

**SAYING GOODBYE
TO AN ICON**

Flanders is mourning the loss of Gorki lead singer Luc De Vos, who died suddenly last weekend



\ 2

A BEER PREMIERE

A country known worldwide for its beautifully crafted brews finally has a museum devoted to the subject



\ 11

**BRIDGING
GENERATIONS**

Crèches and rest homes in Flanders are teaming up to share facilities and bridge the ends of the generation spectrum

\ 13



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Six months of terror

Seventy years on, Antwerp remembers the carnage caused by the Nazi V-bombs



Dan Smith

More articles by Dan \ flanderstoday.eu

Antwerp suffered heavily at the hands of the Nazis' flying "vengeance bombs" during the Second World War, with daily attacks that killed more than 4,000 people and destroyed or damaged 90,000 properties

Seventy years ago, Antwerp was in the midst of one of the darkest periods in its history. After being liberated from the Nazis on 4 September, 1944, the city enjoyed less than six weeks of relative peace before V-bombs started to fall.

The first indications of the pending attacks came when reconnaissance images showed the Nazis building launch pads in Germany and the Netherlands that all pointed to Antwerp. Before this, London had been the sole target for

these guided missiles, also known as buzz bombs or doodlebugs.

On 12 October, Hitler gave the command to start concentrated attacks on both Antwerp and London. By the time Allied forces captured the last launch site on 29 March the following year, more V-bombs had fallen on greater Antwerp than had hit London.

The first V-bomb fell on Schilderstraat near the Museum of Fine Arts at 9.45 on 13 October. The blast killed 32 people instantly and destroyed 15 houses. Another 46 were injured in this attack and more than 500 homes damaged. The spot where the bomb fell is marked with a plaque set into the footpath outside the museum.

That afternoon, a second V-bomb hit an abattoir in Lange

Lobroekstraat, killing another 14 people.

Shortly after the first V-bomb hit, Antwerp city council built a wooden observation room on the Boerentoren (Farmer's Tower), the second tallest structure in the city. Observers were connected by telephone to the War Room, where the Red Cross, fire brigade and police were represented. When a V-bomb fell, the observers could direct emergency services to the site of the explosion.

On 6 January, 1945, a V-bomb hit the Boerentoren itself, leaving a seven-metre hole in the side. People taking shelter in the tower's basement didn't even realise the building had been hit. After the war, the observation room was replaced by the Panorama Hall, which occupies the 26th floor of the building.

Singer Luc De Vos dies at 52

Long-time Gorki frontman died at weekend of multiple organ failure



Alan Hope

Follow Alan on Twitter \ @AlanHopeFT

Luc De Vos, lead singer of the Flemish band Gorki, died at the weekend at the age of 52. According to an autopsy ordered by the Ghent prosecutor's office, the cause of death was acute multiple organ failure. Both foul play and suicide have been ruled out, and no further details have been released.

De Vos (*pictured*) was found on Saturday in an apartment in Ghent he used as a work space, close to where he lived. He was married and had a 14-year-old son. A register of condolences has been opened on the website gorki.be.

As well as the 11 albums he made with Gorki after co-founding the group in 1989, De Vos was the author of three autobiographies, a novel and columns for the Ghent magazine *09*. He wrote songs for a stage show and made appearances on TV. His last was a second run of four episodes in the popular quiz show *De slimste mens ter wereld* just last month. The culture sector, music journalists and legions of fans reacted with shock as the news broke on Saturday night. Bart Peeters, a long-time friend, opened his concert in Leuven with a rendition of "Mia", Gorki's most famous number. Flemish culture



© Dominique Dierick/Het Nieuwsblad

minister Sven Gatz said that De Vos was "one of the greatest Flemish rock icons" who "left his indelible mark on the Dutch-language music scene of the 1990s. He could play with words like no other. As a rock musician, but also as columnist and writer, he put unforgettable words to paper."

The city he loved also paid tribute. Hundreds of people gathered at noon on Sunday at the foot of Ghent's Belfort to hear the city carillon play "Mia" in his memory.

Lampiris test to limit household energy use proves positive

A test to see how willing people are to limit their electricity consumption in times of shortage revealed "a clear positive effect," according to energy provider Lampiris, which carried out the experiment.

The 140,000 households that took part were notified on Thursday evening that the test was beginning and asked to limit their consumption by, for example, shutting off the TV, turning down the thermostat and avoiding turning on lights in every room. News reports showed residents unplugging appliances and using torches and candles for a couple of hours. The experiment was designed to replicate the circumstances of a Code Orange, the last step in the federal government's plan for this winter before a brownout – a

timed switch-off of power. Lampiris' test was launched to see if the population was ready to co-operate to ultimately avoid brownouts.

According to the company, consumption between 18.00 and 19.30 was 100 to 200 megawatts less than expected. "There was a clear positive effect," said spokesperson Olivier Lechien, "but we only have general figures of consumption across the whole country, not for the 140,000 participants in particular. The detailed impact is difficult to measure."

Lampiris CEO Tom Van de Cruys added that "the test showed that, with good communication, we can work together with consumers on reducing consumption. That could allow us to avoid a switch-off in an emergency situation." / AH

Belgium's carillon culture protected by Unesco as intangible heritage

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) has added Belgium's carillon culture to its register of intangible cultural heritage. Carillons are musical instruments made up of bells normally located in bell towers. Bell towers began as alarm beacons in the flat Flemish landscape and later were built on to churches and cathedrals. They have been used for playing music since at least 1510. Mechelen is home to a renowned carillon school, which attracts musicians

from across the world for master classes and the chance to play live. Mechelen is unique in having four carillons, as well as a new mobile carillon.

Unesco pointed out that the programme to protect the practice of carillon playing exists in 76 municipalities in Belgium, as well as 30 other countries worldwide. The recognition also helps to ensure funding for the restoration of historic instruments. Flemish culture minister Sven Gatz issued a joint statement with his French-speaking counterpart, Joëlle Milquet,



The carillon in Bruges' belfry

pointing out that the admission of carillon to the list was "an important recognition for Belgium's carillon players and all those who work for the carillon culture in this country. Carillon music has been giving our towns and cities a unique atmosphere for five centuries. I hope we may be able to enjoy our carillons for much longer still." \ AH

Brussels launches ambitious plan for pedestrianised centre

Brussels-City authorities have released a radical new car-free street plan, inspired by Ghent and Bruges, which they claim will ultimately give the capital the largest pedestrian zone in Europe after Venice.

The plan was launched by Brussels-City mayor Yvan Mayeur, alderwoman for transport, Els Ampe and the Brussels-Capital Region's mobility minister, Pascal Smet.

The goal of the long-awaited plan is to stop through traffic in the city centre while

allowing it to remain accessible to residents. Several new districts will become pedestrianised, including the central boulevards, the Zavel and the Dansaert quarter. In addition, some streets will be reduced to one lane of traffic.

A free electric train would be introduced for pedestrians and tourists, and five new underground car parks would be built to hold some 1,600 cars.

Critics of the plan have argued that it will

simply shift traffic congestion to other areas of Brussels, but the council claims that the inner ring will be designed to carry more traffic through the installation of smart traffic lights. The plan also involves transport authority MIVB diverting several routes and moving bus terminuses away from Beurs and De Brouckere.

The city also wants to create several dedicated cycle lanes in the centre and around the inner ring, Smet said. A new under-

ground bike park would be built in the Beurs metro station.

But the biggest change will happen on 18 July, 2015, when the Beursplein is officially made car-free. The city council is aware that this is an ambitious project that will cause enormous upheaval. "It is going to take two years to sort everything out," Mayeur admitted, "but the quality of life for everyone will improve immensely afterwards." \ Derek Blyth

356



12,500

repairs carried out by De Lijn in 2013 to the real-time info panels at bus and tram stops, according to mobility minister Ben Weyts. In the first half of this year, the total had already reached 252

people took the *waterbus* last summer between Vilvoorde and Akenkaai in Brussels. Last year's total was only 7,800, though the service then was available only two days a week instead of three

€134 million



cost to Flanders' education department of the 13,154 Dutch students who came over the border to study in 2013 – 7,023 in primary and secondary schools and 6,131 in higher education



10,000

lost suitcases per year at Brussels Airport that never make it home to their owners, an acceptable 0.05% average, says airport management. Some of those are recovered but contain no identification

25th



anniversary of the Flemish League Against Cancer, which changed its name to Kom op tegen Kanker, to match its most famous public campaign. The organisation will also release a new logo

WEEK IN BRIEF

Charles Michel is set to become the first sitting prime minister of Belgium to **become a father during his term**, after he announced last week that his partner, Amélie Derbaudrenghien, is expecting a baby in March. Michel also has an 11-year-old son from a previous marriage. He met Derbaudrenghien six years ago when he was minister of overseas development and she was an expert adviser.

Flanders is to receive **€400 million in aid from the EU** for employment and training measures, in particular those aimed at young people and those older than 50, commissioner Marianne Thyssen has announced.

The three communities in Belgium – Flemish, French-speaking and German – are collaborating on an application to Unesco to have the country's **friet (french fry) culture recognised as intangible heritage**. Flanders officially recognised *friet* and *frietkot* culture as intangible heritage earlier this year. Last week the other two communities granted their recognition. Belgium's beer culture is already on the Unesco register and was joined last week by carillon culture (see facing page).

The Brussels Institute for Environmental Management (BIM) is facing an annual bill of €3.6 million for the rental of a new passive headquarters on the site of Tour & Taxis, more than double the amount it pays for its current HQ in Sint-Lambrechts-Woluwe. BIM pointed out that it will save €600,000 on energy and water costs, as well as €60,000 a year on events that will no longer have to be organised externally. The Institute will also raise funds from rent-

ing out the new auditorium and meeting rooms.

Consouling Sounds in Ghent has been named **Starter of the Year by Unizo**, the organisation that represents the self-employed. The shop, run by doctor of literature Mike Keirsbilck, is a vinyl record shop, coffee bar, record label and talent agency for experimental music. "Consouling is an inspiring example for anyone thinking about starting their own business," the prize jury said, "combining passion, daring, stamina and a convincing business model." The owner receives a trophy, a business video, four hours of coaching and a meeting with Unizo director Karel Van Eetvelt and Flemish minister-president Geert Bourgeois.

The new **domain name extension .brussels** has attracted 1,748 subscribers since it was launched in September, according to web traffic analysts ntld-stats. The .vlaanderen extension, meanwhile, has 1,179 users, fewer than .gent on 1,315. The Flemish extension is not yet freely available, and higher numbers are expected when subscriptions open up next year. The domain has been criticised by some business owners as too long and not international enough.

The Antwerp provincial culinary school **PIVA has won a gold medal** at the Culinary World Cup in Luxembourg, one of the most important competitions of its kind in the world. The medal went to pastry chef Jorgen Baert in the category Artistic Pastry. Kris Van Rysselberghe won bronze for Pastry Art, while chef Luc Godon won bronze for Culinary Art. In addition, the catering team took home bronze for its dinner for 150 on a theme of

Europe Meets Asia.

The Zelfmoordlijn, Flanders' **help-line for those contemplating suicide**, celebrated its 35th anniversary at the weekend with a conference recalling the 204,368 callers handled over the years by 617 volunteers and, more recently, by online chat and email.

The Ghent food and drinks services sector is launching a campaign warning of the dangers of climbing onto rooftops, following the **death of a journalism student** who fell through a roof. The 22-year-old from Zottegem is thought to have been drinking with friends and climbed onto the rooftop of an empty building known as the Winter Circus to take a photo.

The tribunal of first instance in Brussels has applied to the Constitutional Court for advice in the case of **Delphine Boël**, the woman who claims to be the daughter of former King Albert II. Boël has brought a case demanding she be recognised, but the court said some evidence points to the paternity of Jacques Boël, who raised her together with her mother, Baroness Sybille de Selys Longchamps. Both the baroness and Jacques also claim that Albert is Delphine's biological father. The Constitutional Court will be asked whether the former king can be forced to take a paternity test.

Baron Jan Huyghebaert has been unanimously elected as the **new chair of the board of the Queen Elisabeth Music Competition**, following the death of Duke Jean-Pierre de Launoit. Huyghebaert is a banker and patron of the arts; he has been vice-chair of the competition since 1988.

OFFSIDE Driving it home

"Friends are for life, not for eternity". It's the rather grim slogan of this year's Bob campaign against drinking and driving. The campaign is run by the Belgian institute for road safety (BIVV) and was kicked off this week by Flemish home affairs minister Jan Jambon and federal mobility minister Jacqueline Galant.

The Bob campaign – the name refers to the designated (non-drunk) driver – has been running for 20 years and has had great success, but they have a mountain to climb. Belgians, they will tell you, are people who appreciate the finer things in life, and that includes a few beers and/or a bottle of nice wine with dinner. It always comes



as a shock to find how normally intelligent people can suddenly become transformed into scofflaws when it comes to getting behind the wheel after one too many. The campaign aims to change that by addressing the widespread tolerance for drinking and driving. "How often do we allow a friend or acquaintance to drive after a few drinks in the café?" the campaign

asks, the answer being, of course, "too often". Hence the slogan: If you knew this might be the last time you see that friend alive, would you still be so blasé?

BIVV will hand out 280,000 Bob key rings to potential drunk drivers and their friends, as well as broadcasting their three new videos and plaster 650 sites alongside the motorways with posters. Over the next eight weeks, Jambon said, police intend to carry out 250,000 spot checks.

In January, meanwhile, a new law comes into force that reduces the blood-alcohol limit for professional drivers from 0.5 per mille at present to 0.2 per mille – from 50mg alcohol to only 20mg per 100ml of blood.

FACE OF FLANDERS



© Courtesy Horeca Vlaanderen

Danny Van Assche

In a week that saw the arrival of six new Michelin-starred restaurants in Flanders and Brussels, it might seem odd that the choice of Culinary Personality of the Year should fall to a man who has never worked inside a professional kitchen.

"It's a little bit embarrassing, because my culinary skills in the kitchen are rather limited," said Danny Van Assche on the announcement of the award. But giving the title to the director of the industry organisation Horeca Vlaanderen can be seen as a sign of the growing regulation of the food and drinks service industry.

Van Assche has been at the head of Horeca Vlaanderen since 2010, after spending four years as an adviser on social affairs at Unizo, the organisation that represents the self-employed in Flanders. Prior to that, he was an adviser to economy and small business minister Eric Van Rompuy in the Flemish government.

He graduated with a doctorate in political and social sciences from Antwerp University in 1993 before going on to Leuven to study for a second degree in economics. He sat in the Flemish Parliament for two years

before being head-hunted by Van Rompuy.

Along the career path he has followed, Van Assche has built up a formidable address book. Affiliated to CD&V since the Van Rompuy days, he also sat as a local councillor and alderman in Wilrijk, near Antwerp, accumulating a host of posts, including chairing cultural associations, sitting on numerous boards and even helping run a brass band and a carnival parade. At one point, before giving up politics to represent the restaurant business, he declared 23 such positions, 10 of them remunerated. That sort of influence is important to the industry, which is now facing the biggest shake-up since the smoking ban. The federal government is introducing the new smart cash register, which will make undeclared income and paying staff in cash under the table impossible. Black work is rife in the bars and restaurants in Flanders, and many owners fear they will have to close. Van Assche can no longer prevent that from happening, but his job now will be to extract whatever compensatory measures he can from the government. \ Alan Hope

FLANDERSTODAY

 Flanders
State of the Art

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5TH COLUMN

The T-word

The Dutch dictionary authority, Van Dale, is currently running a poll on the “word of 2014”. When it comes to Flemish politics, they need to look no further: “tax shift” it is. The term came into use in the run-up to the May elections. All parties agreed that labour costs are too high in Belgium, which makes the economy less competitive. The reasons for this are historical: Belgium has a long tradition of protecting workers’ rights, jointly financed by workers and employers. However, in view of the ageing population, the system has reached its limits. The much-talked-about tax shift is a theoretical solution: decrease taxes on labour and increase them on capital gains, consumption and emissions. This tax shift has been recommended by the OECD and the EU.

Implementing it, however, is much harder than talking about it, for both practical and ideological reasons. For one, the tax shift has mostly been promoted by left wing parties, such as SPA and Groen. Both have pleaded for a tax on capital gains, or, as they call it, “making money by having money”.

Parties such as N-VA and Open VLD will not hear of this. They believe that those who stand to lose from the taxation of capital gains will simply move to other countries, and both parties favour cutting government spending (or “tax drift”) instead. They also fear that a tax shift will come down to a tax *lift* for entrepreneurs, who they feel have already been hit hard by the previous governments.

The LuxLeaks revelations and the sale of Omega Pharma, which brought in millions for entrepreneur Marc Coucke, have rekindled the debate recently, especially since they coincided with the first union protests against government cuts.

Centrists CD&V now, too, demand a tax shift, which is gaining support amongst the general public. “Families have contributed enough, now it is up to others,” CD&V says. The term has become so crucial that observers have dubbed it “the T-word”, but it’s come to refer to a tax on capital gains specifically, as a higher VAT on consumption and emissions – such as car use – is far less popular in times of shrinking incomes. So what’s next for the tax shift? Apart from CD&V, the federal coalition parties will not rush into it. The unions, meanwhile, have issued a clear warning: “No tax shift, no peace”. \ Anja Otte

Flemish Parliament has highest percentage of women

At 44.4%, Flanders has more women than any other elected body in Europe



Derek Blyth

More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

The Flemish Parliament has a higher percentage of female MPs than any other regional or federal parliament in Europe, according to a report commissioned by parliament speaker Jan Peumans.

The report shows that 44.4% of members of Flanders’ parliament are women, which puts the region’s assembly just ahead of Sweden on

© Courtesy Flemish Parliament
43.6% and Finland on 42.5%. The Flemish Parliament currently has

55 women representatives out of 124. The number has increased sharply since the regional parliament’s first elections in 1995, when 19.3% percent of those elected were women.

The high score was partly the result of new legislation requiring Flemish political parties to have both sexes represented by the top two names on the party list (which

determines who is first in line to enter parliament after the votes have been counted).

In Brussels, women make up 41.6% of parliament, while on the federal level, the figure is 39.3%. These figures put Belgium well ahead of most other democracies, with women making up only 25% of Luxembourg’s parliament, 22.3% in the UK and 18.9% in France.

Health minister wants sale of medicinal marijuana at chemist

The federal minister of health, Maggie De Block, is working on a decree that would enable the sale of medicinal marijuana in chemists across the country. Currently, the only cannabinoid drug available in Belgium is Sativex, which is only prescribed to patients with muscle spasticity due to multiple sclerosis.

The use of cannabis to relieve nausea associated with chemotherapy and to treat pain and muscle spasticity is only allowed in Belgium as part of

scientific studies. The new decree would open it up to prescription by doctors.

Patients with, for example, cancer, neuropathic pain or paraplegia who want to use medicinal marijuana are at present not included in the Sativex target group. “The scientific value was not sufficiently demonstrated during clinical trials,” said De Block during the Chamber commission for public health. \ Andy Furniere

Belgians who fight in Syria to lose nationality

Federal home affairs minister Jan Jambon (N-VA) has announced plans to confiscate passports from Belgians who join rebel forces fighting in Syria, taking away their Belgian nationality. Jambon also wants to draw up a list of radicalised jihadist fighters wanted by national and international police forces, he said in a policy statement. The measures are aimed at discouraging young people from joining terrorist groups fighting in Iraq and Syria. “The government intends to consult with its international partners on how to deal with radicalisation and violent jihadism,” Jambon said. The minister said that Belgium would adopt measures to deprive people of their Belgian nationality

if they have joined a terrorist group such as IS in Syria. The new measures, similar to those adopted by the British and Dutch governments, could be introduced by adapting a 1979 law on mercenaries, making it illegal to take part in certain conflicts abroad.

The home office also plans to use undercover officers to monitor websites that encourage radicalisation, hate or violence.

Jambon said he would introduce measures to allow the confiscation of travel documents if there is “serious and plausible evidence” that someone intends to carry out “activities that constitute a threat to the state”. \ DB

Flanders sends urgent aid to South Sudan and Burundi

Flemish minister-president and foreign minister Geert Bourgeois has approved two aid packages for African regions. In the first package, the government is to give €248,000 to the charity Plan België to provide emergency help for 700,000 displaced people in South Sudan who are fleeing fighting between government and opposition forces. The subsidy is aimed at protecting children living in the Aweri camp in the Lakes State region of South Sudan, who are at risk of violence and abuse. The aid will go toward providing a safe and supportive environment where the children can go to school. A second aid package of €249,000 is going to the Flemish branch of the Red Cross to provide emergency aid in Burundi. The aim is to help refugees to resettle in Burundi following a ceasefire agreed in 2008. About 500,000 people fled the country during civil wars in 1972 and 1993. Now that camps are closing down, refugees are being forced to return to Burundi, where they face problems finding homes and employment, Bourgeois said. \ DB

Non-violent union strike causes major disruption to transport

The first of a series of strikes on Monday, 24 November, hit public transport and shipping hard but had little effect on business, with most private sector companies able to operate as usual. The strike in Antwerp and Limburg provinces was followed this week by similar actions in East and West Flanders.

Unions are protesting at the federal and Flemish government’s austerity measures, including raising the pension age and wage freezes.

The strike on 24 November was already making itself felt on Sunday afternoon. No ships were allowed to enter or leave the ports of Ghent and Antwerp from around midday. Traffic was stopped at Zeebrugge from 17.00.

All freight traffic in Antwerp came to a standstill, with pickets set up outside factories and extra reinforcements sent in to keep order during shift changes. Trouble anticipated from the dock workers remained largely absent. Antwerp mayor Bart De Wever said he was “relieved, but not happy”. \ Anja Otte

© Yves Herman/REUTERS
Workers block an entrance of the port of Antwerp during last Monday's strike

Rail traffic was virtually non-existent in Limburg and Antwerp, leading to no peak time trains from either province to Brussels. Some passengers were stranded on Sunday evening, having assumed the strike would only begin on Monday morning. Traditionally, railway worker strikes begin at 22.00 the evening before. Public transport authority De Lijn reported severe problems with buses and trams in Antwerp and

in Limburg.

As *Flanders Today* went to press, the second of the series had had similar effects in East and West Flanders: public transport was hardest hit, while public services like post were relatively unaffected. The port of Ghent was completely closed. In Zele, East Flanders, one man was slightly injured when a car drove into a picket line after strikers attempted to keep the driver out.

Unions claimed 8,000 activists on the ground, while Voka said 80% of employees in West Flanders turned up for work as usual. The organisation reckoned the cost of the day of action at €80 million.

Rail union ASTB has announced that its members will take part in a nationwide strike on 11 December for 24 hours starting at 3.00. The union is protesting at a “lack of coherence” in the system of premiums paid to drivers. Flemish Brabant and Brussels will strike next Monday, 8 December, while a national strike is planned for 15 December. \ Alan Hope

Six months of terror

Recalling the deadly aerial onslaught Antwerp withstood during the Second World War

continued from page 1

During the first months of the V-bombs, the tower of the cathedral was also used as a lookout point. Staffed by volunteers from the fire department, the lookout was linked by telephone to every fire station in the city. When a bomb fell, the volunteers called the nearest brigades.

Antwerp's ordeal was due to the importance of its harbour, which offered one of the only deep-sea ports between the Mediterranean Sea and the English Channel that had not been destroyed by the Nazis or Allied bombing.

"We had six or seven armies in the field that required food, petroleum, munitions, troops and all the other things you need to fight a war," Lieutenant Colonel Charles Sussman told *Canvas* in an interview for a special on the 60th anniversary of the bombings. The American was a member of the secret Antwerp X team, which was quickly established to defend the city from the V-bomb. "If Antwerp had fallen, we'd have been fighting the war for years," he said.

Antwerp X was under the command of American Brigadier General Clare Hibbs Armstrong. Armstrong led a team of more than 22,000 anti-aircraft gunners who established gun placements in every available space around the city.

Told by General Bernard Montgomery that he would be doing well if he achieved a 50% success rate, Armstrong's team managed to shoot down six out of every 10 V-1s on their way to Antwerp. By the end of the V-bomb campaign, Armstrong was achieving a success rate of over 90%.

The V-bomb attacks on Antwerp were part of the Nazis' plans to deny the Allies access to the port. While the city had been liberated, large parts of the Scheldt estuary were still occupied by Nazi troops. The river itself was full of mines, which took almost three months to clear.

In early October, the task of clearing the estuary was given to Lieutenant General Guy Simonds, a Canadian. Despite deliberate flooding of the estuary, Simonds and his troops managed to clear



© Canvas

Lieutenant Colonel Charles Sussman talks to *Canvas* on the 60th anniversary of the bombings

the river banks of enemy troops by 8 November.

After more than four years of occupation, the liberation of large parts of Belgium in September of 1944 came as a huge relief. Entertainment venues reopened, newspapers resumed publication, and life began to return to normal.

Despite the fall of the first V-bombs the following month, authorities in Antwerp initially decided not to restrict people more than necessary. Although many chose to sleep in their cellars, life continued normally. This attitude was maintained, even after a V-2 bomb fell on Teniersplaats at lunchtime on 27 November.

The square, at the junction of Frankrijklei and De Keyserlei, close to Central Station, was a major crossing point for troops heading north to the frontline in the Netherlands and south to Liège. The blast killed 126 people, including 26 Allied soldiers.

Worse was to come. On 16 December, a V-bomb hit the Rex Theatre. Described as "the place to get lost if you had time off", the Rex was packed with soldiers and civilians watching *The Plainsman*, a Cecile B DeMille western starring Gary Cooper and Jean Arthur. Three days after the blast, the authorities were still pulling victims from the wrecked theatre. More than 570 people died in this one attack, 300 of them Allied personnel.

On the same day the Rex was attacked, Hitler launched what was to become known as the Battle of the Bulge. The goal of the offensive in the Ardennes was to capture Antwerp. However, the harsh winter took its toll, and after six weeks of fighting, the Nazi troops



© Reuters
The Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp after bombing by the German army in 1944, and the same view in 1998

were defeated. The first Allied ship was able to unload its cargo in the port on 29 November.

Morale in the city quickly broke down after the Rex bombing, and many residents left Antwerp to stay with friends or relatives in the countryside. All schools and cultural venues were shut and public gatherings banned.

The V-bomb campaign saw more than 850 V-1 and V-2 missiles rain down on the Antwerp city area over a period of 167 days. Another 1,300 fell on the 50 districts surrounding the city. Together the attacks took the lives of more than 3,400 civilians and 700 allied service personnel, and destroyed or damaged more than 90,000 properties. In

almost six months of terror, there were just 12 days on which no bombs fell.

By the end of March 1945, the V-bomb attacks on Antwerp had stopped. People began to return to the city, and within a year, most of the material damage had been repaired.

WHAT WERE V-BOMBS?

The first flying bomb was developed as a private venture in the late 1930s. Designs were presented to the Nazi regime in the early years of the war but were shelved due to concerns about the practicalities of the concept in warfare.

Work on the project continued, and by the end of 1942, the first flight test had taken place. Initially known by the codename Fi 103, the missiles were dropped from a moving plane. Later developments meant they could be

launched from a fixed ramp.

In June 1944, a week after the Allied landings in Normandy, the first Fi 103 was deployed against London. Known by this time as the Vergeltungswaffe (vengeance weapon), or V-1, the missile had a fuselage made from mild steel and wings of plywood. It was powered by a pulse jet engine, which gave the V-1 its characteristic buzzing sound and led to the nickname "buzz-bomb".

While the V-1 could be intercepted by anti-

aircraft fire and fast aircraft, the V-2 was invisible. The time from launch until the V-2 achieved the speed of sound was just 30 seconds. Fired at a 30-degree angle, it followed an 80- to 95-kilometre trajectory before descending.

Many people at the time described the V-2 as looking like a needle falling from the sky, the smoke trailing behind like a thread. The V-2 carried a tonne of explosives in its nose. It was the world's first true rocket and the first man-made object to enter space.

Almost half of the 3,000 V-2s launched were directed at Antwerp. Their main targets were the port, Deurne airfield, the rail lines and the main roads into and out of the city. Because of the limited availability of materials in 1944, many of the rockets were poorly constructed and lacked accurate guidance systems. The result was a bomb that missed its target much more often than it hit one, but which struck absolute fear into the population as a result.

WEEK IN BUSINESS

Aviation \ Rafale

Together with engine manufacturer Snecma and electronics supplier Thales, the French-owned Dassault aircraft manufacturer has opened an office in Brussels to promote the Rafale military jet, which is replacing the ageing F16 in the Belgian Air Force.

Banking

\ Largillière Finance

The French boutique investment bank, specialised in corporate acquisitions and financial engineering, including crowd funding, has opened offices in Brussels.

Catering \ Chi-Chi's

The US-based tex-mex restaurant group plans to open franchise outlets in Kortrijk, Leuven and Ostend over the next two years. The company currently operates seven restaurants in Brussels and Flanders.

Engineering \ NMBS

Two affiliates of national railway operator NMBS, Eurostation and Transurb, in association with the Besix building group, have won a €47.5 million contract to build a bus hub station in Portmore, Jamaica. The new facility, expected to be completed in late 2017, is the second project for the partners in Jamaica following a €50 million development in 2008.

Petrochemicals \ BP

The UK-based oil group has plans to invest several million euro in its Geel téraphthalic acid PET compound production unit to improve efficiency and cut energy consumption.

Property \ Matexi

The residential housing developer, based in Waregem, West Flanders, is to issue a €30 million bond to finance its growth. The company, which has built 580 projects across Belgium and Luxembourg, plans to double the number of units it builds annually to 1,500.

Retail \ Media Markt

The German-owned electronics and appliance retailer inaugurated its 13th outlet in Flanders last weekend with a new location in Turnhout. The company also announced that it will open more outlets in the region over the next few years, possibly in the Leuven and Aalst areas.

Bid for Ford Genk rejected

Government decides against €5 million bid for site as end draws near



Alan Hope

More articles by Alan \ flanderstoday.eu

The government of Flanders has rejected the final bid from Flemish industrialist Guido Dumarey for the takeover of the pressing division of Ford Genk, which, like the rest of the factory is due to close on 18 December, financial daily *De Tijd* reports. The newspaper revealed a leaked note explaining why the bid is not acceptable.

Dumarey, who runs Punch Metals, also in Limburg, has an agreement with Ford to carry on producing coachwork pressings for some of their models. He also had the promise of contracts from DAF and Valmet, which supply Mercedes, BMW and Bentley, if he was able to take over Genk's pressing line. Those contracts would have covered Punch for three years for the loss of business when Ford Genk closes. His bid consisted of one symbolic euro for



© Courtesy TV Limburg

the site itself and €5 million for the pressing machinery. According to the government, the contents of the leaked note are not official but that all coalition parties agreed the bid was not acceptable.

Meanwhile, Genk mayor Wim Dries has called for two minutes of noise on 18 December, the last day of production at the Ford plant. At exactly midday, he said, there will be "a moment of collective solidarity where we join forces. Genk will be sounding her police and fire sirens, and churches and mosques will let themselves be heard. We call on all of the people of Genk and of Limburg to do the same in these last moments of Ford's activity."

The factory's final two vehicles – an S-Max and a Galaxy – to roll off the line will be given away as gifts to the city and to the Ter Heide training centre for the handicapped, the company announced. Production of the Ford Mondeo shut down in September.

NeoScores second-most promising start-up in the world



© 2012 Samsung BE

The Antwerp company neoScores has been chosen as the second-most promising start-up in the world by the jury of the prestigious Start-up Nations Summit, which took place last week in Seoul. The jury included high-profile representatives of technology giants such as Samsung, Huawei and Foxconn. The Flemish company was chosen out of a list of about 45 nominated young start-ups.

neoScores has developed a user-friendly sheet music app for smartphone, tablet and computer. Musicians can use, manage and share digital scores, hide parts of scores they don't need at any given time and create notes on them. The developers have dubbed the product the "iTunes of music scores".

neoScores was officially launched last year and was assisted through a collaboration with the Brussels Phil-

harmonic. Upon winning the title, neoScores CEO Bart Van der Roost, also a musician, emphasised the support of the digital research centre iMinds and KBC's start-up incubator. Through this support, he said, they discovered how big their potential market was and which functions they needed to add to their app.

"Ten years ago, you had to take this idea to the United States, but now it can just happen in Flanders," said Van der Roost.

Start Up Nations' second prize, called the Foxconn Award, is worth \$20,000 (€16,000). \ Andy Furniere

BASF plans "substantial investment" in Antwerp

The German chemicals company BASF has announced an investment of €500 million in the production worldwide of super-absorbent polymers. About one-third of the production will take place in Antwerp, which will receive a "substantial" share of the investment, the company said.

Super-absorbent polymers (SAPs) are chemicals that can absorb many times their own weight, which makes them perfectly suited to the new generation

of disposable nappies, incontinence products and sanitary hygiene products.

BASF produces about 590,000 tonnes of SAPs at present. Over the next three years, existing plants will be adapted for the new product, beginning in Europe with Asia and America following later. Antwerp is BASF's second-largest production site and will produce around one-third of the company's output of SAPs. \ AH

Hospitals to be closely monitored due to dubious referrals

A leading doctor has called for more inspections of emergency services and intensive care departments after several hospitals in Belgium were found to be generating extra income through dubious methods.

In 17% of cases, an emergency room doctor refers the patient to another specialist, but in some hospitals that happens 100% of the time. That's according to a study by the socialist mutual insurance fund, which was carried out three years ago.

"The mutuality knows at which hospitals these practices occur," Marc Moens, vice-president of the Belgian Association of Doctors' Syndicates, told industry magazine *De Artsenkrant*. "The previous minister will probably have known about this. It is a scandal that nothing was done about."

The monitoring service of the medical insurance agency Riziv will now be requested to carry out extra inspections of emergency services and intensive care departments. \ AF

Bourgeois works to put small businesses on international market



From left: Princess Astrid, Flemish minister-president Geert Bourgeois and federal foreign affairs minister Didier Reynders in Singapore

"Mission accomplished," Flemish minister-president Geert Bourgeois said on Friday, on completion of his first royal trade mission since taking up the job this summer following the May elections. Bourgeois joined the three-day mission to Singapore led by Princess Astrid, who had been in Malaysia. About 70 Flemish businesses took part in the Singapore leg of the mission.

Bourgeois' government is concerned about the cost of the royal missions and wants to see them reduced from four to two a year. His experience this time has convinced him, however, that there is room for more Flemish exports on world markets.

He now intends, he said, to work with the export promotion agency Flanders Investment & Trade

quite a few concerns attached. We'd like to make it easier for businesses to take the step."

Earlier in the week, the missions received the seal of approval from Deme, the world-leading, Zwijndrecht-based dredging company. "I've taken part in many royal missions," said CEO Alain Bernard. "They are enormously important for our company, and Princess Astrid leads them with knowledge, grace and good humour."

Trade missions without a member of the royal family present would not necessarily be less successful, he said, but the princess' presence offers "leverage". "FIT does excellent work with targeted missions, but the presence of the princess in certain countries is definitely a bonus."

\ AH

The green revolution

Artists from around the world present their varied takes on ecology



Julie Kavanagh

More articles by Julie \ flanderstoday.eu

Kortrijk's Budafabriek will play host to the "smart green revolutions of artists, scientists and entrepreneurs" in a three-month exhibition peppered with workshops, lectures and labs. Entering the quirky, eclectic exhibition, Franky Devos, director of the Arts Centre Buda, explains the "Love, Work, Share" ethos at Budafabriek, where the emphasis is less on the physical space and more on forging connections and nurturing new projects.

"Ecology has an influence on a very broad section of society, and the Green Light District seeks to reflect the concerns and creativity present in the work of artists from around the globe and of small business and researchers with a local base but an international outlook," he explains over coffee in the NANO pop-up supermarket. In the Green Light District, curator Christophe De Jaeger has blended an exhibition that defies easy definition, one that crosses and recrosses boundaries and breaks down the notional barriers separating the fields of art, science and entrepreneurship.

Counter-culture artistic creations and innovative research projects earnest about their real-world potential combine to form a nuanced insight into a complex green future.

Annemarie Maes, creator of Edible Forest Garden, a rooftop garden with a difference in Brussels, has taken on the challenge of indoor gardening. Partnering with VELT (Society for Ecological Living and Gardening) and the Provincial



Brandon Ballengée's installation of glass jars – some containing life, others empty

Institute for Agriculture, she has designed The Invisible Garden in a room devoid of natural light. The winter vegetable produce will be sold in the exhibition's pop-up supermarket.

In the adjoining room, Koen Vanmechelen of *Cosmopolitan Chicken Project* fame presents his plans for a new site called La Biomista in Ghent, which he describes as a "biocultural temple of active and living art, but in addition to being an intellectual breeding ground, it is also a breeding station".

Confused? Turn up at the Green Light District with a clear head



Yoghurt made with human enzymes by "bio-artist" Maja Smrekar

and an open mind; future ecology favours dense concepts.

Controversial, offbeat, utopian, dystopian – the Green Light District is a sometimes dizzying look at the contradictions of a green future. Your brain will be stimulated, your curiosity piqued and your senses stimulated in an exhibition that offers opportunities to not only see and hear green revolutions, but to taste and smell them, too.

The NANO supermarket displays a range of fantastical products that might foreseeably be on our shelves in the near future: programmable wine, medicinal chocolate, yoghurt made from human enzymes... the last is already a reality, if not a commercially recognised one. Creator and self-styled bio-artist Maja Smrekar will be organising a workshop and Maya Yoghurt tastings during Green Light District.

Devos' enthusiasm for the project is infectious, and I find myself gleefully pressing smell buttons

on the interactive, Wonkaesque Cultural Odor Generator, which is sure to be a hit with children. It's the brainchild of Peter De Cupere, whose other installations are equally zany, including bees with gas masks forced to make way for computer-controlled drones and a carpet of flowers that expels polluting odours.

Artist, biologist and activist Brandon Ballengée's "Prelude to the Collapse of the North Atlantic", a pyramid of glass jars – some containing underwater life, others significantly empty – is a commentary on the crisis in fishing and the degradation of a marine ecosystem.

There is also a nod to the historical origins of the ecological movement in the late 1960s with a model of Mass Moving's "Butterfly Project". Mass Moving was an ephemeral collective of Belgian and Dutch artists who sought to take art out of museums and on to the streets, while at the same time highlight humanity's interconnectivity with nature. Spectacularly disbanded in 1976, the collective's material was consciously destroyed, and the model is a rare trace of that early artist activism.

Biological money, glow-in-the-dark rabbits, fluorescent water fleas, exploding seed-suitcases, fake-plastic flower classification and more await as imagination and innovation combine. Even the entrance process is appropriately novel – a biometric, paperless ticket where €6 and the imprint of your index finger guarantees unlimited entry until 8 February.

\ WWW.GREENLIGHTDISTRICT.BE

WEEK IN INNOVATION

Antwerp institute to test HIV prevention

Next year, the Institute for Tropical Medicine in Antwerp will start a trial project in which 200 men will receive a preventive medicine against Aids. The measure was announced by Flemish innovation minister Philippe Muyters in parliament. Belgium is the second country, after the US, where the pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) treatment is to be tested. Scientists will administer Truvada, which was recently approved in Europe for the treatment of HIV infection and is already used in Belgium. The target group is men aged 18 and over who have sex with other men, who are HIV-negative and have a high risk of infection. Scientists will screen for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases during consultations.

Science Day attracts 34,000

The fourth edition of Science Day, which took place at the end of last month, drew 34,100 people to 86 locations across Flanders and Brussels. Nearly 490 activities put the spotlight on science, technology and innovation. Universities, colleges, scientific institutions and companies opened their doors to share scientific and technological know-how with the public through workshops, lectures, demonstrations and guided tours. "I am glad that Science Day has again brought thousands of youngsters into contact with the sometimes unexpectedly practical applications of all this science in our daily lives," said Flemish innovation minister Philippe Muyters.

Medical sector to work with brewers

The University of Leuven (KU Leuven) is establishing the Brewing Science Serves Health Fund to encourage interaction between the medical and brewery sectors. Research into beer yeast will provide scientists with fundamental insights into the development of diseases like cancer and Alzheimer's. The fund was established by Bernard Van den Bogaert, former CEO of Antwerp's De Koninck brewery. According to a KU Leuven statement, Bogaert wants to "promote and support research in the spirit of Louis Pasteur", the man who discovered how the fermentation of beer occurs and was the founder of modern vaccines.

© IngImage
Febrile seizures are usually not dangerous, but can develop into epileptic fits

Flemish researchers find genetic cause of febrile seizures

International research groups, including teams from the University of Antwerp (UA) and the University of Leuven (KU Leuven), have pinpointed a new genetic cause of febrile seizures among babies and of epileptic fits later in life. The finding was recently documented in the international magazine *Nature Genetics*.

Febrile seizures are the most frequent form of childhood epileptic fits and affect 2 to 4% of all children aged up to three worldwide. The seizures, which can be frightening to witness but are not dangerous, normally disappear by the time the child is about four.

In rare cases, such as in people with Dravet Syndrome, the seizures develop into epileptic attacks. Most people with this kind of disorder also suffer from intellectual disabilities. It was already known that this type of disorder had hereditary causes. Now, through international collaboration, researchers have found a new genetic reason: mutations of the gene known as STX1B.

The mutations in this gene disrupt the regulation of certain neurotransmitters, chemicals that are essential for the communication of

signals in our brain. This results in uncontrolled electrical releases, which cause epileptic fits. The mutations were first discovered when scientists examined the genetic material of family members who suffer from this kind of disorder. Later analysis carried out among an extensive group of patients, in which the Neuro-Genetics Group at UA was involved, uncovered additional mutations. The Antwerp experts were part of the European consortium EuroEPINOMICS.

However, the first statistical findings had to be confirmed through tests on animals. The international team called on the expertise of the Lab for Molecular Biodiscovery at KU Leuven, which specialises in genetic research on epilepsy using zebrafish.

"The genetic mechanisms of zebrafish are very similar to those of humans, and we can manipulate them relatively easily," explains professor Peter de Witte, head of the lab. He says tests on the fish offer much faster results than experiments on mice.

Scientists at Leuven found a clear change in the brainwaves of the zebrafish in which they

created a mutation of the STX1B gene, a finding in line with the statistical data. De Witte, however, stresses that more research is necessary.

In January, the lab at Leuven and the Neuro-Genetics Group will team up to explore more possible genetic causes for this type of disorder. Their collaborative project is supported by the Flemish Fund for Scientific Research for four years. \ Andy Furniere

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The perfect match

Student-friendly Travaq offers personalised temporary jobs



Andy Furniere

More articles by Andy \ flanderstoday.eu

\ WWW.TRAVAQ.BE

For many of us, student jobs bring back memories of dull tasks with the prospect of acquiring pocket money the only motivation. The innovative Travaq platform now employs young people to help their fellow students find a temporary job that matches their studies, skills and interests.

Although Travaq does not promote itself as a temporary employment agency, it has grown out of one. One of the initiators is Anke Ulens, CEO of Vivaldis employment agency in Antwerp, where the head office of Travaq is established. Vivaldis also provides the budget for the platform. The other co-founder is Werner Viaene, who has 15 years' experience in the sector and is now the co-ordinator of the project.

"We established Travaq because we noticed that the temporary employment sector in Flanders was not adapted to the social environment of students, because student jobs are not their core business," says Viaene. "We often heard complaints from students about agencies' communication." According to Viaene, agencies normally don't take into account students' specific profile, but refer them to any job for which there is a vacancy.

"A survey among about 1,500 students showed that only 23% of students in Flanders were happy about their student job," says Viaene. "If young people's competences are not considered important by agencies, the job they provide will in most cases remain just an opportunity to get some pocket money, without helping them to develop skills that can prove essential in their later career."



Travaq employs students as matchmakers to find the ideal jobs for their fellow students

To provide students with jobs that have a useful link with their studies and interests, Travaq counts on students themselves. Since its launch in September, Travaq has recruited a team of 10 students, known as matchmakers. "They work around eight hours a week, like most of our job students, which should leave them sufficient time to study," explains Viaene. The matchmakers are based in three student cities: Ghent, Leuven and Antwerp. They are trained to deal with the specific social legislation, administration and software and can count on the assistance of "coach" Viaene and an "ask-it buddy" at Travaq who answers questions about contracts and

other issues. One of the matchmakers is Charlène Dupont, a 22-year-old nursing student at Karel de Grote University College in Antwerp. Much of her work takes place online, as communication for a large part occurs via websites, social media, student forums and email. However, she also actively looks for potential employees via her personal networks of friends and fellow students. She regularly meets up on campus with youngsters interested in temporary work. Matching a student with a job that fits their profile is generally straightforward. "It can be interesting to link a student with a job

directly related to their studies," she says. She refers to the example of a student in a biomedical discipline who got a job as online communication officer for the Fat Stem company, which specialises in stem-cell therapy for animals. "But you also have to look further than the studies," she says. "A student in a medical discipline might also have a keen interest in gardening, which makes a job in this sector attractive."

Since the beginning of October, Viktor Feyt, who studies SME management at Karel de Grote University College, has been working in logistics at Eydwerk Promotions in Hoboken, near Antwerp, via Travaq. For this events and logistics company, Feyt mostly works on the organisation of cyclo-cross races, on average for about eight hours a week.

"The working conditions are flexible; there is absolutely no problem if I can't work because of my lesson or exam schedule," says Feyt. He is also happy with Travaq's communication methods. "I have worked via temporary employment agencies in the past, but they mostly treat you as just a number instead of a person," he says. "Travaq's approach is more spontaneous and personal."

He also feels the experience will be helpful in his later career. "I am learning about the business world in class, but now I can also see how it works in real life," he says. "For example, it's interesting to see how managers maintain close contact with their clients and other contacts."

Travaq provides jobs at about 30 client companies and since September has helped about 250 students to find a temporary job.

WEEK IN EDUCATION

Students compete for UN diplomacy

Last week, the Flemish Association for the United Nations hosted the 10th anniversary edition of its annual inter-university Model United Nations competition at Brussels' Constitutional Court. 48 university students took part in a mock UN Security Council meeting. The universities of Leuven, Antwerp, Brussels (VUB) and Ghent sent delegations to the competition, where they took on the role of diplomats, represented a country and debated an existing and recent international problem. This year, the delegations discussed the "forgotten conflict and the humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic". One of the speakers was Bruges independent researcher Jan Vandemoortele, co-author of the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Pro cyclist leads chair at VUB

Biomedical scientist Lieselot Decroix, a pro cyclist on the women's Lotto Belisol team, will head a new chair at the Free University of Brussels (VUB). The Lotto Science Chair will focus on the cyclists' recovery and the influence of exertion on the brain. The chair will also serve as scientific support for the team. The National Lottery will award €45,000 a year to the chair, which will work to reduce the gap between scientific information and sports practice. "The research on the limits of fatigue is important for top sport, but also for movement in general," VUB exercise physiology professor Romain Meeusen told *De Morgen*.

Universities to monitor own quality

Universities and colleges that prove they can assure the quality of their services will be relieved of the requirement to undergo external inspections. Education minister Hilde Crevits reached an agreement on the subject with representatives of the institutions, students and the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation. The agreement follows comments by University of Leuven rector Rik Torfs last summer, who said budget cuts should go hand-in-hand with increased autonomy and less external monitoring. Currently, quality control is monitored in each discipline of an institution. A review system of the institutions as a whole is being prepared, and authorities are launching test projects on internal quality monitoring. \ AF

Q&A

Rosalie Gielis won the Euregional Architecture Prize with her graduation project at Hasselt University, the concept of an organic oil refinery on the site of the Ford manufacturing plant in Genk

What gave you the idea for this project?

I saw it as a possible solution for problems on both the economic and ecological levels. First of all, the closure of the Ford factory will create a lot of unemployment in the region. At the same time, environmental reports show that the soil and air at the site are highly polluted. With my concept, I want to go from a polluting industry to a sustainable activity and turn a brownfield into a greenfield site. I chose the title "Transition" for my concept because I was inspired by

The Transition Handbook: From Oil Dependency to Local Resilience by the British author Rob Hopkins.

Do you make use of the existing infrastructure in your design?

Yes; I propose to turn the factory's rooms into greenhouses for the development of algae or other energy crops, which could be quite easily done by adding glass structures. The terrain outside the factory could also in large part be used to grow the crops, which would clean the air at the site. The crops would be transported

via existing railway lines. In a new building, which I designed in detail, the crops would be used to make organic oil. Remaining crops would be converted to energy at a biomass plant on the site.

How did you design the refinery?

I designed it as a relatively small and simple building, with different floors that house the necessary technology and labs. Pumps would be unnecessary for the production process, which keeps the ecological footprint very low.

How likely is it that the plant will be built?

It's difficult to say, but I don't think



chances are high. I designed it to be feasible, and it would be a very ecological initiative, but its innovative character may seem too risky for investors, who tend to prefer economically safer options.

\ Interview by AF

WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

China Light

Chinese artists transform the zoo into a wonderland of coloured lanterns, glowing animals and luminous flowers. Entertainment such as a tea ceremony, acrobats and folk dancing add to the atmosphere. *6 December to 18 January, 18.00-21.30; €15* \ www.zooantwerpen.be

Lambic Day

Curious to learn more about the oldest type of beer in the world? Or maybe just eager to try some new brews? At least 10 traditional lambics will be available for tasting. *6 December, 15.00-24.00, In de Verzekering tegen de Grote Dorst, Frans Baetensstraat 45, Eizeringen (Lennik); free* \ www.dorst.be

Putteke Winter

An evening of outdoor entertainment, by the glow of firelight under the trees. Eight recreational domains host this winter festival, including three this weekend: De Schorre in Antwerp on 5 and 6 December, De Lilse Bergen in Lille on 6 December and De Halve Maan in Diest on 6 December. *€2, De Halve Maan free* \ www.puttekewinter.be

In the Footsteps of Tintin

A guided walk through Brussels, with locations and stories from the adventures of the boy reporter and his dog Snowy. Along the way, learn more about the life and work of Hergé, Tintin's creator. Tour ends with a visit to the Hergé Museum. *6 December, 13.00-17.00, reserve via 0496 38 85 94; €28, includes guide, bus and museum admission* \ www.itineraires.be

Draft Horse Walk

Discover the Pearl of the Pajottenland, Vollezele, home of the Museum of the Belgian Draft Horse on this organised walk. Seven routes between 4 and 32km. Registration includes admission to the museum. *7 December, start between 7.30 and 15.00, De Carrousel, Molenstraat 20, Vollezele; €1.50* \ www.marching.be

Ghent Winter Festival

A winter market, ice rink and giant Ferris wheel in the centre of Ghent. With live musical acts and entertainment, food and drink. *5 December to 4 January; free, fee for skating rink and Ferris wheel* \ www.gentsewinterfeesten.be

The fast and the furious

National roller derby team skate into their first World Cup



Courtney Davis

More articles by Courtney \ flanderstoday.eu\ WWW.ROLLERDERBY.BE

This week, more than 20 Belgians will find themselves battling on American soil, bruising various body parts as they fight for the title of roller derby world champion. From 4 to 7 December, the city of Dallas, Texas, is hosting the sport's second-ever World Cup. The inaugural Roller Derby World Cup was held in Canada in 2011 and hosted 13 countries. Three years later, roller derby skaters representing 30 countries from Brazil to Japan, Belgium to Australia, will converge to play in the tournament.

A fast-paced, hard-hitting sport played on roller skates, the all-female roller derby has enjoyed a revival over the last decade, including in Flanders, where the first local team, the Gent Go-Go Roller Girls, formed in 2009. They have since been joined by eight more teams, which Team Belgium pooled its skaters from. The 20-person charter includes skaters from across the country and Lilo & Stitches from Scotland.



© Ian R. 2014

Established in 2009, the Gent Go-Go Roller Girls were the first team in Flanders. Since then, eight more have formed across the country

passport regulations, will be skating for the land of her birth.

"My dad is totally delighted I am skating for Belgium and representing my roots," says De Buyl, who is equally looking forward to the experience. "High-level tournament play is one of the best and

time with Team Belgium skaters on each of those trips."

De Buyl began skating on a whim. "I did some individual sports as a kid but have always been the least co-ordinated human ever, so I never really excelled at anything." She says she was blown away by the positive impact playing a team sport can have. "The competitiveness and the striving for excellence combined with the reliance on other people and the drive to create something that is greater than the sum of its parts; I love it all. I also think that playing a sport is one of the most revolutionary and empowering things a woman can do."

Els Aerts from Ghent (also known as Sandra Buttblock) couldn't agree more. Aerts is the co-captain

4-7 December

of Team Belgium and is attracted to the sport for its competitiveness and "for the way it enables women to be strong and athletic while still fostering that smidge of humour," she says. "How it doesn't want you to be a nice, calm girl but instead a focused, really intense and crazy athlete."

She knew she wanted to be the team captain as soon as she got involved. "When I tried out for Team Belgium, I immediately set this goal for myself: I want to make the team and even be their captain. I'm not good at doing stuff half-heartedly," she explains.

And Team Belgium are good. They've been practising together for over a year now and have played against Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark, boasting a 4-1 win-loss record.

Still, Aerts is matter of fact about their chances on the global stage. "Beating Team USA, our chances are next to nothing," she says. "But we do have a good chance to make it through round one to the winners' bracket."

They will also be up against Team Greece, which consists mostly of American expats, Team Italy and Team Australia in the first round. Everything after that is one big question mark. "Who will we meet on track? Team Finland? Team Scotland? One thing is certain: Team Belgium are a small but very resilient team, and we will always skate our hearts out to do as well as we possibly can," Aerts says.

Kay Bailey Hutchison
Convention Center
Dallas, Texas, USA

“

Playing a sport is one of the most empowering things a woman can do

Lilo & Stitches – her roller derby name – is Sasha De Buyl. Born in Brussels, she moved to Ireland at the age of five. She later headed to Scotland for college and started playing roller derby for the Auld Reekie Rollers. De Buyl is co-captain of the All Stars there but, because of the tournament's

most fun things about roller derby." For De Buyl, the World Cup preparations have also been a welcome opportunity to spend more time in the country. "When I came for training, I made a trip of a few extra days and coached local leagues," she explains. "So I have had a chance to spend some extra

BITE

The All Day Long campaign

As part of the government of Flanders' on-going initiative to get people to eat more fruit and veg, the All Day Long campaign this week selected a company as winner of the 2014 All Day Long Award. Aedes Insurance, with offices in Oudenaarde and Ghent, won the award for setting a perfect example of how to promote a healthy lifestyle in the workplace.

Every year, the All Day Long campaign rewards a company that pays special attention to the overall health of its staff. Particular attention is paid to snacking in the workplace and encouraging everyone to reach for healthy alternatives to vending machine junk food.

With this year's Russian import ban on many European agricultural products, including fruits and vegetables from Flanders, All Day Long found it especially pertinent to ask the participating companies to show what they had done to promote home-grown produce.

Aedes' submission convinced the jury with its commitment to promoting a healthy lifestyle at work. The dynamic company provides its employ-



ees with all the facilities they need to keep active such as showers, saunas and even personal trainers.

"At Aedes, we believe in a healthy mind in a healthy body," said company CEO Katrien Vanden Bulcke. "We encourage our employees to work out for a few hours every week. We believe that you can only take care of others once you've first taken care of yourself."

Aedes also showed solidarity for Flemish apple and pear growers, right from the start of the embargo. It sent 25 kilograms of local apples and

pears to each of its insurance agents, who could then decide for themselves what they did with the fruit: donate it to a school, a nursing home or, of course, just enjoy it. In total, the company distributed nine tonnes of produce.

The All Day Long campaign treated the employees to a healthy lunch (including apple smoothies, pictured) and goodie bags full of fresh fruits and vegetables. Track and field star Kim Gevaert, ambassador of the campaign, handed over the trophy last week.

Gevaert has been the campaign's goodwill ambassador for six years now. According to the Flemish Centre for Agricultural and Fisheries Marketing (VLAM), she exudes the positive message of the All Day Long campaign, which is about enjoying fruit and vegetables all day, as part of an overall healthy lifestyle.

The All Day Long campaign is a joint initiative of the Belgian fruit and vegetable growers and domestic retailers, and is co-ordinated by Vlam with the support of the European Union.

\ Robyn Boyle

Better late than never

Flanders gets its first beer museum, as pals with a passion find a niche in Bruges

 Diana Goodwin
More articles by Diana \ flanderstoday.eu

\ WWW.BRUGESBEERMUSEUM.COM

The most surprising thing about the new Bruges Beer Museum is that it's the first of its kind in Belgium. How is it possible that a country with such a rich beer culture and a worldwide reputation for brewing didn't have a museum dedicated to its most beloved beverage?

That's the question that prompted Thibault Bekaert to open the museum, together with business partner and long-time friend Emmanuel Maertens.

Bekaert was visiting Prague when he came across not just one, but two, beer museums in the Czech capital. "So I was thinking: 'Is there a beer museum in Belgium?' I didn't even know," he recounts. "I started Googling it in Prague, when we were at a pub having a beer. I saw that there were a lot of places you can visit, mostly breweries. But they always tell the same story. It's always the history of that brewery, and they explain how they make their beer."

The Bruges Beer Museum, by contrast, aims to tell the complete beer story – from its earliest history to its modern role in gastronomy, from the local breweries of Bruges to beer production worldwide, from the brewing process to the best way to taste and appreciate it. Oddly enough, there is no text to be found anywhere in the museum. Instead, visitors receive an iPad mini and a set of headphones. "The museum is based on a technology called augmented reality," explains Lars Pillen, operations manager. "You aim the iPad at an object in the museum; they're all scannable. And then you have three options on the screen: I want to read something, I want to see something, or I want to hear something. For instance, I'll choose read, and then I get the story behind the item over there. It's the same story, either spoken or written."

At the moment, the scannable pictures and objects have QR codes, but as of January, a new system will replace the codes with a combination of image-recognition software and proximity beacons to access the information.

Because all information is accessed via the iPad, the museum is able to offer many language options. "There's a very diverse international public in Bruges," says Bekaert. "So we wanted everything to be in 10 languages to start with. Other languages will follow next year. The idea is that for somebody who speaks only, say, Russian – the moment he clicks on 'Russian', the whole tour is in Russian."

The museum is divided over three levels. The ground floor, a bright space with floating wall panels and stylish graphics, covers the history



© Courtesy Bruges Beer Museum



© Courtesy Het Nieuwsblad



© Courtesy Bruges Beer Museum

Quench your thirst: Bruges Beer Museum co-owner Thibault Bekaert doubles as the barman; clever exhibition spaces enhance the beer experience; the museum's pub offers visitors the chance to sample four different fermentation methods

of beer and beer culture.

The range of topics addressed here is wide and includes beer and gastronomy, beer and cheese pairing and beer across the world. "For example, if you're from Italy, what's the history of beer in Italy?" Bekaert explains. "Then there's the different beer styles: What's an ale? What's a porter? So not only the Belgian styles."

Another theme is women and beer. "That's a really hot topic right now," says Bekaert. "Historically, beer was always brewed by women, never by men. So that's a nice story to tell."

The upper level, installed in the renovated attic of the building, has a completely different look. Four immense wooden mash tuns – brewing devices that combine crushed malts with hot water –

custom built on-site, dominate the room. A doorway is cut into the wall of each tun, and inside are scannable images related to the ingredients of beer, the brewing process, the four kinds of fermentation and beer tasting.

“

Historically, beer was always brewed by women, never by men

Around the edges of the room, old brewing implements and wooden casks create a more traditional museum-like atmosphere.

An attractive mural painted on the back wall is devoted to the

Trappists. "We have all 10 Trappist beers painted by some young artists here in Bruges," says Pillen. "All the abbeys and their beers are painted and scannable, so you can learn about the beer and also about the abbey."

For kids, there's a separate story about the Bruges bear, written by Bruges-born author Peter Verhelst and illustrated by cartoonist Stédo. Scannable pictures are placed at children's height throughout the

museum so that kids can read or listen to the story while their parents are occupied with the beer-related content.

The tour ends in the tasting room, a large cafe with windows overlooking the city's Markt. Here, the visitors hand in the iPads and receive three 15cl tasting glasses of their choice from the 16 beers on draft. The cafe is open to visitors without a museum ticket as well and features a library corner with shelves of books about beer.

The museum has partnered with Palm brewery, based in Londerweel, Flemish Brabant, for the tasting room's beer selection. "It's the only brewery that could offer all four types of fermentation," Pillen explains. "If you tell the complete story of beer, you want to be able to offer the complete range to visitors."

Palm owns the Brugge Tripel and Steenbrugge abbey beers, which were formerly brewed in Bruges. Both are available for tasting. The bar also has three exclusives on draft: Boon Oude Lambiek, Unfiltered Palm and Foederbier Rodenbach.

At the moment, the museum is still a work in progress. The images that are accessed via the "see" link on the iPads lack explanatory text, making it the weakest part of the presentation, and in some cases there are no images at all. Many sections of the museum, especially the parts related to the brewing process, would probably benefit from some video clips showing the different activities involved.

Bekaert says that 1,300 images and 32 film clips will be added from January, when the new scanning system will also be installed. But he has even bigger plans for the future. "The content of the museum is permanent," he says. "but the device itself is temporary. I'm sure that three years from now, we won't have iPads anymore. Maybe we'll go to Google Glass or something completely different, something more with augmented reality, where you can see somebody brewing, for example, without them actually being there."

Bekaert, a philosophy major at university and a stone carver by trade, admits that he is not the most likely person to have founded a museum dedicated to beer. "We were just two young guys who were really passionate about beer and couldn't understand why there wasn't anything similar in Bruges or in Belgium," he says. "So we had to do it. But we were obliged to stick to a tight budget. The thing is, when you have a really small budget you start thinking more creatively."

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Best of both worlds

Nursing homes are pooling their resources with creches for the good of all

 Débora Votquenne
More articles by Débora \ flanderstoday.eu

It's a quiet afternoon at Ter Venne, the care home for elderly people in Sint-Martens-Latem, just outside of Ghent. A resident is enjoying her *dame blanche* in the cafeteria, while a couple quietly sip their coffees at another table. Then suddenly, the sounds of small children fill the room, causing the elderly residents to look up. Faint smiles appear on their faces but, oddly enough, no-one looks surprised.

The toddlers have come over from the creche De Droomtuin, located next to the nursing home, under the same roof, to do arts and crafts with the Ter Venne residents. "Today we will be painting with balloons filled with flour," one of the instructors explains, as she gives clear instructions to both the toddlers and seniors. "We will dip the balloons in the paint and then use them like stamps on this construction paper lying in front of us on the table."

Tania Meulemeester is the East and West Flanders regional manager for Armonea, the organisation behind this initiative. Armonea manages care and living facilities for the elderly. "Ter Venne is not the only place where we created a joint facility for a creche and a nursing home," Meulemeester explains. "We have three facilities of this kind."



© photos: Débora Votquenne

\ WWW.ARMONEA.BE

“The children here think it is very normal to spend time with the elderly

In the two other centres, the creches are completely integrated with the nursing home. "But it is difficult to find suitable locations to set this up. So here in Ter Venne, De Droomtuin is situated right next to the nursing home," she explains. That set up works just fine for the residents. "We can see the children playing outside from our window," one of the residents explains. "But of course, it's nice when they come over," 80-year-old Suzanne adds. "It keeps us young, and it makes me smile."

Doesn't it get too noisy sometimes, I wonder? Brigitte Steyaert, responsible for De Droomtuin, tells me that they tend to visit with a limited group of children, usually a bit older, to avoid stress-inducing situations.

"It is important that the children are comfortable and enjoy the visits," she explains. "When they are too young, they depend too much on us or they tend to leave the table, and we have to run after them. That would not be ideal for an activity like this one."

That explains why only the oldest

age group is visiting today. The children come over twice a month, and the visits are well prepared by staff on both sides. "Of course, these activities need some preparation," says Steyaert. "We have to think about which activities are challenging enough but not too difficult for both age groups. But that is nothing when we see what we get in return."

Meanwhile, the painting activity has ended, hands have been washed and someone's put on music. Children's sing-alongs start playing, and the staff tries to get young and old to clap to the rhythm of the beat.

"Many of these people suffer from some stage of dementia, and they are not all able to actively participate," Steyaert says. "And yet you can see how all of them enjoy what's happening to a certain extent. Look at their smiles."

To bring different age groups closer is one of Armonea's core missions, and it's a philosophy Steyaert fully supports. "In our society, 'old people' are often excluded, set aside," she says. "With these kinds of initiatives, we show that it shouldn't be this way. The children at our creche think it is very normal to spend time with the elderly."

Moreover, some of the nursing home residents don't have any grandchildren. For them, it's particularly nice to be able to spend time with the toddlers.

Building the facilities together and having them interact also

offers another advantage. Steyaert explains that a couple of parents were determined to get their children into De Droomtuin because their grandparents live at Ter Venne, so the two would be able to spend more time together.

"We have this little toddler who, every morning, starts his day by greeting his 'bobonne' or granny. He goes to the window of the creche and points at her to say 'hi'. And his grandmother waves to him from her side of the window in Ter Venne".

But the visits also work the other way around. "There are residents who like to go and pay the children a visit at the creche," Steyaert explains. "They walk past the window or stop at the gate in the garden to say hello. The children love this and are all excited to see them."

And sometimes the visitors are invited into the kitchen. "Then we bake a cake together. This can be rather hilarious because these ladies tend to have their own ways of doing things in the kitchen. Some of them can be rather bossy

at times."

So, if it's such a great, simple initiative that feels natural and benefits everyone, why isn't this being done more often? "Because running a creche is not a profitable thing to do," says Meulemeester. "Setting up activities like these is a lot to ask from those who work there. By integrating the children's creche in the nursing home, it's manageable. You get out of the red."

Armonea also supports other initiatives to bring young and old together. In Brussels, there is a programme with pre-school children of typically four years old who visit a nursing home a few times a year. "It's the same idea," says Meulemeester. "Children get to interact with the older generation, and the retirees experience the joy of spending some time with the little ones."

With St Nicholas and Christmas just around the corner, Ter Venne and De Droomtuin are already getting ready for their next get-together. No doubt, the holidays will be heart-warming in Sint-Martens-Latem.



WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

Six new Michelin-starred restaurants

Flanders' three-Michelin-star restaurants kept their stars, and both Flanders and Brussels have three new one-star restaurants, following last week's release of the new edition of the legendary guide to fine dining in Belgium and Luxembourg. Antwerp's The Jane, owned by celebrated Dutch chef Sergio Herman, which opened last March, has earned its first star. Flemish Foodie Olly Ceulenaere gets his first star for Publiek in Ghent. Jan Audenaert and Ann Stevens' D'Oude Pastorie in Lochristi, just outside Ghent, is the third new one-star restaurant in Flanders. In Brussels, Le Monde est Petit in Etterbeek, Le Pigeon Noir in Ukkel and Da Mimmo in Sint-Lambrechts-Woluwe all got their first star.

Wat Als? wins International Emmy

The second season of the Flemish comedy sketch show *Wat Als?* (*What If?*) has won America's International Emmy Award for Best Comedy. The Antwerp production house Shelter is the first producer in Flanders to win two International Emmy Awards. The company's show *Benidorm Bastards* also won an International Emmy for Best Comedy in 2011. The second season of *Wat Als?* – which starts every sketch with the phrase, followed by an absurd situation (What if... Barbie was a real woman? What if... yoga came from the Netherlands?) – aired on 2BE in Flanders last year. Van Aelst says there will be a third season but isn't mentioning a date.

New books in easy Dutch from Wabliet

Wabliet, the centre for easy-to-read Dutch, has just released four new books in its trademark straightforward language. Wabliet launched its weekly newspaper more than 30 years ago for those with literacy problems, and the paper and series of books are now read by young people and Dutch-language learners for their accessible language. The new books include *Johnny Stalker* by Diane Broeckhoven, a story about a lonely man of 40 who has a chance meeting with one of his TV idols. The other books *Verloren in je hoofd: Leven met dementie* (*Lost in Your Head: Life with Dementia*) by journalist Nathalie Carpentier, *Jelle* by young adult author Gil vander Heyden and *De taart van Tamid* (*Tamid's Cake*) by teacher Ria Massy.

\ WWW.WABLIEFT.BE

Where fiction and reality meet

Hans Op de Beeck's exhibitions portray images that "could have been real"



Tom Peeters

More articles by Tom \ flanderstoday.eu

\ WWW.HANSOPDEBEECK.COM

“Tough everything I make is a visual fiction, all these people and places and surroundings could have been real."

That verisimilitude is exactly what people like about Hans Op de Beeck's multidisciplinary body of work, which mixes paintings, sculpture, video installations, text, set designs, musical compositions and, as of next year, theatre.

"I'm always delighted when I notice people spend a lot of time in my experience-based but fictitious installations. I offer them a fair and plausible deal, and they are willing to believe the illusion."

Another reason Op de Beeck's work appears to cut deeper than the art of some his contemporaries is his focus on the mundane. "Why is the film *The Birds* by Hitchcock so terrifying? Not because the problem is some kind of monstrous appearance. No, the problem is just a bunch of birds."

And making something extraordinary out of the trivial has become one of the artist's strongest motives. It's exactly what I get to see in "Staging Silence (2)". As I wait for Op de Beeck to arrive, one of his five assistants darkens a room and starts a 20-minute video in which two pairs of hands stage a world. As if anonymous puppet masters, they create city- and landscapes using everyday objects. "You saw them building this new, immaculate Dubai-type city with white sugar cubes, only to ruthlessly destroy it a few seconds later by pouring scalding hot coffee on it," Op de Beeck later says, referring to one of the scenes in the video. The clip also features a dirty alley made of Toblerone and Côte d'Or chocolate, and a snow landscape fashioned out of Delhaize caster sugar.

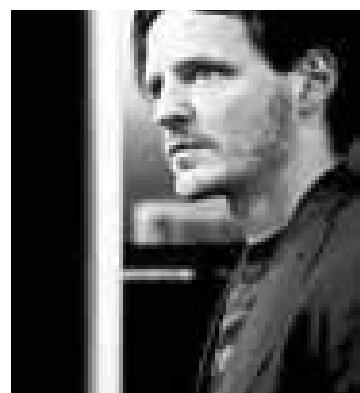
But though the ingredients of the video smack of the ordinary and



Hans Op de Beeck's large-scale black-and-white paintings are on show at Botanique

ridiculous, the effect, especially when projected on a large screen, is dramatic and serious.

The thought-provoking video has toured the world and is now on view in a group exhibition at the Z33 contemporary arts centre in Hasselt. "For me, it's all about the moment of entering the parallel world," Op de Beeck says. "Like forgetting you have a book in your hand when reading because you are absorbed in the story, all my work aims to step out of the constructed nonsense into a mood-driven world of experience." That dynamic will be at play in the



© Courtesy ArtPulse Magazine

No one-trick pony: Op de Beeck

new installation he was asked to create for the Herkenrode Abbey site in Hasselt. "A new construction, evoking a lowland, will invite visitors to just take a seat on a large sofa, stare into the infinite fictitious horizon and spend a timeless moment."

Though fictitious, Op de Beeck's constructions are never simulated or ready-made. "I would never use 20 Ikea chairs in an installation," he explains. "I like to create. All the cabinets and pedestals for my travelling exhibition *Sea of Tranquillity* were self-made."

The same is true of the pedestals used in the Chamarande Castle in France, where he installed five discreet, life-size sculptures of human beings in the baroque rooms, with the intention of prompting a dialogue between desolation and exuberance. "In contrast to colleagues I respect like Guillaume Bijl, I don't want to simulate with ready-mades; I want to interpret and evoke."

Until 4 January

Op de Beeck, born in Turnhout in 1969 and a graduate of the Sint-Lukas arts school in Brussels, typically tries to get his message out in a multidisciplinary environment.

His work ethos of 30 exhibitions a year – 10 solo and 20 group shows – is demanding.

As I interview him in the video room of his Brussels studio, where he will soon begin the preparatory work for a new animated movie with puppets, his staff are working in the adjacent office, while the sound of the compressors from the sculpture studio can be heard downstairs.

The upper space of the workshop is currently empty, but over the past five years it proved to be the ideal escape for the artist to paint the large-scale black-and-white watercolours now on display at the Botanique in Brussels.

Since his daytime schedule was hectic and his surroundings too noisy, Op de Beeck painted them at night. In the process, darkness

Botanique, Koningsstraat 236, Brussels
Z33, Zuivelmarkt 33, Hasselt

became a prominent theme, which becomes clear when you enter the darkened universe of the museum space at the Brussels venue.

"For a long time, I was a bit embarrassed to show these drawings, which were somehow inspired by my soft spot for graphic novels as a teenager," Op de Beeck says. "As a result they were very illustrative and pictorial, but my teachers were minimalists, you see."

Five years ago, when he was asked by the renowned Galleria Borghese in Rome to enter into a dialogue with the 16th-century Italian painter Correggio, he decided to finally show them. "Instead of showing off with a big contemporary video projection, I started a silent conversation with the old master. The mood was calm and serene, much like the show at the Botanique."

The apotheosis of the last five years was a movie in which Op de Beeck's watercolours are animated. "The fog is lifting, raindrops are falling, a man in a canoe slowly passes by, a chandelier is lit," he says. "I'm suggesting the serenity of the night, but also more mysterious things we are not allowed to see in the daylight."

In the process, the artist proves he does not need a kitschy environment to illustrate the real tragedy – the absurdity of our day-to-day existence. You can almost feel the softness of the snow banks he painted, which become even more impressive when you realise the snow is really an illusion: it's just the white of the paper.

"It has always been my greatest fear to become a one-trick pony," he says. "I could have been the artist known for his endless variations on desolated crossroads. It would have been great for my visibility, and my audience would have accepted that. But it would have been creative suicide."

MORE VISUAL ARTS THIS MONTH

Olga Chernysheva Keeping Sight

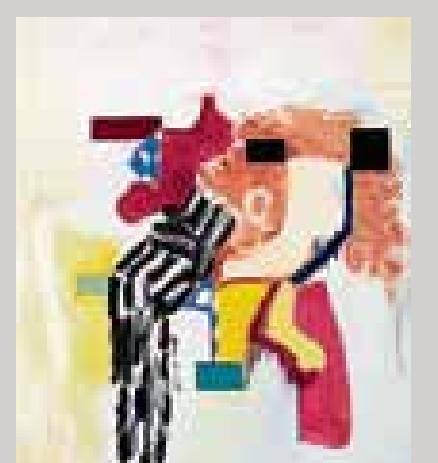
Antwerp's M HKA museum has invited acclaimed Russian visual artist Olga Chernysheva to "interfere" with the museum collection. Works by Francis Alÿs and Antoni Muntadas, for instance, enter into a dialogue with the artist's recent audio-visual installations, photographs and drawings, marked by a social realism typical of a confused post-Soviet generation. Until 18 January, M HKA, Antwerp
\ WWW.MUHKA.BE

Werner Mannaers The Scent of Mimosa

New paintings prove that, at 60, Antwerp artist Werner Mannaers still does not want to choose between figurative and non-figurative, between telling a story and keeping things abstract. In this gallery show, warm geometrical figures in the most diverse of colours and shapes all search for sincerity and emotional depth. Until 1 February, Roberto Polo Gallery, Brussels
\ WWW.ROBERTOPOLOGALLERY.COM

The Sea: Salut d'Honneur Jan Hoet

With Mu.ZEE as the starting point and the sea's never-ending horizon as a source of inspiration, this was meant to be the last major exhibition curated by Jan Hoet. But the art missionary who combined the brains of a captain with a sailor's soul passed away earlier this year. So instead, 120 prominent artists, including his idols Joseph Beuys and Marcel Broodthaers, comrades on the other side of the horizon, pay homage to Hoet. Until 19 March, Mu.ZEE & other locations in Ostend
\ WWW.DEZEE-OOSTENDE.BE



Choreography, but not as you know it

Much Dance

9-10 December

NTGent, Ghent
\ WWW.NTGENT.BE

You either love him or hate him. Stage director, actor and court jester Jan Decorte has always avoided convention, opening up his artistic horizon to more bumpy paths than his contemporaries, who often seem to be striving for perfection. Though Decorte's childlike evocations of dance may be an acquired taste, they do touch the bare essences. Not because they are necessarily a delight to watch, but because they express the whole human palette of emotions, from rough to tender, with a cry and a smile.

In recent years, choreography has become a regular part of the

Flemish performer's stage acts. In the past he worked with dancers such as Charlotte Vanden Eynde, Sharon Zückerman and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. Still, *Much Dance* is, after 2010's *Tanzung*, only his second show putting movement up front. Perhaps *Much Love or Less Dance* would have been a more appropriate title, as the often silly and blunt dance moves (not to mention a rather grotesque pony ride) will leave no lasting impact on you after you exit the theatre. A few strong images – stills of intimate scenes, expressing vulnerability and/or dealing with mortality – are what will

16-17 December

STUK, Leuven
\ WWW.STUK.BE

© Danny Willems

accompany you home. It justifies Decorte's claim that *Much Dance* is closer to visual art (painting or even sculpture) than to dance. The "choreographer" puts two couples on stage, celebrating passion, hugging

and caring for each other, but also experiencing the downsides of love.

Decorte, most of the time watching from one side on a crutch, pairs himself with his long-time muse, Sigrid Vinks, while the more playful *Bacchae*-inspired heavyweight Benny Claesens faces his skinny Estonian boyfriend, Risto Kübar, who recites poems from the battlefield of love between scenes. It's not these fast-paced words by Decorte nor the sporadically played music that make the difference. The poetry of the body, failing but moving on, is what does. \ Tom Peeters

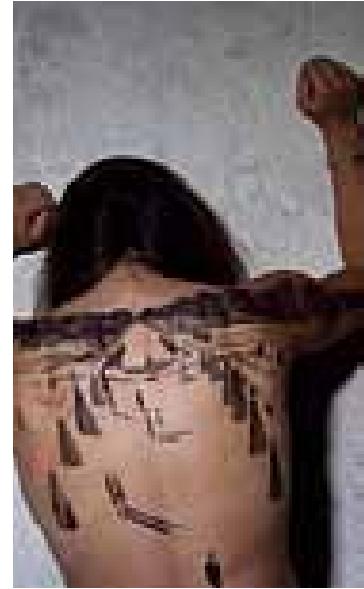
PERFORMANCE

Working Title Platform #08

5-13 December

Across Brussels
\ WWW.WORKSPACEBRUSSELS.BE

Resident artists at the contemporary arts laboratory Workspace Brussels strut their stuff at this annual festival. As the name suggests, this party is all about the process. Workspace Brussels' roster of international residents are given no direction. They've been welcomed into the fold on the strength of their CVs and are now free to develop their talents with the blessing and support of the organisation. The results are staged at three prestigious venues across Brussels: Kaaistudio's, Brigitte and Beursschouwburg. Among this year's 20 performances and installations are works by Greek visual artist Antigone Michalakopoulou and Dutch performance artist Nick Steur. \Georgio Valentino



PHOTOGRAPHY

David Lynch: Small Stories

Until 1 March

Cinema Galeries, Brussels
\ WWW.GALERIES.BE

David Lynch has done a little bit of everything. Although the left-field American director's reputation rests on cult films like *Blue Velvet* and *Mulholland Drive*, he also directed the sci-fi blockbuster *Dune* and produced the successful (and soon to be rebooted) TV series *Twin Peaks*. Lynch has even recorded an album. And now you can see his photography. This exhibition presents 40 black-and-white photos that are every bit as haunting as Lynch's films and music. The characters in *Short Stories* inhabit the quintessential Lynchian landscape, a faded simulacrum of 1950s America peopled with creeps, killers, lost innocents and the occasional dancing midget. \GV



VISUAL ARTS

Citadel'arte

Until 21 December

Diest Citadel
\ WWW.CITADELARTEIDIEST.BE

The Flemish Brabant city of Diest is known for its well-preserved citadel. The only one of its kind in Flanders, this pentagonal fortress was built in the early 19th century to defend against Dutch (re)expansionism. These days, of course, it is utterly obsolete as a military stronghold, but the townsfolk have found another use for



MARKET

Brussels Vintage Market

6-7 December

Sint-Gorikshallen, Brussels
\ WWW.BRUSSELSVINTAGEMARKET.BE

Because hip cats need to shop for Christmas gifts just like the rest of us, Brussels Vintage Market is back with a special holiday edition. Not only will you find the usual smorgasbord of vintage and second-hand threads, brought to you by dozens of dealers from across Belgium, but you will also

have the chance to meet and be photographed with the one and only Sinterklaas (and possibly his controversial squire, Zwarte Piet). Other themed events include a live Christmas rap show, a gospel choir, holiday workshops, festive food, mulled wine and retro DJs. As always, entry is free. \GV



CONCERTS

Brussels

Chris Wood: The "renaissance man of English folk" (*The Irish Times*) and winner of the BBC2 Folk Award presents his fourth album, *None the Wiser*. 5 December 20.00, *Molière*, Naamsepoortgalerij, Bolwerksquare 3 \ www.muziekpubliek.be

Jackson Browne:

An evening with the American singer best known for 1970s rock classics such as "Late for the sky", "The Pretender" and "Running on Empty", together with a full band for the release of his new album, *Standing In The Breach*. 24 June 2015 20.00, *Koninklijk Circus*, Onderrichtsstraat 81 \ www.cirque-royal.org

GET TICKETS NOW

VISUAL ARTS

Ghent

Lightopia: Exhibition on various aspects of lighting design and new technologies, from light art to luminaires, featuring examples from art, design and architecture, among other disciplines. Until 15 March, *Design Museum*, Jan Breydelstraat 5 \ www.designmuseumgent.be

FILM

Brussels

Cinéma Méditerranéen: Annual festival dedicated to films from and about life near the Mediterranean Sea, including 70 recent features, documentaries and shorts. 5-12 December, *Botanique*, Koningsstraat \ www.cinemamed.be

Syria on Film: Movies and debate shed light on one of the darkest pages in the Middle East's recent history, featuring features and documentaries, including the premiere of road movie *Our Terrible Country* in the presence of the director Ali Atasi. 7 December 14.30-21.00, *Bozar*, Ravensteinstraat 23 \ www.bozar.be

PERFORMANCE

Bruges

December Dance: Connecting Asia: The annual theme-oriented dance festival this year provides a confrontation between East and West, modern and traditional. Featuring dancers and drummers from the Taiwanese U-Theatre, *kohn* mask dance master Pichet Klunchun and local favourite Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. 4-14 December, across Bruges \ www.concertgebouw.be

Talking Dutch

No such thing as a free fridge



Derek Blyth

More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

Stef Mintjen decided to do something useful with all the food left over after family meals. He gave it away to anyone who wanted it. His generous initiative made the pages of *Het Nieuwsblad*. *In de Albertlaan in Gent staat sinds enkele dagen een koelkast gevuld met restjes uit de keuken van Stef Mintjen, zoals soep en cake* – For the past few days, a fridge has stood on Albertlaan in Ghent filled with the leftovers from Stef Mintjen's kitchen, such as soup and cake.

"Freego", it said on the fridge – a play on the English word "free" and the Dutch *frigo* – a fridge. "Free food to share," it said on the side, in English.

It seemed like a brilliant idea to give away good food rather than throw it in the bin. *Er wordt veel te veel voeding weggegooid* – Far too much food is thrown away, Mintjen told VRT news.

It's also exactly what the government has been telling us to do. Many people are struggling to feed themselves properly while huge amounts of food are thrown away every day. *Wij vinden dat ideren recht heeft op verse en gezonde voeding* – We think that everyone has the right to fresh and healthy food, added Mintjen (*pictured*).

He was filmed placing neatly labelled containers of soup in the fridge. Within an hour, all the food had disappeared.

But some people got the wrong idea. *Maar blijkbaar heeft niet ideren begrepen dat de inhoud van de koelkast gratis is, niet de koelkast zelf* – Obviously not everyone had understood that the contents of the fridge were free, not the fridge itself.

Two men were caught on video carrying the fridge to their car. *Gelukkig konden de journalisten de dieven*



© Courtesy De Standaard

onderscheppen en werden ze wel verplicht om de koelkast terug te plaatsen – Fortunately the journalists were able to intercept the thieves, and they were forced to put the fridge back.

Wat bent u aan het doen? – What are you doing? asked one journalist. *Daar stond op: 'om mee te nemen'* – The sign said: "to take away". *Zo'n frigo kan ik wel gebruiken* – I could use a refrigerator.

Je zie dat de kennis van engels is bij ideren niet zo groot – You can see that not everyone speaks English all that well, Mintjen said with a smile.

It seems that, in Ghent at least, there is after all such a thing as a free lunch. But there is definitely no such thing as a free fridge.

VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY

In response to: Flanders gets its first beer museum, finally

J Robert Miller

Excellent article. I can't wait for the opportunity to visit.

In response to: NMBS should prepare to face competition, minister warns

Miranda Martin

This is sheer dogma. The British experience has been an expensive disaster

Neil McCart

The British experience has been what can only be described as a total rip-off, with profits coming well before any passenger considerations.

Andy Carling @quarsan

Brussels will escape powercuts this winter. I wonder why?
<http://www.sibelga.be/en/sector/blackout-shortage-cut-off>

John Chapman @BelgoFoot

Difference this time is Gent are a much healthier & successful club than Antwerp are/were; state-of-the-art ground/in top 3.
#MUFC

Monica Michael @monicamichaeluk

AMAZING lunch in Leuven! Never eaten frogs legs before & definitely not with #LeeRyan @pentahotels @officialblue

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Poll

Belgium's mobility minister has warned rail authority NMBS to prepare for competition for passenger travel. Would competition be good for passengers?

a. Yes. A state monopoly cannot provide the service that free market competition ensures.

42%

b. No. When competition was introduced in the UK, fares didn't decrease, and service went downhill. Fast.

58%

National rail authority NMBS should prepare to face competition, Belgium's mobility minister warned last week. Aside from needing to pay off its debts, it should prepare for a liberalisation of the passenger rail market at some future date. The statement probably brought

smiles to passengers' faces during this time of seemingly never-ending strikes that make it impossible for many to get to work or to the airport. Imagine if the NMBS had to fight for your custom!

Flanders Today readers are opposed to any privatisation of the railways, though not by a

huge margin. Close to half of you think some kind of competition would improve services. Possibly you take the view that things could hardly get worse. But many passengers of British Rail would be happy to tell you how much worse things could get.

THE LAST WORD

Tents situation

"We sat down around the table, but they won't change their offer of €50 a night, which of course is ridiculously insufficient to cover the inconvenience and other costs incurred."

Els Bruggeman of Test-Aankoop, which is taking legal action against the Football Union and tour operator Sun Reizen over the poor state of the "luxury" campsite at the World Cup in Brazil

Parking pains

"This is a fatal blow for the traders. And there are enough car parks in the area already."

A local policeman on a petition against plans by the City of Brussels to build a car park under and fully renovate Vossemplein, home of the famous flea market

Nearest and dearest

"The government is cutting subsidies at the same time as rest home residents need more and more care. We have to push those costs through somehow."

Peter Degadt of Zorgnet Vlaanderen on why prices of rest homes will go up by up to 20% in the near future

\ Next week's question:

Federal health minister Maggie De Block plans to allow doctors to prescribe medical marijuana for a variety of ailments. What do you think?

Log on to the Flanders Today website at www.flanderstoday.be and click on VOTE!

