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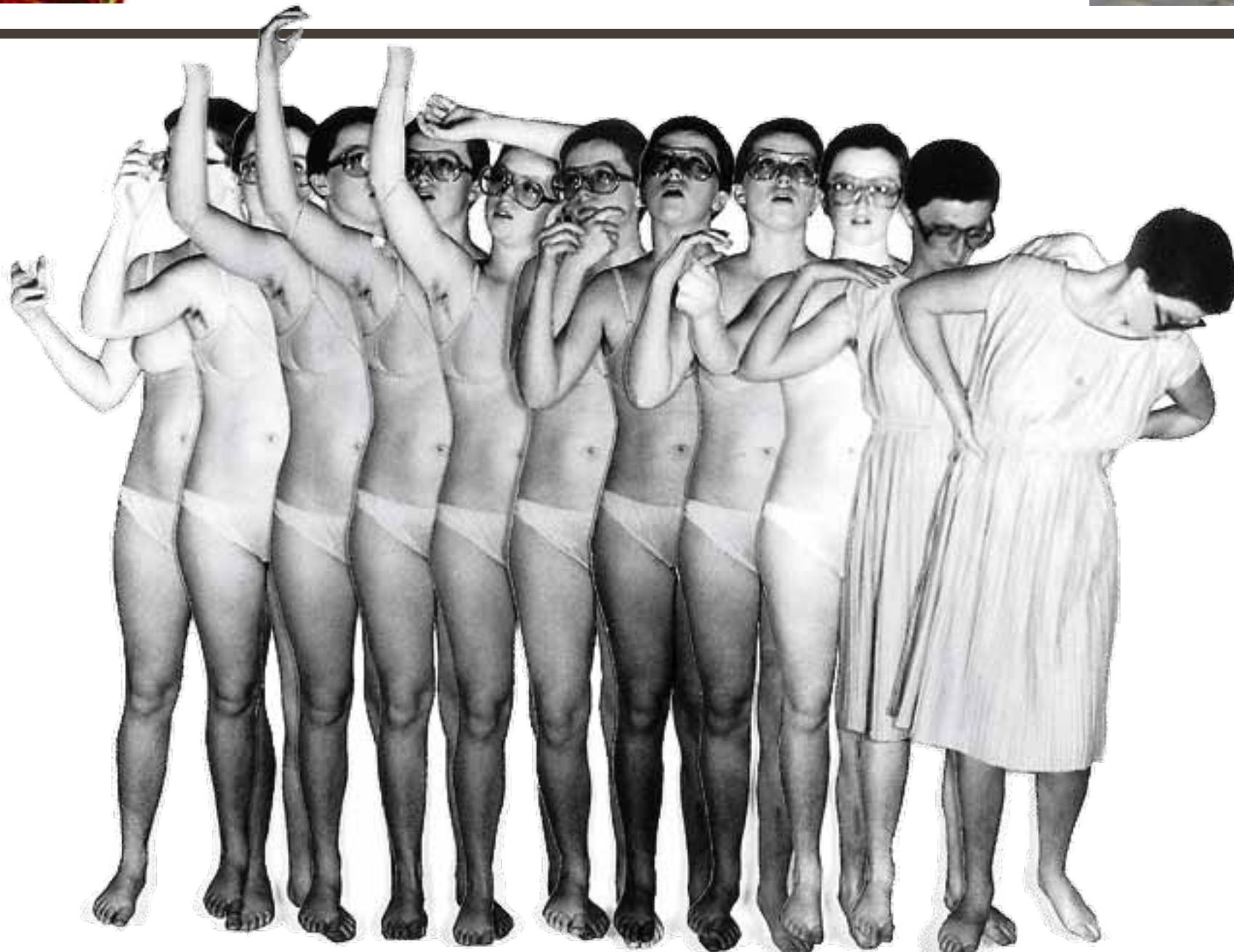
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© Untitled (Doll Clothes), 1975, Cindy Sherman / Courtesy of Metro Pictures, New York / SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

Feminism in focus

This year's Summer of Photography zooms in on gender issues and artistic emancipation

Katy Desmond

Photography in the 1970s, as a new art, was an act of emancipation for women. At Bozar and across Brussels, the Summer of Photography festival examines how women used the art of photography and puts it in a wider context. *Flanders Today* talked to some of the main players.

For women, photography was different, says Gabriele Schor, the Austrian curator of Bozar's new exhibition, *WOMAN: The Feminist Avant-Garde of the 1970s*, which stands as the centrepiece of the fifth biennial Summer of Photography festival in Brussels.

According to Schor, when women took up photography and

other new media in the 1960s and '70s, it was an act of artistic emancipation. "For the first time in the history of art, the 'image of women' was being created by women," she says.

WOMAN, a collection of 450 works – mostly photographs – by 29 European and American female artists of the 1970s, sets the tone for this year's festival, which takes a penetrating look into the world of gender and how it is performed and experienced in different societies.

Spearheaded by Bozar and in collaboration with 36 partners, Summer of Photography spreads across 20 locations in the Brussels-Capital Region, representing more than 85 artists.

The works vary widely, from Schor's look at Western photographers in the 1970s to contemporary images that look

more globally at how women are represented through art. For instance, in *Where we're at! Other Voices on Gender*, 25 artists with African, Caribbean and Pacific backgrounds explore their personal experiences of gender and sexuality, while *Power & Play* at De Markten collects works from former Soviet states to examine how artists reflect on the position of women in those countries.

However, all share a common aim: To hold up a mirror to society and reflect the dialogues that surround gender today. Most of the exhibitions focus on issues concerning women and feminism. But others explore other themes in gender, such as the vulnerability and camaraderie displayed in Flemish photographer Stephan Vanfleteren's poignant portraits of the

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Red Devils win first two World Cup matches in Brazil

Belgium's national team beat Algeria and Russia to head to the second round

Leo Cendrowicz

A goal from 19-year-old substitute Divock Origgi two minutes from time in their second group match secured victory against Russia for Belgium last weekend, and saw the team take their place in the second round of the World Cup in Brazil. The Ostend-born forward, who replaced Romelu Lukaku, was rewarded with the winner at Rio de Janeiro's Maracana stadium, making the Red Devils the sixth side to reach the last 16. It also means that all three of Belgium's goals in this tournament so far have been scored by players coming off the bench.

Wilmots had taken an axe to the side that laboured to a win over Algeria days before. Out went Tottenham trio Mousa Dembele, Nacer Chadli and Jan Vertonghen, replaced by Arsenal's Thomas Vermaelen and the goal-

scoring substitutes from the opening game, Dries Mertens and Marouane Fellaini.

After a first half during which Belgium were lucky not to concede, Wilmots brought on Origgi for the disappointing Lukaku, who has touched the ball just once in the opposition penalty area in 145 minutes of play at this World Cup. It was Chelsea's Eden Hazard who made the decisive intervention for the goal. Beating two men, he drove to the Russian byline and pulled back a perfect pass for the arriving Origgi, who smashed the ball into the Russian net.

Origgi is just one of the many teenagers lining up behind an already youthful first-choice side. The son of a former Kenyan international, he began his career at Genk's famed youth academy and signed for French side Lille in 2010. Origgi has represented



Daniel Van Buyten celebrates with the rest of the Red Devils following the win against Russia

Belgium at under-15, 16, 17, 19 and 21 level, and, though he has only four senior appearances for the national team to his name, is rumoured to be moving to Tottenham this summer. "Physically we were stronger," Wilmots said afterwards. "You could see some of the Russian players were looking at their feet. We were fresher, better in the last 10 to 15 minutes. We've prepared our players for the last four weeks, and we could see our players were fresher until the end." In Belgium's opening match last week, goals from substitutes Mertens and Fellaini secured a 2-1 victory against Algeria. Brussels-born Fellaini, who has endured an indifferent season with Manchester United, nodded in the 70th-minute equaliser, while Leuven-born Napoli forward Mertens hammered home the winner 10 minutes later.

Nation celebrates World Cup victories

People across the region left work early to catch the 18.00 kick-off of Belgium's first match in the World Cup from Brazil last week, according to the Flemish Traffic Centre. In Brussels, about 12,000 people gathered in the Koning Boudewijn stadium to watch the match on a giant screen in an atmosphere that was at first tense – until all joy broke loose as Marouane Fellaini headed the first goal for Belgium.

"This was the first time we moved [the screening of World Cup] outside of the city centre, and we brought in 12,000 people," said Brussels sport alderman Alain Courtois. "The diversity of the Brussels people was a delight." In Leuven, thousands gathered on Oude Markt, known for its proliferation of bars, although there was no giant screen. TV coverage was provided outside every bar. The brand-new Ghelamco Arena in Ghent hosted the largest screen in the country. Half-time entertainment was provided by veteran pop group Clouseau.

In Antwerp, Studio Brussel was in charge of the match party at Sportpaleis (pictured). In nearby Stabroek, two over-enthusiastic supporters had to be rescued by the fire service after climbing a scaffolding attached to the church steeple and finding themselves unable to get back down.

The Brussels district of Elsene repeated a



Studio Brussel DJs lead the cheers at the Sportpaleis

warning to bar owners not to put TV screens on their terraces. The rule is not in force for Belgian matches or for the final, whoever is playing. First offenders will receive a warning, and thereafter their licence could be withdrawn, said mayor Willy Decourcy.

A football supporter in the centre of Brussels, meanwhile, died after a fall from one of the statues at the entrance to the Beurs. He was taken to hospital and died early the next morning from his injuries.

Belgium's second match was watched by nearly 2.2 million people on Canvas, making it the most-watched football match ever televised by public broadcaster VRT. Alan Hope

Railway police patrol for trespassers

Railway police have begun a campaign designed to discourage people from crossing or walking along railway tracks by targeting 80 favourite short-cuts. Over three days last week, inspectors carried out visible and covert checks on places where trespassing is more common, as well as level crossings particularly vulnerable to dangerous behaviour.

"Every day we note that pedestrians, cyclists and motorists are all too ready to ignore the rules, to walk too close to the tracks or to cross at a crossing when it's not allowed," said Infrabel, the national rail infrastructure authority, in a statement.

Last year, nine people died in Belgium after trespassing on the railways, three times as many as in 2012. Infrabel recently stated that each case of trespassing leads to three hours

of delay on the network, as trespassers have to be reported by drivers even when there is no incident. Trains immediately following have to reduce speed, and subsequent trains suffer the knock-on effect of delays, said Infrabel.

There were 527 incidents of trespassing reported in the first four months of this year, Infrabel said, and 1,122 in the whole of 2013. Trespassing delays are more than four times more serious than delays caused by weather and signalling problems combined.

The campaign will continue in an attempt to highlight the dangers of trespassing on the railways, as well as the possible cost. Trespassers face fines of up to €1,200. The action last week saw police issue 29 fines and Infrabel issue 39 fines. AH

Rail strike planned for 30 June

The socialist trade union ACOD Spoor has announced a general rail strike on 30 June in protest at a series of problems. The other main rail union, ACV-Transcom, has so far declined to take part. ACOD is complaining of lack of recruitment leading to existing workers being unable to take vacation days owed to them, as well as the new rail plan due

to come into force in December. The protest will begin on Sunday, 29 June at 22.00 and last for 24 hours. "These actions will disrupt train traffic over the whole network," the union said in a press release. ACV-Transcom will meet on 27 June to decide whether to join the action. AH

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

70,000

residents of Brussels moved house over the last five years to municipalities in Flemish Brabant, twice as many as moved in the other direction, according to a study by the province

€916,350

left by an elderly lady in Eeklo, East Flanders, to Oxfam Solidarity, the largest bequest the organisation has received in 15 years

€4,120

donated by 132 people in Ghent for the restoration of a painting by Joseph Cornelis announcing the city's 1913 World's Fair. This is the first crowd-funding project for an art restoration in Flanders

4,500

jobs could be at stake in Flanders' road-building industry because of a lack of orders from municipalities faced with spending cuts, according to sector organisation Vlaewebo Limburg

€1,089,532.42

paid by the US administration for two presidential stays at The Hotel in Brussels this year. Another €396,000 was spent lodging staff in the Crowne Plaza

WEEK IN BRIEF

The federal public health ministry has warned of a new **stricter enforcement of the smoking ban** in bars. Owners who persist in ignoring the ban will now face fines of up to €6,000 – more than three times the previous amount. In addition, repeat offenders could find themselves facing a six-month closure order. The increased fines are mainly meant to deal with repeat offenders who have repeatedly ignored warnings and fines.

Flemish cyclist **Tom Boonen** will not compete in next month's Tour de France, opting instead to focus on shorter races in Belgium and Spain. "My love for the Tour hasn't faded but if I ride the Tour de France, I can say goodbye to the rest of the season," Boonen said. The 33-year-old Omega Pharma-Quick Step rider said he will target the Belgian national championships and then take a break in July before riding the Eneco Tour and Vuelta a Espana in August and the world road race championships in Spain in September.

The **C Ladybug, a car transport ship** that has been marooned in the port of Antwerp since April of last year, could be freed soon, after bids came in from unidentified buyers. The car transport ship owned by Taiwan Maritime Transportation (TMT) was impounded last year, after TMT was unable to pay its creditors. Members of the Chinese crew on board went unpaid and were unable to leave. They were finally the subject of a food collection action by a seamen's organisation, after provisions on the ship ran out. In the end, the crew were paid and repatriated. A decision on any sale is expected by 3 July.

Fifteen more magistrates will be assigned to prosecute **fraud and financial crimes in Brussels**, new prosecutor-general Johan Delmalle has announced. The reinforcements come after decades of complaints that a severely

stretched justice system was unable to compete against the extensive legal forces large companies deploy, leading to several major cases being dropped because the prosecution ran out of time. The new team will handle each case from first instance all the way through to appeal, avoiding the delays common when a higher level of magistrate has to come up to speed on what are often extremely complex cases.

The residents of Antwerp have chosen cycle-friendly streets, elderly people living at home longer and better footpaths as their **main priorities for spending** in the coming year. The residents of Antwerp City were given the chance to choose how the council would spend €1.1 million, one-tenth of the annual budget. Money will also be spent on more green spaces, residents' groups and art in public places.

Motorists have been warned of **severe traffic disruptions this summer** as a result of major roadworks in Brussels. The two approaches to the Reyers viaduct in Schaerbeek will close on 30 June with works lasting until the end of September; motorists are advised to avoid the area if possible. Close by, tram lines will be replaced on Meiserplein and Rogierlaan, closing Rogierlaan until the end of September. The Jubelpark tunnel direction Montgomery will also close on 30 June, with works lasting until 29 August. Tramlines will also be replaced in Koningstraat between Brialmontstraat and the Sint-Maria church from 27 June to 31 August. Finally, tramlines will be replaced in Stallestraat in Ukkel and Alfred Madouxlaan in Sint-Pieters-Woluwe.

Beaches at the Flemish coast are facing a **plague of jellyfish** as a result of the warm winter, according to Tom Coclé, head of the coast's lifeguards. And because of winds coming off the land in recent weeks,

the jellyfish are being driven from deeper waters towards the beaches. The species of jellyfish concerned are not normally strong enough to sting human beings, Coclé said. The more dangerous sorts are expected later in July and August.

The city of Ghent is in talks with the restaurant trade to **launch a "leftover box"** – a doggy bag by another name – which would allow diners to take leftover food home. "We want to convince people to use the leftovers and to encourage restaurants to offer the service," said environment alderwoman Tine Heyse. The city also aims to encourage the use of local, seasonal, organic and fair trade ingredients.

A 33-year-old Serbian man has been arrested in Germany in connection with the theft of a safe in Torhout, West Flanders, last year, which made world headlines after the fleeing thieves **threw the safe out of their car**, sending more than one million in euro notes scattering over the streets in nearby Zedelgem. A number of locals helped themselves, and much of the money has never been recovered. The number of the getaway car has been traced to the Serbian, who once lived in Charleroi.

The government of Flanders has issued a seizure notice on the home of a man from Herentals in connection with a **breach of building permit rules** for another building he constructed 35 years ago. Leo Mertens built a youth centre without the necessary permits, but nothing happened until two weeks ago, when he was told the government would place a lien on his home, preventing its sale or bequest, until the offending building was demolished. The municipality is helping to seek a solution. Some 2,000 people in Flanders are thought to be in a similar position regarding permit offences committed between 10 and 35 years ago.



for "a heavy-handed approach". The ban on selfies is bigger in the Netherlands, where it was recently extended to visitor waiting rooms as well as patient areas.

OFFSIDE

Physician, snap thyself

Last year it was voted Word of the Year in Flanders; this year they're trying to get rid of the phenomenon. Although there are many of us who would like to see an end to the selfie, in the case of the news this week, the request comes from a hospital.

The problem with the selfie – a photograph taken of oneself, usually with a mobile device – isn't that it's a photo of you, it's that it's a photo of other things going on, say, behind you. There are hilarious examples of this enough on the internet: try the Embarrassing Selfies page on Facebook for starters.

What Antwerp University Hospital is concerned about are selfies that include other people. Such

as patients, who may be in bed, in a state of *déshabillé*, hooked up to tubes and monitors, trying not to go down Death's Dark Vale – or generally just not looking their best.

"We're considering clearer rules," a spokesperson for the hospital told *De Standaard*. "Our doctors and nurses also want to know if it's acceptable for them to be involved in photos patients take." The hospital plans to include the new rule in the brochure every patient receives: No photos of staff or other patients without their express permission.

Zorgnet Vlaanderen, an umbrella organisation for several hospitals, says it recognises the need for privacy but prefers not to opt

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



© Sarah Van den Eijzen

Norbert Verswijver

If you had €1 million, it's unlikely you'd want to spend it at Blokker. Norbert Verswijver doesn't have €1 million, but last week he entered the household items chain in the Wijnegem Shopping Centre near Antwerp fully intending to walk out with €1 million worth of garden furniture, in what he promised would be his "biggest coup yet".

Verswijver, 66, is known to Flanders' residents as Bonnenman, or Coupons Man. Instead of cash, he comes armed with discount coupons – in the case of Blokker last week, he had 207, each offering a 10% reduction on a purchase of €50 or more. According to the wording of the coupon, Verswijver and his lawyer claim he should be able to get €1 million worth of furniture without paying anything at all. "It doesn't state anywhere that the coupon isn't cumulative," Verswijver told *Gazet van Antwerpen*. "It only states that the purchase must be at least €50. Well, I'm buying for €1 million. Ten percent comes off over and over, with each coupon, until I get to €0."

The Blokker staff, perhaps not surprisingly, refused to hand over €1 million worth of garden furniture in exchange for the

coupons. Verswijver remains undaunted. If he doesn't receive his garden furniture within three months, he said, he'll take legal action. If he does, he'll raffle it off and give the money to good causes.

He's not kidding about the legal action. In 2011, he turned up at Home Market with 10% discount coupons and asked for 1,600 square metres of parquet flooring. He was refused, and the case, like two others before it, is going through the courts.

Verswijver sees his activity as a crusade against the "dishonest and deceptive" coupons issued by retail businesses, which are never what they seem and only meant to attract people to the shop. If he does succeed, he gives the money away, and so he refers to himself as Robin Hood, complete with hat.

And he does sometimes succeed. During his first attempt in 2007, he took home €6,000 worth of frozen food from a Match in Antwerp, where he lives, on payment of 50 cents and a fistful of coupons. He later succeeded in buying 500 car radios from MediaMarkt for €1 each.

FLANDERS TODAY



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

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

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5TH
COLUMN

Anja Otte

Will heads roll?

It is a tradition in Flemish politics that, following the elections, at least one party president quits. Leaders whose parties lose the elections consider this their own failure and take full responsibility, even if their personal result is good.

The May elections were rather odd in this respect, with no speedy resignations. The three traditional parties – CD&V, Open VLD and SPA – did not exactly win, but they held on, and more than they expected to.

Some weeks later, though, one leader's position has become rather shaky. SPA's Bruno Tobback, in his own words, "put his head on the table" on 26 May, "but no-one wanted it". The party president had better stay put, his party decided, after some negative experiences with quick leadership changes. Also, the formation talks may necessitate a veteran of sorts to defend the party's interests.

However, as talks began without SPA, there was grumbling in socialist party ranks. How can it be that the social-democrats, one of the architects of the modern welfare state, have become almost irrelevant? How can it be that the party that got 24% of the votes in 2003 has lost 10% in five consecutive elections?

In an interview with the weekly *Knack*, MPs Hans Bonte and Peter Vanvelthoven blame the party's continual presence in government, as well as a weakness on the part of the leadership. Candidates were asked not to confront N-VA head-on, even though that party advocates the exact opposite of SPA. Bonte and Vanvelthoven also regret the party's attitude towards dissidents and demand less indifference and more indignation.

Neither MP may be a heavyweight, but their criticism is still bad news for Tobback's position. About the same time, Johan Vande Lanotte, parting vice-prime minister and the party's elder statesman, sent out a report on how he achieved a much better result in his province, West Flanders. Vande Lanotte stresses the importance of canvassing, which he did "seven weeks, six days a week, 10 hours a day".

That this advice should come from an old hand like Vande Lanotte says a lot: the president's head may yet be on the table. If Tobback does not resign, the criticism will keep on coming. Many party members now look to coming man John Crombez, parting secretary of state, to take over the leadership. Can he make SPA relevant once more?

N-VA joins conservative ECR group in European Parliament

Belgium's largest party chooses Eurosceptic group over liberal ALDE

Anja Otte

In a surprise decision, Flemish nationalist party N-VA has decided to join the European Conservatives and Reformists in the European Parliament, after holding talks with ALDE, the liberal group led by former Belgian prime minister Guy Verhofstadt.

In the previous term, N-VA was part of EVA, a mix of greens and regionalists. With four extra N-VA members, the ECR now becomes the third largest group in the European Parliament, after Christian-democrats and socialists. This is a blow to Verhofstadt's hopes of becoming president of the assembly. Flemish newspapers spoke of Verhofstadt (*pictured*) being "humiliated". In the past, the liberal lamented N-VA's nationalism, but recent weeks saw a rapprochement.

The ECR is by and large Eurosceptic, much



more so than N-VA, which has always called itself "pro-European". Besides the British Conservatives, it includes the German Alternative für Deutschland, the Polish Law and Justice and two parties deemed extreme-right – the Finns

Party and the Danish People's Party. N-VA's decision provoked strong reactions in Flanders. "Honestly, there are some scum in that group. I have no idea what N-VA will do there," said the usually soft-spoken Ivo Belet, MEP for CD&V. Open VLD's Guy Vanhengel said, "After a term with the greens and weeks of fooling the liberals, they now show their true face: ultra-conservative, Eurosceptic and by no means liberal." Vanhengel also referred to the on-going federal government talks, in which Open VLD might no longer be eager to help out N-VA. Open VLD president Gwendolyn Rutten, however, says that this will not influence her party's willingness to enter government.

Flemish mayors clash with federal tax service

A number of Flemish cities are denouncing extra taxes imposed last week by the federal tax service on previously untaxed income such as fees for the use of public ground for fairs or markets, concessions for running cafeterias in sports centres, burial plots in cemeteries and even lending out CDs by libraries. "These concessions are not profitable activities," the Flemish Association of Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) said in a statement. "On the contrary, they usually cost a municipality more than they bring in. Taxing these net incomes comes down to thievery by the tax services."

The taxation would also be applied

retroactively, which the VVSG said would lead to "a financial catastrophe" for cities such as Antwerp, which would owe at least €5 million.

"This is one government level pestering the other," commented Ghent mayor Daniel Termont (SPA) in *De Standaard*. "We have sounded the alarm several times over this. If we are not heard, I do not intend to pay up. What will the Belgian state do? Sue the city of Ghent?"

Acting federal finance minister Koen Geens (CD&V) says he, too, wants a solution. However, two proposals to end the situation were voted down in parliament. **AO**

Pension experts commission proposes new points system

A commission of 12 experts presented a proposal to ensure Belgium's pension system until at least 2040. The report was ordered by acting federal minister for pensions, Alexander De Croo, and acting federal minister for the self-employed, Sabine Laruelle, after a number of attempts to reform the system failed.

Belgium's pension system is not only complex and outdated, it is also under great pressure because of its reliance on social security contributions: people in work pay for the pensions of the retired, but in light of the ageing of the population this system is not sustainable. The commission proposes a points system, whereby a worker saves up points, which are later transferred to a concrete sum. Working less than full time for one year means fewer points, working more means more points.

The points, according to the commission, give workers an idea of how much pension they can expect.

The commission also proposes that people should work longer, with social corrections for the lowest incomes and changes to pensions for civil servants.

"There is no reason for panic," Frank Vandenbroucke, former minister and member of the commission, told news programme *Terzake*. "But the new government should take the decisions. People will find much to criticise in the report – the self-employed are asked to contribute more, and we will also look to other sources such as capital – but it is balanced, and it is what we need for the system to survive."

Trade unions ABVV and ACV call the report "worrying", as it touches on two principles: retirement at 65 and 45-year careers. The ministers who ordered the report insist that all stakeholders will be heard, but ultimately the new federal government has to decide on the reform. **AO**

► www.pensioen2040.belgie.be

Flemish Parliament meets in first session since elections

The Flemish Parliament met last week for its opening session, during which the newly elected were sworn in. Over half of the 124 Flemish MPs are entirely new to the assembly, 30 of them belonging to N-VA. Many of the newcomers brought relatives along to witness the official beginning of their term of office. The session was chaired by Herman De Croo, who served in the federal parliament for more than 40 years. He decided to stand for the Flemish Parliament this time, leaving the way clear for his son Alexander, acting federal pensions minister, at the federal level. Due to his seniority and according to tradition in the Flemish Parliament, De Croo was appointed as provisional speaker, with the two youngest MPs, Francesco Vanderjeugd and Tine Soens, as his deputies. The Flemish Brabant MPs were not sworn in, as the votes in that



Sabine Vermeulen (N-VA) takes her oath during the first session of the Flemish parliament

province had to be recounted after an appeal by SPA chairman Bruno Tobback. His party missed a seat by only 64 votes in the province, the seat going to the French-speaking party UF. SPA demanded a recount in the district of Sint-Genesius-Rode, in the Flemish belt around Brussels, where the elections were marrred by "mistakes and inaccuracies," according to Tobback. The recount, however, confirmed the original result, and the seat went to UF candidate Christian Van Eyken. **AO**

Fair culture and Memorial Day become intangible heritage

Joke Schauvliege, Flanders' outgoing minister for culture, has added funfair culture and Memorial Day to the Inventory for Intangible Cultural Heritage. This inventory keeps knowledge about traditions, customs and practices alive.

Funfairs have a rich history in Flanders, dating back to the Middle Ages; they were the breeding ground for other attractions such as cinema, circus, zoos and theatre. For centuries, every city and town in Flanders has held its own fair at fixed dates. Operators and performers travelled from one town to the other, forming a tight-knit community.

On Memorial Day, held annually on the last Monday in May, American soldiers who gave their lives during both World Wars are commemorated in Waregem, West

Flanders. Earlier this year, American president Barack Obama visited the Flanders Field American cemetery in Waregem, the only American First World War cemetery in Flanders and the site of the first Memorial Day in Belgium.

The Belgian branch of the American Overseas Memorial Day Association was founded in 1923. This was the first time local schoolchildren sang the Belgian and American anthems, a tradition still alive today.

"Adding fair culture and Memorial Day to the Inventory is an expression of our appreciation of both rich traditions," said Schauvliege. "This is definitely not a finishing point. Both heritage communities are committed to passing on these traditions to future generations." **AO**

Feminism in focus

The female gaze, gender-bending and women's rights at Summer of Photography

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national football team at Botanique and the gender-bending themes in Pepa Hristova's *Sworn Virgins*, also at Bozar.

"We wanted to create a debate around gender and get people questioning what they think they know," says Christophe De Jaeger, Bozar's programme co-ordinator. "Every day in the newspaper you see a debate around women, but what is that debate? Is this the debate we should be having now? Is the feminist discourse from the '70s really relevant today or do we need something newer, broader?"

Schor points out that "when you go to a traditional museum, you see a lot of women in the paintings and sculptures, but who painted them? They were painted by men. Men controlled how we saw women."

This, she says, is why it was very important when, in the 1970s, female artists took up photography. "Because it had no history – in particular, it had no male history." By calling her collection avant-garde, Schor establishes the 1970s as a time of radical change in the art world for women.

"There was a break in art history, where women artists took up the medium of photography and used it," she says. "They were not interested in a perfect print. They wanted – needed – to say something."

Schor's pioneers have had on today's generation of artists.

Bowland, a Flemish artist from Brussels, directly engages with her feminist predecessors, creating *Female Gazing* – at the InBetween Gallery in Sint-Pieters-Woluwe – in response to feminist theorist Laura Mulvey's term the "male gaze", coined in 1975 in her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema". While Bowland agrees that the "male gaze" – the notion that the way men look at women often defines women in a society – remains important, she says that in her experience as a young artist today, how women look at other women can be just as defining.

Female gaze

"When we talk about the female gaze, we often talk about women looking at men, but I think it is important that we also talk about women looking at women," Bowland says. "What I try to do with the images is show a situation where men and women are together, and then I think about the position of the woman. It is about creating the question: How do I look at women?"

The 24-year-old artist, fresh out of Brussels' Sint-Lukas art school, says that right now in her work she is happy to remain a student. She consciously chose "gazing" over "gaze" for the title of her project to emphasise that her work comes from a place of investigation.

"I am not making any statement," she says. "I am trying to feel out where the lines lie between the male and female gaze. It is more of an exploration."

However, Bowland is sure that the road to confronting the imposition of gender in one's life and work can be a difficult one. "When you are young, you are looking on the one hand for your own femininity and your place in the world, and on the other hand you have to confront – if you choose to – those who try to get you down because you are a woman."

Art, Bowland says, offers one solution: "We have the perfect weapon to face those trying to bring women down: the practice of image-making."

50 Years

While exhibitions like *WOMAN* and *Female Gazing* can stand on their own, having some knowledge of the history of women's movements certainly helps take more away from the festival programme.

Without quickly enrolling in a gender studies degree, getting a sense of the history and accomplishments of feminism and women's movements in your own backyard is a good place to start. In *50 Years Fighting for Equality*, the library and documentation centre RoSa aims to provide just this.

Located in the Flemish Equality House, RoSa's exhibition presents a retrospective, looking back at the major events of women's movements in Belgium and how they have



Clockwise from top left: *Where We're At! Other Voices on Gender* at Bozar looks at work by women of African, Caribbean and Pacific Islands descent; Feminist group Dolle Mina's take on the 1971 Miss Belgium contest from *50 Years Fighting for Equality*; Birgit Jürgenssen's 1979 photo "Nest", from *WOMAN* at Bozar

changed society.

While it's perhaps more academic than other exhibitions in Summer of Photography, what RoSa lacks in original artwork, it makes up for in context and explanation. The goal behind *50 Years* is clear: To place feminism and women's rights in context.

Since its founding in 1978, RoSa has been documenting the history of local women's movements. Today, its specialised library holds the artefacts and documents that illustrate how far women's rights have come in the past decades.

It is these artefacts, says *50 Years* curator Hildegard Van Hove, that provide the key to giving people a sense of history as they confront questions about the roles of gender in society.

lot of RoSa's task is correcting negative stereotypes about feminism and women's rights often held by the public. "Many people think that feminism is made up of humourless, dissatisfied old women," says Van Hove. "But in the history of feminism, you can see that it has always been a movement of the young. This is especially true today. The groups carrying out actions for women's rights are more diverse and more colourful than ever."

The exhibition moves from the 1966 three-month strike of female employees of the FN Herstal weapons factory, fighting for equal pay, to

the mid-1970s campaign of Dutch and Flemish feminist activist group Dolle Mina. They were fighting for the "right to get lung cancer", as women were forbidden to smoke in workplaces while men were not. By the end, you've landed at the struggle for the rights of transgendered people today.

Above all, Van Hove hopes that the audience will take away these achievements from the exhibition. "I would be satisfied if they got the message of what the women's movement has accomplished over the last 50 years – it is a whole lot and it is important to appreciate that."

Until 31 August

Across Brussels

► www.summerofphotography.be

"It was the first time that women in the arts, even those who did not know each other, were doing similar things, sharing similar ideas," says Schor.

If *WOMAN* puts photography into a context of the accomplishments of Second Wave feminism of the 1970s, then Ash Bowland's *Female Gazing* lets us observe the results

© Ansab-SSG archives

© Estate of Birgit Jürgenssen / Courtesy of Galerie Hubert Winter, Vienna / SAMMLUNG VERBUND, Vienna

WEEK IN BUSINESS

Air ▶ Vueling

The Spanish low-cost airline is to test three additional destinations from Brussels Airport – Prague, Florence and Catane, Romania – this autumn. The company already connects Brussels to 11 cities in Europe and has further development plans for next year.

Banking ▶ KBC

Flanders' largest financial institution is to reorganise its operations in Brussels by integrating its CBC and KBC branches in the area. The 40 KBC offices and the 10 CBC outlets will be combined to create KBC Brussels in a bid to capitalise on the city's international development and specific economic environment.

Energy ▶ Nordex

The German windmill manufacturer has created a subsidiary in Brussels to develop its activities on the local market.

Food service ▶ Exki

The Brussels-based chain of healthy fast food restaurants inaugurates its first outlet in New York this week and will follow with a second one on Madison Avenue in October.

Hotels

▶ Les Galleries

The French publishing family Flammarion plans to open a 26-room, four-star hotel in the historical Sint-Hubertusgalerij in downtown Brussels this September.

Post ▶ Bpost

Unions representing federal postal workers say that 3,000 jobs could be at risk if Bpost does not win the new contract, which is open for bidding, for the delivery of newspapers and magazines. Unions argue the government needs to take account of the quality of the service rather than only the cost.

Steel ▶ Bekaert

The steel wire manufacturer, based in Zwevegem, West Flanders, has signed a partnership agreement with the Italian Maccaferri group to develop steel structures to strengthen underground tunnels and passages using Dramix steel fibres.

Supermarkets
▶ OKay

The smaller, neighbourhood affiliate supermarket of Halle-based Colruyt opened its 100th outlet last week, in De Pinte, near Ghent. The company expects to reach its target of 180 stores within 10 years.

Media in uproar as Telenet takes stake in De Vijver

Telenet now owns 50% of De Vijver Media, home to TV stations VIER and VIJF

Alan Hope

Multimedia service provider Telenet sent a shock-wave through the Flemish media world by announcing the acquisition of a 50% stake in De Vijver Media, the holding company that owns TV stations VIER and VIJF. Telenet bought out magazine publisher Sanoma for €26 million and invested a further €32 million to bring its stake up to 50%.

The remainder of De Vijver's shares are owned by the partnership of CEO Wouter Vandenhaute and Erik Watté on 25%, and Corelio, publishers of *De Standaard* and *Flanders Today*, also on 25%.

"Our share in this extremely creative company is a new step for us in the creation of local content, in partnership with a strong broadcast group," commented Telenet CEO John Porter (pictured). "Our goal is to provide the Flemish viewer with the best and most modern multimedia entertainment possible."

The Flemish media regulator has expressed misgivings about the deal, while acting media



© Courtesy VTM

minister Ingrid Lieten repeated her hope that all broadcasters would be treated the same in being allowed access to cable.

"We have an exceptional situation in Flanders: an excellent public broadcaster and fantastic private broadcasters," Lieten said. "The Flemish viewer is spoiled, but we ought to try to maintain that situation."

As a distributor of cable content, Telenet enjoys a

virtual monopoly in Flanders. The new position is part of Telenet's strategy to compete against new services like Netflix, due to arrive in Belgium soon. That dominant position was the cause of "great concern" at Mediaalaan, the company that owns VTM and 2BE, the two other main private channels. "Telenet is becoming judge and jury in a market where, as a TV distributor, it has complete control over which channels and programmes the Flemish viewer is allowed to see. Now, as owner of De Vijver Media, the company can also give preference to its own channels and content," said CEO Peter Bossaert.

The deal excludes the weekly magazine *Humo*, which becomes the 100% property of Sanoma, a Finnish company at present busy trying to divest itself of its other Belgian titles. "Telenet is for strategic reasons not interested in *Humo*," Vandenhaute said. "It doesn't fit in with their plans, but that's not a judgment on the quality of the magazine."

Air traffic controllers threaten to strike this week

The Christian trade union ACV Transcom has issued a warning of possible strike action by employees of Belgocontrol, Belgian's air traffic control authority, on or after 25 June. If the threat becomes reality, it could lead to chaos at Brussels Airport at the start of the summer holidays.

The reason, says the union, is "various dossiers that are important to the functioning and the future of Belgocontrol and its workers," a list of issues that includes staff schedules, training and the maintenance of systems. The union is also angry at what it calls "the unrealistic savings that the European Commission and the Belgian government wish to impose." The authority has seen cuts of 3.5% a year since 2012, with a level of 3.2% expected for the coming years.

"This blind cost-cutting will entail a reduction in the quality of service and in safety," a union

representative said. "Recruitment and investment have already been frozen, with negative consequences for working conditions. ACV Transcom will not stand by and allow the safety of air traffic and passengers to be put at risk in exchange for a good report card from Europe."

In related news, it was revealed that eight Boeing 777-Aerologic aircraft were given permission five months ago to fly over Brussels at night, contrary to European law and to Belgian regulations on aircraft noise. The aircraft are a joint venture between DHL and Lufthansa Cargo and do not have the necessary noise certificates. An exception was made because two DHL flights, which already have permission, were replaced by one of the 777s, a spokesperson of the federal mobility ministry said. And since the 777 is not fully laden, it is considered to be within the noise limits. AH

Kringwinkel to collect used furniture at Ikea stores

Furniture chain Ikea is working together with the Flemish charity shop Kringwinkel to encourage the re-purposing of old furniture, the company announced. Under the action Red de Meubelen (Save the Furniture) members of the public can now bring unused pieces of furniture once a week to the car park of their nearest Ikea store to give it away to the Kringwinkel. If Kringwinkel sells the piece, the takings go to charities.

According to a study carried out by Ikea among more than 1,000 Belgians, people have no clear idea what to do with furniture they no longer want, with one in four storing it at home and nearly as many taking it to the rubbish dump. The first Kringwinkel stands will appear in Ikea car parks on Mondays from 12.00 to 17.00 in Zaventem, Ghent and Wilrijk. The Brussels district of Anderlecht follows on Tuesdays, working with Spullenhulp, the Brussels equivalent of Kringwinkel.

There are 118 Kringwinkels in Flanders, which offer used items at low prices, many of which have been repaired or



© Courtesy Kringwinkel

improved, and provide jobs for the disadvantaged. Profits in excess of operational costs go to environmental and social projects.

"Last year in Flanders, we collected 63,000 tonnes of goods," said Danny Vercauteren, director of Kringwinkel Antwerp. "A dozen Kringwinkels are taking part. With this initiative we hope in time to collect another three tonnes a week, the equivalent of 75 customers a week."

Olivier Baraille, CEO of Ikea Belgium, commented: "We see it as an investment. It costs money to provide this service to customers, but in the long term we think we can satisfy our customers better this way." AH

Council of State scraps Unibail contract at Neo

The Council of State has overturned the award of a contract for the first phase of Europea, the conference and leisure complex (formerly known as Neo) planned by the City of Brussels for the Heizel plateau. The contract was awarded to the consortium Unibail and the case brought by competing bidder Hammerson. The Council of State found the reasons given for the award "unconvincing".

Europea will be the largest urban development project in Europe,

with 81,000 square metres of shopping and leisure facilities, office and living space and a conference centre. Only a company or group of companies with €1 billion in capital and a portfolio of property projects worth €2 billion were allowed to bid for the project.

In April, the contract was awarded to the Paris-based Unibail, which specialises in shopping centres. The group owns 83 shopping centres across Europe, as well as 10 convention and exhibition venues

in the Paris region. Competitor Hammerson, based in London, has 20 shopping centres, 22 retail parks and nine outlet villages in the UK and France.

The Council of State found the consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of the two competing contracts "not convincing" and in two of the five criteria "incoherent". Unibail won the contract by only two points over Hammerson, while the criteria described by the Council of State as incoherent accounted for

70 points.

The council, which rules on decisions taken at government level, found this to be grounds enough to strike down the award of the contract.

The decision will have limited impact on the progress of the project, according to Brussels-City alderman for finance, Philippe Close. "Our teams are analysing the ruling to determine how the procedure can be taken forward," he said. AH

Smart charging

Leuven scientists tackle roadblocks to an electric-car friendly Flanders

Daniel Shamaun

Convincing Flemings to trade their heavily polluting but much-loved diesel cars for more sustainable electric vehicles poses a chicken-and-egg problem. Consumers are unlikely to embrace electricity-powered vehicles until they are sure robust and reliable charging solutions exist. Manufacturers, meanwhile, are wary of investing in the costly development of electric cars until they see more consumer interest. A handful of researchers at the University of Leuven (KU Leuven) may end this standoff with their new findings on the grid infrastructures needed in an electric-car friendly Flanders.

The university is investigating promising and cost-effective ways of protecting electrical grids as the numbers of vehicles charging from them increases as part of a research effort under the umbrella of the sustainable energy research institute EnergyVille.

Leuven researcher Niels Leemput explains that their task is to create a "grid-integrated charging infrastructure" for electric vehicles. Smart charging would keep the grid within its operational boundaries. It is designed to measure the status of the grid and the needs of the vehicles and, if necessary, deliver a slower charge to the cars, protecting the grid from overloading.

Leemput is working on the infrastructure for low-voltage grids, for roughly 100 to 250 households, while researcher Juan Van Roy is exploring the benefits of smart grid integrated buildings, such as apartment and office blocks.

"So far, a lot of research has investigated very complex and advanced charging strategies, which will be necessary in the long-term," says Leemput, "but short- and mid-term low-tech solutions have been ignored."

"You need local methods for the first users of electric vehicles because a centralised system would be too expensive for a few cars," continues



According to researchers, use of an electric car consumes the same amount of energy as average household use

Van Roy, pointing out that not all areas are likely to adopt electric cars at the same rate. Wealthier neighbourhoods, for instance, are likely to have more electric cars sooner.

"An electric car will consume the same amount of energy as a household," Leemput says, adding that grid operators will need to adapt accordingly. They could do this by installing additional cables, but this typically costs tens of thousands of euros for a cable that supplies 20 to 40 households.

It is possible, however, to implement adaptations using software in the

vehicle, as the hardware required is already in place. This would result in lower costs and fewer roads being dug up.

There are also major benefits to charging electric cars at the office. "When you increase the opportunities for charging, you decrease the impact at home," notes Van Roy, thereby spreading the load. Though this may increase the impact on the grid near the office, this can be offset by use of photovoltaic installations or solar arrays. Leemput says it is possible to "use the rooftop space that office blocks have to install solar panels

and use them to charge vehicles on their parking lots".

Impact on the grid can also be reduced by controlling the amount of power used to charge each car. Van Roy says that you could use "delaying", or charge different cars at different times. "But this could leave drivers without any power in case of an unexpected journey," he says.

It's better, he continues, to charge continuously with a lower power rate. "This also reduces the impact on the grid, is better for the battery life of the car and can leave you with some energy in an emergency."

The only downside is that it would take longer, but this is made up for in a number of ways. First, most cars in Flanders have long standby times, as they are mainly used to travel between home and work. They also only drive about 40 kilometres per day on average, so the energy needs are relatively low.

Second, there are a number of incentives to convince, but not force, drivers into slow charging, including the aforementioned battery life but also a cheaper electricity tariff when participating in smart vehicle charging.

Leemput stresses the importance of "simple and robust strategies". He says that many people compare electricity grid problems to IT hiccups, but you can resend lost data, he points out "which you cannot do with energy." The reliability of a power system needs to be much higher than that of IT solutions to avoid blackouts.

"In the future, once the centralised system is installed, local systems will still work as a backup in case the larger network fails," Van Roy says. Because the larger networks would have to be connected to the internet to run automatically, a cyber-attack could cause huge problems. "But if you have these simple mechanisms as a backup," says Leemput, "you can still avoid a blackout. Local smart grid controls are simple, robust and offline".

► www.energyville.be

WEEK IN INNOVATION

Interactive remote control for kids

Two students in multimedia and communications technology at Karel de Grote University College in Antwerp have created an interactive remote control for children. Lorenz Adriaensen and Rémi Pelhate last year presented the idea at public broadcaster VRT's Make-a-thon competition for the development of the best new media product. They won the competition and continued the project for their final thesis. "We wanted to create a solid tool that can be a cross between a remote control and a toy," Adriaensen told *De Morgen*. The remote is orange and in the shape of a large X, and is called Copii, which is Romanian for "child". Copii provides children with a variety of possibilities to interact with programmes.

Robot used for medication distribution

In the AZ Damiaan in Ostend, the distribution of medication is carried out automatically, from the prescription to the preparing of the medication. The procedure, which is unique in Belgium, was presented last week. The hospital uses a robot installation to automate medication distribution. On the basis of an electronic prescription, the robot determines the dose per patient and the time of administering and automatically provides the medication sets for the day. Doctors and nurses double-check the medication and identity of the patient when they administer the medication. This is registered by the robot and ticked off the medication schedule.

Project to track diabetes earlier

The government of Flanders is working with the Diabetes League to set up a large-scale project to identify prediabetes – the earliest form of diabetes. Prediabetes can be recognised through slightly increased blood sugar levels. By implementing some lifestyle changes and getting the right treatment, patients can stop the disease in this early phase. Prevention is vital, and trial projects are under way in Sint-Truiden and Ghent, via GPs and pharmacists, who will administer questionnaires to at-risk groups. On the basis of their answers, doctors can decide who needs to be tested for prediabetes. If the trial is successful, the project will be expanded. AF

► www.diabetes.be

Q&A

Dietmar Schmucker of VIB has just published his discoveries of how the wiring of highly branched neurons in the human brain work in *Science* magazine

How exactly is the brain "wired"?

The human brain contains billions of nerve cells, also called neurons, which are interconnected by thin, elongated, highly branched offshoots named dendrites and axons. The axons serve as information and signal processors, transmitting electrical impulses throughout the network of neurons. The molecular mechanisms that explain the linear connection between neurons are roughly known, but this is not the case for the branched wiring. If you compare the network of connections to a roadmap, you could say we already have visualised

the motorways, but not the smaller roads.

But you have now made progress in explaining the branched wiring?

Yes, through the analysis of the so-called Dscam1 protein in the fruit fly. A neuron can create many different protein variations, or isoforms, from this protein. The specific set of isoforms that occurs on a neuron's cell surface describes why certain neurons either come into contact with each other or reject each other. Our recent research now demonstrates that different sets of



Dscam1 isoforms occur inside one axon. If this were not the case, only linear connections could be formed between neurons.

Could this insight help to battle certain disorders?

Yes, it shines a new light on

neurodevelopmental disorders, such as autism. Extensive knowledge of nerve cell creation and their interactions is also essential for the future possibility of using stem cell therapy as standard treatment for certain neurological disorders, like Parkinson's disease.

How is the research continuing?

Research on fruit flies is very helpful, but we are now also conducting experiments on mice and frogs to advance our knowledge. Frogs are not yet commonly used as test animals, but they have a lot of potential because their skin is relatively transparent in their early life stage, so they can be examined without surgery. **interview by Andy Furniere**

THE Bulletin

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Abundance of riches

Bruges launches Flanders' very first summer course on Flemish art

Ian Mundell

Studying Flemish art in Flanders has many advantages. You can see the landscapes and architecture that inspired paintings, visit churches and other buildings for which art was commissioned and delve into historical archives. "It's a richness that we sometimes forget we have," says Vanessa Paumen, co-ordinator of the Flemish Research Centre for the Arts in the Burgundian Netherlands, located in Bruges.

Giving more young scholars from around the world this experience of working close to the source of Flemish art is the aim of a new academic summer course. Conducted in English, it will run for the first time in June of 2015 and focus on Jan Van Eyck. Applications are due in October of this year. The course is an initiative of the Flemish Art Collection, the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp, the Groeninge Museum in Bruges, the universities of Ghent and Leuven, the Rubenianum and the Flemish Research Centre. This is the first time they are collaborating in such a strategic way. "We would like to put ourselves on the academic map,"

Paumen explains. Each year the course will focus on a different period in Flemish art history, its importance reflected in the region's collections: the 16th century of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, the 17th century of Peter Paul Rubens and possibly the 19th century, with a figure such as James Ensor.

Beginning with the 15th century and Van Eyck makes sense chronologically but also takes advantage of the ongoing restoration of his Ghent Altarpiece. Participants will be able to talk with restorers about the discoveries they have made and get a feel for the context in which the altarpiece was created. "What is important about being in cities where Van Eyck and his contemporaries worked is that you can still go and search for where the paintings were and where they functioned," says Anne van Oosterwijk, assistant curator at the Groeninge Museum. "That is something you simply can't do by reading a book. You have to experience the spaces."

The course will last 10 days, with the 18 participants staying in Bruges, Ghent and Brussels. As well as



Researchers at the Groeninge Museum in Bruges examine paintings using infrared reflectography

lectures and visits to art collections, archives and historic locations in the three cities, there will be excursions to sites such as the Sint-Katharina church in Hoogstraten and the Sint-Jans church in Mechelen, which provide important period detail. There will also be a trip to the archives and city museum in Lille. Participants are expected to have a Master's degree in art history, history or a related subject and to have a commitment to Netherlandish art from the period. They might have

embarked on a PhD, for example, or be building a career as a curator. As well as introducing them to the resources Flanders has to offer, the aim is to feed their enthusiasm for the subject. "Maybe someone will say: 'A work I saw on this course or an idea that came up is now very important for my further research,'" says Paumen. "And if one of these 25-year-olds becomes a major professor in the field, that's something we want to be part of."

► www.tinyurl.com/flemishart

New centre to bridge books, new media

Flemish publishing company Clavis Uitgeverij and the teacher training department at PXL University College in Hasselt have announced their intention to establish a new educational centre. The Willewete or "wannaknow" centre will open 1 October at the centuries-old Herkenrode Abbey site in Hasselt, where Clavis Uitgeverij is already situated.

The centre wants to offer children between the ages of four and 14 new ways of learning. "The specific purpose is to improve the language development and media literacy of children," Leon Kustermans, general director of Clavis Uitgeverij, told *De Standaard*.

Both books and new media – such as computer games and websites – will get equal attention at the new centre, which is hoping to bridge the worlds of language, science and technology. Willewete also wants to offer teachers, educational experts, authors and illustrators additional resources.



Hasselt's new education centre will bridge the worlds of language and technology

School classes will be able to visit the centre for either a full or half day. Creative activities around children's books, such as reading sessions and handicrafts workshops, will be organised during weekends. The centre will also train teachers to make books and new media more attractive to their pupils.

For PXL-Education, the college's teacher education department, the new partnership expands the possibilities of providing students with practical experience. "The centre gives us the opportunity to educate students in a broader context," said Marc Hermans, department head at PXL-Education. "The centre will be a unique place for internships."

Ben Lambrechts, PXL general director, is especially pleased that the Willewete centre will help children to stay up to date with the latest evolutions in new media. "New media are indispensable for today's life," he said. "Nobody can afford to lag behind in this respect."

Although the new centre at the abbey will only open its doors on 1 October, schools can already register for activities. In the first year, the centre will work around the theme of "In the attic".

Andy Furniere

► www.willewete.be

Union unhappy with new day care rules

Socialist education union ACOD Onderwijs is warning against the negative effects of a recently adopted decree for workers in day care centres. Since 1 April, day care centres in Flanders have been subsidised according to their actual occupancy numbers, while an average rate of 70% used to suffice to qualify for subsidies.

Since every toddler counts under the new regulations, day care centres are now striving to keep their occupancy rate as high as possible. According to the ACOD union, parents with irregular working schedules, who often don't send their children to day care centres full-time, could soon

find themselves in trouble. "One of the attractive aspects of working in the education sector is that you can care for your children yourself during holiday periods, but the decree makes this a handicap in the search for a place at a day care centre," the socialist union said in a statement. "Their irregular working schedule makes it so that education staff are no longer an attractive target group for day care centres." In *het Laatste Nieuws*, ACOD Onderwijs general secretary Raf De Weerdt added that "it is understandable that day care centres will give preference to children who will almost always be present."

He warned that employees in other sectors with irregular working schedules could be similarly hit by the new regulation. "There is a need for quick solutions to the shortcomings of the new decree," he said. "It is generally known that the places at day care centres are limited."

Bieke Verlinden, Leuven alderwoman for social affairs, also expressed concern about the "negative consequences" of the new decree in an op-ed on *Deredactie.be*. "The new decree is at odds with the reality, since the labour market demands increasing flexibility of employees," she wrote.

Flemish family agency *Kind en Gezin* has recognised the problem and said it will try to address the concerns. "It's by no means the purpose to bring people from the education sector into trouble," said spokesperson Leen Du Bois. AF

WEEK IN EDUCATION

Royal Arts Academy sounds alarm

Antwerp's Royal Academy of Fine Arts, home to the famed fashion department, is facing financial difficulties since the merger that created the Artesis Plantijn University College. As part of the reform of higher education in Flanders in the mid-1990s, the academy became part of the Artesis University College, which last year merged with another school. An increase in costs is leaving insufficient funds for education itself, according to Eric Ubben, head of the academy. "There are a lot of differences of opinion on, for example, the use of classrooms and how the campus should look," he said. The overhead costs have increased considerably, despite the advantages of scaling up, he said.

Pupils can choose classmates

Some educators are questioning the method used by many Flemish schools to place pupils in classrooms. Primary and secondary schools often allow children to choose who they would like to have in their class, and some even let them choose who they don't want. Primary school De Biekorf in Houthalen-Helchteren, Limburg, lets children determine with whom they definitely don't want to be in class with the following year. "This way, we get a better view of the relationships in the class, and this results in a better atmosphere," management of the school told *Het Nieuwsblad*. "Determining with whom you don't want to be in class is a step too far," said Bert Smits of the platform for education innovation *Het Mysterie van Onderwijs* (The Mystery of Education). "However, if there is a big inter-personal problem, the option must be negotiable, and the school should take its responsibility."

One in three school kitchens fails inspection

One-third of kitchens in schools and boarding schools don't meet quality standards, according to the annual report of the Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain. The number of positive inspections in the last three years amounts to about 66%. While other sectors are making progress, the figures for kitchens in schools remain stagnant. "This is bad for the perception of school kitchens," said Dirk Vanstappen, director of the investments department of the Catholic education network, in *De Standaard*. His network will contact the agency for more explanation. AF

WEEK IN
ACTIVITIES**Zap Parade**

Creative family festival with street theatre, music, workshops and games for kids and a closing fire act. 28 June, from 14.00. Sint-Pauwels, Sint-Gillis-Waas (East Flanders); tickets €10, free for kids 12 and under

► www.zapparade.be

Genk on Stage

Three days of free music on six stages throughout the city centre, with headliners Axelle Red, Boy George, Praga Khan, Arno and Clouseau. Late-night after-party on Friday and Saturday. 27-29 June, across Genk

► www.genkonstage.be

Fish and Folklore Festival

A weekend celebration of the traditional fishing village, with a fishermen's parade and an old-fashioned open-air fish auction. Also, handicrafts, music, flea market and seafood stands. 28-29 June 11.00-20.00, Mariekerke (Antwerp province)

► <http://folklore.mariekerke.eu>

Adriaen Brouwer Beer Festival

The festival is named after the beer, which is named after the painter born in Oudenaarde in 1605. Three days of free music, with Flemish favourites Clouseau performing on Friday night. 27-29 June, Grote Markt, Oudenaarde; free

► www.adriaenbrouwer.be

Historia Mundi

One thousand historical re-enactors representing every age from Roman centurions to the Second World War come together for this unique annual festival. Craft demonstrations, battle re-enactments, evocations of daily life and more. 28-29 June 10.00-18.00, Gunfire Museum, Kapellei, Brasschaat (Antwerp province); tickets €5-€8, free for kids five and under

► www.historia-mundi.be

Open Garden Days

Exemplary public and private gardens throughout Flanders are open to the public. Participating sites are listed on the website and in the guide book, available for purchase at Avee stores. 28-29 June 10.00-18.00; free

► www.opentuinen.be

Humorologie

Annual performing arts festival that combines comedy with clown and circus acts. Australian circus group CIRCA will perform for the first time in Belgium. 27-29 June, Marke festival grounds, Hellestraat 6, Kortrijk-Marke (West Flanders); tickets €21-€81

► www.humorologie.be

Special delivery

Entrepreneurs set up scheme that lets you discover little-known brews

Alan Hope

One thing you notice very quickly about Belgium, the land of beer, is that you tend to see the same beers on sale everywhere. There may well be more than 1,000 beers brewed here, but whenever you take a seat in a bar or push your trolley round the supermarket, the range seems to be very much more limited than that. There are two remedies: Go out of your way to a specialist beer shop or bar or have a box of special, little-known, artisanal craft beers delivered right to your door every month. The service is provided by Belgian Beer Discovery, the brainchild of former schoolfriends Dario Ceccarelli and Paul Pilavachi, who met at the European School in Brussels.

I met the Italian Ceccarelli in Le Coq, a bar in central Brussels where you can still find a few beers not manufactured by a gigantic multinationals.

"Why do we do this? We were tired of drinking the same beers when we went out and because the food and beverages industry here is a closed circuit," he says. "It's in the hands of big brewers who not only buy their own premises to sell their beer but also force whoever rents out the place to sell only their products." He likens it to the Italian Mafia. "If you denounce these practices, you're thrown out and somebody else comes in to run it."

The pair began visiting small, out-of-the-way breweries and worked out deals with them to help distribute their beers in restaurants and cafes in Brussels. That still accounts for 80% of the business.

"We introduced the concept of Belgian Brewer of the Month; every month we showcase a brewer, with a beer menu that describes the product and tells their story. We have excess products that come back from the bars, so we thought, why not sell them on the internet?

Dario Ceccarelli (left) and Paul Pilavachi, founders of Belgian Beer Discovery

One month we sell it to the food and drink industry, the next, we take it back and sell it online, so there's no clash."

The result is Belgian Beer Discovery. The way it works couldn't be simpler. You sign up on their website for a subscription, which could be for a single box, or for three or six months. You'll receive two bottles each of four beers produced by a brewer you won't find taking up space in the Carrefour Express.

Last month's was an excellent selection from Wallonia's Mille Vertus; prior to that it was De Leite from Ruddervoorde in West Flanders, and this month it's the Vicaris beers of Brouwerij Dilewyns in Dendermonde, East Flanders, including their much sought-after Triple Gueuze.

That's sold out already, but there's still time to get on board for July's box

containing a selection from the tiny Gruit brewery of Annick De Splenter in Ghent, which uses herbs and spices instead of hops, just as they did in parts of Flanders in the Middle Ages. It's also possible to order a box containing the appropriate glasses for the beer of the month. Shipping costs extra, but boxes can be picked up at no charge from three Brussels addresses.

Finding the brews is a job in and of itself. "We find them online or by word of mouth. For example, Paul Walsh [publisher of *Belgian Beer & Food* magazine] came to my house and brought two bottles from Dochter van de Korenaar, a brewer from Baarle-Hertog. Their products are awesome. I called the guy and I said 'I have to visit you'."

There's another, perhaps more important, criterion than just having interesting beers. "Some are new and

some of them have been established for a very long time, but we only work with people who brew themselves, who do the actual job. I go there and make sure that they're brewing, that they have the equipment and so on. We want to work with those small brewers who actually enjoy brewing and who have a tradition."

Then it's transporting 80 crates of each beer to their warehouse in Tour & Taxis and boxing the beers up for customers – a very labour-intensive job. "We will never outsource this service," Ceccarelli pledges. "We tried it once, and the people making the packs weren't doing it right, so things were broken or wrong. I believe that the core activity, of making those boxes correctly, must be done internally. Nobody else will take care of your business the way you do."

► www.belgianbeerdiscivery.com

Alan Hope

BITE

A lunch on the ocean waves

If you're at all interested in fish and seafood, you can't afford to miss Kom Proeven this weekend in Ostend. It's a chance to test the abilities of the city's chefs, learn how to peel grey shrimp and even take to the ocean waves – well, the North Sea at least. Chefs from 28 local restaurants, including Savarin, Marina, Bistro Mathilda and Ostend Queen, will prepare their choicest fish dishes live along the Zeeheldenplein, in a sort of Culinaria-by-the-Sea. Dishes cost €4 or €6. You can find a list of all restaurants and even a few recipes on the website. The desserts on offer at the same prices come from *patissier* Debusschere and chocolatier Willems. Peeling shrimps sounds easy, and in the hands of an expert it even looks

easy, but a decent-sized portion in the hands of a fumbling amateur can have you pulling out your hair in frustration. That's why a trained Ostend *pelster* (peeler) will be on hand at 13.00, 15.00, 17.00 and 19.00 on both days to teach you how. Not only is it faster once you know how, it's also much cheaper to buy them unpeeled.

Should you be taking some home, don't forget that the traditional accompaniment is a nice glass of Rodenbach, either the full-bodied Classic or, if you prefer something fruity, Caractère Rouge.

To walk off what you've eaten, there are free guided tours of Ostend's maritime sites leaving from Zeeheldenplein at 11.00 and 15.00 on both days, taking in the



lighthouse Lange Nelle, the North Sea aquarium, the fish market

(where fish are sold by the process known in English as the Dutch auction – the first to accept a constantly decreasing price takes home the lot) and the so-called *sprotkot*, built after the Second World War as a market hall for the sale of herrings and sprats.

And if you're feeling adventurous, there are boat trips: on a shrimp or a cod boat, departing at 7.00 and returning at 17.00. The cost is €45, and you're advised to reserve via info@franlis.be, as places are limited.

The Zeeheldenplein is a short walk from Ostend's train station, as well as the coast tram stop Station Oostende if you're coming from elsewhere on the coast.

► <http://komproeven.ostendaise.be>

Nibbling and pedalling

New culinary cycle routes in Limburg pair two of Flanders' favourite pastimes

Diana Goodwin

If there are two things that locals love to do in Flanders, it's cycling and eating. Even better: cycling through beautiful countryside and picturesque towns, and eating good food in traditional cafes and chic restaurants. If only there was a way to do both at once ...

ADutch company has come up with a winning combination: a bike route with planned stops for food along the way. At each of five restaurants over the length of the route, you receive a different course – starting with cake and coffee, then proceeding to appetiser, soup, main and dessert. Happen en Trappen, or “nibbling and pedalling”, first began offering its routes in the southern provinces of North Brabant and in Dutch Limburg seven years ago and soon expanded throughout the Netherlands. In 2011, they offered their first routes in Flemish Limburg. There are currently seven routes, including one in Voeren, the Flemish community bordered by the Netherlands and Wallonia.

Here's how it works: You make a reservation via the website and pay in advance (€38.50 per person). On the selected date, you arrive at the first restaurant between 10:00 and 11:00, where you receive a set of laminated maps with directions and a handy holder that clamps onto your handlebars. From there, you just follow the route as described, making sure to stick to the guidelines for arrival and departure times at each stop.

In the spirit of journalistic inquiry (you understand), my partner and I recently booked the Happen in Haspengouw route, which begins and ends in Tongeren. It's 48 kilometres divided into five segments.

The day began inauspiciously, with dark clouds and threatening skies, and by the time we arrived at the station in Tongeren, the rain was coming down in earnest. In the five minutes it took to bike to our starting point, we got thoroughly soaked. However, we were soon warm and dry, ensconced in the beautiful interior of Brasserie Bazilik with its black-and-white tiled floor, bentwood cafe chairs and wrought-iron railings.

Along with our maps and route description, our waiter brought coffee and two big slices of warm apple pie. The pie, although delicious, seemed a bit heavy just before setting off on a 48-kilometre bike ride, not to mention a very filling start to a five-course meal. I would have

expected croissants and rolls with my coffee here in Flanders, but maybe they do things differently in the Netherlands.

Luckily, by the time we finished our pie, the rain had stopped, and the sun was shining. We secured the map holder to the handlebars of our tandem and set off through the main square. We soon passed out of the city centre and into the surrounding fields, where wheat and barley were ripening in the summer heat. Haspengouw is mostly flat, so the cycling was leisurely, allowing us the pleasure of enjoying the scenery at a relaxed pace.

Our route often followed the bike path network, so staying on track was a simple matter of following the signposts to the next

numbered intersection. That is, it was simple until the directions no longer matched up with the bike path numbering. Several times, we had to adapt our route to changes in the bike path network that had evidently been made after the route was written.

Our second stop was at Herberg de Horne, a former inn with a beautiful front garden, where we enjoyed our appetiser, a terrine of *paling in 't groen*, the classic eel dish in herb sauce, offered as a chilled starter that was perfect in every way.

The next stages of our journey took us through Haspengouw's orchards, which are the main attraction of this particular route. We had chosen a good time of year to visit the region,

as the cherry trees were laden with fruit in glowing shades of red. We also saw apples and pears starting to ripen, and even passed some vineyards starting to bear grapes.

Our third stop was the picturesque Chateau de la Motte, just outside Sint-Truiden. The main attraction at this location, popular with families, Vespa tours and cyclists, is the beautiful castle with its large outdoor patio. Here we were served a serviceable, but not very interesting bowl of tomato soup. I consoled myself by giving the accompanying bread to a mama duck who swam back and forth across the pond to feed her young on the opposite side.

By the time we got to the main course, at Taverne de Klee, outside Borgloon, I wasn't even hungry. There we had a choice out of several traditional Flemish dishes. I chose the Haspengouw chicken, which turned out to be half a roast chicken served with a rather bland mix of potato, bacon and apple. My partner was happy with his braised pork ribs, served with salad and fries.

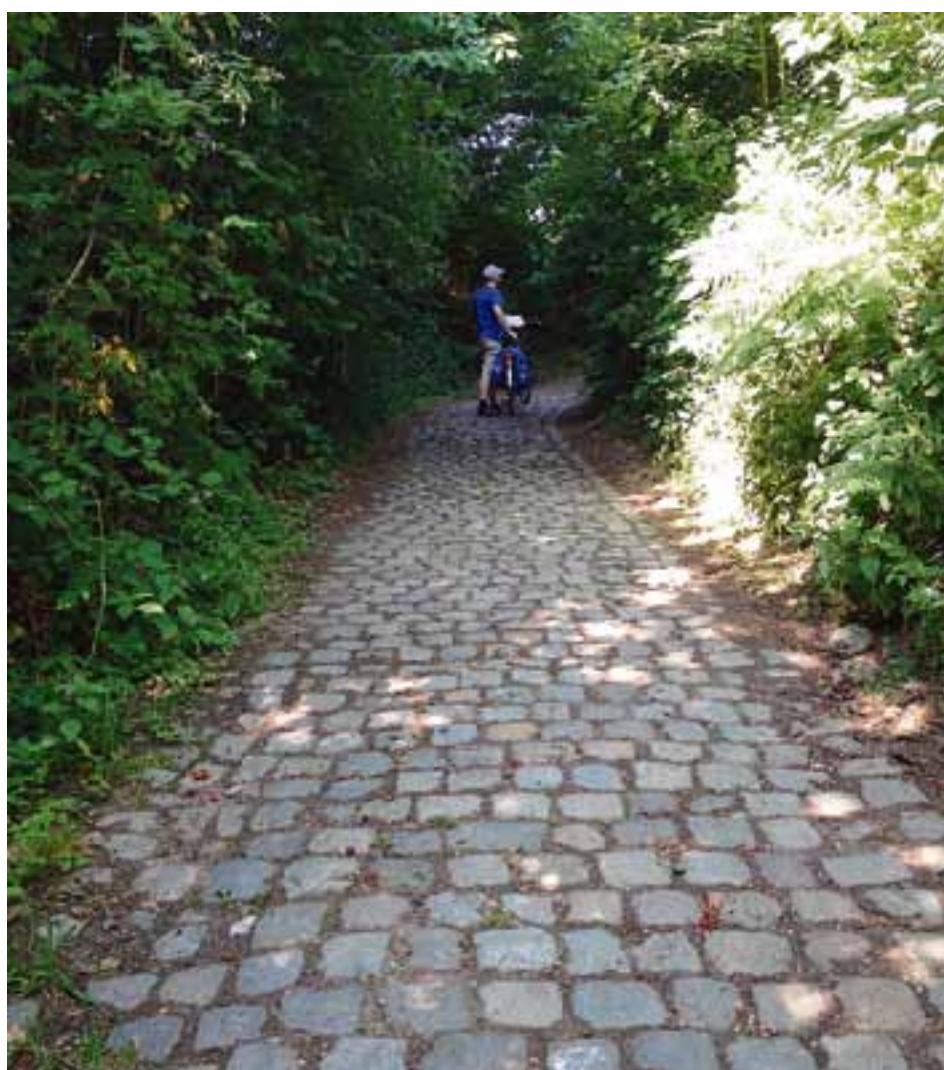
After eating the heavy meals (and downing two beers each), we soon found ourselves labouring to climb the hills around Borgloon. And then we reached a steep section of cobblestones that was simply impossible to negotiate by bike – at least for us. We dismounted and walked the tandem up the hill. Soon afterwards, we were rewarded for our efforts by arriving at our last restaurant of the day.

By now we were both hot and tired, and I was desperately hoping that dessert would be something involving ice cream. At Bij Mariella, my prayers were answered: a Coupe Aardbei, vanilla ice cream buried under a mountain of fresh, local strawberries and topped with whipped cream – the perfect ending to our cycling adventure.

From there it was just a short ride back to Brasserie Bazilik, where we returned our maps. We'd had such a good time that we agreed to do another Happen en Trappen route soon, and to persuade some friends to join us. It's just the sort of thing that would be fun to do with a group.

Although Happen en Trappen does not provide bike rentals, each route begins near a rental facility, which can be found on the website. Additional routes in Mechelen, Antwerp and West Flanders are planned for the near future.

► www.happenentrappen.nl



Happen en Trappen's Limburg routes offer cobblestones, countryside scenery and sunny terraces

© Diana Goodwin



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The man behind the bands

Xavier Benoit steers bands touring Flanders in the right direction

Mark Andrews

Xavier Benoit is a gun-toting bearded guy who glares at the world from under his Stetson, ready to tussle in the rough-and-tumble world of tour management. Fortunately for promoters, booking agents, road crews and me, this image is just an photo from his Facebook page. It's a film still in fact, from his role in *Black Mold*, a promo video for The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, regular clients of Benoit and tonight's headliners at performance venue De Kreun in Kortrijk. In the clip, Benoit plays a sheriff who meets a grisly end at the hands of some kind of extra-terrestrial werewolf.

Still, even the real Benoit doesn't look like someone you'd want to mess with, especially if you've seen him pounding the drums in his own band, Blackup. Still, I find it hard to picture him wielding a baseball bat Peter Grant-style (or cricket bat, Ian Faith-style) in the line of his work.

He's a polite, professional guy who likes things smooth, orderly and congenial. These are all reasons he likes touring throughout his native Flanders with his Fire Mountain Tours company. As an independent tour manager, he takes care of a hundred little things bands need as they tour from one venue to another.

"A lot of the venues are non-profit and are subsidised by the government. That's why France is good to tour in, too," he explains. "Some countries, with privately owned venues, are the total opposite. De Kreun is a particularly good venue – quality food, people are really attentive; you're welcomed. It's a family atmosphere."

Benoit's goal is to ensure that his musicians are relaxed, well-rested and ready to do their work. Rock'n'roll shenanigans are for the stage. Anyone misses a night's sleep, something's gone wrong.

Benoit is quick to dispel rock'n'roll notions about life on the road. "I've worked with some bands – slackers, drug addicts, drunks – they arrive late and fuck it all up," he says. "You need one strong person in the pack. With the Blues Explosion, for instance, they're all strong; everybody's reliable. The tour is like a machine." Benoit works with whoever needs his services, from small club bands to arena-size acts, from Flanders' little cultural centres to the Sportpaleis and Vorst-Nationaal. Right now he's got the hip-hop band Jurassic 5 on his roster, who draw several thousand a night.

Other bands he's worked with lately are Hot Snakes, Connan Mockasin, Rocket from the Crypt, Black Mountain and Lightning Dust. Those are for tour management; he also rents vans and equipment to a great number of bands. So, let's run through the division of labour on a tour.

"Before a band arrives in the country, I do the advance work, all the basics, from booking hotels, ferries, checking the equipment, getting work permits, doing all the contracts," he says. "Basically the band gets in the van, we drive off, we tour, we come back and everything has been done – the accounts, the crew is paid, the band is paid. The equipment and van go back to the depot, all the paperwork is done."

The venue is different every night, but the services offered are typically the same. "Catering and a cook, rider, in-house technicians, people from production and all the facilities, from a toilet to the PA," Benoit says. "And for the Kortrijk show, a hotel."

What, like a Best Western? "No, no, no, better than that," he says. "We get good lodging."

For Benoit, the current tour is a fairly usual set-up. "The band and me, Lou who does the front of the house and the tech guy who also does monitors. Six guys in the van, that's it."

Time to mention the van – we are sitting in it after all. A Mercedes Sprinter converted into the ubiquitous Splitter Van is the touring rock band's trusty workhorse. Nine seats, no more than 3.5 tonnes, and "split" style – gear in the back, band and any crew in the front. Renting these out freelance through a company in Lille is Benoit's bread and butter.

So how did he end up in this line of work? "About 20 years back, when my band was in the van – I can't even remember the name of the band – somebody said: 'Can somebody take care of the money?' I said: 'Well, I'll do it,' and that's how it all started."

"About 20 years back, somebody said: 'Can somebody take care of the money?' I said: 'Well, I'll do it'

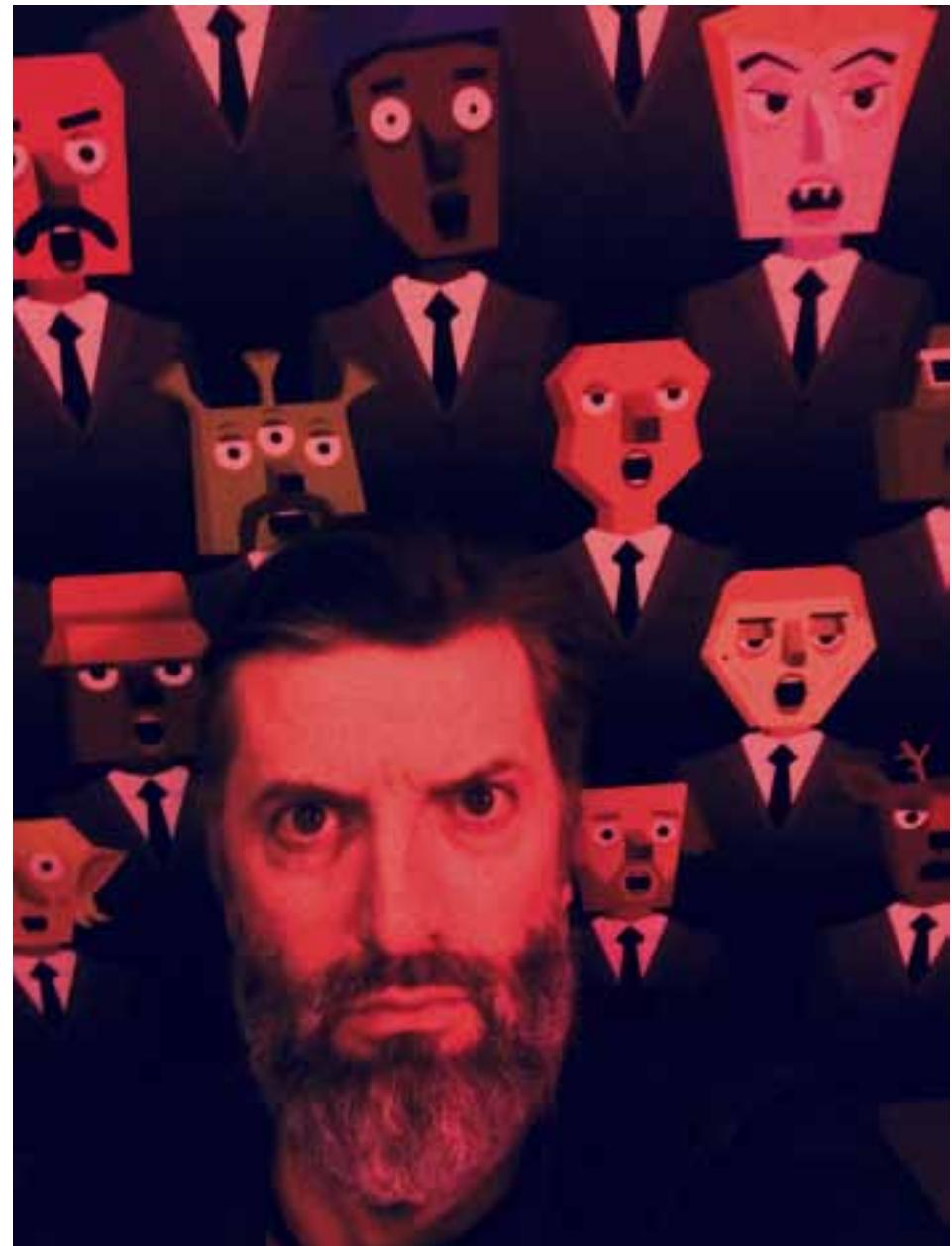
At first, he just handled the accounts and went to collect money for the band every night. Then one day, a couple of friends who had a band asked him: "Do you want to do this for us?" Benoit did and he subsequently joined them on a tour. "They didn't have a booking agent, so I started booking them. Then my own band recorded an album, and I pressed 1,000 copies," he explains. "So simultaneously I started a record label, a booking agency and a tour management company without even knowing it."

At the time, Benoit had a regular day job as a dispatcher in a transport company. "All my free time was taken up by touring and booking, so I finally had enough and quit," he says, looking back. "By then I had a roster of about 40 bands."

When he liked a band, he would always ask them if they wanted to make a record, or if they would like him to book a tour for them. "Some said 'no', but some said 'yes'. Some of them went major label," he says. "My label – Del Boy Records – stopped in 2002 because of downloading and MP3s. I just didn't sell any more records. But I just started it up again now."

Ultimately, Benoit had to choose the most lucrative option between being a booking agent and a road manager. The latter won out.

Most bands also rent backline – or equipment – from Benoit. "Over the years I've collected a lot of gear," he says. "Now I have 60 amps and 100



drum sets in storage in Ghent."

There's just time to wax lyrical about venues in Flanders. "De Kreun is now in a brand new building, but it has a long history," Benoit says, explaining that it used to be based in Bellegem, in what amounted to a garage. "Everybody from Einstürzende Neubauten to The Ramones came there – it had it all. Trix in Antwerp is another good one."

And, like most anyone who has worked with Brussels Ancienne Belgique, he has good things to say about them. "The sound at the AB is impeccable, the food too. Everything is top-notch. I like Het Depot in Leuven's new

building. And of course Vooruit in Ghent is legendary. And you shouldn't miss the 4AD in Diksmuide, which is, for me, one of the best places to see bands. It's in the middle of nowhere in Flanders Fields. They bought a house and have built a whole venue inside it. It is really amazing."

And in Kortrijk is another beloved spot. "It's called The Pits. It's been here for 25 years. It's a tiny bar, and the PA system is just a vocal PA, but they host an insane number of bands."

And then he checks his watch and the interview is drawn to a close. "I've got to go work". Indeed.

► www.firemountaintours.com



Top: The inimitable Xavier Benoit in one of many colourful venues he haunts in the course of his work. Above: The John Spencer Blues Explosion (left) and Triggerfinger are but two of Benoit's regular clients



WEEK IN ARTS
& CULTURE

Sounds limits for street performers

The municipality of Brussels-City has extended the number of locations where street musicians can legally operate, culture alderwoman Karin Lalieux announced. The number of locations is increased from 16 to 19. At the same time, street musicians will be limited to a noise level of 60 decibels. The three new locations are Central station, Muntplein and Kunstberg. The new noise level of 60 decibels is about the equivalent of a normal conversation and will affect mainly amplified musicians. Those failing to abide by any of the regulations could have their instruments impounded. The new rules also permit the sale of CDs for the first time. Performers who do not use sound or music, such as jugglers or human statues, may perform wherever they like, providing they have permission from the city council.

Monument Day on 14 September

Flanders' heritage organisation Herita has announced that this year's Open Monument Day will take place on Sunday, 14 September. The theme is "Heritage past, now and in the future", with a focus on heritage itself: why it's important and how priorities have changed from the launch of Heritage Day in the 1980s. Restorations of monuments and historical buildings will figure heavily in the programme along with archaeological sites. Open Monument Day, which allows access to many buildings normally closed to the public, is one of Flanders' most popular region-wide events; last year 450,000 people took part. The full programme for the day of 450 open monuments and 370 activities across Flanders will be available on 4 August.

► www.openmonumentendag.be

Museum Council asks for minute of silence

The Brussels Museum Council asked museums across Belgium to plan some kind of memorial on 24 June, 30 days after the shooting at the city's Jewish Museum took place. A gunman killed three people on site at the museum on 25 May and wounded another, who later died in hospital. A suspect was arrested in France a week after the shooting and is awaiting the court's decision about whether to extradite him to Belgium. The Brussels Museum Council asked museums to take some kind of action, such as providing condolence books, lighting candles and having a minute of silence at 15.30.

Far away, so close

There's a new dawn for Flanders' renamed early music festival

Marie Dumont

For the past 30 years, the thing to do if you were a fan of early music and lived in Flanders was to head for the sprawling Limburg estate of Alden Biesen in the last days of June and feast on some glorious medieval and Renaissance polyphony.

Featuring some of the genre's finest performers, the Dag van Oude Muziek (Early Music Day), as it was called, was invariably tasteful and sophisticated, and one of the region-wide Festival of Flanders' best-kept secrets.

Still, the attraction wore off over the years, and audiences dwindled. It was time to inject new blood and new ideas.

Exit Dag van Oude Muziek, therefore, and enter AlbaNova, its brand new avatar, with a first edition scheduled for the end of the month. Behind the bright new name, there's an ambitious agenda – a desire to wash away the years that separate us from the early repertoire and – instead of seeing it as a museum piece to worship from afar – focus on its power and modernity. Purists and authenticity buffs, stay away.

The programme gleefully jumbles chronology by presenting modern compositions inspired by ancient sounds and aesthetics alongside old ones that sound as crisp and relevant as new. Take Zwerm, a Belgo-Dutch combo who will perform John Dowland's aching laments with a bold new twist.

Dowland, a composer and lutenist from the English Renaissance, was also a chronically depressed soul who has long struck a chord with our Prozac-popping generation. Dozens of modern versions of his songs exist, from jazz improvisations to



Sting's soulful covers in *Songs from the Labyrinth*.

Zwerm, whose "guts and imaginative power" were hailed by *De Standaard* in 2010, have opted for a screeching heavy metal version that translates Dowland's sublime melancholy into modern angst.

David Catalunya (pictured) is another musician who successfully bridges the past and present. A Spanish musicologist and conductor, he has, with the help of old paintings and musty treatises, reconstructed a long-lost keyboard instrument, the clavicymbalum, a cross of sorts between the dulcimer and the yet-to-be-invented harpsichord.

Never mind its lineage: This object relies as much on Catalunya's imagination as on historical facts, and its delicate twang is still utterly mesmerising. There will be a chance to hear it, played by Catalunya himself, in some rambling improvisations based on a 14th-century book of songs, the *Codex Faenza*.

Improvisation, a key component of pre-classical music, is another

bewildering time machine as it marries ancient notes with modern creativity. It naturally looms large on the programme, such as in a concert by Gregorian group Psallentes in which singers will flesh out melodic lines scrawled in a manuscript kept at Tongerlo Abbey.

Although they will be standing in a circle and reading from a single score, medieval-style, the performance goes beyond mere recreation, if only for the fact that female voices will be included, which wouldn't have been the case at the time. The audience will be invited to join in the creative buzz and ad-lib their own ornaments.

Other highlights of this busy day include *Diwan*, an exhilarating concert by Ensemble Lucidarium demonstrating that medieval Italians and contemporary Palestinians share essentially the same musical tradition; *Mikro/kosmos*, an installation reflecting on ancient views of man and the cosmos thought up by early music group Zefiro Torna and conceptual sound artist Paul Craenen; and a large choice of creative workshops for children and adults.

You'll drive home with strange sounds ringing in your ears and the idea that the past is not so much a foreign country as an evergreen and familiar landscape to which, in our headlong race towards the future, we must keep returning.

June 29

Landcommanderij Alden Biesen

Kasteelstraat 6, Bilzen

► www.albanovafestival.com

Flemish films heading to MoMA in New York



Berlin and Cannes.

When I meet him at his office, overlooking the port of Brussels, it doesn't take much to get him started.

"Producing non-commercial films is a challenging job," he says. "It's not easy to get funding for films like *Lost Persons Area*, and the distribution part is hardly a walk in the park, either. Yet Caroline Strubbe gets recognition from all over the world – Dave Kehr from the film department at MoMA describes her as 'a voice he has never heard before'. And still we can't get the Flemish public broadcaster to show her films. That's just a bit sad."

That his films attract only a select audience is not an argument. "It's also a matter of budget," he says. "Give me a big promotion budget and a broadcaster willing to co-produce and promote it, and people will come." People say Strubbe's films are too difficult, too 'artistic'. But if they knew more about them, they would see they are very accessible. *I'm the Same* (pictured) is practically a silent film, but that doesn't make it less accessible. Maybe intimidating, that's all: Without words, a film becomes about emotions. Nothing is more accessible than emotions."

The problem, Leyers believes, is that the quality of a film is expressed in numbers. How many people saw the film the first weekend it came out? Is it paying off? "These are awkward ways to talk about art in the cultural section of the media," he says.

Such reports, he continues, "have meaning in the financial pages of the newspaper, not the cultural. The critic should write about the emotions the film triggered, the

camera work, the music, etc. And if it's not a mass success, so what? Is fast food better than cooked vegetables because more people tend to like it? Of course not!"

Leyers holds up Denmark as an example: "The country is about as small as we are, and they speak the same impossible language. Yet they manage to make their films and television series one of their most successful export products in Europe. How? By giving production companies some structural funding. It offers directors and producers breathing space, allowing them to explore and develop."

To conclude, Leyers tells me about his dream: a House of Flemish Film in Brussels that would "show Flemish films for tourists and a local audience, without focusing on how much money it will generate, but more as a tribute to the gems that are being produced every year here in Flanders. Wouldn't that be nice!"

Débora Votquenne

► www.mindsmeet.be

Stephan Vanfleteren and the remains of the day Atlantic Wall

Until 5 October | Provincial domain Raversyde, Ostend

► www.tinyurl.com/atlanticwall

If you see it on the map, it seems almost too enormous to grasp. A line of defence stretching from the far north of Norway to the south of France. But the Nazis did things big. The defence line, also called the Atlantic Wall, was intended to repel an Allied attack, allowing the Germans to concentrate on their fight against the Soviet Union. All along the coasts of Europe, the bunkers and defences of the Atlantic Wall were rapidly constructed. Seventy years later, many of those buildings are still there. It is these remnants that Flemish photographer Stephan Vanfleteren searched for. The famous Vanfleteren's distinctive style in black and white work very well with this subject, resulting in

hushed images of the remnants of the Atlantic Wall, standing quietly in contrast to the devastating power of their original purpose. Some bunkers are partly swallowed by the sea, others stand tall as if they were still waiting for the enemy. The concrete giants still impress today. The photos are not printed but are projected on the wall of a replica of a bunker specially constructed for the exhibition on the Flemish coast.

A soundscape plays that combines the murmur of the sea and echoes of the past. It is rather strange that the choice was made to show *Atlantic Wall* in a model of a bunker when there are plenty of real bunkers in the Raversyde recreational park. During



the Second World War, Raversyde was the key location in the Belgian section of the Atlantic Wall. The complex of bunkers, artillery and reinforcements has been well preserved. Visitors can stroll

through the entire complex. Scenes set with original artefacts from the war years provide a good picture of daily life in the bunker complex. It's in any case, a fitting location for this exhibition. **Toon Lambrechts**

► www.d.art-mechelen.be

VISUAL ARTS

Mechelen

D.ART: This art parcours focuses on Mechelen's contemporary arts scene and coincides with the popular Dijlefeesten. The meeting point and first stop of 13 is restaurant Mille where an art wall serves as an interactive catalogue of the exhibiting artists.

► www.d.art-mechelen.be

CONCERT

Antwerp

Radio 1 Bowie Sessie: After the successful Beatles and Stones sessions, Radio 1 celebrates David Bowie. Both local heroes, such as Marie Daulne, Arno and Stijn Meuris, and young talented bands, like The Sore Losers and Reena Riot, interpret the songs of the musical chameleon. 27 June, 21.00, *Openluchttheater Rivierenhof*

► www.openluchttheater.be

EVENT

Lier

Zomer in het Park: The lawn near the picturesque Nete river offers a summer bar, an open-air pop-up restaurant, some intriguing theatre productions for young and old and, on 30 June, a public screening of the cinema classic *The Commitments*. 27 June to 11 July, *Stadspark, Netelaan 4*

► www.zomerinhetpark.be

DEBATE

Brussels

George Soros: The Tragedy of the European Union - Disintegration or Revival? Gregor Peter Schmitz, Europe correspondent for *Der Spiegel*, moderates a debate on the future of Europe with the 83-years old US financier and philanthropist. The title of the evening is also the title of Soros' new book, a plea for more solidarity and active involvement of Europe's citizens. 30 June 17.45-19.30, *Bozar*

► www.bozar.be

FILM

Dilbeek

Kotteekekoer: The cosy open-air film festival starts its 16th edition with the screening of Paolo Sorrentino's 2013 Oscar winner *La grande bellezza*. Screenings of *Brave*, *Skyfall* and *Hasta La Vista* follow. Every Tuesday 1 July to 26 August 21.00, at various locations

► www.kotteekekoer.be

CLASSICAL

Ghent

International Organ Festival Since 1951, the Gents Organ Centre has organised a summertime concert cycle. This time, Flemish and foreign guest organists gather in Sint-Baaf's Cathedral. Every Thursday, 3 July to 28 August, *Sint-Baaf's Cathedral*

► www.gents-orgelcentrum.be

MUSIC FESTIVAL

Couleur Café

27-29 June | Tour & Taxis, Brussels | ► www.couleurcafe.be

What started in 1990 as a small-scale city festival mainly dedicated to African and Afro-Cuban rhythms has become one of the most colourful urban world events in Europe, with more than 60 concerts and DJs on four stages. The new indoor club Clandestino, numerous dance workshops and an art exhibition offer breathing room between concerts, which this

year include Seun Kuti, son of the late Afrobeat pioneer Fela Kuti, and African reggae stars such as Alpha Blondy and Tiken Jah Fakoly. Check out the funk legend Bootsy Collins and the anticipated reunion of the Californian hip-hop crew Jurassic 5, while shaking your hips to dance duos Basement Jaxx (*pictured*) and Magnus, both offering new albums in September. **Tom Peeters**



FAMILY

Handhaven

2 July to 31 August | MAS Havenpaviljoen, Antwerp

► www.zva.be

Every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday at 10.00 and 14.00, a bus leaves from the front of the landmark Museum aan de Stroom (MAS) for a hilarious trip through the port of Antwerp. Based on a story by the Antwerp actor and screenwriter Dimitri Leue, a tour guide will

show kids eight and older and their families the ins and outs of one of the biggest ports in the world. How many bananas arrive here daily? And what else is in those gigantic containers? This production by the theatre collective Nachtkrab is free, but a reservation is necessary. (In Dutch) **TP**



VISUAL ARTS

art@Knokke-Heist

28-29 June | Across Knokke-Heist | ► www.artknokke-heist.be

More than 70 art galleries in a space of two square kilometres: that's surely an asset for the up-scale seaside town of Knokke-Heist and its dandy visitors. To emphasise the artistic opulence, three times a year — during Easter, summer and autumn holidays — gallery owners organise a joint opening weekend for their new exhibitions. This Saturday and Sunday, 39 galleries are participating in the collective effort. As an extra promotional effort, a jury of professionals selected one favourite work by an exhibiting artist: "The Smoker" (*pictured*), a mysterious oil on canvas by the self-taught Serbian painter Goran Djurovic (represented by Galerie Zuid). It's art@Knokke-Heist's first real headliner. **TP**



© courtesy Galerie Zuid

THEATRE

GET TICKETS NOW

Het Theaterfestival

4-14 September | Across Antwerp

► www.theaterfestival.be

Between 1 May 2013 and 15 May 2014, the five jury members of Het Theaterfestival, chaired by popular local crooner Helmut Lotti, watched 469 Dutch-language plays. Their 14 favourites will run again in September. Not surprisingly, the multidisciplinary *Van den vos*, starring a grandiose Josse De Pauw, and the Toneelhuis/Toneelgroep Amsterdam collaboration *Hamlet vs Hamlet* were chosen. We also recommend De Koe's version of Chekov's *Olga* (*pictured*) and the sublime dance performance *Vortex Temporum*, courtesy of Rosas and Ictus. Additionally, a children's jury selected four productions for young theatre fans. Should you have your heart set on a specific production, don't dawdle; these tickets sell like hotcakes. **TP**



© Koen Broos

Talking Dutch

One flew over the stork's nest

Derek Blyth

When hailstones the size of golfballs fall out of the sky, you know there are going to be problems. The violent storm that passed over Flanders earlier this month left a trail of shattered window panes and dented car roofs. But no one expected it to leave behind mourning storks and giant tropical butterflies. The headline didn't make a lot of sense when I read it at first – *Lokeren ontfermt zich over treurende ooievaar* – Lokeren takes pity on lamenting stork. The stork, nesting in the Buylaers nature area, was apparently lamenting because he had lost his partner – *Het vrouwtje werd op het nest dood gehageld toen ze haar jongen probeerde te beschermen* – the female was killed by hailstones trying to protect her young. The little storks survived, but they were getting hungry.

The father stork wasn't feeding them. It turns out that storks are terribly romantic creatures. *Als een van de volwassen vogels sterft, de ander beseft dat hij het niet alleen aankan* – if one of the adult birds dies, the other realises that it can't carry on alone, an expert explained. *Treurt dit mannetje echt om het verlies* – this little guy is really suffering from the loss. *Hij maakt zachte kleppergeruida en zit aangeslagen op het nest* – he's making gentle rattling noises and sitting in the nest looking defeated. *Ooievaars zijn partners voor het leven* – storks partner for life.

Volunteers from a wildlife organisation are now leaving out food to make it easy on him, but they aren't sure if the father will stay around to look after his brood. *De kans bestaat dat het mannetje het nest nog verlaat* – it is possible that the male might still abandon the nest. Over in Antwerp, residents are more puzzled than sad. *De inwoners van de stationsbuurt van Antwerpen moeten niet vreemd opkijken als ze zeldzame tropische vlinders in hun tuin zien opduiken* – residents in Antwerp's station quarter shouldn't be too surprised if



The happy couple at home in Lokeren last April

rare tropical butterflies turn up in their gardens. *De hagelstorm van zondagnacht sloeg grote gaten in het koepeldak van de Vlindertuin in de Zoo* – the hailstorm on Sunday night smashed gaping holes in the dome of the zoo's Butterfly Garden. You can guess the rest: *waardoor een tiental vlinders kon ontsnappen* – and about 10 butterflies escaped.

Geert Van Damme was walking along a street near the zoo when he saw a strange sight. *“Er fladderde plots een blauwe Morpho voor mij”* – I suddenly saw a blue Morpho fluttering past, he told *Het Nieuwsblad*. (He recognised this huge tropical butterfly from a trip to Suriname). *“Ik heb nog geprobeerd om het dier te vangen, maar het was me te snel af”* – I tried to catch the creature, but it quickly flew off.

We now live in a country made stranger by sad, single storks and giant blue butterflies. All because of a sudden hailstorm.

VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY

Amélie Windels @AmelieWindels

My conclusion: don't watch the #BelgianRedDevils play 'till the last 20 minutes ... #Belgium #WorldCup2014

Hernando High @HHS_History

We all know that Belgium does chocolate right. They know who does barbecue. Real recognizes real. #Belgium pic.twitter.com/1IKS0q2WSI

BeNeFoot @BeNeFoot

Records continue to tumble with Belgium-Russia being the most watched game ever in Flanders with 2.2m viewers on average #belrus #reddevils

Ed Rex @rexyedventures 2h

@visitgent the architecture, the space, the people, the atmosphere, frites, boat tour, the belfrey, the history and everything #Flanders!

Philip Amaral @AmaralPhilip

Foosball at #Brussels Airport ... Finally!! No free wifi, but there's foosball. #WorldCup2014 #toodamnearly pic.twitter.com/DJqxglp71I

John Williams @eurapart

Free music with The Marvin Gays at Fete de la Musique, parc Royal, #Brussels #visitbrussels http://instagram.com/p/a51OUjSOMp/

In response to: Fines tripled for smoking in bars

Brian Neale: About time, the more stringent laws against smoking in bars etc the better. I am a non-smoker

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Poll

A new production at KVS explores life in an ideal city. Which of these is closest to your ideal city?

a. Barcelona: cosmopolitan, vibrant, nocturnal

50%

b. Paris: culture, beauty, class

17%

c. Stockholm: clean, civilised, safe

33%

d. Milan: fashion, food, design

0%

So much for the old favourites. Milan was once considered the choicest city in the world, the home of great design and world-class fashion. To walk the streets there was to suddenly become more attractive, even in a bum bag and Birkenstocks. These days it doesn't get a single vote from *Flanders Today* readers.

Likewise Paris, City of Light, once the destination for generations of Bright Young Things, capital of art, where every man could be Alain Delon and every woman Catherine Deneuve. Fewer than one in five of you showed any interest.

Stockholm is one of the coming places, its values now in the

ascendant. If you weren't here, one-third of you would be there (though you'd have to learn to drink something other than beer). Meanwhile, Barcelona continues its world domination as the only trendy place to be since the fall of Franco in 1975. If you're looking for an ideal city, that's the closest we've got.

THE LAST WORD

Points mean pints

“The more they score, the more it costs me, because I buy a round for every Devils goal.”

Marina Kushnerenko, owner of the bar 't Eindeloos Begin in Koksijde, got off lightly last Sunday

Road to Rio

“It's not just sport, and it's not just a game. In fact, it's a sort of art.” Sofiane Bencok, reigning European Freestyle Champion, as Brussels hosts the second edition of the European street football championships

A dog's life

“From first thing in the morning until last thing at night, he lies there. Even in the winter, the window has to be open a couple of hours a day.”

Twelve-year-old Labrador Fidèle is the most photographed inhabitant of Bruges, according to his owner, thanks to his vantage point over the canal boat routes

Rave review

“I have been to a thousand concerts, but tonight in NYC @ Stromae gave me one of the best I have EVER been to!!”

American celebrity blogger Perez Hilton raves on Twitter about Stromae's 20 June concert in New York

Next week's question:

Rival TV channels have expressed concern at Telenet acquiring a stake in TV channels VIER and VIJF. What do you think?

Log in to the *Flanders Today* website to vote! www.flanderstoday.eu