

Bombs away

The Dovo unit cannot dismantle toxic bombs because of infrastructure malfunctions

► 2



Do not disturb

Some local companies are telling their employees to turn off their devices after-hours

► 10



Klara Festival turns 10

Brussels' popular annual festival of new music moves to the spring for its 10th birthday

► 14



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Saving a continent's culture

Hollywood blockbuster *The Monuments Men* puts Flanders' art centre stage

Lisa Bradshaw

"They took the Ghent Altarpiece?" With these words, actor Bill Murray finally realises just how monumental the Nazi appropriation of Europe's art works really is. The new film *The Monuments Men* is the story of a group of soldiers who got it back

It is the best of times, it is the worst of times for *The Monuments Men*. With the recent news in the headlines that many Belgian museums are in possession of previously privately owned art stolen by the Nazis and later returned to the country, it would seem that the timing is perfect for a film about how that art was recovered. And yet both Flanders'

precious art objects featured in the film are in the midst of restorative works.

Michelangelo's sculpture "Madonna and Child", which attracts two million visitors a year, is on view in Bruges' Church of our Lady, though the church itself is undergoing restoration. It looks a bit of a mess, and the admission price has been

Toxic bombs can't be disarmed

Bomb squad cannot dismantle chemical weapons in West Flanders due to faulty machinery

Alan Hope

Last week it was revealed that an installation in Poelkapelle, West Flanders, maintained by the army's bomb disposal squad Dovo for the dismantling of toxic weapons has not functioned since 2012 because of a defect. Hundreds of shells from the First World War were unearthed last week in a field on the border between the towns of Passendale and Moorslede (pictured), the second major find in a two-week period. In late February, thousands of bombs and shells were found stockpiled by farmers in barns in Langemark-Poelkapelle, Zonnebeke and Staden. On that occasion, Poelkapelle mayor Alain Wyffels said the stockpile of weapons risked causing a chain

reaction and that the munitions would be destroyed at the Dovo barracks. But Dovo is unable to render the munitions safe and is stocking the bombs instead. The site in Poelkapelle currently holds some 3,200 toxic projectiles – shells containing poison gas, or Yperite, named after the city of Ypres where it was first used. "Major investments will be required for a new installation," said army spokesperson Ingrid Baecke. "We have approached the regions about this but have obtained no response." Mayor Wyffels said he had not been aware of the problems and "will do everything I can to see that the installation is quickly repaired."

West Flanders governor Carl Decaluwé said that "there is no problem regarding safety for those living in the area. For the time being, there is sufficient storage space". The munitions in Passendale came to light last week when farmer Johan Devriendt started to plough under a field previously used as a pasture. Since then, Dovo has found 300 projectiles of German origin, one leaking slightly. The clearance work is expected to take four weeks. Police will patrol the area against souvenir-hunters at night, while the 110 people living within the army's 700-metre perimeter will be alerted to any emergency by siren and by SMS.



Flanders says farewell to Jan Hoet

The funeral for Flemish art curator Jan Hoet took place in Ghent's Sint-Paulus church last Wednesday morning. Hoet died on 26 February of a heart attack at the age of 77. On Tuesday evening, about 250 people and a New Orleans-style jazz band took part in a funeral procession departing from the city's Museum for Contemporary Arts (SMAK), which Hoet ran for 14 years, to Sint-Baaf's cathedral. The procession was a memorial and thank you to the curator who devoted his life to Flanders' contemporary art scene – shaking it up and courting controversy not a few times. "However difficult it all is, this brings great comfort," said Jan Hoet, Jr, at the procession. "He gave his life to the public, and the way they've responded has been very moving." Sint-Paulus, located just a few blocks from SMAK, proved too small for the crowd of more than 1,800 wishing to attend the service on Wednesday. Among those present were



culture minister Joke Schauvliege, artists Michaël Borremans, Berlinde De Bruyckere, Jan De Cock, Wim Delvoye and Jan Fabre and East Flanders governor Jan Briers, former director of the Festival of Flanders. The many foreign guests who attended the funeral included representatives of Kassel and Herford, in Germany, where Hoet curated major

exhibitions. Hoet was "a simple man, who enjoyed everyone and everything," said pastor Michel De Beer during the service. "Everywhere Jan went, there was a party. First, perhaps, some uproar – but after that, a party." "Jan had an exceptional energy and strength. Lightning bolts came from his eyes," said painter Borremans later in an interview. "He was enormously driven. This was a man who was always in overdrive. I'm going to miss him." "He taught Flanders how to look at contemporary art, and at the same time took Flemish artists around the world," said former minister Stefaan De Clerck, also present. "He may well be the most important person we have ever had in the field of the visual arts." Hoet was buried later in the day in the Campo Santo cemetery in the Ghent district of Sint-Amandsberg. AH

Grandpa Storky returns to Planckendael for 15th year

The first *ooievaars*, or storks, have returned from their winter migration to their home at Planckendael, the animal park in Mechelen. Planckendael happens to lie on a natural migration route for storks, and the park is home during the breeding season to more than 100 birds. Some of the Planckendael colony have spent the winter in Spain, while others ventured as far as western Africa, a journey split up into stages of up to 300km a day. Once arrived, they will pair off, breed and raise their young. Female storks typically lay one batch of four eggs in a year. The storks are not part of the park's collection of animals but have rather chosen the park's

buildings and fixtures for their nests, while they fly around freely. The park encourages the birds' return by building special metal structures perfect for using to build nests. The birds generally return to the same nests every year. The storks are often seen strolling in the car park or along the park's lanes, to the delight of visitors. The most notable of the returning storks is the eldest, named Grandpa Storky, now returning to Mechelen for the 15th time. Storky was born in Planckendael in 2000 and has returned every year since then. AH



Seven young people die in motorway accident

Seven people aged between 15 and 23 were killed in a collision and subsequent fire on the E314 at Zonhoven in Limburg province in the early morning hours of Saturday. All the victims were students and former students of the same school in Leopoldsburg. The group had started the evening at a youth centre in Leopoldsburg and were on their way to a party in the Netherlands when their BMW collided with the rear of a German lorry and immediately caught fire. According to the Hasselt prosecutor's office, the cause of the crash was excessive speed. The office also pointed out that seven occupants is two over the legal limit for that model of BMW. Two of the victims were in the front passenger seat, and one may have been riding in the boot of the car. Wouter Beke, mayor of Leopoldsburg, ordered all flags in the municipality to be flown at half-mast, and a number of local events planned for the weekend were cancelled out of sympathy for families of the victims. A condolences book will be available to sign all week in the town hall. An online version is available at www.leopoldsburg.be. AH

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

606

words printed on the new postage stamp issued by bpost for International Women's Day, a world record. The text is the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

242,050

complaints received by the Flemish ombudsman in the five years of the current legislature, now approaching its end, substantially more than the 133,344 in the first legislature

€5.6 million

cost to the Flemish government of paying its bills too late in 2013, thus incurring interest and other charges, according to figures provided by the economy ministry

€788 million

raised by the 10 banks that offer the People's Bond, introduced in January; proceeds finance social projects such as school and hospital construction

1

hour extra of mathematics a week in secondary school radically increases the chance of success in the first year of university, according to a study at UHasselt

WEEK IN BRIEF

More than 30% of the cherry trees in the Haspengouw area – the part of Flemish Brabant and Limburg famous for its fruit production – could be affected by the **Little Cherry virus**, which makes cherries unfit for sale, according to researchers at the Fruit Test Centre based in Sint-Truiden. The virus causes discoloured leaves and deformed fruit that cannot then be sold; the only way to eradicate the virus is to uproot the affected tree and replace it. A working group has now asked the city of Sint-Truiden to impose fines on anyone who does not uproot infected trees, which put other healthy trees at risk.

The mother of an eight-year-old boy who disappeared in Antwerp 20 years ago has started the procedure to have him legally declared dead. **Ken Heyrman disappeared in 1994** along with his 11-year-old sister Kim, in the vicinity of the Sportpaleis in Antwerp. Kim’s body was later found murdered in the Asia dock. No trace of Ken has ever been found. “Their mother has always kept up hope that he is still alive, but in the end you have to dare to see the facts for what they are,” a member of the family said.

Flemish athlete Thomas Van der Plaetsen enhanced his status as an emerging all-rounder at the weekend when **he secured a bronze medal in the heptathlon** at the World Indoor Championships in the Polish city of Sopot. Van der Plaetsen, 23 claimed Belgium’s second ever medal at a World Indoor Championship, after Mohammed Mourhit’s silver in the 3000m in Lisbon in 2001. Van der Plaetsen is one of the world’s most promising young decathletes, recently winning European junior and U23 titles. The men’s heptathlon, just seven events, is only held in indoor competitions.

Belgium has a third billionaire, according to *Forbes* magazine. Joining long-established list members Albert Frère (worth about €3.5 billion) and Uzbek-born Patokh

Chodiev (€2.4 billion) is Dutch-born Albert Blokker, grandson of the founder of the chain store, who became a naturalised Belgian in order to run the Casa chain. Blokker’s personal fortune is estimated at just over €1 billion, equal to that of his sister Els, who retains her Dutch nationality.

Five teenagers had to be rescued by the fire service after being **stranded on a breakwater** on the beach at Knokke-Heist by the incoming tide last week. The five failed to realise how fast the tide was rising, officers said. They were picked up by a rescue boat and were showing the initial signs of hypothermia.

Former prime minister **Jean-Luc Dehaene is making steady progress** following surgery to remove a pancreatic tumour at the end of February, the University Hospital of Brussels announced. “It was a delicate and difficult operation lasting seven hours, but it went well,” the hospital said in a statement. Dehaene, 73, is conscious and will remain in the intensive care unit until Friday.

The Brussels alderwoman for trade has called for an **end to independent stalls offering food** and drinks around Sint-Katelijneplein in central Brussels. The stalls “are illegal and represent unfair competition for the local bars and restaurants,” Marion Lemesre said. Some of the stalls hold a licence as a market trader, but “that’s not what they are at all,” said Lemesre. “You buy something at a market stall to take home. That’s not the case here.” The twice-weekly bio- and flower market will remain, she said.

The most **common family name in Flanders** last year was Peeters, with 28,884 bearers, followed by Janssens (25,964), Maes (22,070), Jacobs (16,920) and Willems (15,242). The Flemish top 10 is also the national top 10. In Brussels, however,

historically Belgian names give way to Diallo (2,155) and Bah (1,244), both of African origin, before the appearance of Peeters (1,087), Janssens (1,087) and Dubois (946).

Sony plans to cut 101 of the 296 staff employed at its computer division in Zaventem, as part of a worldwide restructuring involving 5,000 job losses in all, unions learned last week. The computer division, best known for the Vaio laptop, is being sold to an investment fund. Another 48 jobs at the sales and marketing division in Zaventem are not affected.

The rail authority NMBS has made one of the walls of the newly renovated station **Antwerpen-Luchtbal available for the work of graffiti artists** Steve Locatelli and Timothy Bauwens, collectively known as DERM. Another wall will be taken over by cartoonist Eva Mouton. Locatelli said his design was inspired by Antwerp and its fashion industry. The wall was opened to the public last weekend.

The ferry **Larks sailed out of Ostend harbour** last week after lying moored for 11 months following the bankruptcy of owners Transeuropa Ferries in April 2013. The ship headed for Sluiskil in the Netherlands for a refit, but its future after that is unknown.

Flemish public broadcaster **VRT has received a fine of €5,000** from the independent media regulator VRM after two complaints of product placement. The complaints allege that VRT gave covert publicity in two discussion programmes – *De zevende dag* and *Reyers laat* – when the name of the piano dealer Maene appeared onscreen during musical numbers several times. The VRM found the bill from Maene to VRT for the use of the pianos to be notably lower than the price shown on the Maene website. The complaints came from two rival piano dealers.

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



Gerard Mortier

To lose on giant of the cultural world is a tragedy; to lose another barely 10 days later is, as one paper wrote, “an immense, irreplaceable loss”. Gerard Mortier, the son of a Ghent baker who rose to the pinnacle of the opera world, died at the weekend at the age of 70. He had been suffering for some time from a particularly aggressive form of cancer. Mortier studied law and communications in Ghent – the latter he put to good use in a 1970 polemic against the city’s opera policy of the time, in which he also called for the creation of a Flemish Opera. His first major job in the cultural world was as assistant to Jan Briers, director of the Festival of Flanders (and father of the current governor of East Flanders of the same name). He went on to spend the 1970s working as artistic director for opera companies in Dusseldorf, Hamburg, Frankfurt and Paris. In 1981, Mortier left Paris to take up a post as intendant at De Munt in Brussels, where his reputation would be made. In the course

of the next decade, he took De Munt from a backwater to the A-list of world opera houses. At the same time, he established himself as a spokesperson on all aspects of cultural policy. Like Jan Hoet, who also died earlier this month, he managed to translate a rather inaccessible world into a language the public could appreciate. Mortier eventually became the director of the Paris Opera, before moving to the Teatro Real in Madrid, a term that was cut short in 2013 by clashes with the board, and then by his diagnosis. Mortier’s death means the loss of “an eminent and colourful figure in the arts,” said Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters in a statement. “He was recognised as an opera eminence far outside our frontiers. Gerard Mortier was driven and discerning, critical and controversial. His legacy is to leave his lasting stamp on the international world of opera.” “May we ever be thankful,” said Flanders’ culture minister Joke Schauvliege, “that he motivated and inspired generations of people in opera.”

OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

Neighbour power

Huidevetterstraat in Houthalen-Helchteren (that’s Limburg province) is what should be a sleepy little, tree-lined street. But Huidevetterstraat lies between two busy streets – Herebaan and Grote Baan – and is used as a thoroughfare between them. Official measures to stop what the residents call “speed demons” had little effect, so the neighbours came up with a fiendishly clever plan of their own. They park their cars on both sides of the street alternately, which forces anyone driving down the street to slalom between parked cars (*pictured*). As a result, speeds are cut drastically. See how it works in action at <http://youtu.be/LxdVNyd5yh0>. The city is said to



support the initiative. Speaking of neighbour power, it’s about to get an outing in Antwerp, and once again the cause is the Sinksenfoor, the annual fair that dates back to the 13th century. Last year some residents of the Zuider dock area won a promise from the city to move the month-long summer fair to spare them the nuisance. From next year, according to the plan, the Sinksenfoor would move to a new location.

Unfortunately, nobody thought to ask the opinion of the residents of the Park Spoor Oost neighbourhood in Borgerhout, which the city had its eye on as an alternative location. They’ve now formed an action committee to resist any development of the area that doesn’t involve more greenery; despite the name, the area is not a park. But they’d like one. “A new park would improve the living conditions and the health of residents in no time,” said committee member Michel Franssens. “It’s desperately needed because right now Borgerhout is one of the least green and least healthy districts of Antwerp.”

FLANDERS TODAY



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Goodbye, and good luck

Every election sees politicians who do not get re-elected. Some of them are known already, as they did not obtain an "electable" place on their parties' lists – a potential ticket to parliament.

Take former minister Fientje Moerman. A decade ago, Moerman was Open VLD's leading lady, now she is left without the prospect of getting elected. Former secretaries of state Guido Depaet (Open VLD) and Bruno Tuybens (SPA) face similar fates.

The problem is more poignant now, as the latest state reform has abolished the Senate... shrinking the number of available seats by 40. Also, since the last elections, N-VA has become even more popular. This party may take over some seats from Vlaams Belang (on its way down) and LDD (all but disappeared), but other parties' seats are threatened as well.

Failing to secure an electable place for the May elections means as much as the end of a political career, as new elections will only be held in five years. By then, the unelected will be forgotten, new talents will have emerged, and who knows what the political power balance will be.

Politicians on the losing side often lament that this system, or their own parties, do not give them the credit they feel they deserve. However, an MP with several terms of service is well taken care of, by the system of exit bonuses.

Originally, exit bonuses were well intended: giving MPs a large sum of money at the end of their terms allows them some time to re-adjust and find another job. This compensates for having abandoned a secure job for an insecure future in politics.

But a number of aberrations, with politicians voluntarily leaving parliament and still claiming the money, have brought the system into question, to the dismay of Eric Van Rompuy (CD&V), former Flemish minister and long-time Flemish MP.

"Newspapers portray leaving MPs as public thieves, with bags full of money," Van Rompuy writes on his blog. He gives the example of Mieke Vogels (Groen), also a former Flemish minister and long-time MP, as well as Van Rompuy's adversary: "She has been an exceptional politician for 30 years, with a great social commitment, but now she is portrayed as a thief." Van Rompuy's own political future is on the line as well, as he only got the doubtful third place on the federal list for Flemish Brabant, but he remains combative. "I will do all it takes not to have to receive an exit bonus."

Voters trust politicians

Confidence in elected representatives is back up after a dip in 2010

Derek Blyth

While voters in many countries have become cynical about politicians, political parties and political institutions, Flemish voter appears to retain a high level of trust in the region's elected representatives.

The findings of a study by Dutch researcher Tim Reeskens of the sociology department at Tilburg University are published in the new book *Belgie#2014*, edited by Ghent University political analyst Carl Devos.

Reeskens compared attitudes of Flemish voters at the time of the 1999 elections with their attitudes on the eve of the 2014 elections. He found that the level of trust was unchanged over the 15 year period, but that it had dipped during the political crisis that began after the 2007 elections.

Reeskens found that trust in politicians declined in all three regions of Belgium following the

elections of 2007 and 2010. The country was plunged into chaos at the time, as politicians struggled to form a stable coalition, leading to a period in which the country was without a federal government for 535 days.

to 2008, their trust in politicians experienced a decline," Reeskens argues. "In 2012 they had a more gloomy view of the economy, but their trust in politicians saw a sharp increase."

"In 2012, they had a gloomy view of the economy, but their trust in politicians saw a sharp increase"

But confidence bounced back to its pre-2007 level as soon as Elio Di Rupo succeeded in forging a coalition government, Reeskens says.

The study also shows that confidence in politicians was not directly related to the economic situation. "While Belgians were more optimistic about the economy in 2010 compared

Reeskens believes that the traditional parties generally benefit from a climate in which politicians are trusted, which is apparently good news for liberals Open VLD, Christian-Democrats CD&V and socialists SPA, but bad news for the parties at either end of the political spectrum, whether left wing or right wing.



Brussels to get new centre for equal opportunities and anti-discrimination

The parliaments of Belgium agreed yesterday on the conditions for setting up a new centre to promote equal opportunities and fight discrimination and racism. The move comes as the government increases its efforts to comply with EU legislation that requires member states to treat all citizens equally regardless of race or ethnic origin.

The new centre will replace the existing Centre for Equal Opportunities and Anti-Racism, which did not conform to EU regulations because it did not have the authority to act at all levels of government. The new body has been given authority by the federal parliament as well as the regional and community parliaments.

"This is a historic agreement signed by all the parliaments in the country," said Flanders' minister for equal opportunities, Pascal Smet. He added that the Belgian agreement went beyond the strict requirements of EU legislation by offering citizens protection



against discrimination on the grounds of nationality, sexual orientation, civil status, birth, wealth, age, belief, health, life expectancy, handicap, political or trade union affiliation, physical or genetic status and social position.

The new centre will be based in Brussels, but citizens will also be able to take their case to local contact points around the country. **DB**

Nursing education threatened by new EU regulation

The chair of the Flemish University Colleges Council, Toon Martens, has warned that new EU regulations are a threat to the Flemish nursing education system. The EU states that nursing students need 2,300 internship hours, while students in Flanders receive a maximum of 1,200 hours. The Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation could, therefore, decide to not extend the accreditation for the academic year of 2015-2016.

According to Martens, the solution is to extend the duration of the programme by half a year. "But the Flemish government will have to take responsibility, because this measure will come with a serious price tag," he said. He is also requesting the organisation of a task force with representatives from academia, the government and hospitals.

The cabinet of Flemish education minister Pascal Smet said that they are involved in exploratory talks about the matter. **Andy Furniere**

Campaign launched to lure more Dutch visitors to Flanders

The Dutch make up 25% of the total number of foreign tourists to Flanders, but tourism minister Geert Bourgeois thinks there is still potential for growth in that market and has launched a new campaign to promote Flanders as an "authentic" destination for the neighbours to the north.

Echt op z'n Vlaams (Genuinely Flemish) is the slogan that runs alongside a campaign to persuade the Dutch to come to the region for Flemish food, drink, cycling, camping and shopping. The main focus is on historic art cities, like Antwerp and Bruges, but Limburg and the coast are also being marketed.

The Dutch market represents one-quarter of all visitors to Flanders, with 40% of them spending a night in one of the art cities and 10% choosing somewhere to stay at the coast. The Dutch spend an average of €131 per night in the art cities and about half that figure at the coast.



"The Dutch represented 3.5 million overnight stays in 2012, which makes them by far our largest foreign market," said Bourgeois. "But that doesn't mean we can rest on our laurels. The new campaign aims to provide a fresh and contemporary look at what we can offer." **DB**

Erasmus College joins EU project for North African universities

The Erasmus University College in Brussels has joined an EU project to support the modernisation of higher education in three North African countries. The aim is to open up university opportunities to students with special needs, from disadvantaged backgrounds and who live in remote geographical regions such as the Atlas and Rif mountains.

The project is also working to improve gender equality in the universities, which are located in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

The project forms part of the EU's Tempus Programme, which supports modernisation of higher education in countries that border the EU, from Central Asia and the Western Balkans to Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean area. Erasmus College is one of 10 European universities participating in the North African project. **DB**

Saving the culture of a continent

Movie will introduce the world to Ghent's magnificent Jan van Eyck altarpiece

► continued from page 1

brought down to a mere €2.

Likewise, several panels from Jan van Eyck's "The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb" – otherwise known, and referred to in the film, as the Ghent Altarpiece – are not in their place in Sint-Baaf's Cathedral but are undergoing restoration in the city's Fine Arts Museum several kilometres away.

None of that might seem like a big problem, but these works aren't just part of the film – they are the stars of the film. If ever Flanders was going to get worldwide publicity for its artistic gems, this is it.

The opening scene of *The Monuments Men*, which hits cinemas across Belgium this week, finds priests frantically crating up the Ghent Altarpiece, hoping to hide it from the Nazis. We find out later that it was to no avail when Bill Murray's character exclaims with surprise: "They took the Ghent Altarpiece?"

It's a defining moment in the film, as it finally dawns on him just how big this German looting operation really is.

The Nazis didn't just take a few key masterpieces off museum walls: During the Second World War, they marched into homes, churches, town halls and anywhere else they needed to in order to confiscate every valuable (or semi-valuable) piece of art in Europe. By the end of the war, they had acquired by theft or forced sale more than five million cultural objects.

The Monuments Men is based on the 2009 book of the same name by American Robert M Edsel, who has published several books and co-produced a documentary on the Nazi pillage of Europe's cultural artefacts. He details the work of the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives section, set up towards the end of the war to monitor both the theft of works by the Germans but also the destruction of ancient architecture and monuments across Europe –



Several key members of the Monuments Men inspect the main panel of the Ghent Altarpiece in a salt cave in Altaussee, Austria. The Germans had put tissue paper on areas they found vulnerable to damage. The man in the middle is George Stout, who George Clooney plays in the movie



George Clooney directs an all-star cast

to stop the theft of thousands of years of culture. Because the Monuments Men weren't just tasked with finding the works of art – works that included such masterpieces as Da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" and "Lady with an Ermine", Monet's "In the Winter Garden",

specifically these two pieces of art. Though the critics – for good reason – have not been kind to Clooney's film, I don't mind telling you it's rather a thrill to see Flanders' art taking the leading role. It is possibly the best international advertisement Flanders has ever known.

Both Bruges and Ghent are planning for an influx of tourists spurred on by *The Monuments Men*. "Many people don't realise that Michelangelo's 'Madonna and Child' is in Bruges," says Bruges mayor Renaat Landuyt. "So it's good that the world will be made aware of this."

What Dan Brown did for the "Mona Lisa", it is hoped, Clooney will do for the Madonna and the Ghent Altarpiece.

Although, let's face it, the "Mona Lisa" didn't really need any help. Landuyt touches on an interesting point: Americans – and many other viewers outside of the low countries – watching *The Monuments Men* will know nothing about these iconic artworks. You can bet that American viewers will have never seen nor heard of the Ghent Altarpiece. Nor will they recognise Michelangelo's Madonna, despite it being a unique and arresting version of the iconic image and its fame as the only work by the Renaissance master to have

left Italy during his lifetime.

"I think when Americans see the film they will think 'why do I not know about this? Why do I not recognise it?'," says Bart Devolder of the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage. He's referring to the Ghent Altarpiece, and no one knows the painting better than him: He's the on-site co-ordinator of the restoration project, which finds several of its panels in Ghent's Fine Arts Museum at any given time, behind glass so the public can view the restorers at work.

"If you say 'Ghent Altarpiece', no one gets an image in their heads like they do with iconic paintings like 'American Gothic' or the 'Mona Lisa'," Devolder continues. "But it's a *far* better painting than the 'Mona Lisa'."

The reason behind the piece's lack of fame, he thinks is twofold: First, that famous reserve of the Belgians. "They don't brag about what they've got. They don't use the promise of works by Jan Van Eyck to boast about the city of Ghent, which has more Van Eycks than any other city in the world."



On the cover: Michelangelo's "Madonna and Child" is carefully moved from a salt mine in Austria

The second reason is perhaps even more profound: The altarpiece is one difficult work. "Van Eyck was very well educated, but it's believed that he had one or more advisors in order to create this sophisticated of an iconographical schema," notes Devolder. "There are so many

discussions about what role all the people in the piece play, and I think that is what is frustrating about this painting – and why it's not more famous. It's complicated."

It's also not just one painting, it's 24, including the panels on the back side, which are seen if the piece is closed up. "It might be too much for people to take in, and maybe that's why it's so difficult for them to *like* it," says Devolder "You can't just say something cute about the eyes to spark people's interest."

Why Edsel – and later Clooney – chose to focus on these two pieces is anyone's guess. But Till-Holger Borchert, chief curator at Bruges' Groeninge Museum, has a simple answer. "I've heard that Mr Edsel has a keen interest in Flemish art," he tells me.

And it's also possible, notes Borchert, that he was simply influenced by historical photography. Several photos still exist of Monuments Men – and the enlisted men who assisted them – holding up paintings outside the mines where they had just found them. (It was the Monuments Men who discovered that most of the artefacts were stored underground in salt and copper mines across Germany and Austria.)

"When I think back on the photographs that emerged of these people, the most significant photos are of the Madonna and the Ghent Altarpiece," says Borchert. "Those were actually taken inside the mines, and we make a connection with them especially for that; they are concerned with getting them out of that place."

Despite Flanders' starring role in *The Monuments Men*, you won't actually see any of Flanders in the movie: It was filmed on location in the UK and Germany. Although one of the men sneaks into an occupied Bruges in the dead of night to make his way to the church in an attempt to protect the Madonna, it's not really Bruges, the Church of Our Lady – or the Madonna. It's filmed elsewhere, and the Madonna is a copy.

"That's the weakest point in the film," says mayor Landuyt. "Bruges is much more beautiful than that. At least visitors who come to the city after seeing the film will be pleasantly surprised."

As for that, there are positive spins to be put on all those renovations for prospective tourists. The city of Ghent is contemplating a triple-ticket to see the Ghent Altarpiece in Sint-Baaf's, the panels being restored in the Fine Arts Museum and the exhibitions about the work in the Caermersklooster. That will take tourists all around the city, where they can also be led to other works by Van Eyck.

As for Bruges, when tourists swoon in awe at the face of Michelangelo's serene Madonna, they might be inclined to open their pocket books to help fund the renovations of the church.

► www.monumentsmen.com

“I think when Americans see the film they will think ‘why do I not know about this?’

casualties of war.

The number of Monuments Men in the field numbered 15 – for all of Europe. They were mostly soldiers who had seen no combat. Some of them were not soldiers at all; they were art curators, historians, architects – sent to stop the Allied troops from shooting down church towers and to find millions of pieces of art skilfully stolen and hidden by the enemy.

It was, in essence, an impossible mission. And yet, as the book and the film illustrate, they were remarkably successful.

It's a wonderful story of integrity, adventure and a desperate need

Vermeer's "The Astronomer" and the original manuscript of Beethoven's *Symphony No 6* – they were also under the gun, so to speak. Hitler had ordered works to be systematically destroyed if Germany fell to the Allies. And while the Monuments Men were searching, Germany was falling.

And yet, it's the Ghent Altarpiece and Bruges' Madonna that are singled out by both Edsel and film director George Clooney as the centrepieces of the struggle. Some of Hollywood's biggest celebrities – Clooney, Matt Damon, Cate Blanchett, John Goodman, Bill Murray and more – spend two hours intent on finding

WEEK IN
BUSINESS

Cars ▶ Sales

New car sales for the first two months of the year were stable at 95,724 vehicles, while light truck registrations jumped by 95%. The industry expects the results of the Brussels Motor Show in January to boost the sales figures in coming months.

Contracts

▶ World Cup

Several Flemish companies have signed contracts to supply equipment and products for this summer's World Cup in Brazil. They include telecoms equipment supplier Newtec of Sint-Niklaas, Roeselaere-based Outside Broadcast, Barco TV producer of Kortrijk, Bekaert from Zwevegem and hybrid turf expert Desso in Dendermonde.

Frozen food ▶ Findus

The French frozen food group has acquired the Belgian operations of Lutosa, the frozen potatoes branch of Pinguin, headquartered in Staden, West Flanders. The move is the result of conditions set by EU competition authorities in the wake of the acquisition of Pinguin Lutosa by US frozen food giant McCain last year.

Medical

▶ St Jude Medical

The US-based developer of medical products and services for cardiac and neurological treatments has inaugurated a 10,000 square-metre distribution centre in Zaventem. The company, which expects to handle up to 2,500 medical equipment parts a day for the European and Asian markets, will hire an additional 50 employees by year end on top of the existing 150-strong workforce.

PR ▶ Mostra

The Brussels-based public relations consultancy, which handles major parts of the European Commission's communications, including the Europa.eu portal, has been acquired by the US ICF International consulting group.

Steel ▶ Bekaert

The steel wire producer, based in Zwevegem, West Flanders, has acquired the steel cord activities of Italy's Pirelli tyre group. The €250 million deal includes five production units in Brazil, Italy, Romania, Turkey and China.

Supermarkets

▶ Delhaize

The Brussels-based super-market group is selling its 54 Piccadilly stores in Bulgaria to the local AP Mart group. The move is part of the supermarket's reorganisation in the region that also saw the sale last year of its affiliates in Albania and Montenegro.

Council of State auditor
finds against Telenet deal

Auditor agrees with Belgacom on the sale of an intercommunal TV network

Alan Hope

Internet and cable provider Telenet could lose up to one-third of its clients if a deal made more than five years ago is struck down by the Council of State. This week the auditor of the council issued an opinion in the so-called Interkabel case, which, if followed by the council, would annul the deal.

In 2008, the Flemish intercommunals – groups of two or more municipalities joined together to provide some sort of public utility, such as water, gas or, in this case, cable television – voted to hand over the operation of their cable network to Telenet for €380 million. The intercommunals would remain owners of the network.

Belgacom, Telenet's main competitor, filed suit against the sale, which it argued should have been open to bids, and made a counter-offer of €420 million. In the end, Telenet bid €427 million for the right to exploit the network for 38 years; Telenet would also pay investment and other costs.



The deal gave Telenet some 800,000 customers in four Flemish provinces – equivalent to one in three of its current customer base. More importantly, the deal allowed Telenet to offer “triple play” – a bundle of telephone, internet and TV – across Flanders.

Belgacom's lawsuit remained on the books,

and last year the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg ruled that not only Belgacom but also foreign operators should have been allowed to bid for the Interkabel network. The auditor of the Council of State has followed that reasoning, and it is now up to the Council of State to provide a final ruling. The council is not bound to rule according to the auditor's advice, but it does in a majority of cases.

That would allow Belgacom to ask the commercial tribunal of Brussels to strike down the deal and take the whole procedure back to square one.

A spokesperson for Telenet told *De Tijd* newspaper that there is unlikely to be a final ruling on the case until 2017, and the worst-case scenario is unlikely. “We're convinced we won't lose customers,” said Evelyne Nieuwlandt. “Possibly there will be a discussion as to whether Belgacom has the right to damages, and the responsibility for that lies in the first place with the intercommunals.”

Dutch complain about government support of Flemish ports

The Antwerp port authority has denied it benefits unfairly from government support, after criticism from a Dutch government minister. The Flemish government's ports policy, which applies to all of the region's ports, has been cleared and hailed by the European Commission as “good practice”, the port authority said last week in a statement.

Earlier this week, Dutch infrastructure minister Melanie Schultz van Haegen complained that Flemish and German ports were “profiting royally from government support” and called on the EU to introduce a package of measures for ports Europe-wide that would limit state aid and introduce transparency in the accounting of port authorities.

According to Schultz, a study by Erasmus University Rotterdam showed “that the port of Rotterdam could handle 7% more containers if the conditions existed in Europe for a level playing field. The influence of public financing on port tariffs is something that needs to be put behind us.”

Antwerp's situation, like that of Ghent, Ostend and Zeebrugge, is governed by the Flemish government's ports decree, which dates back to 1999. That port infrastructure in Flanders is considered by the World Economic Forum as among the best in the world is partly due to the support of the government, the port authority said. “However, the port authority has in recent years contributed



Maasvlakte in Rotterdam – a 1,000-hectare extension to the port begun in 2010 and completed last year.

Antwerp's success is due to a number of factors, the authority argues: extensive infrastructure, maritime accessibility, a landward siting that allows ready access to the European hinterland and co-operation between sea-based activities, industry and logistics.

“The many million-euro investments by private companies and the recent decision by the world's largest shipping company to make more frequent use of Antwerp are all facts that show that our clients are convinced that the choice of Antwerp is an important one for their whole supply chain.” AH

more financially to the extension of the port, even though this is, according to the decree, a job for the government.” The authority contributed 25% of the cost of the new Deurganck lock (pictured), currently under construction on the left bank of the Scheldt.

The statement also questions how important Dutch state aid was to completion of the Second

Uber taxis seized in Brussels
as company strikes back

Taxi service Uber has hit back at the seizure of two of its vehicles by Brussels police last week, by offering each resident up to five free rides in the week up to 13 March.

Two vehicles belonging to drivers contracted by the American taxi firm were seized in the Brussels district of Elsene early last week for operating without a valid taxi licence. Transport minister Brigitte Grouwels had already warned the new service, by which members of the public can book a cab via SMS or smartphone app, that it risked seizures if it began operating in Brussels.

“The drivers have not passed an exam, they are not in line with official tariffs, and the vehicles do not conform to our regulations,” the minister said.

The two taxis were discovered operating for Uber during a spot-check. Unlike licensed Brussels taxis, Uber vehicles have no identifying characteristics, such as the chequerboard stripe down the side of the vehicle or the taxi sign fixed permanently to the roof. Uber was founded in San Francisco in 2009, initially offering high-end cars for taxi hire but later branching out into a wide range of other vehicles. Customers reserve a cab by text message or via an app.

Brussels only permits rides for hire by licensed taxi drivers. The Brussels prosecutor's office will now decide on the next step in the case – whether to file a legal complaint against Uber or to return the two confiscated vehicles. The service is also opposed by existing Brussels taxi associations. AH

Flanders' first Open Airport Day
attracts 30,000

The first Open Airport Day last Saturday attracted 30,000 visitors, organisers said, one in three of them at Brussels Airport in Zaventem. The event also included the other airports in Flanders: Ostend-Bruges, Antwerp and Kortrijk-Wevelgem in West Flanders. Minister-president Kris Peeters and mobility minister Hilde Crevits paid a visit to all four airports.

The goal of the event is to present the variety of activities that take place at the region's airports, outside of passengers flights. “Air transport is also very important for freight,” Crevits said, “and it can also save lives, with emergency medical flights and humanitarian operations.”

The air transport sector in Belgium, said Peeters, has an annual turnover of €2.3 billion a year. Some 18,500 people work at Flanders' four airports. “Flemish companies are at the very top of the industry with their niche technologies,” he said, “and they are

among the permanent suppliers of all of the main aircraft builders in the world.”

At Brussels Airport, a handful of visitors had the chance to visit the 150-metre control tower, from where all air traffic is directed. “It's a unique opportunity to see the airport from this perspective,” one visitor told VTM News. “And it's interesting because this happens to be the moment when a lot of planes are taking off.”

Closer to the ground, the airport also displayed the activities of 20 or so companies that operate at Zaventem, including equipment manufacturers and Brussels Airlines, which opened up a new Airbus for visitors to check out.

At other locations, visitors were given tours, watched demonstrations of safety procedures and cargo handling and were introduced to training programmes for jobs such as airline pilot. AH

▶ www.luchtvaartdag.be

A rare mutation

Antwerp PhD student stumbles upon new genetic cause of mystery disorder

Senne Starckx

Scientists have only been able to identify a mere 15% of all the genetic causes of autism spectrum disorders (ASDs), collectively known as just autism. The emergence of the disease is still poorly understood.

But in a ground-breaking discovery earlier this year, scientists from the University of Antwerp and the Antwerp University Hospital (UZ Antwerp) identified an entirely new genetic cause of ASDs. Intriguingly – and maybe also a bit frighteningly – they identified a series of genetic mutations that aren't hereditary; they just happen to "pop out" in the DNA of unlucky children. Geneticists call these mutations *de novo*; this means that they originate in the child. The discovery was described in the science and medicine journal *Nature Genetics* last month.

ASDs are developmental disorders that are characterised by social deficits, communication difficulties, repetitive behaviour and thoughts and, in some cases, a certain degree of cognitive delay. While ASDs were once considered to be consequences of youth traumas or other challenges experienced during childhood, scientists have now established that social or psychological factors don't play any part. ASDs are fundamentally biological and occur as a result of problems during the development of the brain. But biological isn't the same as hereditary – just like genetic doesn't always mean that you get it from your mum or dad. There are indeed some environmental factors that can cause ASDs, like certain viral infections, illness of the mother during pregnancy, oxygen deficiency during birth and long-term exposure to heavy metals.

These environmental factors cause problems during brain development, and they account for roughly 10% of all the causes of ASDs. The other 90% is purely genetic.

The most common genetic causes of ASDs are the so-called Fragile X syndrome (when there's a mutation



of the female sex chromosome), tuberous sclerosis and (in 5 to 7% of cases) children with Down syndrome. Some of these known genetic defects are hereditary, with parents likely to transmit the disease to their children. The recent research was mainly carried out in the medical genetics department at UZ Antwerp. Céline Helsmoortel is working on her PhD, in which she uses a new technology – dubbed "next generation sequencing" – to investigate new causes of intellectual disability and autism. All the new mutations were found in the gene that codes for the activity-dependent neuroprotective protein (ADNP). She stumbled upon the mutation in the ADNP gene while examining the DNA code of two patients at the hospital with a severe form of ASD.

"This gene immediately caught my

attention," Helsmoortel explains, "because it plays an important role in the development of our brain, in learning and memory processes." But the 25-year-old student only had two patients – not a good basis for a sound statistical estimation of a causal relationship between the mutation and this specific type of ASD.

Helsmoortel: "That this was a *de novo* mutation gave me hope. Every one of us has around 10 of these mutations in our genes. So it definitely had to be a rare mutation – otherwise it would have been discovered much earlier."

Helsmoortel searched and found international assistance. With help from colleagues from the Netherlands, Sweden, Italy, Australia and the US, she was able to find eight other patients with the same clinical background (the same symptoms



Céline Helsmoortel discovered the gene mutation while examining the DNA of two patients at Antwerp's university hospital

of this form of ASD). In each of their genomes, the international researchers were able to identify mutations in the ADNP gene.

"Because we found it in every one of our 10 ASD patients with these particular symptoms, it was clear for us that there was indeed a causal relationship," says Helsmoortel.

So how important is the discovery of these new ASD-causing mutations? Helsmoortel explains that they looked for mutations in this same gene in 5,776 patients (including the hospital's 10 patients) who were also diagnosed with ASD. "Again, our 10 patients 'popped up' as the carriers of mutations in this gene. This means that in 0.17% of all the people with ASD, their disease is caused by a malfunctioning ADNP gene. That's much less than with other genetic causes, but what's special about this one is that the mutation is *de novo* – it just popped out in the patient's genome – somewhere during embryo development."

Thanks to the discovery, doctors can now more easily diagnose ASD. Indeed, like the spectrum element in the name of the disorder indicates, a foolproof diagnose of ASD isn't always possible – the range of symptoms is often too broad. However, says Helsmoortel, "if you see a mutation in the ADNP gene, it's definitely the cause of the ASD."

WEEK IN INNOVATION

Change in scans to cut radiation risk

Federal public health minister Laurette Onkelinx has announced a thorough revision of the standards for medical imaging, to better protect patients against the risks of radiation. An increase in the number of devices for imaging via magnetic resonance (MRI) and of positron emission tomography (PET) scanners should decrease the number of computed tomography (CT) scans, which work with X-radiation.

Repeated exposure to ionising radiation can increase the risk of cancer. MRI scans don't carry risks, but the current number of 109 recognised MRI devices in Belgium is insufficient for the needs today.

Flemish scientist wakes coma patients

World-renowned Flemish coma expert Steven Laureys of the Coma Science Group at Liège University has been able to temporarily wake patients who have been in a coma for months or even years. He worked with patients in a condition of "minimum consciousness", which is less serious than the so-called vegetative state.

For 20 minutes, the patients received mild electric waves through their brain, via two electrodes on their skull. Thirteen patients then showed an increased consciousness, which means they could follow movements with their eyes or answer simple questions. The effect lasted for up to two hours.

Laureys' team will soon examine how patients react to longer brain stimulation. The research could help scientists understand how brain networks become active again after being damaged.

40,000 young people care for sick parents

Research centre Kind en Samenleving (Child and Society) has for the first time mapped the number of young people in Flanders providing physical care for their parents. It found that about 40,000 people between the ages of 10 and 24 take care of chronically ill parents.

"This phenomenon has been largely overlooked," said An Piessens of Kind en Samenleving. "Children often don't talk about this issue, so their schools have no idea."

The centre is launching an awareness campaign to encourage school directors and teachers to be flexible and to inform doctors about the situation. According to Piessens, many doctors neglect to support children in dealing with the situation. AF

Q&A

Deinze hospital director Frank Lippens chaired the working group that mapped the areas in Flanders where emergency workers fail to get to residents in time

What kind of map did you create?

Our working group at the National Council for Hospital Provisions, which advises the federal public health ministry, co-operated with the geography department at the University of Ghent to develop an interactive map of the distribution of emergency help services. With data from GPS manufacturer TomTom and the actual driving times of the medical teams, we were able to examine if there were areas where people don't have sufficient guarantees of timely assistance after calling the emergency phone number 112.

Are there any blind spots on the map?

We identified eight vulnerable areas –

around Diksmuide, Aalter-Beernem, Assenede-Zelzate, Beveren, Heist-op-den-Berg, Aarschot, Leopoldsburg and Lanaken. In these areas, where a combined 250,000 people live, a medical professional can help a patient in 15 minutes in less than 90% of cases. Although ambulance staff have an essential function, they aren't allowed to perform complex medical actions, like administering medication or intubating someone.

What solutions are you proposing?

The number of hospitals will only decrease, and there is already a shortage of emergency doctors that lead a Mobile Urgency Group. I therefore feel the government should invest more in Pre-hospital

Intervention Teams (PITs), which include nurses specialised in emergency care. Our experience with hospitals that currently have PITs shows that the care that these emergency nurses provide is equal to that of emergency doctors.

How many PIT teams are there in Flanders?

I established the first PIT in the 1980s at the Sint-Vincentius hospital in Deinze. About five years ago, the government decided to invest in the project, and there are currently 17 PITs. This year, three more hospitals will get funding for a PIT. The PITs are officially still considered trial projects, but we are asking the next government to give them a better statute. PITs



should also be established outside of hospitals, to assist the ambulance staff in fire brigades, for example.

Interview by Andy Fumiere

► <http://cartogis.ugent.be/pit>



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Shedding the overalls

Students experience life on the workfloors of technical professions

Andy Furniere

To improve the reputation of technical studies, the Regional Technological Centres (RTCs) of West and East Flanders have launched the campaign Techniek is sjiek (Technical is Chic). The most recent feature of the campaign is the platform Bedrijf+School (Company+School), which brings students on to the actual workfloors of companies and research institutions.

The lack of interest in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) is an issue that has been high on Flanders' political agenda for some time. But despite government and labour market campaigns, there is little progress. The most recent report from the Flemish education ministry, "Higher Education in Figures", showed that this academic year, 191 students, or 3% fewer than last year, enrolled in science and tech studies at universities or colleges. As a result, companies continue to have difficulties finding skilled staff for their technical vacancies.

"Many students still think of dirty work in overalls when they think of technical jobs," says Isabelle Herteleer of RTC East Flanders, "while many of the job opportunities consist of high-tech innovation in good working conditions."

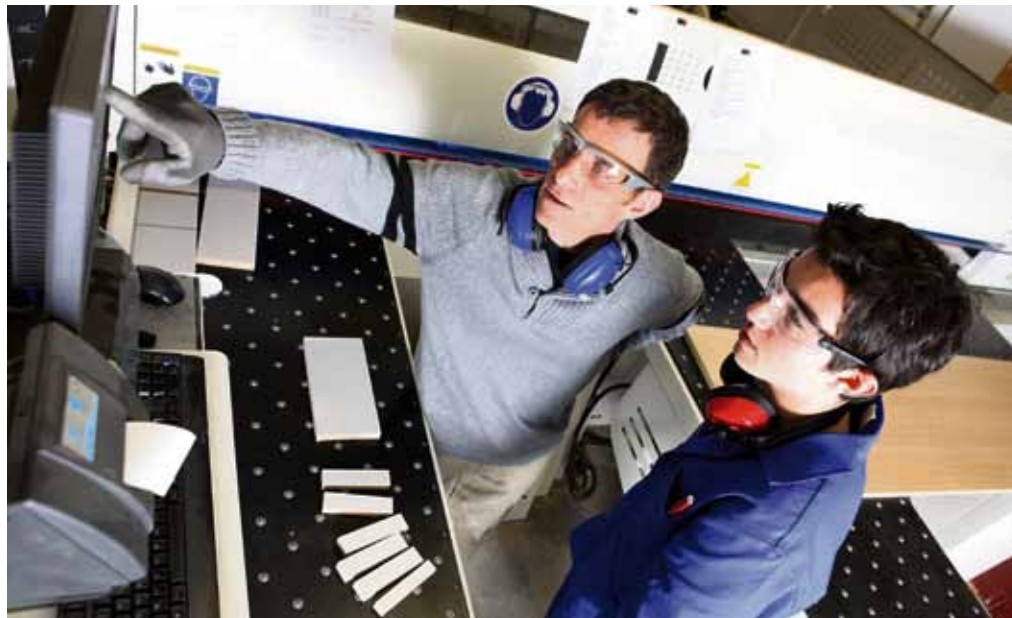
To change this view, RTC West and East Flanders have joined forces for Techniek is sjiek. They are organising media campaigns with positive testimonials and events like the Technologica event in Ghent in May.

A third part of their campaign revolves around helping teachers to excite the enthusiasm of their students for technical assignments. "Particularly in primary and the first level of secondary education, teachers struggle to find the right activities for youngsters," says Herteleer. "In too many cases, the technical activities only involve tinkering with certain materials."

To show young people what future opportunities lie open to them when they choose to develop their technical skills, the RTCs of East and West Flanders are bringing students to the workfloors of companies and knowledge centres, like Volvo Cars Ghent and Antwerp University.

To get companies and institutions on board, the RTCs set up a partnership with the Dutch province of Zeeland, which has been involved in the Bedrijf+School project for four years. On the online platform bedrijfplusschool.eu, companies and institutions can list the activities they provide for different age categories.

Technical staff can, for example, give a guest lecture at the school; the class can pay a visit to the work floor; students or teachers can have a so-called *snuffelstage*, an internship of a few days; students



can take part in a technical hands-on assignment. "Think for example of creative soldering exercises, chemical experiments or working with small electric motors," says Herteleer.

Volvo Cars Ghent has already organised a visit where students could talk to maintenance technicians. "We are especially interested in organising school visits and internships for final-year technical students, to encourage them to apply for one of our vacancies," explains Volvo HR manager Annick Stevens. "In the future, we may also offer more hands-on assignments for younger students, like we provide during events like Boetiek Techniek."

Boetiek Techniek is a fair organised by the City of Ghent and TOFAM East Flanders – a non-profit that promotes the metals sector. "During this event, kids can program simple actions for a robot, for example," explains Stevens.

Thanks to European subsidies, the RTCs can also offer a free bus ride on the Techniekbuss to visit companies or centres across the border in Zeeland. In Flanders, the platform currently only includes companies and centres in the provinces of West and East Flanders, but this will change in 2015. The platform currently showcases the activities of about 250 companies and centres in Zeeland and 90 in Flanders.

For its next project, titled Technical Ambassadors, the two RTCs are again looking for inspiration in the Netherlands but also in Germany, the UK and the Scandinavian countries. The purpose

of Technical Ambassadors, also financed with European subsidies, is to increase the efficiency of technical activities organised by schools and companies, customised to different age groups.

By the middle of 2015, the project should empower the technical ambassadors or co-ordinators to assist both parties in setting up concrete projects with tips and tricks. "We are not yet sure about all the details, but one of our main ideas is that we should work locally," says Herteleer. "Our experience shows that both schools and companies are more dedicated when they are situated very close to one another."

With similar goals as the Techniek is sjiek campaign, the schools' umbrella organisations VVKSO, OVSG and GO! have organised the campaign Toch wel technisch (Certainly Technical), and Flemish innovation minister Ingrid Lieten launched the Richting Morgen (Direction Tomorrow) campaign, part of the Flemish government's STEM action plan to support technical studies.

MP Sabine Poleyn last December asked minister Lieten in the Flemish Parliament to bring together these three different campaigns in one big campaign to promote technical study streams. Lieten answered that she was open to suggestions for collaboration or demands for financial support, but that she was also careful not to put grassroots initiatives in a sort of strait-jacket.

► www.bedrijfplusschool.eu

WEEK IN EDUCATION

Number of UA students up by 50%

Antwerp University's student population has increased by 53.8% in the last decade, from 24,478 in 2004 to 37,656 this academic year. No other Flemish university can show similar figures. According to Robert Voorhamme, chair of the Association of University and University Colleges Antwerp, "the strong reputation of the unified university and the innovative structure of university colleges attract many students." "But the reputation of the city of Antwerp has also improved; it is increasingly seen as an agreeable, safe and creative city for young people."

Down syndrome pupils do better in regular class

Children with Down syndrome in regular education in primary school do better at speaking, reading, writing and maths than those in special education, according to researcher Gerrit De Graaf of Ghent University. According to De Graaf's research, children with Down syndrome in regular education pick up more vocabulary because both teachers and fellow students use a more complex language structure than pupils in special education. Teachers also devote one-and-a-half more time to the teaching of scholastic skills, while special education postpones this too long for these students, he says. Essential to integration in regular education, according to De Graaf, is good communication with the parents, a positive attitude in class and individual guidance.

Record numbers in real estate studies

The Flemish Confederation of Real Estate Professionals has announced that there are 34% more young people enrolled in real estate studies at university colleges compared to three years ago. The number of registrations increased considerably at the three university colleges with Bachelor's studies in Real Estate: KaHo Sint-Lieven in Aalst, HoGent and AP Hogeschool in Mechelen.

The confederation thinks the increasing complexity of acquiring property emphasises the need for agents to be well educated and trained. The confederation also pointed to the need to establish Master's degrees in real estate at universities. Real estate studies also provide job opportunities, it said, at property developers, construction companies, banks and government departments.

Q&A

Annelies Somers of the study advice department at the University of Leuven is helping implement the new vacancy database LoopbaanLift (CareerLift)

What can students find on LoopbaanLift?

Apart from jobs and internships, students and alumni can find topics for Master's theses and other study projects. Via social media networks Facebook and LinkedIn, they can also easily set up profiles on the website. If they have created a profile, our system will only present them with the vacancies that fit their competences. But perhaps the most important innovation is the international character of the database.

So the database also assembles vacancies for positions abroad?

Through Danish technology developer Graduateland, which created this database and many

others for international universities, LoopbaanLift includes thousands of vacancies at foreign knowledge centres, businesses and non-profits. Students and alumni can, for example, browse through the job opportunities at Harvard University in the US, Vodafone Group in London or Alcatel-Lucent in France.

How many students have registered on the website?

More than 3,000 students and alumni in the first three weeks. We target students in an advanced stage of their education. We don't provide information on student jobs or voluntary work. To promote the new database, we co-operated with the student associations, through

umbrella organisation LOKO. Before launching the database, we also asked students to test it, and we will keep asking for their feedback to improve its functions.

Do you have any other initiatives to guide students to the labour market?

Absolutely – the launch of the LoopbaanLift took place during our annual Job Info Day last month. This is a large job fair where all final-year students can meet representatives of companies and learn about their social statute, working abroad, job applications and PhDs. Last week, interested students learned about working in the United States during our event Success in the US.



We also sponsor the lecture series Wegwijs op de arbeidsmarkt (Finding Your Way on the Labour Market), with info on working in certain sectors, like in education and government. At the end of March, we are sponsoring the Leren solliciteren week (Learn to Apply Week), with info sessions.

interview by AF

► www.loopbaanlift.kuleuven.be

WEEK IN
ACTIVITIES

Cherry Blossom Time

Thanks to the mild winter and early spring, the cherry trees in the Japanese Garden in Hasselt are already in bloom. For the first time, the bloom in Flanders coincides with the blossom season in Japan. *From 14 March, Gouverneur Verwilghensingel 23, Hasselt, €5*

► <http://tinyurl.com/cherry-blossom-time>

Brugge Culinaire

This weekend, the old Saint-John's hospital site will be the setting for a three-day culinary festival with pop-up restaurants, outdoor market, a cafe with live music, workshops for kids and a fish soup cooking contest. *14-16 March, Mariastraat 38, Bruges, free*

► www.bruggeculinaire.be

Home, Garden
and Pool Show

Discover the latest products and trends for your house and garden at Sfeer in Ghent. Outdoor entertaining is a special focus with cooking demos in the "kitchen garden." *15-17 & 21-22 March, 11.00-19.00, €10*

► <http://sfeer.be>

Care Day

For the third year in a row, hospitals, nursing homes, schools and other organisations across Flanders open their doors. Learn about jobs, new developments and trends in the care and wellness sector. *16 March, free*

► www.dagvandezorg.be

In Vlaamse Velden
Day

Have you been following the Flemish First World War miniseries *In Vlaamse Velden* on Eén? If so, register for a bike or auto tour of filming locations, a meet-and-greet with the cast, or a walking tour of Veurne, where the series was set. *15 March, free, registration required*

► www.invlaamsevelDEN.be

Saint Patrick's
Festival

Kraainem – home to a substantial Irish community – celebrates Saint Patrick's Day with a weekend of music, food and performance at the local cultural centre. Listen to bluegrass band The Sons of Navarone, enjoy theatre, literature and poetry courtesy of Brussels' Irish Theatre Group and tuck into a Flemish-Irish lunch or supper. *14-16 March, Lijsterbessen-bomenlaan 6*

► www.delijsterbes.be

Off the grid

Companies are beginning to encourage employees to unplug in their downtime

Katy Desmond

When emails, texts and endless social media first arrived on the doorsteps of businesses, they made many aspects of office communication infinitely faster, clearer and more reliable. However, today a growing body of research suggests that all that checking, clicking, scanning and replying takes a heavy toll on workers' productivity and general well-being.

Heavy internet use has been linked to a number of physical and psychological ailments – from professional burnout to weight gain to decreased memory and attention spans. For some 10% of people, the internet is even addictive.

"If you do FMRI studies and put people under the scanner," says Frederik Anseel, occupational psychologist at the University of Ghent, "then you can see that exactly the same mechanisms play out as in other addictions."

employees can now choose to make themselves unreachable on their mobile devices, both inside and outside working hours, if agreed upon with their boss. BMW's Brussels office expects to roll out the policy later this year.

According to Koen Dejaeger of BMW in Belgium, the new policy gives employees the opportunity to maintain a distance from their work and focus on other parts of their lives, which will help them feel and perform better on all fronts.

Such policies fly in the face of current business culture, which is accustomed to immediate responses and often looks down on those who choose to take themselves off the grid. In Dejaeger's view, a cultural shift that recognises the value of downtime on worker productivity is needed.

"If you are always working, and you have so much stress that



© InImage

“When people decide on their own how to organise their working lives, they are more satisfied

To combat this negative effect of constant connection, some companies are taking steps to encourage employees to unplug. Most recently, the BMW Group's head office in Germany announced a policy granting employees the "right to inaccessibility". German

you cannot enjoy your free time anymore, that is not good for you. And it is not good for BMW either." BMW is not the first company in Belgium to be planning such a policy. According to *deredactie.be*, both Total and Siemens are in talks with trade unions to create similar

agreements. Other companies and organisations, such as German trade union IG Metall, have taken the principle of inaccessibility a step farther, actually blocking access to emails after working hours, *Der Spiegel* reports.

However, Anseel raises doubts about both the effectiveness and wisdom of all-out bans on work media outside working hours. "We are very bad at resisting things we love," he says "If you restrict or prohibit use, people will still be seduced."

Better, in Anseel's opinion, is to teach employees to be aware of their own work habits and to develop strategies to manage the balance between their on- and offline lives better.

"Workers can learn to log out of their email, shut down their computers or not to sleep with their phone in the room." What companies should not do, he says, is restrict their employees' freedom. Freedom, according to Anseel, is very important in the workplace. "We know from research that when people have autonomy and decide on their own how to organise both their private lives and their working lives, then they are more satisfied with both."

BMW says it has no intention of restricting its employees' freedom. "Each employee can choose if, when and how to be unreachable," says Dejaeger. "But then you have people who want to be reachable all the time, and that is OK, too."

Robyn Boyle

BITE

Taste the Flemish Ardennes

Winding cobbled roads, meandering rivers, wooded trails and open vistas are what make the Flemish Ardennes so special. And not only for fans of hiking and biking: The rural area in East Flanders, just south of Ghent, also counts hundreds of producers of regional and farm products, and plenty of cosy cafés and restaurants. If you've always wanted to discover this hilly hidden corner of Flanders, March is the best time to do so. Thanks to an initiative called *Proef de Vlaamse Ardennen* (Taste the Flemish Ardennes), you can easily put together a tailor-made visit. In the brochure and on the website, you'll find culinary cycling and walking routes that manoeuvre their way between the best spots for a local beer or bite to eat.

There's also a run-down of all the events taking place this month, including everything from a tour of coffee roaster Hoorens in Zottegem and jenever distillery Van Damme, to a visit to a beekeeper in



© David Stockman

Wortegem-Petegem and a unique horse carriage museum and horse swimming pool in Elsegem.

For me, any form of physical exertion must come with the promise of a good meal. Luckily, the Taste the Flemish Ardennes brochure highlights a few bike rides that point out refreshment stops along the way. The Water Route,

for example, is a 57-kilometre ride through the lush Zwalm region, dotted with locations for farm-fresh ice cream, Balegemse jenever and watercress from Roborst.

The Oud Bruin Route, meanwhile, navigates the hills around cycling mecca Oudenaarde. It comes with suggestions for strategic stops and places to order a typical brown

beer from one of the area's four remaining breweries: Roman, Liefmans, Cnudde and Smisje. Those with a sweet tooth are invited to head to the area around Brakel and Sint-Martens-Lierde. Here, along the Zoete Hoeve Route, are a number of good spots to try the thick pancake-like *geuteling* from Elst, the *mattentaart* from Geraardsbergen, and rice pudding, cheesecake and chocolate mousse from one of the region's many dairy farms.

The Picknickroute leaves from the church of Ronse, in the deep south of the Flemish Ardennes, and leads walkers straight through the heart of the Muziekbos, a dense forest at the edge of the city. Pick up a picnic basket from nearby Bistro Boekzetting to take with you; it's filled with local delicacies like Breydel ham, cheese from Horebeke, Rigaux chocolate and Inex yoghurt.

► www.proefdevlaamseardennen.be

Breaking the expat bubble

Ghent non-profit wants to spark dialogue between expats and city's service sectors

Katy Desmond

Despite the chance to travel, learn new languages and build relationships with people from all over the world, being an expat can also be an isolating experience. Language difficulties, cultural differences and a lack of information about the city limit the ways new residents can engage with their adopted community.

If you ask De Community Gent, a non-profit platform for community co-operation, exchange and consulting, this isolation is not only difficult for the expats but is a disservice to the city as well.

Later this month, De Community Gent will try to remedy this.

“I think that for such a small city, it is missing some clear common channels of communication”

Recognising that expats often find themselves on the outside, unaware of or unable to interact with the organisations and people that run the municipality and its services, the non-profit is inviting internationals living and working in the city to spend an evening at the



De Community Gent wants to find out what expats think of life in the city, and how it can be improved

Ghent Museum of Fine Arts with representatives from the various sectors that surround, serve and employ them.

More than your average meet-and-greet, De Community Gent has a clear, constructive agenda with this event: to find out from expats from all walks of life – from employees of multinationals to independent artists – what they think of life in Ghent and how it can be improved. “A lot of expats are interested in

what is going on in the city,” says Anne Lybaert, event organiser and managing director at De Community Gent. “They are not only there to work. They live in the city, they do sports, enjoy cultural activities, use services. So we want to bring people into contact with those who provide these services.” From the expat perspective, Felicia Benefield, an American who has been living in Ghent for almost five years, describes the frustration that

arises in trying to get information about how she can, or is expected to, take part in her community. “I think that for such a small city, it is missing some clear common channels of communication,” Benefield says.

**20 March,
19.00**

Giving the example of local elections, she says, “It is not 100% clear what, as an expat resident, I am allowed to take part in. I have been told that I can participate in local politics, but the facts behind this are not very clear in terms of how do I register or if I am required to vote, like Belgians.”

Lybaert sees this lack of dialogue between the expat community and the city and its service sectors as a disadvantage for a city trying to position itself as an advantageous place to invest. “We realised that there are lots of expats working in the harbour and lots of expats, of course, at the university. But there are many more. There are musicians and people who work in film, in the opera, in the research centres,” she says. “But we do not know them. If you do not know them, you cannot get their input.”

While not exactly Ghent's first expat event, this is the first of its kind, Lybaert says, in its cross-sector approach – connecting expats to representatives from the city, the university, the harbour, entrepreneurial organisations, research centres and the cultural sector.

Lybaert also makes the point that Ghent is already considered a good city in which to live, always ranking highly among Belgian cities in standards of living benchmarks. “But we can do better,” she says.

Museum of Fine Arts

Fernand Scribdeef 1, Ghent
► www.decommunitygent.be

Go Polynesian at Flanders' first Tiki bar

The newest pop-up bar on Antwerp's south side doesn't lure in its customers with flashing lights and wide-open doors. It's almost hidden behind a dark facade, with windows that are slightly damp and, behind them, giant palm leaves to shroud the interior from outside view.

To enter this mysterious new hotspot, you don't just walk right in but ring a bell. Or knock on the door until someone at the bar takes notice and lets you in, as was the case for yours truly.

Inside you are welcomed by a lush decor of palm trees, parrots and Polynesian totems. Typical cocktail bar beats mingle with the sounds of ice shaking and waves breaking on the beach. Or maybe that was just my imagination. Welcome to the Appleton Tiki Bar.

Tiki what now? For the unknowing European, the Tiki concept may require some explanation. Tikis are wooden statues with religious significance that were originally found in Maori and Polynesian

cultures. In 1934, one Ernest Raymond Beaumont-Gantt opened a bar and restaurant in Hollywood called Don the Beachcomber, inspired by his voyages through the South Pacific.

Don's kitschy amalgam of rattan furniture, flower leis, torches, wooden carvings, tasty island dishes and exotic rum cocktails became the precedent for an entire entertainment culture in the US. Donn Beach, as Beaumont-Gantt was better known, had created the first Tiki bar.

Fast-forward to Antwerp, 2014. Entrepreneur Serge Buss and bartender Marc Mathieux, the duo behind Bar Bounce, the trendy cocktail dig across the street, decided it was time to inject some Polynesian whimsy into the city's nightlife.

The Appleton Tiki Bar is the first of its kind in Belgium and serves yummy mixed drinks filled with fresh fruit and the famous Jamaican Appleton Rum. Some enticingly titled options



for anyone wishing to kick back and enjoy – or just get drunk really fast – are the Nuclear Daiquiri, Kingston Swizzle and the classic Tiki cocktail known as the Mai Tai.

Since Tiki is as much about good company as it is about booze, the bartenders highly recommend sharing a drink, like the gigantic Zombie for three, served in a

Until 30 April

Gillisplaats 3, Antwerp
► www.facebook.com/appleton.tikibar

volcano bowl complete with fire and what looks like boiling lava. Thirsty customers will be happy to know the brewing fluid is actually Donn Beach's famous chilled concoction of Appleton, pomegranate syrup, grapefruit juice and a slew of other ingredients.

For extra fun, the bar menu is designed like a pirate's treasure map. You can take it home with you, together with a beaded necklace to stay in the Tiki spirit.

The Appleton Tiki Bar is small but cosy. Since you have to ring to get in, the place doesn't get too crowded, so that nothing gets between you and your drink/moment of relaxation. This exotic pop-up bar will only be open for two months, so hurry if you want to enjoy the rum-flavoured fantasies on offer. But don't rush too much. Take it easy. Enjoy the island life. **Catherine Kusters**

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Admiral Freebee's easy fifth

Tom Van Laere on his new album, travelling the world and (finally) chilling out

Christophe Verbiest

“I call this my easy fifth,” Tom Van Laere says, referring to his new album *The Great Scam*. “I’m a difficult guy, and I’m easily irritated,” he says with a big smile. “This time around I decided that once I felt the slightest irritation, we would stop recording and start with another song. When I listen to the album, I hear myself having a good time.”

On the previous album, *The Honey & The Knife*, the Antwerp singer and guitar player worked the other way around. “When something irritated me, I persevered.”

Van Laere, who introduces his new albums with two concerts this week at Brussels’ Ancienne Belgique, has good reasons for taking a different recording approach with each new album. “I don’t want to change what Admiral Freebee is about – melodious songs with a verse-chorus-bridge structure and a guitar solo. That’s who I am,” he says. “I don’t want to be an innovator. Conversely, I want to record every album with a different concept. Changing the how, but not the what.”

Admiral Freebee – the name was inspired by beat author Jack Kerouac’s cult novel *On the Road* – first rose to fame with rootsy rock songs in the vein of Bob Dylan and Neil Young during Humo’s Rock Rally competition in 2000. It would take three more years before Van Laere finally released his debut album. Four albums would follow in the subsequent decade, often with long gaps between the releases. But Van Laere says that he did a lot of work between those intermittent studio sessions, pointing out that he went on a 18-month tour after *The Honey & The Knife*, produced an album by Flemish singer Raymond van het Groenewoud, camped in Berlin for a while and did a solo tour with more than 50 shows in Belgium and the Netherlands. “It’s not like I’ve been lazy,” he notes.

Van Laere writes many more songs than he releases. “Some of the artists I really like – Ryan Adams or Howe Gelb, for instance – seem to release every song they write. As a listener, I think that’s too much. I want to avoid making my fans have the same feeling.” He does record some of those songs, though, even if they never see the light of day. For *The Great Scam*, Van Laere recorded 20 tracks, though the actual album only contains 12. “When I’m dead, they can bring out all those unreleased songs,” he says with a grin.



Tom Van Laere, better known as Admiral Freebee, plays the Ancienne Belgique this week

Even if they’re of lesser quality? “But they aren’t,” he insists. “I just don’t want to bring them out now because I don’t want to overwhelm my fans with new songs.”

The most important thing, he

with a soul producer, it would be obvious that I’m not a soul singer.”

Van Laere had been impressed by Agnello’s work on Philadelphia musician Kurt Vile’s latest album, and subsequently discovered that the

producer, I let him choose the musicians,” Van Laere explains. “Once I trust a producer – when I notice that he understands me and my songs – I’m convinced he’ll choose the right people.”

Van Laere says he wasn’t too concerned about connecting with the musicians on a personal level. “I think ‘personal’ is an overrated notion,” he says. “You don’t have to become friends with the musicians you’re recording with.”

It was Van Laere’s own idea to bring on board one of his heroes, J Mascis from Dinosaur Jr, to play on one of the tracks. “Their ‘Where You Been’ is one of my all-time favourite albums.” It helped, of course, that Agnello had worked with Mascis for more than 20 years.

Multi-instrumentalist David Mansfield, who played with Bob Dylan in the 1970s, also makes a surprise guest appearance on *The Great Scam*.

But Van Laere didn’t grill Mansfield to learn everything about His Bobness. “I’m a fan of Dylan but what he’s like as a person doesn’t interest me at all. I never read biographies about musicians.”

The Great Scam is the first Admiral Freebee album for Sony Music, the artist’s new label. “My previous contract had ended. I wasn’t looking for a new label per se. I just chose the financially best offer.”

Transatlantic recording sessions aside, the orbit Admiral Freebee typically travels is the Benelux. Van Laere says he never had any great ambitions to conquer other countries since that would require a lot of touring, and he’s not big on that. “I like to travel, but with the aim to see a country and meet its inhabitants. Ages ago, Dylan embarked on his Never Ending Tour. I’m on a Never Beginning Tour.”

“When I’m dead, they can bring out all those unreleased songs

continues “is actually recording the songs. Whether they get released or not – that’s another thing. They’re all equally dear to my heart.” Van Laere says he passed on some 40 songs to the album’s producer and let him make the final cut. “To give just one example, I would have never have included ‘No One Here’ on the album, but the producer really loved that song.”

That producer was American John Agnello, who has previously worked with a lot of guitar-centred bands. “I had written songs with a soul twist, but I feared that if I recorded them

producer had also collaborated with Sonic Youth and Dinosaur Jr, two of his favourite bands. “We Skyped a few times, it clicked, and that was it,” he says.

Van Laere recorded *The Great Scam* in Hoboken. Not Hoboken as in the southwest district of Antwerp, but as in Hoboken, New Jersey. “It was John’s idea; he lives over there.” As does Steve Shelley, formerly with the Sonic Youth noisemeisters, who plays the drums on the album and was also Agnello’s pick.

“When I work with an American

12&13 March,
20:00

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110, Brussels
► www.abconcerts.be

MUSIC REVIEWS OF THE WEEK

Little Trouble Kids

Haunted Hearts • Self-released

Little Trouble Kids is the brainchild of Eline Adam and Thomas Werbrouck, partners in love and music. For their third album, *Haunted Hearts*, the couple has taken a third member on board, percussionist Jonas Calu. Yet they still hold that less is more. It certainly is on this intense collection of songs, recorded over three days in the couple’s living room

in Ghent. Stripped of all possible trifles, these sober tunes – propelled by a grim guitar and (mostly) sung by Adam in her lovely wavering voice – aim straight for your heart. Primitivism as art – Little Trouble Kids proves it doesn’t have to be a contradiction.

► www.littletroublekids.be

And They Spoke in Anthems

June • Huis Mortier

During 12 long months, Leurentop busked his way through Australia. When the hard drive that contained all his photographs died at the end of the trip, he decided to capture his memories in songs to prevent them from fading. *Se non è vero, è ben trovato*, since the result, released under the artist name And They Spoke in Anthems, is an impressive

debut album that has him playing almost all the instruments himself. He’s not a novice; he’s appeared along Liesa Van der Aa, among others, as a sidekick and has previously written music for theatre. Leurentop mostly deals in melancholic pop songs, though they never come without a silver lining.

► www.andtheyspokeinanthems.com

WEEK IN ARTS
& CULTURETemporary museum
“waste of money”

A planned temporary museum of modern art in Brussels is a waste of money, according to the director of the Wiels centre for contemporary art, Dirk Snauwaert. The federal government plans to convert the former Dexia Art Centre opposite the Sint-Hubert galleries to house artworks left in storage with the closure of the modern art section of the city's Fine Arts Museum. Snauwaert joined Flanders' master architect, Peter Swinnen, in criticising the plan, saying that the building is not suitable for displaying major artworks and is far too small. It is also, at a cost of €11 million, too expensive. He called on the federal government to use its funds instead to renovate empty spaces in the Fine Arts Museum and the Art & History Museum in Jubelpark.

Film tax shelter
to be reformed

After more than a year of lobbying, Belgium's independent film producers have persuaded the government to reform the country's film tax shelter. The proposed reform, which must pass both the Belgian Parliament and European Commission, will restructure the system and even the playing field among local producers. The reform will also increase transparency in the system and cap limits on investors' recoupment options. Although the tax reforms will limit the role of investors, they will open the door to increased international co-productions. The changes will also prohibit investors from financially exploiting films, a gain for filmmakers. The reforms are expected to pass through both parliament and the commission by the end of this year.

Bourla “endangered heritage”

The infrastructure of the Bourla theatre in Antwerp, dating from 1834, has been placed on a shortlist to find the seven most endangered heritage sites in Europe by the independent heritage organisation Europa Nostra. The old wooden machinery includes cable drums and death-defying overhead catwalks, neither of which are still in use. The ancient equipment, which made Bourla one of the few theatres in Europe where 19th-century works could be performed as written, is to be dismantled to make way for more modern equipment, theatre company Toneelhuis said last year. However, work has yet to begin.

“Jazz is a lifestyle”

Flemish drummer Teun Verbruggen inspires at the Leuven Jazz Festival

Tom Peeters

“I don't want to sound too pretentious, but to me, jazz is the ideal way to become a better person,” says Teun Verbruggen, one of Flanders' most eager and clever jazz drummers. “It teaches you to sit ‘in the moment’, forget about the bullshit in your head and be communicative. On an almost meditative level, it gives you the opportunity to forget about your ego, while at the same time offering a mirror to see and cope with your faults.”

That said, the 38-year-old is constantly working, trying to play as much as he can, even learning from his own students. On the last night of the Leuven Jazz Festival, which also features Verbruggen's good friend Jef Neve and the Robert Gasper Experiment, he invites four young talents onstage, including bassist Laurens Smet, a former student of his at the conservatory.

Tenorsaxophonist Steven Delannoye, trumpet player Jean Paul Estievenart (both spot on as a duo) and pianist Bram De Looze also join Verbruggen for a set of some classic Ornette Coleman tunes and own material by Delannoye and Verbruggen. “It's rather simple stuff,” the drummer says. “It's improvised, but there are also some catchy melodies I use as a framework to generate a more inviting overall sound.”

For this special occasion, billed as a laureate show after winning last year's Jazzmozaiek Award, Verbruggen will see his own name appear on the poster. Usually, he invents a quirky name for every new band he leads. Take his eccentric international improv sextet BOAT, short for Bureau Of Atomic Tourism. It was assembled for the Antwerp Follow The Sound Festival, and next month sees the release of two singles and a European tour.



Drummer Teun Verbruggen has put together one fine band for the closing night of Leuven Jazz

“I found the name surfing the net, and it just fit the energy and the explosive character of the band, led by [American saxophonist and clarinetist] Andrew D'Angelo, by far the most extroverted guy I've ever met.”

In fact, a lot of people think it's D'Angelo's band, says Verbruggen, but the drummer doesn't mind. “I need these kind of people around me. They open new horizons.” Since his childhood, Verbruggen has been the quiet type. When at eight he got a drum kit from his father, it wasn't because he needed to release pent-up energy, he just loved playing and improving his skills. “Later, when joining all kind of rock and jazz bands I had to learn to stand up for myself. I'm still rather thoughtful.”

Fortunately, the reserved attitude did not stop him from performing. In fact, trying to follow the jazz ensembles he leads and joins as a sideman is almost a daily job, as you will notice from his agenda. “I need all these other musicians around me to stay alert,” he explains. Playing with Neve recently on the Sons of the New World project, meanwhile, taught him to stay positive. “Jef can

really keep things rolling. But at the same time he's very serious about his music. On that front, we're a match.” Over the next few years, they won't often share a stage, as they are both so busy with other projects. “But it's good to dive into new territory and energise each other afterwards with newfound inspiration.” In the meantime, Verbruggen will focus on BOAT, his Gowk quartet and a new album for Othin Spake, the free jazz trio he runs with Mauro Pawlowski on guitar and Jozef Dumoulin on Fender Rhodes.

He will also be releasing a bunch of albums from his trios and duos with American avant-garde jazz musicians such as Steve Swell, Nate Wooley and Trevor Dunn, all of them on his own label, Rat Records. He will also appear on Bruno Vansina's big band album and tour with Flat Earth Society, Too Noisy Fish, the young piano talent Igor Géhenot and the Alexi Tuomarila Quartet, led

by the Finnish pianist with whom Verbruggen won the Jazz Hoeilaart contest in 1999, launching his international career.

“I feel privileged surrounded by so many great musicians,” he says, but his most inspiring project lately has been a new duo with Vincent Glowinski, and he's not even a musician. Better known by his street artist name Bonom, his work is all over Brussels. Now he's painting live on stage, projecting it onto the wall to improvised rhythms by Verbruggen. They have already been working together in a project with Flemish choreographer Wim Vandekeybus, but now they can also be booked as Duo à l'encre.

“This is really my new baby,” he says, “and one of the most exciting things I've ever done.” It feels a bit like coming home for Verbruggen, who grew up in a Brasschaat family with a visual arts background. He himself had been drawing since his childhood, giving up his pencils and paintbrushes when he entered conservatory, only picking them up again three years ago when entering a new course in the academy of art of his Anderlecht home.

As a fine apotheosis of his modest graphic career, he found the renowned Belgian artist Pierre Alechinsky, 86 now, willing to create the artwork for his April BOAT release, even delivering 20 etchings for a special edition of the album.

It all fits in with his definition of jazz “It's a lifestyle. It's improvised music, but, more importantly, it's showing interest in everything that's happening around you.”

19-23
March

Leuven Jazz Festival

Across Leuven

▶ www.leuvenjazz.be

Klara Festival moves to March for birthday edition

They don't want to be considered as the kick-off of the season anymore. No, entering their 10th consecutive edition, they want to be the highlight of it. That's the idea behind the move of the Klara Festival from September to March this year.

And it's the reason why the festival, an initiative of the classical radio station Klara, is investing even more in trying to close the gap between contemporary classical music and open-minded audiences, without losing its ear for quality.

Opening the festival in Bozar is the world-famous Chinese pianist Lang Lang. Sure, backed by the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam, his smooth virtuoso performance style will unravel Ravel's *Concerto pour piano et orchestra en G* with flair. But more intriguing will be the new composition that Flemish pianist Kris Defoort has written for the orchestra, premiering that same



Kris Defoort is the artist-in-residence at this year's Klara Festival

night: *Human Voices Only*, he says, “a patiently shaped improvisation looking for the individual voice of every member of the orchestra”.

Defoort is the artist-in-residence at the festival, with three concerts dedicated to his classical and jazz work. Another highlight is the world première of *Darkness & Light*, a

new project by organist Bernard Foccroule and video artist Lynette Wallworth, in the St Michael and Gudula Cathedral.

Arthur, meanwhile, is a new piece

by B'Rock, Cappella Amsterdam and Muziektheater Transparant in Flagey. Flemish novelist Peter Verhelst was asked by the festival to modernise the war legend about the Breton King Arthur, which is now set in Flanders Fields during the First World War. If that sounds like quite an excellent co-operation, you're not the only one who thinks so: It's already sold out.

But you can still pick up tickets to the theatrical *Winterreise*, another new production, this time by Flemish painter Michaël Borremans, who designed the décor, Dutch stage director Johan Simons and the French contemporary composer Mark Andre. They all meet around the melancholic notes of Schubert. For anyone who really missed the winter season. TP

15-29 March

Across Brussels

▶ www.klarafestival.be

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Eurantica

14-23 March | Brussels Expo
www.eurantica.be

With easy access to dealers and collectors in London, Paris, Amsterdam and beyond, Belgium has developed a thriving trade in the fine arts. On an average day, Brussels' Zavel district is ground zero for the gallery crowd but, for one frenzied fortnight out of the year, all eyes are on Eurantica.

The annual fine arts fair attracts vendors from around Europe who trade in collectibles of all stripes: paintings, sculptures, furniture, jewellery, textiles, tapestries, tools and weapons. Eurantica doesn't specialise in one style but encompasses the whole spectrum of the fine arts. It's a sprawling affair, with 125 dealers exhibiting their wares over 10,000 square metres.

You'll find pieces from every continent from East to West and every historical period from antiquity to the present – a particularly Belgian approach, according to exhibition manager Luc Darte.



“Belgium’s reputation is based on eclecticism,” he says. “We were the first to mix up art from different places and periods, and now all of Europe is catching on.”

Despite its scope, this isn’t a kitchen sink affair. Every single item on display has been vetted by a panel of 25 international experts, three of whom remain on-call throughout the duration of the fair. This, coupled with the inclusion of many (relatively) affordable pieces, is intended to get the public at large involved in buying a good piece of art.

The fair also serves as a proving ground for young, aspiring collectors, who use the occasion to network with trade professionals and make a smart acquisition or three.

This year’s theme is “Brussels”. In celebration of the capital’s rich artistic history, Claire Leblanc of the Museum van Elsene has curated the special exhibition *Dreaming Brussels*, featuring original works on loan from the museum’s collection and that of BNP Paribas Fortis. **Georgio Valentino**

CONCERT

Cole Porter Festival
13-15 March | Concertgebouw, Bruges
www.concertgebouw.be

Mid-20th century composer Cole Porter (*pictured*) is responsible for some of the American songbook’s biggest vocal hits. Tunes like “Night and Day”, “I’ve Got You Under my Skin” and “I Get a Kick Out of You” were recorded by Frank Sinatra and a host of other stars. Behind the scenes, Porter defied the strict division of creative labour then in force by penning both words and music. What audiences didn’t know was the flamboyant and turbulent personal life of the songsmith, who rose to fame as a decadent expat playboy in interwar Paris and reinvented himself on Broadway as the man with the Midas touch. This festival explores Porter’s legacy through concerts and lectures. **GV**



FESTIVAL

Ladyfest
14-16 March | Brass, Brussels
www.ladyfestbrussels.jimdo.com

With a successful inaugural edition under its belt, Ladyfest Brussels is back for round two against the powers that be. The politically minded arts festival spans three days of discussions, workshops, screenings, visual arts and concerts. Featured artists do more than simply promote sex and gender equality; they explore alternatives to normative gender roles. Guests are invited from all over Europe: Dutch performance-art collective De Pottenfabriek play with subcultural stereotypes. A British graphic designer exhibits her iconoclastic collages. Austrian quartet Lusie Pop play politically engaged indie rock. There’s also a strong local contingent. Brussels minimalist-punk duo Baby Fire, for instance, perform at the festival’s opening night. **GV**



VISUAL ARTS

Mobil2040
Until 29 March | Kardinaal Mercierplein, Brussels
www.mobil2040.be

Brussels Mobility has launched an ambitious initiative to imagine the capital’s urban landscape in the year 2040. The project is directed at the adults of 2040, who also happen to be the youth of today. It kicked off with a participative conference in February and continues with a series of school-sponsored brainstorming

sessions and a city-wide contest designed to get students thinking about how transport and urban planning can evolve in sustainable ways. Jette’s Kardinaal Mercierplein has simultaneously been transformed into a free, immersive exhibition demonstrating the possible future faces of Brussels. **GV**



FAMILY

Pinokkio
23 March, 16.00 | De Bijloke, Ghent
www.debijloke.be

The 19-century Italian children’s story *Pinocchio* was given a new lease on life by Walt Disney in 1940. Since then, the titular marionette-turned-flesh-and-blood has served as a cautionary tale for generations of youngsters who might have

otherwise turned out total duplicitous scumbags had it not been for that Sword of Damocles – the supernatural elongation of the nose – hovering

overhead. Actor Nico Sturm and the Royal Flemish Philharmonic bring the parable to the stage with this family-friendly production, showing also in Antwerp the same weekend. The score is based on Gioacchino Rossini’s operatic score. (in Dutch) **GV**



Concert

Brussels



Jools Holland: If the legendary BBC programme, *Later... with Jools*, doesn’t ring a bell, perhaps you’ve heard of the English musician by way of his popular bands Squeeze or Jools Holland’s Rhythm and Blues Orchestra. In any case, his upcoming performance in Brussels should not be missed, for it promises to be a rocking Friday night filled with warm ambiance and thrilling craftsmanship
MAR 28 20.00 at Ancienne Belgique
www.abconcerts.be

Visual arts

Bruges

Dan Van Severen: Paintings, drawings and graphic works by the 20th-century Flemish artist who lived and worked for 10 years in Bruges, developing a unique geometrical, almost purely linear style with a consistent meditative dimension
Until JUN 9 at Arentshuis, Dijver 16
www.museabrugge.be

Brussels

Marc Van Cauwenbergh: New Works: The Flemish artist’s first solo exhibition features a selection of paintings on raw linen and sheets of paper, interwoven layers of horizontal gestures in a colourful palette of almost levitating forms
MAR 14 to APR 12 at MH Gallery, Léon Lepagestraat 11
www.mathildehatzenberger.eu

Film

Across Flanders

De Nacht van de Wansmaak (The Night of Bad Taste): Cult-film event featuring a selection of works straight out of the gutters of international cinema, films that surprise, shock and/or disgust
MAR 14 to APR 26 across Flanders
www.nachtvandewansmaak.be

Literature

Geraardsbergen (East Flanders)

Bernard Dewulf: Enjoy Mediterranean tapas and a glass of cava while listening to the Flemish writer talk about his time as Antwerp city poet and his work as a columnist and dramaturge
MAR 16 11.00-13.00 at Koetshuis, Abdijstraat 10
www.de-abdij.be

Special event

Ghent

Expats in Gent Drinks: Monthly meet-up inviting new and seasoned expats to enjoy a few drinks and chats in English with fellow foreigners living, working or generally having some connection with Ghent
MAR 15 20.00 at Celtic Towers, Sint-Michiëlshelling 5/6
www.tinyurl.com/expatsdrink

Talking Dutch

Let's call the whole thing off

Derek Blyth

Most people know the old Louis Armstrong song where he sings about two people who realise they are incompatible because one says *eether* and the other says *eyether*, one says *neether* and the other says *neyether*. They disagree so much that they decide to call the whole thing off. The same goes on in our own little part of the world where the Dutch say one thing and the Flemish say something completely different. When you live in one country, you don't really notice the difference. But if you move across the border, you realise you are using Dutch words that no one around you understands. The Flemish are fond of words that have an old-fashioned ring to them, whereas the Dutch like a word to be short and snappy. For example, the Flemish often use the word *rijwiel* – bicycle – whereas the Dutch just say *fiets*. The Flemish buy their stamps at the



posterijen – post office – where the Dutch go to *De Post*. When your clothes need to be dry cleaned, you take them to a *droogkuis* in Flanders, but to a *stomerij* or possibly a *wasserij* if you live in the Netherlands. When it comes to the sales, you see signs in Flanders announcing *solden*, whereas the Dutch shops have *koopjes*. Things really begin to show when you are driving. If you have an accident, it is called an *ongeluk* in Flanders but an *ongeval* in the Netherlands. If you have to pull off the motorway onto the shoulder, you use the *pechstrook* in Flanders but the *vluchstrook* in the Netherlands. But watch out when you pull off the road in Flanders because apparently

we gebruiken de pechstrook verkeerd – we don't use the hard shoulder correctly, according to the Belgian traffic police. And that could result in an *ongeluk*. Some differences are quite baffling to explain, like ordering water in a restaurant. The Dutch ask for *Spa rood* when they want sparkling water and *Spa blauw* if they want a still water. The reason for this is that the sparkling version of Spa mineral water comes in a bottle with a red label, whereas the still water has a blue label. But don't necessarily expect to be served Spa. Sometimes you will ask for a *Spa rood* in a Dutch café and get served sparkling water from Chaudfontaine. But it is still quite correct to call it *Spa rood*. In Flanders, you would never ask for *Spa rood*; that would be just silly. You just ask for *bruisend* or *sputwater* if you want the bubbly variety or *plat water* if you want the other sort. But these differences are not really all that important. For most of the time, the people in Flanders and the Netherlands are speaking the same language – and drinking the same water. You call it *Spa*. We call it *water*. Let's not call the whole thing off.

VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY

Tony Bates @babblingbates
Went to Ghent yesterday not realising it's twinned with Nottingham. Maybe we should make more of twinning?

Paul Boag @boagworld
I am missing out because I can't understand the Flemish comedy routine at #phareconf I should be British & laugh even if I don't understand.

Heather Nova @nova_says
Lovin' Leuven! And looking forward to playing at Het Depot tomorrow night. #leuven <http://instagram.com/p/k0HRL-tecd/>

Spagmasterswift @UncleSpaggles
Taking wife to Bruges this weekend for her b'day – city breaks feel wrong without a #PearlJam show! Bring on the summer!

Jeff Jarvis @jeffjarvis
I'm in Brussels to speak at an EU event called "Internet ready? Behavior online & what happens to the rules."

In response to: One in six living in Flanders is of foreign descent
Miranda Martin: Not speaking Dutch at home should not in itself be a problem. In England pupils who speak English as a second language actually do better in English than native speakers.

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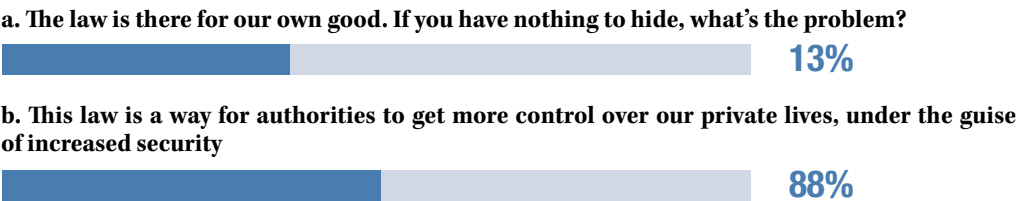
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Poll

What do you think about the new law requiring telecom companies to store our electronic data?



In a democracy, it's not the right of the people to be suspicious of government, it's their duty. And a healthy degree of scepticism is what is clear from this week's poll results: by a margin of seven to one, you agreed that a plan to make ISPs and telecoms companies store the meta-data of all of our emails and phone

conversations – that is, the name and address of the correspondent, duration of the call and other stats and not the actual content of the communication – is a threat to our privacy. The League for Human Rights in Flanders agrees, regardless of the arguments of the government that

the companies keep the meta-data anyway for billing purposes. Who gets a bill for the number of emails sent, after all? The league is now asking for funding from the public to campaign against the law.

www.mensenrechten.be

Next week's question:
A study by a Dutch researcher shows that the Flemish public's trust in politicians has increased sharply in the last two years (see p4). What do you think? Do you trust politicians?
Log in to the Flanders Today website and click on the VOTE button on the homepage!

THE LAST WORD

Pride and joy

"I carried out the thefts alone. My friends have nothing to do with it. But I'm only 11 years old. There's nothing you can do to me."
The brazen confession of a young shoplifter in Zedelgem, shortly before being released as the minimum age for detention is 12

Requiescat in pace

"I'm happy with his resting place, a quiet spot where lots of leaves fall. What could be more beautiful that autumn leaves falling on a grave? Jan would have found it fantastic."
Liliane De Boever, widow of art curator Jan Hoet, who was buried in Ghent last week

Bean sprouts

"This year is already a success. Lore and I are expecting our first baby :)
Top cyclist Tom Boonen, on Twitter

Copycat criminals

"How is it even possible for a prison director to show how to run amok inside the walls of a prison? The riot in Leuven was almost a carbon copy of what Meurisse got up to in Beveren."
Prison unions allege that a staged uprising by prison services director Hans Meurisse during the test-run of the new Beveren prison was the inspiration for disturbances in Leuven, Hasselt and Everberg



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