

Local elections: the yellow wave

N-VA upsets established parties across Flanders

Bart De Wever becomes mayor of Antwerp

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The state of the Ark



© Hugo Wilcox

Despite the acquisition of much new habitat, biodiversity in Flanders continues to deteriorate

Toon Lambrechts

All is not well with nature in Flanders. In such a densely populated area, there is little room for wild corners, but, according to scientists, it is in our interest to stop the decline of biodiversity. We look at some of the species at risk and the reasons behind their struggles

Professor Kris Verheyen shows me a few graphs. The dominant colour is red: seldom a good sign. "Dramatic," is his one-word summary of the state of Flanders' biodiversity. Verheyen is head of Ghent University's Laboratory for Nature and Forest, where he specialises in forest ecology and management, and his figures speak for themselves. About half of all species in Flanders are on the infamous Red List, which means they're in the danger zone. As much as one-quarter has

severely deteriorated or is about to disappear. Another graph concerns breeding birds that nest here and are one of the indicators of biodiversity. The line that reflects their appearance in Flanders follows two different paths. "Each taxonomic group has its own story, but what you see here is surely a global trend," explains Verheyen. "The species that live in the forests improve slightly, while the rest are in decline. This is because the Flemish forests are gradually aging and thus becoming more ecologically valuable, partly because there remains more dead wood. Meanwhile, the rest of the landscape degrades further."

Broken chains

Ecology and biodiversity are complex, and the reasons why so many species disappear in Flanders are intertwined. Five factors play a major role. First, there is the fragmentation

of the landscape. Flanders is one of the most fragmented regions in Europe. Habitats often disintegrate into pieces too small for many species to survive.

Other factors have to do with agriculture. Large-scale agriculture relies on strong fertilisers, which cause the disappearance of habitats that need specific soils. Fertilisation also provokes acidification, and the effects of acidic soils are often linked with those of over-fertilisation. Flanders is also becoming drier, and has been for a long time. Industry, agriculture and drinking water provision absorb large volumes of water, reducing the level of groundwater and making wetlands disappear. Finally, there is pollution, although on this point much has been achieved.

Remarkably, climate change and invasive species brought here by human intervention are not on the list of threats.

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FACE OF FLANDERS

Koen Lenaerts



Koen Lenaerts, a leading European federalist and judge at the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in Luxembourg, was last week the first appointment to the new post of vice-president of the Court. Lenaerts was born in Mortsel, Antwerp province, in 1954 and began his studies at the University of Namur, where he graduated *summa cum laude* in law in 1974. He went on to further legal studies in Leuven and at Harvard, where he also took a Master's in public administration, before being awarded a PhD from Leuven. In 1983 he started teaching at Leuven as professor of European Law; his doctoral thesis compared the constitutional case law of the ECJ and the US Supreme Court. Comparative law has always been an interest, and he once compared it – while speaking on a platform with US Supreme Court justice Stephen Breyer, under whom he had studied at Harvard – to Goethe's injunction on languages: Those who know nothing of foreign languages know nothing of their own. He's held the title of "extraordinary lecturer" at

Leuven since 1990 and was director of the Institute of European Law, as well as holding a chair at the Free University of Brussels (VUB), teaching at the College of Europe in Bruges and sitting as a judge in the European Court of First Instance. His appointment to the ECJ came in 2003 when he took over from former justice minister Melchior Wathelet. Lenaerts' nomination as vice-president of the ECJ is one of the highest ranks ever achieved by a Flemish judge. The court has 27 judges, one from each member state of the EU, and until now had only a president. A change in its statutes this year, however, created the post of vice-president, and Lenaerts is the first to hold the position, for a term of three years. In his new function, Lenaerts will assist the court's president, the Greek Vassilios Skouris, who has been re-elected for a second term, as well as replacing him if he is absent, or if the post should fall vacant for any reason. Lenaerts lives in Edegem in Antwerp province and is married with six children.

Alan Hope

News in brief

Flemish minister-president **Kris Peeters** is visiting Turkey this week, joining the Belgian economic mission to the capital Ankara. Peeters will then lead a Flemish trade mission to the city of Izmir, where he will visit the country's most important high-tech business park and give a speech at Yasar University.

All six people involved in a **case of commercial surrogacy** have been found guilty of degrading treatment by a court in Oudenaarde. They include the birth mother and her partner, who promised the child known as Baby D to an Antwerp couple in February of 2005. They later told the couple that there had been a miscarriage and sold the baby to a Dutch couple for €10,000. The Antwerp couple proved to a Dutch court that the man was the child's biological father, but the court decided to leave Baby D with the Dutch couple. Last week the court handed out a suspended sentence of one year to the birth mother and her partner, as well as a fine of €1,650. The Dutch couple were fined the same amount, while the Antwerp couple were found guilty but not sentenced.

Six of the seven men arrested last week in Brussels on suspicion of terrorist activities have been **released after questioning**. The arrests came after a year-long investigation, and the men are accused of recruiting young Muslims in Belgium to send to conflict zones in Africa. One man remains in custody.

More than one family in 10 in Flanders has **switched electricity providers** this year, according to figures from the Flemish energy regulator. While nearly 12% found a new electricity supplier, 13% changed their gas supplier. In

August alone, more than 55,000 families and companies switched.

Psychiatrist Walter Vandereycken, who admitted to **inappropriate sexual relations with patients**, has been fired from his clinic in Tienen and suspended from his post at the University of Leuven, pending further inquiries. According to the Leuven prosecutor's office, no formal complaint has yet been filed. Federal health minister Laurette Onkelinx has called for a disciplinary investigation by the Order of Physicians.

This week saw the opening of a **new tunnel under Leopold III-laan** in the Brussels commune of Evere, which is intended to speed up traffic between the airport and the city centre. The 235-metre tunnel from Bordet to beyond Nato cost €20 million and has four lanes. An estimated 35,000 vehicles will use the tunnel every day. Work above ground to provide foot- and cycle paths and to extend tramline 62, will cost another €22.5 million.

The association of Flemish municipalities has launched a campaign to **recruit at least 500 child-care workers**. Flanders has about 7,000 registered childminders providing care for 31,500 children, but there are acute shortages in and around Brussels, as well as in other urban areas in Flanders, the association says. It also launched websites for those seeking places and those thinking of becoming a child-care provider.

► www.ikzoekenonthaalouder.be

Two men involved in a robbery in the Brussels commune of Elsene in April of 2010 in which **jeweller was shot and killed** were last week acquitted of murder, after the jury decided that a third robber, who

had never been traced, was guilty of firing the fatal shot. The two on trial claimed they were unaware their accomplice was armed. They were convicted of robbery with violence; one was sentenced to 17 years and the other 19 years.

Tourism representatives in the Westhoek area of West Flanders have welcomed a plan by British prime minister David Cameron to send **British schoolchildren to visit First World War sites** in the run-up to the centenary in 2014. "The Westhoek municipalities have invested a great deal in recent years in the commemoration of the war," said Zonnebeke alderman Franky Baron. "We are ready to welcome everyone with open arms."

The Flemish football federation last week repeated its **support for compulsory medical tests** for young people taking part in sports, after the sudden death in Jette of a seven-year-old boy during football training. It is not yet clear what caused him to collapse. Sporting authorities have resisted introducing mandatory heart scanning, but a more general medical examination introduced by the Flemish government will come into force next year.

A group of more than 30 social-cultural organisations in Flanders has written an open letter arguing that municipal administrative sanctions, the so-called GAS fines, are a **threat to the democratic right to peaceful action**. The fines are aimed at deterring public nuisances but can also be used against those who carry out peaceful protests, the group said. The group includes the Human Rights League, the Kurdish Institute, Pax Christi and refugee aid organisation Vluchtelingswerk Vlaanderen.

FLANDERS TODAY



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OFFSIDE

Beavers give a dam

Farmers in the area of Zandhoven in central Antwerp province are tearing their hair out at the effects of a sort of natural disaster: a dam built by beavers in an adjoining nature reserve.

Beavers, of course, are very good at building dams. They do so to create a pool for food and to protect themselves against predators. The Dutch word for a beaver lodge is, in fact, *burcht*, which means "fortress". The Zandhoven dam is 15 metres long and growing and the water backed up behind it has now flooded hectares of farmland. The culprit is the Eurasian beaver (*Castor fiber*), the largest rodent native to Eurasia. At the beginning of the 20th century, it was nearly extinct as a result of hunting. While still classified as endangered, its numbers have risen considerably, with populations re-established, including in Flanders, where there are now thought to be about 140.



That's largely as a result of conservation efforts, and therein lies the problem for the Zandhoven farmers. The Eurasian beaver (*pictured*) is a protected species and is not allowed to be eradicated, nor can farmers even get rid of the offending dam. In fact, beaver ponds, created by their dams, are considered to be extremely beneficial to the local ecosystem, filtering bacteria from cow manure that finds its way into streams and generally improving fish habitats.

Tell that to farmer André Van Tendeloo. "These three beavers have put my land under water, and my cows don't like to eat wet grass," he told *De Standaard*. "Nobody has seen the beavers, which is a good thing: One of these days someone is going to lose his self-control."

Alan Hope

The state of the Ark

One-quarter of Flanders' species are at severe risk of extinction

► continued from page 1

Verheyen explains: "Climate change will not affect our region too much. We see now how mobile species from southern Europe emerge, which will change the competition between species. The same goes for exotic species: It is difficult to predict their impact, but it is certainly not a black-and-white story. New species mean more biodiversity and are not necessarily a problem."

Much depends on the resilience of ecosystems. The question is how an ecosystem copes when confronted with climate change or new species. Biodiversity plays a major role: The more diverse an ecosystem, the more resilient it is. If one chain breaks, another takes over.

A limited view?

The government of Flanders included the conservation of biodiversity as one of its goals in the coalition agreement. But of course, that's easier said than done.

"We focus on different channels," explains Patrick Verstuyft, spokesperson for Flemish environment minister Joke Schauvliege. "The acquisition of new swaths of land and measures aimed at protecting specific species serve to preserve biodiversity in Flanders, just like dealing with invasive species. It is important to include care for nature in other policy areas. Our policy should be sustained by all stakeholders if we want to succeed. Therefore, the minister tries to involve all interest groups, such as agriculture and businesses."

Wim Van Gils, who works for Flemish nature conservancy organisation Natuurpunt and is responsible for policy making, disagrees. Natuurpunt is Flanders' biggest environmental NGO and manages a large chunk of the region's nature reserves.

"The current environmental policy is too limited to assess the trend of declining biodiversity," says Van Gils. "The budget is not sufficient. And the measures to protect specific species look like a story of missed opportunities. The integration of conservation measures into other policy areas is still very limited, especially in urban planning and agriculture."

Flanders' environmental policy

relies on European legislation, of which the 1992 Habitats Directive is the most important. This sums up a number of habitats that must be preserved, and Flanders is obliged to report periodically on the state of these habitats.

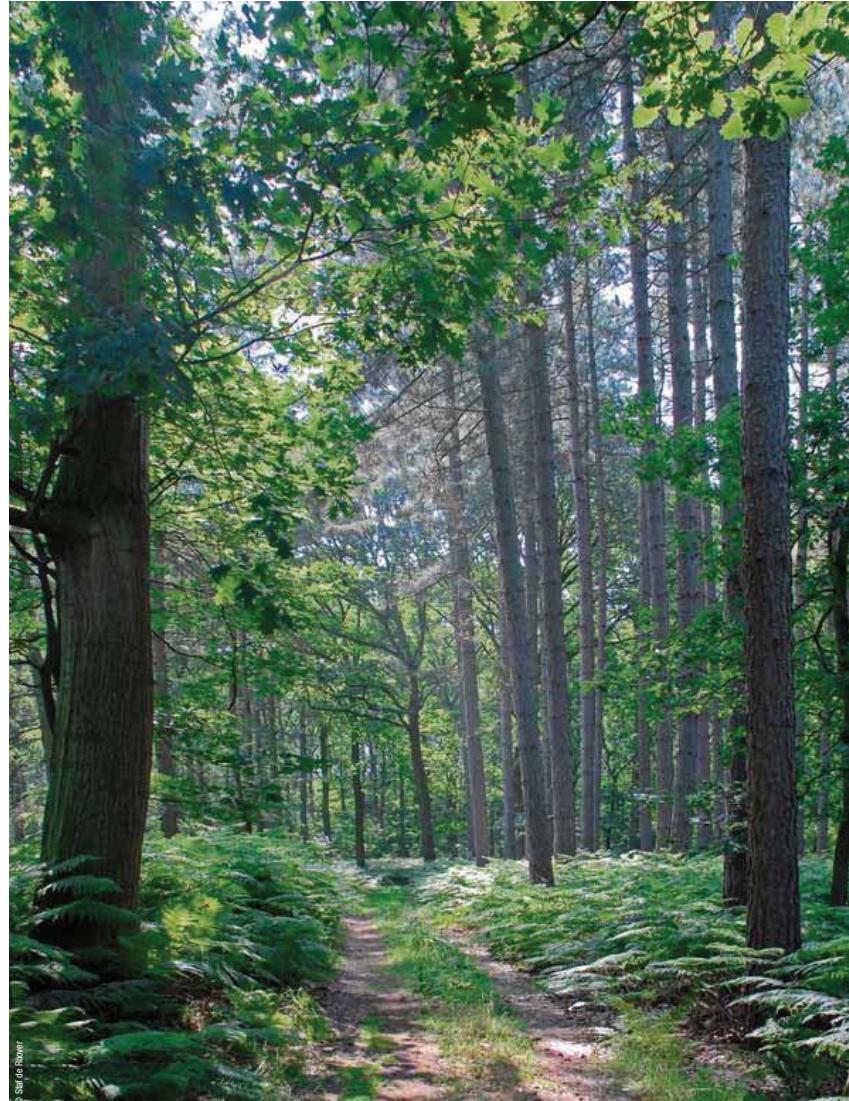
Three-quarters of these habitats are in poor condition: It is not surprising that the Flemish government is strongly committed to achieving the goals defined in the directive.

"The Flemish government's plan for the habitat areas is scientifically grounded and in consultation with interested parties," says professor Verheyen. "But there is danger in the one-sided focus on the habitat areas. Increasing segregation threatens to emerge between nature and non-nature outside the habitat areas – about 90% of the territory – biodiversity is seriously in decline. This creates a barren landscape. The intention to connect pieces of nature is almost buried, and we are moving towards islands of nature in a sea of non-nature."

Why so many species?

Why all this effort to preserve biodiversity? Are we better off with all those species than without them? Traditionally, this question has received an ethical answer: Species must not disappear because it is morally wrong. But this is not sufficient. "A new approach points out the importance of ecosystems," explains Verheyen. "Nature does a lot for us, more than we often think. Pollination of crops, water purification, erosion prevention... Our well being depends on these ecosystem services. And we know that more diverse ecosystems do a better job. Biodiversity is the yardstick of how healthy an ecosystem is and therefore the extent to which it provides its services."

And the future? "I'm afraid we will lose more species, especially outside the protected areas," says Verheyen. "The dichotomy between nature and non-nature is going to become more pronounced, with all the consequences that entails – unless there is a radical change."



As they age, Flemish forests are becoming more ecologically valuable, meaning that the species living there are doing well

A GLIMMER OF HOPE

Sometimes a species that has vanished pops up again unexpectedly. A few weeks ago a wildcat was spotted in Bocholt, Limburg province, and otters (photo, p1) have been seen recently.

The species that reappear often benefit from better protection; for example, the great cormorant. Another element is improved water quality, something the

beaver, otter and many fish species take advantage of. In other cases, "opportunistic species" that are able to adapt to humans return to their old habitats – like the wild boar, the fox and the beech marten.

This should be a sign of hope, but not everyone is happy: Both the fox and wild boar are seen as pests by farmers.

THE FRAGILE FIVE



As many as one-quarter of all species in Flanders are threatened, but for these five the picture looks very bleak.

Most heathland in Flanders is protected, but this ecosystem is very sensitive to pressure from outside. The **wheatear bird** (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) is one of the heathland species suffering from habitat degradation.

Not long ago, the **wall brown** (*Lasionymata negra*) was a common butterfly, until it suddenly disappeared for reasons unknown. Most butterflies are struggling, as it's hard for them to find food in agricultural areas.

In a field in Tongeren a wild **hamster** (*Cricetus cricetus*) specimen

was found after it was killed by a combine harvester. No more than a few dozen remain. The hamster is a typical field species that lives outside nature reserves, in agricultural areas where biodiversity is in sharp decline.

The **garlic toad** (*Pelobates fuscus*, pictured) is a specialised species that needs a specialised environment: sandy soil that's not too acidic. Like others, it finds it difficult to survive in a fragmented environment.

The **angel shark** (*Squalus squatina*) has the dubious honour of being the only Flemish species on the international Red List and is the victim of by-catch and overfishing.

Local elections: Yellow wave sweeps across Flanders

N-VA upsets parties across the region, as Bart De Wever becomes mayor of Antwerp

Alan Hope

Last Sunday's municipal elections showed a clear victory for the N-VA and for its party president Bart De Wever. It will take a few days for complete figures for the region to emerge, but N-VA was the largest party in 44 municipalities, up from only three in the previous local elections of 2006. Not only did the N-VA topple 41 mayors of other parties, they also earned second place in many races and achieved a popular vote expected to be roughly equal to that of former cartel partner CD&V, at something under 30% of the vote. The election for provincial councils also took place on Sunday: Across the region, N-VA scored 28.5% against CD&V's 21.5%, Open VLD's 14.6%, SPA's 11.5%, Vlaams Belang's 8.9% and Groen's 7.7%. While those scores do not take local issues and personalities into account, they are as close to a region-wide trend that was available as *Flanders Today* went to press.

With the exception of Herstappe in Limburg province, where the elections list was unopposed and took all seven seats, most municipalities saw upsets.

Antwerp

The talk of the town was unquestionably the result in Antwerp, where the margin between De Wever's N-VA and sitting mayor Patrick Janssens' SPA was much greater than expected. N-VA won by 9%, and De Wever will become mayor of Antwerp. Janssens conceded before all the results were in, saying: "There was someone better than me."

Janssens admitted that he had failed to engage with De Wever's strategy of announcing the local election as a referendum on the federal government, in which his party does not serve, but where Janssens' socialists are present. The SPA were standing on a joint list with CD&V. De Wever (pictured) now faces the task of governing rather than opposing, and his party's fortunes in the 2014 federal and regional elections would appear to depend very much on how he performs in office.

The other big surprise in Antwerp was the spectacular result for the



left-wing PVDA of Peter Mertens, which won four seats, where Mertens himself, a highly media-savvy figure, had been expected to scrape through alone.

Antwerp results: N-VA 37.7% · Stadslijst 28.6 · VB 10.6 · Groen 8 · PVDA 8 · Open VLD 5.6

Ghent

"Ghent is an island in Flanders," commented the popular mayor Daniel Termont following the result, in which he was returned to city hall thanks to a combined socialist-green list that pulled in more than 45% of the vote. N-VA was never expected to unsettle Termont, but it did take second place in front of Open VLD, with CD&V and VB languishing in single figures. As *Flanders Today* went to press, Termont was weighing the possibility of introducing a third party – most likely Open VLD – into his administration.

Ghent results: Stadslijst 45.5% · N-VA 17.1 · Open VLD 16.5 · CD&V 9.1 · VB 6.5

Kortrijk

In Kortrijk, federal pensions minister Vincent Van Quickenborne looked set to become the new mayor,

despite his Open VLD party winning fewer seats than that of his rival, sitting mayor and former justice minister Stefaan De Clerck (CD&V). As *Flanders Today* went to press, Quickenborne, who has promised to step down from his ministerial post if he takes the mayoral sash, had formed a coalition with SPA and N-VA to oust De Clerck.

Kortrijk results: CD&V 33% · Open VLD 21.3 · N-VA 16.3 · SPA 14.3 · Groen 7.4 · VB 6.1

Other cities

Turnout in Brussels was remarkably low: 17.1% absentees across the 19 municipalities, with a high of 20% in Elsene. Some politicians are blaming federal interior minister Annemie Turtelboom's comment that no-one would be prosecuted for failing to vote. Among Flemish candidates, Groen achieved the most success, rising from 11 seats in 2006 to 19 now, while the overall number in Brussels remained the same as 2006, with a total of 77. The biggest changes came in Brussels City (from six to 10) and Anderlecht (from seven to 10). In both Sint-Agatha-Berchem and Ganshoren, the number of Flemish candidates elected fell from seven to four.

Mechelen returned mayor Bart Somers to his post, along with his Open VLD-Groen-independent list, with more than 33% of the vote. N-VA was in second place with 23.2%, while the biggest surprise was VB, which lost two-thirds of its support to finish at 8.7%.

In Hasselt, a number of local scandals saw the mayor's list of Hilde Claes lose 15% of its support but still remain the largest party at 33%, with the N-VA at 25.5% and the CD&V at 22.7%.

Bruges' socialist party under Renaat Landuyt edged into first place at 26.8%, just 2.2 points ahead of the CD&V of former mayor Patrick Moenaert. The two parties have now formed a coalition, with Landuyt as mayor. Bruges was just one of many municipalities that had trouble with the new voting computers, which led to delays and, in some cases (as in Bruges), recounts of the vote.

Oostend saw the socialists hold on to power but with a reduced margin, their share down 13% to 32.1%. N-VA took most of those at 22.7%, but also more than halved the score of VB, from 16.8% to 7.7%.

Anja Otte

FIFTH COLUMN

A new era

For just a brief moment, waving through an open window of Antwerp City Hall, he looked like Sinterklaas, the Episcopalian figure that spoils Flemish children with sweets and toys. To many Flemings, Bart De Wever, who won Antwerp's local elections convincingly, is indeed something of a Sinterklaas: an almost saintly figure that brings nothing but good.

As his opponents keep reminding him, De Wever has simply become the mayor of Antwerp. However, everyone knows that his influence in years to come will reach far beyond City Hall.

De Wever's eyes were set on 2014 from the start. The N-VA leader believes that the 2014 federal, Flemish and European elections will be the start of a "democratic revolt" and that his nationalist party will be able to extend its influence at the national level even further, with Flemish independence as its ultimate objective.

To do this, De Wever needs the local support he got last Sunday across Flanders. This gives the N-VA not just a local network to build from but also extra finances.

The final debate on Sunday demonstrated the fighting mood the party president is in. His victory, he says, stands for Flanders' rejection of the federal government, led by French-speaking socialist Elio Di Rupo. De Wever's first words in his victory speech were directed at the prime minister, who he asks to "start preparing a confederate state as of now". (Literally, his first words were "turn that record off", as loud music kept him from starting the official speech.)

The local elections do not change anything as far as the government of Flanders is concerned, although minister-president Kris Peeters will undoubtedly feel some impact from N-VA's renewed confidence. Peeters' own party, CD&V, like the other traditional parties Open VLD and SPA, has yet to find a strategy to counter the seemingly unstoppable N-VA.

The fact that all three of them are part of the federal government, which De Wever systematically calls a "taxation government", hasn't helped. Neither can they ignore N-VA, like they did for years with the now imploded Vlaams Belang, which they deemed undemocratic and left aside for ethical reasons.

With this result, Flanders is entering a new era. Gone are the times when power shifted between the three traditional parties. The outcome largely depends on De Wever's ability to stretch the momentum for another year and a half. Can he keep his record playing?

THE ELECTION IN FIGURES

76,185

personal preference votes for Bart De Wever, standing in Antwerp, the highest score in Flanders

200

technicians were standing by on Sunday to deal with any problems arising in the 151 municipalities using electronic voting machines

98

years, the age of the oldest candidate in Flanders, a former journalist, standing for the left-wing PVDA in the provincial election in Limburg

24

years, the youngest mayor to be elected on Sunday, the aptly-named Francesco Vanderjeugd from Staden, West Flanders, who will lead a three-party coalition of Open VLD, SPA and N-VA

18

the youngest election candidate, Niels T'Seyen of Hemiksem, Antwerp province, celebrated his majority – and eligibility – on the day of the election itself. He was contacted by the list leader on Facebook, of course

Record cocaine haul in Antwerp

Eight tonnes of the white powder was packed with bananas from Ecuador

Alan Hope

Police and customs officers in Antwerp have seized a record consignment of cocaine, contained in banana boxes travelling from Ecuador to the Netherlands. At over eight tonnes, the seizure is the largest ever of the drug in Flanders and the second-largest ever in Europe. The seizure was made in connection with an investigation into a

customs officer working at the Port of Antwerp, who was suspected of being involved in organised drugs smuggling. Among the bananas in the container, customs found 6,985 packets of cocaine. The container was allowed to continue by lorry, minus most of the cocaine, to Rotterdam, where five men were arrested, including the driver of the lorry.



The street value of the haul was estimated at half a billion euros. There was also a windfall from the operation: The bananas in the shipment were also seized and sent to the Rotterdam Zoo. The suspect customs officer and two alleged accomplices were ordered to remain in custody for another month by a court in Antwerp.

De Lijn bus contract decision on hold

Unions at Flemish-based coach constructors VDL and Van Hool reacted furiously to news last week that 237 new buses for Flemish transport authority De Lijn had been ordered from the French constructor Irisbus. No final decision has yet been taken regarding the purchase, minister-president Kris Peeters announced. "Price should not be the only criterion when placing an order," unions said in a statement. Luk De Bock, secretary of the ACV Metea union called on the government to "show some political courage" by bringing the order back to Flanders. Van Hool, the larger of the two constructors, employs about 4,000 people in Bree, Limburg province, and in Koningshooikt in Antwerp.



The VDL Transit model currently used by De Lijn, seen here in Ostend

province. VDL Bus in Roeselare, West Flanders, is a subsidiary of the Eindhoven-based VDL Group and employs about 500. The French bid for the delivery of the buses was "exceptionally attractive", said De Lijn chairman Jos Geuens, coming in €37 million under De Lijn's own estimate. Under EU law, the authority is obliged to invite tenders from European as well as local companies. The total contract concerns 232 regional buses and five training vehicles. Van Hool has been contracted for 27 regional buses and VDL for 27 city buses. Peeters said that the government will take into account all documents and arguments before reaching its decision.

New home for Mini-Europe?

Mini-Europe, the tourist attraction currently housed in the Heizel complex in Brussels, could find a new home in Kortrijk, according to owner Thierry Meeus. The attraction is due to move off the Heizel plateau in 2013 to make way for a new conference and shopping centre.

According to Meeus, Kortrijk politicians have been talking about the subject since May, but the question remains unresolved whether the city will find a place for the park, which features models of

well-known European landmarks. According to local N-VA leader Geo Verstichel, the park could provide 250 local jobs and tourist income for cafes and restaurants.

Other options include Braine-l'Alleud in Wallonia and a site in Montenegro. "All options remain open," Meeus said. He is also looking for a new location for Océade, the water attraction that will also be evicted from the Heizel next year.

Belgium trailing in labour market

Belgium is not doing an effective job bringing the unemployed and job vacancies together, according to a study carried out by the country's own National Bank (NBB). Belgium suffers from an unemployed workforce of low education, whereas the majority of vacancies are for skilled jobs. The gulf between vacancy and potential employee is wider in the country than anywhere else in the EU, according to the NBB. According to Fons Leroy, head of the Flemish employment and training agency VDAB, the problem

goes back to schools: Education curricula take little account of the needs of the labour market. In addition, he said, 17% of young people leave secondary education without a diploma. Flanders, with unemployment at 7.2%, does better than the national average. Brussels, where unemployment is over 20%, has the worst labour market efficiency of all three Belgian regions, more than three times as bad as Flanders and more than twice as bad as the national average.

Pilots to work part time at Brussels Airlines

Pilots at Brussels Airlines (BA) are prepared to work together with management to achieve savings but are proceeding with caution, the Belgian Cockpit Association (BeCa) announced. Last week BA said its restructuring plan would not involve any pilot redundancies, but they would be asked to adopt part-time work and a cut in pay.

BA is looking to save €110 million and presented its plans without laying off staff. Those involve part-time jobs for pilots, down to 85% in 2013 and 90%

in 2014 and a productivity increase of 15%. Pay rises would also be frozen for two years. The savings are intended to make up for losses in the last two years of a total of €130 million, as well as getting the company into a better shape for a €100 million investment by 45% shareholder Lufthansa. "Management will have to demonstrate to us that the measures will lead somewhere," a BeCa spokesman said. "We are not prepared to write them a blank cheque."

Thieves net €10 million in diamonds

The Indian diamond community in Antwerp has called for extra security measures after thieves last week entered the home of a 26-year-old dealer and made off with a package of uncut diamonds worth €10 million. The thieves tied up the dealer's wife and threatened violence if he did not meet their demands. He was ordered to empty the office safe and bring the diamonds to the Stadspark, which he did. The robbers were gone when

he returned home. This was the second such theft in two weeks in Antwerp's Indian community. In the previous incident, thieves used similar tactics against a gold dealer in the city. Another so-called tiger kidnapping in the suburb of Wilrijk in 2010, when a dealer's family was held for more than 18 hours, remains unsolved.

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Audit ▶ PWC

PricewaterhouseCoopers, the local affiliate of the international tax and audit consultancy, will be hiring 300 staff over the next year. The announcement comes weeks after competitors Deloitte and Ernst & Young launched a hiring spree to meet demand for financially savvy professionals.

Banks ▶ KBC

Flanders' largest financial institution, KBC, is to reorganise to concentrate on its core retail banking and insurance activities in Belgium and the Czech Republic. It will sell its businesses in Russia, Serbia, Germany, Slovenia and the Antwerp Diamond Bank, and keep its affiliates in Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Ireland and try to make them profitable. KBC received €7 billion of public money in the wake of the financial crisis in 2008 and expects up to €4.6 billion to be reimbursed by the end of 2013.

Beer ▶ Inbev

Leuven-based beer group Inbev is to invest €20 million in a new filtration and canning facility in its Liège brewery, producing the best-selling Jupiler brand.

Chemicals ▶ Tessenderlo

Specialist chemicals producer Tessenderlo is to invest €75 million in its French affiliate in Loos to develop capacity of its water purification products line. The new facility is expected to come on stream in 2016.

Luxury ▶ Poltrona Frau

Italian luxury home furnishing and decoration group Poltrona Frau is to open a flagship store in the Grote Zavel area in Brussels as part of its international development.

Post ▶ Bpost

Postal service operator Bpost has sold the electronic financial documents management activities of its Certipost affiliate to the Finland-based Basware for €18.2 million.

Retail ▶ Ikea

Swedish home furnishing retailer Ikea plans to open an additional three stores in Flanders over the next five years: one in Hasselt, one near Antwerp and one possibly near Bruges.

Supermarkets ▶ Delhaize

Supermarket group Delhaize is to drop its 15 town-centre City stores. The company will seek franchise operators for the outlets and turn them into independent Proxy Delhaize shops.



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ING

Mining a rich seam

Old smartphones and laptops could be the key to a shortage of crucial materials in Flanders

Senne Starckx

Flanders doesn't have mines for precious metals. So where do we get our rare earth materials from – the elements without which we wouldn't be able to produce wind turbines, electric cars or energy-saving light bulbs? Well, through "urban mining", a new recycling strategy by which we can become a little less dependent on imports from China.

Last month, the universities of Leuven (KUL) and Ghent, the Dutch research institute TNO and the Belgian materials and technology company Umicore presented a new research platform that will look for solutions to tackle the scarcity of these so-called rare earths and other materials that are vital for the Flemish economy. The platform, known as the Research Platform for the Advanced Recycling and Reuse of Rare Earths – or RARE³ – consists of a strong multidisciplinary collaboration between university researchers and the private sector.

In recent years, the EU has defined 14 materials as "critical raw material" – so-called because their exceptional scarcity is directly proportional to their exceptional economic value. They are all materials that are crucial for the transition to a green economy. Rare earths (among which are neodymium, europium, terbium and yttrium) are necessary for the operation of wind turbines, electric cars and low-energy light bulbs – and also for mobile phones and laptops.

With the exception of Greenland and Sweden, Europe has no critical rare earths of its own. This may become a major problem in the near future, because more than 40% of the world's reserves are in China – and China produces about 90% of all the rare earths in the world. For



Thanks to "urban mining" Flanders can become a little less reliant on China for its rare earth materials. The Chinese leaders, materials like europium are becoming a strategic weapon.

One man's trash

Part of the solution for Europe and for smaller countries and regions like Flanders and the Netherlands, lies in the recycling of rare earths from electronic waste – by a strategy dubbed "urban mining".

"Currently, only 1% of the rare earths in electronic waste worldwide is being recycled and reused," says Koen Binnemans, a chemistry professor at KUL and one of the leaders of RARE³. "With this platform, we want to explore new and more efficient methods for recycling rare earths from electronic waste."

One of the key challenges is to separate the metals used in electronic goods like mobile phones and laptops. Binnemans: "It's not an easy task. In contrast to precious metals like gold and platinum – that

Umicore can recycle very efficiently – it's much more complicated to recover and reuse rare earths. One of the main reasons is that the designers of these goods don't give much thought to the scarcity problem. Another reason is that all these products have become more and more complex. Not so long ago, a typical electronic product contained around 20 elements from the periodic table. Now a smartphone contains more than 60 elements."

So how will the RARE³ researchers tackle these problems? "At KUL we are studying, for example, the use of super strong magnets to separate the rare earths – based on their different magnetic properties," explains Binnemans. "Another strategy is that we radiate the complex mixture of rare earths with light emitted by very intense LEDs. Some rare earths will oxidise by the intense radiation, others will stay unchanged, by which we have

created a new way to separate them from each other."

Supply and demand

Although urban mining seems a promising and very "green" way to substitute rare earths imported from China with our own home-produced materials, it cannot supply the entire demand for rare earths from industry in Flanders. Binnemans: "Rare earths are not only rare in the earth's crust. They are also rare in electronic waste. For example, a mobile phone contains only 0.6 grams of rare earth material. Recovering such a small amount from a rather complex electronic circuitry is not always profitable. So we are realistic. Urban mining is definitely necessary, but it won't solve the scarcity problem. We have estimated that, if we had the best separating and recovering methods at our disposal, we would still be able to provide only 20% of the total demand for rare earths through urban mining."

That's not a very good prospect. But maybe the designers of our future laptops, smartphones and other electronic devices could help out. "Good recycling begins with good design," says Christian Hagelüken, an engineer at Umicore. "Imagine a computer that, if you let it fall on the ground, falls apart into reusable components," he says. The situation is not quite like that at the moment. Materials are connected and fused together in an increasingly complex manner, making it increasingly difficult to separate them when the product has become waste. We need a radical change in the way product designers work. They have to think more about the afterlife of their electronic designs."

THE WEEK IN SCI & ED

Fleming Arne Pauwels is one of 50 nominees, out of 700 entries from 18 countries, for the international James Dyson Award for young design engineers. Pauwels, who studies product development at the Artezian University College in Antwerp, designed a transportable climatic chamber for farmers in sub-Saharan Africa. On a study trip in Ethiopia, he saw how many crops were lost during transport. His affordable chamber, named Baridi – meaning "cold" in Swahili – creates ideal conservation conditions.

The Interdisciplinary Institute for Broadband Technology has been rebranded as iMinds – already the name of the institute's annual conference, which starts in Ghent on 8 November. The independent research institute, founded by the Flemish government to stimulate ICT innovation, wants to focus more on people and social challenges.

Private clinics from now on will have to report risky surgeries to the Flemish agency for care and health. If they ignore this obligation, they can be fined up to €10,000. According to Zorgnet Vlaanderen, the umbrella organisation for the care sector, Flanders has more than 60 private clinics. The Flemish government hopes that this obligation will give a better insight into how they work.

The city of Ghent has launched a pilot project whereby parents automatically receive an SMS if their child does not show up at school. If successful, the city wants to expand the system to all secondary schools in the city. Truancy is a big problem in Ghent, where 11.5% of students in secondary schools skipped at least 10 half-days during the 2010-2011 academic year and 3% at least 30 half-days.

A total of 1,180 students – or 1% more than last year – are registered at a Flemish university college. The umbrella organisation of the Flemish university colleges counts 132,724 students altogether, and in five years, their numbers have risen by 25%, or 26,182 students.

The research project "Sterk in Frans" ("Strong in French") shows that first-year students of primary education in university colleges lack sufficient knowledge of the French language. Flemish education minister Pascal Smet says the issue is discussed during the evaluation of the teachers' study. A working group of the Flemish Education Council, the strategic advisory body for education policy, will concentrate on the specific problem of French.

Q&A

Chris Lambrechts, director of the Flemish expertise centre for sexual health Sensoa, on the new national Aids plan

Why is it necessary to draw up a plan against Aids on a national level?

A plan that combines all strategies will be more effective and improve cooperation. For the moment, Flanders is mainly active on the prevention front, while the federal state is responsible for medical care. But we don't work in separate domains as there is a clear link between treatment and prevention: Early medical intervention makes people with HIV – the virus that causes AIDS – less contagious.

When will the plan be ready?

It should be launched by next June. A committee of experts from all communities and relevant sectors will meet regularly, and among them will be people living with

HIV. Bringing all parties together will be a challenge, especially

in Wallonia, where there is no umbrella organisation, like Sensoa in Flanders.

How is the situation in Belgium?

About 25,000 people in Belgium live with the certainty of an HIV diagnosis, which is around 0.2% of the total population. The situation is far better than in, for example, South Africa, where 22% of people know they have HIV. But we especially have to reach more gay men and people with origins in sub-Saharan Africa. We certainly don't want to stigmatise these groups, but the rate of HIV diagnoses among them is still rising – in the whole of Western Europe. The prevalence of HIV among gay men in Belgium has doubled in the past decade. As

HIV is a long-standing problem in sub-Saharan Africa, many immigrants are infected, often without being aware of it.

What measures should be included in the plan?

We are proposing a distribution of pamphlets among doctors, to help them in their conversations with patients who they feel are at risk of infection. There should also be a self-test available online to find out whether you could be infected or are part of a high-risk group. Furthermore, we hope researchers can establish in detail why people are reluctant to use condoms.

Interview by Andy Furniere



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On rough seas

Ostend's museum ship Amandine sails you back in time

Andy Furniere

Until 1995, Iceland was the promised land for fishermen in western Europe, even in winter. The crews on Flemish vessels gladly defied the biting cold and treacherous tides to cast their nets in the rich fishing grounds around Iceland because they were rewarded with an ample salary and the admiration of colleagues.

The last of those Flemish Icelandic trawlers, the Amandine, is now docked on land at the Fisherman's Quay in Ostend, as a museum where the tales of an illustrious period in Flemish fishing history are related.

Those huge catches in Icelandic waters were so appreciated that the fishermen of centuries ago were willing to spend six months at a turbulent sea in extreme cold.

At the beginning of the 20th century, motor ships considerably shortened their journey to three weeks. Flemish vessels operated in Icelandic waters in summer, but remained in the North Sea and the English Channel during the winter months.

After the Cod Wars on fishing rights between Iceland and the United Kingdom, in 1972 Iceland reduced the fishing areas for foreign vessels and gave the captains the choice of either fishing there all year long, or not at all. Nineteen captains from Ostend preferred to become true Icelanders – among them was the skipper of the Amandine, which would hold on the longest. By the time it returned, on 3 April, 1995, fishing in Iceland was not deemed lucrative any more, and the curtain fell on the Icelandic fisheries in Ostend.



Inside the crew's cramped sleeping quarters on board the Icelandic fishing boat Amandine, now a museum in Ostend

Hazards and disasters

The exhibition in Ostend, set up alongside the keel of the museum ship, vividly illustrates the rough working conditions on board an Icelandic trawler. You can listen to the recorded testimonies of crew members and watch a Flemish documentary from the 1950s that lays bare the reality of gutting fish and toiling in rain and wind for hours on end.

"After a trip of around four days, the crew fished for 10 days in a row, sometimes 20 hours a day," says guide Michel Decoo, who helped renovate the Amandine.

The renovation was organised by Maritieme Site Oostende, a group of volunteers with a nostalgic passion for old fishing vessels.

"Temperatures could drop below minus 20 degrees," Decoo goes on. The seamen wore several layers of woollen clothes under water- and windproof clothing, and even motorbike tyres over their wrists, as protection against friction with the wet sleeves.

The journey was hazardous, especially in the rough seas of Pentland Firth north of Scotland, where the clash between the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea caused

dangerous tides. The Amandine crew was not spared from disasters: In 1969, a seaman was knocked overboard in a storm. Another crew member suffered life-threatening injuries in 1982 when the Amandine towed a trawler with engine failure – the Pelagus. The captain of the Amandine dropped the injured man off quickly on land before returning to the Pelagus, but the tide and the storm drove the defective ship onto the rocks. Four men drowned. But the many photos on display don't feature frightened or sick sailors. The seamen mostly pose together proudly and show off their enormous

catches, with specimens one-and-a-half metres long. "They didn't just do it for higher salaries," says Michel Decoo. "The extreme conditions forged strong ties of friendship and gave them a special status among the fisher folk."

Nude models and motorbikes

In that time, quantity was more important than quality, and in 10 days the Amandine would catch around 60 tons of fish, mostly cod. This was the maximum capacity of the Amandine's fish hold, where the catch was conserved in ice. While looking at a replicated scene of men at work in this fish hold, you can even smell the fish.

Through a narrow doorway and over raised thresholds, you reach the engine room, where the temperature could rise to 40 degrees – ideal for drying clothes. At the top of a steep staircase, you step into the crew's sleeping room: small bunks with posters of nude models and motorbikes. Only the captain slept upstairs, close to the control cabin. In this small cabin with several navigation systems, Morse code signals beep constantly. On deck, all the equipment has been renovated so precisely that it feels like the Amandine could set off again for a fishing journey in Iceland at a moment's notice if necessary. After disembarking, you can walk in a replicated street in the Ostend of the 1960s, with shops, a bar and even a brothel.

► www.museum-amandine.be

STREEKPRODUCT SERIES

Alan Hope

Hasselt speculaas

Cast aside those minimalistic biscuits they bring you with your coffee: There's a new *speculaas* in town, and you may never look at biscuits in the same way again. It's not new, of course, the Hasselt *speculaas*, but it's just been added to the list of recognised Flemish regional products by the agricultural marketing agency VLAM. In fact, the variant on the usual biscuit has been traced back to 1831, at the time of the Ten Days' Campaign by the Dutch king Willem I to try to suppress the Belgian revolution.

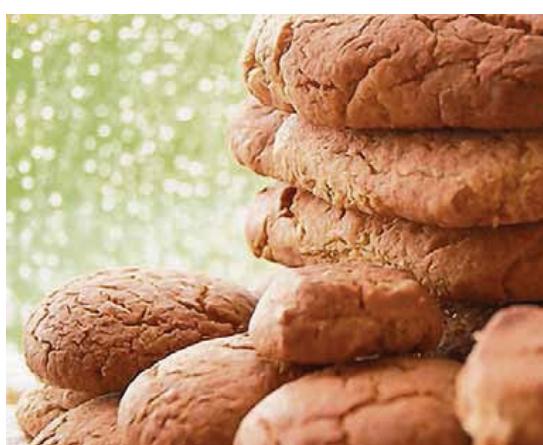
The confection known as *harde oemp* was made by Hasselt bakers for the troops, because it was portable, highly nutritious and kept for a long time. Baker Antoine Deplee filed a patent for it in 1870, under the name *speculatie*.

The word *oemp* is the local pronunciation of *homp*, or chunk, which describes the Hasselt

speculaas perfectly, albeit not very elegantly. In contrast to the thin, crisp *speculaas* we're all used to, the Hasselt variety is thick and heavy, which means it's crisp on the outside and softer inside. There are two varieties: plain *speculaas* and "good" *speculaas*, which has added almonds.

A word about the word: *speculaas* is usually considered to be the Dutch sort, flavoured with spices like cloves, cinnamon and nutmeg. The word *speculoos* usually means the Belgian version, whose flavour is predominantly that of caramelised sugar. In fact the words are interchangeable, at least as far as Limburgers are concerned.

Hasselt boasted a number of bakers of the traditional *speculaas* in the lead-up to the First World War, and the Sint-Marie bakery, one of two to have won a certificate as



streekproduct, uses the old recipe of the Jacobs bakery: flour, lots of butter, dark candy sugar and baking soda. And roughly chopped almonds for the "good" version. Bikkems bakery, which was also recognised, also sticks to tried-and-trusted methods. We tried a selection from one of the many shops in the city who

make their own: As well as the usual everyday *speculaas*, there were versions with chocolate chips and with marzipan. The latter version comes close to the Dutch "filled *speculaas*", and the flavours go together remarkably well. The chocolate chips were frankly lost in the mix, and almonds, likewise, are an unnecessary addition in our view. Nothing beats the simple pleasure of the plain *speculaas*, large and chunky, hard on the outside and crumbly inside, lightly spiced, not too sweet and very filling.

And not as cheap as the run-of-the-mill *speculaas*, it has to be said. No wonder the cafes don't give them away. But worth it, for a treat: The chances of you downing a whole pack while watching telly are slim, unless you try really hard.

► www.streekproduct.be



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Come on in

Kortrijk's Interieur is an open celebration of modern essentials and a reflection of design's evolution

Emma Firmin

If 2012 is to be the first time you experience the Interieur Design Biennale in Kortrijk, well, you won't be alone. Even seasoned attendees will feel a difference. Change has been headlined in the lead-up to an event that regularly attracts 90,000 visitors, and nearly half of the more than 300 exhibitors will be new participants. So what to expect from an event that has a 44-year history and was born in a time of change that echoes through to today?

While Kortrijk Xpo plays host to the majority of Flemish and international brands, exhibiting the latest furniture, lighting, textiles, flooring, bathrooms, technology and other realisations of Interieur's distinctive identity of design for modern interiors, the new Buda Island provides a temporary residence that reflects design's evolution.

And with the multifaceted cultural programme of Interieur Extra extending from day into night, you can eat, drink and talk design in settings that may be informal but not without meaning. DesignMarketto serves up a "Freshly Cut" menu at the Interieur Bistro on the first floor of the Buda Factory, where food, design and ideas will mix.

Last spring, the biennial appointed Lowie Vermeersch as its new president and curator for this 23rd edition. The former design director of car maker Pininfarina says that when he took charge, "what clearly emerged was the need to look again at the essence of an event in a heavily changed society, which is reflected in the design context of globalisation or access." Reaffirming the DNA of Interieur "has given us the opportunity to explore the potential of its physical value and sensory experience for exhibitors and visitors".

Under the banner "A city in a biennale, a biennale in the city", Vermeersch is seeking a new dynamic for the event, which wants

visitors to not just look but also take part. Despite its long association with Kortrijk, Interieur has sometimes looked a bit off-piste at the Xpo, with the pull of the city and its links to the event not as strong as they could have been. Vermeersch: "When I first came to the project, the Buda Factory wasn't part of the deal ... but it was one of those moments when the constellations clicked."

And so it should have been. With its industrial heritage in the textile industry, a strategic policy towards design has been a focus in Flanders for numerous organisations that promote creative industries. But if the promotion is too introspective, a vortex of coherency and context threatens such well-meaning initiatives.

Yet the pro-active approach of Kortrijk mayor Stefaan De Clerck and the way design is woven into Flanders in Action's Pact 2020 - a list of economic and ecological goals that the region would like to achieve over the next eight years - means that, according to Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, "design not only makes it possible for enterprises to generate more added value to become more competitive on a global market, it's also a trigger for innovation with interesting concepts and methods." Indeed, Kortrijk and the region are being bold, balancing their investments in diverse projects from design management and tools for service design to cross-over projects that focus on mobility in a city context. They are also making local connections and extending their reach in Europe.

But the region is looking for more than media coverage: Even vague ideas have to have substance to leave a visible trace.

Magnificent seven

For Vermeersch, the commerce-culture equation that Interieur embodies produces a "really very curious dialogue between the two - a kind of friction and inspiration that sees both elements



Nendo's fishline chair is part of the Future Primitives project at Interieur

come together and produce one hybrid aspect". Hybrids won't be rare species at Interieur and can certainly be found in the Project Rooms of what Vermeersch has called "Future Primitives".

Departing from the tradition of having one guest of honour, Vermeersch selected seven guests to explore the theme of tomorrow's living experience. Interpretations by Japan-based design studio Nendo, American architect and designer Greg Lynn, Rotterdam design duo Makkink & Bey and Flemish photographer Fien Muller with Ghent artist Hannes Van Severen will be spread throughout Interieur. Those of American artist David Bowen, London designer Ross Lovegrove and London-based collective Troika are anchored at the Buda locations - particularly appropriate for Bowen, who uses real-time surface data from the Leie River to propel the mechanics of his project.

Other features at the Xpo will include work by this year's Belgian Designer of the Year, Brussels-based

Alain Gilles. He is also one of the designers in Designregio Kortrijk's third edition of the 5x5 showcase, for which the organisation matched five local businesses with a leading designer and supported a design process for a year. And in the exhibition *Déjà-Vu*, creations by Jasper Morrison and Naoto Fukasawa question concepts like originality and innovation in design.

Pedal-powered lunch

Events at Buda Island include the winners of the Interieur Design Awards and the work of 40 designers and 20 open workspaces in *The Battle* by De Invasie alongside the Interieur Extra programme, with its selection of mini exhibitions, open studios, film screenings, installations, interventions and

culinary experiences like a pedal-powered barbecue.

Other highlights include the Four Yearly Prize for Design given by the province of West Flanders at the Broelmuseum and the Lowest Industrial Design Centre alumni show, presenting a portfolio of its Industrial Product Design graduates.

For Vermeersch, exhibitors are the core of Interieur, and he is delighted with the number who will venture to the event for the first time. Kortrijk is not Cologne or Milan and has never pretended to be; it is open to professionals and the public, and with its size and focus an advantage, it is what Vermeersch describes as an "event of discovery".

20-28 OCTOBER

Kortrijk Xpo, Buda Island and other locations across the city

► www.interieur.be

INTERIEUR HIGHLIGHTS



"Surfaces" by Charlotte Dumoncel Argence, part of Flanders Avenue

Design Platform Flanders

Interieur 2012 will see some of the first public results of Design Platform Flanders. A collaboration of Design Vlaanderen, Flanders InShape, Flanders Fashion Institute, Designregio Kortrijk and Design Hub Limburg, the desire is to outline a strategic policy for Flemish design and promote it here and abroad. It is a Flanders in Action initiative, receiving support from the Flemish ministers of economy, innovation and culture.

► www.designplatformvlaanderen.be

Design Fusion: Flanders Design Summit

22 October, Kortrijk Xpo

National and international speakers talk about the

changing role of design and the designer and explore how it can be a critical resource for Flanders. Registration required.

Flanders Avenue

20-28 October, Kortrijk Xpo

Four Flemish designers present their work in dialogue with young talent.

Muller-Van Severin: Future Primitives

20-28 October, Kortrijk Xpo

Flemish photographer Fien Muller and Flemish artist Hannes Van Severen present one of the seven projects by designers, artists and architects that explore the theme of tomorrow's lifestyles.

Can you feel it?

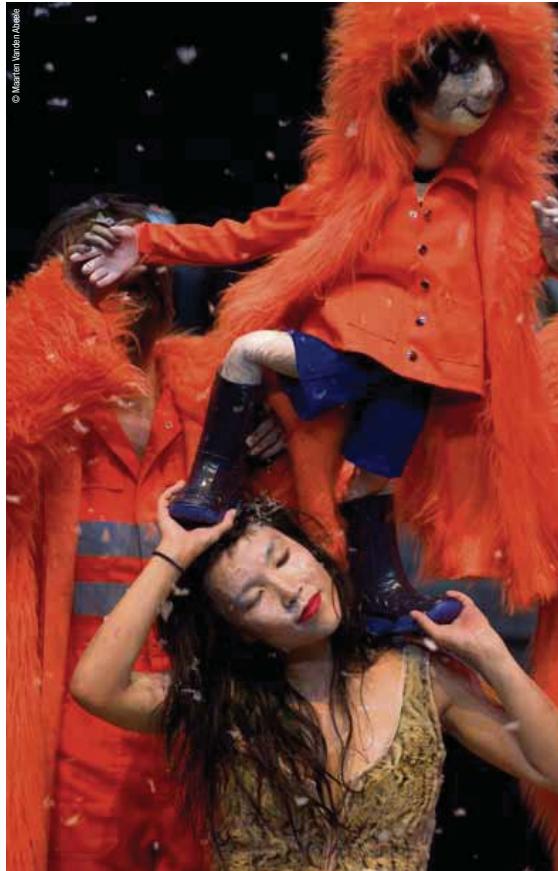
Marketplace 76 is a multilingual emotional frenzy – just remember, none of it's real

Katy Desmond

Jan Lauwers, renowned theatre maker and co-founder of the Brussels-based Needcompany theatre group, takes his job very seriously. "I think every play should have a good conflict and a good catharsis," he says. You will find his latest work, *Marketplace 76*, which plays the Kaaitheter in Brussels this month, packed full of both, from incest, rape and suicide to promiscuity, salvation and love.

This musical play of four acts opens at the one-year anniversary of a terrible tragedy that killed 24 people of a sleepy Belgian village. Told through acting, dance and song and based on a stunning original score by composers Hans Petter Dahl, Maarten Seghers and Rombout Willems, we follow 11 hapless villagers over the course of four seasons as they confront their ongoing grief while dealing with a string of further horrors that Lauwers throws across their paths.

A boy jumps from a high window; a Dutroux-style paedophile abducts and rapes a local child; a man is publicly hanged, his wife is imprisoned by their neighbours. All the while, we watch the villagers react and grieve. Performed in English, French and Dutch, with subtitles in all three languages, it's a multilingual frenzy of feeling and raw emotion. Underpinning the drama is a broader message about acceptance and belonging. Lauwers got the idea for the play



The orange-clad performers in Jan Lauwers' *Marketplace 76* tug at the heartstrings

from a conversation he had with a street cleaner outside his office. "A black man, in his orange overalls," he recounts. "He started here as a refugee. He studied in Mogadishu in the university and now he cleans the streets."

For Lauwers, orange becomes a symbol of "the fifth world – a world of people without identity who are not being allowed into Western society." As the play goes on, more and more characters join this world, cladding themselves in orange as they fail in one way or another to conform to society's norms.

It's only a show

Marketplace 76 is no light-hearted evening at the theatre, but it is extremely watchable and, believe it or not, not at all depressing. You will even find yourself laughing at certain points. In the prologue, Lauwers warns the audience against taking the tragedies of this unhappy village too seriously and advises: "Don't think about it afterward; this is theatre, you know." And, strangely, you don't.

It is a play of intense dynamics.

The violence is as fierce and

palpable as the love is tender and

all-conquering. But their intensity is brought to a point that they begin to become caricatures. Right at moments of high action and unbearable emotion, Lauwers or another performer will interrupt to tell you: "Watch this. This is important", bringing in a sort of sarcastic realism that reminds you that what you are watching is, after all, a piece of fiction.

So while your heart is sick with compassion for the loss and pain of the villagers, there exists a nagging feeling that your emotions are being directed by a cunning puppeteer. Juggling the incongruity of what you feel for the characters and what you suspect is a dirty trick leaves you with nothing else but to laugh.

"There is a perverse angle in the show that asks how far do we go now, people ... I'm pushing the emotions almost to the level of sentimentality. Sentimentality is forbidden in art, and I totally stand for that. But art has to do with emotion, as well. So you have to find that difference between emotion and sentimentality."

► www.needcompany.org

24-27 OCTOBER

Kaaitheter, Sainctelettesquare 20, Brussels

► www.kaaitheater.be

The Lost Boys are back in town

Peter Pan comes to Brussels, like you've never seen him before

That boy is back – the one with the wild red hair, floating at the window, looking for his shadow – but you've probably never seen Peter Pan this way before. From 20 December to 6 January, the production company Music Hall will present *Peter Pan, the Never-ending Story* in Brussels' Vorst National. Not your typical Peter-Pan-Mary-Martin crooning on a window seat, this new adaption turns the classic play into a 360-degree spectacle, with some 50 actors, singers, acrobats and stunt people flying, flipping, twirling and sword-fighting their way across the stage.

The story stays true to most adaptations (though this does tend to vary from JM Barrie's original play), with all the staples present: Peter, Wendy, Nana the dog, pirates, Indians, Lost Boys and all the rest. The actors sing, but do not talk on stage, leaving the storytelling up to a slightly cloying voice-over *tête-à-tête* between Tinker Bell and Captain Hook. The songs, which are well-known hits like Seal's "Kiss From a Rose" and "Someday I'll Fly Away" from *Moulin Rouge*, are also used to move the plot forward.

A few great stunts make this spectacle truly spectacular, such as Peter Pan free-flying 15 metres in the air thanks to a massive wind fan, during which I actually held my breath. Also, the final fight between the Lost Boys and the pirates is an epic ordeal, with huge fireballs flying across the stage, hot enough to heat up a chilly arena. At one point, Hook and Pan actually fight upside down on the ceiling, with no visible ropes or harnesses – a sight that alone made the whole show worth attending.

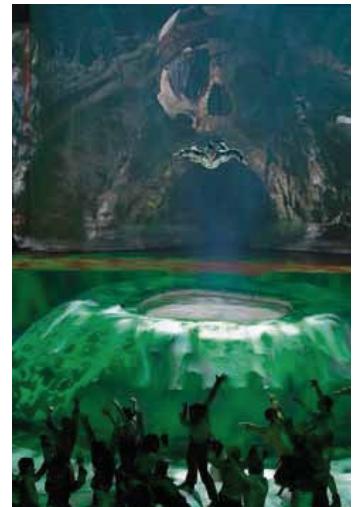
Fairytale fashion

Also notable are the costumes, which were the final project of Flemish fashion designer Kaat Tilley, who died unexpectedly this year and to whom the show is dedicated. Tilley's style is at home in the fairytale world and extravagantly intricate, fanciful costumes do well in inviting the audience in for a night of fantasy. The adaptation isn't flawless, however. It's much more spectacle than play, so often storytelling plays second fiddle to an impressive display. Occasionally the songs seem tired or forced, and they lay the love

story between Peter Pan and Wendy on a little thick, which, heretical to Barrie's story, makes it more about romance than about coming of age.

The narration was occasionally drowned out by the swelling of dramatic music, which at times made it difficult to follow for people unfamiliar with the details of the story. For example, there was obvious confusion among audience members when Tiger Lily suddenly appeared and the explanation was inaudible. All in all, however, it's a fun family show for those wanting to suspend their disbelief during the holiday season. Music Hall says it's for young and old, but I say if you're old, you'll enjoy it more if you take along the young. The music is all in English, but the narration will be done in French and Dutch (so check that you buy tickets to the right show). There is also one performance on 20 December that will take place fully in English. Tickets are already flying out the door. So you're advised to reserve now. KD

► www.musicall.be



Peter Pan soars in a spectacular performance of the much-loved tale

Picture this

A pair of teenagers have combined their artistic skills for a new book of striking images

Alan Hope

The first time we wrote about Maxim Piessen in these pages, he was back in August of last year. He was heading off to St Louis in the US to take part in a prestigious photography workshop, one of only three students admitted worldwide, on the basis of his formidable portfolio of insect photographs. Now he's back, with something very different: a new art book created with his friend Ben Goovaerts and published by Lannoo. And he's still only 17. *Flanders Today* caught up with the *wonderkind* from Kapellen, Antwerp province.

How did that American visit turn out?

"It went great! I learned a whole lot of techniques, like photographing insects in a mini-studio. On top of that, I met a lot of people I'm still in contact with. So that was good. But the best thing about the whole America trip was that I'm still getting a lot of attention and commissions because of all the media interest there was at the time. It gave me a boost that's made it possible to raise my hobby up to a whole new level."

How did the idea for the book come about?

"Ben and I were in the same class for years, and we became good friends. I knew Ben could draw really well, and he knew I was interested in photography. We wanted to combine the two hobbies, and the result was the penpho, a word we invented ourselves for the art-form; it is a mixture of PENCil and PHOTograph. We made the first real penpho for a birthday party for two friends. We were too late to buy a present, so we made them a penpho instead. And because we got such a great reaction, we went on to make a lot more."

"Once we'd made five or so, they wrote about our project in the paper. Lannoo the publishers read the article and came to us to ask if we'd like to make a book with 50 penphos on a theme of young people."

Penphopedia, is a 96-page collection of their work, crackling with brilliant ideas and capturing (if memory serves) every aspect of what it's like to be a young person. It's published by Lannoo, which has a stellar catalogue of books for children and young adults.

So how does the collaboration work?

"First we sit down together to think up a good idea, because a good penpho has to have a strong idea behind it. Once we have that, I get started with the photography. When the right photo has been taken, Ben goes to the drawing board to draw the work that's going to go along with the photo. Once that's finished, it's scanned and I get to work with Photoshop. At the last stage, I have to make sure the drawing and the



photograph fit together perfectly, and then the penpho is done."

Think of drawings combined with digital photos, and you probably think of Ben Heine, an Ivory Coast-born Brussels artist whose work is a viral sensation on the internet. Piessen's response suggests he's heard the comparison more than once, though the similarities are only superficial.

Who are your artistic influences?

"Of course we're familiar with Ben Heine, and we have the greatest admiration for his work. Ben certainly inspired us, just as other digital artists have. There are certainly similarities, but isn't that true for a lot of artistic projects? Every painter and artist in history got his inspiration from somewhere."

WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

Steven Wullaert from Ghent has been named **Sommelier of the Year**. Wullaert, who has been practising for eight years, works at the two-star restaurant Nuance in Duffel, Antwerp province. The 26-year old won the title on his third attempt, after coming second last year to Pieter Verheyde of Hof Van Cleve. "Will my boss give me a pay rise? You'll have to ask him," he commented.

The TV comedy *Wat als?* has been **nominated for an International Emmy award** in the Best Comedy Show category, against competition including *Absolutely Fabulous* and the Sky TV comedy *Spy*. *Wat als?* is produced by Shelter, which also made the internationally successful *Benidorm Bastards*.

British author Jonathan Coe was in Brussels last week to hand over a "Noble Prize" to **Jo Boon**, son of the celebrated Flemish writer Louis Paul Boon, at the close of six months of celebrations around Boon's centenary. According to the organisers of "Boon year" in Aalst, more than 25,000 people took part in the various events in Aalst and Antwerp organised to mark the centenary.

A marble bust of Livia, wife of the Roman emperor Augustus, has been **returned to the Jubelpark museum** in Brussels, from where it was stolen in 1976. The bust, dating from the first century AD and probably commissioned by her son, Emperor Tiberius, turned up this year in Berlin, where it aroused suspicions in a saleroom. The would-be seller, who had nothing to do with the theft, received €25,000 in compensation – a fraction of the work's real value.

Action hero Jean-Claude Van Damme is to be honoured with a **life-size statue in his native Anderlecht**, commissioned by the owner of the Westland Shopping Centre and sculpted by the artist Guy Ducheyne. Van Damme will come to Brussels on 21 October to unveil the work, which he said had left him speechless.

Crime writer Pieter Aspe has **won a court case against the use of his photo** in an election pamphlet put out by Dwars Groen in Blankenberge. The photo originally appeared in a leaflet for Open VLD, for whom Aspe was a candidate before pulling out of the election race.

► www.facebook.com/penpho

Leading lights

Phaedra anniversary concert

Marie Dumont

Anyone interested in classical music will at least have heard of Roland de Lassus, Johannes Ockeghem, Adrian Willaert and other Flemish polyphonists who reigned supreme over European music in the Renaissance. They'll probably also have heard of Tongeren-born contemporary composer Philippe Boesmans, whose operas are regularly performed at De Munt and elsewhere. But between these two, *niets*: there is a four-century interruption, as if the land of Rubens and Ensor had stopped producing any music whatsoever.

"That's absurd," says Luc Famaey. "You can't have a brilliant composer one day, another hundreds of years later, and nothing in between. There must be some link between the two, some continuing tradition, even if, for various reasons, we've forgotten about it."

It is to unearthing this tradition that the energetic former VRT employee has devoted the past 20 years of his life. Phaedra is his labour of love, a small label produced almost single-handedly from a couple of rooms in his house in Beveren. With 76 CDs to its name, it is now about to celebrate its 20th anniversary with a concert at deSingel featuring the Jeugd en Muziek Symphony Orchestra of Antwerp, conductor Ivo Venkov and



the young soprano Liesbeth Devos (pictured).

Although Phaedra's catalogue includes music by Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann, it is most famous for its "In Flanders Fields" series, which focuses on previously unrecorded Flemish music. Starting in the 1820s, it reveals to the world pure gems by August De Boeck, Peter Benoit, Jef van Hoof, Lodewijk Mortelmans and many others. "Their music is to us what Smetana's is to the Czechs," says Famaey.

For love, not money

Phaedra receives no subsidies. "They're often more trouble than they're worth," Famaey sighs. "I haven't got time for all the red tape." The label relies on sales and often struggles to make ends meet. Famaey has made a virtue out of financial necessity by focusing on achingly beautiful songs and chamber works and forgoing much orchestral music that is beyond his means.

Still, with praise flowing in from as far afield as Japan and the US, his venture is a true artistic, if not commercial, success. And at a time when many labels are hugging the shore, preferring to record the umpteenth version of Brahms' symphonies rather than venture out into new territory, it also stands as a

courageous oddity.

Famaey grew up in Mechelen where, he recalls, music was the air he breathed. "From the carillons to the conservatory, to the Lemmens Institute, which was based there before moving to Leuven, to the cathedral choir which sang local works on feast days - Flemish music was everywhere," he remembers. It's a different story today, when he has a hard time convincing his countrymen that their musical heritage is anything but mediocre, a misconception he ascribes to a general lack of pride. Several times, he's had to work with Czech and Hungarian orchestras when local ones proved uninterested.

Famaey named his series after the famous First World War poem by Canadian officer John McCrae. "The composers are like the soldiers in the poem, buried underground," he explains with a tremor in his voice. As for 'Phaedra', it means 'beautiful' in Greek, but also 'to shine the light on'. "My role," he says, "is just that: to reveal music that's lying in obscurity." As long as Flemish scores continue to gather dust on library shelves, he'll be in business.

Phaedra recordings can be ordered or downloaded from the website

► www.phaedradcd.com

28 October, 17.00

De Singel, Desguinlei 25, Antwerp

► www.desingel.be

MUSIC

Sparks

Brothers Ron and Russell Mael have been the heart and soul of Sparks for the past 40 years. It's hard to imagine a more perfect pair. The elder Ron, hiding a timid but formidable genius behind his piano and ironic Hitler moustache (now trimmed down to an ironic John Waters moustache), composes the songs while Russ sings them with aplomb. The Los Angeles natives naturally got no respect at home but became near-instant celebrities upon landing in London in the 1970s. The boys also migrated musically from glam rock - their breakthrough hit "This Town Ain't Big Enough for the Both of Us" remains a milestone in that genre - to disco to New Wave, without ever exhausting the vein of cheek (and brute talent) that sets them apart. The tour is a back-to-basics affair billed as *Two Hands, One Mouth*. Ron and Russ perform songs from their extensive repertoire without any arrangements or extra musicians. **Georgio Valentino**

19 October, 22.00

Vooruit, Ghent

► www.vooruit.be

MORE MUSIC THIS WEEK

Brussels

Natacha Atlas and Smadj: British-Egyptian singer Atlas and Tunisian-French multi-instrumentalist Smadj perform together for the first time. The inaugural concert of Bozar's Tarab series, dedicated to Arab music.

OCT 18 20.00 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23

► www.bozar.be

Dirty Projectors: The Dirty Projectors won't let all the hype go to waste. The members of the latest Brooklyn buzz band have used their PR coup as a springboard into filmmaking. The result, a short entitled *Hi Custodian*, will be screened before their live set.

OCT 20 19.00 at Ancienne Belgique, Anspachlaan 110

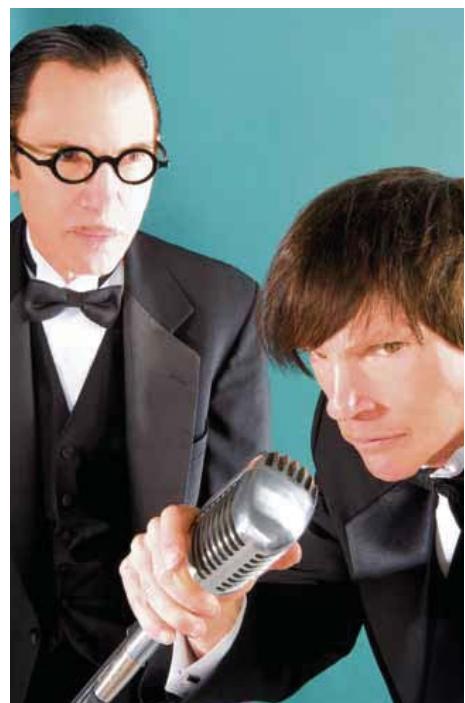
► www.abconcerts.be

Ghent

World Soundtrack Awards: The 12th edition of the awards, in the context of Film Festival Ghent, feature a concert programme celebrating the work of award-winning composer James Newton Howard. Howard himself conducts the Brussels Philharmonic for the occasion.

OCT 20 20.00 at 't Kuijke, Citadelpark

► www.filmfestival.be



FAMILY

Family-Friendly Films

Options are limited for families seeking quality entertainment on the silver screen. The children's movies of today are massive merchandising machines that cater to the shortest attention spans. Adult fare is, well, often *too* adult for the junior members of the family. They just don't make 'em like they used to. So Bozar is offering an alternative. Its family-friendly film series offers a cross-section of cinematic masterpieces from the past century. The first item on the agenda is the classic Gene Kelly (and Stanley Donen) flick *Singin' in the Rain*, an eminently wholesome musical comedy about golden-age Hollywood and the growing pains it went through in the evolution from silent film to talkie. It's in the original English with Dutch and French subtitles. The series continues in the coming months with Disney's *Finding Nemo*, Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* and *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. **GV**

21 October, 15.00 | Bozar, Brussels | www.bozar.be



SPECIAL EVENT

Brabant Draft Horse Day

The mighty Belgian breed – considered by many to be the strongest horse in the world – is the guest of honour and *raison d'être* of this special all-day event, which is hosted for the second time by the Flemish Brabant town of Vollezele, home also of the Belgian Draft Horse Museum. Visitors are treated to a horse show, competitions, shoeing and grooming demonstrations and kids' activities. The day wraps at 18.00 with the town's traditional *Brillantworp*. Spectators are showered with chocolates for which they couldn't care less. Everyone is looking rather for the needle in the haystack, a single gold piece that earns the prize: a replica of the bronze sculpture that crowns the town square. The horse festival is just the tip of the iceberg as Vollezele's town fair is in full swing the entire weekend. Be prepared to have a spooky time in keeping with the Halloween theme. **GV**



MORE FAMILY ACTIVITIES THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Grimm's Fairy Tales: Cinema Zuid marks the 200th anniversary of *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. Each Sunday session begins with breakfast and continues with readings and film adaptations of Grimm classics. Part of the *Jeugdfilmfestival*.

OCT 21 & 28, 10.30 at Cinema Zuid, Lakenstraat 14

www.cinemazuid.be

Mechelen

Soup and Potatoes Explained: Nutrition is the theme of this interactive exhibition which was recently unveiled at Mechelen's science centre. Discover the importance of a healthy diet through hands-on activities.

Until SEP 1 at Technopolis, Technologielaan

www.overdesoependepatten.be

PERFORMANCE

Booty Looting

Famed Flemish choreographer Wim Vandekeybus has been a fixture on the European contemporary arts scene since the 1980s, so it's no surprise that he and his company Ultima Vez were invited to debut their latest production at the Venice Biennale this year. *Booty Looting* is a surreal marriage of dance, music, photography and spoken word. Six performers act out a family drama. The psychological tension is projected through the amplifier of multi-instrumentalist Elko Blijweert. The frequent Ultima Vez collaborator is camped out with his guitar and synthesisers on the periphery of the action. Another intruder is photographer Danny Willems, who shoots the drama as it unfolds. And it sure does unfold. If you can't make any of the Antwerp dates, your next chance to catch *Booty Looting* is 22 November at Cultuurcentrum Hasselt and 28-29 November at Stadschouwburg Leuven. In English. **GV**



18-20 October, 20.00 | De Singel, Antwerp | www.desingel.be

MORE PERFORMANCE THIS WEEK

Brussels

La Wallifornie: Post-apocalypse Belgium is the setting of this performance-installation in which future Flanders is underwater and its refugees drift toward the high land of Wallifornia. In English.

OCT 19-20 20.30 and 22.00 at Beursschouwburg, A Ortsstraat 20-28

www.beursschouwburg.be

Lulu: Polish director Krzysztof Warlikowski presents Austrian composer Alban Berg's unfinished opera about a famous dancer's fall from grace. Sung in German, with French and Dutch subtitles.

Until OCT 30 at De Munt, Muntplein

www.demunt.be

DUSK TIL DAWN

From Dusk till Dawn 20 - 21 October from 21.00, Tijuana, Ghent

Sci-fi and anime lovers, your attention please. The weekend of 20 and 21 October is all about the annual F.A.C.T.S. event at Flanders Expo in Ghent. It's the biggest comic, science fiction and anime festival in the Benelux area, with, for the first time, a proper after-party. Nightclub Tijuana will host the first From Dusk Till Dawn Party, a do with the unusual dress code of "waking the dead". The party is named after Quentin Tarantino's darkly comic 1996 horror crime movie, so to get in the mood you might want to watch it (again). Afterwards, dive into your fancy dress

wardrobe and come up with your best zombie look (weapons are strictly forbidden). The party on 20 October starts at 21.00 on the ground floor of Tijuana, the so-called Space Bar. There will be a special cocktail served, a happy hour from 21.00 to 23.00 and musical video performances by the Wagner Bros DJs. Around 23.00, the doors to the downstairs floor will be unlocked. Walk down to the Titty Twister room (named after the strip club in Tarantino's movie), where several DJs will make you dance all night: Like Davidov, for instance, resident DJ at Ghent's Culture Club

who is also famous for his Studio Brussel De Maxx parties. Jedilectro will be there, too, a local DJ who'll be performing under this name for one last time. Make sure you're there at 1.00 if you don't want to miss the "special welcome": a sensual dance act! Tickets are €6 in advance, €8 on the night. Don't forget your fancy dress (or cosplay, as it's called in the comic and sci-fi world): The best outfits will be rewarded with a free cocktail.

www.facts.be



Katrien Lindemans

BITE

Artisanne ★★★★

Where I live in the Flemish Ardennes there are countless farms selling meat and dairy and speciality shops with all sorts of artisanal delicacies. Every time I pass one I vow to start going there for my fresh produce, but for convenience's sake I continue to favour the one-stop grocery shop. Then I discovered Artisanne, a shop and eatery in one, selling and serving up local specialities, from coffee and *speculoos* to wine and cheese, and all from the Flemish Ardennes.

Artisanne opened in June this year under the slogan Taste your Region. "It's a hobby that got out of hand," says owner Robrecht Bothuyne, also a local politician who took time out of his busy campaigning schedule to chat with me and my friend when we came over for lunch. "At first my wife Martien and I had the idea to open a web shop as a way to bring the region's many quality products to the people. But then we decided that customers should have a chance to taste the products before they buy."

The entrepreneurial couple fell for the charms of Ronse's oldest house, a former gravedigger's home from 1684. They fully renovated the white-painted brick corner building with a typical Flemish gable roof, transforming it into a cheery, comfortable dining room with old-fashioned accents.

Martien takes our lunch orders while telling us more about the inspiration behind the business: "We live in such a rich region. There are five coffee roasters right here in the Flemish Ardennes, and eight breweries. Not to mention an impressive number of local meat producers, cheesemakers, bakers and even wineries. It took me a year to come up with



the selection you see here, and I'm continuously adding to it."

My friend's lunch is a *hoeveschotel*, or farm platter, filled with local pâté, steak tartare, two types of ham in thick slices, local cheeses including one creamy goat's cheese, grain mustard and slow-baked organic bread. It comes with a side salad. With this she enjoys a glass of Regent 2009, a full, fruity red from the Dorrebeek winery in nearby Michelbeke.

I've ordered the *croque Artisanne*, a hearty grilled ham

and cheese sandwich using only local products. The cheese is gooey and flavourful, the ham thick and smoky and the bread light and crispy – the best *croque* I've ever had. It comes with a very nice salad and sides of ketchup and mayonnaise. I wash it down with a Ronsische dubbel, a dark and heady beer from Ronse.

In spite of the more-than-generous portions, we round off lunch with dessert and two coffees from Oké Coffee in Geraardsbergen. My friend is pleased with her slice of lemon cake which is fluffy and zesty and includes a layer of plump raisins. Meanwhile, I am at the chocolate counter, selecting five pralines to go with my coffee and chocolate mousse.

After paying the €42 bill for both, we proceed to the shop where we splurge on an assortment of beer, wine, *advocaat*, cookies, chocolate, coffee, jenever, fruit juice, honey and jam.

► www.artisanne.be



Sint-Martensstraat 51-53, Ronse



Tue-Sat, 10.00-18.00



Mains: €8-€12



Boutique shop, cafe and eatery selling only products from the Flemish Ardennes

TALKING SPORTS

Bruyneel's role in Armstrong's downfall

In Lance Armstrong's Shakespearean downfall from the cancer survivor who won a record seven Tour de France titles to his unmasking as the devious mastermind of an elaborate doping network, there is one man who emerges as his equal in cheating and chicanery. That is Johan Bruyneel, the West Flemish team manager who helped create the programme that fooled the authorities for so long.

In the devastating 200-page report released last Wednesday by the United States Anti-Doping Agency (Usada), Bruyneel's name appears 129 times. Usada investigators describe "the most sophisticated, professional and successful doping programme that sport has ever seen".

The nine-page section on Bruyneel alleges that he managed to "introduce young men to performance-enhancing drugs, becoming adept at leading them down the path

from newly minted professional ride to veteran drug user".

Bruyneel, 48, has always denied the accusations. However, the report's exhaustive details of his persuasive and often bullying techniques leave little doubt. Usada questioned 26 witnesses, including 11 former teammates of Armstrong and even carefully selected quotes from Bruyneel's own autobiography. It reveals how he closely monitored riders' blood values, taught them how to dope and pressured them instead of protecting their health.

Bruyneel was considered a master tactician in the cycling world when he served as team director of USPS and Discovery Channel cycling teams, beginning in 1999. He oversaw nine Tour de France victories in his 14 seasons as a team director, making him one of the most successful in history.

Last Friday, RadioShack Nissan Trek took the inevitable

decision to relieve Bruyneel of his position as sporting director. In a statement, Bruyneel said he was stepping down in part to prepare for his defence against separate doping allegations brought against him in June by Usada.

There is also a question mark over Flemish cyclists Jurgen Van Den Broeck and Stijn Devolder. Both raced for Armstrong's USPS team during their early careers but say they are surprised and shocked by the revelations and had no knowledge of what was going on behind the scenes.

Meanwhile, the Belgian Cycling Federation has forwarded the Usada document to federal prosecutors for further investigation into Bruyneel's involvement. Whatever the outcome, Bruyneel has ensured himself a place in sports infamy. If cycling is to recover from this scandal, he needs to be removed from any position of influence.

The last word...

One for the road

"We're expecting some turbulent years. We can get through it much easier without obligations to shareholders."

Michel Moortgat, CEO of Duvel Moortgat, which is pulling out of the public stock exchange

New direction

"There are fewer and fewer people coming to church, and the number of priests and volunteers is shrinking fast. Our organisation can't support such a large number of churches anymore."

Werner Van Laer of the Mechelen archbishopric, where nine churches will close

Winner takes all

"The city is for everyone, but tonight it's mostly for us."

Bart De Wever takes possession of Antwerp's slogan, as well as its city hall

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY

Cover story

Constant Permeke is without a doubt the leader of Flemish expressionism. As a major retrospective to the Antwerp-born painter and sculptor opens in Brussels, we tell you about his work and in what ways the tragedies of both World Wars so profoundly influenced it

Business

A few weeks ago, it was announced that, after its acquisition of the Method group in San Francisco, Ecover had become the largest ecological cleaning products company in the world. We visit the staff in Malle, Antwerp province, to find out how this business has grown, why they do what they do and who is buying their green products

Tourism

It's believed that the first-ever windmill for grinding grain was developed in the County of Flanders, where a rich population ensured the technology as far back as the 12th century. Now East and West Flanders have a massive concentration of old grain windmills and watermills. We talk to associations charged with maintaining them and meet a student of a special windmill course



Johan Bruyneel (right) with Lance Armstrong in 2010