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## A lonely word

Bruno Pieters' new fashion label is 100% honest

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Heritage Day measures heroes by their deeds

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# The devil and the blue sea

## The Flemish coast turns art gallery for Beaufort04

Lisa Bradshaw

Beaufort happens every three years, but this year's edition will make you long for it more often. Having built up a reputation over 12 years, the art parcours boasts 30 works by Europe's best and brightest. It's a highlight of Flanders' year in arts.

Eight artists, 50 metres and 10 degrees below zero. Strolling along the glorious dunes of the undeveloped coastline just outside of Wenduine on this warm spring day, it's hard to imagine how the group of international artists, led by Finnish architect Marco Casagrande, completed the job in four weeks last February.

"Sandworm" is a 50-metre long curved tunnel of hand-woven willow branches. It reaches 10 metres high and wide at its centre. Yet it's still more impressive seen from the inside than from a distance. When you visit "Sandworm", do so on a sunny day, when the light coming through the cracks falls down around you in jagged streams. It's like a cathedral sprung organically from the dunes.

That's just the impression Casagrande wants to give; an eco-architect, his work focuses on the environmental impact of architecture and an elimination of waste. "We wanted to avoid that after the exhibition, the work just becomes garbage," explains Nikita Wu, Casagrande's wife and one of the artists who built "Sandworm". "This material will just return to nature."

She admits however that the below-freezing temperatures made it "a physically demanding experience". But one the artists almost relished, she says, because "it really was like man against nature. Who will win?"

When I visited, there were children playing inside "Sandworm", and we were hard-pressed to get our group of adults to move on, too. The way the work blends into the environment and will leave no trace of itself when it disappears in the autumn suggests it's a win-win situation.

## Art without concessions

"Sandworm" is one of 30 works of art – many monumental – that dot the Flemish coast until the end of September as part of Beaufort04, the international art parcours triennial that attracts more attention from artists and from the public with each new edition. Now in its fourth edition, "Beaufort has reached maturity," says curator Philip Van den Bossche, also the director of Ostend museum Mu.ZEE.

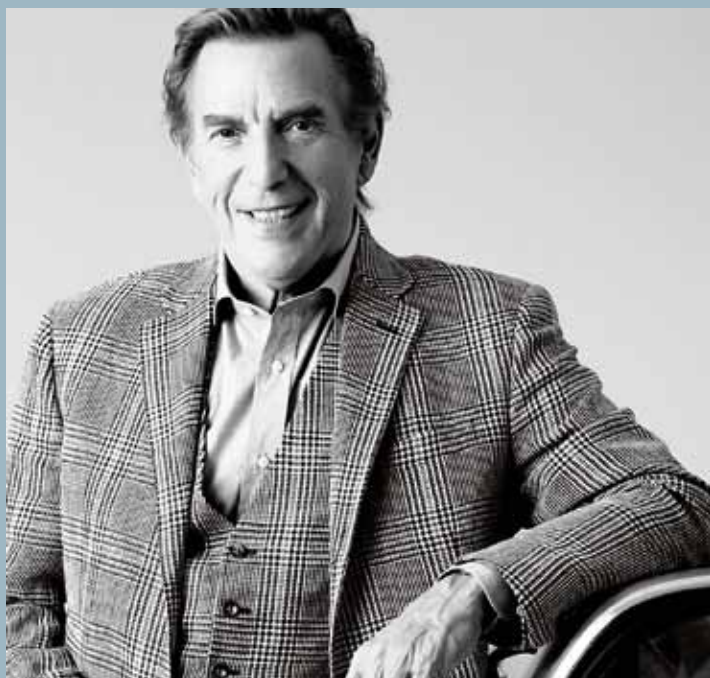
Beaufort is seen as a way to get more tourists to the coast from April to September, but municipalities have in the past had concerns about the avant-garde level of some of the works chosen. Now, "the attitude of the participating coastal cities has become more open to dialogue," notes Van den Bossche. "We do not make any artistic concessions. We hope to introduce art to visitors who have never seen the inside of a museum. I hope some of the works will raise questions or even agitate people. As long as they are not left





## FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



## Will Tura

You might think it's a bit late in the day to be performing at a music festival at the age of 71, but Will Tura doesn't think so, and neither do his many fans, who extend far beyond the target audience for Rimpelrock (Wrinkle Rock), where he'll be appearing in August.

Tura will be appearing on the same stage as Sir Tom Jones, who'll be 72 by the time the festival rolls around. And the UK is sending none other than Engelbert Humperdinck, 75, to the Eurovision Song Contest this year. So suddenly Will Tura is looking decidedly fresh-faced.

Tura was born Arthur Achiel Albert Blanckaert in 1940 in Veurne, West Flanders, where he's one of only three honorary citizens (together with King Albert I and artist Paul Delvaux). Tura started singing songs by Nat King Cole and Gilbert Bécaud when he was only nine, and his first hit came in 1963 with "Eenzaam zonder jou" ("Lonely Without You"), still considered one of the greatest Flemish hits of all time. You're sure to hear it covered at neighbourhood flea markets and

village fairs.

The hits kept coming, and, like many a Flemish singer, he was unbound by the limits of genre: one hit in 1992 was in West Flanders dialect, and in the same year he made an album with a symphony orchestra. In 1984, he released a tribute album to Elvis Presley.

Including compilations, Tura has released no fewer than 128 albums (compared to a piffling 62 from Sir Tom). Two weeks ago, he released his first album of original material in 10 years, described by one critic in *De Standaard* as "a credo recording".

"Never say never," he told the paper. "Indeed, this could be my last album. But my career wasn't built on records alone. ...I've always in the first place been a live performer. You have to have seen me live to be a fan. Concerts have been the one constant all these 50 years." Rimpelrock ticket-holders will be well-placed to judge on 11 August in Hasselt.

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

## News in brief

Parents and staff of the Sint-Lambertus school in Heverlee are considering placing two artworks in and close to the school **in memory of the children who died** in last month's bus crash in Switzerland. The school lost seven pupils and two members of staff. One of the works would be installed on the school playground and another on a play area nearby.

Belgium has joined with 40 other countries in the **Google Art Project**, which uses Street View technology and high-resolution photographs to allow visitors to take a virtual tour of some of the world's great museums. For the moment, only the Royal Museums of Fine Arts in Brussels is taking part. Ten of their works are now online, among them "The Fall of the Rebel Angels" by Pieter Bruegel the Elder and the Pietà of Rogier van der Weyden.

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

Nathan Ramet, one of the **founders of the KazerneDossin Holocaust museum** in Mechelen, has died at the age of 87. Ramet was deported in 1942 at the age of 17 and spent time in a number of camps, including Dachau and Auschwitz. Prior to being deported, he spent eight days in the Dossin barracks, now transformed into the museum. He was knighted by the king in 2005 and also received an honorary doctorate from the Free University of Brussels (VUB).

The mayor of Sint-Truiden in Limburg has called on residents and tourists to show mutual respect during the coming **blossom season**, which attracts thousands of tourists to the fruit-growing area every year. In the past, the presence of so many tourists has caused problems

for the locals, leading to clashes. "Everyone is welcome, but show some respect for the people who live here," advised Ludwig Vandenhove.

Japanese airline All Nippon Airways (ANA) has announced it will operate **direct flights between Brussels and Tokyo** starting next April. The flight takes 11 hours and will be serviced by a brand-new Boeing 787 Dreamstar.

The college of aldermen in Wielsbeke, West Flanders, was last week collectively found **guilty of bullying in the workplace** by a labour tribunal. The complaint was brought by an employee in the building department who claimed she had been pushed aside when the opposition came to power in the town, isolated in a tiny office and left without a telephone or email address. The college was ordered to pay damages of €23,000.

No fewer than 56 candidates have applied for the job of **director-general of the Brussels public transport authority** MIVB, succeeding Alain Flausch, who resigned last year. Among the names reported to have applied are the man who is temporarily replacing Flausch and a former chairman of the board of the rail authority NMBS. Brussels economy minister Benoit Cereche, meanwhile, has criticised the MIVB after it was revealed that the IT help-desk for employees is based in Morocco.

About 10 million computer files containing images and videos of child pornography were found on the computer of a 53-year-old man from Asse accused of **abusing at least 23 children** in Belgium and

abroad. The man known as Marc V, who worked as a psychiatric nurse in Grimbergen, made some of the pornographic materials himself. In 1988, the prosecutor's office said, he was convicted of sexual assault on minors while a scoutmaster in Dilbeek. And in 1999 he was sentenced to two years in prison for possession of child pornography.

The electoral district of **Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde** (BHV), the situation partly behind the delay of more than a year in forming a federal government, will be definitively split into two parts by the beginning of August, after the necessary legal instruments were last week introduced in the Chamber and the Senate. The measures also cover the splitting of the BHV judicial area into Dutch-speaking and French-speaking sections.

Brussels is experiencing **explosive population growth**, according to federal government development agency FPS Economy. In 2010, there were 18,162 births, while a total of 136,915 people moved into the city, both from within Belgium and from abroad. A total of 138,402 died or moved out of the city.

A pair of **peregrine falcons nesting** in one of the towers of the cathedral of Brussels is expected to hatch up to three eggs any day now, experts from the Institute for Natural Sciences said. The pair has been nesting in the towers for eight seasons and last week already hatched four chicks. About 90 breeding pairs are known to be in Belgium, six of them in Brussels. The cathedral's pair can be followed on webcam.

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

## FLANDERS TODAY

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## OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

## Losing our marbles

Remember when we used to run around in short trousers, holes in the elbows of our jumpers and knees permanently scuffed as we rampaged in the streets through the permanent summer of childhood?

You probably don't, but stand by for more such phoney reminiscences as Antwerp enters the grip of marbles fever. The second edition of the Antwerp Championships started last week, but the qualifying heats go on until the end of the month, with the final in June in the Stadspark. The bad news is it's for kids aged six to 12.

The game of marbles – *knikkeren* in Dutch – dates back to the Harappan civilisation of the Indus valley, active from about 3300 to 1300 BC. While we in Europe were trying to make useful utensils out of bronze, the Harappans were mastering the technique of flicking a glass ball with finger and thumb.

In our own time, marbles is a



© Shutterstock

children's game, and should you know one who has the needed skills, sign them up at [knikkeren@stad.antwerpen.be](mailto:knikkeren@stad.antwerpen.be).

On a more sober gaming note, animal rights organisation GAIA has turned to computer games to highlight the problem of battery hens. Chicken Squeeze is a version of Tetris, in which as many oddly shaped chickens as possible have to be stacked in a coop – almost exactly what happens in the real world of factory farming.

Local consumers have largely switched to eggs produced under slightly better conditions. However, the supermarkets and the food processing industry are still, according to GAIA, using huge quantities of battery eggs in processed foods like cakes and pasta. The game is a call to boycott those products until the industry changes its ways.

► <http://tinyurl.com/gaiagame>



# The devil and the deep blue sea

Works at Beaufort range from the monumental to no bigger than your thumb

continued from page 1

indifferent.” He needn’t worry. One cyclist speeding past Estonian artist Flo Kasearu’s “Coast to Coast”, which features three shipping containers lined up on the sand in Bredene, commented to his companion: “In other countries, they haul those away; here, they call it art.” Honestly, I was inclined to agree, growing weary of container art and its allusions to migration. But when I suddenly realised that these containers had been bent on one side to resemble boats, I was at least impressed with the technical skill this required.

In any case, most of the works that make up Beaufort04 are intriguing or dramatic or brilliantly entertaining. Many, like “Sandworm”, are interactive experiences. Near the pier at Nieuwpoort, a giant boulder appears to have fallen from the sky. A very small entryway invites those who don’t mind a crawl to go inside, where they find a very different universe than the concrete exterior would suggest. Latvian artist Ivars Drulle’s “I Can Hear It” in Middelkerke invites visitors to put their ear against the end of monolithic ear trumpets, facing out to sea.

Flemish multi-media artist Hans Op de Beeck asks trust from visitors to his “Location (8)”, which is set in the somewhat discomfiting location of a dark, abandoned old munitions depot in Nieuwpoort. Walking along a wooden path in the dark – over water, no less – you are rewarded at the end with a soundscape and the assuring light of candles. Like much of the work at the coast, Op de Beeck’s piece is site-specific, made especially for Beaufort. Another Beaufort piece attracting a lot of attention is “The Wanderer” by Melita Couta of Cyprus (*pictured on cover*). The sheer height of

the metal pillar that hold a figure at an angle towards the sea is enough, but the figure itself is also startling: Naked, with a single golden horn emerging from his forehead, he is holding a fish, and his mouth is open in what looks like a cry of longing. Does he want to leave, or is he waiting for someone to return?

At the other end of the size scale is Isaac Cordal, a Spanish artist based in Brussels who has become famous for his installations of tiny figures in public space. Most people walk past without even seeing them. In De Panne, they are fortunately mapped out for you: “Waiting for Climate Change” finds 10 figures atop wooden poles, faced out to sea with little life preservers (or water toys) around their waists. They wait, passively, for the ocean to spirit them away. Cordal’s second site is inside a house, only accessible between 14.00 and 17.00, and includes several installations on this theme.

The artist has also promised to create more site-specific installations with his trademark miniature figures along the coast this summer, and Beaufort has promised to list their locations on its website.

Beaufort always has a theme – three years ago, it was art and heritage, for instance. This year, all the artists are European. “In choosing to invite only artists from Europe, we are not closing any borders,” assures Van den Bossche. “We are looking via small stories to a possible and communal future.”



**Photos:**

- 1 ▶ Try not to step on Brussels-based artist Isaac Cordal’s installations of little maudlin men
- 2 ▶ Flemish artist Nick Ervinck’s “Olnetop” resembles a big splash of water
- 3 ▶ “The Move Overseas” as envisioned by Swedish artist Michael Johansson
- 4 ▶ Walk through Finnish architect Marco Casagrande’s “Sandworm”

UNTIL 30 SEPTEMBER

Beaufort04

Along the Flemish coast

▶ [www.beaufort04.be](http://www.beaufort04.be)

## DOING BEAUFORT

There are 30 works in Beaufort spread from De Panne all the way up to Zeebrugge, so it’s impossible to see it all in a day, or even a weekend. Instead, you’ll want to schedule a few trips to the coast in the coming months. The tourist office in any participating city can provide you with a copy of the *Beaufort Walking Guide* for €7. This is your best shot at finding all the locations, as the information that comes free online doesn’t include maps.

The *Walking Guide* provides maps with Beaufort locations clearly marked and also includes a tour of each city that takes in its other main attractions, such as monuments, museums and gardens. Cyclists can opt for a Beaufort cycle map for a cheaper €3.

If you’re on foot, leave the car at home and **use the coast tram**. The *Walking Guide* shows you which stops to get off

at to see which works. De Lijn offers day and multiple-day passes. Beaufort offers many **accommodation packages**, guided tours in multiple languages, special maps that describe accessibility options for the disabled and **children’s activities** (demarcated with a cartoon seagull named Bo and under the cute moniker “Bo4Kids”).

If you’re only going to get to the coast once or twice, you have a couple of options for getting the most out of Beaufort: **visiting by city or by a selection of works**. In terms of cities, De Panne, Nieuwpoort, Wenduine and Zeebrugge are excellent choices. Among artists not to miss are Michal Gabriel and Isaac Cordal in De Panne, Melita Couta in Koksijde, Hans Op de Beeck and the Chapuisat brothers in Nieuwpoort, Ivars Drulle in Middelkerke, Marco Casagrande in Wenduine and Michael Johansson in Zeebrugge.

## VISUAL ARTS FLANDERS

Beaufort is the first of five major arts festivals in Flanders this year, which has led to the creation of Visual Arts Flanders, an umbrella project managed by the Flemish Institute for Visual, Audiovisual and Media Art (BAM). BAM is using the title Visual Arts Flanders to promote the cluster of events both inside and outside Flanders’ borders. The events include Beaufort04 on the coast; TRACK, the first of a planned annual art parcours in Ghent; a major redevelopment of Antwerp’s Middelheim Museum; Manifesta 9, the European Biennial of Contemporary Art in Genk; and Newtopia, an international art exhibition on the state of human rights in Mechelen.

“It’s really an exception that so many high-profile, quality events are taking place in such a small region in one year,” says Dirk De Wit, director of BAM. “It’s a coincidence that it happened, but it’s also a fantastic opportunity to talk about Flanders this year. In the longer term, we aim to create an image of the region for artists and art

tourists that Flanders is a region worth visiting.” To that end, Visual Arts Flanders is staging presentations about Flanders’ arts scene at major European festivals and other international platforms where artists and culture connoisseurs come together, such as Art Basel, the Venice Biennial and the Tate Modern in London. Not only does Visual Arts Flanders want to bring attention to the region as a major hub of arts and culture to artists and arts tourists, but it also hopes to pick up on some of the tourists travelling through Flanders to other major arts festivals just beyond its borders this year, such as Lille3000, DOCUMENTA 13 in Kassel and the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad.

The five events all taking place this year in Flanders is “a unique situation, and it won’t happen again,” says De Wit. “It is an opportunity to put us on and to keep us on the map of international arts and culture.”

▶ [www.visualartsflanders.be](http://www.visualartsflanders.be)



# Budget discipline report gets thumbs up

## High Council advises all governments to balance their budgets by 2015

Alan Hope

Flanders' minister-president Kris Peeters has welcomed a report by the federal High Council for Finance (HRF) that advises balanced budgets at all government levels by 2015. The advice was sought by the federal government in connection with the question as to what contribution the federal and regional governments should make towards overall spending.

The HRF's report, Peeters said, shows his government is on the right track: "This is a recognition that Flanders, in accordance with our government programme, is going for a balanced budget and is correct not to run up a deficit," he said.

The HRF indeed rules out deficit spending by all six governments – federal, regional and community – and calls for budgets to be balanced by 2015. That contrasts with a report last year that left the door open for the three regions together to run up a deficit of 1.2%, something Peeters' government has rejected.

Peeters said the latest report was "positive" for Flanders. "However,

the investment needs of Flemish society will remain very high."

For the federal government, the news is less good: the HRF estimates the federal government will have to find about €10.5 billion in savings in the next three years, over and above the €13 billion that was saved in the latest round of budget negotiations. In comparison, all three regions together are facing savings of €800 million.

The HRF suggests the transfer of certain responsibilities from the federal state to the regions, without transferring the money required to service them, thereby pushing further budget cuts onto the regions. Federal finance minister Steven Vanackere (*pictured*) called the report "more readable, more transparent and more clear" than previous reports. "The figures circulating at the moment – €10 to €11 billion – might seem like a lot, but I would remind you that just in December last year and at the budget control in March the federal government took steps to



save €13 billion. Now we're looking at a comparable effort but spread over three years and divided among all governments. Which doesn't take away from the fact that we're facing a mammoth task."

The budget problems, he warned, ensure that the tax burden on individuals and companies is not likely to come down soon. That will

only happen "through budgetary orthodoxy, and this and the next administration will have their hands full providing it," he told Knack magazine. "People will have to accept a high rate of taxation by the government for quite some time yet."

## Think-tank to consider media issues

Media minister Ingrid Lieten has announced the creation of a new think-tank for the creative audiovisual industries to help in the government's aim of promoting quality Flemish television. Lieten made the announcement last week while on a working visit to MIPTV in Cannes, the largest television industry event in the world.

The think-tank will be called Studio and will, the minister said, consist of eight to 12 experts from different backgrounds who will meet in isolation for several days at a time to consider certain questions. "An example of the type of question that could be asked would be how can we organise the remuneration of creativity differently?" Lieten said. She said that she sees such a body as an interesting prospect. "I want to provide the necessary support." The Flemish government's main support for the audiovisual industry at present is the Media Fund, set up in 2010 and financed by both the media and culture ministries.

Meanwhile in Lommel, Limburg province, Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters was on hand for the start of shooting on a new 10-part youth drama series, *Crème de la crème*, the story of three young women starting up an ice cream business. The series is one of several to benefit from government support in presenting a positive image of entrepreneurship in Flanders. "International research has shown that media projects are an effective means of developing business culture in the longer term," Peeters commented.



Ingrid Lieten launched a new think-tank to boost the Flemish TV industry

## Prison conditions at Vorst "inhuman"

The conditions at the prison in the Vorst commune of Brussels are "inhuman", according to a senior magistrate who paid a visit to the prison last week. Luc Hennart, chief magistrate of the court of first instance in Brussels, was accompanied by five of his colleagues. "The prisoners are kept 23 hours a day three to a cell intended for one person," he said. "One of them has to sleep on a mattress on the floor." Some of the cells have no running water or no toilet. "I don't think there are adequate words to describe such a situation," said Hennart.

The prison, which dates from the 19th century, is due to close in 2016, with the prisoners moving to a new prison complex in the Haren neighbourhood of Brussels. In the meantime, penal authorities and successive ministers argue that there is little that can be done to remedy the situation in the current prison.

One suggestion posed is to reduce the number of people being detained on remand – charged and awaiting trial, but not yet tried and convicted. Remand prisoners, who in legal terms must be considered innocent, account for one-third of the prison population at Vorst. Because of the situation in Vorst and nearby Sint-Gillis prison, the Brussels prosecutor's office has instructed investigating magistrates to keep remand cases to an absolute minimum.

## FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

## De Coninck's judgement

This week the federal minister for work faces her first real test. Monica De Coninck has gained a formidable reputation as head of the Antwerp OCMW, or welfare office, where her approach stood out. The OCMW is the last resort for people in financial problems, with no job and no right to unemployment benefits.

It is also the office where many asylum seekers turn to for help. But handouts, De Coninck says, gives these people nothing: work does. "Offering people a job is the best way to find out if they want to work," she says. Work, she says, is also a way to reconnect to a society they have fallen out of touch with.

The activating and integrating power of work has become a mantra to minister De Coninck (SPA). Belgium's employment rate, too low to support an aging population, should be improved by any means, she believes. Everyone who can work, should work.

In the past few weeks, the Ostend-born politician stirred up a major debate, stating that too many women stay at home. As long as their marriage lasts, they do fine, but after a divorce, they often find themselves in poverty, having lost touch with the labour market. Women should work more and men less, De Coninck says, citing her own marriage as an example.

De Coninck also stresses the need to work longer. The over-50s not only lose their jobs more often, many of them are quite happily resigned to the prospect of an early retirement. Early retirement, however, is an old recipe, dating back to the high unemployment period of the 1980s. Raising the early retirement age was one of the first priorities of the Di Rupo government.

The unions still believe in the system, though, especially when companies sack (older) workers by the dozens. They say it is unrealistic that these over-50 workers can find another job. In circumstances like these, the minister for work could still allow exemptions on the early retirement age.

So this is De Coninck's test: Flemish steel wire producer Bekaert is in the middle of layoffs, cutting its work force by hundreds. Will the minister allow early retirement exemptions for the Bekaert workers? If De Coninck does, this will seem inconsistent with what she has promoted so far. If she does not, this will seem like harsh treatment of people who lose their jobs through no fault of their own. What will De Coninck do?

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES

623

bicycles stolen by a man in Antwerp, who was last week given a one-year suspended sentence. The man sold the bikes to a café owner for €30 each

3,261

tonnes of rubbish strewn along the sides of the region's roads and motorways, costing €4 million to clean up, according to Flemish mobility minister Hilde Crevits

185 km/h

driven by a woman from Geel, caught on the E314 for the 12th time since buying her new Porsche 911. She was fined and banned from driving for three months

40,000

zwartrijders, or fare evaders, caught by De Lijn public transport across Flanders last year. About one-quarter were later able to prove they had a transport pass

54%

of Belgian young people aged between 15 and 25 describe themselves as "happy", according to a European study carried out by Ghent-based InSites Consulting. Just one in seven said they were "unhappy"



# Ministers protest energy price rise

## “Challenge your bills,” Vande Lanotte advises business customers

Alan Hope

A 5.5% increase in the cost of gas introduced on 1 April by the two main suppliers, Electrabel and Luminus, was against “the letter of the law,” federal economy minister Johan Vande Lanotte protested last week, in a joint statement with federal energy minister Melchior Wathelet. The Belgian government introduced a law at the end of March freezing energy price rises from 1 April until the end of the year. Energy suppliers typically adjust their prices on a monthly basis in accordance with the evolution of oil prices. While the increase in tariffs is 5.5%, a slight downturn in other costs than oil means the net effect on the consumer will be a rise of 3.3%. That brings the annual increase in the price of gas, compared to April 2011, to 11%. According to the two companies, the freeze takes effect after 1 April, not on the day itself. In the view of one lawyer interviewed by *De Morgen*, that position is supported because the base price as defined by the law is the price in effect on 1 April, not that of 31 March. The increase is not

in breach of the letter of the law, he said, though it is clearly not in the spirit of the law. “There was enough communication over recent weeks to make it clear what the intention was,” the lawyer said. “But the spirit of the law is of no consequence when the letter is explicit enough.” Last week, Vande Lanotte and Wathelet were threatening to take the issue to the commercial court if the companies did not reverse their price increases. This week, economic inspection teams were due to visit the two companies to collect details. The power companies claim they were following guidelines given to them by the energy regulator CREG, but the regulator disputes that. “Our guidelines state clearly that it is forbidden from 1 April to index prices,” a CREG spokesman said. “Electrabel is simply referring to another sentence in our guidelines.” Technology federation Agoria argued that the price freeze was now pointless. The price of gas usually falls in the summer as consumption for heating goes down, so a price increase that gets in under the



wire will affect prices for the rest of the season. According to Agoria chairman Paul Soete, “freezing gas prices during the summer has about as much effect as banning the sale of Christmas tree ornaments in the summer.” Vande Lanotte is advising companies to challenge their energy bills. “That will indicate the company is not in agreement with the bill because it is in conflict with the law.” In that

way, the bill, he explained, will not be legitimised by payment. It is important for businesses to react immediately, as they receive energy bills monthly. For domestic consumers, the increase will only make itself felt at the end of the year. “By that time, the issue will long have been clarified,” Vande Lanotte said. “This has to be sorted out: It’s as simple as that.”

### Bekaert unions demand early retirement

Workers at the troubled steel-wire manufacturer Bekaert, based in West Flanders, have demanded the right to take early retirement from the age of 50 to mitigate the effects of a planned 600 redundancies at the company. Last Friday, as *Flanders Today* went to press, Bekaert CEO Bert De Graeve was due to sit down with union representatives to discuss the restructuring plan, a conversation made more difficult, following the revelation that he will receive a 33% salary increase this year to €1.78 million. The previous week, workers had gone on strike for one day to protest

the news. Unions last week met in Brussels with federal labour minister Monica De Coninck. Allowing early retirement (at 50 for workers at the Aalter plant and 52 for those elsewhere) would, unions say, take care of most of the redundancies. In a time when in general the government is preparing everyone in the workforce to face a longer working life, however, it seems unlikely the unions’ demands will be met. Bekaert management has proposed a fund worth €450,000 to help workers made redundant to find new jobs.



Federal minister of employment Monica De Coninck (SPA) meets with union representatives from Bekaert steel-wire manufacturers last week

### Port of Antwerp confirms commitment to India

The Port of Antwerp welcomed the minister of shipping from India, GK Vasan, last week for the seminar Belgo-Indian Encounter on Ports, Infrastructure, Logistics and Shipping. With a growth rate prediction of 7% for 2012, India is one of the world’s fastest-growing economic regions. Vasan cited the long tradition of maritime interaction between India and Belgium taking the Memorandums of Understanding between Flemish and Indian port cities as an example. “In view of the further expansion of our maritime operations, today’s meeting was about the training of our maritime officials in the APEC

[Antwerp Port Engineering and Consulting] seminars,” said Vasan. “With over 14,500 kilometres of navigable inland waterways, inland navigation becomes increasingly important.” Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters underlined the importance of India as an economic region. “Ninety-eight percent of [Belgium’s] exports to India are generated in Flanders, mainly in the diamond trade – but we want to diversify,” he said. “With investments worth \$7 billion in Indian port installations, there are quite some opportunities for Belgian companies.” **Marc Maes**



Left to right: Eddy Bruyninckx, CEO of the Port of Antwerp Authority; minister-president Kris Peeters; Indian minister of shipping GK Vasan; and Pradeep Sinha, secretary to minister Vasan

### Bill payments improved in Flanders

Companies in Flanders have improved in the matter of paying their bills on time, according to the regular index of payments maintained by consultancy Graydon. The bureau drew up an index in 2002 and measures on-time and late payments to track the index

since. In the first quarter of this year, almost 68% of bills were paid within the deadline, an increase from the last quarter of 2.35% and the best figure since the start of the economic crisis in 2008.

## THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

### Biotech ► Thrombogenics

Leuven-based biotech company Thrombogenics has raised some €78 million in new capital to finance its research programmes and develop its sales in the US.

### Distribution ► Mondial Relay

The French Mondial Relay, the logistics affiliate of mail order group 3 Suisses, has opened a distribution centre in Vorst to supply its local clients and industrial partners Vanden Borre, Decathlon, Maxi Toys and online sales companies.

### Food ► La Lorraine

The bakery and frozen bread group, based in Ninove, East Flanders, has taken over the Bruges Paverko pastry and bakery company. Owned by the Vanherpe group with sales of some €550 million, La Lorraine is a leading supplier of supermarkets Delhaize and Carrefour. It operates six production units in Flanders, one in Poland and one in the Czech Republic.

### Hotels ► Astoria

The landmark Astoria hotel on Koningsstraat in Brussels will reopen in 2015 after extensive renovation priced at some €60 million. Owned by the Saudi Global Hotels and Resorts group, the Astoria will also increase the number of its rooms from 106 to 140.

### Insurance ► Ageas

Belgium’s largest insurance company, created in the wake of the Fortis break-up in 2008, plans to launch a 20-for-one reverse split to reduce the number of its shares.

### Insurance ► KBC

Flanders’ largest financial institution has finalised the sale of its Fidea insurance affiliate to the US JC Flowers investment group.

### Telecom ► Belgacom

The country’s largest telecommunications group is considering merging with its Proximus mobile telephony affiliate. The move, which would have no effect on customers, follows the evolution of technology and the company’s strategy to integrate all its products in one offer. Proximus, launched in 1994, was at the time the country’s first mobile telecommunications operator.



# A little honesty goes a long way

**Bruno Pieters' new line is the first 100% transparent fashion label in the world**

Catherine Kusters

When Bruno Pieters made his grand exit from the fashion scene at the start of 2011, fans and critics were puzzled. After all, the Flemish designer had a lot going for him: a successful label, critically acclaimed shows and the experience of a three-year stint at Hugo Boss. The world at his feet, some might say. Why he chose to leave it all behind for a sabbatical in India remained something of a mystery. Until his return earlier this year.

It turns out, Pieters just needed a break. For nearly a decade, he had been living from show to show, always upping the ante, but without receiving much personal gratification. During his travels, he reflected on what he wanted most and came up with a radical idea for a new clothing line: Honest By. "Simply put, Honest By is something I wanted as a customer," says Pieters. "I love shopping and buying luxury products, but at the same time, I like to know where they come from." His new company, launched in January, is sustainable, ecological and the first 100% transparent fashion label in the world. It strives for complete honesty about everything, from the origin of the materials used to the final mark-up. The details of each piece are listed on the website. "I realised that every purchase you make has an impact on the

world around you," the designer explains, "so I wanted to create a brand that allows customers to see all the information they would like to know. They must be able to make a conscious decision, and, at the same time, I also want to be completely aware of what I'm making."

Uncompromising openness is without precedent in the fashion industry, where brands are often vague about their manufacturing practices. According to Pieters, the internet has made matters worse: "Today, there are so many online rumours about how clothes are made. As a customer, I was left assuming, and assumption is dangerous for a brand." Pieters, 36, believes that when you buy a luxury product, you don't just buy the clothes. "You buy the whole story," he says. "Part of the fun is knowing something was made with *savoir-faire*. The story translates into the quality you buy; otherwise why would you pay that amount?" It's a fair question, considering that Honest By comes with a designer price tag: about €400 for cotton shirts and pants, up to €800 for wool coats. So the question on everyone's mind is, just what is the mark-up? True to his word, Pieters releases the information. A jersey knit dress of €527 (excluding VAT) cost €132 to make. The rest is wholesale and retail mark-up. All the pieces in Honest By are limited editions – only about 10 or so of each piece are made. Though if

the concept works, more of each piece will be made, and – crucially – the cost will come down. So the more consumers buy over the next few months, the better the chance of lower prices.

## Transparency is the new black

The company's transparency forms part of the personal philosophy Pieters developed during his year off. "India especially was an eye-opener for me," he reveals. "To see how people live there and interact with each other – the freedom, the chaos. I saw a beauty in it that just felt liberating." But India wasn't the only inspiration. "It didn't take two years to create the brand. Honest By is the result of the 36 years of my life." The collection does show Pieters at his most mature. The sharp lines and clean-cut silhouettes for which critics have lauded him make a comeback, but there is an extra softness to the pieces. The choice of organic, skin-friendly and vegan materials will undoubtedly have contributed to this. In stark contrast with his time at Hugo Boss, Pieters refused to use leather or fur. Instead, Honest By includes sweaters made from recycled wool, linen wrap dresses and cotton jersey bomber jackets: all wardrobe staples for the Kyoto generation. The line knows no seasons. Pieters prefers a more organic approach

– pun intended – to building a collection. "We have about 60 pieces for men and women, and every week we put up a few new arrivals. Right now, it's turning summer here and winter in Australia, so it's nice to offer both seasons the whole year round."

The new items dropping in are not the only reason you might want to keep an eye on the website. Pieters hints that Honest By has some exciting projects in store: "Every three months, we will have a guest designer, and in-between we will launch collaborations with other brands." The first guest designer is Toronto-born Calla Haynes, now based in Paris with her label Calla. Honest By, Pieters emphasises, is more than just his project: "The designers who agreed to do guest collections understand that this is not about helping me or my work. It's about doing something they believe in themselves."

## The future of the fashion business

Whether this brave new transparent world will take off is yet to be seen. According to Pieters, it's all in the hands of the customer. "In the end, it's up to the public to decide what to buy," he says. "There's no company in the world that will do something that the customer doesn't want." Via the brand's website, customers can leave comments and even ask Pieters for styling advice. Then there is the blog, which features people who have bought items from the collection. "I want to make fashion more personal," he explains. "A lot of brands

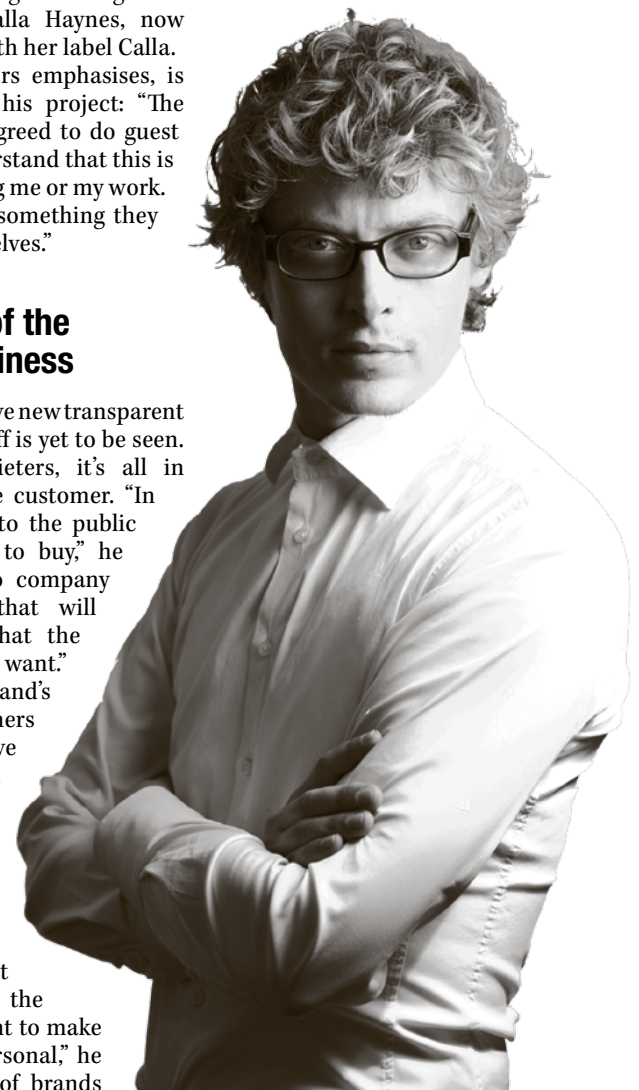
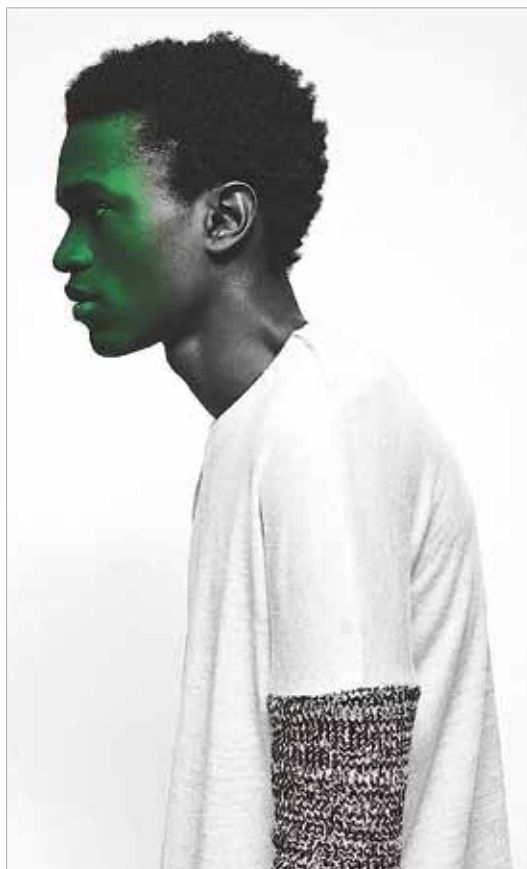
focus on name and heritage, but I want to invest in the present and in the people who buy my clothes. To me, the human side is the most fascinating one. When people ask me what the future of fashion will be, I say: 'Whatever you want it to be'."

*Honest By is sold online and at eco-fashion boutique Haleluja, Nieuwe Graanmarkt 6, Brussels*

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



Black, white, organic and vegan: Honest By styles



## FACT FILE: BRUNO PIETERS

- 1975:** Born in Bruges
- 1999:** Graduates from Antwerp's Royal Academy of Fine Arts with a BA in Fashion Design
- 2001:** Makes his debut as a designer at Paris Couture Week
- 2002:** Launches a ready-to-wear collection
- 2005:** Becomes creative director of the men's line at Belgian leather goods brand Delvaux
- 2007:** Named art director of Hugo by Hugo Boss, the German house's avant-garde line
- 2011:** Announces the retirement of his own label in February and spends most of the year travelling in India. In-between trips, he creates a capsule collection for Swedish high-street brand Weekday
- 2012:** Returns as a designer with Honest By, a revolutionary new concept based on sustainability and transparency



# Flanders 101

## A Ghent University course is helping foreign students discover hidden corners of Flemish life

Andy Furniere



A visit to Ghent's city museum: Low Countries Studies teaches students everything they ever wanted to know about Flanders – and more

Every year, foreign students taking the Low Countries Studies course at Ghent University graduate as certified apprentices in Flemish life. They've not had to memorise dates of famous battles or names of kings – showing an interest is the most important thing. The programme offers about 250 foreign students, researchers and other interested people lectures in English on Flemish history, politics, economy, media and culture. Excursions in Ghent and to the Flemish-Dutch border take the

theory outside the classroom. In the second semester, 12 lectures and four field trips familiarise students with various aspects of life in the Flanders of yesterday and today. At the start of the semester, in February, 60 participants were guided around Ghent. The walk brought them to cultural, industrial-archaeological and religious places of interest such as the begijnhoven. "We show them hidden corners of the city that are difficult to find on your own," explains coordinator Valère Meus. Afterwards, the City of Ghent received the students in the

historic city hall. The students also went on a trip through the history of East Flanders' capital at STAM, the Ghent city museum. Then at the Hotelschool Gent, participants rolled up their sleeves to prepare a Flemish speciality: waffles. On 5 May, a bus will take the class to the countryside northwest of Ghent. After a stop at the town of Kaprijke, the group moves on to the border region. The small area of the Netherlands called Zeelandic Flanders illustrates both the similarities and the differences between the Netherlands and Flanders. The mediaeval town of Damme in West Flanders is the last stop of the day.

### Media landscape

Twelve lectures outline the history and present situation of Flanders. They cover topics such as the mediaeval and early modern past of the cities of Flanders and Brabant, the legacy of the Second World War in Flanders and the history of the Dutch language. Students receive background on why Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg are the only three countries in the world that have legalised euthanasia. A lecturer also takes the students on an illustrated tour through the Flemish media landscape, focusing on newspapers, radio and television. The course reveals, for example, on which radio stations you will find Flemish folk songs or the region's alternative music scene. The difference is made clear between "typically Flemish" TV programmes and globalised formats. Another lesson featured a screening of the Flemish romantic comedy *Smoorverliefd* (*Madly in Love*). The programme launched 18 years ago and is a huge success among foreign students. "Around

250 people of approximately 50 nationalities enrolled for this edition," says Meus. He believes the reason is that foreign students look for essential background knowledge so they can integrate into Flemish society. "Our political situation can be hard to grasp for people from China or Ghana," he explains. "The courses help them to get insight into the present state of affairs and to understand Flemings themselves." Students who attend six out of the 12 lectures receive a certificate signed by the UGent rector during a ceremony on 31 May. "It's not an actual degree but a proof of their interest in Flemish society," Meus says.

### Open to everyone

The Low Countries Studies are mainly targeted at exchange students and foreign researchers of the Ghent University Association, who attend the lectures for free. Anyone else interested can apply, though they must pay a fee of €60. One of them is Douglas W Kinney, a retired dentist from the United States who has lived with his Flemish wife in Erpe-Mere, East Flanders, for the past five years. "The course has enlightened me about aspects of Flemish history, culture, architecture and in general the way Flemings live," he says. "The sensitivity about language in Belgium, for example, makes more sense to me since hearing the lectures." Kinney says the course has enriched his daily life. "I am exploring more Flemish radio stations now that I know which suit me best. My wife and I are even thinking about taking evening cooking lessons after the activity at the hotel school in Ghent."

► [www.lowcountries.ugent.be](http://www.lowcountries.ugent.be)

## THE WEEK IN SCI & ED

An electric car created by University College Ghent has **broken the Belgian record for energy-efficient driving** at the recent Belgian Eco Marathon for innovative vehicles. The prototype, HoGent Energy5, made it 2.337 kilometres on the equivalent of one litre of diesel fuel. The vehicle is powered by the motor of an electric bicycle, incorporated into the wheel.

Adding bitter flavours to food and drink **could help to battle obesity**, writes Sara Janssen of KU Leuven's medical faculty in her doctoral thesis. Experiments confirmed that adding substances with a bitter taste speeds up saturation. In the future, a bitter pill could be developed against obesity.

A collaboration between the Centre for Statistics at the University of Hasselt and the University of Antwerp's Vaccine and Infectious Disease Institute has resulted in a **new mathematical model to analyse vaccination studies**. The innovative model should lead to improved insight into the working of the immune system and makes it possible to predict how long a vaccination will protect.

► [www.ua.ac.be/vaxinfectio](http://www.ua.ac.be/vaxinfectio)

A forensic team at KU Leuven headed by renowned geneticist Jean-Jacques Cassiman and members of the federal police's Disaster Victim Identification team are in Burundi **to identify the possible remains of the last king of the country**, who was killed in 1972. Burundi would like to give the former king an honourable funeral on 1 July to celebrate 50 years of independence. In 2004, Cassiman used genetic research to establish the authenticity of the French king Louis XVII's heart.

Flemish education magazine *Klasse* is trying to **improve communication between teachers and non-native parents** with an icon dictionary. The dictionary contains 25 basic expressions with icons and translation into nine languages to explain parents that, for example, "there is a school trip coming up" or "they need to sign a document". *Klasse* wants to raise awareness among schools that they have to involve non-native parents more in the education of their children.

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

Paul De Knop, the current rector of the Free University Brussels (VUB) will more than likely continue in the role, as he is the only **candidate at the approaching rector elections**. The 57-year-old sports sociologist, who has been head of the VUB since 2008, wants to make the university less dependent on government resources during his new mandate. The elections take place on 4 May. **AF**

## Q&A



### Dominique Trocmé works for student exchange programme WEP, which is looking for 11 Flemish families to house students from Wallonia

Canada or Australia for a couple of months to learn English. During their travels, they can also choose to work as a volunteer. This experience helps them to see and understand more of the world.

#### Why are you looking for Flemish host families?

We also help French-speaking students from Wallonia to learn and practise Dutch. People too often think these students don't want to learn Dutch, but this isn't true. Every year we send about 20 students to the other side of the language border. At the moment, we're still looking for 11 Flemish host families to house a student

who's graduated from secondary school in Wallonia for one semester.

#### What are the requirements to become a host family?

A spare room! WEP does not compensate the host families, so a good dose of motivation is required, too. The students will arrive at the end of August and will go to the local Dutch-speaking secondary school. Ideally, he or she will also join a local sports or arts club to practise conversational skills. We discourage students from travelling home or having their parents visit during their stay in Flanders, to make the most of the experience.

#### What are the results after such an exchange?

The students often arrive with a minimal knowledge of the language but go home with very good language skills. The exchange is also important on a personal level, as they don't get to see their parents for a couple of months. A while ago, TV Limburg interviewed Alexandre, an exchange student who had been staying with a host family in Lanaken, and he wowed the viewers with his Dutch. You can see the video on our Facebook page ([facebook.com/wep.be](http://facebook.com/wep.be)).

interview by Katrien Lindemans

► [www.wep.org](http://www.wep.org)

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# Hero's welcome

## Flanders' Heritage Day celebrates the extraordinary deeds of ordinary people

Alan Hope



There's a tendency to associate heritage with momentous events and extraordinary people – with battlefields and great ships, generals and kings. In more modern times, heritage culture has tended to turn more towards the lives and contributions of common people, so it's not surprising that this year's Erfgoeddag, or Heritage Day, on 22 April has a wide range of events planned that place ordinary people at centre-stage. And while this year's theme is "Heroes", there's no shortage of examples. The town of Duffel in Antwerp province derives its name from the Celtic word for water, and for Heritage Day it's shining the spotlight on its fire brigade. Set up in the 1870s, the brigade consists of two professionals and 52 volunteers, a balance that has remained constant since the beginning, when the town was unable to find the manpower for a full-time force.

There are more volunteer fire brigades in Flanders than you might think: from almost wholly volunteer corps in places like Dendermonde or Deinze to professional corps aided by volunteers like in Aalst, Kortrijk and Ostend. Nevertheless, the Duffel force is good enough to include a team that specialises in dealing with hazardous substances, which often sees them called for incidents outside their area. To mark Heritage Day, they've organised a tour that includes a photo exhibition and a demonstration of smoke detectors. The description refers to them as "everyday heroes", and there can't be much doubt about the accuracy of that.

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

Also in the municipal museum in Duffel is an exhibition on heroes of health care, featuring the nursing sisters of Duffel convent and Jeanne Hellemans from nearby Mechelen, who helped set up the St Elizabeth clinic. Hellemans also nursed troops from the front at the military hospital in Calais in the First World War, before going on to head many nursing professional bodies and to be elected to Mechelen's city council.

### Non-human varieties

Everyday heroes of a different sort were the draft horses of Brabant, who are being feted in the museum dedicated to the breed in Galmaarden-Vollezele, Flemish Brabant. At one time, of course, draft horses were the equivalent of farm machinery, used for ploughing and transport. In the 19th century, pioneers like Remi Vanderschueren started a programme of selective breeding of three breeds of draft horse, leading to the creation of the Brabant, which became an international benchmark of quality. Not only did its success make the name of Brabant recognisable worldwide – at one point in the early 20th century these horses were Belgium's number one export – it also made Vollezele into a household name in horse circles. Fittingly, in front of the museum in what used to be the town hall, stands a huge statue of Brilliant, one of the most celebrated of the race.

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

## 22 APRIL

### Across Flanders and Brussels

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

## HIGHLIGHTS

Every province of Flanders – and Brussels, too – offers a range of attractions on Heritage Day. There's a complete programme on the website, as well as brochures for specific local areas. Everything is free, but some guided tours require reservations. Here's a tiny sample of what's on offer.

**Antwerp:** Workshops for children aged six to eight in the Photo Museum in Antwerp on the subject of heroes. Reservation required. The museum is also hosting exhibitions and a guided tour for adults.

► [www.fomu.be](http://www.fomu.be)

**Brussels:** Heroes of a military sort in the Army Museum at Jubelpark, with a list of 12 names from which you choose a winner. There's also a scavenger hunt for children on the theme of superheroes.

► [www.klm-mra.be](http://www.klm-mra.be)

**East Flanders:** Reynaert the Fox is the hero of a mediaeval heroic epic, and he'll be brought to life in Deinze with a scavenger hunt through the town, animated by characters from the story, including talking animals. To close

the day, there's a concert in the main square.

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

**Flemish Brabant:** The facade of the city hall in Leuven is decorated with the representations of some 200 local heroes. The city chose five to highlight on Heritage Day, with local people choosing another five. Included is Father Damien, once voted the greatest Belgian of all time. In other locations, the city salutes heroes of science, religion and academia, as well as the unsung heroes from the ranks of the ordinary *Leuvenaars*.

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

**Limburg:** For such a small country, Belgium has a large footprint in space. As well as two astronauts, Dirk Frimout and Frank De Winne, it was University of Leuven priest and researcher Georges Lemaître who first proposed the Big Bang theory. The Cosmodrome in Genk will celebrate local and international heroes of space exploration with an exhibition, a guided tour and planetarium shows.

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



© Erfgoeddag / Philippe Debroe

## STREEKPRODUCT SERIES

Alan Hope



### Red-brown beer

If you've ever carried out an internet search for the word "Flanders", you'll know that there are three strong contenders for the most hits: Ned Flanders from *The Simpsons*, Stephanie Flanders of the BBC and Flanders Red Ale. Only the third of those has a link to our Flanders, but it's arguably the one that arouses the most passions, not to say slavish devotion. Just this month, for instance, Alan Sprints from the Hair of the Dog bar in Portland, Oregon (which, by the way, has a Flanders street, after which Ned Flanders is named), came all the way to Lochristi in East Flanders for the chance to take a brewing masterclass from Dirk Naudts. Naudts invites one American every year to share his brewing secrets. Sprints made a beer he calls Flanders Fred. Red-brown ale is typical to the south of West Flanders, dating back to the Middle Ages when

brewers would use *gruyt* (anything from orange peel to rosemary to anise and cinnamon) instead of hops to give the beer flavour and improve its longevity. Hops bring a bitterness to beer that is not at all in keeping with red-brown ale's sour notes. Red-brown ale was also stored in *foeders*, or oak vats, which helped to develop and concentrate the flavours. Later, when the railways came along, linking Kortrijk to Oudenaarde and Brussels, the local beer gained wider appeal before going under to the dubious charms of the ubiquitous pilsner style. The colour of the red-brown beer comes from its mix of malted grains; oak vats from the Vosges and Poland are still used, the oldest dating back to 1836. You'll be able to inspect them yourself on Heritage Day (*see above*) when three brewers of Southwest Flanders red-brown

beer – Rodenbach from Roeselare, Bockor from Bellegem and Verhaeghe from Vichte – offer guided tours of their facilities. Included are free samples, prizes and good deals on beer to go. They've also laid on a free bus service linking the three breweries, as well as a cycle route for those who want to work off the effects of one glass before moving on to the next. Rodenbach and Verhaeghe are also bearers of the *streekproduct* (regional product) label awarded by the Flemish government, and the streekproduct.be website offers recipes using the beers, including smoked mackerel with Rodenbach sauce and West Flanders red-brown ale sabayon.

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



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# Mango number one

The journey to victory for the winner of Britain's MasterChef 2012 included a detour to Bruges

PM Dautreline

While the MasterChef franchise exists in various guises in more than 20 countries, the original British version, shown on the BBC, is the "daddy" of them all. The brand new MasterChef champion is London-based Shelina Permalloo, the first woman to win the trophy in seven years.

Throughout the competition, she wowed celebrity chefs and food critics – as well as Thailand's royal family – with dishes that displayed technique and finesse while keeping in touch with her Mauritian roots. Mango, in particular, seemed to creep into every other dish she devised, whether it was a dessert or a starter.

One of her most daunting challenges took place in Bruges' three-Michelin-star restaurant De Karmeliet, where, under the tutelage of chef Geert Van Hecke, she had to cook several of his celebrated dishes (including mackerel and Dover sole).

Van Hecke's verdict? "Perfect." His last words to the cameras were: "I hope she wins". And that she did. Unsurprisingly, she now hopes to open her own restaurant, a place that would showcase the mouth-watering cuisine of Mauritius.

**TV viewers obviously saw an edited version of your stint at De Karmeliet, but how long were you in Bruges?**

I was there for a total of four days, two of which I spent in De Karmeliet.

**Was Geert Van Hecke aware of the programme and its popularity?**

Yes he was! In spite of his busy

schedule, he does know about the show. But then again, he is friends with Michel Roux Jr, who hosts the sister series *MasterChef: The Professionals*.

**You had to recreate a Van Hecke-conceived dish based around fried Dover sole and shrimps. Did you realise that Flanders will never forgive someone who messes up such holy ingredients?**

The only "Flemish" dish I knew was *moules marinière*! I knew that Dover sole and shrimps were staples of Flemish cuisine, but no, I didn't know they were so sacred. My only concern was to truly respect the spirit of Flemish cuisine as interpreted by Geert Van Hecke and, in this instance, to do justice to that sole-and-shrimp dish.

**You could have challenged him about his knowledge of Mauritian cuisine. Were you tempted?**

Not at all; it never even crossed my mind. I was equally focused and awestruck throughout. I mean, he is an absolute guru of food. What he produces is not just food – it's art with a capital "a". He is a creator.

**It was plain for all to see that he in turn enjoyed watching you recreate his signature dishes; moreover, he appeared to be approachable.**

Not only approachable but warm and extremely welcoming. I am immensely proud to have cooked for him.

**So Bruges was a good experience, all the way around?**

Absolutely. My time at De



Permalloo (right) says cooking at De Karmeliet with Geert Van Hecke was "a penny-dropping moment"

Karmeliet was easily one of the best experiences of my life. It was a genuinely penny-dropping moment. Suddenly it all made sense, and I knew exactly the direction I needed to take in terms of dedication and commitment.

**Your website offers dozens of recipes and also champions a Mauritian beer called Phoenix. How would you sell this to the beer connoisseurs of Flanders?**

Well, Phoenix is rather light compared to Belgian beer, but I am really proud of it because it comes

from Mauritius. I would market it as the perfect accompaniment to Mauritian food. It is very refreshing – ideal with all those flavours and spices. But I love a dark Leffe, too!

**What becomes of all the food on MasterChef? In the "invention test", for example, you have the equivalent of an entire market stall's worth of food to choose from.**

I'm glad you asked that. You'll be pleased to hear that not one bit of food is thrown away. Everything gets eaten eventually – whether

it's by contestants, assistants or technicians.

**Finally, when will Flanders have the pleasure of seeing you again?**

I really want to come back to Bruges as soon as possible, with my husband. But this time I'll be eating, not cooking!

It's not hard to imagine Geert Van Hecke declaring that dinner is on the house.

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

## Floating church on the move

Antwerp's Kerkschip has a new berth closer to the city centre

Marc Maes

After more than 40 years of being moored on quay 526 near the Lillo bridge, the Kerkschip (Church Ship) St Jozef was recently towed to Antwerp's Houtdok, close to the MAS Museum, where it will be more accessible to the public and churchgoers.

The Kerkschip was originally built by the Germans during the Second World War as a supply vessel for their submarine armada. The submarines had to cut off sea traffic lanes to and from the UK; Hitler ordered the building of concrete ships to supply the U-boats at sea.

French shipbuilders Saintrap and Brice were assigned to build the armed concrete ship in the Rotterdam shipyards. It was then towed, in 1944, to Antwerp, where the engines were built. Then came D-Day and the liberation of Antwerp, leaving the ship

unused.

After serving as a bunkering barge, the ship was acquired by the Archdiocese of Mechelen in 1950, which transformed it into a religious and social centre for seamen. "The ship was completely rebuilt by barge crews and lightermen families, motivated by chaplain Henri Heylen," remembers Marc De Wulf, a long-time volunteer with the Apostolaat der Schippers (Sailors' Apostolate), the non-profit organisation that manages the Kerkschip.

Today, the Kerkschip houses two chapels with room for about 350 people, a multi-purpose hall, a restaurant and bar. "The Kerkschip has become the gathering place for ship's crew members, skippers, dock workers taking a break and interested visitors," says De Wulf.

A museum focusing on inland shipping and barges is on the top floor of the multi-purpose hall, and the Kerkschip was recognised by the government of Flanders as a protected heritage site last year.

The decision to move the concrete vessel to a berth nearer to the old port and the city centre was taken 18 months ago. "Forty-two years ago, when the ship was moored on quay 526, this was in the middle of nowhere," explains Christian Herbosch, chairman of the Apostolate. "Later, the vessel became squeezed in-between terminals and port installations. We were happy that the Antwerp Port Authority suggested we shift the ship."

Assisted by two tugboats, the non-motorised ship was brought to its new berth, a journey along the docks of the port witnessed by hundreds of



The floating church of Antwerp, which also hosts a museum and restaurant, is a protected heritage site

curious onlookers. A team of boatmen moored the ship on quay 25, walking distance from the MAS.

"The Kerkschip is actually a floating parish church," said Bishop Johan Bonny as the ship arrived. "And I'm

convinced that at its new berth, closer to the city centre, its religious role will be enhanced." The ship will re-open to the public on Easter Sunday.

► [www.kerkschip-antwerpen.be](http://www.kerkschip-antwerpen.be)



# Teaching the blind to see

**M HKA pays homage to the Antwerp group that brought abstract art to the mainstream**

Bjorn Gabriels

New horizons call for new art. It's 1958, and the World Fair in Brussels welcomes all kinds of novelties, while also celebrating tradition. Which isn't that surprising. Some artists, though, have spotted a form of rigid traditionalism in how the local art scene in general approaches contemporary art.

That same year, a group of Antwerp abstract artists join forces to defend their art against – in their view – the dominance and rigidity of figurative painting. And so G58 is born.

The rather rapid social-economic recovery immediately after the Second World War, also known as “the Belgian miracle”, stagnates in the 1950s. Although most commonly typified as a stale period, a new age lurks on the horizon, an age of mass consumption and space discovery. These changes in the industry and society at large demand a new form of art, G58 thinks. All too often, the cultural establishment prefers old wine in even older bottles.

## Abstract vs figurative

With economic renewal comes a general cultural rejuvenation. Rock'n'roll and cinema targeted at post-war teens put youth at the centre of popular culture. With the exportation of these products of mass entertainment, the US attains a dominant position in the western world. New York has become the centre of the international art scene, with a mix of locals and European exiles who have fled their native countries after the Nazi rise to power. Partially building on the accomplishments of the various historical avant-gardes in the first decades of the 20th century, American abstract expressionism takes on a major role. Artists like Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Willem de

Kooning come to the fore and make abstract art the most dominant art form of the time.

In Flanders, artists who seek new ways to reflect on the changing world also experiment with non-figurative representation. Abstract art, however, doesn't seem to fall on fertile ground here. Flemish Expressionism, with exemplary artists such as Constant Permeke, Frits Van den Berghe and Gustaaf De Smet, continues to rule the local art scene. The majority of museums and galleries show little interest in the abstract.

Animated discussions on the matter place artists, critics and art professionals in two opposing camps. Between them is a river of misunderstanding and, sometimes, contempt. Defenders of figurative representation see abstract art as an unintelligible platitude, the downfall of a masterful craft or – at best – an intermediate step towards a new art form. Apostles of the abstract arts, meanwhile, refute figurative painting as hopelessly old-fashioned, incapable of depicting the developments and sensitivities of the modern world.

In the middle of the fray, the members of G58 strive for opportunities to expose their work. With the support of then-mayor Lode Craeybeckx, the group finds a home: an enormous attic in Hessenhuis, one of the oldest port buildings in Antwerp. From 1958 until the group disbanded in 1962, a vast number of activities take place here.

## No success but who cares?

Antwerp's museum of contemporary art, M HKA, is paying homage to G58, which was crucial in fuelling interest in abstract art in Belgium. Divided into five chapters, *New Art in Antwerp*

1958-1962 revisits the works and the context in which they were exhibited. The opening chapter earlier this year focused on the founding myth of G58. It looked back on how the group managed to get a hold of their 1,000 square metre-plus space and organise their inaugural expo.

This second instalment, called “Must we teach the blind to see?”, explores the first generation of Belgian abstract artists. Although post-war abstract artists often travelled different paths than their local colleagues had done 30 years earlier, they wanted to dispense with the unjust neglect of their predecessors. That this “historical correction” also gave legitimacy to their own battle for abstract art was, of course, a nice bonus.

Among the selection are pieces by Felix De Boeck, Georges Vantongerloo, Paul Joostens and Victor Servranckx, all of whom gained an undisputable renown over the years. A video interview with the daughter of Jozef Peeters makes clear that this renown is not self-evident. “My father never had any success,” she says, “but he didn't care.” She talks passionately about her father's works, while guiding us through his apartment, designed entirely according to his artistic vision.

A good portion of the works show a preoccupation with movement, industry and technique, obviously so in the paintings by Hubert Wolf and Karel Maes, who were both inspired by trains.

At the end of 1963, a year after the artists of G58 went their separate ways, an ambitious exhibition in the Hessenhuis put Flemish abstract art on a pedestal, and the accompanying book told the history of this art branch from its origins. The art world had officially embraced abstract art



© Prosper De Troyer's "La toilette animée" (1920)

**UNTIL 13 MAY**

## New Art in Antwerp 1958-1962

M HKA, Leuvenstraat 32, Antwerp

► [www.muhka.be](http://www.muhka.be)

# Third time lucky?

**Flemish violinist again makes the Queen Elisabeth cut for the venerable competition's 75th anniversary**

Alan Hope

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again: morally uplifting advice from American educator Thomas H Palmer in 1840, and taken to heart, evidently, by Jolente De Maeyer (pictured), a violinist from Antwerp who's now taking part in the Queen Elisabeth Music Competition for the third time, after competing in 2005 and 2009.

This year there are 88 candidates for the first round of the competition, which begins on 30 April. The largest single group comes from Korea, with 16, followed by the United States (13) and Russia (11). One candidate comes from Brussels: Claire Dasselme won last year's Vieuxtemps competition in Verviers. Eugenia Ryabinina, meanwhile, was

born in Astrakhan, Russia, and now lives in Antwerp.

For its 75th anniversary, the competition returns to its violin roots. When the Queen Elisabeth was launched in 1937 it was in memory of the violinist and composer Eugène Ysaÿe, who had died six years earlier never having achieved his dream of a competition to showcase young virtuosos. The competition was named after his friend and patroness since 1900, Queen Elisabeth, widow of Albert I and grandmother of the present King Albert II.

The first year was a violin competition, the second piano. The competition was then interrupted, returning in the 1950s. It was then on a three-year cycle of violin, piano and composition.

Voice was added in the late 1980s. Composition is, when it is awarded, in addition to one of the other three talents.

For years the Soviet Union was a virtually irresistible force in the piano and violin categories, producing winners like Vladimir Ashkenazy, Emil Gilels, Philippe Hirschhorn and Vadim Repin.

This year introduces some changes: The maximum age for entrants has been raised to 30 and the lower age limit to 18, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The first round, with two contestants going through the mandatory programme every day, and the semi-final, when the 88 are whittled down to 24, take place at Flagey instead

of the Conservatory in Brussels. The semi-finalists will all play a Mozart concerto (of which there are five). The QE organisers are building a massive archive of audio and video recordings of the competition's history, compiled with the help of Flemish public television station VRT.

The closing concert of the year, featuring the top finalists, will be relayed live via satellite from Bozar to audiences in Kinepolis cinemas in Antwerp and Ghent. Finally, to mark the occasion of the anniversary, the Royal Mint will issue a commemorative €2 coin featuring the image of Queen Elisabeth and the insignia of the competition.

► [www.qeimc.be](http://www.qeimc.be)





# The clothes make the woman

Social history is revealed through women's clothing at Antwerp's Fashion Museum

Stéphanie Duval



In a world ruled by online access and influence, it's easy to think that every phenomenon is a direct result of today's society. It takes an inventive approach to history to show us that this is not the case. In the field of style and clothing, the Antwerp Fashion Museum's latest exhibition proves that we might not be as original as we thought.

These are exciting times for fashion museums, that much is clear. There is not a self-respecting city in the world that isn't trying to lure visitors with trendy fashion exhibitions. The best way to do that is to present the oeuvres of awe-inspiring designers: Focusing on the universe of these godlike creatures ensures headlines, visits from industry influentials and the respect of fashion aficionados. But more often than not, these

people belong to the same niche target group, and having all of them come over for one visit might not even be enough to safeguard the public funding many of these museums rely on.

start attracting a larger audience. The challenge will be to do so without hurting its credibility; if *Living Fashion* is an example of their new strategy, fans of the museum shouldn't worry too much.

rest will be kept in storage until the museum finds the right place to install a permanent exhibition. "There are also lots of duplicates in the collection, so we are going to make these available as a

"No one could ever teach you what you can learn from spending 50 years surrounded by the clothes: touching them, feeling them, trying them on"

"Every museum needs to balance a certain commercial appeal with quality content," explains Karen Van Godtsenhoven, curator at Antwerp's Fashion Museum, MoMu. The museum is nearing its 10th anniversary and has built a considerable reputation with its avant-garde shows. But after a decade, the time has come for MoMu to broaden its horizons and

## A life's work

For *Living Fashion*, MoMu didn't borrow clothes from designers, collections or other museums. Instead, it bought an entire private collection: the life work of Dutchwoman Jacoba De Jonge. The first of the nearly 2,500 pieces she collected throughout the past 53 years was given to her by a great aunt: a wedding dress that she promptly tried on.

Because of the heavy skirt and bodice, De Jonge could barely move in the dress. It made her realise the extent to which fashion can have an influence on people's lives.

"When Jacoba De Jonge became interested in costume history, she found she was unable to find the knowledge she was seeking," says Van Godtsenhoven, who co-curated the exhibition and interviewed De Jonge for the accompanying catalogue. "There were professors in costume history whose knowledge was purely theoretical, and there were restorers. But nothing any of them could tell her satisfied her curiosity. Jacoba says that no one could ever teach you what you can learn from spending 50 years surrounded by the clothes: touching them, feeling them, trying them on." MoMu is debuting part of De Jonge's collection at *Living Fashion*. The

showcasing the kinds of dress that were appropriate for different moments in a woman's life. "It has shown us so many interesting things," Van Godtsenhoven says. "For example, it was perfectly acceptable for a woman to lounge around her home in a negligee until noon, and the growing popularity of the bicycle as a means of transportation is directly responsible for the breakthrough of trousers for women."

The collection also sheds a light on more troublesome practices: "Throughout these two centuries, the focus was always on an extremely small waistline, to the point where pregnant women forced their bodies into tight-fitting bodices and often even miscarried because of this," says Van Godtsenhoven.

Critics today love to berate fashion magazines for reinforcing an unrealistic beauty ideal as if they invented it, when actually unrealistic expectations of how a woman's body should look have existed for a long time.

## So last season

Another characteristic of fashion that hasn't changed is that last season's designs are unacceptable today. "The pressure to buy and wear the *nouveautés* was already very present back then," confirms Van Godtsenhoven. "Women who couldn't afford to buy an entirely new wardrobe every season actually experimented with customising designs until they looked new. Also, shopping gradually turned into a respectable activity for which special outfits were needed. Women would stroll down the boulevards past the shop windows to show how 'in fashion' they were."

This has partly inspired the show's current scenography, as visitors are invited to walk through the exhibition on Parisian cobblestones. It is MoMu's first collaboration with David Van Severen's design studio Office, which favoured a clean and minimalist approach to present the historic pieces, avoiding any cliché. If you skipped the past few exhibitions at MoMu (Knitwear in Fashion, Walter Van Beirendonck) because you are generally not that interested in fashion, I strongly suggest you give *Living Fashion* a try: It's an inspiring and almost anthropologic view into history.

'study collection' to anyone who is interested in learning more by actually touching and studying the garments," Van Godtsenhoven explains. De Jonge's work will not only be preserved, then, it will continue to serve the purpose she advocated.

## Daily fashions

De Jonge's collection is not your typical accumulation of historic masterpieces or hunted-down rarities. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Many of the pieces in the collection were simply given to De Jonge. As she is part of the upper-middle class, much of the collection reflects the lifestyle of this demographic from 1750 to 1950. "In this way, the exhibition is a realistic look at what women were wearing during this period in time," says Van Godtsenhoven.

*Living Fashion* is divided into themes,

UNTIL 12 AUGUST

Living Fashion: Women's Daily Wear 1750-1950

MoMu - Nationalestraat 28, Antwerp

► [www.momu.be](http://www.momu.be)





# Maeterlinck's eerie tale of silence and death

## Interiors

Bjorn Gabriels

Recent years have been thrilling for Maurice Maeterlinck aficionados. The centenary of his 1911 Nobel Prize in Literature – he is the only Belgian to have ever been bestowed the honour – has given birth to a host of events and publications. All this attention has put him on the map again in Flanders, since Maeterlinck's bright star had actually already waned during his lifetime.

He was catapulted into worldwide fame around the turn of the 20th century mainly because of his plays, which are said to have paved the way for contemporary theatre. Out with the *bourgeois* realism, in with the mysterious symbolism. His rupture with realistic settings and his introduction of characters who acted like puppets of fate anticipated the absurd and minimalist modernism of Samuel Beckett.

Maeterlinck's depictions of man as a helpless creature at the unfathomable mercy of death

also came to the fore in the few plays he intended for marionettes. One of these is *Interior* (1895), a lesser-known work among the *fin de siècle* pieces that are largely responsible for his fame. *Interior* is a tale of contrasts between a family gathered indoors and the messengers of death outside in the garden. Only the characters who are to inform the family that one of their daughters has died have speaking parts.

In his adaptation *Interiors*, Scottish director Matthew Lenton has kept the premise of Maeterlinck's original play. Through the windows of a home, the audience sees guests coming together for a dinner party. The gestures and (unheard) chitchat around the dining room table befit the occasion. Nervous hosts dart to and fro. Distant politeness makes room for a lame joke to break the ice.

The social norms and chitchat during reunions of friends and relatives is contradicted by the

omniscient voice of the narrator, who remains at first unseen. Her words, ranging from poetic vagueness to harsh observations, break through the superficial layer of banality characteristic of many a dinner party and reveal the inner thoughts of the guests.

The contrast between interiors and exteriors is further played out in the *mise en scene*. The audience watches the actors through glass windows, surrounded by atmospheric projections. From time to time, the glass functions as a mirror, for the characters as well as the audience.

Lenton wilfully creates distance between the party guests and us, his guests in the theatre, but also between words and actions, between thoughts and gestures. As the dramatic events unfold, we are in the grip of the characters. Until the narrator interrupts, that is, and throws us back into our voyeuristic position.

*Interiors* is a wry comedy, at times



uncomfortable, that unfolds into a alternately distant and intimate look at human isolation. The absence weighs more and more: one empty chair silently screams for our attention. "The word is temporary, silence is eternal," Maeterlinck once wrote. Those dichotomies bounce off of each other in *Interiors*.

As death, lurking through the entire play, manifests itself, we realise Prague-born poet and Maeterlinck admirer Rainer Maria Rilke was right to call Maeterlinck's plays "dramas of death".

*Interiors* is in English with Dutch and French surtitles

20 & 21 April | Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23, Brussels | [www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)

## CONCERT

### Jools Holland

You probably recognise him from the hit BBC programme *Later... with Jools Holland* (shown in Flanders on Canvas). Or maybe you've heard him play in that legendary '80s pop group, Squeeze. Or you've had the privilege of watching him perform with his Big Band and a long list of famous musicians over the years. Well now's your chance to witness Jools Holland's dynamic stage presence and musical prowess when he brings his Rhythm & Blues Orchestra to Brussels next week. He'll be performing with percussionist Gilson Lavis and guest vocalists Ruby Turner and Louise Marshall. Expect an exciting mix of boogie-woogie, jazz, funk and soul.

Robyn Boyle



20 April, 20.00 | Ancienne Belgique, Brussels

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

## MORE CONCERTS THIS WEEK

### Antwerp

**Absynthe Minded:** The Flemish band presents its highly anticipated new album *As It Ever Was*

APR 14 20.30 at De Roma, Turnhoutsebaan 286

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

### Bruges

**Georgie Fame:** British R&B and jazz singer and keyboardist

APR 14 20.00 at Stadsschouwburg, Vlamingstraat 29

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

## FAIR

### Art Brussels

Discover what's hot in the international world of contemporary art at one of Europe's largest and most cutting-edge art fairs. This 30th anniversary will have you mingling with more than 200 artists, more than 180 galleries and some 30,000 patrons of the arts and collectors from around the world. Take part in lectures and debates, video screenings and more, or take it all in during one of the daily guided visits (in Dutch or French). RB



19-22 April | Brussels Expo | [www.artbrussels.be](http://www.artbrussels.be)

## MORE FAIRS THIS WEEK

### Heverlee (Leuven)

**Foire du vin:** First edition of the Flanders wine fair with tastings and the opportunity to purchase directly from 30 producers

APR 13-15 at Brabantthal, Brabantlaan 1

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

### Mechelen

**Het Boekenfestijn:** Free book, hobby and multimedia fair featuring one million new books at rock-bottom prices

APR 12-15 at Nekkerhal, Nekkerspoel-Borch

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



SPECIAL EVENT

GET TICKETS NOW

Richard Branson

“Screw it, let’s do it!” Sir Richard Branson reveals the reckless and unconventional philosophy behind what drove him to launch hundreds of successful companies and become one of the leading minds in the world of business. The Antwerp diamond community and Flanders DC proudly invite you to meet this icon of innovation and entrepreneurship and discover the inside scoop on his alternative business model and power to make positive corporate change. This is a rare opportunity to meet the man behind the Virgin group and other business leaders, too: Bart Becks of Belgium’s SonicAngel crowdfunding firm will be there, as well as the hugely successful 20-something Flemish entrepreneur Davy Kestens. With such big names and only 1,000 places available, the hall will fill up fast, so don’t wait on this one. **RB**



6 May, 14.00-16.00 |  
Stadsschouwburg, Antwerp  
► [www.flandersdc.be](http://www.flandersdc.be)

SPECIAL EVENTS THIS WEEK

Bruges

**Feestweekend Belfort:** After three months of being closed for renovations, the famed belfry of Bruges is re-opening and showing off its facelift with a weekend of festivities for the whole family  
**APR 14-15 at Grote Markt**  
► [www.museabrugge.be](http://www.museabrugge.be)

Ostend

**Kids@Oostende Boekenbeesten:** Books and fairy tales come to life during this series of fun activities for kids, including readings by well-known children’s book authors, games and entertainment  
**APR 11-15 at Kursaal Oostende, Monacoplein**  
► [www.visitoostende.be](http://www.visitoostende.be)

MUSICAL

Musical in the cinema: Memphis

“How do you hockadoo?” questions *Memphis*, the Tony-award winning Broadway musical. To find out if hockadoo-ing is something that just might interest you, buy a ticket to Musical in the Cinema. Following Opera in the Cinema and Theatre in the Cinema, Kinopolis introduces this new series, direct from Broadway. Live performances are recorded then shown on the big screen every third Friday through June – much cheaper than a flight to New York. *Memphis*, with music by Bon Jovi keyboardist David Bryan and book by Joe DePietro (*The Toxic Avenger*) is loosely based on the Tennessee DJ Dewey Phillips, one of the first whites to play music made by blacks in the 1950s south. The following weeks, Musical in the Cinema features *Smokey Joe’s Café* and *Putting it Together*.



20 April, 20.00 | Kinopolis Cinemas in Brussels, Antwerp & Ghent | ► [www.kinopolis.be/musical](http://www.kinopolis.be/musical)

MORE MUSICALS THIS WEEK

Antwerp

**Domino:** Deborah De Ridder stars in the musical featuring the hits of pop group Clouseau (in Dutch)  
**Until FEB 15 at Stadsschouwburg, Theaterplein 1**  
► [www.stadsschouwburgantwerpen.be](http://www.stadsschouwburgantwerpen.be)

**Unforgettable:** The moving story of African American jazz pianist Nat King Cole starring Monroe Kent III (in English)  
**APR 17-22 at Fakkelteater, Hoogstraat 12**  
► [www.fakkelteater.be](http://www.fakkelteater.be)

FILM

Millenium Film Festival

The Millenium International Documentary Film Festival screens about 50 films centring around humanitarian issues, with particular attention paid this year to problems and challenges facing children and young people. More than 20 filmmakers will be in Brussels to introduce their films and talk to audience members. Visitors also have a chance to attend debates, workshops and conferences as diverse as an approach to food distribution problems and web documentaries. Fifteen films compete for festival prizes, including best film, most original film and best development message, awarded by a jury of 30 made up of volunteers and international filmmakers and headed by Italian documentary maker Stefano Savona. Among several strong contenders are *Body and Soul* by French director Mathieu Bron, who records the lives of three inspiring young people from Mozambique with several physical disabilities, and *The Kingdom of Mister Edhi* by Belgian filmmaker Amélie Sailleuz about an ordinary couple who have developed an efficient network for social care in Pakistan (*pictured*). **Andreas Ilegems**



17 April to 5 May | Across Brussels | ► [www.festivalmillenium.org](http://www.festivalmillenium.org)

MORE FILM FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

Brussels

**Brussels Int’l Fantastic Film Festival:** The 30th edition of the horror, fantasy and sci-fi fest, with special guests Terry Gilliam and William Friedkin, plus a body painting contest, Vampire’s Ball and the ever-enduring Zombie Parade  
**Until APR 17 at Tour & Taxis, Havenlaan 86c**  
► [www.biff.org](http://www.biff.org)

**Snake Dance:** The premiere of the Belgian documentary by Manu Riche and Patrick Marnham that mixes the stories of Robert Oppenheimer, the “father of the bomb”, and Aby Warburg, a German art historian who travelled to the US to study Pueblo Indians. Special guest performance by the UK’s Jerry Killick  
**APR 16 & 17 20.30 at Kaaitheater, 20 Sainctelettesquare**  
► [www.kaaitheater.be](http://www.kaaitheater.be)

Turnhout

**Open Doek Film Festival:** The 20th edition of the world cinema festival, with premieres, special guests and an exhibition of Asian film sets by Flemish photographer Kris Dewit  
**APR 20-29 at Kinopolis Turnhout and other locations across Flanders**  
► [www.opendoeck.be](http://www.opendoeck.be)



BITE

Robyn Boyle

Elckerlijc ★★ ★

Celebrity chefs, Flanders has 'em. But only one has risen to fame as a veritable master of the grill. Peter De Clercq's face can be seen regularly on TV, in his books on outdoor cooking and on an array of grilling paraphernalia, from accessories and spices to cutting boards and even CDs (because every BBQ needs a good soundtrack). But his biggest claim to fame is his restaurant of 23 years, Elckerlijc.

The restaurant's location is top, in the middle of the green countryside known as Meetjesland, between Ghent and Bruges. The air smells of straw and earth, as I step out of my car, parked in front of Elckerlijc farm where the restaurant grows its own veggies and fruit and raises its own pigs. The building is very villa-esque, but once inside I'm pleased to find a snug and cosy space with plenty of wood and brick and dim lighting. There's a remarkable number of staff bustling about the kitchen and dining room, as the place is packed even on a Tuesday evening.

My dining companion and I start out at the bar with two Bourgogne des Flandres, a dark, malty, slightly sour brown ale from Dilbeek brewery Timmermans-John Martin. And to show that they know what it means to have an aperitif, the house offers up a bowl of salty olives and spicy chorizo to go with.

We both order something we've never had before: Holsteiner steak, from the milk cow, and pork's cheek medallions. A little "EF\*" next to the pork dish tells us it comes from Elckerlijc Farm across the street. The meat's been grilled over a fire fed with wood chips from smashed up barrels

of Geuze Timmermans. The taste is far richer than normal pork, and the texture considerably softer.

The medallions are presented alongside an arty arrangement of green and white asparagus, butternut squash puree, edible purple orchids, crunchy croquette, baby corn, string beans and a delicate grain mustard sauce. It goes down nicely with a frosty glass of tart Geuze Timmermans.

On the other side of the table is one massive slab of beef with a lovely crispy outside and barely bloody centre. A marbling of fat makes the meat soft and full of flavour. As does the little-known fact that the beef from a milk cow can be incredibly tender. This particular piece, from the grass-fed Holstein breed, is as soft and juicy as steak gets. It's served with a big bowl of salad, fresh-cut fries and homemade mayonnaise. My companion opts for a Carlsberg with his meal, rather for lack of choice, and bemoans the fact that it's not a local beer.

We've absolutely no space left for dessert, but another Geuze or two at the bar suit just fine. The bill comes to a correct €80.



Grillmaster Peter De Clercq at Elckerlijc in Maldegem

- 📍 Kraailokerkweg 17, Maldegem; 050.71.52.63
- 🕒 Thurs-Tue, from 12.00-14.00 & 18.00-22.00
- 💶 Mains: €20-€40
- 📖 Grilled specialties by the hand of Flanders' most famous BBQ chef, Peter De Clercq

▶ [www.elckerlijc.be](http://www.elckerlijc.be)

CAFÉ SPOTLIGHT

Katrien Lindemans

Barbeton

Dansaertstraat 114, Brussels



© Bart Deynale

Barbeton just opened a few weeks ago, near the end of Dansaertstraat in the centre of Brussels. The bar is the latest project of Frédéric Nicolay, a man whose name will forever be associated with some of the city's most popular drinking spots.

While the first half of Dansaertstraat is paved with fancy boutiques and designer shops, the other half is rather desolate. Opening a bar in the latter area might seem like a risk, but Frédéric Nicolay isn't afraid of a challenge. A year ago, for instance, Nicolay

opened Potemkine in the shadow of Hallepoort and had no trouble attracting people all the way down to his bar for a drink, a movie or a gig. Let's not forget Nicolay is also the man behind some of the great bars on Sint-Goriksplein: Zebra, Le Roi des Belges and Mappa Mondo. He settled in the area years ago, long before it became the number one place to turn to for a drink in the centre. The new Barbeton got its name from the enormous concrete counter and tap, which is a copy of a design by Le Corbusier. Concrete translates as *beton* in both Dutch and French, which makes Barbeton a very convenient name for bilingual Brussels.

The rest of the interior is minimal, with little wooden tables, black chairs and benches. As the bar is located on a corner, there's a very large terrace with the typical Nicolay electric-blue chairs as well.

The drinks menu features a few nice beers on draught, including La Chouffe and Nicolay's own beer, Volga. Barbeton also serves a great range of fresh juices, and those after a nice apero in the sun can order Pimm's and lemonade. Hungry bellies can choose sandwiches for lunch or tuck into the nuts served with every drink. Cheers!

▶ [www.barbeton.be](http://www.barbeton.be)

The last word...

All in the family

"I didn't grow up around politics, but thanks to the Van Rompuy's I've been infected with the microbe." Geertrui Windels, wife of European Council president Herman Van Rompuy, will stand for election for the Flemish Brabant province in October

Mean streets

"We're not sheriffs. Depriving someone of their liberty is not something a mayor should be charged with." Ghent mayor Daniel Termont is not in favour of street bans for troublemakers

Weather report

"Heavy rain on the E17 at De Pinte. Traffic moving at a snail's pace. Looks like a cloudburst. (I'm not at the wheel)." Federal pensions minister and twitter enthusiast Vincent Van Quickenborne makes his position clear for any police officers listening in

Wake-up call

"A pharmacist on call is supposed to be for emergencies. It's a bit much to have to get out of your bed for a pack of Viagra." An anonymous pharmacist quoted in *Het Nieuwsblad*

NEXT WEEK  
IN FLANDERS TODAY

Cover story

Have you visited every single town in Flanders? No? Then Howard Gutman is putting you to shame. The American ambassador to Belgium has pledged to visit every municipality in the country, and he has the photos to prove it. We talk to him about why he's set out on the quest and what he's discovered about the Flemish

Living

Posters – they're everywhere. Concerts, exhibitions, political groups, movements ... you can't walk five metres in a Flemish town without a poster jumping out at you. Our correspondent finds a remarkable private collection in Bruges and discovers the history of a city through posters

Arts

The Open Doek Film Festival in Turnhout is 20 years old this year, which is in fact it's last. But it's not going away entirely – we'll tell you what's in store for this double decade celebration and the form Open Doek will take next year