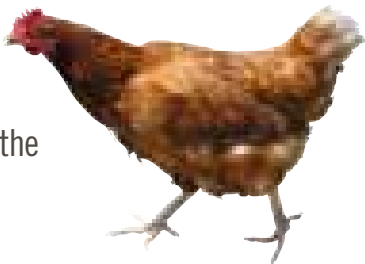


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### RUNNING FOR COVER

Flanders' poultry has been ordered indoors to wait out the bird flu pandemic that has hit the Netherlands hard



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### A WORLD FIRST

A new business in East Flanders is raising a sustainable fish and sharing resources with a tomato farm next door

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### NEW YORK STATE OF MIND

Limburg brothers' experience serving street food in the big apple is transplanted to Louizalaan



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# When the world won't stop moving



## Tania Stadsbader turned a years-long struggle with vertigo into a successful blog and a new book



Katrien Lindemans  
More articles by Katrien \ [flanderstoday.eu](http://flanderstoday.eu)

With diagnoses from hyperventilation to a brain tumour, it took Tania Stadsbader 14 years to find out why she felt so dizzy. She recently co-authored a book with an Antwerp University professor in which she documents her long quest for answers and treatment in a fast-spinning, progress-oriented world in which there is little room for dizziness

**D**izzy *Me*, written in Dutch but soon to be published in English, is a guidebook about vertigo for patients and doctors, and it was co-written by Tania Stadsbader and the Antwerp balance specialist Floris Wuyts.

"Humans are designed to go hunting, which makes gaze stabilisation essential for survival," says professor Wuyts. "People who suffer from vertigo don't have this stable gaze and have the constant illusion of movement, even when they're standing still. It's a sensation similar to feeling drunk."

Stadsbader, 44, from Herne, Flemish Brabant, suffered from chronic dizziness for 15 years, which, at its worst moments, left the mother of three bed-bound for days on end. "A simple head movement could cause the room to spin around violently for a couple of seconds, followed by hours or even days of extreme nausea, vomiting and feeling very sensitive to noise and light," she explains.

The cause of vertigo can be found partly in our inner ear, in the vestibular organ. "This organ detects every movement our heads make, and the brain uses this information to stabilise our eyes," Wuyts explains. "For instance, when you're sitting down, your brain makes an internal image of the position, based on information from your eyes, muscles and vestibular organ. But when one of the sources is wrong, say, the vestibular organ, there's an illusion of movement, and your surroundings start to spin."

Wuyts uses the image of a snow globe to explain the inner workings of the vestibular organ. "There are crystals in your vestibular organ embedded in a gelatinous structure. But sometimes they get loose and start floating around every time you move – a bit like the snowflakes in a snow globe," he says. "This causes dizziness, called BPPV in medical terms – Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo."

BPPV is exactly what Stadsbader suffered from, even though it took her more than a decade to find out. "I was 23 when it first happened and visited so many specialists and doctors," she says. "I was diagnosed with so many different diseases, but nothing seemed to change. Since I didn't really look ill, people started to think I was making it all up."

Stadsbader began looking for information and help online. One day, she landed on the webpage of one of the institutions of

# Listen more to kids, advises children's rights commissioner

Parents and teachers should "integrate children's perspectives" into everyday life



Alan Hope  
Follow Alan on Twitter \ @AlanHopeFT

**O**f all the issues raised in the some 1,000 complaints made to the Flemish children's rights commissioner in the last year, the most common concerns the lack of time given to children, Bruno Vanobbergen told the Flemish Parliament last week. Children's rights commissioner Vanobbergen (pictured) was presenting his office's annual report. Children need to be given time to be heard, Vanobbergen said, whether by parents, teachers or other adults who have control

over their lives. "It seems to me logical that we should integrate their perspective into our discussions about important social themes," he said. "Think, for example, about flexible working hours or time credits. Until now, we've only heard the point of view of adults, of employers." In many other situations, the report says, more time devoted to the child would help in working towards a solution: in the case of asylum seekers, where children and young people are often not



© Titus Simoons

asked for their point of view; in cases of school discipline, where the frequent use of "time-outs" could be precisely the opposite of what is best for the child. The report recognises that adults often simply do not have the time to give. "One of the explanations for that is the growth of 'management logic' in care and in education," Vanobbergen said. "Teachers and caregivers are under pressure to reach targets within very limited time-spans." The report also praises initia-

tives already taken, including the new Family Tribunal, which offers children over 12 a voice in family matters such as divorce. The Commissariat-General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, meanwhile, has been looking at how children's voices can be heard during asylum procedures. "We are happy with these initiatives," said Vanobbergen, "but we would ask the government to invest even more, so important is the voice of children and young people".

## Study proves value of tips on being happy

A major study on happiness carried out at the University of Leuven (KU Leuven) demonstrates that tips on how to be happy have a positive effect on the average person's actual level of happiness.



KU Leuven examined the sense of happiness of 7,770 residents of Flanders, divided into three groups. One group received an e-mail every day for four weeks with simple tips on increasing happiness. Another received more extensive ideas in a weekly email, while the third group got just one e-mail at the end of the four-week period.

The participants' sense of happiness was analysed after the first four weeks and again after six months. Researchers ascertained a clear positive effect on the feeling of happiness among the participants in the first two groups, both in the short and the long term. The third group showed little to no change. What is particularly interesting, said KU Leuven professor Patrick Luyten, is that there was no discernible connection between actually carrying out of the suggestions and the increase of feelings of happiness. "What's important is that the interventions set in motion a reflection process," he explained "They make us clearly aware of how we live our lives and what makes us happy or unhappy." \ Andy Furniere

## Mortgage tax relief reforms could cost Flemish homebuyers

Changes to mortgage tax relief rules in Flanders could mean that homebuyers will lose €170 a month, according to calculations made by *De Standaard* and ING bank.

The new system could cost an average couple buying a house some €40,000 over the course of a standard 20-year mortgage, the report warns. A couple with a 30-year mortgage would stand to lose some €66,000, or €280 per month. The cost of the reforms is higher than previously announced because the

government is no longer adjusting tax relief in line with inflation, which in the past meant that house buyers generally received a slightly higher tax relief every year.

As a result of the reforms, many people have been rushing to sign up to a mortgage before the new rules take effect on 1 January. But it now appears that the new rules will also affect people with an existing mortgage, due to the abolition of inflation-indexation.

That means a homebuyer who already

has a mortgage will have to pay about €60 a month more, or €14,000 over the course of 20 years, according to the calculations. It is still worth getting the mortgage deal signed before the end of the year, as this could save the buyer some €26,000, the report says.

But not everyone agrees. Some property experts argue that the new rules will simply lead to a fall in the price of a house to take account of buyers' reduced spending power. \ Derek Blyth

## Vilvoorde man identified on beheading video

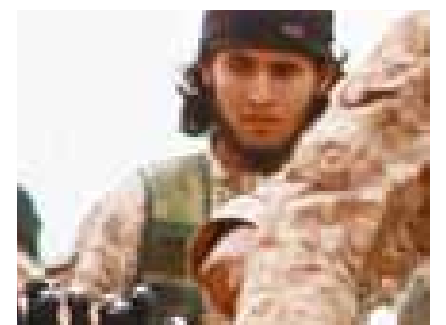
The federal prosecutor's office is investigating claims that one of the men visible on the latest video released by the terrorist organisation IS is a man from Vilvoorde. Belgium's state security services spotted the 28-year-old on the video, in which several beheadings are shown taking place.

The man has been identified as Abdelmajid Gharmaoui, one of the accused at the Sharia4Belgium trial, currently adjourned, who failed to turn up for the proceedings. According to a post on Facebook, he is based in Dabiq in the north of Syria. According to statements made in the video, Dabiq is where the video was

made.

The identification has been contested by Hans Bonte, mayor of Vilvoorde. "We are absolutely certain that this Vilvoorde man is not seen on the video," he said. Bonte is active on the issue of young radicalised Muslim men who go to Syria to fight and said he did not want the problem to become diverted into "a manhunt for one young man".

He did add that men from his city are active in Syria. "Young men from Vilvoorde and elsewhere in Flanders are involved in the most horrific actions there," he said. Bonte has prepared a bill to go before parliament that would allow



State security has identified this man as Vilvoorde resident Abdelmajid Gharmaoui

the authorities to withdraw the travel documents of minors suspected of going to Syria. \ AH

9.2%



of the domestic product of Flanders in 2012 was from the manufacturing industry, down from 12.2% in 2003. The main industries that disappeared are textiles, electronics and cars



108,000

fewer cinema tickets sold in 2013 in Flanders compared to a year before, according to figures from the economy ministry. Brussels did much worse, with 576,000 fewer tickets sold

2,250



ballots were destroyed after being counted in Belgium's elections last May, according to a group of 10 minor political parties, which have filed a complaint with the Brussels prosecutor



96%

of Flemings are satisfied to very satisfied with their lives, according to Flanders' latest collection of regional indicators. Flemings are even more satisfied than last year when it comes to income, free time and housing

23,512



job vacancies in Flanders in October, according to VDAB, 3.7% more than the same month in 2013. So far this year, the agency handled 249,579 vacancies, or 12.3% more than the previous 12 months



## WEEK IN BRIEF

A police officer who failed to pass on a tip that might have identified the man who **shot and killed four people at the Jewish Museum** in Brussels last May has been transferred and his superiors disciplined. The Brussels prosecutor is investigating the possibility of criminal charges. The suspect, Medhi Nemmouche, was not arrested until a week later. In related news, Brussels' Jewish community has complained that extra security measures, like scanners and cameras, promised by former interior minister Joëlle Milquet in the aftermath of the shooting, have failed to materialise.

The **best Gouda cheese in the world** is not Dutch, according to judges at the World Cheese Awards in London, who voted for Flandrien Kaas, made in Wervik, West Flanders. The renowned Beemster cheese from the Netherlands came in second this year. Flandrien producer Jan Desmet explained how his cheese contains less acid and uses less salt than other Gouda-style cheeses, giving what the judges called "a perfect structure and flavour".

397 lecturers at Flemish universities **teaching in English still haven't passed the test** that proves their mastery of the language. That is nearly 18% of the 2,243 lecturers who must meet the requirement by February, as stipulated by a Flemish government decree. About two-thirds of those who haven't passed are from KU Leuven. "That might seem like a lot, but there are 125 new lecturers who didn't have the chance to take the test yet," vice-rector Didier Pollefeyt told *De Standaard*.

The Brussels **police had no plan for coping** with violent

outbreaks at the massive demonstration against government cuts that brought more than 100,000 people onto the streets of the capital on 6 November, according to an internal police report leaked by *La Dernière Heure* newspaper. The report reveals tactical and technical shortcomings, a lack of co-ordination and a shortage of protective gear.

King Filip and Queen Mathilde are to be **received by Pope Francis** at the Vatican on 12 December, a spokesperson for the Holy See revealed. This is the first time the royal couple have had a Papal audience. In 2009, King Albert and Queen Paola were received by Pope Benedict.

**Brussels' annual Christmas tree**, which was installed on the Grote Markt last week, broke with tradition this year as it did not come from the forests of the Ardennes but as a gift from the people of Riga, the capital of Latvia and this year's European Capital of Culture. The tree is a European spruce more than 18 metres tall and selected by mayor of Riga, Nils Ušakovs, himself.

Residents of the Brussels-Capital Region will be able to **sort food waste separately from general waste** in a brown bag from 2016. Pilot projects are under way in Evere and Etterbeek, where the brown bags are available on a voluntary basis. Two or three municipalities will join them shortly, said waste management minister Fadila Laanan, and the service will extend to the whole region in 2016. Net Brussel estimates half of all unsorted rubbish consists of organic materials.

Online streaming service **Netflix is looking for a profes-**

**sional watcher** in Flanders or the Netherlands. The first "European tagger" will be a Dutch speaker tasked with watching TV shows and films and attach tags such as romance, violence, animation, strong language, etc. Taggers in the US and UK are mainly graduates of film school, screenwriters or film critics, the company said.

The **Benelux train linking Brussels and Amsterdam** comes back into service on 14 December, after an absence of two years. The train was replaced in 2012 by the ill-fated Fyra, which was withdrawn for technical reasons. The Benelux train resumed service but only as far as The Hague. The new service also stops at Brussels and Schiphol airports, for a total journey time of 3h20.

The Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels has **cancelled two planned exhibitions** for 2016, blaming loss of federal government subsidy. The exhibitions were to feature the sculptor George Minne and the symbolist painter Fernand Khnopff, both Flemish-born artists of international repute. Khnopff was born in Dendermonde in 1858, and Minne was born in Ghent in 1866.

Most **fire blankets do not work**, according to consumer organisation Test-Aankoop, which found 15 out of 16 tested unsatisfactory. Fire blankets are intended to be used to smother a fire if a fire extinguisher is not available or should not be used, such as a stovetop oil fire. Test-Aankoop found that the blankets not only failed to smother the flames, they caught fire themselves. The organisation has asked the government to order the blankets that did not pass inspection to be withdrawn from sale.

## FACE OF FLANDERS



© Courtesy De Bijloke

### Alain Platel

Choreographer and theatre director Alain Platel has been awarded this year's Champagne Prize, given by the Champagne Bureau Benelux to a personality who stands out because of "talent, creativity and a continuous striving for excellence". Alain Platel was born in Ghent in 1959, the second child of architect André Platel and his wife, Andrée Huysman. Three of them went on to a public life in the arts: Pascale is a stage and television actress, now much associated with youth theatre, while Serge is the new director of the Festival of Flanders. Platel began as a performer, studying mime with Marcel Hoste from the age of 11, later taking up dance. By the age of only 21 he was creating his own work and combining different influences and disciplines – music, theatre, dance and circus – which would define his later style. In 1984 he and his sister Pascale founded the company he still runs, Les Ballets C de la B (standing for Les Ballets Contemporains de la Belgique) in Ghent and soon became a leading figure in the Flemish dance world, together with

Wim Vandekeybus, Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker, Jan Lauwers and Jan Fabre, members of the so-called Flemish Wave who made their first public appearances in the 1980s. In 2003, Platel withdrew from active participation in the company, leaving the dancers and guests to create their own productions while he returned somewhat to his artistic beginnings by studying sign language. It was a means of communication, he said, that "does not allow one to lie, because those who practise it are trained to see beyond the façade". He was back in 2006, just in time to help install the company on the Bijloke site in Ghent, home to the Bijloke concert hall, the STAM museum and the KASK academy of fine arts. The prize jury praised Platel's "creativity and time needed to allow ideas and choreographies to ripen, as well as the bringing together of different artists into a complementary whole". Last year the prize, awarded for the first time, went to Brussels-based lingerie designer Carine Gilson. \ Alan Hope

## OFFSIDE Taxi wars

In case you've missed headlines about Uber, the self-described ride-sharing company that everyone else calls a taxi service, fear not; they made the press again last week. Brussels Airlines was announcing its end-of-year promotions, one of which was a free coupon worth €15 for a ride with Uber. All well and good, though not if you're a Brussels taxi driver. The capital's taxi companies have been up in arms about Uber ever since it made its entry into Brussels earlier this year. Uber employs drivers as freelance operators who use their own cars. Uber drivers are not licensed to operate as taxis, hence the ride-sharing moniker. Taxi drivers, on the other hand, are trained and licensed, have to keep their vehicles to a certain standard and pay the same tax rates as any other Belgian. So the taxi drivers were understandably upset at Brussels Airlines' co-operation with the enemy, especially as it followed Pascal Smet, Brussels' mobility minister, saying that he could see a place for Uber in the capital.



Flemish mobility minister Ben Weyts, too, speculated that a change to the regulations might be called for to allow Uber to operate in Flanders. But it turns out that the Uber voucher is not valid in Belgium, the airline explained to Smet. Customers who obtain one can use it at their destination, but they're not to be used here. Nobody has yet explained how Brussels Airlines intends to police that decision, but that will be another chapter in the long-running saga. \ AH

## FLANDERTODAY Flanders State of the Art

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## 5TH COLUMN

### Odd man out

Coalitions often find cohesion through a shared aversion. During the Verhofstadt years, liberals, socialists and greens were elated to see the Christian-democrats out of government. A similar feeling took hold of the current Flemish and federal coalitions when they rid themselves of the socialists, whom they hold responsible for high government debt and staggering labour costs.

It wasn't long before a number of socialist ideals went out the window. The first to go was the "gratis policy" – the idea, introduced by Steve Stevaert (SPA), that a number of services, such as public transport, should be free of charge. Free does not exist, the current coalitions said.

The same happened to the "equal opportunities" policy in education, introduced by Frank Vandenbroucke (SPA). Extra funds for schools with many pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are now under review. Predictably, the Silver Fund, introduced by Johan Vande Lanotte (SPA), to partially pay pensions with government windfalls, was also axed.

But one party feels uneasy about all this: CD&V, which has pledged to become the "social face" of the Flemish and federal governments. As centrists, they do not want to be associated solely with right-wing economic policies. And since the Christian-democrats boast neither the prime minister nor the minister-president, they are feeling free to speak out.

CD&V therefore keeps on bringing up a tax on capital gains. This "tax on the rich" would counterbalance all other cuts, mainly felt by the working population and those on public benefits. It would contribute to the tax shift that the OECD, among others, is asking for: taxing labour less and capital gains and polluters more.

Federal labour minister Kris Peeters, justice minister Koen Geens and MP Eric Van Rompuy, backed by his brother Herman, have all demanded some form of capital gains tax. However, the other coalition parties will not hear of it, and it was not included in the federal government agreement.

And so CD&V continues to remain uncomfortable in these new government coalitions. The current strikes and workers' demonstrations do little to ease this, especially since one of the most outspoken union leaders is Marc Leemans, of the Christian-democrat ACV. And guess what he's asking for?

# Flanders in talks to re-open Iron Rhine rail link

## Region to boost economic co-operation with North Rhine-Westphalia



Derek Blyth

More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

Flemish minister-president Geert Bourgeois travelled to Düsseldorf, the capital of Germany's North Rhine-Westphalia region, last week to strengthen ties between the two regions. Bourgeois met with the German region's minister-president Hannelore Kraft to talk about boosting economic co-operation, including reopening the Iron Rhine goods line.

"Co-operation with North Rhine-Westphalia is an absolute priority for the new Flemish government," Bourgeois said in a statement. "Economically, it is the strongest state in Germany as well as being Flanders' most important export market."

The leaders discussed ways in which their regions could work together by improving links

between the Flemish ports and the inland port of Duisburg. They also discussed the controversial plan to re-open the IJzeren Rijn, a 19th-century goods line between the Ruhr and the Flemish ports, at present rarely used, partly because it passes through a Dutch nature reserve.

Bourgeois went on to describe areas in which the two regions would develop closer ties. "We are focusing on bilateral agreements in areas such as the economy, transport, innovation, the environment, language and culture," he said.

He also talked about including the Netherlands in some agreements. "We are looking into a trilateral agreement between Flanders, the Netherlands and North Rhine-Westphalia." The deals could include one on co-operation among chemical companies.



© Belga

Geert Bourgeois meets with North Rhine-Westphalia minister-president Hannelore Kraft (left) and the region's federal affairs minister, Angelica Schwall Düren

## €330 million for handicapped programme over four years

The government of Flanders will spend €330 million between 2015 and 2019 on care for the handicapped, health and welfare minister Jo Vandeurzen announced. The budget starts with €40 million for spending next year.

"In determining the allocation of resources, we took account of real needs and the principle that everything must be done to give handicapped people control over their own lives," said Vandeurzen.

Next year sees the beginning of a system of "person-led financing", which allows decisions about care to be taken out of the hands of antiquated care mechanisms and given over to the handicapped and their families.

Funding will be available for projects like adapting living quarters to the person's needs, Vandeurzen said. Central to the system is the basic support budget, which grants the person with a handicap a basic monthly sum that they can use to pay for care as they choose.

That part of the system only comes into operation in 2016. In the meantime, regional priority committees will determine who is in most need of the additional sums that will be available.

Socialist opposition in the Flemish Parliament claimed that no extra money will be seen until 2017, leaving 22,000 people with a handicap "literally and figuratively waiting in line," according to SPA member Bart Van Malderen. "This misplaced three cheers from the minister is in fact the announcement of a delay of at least two years in implementing the person-led budget." \ Alan Hope

## Gatz rallies politicians for cultural co-operation in Brussels

Flemish culture minister Sven Gatz wants to hold a round table discussion to improve cultural co-operation in Brussels. Normally culture in Brussels is sharply divided between the Dutch- and French-language communities, with just a few organisations such as Bozar and Flagey successfully spanning the two.

But Gatz wants to involve several ministers and cultural bodies that have a role to play in the capital's cultural scene, saying it could not only improve communications and audience numbers but reduce costs.

Gatz has already met Joëlle Milquet, his French-speaking counterpart, to talk about joint financing. "I want to broaden the dialogue to include representatives from the federal and European levels," he told the newspaper *Le Soir*. \ DB

## Homeowners required to insulate roofs

Flemish housing minister Liesbeth Homans has announced that 400,000 homes in Flanders lack sufficient roof insulation. If owners fail to install insulation by 2020, the houses will be declared "unsuitable for habitation".

Reports in the press last week suggested that people would be evicted from their homes if they did not insulate, but Homans stressed that the new measure was not the same as declaring a house "unfit for habitation", which requires it to be vacated until it is brought up to code. Failure to install roof insulation would result in a fine, but no one would be forced to leave their home.

"This measure is not aimed at removing housing stock from the market, particularly not in the light of current demographic challenges," she said. "It is important that we implement ambitious policies to improve the quality of housing, but I would never permit people to be thrown out of their house because of poor roof insulation." \ DB

## Federal pensions minister wants teachers to work longer

Federal pensions minister Daniel Bacquelaine has angered teachers by announcing they will have to work two to three years longer to qualify for a pension. "We have to make sure that teachers in general work a little longer," he said in a TV interview. "If we don't introduce reforms now, then we are risking the pensions of our children and grandchildren. At present, less than 10% of the population works to the age of 65."

The socialist union ACOD said the proposal was "unrealistic" and that it was "physically impossible for most teachers to stand in front of a class up to the age of 63".

The change comes on top of an earlier reform that aims to gradually abolish the right to



© Belga

Federal pensions minister Daniel Bacquelaine (third from right) meets with Flanders' education minister, Hilde Crevits (far right), to talk teacher retirement

early retirement for teachers and university staff, depending on the number of years they had spent studying. In the past, teachers with a Bachelor's degree were allowed to retire two years early, while those with a Master's could take off four years. But those rights will be progressively eliminated beginning in 2016.

Flanders' education minister, Hilde Crevits, confirmed that teachers would have to work longer, but she said she hoped that Bacquelaine would introduce measures to ensure that there was a "smooth transition period which was reasonable for everyone". The unions are now hoping Crevits can persuade the federal minister to soften the blow for teachers. \ DB



# When the world won't stop moving

Fleming publishes second edition of book about experiences with vertigo

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/DIZZYME

continued from page 1

the University of Texas System in the US that exactly described her symptoms. In the process of trying to find out more about the doctors involved in the research, she found an article in the Flemish science magazine *EOS* that mentioned Wuyts, head of the Antwerp University Research Centre for Equilibrium and Aerospace.

She booked an appointment with him as well as with an ear, nose and throat specialist at the Antwerp University Hospital. Stadsbader was finally diagnosed with BPPV in 2007.

BPPV is one of the main causes of dizziness. "It can happen after you bump your head or sometimes it's just bad luck," Wuyts says. "One out of five people with a vestibular disorder have BPPV. It's also very common in older people; about one out of seven people older than 70 suffer from it."

The disease can be managed with the so-called Epley manoeuvre, a series of twists and turns to the body and head, executed by a specialist, that are meant to put the crystals in the vestibular organ back in the right place.

"Tania was one of the rare cases where repeated Epley manoeuvres didn't cure the dizziness," Wuyts says. "The only way the crystals could be stopped from floating the wrong way was by putting a plug in one of the canals of her inner ear and thus blocking their passage." Stadsbader successfully recovered



© Leen Vandeweghe

The first edition of *Dizzy Me*, co-authored by Floris Wuyts (left) and Tania Stadsbader, completely sold out

research into dizziness had resulted in new insights, the medical part required significant updates.

"BPPV is one of the causes of dizziness; vestibular migraine is another important one," Wuyts

Stoned-list', as described in the book," Wuyts explains. "Doctors should be able to rule out more easily what kind of dizziness their patients are suffering from."

The updated medical chapter of the book is based entirely on peer-reviewed articles. "In our Western and career-driven society, there's no space for feeling dizzy, which is why there's been quite some research over the last couple of years," Wuyts explains. "But at the same time, progress is slow as the equilibrium system is so difficult to study. However, as a doctor in physics, I am trying to approach it from different angles, like through my research with cosmonauts."

When arriving in space and coming back to earth, astronauts typically suffer from disorientation and vertigo. The crucial difference is that it's temporary. "Brain scans from before and after their trips to space offer us important

the diagnostic process, the book, by way of Stadsbader's story, also offers readers a reminder that vertigo *can* be cured. "Whereas the diary in the first edition may have depicted me as a victim, I'm definitely a survivor in the second edition," she says, laughing. "In the first edition, the cover shows me with my feet in the sand; in the second I'm in high heels on top of a wall! I explain everything about how my life has changed and how I got a new job."

Stadsbader, who today works as a marketing and communication manager at the Free University of Brussels (VUB), even became an ambassador for the US-based, awareness-raising Vestibular Disorders Association. She also has a Facebook page where she keeps in touch with patients from around the world.

"They share their symptoms, look for recognition and ask for medical advice," she says. "I'm by no means a doctor, but I try to give them as much information as I can and give them the contact details of the specialists that helped me get back on my feet. We're also working on an English translation of the book – to guide even more doctors and patients."

The last picture in Stadsbader's diary is one of her running the Brussels half-marathon. "Something I never thought I could do," she says. "I've picked up running and cycling, and my next big challenge is the Paris-Roubaix. It's about 270 kilometres on my bike."

*Dizzy Me* is published by ASP in Dutch

“Since I didn't really look ill, people started to think I was making it all up

from the canal-plugging operation in 2008 and has kept an online diary ever since. Under the pen name *Dizzy Me*, she blogged about her experiences and her road to recovery.

"I wrote in Dutch but noticed I got visitors from all over the world," she says. "I got emails from people from as far away as the US and Egypt, and when I looked at all the search words used on the blog, I knew there were a lot more people suffering from this than I thought."

Stadsbader bundled her blog into an e-book, wrote a description of the illness and contacted Wuyts for feedback. He loved the idea and even decided to handle the scientific part of the book. "In 2010, we published the first version of *Dizzy Me* with my diary and medical and scientific information from professor Wuyts," says Stadsbader.

A few weeks ago, the second edition of *Dizzy Me* was published. The first one completely sold out, and since

reveals. "When the first book was published, very little was known about vestibular migraine as it had only just been defined by science. The new *Dizzy Me* has the latest information on vestibular migraine and how this condition was previously mistaken for Ménière's disease."

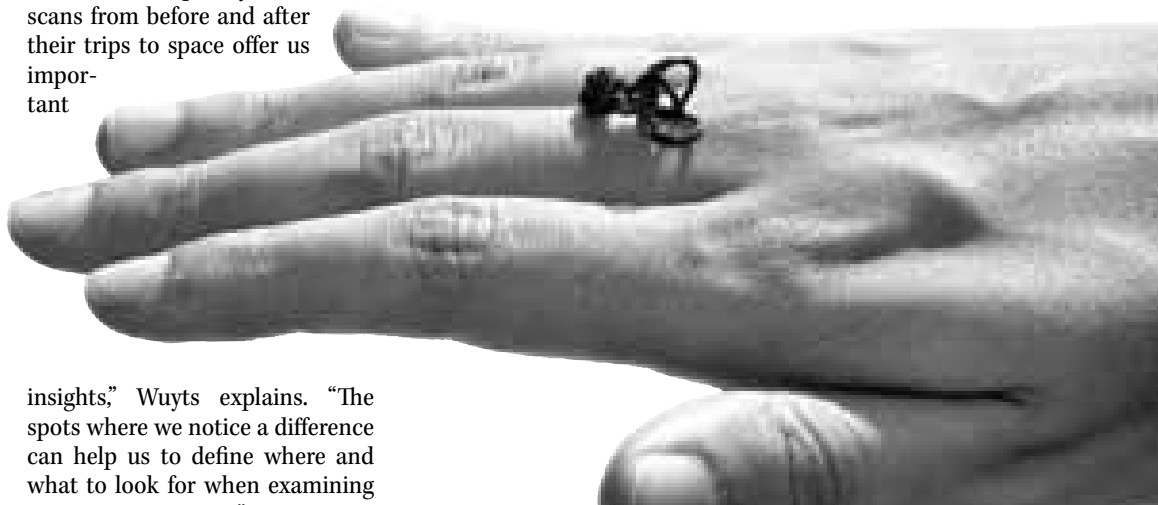
According to Wuyts, that relationship between vestibular migraine and dizziness also makes the book relevant for doctors. "About 12% of people with dizziness suffer from vestibular migraine," he says. "It can be treated fairly easily, but only after the right diagnosis."

One important distinction is that in the case of Ménière's disease, the vertigo typically lasts between 20 minutes and a couple of hours, while with vestibular migraine, it can range from a couple of minutes to over a day.

"A thorough patient case history is mandatory and based on the eight questions of the so-called 'So

insights," Wuyts explains. "The spots where we notice a difference can help us to define where and what to look for when examining patients with vertigo."

In addition to helping doctors with



The cause of vertigo can often be found in the tiny vestibular organ (model pictured) in the inner ear

## WEEK IN BUSINESS

### Banking \ KBC

Flanders' largest financial institution is on the brink of fulfilling the conditions set by the EU for its €7 billion bailout by public authorities in 2009. The bank's balance sheet total dropped 22% and assets by 37% following the sale of Centea, Fidea, KBL Private Bankers, Poland's Kredyt Bank and Russia's Absolut Bank, among others. KBC is also poised to pay back the outstanding €2 billion of public money it received, three years earlier than expected.

### Banking \ Puilaetco

The Brussels-based assets management and private bank, controlled by the Qatari Precision Capital company, has acquired the local subsidiary of the Swiss UBS bank. The move, which will boost Puilaetco's assets under management to well over €10 billion, also includes the UBS offices in Ghent and Antwerp. Not included, however, are the activities and staff under investigation by the tax authorities for fraud and money laundering.

### Hotels \ Texaco

The US-based oil group is investing €18 million to renovate its services station along the E40 motorway at Groot-Bijgaarden and build a 40-room three-star hotel on the site. The new facility, to include two restaurants and retail shops, will replace an ageing Best Western property.

### Metals \ Nyrstar

The Brussels-based zinc and non-ferrous metals group is believed to have become a target of Trafigura, the international commodities trading and logistics group. Trafigura has built a 15% stake in Nyrstar, and shares have shot up by nearly 30% since their October low.

### Office space \ Regus

The UK-based temporary offices group is opening four express business lounges in railway stations in Flanders, including Antwerp, Leuven, Bruges and Sint-Niklaas. They are also opening three in Brussels – in South Station, Central Station and Luxembourg Station.

### Retail \ Primark

The Irish discount clothing chain is opening its new downtown Brussels outlet on 10 December to take advantage of holiday shopping. The new store is located on Nieuwstraat, and the company plans to eventually open outlets in Ghent, Antwerp and Hasselt.

# Flanders' poultry ordered inside as bird flu threatens

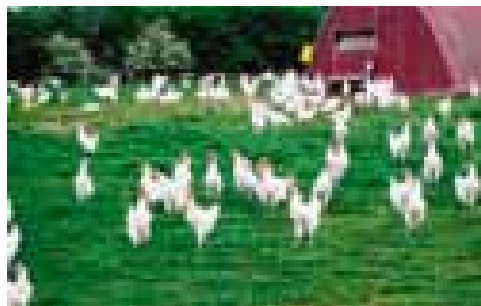
## Government blames migrating birds for spread of disease



Alan Hope

More articles by Alan \ [flanderstoday.eu](http://flanderstoday.eu)

The federal government has imposed an order on poultry farmers to keep their birds indoors or, if they are allowed out of doors, under nets, federal agriculture minister Willy Borsus has announced. Amateur holders of poultry have been advised by the federal food safety agency to keep their birds indoors. The order is a preventive measure against bird flu, following the confirmation of a third outbreak in the Netherlands and the theory that migrating birds may be instrumental in spreading the disease. Bird flu has so far not been encountered in Belgium. The order comes in response to a demand from farmers, said the farmers' union, Boerenbond.



"A number of farms were doing it already, but a general measure makes things a lot easier," a spokesperson said. Organic poultry farmers were particularly

interested in an order, as livestock kept by organic farmers has to be allowed out of doors. "They had to wait for a government order allowing them to stop," the spokesperson said. Nature conservancy organisation Natuurpunt responded by saying that the chance of bird flu transmission by migrating birds was "exceptionally small". The first case of the disease in the Netherlands hit hens that were already kept indoors, said Natuurpunt's Walter Roggeman. "Apart from that, there have been numerous poultry transports that make it impossible to discern a pattern, but which are far more likely to be responsible for spreading the infection," he said.

## HSBC Bank accused of bilking Belgium out of hundreds of millions

A Brussels investigating magistrate has accused HSBC Bank of "serious and organised" tax fraud, money laundering, criminal conspiracy and illegally acting as a financial intermediary. According to the complaint, the British bank encouraged clients over a number of years to avoid paying tax on billions of euros in income, depriving the Belgian state of hundreds of millions in taxes.

According to a spokesperson for the prosecutor's office, HSBC approached rich clients – in particular those from the Antwerp diamond sector – and offered to manage their assets, helping them avoid paying tax by using accounts in Switzerland and using offshore shell companies set up in Panama and the Virgin Islands. The complaint alleges shell companies were used to help more than 1,000 customers

avoid the EU directive on savings income, which Switzerland has agreed to abide by since 2005. Tax on income coming through Switzerland has been 35% since 2011, but the HSBC construction helped their customers to avoid paying anything. As well as the hundreds of millions lost to the exchequer, the bank's activities could also include "much higher sums that may have been laundered and that the

justice system could still confiscate," the prosecutor's spokesperson said. The investigating magistrate will now summon executives and other employees of the bank for questioning. "Given the extraordinary gravity of the circumstances and the extent of the damages, the magistrate is counting on the greatest possible degree of co-operation," said the spokesperson. \ AH

## Antwerp Port Authority CEO receives Lifetime Achievement Award

Eddy Bruyninckx, CEO of the Antwerp Port Authority for the last 22 years, has been awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award by the professional periodical *International Bulk Journal*. Bruyninckx (pictured) was given the award for his performance over the last 20 years, during which he turned Antwerp into a world-class harbour capable of taking ships of every size and type, carrying every sort of cargo. "This award is a token of recog-

nition for the whole Antwerp port community, which, after the serious crisis of 2009, showed themselves more creative and dedicated than ever and facing up to any challenge," Bruyninckx said. "Antwerp harbour has grown greatly in recent years, with liquid bulk our main growth engine, followed by containers. The future is looking bright, with a new record year in the short term and with billions of industrial investments in the middle



© Courtesy SCMF  
to long term." \ AH

## NMBS should prepare to face competition, minister warns

National rail authority NMBS should prepare for the opening up of the market in passenger transport, federal mobility minister Jacqueline Galant told parliament last week. Part of that preparation must involve paying off debt through cutting costs. She also intends to restructure the authority's internal organisation in preparation for the liberalisation of the passenger rail market at some future date.

The government is about to begin negotiations on a new six-year management agreement with NMBS and the rail infrastructure company, Infrabel. At the same time, the investment plan for 2012-2025, worth €25 billion, will be reviewed. While the passenger transport market will be opened up to competition, Galant suggested that freight transport ought to remain in Belgian hands. "I will pay special attention to rail infrastructure projects for goods transport and the accessibility of economic gateways," she said. The government would consider "all strategic avenues" for the rail freight division, NMBS Logistics, "which would lead to a stronger position for the Belgian economy". \ AH

## Monopoly on payment terminals faces challenge

An American company has entered the race to break the payment terminal monopoly in Belgium currently held by Worldline. BNP Paribas Fortis said in September it was planning to introduce its own electronic point-of-sale terminals. The Dutch-American European Merchant Services (EMS) is aiming to take 10% of the Belgian market, according to financial daily *De Tijd*. Sales in Belgium using Bancontact/Mister Cash currently account



for one billion transactions a year. However, retailers have criti-

cised the cost of the system. When the system crashed completely last year on 23 December during a rush of holiday shopping, there were calls for an alternative. The EMS terminals would accept cards from the Bancontact/Mister Cash system and also credit cards. EMS wants to have 30,000 terminals installed by the end of 2017, taking more than 100 million payment transactions a year. \ AH



# Fishy business

Flemish entrepreneur brings sustainable fish to chefs and consumers



Andy Furniere  
More articles by Andy \ flanderstoday.eu

WWW.AQUA4C.COM

Last month, Flemish environment minister Joke Schauvliege turned over the symbolic first shovels of dirt at the greenhouse cultivation zone Stokstorm, in the border area of Deinze and Kruishoutem in East Flanders, where a new fish farm will be built by next April. The facility is unique in its focus on sustainability and intends to bring a new type of fish to the Flemish market through a highly eco-friendly breeding process, which involves collaboration with the tomato farm next door.

The Aqua4C project originated from the PhD research project of Stijn Van Hoestenberghé at the biosystems department of the University of Leuven (KU Leuven). Van Hoestenberghé founded and is heading the project, while KU Leuven continues to provide support, including financial assistance.

"After gaining experience in the commercial aquaculture sector, including work abroad, I decided to examine a way to farm fish in a more sustainable manner than is



© d'Artagnan/Chris Viegels

Stijn Van Hoestenberghé and his sustainably grown jade perch

now the case," Van Hoestenberghé explains.

One of the main goals of his PhD work was to find a fish species that could be bred using eco-friendly methods. He eventually found his winner at the other end of the world, in Australia. The fish is called the jade perch but is known as *omegabaars* (omega perch) in Dutch because it contains a lot of healthy Omega-3 fatty acids.

"One of the other important assets is that the fish are vegetarians," Van Hoestenberghé continues. "Their diet is completely plant-based, so we don't have to feed them fish oil or fish meal like with most other farmed species."

The jade perch is, in addition, very resistant to diseases so antibiotics don't have to be used in the filtering system, which is rare in fish breeding. "Our filtering system is entirely biological; we actually use bacteria to do the filtering, so antibiotics would make that technique impossible," says Van Hoestenberghé.

A final significant advantage is that smaller water quantities than usual are necessary to cultivate the fish. The jade perch naturally acquired these characteristics since its normal habitat in Australia was in a desert area where rivers often dried up, so the fish had to live together in large numbers in small pools of water.

The collaboration with the adjacent tomato farm, Tomato Masters, further reduces the ecological impact of the fish-breeding enterprise. After

the water has been purified, the residual and nutrient-enriched water from the fish farm will be transported to the greenhouses next door, where it will be used to grow tomatoes.

The water is subsequently filtered and evaporates through the tomatoes. "Which means that we don't produce waste water, and the farm can use less

water and fertilisers," Van Hoestenberghé says.

The tomato farm will in turn distribute its surplus electricity to the fish farm, where it will be used to heat the water, which will be especially helpful in the winter.

According to the founder, this collaboration technique is unique in the world. "There are projects in the US and Switzerland where the residual water of a fish farm is also used to grow vegetables, but the process always takes place in the same location," explains Van Hoestenberghé. "We are the first to delink the processes and to carry it out commercially on a large scale."

“One of the important assets is that the fish are vegetarians

Aqua4C may have its roots in research, but today it is an unequivocally commercial enterprise. That makes the taste of the fish of crucial importance. According to Van Hoestenberghé, the jade perch tastes like sea perch when baked and like eel when smoked. "In the beginning, we had to adjust our filtering techniques and the choice of feed to improve the taste of the fish," he says.

The Aqua4C founder says he had no difficulty convincing top chefs of the quality of the fish after those tweaks. "It was actually the culinary sector that pushed me to quickly exploit the research findings in a commercial business."

Van Hoestenberghé hopes to get the farm off the ground by April of next year, with the first fish for sale in October. "We hope to attract the interest of specialist fish shops, caterers and restaurants," he says. "Our enterprise will be too small for the demand of big supermarkets at first."

He expects to produce about 200 tonnes of fish a year, with one fish weighing between 600 and 800 grams, and he hopes to make an annual turnover of €1.5 million. The cost to launch the project was €3 million, which was financed through investments from 25 local partners, including KU Leuven, banks and business angels.

## WEEK IN INNOVATION

Teens don't protect privacy online

Research shows that young people in Flanders have too little knowledge of the mechanisms of social media and don't have the skills to effectively protect their privacy online. This is one of the main conclusions of the User Empowerment in a Social Media Culture project, carried out over the last four years by six research groups from the Flemish universities of Ghent, Leuven and Brussels. According to the study, young people don't think they are vulnerable to the consequences of sharing personal information via social media, despite the fact that only half the participating 18-year-olds read the privacy settings for mobile or Facebook apps; 83% don't realise how much access apps have to information.

One in 10 had irregular colon tests

The results of a mass colon cancer screening in Flanders shows that slightly more than 10% of participants, who were aged 66 to 74, had irregular results. They were referred to specialists for further tests. The results were announced by the region's public health minister, Jo Vandeurzen. Last year, about 250,000 residents in Flanders received an invitation to participate in the screening. About half of them obliged with stool samples. Trace amounts of blood were detected in nearly 12,000 samples. Cancer was ultimately diagnosed in 10% of those cases, and in six out of 10 cases, polyps were found, which can precede cancer.

Flemish concerns build satellite

The Von Karman Institute for Fluid Dynamics in Sint-Genevius-Rode, just outside Brussels, and the Antwerp engineering bureau Voxdale are collaborating on the building of the nanosatellite Qarman. The objectives of the project are to test a passive system to get a satellite out of its orbit around the earth and the collection of scientific data, like temperature and pressure during re-entry into the atmosphere. The project should contribute to sustainable and affordable space missions. The partnership will optimise the structural development of the satellite, according to Voxdale CEO Koen Beyers. \ AF

## Q&A

**Ilse Noens is an autism specialist at the University of Leuven and heads Flanders' new Autism Taskforce, which must present its advisory report to the Flemish welfare minister by next summer**

**What kinds of issues make the lives of people with autism more difficult?**

The main problems are communication and social interaction. People with autism, for example, often have trouble understanding none-specific questions and implicit information; they need very concrete communication. Another issue is that they are less flexible in their behaviour and interests, which can manifest itself in a strong need for strict routines.

**How do these characteristics hinder their participation in society?**

One of the problems in Flanders

is the large number of people with autism who fail to graduate from higher education, although they have the necessary intellectual capacities. The students often have trouble adapting to changing lecture schedules, organising themselves independently and collaborating with their fellow students.

There are already initiatives that help students with autism to overcome these challenges, like buddy projects, but more are necessary. People with autism also have many difficulties on the work floor, like interaction with colleagues. Projects with specialised job coaches, who assist employees



with autism, are steps in the right direction.

**Is the prevalence of autism increasing?**

The number of diagnoses is

increasing, but that can partly be explained by the fact that the criteria for autism were expanded, so milder forms of autism are now also being diagnosed. It is now generally recognised that autism affects people with all kinds of intellectual capabilities, from very high to very low, which was not the case a few decades ago.

One of the other previous misconceptions was that autism only occurred in children, not in adults. On the other hand, experts also suspect that the prevalence is increasing because we need more and more flexibility and autonomy to function well in today's society. One of the tasks of our team may be to list the priorities for future awareness actions that have the goal of making our society more autism-friendly. \ Interview by AF



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# Culture through comics

## Leuven's Miniemen Institute launches global comics adventure



Andy Furniere

More articles by Andy \ flanderstoday.eu

WWW.STRIPTOIDENTITY.EU

Through the medium of comics, which happens to be a Flemish speciality, the secondary school at the Miniemen Institute in Leuven is encouraging its students to look beyond the borders of Flanders. With the Strip to Identity project, funded by the European Commission, students and teachers can also learn about cultures and teaching methods abroad.

At the beginning of this month, pupils from secondary schools in Turkey, Germany, Italy, Spain, Slovenia, Norway and Ireland came together at Limburg's Alden Biesen complex for the kick-off event of Strip to Identity. Thirteen students from international project management at the Miniemen Institute, which is co-ordinating the initiative, welcomed their fellow students for three days of seminars and workshops. The Flemish students are all in their fifth year of secondary school.

"All the students had different tasks, from making badges to introducing the speakers," explains teacher Diederik Roelandts, who is co-ordinating the project with colleague Dirk Staf. The kick-off is the first of several gatherings in the context of the project, which has received funding for the next three years.

Throughout the school year, pupils and teachers can collaborate through an innovative digital platform provided for free by ICT multinational Microsoft. "This platform principally serves the collaboration between the eight main partner schools, but we also grant access to other interested schools, like one in Taiwan, which can learn from and contribute to the project," says Staf.

During Strip to Identity, every school will create comics on the basis of a classic story from their culture. The comics should not only be fun to read but describe fundamental characteristics of the region's identity. The Miniemen



The pupils taking part in Strip to Identity came from across Europe to the kick-off event at Alden Biesen

Institute opted for the 1920 novel *De Witte (Whitey)* by Ernest Claes. *De Witte* is a novel about an inventive boy who grows up in a poor family but finds refuge in pranks and literature. "It's funny and enjoyable to read, but it also explains certain social, religious and political aspects of Flemish culture," explains Roelandts.

The pupils will use photos shot in the region of Flemish Brabant around Scherpenheuvel and Averbode, where the story takes place, as inspiration for the comic's setting. The characters will be designed through the specialised software programme Pixton. In the first year of the project, the pupils will create the comic in their native language, and an English translation will be developed in the second year.

The pupils will also develop pedagogical files in their mother tongue, with informative background and analysis of the story, so that the comics and files can be used as learning materials in primary schools. In the third and final year of Strip to Identity, the project should be continued with new ideas and approaches.

In May of 2017, the international team will present the collection

of eight comic books from the partner schools, which will be published in a printed and digital version for educational purposes only.

The Miniemen Institute has concrete experience with this kind of project. In the last academic year, secondary school students worked with contemporaries at a partner school in Poland to create a comic on the basis of fairy tales by the Irish writer Oscar Wilde.

This Ready to Read Me project was also supported by the European Commission. "For this project, we first carried out a survey, which showed that if youngsters want to read anything other than magazines, they are mostly attracted to comics," explains Roelandts.

One of the main purposes of the two projects is to develop literacy among young people, one of the goals of Europe 2020 – the European Union's strategic growth strategy. "Practising their reading skills will help students in the long term to more easily process large units of information," says Staf. "But this informal way of working also helps them develop their digital, English-language and social skills more efficiently than through more traditional teaching

methods."

Staf explains that students learn to work in a team, to finish a project and to interact with people from different cultures. "It's essential that they learn about multiple identities, to broaden their worldview and to develop tolerance," he says.

For Halime Celebi, 16, one of the participating students at Leuven, one of the main advantages is that she can express her creativity. "It's more motivating to be active yourself than to have to sit and listen," she explains.

Fellow student Cyrus Vanderschoot, 17, says he was surprised by the ease with which the students mingled, and he looks forward to learning more about the foreign cultures through their stories. Both also stress that they keep in touch with their fellow students abroad.

As Strip to Identity has also received funding for a mobility programme, students can even go on an Erasmus exchange at one of the partner schools and stay at a host family in the country. Teachers and directors will also pay extensive visits to other participating schools to gain inspiration for innovative teaching methods.

## WEEK IN EDUCATION

### Philosopher questions expensive congresses

Maarten Boudry, science philosopher at Ghent University, has questioned the value of scientific congresses abroad. "Too often, scientific congresses are charades without quality, which look good on your CV and offer trips to exotic countries," he told *Het Laatste Nieuws*. "Afterwards, I often have the feeling that the congress consisted of mediocre lectures with no useful discussion, and that I could just as well have read about the topic at home." Universities expect professors and researchers to attend or lecture at congresses several times a year to increase the university's profile and to publish more with international colleagues. Boudry said he could spend up to €5,000 a year on costs such as flights and hotels.

### Athletes and artists join teaching pool

Next year, the City of Antwerp will start with a substitute pool for the primary sector. A teacher who is absent because of extra training will be temporarily replaced by people from various backgrounds – such as artists, athletes and business leaders. "Teachers regularly have to follow extra training," Antwerp's education alderman, Claude Marinower, told *Gazet Van Antwerpen*. "They are then absent from school for half a day or a whole day, which means students have to carry out study work or be integrated into other classes. Next year, schools will be able to call on a replacement from the substitute pool." The substitutes will receive the necessary training.

### Medical entrance exams re-evaluated

Seventy students who failed last summer's entrance exam to study medicine or dentistry will be allowed to begin courses after a decision by the Council of State. 2,747 of the 3,331 candidates failed the exam in August. After a re-evaluation, following complaints by students about three questions, 80 of those students were able to start the studies. However, a student who was less than half a point short of passing the exam filed a complaint with the Council of State. She had answered one of the three disputed questions correctly but didn't receive the point as the question had been scrapped. The Council of State agreed and decided all students should get a point for the question, whether or not they answered it correctly. \ AF

## KU Leuven to stop allowing failing students to continue

The University of Leuven (KU Leuven) has developed a plan to refuse first-year students the ability to continue their studies in a specific discipline if they achieve less than 20 to 30% of the maximum number of study points possible after re-sits. The new rule means that full-time students must get 12 to 18 of the 60 possible points, requiring them to pass at least three to five subjects.

The students who do not meet requirements would not be allowed to register again in the discipline but are free to register for another discipline. The university has noted that exemptions are possible, in the case of emergency situations or illness, for example.

Last year, KU Leuven had 1,545 first-years who got less than 30%, 345 of whom registered for the



© Courtesy KU Leuven

same discipline the following year. According to the university, the plan helps with the cost-cutting required by the government of Flanders. "The plan still has to be approved, but that shouldn't be a problem," rector Rik Torfs told *De Morgen*. "We might be able to introduce the new measures by the next academic year, but

that has not been decided yet."

KU Leuven based its plan on its own statistics, which indicate that students who get less than 30% of the study points and register for the same discipline usually don't succeed the second time either; only 5.6% go on to get a degree. Graduation chances are much higher (16%) for those who score 40%.

Education minister Hilde Crevits' spokesperson, Katrien Rosseel, told *De Morgen* that the minister requested such proposals in order to decrease costs but also to help students choose better options. "She wants to have one approach for all universities and colleges," said Rosseel. The other Flemish universities request that a measure is introduced through a government decree. \ AF

## WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

### Arboretum open house

The Arboretum in Kalmthout, Antwerp province, is one of the oldest botanical gardens in Belgium. Guided tours, live music and special discounts in the bookstore and gift shop during this end-of-season event. Visit the exhibition on book bindings with a floral theme in the gallery. 29-30 November, 10.00-17.00, Heuvel 2, Kalmthout; free  
[www.arboretumkalmthout.be](http://www.arboretumkalmthout.be)

### Solidanza

Dance party for young and old, for people with and without a disability. Dance performance by people with disabilities and a wheelchair dance show. Workshops for adults and kids simulate living with a disability. 29 November, 14.00-20.00, Autoworld, Jubelpark, Brussels; €5 for adults, free for under-12s  
[www.handicapinternational.be](http://www.handicapinternational.be)

### Sinterklaas train

Board a steam train with Sinterklaas and his helpers for an afternoon ride with presents and treats for all the kids. 29-30 November & 6 December, Stoomcentrum Maldegem, Stationsplein 8, Maldegem; €10  
[www.stoomcentrum.be](http://www.stoomcentrum.be)

### Old Ijzer heritage walk

Ijzerlaan in the Eilandje district of Antwerp used to be a canal, and the surrounding area a lively neighbourhood peopled by hard-working sailors and dockworkers. Take a guided walk and learn about the history of this vanished piece of the city. Every Sunday until 28 December, 10.30-12.30, Circus School, Joossengang 14, Antwerpen-Dam, register via 03 22 11 333 or [stadinverandering@stad.antwerpen.be](mailto:stadinverandering@stad.antwerpen.be); €4  
<http://tinyurl.com/old-ijzer-walk>

### International model car swap

Collectors will find the best and rarest miniatures and scale models from more than 150 exhibitors at this one-day event. 30 November, 10.00-17.00, Autoworld, Jubelpark, Brussels; €10  
[www.autoworld.be](http://www.autoworld.be)

### Sint-Cruise

Enjoy a two-hour cruise on the Albert Canal with Sinterklaas. The Piets put on a show and give treats and toys to the children. 23 & 30 November, boarding 13.00, departure at 14.00, Rederij Limburgia, Scheepvaartkaai 5D, Hasselt. Reservations required on 0475 95 40 78; €9 for under-12s, €12 for adults  
[www.rederijlimburgia.be](http://www.rederijlimburgia.be)

# Burger Americana

## New Brussels eatery looks to Big Apple for inspiration



Georgio Valentino

More articles by Georgio \ [flanderstoday.eu](http://flanderstoday.eu)

[WWW.MANHATTNS.COM](http://WWW.MANHATTNS.COM)

Last month Brussels celebrated the opening of its newest burger joint, and the concept is as quaint as it is tasty. You place your order at one end of the counter. As you slide down the line to the designated pick-up zone, you watch your burger get grilled and topped by a team of short-order cooks. It emerges on a gleaming tray with a side of fries. You rush to table and consume.

Jerry and Phil Vandermeulen, two brothers from Sint-Truiden, dreamed of marrying the classic American diner experience with top-shelf ingredients, modern marketing and, of course, a bit of Belgian flair. Thus was born Manhattn's.

It's an appropriate name, as Jerry hatched the idea in the Big Apple, where he peddled street waffles for Wafels & Dinges, owned by a Flemish entrepreneur, for two years. "I wanted to bring the New York vibe to Belgium," he says. "I want you to feel that kind of energy when you walk in the door."

cut and cooked twice.

The presentation of his American-style burgers is only slightly modified from the tried and tested. Old-World influence, for example, can be detected in cheeseburgers that boast French Comté and Reblochon. And of course the fries are paired with mayonnaise.

Vegetarians take note, you have not been neglected. Phil's menu includes a veggie burger and a range of salads.

With concept in hand, the brothers Vandermeulen set about soliciting investors and applying for permits. The hardest part, according to Jerry, was finding the right location. The brothers scouted various Brussels neighbourhoods before discovering the disused temp office on Louizalaan that would become Manhattn's.

"This neighbourhood is the closest thing to New York City in Brussels," he says. "There are loads of offices and boutiques, but more than anything, there are all kinds of people working and living here."

“

We've been packed from day one

Jerry may have had the vision and – as a business-school graduate – the commercial knowhow, but he needed his brother's culinary expertise to really get cooking. Phil is a chef with experience across Flanders. "It's the ideal team," Jerry says. "I manage the books; he manages the kitchen."

And what a kitchen it is. Phil built the menu around three key ingredients. First, he sources quality British beef. Second, he makes his brioche buns with extra virgin olive oil from Italy. Third, the fries are quintessentially Belgian, hand-

Once contracts were signed and permits approved, work surged ahead. The erstwhile office space was transformed into a stylised, branded fast-food paradise in just two months. Manhattn's was ready for its moment of truth in mid-October.

In the event, Jerry and Phil were victims of their own success. Manhattn's impressive marketing machine had turned on too many customers, and the first few days were characterised by long queues. Early reviews were savage, charging that the style of the concept



© Courtesy Manhattn's

Manhattn's combines the quintessential American diner experience with homegrown flair

wasn't matched by the substance. "It was crazy busy," Vandermeulen says. "We thought we'd have time to find our feet but there hasn't been time to think. We've been packed from day one."

Jerry and Phil reacted quickly, adding an extra register, more pay terminals and additional staff. They found their rhythm within a few weeks and are the wiser for it. Jerry is philosophic about his trial

by fire. "It was a lot of hard work," he says. "We're constantly moving, constantly adapting. But it's satisfying to overcome challenges."

These days, Manhattn's is doing brisk (but manageable) business. For his part, Jerry seems ready to do it all over again. "If this goes well, why not?" he muses. "We could open another Manhattn's somewhere else – in Ghent or Antwerp."

## BITE

## The fight is on to be Flanders' top fish chef

[WWW.VLAM.BE](http://WWW.VLAM.BE)

Flanders has a slew of professional chefs who are continually bettering themselves. The region's best are also usually the first to sign up for a chance to compete for a new title or diploma, win a trophy and perhaps even collect a few nice prizes in the process.

One such competition is the battle for Fish Chef of the Year, a serious affair to see which professional chef makes the tastiest and most original dish with sole. Why sole? Besides being the most important catch for Flemish fishermen, sole was elected Fish of the Year 2014 by Vlam, Flanders' agricultural marketing board.

With North Sea Chefs, a team of enthusiastic ambassadors for the promotion of sustainable fish, unknown fish species and bycatch, Vlam has launched various initiatives throughout the year to put sole in the spotlight.

A jury, composed of representatives from the



© Courtesy Roger Ferrer Ibáñez/Flickr

region's major restaurant associations and chaired by North Sea Chef Rudi Van Beylen, made a pre-selection of the submitted recipes this month. The five finalists were due to compete for the title of Fish Chef of the Year as Flanders Today went to press, during a demonstration at the Horeca Expo in Ghent, the most important annual trade fair for the hotel, restaurant and catering industry.

This year's finalists were Bart Gils of The Keizershof in Turnhout, Jonas Haegeman of De Vijf Seizoenen in Brakel, Jean-Philippe Vormezele of Boury in Roeselare, Jonathan Oliver of De Jonkman in Bruges and Dimitri Van Berlo of Chef's Table in Burcht.

Previous winners include Ivan Menten of Lèche Plat in Arendonk (2013), Dean Masschelein of Boury in Roeselare (2012) and Guillaume Noël of Sans Cravate in Bruges (2011).

The winner went home with the diploma, a trophy designed for the event by artist Tuur De Rijbel, a cheque for €1,250, a €250 voucher to spend at the Horeca Expo and dinner for two at Peter Goossens' Hof van Cleve in Kruishoutem, otherwise known as Belgium's best restaurant.

The remaining finalists each received a diploma and dinner for two at famed fish restaurant De Jonkman in Bruges. \ Robyn Boyle



# Maturing nicely

Antwerp's Van Tricht family has got ripening cheese down to a fine art



Alan Hope

More articles by Alan \ [flanderstoday.eu](http://flanderstoday.eu)

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

**T**he *Wall Street Journal* once named it the best cheese shop in Europe. And it's right on our doorstep.

But Van Tricht is a name associated not only with selling cheese, but also with the more rarefied business of ripening cheese. The well-known shop is in Antwerp's Berchem district, but the cheese maturing takes place in eight rooms of the former De Koninck brewery.

*Affinage*, it's called in the trade, and it's an intermediate step between producer and consumer. You know how it is. You're having guests round, so you go to the supermarket and buy some nice cheeses for a cheeseboard after the meal. But when the moment comes, the Camembert is way too runny, while the Brie sits there like a block of stone, refusing to give before the knife.

That's where the *affineur* comes in. If you'd bought your cheese from such a specialist, both cheeses would have been at the top of their condition. "What we do here is pretty unique in Belgium; nobody else does it quite this way," explains Michel Van Tricht, who runs this part of the operation with his son Frédéric. (His wife, Jeanine, runs the shop.) "As far as installations are concerned, as well as the investment in top cheeses, I think it's fair to say we're number one. I'd be lying if I said otherwise."

The installation is a series of rooms, each temperature- and humidity-controlled, and a preparation area, as spotless and high-tech as a microchip plant. "Before, ripening took place behind the shop," says Van Tricht, "and I had two more rooms in an adjoining shop that I rented. Here, there are eight rooms." Formal training in the craft of *affineur* exists in France, but Van Tricht learned on the job. "My father was a pastry chef here in Bornem and started a business in about 1950. In 1960, they expanded into a delicatessen. I worked for a couple of years in the shop and later as a travelling rep for the delicatessen, but not especially for cheese. In 1978 I bought the business from my parents."

A speciality in cheese came on slowly but surely. "Why? Because I thought it was a great product, made by true craftsmen. I got to know some *affineurs* in France. My interest was not only to sell cheese in the shop but also to restaurants. I tried always to find better and better cheese for them, and now our wholesale trade is a major part of the business."

If you happen to be dining in one of Belgium's top restaurants and go for the cheeseboard, the chances are you'll be eating cheeses ripened by Van Tricht. Sometimes exclusively – Peter Goossens has Comté cheese specially ripened for Hof Van Cleve to the age of four years, something that's unobtainable elsewhere.

But there's nothing stopping you from walking into the Van Tricht shop on Fruithoflaan in Berchem and buying some two- or three-star cheese for yourself. The cheese counter is 11 metres long and offers as many as 300 different types, which



the staff are happy to guide you through. The shop also sells charcuterie and prepared meals, as well as cheese accompaniments like crackers, crostini and olives.

The cheeses are almost all made with unpasteurised milk. "Those cheeses have more character and much more flavour," explains Van Tricht. "Raw-milk cheeses also have more of a development curve: First they're not ready, then they're in perfect condition, then they've gone too far. Pasteurised cheeses, on the other hand, have a much flatter curve. So, though they have a longer life, they don't have the same highs and lows."

The company also regularly takes part in beer and cheese pairings – "It's all the rage these days." Not only does the carbonation of beer help cut through the fatty cheeses, there are an infinite variety of flavours.

Some suggestions from Van Tricht: pair the bitter, hoppy Houblon Chouffe with a Rossini Italian blue cheese or the deeply complex Liefmans Goudenband with a Torta de Oveja from Salamanca in Spain – so creamy and soft it has to be served with a spoon.



© Photos courtesy Van Tricht

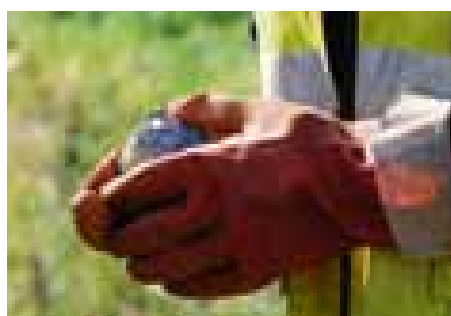
To find out about open pairing evenings, follow *Kaasaffineurs Van Tricht* on Facebook. To organise one yourself, contact them via the website

## Westhoek dig uncovers relics from the Iron Age to WWI

Digging in the Westhoek area remains a risky business. The First World War left so much unexploded ammunition in that part of West Flanders that even now, 100 years later, surprise discoveries continue to be made. That's a problem for anyone wanting to put a spade in the ground, whether to lay the foundations of a building, to plough fields or to carry out large infrastructure works.

Fluxys, the company that manages the Flemish gas network, will begin constructing a new natural gas pipeline between the West Flemish municipalities of Alveringem and Maldegem next year. It's a job that doesn't normally involve too many headaches, were it not that the planned route of the 74-kilometre pipeline crosses the entire former frontline of the First World War.

That meant that the fields, just north of Ypres, would most likely contain unexploded



© Fluxys Belgium

munitions, so the area would have to be cleared before any works could begin. And if you're going to dig anyway, you might as well complete an archaeological survey, no? "Before the project began, we investigated what might be in the soil, based on aerial photographs," explains Sam De Decker, an archaeologist with the Flemish govern-

ment's heritage agency. "But we encountered many surprises. More than half of the traces that we found were not on our photographs. So there is much more resting under the soil than we thought – not only from the First World War, but also relics from earlier periods. Our findings date back to 1000 BC." De Decker says the team's discovery of a bronze axe from the Iron Age was a prime find. "But archaeologists look primarily to the people behind the objects," he adds. "Who made these objects? What did the landscape look like at that time?"

The archaeologists also found pottery workshops from the middle ages and a well-preserved Roman yard, situated only 20 metres from German war positions. "This means that we now have an excavation site with, on the one hand, a Roman yard and, on the other hand, a piece of German front line,

complete with bunkers."

The team also found a soldier's chair next to one of a child in the area that the German frontline used to span. De Decker says it's easy to imagine stories around these findings. "Often the question is asked what archaeology of the First World War has left to offer," he points out. "In my opinion, such findings give the war a human face. Other sources such as letters and reports are often coloured, but not archaeology. Findings don't lie."

After workers have finished clearing the area, the pipeline will be built, and it will be followed by a second one in northern France. According to De Decker, the archaeological research conducted in the margins of these works will be the largest research project ever related to the First World War.

\ Toon Lambrechts

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*"An update of the recent legal changes"*
- **Dave Deruytter,**  
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# Delicate devastation

Novelist Kris van Steenberghe's debut, *Woesten*, adds another award to the list



Rebecca Benoot  
More articles by Rebecca \ flanderstoday.eu

Former teacher Kris van Steenberghe dreamed as a child of becoming a writer, and with his epic family saga examining the darkness in individuals as well as society, he's made it.

Teacher-turned-author Kris van Steenberghe wrote a lot when he was a child, hoping that one day he'd hold his own book in his hands. Back then, he was usually distracted after a few pages by football and friends, but now he has finally fulfilled his dream.

His debut novel, *Woesten*, was released a little over a year ago and received great reviews, but it slowly faded into the background. Until last month, that is, when Van Steenberghe won the Bronzen Uil, a prize for the best Dutch-language debut novel, as well as the readers' prize.

"It was a great honour to be recognised for the work," he says, "especially seeing as the novel was released last year. It's wonderful to have the reviews validated with a

prize, and it also buys you time and opens doors."

But that's not all: At the opening of the Boekenbeurs this year, he was also awarded the Flemish Debut prize, fuelling both his ambition and his second novel, which is already in the works.

“

I wanted to explore what that kind of defect does to someone

Van Steenberghe (pictured), who lives in Lier, Antwerp province, dabbled in acting and directing before he started writing his own plays. "That's how I ended up in the Schrijvers Academie (Writers' Academy) in Antwerp," he explains. "I wanted to work on my craft. They had several courses there, such as prose and poetry, which had interested me for a while. It just happened to be the right time and place."

The result is *Woesten*, a novel set in a village of the same name in the Westhoek region of West Flanders, a place scarred by the Great War. The story of this promising debut begins with Elizabeth, a bright young woman living in Woesten. Hoping to escape, she marries Guillaume, a doctor from Brussels. Not long after their wedding, she gives birth to twin boys, one beautiful and blond, named Valen-

tijn, the other dark and deformed. Disappointed and disgusted, Elizabeth's husband calls him Nameloos (Nameless), denying him an identity and a legacy. After Elizabeth's death, the point of view switches to tell the story of the men she left behind. All will be crippled in one way or another, as there is no escape from the war that lingers in the shadows.

The initial idea behind the novel was straightforward. "I wanted to tell a story about twins", Van Steenberghe tells me. "What happens when one turns out beautiful and the other is maimed? How does it influence them? The parents? And even their environment? I wanted to explore what that kind of defect does to someone and how they survive it."

As a father of five, including twins, the core of the novel hits close to home for Van Steenberghe.

*Woesten* is set at the end of the 19th century but ultimately spans beyond the First World War, creating a multi-faceted portrait of human hardship. "I wanted to put the devastation of this individual, Nameloos, and man in general in a larger picture," he says. "The First World War was a logical setting as it's one of the darkest pages in our history."

As with any novel with a historical backdrop, a lot of research was involved. "The novel took me four years to write, but it's not a historical novel per se, nor is it a war novel; rather, it's an epic family saga set in that particular period. If you want to know more about the war, you'll feel

cheated, as this is a work of fiction and not a historical account."

*Woesten* is an intricately constructed tale, told by the four protagonists, each giving us their own interpretation of destiny in their own

distinctive voice.

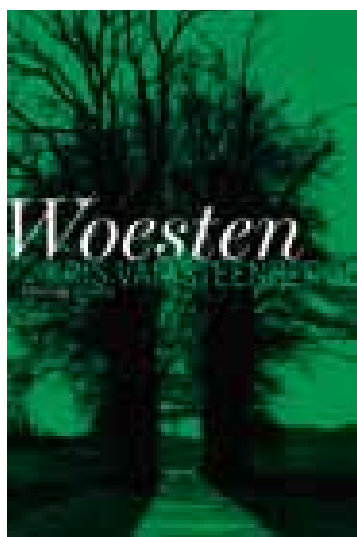
Smouldering sentiment with a whiff of Jane Austen and reminiscent of the classic 19th-century Flemish village novels full of gossip, adversity and hypocrisy, this is an impressive and deceptively simple debut with characters that leap from the page and into our hearts.

Atmospheric, grand and flawlessly Flemish, *Woesten* is good old-fashioned storytelling at its best.

*Woesten* is published by Podium ★★★★★



Kris van Steenberghe's new novel, *Woesten*, is a multi-faceted portrait of human hardship



## MORE NEW FICTION

**De Poppendokter**  
(The Doll Doctor)

Diane Broeckhoven • Vrijdag

Seasoned author Diane Broeckhoven returns with a novel about two people whose lives become sidetracked by war and family. Hendrik and Esther are two kids living in Amsterdam in 1942 who spend their days playing house, until Esther vanishes, leaving behind her beloved doll, Trui. Years later, unable to forget his childhood friend, Hendrik leaves his job as goldsmith to become a doll doctor, hoping Esther will come looking for Trui. Just as he's about to give up hope, fate steps in. Simple yet serene, *De Poppendokter* takes your breath away. ★★★★★



**Zonder voorschrift**  
(Without a Prescription)

Pieter Aspe • Manteau

Flanders' favourite crime author is back with a new novel that begins with a strange home-jacking that triggers a series of murders by a man who calls himself John Bold. Bold is a known ladies' man who is soon linked to the brothel Het Made-liefje, a place where you can have any girl for a price and where Inspector Van In contracts a deadly bacteria. His partner Versavel, smitten with the lead witness, now has to race against the clock to catch Bold and find a cure for Flanders' beloved, long-suffering inspector. *Zonder voorschrift* is average at best. ★★★★★

**Het Vlindereffect** (The Butterfly Effect)

Margot Vanderstraeten • Atlas

Inspired by chaos theory, journalist Margot Vanderstraeten's novel tells the tale of Angela, who returns to Mumbai, where she stayed in the Taj Mahal Hotel with her son during a terrorist raid. On her way back, she is immersed in a conversation with the spiritual Jane, who tries to distract Angela when their plane is struck by turbulence. She asks her to tell her about her life, resulting in a chaotic and cathartic story filled with coincidences and candour. *Het Vlindereffect* bursts with depth and atmospheric allusions. ★★★★★

**De Boekendokter** (The Books Doctor)

Thomas Blondeau & Roderik Six • De Bezige Bij

Thomas Blondeau, who died suddenly last year in his 30s of an aortic rupture, created the concept of the *boekendokter* as a gimmick for the Boekenbeurs: In a fake doctor's surgery he would heal readers' aches and pains by prescribing them a novel that would cure the most painful of afflictions, whether it was a sore toe or a lost love. Author Roderik Six has selected his best cures and, assuming the role of assistant to the renowned doctor, he takes us on a literary voyage covering death, language, loss and an ode to his old friend. ★★★★★

## WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

Film production needs extras and 1980s cars

Production house Menuet is looking for extras to feature in scenes from Flemish director Felix Van Groeningen's latest movie, *Belgica*. Van Groeningen is best known for his award-winning films *De helaasheid der dingen* (*The Misfortunates*) and *The Broken Circle Breakdown*. The new movie, which begins shooting next month in Ghent, is about brothers who own a 1980s bar called Belgica. The brothers are played by TV actor Tom Vermeir (*Vermist, Eigen kweek*), also the lead singer of the band A Brand, and Stef Aerts (*Adem, Smoorverliefd*). The production needs extras for the bar scenes and also cars from the late 1980s to early 1990s.

\ [www.belgica.inthepicture.tv](http://www.belgica.inthepicture.tv)

Roets calendar 2015 released

Did you know that the first woman to ever speak before the American congress was Flemish? That's just one of the historical facts about Flemings you'll find in the new edition of the Roets calendar. It's the 11th edition of the calendar that enlightens residents about some of the lesser-known historical bits of information from Flanders. Every week of Roets has a page that relays the story of a historical figure or event, and there are also daily tidbits of information related to that day. De Roets started publishing in 2005 out of a sense of concern that so much of this information was lost to history. Roets is constructed to be easy to read in the sofa as well as hung on the wall and can be purchased from the website.

\ [www.roetsinfo.eu](http://www.roetsinfo.eu)

Foo Fighters headline Rock Werchter

American rock band Foo Fighters will be one of the headliners of Flanders' biggest music festival, Rock Werchter, next summer. Festival organisers even changed the traditional July date to June specifically to accommodate the band, who were at the top of their fans' wish list. The band, fronted by former Nirvana drummer Dave Grohl, haven't played Werchter since 2005. The festival has also announced that British rock band Muse, a Werchter stalwart, will return next summer. Rock Werchter, regularly voted by international industry experts as one of the best outdoor music festivals in the world, takes place next year from 25 to 28 June.

\ [www.rockwerchter.be](http://www.rockwerchter.be)

# An artistic journey

Masereel exhibition in Brussels celebrates pioneer of the graphic novel



Bjorn Gabriels

More articles by Bjorn \ [flanderstoday.eu](http://flanderstoday.eu)

\ [HTTP://WITTOCKIANA.ORG](http://WITTOCKIANA.ORG)

Brussels' Bibliotheca Wittockiana is exhibiting the aquarelles of the 20th-century Flemish artist Frans Masereel, an aspect of his work that has long been in the shadows of his more famous woodcuts.

At the peak of his career, artist Frans Masereel, born in Blankenberge in 1889, had his work published across the globe. His illustrations were requested by the greatest authors of his day, among them several winners of the Nobel prize for literature, such as Thomas Mann, Stefan Zweig and Maurice Maeterlinck. His highly recognisable black-and-white woodcuts influenced visual arts and crafts for years to come.

He didn't only illustrate the works of others, though. With his wordless "novels in pictures", as he called them, Masereel can be seen as one of the pioneers of the graphic novel.

Today, 125 years after his birth, Masereel's most influential "novels in pictures" continue to be published worldwide. The English translations of *Mon livre d'heures* (1919) and *La Ville* (1925) are even available for e-readers as *Passionate Journey* and *The City* respectively.

Although his work is strongly tied to a bibliophile tradition, Masereel (*pictured right*) might have actually liked it to be so readily available, as he was a keen supporter of popular editions at affordable prices.

Despite the incessant attention, from both the public and art professionals, one aspect of his work has remained largely hidden in the shadow of his woodcuts. The succinct exhibition *Frans Masereel in Transition (1914-1930)* at Bibliotheca Wittockiana, a private book-printing museum in the suburban outskirts of Brussels, tries to adjust that image.

"Masereel drew his whole life," says curator and Masereel aficionado Roger Vander Linden, "from the moment he could hold a pencil in his hand until he lay on his deathbed. But he was not only an engraver who is – quite rightly – famous for his woodcuts. Masereel was also a painter and an aquarellist."

Early in 2006, Vander Linden arranged an exhibition called *Masereel and Colour* in the Queen Fabiola Salon in the centre of Antwerp. "Many years ago, on the occasion of a travelling exhibition with Masereel's woodcuts, a seemingly never-ending tour that must have stopped at every cultural centre and city hall available, I asked the organisers when they would finally show his aquarelles," says Vander Linden. "It didn't



© VG Bild-Kunst / SABAM

Frans Masereel's *Plage le dimanche*, 1926

happen until that 2006 expo in Antwerp, with 90 works by Masereel in colour and no black-and-whites at all. Some visitors couldn't even believe that what they were seeing was made by Masereel."

“Masereel drew from the moment he could hold a pencil in his hand

The set-up at the Bibliotheca Wittockiana is less iconoclastic by nature, as it shows Masereel's artistic development from his earliest drawings in black and white and his most famous woodcut novels to his colourful paintings from the late 1920s. This also means a journey from the bleakness of the First World War to the frivolous period that follows.

When the imminent German invasion causes panic in Belgium, the 25-year-old Masereel is living in France. He returns to Ghent in the late summer of 1914, but as he is no longer a registered resident there, his military status remains unclear. He stays in the city for a few weeks – and draws quite ordinary scenes, like the first ones on display at the Wittockiana – before heading to France and then Swit-

zerland. He would never live in Belgium again.

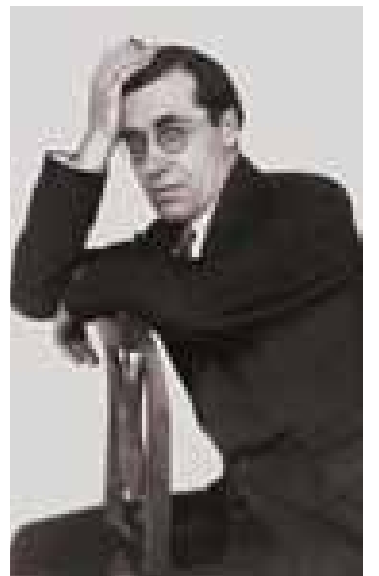
In neutral Switzerland, Masereel works as a volunteer translator for the Red Cross. He meets and befriends other artists and writers, such as the French Nobel prize-winning author and pacifist Romain Rolland.

While in Geneva, Masereel lays the foundations of his artistic career. He joins the monthly *Les Tablettes* and the daily *La Feuille*, both new publications that battle the hypocrisy of warmongering by all parties involved. Hence their prohibition in both Germany and France.

Day in, day out, Masereel produces a front-page illustration that skillfully dissects war profiteering and military propaganda. Some of the staggering number of drawings, originally printed on low-quality paper, can be seen at the Wittockiana in the form of unique zinco-graphs Masereel had made on high-calibre paper at the time.

Besides his work as a wartime political cartoonist and a book illustrator, Masereel starts working on his own projects. Every new step he takes impresses his friends and fellow artists. In 1921, Rolland writes to Stefan Zweig: "I am as fond of him as you are. He's one of the few strong creative figures of our time, who constantly renews himself and yet always remains true to himself."

As part of this artistic process,



Masereel also wants to develop himself as a painter who is equally expressive with his brush and aquarelles as with his woodcuts. Centrally placed in the exhibition is the oil painting "La fleur" (*The Flower*, 1920).

With its prominent red flower against a dark urban background, all drawn in the clear lines reminiscent of his woodcuts, this work seems the hinge around which the exhibition turns towards Masereel's multi-coloured, fluidly painted aquarelles. Masereel depicts bustling Paris nightlife, a crowded beach scene and business people at work, possibly in a bank. There's yet another crisis on the horizon...

Until 1 March

Bibliotheca Wittockiana  
Bemelstraat 23,  
Sint-Pieters-Woluwe (Brussels)



Because it's quality, not quantity, that counts

# Leuven Int'l Short Film Festival

28 November to 6 December

STUK, Leuven

\ WWW.KORTFILMFESTIVAL.BE

Leuven's first edition of the International Short Film Festival in 1995 grew out of necessity. Jan Bosmans, then a recent film school graduate, had a new short but no venue to show it. Together with Johan Van Schaeren, now general co-ordinator of the organisation that runs the International Short Film Festival, he held an evening dedicated to the genre in Leuven. They had 11 films.

This year, in its 20th edition, the Academy Award qualifying festival presents a week jam-packed with workshops for both children and up-and-coming professionals, concerts, master classes and, of course, a wide range of recent national and international short films.

One of the Artists in Focus is young Flemish filmmaker Wannes Destoop, whose *Badpakje 46* (*Swimsuit 46*) won the shorts Jury Award at the Cannes Film Festival in 2011. A very-early-career



retrospective will culminate in Destoop's new short drama, *Billy the Bully* (pictured).

To celebrate its 20th anniversary, the festival has

put together four themed programmes with a selection of audience favourites from previous editions: Life is... Scary, Sci-fi, Love and Comedy. In the medley of scary shorts, the haunting *Forever* (2004) shows that director Jonas Govaerts didn't wait until his slasher feature *Welp* (currently in cinemas) to take a stab at horror.

The festival hasn't forgotten about animation, which is how many film-goers first experience short films. In a workshop on 30 November, children aged seven to 12 can make their own stop-motion film. Should they, or anyone else, need inspiration, there's a special programme dedicated to Beast Animation, a stop-motion studio in Mechelen that has worked on, among many others, the popular *A Town Called Panic* series of shorts in which plastic toys Cowboy, Indian and Horse go berserk.

\ Bjorn Gabriels

## VISUAL ARTS

### Mediterranean: The Continuity of Man

Until 1 February

FotoMuseum, Antwerp

\ WWW.FOMU.BE

Nick Hannes' previous FoMu exhibition followed the Flemish photographer's travels through the former Soviet Union. *The Continuity of Man* takes him to the contemporary Mediterranean basin, a region once united under Pax Romana but now in turmoil. Its northern flank is unsettled by the European auster-

ity regime; its southern and eastern reaches are still feeling the effects of Arab Spring. And to the west... the open Atlantic. Hannes' ironic lens meditates on immigration, urbanisation and mass tourism, all against the backdrop of a global economic crisis to which we've become all-too accustomed. \ Georgio Valentino



## FESTIVAL

### Winter Wonders

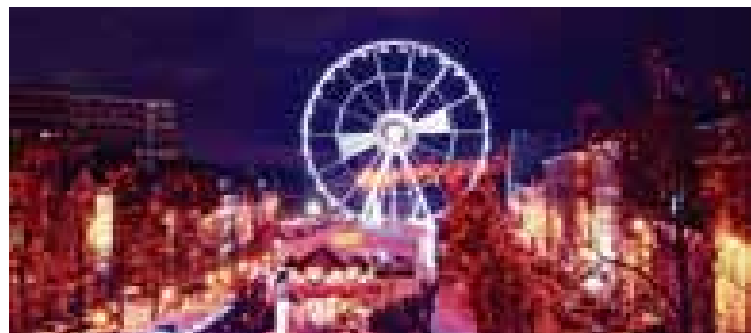
28 November to 4 January

Across Brussels city centre

\ WWW.WINTERWONDERS.BE

Brussels' holiday market is a force to be reckoned with. Winter Wonders stretches from the Grote Markt past the Beurs and Opera, across the Anspachlaan and Sint-Katelijneplein, all the way to the towering Ferris wheel at the far end of the Vismarkt. The market's

centrepiece is a massive Christmas fir given to Brussels by the City of Riga, Latvia as a gesture of friendship. Another highlight is the luminous installation integrated into the facade of the church, as well as the nightly light show Electrabel Nights just in front. \ GV



## FILM

### Autoluminescent

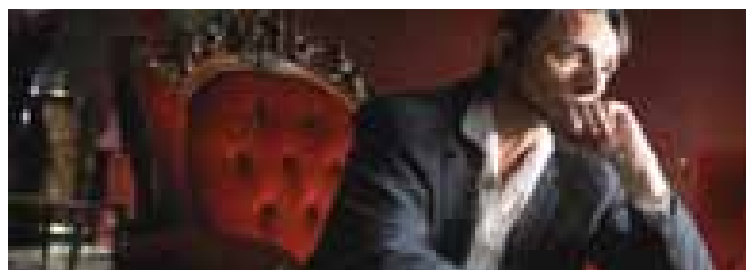
3 December, 20.00

Ancienne Belgique, Brussels

\ WWW.ABCONCERTS.BE

Lynn-Maree Milburn and Richard Lowenstein's 2011 documentary *Autoluminescent* celebrates the life and art of cult musician Rowland S Howard. The late Australian guitarist never cared to leverage the early underground success of his punk outfit The Birthday Party into a mainstream career, as did singer Nick Cave. But Howard nevertheless influenced a genera-

tion of musicians with his distinctive style, borrowing its gritty, industrial modernity from West German *krautrock* and its melancholy twang from American country-and-western. In his presentation, too, Howard was oft-imitated but never surpassed. He was the archetypal sombre dandy of the 1980s, a German expressionist film come to life. \ GV



## MARKET

### Prêt-a-Marché

30 November, 10.00-18.00

Seven, Eeklo

\ WWW.PRETAMARCHE.BE

East Flanders' favourite family-friendly pop-up design market is back and just in time to give you a head start on your holiday shopping. Prêt-a-Marché is a forum for local and independent producers, so don't expect to find standardised or mass-produced commodities. Backstitched Design (pictured) embodies the spirit of the event. The Belgo-American DIY brand takes discarded leather and lovingly transforms it into original, hand-crafted bags and accessories. Dozens more producers show off their wares, including fashion, food and health and beauty products. There's also face-painting and games for the kids. \ GV



## CONCERT

Brussels

**Michael Paouris:** The fastest bouzouki player on Planet Earth (according to legendary guitarist Al Di Meola) is in Brussels to perform Django Reinhardt meets Manolis Chiotis, a combination of Belgian gypsy jazz and Greek bouzouki. 28 November 20.00, Art Base, Zandstraat 29

\ WWW.ART-BASE.BE

## FILM

Antwerp

**Fashion Film Festival:** The annual international travelling film Festival founded by American-born, Paris-based fashion blogger and critic Diane Pernet, featuring shorts, features, documentaries, conferences, performances and installations. 2-3 December, AMUZ, Kammenstraat 81

\ WWW.ASHADEVIEWON-FASHIONFILM.COM

## EVENT

Bruges

**Winter Moments with Flowers:** Inspiration for a cosy holiday season, with azaleas from Ghent, poinsettias, table decorations and inspired creations by renowned florists and interior designers, plus demonstrations and workshops around festive decor and do-it-yourself flower and wreath arrangements. Until 30 November, Oud Sint-Jan, Zonnekemeers

\ WWW.HAPPENINGS.BE

## FOOD&DRINK

Brussels

**Happy Thanksgiving:** Feast for those in Brussels missing "turkey day" in the United States, featuring a traditional Thanksgiving dinner with all the trimmings, pumpkin pie and special drinks. 27 November noon until late, Hard Rock Cafe Brussels, Grote Markt 12a

\ WWW.HARDROCK.COM/CAFES/BRUSSELS

## PARTY

Ghent

**Hindu Nights:** Annual New Year's Eve party that sells out quickly every year for its laid-back atmosphere and eclectic mix of rock'n'roll and DJ sets, featuring a winter terrace (Frank Sinatra, John Lennon...), soul café (Etta James, Aretha Franklin...) and indie ballroom (Oasis, Arctic Monkeys...). 31 December 22.30-6.00, Vooruit, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23

\ WWW.HINDUNIGHTS.BE

# Talking Dutch

## The War of the Noses



Derek Blyth  
More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

Sometimes, while you're reading a Flemish newspaper, you come across a headline that makes no sense at all. Here's one that had me scratching my head – *Snoepkar omver gegoooid in nieuwe 'neuzekesrel'*, it said in *De Standaard*. You know what you're meant to do when you come to a sentence like that. Take it one word at a time and break down those compound Dutch words into their different bits. So here we go.

A *snoepkar* is a *kar* – cart, selling *snoep* – sweets. And this sweet cart had been *omver gegoooid* – overturned. But then you come to the puzzling part– *in nieuwe 'neuzekesrel'* – in a new little nose riot.

Alert readers might remember that we have had little nose riots before. They are a speciality of Ghent, like *donderdag veggiedag* – vegetarian Thursday, and *insectengerechten* – insect cuisine.

The Ghent War of the Noses, as historians might one day call it, involves two cart vendors on the Groentenmarkt who sell cuberdons – those incredibly sweet purple local specialties; the Flemish are convinced they look like noses. Hence their nickname: *neusjes* – little noses. When you bite into them, they release a sticky liquid that dribbles down your nice clean clothes.

*Beide handelaars beweren dat ze de beste snoepjes hebben en zeggen dat de tegenstander op ongeoorloofde wijze klanten afpakt* – both traders claim their sweets are the best and that their rival steals customers using unscrupulous methods. It sounds familiar, like Pepsi vs Coke or Apple vs

Samsung. Only the Ghent situation is in danger of turning into World War Three.

*In 2011 werden er al eens klappen uitgedeeld in de 'neuzekesoorlog'* – In 2011, the 'noses war' led to an exchange of blows – *en in april trok de Gentse burgemeester de vergunning van de twee verkopers voor twee weken in na een nieuwe vechtpartij* – and in April the mayor of Ghent suspended the two sellers' trading licences for two weeks following another street fight.

And War of the Noses has now taken an unexpected turn. *Op de Groentenmarkt heeft een ontevreden klant van een cuberdonverkoper donderdag het kraampje van de verkoper volledig vernield* – on Thursday an unhappy customer who bought cuberdons from a seller on the Groentenmarkt destroyed the vendor's cart, said a Ghent police spokesperson.

*De klant had snoepjes gekocht aan het kraam, maar zou niet tevreden geweest zijn over de kwaliteit* – the customer had bought the sweets at the stall but was disappointed by the quality. *Even werd gevreesd dat het incident een nieuwe confrontatie vormde in de Gentse 'neuzekesoorlog'* – at first, people were afraid this incident was another outburst in the Ghent War of the Noses.

But it was probably just an annoyed customer who'd dribbled purple sticky liquid down his nice clean clothes.



© Courtesy visitgent.be

## VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY



In response to: *New eatery brings New York vibe to Brussels*  
**David Ramael**

Are the rude NY service, the ridiculous prices and loud street noise included?



In response to: *Belgian employee second most expensive in Europe*  
**Paul Walsh**

Worth every penny.



In response to: *Hundreds of professors haven't yet passed English test*  
**Miranda Martin**

It doesn't surprise me to hear this. Belgians are generally much better than British people at learning other languages but many, especially academics, have a quite mistaken view about the standard of their proficiency.



**BLUE @officialblue**

After a weekend of @bbcstrictly & @nightoftheproms .. It's good to be back together for a few hours. #OneLove



**Rachel A Davis @vagabondbaker**

Board @Eurostar at St Pancras and within 4 hrs you can be in picture perfect #Bruges! <http://wp.me/p4PcrJ-2mn> \*new\*



**Gediminas Varvuolis @varvuolis**

Always good 2 comeback to #Gent University, this time with a lecture on #Lithuania @ East Flanders Province, #Belgium



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## Poll

Now that the EU is about to let members states choose whether to allow the sale of genetically modified crops (GMOs), do you think Belgium should allow them to be sold here?

a. No. Genetic manipulation could be dangerous and the results irreversible

36%

b. Not yet. Not enough is known about the long-term effects of GMOs, and any action should be based on science, not fear

50%

c. Yes. GMOs are more resistant to pests, reducing the need for pesticides, and no adverse effects have been proven

14%

The European Union is on the verge of enacting legislation that would allow member states to decide for themselves whether to allow the sale of genetically modified foods, otherwise known as GMOs. The position of half of our readers has much to recommend it: above all it allows for more

testing to determine what protections and safety measures might be required.

Among those whose mind is already made up, the vote goes more than two to one against GMOs. Objectors have done their job well in convincing people that GMOs are some kind of Franken-

science fraught with unspecified dangers.

The scientific community, meanwhile, seems to be pretty clearly in favour of allowing some use of GMOs under certain conditions, but the public remains suspicious. Only a small minority of reader are prepared to go so far.

## \ Next week's question:

Federal mobility minister Jacqueline Galant has warned the rail authority NMBS to prepare for competition. Is this a good thing for travellers?

Log on to the Flanders Today website at [www.flanderstoday.eu](http://www.flanderstoday.eu) and click on VOTE!

## THE LAST WORD

### Pre-emptive strike

"Don't drink. And if you do drink, do it in moderation."

Advice given to Antwerp dock workers by their union before taking part in Monday's strike

### Regarding Henri

"I want to teach the children as much as possible about the soldiers whose graves they maintain. For Henri Thoremans, as the only Belgian, that's difficult. I'm looking for family members who can tell us more."

Teacher Trevor Duke of the Macclesfield War Graves Project in England, which maintains, among others, the grave of Vilvoorde man Henri Thoremans, who died in the First World War

### Dream the impossible dream

"I always hoped, but never dared to dream, that Samson would eventually return to the screen. And then one day three months ago, out of the blue, the telephone rang."

Actor and singer Koen Crucke is once again on the set of kids' show *Samson & Gert* for new episodes as hairdresser Alberto Vermicelli

### Better late than never

"We're going to develop an individualised programme for each student so that they don't suffer from the delay."

Piet Stinissen, dean of medicine at the University of Hasselt, as 70 students across Flanders learned they will be allowed to study medicine after all (see p9)

