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Braving the elements

Education and entertainment meet at Ostend's newly renovated Explorado theme park

 **Andy Furniere**
More articles by Andy \ flanderstoday.eu

The Explorado Family Adventure Science Park recently opened its doors in Ostend, taking the place of its successor, Earth Explorer park. Through spectacular attractions such as Apollo 3000, a spacecraft simulator, and Cleverlabs, with interactive experiments, the park uses “edutainment” to encourage children to take an interest in science.

Last summer, German business group Blueprint Entertainment took over the former Earth Explorer park, with plans to make the site near Fort Napoleon into a third Explorado park – modelled after two parks in the German cities of Duisburg and Munster. Earth Explorer was established in 2004 with Belgium’s first person in space, Dirk Frimout, as its figurehead. However, the park had to

close at the end of 2012 due to financial difficulties. The business group – which, aside from its Explorado parks, also owns an edutainment park in Cologne – retained most of the attractions in Ostend but invested about €1 million in renovations and the development of new, more interactive concepts.

One item the park kept from Earth Explorer was the trademark gigantic globe at the entrance to the science park, which serves as a landmark. Unlike the Earth Explorer park, however, Explorado will not close at the end of each summer, but will remain open at least until November and possibly year round.

“The philosophy of the park is still the same,” says marketing co-ordinator Mariska Dhoore, who previously worked at

Earth Explorer. “We want to rouse the scientific and technological interest of children from about five to 14 years old through playful activities.”

Explorado peaks the curiosity of kids by revealing the intricate processes behind natural phenomena, like earthquakes and volcano eruptions. The goals and methods of Explorado are similar to those of Technopolis, the hands-on science and technology centre in Mechelen.

Alongside its permanent exhibition, the new park now also houses temporary exhibitions, sessions of exploration and discovery in so-called Cleverlabs and birthday party activities. Special tours are also available for schools, where children are divided into groups and sent on an information scavenger hunt, during which they have to comb the park

More WWI deaths than thought

In Flanders Fields Museum projects names of war dead in special installation



Alan Hope
Follow Alan on Twitter \ @AlanHopeFT

Belgium suffered five times more casualties in the First World War than previously thought, according to the results of a research project in which volunteers across the country counted the names on war memorials in every municipality. “Results showed that not 5,000 Belgian citizens were killed during the First World War, but five times as many,” said Piet Chielens, co-ordinator of the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres, which organised the census. The project was part of a larger programme called The Name List, a comprehensive register of victims during the war. “It’s a list with room for civilians as well as soldiers, regardless of their nationality ... as much for Belgians who died in their own country or another, as for non-Belgians who died here or were fatally wounded, to die elsewhere later,” the project

website explains. Registers of victims, the project points out, tend to be composed of lists of “our” names: “Even with the best of intentions, public remembrances tend to underwrite an insuperable Us and Them logic.” The research project started three years ago and is due to be complete in 2018, the centenary of the end of the war. A searchable list of the names will be made available online; they will also be projected over the next four years on a wall in the In Flanders Field Museum, each one exactly 100 years after the person died. On the first day, some 200 names were projected, including 18 Belgian civilians, 29 Belgian soldiers and 23 German soldiers. The next day there were 727 more, and so on for the next 1,558 days.



© In Flanders Fields Museum

TreinTramBus criticises state of railway stations

Rail authority NMBS is giving priority to prestigious projects like the renovated Leuven train station and ignoring the disastrous state of much of the rest of the network, public transport user group TreinTramBus said. “While works like that go on, there are many perfectly ordinary train stops where commuters are afraid to get off in the evenings. In some stations it’s understandable that people would rather cross the tracks than go down into a dark and filthy tunnel,” said the group’s spokesperson Jan Vanseveren. Vanseveren mentioned stations and stops that have been allowed to deteriorate, with broken glass, malfunctioning escalators, crumbling infrastructure and graffiti everywhere. “Anyone who takes the train is on a trip from one junk heap to the next,” he said. “Vilvoorde, Weerde, Brussels South, Halle, Veurne, it just gets worse and worse. We could say these stations are like something out of Eastern Europe, but that would do a disservice to many East European stations.” Vanseveren said he and other members of TreinTramBus travelled across Flanders and made an inventory of the serious backlog of maintenance facing the NMBS. Infrastructure management company Infrabel, meanwhile, pointed out it had plans to invest €2.1 billion in stations between now and 2025. “We can’t tackle every station at once,” said spokesperson Bart Crols. “But sooner or later they’ll all get their turn.” \ AH



Vilvoorde train station, long an embarrassment to the locals

Ringland files suit against Oosterweel project

The activist organisation Ringland, launched to campaign for the enclosure of the Antwerp Ring, has lodged an official complaint against the regional planning order (GRUP) for the Oosterweel link. The link is intended to complete the circle of the Ring road. According to Ringland, the GRUP makes a complete enclosure of the Ring impossible. The Oosterweel link has been a political problem ever since the original presentation of the construction options in 2000. Eventually, it was decided that a long, two-tier viaduct would pass through the docks area in the centre of greater Antwerp, which became known as the Lange Wapper after a figure in local folklore. Following opposition from two protest groups, Ademloos and Straten-Generaal, a referendum was held in 2006, in which the people of Antwerp voted in favour of an alternative plan where the viaduct was replaced by a tunnel. That decided, alternative routes for the link were proposed by the two groups to move the link outside of the city centre, where they say it will cause severe pollu-


tion problems because of fine particulates. The intention of the Oosterweel project is to close the circular road in order to ease congestion both in the centre of the city and on other parts of the Ring, by allowing traffic from the left bank of the Scheldt new routes to the Netherlands and the north, and to Germany and the east. Ringland is calling for the new link to be completely enclosed, cutting down greatly on pollution and noise, and providing a vast amount of new urban space, which could be used, it says, for parks, sports and leisure facilities. The plan quickly caught the imagination of the public: A petition last May gathered the 15,000 signatures needed to obtain a hearing in the Flemish Parliament, and a march in favour attracted 10,000 people. Ringland’s complaint calls for the Oosterweel project to be suspended while feasibility studies are carried out on the order of Hilde Crevits, mobility and public works minister in the last Flemish administration. \ AH

New law requires restaurant staff to inform customers about allergens

A new EU regulation, which comes into force in December, requires wait staff in restaurants to be able to inform clients about allergens – such as gluten and nuts – in the food they serve if asked. Flanders has listed 14 food products that require warning because they contain substances that could cause serious allergic reactions, including shellfish, soy and lactose. The new European allergen law is pushing restaurants to provide the information in written form, but this will not be obligatory in Belgium. “The Belgian law allows an exception that states that informa-


tion can also be provided verbally,” explained Danny Van Assche, managing director of sector organisation Horeca Vlaanderen. The royal decree that validating this exception was signed last week. According to Horeca Vlaanderen, this exception will be to the benefit of consumers. A written notification, said Van Assche, “offers the chef little room for creativity and leads to a standardisation of the menu. Offering day menus would become almost impossible.” Restaurant owners have to provide training to staff in following the procedure. Monitoring will be carried out by the federal food safety agency. \ Andy Furniere

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children got lost at the beach during the month of July, compared to 778 in the same month last year. Some 400,000 wristbands containing parents’ details were handed out

€85 million




paid out so far by Leuven-based bank insurer KBC for damage caused by the severe hailstorm in early June. Some of the policies were re-insured, KBC said, bringing the total net loss to €41 million

900,000




Residents of Belgium skip doctor visits for financial reasons, according to a new study ordered by the European Commission on the quality and accessibility of health care across Europe

47.7%



of secondary school teachers think mobility and road safety should be taught in secondary schools, and not only in primary schools as at present, according to a poll by the Flemish Traffic Sciences Foundation

€400,000



offered by the city of Grimbergen for the return of four paintings by the 16th-century painter known as the Master of the Beigem Altarpiece. The paintings are believed to have been looted by German troops in 1914

WEEK IN BRIEF

The **Jewish Museum of Belgium** in Brussels, which will re-open on 14 September (the European Day of Jewish Culture) for the first time after the shooting attack in May that killed four people, will undergo an extensive renovation starting next year. The renovation has no link to the shooting, the museum confirmed, but architects will now take another look at possible additional security measures. The lawyer representing Mehdi Nemmouche, who was arrested as a suspect for the shooting, appeared in court last week and said that the prosecution does not have a single piece of material evidence to link his client to the crime.

Frank Vercauteren is expected in Genk on Monday to sign his **new contract as trainer of Racing Genk**, following the recent sacking of Emilio Ferrara after the very first game of the new season. Vercauteren took over barely two months ago as trainer of the Russian club Samara and trained Genk from 2009 to 2011, taking the club to victory in the league championship.

Belgacom has started **removing the last 1,000 public telephone boxes** remaining in Belgium, as the once-familiar landmarks are due to disappear entirely in 2015. “The arrival of mobile phones means the public telephones are hardly ever used,” a Belgacom spokesperson said. “Some boxes see barely one call a week.”

A Brussels-based group of beer fans has complained to the city council after they found the **only beer allowed on sale at Brussels Beach** on the canal was Heineken. The group, Malt&Mout, said they were “insulted” to be served the Dutch beer in the capital of a country famed worldwide for its more than 1,000 beers. Heineken owns the Belgian beer group Alken-Maes,

which produces Maes, Cristal, Affligem, Grimbergen and Ciney.

The **first fruits of the new pear harvest** are expected in shops this week, three weeks earlier than usual. The Corina variety ripen faster than the usual Conference and are being described as bigger and better as a result of the warm spring. The variety is being grown on 100 hectares in Limburg, and the harvest is likely to reach 1.6 million kilograms. Production of the Conference pear later is expected to break records with 300 million kilograms, 8% more than last year. The apple harvest, meanwhile, is expected to be up on last year by no less than 35% to 301 million kilograms.

The introduction of the so-called **smart cash register in the restaurant business** could mean the loss of 68,000 of the 164,000 jobs in the sector, according to research from the University of Hasselt. The new registers become obligatory in 2015 and are intended to make it impossible for owners to work with undeclared staff. Professor Ghislain Houben was given access to the books of 250 businesses in Flanders, including their secret accounts, and found the eradication of “black” employment would reduce earnings by up to 35% for businesses employing 10 to 35 workers. Larger businesses such as hotels, however, would be little affected.

The Brussels public transport authority MIVB has a tendency to **see cyclists as competitors** and could do much to improve communication aimed at them, according to the Master’s thesis of Anders Brunlid of the University of Leuven. The thesis compares Brussels unfavourably with cities like Valencia, Munich and Amsterdam in terms of their policies regarding the combination of cycling and public transport.

The federal government is carrying out too few checks on the **import of illegal wood** through the port of Antwerp, according to the nature conservancy organisation WWF. Despite tough rules and appropriate criminal sanctions, WWF said, the authorities a combination of the public health department, environmental inspectors and customs have not enough resources to carry out meaningful inspections.

The Brussels prosecutor is investigating a **case of possible arson**, after a fire broke out in the former industrial bakery La Wetternoise in the Brussels district of Molenbeek early last week. Two squatters were taken to hospital suffering from smoke inhalation, and about 50 fire fighters took more than four hours to bring the fire under control. A fire in 2011 in the same building was found to be due to a technical defect.

About 8.6% of the population in Belgium **avoid visiting a doctor** because of financial difficulties. This puts the country in 20th place in a ranking of 31 countries in the Qualicope study funded by the European Commission, which investigated the quality, cost and accessibility of health care in European countries. There are systems in Belgium through which people can visit the doctor at nearly no cost, but “people don’t know about these programmes,” said professor Sara Willems of Ghent University, one of the co-ordinators of the study.

A 34-year-old Brussels woman recently found her birth mother, from whom she was **kidnapped 30 years ago**. Dolores Maria Praet was legally adopted by a Flemish couple in the 1980s, and a recent search for her birth mother led to the discovery of the crime. She had been kidnapped at the age of four and sold to black market adoption channels. Guatemalan police have made an arrest in the case.

FACE OF FLANDERS



© Courtesy De Standaard

Herman Schueremans

Herman Schueremans, the former member of parliament and concert promoter who gave the world Rock Werchter, has announced he is putting his personal management company into liquidation in protest at new rules on tax introduced by the outgoing Di Rupo government. Schueremans was born in Leuven in 1954 and studied journalism in Brussels. In 1975, he was working for the Dutch music paper *Muziek Express* and was the only journalist to apply for accreditation to the brand new Rock & Blues Festival organised by Hedwig De Meyer, an engineering student who ran a disco on weekends. The festival was held in a field in Werchter, now a district of Rotselaar in Flemish Brabant. Schueremans was also running a tiny event in Herent, and he and De Meyer hit it off right away. Together they managed to persuade Noel Steen, in charge of Rock Torhout, to work with them on a revolutionary idea: the same festival in two locations: on a Saturday in July at Torhout and the next day at Werchter. “That increased the chance of attracting a lot of people, and

a large public made it possible to invite bigger names from abroad,” he once explained in an interview. De Meyer went on to found Stageco, one of the world’s most prominent staging companies, with customers like the Rolling Stones, Justin Bieber and Robbie Williams. Schueremans continued to preside over Werchter as it eventually dropped the Torhout date and became one of the biggest and most respected music festivals in the world. He was elected to the Flemish parliament for Open VLD, where he sat from 2004 until 2012 and left to work full time with Live Nation, the world’s largest events promoter. He’ll continue to do that job as an independent operator rather than through his management company. Not that the tax situation will change much: According to figures from *De Tijd*, Herman Schueremans BVBA made a profit of €3.9 million in 2012 and paid €1.5 million in tax. Under old liquidation rules, however, he’ll only be paying 10% on the €18.3 million in assets the company has. After 1 October, the tax bill goes up to 25%. \ Alan Hope

OFFSIDE Suffer the little children

Ah, summer! The sight of sunshine and summer dresses; the smells of warm earth and backyard grills; the sound of ice cream vans and children happily playing! Wait, scrap that last bit. We know that the sounds of children playing don’t go down very well in some parts of Flanders. In May this year a restaurant in Wetteren had to close its playground because neighbours couldn’t stand the noise. In March last year a man in Landen argued that playgrounds, being for children, discriminate against older people, in his attempt to stop one being built near his home. In Mariakerke, a judge ordered a crèche to close for reasons of noise nuisance in 2012. Police in Aalst last week, however, managed to go one further: in one particular neighbourhood there is now a ban on children play-



© Ingimage

ing anywhere outside. The official reason is that playing football in the street can be dangerous. One set of parents in the neighbourhood – bound by Caudronstraat and Schrijversstraat – disagrees. There is a retired couple in the area, they told

Het Nieuwsblad, who “can’t stand our children playing. The man stands in his doorway until the ball comes in his direction, then he takes it or even punctures it. It’s becoming unliveable for our children.” The newspaper contacted the retired couple in question. “I have to call the police up to five times a day to ask them to stop children playing football. Across the road there, several windows have been smashed. Those children often make so much noise we can hardly hear the television.” Aalst mayor Christophe D’Haese offered parents a solution. They can have their neighbourhood streets declared as “play streets”. “That way the necessary road signs can be installed,” he said. “If the parents submit an application, I’ll see that it is handled without delay.” \ Alan Hope

FLANDERTODAY Flanders State of the Art

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

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

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To cut or not to cut?

Now that the new government of Flanders has been sworn in and the federal government is being formed, more and more new policies come to light. With the socialists in opposition for the first time in decades, some changes are quite drastic.

Some commentators see traces of vindictiveness, of settling old scores, as the function of master architect is abolished, the rules for social housing changed and free public transport for the elderly scrapped. Indiscretions about keeping nuclear power plants open for longer, reversing earlier plans for a nuclear exit, spark the flames of this theory even more.

It is not unusual for new governments to push through what they consider long-needed reforms. In 1999, the Christian-democrats ended up in the opposition and soon a number of ethical issues, such as euthanasia and same-sex marriage, saw a breakthrough.

Although there is an element of ideological differences, the main factor driving the change is budgetary. Although there may be discussion as to who should bear the brunt of it, the fact is that there simply isn't enough money to go around.

As a result, public broadcaster VRT will be hit by cuts, as will higher education. Fiscal policy to promote home ownership will become less generous, while child care will become more expensive. Energy prices, too, are likely to go up.

Although the media are full of numbers for all these cuts, the government of Flanders prefers to keep its budgetary plans to itself until September. Unsurprisingly, this infuriates the opposition. But it's also worrying some allies.

The news that social and cultural associations will be hit "scars" Marc Justaert, the president of Beweging.net, the workers' movement closely linked to CD&V. "Flanders has a very active social life in the fields of culture, sports and youth. I wonder if the proposals for cuts are even realistic."

His concerns are bad news for CD&V, who have to prove they can stand their ground in right-wing dominated governments. It is something Kris Peeters, federal *formateur* and future prime minister, will have to keep in mind, especially as budgetary constraints are even bigger on the federal level.

No social housing for life

New housing minister wants residents to move if their incomes increase



Derek Blyth
More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

New Flemish housing minister Liesbeth Homans announced government plans to end the current system of social housing, which provides tenants with indefinite contracts regardless of how much they earn.

In an interview with *De Morgen*, the minister said that future tenants of social housing would be asked to move if their financial circumstances improved, bringing Flanders in line with Wallonia and Brussels. "The state should provide a launching pad and not a hammock," she said.

The government plans to introduce a new system where tenants would be given fixed-term contracts lasting three, six or nine years, simi-

lar to those in the private sector. The aim is to persuade tenants to move to the private market as soon as they can afford to, so that housing can be released for people on the waiting list. It would also make it easier to evict council house tenants who are a nuisance.

Liberals Open VLD has been in favour of the new law for some time, but socialist SPA has always voted against, arguing that a secure council home for life promotes social cohesion. More than 100,000 people are currently on the waiting list for social housing in Flanders.

Visit www.flanderstoday.eu to take part in a poll on social housing



Minister halts Reyers viaduct renovation in Brussels

The Reyers viaduct, which runs above the ring road in the Brussels district of Schaerbeek, could be demolished rather than repaired, according to Brussels' new mobility minister, Pascal Smet. The viaduct was closed earlier this summer to allow urgent repair work, but Smet halted the work order last week.

Smet ordered the workers to down tools after he was told that "unforeseen complications" had emerged. "The renovation will take longer, and the costs will go up," Smet

said. "We need to look carefully at this project and ask whether it might be better to demolish the viaduct."

The renovation of the Reyers viaduct was initially scheduled to be completed by the end of the summer, but the final date has now been moved back to November. At the same time, the costs have doubled from €2 to €4 million. "Given the deplorable state of the structure, we have to ask whether the current renovation work will be enough to keep it in working

order over the long term," said Smet. "Local residents will definitely benefit if the viaduct is demolished and replaced by a city boulevard."

The urban action group Arau urged the city earlier this year to tear down the viaduct, which was constructed 40 years ago. "It is a dinosaur that no longer serves any purpose," the organisation said. Arau has dusted off a proposal it first put forward in 1995 to replace the viaduct with an oval roundabout. This would slow down traffic

and reduce congestion at nearby Meiserplein, a busy junction. This move would demonstrate that Brussels is committed to reducing car traffic in the city, according to the organisation.

The mayor of Schaerbeek, Bernard Clerfayt, has also argued in favour of demolishing the viaduct, which crosses his municipality. Smet has now ordered his department to produce a report on the future of the viaduct. It is due by 25 August.

\ DB

Open VLD concerned about elimination of master architect

Flanders' new culture minister, Sven Gatz (Open VLD), has criticised the government's decision to dispense with the post of *Vlaams bouwmeester*, or Flemish master architect. "From a cultural perspective, this is a regrettable decision," he said in an interview with *De Standaard*. "We shall see what comes of it."

Patrick Dewael of Open VLD joined Gatz in criticising the decision. "The buildings of today are the works of art of tomorrow," he tweeted. "By abolishing the Flemish master architect, we are replacing creativity with sterility."

The news follows last year's decision by Antwerp's city council to dismiss its city architect.

The post of the Flemish master architect was set up in 1998 to develop an architectural policy for Flanders and "help to create a high quality architectural environment". The post was initially filled by the Antwerp architect Bob Van Reeth. Current master architect Peter Swinnen (*pictured*) was appointed in 2010 and will fulfil his mandate, which ends in the middle of next year. The master architect will be replaced by a rotating panel of experts. \ DB



© Courtesy Canvas

Vande Lanotte possible future mayor of Ostend

Socialist politician Johan Vande Lanotte plans to return to local politics as mayor of Ostend, according to a report in the business daily *De Tijd*. The Ostend city councillor and member of the federal parliament has not confirmed that he has his eye on the mayor's office of the port city.

Vande Lanotte (*pictured*), formerly leader of the socialist party, occupied a high-level position in the Di Rupo government as deputy prime minister as well as federal minister for the economy, consumer affairs and the North Sea.

But it is highly unlikely that his S.P.A party will form a part of the next federal government, which means he won't have a post in the next government. "If I'm not a government minister, then I



© Courtesy Amcham

will go back to being a city councillor," said Vande Lanotte. "I have no more to say on the matter at the moment."

Vande Lanotte, 59, has a law doctorate and entered parliament in 1991. He has served as a minister in several governments. \ DB

De Lijn budget likely to be cut

The new government of Flanders plans to cut its budget by €8 billion over the coming five years, and public transport authority De Lijn is expected to be required to cut its budget by 3%, or €30 million a year, according to government sources quoted in *De Standaard*. To achieve the target, De Lijn will have to reduce operating costs by €15 million and increase revenue by a further €15 million. Analysts say that it is likely that the company will be forced

to scrap free bus passes for senior citizens and eliminate some routes.

Other government cost-cutting measures include cuts in the subsidies paid to charitable associations, reducing funds allotted to retirement homes and increasing the cost of childcare. The government has not confirmed or denied any figures. "The budget details will be outlined in the September Declaration," said government spokesperson Kris Snijkers. \ DB

Braving the elements

Theme park aims to get kids excited about science

WWW.EXPLORADO-OOSTENDE.BE

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to find the answers to lists of questions.

Children can also play outdoors at the park's kids construction site. Decked out in protective clothing and with the assistance of Explorado staff, children are invited to get their hands dirty by working with the different kinds of building tools at their disposal.

After entering the park, visitors are first invited to the Discovery Room, where they can find introductory information on each exhibition. Maps and computer screens let visitors discover fun facts, for example, on the prevalence of earthquakes in different parts of the world.

The permanent exhibition consists of a tour around four sections, each with hands-on installations organised by the four natural elements: earth, water, air and fire. The different sections are distinguished by colour.

Visitors start in air: After measuring how high they would be able to jump on the planet Mars and trying the slide that simulates the effects of a wind tunnel, young visitors come to the highlight of the air section: the tornado shelter. In this dark room, the conditions of a serious tornado are simulated. You hear the wind rage threateningly, and rain showers pound in the room.

"The inspiration for the interior was the kind of shelter that was installed in the American city of Stillwater, in Oklahoma state," explains my guide Kobe Labath. "The city was almost completely destroyed by tornadoes in the 1980s."

Unfortunately, for the moment the water section doesn't house a very interactive feature, since a spectacular submarine attraction had to be removed. Currently, several installations teach children about phenomena such as dune formation, climate change and pollution.



© photos courtesy Explorado

Children can get their hands dirty in experiments that provide a fun learning experience

The fire section is more memorable, with interactive installations on different kinds of volcano eruptions and flames.

The earth section is probably the most intriguing for most visitors. Explorado has installed a large version of Foucault's pendulum, which impressively demonstrates the rotation of the Earth in a way that is accessible to children.

Another memorable attraction is the earthquake. After walking calmly through the first part of a hallway with typical administrative offices on either side, visitors experience how the shocks and sounds of an earthquake can shake you up: On either side of the hallway, children can see destroyed offices, as they would look after an earthquake.

The major highlight of the tour, however, is the Apollo 3000 simulator, which launches you in the air just like at an amusement park (though perhaps not quite as high).

But the attraction offers more than just the thrill of the launch. When you reach the highest point of the ride, a short video makes you feel like you're in a space shuttle on the way to the International Space Station. Floating along, visitors

and learn to build water rockets. "We organise whole soap bubble workshops," says Labath.

The temporary exhibition, which remains until near the end of the year, is less scientifically inspired. Instead, it revolves around the

“Carrying out experiments has a more direct effect on them than listening to our explanations

can dodge meteorites, observe a large storm on Jupiter and admire the beauty of the rings of Saturn.

The end of the exhibition also features some fun games, like a robot arm with which children can shoot balls through a basketball hoop. In other activities, children can make huge soap bubbles

football hype brought on by this summer's World Cup in Brazil. Children and parents alike can play a life-size version of table football, or follow a mini football route similar to a mini golf course. Jerseys of the local football team, KV Oostende, decorate some of the walls of the exhibition.

Also new at the edutainment park are the two Cleverlabs: rooms where children can carry out playful scientific experiments with the help of guides. "While the focus in the previous park lay on presentation, the Cleverlabs introduce a more interactive way of stimulating children," explains Labath, who also worked for Earth Explorer. "Carrying out experiments will have a more direct effect on them than listening to our explanations." The Cleverlabs are a concept of Blueprint Entertainment and also feature in the German Explorado parks.

In a typical Cleverlabs, children might learn how to make "elephant toothpaste" – a foamy substance created by the quick decomposition of hydrogen peroxide. They can safely simulate the effects of a small-scale tornado and volcano, create a miniature hovercraft and produce electricity with simple objects and products like potatoes. When not busy constructing and deconstructing experiments, children can watch presentations shown at the Cleverlabs, depicting and explaining phenomena such as the workings of the solar system.

Children's birthdays are especially exciting at the park. The Explorado team designs activities that let them step in the shoes of researchers or detectives. In the detective activity, children have to find the parts of a spaceship so that the stranded extra-terrestrial creatures to whom it belongs can return to their own planet. As researchers, they dress up in professional white coats and put their safety glasses on to carry out all kinds of experiments.

If all goes well, the Explorado team hopes to have attracted about 80,000 visitors by the end of the year.



Birthday parties at Explorado find kids tracking down clues to solve a crime



The former Earth Explorer's trademark globe was retained at the new Explorado

WEEK IN BUSINESS

Air \ Brussels Airlines

Brussels Airlines is reorganising its flights to areas of Africa affected by the Ebola epidemic, after pressure from unions. Flights crews will now make an extra stop in Gambia, Senegal or Ivory Coast instead of overnighting in Monrovia, Liberia. The move will mean an hour added to return flight times.

Meat products \ Equinox

Belgium's animal rights organisation Gaia has filed a legal complaint against horse-meat importers Equinox of Wijnegem, near Antwerp, alleging "cruel and illegal trading" in connection with a slaughterhouse in Argentina. Gaia says that the horses, many of them stolen, are transported thousands of kilometres to the abattoir without food or water. Equinox denies all accusations.

Rail \ Infrabel

Rail infrastructure company Infrabel has refused to accept the full bill for the train disaster in Wetteren, East Flanders, in May last year, when a speeding train derailed and toxic freight exploded, causing homes to be evacuated and rail traffic to be seriously disrupted for weeks. Infrabel has said it will pay €200,000 of the cost of fire and municipal staff involved in the clean-up, with the rest of the €450,000 bill to be claimed from the company that operated the train.

Snack foods \ Fountain

Flemish entrepreneur Marc Coucke has taken a 7.5% stake in Fountain, the West Flanders supplier of drinks and snacks vending machines. The company is in a transition phase after losing €6.4 million last year and is now 30% owned by Matexi construction group and 15% by Bank Degroof.

Social media \ Facebook

About 170 Belgians have joined a class action suit against Facebook, launched last week in the commercial court of Vienna. The suit alleges Facebook breached European privacy laws by supporting the government's surveillance system Prism, which tracks users' movements via the Like button and exchanges private data with app developers.

www.fbclaim.com

Technology \ Barco

The Kortrijk-based tech company has agreed to sell its German subsidiary Orthogon to American defence and aerospace company Exelis for €13 million. Orthogon manufactures applications for air traffic control.

Farmers fear Russia export ban

Flemish pig and fruit farmers hardest hit by Russian ban on EU exports



Alan Hope

More articles by Alan \ flanderstoday.eu

The two organisation representing the Flemish agriculture industry – Boerenbond and the General Union of Farmers (ABS) – have said that the ban on imports of a number of foodstuffs from the European Union will lead to economic damage and job losses for local farmers and fruit growers. The ban, announced by the Russian prime minister Dmitri Medvedev last week,

covers exports of beef, pork, poultry, milk, cheese, fruit and vegetables from the EU, Norway, the US, Canada and Australia. The ban was described by the EU Commission as "politically motivated".

As far as Flanders is concerned, the main products affected are pears, pig meat and apples. Half of Belgium's pear crop goes to Russia, with a worth of some €100 million. Pear growing is concentrated in the Haspengouw and Hageland areas of Flemish Brabant and Limburg provinces.

The next most important sector is pork: Belgium exports about 30,000 tonnes for a value of €50 million, most of it coming from Flanders. Apples, in third place, are

worth about €43 million in export income. Russia takes between 15 and 20% of Belgium's annual apple crop, and is the biggest customer outside of the EU.

In total, Belgium exports some €230 million worth of farm produce to Russia. Tomatoes account for about €22 million, while milk powder and cheese are worth about €10 million.

"Major economic consequences"

The measures, according to Boerenbond, "will weigh on the whole sector. In the long term, this will lead unavoidably to reduced production and ultimately to job losses. We call on all governments concerned, both national and European, to take the necessary steps to try to lessen the impact." In the meantime, the pear harvest is due to start in about a week. Growers will be able to stock their harvest for a time, but exports of the new crop would normally begin in about October, and warehousing for too long a period, ABS said, will lead to a loss of quality. "It's not clear how easy it will



© Courtesy vakantieshe.be

be to find new export markets, but there's no doubt there will be major economic consequences for the sector," an ABS spokesperson said.

One note of optimism came from the Belgian Association of Horticultural Co-operatives (VBT), which groups together the main auction markets. "In August and September, there are usually very little pear exports towards Russia," commented VBT secretary-general Philippe Appeltans. "We are hoping for a rapid solution to

the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, so that this sort of sabre-rattling is no longer necessary."

Europe's growers met last week in Istanbul, where it became clear, said Appeltans, that some countries are looking at a reduced harvest. "Turkey's pear crop is down a whole 25%, so it's possible for us to focus on new markets. Since the Russian ban on Polish imports, domestic demand for pears has gone up fourfold. They're completely sold out."

Optimistic figures for port of Zeebrugge

The port of Zeebrugge handled just over 22 million tonnes of cargo in the first six months of the year, an increase of 3.7% compared with the same period last year, or nearly one million tonnes more.

Rolling cargo (cars and other motorised vehicles) increased by 5.8% to 6.6 million tonnes, largely thanks to the recovering economy in the UK; the number of new cars being shipped rose to almost one million, an increase of 12.7%. "The port is still on the right course to pass the two million cars mark in 2014," CEO Joachim Coens

said in a statement.

Container traffic was up by 10.2% to nearly 11 million tonnes. Last week also saw the start of a new feeder service of shipping line SCS Multiport, to deliver loads from the Far East between the ports of Amsterdam, Tilbury in England and Zeebrugge. Zeebrugge has strong links with the Far East, while Tilbury is strongly placed in South American traffic.

The new service, which runs twice a week between Zeebrugge and Tilbury, will remove the need for road haulage in moving cargoes. A ship-

ment arriving in Tilbury from South America with cargo intended for the Far East can quickly and easily be trans-shipped to Zeebrugge, for example, with Amsterdam offering another range of options.

Other forms of traffic were less successful: break bulk (goods loaded in barrels or boxes rather than containers) was down 35% because of lower volumes of paper pulp from Sweden and Brazil. Bulk cargo was also down. "We are cautiously optimistic, as the maritime world is still facing major challenges," said Coens. \ AH

Anti-terror office joins Doel sabotage investigation

The federal anti-terrorism agency OCAD has joined in an investigation of an oil leak at the nuclear power reactor Doel 4 in Beveren, East Flanders. Last week the agency for nuclear control (Fanc) said it was looking into allegations of sabotage.

The reactor was shut down unexpectedly last week, after about 90,000 litres of oil leaked into the steam turbine, causing it to overheat. Electricity producer Electrabel called it "an apparently deliberate manual intervention".

Representatives of Fanc and Electrabel first interviewed members of staff, and then the prosecutor's office of Dendermonde was included in the enquiry, according to Jan Bens, director of Fanc, who was previously the director at Doel. "Several hundred people have access to the technical zone where

the incident took place," he said. "The prosecutor is now leading the investigation with our co-operation."

Both Electrabel and Fanc stressed that the zone where the leak took place is not connected to the reactor, and that the nuclear zone was at no point at risk. However, many of those with access to the technical zone also have access to the nuclear zone.

Later it was revealed that OCAD was also involved in the investigation. At present, investigators have said only that they are assuming the involvement of one or more people, who may have set off the leak deliberately or accidentally.

"We are ruling nothing out," said Jurgen Coppens of the prosecutor's office. "We're dealing with very recent events, so it's still far too early to talk about results."

Activist group asks for appeal of flight routes judgement

The group Actie Noordrand, which represents residents of the Flemish municipalities to the north of Brussels, has called on the federal government to take legal action against the recent court ruling in which a judge struck down two routes used by planes taking off from Brussels Airport.

The two routes, in force since last February, took departing aircraft over the capital: the first following the canal through Molenbeek and Anderlecht, and the second swinging southwest over Etterbeek, Oudergem and Watermaal-Bosvoorde. In the meantime, routes that lead planes over the Flemish areas north of the city remain in use.

According to Actie Noordrand, Brussels should share the burden of noise nuisance. At present, 42% of planes taking off and landing in Zaventem fly over the municipalities represented by Noordrand, such as Grimbergen, Meise and Wemmel, but that figure is due to go up when the two contested routes go out of service within the three-month deadline imposed by the court.

The group is calling for a solution "in which no single zone receives a concentration of overflights, and the situation remains liveable for everyone". \ AH

Oceans to blame

UGent analysis of oceanic patterns reveals origin of droughts



Senne Sterckx
More articles by Senne \ flanderstoday.eu

Everyone older than 35 remembers the tragic famine that ravaged Ethiopia and neighbouring Eritrea between 1983 and 1985 – if not because of the footage of starving children on television then because of the Live Aid concerts organised by Bob Geldof. In northern Ethiopia alone – the hardest stricken region – more than 400,000 people died from the effects of the famine, mainly because of starvation and disease, but also due to violence inflicted by the oppressive Ethiopian army. According to the United Nations, more than one million people died during the three-year famine.

One of the major causes of the disaster was a lingering period of drought that struck eastern Africa in the beginning of the 1980s. In Ethiopia, the economy relies heavily on agriculture and the export of agricultural products.

The first signals were already there in 1981, when a less-serious drought wiped out harvests. But Ethiopia's food reserves were then still large enough to handle what was hoped to be an isolated incident. In the following years, however, the usual spring rains again stayed away, and diseases destroyed crops on a massive scale in the Sidamo region, Ethiopia's breadbasket.

By the summer of 1984, tens of thousands were dying of starvation and related diseases. Aid agencies said six million people were at risk. Food aid from the West came much too late because Western countries were reluctant to support the Marxist government of Ethiopia, and the famine became the worst in the history of modern Africa.

Thirty years later, it is clear polit-



© Corbis

Repeated droughts caused by oceanic patterns sparked the three-year famine that left 400,000 dead

ical factors were largely at fault: aside from the West dragging its feet, the Ethiopian government preferred spending the country's already narrow budget on its army instead of on its starving population.

“We hope to construct a drought prediction model for the Northern Horn of Africa

But what caused the droughts in the first place? Flemish scientists, together with Ethiopian colleagues, have now solved the puzzle. A complex interplay between three oceanic patterns from three different oceans is to blame, they have announced.

That oceans have an important impact on global climate is well-known. Lesser known is that climate variability – or the occurrence of local extremes – can be caused by anomalies in oceanic

patterns tens of thousands of kilometres away. For example, the effects of El Niño, a band of warm water temperatures that periodically develops off the South American coast around Christmas, are felt globally.

Ethiopian meteorologists have known for many years that their weather is influenced by El Niño. However, a Flemish researcher from Ghent University (UGent) has recently discovered other contributing factors apart from this one powerful “oceanic driver”. Sil Lanckriet, a UGent meteorologist and PhD student, has pinpointed two other major influences in Ethiopia's weather system: the so-called Indian Ocean dipole and the monsoons

in the south-western part of the Atlantic Ocean.

By doing so, he was able to increase the accuracy of the country's rainfall model dramatically. The results from the model now fit precisely with the data of the recorded rainfall (or the absence of) during previous decades in Ethiopia. In other words, Lanckriet has identified the true cause of the lingering drought that caused the famine in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Lanckriet made use of a 15-year-old modelling technique called EOT. “It's a method used to find large-scale atmospheric patterns,” he says. “In Earth observation data, we use this technique to examine each pixel of millions that make up satellite images and to identify the ones that have the greatest influence on the global picture. Using EOT, we found relevant patterns not only in the Pacific [due to El Niño], but also in the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans.”

According to Lanckriet, all three oceanic patterns were needed to cause the severe droughts that resulted in the famine of the 1980s. “The interplay between them altered the monsoon circulation as well as the air flow in the lower atmosphere in the tropics.”

So is this phenomenon likely to recur? Lanckriet thinks so. “Yes, it is, though we really need all three oceanic patterns to be present at the same time to cause a drought as severe as the one we saw in Ethiopia. But predicting future droughts with our currently model is still difficult. It is a diagnostic model and not a real prediction model. However, we hope to construct a drought prediction model for the northern Horn of Africa soon.”

WEEK IN INNOVATION

Smokers lose eight years off life

Smokers live an average of eight fewer years than non-smokers and suffer from physical limitations six years earlier than they normally would. People who quit smoking can significantly improve their lifespans, up to 2.5 years fewer than non-smokers. These are the main conclusions of a study by the Scientific Institute of Public Health. The Flemish League against Cancer called on the government to start “a real anti-smoking policy”, including banning advertisements for tobacco products at supermarkets, a reduction of the number of places where tobacco can be sold and measures to ensure stricter monitoring on the age of buyers.

Belgians buy more counterfeit drugs

The Belgian customs and police intercepted 1.5 million counterfeit medications last year, 230 times more than in 2012. This huge increase can be explained in part by a special international police operation. “In one week, they took down 10,000 fake pharmacy websites in 111 countries,” said Francis Adyns of the federal finance department. “In Belgium, 331 websites had to close.” The fake medications are popular because they are cheaper, don't require a prescription and can be ordered online. “But people order exactly the medicines that carry the biggest risk: pills for the heart, blood pressure and diabetes,” said KU Leuven toxicologist Jan Tytgat.

Hospitals receive Ebola guidelines

The Superior Health Council has sent guidelines to all hospitals and doctors in Belgium on how to deal with patients who exhibit symptoms related to the Ebola virus. In West Africa, the worst Ebola epidemic ever has caused the deaths of more than 900 people. “The danger for Belgium is very limited,” emphasised Steven Callens, a Ghent University specialist in infectious diseases. Callens is one of the authors of the guidelines, which explain how to recognise the symptoms and how to react. It is unlikely that infected travellers would arrive on a plane in Belgium because people from afflicted areas, such as Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone are screened at the place of departure, Callens explained. \ Andy Furniere

Q&A

Guido van der Groen, the former head of the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, was the first to identify the Ebola virus in the blood of a missionary nun working in former Zaire

Many experts are advising that experimental vaccines should be used in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone against the Ebola virus. Isn't that making people guinea pigs?

One week ago, I sent an e-mail to Hilde Declerck [the Flemish doctor currently running the Ebola isolation centre in Sierra Leone]. I advised her and her co-workers to administer these promising products to themselves. By doing this, they can counter the perception within the local communities that people are being used as guinea pigs by Western pharmaceutical companies. I realise this is a very delicate issue, but I think the

current epidemic is really extraordinary and asks for the application of these new drugs – both in healthy and in infected people. Of course, the people must always approve.

When will these vaccines and medications get approval?

It is difficult to say. The American pharmaceutical company Tekmira started a clinical trial for the antiviral drug TKM-Ebola in January. And I know that an experimental vaccine is currently in the pipeline. But for cases of emergency, there is a legal procedure that allows the administering of experimental drugs to a population before

they've passed through the trial phase; it's called the “compassionate use regulation”.

Since you and a colleague identified the Ebola virus in 1976, it has infected 3,700 people worldwide. It seems that the rule “the deadlier the virus, the harder it spreads” is true for Ebola.

Definitely. Ebola kills quickly. That is also why we know very quickly where the virus is circulating and what measures are needed to prevent a wider outbreak. Until now, all Ebola outbreaks have been stopped – and I expect that the same will happen for the current one in West Africa. Compared to Ebola, HIV, for example, is much more cunning. You can be infected with HIV without knowing it for years – until your immune system weakens and you

develop Aids. Also, antiviral drugs can't destroy every HIV particle in the body, while with Ebola this would certainly be possible with the experimental drugs that are currently being developed. \ interview by SS



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Finding their way

UA counsellors helps autistic students navigate higher education



Andy Furniere

More articles by Andy \ flanderstoday.eu

Increasingly more students are asking for special accommodations and facilities in higher education because they have autism. In the last academic year at Antwerp University (UA), the number of students with autism increased from 55 to 66 on the previous academic year.

The general accommodations for these students include extra time during exams and a more flexible exam schedule. Individualised facilities are also possible, like exemptions from excursions or presentations in front of the class.

According to Isabelle Vloeberghs, a student counsellor at Antwerp University, not all students with autism ask for these allowances. "Some students feel that they don't need this extra help during exam periods, but sometimes they do need the advice of a counsellor during the academic year," she explains.

Together with her colleague Ruth de Pau, Vloeberghs has created a handbook with general advice for students with autism and their lecturers. The handbook explains what autism entails exactly and includes many testimonies from students with the condition, as well as from their relatives, friends and teachers.

Throughout the 10 chapters, from choosing a study programme to finding a job after graduation, the handbook lists the difficulties autistic students face in higher education and offers possible solutions to some common problems.

"Students with autism have very different characters and so have very different needs," says Vloeberghs. One common characteristic of youngsters with autism, however, is that they are very independent and don't readily seek help, so the handbook urges them not to wait too long to talk to someone – whether a counsellor or a personal acquaintance – if they experience difficulties.

Vloeberghs gives the example of a history student with autism who had trouble searching for materials in an archive and spent a week there without getting any work done. "There are many deadlines, and an academic year can fly by very quickly, so you don't have the time to get far behind," she says. A counsellor can give very concrete advice, on study problems or personal issues, to help students get back on track.

One of the major difficulties of many people with autism is that they don't easily integrate in a group. This can lead to social isolation, but



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also causes problems when students have to work on team projects. According to the handbook, lecturers can help student with autism by dividing the class into groups themselves and by asking for regular feedback to quickly defuse possible conflicts.

"In general, lecturers don't have to change their teaching methods too much because an autism-friendly approach is really just a human-friendly approach," explains Vloeberghs. "Lecturers just have to make sure that they are very clear in their communication and that they act respectfully towards the student." The handbook also emphasises the necessity of zero-tolerance on bullying, as students with autism are significantly more likely to be victims of bullying than other students.

When lecturers are not aware that a student has autism, this can lead to conflict. "Students with autism can react very strongly if they lose self-control, like if they are extremely nervous during an excursion or presentation, for example," says Vloeberghs. "Teachers who are not informed about the student's condition can interpret their behaviour as simply annoying or arrogant."

The student counsellor further explains that many autistic students have difficulties in assessing their own limitations. "If they go too far without addressing their tension and stress, this can

cause them to crash mentally for a long time," says Vloeberghs. She adds that many students with autism have a general problem finding the right balance between work and rest or recreation.

Another common struggle is planning ahead and dealing with administrative issues. Students with autism can also have problems following the lessons, because they are more easily distracted. Despite the many obstacles for these students, UA statistics demonstrate that they achieve similar marks to the average student. The handbook also mentions the strengths of this group of students. Often, students with autism are more prepared at the start of their higher education studies because they know that new situations require a lot of advance preparation.

As many of these young people have had to deal with several negative experiences in school, they often can put setbacks more easily into perspective than their fellow students. Many people with autism also possess a certain stubbornness that helps them to succeed, according to the handbook.

The handbook Verder studeren met autisme (Further Studies with Autism) costs €15 and can be ordered from UA's Student Information Point by emailing stip@uantwerpen.be

WEEK IN EDUCATION

Ghent offers lessons to Roma children

In September, the city of Ghent will begin offering lessons to Roma children in a container classroom on a terrain along the Drongens-esteenweg. Ghent is the first Flemish city to offer classes to children of Roma families who are in the country legally. Children from these communities rarely go to school because of their nomadic lifestyle. In Ghent, the children will receive lessons from five students from teacher education studies. Because the children often stay in Ghent for only a limited period, the team will keep a record of every child's progress to pick up their education again the next time they come to the city.

VAT introduced for language courses

Language courses provided by commercial institutions or the self-employed will become subject to VAT of 21% starting 1 September. According to guiding principles, education should be free from VAT regulation. But the EU decided that there should be a limit to the interpretation of this principle. The VAT exemption should not serve to help taxable businesses make a profit with language courses. Therefore, the exemption will now only be valid when the institution or business invests all its profits back into the language education programme. Non-profit organisations will still enjoy the VAT exemption.

Knokke-Heist improves bee habitat

Knokke-Heist is increasing its efforts to reduce the number of bee deaths through a project in co-operation with the company BeeOdiversity. In 2011, the coastal town started planting meadows of wildflowers on a small scale. Now the Culture Centre Scharpoord has opened a biodiversity centre in its garden with special bee habitats and information on the value of bees to the maintenance of the environment and food diversity. Two cycling routes and a walking route are also being created with educational information on bees, butterflies and flowers. Knokke-Heist is co-operating with the BeeOdiversity team, led by researcher Bach Kim Nguyen of Liège University. BeeOdiversity is a Brussels company that develops projects to stimulate biodiversity. \AF

Q&A

Sophie Obin co-ordinated the first summer camp for children of Flemish expats. The goal is to strengthen the children's ties to Flanders and facilitate their possible return

Whose idea was it to launch this summer camp?

The camp is the result of a collaboration between camp organiser Idee Kids and Vlamingen in the Wereld [VIW], the association that assists Flemings living and working abroad. It was initiated at the request of VIW members, in fact. Many kids of Flemish expats stay with the grandparents in Flanders during the summer holiday, and many parents plan to return to the region with their kids in the future. They feel it's important to give their children an idea of the Flemish culture and language, which

should help them to integrate into society and the education system.

Where is the camp located?

The 21 participating expat children spent five days in the countryside in Wulveringem, a district of Veurne in West Flanders, together with 33 children who live here. We showed them life on a farm in Flanders and took them to a market in Veurne, for example.

What's a typical day at camp like?

Through accessible games, songs and contact with local children,

the expat kids got to practice their Dutch. Sometimes I took the expat children who had very little knowledge of Dutch aside to teach them basic concepts – like the words for colours and animals. The expat children also learned how to introduce themselves in Dutch.

How did the expat children react to the camp?

Some participants, like children from Dubai, were delighted by the mere sight of wheat fields and farms because they are so uncommon to them. The contact with farm animals, baking bread and the visit to the market in Veurne definitely made a big impression. I noticed that the expat children easily mixed with the Flemish,



since they are used to making new friends and having to be self-reliant. For the local kids, it was an enriching experience to meet children with stories from different parts of the world. Interview by AF

\ WWW.TINYURL.COM/EXPATCAMP

WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

Brussels Games Festival

Three-day festival devoted to games, including board games, role-playing games, and games of skill. There will also be tournaments, dealers and demonstrations. 15-17 August, Onderrichtsstraat, Brussels; free
www.brusselsgamesfestival.be

First World War Theatre Walk

On 18 August 1914, two prominent citizens of Kanne, now a district of Riemst, Limburg, were murdered by German soldiers at the outbreak of the First World War. The unique theatrical performance *Poswick: Oorlogszomer 14* by Theater Ozzy Riemst evokes events of the time, recreating historical scenes during a walking tour through Kanne. 15-17 August at 14:15, 15:45 and 17:15, starts on Kapelstraat; tickets €5, reserve on 0496 83 11 57
www.facebook.com/TheaterOzzyRiemst

Horst Castle Festival

Annual medieval family festival at a restored 15th-century castle, with knights' tournament, minstrels, craftspeople, storytellers and guided tours of the castle. 15 & 17 August, 10.00-18.00, Horststaat 28, Holsbeek; free
www.pyntnockridderhorst.info

Patershol Festival

Neighbourhood street fair in Ghent's medieval quarter, with live music, kids' entertainment, guided tours, a flea market, food and drink. Dance band on Saturday night and a midnight candle procession on Sunday. 15-17 August, Patershol, Ghent; free
www.patershol.org

Reptile Open House

Calling all lizard-lovers! The reptile rescue centre in Zuienkerke opens its doors to the public, with guided tours, demonstrations, entertainment, food and drink. 16-17 August, 10.00-18.00, SOS Reptiel, Oostendsesteenweg 90, Houtave; free
www.sosreptiel.be



A bed of begonias

Brussels' biennial Flower Carpet salutes 50 years of Turkish migration



Giorgio Valentino

More articles by Giorgio \ flanderstoday.eu

Even on a bad day, Brussels' Grote Markt ranks among the most beautiful squares in Europe. The Flower Carpet extravaganza dials up the charm factor of the capital's historic main square from merely scenic to positively spectacular, thanks in large part to hundreds of thousands of Ghent-grown begonias.

Every two years a new floral pattern, 75 metres long and 25 wide, is conceived by landscape architect Mark Schautteet and laid at the doorstep of Brussels City Hall by an army of over one hundred volunteer artisans. This 19th edition celebrates 50 years of Turkish immigration to Belgium.

The biennial event has been taking place in Brussels for over 40 years but its roots go back even further. Horticulturalist Etienne Stautemas had begun seeding his native Flanders with small, experimental flower rugs in the 1950s before perfecting the concept and planting large-scale flower carpets in Antwerp, Amsterdam and even Buenos Aires. The Brussels event was established in 1971. Its current resident architect Schautteet inherited the Flower Carpet on Stautemas' death in 1998.

Of course, Stautemas and Schautteet would have been unable to realise their ambitious designs without the raw materials supplied by the Flemish flower industry. Not only is the industry's staple, the begonia, robust enough to weather the ordeal, it also offers a palette of colours from bright white to yellow to orange to red, with a whole range of pink hues in-between.

The flower comes in different shapes, too: single, hanging and double. What's more, the begonia is in plentiful supply here. Belgium is the world's largest producer of the variety and most of the country's annual yield of 60 million tubers is cultivated in the Ghent area.

This one flower, grown in this one region provides more than enough to weave an organic tapestry to remember. The rest is up to human ingenuity. Schautteet and his team begin planning a full year in advance by brainstorming and experimenting with sketches and scale models. Once they've perfected the



© Avi&Gulli, Gaston Batistini, Labo River, Michel Block

The last Flower Carpet brought thousands of visitors to the Grote Markt

pattern, they must calculate how many and what kind of flowers they will need.

These are harvested by an army of gardeners while the team builds a life-sized turf template to be rolled out on the Grote Markt the morning of the big reveal and filled in with live begonia, like a giant colour-by-number, in just four hours. The finished product measures a full 1,800 square metres, each one containing no less than 300 densely packed flowers.

The Flower Carpet is not simply an exercise in form, however. Each edition is given to a theme plucked from history or the present day. In recent years the organisation has taken an intercultural turn. The last Flower Carpet, for example, was inspired by—and even incorporated flowers from—Africa.

This year the Carpet marks the 50th anniversary of Turkish immigration to Belgium. It was in 1964 that Belgium's captains of industry officially invited Turkish workers to come work in their mines, factories and construction sites. Fifty years later the country is home to 220,000

Belgians of Turkish descent.

The immigrants brought with them their culture, making Turkish goods widely available throughout Belgium. There's the food, of course, but the Turks are also renowned for another product: the Anatolian carpet.

The artisanal tradition began in Ottoman times, when the Turks occupied a crucial crossroads on the overland trade route between East and West. Certain regions distinguished themselves by producing luxurious, hand-made designs that were peddled as status symbols and gifts to potentates. Turkish carpets are still in high demand all over the world. This year's Flower Carpet will incorporate elements from these various regional styles.

The Turks are no strangers to flowers, either. The tulip, which so fascinated Western Europe in the 18th century, was, after all, an Ottoman export adopted by Flemish and Dutch botanists. But make no mistake: This Flower Carpet, like those before it, is still made of home-grown begonias.

Tulip or no tulip, Flower Carpet 2014 will nevertheless honour the contributions of Turkish labour and culture to Belgium in the past half-century. The Carpet is on show for three full days. While it's a breath-taking sight from ground level, the best panorama is to be had from the balcony of City Hall, open daily 9.00 to 23.00 for the occasion.

At night the Carpet comes alive in a sound-and-vision spectacle. A light show unfolds, accompanied by an original soundtrack created by Belgian composer and violinist Grégoire Dune. Together they tell the story of an imagined group of Anatolian nomads whose collective life and travels follow the rhythm of the seasons. Winter still is followed by spring blossom (naturally) and summer tempest. The Conservatory-trained Dune combines the best of contemporary technique with traditional Turkish instruments such as the lute-like *saz* and the *daf* drum.

15-17 August

Grote Markt
Brussels

BITE Rubensmarkt

A market named after a Flemish Baroque painter known for colour, extravagance and sensuality can only be a good thing. The city of Antwerp and the Antwerp Market Stall Holders organisation host the Rubensmarkt every year on 15 August, a medieval affair featuring more than 200 stalls. The festive market is a flashback to the time of Peter Paul Rubens and the heyday of the city of Antwerp.

This weekend's 46th edition of the event is no different from previous years. Visitors will find stall holders decked out in 17th-century garb, selling every tasty thing that Antwerp – and the rest of Flanders – have to offer: from cookies (*Antwerpse handjes*) and liqueur (Elixir d'Anvers) to the city beer (De Koninck), plus *karakollen* (sea snails), dried sausage, local cheeses and plump bunches of grapes. There are also clothes and shoes, watches and jewellery, antiques, books and all the same products you find in regular markets. True to tradition, the opening of the market is preceded by a torchlight parade through the

historic centre of Antwerp, with the towering Cathedral of Our Lady as a painting-worthy backdrop for the event. The parade is a sort of group prayer to the weather gods, one which, when answered with clear skies, is a guarantee for big crowds at the Rubensmarkt and even bigger sales, especially in ice cream and cold beer.

The medieval market happens to fall every year on Mother's Day. (In and around Antwerp only; unlike in the rest of Flanders, they've been celebrating Mother's Day on 15 August for more than 100 years). That means you'll also find plenty of gifts for mama, including stands overflowing with flowers or chocolate and salesmen demonstrating the latest model of potato peeler.

"We come every year with the family," Bart Stuer of Edegem told *Het Gazet van Antwerpen*. "First we go to mass in the Cathedral, and then we head to the Rubensmarkt to buy flowers for Mother's Day before going to eat a waffle."

Aside from the market itself, there's plenty to do in Antwerp on this Catholic feast day. Boats like



Flandria and the Riverstar take visitors for scenic rides up and down the Scheldt, kids are entertained by street theatrics and most of the city's museums are open.

But in the true spirit of Rubens, the idea is to eat, drink and be merry. \ Robyn Boyle

15 August

8.00-23.00
Across Antwerp

Flanders off the beaten path

War plans foiled, stolen art and moving towers: the secrets of Limburg province



Toon Lambrechts
More articles by Toon \ flanderstoday.eu

The rich heritage of Flanders has left many traces behind. Some are touristic highlights, others remain virtually unknown. *Flanders Today* went in search of its quirkiest historical spots for our five-part series: Flanders off the beaten path. This week we visit the province of Limburg, unearthing forgotten tales of theft, war, espionage and faulty towers.

Vucht, a borough of Maasmechelen, would appear to be a sleepy little place where nothing much happens. But in 1940, the village witnessed an incident that could have affected the Second World War dramatically. January, 1940. All across Europe, the situation has become very tense. Four months earlier, Nazi Germany brutally trampled Poland. In response, France and England declared war on Hitler. It seems certain that Europe will explode into war again, but when?

“Reinsberger digs for matches to burn the documents, but it's too late

Just outside Vucht, a small German plane has engine trouble and makes an emergency landing. Belgian border guards arrive immediately. To their surprise, it appears that the two occupants of the aircraft are carrying Germany's military plans for an invasion of Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Rewind one day. The German major Helmut Reinsberger has received instructions to bring the plans for the imminent invasion – called *Fall Gelb* (Case Yellow) – by train to Cologne. During a stop at the Loddenheide airport, Reinsberger bumps into pilot Major Erich Hoenmanns. They are old friends, and, after a night out in the airport's officers' mess, Hoenmanns proposes that Reinsberger take him to Cologne by plane. The next morning, in thick fog, Hoenmanns loses direction and



Just outside Vucht on Vranckenstraat, a monument commemorates the memorable plane crash of 1940

misses Cologne. When the engine starts to break down, the pilot is forced to make an emergency landing, crashing into neutral Belgium. Reinsberger digs for matches to burn the documents, but it's too late: The guards are already there. Both men are arrested and the plans seized. The documents cause a great uproar in Belgium, but our military leaders suspect that the crash is a ruse and that the plans are false. Four months later, it becomes painfully clear how real the plans were.

Long live Tijl!

Barely legible graffiti on a railway bridge just outside Hasselt reminds us of a theft that stoked the public fire in Belgium some 40 years ago. A man who called

himself Tijl van Limburg stole an invaluable painting by Vermeer and demanded that the government help the refugees in East Pakistan.

On the morning of 24 September 1971, attendants at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels made a shocking discovery: The painting “The Love Letter” by Johannes Vermeer, a 17th-century Dutch masterpiece on loan from Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum, had disappeared overnight.

The night before, 21-year-old Mario Roymans had locked himself into a utility cabinet in the museum. With a kitchen knife, he had cut the painting from its frame and hid it in his home.

On 6 October, the BRT (now the



Vermeer's “The Love Letter”, stolen by Tijl van Limburg in 1971

VRT) receives a phone call live on air during the news: the thief is calling to make an unusual

demand. Calling himself Tijl van Limburg, he holds the painting ransom, demanding that government donate 200 million Belgian Francs (equivalent to €5 million) to support the refugees in what was then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, where civil war had broken out.

Roymans made the call from a petrol station in Hasselt within earshot of the station owner. Shortly after, the thief returned again to phone the popular Radio 2 programme *Te bed of niet te bed* with Jos Ghysen, but the owner had already informed the police. After a brief search, Roymans – or Tijl, as he is popularly called – was arrested, found hiding in the cowshed of the Herkenrode abbey. The painting was found under the mattress in his bedroom.

The arrest and conviction of Roymans to two years in prison sparked wide social unrest. The public sympathised with Tijl, and petitions began circulating demanding his release, while others organised actions to help the refugees in East Pakistan. All over Limburg, slogans started to appear, like “Long live Tijl” and “Free Tijl”.

In the end, Roymans served only six months in prison, and the painting was fully restored and still hangs in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

One of the graffiti slogans from the reign of Tijl has survived the passing of time. Just outside Hasselt, on the Kuringen railway bridge, one can just barely make out “Long Live Tijl”. The writing has faded, but it remains a powerful reminder of a man who sacrificed himself to bring attention to the suffering of others.

Over the years, a book, documentary and even a stage play have all told the story of Tijl van Limburg.

THE MOVING TOWER OF BOCHOLT

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Limburg town of Bocholt caught the attention of the world with a bold undertaking. To expand the church, the tower was moved, a feat that would be repeated only 50 years later.

The year is 1910, and the church of Bocholt has a big problem. The city's population has dramatically increased in recent years, and the church has become too small to accommodate all the worshippers. Plans to expand the church prove difficult. It's not feasible to construct an addition to the side or the front. Then a bold plan is

put forth: Pastor Van Venckenray and Mayor Langens hear that two engineers had moved the reception room of the Dam Station in Antwerp as one whole piece. Why not repeat the trick with the church tower?

After some negotiations, engineer Weiss and contractor Morglia are up to the job. The tower – built in 1411 and weighing about 2,600 tons – is lifted two centimetres using 256 jacks and moved 9.4 metres along specially designed rails. The story goes that the tower bells were ringing all the while. The move made it possible to make the



church two bays (a window length) larger.

Today it is clear which pieces of the church were added on; the colour of the stones is slightly different. The project left the inhabitants of Bocholt with the local nickname of *Torenkuiers* (tower carriers). Until the relocation of the temple of Abu Simbel in Egypt, the tower of Bocholt was the oldest monument to have been relocated.

The church (*pictured*) is located in the centre of Bocholt. A small museum inside is dedicated to the moving of the tower.

 BUSINESS

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Five million hits and counting

The charmingly complaintive Flemish band Marble Sounds is a social media hit



Christophe Verbiest
More articles by Christophe \ flanderstoday.eu

\ WWW.MARBLESOUNDS.COM

“When I was 23, I was pondering what I would do with my life,” Pieter Van Dessel tells me in his adopted hometown of Brussels. “I loved music, but I had no idea if it had a future in store for me. I liked writing songs, but you don’t make a cent out of that in the beginning.”

So instead, Van Dessel (*second from right in photo*) used his law degree to get a job at a publishing house specialising in fiscal and legal books. But he always kept making music on the side in projects like the electronic duo Plastic Operator.

Now, 14 years on, Van Dessel heads Marble Sounds – not Flanders’ best-selling band, but certainly one of its most internationally popular if you count views on YouTube. Having a song with nearly five million hits might not be an astonishing feat for Lady Gaga, but for a Flemish band, it’s huge.

And all this thanks to a sojourn in francophone Canada. “In 2006, my wife got the chance to work in Montreal,” Van Dessel explains. “I quit my job and followed her. I envisioned it as a sabbatical during which I could focus on music.” That’s precisely what happened, though not the music he foresaw. In Montreal, he started working for a studio that specialises in music for commercials. He had a little experience in the field of film scoring, having helped some friends out who needed music for their short films. “Having the opportunity to do it on a professional level was a revelation,” he says. “Also, I could use the studio to record the songs I was writing.”

After two years, the couple returned to Belgium. Van Dessel, who, despite his degree, was never very attracted to law, decided to fully focus on music. He took the time to turn Marble Sounds into a full-blown band.

“If we hadn’t moved to Canada, I don’t think I would have had the guts to skip my 9-to-5 and plunge blindly into the uncertain realm of music,” he confesses. He’s happy, of course, about how things worked out. “Thanks to scoring work, I can make a living from music now. It’s a varied job. I get the chance to tackle a diverse range of genres, from classical to electronic. I really love that but couldn’t do it in Marble Sounds. And I like having to work with deadlines: It forces me to be structured and disciplined.”

If you have watched Flemish television in the past month, you might have heard some of Van Dessel’s music. He wrote the piano theme for Unicef’s ad encouraging people to put the organisation in their wills. He also just scored



Marble Sounds play Pukkelpop on 16 August

his first feature film, *Labyrinth*, which is in cinemas now. “It was an adventure,” he smiles. “I had to write 70 minutes of music, and it was recorded by a symphonic orchestra.”

He doesn’t mind that he has to put himself at the service of a director or producer. “With Marble Sounds, I have complete artistic freedom. And I don’t have to make concessions because I don’t depend on the band to earn a living.” He has also sold Marble Sounds songs commercially. “It’s a reality you can’t escape since record sales have plummeted dramatically the past decade. Granted, sometimes it leads to difficult discussions in the band.”

From an early age, Van Dessel went to music school, studying piano. He never had the ambition to become a classical musician. “I

didn’t like to practise,” he explains. “I preferred to improvise instead of following the scores. My fingers were too short, too.”

He picked up the electric guitar when the grunge craze broke out more than 20 years ago. “I was almost 30 before I started singing,” he says. “I had to learn to accept the limitations of my voice and to create songs in function of my voice. I’m really glad I made the leap. I’ve discovered that at some moments I really need to sing. It’s a physical thing, it feels like a release.”

He also points out, with a smile: “I’m not charismatic on stage. I know it, but I don’t care.”

Marble Sounds released its debut album *Nice Is Good* in 2010, and *Dear Me, Look up* followed last year. They deal in autumnal post rock, punctuated by belligerent

“My wife’s reaction was: ‘If you sing it, it never sounds cheerful.’ It’s my fate

guitars, a stately cello and tufts of electronic impulses, though never all at the same time. At the heart lies Van Dessel’s voice, charmingly complaintive. In one word: melancholy.

“It’s a consequence, not a goal,”

Van Dessel points out. “Probably the feeling is linked to my voice. One day, I remember, I let my wife listen to what I thought was a happy song. Her reaction was: ‘If you sing it, it never sounds cheerful’.”

He smiles. “It’s my fate. Though I think that, especially on the second album, all the songs have dismal arrangements. I don’t like to flirt with everlasting melancholia.”

That being said, Marble Sounds did cover Sophia, the group of American Robin Proper-Sheppard, an unrelenting dealer in exquisite melancholia. A kindred spirit? Van Dessel: “I’ve always been a big fan of theirs. But the cover, ‘Ship in the Sand’, happened very spontaneously. We recorded it, not with the idea to put in on *Dear Me*, but it was too good not to include it.”

The songs “The Time to Sleep” and “Good Occasions” have touched a tender spot with music fans around the globe. They have been watched, respectively, by 2.7 and almost 5 million people. In the latter case, that is not even accompanied by a stunning music video: it is only the music and a picture of the record sleeve.

“At its height ‘Good Occasions’ counted 7,000 views a day,” say Van Dessel, who offers a kind of explanation for the success. “From the comments, I learned we’re part of a merry-go-round of songs. People start with a song and afterwards click one of the suggestions and, at one point, end up at ‘Good Occasions’.” Don’t ask me how we got in there, but all the artists can be called melancholy.”

Other artists in that stream of suggested videos are Icelandic singer Sóley (16 million views) and Australian fivesome The Paper Kites (4 million views). None of them are famous if you look at record sales, but the 21st century being what it is, one’s impact on social media often says more about popularity than do sales.

“Good Occasions” was uploaded by a fan called Omar Gonzalez. “I don’t care about fan-uploads as long as they don’t mess with the music,” says Van Dessel, “or include a link to an illegal download.”

And in case you’re curious if any of this social media earns them any money: “Not one penny, but the record company is looking into it,” says Van Dessel. “Apparently it’s a hell of a job to earn money from YouTube.” Luckily, parallel to the explosion of views, they saw an increase in the number of digital sales.

Marble Sounds: it might not be Van Dessel’s main source of income, but it’s certainly much more than a pastime.

WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

Canada funds Canadian Remembrance Trail

The Canadian government has given €110,000 to the Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917 and the city of Zonnebeke for the creation of a Canadian Remembrance Trail. The announcement was made by Canada's minister for veterans' affairs, Julian Fantino, who was recently in Belgium taking part in the ceremonies to mark the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War in Belgium. More than 4,000 Canadians were killed in the Battle of Passchendaele in 1917, and 12,000 more were injured. "Our government is proud to partner with the Memorial Museum Passchendaele to ensure that our military's brave stories of service, sacrifice and heroism are told," Fantino said.

Flemish films premiere at Toronto

Several Flemish films will have their world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival next month, including *The Drop*, the new film by Michaël R Roskam, director of the Oscar-nominated *Rundskop* (*Bullhead*). *The Drop*, which features Matthias Schoenaerts in a supporting role, was shot in New York and stars Tom Hardy and James Gandolfini. Also premiering at the festival is *Waste Land* by Pieter Van Hees (*Linker-oever*), the story of the investigation of a bizarre murder in Brussels. *Welp*, the debut feature from Jonas Govaerts, will also screen in Toronto. An all-too-rare horror production out of Flanders, *Welp* co-stars Stef Aerts (*Adem*) and Evelien Bosmans (*Marina*).

Flanders Fields Post launched abroad

Tourism Flanders has launched a First World War newspaper in locations across the UK, Ireland, the US and Canada. *The Flanders Fields Post* is based on the historic *The Wipers Times*, a satirical newspaper created by British captain Frederick J Roberts during the war. *The Flanders Fields Post*, which plans just one edition, is presented in the same style but with information about the war and visiting sites in Flanders. The papers were handed out on the streets last Monday, in honour of the 100-year anniversary of the invasion of Belgium, by costumed paperboys hollering at passers-by: "Hundred years World War One! Get your free copy of The Flanders Fields Post!"

Life in pink

Richard Mosse's Enclave shows the hidden side of war in Antwerp



Ian Mundell

More articles by Ian \ flanderstoday.eu

WWW.FOTOMUSEUM.BE

Richard Mosse's shocking pink images of the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are highly distinctive, a challenge to conventional war photography and the way we are used to looking at Africa. Created with the last reels of an obsolete film stock, they may even be unique in the world.

The film, which is sensitive to infra-red light, was originally developed by the US military as a way of identifying enemies concealed in the landscape. Vegetation appears bright pink, while other materials remain dark, thwarting attempts at camouflage. The film was subsequently used by geographers and archaeologists to reveal landscape features and during the 1960s to produce psychedelic album covers (think Frank Zappa's *Hot Rats*).

"I wanted to throw my genre up against the wall to see how it would break apart"

But it is not a film stock that any serious photographer would use, which was one of the reasons Mosse was drawn to it. The Irish-born, Berlin-based photographer



© Courtesy FotoMuseum

had become dissatisfied with his work in documentary photography, dealing with subjects such as war and conflict in Iraq and the Middle East. Working with this bizarre, unfashionable film would take him out of his comfort zone. The choice of the DRC came afterwards. The conflict in the east of the country, around Lake Kivu, has claimed millions of lives since it began in 1998. It is a complicated situation, with conventional forces, rival militias and the United Nations all struggling for advantage in a tangled web of political, ethnic and territorial conflicts. The media tends to respond to this complexity by ignoring it altogether, but it was just the kind of challenge that Mosse was looking for. "It's an opaque conflict, and that was why I became fascinated by it,"

he said in a talk opening the show of his work at Antwerp's FotoMuseum. "There is this problem of representing it: as a documentary photographer, I need to get the subject in front of the lens." Using a film designed to make hidden things more visible seemed an appropriate choice, both to reveal something about the conflict and about documentary photography. "I wanted to throw my genre up against the wall to see how it would break apart," he explained. Beginning in 2010, Mosse made several trips to the region, getting close to the militias and taking photographs of what he saw. He also worked with cinematographer

Trevor Tweeten and sound artist Ben Frost to produce a multimedia installation that forms the centre-piece of *The Enclave*.

Filmed images of the conflict unfold across six screens, forcing viewers to keep shifting their attention. The smooth, gliding movements of the steady-cam, a technique rarely used in conventional reportage, are particularly striking. Following a soldier through a field of tall, violently pink elephant grass or winding through the paths of a camp for internally displaced people, the effect is breath-taking. There are also militia rallies, ceremonies to magically protect soldiers from bullets, rehearsals for attacks, actual attacks and aftermath. Some of this is real, some of it staged by the militias for the camera. There are people playing dead, and people who are clearly not playing at all.

The pink brings an otherworldly feeling to everything, a jolt that stops the viewer being lulled either by over-familiar images of men with guns or by the natural beauty of the landscape. However unreal, everything feels more present than in conventional images.

The colour also proves to be revealing in more subtle ways in the still photographs. For example, in a landscape where Tutsi herdsman have forced out indigenous subsistence farmers, the dark specks of their cattle now stand out clearly in the sweeping pink pasture.

Until 11 November

FotoMuseum
Walsekaai 47, Antwerp

Old artists play new sounds at Jazz Middelheim

JAZZMIDDELHEIM.BE

Jazz Middelheim tends to attract musical legends, and each time one of these elder statesmen of jazz takes to the stage, there is a frisson that perhaps this is your last chance to see them. Morbid thoughts aside, this is almost certainly the case this year as the festival marks the final date in a rare European tour by two of these legends – Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter – playing as a duo.

Now aged 74 and 80, respectively, Hancock and Shorter were members of the second great Miles Davis Quintet in the 1960s, with Shorter composing much of the group's influential music. They collaborated occasionally in the decades that followed, but only made one album together, released in 1997. They toured together then, but rarely since.

As a duo, Hancock plays synth and piano, while Shorter sticks to soprano sax. Reports from earlier dates in this summer's highly exclusive tour suggest ethereal improvisation, with both musicians still willing to take creative risks. But ultimate seniority at this edition of Jazz Middelheim goes to another pianist, 84-year-old Ahmad Jamal, who appears with a quartet of bass, drums and percussion. Expect Latin



Wayne Shorter (left) and Herbie Hancock headline Antwerp's annual jazz fest

inflections and open exploration of standards, such as his trademark "Poinciana". He would have been surpassed in years by Toots Thielemans, a fixture at the festival for more than 30 years, but the 92-year-old harmonica player announced his retirement last March. The festival will pay tribute with an evening of his music, performed by his regular trio along with guests such as Kenny Werner, Bert Joris, Philip Catherine and Eliane Elias. Middelheim's approach is eclectic, combining musical styles from the mainstream to more

experimental groups. It's particularly good at providing space for artists to explore different facets of their music. This year, for example, American pianist Vijay Iyer appears on three evenings. First, he plays with a jazz sextet. Then he appears with a group, including poet Mike Ladd, performing material from the album *Holding It Down*, based on the dreams of US army veterans. Finally, he plays chamber music with the Hermes Ensemble.

A similar system operates on the festival's club stage, which is given over each evening to a musician or a group, to fill with different styles or musical formats. Invited artists include The Bureau of Atomic Tourism, Thomas Enhco, Gorka Benítez and the exceptional Ghent group MannGold de Cobre.

Other local performers on the bill include pianist Jef Neve, MikMâäk and saxophonist Bruno Vansina, appearing with his big band. International acts include Stacey Kent, Phronesis, Avishai Cohen, the Dave Douglas Quintet and the Carate Urio Orchestra. \ IM

14-17 August

Park Den Brandt
Beukenlaan12, Antwerp

Unsung heroes of the 20th century

Radiology at the Front

Until 15 December

Belgium Museum of Radiology, Brussels
WWW.RADIOLOGY-MUSEUM.BE

Like many military conflicts, the First World War accelerated the rate of certain technological developments. One we don't hear much about is radiology. It was during the Great War that X-ray machines first earned a regular place in hospitals. A small exhibition at the Belgian Museum of Radiology, located in the Military Hospital Queen Astrid in Brussels, focuses on the role of radiology in field surgery and the development of this medical discipline throughout the wars of the 20th century – from the First World War to the War on Terror.

At the outbreak of the First World War, the discipline of radiology, which allowed doctors to see inside a living human body for the first time, was only 19 years old. Early radiologists used the grey images to make an "autopsy of the living body". At the dawn of war, it quickly became clear that radiology would contribute enormously



to the practice of war medicine. Thanks to X-ray images, surgeons behind the frontline were able to localise bullets or pieces of shrapnel in a soldier's body. In the exhibition, you learn about the radio-opaque fluids that were first used by doctors on both sides of the Western front. These fluids raised the contrast of the

X-ray images and produced sharp contours of the projectile inside the body – an early form of tomography. From 1916 it was possible to send X-rays into the body at different angles, improving the locationing of projectiles. Now this technique – called computer tomography, or CT – is often used to find tumours and to measure their precise dimensions. After the First World War, radiology consolidated its place in medicine – this time for civilian use – and soon every hospital and doctor's office was equipped with an X-ray machine. \ Senne Starckx

VISUAL ARTS

I See What You Don't See

Until 21 September

Guislain Museum, Ghent
WWW.MUSEUMDRGUISLAIN.BE

American sociologist Howard Becker once wrote that the only art conceivable outside the fundamentally social circuit of the "art world" would be, literally, an autistic art. This may have been an overstated polemic – artists with autism do in fact exist and, they're not as isolated as all that – but it's true that these artists can open our eyes to new ways of seeing the world, experiencing art and, above all, thinking about autism itself. *I See What You Don't See* features works by artists with autism. The exhibition was conceived in Kassel in 2007 and has been touring Germany for the past three years. Guislain's iteration includes Belgian artists as well as German. Georgio Valentino



FAMILY

Deerlycke Folk Festival

15-17 August

Tapuitstraat, Deerlijk (West Flanders)
WWW.DEERLYCKE.BE

Once upon a time, the West Flemish town of Deerlijk had no cultural centre. The townsfolk, starved for arts, found a DIY solution, staging theatre performances and concerts in the municipal meeting rooms. This ad-hoc organisation eventually led to the inaugural Happy Folk Night in 1993. The thing grew and grew, changing its name in the process, until it achieved its present form: the Deerlycke Folk and Family Festival. Now spanning an entire weekend, Deerlycke boasts more than a dozen musical performances plus dance workshops and street theatre for the kids. This year's special guest is wild Irish folk-pop singer Wallis Bird (*pictured*). GV



MUSIC FESTIVAL

Stadsfestival Ypres

16 August, 18.30

Grote Markt, Ypres
WWW.ACCI.BE

Flanders is the land of a thousand music festivals. Loathe to waste any ray of sunshine, cities and villages from one end of the region to the other use the season as a pretext to put on an open-air shindig of some kind. Ypres' free festival is the perfect opportunity to stroll the city's historic centre and enjoy three Flemish pop and

rock acts. Kinshasa-born singer Leki opens the festivities with her special blend of American hip-hop and Congolese sounds. Hasselt alt-rockers Zornik are up next, followed by headliners Clouseau, that veteran Flemish duo who have already appeared at a handful of festivals across Belgium this summer. GV



ACTIVITY

Forgotten Folk Cafes

15 August, from 14.00

Across Poperinge
WWW.VLAANDERENLEKKERLAND.BE

Poperinge is famous for stubbornly continuing to produce the hops that go into some of Belgium's finest artisanal beers. The West Flemish town has a rich tradition of consuming the national beverage, too. Local workers congregated regularly in Poperinge's *volkscafés* to consume prodigious quantities in a convivial atmosphere complete with local musi-

cians and regional eats. This guided bicycle tour takes you to several of these erstwhile dens of camaraderie. A knowledgeable native guide will explain how the brewing industry has changed over the years and how it has in turn changed the face of Poperinge, relegating these once-popular watering holes to quaint souvenirs of yesteryear. GV



VISUAL ARTS

Ghent

Garden of Multiple Appearances: Temporary installation by Ghent artists Egon Van Herreweghe and Matthias Yzebaert, who share a fascination for the repurposing of sculptures and objects. *14-17 August, These Things Take Time, Nederkouter 36*
WWW.THESETHINGSTAKETIME.BE

Hasselt

Geen nieuws, goed nieuws?! (No News is Good News?!): Collection of anecdotes from and about the residents of Hasselt who stayed put during the First World War, including letters, diaries, postcards and photos. *Until 30 August, Het Stadsmus, Guido Gezellestraat 2*
WWW.HETSTADSMUS.BE

MUSIC FESTIVAL

Eeklo (East Flanders)

Helden in het Park (Heroes in the Park): 20th anniversary edition of the world music festival in a lush park in the middle of the city, organised by Muziekclub N9 and featuring concerts by Tomi Y Su Timbalight, Septeto Nabori, Debademba and Sekouba "Bambino" Diabaté, among others. *14 & 21 August 19.30-1.00, Helden Park, Oostveldstraat 91*
WWW.HELDENINHETPARK.BE

FILM

Antwerp

Cinema Urbana: Summer of Antwerp's programme of free open-air screenings this week presents the moving French film *Intouchables* (*The Untouchables*) about the relationship between a disabled Parisian aristocrat and his boisterous caretaker from the inner city, as well as the Jennifer Aniston vehicle *We're the Millers* and the feel-good Australian film *The Sapphires*. *Until 30 August, film at 22.00, Hangar 19A, Plantinkaai*
WWW.CINEMA-URBANA.BE

FOOD & DRINK

Zeebrugge

Dag van de Vlaamse Vis (Flemish Fish Day): Celebration of fish from the North Sea, featuring tours on board a fishing boat, cooking workshops and plenty of tastings, including a giant pot of Flemish Bisque, a new product made with only local varieties of fish that are too often overlooked. *15 August 10.00-00.00, Oude Vismijn, Tijdokstraat, Rederskaai*
WWW.TINYURL.COM/flemishfishday

Talking Dutch

Who's the fairest of them all?



Derek Blyth
More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

Everyone who lives in Ghent will tell you that it the finest city in the world. Much finer than the more famous Bruges. And now the city's charms have been noticed by an American blogger called John Aravosis, according to an article in *De Standaard*.

"Tot mijn grote verbazing stelde ik gisteren vast dat het Belgische Gent misschien wel de mooiste plaats is die ik ooit heb bezocht" – I was astonished to discover yesterday that the town of Ghent is quite possibly the prettiest place I have ever visited, wrote Aravosis on his blog Americablog.

Aravosis was in Brussels on business. He had asked some friends in Brussels which town he should visit and they suggested Ghent. *"Ik ben blij dat ze dat deden"* – boy am I glad they did, he wrote.

The first thing he noticed on entering Ghent were the men and women. *"In vergelijking met Brussel kunnen de looks van de Gentenaren me meer bekoren"* – The Ghent people struck me as kind of hot, especially compared to Brussels, he claimed.

Apart from the smouldering people, the town itself was simply gorgeous. *"Ik kan het bijna niet geloven dat mensen die hier wonen dit elke dag zien"* – I can't believe that people actually live here and see this every day," he said.

Aravosis posted some photos on his blog to show his readers some of the charming details of Ghent. *Zo was hij geïntrigeerd door het standje met Gentse neuzen op de Groentenmarkt, het gehaktballenrestaurant Balls and Glory van Wim Ballieu en de schoenen die aan de elektriciteitskabel bengelen op de Pensmarkt* – he was intrigued by the stand with the Ghent "noses" ("insanely sweet

candie thingies," he called them) on the Groentenmarkt, the meatball restaurant Balls and Glory run by Wim Ballieu and the shoes hanging from the electricity cables on the Pensmarkt.

"Als je veel reist, kom je op een punt dat je beseft dat je alles als eens hebt gezien. Maar in Gent kwam mijn kinderlijke verwondering en droefheid naar boven. Dat laatste omdat ik moest vertrekken" – If you travel a lot, you reach a point where you think you have seen everything. But Ghent brought back to me that childish sense of wonder and sadness (because you have to leave).

Hij raadt zijn lezers, die ooit naar België komen, aan om Brussel voor een dag te bezoeken en de rest van de tijd te spenderen in Gent – He advised his readers, if you're ever in Belgium, visit Brussels for a day, then spend the rest of the time in Ghent. But don't eat too many of the insanely sweet candie thingies.



© Courtesy neosvzw.be

VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY

Rob Schäfer @GERArmyResearch
#WW1 Today I will be remembering the German soldiers that lie in Flanders Fields and in the chalky soil of the Somme

Ed Rex @rexyedventures
33 Reasons Why #Ghent is Beautiful <http://wp.me/p2TgfA-3hs>
@visitgent #travel #ttot @visitflanders #gent #belgium

Christopher Olwage @ChrisMOlwage
Gosh Antwerp you have been awesome! @tuurvanhove @db_kristof @MrGayVlaanderen thank you for making me feel welcome #mgworg #AntwerpPride

mike eliason @bruteforceblog
high point of having neighbors who lived in Belgium? drinking belgian beer all eve, talking about aqualibi and trips to brugge, oostend

Europeana @Europeanaeu
Hans Memling died #OnThisDay in 1494. Leading Netherlandish painter of the Bruges School. http://bit.ly/Hans-Memling_pic.twitter.com/YbR6CMue3U

Dirk Brossé Visiting our friends Belgian astronaut Frank and Lena De Winne at ESA (european astronaut center). Coming a bit closer to my plan to fly to space one day...

Jef Neve Thank you everyone for the fine suggestions for a new album title! Looking forward to playing with the trio in Leuven (Museum M), Oostende (TAZ) and Antwerp (Jazz Middelheim); most welcome everyone!

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Poll

Should the police be allowed to seize the mobile phone of any driver involved in an accident?

a. Yes. Driving while calling or texting is as bad as drunk driving and calls for tough measures

69%

b. Yes, but only if it was a serious enough accident to warrant the invasion of privacy, not just a fender bender

31%

c. No. Yet another attempt to rob us of any privacy we have left!

0%

According to the Belgian Institute for Road Safety, way too many in Belgium are texting or holding their mobile phones up to their ears while driving. Drivers increase their chances of having an accident in such circumstances three or even fourfold, the institute says. So Belgium should do it like the UK does – seize the mobile phone of

anyone involved in an accident. If either of the drivers was texting or talking at the time of the accident, guilt is proven. Although this idea receives 100% support from our readers, about one in three of you hedged slightly, insisting that the accident be serious enough to warrant the invasion of privacy.

That's understandable, considering all the nuances that can exist in any given situation. How would one prove the use of a headset? What if someone is texting at a stop light but then is involved in an accident a few minutes later? The Privacy Commission is asking itself these questions and more in the lead-up to a possible law.

\ Next week's question:

The new government of Flanders wants to scrap the system whereby those who qualify for social housing never have to move, even if their income increases. What do you think?

Log in to the Flanders Today website and click on VOTE!

THE LAST WORD

War games

"We hoped in this way to find undiscovered talent within the ranks and shake it loose." The defence ministry used a computer game to recruit 10 new "cybercommandos"

It's all relative

"The prices are indeed high, but the variations are enormous. For a good location you can get €135,000, but for a place further from the centre, you might pay only €45,000." The prices of garage boxes at the coast are skyrocketing, even as apartment prices fall, according to Knokke estate agent Gwendoline Dumolijn

Not playing around

"This season we want to strike hard and fast to get rid of these troublemakers once and for all." Football union director Jo Vanhecke on the news that Club Brugge is the only top-ranked club with serious hooliganism problems

Coming of age

"It's bothered me for years that getting older is surrounded by such sorrow, and old people are always presented as a problem. That's not true, and all around me I see people enjoying life. So I wanted to set the record straight." Radio and TV host Zaki publishes his book *Ondeugend ouder worden* (Growing Old Disgracefully) next month

