

Eight days later

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Emotional investments

Bozar looks back on the vast catalogue of work created by troubled expressionist Constant Permeke

Ian Mundell

Sixty years after his death, Bozar looks back at the life and work of renowned Flemish expressionist Constant Permeke and at some contemporary artists through whom his inspiration lives on.

Bozar's retrospective of Flemish expressionist Constant Permeke may feel immense, but the 130 works on display are just the tip of the iceberg. "In 1930, in this building, he mounted an exhibition with around 600 pieces," says Willy Van den Bussche, curator of the retrospective. At this point, Permeke still had more than 20 years of active life ahead of him, during which he continued to paint and draw at a terrific rate, while developing a new interest in sculpture.

Yet the artist's productivity was balanced by a destructive tendency. "He made a lot of sculptures, but he also destroyed a lot of sculptures," says Van den Bussche. "He wanted his vision to be unique."

This went beyond self-criticism and the destruction of work that Permeke didn't think was up to scratch. Van den Bussche tells a story from late in the artist's career: A Parisian museum director suggested that one of Permeke's sculptures recalled the work of Rubens. "When the work came back to his studio, he demolished it."

When I suggest that Permeke was perhaps a troubled soul, Van den Bussche gives me a slightly withering look. "Yes, he was troubled. He was an expressionist painter, an artist. It's all emotion."

Born to the business

Permeke was born in Antwerp in 1886 but spent much of his childhood in Ostend, where his father was curator of the municipal art museum. The young Constant met famous local artists such as James Ensor and studied at the academies in Bruges and Ghent. Reaching his 20s, he seems to have had no problem becoming a full-time artist. His early interest was in impressionism and the styles that developed from it, including

the luminism of Fleming Emile Claus. He also came into contact with more radical contemporary movements, such as French cubism and fauvism, along with the first stirrings of expressionism from Germany. Closer to home, he was friends with the symbolist Léon Spilliaert and a frequent visitor to the artists' community at Sint-Martens-Latem, where he met figures such as Albert Servaes.

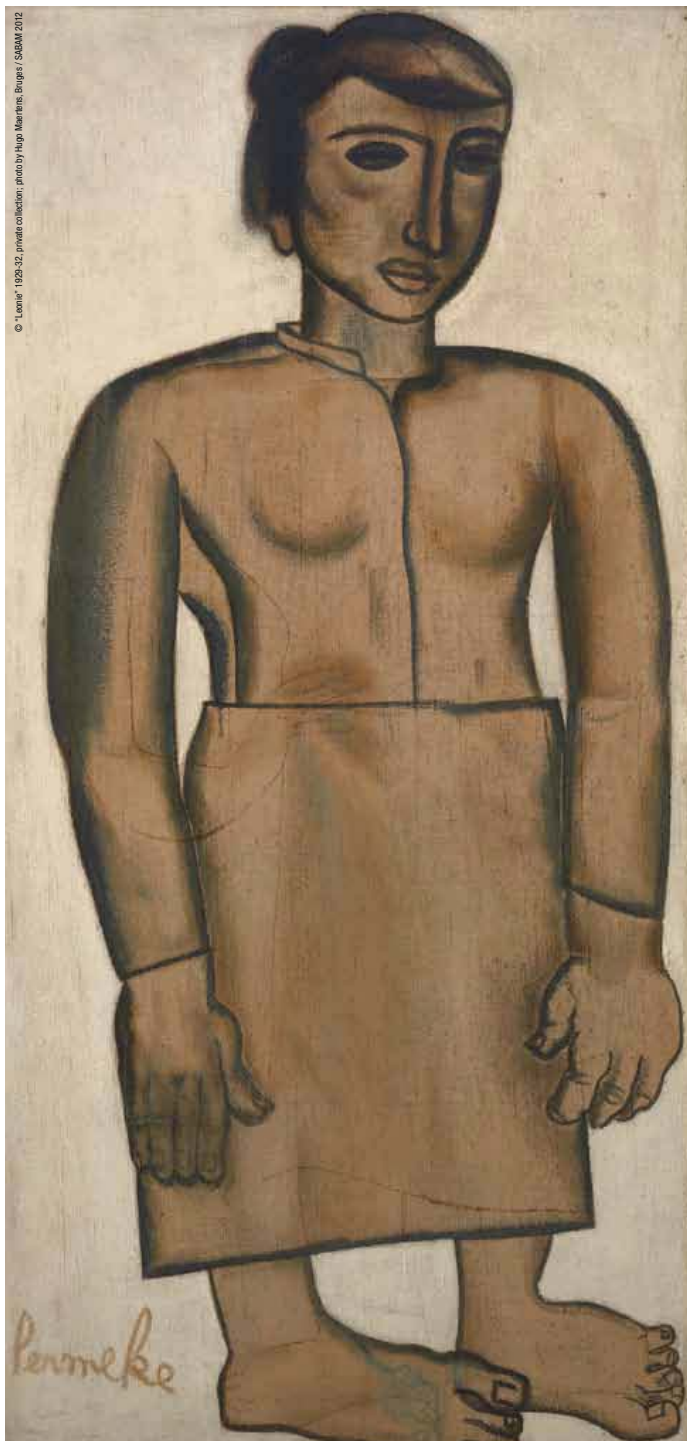
All this ended with the outbreak of war. In 1914, Permeke was seriously wounded in the defence of Duffel, near Antwerp, and was sent to England to convalesce. Joined by his wife, he saw out the war in Devon. It was here that Permeke started to draw and paint again, combining his pre-war influences into a very personal version of expressionism.

The art of expressionism

While impressionism aimed to capture the visual sense of a particular scene, often through free use of colour and brushwork to depict the effects of light, expressionism sought to bring out the artist's deeper reactions. To do this, artists used techniques such as distortion and exaggeration in either colour or form, often harking back to more primitive forms of art.

Permeke's brand of expressionism simplified figures, emphasising their feet and hands, while reducing their faces to masks. They grew to fill his canvases, often giving the impression of being confined, contorted or crushed within the frame. Meanwhile, his range of colours diminished to browns and blacks, giving his portraits an earthy feel.

Permeke was not alone in taking to expressionism, and he is commonly grouped as one of the Flemish expressionists with his contemporaries Frits Van den Berghe (1883-1939) and Gustave De Smet (1877-1943). They were friends and shared influences, but Van den Bussche thinks that the separation caused by the war meant that Permeke's style was all his own. "In 1920, when they found each other again, they saw that Permeke was thinking in the same way. But he has always been independent."



© "L'Enfer" 1923-24, private collection, photo by Hugo Maertens, Bruges / SABAM 2012

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope

Filip Peeters



If you've lived in Flanders long enough, you have no doubt seen the face of Flemish actor Filip Peeters, who has had roles in the blockbuster *Loft*, the crime-drama *De Hel van Tanger* and all the way back to *De Leeuw van Vlaanderen*, the 1985 adaptation of the historical epic novel, directed by the late Hugo Claus. Now Peeters is the face of De Acteursgilde (Actors' Guild), a new union for actors. Peeters, one of the founders, is the group's chairman.

Peeters has an impressive filmography and list of TV appearances, but he's even more famous in Germany to TV viewers. In the theatre, on the other hand, he's as much at home on Dutch stages as Flemish, and in French as well as Dutch. The 49-year-old actor, born in Anderlecht, has also written a cookbook for children, having previously worked in restaurant kitchens, including that of the two-starred Barbizon in Overijse. "At the beginning of my acting career, I was at the stove more than I was treading the boards," he said.

The Actors' Guild was launched last week in the Roma theatre in Antwerp and members so far

include deputy chair Michael Pas (*Code 37*, *Deadline 14/10*), Koen De Graeve (*De helaasheid der dingen*, *Tot altijd*), Wim Opbrouck (*Frits en Freddy*, *Man zkt vrouw*), Tom Van Dyck (*Katarakt*, *Dennis van Rita*), Els Dottermans (*Dennis van Rita*, *Allez Eddy!*) and the grand old man of Flemish acting Jan Decleir, among others. The group will offer legal, financial and contract advice and hopes to attract about 500 members, in part by offering a year's free membership to final-year drama students.

The surprise is not that Flanders' acting profession is forming a group to lobby for its interests, but that there hasn't been such a thing until now. Equity in the UK was formed in 1930 and the American Screen Actors' Guild in 1933. In Flanders, directors, screenwriters and producers have their own interest groups, but one for actors is only appearing now.

"The need was there," Peeters told *De Standaard*. "Flemish TV series, films and theatre productions are doing well, even internationally. It was time actors had a professional representation they could call on with their questions and ideas."

► www.deacteursgilde.com

News in brief

Socialist railway workers union ACOD has filed a **provisional intention to strike** on 29 and 30 October. Whether a strike will actually take place depends on the progress of talks on the reforms of the rail authority NMBS. The Christian union ACV is not involved in the announced action.

Work has begun on the long-awaited renovation of the **passage that links Brussels' Central Station** with the metro. The 130 metre-long corridor, which is used by about 100,000 commuters a day, will receive new lighting and exits, a bicycle parking space, info screens, CCTV and a work by the late Brussels artist Daniel Deltour. Some of the work, which will cost €1.6 million, will require the passage to close at night and in the summer. Renovations are expected to be completed by the autumn of next year.

Paul Marchal, the father of one of the two Flemish victims of serial killer Marc Dutroux, has rejected a possible meeting with Dutroux's ex wife and accomplice, **Michelle Martin**, who now lives in a convent in Wallonia. Martin has been given permission to meet with Jean-Denis Lejeune, father of another of Dutroux's victims. Marchal said that he thinks that Martin is using the meeting in an attempt to manipulate public opinion. "I'm afraid nothing new is going to come of it," he said.

The Flemish media regulator VRM has **fined TV station Vijf €25,000** for a station-identification clip broadcast in April that was sponsored by the perfumery chain ICI Paris XL. The clip advertised the station's own programmes, using shots of the cast of *Sex and the City* testing perfumes in one of the chain's shops. VRM said the identification of the sponsor meant it must be considered an advertisement.

A Facebook ad purporting to be a gift coupon from Flemish supermarket chain Colruyt originated from Pakistan and was designed to harvest the Facebook data of those who fell for the scam, the chain said. Visitors were asked to share the message and approve the **fake "Colruyt app"** at the same time. Colruyt said that as the spammers' website is registered in Pakistan, legal action is virtually impossible.

The government of Flanders has approved a new decree on international adoptions, establishing the **Flemish Centre for Adoption** to counsel potential adoptive parents and provide advice after the adoption takes place. According to a spokesperson for welfare minister Jo Vandeurzen, the new procedure will speed up the process of adopting and encourage more couples to take the step.

Last week's World Cup qualifying match between Belgium and Scotland in Brussels was the **most-watched match in 10 years**, with 1,446,000 viewers on Sporza, a market share of more than 45%. Another 188,000 fans listened to the Sporza commentary on VRT Radio 1. Belgium won the match 2-0.

The **train route Brussels-Amsterdam** will be taken over by the high-speed Fyra service, local rail authority NMBS has announced. An NMBS spokesman said a weekend return ticket through Fyra will cost €82, while the cheapest fare available, booked at least a week in advance, will be about €50. Currently, tickets can be as low as €40 during the week and €24 on the weekend. The Fyra train will run 10 times a day, compared to the current 16 trips a day. Hunters in Bilzen, Limburg province, last week **shot 14 wild boar**, after a group of 40 of the animals

were chased out of a cornfield with harvesting equipment. Local farmers have been complaining of the damage caused by boar and blamed nature conservancy organisation Natuurpunt, which maintains the nearby Munsterbos woods, for not taking sufficient action to protect surrounding farmland.

Aviel Cahn, the Swiss administrative manager of the **Vlaamse Opera** since 2009, was last week re-appointed in the post for a further six years. "With the arrival of Aviel Cahn, we took the decision to build a new and idiosyncratic opera house," commented chairman Paul Cools. "With this extended term of office, we want to continue along that same path."

Last week saw the start of a new campaign to encourage students in the main **university cities of Flanders to give blood**. The non-profit organisation Bloedserieus (Blood Serious) aims to attract 16,500 donations among the student populations of Leuven, Antwerp, Ghent, Brussels and Hasselt with a twice-yearly call for donors. According to the Flemish Red Cross, about 10% of regular donors are lost every year, often as a result of reaching the age limit. "That's why it's crucial to have a good supply of new donors," a spokesperson said.

Belgacom has announced it will begin to roll out its new **super-fast 4G mobile data network** in November. The service, also known as LTE and available only for smartphones, will at first be limited to a few cities in Belgium, including Antwerp, Ghent, Leuven, Hasselt and Haasrode. The arrival of the service in Brussels has been delayed because of stricter GSM radiation levels in the capital.

FLANDERS TODAY

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Hans De Loore

OFFSIDE

Spreading the word

When some time during the 18th century, John Montagu, the fourth Earl of Sandwich, called for his manservant to bring him some meat placed between two slices of bread during a game of cribbage so he wouldn't have to stop playing or get the cards greasy, he could hardly have imagined how popular the invention would become.

Popular, in that the sandwich is eaten all over the world, and also popular in that it's a food that knows no class distinction. In my 1960s Glasgow neighbourhood, for instance, it was commonplace for children playing outside to yell up at their mothers in the tenement flats and receive a sandwich wrapped in paper thrown over the balcony several floors up.

Now the sandwich has become virtual, with a new campaign just launched by VLAM, the Flemish



agriculture marketing agency. Just visit the website, make a virtual sandwich or post a photo of one you've made in real life, and the

agency will match every virtual sandwich with a real one, donated to local food banks. The action coincided with International Bread Day last week, but it's running until 31 October.

The website also offers lots of information on the benefits of bread, as well as recipes for "creative" sandwiches, which apparently now covers those "wraps" that look as if they would stand no chance of remaining in one piece if chucked out of a fourth-story apartment. You can also find out about bread-related stunts going on around Flanders, from a bakery in Rijksevorsel giving away a filled lunchbox to a school in Merchtem where the teachers are making French toast for everyone.

► www.alliedagenbrood.be

Emotional investments

Constant Permeke show at Bozar is a study in extremes

▶ continued from page 1

Back in Flanders after the war, Permeke exhibited regularly and remained a part of the art world, but he was increasingly drawn to the lives of simpler folk. Living in Ostend during the 1920s, he painted seascapes and made many studies of fishermen, their families and living conditions. Then, in 1929, Permeke moved to Jabbeke, a village between Ostend and Bruges, and he increasingly turned to painting rural landscapes, farmers and their families. (He worked on "Leonie", the image on the cover, between 1929 and 1932.)

Permeke is well-represented in Flemish museums, usually with his earthy studies of peasants and fishermen. As well as showing some of the most famous examples, Bozar has brought out some less familiar work in this vein from private collections and museums across Europe. This includes some fine examples of the texture effects that Permeke achieved by combining oil paint and charcoal on canvas.

A particular treat is the "The Barn" (1933), on loan from the Pompidou Centre in Paris, showing a farmer with his cattle in a vibrant half-light of dark reds, browns and yellows.

Much of Permeke's work is dark, but the extremes on show here are still surprising. One of Van den Bussche's discoveries was "The Sleeping Harvesters" (1920), a portrait so black that it is hard to see the peasants leaning on their hands in the thickly applied paint. "It's an amazing work that has never been shown in my time," he says. Contemporary art critic Paul Haesaerts noted it when writing about Permeke's 1930 show and commented on how black it was. "That proves Permeke conceived it this way," notes Van den Bussche. "It hasn't become darker afterwards but was painted like this."

Contours of the body

There is also a good deal of darkness in Permeke's landscapes, but others are so bright that they leap off the gallery walls. Images of the spring and summer mix greens and golds in explosions of colour that are practically abstract. People hardly feature at all, although "Sunday Afternoon"

(1937), again brought in from a private collection, features a group of picnickers whose outlines are scratched into the paint in the bottom right-hand corner of the canvas, almost as an afterthought.

Late in the 1930s Permeke reacted to criticism of his landscapes by devoting himself to drawing and painting nudes and to sculpture. It's fascinating to see the techniques of the peasant pictures turned to this more intimate subject matter: He is still painting in browns, still squeezing his figures into the frame, but there is less distance and more warmth to the compositions. There are also striking similarities in colour and texture that you see when the large nudes are hung next to the landscapes, the contours of the bodies echoed in the contours of the land.

Jabbeke would remain Permeke's home until he died in 1952. His house and studio in the village is now the Permeke Museum.



The self-referential "About Permeke", 1922



Constant Permeke in his Jabbeke studio in 1946



"The Daily Bread", a late painting by Permeke from 1950, shows the browns of the fields transplanted to human forms

UNTIL 20 JANUARY

Bozar

Ravensteinstraat 23, Brussels

▶ www.bozar.be

AFTER PERMEKE

Work by two contemporary artists accompanies the Permeke retrospective at Bozar: nudes by South African painter Marlene Dumas and landscapes by Flemish painter Thierry De Cordier. While the subject matter provides a connection with Permeke, neither artist is exactly following in his footsteps.

Dumas is interested in displays of nudity, working from private and pornographic images of women to produce large portraits that retain the poses and gestures of the source material, while dissolving the flesh in washes of ink and acrylic or watercolour paint. There's a clear expressionist influence in her work, in particular with the adoption of

primitive forms, but the result is much colder and more distant than Permeke's nudes.

There's a spot in the Dumas room where you can look back to the Permeke exhibition and see one of his nudes framed in the doorway alongside one of hers. Seeing the two paintings side by side, there's a distinct human warmth in Permeke's treatment of his subject, while Dumas' painting, however it transforms the image, still communicates the pornographer's objectifying gaze. That may be the point, but it makes her work rather alienating.

De Cordier's large, dark seascapes have a closer connection with Permeke's work, exploring the movements of water

and air in a way that approaches abstraction. There's also a pleasing, if anecdotal, association, since De Cordier is based in Permeke's old home town of Ostend and presumably looks out on the same rolling waves.

But De Cordier is much more self-conscious in his work, choosing oblique titles for the canvases and working notes into the paint, from obscure quotations in German to comments that the painting is "unfinished and unfinishable". That said, Permeke was not above such games, once painting a domestic scene in which he depicted himself at tea, contentedly reading a newspaper article "About Permeke".

Local elections: eight days later

Coalitions form to block the N-VA, while Van Quickenborne becomes mayor of Kortrijk

Alan Hope

More than a week after the local elections, Antwerp politicians are continuing talks to form the city council, headed by N-VA's Bart De Wever (see Fifth Column, right), who will become mayor. More than half of all municipalities in Flanders – 150 – saw a change of mayor following the election. In 27 municipalities, parties formed ruling coalitions to exclude the largest party. The most reported, though, was in Kortrijk, where Vincent Van Quickenborne of Open VLD formed a coalition with socialists SP.A and the N-VA to oust the city's current mayor Stefaan De Clerck, whose CD&V party received the most votes. Van Quickenborne will now become mayor of Kortrijk. His job as federal pension minister will go to Open VLD president Alexander De Croo. Other notable news from 14 October's local elections:

- The Flemish electorate turned *en masse* for election coverage,



Vincent Van Quickenborne made a quick and decisive move to become Kortrijk's new mayor

on TV, on the radio and online. The website *derelectie.be* attracted more than half a million visitors, while the election coverage on TV saw an average of 800,000 viewers in the period between noon and

midnight

- Mark Demesmaeker, leader of the winning N-VA list in Halle, Flemish Brabant, was shut out of the mayor's office by a coalition of other parties. He is moving on to the European

Parliament, where he will replace Frieda Brepoels, who moves in the other direction to become mayor of Bilzen in Limburg

- Bart De Wever was widely reported to have the highest number of personal preference votes in Flanders, with 76,185. However, when taken as a percentage of total votes cast, De Wever drops to 63rd place with 23%, while the top spot goes to Sandy Evrard, mayor of Mesen, West Flanders, with nearly 62% of the total votes cast

- Kortenbergh in Flemish Brabant had the best return for women candidates in Flanders, with 15 of the 25 seats on the council now occupied by women. According to women's collective Femma, one in four municipalities in Flanders elected a percentage of women between 40% and 60%, most notably Overpelt in Limburg (56%), Ingelmunster in West Flanders (57%) and Kapellen in Antwerp province (58%).

Problems for electronic voting

Problems uncovered in the system of electronic voting used in the recent local elections were "teething troubles" and the voting procedure in general went well, according to Flemish minister for administrative affairs Geert Bourgeois.

Last week it was reported that the touch-screens of the new voting machines (pictured) had an unexpected influence on the outcome of the vote. When voters pressed on a party name too hard, they could easily jump to the next screen and inadvertently give the vote to a candidate on that list.

The result was that some lesser-known candidates ended up with more than the expected number of votes, and in some cases more than their better-known party colleagues. In the case of cartel lists, where lists are formed of members of more than one party – a common occurrence in municipal elections – the mistake might result in a member of one party being electronically favoured over a member of another. According to Antwerp judge Jacques Mahieu, the situation raises no legal problems. Bourgeois said that the problem did not arise in tests carried out after the election by his department and by the company that makes the



machines and that the auditor of the election, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, never notified him of any problem. In addition, he said, the screen display gives the option of changing the vote cast before the record is made, and the printed ballot can be inspected before it is posted in the ballot box. "I take it as read that people who vote do so consciously," said Bourgeois.

Peeters meets leaders of Turkey and Mozambique

The government of Flanders will dedicate one week next year to the promotion of Turkish food and cinema, minister-president Kris Peeters announced last week on a visit to the country. Peeters was in Turkey in conjunction with the Belgian trade mission to Ankara, as well as leading a delegation of Flemish business leaders to Izmir.

In Izmir, on a visit to a manufacturing plant owned by Deceuninck, which makes window and door profiles, Peeters received an assurance that the company in West Flanders had no plans to move all of its manufacturing to Turkey. "There is absolutely no question of delocalisation," said Koen Vergote, company representative to the visit. Flanders and Turkey will also cooperate more closely on maritime transport, according to a meeting

between Peeters and the Turkish minister of transport, Binali Yildirim. The port of Antwerp already trades about 2.4 million tonnes of freight with Izmir, and the growing Turkish car assembly industry could see that figure increase.

Peeters also threw his personal weight behind the promotion of lesser-known Turkish delicacies. "Everyone of course knows about kebabs," he told delegates, "but Turkish food is so much more than that."

Prior to the Turkey mission, Peeters met President Armando Guebuza of Mozambique, who was on a state visit to Brussels. Peeters announced €2.35 million in subsidies to projects in Mozambique: €1.17 million to Doctors Without Borders and nearly €1.2 million for the International Center for Reproductive Health.



Flanders will promote Turkish foods next year

FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

Winning was the easy part

A lot has been said about Bart De Wever's first reaction, after his Antwerp victory on election day. Should he not have spoken to the people of Antwerp first in his speech, before addressing prime minister Elio Di Rupo and the French-speaking politicians? Was his cry "tonight, the city belongs to us" too arrogant? Too divisive? Why did he look anything but happy, calling the poor DJ who failed to stop the music in time an "idiot"? And what was this march to City Hall all about?

Although most of this had been carefully planned – De Wever even selected the music – his attitude spoke mostly of relief, after spending years in the catacombs and seeing his party N-VA nearly wiped out, shortly after he cofounded it in 2001.

The day after, though, De Wever must have realised that winning was the easy part. Now it is up to him to form a coalition. The puzzle the voters have laid out for him is not easy and, last week, current socialist mayor Patrick Janssens made it harder still.

Janssens, who headed the Stadsljst, an alliance between socialists and Christian-democrats, told De Wever that it would not enter a coalition without the greens. This, he said, would truly reflect the election results, as the right- and left-wing parties are approximately equal in votes collected. In fact, the Antwerp vote reflects a duality, with a majority for the left (split between the Stadsljst, greens and the workers' party PVDA+) in the inner city districts and a majority for the right (N-VA) outside of those areas.

Janssens' demand rules out the obvious combination of N-VA and the Stadsljst. The coalition he proposes undoubtedly sends shivers down De Wever's spine. Instead of chasing the socialists from City Hall, as he had hoped, this would leave him stuck with even more lefties. No problem, Janssens replies, De Wever can always opt for an alternative coalition with liberals and greens.

Although Janssens calls his proposal sincere, it also seems very strategic. He will not leave the opposition to the greens, indeed the other winner on 14 October. Annemie Turtelboom, of the liberal Open VLD, refutes this proposal as "strategic".

It is up to De Wever to make the next move. Winning the elections is one thing, forming a coalition another. After the messy formation of the federal government, from which De Wever eventually pulled out, he knows that much.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

34,172

EU expatriates were registered to vote in the 14 October municipal election in the Brussels region. 15 expats were elected

4.6/10

average score on questions testing financial knowledge, in a poll carried out by *De Tijd* newspaper among members of the public

29%

fewer accidents involving serious injuries or fatalities at the location of speed cameras, according to a study by the University of Hasselt

43%

increase in the number of mobile internet subscribers using Telenet in the first nine months of the year, the company announced, to a total of 340,900

€144,000

in savings accounts held by serial killer Ronald Janssen disappeared without trace in the weeks prior to his trial in September 2011. The families of victims have not been awarded damages of €368,000 awarded at trial

How local is local?

Political scientist Kris Deschouwer crunches the numbers of last week's election

Anja Otte

“Were the local elections also a national test? If you ask parties, they will always answer a clear ‘yes’ or ‘no’. The real answer is more subtle,” says political scientist Kris Deschouwer.

For instance: Do a majority of voters in Flanders support independence? If you were to combine the votes of N-VA and Vlaams Belang, two separatist parties, in the recent local elections, the answer would seem to be yes. But, Deschouwer warns, “that is assuming the motivation behind the vote”.

Voters seldom cast ballots for a party for just one reason, says Deschouwer. “Research has shown that not all Vlaams Belang voters favour Flemish independence; they are attracted more by the party's views on immigration. Moreover, most other parties also defend some kind of confederate structure. Conclusion: There is a basic demand in Flanders for more autonomy, not for independence.”

Deschouwer's statements were part of a briefing for prominent members of the international community the day after the elections, organised by the Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs, the Flemish Agency for Home Affairs and the Liaison Agency Flanders-Europe.

Expect stability

The impact of N-VA's new electorate, lured away in part from Vlaams Belang, should not be exaggerated either, according to Deschouwer, a professor at the Free University of Brussels (VUB). “The N-VA will not become more radical. Its formula is mixing feelings of Flemish identity with an anti-establishment tone. In Bart De Wever, the party also has a strong leader.” Deschouwer reminded his audience that N-VA was “not Le Pen-ist. The fact that Flemish nationalism was captured by right-wing extremism in the past saddened De Wever.”



Flemish political scientist Kris Deschouwer explains the figures at an international post-election event

What, then, will be the effect of these local elections on the stability of the federal and Flemish governments? “For the Di Rupo government, this will not make life easier, but that was always going to be the case,” notes Deschouwer. “Installing a government with

no majority in Flanders was a conscious decision. If N-VA gained 40% of the vote, a government could not be formed without it, but that is not the case now. This is a young government, and every party and the prime minister knows that it has to deliver.”

The government of Flanders is expected to remain even more stable. “N-VA wants to demonstrate that Flanders can be governed,” says Deschouwer. “It would be counterproductive to destabilise it. For CD&V, this is the only opportunity to let the 2014 elections be about evaluating the Flemish rather than the federal government. That's why minister-president Kris Peeters did not get too involved with the local elections.”

N-VA performance “exceptional”

Deschouwer is known as the number-crunching professor. On election nights, you can find him in a TV studio, calculating away, often with politicians leaning over his shoulder. “I love election results,” he confessed at the briefing, “but not local election results because they are extremely difficult to read. With 308 communes in Flanders, there are 308 different stakes, 308 different mayors and 308 different majorities. Still, these elections hold some meaning at the regional and federal levels. The participants are local representatives of national parties. It is a state-wide event, held on one day, and the results may have political significance beyond the figures.”

To help answer the question “how local is local?”, Deschouwer looked at the number of communes in which the national parties campaigned and were listed on the ballots as the national parties, rather than as a separate, city-specific name or as part of a coalition. Both the Christian-democrats CD&V and the nationalist N-VA are very present – a deliberate strategy – while the socialist SPA tended to opt for local labels and alliances.

Unlike federal or regional elections, the results of the locals are not homogenous. “Typically, a party wins some and loses some

communes. The results seldom go in one direction. The region-wide win of N-VA is, therefore, very exceptional,” he says.

The trends: looking to 2014

Aggregating the results shows that local elections follow the same long-term trends as the regional and federal elections. So what are those trends? “Seeing the 2010 federal election results, N-VA's victory is not all that surprising,” Deschouwer says. “Likewise, Vlaams Belang's loss was predictable. SPA shows a gradual decline from roughly 25% in 1976, to around 15% now. With some exceptions, Groen's results remain around 7%, while Open VLD peaked in 2003.”

The aggregated results also show that CD&V and N-VA are competing to be the largest, with CD&V the winner by just the slightest margin. However, the very largest share goes to “Others” – all kinds of local lists – that saw its highest score ever of about 25%. “There is the counterargument, showing that local elections are indeed also very local,” Deschouwer says.

As for the formation, “anything goes”: greens with liberals, nationalists with socialists, coalitions of losers – all are possible. “Unlike personal differences, policy differences can be negotiated away,” says Deschouwer. “So it is best to be prepared and move fast.” Finally, one last number: that of the provincial elections. “Few voters have an idea what the stakes and who the candidates are in the provincial elections. This makes them an excellent indicator of public opinion,” says Deschouwer. With more than 28%, N-VA is the big winner in this category. “I would not bet one euro on the 2014 result, though. The only votes you can be sure of are yesterday's votes.”

Regions unite to celebrate Scheldt river

Marc Maes

To highlight the economic, cultural and geographical importance of the river Scheldt, the three countries in the Scheldt estuary last week launched the Escaut/Schelde 2013 project. The timing is no coincidence: 2013 is not only the Unesco International Year of Water Cooperation, it is the 150th anniversary of the re-opening of the river, after having been closed to navigation since the 16th century. Provinces and cities in France, Belgium and the Netherlands have teamed up for Escaut/Schelde to highlight the importance of the river for the region and its residents. Next March will see the launch of



Antwerp, the largest city on the banks of the Scheldt river, will next year celebrate the 150th anniversary of the reopening of the river to navigation

an electronic tourism map of the Scheldt and International Scheldt Week, a project targeting improved surface and groundwater in the Scheldt basin, spearheaded by ScaldWIN, part of the European Union's Interreg programme that aims to stimulate cooperation between regions.

Professor Patrick Meire of the Ecosystem Management research group at the University of Antwerp (UA) will head up the scientific programme of Escaut/Schelde and will bring together specialists from the universities of Lille and Valenciennes in northern France and the Roosevelt Academy in

Middelburg, the Netherlands.

“The River Scheldt is one of the best-documented estuaries in Europe and faces tremendous challenges,” says Tom Maris, bio engineer at UA and a member of Meire's research group. “There's the human intervention in the ecosystem and the system's reaction with, for instance, increased tidal forces. UA is looking for structural solutions for a safe and healthy Scheldt basin in combination with marine traffic.” Throughout the year, the Escaut/Schelde project will be accompanied by cultural events, film screenings and art competitions.

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The Estonian connection

New ambassador continues his long-standing link with Flanders

Alan Hope

In July, Estonia appointed a new ambassador to Belgium. Gert Antsu, 37, not only has a very Flemish-sounding first name, he also has a link with Flanders going back to 1996, when he was the recipient of a scholarship from the government of Flanders to attend the College of Europe in Natolin, Poland, a sister to the college of the same name on the Dijver in Bruges.

"At the time, relations between Estonia and Flanders had just started, and Estonian students were able to benefit from scholarships," he tells me in his office in the country's embassy, one floor of a building on the Guimardstraat in Brussels that also houses the much larger permanent representation to the EU. "The college organised a competition for places in Natolin and Bruges, and those who came out on top got the scholarships. I am grateful to the Flemish government for the scholarship all those years ago that enabled me to study at a world-class institution – this really kick-started my career in EU affairs, leading to the appointments in Tallinn [*Estonia's capital*] and then in Brussels. So the connection is not only historical but very concrete."

A decade after Natolin, Antsu was in Flanders, working on the fourth floor of this same building as deputy permanent representative to the EU. "I never left," he smiles. "I only had to move three floors down. I finished in the representation at the end of June and then started on 1 July as ambassador."

Diplomatic sensitivities

Estonia was the first of the new independent states of eastern and central Europe with which Flanders established a cooperation agreement in 2005. In his old job, Antsu was representing one state among 27; now he's only concerned with bilateral relations, but when dealing with Belgium, even that's complicated.

"The agreement covers all sorts of practical issues, culture, education, exchange of students and so on, as well as business, trade and industry and innovation," he explains. "We have a new agreement that came

into force in January. In Estonia, the central government is responsible for most things. We have local governments but no regional governments. We have to be aware that in Belgium, regions like Flanders are responsible for many areas and are our direct contact points."

Does dealing with different levels of government present particular diplomatic problems? "I wouldn't say problems," Antsu answers. "There are certain sensitivities, but I've just started as an ambassador, so I really don't know where those sensitivities may lie. I'm still on a learning curve." Antsu is already in close contact with the government of Flanders. "Yesterday they organised a seminar where a university professor interpreted the results of the local elections, which was very useful," he says. "But I haven't yet officially visited any provinces in Flanders; that's still to come."

Estonia 101

Part of Antsu's job is also to sell Estonia to the Belgians. The country has only been independent since 1991 and sits on the very periphery of Europe – the most northerly of the Baltic states. "In that sense, my job is different from the job of ambassadors from traditional EU member states," notes Antsu. "Everyone knows where Portugal and Austria are, and they may even have been there. But I've actually come across quite a lot of people now in Belgium who tell me they've been to Estonia or they're planning to go there."

He can then engage them about the country. "I can explain to them that Tallinn is a medieval city and was very rich in medieval times; then in later centuries, up to the 20th century, it was rather poor, so they never tore down the old buildings. These days, if one looks at the rankings, we immediately see that we have one of the lowest public debts in Europe, around 6%. We didn't have a huge debt to begin with. We didn't inherit any Soviet debt, and when we started out as an independent country, we were rather prudent right from the start, so there wasn't a great deal to pay off."



A scholarship from the government of Flanders helped kick-start Gert Antsu's diplomatic career, and now he's back as the ambassador of Estonia

Cultural exports

Cultural exchange is also one of the areas where Estonia will be cooperating with Flanders. "Our cultural exports, if we can put it in economic terms, are quite big," says Antsu. "In February, for example, we will have the Tallinn Philharmonic Choir, one of the top

choirs in Europe, singing Avro Pärt [*Estonian composer*] in Antwerp. I'm very happy to discover that there is so much culture on offer between Brussels, Ghent and Antwerp. Last week we went to see the excellent *La Damnation de Faust* at Vlaamse Opera in Antwerp."

With such a hefty schedule, does the ambassador have time to study up on his Dutch? "Yes," he replies. "The first couple of months have been a bit hectic, but about a week ago I noticed that *De Standaard* started appearing on my desk every morning. So I'm trying to read that and to learn the language as well."

TALLINN AND GHENT: TWIN CITIES

The Flemish-Estonian connection goes back to before Estonia became independent for the last time in 1991. Tallinn, the capital (*pictured*), has been twinned with Ghent since 1982.

With a population of 417,000, Tallinn sits on the northern coast of Estonia, about 90 kilometres across the Gulf of Finland from the Finnish capital, Helsinki. Tallinn's history dates back to the 12th century; the city joined the Hanseatic League in the 13th century and was an important trading port in the Middle Ages. Much of the architecture of that time, as in Ghent, has been maintained – partly, as Ambassador Antsu explains, because the country was later too poor to pull down the old and put up anything new.

Estonians consider themselves Nordic rather than Baltic and the language is related to Finnish, which

means that, like the *Gents* dialect, it's virtually impenetrable to outsiders.

Tallinn was European City of Culture in 2011 (with Turku in Finland), and Ghent was part of that, through a film concert organised by the Flanders International Film Festival. Ghent's Museum of Fine Arts has a long-standing relationship with Estonia's KUMU art museum. Ghent city council's parks department took part in the first Tallinn flower festival in 2009, and Tallinn has since been the guest city at Floraliën in Ghent. January's light festival in Ghent was in part inspired by Tallinn's own light festival.

The twinning arrangement also covers cooperation on environment, culture, social and economic issues such as the homeless and poverty and the exchange of know-how on questions of IT and e-government.



Sister-city Tallinn counts numerous cultural and economic ties with the city of Ghent

THE WEEK
IN BUSINESS**Auctions ▶ Cornette de Saint Cyr**

Paris-based auction house Cornette de Saint Cyr is launching its Brussels operation with a sale in early December. The company follows other French auction businesses that have moved part of their operations to Brussels in recent months.

Autos ▶ Cardoen

The Antwerp auto retailer has opened one of its famed low-cost "car supermarkets" in Halle, just southwest of Brussels, and is still looking for an opportunity in Zaventem. The group already has six outlets in Flanders.

Banks ▶ KBC

Flanders' largest financial institution has sold 5.1% of its own shares in an "accelerated book building" auction for a total of €350 million. The move will help the bank strengthen its solvability ratios and help to reimburse €4.7 billion it owes public authorities after its rescue in 2008.

Brewing**▶ Duvel Moortgat**

The family shareholders of the Duvel Moortgat brewery, based in Puurs, Antwerp province, are taking the group private in a €95-a-share offer for the 24.4% they don't own. The brewery, known for beers such as Duvel, Vedett, Liefmans and De Koninck, has been listed since 1999, when it entered the stock market to finance its development.

Energy ▶ ENI

Italian energy group ENI, owner of the local Nuon and Distrigas electricity and gas distribution companies, will merge the two firms under the ENI brand in a bid to boost its local market share to some 20% to become the country's second-largest energy group behind Electrabel.

Fashion**▶ Marc Jacobs**

The high-end US fashion brand Marc Jacobs has opened a flagship store in the Dansaert area of downtown Brussels.

Press ▶ De Persgroep

The Brussels-based Persgroep, publishers of dailies *De Morgen* and *Het Laatste Nieuws*, will bid for the Dutch Wegener press group, with several dailies in the Netherlands. Wegener is owned by the British Mecom group, which seeks to sell its Dutch activities. The Persgroep already owns three dailies in the Netherlands.

Alfacam files for credit protection

Flanders pioneer TV services company postpones €58 million debt

Alan Hope

Last week trading in shares of media services company Alfacam were suspended on the stock market at the company's request, and the company officially filed for protection from its creditors, after talks with a potential new investor broke down. Alfacam received a postponement from creditors of its €58 million debt as negotiations continued.

Alfacam, based in Lint, Antwerp province, is a pioneer in the provision of high-definition TV images across the world. Set up in 1985 by Gabriel Fehervari (pictured), a Flanders-born son of Hungarian refugees, the company has become the go-to expert worldwide for the coverage of live events like the Olympic Games (Athens, Beijing, London), the Euro football championships and the World Cup, as well as events like the Eurovision Song Contest, 18 editions of Night of the Proms and broadcasts for the VRT.

Although the company was traded publicly,

Fehervari and his family held a majority of shares, and they will be liable for the greater part of any losses. Flemish parliamentarian Lode Vereeck, however, speaking last week in the Flemish parliament, was more concerned about the credit guarantee of 80% of €20.5 million extended to Alfacam last year by Gigarant, the government's financing agency. According to Vereeck, the government can essentially say goodbye to that money.

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters disagreed, saying: "It's true that we gave a guarantee of €16.4 million, but that is not yet lost by any means." Having filed for protection, Fehervari now hands over control of the company to an administrator appointed by the court, which leaves room for hope, Peeters said. "The important thing now is to look for solutions for this remarkable company, and the creditor protection procedure offers the perfect opportunity for that to be done. Even if



the company goes under, we will try to get back our guarantee."

Telenet teams up with HBO for exclusive broadcasts

Mechelen-based cable and internet provider Telenet last week announced an exclusive deal with HBO to broadcast all new films and TV programmes made by the American cable channel over the next three years.

HBO, producer of such classic series as *The Sopranos*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Game of Thrones* (pictured) which started its run on Flemish TV last week, is widely credited with reviving the fortunes of cable TV in the US and with ushering in a new era of high-quality TV



productions comparable to cinema. Telenet will broadcast all new HBO productions on its Prime channel, starting shortly with *Veep*, a satire on the

life of the US vice-president starring Julia-Louis Dreyfus (*Seinfeld*).

Belgacom, meanwhile, has been told by the telecommunications regulator BIPT to open its digital TV network up to competition within six months. In future, companies offering internet and telephone services will also be able to offer digital TV, in what the industry calls triple-play packages. "Now more players will be able to compete with each other, and the consumer will reap the benefits," said BIPT chair Luc Hindryck.

Eye drug bonanza for ThromboGenics

Leuven-based bio-pharmaceutical company ThromboGenics has been given the go-ahead to market its eye medicine ocriplasmin in the United States, under the trade name Jetrea. The medication is a treatment for symptomatic vitreomacular adhesion (VMA), a condition associated with aging that can lead to loss of vision.

The condition has traditionally been treated through surgery. Jetrea, an enzyme that breaks down the proteins that cause the adhesion,

makes an operation unnecessary, saving patients and health-care insurers up to \$7,000 in each case. The agreement of the Federal Drugs Administration allows ThromboGenics the exclusive right to market the treatment, whereas the company sells Jetrea in Europe with Swiss partner Alcon/Novartis. Profits from biotechnology products developed in Belgium benefit from a tax discount of 80%, and ThromboGenics shares closed at a record high on the news.

Week of heavy job losses

The last week saw the announcement of nearly 1,000 jobs losses, most of them in Flanders' high-tech sector, following world-wide trends. Telecoms company Alcatel-Lucent in Antwerp and Namur let nearly 300 people go, following on from 185 voluntary redundancies at Antwerp in January. About 265 jobs were lost at Hewlett-Packard in Mechelen and Diegem, from a workforce of 2,600. Lay-offs also affected engineering, steel and textile companies from Leuven to Ghent, with the loss of another 400 jobs.

Q&A

Raf Weverbergh is a former senior reporter with Humo magazine who recently launched Whiteboard, an online magazine on entrepreneurship and innovation

Tech news is all around us these days. What makes your platform different?

I noticed that European publishers only cover their home markets. The European media are largely organised as 27 silos, with little or no conductivity between them. This has a few negative effects for start-ups and innovative ideas: They have difficulty reaching an international audience, and they have difficulty getting noticed by venture capitalists. That's what Whiteboard wants to solve: We want to be a spotlight for European ideas and businesses.

Where did the name Whiteboard come from?

I went through about 150 names, which were either already trademarked or just didn't sound right or were too difficult. I was getting desperate to find something that expressed both the idea of innovation and entrepreneurship. That's when the word "whiteboard" popped in my head: Every idea is born on a white board, every business and sometimes entire industries. And it also has connotations of a blank page, the idea that everything is possible.

Whiteboard differs from traditional business reporting in that contributors from industry will put forth their own ideas, right?

Whiteboard's goal is to create a concept for tomorrow's journalism. Thinking about the future of journalism, I think a journalist's job might evolve less around writing articles and increasingly around unlocking opinions and facts, fact checking, editing and offering feedback to non-journalists. In the next 12 months, I want to show that this model of distributed journalism is feasible and accessible to readers, contributors and advertisers alike.

interview by AH

▶ www.whiteboardmag.com



Clean sweep

Flanders' Ecover combines with US Method to become the largest eco products company in the world

Tamara Gausi

Green pioneer Ecover has always been ahead of the game. When the company started making phosphate-free washing powder in 1980, "green" still referred to a colour rather than a way of life. But from its headquarters in Malle, Antwerp province, Ecover became Europe's biggest environmentally friendly cleaning brand, selling 40 products in 35 countries worldwide. And it just got bigger. Last month, Ecover announced the acquisition of American company Method in a move that saw the creation of the world's largest green cleaning products company. With combined sales exceeding €152 million and a total staff of more than 300, it is quite literally a big deal.

The two brands are stars in their own right: San Francisco-based Method is well-known for its fun, green ethos and well-designed products, while Ecover is a respected pioneer, trusted by consumers for its technical nous and commitment to innovation.

The marriage of two brands

"I am personally very excited about this acquisition as it will not only create the world's most dynamic and visionary green cleaning company but also establish a great platform for growth for both brands," said Ecover CEO Philip Malmberg last month when the news broke. "By leveraging each other's strengths, this partnership will support the elevation of the green cleaning category as a whole." Method CEO Drew Fraser added:

"The marriage of our two brands makes perfect sense, as we are both companies rooted in a deep heritage of sustainability, innovation and making people's lives healthier and happier. By coming together, our two brands will only serve to strengthen each other."

As the quotes suggest, the emphasis of the acquisition is on partnership, with Ecover and Method remaining separate entities. No jobs will be lost, and Method will not be forced to move to Europe. Instead, "the two brands will live side by side while remaining true to what they stand for and who they are," Effi Vandevoorde, Ecover's corporate and legal affairs manager told *Flanders Today*.

"But there will be a definite synergy when it comes to research and development and also the whole supply chain," she continues. "Method has a huge distribution network in the US – they sell at 40,000 retail outlets across the country, which opens up an enormous opportunity for Ecover. And it's the same for Method. Working with us opens up the European market as they will have a production base here for the first time."

Method is not yet available in Belgium (plans for the brand's further expansion into Europe are still in discussion), but both brands have their eyes firmly on Asia. Method is already doing well in Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and Japan, while Ecover is well-represented in Japan and Korea.

It's a testament to the massive growth of this market – achieved



The green team: Leaders of the newly merged Ecover and Method

in no small part by the pioneering work of Ecover – that simply "being green" is no longer unique. While both brands are committed to the use of plant-based ingredients and sustainable packaging, they've expressed it in different ways. Method, for example, has been exploring a non-toxic solvent made of corn stalks and leaves, while one

of Ecover's most recent innovations was a range of revolutionary biosynthetic detergents. On the distribution side, Method is committed to reducing its carbon footprint, while Ecover's environmentally friendly factory in Malle – which operates on green electricity, among other things – was a European first.



The first to lose phosphates

But above all, what sets Ecover apart is its trailblazing status. More than 30 years ago, it was the first company not only to prove that phosphates – a common ingredient in laundry and dishwasher products at the time – were pollutants, but to do something about it. After launching the world's first phosphate-free washing powder, it went on to create numerous green products ranging from washing-up liquid to anti-bacterial wipes.

Method, on the other hand, is like Ecover's trendy younger sibling. While Ecover's simple packaging reflects the purity of its products, Method's slick design and attention-grabbing marketing campaigns almost make you forget that its products really do put substance – or more specifically, non-toxic substances – over style.

But its colourful approach has been a roaring success. In just 11 years, Method, which was founded by Adam Lowry and Eric Ryan in Lowry's garage, has become one of the fastest-growing privately owned companies in America.

So what next for this new turbo-powered green partnership? Press releases speak of "joining forces to make green the new normal". But thanks to Ecover's legwork, this is almost already the case. The next step is total domination of the market: "When someone thinks of green cleaning brands," says Vandevoorde, "the only thing we want to come to mind are these two brands."

► www.ecover.com

Great minds

Tomorrow's technology tackles today's problems at the iMinds conference

Daan Bauwens

ICT research institute iMinds is holding the fourth edition of its networking conference on 8 November in Ghent. The Flemish organisation – which used to be known as IBBT but has recently rebranded itself – is a matchmaker for 1,000 ICT academics, companies and end users, with a sharp focus on contemporary societal needs. "We ask ourselves: What are today's problems that we can solve tomorrow?" says Karen Boers of iMinds. "At this conference, we want to show the public what we have realised during the past eight years, but most importantly we want to start the conversation between users, industrial partners and academics. We want to create space for new ideas to bloom." This year iMinds plays host to 13 themed sessions with well-known

lecturers, including New York journalist Robert Levine, author of *Free Ride: How Digital Parasites are Destroying the Culture Business*. He is part of a debate on intellectual property, defending the stance that "copyright is a human right". Levine is up against Adam Sinnreich, professor at Rutgers University and author of *Mashed Up*, who thinks our cultural landscape should be available to everyone as "commons" from which we can all draw.

American computer scientist Jim McKelvey (pictured), co-founder of the revolutionary mobile payment company Square, will talk about a range of topics from art to entrepreneurship. Other high-profile speakers are Neelie Kroes, vice-president of the European Commission, and Markus

Hofmann, head of the Bell Labs research group at global telecom corporation Alcatel-Lucent.

There will also be discussions about social media and security, visionary city technology and eCare – technological solutions to imminent problems in the health-care sector. In snappy one-on-one meetings that last for no longer than 15 minutes, everyone can engage in a discussion with iMinds coaches about starting a technology project or student entrepreneurship.

The manager of iMinds' Singapore office will be available to help visitors explore opportunities for collaboration overseas. And of course, there will also be a thorough debate on how to reduce our ecological impact using ICT. The conference is attended by

policymakers, ICT developers, entrepreneurs and researchers, but it can be equally interesting to non-experts. "We're not as broad as TEDx, but everyone is welcome to come and discover what the role of ICT will be tomorrow," says Karen Boers.

This year iMinds is part of Creative Media Days, a much broader event that takes place in Brussels and Ghent over the course of seven days.



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Wind in their sails

Care to become a miller? You can in Flanders, thanks to a programme of study and restoration

Andy Furniere

Mills may no longer have the economic importance of medieval times, but they remain crucial heritage sites in Flanders. With support from the government, mill associations united in the umbrella organisation Molenforum-Vlaanderen are restoring them to their former glory and transmitting the skills and tales of millers through educational courses. *Flanders Today* was there for one student's final exam.

Although the Netherlands is considered the land of windmills, their origins probably lie a bit farther south. The first reliable historical reference dates back to 1183, to a mill in Wormhout, which is now part of French Flanders but then belonged to the County of Flanders.

As a wealthy and densely populated region, the technical prowess and resources to innovate the milling techniques were available here. Both windmills and watermills are abundant in the history and landscape of West and East Flanders.

Two hundred years ago, there were nearly 3,000 working windmills and hundreds of working watermills in Flanders. These small "factories" forged iron, pressed oil, sawed wood, manufactured paper and, of course, milled grain. But after the Industrial Revolution introduced steam and diesel engines in the 19th century, mills were no longer economically competitive. Then during the First World War, many of them were damaged by the military, as they made excellent vantage points.

Saving the mills

In the 1970s, however, Flemish artists and pioneers such as the judge Paul Bauters put mills in the spotlight as cultural symbols of the region. This appreciation created a growing enthusiasm around mills that led to the establishment of mill associations. Molenforum-Vlaanderen now saves mills from ruin, offers advice on restoration, holds open days for the public and transmits the experience of millers through study courses.



The Hoeke windmill in Damme, West Flanders, before and after restoration

Today, Flanders has approximately 250 active mills. "About 70 of them are in West Flanders, where the vicinity of the coast provides excellent windy conditions," says Frank De Craeke, president of mill association Werkgroep West-Vlaamse Molens. In East Flanders, watermills are more numerous, because of the hilly landscape.

This year, the Flemish organisation for heritage conservation Herita collaborated with the province of West Flanders, the city of Damme and construction company Vlassak-Verhulst to restore the windmill in the Hoeke district. Miller Filip Devoldere now shows visitors around the monument, located not far from the coast.

"One person can actually run a mill through an ingenious system of ropes and delicate mechanisms," Devoldere explains. "The basic technology was invented at the end of the 11th century and remained unchanged for about 800 years."

"Mill masters"

"It's not simple to restore these mechanisms," adds architect Erik De Bruyn, who designed the restoration concept. "You need specialised craftsmen, who are becoming much harder to find."

Professional millers don't exist anymore – and haven't since the 1970s – but volunteer millers are needed to maintain the mills, which deteriorate quickly if they are not active. The courses organised by mill associations ensure that both the infrastructure and history are handed over to the next generation. After theoretical lessons, students complete at least 100 hours of internship sessions at mills. Students finally take an exam under the supervision of two experienced "mill masters".

The final exam for student Fabienne Cammaert from Denderleeuw took place at the Buyses mill in Sint-Antelinks, East Flanders. "It's still very much a man's world, but I will



prove that small, slender women are also capable of managing a mill," Cammaert smiles.

Her first assignment is to ascertain the direction of the wind, which is unfortunately only a slight breeze that afternoon. "While millers in the past could insist that the area around the mill remained empty, today houses and trees are often in the way," says Alain Goublomme, president of Levende Oost-Vlaamse Molens, the East Flemish mill association.

Wind is a blessing for a miller, but it can also damage and even destroy a mill if a strong storm gathers when it is running. This happened last year in Merkem, West Flanders, where a wooden mill collapsed under the force of a storm. Millers have to be able to predict the weather, without all the modern equipment of professionals. In times gone by, farmers would consult millers before setting out on a trip. "The shape of clouds tells a whole story," says Cammaert.

Centre of the community

Goublomme elaborates on the special status of mills and millers: "They knew everything that happened in the community because everyone needed grain for their bread. The mills also signalled important events, such as births and deaths, with specific settings of the blades." Their importance is shown by their omnipresence in Flemish proverbs; for example, something is "koren op je molen" ("grist to your mill") if it is to your advantage.

When the wind picks up for a moment, Cammaert succeeds in grinding a little flour from the grain. "This is why I make all this effort and sacrifice so much time," she says, letting the flour slip through her fingers. "I am also studying bakery and want to make bread in the authentic way. Back to basics."

► www.molenforum.eu

FIVE SPECIAL MILLS



A windmill used to grind grain is the best-known kind of mill, but here are five unusual mills in West and East Flanders. Your best chance of seeing them in full swing is on Sundays.

The **rosmolen** (horse mill) in the provincial domain of Sint-Michiels in Bruges works on horse (*ros*) power (*pictured*)

The **getijdenmolen** (tide mill) in Rupelmonde on a branch of the River Scheldt is the only remaining tide mill in Flanders, built in 1561.

't **Waterkot** watermill, built in the 16th century in Erembodegem, was equipped with a steam engine in 1889. The mill now produces electricity for its own use.

Pommolentje Casier in Waregem is a reconstruction of a wooden mill built in the 19th century to provide the ponds of

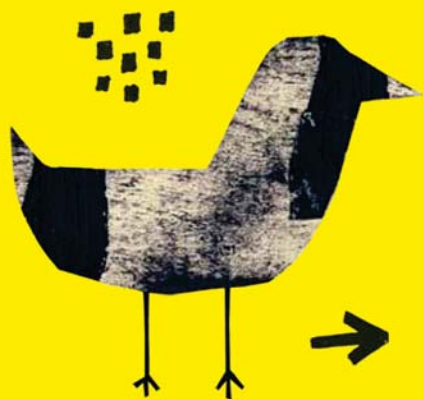
Casier park with water from the Gaverbeek. It's the only remaining 19th-century pump-windmill in Flanders.

With a first historical reference in 1316, **Hoosmolen** in Drongen, a district of Ghent, is probably the first polder mill in the world, used to pump water away from low-lying areas of land. Inside, info panels explain the history and technique of polder mills.

Want to know more? Visit Mola, the provincial mill centre at Puyenbroeck Castle in Wachtebeke, East Flanders. Or create your own mill route, with the maps of the Werkgroep West-Vlaamse Molens or Levende Oost-Vlaamse Molens.

► www.wvmolens.be

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Now you're talking

Brussels' two Flemish theatres roll out the red carpet to English speakers this season

Georgio Valentino

Immersion is all well and good, but every so often we long to curl up with the mother tongue as with a warm blanket. Fortunately for us, English-language fare is widely available in Brussels. We have this useful and engaging weekly newspaper. We have the inevitable Hollywood blockbusters, for what they're worth. And we have the theatre.

Forget the classics – contemporary art is by nature a cosmopolitan affair. Two of Brussels' premier purveyors of contemporary creation – Flemish venues Kaaitheater and KVS – have even put together special programmes for expats like us.

Kaaitheater International

Kaaitheater International offers a discounted pass to five selected performances – all in English – during the 2012-2013 season. The first is Jan Lauwers' *Marketplace 76*, an epic story set in a small village that has just suffered a catastrophic explosion. The Flemish writer/director and his Needcompany troupe use dialogue (in English and French, with surtitles), dance and live music to dramatise the tension of a community on the emotional edge. While he's there, Lauwers will also kick off the Soul Food series, which sees resident artists preside over dinner parties. Conversation is conducted, conveniently enough, in English. *Marketplace*: 24-27 October, 20.30

The next instalment of Kaaitheater International comes in December, when the playful Austrian-French company Superamas present their latest, *Theatre*. Marshall McLuhan's maxim ("the medium is the message") seems all the more relevant in the digital age. This multimedia spectacle pits virtual reality – in the form of avatars and 3D images – against flesh-and-blood actors. Superamas will also sit down at the Soul Food table to discuss the politics behind the media. 7-8 December, 20.30

Kaaitheater International runs to the very end of the season. The fifth and final item on the agenda is the world premiere of *Nora*, Antwerp collective TG STAN's adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, slated for June.

► www.kaaitheater.be

Royal Flemish Theatre KVS

The Royal Flemish Theatre, otherwise known as KVS, is looking out for us this season, too. This month's **Freedom Festival**, organised in



Brussels-based dance troupe Peeping Tom presents *32 Rue Vandenbranden* at KVS in December

partnership with the Francophone Théâtre National, reaches out to French and English speakers. And KVS' own multilingual programme highlights works in English, French and German throughout the season. Flemish choreographer Wim Vandekeybus and his company Ultima Vez are resurrecting their 25-year-old debut for the occasion. *What the Body Does Not Remember* marked an evolution in contemporary dance when it appeared in 1987. Vandekeybus' performers took real risks on stage. They weren't just exposed emotionally but physically as well. They threw stones and darts at one another and launched themselves into the air, trusting their partners to catch them. They contorted and abused themselves. Audiences squirmed; then they raved. Today's contemporary dancers owe much to the success of this piece. Vandekeybus has recruited a new cast to revisit the performance in all its perilous glory. 12-16 February, 20.00; 17 February, 15.00

Nine Finger is another of yesteryear's sensations that enjoys a revival this season. This collaboration between dancer Fumiyo Ikeda, actor

Benjamin Verdonck and producer/choreographer Alain Platel premiered in 2007 under a cloud of controversy. The production's unflinching treatment of horror – namely the experience of an African child soldier – was too much for some. Others, however, acclaimed *Nine Finger* as a masterpiece of honesty and minimalism. The performers rely on nothing but body and voice to tell the story. Actor Stijn Van Opstal joins Ikeda for the 2013 reprise. 13-16 March, 20.00

KVS has a long history of collaboration with Congolese artists, most notably Kinsangani-based choreographer Faustin Linyekula. His *Sur les Traces de Dinozord* is in his native French, with Dutch and English surtitles. In it, Linyekula stages a surreal homecoming to a post-apocalyptic Kinsangani, complete with a live operatic soundtrack. Actors and dancers search the ruins for their broken dreams. The production is adapted from Linyekula's 2006 Avignon Festival gem, *Dinozord: the Dialogue Series III*. 13-14 December, 20.00; 19-21 December, 20.30

► www.kvs.be

On letting go

Poet-turned-author Maarten Inghels' debut novel proves to be simple, sweet sorrow

Rebecca Benoot

Antwerp native Maarten Inghels has already published two books of poetry – *Tumult* and *Waakzaam* (Vigilant) – before publishing his first novel last month, claiming his place in the world of literary buzz. *De handel in emotionele goederen* (The Trade in Emotional Goods) has generated a lot of attention, something that puzzles Inghels as he's already been writing for several years.

Though the fact that his publisher, Harold Polis of De Bezige Bij, supposedly burned a bad review of the book during the launch party might have something to do with it. Publicity stunt, blind faith or a simple inside joke, Inghels thinks the *faits divers* didn't deserve all the press and was more concerned about debuting for the second time. "There aren't many people who read poetry," he explains, "so when you write a novel, your audience expands – and so does the attention. As a poet, I always had good reviews, but with a novel you have to start over again with different readers, which can be a little daunting." There's no denying it, people still – unfortunately – respond much more to prose than to poetry. Writing since he was 14, Inghels (*pictured*) started sending poems to literary magazines when he was 18. Most of his second poetry collection has been translated into English. Now at the tender age of 24, he is a poet, novelist and coordinator of De Eenzame Uitvaart (The Lonely Funeral) in Antwerp, a project he started together with other poets such as Andy Fierens, Joke van Leeuwen and Bernard Dewulf. Members of the group writes a poem



© Kon Bae

to read at the burial of a person who has died without any friends or family, giving them one last tribute.

Keepsakes of the dead

The idea for *De handel in emotionele goederen*, meanwhile, germinated four years ago. "I was toying with the concept for quite some time, but I never found a way to make it and the characters work," says Inghels. "So I wrote my second book of poetry. After that, it all kind of came together."

He admits that he doesn't want to be known as either a poet

or an author but rather as a writer – since the content of the idea determines the form. *De handel* is the story of Luukas Kolibri, a man who clears away the possessions of the dead. After losing his beloved Robin, he starts to collect her things, but it soon gets out of hand, turning him into a hoarder in search of a final resting place. "I'm fascinated by the things that loved ones choose to keep, by the memories they connect with a certain object or song," says the author. "People especially keep things as reminders, but sometimes

it goes further, and they start building shrines or mausoleums, going beyond the Belgian tradition of a photograph with a candle next to it." It is a novel about love, loss and mourning, about letting go without losing touch and finding your own way to keep memories alive. These aren't just intricate parts of the book but also of our lives. "Death is an essential part of our being," Inghels adds. "When someone dies, you're not just confronted with death but also with life and future possibilities. Mourning, for example, is one of the most extreme emotions – perfect for literature. I was particularly interested in how people deal with this."

Too close to home

The story is alternated with a second plotline involving René Demeter, a man who is mourning something he never truly had. "People who have lost someone and read the book have come up to me to say that they had to put it away because it came too close to home," Inghels says. "So I tried to put some humour into it. Otherwise, it would have become too dense." The result is well worth the read. *De Handel* isn't a plot-driven novel but rather an atmospheric contemplation of loss prompted by the protagonist's feelings. Despite the heavy subject matter, Inghels proves that he isn't out of his depth. Aided by a touch of humour, a keen eye for detail and an exuberant innocence, he has created a convincing, although slightly formal, portrait of a man desperately trying to hold on to the essence of the woman he loves.

WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

Karen Renders, the director of Art Brussels, has died at age 54 of cancer. As a partner at events organiser Artexis, she, over the last 20 years, elevated Art Brussels to one of the top contemporary art fairs in Europe. She was credited by colleagues as being a great motivator of people and having a knack at combining art and commerce.

The Sportimonium in Zemst, Flemish Brabant, has won the 2012 **Flemish Culture Prize for Cultural Heritage** for its Ludo Diversity programme. The programme, recognised last year by Unesco, includes a collection of objects from traditional sports and games in Flanders and teaches these games – such as *krullbollen*, in which heavy round discs are rolled towards a stake – to younger generations.

► www.sportimonium.be

Five Flemish documentaries (or co-productions) have been selected for the **International Documentary Festival** in Amsterdam next month: *Snake Dance* by Manu Riche and Patrick Marnham, *Rain* by Gerard-Jan Claes and Olivia Rochette, *The Sound of Belgium* by Jozef Devillé, *Kinderen van de rekening* (*Expecting*) by Fabio Wuytack and *The Wave* by Sarah Vanagt. In other film news, Flemish director Fien Troch received a special mention from the jury at the Flanders International Film Festival in Ghent last week for her new film *Kid* for its authentic and daring look into the experiences of a seven-year-old boy from a farming family that has hit hard times. Lukas Dhont, meanwhile, won the prize for the best student short film for *De naam van de Vader* (The Name of the Father).

The Flemish Community Commission in Brussels has launched the **Bibliotheekportaal**, or Library Portal, through which all Dutch-language public libraries in the capital can be consulted at once. The site also offers news articles, images of books, info on readings and special links, such as Last FM, where visitors can explore music, and Library Thing with tips on new books and lectures.

► <http://zoeken.bruno.bibliotheek.be>

Flemish actress Veerle Baetens (*Code 37*, *The Broken Circle Breakdown*) has landed the **role of Margaret of Anjou** in the period television drama *The White Queen*, a co-production of the BBC and VRT, which is being filmed in Belgium. The 10-part series covers the Wars of the Roses in England in the 15th century. Margaret was the wife of the insane king Henry VI of England and ruled in his stead, ending the regency of Richard of York. The series will air next year.

FRESH FICTION AT BOEKENBEURS

From 31 October to 11 November, Flanders' largest annual book fair, Boekenbeurs, returns to Antwerp Expo, meaning 12 days of book buying, interviews and workshops. It's also the perfect occasion to get an autograph from your favourite author. Here are a few of our top picks.

Guggenheimer in de mode (Guggenheimer in Style)

by Herman Brusselmans • De Bezige Bij

Flanders' most prolific writer brings back one of his favourite characters, the enigmatic and opinionated Guggenheimer. This time round, the incredibly rich entrepreneur decides to start Guggenheimer's Fashion Company after concluding that modern day women are seriously in need of a makeover. Together with his ex-wife, his cleaning lady and a designer

named Muft Musmuz, he takes the world of fashion by storm. Funny, entertaining and filled with genuine wisdom, it's vintage Brusselmans.

Winst (Profit)

by Jeroen Olyslaegers • De Bezige Bij

Author, columnist and playwright Jeroen Olyslaegers is back with the second instalment in his trilogy about the derailment of contemporary society. The main characters in *Winst*, written in Olyslaegers typically bombastic style, either have nothing left to lose or are on the verge of losing everything. So begins the tale of art dealer Donald, who has one last shot at making it big by organising an exhibition in Berlin for a wealthy diamond dealer.

De onvervangbare (The Irreplaceable)

by Simone Lenaerts • De Geus



Based on the experiences of family members who were in concentration camps during the Second World War, Simone Lenaerts has written a haunting novel showing us what happens to people who are torn from their everyday lives and submitted to unimaginable

cruelty. *De onvervangbare* is an epic novel spanning three generations, commencing with the story of Robbie, an actor who unknowingly uncovers his grandmother's secret past while researching a new play.

Nauwelijks lichaam (Barely Body)

by Filip Rogiers • De Bezige Bij

After publishing several short stories, journalist Filip Rogiers made his fictional debut last year with the collection *Nauwelijks lichaam*, which earned him Flanders' prize for a debut work. Six dark, explosive and very satisfying stories create a humane and cathartic canvas of broken lives and hidden hopes. There are no happy endings for these characters – which include a sexually frustrated housekeeper and a melancholy waitress – but there's plenty of good writing.

► www.boekenbeurs.be

A fascination for strangeness

Jan Fabre: Waxes & Bronzes

Christophe Verbiest

This autumn, Jan Fabre seems to be everywhere. Some of his groundbreaking theatre work from the 1980s has just had a successful revival. He created two mosaics to decorate the entrance of the zoo in his hometown Antwerp. And he has an exhibition at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts in Brussels: *Chapters I-XVIII: Waxes & Bronzes*.

"I gaze a lot at my own image in the mirror to draw myself, and every time I see someone else," a 21-year-old Fabre wrote on 5 May 1980 in his diary (published in English as *Night Book*), and self portraits are the thread that holds his vast artistic output together. *Waxes & Bronzes* brings together 36 busts showing the artist, from a young man to the old man he will be in the future.

The works are arranged in two rows of 18: at one side are the extremely polished bronzes, at the other the coloured waxes. Every image appears on both sides, though the identical images

don't face each other.

The self-portraits are adorned with horns, antlers and, a few times, animal ears. They refer to existing mammals – mouflon, buffalo and impala, to name but a few – though the way these appendages are placed on the head sometimes suggests mythological creatures.

By planting a single gemsbok horn on his forehead, for example, Fabre transforms himself into a unicorn. Other moments, he creates his own animals, such as when he puts four short horns of a warthog next to his nose and in the corners of his mouth.

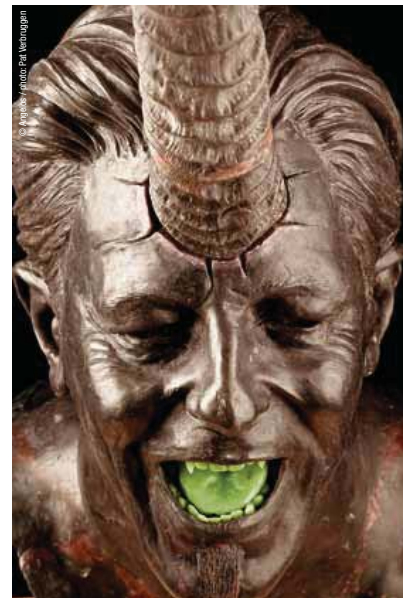
The 18 Fabres have different facial expressions, varying from zestfully enthusiastic to downright melancholy. When they show extreme facial expressions ("Self portrait is a fascination for strangeness," Fabre states), the busts seem to be influenced by the 18th-century Austrian sculptor Franz Xaver Messerschmidt. Others fit in a classical lineage that goes back to

antiquity.

Fabre, 53, is responsible for some innovative exhibitions, integrating his work in the collection of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts (*Homo Faber*), the Louvre (*The Angel of the Metamorphosis*) and the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (*The Years of the Hours Blue*). Every time, the dialogue between the old masters and the young one sparked with energy.

Waxes & Bronzes is billed as being part of this ongoing series of great invasions. It isn't. The 36 busts are on their own in a large passageway. There are some great paintings by Rubens in an adjoining room, but there's no direct confrontation.

I'm only mentioning this to deflate false expectations. In itself *Waxes & Bronzes* is small, but beautiful. Provoking and funny, at times touching and always assertive, it confirms what other exhibitions in recent years have shown: Fabre is at a peak in his artistic career.



Until 27 January | Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Regenschapsstraat 3, Brussels

► www.fine-arts-museum.be

VISUAL ARTS

The Soul of the Master

Antwerp's Museum Plantin-Moretus is a shrine not just to the European printing trade but also the heritage of its host city. Occupying the picturesque residence and workshop of printing pioneers Christoffel Plantin and his son-in-law/protégé Jan Moretus, the museum keeps a bit of historical Flanders alive in the 21st century. The current exhibition bridges past and present through a chronological cross-section of drawings – perhaps the most intimate of visual media – by Antwerp artists encompassing the 500 years between Rubens and Panamarenko. Having outlined the concept, the museum then left it to a panel of experts, enthusiasts, artists and local folk to curate the exhibition, made up of 100 drawings from the museum's permanent collection. Surprisingly, it's not a "greatest hits" but includes many less familiar works. **Georgio Valentino**



© The Head of Hendrik IV, 1622, by Peter Paul Rubens

Until 16 December | Museum Plantin-Moretus, Antwerp

► www.museumplantinmoretus.be

MORE VISUAL ARTS THIS WEEK

Bruges

Schriftuur/Scripture: Cultuurcentrum Brugge celebrates 17 years of contemporary art with a retrospective that includes such big names as Jan Fabre and Wim Delvoye. Free entry

Until NOV 18 at De Bond, Smedenest 1

► www.cultuurcentrumbrugge.be

Ghent

Update 4 Biennial: Fourth edition of this international technological arts showcase. A symposium is held in Update's final days, followed by the announcement of the results of the New Technological Art Award 2012

Until NOV 18 at Zebrastraat, Zebrastraat 32

► www.zebrastraat.be

FILM

Filem'on Children's Film Festival

Several of the capital's independent cinemas partner up to screen some 80 films for children and young people. The programme includes a little bit of everything: classics, animation, features, shorts and documentaries. This year's theme is movement, with a dual focus on dance and cycling. Kids 12+ won't want to miss the film *Rosas Danst Rosas* by Thierry de



Mey, a dialogue-free showcase of Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker's famous production. Younger kids will be more intrigued by *TuTu Much*, a Canadian film that goes behind-the-scenes at an intense summer ballet programme for youth, and by *Lotte et la pierre de lune*, which finds the animated dog riding her bicycle through a number of adventures. Children are also invited to workshops and other hands-on activities. The festival's opening is celebrated at Cinematek with a matinee, a live concert and a reception featuring international speakers and special guests. **GV**

28 October to 4 November | Across Brussels | ► www.filemon.be

MORE FILM THIS WEEK

Across Flanders

Flemish Documentary Days: Cinemas in Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, Hasselt and Leuven participate in this documentary festival focusing on the work of young Flemish filmmakers

OCT 31 - NOV 12 across Flanders

► www.docville.be/vdd

Brussels

Tango Libre: Award-winning Belgian director Frédéric Fonteyne and actress Anne Paulevich will be present at the premiere of their latest feature, about two men in prison in love with the same woman. The screening is preceded by a Latin-flavoured flash mob. (Film in French with Dutch subtitles)

OCT 31, 20.00 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23

► www.bozar.be

CONCERT

Emmett Tinley

How the re-release of a band's second album lead to a stunning solo album, or the story of Emmett Tinley. Born in Chicago and raised in Ireland, Tinley founded the group The Prayer Boat in 1987. As singer and songwriter, Tinley is responsible for the success of the band's critically acclaimed second album *Polichinelle* in 1999. Ten years later, the same album's re-release is so enthusiastically received that Tinley decides to make a (second) solo album. Recorded without The Prayer Boat and simply called *Emmett Tinley*, the album has 10 perfect of songs, all containing lyrics that matter, mostly accompanied by acoustic instruments. While Tinley's voice is often compared to Thom Yorke, Chris Martin or Jeff Buckley, the singer has proven himself unique with this most recent record for lovers of contemporary folk. I can't think of a better setting than Bruges for a concert dedicated to this autumnal album, the perfect soundtrack for a rainy weekend.

Robyn Boyle



26 October, 20.00 | Cactus Club@MaZ,
Bruges

► www.cactusmusic.be/concerts

MORE CONCERTS THIS WEEK

Brussels

Lucas Santana: Sizzling world-pop by the Brazilian sound wizard, guitarist, singer and multi-instrumentalist

OCT 31 20.00 at Ancienne Belgique, Anspachlaan 110

► www.abconcerts.be

Heist-op-den-Berg

Willem Vermandere: Multi-instrumental performance by the famous Flemish folk artist from the 1970s

OCT 26 20.00 at CC Zwaneberg, Cultuurplein 1

► www.zwaneberg.be

HALLOWEEN

Razor Reel Fantastic Film Festival

Bruges' festival of fantastic film Festival celebrates its fifth year with another gory programme jam-packed with some of the most entertaining films to come out of the horror, science fiction, fantasy and anime genres. In addition to blood-curdling screenings, RRRFF also features a host of fun side activities, such as exhibitions, interviews with directors and actors, book signings and debates. Highlights include the opening night (25 October), which features the Belgian premiere of *Safety Not Guaranteed*, followed by an elaborate reception, and the Casino Royale Night (31 October), treating party-goers to a free screening of the classic Peter Sellers comedy of the same name (pictured), followed by a James Bond-inspired masked ball. On Halloween afternoon, the fest presents an afternoon of ghoulish movies for kids. **RB**



25 October to 3 November

Across Bruges

► www.rrff.be

MORE HALLOWEEN ACTIVITIES THIS WEEK

Brussels

Masked Ball: Halloween celebration with live music by Georgio "the Dove" Valentino & his Société des Mélancoliques, Baby Fire and more

OCT 31 20.00 at La Compilothèque, Akenkaai 50

► www.georgiothedovevalentino.com

Maldegem (East Flanders)

Ghost Train Ride Halloween adventure for all ages aboard a real steam train: Dress in costume, search for monsters (and candy!) and take part in a spooky walk in the woods

OCT 31 18.30 at Stoomcentrum van Maldegem, Stationsplein 8

► www.stoomcentrum.be

Ostend

Halloween in Ostend: The coastal city is haunted this Halloween with hotels and restaurants offering themed packages, plus trick-or-treating, a haunted house at Fort Napoleon, entertainment and fireworks, a Halloween dinner cruise (see *Bite*, p16) and more

Until NOV 4 across Ostend

► www.halloween-ostende.be

CAFÉ SPOTLIGHT

Daan Bauwens

A La Mort Subite

Warmoesberg 7, Brussels

Everybody knows the old brasserie at the corner of Warmoesberg and Arenbergstraat, where waiters in traditional black-and-white garb serve you with a hard-to-find ease. Where the only discernible sounds are the humming of other customers and the intermittent shriek of the coffee machine. Where you can see Flemings, Walloons and *Brusselaars* mirroring themselves in the old photo of a satisfied Jacques Brel, drinking beer at his table in surroundings that have hardly changed since.

But the real beauty of A La Mort Subite lies deeper: It takes some of us Flemings back to our early childhood, when beautiful bars like this were still abundant. Mort Subite is the name of a beer and means "sudden death". But, contrary to what many Flemings think, it has nothing to do with the percentage of alcohol in the beer that would make you black out instantly.

No, *mort subite* is a term that used to be called out by those who played *pitjesbak*, an old Flemish dice game. The one who lost the game was called *den dooie* (the dead one). When players were running out of time, they decided on what we call in English a "sudden death" version – *a mort subite*.

Thirty years ago, *pitjesbak* was still being played in every Flemish house and pub. For me, it is simply impossible to imagine my grandfather, who died when I was seven, without a *pitjesbak* at his side.

So why is this Brussels brasserie called Mort Subite? Well, because the guests at the former La Cour Royale – mostly clients of the National Bank of Belgium, who preferred drinking a beer and playing a game to waiting their turn in line at the bank – were playing *pitjesbak* day and night. The



bar owner changed the name of the bar to A La Mort Subite. When the owner started brewing his own beer, he gave it the same name. And it is still served at the same spot where it was invented.

► www.alamortsubite.com

BITE

Robyn Boyle

Halloween Dinner Cruise

The only Halloween parties I've ever been to involve wearing silly costumes, playing juvenile games and sipping spiked apple cider. But here is something else altogether: a real grown-up Halloween event – on a boat!

As Halloween becomes increasingly popular across Flanders, you'll start to notice a number of activities popping up around the ghoulish celebration. Most of these take place in Ostend, which is proudly marketing itself as *the* place to be this time of year. It is the coastal city with by far the most Halloween happenings, and even has a website dedicated to them.

One such event, the Halloween Dinner Cruise, caught my eye as much for its enticing menu as for its unique setting. Leaving from the Port of Ostend, the modern passenger ship Zephira pushes off for a fun ride in coastal waters.

"An on-site make-up artist specialises in macabre makeovers"

Passengers board at 19.00 for an aperitif of "devilish bubbly and witch's snacks", followed by the chance to get a spooky new look compliments of an on-site make-up artist specialising in macabre makeovers. Scary sounds and music add to the atmosphere as the boat cruises over the dark sea, the lights of Ostend twinkling on the water.

The Halloween theme continues in the menu, which features

a starter of bloody tomato and red onion *tarte tatin* with pesto and buffalo mozzarella. Creepy cream of pumpkin soup is next up, topped with a drizzle of truffle oil and toasted sesame seeds.

The main course is a roulade of guinea fowl with porcini mushrooms, broccoli mousse, mustard greens and potato gratin with chorizo and smoked garlic. Finally, the menu finishes off nicely with a poached pear, cream of *gianduja* and a sprinkling of "Frankenstein's cocoa crumble".

While I may no longer be interested in juvenile costume parties, Halloween is something that shouldn't pass by unnoticed. This dinner cruise is the perfect way to celebrate it in style and, most importantly, without having to stick your head into a bucket of bobbing apples.

► www.halloween-ostende.be



Port of Ostend, with free parking at Romac Fuels, Noordhinderstraat 1



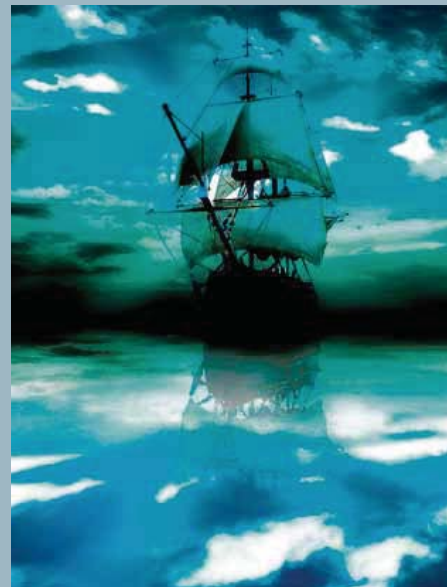
27 & 31 October; 3 November 19.00-23.00; reservations required at info@franlis.be or 059.70.62.94



€70 per person includes paired wines, water and coffee



Halloween boat ride with scary music, make-up artist and a four-course meal



TALKING DUTCH

Philip Ebels

Flanders, New York

Did you know that in New York there is a place called Flanders? I kid you not. But before we go there, a final thought on the Flemish pout, the famous body language of the natives here and the subject of my last two columns.

Martin Thorpe, a British expat who has been living in Ghent for eight years, writes that the pout "was the first – and only – example of a Flemish mannerism that [he] could think of" when some time ago I asked you, beloved reader, to enlighten me.

"I am very surprised you have not experienced it," he says. Rub it in, why don't you.

In Martin's experience, the pout has been used as in *waarom niet*, why not, or *ja, ik denk het*, yes, I think so. "Would you like a beer?" Pout with a slow nod: *ja, waarom niet*? Do you think that will hold 'til all the way home? Pout with a slow nod: *Ja, ik denk het*. I think I'm starting to see what you mean. And, if I may be so frank, it reminds me of the French. Don't they pout as if their lives depended on it? "Do you want to live?" Pout, slow nod, *ja, ik denk het, waarom niet*.

Anyway, back to New York. I was there two weeks ago to feast on one-dollar pizza and to attend a beautiful wedding in New Jersey. (Here's to Dan and Kristen!)

I knew the heritage of the Dutch language was rife there. After all, the city used to be called New Amsterdam. The name Harlem comes from Haarlem, a town close to the Dutch capital. Hoboken, a city in New Jersey facing Manhattan from across the Hudson River, comes from the southern district of the city of Antwerp.

And Brooklyn, of course, is after Breukelen, a village near Utrecht. Its motto, *Eendracht Maakt Macht*, Unity Makes Strength, written in Dutch on the borough's seal, might sound familiar. It is also Belgium's motto (as it is that of Bulgaria, Haiti and the former Dutch Republic).

But little did I know that there is a Flanders, New York: a village with a population of 3,646 in the east

of Long Island, right in the mouth of Flanders Bay, with, as its main attraction, a shed in the shape of a giant duck. I haven't been to visit. Do you know more about the heritage in New York or elsewhere of the Dutch language? Or of that of the Flemish in particular? You know where to send it.

► talkingdutch@hotmail.com



Truth is stranger than fiction in Flanders, New York

The last word...

Keeping the faith

"This could become a sort of shrine for pilgrims."

Jean-Claude Van Damme, the Muscles from Brussels, unveiled a statue of himself in Anderlecht

Light lit

"BVs [*Flemish celebrities*] also write books, and prizes like the Golden Owl ignore them every time. BVs also have the right to a literary prize now and then."

Radio host Wim Oosterlinck launched his own prize, the Golden Penguin, for books by a celeb or the ghost-writer of a celeb

Housekeeping

"We're now in the situation of someone who puts off washing the dishes and then thinks, I really should have done those yesterday." Federal finance minister Steven Vanackere, on the current difficult budget round

Hey, big spender

"We hoped perhaps he might make a small order. He took 80 of every kind. We're completely overwhelmed."

An Arab sheikh fell for candles containing gold leaf and diamonds at Bruges candle shop Hautekiet, priced at up to €25,000 apiece

NEXT WEEK
IN FLANDERS TODAY

Cover story

In a great move for irony, the justice studies department of the University of Hasselt has re-located to the city's old prison. The 19th-century building on the Hasselt's ring road was renovated on the inside, retaining much of its structure but with an update suitable for a modern educational facility. We'll tell you how – and why – they did it

Science

How do you like your algae? On toast? Over ice? That might not sound appealing, but in fact algae is on the verge of becoming a major "crop", cultivated to use in food products for both animals and humans and in cosmetics, supplements and industrial chemistry. We'll tell you about VITO's new Sunbuilt project for growing the green stuff

Arts

The amount of culture available to children in Brussels and Flanders is rather astounding, and one of the highlights of the year is next month: Bronks youth theatre's Import/Export Festival, which reaches out to an international audience with many dialogue-free and English-language productions. Culture critic Marie Dumont tells you what not to miss