

Regional recognition

Kris Peeters visits his Catalan counterpart to discuss better recognition of regions at EU level

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Electri-cycle

Power your own energy to load your mobile or get wi-fi in public spaces across Flanders

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Here and elsewhere

Painter Luc Dondeyne celebrates his 50th birthday with exhibitions in Antwerp and Mechelen

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The powers that be

Flanders' 10 most influential women on work, convictions and choices

Sabine Clappaert

In 1908, 15,000 women marched through New York City demanding shorter hours, better pay and voting rights. The following year, National Women's Day was observed in the US, eventually spreading to the rest of the world and recognised every 8 March. As statistics on work, violence and poverty show, the struggle for equity continues. We spoke to three of Flanders' most influential women about their jobs, their personal lives and their dedication to their convictions

Mieke Van Hecke *Director-general, Flemish Secretariat of Catholic Education (VSKO)*

As director-general of the VSKO, Mieke Van Hecke is one of the most influential figures in Flemish education, with the organisation representing 64% of primary schools and 75%

of secondary schools in Flanders, as well as boarding schools, centres for adult education and university colleges.

"My power is linked to my position, not my person," says Van Hecke. "Because I represent such a big majority of our educational system, of course people pay attention to what I have to say on behalf of our members."

With degrees in law and criminology and a habit of speaking her mind in no uncertain terms – she recently famously argued that "everyone deserves a second chance, even Michelle Martin" – yet also deeply religious, Van Hecke has an unusual profile to hold a powerful position in an organisation closely linked to the Catholic church.

"I am not afraid to speak from my own conviction," she told *De Standaard* last year. "I try to keep the difference between my personal and professional views as minimal as possible. It's not

that hard, primarily because I am also willing to admit when I have had to change my point of view."

All too often, she tells me, "people in public functions are too

"My feminism is that I make my own choices; don't let anyone foist anything on you"

afraid to doubt or question themselves. But how can you be authentic without doubt? And what is wrong with adjusting

Pictured above, from left: Marleen Temmerman, Mieke Van Hecke and Sandra De Preter

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope

Lucas Van den Eynde



He's played everything from a swamp ogre to an adulterous butcher to a singing priest, and last week it was announced that Flemish actor Lucas Van den Eynde will portray King Albert II in a new drama for channel Eén. Veerle Eyckermans (*De Rodenburgs*, *Sara*) has been cast as Queen Paola. Van den Eynde, 53, began his acting career in the theatre, working with the Royal Flemish Theatre (KVS), Het Toneelhuis and Blauwe Maandag Compagnie. His first film was a bit part in *Stronghold* (1985) and by the time he became a household name, he had already demonstrated a shape-shifting versatility in movies and TV series, including the old favourite *FC De Kampioenen*. His breakthrough came with the TV comedy *Morgen Maandag* in which his character, Xavier De Baere, tried to give a serious speech at the end of each episode, always in vain. His popularity led to him being imitated in parliament, recording a Christmas single and coming second in the 1993 Man of the Year vote behind King Boudewijn, who had died earlier in the year. Since then it's been virtually impossible to turn on a Flemish TV

drama without seeing his face. He's appeared in everything from the children's fantasy *Kulderzipken* to the sea-rescue drama *Windkracht 10*. He was a leading man in the hugely successful *Van vlees en bloed* and turned up in 47 episodes of the detective series *Aspe*, not to mention voice work in the Flemish versions of *Shrek*, where he voiced Shrek, and the Suske & Wiske cartoon *De Texasridders*, where he played the voice of Lambik. A few years ago, he proved he could sing, too, as he took on the lead role in the musical *Daens*, based on the 1971 book by Louis Paul Boon about the true-life Aalst priest who fought for workers' rights. After that, Van den Eynde played Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*. This past January, he was back all over TV screens, appearing in four programmes on three channels in the space of two weeks. The king has been very prominent in the news lately, with controversial incidents putting the royal family in the spotlight. The drama series, which begins shooting this month, is directed by Frank Van Mechelen (*Groenten uit Balen*), who promises "an honest portrait of the king and Belgian history".

News in brief

With a per capita GDP of €29,895, **Flanders is in fourth place** in a list of 15 EU regions compiled by Eurostat, minister-president Kris Peeters told the Flemish parliament last week. The figures reveal, he said, that the government's plans under its Flanders in Action programme – to be in the top five of European regions by 2020 – are on course.

► www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat

Brussels hosts its first **International Languages Day** this week, made up of conferences and workshops aimed at helping young people find an internship or language course in 40 cities worldwide. More than 90% of jobs in the Brussels-Capital Region demand knowledge of the two national languages, with one in three of those also requiring English, while only 22.7% of job-seekers can speak a second language.

► www.languageanddays.be

Increased fines for speeding and other traffic offences that were scheduled to come into force on 1 March will be delayed for at least a month because the new tariffs have not yet been input into the 30,000 police computers across the country, the federal police said. The new fines range from €55 for first-grade offences up to €165 for, for instance, running a red light or failing to use a seat-belt for a child.

Sports minister Philippe Muyters has issued a new information package to help sports clubs define a **policy on sexually inappropriate behaviour** towards – and among – youngsters. "Clubs would do well to determine a policy in advance, not to wait until they're faced with a problem," said Muyters. "Avoiding inappropriate behaviour is mainly in the interests of the children, but the reputation of clubs is also at risk. Society will not accept that children are faced with such situations, whatever form they

may take."

► www.sportmetgrenzen.be

The European Commission is investigating the legality of a new policy approved last week by Antwerp city council that would increase the **charge for registration of non-Belgian residents** moving to the city from €17 to €250. The city council argues that the charge reflects the higher cost of registering foreigners. However, according to EU rules from 2004, EU nationals should be registered for free or should not be charged more than Belgian nationals for the same service.

Els Beerten has won the **Flemish Culture Prize for Youth Literature**, handed over during a ceremony last weekend that kicked off the Jeugdboekenweek, or Youth Book Week. Beerten is best known for her 2008 book *Allemaal willen we de hemel* (We All Want the Sky), the story of four adolescents during the Second World War, which became an instant classic in Flanders and the Netherlands, winning three prizes.

► www.cultuurprijzen.be

Bancontact/Mister Cash, which handles debit card payments in Belgium, has announced a new **smartphone app that allows payments** to be made at retailers equipped with a device that creates a QR code for every transaction, which is then scanned by the customer's mobile phone. For sums up to €125, the app works for payments to individuals as well and will be available soon for both Android and iOS.

Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT) is inviting registrations for a free seminar on 27 March in Leuven on **internationalising the Flemish knowledge economy**. The event will feature reports from Flemish

technology clusters such as DSP Valley and FlandersBio, as well as a panel discussion with the CEOs of several technology companies.

► www.flanderstrade.be

Two women who were involved in a **fatal BDSM session** in which a British businessman died have been discharged without sentence by a court in Antwerp. The women, a dominatrix and her assistant, administered laughing gas to 58-year-old Robin Mortimer, a regular client, at his own request. The court found that the women were liable but declined to sentence, which Belgian law allows. One of the women, however, was sentenced to six months for being in possession of amyl nitrate "poppers" and a Taser-like device.

The federal nuclear safety agency FANC is reviewing **security at the Nuclear Energy Study Centre** in Mol after thieves managed to break into one of the research buildings on the site, apparently looking to steal IT equipment. The theft failed, but the thieves succeeded in entering the site, which houses nuclear material and top-secret documents. "If anyone can simply walk onto a nuclear site, that makes me seriously worried," commented Kristof Calvo, a member of the federal parliament for Groen.

► www.sckcen.be

ICT will no longer be taught as a separate subject in Flemish secondary technical and vocational schools of the Catholic network; it will be integrated into other subjects. At least one ICT teacher does not agree: Rudi Vandenbussche of the VTI in Izegem, West-Flanders said that "not all pupils are whizzkids. The only difference with the previous generations is that they do not need a course to start up a word processing program."

FLANDERS TODAY

Flanders Today, a free weekly English-language newspaper, is an initiative of the Flemish Region and is financially supported by the Flemish authorities.



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Branches everywhere

Different cities have different cultures and different traditions, and in the case of Antwerp and Brussels, a completely different idea of how to keep young people busy. Brusselbazaar.be is a new website by the youth service of the Flemish Community Commission in Brussels. Its aim is to bring all information of interest to Dutch-speaking youngsters together in one place. And what a range of information it is: language classes, student jobs, scholarships. That's all very useful, but it's not exactly fun. It also includes sections for parents and youth workers, which reinforces the impression that this has been made for young people but without their input. Case in point: It's web-based

but without a smartphone app. Young people are all about apps, only getting behind the computer for homework, according to recent reports. The latest initiative from Antwerp, on the other hand, is absolutely pitch-perfect. Last week the district council announced the inauguration of three new trees, in the Noordschippersdok, Multatuliplein and Vlaamsekaai-Waalsekaai. What's so clever about that? These are climbing trees, and I don't care how cool or hip you think you are, nobody can resist climbing trees. The variety they chose is *Juglans regia*, or the common walnut. As you can see from our image, it's perfectly suited to the task, capable of giving hours of pleasure



© Thesupermat/Wikimedia Commons

to children of all ages. This is an initiative that needs to be adopted everywhere, immediately – and when was the last time anyone said that about Antwerp council?

Prosecutor-general reviews Jonathan Jacob case

Antwerp prosecutor Herman Dams steps down, then retracts admission

Anja Otte

Antwerp prosecutor Herman Dams stepped down last week after admitting to intervening in the case of Jonathan Jacob, the psychiatric patient who died at the hands of a special police unit in a local jail cell three years ago. The case has been widely reported in recent weeks after footage of the man's last moments was shown on the TV news programme *Panorama*. (See *Flanders Today* last week). Recent reports revealed that some documents in the case were possibly

tampered with in order to conceal the role of the prosecutor's office. Dams was under intense pressure from his superior, prosecutor-general Yves Liégeois, who announced at a press conference that Ingrid Pira, former mayor of Mortsel, had reviewed her own notes, which mentioned a contact with the prosecutor on the fatal night in question. However, in a remarkable turn of events, last weekend Dams stated that he had confused two incidents and most likely did not intervene



Herman Dams confused two cases and should not have stepped down, he says

on the that night in 2010 after all. An assistant prosecutor is believed to have given the order to "knock out" Jacob with a sedative. Dams retracted his earlier admission. The case will now be reviewed by Liégeois, under the supervision of the Cassation Court. The substitute magistrate now believed to have been involved was promoted last week, a decision that was made much earlier and independent of the Jacobs case.

First week of De Gelder trial comes to a close

The first week of the trial of Kim De Gelder came to a close with no definitive answers as to the question of whether he was fully accountable when he committed multiple murders in 2009. De Gelder confessed to the stabbing deaths of an elderly woman and of two babies and a caregiver at the Fabeltjesland crèche in Dendermonde, and the trial will decide whether he was of sound mind at the time, in which case he will go to prison. If he was not of sound mind, he will most likely be sentenced to a psychiatric facility.

Many onlookers were puzzled by De Gelder's bizarre behaviour during the trial, which seemed even to surprise his lawyer. Asked why he was wearing certain clothes when he committed the crimes, the young man said: "To cover my nakedness," an answer typical of his erratic behaviour throughout the investigation and trial.

De Gelder, 24, had announced in court that he would reveal his motives for the killings, but he did not, leading to a public quarrel with his lawyer. Earlier, De Gelder had also argued with the court judge, later apologising.

Most of last week was dedicated to events surrounding the murder of Elza Van Raemdonck, an elderly woman alone at her home in Vrasene. De Gelder, who revealed



Kim De Gelder, who retracted his earlier ban on photographs, during his trial in Ghent

little about the murder, did say that Van Raemdonck fought back. Later, investigators and ambulance staff testified about the scene at Fabeltjesland after the attack. De Gelder denied that his acts or appearance were influenced by the character The Joker in Batman films. The petrol he kept under his sink, believed to be used to make fire bombs, he said was there "in case someone's car broke down".

Antwerp's diamond wars continue

Last week saw a new episode in Antwerp's so-called "diamond wars": a dispute on the way fiscal fraud should be tackled. Prosecutor-general Yves Liégeois favours a settlement, while one of his assistants, Peter Van Calster, wants the fraudsters tried in court. Liégeois has opened an investigation into assistant prosecutor Van Calster, a protégé of prosecutor Herman Dams.

Over the years, this conflict has seen magistrates accusing each other of forgery and slander. In the end, none of the accusations went as far as the courts, with the exception of one against *De Morgen* editor Yves Desmet by Liégeois' wife, who claimed that she and her family were damaged by his editorial on the matter.

Bourgeois again refuses to appoint mayors

Geert Bourgeois (N-VA), Flemish minister for internal affairs and *de rand*, or the periphery of municipalities around Brussels, repeated his refusal to appoint the candidate mayors of Kraainem, Wezembeek-Oppem and Linkebeek. This is the second time that the mayors have refused to abide by the language laws during a communal election. The law states that the official language of their municipalities is Dutch (with "facilities" granted to French-speaking residents). Bourgeois also suspended two deputy mayors. The move follows negative advice by the governor of Flemish Brabant, to whom the three candidate mayors had confirmed their non-adherence

to the language laws. During the communal elections last October, they sent out French-language voting instructions, a breach of the law. Another French-speaking mayor, Pierre Rolin of Sint-Genesius-Rode, has proclaimed his intention to stick to the law. He received a positive advice and was appointed mayor accordingly.

The three candidate mayors will contest the decision at the Council of State. They hope that a new bilingual chamber, which was installed as compensation for the split of the constituency BHV, will agree with them. They also plan to take the case to the Council of Europe and the UN Human Rights Court.

FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

When duty calls

The ACW, the Christian Workers Movement closely linked to the Christian-democrat CD&V, has not yet steered out of rocky waters after it was revealed last week that it had obtained an exceptionally high interest rate on a loan to Belfius, a bank owned by the state. ACW's troubles reflect badly on vice-prime minister Steven Vanackere. As finance minister, he is responsible for Belfius. At the same time, he is close to the troubled ACW. No wonder there was some doubt about the role of Vanackere, although he vehemently denies having any knowledge of the ACW-Belfius deal.

This is not the first time Vanackere has suffered from public perceptions. Some months ago, the Wetstraat – the Belgian political milieu – was buzzing with rumours of him being "tired of politics". "I am not tired of politics, just tired," he stated in response, though his weariness rang through in later interviews. In those, he recalled how Yves Leterme, Inge Vervotte and he started out as ministers at about the same time – with Vanackere being the only one remaining. He added that "personal happiness" was not something he associated with a career in politics.

As a young man, Vanackere decided he would never enter politics, as he "lost his father to it". Leo Vanackere had only just left parliament to become governor of West Flanders when he suffered a fatal heart attack. His son calls himself "a politician by coincidence". He was called to politics by Herman Van Rompuy, who later called him to the federal government when he was prime minister. Vanackere enjoyed being foreign affairs minister, but under Di Rupo he became minister of finance – a troubled department.

His role in the federal government is not easy. As the number one Christian-democrat in the federal government, he is not prime minister – a situation his party has to adjust to. Moreover, he is not CD&V's number one either, that role being attributed to Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters. Vanackere is not expected to run in the federal elections next year, preferring an "exit" to the European Parliament.

Vanackere's half-heartedness has earned him the nickname "ultimate *tsjeef*" – *tsjeef* being a derogatory term for a Christian-democrat, with a ring of hypocrisy to it. He himself does not mind the word "*tsjeef*" though – "as long as it stands for a sense of duty, taking up responsibility and a willingness to reach a compromise".

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

11,000 tonnes

total amount of plastic and metal waste collected last year in Brussels, a significant decrease on the 16,000 tonnes in 2010

€289 million

hole in the Flemish government's 2014 budget if KBC fails to pay out a dividend to shareholders, budget minister Philippe Muyters told parliament

3,634,000

active internet connections in Belgium in the last quarter of 2012, according to the Internet Service Providers Association, including 2.95 million connections in homes

7.6%

of retail spaces in Flanders were empty in December last year, planning minister Philippe Muyters told the Flemish parliament, ranging from 4.4% in Bruges to 14.1% in Turnhout

€346.99

average water bill paid by households in Flanders last year, an increase of 3% over 2011. The average family uses 88 cubic metres of water in a year, or 101 litres per person a day

The powers that be

Making your own choices and refusing to conform to others' expectations top advice from Flanders' most successful women

▶ continued from page 1

one's point of view as the context evolves? It is because I am not afraid to question my convictions that I am also not afraid to be assertive."

The mother of four, Van Hecke, 65, believes the role of parents and educators is to teach children to make conscious choices. "That is how my parents raised me, and it is exactly what I tell my children: Be yourself, be critical, take responsibility and make choices."

"Choices" is a word Van Hecke uses repeatedly throughout the interview. Reflecting on her own life, she comes back to it again. "My feminism is that I make my own choices – in consultation with my husband."

Her advice to young women is unequivocal: Make your own choices. "Don't let anyone foist anything on you. I chose to stay home for 10 years to raise our children. That was my choice. But equally, if a woman wants to combine a career and family, that is her right, too. What matters is that it is the right choice for that person at that point in time."

She says the best advice she ever received was: If an opportunity presents itself, jump! And don't let the idea of possible failure stop you.



It was the unhappy task of Mieke Van Hecke to talk to the press after the bus crash in Switzerland that killed 22 Flemish schoolchildren

Professor Marleen Temmerman *Director, department of reproductive health and research, World Health Organisation (WHO)*

Gynaecologist, professor, former senator (sp.a) and fervent humanitarian: Few Flemish women have fought as long, hard and publicly for women's and children's rights as Marleen Temmerman – or Mama Daktari as she's known in Kenya – where she worked as a gynaecologist for many years.

Her husband lovingly refers to her as "my Duracell bunny" because of her tireless commitment to women's rights – a cause the 59-year-old defends from the bustling streets of Washington and Geneva to the field clinics on the dusty plains around Mombasa, Kenya.

Temmerman was the head of Gynaecology-Midwifery at Ghent's University Hospital before being appointed director of the department of reproductive health and research at WHO. On leaving the Belgian senate, she was awarded a departure fee of €84,382, which she donated to the International Centre for Reproductive Health, a non-profit she founded in 1994. The organisation today employs more than 300 people in Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Ethiopia, China and Latin America and runs a halfway house for victims of sexual violence in Mombasa.

"I can't turn a blind eye to social injustice. For as long as I can remember, I've wanted to do something about it"

"Throughout my career, my goal has always been to improve the reproductive and sexual health and rights of women and girls across the world," she tells me. "I come from a family that is socially engaged. My mother and father have always been very active in their local community. I can't turn a blind eye to social injustice. For as long as I can remember, I've wanted to do something about it – especially injustice toward women and girls."

Most worrying to Temmerman is the rate at which African women die during childbirth. "Every minute a girl or woman dies due to complications related to pregnancy or childbirth. That's two full Boeings per day."

Many women, I suggest, are afraid to label themselves as feminist. "In my view, equal rights for men and women is such a fundamental issue that I don't understand how you can *not* be a feminist," she responds. "Equal rights have nothing to do with the negative perceptions of 'butch women'."

Annemie Turtelboom *Federal minister of justice (Open Vld)*

Annemie Turtelboom, 46, studied economy and marketing, and prior to her appointment as federal minister of justice, she held the positions of, among others, minister of internal affairs and minister for migration. "I'm a salmon, a fish that swims upstream and defies waterfalls," she said in 2011. "I forge my own path and grab all opportunities that come along."

Asked by the women's magazine *Libelle* whether she was the fervent feminist many say she is, Turtelboom answered: "Yes, absolutely. As I grew older and had my own kids, I became even more feminist! I realised that even if you have a supportive husband ... as a woman you still have to justify why you are seldom or never at the school gate to pick up the kids, or why you don't do this or that with the children."



Sophie Dutordoir *CEO, Electrabel*

Sophie Dutordoir looks back on a career of more than 20 years in the energy sector, starting out as head of communication at Ebes, the predecessor of Electrabel, in 1989. Twenty-three years on, she was the woman who went into full combat with vice-premier Johan Vande Lanotte and state secretary Melchior Wathelet when she deftly bypassed their price freeze on gas late last year. "I am not motivated by power or by its attributes, but by the pleasure I take in solving problems, seeing results and achieving things together," the 50-year-old told *Psychologies* magazine recently. "I'm not authoritarian, but I also don't like mediocrity."



Dr Christine Van Broeckhoven *Molecular biologist, director molecular genetics at the Flemish Institute of Biotechnology (VIB)*

With more than 450 publications, several international awards and 30 years' experience in molecular genetics, Christine Van Broeckhoven (PhD, DSc) is one of the world's leading authorities on neurodegenerative illnesses and related disorders such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and early-onset dementia.

Asked in a recent interview whether she was afraid of mental degeneration herself, the 60-year-old replied: "It never crossed my mind when I was younger, but as I am getting older, I do spend more time thinking about it, especially considering that my brain is an enabler for my work, which I would like to continue to do for a while yet. It is also why I give people the advice: 'Live today, not later!'"



Isabel Albers *Editor-in-chief, De Tijd*

In 2011, Isabel Albers became the first female editor-in-chief of a Flemish daily newspaper. The 41-year-old was previously political editor at *De Standaard*, where she was widely recognised for the quality of her journalism. In 2009, Albers was awarded the Dexia press award in both the economic and general journalism categories.

Upon her appointment at *De Tijd*, Albers was immediately given the opportunity to raise the stakes: She was asked to rejuvenate a daily that had come to be seen as, if certainly quality, a dull economic newspaper. Within a year of her appointment, she had changed the format, tweaked the content policy and implemented a strong "cross-media" strategy. In 2012, *De Tijd* won the Newspaper of the Year award from the German-based editorial-design.com.





Marleen Temmerman surrounded by staff and children at one of the clinics of her non-profit, the International Centre for Reproductive Health, which assists women and children in Africa, China and Latin America

Sandra De Preter *CEO of Flemish public broadcaster VRT*

With a career of more than 25 years spanning functions at British American Tobacco, Delacre, Barry Callebaut and Sanoma Magazines, Sandra De Preter was a seasoned navigator of the corporate jungle when, in 2010, she was named head of VRT, becoming the Flemish public broadcaster's first female CEO.

De Preter, 52, was put through her paces straight away when she was tasked with developing a new management agreement and saving the organisation €65 million by the end of 2011. "Of course it wasn't easy," she told a newspaper at the time, "but at least we've cracked the hardest part right away."

"All too often both men and women are confined by clichéd expectations stamped on them by their environments"

It is a solid determination to forge ahead that typifies De Preter, who admits she works best when faced with problems. "I like being challenged; I don't have the same energy for things that become too easy," she shrugs.

It is an energy she puts to good use, while admitting that life isn't exactly nine-to-five and that it

isn't always easy being both mother to two teenagers and CEO of a 2,000-strong organisation. "Of course you always have to work hard to achieve your goals, but I do think that often men can take this dedication further than many women simply because they have a partner at home who chose to work less. For many women, it remains a juggling act."

De Preter believes that quotas for women on boards are a "necessary evil". "I strongly support the premise behind feminism – that men and women are equal and entitled to the same fundamental rights," she states. "And if introducing a quota system is what it takes to get more women into 'all-boys clubs' to make organisations more diverse, then so be it."

De Preter is a strong believer in the value that diversity provides within businesses and organisations in general, and the media in particular. "We offer our audience a mirror on the world," she says. "If we only employ journalists with a certain socio-economic and cultural background, we will produce one-dimensional views of the world. Diversity in its broadest form – beyond gender – is vitally important in the media. It's in the best interests of the viewer but also of the success of the organisation."

Asked what she considers the most important lesson of her career, De Preter is quick to answer: "Be true to yourself, always, even in difficult times. Know which personal values are non-negotiable and stick to those, even in the face of adversity."

And what advice would she offer girls today? "Go after your dreams – even if they don't conform to what people expect of you. All too often both men and women are confined by clichéd expectations stamped on them by their environments. We should teach our children to break free of those restrictions and to be and do what makes them truly happy."



Sandra de Preter presents VRT's annual report to the Flemish parliament last year

Michele Sioen *CEO, Sioen Industries and independent director at Belgacom, ING Belgium and D'Ieteren*

Michele Sioen was appointed CEO of the Sioen family's textile business in 2005, shortly before her 40th birthday. The mother of three, she was one of two women nominated as Trends Manager of the Year in 2012. Yet she is against quotas for more women at the top. "While I support pushing women to achieve, I am against forced appointments of women to top positions," she told *Trends* magazine recently. She admitted, though, that "there are simply too few women with adequate experience at the top."

Sioen, 48, considers the most important lesson of her career to be: Where there is a will, there is a way. "Whether you are male or female, to achieve your goals takes commitment and perseverance. Of course I don't deny that it's extra hard for women with young children who also want to build their career; but it is not impossible."

She thinks that doing what you love is vital in achieving success. "People do things well that they love doing. Passion and conviction are therefore fundamental to achieving your personal goals."

Claire Tillekaerts *CEO, Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT)*

Born and raised in Ghent, where she later studied law and headed her own practice, 55-year-old Claire Tillekaerts was last year appointed CEO of Flanders Investment and Trade (FIT), which represents Flanders to the world's investors. In 2011, FIT brought in 174 investments to the region, leading to the creation of more than 3,700 jobs.

Tillekaerts says she sees no problem with a woman representing Flanders on the international business stage. "Of course, as a woman, I wear a headscarf when I visit a mosque abroad, but I won't do so when I receive a Saudi delegation here in Brussels," she told *De Standaard*.

"Ignore gender issues," is the number one advice she would give to young women. "Do not imitate men's behaviour. Just be yourself and do your utmost best."

Ingrid Lieten *Flemish minister for innovation, government investment, media and poverty*

In 2009, former De Lijn director-general Ingrid Lieten (sp.a) was appointed vice-minister-president in the Flemish government under Kris Peeters, in which she was given the mandate for innovation, government investment, media and poverty. Lieten, 50, looks back on an illustrious career as a lawyer and later corporate leader, which culminated in being voted the most powerful woman in Flanders by *Trends* magazine in 2009.

Lieten is a strong proponent of helping women forge successful career paths to the top of their chosen fields. "Flanders is wasting a significant part of the talent of highly educated women: Only one in five professors is a woman," she told *Het Nieuwsblad* in 2011, promptly announcing that she would commit €3 million to helping female academics advance in their careers.

As part of her media mandate, Lieten's directive is clear: By the end of next year, she wants greater diversity in terms of gender and cultural background among the workforce at the VRT.



THE WEEK
IN BUSINESS

Banking ▶ Degroof

The Brussels-based private and investment bank is merging its Geneva-based operations into Switzerland's oldest bank, Landolt & Co, with offices in Lausanne and Geneva.

Chemicals
▶ Tessenderlo

The Brussels-based food additives, agriculture and water management products company is selling its €120 million elastomer activities to Japan's Mitsubishi Chemical Corporation. Tessenderlo has plants in France, Poland and China and a research and development facility in Flanders.

Dairy ▶ Ijsboerke

The takeover agreement of ice cream maker Ijsboerke, based in Tielen, Antwerp province, by Glacio, headquartered in nearby Beerse, has finally been signed, with the unions accepting a drastic 38% cut in the workforce of 335 employees.

Distribution
▶ Hyundai

The Korean-owned Hyundai Heavy Industries is expanding its facility in Geel with a new €22 million distribution centre in nearby Tessenderlo, to open at the end of 2014.

Food ▶ Ter Beke

Frozen food and luncheon meat company Ter Beke, based in Waarschoot, East Flanders, has temporarily shut down production at two of its factories due to the on-going horse meat scandal. Although no horse meat has been found in its products, the fall in sales of products in general has brought demand to a halt.

Plastics
▶ JBF Industries

India's polyester chips and films producer has finalised its agreement to build a €160 million production and distribution unit in Geel, its first in Europe. The new facility is expected to employ 150 workers.

Steel ▶ Bekaert

The world's largest producer of steel cord for tyres announced a €195 million loss in 2012. In 2001, the company, based in Zwevegem, West Flanders, had about that same number in profits. Last year's loss was due, said the company, to a one-time cost for restructuring and to the collapse of the saw wire business worldwide.

Textiles ▶ Picanol

The Ypres-based weaving equipment producer is investing €12 million to increase capacity and build a new test centre.

Peeters holds talks with
Catalan president

Regions needs more recognition at the European level, says minister-president

Alan Hope

The EU needs to do more to recognise the competences of regional governments and their specific identities, according to Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, speaking in Barcelona last week. Peeters was visiting the Mobile World Congress (MWC) and also held talks with his Catalan counterpart Artur Mas.

"I am convinced that the European Union of the future is increasingly a European Union with and of the regions. And I am happy that President Mas and the Government of Catalonia share this vision," Peeters told a meeting of APEC, the association of European journalists in Catalonia. "But it is not enough that the strong regions of Europe share this vision. It also has to become a basic principle of the EU itself. The Lisbon Treaty already clearly states that the EU respects the national identity of the member states,



Flanders' minister-president Kris Peeters (right) discussed more recognition for regions with Catalan president Artur Mas

including regional self-government. However, far too often, the regions are overlooked at the European level. This is an issue we must address." In a speech at the MWC, the world's largest fair for the mobile phone

industry, Peeters stressed Flanders' open economy, which depends on links with the rest of the world. "It is key that we embrace the evolutions in the mobile technology sector and use them to our advantage," he said.

"And that is exactly what Flemish companies do. They are at the top in their respective fields. They innovate. They find new applications that improve the lives of our citizens and give companies even more assets to excel across borders."

After his meeting with President Mas, Peeters announced that the two regions are planning a joint economic mission, probably early next year. The exact destination is not yet decided, but it will be a country outside of Europe "where both Flanders and Catalonia are already present and where they can represent something together."

This year, meanwhile, the two regions – described by Peeters as being "the economic engines of their countries" – will organise a joint congress on the logistics industry.

Peeters will also go on a trade mission to South Africa in July, together with Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte.

Common Fisheries Policy reform agreed

The EU Council of ministers last week agreed a reform to the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), which will ban fishing crews from throwing a catch back into the sea once netted. The change is intended to protect dwindling fish stocks in the oceans by forcing boats to equip themselves with better and more suitable nets. Fishermen see by-catches as an unavoidable part of sea fishing: trawler nets inevitably catch species other than the targets. Until now, the catch could be sorted and unwanted

fish returned to the water; some estimates say 1.5kg to 2.5kg of fish are thrown back for every kilogram landed.

However, conservationists argue that many fish are killed or injured in the process. The fishing industry in Flanders supports maintaining fish populations by other methods, such as special nets that allow unwanted catch to pass through and modern techniques to better locate fish shoals. Under the new regulation, unwanted fish will count towards the tonnage

boats are allowed to bring to land, which the industry claims will add another economic burden to an industry already suffering hardship. Ministers admitted that 100% selective fishing is an unattainable goal, so the measure contains some flexibility: Unwanted fish brought to land can be offset against quotas for other species, and 10% of any unwanted quota can be carried over to the following year.

In Flanders, for example, the fishing industry has a quota for species

other than the sole and plaice being targeted. That can now be used to cover some of the losses caused by by-catch.

Minister-president Kris Peeters, whose portfolio also includes agriculture, said he recognised that the new landing requirement presented the industry with "an exceptionally difficult challenge". However, the new policy was, he said, a realistic way to achieve the desired goal without losing sight of the principle of conservation.

Belfius CEO says deals with ACW good for
Belgian state

Federal finance minister Steven Vanackere, who is connected to the Christian workers' movement ACW, declared in the parliament that he was unaware of commercial deals between the union and Belfius bank. Belfius was formerly Dexia Belgium until the bank was broken up and nationalised in 2011.

During a hearing in the Chamber, Belfius CEO Jos Clijsters emphasised that the deals with the ACW are legal and were advantageous for

Belfius – and thus for the Belgian state. He pointed to a profit of €60 million for tax payers. The CEO said that the ACW only received a common bonus for commercial loyalty to the bank.

The ACW has been in the eye of a political storm since it became known that the organisation set up financial constructions that allowed them to evade taxes. The workers' movement earlier called similar strategies of enterprises unethical.

Agreement reached on work reforms

The federal government agreed with unions and employers federations on increasing benefits, pensions and the minimum wage. Employers' social security payments are reduced and certain existing measures are renewed, such as the early retirement age for several professions considered particularly risky or difficult.

The negotiations on a single statute for labourers and professionals will continue in a new working group. Managing director of the Belgian

employers' organisation VBO, Pieter Timmermans, felt this working group constituted "the most important decision". The leaders of the unions are moderately satisfied but are still against the wage restraint that the government wants to implement.

The unions of the health and welfare sector, meanwhile, are critical because no money is set aside to reduce social security costs in the non-profit sector until 2015.

Rise in profits for AB InBev

Leuven-based AB InBev, the world's largest brewer, made a net profit of €5.56 billion in 2012, an increase of 13% compared to the previous year. The main progress was made in the United States, Brazil and China. AB InBev also introduced successful new products, such as Bud Light Platinum.

The company is facing a lawsuit, however, filed by two consumers who claim that the brewer is watering

down its beers. Thomas and Gerald Greenberg from Philadelphia say that AB InBev adds water to produce beers with significantly less alcohol content than displayed on its labels. Similar complaints were filed in New Jersey and San Francisco. Eleven beer brands are targeted, on the basis of information from former employees of breweries in the US. AB InBev denies the charges, calling them "completely groundless opportunism".

McDonald's, AE voted best workplaces

McDonald's is Belgium's best workplace in terms of large companies, according to a survey carried out among employees by the Great Place to Work Institute in co-operation with Vlerick Management School. The result knocks Schoenen Torfs, last year's winner and a multiple winner of best-employer awards, into second place, ahead of employment agency Accent Jobs for People.

McDonald's employees said their workplace had a convivial atmosphere, with activities organised for staff and regular appreciation given for their efforts.

The award for best workplace for a

company with 500 or fewer employees went to AE, a Leuven-based consultancy that helps companies streamline their IT activities. Last year's winner, the Tervuren-based business analytics and software company SAS Institute, made second place, with Thuiszorg Vleminckveld, an Antwerp organisation that provides care at home to the sick and elderly, coming third.

AE staff cited training and development opportunities as the main reason for their satisfaction with their employer. The company pays attention to personal growth as well as professional development, employees said.

One man's trash

International students join forces to find a creative solution to waste

Catherine Kusters

MBA students at Vlerick Business School are developing an innovative way for companies to minimise their waste and promote best practices. As part of an entrepreneurship project, former lobbyist Andrew Swan and his classmates have teamed up with industrial designer Judith Lievens to help manufacturers transform discarded material into corporate gifts that demonstrate social responsibility.

British NGO lobbyist Swan, Indian business analyst Glen Fernandes, Brazilian corporate financial consultant Daniel Michels and Columbian process manager Daniel Angel enrolled in Vlerick's Master of Business Administration course last September. The programme's entrepreneurship course requires students to develop a business plan, thus putting into practice the management lessons learned throughout the course.

Via the school's Bridee platform, which brings together business and design students, the four met Lievens, a part-time student at Hogeschool West-Vlaanderen (Howest) and part-time industrial engineer. And she had a bright idea.

The smell of potential

Several years ago, Lievens started making laser-cut jewellery from discarded cedar wood as a school assignment. In 2009, a company



Judith Lievens models her laser-cut earrings made from discarded cedar wood

called Outdoor Wood Concepts, based in Avelgem, West Flanders, "challenged my class to do something with its leftover planks," she explains. "The pieces were of good quality, and cedar is a great material to work with. I got the idea to create perfumed earrings and bracelets, playing on the wood's ability to retain fragrances." The jewellery was a success, and Lievens was able to sell the designs well beyond her circle of friends. When given the chance recently to pitch her idea to MBA students through the Bridee initiative,

Lievens caught the attention of Swan and his classmates. Their research showed that continuing and enlarging the scale of Lievens' work might well prove a novel approach to waste management and a viable way to monetise corporate social responsibility. Several months into the project, it has taken on a whole new form. Moving beyond jewellery, the group is establishing a pilot around business gifts and promotional products. "There seems to be a large number of companies producing similar waste, such as

leather manufacturers and other wood producers," says Swan. "So we have been working on prototypes that can be used to help these companies support their policies towards sustainable development or good corporate responsibility. Things they could leave at a client's, take to trade fairs and so on."

From trash to treasure

To show the possibilities, Lievens is putting together a design stock book. "I am thinking of coasters, stamps, business cards," she says. "But I would also love to design wooden logos or lettering and objects in materials such as leather or Plexiglas." Swan and his colleagues will then be able to contact companies with these standard designs as well as offer tailor-made solutions.

"We could act as consultants and look at what kind of waste is being produced, how it can be reused and even given more value," he continues. "The ideal would be to co-create something that really embodies the corporate message and sets the company apart from competitors."

If the concept develops as the team hopes, it would allow guest designers to contribute as well, giving businesses the chance to promote local talent.

The students are in discussion with Outdoor Wood Concepts to supply the materials. "We are

also investigating if there is scope for up-scaling the production by outsourcing it to a sheltered workplace," adds Swan. "We know the concept is rather new, however, so we have to build some kind of awareness among the business community that the service is out there first."

The future is green

The five students hope to do so via the Bridee platform and by setting a precedent with the current pilot. "Then, if Judith is comfortable with it and there are MBA students working here, it becomes very easy for them to pick up once the course is over."

Though the project works from an environmental angle, the students are as pragmatic as they are idealistic. Swan does not see the concept as a waste management solution per se, but as a way for companies "to lift sustainable values from words on a website and make them tangible".

In any case, these school-going professionals have a clear vision of where the business world should be heading. "Vlerick is quite strong in its corporate social responsibility programme, and we see why this is important every day," Swan concludes. "From the BP oil crisis all the way through to the horsemeat scandal, there is no escaping these issues."

► www.bridee.org

Pedalling for power

WeWatt cycle desks provide offices and public spaces with a new source of energy

Andy Furniere

The company WeWatt is bringing the spinning bikes of the gym to offices and to airports, where they allow you to charge your own batteries while charging those of your phone or laptop. In the near future, these We-Bikes could increase the activity levels of schoolchildren and elderly people in rest homes.

After stimulating creative entrepreneurship as the Flemish minister for economy and innovation until 2009, Patricia Ceysens decided to walk her own talk. The Flemish MP founded the company WeWatt, which now produces the We-Bike – a desk that doubles as a stationary bike. Pedalling generates electricity to charge mobile devices or a wi-fi connection.

Just like many other professionals, politicians spend much of their working hours sitting at a desk, a conference table or in the car.



Load your mobile phone or tablet with cycle power at the airport or a shopping centre

"Because not everyone has the motivation or time to exercise in their free time, we integrate the exercise into working life," explains Ceysens.

Studies show that 30 minutes of gentle cycling a day helps improve cardiovascular health. It has also been shown to improve your

mental sharpness – your reading speed, for instance. This is making the We-Bikes popular additions to meeting rooms.

Digital nomads

Several We-Bikes were installed recently at Brussels Airport and at Schiphol in the Netherlands.

Montparnasse railway station in Paris has also installed them for travellers. "Many entrepreneurs these days are 'digital nomads', who are happy that they can get in a little recreation and quickly charge their principal tools of work between destinations," says Ceysens. "But other passengers also need their smartphones charged. In the future, our wallets and passport will probably become digital as well."

You can comfortably generate 230 volts of electricity, which fully loads most mobile phones in about half an hour. That makes the pedalling as efficient as plugging the devices into an electrical socket.

The We-Bikes have also become part of the furniture in a number of Flemish businesses, libraries, congress centres, hotel lobbies, shopping centres and restaurants. The International Congress Centre in Ghent sports some, as does the Provincial Library Limburg in

Hasselt. There is also interest from abroad: one Swedish hotel has already installed We-Bikes.

The WeWatt team hopes to soon introduce the cycle desks to schools, where they could help students to let off steam but also increase their concentration. "For me as a child, it was easier to memorise multiplication tables while walking around," remembers Ceysens. "Most children, and definitely those with ADD, have trouble with sitting still for too long."

Another plan is to install them in rest homes for the elderly and in hospitals for patients or visitors. Private homes could follow, but a price tag of more than €3,000 each makes it not a consumer product quite yet. Every We-Bike is hand made at a sheltered workshop in Flanders, with eco-friendly materials.

► www.wewatt.be



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Why didn't I think of that?

Brilliantly useful and innovative products for health care on show during Zorgidee

Alan Hope

Computer games as a therapeutic tool for children with ADHD and a cane for the blind and visually impaired that can help them navigate. These are just two of the ideas that were on display during the recent Zorgidee at the University of Hasselt.

"Zorgidee aims to give full support to dynamic movements in health-care innovation," said Dr Piet Stinissen of UHasselt's medical faculty. Stinissen is also the chairman of LifeTechLimburg, which organised the event. The best way to support such innovation, he said, "is to showcase best practices, to discuss trends and developments in the field and to offer a framework for future policies."

Flemish welfare minister Jo Vandeurzen handed out a prize to one of the many entrants in a competition designed to showcase the best in innovative developments in the health-care sector.

"The Zorgidee award demonstrates just how much new is going on in the world of innovation in health care," Vandeurzen said. The competition – the name means "care idea" – is part of Flanders Care, one of the areas of the government's Flanders in Action programme.

"The Flemish government is aware of the challenges facing health care," said Vandeurzen, "and has invested via Flanders Care in innovation and entrepreneurship in this field in order to improve the availability of top-quality care."

Patient, diagnose thyself

The winner of the competition was MyDiagnostick, produced by the Dutch company Applied Biomedical Systems of Maastricht. Described by the jury as "a remarkable example of a low-barrier form of care," MyDiagnostick is a baton-shaped device about 30 centimetres long,



No need to worry, the I-Cane will warn the user of any oncoming obstacles

with electrodes at each end. The patient holds it with both hands for one minute while it measures heart rhythms and displays a result.

The device is looking for signs of atrial fibrillation, a particular form of cardiac arrhythmia that can go undiagnosed and lead to an increased chance of stroke. The unit is entirely self-contained and needs no power or communications connection. It also records up to 100 cardiograms, which the doctor can download for future reference. Although MyDiagnostick was the winner, it faced tough competition at the event from many new products, many seemingly simple but which have nonetheless never been developed before.

I-Cane is cane for the blind that can be fitted with various electronic modules that allow the user to

navigate a pre-planned route or detect obstacles in the environment. It also contains a communications module with which the user can make immediate contact with a family member or the help desk.

I-TRAVLE, or Individualised Technology and Robot Assisted Virtual Learning Environment, is for patients with multiple sclerosis or other disorders. Developed by the digital media centre at the University of Hasselt, I-TRAVELE reduces the energy patients must expend to move their limbs. The user navigates a virtual arm through a video environment, and the robot arm feeds back power to the user's own arm, as a means of rehabilitation exercise.

Care4Safety is a personalised alarm communication system

that responds to any number of parameters set for each patient, depending on their condition. The system allows information to be transmitted to a caregiver, permitting a rapid response in emergency situations such as falls, seizures or dizzy spells. The goal of Care4Safety is to allow older people to live independently, while still being continually monitored.

Healseeker is a computer game developed by Janssen Pharmaceutica and the non-profit Centrum Zit Stil. It targets children between the ages of eight and 12 with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Children use the game to learn skills such as organisation, time management and social interaction, with the aim of creating a better self-image and improving concentration.

THE WEEK IN SCI & ED

The prominent British magazine *New Scientist* will soon have a **Dutch-language version**. The new monthly will cover international scientific and technological news but with a focus on Belgium and the Netherlands. Dutch publisher Veen Media will publish the first issue in June.

The Department of Movement and Sport Sciences at Ghent University has developed **I-TRAVLE, the first robotic exoskeleton**, which reduces the energy output of the person using it. PhD researcher Philippe Malcolm feels the innovation could support the disabled, the rehabilitation of patients and increase the endurance of able-bodied people. (See article left for more information.)

Nursing and midwifery students at the West Flanders University College (Katho) in Kortrijk will begin working with four **high-tech dolls that simulate physiological reactions** of the human body. Each doll costs around €45,000, and the purpose is to improve communication and co-operation between caregivers by teaching them how to react as a team in different scenarios.

About 4,000 students from Flemish primary and secondary schools participated in the Vakmansroute, or Vocational Route, which **promotes technical professions**. The students could visit a selection of the 179 enterprises that opened their doors, from bakeries to high-tech enterprises. The Vakmansroute is an initiative of Unizo, the organisation that represents the self-employed in Flanders. On 19 March, the general public is invited to a similar event called The Night of History.

► www.davidsfonds.be

Young people from Limburg and West Flanders are **less likely to attend university** than those from the other Flemish provinces, according to a report by research bureau McKinsey. There are 39% too few youngsters in each province registered in university studies not offered by a school in the province. According to the rector of the University of Hasselt, this proves that universities in these provinces need to offer more study opportunities.

The Flemish government's public investment agency Gimv has announced a €200 million fund to be invested in innovative **applications in the health and care sectors**. The agency and the Flemish government have also set themselves the goal of collecting another €100 million in investments from outside sources in order to adequately address the challenges posed by an aging population.

► www.gimv.com

Q&A

Ada Sekirin is vice-president representing the Benelux, Germany and Eastern Europe of the Brussels consultancy Business & Decision. Born in Russia, she emigrated to Belgium in 1978 and has been named ICT Woman of the Year by the local Data News magazine

There's currently much concern about the lack of women in IT and other technical industries, yet you're not in favour of quotas. Why not?

My view is that today in computer science and IT in general, the role of pure technicians – someone who sits behind a screen coding the whole day – is diminishing. The role of someone who is able to communicate with others, who is open to listening and to understanding, who is able to reconcile different opinions, is, on the other hand, increasing. What I see in my professional life is that women who want to enter IT, who are not afraid of technical subjects even if they are not technicians

themselves – they are building very nice careers.

Then how would you suggest solving the problem of under-representation?

The problem is that women are not really willing to enter the field, and then if they do, they are not very ambitious – certainly not in Belgium. They're more likely to reduce their hours to part-time to pay more attention to the family. And that's their right, of course. It's a choice, and why should we push everybody to be super ambitious? I see no barrier whatsoever to women who are really willing to climb the ladder.



You have four daughters. What advice would you give them on

dealing with a male-dominated sector?

They've all done what you might call hard-core studies – civil engineering, commercial science, medicine and psychology. The most important thing is to raise them to believe in themselves and their capacity to learn – the belief that they can do anything. And I think the example of a mother who is working and building a career is very important as well, to show girls they don't have less ability, even technical abilities. The other thing is the importance of effort, the ability to sit down and get to work; that's very important for women and for men alike. **interview by AH**

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Complementary colours

Painter Luc Dondeyne celebrates his 50th with not one, but two exhibitions

Christophe Verbiest

Flemish painter Luc Dondeyne, who turns 50 later this year, sums up his recent career with *Distances*, a book illustrating all his works since 2002, and two exhibitions. Bedrijvencentrum Concentra in Antwerp hosts a selection of those paintings, while the exhibition *Elsewhere* in Mechelen's Galerie Transit is a collection of brand new works.

Bedrijvencentrum Concentra is a business complex that houses the editorial staff of Flemish newspaper *Gazet van Antwerpen*. It's not a place you would expect to visit an exhibition of paintings, especially as some of them are scattered throughout the editorial offices. "It's not the white cube a museum normally is," Dondeyne admits. "But I like the confrontation between my paintings and reality. I think my work is able to resist it." To be clear: Visitors can freely enter the offices to see the works.

"Most of the paintings are made in three, four days," the artist explains as he guides me through the exhibitions. "The hardest part is knowing when you have to stop." It's a pertinent issue for any painter, certainly. "When I was young, I had a tendency to keep adding paint. That wasn't always right. Only in the past decade have I been really pleased with my work."

Not that he rejects all his older works. "I experimented a lot, and sometimes that led to good things, but not consistently."

Dondeyne, who lives in Kapelle-op-den-Bos, Flemish Brabant, grew up in Brussels and studied graphic arts at the city's Sint-Lukas University College. "I was better at graphic arts than at painting," he says. "But after my studies, I realised it wasn't what I wanted to do: I couldn't fully express myself. I was extremely interested in colours. It was a period of searching." He spent the next five years teaching himself to paint. But he doesn't regret his training as a graphic artist. "It taught me to think analytically."

In 1998, he went back to school and completed a Master in Fine Arts in Painting. Was there still a lot to learn? "Certainly. It broadened my view on painting." It's not a coincidence, he says, that a few years later, he was finally happy with his work. "You should never despair. In the end, you'll find your way."

One night in Paris

The exhibition *Elsewhere* at Galerie Transit is named after one of the paintings, which offers a fascinating view of Paris. "I had visited the Gerhard Richter retrospective in the Centre Pompidou and exiting the space, I was struck by the light: Night was falling, but it wasn't dark yet. It's a city view, but the image is also anthropomorphic: You can see a face in it. Although I only discovered that after I had completed it."

The bluish, purplish sky reminds



A new view on Paris in Luc Dondeyne's "Elsewhere"

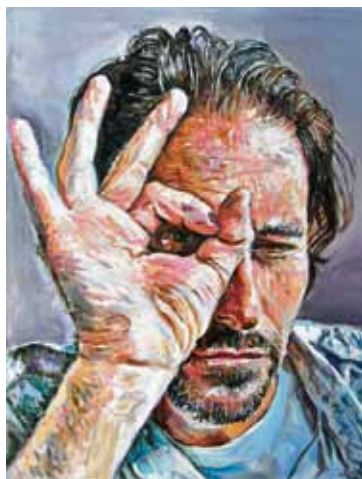
me, not for the first time, of the colours of Claude Monet. "Or the Impressionists in general," Dondeyne points out. "They often use complementary colour contrasts. So do I, but I certainly don't call myself an Impressionist."

He adds that he didn't "cheat" with the sky. "That's really how it looked that evening. In the past, I would have shied away from painting such a sunset because it easily can turn out corny." But Dondeyne doesn't carry around those kinds of fears anymore. When he was young, the painter worked with models in his studio or went into nature to paint landscapes. Now he starts, like a lot of his contemporaries, from photos. "It really has altered my work," he says. "With live models, you have to create the image on the spot. With photos, you can wait until you feel like it. Plus, you can take a photo of a moment you would not have the chance to paint in real time. Basically, it gives me more freedom."

Contrary to what you might expect, the photos are not always staged. "Because I use photos, the paintings partially document my life," says Dondeyne. One of the most impressive paintings of recent years is "Invisible World". It shows his son in the bath, rubbing his eyes and that way covering most of his face. "It was his reaction to seeing me come in with my camera," the painter laughs. "He knew what was going to follow."

Teacher's pets

Like many artists, Dondeyne combines his own work with teaching. He's still doing the latter, two days a week. "At first I had no choice: I needed the money. But it never impaired my creativity. On the contrary: I always got a lot of feedback from my students. Growing older, this has become even more important than it was in the beginning. Even if financially I didn't



The self-portrait "Illustration"

need to teach anymore, I would not quit it completely."

The students are an important reason to keep teaching, but there are more. "I've built quite a network thanks to that job," says Dondeyne. "Also, being isolated in my study seven days a week is not an attractive perspective."

Dondeyne teaches at the Secundair Kunstinstituut, or Secondary School for the Arts, in Ghent, where Michaël Borremans has been his



"Split Second" is a homage to 19th-century French painter Gustave Caillebotte's "Baigneurs, bords de l'Yverres"

colleague for 10 years. "I remember the moment he became a star in the international art world. For him, it was quite a surrealistic experience. He didn't expect it anymore."

And does Dondeyne ever wonder why Borremans got his breakthrough and he didn't? "Sure, but I know that a lot of factors are at play. Talent is, of course, an important one, but it has also to do with your contacts and the chances that you take – or not."

UNTIL 17 MARCH

Elsewhere

Galerie Transit,
Zandpoortvest 10, Mechelen

UNTIL 30 JUNE

Distances

Bedrijvencentrum Concentra,
Katwilgweg 2, Antwerp

► www.transit.be

WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

De slimste gemeente, or The Smartest Town, premieres on 11 March on channel Vier. Hosted by Michiel Devlieger of *De laatste show*, *De slimste gemeente* follows the same format as *De slimste mens ter wereld* (The Smartest Person in the World), Flanders' most popular quiz show. A team of participants from different municipalities will battle it out to see which town is the cleverest.

The darkly humoured drama *Clan*, the story of the surviving family of a much-hated dead man, was the big winner at the Night of the Flemish Television Stars last weekend, bringing home three prizes: Best Actor for Dirk Roofthooft, Best Drama and the public prize Most Popular Programme. Among the other awards were Tine Embrechts (*Quiz Me Quick*) for Best Actress, Jeroen Meus' *Dagelijkse kost* for Best Lifestyle programme, and *Tegen de sterren op* for Best Comedy for the third year in a row.

The Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF) received an **International Shorts Visionary Award** at the recent Shorts Awards in Los Angeles. The award was partially in recognition of the four Oscar nominations of Belgian shorts in the last 10 years – all with support of the VAF – and also for the way in which the fund supports and promotes the genre. The VAF is a project of the government of Flanders.

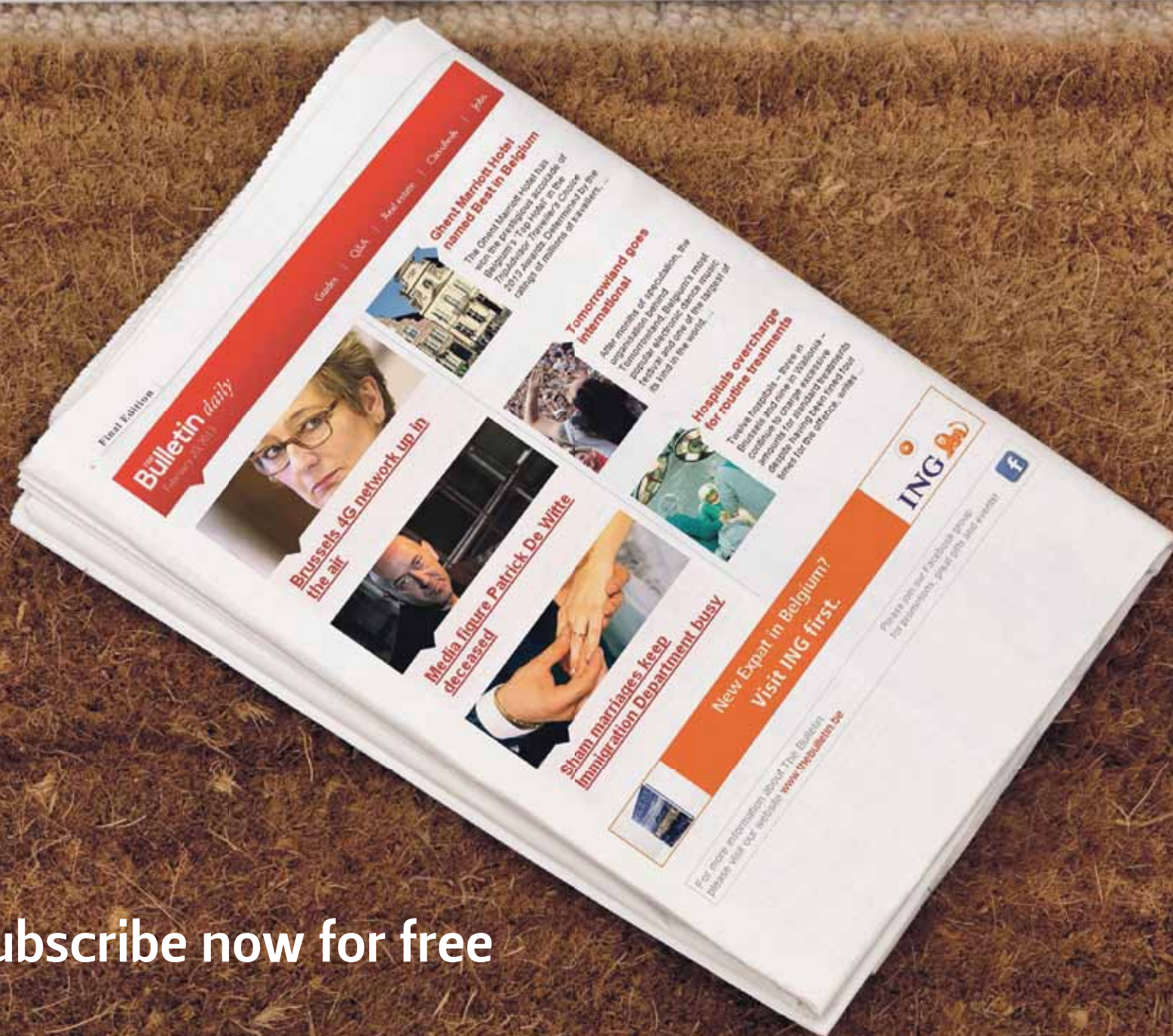
Martin Scorsese, a major exhibition currently showing in Berlin about the lifetime achievements of the American film director, has been scheduled to run in Ghent. The exhibition will open during the 40th anniversary of the International Film Festival of Flanders in October. Scorsese is a living legend of modern American cinema, responsible for such iconic films as *Taxi Driver*, *Raging Bull* and *The Last Temptation of Christ*.

Wim De Vilder is **leaving the channel Eén programme *Koppen*** at the end of this season after a decade of co-anchoring the news magazine. De Vilder (*pictured*) will continue as anchor of VRT's evening news *Het Journaal*, as well as begin working on the programme *Het jaar 2015*, which follows eight prominent Flemings for five years.



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Two centuries and counting

Prague exhibition celebrates six decades of work by Flemish photographer Herman Selleslags

Katy Desmond

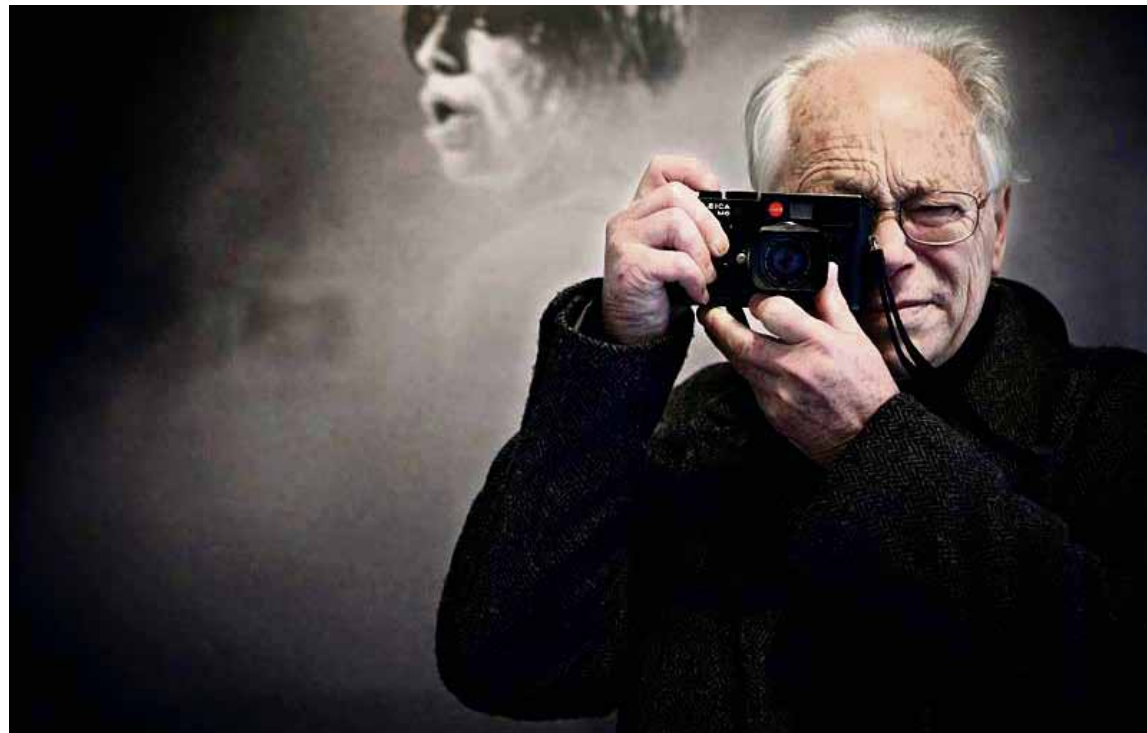
“In 1961, I met Jean-Paul Sartre, who was an idol of mine,” photographer Herman Selleslags begins a story, which, like many of his stories, involves a fascinating encounter with a great history-maker of the 20th century. “[Sartre] had a bad eye, but I didn’t know that,” he continues. “There are famous pictures of Sartre by Henri Cartier-Bresson, but I had never noticed [the eye]. So, when somebody introduced me to him, and he turned around and I saw it ... it was incredible. There are all these pictures, but you never see the bad side of the person. So, I took a picture of the bad side.”

Sartre and his lazy eye are hanging in the Goethe Institute in Prague in an exhibition marking the opening of a Dutch and Flemish reading room sponsored by the government of Flanders. The exhibition features a collection of Selleslags’ portraits of Flemish, Dutch and international writers from the last 50 years.

Beginning in 1943 with photographs by Selleslags’ father, also a photographer, the exhibition offers a retrospective of the 20th century’s great literary minds through the camera’s lens. Until 4 April, you will find hanging alongside Sartre the likenesses of writers such as Isabel Allende, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Doris Lessing and Harold Pinter.

War child

Selleslags, 74, has been documenting the good and bad sides of the 20th and 21st centuries, and he has seen plenty of both. Born in Antwerp in 1938, just in time for the start of the Second World War, his earliest memories are of an occupied Europe. He remembers at four being smuggled over the closed border to The Netherlands, wedged between two people on a motorbike, to visit his Dutch grandmother in Eindhoven. “When you are a kid,



you think everything is normal,” he says. “There is a bomb falling, and the panic is normal.” But in the 1950s, destruction gave way to rebirth, and the Flemish

first job with *Humo* magazine, with whom he would continue to work closely for most of his career. For *Humo* and other publications, he photographed everything – from

football club uniform in a Brussels hotel room and regrets turning down Jimi Hendrix’s offer to attend his show because he had other plans. “I was raised in a generation that went to the cinema at least three times a week, so I was very influenced by movie stars and singers,” Selleslags says. “But I always wanted to know, what is in the background, what is behind all this glamour?”

Hence, his photos are frank, honest portraits of people in context, whether backstage, in hotel rooms or on sets. “I always avoided posed pictures. I like to photograph real life,” he says, but quickly adds: “Of course, that is not really possible because real life stops for, say, Mick Jagger when he sees me. He knows he is being photographed.”

After nearly three decades of documenting movie stars and famous bands, in 1985 Selleslags turned his focus to writers and

“If you want to have an interesting life, press photography is fantastic. But it is not easy”

photographer spent his 20s in what he calls “a golden age”.

“The 1960s were full of hope,” he says. “Everybody was going to change and going to be better. In Belgium, in 1958, there was the World Exposition, and everything clicked: Things went better, business went better, and I was 20 – that was better, too.”

Selleslags (*pictured above*) left school at 16 to become a full-time photojournalist. In 1956, he got his

the mundane and every day to Hollywood glitz and glamour – but he is best known for his photographs of rock and pop stars of the 1960s and 1970s.

Behind the glamour

Looking through a photo book, he tells of jokes told to him by John Lennon on the set of *The Magical Mystery Tour*. He remembers Bob Marley trying on the Anderlecht

politicians. He felt he was getting too old for rock’n’roll. “When you are starting out, you are the same age as them. And then you become like their big brother, then like their father. But then you become their grandfather.”

Putting life in a frame

Among the many international figures Selleslags photographed in the ensuing years was his good friend, Flemish poet and novelist Hugo Claus, who features prominently in the Prague exhibition. Looking back at how photography has changed during the course of his career, he notes that photographers today have one large advantage. “I must say, digital has made the life of a photographer a lot easier. Jesus, what a difference! I always needed three cameras: one black and white, one colour and one spare. Now one camera is more than enough.”

Still, today is no easy place for a press photographer, he warns. “Press photography is essentially dead,” he declares, blaming the ease of finding high-quality photographs on the internet. However, there is still space, he says, for those willing to do the work. “You have to stay curious. If you want to have an interesting life, press photography is fantastic. But it is not easy. As a photographer, you have to be an opportunist. You have to take the circumstances and put them in a frame.”

Asked if he ever feels voyeuristic, he points to one photograph in particular: “I feel guilty about this one.” The photo hanging in his corridor is of a young man passed out drunk on a car bonnet outside Antwerp’s Central Station. Face up, pants unzipped, he is obviously a mess, but he still looks oddly comfortable. “Such an angel face. He does not know this picture exists; he does not know it hangs here. But you have to take the picture.”



Selleslags’ post-1985 work focussed on political and literary figures, including British Nobel Prize laureate Doris Lessing, Belgium’s own Georges Simenon and Flemish man of letters Hugo Claus, in a rare image of him smiling (though hiding it)

A hometown girl and her wardrobe

Axelle Red: Fashion Victim

Katrien Lindemans

Most of us know Axelle Red as the Flemish singer of French lyrics with dreamy tunes. But the 40-something redhead also has a keen sense of fashion and an impressive wardrobe, full of Belgian and international designers. So impressive that the Fashion Museum in Hasselt (where Red is from) dedicated an entire exhibition to her clothes, including both her stage outfits and daily wear.

Red was born Fabienne Demal in 1968 and earned a law degree in Brussels in 1993, the same year she released her first album. She's been on stage for more than 20 years now, and besides a record collection to be proud of, she's gathered a wardrobe that would be envied by many, too.

"She has kept everything she ever wore," says Didier Vervaeren, co-curator of *Axelle Red: Fashion Victim*. "I was overwhelmed when she showed me her dressing room. The amount of clothes is unbelievable. But she's got some great designer items." It took a while before Red, who co-curated, and Vervaeren found the right angle. "Style icon sounds too pretentious," Vervaeren explains. "Her

enormous wardrobe inspired us to go for 'fashion victim'. It's got the right dose of humour to it, even though people will understand that Axelle isn't a fashion victim at all. She doesn't copy looks from the catwalk, for instance, but stays true to her style and mixes designers and styles in her own way."

From first album to wedding bells

The singer's style has evolved together with her career. "She wore designs by Belgian designer Martin Margiela when her first album *Sans plus attendre* was released. Her debut almost coincided with Margiela's, so we could say she's an avant-gardist," says Vervaeren. "She likes to keep things minimal as well, but very feminine and sexy at the same time. Axelle makes every designer piece her own."

The curators decided not to go with a typical chronological approach to the exhibition. "Instead, we focus on different themes: the Belgian designers, the international designers, the big moments in her life and so on," explains Vervaeren. "We asked

ourselves what the audience wanted to see and went for a mix of the expected – her best-known stage outfits – and those that people probably haven't seen before, more intimate items such as her wedding dress, by Belgian designer Véronique Leroy."

Throughout *Fashion Victim*, red mannequins display the many outfits. Video clips of the performer screen in the background, and her voice is the soundscape. From the collection of Stetson hats by Brussels designer Elvis Pompilio to Red's fondness of the colour pink and friendship with Véronique Leroy, the exhibition indeed provides a nice view of her sense of style. The exhibition ends on the top floor, where a couple of packed clothes racks and dozens of shoe boxes give an impression of what her wardrobe must be like.

If all this sounds like a vanity project, then you're probably not an Axelle Red fan. But if you are – or if you're seriously into beautiful wardrobes – you'll be quite satisfied with *Fashion Victim*.

Axelle Red has just released a new album, Rouge Ardent



Until 2 June

Modemuseum Hasselt, Gasthuisstraat 11

► www.modemuseumhasselt.be

SPECIAL EVENT

De Vreemde Smetten

About four years ago, Dutch poet Ramsey Nasr and Flemish rock musician Mauro Pawlowski joined forces to tour a unique show blending poetry, literature, storytelling and music with more than a little irreverence. It was a hit with audiences across Flanders and the Netherlands. The duo is back for another round of musico-literary high jinks. *Vreemde Smetten* is an entirely new show, developed around the notion of "the fatherland", often a subject of Nasr, who is poet laureate of the Netherlands and a former city poet of Antwerp. Nasr has both Dutch and Palestinian roots, and Pawlowski comes from a Polish-Italian family. They must either parody or reinvent patriotism for a new, multi-cultural generation. **Georgio Valentino**



9-29 March, 20.00

Across Flanders

► www.begeerte.be

MORE SPECIAL EVENTS THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Zwaarddans: Annual traditional sword dance by local dance group Lange Wapper
MAR 10 8.40-13.30 at Handschoenmarkt and Grote Markt

► www.dansgroepangewapper.be

Brussels

Stand Up Brussels: Comedy in English, featuring the UK's Terry Alderton and Carey Marx
MAR 16 20.30 at Theatre 140, Eugene Plaskylaan 140

► www.standupworld.com

VISUAL ARTS

Cairopolis

The Egyptian Revolution that toppled strongman Hosni Mubarak in 2011 drew reporters from around the world, among them the four Flemish photographers collaborating for this exhibition. Harry Gruyaert, Filip Claus, Zaza Bertrand and Bieke Depoorter each documented the tumult in Tahrir Square in their own way. Gruyaert focuses on the contemporary architecture of Cairo and its suburbs, where over-ambitious construction projects eclipse the people and their aspirations. Claus searched streets and other public spaces for signs of unity. Bertrand captures moments of intimacy among strangers. Depoorter documents Cairo's youth with anthropological rigour. These photographs, all taken between November 2011 and March 2012, present a complex portrait of a complex city of 20 million in the middle of an unprecedented social and political upheaval. **GV**



Until 20 May

Sint-Pietersabdij, Ghent

► www.sintpietersabdijgent.be

MORE VISUAL ARTS THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Camera Exotica: A selection of photos from the very beginnings of photography until the 1960s, which illustrates the role played by the medium in the western European perception of "exotic" foreign worlds

Until JUN 9 at FotoMuseum, Waalsekaai 47

► www.fotomuseum.be

Brussels

Babel: Paintings, photographs, sculpture, film and graphics illustrating multiple facets of the Babylonian myth in contemporary art

Until APR 21 at Botanique, Koningsstraat 236

► www.botanique.be

CONCERT

Yo La Tengo

American alternative rock group Yo La Tengo celebrate their 30th anniversary next year. The band was born in a Hoboken, New Jersey basement in 1984 as a husband/wife duo, comprised of guitarist Ira Kaplan and drummer Georgia Hubley. The addition of James McNew several years later cemented the current line-up. More cult classics than chart-toppers, YTL have grown their audience slowly over the decades by persistent touring, a steady output of albums through prestigious indie labels and, most importantly, praise from authoritative critics. The release of their 20th album *Fade* finds the Hoboken heroes on tour again. This AB date is their only one here, after which they're off to London for an already sold-out performance at the hallowed Barbican Hall. We shall abstain from any puns about them still "having it". **GV**



16 March, 20.00 | Ancienne Belgique, Brussels

► www.abconcerts.com

MORE CONCERTS THIS WEEK

Across Flanders

Didier Laloy: Balkan folk rock by the top accordionist, featuring six more musicians and four performers, including a break dancer and acrobat
MAR 7-14 in Brussels, Heist-op-den-Berg, Leopoldsburg and Mechelen
► www.didierlaloy.be

Ghent

Cuadro Flamenco: Fiery flamenco quartet featuring dancer Irene Alvarez, guitarist Alexander Gavilán, singer Carmen Fernandez and percussionist Ruven Ruppik
MAR 9 20.00 at De Centrale, Kraankindersstraat 2
► www.decentrale.be

Meise

Zjef & Micheline: Flemish folk music and anecdotes by Zjef Vanuytsel & Micheline Van Hautem
MAR 9 20.00 at De Muze van Meise, Brusselsesteenweg 69
► www.demuzevanmeise.be

FESTIVAL

Rock Werchter

Maybe it's the unlimited supply of flat tracts of grassy land, or maybe it's the proximity to millions of concert-goers in several countries. For whatever reason, tiny Belgium has more summer music festivals per capita than any other country. Rock Werchter is the biggest – and one of the oldest. It also attracts the biggest names in pop and rock music. Among this year's headliners are Blur, Green Day and Rammstein. But the main event is Depeche Mode (*pictured*). The boys from Basildon, England have come a long way since their 1981 breakout hit "Just Can't Get Enough". Guitarist Martin Gore is one of the most consistently brilliant songwriters of his generation, capable of crafting not just hits (Depeche Mode has charted dozens of them) but good songs. The band's 13th studio album *Delta Machine* is out later this month. Buy it. And book your Werchter tickets soon, especially if you want the all-festival pass. They won't be around much longer. **GV**



4-7 July | Werchter festival grounds (Rotselaar) |

► www.rockwerchter.be

MORE FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

Bellegem (Kortrijk)

Omer Jazz: Features The Scaldish N.O. Jazz Messengers, Sofie La Digue Quintet and The Fondy Riverside Bullet Band
MAR 9 19.30-23.30 at OC De Wervel, Processiestraat 6
► www.cultuurcentrumkortrijk.be

Brussels

Make up: At Antonia Baehr and Werner Hirsch's Table: Berlin-based performance artist Antonia Baehr brings her many male alter egos – including her favourite Werner Hirsch – to Brussels for this one-of-a-kind festival
MAR 8 to MAY 25 22.00 at Beursschouwburg, A Ortsstraat 20
► www.beursschouwburg.be

Offscreen Film Festival: For fans of eccentric cinema and cult films, with special guest John Waters
MAR 6-24 across Brussels
► www.offscreen.be

DUSK TIL DAWN

Katrien Lindemans

JIMfest 13

16 March, from 18.00, Ethias Arena, Hasselt

The summer festival season won't kick off for another couple of months, but for those who can't wait to see a super festive line-up of international musicians and DJs on stage, JIMfest 13 is a good warm-up. Music channel Jim TV invited international and local top performers for this five-hour-long music event, which includes their annual awards, the Jimmies. The doors open at 18.00, early for a night out, but there's a lot going on. After a warm-up session by local DJ Ward, Jim VJs Eline de Munck and Sean d'Hondt will host the Jimmies ceremony, starting at 19.30. There are awards for the best singer, best group, best video clip and so on. You can vote, too, via the Jim TV website. Around 21.00, the stage is open for a line-up of more than 20 performers, DJs and bands. Some of the headliners: Ellie Goulding (UK), who has just released her new album *Halcyon*, featuring the chart-topping "Anything Could Happen"; Jessie Ware (UK) and her

"Wildest Moments"; Gers Pardoel (The Netherlands), who has taken the lowlands by storm with his Dutch rap lyrics. The Opposites (The Netherlands) also rap in Dutch, and so does Kraantje Pappie (The Netherlands), although you might not always understand what he's on about. But don't worry, Flemish acts are well represented, particularly to pump things up on the dance floor. You'll move to the sounds of Milk Inc, Lasgo (*pictured*) and Peter Luts, to name a few. Their commercial dance tracks have all made it to the charts abroad. The line-up also includes local hardstyle performers like Coone and drum'n'bass by Murdock. Tickets are €39 or €59 for a Gold Ticket, which gets you much closer to the stage, a special parking spot and a separate entrance.

► www.jim.be



BITE

Robyn Boyle

Le Baan Thai ★★☆☆

Thai food is hot these days, with restaurants and take-away joints popping up all over Flanders. One of the best, according to the foodie rumour mill, is Le Baan Thai. Tucked away down one of the narrow cobbled streets of Ghent's excessively romantic Patershol neighbourhood, the entrance to the restaurant is at the back of an enchanting courtyard, just behind the legendary candlelit café Rococo. The décor is considerably more upscale than your average Thai, with warm earth tones, elaborate teak wood carvings, wicker chairs, white tablecloths and tall and exotic green plants at every turn. There are several different dining rooms, all of which are full on this Thursday night. Luckily our party of four reserved in advance. A mixed starter – meant to tide us over until the mains arrive – is more show than substance. Fried scampi rolls, steamed pork dumplings and chicken satays in peanut sauce are artistically arranged, nestled among carved carrots and an edible bowl, as if in an attempt to substitute presentation for sub-par quantity. While they are tasty, a few pretty but scant appetisers, even with three dipping sauces, don't warrant a €14 price tag. Our mains, however, save the day. Three creamy curries and a platter of spicy stir-fried beef arrive with a bowl of fluffy rice. The spicy beef with Thai basil stands out from the rest, as it packs a lot of heat from chillies and black pepper and has a pronounced meaty flavour. Tender chunks of beef and whole leaves of sweet aromatic Thai basil mingle with heaps of vegetables, including mushrooms, baby corn, string



beans, green peppers and Thai aubergines. In perfect Thai fashion, the other three dishes hold the balance between sweet, sour, salty, bitter and spicy – no mean feat. With the addition of coriander, lemongrass, garlic, ginger, fish sauce, coconut milk, chillies and lime, the result is a rush of tantalising flavours. The pork comes smothered in orange curry, the chicken in yellow curry and the beef in red. Small round Thai aubergines add a lot of interesting texture and a profound earthy flavour to the beef dish. I'm disappointed to see potatoes in my chicken curry, but the softness of the meat about makes up for it. Including a round of sparkling water and beers, the total comes to about €35 a head, which is justifiably pricy.

► www.tinyurl.com/lebaanthai

- 📍 Corduaniersstraat 57, Ghent; 09.233.21.41
- 🕒 Tue-Sat 18.30-22.30; Sun 12.00-14.00 & 18.30-22.30.
- 💶 Mains: €20-€40
- 📖 Thai food in Flanders at its best, served in a classy setting but without too much fuss

TALKING SPORTS

Leo Cendrowicz

Harder for Hellebaut to hit the heights

When do you decide to quit your game? When do you realise that your time is done, that you're never going to match your previous bests, let alone those of your rivals? That is a gnawing question among all sportspeople, all the more wrenching given that the cut-off point – measurable in weights, lengths and times – is at a relatively young age. Tia Hellebaut is raging against the dying of her sporting light. The 35-year-old 2008 Olympic high-jump gold-medallist has already come out of retirement to rekindle the flames of her sporting passion but has yet to burn with the same force as she did in her prime. At the Gothenburg European Indoor Championships this weekend, Hellebaut did reach the high-jump final, but of the eight competitors, she trailed in last. She qualified for the final with a respectable 1.92m, but on Sunday she needed two attempts to clear 1.87m and failed to repeat the 1.92m of the previous day. Spain's Ruth Beitia took gold with 1.99m. The Flemish high-jumper's performance was her poorest since the 2007 World Championships in Osaka. That was when she was in her pomp: The following year, she won the pentathlon in the Valencia World Indoor Championships, while her Beijing gold-medal-winning jump was 2.05m. Even at last year's London Olympics, when she came fifth, she still cleared 1.97m. And last month, at an athletics meeting in Eaubonne, she also reached 1.97m. To be fair, Hellebaut is showing remarkable staying power just by reaching the final. At 35, it was always going to be a stretch. And since Beijing, she has had



Waving goodbye? Tia Hellebaut with her gold medal in Beijing

two daughters, which is – to say the least – an interruption to any training programme. The Antwerp athlete also did as well as any of her compatriots in Gothenburg. Almensch Belete came fifth for Belgium in the women's 3,000m in 9:03.89, five seconds behind winner Sara Moreira of Portugal's 8:58.50. In the 400m relay, Antoine Gillet, Kevin Borlée, Arnaud Ghislain

and Tim Rummens came fourth. And Eline Berings, from Ghent, came sixth in the 60m hurdles in 8.08 seconds. So zero medals for Belgium this year. As for Belgium's 2012 Olympic flag-bearer, it may be time to think of hanging up her spikes. We all admire her feats and her gritty determination. But even the best have to stop at some point.

The last word...

In a new light

"If you walk around, you can see them. Giraffe legs, fish wings and two skulls, a critical reference to Belgium's colonial past." Artist Jan Fabre planted a hidden message in the ceiling of the Mirror Room in the Royal Palace, which he covered with luminescent beetle wings in 2002

Unconditional love

"I am not ashamed of him; I am proud that he was my son." Jan Jacob, father of Jonathan Jacob, who died in an Antwerp police cell three years ago (see p3)

Family values

"My mother." Brussels footballer Romelu Lukaku, currently playing in the English premier league, when asked what he misses most about Belgium

Keeping the faith

"Not one second. I am a cardinal. I was called to come. I will go. It is as simple as that." Belgian cardinal Godfried Danneels had no doubts about going to Rome to help elect the new pope, despite recent church scandals

NEXT WEEK
IN FLANDERS TODAY

Cover story

The VDAB, Flanders' job finding and training agency, recently launched a programme to reintegrate those experiencing a mental illness back into the workforce. We talk to the programme co-ordinators and to workers in the programme to see how they are adjusting to their new jobs

Science

It's been all about meat labeling lately, but there could also be serious problems lurking for fruits and vegetables – climate change. The European Commission and Ghent University have teamed up to research the effects of weather and temperatures on produce and also discuss how to minimise pesticides and microbiological risks like bacteria

Arts

Flanders loves its literary events, and the Passa Porta Festival in Brussels is the highlight of the year, thanks to its top names and unique activities. See Julian Barnes, Boualam Sansal, AS Byatt, Leonard Nolens, Chika Unigwe and Anne Enright, to name but a few, during the Long Night of the Short Story, Arab Spring: Writers in Revolution or the famous Passa Porta parcours