# FLANDERSTODAY

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# IT'S A SUNSHINE DAY

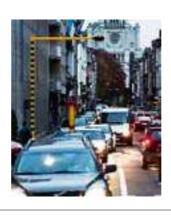
Flanders now has an online tool that tells you if solar panels are right for your home, based on precise measurements of daily rays

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Ghent's new mobility plan rolls out next week, but not without its detractors — and the threat of a referendum

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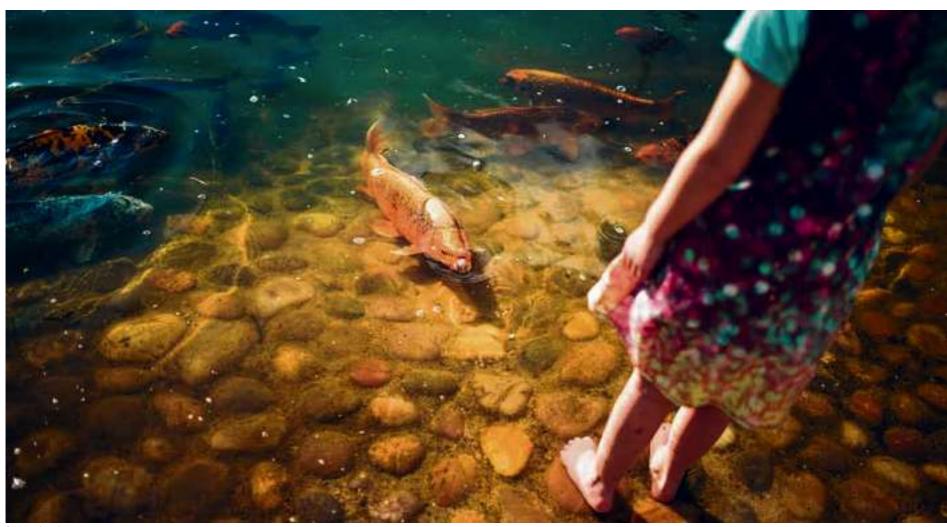


# THE BEAUTY OF BONES

A natural history museum in Koksijde is a testament to the resilience of both bones and the people who put them back together

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# Zen in the city

### Japanese Garden marks 25 years of taking root in Hasselt



Diana Goodwin

Follow Diana on Twitter \ @basedinbelgium

Opened in 1992, the garden celebrates Hasselt's cultural ties with Japan, and the whole city is taking part in the year-long birthday festivities.

Then people in Flanders think of Hasselt, the Japanese Garden is one of the first things that springs to mind. For 25 years, the garden has been a unique attraction in the Limburg capital, and now the city is celebrating its anniversary with a year-long programme of Japan-themed events.

Most of the celebrations are taking place in the garden itself, but other cultural institutions will also partake in the Yokoso Festival, with special exhibitions and activities throughout the year.

"It's actually the first time that so many partners have joined around one subject in Hasselt, and that's very special," says Sara Davidson, city co-ordinator for the garden. "The Japanese Garden is for many people the symbol of Hasselt, and it's quite close to their heart. That's why so many people want to take part."

It's the largest Japanese garden in Europe, covering 2.5 hectares in the northeast of the city. It opened on 20 November 1992, a gift from Hasselt's sister-city of Itami, Japan.

The sister-city partnership dates back to 1985, but in the beginning it consisted mostly of student exchanges and delegations of prominent citizens. Then, according to Davidson, the city leaders realised that they needed to broaden the scope of their relationship.

"They thought that the partnership was too focused on the elites and should be more for the people," she says. "And they decided to exchange cultural gifts."

In 1991, Hasselt gave Itami a carillon, the musical instrument made up of bells found in towers across Flanders and symbolising the independence of Flemish cities. Itami decided that their gift would be a traditional Japanese garden.

The city sent a landscape architect named Inoue Takayuki to Hasselt to choose a location and design the garden, but he wasn't able to find a suitable spot inside the old city centre. Instead, he settled on a large field between the inner and outer ring roads.

Takayuki's garden was much larger than what the original budget could cover, so in addition to the funds provided by Itami, money was raised from both Flemish and Japanese companies and augmented by the European Fund for Regional Development.

The garden took a year and a half to build, with Japanese craftspeople traveling to Hasselt to complete the bulk of the work. The workers lived in the nearby firehouse for six months. The traditional ceremonial house and tea house in the centre of the garden were constructed on-site with materials shipped from Japan.

The garden is laid out according to the principles of *Sakuteiki* – an 11th-century manual of landscape design. Every element in a Japanese garden has a symbolic meaning and is carefully arranged in relation to the other features. The best way to appreciate the garden is with a guided tour, offered every Sunday afternoon.

This year's celebration marks not just the garden's first quarter-century, but its maturation. It's only now, in fact, that

# Road deaths at historic low

### Traffic fatalities and injuries on Flanders' roads continue to decrease



he number of deaths caused by traffic accidents in Belgium fell in 2016 to 640, a drop of 13% compared to 2015, the Institute for Road Safety (BIVV) has announced. In Flanders, the number dropped by 15%. The figures are historic

In Flanders, home to 60% of the population, 320 people died in road accidents last year, exactly half of the national total. That was down from 378 in 2015. Limburg was responsible for the sharpest drop.

The 640 total includes victims who died up to 30 days after the accident; 540 of the victims died at the scene. The figures confirm a decade-long trend: Until some 10 years ago, the totals were about 1,000.

"The speed cameras have created a shift in thinking," said Flemish mobility minister Ben Weyts, "namely that we should always keep to the speed limit on the motorways and not only where speed monitoring has been announced."

The number of accidents with injuries and the number of injured people also both decreased slightly, by 0.5% and 1.4% respectively nationwide. The Brussels-Capital Region had a slight increase in both categories. The number of accidents involving cyclists in Flanders was up by 2.2%, while in Brussels the increase was 19.2%. A large part of the increase involved cycling seniors, the

"For many types of users, our roads have never been as safe as they were last year," BIVV said in a statement. "Compared to France, Germany and the Netherlands, Belgium saw the most positive evolution in the number of accidents involving injuries and the number of injured people."

### Triumphant Van Avermaet eyes success at Tour of Flanders

Greg Van Avermaet is the firm favourite of the Ronde van Vlaanderen, or Tour of Flanders, road race on Sunday, after winning the Gent-Wevelgem and E3 Harelbeke races last weekend.

The Rio Olympics road race champion admitted this much after last Sunday's victory at Gent-Wevelgem. "I can no longer say that I'm not the Tour of Flanders' favourite," he said. "At the beginning of the season, I said that Flanders is my biggest goal, and that still has to happen."

The 31-year-old Van Avermaet, who races for BMC Racing, beat fellow Fleming Jens Keukeleire in a sprint finish to take the 249-kilometre race, with world champion Peter Sagan of Slovakia coming in third.

On Friday, Van Avermaet took the 206km E3 Harelbeke cobbled classic in a "poker game" - he was part of a threeman breakaway that got clear 35km from the line to contest a sprint finish, edging out compatriots Philippe Gilbert and Oliver Naesen.

After years of starting in Bruges, next weekend's Tour of Flanders will start in Antwerp, bringing back the famously gruelling Geraardsbergen Wall climb. The 260km race has 18 official hellingen - the short, sharp, and often cobbled climbs that are emblematic of the second "monument" of the season.

\ Leo Cendrowicz Greg Van Avermaet crosses the finish line to win the Gent-Wevelgem cycle race



### Antwerp police arrest erratic driver with weapons in car

Police in Antwerp arrested a man last week driving a car down the city's main shopping street, Meir, narrowly missing pedestrians. The man, Mohammed R, was later charged with an attempt to carry out a

Meir is a pedestrian street, but suppliers are allowed to make deliveries to shops before 11.00. That was when R raced his car down the street. Witnesses said he passed at high speed, before being flagged down by soldiers on foot patrol. As they approached, he took off again, to be stopped by police 1.5km away on the

The man, a French national, was found to be heavily under the influence of alcohol. Items of military clothing were found in the car, together with a shotgun and several large knives.

He is known to French police for crimes involving drugs and the possession of illegal weapons, but has shown no extremist tendencies. The prosecutor's office has not issued a comment. \ AH

### Anniversary of terrorist attacks marked by memorials

The one-year anniversary last week of the terrorist attacks at Brussels Airport and the Maalbeek metro station was marked by remembrance ceremonies, moments of silence and even a moment of loud noise. Ceremonies attended by authorities and victims' families took place at the two locations, and public gatherings were held in Brussels city centre and Molenbeek.

The suicide bombings at Brussels Airport and Maalbeek metro station on 22 March 2016 killed 32 people and injured more than

Two minutes of silence was held at the airport at 7.58, the moment that two bombers detonated their explosives. The same

was done at Maalbeek metro station in Brussels' EU district at 9.11, the moment that another bomber blew himself up.

At both locations, the king and queen were present to accompany families of the victims, emergency service staff, airport and metro staff and politicians. Both the injured and family members of the dead gave testimonies about the effect the event had on their lives.

Drivers of metros, trams and buses in Brussels brought all vehicles to a halt at 9.11 for a minute of noise, as opposed to silence. As they honked their horns, passengers were encouraged to applaud and make noise as a sign of resistance to the intimidation of terrorism.

At the same moment, Brussels City councillors and staff gathered on Grote Markt to observe a minute's silence. Elsewhere, advertising company Clear Channel programmed its roadside ad panels not to show commercial advertising for the whole day. In Bozar, choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker led some 100 people in a group dance referred to as a "connection ritual".

At 16.00, several hundred people gathered on Beursplein in Brussels (pictured), which was home to a spontaneous memorial following the attacks where people left thousands of flowers, notes and candles.



An organised event featured speakers and music by schoolchildren. Across the canal in Molenbeek, a group of some 400 children sang songs of peace. \ AH

loans of books and other media in 2016 by Brussels public library Muntpunt, according to the annual





net loss for Brussels Airport as a result of the terrorist bombing last year, CEO Arnaud Feist said. The cost of the damage was €90 million, of which the airport's insurers reimbursed €50 million



of residents in Flanders would like to see a deposit on beverage cans and bottles, according to a poll by Test-Aankoop, in order to reduce the number of them thrown away as litter



4.4 million

tonnes of potatoes and related products sold in 2015 in Belgium, industry federation Belgapom said. The biggest growth, of 14.3%, was in frozen fries, an industry based mainly in West Flanders

€676,000



collected by the charity consortium 12-12 to fight hunger in Africa, during what has been described as the worst famine since the end of the Second World War, with 20 million people at risk

#### **WEEK IN BRIEF**

More than 20,000 people have expressed an interest in attending a march to **protest the arrival of US president Donald**Trump in Brussels on 24 May. A march, organised by four Ghent students, will probably start at North Station, although more details will be released closer to the date.

\ tinyurl.com/trumpnotwelcome

Proximus has begun rolling out its glass-fibre internet to users in Ghent's Sint-Pieters neighbourhood, the company said. Proximus is also testing the new network - which promises internet speeds many times higher than the existing broadband - in Antwerp, Charleroi and Namur. Over the next 10 years, the company intends to have more than half of all homes and 85% of businesses supplied by glassfibre. It announced a €3 billion investment in the technology last week.

Regional planning agency Ruimte Vlaanderen has issued an opinion against the planned new national football stadium. The opinion is binding on the municipality of Grimbergen, which abuts the Heizel in Brussels, when it considers an application for a building permit. The agency once again raised the matter of a right of way that is not included in the plans, as well as ruling that developers Ghelamco had not sufficiently taken account of problems relating to mobility.

Belgium has dropped four places to 17th in the **rankings of the Tobacco Control Scale** (TCS), which rates the anti-smoking policies of 35 European countries. The scale is based on points for pricing, campaign budgets, smoking bans and aid to smokers wanting to quit. Belgium achieved only 49 points out of a possible 100. Apart from the ban on smoking in bars, TCS said, no progress has been made since 2006.

The Brussels-Capital Region is working on changes to the law on burials, Bruzz reports. At present, burials may only take place using a traditional wooden coffin; under the new rules it will be possible to be buried in a cardboard casket or even wrapped in a shroud - methods considered more ecologically friendly. A shroud burial is also in keeping with Muslim tradition, which causes many families to bury their loved ones in their countries of origin instead of in Belgium. The rule on coffins was abandoned in Flanders in 2004.

Belgium will see the opening of "30 to 40" **branches of Burger King** within the next few years, with the first one opening this summer, according to Kevin Derycke, CEO of Burger Brands Belgium. The outlets will all be new: Initial reports that Burger King would take over Quick outlets are not true, Derycke said. A few Quick branches may be converted, he said, but overall the brand will remain.

Unions and management at Delhaize have come to an agreement over a restructuring plan involving shop closures and staffing. The dispute led to **spontaneous strikes** in a number of supermarkets, mainly in the Brussels area, last weekend. The agreement, the details of which were not announced, is being put to union members.

River pilots in Antwerp have cancelled a work-to-rule after an agreement with Flemish mobility minister Ben Weyts on the question of cutting waiting times for ships entering and leaving the port. A proposal to reduce delays – crucial to Antwerp's ability to compete with Rotterdam and other major ports – included an amendment allowing sea pilots to work on the Scheldt, but that has now been scrapped – at least until a re-evaluation in 2019.

The federal police did not call army bomb disposal squad **Dovo** to the scene of the bombing at Brussels Airport in March 2016, and the squad simply showed up on the site of their own accord. According to the head of the agency, other emergency services were rapidly in attendance at the scene, but Dovo were only tipped off when they started to receive text messages about an explosion. As it turned out, one of the three suitcase bombs was not detonated and had to be dismantled by Dovo.

Auditors KPMG will not have to pay damages to the **creditors of Lernout & Hauspie**, the West Flanders software company that went bankrupt 15 years ago, resulting in fraud convictions for both founders. In the civil case, more than 15,000 people filed for damages, and since the founders are broke, then turned to KPMG for payment, alleging negligence. But the court of appeal in Ghent said KPMG did not have to pay.

The court of first instance in Brussels has refused an interim interdict for Botanique and Sportpaleis in the long-running dispute over the management of the Koninklijk Circus concert venue in Brussels. Botanique used to manage the venue, but Brussels-City has awarded the new management contract to Brussels Expo. Botanique teamed up with Antwerp's Sportpaleis to contest the award as a conflict of interest, as Brussels Expo chair Philippe Close is also a city councillor. The court does not agree.

Brussels is a candidate for the **new location of the European Medicines Agency** (EMA) head-quarters when the UK leaves the European Union, according to the federal government. The EMA is currently based in London but will have to move house when the UK is no longer a member state.

\ ema.europa.eu

#### **FACE OF FLANDERS**



### Sergio Herman

Sergio Herman was born straight into his destiny: The restaurant Oud Sluis, just over the border in Zeeland, the Netherlands. The restaurant had previously been his grandfather's barber shoptea house-general store, and his parents had turned it into one of the best-rated mussels restaurants in the Benelux.

After Herman finished his studies at the hotel school Ter Groene Poort in Bruges, he returned to the family kitchen and gradually turned it in a more gastronomic direction. It was a move that would pay off exceedingly well.

He was awarded one Michelin star in 1995, another in 1999 and the third in 2005. He was twice named chef of the year by Gault-Millau, and in 2010 became the only chef ever to be rated 20/20 by the guide. The list of awards and accolades goes on and on.

In 2010, he decided to branch out, opening a more accessible restaurant on the seafront at Cadzand, just up the road from Sluis. In 2013, came the shock announcement: Despite being as popular as ever, Oud Sluis would close at the end of the year.

It has now been taken over by brother Michel as De Eetboetiek, going back to its roots with a combo eatery and shop featuring stylish kitchen and home decor. Herman, meanwhile, opened a chain of gourmet *frietkots*, including one in Antwerp. And he opened The Jane there, together with his former sous-chef Nick Bril. They gained their first Michelin star within eight months, and the second the year after that.

By that time Herman, 46, had become a major celebrity in Flanders because of his role on the juries of the *De Beste Hobbykok van Vlaanderen* and *Mijn Popuprestaurant!*, the fourth season of which is currently airing.

In that show, his approach is gruff and direct, backed up with a serious amount of know-how. Contestants struggling to open stylish pop-up restaurant stare plaintively from the kitchen to see the look on Herman's face as he tastes their dishes. It's hard to see if he's happy, but it's easy to see if he's not.

His appearance on the show was interrupted earlier this month by a sudden tragedy: He and his wife had lost their baby just shortly before he was due to be born. The couple have two children, and Herman has another two from a previous relationship.

He's back now on *Mijn Pop-up*, a little more personable than before. \ Alan Hope

### **FLANDERS**TODAY



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OFFSIDE
Naming a new city

The thought likely occurs from time to time when travelling the roads of Flanders just how some of those places got their names. Things like Erps-Kwerps or Houthalen-Helchteren. Last week gave us some inkling of how it happened.

Two Limburg municipalities, Opglabbeek (*pictured*) and Meeuwen-Gruitrode, have decided to merge; sometimes neighbouring small towns merge to creat one municipal authority, saving money. But what will the new municipality be called?

Opglabbeek-Meeuwen-Gruitrode is a bit of a mouthful, authorities wisely thought. So residents of the two towns were asked for suggestions, and 869 were sent in. When duplicates were removed, 547 were left over. A jury of 46 residents whittled that huge number down to only four, and here they are: Oudsbergen, Donderslag, Oudsberg and Broekstede. You get the feeling someone is having a laugh with Donderslag, which



© Sonuwe/Wikimedia

means "thunderclap", but apparently it's an ancient place name with local associations.

Now residents get to vote on their brand new name. Anyone aged 12 and older who is legally resident in one of the towns can vote, either in person at the town halls and libraries, or online. Voting is open until 9 May. \ AH

#### **5TH COLUMN**

#### The Ghent experiment

Ghent has always held a special place in Flanders' heart. For decades, it has been its most progressive city, with a wilful - bordering on anarchist - population. Politically, this resulted in an absolute majority for a socialist-green cartel, led by the popular folksy mayor Daniël Termont. Much has changed in recent months, though, after news broke of extremely high remunerations some city councillors have received from intercommunals and related companies. The revelations led councillor Tom Balthazar, set to succeed Termont, to step down. (The mayor's own reputation had already been tainted by reports of close ties with the management of a failed private bank.)

The opposition also got caught up in this crisis, as the controversy acted like a boomerang for N-VA's Siegfried Bracke, the federal parliament speaker who had stirred up the fire in Ghent. After it was revealed that he, too, was generously paid as an advisor to Telenet, he stepped down as list leader in the city. He has been succeeded by Elke Sleurs, who gave up her portfolio as secretary of state. CD&V, also in opposition in Ghent, opted for Mieke Van Hecke as list leader. Van Hecke is a heavyweight whose CV includes being an MP and secretary-general for the influential Catholic education network. At the age of 70, however, her appointment seems one out of necessity rather than ambition.

The only clear winners from the Ghent imbroglio seemed to be the greens, who, unscathed, have strengthened their position next to the socialists. Groen's big test starts next week, with the implementation of a farreaching new mobility plan, spearheaded by mobility councillor Filip Watteeuw.

The plan makes it impossible for cars to cut across the city centre, which Groen hopes will improve traffic congestion and reduce fine particulates. Radical mobility changes are nothing new to Ghent, which banned cars from the tourist and shopping centres years ago.

Still, there is plenty of opposition to the new plan. A petition to hold a referendum about it received 30,000 signatures – more than needed for a referendum – in no time.

Whatever the outcome, the face of Ghent will have changed drastically by the end of this year, making the 2018 local elections something to look forward to with even greater interest.

\ Anja Otte

# Undercover applicants could uncover job discrimination

### Minister wants decoy applicants to test employers' hiring practices



Hederal labour minister Kris Peeters (CD&V) has reportedly completed a proposal for a bill that would see "mystery calls" made to tackle discrimination in the jobs market. Mystery calls involve inspectors posing as job applicants from groups who are regularly discriminated against.

Such groups include people with an immigration background, the disabled and over-50s. When told the vacancy has already been filled, another inspector would then repeats the process to see if they get a different response.

At the moment, labour inspectors are obliged to identify themselves, which makes such undercover work impossible. Peeters' bill would allow an exception to that rule.



"Mystery calls offer an extra instrument in the fight against discrimination in the labour market," said Peeters (*pictured*). "Inspectors will only use the process following a complaint or where there is suspicion of discrimination."

Both N-VA and Open VLD have expressed opposition to the introduction of mystery calls, in favour of a system of self-regulation of the sectors. Only if that proves to be ineffective should the government resort to mystery calls, they have said.

"Only the temping and service cheques sectors currently have self-regulation policies," according to Vincent Van Quickenborne of Open VLD. "We will be studying the proposed bill, but at first glance it looks as though Peeters is bringing in a parallel system of self-regulation and mystery calls." That, he said, is not in keeping with the resolution agreed to by the majority parties in 2015.

### Development minister suggests embargo on Saudi arms sales

Flanders does not export arms to Saudi Arabia and is therefore not interested in an arms embargo to the country, according to ministerpresident Geert Bourgeois (N-VA), responsible for foreign affairs in the Flemish government. Bourgeois was reacting to calls for an embargo by federal minister for development co-operation Alexander De Croo (Open VLD).

Speaking on VRT's weekend politics programme *De zevende dag*, De Croo called for an embargo on arms exports to Saudi Arabia on humanitarian grounds because of the country's involvement in supporting a civil war in Yemen.

supporting a civil war in Yemen. Yemen is one of the countries affected by the current famine crisis, the subject of a fundraising campaign by the Belgian NGO consortium 12-12. "You can't simultaneously try to save lives and export weapons," said De Croo. Arms exports are a regional responsibility, De Croo said, making it impossible for him to take unilateral action. He issued a plea to the regions to stop arms sales. Wallonia, for example, sends 60% of all arms exports to Saudi Arabia. "Flanders exports no weapons to Saudi Arabia," a spokesperson for Bourgeois said. "The problem is therefore not one that concerns the Flemish side, so there is no need to speak of 'the regions'." An embargo would only make sense, the spokesperson said, if applied at a European level.

Last September, Flanders approved the export of a shipment of weapons worth €179,300 to Saudi Arabia, but the spokesperson stressed these were parts intended for civilian use, including rifle sights.

SP.A pointed out that De Croo's party voted against a proposed embargo against Saudi Arabia last year, when the hunger situation in Yemen was already serious. Socialist member of the federal parliament Tine Soens said that she supports the call for an embargo and would be introducing an alternative bill at a later date, which she hoped Open VLD would now support.

# Flanders approves amendments

In related news, the government of Flanders approved amendments to the 2012 law on arms exports, which regulates the import, export and transfer of arms and military equipment. "The proposed changes don't suggest a fundamental modification, rather a correction of certain substantive legal gaps and some ineffective practices," the government said.

The main change concerns the transit of arms: weapons and military equipment transported through Flanders but not originating here. The change to the law makes transit obligations from EU member states simpler, reducing administrative obligations without sacrificing control.

The new Arms Trade Act also becomes more transparent, improving reporting to the Flemish parliament. It retains the possibility for the Flemish government to adopt its own restrictive measures when it considers it necessary, stopping the export of all arms and military equipment to a country for a limited period.

"This way, the government can act when an arms embargo on the level of the UN or the EU appears to be justified but is unlikely for political reasons," a government spokesperson said. The draft bill will now go to the Flemish parliament for approval. \ AH

# Epileptics not finding way to treatment centres, says MP

Federal MP Yoleen Van Camp (N-VA) has submitted a proposal for policy changes to improve the care for people with epilepsy. Many patients seem to have trouble making their way to specialised centres, she said.

About 60,000 people in Belgium have epilepsy, according to Van Camp, who is a medical doctor. She said that the neurological disorder leads to stigmatisation, limited social activity, anxiety, learning deficits and exclusion from the labour market.

She wants an improved system of registration for epileptics and a record of interventions and success rates. Early treatment is crucial, she said, as it influences levels of success at school and on the jobs market.

In one in three cases, medication used to help prevent seizures – which range from uncontrollable jerking of the limbs to unconsciousness – provides little to no relief. In that case, patients can consult specialised departments in UZ Leuven or UZ Gent, or in Saint-Luc or Erasmus in Brussels.



© Pujanak/Wikimedia

# Sunshine Map shows if solar panels will suit your home

Flemish energy minister Bart Tommelein has launched the new Zonnekaart, or Sunshine Map, which helps homeowners decide whether and to what extent they should equip their property with solar panels. The website crashed hours after going online last week because of the level of demand.

The Zonnekaart was developed by the Flemish Energy Agency (VEA) and is based on measurements taken during two years of flights over the region using laser recording devices. The flights allowed VEA to gather precise measurements of 2.5 million buildings in the region, with data including roof area, orientation, inclination and whether the building was overshadowed by other buildings or by trees.

That information was then coupled with details of exposure to sunlight from the Royal Meteorological Institute, allowing the agency to estimate the amount of sunlight received for any area of  $25 \times 25$  centimetres.

"We want to convince as many people and organisations as possible, including companies, associations, schools and government departments, to invest in solar energy," Tommelein said. "The aim is for the map, together with other elements of the solar plan, to help us make the switch to renewable energy faster, and help us meet our European targets." \ AH

# Zen in the city

## Hasselt throws year-long celebration of Japanese Garden's silver jubilee

VISITHASSELT.BE/EN/JAPANESE-GARDEN-1

the vision of the designer can truly be appreciated. "A garden needs 25 years to grow," explains Davidson. "A lot of people came here in 1992 or 1993 and the trees were only this high," she adds, holding her hand waist-high above the ground. "People were a bit disappointed because they thought, 'Ah, a Japanese garden', and there was nothing to see yet."

This week, the mature cherry trees are just starting to bloom, and the garden will be at its most spectacular over the coming several

Hanami, or the Cherry Blossom Festival, is a popular spring tradition at the garden, celebrating the annual bloom. In Japan, people celebrate by going out into the country and picnicking under the

This year, the Japanese Garden will host food trucks so that visitors can also enjoy eating and relaxing among the blossoms, in addition to the other activities and entertainment.

The Cherry Blossom Festival is one of many annual events at the garden that will receive an upgrade this year with an expanded programme. Visitors who have attended these events in the past including the Manga and Cosplay Festival, Koinobori, the childrenoriented Tanabata, or Wish Festival, and Obon Matsuri, or the summer nocturne - can expect to find new additions to the usual activities.

There are also new events planned for the anniversary year. On Japanese Dog-Walking Day, for instance, owners of dogs from 10 Japanese breeds can register to bring their pets to the garden for one day; usually dogs are not allowed. "There are already more than 320 Japanese dogs signed up," Davidson says. "So that will be quite a spectacle!"

In May, the garden hosts a bonsai exposition devoted to the tradi-



From a festival celebrating the blossoming of cherry trees to a juried show of ornamental koi, Hasselt's Japanese Garden pulls out all the stop for its 25th anniversary

tional Japanese art form of turning miniature trees into living sculptures. Both *shohin* – a bonsai smaller than 25cm - and satsuki, a larger bonsai made of blooming azaleas, will be exhibited, along with selections from local bonsai clubs. There will also be workshops and demonstrations of bonsai-cutting.

The Belgian Koi Show takes place in June, giving visitors a chance to admire the most beautiful specimens of these ornamental fish. In Japan, koi are a symbol of love and

Many koi, a species of carp native to Asia, live in the ponds of the Japanese Garden and remain one of its chief attractions. Besides a juried contest, the Koi Show will

restaurant run by the winners of last year's edition of the VTM TV show Mijn Pop-Up Restaurant.



### For many people, the Japanese Garden is the symbol of Hasselt

also offer information and expertise on gardens and fish ponds. The garden opened a month earlier than usual this year, in part to accommodate the expanded schedule of events. One of the first highlights of the year was a pop-up

For the entire month of March, Chloë and Magali Szpyt have been serving East-West fusion cuisine at a temporary eatery in the garden's activities pavilion. Most of the tables were booked within days of the opening.

Throughout the year, there are special workshops for adults planned at the garden. Besides monthly ikebana (flower-arranging) and calligraphy workshops, there will be sessions on wearing kimono, the traditional women's garment, cosplay (dressing up as characters from manga and anime), bento (lunch boxes), haiku (poetry) and Japanese cooking. The festival will culminate on 20 November with an evening celebration at which the city will present a surprise birthday gift to the Japanese Garden. The full programme will be announced later in the year.

### **MORE JAPAN IN HASSELT**

 Across Japan This exhibition at the city's fashion museum showcases both Japanese fashion and the country's influence on Western designers. It starts chronologically with imported Japanese silks and accessories of the late 19th century and the Japonism of the early 20th century, when kimonos, draped garments and Japanese prints were all the rage.

The exhibition continues with the ground-breaking Japanese fashion designers of the 1980s, including Rei Kawakubo, Issey Miyake and Yohji Yamamoto, who had a strong influence on Western fashion. This dialogue between Japan and the



is well-represented by garments from Flemish designers like Ann Demeulemeester and Martin Margiela. Until 3 September, Mode-Museum, Gasthuisstraat 11

• Cranes and Cherry Blossoms This exhibition focuses on Japanese and Chinese influence on illustrated books for children, with original works by celebrated Belgian and French artists. Many of the books illustrate fairy-tales set in the East, such as Hans Christian Andersen's The Nightingale, or feature Asian characters and settings.

Literary Museum has built a miniature Japanese house indoors that visitors can enter. During the Easter school holidays, there are workshops for children in Chinese brush painting and calligraphy. Registration is required. Until 14 October, Bampslaan 35

• Anton Kusters This Hasseltborn photographer gained worldwide attention for his in-depth series on Japan's organised crime syndicate, the Yakuza. His series Mono No Aware will premiere at Hasselt's Cultural Centre, along with his Yakuza photographs.

West continues to this day and As part of the exhibition, Hasselt's Mono no aware is a Japanese concept that embraces both a sense of the transience of things and a sweet melancholy at their passing. 23 April to 24 September, Kunstlaan 5

> • Sake Food Pairing Although it's not the same as jenever, sake is also a clear distilled spirit - made from rice instead of grain - with a long tradition in Japan. During this workshop, you can taste four sakes paired with an appropriate dish. Each workshop is limited to 20 participants, and reservations are required. 29 April, Jenevermuseum, Witte Nonnenstraat 19; €23

# WEEK IN BUSINESS

#### Hotels \ Astoria

The landmark art deco hotel on Koningstraat in Brussels, closed since 2008, is to re-open in 2019 after an €80 million facelift financed by the owner, IHI holding company in Malta. The property will have 126 rooms. Meanwhile, the bankrupt Silken Berlaymont hotel in the EU district is expected to be taken over for by the Scandinavian Pandox group, which already operates eight hotels in Brussels.

# Beverages \ Pelican Rouge

The largest coffee distributer and coffee machine manufacturer in Europe, serving mostly workplaces and the catering industry, is being taken over by Switzerland's Selecta vending services group. Pelican Rouge was founded in Antwerp in 1863.

#### Air \ ADB Safegate

The world-leading airport management and logistics developer, based in Zaventem and supplying over 2,000 airports worldwide, is being acquired by France's PAI private equity group.

#### Retail \ Alain Afflelou

The French chain of optical and hearing aids has plans to open up to 60 outlets in Flanders over the next three years. The company already operates 1,500 stores in 17 countries but has mostly focused on Wallonia and Brussels locally.

#### Dentistry \ Solvay

The Brussels-based chemicals and materials group is developing state-of-the-art removable denture frames where metal is replaced with polymer-based composites.

#### Video \ GIMV

The Flanders government venture capital fund has made a solid profit from the sale of its stake in France's Teads video advertising firm to the Altice cable group. GIMV had acquired 10% of Teads for €14 million in 2011.

#### Aerospace \ Esterline

The Kortrijk-based screens and visual systems developer has signed a contract to supply the UK's BAE Systems with equipment for simulators at the Royal Air Force Eurofighter Typhoon training facility

# Slaughterhouse closed after graphic video footage leaked

Pork processing facility in Tielt accused of animal rights violations



Hemish animal welfare minister Ben Weyts has ordered an immediate stop to all activities at the Debra-Group slaughterhouse in Tielt, West Flanders, after the release of video footage by a group called Animal Rights.

The graphic undercover video shows pigs being kicked and beaten and having their throats cut without being stunned, which is illegal in Flanders. Other pigs are shown being plunged into boiling water while still alive.

"From the images, we are able to determine dozens of breaches of animal welfare laws," Weyts said. "Inspectors will compile a dossier, which I will pass on to the prosecutor for further action."

The slaughterhouse is the third-largest in the



© Courtesy Debra Grou

country, handling 3,800 pigs a day. Debra-Group management said it would carry out an internal investigation. The company later came forward with an action plan for ensuring animal welfare, but Weyts refused to return their licence while

a police investigation is going on. "We're not just going to turn the page and pretend nothing happened," he said.

In return, the company accused Weyts of holding 350 jobs to ransom. "In the film a number of procedural breaches are filmed and edited together as a single report," a spokesperson for the group said. "This delivers a mass of images that could give the viewer the impression that this is current working practice. It is not."

"The negative impact for our sector is enormous," said Bart Vergote of the farmers' union ABS. "Our image had improved over recent years thanks to the efforts of so many pig farmers who were proud to allow consumers an insight into their businesses via social media or open-door days. That improvement has been undone today."

### Brussels rubbish collectors go back to work after strike

A strike by unions representing staff of Net Brussel, the capital's waste management agency, is over, minister Fadila Laanan announced. The results of talks were presented to workers last week, although in some areas normal operations resumed only at the weekend.

Staff had been on strike since Monday in protest at changes to the rubbish collection schedule, which unions claim result in longer routes, more hours and a shortage of personnel. Among other measures, the collection of yellow and blue bags returned to a weekly schedule following a year in which they were picked up fortnightly.

"Our goals are reconcilable," a spokesperson for Laanan said. "Both sides want to improve the quality of the service we provide to the people, while ensuring the welfare of staff. We have to find a balance." \ AH

# Docks Bruxsel shopping centre 'built illegally' claim N-VA

The Docks Bruxsel shopping centre, which opened in the capital's canal area last October, was constructed in the absence of valid permits, an opposition member of the Brussels parliament has alleged. According to Cieltje Van Achter (N-VA), the government of the Brussels-Capital Region operated a "permits carousel" by issuing new permits the minute the Council of State appeared to be ready to nullify the old ones.

Citizen action group Bral filed a complaint with the Council of State with regard to the socio-economic permit for the shopping centre, and the Council ruled in their favour in February 2015 on the grounds that mobility regulations were not adequately met. The Brussels government simply issued another permit.

Last December, the auditor of the Council of State again issued an opinion against the socioeconomic permit and also the environmental permit for the shopping centre – which by that point had already been built.

In both cases, the auditor said, the complex failed to meet the capital's



© Courtesy Docks Bruxsel

planning regulations.

The opinion of the auditor is not binding on the Council of State but tends to be followed more often than not.

Brussels avoided the problem by withdrawing the previous permit, the subject of the complaint, and issuing another one. "To prevent the Council of State from once more confirming the illegality of the shopping complex, the Brussels government withdrew the permit on the day before oral arguments, only to deliver the same permit anew," Van Achter said.

The same thing happened with the environmental permit in July 2015, she said, following an opinion from the auditor.

# Airlines must repay €19 million in federal state aid ruled illegal

The federal government will reclaim more than €19 million in total from Brussels Airlines, TUI (formerly Jetair) and Thomas Cook – after subsidies they were given for using Brussels Airport were ruled illegal state aid. For Brussels Airlines alone, the sum comes to €16.8 million.

The money was initially granted as a contribution to security infrastructure costs for airlines that handled an annual minimum of 400,000 departing passengers. The aid was contested by Ryanair and Vueling as state aid and thus unfair competition; they filed a complaint with the European Commission, which agreed.

The "security grants" were in fact intended to help airlines compete with low-cost competitors like Ryanair, which registers its employees in Ireland, where social security charges are much lower. As Ryanair's headquarters are in Ireland, this is legal to do



© Courtesy Brussels Airlines

even for employees who do not live or work in Ireland.

The subsidies amounted to €19 million a year for three years, from 2014-2016. It was not paid out in 2015 or 2016 because of the complaint procedure. The airlines said they would not contest the ruling, but would wait for the government to come forward with an alternative system to meet its promises regarding unfair competition. \ AH

### New Flanders Literature website launches at London Book Fair

The Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren, or Flemish Literature Fund, which promotes Flemish literature abroad, has launched a new website in English. The new site, called Flanders Literature, was introduced at the London Book Fair earlier this month.

Flanders Literature allows publishers and event organisers to search the catalogue of Flemish works to decide which author or book would best suit their own needs. The site is searchable according to genre, author, title or translations, making it a useful tool for the reading public as well. It also provides information on accredited translators and on the local book market.

The Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren was launched in 2000 to support "a broad and accessible literary landscape" in Flanders, as well as to make local authors and their work more visible at home and abroad.

According to the 2015 annual report, the fund paid out &802,500 to 92 successful applicants for projects ranging from young adult literature, children's books, theatre, poetry and prose.  $\land$  AH

**FLANDERS**TODAY



# The long and winding road

## Ghent's new mobility plan enters final stretch despite opposition



Daan Bauwens

Follow Daan on Twitter \ @DaanBauwens

\ STAD.GENT/MOBILITEITSPLAN

The weekend before last, some 1,000 pedestrians and cyclists took to the centre of Ghent to show their support for the city's new mobility plan. Not everyone shared in their enthusiasm.

The plan, set to come into effect next Monday, is being opposed by a group of local retailers and professionals, backed by opposition party N-VA. The group has demanded a public referendum on the issue.

Since 2000, Ghent's population has increased by more than 32,000 to a total of 257,000, making the capital of East Flanders the second largest municipality in Belgium, after Antwerp. But the rapid growth has come at a price.

Today, Gentenaars own 17,000 more cars than only 10 years ago. And congestion has never been worse, with an additional 100,000 people commuting to the city for work every day.

During rush hour, the cramped city centre can feel unwelcoming to pedestrians and cyclists, who have to share the narrow streets with cars. To help alleviate this, last year the city government unveiled the much-anticipated mobility plan, which will increase the car-free area and create new no-parking zones. It is due to come into force on 3 April.

According to mobility studies commissioned by the city, 40% of all car traffic through the centre is avoidable and could be redirected to the ring road. Some 10% of this traffic is made up of people who only pass through the city on their way to somewhere else.

The mobility plan is intended to keep this through traffic out of the centre. "Our main goal is to make the city centre more enjoyable, safer and healthier," says city councillor for mobility Filip Watteeuw (Groen). "To make this a reality, we first have to enlarge the pedestrian zone to about twice its size. But not blindly - we're including the streets where car traffic is already slow and sparse, and where there are more cyclists and pedestrians."

The pedestrian zone will be serviced by three electric buses, but De Lijn buses, taxis and lightweight mopeds will also be allowed in at all times. Cars and motorcycles - even those owned by local residents – will only be allowed if they are equipped with a special permit, and even then only between 18.00

"Most delivery services, including Bpost, have already replaced their heavy vehicles with bicycles and electric bikes," says Watteeuw. "And

bourhood committees, retail associations, transport federations and the hospitality sector to adapt the plan where needed.

In an extra round of talks last year, the councillor answered concerns from specific target groups, including health-care providers. "Thanks to the dialogue, the plan has become much stronger," he says. One group, however, has consistently resisted the mobility plan. Mobiel Gent was founded by 20 professionals - mostly local vendors - who met at a city hall discussion in 2015. Last spring, they were joined by local opposition party N-VA and renamed IntelliGentmobiel.

The group has demanded that the city hold a referendum on the plan and turned in a petition with nearly

reason to force the other 90% to go the extra mile?" Burm asks. "The original plan would have increased my own commute by 80%. After the changes, it's still gone up by a quarter, but nobody's thinking about the increase in traffic jams caused by the plan. This could turn out to be nothing but a giant waste of time." Burm agrees with N-VA, which says that, in its current form, the mobility plan puts an economic stranglehold on Ghent. Peter Dedecker, a Ghent resident and member of the federal parliament for N-VA, says that, even though it's too late to stop the plan from starting on 3 April, it will have to be revoked in

# case the possible future referen-"The majority of residents and entrepreneurs are of the opinion

### We have enlarged the pedestrian zone to about twice its size by including streets where car traffic is already slow and sparse

no one's likely to order pizza before 18.00."

The mobility plan also divides the city centre into six traffic zones around the enlarged pedestrian area. "By splitting the roads into sections and altering the direction you can drive down them, we made it is impossible for cars to get from one sector to another," Watteeuw explains. "If someone needs to reach another sector, they'll have to use the ring road."

When presented in its initial form in 2014, the plan caused an uproar. Over the course of three years, Watteeuw has worked with neigh-

30,000 signatures last week – well above the 26,000 required. Now the city is tasked with checking the signatures to make sure they are

The group's chair, Jozef Burm, has expressed concerns that the city has not done enough to involve neighbourhood associations. All commissioned studies are available online, but Burm, a general practitioner with an office inside the city's ring road, is sceptical about their validity.

"And even if they're true, and 10% of all transport in the city is totally unnecessary, is that enough of a

that the plan makes the mobility situation worse," says Dedecker. His claim is based on a recent poll by Flemish chamber of commerce Voka, in which 70% of respondents agreed with the statement that the plan will make things worse for those "who do business or work in

Councillor Watteeuw, however, is sceptical about the poll and remains confident that the plan will stand the test of time. "After years of talks and preparation, everything is in place," he says. "Thinking you can still stop it is a sign of being out of

### **WEEK IN** INNOVATION

#### Trauma centres could save '900 lives a year'

Under current legislation, severely injured patients have to be taken to the nearest hospital. In 2015, 3,500 people suffering from major trauma were brought to 145 different hospitals. According to the Belgian Health Care Knowledge Centre (KCE), it is impossible to maintain specialised trauma equipment and highly trained staff in that many institutions. The centre looked at countries that use an integrated care system that revolves around major trauma centres - specialised hospitals that meet the highest standards for equipment and staff. According to KCE, care for seriously injured patients in Belgium should be limited to seven specialised trauma centres spread strategically across the country. The system, says KCE, could save up to 900 lives a year.

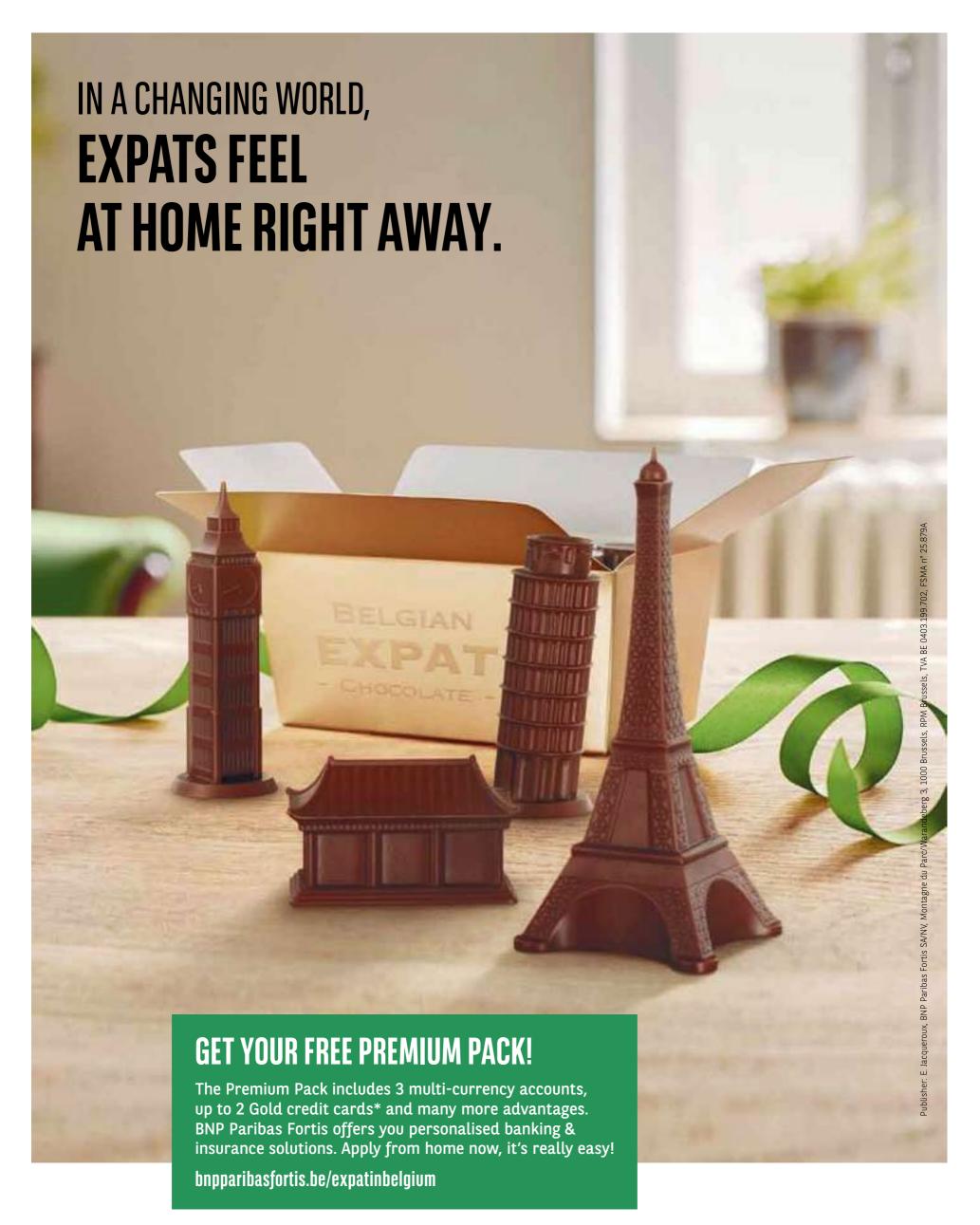
#### €2.5 million for highquality holographs

Jan Genoe of the Leuvenbased nanotech research centre imec has received a European Research Council Advanced Grant to develop high-quality holographic projection. The grant of €2.5 million covers a five-year period. Today, holographic projectors do not have a fast enough frame rate to allow the projection of complex holograms. With a combination of smart electronics, optics and materials, Genoe aims to enable next-generation video holography, that could eventually be integrated in a smartphone and allow watching 3D movies without 3D glasses.

#### UGent researchers develop new plastic

Researchers at Ghent University have developed a new type of plastic, belonging to the family of vitrimers, chemically strengthened plastics that can easily be processed, repaired and recycled. The researchers have discovered that characteristics that are essential to the recycling process can be significantly changed by adding very small quantities of simple additives, like acids and bases. The research at Ghent is a major step forward in the use of the recyclable plastics because it means the characteristics essential for recycling can be separated from other characteristics, making it possible to create a customised vitrimer for numerous specific applications - such as rubber and harder applications - by choosing the right additives.

\ Andy Furniere





The bank for a changing world

# Future-proofing

### ISB conference leads the charge towards a changing world of education



More articles by Paula \ flanderstoday.org

\ ISB.BE

At a recent conference at the International School of Brussels, teachers from around the world joined students to explore new ways of working in areas such as social innovation and climate change.

66 chools have become learning enclosures, Separated from the world our kids need to understand," learning futurist David Price tells assembled teachers at the International School of Brussels (ISB). "Education itself needs to change."

The teachers have gathered to hear Price's thoughts on one of the key topics of a learning conference being held at the school: how education can transform itself to keep pace with new ways of living, working and communicating.

"Disruption" is a word that might make some teachers' blood run cold, but the Learning by Design event was put together with the express aim of inspiring educators to disrupt the existing system, to better equip students for a world that's already rapidly changing.

The English-language school in Watermaal-Bosvoorde is home to international students from preschool all the way through secondary school. For the recent Learning by Design, it hosted 420 educators from more than 40 countries – as well as involving 120 of its own pupils - and plans to repeat it in 2019.

Sessions at the three-day event tackled topics such as using Instagram as a language learning tool, creating prosthetic hands with 3D printing, fostering student autonomy, teaching the power of engaging storytelling and learning how to break out of old habits and risk innovative ideas.



Fred Brown (left) and Peter Gee, the founders of Saving Paw Prints

says ISB director Lee Fertig.

In his session, Price relays an anecdote about discovering the reason his own teenage son was so "zombie-like" each morning that they couldn't get him out of bed. He eventually revealed that in the small hours he'd been appearing as a panellist on an internet radio talk show about libertarian politics.

"We knew nothing about it," says Price. "I realised there was this gulf opening up between the learning that's being done socially and the learning in the formal context."

Price went on to write the bestselling book Open: How We'll Work, Live and Learn In The Future and gives talks all over the world about making education more democratic, innovative and relevant. Citing predictions that half the workforce will be freelance by 2020, he says schools should focus on what children can do with their

two days old, Saving Paw Prints already has a website and flyers, and the pair have persuaded a local vet to volunteer his services.

"We've done it all by working in the evenings," Peter says. "Yesterday we called 15 vets, dog shelters and kennels, asking them to contact us if they have anyone interested."

Fred says the school has promised seed funding for any projects that get going. "Most of the groups in here are fantasising about their projects, but we are actually doing

The teacher leading the session, Ben Doxtdator, says the racism group has set up a meeting with someone at the EU who works on Islamophobia, while another is discussing building an inclusive LGBT community within the school.

Writer and education consultant Suzie Boss, who is running a teachers' session on "students as change agents for the planet" says there is room within the current system for students to engage in real problem solving. Armed with myriad examples, such as a Massachusetts student project to capture energy generated by pedestrians using specialised floor tiles, she says that "action is doable and students are

of teachers are grappling with little wireless electronic blocks, trying to come up with inventions that they could replicate as a lesson plan. While the physics teachers work on a set of plastic batwings that flap when triggered by a sensor, another group discusses devising an alarm system to alert pupils when they've been sitting down too long.

Across the room, design teacher Ryan Evans is among those building a Lego animal enclosure that closes when a creature wanders inside. "It then takes a picture and tweets it out to let people know there's something in there," explains his teammate Peter Aitchison. "It could be used for a wildlife study or capture and release." Evans, from Wales, teaches at an

international school in Angola,

and has come to the conference to explore "design thinking". "I was interested in how this conference was about design thinking for the whole curriculum, to show how everything is connected," he says. Everything we do is a process, he continues. "It could be writing an essay or doing a project on famine in Africa. You approach, plan, do it and evaluate it. It's all about problem-solving, rather than just listening and regurgitating."

Outside, Tabitha Johnson from the US and Akio Iida from Japan - who are both teachers in Hong Kong - say they travelled to Brussels after seeing the event advertised on Twitter. "This is the kind of thing people in education are talking about right now: how to create experiences in classrooms that are hands-on and innovating," says Johnson. "We went to the recycling and robotics session and made birds. We could definitely replicate that. In teaching you sometimes get marooned in your own school and don't know what's going on in

stuff," adds Iida. "It's important in teaching not to keep doing the

#### WEEK IN **EDUCATION**

#### Standardised tests required in primary school

Starting with the 2017-18 school year, all pupils in the last year of primary education will be required to take at least two standardised tests in the academic subjects of their choice, Flemish education minister Hilde Crevits has announced. Tests developed by the Catholic education network, the Education Secretariat for Cities and Municipalities and the community education network Go! have up to this point been administered voluntarily by individual schools. Now the tests will be required. Some 90% of schools are already using the tests, meant to measure the schools' quality of education and strengthen their policies and methods. The tests are not meant to determine whether pupils are ready for secondary education.

#### More international students seek psych help

Increasing numbers of international students at the University of Leuven are seeking psychological help, reported the university's student magazine Veto. In the 2015-16 academic year, 24% of the 1,362 students who consulted a psychologist at the university's Student Health Centre were international students, compared to 19% the year before. "The number rises every year," said Anne Neyskens, head of the centre. Some of the international students who seek help have already experienced mental health issues at home. For others, adjusting to the new environment proves more difficult than anticipated.

#### Schools consider delaying start date

The Catholic network has started up a conversation on the possibility of postponing the first day of the next school year because 1 September - Flanders' annual official first day of school - is also the Muslim Feast of the Sacrifice this year. The network is suggesting pushing the first day of school to Monday, 4 September. The Feast of the Sacrifice is an official Islamic holiday, for which children can stay home from school. Schools in the bigger cities are concerned that large numbers of students would be absent on the first day. Education minister Hilde Crevits said that schools have enough options to deal with the situation and that it's not necessary to postpone the general start of the school year. \ Andy Furniere

# It's important in teaching not to keep doing the same things

A range of workshops focused on project-based learning such as inventing Internet of Things projects or creating interactive robots using common electronic parts and recycled materials.

As part of its social innovation theme, a parallel event for students involved being mentored by experts to come up with practical actions to help tackle global issues like climate change, racism and poverty.

"It's an opportunity to engage in conversations aimed at re-imagining how schools can best facilitate learning in today's complex world,"

knowledge: "We need to prepare kids to be entrepreneurial, to be self-starters, to work with change." In the next building, more than 100 students are busy doing just that. Printouts of the United Nations' 17 sustainable development goals adorn the walls, and groups of children are noisily coming up with their own ways to tackle them at a local, achievable level.

Peter Gee, 14, and Fred Brown, 13, have put their own spin on animal conservation and devised a plan for a not-for-profit organisation providing free 3D-printed prosthetics for disabled dogs. Though only

eager". "What these projects require is the will to think differently about how students learn," she explains. "Realworld projects put new demands on teachers, but educators tend to be energised by what their empowered students can do." Over at ISB's middle school, groups

> other classrooms." "It's just great to get excited about same things."

# WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

#### Tour of Flanders

For the first time, Flanders' biggest and most prestigious cycle race will start and end in Antwerp, and the city is planning to make the most of it with a public lecture on its history on Friday, an amateur race on Saturday and a party on Grote Markt on Sunday. The Men's Elite pro race starts at 10.30 on Sunday. The Women's Elite race starts and ends in Oudenaarde at 11.00 on the same day. 31 March to 2 April, across Flanders; free

\ rondevanvlaanderen.be

# Return of the Mercator

After two years in dry dock for renovations, the historic three-mast sailing ship Mercator is returning to Ostend. There will be activities on board and dockside all weekend, including guided tours of the ship and maritime quarter, workshops for children, food trucks and music. 1-2 April 14.00-18.00, Mercatordok, Ostend; free

\ visitoostende.be

#### Antwerp Tattoo Convention

Whether you're itching to get some new ink or want to meet other tattoo enthusiasts, Antwerp is the place to be this weekend. Meet Belgian and international artists, get a tattoo, listen to live music or participate in tattoo contests. 1-2 April 10.00-18.00, Waagnatie, Rijnkaai 150, Hangar 29, Antwerp;  $\in 10$ 

\ diamondcitycrew.be

#### Facts Comic-Con

Facts is the number one Belgian comics and pop culture convention, with all things fantasy, science fiction, comic books, cosplay and gaming. Special guests include stars of TV and movies, comic artists and cosplayers. Also, the world's biggest inflatable obstacle course. 1-2 April, Flanders Expo, Maaltekouter 1, Ghent;  $\in$ 18

\ facts.be

#### British Classic Car Heritage

For just two weeks, Autoworld is home to an exhibition of classic cars from the 1950s to the 1970s, including the Austin Healey, Morgan, Land Rover, Rolls Royce and Mini. The expo is organised by The English Drivers Guild, a group of British car aficionados in Brussels. 1-17 April, 10.00-18.00, Jubelpark 11, Brussels;

\ autoworld.be

# **Block party**

### Antwerp's Plein Publiek is an urban oasis that never stops giving



PLEINPUBLIEK.BE

In the autumn of 2015, the abandoned Fierensblokken social housing project near the waterfront in Antwerp's Sint-Andries district was transformed into an urban jungle. A 300 squaremetre greenhouse was erected in the courtyard, and Plein Publiek was born.

Amid the lush vegetation, you'll find a cocktail bar, a restaurant and an event space that changes with the seasons. The derelict apartments, once inhabited by squatters, have made way for an art gallery.

"What makes Plein Publiek unique is its location and look," says Nelson Donck, head of programming. "The modernist tower blocks date back to the interbellum and give the place an underground vibe that's reminiscent of Berlin. At the same time, Plein Publiek remains accessible. Everyone's welcome."

The social aspect is what sets Plein Publiek apart. This isn't just another hipster hangout, but a meeting place for the entire neighbourhood. "We work closely together with the community centre coStA," explains Donck. "Every month, there's a neighbourhood brunch for only €8 per person, and the live music nights are free."

Plein Publiek's art gallery, Kunst/ Werk, doubles as a creative space and rehearsal room for artists. "We try to make art available to everyone," says Donck.

But that doesn't mean things don't get swanky. In January, British band The xx played an exclusive showcase in the greenhouse, and last year, H&M used the space to host the presale of its latest design collaboration with the French luxury brand



© Robin De Raedt

Kenzo

Plein Publiek is actually an umbrella term for a lot of different things. There's a cosy afternoon-to-night cocktail bar, nicknamed Café Congé; a pop-up restaurant, where chef Thomas Van De Weyer serves plates to share, and an event space

The programme for the coming months is packed with weekend parties and free Wednesday night concerts, but the daytime activities are not to be missed, either.

On 4 June, part of the Sint-Andries city run will cross through the greenhouse, a chance for a quick

right now we're working on new decorations for the spring that will feature a small airplane. We have a real DIY mentality and find a lot of our stuff in second-hand shops."

Just like the seasons and decor, however, nothing lasts forever. Plans to renovate the Fierensblokken into affordable rental flats are well underway. "We can stay until the end of September, maybe longer, but after that it's uncertain," says Donck.

Even with the end in sight, he finds no reason to despair. Congé, the organisation behind Plein Publiek, has already secured a new place – the hip food hall Mercado, which opened in the city centre in October. What will happen to the greenhouse? "Well, they're not tearing it down, that's for sure," says Donck. "We're taking it with us."

# 66

# We go from dining to dancing to everything in between

that morphs into club or debate room depending on the hour of the day.

"The transformation is what keeps things interesting for us," says Donck. "We go from dining to dancing to everything in between." look at Plein Publiek's ever-changing decor. Speaking of which: There are no fancy decorators or set designers here; the eccentric interior, says Donck, is a team effort.

"We've had everything from a ski cabin to vintage bumper cars, and

\ DE-SERRE.BE

#### BITE

### De Serre eatery reinvents the catering industry

It may look like a regular self-serve breakfast-andlunch joint – albeit a modish one with a wall of plants, handsome parquet floors and an expansive terrace – but take a closer look, and you realise that De Serre has technological innovation at its core

Customers to the Antwerp eatery order via an app, then help themselves to locally sourced salads and sandwiches. Behind the scenes, everything from payment to stock management runs on software provided by 20 tech partners, including ING.

The restaurant, which is also open to the public, is the brainchild of Dieter Veuelemans of the marketing firm CityCubes and Sebastian Rummens of the hospitality recruitment agency Forganiser, who previously masterminded the pop-up Kaffee van Antwerpen.

Set in a former school that backs onto the Botanical Garden in the south of the city centre, De Serre (The Greenhouse) serves as the restaurant and event venue for StartupVillage, an incubator that leases affordable office space to 70 entrepreneurs on a two-year basis.

"We want to help start-ups, obviously," says Lorenz

Lievens, De Serre's operational manager. "But we also want to be a place where hospitality can grow and digitalise."

De Serre, which opened earlier this week, can host all kinds of public events thanks to the clever interior, designed by the local studio Pinkeye's; the bar morphs into a buffet, and plant stands double as recention tables.

The idea is to fully integrate the software so that it runs near automatically. This will produce swathes of data that De Serre plans to analyse to boost profits – turning it into Belgium's largest data-mining laboratory for catering.

Big data hasn't really been applied to hospitality, but the founders believe that it could help boost revenue in an industry rocked by a government crackdown on undeclared income.

"Many businesses are scared of that data collection, but we feel that you should embrace it and try to use it," says Lievens, adding that the demise of numerous Belgian banks is partly due to their failure to grapple with digitalisation.

Insights will be shared with restaurateurs via events and workshops. De Serre will also collab-



orate with Flanders employment service VDAB to help catering industry employees without a job to update their CVs with digital skills.

Caterers who do make the leap won't just benefit financially, says Lievens. "If you digitalise everything that the customers can't see, then you can use the time you save to personalise everything that they do see – and you end up with an even greater layer of actual hospitality." \ Clodagh Kinsella

Lange Gasthuisstraat 29, Antwerp

# The bone collectors

### Quirky Koksijde museum reveals the hidden side of the animal kingdom



\ MUSEOS.BE

he Flemish coast contains a wealth of fanciful oddities, from Ensor's house in Ostend to the Serpentarium in Blankenberge. The fairly new MuseOs in Koksijde fits right in. Tucked away just south of the city centre, this inconspicuous museum of natural history is owned by Luc Tyteca and Leentje Vandenhoudt, biologists who have spent more than half of their lives amassing a vast collection of animal skulls and skeletons.

"Back in the 1980s, we were both studying biology in Leuven," says Tyteca. "We were taking a class on evolution, and the professor asked us to bring along animal skulls so that we could study them."

An actual skull, said the professor, is a much better tool for learning animal anatomy than photographs or drawings. "I brought a dog skull," says Tyteca. "It was the first one I ever owned; many would follow."

Tyteca became fascinated with bones, but MuseOs, which opened in 2015, would remain a pipe dream for years to come. When the pair graduated from the University of Leuven and got married, they were asked to take over Tyteca's family bakery in Koksijde.

"We kept it open for 27 years," says Tyteca. "It was a demanding job, no doubt. I worked the nights and slept during the day, while my wife ran the shop. Six days a week."

On Wednesdays, he continues, "when the bakery was closed, we were biologists again." They traded bones with collectors from all over the world and stored them in their house. Soon, their entire their garage, cellar, attic and even the swimming pool were filled with bones of various shapes and sizes. But the impressive collection was only gathering dust; Tyteca and his wife had no way of displaying it to the public. "I felt it'd be a pity to keep it to myself," he says. Eventually, his brother took over the bakery, and the couple started work on MuseOs - a play on the words museum and os, meaning bones in Latin.

The three-story building sits right next to their house. Inside, large windows let in plenty of natural light. "We worked very closely with the architect to make the building ideal for displaying skeletons and skulls," explains Tyteca. "The levels cascade so that we can fit an entire skeleton of an elephant, or even a giraffe. We also wanted to ensure that our visitors could study the bones from all angles."

Suspended from the ceiling by thin wires, the elephant is one of the most impressive assets in MuseOs' collection. Spanning two levels, it appears to be greeting the visitors as they enter the main hall, where another formidable creature lurks just above their heads.

The sperm whale's skull weighs half a tonne, but Tyteca wasn't shy about putting it right over the wooden cabinets lent to MuseOs by the zoo in Antwerp. The massive animal died after getting stranded on a beach in Denmark in 2000.

Other specimens are no less impressive. MuseOs houses gorilla skulls, countless antlers and horns, a skeleton of a platypus and a two-headed calf. Even the tiny house mouse, perched on its hind legs, looms in the imagination. Bones can be surprisingly fascinating.

And this is exactly what Tyteca and Vandenhoudt are trying to accomplish. "We want to showcase the beauty of animals," says Tyteca. "People know what they look like on the outside, but their inside can be just as amazing. We want to offer a 'wow' factor to our visitors and share our excitement."

MuseOs is also an educational project. Most of the visitors are parents with children or part of a school trip, and there is a designated space where youngsters can assemble pieces of bones or study them under the microscope.

"Adults are satisfied with looking at the glass cabinets," he says, "but children, they always want to touch everything."



© Photos: Bartosz Brzeziński

Leentje Vandenhoudt and Luc Tyteca have built MuseOs by themselves from the ground up; the complete skeleton of an elephant (below) is one of the museum's most striking pieces

Backed by a wall decorated with some 60 deer antlers and antelope horns, he explains that his fascination with bones extends beyond their scientific value. "For me, these are so much more than just dead animals; they are pieces of art"

His personal favourite? The moose antlers. "They're huge."

The museum still has some empty space, but the collection keeps on growing. On the second floor, Tyteca is assembling the newest addition – a skeleton of a rhinoceros.

"It takes time, and I'm doing it right here in the museum because people are fascinated by the process," he says. "Also, once the skeleton is complete, it will be too big to carry up the stairs."

While Tyteca shows us around the museum, Vandenhoudt is making coffee and tea. "We prefer small groups to large crowds coming in all at once," she says. "This way we can have a chat with our visitors."



# Grants approved for Mechelen cathedral restoration and other projects

The government of Flanders has approved nearly &1.2 million in funding for restoration work on Sint-Rombouts cathedral in Mechelen. The cathedral (*pictured*) dates to the 13th century and has been a listed monument since 1938.

Mechelen became Belgium's archdiocese in the 1500s and is still the home of the country's archbishop, cardinal Jozef De Kesel. Restoration of the cathedral started in 1985. The current phase concerns cleaning and repairs to the facade. The cathedral remains open for services.

Minister-president Geert Bourgeois, whose portfolio also includes heritage affairs,



© Milo Profi

announced that the government had also listed two electric harbour cranes in

Antwerp as monuments.

The cranes, known as 400 KA and 410 KD and located on the Rijnkaai near the Mas museum, represent a high point in the development of crane technology from the 1950s. 410 KD was operational until 2003, and both cranes are testament to the growth of Antwerp as a port.

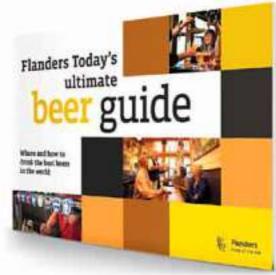
Over the last two months, Bourgeois has approved funding of more than €12 million for heritage projects. They include €787,000 for the restoration of the Middelkerke's town hall and an Art Deco building, listed monuments since 2002 and 2009 respectively. A sum of nearly €1.9 million will be spent

on restoring two forts that form part of the ring of fortifications around Antwerp, part of the former military protection of the city, while  $\[mathebox{\ensuremath{\mathfrak{e}}}\]$ 1 million will be spent on the boarding school wing of Sint-Jozef college in Aalst, which dates in its original form to the 18th century. The college was founded in 1620. There will be  $\[mathebox{\ensuremath{\mathfrak{e}}}\]$ 1.7 million for the old water tower in Ostend, which originates from 1900 and has a 50-metre neo-gothic tower and a capacity of 700 cubic metres.  $\[mathebox{\ensuremath{\mathfrak{e}}}\]$ 600,000, meanwhile, has been earmarked for Ypres's landmark Cloth Hall and tower, which houses the In Flanders Fields museum.



For expats, by expats. From the editors of The Bulletin www.the bulletin.be

# Welcome to the land of beer



Everyone knows

Belgium is home to the best beer in the world.

But there might be a few things you still have to learn

Which beers go with which cheeses?

What's the difference between a Trappist and an abbey?

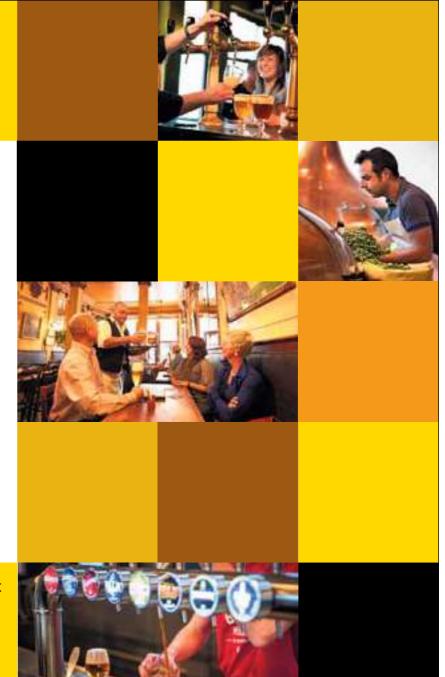
Is the glass really all that important?

We'll answer all these burning questions and more in our free\* e-book

Just visit the Flanders Today website to download it

\ flanderstoday.eu

\* No fine print. It's actually free



# All things weird and wonderful

### Flemish art in France offers fur, feathers and a dose of eccentricity



\ MUSEEDEFLANDRE.LENORD.FR

An exhibition in France explores unusual and occasionally moving animal-based art by contemporary Flemish artists, from amorous deer to war horses in the throes of death.

ast year the Musée de Flandre in northern France explored **∠** the pioneering representation of animals in 17th-century Flemish painting. Now the museum takes visitors back to the future with a follow-up exhibition that basks in the zoological eccentricity of contemporary Flemish art.

The French village of Cassel is situated atop a hill that locals claim is the tallest in all of Flanders. A historical crossroads, the region has for the last 1,000 years been a melting pot of French and Flemish influence. The modern border may have put the Kasselberg about 10km from Belgium, but the town that straddles it remains rich in echoes of the past.

Nowhere is the Flemish legacy more pronounced than the Musée de Flandre. The museum's permanent collection is drawn mainly from the Baroque era, when Flemish painting flourished.

Indeed, the exhibition that inspired Fur and Feathers showcased the art of that period. Last year's Odyssey of Animals presented wildlife canvases by the likes of Roelandt Savery, Jan Fyt and Paul de Vos.

The current exhibition fastforwards a few hundred years to the end of the 20th century and into the present millennium. "We wanted to bring the subject up to date," museum director Sandrine Vézilier-Dussart says. "The changing representation of animal life tells us a lot about changing values, both in art and in society."

Vézilier-Dussart and her team duly reached out to nine contemporary Flemish artists and acquired more than 30 of their works in various media, from bronze sculptures to photographic montages to wild taxidermy installations.

"These are all revisited works," she explains. "They were created in different contexts across many years, but bringing them all together, in this specific context, emphasises similarities and differ-

One of those similarities is the freedom with which contemporary artists approach the subject. "The early painters were busy perfecting a technique," Vézilier-Dussart explains. "Representational painting was fairly new. These painters used the varied forms of animal anatomy to test the limits of verisimilitude. Contemporary artists use the animal subject to deconstruct or transcend that very representational technique."

So the ancients wrote the rule book



Despite the minimalism of Berlinde de Bruyckere's approach, she plunges the viewer into the intensity of war

only for the moderns to tear it up. This general evolution is, of course, a global fact of contemporary art. There is a specifically Flemish characteristic, however; the current generation of Flemish artists inherited the Baroque tradition of

meanwhile, even if the amorous animals are pairing in missionary position. His triptych of controversial tattooed pigskins is also relatively understated (apart from one titled "Madonna"). Still, exhibition curators serve them up with a The work consists of three life-sized horse simulacra upholstered in real treated horse skins and posed in their death throes. "This one moves me the most," she says. "Despite the minimalism of her approach, the artist plunges you into the inten-

## Look at the bizarre creatures by an artist like Koen Vanmechelen. They are conscious references to Hieronymus Bosch

animal painting and can reference it with native ease.

"Look at the bizarre creatures catalogued by an artist like Koen Vanmechelen," Vézilier-Dussart says. "They are conscious references to the world of Hieronymus Bosch."

Visitors are greeted in the exhibition's first galleries by two of the biggest names in contemporary Flemish art: Jan Fabre and Wim Delvoye. Though Fabre's bronze lamb sculpture "Sanguis Sum", his stuffed owl head and their accompanying Baroque tableaux are a little too clumsy in their symbolism, he does have some excellent work in the exhibition - particularly the wood, taxidermy and beetle installation "Gravetomb".

Delvoye's copulating deer bronze "Trophy" is refreshingly secular, gigantic 16th-century Italian painting of a bloodied and lifeless Jesus being hauled to his grave.

It's only with the third featured artist that we truly move away from ecclesiastical domination and into the modern era. Marie-Jo Lafontaine's photographic series *I Love* the World! does feature an obligatory lamb among the wolves (and rats and predatory apes) of Wall Street, but everything else about it is resolutely 21st century.

Vézilier-Dussart's favourite piece is a meditation on modern warfare. Berlinde de Bruyckere's immersive installation "In Flanders Fields" was originally conceived for the eponymous First World War museum in

**Until 9 July** 

sity of war."

After traversing Vanmechelen's cabinet of curiosities - a taxidermy mash-up that puts iguana heads on poultry and vice versa - and passing Michel Vanden Eeckhoudt's stark photographic depictions of zoo life behind the scenes, the exhibition ends on an optimistic note with Éric de Ville's slick, digitally enhanced montage "Paradise".

This utopian vision of lush landscape and exotic wildlife is a modern update of the birds-ofparadise tableaux showcased in last year's Animal Odyssey. It's also a reminder that contemporary art isn't always about ironic distance or worldly pessimism

Musée de Flandre Cassel, France

# WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

#### Flemish authors up for Libris Prize

Two Flemish authors have been nominated for the Libris Literature Prize, which rewards the best Dutchlanguage novel of the previous year. Jeroen Olyslaegers was nominated for Wil (Will), which finds an old man trying to explain his experiences in Second World War Antwerp to his grandson. He struggled with ambivalence, faced with two sharply disparate ideologies. Lize Spit was nominated for Het smelt (The Melting), which finds Eva driving from Brussels to the tiny Kempen town where she grew up. She recalls the events of her youth, moulded by a friendship with two boys, all the way up to a violent incident she intends to resolve on this day 13 years later. Four Dutch authors are also nominated for the prize. The winning author, who receives €50,000, will be announced on 8 May. \ librisliteratuurprijs.nl

#### Play4Peace brings 7,000 to Brussels

More than 7,000 people took part in the third annual Play-4Peace at Tour & Taxis in Brussels at the weekend. The event brings together sports teams and clubs from across Belgium for a weekend that focuses on sport as a way to bring people together, encourage dialogue and improve social cohesion. The free event, supported by Unesco and the King Baudouin Foundation, was open to children and adults and featured more than 30 sports and activities. The Play4Peace organisation sponsors monthly events particularly aimed at youngsters from disadvantaged backgrounds. The UN's International Day of Sport for Development and Peace is on 6 April.

\ play4peace.be

#### €2 million for cultural infrastructure

Flemish culture minister Sven Gatz has announced €2.1 million for infrastructure projects across the region. Ghent cultural centre Vooruit will receive €500,000 to automate its theatrical rigging system, which is still operated by hand. Kazematten in Kortrijk and Circusplaneet in Ghent receive €500,000 and €300,000 respectively to create new meeting spaces for children and young people. Also in Kortrijk, the 100-year-old De Scala banquet hall has been awarded €300,000 for renovation work. And the Elzenhof cultural centre in the Elsene municipality of Brussels will receive €500,000 for rehearsal spaces.

# The house that Victor built

### The Horta Museum, a marvel of Art Nouveau architecture, is now bigger and better



\ HORTAMUSEUM.BE

or fans of Art Nouveau, the house built by Belgian architect Victor Horta for himself and his family is a mustsee in Brussels. Now, with the opening of a new extension, the Horta Museum can accommodate more visitors, while reducing the strain on its historic architecture and interiors.

The revamped museum still offers an intimate encounter with Horta's genius while adding greatly to the visitor experience. Horta is credited with designing the first Art Nouveau building in the world in 1893. He went on to have a successful career, receiving commissions from the bourgeoisie and, later, for commercial and civic buildings in Brussels such as

His own residence on Amerikaansestraat in Sint-Gillis was built in 1898, with an adjoining studio added soon after. It displays all the hallmarks of Horta's Art Nouveau style, including an innovative plan with rooms radiating off a central staircase.

He also designed the interiors down to the tiniest detail, from the floors and furniture to light fixtures and door hardware. Walking through the museum allows visitors to experience one of his unique houses from the inside

One of Horta's former students, Jean Delhaye, persuaded the municipality of Sint-Gillis to buy the house in 1961, with the goal of turning it into a museum dedicated to the architect and his work. It was the first Art Nouveau building to be listed in Belgium.



The Horta Museum in Brussels has extended into the house next door, offering more space for visitors and creating an are for temporary exhibitions

Ever since it opened in 1969, the Horta Museum has attracted visitors from around the world, and in 2000 it was added to the Unesco World Heritage List.

But over the years, as the numbers of visitors has steadily increased, the museum's popularity literally became a burden. The wear and tear from foot traffic and the weight of administrative functions took their toll on 100-yearold structures originally intended to house a family of three.

Although a long-term restoration plan developed in 1989 foresaw the need for an extension, it wasn't until 2007 that the municipality was able to buy the house next door. Built by Horta's contemporary Jules Brunfaut, it had undergone so many transformations over the years that nothing of the original interior remained.

 $That \, allowed \, the \, architects \, to \, start$ again from scratch and design a new interior perfectly suited to the museum's needs. Visitors now enter through the ground floor of the Brunfaut house, which functions as both reception area and gift shop. Previously, they often had to queue outside the front door of Horta's house, since it can only accommodate up to 45 people at once. Now they can wait inside the building or in the garden behind the extension.

The upper floors of the extension now house the museum's

administrative offices and its archives. The museum has the largest library devoted exclusively to Art Nouveau, with more than 5,000 volumes, as well as Horta's personal archives.

The combined weight of this material was simply placing too much strain on the upper floors of Horta's studio, where they were previously kept. By moving its administrative and research functions to a separate building, the museum is also able to open up more of Horta's residence to the public.

The most dramatic change is the opening of the ground-floor kitchen, which was completely inaccessible to visitors before.

Heavily damaged at the time of the house's purchase in 1961, it has been fully restored to its original appearance and furnished with furniture designed by Horta and other objects from the period. Connecting the kitchen to the floors above, the servants' staircase has also been opened to visitors, helping to improve traffic flow and relieve some of the strain on the main staircase. After visiting the guest room on the top floor, visitors now descend via the servants' stairs and finish their visit in the kitchen.

Along the way, they can also view two rooms adjoining the dining room. The butler's pantry allowed servants to pass food brought up from the kitchen into the dining room, and a small room off the butler's pantry - which until recently served as the museum secretary's office - may have been used as a breakfast room.

Finally, the extension also adds much-needed exhibition space. Though the museum remains popular with foreign visitors, it has struggled to attract locals who may have visited once but see no reason to return.

For the first time, temporary exhibitions can be mounted in a large, airy gallery above the reception area. The museum will host two exhibitions a year, alternating between contemporary decorative arts and topics related to Art Nouveau.

The inaugural exhibition, A Play of Light and Shadow: Art Nouveau Revisited Through Five Artists, showcases several original works commissioned for the museum.

# A boy and his dog: new sculpture honours literary heroes

A statue has been unveiled in fron of Antwerp Cathedral depicting a young boy and his dog, in tribute to the stars of a beloved 19th-century novel that found fame in Japan before it became known in Flanders, where the

A Dog of Flanders was written by British author and animal rights activist Marie Louise de la Ramée, under the pen name Ouida. It tells the story of young orphan Nello, who grows up with his grandfather in a village near Antwerp.

One day, Nello and his grandfather rescue a dog who's been beaten nearly to death, and Nello and the dog, Patrasche, become inseparable. Though the book is set in Flanders, it's only relatively recently that it's found fame in the region.

After reading about the book in

the author's obituary in 1908, a Japanese diplomat in New York sent a few copies of it home. The translation is now one of the bestknown children's stories in Japan, having become required reading for schoolchildren, and the anime adaptation in the 1970s was a nationwide hit.

The hardship of the boy's life, the wind and rain of Flanders and the tragic ending (in which the cathedral plays a major role) all fit perfectly with the Japanese national psyche. But strangely enough, nobody in Flanders knew about the story until the first translation appeared in the 1980s. As more and more Japanese tourists to Flanders asked where they could find the sites mentioned in the book, the Antwerp district of Hoboken swiftly erected a small statue - only to be told by the



Japanese that the figures didn't look right to them at all.

Antwerp city guide Tanguy Ottomer felt the two characters deserved a better tribute. "It's not nearly the honour such a story deserved," he says.

He discovered A Dog of Flanders 10 years ago and was amazed that it was so little known, so he

initiated a project to build a new monument. "It was high time that we embraced the most-read story about Flanders in the world."

Ottomer travelled to Japan for research, and he and a friend started a campaign to fund a new statue, this time in the centre of Antwerp. They found a Chinese diamond trader who was happy to provide the funds.

"With the plan and the money, we went to the city administration: All they had to do was say 'yes'. Which they did."

The white marble monument of Nello and Patrasche huddled together under a blanket of cobblestones was unveiled in December, in front of the city's cathedral. "It's a location we hadn't dared dream of," Ottomer says, "but it's most fitting for the story." \ Daan Bauwens

MARCH 29, 2017

At home in colour

# Rik Wouters: A Retrospective

Until 2 July

Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels

\ FINE-ARTS-MUSEUM.BE

💙 itting in a dark grey sofa against a red curtain, staring at the viewer with a J sorrowful look, his left eye hidden behind a patch. This striking but woeful self-portrait closes the retrospective of Flemish modernist painter Rik Wouters at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts in Brussels.

The painter finished it in 1915, some eight months before he succumbed to cancer, at the age of 33. The decade preceding his untimely demise, he created one of the most impressive oeuvres by a Flemish artist, influenced by the revolutionary insights of Paul Cézanne and the explosions of colour that characterised the fauvists.

He used this approach to paint mostly domestic scenes, often with his wife Nel as the main character: ironing, reading a book or just sitting at a window. Homely as they might



**VISUAL ARTS** 

29 March to 20 August

French artist Yves Klein helped

define post-war modernism visu-

ally with his monochrome exper-

iments and philosophically with

his real-time performance inter-

contemporary art's penchant

for the ephemeral. Theatre of the

Void surveys his short but semi-

nal career, from famous works to

unseen masterpieces. The brain-

CONCERT

23 April, 20.30

ventions,

which anticipated

Yves Klein: Theatre of the Void

look, that use of colour renders them with a rambunctious character. This opposition between form and content is the main force of Wouters' work.

The artist was born in Mechelen but created the majority of his work in Brussels. With an exhibition in Antwerp and several in his birthplace, Wouters has been the subject of much attention over the last few years.

But this one is the first exhibition of his work in Brussels since 2002. With 72 paintings, 33 sculptures and 94 works on paper, this is the most complete show ever devoted to the

Surprises might be rare for aficionados of the painter, but even so: It remains an oeuvre that keeps revealing new insights every time you view it. \ Christophe Verbiest

Bozar, Brussels

child of British curator Darren

Pih, the retrospective was orig-

inally conceived for Tate Liver-

pool. The Brussels sequel features

a programme of "happenings" by

Belgian and international artists.

Opening night sees young Flemish

artist Miet Warlop stage a short

performance titled HORSE: A Man,

a Woman, a Desire for Adventure.

BOZAR.BE

GET TICKETS NOW

Bozar, Brussels

BOZAR.BE

Dianne Reeves and the Luxembourg Philharmonic

# CONCERT

Brussels

John Mayall: Livin' & Lovin' the Blues: Performance by the well-seasoned British blues rock pioneer whose musical career spans more than 50 years and includes hits like "Looking Back", "Congo Square" and "Room to Move". 2 April 20.00, Ancienne Belgique, Anspachlaan 110

\ abconcerts.be

#### MANdolinMAN,

**Green Moon:** Two local bands present their new albums, both with a focus on the universal and timeless mandolin. 31 March 20.00, Muziekpublique, Bolwerksquare 3

\ muziekpublique.be

#### **EXHIBITION**

Antwerp

The Human Body: Travelling exhibition about the anatomical science behind more than 200 objects, including preserved human bodies, skeletons, limbs, organs, simulated bodily functions, prototypes and 3D printouts, providing food for thought about organ donation, cancer, AIDS, alcohol and nicotine abuse and poor eating habits. 31 March to 16 April, Parking Pidpa, Desguin-

### **VISUAL ARTS**

Ostend

**Opgepast werken (Caution:** Work in Progress): Free, open-air exhibition featuring the broad spectrum of works by Flemish artist and cartoonist Kamagurka, featuring hundreds of quirky cartoons, drawings and paintings. Until 14 May, Venetiaanse Gaanderijen, Zeedijk \ visitoostende.be

#### **FESTIVAL**

**Brussels** 

Listen!: Second edition of the Brussels Future Music Festival with a focus on electronic music and innovation, featuring live acts, DJ sets, inspirational talks and a record fair. 30 March to 1 April, across Brussels

\ listenfestival.eu

#### **MARKET**

Lier

Fiesta Europa: Travelling international market with stands selling gourmet products from every corner of Europe and featuring a lively terrace and festive atmosphere. 31 March to 2 April, Markt, Gasthuisvest

\ fiestaeuropa.eu

#### CLASSICAL

#### Orazio Vecchi's Requiem

6-7 April

Amuz, Antwerp & CCHA, Hasselt GRAINDELAVOIX.ORG

Antwerp-based arts collective Grandelavoix, led by anthropologist Björn Schmelzer, has been exploring early music through archival research and historically accurate performance for over a decade. The ensemble's latest mission is to resurrect long-forgotten works published by pioneering Antwerp printer Christophe Plantin around 1600. The pieces were composed by Italy's Orazio Vecchi, Portugal's Duarte Lobo and Antwerp's own George de la Hèle, among others, but may never have been performed in their time. Schmelzer and co are also releasing a CD of the project to coincide with this weekend mini-tour.



#### **FILM**

#### **Premiere of Dries**

31 March, 20.00

Bozar, Brussels BOZAR.BE

German director Reiner Holzemer unveils his intimate portrait of celebrated Flemish fashion designer Dries Van Noten. Van Noten rose to prominence 30 years ago as part of the Antwerp Six collective and would become one of the world's top designers. Dries marks the first time the notoriously private figure has allowed a filmmaker into his personal and professional space. Holzemer documents a year in the life of the designer, during which Van Noten launched no less than four new lines. Both Van Noten and Holzemer are set to attend the premiere. (Film in English with Dutch and French surtitles)

Once a year, the Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestra makes a point to step outside the world of classical music with a high-profile pop collaboration. The prestigious ensemble has invited American jazz diva Dianne Reeves and her backing band. Guest conductor Wayne Marshall, a master of the classical-pop crossover in his own right, is on board for this special collaboration. Together they will perform songbook standards and select numbers from Reeves' Grammy Awardwinning 2015 album Beautiful *Life.* After premiering the set in the Grand Duchy, the show hits the road for this Brussels date.

# Talking Dutch

### The writing's on the wall



Derek Blyth More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

The writing's on the wall. Or at least it is now, but it will soon disappear under the wallpaper. The story began 150 years ago, in d'Ursel Castle, a country house in Hingene, part of Bornem in Antwerp province. In 1877 verstopten twee gravinnetjes een brief achter het behang van het kasteel - In 1877 two young countesses hid a letter under the wallpaper in the castle, explains d'Ursel's website.

Ook ambachtslieden zetten hun naam - Workmen also left their name, een tekst of een tekening op de muur a text or a drawing on the wall. Eeuwenlang zaten ze verborgen – They remained hidden for a century achter tientallen katoenen wandbespanningen – behind dozens of layers of cotton wall coverings, maar tijdens de restauratie kwamen ze tevoorschijn – but they came to light during recent restoration work.

The work is now finished, and the castle is ready to hang up its brand new wall coverings. But first they made a call to the public. Zet een boodschap voor de toekomst - Leave a message for the future op de muur van het kasteel - on the castle wall.

It could be anything: je favoriete citaat – your favourite quote, een zelfgeschreven gedicht - a poem you've written yourself, een herinnering of een voorspelling a memory or a prediction, een filosofische gedachte a philosophical thought of een liefdesverklaring - or a declaration of love.

After people submitted their texts, Brody Neuenschwander, an American calligrapher who lives in Bruges, was recruited to transfer the writing to the walls, covering eight rooms with more than 100,000 elegant letters.

The shortest message was "JDB (heart) VVP". The longest was een preek van Patrick Maervoet - a sermon by



Patrick Maervoet, voormalig pastoor van Hingene former pastor of Hingene, die gedurende enkele jaren vlakbij het kasteel woonde - who lived near the castle for several years.

Then there was *de oudste schrijver* – the oldest writer: *de* 87-jarige Alberta Huygelen – 87-year-old Alberta Huygelen, afstammelinge van tapissier Josephus Huygelen – a descendant of the decorator Josephus Huygelen, die in 1877 boodschappen op onze muren heeft geschreven who left messages on our walls in 1877.

Their words will soon disappear beneath the wallpaper, along with a message from Australia, a recipe for a pudding, a poem in West Flanders dialect and a Chinese proverb.

But it's not too late to leave your own message. In de najaar zal Neuenschwander drie extra kamers vullen -Neuenschwander will be decorating three more rooms in the autumn. Je kan je boodschap voor de toekomst nu al insturen - You can already send in your message to

Who knows who will read it in 100 years' time?

### **VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY**



In response to: One in 10 households experience stalking by neighbours

John Snow: I wish I had seen this a year ago.



In response to: Japanese Garden marks 25 years of taking root

Annemarie Bos-de Roos: Did you get the chance to go there Masaki Osugi? Otherwise we should plan a trip! ©



In response to: A boy and his dog: new public sculpture honours literary heroes

Steve Smith: Many of my Flemish friends were completely unaware of this book when I brought it up a few years back



In response to: Tree-planting entrepreneurs put the eco in econ-

Rosemary Morgan: Brilliant idea !!!!



Scott Thwaites @Scott\_Thwaites1

Crazy day riding through the fields of Flanders. Pretty cool to ride where the Christmas truce football game was in the war #GentWevelgem



Nicola @i\_cook\_theworld

Bruges Food Market, wish I was back there!



facebook.com/flanderstoday

### THE LAST WORD

#### Where the heart is

"The availability of affordable homes in the cities is growing, especially in upgraded neighbourhoods."

Real estate expert Philippe Janssens on why more and more young families are putting down roots in Flanders' cities

#### Radio silence

"If you really want to enjoy your Sunday, just turn off your mobile phone."

Flemish TV presenter Tom Waes blames the internet for information — the Eneco Clean Beach Cup in De overload, causing stress even during Panne at the weekend, in which

#### **Behind bars**

"I can understand that secondary school students get the idea they're in prison."

Principal Ann Daelemans spent 17 years working in Mechelen prison before making the switch

#### Many hands

"One million seabirds and 100,000 turtles die every year as a result of plastic in the oceans. Actions like today's are necessary to draw attention to the problem."

Sven Fransen was the organiser of more than 2,500 volunteers picked up 5.3 tonnes of rubbish



**REEFER MADNESS** Greenpeace activists unfurled a banner at the Total oil refinery in Antwerp on Monday, in protest at the company's plans to drill near a recently discovered coral reef off the coast of Brazil. The protest is part of the Break Free movement, a global platform of citizens and organisations calling for an end to the use of fossil fuels.

