylistically, but they also give the exhibition an air of conceptual density. If you prefer practice to theory, you can forget about the "spirits" and just wander through the museum, discovering the many interesting pieces in a more spontaneous manner.

It is likely that Andy Warhol's pop art portrait

of Chairman Mao (*pictured*) will immediately draw your attention, but there are other gems in the collection. A neon light installation by Warhol's countryman Dan Flavin poses a relevant question about the meaning of space, and works by renowned German painters like Gerhard Richter and Anselm Kiefer are highlights.

But the starting point for *Spirits* is the Benelux, and the M HKA fittingly puts several local artists in the spotlight. Paul Van Hoeydonck, who recently enjoyed a solo show in Drongenbos' FeliXart Museum, is known as the only artist whose work made it to the moon. His aluminium statuette "Fallen Astronaut" was left behind by the crew of Apollo 15 to commemorate the astronauts who died in the space race between the US and the USSR.

Marcel Broodthaers, meanwhile, examined the power of language in his literate works, laying bare the core of ideological thinking. The importance of words is also a key theme in the work of Paul de Vree: "Hysteria Makes History" is a clear critique of mass media in the early 1970s.

In juxtaposition with work from other countries, it becomes clear that local artists adopted many of the sensibilities of the cold war era in a unique – often openly critical – way. At the same time, the artistic tendencies present in other countries, especially the United States, can be discerned in the works of these artists as well. By reflecting on both similarities and differences between countries and across continents, the exhibition conjures up exactly what it promises: the spirit of internationalism.



© Andy Warhol, "Mao Tse Tung", 1972, collection Van Abbemuseum

Until 6 May | M HKA, Leuvenstraat 32, Antwerp | [www.muhka.be](http://www.muhka.be)

## DANCE

### Untitled 4

Flemish choreographer Christine De Smedt of Les ballets C de la B wanted to get to the bottom of how stage performers balance the relationship between life and work. How can one make a show "personal" without making it dull or, the other extreme, too invasive? To this end, she interviewed four colleagues – top choreographers Alain Platel, Jonathan Burrows, Xavier Le Roy and Eszter Salamon. During these conversations De Smedt noticed the line between interviewer and interviewee becoming increasingly vague. Who is talking about whom here? She's taken her findings and combined them into *Untitled 4*, a solo show based on the fascinating portraits she sketched of these four artists. **Robyn Boyle**



© Christine De Smedt

**23 February, 19.00** (acts #1 & #2)

**25 February, 17.00** (premiere of all four acts)

Budascoop, Kapucijnenstraat 10, Kortrijk | [www.budakortrijk.be](http://www.budakortrijk.be)

## MORE DANCE THIS WEEK

### Blankenberge

**L'Hôtà (The House):** Production for two dancers exploring the notions of the double image by contemporary Swiss choreographer Nicole Kohler

**FEB 23-25 20.00; FEB 26 15.00 at Kusttheater 't Colisée, Kerkstraat 27**

[www.kusttheater.com](http://www.kusttheater.com)

### Bruges

**D-Spot:** First edition of the dance and performance festival featuring young, new talent, followed by after-parties on Friday and Saturday

**FEB 24-26 20.00 at Biekorf, Sint-Jakobsstraat 20 & Het Entrepot, Binnenweg 4**

[www.dspot.be](http://www.dspot.be)

## WORLD

### 100% World: Music from Wales and Flanders

Earth's biggest world music expo, WOMEX, is coming to Wales in 2013, and the country doesn't intend to let this great news go by uncelebrated. Therefore, the Welsh Government and Flanders Music Centre have joined hands to create a festive evening of music from Wales and Flanders. The free event\* takes place on St David's Day, also the Welsh national day, and features three acts: Poet and singer Gwyneth Glyn combines her timeless voice with the melodies of violinist Megan Childs, both of Wales. Flemish folk group Naragonia Quartet charms with multiple instruments, including melodeon, violin and bagpipes. Fernhill awes with its unique interpretation of lyrical Welsh folk music. And DJ Hefin Jones guarantees to keep you entertained in-between acts. **RB**

\*Event is free but you are welcome to make a donation to Marie Curie Cancer Care

**1 March, 19.30** | Beursschouwburg, A Ortsstraat 20, Brussels

[RSVP to euerevents@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:euerevents@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

## MORE WORLD MUSIC THIS WEEK

### Antwerp

**Arifa featuring Jahida Wehbe:** Music from Iraq

**FEB 24 20.30 at Zuiderpershuis, Waalsekaai 14**

[www.zuiderpershuis.be](http://www.zuiderpershuis.be)

### Opwijk (Flemish Brabant)

**Pure Vida with Congo "Ashanti" Roy:** Flanders' own reggae band, together with the founding father of the world-famous Jamaican band The Congos.

**FEB 25 20.00 at Nijdrop, Kloosterstraat 9**

[www.nijdrop.be](http://www.nijdrop.be)





JAZZ

Brad Mehldau Trio

“Moody, pensive and hopelessly romantic” is how one reviewer describes The Art of the Trio, a collection of five albums recorded by the Brad Mehldau Trio between 1996 and 2001. Now that’s how I like my jazz. The American jazz pianist, together with his drummer and his bass player, is back in Brussels with a new mix of standards, original compositions and his speciality: surprising arrangements of pop and rock songs. The trio is known for its unique versions of numbers by The Beatles, Radiohead and even Soundgarden. Jazz purists and experimentalists alike are in for a real treat. **RB**



27 February, 20:00

Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23, Brussels

► [www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)

MORE JAZZ THIS WEEK

Brussels

**The Roof New Orleans Jazz Band:** Pierre Claessens (clarinet), Vincent Van Elferen (trombone), Bruno Van Acoleyen (trumpet), Filip Hermans (banjo), Paul Brandes (bass) and Philippe Desmet (drums)

**FEB 25 21.00 at The Music Village, Steenstraat 50**  
► [www.themusicvillage.com](http://www.themusicvillage.com)

Lokeren

**Andy Middleton Quartet:** American jazz saxophonist and his band

**FEB 25 21.00 at Lokerse Jazzklub, Gasstraat 27**  
► [www.lokersejazzklub.be](http://www.lokersejazzklub.be)

Turnhout

**Den Boemel op 78 toeren!:** An old record player and a stack of vinyl. Sit back and listen to rhythm & blues, (hot)jazz, popcorn, country, rock & roll, latin and more

**FEB 25 21.00-3.00 at Den Boemel, Stationstraat 10**  
► [bloedgroepk@gmail.com](mailto:bloedgroepk@gmail.com)

ACTIVITY

Wil je met mij

To all you Dutch-learners out there: Have you ever sat in a class for hours learning all about where to put your verbs or whether to refer to a noun as *de* or *het*, only to go out into the real world and fumble just trying to string together one coherent sentence? Well, you’re not alone. For many, language learning goes much more quickly in a natural environment where you are at ease and encouraged to take part in real-life conversations. Because we don’t all have the luxury of a group of natives around us to correct our mistakes, Wil je met mij (Do you want to...) is the perfect solution. Every year in February and March, this initiative of the commune of Sint-Pieters-Woluwe offers a range of fun activities for Dutch-language learners in Brussels. Upcoming events include a guided visit to the Royal Flemish Theatre (KVS), a self-defence course, a pastry workshop, children’s theatre, a presentation on Brussels’ beers, an interactive musical performance and more. **RB**



Until 31 March | Across Brussels | ► [www.wiljemetmij.be](http://www.wiljemetmij.be)

MORE ACTIVITIES THIS WEEK

Antwerp

**Antwerp Ghostwalk:** Guided tour through the maze-like streets of the old city with stops at many historical locations, plus ghost stories and anecdotes (ages 18 and up; in Dutch, with next tour in English on 6 March)

**FEB 25 (and every Saturday through June) 20.30 from Steenplein**  
► [www.ghostwalk.be](http://www.ghostwalk.be)

Kamphenhout

**Discover the white gold:** *Krokuskriebels* presents a week of workshops for children (and their families) on *witloof*(endive), including games, hands-on activities, tastings and more

**Until FEB 26 at the Witloof Museum, Leuvensesteenweg 22**  
► [www.witloofmuseum.be](http://www.witloofmuseum.be)

DUSK 'TIL DAWN

Katrien Lindemans

From Disco to Disco

2 March, across Antwerp

At the start of the millennium, clubbers in Antwerp were spoilt for choice. Fill Collins Club, Club Geluk and Café Capital were the three most popular – and they’ve all closed their doors since. But on 2 March, the vibe of all three will be back.

Launched in 1999, Fill Collins Club was a legendary party night at the Red & Blue. The brainchild of techno legend Peter Decuyper (the man behind both Fuse in Brussels and Ghent’s I Love Techno), but it called it quits just three years later. If you’ve missed Fill Collins ever since or deeply regretted you never ventured there when you had the chance, head to Red & Blue on 2 March and relive the atmosphere. Behind the decks will be magic duo Ed & Kim (*pictured*), who’ve been part of local club life for more than 15 years, and Jan Van Biesen, radio station Studio Brussel’s dance guru. Café Capital, another of Antwerp’s finest night venues, had to close its doors after a fire in 2010. But on 2 March, you can party as if you were at the Capital – except inside neighbouring club Café d’Anvers. Meanwhile, in the same building, but on a different floor, dance the night away at Club Geluk, where the club’s most famous DJ Stephanie will bring back memories of a couple of years ago. The music played in all venues will be exactly the same as during the heydays of the clubs. No need to dress up like you did for a night out back then, though (although, it could make the experience complete). Tickets are €13 in advance at Fnac and grant access to all three clubs. A shuttle service will take you from disco to disco.

► [www.fromdiscotodisco.be](http://www.fromdiscotodisco.be)





## BITE

Robyn Boyle

## Tram Experience

When I think of a “tram experience”, mostly what comes to mind are crowded spaces and long faces. But a unique initiative in Brussels is changing all that. In fact, people are reserving their seats for this particular tram ride weeks to months in advance, and paying a pretty penny for it as well. Thirty-four places at tables for two and four fill the sleek and streamlined tram. It’s all black and white and immaculate, like you’ve never seen a tram before. And there’s a high-end kitchen built in at one end.

The Tram Experience is part of Brusselicious, the 2012 Year of Gastronomy, an initiative of tourist office VisitBrussels. Tram operators MIVB jumped on board, while home appliance multinational Electrolux joined the project by outfitting the tram with all its top-of-the-line cookery equipment.

The rolling restaurant takes passengers on a leisurely two-hour tour of Brussels’ most photogenic spots. Departing from the Poelaertplein, the tram chugs along all the way to the green area around the Free University of Brussels (VUB) before heading back, only to pass the Tram Museum and busy Flageyplein, where it will no doubt turn more than a few heads.

Aside from gazing out the window and snapping photos (about 50% of the reservations so far have come from tourists), passengers – or diners, rather – enjoy a multi-course meal prepared by two-Michelin-star chefs from around the country. Depending on the date of your reservation, this could be Lionel Rigolet of Comme chez Soi, Sang Hoon Degeimbre of L’Air du Temps, Pierre

Resimont of L’eau Vive, Bart De Pooter of De Pastorale, Pascal Devalkeneer of Le Chalet de la Forêt or Thierry Theys of Nuance.

The only guidelines the chefs have are to provide a menu based on new versions of traditional Belgian dishes, with a focus on high-quality local and seasonal produce. In other words, you do need to go into the Tram Experience with an open mind and a taste for surprise, but if you appreciate refined ingredients, you will be guaranteed a good meal.

The €75 menu includes an aperitif, starter, main dish, dessert, two glasses of Champagne, two glasses of white wine, two glasses of red wine and water.

The year-long Brusselicious has many other events to offer, from markets to exhibitions, and even a gastronomic night at Cinematek.

► [www.brusselicious.be](http://www.brusselicious.be)



Departures from Poelaertplein for a two to 2.5-hour round trip



2 MAR-31 DEC, Tues-Thurs 20.00; Fri-Sat 18.30 & 21.30; Sun 12.00



€75 per person



Gastronomic meal for two or four on board a designer tram that tours Brussels



© Tony Le Duc

## TALKING SPORTS

Leo Cendrowicz

## Recalling the giants of Flemish sail

It may be hard to credit today, but many of the world’s most intrepid sailors and explorers hailed from Flanders: from William of Rubruck, the 13th-century missionary who enjoyed Marco Polo-like adventures in central Asia, to Jean Bart, the privateer for Louis XIV of France, to Willem de Vlamingh, who charted the south-western coast of Australia in the 18th century.

There is less to discover today, but a few hardy souls still patrol the oceans, including one – Bert Schandevyl – from Flanders.

Schandevyl is part of Team Sanya, one of six crews currently competing in the Volvo Ocean Race, a round-the-world yacht race held every three years. Some dismiss it as a flotilla

holiday, but fans say it is the ultimate sporting challenge: Following the prevailing winds, the course is deliberately plotted through some of Earth’s most inhospitable environments. As a result, the competing boats can expect to face three-storey swells, iceberg-strewn seas and ship-swallowing squalls.

Sailing around the clock, the 11-person crews race day and night for more than 20 days at a time on some of the legs. Fresh food, mattresses, pillows and even reading material are *verboden* – too heavy. Everyone shares a single cabin, which wouldn’t be so bad if they had the time and the means to bathe. The winning crew doesn’t get a cash prize, but they can count on a crystal trophy, a slap on the

back and perhaps sailing’s best bragging rights.

The race set off in Alicante in October and will end in Galway in July after the crews have completed 72,000 kilometres. The 28-year-old Schandevyl, who is Team Sanya’s bowman, has already competed in many of sailing’s most high-profile events, including the Tour de France four times, the Round Britain and Ireland Race twice, the Fastnet Race three times and the Sydney to Hobart Race three times. The *Antwerpenaar* is also an accomplished 18-foot skiff sailor and has competed in the double-handed Figaro Transat and singlehanded mini-Fastnet.

“It has been my dream since I was eight years old,” said Schandevyl a few weeks before setting sail on the first leg took off last October. “The first Volvo I watched was the one when EF Language won [1997-98]. I have it all on tape. From that moment on, I knew that this was the race I wanted to do. It’s actually my life’s dream.”

So how are Schandevyl and Team Sanya doing? Well, for all the majestic historical references “Talking Sports” has dredged up, rather poorly: After three of the nine legs, the team is languishing in sixth (and last) place, with just 16 points (leaders Team Telefónica have 95). But if his team fails to catch up with the others, Schandevyl can at least console himself that he is upholding a very Flemish tradition of navigation.

► [www.volvooceanrace.com](http://www.volvooceanrace.com)



Bert Schandevyl from Antwerp with Team Sanya on the Volvo Ocean Race

## The last word...

## A stitch in time

“Sewing is not so difficult. In fact it’s pure mathematics.”

Yentel, 11, is one of the new generation of young people joining up for needlework classes all over Flanders

## Final curtain

“Better to quit five years too early than two years too late.”

Walter Grootaers, singer of the Flemish group De Kreuners, who last week announced their retirement

## Cutting remarks

“I’m absolutely no fan of circumcision. The foreskin is extremely important for sexual sensitivity; you don’t take it away just like that.”

Ghent University urologist Piet Hoebeke on news that circumcisions have increased by over 20% since 2006

## Get well soon

“Do you hear that, Sandra? It worked. The doctors say you’re not going to be sick anymore.”

After four years of fighting a metabolic disorder, 10-year-old Sandra Massart from Temse last week had a successful stem-cell transplant in the US

NEXT WEEK  
IN FLANDERS TODAY

## Cover story

One of the most famous human beings in history is being celebrated next month across the world, but nowhere more so than in Flanders, where he was born exactly 500 years ago. We’ll tell you all you need to know about Mercator and about the many activities in store

## Science

The chemical industry and Flemish institutions are working together on a new technology to identify genes that influence the yield of crops. It’s hoped that the project, called TopYield, will increase productivity in sustainable agriculture

## Arts

FeliXart in Drogenbos has recreated an exhibition of Belgian artists that took place in the south of France in 1927. It brought every important artist of the day together in one exhibition, becoming a sort of time-capsule of local art in the early 20th century