

## Carrying the torch

Flemish companies contracted for Olympics

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## C-Mine Expedition

Grand opening of new visitor attraction

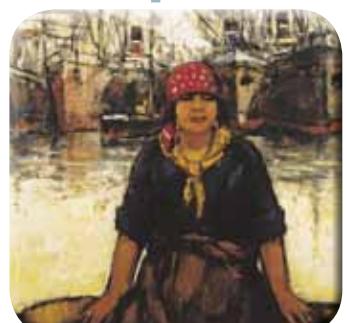
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## Van Mieghem's port

Exhibition of Antwerp's great waterfront painter

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# On the map

Guislain Museum takes the lead in the extraordinary world of European outsider art

Lisa Bradshaw



© Collection Museum Dr Guislain

When the Museum Dr Guislain opened 26 years ago, many Belgians had no idea that one of the fathers of modern psychiatry was from Ghent, nor were they familiar with the term "outsider art". Now the museum is a key member of the European Outsider Art Association and this month hosts a major international symposium.

**“**W<sup>e</sup>’ve come a very long way from *art brut*,” smiles Yoon Hee Lamot. I’m sitting across from the curator at a cafe table in Ghent’s Museum Dr Guislain, struggling to make distinctions between the many categories the art world has introduced to describe work produced by those outside the traditional arts culture. *Neuve invention*, *folk art*, *marginal art*, *intuitive art*.

It all, according to Lamot, fits into the category of outsider art, which Guislain has been championing since its origins, first in temporary exhibitions and later with a still-expanding permanent collection. It was French artist Jean Dubuffet who coined the term *art brut* in the 1940s for work produced by those who not only sat outside the art gallery culture, but who didn’t even understand the concept of art itself. Namely, institutionalised mental patients who created work out of impulse and had little or no connection to the outside world. Dubuffet was inspired by a German psychiatrist who had previously publicised the drawings of one of his psychotic patients.

In the 1970s, a British art critic adopted the term “outsider art”. As some outsider artists became very famous and sold their works, the term *art brut* no longer really applied. “No one in the outsider art world really believes in the strict definition of *art brut* anymore,” says Lamot. With mental institutions being less insular than they once were, “you can’t say that nobody is influenced by what is happening around them. Everyone is influenced in some way.”

Still, much of what is presented as outsider art is work done by mental patients, some who begin to paint or draw spontaneously and some who are introduced to the methods in workshops. Others considered outsider artists are those who have had no formal training and no opportunity to enter the art world due to their socio-economic status. There are several Flemish outsider artists, and four have a place in the permanent collection at Guislain, including Dirk Martens from Antwerp, whose collages are not only fascinating for the viewer (*pictured left*), they fulfill his desire for repetitive, detailed work. Like every outsider artist, Martens’ work helps him to focus and stay both structured and calm.

Europe, meanwhile, is home to many very famous outsider artists, such as Willem van Genk from the Netherlands, whose drawings and found-object sculptures feature a mass of electrical lines and transport cables, and Francis Marshall from France, who, like many outsider artists, combines text with his work – in Marshall’s case, in English and only on the frames. You’ll find both in the permanent collection of Guislain.

### Cross-border collaboration

Because of its longevity and its role as a psychiatric museum (housed in Ghent’s former asylum), Guislain is a leader in the outsider arts community and helped found the European Association of Outsider Artists (EAOA) three years ago. There are now 40 members in 18 countries. The initiative came from the GAIA Museum of Outsider Art in Denmark, which hosted the first organising meeting. The first general assembly was at Guislain.

“In Denmark, there weren’t very many organisations working on outsider art, so GAIA knew if they wanted to collaborate, they would

## FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



## Luca Brecel

If your 17-year-old were spending all of his time on a snooker table, you might not consider it a good thing. But Luca Brecel is no ordinary teenager, as he showed last week by becoming the youngest-ever player to qualify for the World Snooker Championship at the Crucible in Sheffield, beating the record set by Stephen Hendry in 1986 by two months.

Brecel was born in Dilsen-Stokkem, Limburg province. He won the European title for under-19s in 2009 when he was only 14, then earned his spurs by beating the legendary Jimmy White and Ken Doherty in the World Series in Portugal. In an exhibition game in Bruges in 2010, the young pretender defeated Hendry, now seven times world champion, by four frames to one. "Luca can be a game-changer for snooker, when you take into account how good he is, how old he is and also where he is from," said British player Ronnie O'Sullivan, who has won the World Championship title three times. "The sport needs a

superstar from Belgium, or anywhere in Europe where it is becoming so popular. He is a very, very talented boy."

Brecel is being home-schooled, which allows him the opportunity to practice on the competition-standard table, measuring 3.7m by 1.8m and weighing up to 1.5 tonnes, given to him by a Chinese manufacturer.

But his preparation for the big match was mainly mental. "I've learned to start strong and not let my concentration slip because there are 19 frames to play," he told *De Standaard*. "Luckily, I know my opponent Stephen Maguire really well. He's one of my best friends on the tour."

As *Flanders Today* went to press, Luca Brecel had lost his first-round match against Stephen Maguire, ranked number seven, by 10 frames to five, having made century breaks on each of the two days' play. According to former champion Steve Davis, Brecel will be world champion within five years.

## News in brief

The family of Iliaz Tahiraj, the **public transport supervisor killed** earlier this month by a Brussels resident in an argument that followed an accident involving a bus and a car, has joined the civil case against the suspect. The family contests the charge of unintentional homicide, which carries a maximum sentence of five years, compared to 30 years for murder. The Brussels prosecutor's office, meanwhile, has detailed a magistrate to deal solely with questions relating to security on the public transport network.

Flanders could have its own **pavilion at the world exhibition** in Milan in 2015, announced Roberto Formigoni, president of the Lombardy region of Italy, last week. Formigoni was meeting with Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, when the two leaders reached an agreement to cooperate on industrial policy. Peeters also met Flemish designers taking part at the prestigious Furniture Salon in the city.

The new **Flemish asparagus season** was launched last week in Kinrooi, Limburg province, with a recipe competition. Recipes from hobby cooks are invited until 14 May for the chance to win a hotel stay with a visit to an asparagus grower and a full asparagus menu. The official season ends on 24 June.

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

Specialists were last week using gamma radiation to tackle a case of **mould infestation among documents** archived at the University of Leuven's Tweebronnen Library. The documents are contained in the contemporary archive; older historical documents are not affected. The problem is said to be caused by the ventilation system.

Drivers at the De Lijn depot in Asse last week took spontaneous industrial action following an incident on the Brussels-Aalst line in Molenbeek in Brussels, when a **passenger revealed a handgun** when asked for a ticket. The man was later revealed to be a plain-clothes police officer in pursuit of a drugs suspect.

Antwerp-based freelance photographer Jorge Dirkx has won the top prize at this year's **Nikon Press Photo Awards** for Belgian media photographers for his images of Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt. Ghent-based Titus Simoens was awarded the Young Promising Photographer award (won by Dirkx in 2010) for his series of portraits of children at the IBIS boarding school in Ostend, which trains young people to be fishermen or sailors.

► [www.nppa.be](http://www.nppa.be)

security at Ostend, where the use of security cameras to check for **illegal immigrants in transit to the UK** was costing the federal police more than €500,000 a year.

Brussels-Capital Region's equal opportunities secretary Bruno De Lille announced the opening of the city's **first HIV café**, which will provide a place for those who are HIV-positive to meet and share their experiences. The café will be installed in the premises of the LGBT organisation Rainbow House on the Kolenmarkt.

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

A court in Brussels last week approved the continued detention on remand of a man charged with theft, but **ordered him not to be detained** in the prison in Vorst, where conditions have been described as "inhuman". The 402-capacity prison is currently housing more than 700 prisoners. The Brussels prosecutor is to appeal the ruling, fearing it might provide a precedent for other remand prisoners, who account for one-third of the prison population.

The management of the Plopsaland theme park in De Panne has defended its **decision to refuse entry to one of its attractions** to a 12-year-old girl with Down's Syndrome. The girl was not allowed to board the Boomstammetjes log-flume ride, citing that it might be dangerous to those with a mental or physical handicap. The girl's parents complained that she had regularly gone on the ride since she was six. "We know our rides best," said a spokesman. "We are not prepared to take any risks."

Federal interior minister Joëlle Milquet has cancelled a controversial contract covering

## OFFSIDE

## O come only ye faithful

A terminally ill man has had his request to have his funeral held in the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp refused because he wants to leave all reference to religion out of the secular ceremony.

Wim Heynen is owner of the popular bookshop De Markies. In this time of plummeting church attendance, he says, churches have more importance as cultural-historical monuments than as centres for the active participation in religious rites.

In an opinion piece in *De Morgen*, Heynen gives an example from his own trade: the Selexyz bookshop in Maastricht, widely known as one of the most beautiful in the world, is housed within a Dominican church. "This new function offers an exceptional chance to allow a contemporary look at the feeling of



social cohesion," he wrote.

Tim De Mey, a priest of the cathedral in Antwerp said that "a cathedral is and remains a church. Only religious services take place here. We do not want to open the door to other services than traditional Catholic celebrations." That view, according to Jan De Zutter, a lecturer in comparative religion at the University of Antwerp, is historically inaccurate.

"The mediaeval builders of the cathedral...would look askance at that argument. A cathedral was not an oasis of quiet devotion. A cathedral was a lively and noisy centre of city life. Markets were organised, pilgrims found shelter, the sick were looked after.... Cathedrals were a manifestation of society, a place where farmers, artisans, merchants, nobles and clerics could meet each other."

Paintings from the city's Baroque golden age are evidence of that, such as in the detail pictured left from a painting by Pieter Neefs the Younger: people begging, children running around, a nobleman taking a tour, and people apparently out for a stroll. And a few visitors are paying attention to the priest in the pulpit.

## FLANDERS TODAY



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# On the map

European collaboration is needed to ensure the livelihood of outsider art galleries

► continued from page 1



Willem van Genk is the low countries' best-known outsider artist



Klaus Compagnie's ode to Stefaan De Clerck

have to go outside the country," explains Lamot. "A lot of these studios and workshops that are home to outsider artists have very few resources and are not well known. They are really searching for collaboration to establish their names."

In the meantime, four of the larger outsider arts museums in Europe, including GAIA and Guislain, have launched *Outsider Art: Past/Forward*, a project funded by the European Union's Culture Programme. That project is responsible for the symposium being held on Thursday of this week at Guislain.

*Outsiders on the Map: Exploring and Mapping Outsider Art in Europe* is a day-long event featuring speakers from across the continent, who will talk about both the practical and the philosophical: methods of displaying works,

integrating the work of outsider artists into exhibitions, ethical questions and how to preserve "visual environments". That refers to whole worlds some artists are compelled to build in their homes or gardens, complete with buildings, figures and other details and often with whole narratives constructed around them. "Sometimes after the death of the artist, it just gets demolished," explains Lamot.

The symposium will also be the official launch of a new book, which gave a space to every member of the EAOA to say what they are working on and what kind of collaborations they are seeking. The symposium is in English, is open to the public and has more than 150 registered to attend, half of whom are from outside of Belgium.

"Right now the trend is to present outsider art simply as contemporary art and exhibit it together with other contemporary art, not focusing too much on the background of the artist – the illness or the handicap – but rather the art itself," says Lamot. "I'm a proponent of that trend, but I sometimes feel that it would also be a shame to lose the identity of outsider art."

No doubt that will be on the agenda this week, too.

## KLAUS COMPAGNIE: A FLEMISH OUTSIDER ARTIST

Klaus Compagnie has made upwards of 1,000 paintings. "I've been at this for 20 years," he tells me from his home inside the lovely *begijnhof* of Sint-Amandsberg, a district of Ghent. "I watch the news every day at 13.00 and at 19.00. And my paintings



often have Spanish subtitles." His keen interest in the media explains his series of portraits of politicians, including the colourful rendition of former federal justice minister Stefaan De Clerck as, well, a shark. "Stefaan De Clerck enters the Belgian government as a shark," the painting boldly

states. This would seem like wry political commentary from most contemporary artists, but Compagnie has no agenda and no explanation for the work. Compagnie (*pictured*) is mentally disabled and an outsider artist.

He is also somewhat of a rabble-rouser. With a list of exhibitions over the last two decades longer than my arm, Compagnie often invites Flemish politicians to the openings of his shows. And they always come. Sometimes he has a few words for them, like about problems he sees in schools or in institutions. To that end, he is about to launch an online video programme in which he talks to a variety of politicians. Flemish education and youth minister Pascal Smet has already confirmed, as has former prime minister Yves Leterme. And even, yes, Stefaan De Clerck.

Compagnie travels to Harelbeke, just outside Kortrijk, four days a week to his workshop at De Zandberg, an artistic workplace specifically for people with disabilities. They operate an Artotheek, from which you can rent works by affiliated artists for up to a year at a very reasonable price. Compagnie also sells his work, of course – anywhere from €250 to €1,000 for an acrylic painting on canvas.

Like many outsider artists, Compagnie often makes dozens of works with the same theme, such as politicians, dinosaurs or the weather. He uses bold and colourful strokes and indeed peppers his work with Spanish words and phrases, which he learns from an electronic translator. He has travelled to Spain and also to Italy, where he visited art museums. He says that he loves paintings from the mediaeval period, particularly portraiture with dark colours. "Only the middle ages," he says. "No modern art."

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

## ON AT GUISLAIN

Aside from the permanent collection, the Museum Dr Guislain hosts temporary exhibitions. The shows are not limited to works by outsider artists, and you'll find a wealth of big names at *Dangerously Young: Child in Danger, Child as Danger*, an exhibition that sometimes plays on our fears of children like so many horror films and sometimes illustrates their exploitation.

*Dangerously Young* is multi-media, but the highlight is photography. You'll find two works by Russian photographer Oleg Dou's, whose large-scale, bleached-out head shots of children have become iconic. French photographer Christine Sprengler's images, on the other hand, are all-too



realistic, as children in Cambodia play in the river with spent grenade shells (which float).

There are works by William Klein and Diane Arbus and a brilliant series of beauty pageant kids shot by Susan

Anderson. Possibly even more disturbing are the portraits of girls by Ukrainian photographer Sergey Bratkov. The young girls arrived at his studio already made up and dressed like adults, despite no request to do so. He added props to increase the tension, and the results are children sexualised by their parents apparently to please a famous photographer (*pictured*).

The exhibition is part of a larger event in Ghent about children in contemporary society that includes performance, readings, film and debates.

UNTIL 20 MAY

Museum Dr Guislain

Jozef Guislainstraat 43, Ghent

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

# Measles on the way out

## Flemish government pledges to meet WHO's target year of 2015

Alan Hope

The Flemish government is ready to declare the eradication of measles by 2015, welfare minister Jo Vandeurzen said last week, marking the start of European Vaccination Week. That is the target year set by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for the end of measles in the European region. The goal for Flanders is for all residents to be protected for life against all infectious diseases for which a vaccine exists by 2020.

In the run-up to those two dates, the government will target five main groups.

- Children and young people: A target of 95% is set for coverage by the MMR, a combined vaccine against measles, mumps and rubella.

- Adults: A vaccination calendar and strategy will be worked out for adults by 2014, with special attention to whooping cough vaccinations for parents and family members of babies. By 2020, at least half of all pregnant women should be vaccinated against seasonal flu, as should at least half of the group of high-risk people under 65, such

as sufferers from asthma, diabetes, heart disease or immune system illnesses.

- Over-65s: The 2020 hard target for coverage among the elderly is 75%. By 2018, the vaccination authorities will produce advice on the need for large-scale vaccines against pneumococcus, a cause of pneumonia and other diseases such as acute sinusitis, meningitis, sepsis, osteomyelitis (infection of the bone marrow) and endocarditis (inflammation in the heart).

- Travellers: A uniform policy on travellers' vaccinations will be in place by 2015, in line with guidelines from WHO and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

- Workers: Some groups of employees dealing with the public will be especially targeted to help prevent spreading diseases. These include health-care personnel and workers in the food industry. By 2020, 80% of the health-care group should be vaccinated against seasonal flu, and 80% of those who work with babies against whooping cough. In the food industry, vaccination against hepatitis B will be extended.



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## In the running

A record 29,615 people took part in last weekend's Antwerp 10 Miles, a series of runs through the streets of the port city. The 10-mile (16 km) course attracted more than 20,000 participants, with others opting for the marathon, short-run, Ladies' Run and Kids' Run. First aid staff took care of 87 participants along the way, and traffic was disrupted by the closure of three of the city's tunnels.

Among those taking part in the 16k were Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters and around 100 of his government's civil servants in aid of Handicap International. Flemish mobility minister Hilde Crevits took part in the Ladies' Run, and welfare minister Jo Vandeurzen ran the short course.

Also in the running, in more ways than one, was N-VA party leader Bart De Wever, who had just announced that he will lead his party's list at the municipal elections in October, in the hope of becoming the city's mayor. De Wever's participation in the run amply showed off his 45kg slimmer physique. His final time was 2.06. The competition to be mayor of Flanders' largest city now becomes a race between three heavyweights: De Wever, until recently polled as Flanders' most popular politician; socialist sitting mayor Patrick Janssens; and Vlaams Belang's Filip De Winter, who at the weekend announced he was stepping aside as his party's leader in the Flemish parliament to concentrate on the mayoral race.

Registration for next year's Antwerp 10 Miles start in September.

► [www.antwerp10miles.be](http://www.antwerp10miles.be)



N-VA party leader and Antwerp mayoral candidate Bart De Wever runs the 10 mile last weekend

## Government debates "divorce tax"

The Flemish government is due this week to start discussions with party leaders in the Flemish parliament in an effort to reach agreement on the future of a tax that has been accused of adding to the problems of families going through the difficult process of separation and divorce.

At issue is the so-called division levy, known more popularly as the divorce tax. This is a charge levied whenever a property is sold and the proceeds divided among several owners. The tax applies to any such situation, but the most common circumstance is a couple selling their house after they separate. Opponents even call it the "misery tax".

As part of its budget review in March, the Flemish government decided to increase the division levy from 1% to 2%. The socialist party SPA (of ministers Pascal Smet and Ingrid Lieten) later expressed a desire to scrap the tax altogether, with which coalition parties CD&V (of minister-president Kris Peeters) and N-VA (of budget minister Philippe Muyters) disagree. "We took a decision as a government, and that decision still stands," Peeters said.

If the tax is not raised, the money will have to be found elsewhere to make up the difference in revenue. Lieten stressed that her party would ultimately stand behind the earlier decision. "For us it would be socially more just if something were to change," she said. "If we are unable to convince our colleagues, then of course we will carry out the decision collegially."

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES

**1,000**

too few foster parents in Flanders. Half of all children under 2.5 years requiring foster care are unable to be placed

**31,749**

complaints about lost luggage at Brussels Airport in Zaventem in the first eight months of 2011, a slight increase from 2010

**2,116**

sites in Brussels where security cameras are installed, according to the Privacy Commission. Each site, such as metro stations, may include several cameras

**€4.30**

supplement paid on train tickets to and from Brussels Airport, including on the Diabolo new rail link to Mechelen and Antwerp, from 10 June. The previous supplement was €2.16

**€1.3 million**

in incorrect wage premiums paid out by the government of Flanders to workers in the care sector since 2001. Flemish budget minister Philippe Muyters has pledged to recoup every euro

## FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

### The end of PVDD

You can say a lot about Pol Van Den Driessche, but not that he is a man of many principles. He started his career with the Volksunie, the predecessor of what is now N-VA. Later he was spotted in socialist circles, before he became CD&V senator in 2007. Recently N-VA made him their candidate mayor in Bruges.

In between, Van Den Driessche held important jobs in media. He was editor in chief of the popular daily *Het Nieuwsblad* and political journalist and analyst at the weekly *Dag Allemaal* and VTM TV. Van Den Driessche also wrote books and is spokesperson for the football team Cercle Brugge.

Enough to keep one man busy, one would think, but Van Den Driessche found time for something else. Many women recount how he has groped them, tried to kiss them, talked dirty to them and so on. Many of them felt very uncomfortable about this, particularly as Van Den Driessche held a position of power over them.

When the weekly magazine *Humo* wrote an article about what many people had known for years, it was a bomb. The title "DSK in Flanders" left nothing to the imagination. (To be fair, comparing Van Den Driessche to a man charged with rape is stretching it too far.)

The article had a polarising effect. Many people felt the mask had fallen off. Others defended Van Den Driessche, seeking political motives behind the article, which did indeed declare the man unfit to become mayor.

N-VA took a similar line of defence, questioning the timing. If these facts had been known for years, why had they not been published in Van Den Driessche's CD&V years? A statement by Wouter Beke, president of CD&V, that these facts had contributed to Van Den Driessche's ousting, only increased N-VA's belief in a conspiracy.

Over the weekend, Van Den Driessche withdrew as a candidate at the local elections. Another article may have helped him make this decision. Journalist Liesbeth Van Impe wrote that she, too, was groped, but did not feel like one of Van Den Driessche's victims. The facts, she wrote, were true and wrong, but the real problem was the silence, including her own, surrounding them for years. Van Impe is now editor in chief at *Het Nieuwsblad*, the position Van Den Driessche held when the facts *Humo* describes took place.

# Flemish companies go to Olympics

Contractors for June Games in London include 20 based in Flanders and Brussels

Alan Hope

Twenty-one Belgian companies, 17 of them based in Flanders, have won contracts to provide goods and services for this summer's Olympic Games in London, worth a total of €280 million. The awards were announced last week by the Belgian Sports Technology Club, a group set up by the Belgian Olympic Committee and the technology industry federation Agoria.

According to Agoria, another five companies are still in the running. The awards are a major boost for Flemish industry: at the last Summer Games in 2008, only 10 Belgian companies were contracted, for one-third of the value.

The successful Flemish companies are performing a wide-range of services, from astro-turf to satellite technology.

**Alfacam** (Lint, Antwerp) will provide trucks containing video apparatus and staff for outside broadcast (OB). Alfacam was also present at the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing and the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

**Barco** (Kortrijk, West Flanders), a display and visualisation specialist, will provide the giant screens at Wembley Stadium

**Betafence** (Zwevegem, West Flanders) will provide fencing for the cycling road trials in London, starting at Hampton Court, as well as fencing around Wembley

**Deme** (Zwijndrecht, Antwerp), one of the world's major dredging companies, also works on dry land. They will be helping on clearing the site of the Olympic village. Deme is thought to account for the largest share of the total contract value

**Desso** (Dendermonde, East Flanders) will provide and install the artificial turf in Wembley stadium

**Dzine** (Kortrijk, West Flanders) will provide the giant TV screens for the Olympic village

**Lancer Europe** (Zaventem, Flemish Brabant) will provide the entire drinks system for Wembley, with the possibility of providing 90,000 drinks to customers in 15 minutes

**Monks/Picanol** (Ypres, West Flanders) will provide the mattress covers for the Olympic village

**Newtec** (Sint-Niklaas, East Flanders) will provide the satellite technology needed for the management of video images from events at the various venues in and around London

**Outside Broadcast** (Rotselaar,

Flemish Brabant), like Alfacam, will provide OB hardware

**Stageco** (Tildonk, Flemish Brabant) will be responsible for temporary stages and podiums

**Theuma** (Bekkevoort, Flemish Brabant) will provide the doors for the entire Olympic village

**Traficon** (Wevelgem, West Flanders) will supply the software for the efficient management of traffic around venues at crucial times

**Vergokan** (Oudenaarde, East Flanders) will supply cable support systems for Wembley

**Vandersanden Brickworks** (Bilzen, Limburg) will provide all stone- and brickwork for the athletes' training centre in Barking, East London

**Veldeman** Structure Solutions (Bree, Limburg) will provide tents and marquees for temporary use

**Videohouse** (Vilvoorde, Flemish Brabant), part of the growing media city in Vilvoorde, will provide video and outside broadcast materials

Another three companies are based in Brussels: **Philips Lighting** in Anderlecht, a subsidiary of the electrical and electronics giant, will supply lighting for stadiums and indoor facilities. **Schreder** in Vorst

will supply lighting for access and approach roads. And **Suseia** from Schaerbeek will run and operate the Belgian House, the official Belgian agency for the Olympics. Finally, **EVS** from Seraing in Liège province in Wallonia will provide slow-motion video facilities.

"Bagging so many deals is partially due to our close proximity to the United Kingdom," BTSC founder Peter Demuynek told *De Tijd*. "But more than that, it is the result of seven years of plain hard work. As soon as it was announced that London would host the 2012 Olympic Games, we started to lobby in all earnest with regular contacts, visits and invitations. Many different companies undertook various trade missions to the English capital in the wake of visits by Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters and former federal prime ministers Leterme and Van Rompuy. It eventually became clear that all the footwork had paid off. Moreover, the fact that many of these companies have a track record that includes previous Olympic Games gave them a head start

## THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

### Banking

► **KBC**

Flanders largest bank has received four bids for its Russian affiliate Absolut Bank. KBC, which paid some €760 million for Absolut five years ago, had agreed with European authorities to sell it before 2014 as part of its 2009 public bail-out.

### Brewing

► **AB Inbev**

The Brazilian affiliate of Leuven-based AB Inbev has paid €1.2 billion to acquire Cerveceria Nacional Dominicana in the Dominican Republic. The move allows AB Inbev to become the largest beer group in the Caribbean.

### Construction

► **DMG**

Antwerp-based DMG Architectural Solutions has won a contract to redevelop the 10,000 square-metre mansion of an unnamed client in the Saudi Arabian capital Riyadh. The facility will include a bowling alley, cinema, a restaurant for 140 staff, a nursery and a reception area for visiting officials. The project comes with creative freedom and a near unlimited budget, according to the firm, who has previously worked on projects for the Saudi royal family.

### Energy

► **Colruyt**

Halle-based supermarket Colruyt, which has become the country's largest investor in wind energy with stakes in the Belwind and Northwind offshore farms, is seeking co-investors prepared to inject up to €150 million in the projects. Meanwhile, the company has sold its industrial automation affiliate Intrion, based in Limburg province.

### Petrol

► **Lukoil**

Russian-owned Lukoil, operator of some 181 petrol stations throughout the country, is adding 13 outlets locations in Limburg province to its network following the acquisition of the Dutch Verolma petroleum company.

### Railways

► **NMBS**

Belgium's national railway group is preparing a bid for its logistics affiliate to secure the future of one of the company's main assets, the Antwerp Hub railway marshalling yard, which services the port area.

### Telecoms

► **Base**

Dutch telecommunications group KPN is said to be considering the sale of its local affiliate Base, the country's third largest mobile telephony operator, valued at €1.8 billion. Potential bidders include the British Apax investment fund and local cable operator Telenet, owned by the US Liberty Global group.

## Ghent gets highest tower

The tallest office tower in Flanders, the MG Tower, was officially opened last week on the Kortrijksesteenweg in the Ghent district of Sint-Denijs-Westrem, close to the E40 motorway. The tower, which will be the new regional headquarters for KBC bank, is 119 metres tall and counts 27 floors, with a total surface area of 21,460 square metres.

The office space is enough for 1,200 people, and there is an underground garage for 430 cars and 150 bicycles, as well as a footbridge and tunnel connecting to bus and tram services. It will also have a 200-seat restaurant, an auditorium and its own fire station. The striking design, in which the building appears to be split from top to bottom

with one part hanging onto the other, is by architects Jasper-Eyers, who also designed the extensions to Anderlecht stadium, the Warsaw Spire in Poland and the Minsk Tower in Belarus.



## Q&A



**This week the Flemish government, the Social and Economic Council (SERV) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) took part in a conference in Brussels on green jobs. Kees Van Der Ree represents the Geneva-based ILO**

**The conference talks about the transition of the Flemish economy towards a green economy. What steps will be necessary?**

There are lots of things that need to happen, like investment in new economic sectors. Research needs to be done estimating current and potential new green jobs. Once you know you can create new green jobs – in renewable energy, in transportation, in construction, in the retrofitting of buildings – then you need to do a lot of planning, in particular around the upgrading of skills. There are not enough green plumbers and green architects; not enough people know about solar panels or green laundry services,

for example. So you need to nurture human resource development.

**Europe is becoming greener partly through the export of heavy industry to other parts of the world. Isn't that simply shifting the problem?**

I would say it shouldn't be part and parcel of a green economy policy. I don't think we need to push out our dirty industries; we should clean them up ourselves. Energy intensive and polluting industries have also moved for other reasons – because of labour costs for example and investment climates. So we have to work with those emerging economies to put up green economy

frameworks there. China is an example. They've already done a lot, contrary to what people believe.

**How is Flanders doing in the area of conversion to a green economy?**

I was in Flanders six months ago for a stakeholder meeting on the green economy in the framework of [the UN conference on sustainable development] Rio+20. And we met the Flanders delegation in consultations, and they have now taken this initiative for a conference. I think these are all important signs of how seriously Flanders takes the subject and how much they want it to happen.

### What exactly are green jobs?

Green jobs are those that help reduce environmental pressure and damage and also improve energy efficiency or resource efficiency in general.

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# Young, gifted and rich

**Limburg whiz-kid Davy Kestens will share a stage with Richard Branson in Antwerp next month**

Alan Hope

**O**n the first weekend in May, Flanders DC, the region's agency for creativity, will welcome international business superhero Richard Branson, the billionaire founder of the Virgin Group. At the same time, all eyes will be on a local hero.

Davy Kestens, like Branson, has been in business since he was a teenager. And like Branson, he's a college dropout. Unlike Branson, he's not yet a billionaire. But give him time.

At 23, Kestens is running his own million-euro company from San Francisco and from his hometown Herk-de-Stad in Limburg province. Last month came the announcement that Kestens' company TwitSpark had raised €1.125 million from a

Hasselt. "They were mainly creating websites for the government," says Kestens. "After half a year of working there, I gave my boss a mini business plan explaining how I wanted to split his company up into three. That didn't work."

## Mixed fortunes

He left that job to study web design in a Kortrijk college. "The minute I signed up, I already knew I wasn't going to finish. I just wanted to have time to do my own stuff, and the best place to do that was college because of the ridiculous amount of free time you have."

On his website, Kestens unashamedly tells the story of his first flop, SliceJobs, which brought

having the time of my life, so why would I sell off my baby right now?"

## Home is where the heart is

Global success may have taken him to the heart of internet success, but Kestens is committed to his roots in Limburg. "Absolutely. I come home every month. I go back and forth all the time. The company is US-based, but we're selling worldwide. It's a global company, and I will be flying around the world a lot of the time. But back in Flanders, there's still the family of course, and a lot of people whom I adore. I also feel that Flanders is a great hub to use as a base for a European takeover because it's highly connected to Europe. Don't get me started on the way businesses are taxed in Belgium, though."

One benefit of success is that his parents are finally coming round to the choices he made. "When I was in high school, I had to do two years over again, and they were all like, 'Davy you're throwing away your future, you're throwing away your life.'"

He heard the same when he went to work instead of to college, when he quit his well-paid job to go to college, and when he quit college. "That all changed a few months ago when they saw that I'm doing what I'm extremely passionate about and building a business that's successful. Now they really understand the path that I wanted to take, and they're extremely supportive and happy. They're the best parents I could wish for."

*Davy Kestens will speak during the Screw It, Let's Do It! seminar hosted by Flanders DC on 6 May in Antwerp. See the website for complete information*



Davy Kestens has broken the €1 million mark with his B2B application TwitSpark

**"The minute I signed up for college, I already knew I wasn't going to finish"**

number of backers in Silicon Valley, the area of southern San Francisco known as the Mecca of internet start-ups.

TwitSpark is a B2B application that rides on the back of the micro-blogging service Twitter, taking advantage of the fact that it can be impossible to manage the flow of information on the site, which publishes 340 million messages a day. Businesses use TwitSpark to manage their conversations with the public, and it's Kestens' latest venture.

"When I was 13, I entered a competition to design a youth website for my city," says Kestens. "It was horrendous and ugly, but I won because the standard was pretty low. I got a lot of attention from the newspapers and a lot of smaller companies, like bakeries and shops, contacted me to make their websites."

By the time he was 18, Kestens was recruited by a web design company in

designers of web templates together with companies looking to buy them. SliceJobs failed because of, not in spite of, Kestens' youthful enthusiasm.

That was followed by Ghostbloggers, which sells ready-made blog posts to companies hungry for fresh content. That's still going.

Just days before we talk, headlines announced that Instagram, a company less than two years old, has been sold to Facebook for \$1 billion. If a buyer with deep pockets were to come along, what would be Kestens' price for TwitSpark, or his whole company? "I'm not sure," he admits. "I really don't think I would sell right now. I'm trying to do my best on my own to see how far I can take the company and how successful I can become, rather than just selling it off to the first buyer that comes along. It's important for me not to focus on the money but on the experience and what I'm learning every day. I'm

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

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

# Sandton opens Grand Hotel in Ghent



**B**aron Olivier de Reylof would be astonished to see the evolution of his Ghent home nearly 300 years after its construction. Sandton, a Dutch hotelier with properties across Europe, has just completed a delicate renovation, respecting the historical character of this listed monument while at the same time bringing it into the 21st century. The Grand Hotel Reylof in the centre of Ghent is now ready for occupancy, with 158 units clustered around a lovely, green courtyard. You'll find "charm" rooms for the punters, "junior" suites for the well-heeled, fully equipped "executive" apartments for the business traveller and a "presidential" suite

for... those who can afford it. There is also an on-site cocktail bar and restaurant, as well as a wellness centre, with fitness room, heated indoor pool and sauna.

Aesthetically, the Reylof is a playful blend of empire and abstract modern, the former's staid elegance married to the latter's verve and vibrancy. (Think Jack Nicholson's Joker run amok in Gotham's Flugelheim Museum.)

In another nod to history, the hotel's various wings are named after local boys done good, most notably the country's leading symbolist poet and playwright, Maurice Maeterlinck (who, incidentally, was born just around the corner).

In terms of sustainability, too, the

Reylof's renaissance is impressive. Sandton adapted this 18th-century structure to BREEAM's strict energy-efficiency standards. So unique was the task and so remarkable its achievement that the construction firm responsible, Van de Walle, was awarded the prize for innovation at this year's Belgian Building Awards. The final selling point is – what else? – location, location, location. The Grand Hotel Reylof is situated on the fringe of Ghent's historical city centre and is accessible by car and public transport. It's just a short stroll from the front door to Ghent's main attractions. **Georgio Valentino**

► [www.sandton.eu](http://www.sandton.eu)



Dear Sir,  
Dear Madam,

**The Bulletin** in partnership with the **Brussels-Europe Liaison Office** will be present at this year's **FÊTE DE L'IRIS ON MAY 6, 2012**! You can find us close to MIM (Instrument Museum)

Come and visit The Bulletin & BLBE's stand, gain information about what we do and register beforehand for a guided walk around Brussels. Pre-registration is required, but the walks are free – offered to you by **Visit Brussels**.

Discover, with an official Visit Brussels' guide, some sites worth seeing in the heart of Brussels:

**The Place Royale**, with the statue of Godefroid de Bouillon at its centre, is surrounded by 18th century buildings including the Church of St. Jacques sur Coudenberg, the former Palace of the Dukes of Brabant, the Museum of Fine Arts and Magritte Museum.

Admire the Museum of Musical Instruments, a beautifully restored Art Nouveau complex, the Alexander Calder's "Whirling Ear", a mobile abstract work.

Going along the **Mount of Arts**: The Royal Library, with more than 5 million books. This building also houses the Nassau Chapel.

Square: Brussels Meeting Centre offers 13,000m<sup>2</sup> for: international congresses, all sorts of events, gala dinners, exhibitions.

Passing by the **Brussels Parliament**: created during the State Reform of 1988-89, like every democratic institution, the Parliament consists of members elected on the basis of universal suffrage: the Brussels Region deputies

Next, your guide will walk you to the old centre of the city to get a taste of the **Market Square** (Grand-Place), Brussels' most amazing architectural feature, surrounded by guild houses. The fantastic 15th C. gothic City Hall tells plenty of legends and medieval stories.

## **SIGN UP NOW, ON [WWW.THEBULLETIN.BE/IRIS](http://WWW.THEBULLETIN.BE/IRIS)**

Looking forward to seeing you there.

Best regards,  
The Bulletin Team

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Brussels-Europe  
Liaison Office

# Going underground

## Genk aims high with its creative celebration of Flanders' mining heritage

Diana Goodwin

**A** list of the top tourist destinations in Flanders includes Bruges, Antwerp, Ghent... and Genk? With the Manifesta European Biennial of Contemporary Art being staged in the little city in Limburg, Genk is poised to become the summer's big tourist draw to Belgium.

Genk aims to sustain that level of renown, and the winning horse in its stable is C-Mine. The business and recreation complex has been built on the site of the old Winterslag coal mine.

The "C" stands for "creativity", which is central to all aspects of its development. The four components of its mission statement are tourism and recreation, culture, education and creative enterprise. The site's goal is to bring together creative people, companies and organisations to facilitate the exchange of ideas and stimulate innovation.

The first business partner to open its doors at C-Mine was cinema chain Euroscop in 2005. Since then, the site has seen the opening of the MAD-Faculty (Media, Arts and Design school), a performing arts centre and a visitor centre. In 2010, renowned Flemish ceramicist Pieter Stockmans (born in nearby Leopoldsburg) opened his studio and showroom in the mine's former metal warehouse.

The former mine offices now house the Centre for Creative Innovation and Entrepreneurship, which supports creative business development. Digital marketing agency Nascom is based there, and other new media companies may soon follow, thanks to a public-private initiative led by Microsoft and local government. The Microsoft Innovation Centre aims to promote Flanders as a centre of information technology.

### From mine to C-Mine

Two years ago, C-Mine received the European Stars Award for best brownfield development, for revitalising a former industrial site that had fallen into disuse. The mining sites of Limburg are a unique part of the region's cultural heritage: Most of Europe's former mines have disappeared, so places like Winterslag offer a rare view into Belgium's mining past.

In 1917, Winterslag became the first mine established in Limburg and was eventually one of several in Genk alone. At its height, it employed 6,250 miners, many of whom came from Italy, Greece and Turkey for the express purpose of working in the mines. Coal production began to decline in the 1960s, and Winterslag finally closed in 1988. In 1993, the remaining buildings were classified as protected



Inside and out, C-Mine is a spectacular homage to Limburg's mining past

monuments.

A chief delight in visiting C-Mine is seeing the original infrastructure preserved just as it was during the mine's heyday. The main building, called the Energie gebouw (Energy Building), houses the visitor centre, cultural centre, gallery space and a café. All of this is nestled in and among industrial artefacts such as the old compressor room, where huge machines still crouch in a vast tile-floored hall; side rooms housing giant wheels that powered the coal lifts; and the circuit room, full of vintage electrical equipment and 19th-century decorative ironwork.

### The garden district

The area around C-Mine preserves an entire neighbourhood (*tuinwijk*, or garden district) built by the mining company for the workers. Brussels-

based architect Adrien Blomme employed a rustic English cottage style in what is regarded as the nicest of such mining residential districts in the Kempen. Separate areas were designed for white-collar and blue-collar workers, but each group was provided with green spaces, private gardens and community buildings such as churches and schools.

In keeping with the tradition, C-Mine will soon incorporate new living quarters in the middle of the former mine site. Modern townhouses and apartments are under construction across from Stockman's studio, offering a unique opportunity to live alongside an architectural heritage site.

The site's newest attraction, C-Mine Expedition, opens on 29 April. Curators hesitate to call it a museum or a simulation, but Expedition will be an interactive experience bringing Genk's



© photo: Stad Genk



mining past to life. Contemporary Belgian artists and designers have been enlisted to create an atmosphere that lets visitors see, hear and even smell the past.

### Cultural Odour Generator

The "experience pathway" starts in the Energy Building, descends underground through old mine shafts and finally ascends to the plaza outside, where visitors can climb to the top of the highest head frame in Belgium. (The head frame was the tall structure above the mine shaft that housed the lift mechanism.)

There they will enjoy spectacular views of the surrounding area from a height of 60 metres. For those who don't aspire to such heights, there is another viewing platform at 15 metres.

As visitors wend their way through the underground

tunnels of Expedition, they will encounter "memory tubes" and hear stories about the mine and its workers. Aspiring recording artists can create their own sound mix using authentic mine sounds, and a panoramic viewer offers a glimpse back in time of the surrounding terrain.

An underground gallery space will house changing art exhibitions. The first of these is an installation created especially for the opening by scent artist Peter Decupere. Visitors will be invited to create their own smell using his Cultural Odour Generator. During the grand opening, entertainment and live music on the central plaza beneath the mine's two head frames will add to the festivities.

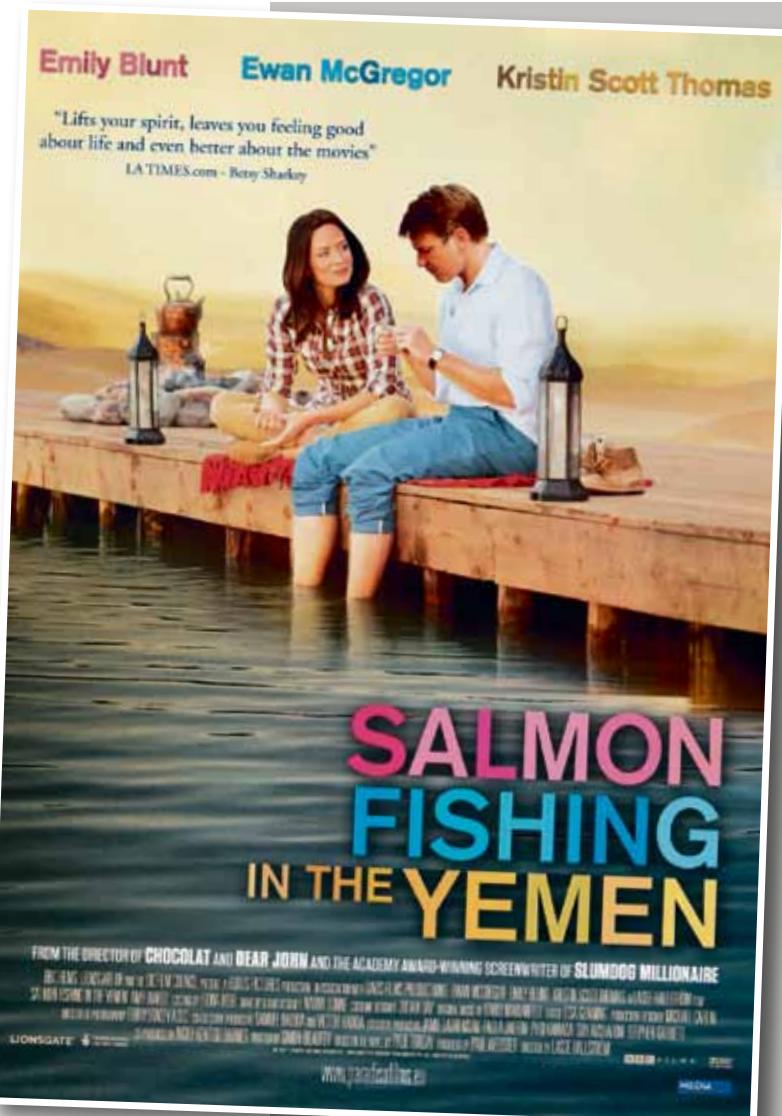
► [www.c-mine.be](http://www.c-mine.be)

Dear Sir,  
Dear Madam,

The Bulletin in partnership with Paradiso Films would like to invite to you the avant-première screening of "**Salmon Fishing in the Yemen**" on May 8, 2012 at Cinéma Aventure, in Brussels.

### ***Synopsis***

Ewan McGregor (Beginners) and Emily Blunt (The Adjustment Bureau) star alongside Oscar-nominee Kristin Scott Thomas (The English Patient, I've Loved You So Long) and Amr Waked (Syriana) in this extraordinary, beguiling tale of fly-fishing and political spinning, of unexpected heroism and late-blooming love and of an attempt to prove the impossible, possible. Directed by Oscar-nominee Lasse Hallström (Chocolat) and written by Oscar-winner Simon Beaufoy (Slumdog Millionaire), this feature film is based on Paul Torday's acclaimed novel about a scientist who looks to fulfill a sheikh's dream of bringing the sport of fly-fishing to his homeland in Yemen.



*Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*

### ***Details***

- Limited seats: 110. First come, first served !
- Requirement registration on [www.thebulletin.be](http://www.thebulletin.be)
- Registration confirmation MUST be brought along on the night of the screening
- Visitors will receive one free glass of wine
- More information can be found on: <http://www.cinema-aventure.be/>
- Start time: 19.30

***Don't miss this opportunity and register now !***  
***on: [www.thebulletin.be/film](http://www.thebulletin.be/film)***

Best regards,  
The Bulletin Team

# Holy moly

## If you're going to a First Communion soon, don't be surprised if a lamb is sacrificed

Courtney Davis

**A**s peculiar as it is to relate chocolate eggs and gift-giving clocks to Easter, the Flemish have their own unique tradition to bring to the table: the bloody beheading of a lamb-shaped ice cream cake.

In this predominantly Catholic region, the arrival of spring brings not just the blooming of flowers and longer days, but the celebration of First Communion, a child's rite of passage marking the initial reception of the Eucharist. A central tenet of the Catholic faith, the Eucharist (unleavened bread and wine or grape juice) represents the body and blood of Jesus.

Very holy and solemn, taken out of context, it could easily appear a bit peculiar with its cannibalistic undertones. The same could be said for the ice cream cake served at the First Communion.

The white frosted and frozen lamb-shaped cake looks innocent enough as it melts vanilla-flavoured cream onto the platter. It's not until the party's guest of honour wields a knife to lop off its head that this particular tradition turns a bit morbid. Children gleefully press down on the neck of the dessert, and, as the head comes off, bright red "blood" oozes out.

This cherry-flavoured syrup is apparently the best part. "Almost everyone wanted a piece with the grenadine!" says Wafa Baccaert as she remembers back to the times she enjoyed the dessert. The daughter of a Flemish baker, she has been to a handful of parties with this tradition. "It was always funny to see how so full of excitement a child is beforehand. The room grows silent, and they focus very solemnly as they slowly cut the neck. Once the head is off and the grenadine blood runs out, everyone applauds."

Wafa's father Luc calls it the highlight of his own communion. "It is a great photo opportunity

where you feel like a movie star, posing with the knife to the neck of the lamb. Plus, as Wafa said, when the deed was done, you got a big round of applause. It wasn't morbid, it was normal. It's like playing Cowboys and Indians; it's pretend. It is just an ice cream lamb cake. It was simply tradition."

### A Biblical history

In fact, the roots of this well-respected tradition go back centuries. "It originally was an actual lamb that was slaughtered for the Easter and Communion celebrations," explains Luc. "The slaughter and sacrifice of a lamb refers to many Biblical stories. The lamb symbolises Jesus Christ and innocence. The sins of mankind are removed with its sacrifice. An ice cream cake lamb replaced the actual lamb in the early 20th century. During the First World War, there were no lambs, and the party became more subdued."

He should know. Not only did he have a cake at his confirmation, he used to make them. Born and raised in Ghent, Luc inherited his father's bakery, which will soon mark its 60th anniversary. "I haven't made the cakes for several years now," he says. "It takes a lot of time to make that kind of cake. Now people have freezers in their homes, which they didn't used to, and they have access to ice cream, another former rarity. Now you can just buy ice cream in the supermarket."

O'Cool, the frozen food store, even sells *Islam met bloed* (ice cream lamb with blood) for €21.95. That price is fairly low but perhaps, notes Luc, not the same quality as a homemade cake from a baker. "In the time of my father, 40 years ago, the cakes were very popular. In the month of May, we made 40 to 50 lambs."

The lamb cake is made of two pieces of vanilla ice cream – a good bakery makes its own ice cream. A tube is placed in the neck



Through the ages, the beheading of the ice cream lamb has endured

and filled with grenadine. Before there were tubes, a hole was made at the neck with a spoon, and it was filled by hand. Finished with *crème fraîche*, Baccaert-Bader bakery's cakes would serve up to 30 people.

While the tradition is less popular today, the dessert lamb still makes its appearance on occasion. Peter Lootens of Evergem, East Flanders, was happy to include the tradition in his daughter Lien's First Communion party in 2009. In addition to drinks and balloons, the post-church event featured the ever-traditional cake.

"My daughter thought it was a bit scary to have the head cut off, but she knows it was fake blood," says Lootens. "Cutting the lamb's head is almost as traditional as making a sign of the cross upon entering a church."

*Bakkerij L Baccaert-Bader is at Klinkkouterstraat 68 in Sint-Amandsberg (Ghent)*

### BUYING A LAMB CAKE



© courtesy of Surprice Desserts

Many bakeries across Flanders make a lamb cake, and some of them with the traditional grenadine "blood". Contact one of these bakers to order yours.

**Brood & Banket Wim** Tereken 58, Sint-Niklaas, [www.bakkerijwim.be](http://www.bakkerijwim.be)  
**Surprice Desserts** Stadenstraat 39, Houthulst (West Flanders) [www.surprice.be](http://www.surprice.be)  
**Geybels** Oude Bareelie 105, Merksem (Antwerp), [www.geybels.be](http://www.geybels.be)  
**Fijnbakker Cools** Kapelstraat 27, Hasselt, [www.coolshasselt.be](http://www.coolshasselt.be)

## Renovation to Bruges' historical belfry complete



© De Fotografe Stad Brugge

**T**he belfry, or belfry, of Bruges, towering above the central Markt, is the mediaeval city's most recognisable landmark. A tower has stood on the spot since 1240, with the current tower built following a fire in 1280. The Belfort is now a Unesco-recognised world heritage site. But visitors to Bruges over the last three months will have missed the chance to visit, as it was closed for renovation. The result is two spruced-up exhibition rooms, new wiring and security and a fresh look to

the whole place.

Everything worthwhile demands some effort, and a climb to the top of the Belfort demands no fewer than 366 steps. After the first 55, there's the treasury, now an exhibition space showing the history of the city, once one of the richest in the world. The so-called Stone Floor, 57 steps further up, contains information on the bells, the clock mechanism and the carillon.

The belfry's main purpose was always as a communications tower, from which bells would ring out to order the daily life of

the citizens, as well as announce special circumstances, from dire emergencies to important gatherings.

The so-called Triumph Bell is housed at step 220; the current occupant is the 11th to have held the position since 1280. It was made in 1680, weighs six tonnes and is 2.13m high. At the height of 333 steps, meanwhile, you'll find the imposing 18th-century mechanism of the carillon. It includes a copper drum dating to 1748 and equipped with more than 30,000 holes for the pins that operate the hammers that

strike the 37 carillon bells. You can still hear the carillon, one of the prime examples in the world, during concerts on Saturdays and Sundays at 11.00.

Finally, at the top is a view that stretches out on all four sides from the sea at Zeebrugge to the depths of the West Flanders hinterland. The renovation saw the visitors' gallery equipped with nets to keep birds out, but they do nothing to spoil the view.

**Alan Hope**

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

# Wanderlust

**Ineke Vander Aa's debut novel takes you on a trip down the back alleys of 18th-century Leuven**

Rebecca Benoot

**A**fter a brief stint at university (history and psychology), Ineke Vander Aa decided to travel to the United States, where she ended up training wolfhounds as well as finishing the manuscript of her first novel *De lichtekooi van Loven* (The Light Cage of Loven).

"I'm a very focused person," Vander Aa tells me, "so I eventually chose for self-study to concentrate on a story that I started writing as a hobby out of interest for the period. It was very satisfying, almost therapeutic, and before I knew it, I had half a manuscript. So I decided to keep on going."

In the States, Vander Aa, 28, was confronted with a completely different lifestyle that put everything in perspective, making her aware of the charms of an old European city and its almost fairy tale-like atmosphere.

*De lichtekooi van Loven* is set in 18th-century Leuven – or Loven as it was called then. It tells the story of 15-year-old Louise, who is forced to make ends meet as a prostitute after her father dies. Vander Aa (pictured) fills the book with sumptuous descriptions, evocative of the time and place. The dialogues are written in the Flemish vernacular of the time, adding to this novel's authentic atmosphere.

"I chose Leuven because I was reading a lot of historical fiction about London and Paris but hardly ever anything about Belgium, let alone Leuven, which also has a very interesting history," she explains. The author was born and raised close by the city in Kortenberg, "so it was quite interesting to find out what this place used to be like."

## Under her skin

The result of her seven-year endeavour is a classic historical novel reminiscent

of Walter Scott, Gustave Flaubert or, more recently, Sarah Waters. Vander Aa masterfully gets into the mind of a young girl faced with many Dickensian hardships.

"I carried Louise with me for quite a while," she says. "In fact, she's still with me. I love watching and reading period pieces, so I had a vivid image of her, of what a girl living in that age would look and even feel like. That's when I started researching and trying to figure out what it must have been to survive as a prostitute in the 18th century."

The story is very much plot and character driven but also manages to give a vibrant depiction of the intellectual and social developments in a city where change is lurking around every corner. "In the beginning, I was mainly writing out of interest, not because I wanted to get published, so I was mostly emphasising the story," says Vander Aa. "The details, descriptions and atmosphere, which are necessary to make the novel realistic, came later. Subjects such as psychology, philosophy and religion are things that I personally find important, so they flowed naturally into the story."

From female emancipation to feminine hygiene, it's all there. "I wanted the story to be as realistic as possible because I find the taboos in our society annoying," she continues. "Some feelings are still being covered up too much, and some things are simply beyond our control. Then again, I was conflicted because reality can already be so harsh so why emphasise it?"

It was difficult "finding the right balance between realism and romanticism," she admits. "But at the end of the day, I believe there's no greater comfort than knowing that



© Liesbeth Kuipers

what you're feeling is normal."

In the end, *De lichtekooi* walks that fine line between realism and romanticism beautifully, with poise and vigour. "I believe that everyone has their own truths," Vander Aa adds. "Whoever we are, we're all looking for warmth, affection and answers. Our basic needs are the same, which is kind of the message of the novel."

*De lichtekooi* takes you back in time

to a city that has had one hell of a makeover. Take your time to enjoy Flanders past and to be swept away by an eclectic cast of wonderful characters and a world full of change, adversity and longing. "I've been living with this story for such a long time that, now that it's published, it feels like letting people look inside my head."

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

## FRESH FICTION

### Gezond weer op (Running Out of Clean Air)

by Geert de Kockere • Houtekiet  
Normally a children's book author, Geert de Kockere has just published his second novel for adults. *Gezond weer up* explores the strange relationship between nature and finance. Dorian is the director of a successful communications agency until one day he decides to sell it and leave town. After being seduced by a woman called Véronique, he suddenly comes face to face with the world's most powerful bankers, who make him an odd offer: convince all farmers to sell their land to the banks. What are they planning? The result is a psychological power play that keeps you on your toes.



### Een uitzonderlijke vrouw (An Exceptional Woman)

by Christophe Vekeman • Arbeiderspers  
Gwen soon realises that the world is a complicated place for those who want to do the right thing. She embarks on a rocky journey,

looking for answers and her purpose in life because there's one thing of which she's sure: She's destined for greatness. *Een uitzonderlijke vrouw* is the latest novel by Christophe Vekeman and his best to date, filled with comic details, contemporary philosophy, subtly swaying sentences and a kick-ass main character.

### Kelderkind (Cellar Child)

by Kristien Dieltiens • De eenhoorn  
*Kelderkind* is the 50th novel by children's author Kristien Dieltiens and was based on the true story of Kaspar Hauser, a 16-year-old boy who appeared on the marketplace of Neurenberg in 1828 after having been locked up in a cellar for his entire life. He's never seen the moon, the stars or even other people. Dieltiens has created a mesmerising fictional diary for

Kaspar, showing us the world through the eyes of an innocent adolescent faced with beauty, cruelty and infinite wonders.

### Zeer van harte (Sincerely Yours)

by Paul Jacobs • Houtekiet

Former VRT radio producer-turned-author Paul Jacobs has written crime fiction, columns and short stories and now returns with a new collection featuring 13 stories on that thing called love. A writer finds the love of his life strolling in the book fair, a tourist falls for the charms of a mysterious woman in the South of France – these are two of the soulful tales that make *Zeer van harte* a bittersweet mix that will touch even the most cynical of hearts.

## WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

The full festival pass plus Friday and Sunday day tickets to **this year's Rock Werchter** are now sold out. There are still day passes available for Thursday (featuring Selah Sue, Garbage and The Cure, among many others) and Saturday (featuring Black Box Revelation, Editors and Simple Minds, among others). If you want tickets for Thursday, act fast. Day tickets are €79. Rock Werchter takes place near Leuven from 28 June to 1 July.

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

After a test period in Brussels, **Kinepolis cinemas across the country** will implement a 21.00 film slot next to its 20.00 and 22.30 start times from Monday to Thursday. The test period showed that professionals and students are much more likely to go to a movie during the week if the start time is later than 20.00. The cinema chain is going a step further in student city Leuven: Traditional film slots are being abolished altogether. Instead, a film will start every 20 minutes.

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

Although they're a bit late this year, **the blossoms are in full bloom in Limburg province**. The pear and cherry blossoms have been in bloom for a couple of weeks now, and the apple blossoms have followed this week. The blossoms only last a short time, so to see the region in all its glory, it's advisable to visit in the next week.

► [www.bloesemfeesten-haspengouw.be](http://www.bloesemfeesten-haspengouw.be)

**Lady Gaga** has scheduled a second concert in Antwerp after her 29 September show sold out in 40 minutes. The second concert is on 30 September. Tickets went on sale on 23 April and were still available as *Flanders Today* went to press.

The new French film starring Flemish actor Matthias Schoenaerts (*Rundskop*) will screen in **competition for the Golden Palm** in Cannes next month. A Flemish co-production, *Rust & Bone*, by director Jacques Audiard, is the story of a marine park killer whale trainer (Marion Cotillard) who meets street fighter Schoenaerts in a nightclub shortly before experiencing a devastating accident. Two Flemish shorts have also been selected for competition in Cannes, *Cockaigne* by Emile Verhamme and *Matteus* by Leni Huyghe.

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

The song "Somebody That I Used to Know" by Bruges-born electro-pop singer Gotye was the **number one rock song in the United States** last week and the number two song across all genres. The single was at the same time 18 on Belgium's charts, having jumped from 30 the week before. The 21-year-old Gotye is currently touring the US and recently performed on the extremely popular sketch show *Saturday Night Live*.

# The port and the poor

## French Flanders celebrates the life and work of Eugeen Van Mieghem

Marcel Schoeters

The Musée de Flandre in Cassel, just across the Flemish-French border, is the temporary home of the exhibition *Eugeen Van Mieghem and the Port of Antwerp*. It is another tribute to an artist who had been nearly forgotten only 20 years ago.

Eugeen Van Mieghem was born in 1875, the son of a pub owner in the old port area just north of Antwerp's city centre. The 't Eilandje neighbourhood today is rapidly growing into a fashionable residential place to be, an evolution triggered by the transformation of the Napoleonic docklands into a marina and an influx of art galleries and other cultural spaces.

In Van Mieghem's days, these very same quays were bustling with port activity. Steamers and sailing ships were loaded and unloaded side-by-side by dock workers performing labour that was manual as well as menial. Right from his bedroom window, Van Mieghem could see the berth of the Red Star Line, the famous Belgian-American shipping company that would take more than two million emigrants – "tired, poor and huddled masses, yearning to breathe free" – to the New World between 1873 and 1934.

They would soon become his favourite subjects. Van Mieghem was a painter, and a socially conscious one. Apart from the on-going stream of fortune seekers, the Antwerp waterfront was teeming with sack-porters, sack-sewers, dock workers, barges and tramps. Van Mieghem's work was social art, which is also represented by painters like Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen, Jean-François Millet and even Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and German sculptress Käthe Kollwitz.

### Vie d'artiste

Van Mieghem is the only painter in Flemish history who has devoted the greater part of his work to the port and its labourers. He did not travel very much; the world, rather, passed by his doorstep. Contrary

to the Impressionists, who would paint the same subject or scenery over and over again from the same position but in different lighting conditions, Van Mieghem would change his position for every work. He would put his characters in specific postures and against different backgrounds.

He came very close to the romantic view of the *vie d'artiste*, or life of the artist. He was very talented, but his talent was hardly recognised in his lifetime. He was short of money most of the time and lost his young wife Augustine Pautre, who died of tuberculosis. Perpetual lack of money required Augustine to sit as a model for both Van Mieghem and his friends, which may have contributed to her condition.

And she continued to do so, even as the disease was devouring her body. One of the paintings on display in Cassel is called "Augustine, ill, taking a walk".

Van Mieghem died at the age of 55 in 1930. Soon after his death, his work fell into oblivion, at least until Erwin Joos came along.

### Comes an aficionado

Joos, the founder and curator of what is now the Eugeen Van Mieghem Museum was fascinated by the drawings illustrating a 1960s book on the history of the Antwerp dock worker. After graduating from university, Joos acquired his first Van Mieghems at auction.

His hobby turned in to passion and eventually a full-time job. In 1982, a Eugeen Van Mieghem Foundation was set up. In 1993, the year in which Antwerp was the Cultural Capital of Europe, the Eugeen Van Mieghem Museum opened. In 2010, it moved to its third and present location, about one kilometre from the Red Star Line Museum in a *fin-de-siècle* mansion combining Art Nouveau and Arts & Crafts decoration. The mansion is owned by the Belgian Shipowners Association, which put the ground floor at the disposal of the museum for a period of 20 years. For the last two decades, part of



Eugeen Van Mieghem's "Bag Mender at the Docks", 1925

the Van Mieghem collection has been touring Europe as well as the US. For the descendants of the millions of emigrants, especially the Jewish, who made the journey through Antwerp, the paintings by Van Mieghem are the only visual testimony to the undertaking of their forebears, apart from an odd Alfred Stieglitz photo.

The exhibition in Cassel is the first ever of Van Mieghem's work in France. It was designed by Joos and Sandrine Vézilier, director of the Musée de Flandre, and concentrates on Van Mieghem's port-related work, expressed through a selection of some 60 paintings, drawings and pastels. It spreads over three rooms, each representing a specific theme.

One of those is Antwerp as an industrial port, caught in an era of full development. Winter seems to have been Van Mieghem's favourite season for painting. In the adjoining room, the focus is on the dock workers and the sack-sewers at work in mooring vessels, discharging barrels and weighing grain. The working conditions of the

lower classes were in general at the turn of the last century miserable, and work at the port was harsh, dangerous and stultifying. The final room shows social life in the port, including children – among which Van Mieghem's own Eugeen Jr on the lap of his mother – night life and the emigrants.

## UNTIL 24 JUNE

### Eugeen Van Mieghem and the Port of Antwerp

Musée de Flandre, 26 Grand'Place, Cassel

► [www.museedeflandre.cg59.fr](http://www.museedeflandre.cg59.fr)

## FLANDERS' LOST TERRITORIES



Cassel's town hall still flies the black and yellow flag of Flanders

The historical County of Flanders was a far different place than the "Flanders" referred to in the title of this weekly. The County of Flanders was not confined to the borders of the present-day provinces of West and East Flanders.

To the north there was the Dutch semi-enclave of Zeeland Flanders, separated from the rest of the Netherlands by the mouth of the Scheldt River. To the south, the story is much more impressive. A great deal of the Département du Nord in France was in fact Flemish until the end of the 17th century.

When the French Louis XIV assumed personal control of his kingdom in 1661, one of the first things on his mind was to extend its territory both to the east and to the north. The country that he would pass on to his successor, his great-grandson Louis XV, is almost a copy-paste of today's France. To the east, Louis was able to add the Alsace to his realm. To the north, he claimed a great part of Flanders.

A series of wars with the greater part of the other powers in

Continental Europe, including Spain (which still ruled the Southern Netherlands), the Dutch Republic (which did not want to have France as a direct neighbour) and the German Emperor, enabled Louis to annex a large part of Flanders. The Flemish origin of these territories is still reflected in names such as Steenvoorde, Hondschoote, Cassel and Duinkerke and local dishes like *potjesvleesch*.

The language, closely related to the dialects of the southern part of West Flanders, held out till the greater part of the 20th century, even if the language of both the cult and the administration had been French since the Revolution of 1789.

Even today, "Flemishness" is still in the hearts and minds of the people, claims Musée de Flandre director Sandrine Vézilier. The old mother tongue is on the decline but is still in use among the over-60s, she says. "They might still speak it with their parents but haven't passed it onto their children." But on the flagpoles of Cassel's town hall, the Flemish banner is still flying in unison with the *tricolore*.

# Seeing is believing Docville 2012

Bjorn Gabriels

Docville started out in 2005 as an extension of the documentary film programme at Cinema Zed in Leuven. The film festival focused on so-called auteur documentaries, which combine cinematographic virtuoso with strong personal involvement.

Over the years, Docville has continued to feature these types of films, but it has expanded to become a festival that reflects the broad spectrum of what the documentary film has to offer, from idiosyncratic filmmaking that excels on the big screen to widely successful TV documentaries.

This year's big guest name is Louis Theroux, a prime example of the latter. The British documentary maker is widely acknowledged for his work as an on-screen reporter who gains access to often reclusive subcultures and who tells deeply personal stories. In his best work, he combines probing journalism with personal commitment. (His

lesser work flirts with narcissistic sensationalism.) In Leuven, Theroux will present three new productions and give a master class about his methods.

## Festival favourites

Another superstar of documentary filmmaking is Morgan Spurlock, who is mainly known for *Super Size Me*, in which he acted as fast food guinea pig with an appetite for critical comments. In his new film, *The Greatest Movie Ever Sold*, Spurlock delivers an ironic take on product placement and the commercial pressures on the creative industry.

Also highly anticipated is the biographical documentary *Marley* by Kevin MacDonald (*Touching the Void*). Other notable films in the Festival Favourites section are Michael Glawogger's *Whores' Glory*, a sensitive look at the oldest profession (*pictured*), and Serge Bromberg's *The Extraordinary Voyage*, which documents the



restoration of Georges Méliès' legendary science fiction short *A Trip to the Moon*.

## Dances with death

Docville has selected 10 films, all premieres for Belgium, for its juried competition. Touchy subjects and visual flair dominate, with new

the murder of Patrice Lumumba with a former colonial officer to tackle the complexities of historical reconstruction. Influential documentary maker Manu Riche will present *Snake Dance* (made with writer Patrick Marnham), a grim look at the development of the atomic bomb and its consequences. You'll also find Luc Vrydagh, whose *F. Deneyer* follows in the footsteps of one of the oldest undertakers in Brussels, and Bram Van Paesschen's *Empire of Dust*. In *The Boy is Gone*, Christophe Bohn tells the personal history of his father's sympathy for the Nazis during the Second World War.

Thirty years after its premiere, Docville will also screen Godfrey Reggio's *Koyaanisqatsi*. The influence of this visual symphony of cities and landscapes, with a soundtrack by Philip Glass, can be seen at almost every documentary film festival. This year, Docville allows you to relive the original.

27 April to 5 May | Across Leuven | [www.docville.be](http://www.docville.be)

## CONCERT

### Zornik Theatre Tour



The new album by Brussels-based rock-pop trio Zornik *Less > More* is not due out until September, but all their shows – so far scheduled in Ghent, Antwerp and Brussels – will sell out, so be sure to nab tickets now for the tour. Singer-songwriter Koen Buyse started the band 11 years ago and has built up its reputation as a one-part melancholic, two-part steamy rock group that proves both musically and visually surprising in a theatre setting. It's an entirely different experience from seeing them on the giant music festival stages where they so often headline. Robyn Boyle

GET TICKETS NOW

## EXHIBITION

### Bits and Pieces Between Life and Death



An oft-forgotten experience of life in the trenches during the First World War was the constant search for comfort in simple pleasures. Sometimes a cup of tea, a bit of snuff or a comic book could provide this. Other times, it took a musical instrument, a special food or a letter from home. All of these objects and more are part of an intriguing collection by Swedish curator Torbjörn Lenskog. More than 1,000 items found in the rucksacks and pockets of soldiers of a variety of nationalities are on display in this exhibition, which also features a projection of the 1918 Charlie Chaplin film *Shoulder Arms*. It's a uniquely light-hearted look at what made life in the midst of death just a little more bearable. RB

Until 15 September | Royal Army and Military History Museum, Brussels | [www.klm-mra.be](http://www.klm-mra.be)

## MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

### Brussels

**Contemporary Croatian Design:** A selection of fine contemporary design pieces from a range of disciplines  
APR 27-MAY 26 at Design Flanders Gallery, Kanselarijstraat 19  
[www.designvlaanderen.be](http://www.designvlaanderen.be)

### Sint-Niklaas

**Globes, Kaarten en Mercator:** 18th- to 20th-century bookplates tell the story of cartography and its most famous son, Mercator  
Until OCT 24 at Internationaal Exlibriscentrum, Zwijgershoek 14  
<http://musea.sint-niklaas.be/exlibris>

### Wetteren

**Aangeraakt (Touched):** Group show featuring the work of internationally renowned artists in dialogue with the former knitwear factory  
Until MAY 20 at Cordonnier, Schoolstraat  
[www.johantahon.be](http://www.johantahon.be)

20 November 20.30 | NTGent Schouwburg, Ghent

22 November 20.15 | Arenberg, Antwerp

15 December 20.00 | Ancienne Belgique, Brussels | [www.zornik.com](http://www.zornik.com)

## MORE CONCERTS THIS WEEK

### Ardoorie (West Flanders)

**Raymond van het Groenewoud:** The Flemish folk singer-songwriter celebrates his 60th birthday with a line-up of classic and new songs  
APR 28 20.00-22.00 at GC 't Hofland, Oude Lichterveldsestraat 13  
[www.ardoorie.be](http://www.ardoorie.be)

### Brussels

**Bozar Night:** Fifth edition of the electronic music party featuring Oneothrix Point Never, Clark, Daedalus and Lazer Sword, plus exhibitions, performances and film  
APR 30 20.00-3.00 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23  
[www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)

## PERFORMANCE

## Cadavre Exquis

Try to imagine a performance with no plot or set plan, where the stage props are freely moved around or even destroyed, should the actors feel so inclined. This is the concept behind *Cadavre Exquis* (Exquisite Corpse), an idea sprung from the partnership between two top-notch theatre groups: Dutch company Kassys and America's The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma. British director Tim Crouch and Dutch-German choreographer Nicole Beutler also take part in this incredibly inventive, improvisational free-for-all in which each participant presents a 15-minute fragment starting with the last image of the previous fragment, but without knowing what happened before. The amount of wit and flexibility required to pull off this type of relay play is astounding. (in English) RB



premiere: 26-28 April, 20.00 | Vooruit, Ghent | ▶ [www.vooruit.be](http://www.vooruit.be)

For tour dates in Mechelen, Kortrijk and Brussels, visit:

<http://cadavreexquis-en.tumblr.com/about>

## MORE PERFORMANCE THIS WEEK

## Antwerp

**Kommil Foo: Breken:** The Flemish brothers presents their latest musical cabaret comedy (in Dutch)  
APR 26-28 & MAY 2-6 20.15 at Arenberg, Arenbergstraat 28  
▶ [www.arenbergschouwburg.be](http://www.arenbergschouwburg.be)

## Ghent

**Nigel Williams:** Working Class Hero: The Antwerp-based stand-up comedian gives his uncensored opinion on the state of the nation (in Dutch)  
APR 27 20.00-22.00 at Capitole Gent, Graaf Van Vlaanderenplein 5  
▶ [www.capitolegent.be](http://www.capitolegent.be)

## FILM

## Brussels Short Film Festival

The Brussels Short Film Festival celebrates its 15th birthday this year, mixing special events with the usual competitions for recent Belgian and international short films. The anniversary programme includes a party on 28 April and a selection of shorts with a birthday theme. There's also a retrospective of past prize winners and festival favourites, including early shorts from Flemish directors Vincent Bal (*Minoes*) and Michaël R Roskam (*Rundskop*). Highlights from the national competition include *Oh Willy...*, the latest fabric animation from the brilliant Emma De Swaef (*Zachte planten*) and Marc Roels, and *Dura Lex* by Anke Blondé, a prize winner at the Leuven short film festival last year. There is also a chance to catch three of the student films that recently won Wild Card awards from the Flanders Audiovisual Fund: the animated film *Shattered Past* and documentaries *The Heir* and *Twenty-One + Seven*. The festival opens with an evening exploring the first uses of 3D on the big screen, presented by early cinema specialist Serge Bromberg. He puts the films in context and provides live piano accompaniment. Later on there's music from Antwerp band Blackie & the Oohoos, who play a live soundtrack to Roman Polanski's (not at all short) *Repulsion* on 3 May. Ian Mundell



27 April to 6 May | Across Brussels | ▶ [www.bsff.be](http://www.bsff.be)

## MORE FILM THIS WEEK

## Antwerp

**Film Histories:** Two key films from the history of the genre every week. Coming up are *Scanners* by David Cronenberg and *Genesis* by Mrinal Sen  
TUES & THURS at Cinema Zuid, Lakenstraat 14  
▶ [www.cinemazuid.be](http://www.cinemazuid.be)

## Turnhout

**Open Doek Film Festival:** The 20th anniversary of the world film fest, with features, documentaries and exhibitions, plus special guests and a retrospective of Indian director Anurag Kashyap  
Until APR 29 at Utopolis, Graatakker 99  
▶ [www.opendoeck.be](http://www.opendoeck.be)

## FESTIVAL

## Red Star Line Festival

We have to wait another year before the highly anticipated Red Star Line Museum opens in Antwerp, a tribute to the legendary shipping company that carried more than two million people from Flanders to the New World between 1873 and 1934 and to all the personal stories that surround it. In the meantime, the city is staging this festival on the site. Visit the historic buildings on the Rijnkaai where the Amsterdam Klezmer Band (pictured) will get things off to a rollicking start with its unique blend of Eastern European, Jewish and Balkan music. Later are tea dances, films, musical theatre, stand-up comedy, boat rides, readings by authors and poets and a special appearance by US Ambassador Howard Gutman. Every weekend, De Rode Ster restaurant will serve dishes inspired by the meals served on board the Red Star Line ships. RB



28 April to 13 May | Montevideostraat 3, Antwerp | ▶ [www.redstarline.be](http://www.redstarline.be)

## MORE FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

## Brussels

**BiGuitar Festival:** First annual Brussels International Guitar Festival, featuring workshops, master classes, readings and concerts  
APR 27-30 at Espace Senghor, Waverssteenweg 366  
▶ [www.bigfest.be](http://www.bigfest.be)

## Knokke-Heist

**International Photo Festival:** This annual festival features the best photographers in the world and hosts the World Press Photo exhibition and a photography competition. Featured photographers this year include Ruud Van Empel, Michael Light and Olaf Otto Becker  
Until JUN 30 across Knokke-Heist  
▶ [www.fotofestival.be](http://www.fotofestival.be)

## CLASSICAL

## Festival of Flanders Kortrijk

The Festival of Flanders begins its six-month journey around the region's towns and villages, and Kortrijk is, along with Mechelen, its first port of call. Once a timid and pretty nondescript classical fest, the Kortrijk leg remodelled itself a couple of years ago into an edgy affair whose chief claim to fame is Klinkende Stad, a sound art event that fills the city's squares and parks with unnerving plinks and whooshes, drawing devotees from all over Europe. But it would be foolish to overlook the rest of the programme, which features an astonishing concert by swinging early music ensemble L'Arpeggiata, another played by mentally handicapped musicians and a cheeky performance of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* on an accordion. Purists, stay away. Marie Dumont



25 April to 13 May | Across Kortrijk | ▶ [www.festivalkortrijk.be](http://www.festivalkortrijk.be)

## MORE CLASSICAL THIS WEEK

## Antwerp

**RIAS Kammerchor:** This famed Berlin choir joins the no-less-excellent Akademie für alte Musik Berlin in motets by Bach that will take your breath away. The conductor is Hans-Christoph Rademann  
MAY 3 20.00 at deSingel, Desguinlei 25  
▶ [www.desingel.be](http://www.desingel.be)

## Ghent

**Ensemble Inégal:** The Czech ensemble performs Jan Dismas Zelenka's *Il Diamante*, together with the Namur Chambre Choir  
APR 28 20.00 at De Bijloke, J Kluyskensstraat 2  
▶ [www.debijloke.be](http://www.debijloke.be)

## BITE

## Patrick Foley's Irish Pub ★★★★☆

I admit I am an American hamburger snob. So my sceptic heart and I went along to Foley's one evening specifically for what my friends were calling "the best hamburgers in Ghent".

Forget Ghent, I'd even dare to say "best in Belgium".

First of all, I'm impressed by the option to build your own burger by picking from a selection of choice toppings, including bacon, cheddar cheese, sautéed onions, spicy relish, pickled gherkins, grilled blue cheese and even fried egg. The 100% Irish beef burger comes served with your choice of two toppings, plus salad, skin-on fries and a pot of mayo. At €13.90, the burger is by no means cheap. But when you see the size of the thing, you'll understand.

Grilled blue cheese and crispy bacon go on my order. The combination of the two is heavenly – salty and savoury, creamy and crunchy. The burger itself is thick, juicy and just barely done. And as any hamburger connoisseur will attest, the bread plays an equally important part in the quality of the whole. In this case, two natural white buns prove perfectly light and crusty on the outside, soft and spongy on the inside.

My friends take the house specialty, Patrick Foley's Famous Burger with sliced gherkin, dried onion, relish sauce, lettuce and tomato. The tart gherkins and spicy relish give this burger a lot of flavour, and the dried onions add a nice crunch. To make us feel even more at home, we wash it all down with three cold, fizzy Coca-

colas.

Another option is three mini homemade beef burgers with cheese, lettuce, tomato and Irish relish for €9.90. Of course, Foley's offers more than just hamburgers: chunky cheese fries, basket chicken, cottage pie, fish and chips, rib-eye steak, traditional Irish stew, Atlantic smoked salmon, pulled pork sandwiches, stuffed baked potato and more fill the menu.

But aside from its burgers, the pub is best known for its full Irish brunch, served on weekends from 12.00 to 15.00. Come hungry for a plate of sausages, grilled tomato, bacon, fried egg, mushrooms, sautéed potatoes, black-and-white pudding and toast, served with orange juice and tea or coffee, all for €14.00.

Making the place feel more authentic is the rugby game showing on the telly and the number of fans who are there just to watch and enjoy a pint. All around the pub are nooks and crannies where friends can find their own cosy corner, and the room at the back features an open fireplace. There's a spacious outdoor courtyard as well, which adjoins to Foley's hotel.

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



© www.jenniferjansons.com

► Recolettenlei 10, Ghent; 09.225.90.85

🕒 Pub open daily from 11.00 until late; food available daily 12.00-15.00 & 18.00-22.30

€ Mains: €10-€24

ⓘ Cosy Irish restaurant that takes the term "pub grub" to a whole new level

## CAFÉ SPOTLIGHT

## De Post

Groenplaats 26, Antwerp

In the end, it all boils down to the right boxes being ticked at the right time. Our party never set out to spend the evening "down the pub", and the fact that we settled for De Post is down to chance – or, once again, to meeting our criteria.

A band, who shall remain nameless but whom I have seen in concert too many times for my own good, had just played a gig in a nearby theatre. Their set could be best described as shambolic. Oh and, at 35 minutes, a tad short. A makeshift group of us, chewing the fat on the pavement outside the building following this "interesting" performance, decided to hit the town, seeing as we had driven from Brussels and Hasselt, and it was a touch early to go home.

We decided we should go to Groenplaats because it's rather pleasant, but also because of the wide array of bars to choose from. We were right, but only to a degree. The choice is there... so long as you want to eat.

We had almost given up hope when a young waiter from De Post – a place that also serves food – invited us to sit outside (the weather was glorious for a late March evening), and within two minutes he was happily taking our "strictly drinks" orders. Having overheard an English accent, he even enquired about football allegiances. (I hope he did look up Wycombe Wanderers as promised.)

Now this is the bit where I would normally reel off the unique



selling points of the place: a jaw-dropping selection of fine spirits, the best jazz pianist in Belgium, an international pub quiz... but, I'm sorry, I can't help you. Maybe De Post does have all of the above, who knows? All we wanted was a comfortable place, preferably outside, where we could get cold beers fast,

while we conducted our post-gig post-mortem. And that's exactly what we got. And we were on Groenplaats, like we wanted. And the toilets were impeccably clean. Result. As for my favourite band, well, there's always next time.

PM Doutreligne

## The last word...

## Table manners

"It's parents' job to teach their children about taste. You have to offer them a wide range of flavours, and you do that by letting them eat with you."

Antwerp chef Fatima Marzouki supports Antonio Carluccio's campaign to do away with children's meals in restaurants

## Song and dance

"Despite an immersion course, my English is still not perfect. An Australian coach taught me the language in one week specifically for the Song Festival. Luckily, they always ask the same questions."

Iris from Morkhoven prepares for Eurovision

## Problem solved

"Just about all the pieces in my collection were packed up and stored in my house, for lack of space. There's no point to that. I either had to stop collecting or find a solution." Supermarket magnate Hugo Voeten opened a private museum last week in Herentals ([www.artcenter.hugovoetens.be](http://www.artcenter.hugovoetens.be))

## Flavour philosophy

"Twenty years ago we went into South Korea, and now the Lotus speculoos is the most imported biscuit. Israel is the same. We have a product that's universally appreciated. We never gave in to pressure to adapt to different tastes." Karel Boone, founder of Lotus bakeries, is stepping down after 42 years

NEXT WEEK  
IN FLANDERS TODAY

## Cover story

It appears that it's not just Starbucks. Coffee shops are busting out all over Flanders and Brussels, with special brews, fancy desserts and packaged beans beckoning to be taken home. We talk to some of the owners of these start-ups and let you know where the best coffee awaits

## Science

Who's cleaning up that next big oil spill? Next month, Bruges hosts a major international conference on cleantech, where industries will gather to compare and share their developments on improving sustainability across a huge range of industries

## Living

Echt waar? Wabliet? These are not just among the first phrases one learns in Dutch class, they are also the titles of newspapers written especially for Dutch learners. We talk to the editors of these fantastic little publications