



BEAT THE TRAFFIC

Entrepreneurs launch car-pooling for cargo to tackle chronic congestion \ 7



HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

The ornamental walled garden at Gaasbeek Castle is a living, growing museum \ 10



EVERYONE TO ANTWERP

Zomer van Antwerpen is back, with a full programme of theatre, live music and circus shows \ 13



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Home of the saint

Renovated Damiaan Museum pays tribute to man of the people



Tom Peeters

More articles by Tom \ flanderstoday.eu

The former home of Father Damien in Tremelo has been equipped with the latest technology to help tell the story of the saint who risked his own life to bring hope to people in need.

“Politics and journalism have no hero to rival Father Damien. Thousands of people in the Catholic Church have followed his example and devoted themselves to the victims of leprosy. It is worthwhile to look for the sources of such heroism.”

The quote by Indian politician Mahatma Gandhi, written on the wall of the renovated Damiaan Museum in Tremelo, Flemish Brabant, could be read as a mission statement.

Pater Damiaan, or Father Damien, was born Jozef De Veuster in 1840 in Ninde, now part of Tremelo. He was expected to take over the family's grain-trading business, but instead he left home to pursue missionary work in Hawaii, where he would spend the rest of his life in a leper colony on the island of Molokai.

In the late 19th century, leprosy was incurable and highly contagious. Father Damien knew he would never be able to return to his native Flanders alive. When he finally did return, in 1936, almost half a century after his death, his body was welcomed by the king, the prime minister, the cardinal and a huge crowd, who gathered in the port of Antwerp.

The posthumous praise didn't stop there. Across Europe, heads of state and politicians were being voted the greatest citizens of their countries, but in Flanders, people opted for a priest who didn't need a war to make his mark on history. In 2005, Father Damien was voted De Grootste Belg (The Greatest Belgian) in a poll conducted by the Flemish public broadcaster VRT. Four years later, he was canonised by Pope Benedict XVI.

The initial plan was to reopen the museum that year. “But negotiations with the town's planning and heritage departments took a bit longer than expected,” says the museum's director, Bart Massart.

Father Damien was a member of the Congregation of the

Craters illuminated 100 years after Battle of Messines

Thousands attend spectacular sound and light show on former battlefield



The centenary of the Battle of Messines in the First World War was commemorated at the weekend in Heuvelland, West Flanders, in a show called Kraterfront. The name refers to the massive mine attack by the Allies on the German front near Ypres. The spectacle began with performances from Flemish musicians including Wannes Cappelle and Ozark Henry, as well as artists from New Zealand, Australia and Ireland. A video by artist Shelbatra Jashari was projected on to a line of 100 people, while the scene was lit by 2,100 candles. The mine attack itself, featuring 11 craters over a distance of four kilometres, was represented by light and laser installations, as well as a soundscape created by the Canadian group Godspeed You! Black Emperor, who also performed live for the occasion. Elsewhere in West Flanders, coastal bunkers were opened to the public for one day only in De Haan, Blankenberge, Koksijde, De Panne, Damme, Middelkerke and Ostend. The bunkers, normally closed to the public, formed an important line of defence in both world wars.



© Courtesy Provincie West-Vlaanderen

Bunkerdag (Bunker Day) is an idea taken from the Netherlands, where it has taken place five times. The event in Flanders could also be repeated, organisers said.

Meanwhile, Flemish minister-president Geert Bourgeois has signed an agreement with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) to restore some of the most famous First World War memorials in the Westhoek area, including Hospital Farm, Lijssenthoek and Hedge Row Trench cemeteries. The work will cost €6.5 million, of which just over €3.9 million will go to the CWGC over a period of five years. The agreement was signed with Sir Tim Laurence, deputy chair of the commission. “This co-operation, and the necessary investment that has been linked to that, proves that over the course of the last years Flanders has developed an important heritage strategy to safeguard war heritage,” Bourgeois said. “This is the last bridge between the present and the past. Reinstall, restore and preserve cemeteries, so we can keep commemorating the thousands of casualties, long after 2018.” Work will start this year at Potijze Chateau Ground and Lawn Cemetery and Artillery Wood Cemetery, both in Ypres.

E40 lorry park to remain open at night

Flemish mobility minister Ben Weyts has rejected a proposal to close a motorway lorry park at night to prevent movements by human traffickers. The idea came from the mayor of Wetteren in East Flanders after 32 migrants were found in a house close to the E40, apparently waiting to board a lorry at night. Human traffickers deliver migrants to the lorry parks and load them on lorries heading for the ports, and usually on to the United Kingdom. In September last year, the lorry parking at Drongen was closed, which has led to more migrants using the lorry park at Wetteren, the town’s mayor,

Alain Pardaen, said. Pardaen contacted East Flanders governor Jan Briers, who had previously organised a round-table of interested parties to discuss the problem. Briers then contacted Weyts. However, Weyts decided not to follow up on the idea of closing the Wetteren lorry park. “Unlike Drongen, Wetteren is a guarded car park, and the police are close by,” he said. “We remain vigilant, and the police are also ready to act.” The car park is free of charge after 18.00, to encourage drivers to park behind the secure fence. \ AH

Roadworks to improve Brussels ring traffic

Flemish mobility minister Ben Weyts has announced eight sets of roadworks to be carried out this summer on the Brussels Ring, aimed at improving traffic flow. Major works are planned for 2019. The works are small-scale measures that can be carried out relatively quickly but will still make a considerable difference, he said. The main focus will be on junctions between Groot-Bijgaarden and Tervuren in Flemish Brabant, where the Ring meets major roads and motorways, often creating bottlenecks. “What happens now is that drivers often change lanes at the last minute, because for

example they have to get ready to move to the motorway,” Weyts said. “These weaving movements from left to right hold up traffic and can cause accidents. By changing road markings we can force drivers to make the choice sooner.” In addition to what Weyts called the eight “quick wins”, larger works will take place over five kilometres in both directions between Tervuren and Sint-Stevens-Woluwe, where a new layer of asphalt will be placed. Delays are expected as the road surface is reduced from three to two lanes. \ AH

Leuven shares prestigious Green Leaf environment prize

The city of Leuven has won the prestigious Green Leaf Prize. The award, handed out by the European Commission, recognises cities that work with residents on issues of ecology, sustainability and quality of life. Leuven shares the award with the Swedish city of Växjö. The jury praised Leuven for its focus on climate change, including its non-profit initiative

Leuven 2030, which aims to make the city carbon-neutral by 2030. The city hopes to achieve this by working with more than 300 partners, including companies, individuals, the University of Leuven and the Flemish chamber of commerce Voka. Leuven 2030 encompasses many aspects of city life, and that broad approach, the jury

said, was one of the reasons it was selected for the award. The jury also praised the city’s traffic plan, which was introduced last year and includes car-free zones, car-sharing initiatives and a new cycling policy with improved infrastructure. “This is a memorable moment for our city and for Leuven 2030,” said Mohamed Ridouani,

city councillor in charge of environmental matters. “The award is a feather in the cap for every resident of Leuven. Thanks to our unique co-operation between residents, companies, organisations and institutions, we are able to work hard at achieving our goal of making Leuven one of the most liveable and healthiest cities in Europe.” \ AH

23,899

JOB

open job vacancies in Flanders in May, an increase of 23.6% on the same month in 2016, according to the employment and training agency VDAB. The biggest rise was in temporary jobs, which went up by 39%

500,000

users of pre-paid anonymous SIM cards were not registered when the deadline passed last week. The cards were then blocked but can still be registered with operators

9,000

families moved from Wallonia to Flanders in 2016, an increase of 25% compared to 2015, according to figures from the federal home affairs ministry. In most cases, the move was motivated by finding a new job

71st

place for the University of Leuven in the QS World University Rankings, the highest place for a Belgian institution, and eight places better than last year

5,619

complaints made to Unia, the federal anti-discrimination centre, in 2016, 23% more than in 2015. The most complaints (30%) concerned racial discrimination, with disabled discrimination at 28% and religious discrimination 14%

WEEK IN BRIEF

Police in Zeebrugge have confiscated a number of lorries after finding their Romanian and Bulgarian drivers were **living in the vehicles day and night** in a lorry park at the port. The men were discovered to be ignoring EU rules on driving and rest times and in some cases had installed software to falsify data. The rules say all drivers must rest for 45 hours on one weekend out of two, but not in their vehicle.

Philippe De Backer, federal secretary of state for the North Sea, has approved an environmental permit for a test project to **generate electricity from wave power**. The project will be installed 500m off the coast of Ostend and involves a 12m high tower to which a floating buoy is attached, which generates power as it moves up and down in the water. The permit lasts until 2020 and can be extended if the project is a success.

King Filip **cancelled all audiences** last week, for health reasons. An appointment with the governor-general of New Zealand was postponed, while a meeting with the president of Ghana was cancelled. The king did go ahead, however, with a visit to the studios of MNM in Leuven, where a marathon show was being broadcast to accompany students across Flanders as they study for exams.

The communal garden adjacent to Parckfarm at Tour & Taxis in Brussels is **under threat from vandals**. In recent weeks there have been five cases of arson, while a small amphitheatre in the garden has twice been destroyed. The garden predates Parckfarm, which recently learned that its bid to become permanent is supported by Molenbeek municipal council. The garden is on private ground and is not patrolled by the stewards of Leefmilieu Brussel.

The parliamentary committee looking into last year’s terrorist attacks in Brussels has **reached a unanimous** agreement on the major focus of its work: the Belgian state’s security apparatus, committee chair Patrick Dewael said. The 500-page report contains a number of recommendations, including a single security database where all intelligence is gathered, instead of the 127 that exist now, 16 of them with the federal police alone. The committee will now consider the question of radicalisation.

The press officers for more than 130 Flemish companies, organisations and government departments are finding it harder to get **full and accurate information** into the media as a result of increased workloads among editorial staff, according to a poll. That leads to information being published without being checked, headlines that do not reflect the content of the article and an emphasis on speed above accuracy, the poll showed.

An Van hamme of the Brussels public transport authority MIVB has been **voted Spokesperson of the Year** by the Flemish journalists’ federation and communications bureau, Kortom. She was praised by the jury for competence and professionalism, whether dealing with good news or bad. “In the end I was only doing my job,” she said.

The farmers union Boerenbond has warned that the continuing dry weather **threatens to ruin the vegetable harvest** for a lot of farmers. May was abnormally dry and warm, but the rainfall figures over the last six months show a marked reduction. One possible result is a crop of smaller than usual potatoes, which means less income for farmers, who are paid by the kilo.

Flemish fashion designer Raf Simons has won this year’s CFDA awards for **both his men’s and his women’s collections**. It has happened just once before, in 1993, when the winner was Calvin Klein, for whose fashion house Simons is now creative director. Other designers have picked up both awards, but not in the same year.

The winner of the recent **EuroMillions jackpot of €154 million** has made himself known to the National Lottery, a week after a €7.50 Quick Pick ticket paid off spectacularly. He is reported to be an office worker, married and fond of DIY. No details were given of his identity or where he lives, but as a fan of comedian Philippe Geubels, he is almost certainly Flemish.

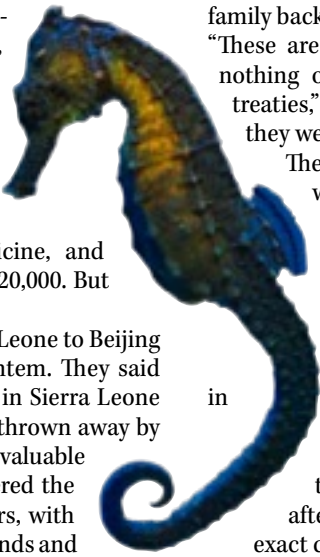
A man stopped by customs officers at Brussels Airport last week was found to be **carrying nine gold ingots in his hand luggage**, weighing a total of 16kg at a value of €36,500 a kilo, or €584,000 in all. There was a further €125,900 in cash in his checked bag. The man, who intended to board a flight to Istanbul, was taken into custody. Also at Brussels Airport last week, a 50-year-old Dutch man was found in possession of 7.86kg of ecstasy pills in his luggage. He was en route to Bolivia via Madrid.

The Antwerp prosecutor’s office has called for a **prison sentence of one year** for a man who ran a Facebook page that carried a stream of racist messages mocking the death of a 15-year-old boy of Moroccan origins. The Vlaamse Verdedigings Liga (Flemish Defence League) page, now removed, took exception to the boy being described as “a young Fleming”. The prosecutor called for “a clear signal that such expressions are not permitted”. The ruling will be made on 30 June.

OFFSIDE
I do like to be beside the seahorse

The customs services at Brussels Airport have seen it all: drugs, diamonds, weapons, seahorses... Three Chinese nationals were last week sentenced to 15 months in prison after being caught at the airport with 2,063 endangered seahorses in their baggage. The animals are used in Chinese medicine, and would have a value there of around €20,000. But the trade is outlawed internationally. The three were on a flight from Sierra Leone to Beijing in April which made a stop at Zaventem. They said they had been working as fishermen in Sierra Leone and noticed how the seahorses were thrown away by local fishermen, whereas they are so valuable in China. They claimed to have gathered the seahorses over the course of two years, with the intention of sharing them with friends and

family back home. “These are three uneducated fishermen who know nothing of European regulations or international treaties,” the defence pleaded. “They had no idea they were doing anything wrong.” The prosecution, however, argued the men were smuggling the seahorses for cash. The court heard the three, far from being fishermen, had travelled to Sierra Leone for the sole purpose of collecting seahorses and bringing them home to sell on the black market. They were sentenced to 15 months each in prison, half of it suspended. They were acquitted of ivory smuggling after a small image that looked like ivory was found in their bags. But the charges were dropped after it turned out nobody had checked the exact composition of the object. \ AH



FACE OF FLANDERS



Sandra Bekkari

In the highly competitive world of TV cookery, there’s a new kid on the block. From September, VTM will launch a new early-evening cookery show, going head to head with the hugely successful *Dagelijkse kost* (Everyday Food) presented by Jeroen Meus on VRT. The show will be presented by Sandra Bekkari, who may be making her TV presenting debut but who is hardly an absolute beginner. At the age of 43, she’s been a permanent fixture in the top 10 for book sales for at least two years, with her *Nooit meer diëten* (No More Diets) series of books on how to eat healthily without jumping through the hoops of fad diets. And as any savvy communicator needs to be these days, she’s big on social media: 22,500 Instagram followers and around 85,000 fans on Facebook. She’s not a cook, though, as Meus pointed out to *Het Laatste Nieuws*. “I am. I could make her food better,” he pointed out cheekily. Bekkari has instead been a food consultant for the last 20 years, after coming second in the Miss Belgium contest in 1992. She comes from Ostend and was adopted at the age of three

months. She never knew her biological father, and speculates that her surname is of North African origin, without going further than that. She now lives in Zwevezele in West Flanders with her daughter and her partner’s two adult children. Her books now are based on what 20 years ago she called the Sana method – a diet system in which nothing is forbidden. The principles seem today to be self-evident – drink enough water, have a healthy breakfast, eat more vegetables and so on – but must have sounded more revolutionary back then. She may not be a cook, but she still has the sort of wacky ideas chefs are prone to (more pomegranate seeds, anyone?). “I don’t believe in dieting, but I do believe in delicious meals,” she told *Het Laatste Nieuws*. “My healthy version of ham rolls with *witlof* for example, with cauliflower puree instead of bechamel sauce. Very simple and uber-Flemish. I know what works!” Viewers may take some convincing. “The Flemish like food that’s healthy and delicious,” said Davy Parmentier, creative director at VTM. “Sandra knows how to combine the two in a very accessible manner.” \ Alan Hope

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5TH COLUMN

The Brussels backlash

The impact of the Samusocial scandal isn't just on the Brussels-City government.

Samusocial, a private non-profit organisation supporting the homeless, has been very generous in pay-outs to members of its board, including Brussels mayor Yvan Mayeur and head of the social agency Pascale Peraïta, both French-speaking socialists.

That politicians should profit from funds intended for the poor has horrified Flanders. The lack of transparency and the arrogance with which Mayeur defended himself have only added to this feeling.

His original defence was that comments about Samusocial were a "Flemish attack". Even so, he was forced to step down as mayor last week, with another French-speaking socialist, Philippe Close, taking up his position.

The way the situation has been handled has led to an incident between Flemish socialists and liberals, as SPA unexpectedly found itself gone from the Brussels coalition. They were kicked out, SPA claims. Open VLD disputes this.

SPA says councillor Ans Persoons was forced to leave a city government meeting after she objected to Mayeur becoming a councillor after he stepped down as mayor. This led to a row with sister party PS, which held SPA responsible for exposing the Samusocial scandal in the first place. In this version Open VLD did nothing to support SPA's demand for cleaner politics, preferring to take up some of Persoons' portfolio behind her back.

In Open VLD's version, Mayeur's comeback was never on the table and SPA left of its own accord. Open VLD councillor Els Ampe argues that SPA acts holier than thou, while it got caught up in a row between socialists.

What really happened at the meeting may never be fully known, but the incident has soured relationships between the Flemish socialists and liberals. SPA president John Crombez has called Open VLD "cowardly peasants", while his liberal colleague Gwendolyn Rutten has protested about the language he used.

SPA has lost a seat on the Brussels-City government, but the outcome is not unwelcome to the party leadership. Samusocial has become an opportunity to distance SPA from the French-speaking PS, a party beset by scandal. It may even help people forget similar scandals with SPA politicians in Ghent.

\ Anja Otte

Brussels mayor resigns over Samusocial payments row

Region and prosecutor investigating fees paid to board members



Alan Hope

More articles by Alan \ flanderstoday.eu

Brussels mayor Yvan Mayeur has resigned over the issue of payments to board members of the homeless charity Samusocial. Philippe Close, formerly councillor in charge of tourism and finance, has replaced him.

Mayeur (pictured) rapidly lost support even within his own party when it was revealed that he had taken attendance fees for board meetings of Samusocial, an organisation within the Brussels social

aid agency which he used to chair before becoming mayor. According to an investigation by the Brussels region, Mayeur and current chair Pascale Peraïta took a total of €17,000 each in fees for meetings that may not have taken place.

Both Rudi Vervoort (PS), minister-president of the Brussels region, and Laurette Onkelinx, president of the party in Brussels, advised Mayeur to consider stepping down. The Flemish socialist party SPA



© Jean-Marc Quinet/Belga

made it clear his resignation would be a condition of their further membership of the coalition in Brussels-City.

The Samusocial issue continues to be investigated. The whole board has resigned, Peraïta has taken an unpaid leave of absence and an agency of the region has taken over the day-to-day running of the organisation. The Brussels prosecutor's office has started its own enquiry.

Government cleared to gather airline passengers' details

The Belgian Privacy Commission has given the go-ahead for the home affairs ministry to start gathering the personal details of everyone boarding an international flight from the country.

The measure is the result of a law passed by parliament in December as a means of fighting terrorism, and other transport sectors are due to follow suit.

In practice, the law will allow the ministry to know 48 hours in advance of any flight who will be on board. Details to be collected include a person's identity as well as when they reserved and how they paid. The airlines will send the data to the home affairs ministry, and the details of persons of interest will be checked again after passengers have boarded the aircraft.

The aim is to track people who are on a security service database as part of the fight against terrorism, serious crime and illegal migra-



© Tom D'haenens/Brussels Airlines

tion.

A spokesperson for home affairs minister Jan Jambon said the air transport industry had been consulted and was confident the measure would not prevent airlines from offering last-minute cheap fares.

The law passed in December also covers international travel by train, tram, bus and water, with the Privacy Commission requested to approve each sector separately. The measure for the air transport sector is expected to come into force early next year.

\ AH

Committee to investigate sexual harassment in sport

The Flemish parliament is to set up a committee to investigate inappropriate sexual behaviour in sport, following allegations of widespread abuse by coaches in judo and other sports. The proposal received support from all parties.

The allegations, from judo athletes including former Belgian champion Niki Heylen and Olympic medallist Ann Simons, led government party Open VLD to call for a full investigative committee, which has the power to summon witnesses and issue search warrants. The other parties decided to limit the matter to a special committee, which has fewer legal powers.

According to coalition partner N-VA, the parliament can, if neces-

sary, change the committee's remit at a later date, for example expanding its investigation to other sectors such as youth work or education.

"An investigative committee would have given us more legal leverage, but I'm happy to go along with the majority," said Lionel Bajart of Open VLD. "The fact we're getting started is more important than what form the committee takes."

The exact composition of the committee and the rules governing how it goes about its business will be decided later, as will a starting date for its deliberations. "As far as I'm concerned, that should happen as quickly as possible," Bajart said. "This case should not be delayed." \ AH

New plan to increase heat energy as sustainable source

The government of Flanders has approved an energy plan that aims to stimulate the production of sustainable energy from heat.

A study by the Flemish institute for technological research, Vito, shows that energy from heat could cover up to one-third of Belgium's renewable energy needs. The country aims to increase the total share of green energy to at least 13% by 2020.

Under the new plan, proposed by energy minister Bart Tommelein, by 2020 Flanders will provide enough heat to power up to 50,000 households – twice as many as today.

The government plans to map out where heat energy is available and where heating networks, recuperation of surplus heat and co-generation can be profitable. Industry experts are working on a manual to show how to adapt buildings and select the most suitable technology for new infrastructure.

Tommelein also wants to increase the use of solar boilers and heat pumps by 2020. He hopes to see 9,500 new solar boilers installed every year, compared to 7,500 in 2016, and 6,400 new heat pumps, compared to 3,700 in 2016. \ Andy

Furniere

Child allowance reform will 'lift 16% of families out of poverty'

The Flemish government has approved changes to child allowance proposed by welfare minister Jo Vandeurzen. The reforms, which include a monthly allowance of €160 for every child, with €150 a year for children enrolled in pre-school, will come into force in 2019. For every child born after 1 January 2019, parents will receive a one-off payment of €1,100, followed by an allowance of €160 a month. Parents who sign their toddlers up for pre-school will receive an immediate €150, with €150 more in the second year, provided the child attended a minimum of 150 half-days.

Child allowance has now been renamed "growth package", as it takes into account a number of other allowances, including those for orphans and foster children, a care allowance for children with specific health-care needs and a school allowance at the start of every school year.

Vandeurzen said his plan aimed to cover some of the cost of bringing up children and contribute to the fight against poverty. According to figures provided by his office, the



© Ingimage

new system will lift 16% of families out of poverty. No family will lose out by the new reforms, he said.

The reforms also affect the school allowance for older children from low-income families. Secondary school pupils will now receive up to €200 a year more. The school allowance for three- to five-year-olds will also go up €98 each year, up to an average €682 a year for pupils aged 12 to 18. This allowance is means-tested.

Also included in the €30 million extra budget is €8 million for the allowance for students in professional education. The allowances will also be extended to include children attending schools approved by the Flemish Community and pre-schools in the Brussels region. \ AH

Home of the saint

Father Damien's birthplace reopens after much-needed transformation

continued from page 1

\ DAMIAANMUSEUM.BE

Sacred Hearts – also known as the Picpus Fathers – who sent him on the mission to Hawaii. On his death, the order bought his childhood home, but recently agreed to a 50-year lease with Tremelo. As a result, the €1.2 million infrastructure cost could be passed on to the municipality.

The building used to be a farm; parts of it date back to before 1770. "After the Picpus Fathers bought it, they turned it into a monastery," says Massart. "It opened as a museum in 1952." Standing in front of the house, he admits to feeling proud that the renovation works have succeeded in restoring the building's original white walls and green doors and shutters.

Ten years ago, when Massart first arrived at the museum, he found it in a pitiful state. "I was embarrassed to take people around," he says. "The exhibition rooms were outdated and certainly didn't represent what a museum experience should be in the 21st century." The Picpus Fathers wanted to preserve Father Damien's legacy while bringing it to a younger audience, so they asked Massart to turn the outdated museum into an experience centre. The renovated centre would focus on storytelling, interactivity and reflection, as opposed to being a straightforward gallery of artefacts.

As a result, the scale models were replaced by touchscreens. Display cases with Father Damien's personal belongings and everyday Hawaiian articles act as crea-

mainly in the village of Kalawao, in the north of the island – Father Damien wrote several letters to friends and family, as well as religious and political authorities, to ask for material support to improve the precarious living conditions of the people he worked with.

"He was a development worker before there was such a thing," Massart says, and an insightful lobbyist. He invited the queen of Hawaii to tour the leper colony – her visit helped spread his message around the globe.

Ambrose Hutchinson, the resident superintendent of the colony and Father Damien's close friend, called him "a jack of all trades: carpenter, bricklayer, baker, farmer, doctor and gravedigger". It was a fitting description, Massart adds.

Some of the letters written by Father Damien are now on display in the museum's biggest room. Thanks to a touchscreen display, visitors can read them in three languages.

There's a touching account of his first months on Molokai. "Here, I sit among my beloved sick," Damien wrote in 1873 to Marcellin Bousquet, the Paris-based Father Superior of his congregation. "If I am unable to cure them such as He was able, then I'm at heart to offer them comfort. The 800 helpers are confined in a small area roughly three kilometres wide, with on the one side the ocean and on the other a steep mountain side. They cannot leave."

Father Damien's initial task in



that if he were alive today, he would urge us to stop labelling people as Muslims, Moroccans, homosexuals, and so on. We should not focus on one aspect of people's lives, but see the total picture."

A timeline at the beginning of the tour lists nearly all the facts of Father Damien's life. Most of the old farm was converted to make room for monastery buildings, but the house, where he lived with his parents and siblings, was preserved and became part of the chapel.



© Lander Loecx

Before becoming Father Damien, Jozef De Veuster spent his youth on a farm in Flemish Brabant; his house is now a museum

“I am the happiest missionary in the world

tive props that invite visitors to apply the saint's mantras to their own life. Students and teachers are invited to take part in workshops on related themes. "We didn't only want to explain who Father Damien was, but also to show what we can do with his legacy today," says Massart.

Father Damien's commitment, he continues, went beyond national borders or religions, and that is what makes him especially meaningful in a world dominated by extremists today.

"Damien left his comfort zone in Tremelo for an uncertain life on an island that lacked all the comforts of modern life," he says. "With almost nothing, he started building houses, a church, a hospital – slowly creating a community based on solidarity and mutual respect." For Father Damien, Massart adds, differences symbolised wealth, and he found it enriching to work with members of other faiths. During his stay on Molokai –

Hawaii was to teach the locals about the Christian faith and convert them. But when leprosy was discovered there, the government passed a law to ensure all lepers were removed from society and taken to a remote peninsula. The Flemish missionary volunteered to go with them and help create a sense of stability and order. At first, he would only go for three months at a time, reducing his chances of becoming infected, but eventually decided to stay.

According to Massart, the decision symbolises one of Father Damien's key messages: "He did not stigmatise. We speak about the sick or the poor, while we could just as easily refer to them as people who suffer from a disease or live in poverty. Father Damien showed us that a human being is so much more than his or her disease."

The people he helped, Massart continues, weren't just lepers. "They were cabinetmakers, poets, teachers and children. I'm sure

The quiet space is ideal for contemplation and offers a view inside the old root cellar, where the coffin in which Father Damien was brought back to Flanders will be placed on display once restored – his bones were laid in a crypt inside the Saint Anthony's chapel in Leuven in 1936. The house isn't furnished yet, as the museum awaits extra funding to repair the ceiling.

The short walk between the house and the larger museum room is especially enchanting. An audio guide lets you listen to a lively conversation between wood sculptures representing Father Damien and two of his helpers. In the background, you can hear the sound of waves and the wind, interspersed with the singing of exotic birds. Then, suddenly, Father Damien whispers in your ear: "Tonight I want to dream of the fair in Tremelo, but, at the moment, I am the happiest missionary in the world."

The museum also includes the

original wooden altar in front of which Father Damien announced his infection with the words "We, lepers". Elsewhere, visitors learn that his pipe helped him cope with the terrible odour of the sickness and that, when pictured, he liked to stand in the middle of his fellow villagers.

On special occasions, Kalawao's orphan boys used to sing songs to the music of thin pipe flutes, steel triangles and tenor and bass

drums. "We are like a family / With one father / Goodbye to you, goodbye to each of us / May you return with aloha," went the lyrics.

Though no recordings were made, visitors to the museum can listen to a new arrangement, recorded by the former soprano of the city of Leuven, Noémie Schellens, and the Camerata Aetas Nova choir. Father Damien's inspiring message is alive and well in Tremelo.

WEEK IN BUSINESS

Postal services \ TBC

The Zaventem-based courier and mail delivery company is seeking to hire 900 workers to meet demand from public administrations and businesses. It expects a 10% growth of its activities by 2020.

Property \ Xior

The Antwerp-based student housing developer is seeking to raise €84 million to finance the expansion of its activities in Holland. It has acquired buildings in Den Haag, Delft, Rotterdam, Utrecht and Venlo to redevelop into student residences.

Insurance \ QBE

The Australian insurance company is to transfer part of its euro-related activities from London to Brussels in the wake of the Brexit vote. The company, which already has an operation in Brussels, is one of the world's 20 largest in the business.

Biotech \ Biocartis

The Mechelen-based biotechnology company has signed an agreement with the British MRC Technology company to develop breast cancer molecular tests and related treatments. The move is expected to allow MRC to continue accessing EU-funded research grants after Brexit.

Food \ Exki

The Brussels-based healthy fast food chain is to close its two New York outlets after three years of losses in the US, and will open up to 12 restaurants in Germany and Spain.

Industry \ Atlas Copco

The Swedish air treatment systems and compressors group is to transfer its equipment rental division and headquarters from Houston, Texas, to Boom, near Antwerp.

Construction \ Besix

The Brussels-based building group has won the contract to develop the marine infrastructure of the tow boats station at Port Hedland in Australia.

Retail \ Eyelove

The Dutch chain of discount optical and eye care stores is to open up to 10 outlets in Flanders this year and has plans for 50 more throughout the country in the coming years.

Antwerp signs trading deal with Chinese port

Agreement with Caofeidian will bring increased trade efficiency



Alan Hope

More articles by Alan \ flanderstoday.eu

The Antwerp port authority has signed a co-operation agreement with the port of Caofeidian in China, as part of China's drive to link its ports and terminals with major trading centres around the world. The agreement was signed in the Hertoginnedal castle in Brussels, with both Belgian and Chinese prime ministers present.

Caofeidian (*pictured*) is a young, fast-growing port, built partly on reclaimed land in the north-east of the country. Of the 260 million tonnes of goods handled by the port last year, 36 million tonnes was steel. Every year, Caofeidian trades around 500,000 to 700,000 tonnes with Antwerp, Europe's main port for steel.

The agreement commits the two ports to



© Fanghong/Wikimedia

examine the possibility of a rail link between Antwerp and Caofeidian, as well as improving the sea connection. Later this year, the authorities at Caofeidian will receive a training pack-

age created by the Apec Port Training Centre, Antwerp's maritime training institute.

The co-operation is part of the Chinese government's One Belt One Road programme, created in 2013 to improve connections between China's main ports and industrial cities and major trading centres in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. The programme already includes a rail link that follows parts of the old Silk Route, as well as a maritime portion that links China to ports around the Indian Ocean.

Last month, the CEO of the Port Authority, Jacques Vandermeiren, took part in a debate at the One Belt One Road Forum in Beijing, which was attended by 1,500 people, including 29 heads of state and government.

Flemish companies imported 1.7bn kilos of waste in 2016

Waste treatment companies in Flanders imported 1.7 billion kilograms of waste last year, double the amount it imported seven years before. Environment minister Joke Schauvliege provided the figures in response to a parliamentary question

The majority of the waste comes from neighbouring countries, but there are also imports from Mexico, Uruguay, Nigeria and South Korea. Most of the waste is destined for re-use, recycling or the recovery of valuable raw materials. About a quarter is incinerated or treated chemically, with only 1% sent to landfill.

"We import waste because Flanders is an authority in the field of recycling," Schauvliege said. The Flemish waste treatment industry employs 12,000 people and last year had a turnover of €3.7 billion.



"Some years nothing is dumped, other years there's a few tonnes of waste from Luxembourg containing asbestos," a spokesperson for the public waste materials agency Ovam told *Het Laatste Nieuws*. "For the time being, dumping in a special asbestos dump is the only option, but we are researching how it could be done better. We're talking about extremely limited quantities, which are only permitted because Luxembourg doesn't have its own treatment facility." \ AH

Auditor advises against extending logistics warehouses

The Auditor of the Council of State has recommended cancelling a permit to extend warehouses in Limburg for logistics company H Essers. The case was brought by a coalition of environmental organisations opposed to a large area of woodland being felled.

After Essers' application for permits was turned down by Limburg province, the company appealed to Flemish environment minister Joke Schauvliege, who approved a permit for felling the trees as well as a general environmental permit.

Natuurpunt, Bond Beter Leefmilieu, BOS+ and a local action committee then took the case to the Council of State. The latest news comes as the auditor of the

council issued an advice, which is not binding on the council but is usually followed. A full decision is expected on 16 June.

The auditor says the Flemish government did not take sufficient account of the effects on nature of letting 12 hectares of woodland be felled in order to build 70,000 square metres of warehouses. Essers says the expansion will create 400 jobs.

"The Essers wood is a domino that must not be allowed to fall," Natuurpunt said in a statement. "If a wood as well-protected on paper as this should disappear, no other piece of nature in Flanders is safe, and the region's entire nature policy falls apart." \ AH

Check-in staff call for better security against passengers

Check-in staff at Brussels Airport have called for more security to protect them from disgruntled passengers, following an incident in which a staff member was reduced to tears by a man complaining about the rules on boarding passes.

The passenger himself posted a video of the incident on social media, which went viral last week, though the incident happened at the end of May. The man, an American who lives in Berlin, forgot to print his boarding pass at home and was told by the woman, an Aviapartner employee working on the Ryanair desk, that he would have to pay a penalty of €50. He shouted at her in front of a line of other passengers, insulting her and making her cry. When other passengers intervened, he turned on them.

Staff say the problem is common at the airport, particularly with low-cost airlines, which often have strict rules relating to printed boarding passes. Passengers lose their tempers when faced with penalties over documents or luggage allowances. Staff receive little protection as desks are undermanned and security personnel stretched.

"Incidents like this are a daily occurrence," said Jan Verbinen of the trade union ABVV. Staff on check-in desks are often not employees of the airline, and airlines need to step in to help, he said. "The company could provide a second person and the airport could also help with security personnel. Experience shows that the problem would be 99% solved that way." \ AH

Petition calls for doubling of paternity leave to 20 days

Two organisations have launched a petition calling for paternity leave to be doubled from 10 days to 20. Family union Gezinsbond and the Vrouwenraad (Women's Council) have set up a petition demanding that partners – fathers or co-mothers – be allowed more paid leave after the birth of a child. The European average is 12.5 days.

A survey by the Gezinsbond among more than 6,000 members and non-members shows that 93% of mothers and 84% of fathers and co-mothers consider the current parental leave for employees insufficient.

As well as calling for leave to be doubled for employees and civil servants, the two organisations want to see equal rights for all self-



© Ingimage

employed people, to allow both partners to build a closer relationship with their newborn child and to assist the mother in the early stages of a child's life.

The petition, which currently has more than 3,000 signatures, will be handed to health minister Maggie De Block and employment minister Kris Peeters. \ Andy Furniere

Full trunk

Flemish company eases congestion with carpooling for cargo



Toon Lambrechts

More articles by Toon \ flanderstoday.eu

TRIVIZOR.COM

Of all the nuisances of modern life, traffic jams are among the most annoying. In Flanders, roads get more congested every year, with trucks and cars deadlocked in a constant struggle for space. As the region's population increases, the situation is expected to only get worse. Because of Flanders' strategic position in the heart of Europe, however, a huge chunk of the congestion is actually caused by commercial transport. Rethinking the way goods are transported has become a pressing issue. This is where Tri-Vizor comes in.

The company, located in Niel, Antwerp province, is the brainchild of Alex Van Breedam and Bart Vannieuwenhuyse, who launched it as a start-up at Antwerp University in 2008. It provides what CEO Van Breedam (*pictured, right*) calls a "carpooling service for cargo".

"One out of four trucks on the road is completely empty," he says. "The others are filled up to only about 57% of their capacity. That's an incredible waste."

Tri-Vizor aims to fill up this empty space. "Our goal is to bring companies together and have them work in a structured way on logistics and multimodal transport."

One of the reasons behind Flanders' skyrocketing congestion is that the local transport sector is very fragmented. "There are as many as 8,600 freight companies, but 8,000 of them are really small, with only a few trucks," Van Breedam explains. "The road tolls for trucks have also resulted in many companies switching to vans. As a result, they avoid the tolls, but have also become less regulated."

Consumers bear some of the blame as well. "The total volume of goods on roads has remained constant over the years, but because of changing economic realities, like online shopping, transportation has shifted to ever smaller cargo that hits the road more frequently," says Van Breedam. "You need more trucks to move the same volume." All this cargo traffic imposes a



© Isabelle Vanhoutte

heavy – but hidden – cost on society, says Van Breedam's partner, Vannieuwenhuyse (*pictured, left*). "As a society, we all actually subsidise car traffic, because those who use the roads don't cover all of the maintenance costs." Even if you don't own a car, some of your taxes are still spent on roads. "This restrains the parties involved in trying to come up with new solutions."

According to Vannieuwenhuyse, more and more companies are beginning to notice the benefits of services like Tri-Vizor. "They take sustainability more seriously, but it still doesn't pay off," he says. "A different form of taxation, like carbon taxing, could be helpful, because at some point, the wider society will refuse to pay for the roads that are mainly used by the transport and logistics industries." Tri-Vizor not only nudges the companies in a more sustainable direction, it also offers practical solutions. "We bring companies together," says Van Breedam. "We don't offer transportation services ourselves, but we develop models that work for all the parties involved. We act as a neutral party

that helps find solutions to logistical issues."

In one of the projects, Tri-Vizor brought together two of the largest players in the soft drinks industry. Pepsico and Nestlé may be fierce competitors, but with Tri-Vizor's help they created a shared warehouse and transportation network. Partnerships like that are a huge step to cutting waste, says Van Breedam, but they have their pitfalls.

Laws on competitive trading, for example, put strict limits on how much co-operation can occur between two competitors in the same market, which is why Tri-Vizor acts as an independent body – a trustee of sorts – and does not provide its own logistic services.

Van Breedam and Vannieuwenhuyse share a clear vision of the future of the cargo industry. According to Van Breedam, transportation will evolve into a radically different system, which he calls "the physical internet". In such a system, cargo will move through a network of connected points, similar to the way data travels through the internet.

"Nowadays, a truck leaves Flan-

ders with an empty trailer to pick up cargo in Spain and then heads back to Flanders," Van Breedam explains. "By 2050, a company will log on to a platform of transport providers and a carrier with enough capacity will transport the cargo to the next checkpoint. The road from Spain to Flanders will be split up into several parts. We'll avoid having empty trucks on the roads and stop wasting cargo space."

Would splitting shipping routes really increase transport efficiency? Definitely, says Van Breedam. "Tests have also proven that it is faster to transport goods this way. We already have the technology and algorithms to carry this through. The main stumbling block is the way the transport sector is organised."

Most freight companies, he says, have individual contracts with all their clients. "In our vision of the future, transport becomes a commodity. This requires a mental shift, which will take some time. Our projects show that a physical internet is not such a far-fetched idea, but a more efficient and smarter method of transportation."

WEEK IN INNOVATION

Activating memories of dementia patients

A Limburg care home is creating a room that triggers the memories of people with dementia through sensory stimuli. The initiative at Aan de Beverdijk in Hamont-Achel is part of a European trial project called Sense Garden, which will last three years. The idea comes from Norwegian professor Artur Serrano, and the local partner is E-point, a company in Hamont-Achel that specialises in care technology. The project aims to bring back long-term memories via sensory stimuli. A scene of a forest, for example, could make the patient feel like they are in a woodland from their childhood.

Cancer institute gets €2m tools

The Cancer Research Institute Ghent (CRIG) has installed €2 million worth of new infrastructure to examine complex biological processes in tumours and individual cancer cells. The CRIG assembles more than 300 researchers from Ghent University, Flemish life sciences research institute VIB, and the University Hospital of Ghent. The researchers now have a series of new technological platforms at their disposal, allowing them to study tumours in more detail. The platforms enable research into malfunctioning genes and proteins in cancer cells on the level of single cells, which was impossible until recently. Individual cancer cells can also be isolated from patients' blood for further analysis

Local universities in world's top 250

Four Flemish universities have made the top 250 of the QS World University Rankings, which evaluated 4,000 universities to find the 965 best. The University of Leuven remains the front-runner in Flanders, in 71st place, eight places higher than last year. The institution scored particularly highly for academic reputation and citations. Ghent University was in 125th spot, one place lower than last year. The Free University of Brussels (VUB) made it to 182nd place, the same as last year, while Antwerp University is ranked 210th, one place below last year. The list is dominated by universities from the US, with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology topping the ranking. \ AF

Leuven students spread dental health message in Senegal

Two medical students at the University of Leuven have set up a project to improve the dental hygiene of children in Senegal. Earlier this year, Jolien Vandoorne and Loesia Tryssesoone went to the Senegalese capital, Dakar, for a three-month internship at a hospital. During free consultations, they noticed how bad dental hygiene among local children was. "We saw degraded teeth and abscesses, and some children had such a serious dental infection that they were sick," Tryssesoone told her university's newspaper, *Campuskrant*. "Brushing your teeth every day is a habit that the children don't know, and for most people a dentist is too expensive."



© Courtesy Nexal Retane/Facebook

With help of friends and family, the two students assembled about 50 kilograms of toothpaste and 1,000 toothbrushes. They also bought anti-

biotics and pain killers.

This turned out to be the start of their project, Nexal Retane, Senegalese for "Give us a smile". The pair went to villages and schools with two local dentists to show children how to brush their teeth, and gave them a toothbrush and toothpaste to use at home.

The project is supported by Flemish radio station Qmusic. Back in Flanders, the students took part in Qmusic's contest De Plezante Premie (The Pleasant Premium), with which the station supports a variety of projects. Nexal Retane received €5,000, which will be used for a new collection campaign and more free consultations in Senegal. \ Andy Furniere

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The language of music

Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp updates master's programme in music



Ian Mundell
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\ APBE/ROYAL-CONSERVATOIRE-ANTWERP

Mikko Pablo and Nicole Miller look slightly puzzled when I tell them the Royal Conservatoire in Antwerp is starting an English-language version of its master's programme in music. Both are current students, and they already work in English. But they are the reason the new option is being introduced.

"Students of 33 nationalities, from Europe and beyond, are currently following our master's programme," explains its head, Inge Simoens. This international population has risen strongly, 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," she says. "The English-language master's addresses this growing multilingual student population."

For students like Pablo and Miller – who play cello and viola respectively – the emphasis of the programme is on performance, and their main contact is with a teacher for their particular instrument. "You speak with your personal teacher in whatever language is most comfortable," Pablo explains.

He was born in the US, grew up in the Philippines, and then returned to Los Angeles for his undergraduate studies. After that, Europe called. "I wanted to dive deeper into the western classical tradition," he says.

Family connections took him to Germany, where he started to look for a teacher. The name Justus Grimm, at Antwerp, stood out.

"Antwerp was not on my list of schools, but I was referred to Justus



© Frederik Beyens
Students from the Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp performing during a concert

by other teachers," he recalls. "And thank God I was, because I found the right person. He's an incredible teacher, an incredible person and in many ways a role model for me." Other attractions included Antwerp's openness to mixing disciplines, for example in the creative project each master's student must produce. "It has to involve the instrument you are studying, but other than that you can do anything you want," Pablo says. Students can commission new work or collaborate with choreographers or dancers. "It's a very nice opportunity to explore how we can be creative."

Sharing a campus with the prestigious de Singel concert hall is also a plus. "All the orchestra conductors and chamber music ensembles that we've idolised come here and we can hang out with them," he says.

Pablo is still thinking about his creative project, but his research project, another requirement of the programme, will be an inves-

tigation of jazz and popular music influences in Shostakovich's Cello sonata. As well as writing a paper, in English, he will defend his findings with a performance of the work.

This is a further aspect of the master's that he appreciates. "They are teaching us the process of investigating a piece of music, the context around it, and finding things that could inform our interpretation of the piece," he says.

Miller's situation is slightly different, since she is following the programme part-time while pursuing a busy career as a performer. Originally from the US, she first studied the violin, then switched to the viola. She currently plays in a range of settings, from classical and contemporary to jazz and rock.

Already living in Brussels, she was also drawn to the Antwerp conservatory by a particular teacher, Leo De Neve. "I really wanted to study with him," she says. "He's an incredible human being and an amazing

teacher."

She sees the master as part of a continuing process rather than a career stepping stone. "I always like to be learning," she says. "It pushes you and keeps you in a framework so that you keep studying."

And Antwerp is proving to be a stimulating environment. "It's a really beautiful campus, with a lot of things happening. The building itself creates a really open mentality, and there is a lot of open-mindedness to more creative projects." Openness is particularly important given her musical interests. "I'm getting a classical education but I do a lot of non-classical things, such as inter-disciplinary and inter-genre work, and I like to get credit for that," she says.

This is also the starting point for her research topic, which will look at how "millennial" musicians like her approach the strings. "We've been trained in a very traditional discipline, in an instrument that was made at a very specific time in history, so how are we taking it out into the world?"

That could mean using the instrument differently, for instance playing percussively or using looping machines, or performing in settings where amplification and distortion come into play. This is something she has experienced with her string quartet In Praise of Folly, which has been touring this year with the rock band Marillion. "I love classical music, but I also think we're not that generation," she says. "I was not born in the Renaissance. So, how do I interpret music when I'm from an open-source generation? To me it means collaboration, open-mindedness and all kinds of mixing."

WEEK IN EDUCATION

Maths knowledge is getting worse

Understanding of maths is decreasing among Flanders' 12-year-olds, according to a study by experts at the University of Leuven at the request of the Flemish government. In May last year, 5,421 pupils from 190 Flemish schools took 13 tests that examined their skills in various mathematical fields, like numbers and mathematical operations, and measuring and geometry. The study analysed whether students in the sixth year of primary school achieved the *eindtermen*, the final requirements for pupils to move on to secondary school. The results show that pupils' mathematical knowledge is decreasing, with the scores on almost all tests concerning numbers and mathematical operations lower. Just six out of 10 students achieved the required score on the test concerning solving problems through measuring and geometry.

Schools to face more frequent inspections

From January, schools in Flanders will undergo more frequent inspections. The change, proposed by education minister Hilde Crevits, was approved by the Flemish government. Education inspectors evaluate each school every 10 years on average; they will now do so every six years. Crevits said it was a more logical choice, as this is the average time pupils spend in both primary and secondary education. She said schools had been asking for more feedback from the inspection services. The reform will transform the inspections from a strictly monitoring operation into a dialogue on improving the quality of policies implemented by the schools.

1,000 children return to special education

More than 1,000 children have returned to special education from regular education despite the decree introduced in September 2015 to move pupils with special needs into mainstream schools. The report in *De Morgen* is based on registration figures from the education ministry comparing 1 October 2016 and 1 February 2017. In total, 1,270 students in pre-school, primary school and secondary education returned to special education in this period. The government has promised to allocate more resources to regular schools next year to help them provide better support for children with special educational needs. \ AF

Belgium in world's top 10 in childhood survey

\ CAMPAIGN.SAVETHECHILDREN.NET/END-OF-CHILDHOOD

Belgium is one of the world's top 10 countries to be a child, according to the End of Childhood Index published by Save the Children International.

Save the Children collected data from 172 countries and presented the results in a report called *Stolen Childhoods*.

"Childhood should be a time to learn, play, grow, develop and feel safe and protected," the organisation says. "However, nearly one in four children around the world are being robbed of their childhoods, simply because of who they are or where they live."

Around the world, 700 million children see their childhood end prematurely for a variety of reasons. The End of Childhood Index focuses on eight reasons: child marriage, teenage pregnancy, child labour, malnourishment, access to education, child mortality, violence and displacement because of conflict.



© Ingimage

Belgium is ranked joint 10th with Cyprus, Germany and South Korea. Norway is ranked first, and the list also contains the Netherlands, Italy, Sweden, Slovenia, Finland, Portugal, Ireland and Iceland.

"Belgium scores especially well in the domain of access to education; only a few countries do better in this field," Karen Mets, senior advocacy

advisor of Save the Children International, said. Child marriages are rare here and teenage pregnancies occur relatively rarely. "Even so, one-quarter of the children in Belgium are at risk of poverty and social exclusion," Mets said. "So there is still room for improvement."

There is a marked contrast with African countries. The 10 places in which childhood is threatened the most are all in Africa. Niger scores the worst, followed by Angola and Mali. Of the 700 million children whose childhoods end early, 28 million are displaced.

"Although the problems have a global dimension and in the long term they also affect us, we aren't looking for a global solution," said Mets. "Our report shows that prosperous countries have the financial resources, but we still say too often that we cannot do anything."

\ Andy Furniere

WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

Lego Zoo Animals

Throughout the summer, visitors to Planckendael animal park will see life-sized animal sculptures made out of Lego bricks alongside the real animals. The 40-plus creations are the work of American artist Sean Kenney and have never before been seen in Europe. *Until 17 September, Leuvensesteenweg 582, Mechelen; included with zoo admission (€25)*

\ planckendael.be

Living Statues

Lommel hosts the 10th annual International Festival of Living Statues, a particular form of street art in which performers transform themselves into sculptures. Single statues, groups of figures, every act different and surprising. Plus other entertainment and food and drink. *17 & 18 June 14.00-18.00, Lommel city centre; free*

\ beeldiglommel.be

Exclusive Mansions

Throughout the year, fans of Art Nouveau architecture have the chance to take guided tours of Brussels' most beautiful mansions. These masterpieces of Art Nouveau, such as Victor Horta's Hôtel Solvay and Paul Cauchie's residence, are not usually open to the public. Check website for details and booking info. *Until December, across Brussels; €10-40*

\ explore.brussels

Marta Hasselt

After a successful start in Antwerp, this local and organic farmer's market has arrived in Hasselt. Organic produce from local farms and artisanal food for sale, plus a breakfast made from local ingredients and a dinner made from the market's leftovers at the end of the day. Reservations required for meals. *17 June 9.00-17.00, Stationsplein, Hasselt; free*

\ tinyurl.com/marta-hasselt

Piknik Musik

The concept is simple: a summer picnic with some good tunes as soundtrack. Bring your own picnic basket or hit the food and drink stands. *18 June 13.00-21.00, Tour & Taxis, Brussels; free*

\ piknikmusik.be

A leaf out of history

Gaasbeek castle's ornamental walled garden is a living museum



Tom Peeters

More articles by Tom \ flanderstoday.eu

\ MUSEUMTINGAASBEEK.BE

If you've ever visited Gaasbeek castle and its surrounding fairy tale-like park, you might have heard about the nearby garden. But you might just as easily not be aware of it, since it's so well hidden behind high walls. For a long time, visitors were only admitted by appointment. But that's all changed. Thanks to a group of keen volunteers, everyone can now stroll like a dignitary along the paths of this beautiful space, built to resemble a late 19th-century formal garden, with its geometric shapes and symmetrical layout, combining fruit, vegetable and ornamental gardens.

"The wide paths in the middle of a garden like this were indeed for noblemen's use," says Bart Van Camp from the Agency for Nature and Forests, the department of the Flemish government that manages the garden. "We're talking about a time in which a garden was a status symbol and an ideal instrument for networking and showing off among the rich. As you could imagine, the workers and gardeners would have to use the smaller paths."

While the environment may be historical, the garden – which has a 10 kilometre panoramic view over the castle and the picturesque Pajottenland landscape – is completely newly built. "The land we are on used to be an open space in the forest," Van Camp says. "But in 1996 it became a museum garden focussing on the heyday of traditional Belgian horticulture. Between 1850 and 1900 we were considered world-class at fruit cultivation and the selective breeding of plants."

As a historical site where there



© Courtesy ANB

were once gardens in the past, the location is top-notch. Add the rich loamy soil of the Pajottenland and you understand why Van Camp says that, especially at the end of summer and the beginning of autumn, when the fruits are ripe, the area exudes a colourful Bruegel-like character.

Walking through the berry and fig gardens, one of the six compartments on the five-acre domain, you notice an abundance of espaliered fruit, tied to a trellis or growing up against a wall. The technique of growing fruit without

trunk and (too many) leaves is an art in itself and is pursued to perfection here. A terrace garden and a kitchen garden mix the ornamental and the functional. In the orchard, with its impressive regional collection of half standard plum trees, Van Camp points out that these fruits used to be far more important than they are now. "Before there was refined sugar, families sweetened their food with plums," he says. Another natural sweetener used in the kitchen back then was honey, and so a few beehives will

soon be added to the garden. Other orchards show standard fruit trees, typical of local fruit farming circa 1900, or illustrate how cultivation practices have evolved over time. But what happens to the fruit?

"That's the question almost every visitor asks," Van Camp says with a smile. "You have to bear in mind that the garden has a museum function. We don't sell our harvest. On the contrary, we make sure it stays as long as possible on the tree, until it drops, and then it is often too late to eat it."

BITE

Bao Bang Bang brings Taiwanese street food to Brussels

\ BAOBANGBANG.BE

Bao Bang Bang is a real new kid on the block: the eatery dedicated to the bao, an increasingly popular street food dish from Taiwan, is the first of its kind in Brussels. The creative mind behind it all is Fabrice Nsalambi, a cameraman from Brussels who fell in love with the steamed bun during a shoot in Taiwan. He kept coming across the dish in major cities across the world during his travels. "I tried bao restaurants in Berlin, London, New York, Paris... but Brussels was lagging a bit behind," he says.

After a year of research, cooking courses, business plans and numerous test dinners with friends, there was, much to Nsalambi's surprise, still no bao place to be seen in the capital.



© EmielsKitchen

"In Brussels people can be quite hesitant when it comes to new things, and then when a new concept opens, they soon pop up all over the place. But the first one

always involves taking quite a risk." Nsalambi was willing to take that plunge, and so far it seems to have paid off. "On launch day, customers who already knew the product waited in line in front of the restaurant," he says.

Bao Bang Bang offers numerous varieties of what you could call the Taiwanese take on the sandwich, in all kinds of culinary directions. But the menu also features the classic bao, just as you'll find it on the streets of its home country: a bun traditionally filled with a slice of pork, a syrupy, sugary soy sauce, cabbage and carrot salad, peanuts and coriander. But what makes a good bao? "You need several ingredients with a bit of a kick. Each element needs to be perfect on its own but at the

same time they all need to work together," says Nsalambi, who also takes on kitchen duty and perfected his skills learning from Korean and Japanese cooks.

"What I like about the bao is that you can be so creative with it and put lots of different things inside," he says. Accordingly, the menu has something in store for everyone, offering baos with shrimps and avocado, a vegetarian version based on tofu, and much more.

Bao Bang Bang provides not just a great food experience but also a sober yet stylish tiger-themed interior, a nod to the original meaning of the word bao: a tiger biting a pig, referencing the mouth-like form of the bun and its content. \ Sarah Schug

Museum on the other side

Traveling museum from Kortrijk puts disabled artists centre stage



Daan Bauwens

Follow Daan on Twitter \ @DaanBauwens

\ VZWWITH.ORG

Just because someone has an intellectual impairment, it doesn't mean they lack creativity. Arts centre Wit.h shows that the opposite is actually the case.

Over the last decade, the Kortrijk-based centre has given 300 artists with intellectual disabilities the chance to create and showcase artwork. With the opening of the travelling Museum aan de overkant (Museum on the Other Side) this year, Wit.h is taking its next big leap. "Always somewhere different, always something different, and with a clearly defined goal in mind," is how Luc Vandierendonck, artistic leader of Wit.h, explains the idea behind the museum. "By inviting ourselves into established art institutions, we stand up for the integration of artists with intellectual disabilities into the often elitist art circuit."

To give an example: on 8 October, Wit.h is taking over Kortrijk's textile museum for an exhibition by its own artists, whose work will be displayed next to that of established names, including the late sculptor Louise Bourgeois. The show will mark the end of 1000 Patterns, a project that Wit.h started in 2016, which denounces the stereotypes about people with disabilities. "Many people think that those with intellectual impairments are not intelligent, lack personality and, most of all, can't reflect on philosophical issues. The only thing prevailing is pity," Vandierendonck says.

"Now let's take the example of Laurence, one of our young artists with Down's syndrome. At first glance, she looks like any person with a disability. Set her free on stage and she turns into a minx, a tease,



© Courtesy Wit.h

feminine and dominant."

Breaking down stereotypes and patterns, the project also includes a series of interviews by people with disabilities by arts philosopher Jan Knops, which will be published in a book to reveal the interviewees' strength of imagination, and a short film in which a person with Down's syndrome is not the subject but the director.

Vandierendonck has been involved in the inclusion of artists with disabilities since the early 1990s, when instead of compulsory military service he opted for civil service. He ended up at a day-care centre for people with intellectual disabilities,

and, at 22, he found a new direction in life.

"Two facts astounded me," he recalls. "I found it irrational that we would remove these people from society, only to place them in a centre where endless efforts were being done to reintegrate them."

Secondly, he continues, "I couldn't understand how no one believed in the qualities of these people, especially when it came to art. Unlike in the Netherlands, Germany and France at that time, people with disabilities weren't taken seriously in the art community."

In 1998, under the patronage of his day-care centre, Vandierendonck

founded his first arts workshop in Zwevegem, West Flanders. When Bruges became Europe's cultural capital in 2002, he organised an exhibition of works from both disabled and able-bodied artists, signifying a major breakthrough.

"The day-care centre had its doubts about going this far," Vandierendonck explains. "They kept seeing arts as a fun pedagogical pastime, not as an end in itself. That's why I broke away from the centre and founded Wit.h. Our art shouldn't be a side project of the care sector but an integral part of the cultural economy."

Those interested in seeing the artists

can do so at several places on a rolling basis. At the beginning of July, Wit.h's Ann Cael and Kenny Callens will be joining Antwerp poet Peter Holvoet-Hanssen at the renowned Watou art festival. The list of projects also includes some on controversial, ethical and medical issues such as preventive abortion.

In the meantime, Wit.h is always open to new artists with mental disabilities, but also to able-bodied ones. "It's a funny thing when the latter step into our workshop," says Vandierendonck. "It's like they've made a connection. They will come back again and again and never leave."

Five summer pop-up bars in Flanders and Brussels

Summer is just around the corner, and that means open-air projects are popping up all over the country. Here are five of our favourite summertime bars in Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent, which are guaranteed to make these next few months that much more enjoyable, especially for those who can't afford a longer getaway.

Bar Paniek, Antwerp

Come summer, the Antwerp art collective Time Circus opens up a part of its hangar to the public. Despite the industrial surroundings, they've managed to turn the place into a veritable oasis, with flowers and plants all around. A wooden bar serves coffee, cool beers and more (*pictured*). Besides the relaxed atmosphere, Bar Paniek's winning point is without a doubt its prime location at the riverside, making it the ideal spot for gazing at the sunset. There's also a food truck should you get hungry.

\ tinyurl.com/barpaniek



DOK, Ghent

Ghent's post-industrial oasis is the veteran among Flanders' summer bars. Located in the up-and-coming neighbourhood by the city's main canal, it's one of the must-be places to hang out this summer. The site includes a restaurant, concert venue, beach volleyball field, playground for kids and even an art gallery. Every summer, its owners also put on a multifaceted cultural programme that includes vintage markets, open mic sessions,

book launches, parties and more.

\ dokgent.be

Bar Left, Antwerp

If you're on the lookout for a less urban experience, Bar Left is the place. Located on the left bank of the river Scheldt, the bar sits at the shore of Galgenweel, the largest sailing lake in the country, offering a quiet and green city escape only 10 minutes from the heart of Antwerp. The family-friendly bar serves everything from snacks and fresh drinks to deck chairs and yoga workshops, on top of the stunning view on the city. Swimming is not allowed, but if it gets too hot, you can cool off with a hose.

\ facebook.com/barleft

Bar Eliza, Brussels

Last summer a group of motivated residents launched a crowdfunding campaign to renovate a vacant pavilion in the middle of Koekelberg's Elisabeth Park and turn it into a proper

summer hangout. The campaign succeeded, and the result is Bar Eliza, a fantastic spot for enjoying a drink with locals, grabbing something to eat, renting sports equipment or playing cards. The organisers have also come up with regular events, from film screenings to concerts.

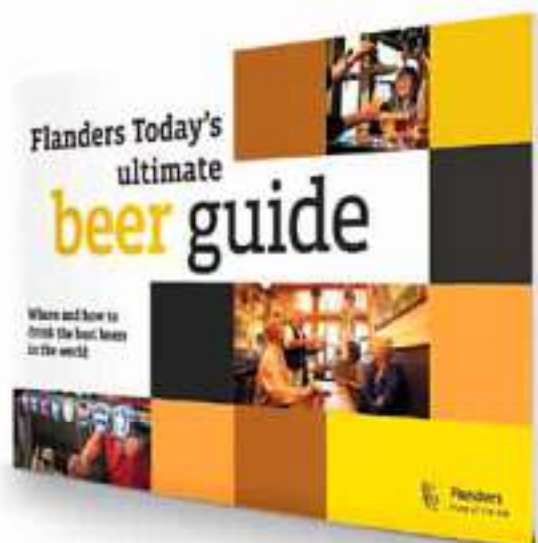
\ facebook.com/bareliza

La Guingette, Brussels

After a successful first run last year, this cosy and friendly pop-up bar surrounded by the greenery of the Vorst Park offers not only food based on local and organic ingredients, but also concerts, yoga classes, activities for kids, markets and more. Lovingly decorated with colourful lanterns, La Guingette is a great hangout for mild summer nights, and the huge sandpit in front makes it a great spot for families. Don't forget to try the refreshing homemade lemonade.

\ Sarah Schug
\ laguingetteduparc.be

Welcome to the land of beer



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Summer vibes

Zomer van Antwerpen turns the whole city into a stage



Samantha Clark

More articles by Samantha \ flanderstoday.eu

\ ZVA.BE

Antwerp's city-wide festival is back with a summer full of concerts, film screenings, circus shows and theatre performances.

For the 23rd year in a row, Zomer van Antwerpen (Summer of Antwerp) returns. The annual festival is a culmination of art and culture, featuring live music, circus shows and location-based theatre performances.

The programme has come a long way from its origins in the early 1990s, gradually expanding every year and becoming the international attraction it is today. Spokesperson Abbie Boutkabout believes the event has made a lasting impact on the community.

"Over the years, we've been able to make this festival into something that people keep really close to their hearts," she says. "They started coming to the circus when they were young and now they're volunteering or working for the festival."

The heart of the festival is at Zomerbar, which Boutkabout claims is Antwerp's original summer bar. There are many others, she says, "but ours is special, because it's not only a bar, it's also the home of our circuses".

Tourists travel from far and wide to see the circuses at the Zomer van Antwerpen. Each of the shows expresses a unique artistic vision and is accompanied by live music. This year's highlights include *Humans*, an acrobatic show by Australian circus Circa. Boutkabout: "They really explore the physical boundaries of the human body." *Limbo*, by Strut & Fret, is another performance coming to Antwerp this year. "This one is more of a cabaret circus," Boutkabout says. "You have people who swallow swords and a girl who spits fire – very cabaret and very sexy."

Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker's critically acclaimed 1983 choreography, *Rosas danst Rosas*, is also likely to draw the crowds. Free workshops will teach you how to do the dance yourself.

The theatre at Zomer van Antwerpen takes its audience to the most unlikely of stages, like forgotten



© Pedro Greig



© Sigrd Spinnox

Zomerbar is the heart of the festival, but don't miss the countless circus performances and film screenings under the open sky

classics, as well as music, dance and slam poetry.

Many are free, but for some of the bigger performances, tickets are required. Each performance uses

Our Mutual Friend.

Zomer van Antwerpen takes the party to every neighbourhood with free live concerts. You can also drop by the festival's headquarters, Zomerfabriek (Summer Factory), where you'll find all kinds of activities and events.

Zomerfabriek is a place where young people can work on their skills and urban sports, from basketball to calisthenics. In the evening, there's a programme of open-mic and jam sessions, DJs and classical music. New this year is classical music.

And if you're just looking for a way to kick back and relax on a summer evening, bring your own chair to the pop-up cinema by the river and watch a free film with family and friends.

According to Boutkabout, the main goal of the festival is to provide accessible and sustainable art and culture to everyone. "People think art and culture are things that you have to be trained for, or that you have to be in the right social class. We believe that everyone should be given the opportunity to be a part of it."

“People keep the festival really close to their hearts

buildings in the city centre and the banks of the river Scheldt. The programme includes various styles of theatre, including reinterpretations of national and international

its location to maximise the overall experience of its audience. According to Boutkabout, one of the most exciting performances this year is an adaptation of Charles Dickens'

16 June–3 September

Across Antwerp

WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

First cellist wins Queen Elisabeth contest

Victor Julien-Laferrrière from France has become the first ever winner of Brussels' international Queen Elisabeth Competition for cello. He will go on to play multiple concerts locally and abroad as part of his prize, in addition to receiving €25,000 and a CD of his work. Named after the former queen of Belgium, the annual competition features performances from young classical violinists, pianists, singers and now cellists, with the chosen instrument rotating each year on a four-year cycle. This is the first time the competition has included cello as part of its programme. The competition began with more than 200 video applicants from around the world. The remaining 11 finalists will also receive cash prizes in addition to performing a series of concerts in Flanders and Brussels.

\ qeimc.be

92 apply to design new art museum

At least 92 candidates have filed an application to design the planned new contemporary art museum in the Citroen building by the canal in Brussels, according to the city's official architect, Kristiaan Borret. The names include Belgian bureaux Jaspers & Eysers and Robbrecht en Daem, as well as international names such as Rem Koolhaas, Shigeru Ban and the bureau of the late Zaha Hadid, who designed the Port House in Antwerp. A selection committee will whittle the list down to seven applicants who will be asked to submit a design, with the winner being announced early next year.

Funding for innovative culture projects

Flemish culture minister Sven Gatz is offering subsidies for "innovative partnership projects" that aim to create bonds between cultural organisations and partners from other sectors of society. His call for applications for the funding follows a discussion last year that focused on cross-sector co-operation. The partnerships must include at least one cultural organisation and one non-cultural organisation from another sector, such as education, science, health, environment, technology, research or social affairs. Applications will be judged on cross-sector value, innovative value and feasibility.

Nothing left to take away

Singer finds contentment in stripped-back latest album



Christophe Verbiest
More articles by Christophe \ flanderstoday.eu

\ MOUVEMENTPERPETUEL.ROCKS

Peter Bultink has been performing since the age of 14, in a variety of guises. Now, on his latest album, he's reached something approaching perfection.

Peter Bultink was 14 when he first appeared on national television, with his band Idiosyncrasy. It wasn't quite the start of a career full of chart hits and screaming fans.

He kept making music, though. He played guitar back then. "It's one of the many instruments I've had a go at," he says. "I excel at none of them. Probably because an instrument for me is just a means to an end. For me, it's all about the songs."

The songs the young Bultink was writing changed completely when he decided to spend two years in Bayreuth, Bavaria, studying German. That's where he started writing songs in French and playing them in clubs and on the street. It was the start of a new musical life, which more than 10 years later, in 2004, led to triumph, when his band, Orchestre du Mouvement Perpétuel, won the Biennial of the French Chanson. Not bad for a band that consisted of Bultink, born and bred in Ostend, and an Argentinian piano player.

"I never thought we stood a chance," he says. "But my girlfriend insisted that we should compete and she signed us up. It was only in the semi-finals that we took the name Orchestre du Mouvement Perpétuel." Their eponymous first album was released in 2005 and the duo became popular in the francophone world, not least in France, playing up to 50 concerts a year.

Clair Obscur is the band's first album in a decade, but in 2011 Bultink, who now lives in Brussels, released a record under his own name, *Aux Larmes Citoyens*. "Honestly, I never wanted to stop with the Orchestre du Mouvement Perpétuel. My management at the time asked me to record a solo album, more accessible for a larger audience, but that didn't work out at all."

Commercially, that's true, but musically it was a very convincing album. It was also an informative experience for Bultink. "I realised I only can function well when I have total freedom," he says. "I have to be able to follow my gut feeling."

Still, he wasn't happy with what had happened and he retired from music. At least from the public eye. "Two, three years after that solo album, I started touring again,"



Peter Bultink: "I'm very pleased with my life and I try to be a happy person. But I have a problem with cheerful music, both as a musician and listener"

Bultink recalls. "I had some new songs that I wanted to try out without fixing, at that moment, on a specific goal." By 2015, he knew he wanted to revitalise the Orchestre du Mouvement Perpétuel.

That year, he said in an interview that the new album would be released in 2016. It's only just been released. Bultink has a good excuse, though – he recorded it twice. "I've very eclectic tastes; music for me can go in lots of directions. We went to France to record and I had invited a bunch of great musicians with whom I had worked before."

But the result was too disparate, he thought, and he wouldn't have been able to perform it live because it would be much too expensive to play with such a large group. Afterwards, he reworked the songs for a fixed formation. Besides Bultink, who plays guitars and sings, his band consists of Cloé Defossez (programming, keyboards, voice) and cellist Céline Chappuis.

2016 seems to have been a decisive year for Bultink's musical career. "I always had a job outside the music, but I finally decided to take a leap and concentrate fully on my

music," he says. He sounds liberated when he says it. And for the moment, he has his hands full. He has two bands with German musicians and a theatre project about which he can't reveal much, and he's revamped his old band BlackSmith with bassist Yannic Kermarrec.

But the main focus is the Orchestre du Mouvement Perpétuel. He sings mainly in French, though you can also hear a bit of English on *Clair Obscur*. The foundations might be chanson, but he has his own take on it, adding electronics (they seldom dominate), and references to pop and chamber music. "I see two parts in the word 'chanson,'" he says. "'Chan' refers to singing and thus the words, and 'son' means sound." In the end, soundwise, everything is possible for him.

"I don't believe that *Clair Obscur* is a perfect album. Perfection doesn't exist in the mind of a musician. But I can say in all honesty that this is the best album I was able to make. Which I didn't think after my three previous albums. Then, immediately after completing them, I already knew what I wanted to do differently. That's not the case now. I think that's the result of taking my time."

It's the first time he's used white on an album cover; the previous ones have been dark. Is that significant? "It was probably linked to my penchant for... I was going to say darkness, but that might suggest I'm leading a bleak life, which isn't the case. Melancholy is part of who I am. I'm very pleased with my life and I try to be a happy person. But I have a problem with cheerful music, both as a musician and listener."

Coming back to the artwork, he believes its stripped-down character reflects the music. "I like the quote that 'Perfection is achieved not when there is nothing more to add but when there is nothing left to take away.' That's what I wanted to achieve."

Even so, a song like "Un temps abracadabrant" is quite pessimistic. "Just looking at the world around me, I don't think it's going in the right direction. But in the last verse of that song some hope is blossoming when I look at my daughters. I see myself more as a realist than as a pessimist or an optimist. Or maybe I'm both."

27 July

Theater aan Zee
Ostend

MORE NEW MUSIC THIS MONTH

Raymond van het Groenewoud
Allermooist op aard • Warner

Six years after *De laatste rit* (The Last Ride), often considered his testament, Raymond van het Groenewoud is back with *Allermooist op aard* (The Most Beautiful On Earth). The Flemish godfather of Dutch-language rock – and at least 10 other genres – reinterprets some of his hits (*Meisjes*), but also some lesser known but equally amazing songs (*Bostella*). They don't always make



you forget the originals. Still, combined with a handful of new songs, this remains a highly entertaining and at best even gripping album. ★★☆☆

\ raymondvanhetgroenewoud.be

Pascal Deweze

Cult of Yes • Starman

Singer and multi-instrumentalist Pascal Deweze has been a prominent force in the Flemish music scene since the debut of

Metal Molly, more than 20 years ago. At 44, the member of, among others, Broken Glass Heroes and the defunct Sukilove, releases his first solo album. Compact pop songs might have been expected, but Deweze goes in the opposite direction. Psychedelic synths, dirty funk, the most adventurous bits of Talk Talk and a smidgen of David Sylvian (in some vocals): if you like to be wrong-footed song after song, this is your album. ★★☆☆

\ starmanrecords.com

When the dancers take control

Choreolab #12

21-30 June 't Eilandje, Antwerp
| OPERABALLET.BE

“As a dancer, someone else is drawing you on a white page; as a choreographer, I do the drawing.” After a season in which she’s had to adapt to all sorts of styles and traditions, Nancy Osbaldes-ton sees the annual Choreolab festival as an exciting challenge. The British dancer used to be first artist at the English National Ballet. Now part of Ballet Vlaanderen, she is one of 12 dancers who have created pieces of their own. “It’s another way of expressing, starting from scratch,” she says of *Entr’acte*, in which she tells the story of a clown and what happens to him after a performance, when his act comes to an end. Australian Nicola Wills is another big fan of the concept. “It’s illuminating to stand on the other side,” she says. For *Captain of The Clear-*



© Sam Asaert/Ballet Vlaanderen

ing, her third Choreolab production, she drew inspiration from the 2015 Pixar movie *Inside Out*. Most of the 12 participants focus on their life as dancers. Others looked elsewhere. The

Brazilian dancer Juliano Nunes, for instance, was inspired by Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity, while the American principal Drew Jacoby was seduced by the trash-pop aesthetic and the photography of Helmut Newton, even putting a drag queen on stage. The 12th edition of Choreolab also marks the return of Jonas Vlerick, who spent more than a decade with Ballet Vlaanderen, but has since made the switch to the other side. “I really wanted to become a choreographer,” he says. “But you really have to go for it.” Finally, artistic director Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, who assisted the dancers in their creative process, will be showing new work. His solo for the Japanese-born Mikio Kato was one of the highlights of this month’s Yokohama Ballet Festival. | Tom Peeters

CONCERT

Juana Molina

20 June, 20.30 De Roma, Antwerp
| DEROMA.BE

Argentine singer Juana Molina returns to Europe to present her seventh studio album, *Halo*. The pop/rock veteran has been making music for over 20 years but that wasn’t her first showbiz calling. A young Molina rose to prominence in Latin America first as a television comedian,

eventually starring in her own internationally successful sketch comedy show. She quit abruptly after just a few years, relocated to Los Angeles and reinvented herself as an electro-pop singer. Kristof Deneijs of Flemish folk group Yuko opens the shows with a solo set. | Georgio Valentino



VISUAL ARTS

Brussels is a Plaizier

16 June–10 September Bozar, Brussels
| BOZAR.BE

Bozar invites visitors to discover the Brussels of yesteryear, courtesy of local publishing house Plaizier. This exhibition documents the changing urban landscape of the capital through nearly a half-century of archival images ranging from postcards to prints to calendars to books. The collection has been kept since 1977 by publishing power couple Wijnand and Mieke Plaizier, who have contributed immensely to the collective memory. Not only do these artefacts trace the growing pains of a national capital as it evolves into a European metropolis, they also indicate changing aesthetic values and print technologies. | GV



© Dolf Kruger, 1957/Nederlands Fotomuseum Rotterdam

EVENT

Grote Gentse Boekenverkoop

16–18 June Leopoldskazerne, Ghent
| 11.BE

The Grote Gentse Boekenverkoop is a massive liquidation of De Krook library’s overstock organised in the name of charity. The city library is putting over 30,000 books and CDs on sale, with all books under €2. There’s something for everyone, fiction and non-fiction for kids and adults alike. The book sale is also a social event. The event takes place in Ghent’s historic Leopoldskazerne and boasts a cosy atmosphere complete with a fair-trade cafe. It is put on by non-profit 11.11.11 in collaboration with the City of Ghent and Province of East Flanders. All proceeds benefit anti-poverty activism. | GV



DANCE

Sadko Royal Ballet

20 June–2 July Opera, Ghent
| OPERABALLET.BE

Opera Vlaanderen continues its celebration of Russian ballet with this season-closing revival of Nikolai Rimski-Korsakov’s fairy-tale opera. First performed in Moscow in 1898, *Sadko* follows the eponymous protagonist on a sea voyage in which the musician-turned-trader awakens Neptune with his song – and pays the ultimate price. This new produc-

tion isn’t just a fairy tale, though. It also addresses 21st-century themes such as contemporary artistic practice, social openness and xenophobia. American director Daniel Kramer, recently appointed artistic director of the English National Opera, returns to Opera Vlaanderen after the success of his *Carmen* in 2012. | GV



CONCERTS

GET TICKETS NOW

Antwerp

Bush: The British alternative rock band formed in 1992 are back, to the delight of fans of the post-grunge outfit led by singer Gavin Rossdale. 30 September 19.00, *Trix, Noordersingel 28-30* | [trixonline.be](#)

Brussels

Flamenco Sentimientos: Artistic director and flamenco dancer Antonio Martinez presents his latest choreography about feelings and the kind of inner depth and sensations that make life worth living, with voice, guitar and percussion accompaniment. 17 June 20.30, *Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23* | [bozar.be](#)

PERFORMANCE

Ghent

De Slet & de Casanova: Solo show by improvisational comedian Pieter Beck, about prejudices and relationships, sexuality and personal preference (in Dutch, 18+). 16 & 18 June 17.00–18.00, *Theater Box, Pijndersstraat 16* | [theaterbox.be](#)

FESTIVAL

Wetteren

Ola!Peloezza: Lively, interactive festival for families with children aged four to 12, featuring workshops with materials like cork, clay, paper and wood, plus performances, sound installations, giant bubbles, yoga and more hands-on fun. 17 June 14.00–18.00, *De Warande, Warandelaan 14* | [ccnovawetteren.be](#)

MARKET

Brussels

Babies & Kids Dressing Room: Dozens of exhibitors come together to sell clothing and accessories for babies and children aged up to 12, including second-hand and new, often brand-name items in good condition. 18 June 11.00–18.00, *BIP, Koningsstraat 2-4* | [brusselsvintagemarket.be](#)

SPECIAL EVENT

Genk

World Refugee Day: Musician Jean Bosco Safari tells his own story of migration, while the Regenboogkoor, a choir of 40 international Genk residents, take the audience on a musical journey and young Genk locals recite poems and rap about the refugee theme. Hosted by stand-up comedian Erhan Demirci, and followed by a shared meal. 16 June 19.30–23.00, *Stadsschouwburg Genk, Stadsplein 1* | [genk.be](#)

Talking Dutch

Smarter than the average tree



Derek Blyth

More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

It sometimes seems as if every city these days wants to be a smart city. Most of the time, city officials are thinking about digital solutions to urban problems, like free wifi for everyone or maybe an app that tells people when to put out their rubbish. But Brussels thinks it can be smart by planting a tree.

Een hoogtechnologische boom is aan de trappen van de Kunstberg geplaatst – A high-tech tree has been placed on the steps of the Kunstberg, announced Bruzz. *De City Tree heeft een luchtzuiverend vermogen* – The City Tree has an air-purifying potential *dat gelijk is aan dat van 275 bomen* – equivalent to 275 trees.

Designed by a Berlin company, Smart City Trees have been popping up in cities across Europe, from Oslo to Paris. Now Brussels has its own, which is about the size of a bus shelter, with two benches where you can sit down to breathe the purified air.

De City Tree heeft een oppervlakte van 2,80 meter bij 2,80 meter – The City Tree measures 2.8 metres by 2.8 metres *waarin maar liefst 1.682 afzonderlijke planten groeien* – within which a whopping 1,682 plants are growing.

Dat is samen goed voor 16 vierkante meter groene oppervlakte – That represents a total of 16 square metres of green space *die invloed uitoefent op de directe omgeving* – which has an impact on the immediate environment.

And that's not all. *De City Tree is in staat om zichzelf van energie te voorzien* – The City Tree is able to provide its own energy *dankzij zonnepanelen die een besproeiingssysteem en meetapparatuur aandrijven* – thanks to solar panels that control the irrigation system and measuring apparatus.

We might even start to see some wildlife returning to the concrete jungle of the Kunstberg. *Dit initiatief*



© Courtesy Brussels.be

versterkt het groene netwerk van de stad – This initiative reinforces the city's green network *en zal ongetwijfeld tal van insecten en kleine diertjes aantrekken* – and it will inevitably attract lots of insects and small animals *die er vrolijk in zullen kunnen gedijen* – who will be able to live happily inside.

The smart tree is part of Brussels' *klimaatplan* – climate plan, *bedoeld om de Europese doelstellingen inzake energie en klimaat te realiseren in 2030* – aimed at achieving the European energy and climate targets by 2030, according to the city's website.

So will we be seeing more smart trees in future? *De boom wordt drie maanden opgesteld in het hart van de stad* – The tree will remain in the heart of the city for three months *om de effecten ervan op het stadsmilieu te meten* – to measure its impact on the urban environment, said Brussels city alderman for green spaces Ahmed El Ktibi.

But of course Brussels City is only one of 19 municipalities that make up the Brussels Region. So you might need 19 smart mayors before we can have a smart city.

PHOTO OF THE WEEK



© François Lenoir/Reuters

TABLE WITH A VIEW Diners raise a glass to Dinner in the Sky, a restaurant hoisted by cranes above the Jubelpark in Brussels for a few weeks each year. The food is prepared by a roster of Michelin-starred chefs

VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY



In response to: *Summer in the city: 5 pop-up bars in Flanders and Brussels*

Apeksha Shapeti: almost time for this kind of summer



In response to: *Leuven wins prestigious Green Leaf Prize*

Gerard Lynch: I am not surprised – wonderful city.



In response to: *The best Dutch-language teacher is a refugee from Bosnia*

Mark Luxton: What a great example to others!



Wouter Vermeulen @woutersworlds

Wonderfull evening for Re-opening @M_Museum in Leuven by @svengatz. Proud to have been on the Board of M



Bearsden Pals @BearsdenPals

It has been a long journey, but time spent in beautiful Bruges was worth it. Now settled in Battalion HQ at Kortrijk.



Didier Verstraete @DidierV_Versuz

My office is better than yours... #Hasselt



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THE LAST WORD

Go no more a-roaming

"It's good for the consumer, but not for the operator, because we have to keep paying the charges. We're just no longer allowed to pass them on to the consumer." Jan Margot of Proximus, as roaming charges in the EU pass into history

Stay cool

"Anyone who doesn't have to be outside would be better off staying indoors. Otherwise get into the shade between 12.00 and 15.00."

Dermatologist Anya De Moor, as Belgium reaches unusually high UV index figures before the summer has even officially started

Fair cop

"He burst through the checkpoint and was gone."

A driver who tried to escape an alcohol check in Dendermonde was later tracked down and turned out to be a senior officer of the Dendermonde police, a spokesperson said

Making it work

"I worked obsessively for three and a half years, and then suddenly I could no longer see the worth of the fight. I was looking for something with more meaning, to fill up the long hours."

Software designer Frederik Vincx has taken a sabbatical from his company to volunteer his talents for the social sector

