



AT YOUR SERVICE

A new ombudsservice lets dissatisfied customers lodge a complaint against retailers if all other attempts to reach a solution have failed

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IN GOOD HANDS

An investment boost for Flemish start-up Cubigo will help the digital care platform expand and provide its unique services for the elderly abroad

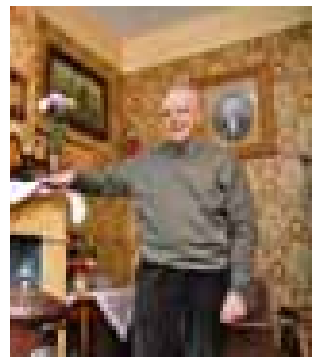
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SPEAKING THE SAME LANGUAGE

A language invented by early 20th-century mine workers in Limburg is certain to die out, but a research project will make sure it is not forgotten

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© Veronique Evrard

Festival fit for a king

Party like it's 1549 at Brussels' celebration of the Holy Roman Emperor



Diana Goodwin
Follow Diana on Twitter \ @basedinbelgium

A two-month festival devoted to the life and times of Charles V culminates in a huge 16th-century-style procession through the capital.

Every year, Brussels hosts a city-wide cultural festival celebrating the time when Charles V, Duke of Burgundy, King of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor, ruled over an empire that stretched from Eastern Europe all the way to distant Spanish colonies in the New World. Brussels was at the very heart of this empire.

The Carolus V Festival spans the two months leading up to the Ommegang, the recreation of a grand procession put on by the city in 1549 to welcome Charles V and his heir, Philip II of Spain. Ommegang, which takes place in the first week of July, is one of the highlights of the capital's cultural calen-

dar and a major draw for tourists.

Born in Ghent, brought up in Mechelen and with very close ties to Brussels, Charles V had a massive influence on the region, and his legend lingers both in the history books and the imagination.

But there's a problem, according to Roel Jacobs, an expert on Charles V and an historical advisor to Brussels. "It's the main tourist event, but we don't talk enough about the historical context, about the meaning of it," he says.

While the Ommegang re-enactment is in its 87th edition, the Carolus V Festival was launched in 2012 as a way of sharing its historical context with the people of Brussels and with visitors. The city plays a co-ordinating role, inviting cultural organisations to participate and publicising the programme.


"We ask museums and historical societies to do things based on the Ommegang in May and June, with scientific conferences, publications, historic walks, exhibitions, theatre and all kind of other activities that point to the importance of Brussels in the 16th century," explains Jacobs.

This year, the central theme is the Romantic literary tradition of the 19th century. "Charles V is of course very important from a historical perspective," says Jacobs. "But he is equally important from a legendary perspective."

There will be talks and symposia on the influential novel about the folk figure Tjil Uilenspiegel by Belgian writer Charles de Coster, which was first published in French 150 years ago. Although Uilenspiegel had his roots in old Germanic legends, de Coster placed him in the time of Charles V and Philip II.

New service for customers to lodge complaints against shops

Consumers can file online complaint against retailer if all else fails



Alan Hope
More articles by Alan \ [flanderstoday.eu](#)

Customers in dispute with supermarkets and other retailers can now take their problems to the new Ombudsman voor de handel (Trade Ombudsman) launched last week by retail federation Comeos. There are already 40 retail chains representing more than 4,000 outlets in Belgium signed up to the service, which is free to consumers.

“We are accepting our responsibilities as a sector,” said Comeos CEO Dominique Michel. “Consumers need to be confident that they can count on the best post-sales service possible. But they also need to know that they can seek a solution if things go wrong.”

The new service is made up mostly of supermarkets and big-box chains such as Dreamland, Brico, Carrefour, Colruyt, Delhaize, Lidl, Media Markt and Standaard Boekhandel.



© Courtesy Colruyt Group

Federal consumer affairs minister Kris Peeters told VRT that he hoped others would quickly join the list.

On the website, customers can find information about their rights, whether purchasing online or in a store, and lodge a complaint if all other attempts to reach an agreement with the retailer have failed. The retailer first receives and responds to the complaint.

If the customer is still not happy, the ombudsservice takes over. Customers can only file a complaint against retailers that are signed up to the service.

Lidl CEO Boudewijn van de Brand stressed that the company's own customer service remains the place to address complaints in the vast majority of cases. “But we are aiming for 100% customer-friendliness,” he said. “That’s why that remaining 1% of exceptional cases have to be dealt with.”

British royals to visit Mesen for battle commemoration

The Duke of Cambridge, Prince William, and his wife, Kate Middleton, will attend the 7 June ceremony in Mesen, West Flanders, recognising the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Messines, mayor Sandy Evrard has announced.

The commemoration of the First World War battle, which took place from 7 to 14 June 1917, will involve a joint British-Irish delegation as well as groups from Australia and New Zealand. The British-Irish commemoration will take place at the Irish Peace Park on the afternoon of 7 June.

The Battle of Messines – considered a prelude to the Third Battle of Ypres – saw Allied forces devastate German lines by detonating 19 mines simultaneously via tunnels. The explosion was heard as far away as Dublin.

“For security reasons we cannot release the

entire programme or the measures being taken,” Evrard said. “But we will be extremely well supported by the defence ministry, by the British security services and by our local police.”

It will be “a very symbolic day,” he continued, “where we show our acknowledgement and gratitude. We don’t want to make a big show, but it will be more than just a laying of wreaths and a Last Post.”

British secretary of state for Northern Ireland James Brokenshire also issued a statement: “We have seen all too well how history can divide, but our ambitious goal throughout this decade of centenaries is to seek to use history to bring us together, and to build on the political progress that has been made throughout these islands.” \ AH

2,500 charging stations for electric cars on the way

Flanders’ energy minister, Bart Tommelein, has inaugurated the first of 2,500 charging stations for electric cars planned for the region. At the event in Ostend, he said that the stations would all be installed over the next four years.

The network is part of the government’s plans to promote electric vehicles. There are currently some 900 charging stations in Flanders; the additional stations will bring the total to nearly 3,500. Every municipality in Flanders will have at least one station, and larger cities will have more than 100.

According to research, electric cars are mostly charged at home or at work. Only about 10% are charged in public space. An adequate public network, said Tommelein, will ensure that charging facilities are always nearby when drivers need them.

Energy distributors Eandis and Infrax

have created the distribution plan and are managing the creation of the network. The delivery, installation and management of the stations is being carried out by Dutch company Allego.

Residents will also be able to request loading stations for their area from the energy distributors. Areas with many apartment buildings and few private garages, for instance, are target areas.

Users of public charging stations pay for the electricity with an app or a pre-paid card. According to Dries Dennequin, who is co-ordinating the project for Eandis, electric power is much cheaper than petrol or diesel. “Purchasing €50 in diesel or petrol will get you between 700 and 900 kilometres,” he said. “With an electric car, that becomes 1,200 kilometres.”

\ Andy Furniere

Security services prepare for arrival of President Trump

Belgian security services are trying to prepare for the arrival of US president Donald Trump, but his agenda remains uncertain, a source with the federal police told *Bruzz*. Trump is due to attend a Nato summit on 25 May, but the details of his visit are still unclear.

Tight security is part of every visit by an American president and of a Nato summit, with the heads of state of other Nato countries also present. Trump comes to Brussels a day after an audience with the Pope, and he leaves immediately after the summit to attend a G7 summit in Sicily.


However, as *Flanders Today* went to press, it was not yet known whether he will arrive on 24 May or the morning of 25 May, nor whether his entourage will land at Brussels Airport or at the military airfield at nearby Melsbroek. His itinerary and lodging also remains a closely guarded secret.

The details are crucial, according to an unnamed source with the federal police, speaking to *Bruzz*, given the level of security demanded by the US Secret Service. For example, when President Obama came to Brussels, 320 kilometres of sewers were inspected in advance and all manhole covers

sealed in places where the president was likely to be.


“It makes it difficult for us to prepare,” the source said. President Trump also faces demonstrations. “The protests make the situation even more complicated. The police are at the end of their tether.”

While a spokesperson for the Elsenne police zone admitted that “it’s of course easier to work if the details of the visit are known down to the last point,” he also said that “we’ve been preparing for weeks for various scenarios at different locations”. \ AH




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reports of drones illegally entering Belgian airspace in 2016, air traffic control agency Belgocontrol reported. None of the incidents was serious




650,000

stickers sold by volunteers for the annual Red Cross fundraiser, which ended on 11 May. That's 80,000 more than last year and beats the 2006 record of 580,000, at a price of €5 each




87.4%

of household waste in Belgium is recycled, the highest percentage in Europe, according to the annual report of Fost Plus, which promotes sorting and recycling



8.4

points out of 10 awarded to Antwerp Airport in a safety survey carried out at all Belgian airports by consumer rights organisation Test-Aankoop. Brussels Airport came fourth behind Ostend and Liège



7.6 million

hectolitres of beer consumed in Belgium in 2016, down 3% on 2015. 56% is sold in shops and 44% in pubs and restaurants. Beer exports were up by 8%

WEEK IN BRIEF

The federal, Brussels-Capital and Flemish governments have together acquired a **25% stake in the Flagey building** in Brussels, allowing them a minority stake and a blocking the vote for any plans announced by the new majority owner Michel Moortgat, owner of the Duvel Moortgat brewery. Moortgat had already given guarantees to the non-profit that runs the building’s cultural activities. Any change of plans will now have to be passed by the three governments.

The **director of the Islamic and Cultural Centre** in the Great Mosque in Brussels has stepped down unexpectedly and returned to Saudi Arabia, according to Staatsblad, the government’s official journal. Jamal Saleh Momenah was recently questioned by the parliamentary commission on last year’s terror attacks on the question of his organisation’s influence on radicalised youth, after which commission chair Patrick Dewael filed a perjury complaint against him.

It is becoming harder and harder for low-income families to find **affordable rental properties**, the Flemish Housing Council has announced. Vulnerable families risk falling into the grey market where tenants’ rights and housing conditions are not regulated,. The Council is calling for a “substantial increase” in the supply of social housing.

Mister Gay Belgium, Raf Van Puymbroeck, has won third place in the **Mister Gay World** finals in Gran Canaria. Van Puymbroeck, 22, is a sports and exercise teacher at Thomas More University College. He was up against 20 other national winners. First place went to John Fernandez Raspado from the Philippines.

Recticel, a producer of insulation, has announced that the **shortage of insulation materials** currently holding up many building and renovation projects is likely to continue until July. The industry is having to delay projects because the supply of insulation materials has been reduced by a shortage of isocyanates, a crucial raw material.

Nebusha P, a suspect in the 2015 murder of Limburg **drugs syndicate boss Silvino Aquino**, has been released from prison on bail of €25,000, the prosecutor’s office in Antwerp has announced. Three other suspects are also in prison.

Het Nieuwsblad and *Mo** magazine are among the winners of the **biennial press prizes** issued by the Federal Council for Sustainable Development. Annelies Roose of *Het Nieuwsblad* won for her series on living for 40 days without producing household waste. Tine Hens of *Mo** won for her reporting on the climate summit in Marrakesh.

The City of Antwerp has moved the famed **Mustel harmonium** from the wedding room of the town hall to a new home in the Vleeshuis, in preparation for the coming renovations to the town hall. The instrument was built in 1898 but fell into disuse until it was rediscovered in 2007 and later restored. It will continue to be used for concerts in its new home.

Flemish culture minister Sven Gatz was in Roeselare this week to inaugurate a new system that allows **libraries to lend e-books in English**. The system also covers the libraries Muntpunt in Brussels, De Krook in Ghent and the municipal libraries in Mechelen and Ostend. The project hopes to

attract Flemish publishers to join up.

The **iconic Nokia 3310**, one of the most popular early mobile phones, will go on sale again in Belgium on 22 May. The phone, together with the addictive Snake game, will be available from many media outlets, including Proximus, MediMarkt, Krefel and Van den Borre for €59.99.

The municipalities of Opglabbeek and Meeuwen-Gruitrode in Limburg have reached an agreement on their new name when the merger is complete in 2019. The **new municipality will be called Oudsbergen**, following a vote of the residents for the four names proposed by a local jury. The name refers to the nature reserve that adjoins both towns.

Artist **Wim Delvoye** has been **summoned** by a court in Ghent to answer charges relating to breaches of building and environmental regulations related to his mansion in Melle. He is accused of felling 20 trees without a licence and of laying down a concrete floor in an area next to the mansion. Delvoye intended to restore the house De Bueren, which is a listed monument, to its original state and open a sculpture park.

Flemish cities have **installed fewer solar panels** than the residents of villages in the region, according to Andries Gryffroy, energy specialist for N-VA. In Kinrooi, Limburg, for example, solar panels produce 474.69 kilowatts of energy for every 1,000 residents. That compares with only 31.62 kw per thousand inhabitants of the city of Antwerp. According to Gryffroy, the reason is that there are more urban dwellers living under one roof compared to the country.

FACE OF FLANDERS



From left: Flanders Today staff Lisa Bradshaw, Alan Hope, Sally Tipper and Bartosz Brezezinski

Flanders Today

SAVEFLANDERTODAY.EU

Face of Flanders this week is none other than the staff and journalists of *Flanders Today*. You might only see four of us in the photo, but there are about 30 more correspondents out there in the field, chasing up quotes, following up stories, discovering Flanders and telling you all about it. The reason we are the focus of this week’s Face of Flanders is because the Flemish government has announced that it will not rebid the *Flanders Today* project, meaning that the newspaper – both online and print – will shut down on 1 October. *Flanders Today* is the product of a bid request issued by the Flemish government’s foreign affairs department. Media companies bid on the project, and the department uses a number of criteria – including price, available resources and design – to choose which company to award the contract. The project has undergone three bids since 2007 and has been awarded to Mediahuis each time. Its subsidiary Ackroyd Publications – an English-language publisher in Belgium for 55 years – is responsible for editorial and

management. The last contract, which runs for a period of four years, is set to expire on 30 September. That contract was for €930,000 a year. After 10 years, the foreign affairs department has decided not to rebid the project. It said that the decision was based on an audit carried out earlier this year on its English-language products, which include the website Fans of Flanders, VRT’s English-language news site *FlandersNews* and *Flanders Today*. The audit was overwhelmingly positive of the quality and impact of *Flanders Today* but had two main criticisms: It was not successful at promoting the foreign affairs department and “FlandersNews offers a comparable product at a lower cost”. The staff and management of *Flanders Today* were taken by complete surprise by the government’s decision and the reasons behind it. We have decided to ask our readers for their support in our efforts to save *Flanders Today*. Please visit the website Save FlandersToday.eu for more information. \ Lisa Bradshaw

OFFSIDE
Bruegel 2.0

PEER.BE/CARTOONFESTIVAL

In February, Peer in Limburg celebrated the 650th anniversary of its status as a town, granted by the nobleman Everaert van der Marck. Some 150 years later, it was, legend has it, the birthplace of the most significant painter of the Flemish Renaissance, Pieter Bruegel the Elder. One of the events marking the 650th anniversary is the Cartoon Festival. The call went out to cartoonists all over the world to imagine the modern world through Breugel’s eyes. No fewer than 573 cartoons were sent in from 260 cartoonists in 55 countries. “Imagine the work of Bruegel seen through the eyes of a Chinese, Brazilian, Greek or Kosovar artist,” the municipal council said. “This is proof that Bruegel is still modern, even 450 years after his death.” The submissions were whittled down to 150 by a jury chaired by Kurt Valkeneers, better known as Klier, the house cartoonist for *Het Belang Van Limburg* and *Gazet Van Antwerpen*. Klier also drew the poster (*pictured*), a parody of Bruegel’s “The Peasant Wedding”, in which the delivery of something that looks like hummus to a table of wedding guests is replaced by a pizza delivery boy on a scooter. The exhibition runs until 31 July. \ Alan Hope



© Klier/Stad Peer

FLANDERTODAY Flanders
State of the Art

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5TH COLUMN

An old friend

When N-VA entered the federal government coalition in 2014, it pledged a “communitarian standstill”. During the five-year term, there would be no negotiations about state and institutional reforms.

The freeze on such talks was a condition imposed by MR, prime minister Charles Michel’s party. MR was the only French-speaking party willing to form a coalition with the Flemish nationalists. The pledge was a bit of a risk for N-VA, as state reform is its core business. But party leaders agreed, stating that economic and social issues were in the interests of the Flemish.

Its base of traditional nationalist voters basked in the largest victory they had ever witnessed with an unwavering belief in party president Bart De Wever. The focus has since shifted to identity and security issues.

“Belgium’s pending break-up”, which tends to generate as much international attention as local indifference, has long disappeared from the headlines. But in an essay published in the new book *Onvoltooid Vlaanderen* (Flanders Unfinished), De Wever spelled out his strategy for achieving an independent Flanders.

He wants to pique French-speakers’ interest in state reform, he said: If federal policies have nothing left to offer them, they will be more willing to discuss alternative scenarios, in which they can decide their own fate.

Up until now, this strategy has not worked, but who knows what could happen in 2019, the next election year, with the far-left PTB becoming increasingly popular in Wallonia. This may lead to very different political situations north and south of the language border – and kindle the desire among French-speakers to go their own way.

Elio Di Rupo, the French-speaking socialist De Wever negotiated with for months in 2010, reacted furiously to the most recent statements, but his anger is mostly directed at MR, which chose to enter a coalition with N-VA.

Since De Wever’s essay was published a few weeks ago, Flemish minister-president Geert Bourgeois and mobility minister Ben Weyts, both N-VA, have spoken out in favour of state reforms. Bourgeois wants to regionalise justice, “like in true federal states such as Canada, the US and Germany,” and Weyts has similar plans for mobility.

One thing is certain: De Wever has certainly piqued interest in state reform within his own party. \ Anja Otte

Ruling threatens plans to demolish port-area villages

Council of State overturns order taking over property in Doel



Alan Hope

More articles by Alan \ flanderstoday.eu

The Flemish government’s plan to demolish the town of Doel in the port of Antwerp area has received a potentially fatal blow with the Council of State’s decision at the weekend. The court voted down the regional planning order that allowed the government to take over property in Doel, including the Ouden Doel and Rapenburg subdivisions.

The Council of State, which scrutinises government actions at all levels, was asked to rule on the order by residents of Doel and Ouden Doel, who have battled for years to save the two villages. Both are districts of Beveren, located on the left bank of the Scheldt in East Flanders.



© Courtesy Doel 2020

The ruling also affects work to return parts of the polder land along the left bank to nature, a matter related to the deepening of the river several years ago.

In a break from tradition, the full Council followed the advice of its auditor only partly.

Where that advice, which is not binding on the Council, recommended overturning the whole planning order, the Council decided to make an exception for the Logistical Park Waasland and for the right bank.

The government now intends to study the ruling and work towards a solution “to respond to the demand for extra container processing in the Antwerp port area,” the government’s port development agency said.

“With this ruling, a new page has been turned,” said Jan Creve, spokesperson for the activist group Doel 2020. “We will now wait for the Flemish government to recognise this and to enter into negotiations with us.”

Flanders and Basque ministers meet to talk food tourism

Flanders’ minister for tourism was in the Basque country in Spain last week to sign an agreement between the two regions to promote gastronomic tourism. The meeting between Ben Weyts and his Basque counterpart, Alfredo Retortillo, took place in San Sebastian.

Weyts was accompanied by chef Seppe Nobels of Graanmarkt 13 in Antwerp, who took part in a “food battle” in the kitchen with Basque chef Xabier Zabaleta of Restaurante Aratz.

The occasion for the meeting was the UN World Tourism Organisation’s World Forum, which brings together experts from around the world to debate the current challenges of culinary tourism. Weyts would like Flanders to host the 2020 edition of the forum.

“Getting the World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism to Flanders

would be the icing on the cake for our gourmet reputation,” he said. Meanwhile, Weyts is bringing together young culinary talent to represent Flemish gastronomy, forming the Young Chefs team to take part in international culinary competitions.

By the end of this month, each of Flanders’ 25 hotel schools will have put forward two top prospects under the age of 21 to take part in individual and team challenges. They will cook menus using ingredients provided but not seen in advance in an attempt to become one of the eight members of the Young Chefs team.

“We already have a top athletes policy,” Weyts said. “Now we also have a top chefs policy. We will be plucking the best kitchen talent from the classroom and preparing them for the culinary high spots.” \ AH

Credit insurance could pave way to no-deposit mortgages

Flemish finance minister Bart Tommelein has suggested a new type of credit insurance that would enable home-buyers to borrow up to 100% of the purchase price of a property. The National Bank of Belgium (NBB) said it would approve the idea under certain conditions.

The NBB recently advised lenders against no-deposit, or 100%, mortgages – meaning lending the total amount of the purchase price – because they carry a higher risk of borrowers being unable to repay the loan. When the lending bank forecloses on the mortgage, it recoups only part of its losses.

Instead, the NBB has told banks to limit their loans to 80% of the value of the property. The borrower would then be responsible for coming up with the remaining 20%.

Some politicians said this would make it virtually impossible for most young people to purchase their first home. In response, Tommelein has proposed credit insurance that would cover part of the value of a house in the event of a default. This would enable home-buyers to borrow up to 100% of the purchase price but offer banks better protection against losses.

The proposal was submitted to the NBB, which said it would accept it under certain conditions. The insurer, for example, must be officially recognised and have a credit rating, and the contract cannot contain clauses that can be unilaterally amended by the insurer.

Tommelein now intends to hold further talks with the banks and insurance companies to work out the details of the proposal. \ AH

Kortrijk delegation visits sister city in South Carolina

A group of representatives from the city of Kortrijk, led by mayor Vincent Van Quickenborne, visited Greenville, South Carolina, in the US last week. The trip was the return leg of a visit by Greenville representatives that took place last year.

The exchange is part of the Sister Cities campaign, which first brought Greenville (pictured) together with the West Flanders city through links based in the textile industry. In addition, there was a relationship created by the service of the US Army’s 30th Infantry Division during the Battle of the Somme in the First World War.

Greenville representatives led by acting mayor Jil Littlejohn visited Kortrijk in June last year. “It was a pleasure, after years of silence between our cities, to meet our colleagues from Greenville again,” Van Quickenborne told Flanders Today. “A lot has changed in the meantime, but you also see the similarities.”

Isabelle Pertry, director of the international affairs department of HoWest University



© Tim/Wikimedia

College in Kortrijk, is one of the representatives taking part in the exchange. Last year, she says, “was a first introduction to each other’s institutions and exploration of possible common areas of interest and options to co-operate. HoWest hopes to develop opportunities for academic co-operation, including long- and short-term student exchanges. We’re also looking into

training opportunities for our senior students within the higher education institutions, companies and organisations in Greenville.”

“I’m a fan of any exchange,” said Roel Vandommele, dean of HoWest. “They are a breath of fresh air and help me think broader and bigger. More specifically, I hope that the visit to Greenville will inspire collaborations between education and local communities and organisations.” Others travelling to Greenville included finance and education city councillor Kelly Detavernier, Wim Van Cauteren of Flanders Investment & Trade and Stijn Debaille of Designregio Kortrijk

The visit, said Van Quickenborne, offered the representatives the opportunity “to discover up close all the things we have heard about Greenville. Kortrijk’s higher education institutions will be with us, and that should lead to closer ties and hopefully more sustainable co-operation. And we’re also looking forward to co-operation with Greenville businesses.”

\ AH

Festival fit for a king

Charles V had a massive influence on the region, and his legend lingers

continued from page 1

CAROLUSFESTIVAL.BE

Born in Damme, near Bruges, Uilenspiegel fights for independence and religious freedom against the Spanish king and corrupt Catholic priests. His picaresque adventures, set against the backdrop of the Dutch Revolt and Counter-Reformation, mix humour with historical detail. Jacobs is keen to emphasise that the importance of Brussels under Charles V has long been underestimated. "Everyone knows that in the 16th century, Antwerp was the economic centre of Europe," he says, "but at the same point, Brussels was equally important – not from an economic perspective but from a political one. And those things go together." The role that Brussels played in European politics was tied to the fact that Charles V, who was obliged to travel constantly to oversee his vast empire, spent more time in Brussels than in any other city. Jacobs: "Brussels was never an economic powerhouse like Bruges or Antwerp, or an industrial giant such as Ghent or Liège, or a religious centre like Tournai or Cambrai. So what was it? It was the town that would become the most influential residence of the emperor."

Born in Ghent in 1500, Charles V was the son of Philip the Fair, heir to the Duchy of Burgundy through his mother, Mary of Burgundy, and to the Habsburg monarchy through his father, Maximilian of Austria. Charles' mother was Joanna of Castile, who inherited the crowns of Aragon and Castile. The Burgundian lands included all of the Netherlands as well as the ancestral seat in France, and the kingdom of Aragon included Naples, Sicily and Sardinia. In 1506, Charles inherited the Burgundian lands upon his father's untimely death.

“Charles V is very important from a historical perspective, but he is equally important from a legendary perspective

By 1516, Charles – a teenager – became King of Aragon and Castile, and in 1519 he became the Habsburg ruler. In 1530, he was elected Holy Roman Emperor by the German princes, over claims from Francis I of France and Henry VIII of England.

He spent much of his reign fighting France, the Ottomans and Protestantism, and struggling to both defend and extend his terri-



© Veronique Evrard

The family-friendly Carolus V Festival is one of the highlights of the capital's cultural calendar and a major draw for tourists

tory. Throughout his life, Charles favoured the Burgundian Netherlands, the region where he was born and had spent his youth. He spoke French and Dutch fluently, only learning Spanish later in life. And for the most part, the Low Countries were loyal to Charles. They were also an important source of tax revenue – which funded his military ambitions. By 1554, Charles was exhausted from years of constant war, and ill with gout. He began a series of abdications, dividing his titles and lands between his brother Frederick and his son Philip.

In 1555, he conferred the Burgundian territories on his son in the Aula Magna (great hall) of the Coudenberg Palace in Brussels. He died in a monastery in Spain in 1558.

The complexities of running such a large empire gave rise to a new class of educated civil servants, who no longer followed the ruler on his constant travels but stayed in one place to conduct his busi-

ness and administer his laws, even when he was absent. The Broodhuis, built on Brussels' Grote Markt during Charles V's reign, housed his ministers and courts. The presence of this cosmopolitan class of imperial functionaries, combined with the royal court and local aristocracy, contributed to a political and economic stability that fuelled the growth of local industries producing luxury products such as tapestries.

Jacobs tells the story of the tapestries woven in Brussels in 1515 for the Sistine Chapel and based on the now-famous Raphaël Cartoons. Although we now admire the ceiling painted by Michelangelo as one of the greatest works of Renaissance art, the tapestries cost five times as much as the ceiling paintings at the time.

"We don't understand that anymore, because we consider painting to be the pinnacle of the arts," he says. "But at that time, tapestry was much more important than painting." And Brussels was the main centre of tapestry weaving in the 16th century.

The Carolus V Festival is centred on the Coudenberg Museum, an archaeological site under the Kunstberg that preserves the remnants of the old Burgundian palace. In the 16th century, it was one of the most splendid palaces in all of Europe, and Charles V had a magnificent Gothic chapel added to it in honour of his

parents.

As part of the festival, the museum will present the exhibition *Remigio Cantagallina: An Italian Traveller in the Southern Netherlands*. This Florentine artist visited the court of the Hapsburg Archdukes Albert and Isabella in the early 17th century and created detailed drawings of Brussels and the surrounding area.

The original sketches are quite small and will be displayed in the Old Masters wing of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts. But enlarged reproductions will be on display in the Coudenberg, along with information about the artist and his travels, presenting a unique opportunity to see how Brussels appeared not long after the time

of Charles V.

Like Cantagallina, the outsider who arrives in Brussels today often appreciates things that go unnoticed by locals. Jacobs believes the expat community has had a hand in kindling modern interest in Charles V.

"The majority of European people who come to Brussels are more interested in the history of Brussels than the people of Brussels themselves are," he says. "It's important that there is that kind of international interest."

Tourists, he says, are regularly asked why they chose to visit Brussels. "Always, history and patrimony are their biggest reasons to visit. It's not because of the weather!"

CAROLUS V FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

Family Day at Coudenberg

Renaissance-themed activities for young and old. Period buffet and cooking workshops, crossbow demonstrations, games, period dances and more. 21 May 10.00-18.00, Paleizenplein 7, Brussels; €7

Ommegang 1,400 costumed performers in Renaissance dress re-enact the Ommegang as it was presented for Charles V in 1549. 5 & 7 July 20.30, Grote Zavel, Brussels; free

Other Ommegang activities

include a Renaissance market around the Oude Beurs, crossbow shooting in Grote Zavel and jousting in Warande Park across from the Royal Palace.

Renaissance Weekend at Erasmus House Two days of family-oriented activities in Brussels' oldest house. Costumed musicians and dancers, a Renaissance market, craft demonstrations, stories and games. 23-24 September 10.00-18.00, Kapittelstraat 31, Anderlecht, €1.25

WEEK IN BUSINESS

Supermarkets \ Colruyt

The Halle-based discount supermarket chain has signed an agreement with China's Alibaba online wholesale site to carry some 50 of its in-house products, including mustard, mayonnaise, corn-flakes and its Cara Pils, which will be available in cans.

Energy \ Umicore

The Brussels-based materials and non-ferrous metals group is investing €300 million to increase the capacity of its NMC (nickel-manganese-cobalt) batteries production units in China and South Korea. The six-fold increase should go some way to meeting demand for manufacturers of electric vehicles.

Cinema \ Kinopolis

The Ghent-based cinema chain has reached an agreement with France's UGC group to sell it the property that houses the UGC cinema on Guldenvlieslaan in Brussels for €13 million. Kinopolis had bought the property in 2014 and was subsequently investigated by competition authorities.

Beverages \ Konings

The beverages producing and bottling company, based in Zonhoven, Limburg, has acquired a Bacardi rum production unit in Beaucaire, France. Other drinks produced on the site include Eristoff Vodka and Benedictine liquor.

Dredging \ Deme

In recent weeks, the Antwerp-based dredging group has signed €125 million in dredging, coastal protection and land reclamation contracts in West Africa.

Brewing \ Alken-Maes

The subsidiary of the Dutch Heineken group, based in Kontich, Antwerp province, is investing up to €75 million over the next three years to increase capacity of its breweries in Opwijk and Asse, both in Flemish Brabant. The locations produce the Affligem and Mort Subite brands respectively.

Data \ Econocom

The quoted Belgo-French data services supplier has acquired Bis, the Mechelen-based multimedia solutions and digital applications group from America's Mood Media Corporation for €18 million.

Freight train begins epic journey from China to Zeebrugge

Trainload of Volvo cars destined for dispatch around the world



Alan Hope

More articles by Alan \ flanderstoday.eu

The first freight train carrying Volvo cars from China to the port of Zeebrugge set off at the weekend. From Zeebrugge, the cars will be dispatched by ship to the rest of the world.

Federal economy minister Kris Peeters (pictured) was in Daqing on Saturday to witness the start of the link, which he called "very important symbolically". The train will travel via Russia, Belarus, Poland and Germany before reaching Zeebrugge.

The first train from the Volvo factory, now owned by the Chinese Geely group, is scheduled to arrive in the port on 26 June. According



© Kris Peeters/Twitter

to port CEO Joachim Coens, there will be three trains a week, each carrying 123 cars.

The new cars, the model S90, will then be further transported in containers. The port is looking for ways to fill the train when it returns to China. The port expects to receive between 30,000 and 40,000 cars over a year, which suggests a higher frequency than expected – up to 300 trains a year, according to Peeters.

The train link will still only represent a small fraction of the total automobile traffic through Zeebrugge, which totalled 2.8 million vehicles in 2016. "Zeebrugge is known to be a world hub for new cars," Coens said.

KBC teaches financial basics to secondary school pupils

Secondary schools can now arrange for staff from KBC bank to provide lessons on "financial literacy" via the bank's Get-a-Teacher project. The bank, which is offering the service for free, is not allowed to use its logos or otherwise promote its own services during the lessons.

More than 200 lessons have already been scheduled. Most of the KBC staff providing the lessons are young people who have a diploma in education. "We have received increasing numbers of more requests in recent years from secondary schools and university colleges to give lessons on bank issues," said KBC in a statement. The bank also said that it receives requests from hospitals, non-profit organisations and other associations.

KBC is focusing on secondary schools this year, but is also preparing lessons for university colleges and universities for the next academic year. The two-hour lessons deal with topics like insurance, saving, investing and loans. Students in economics studies also get a case study on establishing your own business. \ Andy Furniere

DHL accused of abusing labour laws governing day contracts

Federal labour minister Kris Peeters has ordered an investigation into claims that courier service DHL Aviation is breaking labour laws with regards to temporary contracts for staff. The accusation followed an undercover investigation by the VRT television programme *Pano*.

According to *Pano*, which attached a secret camera to a reporter sent to work for the company at its base at Brussels Airport, DHL keeps employees on temporary day contracts for months at a time. "A day contract is only allowed in specific cases," Peeters said. "It cannot be used systematically. Seven months is out of the question."

Among the exceptions are when extreme flexibility is required because of circumstances out of the business's control, such as in restaurants at the coast where weather plays a key role in demand, Peeters' office explained in a statement.

Day contracts allow workers to be hired and fired immediately, and they are not entitled to receive any benefits. *Pano*'s reporter discovered that many employees were



© Courtesy DHL

working under a chain of day contracts; he also uncovered problems with employees getting paid and breaches of workplace safety. The programme followed up with interviews with staff on temporary contracts, who confirmed the allegations.

"What the report reveals is shocking," Peeters said. "Day contracts place the employee in a very vulnerable position and open the door for abuse. The report on DHL Aviation suggests serious offences that I, as labour minister, cannot tolerate."

DHL, meanwhile, said it was aware of the legal restrictions and held to them. No employee was kept on a temporary day contract for more than 20 days, the company said, in direct opposition to what staff are reporting. DHL employs 977 staff in Belgium, 90% of whom have a regular work contract. \ AH

Ryanair take-off plan disregards safety, says Belgocontrol

Belgocontrol, which provides air traffic control services for Belgian airspace, is not in favour of a plan by Ryanair to have all of its pilots request to take off from a specific runway at Brussels Airport. The low-cost airline's idea is to avoid fines related to the new aircraft noise limits imposed by the Brussels-Capital Region.

"Safety and capacity are for us the absolute priorities," a Belgocontrol spokesperson said.

Ryanair has ordered its pilots to request take-off from the eastern end of runway 25R, the most used of the take-off runways at Zaventem. That approach allows planes to climb into the air faster and escape being detected by scanners installed by the Brussels region to measure aircraft noise.

By that means, Ryanair hopes to avoid incurring fines imposed by Brussels for breaching the new noise



© Courtesy Ryanair

limits. "We find it disturbing that an airline would give such a general recommendation to its pilots with the express intention of avoiding fines," the Belgocontrol spokesperson said.

In related news, the Slovakian freight airline Air Cargo Global has decided to move its base out of Brussels Airport because of noise limits and the associated fines. Its last flight has already taken place, it told press agency Belga. The company will operate mostly from Amsterdam and Prague, it said. \ AH

Bombardier Bruges meets with politicians over job losses

Unions representing workers at tram and train constructor Bombardier in Bruges have joined with ministers from the Flemish and federal governments to work out a plan concerning upcoming job losses at the factory. About 200 jobs are at risk under a recently announced restructuring plan that would relocate some of the factory's work to France.

Flemish minister-president Geert Bourgeois and education minister Hilde Crevits met last week with union representatives and federal ministers Kris Peeters (work) and François Bellot (mobility). The parties said they were looking for a "Plan B" for the factory, to ensure a sustainable future with the maximum retention of jobs.

Bombardier, a Canadian company, said it intends to turn its Bruges facility into a unit specialised in finish work and testing. Unions said they welcomed the change and that staff were willing to be retrained. But they stressed that the change could only work if there were enough orders.

At present the company appeared to be heading for "less work and less manpower," according to ACV union representative Steven Bogaert. "But we know it is possible to bring extra work to Bruges."

The government of Flanders is prepared to support the retraining of workers, Bourgeois said. "One of the reasons for the restructuring is the difference in labour costs between France and Belgium," he said. "That's what's bitter about it. It's not as if they're moving production to India or south-east Asia. We have brilliantly trained people and high productivity right here." \ AH

California dreaming

Limburg start-up makes a difference for patients, at home and abroad



Andy Furniere

More articles by Andy \ flanderstoday.eu

\ CUBIGO.COM

Thanks to a €4 million boost, Cubigo aims to conquer the US with a digital platform that helps elderly and disabled people maintain an independent lifestyle from home.

In 2015, Cubigo was named one of the world's most promising start-ups by Google. Two years on, the Flemish company is living up to the expectations. With stable growth and a steady stream of investors, its main objective now is to make the American dream finally come true.

Based in Hasselt, Cubigo hopes to become a global leader in health-related services with its user-friendly platform for people who need care, such as the elderly and handicapped. Last month, the company announced that it has sealed a €4 million investment that should bring it closer to that goal. The money comes from the Flemish entrepreneur Urbain Vandeurzen and the Dutch transport company Transvision. It's symbolic of how quickly Cubigo has grown since 2011, when it was founded as a spin-off company of Hasselt University.

The company was founded by ICT specialist Geert Houben and general practitioner Peter Willems. By combining their experience, they created an easy-to-use platform that provides access to services like meals and transportation to elderly and disabled people, so they can maintain a relatively independent lifestyle from home. "Our platform helps reduce health-care costs, which are increasing because of the ageing population," explains Willems. "At the same time, Cubigo improves the quality of life for people who require care by offering personalised solutions that help them remain active."

Cubigo focuses on three areas: comfort, social life and medical care. With the different apps – known as Cubes – users can order meals and house cleaning services but also check on activities in the area, contact relatives, send blood samples to a care provider, and even video chat with their doctor. The apps are tailored to the needs of each patient and can, for example, suggest meals that are safe for diabetics. With all of these services, Houben says, people are empowered to remain more independent. The platform is made to be as easy as possible and requires minimum technical skills. Cubigo trains the staff at care organisations, and they in turn provide basic training to the platform's end users.

Care providers benefit directly as well, he says, thanks in part to the improved flow of information. It also helps companies and associations – like the over-55 organisation Okra – promote their activities



© courtesy Cubigo

With the easy-to-use platform, users can order meals, contact care providers and request an adapted ride

and services.

According to Houben, who serves as CEO, the pivotal movement for Cubigo came in 2015, when the company was invited by Google to take part in BlackBox Connect, a two-week boot camp for potential leaders in world technology.

Cubigo was one of only 15 start-ups in the world to be invited to BlackBox, which takes place every year in Silicon Valley. The experience, says Houben, completely changed his perspective, prompting him to rethink his plans for Cubigo and aim bigger. "The attention we received in the press also gave us a huge boost."

“Our platform helps reduce health-care costs, which are increasing because of the aging population

After his return from California, Houben managed to secure deals with health insurer Christian Mutualiteit (CM) and the banking and insurance group KBC. CM integrated its own CM-Zorgapp (CM Care app) into the platform, while KBC created the service package Happy@Home, which facilitates the hiring of cleaners, gardeners and maintenance people.

Cubigo, which is based at the Hasselt incubator Corda Campus, also benefits from the knowhow of an existing platform in Limburg. Happy Aging is a community of experts, companies, care organ-

isations, knowledge institutes and policy-makers that work to improve the ageing experience. Happy Aging functions as a living lab, letting elderly people test new products and services that enable them to live safer and more comfortable lives.

Because the Flemish market is relatively small, Cubigo has long had international ambitions. It currently has offices in the Netherlands, Spain and San Francisco in the US. Houben says there is also interest from Canada, Switzerland and Singapore.

The conquest of the American market remains a priority, even

its headquarters at Corda Campus are also becoming too small, so the team is looking into expanding elsewhere.

Through the partnership with Transvision, Cubigo has strengthened its position on the Dutch market. Cubigo created a new app, with which users can book and arrange transportation. Once the users indicate that they are in a wheelchair, for example, the app will suggest adapted buses or taxis. The investment from Vandeurzen, says Houben, is also more than just a financial boost. "He is also lending his expertise and entrepreneurial experience, which will help us to keep on growing."

Cubigo has new products in the pipeline. The team is currently working on technology that will allow people to share their files with others in their care circle, including care providers, but also relatives and friends.

"For instance, if you live abroad," says Houben, "you will still be able to follow up in detail on your grandmother back home and discuss possible measures with others in her care circle."

Cubigo is sometimes called the "Facebook for the third age", but Houben stresses that the platform's focus remains on care services. "We help people maintain social contact, but we don't want to become like Facebook," he says.

For the same reason, the platform also doesn't allow advertising. "We suggest options for services, like maintenance work," Houben says, "but only based on people's location and needs."

WEEK IN INNOVATION

Self-learning chip from imec composes its own music

Researchers at the Leuven-based research centre imec have developed a new type of chip that can learn from its experiences and compose its own music. The new chip can recognise patterns in data and learn to perform additional tasks by taking into account earlier experiences. According to imec, self-learning chips could be used in the management of large data flows, like road traffic analysis, and healthcare. "When used in heart sensors, self-learning chips can identify subtle changes in heart rate that may pose potential health risks," imec said in a statement. "This would enable health monitoring that is tailored to individual patients."

New air filter clears up pollution and generates power

Researchers from the universities of Antwerp and Leuven have developed a method to simultaneously purify the air and generate power. The device purifies polluted air on one side and produces hydrogen gas from the purification process on the other side. This hydrogen gas can be stored and used later as fuel, such as for hydrogen-powered buses. The innovation addresses two major environmental needs: clean air and alternative energy. The device itself is also eco-friendly way, using technology similar to solar panels to operate. "At a later stage, we want to scale up our technology to make the process applicable for industry," said professor Sammy Verbruggen.

Digital Belgium Skills Fund launched for disadvantaged youth

Alexander De Croo, responsible for the digital agenda in the federal government, has launched the Digital Belgium Skills Fund, focused on young people. The fund has a budget of €18 million, to be invested in projects over the next three years. The projects will provide digital training to people under the age of 30, with priority given to vulnerable groups. "We have to make sure that everybody in our digital society has equal opportunities, regardless of their age, background or situation at home," said De Croo. The first projects to be considered for funding should teach participants basic coding and online security, but projects focusing on more complex skills can also receive support.

\ Andy Furniere

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Let's get digital

KU Leuven's Kulak campus unveils classrooms of the future



Andy Furniere

More articles by Andy \ flanderstoday.eu

KULEUVEN-KULAK.BE

Last month, the University of Leuven's Kulak campus in Kortrijk opened its new living lab. Its classrooms come equipped with the latest technology that revolutionises the way teachers conduct classes, enabling more interaction and collaboration between students. At Edulab, the students can, for example, send questions electronically to their teachers. The technology is provided by Kortrijk-based video and screen manufacturer Barco and by Televic, a company based in nearby Izegem that specialises in digital education platforms.

Last year, the two companies teamed up with KU Leuven on the Tecol project, which encourages innovation in educational technology. "Kulak is the perfect place to test the latest tech because we teach a wide array of programmes on a small scale," says professor Piet Desmet, the driving force behind the project.

In Kulak's largest auditorium, students can already ask "quiet" questions during class. Rather than raising their hands and speaking up, which not all students are comfortable doing, they can send questions through an online platform.

The platform is accessible on their laptops, smartphones and tablets. Their fellow students can "like" the questions, and the ones that receive the most likes are shown to the lecturer.

To ensure students are engaged and understand the content, lecturers can give them quizzes with multiple-choice questions. They can also see how the students feel about a certain topic with the



Digital classrooms foster direct interaction between students and teachers

use of an opinion poll and, if necessary, use the feedback to re-evaluate the lesson plan.

Edulab's main room consists of an open space with several working units – each equipped with a screen – and a larger screen in the middle. "Students sit in groups, and their devices are connected to the unit, so that the screen above shows what they're doing," Desmet explains. "This gives instructors a clear overview, so they can help the students, including by showing additional information on the larger screen."

Everything that appears on the screens is saved on the main digital platform. Students can go over their work after school and prepare for an exam, for example. Another classroom features a set of screens with which other students and instructors can virtually join the lectures. "Now we can invite students from other institutions to participate," says Desmet, "and organise virtual lectures by guest professors or other experts. A specialist at a hospital, for example, can give medical students

remote feedback, or we can have an entrepreneur share their experience without having to come to the campus."

The Edulab will also soon feature a virtual classroom that will enable students to follow lectures from wherever they are. This should prove particularly helpful to professionals interested in additional training and to students who combine their studies with a job. The virtual classroom should be ready by this autumn.

In its renovated campus library, Kulak also set up high-tech rooms where students can study. There is also a separate room equipped with screens and a camera in which students can practise and record their presentations. Afterwards, they can analyse the recording on their computers or phones. While students are generally quick to adjust to new technologies, some lecturers face a much steeper learning curve. But Kulak also offers training sessions for them.

The Tecol project finishes at the end of the academic year, but

Edulab is here to say. The gained insights, says Desmet, will be used to introduce best practices in other institutions, including the main campus in Leuven.

Last month, Kulak also launched a new smart education programme spearheaded by the Leuven-based nanotech research centre imec. The programme unites imec's technical expertise with the work of research groups from different Flemish universities. The government of Flanders has set aside €5 million to support it over the next five years.

As part of the programme, researchers will test systems that assess students' attention levels with facial recognition and sensors. "We will see if it's possible to monitor the students' focus by analysing their movements, heart rate and sweat," explains Desmet. To test more personalised instruction techniques, the programme will also look at adaptive learning systems. The goal is to develop systems that can take into account what the students already know and adjust the tempo and difficulty levels accordingly. If this works, language classes, for example, could be taught much more efficiently.

The developments will be used to improve the education system as a whole, but they could also lead to new economic initiatives like start-ups. In Flanders, talks are underway to create incubator spaces for new enterprises that focus on smart education.

There are no concrete details as of yet, but Desmet is in no hurry: "Whatever comes of it, Kulak is the ideal place for entrepreneurs to test their innovations."

WEEK IN EDUCATION

Luc Sels is new KU Leuven rector

Luc Sels, the dean of the economics and business sciences faculty, has been elected as the new rector of the University of Leuven (KU Leuven). In a race that saw only two candidates, Sels defeated the current rector Rik Torfs by a margin of only 48 votes. During the campaign, Sels did not propose any significant policy changes but indicated that he would like to see more international collaboration with top institutions. He also said that scientific research should prioritise quality over quantity. He will begin the four-year post in August.

Teaching interns matched with schools on new platform

Education minister Hilde Crevits has announced the creation of the digital platform lerarenstage.be to help students in teaching studies find internships. The site brings secondary schools together with teaching studies in higher education. On the basis of certain criteria chosen by the applicant, the system suggests internships in schools in Flanders and Brussels. The government has invested €224,000 in the platform. Until now there was no central database for candidate teachers to find internships, with systems and arrangements differing depending on the area or education network. "We are providing the education sector with a solution to a chronic problem," said Crevits in a statement.

\ lerarenstage.be

UGent rector elections deadlocked after five voting rounds

Ghent University is still seeking a new rector and vice-rector, after the fifth voting round failed to bring a two-thirds majority for either of the candidate teams. The front-runners in the four previous rounds, Rik Van de Walle and Mieke Van Herreweghe, again finished first with just over 58%. Guido Van Huylenbroeck and Sarah De Saeger claimed 32.6% of the vote. While none of the current parties is considering stepping down from the race, new candidates can sign up until 29 May. The requirement to attain a two-thirds majority for victory cannot be changed before a new rector and vice-rector are elected. What will change, though, is the speed of voting rounds in the new cycle, which will start on 19 June.

Q&A

Inge Simoens is the head of the music education department at the Royal Conservatory of Antwerp, which recently launched an English-language version of its master's degree in music

What subjects does the new master's degree cover?

We offer academic programmes in instrumental and vocal studies, for classical, jazz and popular music. In classical music alone, we cover 28 instruments, from accordion to viola. There are also master's programmes in conducting – either for choirs or brass bands – and composition.

Will the English version be different from the Dutch version?

No, the English-language master's offers all existing master's classes, except for some options in which a certain degree of Dutch is compulsory, such as those dealing with music education. There is also a music pedagogy programme that

will only be available in Dutch.

Why have you introduced this English-language track?

Students of 33 different nationalities, from Europe and beyond, are currently following our master's programme. This international population has risen strongly over the past few years, from 16% foreign students in 2009 to 34% during the past academic year. Some of the instrument classes nowadays have more foreign students than Belgians. The English-language master's addresses this growing multilingual student population.

What kind of students are you looking for?

We intend to attract creative, crit-



ical and independent students, with a solid undergraduate training, who are open to collaboration, diversity and interdisciplinarity. In addition to a bachelor's degree in the corresponding discipline, students also have to pass the artistic entrance exam. Then, in dialogue with the student, we

\ APBE/ROYAL-CONSERVATOIRE

compose an individual, tailor-made study programme.

How many students do you expect to accept to the English track?

We're ready to welcome about 50 extra music students. Some of our international bachelor students will probably also enrol in the new programme.

Can Flemish students also apply?

Yes, we think this English-language master's is an interesting offer for both the foreign and Flemish students. The field in which young musicians will end up, once they graduate, has become very diverse and international, so every music student benefits from an international study environment.

\ Interview by Ian Mundell

WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

Picnic in style

This summer, four historic locations in West Flanders will host a family picnic day with 100% local food and drink. Reserve in advance and order your picnic basket filled with products from local farms. Tables and chairs provided, or you can bring your own picnic blanket. The first date is already sold out, so hurry and sign up for the next three dates. *21 June, 27 August, 10 September, various locations; €15*

\ brugseommeland.be/
nl/picnicks

100K Walk of leper

This annual three-day walking event in memory of the Great War draws participants from Belgium, England, France, Germany and Canada. Choose a distance between 5 and 50 kilometres each day and participate for one day or all three. Overnight accommodation in tents and meals available. *26-28 May, Jeugdstadion, Leopold III-laan 16, leper; €1.50-€14.50*

\ 100km.be

Leuven giants

The "giants" of Leuven – oversized folkloric figures – will be accompanied by more than 50 other giants from both Belgium and abroad as they make their way through the city centre. The procession ends on the Ladeuzeplein, where the city's newest giants will be inaugurated. *20 May, 13.00, Vesaliusstraat; free*

\ leuven.be/reuzeleuven

Forts of Antwerp

This annual one-day event joins 23 forts in and around Antwerp via five different bike routes. At each location, there are guided tours, musical performances, workshops and entertainment. A great chance to explore the city's green edges and learn about its history. *21 May, various locations; free*

\ fortengordel.be

Procession of the Holy Blood

What started out as a religious observation hundreds of years ago has become a festive city-wide pageant and major tourist draw. The Holy Blood is a relic of the Crucifixion that's kept in a chapel in Bruges, and the procession combines biblical and local history. Tickets available (€12) for audience seats in the bleachers. *25 May, starting at 14.30, Bruges city centre; free*

\ bloedprocessiebrugge.be/en/

Europe, where art thou?

House of European History charts common course in divided times



Diana Goodwin

More articles by Diana \ flanderstoday.eu

\ HISTORIA-EUROPA.EPEU

The House of European History opened in Brussels last week, the culmination of an idea first proposed 10 years ago by German politician Hans-Gert Pöttering, the then-president of the European Parliament. The museum's opening comes at a time when the future of Europe as a collective enterprise seems more uncertain than ever and signals the European institutions' commitment to a united Europe.

Located in the historic Eastman Building in Leopold Park, the museum is a stone's throw from the parliament. The Art Deco building, built in 1935 as a dental clinic for underprivileged children by American philanthropist George Eastman, has been recently renovated and expanded with a modern addition.

The museum is divided into two sections: the bottom two floors house temporary exhibitions, while the upper floors present the permanent collection. The permanent display is both chronological and thematic, starting with the question of a common European identity, and focusing on the events of the 20th century.

The exhibits in the permanent collection, however, lack any labels or text, lending the gallery an oddly disorienting appearance, as objects are displayed without any apparent context. According to Blandine Smilansky, an educator at the museum, this was done on purpose, as "the museum treats history as open to interpretation, bringing together all the disparate voices".

The permanent galleries are filled with a combination of objects that were either purchased for the museum or loaned from more

than 200 museums across Europe.

"This corresponds to the purpose of the project, bringing all these objects from national collections and putting them together in a new context," Smilansky explains.

On the second floor are sections dedicated to the ancient myth of Europa, the changing maps over the centuries and a selection of objects that are commonly associated with European culture. It makes for a puzzling and disjointed installation and doesn't inspire confidence that any such thing as Europe actually exists.

The third floor starts with a small gallery that skips lightly over the developments of the 19th century, including the rise of democracy, the industrial revolution and colonisation. The cursory displays seem inadequate to the importance of these developments and risk trivialising the more difficult subject matters, such as the slave trade.

But the curators seem impatient to get to the events ahead, namely the two world wars and the political developments that surrounded them. Here's where the museum hits its stride, with impressive audiovisual displays and objects dedicated to the machinery and horrors of war. It appears that the nations of Europe finally have something in common.

The fourth and fifth floors are dedicated to the post-war period, the Cold War, the founding of the European Union and recent political developments. A small room on the fourth floor, hidden from view, deals with the memory of the Holocaust. Its placement suggests the ambivalence that many in Europe still feel about the issue.

The inaugural temporary exhibition, meanwhile, is called *Interactions: Centuries of Commerce, Combat and Creation*. The first section is dedicated to trade, war,

negotiation and learning, with wall texts in four languages.

A separate section resembles the rooms of a house, with furnishings and everyday objects each telling a story of cultural contact and exchange. It's an innovative and attractive installation; visitors can touch and play with the items on display, making it both fun and interactive.

At a press conference to announce the opening, Antonio Tajani, president of the European Parliament, stressed the importance of communicating the EU's common values to its citizens, and especially its young people. "We need the Museum of European History because we need to know more about our history," he said.

Pöttering, with whom the idea began, was also there. "If we don't defend the European Union," he said, "it might have a very different future."



BITE

Antwerp's favourite soup resurrected in print and on stage

\ FACEBOOK.COM/SOEPVANBOOM

Mention Soep van Boom to *Antwerpenaars* of a certain age, and their faces reflect a flood of happy memories. Now the company is being celebrated in a new book by the great-granddaughter of the founder and in a play by a local stage director.

The Soep van Boom story began in 1915 when Lie van Boom, pregnant with her fifth child, went to the council and asked for support so she could make soup for her starving family and neighbours. The council gave her 250 Belgian francs (about €5.50).

Van Boom, better known as Moemoe, bought a boiler and started making soup for her community, selling it for 20 cents a litre. "After a few months, Moemoe had earned enough pay the money back to the council," explains her great-granddaughter, Wendy van Boom. "They were shocked at the return of their 'donation' and immediately gave her permission to distribute soup to schools in Antwerp. Soep van Boom was born."

Moemoe (pictured) continued making soup right up until her death in 1965, but her son, Jules,



© courtesy van Boom Family Archive

eventually became the driving force behind the business. The soup was incredibly popular, and the family did well.

As a marketing stunt, the rather flashy Jules ran raffles, with televisions and radios as prizes. People wanted the tickets, but they didn't bother attending the draws. So in the 1960s, Jules began

giving away 50 cars at each draw, but only to customers who had bought soup and were in the audience. Who could resist? Sales surged, and Soep van Boom was delivering up to 30,000 litres of soup a day in Antwerp and surrounding towns. By the 1970s, Soep van Boom was in decline. Regulations on food production tightened up, and frozen soup became widely available from competitors.

Eventually the shop at 170 Kerkstraat closed, and the Soep van Boom delivery vans disappeared from Antwerp's streets. Van Boom's book draws on family memories and images to tell the story of Moemoe, Jules, and Soep van Boom. There are also 10 family recipes, including one from Moemoe's last surviving child.

From 18-21 May, a play about Moemoe's legacy runs at the Buurtcentrum Cortina. On opening night, Wendy van Boom will sign copies of her book – and soup will be served. \ Dan Smith

Soep van Boom (€25.90) is published in Dutch by Uitgeverij de Vries - Brouwers

Speak now

Dying language of Limburg's immigrant miners is focus of new research



Toon Lambrechts

More articles by Toon \ flanderstoday.eu

“Of course I speak Cité-Duits,” says Jan Kohlbacher. “I’ve lived in the Cité all my life.” At 81, Kohlbacher has in fact lived through a significant part of his village’s history.

“Cité-Duits was – and to some extent still is – the language I spoke with my friends,” he says. “Not at home, that wasn’t allowed. My father insisted that we speak impeccable German in his presence.”

The discovery of coal beneath Limburg in 1901 changed the previously sparsely populated region forever, as rapid industrial development brought migrants from all over Europe and the Mediterranean to the mines.

While the post-war migration of workers from countries bordering the Mediterranean is well-known, previous migration waves have largely been forgotten. But they left their traces.

One of them is a linguistic curiosity: Cité-Duits (Cité-German), a local language only spoken in Tuinwijk. The neighbourhood is also known as the Cité, a miners’ quarter in the village of Eisden, now part of Maasmechelen.

In the beginning, the Limburg mines drew their labour force from the local population and from Wallonia, where coal mining had taken off much earlier. But Eisden was an exception.

Bordering the river Meuse, which constitutes the border with the Netherlands, Eisden had no hinterland in which to find potential miners. So the Eisden mines depended on foreign labour from the get-go.

Recruiters swarmed Central and Eastern Europe to find skilled workers, focusing on regions



© Ulli Kohlbacher/Ludo Coenen

Jan Kohlbacher in the Miners House Museum in Eisden. The house, built in 1925, was once home to two mining families from Slovenia

where mines were already established. Many of them came from the countries of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, like Kohlbacher’s father, who arrived in Eisden with his family in 1925.

Despite their diverse ethnicities, most of these immigrants from Hungary, Slovenia, Silesia and elsewhere had at least a rudimentary knowledge of German. The language was used for administration and the military in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

It proved a base for a common language, while gaps were filled with the Limburg dialect, Dutch terms and words from all over Eastern and Central Europe. And so Cité-Duits was born.

“Cité-Duits is an element in a wide-ranging story of early migra-

tion,” explains Kohlbacher. “But we learned it on the streets and in the mines without a thought.”

The process of acquiring the language was very fluid. Speakers found their own solutions to gaps. If someone didn’t know a certain word, they would use the corresponding one from their mother tongue.

“That’s why Cité-Duits is full of words from Hungarian, Polish and so on. It was a hyper-local language. Even within the Cité, there were differences. Quite often it was the big mouths who introduced new elements. To an outsider, it might have sounded like German; but it certainly wasn’t.”

For example, during the Second World War, an American recon-

naissance plane used to take off from a local airfield. Kohlbacher: “My Polish friend called it a *pasja-konnik*, and it wasn’t until much later that I learned that actually means ‘grasshopper’ in Polish.”

Or they would say *Past auf, du stats auf mein tenen* (“Look out, you’re standing on my toes”), which sounds German, but *tenen* is a Dutch word.

Cité-Duits has always existed under the radar, and it’s only recently that linguistics have begun to study it. And just in time, because there are only a handful of speakers left.

Nantke Pecht, a PhD student at Maastricht University, is carrying out research into the language. “I find it hard to describe how it sounds,” she says. “It’s some-

where between German dialects and Flemish, but it differs from both languages. The name Cité-Duits was given to the language by the speakers themselves, but I wouldn’t label it as mostly German.”

She describes Cité-Duits as a mixed language that originated from a very specific social constellation. “There are a lot of elements where the origin is unclear: The roots of many words and some syntactical structures cannot be brought down to a defined language of origin. Many words derive from German, but some structures can’t be found in German or in Dutch.”

The reason Cité-Duits did not spread to other mining areas has to do with the neighbourhood’s relatively isolated position, Pecht explains. “The miners had very little contact with the other villagers, and the mine provided everything, including a church, schools and leisure activities. It had to do with identity as well. By speaking a language only known to themselves, the miners from Eisden constructed a separate identity.” Kohlbacher is pleased with the recent attention Cité-Duits has received. “It’s a dying language,” he says. “Cité-Duits has never been passed on to younger generations. It wouldn’t be possible, because there’s no grammar, no formal structure to be taught.”

After the Second World War, he continues, “new groups of people migrated to the region with no connection to German at all. We meet regularly with the last remaining Cité-Duits speakers, but we’re all over 70. The language will disappear with us. With these new studies, at least some accounts will survive in the archives.”

Antwerp’s historical shops subject of archive project

Shopping can be remarkably dull from an aesthetic point of view. Shops usually act as nondescript backgrounds for the products on sale, or they subscribe to the hipster aesthetic – reclaimed wood, stripped walls – a style so desperately focused on authenticity that it’s become a cliché itself. But here and there, a true gem has withstood the test of time. Now Arsène, a local heritage organisation focused on historical shop interiors, has made an exhaustive inventory of Antwerp’s most valuable historical shops.

Arsène took to the streets to look for vintage interiors, spokesperson Katherine Ennekens explains. “We walked all around the city to look for these remaining authentic shops that have survived time.

I knew many of them already, but we did find some new ones, especially from later periods.”

In 2014, Ennekens published an acclaimed book on historical shop interiors, and she has been working on the subject ever since. The interiors Arsène chose were selected based on criteria mapped out by the Agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed, the Flemish government’s heritage agency, evaluating their architectural value, rareness and social and historical context. They added them to an online heritage inventory, which will be used to decide on protection status.

“We listed something like 40 shops,” Ennekens says. “Out of these we researched 27. All are small retail businesses.”



© Evy Raes

The Boon glove shop on Lombardenvest in Antwerp

And protection is needed, she says, because over the years, many of these old-fashioned places have disappeared. “In most cases,

shop owners know all too well the value of their unique interiors and see it as a commercial advantage.” Sometimes, though, they don’t

realise how precious their store is from a historical point of view. “That’s why we hope for regulation that will help shop owners to preserve these beautiful interior designs. They are part of the memories of our city.”

Ennekens’ book and the work of Arsène have raised awareness of this vulnerable and often overlooked heritage. “Flanders is catching up, but a lot of work needs to be done,” she says. “If you look at cities like Barcelona or Lisbon, this form of everyday heritage is much more valued. These cities understand that it’s places like this that determine a city’s authenticity. It’s the reason why tourists visit, but it improves the quality of life for locals as well.” \ T L

\ ARSENE.ORG

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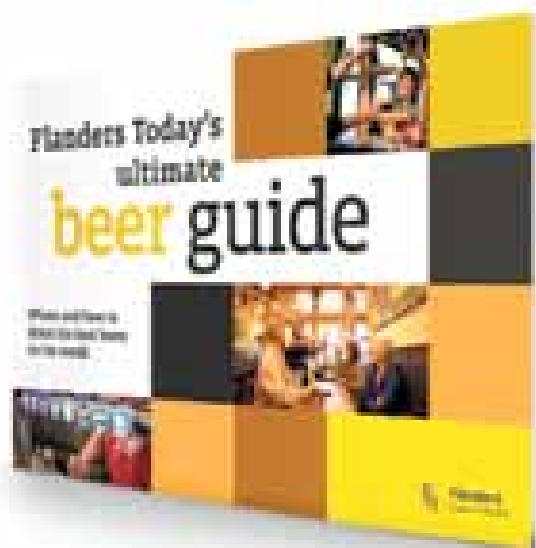
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www.thebulletin.be

Welcome
to the land of beer



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Moments in time

Contemporary art finds home amid Bruges' medieval splendour



Ian Mundell
follow Ian on Twitter \ @IanMundell

\ ADORNES.ORG

Aleksandar Avramović is the first painter to display his work in the recently renovated 15th-century Adornes Domain in the heart of Bruges.

Aleksandar Avramović is deciding which of his paintings to include in a new exhibition. The canvases are laid out on the floor around the exhibition space, at the medieval Adornes Domain in Bruges. He shuffles them around, occasionally disappearing into a back room to bring out more.

It's not just a selection of images but a selection of moments. Avramović specialises in capturing fleeting instances of heightened reality, when a body comes to rest into a particular attitude, when the light falls on someone in a particular way. It might be a person reading, taking a nap, or leaning out of a window to watch something in the street. He works quickly, usually from photographs, so the selection is also about the moment in which each painting was created in response to the original image.

"Trying to find the moments when I was the most present, that's the main interest for me," he says. "Almost everything is done with a single, unique impulse. There is no returning to the work, because when you go back, it becomes a different idea, so you might as well make a second or a third painting." Born in Belgrade, Avramović left Yugoslavia in his teens to settle with his parents in Brussels. He went on to study at La Cambre art school in the city, and now combines work as an artist with a career in graphic design.

While he was initially interested in photorealism, his recent painting is more impressionistic. "It's clear that Luc Tuymans is an inspiration, and equally Michaël Borremans," Avramović explains, citing the biggest names in contemporary Belgian figurative art. "But I also have enormous admiration for Raoul De Keyser, whose rapidity of work and spontaneity appeal to me very much."

One of the reasons Avramović was chosen to exhibit in this complex of medieval buildings is the emphasis his work places on the passing of time. "Here, possibly more than anywhere else, one can feel a palpable sense of history and a long timeline on which all the small moments of our lives and many successive lives are strung together," the exhibition note explains.

More broadly, exhibiting contemporary art is part of a plan to develop the Adornes Domain, and to make it a living attraction as well as an historic monument. This began last year with two exhibitions by photographers, but Avramović is



Avramović's earlier paintings reflected photorealism, his recent work, including "The Irremediable", is more impressionistic

the first painter invited to bring his work to the site.

The Domain was created in the 15th century as a country residence for the Adornes family, wealthy Genoese merchants who moved to Bruges around 1300. Alongside the house, a magnificent private chapel was constructed, modelled on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which family members had visited in a series of pilgrimages. A row of almshouses was also added.

The most famous member of the family, Anselm Adornes, was a merchant and a diplomat, but also a patron of the arts. He owned paintings by Jan Van Eyck (possibly commissioned by his father or uncle) and arranged for a lute player to be trained in Bruges for King James III of Scotland.

"He was involved in the arts in many ways, and these are the values we try to perpetuate," says Véronique de Limburg Stirum, the moving force behind the development of the Domain. Her husband, Maximilien, is a direct descendent of the original Adornes family, and when he inherited the Domain they decided to

make something of the place.

"The previous generation was not so active," she confides. "The house was completely closed. When my husband was a child, for example, he never came here." During much of the 19th and 20th centuries, the site was occupied by nuns, who set up a lace school and later a rest home in the grounds.

Over the past few years, de Limburg Stirum and her husband have begun renovating the older buildings and making other changes to bring out the Domain's historic character.

The Jerusalem Chapel remains the jewel of the Domain, an idiosyncratic square chapel with a high wooden ceiling, a macabre altar decorated with skulls and ladders, and a replica of Christ's tomb. In the centre of the chapel is a family tomb dedicated to Anselm Adornes and his wife, Margareta. Aselm's heart was brought here after his murder in Scotland in 1483, but his body remains in Linlithgow.

The almshouses adjacent to the

chapel used to house the Bruges Lace Museum, now relocated to the old school buildings in nearby Balstraat. In its place is a new museum, which goes deeper into the story of the Adornes family in Bruges, the symbolism of the chapel, and the history of the estate. Particular attention goes to Anselm, his pilgrimage to the Holy Land and his role in diplomatic relations between Flanders and Scotland.

The exhibition space has been established in newer buildings, formerly used as living quarters by the nuns. Further renovations are planned to allow more of the family heritage to be displayed, and visitor facilities to be improved.

The Adornes house is also being restored. One room has been turned into a lounge, where visitors can have tea or coffee, and two large reception rooms have been restored for the use of the family. These are not usually open to the public, but can be seen on group visits.

Until 26 August

Adornes Domain
Peperstraat 3, Bruges

WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

Nationaal Orkest changes name

The Nationaal Orkest van België, also known as the Orchestre National de Belgique in French, has changed its name to the Belgian National Orchestra. It has also announced that it will play more contemporary music and start public-friendly events like classical happy hours. Director Hans Waeye said that the orchestra will also concentrate more on co-operations with other major cultural institutions in Brussels like De Munt opera house and fine arts centre Bozar. The happy hours will take the form of short concerts of classical music in a local nightclub.

Competition for amateur stage artists

Pascal Smet, in charge of culture within the Flemish Community Commission in Brussels, has launched a new competition for amateur stage artists called Brussels Bijou. The prize is meant to recognise not only the high concentration of amateur theatre and dance groups in the capital but also the quality of their work. Anyone wishing to be considered for the prize – from stage directors to dancers to whole companies – must register by 18 June. Productions can be in Dutch, English or French. The productions that make the shortlist will each receive €2,000 and the chance to stage their work at Bozar in December.

\ zinnema.be

Olyslaegers wins Fintro Literature Prize

Jeroen Olyslaegers has won the Fintro Literature Prize for his book *Wil (Will)*. The Flemish author won both the jury prize and the readers' prize. It is organised by Boek.be and given annually for the best Dutch-language book of the previous year. *Wil*, which was also nominated for the Libris Literature Prize, is the story of Wilfried Wils, who finds it difficult to navigate the moral quagmire of the Second World War in Antwerp. "We chose a book that cannot but help be seen in a societal context," said the jury in a statement. The other nominees were Dutch authors Richard Hemker, Donald Niedekker and Martin Michael Driessen as well as Flemish author Lize Spit for *Het smelt (The Melting)*. Both *Wil* and *Het smelt* are being translated into English.

\ fintroliteratuurprijs.be

‘Begging for art’

Wiels centre for contemporary art in Brussels marks 10 years of going its own way



Christophe Verbiest

More articles by Christophe \ flanderstoday.eu

\ WIELS.ORG

Over the course of a decade, Wiels, the Brussels centre for contemporary art, has become an institution with a strong international reputation.

“I remember the day I was first invited to visit this building, when it was still dilapidated,” Dirk Snauwaert says of Brussels arts centre Wiels. “It was a cold, windy Sunday in February. The sun was shining and the light was amazing. That’s when I knew that these large, high rooms were just begging for art.”

In January 2005, he accepted the offer to become the first artistic director of Wiels, an institution he would have to build up from scratch. Snauwaert, who is still at the helm, was 41 when he took the reins and already had an impressive CV, having worked at what is now Bozar in Brussels, and later in Munich and Lyon. Wiels was going to be what is generally described with the German word *Kunsthalle*: a place that organises exhibitions but, unlike a museum, doesn’t have its own collection. “But we wanted to be a bit more than just a *Kunsthalle*,” Snauwaert says. “That’s why we set up our residency programme.”

Wiels has nine fully equipped working spaces that are put at



© Courtesy Wiels

The Wiels building, a vertical space designed by Modernist architect Adrien Blomme in 1930, originally as a brewery

the disposal of artists, be they Belgians or foreigners, for six or 12 months respectively. “This means we house the whole chain of the art practice: from coming up with an idea to showing the finished works.”

To distinguish itself from other local museums and art galleries that show contemporary art, Wiels has carved out its niche. “Two forces are at play here,” Snauwaert says. “I like to work by exclusion: not doing the things that others are already doing.”

It’s also a choice that works, he emphasises, for the shows he prefers. “I think one of our characteristics is the essay-like exhibition. An exhibition that’s not chronological or retrospective, but where you ask the artist: show us your programme. It’s a

impact on the exhibitions. The building is vertical, meaning that shows that have been conceived horizontally, as a *parcours*, have to be rethought completely.

It is, of course, an exceptional building. Designed in 1930 by architect Adrien Blomme, it used to house the now defunct Wielemans-Ceuppens brewery. Wiels is in the municipality of Vorst, a kilometre south of Brussels South station. It’s squeezed between the railway and both a prosperous and a poor neighbourhood.

“I like to work by exclusion: not doing the things that others are already doing

kind of show that you don’t see in the classical institutions – like Bozar, just to pick one.” But there is more. One of the most striking elements of local curating, he says, “was the relative absence of significant female artists in the programming. So we tried to readjust that. And one of the main questions Wiels has been asking over the past decade is: what about the multicultural society, what about our mixed demographic?”

The space itself has an important

“It’s difficult to exactly say how strong our impact on this part of the city is,” says Snauwaert. “But we have always worked on it proactively. I still think we attract too few visitors from the neighbourhood, but that’s an element we don’t have much influence on. Schools and other organisations have a greater impact on that, but culture isn’t their main priority. Maybe our world view doesn’t match with their at times somewhat more inward-looking ideas.”

But Snauwaert points to Wiels’ social-artistic programmes (“often without extra financial support”) and its employment policy, which prioritises people from the neighbourhood and surrounding municipalities. It also works with Actiris, the Brussels employment agency, for example, and new employees get language and behaviour courses. “During an exhibition, they are the first contact with the visitors. That audience is quite international,” he explains. “But our stewards are often even more international: They’ve come from further away, sometimes even by foot. We have more and more refugees among our staff. All in all, our crew is a good reflection of Brussels’ inner cities.”

This, he says, “is a signature of Wiels. We could have done it differently, employing students, for instance, but how we do it is a definite ideological choice”.

Snauwaert seems happy with Wiels’ place in the Brussels art world, literally and metaphorically. “We are in a suburban area, and that really makes a difference: We don’t have to neurotically serve the tourist audience. Even so, compared to some other institutions we have a nice number of visitors, maybe 50,000 per year.”

Though he’s not going to pretend, he says, “that I wouldn’t love to double that figure. Of course, you can’t compare us to the more centrally located museums. They’re building on the past, while we show the future”.

To celebrate its 10th birthday, Wiels presents *The Absent Museum*, an exhibition that fills the whole building, including the roof, and even two adjacent buildings. The title is a reference to the absence of a museum of contemporary art in Brussels.

The opening of such an institution has been under discussion for years. “It’s very deliberate that the new show is called *The Absent Museum*. The museum is absent, and that’s not the same as non-existent.”

Snauwaert is referring to the Fine Arts Museum in Antwerp, which has almost completely hoarded its modern and contemporary art. “It’s literally a crumbling building that has been neglected for 40 years.”

And he adds: “Anyway, I don’t think the Fine Arts Museum is the place to host contemporary art, since it propagates a homogeneous societal vision. Such a society hasn’t existed for decades, but some people still propagate it for their own benefit.”



© Private collection, image courtesy Wiels

Twentieth-century German painter Felix Nussbaum’s “Maler mit Maske” (Painter with Mask) is part of Wiels’ *The Absent Museum* exhibition

Longing for days past, then and now

Rooted

Until 6 August

Caermersklooster, Ghent

\ CAERMERSKLOOSTER.BE

Information overload, social media-induced loneliness and the other unpleasant by-products of our current digital age can sometimes make us long for the days of the past. *Rooted: Painting Flanders* at the Caermersklooster in Ghent explores our nostalgia for simpler times by drawing a parallel between our own modern-day angst and that of Flemish artists during the 19th-century industrial revolution.

Entering the exhibition, we're exposed to images that could hardly be more different. One wall shows pictures of the dire living conditions of textile workers in

the Patershol neighbourhood in Ghent; on the other is "Girl at the River Leie", a serene 1892 painting by Emile Claus.

The river runs through the village of Sint-Martens-Latem, a favourite retreat and sanctuary for the prolific Ghent artists who wanted to escape the rapidly industrialising city – both in life and in art. Such painters as Claus offered idyllic depictions of peasant women, while Gustave Van de Woestyne painted his farmers against golden backdrops (*pictured*), a practice usually reserved for saints. Valerius De Saedeleer's work, meanwhile, was heavily indebted to Pieter Bruegel the Elder but removed all



signs of human life.

The exhibition doesn't limit itself to the work of the so-called "Latem

school", also showing works by the sculptor Georges Minne and brilliant painters like Frits Van den Berghe, Constant Permeke and Edgard Tytgat, who introduced Flanders to Dadaism, cubism and fauvism after the First World War. Despite these new influences from abroad, the end result on the canvas remained deeply Flemish. The exhibition, in fact, convincingly demonstrates that there is a certain elusive "Flemish" quality to painting.

Whether this explains the soothing effect of the works on show here is unclear, but one thing is sure: The selection in *Rooted* is extraordinary. \ Daan Bauwens

THEATRE

The Only Way Is Up

24-26 May, 20.30

Campo, Ghent

\ CAMPO.NU

Young Flemish performers Boris Van Severen and Jonas Vermeulen first dazzled the theatre world with their 2014 debut *The Great Downhill Journey of Little Tommy*. Part rock concert and part contemporary theatre, *Little Tommy* played from Ostend's Theater Aan Zee to Edinburgh's prestigious Fringe Festival.

Now the pair present their latest. *The Only Way Is Up* continues to fuse disparate genres, in this case electronic dance music and opera. The plot follows four protagonists at successive stages in their lives as their circumstances and attitudes change. Expect plenty of beats and neon. (In English) \ Georgio Valentino



FESTIVAL

Gluren bij de buren

19-28 May

Across Antwerp province

\ GLURENBIJDEBURENHUISKAMERFESTIVAL.BE

Most music festivals are vast, muddy, impersonal affairs but the organisers of Gluren bij de buren dared to put on one of human proportions with a 10-day fest that unfolds in the living rooms of volunteers. A handful municipalities in Antwerp province will host 40 living room concerts by local groups with styles ranging from the Dutch-language pop of Salon Jacques to the Balkan beat of Skratt to the foot-stomping Flemish folk sounds of accordion quartet Decolores. Entry is free but online registration is required for each performance.

\ GV



VISUAL ARTS

Antwerp Art Weekend

19-21 May

Across Antwerp

\ ANTWERPART.BE/WEEKEND

This third edition of Antwerp Art Weekend brings together over 60 of the port city's galleries, art spaces, temporary exhibitions and museums for a three-day celebration of contemporary art. In addition to their usual offerings, many of these are extending hours and adding content. The biggest single event is Night of the Visual Arts at the event's main hub De Studio. Kicking off Saturday night and stretching well into Sunday morning, this white night of artistic revelry combines a pop-up exhibition of young Antwerp talent and a dance party organised by the local DJ collective TRAP. \ GV



LITERATURE

Poetry of Loss

23 May, 20.00

Passa Porta, Brussels

\ PASSAPORTA.BE

Cardiff-based arts association Literature Wales collaborates with Brussels' own Passa Porta to celebrate the work of Romantic poet Hedd Wyn and other artists who lost their lives on the battlefields of Flanders during the First World War. Wyn's literary career was just taking off when he was conscripted

and cut down during the Battle of Passchendaele in 1917. The evening features readings by National Poet of Wales Ifor ap Glyn, performance by Welsh singer Gwyneth Glyn and commentary by literary critics Geert Buelens and Patrick McGuinness. (In English and Welsh) \ GV



CONCERT

Brussels

Elvis in concert!: In celebration of what would have been Elvis Presley's 80th birthday, the King of Rock & Roll "performs" on screen in a unique collaboration with the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra, featuring an appearance by his former wife, Priscilla Presley. 19 May 20.00, Paleis 12, Miramarlaan

\ palais12.com

Ghent

The Shape I'm In: Five Meetjesland musicians bring their own version of groovecore, a solid blend of stoner rock, blues and grunge, on two guitars, bass, voice and drum. 20 May 21.00, De Karper, Kortrijksesteenweg 2

\ facebook.com/TheShapelnBelgium

Tomeka Reid Quartet:

The Chicago-based cellist, composer and melodic improviser performs with her band, including guitar, double bass and drums. 24 May 20.15, Handelsbeurs, Kouter 29

\ handelsbeurs.be

PERFORMANCE

Across Flanders

Mouw: Original dance and theatre performance with special characters showing that it's all right to be different, featuring unusual music instruments and aimed at kids up to age four. (in Dutch) Until 13 June, across Flanders

\ despiegel.com

PARADE

Brussels

Brussels Pride Parade: The theme of this 22nd edition of the annual Brussels parade celebrating the LGBT community is "asylum and migration", with a focus on the experiences of LGBT refugees. 20 May 12.00, Kunstberg

\ pride.be

LITERATURE

Antwerp

Jasmin Frelj: Free literary brunch with the Slovenian writer and striking new voice in contemporary European literature, whose futuristic stories and debut novel have met with critical acclaim for their take on individualism, social relations and the canvas of human existence (in English). 20 May 11.00-12.00, De Groene Waterman, Wolstraat 7

\ passaporta.be

Talking Dutch

Move on over



Derek Blyth

More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

It's the thing that annoys drivers more than anything else: *middenstrookrijders* – drivers who cruise in the middle lane. And it seems there are more of them on the road than ever before, according to motoring organisation Touring.

Drivers are routinely annoyed by traffic situations, like *files* – traffic jams, *bumperkleven* – bumper stickers, *inactieve richtingaanwijzers* – indicators not being used. But their biggest gripe is the driver who hogs the *middenrijstrook* – the middle lane.

According to Belgium's traffic rules, the middle lane, like the left lane, is for passing people to the right. Once you've passed, you're meant to move back to the right lane.

Er zijn meer middenstrookrijders dan vroeger – there are more drivers sticking to the middle lane than ever before, *omdat er gewoon meer vrijetijdsverkeer is* – for the simple reason that there is more holiday traffic, said a Touring spokesperson.

Dat zijn mensen die minder vaak rijden – These are people who drive less often, *die wat onwenniger rijden* – who are a bit less used to driving *en niet graag veel manoeuvreren op de weg* – and who don't like to make too many manoeuvres on the road, the spokesperson explained.

Dus rijden ze netjes en veilig – So they drive simply and safely – *vanuit hun oogpunt toch* – at least in their own eyes *in het midden* – in the middle, *ook al is dat niet nodig* – even when it isn't necessary.

But they really should move over, says the organisation, because *dat frustriert dan weer anderen* – It's frustrating for others *en leidt tot ongevallen* – and leads to accidents.

Now, of course, there is a Facebook group to tackle the



© Ingimage

problem – *Blijf niet plakken op de middenstrook* – Don't stay stuck in the middle lane.

Dit is een initiatief dat tot stand is gekomen – This is an initiative that has been launched *door de vele irritaties* – due to the widespread anger *die ontstaan door het nodeloos rijden* – that arises because of unnecessary driving *op de linker of middenrijstrook* – in the left or middle lane. *Jij ook?* – How about you? the group asks.

In Het Laatste Nieuws vertellen de initiatiefnemers – The people behind the petition told *Het Laatste Nieuws* *dat de politie elke dag 9.300 snelheidsboetes uitschrijft* – that the police issue 9,300 speeding fines every day *en slechts zeven boetes tegen middenstrookrijders* – and only seven fines for driving in the middle lane.

Well, to be honest, the petition hasn't set the internet on fire so far. With just over 100 followers, it doesn't compare to the 4,280 concerned citizens who signed a Facebook petition to save a controversial penis mural in the Brussels municipality of Sint-Gillis.

But these irritated drivers have a point. So our advice is to keep right if you want to keep out of trouble.

PHOTO OF THE WEEK



© AFP/Belga

KIEV CALLING Belgium's Eurovision entry, 17-year-old Blanche from Brussels, performs "City Lights" in Ukraine on Saturday night. The song's popularity in the public vote saw her finish in fourth place, equalling the success of 2015's entry by Loïc Nottet

VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY



In response to: Security services prepare for arrival of President Trump

Sarah Struglia: Like it or not, Mr. Trump is coming for meetings and will leave again. Give him a break.



In response to: Ryanair take-off plan disregards safety, says Belgocontrol

Samuel Harris: As long as runways are allocated politically and not based on wind and environmental criteria this should come as no surprise – besides Ryanair relocating would hardly be a loss for Brussels or the region



In response to: Complaints against shops focus of new ombuds-service

Andrea Lakin: What about any positive comments? People always want to know when something is good!



In response to: New air filter clears up pollution and generates power

Kay Meseberg @Meseberg
Will @vwgroup_en invest?



In response to: €250,000 for 'breakthrough' artists

Nayra martin reyes @Nayra_M_R
I want some 🐶



In response to: Man who called police officers 'smurfs' appeals sentence

John Rega @John_Rega
Those smurfin' smurfs! I applaud the headline writer's restraint. Good one by @AlanHopeFT for @flanderstoday



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THE LAST WORD

Over a barrel

"I saw no other way out than to pay the \$300 ransom."

Bart Smets, a retailer in Lier, was one of the local victims of the WannaCry ransomware attack last week

Aftershocks

"I cried so much. At home I sat in my chair and stared at the wall. I didn't read any more, I didn't listen to music, I didn't go outside, and I didn't write any more."

Christian De Koninck, spokesperson for the Brussels police, revealed to *Het Nieuwsblad* that the terrorist attacks of 22 March led him to suffer a burnout from which he is still recovering

Vote of confidence

"The question is not will we win seats, but how many?"

Dyab Abou Jahjah and former socialist politician Ahmet Koç have launched a political party targeting the immigrant vote

Words of wisdom

"Do something special. That makes the world a better place."

The important piece of advice given to TV presenter and singer Bart Peeters by his mother, Suz, according to *Het Nieuwsblad*



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