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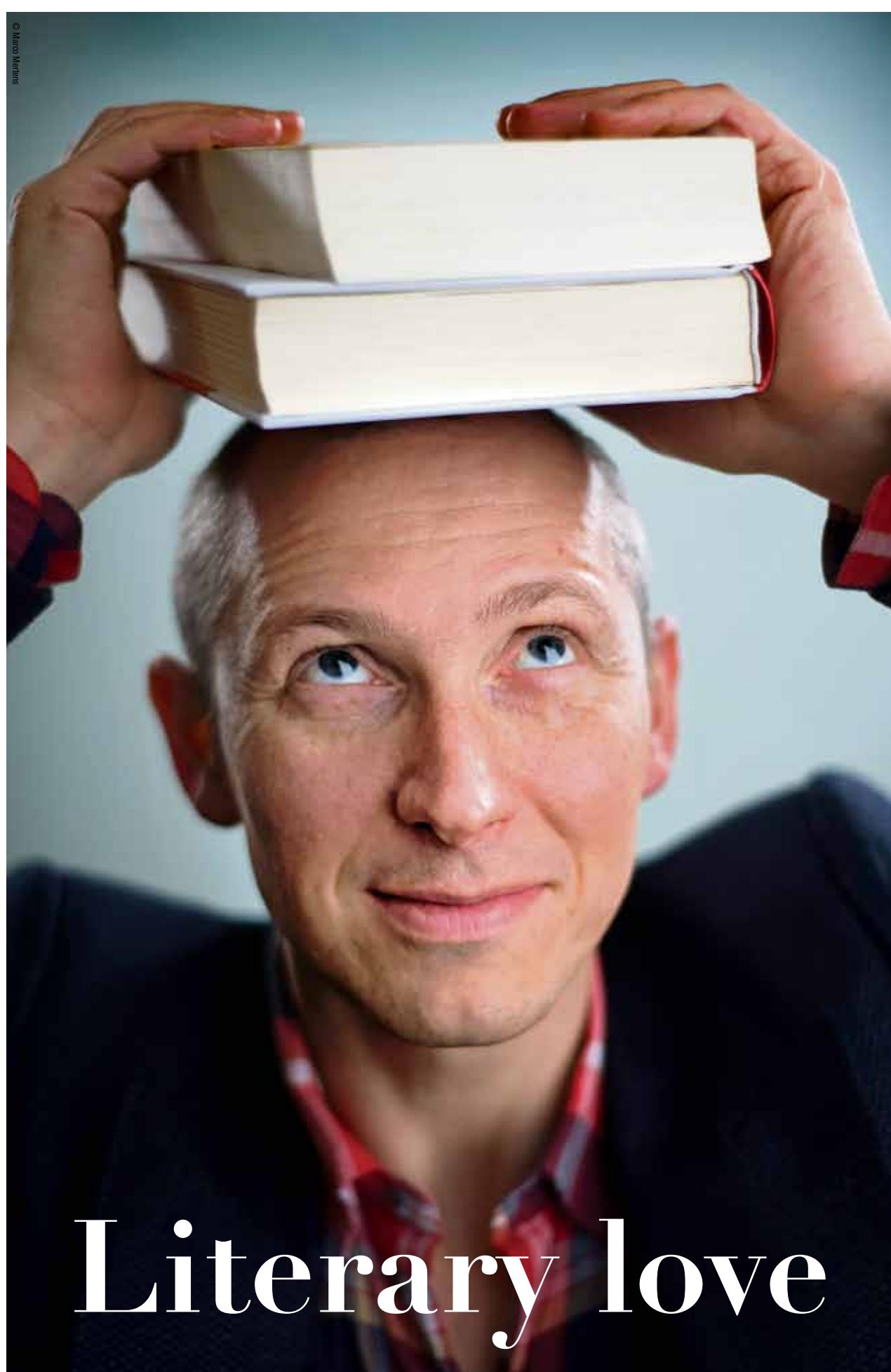
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Happy Birthday, Flagey

Discover the history of the landmark building in Elsene as it turns 75 amid much celebrating



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Literary love

Saint Amour celebrates its 20th edition with an ardour-filled tour of authors and musicians

Rebecca Benoot

Seven exciting contemporary authors and three musicians (like Helmut Lotti, pictured) get your blood flowing during the chilly two-week run-up to Valentine's Day. Saint Amour is celebrating its 20th edition by recognising two important anniversary dates relating to the late, great Hugo Claus

On 14 February, 1984, the Antwerp-based literary organisation Behoud de Begeerte was born. A rough English translation: Conserve the Desire. Its aim: to promote literature through a wide variety of meticulously crafted evenings revolving around the written and spoken word. Behoud de Begeerte's most famous event to date is Saint Amour, a night of love, lust and longing brought to you by an eclectic mix of Flemish and Dutch authors and musicians.

Saint Amour, which has dozens of stops across Flanders beginning on 31 January, began as two separate events. Because the anniversary of Behoud de Begeerte is on Valentine's Day, explains the organisation's director Luc Coorevits, they hosted the Nacht van de Begeerte (Night of Desire) and the Nacht van de Liefde (Night of Love) for their fifth anniversary in 1989.

"The only thing I wasn't sure about at the time was the name," says Coorevits, "because it reminds you too much of the Nacht van de Poëzie. So we went in search of something unique."

The Nacht van de Liefde was a night filled with poetry and literature. Nacht van de Begeerte, on the other hand, was a cheerful soirée with cabaret and music. As they both dealt with love and desire, they were eventually combined, resulting in one action-packed and emotionally evocative evening titled Saint Amour.

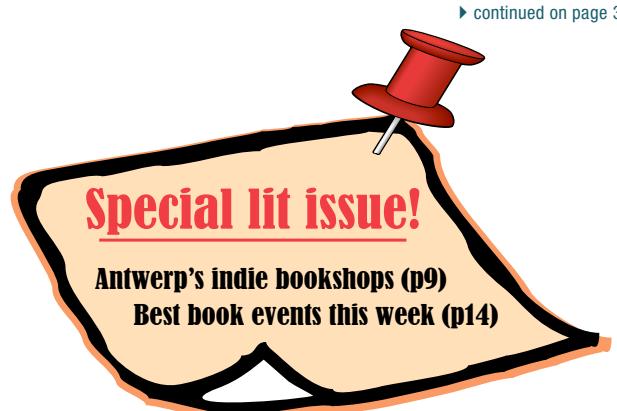
Barbara Wyckmans, currently the director of theatre Het Paleis in Antwerp, encouraged Coorevits to turn the event into a tour. "She was working in Hasselt at the time and wanted us to do a show there, so we decided to take the plunge and take Saint Amour on the road." Its popularity in Flanders convinced the organisation to tour in the Netherlands, too. This year marks the event's 20th edition in Flanders and its eighth in the Netherlands.

An innovative arts medley

"It was a big success from the start," smiles Coorevits as he sips his coffee at the café in the city's Permeke library, which houses the offices of Behoud de Begeerte. "It was a one-of-a-kind concept in the early 1990s."

After five years, however, Coorevits decided to quit while he was

▶ continued on page 3



FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



Monique Verdickt

To judge by appearances in the media, one name and one name only has dominated coverage of Antwerp in the past year. But last week even the city's new mayor had to take a back seat when he handed over the award for Antwerpener of the Year to Monique Verdickt, the chair of Moeders voor Moeders (MvM), a volunteer organisation most famous for its work with foundlings.

Last year MvM hit the headlines after a newborn baby was deposited in the foundling drawer that the organisation maintains in the district of Borgerhout. It was the second case since 2009; in both cases, the baby had recently been born to an unknown mother and left in the drawer. In both cases, the babies went into foster care. The organisation was launched when a social worker in Verdickt's neighbourhood asked if she had any old baby clothes she could do without. In fact she did, but "to my surprise there didn't exist any services that provided necessities for children, though there was one for adults," she told the magazine *Veto* in 2000.

MvM doesn't only concern itself with foundlings, of whom there are very few cases. The organisation also provides clothes and equipment, like buggies and cribs, to low-income families, as well as a place to come regularly for a warm meal or to give baby a bath – things most of us take for granted, but which are still not within reach for some of the most disadvantaged.

The jury described her as someone "with her heart in the right place, and who is not afraid to speak out". She was described as "the driving force behind MvM, which takes care of people who have slipped through the fragile social safety net."

Verdickt dedicated the award to the 150 volunteers who work with her organisation. Mayor Bart De Wever said: "As far as I'm concerned, she could even be Antwerpener of the Century."

Last year's winner was choreographer Siham El Kaouakibi, who runs the dance school Let's Go Urban. The award is given out annually by the *Gazet van Antwerpen*, regional TV station ATV and Radio 2.

FLANDERS TODAY

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EDITOR Lisa Bradshaw

DEPUTY EDITOR Sally Tipper

NEWS EDITOR Alan Hope

AGENDA Robyn Boyle, Georgio Valentino

ART DIRECTOR Paul Van Dooren

PREPRESS Corelio AdPro

CONTRIBUTORS Daan Bauwens, Rebecca Benoot, Robyn Boyle, Leo Cendrowicz, Angela Chambers, Sarah Crew, Katy Desmond, Marie Dumont, Andy Furniere, Nicholas Hirst, Toon Lambrechts, Mark Latham, Katrien Lindemans, Marc Maes, Ian Mundell, Anja Otte, Tom Peeters, Senne Starckx, Georgio Valentino, Christophe Verbiest, Denzil Walton

GENERAL MANAGER Hans De Loore
PUBLISHER Corelio Publishing NV

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

Gossetlaan 30 - 1702 Groot-Bijgaarden
tel 02 373 99 09 - fax 02 375 98 22
editorial@flanderstoday.eu

FREE SUBSCRIPTIONS

subscriptions@flanderstoday.eu
or sign up online at www.flanderstoday.eu

ADVERTISING

Evelyne Fregonese
02 373 83 57
advertising@flanderstoday.eu

VERANTWOORDELIJKE UITGEVER

Hans De Loore

News in brief

Sint-Baaf's cathedral in Ghent is preparing to undergo renovation work due to last four years at a cost of €6.3 million – €1.7 million more than previously estimated. The work, under local architectural firm Bressers, will prevent further damage to the fabric of the church, including masonry fallen from the cathedral tower.

Eleven people facing charges relating to a demonstration against genetically modified crops in Wetteren in May 2011 walked out of a court in Dendermonde last week after a judge ruled that 91 supporters of those charged were not allowed to stand trial voluntarily. The volunteers, who include Groen MEP Bart Staes, claim the trial is treating activists like criminals. The prosecution is asking for sentences of up to eight months. A verdict in the absence of the 11 accused is expected on 12 February.

The sole survivor of an accident in which a van with six passengers drove into Zeebrugge harbour in December has come forward. The Romanian man was taken to hospital suffering from hypothermia but discharged himself and disappeared. The man told police he was able to escape from the van through a broken window. Social services is investigating the company that employed the six men.

Elections in Belgium for the European Parliament are likely to take place on 25 May 2014. Not all EU member states have yet agreed the proposal, however. According to agreements already reached, the European elections would coincide with the regional elections and the general election for a new federal government.

Flemish tennis player Yanina Wickmayer was defeated in the third

round of the Australian Open last weekend by world number 14 Maria Kirilenko from Russia. Number 20 seeded Wickmayer lost 7-6, 6-3 on the hard court in Melbourne. Wickmayer next tournament is the GDF Suez Open in Paris, which begins this weekend.

History was made last week when delegations from the Brussels and Walloon parliaments met with colleagues in the Flemish parliament for a joint meeting to work out a common plan to tackle the danger of flooding in areas where the rivers Zenne and Dender cross regional boundaries. The joint committee meeting, the first of its kind, was chaired by the Flemish parliament speaker Jan Peumans, who last year called for closer cooperation between the regions on other matters of common interest, including road levies, bus connections and regional representation in other countries.

Interested parties have been given one week to file an offer to buy the Charlesville, the last surviving Congo boat – an ocean liner that operated between Antwerp and Congo – for one symbolic euro. The ship was threatened with scrapping after the city of Rostock in Germany decided to stop funding its use as a youth hostel. The organisation Watererfgoed Vlaanderen, which looks after Flemish maritime heritage, has obtained a commitment from Rostock that the ship will not be scrapped if a buyer can be found.

Following questions last week over the civil list payments to dowager queen Fabiola, her nephew Prince Laurent now faces a possible withdrawal of his €300,000 annual allowance after it was revealed that he has had contact with officials in Angola over an environmental development project. Two years ago, Laurent, the king's youngest

supermarket chains Aldi, Carrefour and Makro have withdrawn mushrooms produced by Univég from sale after traces of nicotine were found in samples by health inspectors. The mushrooms, in both brown and white varieties, can be returned to the place of sale for a refund. Details of batch numbers are available on the website of the federal food safety agency.

► www.tinyurl.com/mushroomrecall

Alan Hope

OFFSIDE

Diamonds are forever

It's either a monumental blunder or the most brilliant scam in history, which deserves to enter the annals of crime alongside the Great Valentine's Day heist of 2003*. In December, police in Antwerp were investigating the sale of 600 fake diamonds of such high quality that even experienced traders – of whom Antwerp has no shortage – could not distinguish them from the real thing.

It turns out there was a reason for that confusion: the fake diamonds were actually real diamonds. At least, the ones in police custody are.

The case could cause red faces for the International Gemmological Institute (IGI), which had initially flagged the 600 stones as fakes. The police were called, and the stones in question taken as evidence.

According to the Antwerp World



trader, while the real diamonds were left behind? "We're faced with a riddle," admitted spokesperson Stéphanie Chomé of the Antwerp police. "Were the diamonds switched or was a mistake made elsewhere? Our investigation continues."

son, agreed to have no contact with foreign officials without the consent of the prime minister, after he had dealings in Congo and with Libyan diplomats in Brussels. If his latest contacts turn out to be in breach of that agreement, prime minister Elio Di Rupo told parliament last week, both he and the government would "be forced to draw the necessary conclusions".

Charles Picqué, minister-president of Brussels-Capital Region, is stepping down in May and will be replaced by fellow socialist Rudy Vervoort, it was announced last week. Vervoort is currently mayor of the Brussels commune of Evere, as well as president of the French-speaking socialist party in the capital. His place there will be taken by federal health minister Laurette Onkelinx, who will continue to serve in her government post.

Federal justice minister Annemie Turtelboom has given her support to calls from Antwerp prosecutor Herman Dams for members of the public to take a more active role in reporting suspicious activities to the police. Turtelboom was pressed for a reaction last week by Groen president Wouter Van Besien, who claimed that Dams had singled out owners of foreign cars, which was discriminatory. "The Antwerp prosecutor's approach is in complete accord with the national security plan," Turtelboom told VRT radio.

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"We're faced with a riddle," admitted spokesperson Stéphanie Chomé of the Antwerp police. "Were the diamonds switched or was a mistake made elsewhere? Our investigation continues."

*On the weekend of 15 February 2003, thieves emptied the强盗团 of the Antwerp Diamond Centre and took stones, gold and other booty worth an estimated €75 million, made possible by hiring a tiny office in the building for three years as a front. The robbers were caught when they dumped some rubbish by the side of a quiet road off the E19, which contained a half-eaten sandwich with the DNA of Italian criminal Leonardo Notarbartolo. Rights to a movie based on the event have been secured.

Literary love

An inspired evening of poetic desire and musical interludes at a venue near you

► continued from page 1

ahead. "I stopped Saint Amour at the peak of its success, which turned out to be a big mistake because everywhere I looked, spin-offs started popping up. So I took hold of the reins once again, and it's been an annual event since 2000."

None of the Saint Amour followers, nevertheless, were a match for the original concept's innovative medley of poetry, literature, music, dance and even film. "Love is a subject that speaks to all of us," Coorevits says. "If you combine that with literature, you've got a winning formula. Everyone at some point writes or reads a poem about love. If you want to write a good love poem, it has to be exceptional – to stand out from the rest. It is a genre, then, that encourages itself to generate quality material due to the vast competition."

Embracing Claus' carnal works

Behoud de Begeerte has mastered the art of heady seduction. It gathers literary musings from some of Flanders' best contemporary authors, who are carefully selected depending on the theme, which changes every year. In 2013, Saint Amour offers an homage to the late Flemish author Hugo Claus, who was famous (amongst many other things) for his poems about physical desire and sexual tension (many of which he wrote in English).

"I asked every author to write a new piece inspired by Claus, whether a story, book, character, interview or even his whole life," Coorevits explains. "He wrote and said such extraordinary things about love that he was the perfect theme."

But Claus wasn't chosen only for his love-laced works or his literary genius. This March marks the fifth anniversary of the writer's death. It is coincidentally, also the 30th anniversary of his magnum opus *Het verdriet van België* (*The Sorrow of Belgium*) as well as the 50th anniversary of the publication of his

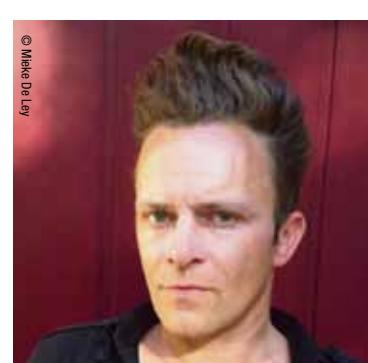
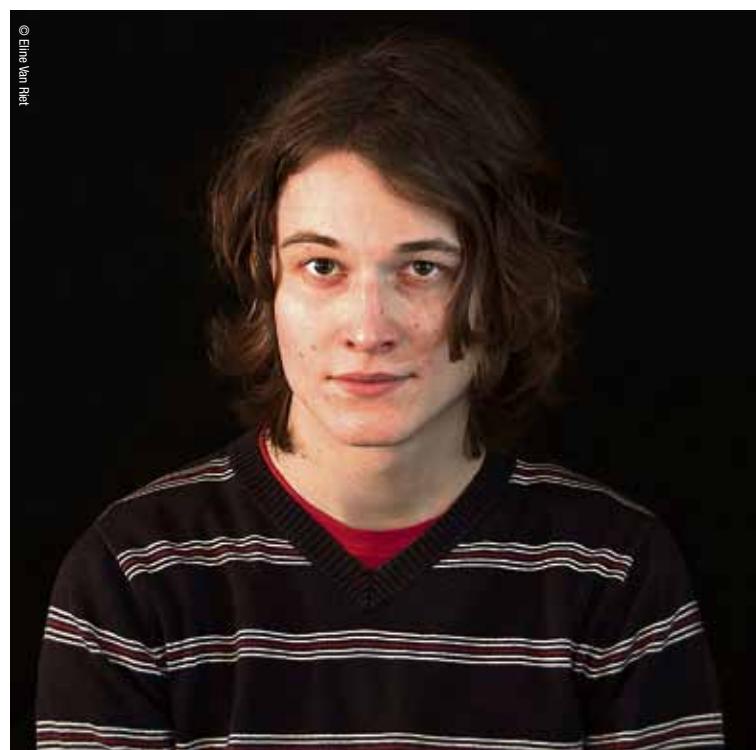
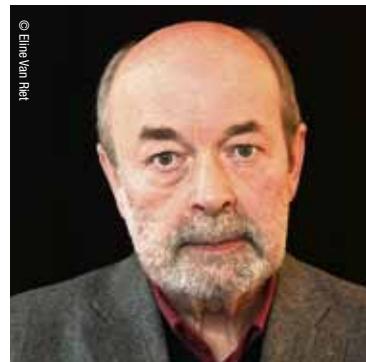
novel *Omtrent Deedee* (Concerning Deedee), the original cover of which was used as an inspiration for Saint Amour's 2013 campaign.

Dangre love

Seven authors (and one mystery guest) are featured in the Saint Amour tour this year. Yannick Dangre, Marcel Möring, Erwin Mortier, Anne Vegter, Christophe Vekeman and Maartje Wortel will entice us with their new Claus-inspired material, while Leonard Nolens, who won the prestigious three-yearly Prize of Dutch Letters last year, will read from his own love-inspired work. Helmut Lotti (*pictured on cover*), Marijke Boon and the Ellen Schoenaerts Kwartet, meanwhile, will be responsible for the musical intermezzos.

Except for the host – radio and TV personality Sven Speybrouck in Flanders and journalist Piet Piryns in the Netherlands – the Flemish and Dutch editions are more or less the same. The tour, which usually starts around Valentine's Day, will commence earlier this year so that the Dutch performances follow the Flemish ones instead of overlapping like in previous years. The event kicks off in Antwerp, but Amsterdam is the lucky recipient of the performance that takes place on Valentine's Day. It's the first time that the 22-year-old Dangre, who won the debut prize in 2011 with his novel *Vulkaanvrucht* (Fruit of the Volcano), is part of Saint Amour. "I think Saint Amour is a wonderful initiative," he says. "A literary tour through Belgium and the Netherlands is a dynamic and fun way to draw attention to literature and to Claus. It's also an extraordinary chance to perform in several lovely locations."

But it's the Claus factor especially that appeals to him. "Claus was one of the most important Dutch-language authors, and he still is. He is a huge inspiration for me personally because he was such a diverse writer who excelled in many genres.



Like Hugo Claus, Yannick Dangre (above) published his first novel at the tender age of 21. He joins six contemporary Dutch-language authors for Saint Amour: (from top left) Leonard Nolens, Marcel Möring, Anne Vegter, Maartje Wortel, Erwin Mortier, Christophe Vekeman

He also gave numerous wonderful interviews, so I had a lot of material to work with for this performance."

Both Claus and Dangre published their debut novels at the age of 21.

31 JANUARY TO 11 FEBRUARY

Saint Amour

Across Flanders (in Dutch)

► www.begeerte.be

HUGO CLAUS, THE ABSENT STAR OF SAINT AMOUR



A portrait of Hugo Claus in 1996 by Flemish photographer Stephan Vanfleteren

Hugo Claus was Flanders' most internationally renowned author of the 20th century. Besides prose, he wrote poetry, plays and film scripts, was a talented illustrator and occasionally dabbled in painting. He also directed several film adaptations of his own and other's novels, including *Hendrik Conscience's De leeuw van Vlaanderen* (*The Lion of Flanders*) and *Het Sacrament*, based on his own novel *Omtrent Deedee*.

Born in 1929 in Bruges, Claus grew up in Kortrijk, where his father owned a printing company. After his father was jailed in 1944 for conspiring with the Nazis, Claus moved with his brothers and mother to Deinze in East Flanders. He studied sculpture in Ghent for a short time and eventually moved to Ostend, where he worked for a publisher and published his first prose in his early 20s.

Claus went on to publish upwards of 100 plays, poetry collections, novels and biographies before his death in Antwerp in 2008. On 19 March of that year, he chose to die by euthanasia after a two-year battle with Alzheimer's.

The author led an eventful and eclectic life both as a man and as an author. He became famous for his productivity as well as his realistic and frequently expressionistic tone while depicting the Flemish way of life. His work has been translated into more than 25 languages.

The Sorrow of Belgium

In 1983, Claus published his most famous novel *Het verdriet van België*, or *The Sorrow of Belgium*. It is the only post-war Flemish novel to be counted among the classics of modern European literature. *The Sorrow of Belgium* is part historical novel and part coming-of-age story following the trials and tribulations of a boy called Louis, who was loosely based on

Claus himself.

The novel paints a rather bleak portrait of a Flemish family sympathising with German occupiers during the Second World War, a time in which the young Louis is trying to make sense of the world and frequently using his imagination to escape its harshness. Dealing with perception, betrayal and homosexuality, it won several awards in Belgium and remains one of the most translated Flemish novels to date.

Omtrent Deedee

Fifty years ago, Claus published *Omtrent Deedee*, or *Concerning Deedee*, earning him the Referendum der Vlaamse Letterkunde (which he politely declined). Each of its seven chapters is written from a different character's point of view, resulting in a complete portrait of the Heylen family, who are taking part in the annual memorial for their deceased mother in the rectory of a rural Flemish town. Due to several misunderstandings, the get-together degenerates into a nasty feud. Claus adapted *Omtrent Deedee* into a play in 1971 (called *Interieur*) and into a successful movie in 1990 (*Het Sacrament*). The original cover of the novel, also designed by Claus, graces the poster of this year's edition of Saint Amour.

► www.clauscentrum.be

Man-made atoll planned for North Sea

The electricity-producing island would make wind power more efficient

Alan Hope

A new man-made island could appear off the Flemish coast within five years, producing electricity for moments of peak demand and providing a new habitat for marine wildlife, according to plans announced last week by federal minister Johan Vande Lanotte.

The plan involves an atoll – a ring-shaped island with a lagoon in the middle – three to four kilometres off the coast of Wenduine. It would produce hydro-electricity by pumping water out of the central lagoon at times when there was surplus energy produced by wind turbines – for example at night. Then, when demand required it, the water would be allowed to flow back into the lagoon, passing through turbines, which would convert the



An architectural image of the planned atoll, which would store wind-generated electricity

flowing water back into electricity. The atoll would tackle the main problem associated with wind energy: It is relatively easy to produce but difficult to store. The electricity produced by wind would be stored in the water, as already

happens at conventional hydro-electric stations in mountain areas. “The main advantage is that such an energy depot can deliver electricity at peak moments,” Vande Lanotte said. “And you can store energy that is produced on land. We also intend

to sell electricity to other countries.” According to Vande Lanotte, whose portfolio includes management of the North Sea, the atoll would be 2.5 kilometres in diameter, sit 10 metres above sea level and be capable of producing 300 megawatts of electricity. A private sector consortium, including Electrabel, wind energy producers, dredging companies and researchers, has already been assembled.

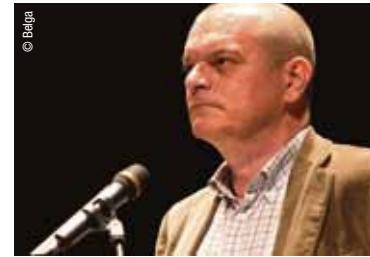
The energy atoll would also provide a habitat for sea birds, taking the place of the brooding island currently standing just off the harbour at Zeebrugge, which is hampering plans to extend the port. The new island could solve the problem of aggressive seagulls in the area, which have been known to attack rail workers at the port.

Editor to appeal damages award

Yves Desmet, editor in chief of daily newspaper *De Morgen*, is appealing a ruling by a court in Mechelen finding him liable for damages over an editorial he wrote in January of 2012. The subject was the dispute between Antwerp prosecutor-general Yves Liegeois and magistrate Peter De Caster, then in charge of a major

diamond fraud investigation. In a verdict described by legal experts as “surprising”, Desmet (pictured) was ordered to pay €1 in damages not to Liegeois, severely criticised in the editorial, but to the prosecutor’s wife, who claimed she had suffered damage to her reputation. The article made no mention of her, but the court ruled

in her favour, replacing her suit for €19,000 with a symbolic award of €1. The verdict caused concern in legal and media circles, as it appears to make no distinction between opinion pieces and news. The laws on libel provide limited protection for questions of opinion, especially in the case of public figures.



Fyra problems see service withdrawn

The Dutch and Belgian governments last week stopped the service of the new high-speed Fyra train linking Brussels and Amsterdam, which has been plagued with problems since its launch last month. According to NMBS CEO Mark Descheermaecker, if the train’s constructor does not solve the problems within three months, the rail authority will cancel its contract for three Fyra trains and seek repayment of €33 million already paid out in deposits.

Last week, 30 engineers from the Italian construction company AnsaldoBreda arrived in the Netherlands – the only Fyra trains in service to date are those owned by the Dutch rail authority NS – to carry out tests after Fyra was taken out of service.

Fyra came into service nearly six years behind schedule, replacing the standard Brussels-Amsterdam service. Rail users

complained that the train was more expensive, rode less often, required a reservation and did not serve The Hague. The performance of the train itself, however, proved the biggest obstacle to its success: From the start, the service has been delayed or cancelled due to breakdowns.

Winter weather added to the problems, and when three trains were reported to have shed parts last week, the service was pulled entirely by safety inspectors. Dutch authorities have cancelled outstanding orders for seven trains. The Dutch rail minister Wilma Mansveld this week said she wanted her department and her Belgian equivalent to work together to come up with an alternative to Fyra before the end of the month. In the meantime the service is replaced by the former intercity service.

Flanders’ budget seeks €596 million

The Flemish government will be looking for an extra €596 million to close its budget deficit, the social-economic council of Flanders (Serv) warned last week. According to Flemish budget minister Philippe Muyters, the gap comes as no surprise. The government’s budget provisions assumed growth of 0.7%, but the reality is somewhat different. In addition, the shift of certain responsibilities from the federal to the regional governments will saddle Flanders with an estimated bill of €125 million. Muyters repeated a warning already given by minister-

president Kris Peeters: The government will not accept unquestioningly whatever bill the federal government decides to present.

Muyters also pointed out that the budget had been drawn up using the best information available at the time, and it was part of the plan to revise those forecasts later. One problem, however, was that the government used up all of its available reserves as an alternative to spending cuts – leaving little room to manoeuvre now. “It’s never pleasant to find savings, but we did it last year, too,” Muyters said.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

66

immigrant students in Brussels this year received the loan of a PC, internet account and coaching for four years to help with their studies

€250,000

extra funding from the Brussels-Capital Region for winter shelters for the homeless, on top of the sum of €1 million already agreed, to provide 150 new places

1,000th

liver transplant carried out at the Ghent University Hospital earlier this month. Since the first procedure in 1991, the hospital has seen a survival rate of 72%

9

cases of “skimming” – theft of bank card details using doctored cash machines – in 2001, compared to more than 1,400 two years ago, according to electronic payments company Atos Worldline

2,272

cafés have gone out of business in Belgium since the smoking ban was introduced in July 2011, according to the organisation for the self-employed NSZ. Since that date café bankruptcies have gone up by 30%, the organisation said

FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

The making of a governor

Provincial governors are representatives to both the Flemish and federal governments. They are also responsible for safety in the province, their most visible role being to co-ordinate safety operations in case of disasters. Although the job is an important one, it is often joked that the greatest advantage of being the governor of a province is job security, as they stay in the function until retirement. This is especially so because the job often goes to former politicians, whose careers can be over at the voters’ whim.

All of the current governors have a political background: Carl Decaluwe of West Flanders, André Denys of East Flanders and Cathy Berx of Antwerp are former Flemish MPs. Herman Reynders of Limburg was mayor of Hasselt, while Lode De Witte of Flemish Brabant is a former socialist aide. All of them have a party label – CD&V for Decaluwe and Berx, Open VLD for Denys, SPA for Reynders and De Witte – but once they are appointed, they shed their political affiliation and become neutral civil servants.

Flanders’ provincial governors are appointed by the Flemish government, with the federal government’s advice (and approval). In the past, this procedure worked out well, as there was also an informal agreement between the three traditional parties – Christian-democrats, liberals and socialists – to split up the posts between them.

However, with the rise of the Flemish nationalist N-VA, the political balance has changed dramatically. Consequently, with André Denys approaching retirement age, it was agreed that it was up to N-VA to propose the next governor of East Flanders. Surprisingly, the party chose Jan Briers, a non-political figure, head of the classical and world music event Festival van Vlaanderen. His appointment is not passing smoothly, though, as Open VLD, part of the federal government, is refusing to approve “N-VA’s dictate”. Open VLD president Gwendolyn Rutten questions the consensus model: “Why should one party decide who gets the post?”

There is a double frustration behind this: with Denys, Open VLD sees the exit of the last “liberal” governor. Moreover, there is a feeling – and not just with Open VLD – that as a result of its speedy rise, N-VA has become arrogant. They act as if they are out to conquer the world, as one journalist put it. The world it has yet to conquer, but for this battle, N-VA has the backing of the Flemish government. Need we mention that Open VLD is not part of that?

Liberty Global bid for Telenet fails

Uncertainty continues as American media giant remains largest shareholder

Alan Hope

An attempt by the American cable company Liberty Global to take over Telenet has failed. Liberty, based in Denver and part of the media empire of John C Malone, the largest private landowner in the US, held 58.4% of the Mechelen-based company at the end of the bid period, consolidating its position as majority shareholder. Liberty has made it clear that it will not raise its bid of €35 a share. Under the law, Liberty will not be able to buy Telenet shares at a price above €35 for a year, unless it offers the same price to anyone who took up



the offer during the bid period. Last week, Telenet shares opened just below €35 (at which point Liberty is free to buy up as much as it wants) but soon passed the bid price to close at €35.80. In the meantime, there are fears that Liberty might use its position as reference shareholder to reduce the value of the company, thereby forcing down the share value and making it possible to buy up outstanding holdings for less than €35. Strategies could involve transferring Liberty properties to Telenet, incurring more debt, or

otherwise integrating Telenet more into Liberty. Malone has already said there would be no shareholder dividend this year.

The main reason for the lack of enthusiasm for Liberty's bid was the price: Institutional investors and independent board members considered €35 too low, a point also made by an independent auditor, who put a price of €37 to €42 on the company.

Telenet is the main competitor of state-owned Belgacom in digital TV, internet, telephony and mobile services.

Unions and Ford Genk sit down to talk

Unions and management at Ford Genk met last week to set the agenda for future meetings, of which at least seven are planned between now and the end of February. It was agreed that the first point on the agenda will be the question of early pensions for Ford workers made redundant when the factory closes in 2014.

"All parties want things to move forward," said Eddie Martens of the Christian ACV union. "Hopefully after these discussions, the most thorny problems will be behind us."

Unions are demanding early pensions for all workers aged 52 and over – about 1,800 of the total workforce of 4,500. According to the liberal union ACLVB, management is open to the idea, but it would have to be approved by the federal government, which



Protester Patrick Trusgnach speaks to the press after union representatives of Ford Genk were blocked from leaving city hall last week

would have to foot the lion's share of the bill.

Federal labour minister Monica De Coninck pointed out later that it was "not the plan" to hand out early pensions to all workers aged 50 or 52, regardless of their situations. "If people have worked for 35 years ... then I have no problem with this

proposal being considered," she said. "But it was never the plan to include people who may only have worked [at Ford] for two years and now want to stop work altogether."

De Coninck said that it was "regrettable" that some workers are remaining in temporary unemployment at Ford instead of looking for new jobs, while they wait to see what the redundancy payments are going to be. She said that she intended to include Flemish labour minister Philippe Muyters in the discussions.

Union leaders held hostage

Last week, the three main representatives of Ford unions were

prevented from leaving the city hall in Genk, where they had turned up for talks, by a group of militants from Ford and the four Genk suppliers of the Ford plant. The group has been protesting since the announcement of the closure, claiming that their interests were not being adequately argued. After the intervention of Genk mayor Wim Dries, the three union men were able to leave the building unhindered.

Union activists, meanwhile, continue to mount a picket at Ford Genk to stop the arrival of parts – a blockade which has brought production at the factory to a standstill. On Monday, 21 January, a bailiff turned up to read the order of a judge to lift the picket on pain of a fine of €1,000 a day. The bailiff imposed the fine for the first day.

Rail strike averted for now

A threatened strike by unions representing railway personnel was averted this week, after delegates were mandated by their members to carry on with negotiations with the rail authority NMBS and the government. The issue concerns the federal government's plan to reorganise the railways into a bipartite structure consisting of infrastructure on one hand and rolling stock and customer affairs on the other. Unions have called for a return to the pre-2005 situation when the railways were under the control of a single authority, which representatives say would cost less, offer better service to customers and offer better conditions for workers.

"We are still absolutely not in agreement with the proposed two-part structure, but today everyone's main concern is with passengers," commented Jean-Pierre Goossens of the socialist union ACOD. Unions had previously reacted angrily to the proposal by Paul Magnette, outgoing minister for government enterprises, and the political agreement given by the rest of the federal cabinet. However, after consulting their membership, unions have decided to shelve the threat of strike action in favour of a campaign to inform the public of their concerns.

Magnette is leaving the job as federal minister of government enterprises, development co-operation and science policy to become mayor of Charleroi. The federal position will be taken over by Francophone socialist Jean-Pascal Labille.

Econation wins international energy prize

Ghent-based Econation has won second prize at the prestigious World Future Energy Summit in Abu Dhabi for its intelligent skylight known as LightCatcher. The company was recently featured in a *Flanders Today* list of 10 leading innovative tech companies in Flanders (14 November). The LightCatcher is a skylight equipped with sensors and photovoltaic cells, which continuously direct built-in mirrors to orient themselves in order to catch the optimal amount of available light and spread it in the most effective way possible into the space below. The panel is also fitted with filters to keep out UV light and to control the amount of heat allowed through.

The idea came to founder Maarten Michielsens when he was watching a football match on TV and noticed touchline photographers using light meters to capture the best light conditions. The graduate of Vlerick Business School then worked on a prototype with engineers from the University of Ghent. Since the company was founded in 2009, it has fitted the

LightCatcher in community centres and sports halls, as well as Schiphol airport.

"Light accounts for about 20% of the energy costs of companies and public buildings, and for schools it can be as high as 70%," Michielsens said, pointing out that the LightCatcher costs less than half of the cost of lighting interiors with fluorescent lamps. "In fact, we're selling free daylight."

First prize was won by d.light, based in San Francisco, which designs and distributes solar light and power products. The prize jury, which included actor and activist Leonardo Di Caprio, was chaired by Iceland's president, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson.



THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Banking

► Delta Lloyd

The Dutch Delta Lloyd financial institution will be listed on the Brussels stock market from 23 January. The move will help the bank develop its activities on the local market where it owns Bank Nagelmackers, a local wealth management and private banker.

Biotech

► Galapagos

The Mechelen-based biotechnology company has acquired the British pharmaceuticals developer Cangene.

Chemicals ► Evonik

The German chemical products group is building a new production unit to increase capacity of MTBE ether in its Antwerp facility. The new plant is expected to come on stream in 2015.

Diamonds

► Second best year

The Antwerp Diamond industry registered its second best trading year of the last decade in 2012. The sector had sales of some €58 billion, an 8.3% drop on the record 2011 result but significantly more than the €41.9 billion registered in 2010.

Foundation

► Vlamingen in de Wereld

Jan Van Doren has been elected the new chairman of Vlamingen in the Wereld, the association that assists Flemings living and working abroad. He succeeds Walter Thiebaut, who will continue to sit on the organisation's board.

Minerals ► Sibelco

Antwerp-based Sibelco, the privately owned world leading producer of sand and rare materials, has acquired the British Viaton Industries, specialised in barium sulphate and magnesium silicates.

Software ► GIMV

The Flemish government's investment company GIMV has acquired a majority stake in the French IT engineering company ProxiAD, specialised in software solutions for the financial and distribution industries.

Transport ► NMBS

National railway operator NMBS is negotiating the sale of its freight activities to Germany's Deutsche Bahn. NMBS Logistics, which lost €185 million in 2011, is in need of a structural solution that would include setting up a joint venture with the German railway operator to become part of the world-leading logistics and freight company.

World wide webmaster

A visionary Fleming is inspiring people to connect on a global scale

Andy Furniere

Did you know that you are part of a global peer-to-peer network? Perhaps you don't only share your thoughts via social media, but you also shop at online marketplaces and search for information on Wikipedia. In this worldwide web based on cooperation, you can now also share a car and a workplace via online applications.

One of the masterminds behind this person-to-person, or P2P revolution is Flemish cyber-philosopher Michel Bauwens.

Last year, the international Post Growth Institute ranked Bauwens among the 100 most inspiring people on their (En)Rich List – in the close company of historical figures, such as writer Henry David Thoreau, and Nobel Prize laureates, like economist Amartya Sen. For around a decade, from his headquarters in Thailand, this visionary has been spreading the message of his P2P Foundation from the *favelas* of Brazil to the Vatican to New York City.

But before he started to change our world, Bauwens (*pictured*) was born in Brussels as a *zinneke* – a *Brusselaar* with a French- and a Dutch-speaking parent. He went through a varied career, all revolving around ICT. Bauwens founded two internet companies, worked for the United States Information Agency, oil and gas company BP and telecommunication enterprise Belgacom, and was editor of computer magazine *Wave*.

In 2004, however, Bauwens felt he could no longer function in the current economic system and took a sabbatical to collect his thoughts. He realised that the internet provided the tools to make the transition to a more sustainable world. He founded the non-profit P2P Foundation, striving towards an open-source economy in which actors worldwide develop goods and services via open collaboration and without copyrights.

P2P is originally an ICT term, referring to a computer network where files are shared freely and equally. Bauwens' P2P Foundation

is funded by donations and sponsorships by companies and organisations.

Bauwens' goal with the foundation is to communicate what we are capable of when we work together online. Of course he is active on Facebook and Twitter, but he also gives lectures and workshops to, among others, inhabitants of Brazilian *favelas*, Occupy members in New York and the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

Economy cars, community satellites

Examples of pioneering peer-to-peer initiatives are the free computer operating systems of Linux and encyclopaedia Wikipedia, a huge success. "But the movement has since then expanded beyond the borders of the internet to the actual, daily lives of people," says Bauwens, 54. "There is now a community consuming, producing and innovating together in large, digitally connected networks."

A typical person-to-person platform involves bringing together complementary knowledge, collecting funds for the infrastructure and sharing the profits after selling them. One example is Arduino, which designs electronics via common expertise and crowd-funding. Its activity even led to the development of the ArduSat, a satellite that will be accessible to all citizens.

In a similar project, Wikispeed, a team designs economical cars. More and more, existing companies are warming to the potential of this dynamic. Recently, P2P assembled a report with telecommunications enterprise Orange. "This alternative economy already accounts for one-sixth of the Gross Domestic Product of the United States," says Bauwens. "Its influence will grow even more quickly as fabrication equipment, like 3D printers, becomes cheaper."

Do more with less

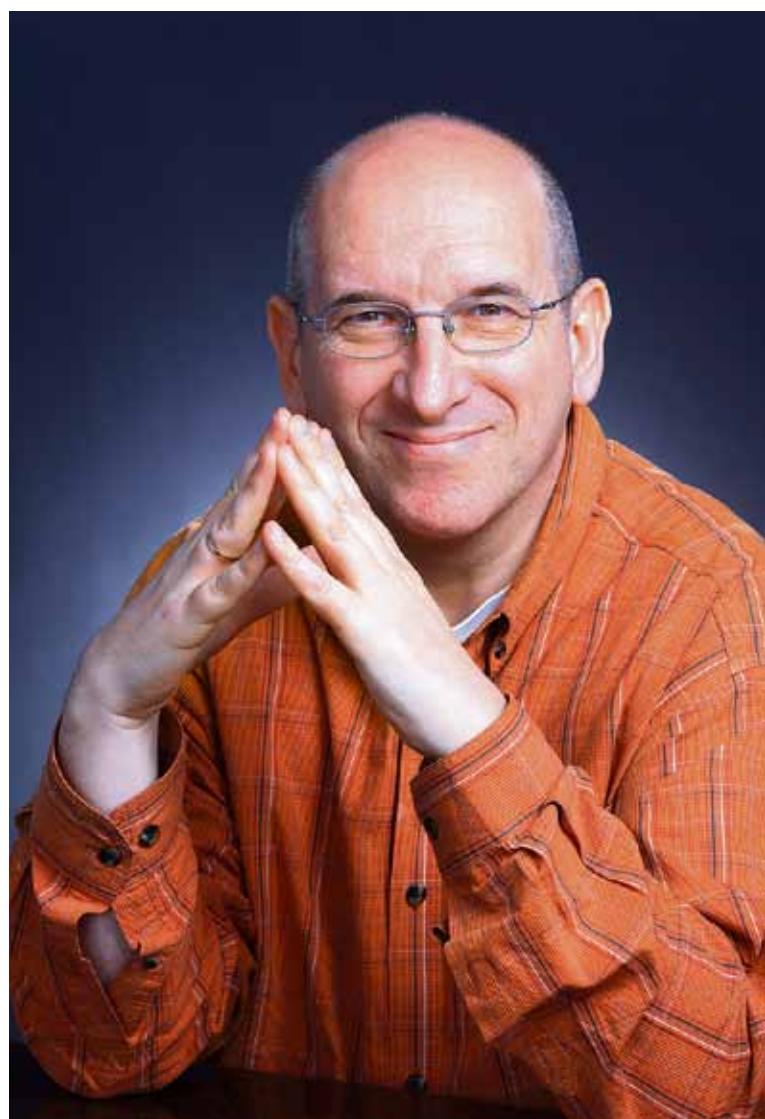
The collaboration offers answers to

the needs of the economic crisis, especially in southern Europe. "In Greece and Spain, there are a lot of networks distributing basic necessities such as food," says Bauwens. But he also points to the ecological necessity: "In general, we have to do more with the available resources, not constantly look for new opportunities to scale up production."

However, the political world is reluctant to implement these ideas, according to Bauwens. "I notice a lot of support among 'digital' young people, but not among the majority of decision-makers." History, he says, shows that transformations of societies usually take a century, for example the democratisation of knowledge after the invention of printing. "Hopefully, the world wide web can accelerate that process because we don't have much time left before we reach new economic and ecological lows."

Via the peer-to-peer technology of Skype, I ask Bauwens if he visits his home country often. He sighs. "Unfortunately, I have been back only a few days in the past decade. But this spring, I am returning for a lecture in Flanders." Would he consider moving back permanently? "Yes, if I could establish a P2P research group at a knowledge institution; that's one of my personal dreams for the future."

► www.p2pfoundation.net



THREE P2P NETWORKS IN FLANDERS

Share a car @ Cambio.be: Cambio started up in Flanders nine years ago and now has around 15,000 users across the country sharing cars. Users can choose from more than 500 cars in 27 cities. The initiative is supported by the public transport authorities and the Flemish job training agency VDAB.

Share a working space @ Bardoffice.com: For around two years now, self-employed people have been able to work together and chat with "colleagues" at Flemish co-working cafe Bar d'Office. Located in eight cities across the region, Bar d'Office is supported by partners such as entrepreneurial support organisation Flanders DC and Design Centre Winkelhaak, a hub for creative talent.

Share a second-hand object @ 2dehands.be: Every day, an average of 600,000 people visit this online marketplace with more than 2.8 million listings. The auction and shopping website finished second (after Facebook) in the last "Site of the Year" competition by computer magazine Clickx. Users on 2dehands (Second Hand) offer a lot of free products; *gratis* (free) is the most popular search term.

Star snapper and international bloggers team up for Stella ad campaign

Celebrity American photographer Annie Leibovitz is behind a new international campaign for Stella Artois, the best-selling beer of Leuven-based AB InBev. The campaign, dubbed Timeless Beauty, will also be supported by a selection of bloggers from different countries, including occasional *Flanders Today* contributor Stéphanie Duval. "Annie Leibovitz's work combines faultless artistic genius with meticulous professionalism," says Emma Fox, global marketing director for Stella Artois. "Our fans enjoy the perfection of Stella Artois, which is the result of 600 years of brewing experience. That's why

we wanted to concentrate on the beauty of this creation as well as the professionalism that goes into it." "Can I be honest? I don't drink beer. Never have," Duval wrote on her blog after the announcement. "But I do have a special relationship with Stella Artois, the brand. I've loved their campaigns ever since I was little, when my uncle's advertising company came up with their famous slogan: 'My home is where my Stella is'. I remember watching every new commercial and feeling this sense of pride – our little country's beer was conquering the world." *Alan Hope*

► www.70percentpure.blogspot.be



Flemish blogger Stéphanie Duval's interpretation of timeless beauty

The clinic in your pocket

An Aalst entrepreneur offers medical diagnoses influenced by Star Trek technology

Andy Furniere

At the Nasa research centre in California technology hub Silicon Valley, an entrepreneur from Aalst is preparing a revolutionary update of an age-old product almost everyone has in their homes: the thermometer. Inspired by *Star Trek*'s futuristic tricorder devices, Walter De Brouwer founded the company Scanadu to develop hand-held medical tools that provide an immediate diagnosis of your vital health signs. The affordable devices should be available by the end of the year.

The origin of Scanadu lies in a dramatic event that happened eight years ago and turned the life of De Brouwer and his family upside-down.

De Brouwer already had experience in a variety of sectors, including as an academic, publisher of computer magazines, internet entrepreneur, telecoms operator and scientific researcher. But when his five-year-old son suffered a severe brain injury after falling from a window, De Brouwer and his wife spent a year in hospital.

"We were sitting by his bed, surrounded by high-tech machines, waiting for the doctors to explain all the confusing data," says De Brouwer. Frustrated by this uncertainty, he studied the medical technology to learn which information meant that his son's condition was improving and to have a more coherent dialogue with doctors.

"After a while, we even began to help other people in the hospital understand their loved ones' situation." De Brouwer's son survived the accident but remained paralysed on the right side of his body.

From sci-fi to reality

After this ordeal, De Brouwer was determined to use all his expertise for one mission: making sure that this is the last generation that knows



The Scanadu Scout can measure the vital signs that you normally have to visit a doctor to find out

so little about its personal health. He was inspired by medical "tricorders" – scanners with which doctors in the TV series *Star Trek* used to instantly collect information about the body and diagnose diseases. Committed to turning these fictional tools into reality, the entrepreneur established Scanadu in 2010 at Nasa's research centre. "Silicon Valley is the frontline of groundbreaking technological research," explains De Brouwer. "The gravity of innovation here keeps everyone on their toes."

At the end of last year, Scanadu



Entrepreneur Walter de Brouwer compares his Scanadu Scout with *Star Trek*'s medical "tricorder"

launched its first three consumer health products: Scanadu Scout, Project ScanaFlu and Project ScanaFlo. Hold the Scout for less than 10 seconds to your temple, and it will upload to a smartphone application precise data on six vital signs: pulse transit time, heart rate, electrical heart activity, temperature, heart rate variability and blood oxygen saturation. "The Scout transfers the diagnostic abilities of a clinic to your pocket," says De Brouwer. The device would cost less than €115.

Saving doctors time

ScanaFlo and ScanaFlu, meanwhile, are two low-cost early detection tools, integrated with Scanadu's smartphone application. Designed to be sold without a doctor's prescription as a disposable cartridge, ScanaFlo analyses urine to test for pregnancy complications, pre-eclampsia, gestational diabetes, kidney failure and urinary tract infections. ScanaFlu similarly assesses cold-like symptoms quickly by testing saliva for the first signs of strep A, influenza A, influenza B, adenovirus and respiratory syncytial virus.

Apart from testing, the tools enable people to track their "personal

health feed", supplying an overview of health statistics as they change over time. This will give a better insight into a person's overall health ranges and empower patients to have more educated conversations with doctors. "We are not replacing medical experts but facilitating the diagnosing," explains De Brouwer. "So doctors won't have to waste precious moments collecting basic information."

Scanadu is now working closely with the US Food and Drug Administration, which will certify the devices if they prove to be reliable and accurate. The tests and final adjustments should be finished by the end of the year, when De Brouwer hopes his tools will be available for the public to buy.

Fulfilling a need

Access to affordable, personalised health care is a growing need worldwide, which is proven by two global competitions in which Scanadu is participating: the Qualcomm Tricorder X Prize and Nokia sensing X Challenge. With budgets of respectively \$10 and \$2.25 million (around €7.5 and €1.7 million), these competitions want to encourage the development of sophisticated diagnostic technologies that put people in charge of their own health.

"There is great activity in the sector of health monitoring devices, but no one else has been able to develop a similarly comprehensive tool," declares De Brouwer. He feels the *Star Trek* tricorders will not remain science fiction for much longer. "We are well on our way to creating a product that collects health information and provides a ready-to-use analysis. Such innovative health care is a puzzle, and we have now put the first pieces into place."

► www.scanadu.com

THE WEEK IN SCI & ED

A surgeon at Antwerp University Hospital is one of the first in the world to **cure a patient of alcoholism** by implanting an electrode in his brain. The electric impulses restrict excessive activity in a region of the brain that is overactive in addicts. Researchers at Antwerp are now planning a large study to exclude the possibility of a placebo effect and examine any long-term consequences.

Flemish nature conservancy organisation Natuurpunt is counting on cats to advance research into **different types of mice in the region**. Natuurpunt is asking cat owners to take photos of the mice their pets have caught. Because mice are small, furtive creatures that are mostly active at night, scientists have difficulties acquiring data on the diversity of the population. In its "year of the mice", the organisation will also install traps with cameras and examine the pellets of owls.

► www.watvandekat.be

Until the end of June, the Museum of the History of Sciences at Ghent University is hosting the exhibition *Bio-Ingenieurs*. The show explains the **growing importance of biochemistry and biotechnology** at universities and in our daily lives. The exhibition also places the current controversy around genetically modified organisms in a historical and scientific context.

► www.tinyurl.com/bio-ingenieurs

The Multilingual Atheneum Woluwe (previously Royal Atheneum Woluwe) secondary school in the Brussels commune of Sint-Pieters-Woluwe will from the next academic year offer **lessons in Chinese**. In co-operation with the Chinese embassy, the school will offer the lessons to its students and other interested people. Last year, the Atheneum Woluwe was the first Dutch-language secondary school to launch multilingual education – students receive lessons alternately in Dutch, French and English.

To examine the Dutch-language deficits of students in Flanders, education minister Pascal Smet has proposed introducing **language screenings for all students**. The language skills of pupils would be tested before they start primary school and then again before secondary school. Students with Dutch as their mother tongue will also have to take the test. For students with difficulties, primary schools would receive support to organise intensive sessions of several weeks or extra lessons outside normal class time. AF

Q&A

Guido van Oost is head of the nuclear fusion research group at Ghent University, the director of Fusion-DC and part of the experimental fusion reactor ITER in southern France

What, in a nutshell, is ITER all about?

The aim of the project is to demonstrate, starting in 2019, that it is feasible to harvest more energy from a fusion reactor than you initially put in it. In a typical fusion reaction, two light nuclei melt together, producing an enormous amount of heat. The difficulty is to get these two nuclei close enough together, which also requires an enormous amount of heat – think 150 million degrees Celsius. And, to be able to harvest energy on a continuous base, we have to sustain this temperature for a quite long time. The big advantage of nuclear fusion is that it is highly sustainable because it only produces a limited amount of nuclear waste and it is

a potentially enormously profitable source of energy.

What is your role in the ITER project?

The ITER project is the most international scientific endeavour of our time. Scientists and engineers from the EU – the main funder – are working with people from the US, Russia, India, China, South Korea and Japan. Because it's such an ambitious project, we need people with excellent skills, and so it's essential that we promote common education on R&D in nuclear fusion. That's the main purpose of Fusion-DC. Coordinated by the University of Ghent, we form a partnership of universities with the objective to develop a

worldwide doctoral network of excellence for education in fusion science and engineering physics.

In addition to a programme for PhD students, you also coordinate an Erasmus programme in fusion science Yes, it's called the Erasmus Mundus Master's in Nuclear Fusion Science and Engineering Physics, or Fusion-EP. This Master's is also organised by Ghent University, in cooperation with institutions in France, Spain, Germany and Sweden. The curriculum is highly interdisciplinary and, like everything in Erasmus, relies heavily on international mobility. Because once you've become a fusion expert, it's absolutely out of



the question that you will stay and work at home!

Interview by Senne Starckx

► www.em-fusion-dc.org

► www.iter.org

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The independent mind

In a digital age, the art of publishing and bookselling is thriving at Antwerp's Demian

Karishma Bhansali Mehta

There are few things as gratifying as entering the perfect bookstore and losing yourself in the smell of old books and stories waiting to be discovered. René Franken's Demian, the second-hand antiquarian bookstore on Antwerp's Hendrik Conscienceplein, is such a place.

Demian, named after Hermann Hesse's 1919 *bildungsroman*, is no ordinary second-hand book shop. The books here are unique: they are critically and carefully curated, and the vibe is alternative and Old World at the same time.

As you enter the shop, laid-back jazz greets you, somehow heightening the tangible reverence for the written word that pervades Demian's medieval walls. René Franken is a passionate owner, who for 20 years has been living out his childhood dream of working in a bookstore.

He wanted to create a personable, reflective, intellectual haven for writers and readers alike. "When I was 19, I worked in a second-hand book hypermarket and realised I didn't want to spend my life in a place like that," he says.

Almost exactly 20 years ago, he opened Demian in Wolstraat, in Antwerp's historic centre. Three years ago, he moved 150 metres to its almost serendipitous present-day location in one of Antwerp's most beautiful literary squares.

Works of art

Housed in a beautiful 14th-century building that is older even than the Carolus Borromeus church with

which it shares a wall, Demian is exactly what Franken wanted it to be and is slowly becoming a modern-day monument to contemporary literature.

The shop stocks an extensive collection of modern art and literature as well as biographical and archival material in Dutch, English, French and German. But the really eye-catching publications are Franken's own, some of which are works of art in themselves. The evolution of the bookstore and its growing ties with the Dutch and Flemish arts and literary community is evident from the mementos on its high walls. Above its extensive bookcases is a beautiful modern mural by artist and close friend Ysbrant, who painted his version of Russian writer Mikhail Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita*, one of Franken's favourite books.

On the high ceiling is a round plaque of visual poetry by the experimental Adriaan De Roover, who inspired Franken's foray into publishing. "When I met Adriaan, his works had not been published," he says. "In 1998, I published his first anthology of poems, which were from 1953 to 1958."

Publishing was a very organic development for Franken. "I never wanted to be a publisher and never undertook publishing to turn it into a profitable venture; for me it is very personal and depends on what inspires me."

So don't be surprised on any ordinary day to walk in on Franken having coffee and cake with a writer, because that's how it starts: "I need to make a connection, be inspired by the people I meet."



The accidental publisher: René Franken opened Demian 20 years ago

A store apart

Over the years, Franken has worked with important writers and poets such as Jeroen Brouwers, Jerrit Komrij, Remco Campert and former Antwerp city poet Ramsey Nasr. In 2009, Franken ran Boest, a performance poetry project featuring nine young poets. Boest was performed on stage, a limited collection anthology was published and a vinyl record of the poetry was also compiled.

Franken is particularly proud of his international exhibition project on the influential American Beat generation. Inspired by the famous City Lights bookstore in San Francisco, in 2005 he converted Demian into an Antwerp version of the store and for six weeks had readings and exhibitions by international poets and authors.

messages, notes and other scraps left behind in the books he has bought from people over the years.

"When someone is selling their personal belongings for whatever reason, they are letting a part of themselves go, and most of the time there is something within the books that they have absent-mindedly forgotten about."

Over the years, Franken collected the missives that piqued his curiosity. When he decided to print them in a book, he asked 91 writers, poets and artists to annotate them with their own interpretations. The result is an inspiring read, beautifully presented with the found messages and notes accompanied by the authors' annotations.

Franken shows me one of his favourite findings – a messy ink blot, the origin of which Jeroen Brouwers has elaborated. Franken is also very fond of a bright pink ticket handed out by a street photographer on Antwerp's Meir in the 1950s, letting the lucky recipient know that a photograph of them has been taken and where they can go to buy it. "The writers looked for this shop," notes Franken. "It doesn't exist anymore."

The book is written mostly in Dutch, but there are some notable English annotations. Digital artist Hugo Heyrman, for instance, penned biographical information about Henry Miller in English, a response to personalised Miller stationery found in one of the books that ended up at Demian. Heyrman, in fact, captures the essence of *Verstrooid papier* perfectly when he writes: "Books are a perfect place to keep personal memories."

Book of memories

Finding meanings in all his endeavours seems to be Franken's *raison d'être*, clearly displayed in his latest publishing venture, which celebrates the shop's 20th anniversary. *Verstrooid papier*, or Scattered Paper, is a collection of

books on art and architecture. It's part of the Modenatie building, also home to Flanders Fashion Institute and the Fashion Museum.

► www.copyrightbookshop.be

T Stad Leest This charming bookstore boasts extensive fiction and non-fiction sections in Dutch, making for hours of browsing. Kids can get lost in its airy and colourful children's book area, one of the largest in Antwerp. Its sister shop, Othello in the city centre, houses its English-language titles and happily takes orders for books not in stock. *Steenhouwersvest 16*; 03 233 08 80

► www.tstadleest.be

Copyright: Make sure your wallet is full when entering this shop of seducing coffee-table

► www.groenewaterman.be



Verstrooid papier is a collection of notes, postcards and other items left behind in books sold to the store



Last November saw the forming of Confituur, an alliance of independent bookstores in Flanders to exchange information and promote the unique quality of indie bookshops. A month later, the organisation sponsored "The day of the Independent

bookseller", with readings and other literary events.

"Today you have to be a good quality independent bookstore and fill a niche to survive and succeed," says Dirk Van Den Bergh of Alta Via bookshop, which gets our vote as one of Antwerp's finest.

Alta Via This book store (*pictured*) near the MAS Museum houses an extensive selection of maps and travel guides in English, Dutch, French and German. The atmosphere is as earthy and warm as its enthusiastic owner, who built the eco-friendly shop using mainly recycled wood. A backpacker at heart, Dirk Van Den Bergh also stocks travel guides for cyclists and campers and a section on children's travel literature. Make sure to go to one of Alta Via's coffee evenings, hosted every

two months by travellers and travel writers. *Nassastraat 29*; 03 293 87 33

► www.altaviatravelbooks.be

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When science met fashion

Silk and software combine in the striking new brand 2Flamingos

Katrien Lindemans

As both an artist and researcher, Frederik De Wilde often comes across graphically intriguing images. About six months ago, he began transferring those images to fashion, and the Electron collection was born: a series of silk scarves with computer-generated designs. Together with his partner, Leen Vandereyken, he launched the label 2Flamingos.

"While working with code, programming and generative art, I realised I wanted to do something with some of the images I was creating," says De Wilde. "I thought it would be interesting to introduce a combination of art and science into the world of fashion by printing these special images on silk scarfs. As Leen and I don't have a background in fashion, scarves seemed the best option to start with. They're also the closest alternative to an actual canvas."

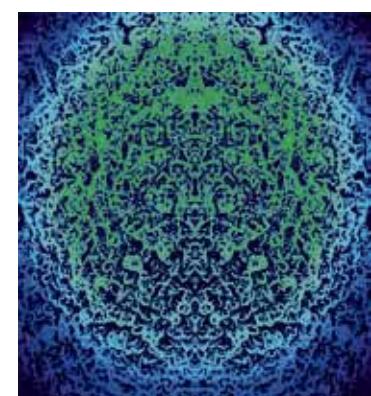
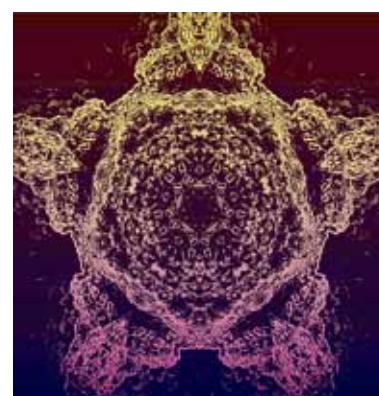
The label name, meanwhile, conjures colour, beaches and heat. "I loved that name as soon as Frederik mentioned it," Vandereyken says.

"We're both into the Miami vibe." The first collection was baptised Electron and features nine intricate designs, printed on either the shiny or the matte side of a silk scarf. While Vandereyken takes care of marketing, De Wilde developed the first range of prints. "They're all images of things you can't normally see, like the grooves on a vinyl record," De Wilde explains. "To create the print, I've used a raster electron microscope and enhanced the captured images with a custom-made software program."

With a natural affinity for combining the arts and the sciences, De Wilde's interests and

quests have landed him some top collaborations. "I've been doing some research into the blackest black colour in association with the Rice University in Texas," he reveals. "We've used carbon nanotubes to catch light. The next steps in the process happened with Nasa. We've had a breakthrough, and soon we will present the first blackest of black nano sculpture." It's another example of how science and art can be united. But don't let this scientific aspect put you off. The Electron collection is a very wearable series of scarves, with intriguing patterns and different colour sets.

"In the future, we'd like 2Flamingos to become a hub for new media artists and scientists," says Vandereyken. And there are already plenty of ideas for the future. "We could use existing images of an artist," De Wilde offers as an example of further forays into fashion. "We could also manipulate some images, and we could even commission the artist to try something new. Whatever the procedure, the outcome has to be fashion." In doing so, the Brussels-



Three designs in the Electron collection, developed by 2Flamingos

based label plans to take the industry to another level. "The first collection was all about the image. But through experimenting we can work on the material as well," De Wilde explains. "At the same time, it will be an unusual experience for the collaborating artists and scientists as they will see their work translated to fashion as well." The Electron collection was launched just last month. At €130-€150, the scarves are not inexpensive but are all designed by De Wilde and made entirely

in Flanders. They are sold on the 2Flamingos website as well as in Antwerp's Seven Rooms (see below). So far, reactions have been promising. "Customers seem to like the authenticity and the story behind the scarves," De Wilde says. "And we've had some good reviews from people in the industry. It's a great compliment to see that our take on science, art and fashion seems to work."

► www.2flamingos.com



Leen Vandereyken sports a scarf from the 2Flamingos' Electron collection, made by her partner, Frederik De Wilde

The house of style

Antwerp's latest high-end shop takes "concept" to a whole new level

Catherine Kosters

Number 12 Sint-Antoniussstraat holds a special place in the heart of Antwerp's fashionistas. For many years, this was the location of designer Walter Van Beirendonck's flagship store. Now a new high-end concept store has opened its doors here, enticing shoppers with a mix of exquisite taste and hospitality. To follow on from Van Beirendonck, who had to leave when the landlord more than doubled the rent last year, one undoubtedly needs courage and a strong idea. Gustav Bruynseraede has both. As the owner of designer boutique XSO, he knows fashion, and Antwerp knows him.

XSO's 20th birthday seemed like the perfect opportunity to embark on a new adventure, so, together with Italian designer Aldo Torelli and Japanese fashion consultant Mie Sazen, he decided to turn what



Gustav Bruynseraede's ambitious concept shop Seven Rooms takes over Walter Van Beirendonck's former premises

was once the Walter Store into Seven Rooms, a high-end shopping experience unlike any other this city known for fashion has ever seen. Seven Rooms is the minimalist loft of fictional host and hostess Mr and Mrs Fox. "A concept to give the shop a more personal touch," Bruynseraede explains. The Foxes are globetrotters and collectors;

their home is one big open space divided into imagined rooms, filled with a fine selection of fashion, furniture, art and interior objects. Everything on display is for sale, from the tub in the bathroom to the plants in the (indoor) Japanese garden. Bruynseraede wanted to create an environment in which the customer

feels at ease and can enjoy the pleasure of "slow shopping". The result is a refreshing take on conceptualism, used to include rather than to impress.

Only the beginning

At the moment, there is a minimum of merchandise to slow-shop for in the dazzling white interior, but the owner says that it's only the beginning for Seven Rooms. Renowned labels like JW Anderson and Prabal Gurung will join the lesser-known Au Jour le Jour and co-founder Torelli's own N8 on the racks in the changing room, and the kitchen bar will serve snacks and drinks in collaboration with local businesses.

"You don't realise a project like this in one day," says Bruynseraede, who is all for organic growth. Seven Rooms will also host events and exhibitions. At the moment,

customers can enjoy the new media art of Frederik De Wilde (see above). The store's international partners see Antwerp as the perfect backdrop to their ambitious project. Co-conspirator Aldo Torelli says: "Belgium is the centre of Europe, and Antwerp is very international, a great place to experiment. What works here may also work in Paris or London."

Mie Sazen is responsible for the selection of fashion brands, a representation of her personal taste. Together, the three of them hope to turn Seven Rooms into an integral part of Antwerp's fashion district. The only thing Bruynseraede wanted to avoid was making a copy, and he has succeeded. We have no idea what Mr and Mrs Fox look like but didn't for a second picture the former with Walter's beard.

► www.sevenrooms.be



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Better with age

Visit with us the Flagey of yesteryear as the landmark building turns 75

Gorik de Henau

Flageyplein is a magnet for everything hip and trendy in the southeast of Brussels. And at the heart of it all is the iconic Flagey building, now a vibrant multidisciplinary arts centre. As Flagey turns 75, we take a walk down memory lane to the very beginning of one of Europe's first broadcasting buildings

Few people seem to know that the distinctive Flagey building once housed Belgium's national broadcaster. It was built explicitly for the purpose, in fact, exactly 75 years ago. The Nationaal Instituut voor de Radio-omroep (NIR), was Belgium's answer to the BBC. It saw the light of day on 18 June, 1930. The fledgling broadcaster didn't have appropriate housing from which to transmit, so in 1933 a competition was organised. It was won by Brussels architect Joseph Diongre, who designed a modernist building reminiscent of an ocean liner or a mail steamer. Construction took three years, and, once finished in 1938, it was one of the first broadcasting buildings in Europe. The emphasis was on usability, and Diongre had furniture built that was tailor-made for the place. The building and its interior immediately won international acclaim because of its technical and acoustic qualities and attracted prominent musicians from all over the world.

At the same time, Flagey housed the broadcaster's many orchestras and choirs, including the showpiece Great Symphony Orchestra of the NIR. It had an excellent reputation in the field of contemporary music and performed premieres of works by composers such as Igor Stravinsky, Béla Bartók and Arthur Honegger.

In 1937, the NIR was split up into a Dutch-speaking and a French-speaking branch, but both remained in Flagey. During the Second World War, the Germans took hold of the building and used it for their own broadcasting purposes.



The Flagey building, completed in 1938, was one of Europe's very first purpose-built radio broadcast buildings

Moving on and out

With the arrival of public television in 1953, the multiplication of services and personnel became too much for the original design of Flagey, and gradually everything related to television was moved to different locations. In the meantime, the federalisation of Belgium began to take shape. What had begun as appeasement for diverging regionalist tendencies within the kingdom became an irreversible process of constitutional reform.

This also affected the NIR, which was officially disbanded and replaced by two co-existing but mutually independent organisations, the Belgische Radio en Televisie (BRT, later renamed VRT) for broadcasts in Dutch, and the Radio Television Belge (RTB, later renamed RTBF) for French-language broadcasts. The centrifugal forces also affected the Flagey building, and in 1974 both radio broadcasters slowly began leaving the building for the Reyers complex in Schaerbeek.

An array of cultural institutions set up shop in Flagey, but uncertainty as to its ultimate purpose remained. A long-term solution was badly needed as urgent repair works and structural restoration (such as the removal of asbestos) could not be addressed.

Saved from the bulldozer

Fortunately, the building was partially listed in 1994, so the notion of razing it to the ground – always an option in Brussels, where property development and politics are two branches of the same tree – was impossible. The biggest stumbling block in the dossier was Flagey's highly symbolic nature. In a climate in which the national level was being stripped of ever more power and no single linguistic community wanted to invest in a "national" institution, Flagey seemed like a thing of the past. In 1997, a working group was founded with prominent figures from the private and cultural sectors, including Flemish industrialist Piet Van Waeyenberge. They began elaborating a rescue plan, and a feasibility study was ordered. The resulting blueprint consisted of a complete renovation and a concept for a new cultural institution.

Restored to former glory

In due course, the working group got the go-ahead from the then owners, VRT and RTBF, and in 1998 the building was sold in its entirety to the public limited company Omroepgebouw/Maison de la Radio Flagey. The new company was established with a capital of €47 million, for which no fewer

than 30 Belgian companies chipped in. That kind of "translinguistic" co-operation was a rare occurrence in those days and created quite a stir, as did the relative swiftness of the entire operation.

The renovation began with a view to creating a fully functional building and restoring the studios and concert halls to their former glory, but with the latest technology in acoustics design and noise control. The building reopened in 2002. The new centre with the succinct name Flagey was multidisciplinary, with a strong emphasis on music but with a wider variety of musical expression (including jazz and world music). For the first time, the programming also took in the audio-



A national orchestra and choirs provided radio music from the beginning, and the Flemish Radio Choir and Brussels Philharmonic are still housed in the building

visual arts, and Flagey developed a partnership with the city's film museum Cinematek, which continues today. Flagey receives €2 million in government funding each year, divided between the Flemish and French-speaking Communities, the Brussels-Capital Region and the commune of Elsene. Several orchestras like the Brussels Philharmonic and the Brussels Jazz Orchestra call Flagey home, but it also houses a host of other institutions and even a few commercial enterprises. On the top floor, various Flemish media have their offices: local channel TV Brussel, weekly paper *Brussel Deze Week*, radio station FM Brussel and the news site *brusselnieuws.be*.

However, nowadays Flagey does not belong to one specific community but caters to all who care for culture beyond boundaries.

► www.flagey.be

WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

Flemish actor **Matthias Schoenaerts**, who made his international breakthrough last year with the Oscar-nominated *Rundskop* (*Bullhead*), has landed his second English-speaking role, playing opposite Kate Winslet in the costume drama *A Little Chaos*. The historical romance is set in the 17th century and will begin shooting within a few months. Schoenaerts' first English role is in the American remake of the 2008 Flemish hit *Loft*, which will be released in Belgium in April.

One of the eight international **finalists for the H&M Design Award 2013** is Minju Kim, who is in her last year of Master's studies in the fashion department of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp. The inspiration for the collection that the 26-year-old entered in the competition comes from the Japanese manga style of comics. Kim, who comes from South Korea, was hand-picked along with 18 other students from around Europe to design a collection for the competition. The winner receives €50,000, the chance to show at Stockholm Fashion Week and to see pieces from the collection in H&M stores this autumn.

Not only was the film *The Broken Circle Breakdown* the most popular Flemish film of 2012, the **soundtrack for the film last week broke the sales record** in Flanders for the most weeks at number one. The CD of bluegrass and American gospel hits, performed by Veerle Baetens, Johan Vandenberg and the band from the Flemish stage play-turned-film, was number one for the ninth week in a row. That breaks the 1998 record, which was also held by a film soundtrack – *Titanic*. The combination of soundtrack – not usually a big seller in the region – and bluegrass music makes the record all the more unusual. The film, which has been selected to screen at the Berlin Film Festival next month, is still playing in local cinemas.

► www.thebrokencirclebreakdown.be

Tickets for Tomorrowland in Boom, Antwerp province, recently voted the world's best dance festival, go on sale for local customers on 9 February, but registration before 7 February is required to buy tickets. Half of all available tickets will be reserved for Belgian residents. The internationally lauded festival takes place during the last weekend of July. Meanwhile, a court will rule next month on claims by three Tomorrowland visitors who said they suffered eye damage from a laser show at the 2008 edition.

► www.tomorrowland.com

75 YEARS OF TOP-CLASS MUSIC



The opening event of the year-long Flagey 75 entails four fine musical evenings this week. The prize-winning pianist Till Fellner gives a recital on 23 January, Musiques Nouvelles plays music by Eleni Karaindrou (long-time collaborator of Greek filmmaker Theo Angelopoulos) on 24 January, the Brussels Philharmonic pays homage to the Jazz Age on 25 January and Matthew Herbert swings with his Big Band on 26 January. In February, a series of piano recitals emphasise the excellent acoustic qualities of Flagey's concert halls and studios. What better way to appreciate the richness of a solo piano performance than by inviting some masters? *Enfant terrible* Ivo

Pogorelich plays the romantic repertoire (Chopin and Liszt), while the adventurous Stephane Ginsburgh prefers the early 20th century (Prokofiev).

This month right through to April, the Brussels Philharmonic (*pictured*) feels right at home in a large-scale cycle dedicated to Stravinsky, that giant of modern music. They perform all his ground-breaking works, from *The Firebird* to *Petrushka* and the infamous *Rite of Spring*.

A special treat is the *Phantom of Flagey* (premiere 15 March), a documentary highlighting Flagey's rich history, with treasures from its archives that are currently being digitalised.

Cold comfort

The Fifth Season

Lisa Bradshaw

It's just about this time of year when the average resident of Belgium begins to think, "will spring ever get here?" It does, though, every year. Eventually. But what if it didn't? What if spring simply never arrived? That is the premise of *La cinquième saison* (*The Fifth Season*), the new film by Flemish director Peter Brosens and his American wife Jessica Woodworth. The pair have come home with the film, which follows *Khadak* (set in Mongolia) and *Altiplano* (set in the Andes), shooting it where they live, in the Ardennes.

The Fifth Season begins with the traditional burning of the Christmas trees in a small farming town. But the trees will not burn. As the villagers and the outsider Pol – a perfectly cast Sam Louwyck – watch in confusion, the giant pile of dry trees simply refuses to catch fire.

It's the first omen of what's to come: seeds don't germinate, cows stop giving milk, temperatures won't rise, trees begin to die. It is perpetual winter.



An environmental theme links the couple's three films: the relocation of nomads in Mongolia, the poisoning of villagers in Peru, man against nature (and then against man) in Belgium. "A trilogy was unintentional, but it has evolved naturally," says Woodworth on the day of the film's premiere in Brussels last week. "But it's an ongoing concern of ours on both a thematic and an aesthetic level, man and his environment. We live in a time of emergencies on so

many levels: ecological, financial, political. Certainly in Europe. There is an absolute need to rethink how we live."

There are certain parallels to be drawn in *The Fifth Season* about nature fighting back: You have abused me, and now I'm done with you. But it's how the helpless townspeople, who have lost their means of income, react to this situation that creates the film's frightening intensity and make up its harrowing events.

"We're very vulnerable" to the elements and to nature, says Woodworth, "and yet we have this kind of arrogant assumption that we can control and manage it – and predict it, to some degree. As we are seeing more and more frequently, there are colossal changes happening that have a huge impact on communities. And these are unpredictable and uncontrollable." *The Fifth Season* is slow moving, featuring long, wide-angled shots, which bear a striking similarity to pastoral landscape painting. It emphasises, says Woodworth, "the insignificance of the individual inside the greater picture. Sustaining the mystery of nature was really important to us. It can make the viewer quite uneasy, and so can the story itself."

It can also impress: The film, which was largely financed by the Flanders Audiovisual Fund, has won eight awards in the festival circuit, including two at the Venice Film Festival.

Like their other films, *The Fifth Season* stars mostly amateurs but is anchored by two professional Flemish actors: Louwyck, who plays a beekeeping nomad (whose bees have disappeared, naturally), and Peter Van den Begin, a villager whose rooster has stopped crowing. The unforgettable opening scene features the recognisable star of *Frits en Freddy* and *Allez Eddy!* trying to teach the rooster to crow again. Laughs Woodworth: "What other actor would you put facing a rooster?"

In cinemas across Brussels and Flanders | ► www.thefifthseason.be

LITERATURE

Gedichtendag

Gedichtendag, or Poetry Day, in Flanders and the Netherlands is 31 January, but this year the poetry isn't limited to just a single day; tons of activities will be held throughout Poetry Week. The theme of both Gedichtendag and Poëzieweek is music. There has always been a connection between poetry and music, from the Classical Greek bards, whose verse was accompanied by the plucked lyre, to the rhythmic metre of William Shakespeare to the Belgian Symbolists of the late 19th century who strove to reduce literary language to pure sound. One evening that promises to stand out is Poëziepingpong (Poetry Ping Pong), which pairs David Troch and Sylvie Marie (pictured) in an improvised poetry contest. A coin toss decides who recites the first poem. From there, the other is obliged to respond with another verse, which must hold some connection to the first. This event, like some others during Poëzieweek, is free. **Georgio Valentino**

Until 6 February | Across Flanders | ► www.gedichtendag.com

MORE LITERATURE THIS WEEK

Antwerp

VSB Poetry Reading: Annual award ceremony for the best Dutch-language poem, this year featuring readings by two of the five nominees: Flemish poet Luuk Gruwez and Dutch poet Ester Naomi Perquin
JAN 24 12.30-13.30 at Letterenhuis, Minderbroedersstraat 22
► www.antwerpenboekenstad.be/donderdagen

De Nacht van de Debutant (Beginner's Night): Four stages welcome a diverse selection of writers, directors, artists and musicians presenting their first works
JAN 26 midnight at De Studio, Maarschalk Gérardstraat 4
► www.destudio.com

VISUAL ARTS

Truc Troc

The concept of Truc Troc is brilliant but simple: Artists showcase their work and barter with other artists and members of the buying public – but not with money. Paintings, sculptures and photographs are exchanged for other works, exhibition opportunities, artistic collaborations, lessons, food and/or drink, vacation packages, property rentals and all kinds of other services. Just write up your suggested trade on a post-it and hang it next to the work you want. The weekend also features performances by students from the Brussels art school La Cambre and specialised tours for both adults and children. If you need some refreshment in the midst of all this activity, Cook & Book hosts Saturday afternoon tea and Sunday breakfast. **ev**

1-3 February | Bozar, Brussels | ► www.bozar.be

MORE VISUAL ARTS THIS WEEK

Bruges

Free Space 18 - Thierry Buysse: Photographs of abandoned buildings and ghost towns by the Bruges artist
Until FEB 20 at CC Brugge, Katelijnestraat 86
► www.ccbrugge.be

Brussels

Princess Marie-José: Between Belgium and Italy: Pieces from the glamorous wardrobe of the daughter of King Albert I and Queen Elisabeth of Belgium, as well as unpublished photographs and archive documentation of her turbulent life (1906-2001)
Until MAR 3 at KMKG, Jubelpark 10
► www.kmkg-mrah.be

Ghent

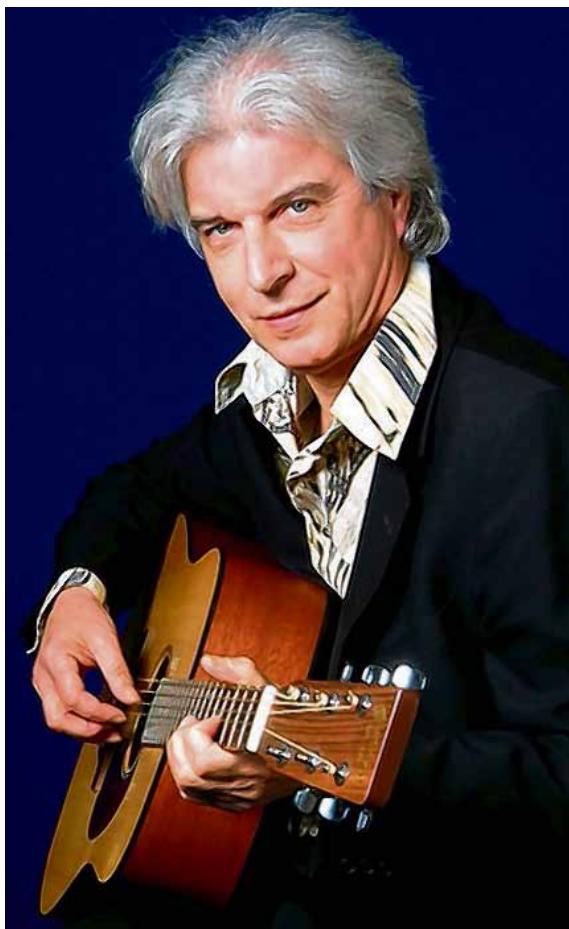
Joachim Koester: Maybe One Must Begin with Some Particular Places: A retrospective of 13 years of work by the Danish artist, including installations on pioneering expeditions, esoteric movements and psychedelic experiments
Until MAR 10 at SMAK, Citadelpark
► www.smak.be

CONCERT

GET TICKETS NOW

Boudewijn de Groot

Boudewijn de Groot is one of the most enduring icons of Dutch popular music. The famed singer-songwriter first made a splash in the 1960s with a string of protest songs like "Welterusten Meneer de President" (Sleep Well, Mr President) before retiring, making a comeback, retiring again and then making another comeback. De Groot has recently announced another retirement after this farewell tour of the Netherlands and Flanders. And this time it might be for real. After all, with 50 years of hit-making behind him, he's surely accomplished everything he set out to, and then some. Dates in Antwerp and Ostend sold out shortly, prompting promoters to schedule additional concerts. Reserve now. **GV**



3-4 May, 20.00 | Lotto Arena, Antwerp

► www.lotto-arena.be

9-11 May, 20.00 | Kursaal Oostende

► www.kursaalostende.be

CONCERTS THIS WEEK

Antwerp

De Correcties: Dutch-language folk rock band

JAN 25 22.00 at Buster, Kaasrui 1

► www.busterpodium.be

Brussels

AB Sessions: Back-to-back concerts featuring Stef Kamil Carlens of Zita Swoon Group, Love Like Birds, Oscar and The Wolf, Imaginary Family, more

JAN 24 20.00 at Ancienne Belgique, Anspachlaan 110

► www.abconcerts.be

Ghent

Aimee Mann: Singer-songwriter who started her career as frontwoman of Til Tuesday in the 1980s, presents her new album *Charmer*

JAN 25 19.30 at Vooruit, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23

► www.vooruit.be

CLASSICAL

Bach Academy Bruges

Ancient metropolis Bruges is the perfect setting for a festival devoted to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. This third edition of Bach Academy Bruges focuses on the final phase of the Baroque composer's life and career, when he served as director of Leipzig's Thomaskirche choir. There are a dozen concerts on offer, spanning the entire last weekend of January. Philippe Herreweghe and his Collegium Vocale Gent are onstage every night, highlighting different aspects of the period. Young, international orchestra Les Passions de l'Âme (pictured), led by Japanese violin virtuoso Shunske Sato, presents the quirky programme 5X Johann, featuring works by Bach and four other similarly named composers. Bach lovers are also invited to a Sunday afternoon lecture by Harvard University professor Christoph Wolff. The internationally recognised Bach scholar places the period in the wider context of Bach's oeuvre and explains the church's central role in the cultural production of the period. **GV**



© Guillaume Perret

25-27 January | Concertgebouw, Bruges | ► www.concertgebouw.be

MORE CLASSICAL MUSIC THIS WEEK

Brussels

Nash Ensemble: The London chamber ensemble performs works of a variety of genres and eras, from Mozart to Ravel, via Fauré and Dvorak

JAN 24 20.00 at the Royal Conservatory, Regentschapsstraat 30

► www.bozar.be

Ghent

De Drie Musketiers (The Three Musketeers): Theatre group Lazarus presents this classic story, while deFilharmonie performs the legendary musical score by Malcolm Arnold (in Dutch, ages 6 and up; optional workshop from 13.00 to 15.00 for kids ages six to 12)

JAN 27 16.00-17.00 at De Bijloke, Jozef Kluyskensstraat 2

► www.debijloke.be

DUSK TIL DAWN

Katrien Lindemans

Area 51

1 February, 22.00-6.00

Factor Club, Bruges

Area 51 at Factor Club in Bruges calls itself a "reborn techno concept". A quick glance at the line-up shows the tagline is not just a vain statement: Organisers managed to book British techno legend Dave Clark for the night. That alone would be a good reason to get your ticket, but there's a lot more to boot. *Antwerpenaar Double U Jay* (pictured), for instance, who was picked by Clark, in fact, as the winner of a contest on Clark's White Noise radio show in 2008. As he result, he was invited the same year to warm up the I Love Techno crowd right before Clark's performance. He promises a set with respect for the old techno vibe.

Also part of Area 51 is Zero (Knokke), who rolled into the techno world after a few visits to Brussels club Fuse. He bought his first turntables in the '90s and soon realised that Detroit techno was his favourite sound. He has played at all the big clubs, venues and events in Belgium and is back for more after a little break. (He became a father).

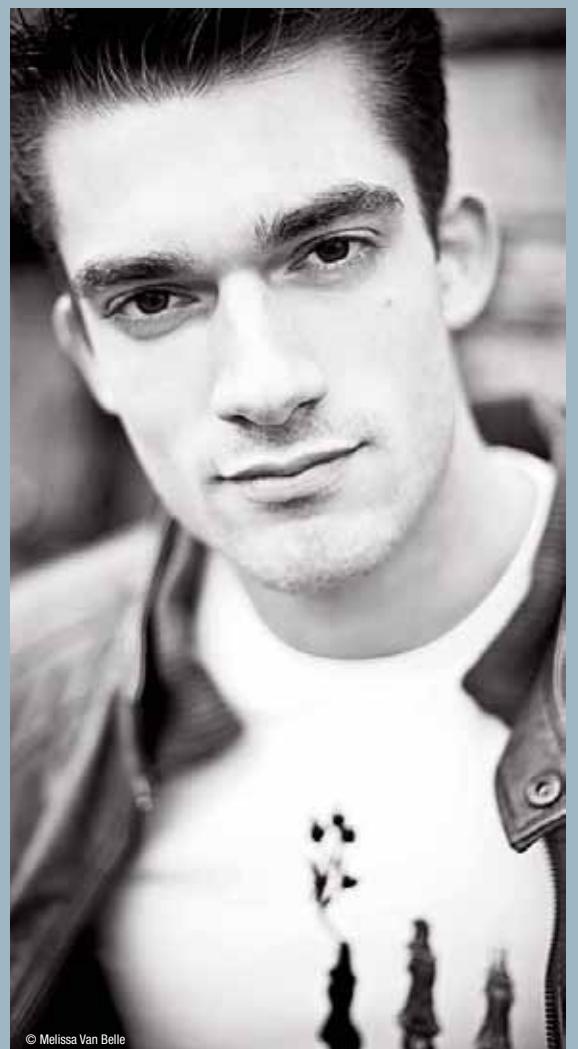
Organisers Voxter & Balance will be claiming some attention from the dance floor, too. They describe their beats as sweeping techno with a lot of depth and energy. Sounds good! Tickets are €14 in advance, €17 at the door.

► www.hetentrepot.be

Party with Paris

And for those who've always wanted to party with (or like) the stars, **Gotha Club** in Brussels' Louise Gallery is the new place to be. The club recently opened its doors and plans to invite (read "hire") international celebrities to spice up the night. The first name on the VIP list is no less than Paris Hilton. On 1 February, the blonde American socialite will make her appearance on Gotha Club's dance floor. Tickets are €35 in presale from Fnac.

► www.gotha-club.be



BITE

De Heeren van Liedekerke ★★★★

The past couple of years have been big ones for De Heeren van Liedekerke (The Gentlemen of Liedekerke). The famous beer restaurant in Denderleeuw celebrated its 20th anniversary, got its first mention as a Michelin Bib Gourmand and was voted the second best beer restaurant in the world by the highly respected ratebeer.com.

But according to Tom and Joost De Four, the brothers behind the business, De Heeren will remain what it's always been: a mecca for beer lovers.

Tom is running the kitchen, so it's Joost you're likely to meet. He's also the one you want to talk to about the 300-odd beers gracing the menu. He helps me to focus on a smaller, seasonal menu that lists about 40 holiday and winter beers.

I choose a Chapeau Christmas gueuze from nearby Brewery De Troch. The bottle is served in its own little wicker basket and with half the beer still inside, allowing me to pour the rest myself. While it makes for a nice aperitif in general, it contains added sugar, resulting in a rather cloying effect I am not fond of.

The dining room is slowly starting to fill up with a good mix of beer tourists and locals. From our corner table, my dining companion and I enjoy a view over the cosy



room with its floor, ceiling and walls made entirely of wood, not to mention the tables and chairs. We see friends playing a board game, a group of Americans dabbling in the beer menu and a family with kids sitting down for dinner.

Inside the playful, albeit chaotic menu that would take hours to fully comprehend, I am pleased to find that there is a suggested brew for each dish. The paired beer listed next to my pork fillet is Urchon, a dark reddish-brown ale that features a hedgehog on its

label (in reference, or perhaps reverence, to the Walloon town of Ath, where the brewery is located). Its fluffy beige head and malty, caramel character indeed make it a good match for the pork.

The fillet is smothered in a red Chimay and tarragon mustard sauce and served with sides of gratin potatoes with Chimay cheese and thyme and turnips soaked in Chimay triple. My dining companion also orders fillet of pork, but in a slightly different version. His comes with a daring,

Robyn Boyle

yet successful, dark chocolate sauce made with the house Heerenbier.

Both dishes are generous and tasty, fine examples of hearty Flemish fare. Followed by coffee, the meal comes to a very reasonable €55.

The De Four brothers' recent accolades are well deserved. There should be more restaurants like this that honour good old-fashioned recipes and exalt the rich beer culture in Flanders.

► www.heerenvanliedekerke.be

→ Kasteelstraat 33, Denderleeuw; 053.68.08.88

🕒 Thurs 11.30-23.00;
Fri & Sat 11.30-1.00;
Sun 12.30-23.00;
Mon 11.30-14.30
(closed every last Sunday of the month during the winter)

€ Mains: €10-€20

ℹ Cosy pub and restaurant with an extensive beer menu and traditional beer cuisine

TALKING SPORTS

Local fallout from Armstrong revelations

Leo Cendrowicz

It was in October that Lance Armstrong was finally – and definitively – exposed as a user of performance-enhancing drugs by the US Anti-Doping Agency. A hubristic liar, an arrogant bully and the greatest cheat in the history of sport; even while he confesses the extent of his crimes – as he did last week to Oprah Winfrey – he continues to leave a trail of wreckage. And that includes his Flemish connections.

His one-time team manager, Johan Bruyneel, is now also ready to come clean. Bruyneel, who was Armstrong's manager during all of his seven Tour de France victories, last week announced his readiness to co-operate with investigations into doping being conducted by the Royal Belgian Cycling Federation. State prosecutor Jaak Fransen said that Bruyneel, born in West Flanders, "has now agreed to co-operate with the investigation"

but admitted that it had been impossible to schedule a meeting, mostly because Bruyneel spends so much time abroad – indeed, he currently lives in London. "We will have to wait and see whether he will actually confess," the prosecutor cautioned.

Bruyneel's website still proclaims him as "9x Winning Tour de France Sports Director", although the seven editions won by Armstrong, from 1999 to 2005, now have the winner's name left empty. The other two wins relate to Spaniard Alberto Contador in 2007 and 2009, but he, too, has been stripped of those after positive drugs tests.

Armstrong's interview with Oprah was tinged with a defiance at odds with his apologies, and Bruyneel seems to be showing a similar cynicism: He is said to be working on a book detailing his side of the story at Armstrong's US Postal Service, Astana and RadioShack

teams.

Armstrong has also lost the support of Flemish cycling legend Eddy Merckx, a one-time confidant, who said he was "extremely disappointed" with the doping revelations. "I was quite close to him," said the five-time Tour winner, "and he often looked me right in the eyes when we discussed doping – and obviously he said 'no'."

Merckx added that the scandal had wider implications for cycling. "It's a disaster for the other riders. It's so easy and so hypocritical." And he was also scathing about Armstrong's claim that it was impossible to win the Tour de France without doping today. "When the riders hear that, they're really going to be happy," he said, sarcastically.

It's an understandable rage: It will be a long time before cycling wins back its credibility.



Lance Armstrong and his Flemish manager Johan Bruyneel celebrate the 2003 Tour de France victory, one of the titles of which Armstrong has since been stripped

The last word...

Farewell to the king

"He wasn't eating any more, had started going blind and had problems with his nervous system." Victor the lion, the king of the beasts at Antwerp Zoo, was put to sleep last week at the age of 19

Party politics

"Now I'm definitely going to stop. The toll is too high, both financially and mentally."

Steven Van Wesemael lost his second attempt to be elected Prince Carnaval in Aalst, a contest that makes the US presidential election look like a picnic

A perfect match

"We don't even fight over the remote control. He hates *Sterren op de dansvloer*, and so do I." Identical twins Rudy and Danny De Cock, 49, from Lokeren sleep in the same room, share a mobile phone and have the same photo (allegedly) on their driving licences

Tough tykes

"Right now I only see benefits. The children are sick less often, and I have to wipe a lot fewer noses than I used to."

The children of the De Teunisbloem Steiner school in Ghent play outside, whatever the weather

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY

Cover story

Districts of cities, like Ghent's Gentbrugge or Brussels' Jette, not only have a lot of administrative independence, they have their own personalities. They are part of the city and yet separate, with their own issues, quirks and general vibes. But the districts of Antwerp are concerned about their identities as they blend more and more into the city. We'll tell you about one that's launched an urban renewal project other districts will surely follow

Science

You might want to check out other seemingly sci-fi research and development projects we've told you about (self-healing materials, medical "tricorders") before digging into next week's science article: In the tunnels of Brussels, Flemish researchers are testing photocatalysts – materials that generate electrons when hit by the right light and perform virtual environmental miracles in the process

Arts

Where, oh where, is the Ballet of Flanders? The region's ballet company is starting its season a little later this year in the absence of former artistic director Kathryn Bennetts, who left after culture cuts were announced by the Flemish government in 2011. We talk to the new director about the brave new post-Bennetts world and what's coming up in 2013