

## Sustain me

Two Flemish cities turn all that green talk into action

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## Noble confection

Sugar-free chocolate maker Cavalier makes the switch to stevia

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## Too cool

The man who opened Brussels' first Ethiopian restaurant is back

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# House of new life



**Student midwives help underprivileged women through a novel new concept in training and medical services in Antwerp**

Andy Furniere

Novo Vida means "new life", so it's an apt name for a unique birth house in Antwerp, where midwifery students from the Artesis University College learn to counsel pregnant women and new parents. With an experienced teacher by their side and in a hospitable atmosphere, the students give free advice to principally low-income families and persons of foreign origin.

**B**ecause new life on the way can be a cause of worry as well as a source of joy, birth houses provide future or new parents with extra guidance. Novo Vida, located right next to the Artesis campus in the Merksem district of Antwerp, offers advice and services to families during a pregnancy, as well as in the first weeks after the baby is born, with, for example, activities such as baby massages and breastfeeding. What makes Novo Vida special is that it is entirely run by midwifery students and their lecturers. Furthermore, the advice is provided free of charge, with the aim of assisting the underprivileged.

"Our primary goal is to provide students with more practical experience before they have to work independently in the demanding environment of a hospital or independent practice during their final internship in the third year," explains Inge Meyvis, lecturer at Artesis and project leader of Novo Vida. "Aided by their teachers, they learn how to lead a consultation with a pregnant woman or with recent parents."

### Better than role-playing

A feasibility study carried out in the neighbourhood of the college showed that the birth house should focus on reaching underprivileged families and those of foreign origin. "In a hospital or independent practice, doctors often don't have the time to explain everything in detail," says Meyvis. "Sometimes people have a hard time understanding the information and medical terms, especially if they haven't mastered the Dutch language completely."

At Novo Vida, patients receive a personal consultation of up to two hours in a more intimate atmosphere that puts them at ease. They are also helped with practical issues such as filling in administrative papers, though a collaboration with social nurses and interpreters. "The project creates a win-win situation," says Meyvis. "The students learn how to counsel people of all social and cultural backgrounds. It's a different situation than a role-playing exercise in class."

### Putting the theory to the test

Cora de Mik, 26, is in her second year of studies; she counselled the first patient at Novo Vida. "It was a challenge to thoroughly answer her questions about, for example, labour pains, by

## FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



© Rob Stevens / KUL

## Conny Aerts

In a week that saw the Alzheimer's researcher Christine Van Broeckhoven win a top international scientific award (see p7), another Flemish scientist, Conny Aerts, was similarly being feted. Aerts won the prestigious Francqui Prize, awarded annually in recognition of the achievements of a Belgian scholar or scientist under the age of 50.

Professor Aerts works at the University of Leuven and spends her professional life, as Oscar Wilde said, looking at the stars. In particular the vibrations of stars, or their oscillations, which provides information on the construction of the star and how its composition evolves over time. It also allows the team she leads to determine the age of any given star, which are many thousands of years older now than when the light we are seeing left them.

Aerts was born in Brasschaat, Antwerp province, in 1966 and even as a child showed an interest in astronomy. She studied in Antwerp, moving to Leuven to do a doctorate, which led her to take

part in missions to see telescopes in Provence and Chile. Since then she has worked closely with the European Space Agency on data from "variable stars" – some of whose oscillations take a period of days – as well as chairing the working group of the International Astronomical Union. As well as a professor at Leuven, she is also an honorary fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society in the UK and a member of the Royal Flemish Academy of Arts and Sciences. The Francqui Prize, set up in 1933, is worth €250,000 and will officially be handed over on 13 June. Professor Aerts will then join the esteemed ranks of Francqui Prize winners such as Big Bang thinker Georges Lemaitre, Nobel laureates Ilya Prigogine and Christian De Duve and federal minister Paul Magnette (a political scientist). The last time a woman won the prize was in 2004, when it went to anthropologist Marie-Claire Foblets, also of the University of Leuven. The time before that was never.

## News in brief

The VRT, *De Standaard* and *De Tijd* have been awarded this year's **Belfius Prizes for the Dutch-language press**. TV journalist Phara De Aguirre won for a report on Bart Verbeeck, a young man undergoing palliative care. Radio journalist Jens Franssen also won for his reports on the Arab uprisings. *De Standaard* and *De Tijd* won for articles on the government formation and on financial affairs, respectively. The Belfius Prizes, formerly the Dexia Prizes, are awarded annually to French-, German- and Dutch-speaking media.

The Flemish government has produced a 40-point plan for **improving media savvy**. The paper, produced jointly by education minister Pascal Smet and innovation minister Ingrid Lieten, aims to make people more comfortable with new media and provoke debate about matters such as privacy and the use of social networks. "Being media savvy doesn't stop at knowing how to use a computer," Lieten said. "You also have to know how to deal with the flood of information and how to determine how much of that information is reliable."

Brussels Airport has no plans to install the **controversial body scanners** that check boarding passengers, the airport management company said. But the airport does plan to install new scanners to check baggage for suspected explosive liquids, which would allow the current limits on carrying liquids on board aircraft to be dropped.

A record 50,000 people turned out last weekend for the annual **Belgian Pride parade and festival**, this year under the shadow of the country's first reported gay hate crime murder in Liège. The parade through Brussels began

with a minute's silence in memory of 32-year-old Ihsane Jarfi, followed by a loud collective cry of protest at the persistence of harassment and violence against gays. The march this year took place under the slogan "Visible Citizens. I want to be! ... Do you?" and for the first time featured participation by the association for LGBT police officers RainbowCops, as well as African Pride, which supports gays from countries where it is still considered a criminal offence. Belgian prime minister Elio Di Rupo also attended the festivities.

Scott Manyo, the Cameroon-born scout leader **threatened with repatriation**, has been given leave to remain in Belgium to complete his studies, following a campaign and widespread public support for his cause. Manyo, 20, arrived in Belgium four years ago as an unaccompanied minor and now lives with foster parents in Boortmeerbeek, Flemish Brabant, while attending a technical school in Mechelen. His application for asylum has been rejected, but supporters said he would make a new application while remaining under a temporary permit.

Labour inspectors have discovered **30 security failures at the Justice Palace** in Brussels, including the lack of an emergency plan and no fire intervention team. Interior minister Annemie Turtelboom promised in February that security at the Justice Palace would be improved following a number of incidents. From next month, only one entrance to the palace will remain, the minister said.

Flemish housing minister Freya Van den Bossche said that **renovations of social housing** have not been brought to a standstill because of lack of funds, as claimed last week by the Union of Flemish Housing Associations. The government is

faced with twice as many appeals for renovations this year, but Van den Bossche promised the most urgent cases would be dealt with, while less urgent cases would be delayed. More than 70,000 people are currently on a waiting list for housing.

Antwerp city council has announced the creation of **400 new pre-school places** in six temporary locations to tackle the city's chronic shortage of space for the under-sixes. Antwerp still needs to find 400 more places for pre-schoolers.

The Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren has **postponed closure for renovations** from the planned date in July to the end of the year. The renovations, by architect Stephane Beel, who also designed the M Museum in Leuven, will last until May 2015 and cost €66.5 million.

Another **six streets around the Grote Markt** in Brussels were last week closed to traffic, as part of the city's plan to make the area car-free. The six streets are situated between the square and Lombardstraat.

A Turnhout **businessman found beaten to death** beside a motorway in St Petersburg may have been trying to sell three stolen paintings by Jan Brueghel the Elder. Jef Brijs, 56, went missing on 6 April after taking a flight from Frankfurt to St Petersburg, where he was found dead three weeks later.

The **Flanders Red Cross** sold more than half a million stickers in this year's fundraiser, for a total income of €2.63 million. The money raised will help finance the activities of 254 local branches across Flanders.

## FLANDERS TODAY

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## OFFSIDE

## The new oldies

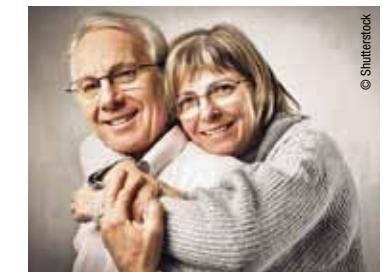
Picture a grandmother or a grandfather, and you're probably imagining a venerable senior citizen, silvery locks, brown spots on the back of the hands. They probably adore their grandchildren (as long as they're not too boisterous), be bamboozled by modern inventions like the smartphone, and they think a tablet is something you take when you get up in the morning. Apparently, not a bit. Society is becoming greyer, and, in response, the older generation is colouring its hair – if not literally, then figuratively. Grandparents have never been younger, in their heads and in their hearts, and if your joints are starting to seize up, well then get some new ones. They're also, we learn this week, more and more choosing to be called something other than one of the favourite names for

grandparents in Flanders, such as *oma* and *opa*, *amoe/apoe*, *mimi/toefke* or *bomma/bompa*. Popular singer Willy Somers became a grandfather last week at 59 and insisted his new granddaughter address him (when she gets round to it) as "pappie".

That, according to Ludo Hugaerts, editor of *Plus* magazine, is in line with current trends. Not only do younger grandparents not want to be saddled with old-fashioned names, the increase in the number of non-nuclear families has created a whole new set of relationships that demand a new vocabulary. How do your kids, for instance, refer to your second wife's father?

"From our readers, we know that *oma* and *opa* are still in use," Hugaerts said. "But often with something added, like a first name or the place where they

Alan Hope



© Shutterstock

live. Fantasy names are also in: *bimpapa*, *apo*, *baba...* As long as it's not *bomma* or *bompa*."

To help out youthful grandparents in this situation, Offside has researched some colourful alternatives for grandma and grandpa, culled from the world's languages: *nainai/yeye* (Mandarin); *nain/taid* (North Wales); *kuka/latu* (Aleut Eskimo); *baba/dyado* (Bulgaria); and of course *babushka/dedushka* (Russian). You're welcome.

# House of new Life

## Working with low-income and immigrant women helps students shape future professional attitudes

► continued from page 1

myself," she admits, "but I felt confident because a teacher was always present in the background, ready to intervene. Now that I was able to put the theory to the test and receive feedback from the lecturers, I feel more prepared to help patients and ease their anxieties."

Also a second-year student, Jolien Vets confirms that the practical experience provides added value to the educational programme. "We can take the time to get to know the person and are able to explain everything extensively," says the 19-year-old. "Not just about medical issues, which they generally get from a gynaecologist, but also tips on their diet – like resisting the urge to eat double portions but to eat a variety of foods instead."

### A modern view

Although she is not part of Novo Vida's target group, new mother Eva Zobell testifies that the students helped her considerably. Being 33 years old, she felt more comfortable talking to the young future midwives than to the more experienced, but often old-fashioned, midwives at the maternity wards of the hospital.

"Although they were very

doctors and gynaecologists." As little Wiljan, now just over two months old, is her first child, Zobell was struggling with uncertainties that were sometimes actually made worse in the maternity wards. "The midwives there made me feel like a bad mother because I often gave Wiljan a bottle instead of breastfeeding him," says Zobell. "They also told me something was wrong because Wiljan would only drink 10 minutes instead of the 'normal' 20 minutes."

At Novo Vida, she was assured that combining breastfeeding with bottle feeding is perfectly healthy. She also learned that it was normal that Wiljan drank less than usual because he was born a few weeks early and his stomach had not grown enough to deal with larger quantities of milk.

"The hospital midwives work by the book because they don't have time to consider the uniqueness of each child," says Zobell. "Although I could always ask questions, sometimes I really felt like a patient number in a child factory."

In the future, Zobell would like to follow a course in baby massage at Novo Vida. "I knew this kind of



© photos: Filip Van Rue

ask advice."

### Treat every patient the same

To come into contact with the people who need assistance the most, Novo Vida has established links with a network of social organisations helping low-income people and those of foreign origin. One of them is Doctors of the World, which runs a Centre for Reception, Care and Orientation (Cozo) in Antwerp offering free consultations to people who have difficulties finding the proper care. These are often people without legal residence permits, asylum seekers and Europeans without health insurance.

"Our goal is to inform patients about their rights and obligations and to make sure they have access to health care," explains Kathleen Debruyne,

coordinator of Cozo Antwerp. "For their immediate care needs, we refer them to volunteer doctors."

Every week, at least one pregnant woman or new parent walks into Cozo to ask for advice. "So the founding of Novo Vida is more than welcome," says Debruyne. "Especially their prenatal guidance is vital: Preventing problems is always better – and cheaper – than having to perform operations such as caesareans."

Debruyne also finds it extremely valuable that students at Novo Vida learn to treat people of all social classes, including those living in Flanders illegally. "They are often portrayed in the media as people who come to take advantage of our social system," she says. "By getting to know them and their reasons for migrating, students learn that they are just people who want to make

sure their child is healthy. That will ensure that, later in their careers, the students will treat every patient the same."

### Future plans

Doctors of the World is hoping Novo Vida can in the future expand its activities to lab research so that patients can have their blood tested at the centre. Blood analysis is essential to tracing possible conditions that can be harmful to the child; treatment before the birth can limit or prevent the consequences. "We often pay for these tests, which are too expensive for many underprivileged people. But our budget is limited as well," explains Debruyne.

Novo Vida coordinator Meyvis agrees on the importance of blood tests. "But for the moment, we cannot provide our own lab research since we are an education project and offer the consultations for free." She affirms, however, that the team is planning to negotiate soon with a lab in the area. "Another design for the future is to hire a self-employed midwife half-time so that the blood tests can partly be paid back by the Belgian medical insurance agency Riziv," she says. "But because of financial limits, we can only refer people to cooperating doctors for the time being."

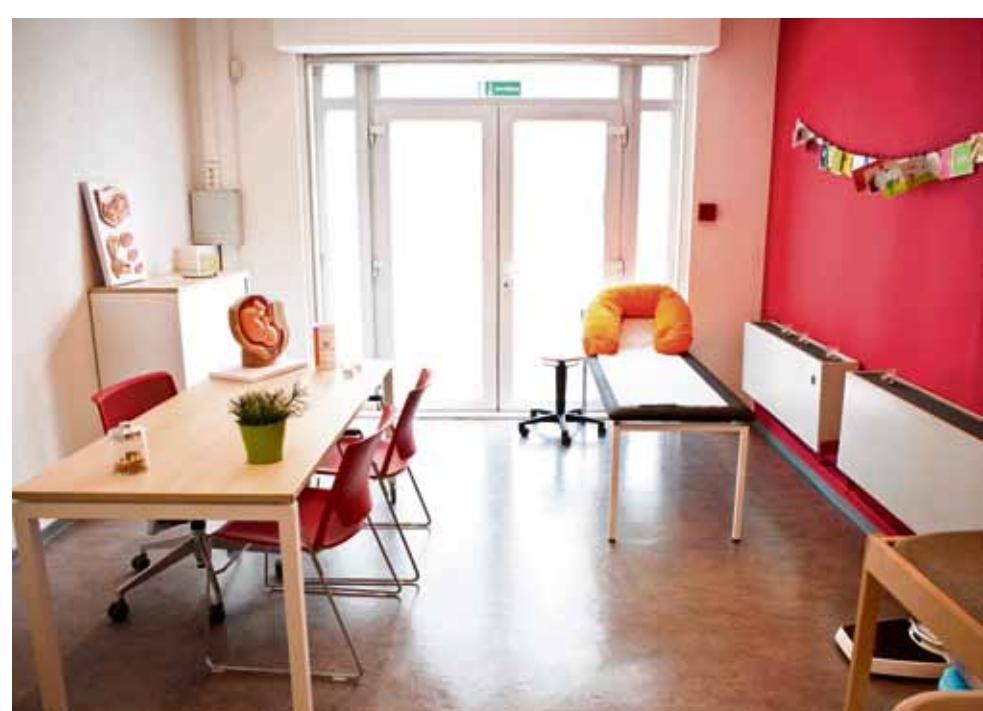
Novo Vida has other ambitious plans. The university college hopes to add an extra dimension to the centre with a buddy project. The midwifery students would guide the pregnant women more continually through weekly appointments. The inspiration for this project comes from a similar coaching initiative of the Artevelde University College of Ghent, with which the Artesis University College is collaborating.

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

**"Although the hospital midwives were professional, I could speak more openly to the students because our worlds are more similar"**

professional and friendly, I could speak more openly to the students because our worlds are more similar," Zobell relates. "The consultation room was also decorated cosily and colourfully, which felt like a breath of fresh air compared to the sterile offices of

activity existed but had no idea where I could learn it," she says. "It's also nice to be certain that there is always a place where you can knock on the door if something is troubling you. I imagine that, especially for underprivileged people, this kind of atmosphere encourages people to



Many women appreciate the cosiness of Novo Vida compared to a hospital or clinic



# Dexia discharge causes controversy

## Absolution for directors granted, but not by Flanders

Alan Hope

The latest issue in the collapse of the Dexia Group last week was the discharge by shareholders of the actions of the members of the Dexia board for 2011. An agenda item at the Annual General Meeting that is normally routine, the move allows shareholders to waive any chance of legal action against directors for decisions taken in the previous year. A number of shareholders were asking for the discharge to be refused. Dexia's financial troubles have left Belgian taxpayers with a huge burden from the €3 billion government bailout of 2008-2009 (and state guarantee of up to €90 billion), and it continues to lose money - €11.6 billion last year. And the government is facing the possibility of a new injection of capital being required to prevent the group from going bankrupt altogether.

In the years since the collapse of Dexia, a discharge has been granted automatically. Therefore, refusal of a

discharge in the financial year 2011 is more a symbolic gesture than anything legal. Nevertheless, the federal government abstained, unable to grant the request and reluctant to anger the French government by refusing it. The governments of Brussels and of Wallonia, as major shareholders of the group, went along with that view. The government of Flanders bucked the trend and voted against the discharge, which passed nonetheless. "Now they know in France that there are certain things here we cannot accept," commented Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters later. The decision to stand up for a largely symbolic gesture had the effect of holding together Peeters' government, with N-VA strongly opposed to any discharge. Disagreement from within Peeters' own party CD&V - between Peeters and former prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene and federal finance minister

Steven Vanackere - was apparently smoothed over at the weekend. For the apparent insult of the federal government abstaining on the discharge vote, Paris last week cancelled a board meeting at which

the new Dexia CEO, Fleming Karel De Boeck, was to have been officially ratified. The French were "not amused" Vanackere said. "The train that should have left the station has now been delayed."



The French were "not amused", said Steven Vanackere (left) after Kris Peeters (middle) voted against the Dexia discharge for 2011

## Immigration kit delivered to Morocco

Flemish minister of integration, Geert Bourgeois, was in Casablanca last week to help distribute a "starters kit" called Migrating to Flanders to the Moroccan government. The package contains a brochure intended to give migrants an idea of life in Flanders, as well as a short film that features testimonies from a number of recent immigrants of different nationalities about how they experienced their move here.

The package, Bourgeois said, "is intended for people who already have

permission to migrate to Flanders. Residence applicants sometimes have false expectations. A realistic picture helps them to understand what a major step they're taking." Critics alleged that the picture painted of Flanders - that it rains a lot, that the Flemish don't like you to drop in on them unannounced, that Flemish people like it quiet after 22.00 - is intended to discourage potential migrants. Spokesperson Peter Buysrogge of minister Bourgeois' cabinet said that the advice given is

based on the experience of recent migrants and what they themselves found most important. Fouad Ahidar, a Flemish socialist member of the Brussels parliament, said that the brochure "insults an entire population group," with references to the law in Flanders having priority over religion and that violence against others - including wives and children - is illegal. His colleague Elke Roex described the portrait given of Flanders, meanwhile, as "stereotyped".

"This package was put together after discussion with Moroccans and on the basis of European advice and scientific research," Bourgeois said. "Eighty percent of the people who come to Flanders don't know it, and we wanted to show them what we're about, with a few specific examples." A version of the brochure aimed at immigrants from Turkey and Russia is in preparation. The video from the starters DVD and a Dutch-English version of the brochure can be found at [www.migreren.inburgering.be](http://www.migreren.inburgering.be).

## Peace Prize winner visits minister-president

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters last week received a visit from Nobel Peace Prize-winner Leymah Gwobee (pictured), who fought for the safety of women during the second civil war in her homeland, Liberia. In large part because of the peace movement that grew out of her struggle, the war came to an end in 2003.

Gwobee was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last year. During their talks, Peeters issued an invitation for Gwobee to attend the international peace symposium organised for November 2013 in the run-up to Flanders' commemoration of the First World War. Myanmar political leader Aung San Suu Kyi has also been invited, and both FW de Klerk and Archbishop Desmond Tutu have agreed to attend.



## New look for secondary schools

Education minister Pascal Smet has received an important boost for his plan for reforming the structure of secondary schools in Flanders. Last week in Ghent, the Catholic education organisation VSKO, which oversees the largest group of schools in Flanders, produced their own vision for the future of secondary education, which concur with Smet's plans in several important ways. Primary among them is the dismantling of the hierarchical structure of Flemish secondary education. Children leaving primary school now choose between general academic education, technical education, professional education and, to a far lesser extent, arts-based education. There is a general view that the first three of those represent a hierarchy, with students who experience problems in one being able to "drop

down" to the next level. The new plan would do away with that "cascade effect" by making all secondary students follow the same courses in the first two years, up to the age of about 14. Only then would career-oriented decisions be made, with the transition from academic subjects to others being more horizontal than vertical. Some experts have criticised the plans as hasty and feel that the two-year period will simply cause some students to delay making a decision that is right for them. The two-year period will also do nothing, critics say, to combat the persistent problem of students growing bored at their own lack of performance and stop turning up. Smet is now considering the VSKO's ideas, with a view to producing his final proposals later.

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES

**140,000**

children in Flanders are living below the poverty line, according to figures compiled by researchers at the University of Antwerp. Nearly 9% of newborns are born into a family with an income below the poverty level

**1,133**

cases of euthanasia carried out in Belgium in 2011, an increase of 19% on the previous year. More than four out of five demands were filed in Dutch from Flanders and Brussels

**€80 million**

in the coffers of the political parties in Flanders - €13 million more than last year, according to *De Tijd* newspaper. €37 million came from state subsidy

**76%**

of fourth-year secondary students in Flemish schools attained the necessary grades in mathematics, according to a survey of 3,873 students

**493**

complaints received last year by the ombudsman for the public transport authority MIVB in Brussels, 17% fewer than in 2010

## FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

### In search of a story

There are not that many options for a party that sees its popularity drop. One of them is to sit it out - a cure European Council president Herman Van Rompuy has always believed in. Most of the time, though, parties feel the need to reinvent themselves, as Open VLD attempted at a congress last weekend.

Open VLD was the leading party in Flanders from 1999 to 2007. Prime minister Guy Verhofstadt was the Bart De Wever of his time: untouchably popular. Under his leadership, the liberals took over the number one position from the Christian-democrats, who were compared to a melting ice floe: doomed to disappear. These days, Open VLD itself is confronted with potential melt-down.

This is partly due to a lack of credibility. Being in government for too long inevitably erodes parties' perceived integrity. For this reason, the leading trio Verhofstadt, Karel De Gucht and Patrick Dewael were politely but firmly pushed out to make space for a younger generation. Alexander De Croo and Vincent Van Quickenborne have yet to gain the public's confidence, however. The fact that they caused the fall of the Leterme government - and thus the long political crisis that followed - did not help in that respect.

The banking crisis has also worn out people's belief in the workings of the free market - the crux of the liberal ideology. Leading liberals such as Verhofstadt, who sounds almost leftist of late, have admitted that they were wrong in supposing the free market would be self-regulating.

Open VLD also finds itself in an uncomfortable position: in a federal government under a socialist prime minister, whom they would normally contest, with the largest opposition party N-VA propagating many of the recipes liberals have always defended. The track record of the federal government members Van Quickenborne, Annemie Turtelboom and Maggie De Block may not be bad, but their party's identity crisis is still looming.

In the words of European commissioner De Gucht, never one to balm any wounds, Open VLD lacks a "story". The first in a series of congresses held last weekend in Ghent resulted in a new definition of "freedom", with elements such as responsibility and durability. This should lead the way out of the "cynicism and negativism" that prevail. Whether that will suffice for the story to have a happy ending remains to be seen. Or is that too cynical?

# Storytelling

## An Islamic cultural centre is recording 50 years of immigration through the stories of everyday folk

Toon Lambrechts

The idea of heritage has undergone a major evolution in recent decades. Where it was once synonymous with monuments and high art, now there is as much attention paid to everyday practices and the traditions of average citizens. Heritage is not merely something from yesterday; it is also about living traditions today.

"First-generation" Muslim migrants have been in Flanders for about 50 years. Their stories of migration – the traditions they brought with them and the evolution of those traditions – form part of local heritage as well. But they are stories for which time is running out; the first immigrants who settled in Flanders have reached a respectable age.

Stories of migration have received a lot of attention of late in the heritage sector, such as the MAS and Red Star Line museums in Antwerp and several projects in the Limburg mining region. "There are indeed a lot of heritage projects on migration," says Najet Boulafdal. "But of course their focus is on migration. The way Islam has been practised is usually only indirectly addressed." Boulafdal works for Mana, the expertise centre for Islamic culture in Flanders. She coordinates the project Oh My God! (OMG!), which specifically focuses on the experience of traditions in Muslim communities in Flanders. "It is the first project of its kind," she says. "Islamic heritage remains a confusing concept. One thinks immediately of the religious side of it, but what matters to us is how the various Islamic communities



The OMG! project is recording the experiences and traditions of early Muslim immigrants to Flanders

in Flanders live their traditions in everyday life."

Many traditional Christian holidays, for example, such as Easter and Christmas, have a Christian basis but are celebrated as family events. The practices around these holidays often differ from the purely religious, and it's the same within the Muslim community. "If we look at the questions we get from the public, we notice that there is a need for information on how these events are experienced," says Boulafdal.

### Interviewing family

The aim of OMG! is to record how Muslims live their traditions in Flanders. Mana is looking for

volunteers in Ghent, Antwerp and Genk. The volunteers are given a number of workshops explaining how to interview people and collect images, after which they are ready to question their own relatives.

"The material that results from the project is classified along two timelines," explains Boulafdal. "A first timeline is the Islamic year. There are 11 annual Muslim holidays. The testimonies of how people now celebrate these events and how things used to be are inserted in that timeline. In addition, there is the lifeline with several important moments in life such as birth, marriage and the like." The results will be included

in an online database, which will be available by this autumn.

Boulafdal emphasises that the Muslim community in Flanders is very diverse. "There are people living here from almost all Muslim countries. The way Chechens celebrate their festivals is different from how the Turkish community celebrates, for instance. But there are also differences between generations. This diversity is often overlooked."

### Time is running out

The timing of Oh My God! is not accidental. The first generation of migrants who arrived here in the 1960s is dwindling, and time is running out to preserve their

stories. "These people often have very interesting stories to tell," says Boulafdal. "Take, for example, halal meat. Now it's no problem to find meat that was slaughtered according to the religious rules, but for the first generation that was not the case. In Antwerp, they solved this by buying meat at the Jewish butchers. In the experience of faith and traditions there has been a whole evolution during those 50 years. That evolution we will definitely survey in the project."

Mana's priority for OMG! is to collect stories, but it doesn't stop with intangible heritage. The volunteers will also take photographs of objects related to the experience of migration and tradition. These will also be stored in the database.

The OMG! campaign poster features a picture of a cassette tape. "Because many people in the homeland were illiterate, they made cassettes for each other," explains Boulafdal. "These cassettes went around the family. In many older immigrant families, there is a box of these cassettes somewhere in the attic."

Finding volunteers isn't a problem, says Boulafdal, though it is a commitment that requires some effort. More challenging is getting people to talk about their pasts. "Many people find it strange that we are interested in their story. For them, it is about everyday experience, nothing special. But with a little effort, people realise that their stories are valuable."

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

# Old-school effort

## Da Vinci international school raises money for Myanmar

Alan Hope

As minister-president Kris Peeters visited Myanmar in March and met leading political figure Aung San Suu Kyi, the Da Vinci international school in Antwerp was already busy with a fundraising effort for the Aye Yeiktha Monastery School in the former capital Yangon.

A short two months later, they were able to hand over a cheque for €10,000 to the Support Fund Myanmar. The school received a visit on 7 May from the Myanmar ambassador to the EU, U Thant Kyaw, in recognition of their contribution.

"The school has always tried to make the children aware of the privileged situation in which they live," explains Peter Martin, a marketing consultant and spokesperson for the project, part of its Reach Out series of activities. "Most of them come from fairly wealthy families, and it's important to make them aware of children who are less fortunate."

Martin is a member of the Antwerp branch of the Rotary Club, as is Ilse De Souter, who founded the Da Vinci school in 1997 and has been head teacher ever since. "One of my fellow Rotarians had spoken many times about projects she is involved with in Myanmar," says De Souter. "Initially, the project started with doctors donating their time to perform operations in Myanmar. However, they also started building schools and

asked if I would be interested in helping them." She went to Myanmar, met the monks, and "found the school was very well run and the funds they received well accounted for," Martin said. That's when she decided to throw the weight of her children's enthusiasm behind a school project.

"The Myanmar project is one of several the school has been involved in," Martin says. "They also work with Moeders voor Moeders, a project for single mothers in Antwerp, and also with Fedasil, the federal agency for asylum-seekers. Most of the children come from overseas, so it's fitting for them to do something for less fortunate foreigners."

Personalising the fundraising has informed most of their activities. "They organised a sponsored walk for Myanmar, and when it got a bit hard for some of the younger pupils, Ilse pointed out that there are children in Myanmar who have to walk further than that every day just to go to school."

The money collected will go toward building a roof and a first-floor level on the Aye Yeiktha school, so that more than 200 children will now have indoor classrooms.

► [www.da-vinci.be](http://www.da-vinci.be)



THE WEEK  
IN BUSINESS

## Autos

## ► Ford

The Ford plant in Genk has assembled its 14th million car since it was built 48 years ago in the period referred to as the "Golden Sixties" of American investments in Belgium. The latest Mondeo Clipper vehicle bears little resemblance to the first Taunus of 1964.

## Bakery

## ► Panos

Flemish bakery products distributor Panos, operator of some 220 outlets in city centres, train stations and motorways, has signed a partnership agreement with Press Shop to open "one minute" convenience stores. The first outlet has opened near the European Commission in Brussels.

## Cards

## ► Carta Mundi

Turnhout-based Carta Mundi, the world-leading producer of playing cards, is building a production unit in India in partnership with the local Parsons Games and Sports to meet fast-growing demand in Asia.

## Energy

## ► Fluxys

Gas transport and pipeline operator Fluxys is bidding to acquire the German Open Grid Europe gas pipeline network in partnership with the US Global Infrastructure Partners investment fund. The deal, valued at some €3 billion by its present owner E.ON, will allow Fluxys to link its west and south European gas operations to supplies from Russia.

## Food

## ► CSM

The Dutch CSM bakery supplies and additives group is selling its operations in Aartselaar and Merksem. The move is part of the company's restructuring programme and impacts some 250 workers locally.

## Pharmaceuticals

## ► Pfizer

The US-based pharmaceutical products group Pfizer is expected to announce a €100 million investment in its Puurs facility to build additional production capacity. The move is expected to create up to 100 new jobs.

## Transport

## ► DHL

Express delivery and transport group DHL is investing €27 million in a distribution and sorting centre at Brussels Airport. The company, which in 2007 had announced the transfer of its activities to Leipzig airport because of air traffic constraints, has maintained the bulk of its operations locally to service its west Europe customers.

# Power cuts threatened by 2014

## Closure of nuclear power plants could lead to blackouts, says energy ministry

Alan Hope

Electricity consumers in Belgium can expect power cuts caused by a shortage of generation capacity, possibly next year but certainly by 2014, a report produced by the energy ministry has warned.

The warning was immediately seen as an argument for reviewing the closure of three nuclear power stations, due to take place in 2015 – two smaller reactors in Doel, East Flanders (pictured), and one larger one in Tihange in Wallonia. In 2014, three coal- and gas-fired generation plants will close, putting more pressure on the grid.

The blackouts would be more likely to happen in the winter, when consumption was at its highest. The report takes no account of alternative energy sources, as production cannot be stockpiled for times of high demand. Questions were put to federal energy minister Melchior Wathelet concerning a possible change to the 2003 law that



set out the timetable for closure of the nuclear plants. The government would fulfil its promise, made in the accords setting up the new administration, to produce a proposal by 21 July to guarantee supply, said Wathelet. Speaking on the VRT programme *De zevende dag*, Wathelet said the

problem was that the power from the nuclear plants would have to be replaced either with new production capacity or by imports. Belgium has, for almost a year, imported more energy than it produces, and there is a question whether that can be increased and at what cost. Similarly, if Belgium is

to replace old production capacity with new, what form should that generation take?

Part of the answer, according to Jo Libeer, chairman of the Flemish chamber of commerce Voka, is the lack of a predictable, transparent and investor-friendly legal framework surrounding the rules on permits in Belgium. "The problem is not so much the closure of the nuclear plants, but the fact that there's too little investment in conventional generation in this country," he said.

The climate of uncertainty, together with a poor public image of energy companies, "largely explain the reluctance to invest in coal- and gas-fired plants," continued Libeer. "But that is just the investment we need, in convention and in flexible installations such as gas and biomass if we are to avoid power cuts in the future."

# NEO complex gets green light

The city of Brussels last week gave the green light to the controversial NEO project, which will give a new look to the entire Heizel plateau in the north of the city. The project would include a conference centre, a hotel and housing, as well as a 70,000 square-metre shopping centre.

Opponents of the scheme employ the same arguments as those who oppose the planned Uplace development in Machelen, not far from Heizel: a huge shopping centre will increase congestion on roads around Brussels and take trade away from more commercial areas in city centres.

Uplace has been opposed on these grounds by 16 towns from Vilvoorde to Leuven and as far as Tienen. Unizo, the organisation that represents the self-

employed, has promised to file a legal appeal if the Uplace project is allowed to go ahead by Joke Schauvliege, the Flemish environment minister.

NEO can expect to meet with the same sort of opposition from businesses and their representatives, but the project has the full backing of Brussels mayor Freddy Thielemans' socialists, as well as the support of French-speaking green party Ecolo. Last week the council announced it was inviting tenders for two parts of the package: residential and shopping spaces, and a conference centre for 5,000 visitors plus a 250-room hotel.

This week, the public procedure started for the granting of planning and environmental permits. The process is expected to take several months.



One of the possible outcomes of the NEO project is the demolition of the King Boudewijn Stadium

## Flemish parliament takes a close look at benefits

The salaries of members of the Flemish parliament are not exceptionally high in comparison to other elected representatives or equivalents in the private sector, but their pension rights are extremely generous, according to a report by consultants Ernst & Young, commissioned by the parliament itself.

Flemish MPs earn just over €7,000 a month in gross salary. Pay increases if a member is chair of a committee or of a parliamentary party fraction. Members of the parliament's management bureau make just under €10,300, while the speaker, Jan Peumans of N-VA (pictured), officially earns just under €18,300 a month before deductions. Peumans chose last year to hand back €4,000 of that every month to bring his salary to the same level as Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters.

Members are entitled, however, to generous pension rights, being eligible for a pension of 75% of the last-year salary after 20 years of service, regardless of age. Federal members until recently had the same rights, before the minimum was raised to 36 years. One party leader called the 20-year entitlement "untenable" in times when everyone else is being asked to work longer. Peumans was due this week to sit down with representatives of all parties to discuss the report, which compared the Flemish parliament to its counterparts in France, Germany, Finland, the Netherlands, Catalonia and Scotland, as well as the European Parliament. Expense allowances and the sum

paid when a member leaves or is not re-elected – one full year's salary for every five years served – are also considered to be high.

The government has already decided the latter benefit will now be halved. Previously, the maximum paid out was the equivalent of four years' salary; that will now be cut back to two years. Members who leave parliament of their own accord will not be eligible for any payout.



## Young entrepreneurs turn Branson's head

"If you need money, let me know." Words that any business might dream of hearing, especially a young start-up. And especially if the words are being spoken by none other than Richard Branson, self-made billionaire and someone with a nose for a good business idea.

Branson was in Antwerp earlier this month to attend an event for the diamond industry and took the opportunity to listen to pitches from two young start-ups. Chocolate Queen's idea was to fuse two of Flanders' major attractions and to create beer pralines. "It was wonderful," commented the two owners later. "We got a lot of positive comments, and people came up and handed us their cards."

Kristof Mertens of Porphyrio won a competition backed by Microsoft with his idea for using cloud computing to allow farmers to keep track of their herds. Microsoft called it "innovative and ambitious", and Branson was just as impressed. The purpose of the pitch was not to raise money, but the English magnate left that door open all the same. "You couldn't ask for a better response," Mertens said.

# Sustainable cities

## Ghent and Diepenbeek are providing lessons for a green future

Andy Furniere

At last week's sustainability conference i-SUP 2012 in Bruges, organised by the Flemish Institute for Technological Research (VITO), international and Flemish experts presented their projects for an eco-friendly transformation of our society. Among the projects presented to 500 international scientists and eco-innovators were two initiatives from Flemish cities Ghent and Diepenbeek.

For the last five years, a truly green neighbourhood called Dorphei IV has been flourishing in the municipality Diepenbeek in Limburg province. The neighbourhood aims to be climate neutral by 2020. In 2007, Diepenbeek started selling properties in an allotment of 65 houses owned by the municipality. Buyers could pick up a house at 80% of the market price but under strict sustainability conditions.

The terms principally impose energy efficiency below the Flemish government requirements. Since 2009, new houses in Dorphei IV have had to have an E-level of 60, while the Flemish government demands an E-70 limit on new houses, which came into force this year.

The E-level is calculated according to the Energy Performance and Interior Climate index (EPB), which measures the effects of factors such as insulation, ventilation, renewable energy and the efficiency of central heating. The lower the E-level, the more efficient the building.

"But the limit will go down to E-60 for the whole of Flanders in 2014, which shows the Flemish government is taking action," says Griet Verbeeck, professor and coordinator of the research on sustainable architecture at the Provincial University College Limburg. "By 2021, all new building

construction will have to meet a nearly zero energy standard." Verbeeck presented the Master's thesis of architecture students Britt Simons and Evelien Kumpen, who analysed the developments at Diepenbeek, at i-SUP. The city also arranged an eco-friendly water management system at Dorphei IV, with open ditches and a central water basin to use the rainwater efficiently. The inhabitants received building plan advice and other sustainability tips during information campaigns. Diepenbeek, which is located just a few kilometres south of Hasselt, is now reserving another allotment for passive houses. "It is unique that these initiatives take place in the countryside," says Verbeeck, "and this municipality has for Dorphei IV favoured families from the Diepenbeek area". The city also prioritised lower-income families "to sensitise people who are less familiar with sustainability instead of attracting those who are already eco-conscious."

### Ghent's climate alliance

Ghent, meanwhile, has formed a "climate alliance" between its companies, organisations and residents. "The city signed the European covenant of mayors to reduce our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 20% by 2020 and has the ambition to be climate neutral by 2050," says Indra Van Sande of the Environment Service Ghent. "But a mayor and aldermen can't achieve these goals alone; we have to inspire everyone in the city." The city organised debates with 15 "frontrunners" from different sectors under the banner Transition Arena. That led to specific climate working groups. More than 20 cultural organisations, for instance, are brainstorming and implementing changes as part of the project Green Track to improve



Diepenbeek's Dorphei IV is an experiment in sustainable neighbourhoods

sustainability in their sector.

In March, meanwhile, Ghent University kicked off its project to develop a sustainability plan, Transition UGent, with a debate between about 80 eco-conscious university employees, creative thinkers, experts and policymakers. The city is also trying to integrate heavy industry and other companies into the sustainability philosophy. "Steel producer ArcelorMittal is already an energy-efficient frontrunner in the industry sector, for example, by converting blast furnace gas into electricity" explains Van Sande. "We are showing this and other good examples to all businesses." To map the energy efficiency of houses in Ghent, an airplane with a thermal infrared camera photographed roofs to see where heat is being lost. The city is also investing in the energy efficiency of street lighting and public buildings and has created systems that measure sustainable city development, used for, among others, the Gent-Sint-Pieters train station development project.

The ultimate aim is also to make Ghent a nicer place to live, notes Van Sande. "Fewer cars and more green areas will make the city safer, healthier and more comfortable for all *Gentenaars*," she says. As a pilot project, the city will start a participation process in the district Sint-Amandsberg, where the population will be intensively involved in debates and other activities to discuss the best possible sustainable measures and build support for their implementation.

By 2022, the city will even replace trams and buses with horse and carts to make the transport system in the whole of Ghent as eco-friendly as possible. Or not? "That was a joke on the website referring to the many myths surrounding sustainability," smiles Van Sande, "but we are certainly open to all such creative ideas."

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

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

## THE WEEK IN SCI & ED

Flemish professor Christine Van Broeckhoven has been awarded the prestigious **Award for Medical Research** from the **American Metlife Foundation** for her research into the causes and treatments for Alzheimer's disease. Van Broeckhoven is professor in molecular biology and genetics at the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology (VIB) and the University of Antwerp. She is the first non-American woman to win the prize, and the €250,000 purse will be used for further research.

► [www.molgen.vib-ua.be](http://www.molgen.vib-ua.be)

The rectors of the Free University Brussels (VUB) and the University of Hasselt, Paul De Knop and Luc De Schepper respectively, **have both been re-elected**. Both were the only candidates at their universities and received more than 80% of the votes. De Knop starts his second term of four years, while De Schepper begins his third term as the longest-sitting rector at any Flemish University.

Ear surgeons at the University Hospital Leuven placed a **new type of acoustic implant** in patients with hearing impairments. UZ Leuven is the first Belgian centre to perform the operation and the fourth centre worldwide. The surgeons attached a partly implantable appliance to a small stirrup prosthesis as far as the inner ear. The new implant provides sufficient sound reinforcement for patients whose hearing was too severely impaired to be helped by other treatments. Acoustic implants provide more natural sounds than classic cochlear implants that use electric stimulation.

The Flemish start-up tech company Tabbed (Tablets for Education) has launched a series of "**budget-tablets**" for use in **primary and secondary schools**. An entry-level model called Pupiltab costs only €99. That is much cheaper than the iPads certain schools want to make compulsory. The tablets are also easier to work with and use a flexible system that can easily be adapted to the existing informatics structure of the schools. The appliances are currently being tested in about 40 Flemish schools.

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

## Q&A



### Piet Stinissen is the chairman of life sciences institute BIOMED at Hasselt University, which recently installed its first chair for MS research

To our surprise, Ms Vanbrabant left the university €700,000 for research on multiple sclerosis after her death in 2009. Neither she nor her relatives had the disease, but she had been moved by a TV broadcast featuring BIOMED's research on MS. The chair has been named after Ms Vanbrabant, and her family was present at the recent inauguration.

#### How will this donation further your research on MS?

Since the 1980s, BIOMED has been a specialist on the role of the immune system in causing MS, but the legacy enables us

to broaden our work. We have appointed an expert in brain research, Professor Jack van Horssen of the VU University Medical Centre in Amsterdam, to lead the work of the chair for the next five years. By studying brain tissue, we will assess which harmful processes occur in the brain when MS breaks out. His team will also examine how cholesterol and other fats act on the activity of immune cells and whether fats can favourably influence these processes.

#### How advanced is the treatment against MS at this point?

Current medication against MS can slow the disease down, but it often causes serious side effects and is not able to help every patient yet. We need to further refine the research on the causes of MS and look more into the differences in the nature of the disease in individual patients. This work eventually should result in a cure for MS, but it will remain essential to detect the disease at an early stage.

Interview by AF

► [www.uhasselt.be/biomed](http://www.uhasselt.be/biomed)

The chair for research on multiple sclerosis (ms) at UHasselt was founded in honour of Rosa Vanbrabant from Limburg. Who was she?

The number of babies born in Flanders with a **birth weight of more than four kilograms** is increasing, according to figures just released by the Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology in Brussels. In 1991, there were just under 4,900 "heavy" babies born, compared to more than 6,000 in 2010. The same evolution is taking place in other industrialised countries, partially because people are becoming taller. Another reason, says the centre, is obesity, sometimes in association with diabetes. The height and weight of the mothers are defining factors for the weight of newborn babies. Babies of mothers with diabetes often have a birth weight that is too high. AF

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# Where artists are at home

## The hill of Kwaremont in the Flemish Ardennes is a long-time arts hotspot

Andy Furniere

This week we revisit the Flemish Ardennes, whose villages continue to inspire both nature lovers and small-town enthusiasts – and, in the case of Kwaremont, artists. The little district of 600 residents has been attracting painters to its gentle hills for more than half a century.

The view from the top of the hill of Kwaremont is definitely one of the most inspiring in Flanders. It's easy to see why this beautiful place in the Flemish Ardennes attracts painters. Today, the artist and artisan community is not only active with a paintbrush, but also with a weaving loom and papier-mâché. From May to September, visitors can take a walking tour along 150 sculptures by international artists.

If you want to get an overview of the art that has been conceived in Kwaremont, a district of Kluisbergen in East Flanders, you best start at Gallery Malpertuis.

Owner Jules Demortier guides me around the gallery, which is also his home. It's filled to the brim with more than 1,000 paintings and other artworks – only his bedroom has been saved from becoming a storage place. Most works have been made by ambassadors of this artists village, such as Jean Oosterlynck, Gies Cosyns and Paul Boonaert.

### Gang of pioneers

In 2004, Demortier took over the studio from stained-glass artist Daniël Devos. Devos was a member of the generation of artists that secured Kwaremont's fame as an artists village, similar to that of Sint-Martens-Latem before 1940, where the expressionist style of, amongst others, painter and sculptor Constant Permeke was developed. "After 1950, the small, quiet village on the 'square mountain' [the meaning of the name Kwaremont] between the fields and the woods became a hub for artists and tourists looking for artistic experiences," explains Demortier.

The pioneering ambassador of Kwaremont was Rogier Vercruyse, also known by his artist name RoVer. In 1949, in love with the view of the valley of the Scheldt since his youth in nearby Avelgem, Vercruyse moved to the village with his wife, the novelist and poet Guylaine "Bertien" Buyl.

RoVer joined fellow painter Jean Oosterlynck, who he had previously

convinced of the charms of the area. Oosterlynck would receive international recognition after an exhibition in Paris in 1971. In 1956, RoVer's childhood friend Michiel Leenknegt, a well-known stained-glass artist, moved into the village's former rectory.

"But it's landscape painter Gies Cosyns, a born *Kwaremontenaar*, who finally put his birth village on the map for artists and tourists alike, during his term as mayor from 1965 to 1970," says Demortier. Cosyns' studio, named the Uilennest (Owl's Nest), is one of Kwaremont's main attractions. Amongst others, the landscape painter Boonaert was drawn by the growing fame of the artists village. Like the expressionism that flourished in Sint-Martens-Latem, the landscape painters of Kwaremont have a specific style, called the style of the Flemish Ardennes. They use very transparent paints in thin layers to give a realistic and detailed representation of their beloved region.

Not only painters enjoyed the atmosphere at Kwaremont. Comics artist Eddy Ryssack found peace of mind here, as well. Apart from drawing series such as *Brammetje Bram* and *Opa* and experimenting with animated films like *Teeth is Money*, Ryssack was also the first director of the Belgian Comic Strip Centre in Brussels from 1985 to 1996.

### Continuing vibe

The nature and vibe of artists in this hilly region also drew textile artist and designer Dorothea Van De Winkel, whose hand-woven wall and floor tapestry, based on her own drawings, are shown in exhibitions from the United States to China. "Here at this height, the inspiration comes easily," she grins. "It can be in the form of the wind in the poplar trees or the heron that flies over almost every day."

Van De Winkel's tapestries can reach sizes of more than two metres, which takes her over four months to complete. "That's the limit of my patience," she laughs. On weekends, Monday afternoons or by appointment, visitors can stroll in and have a look over her shoulder to admire how the tapestry slowly takes form.

Just a stone's throw away, papier-mâché artist Véronique De Groote works in her studio L'Artisane. De Groote provides massages, skin care and meditation sessions but sculpts



Cobblestones and art studios define Kwaremont, a district of Kluisbergen that lies at the heart of the unholy alliance between cycling fanatics and artists



Gallery Malpertuis: Your starting point for a tour around Kwaremont

with organic materials like paper, grass, leaves, herbs and sand.

In line with her main occupation, she explains that her art is meditative, meant to calm the soul. As the daughter of landscape painter Frans De Groote, at one time a student of RoVer, she also finds her inspiration in the peaceful,

green environment of Kwaremont.

On the top of the square mountain lies the Gallery Beukenhof of *Kwaremontenaar* Piet Willequet. Although a painter himself, during the summer his gallery is famous for its sculpture garden. On the "Sculptour", visitors can see about 150

sculptures by 15 international artists. Inside the gallery stand another 100 works. "Kwaremont is the perfect environment to exhibit art and find inspiration," says Willequet's wife Lieve Roeland. "Art is part of its nature."

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



Visit Dorothea Van De Winkel's home studio on weekends

## APART FROM ART

For those who want to discover on foot the area that inspires so many painters, there is a perfect opportunity on 19 and 20 May, when the annual walking tour Omloop Kluisbergen takes place. With several choices of walking routes, ranging from a child-friendly six kilometres to a 100km route for "die hard walkers", everyone can find the right length for them. A favourite location of walkers is the natural area Paddenbroek, named after the many toads (or *padden*) hopping around in the bogs.

But don't forget, these hills also feature prominently in the famous Tour of Flanders, so bring your bike to pay tribute to Karel Van Wynendaele, the sports journalist who founded Flanders' biggest cycling classic in 1913. A monument to him stands in the street named after the race, the Ronde van Vlaanderenstraat.

After all that, tuck in at one of Kwaremont's four restaurants: 't Palet, 't Monument, 't Konijntje and De Pupiter.



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# Sweetening the deal

## Flanders' only exclusively no-sugar chocolatier turns to stevia

Lisa Bradshaw

**T**he first trials were awful," laughs Felix Verdegem from his office in Lovendegem, East Flanders. "We were like, this is never going to succeed."

But five years later, Verdegem's new product is on the market: chocolate sweetened with stevia. Since introducing it last December, sales of his Cavalier chocolate brand have increased 54%.

It's a staggering figure, and it speaks to the nature of supply and demand. Health-conscious consumers have for years been pining for products containing steviol glycosides, sweeteners extracted from the stevia plant, native to South and Central America. Although it was only approved for sale in the EU a few months ago, "people were finding stevia" before that, says Verdegem. "If it wasn't on the shelf, it was under the shelf."

Seeing people go to such lengths convinced Verdegem to get started developing his chocolate with the product so he would be ready when the time came. When stevia was finally approved for sale, Cavalier's chocolate and new packaging – with a bright green label blurring "Deliciously with Stevia extracts" – were in shops the same day.

Cavalier is the only chocolatier in Belgium that makes chocolate without sugar exclusively. Before introducing stevia, they used the chemical sweetener maltitol. But not only is maltitol not a natural product, it also has a reputation for having a laxative effect. More recently, studies have shown it to be a carcinogenic. Stevia is not only naturally produced, it's highly condensed, so you don't need much of it. The calories are also significantly reduced: There are about 120 fewer calories in 100 grams of chocolate made with stevia than in chocolate made with sugar.

Cavalier is now making both chocolate with stevia and chocolate with maltitol because many countries (they export to



more than 50) are not ready to introduce stevia as an alternative. Currently, shops in Germany, the Netherlands, the UK and Austria have ordered the new stevia chocolate, as well as the huge organic supermarket chain Whole Foods in the US. "We just got a call that Whole Foods was out of stock, so I think that's a good sign," says Verdegem.

Local consumers can find Cavalier chocolate bars in the Bio Shop franchises, as well as the organic supermarket Bio Planet, with seven locations across Flanders. Bio Planet's strict regulations, however, place Cavalier products in the sugar-free section rather than with the rest of the chocolate because Cavalier is not yet a recognised bio product.

Cavalier's manufacturing facility in Eeklo works on recipes in its on-site lab, converts liquid chocolate to bars and pralines and packages it all for

shipping. But the chocolate itself is made by Flemish-Swiss chocolate giant Barry Callebaut. Cavalier had to do a lot of talking – and eventually threatening to take their business elsewhere – when they wanted to develop chocolate with stevia as early as 2007. The companies soon found common ground, and now Cavalier has an exclusive contract with Callebaut for the stevia chocolate. Cavalier side brand Dulci Sana, which is more marketed to diabetics and dieters, is also switching to stevia. Verdegem calls chocolate with stevia a "not unhealthy product", unlike chocolate with processed cane or beet sugar. "No sugars added," he says, "is a negative claim. It fits a certain condition, like you were diabetic, so you *had* to buy a product without added sugars. But stevia is something people specifically choose to buy."

But be careful. While studies are in fact

showing that stevia is a healthier alternative to chemical sweeteners such as aspartame and maltitol, and certainly to normal sugar, stevia is delivered as a liquid, and Cavalier had to make up for the lack of bulk somewhere. So they've added a lot of fibre. Fibre is not bad for you, but it is a source of carbohydrates. "If you use a lot of fibres, then the positive effect of the stevia could be decreased," says Dr Dominique Hansen, an associate professor of cardiovascular medicine at Hasselt University. He does say, however, that diabetics and others who cannot eat sugar can eat stevia chocolate because "it doesn't cause any side effects".

So if Dr Hansen were faced with two choices at a buffet – regular chocolate or chocolate with stevia – which would he choose? "I would go for the stevia," he says, without hesitation. "I'm on a diet right now, and it has less calories. But

you have to be careful, of course. Just because it's less calories, doesn't mean you should eat three times as much."

### The bottom line: taste

But what you really want to know is: How does the chocolate taste? Remarkably good, in fact, particularly the dark chocolate bars, of which there are many kinds: with crisped rice, with hazelnuts, with blueberries, to name a few. Cavalier will be introducing chocolate chips for cooking in a few weeks.

If you have never tried chocolate without sugar, you should start with a dark variety of Cavalier with stevia. Dark is bitter, which performs better with alternative sweeteners than does milk chocolate. It's not the taste, though, but the texture of the chocolate that puts some people off; there can be a chalky feeling in the mouth after eating it. But, in fact, this doesn't have anything to do with the sugars. According to Verdegem, all chocolate contains the chemical PGBR, which gives it that divine, melt-in-your-mouth texture. Adding that synthetic substance to Cavalier chocolate, he says, "doesn't fit the corporate profile".

Cavalier's chocolate with stevia has a better taste than its maltitol products, if my colleagues in the office of *Flanders Today* are to be believed. With an array of Cavalier chocolates on offer, it took a lot longer for the maltitol products to disappear than the stevia products. It was also surprising how used to the chocolate everybody became: The transition from standard chocolate to this is not all that big of a leap.

Cavalier's next revolution is its fine pralines, soon to make their way on to the market. Some are better than others, but when they are good, they are very good. You could find yourself serving Cavalier's stevia pralines at a dinner party, and no one would guess they weren't eating sugar.

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

## STREEKPRODUCT SERIES

### Moeze patat

Flanders is renowned for its potatoes, with the *bintje* variety generally considered the best there is for making *friet*. But the humble spud is rarely considered a culinary delicacy. With one exception: the Moeze patat.

"To my great culinary shame, I have to admit that until last spring I had never tasted them," writes food-blogger Lut De Clercq at the website [backstagekitchen.com](http://backstagekitchen.com). "Since then I look forward to this early potato with the same excitement as the first asparagus and the first strawberries."

Now the Flemish agency for agricultural marketing Vlam has awarded the Moeze patat the coveted recognition as a *streekproduct*, or authentic regional product. And the season, delayed somewhat this year because of the weather, is only just beginning.

The name of the potato refers to Moerzeke in East Flanders, or Moes in the local dialect, which happens to lie in a wide bend of the river Scheldt, part of the flood plain. That not only provides the rich clay soil in which the patat thrives, it also creates a sort of microclimate, with a slightly warmer temperature and less frost. The new potatoes can be planted and harvested earlier.

The other thing that makes the Moeze patat special is that it's treated like a hothouse flower. The seed potato is first laid in a

protected place, either a cellar or, in the case of Agra Claessens, which just won the *streekproduct* label, in a greenhouse. When the shoot is about 10 centimetres long, the potato is planted in the ground – very carefully, as the shoots are fragile. That treatment gives the Moeze patat a huge advantage over ordinary potatoes of the same variety.

Agra Claessens sells them on the spot in Moerzeke and also at markets in Liezele and Hombeek. Some of the crop is taken by wholesalers to vegetable markets in Brussels, Antwerp and Mechelen. Other producers in the area, most of whom are getting on in years, sell their crop through Agra. The season runs until August, but be warned: They're much in demand.

On its website, Vlam provides a number of recipes for the Moeze patat, using grey shrimp or Flemish goat cheese. Lut De Clercq offers a Spanish-style *tortilla* with Moeze patat and mint to be served in delicate tapas-style portions with an aperitif.

*Agra Claessens is on Bootdijkstraat in Moerzeke, open Wednesday and Friday from 14.00 to 18.00*

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



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# An open book

## Flemish artists' little-known art form is on show in Waregem

Alan Hope

**H**ear the term "art-book", and you will probably have in mind a book about art: that old volume of Gombrich that's been with you since university; an exhibition catalogue; one of those lavish coffee table books on the Impressionists. But there's another significance to the term, and that's the subject of an exhibition in Waregem, West Flanders: books made by artists, in which the book itself – content and form – is the actual artwork.

Numerous Flemish artists in the last 50 years have turned their attention to the book-as-medium, and a goodly selection of them are on display in *Bookshow Bookshop* at contemporary art centre Be-Part.

*Bookshow Bookshop* was the idea of two avid collectors, artist Vaast Colson and art historian Johan Pas, who wanted to draw more attention to the art form. They pooled examples from their collections and borrowed from museum collections, including M HKA in Antwerp and the Mu.Zee in Ostend.

We begin in 1960, with a pamphlet by Jef Verheyen entitled *Pour une peinture non plastique* (Towards a Non-plastic Art of Painting), which resembles nothing more than a political tract. In some ways, that is what it was – an artists' manifesto.

Seven years later the art-book as *objet* was fully realised, with *Een verpakte gedachte* (A Packaged Philosophy) by Raoul De Keyser, Antoon De Clerck and Roland Jooris: a book made up of bound artworks, in a slip-case designed by De Keyser. Where Verheyen had almost negated design for his manifesto, De Keyser et al raised the packaging to almost the same level as the philosophy, where it



*Ik, een autobiografie* (I: An Autobiography) by Daniel Weinberger is a purposeful exercise in narcissism – as well as photos, there's a sticker and a poster, all bearing Weinberger's image. A satire on the cult of the artist, it's a work that has no frame of reference beyond the end of the artist's nose and a precursor of the work of people like Tracey Emin.

Some artists, like Hugo Duchateau, use the occasion to subvert both book and artwork. His *Schilderboekje/Tekenboekje* (Painting Book/Drawing Book) from 1985 is two miniature blocks of pages mounted one above the other, all blank. The only indication of an artist's presence is the scribbling on the page-ends, in one case in paint, in the other in pencil.

One caveat: the books on show are presented uniformly in glass cases, which thwart the natural inclination to pick up an interesting book and leaf through it. While it's obvious why that's not possible, it's nonetheless frustrating. Books, more than paintings or other *objets d'art*, cry out to be taken up and read.

*Free guided tours of Bookshow Bookshop are available in Dutch every Sunday at 14.30. Some books on display are on sale in the bookshop*

was to remain in the years to come. The exhibition brings us right up to the present day, and a book compiled by seven artists using a Ricoh photocopier right in the Be-Part basement. *The Ricoh Book*, with work by Gerard Herman, Pol Matthé, Peter Morrens, Sophie Nys, Ria Pacquée, Guy Rombouts and Reinaert Vanhoe, is on sale in the Be-Part bookshop.

### Books doing the impossible

In-between are works by big names like Luc Tuymans, Panamarenko and Wim Delvoye, who produced a book in the form of an old school atlas. Marcel Broodthaers' 1969 *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (A Throw of the Dice Will Never Eliminate Chance) features the text of a poem by the French poet Stéphane

Mallarmé, which itself used unorthodox page layout, printed on transparent paper. Broodthaers then used a marker to delete words and lines, creating a new text that changes as pages are turned and deletions appear and disappear. Mark Verstockt's 1971 (*this is not*) a book is a package of loose-leaf folios that can be read in any order, drawings and a flexi-disk, considered at the time to be the height of technological media.

*Film makers* by Ludo Mich from 1972, contains what appears to be a text in Asiatic ideograms but is in fact a series of "words" made up of drawings of tiny figures, each line taking on the appearance of a film strip, a reflection on the improbability of an alphabet. The "text" demands to be read, but at the same time defies any attempt to

decipher a narrative. Christine Vandemortel's *elementen in corten staal naar lichaamsmaat* (Elements in Corten Steel on a Human Scale) from 1976 attempts to set down in a book, the most permanent medium we have, the elements of the most ephemeral – the performance. Using photographs printed on accordion pages, the book is essentially a record of its own impossible ambition.

### UNTIL 10 JUNE

#### Bookshow Bookshop

Be-Part, Waalsekaai 47, Westerlaan 17, Waregem

► [www.tinyurl.com/be-partbookshow](http://www.tinyurl.com/be-partbookshow)

# My 15 minutes

## The third edition of De Canvascollectie is back in Bozar

Bjorn Gabriels

From a variation on a well-known television format to an annual string of popular cultural events, in a few years' time, the art talent hunt *De Canvascollectie* has conquered a spot in the limelight. The long queues of amateur artists, nervously waiting to subject their work to the scrutiny of professional experts, hoping to be selected for the final exhibition, have become a familiar sight. And everyone in the country watches the months-long process on either the Flemish public TV station VRT or the Walloon equivalent RTBF.

Although partly inspired by the long-standing tradition of *The Summer Exhibition* in the Royal Academy of Arts in London (also televised by the BBC in recent years), this sort of open-submission art show taps into the more recent democratisation of popular media, as well as the arts.

Many a museum seeks to trade in its ivory tower (or white cubes) for "public spaces" within or beyond its own walls. They want to "reach out". As in other domains, the boundaries between amateurs and professionals have been stretched and breached along the way. Arguably the most important ingredient of *De Canvascollectie* is the series of selection rounds. They were held in 11 museums, spread out across all three language communities.

Now the final 280 selections make up *De Canvascollectie* exhibition in Bozar. The national jury – or selection committee, as they prefer to be called to downplay the competitive element – has awarded the two Young Visual Artist prizes to Bieke Criel (for her video work *Landscape 08*) and Sébastien Van Mallegem (for his black-and-white photo series *Police*

*Triptyque*). The ARTE awards go to Stéphanie Kerckaert's photo *Mémoire* and Meggy Rustamova's short video *M.A.M. (My Assyrian Mother)*, which amusingly disrupts a duo portrait of mother and daughter.

As much as *De Canvascollectie* focuses on the input of amateur and semi-professional artists, this third edition also wants to stress the dilemmas of curatorship. The jury has made every effort to organise the works around thematic clusters (fairytales, animals, abstracts, religion, etc).

Along this line, a prominent place has been given to works that reflect on the nature of the art talent hunt itself. This specific context, which has grown across the three editions, is central to this year's Grand Prize winner, *Gentenaar Ignace Van*

*Ingelgom*. His performance *Now or Never – Ignace Van Ingelgom for Ever* is a clever mixture of (self) promotion, art critique and hip hop. "But it's a game," Van Ingelgom quips. "I want my 15 minutes of fame!"

The national jury and jury of museum directors clearly embraced performances and installations, preferably with a self-reflexive twist. It remains to be seen if the public prize, selected by visitors to the exhibition and online voters, follows this trend.



### UNTIL 10 JUNE

#### Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23, Brussels

► [www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)

© Tom Van Clevenbrugel

# Silence is Sexy

Christophe Verbiest

**I**n the work of a lot of new composers I feel a sensibility for silence," Kurt Overbergh told *Flanders Today* last year. That's why the artistic director of Brussels' Ancienne Belgique created the concert series Silence is Sexy.

This month, two evenings are scheduled in this series, and Dustin O'Halloran will be present at both. Thanks to his soothing, almost timid music, this American composer and piano player is one of the up-and-coming names in the world of minimalist composers – or post-classical, if you want the trendy word *du jour* – that have risen to the surface since the turn of the century. On 17 May, he will be accompanied by a string quartet and that's a first. On 31 May, he'll be back with

A Winged Victory For The Sullen (*pictured*), a duo formed together with the American-born but Brussels-residing Adam Bryanbaum Wiltzie. Their eponymously titled 2011 album is a small masterpiece of subtly

arranged minimalism, but be prepared if you go and see them at the Ancienne Belgique. For the first time in its career, A Winged Victory For The Sullen will be accompanied by a 20-musician strong orchestra. The music might sound a teeny-weeny less minimalist.

Don't be late that evening, in any case, since the opening act is Nils Frahm, probably the most promising, most versatile and most adventurous of the new string of composers. This Berlin pianist specialises in whispering compositions. Interesting to know: Frahm is recording all the concerts on his current tour, so maybe your applause will one day be heard on a live album.

Apart from O'Halloran, who headlines, there are two other acts playing at Silence is Sexy on 17 May. First up is Hauschka, the stage name of German piano player and composer Volker Bertelmann, whose work is centred around prepared piano. He just has released an intriguing

album with the famous violist Hilary Hahn, but in Brussels he will be accompanied by Samuli Kosminen, the Finnish percussionist from the bands Edea and mûm.

The Icelandic Jóhann Jóhannsson, meanwhile, is a man for all seasons. He is part of Apparat Organ Quartet, a band with members who only play vintage electric organs, but in recent years, he has built up a reputation as composer of film scores and classical works, in which he generally combines piano, strings and electronics.

He'll be accompanied at the Ancienne Belgique by a string quartet and will perform a track on *Transcendentalism*, an upcoming EP compilation on the Fat Cat label that brings together the three acts that play on 17 May. This combination sounds very promising.

Silence might be sexy, but don't forget to listen to the music.



17 & 31 May | Ancienne Belgique, Anspachlaan 110, Brussels

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

## FOOD & DRINK

### Gent Smaakt

The organisers of this culinary event are calling its location one of the best-kept secrets of Ghent. The Leopoldskazerne is indeed a special place, with only its high walls visible from the ring around the city. Inside this former military barracks-turned-artist studio is a spacious courtyard, perfect for a long weekend of tastings and demos. In addition to live concerts by a number of local artists playing everything from rock and pop to folk and jazz, there will be the chance to sample food from 20 local restaurants, chocolate tastings, info sessions on cheese and beer pairing, a baking workshop for kids and a happy hour on Friday from 16.00 to 19.00. Entrance is free, and you pay for food and drinks with *Gentse stropkes*, a special currency for the occasion, with meals priced from €3. **Robyn Boyle**



17-20 May | Leopoldskazerne, Ghent | ► [www.gentsmaakt.be](http://www.gentsmaakt.be)

## MORE FOOD & DRINK THIS WEEK

### Puurs (Antwerp province)

**AsPUURSge:** Taste and buy asparagus at this festival featuring gastronomic, educational and musical activities in the park, plus a special asparagus menu at the brasserie on Friday

**MAY 17-20 at Domein Hof van Coolhem, Coolhemstraat 64**

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

### Ronse (East Flanders)

**Ronse smaakt naar meer:** Culinary festival with regional products, walking dinners, wine tastings and more

**MAY 19-25 at Toerisme Ronse, De Biesestraat 2**

► [www.tinyurl.com/ronsesmaakt](http://www.tinyurl.com/ronsesmaakt)

## MUSIC FESTIVAL

### Les Goûts de Gand

For an evening of music in a spectacular location, look no further than Ghent's Portus Ganda this weekend. The annual world music festival features intimate concerts by Bulgarian ensemble Zongora and Flemish folk singer Willem Vermandere, who will perform with the Turkish musician from Ghent, Mustafa Avsar, on the site of the old abbey ruins. There will also be a Feria Mundial world market in Baudelo Park, free concerts on the Aurelia Feria boat on Rodetorenkaai and an exclusive series of concerts on the Gentse Barge, a boat docked in front of the Van Eyck swimming pool, plus dance and percussion workshops, a murga fanfare and more. Only concerts on the barge come with an entrance fee; the rest of the festival is free. **RB**



19 May, 15.00-22.00 |

Sint-Baafs Abbey and other locations across Ghent |

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

## MORE MUSIC FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

### Roosdaal (Flemish Brabant)

**In de Luwte:** Free "slow art" festival featuring concerts, theatre and poetry

**MAY 18-20 at venues across Roosdaal and Strijtem**

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

### Watou (West Flanders)

**International Gregorian Festival:** Prominent Gregorian ensembles and choirs from Europe and Asia meet in West Flanders' art village for the 11th edition of this triennial for those who cherish the sometimes angelic, sometimes mysterious sounds of chant

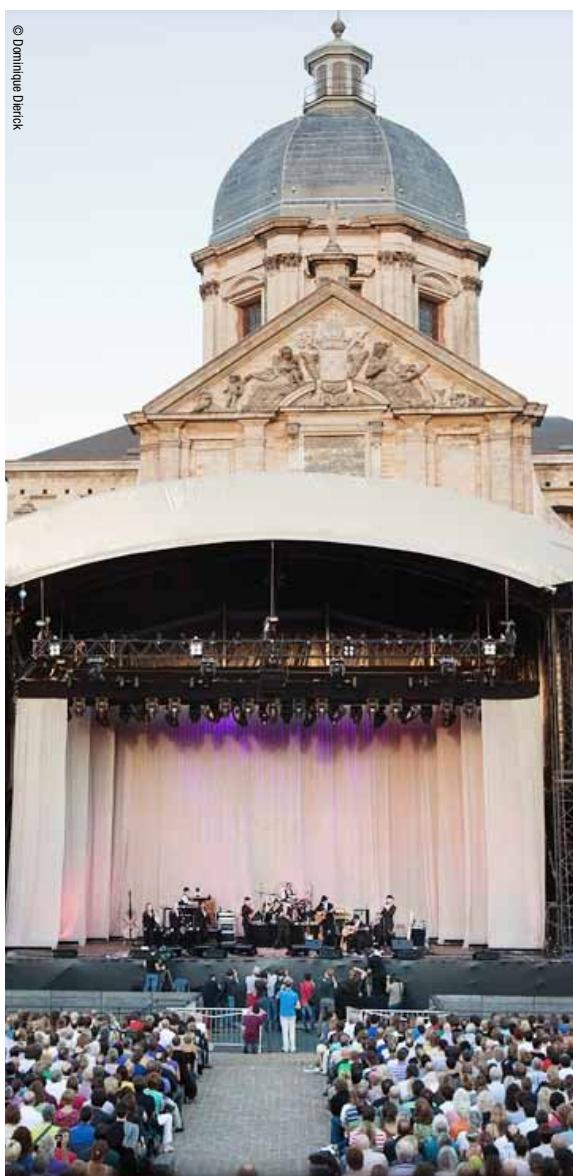
**Until MAY 20 at Sint-Bavokerk, Watou, and other location across Flanders**

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

## CONCERT

## Leonard Cohen

Two years ago, Leonard Cohen sold out three shows at this stunning location, playing all his greatest hits against the backdrop of Ghent's Sint-Pieters Abbey. No wonder, then, that he again chose this place as the starting point for his new world tour, Old Ideas. The first four dates are sold out, but a fifth night (a Saturday!) was added, and tickets are still available. If it's anything like last time, the legendary 78-year-old Canadian singer-songwriter will astound audiences with a three-hour joyride along all his classic numbers like "Ain't No Cure for Love", "Bird on a Wire", "Hallelujah", "I'm your Man", "Suzanne", "Blue Raincoat" and so many more. The emotional impact of these songs touches fans of all ages. **RB**



**18 August, 20.00 |**  
**Sint-Pietersplein, Ghent**

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

## CONCERTS THIS WEEK

## Brussels

**Thomas Dolby:** The British new wave/synth-pop artist of 1980s hits such as "She Blinded Me With Science" and "I Scare Myself"

**MAY 16 20.00 at Ancienne Belgique, Anspachlaan 110**

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

**Charlotte Gainsbourg + Connan Mockasin:** The daughter of the legendary Serge plays as part of the Nuits Botanique concerts series, together with the New Zealand musician and his band

**MAY 19 20.00 at Koninklijk Circus, Onderrichtsstraat 81**

► [www.cirque-royal.org](http://www.cirque-royal.org)

GET TICKETS NOW

## SPECIAL EVENT

## Open House Brussels

If you've ever asked yourself what the role of art is in the world today, here's an event for you. Whether you create art, appreciate it or make a point of criticising it, you'll be interested in Open House Brussels, part of the Kunstenfestivaldesarts. Should an artist give in to consumption, supply and demand, societal pressures, a government that claims art is important yet fails to provide the necessary funding? All of these questions and more will be addressed during two morning debates: the first focusing on "Slow Art", the second on the position of the artist in the sector and Brussels in particular. The afternoon finds artists acting as tour guides, taking you on a walk through different parts of Brussels, showing you the city from their perspective. They will point out interesting architecture, experimental sound and music, digital arts, technology, movies and more scattered throughout some of the city's most art-laden neighbourhoods. Registration is required for the walks. **RB**

© Silvano Maggiore / Basis Connective



**17-19 May, 12.00-20.00 |** Vanderborght Building, Brussels | ► [www.openhousebrussels.be](http://www.openhousebrussels.be)

## MORE SPECIAL EVENTS THIS WEEK

## Across Flanders

**Vlaamse Molendag:** Official European day of the mill, with historic wind- and watermills opening their doors to the public

**MAY 20 10.00-18.00 across Flanders**

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

## Antwerp

**Binnenkijken in Antwerpen (Peek Inside Antwerp):** Designers, antiquarians, artists and florists show off their talents inside a number of participating locations, plus a special dinner at AMUZ

**MAY 16-20 across Antwerp**

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

## DUSK TIL DAWN

Katrien Lindemans

## Boombal

27 March

Vooruit, Gent

Most of us enjoy a day off on 17 May (Ascension Thursday). Why not spend your Wednesday evening out and about, rather than curled up in front of the telly? There are plenty of places out there throwing parties the night before you get to sleep in late

## FM Brussel Tonight

Brussels' rock radio station is staging its annual party at club Mirano. After their first big party 10 years ago at the same venue, they felt it was time to go back to their roots. Expect a whopping line-up, with the Belgian Aeroplane as the main crowd-pleaser. King DJ ('t Hof Van Commerce's dj 4T4) and FM Brussels' house djs Kong & Gratts will be there, too, in the main hall. More funky beats in the smaller room with, among others, Jules-X and Rim-K. Tickets are €12 in advance from FNAC or €16 at the door.

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

## God save the '90s

Make your way to Tour & Taxis to travel back in time for "the biggest revival party Brussels will ever see". You'll be dancing to music from the 1990s, the decade that saw the Spice Girls appear and the walkman disappear. Tag line of the event: Be bold, be shiny, be gorgeous, be '90s. The dress code is, of course, '90s, which appears to be much more colourful than I remember it (see photo). Tickets are €12 in advance or €15 at the door.

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

## Was het nu 80, 90 of 2000

More beats from the past at Vooruit in Ghent. Radio station Studio Brussel is teaming up with Ghent party planners



New Wave Classix for a night of music from the 1980s to the year 2000. Tickets are €10 in advance or at the door.

► [www.new-wave-classix.be](http://www.new-wave-classix.be)

## Bal de Luxe

Back in the present, you must put on your most fancy gown or suit to get into Bal De Luxe at Ghent's Culture Club. Yes, this is HoGent's (Hogeschool Gent) prom night, but everyone is invited, and it will probably put your own prom night to shame, with the ultra-cool venue, DJs Les Mecs, X-tof and Neo and "surprises" throughout the night. Tickets are €15 in advance and €17 at the door.

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

## BITE

## Toukoul ★★★★

The cobblestones are slippery under the pouring rain as our party of five scampers down the Lakensestraat, an entire hour late for our dinner reservation. "No problem," smiles the boss, Haile Abebe, "if you don't mind taking a seat at the bar while we wait for a table to free up." It's 22.30 on a Friday evening and Toukoul, central Brussels' newest hotspot, is chock-full. Abebe is one of the two original owners of KoKoB (Brussels' very first Ethiopian restaurant). He sold that business to take over Le Cercle des Voyageurs (restaurant, arts and travel café), and last February he opened Toukoul and a tribute to the cuisine of his homeland, which he left at the age of six. Since then, Abebe has lived all over Europe and the US, but it's ultimately Brussels that has proven the most open to his endeavours.

We order Ethiopian beer (a malty lager from St George Brewery in Addis Ababa), a glass of red wine and a couple of house cocktails made with honey and fresh pineapple juice and sit back to take in the atmosphere. It's toasty warm and cosy, made even more so by a predominantly wooden décor housing African musical instruments and with indirect lighting that bathes the whole room in a soft, orange glow. Meanwhile, a jazz singer and pianist deliver sultry background music. A *toukoul*, by the way, is a traditional Ethiopian hut made of clay, wood and straw.

Our table is on the small side, but eating Ethiopian style is a communal experience. The only "silverware" is spongy, lightly fermented bread called *injera*. The food – all stews and vegetarian pottages – comes served on a large platter (or in



our case two).

We haven't even taken the time to know exactly what we ordered, but for the less adventurous there's a handy lexicon in the menu. We opt for two menus (minimum two people each): the vegetarian Shifinfin (€48) and the spicy hot Cornise (€54).

We tear the bread and use it to scoop up the surprising and delicious mixtures. The vegetarian platter consists of piles of spinach, cabbage, carrots, peas, chickpeas and lentils, plus one especially tasty dish called *ayeb*, a combination of spinach and Ethiopian cheese. All of the veggies are incorporated into rich and varying dishes with tomato, onion or lemon and spices such as turmeric, basil, garlic, cumin and coriander. The Cornise platter is covered in stews made with chicken, lamb, veal or beef in various sauces that turn up the flavour

and heat with everything from ginger and chilli peppers to shallots and sesame oil. Our hands-down favourite is the *doro wot* (red chicken stew), a chicken leg and hard-boiled egg surrounded by a dark, spicy Berbere sauce that blends 20 imported herbs and spices. "This is the most typical dish from our country, the kind of thing you would make if you had someone special coming over to your house," Abebe explains. A bottle of sparkling water and a bottle of house red provide the necessary refreshment throughout the meal. Afterwards, we take turns washing our hands under a sink that is strategically located in the dining room.

We then take our sweet time sipping a round of espressos, for at midnight there are still plenty of people around, laughing and enjoying drinks with no indication of going home anytime soon. The bill comes to a reasonable €32 apiece.

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

► Lakensestraat 34, Brussels; 02.223.73.77

⌚ Tue-Sun, 12.00-15.30 & 18.00-23.30

€ Mains: €8-€18

ⓘ Authentic Ethiopian cuisine in a fun, laid-back atmosphere; a great place to go with a group

## TALKING SPORTS

### Out of this league

Leo Cendrowicz



So congratulations to Anderlecht, which clinched Belgium's league title last week after a 1-1 draw against Club Brugge. "Now it's time to party," said Anderlecht coach Ariël Jacobs afterwards, even if it has a ring of inevitability to it: This is the Brussels club's 31st title, and they kept a wide lead over their rivals this season. But in any case, this was all a sideshow. Belgian fans knew that the real drama was happening across the channel in England, where Manchester City were securing their first league title in 44 years, thanks to two sensational injury time goals in the very last game of the season. Why does that matter for Belgium? Because the country's most accomplished player, Ukkel-born Vincent Kompany, enjoyed an outstanding season as

City's captain.

Kompany is, of course, also the captain of the Belgian national side, whose nickname, the Red Devils, is ironically shared by City's fierce rivals, Manchester United. Indeed, as City were trailing Queens Park Rangers on Sunday, United looked to be snatching the title away. But Kompany rallied his side, and, in a nerve-shredding game, City pulled back two goals in the last moments.

The exhilarated Kompany (*pictured in the centre of the photo above*) was the one who received the coveted Premier League trophy. "We've dreamed of this all our lives, when we were kids and we had no money, we had nothing," he said. Days earlier, Kompany was named Premier League Player of

the Season. He also won the club's Community Player of the Year, a prize given to the player who has contributed most to the club's assorted schemes.

Kompany, who joined City for €7.5 million in 2008, is one of the best transfer market buys of all time. He has pace, positional sense, strength in the air and ability on the deck, and, at 26, he is approaching his peak. His headed winner in the game match in City's derby last month against United – in a game said to have captured a television audience of 650 million in 212 nations – was the most important goal scored by a Belgian all year. If only Belgium had more players like him. But if you missed him, Kompany will lead the Belgian side out against England in a friendly on 2 June at Wembley

## The last word...

### Red card

"This shows a total lack of all respect. This is one of the worst blows I've ever had to suffer in football."

François De Keersmaecker, president of the football union, after the coach of the national team quit unexpectedly to go manage Club Brugge

### The final frontier

"The question I'm most often asked is: what do people with dementia feel? We don't know."

Scientist Christine Van Broeckhoven, who last week won the Award for Medical Research from the Metlife Foundation for her work on Alzheimer's

### United nations

"The similarities are greater than the Flemish expect, and the differences larger than the Dutch expect."

Corne Mulders, local general manager of Dutch supermarket chain Albert Heijn, now with stores in Flanders, on how residents feel about the store

### Future simple

"I hope...that my children can one day come home and tell their two papas: 'Today we talked about you in the class.' Without prejudice and without hate. I'd be happy with that." Elio De Bolle, 17, wrote to Pascal Smet calling for an end to homophobia in schools

## NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY

### Cover story

Next week, we'll tell you all about photonics, or light energy, which VUB professor Hugo Thienpont says is "the technology of the 21st century". Last month, thousand of scientists gathered in Brussels to check out the newest applications, including in telecommunications, holography and medicine

### Education

The Flemish region is trying to get more of its university students to go abroad for part of their studies. Our correspondent attended the EU's Erasmus Programme seminar in Copenhagen earlier this month to find out about the future of this long-running exchange scheme and how Flemish students use it to their advantage

### Arts

Ghent has joined the art parcours fray with TRACK, a series of indoor and outdoor art installations arranged by neighbourhood. We'll tell you where to see a giant floating Vooruit, an honour-system library and a tree house like only Benjamin Verdonck could make