

Fun with Fyra

The NMBS scrutinise the high-speed train contract, while the Italian manufacturer files suit



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Learning together

Students are waiting in line to spend the day at the University of Leuven's new study centre

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Fashion forward

Antwerp students put the final touches on their collections for Show2013

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Wounded tree

Ghent artist Berlinde De Bruyckere represents Belgium at the Venice Biennial

Christophe Verbiest

Every four years, alternating with the French-speaking Community, Flanders chooses the artist that will represent Belgium at the Venice Biennial. After being nominated three times before, it's fourth time lucky for the Ghent-based artist Berlinde De Bruyckere, who is wowing both crowds and critics with one giant sculpture that fills the entire pavilion.

It's Tuesday, 27 May, and the Giardini, one of the cornerstone locations of the Venice Biennial, has opened its doors for the preview of what is still the most famous biannual gathering of contemporary art in the world. After a first rush of visitors, the Belgian pavilion has almost emptied. It's enveloped by a sacrosanct silence, a feeling fuelled by the gloaming that De Bruyckere (*pictured*) has created in the space. And by the 17-metre long tree that fills the entire room.

Kreupelhout - Cripplewood is the only piece the 48-year-old artist has made for the pavilion, but it's clearly a matter of quality over quantity. The uprooted elm has an impressive lower trunk from which spring sturdy branches. At some spots, sheets are wrapped around the tree. Its weather-beaten bark is greyish brown with some reddish spots, like badly healed wounds.

For more than a decade, De Bruyckere has become internationally famous for her wax sculptures. First of dead horses, their bodies hanging from the air, lying on a table or simply on the ground, twisted and contorted. Later the sculpture were humans, or rather: faceless human bodies, as often as not contorted. Scrawny bodies, whose eeriness is heightened by their pallor.

Emotional impact

Indeed, *Kreupelhout - Cripplewood* is a wax sculpture. It

reminds me of a wounded wild animal that, with an ultimate effort, might jump up again. But it also could be a fallen giant, lying in pain. Or a phallus symbol.

Great art is often multi-interpretable, and that certainly is the case with *Kreupelhout - Cripplewood*. It makes you think, but even more: it has a great emotional impact. Like almost all De Bruyckere's work, it astonishes you, it makes you shudder. There's a feeling of fear, even horror; but in the end, the work feels comforting.

The sculpture is based on a real elm. "Two years ago I found this tree – uprooted, not cut down – in a field in France," says De Bruyckere. "I immediately fell in love with it."

We're standing in one of the dark alcoves that surround the central room, which holds the artwork. The tree, she continues, "radiated a great sense of loneliness: Someone was so cruel as to uproot a 150-year-old tree. It reminded me of uprooted people who have to leave their country because of,

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope

Willy Sommers



Together with a number of fellow artists, including Luc Steeno and Sergio, Flemish singer Willy Sommers is boycotting the VRT's Radio 2 because of a perceived lack of respect for Dutch-language music. Don't feel too bad if you've never heard of Sommers and his colleagues before: Their music is a "niche art form", said radio host Dirk Somers to the chagrin of the performers. One of the names for the style is *schlagermuziek*, which is borrowed from the German, where it literally means "a hit". The Dutch call it *levenslied* (song of life), and in Flanders, if you want to be respectful, you refer to it as *kleinkunst*. British listeners might remark on similarities to the music of someone like Engelbert Humperdinck, whose "Release Me" was a typical *schlager*-style song: a tragic story of love and loss, full of unbridled sentimentality, sung at the top of the voice. It has lyrical similarities with country music but, critics would argue, does not reach the same level of musical sophistication. *Schlager* singers are much more popular outside of urban centres; performers like Sommers are on permanent tour in cultural centres,

fairs and municipal events up and down Flanders to invariably full houses. Their CDs still sell well, and fan clubs number in the thousands. Sommers, 60, was born in Brussels and schooled in music at the academy in Anderlecht. He started a rock band in 1967 and later became the lead singer of The Yeats. His first solo album in 1971 was hailed as a breath of fresh air in the Flemish scene. His first single "Zeven anjers, zeven rozen" (Seven Carnations, Seven Roses) sold a remarkable 100,000 copies, and its syrupy style and tear-jerking story (the flowers are for a wedding bouquet for his love as she marries another) were to become his trademark. Radio 2, meanwhile, reacted with surprise to the threat of a boycott. The station doesn't play much *schlager* music, but they rely greatly on the artists to animate events organised by VRT, knowing full well that nothing succeeds quite like they do in bringing the Flemish public out of doors. "Music from here, including *schlager* music, is an integral part of the DNA of Radio 2," the station said in a statement. And it invited the artists' organisation Vlpo for talks to smooth over the differences.

News in brief

Work can begin next year on the **new Uplace shopping and leisure complex** in Machelen, after an environmental clean-up on the former industrial site was completed last week. The works included a clean-up of nearly 16,000 square metres of ground polluted by mineral oils, and the replacement of more than 12,000 tonnes of soil.

Fouad Belkacem, leader of the **Islamist group Sharia4Belgium**, has been sentenced by the court of appeal in Antwerp to 18 months in prison for inciting hatred. Belkacem had appeared in a number of videos posted to YouTube calling for death to those who insult Islam. A lower court previously sentenced him to two years, one suspended, but the appeal court said it considered a sentence of 18 months with no suspension more appropriate. He was also fined €550.

Leuven-based AB InBev has begun production of **cans of emergency drinking water**. The company plans to build up a stock of 100,000 33cl cans for free distribution in disaster areas in western Europe. AB InBev's American branch, Anheuser-Busch, has stockpiled drinking water in the US since the 1980s, providing more than 72 million cans to victims of hurricanes and other disasters.

Brussels' **Car-free Sunday will take place** on 22 September, said minister for mobility Bruno De Lille. The announcement follows some confusion two weeks ago after the Brussels prosecutor appeared to call the legality of the event into question. The popular annual event is not entirely car-free: public transport and taxis still operate, and permits for the private use of cars in exceptional circumstances can be requested in each district.

The Bruges prosecutor's office has lodged a request with the

American judicial authorities for the extradition of 32-year-old Aubrey Alta Anderson, who is accused of wilfully **breaking the wrists of twin babies** while working as a nanny in Knokke in 2011. Anderson was recently sentenced to five years suspended by a court in the state of Utah for similar crimes. "We'd like her to be extradited," said prosecutor Jean-Marie Berkvens. "However, it's anything but straightforward," as US authorities are often reluctant to extradite their citizens.

The government of Flanders will propose **new rules on the support of football clubs**, after the Council of State last week overturned a scheme to offer government support for building or renovating stadiums, which it said was in breach of EU regulations. Ten clubs had made initial applications, but only Ghent's was in an advanced state. "In that case, we'll have to see how we can fill in," said sports minister Philippe Muyters.

Flemish public transport authority De Lijn has signed a contract worth €1.8 million for the **renovation of 15 coastal trams** after the end of the summer season. According to one union, dozens of scheduled tram trips are cancelled every day because of the poor state of rolling stock, including rust, leaks and electronic problems.

Alfred Bouckaert, chair of the board of nationalised bank Belfius, last week **stepped down after a ruling** from the Cassation Court that he and others should stand trial for tax fraud in connection with a previous position he held.

The government of Flanders last week approved financing of €825,000 for the final phase of **renovations to the Gravensteen in Ghent**, known in English as the Castle of

the Counts. The castle, a mixture of architecture from the previous 10 centuries, stands in the centre of the city and attracts 250,000 visitors a year. The final stage involves repairs to the masonry and foundations of the outer walls. The work is expected to be completed in 2014, at a total cost of €6 million.

The arrival of **4G mobile internet in Brussels** could take up to 18 months, according to Geert Standaert, vice president of Belgacom in charge of network and infrastructure. Belgacom has already launched 4G in other cities, including Ghent and Antwerp, but is hampered in Brussels by local regulations which severely limit GSM radiation. The growing use of smartphones and tablets in the absence of 4G, Standaert said, is putting extra strain on the existing 3G capacity.

The federal prosecutor is investigating a video posted online last week that appears to show fighters in Syria speaking Dutch with Flemish accents **taking part in the beheading** of an elderly man. It remains unconfirmed if the video is genuine. Last week, federal foreign affairs minister Joëlle Milquet met with EU colleagues to discuss an approach to the problem of an estimated 700 Europeans who have joined the fighting in Syria.

The **Zonnegloed animal park in Oostvleteren**, West Flanders, last week welcomed Birman, a 10-year-old puma. Birman spent the last two years in the nature conservancy centre in Opplabbeek, Limburg province, after he was rescued from a French circus where he had been severely mistreated. Zonnegloed is the only animal park in Europe that offers a home to neglected and mistreated animals from all over the continent.

► www.dezonnegloed.be

FLANDERS TODAY

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OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

On a wing and a prayer

Planckendael in Mechelen said hello to a record 35 new-born storks last week, spread across 53 nests in the area of the animal park, where the birds can often be seen soaring above the clouds or strolling through the grounds. Things are going well for the stork that brings the baby storks, then, but not so well for some of Flanders' other feathered friends. There's bad news, for instance, for the Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*), known here as the *tapuit*, a migratory songbird. In the 1970s, there were about 230 breeding pairs in Flanders, but that figure plummeted to only 15 by the turn of the last century. They could be found at the mouth of the IJzer in Nieuwpoort and the port area in Zeebrugge.

According to nature conservancy organisation Natuurpunt, 2013 could be the first year that no



© Courtesy Planckendael

breeding pairs are recorded in Flanders. The reason: the loss of their habitat – heathland, dunes

and sand flats. What remains of that is overgrown with grass and the spiny sea-buckthorn shrub, which prevents the *tapuit* from building nests. Things are also not looking up for the Kentish plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) known in Dutch as the *strandplevier*. Despite the name, that small wading bird no longer breeds in the UK at all, and that fate could soon befall them here, too. The plover was common along the coast in the 1950s; last year there were but two pairs left. The only hope for the Kentish plover now are nature development projects at the IJzer estuary in Nieuwpoort, the extension of the Zwin nature reserve at Knokke and some much-contested nature development on the left bank of the Scheldt in the port of Antwerp.

► www.natuurpunt.be

Wounded tree

De Bruyckere was inspired by an intense correspondence with author JM Coetzee

► continued from page 1

for instance, a war. Uprooting can't be undone."

Two years ago, De Bruyckere didn't know she would be at the Venice Biennial in 2013. "I only knew that I wanted to do something with the tree. When I got selected for Venice, I had the idea to incorporate it."

With the help of her assistants, she made a wax copy of the elm, a long and painstaking process. Unlike her horses or human bodies, the tree is not deformed.

The exterior of the tree is made of wax but "inside, there's a whole iron construction to prevent it from collapsing," she explains. "Wax isn't very strong; the tree would break under its own weight if we didn't reinforce it from the inside." The tree was shipped in smaller parts and assembled and finished on site.

Curated by Coetzee

The curator of the Belgian pavilion is the much-lauded South African writer JM Coetzee. De Bruyckere had already collaborated with him last year for a special publication of the Flemish literary magazine *DWB*. A curator normally selects the works and builds the exhibition, but that's not what De Bruyckere wanted for Venice. Instead, she was looking to a curator "to feed" her, to inspire her. Coetzee sent her an unpublished short story, and they started an intense correspondence, published in the exhibition catalogue, in which he mostly gives short answers to her musings, ideas and uncertainties. Coetzee will only see the work for the first time this month in Venice.

Three themes converge in *Kreupelhout - Cripplewood*. The notion of uprooting and, "secondly, Saint Sebastian, who protected against the bubonic plague and who has been highly revered in Venice,"



cholera – epidemics that rend us highly vulnerable or have the power to exterminate whole populations." She leads me closer. "Sebastian is present in the tree. Look at the bark; it almost looks like a wrinkled skin." Sebastian is generally represented tied to a tree, his body pierced by arrows. "Here's he's inside the tree, an inverse metamorphosis."

The third motif is Venice: "The flaking walls and the water-induced bumps that are characteristic for the houses in this city," she says. "The threat that this city will one



Berlinde De Bruyckere works on her piece in the Belgian Pavilion in Venice; *Kreupelhout - Cripplewood* brings together the sense of being uprooted, the imagery of Saint Sebastian and the history of the city of Venice

the inside of the pavilion. The interior, normally a clean, white space, bathing in daylight, is unrecognisable: the walls are black, the skylight is darkened with black linen, barely letting through a ray of light, and on the floor lies roofing.

Coming to Ghent

It's quite exceptional for an artist at the biennial to make a work so strongly linked to the city. But

"that was important," stresses De Bruyckere. "To me, Venice is not a place where you can do whatever you want. Everywhere you go in this city, you feel its culture and history. My team and I absorbed the art we saw in Venice – the reds in the artwork, for instance, refer to Veronese and Tintoretto. I wanted to give something back to the city."

De Bruyckere's work is indeed

always anchored in the space where it's first shown, be it at the biennial or a gallery in New York City. Still, the work transcends the space for which it's made. "*Kreupelhout - Cripplewood* will be shown at the SMAK in Ghent next year, in a white room with daylight," she concludes. "That'll work, too."

► www.belgianpavilion.be

"It radiated a sense of loneliness:
Someone was so cruel as to uproot a
150-year-old tree"

explains De Bruyckere. "I still feel the presence of the pestilence, though now it doesn't take the form of the bucolic plague, but of Aids or

day be completely swallowed by the water."

That disquieting imagery, in fact, inspired De Bruyckere to alter

THE FLEMISH IN VENICE

Berlinde De Bruyckere has filled the Belgian Pavilion with her *Kreupelhout - Cripplewood* sculpture, but she's not the only Flemish artist at the Venice Biennial. Three were selected for the central exhibition *The Encyclopaedic Palace*, assembled by the 55th biennial's curator, the New York-based curator and critic Massimiliano Gioni.

Thierry De Cordier is showing some of the amazing seascapes he has been painting in recent years at home in Ostend, in which the sea looks like a dark, looming mountain. You might have seen

some of these at the Brussels gallery Xavier Hufkens; new works have been added to the collection here in Venice.

At times as gloomy but often also playful are the drawings of Patrick Van Caekenbergh. They contain trees that look like they're lifted from a sinister fairytale. The artist, based in East Flanders, started this series three years ago and showed it in part last year during a retrospective of his work at Museum M in Leuven. Though the drawings keep evolving: Some of the trees look eerily anthropomorphic.

Vanmechelen & Fabre

Jos De Gruyter and Harald Thys, collaborating video artists who had a retrospective earlier this year in Antwerp's M HKA, present *Das Loch (The Hole)*. I wasn't able to see this short film in which figure three dummies with Styrofoam heads, but according to Shira Backer of the American Federation of Arts, writing in the catalogue, it "appears to play on stereotypes of Germanness".

Apart from the central exhibition and the multitude of pavilions dedicated to different countries

– Mark Manders, who has been living in Flanders for ages, is representing the Netherlands – the Venice Biennial is also a collection of smaller exhibitions, the so-called collateral events. Koen Vanmechelen, famous for his Cosmopolitan Chicken Project, is part of *Glasstress*, an exhibition with only artworks in glass, and



Jan Fabre's "Skull with Mallard (Female)" is part of the *Wunderkamer* exhibition in Venice

of *Pavilion 0*, "a transnational pavilion of a country which does not exist, of a common future, of utopia".

In past editions, Jan Fabre simply organised his own, always worthwhile exhibition at Venice, but that isn't the case this time around. Fabre fans don't have to despair, though, since his work is present at *Glasstress* and at *Wunderkamer*.

Flemish education reforms agreed by government

Changes to secondary education in the region will not be felt until 2016

Alan Hope

The government of Flanders finally announced an agreement on a reform of secondary school education last week. The reforms were proposed by education minister Pascal Smet to tackle what he saw as the main problem of secondary education, which in Flanders is split into three main streams – academic, technical and professional. Children select one stream on leaving primary school at 12, which is often too early to decide, and they end up having to switch streams later on.

Smet's proposal involved postponing that major decision

to the end of the second year of secondary school at age 14. All students would follow the same broad course, which would allow less academically inclined students to find their way more easily and provide more technical and scientific options than ASO does at present. At 14, students could then go in their chosen direction in any school that caters to their needs.

According to Smet, the final package sees the divisions between the streams vanish entirely. Although N-VA president Bart De Wever disagrees, interpreting the reform differently. As the reforms will



not be pushed through until 2016, when there will also be another

government, the exact conditions of the package will still need to be debated and agreed to.

Industry, represented by Voka and Unizo, are content to see the eradication of the streams if it means more graduates to fill the thousands of scientific and technical jobs standing vacant. Teachers' representative also broadly welcomed the agreement. "Education is like an oil tanker," Smet said. "You can only change direction slowly, otherwise the vessel will capsize. But we have definitely steered the ship onto a new course."

Verhofstadt wins European Leader Award

Former Belgian prime minister Guy Verhofstadt, who now leads the liberal fraction in the European Parliament, has been given the European Leader Award, together with his green fraction counterpart Daniel Cohn-Bendit. The Fleming Verhofstadt and the German/French politician, who were nominated as a team, co-wrote

For Europe!, a book calling for a more united, federal Europe. They were chosen by an online poll ahead of European Central Bank chairman Mario Draghi, Polish prime minister Donald Tusk and EU commissioner Viviane Reding.

► www.tinyurl.com/euroleader

MIAT wins Museum Prize in Flanders

The Museum of Industrial Heritage and Textiles (MIAT) in Ghent is the winner of this year's Museum Prize for Flanders. The museum tells the story of the city's industrial past from 1750 onward through ancient machinery, replications of streets and shops, stories of local labour movement and photography.

In Brussels, the prize went to the Musical Instruments Museum and its collection of 1,500 instruments. The annual Museum Prize chooses the best museums in all three regions of Belgium. Each winner takes home a prize of €10,000. There is a juried prize, a public prize and a children's prize.

The public prize for Flanders was awarded to the Museum aan de Stroom (MAS) in Antwerp and in Brussels to the Art & Marges Museum for outsider art. The prize of the children's jury went

to the Suske & Wiske museum in Kalmthout, Antwerp province, and to the Museum of Natural Sciences in Brussels.

► www.museumprijs.be



Government diversity numbers creeping up

The government of Flanders is close to meeting its targets for women employed in middle management posts, according to figures presented to parliament by administrative affairs minister Geert Bourgeois last week.

The goal of the government's diversity policy is to have government services accurately reflect the composition of society, and it includes target figures to be achieved by 2015 for three groups: women should make up at least 33% of middle management and senior functions; people with a disability or chronic illness should

make up 3% of all government jobs; and 4% of jobs should go to those with a migration background.

At the end of 2012, the figures were 3% for those with a migrant background (up from 2.8%), 1.3% for handicapped or chronically ill (up from 1.2%) and 31% for women in middle management (up from 28%). The number of women in senior administrative jobs, meanwhile, has gone down from 24% to 21%. Bourgeois stressed that, while disappointing, the figure is still better than the federal government, as well as most of the private sector.

Royals to pay tax on reduced allowances

The federal government has announced changes to the sums paid to members of the royal family, including making allowances from the public purse taxable for the first time. According to prime minister Elio Di Rupo, these are the most significant reforms to the payments made to the royal family since the creation of the country as a monarchy in 1831.

• The civil list payment to the king, this year €11.5 million, remains unchanged
• Crown Prince Filip receives €743,000 to cover working costs, as well as an allowance of €180,000

which is now taxable

• The dowager Queen Fabiola receives €371,000 in working costs and a taxable allowance of €90,000
• Princess Astrid receives €230,000 working costs and a taxable allowance of €90,000
• Prince Laurent receives €217,000 working costs and a taxable allowance of €90,000

In addition to the monarch, allowances in future will be paid only to the successor to the throne and the widow or widower of a monarch or successor, as well as an abdicated monarch and spouse.

FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

Semantics

Semantics matter, especially in politics. Take the word "confederalism". Almost every Flemish party has a different definition of what this precisely means. (Especially the ones that support said confederalism.)

Until recently, three Flemish parties were in favour: N-VA, CD&V and Open VLD. Reason enough for N-VA to dream of a confederalist coalition after the 2013 elections. Three like-minded parties would be enough for Flanders to demand further steps in the process of state reform from the French speakers.

At this point, though, both CD&V and Open VLD shudder at the thought. They fear another round of institutional talks that could result in a political stalemate comparable to that of 2010. They believe that the formation talks should be about more pressing issues and hold N-VA responsible for the social-economic state the country is in.

Last week, Open VLD president Gwendolyn Rutten distanced her party even more from N-VA's ambitions by announcing that it would drop its adherence to confederalism. "Either way you look at it, confederalism is always linked to splitting up the country. That is not what we want; we do not want an end to Belgium. We want a strong Flanders in a federal Belgium."

This is where semantics come in. To CD&V and Open VLD, confederalism stands for increased decision-making power for Flanders. The recent "bowtie agreement" – named after prime minister Elio Di Rupo's characteristic daywear – brings exactly that. Further demands for confederalism only serve to narrow it down to its original definition: a voluntary collaboration between independent states. Of the kind N-VA wants and Rutten doesn't.

On Monday, Bart Somers, Rutten's predecessor, defined how the party views "a strong Flanders in a federal Belgium". To Somers, some constitutional guarantees to protect the minority (of French speakers) are outdated. It is precisely these instruments that cause the almost continual deadlock between the two languages groups, Somers argues. Without them, there is no (longer) need for confederalism. The reason for Open VLD's unusual move is its weariness of institutional matters, which have dominated the debates due to the success of N-VA and which continue to feed the party's popularity. "The next government should concentrate solely on the economy", Rutten said.

How ironic that the immediate result is that confederalism is at the top of the agenda again. For you cannot get rid of something if you do not define what it is exactly.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

13,611

people claiming unemployment benefits were caught working on the side in 2012, according to social security authorities

39

pollen grains per cubic metre of air reached last week by late-blooming grasses, in a delayed hay fever season set to last until the end of October

40%

increase in electricity prices by 2030, according to a study by Boston Consulting for the Federation of Belgian Enterprises, based on current energy pricing policy

14.5%

of beer buyers in Flanders chose a local regional beer over a major brand in 2012, nearly double the number of the year before. Trappists also rose in popularity to reach 17.8% of the market share

€12.50 to €15

starting price for shares in bpost when it launches on the stock market, placing a value on the company of between €874 million and €1,049 billion. The sale involves 47 million shares or 23.5% of the total

Thousands march for employment status

Government in talks for solutions to the outdated legal status of workers

Alan Hope

With barely a month to go before the federal government's deadline to come up with a proposal, 30,000 members of the socialist and Christian trade unions last week demonstrated in Brussels in favour of an end to the legal demarcation between "workers" and "employees". In Belgium, unlike in any other European country, the law differentiates between *arbeiders* – originally manual labourers – and *bedienden*, which are generally white-collar workers. The distinction, created in the 19th century, effects employment rights in the areas of holiday entitlement, overtime pay, sick leave and notice required in the event of redundancy. As a general rule, employees receive better treatment than labourers. To



take one example, employees are paid from the first day of sick leave, whereas labourers are not. In 2011, the Constitutional Court ruled that the distinction was

discriminatory and gave the government two years to change the law. That term will expire in late July. Federal labour minister Monica De Coninck is in negotiations with

the social partners – government, employers and unions – to find a solution.

The unions support bringing the rights of labourers in line with the rights of employees. Employers, on the other hand, do not want to support any measure that would increase costs – an already weighty subject, with Belgium one of the highest in the EU in terms of labour costs.

Last week Geert Bruyneel, CEO of Volvo Ghent, said the factory would have to close if labour costs had to increase. The plant, which employs 5,000 people, is one of only three remaining car manufacturing plants in Belgium, but Volvo's owners, the Chinese Geely group, are currently completing the construction of two factories in China.

Fyra file handed over to prosecutors

The national rail authority NMBS has turned the case of the controversial high-speed train Fyra over to the public prosecutor's office, CEO Marc Descheemaeker told the federal parliament's infrastructure committee last week. At the same time, it was announced that the train's manufacturer, the Italian-owned AnsaldoBreda, is to file suit against the NMBS for damages after the rail authority's decision to cancel the contract for three trains. Descheemaeker revealed he had ordered an audit in February from Ernst & Young to look into the procedure followed for the purchase of Fyra during the period 2000-2004. He received the report in May, and it was discussed by the NMBS board. Although he did not give details about the contents of the report, Descheemaeker's decision to turn it over to the prosecutor suggests there was reason to suspect irregularities. One of them is, reportedly, price. According to the Dutch public broadcaster NOS, which claims to have read the Ernst & Young report, the representatives of the Dutch rail authority NS and the NMBS had a strong preference for Fyra, which

the company came to be aware of. The price went up from €18.9 million to €20.7 million without any clear technical reason, the report says. Only two parties – AnsaldoBreda and a French constructor – were still in the running for the contract. AnsaldoBreda's complaint concerns the NMBS' criticism of the technical shortcomings of the Fyra train, which CEO Maurizio Manfellotto described as "teething troubles". The NMBS had failed, he claimed, to take advantage of his company's offer of regular maintenance inspections, which in turn led to serious failures once the trains were put into service during heavy snow.



The much-maligned Fyra V250 on a trial run at Brussels South Station last December

Interest tax relief must apply to foreign banks, says ECJ

The federal government has been asked for clarification of the status of savings accounts, following a ruling by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) that the current system of tax-free interest discriminates against foreign banks.

The ECJ's decision is in response to a complaint from the European Commission, which considered the Belgian rules discriminatory. While banks based in Belgium can offer tax-free conditions on interest, banks based elsewhere cannot. As a result, Belgian banks have a huge number of savings account-holders – the equivalent of more than two accounts for every person in the

country. Many people have two or more accounts in order to take advantage of the pre-tax interest allowance of €1,880 a year per account.

Federal finance minister Koen Geens has promised the government will take steps to put Belgian and foreign accounts on an equal footing. Recently Geens caused controversy after he spoke of the possibility of removing the tax-free interest provision – an idea floated originally by the National Bank. Belgian banks are currently sitting on €240 billion in savings accounts – money the National Bank thinks could be put to better use invested in the economy.

Solar panel duties threaten industry

The Flemish solar panel industry has called on the Flemish and federal governments to take new steps to promote solar energy, after a decision last week by EU commissioner for trade Karel De Gucht to impose duties on solar panels imported from China. The Commission said that the Chinese panels are being sold in Europe at dumping prices and represent unfair competition with EU-based manufacturers.

In a statement issued following the decision, Flemish industry association PV-Vlaanderen pointed out that existing measures to promote solar power – the green energy certificates – involve premiums based on the lower market price of Chinese panels. Any extra income arising out of the duties, the association said, ought to flow back

to the customer.

The market for solar panels in Flanders has been stagnant since the beginning of this year, PV-Vlaanderen pointed out, with many companies going out of business or having to lay off workers. Yet without a growing solar industry, Belgium is not likely to meet its goals for renewable energy.

De Gucht imposed the duty – 11.8% of the price over the next two months, pending talks with the Chinese – following a complaint from EU ProSun, which represents the solar panel industry across Europe. Belgium is one of 18 member states that opposes the measure, which governments argue will simply make solar power more expensive and therefore less attractive.

More job losses in Genk

Decoma Belpas, a manufacturer of car parts, with a factory standing directly opposite Ford Genk, last week announced it was planning to close at the end of 2014, with the loss of 322 jobs. The factory also employs 170 temporary staff. Decoma Belpas, formerly Magna, had previously said that the closure of Ford Genk – also planned for the end of 2014 – would not mean the end for them, as they looked forward to finding new customers.

The factory makes bumpers, grills and other parts, and includes Audi Brussels and Volvo Trucks among its clients, as well as Ford Genk. However, the company now admits that it has operated in the red for years, its losses covered by the Canadian parent. Last week Belpas management announced that Audi Brussels had cancelled its contract, making closure unavoidable. Unions have promised to fight the decision.

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Autos ▶ BMW

BMW is investing €25 million in a new headquarters and servicing centre for its local operations in the Brussels district of Evere.

Banking ▶ Dexia

Ailing financial holding company Dexia is selling its French insurance affiliate Sofaxis, which employs 450, to the Paris-based Sham (Société Hospitalière d'Assurances Mutuelles). The move is part of Dexia's debt-reduction plan. Also on the market is the company's data processing affiliate DTS, which is expected to be sold shortly.

Banking ▶ KBC

Flanders' largest financial institution launched a new branch last week in Ghent called Bamboo, where all operations, including contracts, are done electronically. Other outlets will open soon in Halle and in Achterbos, the Netherlands, with 10 more planned for 2014.

Decor ▶ Flamant

The home and interior decor group, based in Geraardsbergen, East Flanders, has opened its second concept store in Flanders, in Sint-Genesius-Rode, near Brussels. The first opened earlier this year in Sint-Martens-Latem, near Ghent.

Energy ▶ Siemens

German conglomerate Siemens is seeking to build a €750 million, 920 megawatt gas-fired power plant in Dilsen-Stokkem in partnership with Switzerland's Advanced Power group. The new unit is expected to come on stream in 2017.

Food ▶ Pringles

The Mechelen-based crisps manufacturer, an affiliate of the US Kellogg group, plans to build an additional production line, to open in 2014. The new facility is expected to offer some 180 new jobs.

Hotels ▶ Holiday Inn

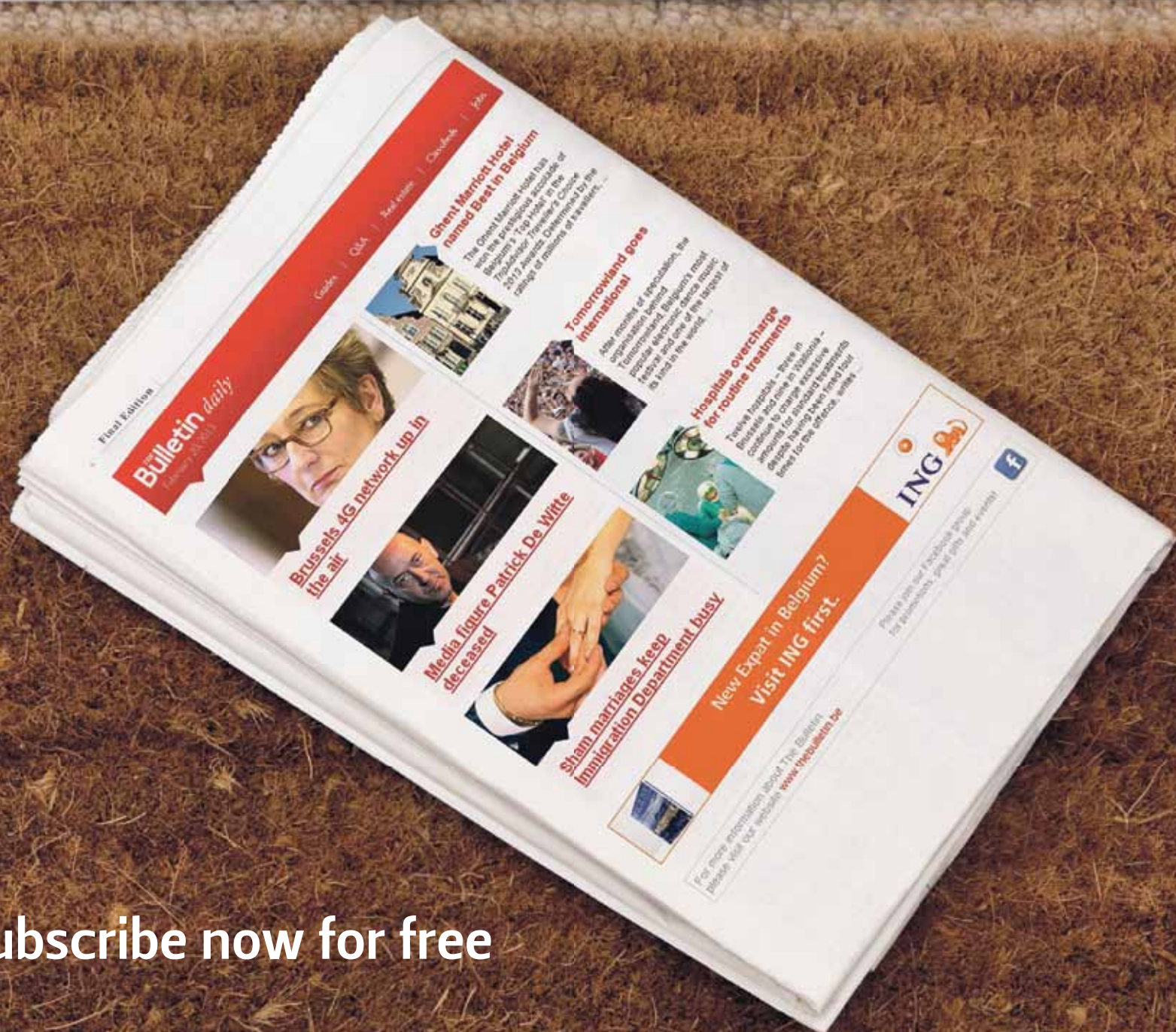
A 150-room Holiday Inn will open in 2015 near Brussels South station. Meanwhile, the 237-room Pullman Hotel opened last week opposite the Eurostar terminal.

Pharmaceuticals ▶ UCB

The Brussels-based pharmaceutical company has sold one of its US production units, located in Rochester, New York, to Unither. The companies also agreed to a six-year supply contract. UCB has also signed on to a development partnership with ConfometRX, a California-based specialist in neurosciences and immunology, founded by Nobel prize winner Brian Kobilka.

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Study alone, together

Students are flocking to Agora, the new social study centre at KULeuven

Tom Peeters

“We love social media, but during the exams we need social pressure.” And that’s what students get at the University of Leuven’s new Agora Learning Centre. This hub for students opened in April in the centre of the town and now, with classes finished and preparations for the upcoming exams in full swing, its popularity is at its peak.

Some 20 years ago, when my friends and I had to fill our heads with the contents of an intimidating pile of books, we locked ourselves between the four walls of our student flat. Tempted by the sun, we might have considered sitting for a while in a park. But in those long-forgotten times of no mobile phones, no internet and no social media, studying was basically a very individual matter.

Times have changed. Over the years, we have seen universities struggle with the growing needs of students to somehow stay connected, especially during the most nerve-racking time of the year. All of a sudden libraries filled up, even after the deadlines of most papers. Students didn’t go there to consult the in-house reference books; they needed the in-house silence to avoid distraction but also to feel part of a community.

Social learning

Evelien Wauters is an Agora regular. The second-year law student sits here every day, arriving at 7.45 to secure a good seat. She’s not the only one. Up to 300 students queue every morning before the doors open at 8.00.

Wauters stays not just all day, but all night, too, leaving at closing time: midnight during the week and 19.00 at weekends. “This place

really works for me: At home, I’m easily distracted by social media. Here I can also go online, but there’s peer pressure to prevent me from doing it. I can concentrate much better when I’m surrounded by like-minded students.”

Another student is sitting nearby in what looks like a very comfortable chair in the building’s “time-out zone”. “Studying in your *kot* is so lonely,” she tells me. She has just finished her lunch and now she’s playing cards with friends, a welcome relief after a few hours of strenuous study.

That’s what most students like about this new place: Though they’re all here to study, it also meets their social needs.

“For an important number of the student population, social learning is a real motivation,” explains Peter Verbist, who co-ordinates the centre and picked up the idea back in 2006 when he visited a few libraries and learning centres in England. “In the Anglo-Saxon countries, uniting a social hub and a service centre for students by means of an independent academic unit has a long tradition. I wanted to implement this concept at KULeuven.”

Breakfast club

When looking for a location, Verbist’s eyes fell on these picturesque but worn-out premises near the social sciences faculty. “It used to be the Pharmaceutical Institute, and it stood empty for many years,” he says about the building, which was designed by canon Jan Janssen and built in the 1930s. “It turned out to be a perfect fit, combining a lot of space and zones of various sizes.”

In the summer of 2011, a big renovation project started, at a cost of €7 million, funded entirely

by the university. In one of the two large “silent study rooms” on the first floor, the pharmacy students’ wooden laboratory desks are still a witness to past decades. Because those desks were designed to work at while standing up, new tabletops were installed between the old furnishings to create desks to sit at. This is one of the reasons people will stand in a queue for up to half an hour before the building, which accommodates 550, opens. “We always go for a seat at these old pharmacist desks,” says one of the many early birds. “There’s more space to lay down your notes and books and, because you’re a bit isolated from the other students, you can create your own little space. We don’t even mind the queuing: It gives us time to have breakfast.”

Flexible spaces

Other students prefer a seat in the cosier and more colourful sofas of the other silent study room, or they check out the FlexiSpace or one of the smaller rooms for group assignments. The variation in spaces and furnishings struck Verbist during his visits to learning centres abroad. “We are very happy to see that this quality in particular is appreciated by our students. It’s more or less our goal to serve every type of student.”

Normally you can chat in the group spaces, but during exams, they all became silent zones. “An important feature of a learning centre is flexibility,” says Verbist. “The use of the spaces varies depending on the point in the academic year. Right now, our flexible study zone is a silent study space. The funny thing is that even without making it official, the students were using the space like this spontaneously.”

In the spring, just after opening, “we noticed it was ‘paper time,’” he adds, meaning that the group study area, providing 20 bookable rooms, was particularly busy with students nearing deadlines. This area has 13 group study rooms, two conference rooms, two presentation rooms, two video editing rooms and one video conference room, proving that Agora is more than just a study centre.

Tread softly

“It’s a social crossroads of information technology and service,” confirms Verbist. The biggest difference between this and learning centres abroad is Agora’s focus on mobility. “In the whole building, you will find only six PCs. Everyone brings their own devices. You can connect your laptop to a 70-inch screen, use in-house virtual software applications or even statistical programs.”

In ancient Greece, the *agora* was the market place where people from different fields met to talk. On the staircase, I meet four students from Zellik. They know each other from before university and now they study at different faculties. “But here we found a central place where we can study but still share breaks and talk,” says one of them.

“I was flabbergasted, but students really use the place as if it has existed for years,” a colleague said to Verbist, indicating how spot-on an initiative like this is.

The concern about not disrupting their students’ concentration is evident on one of the flat screens hanging from the ceiling: “Our tiled floor and high heels, not a good combination.”

► www.bib.kuleuven.be/english/agora

THE WEEK IN SCI & ED

The International Ovarian Tumour Analysis (Iota) research group, led by professor Dirk Timmerman of the University Hospital Leuven, has launched free **mobile applications that help gynaecologists** to decide which sort of surgery is necessary for women with different forms of ovarian cancer. Iota is made up of universities in Leuven, Sweden, London and Rome. The apps function through prediction models and decision rules based on the results of echographic data, demographic characteristics and biomarkers. The data was collected from 6,000 women with ovarian anomalies from 50 clinical centres around the world.

Two-thirds of Flemish teenagers have contact via **social media with people they have never met**. This is one of the conclusions of the research group Media & ICT in Organisations & Society at the University of Antwerp. The researchers asked 1,743 youngsters between 12 and 18 years old at 16 Flemish schools about their use of social media. Almost half (46%) said they shared their mobile phone number with their contacts, and 16% have been the victim of cyber bullying. The victims of cyber bullying have significantly more online contacts that they have never met in real life.

The City of Ghent has awarded the **first SODA certificates** to 135 students of the Royal Technical Atheneum MoBi. The students received the certificate because of a good score on *Stiptheid, Orde, Discipline en Attitude* (punctuality, order, discipline and attitude). The concept was invented by a mechanics teacher at the school and is meant to be an extra motivation for developing a professional attitude. The school is making the concept available to other schools.

By the end of 2016, there will be **3,000 more student rooms available in Leuven**. Half of the new facilities are being funded by the University of Leuven and will be added to its existing residences. The other half come from agreements between private investors and the university. The expansion is necessary because first-year student numbers are increasing every year, as are the numbers of foreign students and researchers. New Master’s programmes will further increase the growth of Leuven’s student population. **Andy Furniere**



The old pharmacy desks in the Agora Learning Centre at KULeuven are a big hit with students

In the footsteps of the Antwerp Six

Royal Academy fashion students are readying their final collections for Show2013

words: Catherine Kusters • photos: Natalie Hill

While most colleges and universities turn into quiet, desolate places around exam time, the corridors of one of the most prestigious fashion academies in Europe are bustling with activity. The fashion department of Antwerp's Royal Academy of Fine Arts is getting ready for Show2013.

The fashion department's annual catwalk show features the designs that its Bachelor and Master's students have been working on all year long. Finally, they get to present them to a crowd of friends, family, fashionistas and an international jury. For Fleming Mattia Van Severen and Canadian Devon Halfnight LeFlufy, it will be a farewell; both are presenting their graduation collections. What the next step will be and where they will end up are questions that remain largely unanswered. But, if it's up to them, they will follow in the footsteps of the Antwerp Six (see sidebar) and the many other successful alumni the academy has spawned over the last 50 years.

Striving for imperfection

LeFlufy left Canada for Flanders four years ago, when he decided to complement the technical fashion design training he completed in Montreal with a degree from Antwerp's Royal Academy of Fine Arts, now part of the Artesis-Plantijn University College. "I wanted to challenge myself, and Antwerp has one of the best fashion schools in the world," the 29-year-old explains. "I was terrified I wouldn't get in,

and then I thought it was a miracle that the school accepted me. But somewhere in the third year, I started feeling more comfortable." Unlike what you hear from pretty much every *Project Runway* contestant, LeFlufy had not dreamed of being a designer since he was little. Far from it, in fact. "I wanted to be a nautical engineer and did a locksmith's apprenticeship," he says, "but when I eventually turned to fashion, it immediately made sense to everyone around me."

He sees the trade as a constant learning process and hesitates to call himself a "designer", although he has been selling his menswear at concept store RA in Antwerp for several seasons. "If I ever did something that I thought was really perfect, then I would have to stop." He may not think of his designs as perfect, but they are good enough for RA's avant-garde tastes. This summer, the graduate will present his latest menswear collection at the boutique's showroom during men's fashion week in Paris. "I think I'm mature enough for it now," he adds.

Close to the chest

LeFlufy's collection will debut at the graduation shows this weekend. It fits right in with current streetwear trends and yet manages to stand out. A psychedelic re-imagining of 1970s road trip movies, the silhouettes scream a Technicolor tribute to the chaos of American counter-culture.

"The collection is called 'LA Ethnic'," he says. "Los Angeles is a melting pot, and the city's artificiality makes it almost surreal. To capture that weird mix, I used a lot of prints, which I developed together with my friend, Canadian

artist Brian Kokoska. I basically wanted to do all the things I know I won't be able to do anymore after I graduate: find sponsors for the fabrics, do all these ridiculous treatments, develop my own textiles, go all out on laser-cutting the leather..."

The Canadian isn't nervous about the show and not that many friends or relatives are coming over for it. "I'm getting married here in August, so they all had to decide when to visit," he laughs.

LeFlufy plans to stay in Flanders for the foreseeable future, though career plans have not yet solidified: "I always said I would like to be part of a team, but now it seems I am pushing in the direction of my own little label. It is a big time of flux in the fashion industry right now; everything has become commercial and sales-oriented. I'm just keeping things close to my chest and, we'll see how it goes."

Starting from scratch

The fashion education of Mattia Van Severen started with an exhibition celebrating 20 years of famed Flemish designer Martin Margiela in Antwerp's Fashion Museum, several floors below the classrooms Van Severen now frequents.

The 26-year-old studied interior design in Ghent, and Margiela's architectural shapes immediately appealed to him. He became increasingly interested in fashion and decided to give the academy's dreaded entrance exam a try. Like his classmate LeFlufy, he never expected to get in. But he did.

"I really wanted to study in Antwerp because the academy is one of the few schools in our country that can compete with the best. Once I graduate from here, I know I'll be able to find work on a world-class level."

Because he enjoyed no previous fashion education, Van Severen had to start from scratch: "I didn't even know how to sew." Now he applies time-consuming and complex techniques such as flocking to his fabrics. The process of covering part of a textile with many small fibre particles to create a felt-like surface, as often seen in the numbers on football jerseys, provided the starting point for his collection. The menswear series is called "Play Time" and features garments covered in angular patches of colourful flock. "I picked the reference to Jacques Tati's 1967 comedy because it approaches modernism ironically," Van Severen explains. "I wanted to do a modernist collection with graphic influences, but nothing too heavy."

Job hunt

Despite the deliberate choice to steer clear of architectural influences the last three years, Van Severen felt like the time was right to revisit those roots in his final year. He likes cycles as well as continuity: "I started designing for men in my first year because it looked easier. Now I just wanted to see that choice through and show the evolution I have made in my work. But I can definitely picture myself doing womenswear in



With a background in interior design, Mattia Van Severen is inspired by architectural

the future."

A week after the show, Van Severen, who was born and raised near Ghent, is organising a small exhibition in Antwerp to promote a book by graphic designer Inge Rylant inspired by his collection. "The books are screen-printed and I also used silkscreen in my designs, which will be on display. I really enjoy these kinds of side projects."

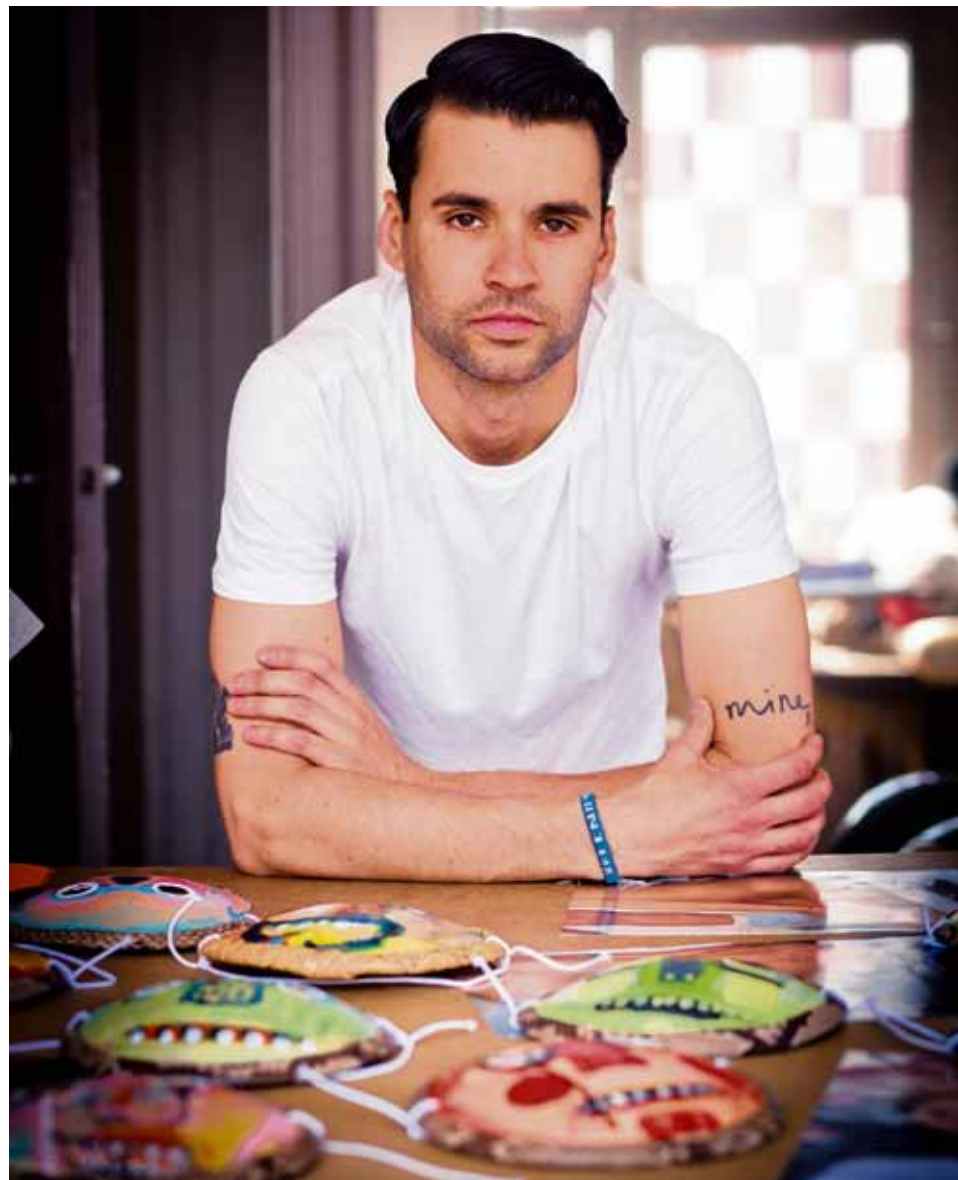
Then, as for any graduate, the job hunt will begin. "I plan to apply anywhere that interests me. An internship is another option ... I know that Raf Simons, for example, hires interns from Antwerp."

Although he's developed a line for Show2013 and won the Artos Award for his line in Show2011, a personal clothing line for the market still seems far off. "I hope to gather at least 10 years of experience at a big fashion house or working under a designer before I venture out on my own," he says. "At the academy, we are rather isolated in our work, and I want to know how it feels to be part of a team."

Sacha Shoe Award

As the winner of this year's Sacha Shoe Award, Van Severen has already had a taste of collaboration – and compromise. The shoe brand produced the leather ankle boots he designed for his models to wear with his line in the show; the design will also be sold in Sacha stores. "You have to compromise if you want the outcome of your hard work to be realistic and affordable."

Designing on a budget is not part of the curriculum at the fashion department, where



Devon Halfnight LeFlufy moved from Montreal to Antwerp to study at the fashion department

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► www.antwerp-fashion.be

Antwerp Six



al shapes

to has always been to dream big. Van , however, realises that fashion is a n times of crisis. “Thanks to sponsors, we ate exuberantly expensive collections,” rains. “Lampe Textiles agreed to weave my fabrics, designer Michaël Verheyden d the handbags, Sacha did the shoes, I small factory to do the flocking. These utions are crucial to the success of my on. But in July, that will all be over.” ar that Van Severen’s head is full of the and worst-case scenarios common graduating fashion students. The y, though, has a history of producing ul alumni, from his hero Margiela to meulemeester to current head of the department Walter Van Beirendonck. from the famous Antwerp Six, Van knows many more recent graduates re found their way to covetable positions or French houses such as Chanel and reassuring thought in times of doubt. stories give me hope,” the young designer es, “and the encouragement to pursue dreams.”

WHO ARE THE ANTWERP SIX?

In 1988, a group of Royal Academy fashion department alumni inspired shock and awe with their avant-garde styles when they showed together at London Fashion Week. Dubbed the “Antwerp Six” by the British press, they are credited with elevating the department to its current reputation as one of the best fashion design schools in the world. The Antwerp Six, who all graduated in the early 1980s, are Dirk Bikkembergs, Anne Demeulemeester, Dries Van Noten, Dirk Van Saene, Walter Van Beirendonck and Marina Yee. Martin Margiela graduated from the department just before them, in 1979.



Top: LeFlufy’s collection “LA Ethnic”: “Los Angeles is a melting pot, and the city’s artificiality makes it almost surreal” Middle: Van Severen pimps simple leather ankle boots to go with his collection, much of which he created through the time-consuming process of flocking (above)

Without words

Experts in Flanders translate gestures and facial expressions to improve our relationships

Andy Furniere

Even if we don’t speak, our body gives away our thoughts and feelings, whether we like it or not. Body language experts Kasia and Patryk Wezowski teach people around the world how to interpret subtle facial “microexpressions” and how to make a positive impression through gestures. Their knowledge helps business professionals and politicians advance their careers but can also help anyone to be able to read people and situations more accurately.

The Wezowskis’ new book, *Lichaamstaal*, or Body Language, starts with an anecdote about a session at a call centre. They found that the posture of employees strongly determined the impression they were making on the person at the other end of the line. Someone seated in an uncomfortable position with a furrowed brow, for example, clearly sounded irritated over the phone.

The experts, however, didn’t just tell them to straighten their backs and put on a smile. They organised relaxation sessions, gave advice on sports and helped employees make their workplace more pleasant by decorating the office with photos and other personal items. “Their communication style improved because their entire attitude changed,” explains Kasia Wezowski.

Involuntary feedback

A special focus at the Centre for Body Language in Berchem, founded by the Wezowskis four years ago, is the interpretation of microexpressions. These are, according to body language experts, universal facial expressions that are impossible to control and thus offer insight into the thoughts and emotions



Kasia and Patryk Wezowski say that picking up on unspoken signals can have a big impact on our lives

recognise them. The centre’s methodology is practised by 35 partners in 15 countries.

Their clients include salespeople, managers and recruiters. An interpretation of reactions can help sales professionals adjust their strategy, deepens managers’ knowledge of employees’ attitudes and shows recruiters if candidates are being truthful about their skills and motivations.

“But the insights can also be of great assistance in daily life,” says Wezowski. “You notice when people are lying, for instance, or if they feel positively about what you are saying.” This involuntary feedback can let you know, for example, when it’s best to change the topic of conversation, improving workplace and interpersonal relationships.

Incognito politicians

Apart from microexpressions, the centre lectures on about 200 gestures and positions. When someone shapes his hands as a sort of pyramid by joining the fingertips, this shows that he or she is feeling confident. Someone is probably hiding information if he touches his nose when

to analyse the body language of celebrities and politicians, and they predicted – with a high percentage of accuracy, as it turned out – whether participating politicians at the most recent Belgian and American elections would score well.

However, politicians are also among the centre’s clients. But they won’t tell us who. “It would not be good for their reputation,” Wezowski notes, “if it was known that they need assistance to make a good impression on the public.”

Animal instincts

Although we have to learn about body language as adults, we are actually born with the knowledge. Research proves that babies can recognise the microexpressions on their parents’ faces. Children are body language experts but lose these intuitive skills during their school years. But, “they are just as important as words to create understanding,” asserts Wezowski.

Researchers from fields such as neurology and psychology have been developing knowledge on body language since Charles Darwin wrote his pioneering work *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* in 1872. Darwin realised that animals developed body language throughout evolution as a means to survive. The principal emotions were anger and fear, and animals still show domination or submission by baring their teeth or cowering.

Humans, however, are aware of negative emotions and, with training, are able to overcome them to remain calm in stressful situations. “Developing these abilities makes us more emotionally intelligent, which has just as important an impact on our lives as our rational intelligence,” says Wezowski.

The pair will soon lecture at Harvard University, and next year their new book will be published in English.

► www.centerforbodylanguage.com

“When you lie, the tension makes blood flow to the nose, causing it to itch”

of the people we talk to. “When listening, we unconsciously react to words with very subtle facial signs that only last a fraction of a second,” Wezowski says.

According to Wezowski, there are 26 microexpressions that reveal seven universal emotions: disgust, anger, fear, sadness, happiness, surprise and contempt. There are five signs that suggest anger: a quick frown, for instance. Lifting one corner of the mouth, meanwhile, shows a feeling of contempt. The centre offers training courses in microexpressions, which teach clients in a few hours how to

speaking. “This is a physical reaction to the stress that comes with lying,” explains Wezowski. “The tension makes blood flow to the nose, causing it to itch.”

Of course, different cultures have different body language. During negotiations, it is useful to know that nodding in Japanese culture primarily signifies respect, not agreement. And in Poland, you can still see men kissing the hand of women as a greeting. Wezowski: “This is a sign of respect but also shows that the men don’t consider women as their equal.”

Both Flemish and American media frequently ask the Wezowskis



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The importance of Ernest

A pop-up “living room” in Ghent is giving young talent a platform – and you a place to relax

Toon Lambrechts

The coffee comes in the kind of cups your grandparents would use. It's still early; the Huiskamer van Ernest (Ernest's Living Room) has just opened its doors. Patricia Vanneste and Jonne Oldenburg step up to the long table in the middle of the cafe. With breakfast served – a croissant and a hard-boiled egg – it's time to tell me about their project. “Ghent has enough cafes,” begins Vanneste, “but a place where you can relax without the obligation to consume something didn't exist. So we had this idea to start a kind of public living room, which at the same time would be a place where we could do something with our passions for design and music.” Although it's a temporary space, living up to its name was really important to the pair. “We wanted to create a space where it feels like you are sitting in your own living room,” continues Vanneste. “People come here to read the newspaper, to study, to knit... They act as if they're at home, shifting the furniture. It's nice to see because it was just this kind of atmosphere we had in mind when we puzzled out the Huiskamer van Ernest on paper. Everything is a bit freer here, maybe a bit messier.”

Creative interaction

Messier maybe, but not chaotic. The interior is clearly well thought out. It looks retro, but most of the furnishings are new. On the wall is a series of silk-screen prints. Everything is created by young designers, sometimes students, who have the opportunity here to show their works. “This menu, for example, is by a graphic design student,” explains Oldenburg. “It is



a nice opportunity for him to show his skills.” Don't get the wrong idea: You don't have to order anything to sit for a spell in the Huiskamer. But food

and drinks are on offer all the same. “We also organise bicycle repair workshops, gardening, sewing... The creative interaction between people that has grown here in a short time

has surprised me.”

The Huiskamer also serves as a concert venue, sometimes with established names, like Daan or Balthazar, sometimes with new bands. “With ‘Living Live’ we want to do the same as with design: give young talent a platform,” says Oldenburg. “Groups are invited to send in demos and get the chance to record a song with a more famous band.”

Temporary

The building on Oude Beestenmarkt in Ghent's city centre had stood empty for a while and turned out to be an ideal spot for their plans. Oldenburg: “We searched for a long time for a suitable location. There are many vacant buildings, and a lot could be done with them, but the idea of temporary use is still gaining ground. The owner of this site, a music fan himself, agreed immediately. He even visits the place regularly. After his approval we furnished the Huiskamer in only three days. Quite an achievement!” But if you want to join in, you need to hurry. The Huiskamer is a temporary project and only runs until mid-July. A pity? “We have always seen it as something temporary,” explains Oldenburg. “It's not a feasible model for the long term. Creating a real ‘living room feeling’ clashes with a commercial approach. We both work voluntarily on this project, just like the bar staff. We have a lot of sponsorship, but that will not last. But I think we will be missed. Who knows, maybe the Huiskamer van Ernest will have a sequel.”

► www.huiskamer-ernest.be

WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

Flemish TV series *Quiz Me Quick* and *Wat als?* (*What If?*) both won **Rockies last weekend** at the Banff World Media Festival in Canada, the first for best sitcom and the latter for best comedy show. It's the second year in a row that *Wat als?* won best comedy at Banff.

► www.banffmediafestival.com

Flemish filmmaker Felix Van Groenningen has made Variety's 2013 list of **Top 10 European directors** to watch. Groenningen has garnered much international attention in the last few years with his award-winning films *De helaasheid der dingen* (*The Misfortunates*) and *The Broken Circle Breakdown*. The latter won two awards at the Berlin Film Festival and two at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City. Tribeca has bought the rights to distribute the film in the US.

► www.tinyurl.com/topeurodirectors

If you've always wanted to be **part of an art installation**, now's your chance. Bozar is hosting Japanese conceptual artist On Kawara's *One Million Years* this summer. The New York-based artist created the work in 1969 as a companion to his “date paintings” but didn't show it until the early 1990s. Now the audio installation, which consists solely of a man and a woman reading dates back and forth (one million of them), is staged all over the world. The dates will be read in English, and anyone who has 90 minutes of spare time between 26 June and 14 July is invited to register on Bozar's website.

► www.bozar.be

The 10-part BBC series *The White Queen*, which was **filmed entirely in Flanders**, premieres on BBC One this Sunday, 16 June. The lavish series follows the lives of several royal women during the turbulent War of the Roses and was largely filmed in Bruges, where several of the characters on which it is based travelled to in the 15th century. You'll see Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk standing in for the palace of Westminster's St Stephen's Chapel and the Heilige Bloed chapel standing in for the Tower of London. You'll also see Flemish actress Veerle Baetens (*The Broken Circle Breakdown*) playing the role of Margaret of Anjou in episodes four and five. *The White Queen* will air on VRT later in the year.

► www.tinyurl.com/thewhitequeen



STREEKPRODUCT SERIES

Alan Hope

Reynaertgebak

Sint-Niklaas cake sounds like something reserved for a once-a-year feast, so it was probably an early 19th-century marketing decision to change the name of this *streekproduct* (regional product) to Reynaertgebak. It's made almost exclusively in the city of Sint-Niklaas in East Flanders, hence the name, it having nothing to do with the bearded saint who brings presents to Flemish children. And it's definitely for year-round consumption. Last week the Reynaertgebak (Reynaert cake) was one of six products awarded official recognition as a *streekproduct* by the Flemish government's agricultural marketing agency Vlam. The others are hops jenever, dried sausage and oven-baked bacon, all from East Flanders, as well as dried sausage from Antwerp and Cervela sausage

from Zemst in Flemish Brabant. Reynaertgebak ingredients, which include almonds, pineapple and Grand Marnier, may not be 100% local to Sint-Niklaas, but the finished product is. The recipe goes back to the 1800s, and there was a time when every baker in the city made their own version. In 1973, however, the Royal Order of Master Pastry Bakers, vigilant against counterfeits, took the matter in hand and decreed that the cake bearing the name could only be produced by six bakers: five in Sint-Niklaas and one in Sinaai, about nine kilometres to the east of the city (and these days a district of it).

The name, incidentally, is a tribute to Reynaert the Fox, an epic 13th-century poem composed of 3,460 stanzas and originally published in Diets, the version of Dutch spoken in

the period 1200-1500 before the language was standardised. The authorship is not clear, other than that the poet's forename was Willem, but the tale inspired Chaucer, Shakespeare, Goethe and Willy Vandersteen. The cake is made with a biscuit base, topped with pineapple and marzipan, and if you think that sounds a little rich for everyday afternoon tea, you wouldn't be far wrong. Luckily, it also comes in bonbon form for the faint-hearted, available from the same outlets. Among the fans of this local



delicacy are the royal family, who regularly order their Reynaert cake for special occasions, though they haven't yet awarded the bakers a Royal warrant. Perhaps some guilty secrets are never meant to be revealed.

For a list of approved bakers, see the *streekproduct* website.

There's no alternative, this time, to actually making the trip in person. Genuine Reynaertgebak is not available in other retail outlets.

► www.streekproduct.be



ARRIVING AT ELLIS ISLAND

RED STAR LINE MUSEUM GRAND OPENING

ANTWERP, SEPT. 27TH 2013

Between 1873 and 1935 more than 2 million passengers boarded the Red Star Line in search of a better life on the other side of the ocean. On the historical site where the ships left the continent behind, the city of Antwerp is restoring the original buildings that will tell the story of those courageous emigrants. Help us keep alive the memory of the Red Star Line and its passengers.

**HELP US BUILD A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE USA AND EUROPE.
BECOME A PARTNER OF THE RED STAR LINE MUSEUM.**

More information: www.redstarline.org



STAD ANTWERPEN



www.redstarline.org

Home and away

Exhibition explores artists' attachment to – and critique of – the Flemish landscape

Ian Mundell

Contemporary Flemish artists have an uncomfortable relationship with their local landscape, according to *Weg van Vlaanderen*, a multi-media exhibition in Turnhout.

You will probably need to travel in order to see the exhibition *Weg van Vlaanderen* in Turnhout, but that should not put you off. Watching the towns and fields roll past the train or car window will put you in exactly the right frame of mind for this exploration of the way contemporary artists relate to the Flemish landscape.

And if you arrive with mixed feelings about the way Flanders looks, then you are on the right track. "It is a very ambiguous view of the landscape," says Jeroen Laureyns, the exhibition's curator. The 20 artists he brings together all demonstrate an attachment to the landscape as well as being critical of the state it is in. Laureyns' interest in the subject comes from a love of nature as well as a long engagement with contemporary art, as a critic and as a teacher at the Sint-Lucas Art School in Ghent. But he admits to a feeling of disillusionment, about both the environment and contemporary art.

Most fragmented

"If you long for nature in Belgium, then you have to look very hard because so much of our landscape has disappeared," he says. He has even included some maps from the European Environment Agency in the exhibition to show that Belgium does, indeed, have the most fragmented landscape in Europe. "I started with a very subjective idea of the landscape, but there is scientific proof."

As for contemporary art, his frustration is with people who continue the avant-garde tradition in a rhetorical, academic way rather than embracing the movement's fundamental urge to break with what has gone before. "It's not that I don't like installation art or conceptual art," he says, "but here I wanted to have a clear return to the image."

This is a challenge because contemporary art has a tendency to treat landscapes in abstract terms. This can be seen in the first room of the exhibition, which contrasts the lush late 19th-century romanticism of "The Picnic" by Emile Claus with the 20th-century abstraction of Raoul De Keyser, who reduces the landscape to white lines on a green background, and Roger Raveel's representation of the river Leie with blue inflatable bags.

Unexpected beauty

In order to return to images of the landscape, Laureyns has cast his net wider than might be expected. Alongside well-known Flemish gallery artists such as Hans Op de Beeck and Wim Delvoye, you'll find

work by architect Renaat Braem (whose 1968 book about Belgium was pointedly called *The Ugliest Country in the World*), illustrator Ever Meulen and photographers Michiel Hendryckx and Stephan Vanfleteren.

While Laureyns is adamant that he is not trying to get back to the romanticism of Emile Claus, he is happy to use outmoded aesthetic terms such as "beautiful" and "ugly". And if you are looking for beautiful images of Flanders, you end up in some unlikely places.

For example, *Weg van Vlaanderen* includes a triptych of screens, silently showing TV programmes made in the 1970s by Jef Cornelis.

"If you defend nature in your own country, you defend it all over the world"

These explore Flanders at ground level, following the highway between Antwerp and Brussels, for example, and from the air. "I was struck by the aesthetic beauty of the way he filmed the landscape but also the overview that he gives," Laureyns explains.

Then there are watercolours of mushrooms by Omer Van de Kerckhove for the National Botanical Garden at Meise. "They serve a scientific goal because the people who study plants say that, to have a really good picture, it is still better to have these drawings than a photograph," says Laureyns. "If you look at the way he draws mushrooms, there you can see the beauty of nature back again and art competing with nature. That's an old idea that has completely gone [from contemporary art], but there you can see a glimpse of it."

These paintings are also included to make the point that you often have to look for the small things if you want to find nature in the fragmented Flemish landscape.

Out of mind

The Botanical Garden also provides an alternative view of landscape photography, through a series of images that revisit locations in a line across Flanders early and late in the 20th century. They show how the landscape has changed, sometimes simply in its plant life but often more dramatically, as marshes are drained and rivers constrained. Reading the notes also brings home how much the "natural" landscape is shaped by human activity: a leafy river turns out to be an abandoned

flax pond, while wetlands are extensively worked peat bogs.

This idea of the landscape changing over time also emerges in drawings by Renaat Braem showing the development of a Flemish town since prehistoric times, through Roman and medieval periods and on to the industrial revolution. Completed in the dark year of 1942, the drawings end by looking forward idealistically to the town of 1999.

The exhibition and an accompanying book are the result of Laureyns' PhD project, one object of which has been to think about why contemporary Flemish artists prefer to be vague about the landscape or ignore it altogether. Here Laureyns

draws on ideas from the Dutch philosopher Ton Lemaire, who argues that all landscape is local. In Flanders, taking a local view often leads to uncomfortable ideas about national identity. "The reaction of contemporary artists is to stay out of it and not refer to the idea that the landscape could be local," Laureyns says.

On the outskirts

Thinking of the landscape in terms of nature offers a way around this. "A return to the local landscape with a focus on nature ensures that you have an attachment to something that is both local and universal," he argues. "If you defend nature in your own country, you defend it all over the world."

And if all landscapes are local, what is the significance of staging this exhibition in Turnhout? Partly the choice was pragmatic: Laureyns is making his debut as a curator, and the Warande arts centre has an impressive new exhibition space. But it also fits the spirit of the project, as does the fact that the book is published by an imprint from Veurne, on the other side of the country.

"I'm not the kind of Belgian who thinks that the only things that exist are the cities of Ghent, Antwerp and Brussels," Laureyns says. "I like going somewhere else, and I wanted to talk about the whole of the landscape in Flanders. It's also on the outskirts of Flanders, so to speak, where a little more of our landscape is left. That's true of Veurne and Turnhout, and I like that idea very much."

SPECIAL DATES

16 June Family Day, with a guided tour of the exhibition, followed by activities

23 June Curator Jeroen Laureyns will lead a guided tour of the exhibition

3-5 July Art camp for kids



From top: A makeshift garden plot in Zaventem, photographed by Michiel Hendryckx in 2009; Roger Raveel's installation on the river Leie in 1971; "The Picnic" by Emile Claus

UNTIL 25 AUGUST

Weg van Vlaanderen

De Warande, Warandestraat 42, Turnhout

► www.warande.be

Premieres, open air and a little femme fatale

Brussels Film Festival

Gorik de Henau

Every June, the Brussels Film Festival signals the end of the cultural season and marks the transition to the leisurely pace of the summer months, when music festivals take precedent over acquainting oneself with the latest high-brow art sensation.

The film festival has had its fair share of identity crises and organisational hiccups but recently seems to have found its niche in building bridges between cinema and music at the ever vibrant venue of Flagey.

This year's edition comprises some 90 films divided into three sections. The official jury (including, among others, Flemish actor Sam Louwyck) will award the Golden Iris to the best overall film and the White Iris to the best first feature. This year's big guest of honour is Bertrand Tavernier, a very French *cinéaste* who has always had a certain appeal in the Anglo-Saxon world thanks to English-language projects such as *Round Midnight* and *In the Electric Mist*. He doesn't have

a new film out but will hold master classes and present a retrospective of his films at Cinematek.

Stylish glamour will be provided by Charlotte Rampling, who will grace the festival with her presence to promote the English-language *I, Anna* (pictured). It's the big screen directorial debut of Rampling's son, Barnaby Southcombe, and she plays the *femme fatale* opposite Gabriel Byrne's detective.

Among the other premières of films that will be released later in the year are *The Best Offer*, the second English-language effort by Oscar-winning Italian director Giuseppe Tornatore (*Cinema Paradiso*), and Dutchman Nanouk Leopold's farm drama *Boven is het stil* (*It's All So Quiet*) with the ubiquitous Flemish thespian Wim Opbrouck.

A large part of the festival's appeal, though, lies in the free public screenings in the open air (weather permitting), which this year are entirely devoted to Belgian films. It's



a renewed opportunity to see movies that have gone on to a successful career in the international festival

circuit, like *The Broken Circle Breakdown*, *Offline* and *Tango libre*. The programmers venture into more

adventurous territory with a series of music documentaries. Interesting entries in this section are *Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer*, about the eponymous Russian band (several members of which are currently serving jail sentences for "religious hatred"); *Daan in Progress* (about Belgian language community-defying glam rocker Daan Stuyven) and *Bent Van Looy: Round the Bend*. The third details the recording of the first solo venture by the Das Pop singer and will be followed by a concert by the man himself.

More music awaits in a number of free events on the occasion of World Music Day on 21 June, with several concerts accompanying silent films, DJ sets and an after-party. Also present will be Chrysta Bell, the new muse of cult filmmaker David Lynch, who (in pure Julee Cruise fashion) produced and co-wrote her first album and is said to provide visuals for an enticing live show. The perfect soundtrack to a lazy summer.

19-26 June | Flagey, Heilig Kruisplein, Brussels | www.brff.be

PERFORMANCE

Het Theaterfestival

Parting is such sweet sorrow. The annual Het Theaterfestival looks back on the best of the past season in Dutch-language theatre and also whets the appetite for next year. A jury of culture and media professionals invite over a dozen of their favourite Flemish and Dutch productions of the past year to take a last bow. Tristero's Kristien De Proost reprises *Toestand*, a (nearly) one-woman show in which De Proost's character delivers an unflinching self-analysis in the mould of La Rochefoucauld and Lucien Freud (pictured).

Other selections include Pieter De Buysser and Hans Op de Beeck's *Kunstenfestivaldesarts* 2012 contribution *Book Burning* and Abattoir Fermé's *A Brief History of Hell*. The kids have their say this year, too. For the first time, Theaterfestival has organised a youth jury and an accompanying programme. Be warned: after fasting through the summer, theatre-goers are always ready to gorge when this event comes around. Most productions on the programme of Het Theaterfestival sell out early, so reserve your tickets now. **Georgio Valentino**



29 August to 7 September | Kaaitheater and Bronks, Brussels

www.theaterfestival.be

PERFORMANCES THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Kommil Foo - Breken: Tickets are flying out the door for this latest performance by the Flemish cabaret brothers, filled with their usual dose of comedy, music and absurdity (in Dutch)

JUN 13-16 20.15-22.00 at Arenberg, Arenbergstraat 28

www.arenbergschouwburg.be

Opglabbeek (Limburg)

Low Impact Man: Flemish environmental activist Steven Vromman continues his mission to reduce our ecological footprint with this amusing one-man show exalting the power of low-impact living (in Dutch)

JUN 14 19.30 at GC Den Ichter, Kapelstraat 16

www.opglabbeek.be

VISUAL ARTS

Strings

Contemporary art looks backward just as much as it looks forward. Traditional crafts, for example, are re-imagined by modern-minded artists and presented in a contemporary context. The Internationale Betonac Wedstrijd, which went through five editions between 1985 and 2000, encouraged such creative adaptation, particularly in the medium of textile. The possibilities were to prove endless. Thread lends itself to experiments with line, colour, texture and scale and it is easily combined with other media. Several winners and runners-up from the prize return to Brussels to show their recent work. They hail from all over the world, from the Netherlands to the UK to Italy to Japan. Thirteen Flemish artists are also on board to represent the region, which championed contemporary textiles long after Betonac. **GV**



Until 18 August | Design Vlaanderen, Brussels

www.designvlaanderen.be

MORE VISUAL ARTS THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Mijn kleine paradisijs (My Little Paradise): Group show exploring the historical importance of the Garden of Eden and contemporary interpretations of paradise, co-curated by Flemish artist Hans Op de Beeck

Until SEP 9 at Middelheim Museum, Middelheimlaan 61

www.middelheimmuseum.be

Blankenberge

International Art Festival Russia-Belarus-Belgium: The coastal city transforms into a creative space for young artists from Belgium, Russia and Belarus, with open-air painting and exhibitions, including *Philosophy of Harmony*, a photo project by Vladimir Chikin with the ballerinas of Moscow's Kremlin Ballet

Until JUN 15 at outdoor locations across Blankenberge

Until JUN 30 (exhibitions) at CC Casino, Zeedijk 150

www.tinyurl.com/intlartfestival

Brussels

The Seventies: Magazine covers, geometric wallpaper and interior design all confirm that the 70s are back, a revival that is illustrated by this exhibition about bold fashion and decadence

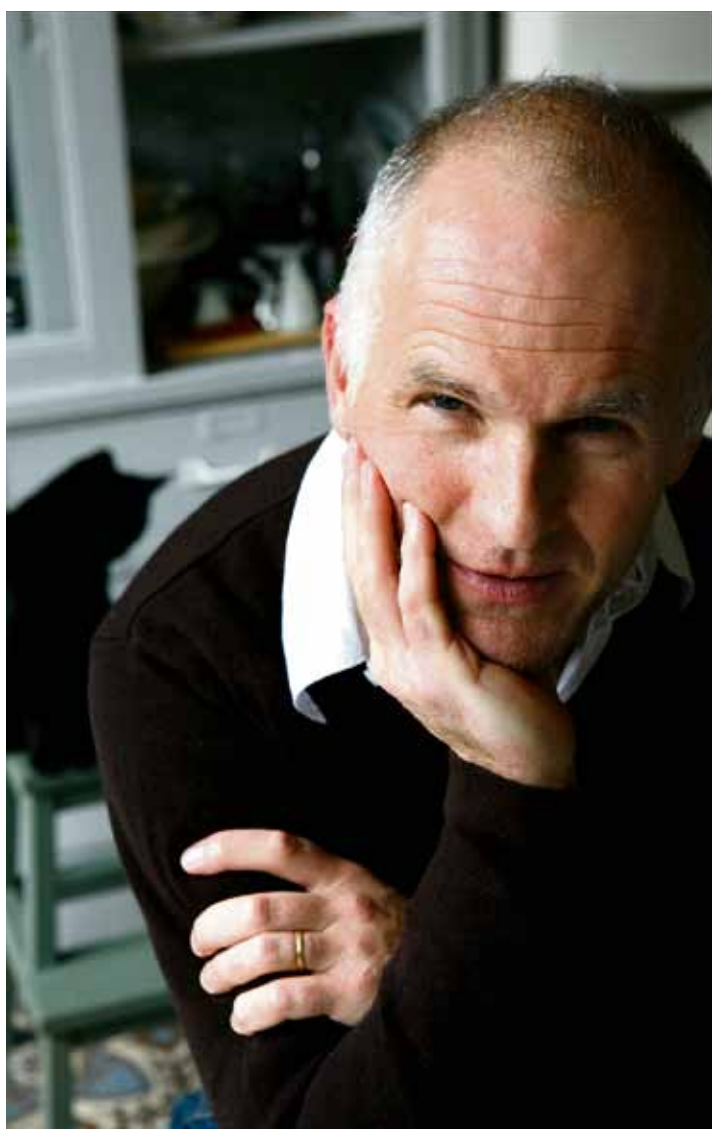
Until MAR 2 2014 at Costume and Lace Museum, Violetstraat 12

www.museumvoorhetkostuumendekant.be

SPECIAL EVENT

Felix Poetry Festival

There's no better way to get intimate with a people than through its poetry. Antwerp's Felix Poetry Festival showcases Belgian verse from both sides of the linguistic border as well as from across the world. This fifth edition is spread over three days; the first event is a lunchtime conversation between Flemish author and poet Johan De Boose and South African author Etienne van Heerden. The following event is billed as "The Best of Belgium" and begins with a plea for poetry. Every year the festival designates a devil's advocate to argue against the naysayers (novelists, perhaps?) who announce the death of poetry. This year's champion is Eeklo native Peter Theunynck (*pictured*), a known quantity in Flemish letters. His first volume of verse won him Antwerp's Prijs voor Letterkunde in 1997, and he has remained in the limelight ever since. Theunynck's defence is followed by readings by several Belgian poets, including Miguel Declercq, Lies Van Gasse, Serge Delaive and Antoine Wauters. The third night's international programme features poets from Russia, Romania, Canada and the Netherlands. **GV**



12-14 June, 20.00 | Felixpakhuis, Antwerp

► www.antwerpenboekenstad.be/felix

MORE SPECIAL EVENTS THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Zomer van Antwerpen (Summer of Antwerp): This annual festival of performance, music, film screenings and loads of outdoor fun runs right up until the end of summer

JUN 20-SEP 1 across Antwerp

► www.zva.be

Brussels

Festi'Konkoba: Festival of West African culture, with concerts, food, dance and more

JUN 15-16 at Curo-Hall, Anderlecht

► www.festikonkoba.com

Plazey: Four weeks of music and fun in the park, featuring concerts, film, performances, a bike repair café, children's activities and more

JUN 12-JUL 7 at Elisabethpark, Koekelberg

► www.plazey.be

CONCERT

Marc Ribot

Veteran of the New York avant-garde scene, Marc Ribot returns to Vooruit to the building's centennial. The critically respected free jazz guitarist might not have been there from the beginning, but he has a long history with the Ghent cultural landmark, having first visited in 1990 with the Jazz Passengers. Ribot and Co endeared themselves to the audience by forming an impromptu brass band with instruments and costumes found backstage the same day. His current solo set features socially and politically themed folk songs, including "Bread and Roses". This 100-year-old labour anthem was covered recently by Ribot's band Ceramic Dog in celebration of the Occupy Wall Street movement. The guitarist was, in his youth, a member of the Industrial Workers of the World and has remained not just socially conscious but politically active. **GV**



13 June, 21.00 | Vooruit, Ghent | ► www.vooruit.be

MORE CONCERTS THIS WEEK

Across Flanders

Andy Cairns: Solo show by the frontman of Irish rock group Therapy?, an acoustic selection of the best numbers by the group as well as original songs

JUN 12-14 20.00 in Bruges, Brussels & Hasselt

► www.therapyquestionmark.co.uk

Antwerp

Bouncing Souls: New Jersey punk rock veterans present their newest album *Comet*; Flemish band The Headshots open

JUN 18 19.30 at Trix, Noordersingel 28

► www.trixonline.be

Brussels

Whitesnake: Charismatic frontman David Coverdale and his legendary 1970s Brit rock band are back with more melodic metal to the tune of "Is This Love" and "Here I Go Again"

JUN 19 20.00 at Ancienne Belgique, Anspachlaan 110

► www.abconcerts.be

DUSK TIL DAWN

Katrien Lindemans

Vert Pop, 15 June Zomerfabriek, all summer

Vert Pop is celebrating its 10th anniversary this Saturday. Green parties Groen and Ecolo throw the popular party at some unique location somewhere in Brussels every year, and always book top DJs, spinning for a massive crowd. To make this edition one to remember, Vert Pop managed to book Massive Attack's Daddy G (*pictured*). And they've omitted the entrance fee. In short, it's a wicked, free party at the old ABP Warehouse in the centre of Brussels.

Besides Daddy G's trip-hop and electronica, house music will be provided by, among others, Dayne S (Germany) and Alex Palmer (Brussels). You do need to register online to get in.

Next week, meanwhile, on 20 June, Antwerp's Zomerfabriek opens again in the old Zurenborg gas factory. Part of Summer of Antwerp, it's made up of a bustling bar, a theatre on stilts and an open-air cinema screen. The Late Night Sessions play host to performances, movies, computer game battles and, of course, parties.

For the entire schedule, have a look at the website, but, as a rule of thumb, movies are on Monday, Thursdays are dedicated to world music, Fridays are all about future bass (UK house and funk), on Saturdays you'll hear the best hip hop and R&B, and on Sundays you get to choose the music by putting in a request on the Facebook page. Late Night Sessions always start at 22.00 and, trust us, chances are you'd rather stay there than travel back home. In that case, make sure you book a night in the dorm in advance. Rooms are decorated with second-hand furniture and divided into cosy niches for a good night's sleep.

► www.vertpop.be

► www.zva.be



BITE

Robyn Boyle

Paul’s Boutique ★★☆☆

If the name Paul’s Boutique rings a bell, perhaps it’s because the Kortrijk restaurant made front-page news last week when owner Paul Drèze gave his business a temporary name change. “Paul’s Winkeltje” was a tongue-in-cheek way of protesting against alderman Rudolf Scherpereel’s request for all shops and restaurants in the city to use Dutch rather than French names.

Let’s ignore for a moment that Paul’s Boutique is the name of a Beastie Boys album, which points more to Paul’s penchant for hip-hop music than his desire to give his restaurant a French-sounding name.

Politics aside, Paul’s is first and foremost known as a quality hamburger joint. My partner and I take our dog there on a sunny afternoon because we know it has a spacious front terrace. And then there’s our persistent hankering for a good cheeseburger.

For just €20, we get two giant burgers on crispy warm buns, a bowl of thick fries, dipping sauces and *bitterballen*, a Dutch snack of meat ragout balls, breaded and deep-fried. My Manifesto burger is topped with a fried egg and salty bacon strips, a bit like breakfast on a bun. The patty is thinner than I expected, but still juicy and made with 100% beef. Across the table, my partner’s devouring a burger smeared with green pesto and stacked high with lettuce, tomato, onion, parmesan and mozzarella. It seems to be the Italian burger and not the Super Cheese that we ordered, but he’s too hungry to make a fuss.

We have no complaints about the portions, though, as



neither of us is able to finish it all off. But that may also be because we grow a bit tired of the flavour-packed burgers towards the end. I start to wish I had ordered just the plain and simple hamburger with cheese (known here as the Paris Texas burger).

Don’t be put off by Paul’s location right outside the giant shopping mall K in Kortrijk. The atmosphere is very laid-back and enjoyable, especially outside where there’s plenty of seating at long picnic tables with cheerful tablecloths. Just be sure to get there early because Paul’s is a tiny place and only open until 20.00, around which time it can get quite busy.

► www.paulsboutique.be

- 📍 Kleine Sint-Jansstraat 15, Kortrijk; 0475.49.71.75
- 🕒 Mon-Fri 10.00-20.00; Sat 10.00-19.00
- 💶 Mains: €5-€10
- 📖 A variety of tasty hamburgers, including several vegetarian, with fries and *bitterballen*

TALKING SPORTS

Leo Cendrowicz

The moment football flashed forward



The Red Devils did not expect their fortunes to change so dramatically last Friday. Belgium faced Serbia in Brussels in a World Cup qualifier just before the summer break, while their group rivals Croatia hosted Scotland in Zagreb. Two home wins were forecast, meaning that the top of the group would be unchanged. Well, Belgium did their bit, with headed goals by Kevin De Bruyne and Marouane Fellaini securing their 2-1 victory. But Croatia stumbled to a shock 0-1 defeat to the Scots. Belgium jump three points clear, and suddenly next year’s World Cup finals in Brazil look within our grasp.

This is a remarkable time for Belgian football. After 12 years of failing to reach a major tournament, its talent is being feted around Europe, in particular England, and the team

are notching up some solid victories. Take the man of the match against Serbia, De Bruyne. Just 21 (though he could pass for 15), he signed early last year for Chelsea. He has been on loan this past season to Germany’s Werder Bremen, impressing Bundesliga rivals like Borussia Dortmund and Bayer Leverkusen, both of whom have made bids for him.

Born in Drongen, near Ghent, De Bruyne has honed his playmaking skills and proved his industry, yet he is likely to be brought back to Stamford Bridge to be part of returning coach José Mourinho’s squad, who would have noted not just his goal but his corner that led to Fellaini scoring.

And for sheer hard-headedness, there’s few tougher than captain Vincent Kompany (*pictured*), who

tangled with the Serbian keeper in the first half, suffering a broken nose, fractured eye socket and concussion. Despite the knock, he soldiered on until the final whistle, before being taken to hospital where he stayed the night.

Kompany later tweeted a picture of his battered, swollen face, which will have to be kept under a protective mask for the next six weeks. “The things you do for our country,” he tweeted.

The boys aren’t in Brazil yet, of course. They have three games left: trips to resurgent Scotland in September and to Croatia in October, before the final game at home to Wales. As Croatia showed, games can go awry. But the Red Devils are in the driving seat, and the road ahead looks a lot smoother now.

The last word...

- Pressing concern**

“I hope I still have it in me to lead my party to success in 2014. But after that, this orange has been squeezed dry.”

Mayor of Antwerp Bart De Wever, who is still serving as the president of his party, N-VA
- Sure thing**

“I’m bringing her over here, and then I’ll arrange a double interview, with her and me. That’s going to be great, don’t you think?”

Flemish crooner Eddy Wally, 80, has plans to bring movie star Sharon Stone to Flanders
- A little learning**

“I myself was a good student. I studied by reading three times: once slowly, then fast and then super-fast. That was usually enough.”

Federal economy minister and Ghent University professor Johan Vande Lanotte, gives some advice to students at exam time
- Tough love**

“He was a bit groggy, but he could speak and think clearly.”

Kris Van Crombrugge, physician to the Red Devils, who allowed captain Vincent Kompany back onto the field against Serbia with a broken nose, fractured eye-socket and concussion

NEXT WEEK
IN FLANDERS TODAY

Business

Sometimes business strategies are partially based on trends – what society is likely to do, think or want in the future, both short and long term. Trendhuis is an umbrella organisation in Mechelen that houses several trend-watchers. We talk to the founder about how they monitor – and predict – the trends that will shape our lives and businesses

Science & Education

If the name QinetiQ rings a bell, it’s because the East Flanders branch of the multi-national defence and aerospace technology company is responsible for the manufacture of the PROBA-V satellite that was successfully launched from the European Space Agency base in French Guyana last month. We talk to the scientists responsible for the satellite that is helping to classify the world’s vegetation

Tourism

Zomer van Antwerpen is one of those festivals that is so vast it’s hard to decide just how you should take part. Our resident *Antwerpenaar* will break it down for you and let you know the best bets in performance, open-air cafes, parades and film screenings that run until the very end of the summer