

All aboard to Brussels

New De Lijn trams will carry passengers from Flemish Brabant into the capital

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Merrily medieval

Where to find the middle ages in Bruges after you've visited the new Historium

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Forever Yoors

The Flemish artist who lived in Gypsy caravans and brought tapestry into the 20th century

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Meet the middle ages

Bruges' long-awaited new attraction Historium brings the city's medieval past to life

Alan Hope

Almost seven years and €10 million in the making, Bruges' Historium finally opens this weekend, and the result is a sensory expedition back in time. Visitors will experience the sights, sounds and (selected) smells of a vibrant medieval port city.

The year is 1435, and you're following the bustling throng through the thriving port city of Bruges. Along the way you pass the studio of a famous artist and are surprised to see a prominent priest on his knees as the painter sketches his portrait. You pass through the vast covered harbour where flat-bottomed boats unload the latest cargoes from ocean-going ships moored at Sluis. In the street, a man butchers the carcass of a pig, and, as you pass along to the fish market, a rat scuttles in front of your feet. Suddenly the scent of jasmine and sandalwood engulf your senses as you approach the Oriental bath house. Everything about the scene is real – except the bit about the scurrying rat. You're at the new Historium Brugge

attraction, which opens this weekend. The attraction, at the very centre of the city, is a €10 million investment that recreates Bruges at the time of its peak as a world city.

Every year, Bruges welcomes about four million visitors from all over the world, attracted by the chocolate, the museums, the canals, the horse-and-carriage tours and the medieval atmosphere. The location of Historium is a prime piece of real estate: Markt 1, a former government building overlooking the city's most famous square.

The entrance is through an enormous porch in which a wooden floor has been laid. On one entire wall facing the entrance is a panorama of Bruges as it looked in 1435, its perspective such that it seems as if you're gazing out over the whole city as it then was.

The ground floor and the courtyard outside are open to visitors without paying the entry fee. In the courtyard are public toilets, vending machines and an amphitheatre-shaped meeting point for tour guides. In the entrance hall are a museum shop, a Pol Depla chocolaterie, a desk of the Bruges tourist office and a massive media table for

12, composed of a giant interactive Samsung touchscreen display. There are also free lockers for visitors to stash whatever they're carrying, even pushchairs and buggies.

Jacob, your guide for the duration

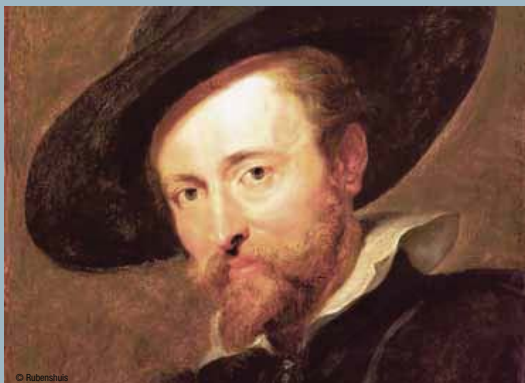
A visit to the attraction proper begins when you scan the barcode on your ticket and make your way into the show. The visit to Historium is built around a fictional narrative: Jacob, an apprentice to the great Flemish primitive painter Jan Van Eyck, is sent to pick up Anna, the model for the Madonna in Van Eyck's "Virgin and Child with Canon Joris van der Paele" (which Van Eyck was working on in 1435).

That's the start of a love story and a pursuit through the medieval harbour city, which takes the protagonists (and the visitors) to Van Eyck's studio, to the port and the market, through the alleys to a bath house and, finally, to a breathtaking view of the city about which we won't leak any details so as not to spoil the surprise.

"We wanted the visit to happen at the rhythm of the story," explains René Tolenaars, in charge of marketing

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



The moustachioed Fleming

While the month of November may leave those of us who are permanent members of the bushy-faced brigade cold, that's exactly what the rest of the male population are not, this November in Flanders. It's all because of Movember, a movement that started in Australia and exhorts men in the 11th month to let their moustaches grow to draw attention to prostate cancer – to "change the face of men's health," as the slogan goes. It started in 2004, reached Europe by 2007, and this year is all the rage in Flanders. Prostate cancer has little to do with facial hair, of course, but it's a serious problem. It's the leading cause of cancer death among men worldwide and the second most frequently diagnosed cancer after breast cancer. It occurs mainly in men over the age of 50, and if a man should live to 80, he has an 80% chance of getting it. Prognoses vary widely across the world, but in Europe the chances of recovery are good, and better if the disease is caught early. In Belgium, about 8,800 cases come to light every year, and 1,410 die of the disease – equivalent to one every six hours. Movember aims to increase the

number of men being screened for prostate cancer using the prostate specific antigen (PSA) test. Last week, Movember donated €70,000 of the funds raised by the campaign to Professor Johan Swinnen of the oncology department at the University of Leuven, who does research into new tests. The Flemish League against Cancer, however, is less keen on widespread PSA testing. The test, explained spokesman Bart Lombaerts, cannot determine if a positive result is a malignant tumour or something less harmful. "It may save a number of lives, but a great many men will also needlessly receive a very difficult cancer diagnosis and undergo invasive treatment". In the meantime, Movember goes on with support from celebrities like TV producer Bart De Pauw and cyclist Thomas De Gendt. The Antwerp tourist department pointed out that Antwerp is the moustache capital of Flanders, from its Moustache Club to Peter Paul Rubens (pictured) to rising movie star Matthias Schoenaerts to Sinterklaas, who landed in the port city last weekend.

News in brief

Unions representing civil servants working for the Flemish government have presented a plan to **save €100 million on administrative costs**, including salaries. The plan was requested by the government as part of its latest round of budget discussions. Among the measures proposed is to bring in-house many of the appointments procedures currently farmed out to external executive search organisations. The government would also take back its entire IT operation, which is also outsourced.

Police in Brussels have arrested a man suspected of sending **death threats by mail to Prince Filip** in connection with an 11 November visit to Ypres. As a result, security arrangements for the prince were tightened, his route was changed and he left immediately after the official part of the event. The man is being held in the psychiatric wing of Vorst prison, where he has been ordered to undergo evaluation.

Staff in Brussels hospitals are now able to take Dutch lessons through a new distance learning scheme called HopITAAL launched last week by Brussels IT minister Brigitte Grouwels. The system allows doctors, nurses and other **hospital staff to follow Dutch courses** on their own without having to take time to attend classes. Last year 550 Brussels hospital workers took language courses in Dutch. "A good bilingual service in health care can be something lives depend on," Grouwels said.

The world-renowned **bonobo research programme** run by the Royal Zoological Society at Planckendaal animal park in Mechelen has been granted a subsidy of €900,000 a year for the next five years by innovation minister Ingrid Lieten. The park has been running the programme for 20 years and has provided the international research community with a great deal of

information used to ensure the survival of the species. The bonobo is thought to be the ape species closest to *Homo sapiens*.

Rail authority NMBS has dropped plans to build a **new tunnel between the North and South stations** in Brussels in an attempt to ease traffic. In its new investment plan for 2013-2025, the authority includes €1.5 million for new infrastructure, while the new tunnel would cost between €3.5 and €5 billion. "Various alternatives are being examined," said a spokesperson for federal minister for government enterprises Paul Magnette.

Visitors to Brussels Airport, the Koekelberg basilica and even the rabbit-warren corridors of Bozar can now find their way more easily, using the new **Indoor Maps function provided by Google**, built into the latest versions of Google Maps. Other institutions, like the University of Ghent and a number of train stations, can also be consulted.

The Brussels prosecutor's office has received more than **130 reports of phishing** – fraudulent attempts, usually by phone or email, to get bank customers to hand over their personal details – since a warning three weeks ago about fake ING emails. More information is being sought about the fraudsters, who operate out of the Netherlands and target exclusively Dutch-speaking bank clients. ING Bank said it would no longer compensate the victims of phishing automatically but will look at each case on its merits. Anyone receiving a phishing email can forward it to be-irm-phishing@ing.be for investigation.

Beers from Flanders have once again picked up several medals at the **European Beer Star Awards** in Nuremberg. Bavik brewery from Bavikhove, West Flanders, took

home two silver medals, for its Petrus Dubbel Bruin and Petrus Aged Ale. Silver also went to the Arend Tripel by De Ryck in Herzele, East Flanders, and to the Maneblusser by Het Anker in Mechelen. Gold medals went to the Affligem Blond of Alken-Maes in Mechelen and the Rodenbach Caractère Rouge from Palm in Steenhuffel, Flemish Brabant.

Norbert Teufelberger, the Austrian CEO of the world's largest online gambling site Bwin, was last week **detained for questioning by the gaming commission** shortly after speaking at a conference in Brussels. Bwin has been blocked in Belgium, but the commission alleges that the company has circumvented the block on two occasions by providing players with a new URL. Under new laws, only sites based in Belgium with a physical office can offer online gambling. Bwin is based in Gibraltar and operates only online.

Inspectors from the economy ministry have carried out searches in Antwerp, Brussels and Mechelen over the last few months netting 10 tonnes of **counterfeit washing powder**, 600 litres of liquid detergent and 1,500 bottles of shampoo. The fakes were packaged as though they were brands and were seized as they might present a threat to human health. Members of the public were advised to be on the lookout for warning signs, such as a shop suddenly selling a product never before stocked, defects in the packaging and prices too good to be true.

Police in Tienen, Flemish Brabant, stopped three men riding a **motor scooter carrying a sheep**, which they were apparently planning to slaughter. The police said that the men appeared to be in the country illegally, while the sheep had been stolen nearby in Wommersom. The men were detained and the sheep taken to an animal shelter.

FLANDERS TODAY

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OFFSIDE
Tree of lights

There will be a Christmas tree on the Grote Markt in Brussels this year. It just won't be a tree, but a symbol of a tree. Allow us to explain.

Earlier this month, city council member Bianca Debaets announced that there would be no traditional Christmas tree on the square this year because of its religious connotations. The council denied allegations that this was to avoid offending Muslims by pointing out that the usual nativity will be in place.

Meanwhile, a petition appeared on the internet calling for the tree to be restored, rapidly gathering more than 20,000 signatures.



In fact, the city council had little to do with the decision. The annual tree is traditionally sponsored by power supplier Electrabel, a company that has this year been

deserted by customers in the tens of thousands in favour of cheaper options. They took the decision to exchange the tree for a light installation representing a Christmas

tree in abstract form. It costs six times more than the natural tree, but that is Electrabel's expense. The Christmas tree is a vestige of a pre-Christian pagan tradition that symbolised evergreen life in the face of winter. It has found its way into seasonal traditions but has this year been pushed aside not by Allah, but by a corporation. Electrabel is paying for prime real estate to advertise its business.

In addition, when the lights are off during the day, you'll be able to climb up inside the structure to get a bird's eye view of the most beautiful square in Europe (for a fee of €4 for adults and €2 for children).

Alan Hope

Meet the middle ages

Experts on medieval history provided consultation to the Historium to ensure authenticity

► continued from page 1

and communications at the Historium. The story features audio and video, and they've recruited actors like Clara Cleymans (*Quiz Me Quick*) as Anna, Leslie De Gruyter (*Parade's End*) as Jan Van Eyck and Peter Van Den Begin (*Allez Eddy!*) as a wily merchant, as well as rising young jazz drummer Lander Gyselinck as Jacob.

Visitors are equipped with an audio guide in one of nine languages, which tells the story and fills in additional historical details – as well as providing a soundtrack recorded by the Brussels Philharmonic. The love story is told by a film that was shot with the actors in Bruges, as well as in three studios, one of them the biggest Blue Key effects studio in Belgium, where the harbour scene was filmed. The set there also included 200 square metres of authentic cobblestones. The film was directed by Kene Illegems, who comes from advertising and music videos, and created dance performances for fashion shows for the late Kaat Tilley. His father, Toon, was director of photography. Charlotte Willems, who worked on the TV series *De smaak van De Keyser*, designed the sumptuous costumes, with the exception of the cloak worn by Anna, model for the Madonna, which was made by Kaat Tilley. (Odorous detail: On the first day of shooting, the two babies playing the infant Jesus between them managed to pee on Clara Cleymans and her priceless cloak no fewer than eight times.

See, hear and smell medieval Bruges

"The idea is to let you explore medieval Bruges using the five senses," says Tolenaars. So there are temperature and weather effects and things to taste. The Duvelorium on the first floor is a beer-tasting room with a covered terrace looking out over the Markt (Duvel Moortgat is one of the attraction's strategic partners). And there are smells. This aspect of the plan intrigued me the most, since a medieval port city must have smelled very particular indeed. Yet no record of how things smelled back then has come down to us. Every

other aspect of medieval life was recorded, and physical artefacts of all sorts have endured. But the one aspect of everyday life that would strike us the most – the place, frankly, must have stunk to high heaven – has vanished from the record.

Here Tolenaars disappoints me: "Of course we have chosen the good smells of cooking and wood fires and the scents of the bath house. You couldn't really include the bad smells or you'd have people turning around and running out the door."

On the question of smells, as on every other historical detail, Historium consulted a group of experts, including Wim Blockmans, professor of medieval history at Leiden University in the Netherlands; Bruges' city archivist Noël Geirnaert, author of several books on the city; and historian André Vandewalle, a former city archivist and author.

The detail about the ambient odours aside, my impression is that the creators of this attraction have done their utmost to recreate the experience of the city as it would resonate with a contemporary audience. The technology is cutting-edge, with touchscreens and animatronics, and the attention to detail by the decor artists is worthy of a Hollywood epic.

But these artists are working with paint and plaster, not with CGI. And because it's not solely for show, there's also a pedagogical exhibition at the close of the tour, where some of the things you've seen are placed in their historical context, leaving the way open for you to return to the city and explore the history further, as it lives and breathes around you in 2012.

Historium is open seven days a week from 25 November, 10.00-18.00 (Thursdays until 21.00). Tickets are €11 for adults and €5.50 for under-14s. A family pass for two adults and three children costs €30. Book online to reserve a date and time slot. Combo tickets, including a walking tour or a visit to the Groeninge Museum, are also available at €15 each.

► www.historium.be



Historium takes you to the medieval streets of Bruges, careful not to avoid danger, and into the workshop of Jan Van Eyck



Unlike many attractions of its size, the Historium enjoys a prime city centre location, right on Bruges' Markt

WIN TICKETS TO THE HISTORIUM!

Flanders Today has five pairs of adult entry tickets to give away. Send an email with the subject "Historium" by noon on Friday, 23 November to editorial@flanderstoday.eu and answer the

following question: What was the name of Jan Van Eyck's brother, with whom he painted the Ghent altarpiece "The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb"? Winners will be notified by 17.00 the same day.

HISTORIUM IN FIGURES

Cost

€10 million, raised by a private group of three families

Subsidy

€1.2 million from the government of Flanders; €375,000 from the province of West Flanders

Time from concept to opening

82 months, starting in January 2006

Total area

3,581 square metres

Admissions

24 visitors for every presentation, once every five minutes; 200,000 visitors expected every year

Length of visit

30 minutes for the attraction, about one hour in total

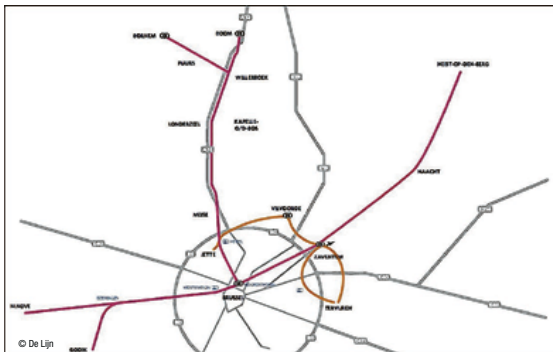
Flemish trams ride into Brussels

The new Brabantnet should curtail road congestion around the capital

Alan Hope

Flemish public transport authority De Lijn last week announced four new tram lines in Flemish Brabant, which will ride into Brussels and terminate at the city's North Station. The plans have won the approval of the Brussels-Capital Region, the capital's transport authority MIVB and Flemish mobility minister Hilde Crevits.

Flemish Brabant lies at the centre of road congestion in Flanders, with 10 of the 16 most serious points in the region located in the areas around Brussels. Residents of the municipalities affected (see map)



have until 11 January to submit their remarks to a public enquiry, as part of the procedure to draw up an environmental effects report.

The four lines are grouped together under the name "Brabantnet". Three of them would link Heist-op-den-Berg, Ninove and Boom with Brussels North, while a fourth, the Ringtram, would link Jette in the north of Brussels with Tervuren, by way of Grimbergen, Vilvoorde and Zaventem.

"Both the MIVB and the government are completely behind our plan," said Francys Peeters, director of De Lijn in Flemish Brabant. "Our plans

also match seamlessly with the extension plans the MIVB has for its own network."

The plan, Peeters said, will allow commuters and others to travel from various points in Flemish Brabant to any point in Brussels with a maximum of one transfer, thereby increasing the use of public transport. The timing of the project, as well as its financing, have not yet been announced. Minister Crevits said that a public-private partnership is one of the possibilities.

► www.tinyurl.com/brabantnet

Massive diamond fraud uncovered

Police in Antwerp are investigating a massive diamond fraud in which a Belgian-Lebanese family smuggled diamonds worth an estimated €1.3 billion over the course of several years. The family has not been named, and most of the income from the scheme is thought to have been exported to Lebanon.

The investigation started with a warning from the state security service that the family had connections with known dealers in illegal diamonds. The diamonds are brought into Antwerp and the takings then exported, both undocumented, to evade huge sums in tax. The illegal diamonds, including stones originating in conflict zones – the so-called "blood diamonds" – were mixed with legal diamonds and the whole shipment certificated as "mixed origin" by the industry's system of Kimberly certificates, which are supposed to guarantee the origins of any stone. The family managed to get around the Kimberly system by passing the stones through the United Arab Emirates and Switzerland before bringing them into Belgium. The profits, meanwhile, were laundered by means of false invoices and fake bookkeeping.

Investigators have so far found €4 million worth of diamonds – a fraction of the quantities concerned, most of which is likely now out of the reach of the authorities.



Smaller scale beer fraud

In another fraud case, hundreds of cafes in East and West Flanders can expect a visit from the tax authorities in connection with a scheme uncovered in 2010 involving a drinks wholesaler from Waarschoot, East Flanders. The trader regularly sold vats of beer under the table to café owners, who then sold the beer on without having to pay VAT.

The man made a deal with the tax authorities at the beginning of the year in which he paid €15 million in back taxes and penalties. He also gave up the names of 800 of his customers. According to trade federation Horeca Vlaanderen, the costs could mean the end of many of the businesses affected.

School forced to pass pupil after court intervenes

Flemish education minister Pascal Smet is preparing new regulations to make it easier for secondary school students to appeal against exam results within their schools, following a decision last week by the Council of State, which forced a school in Genk to pass a fifth-year secondary student it had previously failed, or face a fine of €1,250 a day.

The student, 17-year-old Carmen Peeters, of Sint-Jan-Berchman college in Genk, has been diagnosed with dyslexia and attention deficit disorder. She was given the C certificate at the end of last school year, which meant she was unable to move forward to the final year of school.

She then took her case to the Council of State. "All I did was stand up for my rights," she said after the judgement came back in her favour. She is now studying at another school.

A Smet spokesperson said that his department was preparing a new regulation to make it more efficient for students to appeal their results, without the cases ending up in court. "The school council is the place where cases should be judged," the spokesperson said. "If student and parents are unable to gain satisfaction there, at least the procedure should remain inside the school gates."

Coast "not ready" for the coming storm

The Flemish coast is not ready to face a super-storm, according to a group of experts meeting last week in Ostend at a conference organized by the nature conservancy organisation Natuurpunt. "If the storm should come, we'll be once more able to swim to Bruges," said one speaker.

Meteorologists talk of the 100-year storm, expected to occur once in a century. However, that was before global climate change increased the chances of storms, and rising sea levels threatened low-lying areas, like the coastal regions of West Flanders. According to current estimates, the level of high tide along the 67 kilometres of the coast could rise by 14cm to 93cm by the year 2100.

The experts proposed a plan: a series of natural measures intended to protect coastal areas and the polder hinterland from the effects of such a 100-year-storm. They include broader and reinforced dune areas, flood basins and constructed oyster reefs.



Baby dies after medical error

A baby who was given too much nitrous oxide by mistake during a routine operation has died in hospital in Bruges. Eight-month-old Jasper underwent a cochlear implant surgery. The operation was successful, but the baby suffered heart failure and was placed in a medical coma. It later emerged that Jasper had been given too high a dose of nitrous oxide and was suffering from the effects of anoxia, or lack of oxygen.

The operation took place in the Onze Lieve Vrouw hospital in Knokke-Heist, which blamed the incident on a technical problem. The company that supplies the gas installation to the hospital, Acertys Healthcare in Aartselaar, later said that the

equipment had only just been installed in the operating room (OR) and had not yet been certified for use.

"After every installation, we test all apparatus and gas lines," said company CEO Brigitte De Vet. "We measure the pressure of the gases used to anaesthetise the patient, and only after that check, do we release the OR for use. When the baby underwent surgery, that still hadn't taken place. As far as we are concerned, the installation was not complete."

The hospital authorities have so far declined to comment on the company's claims. Last Saturday, about 700 people attended the funeral of Jasper in Duinbergen, near Knokke.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

900

beds for the homeless opened up in Brussels last week for the winter season

3.08%

increase in the price of a standard rail ticket from February, the rail authority NMBS said. A season ticket will go up by a maximum of 1.32%

170,000

people visited Antwerp's Boekenbeurs, where booksellers increased their takings this year by about 10%, according to event organiser boek.be

1,647,000

passengers went through Brussels Airport in October, 25,000 fewer than in the same period last year. Freight traffic also fell 12.9% to 36,346 tonnes

€0.40

increase in the price of a crate of beer announced by Alken-Maes, following an increase announced by InBev recently. A beer in cafés will go up by about 2 cents

€1 billion for small business

Banks await decision from Flemish government on SME Fund proposal

Alan Hope

The government of Flanders would guarantee up to €1 billion in long-term financing for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) under a new plan proposed by the banks last week. The loans would be earmarked to help companies that are having trouble obtaining bank financing. Banks would provide credit through an SME Fund for periods of five to 15 years.

The construction of the fund is complex: The banks would pay €150 million of their own funds into the SME Fund and raise the rest (€850 million) by a bond issue. The structure is designed to allow banks to maintain their liquidity obligations under a recent new banking treaty, which was blamed for their reluctance to extend credit to businesses.

According to the proposal, each bank's own credit committee would consider applications for financing from the SME Fund. In the first instance, the banks would

retain liability for defaults, with the government guarantee coming into play only in extremis and only for losses over €75 million. In this way, the fund would not risk becoming a depository for high-risk credit: The banks must still consider their own risk in approving loans.

No effect on Tobin Tax

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters (pictured) welcomed the proposal but stressed that it would still have to be approved by the whole government. He warned the banks not to rely on *quid pro quo*: "The banks are assuming that there will be no additional taxes imposed on them in return for this measure, but I am only able to give that sort of guarantee on a Flemish level," he said, alluding to the federal government's ongoing budget discussions, which include a proposal to introduce a tax on financial transactions, the so-called Tobin Tax.

According to Unizo, the organisation that represents the self-employed,



the bank plan contains "favourable conditions for SMEs," 25% of whom currently have trouble getting financing. However, "the proposed measures have to be translated into concrete action as quickly as possible," the organisation said. Meanwhile, the government agreed to set up a special agency for Flemish

and strategic investment projects and a regional planning permission committee. Both bodies will work together to provide investment projects – whether public, private or a mix of both – with intensive support, in an effort to avoid needless delays and blockages. The two bodies will come into force in December.

Names of Limburg task force revealed

The 12 experts who will form the government's task force for the economic relaunch of Limburg have been named. They include Urbain Vandeuren (pictured), chairman of the Flemish investment company Gimv; Professor Piet Pauwels, dean of the faculty of economics at Hasselt University; Francine Quanten, director of strategic policy at the city of Genk; and Jean-Paul Coenen, secretary of the Limburg social investment company LSM.

The task force will be chaired by Professor Herman Daems, a former director of Gimv and now president

of BNP Paribas Fortis. Its job will be to formulate a strategy for economic recovery in the wake of the announcement of the closure of Ford Genk, with an expected loss of 10,000 jobs, directly and indirectly.

No parts export

Meanwhile, at Ford Genk, unions are holding to their position of not allowing parts to exit the factory for other plants in Europe, despite an offer from management to pay workers a one-off premium – described by union representatives as "a ransom".

Work re-started at Ford Genk last week with the two sides still at loggerheads over the parts blockade and over the number of new vehicles the plant will turn out. Management, one representative said, had set a figure of 8,000 new cars in eight days, "but we don't know if that's feasible or not".

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters said that he is approaching the EU Commission in an effort to obtain a special status for Limburg province that would allow it to obtain EU grants under the Cohesion Funds.



De Tijd wins Newspaper of the Year

Flemish business daily *De Tijd* has been named European Newspaper of the Year by editorial-design.com at a ceremony in Germany. The paper, headed by editor in chief Isabel Albers, shared the prize with the Dutch daily *Trouw*. The awards are given for concept and design and recognise *De Tijd*'s recent relaunch in Berliner format – larger than a tabloid but smaller than a broadsheet. The jury described the paper as "modern and user-friendly". "We have broken through the cliché that a business paper has to be grey, boring and predictable," commented art director Jan Nelis. "*De Tijd* has always been a strong brand. Now it's also a good-looking and contemporary brand."



bpost's Oosterlinck honoured

Dirk Oosterlinck has been voted Marketer of the Year by the Marketing Foundation and the magazine *Trends*. Oosterlinck, who works for the national post office bpost, is the brains behind "bpost op afspraak", or bpost by appointment, a new service that allows customers to make an appointment to have mail delivered at a certain time. The service is currently being tested in Turnhout, Geraardsbergen and Sint-Niklaas.

Business says "no" to VAT increase

Representatives of Flemish business have united in rejecting a proposal to increase VAT from 21% to 22%. The proposal is one of many on the table of the ongoing federal budget negotiations.

The Neutral Union for the Self-Employed (NSZ) described the proposal as "unthinkable". President Christine Mattheeuws commented: "Higher VAT would only reduce purchasing power, which would affect traders and the self-employed. Small businesses have contributed enough over the past months towards bringing the budget into line".

According to Karel Van Eetvelt, director-general of Unizo, "an increase in VAT would lead to a slump in growth, which is already at zero. The state will in the end take in less income." Calculations on household spending by the economy ministry suggest that the increase would cost the average person €93 a year, offset slightly – about €25 a year – by a cut in the 6% rate (for books, as well as renovations to certain older houses) to 5.5%.

According to Dominique Michel, director of the retail and wholesale trade federation Comeos, the VAT increase would lead to more job losses – about 5,400, according to a calculation by consultant Arthur D Little.

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Energy ▶ Tractebel

Tractebel Engineering, a local affiliate of the French GDF-Suez energy group, has won a €14 million contract to develop the world's largest solar oven, to be built in South Africa. The facility, with a capacity of some 100 megawatts, is scheduled to come on stream in 2014.

Gas ▶ Fluxys

The local gas transport and energy network operator is seeking to further develop its distribution activities, according to one of its leading shareholders, the Caisse de Depots et Placements du Quebec, one of Canada's largest pension funds. The company is believed to be considering an offer for Sibelga, the leading gas distributor in the Brussels area.

Interiors ▶ Ethan Allen

US-based furniture retailer Ethan Allen, known for its classic and Americana style, is opening its first European outlet in the Zavel area of Brussels early next year.

Materials ▶ Umicore

The Brussels-based materials technology group is investing €10 million to build a muller catalyst unit for heavy duty diesel in Suzhou, China. The move is part of the company's plans to increase its capacity in a market of over two million trucks sold annually.

Pharmaceuticals

▶ Arseus

Belgo-Dutch pharmaceutical group Arseus, with headquarters in Waregem, West Flanders, is spending some €16 million to acquire compounding and conditioning companies in Brazil, Colombia and Denmark.

Property ▶ WDP

The Meise-based industrial property group WDP has sold its Czech affiliate to its local CTP logistics group for €25 million. The move provides WDP with additional funds to develop its activities in Zwijndrecht, near the Antwerp port area.

Retail ▶ Mac Line

Mac Line, the local French-owned distributor of Apple products, has been acquired by Herentals-based Easy-M, operator of nine Apple stores in Flanders. The company has also made an offer to acquire four stores of the electronics retailer Photo Hall in receivership.

Technology ▶ LMS

The Leuven-based industrial software developer and automation group, with affiliates across Europe, Asia and in the US, been acquired by the German Siemens company for €680 million. LMS is a world leader in mechatronic simulation software and testing systems.

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The American dream

BelCham is helping Flemish enterprises make it in the US

Lawrence De Geest

Last month in New York City's Greenwich Village, Flemish entrepreneur Christophe Van Aerde joined two friends to open the Japanese restaurant BambooTori. The founders met and formulated their idea as part of a Global Entrepreneurship graduate programme and secured start-up funding from one of their professors. Co-founder Hendy LaMothe says their plan involves reaching into Belgium, but first they must get through some of America – and they are setting up in a hot spot. There are nearly 5,000 restaurants in Manhattan alone, and 80% of restaurants in New York City close within five years of opening. Nonetheless, early reviews of the small restaurant that specialises in Japanese-style grilled chicken have been positive, and LaMothe is bullish. "We don't see why we can't do it," he says. "Our model is easily scalable."

A day after BambooTori's grand opening – and less than a fortnight after Hurricane Sandy tore through greater New York City – the Belgian-American Chamber of Commerce (BelCham) threw its annual black-tie gala at the Harvard Club, where successful and promising Belgian enterprise was honoured, including Flemish physiologist Emile Boulpaep,



BelCham's black-tie Entrepreneurship Awards Gala Dinner hosts 200 Belgians working in the New York area

who received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement award (see sidebar).

The influence of BelCham

BelCham has been around since 1918, helping Belgian businesses grow in the United States. The US was recently ranked fifth in a global

leadership survey by consultancy firm SHL, while Belgium was ranked 16th.

"BelCham is taking a leadership position in helping firms compete by bringing them together to exchange knowledge and collaborate," says BelCham executive director Bieke Claes. In addition to hosting networking and other events every

few months, BelCham is getting set to launch two professional programmes for Belgians in the US, jointly called the Belgian-American Career Programme.

The first component is the Strategic Business Centre, which offers support to Belgians in America who have a business plan to improve or specific problems that need to be solved. "Once we understand what people are hoping to explore or discuss, we assemble a team of accomplished business people from different fields and backgrounds," explains Claes. "They sign a non-disclosure agreement, and then we schedule a meeting for the group to come together and have a discussion regarding the idea or problem."

The second component is a human resources support service that helps BelCham members find employees and interns, as well as placing Belgians in positions at American companies.

Demand for Belgian talent

"There was and is a great demand for Belgian talent," says Claes, who was born and raised in Rotselaar and worked for a local law firm

before heading to the US for further studies two years ago. "Belgians are productive, highly qualified and easily fit into the culture of American companies. With the Belgian-American Career Programme, we want to create and foster a Belgian-American business climate that increases knowledge, builds on collaborative relationships and can pride itself on entrepreneurship and innovation."

Vincent Herbert, the CEO of Brussels-based cafe chain Le Pain Quotidien and a BelCham board member, is a fan of the organisation's initiatives: "We would love to have more Belgians working at Le Pain Quotidien in the US," he told BelCham. "They speak several languages and carry with them the local colour of our company. We want to let Belgians know that Belgian companies in the US are open for business."

The US Department of State has designated BelCham as a potential sponsor of J1 visas – the visa that interns must have – so it helps applicants through the process. A new website is also about to be launched, where members will be able to promote themselves.

► www.belcham.org

BIG NIGHT OUT



At the BelCham gala earlier this month, about 200 attendees sipped champagne and Stella as they mingled with ambassadors, toasted globalisation and listened to speeches from award winners at the annual Entrepreneurship Awards Gala Dinner. Brussels Airlines was named Company of the Year, in part for re-opening a direct route between Brussels and New York. Most Promising Company of the Year went to software company Acquia, whose Drupal software – the brainchild of Dries Buytaert, a 33-year-old from Antwerp – is used in the

websites of the White House, among others worldwide.

And the gala concluded with a Lifetime Achievement Award for Yale University molecular physiologist Emile Boulpaep (pictured) – though not for his science, but rather for his role as a businessman.

Born in Aalst and educated at the University of Leuven, Boulpaep "turned the Belgian American Educational Foundation from a \$3 million organisation into an \$80 million organisation," says Claes. "The foundation is in line with BelCham's mission and values:

creating a link between the US and Belgium to facilitate exchange and stimulate collaboration."

Past winners of the Lifetime Achievement Award include Eddy Merckx and Le Pain Quotidien CEO Vincent Herbert. I'm told a journalist has never won, but I still have hope. It would take, says BelCham director Bieke Claes, "entrepreneurship, the will and courage to dig deep, writing the truth even when it's risky or controversial and stimulating a critical sense and autonomous thinking among the readership."

Flemish med-tech firms exhibit in Dusseldorf

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters last week promised the government's continued support for the medical research sector, speaking at Medica in Dusseldorf, Germany, one of the largest medical trade fairs in the world. Forty-eight Flemish companies presented their cutting-edge advances in medical products and innovations. "Flanders has one of the most highly developed health-care systems in the world," Peeters told delegates. "We have an excellent reputation in specific areas such as diagnostics and medical devices. Moreover, new developments, like health-care IT applications, are growing at a very rapid pace."

Among the leading companies at Medica was Kortrijk-based imaging specialist Barco, which launched its new bedside smart terminal JAO ST-185B (pictured). The terminal keeps patients informed about doctors' schedules, while offering entertainment and allowing them to control their own experience by, for example, ordering meals or changing the lighting in their rooms. "With bedside terminals, we want to engage patients during their stay in the hospital as we believe active patients are

healthier patients," said Warren Kressinger-Dunn, VP of Strategic Marketing for Barco's Point of Care Division. "Our software provides patients with more tools for health education, service requests and communication with the care team. Information and interaction are key."

Also among the Flemish companies at Medica were BioniX, which makes equipment to carry out muscle evaluations on back patients; Indigo Care, a Limburg company that developed a nursing call system using the internet, and which last week unveiled its in-room touchscreen terminal; PHI Data of Wommel, which presented its advanced system for identification and localisation; and Medec Benelux, which last week won the Unizo small business prize for East Flanders and showed its new Caelus Anaesthesia Workstation.

"This is truly one of our key industries, famous for its high degree of expertise and innovation, which is very obvious here at Medica," Peeters said. "The government of Flanders will continue its efforts in supporting the medical sector, both in the region and on the international scene." Alan Hope



Eat, drink and be merry

For more than a decade, actors, musicians and chefs have been recreating a wedding that saw

Nicholas Hirst

Bruges, 1468. To celebrate the marriage of Charles the Bold and Margaret of York, the famously gregarious Burgundian court threw a 10-day festival – one that will go down in history for its opulence and high spirits. The parties became legendary, with a dizzy succession of musicians and duelling knights, falconers and fire-eaters, chefs and poets bent on welcoming their new duchess. Since 1994 – indeed, long before the Historium sought to bring a love story from 1435 back to life – the festivities of July 1468 have been revived each week in a former Jesuit church in Bruges' old town. With fewer people attending mass, the Jesuits sold the church to a property developer in the early 1990s. When his plans to build a hotel were rejected by the local council, he set about finding another use to which it could be put and was inspired by the Beefeater banquet in London. Celebrations Entertainment, based in Antwerp, is in charge of the banquet. The mock banquet caters for up to 450 diners and medieval

neo-gothic church's vaulted ceiling. Around the diners, in the aisles, old tapestries and flaking paintings glimmer in the shadows. A jester opens the evening and marshals proceedings, explaining the goings-on, introducing the acts and ribbing the guests and his master, the Count of Burgundy. True to legend, the Count is a fine Flemish man, tall, robust and decked out in exquisite silk and velvet. Though not overwhelmed by the festivities, he is nonetheless graciously pleased by the attendance and does rise for the occasional jig. On his arm, Margaret of York, sister to the King of England and a true daisy of the north, does a good job of appearing awe-struck at the unfolding celebrations in her honour.

Taking flight

First up are the falconers, whose birds swoop above diners' heads. Several larger birds are also brought in, including a very big owl. Next, a fire-eater guzzles flames and blows clouds of fire into

First up are the falconers, whose birds swoop above diners' heads

enthusiasts, for the most part in modern clothes, who are welcomed by fair damsels and gnarly squires. Several banqueting tables are laid out in the nave, flanked by large stone pillars propping up the

the church's upper realms. It's an impressive spectacle that plays off the eerie setting. He is followed by, among others, a gaggle of witches and a mob of knights. A rather ferocious sword



Recording a city

Discover medieval Bruges through the painters who lived it

As the Historium and other activities in Bruges show, memories of the city in the Middle Ages are not lost forever. But no glimpse into Bruges' past is complete without a visit to the Groeninge Museum's collection of early art. By the mid-11th century, *Bruggelingen* were already active in international trade, and its importance on the world stage would continue to grow for at least another 300 years. "Bruges is the one city in the world where money can buy anything," said Pedro Tafur, the Spanish traveller and writer, in 1438. But it was with the arrival in of the Burgundian court in the early 1400s, and its associated patronage, that the arts began to flower in full. Portraits, urban scenes and illustrations from books of the time all reveal a Bruges that is architecturally still

recognisable today.

A late 15th-century painting of Saint Nicholas by the "Master of the Legend of Saint Lucy" – an unidentified Early Netherlandish painter – shows the town's bulky fortifications, including the Gates of Ghent and the Cross, which enclose the towering Church of our Saviour, the Belfry and Jerusalem

The "Moreel Triptych" demonstrates how paintings could serve individuals' social aspirations

Church, all the same as they are now. "The Groeninge received a lot of art from Bruges' various churches and convents," explains Till-Holger Borchert, the museum's head curator. But not all art was religious. "The Judgment of Cambyses" diptych

by Gerard David from 1498 shows townspeople apprehending and flaying alive a corrupt judge. You'll be relieved to know it's not based on actual events in Bruges, but rather on an ancient Persian myth. It was commissioned by the local council and hung in Bruges' court as a reminder to those who

held office and as an illustration of the emerging relationship between art and civic life. What's more, the buildings, stonework and coats of arms all recognisably place the scene in Bruges. The "Moreel Triptych", meanwhile,

was painted by Hans Memling in 1484 on the order of William Moreel. Moreel was an important *Bruggeling* of Italian descent, a wealthy spice merchant who headed the Bank of Rome in Bruges and was active in politics. The painting shows Moreel flanked by his wife and two saints against the backdrop of a fortified Bruges and demonstrates how paintings could at once serve individuals' religious beliefs and social aspirations. Bruges certainly has much art that testifies to its past. But this is not only due to the number of skilled painters active in Bruges and the affluence of its international merchant community. "It's also true that the Protestant anger against Catholic images was less potent in Bruges," says Borchert. **NH**



"The Judgment of Cambyses" hung in the Bruges' courts

► www.tinyurl.com/groeninge

Take a bow

Descendants of Bruges' medieval crossbowmen are keeping the centuries-old tradition alive

Nicholas Hirst

Bruges at its most splendid

tournament is the culmination of the festivities – recalling the Golden Tree Joust that took place on the Markt in 1468.

Throughout the performance, no one is more important than the jester. In a great performance, he tells jokes, announces toasts and mixes lewd humour with wise words. Perhaps in recognition of cosmopolitan attendees at the wedding celebrations – Florentines, Venetians, Spaniards, Scots and *Osterlings*, or people from the East – he speaks in French, English and Dutch, and even Spanish and Russian.

Indeed, it's important not to forget that this is, in addition to a spectacle, is a banquet. The food is neither Flemish nor French – nor even Yorkish – but is probably best described as solidly medieval. A cart is used to bring in the various servings, from which the rough peons carve chunks of rustic bread to accompany the hearty starter of soup and pate. This is followed by well-grilled spare ribs and vegetables, with apple pie for dessert. All washed down with lashings of claret and beer, while a bar serves other drinks.

Visually dramatic, this event has a decent go at taking Bruges' past out of the museums. The costumes are impressive with their girdles and mantles, and all the performers seem to much enjoy what they are doing. The show is family oriented – perhaps too much at times – and, unsurprisingly, the food, served in copious amounts but without

much finesse, is more picturesque than tasty.

Jousting on the markt

Back in 1468, Bruges was one of the world's most prosperous and cosmopolitan cities. The marriage, which made Margaret the most powerful duchess in Europe, was bitterly opposed by France's Louis XI, who even tried to sink the boat bringing her from England with her "strange" English retinue.

As Charles and Margaret made their official Joyous Entry into Bruges, they were received by thousands blowing horns, ringing clarions and acting out spectacles. The streets of Bruges were carpeted, draped in gold cloth and became a sea of banners, tapestries and flowers.

The festivities lasted for 10 days, culminating in a final banquet where guests are said to have been entertained by lions and singing dwarves as well as a 20-metre tower filled with dancing bears and monkeys.

The arrival of the ducal couple, with the Golden Tree jousting tournament that took place on the Markt, is commemorated and re-enacted every five years in Bruges in the Pageant of the Golden Tree.

As for the banquet, it takes place every Saturday night. (From April to October, it's on both Fridays and Saturdays.) Prices range from €45 to €74 per person. Celebrations Entertainment also accepts private events catering to a minimum of 120 people.

► www.celebrations-entertainment.be

It's easy to get the feeling that most of Bruges' history has been laid out on a plate for all to see and admire. As such, the Crossbow Guild of St George, an exclusive body that can be traced right back to the Middle Ages, comes as a surprise.

The Koninklijke en Prinselijke Hoofdgilde Sint-Joris was founded in the early 1300s in the time of Count Robert III, the so-called Lion of Flanders. Members were responsible for maintaining peace in the town while protecting it from invaders – mainly English and French – while the Flemish Dukes would call on them for military expeditions.

Philip the Good and his oldest illegitimate son Anthony (unforgettably dubbed the Grand Bastard of Burgundy) were members of St George's Guild. Louis de Gruuthuse, knight of the Golden Fleece and original owner of the Gruuthuse Museum, was also a

another historical parade, known as the Blindekensprocessie (Blind Procession) or sometimes as the Brugse Belofte (Promise of Bruges). This dates back to 1302 and the Battle of Pevelenberg where the French king Philip the Fair sought revenge after losing the Battle of the Golden Spurs. Though having the upper hand, the Flemish left the battlefield and so both sides claimed victory. The procession, which sets out from Our Lady of the Blind each year on 15 August, commemorates a promise made by Bruges folk to offer, in exchange for their safekeeping, a 36-pound candle (about 16 kilograms) to Our Lady of the Pottery.

No taxes, plus wine

Members still compete against each other to be "king" of the guild by winning a tournament. They also on occasion challenge guilds from other towns. St George's isn't in fact the only

reputedly more expensive and its feasts more indulgent. These days, St Sebastian's guild, unlike St George's, is open to the public for a few hours each day except Sunday. Both guilds also have valuable archives and unique collections of weapons.

Crossbowmen were first recorded in Bruges' civic records in the 1280s. The archery and crossbow guilds soon became important religious and social associations in medieval cities. Their members would not only maintain peace within the town and protect it from external threats, they would also join campaigns organised by the Dukes of Flanders. For example, in 1411 John the Fearless had more than 120 archers and crossbowmen from Bruges among his troops in his campaign against Orleans and Armagnac.

In exchange, the guilds received privileges from the Dukes. They were exempt from taxes, had the right to bear arms and received money and lands. Bruges also gave the crossbowmen "two stoops" of wine a week.

After superseding the longbow on the battlefield, the crossbow soon became a sport as well. Crossbow tournaments in Flanders would sometimes draw in hundreds of bowmen from across northern Europe. Contemporary pamphlets would invoke crossbowmen to engage in the "excellent, very noble and loved game, and above all other games, the most pure and honourable".

► www.st-jorisbrugge.be

Bruges' crossbowmen were exempt from taxes and received money, lands and "two stoops of wine" a week

member, as was King Leopold I of Belgium.

The descendants of those crossbowmen now number 56, says Philippe Putman, the guild's keeper. Each Tuesday and Friday these members congregate at their clubhouse, a red-brick neo-gothic building in the east of Bruges' old town, to practise. In the summer, they shoot in the gardens outside, while in winter they use a shooting room – a wide corridor with targets at the end.

Protectors of the blood

All shooting is done in suit and tie, in part to honour the guild's military origins, in part to paper over any class differences between the members: Where once members were drawn exclusively from Bruges' high society – politicians, lawyers and doctors – that is no longer the case.

Not that membership costs are insignificant – there are the weekly dinners, hosted by each in turn, the two tailor-made crossbows, one for inside and one for outside, and the club's penchant for life's finer things, such as claret and cigars.

Candidates to the club must be not only descendants but sponsored by two members. They are only accepted as full members after a six-month trial and a three-year initiation. This reflects the honour of serving in the ancient guild. The crossbowmen, after all, are the protectors of the Holy Blood. During Bruges' annual Procession of the Holy Blood, in which the blood purported to be from Jesus is carried through the town, they stand on either side with their weapons and in crusader attire to protect it.

The crossbowmen also partake in



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The wandering weaver

A new exhibition reflects on the remarkable life of Jan Yoors

Bjorn Gabriels



The monumental "Written in the Fire" (1974)

Abstraction, world wars and a youth spent in gypsy caravans all had an effect on 20th-century artist Jan Yoors and his monumental tapestries, on view at FeliXart Museum

It's rather the stuff of fiction: When Flemish artist Jan Yoors was a teenager in the 1930s, he joined a group of gypsies passing through Antwerp. In the years to come, he travelled with them and became a gypsy by adoption, all with the approval of his father, Eugene, a painter and stained-glass artist, and his mother, Magda Peeters, a poet. This experience of the gypsy culture and the ideas about art and society cherished by his deeply religious yet cosmopolitan parents would have a lasting influence on Yoors' career. During the Second World War, Yoors' familiarity with the gypsies made him an ideal intermediary between the nomadic Romani peoples and the Allied forces. His resistance activities led to his being imprisoned twice. He endured torture but eventually managed to escape to England in 1944, where his parents had lived since the outbreak of war.

As a student in London, he was enthralled by an exhibition of medieval and Renaissance tapestries. More preoccupied with sculpting and weaving than with his studies, he abandoned his student visa and wandered from one workshop to another. Yoors was joined by his recent bride, Annabert van Wettum, and later by her long-time friend Marianne Citroen (who will become his second wife). All three learned to weave and started working on large-scale tapestries.

First we take Manhattan

In 1950, Yoors travelled to New York as a reporter, set up a studio and was soon followed by his two companions. His remarkable life story started to gain attention in the American press, and, in 1951, the *The New Yorker* portrayed his adventurous experiences with gypsy culture. Yoors linked both his families (one by birth, one by adoption) with his artistic practice: "I'd been brought up in my father's studio, surrounded by strong colours and design, and the gypsies, in their physical appearance

and dress, had this strong colour – a great contrast to the drabness of Antwerp."

In his earliest, still figurative, tapestries, Yoors is clearly influenced by the Old Testament and the figures of Henri Matisse. The black contours around his dark-skinned men and women also hark back to the typical lead lines of the stained-glass tradition. In "Captives" (1956), small tattooed numbers in blue that deviate from the brownish colours of the figures and the background poignantly illustrate that Yoors is digesting war traumas.

Accents in ostensibly diverging colours will continue to play a vital role in his monumental designs. By the late 1950s, Yoors had evolved towards nonfigurative forms, often based on pre-existing imagery of branches and flames or on his abstract urban photography. His knack for abstract compositions crossbred with symbolism, as he continually alternated direct political issues ("Fallout", 1959) and more abstract patterns ("Roots", 1958). A Flemish tradition meets metropolitan New York, brimming with creativity and new forms of art, design and architecture.

Looms and champagne

Yoors settled in Greenwich Village and became involved in the local art scene. In 1959, he moved into a large loft in East 47th Street, across from the United Nations and not far from where Andy Warhol will open his first Factory a few years later.

Yoors set up his gigantic looms in the luminous open space, which also proves to be an ideal place for a variety of events. One "champagne party" in March 1962 to support racial equality included a performance by legendary jazz trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie.

Yoors' work was commissioned by both corporations and institutions. Modern architecture, with its spacious rooms, inspired him, as did the abstract patterns he observed all around him. Though meticulously designed and crafted, his tapestries never feel cold or calculated. The precision work by the Yoors trio resulted in tactile artworks *par excellence*.

On the occasion of an exhibition in the University of Texas Art Museum in 1967, Yoors said he "wanted



"Captives" from 1956 signifies Yoors coming to terms with the traumas of war

visitors to touch his works" because he felt that "sensing the texture was essential to the appreciation of the tapestries".

Beginning at the end

FeliXart, of course, where his work will be on display until mid-January, doesn't allow this, but the compositions of black with recurring red, orange, purple and blue give an immersive rather than distancing sensation. Monumental woven artworks such as "Written in the Fire" (1974) seem to draw you in, even if you keep your hands to yourself. Gradually, Yoors left the weaving to his female companions. Time and again inspired by new multicultural environments, he embarked on tours throughout New York and travels all over the world. He wrote, painted

and photographed, and with French cineaste Pierre-Dominique Gaisseau, he made the documentary film and book *Only One New York* (1964-1965). Yoors also published books about gypsy culture and his wartime experiences.

In the 1970s, Yoors' health worsened and he lost both his legs. Yet he continued to make *gouaches*, designs and drawings, including charcoal sketches that depict bodies trapped in the frame. In November 1977, at age 55, Yoors suffered a fatal heart attack.

The FeliXart exhibition opens with his most recent tapestries and goes back in time to his earlier works, passing etchings and sculptures along the way. It ends in a stained-glass window by his father. The roots of a new beginning.

UNTIL 13 JANUARY

FeliXart Museum

Kuikenstraat 6, Drogenbos

► www.felixart.org

WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

Rundskop (Bullhead) filmmaker Michaël R Roskam has accepted the offer to direct *Animal Rescue* for the Fox Searchlight studio in Hollywood. Dennis Lehane (*Mystic River*, *Shutter Island*) has written the script, which is based on his own short story about a Boston bartender who is being harassed by a stalker while simultaneously caught up in mob politics playing out in his bar. British actor Tom Hardy (*Inception*, *The Dark Knight Rises*) is being considered to star.

The Flemish government has launched **Screen Flanders** to attract foreign film productions to the region, with an annual budget of €5 million. International producers can expect up to €400,000 in incentive funding, provided that funds are spent within the Flemish audio-visual industry, such as on the hiring of equipment or technicians. The fund will be managed by the Flanders Audiovisual Fund.

Prestigious restaurant guide *Gault&Millau* has named West Flemish chef **Kobe Desramauts as Belgium's Chef of the Year**. Desramauts owns the Dranouter restaurant In De Wulf and the Ghent restaurant De Vitrine and is a member of the Flemish Foodies, three chefs who share their passion for local ingredients and unique recipes online. "Desramauts is part of Belgium's generation of rock'n'roll 30-somethings who are revolutionising the country's gastronomy," said the guide. It was Peter Goossens' Hof van Cleve in Kruishoutem, however, that earned the most points in Belgium from the guide, at 19.5/20.

Ulrich Hauschild, the director general of the Vienna Arts Festival, will become the **head of Bozar's music department** as of 7 January. Ulrich is a musician himself, playing the clarinet, saxophone and contrabass. He speaks French and English and is already studying Dutch. Hauschild follows the Brussels arts institution's music director Christian Renard, who retired earlier this month. Renard leaves behind a legacy of increasing both the number of concerts programmed and developing partnerships with other venues.

The Flemish Interface Centre for Cultural Heritage (Faro) is hosting the conference **Erfgoed & Games: Level 2** this month to discuss the **role of games in the discovery of local and regional heritage**. A panel of international experts will present best practices on alternate reality, location-based games and the important of the smartphone app in educating young people about heritage and monuments.

AFTER 56 YEARS: END OF AN ERA



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Christian Hornbostel

I remember it like it was yesterday. I was 22 years old and a friend of mine got a job offer at the largest importer of Persian rugs. This appealed to me, and when he told me he was not interested, I grabbed the chance with both hands. From the first day on the magic of Eastern art seized me and it never released me since. After acquiring the required experience, I started my own business. Presently, after 56 years, the time has come to slow down. However, due to family situations, my son, and only possible successor, has pursued this tradition in Canada. It hurts me to put an end to my career, but at my age I have no other choice. Given my reputation, large clientele and my stakeholders' confidence, I NOW offer my collection at strongly reduced prices. I therefore invite you to visit my store and acquire a piece of art. An art that before long will become extinct.

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Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andsnes puts Brussels' deaf kids at the piano during Feel the Music

Marie Dumont

“How can a musician be deaf?” asks the writer Vikram Seth, whose novel *An Equal Music* deals with the very subject. To most of us, the answer would simply be: They can't. How can someone create beautiful sounds if they can't hear what they are playing, often when they have never even heard a beautiful sound in their lives? But new theories have emerged to suggest that deaf people, when provided with the right exposure and training, can learn to grasp notions such as rhythm, pitch, volume, melody and harmony. They may be able to perceive, through touch, visual stimuli or the electric signals produced by modern hearing aids, a Mozart sonata or a Chopin nocturne. From there to suggesting that they become performers is only a small step – and some of them do. This uplifting theory will be put into practice this evening (Wednesday) at Bozar, where the Mahler Chamber Orchestra will play Beethoven and Stravinsky, with the Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andsnes conducting from his instrument. What sets the concert apart is the unusual and ambitious outreach effort behind it, involving deaf and hearing-impaired children.

Perfect match

The children, all of them pupils at the Kasterlinden school in the

Brussels' commune Sint-Agatha-Berchem, have received the full VIP treatment. As well as being invited to attend the concert with their families, they have also, prior to that, met Andsnes and members of the orchestra, sat among them during rehearsals, been encouraged to crawl under the piano and even enjoyed a spot of playing and conducting. At school the day after the concert, a visual artist will help them to translate their impressions with paint and brushes.

The experiment is part of a new educational programme called Feel the Music, which the Mahler Chamber Orchestra is carrying out as part of its three-year world tour of Beethoven concertos. Andsnes, one of the world's finest pianists, is a perfect partner in this adventure, not least because of his driven, inquisitive personality that doesn't seem to know the meaning of the word “impossible”. He once had a concert grand hoisted by helicopter to the top of a mountain range just to play a Grieg concerto.

“It is surprising to see what these children can feel through music,” he said, after the first workshop took place in Brescia, Italy. “I thought the way they reacted was fascinating. They were really sensitive. When playing the piano, for instance, they didn't just bang on the keys. They



Leif Ove Andsnes works with deaf children from Brussels

actually tried to produce sounds. It was very beautiful to watch.”

Inspiration at hand

Beethoven, whose first and third piano concertos features on the programme, was an obvious choice. Plagued by hearing loss for most of his adult life and stone deaf by his mid-40s, he remained musically active until his death, using a piece of metal that he held between his teeth to feel the piano's vibrations as he played.

There is another deaf man behind this week's experiment: British musician Paul Whittaker who, although deaf since childhood,

studied the piano and organ and went on to earn a PhD in music in Oxford after 12 other universities turned him down. To help deaf children blossom and break out of their isolation through music, he founded Music and the Deaf 24 years ago, which is the main inspiration behind Feel the Music. “Music's one of those things that affect everybody, in so many different ways. Just because someone is deaf doesn't mean that they should be excluded,” sums up Whittaker. It is largely thanks to him that the cause of musical education for deaf people is so advanced in Britain, where there are several orchestras, scientific conferences and even a new documentary just released on the subject.

Belgium still has a long way to go before we reach this kind of awareness. But tonight, at least, a bunch of deaf kids will be going home with music in their heads.

21 NOVEMBER, 20.00

Mahler Chamber Orchestra with Leif Ove Andsnes

Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23, Brussels

► www.bozar.be

Art tech

iMAL fuses creativity and technology into new media artwork

Andy Furniere

At iMAL (interactive Media Art Laboratory) in Brussels, the imagination of artists, designers and scientists is blended to produce fantastic creations such as personalised medals for runners, showing their speed, distance and time. These are developed at its fab lab, the newest addition dedicated to experiments using computer and network technologies.

The iMAL draws creative minds from all over the world to research, perform tests and exchange expertise. At the Media Lab, the artists in residence have the newest computer technology at their disposal. But iMAL is more than a workplace for artists in residence. It's also an art centre that hosts exhibitions, seminars, concerts and performances at its venue in a former industrial building, situated by the canal in Sint-Jans-Molenbeek. Since the beginning of the year, iMAL has also been fostering communications between cultural institutions and managing practical issues such as contracts.

From artist to manufacturer

Last month, iMAL officially inaugurated its fab lab (fabrication laboratory) – a workshop filled with

computer-controlled machines with which you can design almost any concept you come up with. “Artists are increasingly less dependent on designing purely digital images, such as video projections, to manufacturing tangible objects,” says director Yves Bernard.

Bernard founded iMAL in 1999 after a career as computer science researcher and founder of the interactive Magic Media studio. “Back then, art created by so-called new media did not yet attract a broad audience,” he explains. “Now that computer technology is a part of daily life, people are far more open to its artistic possibilities.”

A recent master class at the fab lab, led by established Norwegian artist Marius Watz, produced original results from young Flemish artists Bert Balcaen and Ingrid Stojnic. Because they thought that medals handed out after marathons lacked emotional value, they designed personalised medals for each participant. After tracking the time, distance and speed of the runner, the statistics are visualised by lines that tell his or her own story of the race. Other Flemish talent includes Frederik De Bleser and Lieven Menschaert, who together created intriguing profiles of the presidential



Beginning artists learn how to create tangible objects, while established artists have a space to work, such as Cécile Babiolo, who made her Diapo Lamp at iMAL

candidates of the past American elections. They have visually summed up their campaigns in three layers: keywords from quotes on important issues, the amount of financial contributions from different sectors and maps of the states where they were most popular.

Cubic baskets

Currently at work in the fab lab is Alix Welter, a young designer manufacturing for the market the first series of his “Redux Cubic Baskets”: stacked baskets in kit form, which must be assembled by the user and form a cube when seen at a certain angle. “We function as an incubator, furnishing young creative minds with the technology to realise their projects but also with advice

to commercialise the ideas,” says Bernard.

Established Flemish artists like Aernoudt Jacobs and Christoph De Boeck have also worked and exhibited at iMAL. The centre also attracts internationals, such as French multimedia artist Cécile Babiolo. During her residency, Babiolo designed the Diapo Lamp: a configurable lamp with colourful slides in Plexiglas that change the light ambience when slid in front of a grid of LED lighting. Other international guests include Félix Luque from Spain, and Frenchman Julien Maire, who will work at iMAL until September of next year. Works (co-)produced by iMAL are shown at international festivals and art centres like the Berlin



Transmediale and the Shanghai Art Biennale.

► www.imal.org

BAR.TEMP

A good occasion to soak up the atmosphere at iMAL is during a bartemp, a pop-up bar that demonstrates iMAL's unique mix of media and electronic cultures in a cosy atmosphere. With workshops, concerts, performances, food, drinks and comfy sofas, the next bartemp pops up on 5 December, and entry is free.

► www.bartemp.be

Web shops spring into the real world

PRET-à-Marché

Robyn Boyle

Dear Santa, "This year for Christmas, I want the umpteenth pair of wool socks and an impersonal gift certificate to a chain department store."

There's a good reason Santa never gets letters like this. They're more likely to read: "Please bring me those really cute hand-knitted mittens and that cool vintage lunchbox" or, in an adult's case, "a nice pair of handmade earrings" or even "a new look for the bedroom". Why, oh why, do we lack inspiration when it comes to the giving season? Web shops are overflowing with great ideas, and the best part is, they deliver to your door. So no need to take time off work or brave the crowds this time of year.

When you want to give something truly unique and personal, think about supporting one of Flanders' many creative web shop owners. Granted, there are so many online sites selling one-of-a-kind gifts and handmade goods that it's hard to know where to start. That's where PRET-à-Marché comes in.



The first-ever edition of this pop-up market is the brainchild of friends and web shop owners Isabel (www.billybo.be) and Ellen (www.cozette.be). They're bringing together 30 web shops under one roof. Come and peruse the stands, touting everything from baby clothes to fashionable household items, from unique pieces of jewellery to original toys, from retro lampshades to arts and crafts supplies ... and so much more.

Get a glimpse of what's on offer before the market weekend by viewing the list of stand holders on the website. Billybo (pictured) offers an array of hip outfits and toys for babies and little kids (and there's even something for the mamas). Cozette, meanwhile, makes the coolest lampshades and other colourful items to spruce up your interior.

Web shop Happy Housewife has a soft spot for 1950s retro style and offers a range of household items such as flowery aprons and old-fashioned soaps. Other shops specialise in children's photography, handmade hats,

ceramic dishes, wooden puzzles, furniture, organic cotton clothing, birth announcements and bike helmets that kids actually want to wear.

On Saturday there's a demonstration by the members of local sewing club De Cousettjes. Afterwards is a reading by a few bloggers who recently brought out their own books on the art of sewing.

Feel inspired? Try your hand at being crafty during one of the workshops. On Saturday, learn to make your own personalised lampshades or earrings. Sunday is all about cupcake decorating and designing fun iron-on patches for clothing.

Kids will enjoy the "retro salon" where members of Theater Savooi will give your little one a fab new hairdo. And everyone is welcome to soup, fresh baked waffles and coffee at the funky mobile coffee bar Koek & Zopie.

Now if only Santa can find his way to Eeklo...

1 December, 16.00-22.00 & 2 December, 10.00-17.00 | Seven, Zeelan 7, Eeklo (East Flanders) | www.pretamarche.be

PERFORMANCE

December Dance

No need to check your calendars in a panic; it's not quite December yet. But if you're keen to attend December Dance, now is the time to book your tickets. The 12th edition of Bruges' international dance festival has a Nordic focus this year but hosts performers from around the world. One of the highlights is *JJ's Voice*, which finds the songs of Janis Joplin adventurously interpreted by Sweden's Cullberg Ballet. As the unconventional soundtrack suggests, this is no traditional ballet routine. Cullberg's classically trained dancers are led here by the resolutely contemporary Quebec choreographer Benoit Lachambre, who values intensity of expression over formal rules. Like December Dance on the whole, *JJ's Voice* is a confrontation between tradition and innovation. **Georgio Valentino**



GET TICKETS NOW

6-16 December | Across Bruges | www.decemberdance.be

MORE PERFORMANCE THIS WEEK

Across Flanders

Half elf zomeravond (10:30 on a Summer Night): Flemish director Bart Meuleman and Toneelhuis stage Marguerite Duras' novel about a woman and a crime of passion with all the madness and despair it requires (in Dutch)

Until APR 2013 at venues across Flanders

www.toneelhuis.be

Brussels

Night of Failure: Beursschouwburg closes its I Fail Good festival with a motley crowd of speakers from various backgrounds. Each reports a personal or professional encounter with failure, resulting in an evening of openness, vulnerability and introspection (free, in English)

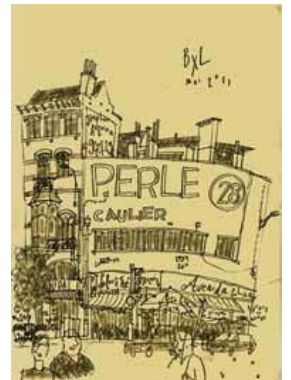
NOV 24 20.30 at Beursschouwburg, A Ortsstraat 20

www.beursschouwburg.be

VISUAL ARTS

BXL Buildings

Brussels is reputed for its architecture, from the Baroque splendour of the Grote Markt to the Art Nouveau mansions of Sint-Gillis and Ukkel to the modernist residence blocks of Elsenne. French architect-turned-artist Philippe Doro was so smitten by the breadth and depth of the capital's architectural heritage that he packed up and moved there. Doro's passion for the density of urban life is exposed for all to see in this exhibition, fittingly presented in the office of an architectural firm. The playful drawings are at once similar to and radically different from the demure blueprints draped across the desks of the resident architects. Both are shot through with their creators' love of form, but Doro's buildings dispense with the crucial architectural concept of proportion. His pieces are impressionistic portraits of Brussels' landmarks and subjective maps of its neighbourhoods. **GV**



Until 2 December | François Martens Architects, Brussels

www.philippedoro.com

MORE VISUAL ARTS THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Weegee: Weegee is one of the most colourful figures in 20th-century American photography, best known for his sensational images of murders, fires, accidents and all-around volatile urban life. The exhibition focuses on black-and-white photographs of New York City crime scenes from the 1930s and '40s

Until JAN 27 2013 at Fotomuseum, Waalsekaai 47

www.fotomuseum.be

Brussels

Constant Permeke: A retrospective of the work of the 20th-century Flemish expressionist on the 60th anniversary of his death

Until JAN 20 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23

www.bozar.be

CONCERT

Engelbert Humperdinck

He floundered for years under his given name. Then the young Anglo-Indian singer formerly known as Gerry Dorsey re-invented himself as Engelbert Humperdinck, the tall, dark and handsome crooner of some of pop music's most shamelessly melodramatic songs. The move was equal parts desperate career gamble and ironic performance art, as evidenced by the absurdity of the name and the man's lifelong refusal to take himself too seriously. It was Humperdinck who inspired Elvis Presley to go sleazy listening (and to take his sideburns to the next level).

Humperdinck's first taste of success wasn't in the Queen's England or the King's United States, however, but in Belgium. A newly christened Humperdinck was invited to represent Britain in the 1966 edition of the Europabeker, Belgium's short-lived answer to Eurovision. He duly made his way to Knokke-Heist and gave his countrymen the win. As Belgium was also the only country where his single "Dommage, Dommage" had made the charts, he stuck around and filmed the promotional video in Zeebrugge. The next year, back in swinging London where he was soon to be the toast of the town, Humperdinck recorded his version of an obscure American country-western tune called "Release Me". He has since sold more than 150 million albums and continues to perform for audiences worldwide. And Belgium still occupies a special place in Humperdinck's heart – and his touring schedule. **GV**



24 November, 20.30
Koningin Elisabethzaal, Antwerp

► www.zalenvandezoo.be

MORE CONCERTS THIS WEEK

Brussels

Alanis Morissette: The Canadian singer-songwriter comes to Brussels, following the release of her new album with the catchy single "Guardian"

NOV 23 20.00 at Vorst Nationaal, Victor Rousseaulaan 208

► www.vorstnationaal.be

Music Marathon: A non-stop succession of performances by star musicians, including Cecilia Bartoli, René Jacobs, Nelson Freire and Antonio Pappano. All will appear with prestigious orchestras in celebrated works such as Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Beethoven's piano concertos. The programme includes introductions, meet-and-greets and public rehearsals

Until NOV 24 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23

► www.bozar.be

FILM

Anna Karenina premiere

Bozar Cinema has a good reason to tout the premiere of English director Joe Wright's *Anna Karenina*. The film is something more than just the next blockbuster period piece imported from a foreign studio. Yes, the premise is adapted from Leo Tolstoy's 19th-century novel about scandal in the prim, polite society of Imperial Russia. And, yes, it stars the requisite big-name actors: Keira Knightley as the tragic heroine and Jude Law as the cuckolded husband. But it is Wright's choice of choreographer that most interests us. The director tapped Antwerp contemporary dance icon Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui to orchestrate the picture's numerous dance sequences. Several performers from his Antwerp-based company Eastman can be seen waltzing their way across the screen. One of them, Guro Nagelhus Schia, even picked up an acting role, the Oslo native's first. **GV**



27 November, 20.00 | Bozar, Brussels | ► www.bozar.be

MORE FILM THIS WEEK

Across Flanders

Offline: The feature debut of video artist Peter Monsaert stars Wim Willaert (22 Mei) as an ex-con and Anemone Valcke (*Oxygen*) as an internet sex worker, who meet online and share everything but sex

Playing now across Brussels and Flanders

► www.offlinedefilm.be

Brussels

World Days of Slovenian Documentary Film: Selected Slovenian documentaries (*Aleksandrinke: The Slovene women from Alexandria*, *Ivana Kobilca: A Portrait of a Painter* and *The Last Boat: An Intermittent Lake*) (In Slovenian with English, Dutch and French subtitles)

NOV 27-29 18.00 at the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia, Handelsstraat 44

► www.tinyurl.com/sloveniandocumentaryfilmdays

Hasselt

Films met Smaak (Films with Taste): To celebrate Week van de Smaak (Week of Taste), Kinopolis Hasselt is hosting two food-related screenings: New French film *Les saveurs du Palais (Haute Cuisine)* and the new Flemish film *Brasserie Romantiek*, accompanied by tastings

NOV 22-23 20.00 at Kinopolis Hasselt, Via Media 1

► www.uitinhasselt.be

CAFÉ SPOTLIGHT

Nicholas Hirst

De Republiek

Sint-Jakobsstraat 36, Bruges

Funky bar and restaurant De Republiek is a vivid reminder that Bruges is no mere museum town. With its high ceilings, menu blackboards and colourful cocktails, it's a world away from the cobblestones, alleyways and churches you leave behind when entering from Sint-Jakobsstraat.

Yet De Republiek is also typically *bruggeling*. Hang around for long enough, and you'll see half of Bruges pass through, whether young trendies, fur-clad ladies, local politicians or tourism empresarios.

Indeed, De Republiek is a democratic sort of place that attracts all ages, and for good reason. The drink selection ranges from solid to exotic, with a choice of local beer, sharp cocktails and zany fruit juices. There is a menu, with home-grown versions of decent hamburgers, fajitas and thai curries. A large, picturesque internal courtyard, flanked by an elegant brick tower and houses, is open when the weather allows.

Inside, the large space is all yellowing walls and dark wood, with tables and chairs to match. By day, the bar has a light and airy feel, while in the evening, with dimmed lights, the atmosphere becomes far more cosy.

Importantly, De Republiek is at the heart of one of Bruges' main cultural complexes. In the same building, art-house Cinema Lumière shows a wide range of films across three auditoriums. Bruges'

annual and excellent Cinemanova international film festival, is based here.

Elsewhere in the same complex are the offices of Tapis plein - a local NGO that has won prizes for the creative way it has promoted Flanders' intangible cultural heritage.

The organisation Lessen in het Donker - or lessons in the dark - also works out of the building. It strives to introduce children across Flanders to non-mainstream cinema, ranging from short documentaries to Belgian films.

► www.derepubliek.be



BITE

Robyn Boyle

Prehistoric dinner

I never thought I'd write about dinner at a museum, but here it is. Brussels' Museum of Natural Sciences is kicking off its new exhibition *Prehistory: Do it yourself!* with a unique experience: the prehistoric dinner.

We know that our cave-dwelling ancestors spent most of their days foraging in order to find enough sustenance to keep them going. But what might come as a surprise is how tasty their hunted-and-gathered food might just have been. Archaeologists agree that the dishes on offer at this dinner include ingredients that must have been available to humans thousands of years ago.

But before sitting down to dinner, guests enjoy a tour of the exhibition, which takes you back to the world of prehistoric humans. Relive daily life through installations, film and hands-on activities that teach you how to make stone tools, hunt bison, tan skins and light a fire.

You'll surely have worked up an appetite when it comes time to feast. The menu starts with a pre-prandial cocktail and an appetiser of quail, simply grilled on a brochette with aromatic herbs. The first course sounds equally delectable, consisting of dandelion salad with lardons, nettle soup with wild garlic, snails with herbs and garlic and salmon marinated in salt and herbs.

The discovery menu continues with a tantalising main course of bison brochette with blackcurrant sauce, honey-grilled spare ribs, a side of mushrooms and hazelnuts and

sourdough bread. Appropriately "dated" but yummy drinks will be served throughout. Dessert is a *maquêe*, or soft cow's milk cheese with berries, dried fruit and honey. Who knew our early ancestors had it so good?

The prehistoric dinner is the last in a series of Brusselicious themed dinners, so spots are likely to fill up quickly. Reserve in advance via the website

► www.visitbrussels.be



➔ Museum of Natural Sciences, Vautierstraat 29, Brussels

🕒 November 22 & 23, 18.30

💶 Mains: €45 per person (includes cocktail, dinner, drinks and access to the exhibition)

📖 An interactive tour of the new *Prehistory* exhibition followed by a "prehistoric" multi-course meal

More eating of yore

Speaking of eating habits of the days of yore, Week van de Smaak (Week of Taste), going on across Flanders until 25 November, has plenty of activities along those lines.

Bruges, City of Taste: What do you know about medieval vegetable markets? Brewing methods over the years? The history of chocolate and fries? Come and sharpen your knowledge of gastronomic Bruges during this guided evening walk with tastings along the way (€8)

NOV 21 18.30-21.30 at Snaggaardstraat 15

► www.spermalie.be

Flemish cook(book) Secrets: In Evergem, East Flanders, Hugo Jacobs uncovers the secrets of old Flemish cookbooks and offers answers to questions about food preparation in ancient times. Which cookbooks are still around today and who uses them? How did one cook during the 16th century? Era-appropriate drink and snacks are provided (€12)

NOV 23 20.00-23.00 at Parochiezaal, Bibliotheekstraat 1

► www.evergem.be/cultuurcentrum

Medieval Banquet: Discover long-forgotten ingredients, dishes and beverages at this dinner at a castle in East Flanders that transports you to the time of knights and damsels: actors and musicians, guided tours of the castle grounds and workshops for kids in marzipan making, medieval dance and coat of arms design (free)

NOV 25 11.00-18.00 at Kasteeldomein van Wippelgem, Kramershoek 4, Evergem-Wippelgem

► www.tinyurl.com/medievalbanqueteevergem

De keuken van Hertog Jan (The Kitchen of Hertog Jan): A fascinating exhibition in Flemish Brabant portraying the menus of our medieval ancestors from the time of John II, Duke of Brabant, with a link to present-day gastronomy (free)

Until NOV 24 at City Hall, De Walsplein 30, Kortenberg

► www.tinyurl.com/keukenhertogjan

TALKING DUTCH

Philip Ebels

Casting your ballot

Now that we've all recuperated from *de verkiezingen*, the elections, in the US, life is back to normal. It seemed people in Flanders and the rest of Europe were just as psyched about the whole thing as they were *aan de andere kant van de oceaan*, on the other side of the ocean. *The Bulletin* online magazine has the pics from its US Election Night bash to prove it. (I sincerely hope I'm not on one of them.) It's a curious thing, though, *verkiezingen* (which, of course, comes from the verb *kiezen*, to choose – or to elect). Especially in the US, where the winner takes all – or at least the presidency – it sometimes looks more like a *hanengevecht* than anything else, a cockfight. (*Haan* is cock, and *gevecht* comes from *vechten*, to fight.)

Both contenders attack each other vigorously. And not only on *beleid*, policy, but also *de persoon*, the person. I don't think I've ever seen anything like it in Europe. Which may be a good thing because in Flanders, *met alle respect*, with all due respect, politicians were sitting ducks if their personal lives were to be scrutinised.

The language of elections, too, is curious. Perhaps especially in Flanders, where elections take place as often as there are holidays, and



politici are as plentiful as are neighbourhood cafés. (*Politici* means politicians and is Latin. The singular, in Dutch, is *politicus*. There are more. *Museum* is one. The plural, in Dutch, is *musea*.) When a *politicus*, for example, is the first on the list of his or her party, he or she is *de lijsttrekker*, literally the list-puller. (It's easy to remember if you imagine your local lawmaker actually pulling a list.)

And he or she who is last on the list – often some kind of celebrity who agrees to lend his or her name to the party but doesn't actually want to be elected – is called *de lijstduwer*, the list-pusher. Do you know more remarkable political jargon from Flanders? Let me know! But, in the meantime, let's hope we're not going to have

to use it again anytime soon. To conclude, let me come back to the US. To New York, to be precise, the subject of my last couple of columns. I wrote about the heritage of the Dutch language there – it used to be called New Amsterdam, after all – and asked you to send in your own observations. "Allow me to mention my old colleague, the late Steve Flanders," writes Louis Freizer, a retired New York journalist now living in Knokke. "Steve's reputation for integrity was so respected, that when he died, the city of New York offered the extremely rare gesture of naming a small street near City Hall after a journalist: Flanders Street." Here's to Steve.

► talkingdutch@hotmail.com

The last word...

What you don't know...

"I don't understand much about the banking business."
Maurice Lippens, former chairman of Fortis, denied any guilt in the bank's collapse

Money shy

"It's a shame we have to do this on our own. Music for Life could have given us a shot in the arm."

Alzheimer's expert Christine Van Broeckhoven is organising her own fundraiser after Studio Brussel decided that Music for Life would from now on only raise awareness, not money

Chocs away

"To save money, the staff are no longer allowed to eat pralines. It sounds ridiculous, but if they all eat two a day, it costs me €7,200 a year."

Chef Gert De Mangeleer of Hertog Jan in Bruges, which, despite its third Michelin star, is feeling the pinch

Germ warfare

"If we carry on using so many antibiotics, we soon won't be able to defeat the bacteria."

Professor Herman Goossens of the University of Antwerp, on news that Belgium uses more antibiotics than any other country in the EU

NEXT WEEK
IN FLANDERS TODAY

Cover story

It's been four years since we ran the architectural plan for Mechelen's new Holocaust museum on our front page. On 1 December, it finally opens, and we'll tell you on our cover next week what you can expect to see in the greatly expanded museum and archives, situated on the site of the barracks from which more than 25,000 Jews and Gypsies were transported to Auschwitz between 1942 and 1944

Science

Perhaps you noticed the mention of *Jada*, the badminton-playing robot, in our recent article on Flanders' Science Week. It turns out that the region is chock-full of robots doing everything from playing sports to hugging kids to taking part in actual robot competitions. (Called the "Robocup". We're not making this up.)

Tourism

One of the charms of Flanders is how world-class establishments pop up in the unlikeliest of places. We admit to having to put "Beerzel" in Wikipedia to find out exactly where this village was. Go there to find a half-timbered 16th-century Tudor style building that houses a restaurant run by Ken Verschuere, former sous-chef at the famous Oud Sluis