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# Every step you take

## Flemish rehabilitation centre improves quality of life for children with cerebral palsy

Senne Starckx

Every day, hundreds of children in Flanders spend hours on fitness machines and massage tables, at home or at the rehabilitation centre of the University Hospital Pellenberg. The centre is working hard to help children with cerebral palsy lead active lives.

Six months ago, 13-year-old Georges Vermast rode her bike for the first time in her life – from her home in the coastal city of Oostduinkerke straight to the beach. Even though she wasn't riding a real bike but a tricycle, it was a remarkable achievement and a demonstration of how endurance and devotion can eventually pay off.

A year before, Georges had been bound to her wheelchair, believing she would never be able to ride a bike or even walk independently.

The ride to the beach was the culmination of Georges' three-month rehabilitation programme at Leuven's University Hospital Pellenberg. There, she underwent radical surgery in which her legs were straightened and her leg muscles deviated. Thanks to that operation – and the intensive follow-up physiotherapy – Georges is now able to move her legs. To get around the rest of the time, she uses a walking frame.

Georges is just one of several thousand children and young adolescents in Flanders who suffer from cerebral palsy, a chronic brain disorder that arises at birth or at a very young age. Parts of the patient's brain are damaged or paralysed. The disorder is non-progressive, but the damage to the brain is permanent and (for the moment) irreparable.

## Signal misfire

Typical symptoms include weakened or absent motor skills, problems with speaking or learning and behaviour that fits the diagnosis of severe autism. However, symptoms vary so greatly that it's impossible to describe an average cerebral palsy patient.

In Dutch, the disorder is described as a "paralysed brain", but that term is not only a stigma, it's also not accurate. On the contrary, the main problem with cerebral palsy – certainly where the motor skills are concerned – is that the brain continuously fires the body's muscles with signals, keeping the muscles in



# Flanders wants more say in NMBS plans

## Region isn't consulted about crucial rail decisions that have impact

Alan Hope

Flanders is badly informed about decisions taken by the rail authority NMBS, even when the region's interests are seriously affected. There is also not enough consultation over projects such as the regional express network. These statements are part of a five-page letter sent to the NMBS and co-signed by minister-president Kris Peeters and mobility minister Hilde Crevits (*pictured*).

The problem has been brewing since July, when the NMBS' investment plans for 2013-2025 were approved by the federal government, including €2.6 billion – 10% of the total investment budget – destined for regional projects. Crevits at the time wrote to government enterprises minister Jean-Pascal Labille with a list of the Flemish government's priorities. To date, she says, those wishes have not been taken

into account.

"The Flemish region regrets that the network plans of the NMBS have not been worked out together with the region," the letter states. Primary among the concerns is the Brussels express network, known as GEN. The Flemish government was not adequately consulted, according to the letter despite the network extending well into Flanders.

Labille responded that he was "always ready to listen" to issues raised by the regions. "The aim is to achieve multi-modal mobility, where all modes of public transport correspond as much as possible with each other," he said. "That is also one of the goals of the Flemish government, which naturally pre-supposes there will be co-operation. We share the concern for there to be open and constructive discussion."



## NMBS extends surveillance cameras on trains

Rail authority NMBS has installed surveillance cameras along the entire length of 130 trains. The move comes as part of a campaign against aggression towards rail staff and comes just ahead of yet another attack on a train conductor this weekend. The camera system has been installed on the authority's Desiro trains, with the main purpose being a deterrent to violence. The cameras will also provide images of any attacker or vandals. The system forms part of the authority's anti-aggression master-plan of 55 measures that saw a 4% drop in the number of violent incidents on trains between 2011 and 2012. Manufacturer Siemens will equip the other 175 Desiro trains in the NMBS fleet with cameras over the next two years. The attack this weekend took place on the Ghent to Brussels Airport train Saturday afternoon when a man was caught trying to break into the train's service carriage. He attacked the conductor, several train windows were smashed, and the police were called. The train was delayed for about an hour. The attack is the latest in a series of incidents involving aggression against staff on trains between the two cities.



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## More and more children arrive hungry at school

More and more children are arriving at school without having eaten breakfast and with little or nothing for lunch, according to the Flemish Education Council (Vlor). This week the alderwoman for education in Ghent, Elke Decruynaere, called on the Flemish government to take steps to assist municipalities in addressing the problem.

According to Vlor, 9.7% of children in

the region are born into poverty. While overall welfare has risen in the last decades, poverty has not come down, bringing about a widening of the wealth gap. "The schools in Ghent obviously do what they can to provide these children with a meal," she said. "But in principle that's not their job. Schools don't have the organisation or the financial means." Ghent city council is to increase its annual budget for measures to tackle

the problem from €35,000 to €50,000, but, according to Decruynaere, the government needs to step in. "Schools and municipalities can't do it alone," she said.

According to Vlor member Gerda Bruneel, "teachers are coming to school with a loaf of bread and a pot of chocolate spread, to give out sandwiches to their pupils."

## No more pig castration without anaesthetic

Animal rights organisation Gaia has welcomed news of a ban on the castration of piglets without anaesthetic, announced by public health and animal welfare minister Laurette Onkelinx to coincide with World Animal Day last Friday. The ban includes a "transition period" and only becomes fully operational in 2018. Piglets are castrated at an early age to avoid a particular smell considered when cooking the meat later, found unpleasant by many consumers. Gaia and others have long pointed out that there are other less



© Pete Aylward/Flickr Commons

painful methods for avoiding the smell. At present, only one retailer in Belgium

– Intermarché – still sells meat from castrated piglets. The main supermarket and butcher chains have all either implemented bans of their own or will do so by the end of the year.

"This is a beautiful gift on World Animal Day for the animals and anyone who is concerned about their welfare," Gaia said in a statement. "For years we have been campaigning for a ban on pig castration.... Of course, we would have liked a shorter transition period, but now there is at least a clear deadline."

## "Sacred soil" for Flanders Fields Memorial Garden in London

Last week 70 sandbags were brought to Ypres, each one filled with soil from Commonwealth war cemeteries in West Flanders. The bags, each marked with the name of the cemetery, are now on their way to London to be used in the Flanders Fields Memorial Garden, currently being constructed near the Guards Museum close to Buckingham Palace.

The soil from Flanders Fields – "sacred soil," according to Andrew Wallis, curator of the Guards Museum – was collected by children from 70 schools in Belgium and the UK. The garden was designed by Bruges-based landscape architect Piet Blanckaert to be a quiet place of reflection and contemplation. "I didn't want to make a monument with huge columns and statues," Blanckaert said. "It had to be simple, a reflection of Flanders, Flanders Fields and London." It is hoped that more memorial gardens will be planted later in Germany, France, New Zealand and Canada, as part of the Flemish government's commemoration of the 1914-18 war. "I hope many people will go to see these gardens in London and elsewhere," said minister-president Kris Peeters, present at the ceremony in Ypres. "The historical bonds between Great Britain and Belgium, in particular the battlefields and cemeteries in Flanders, are very close and unique."

London's Memorial Garden will be officially inaugurated in the autumn of 2014.

► <http://memorial2014.duo.be>



© Belga

From left: West Flanders provincial governor Carl Decaluwe, British Ambassador to Belgium Jonathan Brenton and Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters on their way to the ceremony that sends 70 bags of Flemish soil to London

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES

€23,304

average annual income of a farmer in Flanders this year, 46% less than the average salary of an employee in another sector

8,108 km

of traffic jams in Belgium in September, the worst ever recorded and 2,000 km more than the same month last year

40%

of teachers in Brussels will look for a job outside the capital within five years, according to education minister Pascal Smet

€20

for a new provisional driving licence, an increase from €9 previously. The new licence, however, is in bank card format

€515

cost for an annual pass on Brussels public transport system MIVB, up from €488 now. The monthly pass goes up to €49



WEEK IN BRIEF

Belgacom is still trying to **rid its computer system of the malware** planted by hackers, allegedly working on behalf of Britain's intelligence gatherers at GCHQ. According to *De Standaard*, sources from both inside and outside the company report that the malware is of a kind that can mutate, which makes eradication difficult. Meanwhile, the Dutch broadcaster NOS has reported that the hacking was not solely concerned with Middle East mobile phone traffic, as widely reported. According to the NOS, the malware also spied on organisations in Brussels, among them the European Parliament, NATO and the interbank organisation Swift.

**Brussels will require a fifth European school** by 2015 if current rates of growth continue, according to Kari Kivinen, secretary-general of the schools. At present there are European schools in Laken, Sint-Lambrechts-Woluwe, Elsene and Ukkel, for a total of almost 11,000 students. That's 2,500 more than in the 2006-2007 academic year, when there were only three schools. Numbers are growing by 300 a year. Talks are under way regarding a location for a new school, Kivinen said, though nothing has yet been decided.

There were 1,332 **bankruptcies in Belgium in September, an all-time record** monthly total, according to consultancy Graydon. The previous record of 1,220 was set in October last year. The jobs under threat this month, at 2,833, is not a record. That was set in November 2011 with the collapse of the national airline Sabena, when more than 7,000 people lost their jobs in a single day.

Federal interior minister Joëlle Milquet has announced that 100 railway police officers will be seconded this month to the MIVB, to help **beef up security on public transport** in the capital. By the end of the year, the number of police

drafted into public transport patrols will have risen to 400. The measures began in April last year following the attack on MIVB supervisor Iliaz Tahiraj, who died of his injuries.

A 44-year-old man from Sint-Niklaas **has undergone euthanasia** in the Brussels University Hospital, despite not being terminally ill. The transgender man reportedly had several operations to change sex, none of which achieved the desired result. According to Professor Wim Distelmans, of the UZ Brussel, the man met the legal condition of "intolerable suffering", which may be psychological as well as physical.

Supermarket chain Delhaize has extended its **Zero Food Waste campaign** to 15 stores, with the addition of a supermarket in Kortrijk. The programme arranges for unsold foodstuffs to be distributed to those in need, taking advantage of the fact that many foods are still perfectly safe to eat for some days or weeks past their sell-by dates. "It's an absolute win-win situation," said company spokesperson Roel Dekelver. "We help combat poverty and participate in local communities, and we also no longer have to pay to have food waste hauled away."

The plumbing company in Waregem, West Flanders, that employed **Navid Sharifi, the Afghan refugee** who was expelled from Belgium last week after his asylum application failed, will attempt to bring him back by applying for a work permit. After being put on a flight to the Afghan capital Kabul, Sharifi was ordered not to return to Belgium for a period of three years. His lawyer intends to appeal that order.

Nizar Trabelsi, the former Tunisian footballer who was sentenced to 10 years in 2004 for **planning a terrorist attack on a US military base** and Kleine Brogel in Limburg, has been extradited to the US, federal justice minister Annemie

Turtelboom has confirmed. The US authorities asked for him to be handed over in 2007, and Belgium agreed in 2011. That decision was challenged, and finally upheld by the Council of State in September. The extradition came after assurances from Washington that Trabelsi will not face the death penalty and will be tried before a civilian court.

One in three business owners in Flanders **loses valuable time dealing with 1 and 2 cent coins**, according to Unizo, the organisation that represents the self-employed. Following a test project carried out in Waregem, West Flanders, only 5% of customers opposed scrapping the two coins. This week federal finance minister Koen Geens told the parliament's finance committee he would be in favour of introducing legislation that would round prices up to allow the coins to be abolished, providing the measure did not increase inflationary pressure. The production of 1 and 2 cent coins costs the EU about €1.4 billion more than the coins are nominally worth.

TV chef Wout Bru host of VTM's Masterchef series, has been appointed ambassador of De Kinderkok, an organisation that promotes **healthy eating among schoolchildren**. The group has called on Flemish education minister Pascal Smet to have schools set aside one hour a week for healthy cooking and eating lessons.

The Brussels prosecutor's office said it is investigating the disappearance of a **package containing 3kg of cocaine** from the Sint-Pieters Hospital in the city. The package was found by hospital staff among the possessions of a man brought to the emergency room, who later died. The hospital did not inform the police, claiming patient confidentiality, and destroyed the drugs on site, the hospital's chairman Yvan Mayeur said. "It would have been better had it been reported," he admitted.

OFFSIDE  
Royal identity problems

A mummified head found in a Paris attic in 2010 is not that of the French king Henry IV as previously claimed, according to Jean-Jacques Cassiman, professor of human genetics at the University of Leuven. The head has been around since revolutionaries ransacked Henry's grave in 1793 and passed from collector to collector until 2010, when it was rediscovered by a French journalist in the attic of a former tax collector. The distinguished forensic examiner Philippe Charlier confirmed it was the head of Henry IV. That was reinforced in 2012 when DNA from the head was compared with DNA from a blood-stained hankie. Now professor Cassiman has crushed both myths: Neither the head nor the



handkerchief is authentic. Henry IV (*pictured*) has been given the sobriquet "Good King Henry," which is odd given that he was widely hated for his Protestant faith; he converted on taking the throne but did not convince many Catholics. Henry survived 12 assassination

attempts during his 21-year reign, but not (spoiler alert!) the one carried out by the Catholic fanatic François Ravaillac in 1610. It's not the first time Cassiman has burst the bubble of royalty-obsessed French researchers. In 1998 he proved that a certain Karl Wilhelm Naundorff was not a descendant of the Bourbons, and in 2004 he showed that a preserved heart kept like a religious relic in Paris was not that of the uncrowned Louis XVII, the son of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. In 2004, Cassiman was asked to determine whether the remains in the Invalides in Paris were truly those of Napoleon. The French authorities, perhaps conscious of Cassiman's record, refused to give permission for the investigation.

Alan Hope

FACE OF FLANDERS



Flanders Today

Bigger and better: Flanders Today launches new website

*Flanders Today* launched in October of 2007 – exactly six years ago – to provide you with news and information on Flanders and Brussels in English. The rate at which you subscribed to this little weekly newspaper astounded even us; we went from 14,000 copies a week to 28,000 copies – and counting. That proved it: *Flanders Today* was filling a gap in the media landscape. Other English publications were focusing on Brussels. And if expats were partaking of local media, it was usually the French-speaking press. But in Belgium, as we quickly discover, that's only half the picture. The Flemish government decided to fund a newspaper that would provide news, business, politics and culture coverage focusing specifically on Flanders and its capital city, Brussels. So week after week, we delved into Flemish policies, municipal concerns, the region's economy, the work of Flemish artists and just where to go to get a good beer. We've told you about the Dutch-speaking community in Brussels, the quirky museums of Flanders, anything and everything to do on the coast and which villages are worth a visit. We've taught you Dutch words. We've introduced you to the politicians who speak them.

And we've provided you with the news of the day, so you could keep up with the region you've made your home. It seems we hit the spot – particularly for those of you living in Flanders, where you never had the opportunity to discover the region in a language you understood. Now we're ready to expand. No longer content with making you wait until Wednesdays, we've launched a new website with daily news. There are also new apps on the way for Android and iOS. So you can read *Flanders Today* whenever you want, wherever you are. Want to get the daily news emailed to you? We've got that, too. Want your trusted weekly e-newsletter? You can still have it, but now you can personalise it to receive as much – or as little – as you want. One of our most exciting new features is Make Your Own Newspaper. Choose the articles you want to read, and they will be delivered to you as a pdf – your own, personal newspaper. You can find all this great stuff on the new *Flanders Today* website, [www.flanderstoday.eu](http://www.flanderstoday.eu). And don't worry, we'll still keep publishing the print version you're holding in your hands. Thanks for sticking with us for the last six years. We look forward to serving you for the next six – and much, much longer.

Lisa Bradshaw  
Editor-in-chief

FLANDERS TODAY

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



The logo and the name Flanders Today belong to the Flemish Region (Benelux Beeldmerk nr 815.088). The editorial team of Flanders Today has full editorial autonomy regarding the content of the newspaper and is responsible for all content, as stipulated in the agreement between Corelio Publishing and the Flemish authorities.

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## 5TH COLUMN

Anja Otte

### Entitled

Politicians get called many names, but the one that is used the most often is probably *zakkenvuller* ("pocket filler", or money grabber). Yet another episode has given fuel to the idea that they are only in it for the money. The commotion started when two prominent members left the federal parliament to take up other jobs: Stefaan De Clerck (CD&V), the former justice minister who becomes president of Belgacom, and Danny Pieters, former Senate speaker who is now vice-rector of the University of Leuven. Upon leaving, both of them were entitled to severance bonuses, amounting to hundreds of thousands of euros. These severance bonuses were originally conceived to make it easier for people from all walks of life to become an MP. The idea was to give them some means of living should they not be re-elected – at least until they found new employment. The longer one has been in parliament, the higher the amount. Over the years, many MPs have started viewing the money as a form of pension savings (regardless of the fact that MPs are also entitled to a pension). Also, the bonus was not just granted when MPs were not re-elected but also when they left of their own accord. This left many a voter baffled, as no one else receives a bonus upon quitting. The severance bonus became an issue in the Flemish Parliament first, when Sven Gatz (Open VLD) left in 2011 to take a job in the beer industry. Gatz eventually forfeited the bonus, while Parliament decided that the bonus would no longer be given to anyone leaving voluntarily. At the time, it was believed that other assemblies would follow suit. They did not – until last week. With both De Clerck and Pieters, the situation was particularly awkward. De Clerck said he considered it to be "some kind of group insurance". Pieters, who lashed out against the bonus in the past, still applied for one for himself. His defence? The Senate decided not to abolish the bonuses; now I am entitled to it, too. Hardly convincing. In the end, both men decided to give up the money, while the House of Representatives, the Senate and the Brussels Parliament swiftly changed their regulations. This marks the end of an abominable aberration, but that might not be what the public will remember.

# Peeters welcomes Myanmar delegation

## The country follows up two recent Flemish economic missions there

Derek Blyth

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters met a delegation from Myanmar, led by vice president Nyan Tun, on 1 October. The Myanmar delegation also included transport minister Nyan Tun Aung and vice minister for foreign affairs Thank Kyaw, along with several other officials from the transport and foreign affairs ministries.

After years of isolation and military rule, Myanmar – also referred to as Burma – is becoming more accessible economically. The government is, however, largely influenced by the military, and the country is subject to tough international sanctions imposed by the EU and US. But its government is drawing up ambitious plans to develop transport infrastructure, ports



Flanders' minister-president Kris Peeters with Myanmar transport minister Nyan Tun Aung during an economic mission to the country last spring

and logistics capabilities. The government of Flanders has been building

relations with Myanmar following visits by Peeters in 2012 and again in March this year. The Peeters administration believes that Flemish companies can play a role in the economic development of Myanmar because of their expertise in areas such as transport, health care and agriculture.

Earlier this year, Peeters met the opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi during a mission to Myanmar. That visit helped to secure contracts for several Flemish companies, including Sint-Niklaas engineers SBE, which signed a deal to work as a consultant on a project to improve navigation on the Irrawaddy river. The Flemish government's investment agency Flanders Investment & Trade has established an office in the former capital Yangon.

## Crevits announces €300 million for improving cycle routes

Flemish transport minister Hilde Crevits has announced a new €300 million investment plan for major improvements to Flanders' cycling networks in the period 2013-15. The plan focuses on 516 individual projects across the region.

The Flemish region already has a well-developed network of cycle routes, she said, but the new plan aims to improve them by addressing missing links, constructing bike "superhighways" and sending out teams to test that cycle paths are properly designed and maintained. Of the total budget, €21 million will

go towards the construction of cycle superhighways that will link Flemish cities. Crevits sees these routes as increasingly important in future due to the popularity of electric bicycles. The minister noted that the current government will have created or upgraded some 1,750 kilometres of cycle paths by 2014, representing the distance from Brussels to Porto. "Flanders is one of the leading regions in Europe for cycling," she said. "In the coming years, we absolutely have to carry on building the infrastructure."

► [www.mobielvlaanderen.be/ffi](http://www.mobielvlaanderen.be/ffi)

## Court ruling on non-appointed mayor in *de rand*

Flemish interior minister Geert Bourgeois will appeal a ruling last week by the Brussels court of first instance that has ordered him to pay damages of €40,000 to Véronique Caprasse because he refused to appoint her as mayor of Kraainem following the last municipal elections.

Bourgeois made the decision following a conversation with Caprasse in which he determined that she was unwilling to implement the language laws applicable to Kraainem. These laws state that Dutch is the official language of municipalities situated in *de rand*, or the belt, around Brussels, some of which are allowed to grant limited services – known as "facilities" – in French for French-speaking residents. Caprasse took her case to the civil court, claiming €35,000 in damages – the difference between the salary she

receives as alderman and the salary she would have received as mayor – and an additional €10,000 in moral damages.

The civil court awarded the €35,000 and a reduced figure of €5,000 in moral damages. Bourgeois said that if Caprasse had agreed to "apply the language laws, as interpreted by the Council of State ... she would have been appointed."

He referred to his decision to appoint the French-speaker Pierre Rolin as mayor of Sint-Genesius-Rode, after Rolin had said that he would respect the language laws.

The judge argued that the government was not at liberty to interpret the language laws and that the decisions of the Council of State were ad hoc decisions specific to the cases in question.

## Government scraps severance pay for resignations

The federal parliament has abolished severance payments to MPs who resign from the House voluntarily. The new rules were announced by the speaker, André Flahaut.

The ruling was fast tracked last week following a number of controversial cases involving members of the Senate and the House of Representatives. In one case, Danny Pieters resigned his post as speaker in the Senate last year to take up a new position as vice-rector of the University of Leuven but insisted he was entitled to a severance payment. The issue of severance pay flared up again last week when MP

Stefaan De Clerck announced that he would claim his severance payment when he takes up a new position later this year as chairman of Belgacom. But both representatives said that they would drop their claims for severance pay if parliament decided to abolish such payouts. MP Stefaan Van Hecke said the decision was a positive step towards equality. "It means that MPs are treated the same as any other employee who resigns voluntarily to take up another job," he said.

The new rules do not apply to MPs who are forced to resign because of issues such as health concerns.

## Flemish representative receives Austrian award

André Hebbelinck, the Flemish government's representative in Central Europe, received the prestigious Grand Golden Decoration of Honour with Star for Services to the Republic of Austria. The award was presented by the Austrian president, Heinz Fisher.

Hebbelinck, who is based in Vienna, was praised for his efforts over the past five years in developing bilateral co-operation between Flanders and Central Europe in the areas of culture, economics and politics. He played a particularly important role in securing Flemish government

funding for the renovation of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. The Flemish contribution went towards the restoration of the Flemish Picture Gallery, which has an outstanding collection of works by Flemish masters such as Anthony van Dyck and Rubens.

The award was also given in recognition of Hebbelinck's work in the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary and Slovakia. This work has led to Vienna becoming a hub for relations between the Central European countries and Flanders.

► [www.flanders.at](http://www.flanders.at)

## Flanders and Quebec sign co-operation agreement

Interior and tourism minister Geert Bourgeois has signed a co-operation agreement with the government of Quebec province in Canada. The minister was on a four-day mission to Quebec for discussions on a range of issues, including heritage and immigration.

The agreement is an extension of a pact signed between the two

governments in 1989, the first international accord signed by the Flemish region after earlier state reforms granted it the power to negotiate international treaties.

The co-operation agreement with Quebec includes the exchange of students and lecturers in higher education, environment, tourism and development aid.

It also involved the signing of an agreement between the Flemish fund for scientific research and its Quebec counterpart, which will see concrete co-operation projects set up over the next three years.

Last year Canada was 25th in the list of export territories for Flanders, and Quebec accounted for around one-third of those exports.



Geert Bourgeois sign the co-operation agreement, together with Quebec parliament chair Jacques Chagnon



# Every step you take

## Young patients face radical surgery and months of hard work

► continued from page 1



Orthopaedist and surgeon Guy Molenaers

a constant state of tension. In other words, patients' muscles are always contracting, never resting. This leads to the manifestation of involuntary movements, causing difficulties in walking or the use of arm and hand function.

What causes cerebral palsy is still a bit of a mystery. In the past, a lack of oxygen, known as hypoxia, during childbirth was thought to be the major cause, but recently this theory has been refuted. "We now consider cerebral palsy to be a result of complications during development of the foetus in the womb," says orthopaedist and surgeon Guy Molenaers, who leads the multidisciplinary rehabilitation centre at Pellenberg. "We also know there's an important genetic factor in the manifestation of the disease."

Naturally, all these children (and adults) need special assistance. These children all go to school and are part of youth groups or other activities. So what's the best way to treat them, without interfering too much in their daily lives?

One key feature that distinguishes children from adults is that they're growing and constantly changing their motor skills. But for children with cerebral palsy, the permanent high muscle tone and spasticity stand in the way of their development. The consequences are devastating:

*"One advantage of a child's brain and nervous system is that they're elastic to some extent"*

structural muscle reductions and bony deformities that cause deviant movement, constantly bent elbows and knees, and sometimes even a hip that spontaneously comes out of its socket.

"In contrast to classic orthopaedics, in which fractures and muscle strains can be repaired, we can't intervene at the root of the disorder, which lies deep inside the brain," says Molenaers. "Our treatment is aimed at minimising the effects of the high muscle tone and spasticity. This way, we can prevent the occurrence of muscle and bone problems, and



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The rehabilitation department at the University Hospital Pellenberg teaches children with cerebral palsy how to better control their movements

we can limit the need for surgical treatment."

One way to reduce the muscle tone is to inject botulinetoxine, better known as botox, in the children's muscles. This enables the physiotherapist to stretch and intensively train the muscles. Molenaers: "One advantage of a child's brain and nervous system is that it's elastic to some extent. The damaged brain is able to make new connections, using other routes than the blocked ones in the body. We stimulate this 'rerouting' by

Here, a 3D gait analysis is made of the movements of the child's torso, legs, arms and even the hands while doing specific locomotive tasks.

It looks a bit like a catwalk – but one with a soft floor and toys on it (most children don't understand why they have to walk back and forth for more than two hours). While they're walking – or shuffling, assisted by a walking frame – the children's limbs are covered with dozens of tiny sensors and electrodes.

"The electrodes measure the muscle tone while moving," explains Katrien Fagard, a physiotherapist at Pellenberg. "And the sensors emit light that the cameras around the catwalk can register." A computer combines all these signals and churns out a detailed movement analysis in 3D. "Based on this analysis, we can see when – and at what speed – the muscular tone of our children differs from that of healthy children," says Fagard.

Based on the analysis, a treatment is determined and a patient is ready to start with a strict physiotherapy regime, often on a daily basis. In the rehabilitation room, fitness-like machines help the children bend their elbows or knees again, ride a tricycle or start to walk. The daily visits demand a lot of the children – and of their parents and family. In most cases, parents have to bring their children to Pellenberg five days a week.

Freya (not her real name) is the mother of Bruno, an 18-year-old



© Dieter Telemans

Physiotherapist Katrien Fagard works with a child at Pellenberg

who's become severely autistic due to cerebral palsy. He has been at Pellenberg every day for six months. A couple of weeks ago, Bruno had surgery, through which – in the long term – he might be able to start using his legs again, having spent his entire life in a wheelchair.

"First I had doubts about the surgery," says Freya. "I thought: Why should I disrupt his life? He's happy the way he is. But Dr Molenaers' team are convinced there is indeed a chance that my son could walk again in the future." To maximise that chance, Bruno undergoes physiotherapy

every day.

Of course, there's the expense – for the parents and for society – of treating children with cerebral palsy. "For patients who are under 18, the treatment is refunded by health care insurance," says Molenaers. "But the parents have to pay a lot of non-refundable medical expenses. Besides that, housing and moving a disabled child asks a lot of them. They often need an elevator at home; their car needs to be adapted to transport a wheelchair... By the way, none of these children will ever get insurance for hospitalisation."

## MOVE TO IMPROVE

To offer children with cerebral palsy a treatment that really makes a difference – without ruining their parents financially – Dr Guy Molenaers started a relief fund in 2008 called Move to Improve. One of its initiatives was a sponsored bicycle ride from Geneva to Nice, organised by Stefaan Vermast, who saw firsthand the costs of providing fitness equipment during his daughter Georges' struggle to learn to ride a bike.

"For a good rehabilitation, you need specialised equipment, and the children should be able to practise at home," he says. The ride allowed Move to Improve to buy six continuous passive motion

(CPM) machines, which help to bend the children's knees after surgery. Vermast: "For Georges, we had to pay €550 per month to have a CPM machine at home – without any refund. Now six machines are hired out to patients for free."

Move to Improve organised another cycling event last August, when 80 cyclists, including Flanders' minister-president Kris Peeters, rode across the provinces of Antwerp and Limburg. One of the stops was Mol, where former world champion cyclist and Move to Improve patron Tom Boonen lives. With the proceeds, the fund wants to buy a tricycle that's specially adapted for rehabilitation.

► [www.movetoimprove.be](http://www.movetoimprove.be)



WEEK IN  
BUSINESS

## Air ▶ B.pass

Carrier Brussels Airlines is introducing a B.pass subscription system targeted at commuting expats and Belgians travelling to their holiday homes. The B.pass covers six return flights over a three-month period to the same destination in Europe.

## Autos ▶ Qoros

The Chinese car manufacturer is seeking a distribution network to launch the brand in Belgium. The company is said to be in negotiations with Bornem-based Beherman group, previously the importer of Saab and distributor of Mitsubishi.

## Banking ▶ Delta Lloyd

The Dutch financial services and insurance group is seeking a buyer for its local banking activities to concentrate on developing its insurance business. The bank has 55 branches in Belgium and some 570 employees.

## Chemicals ▶ Solvay

The Brussels-based chemicals and plastics manufacturer is investing €20 million to build a 100,000 tonnes capacity sodium bicarbonate plant in Thailand. The new facility is expected to come on stream in 2015.

## Distribution ▶ Lidl

German discount supermarket Lidl inaugurated a new 45,000 square-metre distribution centre in Sint-Niklaas. The €50 million investment comes on top of the €100 million the company has earmarked for the renovation and development of its 285 local stores this year.

## Holdings ▶ Dexia

The ailing Belgo-French holding company has sold its French Sofaxis insurance brokerage activities to the Société Hospitalière d'Assurance Mutuelle for €136 million.

## Metals ▶ Nyrstar

The world-leading zinc producer, based in Balen, Antwerp province, has signed an agreement with Hong Kong's Noble trading group to supply 200,000 tonnes of zinc a year over the next four years.

## Retail ▶ Media Markt

The appliance and electronics retailer Saturn is rebranding four of its outlets into Media Markt stores. Both brands are owned by the German Metro group. The company is also investing €30 million to open up to 10 more Media Markt stores over the next three years, including one in Mechelen this autumn and one in Turnhout next year.

More than 4,000 new jobs  
for port of Antwerp

City's chamber of commerce says port is "alive and kicking"

Alan Hope

The port of Antwerp and the adjoining area of East Flanders known as the Waasland will require an additional 4,400 new workers over the next three years, according to a poll taken by the Antwerp chamber of commerce among 170 businesses in the area. The majority of the jobs are in technical fields, as well as IT staff and administrators.

According to soundings taken by the chamber of commerce, industries in the port will be advertising some 2,500 vacancies; most of these will be in process operations and maintenance. Port-related and logistics jobs will amount to nearly 1,900, including accountants, IT personnel and dispatchers.

"To young people who will soon be looking for work, I say ... The port is alive and kicking and a



© Arminius/Wikimedia Commons

source of well-paid jobs," said Luc Luwel of the chamber of commerce.

The new jobs offer some solace in the wake of news from Flemish labour minister Philippe Muyters that unemployment in September was 9.5% higher

than the same period last year. The region now counts 236,675 unemployed, a rate of nearly 8%. For women, the unemployment rate is 8.15% and for men 7.8%. One in four of those seeking work is under the age of 25.

Meanwhile, the Antwerp port authority has launched a new international branding campaign under the slogan "Everything is possible at the port of Antwerp". The campaign, which will run to the end of 2014, will feature a number of the port's major clients, who will testify to "the can-do mentality" to be found in the industry.

"Everyone who has a story to tell can become an ambassador of the port, to carry our message into the world," said Luc Arnouts, the port's chief commercial officer.

▶ [www.portofantwerp.com/everythingispossible](http://www.portofantwerp.com/everythingispossible)

First World War tourism  
campaigns launched

With First World War centenary events starting soon, Flemish tourist organisations Toerisme Vlaanderen and Westtoer have launched a publicity campaign to attract tourists to the battlefield sites of West Flanders.

With the slogan "De Grote Oorlog: Om nooit te vergeten" (The Great War: Lest We Forget) the centre of the campaign is a new website in three languages offering information on events, sites, museums and accommodation in the area. One section features Great War journeys into neighbouring areas in French Flanders; visitors can also download a brochure detailing the car trip Life at the Front.

Flemish tourism and heritage minister Geert Bourgeois said that one-quarter of the infrastructure projects announced in 2010, with financing of €15 million, are now completed. The projects – in Ypres, Poperinge and Zonnebeke – are already open and have begun attracting tourists.

"Our goal is to receive 500,000 people a year starting next year with

a top-quality, hospitable welcome, so that their experience of the commemoration is meaningful," Bourgeois said. "In so doing, we can ensure that the message – no more war – is not lost."

▶ [www.flandersfields.be](http://www.flandersfields.be)



© courtesy In Flanders Fields

In Flanders Fields museum in Ypres was renovated as part of improvement leading up to the centenary

Antwerp praises return of  
Benelux train

The city of Antwerp is "delighted" at the decision to reinstate the Benelux train from Brussels to Amsterdam in the wake of the ill-fated Fyra high-speed train, according to the city's alderman for business, Koen Kennis.

The rail authority NMBS has announced it will resume a service between the two capitals at the end of 2014, with 16 trains a day. At present the capitals are only linked by a Thalys service. The resumed Benelux train, which was taken out of service when Fyra launched, will stop at Brussels Airport and in Antwerp. The Brussels-The Hague train, meanwhile, which began running earlier this week will operate 10 times a day.

The new service will be an opportunity, Kennis said, for Antwerp to position itself as a major destination for shopping tourism. "With a better train service out of the Netherlands and a general open-mindedness in the consideration of being open on Sunday, we should be able to take Antwerp's shopping policy to the next level."

Peter Aerts, the director of the Antwerp chapter of Unizo, which represents small businesses, said his organisation would not protest against Sunday opening hours as long as the city was prepared to invest sufficiently in marketing to ensure enough extra income to compensate shop owners for the additional expense.

## Flemish delegation to visit UK

A group of representatives of businesses in Flanders will visit Hull in Yorkshire this week to take part in the seminar Doing Business in Belgium. The delegation includes Miel Vermorgen, director of sales and logistics at the port of Zeebrugge; Ben De Smit, economic and commercial counsellor for Flanders Investment & Trade at its London office; and Michel Vanhoonacker, chairman of the Belgian Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce.

"Throughout its history, Zeebrugge has been the port through which the largest quantity of cargo has passed to and from the UK," Vermorgen told *Flanders Today*. "Over time, Zeebrugge has also grown as a platform for continental Europe: Our rail network, thanks to

the two turntables of Dourges and Duisburg, now reaches the whole of southern Europe, all the way to the eastern edge of continental Europe. It's certainly worthwhile to bring these developments to light, especially for a market such as the UK, which is of crucial importance for our port."

Peter Brown, director of World Trade Centre Hull & Humber, which is helping organise the seminar, agreed: "Zeebrugge is one of the fastest growing ports between Le Havre and Hamburg, which together handle more than a billion tonnes of cargo a year," he said. "Flanders is a prime business region and strategically located in the centre of the most prosperous part of Europe."

▶ [www.portofzeebrugge.be](http://www.portofzeebrugge.be)

Base launches 4G mobile  
internet

Mobile phone operator Base launched its 4G mobile internet service in 12 cities across Flanders last week. Fourth-generation internet, known as 4G or LTE, offers greatly increased download speeds – up to 86 megabytes per second, or 10 times the speed of 3G.

Base is the region's second operator to offer 4G, after Belgacom's Proximus launched in Antwerp, Ghent, Leuven, Hasselt and Haasrode last year. "We are closing the gap," said Base CEO Jos Donvil (pictured). "As far as network coverage is concerned we're already the best for 2G and coming up fast on 3G."

Other operators that contract the use of Base's network, such as Mobile Vikings, will also be able to offer 4G.

Base's 4G is available in Aalst, Antwerp, Beveren, Bruges, Genk, Gent, Hasselt, Kortrijk, Leuven, Mechelen, Ostend and Sint-Truiden. Base said it would add further cities shortly. The glaring omission from



© KPN

the list is Brussels, as the region's government continues to enforce stricter radiation standards than elsewhere for GSM masts. That means the capital has relatively few masts for the population, stretching capacity too far to allow 4G to operate at present.

iPhone users will also have to wait: both Proximus and Base are waiting for Apple's approval to allow iPhone users onto the new network.



# Science through new eyes

## The virtual world of the cyber classroom brings workshops at Technopolis up to date

Andy Furniere

The newest addition to the recently expanded Technopolis museum in Mechelen is the cyber classroom, installed in Belgium for the first time. Thanks to German technology, youngsters can see such things as chemical reactions in 3D, making tricky concepts easier to grasp. The cyber classroom is installed at the Lab, where children take part in workshops full of chemical and biological experiments.

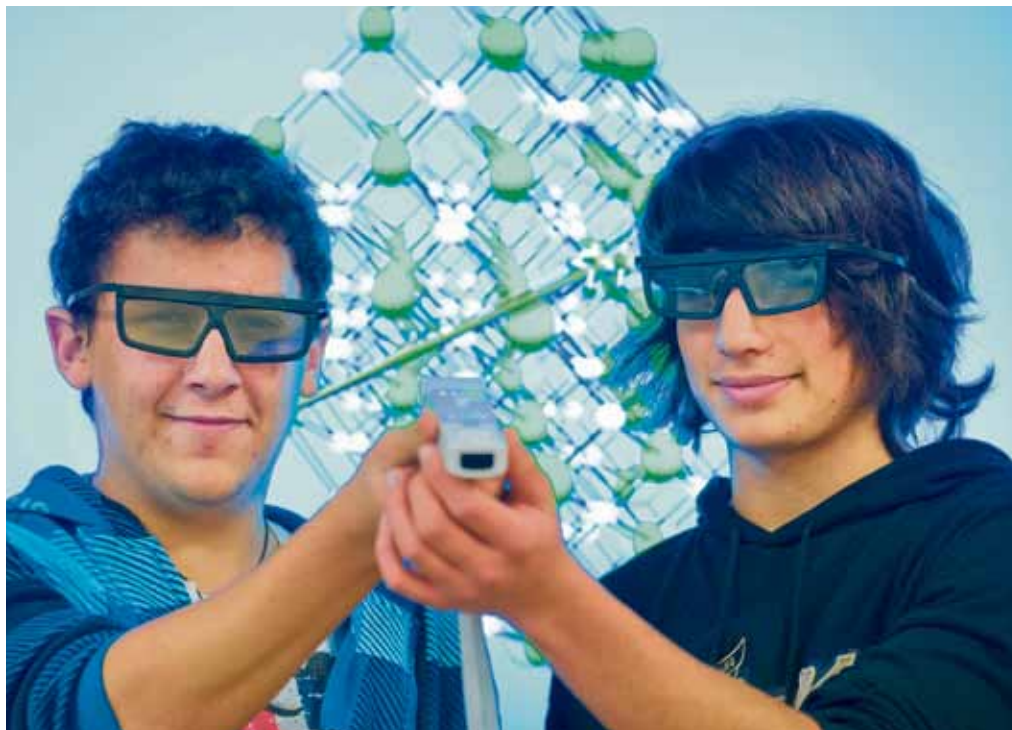
The Lab at Technopolis is a separate room in the hands-on science centre that's not open to general visitors. In the Lab, students in the second and third grade of secondary education can use the specialised equipment to find lactose in milk, analyse the DNA of plants, create bio-ethanol and compare regular sunscreen to sunscreen with nanoparticles. On Wednesday afternoons, there is one workshop, and during the holidays and at weekends, there are three three-hour workshops a day.

Technopolis hopes that the Lab will help it reach a new target group: adolescents. The general exhibitions mostly cater to a younger audience. "On some occasions, we also provide simpler workshops for younger children, but the Lab is mainly meant for youngsters who are starting to consider their future school careers," says Dennis Van Landeghem, one of the workshops' organisers. These youngsters will soon also be invited to the new Atelier, where they will be able to create designs with equipment such as 3D printers, like in a fabrication laboratory, or fab lab.

For a couple of weeks now, the Lab has housed a high-tech "cyber classroom", which looks like a new type of game console. It's not meant for playing games, though, but for making abstract scientific concepts such as DNA easier to understand.

With the aid of 3D glasses and a Wii console controller, students can examine molecules from all sides and make molecular models. On the right-hand side of the screen, they receive tips and can read a concise explanation of the visualised processes in Dutch. "It definitely helps to increase their interest, because they can actually dive into these otherwise quite inaccessible worlds," says Van Landeghem.

The cyber classrooms have found their way to Belgium thanks to the partnership of Technopolis with German chemistry company Evonik. Evonik designed the 3D modules with the help of Stuttgart-based technology company Visenso, which developed the innovative 3D teaching and



© Courtesy Evonik

learning environment. Evonik earlier introduced the cyber classroom at about 10 German schools and universities. The company hopes to further internationalise the concept by creating versions in different languages.

Via this fun and accessible teaching technology, Evonik – which also has a branch in Antwerp – hopes to attract more youngsters to the studies that prepare them for a career in the chemistry sector. Although the number of registrations for these studies is rising, the Belgian chemistry industry still needs many qualified young people to become the next generation of scientists. Research by essenscia, the Belgian umbrella organisation for the chemistry and life sciences sectors, predicts that in Flanders annually about 2,000 of the 60,000 employees in these industries will retire.

Although the sponsor of the cyber classroom programme is a chemistry company, there is also virtual lesson material in other disciplines of general humanities education like maths, physics, biology and art. There also is a version dedicated to topics for more technical studies, such as production and microsystems technology.

To illustrate the many possibilities of this virtual

classroom, Van Landeghem pushes a few buttons and suddenly the particle detector of Cern in Switzerland appears before my bespectacled eyes. "The cyber classroom also offers many possibilities for the Atelier," he says. It could, for example, help students make their own 3D copy of Michelangelo's David.

"Furthermore, we hope to create our own virtual models, specially adapted to the workshops here," he adds. Another plan is to create a programme that enables students to control the cyber classroom with a tablet computer, which could be more practical. For people without a Wii, like me, it is a little complicated getting used to moving around in this virtual universe. The staff at Technopolis have received training from the developer, Visenso.

At the end of the demonstration, I ask Van Landeghem how popular the cyber classroom was among the few classes that have already tried out the new technology. "The reactions were definitely positive as the interactive assignments speak to their imagination," he says. "Still, the experiments with small explosions usually leave the biggest impression."

► [www.technopolis.be](http://www.technopolis.be)

## WEEK IN INNOVATION

### Robot helps children with physical therapy

Ghent University Hospital will be the first institution in the world to deploy a robot to help children with physical rehabilitation. In the next two years, physical therapists at Ghent will test how a humanoid robot named Zora can assist children in carrying out certain physical therapies that have been taught to the children beforehand. Zora should make the repetition of actions less dull, by accompanying its instructions with music, sound effects and compliments. The robot of 57cm high includes a camera, which records the therapy. Zora can also be programmed to detect falls in elderly or epileptic patients. The project is the result of a collaboration between Ghent University, the Christian Mutuality and computing technology firms Qbmt of Ostend and Qbis of Bruges.

► [www.qbis.be](http://www.qbis.be)

### One million colon cancer tests

The government of Flanders has launched a research project on the prevalence of colon cancer in the region. Colon cancer is the second most common cancer in women and the third most common in men. Annually, about 5,000 Flemings are diagnosed with cancer and 1,800 die from the disease. Experts believe that the number of related deaths can be reduced by 400 per year if the cancer is detected at an early stage. From the middle of October to the end of 2015, the Centre for Cancer Detection will send an invitation for testing to about 1.4 million residents between the ages of 56 and 74. The participants will receive a new invitation every two years.

► [www.bevolkingsonderzoek.be](http://www.bevolkingsonderzoek.be)

### VUB research group opens new "light lab"

Researchers of the Free University of Brussels' (VUB) B-Phot, specialised in photonics, or light technology, have moved into the new Photonics Innovation Centre in Gooik, Flemish Brabant. The lab houses valuable high-tech equipment that enables the scientists to create prototypes for business, from large to SMEs. The VUB team will integrate components, like microlenses on labs-on-chips. Labs-on-chips are miniature laboratories of a few square millimetres or centimetres. Recently, the researchers succeeded in making plastic microchips to measure dangerous substances in solutions via fluorescence. B-Phot is one of a few labs in the world that focuses on the development of optical technology like labs-on-chips in biodegradable plastics, meant for low-cost mass production.

► [www.b-phot.org](http://www.b-phot.org)

## Q&A

**Nico Callewaert of life sciences research institute VIB is one of two European scientists in the Top 20 Translational Researchers list of leading journal *Nature Biotechnology***

### How does *Nature Biotechnology* designate its Top 20?

Translational research means that scientific insights are converted into actual applications, not just into theoretical papers. A team tasked by *Nature Biotechnology* first screened the main research journals from last year for publications that caught the attention of biotech enterprises. Then they investigated how active the senior authors had been in filing for patents granted in the US or Europe. With a total of 10 approved patents up to last year, I made 18th place in the ranking.

**Seventeen scientists in the Top 20 work in the US. Why do you think this is?**

In the US, there is a stronger focus on concrete applications through collaboration with enterprises, while fundamental research is still appreciated more in Europe. But I have the feeling that this mentality is changing. Thankfully, the EU has made applying for patents easier by removing the obligation to file your request in all the European languages from next year on.

### What was your most important achievement last year?

My lab worked with teams from the Free University of Brussels (VUB) and the Ghent firm Oxyrane to start developing a more efficient and cheaper therapy for lysosomal storage diseases.



© Valerie Clarysse, VIB

### What are lysosomal storage diseases?

A lysosome is like a cell's recycling

centre: It processes waste materials into substances that the cell can use again. In patients suffering from inherited lysosomal storage diseases, one or more essential enzymes are absent or don't function properly. The result is that accumulating cellular debris poisons the cell, leading to organ damage. One example of these disorders is Pompe disease, which affects the muscles. Our team improved the biotechnology to create enzymes that patients with these disorders don't have. After our promising trials on mice and in vitro, Oxyrane will start testing the technique on patients with Pompe disease soon. **Interview by AF**



# Paul's Place



- located in the village of Zonnebeke, is a fully furnished, top grade holiday cottage, which sleeps up to six guests.

- A mere 6 miles (10 kilometres) east of Ypres and at walking distance from the infamous Polygon Wood, Paul's Place lies right in the heart of 1914-18 Country.

- The setting of the cottage, in the midst of a partly wooded garden covering over 5.000 m<sup>2</sup> and devoid of through traffic, guarantees a full immersion into the tragic and dramatic past of an area that became known as the Ypres Salient.

- As a qualified tour guide, your host can give you the right advice to explore the Ypres frontline area, or accompany you on your trips, giving you a better insight into the tragic events that happened here a century ago. Personalised excursions are possible on foot, by bicycle, by car and even by motorbike!

- further information and a wealth of photographs, please take a look at [www.paulsplace.be](http://www.paulsplace.be) or mail us at [info@paulsplace.be](mailto:info@paulsplace.be)

- Hoping to welcome you one fine day, Eddy Lesage – Nicole Cornelus



“We visited most of the other international schools. BSB was the school we liked the best.”

**Brann family from Australia (who chose BSB Primary for their children)**

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# Language matters

## New kit will offer primary school teachers advice on working with non-Dutch speaking kids

Andy Furniere

Teachers in Flemish primary schools are increasingly confronted with pupils who don't have any knowledge of the Dutch language. For the first time in the region, experts are creating an educational kit consisting of a movie and manual with hands-on tips and examples of good practices. Part of the movie follows the first months at school of a Romanian girl who recently moved to Flanders.

One out of seven pupils in primary school don't speak Dutch at home, according to figures from 2012 released by the Flemish government. For teachers, it's a challenge to integrate the non-Dutch speaking children into the class group.

In Antwerp province, the organisations DoorElkaar and docAtlas specialise in assisting these teachers. DoorElkaar is a department of the training centre Hivset with expertise on intercultural issues and non-native speakers, while docAtlas is the provincial centre for documentation on these subjects.

### 'Panic questions'

Experts Lieve Lenaerts of DoorElkaar and Yasmine Wauthier, a former staff member of docAtlas, are now co-operating to make the life of teachers a little easier. "During our research, we discovered that there is a real need for easily accessible and applicable tips," says Wauthier. "There is so much info available on these issues, and many teachers have established creative initiatives. But teachers simply don't have the time to plough through all this material, and there is not enough exchange of knowledge among colleagues."

Their new educational kit, which provides teachers with concrete help, is called *pANiekvragen*, or Panic Questions. The capital letters AN refer to Anderstalige Nieuwkomers (non-native speaking newcomers). Since last summer, the duo have been contacting schools to search for good



© Valerie Kuypers/CORBIS

practices and arrange interviews. To visualise the daily reality at primary schools, a director is filming several episodes of life at a fifth-year class between now and Christmas, with the focus on the Romanian girl Elena, who recently arrived in Flanders.

The film will include interviews with the 11-year old Elena, her parents, classmates, teachers, and the headmaster of school De Smiskens in Turnhout. In the film of about 40 minutes, experts of other schools and associations from Antwerp Province will also speak about their experiences.

The first shooting of the film took place on Elena's first day of school, after arriving in Flanders only one week before. "Still, it went quite well," says Lenaerts, "because she already had a cousin at the school and received help from another classmate of Romanian origin who speaks Dutch well."

Many other children, however, arrive alone at school, with classmates who only speak Dutch. In some cases, it's the first time they've ever even been

to a school.

In their manual, Lenaerts and Wauthier offer background information and tips on 14 concrete topics, related to bridging both the culture and language gap. Teachers are often worried about how to welcome foreign students, involve parents, teach the language and deal with problematic behaviour such as aggression.

The authors also summarise the latest trends concerning teaching methods. At the end of each chapter, they offer tips by highlighting a good practice out of the scientific literature or discovered at a school in Flanders, Brussels or the Netherlands.

At the school De Vlinder in Baarle-Hertog, on the border with the Netherlands, for example, a teacher accelerated the integration of foreign students by showing considerable interest in their culture. Pupils could bring a photo that symbolises an important aspect of their background to hang on the wall of the classroom. During a cooking workshop, pupils prepared a dish that was typical

for their country. To teach foreign children basic vocabulary, many teachers assemble their own files with pictures of objects or encounters that are essential in daily life. Another method is teaching Dutch by using sign language.

The hope of the authors is that the kit will be used during workshops for the current generation of teachers but also as study material for the next generation. "It could be useful for the students in teacher education at university colleges," says Wauthier. "To prepare them from the start of their career on."

For their project, Wauthier and Lenaerts received about €4,000 in subsidies from Antwerp Province and the regional fund of the Cera co-operative financial group. They can also count on the support of educational teams at Turnhout, Mol and the city of Antwerp. The film and manual should be ready for publication by next spring. The Flemish educational publisher Garant Uitgevers will design and distribute the kit.

## WEEK IN EDUCATION

### Sport science centre opens in Leuven

The University of Leuven (KUL) opened the Bakala Academy, a research and testing centre for top sport, last week. Both elite and amateur athletes are welcome to improve their endurance with the help of sports scientists in the athletic performance centre. The centre is equipped with the latest test facilities and includes five high-altitude chambers. It also houses a research and development department and an education centre where academics with diverse backgrounds are invited to gather. The building is on the KUL's Sport Centre campus, near the Faculty of Kinesiology and Rehabilitation Sciences. KUL co-operated on the project with Czech businessman Zdenek Bakala, who owns the Omega Pharma Quick Step pro cycling team.

► [www.bakala-academy.com](http://www.bakala-academy.com)

### Youngsters map air quality

Together with its Wallonian partner Hypothèse, Leuven's RVO-Society has created the Planetwatch project, which distributes kits to young people to map their local air quality. The educational non-profit wants to make Flemish youth aware of the importance of a healthy environment and to strengthen their research skills. Classes from the first two years of secondary education are encouraged to collect leaves from two ash and maple trees, which are strong biological indicators of the presence of polluting substances in the environment. After analysing the leaves in the laboratory, students can post their scientific results online, on a digital map of Belgium. Recent research showed that children take in 50% more air per kilogram of body weight than do adults.

► [www.rvo-society.be](http://www.rvo-society.be)

### Chess legend Kasparov lobbies in Antwerp

Former world chess champion Garry Kasparov visited Antwerp last week to lobby for the introduction of the sport in primary education. Kasparov, who is also a political activist, explained that scientific studies show how chess enhances the intellectual development of children. "They learn to recognise structures and patterns, which is an essential addition to, among other things, memorising skills," he said. Mayor Bart De Wever, a chess player in his youth, made no promises but agreed on the beneficial aspects of chess – which is no longer acknowledged as an official sport in Belgium. "Chess teaches youngsters logical and mathematical insights, and it's accessible to all socio-economic classes since you don't need much equipment," declared De Wever.

## Q&A

**Miguel Meuleman, programme director of the Master's in General Management at Vlerick Business School, which has broken into the top 30 ranking by the *Financial Times***

### How many schools does the *Financial Times* monitor?

This year, we are 29th on the list of 70 courses worldwide, making us the best in Flanders. We are steadily climbing on the list: For the second year in a row, we have risen three places, and we progressed two spots in 2011. More specifically, Vlerick this year rose from 10th to eighth place in offering value for money. In the category that judges how schools help students find a good job after graduating, we finished in 11th place, thanks partly to our career services team. All year long, these coaches give tips on subjects such as applying for a job and writing a CV.



### What changes have you implemented in recent years?

Increasingly we bring experienced managers to our classrooms and send our students to business workplaces.

Managers of large companies such as lingerie manufacturer Van de Velde, based in the East Flanders town of Schellebelle, challenge our students to come up with answers to strategic questions – for example, concerning expansion into international markets. It's essential that our students acquire a helicopter view of the impact of their decisions, which influence the working of various departments in an enterprise. We also focus on individual coaching of students, with customised advice on their careers.

### What is the biggest challenge left for Vlerick?

We want to keep raising the

international profile of our English-language programme in the coming years. Our collaborations with schools in Beijing, Saint Petersburg and Stellenbosch in South Africa are already gaining us much attention abroad. In the future, we may set up or enter co-operation networks with several international institutions as well. We furthermore try to attract more foreign students by offering online seminars, or "webinars", to give them a taste of what they can expect. Finally, we also provide an annual international study trip in our programme. Last year, the students visited the Hungarian capital, Budapest. **Interview by AF**

► [www.vlerick.com](http://www.vlerick.com)



WEEK IN  
ACTIVITIESLate Summer in  
the Maasland

Five cities in the Meuse Valley host special evening programmes beginning at dusk. In Kinrooi, take a river cruise and release illuminated wish-balloons over the Meuse river. In Oud-Rekem, take a guided walk through the village, which will be awash in lights. In Stokkem, experience the stillness of nature on a torch-lit boat ride. An atmospheric evening walk in Leut begins and ends at a castle, and a special twilight tourist train goes from Maaseik to the historic village of Aldeneik.

**Until 2 November,**  
**across Meuse Valley**

► [www.tinyurl.com/nazomeren](http://www.tinyurl.com/nazomeren)

## Brusselse Sporen

Brusselse Sporen (Traces of Brussels) highlights connections between the capital and other cities in Flanders. Each year, two cities are given the spotlight. The programme in Ostend wraps up on 13 October, while the activities in Hasselt kick off on 12 October with demonstrations by celebrity chef Giovanni Oosters and beer tasting with Julien Vrebos at the Smaaksalon in the city centre.

**Until 27 October across Hasselt,**  
**Ostend & Brussels**

► [www.brusselssporen.be](http://www.brusselssporen.be)

Brussels Accessible  
Art Fair

The 10th edition of a juried art fair that encourages direct interaction between artists and potential buyers. Admission is low, and pieces are priced from €100 to encourage first-time buyers. Works include photography, sculpture, painting and ceramics.

**10-13 October, Steigenberger**  
**Grand Hotel, Brussels**

► [www.accessibleartfair.com](http://www.accessibleartfair.com)

## Nacht van de Duisternis

Once a year, cities and their residents turn out their lights to enjoy the natural darkness and draw attention to energy savings. Events are organised across Flanders, and, if you have kids, the Planetarium of Brussels hosts a fine one – stargazing, concerts, guided tours, games and other entertainment offsite at an old monastery.

**Saturday, 12 October, 18.30-00.00,**  
**Red Cloister Art Centre, Brussels**

► [www.planetarium.be](http://www.planetarium.be)

## Architecture Day

The celebration of contemporary architecture in Flanders looks at sustainable development this year with the theme “Flowering Landscapes”. New this year is the choice of a Capital City, which is Genk. Its development from industrial zone to modern community serves as a template for the challenges facing the rest of Flanders.

**Sunday, 13 October, across Flanders**

► [www.dagvandearchitectuur.be](http://www.dagvandearchitectuur.be)

## Art on the water

Politician Yamila Idrissi finds support for a contemporary art museum  
in Brussels' canal zone

Tom Peeters

What do filmmaker Fien Troch, singer Geike Arnaert, choreographer Wim Vandekeybus, author David Van Reybroeck and visual artist Hans Op De Beeck have in common? Apart from the fact they are respected cultural icons, they all live in Brussels, and they all dream of a museum for contemporary art in the city's canal zone – a still undeveloped but potentially very vibrant area.

Brussels-based Yamila Idrissi, member of the Flemish Parliament for SPA, can take the credit for gathering 150 Brussels opinion leaders to discuss the idea of a Museum Aan het Kanaal (Museum on the Canal), better known simply as MAK.

After the modern art wing of the city's Royal Museum of Fine Arts closed in 2011, Idrissi made it one of her main goals to raise public support for the project, which she thinks could be the catalyst the district needs to become a new tourist hotspot.

Since the public debate at Kaaithheater two weeks ago, there's also movement on a political level – so the dream may come true sooner than expected. In an article in *Le Soir*, Michel Dragnet, the director of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts, said he was expecting parts of his museum's rich modern and contemporary art collection – now stored in vaults – to be on display in the city's Dexia Art Centre from early 2016.

There seems to be consensus among politicians in the Brussels government that this temporary location should be replaced by a long-term solution – in the canal



Member of the Flemish parliament Yamila Idrissi, pictured in Brussels' canal zone

© Reporters

zone. The main contenders are an empty site at the Ninoofsepoort, where a new building can be constructed, and the Citroen garage, near Yser. Both have potential, according to Idrissi, who says the broad support for her plan certainly opened doors: “The successful debate in Kaaithheater showed it's not only my dream or the dream of my inner circle, but

one of many people in Brussels.”

The seeds of her vision were planted by indignation: “Brussels is a city full of artistic treasures, but, like its subterranean river Zenne, their beauty is unfortunately hidden out of sight,” she wrote in her project proposal. “James Ensor, Paul Delvaux, Marcel Broodthaers are all well-known Brussels artists. But to see their work, one has to

go to Paris, London or New York. It is almost incredible that a city like Brussels, capital of Europe and Belgium, has no museum of modern and contemporary art.”

Potentially, the new museum will have at least 10,000 modern and contemporary works to draw on: It's not only the Royal Museum of Fine Arts' collection that's hidden in cellars. “A lot of state-owned companies as well as private collectors could contribute, too,” says Idrissi. “Belgacom has an interesting collection. The National Bank has 1,600 pieces of art. And what about the banks, which were saved by taxpayers' money? We can at least make an agreement with them to show their art.”

The museum could also have a social dynamic, she believes: “The canal zone is in full development. It could become a new centre, making a real connection between the city centre, Molenbeek and Anderlecht.” Idrissi makes the parallel with London's Tate Modern, which transformed a neglected strip of land along the Thames. “It gave London an incredible international billboard, but it also literally created a bridge between the city and the South Bank, where previously tourists had never been seen.”

What happened to the South Bank can also happen to the canal zone in Brussels, she says. “Attracting extra visitors will create extra economic activity and can boost local employment.” She realises that it's a long-term project, so if all is finished by 2020, she would be happy: “I like to dream; but as a politician, I'm also realistic.”

► [www.macbrussels.be](http://www.macbrussels.be)

Robyn Boyle

## BITE

## Pumpkin month

“In Kasterlee we eat pumpkins, while the rest eat beans,” wrote a 16th-century priest, giving the residents of Kasterlee their reputation as ‘pumpkin mash eaters’, a nickname that has stuck to this day. Before the introduction of the potato from the New World two centuries later, many Flemish peasants relied on beans as their main source of sustenance. Pumpkins, therefore, were considered a seasonal delicacy and are still associated with festivals around harvest time. And nowhere is the big orange (and other coloured) squash more celebrated than in the village of Kasterlee in Antwerp province.

Visit the town throughout October to experience a diverse range of activities, and I mean *diverse*: in Kasterlee, they don't just eat pumpkin, they have even based a number of games, competitions and rituals around it.

The fun kicks off with the Pumpkin Happening on 12 October at 17.00



The pumpkin regatta in Kasterlee is unlike any boat race you've ever seen

in nearby Sint-Lenaarts, also in Antwerp province, a contest for the heaviest pumpkin and the best-looking pumpkin. Last year's winning gourd weighed in at an impressive 535kg. Then, on 13 October at 13.00, the highly anticipated annual pumpkin shoot takes place in Kasterlee, pitting teams against one another to see who can catapult a 4kg pumpkin

the farthest.

On Kasterlee's officially designated Pumpkin Day, 20 October, there's a traditional farmer's market selling pumpkins in all shapes and sizes, as well as artisanal and regional products (including non-pumpkin delicacies like local beer and goat's cheese).

But the regatta on 27 October at 13.00 has to be the highlight of

pumpkin month. For this event – which is, perhaps needless to say, unique in Belgium – giant pumpkins are hollowed out and used as makeshift kayaks. Believe it or not, the pumpkins stay afloat and upright as contestants climb inside and paddle their way to the finish line downriver.

The regatta participants may get wet and cold, but a warming cup of creamy pumpkin soup is sure to be waiting for them around every corner. For *Kastelaars* don't play with their food; they in fact take it very seriously. Especially this month you'll find surprising suggestions and dishes incorporating pumpkin on the menus of many of the town's 100-odd restaurants. Ask the Kasterlee tourist office for a list of suggested restaurants. While you're at it, why not pick up maps for a pumpkin-themed walk or bike ride through the pumpkin fields.

► [www.toerisme-kasterlee.be](http://www.toerisme-kasterlee.be)



# Bridge over troubled water

## Troops test pontoon bridge across the Scheldt ahead of First World War centenary

Andy Furniere

One of the highlights of next year's First World War commemorations in Antwerp will be a floating bridge connecting the left and right bank of the river Scheldt. On 28 September, Belgian and Dutch army troops successfully carried out a trial run of this ambitious project.

Under the eyes of many curious onlookers, barges manned by military engineering troops assembled a string of segments that finally formed a bridge between the Steenplein on the right bank and Boeienweide on the left bank. The Belgian army built a similar bridge in August 1914, at the start of the First World War, when the fortified city of Antwerp became the temporary Belgian capital – sheltering the government, army and royal family. Info panels already installed on both sides of the river explain this history in four languages.

Via the pontoon bridge, Antwerp could be sufficiently supplied and quickly evacuated. When the German troops made progress in breaking down Antwerp's defences, a large number of people crossed the bridge to flee to the Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom. On 9 October 1914, Antwerp was conquered by the German aggressors, and the Belgian army blew up the bridge to make sure it would not be to the benefit of enemy troops. During the recent trial run, only a



Antwerp tests the floating bridge, which will be placed next year in commemoration of the bridge used during the First World War

© Gunther Biront

few guests were allowed to cross the bridge, such as the patron and patroness of the project: Flemish actor Herbert Flack and Sihame El Kaouakibi, founder and co-ordinator of the Antwerp dance school Let's Go Urban. But the first guest to set foot on the pontoon was John Poulet. He is the winner of a story competition that

the non-profit Vredescentrum set up with Oxford University and the In Flanders Fields Museum. His grandfather, Prosper Poulet, was Belgian minister of arts and science during the First World War. Next year 100,000 visitors will be allowed to cross the river on 4 and 5 October (weather permitting – strong winds, for instance, could be

a problem). During the festivities, the bridge will be broken up several times to let ships pass through. During the festive opening next year, a "peace parade" of about 1,000 children will officially inaugurate the bridge. Architecture students from Artesis University College will create original lighting for the bridge, dancers of Let's Go Urban

will give a special performance, and literary organisation Vonk& Zonen will establish the poetry tour Hellemonden, which revolves around war poets.

In the run-up to the commemorations, the Vredescentrum is hosting a varied programme of activities with a network of about 40 other associations. Next month, on 3 November, Flemish historian Sophie De Schaepdrijvers kicks off a monthly series of lectures on the First World War at the Palace on the Meir. Also starting at the beginning of November, the Vleeshuis, or Butcher's Hall, invites classes from the last year in primary education for an interactive workshop around diverse aspects of war and peace.

Early next year, a majority of Antwerp's museums will take part in the commemorations through related exhibitions. The new Red Star Line museum will focus on the experiences of Belgian emigrants to America during the war years, while the MAS puts the spotlight on the masses of refugees who fled to neighbouring countries at the start of the war.

From January, Antwerp's tourism service will also organise historical city walks, which start at the Banquet Hall on the Meir – where King Albert I resided during his stay in Antwerp – and end at the Steenplein.

► [www.antwerpen14-18.be](http://www.antwerpen14-18.be)

# Design with a twist

## Seventeen innovative products receive the Henry van de Velde label

Katrien Lindemans

Every year, Design Vlaanderen – the Brussels-based Organisation promoting Flemish design – honours innovative and clever products with a Henry van de Velde label, named after the Flemish architect, artist and designer. Out of the 123 entries, 17 were rewarded with the prestigious quality label. Among them: a children's plastic spade and a seat for two.

When talking about design, we instantly think of furniture and home interior. But in this year's list of Henry van de Velde labels, children's toys made a surprise appearance. Scoppi is a yellow-green shovel from the Quut toy range, designed by the Ghent-based agency Pars Pro Toto.

"A couple of years ago, we designed a collection of baby items for the brand Hoppop," says Johan Bonner, a partner at Pars Pro Toto. "We also took care of their entire branding – from their catalogue to their website and their stands at baby fairs."

The agency realised there was a lot of potential in the children's toy



The Scoppi spade wants to offer an upgrade of the cheap, brandless beach toy

market and was eager to design something from scratch. "The toy market is vast," says Bonner, "but we narrowed our focus down to one item that seemed to have no brand, was usually made in China and had a very low innovation threshold – the plastic spade."

Pars Pro Toto gave the cheap beach spade a make-over, turning it into a sustainable and stylish product.

The company launched the Scoppi spade at the Nuremberg baby fair in 2013. "We're now selling the Quut beach toys range in 10 countries," Bonner explains. "To receive a Henry van de Velde label is really important for us; I don't think toys get this kind of appreciation often. Since we're an unknown brand, the quality recognition of this label will help us grow as well."

To expand the brand, Pars Pro Toto will need to broaden its distribution network. "And that's why we joined Flanders Investment and Trade," Bonner adds.

While some designers have to wait years to receive a van de Velde label, others see their hard work rewarded almost instantly. "We only launched into furniture design in 2011," says Fien Muller, half of the Ghent-based design duo Muller Van Severen.

Muller is a photographer and her partner, Hannes Van Severen – son of the famous designer Maarten – is a sculptor. "While renovating our house, we encountered some electricity problems, and we came up with a solution in the form of a table with a built-in lamp. When the Antwerp art and furniture gallery Valerie Traan asked us to provide some furniture for an exhibition, we

also applied the idea of that built-in lamp to a leather seat."

The two of them took their newly found furniture project to the Kortrijk interior design fair in 2012. "Curator Lowie Vermeersch asked seven designers to think about future primitives – furniture of the future to suit our primitive needs. We came up with a range of designs, which also featured our Crossed Double Seat," explains Muller. "The idea was to combine two seats – not adjacently but opposite to each other. This resulted in a cosy but sleek-looking construction, made from leather and steel."

The Double Crossed Seat was awarded with a Henry van de Velde label. "A big surprise," Muller says. "We're new to this sector, but we can't wait to see what the future holds."

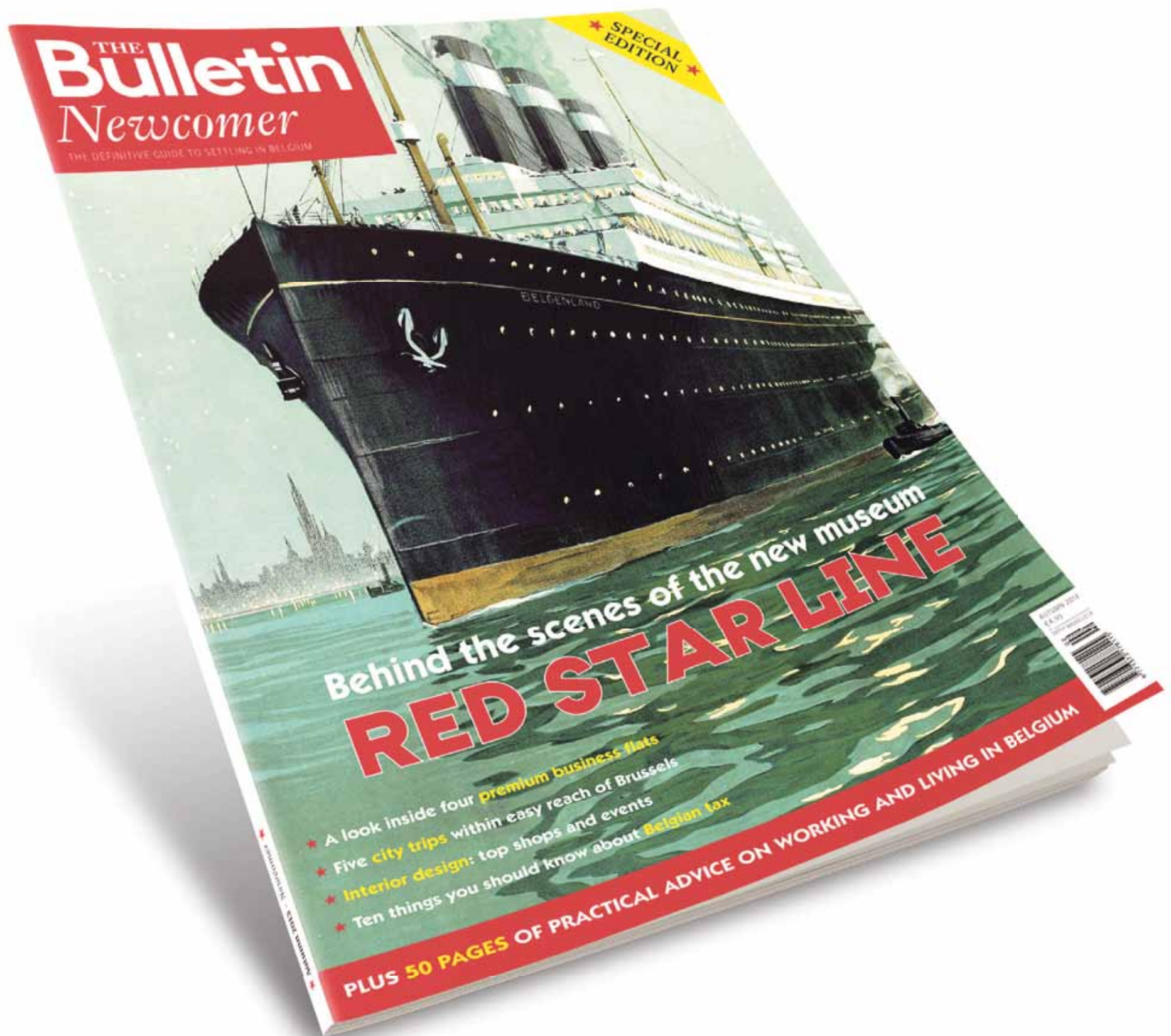
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# “Very unorthodox, but it sounds great”

## Love letters and trashy beats infuse the music of Ghent band King Dalton

Daan Bauwens

There's a new sound in Flanders. It's both psychedelic and organic, both rough and funky. It's blues, jazz and folk shaking avant-garde's hand in Africa, creating something wonderfully fresh and new. King Dalton's first and self-titled album finally reveals what had been kept hidden in Ghent's bars for too long.

King Dalton must feel extremely lucky. One month after the release of their first album, the quintet is more in demand than ever before. The album was received enthusiastically by the press on both sides of the language border, and Radio 1 is playing songs that haven't even been released yet. And, despite their frightening appearance, the band was invited to play in front of the nation's most distinguished politicians on the Sunday news show *De zevende dag*. The Netherlands has also succumbed to the band's strange charm. "I have the feeling it is really starting right now," says Pieter De Meester, King Dalton's charismatic band leader. The 25-year-old sings and plays the four-string guitar and baritone sax. "Now that the album is out, we can't wait to go play our music everywhere, as hard as we possibly can." Pieter's older brother Jonas is a professional guitar player, but in this project he plays the Irish bouzouki. "We are facing a different situation from a decade ago," he says. "These days you need to have a strong live reputation to sell albums – and rightfully so." In Ghent, home to both brothers, the band already has such a reputation. Over the last three years, King Dalton has become an established name at the infamous café Charlatan. "We used to play there on calm Sunday nights," says Pieter. "I think it's on that stage that we developed our sound. This band has never had any predefined concept. Everything originates organically and intuitively." The brothers are not new to the music scene. With their folk-rock band AedO, formed when Pieter was only 11, they played at every folk festival in the country, toured Europe and recorded their first album in 2004. It was about then that ideas about a new band and a new style started emerging. "It must have been nine years ago," remembers Jonas, 27. "We were at the festival of Saint-Chartier in France, the so-called Woodstock of folk, when we met Tomas De Smet." De Smet has been a member of legendary Flemish bands



King Dalton are (from left): Tomas De Smet, Jonas De Meester, Pieter De Meester, Jorunn Bauweraerts and Frederic Heuvinck

such as Think of One, Zita Swoon and The Broken Circle Bluegrass Band. "We asked him if he wanted to produce the new AedO album. He didn't accept, but he told Pieter to keep on writing and offered to be our coach as well as our bass player." The three started experimenting in Kalmthout, a lush village north of Antwerp where De Smet lives together with his partner, Jorunn Bauweraerts, one of the singers of the famous vocal folk trio Lais. She soon joined the band, too. AedO's drummer was replaced by A Brand's Frederic Heuvinck. Thanks to this unique combination of backgrounds, the album has an international and innovative sound. Bauweraerts is mostly heard singing high-pitched Balkan melodies. Percussion is often African, picked up by De Smet during his travels to Kinshasa and

Marrakech with the Antwerp ensemble Think of One. There are no real drums, but metal cases emit trashy beats. Pieter, who claims not to know how to play the guitar, still tries, but on four strings instead of five. He mostly groans instead of singing. Jonas puts the Irish bouzouki on a table and turns it into a slide guitar. "Very unorthodox, but it sounds great," he says. This all results in a new genre: avant-garde folk blues. "It should resemble JJ Cale – a mix between Americana and country, psychedelic music based on the blues," explains Pieter. "Then we bring in the baritone saxophone. I'd like it to sound like Morphine's Dana Colley. His saxophone can grab you in such a subtle way, without having to go wild." Jonas: "Morphine also has a dark side, we're all fans of that dark side. On the other hand, we're

as funky as Prince." But what's most important is for everything to sound real. "The music is written intuitively," says Pieter. "There's nothing on the album we cannot play live. King Dalton is not digital. We don't send messages; we write love letters." That doesn't necessarily refer to the lyrics. "Well, those are best defined as absurd and fragmentary. There's no real themes." The same goes for the band's name. "My brother and I were nicknamed the Daltons many years ago by a sound technician in the Ghent venue De Centrale," says Jonas, "because we look like each other, because of the funny way we walk and our tough appearance. But it's not a good name for a band. So we decided to add the king. Then we had another problem: Which one of us is the king? That is hard to decide."

► [www.kingdalton.be](http://www.kingdalton.be)

## NEW ALBUM REVIEWS

### Carate Urio Orchestra

**Sparrow Mountain • Klein**  
Clarinetist and saxophone player Joachim Badenhorst is a busy bee: In the last five years, he's played on more than 20 albums, both as a guest musician and with his own bands. And he's added a new, at times brilliant group to his list: Carate Urio Orchestra. On the debut *Sparrow Mountain*, Badenhorst surrounds himself with six of his favourite musicians. It results in eight intriguing tracks, bridging the gap between folk and postrock, between improvisational music and even some noise. Half of the tracks have vocals, twice by – surprisingly – Badenhorst himself, in Dutch. All in all, a unique blend.

Christophe Verbiest

### Tom Vanstiphout

**Little Beams of Light • DTP Records**  
A quick search on the Flemish music archive site reveals that Tom Vanstiphout has so far played on more than 100 records. Not bad for a musician of 38. For years, he was the region's most sought-after session musician, and he recently travelled the world with Milow's band. In between his work as a sidekick, he releases his own songs. Four years after his second album, there's now *Little Beams of Light*. With his nasal voice, reminiscent of James Taylor, he draws delicate portraits of daily life. Pop songs with a soothing quality – though he should be

careful not to sound too corny, especially with the lyrics. **CV**

► [www.tomvanstiphout.be](http://www.tomvanstiphout.be)

### Flying Horseman

**City Same City • Unday**  
With *City Same City*, their third excellent album in three years, Antwerp combo Flying Horseman confirm its reputation as one of the most interesting bands in Flanders. The fivesome led by singer and guitarist Bert Dockx produce hypnotising songs that slowly draw you in. Some tracks burst open like a putrid abscess, others float on an imminent threat that never fully materialises. In the no man's land between improvised music, rock, noise, West African rhythms

and even some country, Flying Horseman has found a place for itself. There's no other band like them, and *City Same City* is one of the best albums of the year. **CV**

► [www.bestov.be](http://www.bestov.be)

### Bl!ndman [SAX]



### 32 Foot: The Organ of Bach • Klara/Warner Classics

As a saxophone quartet, Bl!ndman revolutionised the instrument at the end of the 1980s. Now, Bl!ndman are a cluster of bands and celebrate their 25th birthday with *32 Foot: The Organ of Bach* by Bl!ndman [SAX]. A tubax, a very low-sound, modified saxophone, has been added to the line-up. It's needed to play the lowest notes of Bach's compositions for organ. It's beautiful to hear how the different instruments take over the different voices of this polyphonous music. *32 Foot* is both a tribute to Bach and a highly contemporary album. **CV**

► [www.blindman.be](http://www.blindman.be)



WEEK IN ARTS  
& CULTUREFunding for renovation  
of Conservatory

The severely dilapidated buildings of the Brussels Royal Conservatory can finally look forward to being renovated, following an agreement by the government of the French-speaking Community to contribute to the costs.

The federal and the Flemish governments had already agreed to pay €20 million each into the renovation fund, but the French community could not agree to do the same, until the announcement this week from the community's vice-president that the cash had been found.

"We are cautiously delighted," commented Gerard de Hemplinne, spokesman for Conservamus, the organisation of students, teachers and supporters that has lobbied for a breakthrough in the years-long funding problem.

Wim Helsen wins  
second Poelfinario

Cabaret artist-cum-comedian Wim Helsen has won the Dutch Poelfinario prize for a second time. Double wins are rare, and Helsen is the only cabaret artist ever to win twice. The prize is awarded annually by the Dutch association of theatre and concert hall managers (VSCD) for the "most impressive" production of the season in the Netherlands. Helsen wins for his theatre piece *Spijtig, spijtig, spijtig* (Pity, pity, pity). Helsen continues touring the show, first in the Netherlands in October and November, and then mainly across Flanders until June next year.

► [www.wimhelsen.be](http://www.wimhelsen.be)

Ketnet show  
nominated for Emmy

The Ketnet programme *Mijn kunst is top* (That's My Art) has been nominated for an International Emmy Kids Award in the category of non-scripted entertainment. The show, by Flemish production house deMENSEN, featured comedian Adriaan Van den Hoof issuing a challenge each week to a Flemish celebrity to learn a new talent, with the help of youngsters.

During the series, actor Peter Van den Begin learned baton-twirling, actress Veronique Leysen practiced experimental theatre and TV personality Bartel Van Riet became a prima ballerina.

The International Emmys are awarded by the International Academy of Television Arts & Sciences in the United States. The Ketnet show will compete with *Battle for Money* from Fuji TV in Japan, *Labyrinth* from SVT in Sweden and *Pet School* from the BBC. Winners will be announced in February.

## The madness of the king

## Guy Cassiers takes the vowels and the blood out of Macbeth – but revels in the paranoia

Tom Peeters

The Toneelhuis' title *MCBTH* is readable enough to know you'll be delving into Shakespeare of a sort. Actor Tom Dewispelaere explains how Toneelhuis' multi-media performance uses music and video to explore the psyche of the famous man who would be king.

Shakespeare showed in the 17th century how the thought of the acquisition of power can lead to blind paranoia. In his tragedy *Macbeth*, he depicted a king going slightly mad, precipitating his own downfall. Antwerp theatre company Toneelhuis takes the paranoia partly out of the head of the main protagonist, transporting it to singing witches, a devastating orchestra and an interactive set, which gets smaller and more oppressive as the evening falls – just like the king's mind.

Though Toneelhuis director Guy Cassiers and script editor Erwin Jans heavily cut the *Macbeth* translation of Hugo Claus, which is used here, he didn't do this to discredit the acknowledged Flemish author: He just wanted to limit the text to its core message, avoiding any kind of anecdote.

The Antwerp company has kept only five main characters of an original play with 20-plus actors. By taking the vowels out of the title, the director emphasises this skeletal content, and in doing so, he thought, he could create space for other, more contemporary accents.

## More complex

For Tom Dewispelaere, being offered the role of this 21st-century version of *Macbeth* was an honour. "For me, the main challenge was trying to understand how Macbeth, step by step, reaches insanity," he says. "The fact that a lot of the original scenes were deleted makes it a bit more complex because it doesn't give me so much time to develop my character."

The other main challenge lies in the interaction between the actors and some new dramatic elements Cassiers has brought in: There's not only the three female singers of VocaalLab, interpreting the witches whose prophecies trigger the king's madness, but also the Spectra ensemble directed by Filip Rathé and a state-of-the-art projection system that enables the actors to start a real-time interaction with the visuals.

"This interaction with video, singers and orchestra is not an obvious thing to do," says Dewispelaere. "There are just a lot of ingredients that hopefully will make a good meal. It requires lots of concentration on stage, but of course you have to avoid losing the freedom of your playing. Fortunately with Guy we had someone with a very clear view about the theatrical world he



The walls close in on Macbeth and the three witches in Guy Cassiers' adaptation of the Shakespeare play

© Kurt Van der Elst

wanted to represent."

First the actors rehearsed with tapes. Three weeks before the opening night the orchestra and the singers joined them. "And then we had to start all over again," Dewispelaere says. "Those three extra women had to find their way on stage. But Guy was fantastic in managing the traffic, and also the live orchestra proved to be very flexible."

It had to be, because at the end of the play the music, composed by Dominique Pauwels of Ghent production house LOD Muziektheater, virtually takes over the role of Macbeth. "At the very end Macbeth doesn't even have a voice," says Dewispelaere. "He just becomes sound." By then the singing is a metaphor for his mind going crazy, the music the soundtrack of his hallucinations.

Scriptwriter Jans describes it even more accurately: "The music is a virus that's slowly creeping into the text and taking over the dramatic statements." By not focusing on showing the cruelty and the blood – all the murders ordered by Macbeth (or his wife, Lady Macbeth) take place outside the stage – the audience are pushed to witness the mental decay of the main character first.

But how he feels, mentally washing the blood off his fingers, is immediately reflected on stage, by the clothes he wears and the gradually shrinking scenery. "It's a great illustration of an oppression you cannot resist," says Dewispelaere. In the play's first dialogues the actor is wearing the stiff baroque costumes of Tim Vansteenbergen, Cassiers' favourite designer, with eagerness and pride. At this point they are still virginal white.

Although Macbeth is a killer, a survivor of many battlefields, until

now he has only killed "for a good cause": out of loyalty to King Duncan. It's only after he murders him to snatch power that he starts to hear voices and becomes schizophrenic: It seems he can no longer mentally disconnect from his own deeds. The cruelties he committed in support of his own glory – even killing his best friend Banquo – drive him insane.

## Power of guilt

This feeling of guilt is unmistakably reflected in his appearance on stage. His costumes become black as the night, and the walls literally close in. Ultimately he tries to get answers from the witches who started his rise and fall, but they speak in tongues. The audience know he's just listening to his own hallucinations. When he sees a bush coming after him, he realises the end is near.

The relevance of a play like this today is obvious. For Cassiers, the tragedy fits seamlessly in his recent oeuvre that has been researching what he calls the anatomy of power. *Mefisto for ever*, *Wolfskiers* and *Atropa* were united under the heading Triptych of Power, and his staging of Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* also analysed the topic from very close up.

"The relevance of *Macbeth* is that you see someone collapsing out of fear," explains Dewispelaere. "But at a certain point Macbeth is so far gone he says he has even forgotten how fear tastes. I always had this imagination about world leaders, reflecting on how they could reach

this point where they can't go back and start acting out of pure despair. I sometimes try to imagine how a man like Bashar al-Assad can go to sleep in his Syrian palace, realising all the cruelties he has committed, so hungry to stay in power."

How do you obtain the state of mind in which you can justify almost everything, even murdering your best friend? It's a question Cassiers and his team try to answer by exploring Macbeth's mind. It's Shakespeare's mastery of the art of introspection, giving people access to the most sinister and darkest parts of their mind, that still gives his repertoire universal appeal.

It's the first time Cassiers has approached Shakespeare's work. His adaptation of *Hamlet* will follow soon. Dewispelaere says, "People are still interested in these universal stories with great narratives, basically dealing with very identifiable experiences. The characters of *Macbeth* may be based in the aristocratic England of kings and battlefields, but I hope the people we put on stage are recognisable and that we are able to tell something that can concern Flanders too."

"Shakespeare created the historical background, but the human feelings here could just as well have been penned by Tom Lanoye or Hugo Claus. The stories would have been different, bigger or smaller, but essentially they would also focus on the real topic of every tragedy: the relations between people, their hopes and dreams, their losses and fears, and their insanity."

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► [www.toneelhuis.be](http://www.toneelhuis.be)



The link between painting and poetry

# Omdat ik geen beeld ben

Until 5 January | Mu.ZEE, Ostend

► [www.muzee.be](http://www.muzee.be)

The late Hugo Claus is considered one of the most influential Flemish writers ever. Until his death in 2008, not a year went by without the local papers speculating on his chances of winning the Noble Prize in Literature. But limiting the spectrum of the artist to only literature doesn't tell the whole story. Claus also made movies, and, throughout his entire life, he drew and painted. He kept on making little drawings until his death by euthanasia, an ultimate statement from the bold and often controversial icon whose views were historically far more cosmopolitan than those of his contemporaries. Moreover, hanging

out with other Cobra artists such as Pierre Alechinsky, Karel Appel and Corneille broadened his mind even further. In 1956, Claus staged his first solo exhibition in Brussels' Taptoe gallery. Eventually, he felt the need to break out of the predominantly experimental Cobra movement, and his work showed other influences such as outsider art, pop art, expressionism and surrealism, making him difficult to pigeonhole. Perusing the drawings and paintings in the Ostend exhibition *Hugo Claus: Omdat ik geen beeld ben* (Because I'm Not an Image), selected by curators Jef Lambrecht and Phillip Van den Bossche, one

could suggest they're more poetic than much of his writing. Here, for instance, his naked women seem more innocent than those in his novels. Sometimes his compositions are colourful, sometimes minimal and/or abstract. But almost always you feel that the man behind the painter's easel was enjoying himself. The stylistic directness of his work also suggests that he was a fast painter. So it's not a big surprise he was very productive, creating more than 1,000 works during his lifetime. Even the arrogance he was sometimes accused of having seems absent here: He often destroyed paintings he didn't like (anymore) and never dated his work. (About the women he painted, we're not sure.) **Tom Peeters**



## CLASSICAL

### Revue Blanche

16 October, 20.30 | Koloniënpaleis, Tervuren

► [www.tinyurl.com/revueblanche](http://www.tinyurl.com/revueblanche)

The Festival van Vlaanderen rolls into Flemish Brabant with a contemporary classical performance in the stately Palace of the Colonies. Revue Blanche is a Flemish chamber ensemble comprised of four young musicians: singer Lore Binon, flautist Caroline Peeters, violist Kris Hellekens and harpist Anouk Sturtewagen. For this occasion, the quartet is augmented by percussion, clarinet and cello. The group have selected an international programme, featuring pieces by several important European composers from the last century, among them Spain's Manuel de Falla and Italy's Luciano Berio. Indeed, Berio's 1964 suite *Folk Songs* gives the programme its name. Revue Blanche also tips



© Revue Blanche

its hat to a peer, the young Flemish composer Frederik Neyrinck, who wrote a piece just for them. **Georgio Valentino**

## FESTIVAL

### A.Week

13-20 October | Across Brussels | ► [aweek.be](http://aweek.be)

Unlike other arts, architecture meets its public every day without anyone thinking too much about it. The inaugural edition of this Week of Architecture, conceived by Brussels' ministry of urban planning and co-ordinated with the Flemish Day of Architecture (see p10), celebrates the contemporary spaces we take for granted and collectively imagines future spaces. Fifty Brussels

buildings open their doors to the public to explore architecture's finished product. A.Week also offers a behind-the-scaffolding look at how a blueprint becomes brick-and-mortar via visits to architects' offices and building site tours. There are also exhibitions and conferences aplenty. Events are spread across the capital, but headquarters is the A.Week Pavilion at Bozar. **GV**



© Filip Dujardin

## VISUAL ARTS

### André De Meulemeester Paints Blankenberge

Until 3 November | CC De Benne, Blankenberge

► <http://cultuur.blankenberge.be>

André De Meulemeester was a true Renaissance man. The Bruges native earned his wings as a flying ace in the First World War before taking over the family brewery De Arend. Somewhere along the way, he mastered the art of watercolour and produced some 1,400 pieces. This vast body of work was never fully appreciated in his lifetime; it has only recently been discovered by the public thanks to De Meulemeester's trustees at Bruges Art Route, who show a selection of 40 canvases by the painter on his many seaside sojourns during the 1950s and '60s. Each tableau is paired with a contemporary photo of the same landscape so you can see how the



© Andries Van den Abeele

place has changed in the past half-century. **GV**

## FILM

### Het Vonnis

Now playing | Across Brussels and Flanders

► [www.hetvonnis-film.be](http://www.hetvonnis-film.be)

*Het Vonnis* (*The Verdict*) gives a Flemish twist to a classic film genre, the courtroom drama. Writer-director Jan Verheyen (*Dossier K*, *Zot van A*) builds his story around the problem of procedural errors that allow otherwise strong prosecutions to collapse. Koen De Bouw (*pictured*) plays Luc Segers, who attempts to put the judicial system itself on trial for letting his wife's killer walk free. Naturally the film reflects Belgian court procedure, which differs from the familiar Hollywood pattern. Outsiders may find this baffling at times, but the cut and thrust of the legal adversaries (Veerle Baetens, Johan Leysen, Viviane De Muynck and Jappe Claes) still hits home. **Ian Mundell**



## Classical

### Brussels

**Classic & Classics:** Flemish quintet made up of two generations of musicians, including father Diederik on viola, his brother Bruno on bass, his sons Jeroen and Frauke on violin and cello and Bruno's daughter Rosalie on bassoon: Verdi, Rossini, Beethoven, Puccini  
**OCT 11 20.00 at D'Ieteren Gallery, Maliestraat 50**  
► [patriciaraes@scarlet.be](mailto:patriciaraes@scarlet.be)

## Visual arts

### Brussels

**Het rijk der lichten (The Empire of Light):** One work from the series of famous paintings by surrealist painter René Magritte, commissioned by the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium between 1950 and 1954, of which there are currently 17 oil-on-canvas versions  
**Until JAN 13 at Magritte Museum, Koningsplein 1**  
► [www.musee-magritte-museum.be](http://www.musee-magritte-museum.be)

### Mol (Antwerp province)

**Aquarelsalon:** Annual watercolour exhibition celebrates "Interior" this year, featuring a collection of works by painters who retreated to churches and cathedrals, bars and factories for inspiration  
**Until OCT 20 at CC 't Getouw, Molenhoekstraat 2**  
► [www.getouw.be](http://www.getouw.be)

## Events

### Across Flanders

**Fair Trade Week:** Annual campaign to increase awareness about Fair Trade among consumers and to encourage the purchase of products that promote sustainability and honest trading practices in developing countries.  
**Until OCT 12 across Flanders**  
► [www.weekvandefairtrade.be](http://www.weekvandefairtrade.be)

### Brussels

**Museum Nocturnes:** Popular annual event featuring Thursday night openings in several museums with guided tours, entertainment and workshops, all with a colourful theme  
**Until DEC 12 Thursdays 17.00-22.00 across Brussels**  
► [www.nocturnesvandebrusselsemusea.be](http://www.nocturnesvandebrusselsemusea.be)

## Film

### Ghent

**Ghent Film Fest:** 40th edition of Flanders' largest film festival, this year with a focus on American independent cinema. Many screenings are in the presence of filmmakers or framed by debates and seminars. There's a large-scale exhibition dedicated to Martin Scorsese, concerts of film music and the World Soundtrack Awards  
**Until OCT 19 across Ghent**  
► [www.filmfestival.be](http://www.filmfestival.be)

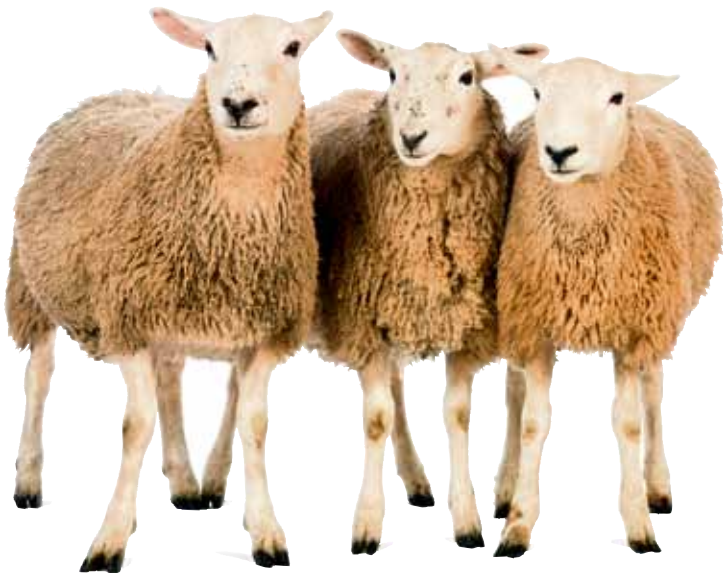


# Talking Dutch

## Counting sheep

Derek Blyth

I noticed the sheep a few weeks ago. They were grazing in a small park in southern Ghent next to the old Bijloke hospital. That's a bit odd, I thought. We don't have sheep in Brussels as far as I know. But Ghent is, as you are possibly aware, a city that likes to do things differently. The city's website explains the story. *In 2010 ging in Gent voor het eerst een stadsherder met schapen op stap* – in 2010, the city shepherd set off with his sheep for the first time. Newspaper *Het Nieuwsblad* goes on to explain that 80 Dutch and German moorland sheep were introduced to the city under a three-year pilot project. The idea was to allow the sheep to graze in the city's parks and along the canal banks so that mowers were no longer required. Well done, Ghent, I thought. I wish they would do things like that in Brussels. But unfortunately the project soon ran into problems – *de schapen werden vaak opgejaagd en gestresseerd, wellicht door blaffende honden* – the sheep were often frightened and stressed out, sometimes by barking dogs. *Drie keer belandde er een schaap in het water* – on three occasions, a sheep fell into the water. The city shepherd told *Het*



*Nieuwsblad* that the project was plagued with problems, not least of all of the human kind. Several poor sheep were pushed into the canal by drunks. Someone also tried to steal one. He finally decided to head back with his sheep to the countryside. *Schapen hebben genoeg van Gent!* – The sheep have had enough of Ghent! declared the paper's headline. But Ghent is not giving up. A new shepherd is to be appointed and additional security measures introduced, according to Tom Balthazar, the alderman responsible for green spaces. The sheep will be

accompanied by a shepherd at all time to prevent any more mischief, he explained. Balthazar remains convinced that the sheep are a good idea. *We krijgen veel positieve weerklank van de bewoners, daarom zetten we dit project van ecologische begrazing verder* – we have had a lot of positive feedback from residents, so we are carrying on with this ecological grazing project. So if you go to Ghent, look out for a flock of ecological sheep. And don't do anything that might stress them out.

## VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY

**f BeerTourism.com**  
St. Bernardus Prior 8 (8% ABV) by Brewery St. Bernard in #Watou, West #Flanders. Fact: this #brewery used to brew the legendary #Westvleteren 12 #beertourism

**t Visit Flanders @VisitFlanders**  
#Duvel in same list as love brands #Apple #AstonMartin #Nike #Liberty and #Lavazza. Proud of #Flanders #CoolbrandsUK

**t exquisbru @exquisbru**  
#Flanders, possibly the sweetest destination in #Europe - #Travel - Stylist Magazine

**t Lea Winkeler @leawinkeler**  
UK and Ireland workshop In full swing at #ieper. Tour operators eager to learn about #flanders #WW1 #FlandersFields

**t Andreea @onfoodandwine**  
#Brussels - the only city where you wait for the tube listening to classical music :) culture @STIBMIVB

**t AFAR Media @AFARmedia**  
Ann Demeulemeester & @DriesVanNoten, Antwerp's style pioneers, are feat in our Oct guide to #Flanders w/@FFlantwerp

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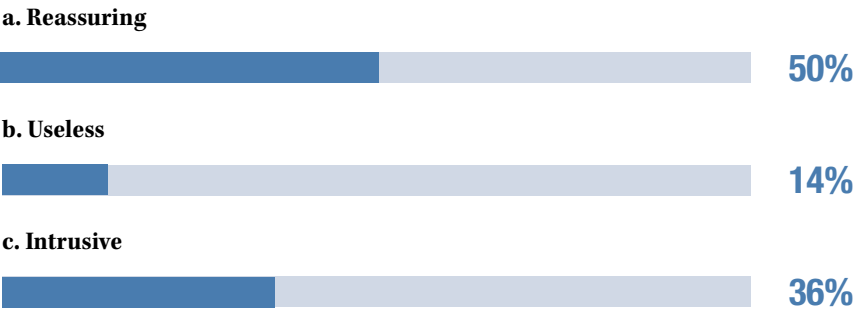
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# Poll

## 02/10/2013: Surveillance cameras are...



We asked your opinion on surveillance cameras, just one of the ways to keep track of our movements. This week we report on 130 new trains being fitted with surveillance cameras by the NMBS to try to cut crime (p2). But do they work? Half of you feel they do. Police agree in one

sense: cameras on the street deter criminals from committing crimes in that area. However, studies have shown that they merely shift the problem to areas not equipped with cameras. For some of you, that proves they're useless. More than one in three of you, however, think they're intrusive.

More than half of all municipalities in Flanders have installed cameras in public places, with more planned. Cameras in 92 railway stations cost more than €1 million a year. Many companies have them installed on private property.

Next week's question:  
What should be done for pupils who come to school with no lunch? (see p2)

Log-on to [www.flanderstoday.eu](http://www.flanderstoday.eu) to vote!

## THE LAST WORD

**Unholy row**  
"It was never the intention to carry out a full funeral service. The intention was only a simple farewell prayer. Now you sometimes get the impression that the priests and deacons are employees of the crematoria." A spokesman for Archbishop André Léonard, who has told priests to no longer hold funeral mass at crematoria

**Witse war**  
"That scene did not fit in with the sort of respectful commemoration we have here." The Commonwealth War Graves Commission refused to allow the crew of the new *Witse* film to shoot in one of the Great War cemeteries

**Highway robbery**  
"That's the big problem with professional racing bikes. The top models easily cost €10,000, as much as a small car. But unlike a

car, you can pick it up with one hand and stash it away in the back of a van." Cycle-maker Anthony Kumpen on a plague of thefts hitting pro racing teams

**Big plans**  
"I want to get to 30. By that time I'll be living in a nice house with a great wife, and I'll be a DJ and maybe even a Dad." Michiel Vandeweert, 15, is approaching the record age for those living with the rapid-ageing disease progeria

