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© Karin Borghouts

Not by the book

Ghent's new library is a 21st-century multimedia living lab



Daan Bauwens

Follow Daan on Twitter \ @DaanBauwens

After making headlines for the unconventional way it moved its books, De Krook media centre opens this weekend, as part of a much larger project to revive an unloved part of Ghent.

Ghent's state-of-the-art library was making international headlines before it had even opened. When 1,250 people showed up to form a human chain transporting books from the old to the new site back in January, the BBC's story on the event was picked up by channels across the world.

And this is only a precursor to the grand opening later this month, according to Annelies Storms, Ghent city councillor for culture and tourism. Storms is also the chair of De Waalse Krook neighbourhood development project, of which the library is a major part.

"Krook" is slang for *kreuk*, meaning crease, and refers to the sudden bend the Scheldt river makes in this corner of Ghent, near the Zuid transport hub. De Waalse Krook, the name of the area, is a reminder of the Walloon sailors who once travelled down the river from Hainaut with ships filled with coal.

In the 19th century, the area became popular for its cinemas, theatres and Winter Circus. By the 1970s, however, it was attracting less glamorous forms of entertainment. The bend in the Scheldt formed the border between the city's red-light district and a collection of vacant garages and graffiti-lined streets on the other shore.

While prostitution was pushed back in the 1990s, the area remained run-down until 2011, when it began being cleared for new building projects. "It was a place you didn't want to be in, unless you had some funny business going on," Storms says. "But with this project, we're giving

Zeebrugge ferry disaster remembered, 30 years later

On- and offshore commemorations for the 193 who died on the Herald of Free Enterprise



Alan Hope
Follow Alan on Twitter \ @AlanHopeFT

Monday marked the 30th anniversary of the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster, in which 193 people died when a ferry capsized off the coast of Zeebrugge on its way to Dover in the UK. Remembrance ceremonies included three ships sailing out to the site of the accident to pay tribute to the victims. West Flanders governor Carl Decaluwé was accompanied by Alison Rose, the British ambassador to Belgium. Survivors, relatives of victims and members of the rescue services who were on duty that day also attended. An enquiry into the disaster found that it was caused by the ferry, operated by Townsend Thoresen, leaving Zeebrugge with its bow doors open. The ship, carrying 459 passengers and 80 crew, left its berth at 19.05 local time and capsized at



© Belga

about 19.28, having taken on water through the open doors. The ship ended up in shallow water on a sandbar about one kilometre off the coast. Only a fortuitous turn at the last minute prevented the ship capsizing in deeper water, where the casualties would have been even more serious. By chance, the Belgian navy was taking part in exercises close by and was able to help rescue survivors. The offshore commemoration ceremony was followed by a conference at the Zeebrugge navy base about the lessons learned from the disaster, and on plans for the event of another such accident. The conference was attended by Philippe De Backer, federal secretary of state for the North Sea, and there was a floral tribute and a fly-over by a Navy helicopter over the site of the accident.

Former terrorist suspect files complaint against multiple detainments

Fayçal Cheffou, accused last year of being the airport terrorist suspect known as “the man in the hat”, has filed a complaint against the police for harassment. He claimed that police have picked him up for three other incidents, also without reason. Security footage from the Brussels Airport bombing on 22 March 2016 showed a man leaving the airport seconds after the explosions – the same man who had earlier been seen in the departures hall with the bombers. Using footage from other cameras, police were able to follow the “man in the hat” as he made his way on foot to Schaarbeek, when his trail was lost. Cheffou – who became a media figure during the summer of 2015 working with refugees in the tent camp that set up in Brussels’

Maximilian Park – was arrested two days after the attacks and accused of being the man in the hat. It was a case of mistaken identity: The man in the hat turned out to be Mohamed Abrini, who was arrested days later and remains in custody. Cheffou was released but detained again several days later when he gained entry to a friend’s apartment, apparently with the friend’s permission. He was again rapidly released. In another incident, police were carrying out a search warrant to locate someone who had returned from fighting in Syria. Most recently, Cheffou was picked up on suspicion of calling in a bomb threat to the Ancienne Belgique concert hall in Brussels. The complaint will now be investigated. \ AH

Winter period for energy prices prolonged

The winter period, during which electricity and gas providers are not allowed to cut off households for non-payment of bills, has been extended to the end of March, Flemish energy minister Bart Tommelein has announced. In normal circumstances, the period would have ended on 1 March. Usually, extensions are for a maximum of two weeks. This year’s decision, Tommelein said, is based on temperature forecasts. The Royal Meteorological Institute offers forecasts for a maximum of 14 days and is currently predicting mainly rain, with daytime temperatures of between seven and 13 degrees. It does not predict that the temperature will drop below zero, even at night. “We want to avoid leaving people literally out in the cold,” Tommelein said. By extend-



ing the winter period, which started on 1 December, both customers and the municipal welfare agencies would have more security, he said. The winter period is a legal protection that prevents households being deprived of heating during the coldest part of the year, except in cases where safety concerns leave no alternative, or where there is evidence of criminal activity such as illegally tapping into another customer’s supply. \ AH

VUB calls for academics worldwide to protest in support of jailed professor

TINYURL.COM/AHMADREZADJALALI

The Free University of Brussels (VUB) has published an open letter calling on international academics and human rights organisations to demand that the Iranian government intervene in the case of Dr Ahmadreza Djalali. The professor, a guest lecturer at the university, is being held in a prison in Tehran. Djalali, a Swedish national, was arrested in April last year during a visit to family in

Iran. He was accused of espionage based on his contacts with western academics. Such a charge carries a possible death sentence, although the Iranian government has said that a sentence has not yet been handed down. A physician and expert in disaster-related medical assistance, Djalali was previously on hunger strike, but ended it last month upon

hearing about the international efforts to get him released. Having been deprived of contact with a lawyer, he has now resumed the strike, and experts are worried about his health. The open letter from VUB rector Caroline Pauwels calls for people and organisations the world over to express their opposition to Djalali’s imprisonment. “We would like

to impress on colleagues, as well as medical, scientific and humanitarian organisations worldwide to support this call and to spread it,” the letter reads, “so that the case of Dr Djalali can be judged in a correct manner, and that he, once found innocent, can be released to join his wife and children in Sweden.” Nearly 224,000 people have signed the online petition for Dr Djalali’s release. \ AH

7,150



drivers tested last year by the Institute for Road Safety. More than 700 were declared unfit to drive and had their licence revoked



complaints of unsuitable housing conditions filed with the Brussels regional housing inspectors in 2016, mainly against private sector landlords

71%



of commuters use their cars to get to work, according to a poll by HR consultancy Acerta. One in five commuters cycles to and from work

37



cars dragged out of waterways in Flanders since December 2015, according to the mobility minister. In 14 cases, the vehicle was in the Albert Canal, which runs from Antwerp via Hasselt to Liège



95,337

unemployed in the Brussels-Capital Region, down 4.5% on the same period the year before, and the lowest level since 2009, according to regional employment agency Actiris

WEEK IN BRIEF

Renovation works on the Nieuwstraat shopping street in Brussels are due to begin later this month, the region's public works councillor Geoffroy Coomans has announced. The project has been postponed several times due to the designation of the pedestrian zone on the central avenues. Works will begin on utilities like electricity and water, with later a new road surface, trees in the side streets and residential properties above the shops.

Anne De Paepe, a medical geneticist who was elected rector of Ghent University in 2013, has announced that she will **not be seeking a second term** this autumn. "I don't feel able to carry out an election campaign that risks being polarising," she said. Rik Van Walle, dean of the architecture and engineering faculty, has announced his candidacy, with Mieke Van Herreweghe, research director of letters and philosophy, as his running mate for vice-rector.

Consumer organisation Test-Aankoop has filed a **complaint against three insurance companies** – Axa, AG and Belfius – because their legal questionnaires for customers seeking mortgage insurance are allegedly in breach of privacy legislation. Questions for those seeking coverage are either too vague, the organisation said, or include medical details that are confidential under the law. The companies claimed that the questions have been approved by a committee made up of company and public representatives, chaired by a magistrate.

More than one in three people in Flanders **never drinks tap water**, despite it being cheaper and more sustainable than bottled water, as well as proven to be perfectly safe, according to a study carried out by Ivox for Sodastream.

Belgian members of **parliament earn on average three times more** than the average worker, making them among the best-paid representatives in Europe, according to

figures compiled by *De Standaard* from public sources. Belgian MPs, from federal and regional parliaments as well as the European parliament, have an average gross remuneration of €9,364 a month. The difference is higher in neighbouring countries, where parliamentarians in both France and the Netherlands earn 3.5 times more, and in Germany four times more.

Drivers caught **under the influence of alcohol** are male in more than eight in 10 cases, according to figures from the home affairs ministry. Men also make up 84% of those caught driving without a licence and 94% of those under the influence of drugs.

The home at which a child is legally resident under a **co-parenting arrangement** is paying up to €150 a month less for water than the other home, socialist members of the Flemish parliament Caroline Gennez and Rob Beenders have complained. While children may be spending equal time with the other parent, the parent at whose address they are registered is entitled to a discount of €100, as well as a preferential basic tariff.

The hospitality industry in Antwerp has asked the city council to **adapt the rules for the low-emissions zone**, which came into force on 1 February. It would like the city to take the arrival of foreigners into account, who they claim do not have enough time or information to avoid incurring a fine by registering their vehicle. The system fines unregistered vehicles that exceed emissions limits, which tourists and other visitors from abroad may not be aware of, Horeca Antwerpen and the Antwerp Hotel Association said.

The federal government **paid one in four of its invoices too late** in 2016, leading to penalty interest of nearly €825,000, according to a parliamentary answer by budget minister Sophie Wilmes. Justice and interior ministries were the worst offenders, with 40% and 38%

of bills paid late, she said.

The government of Flanders has designated **three more protected species**: the grayling butterfly (*Hipparchia semele*), which lives on coastal dunes and grasslands; the Eurasian bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), a type of heron that inhabits reeds on the water's edge; and the common spadefoot (*Pelobates fuscus*), which emits a smelly secretion when alarmed, hence its alternative name of garlic toad.

The mayor of the Brussels municipality of Molenbeek has introduced a **curfew at and around Beekkant metro station**, after complaints of aggression and drugs trading. During the hours of 21.00 to 5.00, gatherings of more than three people are forbidden in the area around the station, an important junction of all four main metro lines. The curfew zone is bordered by Edmond Machtenslaan, Dubois-Thornstraat, Osseghemstraat and Leeuweriksliedplaats.

The French developers of the **dope-trading app Weeder** have taken it offline in Belgium after it was declared illegal by federal justice minister Koen Geens. The app allowed users to find and contact marijuana dealers in their vicinity. Users would log in anonymously and declare themselves as buyers or providers, and could then make arrangements to meet. Geens' department found that the app facilitated the trade in illegal drugs.

Antwerp International School (AIS) is handing over a cheque this week to the city's University Hospital in the amount of **€38,000 to help fund research** into dendritic cell therapy. The hospital's Centre for Cellular Therapy and Regenerative Medicine, led by professor Zwi Berneman, is working on new cancer therapies using the cells, which stimulate the body's natural immune responses. AIS raised the funds at a Charity Art Auction last year.

\\ tinyurl.com/ccrgantwerpen

OFFSIDE To give is to get

Two out of every three people in Flanders give away their old stuff instead of sending it off to the landfill, according to an enquiry by marketing agency Ivox among Flanders' 135 thrift shops and the website 2hands.be. The most popular items to be given a second life: clothing and books. We've probably all found space in our wardrobes at some point for a rare hippie or goth find, and the joys of sniffing around old books are well known to bibliophiles. But who might have guessed that the



© Courtesy Kringwinkel

other side of the coin – the gifting of such treasures – was so popular?

According to the survey, 67% of people in Flanders have at some point given stuff away. About half of those gave to the Kringwinkel chain of charity shops. Another half gave directly to family or friends. A large portion of the books and clothes belonged to children who had grown out of them.

Over on the second-hand website 2hands.be, 11,000 people have at one time or another registered to sell items, many of those frequent sellers. \\ AH

FACE OF FLANDERS



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Jean Blaute

\\ TWITTER.COM/JBLAUTE

Most people in their mid-60s are probably thinking about retiring. Jean Blaute, who turned 65 last week, is not only not preparing to take things easy, he's done the work of about three lifetimes.

Jean Corry Leonard Blaute was born in Zottegem, East Flanders, in 1952. His mother and father were not only talented musicians, they also ran a record and instrument shop out of the ground floor of the house. So the young Blaute seemed destined to make music.

And he did: One day he picked up a guitar from the shop window. Later, he learned the accordion from his father. Later still, he attended the Conservatory in Brussels to study sight-reading and composition.

But he was already appearing on stage with the likes of jazz virtuoso Toots Thielemans and venturing into Ghent to play in the lively cafe scene by the time he was 15. He went on to accompany Flemish names like Johan Verminnen and Raymond van het Groenewoud, as well as release a novelty song of his own called "Bananen" (Bananas). He was more successful, though, in writing music for others: for film (*Urbanus Vertelt*), for

TV (*Kulderzipken*) and for the stage (musicals based on Alice in Wonderland, Pinocchio and Peter Pan).

Behind the scenes, Blaute built a solid reputation as an arranger and producer, running up a total of some 120 albums and even more singles, gaining 30 gold or platinum discs from behind the mixing desk.

Most people probably recognise his face, though, from his appearances on TV. He was a regular panel member on the 1990s topical comedy show *De drie wijzen* (The Three Wise Men) and, in the following decade, *De rechtvaardige rechters* (The Righteous Judges).

He sat on the jury of the talent show *Idool* in 2003, 2004 and 2007, and in the similar show *X Factor* in 2005.

De bende van Wim (Wim's Gang) brought him together with two of his passions – motorcycles and music – as he and two friends, actor Wim Opbroucke and photographer Michiel Hendryckx, toured Europe for two seasons.

Later Blaute added a third interest: Belgian beer, in the three seasons of *Tournée Générale*, touring breweries with former MTV VJ Ray Cokes. \\ Alan Hope

FLANDERTODAY Flanders State of the Art

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

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5TH COLUMN

Coalminer's daughter

The commotion about politicians' paid board positions has produced one clear winner: Zuhail Demir, who succeeded N-VA party colleague Elke Sleurs last week as secretary of state for poverty, equal opportunities, people with disabilities and urban and science policies.

Sleurs moved on to lead the N-VA list in Ghent at the 2018 local elections. It is an open secret that the nationalists thought Sleurs was "too invisible".

That is one problem Demir will never have. Even before she entered government, she was known for what she herself calls her "big mouth".

Demir is the daughter of a Turkish-Kurdish coalminer, who immigrated to Limburg in the 1970s. It's a heritage of which she is proud, as demonstrated by the red miners' scarf she wore around her wrist when she took the oath.

As a youngster, she received little encouragement to choose the more academic general education track in secondary school, not to mention law studies in Leuven – except from her father, who supported her every ambition.

This experience shaped Demir's world views: She strongly believes in individual responsibility and merit. To some of her critics, this makes her ill fit for her function, as she finds it hard to empathise with people with less talent and willpower than herself.

Politically, Demir was first noticed as a district councillor in Antwerp after forging an unlikely coalition with the Groen party. To N-VA, she personifies the view that anyone can be successful in Flanders provided they accept a set of shared values.

The public became familiar with Demir in a more unconventional way: through a saucy 2015 photo shoot for a girlie magazine in the federal parliament building and the reality show *Terug naar eigen land* (Back to Your Own Country), in which she was one of the celebrity guests travelling along the refugee route to Europe. The scene in which she told refugees living in dire camp conditions that they had no future in Europe stuck in viewers' minds. Last year Demir moved from Antwerp to Genk. Politically, she is destined to become Limburg's leading lady for N-VA.

After years in the spotlight, she has finally landed a government post. She has her fiery temperament to thank for this, although she is well aware that it is exactly this disposition she will have to curb now. But invisible she will never be.

\ Anja Otte

She Decides conference raises millions for family planning

International campaign co-sponsored by Belgium has raised €700 million



Alan Hope

More articles by Alan \ flanderstoday.org

More than 40 countries took part in the She Decides reproductive rights conference in Brussels last week, organised by federal minister for development co-operation Alexander De Croo and his counterparts in the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden. The four governments launched the initiative with a collective pledge to fund the campaign with €51 million.

The impetus for the campaign was a decision by the Trump administration in the US to withdraw development funding from NGOs that perform abortions or even provide information on the procedure. The withdrawal of US funding is estimated to leave a shortfall of €600 million worldwide.

Dutch minister Lilianne Ploumen launched the international crowdfunding campaign in January to make up the difference. De Croo and the Scandinavian nations, represented by ministers

Isabella Lövin and Ulla Tørnæs, soon joined up. The four central nations have pledged €51 million, and the shortfall of €600 million was raised from governments and private donations across the world within five weeks. "If we can keep up this tempo, things are looking good," said Ploumen.

"We never imagined we would be able to mobilise so many countries," De Croo said. "The important thing now will be to strengthen that support. We cannot accept that access for girls and women to information on family planning, Aids prevention and mother-baby care can be withheld."

During the conference, further pledges came in, including \$20 million (CAD, or €14 million) from Canada, €20 million (USD, or €19 million) from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and \$50 million (USD, or €47.5 million) from an anonymous donor.



© Nicolas Maeterlinck/BELGA

From left: Ministers Ulla Tørnæs (Denmark), Lilianne Ploumen (the Netherlands), Alexander De Croo (Belgium) and Isabella Lövin (Sweden) at the She Decides conference in Brussels on 2 March

The conference was attended by representatives from international NGOs and governments including Afghanistan, Canada, Chad, Finland, France, Mali, Mongolia, Nepal and Vietnam.

People with a disability can now spend subsidy on 'green care'

Flemish welfare minister Jo Vandeuren has announced that people with a disability in Flanders can now use their personal budgets allocated by the government for care to take part in "green care" initiatives. Green care refers to assistance offered at care farms, children's farms or animal shelters.

As part of an ongoing reform of the system of care for those with a disability, 30,000 adults now receive funding with which they can organise their own care and support. The reform is gradually shifting the management of government subsidies from care organisations to people with a disability and their caregivers.

There are hundreds of initiatives in Flanders offering green care, primarily care farms, which allow people with a disability to take part in a farm's daily



© Courtesy ZZG Zorggroep

activities such as caring for animals and working in vegetable gardens. The Flemish government has detailed the conditions that must be met in order to be officially recognised as green care. "Working with animals or helping on a farm allows those with a disability to take part in a useful activity in a healthy working environment," said Flemish MP Tine van der Vloet, an expert on the topic. \ Andy Furniere

€900,000 for Unesco cultural heritage projects in Africa

The Flemish government has approved a payment of €900,000 to a trust fund it maintains with Unesco for cultural heritage projects in Africa. Since 2000, Flanders has supported two such trust funds, one for scientific projects and one for cultural heritage, with an emphasis on the continent.

The funds have seen €35 million in financing over the course of more than 15 years. Projects financed include protecting nature in Africa, conservation of marine heritage and protecting world heritage in Iraq and Syria.

"By giving support to the preservation and enhancement of cultural heritage in Africa, we are contributing to the sustainable development of the continent," said minister-president Geert Bour-

geois. "Apart from the restoration of architectural heritage – think of the beautiful mosques of Timbuktu that suffered from fundamentalist violence – it is also about natural heritage, underwater heritage, and more and more about intangible assets."

The latter term, he said, refers to traditions, rituals and art forms. "The preservation of all that heritage is not only important for the dignity of the peoples of Africa, but it also provides opportunities for valorisation as a tourist asset."

The partnership with Unesco means the organisation can count on Flanders for funding and can benefit from the expertise of Flemish universities, while Flanders gets the benefit of Unesco's network of contacts worldwide. \ AH

N-VA concerned about interfederal centre for equal opportunities

Nationalist party N-VA, part of both the Flemish and federal government coalitions, has called for a Flemish centre for equal opportunities, following criticism of the interfederal centre Unia.

At the end of February, Zuhail Demir replaced Elke Sleurs as the secretary of state for equal opportunities; Sleurs had stepped down to head the electoral list in Ghent. Demir, a Limburger with Turkish-Kurdish roots, took the opportunity to comment on Unia, the interfederal centre for equal opportunities.

Demir said that the organisation was intervening in political issues such as the discussion regarding holiday figure Zwarte Piet instead of doing what it was meant to do.

Demir's intervention was backed by Flemish equal opportunities minister Liesbeth Homans, also N-VA, who accused Unia of being a force for polarisation rather than unity.

According to anonymous sources talking to *De Standaard*, Unia treats complaints of anti-Semitism differently from complaints of Islamophobia because the agency is largely French-speaking, whereas the Jewish population of Belgium is mainly centred in Antwerp.

"Either you're open as a centre to anyone who has complaints about discrimination, or you're a centre for complaints from immigrants," Homans told the VRT programme *De zevende dag*. Flan-

ders has its own equal opportunities policy, but that is not translated to a federal level, Homans explained.

Questioned by the same programme, Demir said that she was "concerned about Unia as an institution, and I'm not alone. It is a centre for polarisation. The budget is fixed until 2019, so I can't scrap it just like that, but I will be having discussions to see how Unia can be made to find support in society as a whole."

Matthias Storme, a member of N-VA who sits on the board of Unia, also questioned the interfederal structure of the organisation. He referred to previous research done by the University of Leuven researchers, who concluded, he

said, that there should be "separate structures".

"Within Unia are people with a certain ideological matrix," said Storme. "I understand why people think Unia acts one way for some, and another for others. The centre carries out research, gives advice and is at the same time an interested party in legal matters. That's not a healthy state of affairs."

Both the Christian-democrats CD&V and liberals Open VLD defended Unia in parliament. "We find it important that there is an institution outside of the government that challenges policy," said CD&V member of the Flemish parliament Ward Kennes, "that forms a counter-balance to the issues of the day." \ AH



© Michiel Devijver

Left to right: Lieven De Marez, research director of the imec-mict-UGent media research group, library director Krist Biebauw, Ghent councillor for culture Annelies Storms and Roger Lemmens of imec

Not by the book

Regeneration project 'gives something back' to the city with cultural exchanges

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\ OPENING.DEKROOK.BE

a piece of the city back to the inhabitants."

The De Krook library – now finished and just a stone's throw from the previous library building – is only one part of a comprehensive city renewal project, which also involves a complete makeover of the old Winter Circus building and the construction of two public squares and a summer terrace beside the water. Cyclists and pedestrians will soon be

each year as the subject of a series of exhibitions, debates and talks, to which imec and the university will contribute their knowledge and expertise.

"Imagine we see an increase of interest in burn-out," Storms says. "First we will organise a series of lectures and debates in the lecture hall. We will then ask university researchers to inform the public on progress in international research through exhibi-

“Some people wonder whether a library is still necessary in the digital age. Well, it is

able to reach the centre of town directly via bridges around the library.

The centrepiece, of course, is the new library building. With its revolutionary design – an inverted glass tower, with steel beams placed horizontally on the outside – the idea is to make it the “showcase of Ghent's innovation narrative”, according to Storms. Ghent University will fill new office spaces with two of its cutting-edge media research centres, while imec, Europe's largest nano-electronics and digital research institute, will house several of its teams here.

Cross-pollination between researchers to speed up innovation is the first step in the new library's master plan. Next: motivating citizens to become part of the research.

“Visitors to the library will be part of a kind of living lab,” Storms says. “As imec produces prototypes of wireless and virtual reality devices, visitors will get the chance to test them and deliver feedback. And the university's institute of psycho-acoustics will have an underground laboratory for immersive experiments with visitors.”

When it comes to citizen input, De Krook will go even further. Analysing data about borrowed books will give a clear insight into what readers are most interested in.

Based on this information, two themes will be picked

tions. Imec, in the meantime, can present its newest stress-meter prototypes.”

There will be a cycle, she explains: The public chooses the most pressing matters, and experts will keep them updated on the state of affairs in science and technology. Citizen participation must drive innovation, Storms believes: “It's an exchange. This building is the ultimate embodiment of that philosophy.”

As well as being a hub for science, technology and entrepreneurship, De Krook will fulfil its traditional duty as a city library, with more of a consulting role than before. “Some people wonder whether a library is still necessary in the digital age; well, it is,” says Storms. “We are being flooded with information, but sources can be questionable. Our staff, relieved from the burden of moving books by a fully automatic transport system, will be able to offer readers their literary expertise.”

In the meantime, visitors can consult legal experts, students can get career advice, Vormingplus will provide professional training in the sociocultural sector, and student radio Urgent.fm will be broadcasting 24 hours a day.

“It's all about reading, learning and living,” says Storms. “That's what the library of the 21st century should offer.”

Finding its rhythm: Library architects followed the patterns of the city

Flemish architects Ralf Coussée and Klaas Goris won the competition to design De Krook in 2009. They believe their victory over architecture superstar and Pritzker-prize winner Toyo Ito – one of the other bidders – was thanks to their sensitivity regarding the scale of Ghent. Coussée takes us on a small journey through the structure's most important elements. The first challenge, he says, was to build something with the required space – 18,000 square metres – without creating a monster.

“We didn't want to build an international project, an ‘eye-catcher’ that would be interchangeable with buildings in somewhere like Seoul or Chandigarh.”

They did everything they could to make the structure blend into its surrounding – first by mimicking the city's patterns. “There's a rhythm in Flemish townhouses, an intricate game of squares and rectangles that we Flemings often see as a product of our indecision or lack of rules,”

Miriam Makeba Square, visitors will see the ground continuing into the building, stopped by nothing but a glass wall.

“The square is the city; we've put a roof over its head,” says Coussée. “It illustrates that this is a place for all inhabitants, easily accessible and open. Once inside, visitors can go deeper: up to the culture library or down to the science library.”

One floor below ground level, Coussée and Goris have imagined a new outdoor leisure space. “We chose to lower the shore by two metres,” he explains. “This is the only place in the city where people can dip their feet into the water. Surrounded by grass and trees, this could easily become a meeting place with the same allure as the Graslei.”

But the true genius and main message of the structure's design lie in its successful combination of durability and aesthetics. Having dreamed of building a structure that needed no treating, painting or scrubbing for decades, the archi-



© Michiel Devijver

says Coussée. “Aesthetically it's actually quite nice and unique. The steel beams around the glass cage of our building mimic this rhythm, adding fragility, while the horizontal placement pushes the building down.”

Besides that, he points out that there is no way to see the building in full. “The sudden bend in the river – which is also typical of this city's medieval centre – is copied. The building bends so it can never be seen from front to back at the same time.”

Two of the building's floors are underground, “and when you're facing the building's side from below, the steel beams follow an irregular pattern into the sky instead of staying constant,” he says. “It adds a sense of humility.”

Another element the architects are particularly proud of is the agora, the building's ground floor. When they stand on the new concrete

fects have made it happen.

“It's as honest as a building can get,” says Coussée. “We show glass, concrete and steel – the only three materials used in the building – in their true colours, with their natu-

“It's as honest as a building can get. The older it gets, the more beautiful it will be

ral patina. The older it gets, the more beautiful it will be. It was designed not to fall victim to trends in fashion or taste.”

OPENING WEEKEND

Have you ever delved into the social life of robots or tried lifting yourself off into the air in a virtual reality trip? De Krook is inviting people to discover something new around every corner at the grand opening this weekend. Prominent writers and poets will present

new work while staff and collaborators are available to have a chat.

10-12 March

De Krook
Miriam Makebaplein 1, Gent

WEEK IN BUSINESS

Brewing \ AB InBev

AB InBev, the world's largest brewer, saw sales fall in 2016 by 2% to 500 million hectolitres, while income was down 1.4%. Following the merger with London-based SABMiller, its western European operations finished the year with slightly higher sales, but a big drop in Brazil wiped out any gains.

Construction \ Besix

The Brussels-based construction company has acquired 100% of the Belgian activities of Dutch group Heijmans. The acquisition is expected to raise Besix' profile in private and public infrastructure in Flanders. The deal also includes three asphalt factories as well as cable and pipeline construction capacity.

Data

\ Real Impact Analytics

The data processing start-up, based in Brussels, has signed up with two major mobile operators in Africa. The deals with Orange and MTN concern technology developed by the start-up and Proximus to optimise investments in data networks.

Dredging \ Deme

The Flemish dredging company is hiring 400 new staff following the purchase of two new dredging ships, worth a total of €500 million. The new hires will be evenly split between office staff and crew members.

Telecoms \ Proximus

Mobile operator Proximus has begun rolling out 4.5G internet in Antwerp and Ghent, which will provide customers with compatible phones with speeds of up to 450Mb per second.

TV production

\ De Mensen

Flemish TV production house De Mensen has sold its drama series *Beau Séjour* to streaming giant Netflix, which will begin broadcasting the series on 16 March.

Transport

\ Bombardier

The train and tram rolling stock constructor is moving its management in Bruges to Crespin in northern France at the end of 2018. The Canadian parent company is cutting 3,500 jobs in Europe, but how that will affect Bruges is not yet known.

Viceland launches in Belgium

US cable and online channel available now on Telenet, later on Proximus



Alan Hope

Follow Alan on Twitter \ @AlanHopeFT

American media company Vice has launched a new broadcast channel, Viceland, in Flanders. The channel forms part of Telenet's basic package, on channel 21. It will be picked up by Proximus in June. In the meantime, programmes and clips can be watched online. Viceland is owned and operated by Vice Media, known for its edgy online and print news and features targeted at young adults. The channel promises a range of local and international programmes covering subjects including music, food, sex, fashion and sport.



© Courtesy Viceland

One of the first features was the hour-long documentary *Census*, in which young people gave their views on topics ranging from politics to drugs to climate change. Other features include the series *Black Market*, in which Michael K Williams (Omar from *The Wire*) investigates shadow economies (pictured).

Viceland was launched a year ago in the US and Canada. Since then it has also opened for business in the UK, Ireland, France, Australia and New Zealand. The launch in Belgium coincides with a launch in the Netherlands.

New CEO for ING Belgium

Erik Van Den Eynden (pictured) has been appointed the new CEO of ING Belgium, the bank has announced. Van Den Eynden succeeds Rik Vandenberghe, who stepped down unexpectedly in January.

Van Den Eynden, 49, started with ING in 1990, when it was called Bank Brussel Lambert, as a management trainee, having obtained a degree in economics from Antwerp University. Since then, he has worked in a wide variety of positions, including in the Netherlands, where he was responsible for sales, marketing and communication for eight years at the ING subsidiary Nationale Nederlanden insurance company.



He returned to Belgium in 2012, responsible for MidCorporates and Institutionals at the bank, which is the market leader in that sector. He comes to the CEO position facing the task of closing half of Belgium's ING branches, with the loss of some 900 jobs. \ AH



Delhaize Belgium tempers profits for Ahold Delhaize group

Ahold Delhaize, the supermarket group resulting from the merger of Belgian chain Delhaize and the Dutch Albert Heijn, has announced group results for Belgium showing a 1% fall in income in the last quarter of 2016. Of the group's five sectors – Belgium, the Netherlands, two divisions in the US and one in Central Europe – Belgium performed the worst. The results for the last quarter of 2016 are the first to cover the combination of the newly composed group. Overall, the group saw its turnover increase by 3.7% compared to 2015, but that was held back by growth

in Belgium – represented by the Delhaize chain – of only 1.7%, and little opportunity to grow market share.

Delhaize also under-performed on margins, with a figure of 5.4% compared to 7% achieved by the Dutch concern – composed of Albert Heijn and the online store Bol.com – the 6.8% achieved by Ahold USA and central Europe, and the 6.6% achieved by Delhaize America.

Ahold Delhaize has been ordered by Belgium's competition authority to divest itself of eight Albert Heijn stores in Flanders. \ AH

West Flemish firms seek reassurance over impact of Brexit

Flemish minister-president Geert Bourgeois visited West Flanders on Monday to reassure business leaders about the effects of Brexit on trade relations. Some 45% of the port of Zeebrugge's traffic – about 17 million tonnes – crosses to the UK, making it more vulnerable to Brexit than more world-oriented ports like Antwerp and Rotterdam.

Brexit is expected to mean not only the UK's departure from the European Union but also leaving the single market and the customs union. As a result, goods that now circulate freely would be subject to import and export tariffs.

In a statement, Bourgeois repeated his call for a broad and inclusive trade pact with Britain, which would be in the interests of both parties. "High import tariffs in the

UK are the last thing we want, not just for the port of Zeebrugge but also for the whole Flemish economy, which lives from exports." The UK is Flanders' fourth-largest trading partner.

Without a trade agreement, the UK would fall back on World Trade Organisation tariffs, which would mean a duty of 8% on textiles, 16% on frozen vegetables and as much as 24% on fruit juices – all sectors important to Flanders. "Flanders wants a zero tariff on these products, and as few border and customs formalities as possible," he said.

As part of his visit, Bourgeois visited frozen vegetable producer Ardo in Ardoorie, before returning to Brussels for a meeting with British foreign secretary Boris Johnson. \ AH

Horeca profits drop by up to 10% in alcohol-free February

Tournée Minérale – the campaign that saw more than 120,000 Belgians swear off alcohol for the entire month of February – saw sales in Flanders' hospitality businesses drop by about 10%, according to industry federation Horeca Vlaanderen.

Horeca Vlaanderen and the federation of drinks wholesalers FeBeD took a poll of 392 businesses in the hotel, restaurant and bar sector, and found 52% reporting a drop in income. In about one-third of the cases, sales dropped by more than 10%.

Sales of alcoholic drinks fell in 62% of cases, but that was partly made up for by sales of non-alcoholic drinks. The campaign – launched by the Foundation against Cancer and the VAD expertise centre for alcohol and other drugs – also saw sales down by as much as 15% among drinks wholesalers. Sales of non-alcoholic drinks were up by only some 3%.

"Tournée Minérale had a clear impact on the sector," said Filip Vanheusden, chair of Horeca Vlaanderen. "We're seeing a fall in



© Ingimage

income especially in restaurants, which shows the importance of wine and apéritifs to profits."

The drinks industry, meanwhile, has asked to be consulted by the campaign organisers ahead of future editions, so they can offer clients non-alcoholic alternatives. The campaign had no effect on the hospitality industry in Brussels, meanwhile, according to sector federation Horeca Brussel.

According to organisers, 122,460 Belgians took part in the action, including some celebrities and politicians, including party presidents John Crombez (SPA) and Wouter Beke (CD&V). \ AH

The theory of sharing

Peer-to-peer expert leads project to turn Ghent into sharing metropolis



Daan Bauwens

More articles by Daan \ flanderstoday.org

\ P2PFOUNDATION.NET

The sharing economy is gaining momentum, and Ghent just might be leading the way in Flanders. According to a recent study by the Flemish socio-ecological thinktank Oikos, the number of civic initiatives in Ghent grew tenfold in the last decade, prompting the city to call in the help of Michel Bauwens.

The Flemish peer-to-peer expert has just begun a three-month research project, culminating in a commons transition plan to help Ghent reinforce and facilitate citizen-led initiatives. The "commons" concept refers to the shared production and consumption of goods in a more sustainable society.

Flemish cities are rife with such initiatives – car sharing, for instance, has taken off, while a growing number of residents use smartphone apps to lend power tools, instead of buying them.

Bauwens is a pioneer in the theory of the sharing economy. In 2005, he founded P2P Foundation, a global network of researchers and activists who focus on commons-based society.

Eight years later, he released the bestseller *Saving the world: With P2P Towards a Postcapitalist Society*. The French newspaper *Libération* called him the "leading theorist on the theme of co-operative economy".

Bauwens grew up in Groot-Bijgaarden, Flemish Brabant, but he now lives in Chiang Mai, Thailand, where he moved in 2003, having left his job in the regu-



Michel Bauwens is one of the leading thinkers on the sharing economy

lar economy. "Even back then, the symptoms were obvious: ecological decline, climate change and rising social inequality," he says. "I was part of a system that created problems instead of solving them. I didn't think I should wait for someone else to do it."

In Thailand, Bauwens began studying history to find new and more sustainable economic models, painstakingly observing societal transitions and crises of civilisations.

"The end of the Roman Empire, the start of feudalism, the tripling of Europe's population and the rise of cloisters," he says. "All transitions share a set of common elements: pooling of resources, a massive spread of information through new systems of communication, and the displacement of production and labour."

By that definition, Bauwens continues, we are now going through another transition. "Our economic model is in a crisis. To mitigate its

consequences, people make use of the internet to pool resources and spread knowledge. They organise themselves outside the existing systems of corporations or states."

The blog in which Bauwens presented his work quickly gained global attention, resulting in the P2P Foundation as we know it today: 12 intellectuals thinking about the emancipatory possibilities of new technologies.

In 2014, Bauwens led a first research project in Ecuador aimed at making the country independent from extractive industries. Now it's Ghent's turn.

"Basically, Ghent wants to know what's happening," explains Bauwens. "I will begin by mapping out all the initiatives and trying to figure out what resources are being pooled. Then I'll see need if the initiatives can result in new jobs."

He'll also find out what these local initiatives expect from the city, he says. While Bauwens researches the situation in Ghent, his collab-

orator will be travelling around the world to find similar initiatives.

Places like Bologna, Seoul and Milan have taken important steps to facilitate the sharing economy. In Barcelona, Bauwens says, market speculation has caused a spike in rental prices and the cost of real estate, while 40% of the housing stock sits vacant. Together with civic organisations, the city has worked out a legal framework allowing temporary habitation.

Another success story, Bauwens continues, is Amsterdam. The Dutch capital assigned a row of office buildings right outside the canal belt to a group of co-working initiatives, leading to a 20% reduction in traffic. Similar efforts are taking place across Europe, but they remain very fragmented, he adds.

"We need oversight, and not only as a place to draw inspiration from," Bauwens says. "Cities can act as intermediaries to provide citizen-led initiatives with information on what's happening in other places."

Another way is to bring residents who share the same goals together. "Cities can also co-operate with each other, sharing knowledge or pooling resources like land or infrastructure."

At the moment, there are plenty of reasons to be pessimistic, Bauwens says. "But pessimism doesn't lead anywhere. The sharing economy is a step in the right direction – if the state can't solve the problem, why don't we do something about it ourselves?"

WEEK IN INNOVATION

New research centre to simulate waves

Mobility and public works minister Ben Weyts kicked off the construction of the new Maritime Research Centre in Ostend last week. The centre will house Flanders Hydraulics Research and departments from the universities of Leuven and Ghent, which will conduct studies and research concerning the influence of waves, tides and wind on ships and offshore constructions. The research centre will be equipped with a towing tank, to test manoeuvres using ship models, and coastal and ocean basins, which will simulate waves, currents and wind and are used to test the safety and functioning of offshore constructions, coastal defence constructions and wave energy convertors. The first projects are expected to start in 2020.

Health dangers of air pollution proven

A Hasselt University researcher has found that more cows die when there are higher amounts of ozone, nitrogen dioxide and fine dust in the air. The findings confirm those concerning the effects of air pollution on people. Environmental epidemiologist Bianca Cox examined the effects of air pollution on cows, because the animals are not subject to other causes that can harm the health of people, like smoking, unhealthy eating habits or alcohol. She could thus more accurately measure the precise effects of air pollution on mortality. "On days when there was 10 micrograms more nitrogen dioxide in the air than normal, we noticed an increase of 9.4% of the cow mortality," she said.

Rechargeable battery to provide electricity

Electricity producer Engie Electrabel is developing the most powerful rechargeable battery installation in Belgium, to be located in Drogenbos, Flemish Brabant. The lithium-ion batteries should be able to store up to six megawatts of electricity, *De Tijd* has reported. Lithium-ion batteries are used in smartphones, tablets and electric cars, but this will be the first time that electricity on the basis of this technology will be stored on such a large scale in Belgium. The battery is part of a strategy by Electrabel's French parent company Engie to provide more green energy and services and become less dependent on fossil fuels. It should be operational sometime this summer.

\ Andy Furniere

UGent researchers create simple solution to India's sanitation problem

India has a huge problem with sanitation, with the lack of toilets and poor hygiene practices costing the economy billions of dollars each year. Researchers at Ghent University (UGent) have come up with a simple technique that could help.

India's problem involves poor health and deaths caused by bacteria, viruses and other pathogens in sewage circulating in the environment. The government has a large-scale programme to build community toilets, but often there are no sewers to which they can be connected.

"So the water goes into a septic tank, and then from the septic tank it overflows and still ends up in the environment," explains Korneel Rabaey, head of UGent's department of biochemical and microbial technology. "In larger cities like Mumbai they have treatment plants, but in all the slums and villages, that's not possible."

One solution would be to treat the wastewater with chemicals, but these are expensive to make, transport and store. So Rabaey and his colleagues proposed making the chemicals on the spot.

Wastewater contains salts, and the chloride in these salts can be turned into chlorine by applying electricity. The chlorine, a disinfectant chemical, then kills any pathogens present. After mopping up any residual chlorine, the water is safe to be released.

The chemistry is simple enough, but the challenge has been to make robust units that can be mass-produced and easily installed and maintained. "We have to make it so that the guy who comes to clean the toilets can also clean the treatment system," explains Rabaey.

The electricity can come from the grid, or solar panels if necessary, although this adds to costs. At the moment the plant runs at 600 watts, roughly the equivalent of



© Belga/AFP

A public toilet block in New Delhi

10 light bulbs. "For a toilet for 100 people, that's an acceptable cost," Rabaey says.

After testing the system on a household toilet, the researchers are now working with a community toilet, combining electrochemical treatment with a natural filter of earth and pebbles that cleans the water further.

This water is currently used on

lawns around the installation, but the next step is to use it to irrigate vegetable gardens. The fact that the treatment does not remove nitrogen compounds from the water means that it is still useful as a fertiliser.

"We are not making drinking water," Rabaey notes. "We're making water safer for the environment." \ Ian Mundell

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The world at home

Flemish pupils explore Brussels to learn about diversity



Emma Portier Davis
Follow Emma on Twitter \ @EmmainBrussels

\ STUDIOGLOBO.BE

When Studio Globo tells teenagers that they will be sent out in small groups to explore the streets of Brussels with no adult supervision, the typical reaction is: “We can’t go out by ourselves, it’s dangerous. What we hear about Brussels is crime and terrorism.” And that’s exactly the view that Studio Globo wants to turn on its head. Founded in 2003 by a conglomeration of local organisations, Studio Globo aims “to bring the world to the classroom and the classroom to the world”. Through a series of programmes and activities catered to all levels of education, from pre-schoolers to university students, it hopes to prepare students for a multicultural world and teach them about the benefits of diversity. A big part of this is the Brussels Experience. Ahead of their field trip to the capital, pupils aged 16 to 18 work with their teachers on educational materials provided by Studio Globo. On the big day, they get exposed to all kinds of diversity, from a visit to an organisation working with the homeless, to a tour of a mosque or synagogue. And then they’re left on their own. In small groups, the teenagers set out to explore one of the city’s many neighbourhoods. This is no tourist trip to the Grote Markt or Manneken Pis, however; the usual destinations are Matonge (the buzzing African quarter), Kuregem (part of Anderlecht) and the Marollen, famed for its flea market. “They will ultimately get an authentic feel for Brussels and its residents,” says project co-ordinator Pieter-Jan Depijper. “These kids often don’t know Brussels at all. They come from another region, and the city seems very diverse compared to Flanders.” For students who come from tiny Flemish villages, he adds, Brussels is “the ultimate school of diversity” in terms of culture and socio-economic status. The programme dovetails with the Flemish curriculum and is supported by the government of Flanders. One of the graduation goals that can be achieved through the Studio Globo programmes, for example, is interreligious competence. “Many teachers never had this in their training, so we try to work on it and make a link to it,” explains Depijper.



© Courtesy Studio Globo

Flemish youngsters get to know Brussels in their own way as part of Studio Globo

It’s also crucial to the region’s education system. While Flanders is consistently ranked as having one of the best education systems in the world, it is also criticised for its lack of efforts in embracing diversity. Both the OECD and the European Commission have recently commented that students who lag behind in Flanders often come from a migrant background and other socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. These reports also cite low diversity among teaching staff. Jan Debonnet, a co-ordinator at Studio Globo, says that the organisation’s purpose is to go beyond the perceptions offered in the media. “We try to show the teachers and the children that there are things that are similar and things that are different.” Teachers, he continues, should also be prepared to deal with diversity. “It’s important to give youngsters a positive idea about the complex world that we live in. We want to let them know that there are others like them, who are also confronted with normal daily life, and that it’s not a world of only troubles. We want to show them the nuances.”

Other programmes aimed at younger pupils bring them together to stage a play, for example. According to Debonnet, this allows them to showcase their talents – music, dance, circus acts – outside of the classroom. “We are focusing on their less conventional skills and show teachers other ways of working with their students.” Studio Globo is also participating in the regional debate on the graduation goals for schools, offering advice on the community-oriented domains. As for the organisation’s own programmes, Debonnet is hopeful that they will address some of the concerns about diversity. “I don’t know whether we have the tools to change the whole system,” he says. “Teachers who have visited us say that they are better prepared to work in diverse settings. But it’s very long-term work.” As for the students, after a day of being thrown in to the thick of things, they come away with a different perception of their capital – not just as a city riddled with crime and a terrorist hotspot. Depijper: “Afterwards, the same kids tell us, ‘Wow, I want to come and study in Brussels.’”

Q&A

Simon Scoones is the co-ordinator of a new programme at Antwerp International School that extends the International Baccalaureate curriculum to students aged 11 to 16.

What is the International Baccalaureate and why is it unique?
The International Baccalaureate is a curriculum that runs from early years all the way through to when pupils leave for university. It is divided into three programmes: the Primary Years Programme, the Middle Years Programme and the International Baccalaureate Diploma, which is completed over the two final years of secondary school. The whole programme is a unique combination of best practices in education from around the world. The aim is to teach skills that can be carried on to university and into

the workplace. We prioritise critical thinking, student-led inquiry and the ability to draw links between subject areas.

Why is the Middle Years Programme such an important addition?
It is a natural extension of the International Baccalaureate programme. The approach is the same, and the skill sets that students develop in the Middle Years Programme is so helpful when it comes to the Diploma. For example, part of the Diploma requires students to write an extended essay. This is a pretty



rigorous piece of academic research, and there was little preparation for it in our previous curriculum.

How does the Middle Years Programme prepare students for real life?
Synthesis is key. Single subjects are just not appropriate for the real

world and neither is regurgitating knowledge. Many parts of the Middle Years Programme are interdisciplinary units in which science meets humanities. We base teaching around big concepts – systems in the rainforest, for instance – and encourage kids to reach their own conclusions by drawing knowledge from different areas.

International Baccalaureate aside, what sets AIS apart from other schools in Flanders?
Great opportunities in sports and in the arts. We also provide strong support to students with learning difficulties and to those with particular strengths in certain subject areas. Our aim is not to feed everyone the same diet, but to tailor learning to each individual. \ Interview by Sofia Christensen

WEEK IN EDUCATION

More university study programmes in English?
Ghent University (UGent) has asked the government for more autonomy in implementing English-language study programmes. Regional regulations limit the number of bachelor’s programmes that can be given in a language other than Dutch to 6%; this number rises to 35% in master’s studies. For every programme in another language, a Dutch-language equivalent has to be available somewhere in Flanders. While the University of Leuven did not agree that the problem was urgent, it did agree with UGent’s proposal to replace the obligation for a “Flemish variant” of each English-language programme by “a variant in Flanders or the Netherlands”. Education minister Hilde Crevits said she will monitor the situation.

€5 million to improve Limburg education
The Limburg social investment company LSM is investing €5 million to improve educational opportunities in Limburg. Some €1.2 million will go to each of four projects. One is the existing programme Kind en Taal (Child and Language), which helps young children improve their Dutch-language skills. Another is Ontdek Techniektalent (Discover Technical Talent), which supports teachers in stimulating an interest in Stem subjects among primary school children. The other two projects are in secondary education, mainly initiatives that concentrate on the transition to the labour market and further developing the professional education track. The remaining €250,000 will fund a new digital platform to ensure efficient co-ordination of the action plan.

Students take over sexual education
Students from three schools in Ghent and Hasselt led lessons in sexual education this week, in protest at how secondary schools in general handle the subject. The initiative was organised by Flemish secondary school student organisation VSK and Sensoa, the Flemish expertise centre for sexual health. The students at the Atheneum in Gentbrugge, the Atheneum Voskenslaan in Ghent and the Humaniora Kindsheid Jesu in Hasselt wanted to see a broader and more positive approach to sex and gender education. The teachers were present to see what changes students would like to see.

\ Andy Furniere

WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

StrEAT Spring Edition

An after-work street party and food truck festival hosted by Felix Pakhuis, the former warehouse-turned-foodie destination in Antwerp's hip Eilandje district. Entrance is free so you only pay for your food and drink. *10 March from 18.00, Godefriduskaai 30, Antwerp; free*
[\ tinyurl.com/streatantwerp](http://tinyurl.com/streatantwerp)

Garden Expo

Spring is just around the corner, so it's time to start thinking about outdoor projects. This year's expo will focus on new garden trends, with demos, gardening machines, patio furniture, an eco-friendly playground, plants and bulbs for sale, and more. *10-12 March, Kortrijk Expo, Doornikstesteenweg 216, Kortrijk; free*
[\ tuinexpo.be](http://tuinexpo.be)

Retro Day

Flemish thrift store De Kringwinkel is organising a special day for those savvy shoppers and cool cats who like a good bargain and appreciate vintage style. Locations across Flanders will show off their best retro clothes, housewares and furniture, and many shops will have extra activities planned throughout the day. *11 March, across Flanders; free*
[\ dekringwinkel.be](http://dekringwinkel.be)

Dreamcatcher

This American documentary tells the story of Brenda Myers-Powell, who went from a drug-addicted teen prostitute to a powerful advocate and ally of young sex workers. *Dreamcatcher* explores the cycle of neglect, violence and exploitation that leaves thousands of girls and women feeling that prostitution is their only option. Reservations via the website. *(In English) 13 March 19.00, Muntpunt, Munt 6, Brussels; free*
[\ muntpunt.be](http://muntpunt.be)

BXL-Walk

This guided walk explores two areas in the city centre that are experiencing rapid changes: the canal zone, a prime example of post-industrial redevelopment with big investments in housing and public spaces, and the new pedestrian zone, a source of much controversy and debate. Reservations required via the website. *(In Dutch) 14 March 14.00, meet on the steps of the Beurs, Beursplein, Brussels; €9*
[\ tinyurl.com/bxlbetween](http://tinyurl.com/bxlbetween)

The Celtic fields

Archaeologists discover ancient site in Neerpelt bigger than thought



Toon Lambrechts
 More articles by Toon \ flanderstoday.org

Some 2,800 years ago, a farmer ploughing his fields in the vicinity of present-day Neerpelt, Limburg, paused briefly to wipe the sweat from his brow. Looking over the land and the walls marking its boundaries, he followed the half-open landscape of meadows and forests, where fellow farmers tended their plots.

This complex of square-shaped fields, about 40 square metres each and separated by adobe walls, is known as the Celtic field, an agricultural system in use from the early Bronze Age until the middle ages. Today, remnants of Celtic fields – a rather misleading term because there is no specific connection with the Celts – can be found all over north-western Europe.

Flanders has its fair share of them, especially in the Kempen area in the north of Antwerp and Limburg provinces. Most were discovered with the use of aerial photography, but new research has shed light on the significance of one site in particular.

"We already knew about the possible existence of archaeological remains in the Kolisbos in Neerpelt," says Bart Vanmontfort from the University of Leuven's archaeology department. "Burial mounds containing signs of Roman settlement were discovered nearby, so we knew there was something underground. We just didn't realise its extent and importance."

To get a clear view of the site, the government of Flanders ordered a new aerial survey with the use of lasers, which resulted in much more detailed topographic data, even under forest canopy.

"You won't see anything when you walk through the forest," says Vanmontfort, "but on the new digital model, the outline of the complex is clearly visible. It turned out to be much bigger and better preserved than we expected. Based on this data, the decision has been made to grant the site protected status."

The new data has revealed that the site measures at least 200 hectares. This makes it unique



The Celtic field buried beneath the Kolisbos dates to around 800 BC

not only for Flanders, explains Erwin Meylemans of Flanders Heritage Agency. "It is a rather exceptional site because of its dimensions and how well-preserved it is. Celtic fields can be found all over northwest Europe, but such a large complex is rare."

The finding, he continues, adds to the knowledge about the settlements and burial sites in the area. "The forest has been growing over it for a very long time, helping preserve the subterranean traces. You could say that this site is like a fossilised landscape from the Iron Age."

Meylemans thinks the Celtic fields in the Kolisbos date to around 800 BC, but the use of the agricultural complex continued longer after that. "It was a very stable system," he says. "It

was probably cultivated even during Roman times. We know of at least two other Celtic fields in the Kempen, which is as a bit of a surprise to us. It shows that this region was used more intensively than we had previously assumed."

For the time being, no new research is being planned. The Flemish government has granted the site a protected status and any activity in the forest that could disturb it has to be preceded by archaeological research.

"We are working out the details to find a compromise between economic activities and conservation," says Meylemans. "But it is clear that what's buried beneath the forest has a lot more to tell us."

BITE

\ HOLYFOODMARKET.BE

Ghent's Holy Food Market brings the world to the table

Although restaurants across Flanders are quite good at catering to English-speakers with menus in multiple languages, you might never feel more at home than in Ghent's new Holy Food Market. Like you, several of the vendors in this collection of eateries come from somewhere else.

The lovely new venue – following on the heels of the similar Super Mercado in Antwerp's Groenplaats – gets its name from its unique location inside a 17th-century church. Some Gentenaars will not have even noticed the church before, as it's partially hidden behind a Neoclassical construction built on to it in the 18th century, which once served as a library.

Diners enter the market here to find chocolates and the local sweet cuberdon – both conveniently located for take-away shopping. Keep going, though, to see the

arches and vaulted ceilings of the former church, still grand despite the modern make-over. And here's where all the real food is.

Twelve eateries line the sides, while long tables and stools offer hundreds of places to sit in the centre of the space. Step up to whatever eatery you choose, buy your food and find a seat.

You'll find everything from the trendy Avo (only snacks made with avocado) and Frank & Brut (gourmet hot dogs) to the more traditional Taberna Lisboa (Portuguese food) and Yalla Yalla (Lebanese dishes).

Taberna Lisboa has the distinction of being Ghent's only Portuguese restaurant. Chef Bernardo Cotrin explains that his boss is an importer of Portuguese food but hadn't yet tried a restaurant.

"But this is a food market where a lot of different cultures are coming



© Peter Baas

together," he says, so they couldn't resist. It sells tapas from €2 (the cod pastry, a kind of croquette with fish, potato and parsley, which is to die for) to €18 for a full tapas plate, including prawns.

I hear a similar sentiment from Rinata Sizova, standing at the counter of Marussia. Although the name suggests Russian fare, they refer to it

as Eastern European.

"In the Soviet Union, so much food culture came together, and then when it broke up, the food remained," she says. "Ukraine likes to claim borscht, and I'm not going to say they're wrong – but it's eaten across the entire region."

Sizova herself is from Kazakhstan. "We don't want to separate the food culture because food brings people together, just like this market does." One business has taken up the theme of the market with gusto: Hos-T (*hostie* in Dutch is the host, or sacramental bread) serves its fresh ingredients, such as smoked salmon, fennel and cheese, atop large savoury biscuits. To wash them down, order one of two home-made iced teas – the father or the son. If that doesn't appeal, choose the bottle of jenever – referred to as the holy spirit – standing in the middle of the two. \ Lisa Bradshaw

Poor harvest, rich rewards

Upstart lambic blenders in Flanders are putting a new twist on an ancient craft



Jake Shaw

More articles by Jake \ flanderstoday.org

Bokkeryder in Hasselt is a fresh face on a traditional brewing scene, blending lambic bases with fruity new flavours – and other young blenders are following its lead.

The 2016 cherry growing season in Belgium was nothing short of a disaster, according to Raf Souvereyns. “We had a wet and stormy spring, and a lot of trees were damaged,” he says. “And the summer was so-so. There wasn’t much fruit at all.” The poor season meant Souvereyns was short of the 40,000-plus Schaarbeekse krieken – sour cherries native to the Schaarbeek district of Brussels – that he and his friends would usually hand-pick.

The 32-year-old needed those cherries for his Pinot Kriek, one of the many beers he makes at Bokkeryder, the lambic blender he founded in 2014. Without the cherries, Souvereyns was forced to develop other blends to take Pinot Kriek’s place.

And so came a series of raspberry blends, some fermented with vanilla pods, others aged in used Cognac barrels. For Souvereyns, a



© BelgianBeerGeek.be

cherry crisis meant a chance for creativity.

“In every beer I make,” he says, “I want to honour the noble character of the base lambic, but I use different techniques and different fruits. Traditional, but with a modern twist.”

Bokkeryder, based in Souvereyns’s hometown of Hasselt, is a fresh face on a brewing scene dominated by tradition. He’s only the third lambic operation to open since 1997, but his success – the user-generated website RateBeer.com named his the best new brewery in the world for 2016 – might be a harbinger of more lambic breweries to come.

That only three new lambic producers have opened in the past 20 years presents a stark contrast to the rest of the Belgian brew-



© BelgianBeerGeek.be

Raf Souvereyns of Bokkeryder is an unconventional lambic blender

ing industry. From 2009 to 2015, according to the Federation of Belgian Brewers, a new brewery opened on average every month: 72 in all.

It isn’t a surprise, however, that lambic brewery openings trail severely behind, considering the logistics involved in making it. “When you’re starting a non-lambic brewery, in some cases you can start selling your beer in four to six weeks,” says Yves Panneels, a board member of Horal, a non-profit organisation that promotes traditional lambic beer. “If you’re starting in January with a lambic brewery, you will have your first young lambic by the end of the year. And if you want to make a geuze, you have to wait three years.”

The word “lambic” might as well be a synonym for “painstaking”. No other beer style in the world requires as much time, patience and, frankly, just being in the right place at the right time.

Unlike in more traditional breweries, lambic brewers don’t intentionally ferment their wort – the sugary liquid made from steeping malted barley and other grains in warm water – with cultivated yeasts. Instead, they allow wild yeasts and bacteria native to their region to inoculate the wort and spontaneously ferment it, essentially relying on nature for the most important step of brewing – turning sugar into alcohol.

The resulting fermented beer is called lambic. It’s sour, acidic and often described as “funky”. Blending multiple vintages of lambics, usually one-, two- and three-year-old batches, creates geuze, which

has even greater complexity.

It also has protected designation of origin and can only be produced in a specific geographical area, in this case the Pajottenland region of Flemish Brabant. Even if he brews in Limburg, Souvereyns calls his product lambic because the wort comes from Pajottenland.

Lambic wort is different from most wort, in that it must contain a certain percentage of wheat. Souvereyns uses a variety of yeasts to brew his beers, many of them cultivated from Pajottenland’s wild yeasts.

Four years ago, Souvereyns started tinkering with home blending by adding fruit from his garden to lambic he bought directly from

as he’s quick to credit his mentors, several young Flemings now are following Souvereyns’ lead.

Niels Leunens, a 24-year-old salesman by day, has lived all his life in Beersel, a town that’s home to two lambic breweries (3 Fonteinen and Oud Beersel). Even so, and despite early exposure to lambic, “like a normal Belgian 16-year-old, I drank what every 16-year-old Belgian drank: Jupiler, stuff like that.”

But in the past few years, his fascination with lambic has sucked him into the home-blending hobby. He’ll buy multiple litres of lambic from various producers, age them with anything from the traditional (raspberries) to the experimental (rose petals), and bottle them

Nueten’s family has made a living from drinks for years. He’s the fifth generation to work at his family store, Drankenhandel Van Nueten in Herentals, Antwerp province, but he’s the first to actually brew.

“About two years ago, I started joking with a friend about how cool it would be to blend our own lambic,” says Van Nueten, 27. “We were both really into lambic for quite a while.”

He and his friend first tested five fruits aged on lambic bought from De Troch. The results varied.

“Kiwi turned out to be a difficult fruit,” he says. Pineapple was “tasty but lacked body”, while the grapes he used were out of season, “so quality wasn’t great”. His blueberry and raspberry blends were hits, though, and that success motivated him to grow his hobby. He’s now taking brewing classes at Alvinne brewery in Moen, West Flanders. He blends up to 30 litres at a time and has bought used wine barrels so he can expand to larger production. He even hinted at brewing his own wort – not

buying it from lambic producers – so he never has to worry about supply, though technically this product could no longer be considered lambic.

He stresses that he remains an amateur home blender, his bottles not ready for the paying public. That could change, for any other home-blender willing to take the next step. Lambic interest is at an all-time high, says Paneels. Buyers are willing to pay well beyond retail prices for the right bottles.

Home-blenders with greater aspirations can look to accomplished lambic breweries, from Cantillon to Lindemans to 3 Fonteinen, and they also can look to their peer, Souvereyns, who’s having immediate success with Bokkeryder.

“The younger generation is definitely inspired by the older generation of lambic brewers. There is a new wave coming

breweries. He got tips here and there from various professional lambic makers, including the three producers where he now gets his labmic wort: Girardin, De Troch and Lindemans (“they deserve the award more than me,” Souvereyns says of his Ratebeer.com honour). He also learned from winemaker Ghislain Houben, the founder and owner of Winery Hoenshof near Hasselt, particularly about the process of barrel aging. Fast-forward to 2017, and Souvereyns is now a renowned professional. Just

under his amateur label, Huisstek-erij Le Chat Rebelle.

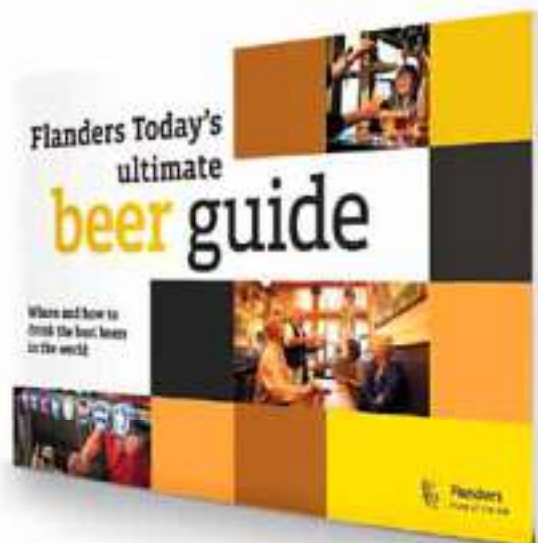
“When I started getting a little more serious and not just chucking stuff together, Raf Souvereyns was a big help to me,” Leunens says. “It’s very cool to see him grow from just being a guy who does home blends to someone the beer world is going crazy over. It’s beautiful to see. It inspires me to keep going with what I’m doing.”

While Leunens doesn’t yet have concrete plans to go professional, Tim Van Nueten just might. Van

His business remains small-scale for the time being: In Belgium, his beers are only available at In de Verzekering tegen de Grote Dorst in Lennik, recently voted the country’s best bar.

After an up-and-down 2016, Souvereyns predicts “more and better beer, hopefully” for 2017. “I think the younger Flemish generation is definitely inspired by the older generation of lambic brewers,” says Leunens. “There is a new wave coming.”

Welcome to the land of beer



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Ride 'em cowboy

Turnhout exhibition revisits legends of the Wild West



Ian Mundell

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WARANDE.BE

From Buffalo Bill to Bobbejaan Schoepen, a new exhibition at De Warande explores how ideas about the Old West arrived – and were transformed – in Belgium.

“This is the West,” says a newsman at the end of *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. “When the legend becomes fact, print the legend.”

It sounds simple enough, but when you visit the *Wilde Westen* exhibition at De Warande in Turnhout you quickly learn that legends are slippery, changing meaning as they pass from place to place, and from person to person.

The starting point for the exhibition was a meeting between artist Tom Liekens and a daughter of Bobbejaan Schoepen, the legendary Flemish singing cowboy. “Peggy Schoepen told me of a huge collection she had inherited from her father that was now in storage,” he explains. “I went to visit and was very impressed.”

But the idea of focusing simply on Bobbejaan (pictured) did not appeal. “I wanted to do a more global exhibition about the Wild West and the myths that grew from it,” says Liekens.

So he and co-curator Frank Herremann, a former director of the Antwerp Ethnographic Museum, set out to explore other collections and see where the idea would take them. “The more we found out, the more we wanted to put in the show.”

The result is an eclectic mix of social and cultural history, historic and contemporary art, and general playfulness. The first thing you see is a stuffed buffalo, the last thing a photograph of Donald Trump miming a rifle shot – just the most recent in a long line of “cowboy presidents”.

Along the way there is a mock-up of a cinema showing a montage of Western movie tropes, a pair of saloon doors to mosey through and a large diorama of toy cowboys and Indians, some of which are confronting a stuffed rattlesnake. And there is a display of Bobbejaan’s cowboy kitsch saddles and outfits.

But the Bobbejaan legacy is surprisingly broad, ranging from Native American ceramics and kachina dolls (colourful representations of spirits made by the Pueblo tribes), to rare original artwork for the *Lucky Luke* comics. He also collected contemporary Native American art, the examples here by RC Gorman and Fritz Scholder reflecting the pop-art sensibilities of the 1960s and 1970s.

The exhibition is particularly interested in how ideas about the Old West arrived in Belgium and were



transformed when they got here. One early route was through the Wild West shows that toured Europe at the turn of the centuries, with the likes of Buffalo Bill coming to Flanders with real “Indian” performers.

“They re-enacted some famous battles, so every day, twice a day, the Indians had to play out their

fair in Brussels and the colourful, imaginative drawings he produced afterwards. The artist Edgard Tytgat, a friend of the family, painted Eric in his Indian costume and may have been inspired by the boy to produce a naive Indian-pattern wallpaper.

Meanwhile, the Western Village from the Brussels Expo of 1958 was

tic toy cowboys and Indians. “A lot of clichés are pushed into that small figurine. It tells the whole myth of both cowboys and Indians, and they are so very dramatic,” he explains. “And because of all these strange, bright colours, they are almost like walking tubes of paint.” Childhood was also an inspiration for Pjeroo Roobjee, whose painting here is a memory of playing cowboys and Indians in bomb-damaged Ghent. Meanwhile, Fred Bervoets drew on a visit to the Nevada Desert for several paintings, one a vivid, violent self-portrait as a gold prospector.

Others artists in the exhibition have a political take. Sven ’t Jolle’s “Social Peace Pipe” combines peace pipe and tomahawk in one object, while Martha Colburn’s animation “Destiny Manifesto” merges Wild West paintings with images from America’s recent wars.

Then there are the enigmatic paintings by German artist Tilo Baumgaertel, featuring Annie Oakley with X-ray eyes and shamans resembling visitors from outer space. The only thing that upstages him is “Smackwater Jack” by Nadia Naveau, a vast white leatherette and polyester gunslinger who has merged with a cactus.

The title comes from Carole King, but Liekens thinks the artist also had a local inspiration. “She worked in Bobbejaanland for two summers, taking Polaroids of people dressed up like cowboys.”

“There’s not a kid in Belgium who didn’t visit Bobbejaanland

defeat, and the white man was portrayed as a hero,” says Liekens. This was a position repeated in much Western lore, although it is not the exclusive reading. In the 1890s, German novelist Karl May wrote sympathetic novels about Winnetou, blood brother to the settler Old Shatterhand.

“Karl May influenced a lot of Europeans and put the image of the noble savage into their heads,” says Liekens. “He sold his books as travel stories, but in fact he never set foot on American soil when he was writing them.”

A further twist came in the 1960s, when East German companies started to film May’s stories, casting the Indians as valiantly resisting the capitalist European colonisers.

Another way into Belgium was through the World’s Fairs, which often had Western exhibits. There are photographs of 11-year-old Eric Wansart visiting the 1910

recycled to found the Texas City in Tremelo, Flemish Brabant, one of the country’s first re-enactment communities. These communities still exist, and the exhibition commissioned photographer Diego Franssens to document participants at El Paso western village in Wuustwezel, north of Antwerp.

Growing up the 1980s, Liekens was introduced to the Wild West through toys and TV series. “There was *Zorro*, which is not really a Western, but is close enough, and cartoons and comics. I used to read *Lucky Luke* quite a lot. And of course Bobbejaan. There’s not a kid in Belgium who didn’t visit Bobbejaanland,” he says, referring to the singer’s theme park in Lichtaart, Antwerp province.

Liekens’ painting “Dusk” is a large desert scene populated with plas-

Until 14 May

De Warande
Warandestraat 42, Turnhout

WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

Volunteers wanted for Hallerbos

The Hallerbos in Flemish Brabant is looking for volunteers to keep visitors on the paths that criss-cross the forest, located in Halle, just outside Brussels in Flemish Brabant. Millions of bluebells bloom in the undergrowth of the forest every April, producing a vivid violet-blue carpet of flowers. The natural phenomenon has become a major attraction for tourists and locals alike, leading to concerns about the state of the forest. Volunteers are required for weekends and holidays from 15 April to 7 May. Interested parties should be able to speak Dutch and can get in touch by emailing groenendaal.anb@vlaanderen.be or calling 02 658 24 60.

\ hallerbos.be

Flanders is first guest of honour at Cartoon Movie

Flanders is the first-ever guest region of honour at Cartoon Movie forum, the annual event focused on animated films. Taking place this week in Bordeaux, France, the event allows movie producers to meet with potential investors, co-producers and international distributors. Cartoon Movie was launched in 1999 by Cartoon, an international non-profit based in Brussels. Flanders Audiovisual Fund will be present to promote three Flemish animated features and five co-productions. Ten producers who will be pitching their projects at the event are united under the name Flandriens of Animation. The term “Flandrien” came into use in the early 20th century to describe cyclists who faced all the challenges of a race in Flanders head on. The region is home to more than 20 animation production companies.

\ cartoon-media.com

Popular book being made into movie

A film adaptation is in the works for the best-selling book *Vele hemels boven de zevende* (Many Heavens above the Seventh) by Flemish author Griet Op de Beeck. The book, published in 2013, features five characters who all tell the same story from their own perspective. The movie’s ensemble cast includes Brit Van Hoof in her first major role as the main character, Eva, Sara De Roo (*Brasserie Romantiek, Swooni*) as her sister and Viviane De Muynck (*D’Ardennen, The Brand New Testament*) as their mother.

Star quality

Seven albums in, Antwerp pop band Star Club West remain unsung heroes



Christophe Verbiest
More articles by Christophe \ flanderstoday.org

STARCLUBWEST.BE

When you take *Nin*, the new CD by Star Club West, out of its cardboard sleeve, you find a folded sheet. It looks like a lyric sheet, but closer scrutiny shows they are liner notes. That's an extremely rare thing in the 21st century; the tradition of liner notes belongs to a bygone era and is more associated with jazz. But Star Club West are an Antwerp foursome who deal in pop songs with noisy hooks. The liner notes are written by Bert Bultinck, editor-in-chief of the Flemish weekly *Knack*. "Bert is a friend of mine. It was his idea," explains Nico Jacobs, 44, the group's frontman. "I thought it was adventurous and was really curious about how it would turn out. I get the feeling people find it refreshing. That's fine with me. I'm more than happy with refreshing."

Nin is the seventh album by Star Club West, the band Jacobs has been leading for 20 years. They are still a musicians' band after all this time, cult favourites at best. Yet these unsung heroes get better with every album and deserve a wider audience. Jacobs studied biochemistry rather than music. "My mother didn't want me to go to the Conservatory. First I had to get a 'proper' degree," he says. He got his degree, but afterwards didn't want to think about DNA or proteins anymore. He became an instructor at the Provinciaal Veiligheids Instituut in Antwerp, where he trains safety advisors. He's been doing it for 20 years. Having an activity beside the music isn't a burden for Jacobs; quite the opposite, in fact: "It's a part-time job. It has the advantage that I can



© chloeandkiwi.be
Nico Jacobs (centre, standing) and the rest of Star Club West, had they stuck with 'proper degrees'

play the music I really want without having to make compromises." He never had ambitions, he adds, to become a full-time musician. "I might have hoped for that when I was a teenager," he says. "But the most important thing for me is having a good balance in life, and to attain that I need serenity. Being able to make the music I really want without worrying about money: that, in the end, is the ambition – one that ties in with a nice life with my girlfriend and daughter." He didn't go to the Conservatory after getting his biochemistry degree, though he did study for a few years at the Jazz Studio in Antwerp. "I acquired a musical vocabulary there that I'm still using," he says. "Our early records contain some songs that have a jazz structure without being jazz at all." Star Club West are certainly

no jazz combo, and the jazz influence has almost completely disappeared. Jacobs' mother died 18 months

out his mother's possessions, he discovered some recordings of her singing with Amabile, the church choir of her hometown, Beerse. He

“Being able to make the music I really want without worrying about money: that is the ambition

ago, and he put a photo of her in her younger days on the album's cover – not for the first time. "The songs are not about her," he says. "They were already written. I was mixing and finishing the album when she died." Still, the influence of her passing is important, and the album is named after her. And there's more. While sorting

decided to include their "Teach Me Thy Way, oh Lord" as the final song on the album, with some additions. The result, in a sense, is a posthumous duet. One of the most surprising features of *Nin* is that there are a few songs

in Dutch – a first for Jacobs. This is something else that wouldn't have happened without his mother dying.

"When I was going through her stuff, I found a booklet I had given her with poems I had written when, as a teenager, I was deeply in love. There were two lyrics that I thought were rhythmically interesting and whose words I still liked. And I decided to put them to music. It just happened one day. That's all."

The way Jacobs talks about music, it's almost as if it just happens to him, rather than it being something he sets out to do. "I'm not going to say I don't have an ego, but it's my desire to let it have as little influence as possible."

Jacobs is Star Club West's songwriter and plays the majority of the instruments on the new album, but he stresses that it is a real band. He's been friends with bass player Wim Van Den Heuvel and drummer Raf De Backer for almost four decades, while guitarist Chris Smet joined the band a decade ago.

For as long as Star Club West have existed, almost 20 years, they have been rehearsing on Tuesday nights. The last 10 years have been in Smet's living room, with a combination of playing music and talking.

Jacobs: "I make the songs at home, in my laboratory. But these evenings are crucial to the band. I get a lot out of these rehearsals. Those four people on a Tuesday night: that's what Star Club West really is."

25 March

Muziek-o-Droom
Bootstraat 9, Hasselt

Klara Festival reflects on migration and exile after a turbulent year

KLARAFESTIVAL.BE

Home Sweet Home: the new edition of the Klara Festival in Brussels has a comforting title, but the past 12 months have been a turbulent time for the capital, and the festival's upcoming edition reflects this turmoil. That should come as no surprise, since referring to "relevant and topical social themes" is part of the festival's DNA. This year it focuses on migration and dislocation, exile and identity. So for two weeks, it will be looking at composers and musicians "for whom place and displacement, whether or not forced, played a crucial role". This means there's room for exiled composers like Sergei Rachmani-



© Rolf Schoellkopf

noff, who fled Russia after the Revolution of 1917, and Gustav Mahler, who called himself "thrice homeless. As a Bohemian in Austria, as an Austrian among

Germans, and as a Jew in the world". Also present at the Klara Festival is the Syrian Expat Philharmonic Orchestra (pictured), comprised

of Syrian musicians living all over Europe, having fled their country because of the civil war. It's not a coincidence they make their Belgian debut on the eve of the first commemoration of last year's terrorist attacks in Brussels and Zaventem.

Flemish performing arts icon Ivo Van Hove will present a music theatre production. He directs *The Diary of One Who Disappeared*, based on the song cycle by Czech composer Leoš Janáček about a village boy who falls desperately in love with a gypsy girl. There's more doomed love in

Casablanca, the quintessential weepie by Michael Curtiz with Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman. The Brussels Philharmonic, directed by Dirk Brossé, perform the soundtrack by the great Max Steiner, one of the innumerable émigré artists (as was Curtiz) who moved from Central Europe to Hollywood.

This is just a handful of the enticing concerts that make up this year's festival. Many of them will be broadcast live by public radio station Klara. So, Home Sweet Home can be savoured at home sweet home. \ CV

9-24 March

Across Brussels

Blueprint for the future

Blauwdruk

14-19 March Vooruit Gent
\ VOORUIT.BE

Ghent arts centre Vooruit has done some artistic and organisational soul-searching over the last few years, brought on by its application for status as one of the Flemish government's officially recognised arts institutes. It was awarded the status last year, meaning more subsidies to spend on programming. Vooruit will demonstrate its metamorphosis with a week of debates, talks and performances. But it also wants to know what you think. Blauwdruk (Blueprint) shouldn't even be called a festival, says performing arts programmer Matthieu Goeury. "It's a work week." Vooruit, he says has "changed drastically in two ways. First, there are no more directors. Vooruit is becoming a collaborative effort. Second, for each new production we will team up with one of Ghent's other arts organisations, like the Fine Arts



Museum, city theatre NTGent or performance arts centre Campo. But also relatively small ones such as Kerk and Gouvernement, which both recently lost their subsidies." While Blauwdruk is intended as a series of dress rehearsals and a relaunch of a new Vooruit,

Ghent's citizens are also in the spotlight. The public is invited to voice its opinion on what an arts institute should be able to offer. Wooden panels in the corridors of the building will ask for input on the new blueprint, while a camera will be on stand-by, giving everyone a chance to say it out loud. Whether you choose to make your voice heard or not, the week's programme offers plenty of reasons to head into the building. It all kicks off with the free multi-room performance/installation *Amusement Park: Tunnel of Thoughts* (pictured) by Flemish artist Miet Warlop – the first time she has constructed the "living sculpture" indoors – and New York's world-renowned sociologist Richard Sennet, who will tell us what cities should provide, and how poor management causes them to fail at every level.
\ Daan Bauwens

CONCERT

The Big Folk'n'Irish Night

11 March, 19.30 De Centrale, Ghent
\ DECENTRALE.BE

Following the success of last year's inaugural edition, this night of Irish music returns to Ghent. The evening is hosted by Flemish-Irish folk singer Daithi Rua and stars two of Flanders' finest Celtic traditional bands. Scottish singer Helen Flaherty may be most familiar as the voice of renowned ensemble Shantalla, but she appears here with a new group. The Antwerp-based Helen Flaherty Band perform Highland folk music with rich four-part vocal harmonies. Dendermonde's Roots share the stage with Flaherty. Formed around the father-daughter team of Erwin and Laure Sabbe, the eight-piece ensemble interpret traditional songs and originals in the same style. \ Georgio Valentino



FILM

Robert Mitchum cycle

Until 29 May Cinematek, Brussels
\ CINEMATEK.BE

Brussels celebrates the versatility one of mid-century Hollywood's biggest stars with a three-month retrospective. See Robert Mitchum from his breakthrough in the 1940s through his 1950s and '60s blockbusters and into the sunset of his acting days. Edward Dmytryk's 1946 film *Till the End of Time* follows a group of return-

ing soldiers as they cope with the physical and emotional wounds of the Second World War. Vincente Minnelli's film noir *Undercurrent*, released the same year, casts Mitchum as the sensitive man in a sinister love triangle. In Charles Laughton's *The Night of the Hunter* (1955, pictured), he's the one who's sinister – and how. \ GV



EVENT

Museum Night Fever

11 March, 19.00 Across Brussels
\ MUSEUMNIGHTFEVER.BE

The 10th edition of Brussels' multi-disciplinary arts festival boasts dozens of events in 23 of the capital's top museums. Each institution is given carte blanche to invite local artists to supplement their regular offerings for a late night of cultural indulgence. Visitors are whisked from venue to venue by a courtesy shuttle. Highlights include International LASSAAD Theatre School's interpretative performance of dinosaur life at the Museum of Natural Sciences and Flemish gonzo-rock band Captain Cheesebeard's hirsute tribute to Frank Zappa at the Royal Museum of the Army. The main programme wraps at 1.00 and is followed by an after-party. \ GV



FILM + CONCERT

Dementia/Daughter Of Horror

9-31 March Across Flanders
\ NORDMANNMUSIC.COM

The instrumentals of Ghent jazz/rock foursome Nordmann have been labelled expressive, noirish and suggestive. So no one was really surprised when they were asked to perform a live film score at new music den De Bijloke last year. Director John Parker's 1955 B movie *Dementia/Daughter Of Horror* follows a young woman on

a dark night in the city. Depicted as a dream, or rather a nightmare, of madness and paranoia, all the film's events – no matter how strange or grotesque – seem to suit the band just fine. A groovy but nervous rhythm section features jagged guitars and a sinister saxophone. \ Tom Peeters



© Leon De Backer

CONCERT

Brussels

Jools Holland and his Rhythm & Blues Orchestra: Former Squeeze keyboardist and current BBC TV host ends his European tour with a bang in Brussels. *18 March 20.00, Ancienne Belgique, Anspachlaan 110*
\ abconcerts.be

CLASSICAL

Antwerp

Rachel Podger and Kristian Bezuidenhout: British violinist Podger performs Mozart and Beethoven violin sonatas, accompanied by young but internationally celebrated Australian pianist Bezuidenhout. *10 March 21.00, Amuz, Kammenstraat 81*
\ amuz.be

DANCE

GET TICKETS NOW

Antwerp & Ghent

Royal Ballet of Flanders: East: World premiere of highly anticipated triptych of contemporary dance created by English-Bengali Akram Khan, the Israeli Ohad Naharin and the Flemish-Moroccan Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. All three reflect on cross-cultural creation. *18 March to 19 April, Opera Antwerp, Frankrijklei 1, and Opera Gent, Schouwburgstraat 3*
\ operaballet.be

THEATRE

Across Flanders

Lazarus: Wat is drinken? (What is Drinking?): Contemporary Flemish theatre company Lazarus takes on debauched American author Charles Bukowski in this production, based on the latter's final novel *Pulp*. Premieres in Willebroek before touring across Flanders. *8-19 March*
\ tarsenaal.be

VISUAL ARTS

Antwerp

Buddha & Mind: Exhibition of ancient Tibetan art that promotes mindfulness, meditation and overall spiritual wellbeing. Its centrepiece, the Mandala of Sarvavid-Vairocana, was created over 300 years ago. *Until 19 March, MAS, Hanzestedenplaats 1*
\ mas.be

FAMILY

Tongeren

Theater Artemis: Oorlog: Dutch youth theatre company, led by Jetse Batelaans, brings its age-appropriate production on the perils of war to Flanders for one matinee only. (*In Dutch, ages 6+*). *12 March 15.00, De Velinx, Dijk 111*
\ develinx.be

Talking Dutch

Get a move on



Derek Blyth
More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

You might have seen those puzzling red signs that have gone up in Antwerp offices. *Vermijd gênante stiltes in de lift* – Avoid embarrassing silences in the lift. *Neem de trap* – Take the stairs. Or, even more confusing – *De trap zit weer helemaal in de lift* – Literally, the stairs are in the lift. But playing on the Dutch phrase *in de lift*, meaning on the rise. It's all part of a campaign by Antwerp city council to persuade locals to adopt a healthier lifestyle. *De stad Antwerpen gaat dit jaar Antwerpenaars aanmoedigen* – The city of Antwerp is setting out this year to encourage Antwerp residents *om meer te bewegen* – to move more. The city council thinks that people in Flanders are sitting around too much – *60% van de Vlamingen beweegt te weinig* – 60% of Flemish people don't move enough *en zit zes tot acht uur per dag* – and spend six to eight hours a day sitting down. So signs are appearing next to lifts to encourage people to take the stairs. *Elke maandag is Liftloze Maandag* – Every Monday is Lift-Free Monday, the posters tell you. But don't worry. They aren't going to tell you to run a marathon. *Bewegen is niet hetzelfde als sporten* – Moving isn't the same as doing sport, insists Antwerp councillor for sport Ludo Van Campenhout. *Bewegen hoeft niet noodzakelijk intensief te zijn* – moving doesn't necessarily have to be intensive, *of veel moeite te kosten* – or to involve a lot of effort. It's actually quite simple, he says. *Het gaat bijvoorbeeld om fietsen naar het werk* – It means, for example, riding your bike to work *of stappen naar de bakker* – or walking to the baker. And it doesn't need to take a lot of time. *Het vraagt geen grote aanpassingen* – You don't have to make big



© Courtesy Stad Antwerpen

changes *om gezond en actief te zijn* – to be healthy and active. *Dagelijks drie keer tien minuten matig intensief bewegen* – Three 10-minute sessions of moderately intensive movement every day, *of 10.000 stappen zetten* – or clocking up 10,000 steps *is al voldoende* – is all it takes. The city is already doing its bit to get people moving more. *Om de trap aan het metrostation van de Groenplaats aantrekkelijker te maken* – To make the stairs at Groenplaats metro station more attractive, *is deze aangekleed met slogans* – they have been decorated with slogans. *Passanten die de roltrap links laten liggen* – So people who choose to avoid the escalator *en voor het alternatief kiezen* – and go for the alternative *worden hiermee gesteund en aangemoedigd* – receive support and encouragement. And if you still aren't convinced, there are other uplifting messages stuck on lift doors. *Op een trap moet je nooit wachten* – You never have to wait for the stairs. And finally – *Met de trap was je er al geweest* – If you'd taken the stairs, you'd be there already.

PHOTO OF THE WEEK



© Yves Hermans/Reuters

SAY CHEESE A punter at this weekend's Made in Asia event at Brussels Expo, featuring karaoke, cosplay contests, video games and film screenings

VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY

f In response to: *Upstart lambic blender puts new twist on ancient craft*
Julie Van Den Bergh: Putting this on my bucket list!

f In response to: *Stay of execution: Marks & Spencer stays open until September*
Kneels Saddler: Give it a few years and they'll reopen somewhere else in the city.

f In response to: *Volunteers wanted to guide visitors through Hallerbos*
Jhem Aoypag: I hope many will volunteer because the last time I went there, there were a lot of visitors who didn't care as long as they had good selfies or photos.

t **Tom lagast @TomLagast**
Working on pics for a campaign for the city of Ghent

t **Olu Yomi Ososanya @oludascibe**
What do I know about diamonds? Don't they come from Antwerp?

t **Rob Ruijgh @RobRuijgh**
Just woke up in Nieuwpoort. Now preparing to race in Dwars door West Vlaanderen Johan Museeuw Classic

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THE LAST WORD

Feline foodies

"A dog or cat is increasingly seen as a fully fledged member of the family, and so we cook for them." More and more pet owners are preparing special meals for their pets, according to Jaak Pijpen, editor of *Woef* magazine

Night train

"It's almost as if NMBS and De Lijn see passengers as cultural barbarians – people who rarely go to the theatre or a concert. They are a real commuting machine, but there's little attention paid to recreational travel." Mobility expert Kris Peeters (not the federal minister) explains why municipalities in the Westhoek, around Oudenaarde and in the Kempen are poorly served by public transport

Coming clean

"The image of soap actors is changing. Now you see people who used to look down their noses coming cap in hand hoping for work." Roel Vanderstukken, one of the stars of Flemish soap *Familie*, is also featured in *Beau Séjour*, the new 10-part series that just concluded on Eén.

Parental police

"Parents are behaving more like consumers. They want value for their money and demand to know if their son or daughter is attending classes." Academics like Hans Van Crombrugge of the University of Leuven are noticing a growth in the number of parents intervening in university and college matters

