



## GOVERNMENTS ANNOUNCED

Agreements have been reached in the formation of both the Flanders and Brussels governments

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Flemish designer offers bespoke trousers at more democratic prices

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Theater Aan Zee kicks off, curated by Ghent theatre collective Ontroerend Goed

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# Sleight of hand

Ghent exhibition sheds light on rich but forgotten history of local magicians



Alan Hope

Follow Alan on Twitter @AlanHopeFT

Tired of hearing about the history of magic in other countries, Kobe Van Herwegen decided to look closer to home and found a long and rich local tradition, which he documents in a new book and exhibition in Ghent.

There's something slightly old-fashioned and run-down about the image of magicians these days; something redolent of heavily repaired costumes, cheap seaside lodgings, the smell of cigarettes and old greasepaint. Performers like David Copperfield tried to raise the image for a time, but he was fighting a losing battle.

Magic started in the fairgrounds, according to a new book by father and son Christ and Kobe Van Herwegen, which covers the surprisingly rich history of magic in Belgium, all the way up to the 18th century, although as a painting attributed to Hieronymus Bosch shows, it had been around long before then. *Chapeau, de geheime goochelgeschiedenis van België* (Chapeau, the Secret History of Belgian Magic) is accompanied by an exhibition of the same name in Ghent's offbeat Huis Van Aijen museum, which contributed many of the pieces on show.

Kobe Van Herwegen (pictured) was bitten by the magic bug at the age of six, when he found an old magic book in the attic. From a boyhood dream to become a magician, he built a career, becoming the house magician for the Flemish children's TV channel Ketnet, performing live on stage and acting as a magic consultant for other performers.

"I've always been interested in the history of magic, but I was fed up reading books about the history of magic in Britain and France," he tells me as we go round the exhibition. "We didn't even know when we started, my father and me, that we have our own history, and a very rich one. In our archives, we now have more than 1,500 magicians recorded. And also, nobody else was looking at this rich history."

Suzy Wandas is one of the biggest stars of Belgian magic, all the more so by virtue of being a woman. As a child, she saw the great Talma, a British magician, perform and she herself played in her parents' theatre, where she took lessons from Philippe De Bisschop.

"It's unusual for a woman to be prominent in magic," says



# War memorial poppy crop fails

## Dry spring thwarts plan to grow 48 hectares of poppies across Flanders



Alan Hope

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A plan to grow poppies all over Flanders to mark the centenary of the First World War has failed, after the flowers, made famous by the 1915 poem "In Flanders Fields" by Canadian doctor Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, failed to bloom. The plan of the Agency for Nature and Woodland (ANB) was to plant 48 hectares of poppies at various spots across the region. Poppy fields have had some success in Dineze, East Flanders; Hoogstraten and Wuustwezel in Antwerp province; Achel in

Limburg province; and in Vilvoorde. But in many of the locations, the flowers just aren't growing.

"Weather conditions in the spring were not ideal because it was so very dry for several weeks shortly after we sowed," an ANB spokesperson said. "Several laboratories are now looking into the matter, and the results will help us ensure next year's project can succeed in all its glory."

Meanwhile, 22,000 pigeons were released in Ypres last week, heading home to Great Britain in a symbolic act of remembrance.

The pigeons had been brought to Ypres by a number of pigeon fancier groups in the UK. "The pigeon was very important for communications during the First World War," explained Stefaan Van Moerkerke, who was behind the project. "I also wanted to draw attention to the dove as a symbol of peace. That's what's behind my invitation to the English and the Scots to come to Ypres with doves instead of weapons, as they did 100 years ago." Van Moerkerke wants the event to become an annual tradition.



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## Flanders riders fail to match Tour de France's symbolism

While this year's Tour de France honoured the fallen in Flanders Fields for the First World War centennial, the riders from the neighbourhood failed to rise to the occasion with memorable performances.

The 2014 course traced battlefield sites from Ypres to the Swiss border, including the Menin Gate, but the rain-lashed, wind-swept Flemish leg will be most remembered for the fall in the mud that ended the hopes of defending champion Chris Froome.

As for the Flemish riders, Jurgen Van den Broeck will once again be looking back with regret at his missed chances, after finishing 13th in the general classification, 34'01" behind winner Vincenzo Nibali. The Herentals rider, who came fourth in 2010 and 2012,



crashed out last year and in 2011, so he will at least be relieved that he finished the Tour. There was only meagre consolation from other Flemish riders. Jan Bakelants finished 24th overall (down from 18th last year) and was

the top Flemish climber, finishing 25th in the polka dot jersey classification.

Greg Van Avermaet, the runner-up in this year's Tour of Flanders, ended 38th. Van Avermaet also came in ninth in the green jersey sprint rankings, up from 13th last year. The fourth and fifth Flemings were, respectively, Jens Keukeleire in 67th and Johan Van Summen at 74th. Jurgen Roelandts came in at 111, while Maarten Wynants was at 117. Teamwise, it was not much better. Omega Pharma-Quick Step trailed in 14th (down from eighth last year); and Lotto Belisol was right behind at 15th (up from 20th in 2013). So a celebration in Flanders, but not for the Flemish, who put on their poorest performance in over a decade. \ Leo Cendrowicz

## MH17 family unhappy at government communications

The federal foreign affairs ministry has responded to criticisms from the brother of one of the six Belgian victims of the MH17 air disaster. A ministry spokesperson said it had done everything in its power to keep relatives informed, even during the long weekend of National Day.

"We had to keep on calling the crisis centre every day, even every hour, and we kept getting the same reply: We'll be in touch, we'll be in touch, and then nothing," said Pierre Chardome, brother of hotel manager Benoit Chardome, 51, who died in the 17 July crash. "On top of the grief, that adds something terrible."

"We were in contact all weekend with the families concerned," spokesperson Hendrik Van de Velde told VRT. "It is true that we were often able to give very little information, but that is not our fault." The situation on the ground, in an area



of eastern Ukraine controlled by pro-Russian rebels, remains confused almost two weeks after the Malaysia Airlines plane was brought down by a surface-to-air missile.

"I understand the reaction of many family members," said departing foreign minister Didier Reynders. "But we tried with the police and our crisis centre to stay in contact with the families. But people have to remember, it's a very

dangerous region there in eastern Ukraine, and it's almost impossible for us to do anything." Last Monday evening, scouts in Antwerp held a wake (*pictured*) for Chardome, who had been involved with the scouting movement for many years before emigrating first to New Zealand and then to Bali. He recently returned to Antwerp to marry his Malaysian boyfriend, who was in Switzerland when Chardome was called back to Bali by his employer.

The flight recorders of MH17 will be carried from the Ukrainian capital Kiev to London by a Belgian military Embraer aircraft, part of the pool of planes of the European Air Transport Command. The black boxes will be examined at RAF Farnborough by the Air Accidents Investigation Branch of the Department for Transport. \ AH

## Brussels father commits murder-suicide

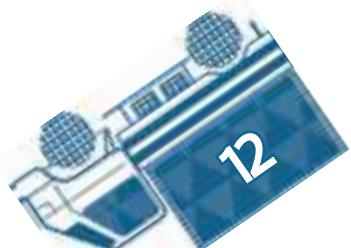
The Brussels prosecutor is carrying out an investigation into an incident in the Brussels district of Vorst in which a man is alleged to have thrown his four-year-old son from an 11th-floor apartment on Miner-vaan, before jumping to his own death. According to investigators, Patrick Van Billoen, 32, was mentally disturbed and feared for the possible loss of custody of his son, Luca.

Police were called when Van Billoen locked himself in his apartment with the child, refusing to turn him over to his mother. Police first tried to force the door of the apartment, then decided to make an approach by passing from a neighbour's balcony. By the time they were able to enter, however, the apartment was empty.

According to a preliminary evaluation of the evidence, it appears the father first pushed his son out of a window, then followed himself. Both were killed instantly on impact.

The child's mother was at the scene when the incident occurred, though was outside the apartment door at the time and saw nothing. According to acquaintances, Van Billoen had spent two months in a clinic to be treated for alcoholism and had recently self-harmed. \ AH

500kg



tonnes of peas blocked traffic in Tongeren when a tractor and trailer shed its load. The tractor landed on its roof and had to be righted while the peas were loaded into a container

398,275



of dead fish removed from the water at the Koning Boudewijn park in Brussels by environmental agency Leefmilieu Brussel. The fish died due to high temperatures, which reduced the volume of water and the available oxygen

25,000



people watched the military parade on National Day last Monday on Canvas, the public broadcaster VRT said – 46.5% of the viewing audience

365g



of marijuana found in a rucksack handed in as lost property to police at the Gentse Feesten. The bag also contained 44g of hashish and €1,460 in cash

## WEEK IN BRIEF

Mehdi Nemmouche, the Frenchman accused of the shooting **death of four people at the Jewish Museum** in Brussels in May, had been living since at least March in a flat in the Brussels district of Molenbeek, according to *De Standaard*. Nemmouche rented the single-room flat for April and May, but disappeared shortly before the attack. The landlord recognised him from photographs released after the shootings. An application to extradite Nemmouche to Belgium to face murder and terrorism charges was last week approved by the French Cassation Court. He is expected to be transferred to Brussels within 10 days.

King Filip joined Belgian citizens on 21 July to celebrate his **first National Day as king**. The day began as always with a Te Deum in the cathedral in Brussels. The First World War was the theme of the traditional military parade that passes by the front of the royal palace, which the king and queen watched from a dais on Paleizen-plein with their four children. After the parade, the pair walked among the public gathered in Warande Park. The festivities came to an end with a fireworks display by Van Cleemput of Brussels, set to the music of the opera *De stomme van Portici*. Filip's parents, King Albert and queen Paola, reportedly chose not to return from holiday in the south of France for the celebrations.

The Kalkense Meersen nature reserve in East Flanders has received a rare visitor: a **short-toed snake eagle**, which is normally only found around the Mediterranean Sea. *Circaetus gallicus* has a wing-span of 1m80 and survives on mice and frogs as well as snakes. It appears to be lost, according to nature conservancy

organisation Natuurpunt.

The Atomium in Brussels will be the scene in August of some **spectacular wire-walking**, as a group of Belgian and French wire-walkers intend to span a cord between two of the balls, 70m long and 70m high, from 11 to 17 August. Members of the public will also be able to try their skill at wire-walking, though much closer to the ground.

A 13-year-old girl was killed by a train near Groenendaal station in Flemish Brabant after she **tried to cross the tracks**. Another girl was unhurt but was hospitalised with shock. Train services were disrupted for more than four hours, and 200 passengers on the train concerned were evacuated.

Matthias Schoenaerts will **not after all be appearing in the new film *Belgica*** by Felix Van Groeningen, producers have announced. The *Rundskop* actor had been named to star next to Stef Aerts (*Adem*) as two brothers who run a cafe in Van Groeningen's next project after the Oscar-nominated *The Broken Circle Breakdown*. "Matthias Schoenaerts has given preference to a new American project," *Belgica* producers said. "More information about the cast of *Belgica* will follow shortly." Filming is due to begin in Ghent in December.

Sint-Katelijne-Waver in Antwerp province has become the first municipality in the country to offer **free internet access**, with hotspots in four locations. The antennae are installed at high points within the municipality. "People who want to make a connection need to be within 200 to 300 metres with a laptop or

smartphone," said Bart Van der Aerschot of Wireless België. Residents can also connect using an external antenna on their homes.

Most **dinosaurs were probably equipped with feathers** that allowed some of them to glide or even fly, according to a new theory published in the journal *Science* by palaeontologist Pascal Godefroit of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences in Brussels. Godefroit took part in a joint Belgian-Russian expedition in eastern Siberia, which discovered a new feathered dinosaur species, *Kulindadromeus zabaikalicus*. This led them to conclude than more dinosaurs than previously thought, and possibly most of them, had feathers, and many may also have had wings.

\ [www.sciencemag.org](http://www.sciencemag.org)

Brussels Airlines last week cancelled a number of **flights from Brussels to Tel Aviv**, in response to the security situation there. Tuesday's flight was cancelled at short notice after the US aviation authority FAA reported a rocket had landed only 1.6 kilometres from Tel Aviv airport. The foreign ministry has advised anyone planning to travel to an area 40 kilometres from Gaza to make other plans.

The Genk fire brigade has received up to **30 calls a day to deal with wasp nests**, and other brigades can expect up to twice as many as usual because of the mild winter, which led to queen wasps awakening from hibernation earlier. Members of the public who discover a wasp nest are advised not to try to deal with it themselves.

## OFFSIDE Soul of the party

The 10th anniversary edition of the Tomorrowland dance festival, about which much too much has been spoken, is all over, and everyone counts it a great success. Including the sisters of the Poor Clares convent in Boom.

On 20 July, the last day of the first weekend of this year's festival, sister Benedicte wrote the following letter to the organisers:

Dear friends,  
As Poor Clare nuns we are not completely shut off from the world, and from number 4 Gasstraat we are sympathisers of Tomorrowland. We think it's a fantastic festival and we look out for it every year. "Since we found out that you are printing flags for the 10th anniversary of this world festival, we decided we'd also like to have one.



We are taking the liberty of asking if you can arrange that, for which much thanks.  
"In closing, may we wish you every success with your enterprise. We will be praying for the safety of all, good weather and a good end to proceedings. We send you all our love and hope you are able to fulfil our wish. You will find us always home. A meeting at the front door would give us great pleasure.  
"Signed,

"Sister Benedicte and her fellow sisters"

As you may have guessed, the nuns got their wish. They also received an invitation to take part in the street party thrown by the organisers of the festival as a way of saying thank you to local residents for putting up with the noise and nuisance of this year's double edition.

The sisters (*pictured*) and about 4,000 other people showed up, and all were given a tour of the festival grounds and across the new bridge designed by Flemish artist Arne Quinze. "Too bad there are no young people around now," said Sister Benedicte.

"If I was younger I'd take part too," commented Sister Jos. "Why Not?"

\ Alan Hope

## FACE OF FLANDERS



### Sven Gatz

The creation of a new government is often the chance for promotion of a rising political star, as it was in 2009 for Joke Schauvliege; or for the arrival from outside politics of what the Flemish call a "white rabbit" such as former De Lijn boss Ingrid Lieten.

The new government of Flanders headed by Geert Bourgeois has a new minister who's a bit of both: Sven Gatz, appointed as minister of culture, youth and Brussels last week, was one of the most promising politicians of his generation before he left politics in 2011.

Gatz was born in 1967 in Sint-Agatha-Berchem in the west of Brussels. He was originally a member of the Volksunie party, which also produced Flemish political eminences like Bert Anciaux and the new minister-president, Bourgeois. Volksunie split in 2001, and Gatz joined Open VLD.

Despite joining the most economically liberal of the parties, Gatz was seen as being on the left of his conservative colleagues, his attention concentrated on issues like urban development, migration and citizenship, particularly in Brussels. In 2007, when Patricia Ceysens became a minister in the Flemish government, Gatz

was elected leader of his fraction in the Flemish Parliament. In 2011, however, he unexpectedly announced he was leaving politics and became director of the Belgian Brewers federation, headquartered on the Grote Markt in Brussels. Gatz himself is not a brewer, though he has written about beer and bars fairly extensively.

Gatz's departure from parliament, though, led to controversy. All members of parliament are entitled to a severance fee on leaving the institution; in Gatz's case, that amounted to about €300,000. Critics leapt forward to point out that the severance payments are intended to compensate those who fail to be elected, not those who give up the job voluntarily.

Gatz eventually decided to forgo the payment, but the issue would not go away: The parliament in the end decided to scrap severance pay for members who depart voluntarily. The 47-year-old seemed as surprised as anyone when he was asked to take on a ministerial position in the new government of Flanders. His response was to tweet his favourite quote from the *Godfather* series. "Just when I thought I was out ... they pull me back in."

\ Alan Hope

## FLANDERSTODAY

 Flanders  
State of the Art

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## Every party's a winner

So it was all a smoke screen: those rumours about N-VA's intransigence and former minister-president Kris Peeters' thwarted ambitions. Nothing is as it seems, as new minister-president Geert Bourgeois said two weeks ago. True enough, behind closed doors, a new government of Flanders was being formed, with a surprising coalition of N-VA, CD&V ... and Open VLD.

The breakthrough occurred when Christian-democrats CD&V let go of its veto that barred the liberals Open VLD from entering government. CD&V had feared being outweighed by a partnership between the economically liberal parties N-VA, Open VLD and, on the French-speaking side, MR. It changed its mind after it was promised a few crucial departments, it had secured the function of prime minister for Kris Peeters, and it realised that the so-called Swedish coalition (N-VA, CD&V, Open VLD and MR) was really the only workable option left for a federal government.

The new government of Flanders, promises something for each of its coalition partners. N-VA, the winner at the ballot box, is the leading party, with four ministers, including the minister-president, and several federal representatives. They can no longer be accused of "not taking up their responsibility".

Moreover, in both the Flemish and federal governments, the nationalists have rid themselves of the socialists, who were standing in the way of the "change" they want. Also on the plus side, the new prime minister does not have to come from N-VA. That would hardly be credible for a party that wants to make an end of Belgium.

CD&V, too, is a winner. Education and welfare, two important Flemish departments, are now safely in the hands of the Christian-democrats. Peeters can look forward to moving into Wetstraat 16, even though his party holds only 18 seats in the federal parliament (with N-VA 33 and MR 20). Also, it has avoided the situation it dreaded: N-VA's absence from the federal coalition and a permanent conflict between the two governments.

Finally, Open VLD made a last-minute surprise entry into the government. President Gwendolyn Rutten had demanded that her party be part of "either both governments or none", and the tactic worked.

# Agreement reached for new government of Flanders

**A three-party coalition will govern Flanders for the next five years**



Derek Blyth

More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

**T**alks to form a Flemish government ended successfully last week with an agreement struck between the Flemish nationalists N-VA, Christian-democrats CD&V and liberals Open VLD. The agreement caught analysts by surprise, as talks until then had involved only the N-VA and CD&V. "This is a sudden and dramatic turn of events," said political correspondent Marc Van de Looverbosch of VRT news.

The deal means the Flemish government will be composed of three centre-right parties, which together will hold a total of 89 of the 124 seats in the Flemish Parliament. Wouter Beke, president of CD&V, said that the new government would act in the interests of households and businesses. "We will invest in welfare provisions, education and economic infrastructure."

The deal has also paved the way for an agreement at the federal level. The three Flemish parties have said they are ready to enter into negotiations on forming a centre-right federal government composed of the three Flemish parties along with the French-speaking liberals MR.

## New ministers sworn in

Flanders' new ministers, meanwhile, were sworn in on Friday. Led by minister-president Geert Bourgeois, the new cabinet comprises eight ministers, including four politicians who have not served before in the Flemish government.

### Minister-president, foreign policy, tourism: Geert Bourgeois

Flanders' new minister-president



© Jonas Roosens / BELGA

The 2014-2019 Flemish government ministers, from left: Joke Schauvliege, Liesbeth Homans, Jo Vandeurzen, Geert Bourgeois, Ben Weyts, Hilde Crevits, Philippe Muyters, Annemie Turtelboom, Sven Gatz

(replacing Kris Peeters) is a leading figure in the Flemish nationalist party N-VA. An experienced politician, he served in the previous administration as minister for administrative affairs, home affairs, citizenship, tourism and the Vlaamse rand. As well as minister-president, he is responsible in the new administration for foreign policy and tourism.

**Education: Hilde Crevits** One of three vice-minister-presidents in the new cabinet, Crevits, 46, of the Christian Democrats CD&V, is Flanders' new education minister. She began her career in West Flanders, working for the mayor of Bruges. She was appointed to the Flemish government in 2007 in charge of work, energy and the environment. In the next administration, her responsibility shifted to mobility, overseeing a series of major infrastructure projects.

**Housing, poverty, home affairs, citizenship, equal opportunities: Liesbeth Homans** Another

vice-minister-president, Homans, 41, of N-VA takes over much of the responsibilities previously held by Freya Van den Bossche. She previously worked in various capacities for close friend and party leader Bart De Wever. Her most recent position was chair of social services in Antwerp city council.

**Finance, budget, energy: Annemie Turtelboom** The third vice-minister-president, Turtelboom will take on a demanding portfolio comprising finance, the budget and energy. An experienced politician, Turtelboom, 46, has held powerful federal positions in migration, home affairs and, most recently, justice. She is seen as a tough negotiator – Turbo Turtelboom is her nickname – able to push through unpopular measures such as recent justice reforms.

**Mobility, public works, Vlaamse rand, animal welfare: Ben Weyts**

Another new minister in the Bourgeois cabinet Weyts, 43, comes from the ring of Flemish munic-

ipalities around Brussels known as the *Vlaamse rand*. He is seen as a hardliner in national politics, earning himself the nickname "Ben Laden" by French-speaking opponents. One of his responsibilities is animal welfare, a new ministerial area created in this government.

### Employment, economy, science & innovation, sports: Philippe Muyters

The third minister to represent the N-VA, Muyters, 52, joined the government of Flanders in 2009 as minister for budget, employment, planning and sport. He is back again in cabinet with a modified portfolio.

### Health & welfare: Jo Vandeurzen

Jo Vandeurzen, 56, served briefly in the federal government in 2007, then took up a seat in the Flemish government as minister for welfare. He is widely respected for his approach to welfare issues, so it's no surprise he's returning to the post.

### Environment, planning, agriculture: Joke Schauvliege

A seasoned politician with CD&V, Schauvliege, 44, was Flemish minister for the environment, nature and culture from 2009. She was criticised by the arts sector for her handling of cultural policy, but environmentalists praised her strong leadership on carbon emissions.

### Culture, media, youth, Brussels: Sven Gatz

Sven Gatz was a surprise appointment as Flemish minister for Brussels. After a political career lasting more than 20 years, Gatz stepped down in 2011 to take over as director of the Belgian Brewers federation. As well as Brussels, he has responsibility for culture, media and youth. "I couldn't have hoped for a better portfolio," he said.

## New Flemish government sets out five-year plan



© Belga

From left: Kris Peeters, Geert Bourgeois and Gwendolyn Rutten

Geert Bourgeois of the Flemish nationalists N-VA, Kris Peeters of the Christian-democrats CD&V and Gwendolyn Rutten of liberals Open VLD presented a 198-page document setting out the aims of the new government of Flanders at a news conference in the Flemish parliament last week.

Minister-president Bourgeois said the government planned to achieve a balanced budget by 2015 without any increase in taxes. "This will require an effort from everybody," he said. "We're doing this in order to be able to make investments." The government plans to make savings of about €1.4 billion over the coming two years.

The plan includes measures to decrease road deaths in Flanders and to improve public transport infrastructure. However, bus and tram ticket prices are likely to rise. "Passengers

will have to pay a larger share of the costs of the Flemish transport company De Lijn," Bourgeois said.

The controversial Oosterweel Link in Antwerp will still go ahead, and a working party will be set up to consider a proposal to put the

Antwerp ring road in a tunnel.

The document also contains a proposal that will have a profound impact on the international community in Flanders. "The government will take steps at the EU level to allow the introduction of a compulsory integration course for all EU citizens who want to settle in Flanders," it states. "One of the big challenges is integration," Bourgeois explained. "We want an inclusive society."

At present, the integration course is only compulsory for non-EU citizens, who are required to attend a set number of lessons explaining social norms in Flanders and offering practical information. The government now wants to introduce a compulsory Dutch language test at the end of the course and to require all foreigners to pass it. \ DB

# Sleight of hand

## Huis van Aijn puts spotlight on magic as an art form

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Van Herwegen. "What's interesting is that there are a few important women in magic history, but all of those women have some connection with Belgium. They're either Flemish, they were born in Belgium, or they were born elsewhere but their parents are Belgian. It's a strange coincidence." The Wandas began as a family act, slightly above the rather louche world of the fairground. The family had their own theatre.

"The act was the father's and when he died the work was too hard for the mother and children alone, so they took a different act into the theatres," Van Herwegen explains. "Then the First World War broke out, and the son had to go to the front. When he came back, he couldn't do it anymore, so mother and daughter carried on together under the name The Wandas."

In the end, though, Suzy Wandas was too good. The mother stopped, while Suzy went on to become famous in Europe. Then, one day at a world fair in Brussels, she met an American, Dr Zina Bennett, and she returned with him to his country. But before doing so, she performed here in Belgium one last time, her last appearance before going to live in America.

"When she was 90, she was given an award by America's biggest magic circle, sort of the lifetime achievement Oscar for magicians," Van Herwegen explains.

One of the most striking other local figures is Servais Le Roy, who worked with Talmal, and their most famous trick – it seems hackneyed to us now – was what is known as Ashra levitation. "Talmal was lying on a table with a cloth over her and she levitated into the air. Le Roy took the cloth away and she had vanished. People still do that trick today."

Josmeh, real name Jan Jozef Smans, also started out as a boy and spent the First World War doing tricks for his brothers in arms in camps, barracks and field hospitals where he worked as a cook. He worked as a conjurer at fairgrounds, fairs and small halls before reinventing himself as a fakir, but also as a crusader of sorts against the unscrupulous.

When all is said and done, magic is a business of deception, but there is good deception and bad. Nowadays, performers like Penn & Teller, Derren Brown and the Flemish mind-reader Gili go out of their way to uncover the secrets behind their tricks. Audiences pay to see a show knowing it's not magic but trickery, and everyone is happy with that sort of deception.

The trickery is of a different order when it comes to spiritualists, those people who claim to be able to contact the dead. Then, the audience's scepticism seems to desert



Kobe (left) and Christ Van Herwegen cover the history of Belgian magic up to the 18th century in their book

them. At every event, at least one person in the room is absolutely certain it's all fake, and that's the spiritualist, some of whom make a lot of money from this sort of deception.

**“**  
It was maybe  
the first time  
some of them  
saw magic  
as an art

"And those spiritualists were and still are exploiting vulnerable people for money, using trickery, and that's a lot more difficult to defend than playing tricks on willing spectators in the name of entertainment," says Van Herwegen.

"People like Josmeh were against that sort of exploitation, in the same way Canadian magician James Randi still is today," he explains. "Derren Brown is another example. He provides entertainment, and I saw him live and it was fantastic, but he's also making it clear that what you see is not real, and his tricks are no different from the tricks used by those who pretend it is real."

The exhibition contains a large number of magicians' props, many of which haven't changed one bit since the turn of the 20th century. Stage magicians are not much different today than



Klingsor or Meester Brando, two other important Flemish magicians, were back then, though Brando could still smoke on stage. With the exception of the crazy escapology of Joe Alcatraz, the tricks are exactly what you might see on *Britain's Got Talent*. It's as if time has stood still.

number of tricks, but an unlimited number of ways of putting it across," he says. "We don't invent new tricks, we reinvent old ones. What makes a good magician win a first prize is presentation."

He sees similarities with how cover bands work. "All cover bands play the same songs, but the way they do it is endlessly different. Making magic is like making music. In music you only have 12 notes, but you can put them in a different order, at a different tempo and you have another song. There are a lot of different sequences you can combine and use, and it's that combination that makes a song or a trick unique."

Does nothing surprise Van Herwegen anymore? "I don't think I've been surprised very often since I was 16. And if that happens, I don't want to know the secret. I love the idea of being fooled again, and I miss that childlike sense of wonder. The great thing about magic is that you can make adults children again by just showing a simple trick."

*Chapeau*, the book, is based on information gathered from hundreds of sources, old magicians and their families, the collections of working magicians and enthusiasts up and down the country. When the exhibition opened on 13 June, Van Herwegen and the other organisers invited 250 magicians who had helped out in some way or another to attend the opening. The guests were all surprised by the amount of material in the exhibition.

"Everyone knew his own little bit, but nobody had ever seen it all together before. Everyone left that evening happy, feeling a little bit more proud of their art," Van Herwegen explains. "Maybe it was the first time some of them had seen magic as an art, and not as a cheap form of entertainment."

That is why the overriding objective for the accompanying book is to bring back all those lost names and forgotten careers on the biggest stages. "We wanted to give them eternal life in book form. We also decided to write for a broader public," Van Herwegen says. "We could have made a very technical book with a lot of dates and names, but we wanted to let the public know that magic is more than just doing a trick, it's also an art."

*Chapeau, de geheime goochelgeschiedenis van België* is published by Manteau in Dutch

Until 16 November

Huis van Aijn  
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## WEEK IN BUSINESS

## Electricity \ RWE

The Dutch power generator, the parent company of Essent.be, is to apply to have its gas-fired generating station in Maasbracht in the Netherlands connected to the Belgian network. The federal government recently issued a call for bids for the provision of the country's strategic reserve of electrical power amounting to 800 megawatts a year for three years.

## Entertainment

## \ Kinepolis

The cinema chain has acquired the cinemas of the Dutch Wolff group for a reported €16.8 million, giving it entry to the Dutch market for the first time. The nine Wolff complexes last year attracted 1.6 million visitors and made a profit of €2.1 million. Two new complexes in Dordrecht and Utrecht are also planned.

## Insurance \ AXA

The insurer has set up a pop-up garage to deal with repairs to cars damaged by a severe hailstorm in June. AXA is dealing with claims from 11,000 motorists spread across 1,400 garages, some of which lack the skills required to carry out repairs to coachwork. Car owners will now be able to take their vehicles directly to the garage in Vilvoorde, run by a company specialising in hailstone damage.

## Power \ Elia

The electricity network manager has been given permission to begin construction of the Belgian Offshore Grid, a high-tension platform 34km from the Flemish coast to the west of the Lodewijk Bank, part of a network to bring wind energy to land. It is not yet known when work will begin, as much depends on progress on the Stevin project bringing cables from Zeebrugge to Maldegem and from there to consumers in the hinterland.

## Technology \ Barco

The technology company has reported turnover down 16.7% in the first half to €498 million, with EBIT and net profit both down by 65% on the same period last year. Net profit dropped from €31.7 million to €11 million. The company has promised cost-cutting measures. Orders in the half were up 9.1% to €479.8 million. Prediction for the full year: turnover and profits down "slightly" on 2013, according to CEO Eric Van Zele.

# Federations react to new Flemish government's plan

Government gets 17 out of 20 from employers, and farmers are happy



Derek Blyth

More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

The new Flemish government's five-year plan, introduced last week, has been greeted positively by Voka, the Flemish employers' federation. "It gives an extra boost to individuals and companies," said Voka chair Michel Delbaere. "I give it 17 out of 20." The farmers' union Boerenbond also responded enthusiastically to the document. "We are pleased that the government agreement emphasises the role played by our Flemish agriculture and garden sector and incorporates this into several policy areas," said chair Piet Vanthemsche.

However, many Flemish people planning to take out mortgages are likely to feel the pinch next year due to a reduction in mortgage tax relief (the *woonbonus*), which applies to mortgages signed after 1 January 2015. The average family is likely to lose €1,300 a year due to the change, tax expert Jef Wellens told *De Standaard*.



The Flemish construction industry has criticised the new rules as they are likely to lead to a long-term fall in house construction. "It's bad news for us as building firms are already finding it hard to fill their order books," said Marc Dillen of the Flemish Construction Confederation.

The changes to tax relief are also likely to have

an impact on house prices, according to Iain Cook of estate agents ERA. He has predicted that house prices will drop by about 5% due to the added financial burden on buyers.

The new government also plans to make profound changes to child benefit in Flanders by paying a standard rate per child, rather than paying a higher rate for each additional child. The Flemish family association Gezinsbond says large families with more than three children are likely to suffer as a result of the proposed changes.

The five-year plan was launched by new minister-president Geert Bourgeois of the Flemish nationalists N-VA, his predecessor Kris Peeters of the Christian-democrats CD&V and Gwendolyn Rutten, chair of liberal Open VLD. The aim is to achieve a balanced budget without tax increases.

## Campaign for proper use of on-call pharmacies

The national union of pharmacists is launching a campaign to teach the public how to use on-call pharmacies correctly, after complaints that customers are not following the rules that pharmacists on standby are only to be used in exceptional circumstances. "We're not night shops," the union said.

The union ensures the availability of a pharmacist through its on-call service, where participating pharmacists remain on duty for 24 hours once – and sometimes twice – a week. The service is intended for those who require urgent medical supplies.

But many customers use the service to buy products such as sun cream and toothpaste, one pharmacist complained, which are not considered urgent supplies. And, according to the union, since pharmacists on duty are being called out of bed sometimes four or five times a night, fatigue might cause them to make a faulty decision in a truly urgent case. In September, the union will launch a poster campaign explaining to the public exactly what the on-call system is for and how to use it correctly.

\ Alan Hope

## Domestic meat consumption down as exports boom

The average Belgian last year ate 50kg of meat, confirming the downward trend of recent years, according to the federal economy ministry. In 2005 the average consumption was 58kg, meaning there has been a fall of 13% in eight years.

For certain types of meat, the situation is much worse: While pork consumption fell by only 6% over the same period, Belgians ate 16% less chicken and 22% less beef. Pork accounts for just under half – 49% – of all meat consumption, followed by poultry at 29% and beef at 12%.

However, despite a drop in the consumption of meat, the same period saw the number of animals slaughtered increasing. The difference is accounted for by exports,



which are doing well, the ministry says.

The country imported 196,000 tonnes of meat in 2013, an increase compared with 2005 of 39%. At the same time, exports rose by 30%, from 1.333 million tonnes to 1.732 million tonnes – more than enough to compensate for the decrease in consumption at home from 1.043 million tonnes in 2005 to 959,699 tonnes in 2013. \ AH

## Brussels Airport starts facial recognition trial

Brussels Airport plans to introduce facial recognition scanners next year, the management company said. The technology is already in use at other major airports in Europe, including Heathrow and Schiphol.

Six of the so-called e-gates that use facial recognition software will be introduced in a pilot project for citizens of EU member states travelling from outside the Schengen area, which consists of 22 of the 28 EU member states, as well as EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

Facial recognition systems use "landmarks" on faces such as size and place of significant features, which can then be compared in photo and real-time versions. So,

while a passenger growing a beard may confuse the system, if enough identifying landmarks are still visible, recognition is still possible. A more modern system turns the texture of the skin of the face into a mathematical model that is virtually impossible to disguise, as the texture of the facial skin is as individual as a fingerprint.

The system is intended to combat fraud associated with false documents. The photo originally approved for use in the passport is compared with a photo taken on the spot as the traveller passes through the system, and anomalies are signalled to airport security officers. The pilot project will be evaluated later with a view to extending the system. \ AH

## Farmers putting investment on hold, says Crelan

Farmers are putting investment plans on the back burner despite a reported increase in economic confidence, according to a survey by the bank Crelan.

In Flanders, the difficulties of the pig sector and the horticultural industry – two sectors almost wholly in Flemish hands – mean the increased level of confidence for the future is much smaller – up two points in Flanders compared to seven in Wallonia – and investment plans are on the decline. While 55% of Flemish farmers are happy with last year's results, an improvement of eight percentage points on the 2013 figure, the general view of investment is one of caution. Only 19% said they had plans to invest in the business this year, with 27% considering investments within two to five years. The two figures have never been so low, Crelan said.

"Some businesses are reaching their own growth limit," said Stef Mertens of Crelan, a bank specialised in the farming industry, which used to be known as Landbouwkrediet. Part of the problem is the shortage of available land in the densely populated region of Flanders. "Not all businesses can look forward to endless growth."

\ AH

# Medicine pathways

## Researchers move one step closer to personalised arthritis treatment



Andy Furniere

More articles by Andy \ flanderstoday.eu

**R**heumatoid arthritis has traditionally been thought of as a single disease, but researchers from the Flemish life sciences research institute VIB are now saying it should be considered a syndrome, or a collection of symptoms that have different causes.

This discovery, which came out of VIB research into components of the immune system known as inflammasomes, could lead to more targeted and customised therapies, since it would allow doctors to choose the most suitable medicines according to a patient's profile. The VIB researchers' findings were recently published in the science journal *Nature*.

Rheumatoid arthritis is an inflammatory affliction that affects a person's joints. Without proper treatment, it can develop into a disabling and painful condition that severely reduces quality of life. It is estimated that 1 or 2% of the global population suffers from rheumatoid arthritis; this would mean about 5 million people in Europe are affected.

In March this year, the Fund for Scientific Rheumatism Research announced that 80,000 Belgians had rheumatoid arthritis, 75% of them young women.

Most of the current treatments only address the symptoms of the condition – relieving pain and slowing down the disease's progression – rather than the cause. A number of other drugs do target the protein known as TNF, a substance in the immune system that has previously been



© VIB  
Mohamed Lamkanfi and Lieselotte Vande Walle say rheumatoid arthritis should be considered a syndrome rather than a disease

found to cause rheumatoid arthritis. "Blocking the activity of this protein only has positive effects for about 40% of patients," says researcher Mohamed Lamkanfi of the VIB's department at Ghent University.

Lamkanfi's lab at the VIB specialises in research into protein complexes that are part of our immune system known as inflammasomes. Their normal function is to protect humans from disease-causing infections, but genetic mutations or other circumstances can cause them to malfunction. Inflammasomes have been linked to several inflammatory diseases such as digestive disorders. Through a new mouse model developed by scientists at the Ghent VIB department, Lamkanfi and fellow VIB researcher Lieselotte Vande Walle have demonstrated the role

of inflammasomes in the development and progression of rheumatoid arthritis.

The VIB researchers succeeded in combating the development of rheumatoid arthritis by blocking inflammasomes. One of the processes for which inflammasomes are responsible is the production of interleukin-1, a protein that plays an important role in inflammatory reactions. When the researchers halted the effects of interleukin-1, this resulted in a cure for the mice. This way, Lamkanfi and Vande Walle were able to show that the mouse model offers a viable method of studying the correlation between inflammasomes and rheumatoid arthritis.

"For the 60% of patients who cannot be helped by blocking the previously found TNF protein, our

new method can form a pathway to a future medicine that does help them," says Lamkanfi.

The VIB lab is now working with the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, a medical research institute in Australia, to develop a molecule that can neutralise the harmful effect of inflammasomes. The next step would be to encourage the pharmaceutical industry to produce drugs that combat the inflammasomes.

"This discovery that rheumatoid arthritis is more of a syndrome than a disease, meaning that similar symptoms can have different causes, will hopefully result in a personalised approach to treating it," Lamkanfi says, adding that scientists can now already use genetic tests to predict whether a treatment will work for a specific patient who has a genetic form of breast, skin and lung cancer. Mutations in the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes, for instance, are known to play an essential role in breast cancer. Research at Lamkanfi's lab more generally focuses on NOD-like receptors (NLRs), a family of intracellular receptors through which immune cells launch immune responses against invading pathogens. Aside from arthritis, mutations in NLR genes are also associated with other auto-inflammatory and immune disorders such as Crohn's disease, diabetes, periodic fever syndromes and asthma.

"This is still a young research domain, which was established about a decade ago, with huge potential," Lamkanfi says.

## WEEK IN INNOVATION

### Patients not informed about MRI risks

Hospital patients are often insufficiently informed about the health risks associated with MRI scans, according to Annelies Holvoet, a student in medical imaging at Brussels University College. Patients who undergo an MRI scans are supposed to fill in a checklist that informs them about risks so doctors can ascertain whether the patients are allergic to certain substances or have kidney problems. Holvoet's survey demonstrated that 19% of the respondents were insufficiently informed about the MRI scan. "More than 90% of patients knew they have to take off metal objects, like jewellery, during the scan, but only 31% were aware that wearing cosmetics that contains iron particles also entails certain risks," she said.

### Antwerp researchers identify obesity risks

Researchers at the University Hospital of Antwerp (UZA) have discovered that Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), found largely in high-fat foods, increase the risk of obesity and diabetes. Scientists have known for a long time that POPs, also found in the environment in pesticides and industrial chemicals, accumulate inside the body. Researchers have now examined the link between POPs and type 2 diabetes and obesity, finding that people with obesity had a larger quantity of POPs in their body and that this was especially the case for people with too much belly fat.

### Use of psychiatrists on the rise

Between 2003 and 2012, the number of psychiatric consultations in Belgian hospitals nearly quadrupled: from 87,000 a year to 330,000. The number of clients seeing psychiatrists in private practice more than doubled. As a consequence, the use of the medications for mental disorders has increased considerably. This increase is especially noticeable for drugs that have not been on the market long. Daily doses of Ritalin, the medicine prescribed mostly for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and marketed in Belgium as Rilatine, for example, were sold 1.5 million times in 2012 compared to 250,000 in 2004 – a six-fold increase. The use of classic antidepressants has increased in the decade by about 40%. More than one million Belgians take antidepressants on a daily basis. \ Andy Furniere

## Q&A

**Rogier van Overbeke** studies electromechanical engineering at the University of Antwerp and is the skipper of the Flemish crew that finished 12th in the Dong Energy Solar Challenge, an unofficial world cup for solar-powered boats held recently in Friesland, the Netherlands

### Congratulations on your 12th place. Are you satisfied?

Actually, our goal was to finish in the top 10. But, since a third of the participating teams didn't manage to complete the entire race – made up of five consecutive stages in one week, each around 40km – I think we can be proud of our result.

### Can you describe your boat?

For this race we developed an entirely new boat, based on a "monohull" design – a hull made of one piece. In earlier years we used a catamaran type – a slow but steady boat. But the monohull is definitely more energy-efficient. And, naturally, being sparing with energy is an important aspect in

a solar race. Our new boat is also more manoeuvrable.

As we could only rely on the power of the sun – no sails or paddles are allowed – we had to take batteries on board to store the electrical energy generated by the solar cells on the front and back deck. Compensating the weight of the batteries is a big challenge, but actually we optimised the weight of most of the components a little bit too much – to a point where it became a disadvantage! Our boat, which weighed only 50kg unmanned, was designed for a lot more weight, and as a result it became a bit less stable than we had hoped, since it didn't sit as deep in the water.



Rogier van Overbeke (front right) with the Antwerp team

### Are the challenges in a solar boat race comparable to those of a solar car contest?

Not exactly. I believe sailing a solar boat is quite different (and arguably more difficult) than driving a solar car. For example, our hull has to be completely water-tight; every part of the electrical system has to be waterproofed. The most important difficulty, however, is

that there's no other boat type with roughly the same properties as ours. They all have different propulsion systems, different hull sizes... so forget about spare parts! Luckily, we were able to deal with all this by having a team member involved in the development of each and every part of the boat.

\ Interview by Senne Starckx

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# VGC sets out education aims

## Commission to focus on improving Brussels' Dutch-language teaching



Andy Furniere

More articles by Andy \ flanderstoday.eu

In the next five years, the Flemish Community Commission (VGC) will focus its energy on expanding the capacity of existing schools and improving multilingualism. Those are the two main ambitions that emerge from the commission's new governing agreement, Goesting in Brussel, or Psyched about Brussels.

The VGC represents the Flemish community in Brussels through various social and cultural institutions. Its budget mainly comes from the Flemish Community and the Brussels-Capital Region, but it is the VGC council and its 17 Dutch-speaking Brussels MPs who decide how these funds are used. Education is one of the VGC's core responsibilities.

In primary education, the VGC is committing to creating at least 3,000 additional places in the next five years. This expansion will be needed to respond to the recent explosive population growth in the capital and the growing interest in Dutch-language education.

The VGC will also make additional investments in secondary education with, for example, large infrastructure works to develop three campuses in the districts of Koekelberg, Anderlecht and Schaarbeek. The VGC agreement also underlines the need for more education support for secondary schools.

"At the moment, this support in secondary schools is too limited and too dependent on the questions of schools," the council members write in the agreement. The VGC will also carry on its efforts to re-evaluate technical and professional education in the Brussels-Capital Region in the next government term.

Multilingualism is another crucial component of the VGC's plan. Just



© Courtesy VUB  
The VUB in Brussels, where the student council called for a minister for student affairs in the run-up to the elections

like the recently unveiled Brussels government agreement, the VGC's agreement recommends the establishment of a bilingual teacher-training programme in collaboration with the French-speaking Community. The council members hope this will be the first step toward general bilingual education in Brussels.

Brussels finance minister and chair of the new VGC council Guy Vanhengel explained his vision of bilingual education during a recent council meeting on the governing agreement, covered by brusselnieuws.be.

"We need perfectly bilingual principals, teachers and secretarial staff," he said, "but we can't find the right staff for this purpose on the labour market now." Vanhengel therefore recommends the launch of a trial project with a bilingual training programme for teachers, "which should in the long term lead to perfectly bilingual directors."

In that meeting, Vanhengel also

pointed to the example of European schools, where children are taught in three or four languages and both teachers and principals perfectly speak at least two languages. Vanhengel also told regional TV station TV Brussel that a bilingual teacher education programme could be established by September 2015 if all goes according to plan.

The Brussels government agreement, which was also recently presented, states that the Brussels Capital-Region will stimulate immersion education in one of the national languages from primary school and even pre-school. Knowledge exchanges between teachers from the different language communities, networks and schools should also be made easier. The VGC council also wants to encourage schools to examine the possibility of providing a limited number of courses in a language other than Dutch – something the Brussels government agreement did not do.

One of the critical problems facing Dutch-language education in Brussels is the large number of students who fail to obtain a diploma – almost one in five students. By establishing a professional centre for learning advice and guidance, the VGC wants to tackle those high drop-out rates as well as absenteeism.

Another novelty this government term is that two ministers will also become responsible for student affairs. Minister-president Rudi Vervoort will handle student affairs in the Brussels government, while Vanhengel will do the same for the VGC. Their responsibilities will include student housing, mobility, safety and image-building.

The student councils of both the Dutch and French-language Free University of Brussels, Brussels University College, Erasmus University College and LUCA School of Arts had demanded the new ministerial portfolio in the run-up to the May elections.

## WEEK IN EDUCATION

### Worries about registration fees

The higher education sector is worried about the cost-cutting plans of the new government of Flanders, which would force them to increase registration fees for students considerably. The new government agreement states that colleges and universities will receive 5% less subsidies, totalling about €80 million. Coalition partners N-VA, CD&V and Open VLD have stated that a registration fee of up to €1,000 a year for students without a scholarship would be acceptable. At present, students without a scholarship pay €620, while those with a scholarship pay €104. A third group that doesn't qualify for a full scholarship pays €410. KU Leuven rector Rik Torfs told *De Morgen* that a large increase in fees endangers accessibility to higher education.

### "Primary school for entrepreneurs" must close

The Flemish government has withdrawn recognition of the primary school Tom College in Antwerp. Tom College was better known as the "primary school for entrepreneurs" and was initially named Natan. The government has determined that the school could not help its pupils reach the necessary educational goals for Dutch, music and global issues. The decision is based on a negative evaluation by the education inspection. The school, which started last September with about 100 pupils, had already received a warning but was incapable of making the necessary adjustments.

### Summer school on archives in education

An International Summer School on archives and education will be held in Neerpelt, Limburg province, from 18-22 August. It is the first event of its kind in Belgium. The summer school is organised by Faro, the government agency for the support of Flemish cultural heritage, in collaboration with the UK's National Archives. Archivists from five European countries will learn how they can develop both on- and offline educational programmes on the basis of archive sources. They will also receive advice on how to work with teachers and the role that the internet and social media play. "In Belgium, the education sector is increasingly demanding educational material from heritage institutions," Faro said.

## Q&A

In a review in the journal *Nature*, University of Leuven researcher Bart Ghesquière and his colleagues at the Flemish life sciences research centre VIB called for more research into stromal and immune cells

### What did you analyse in this review article?

I looked at the scientific literature that focuses on the metabolism of immune cells and that of stromal cells. Stromal cells support the tissues and organs in the body by providing nutrients, oxygen and support, while immune cells attack harmful bacteria and viruses. I found that very little research in this field has been carried out internationally in comparison with the research on the metabolism of cancer cells. The review article should serve as a wake-up call for scientists to diver-

sify the research.

### Why is it important to take these other cells into account?

Research into their metabolism could lead to new treatments for cancer, but also for diabetes and inflammatory diseases. These cells may not be the main culprits, but they help the tumours develop by not acting as they are supposed to. The cause of their malfunctioning is not yet entirely clear, but the fact is that they incorrectly interpret certain molecular signals. There are already certain drugs to stop the activity of these cells, but these

are much too aggressive. We have to find ways to reduce their functioning without switching them off completely, because these cells also do good work in the body.

### Is your lab specialised in this topic?

Yes, I work at Peter Carmeliet's lab at the VIB's department at the University of Leuven, which specialises amongst other things in research on the metabolism of endothelial cells. These are an important type of stromal cell that line the inner wall of blood vessels. In cancer patients, these cells form new blood vessels and thus provide nutrients and oxygen to the cancer cells – allowing the cancer to grow and spread throughout the body. We believe that blocking



the excessive blood vessel growth by the suppression of endothelial cell metabolism offers new opportunities to battle cancer.

\ Interview by AF

## WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

### Antwerp Museum Night

Seventeen museums in the city centre will be open until the wee hours with special activities and programmes for kids and adults. Your wristband lets you ride a free shuttle bus all night. Afterparty starts at 23.00. *August 2, 19.00-1.00, €10 for adults, €5 under 26 and free for kids under 12*  
 \ [HTTP://MUSEUMNACHT.BE](http://MUSEUMNACHT.BE)

### Fly In Koksijde

A vintage aircraft expo in commemoration of the First World War. Authentic warplanes from 1914-18, wartime village and re-enactors, exhibition on the history of Ten Bogaerde military air base, flights with vintage aircraft, classic cars and more. *1-3 August, Koksijde Air Base, Ten Bogaerdelaan, €10-€16*  
 \ [WWW.FLYINKOKSIJDE.BE](http://WWW.FLYINKOKSIJDE.BE)

### Different Beer Festival

Brouwerij Anders hosts this annual festival focusing on small artisanal breweries and hard-to-find beers. Thirty brewers will present more than 100 beers on the market square in Tongeren. *2 August, 15.00-23.00, 3 August, 12.00-20.00, free*  
 \ [WWW.BIERANDERS.BE/BIERFESTIVAL-ANDERS](http://WWW.BIERANDERS.BE/BIERFESTIVAL-ANDERS)

### Antwerp Pride

Week-long festival celebrating Antwerp's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community. Programme includes Queer Arts Festival, dance parties, Pride Parade on Saturday and closing festival on the Grote Markt on Sunday. *4-10 August, Antwerp city centre, most activities free*  
 \ [WWW.ANTWERPPRIDE.COM](http://WWW.ANTWERPPRIDE.COM)

### Retro & Vintage Festival

Whether you lived through the 1950s, '60s and '70s – or you've just heard of them – come to Bokrijk this weekend for a nostalgic trip down memory lane. Classic cars, vintage market, live music, Vintage Dance Café, old-fashioned carnival rides and more. *3 August, 11.00-19.00. Hangar58 and Old Town, Herkenrodeplein 5, Genk-Bokrijk, €3*  
 \ [HTTP://TINYURL.COM/RETRO-FESTIVAL](http://TINYURL.COM/RETRO-FESTIVAL)

### Hapje-Tapje

26th edition of this annual food festival in Leuven. Sample small plates from dozens of restaurant stands or rent a tasting glass and try the best of local brewing on the Old Market. Show cooking, waiters race and live music. *3 August, 12.00, free admission*  
 \ [WWW.HAPJE-TAPJE.BE](http://WWW.HAPJE-TAPJE.BE)

# Perfect fit

## Flemish designer brings custom-made trousers to the people



Daniel Shamaun

Follow Daniel on Twitter @Slamcopy

\ [WWW.RUBEN-O.COM](http://WWW.RUBEN-O.COM)

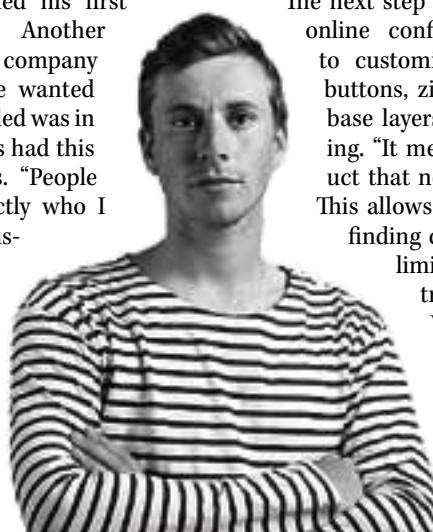
**R**uben Opheide, the young Flemish fashion designer and entrepreneur behind the Ruben O label, has just raised more than €23,000 with his Kickstarter crowdfunding project to sell affordable, made-to-measure trousers.

A pair of bespoke trousers typically costs between €300 and €500. "It's for the elite, and that's fine, but I want to bring it to everyone," Opheide says. With three styles, an approximate price of €150 and a client base ranging from CEOs to homemakers, Opheide is well on his way to achieving that goal.

Opheide (*pictured below*) has become the first person to successfully crowdfinance a fashion project in Belgium, thanks to the 135 people who backed him. "Using Kickstarter here was not easy," Opheide says, referring to the online platform that allows people to donate money to help realise creative projects. "I not only had to explain what we do, but what Kickstarter is too." But Opheide (24) enjoyed being a pioneer and says word of mouth played a large role in the success of the campaign that he describes as "the birth of Ruben O", adding that the website offered an excellent platform to fund, test and market his product.

At the age of 19, while still at college in Antwerp, Opheide opened his first online clothing store. Another e-store and a logistics company quickly followed, but he wanted more. "Everything I founded was in e-commerce, but I always had this whimsical side," he says. "People knew I couldn't be exactly who I wanted to be in the industry."

After selling all three companies, Opheide ventured into fashion design, beginning with a line of golf clothing inspired by 1920s Britain, which eventually led to the Ruben O label. "I get



Ruben Opheide says there's no reason made-to-measure trousers should be reserved for the elite

to combine my two biggest passions," he says. "Being an entrepreneur, and at the same time doing something artistic, expressing myself in the products that we bring."

Opheide shares his office space in Antwerp with a furniture design company, so going there to be measured is a treat for those with an interest in interior design, although measurements can also be submitted online.

The next step will be the development of an online configurator that allows people to customise their trousers by adding buttons, zips and pockets, and choosing base layers, colours and contrast stitching. "It means we actually make a product that nobody else can," Opheide says. This allows people who have a hard time finding clothes that fit and are usually limited to one or two brands to get trousers in any style they want. With his Ruben O trousers, Opheide hopes to address not just quality but also environmental concerns. He points out that centuries ago, made-to-measure clothing was the only clothing available. Mass produc-



tion changed all that, and modern production methods are hugely wasteful.

"Whatever is not sold is just burned; the way we buy clothes is extremely polluting," he says. He wants to do things differently. "It's all about giving people an affordable alternative, one that really makes people think it can be done differently."

His vision is for the industry to come full circle and return to custom-made clothing that's affordable, long-lasting and stylish. "We are just bringing a product that the master tailors here have been making for centuries to a new clientele," he says.

## BITE Culinary park

Vordenstein is a 14th-century castle park in Schoten, near Antwerp, that belongs to the Flemish region. It's a paradise for walkers and nature-lovers, and now for food-lovers as well. Since May, the park has been enriched with 4,000m<sup>2</sup> of culinary gardens where you can walk among herbs and other organic edibles in what is now one of the world's richest collections of culinary plants, some 50,000 in all.

The idea is not that visitors of the park get to munch on the plants as they walk, but a stroll through the gardens is certainly aromatic and visually stunning, as well as educational. Wim Maes of the website Cook and Herb is the mastermind behind this initiative. "I've been coming to Vordenstein since my childhood and now, with Cook and Herb, I've given numerous workshops here for chefs and herb lovers. But now I can really get my hands dirty working in this magical garden," he told *Fence* magazine.

Maes, who is the main supplier of award-winning restaurants such as 't Zilte, Rascasse, Jane, de Schone van Boskoop and Hof van Cleve, says,



"Chefs are always looking for new tastes, new sensations, colours and textures. I'm trying to build a collection of them, to deliver top quality that you only get with cultivation on a small scale like here in Vordenstein." The educational side of the project is supported by ANB, the Flemish Agency for Nature and Forests. Director Tom Embo is delighted with the new culinary park: "Vordenstein lives, smells, feels; there is a vibe now on this domain which was much needed," he told *Fence*.

\ [WWW.COOKANDHERB.BE](http://WWW.COOKANDHERB.BE)

The park serves as a source of inspiration for both professional chefs and the public. The culinary gardens are set up according to habitat (shadow plants, rocky soil) or style of cooking, under a theme that changes monthly to reflect the seasons.

Top chefs from Flanders' best restaurants have taken sections of the park under their wings, including Peter Goossens (gourmet garden wonders), Sergio Herman (coastal herbs and wild Japanese vegetables), Viki Geunes (exotic winter garden), Roger Van Damme (edible flower garden and dessert herbs) and Wouter Keersmaekers (historic vegetables).

The gardens are open to the public and entrance is free. And of course there is a bistro on site in case you work up an appetite: Parkbistro Orangeerie De Vlinder, run by people with conditions such as autism. The bistro has been welcoming park visitors since February with a variety of local food and drink. \ Robyn Boyle

# Cycling union lists demands

**Fietsersbond calls on new government to improve functional routes**



Andy Furniere

More articles by Andy \ flanderstoday.eu

\ WWW.FIETSERSBOND.BE

**W**hile the network of recreational cycling routes in Flanders is well-developed, there is still a lot of work to be done to let cyclists ride comfortably from residential areas in the suburbs to the centre of the cities. That is one of the key messages of the Flemish cyclists' union, Fietsersbond, directed towards the new government of Flanders.

In a memorandum, the Fietsersbond has listed its demands for the new Flemish government. To fulfil these, the union feels it is necessary to increase the budget for cycling policy considerably.

"The previous government raised the budget from €60 million to €100 million, which was a step in the right direction, but the budget remains far too low," says spokesperson Roel De Cleen. "The budget should at least be tripled to €300 million. This is still a modest investment if you compare it to the cost of renovations of infrastructure for cars, such as tunnels."

According to De Cleen, the previous government invested in a fragmented way. "The next government has to make it an absolute priority to finally make the centres of Ghent, Antwerp and Leuven more accessible by bike for people who want to cycle from their home in the suburbs to their work in the centre," he says.

"While the recreational routes in Flanders are mostly good quality, there still is a lot of potential



© Courtesy Fietsersbond

to improve the facilities of functional routes from the home to the workplace."

He believes such routes could considerably reduce the congestion problems in cities like Antwerp as well as removing the need for large infrastructure works to make more room for cars. "The availability of electric bicycles makes these functional cycling routes, which are mostly between 15 and 25 kilome-

tres long, even more attractive," he says.

To check the quality of the current functional cycling routes, since January the Fietsersbond has been using the specially equipped *meetfiets* or measuring bicycle. Thierry Jiménez of the union rides this bicycle with measuring technology over the cycling routes of cities or municipalities that request it. "The objective data can be used to determine which

routes need the most urgent care," he explains.

The bicycle examines the width of the cycling path, the distance from car traffic and the amount of vibration. "The Flemish government uses a registration system that doesn't take into account this vibration comfort," says Jiménez. "That system doesn't distinguish between an asphalt road and one with cobblestones, which makes a huge difference for a cyclist."

Concerning the new Brussels government, the Fietsersbond is asking it to at least double its previous budget of €10 million to improve its bicycling policy. This should be used among other things to create cycling routes on the capital's inner ring road, a promise of the last government that was insufficiently carried out. "There is also too little space for cyclists in Brussels because of the excess of parking spaces in the city," says De Cleen. "Some of these parking spots should disappear or be installed underground to make space for cycle paths." He also points out the lack of bicycle parking spots.

One of the ambitions of the previous government was to install successful cycle streets, where cyclists are allowed to use the whole width of the road. Motorists are permitted on the road, but they are prohibited from overtaking cyclists and from going faster than 30km/h. The first cycle street lies alongside the busy Louizalaan, from Dalstraat to Stefaniaplein. "This project, however, is a failure since there is too much car traffic," says De Cleen. However, he is positive about the HST cycling route that cyclists can use to ride from Leuven to Brussels. "The only issue is that a lack of co-operation between the different governments has made the transition from the territory of Zaventem to that of Brussels problematic," he says.

## Bringing art into the public space

Five pilot projects have been selected by the Flemish official architect's office for its *Kunst in opdracht* (Art on Command) programme, a project of the Flemish ministry of culture, now in the hands of minister Hilde Crevits, the official architect, the institute for visual, audiovisual and media arts, and the Arts and Heritage agency.

The programme aims to feature five exemplary pilot projects for the use of art in public space, to show how art, rather than being an esoteric activity existing in isolation in galleries and museums, can be made to become part of the daily lives of ordinary people, as well as working with other disciplines.

The province of Antwerp plans to involve an artist in developing the new provincial headquarters and the place within it of the provincial collections of some 2,500 works of art, paintings and sculptures. The provincial house will have an open and welcoming ground floor with public access and be surrounded by a public park in which some works of art can be displayed.

In a statement, deputy for culture Luk Lemmens said: "The demolition of the old provincial house was the perfect opportu-



"The Naked Dancers" by Leopold Van Esbroeck, on loan to the Rivierenhof provincial domain in Antwerp

nity to breathe new life into the province's art collection. The pilot project will allow us to bring the collection to life in and around the new provincial house. We want to give our collection the chance to shine by giving it its own place within the construction project. We're clearly very proud that the Flemish architect was able to recognise the potential of our collection and of the new provincial house."

The project of the city of Genk in Limburg is concerned with monuments and memorials, their place in the public space and their relationship with other public art. The results of the pilot project are intended to provide material for future public debate on the question of monuments across the region.

The project from the city of Aalst looks at the role of art in urban renewal and development, and was chosen for its ambition in crossing administrative boundaries: The scope is not restricted to the city itself, but also includes a network reaching two kilometres along the river Dender.

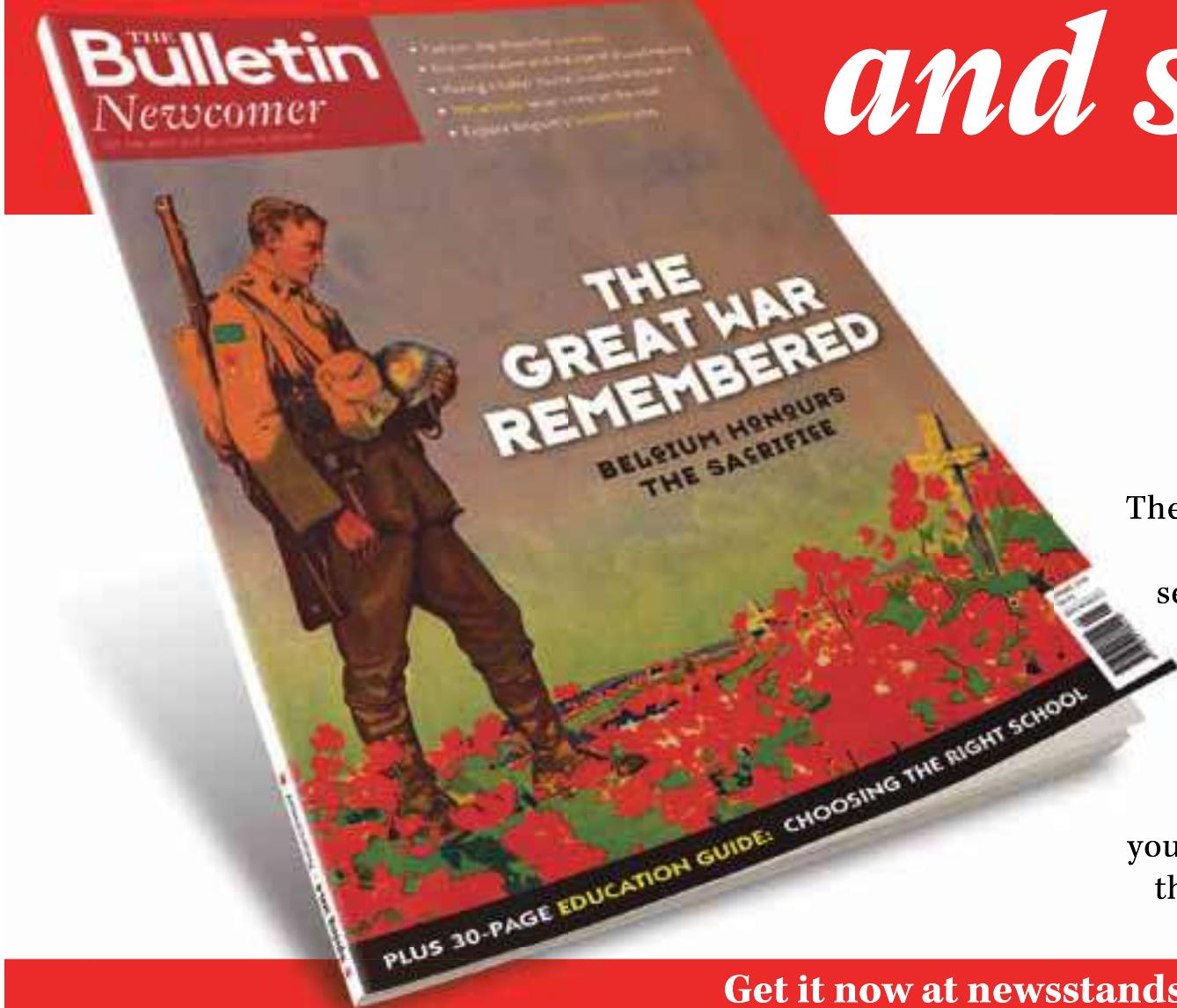
The city of Ghent is working with Tondelier Development, a consortium of architects and other professionals from the private

sector. The project concerns the construction of a new city residential area of around 500 homes within an existing city neighbourhood, and including parks, offices and amenities and sport facilities, and will look at the value public art can add to the public space. Finally, the municipality of Herzele in East Flanders has a project centred on the renovation of the former village centre of Ressegem, now part of Herzele, which takes landscape as a variant of public space to stimulate a dialogue between government, artists and experts on how art can bring communities together.

The five projects selected were among 22 submissions. Each applicant is committed to follow through with an actual artistic commission handed out before the end of 2017. In the first place, during the summer, the five projects will work out their exact plan with the help of experts. In a later stage, artists and various intermediaries will be named to take part in the projects.

\ Alan Hope

# Latest guide to life and schools



The Bulletin Newcomer is the new-look definitive magazine on settling in Belgium, with an extra 30-page Education Guide. Mixing essential practical information with lifestyle features on property, having a baby and top fashion tips for your kids, it's your guide to making the most out of living in Belgium.

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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

# The farmer wants a new life

## Exhibition in Ghent presents the stories of Flemish migrants to North America



Andy Furniere

More articles by Andy \ flanderstoday.eu

While Flanders today is a region that attracts many migrants, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries thousands of Flemings left their homes to search for a better life in North America. An exhibition at the Caermers Convent in Ghent focuses on the communities that Flemings from the Meetjesland area – between Ghent and Bruges – formed in the US and Canada. The exhibition *Boer vindt land* (Farmer Finds Land), set up by the Archives and Documentation Centre for Flemish Nationalism (ADVN), consists primarily of photo material. At the beginning, you walk through a corridor with photos of rural scenes in the Meetjesland which seem idyllic but reveal the main reasons for the departure of thousands of its inhabitants a century and a half ago.

"Until about 1850, the economy of the Meetjesland was mostly based on agriculture and the home textile industry," says curator Andreas Stynen, a researcher at the ADVN. "The population was hard hit when the textile industry underwent a mechanisation, the available land for agriculture became scarce and American corn flooded the European market." Photo slides in a separate room demonstrate the poverty of Flemish farmers during that period. A failed potato harvest in around 1840 had already triggered migration to the US, but the real exodus started around 1880 when steam-boats made the trip across the Atlantic faster and cheaper. A



© Courtesy ADVN

A picnic of the Belgian American Club of Moline in the garden of Edward Coryn, a prominent figure in the Flemish community of Illinois who came from Lotenhulle in East Flanders

poster from the Red Star Line shipping company refers to the fact that many of the migrants boarded at Antwerp, but the exhibition doesn't focus on this aspect since it is extensively documented at the Red Star Line Museum in Antwerp. For visitors who are looking for information about relatives or friends who went to North America, the Red Star Line Museum has provided its database to the Ghent exhibition.

In Ghent you can also listen to audio fragments – in Dutch – that relate passengers' experiences, which were often written down in diaries. Photo material shows that all passengers were able to enjoy good conditions on board. "It's an often-heard misconception that third-class patients had to stay in miserable accommodation," says Stynen. "Everybody had access to all the necessary hygienic facilities, could sleep comfortably and eat well."

The main part of the exhibition tells the stories of the communities that the Flemings built up in the US and Canada, most prominently in the American cities of Detroit, Chicago, Moline and Mishawaka and in the Canadian province of Manitoba. The Flemings often worked in large factories such as the John Deere tractor factory in Moline and a big shoe factory in Mishawaka. "Much of the good land plots for farming had already been taken by earlier colonists," explains Stynen. Many Flemish communities in North America consisted for a large part of people who came from the same villages in the Meetjesland. "Migrants often followed in the footsteps of pioneering relatives or friends," Stynen says. This doesn't mean, though, that whole village populations moved; at most, around 4% of a village population in the Meetjesland migrated. "And about a quarter of the migrants

returned to Flanders at some point," says Stynen.

To develop a social life, Flemish communities often organised typical activities from Flanders in their new home country. A huge photo in the exhibition shows the members of a Flemish brass band in the US. In another photo, a

**“**  
Migrants often followed in the footsteps of pioneering relatives or friends

Flemish community poses during a large picnic, which was the local version of a Flemish fair.

The newcomers also introduced their favourite sports and games to North America, like pigeon racing and *krubollen* or *rolle bolle* – the Flemish version of boules. The city of Ghent in Minnesota – named after the East Flemish capital – still has a *rolle bolle* association and presents itself as the Rolle Bolle Capital of the World. Certain clubs where events such as concerts were organised became centres of Flemish social life. The

Until 14 September

papers for the communities – like the *Gazette van Detroit* and the *Gazette van Moline* – informed migrants about events in the old country and their new home. These associations and activities helped Flemings cope with the challenges of their new environment, such as the different climate, the language barrier and hostile reactions from the local society. Flemings who tried to retain their cafe culture, for example, were sometimes looked on with suspicion by the advocates of a prohibition on alcohol.

To limit the number of immigrants, in around 1920 the US introduced quotas. "But by then, the economy in Flanders was reviving," says Stynen. Although the Flemish associations "Americanised" almost completely, Flemish communities definitely left their traces in North America.

This is also demonstrated by a short documentary shown at the exhibition, in which descendants of the migrants are interviewed. "But the filmmakers discovered that much of the heritage is disappearing or losing its Flemish identity," says Stynen.

There are no direct references to current migration issues, but Stynen hopes visitors notice the links with the situation today. "The stories of Flemish migrants in North America then are very similar to those of the migrants in Flanders today," he says.

Caermers Convent  
Vrouwebroersstraat 6, Ghent

## Ghent expo shares story of eccentric photographer

\ WWW.SINTPIETERSABDIJGENT.BE

Framed as Mary Poppins with a Rolleiflex camera instead of an umbrella, American photographer Vivian Maier (1926-2009) is often considered an eccentric before a fully fledged artist. Maier, who worked as a nanny, has recently caught the imagination of the public and art professionals alike, and an exhibition of her work is now on show in Ghent.

Part of Maier's remarkable story is told in the documentary *Finding Vivian Maier* (2013), directed by Charlie Siskel and John Maloof and recently released on DVD here. Largely set up as a detective story, *Finding Vivian Maier* recounts how Maloof, a young historian from Chicago, in 2007 accidentally stumbled upon a box of Maier's undeveloped photo negatives at an auction while working on another

project.

As in many great detective stories, the obsession of the main character – which in large parts of *Finding Vivian Maier* is Maloof rather than Maier – sinks its claws into the narrative only after the subject of interest is initially shrugged off. Maloof gradually became intrigued by Maier's inscrutable life and the vast number of photographs she took, mainly in the 1950s and '60s, but never actually made public or even developed from the negatives.

Maloof's fascination – after his first haphazard purchase, he obtained the lion's share of Maier's photographs and collected other personal belongings – catapulted her hitherto unknown gems into the public sphere. A new star was born. Even if Maier herself, says

an interviewee in the film, would probably have disagreed with the way her photographs have been made public now. During her life, she seemed far more interested in the practice of photography than in the finished print.

But her work undeniably deserves to be seen. Maier had a keen eye for observations of daily life in the city centres she commuted to and the suburban areas she worked in. The representative sample on show in Saint Peter's Abbey in Ghent proves that the photographer whose self-portraits demonstrate an often oddly dressed, tall woman with a serious gaze had great wit to go with her highly developed sense for photographing people on the fringes of society, and for capturing the cracks in the white picket-fence lives.



*Finding Vivian Maier* and the BBC documentary *Vivian Maier: Who Took Nanny's Pictures?*, which can also be seen at the abbey, raise questions about dealings in the art

Until 17 August

business and the wishes of artists after their death.

In the still somewhat murky succession of events that constitute her discovery, it remains tragic that while all this happened, Maier lived in dire circumstances – her possessions were being auctioned because she could no longer afford their storage – and fell ill.

Ultimately, Maier's extensive body of work doesn't deserve to be discarded as a nanny's side project. That would belittle both her profession and the quality of her photographs. \ Bjorn Gabriels

Sint-Pieters Abbey  
9 Sint-Pietersplein, Ghent

## WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

### Netflix to operate locally

Netflix, the US-based online video-on-demand service, will begin operating in Belgium in September, the company told shareholders when announcing its quarterly results. Netflix has 50 million subscribers worldwide, mainly in the US, and recently started producing its own TV content, to enormous critical acclaim. The company offers a subscription model that allows viewers to watch from an extensive library of archive and current video product.

### Gent Jazz goes back to roots

This year's Gent Jazz festival was the most successful ever, attracting more than 30,000 people by returning to the festival's roots, organiser Bertrand Flamang said. The first four days of the 10-day festival were reserved for new developments in what is traditionally known as jazz, he said, while the second part looked at black music, singer-songwriters and creative pop: "Music which by its social engagement or form makes up part of what jazz signifies in 2014," he said.

### Tomorrowland for Brazil

Fresh from a successful 10th anniversary edition, dance festival Tomorrowland has announced it will introduce a new edition next year in Brazil, the second time the festival established in Boom in Antwerp province has gone international. Last year the festival held an edition in Atlanta in the US. This year, 8,000 people in São Paulo were able to join in the festivities via satellite link.

### Leuven launches online war diaries

The city of Leuven is to launch a new project in August, exactly 100 years after the start of the First World War, which will publish daily online and on Facebook a diary entry on everyday life in wartime, taken from the journals of 10 witnesses including a monk, a law student, a businessman, a mayor, a wine dealer and a journalist.

\ [WWW.OORLOGSDAGBOEKLEUVEN.BE](http://WWW.OORLOGSDAGBOEKLEUVEN.BE)

\ [WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/OORLOGSDAGBOEKLEUVEN](http://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/OORLOGSDAGBOEKLEUVEN)

# A massage for the mind

## Ontroerend Goed return as curators to Ostend theatre festival TAZ



Tom Peeters

More articles by Tom \ flanderstoday.eu

\ [WWW.THEATERAANZEE.BE](http://WWW.THEATERAANZEE.BE)

The interactive, thought-provoking plays of Ontroerend Goed seek to break conventions, cross borders and challenge audiences worldwide. Curating Theater Aan Zee, the summer theatre festival in Ostend, the Ghent-based theatre collective prove why artists such as Cate Blanchett, Gabriel Byrne and even the late Lou Reed showed interest in their work.

**I**t's an entry through the big gate for the members of the collective. After winning the youth theatre prize of Theater Aan Zee (Theatre by the Sea, or TAZ) with their first proper show in 2003, Ontroerend Goed took their career overseas. Intriguing performances such as *The Smile Off Your Face* (2004), *Internal* (2009) and *Audience* (2011) broke all theatre conventions and were discussed and lauded worldwide, leading to collaborations with the Sydney Theatre Company, among others, as well as prizes, most notably at the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh.

“

We deeply believe in the universal power of the individual

"Curating TAZ forces us to look back where we came from," says artistic director Alexander Devriendt. As a teenager he was expelled from a Jesuit college because he was just "very difficult, questioning any form of authority". It's obvious those very same qualities are crucial for Ontroerend Goed, a collective that slowly evolved from a performance poetry ensemble, starting out in a Ghent



© Athos Burez

Ghent theatre collective Ontroerend Goed say they reinvent themselves for every performance

jazz bar, into a theatre group, though not the most conventional. "When we played here for the first time we didn't know who we were and what we did," Devriendt explains. Actress Charlotte De Bruyne – you might have seen her in Flemish director Dominique Deruddere's film *Flying Home* – remembers that when she was recruited for *Pubers Bestaan Niet* (Adolescents Don't Exist, 2008) the collective's goal was still unclear: "I liked the fact there was no preconceived formula."

"We redefine ourselves and the collective for every new piece," says Devriendt. "The best compliment is when people tell me they never know what to expect. We don't want to be pigeonholed, and the changing forms we use – a personal approach, working with adolescents – don't give people the chance to do this. Abroad, we're 'the company with the unpronounceable name,'" he says, laughing. In Edinburgh, they might also be "those crazy Belgians", De Bruyne adds. It was during the Fringe Festival in the Scottish city that they experienced their breakthrough. Their early decision to search for foreign audiences came out of necessity. "The Flemish cultural centres thought we were too

experimental," says Devriendt. For *The Smile Off Your Face*, the first part of the group's "personal trilogy" (which will be repeated in its entirety during TAZ), they broke all theatre conventions. Devriendt: "Normally you're in a room with 200 others; we make it a one-on-one-experience. Normally you sit still on a chair; we ride you around in a wheelchair. Normally you can see and use your hands; we blindfold you and tie your wrists."

De Bruyne saw the show before she joined the company. Now she's acting in it. "As a visitor you get the chance to use your own imagination and create your own story and space. That's just marvellous," she says.

"When we played it in Morocco someone called it 'a massage of the mind,'" recalls Devriendt. "But in fact we try to do this in all our plays: creating a universe without telling anyone how to feel." For the actors these "personal" shows are demanding.

"A month after I played *A Game Of You* (2010), the third part of this personal trilogy, in which the actors really try to creep into the head of the visitor, someone thanked me for the show, but I had

31 July to 9 August

forgotten him," says De Bruyne, with regret.

"I understood his reaction; possibly nobody had come so close to him lately," Devriendt reminds De Bruyne how immense this role was for her: "I remember you were dreaming of the people you met during these encounters."

For *Wijven* or *Sirens* (2014), a polarising new show, the collective selected a more specific social topic: how Western women react to sexism. Other more recent plays questioned the elections and our voting system (*Fight Night*, 2013) and the current information implosion (*All That Is Wrong*, 2012). "But we were never inspired by only one culture," says Devriendt. "We deeply believe in the universal power of the individual. I'm as much a person from Ghent as I am from Flanders, Belgium, Europe and the world."

"When we played *Pubers Bestaan Niet*, after the show some people said it was 'very Ghent'! But they were wrong. We played the English-language version in New York for a bunch of local adolescents and they were all convinced."

Other foreign accolades prove him right. *The History of Everything* (2012) was a co-production by the Sydney Theatre Company and was a result of their friendship with actress Cate Blanchett, who until 2013 was the company's co-artistic director.

And she's not their only famous fan. De Bruyne still gets enthusiastic about the fact she played *A Game Of You* for one of her heroes, *In Treatment* star Gabriel Byrne, and mentions the late Lou Reed buying a ticket for one of their New York shows, while Devriendt is already looking forward to their next challenge: a collaboration with the acclaimed American avant-garde composer William Basinski.

Across Ostend

## FIVE TAZ MUST-SEES

### Jan Paternoster • 1 August

De Bruyne: "The Black Box Revelation song 'Here Comes The Kick' was an inspiration for *OMG*, the play I'm rehearsing right now with Angelo Tijssens. It deals with anxiety: What are we afraid of, what do people make us afraid of, what should we be afraid of? We asked Jan, a regular at our shows, to write the soundtrack. An invitation for an intimate solo show followed soon."

### Rauw (Kabinet K) • 2 August

Devriendt: "I'm a long-time fan of the plays by Joke Emmers and Kwint Manshoven. They collaborate with young children and are always questioning what theatre for kids can be."

### Audience (Ontroerend Goed) • 6-7 August

Devriendt: "Your last chance to see the most controversial Ontroerend Goed play ever. To show the dangers of mass manipulation, we manipulated our audience and it was frightening to see how easily we could do that. The reactions were heated, but I don't regret it. Now it's time to say goodbye. I'm sure I will miss it."

### The Dogs Days Are Over (ICKAmsterdam)

#### 7-8 August

De Bruyne: "I'm really looking forward to this because the concept is as simple as it is exciting: Dancers keep on jumping for 50 minutes and you can witness their physical decline. I like to watch that."

### Persona, 2013 (Tibaldus en Andere Hoeren) • 9 August

Devriendt: "Our invitation to TAZ as a very young collective was a springboard for us, so we like the fact the festival has always presented both emerging talents and established acts. But we don't make this distinction. We also wanted to give chances to companies whose careers are somewhere in between, such as *Tibaldus en Andere Hoeren*."

De Bruyne: "These are former schoolmates of mine, always looking for a special way to tell a story. It used to be quite hermetic, but this is their first play – a monologue inspired by an Ingmar Bergman film – where form and story blend beautifully."

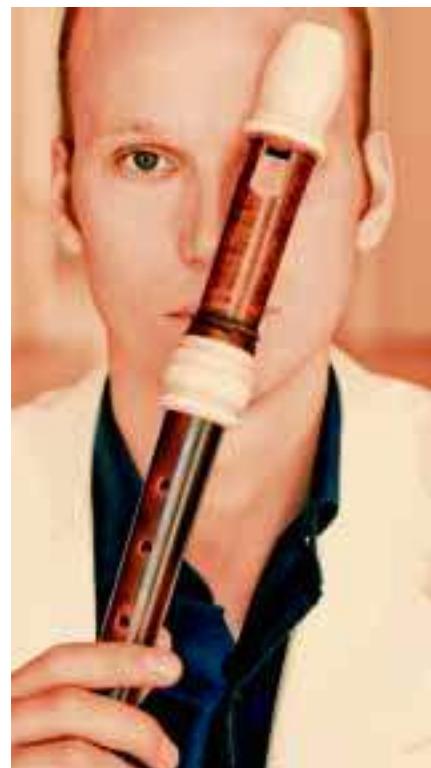
In with the old

# MA Festival

1-10 August

Across Bruges  
\ WWW.MAFESTIVAL.BE

Bruges' celebrated Musica Antiqua Festival brings together the best of old and new. Although the annual 10-day event focuses on early music – read: styles, compositions and instruments from antiquity up to the Renaissance – MA seeks out fresh talent and contemporary interpretations of the centuries-old genre. Indeed, the verve of this festival proves that early music is in no danger of dying out. Venues across Bruges are hosting over a dozen concerts by Europe's best players, including Flemish harpsichordist Frank Agsteribbe, French violinist Amandine Beyer



© Marco Borggreve

namely the recorder, baroque flute, baroque violin, baroque cello and viola da gamba. These ancient pieces are meant to be seen as well as heard, hence the free historical instruments exhibition in Bruges' Provincial Court. Not only will you learn how pre-modern music was made but you'll also see period instruments up close. There's plenty more besides. In addition to the official concerts, MA puts on a fringe programme of free afternoon performances in collaboration with sister festival Oude Muziek Utrecht. There's even Vélo Baroque, a musical bike ride around Bruges and its environs. The 30km circuit is interspersed with short concerts at various historical landmarks en route. In short, this isn't your great-great-great grandfather's early music festival.

\ Georgio Valentino

## CONCERT

### Bryan Adams

1 August, 20.00

Capitole, Ghent  
\ WWW.CAPITOLEGHENT.BE

Bryan Adams had already recorded a clutch of hit albums in his native Canada when, in 1991, the Hollywood blockbuster *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* featured his single "(Everything I Do) I Do It for You" and made the Canuck singer-songwriter a staple on American radio and television. The ballad won a Grammy and nearly scored an Oscar. It sold *nearly* as many copies as the Scorpions' contemporaneous schmaltz-fest "Wind of Change." This summer Adams revisits his hits from the '80s and '90s in acoustic format. The Bare Bones Tour sees the veteran rocker put down his electric guitar and perform stripped-down versions of signature tunes "I Do It for You,"



"Cuts Like a Knife," "Kids Wanna Rock" and more. \ Georgio Valentino

## VISUAL ARTS

### 100 Years of Maserati

Until 31 August

Autoworld, Brussels  
\ WWW.AUTOWORLD.BE

In December 1914, Italian brothers Alfieri, Ettore and Ernesto Maserati established an automobile company that would become synonymous with speed. Not only has the firm survived 100 years, it has produced some of the world's most iconic cars – all bearing Maserati's trademark trident, inspired by the statue of Neptune in Bologna's Piazza Maggiore. The Maserati centenary is being



celebrated with events around the globe. For its part, Brussels' Autoworld is marking the occasion with an exhibition of more than 30 cars borrowed from private collections in the region. Together these automobiles tell the story of a full century in which Maserati has kept pace with technical advances, changing tastes and fierce global competition. \ GV

## FAMILY

### Bird of Prey Meeting

3 August, 11.00

Cap Sonia, Lummen  
Strand, Zeebruggestrand  
\ WWW.VZWFREESPIRIT.BE

Animal-lovers are bound this weekend for Lummen, where birds of prey will strut their stuff in support of imperilled dogs. Limburg bird club Free Spirit has organised a full day of falconry demonstrations for a good cause. A portion of the event's proceeds go to local non-profit Galgo Save Belgium, which rescues greyhounds from

Spain. Indeed, without their intervention, these racing and hunting dogs – exploited and abandoned after "careers" that last only a few short seasons – are euthanised as a matter of state policy. The irony: No dogs are allowed at this raptorfest. Solidarity in the animal world only goes so far. \ GV

## EVENT

### Turnhout Culinair

1-3 August

Grote Markt, Turnhout  
\ WWW.TURNHOUTCULINAIR.COM

Turnhout inaugurated its food festival just last year. Now Turnhout Culinair is back for round two. Seventeen local restaurants and cafes are on hand to present their wares in a festive atmosphere, complete with live music, contests (one lucky foodie will come away with a new car), food and drink workshops and games for the kids. Each establishment offers a condensed version of its regular menu, containing only the best of the best (and priced to sell). Festival-goers are encouraged to take a plate here and a plate there, to taste a little bit of everything. There's plenty of Flemish flavour, of course, but Turnhout Culinair features food from all over the world. \ GV



## CONCERT

Deurne

**Poliça:** Haunting synthpop and alternative rock band from Minneapolis, Minnesota. 3 August, 19.00, *Openluchttheater Rivierenhof, Turnhoutsebaan 232*  
\ WWW.OPENLUCHTTHEATER.BE

## MUSIC FESTIVAL

Bruges

**Moods!:** City festival with Bruges' historic city centre as the backdrop, featuring a mix of free and paid concerts by Suzanne Vega, Sophia, Buika, Nils Frahm, Babylon Circus, The Magic Numbers and Melanie De Biasio, among others. Until 7 August, *Burg 12*  
\ WWW.MOODSBRUGGE.BE

## FILM

Brussels

**L'heure d'été:** In- and outdoor film festival, this year with Rome as its theme, featuring classics from Italian cinema. 4-10 August, *Galerie Cinema & Brussel Bad*  
\ WWW.GALERIES.BE

## PERFORMANCE

De Haan

**LesGrandsBals@DeHaan:** Nostalgic song and dance evenings inside a circus tent featuring disco, funk and soul music (31 July), live 1940s swing jazz by Cat Cat Canary (1 August) and a retro DJ party (2 August). 31 July-2 August, *Spiegeltent, La Potinière, Leopoldlaan*  
\ WWW.VISITDEHAAN.BE

## FAMILY

Ghent

**Parkkaffee:** Family- and dog-friendly park happening with food and drink stands, music and entertainment for kids, including theatre performances, tarot card readings and more, rounded out every night with a giant bonfire next to the water. Daily throughout August, 14.00-00.00, *Parkkaffee, Groenestaakstraat 37, Mariakerke*  
\ WWW.PARKKAFFEE.BE

## Berlare

**Waterfeesten:** Annual day of activities on and around Donkmeer, a lake in East Flanders, with a flowery cafe patio for drinks and snacks, plenty of water sports and a Venetian fireworks display. 3 August, 13.00-19.00, *Donkmeer, Donklaan 119*  
\ WWW.BERLARE.BE/WATERFEESTEN

# Talking Dutch

## Not too hot, not too cold



Derek Blyth

More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

We've all been talking a lot about the weather recently. Either it's too cold for the time of year, and no one goes to the beach, or it's too hot, and trains are stuck because of melting points. Whatever the weather, it's never perfect.

But what is the perfect weather for us? The experts who work for the website Meteovista decided to do some research. They interviewed 1,700 Belgians to find out the perfect holiday temperature. And they finally came up with a precise figure, according to *De Standaard*. *De gemiddelde Belg verkiest een middagtemperatuur van 26,3 graden tijdens de zomervakantie* – the average Belgian wants a midday temperature of 26.3 degrees on their summer holiday.

That's why thousands of Belgians are driving to France at this time of year. *Voor maxima die schommelen rond 26 graden tijdens de zomer kan de Belg het beste terecht in Midden-Frankrijk, bijvoorbeeld in de regio Auvergne die rijk is aan campings en vakantieparken* – The average Belgian looking for maximum temperatures that hover around 26 degrees in the summer should be thinking about a destination in central France, such as the Auvergne, where they will find a wide choice of camping sites and holiday parks.

They could also head for the Alps, as long as they stay clear of Italy. *In de zuidelijke Alpen is het Zwitserse Lugano een kanshebber, terwijl het Gardameer nog niet iets zuidelijker ligt en daardoor te warm wordt* – The region of Lugano in the Swiss Alps is promising, but Lake Garda lies further to the south and is therefore too hot.

The Mediterranean is of course ridiculously hot for the sensitive Flemish tourist. But what about somewhere



© Wikimedia/Nobli

in central Europe? *Het Hongaarse Boedapest is een aanrader met gemiddelde middagtemperaturen van 26 graden tijdens juli en augustus* – The Hungarian city of Budapest is worth considering as it has an average midday temperature of 26 degrees in July and August. And if you need to cool off in a lake, you are definitely in the right country. *Niet ver van Boedapest bevindt zich het Balatonmeer, de grootste toeristische trekpleister van Hongarije met ideale temperaturen voor de Belg* – Not far from Budapest, you find Lake Balaton (pictured), the most popular tourist destination in Hungary, where the temperature is ideal for the Belgian. Rome is of course far too hot at this time of year. *Wie het Colosseum wil bezoeken doet dat best in juni of september, wanneer de gemiddeldes rond 26 graden liggen in Rome* – Anyone who wants to visit the Colosseum should go there in June or September, when the average temperature in Rome is about 26 degrees. Not too hot. Not too cold. Perfect for the average Belgian.

## VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY



Mimi Bekhechi @Mimi\_Bekhechi

Happy birthday to the best little kookie country in the world  
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ceg6NQKHd70 ... #Belgium

Marie-Eve @Meb05

Another great National Day in Brussels... We love our country!  
:-) We are #Belgium !:-D pic.twitter.com/snPzMEDThm

Justine @jumattx

Perks of going to sleep at 5:30 am: it means you've had a good night out. Downsides: dozing off at 9 pm #Gentsefeesten



Frederick Abeloos @abeloosf

Always a good nostalgic feeling when I see the Royal Military Academy marching in... #belgium... http://instagram.com/p/qt9EnTqaJu/



Regi @Realregi

Mind. Blown. #Tomorrowland pic.twitter.com/XEJrdynVFV



Jai-Jagdeesh

#BELGIUM!!!! I am very nearly #speechless. All I can say is thank you; over and over and over, thank you. See you (and squeeze you!) next time, whenever it's in the stars for us to be back... #Liefs!  
#Liefde! And#amour!!

Fred Hush

Tomorrowland and 10dayoff was really amazing, it was really great to be part of this enormous weekend!!! Thanks to all the nice people that were present



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## Poll

A researcher at the University of Ghent says young Flemish children are too sedentary and need to move about more. What do you think?

a. Parents and teachers alike need to make sure kids run around more

50%

b. Children need to learn to sit still in preparation for school. If they're overweight, cut down on sweets and cakes

0%

c. Turn off the computer and leave the car at home. Problem solved

50%

For the first time, a split decision. First, nobody at all thinks children need to sit still at school, when experts are complaining the children of Flanders don't get enough exercise. Once that's established, it's only a matter of deciding how it needs to be done.

Half of you think it's the job of both schools and parents to get kids moving, which seems reasonable given how much time they spend in school. And half of you appear to put the responsibility more firmly on parents and what goes on in the home.

So there it is: more active games and play at school, less sitting around at home. A generation of super-fit Flemings is on the horizon. When's the next Olympics again?

## THE LAST WORD

### Doing time

"A lot of older people are in the drugs circuit. They sell hash to young people to get some respect. In their eyes, they're not breaking the law; it's only about social contact."

According to university lecturer Karel Oei, the growing number of gangsters over 60 in Flanders – up 140% since 2003 – demands an approach other than prison sentences

### Glass ceiling

"[The merging of Flemish government departments] is in itself not a bad thing. But when I look at which departments are to merge, it looks as if it will mainly be at the cost of women in top jobs."

Flemish government diversity official Alona Lyubayeva, as the number of women in top posts looks like being cut from 21 to 15%. The government's target is 31%

### Lending a hand

"The more difficult it is for people to ensure their living standards, the more business we do."

Etienne Lambert of the Brussels Berg van Barmhartigheid, the country's only legal pawn shop, which made more than €9 million in loans last year

### Under the hammer

"They're old, and most of them haven't been used for a while. Renovation would cost too much, and anyway we have no use for them. So we're hoping to get rid of them as quickly as possible."

Joren Vandeweyer of the foreign affairs ministry, which is selling off properties in Congo to raise money for a new embassy in Kinshasa

## \ Next week's question:

The new government of Flanders is considering making the integration course obligatory for all foreigners, including those from the EU. What do you think?

Log in to the Flanders Today website and click on VOTE to let us know your view!