

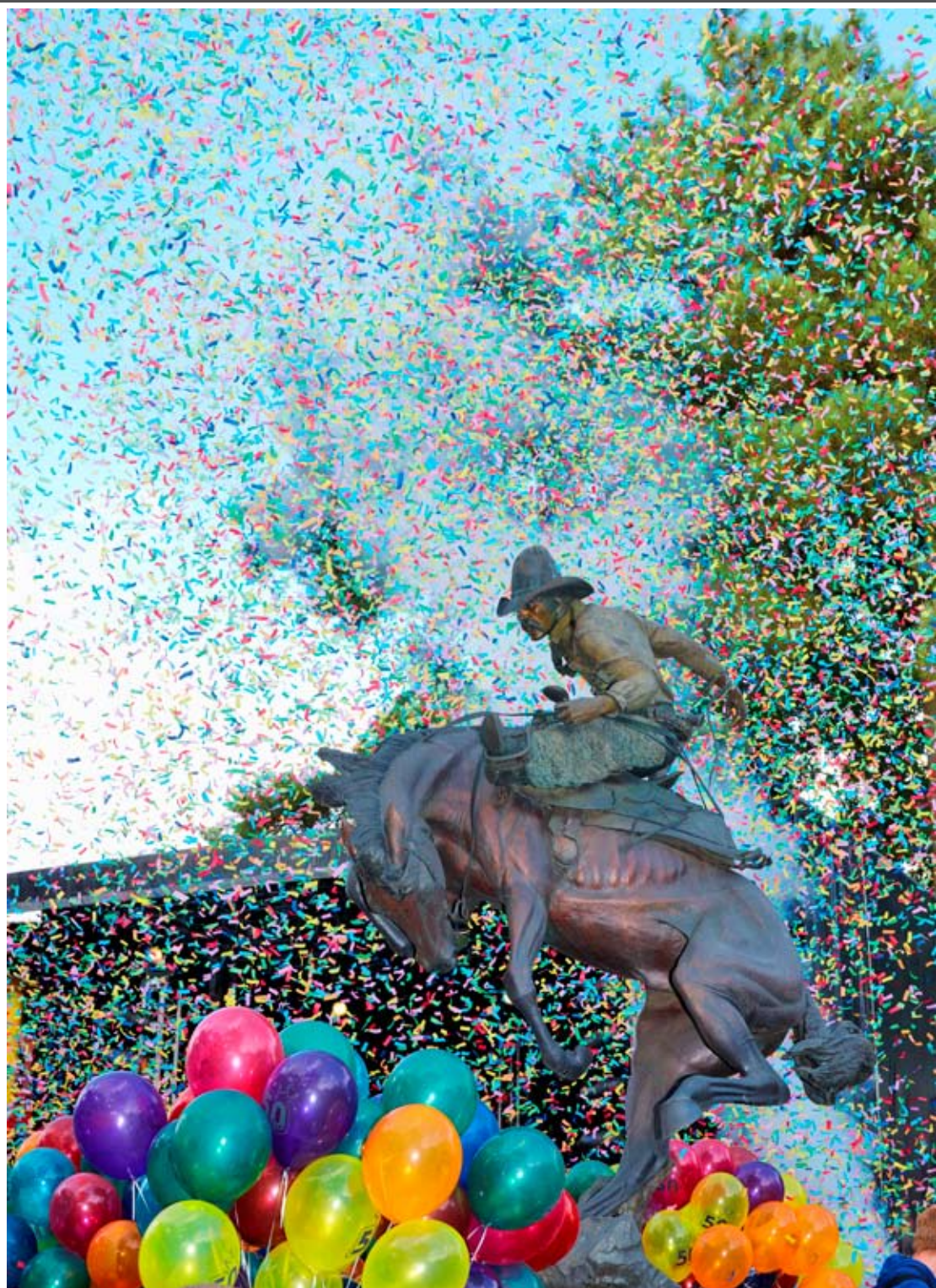


Europe in Bruges
The college of EU hopefuls
6

Faced with the CAP
EU agriculture proposal
bad for Flanders
7

Tinseltown Tintin
The movies that came before
10

#202



Bobbejaanland turns 50

Flanders' singing cowboy lives on in one of the region's most popular attractions

MONIQUE PHILIPS

Bobbejaan Schoepen died in the spring of 2010, leaving behind many Flemish mourners and not a few perplexed internationals unfamiliar with the Bobbejaan phenomenon. A 1960s Flemish singing cowboy who opened his own amusement park? Seriously?

A big help to the uninitiated is Tom Schoepen's beautiful coffee-table style biography, published on the first anniversary of his father's death. As the youngest child of the family of five, he harboured many questions about the early days.

By the time Tom was born, Bobbejaan's performances weren't the novelty they once were, and the 1970s anti-American attitude had overtaken the once so-popular cowboy image. It was only later, as he browsed through his father's extensive archives, did Tom fully realise his father's world-renowned originality.

Bobbejaan needed a comeback, he decided. It was time to make a record of the stories, the music and the man.

Bobbejaan's music was extraordinary yet perhaps too broad to be pegged into a single category. In 2008, a new generation of Flemish pop and rock singers, including Axelle Red, Daan and Geike Arnaert, collaborated with Bobbejaan on a cover CD of Bobbejaan songs. At the age of 83, Bobbejaan performed his own music. It was an instant success.

The stark black-and-white promotional photos show a tired cowboy bearing a Johnny Cash quality. Flanders fell in love with its hero all over again. This time people saw past the "entertainer", the "singer-comic" from the yellow newspaper cuttings. They saw the musician.

The yodelling whistler

Bobbejaan started out life in 1925 as Modest Schoepen, a wise-cracking kid who entertained folk in the cafés of Boom with his sister Liske. His father was a blacksmith; hence his lifelong love of horses.

Whistling was an official discipline at the local music school, and Modest was gifted in it. His mother apparently whistled all the time, and in turn Modest's "razor blade lips" would soon become famous. He learned to play both the guitar and the harmonica.

Bobbejaan always retained a kind of post-war optimism and ambition. He performed his cowboy songs for the US Special Forces in Nürburg. He moved on to entertain the Dutch troops in Indonesia and to do a tour in the Congo in 1955. "De Jodelende Fluit", or yodelling whistler, became an overnight sensation. Fellow artists like Jacques Brel and Toots Thielemans loved his authentic, unpretentious songs, written in Dutch, French and English. Sometimes he had several language versions of the same song.

→ continued on page 5

Gilbert named "Flandrien of the year"

Philippe Gilbert, who was the third-placed sprinter in this year's Tour De France, has been voted "Flandrien of the year" by his fellow cyclists for the third year in a row. Gilbert, 29, is currently leading in the UCI world rankings. He won 24 trophies this year, including a remarkable triple victory in April when he claimed the three Ardennes Classics in a just one week: the Amstel Gold Classic in the Netherlands, the Flèche Wallonne and the 255.5km Liège-Bastogne-Liège.

The annual award is organised by *Het Nieuwsblad* newspaper. A professional jury chooses the nominees for the prestigious honour, but the cyclists themselves have the last word on who receives the prize. The trophy was awarded at a gala dinner in Vilvoorde that included a special tribute to Wouter Weylandt, the 26-year-old, Ghent-born rider who died in a crash in this year's Giro d'Italia. (Leo Cendrowicz)



© Eric Lallmand / BELGA

Municipal investor on brink of bankruptcy

Regions struggle over share of responsibility in Dexia buy-out

ALAN HOPE

Communal Holding, the investment body representing the country's municipal authorities, has until Saturday, 22 October, to decide if it will declare bankruptcy, throwing the finances of local, regional and federal governments into turmoil. This week, an attempt by Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters to come up with a rescue plan ran into obstacles from his federal colleagues. The problems of the Gemeentelijk Holding (GH) are caused in large part by the dismantling of Dexia Group and the nationalisation of Dexia Bank Belgium. The GH is one of the main shareholders of Dexia,

with 14.1%. The GH, in turn, is made up of the municipalities of the country, with 39.8% in the hands of Flemish municipalities. On the books of GH, Dexia shares are worth €8.50. At the time of writing, the shares were worth 61 cents, representing a total loss to the GH of some €2 billion.

The GH is now effectively insolvent: It does not have the assets to cover its debts. The deficit is estimated at about €900 million, and the problem for the federal and regional governments is to avoid bankruptcy.

→ continued on page 3



FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE



© Beica

Paul Devroey

If he were to invite all of his children to his retirement party, he'd need to book the Sportpaleis three times over. Professor Paul Devroey, who turned 65 on 18 October, last week announced he was retiring as head of the Centre for Reproductive Medicine at the hospital of the Free University of Brussels (VUB). In his time, it is estimated he has paved the way to the birth of 40,000 to 50,000 babies in Belgium. (Two of them, aged 17 and 13, currently reside at the home of this writer.) Devroey is internationally recognised as a world authority on human fertility. With his then-colleague, Professor André Van Steirteghem, he developed in 1992 the technique of intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI), in which a single sperm is inserted into a woman's ovum to achieve fertilisation. The technique is now used worldwide as a treatment for infertility, especially in men. Devroey's unit has since helped couples in Belgium to bring about 50,000 babies into the world; the worldwide figure is certainly many times higher – three million, according to Devroey's own estimate. "I remember when we were first able to produce a baby

by ICSI," he told *TV Brussel* last week. "The headline in *Le Monde* read, 'Le viol de l'ovule (the rape of the egg)'. That shows you how shocking the innovation was in 1992." Devroey is now the most cited journal author in the world in the field of human fertility, and Van Steirteghem is second. Devroey has some 440 peer-reviewed articles to his name, as well as three books. Yet despite his renown, he always made a point of seeing patients personally whenever possible. Couples seeking treatment were often surprised to call the clinic and have him pick up the phone, or to find themselves on their first visit speaking directly to the world-famous consultant. He never contemplated leaving Brussels. "It all came about because we were given the liberty by the university to go ahead, and we received a lot of money from what were then national organisations for scientific research. This was the perfect place, the perfect environment to carry out our research. There have probably been hundreds of researchers from all over the world who have visited here, and they all contributed to our scientific development. Brussels is a city without intellectual borders."

News in brief

Part of the **art collection** of Ghent couple Anton and Annick Herbert is to go on sale at Christie's in New York in November. The 35 artworks, including important minimalist and conceptual works, are expected to raise up to €5 million, which will go towards the construction of an exhibition space in Ghent to show the rest of the collection, which has never been shown in Flanders.

The town of Koksijde on the coast last week began **works to protect the coastline** against a super-storm, which could hit at any time with waves five to eight metres high. The beach will be widened by 20m. The works are part of the Flemish government's Coastal Safety Masterplan. Wenduine and De Panne, considered with Koksijde to be the least well-protected municipalities against flooding, will follow shortly.

on what is intended to be the longest wind-propelled **expedition across Antarctica**, covering 6,000km in 100 days. Dansercour, together with Flemish medical student and mushing champion Sam Deltour, will use kites and sleds to cross the unexplored Antarctic Plateau in the east of the continent. In 1997-98 Dansercour set the previous record of 3,924km in 99 days, together with Alain Hubert.

→ www.antarctice.be

The **abbey of Affligem** in Flemish Brabant narrowly escaped serious damage when fire broke out in an adjoining workshop last week. Firemen took an hour to bring the fire under control. No-one was injured. The cause may have been smouldering wood-chips caused by an overheated planing machine.

The port of Brussels is to carry out a feasibility study to examine the possibility of accommodating **large cruise ships** and container traffic at the Meudon site in Nederover-Heembeek. The news was announced at the launch last week of a cooperation between Brussels and the city ports of Lille, Utrecht, Paris, Basel and Liège.

Flanders has been admitted to the management committee of the **United Nations World Tourism Organisation** at its annual meeting in Gyeongju in South Korea last week. Flanders has been an associate member of the organisation since 1997 and will take over from Macau in representing the interests of other associate members. Flemish Tourism minister Geert Bourgeois announced he plans to bid for the 2017 meeting to be hosted in Flanders, to coincide with commemorations of the 1914-1918 war. "As host country of such a world organisation, we can put ourselves on the map," Bourgeois said.

One in three prisoners in the overcrowded prison system in Belgium is an illegal immigrant, according to figures released by the state secretary for asylum and migration policy. Of the 11,000 prisoners in custody, approximately 3,300 were living in the country illegally when sentenced. The N-VA suggest that judges make more use of the agreements with some countries, such as Morocco, to send convicted criminals to their home countries to serve their sentences and have also prepared a proposal to allow judges to deport criminals back home rather than send them to prison.

The bodies of **a couple who had been missing** for three days after having left a party in Aalst have been recovered by police divers in the river Dender. Their car apparently drove into the river after missing the Sint-Anna bridge, which was recently moved 10m. The former position is not marked, and has no signs, rail or other barrier. During the search, the body of an unidentified woman unconnected with the disappearance was also recovered. She had been missing since the end of August.

The monks of the abbey of Westvleteren in West Flanders are putting their famed **Trappist beer** on sale in Colruyt supermarkets for the first time ever on 3 November. The beer, frequently rated one of the best in the world, is normally sold only to those who call personally at the abbey, in limited quantities. Only 93,000 boxes of six bottles and two glasses will be sold at a price of €25 to holders of coupons which will appear in *De Standaard* and *Knack*. The income will go toward the renovation of the abbey, which is suffering from subsidence.

The province of West Flanders last week joined Limburg and Antwerp in posting descriptions and photos of **recovered stolen bicycles** on a website to help with finding the owners. After Antwerp, West Flanders suffers the most bicycle thefts in the region: 8,211 in 2009. The site currently shows 3,600 recovered bikes, 700 of them from the province. Owners have already been found in 313 cases.

Two out of three 10-year-olds has a **mobile phone**, and almost all 12-year-olds, and they send on average 90 SMS messages a week, but make an average of only 10 phone calls, according to a survey by the consumer organisation OIVO.

Flemish polar explorer Dixie Dansercour will next month set off

→ www.gevondenfietsen.be

OFFSIDE

Readin', writin' and 'rithmetic

It may be too late to sort out the economic mess the world is in right now, but it may provide some hope for the future: From 2014, every child in secondary education in Flanders will be obliged to take economics lessons, education minister Pascal Smet announced last week. The subject is already taught in many schools, with students setting up mock businesses they have to run successfully. Last school year in Flanders, 29,800 students took economics, or 26% of the secondary population. That's less than in 2007-2008 (27%) and far down on 10 years ago, when the figure was 32%.

The new required course is intended to provide every student with at least a basis on which to operate when, say, balancing their household budget, or keeping their bank from the brink of bankruptcy, as the case may be. When economic illiteracy reaches all the way to the summit of the financial world, Smet clearly realises, something needs to be done.

Ordinary illiteracy, meanwhile, is also at the top of the agenda, as a study by the University of Antwerp revealed that 18-year-olds are worse at spelling than 12-year-olds – even when the older students were new entrants to the course in teacher training. In other words, aspiring teachers make more spelling mistakes than the youngsters



© Shutterstock

they can expect to be teaching one day. The reasons given for the apparent anomaly: older students are more nonchalant; they have been conditioned by social media and texting to be more lax in spelling; there's not the emphasis placed on spelling in schools that there used to be. The other problem, not mentioned by the study, is the Dutch language's famous "dt" spelling trap. The majority of the mistakes were "dt" faults, where the trick lies in knowing whether a part of the verb ends in d, in t, or in dt. I'll leave it to my colleague Philip Ebels of Talking Dutch to provide the details at his leisure.

FLANDERS TODAY



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

The logo and the name Flanders Today belong to the Flemish Region (Benelux Beeldmerk nr 815.088). The editorial team of Flanders Today has full editorial autonomy regarding the content of the newspaper and is responsible for all content, as stipulated in the agreement between Corelio Publishing and the Flemish authorities.

Editor: Lisa Bradshaw

Deputy Editor: Philip Ebels

News Editor: Alan Hope

Agenda Editor: Robyn Boyle

Art director: Michel Didier

Prepress: Corelio P&P

Contributors: Rebecca Benoot, Laurens Bouckaert, Robyn Boyle, Leo Cendrowicz, Sabine Clappaert, Courtney Davis, Nicholas Hirst, Stéphanie Duval, Andy Furniere, Anna Jenkinson, Katrien Lindemans, Marc Maes, Ian Mundell, Anja Otte, Monique Philips, Christophe Verbiest, Alice Voz, Denzil Walton

General manager: Joske Plas

Publisher: Corelio Publishing NV

Editorial address:

Gossetlaan 30

1702 Groot-Bijgaarden

Tel.: 02.373.99.09 – Fax: 02.375.98.22

editorial@flanderstoday.eu

Free subscriptions:

subscriptions@flanderstoday.eu

or sign up online at www.flanderstoday.eu

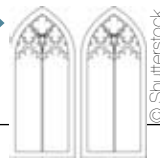
Advertising: Evelyne Fregonese

02.373.83.57

advertising@flanderstoday.eu

Verantwoordelijke uitgever:

Lisa Bradshaw



Federal position on GH “incomprehensible”, says Peeters

→ continued from page 1

Part of Peeters' request was for the National Lottery, which is under the control of the federal government, to be given permission to reschedule two loans that the GH was due to repay this week, one of €5 million and one of €17 million. That would give the GH breathing space to undergo what he referred to as a “controlled liquidation”. As far as Peeters is concerned, the GH no longer has a reason to exist, now that Dexia has been taken over by the state.

The idea of delaying debt repayments is backed by the other two regions, and Brussels Region has rescheduled a GH loan worth €30 million that fell due on Tuesday. Speaking on VRT radio on Monday morning, Peeters said a compromise proposal tabled by Walloon minister-president Rudi Demotte had been hammered out in talks at the weekend among experts on the division of GH debts,

but that the federal government had declined to give it the green light.

“If an agreement is technically possible, why is it not politically possible?” Peeters asked. The federal position, he said, was “incomprehensible” if the goal was to avoid allowing GH to go bust. The regions want the €900 million GH deficit to be split: half for the federal government and the other half divided among the three regions. The federal government, on the other hand, wants the regions to write off the €450 million they put up as guarantee in 2008, and then for the remaining €450 million to be divided in two: €225 million for the federal purse and €225 split between the regions.

The regions are not ready to agree to that. In his address to the Flemish parliament last week, Peeters pointed out that the government had pressed the Flemish Region in 2008 to step in with guarantees to shore up Dexia. It had also pressed GH to increase its shareholding. Flanders and the GH had each, as a result, put in



About 7,000 people demonstrated in Brussels against the irresponsible behaviour of the banking system and its political supporters, an extension of the Occupy Wall Street movement in the US, and the Indignados of Spain, some of whom travelled to Brussels to take part in the march. The generally cheerful atmosphere of the demo was spoiled by video released on YouTube of a policeman kicking and striking one handcuffed protester. The officer was later arrested and suspended, pending charges.

€500 million. The Flemish Region's contribution fell short of allowing it a director on the Dexia board. The federal government, however, also provided guarantees of 60% on an injection of €150 billion, did gain the right to a director.

As *Flanders Today* went to press

this week, a rescue plan had still not been agreed, though the GH decision to announce their conclusions on Saturday suggests they have some assurances from the federal government that, in the meantime, the two National Lottery loans will not be called. ♦

THE WEEK IN FIGURES



15%

of primary school teachers in 2009 were men, according to figures from education minister Pascal Smet, down from 19.6% in 2002. In teacher training, only 17.5% of trainees are men, and the government predicts a shortage of 12,000 teachers by 2020

68,000

Chinese tourists visited Flanders in 2010, an increase of 23.8% on the previous year, but still far below the peak year 2004 when the region attracted 106,000 Chinese visitors

48%

of all euthanasia requests are carried out, according to a study by the universities of Ghent and Leuven. In 23% of cases the patient died before the request could be approved

132,447

students have enrolled this year in one of Flanders' 24 university colleges, 5.1% more than last year. In the last five years, colleges have added 30,000 students to their rolls, the equivalent of the whole University of Ghent

1,467 square km

of the territory of Flanders is woodland, according to a new database from the federal economy ministry, or 11% of the total surface. Hoeilaart is the most wooded municipality in the region, with woodland covering 56% of its area

Flanders embraces its capital city

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters made a tour of Brussels last week in an effort to emphasise the need for Flanders to forge closer ties with its capital city. “The best way to go forward,” he said on a bus ride through the city, “is to go together.”

The highlight of the visit was a guided tour at M-Pro, a dealer in building materials located in the capital's harbour. Together with Brussels' minister of transport, harbour and public works, Brigitte Grouwels, he saw 1,000 concrete blocks arrive by boat from the Coeck factory in Niel, Antwerp province. “This shows that Flanders and Brussels already work together successfully,” said Grouwels.

Peeters also spoke of the collaboration between the Flemish employment agency VDAB and its Brussels

equivalent, Actiris, to address the high unemployment rate in Brussels and the shortage of suitable candidates in Flanders. Last year, VDAB advertised more than 90,000 vacancies through Actiris. “This is the type of win-win situation that we strive for,” Peeters said.

Peeters also stressed the importance of Brussels in attracting foreign investment and said he hoped that the Flemish will change their sometimes distant attitude towards their capital. “Too many commuters only come to Brussels to work and forget to discover this fascinating metropolis, which is also the capital of Europe,” he said. Other stops of the bus ride included the training centre Syntra Brussels and the Kaaiteater performing arts centre. ♦ (Andy Furniere)

Hasselt police staff threaten strike action

Administrative staff working for the Hasselt police have threatened to take industrial action if two whistle-blowers are allowed to return to work. The two women were last week acquitted of charges relating to the possession of a confidential document that formed the basis of an investigation by the VRT's *Panorama* programme detailing widespread mismanagement, harassment of personnel and financial irregularities in the police zone Hasselt-Zonhoven-Diepenbeek, known as Hazodi.

Also in Hasselt last week, the municipal council rejected a proposal to allow Marc Schepers, the former chief of staff of the mayor, to receive his severance pay in instalments in order to pay less tax. The proposal was suggested by Schepers, who was let go in September after what was described as “a breach of trust”.

Schepers suggested the plan to mayor Hilde Claes, who passed it on to the town's administrative services. Someone there came up with the idea of allowing Schepers to carry on receiving his salary for a time rather than receiving his severance pay all at once. When the proposal came before the council, it was rejected without argument. Schepers will receive his severance in one lump sum, according to the town's custom. ♦

Lights go out during Night of the Twilight

More than 100 municipalities in Flanders took part last Saturday, 15 October, in an annual action to turn off street lights in an effort to highlight the problem of light pollution. Nacht van de Duisternis, or Night of the Twilight, was organised by Bond Beter Leefmilieu, a consortium of more than 150 environmental organisations in Flanders. Participating municipalities went dark in part; in Hasselt, the whole city went dark for one hour.

Flanders has long been one of the Europe's most lit-up regions. But that is already changing, as lights on the motorways are now switched off at night except at junctions and known accident spots. As part of the Night of the Twilight action, Flemish mobility minister Hilde Crevits was given the European Lighting Design Award for her work in turning off the lights on roads. ♦



There's more than one way to light up the night

FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

National unity

The Blackberry and Twitter habits of Yves Leterme (CD&V) have been the subject of many jokes, but when our caretaker prime minister tweeted that this week is “crucial for our future prosperity,” everyone sat up and listened. “Everyone should realise that the budgetary efforts in this country have become very urgent,” Leterme explained afterwards.

With our future federal government beginning to take shape, more than a-year-and-a-half after the elections, we finally know who will have to make the tough decisions. The greens were chucked out of the federal negotiations, which they had been part of almost from the start. This leaves us with a coalition of socialists, Christian-democrats and liberals, the so-called traditional parties.

In the past, this type of coalition was called “a classical tripartite” or even “a government of national unity”. In the 20th century, this type of government was typical of tough times, such as the years after the two World Wars and the 1930s, when it was believed that joining forces was the only way out of a deep crisis.

The circumstances may be somewhat similar, but the Di Rupo government can hardly be called one of national unity. In Flanders, the traditional parties' success has diminished to such an extent that even between the three of them, they do not have a (Flemish) majority in Parliament. There is some truth in the argument that this government will be dominated by French speakers, at a time when Flanders has voted massively for N-VA, a party that wants to get rid of this dominance.

Some years ago, Leterme even said that CD&V would resist a government without a Flemish majority “from De Panne to Opgrimbie” (from West to East, that is). Now, no matter how often CD&V president Wouter Beke says that this is not “the way it was supposed to happen”, the party is now part of exactly that.

Last weekend, a new type of conflict reared its head, as the regions clashed with the federal government over who will foot the bill of the ailing Gemeentelijke Holding, the financial instrument through which the municipalities were shareholders of Dexia bank. This was no conflict between Flanders and the French speakers, as the regions were quite united in their demands from the federal government. A new type of unison this may be, but it also shows that national unity will never be a strong point of this country.



St. John's provides a caring environment, where students are cherished as individuals, encouraged to reach their unique potential, prepared to think globally with a commitment to justice and challenged to act responsibly in a constantly changing society.

We invite you to come take a look for yourself if this is the school for your family! Make an appointment to tour the school and speak to teachers and students.

www.stjohns.be



ST. JOHN'S
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Drève Richelle 146, 1410 Waterloo, Belgium
Tel. 02/352 06 10, admissions@stjohns.be

We have a new face



As one of the key global hubs for politics and business, Brussels is home to a massive international community and for the last five decades, one publication has been their bible - The Bulletin.

After an extensive redesign, The Bulletin is back this September with a brand-new look and a renewed focus on everything the international community needs to know about what is happening in the capital of Europe. The Bulletin will be packed with exclusive interviews, expert analysis and your definitive guide to lifestyle & culture in Brussels and Belgium. The agenda will also be back in The Bulletin, covering the highlights in and around Brussels.

TRY IT OUT!

Request a free trial of three issues by visiting www.thebulletin.be/ft as of September 8.

THE
Bulletin

Bobbejaanland turns 50

Jubilee hopes to bring attention back to the park's family origins

→ continued from page 1

Bobbejaan then toured the US, met up with Dolly Parton and George Shearing, starred on the Ed Sullivan show and recorded with Elvis' band. Meanwhile, his manager landed him a gig at the second-ever Eurovision Song Contest. Throughout the 1950s, Bobbejaan Schoepen had hits all over Germany and Austria. His recording of the existing song "A Pub With No Beer", which he also recorded in Dutch and German, made the charts in Belgium, the UK, Austria and Germany. His own work was also covered time and again. American Tex Williams recorded "Fire and Blisters" in 1974. "Lichtjes van de Schelde" (The Lights of the Scheldt) was sung so often, it was easy to forget it was originally Bobbejaan's.

Laying down roots

A turning point came in 1961. Bobbejaan's manager wanted him to keep touring and extend his ever-growing international fan base, but the singing cowboy had other plans. He met Dutch model and former opera singer Josée Jongen. They got married in 1961.

Bobbejaan toured Flanders for one more year with his own circus tent, parading on horseback through villages and towns, where residents came out to wave at this cowboy riding past their factory or church. (The horse he rode was one featured in the 1950s American TV series *Zorro*; Bobbejaan had bought him from a stuntman in Brussels during Expo58. When the horse was electrocuted in a freak accident, Bobbejaan cried for three weeks.)

Bobbejaan owned a piece of land in Lichtaart, now a municipality of Kasterlee in eastern Antwerp province, and decided that doing his shows in one place might be a bit easier. Bobbejaan, his wife and her sister turned out to be an unbeatable business team.

Devoted personnel carried countless trays of 60 beers, colas and coffees into the theatre, where crowds enjoyed the shows put on by Bobbejaan and Josée. They were hugely popular; the pair was performing for 1,200 people at a time, five times a day. Bobbejaan also gave many a young musician a chance on stage. It was here that Flemish crooners like Louis Neefs and Will Tura found their first audiences.

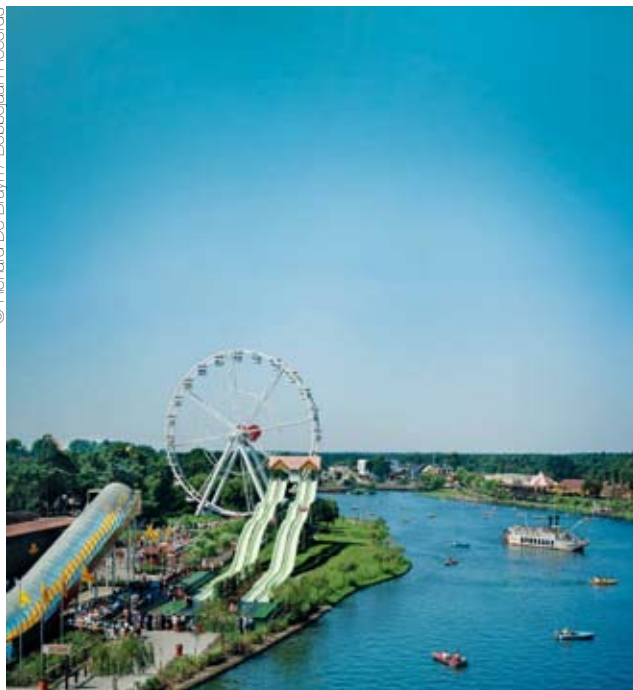
The amusement park we see today built up around these performances. Bobbejaan and Josée had five children, and they got involved in the park as well.

In 2000, Bobbejaan was diagnosed with intestinal cancer, and, in 2004, the park was sold, though it still retains its name. Bobbejaan Schoepen died on 17 May 2010. ♦

→ www.bobbejaan.be



Bobbejaan Schoepen pictured above in the 1962 film *At the Drop of a Head*. The Flemish film was shot in both English and Dutch and was one of a handful of films in which "the yodelling whistler" took part



Bobbejaanland circa 1990, when a grand river boat shuttled passengers around the lake



From left: Jacky, Josée and Tom Schoepen in front of Bobbejaan's beloved Pontiac

BJLand: from cowboy show to amusement park

Never mind the October storms lashing the beautiful surrounding pine forests. Crowds still flock to Bobbejaanland, darting from one indoor attraction to the next. You'll hear people scream in Dutch, French and German. The Indiana River, on which you hurtle down waterfalls into pitch blackness, is quite a heart stopper.

Ride into *Desperado City* to improve your horseback shooting skills on mechanical horses lined up in the western saloon. By all means buy ponchos if you're going on the water rides. In *El Rio*, your float is literally sucked into an abyss.

Halloween at Bobbejaanland – a two-week event – isn't for the faint of heart. Witches, wolves and spiders infiltrate, and the 4D live show *Vampires* twirls stage illusions at you. The Halloween Nocturne features live music, VJs and fireworks.

And it all started with one tent. Bobbejaanland officially turns 50 in December, but the 50th anniversary celebrations, which last into 2012, were officially launched in August. For one day only, visitors enjoyed the Bobbejaan Museum, set up in the park by Maxim Selis.

In collaboration with Bobbejaan's son Jacky Schoepen, Selis fuels the Bobbejaanland Nostalgia website with interviews, photos, old promotional clips and technical blueprints from the Schoepen archives. "People love the history and to pour over the old photos of Bobbejaanland's attractions," says Selis.

Bobbejaanland started out as a big-top tent performance venue for the singing cowboy to perform. As it became more and more popular, other attractions were added until it grew into a full-blown amusement park.

"The shows were the main event," says Selis, "but there were plenty of diverse attractions for all ages. Grandparents didn't have to sit and wait for the kids to get off the roller coasters. They had their own stuff to enjoy."

Risky investments that paid off

Every year, the Schoepen family made new, unique and sometimes risky investments. "The (R)evolution" (1989), for instance, is a 28-metre high indoor roller coaster that runs in the dark with flashing light effects. There was only one other such roller coaster in the world at the time.

Further unique attractions include the *Dreamcatcher* (1987), the first roller coaster in Europe that hung people upside down, and the 7,000 square-metre indoor kid's playground *Kinderland*.

But the family park also stuck to its independent and maverick quality. Josée installed an Indian Art Museum with authentic Hopi and Navajo artefacts from Arizona (now closed), while a windmill was installed to provide the park with alternative energy.

The family was deeply dedicated to the park and saw to the

smallest detail. "Whether there were 100 or 15,000 visitors," notes Selis, "all the attractions were open and lit up".

Iconic imagery was forged when Bobbejaan Schoepen rode his white Pontiac, its dashboard decorated with American coins, through the park. "If you'd been to BJ Land and you hadn't seen Bob himself in his Pontiac you'd feel you'd missed out. So, obviously, we were thrilled to be able to display the Pontiac at the museum for the day. People had missed it."

Bobbejaanland's top year was in 2004, when attendance reached 882,000. The park won "Most Appreciated Amusement Park in Belgium" and came second in the same category for all of Europe. That was the same year the Schoepens decided to sell the park to the Parques Reunidos corporation. Since then, Bobbejaanland has become more mainstream, less cowboy way.

In May of this year, Roland Kleve became the new director of Bobbejaanland, and he seems to see the benefits of reintroducing the roots and history of the park. "BJLand's uniqueness obviously lies in its fun history," says Selis. "In the cowboy, the man who was the heart and soul of the place." ♦

→ www.bobbejaanland.be
→ www.bjnostalgie.be

© www.nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Ordomans

© courtesy of www.bjnostalgie.be

The Bruges mafia

The College of Europe draws yet more visitors to Bruges, though not of the usual sort

NICHOLAS HIRST

Few are left unimpressed by Bruges' pulling power for political heavyweights. Presidents, prime ministers and kings have all delivered speeches in the city, ranging from German Chancellor Angela Merkel last year to the president of the European Council Herman van Rompuy the previous year and, before them, then French president François Mitterrand and British prime minister Margaret Thatcher. This year, on 26 October, it will be Giorgio Napolitano, president of the Italian Republic. What brings them to Bruges is a tiny post-graduate institute that, since its foundation in 1949, has been the leading place to study European affairs. Each year, students from all over the continent – and increasingly further afield – relocate to this ancient Flemish town for a one year masters in European Union law, politics, economics or diplomacy. Among its alumni, the College of Europe counts the new Danish prime minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt, the UK deputy prime minister Nick Clegg and an array of other ministers, secretaries of state and high-ranking members of the European Parliament or officials at the European Commission. They are often said, due to their friendships and connections, to form something of a “Bruges mafia” in and around the EU institutions.

Young ambassadors

In line with tradition, the current academic year is named after a notable European, famous Polish-French physicist Marie Skłodowska Curie. It will officially be opened by the Italian president, though classes began in September. He will deliver his speech to a class of 53 different nationalities from all over Europe and, reflecting the growing number of scholarships for non-EU students from Turkey, North Africa and Belarus, amongst others. Of the 300-odd students enrolled, around 10 are Flemish.

Yves Roose, alderman for culture and education in Bruges, is convinced of the college's value for the city. “The students become ambassadors for Bruges,” he says. “They are enthusiastic about the city and regularly come back.” To reflect their ambassadorial role, students are made honorary citizens of the city when they graduate. Roose adds that “the College of Europe has helped to give a certain intellectual and diplomatic status” to the city, which, for historical and political reasons, has never had a university of its own. Christophe Christiaens agrees: “It's blasé to say that the future leaders come to the college, but the city benefits from the fact that many of the students go on to hold important positions.” Among all the Poles and Italians, he is the only *Bruggeling* at the college, where he's reading for a masters in European politics and administration. “The atmosphere is very good,” he says. “It's intellectual and very competitive.”

In Bruges

The institute ended up in Bruges thanks to the vision and determination of local Europeanists and politicians. The original idea of creating a European university to bring students together to study from a European perspective



was floated after the war by leading politicians, including Winston Churchill, Henri de Spaak and Salvador de Madariaga. However, it was the Flemish priest Karel Verleye who was the first to suggest Bruges as a suitable location, stressing the city's role in European history and humanism, and that there was no “rival” local university. This echoed with the townspeople, leading Bruges to make funding and buildings available for a successful trial run in 1949. Since those early days of 20 students, the college has grown and now occupies several buildings across the city. The college's seat is a beautiful 18th-century building in Bruges' historic heart along the Dijver canal, whilst another of its buildings, a large, renovated former Jesuit school, offers modern teaching facilities. This year's 317 students are spread across nine residencies in the north of town, providing a certain flamboyance to otherwise sleepy streets and squares where, centuries earlier, rich European merchants had lived and traded. A canteen reminds the students to attend to their physical needs; a college bar, in the cellars of a 17th-century merchant's house, is the place to discuss the EU's latest gossip. Otherwise, when not frantically studying or dutifully attending the talks of the many luminaries that pass through, the two semesters are punctuated by national weeks, organised by students to showcase their home country's culture (often with particular

attention given to the various beverages).

The number of College of Europe marriages is not insignificant: both the Danish prime minister and the UK deputy prime minister met their spouses here. It has led one commentator to observe that the college was an enthusiastic motor for European “horizontal integration”.

Local meets global

Integration into the local community appears, by general consent, to be more problematic. “I feel a bit sorry that students integrate so little in local cultural, artistic and intellectual life,” says Roose. He attributes the fact to the brevity of students' stay in Bruges and the intensity of the programme. Others complain that the students, who study in English and French, make little effort to speak Dutch (though classes are offered by the college) and are often uninterested in Bruges' historic past or dynamic present.

The responsibility for bridging the gap between town and gown falls to Bertil van Outryve d'Ydewalle, a true *Bruggeling*, alumnus of the college, and president of the local committee for the College of Europe. As part of a hosting project, they've convinced 50 local families to welcome the students into their homes for the occasional Sunday lunch. Elsewhere, joint concerts, sporting events and guided tours are organised to bring the two sides closer together. Paul Demaret, the college director who first took charge of its law department in 1981, has been won over by the city. He lauds it as “safe and welcoming” and underlines the support that the college has received, in particular, in the form of generous indirect subsidies. For if the college's funding comes from tuition fees and the EU, Belgian and West Flanders governments, the city has made several large, renovated and central buildings available for it to use.

Yet the shortage of available public buildings has, it is claimed, led to millions of euros having to be spent on renovating and extending other public buildings in Bruges, most recently in the case of school buildings. This has given some local politicians cause to call for the college to be axed from the city budget, which is already under pressure. “No, this view is quite exceptional and only on the fringe of the political debate,” asserts Roose, who adds that “the majority of the local population is proud to house the college.”♦

→ www.coleurop.be



Life is not too bad at the Oude Zak residence of the College of Europe, even though the work is tough

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

CAP proposals criticised

Agriculture plans described as “slap in the face for Flanders”

ALAN HOPE

New proposals to reform the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) have been met with criticism and disappointment in Flanders, with warnings that they would cost the industry here €40 million in lost subsidies.

Last week, EU commissioner for agriculture Dacian Cioloş presented the commission's proposal for the CAP after 2014. The main points included maintaining farm spending at about €55 billion a year until 2020, imposing a cap on the total subsidies available to individual farms and requiring farmers to meet strict environmental criteria in order to qualify for subsidies. Among them are the need to grow at least three different crops and leave at least 7% of their land fallow. There would also be premiums available to start-up farms in an effort to encourage young people to go into agriculture.

According to the Flemish Boerenbond (Farmers' Union), the proposals would mean a three-fold loss for farmers in the region. “The purchasing power of the proposed budget will go down over the years by 12.5% by not being indexed,” the union said in a statement. “The redistribution of resources between the member states will cost Flemish agriculture a further 7.7%. And the proposed greening, which accounts for 30% of direct payments, offers few opportunities in an urbanising context. Farming in Flanders is in an area where

every square metre of land has to be put to work, where population density is exceptionally high, and where farms are on the doorstep of cities, industrial areas, residential areas and nature preserves. The proposed greening measures will be difficult to adapt to a Flemish context.”

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters, whose portfolio includes agricultural policy, put a figure on the loss. “The Flemish farm sector is under threat of receiving about €40 million less income a year as a result of the general reduction of the budget and the new division of incomes between the old and new member states,” he said. “I had expected more ambitious proposals. What is now on the table will lead more to a reshuffle of resources between member states than to a more sustainable, competitive and crisis-resistant sector. I expect the commissioner to amend his proposals substantially during the coming negotiations.”

According to the General Union of Farmers (ABS), the proposals are “a slap in the face for agriculture and horticulture in Flanders”. While elements of the proposal such as targeted income support, risk-management instruments and support for research and development as well as for young farmers are all broadly positive, the ABS singled out other aspects of the plan as “downright harmful” for the



© www.nieuwland.be

sector. “Agricultural land in Flanders is so scarce and so expensive that there is simply no room for removing more land from production,” said ABS chairman Hendrik Vandamme.

The current proposals treat the entirety of the EU's agricultural industry as a single entity, says Vandamme. If the EU loses sight of local requirements, “the fate of the Flemish agriculture sector is sealed.”

Belgapom, the association representing potato producers, said extra support for less productive regions would undermine Flanders' competitive edge. Environmental organisation

Natuurpunt, on the other hand, found that the Commission's proposals on greening do not go far enough. “The current proposals cannot confront the major challenges we face, such as the demand for food, fuel and energy, climate change and the deterioration of eco-systems,” a spokesperson said. “With this proposal from the Commission, Europe will not succeed in halting the loss of biodiversity by 2020. Europe is not only placing biodiversity in jeopardy, but also those eco-system services on which farmers depend every day, such as clean water, soil fertility and pollination.” ♦

Legendary Knokke hotel reopens its doors

Once among the most famous and luxurious hotels in Flanders, Knokke's legendary La Réserve reopened its doors to the public on 6 October. During a four-year closure, the old wooden hotel in classic Normandy style was torn down and replaced by a monolithic ultra-modern building of glass and metal. “We are very happy with the result,” says Martine Van Thillo, who has been running the hotel since 1997. “The guests' reactions, as well as those of the inhabitants of Knokke, have been unanimously positive”.

The new hotel was designed by experimental Kortrijk architect Luc Declercq and boasts an immense entrance hall, 110 rooms and a giant ballroom on the ground floor. The sky-high entrance hall is filled with giant black sofas sporting golden pillows; black mediaeval gates lead to the rooms; green and yellow lights shine

brightly out of large paper bowls in the dining room.

The interior was done by TV host turned interior designer Ilse De Meulemeester. “But we've chosen these colours ourselves”, says Van Thillo. “My husband and I chose for the colours of the sea: bright green and blue on a sunny day, but also the greys and blacks of a rainy day.”

The only place with some nostalgia left is the bar: pictures of stars like Gilbert Bécaud, Marlene Dietrich, Edith Piaf and Frank Sinatra show what a glamorous and popular place this used to be among the rich and famous. Van Thillo has no regrets about losing the original hotel: “The old building had to go; it was impossible to restore and not fit for contemporary times. Some areas couldn't even be heated,” she explains.

She notes that it's the only hotel on



the Flemish coast that can offer this much luxury to tourists, as well as host business congresses. “And we're proud of it,” she continues “We've even heard a number of people compare our

new place with buildings you only see in New York, Vegas or Dubai. Nobody expects to see this in Belgium.” ♦

→ www.la-reserve.be

Soudal is Enterprise of the Year

The Turnhout based company Soudal, which produces insulation foams and silicone mastics, has been voted this year's Enterprise of the Year in a poll carried out by Ernst & Young, together with *De Tijd* newspaper and BNP Paribas Fortis.

The company was set up by Vic Swerts in a cellar in Antwerp in 1966, when silicone products were only starting to appear. Swerts started off selling welding supplies and polyester-based repair pastes.

Soudal moved to Turnhout, where they still have their head office and main production facility. It also has plants in France, Germany, Poland, China, India, Chile, the US and Turkey. The company employs more than 1,300 workers worldwide and made a profit of €40 million last year.

The award citation praised Soudal's “sustainable and profitable growth over more than a decade. Above all, the company is working constantly on future profitable development on a geographic as well as a technological level.” ♦

→ www.soudal.com



© Peter Deconinck

Vic Swerts of Soudal accepts the award for Flanders' Enterprise of the Year

Air Transport • Heinan

China's Heinan Airlines has confirmed plans to increase its traffic to Brussels Airport next year. The company presently operates four flights a week from Beijing and three from Shanghai.

Auto leasing • VDFin

Car and vehicles distributor D'Ieteren and Volkswagen have created a joint venture, Volkswagen D'Ieteren Finance (VDFin), to handle their car leasing and financing activities. The new venture is expected to help the partners consolidate their more than 20% share of the market.

Banks • Dexia

The Franco-Belgian Dexia Bank, being dismantled in the wake of the present sovereign credit crisis, has sold two of its prized assets. Its Luxembourg affiliate Dexia BIL has been sold to a Qatari sovereign fund while its 50% stake in Canada's RBC Dexia Investor Services has been sold to its joint venture partner, the Royal Bank of Canada, for up to €400 million.

Banks • KBC

KBC Bank, Flanders' largest financial institution, has sold its Luxembourg-based KBL private banking affiliate to the Qatar-based Precision Capital for €1.05 billion. The move had been requested by European authorities for approving KBC's public rescue during the 2008 financial crisis. The amount paid, however, is some €300 million less than what KBC had been offered last year when India's Hinduja group bid was rejected by the Luxembourg regulatory authorities.

Gastronomy • Hof Van Cleve

The Kruishoutem-based three star restaurant Hof Van Cleve of celebrity chef Peter Goossens has been named the world's best restaurant by the Swedish culinary website wbpstars.com.

Mail • bpost

Parcel delivery company bpost, an affiliate of the Belgian Post and one of the five largest firms in the business worldwide, has acquired the Chinese Citipost Asia, a courier company with activities in Hong Kong and Singapore. The deal allows bpost to expand its activities in the area.

Handling • Stukwerkers

The Ghent-based Stukwerkers Havenbedrijf handling company, founded in 1338, is to operate the Duferco distribution centre in Wallonia's La Louvière. The new facility is expected to process up to 16,000 containers yearly in addition to large volumes of steel-related products.

Tourism • Flanders-Brussels

The new director of the Tourism Flanders-Brussels agency in London is Pier Paolo Solinas, formerly director of tourism at the agency's Milan office. A trained accountant, Solinas also has a background in marketing.



A warm welcome to Belgium!

We hope your days here are happy ones.

At KBC we'll be glad to settle you in by providing you a full bank and insurance service.

Anne Marie Azijn and Leo Verhoeven, KBC Expat Advisers
expats@kbc.be • +32 (0)2 429 18 57



www.kbc.be/expats

putting people first

Fueled By Stella

A Flemish football team in New York City

LAWRENCE DE GEEST

Belgium's national football team, The Red Devils, failed last week to qualify for the 2012 European Championships. The last time they appeared in any championship was in 2002, and the last time they managed to get past the quarter-finals was in 1986. The present generation of football fans have, despite a promising squad of young players, no space for hope unless they invent it.

Fortunately, a more successful ambassador has appeared in the form of an amateur team in New York City, Team Flanders House. Cobbled together with temporary professionals from Belgium and the rest of the world, the ambitious team, both on the pitch and in the pub, finished this year's spring season in second place after a hotly contested final. Hopes are high for the prize next season to add to their two existing championships. Their excitement is something you could call a smiling impatience. Manhattan is a place that endows you with everything but time.

Most squad members tie themselves together in manners deeper than sport

Roel Sterken, team captain, creator, and post-doctoral researcher in kidney genetics at Columbia University, explains that the whole thing started with a networking event. "This event for Belgians in New York happened once a month in Manhattan's Belgian pubs Markt and BXL East and attracted quite a young crowd. On one of those evenings, the conversation went from 'Let's do a

bike ride' to 'Let's play soccer' with all the Belgians in NYC."

The team secured some financing from Flanders House, the cultural representation of the Flemish government in New York. With the sponsorship, the team was able in turn to support the Lance Armstrong Foundation, a charity. All that was left to do was to recruit the players.

Defender Dennis Van Zoelen, a tax consultant, joined the team "by pretending to be from Wallonia but fluent in Dutch," he says. Others were found through keen scouting efforts. "One of the team's players saw my skills during a Wimblefoot Tournament" – a sport that is a blend of tennis, football and brandy – "and invited me to fight for the cause," says Stefano Storace, a doctoral candidate in physics from Italy.

Accounting firm Deloitte has consistently supplied eager players, according to winger and New Jersey native Brigid Matrai, who works for the firm's international tax law division. When she joined, the team was looking for women – league rules require three women on the pitch at any time during a match. Theoretically, reducing on-pitch testosterone makes football more casual. Though most – if not all – squad members tie themselves together in manners deeper than sport. Romances have been made and lost. Two newcomers even got married.

"It's more than just football," says Italian full-back and scientist Valentina Emmanuelle. "I've met good people; I've made close friends; I've discovered new interests. And I can handle more than two beers now."

The squad consensus is twofold about what makes Team Flanders House. First, the spirited camaraderie and relaxed atmosphere – winning is nice, good even, but not necessary. Second, the post-game drinks. Storace relates the team to Stella Artois: personal without being aggressive, stylish, international.



Team captain Roel Sterken, in the middle, standing up, with Team Flanders House

Van Zoelen offers another. "The Flanders House team would be a beer with international reach and fame, good for fast and heavy drinking, a nice golden colour and of course a good name. I'd say Duvel."

Due to the nature of their professional arrangements the players can only stick around so long. One recently departed savoured every moment of her seven-hour runway delay at the airport. Others relish homecoming. The gradient depends on what emotions brought them here in the first place.

Johan Halsberghe, a chef, says that "you meet people from different working sectors and share the experience of being abroad for work. I plan to stay as long as possible until I have no reason to be here anymore."

The spring season final was intense. It was played at Columbia University's

Bakers Field in a cold rainstorm marking the start of what became a hot summer. A 4-4 draw was played in the crimson of personal confrontation between Team Flanders House and their American opponents. A stalemate overtime led to penalties. Team Flanders House lost the match when their final effort ricocheted off the goal's crossbar, sounding like the gavel of a judge at verdict.

Yet the wetness of the defeat was forgotten when, hours later, they were singing karaoke, using pints as microphones. It was a Wednesday night turning into morning, and, though they would have to go to work soon, there was always one more drink. ♦

→ www.flandershouse.org

A medley of languages

Expat and Flemish kids in the Flemish periphery of Brussels find each other in music

ALAN HOPE

Music is a universal language, and especially, it appears, when it comes to children's songs. That's the premise of a project run by De Rand, the organisation that brings together families living in the Flemish municipalities surrounding Brussels. Five schools are taking part, involving 120 children aged eight to 10 in art projects and a joint concert based around children's songs in Dutch and in English.

The five schools are the British School of Brussels in Tervuren, St Paul's British Primary School in Vossem and the local municipal primary school, the local primary in Jezus-Eik, the Catholic school of Our Lady in Jezus-Eik. Each class will make an artwork on the theme of water, and practice a song in their own language. Finally, under the direction of the noted soprano Catrin Wyn-Davies, who now teaches music at St Paul's, the children will perform a medley of their own and each other's songs.

For the kids at St Paul's, the collaboration is an extension of what they do anyway. "It's a great start to the year," says headmaster Brett Neilson. "We're involved in a number of cross-cultural projects, and have very good relations with the Vossem primary. They often get involved in what we're doing, like in the harvest festival for example." The school, which has 90 pupils aged three to 10, about half from families where a language other than English is spoken, doesn't teach Dutch, but does cooperate with local schools in Tervuren, Kortenberg and Hoeilaart when they're teaching their children English.

In the assembly hall, a class of eight-year-olds brings a tear to the expat Scottish eye with a rendition of the Skye Boat Song, in front of their artwork: an enormous paper sailing ship. According to Tim, whose parents come from Slovenia and who is able to speak a little Dutch, the songs are going very well. He dismisses, in the way expat children have, any idea that learning to sing in another language might be a challenge. Katya (Dad British, mother Russian, "and I'm Hungarian myself") explains proudly that she has had some Dutch lessons and used to speak quite well, but now she speaks more French.

At the Vossem primary, about 50m down the street from St Paul's, the children of the second class proudly display the frog-pond they've made. Lucas explains, "We made the frogs out of round things and then painted them, but some of us didn't because we had religion". Lori, the most confident about remembering the words, leads them in a faultless performance of their song: "De Kikkertjes", Little Frogs.

The schoolchildren, together with members of the Brussels Light Opera Company, will be exhibiting their work and performing their songs at De Bosuil community centre in Jezus-Eik on 21 October at 15.30. All are welcome. ♦

→ www.debosuil.be



The kids of the municipal primary school of Vossem are excited to sing along with their English-speaking friends

Tintin and the Secret of Animation

The new film about Belgium's famous reporter might be the highest profile, but it isn't the first

TOON HORSTEN

On 22 October, Brussels will welcome famous director Steven Spielberg for the avant-première of his long awaited film about *Kuifje*, known in English as Tintin. Prepare yourself for a big, splashy opening, and a buzz that will make the film and Belgian's most famous reporter the talk of the town for weeks to come. But know that Spielberg is not the first to give Tintin a try.

Hergé (Georges Remi, 1907-1983), the Brussels author of Tintin, wanted his comic books to be "films on paper". Cinema used to have an enormous influence on his way of storytelling. It was a lifelong dream of his to see a motion picture made of the comic, and several attempts were made. A first one, with puppets, came immediately after the Second World War, and 15 years later two live-action films were produced.

Yet *Tintin and the Secret of the Golden Fleece* (1961) and *Tintin and the Blue Oranges* (1964) were not really to Hergé's taste. He had higher expectations of the two animated films that were due several years later, *Tintin and the Temple of the Sun* and *Tintin and the Lake of Sharks*, made by the Belvision Studios in Brussels.

Belvision was the first great animation film studio in Brussels and was part of the same company as the weekly *Journal de Tintin*, property of publisher Raymond Leblanc. It was Karel Van Milleghem, editor-in-chief of *Kuifje*, the Flemish version of the *Tintin* weekly, who had the idea to start working in animation. "After a long, sleepless night thinking about it," Leblanc said in 2006, "I thought: Why not? Walt Disney began by making animated films and later switched to comics. Why shouldn't we do it the other way around?"

The newly created studio began in 1956 with a series for Flemish television of the popular comic book characters *Suske en Wiske* and would later produce feature films of Lucky Luke, The Smurfs, Astérix



Steven Spielberg's *The Adventures of Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn* is in 3D and uses "performance capture" animation: real actors go through the motions and are animated afterwards. The film opens to the public on 26 October

and Tintin. From the 1970s onwards, Belvision mainly worked for television and publicity. Making good animated films proved to be expensive, difficult and risky.

"Van Milleghem had a few ideas that everybody believed in," says Guy Dessicy, who worked as an assistant to both Hergé and Leblanc. "But he thought that making an animated film was easy: You take a couple of drawings, you show the one after the other, and that would make a film."

But it turned out not to be that easy. "It was actually very difficult to make a good film, and it took a lot of people to do it. And a lot of money, of course."

Leblanc wanted to become "a kind of European Disney", Dessicy says. "He wanted to have something that he could

call his own. The *Tintin* weekly was his, but everybody associated it with Hergé. I think that this was on his mind when he invested so much time and money in Belvision."

The first of the Belvision films, *Tintin and the Temple of the Sun* (based on two of the albums), was a success and received praise from the critics – mainly thanks to the score, written and performed by Jacques Brel and his musical director François Rauber. Hergé was only involved from a distance, but he had asked his assistant, Antwerp-born Bob De Moor, to draw the decors for the film. "Those were very busy times for my father," remembers his son Johan De Moor. "He used to bring home these big drawings for the decors. He sat there drawing at the table all evening long while family life went on."

For the second film, *Tintin and the Lake of Sharks*, comic artist Greg (pseudonym of Michel Régnier) wrote the script, not based on any of the *Tintin* books that had been published. Greg was the editor-in-chief of the *Tintin* weekly and wrote the scripts for most of the stories published in the magazine. The story was in the spirit of Hergé's own, but the critics weren't very kind. The film would turn out to be the last about Tintin, until now.

Hergé had always been a great fan of Steven Spielberg and hoped that one day, he would be willing to make a *Tintin* film. Today, after 30 years of negotiating, his dream seems to have come true with the release of *The Adventures of Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn*.♦

→ www.kuifje-film.be

When Vienna was ruled from Mechelen

KATY DESMOND

Flanders is working together with Vienna's famous Kunsthistorisches Museum

Flanders will have a front-row seat as the historical Kunstskammer collection reopens for the first time in 15 years in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, one of the world's leading art history museums.

The Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs has agreed to sponsor the renovation of a room in the Kunstskammer collection as a nod towards 500 years of shared heritage. "In the early 16th century, the Hapsburg Empire, which included Spain and France, was effectively ruled from the courts of Margaret of Austria, in Mechelen," explains André Hebbelinck, representative of the Flemish government in Central Europe. The room, one of the many of the collection that cover some 3,000 square metres, will be filled with objects from this period.

The sculptures, tapestries, jewellery and furniture of the Kunstskammer collection tell the story of Europe through the objects of its ruling class. "These objects are more than just well-made things," says Hebbelinck. "They were important symbols used by Europe's rulers to propagate the myth of their wealth and might."

In addition to the sponsorship, Flanders will take part in a series of cultural exchanges, including lectures by art historians on particular objects on display.

The Kunstskammer collection won't be open to the public until December 2012, but the museum is already hard at work creating a buzz around the project. It aims to reach out to the general public, Hebbelinck says, and not just to experts in art history.

It is in this democratic spirit that they've placed a large construction container in front of the museum (pictured) equipped with video screens that show the work in progress and 3D-simulations of the final product. Anyone can become a patron of one or more objects in the collection. "We'd like people to adopt an object as their own and retell its story, adding to its history," explains Hebbelinck.

There are also more concrete incentives, including one that hits close to the Flemish heart: Buyers of an annual pass to the museum will receive a shiny, gold-plated bicycle helmet. "The helmets have been an enormous success," Hebbelinck says. "You can actually see people wearing them riding through the streets." One bicycle messenger company has fitted all its messengers with the gilded headgear.

→ www.khm.at



CULTURE NEWS

Wandas never cease

The AB plays host to a transatlantic and intergenerational rockabilly collaboration

PM DOUTRELIGNE

Is it really necessary to introduce Wanda Jackson? In rock'n'roll circles, the Oklahoma-born singer is known as the Queen of Rockabilly; she once dated a budding Tennessee upstart called Elvis Presley and has recorded over 30 albums. A true rockabilly pioneer, she is responsible for some of the genre's most memorable songs. The haunting "Funnel Of Love" has been recorded by – among many others – Tav Falco's Panther Burns and The Fall, while "Let's Have A Party" and "I Gotta Know" have been covered by bands as diverse as The Go-Go's and Frantic Flintstones, respectively. As for "Fujiyama Mama", its risqué lyrics ("when I start erupting ain't nobody gonna make me stop [...] I can cause destruction just like the atom bomb") didn't prevent it from going to number one... in Japan.

Like many 1950s rock'n'roll artists, Jackson was a victim of the lack of interest in rockabilly in the late '60s and throughout the '70s. As a result, she reinvented herself as a country singer and then, having become a practising christian, tried her hand at gospel. And like many '50s rock'n'roll artists, she was rediscovered, thanks to the worldwide rockabilly revival, circa 1980.

This second wind led to collaborations with contemporary artists who had always adored her, such as The Cramps, who helped her revisit her very own "Riot In Cellblock #9". Then earlier this year came *The Party Ain't Over*, an album recorded with former White Stripes frontman Jack White at the helm, and featuring covers of songs by Eddie Cochran ("Nervous Breakdown"), Bob Dylan ("Thunder on The Mountain"), Johnny Kidd & The Pirates ("Shakin' All Over") and, more incongruously, Amy Winehouse ("You Know I'm No Good"). Perhaps unsurprisingly – White had, after all, already helped out country veteran Loretta Lynn to great acclaim – the project once more gained her a new generation of fans. Now in her 70s, Jackson is about to play the venerable Ancienne Belgique, backed by none other than Antwerp's very own Seatsniffers. If you are surprised by this unlikely pairing, you may be baffled to hear that it has actually been going on for a while.

"A few years ago, the Trix venue in Antwerp had the idea to book



Wanda Jackson still does the rockabilly at 70

Wanda, with us as a backing band," says singer and guitarist Walter Broes. "We have backed her up six times in total, and it seems like both parties enjoy working together."

*It isn't just
The Seatsniffers.
The whole
Flemish rockin'
scene is in rude
health*

Formed in 1996, The Seatsniffers quickly became Belgium's leading rockabilly combo. They have now released six studio albums and one live collection (the terrific *Flavor Saver*), and plans are afoot for a next album. Gaining in confidence with every release, they are now a regular fixture on the UK's particularly demanding rockabilly festival scene (Hemsby, the Rockabilly Rave) – proof, if it was still needed, of the band's international stature. In fact, it isn't just The Seatsniffers. The whole Flemish

rockin' scene, mostly centred around Antwerp and Ghent, is in rude health, with bands such as The Baboons and Moonshine Reunion holding their own against more established acts. Flanders hosts several international rockabilly festivals, such as the Rockabilly Psychosis in Antwerp and the Monster Mash in Geel, the popularity of which is largely explained by the quality of the bands on the bill, but also by the fact that many overseas fans, from nearby cities such as Eindhoven, Düsseldorf and Lille, will use these events as de facto meeting points. It is far from unusual these days to see local bands high on the bill, whereas a decade ago they would have been lucky to play a handful of numbers just as the doors opened.

The "Wanda Jackson with The Seatsniffers" joint venture will not be confined to Brussels. After the Ancienne Belgique, the party moves on to the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria and Spain. Which doesn't mean that The Seatsniffers will be putting their feet up – far from it. More Dutch shows await them before Christmas, then in early 2012

they will be in the spotlight in more ways than one: they will be playing live in the studio, for four consecutive nights, on *De Laatste Show* – possibly the most high-profile programme on Flemish television.

Afterwards, there is the new album ("there are no dates or deadlines yet," Broes adds) and, as always, more dates in Flanders and abroad. Here's to a career as long as Wanda Jackson's. ♦

**Wanda Jackson &
The Seatsniffers**
25 October, 20.00
Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110, Brussels
→ www.abconcerts.be

Congolese-Belgian actor **Dieudonné Kabongo** died last week while on stage at the cultural centre in the Brussels commune of Jette. He was 61 years old. Kabongo was a prolific actor who appeared in several films, such as *Lamumba* and the new film *The Invader* by Flemish director Nicholas Provost, which releases in Brussels and Flanders next month.

Flemish culture minister Joke Schauvliege last week announced an investment of half a million euro for the digitisation of **small and alternative cinemas**. "They often lack the funds to make the transition," she said, "but most of the movie market is already digital." Art houses and neighbourhood cinemas are of importance, she said, because "they diversify the films on offer."

American pop idol **Beyoncé Knowles** has admitted to **finding inspiration** in the work of Flemish choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker for her new video "Countdown". "It is clear that the ballet *Rosas danst Rosas* is one of many references in the video," she said in a press release last week, after worldwide rumours of plagiarism had been circulating for days. De Keersmaecker said that she's "not angry, but not honoured either". She and her lawyer are still looking at possible legal procedures against Beyoncé.

→ www.rosas.be

The Hermitage Amsterdam, a dependency of the Saint-Petersburg museum, announced last week that eight **"young Flemish masters"** will feature next to the old at the exhibition *Rubens, Van Dyck & Jordaens*, which opens on 5 November. The young artists – Sarah & Charles, Manor Grunewald, Marie Cloquet, Fia Cielen, Filip Gilissen, Renato Nicolodi, Nick Ervinck, and Vadim Vosters – will show works that have been inspired by four selected masterpieces of yore.

→ www.hermitage.nl

Brussels literary organisation Het Beschrijf has secured four **foreign residencies for Flemish authors**, who will get to know "the literary context" in their respective host countries. Paul Mennes is currently in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Rachida Lamrabet is in London; Chika Unigwe will depart for New York; and Miriam Van hee for Krakow, Poland. In exchange, one author from every country is invited to come to Flanders or Brussels.

→ www.beschrijf.be

Live! We take care of the rest!

**Euromut
welcomes you
to Belgium.**

It is essential that you receive the best health care advice and customer service. We'll make your administration as easy as possible and have solutions for every request. More than 4,000 expats choose Euromut every year. They can't be wrong!

Contact the Business Customer Care by mail: expats@euromut.be, by phone: +32 2 44 44 700.



euromut
health insurance

Live! we take care of the rest!

www.euromut.be/expats

Rainbows of grey

DIRK BRAECKMAN

CHRISTOPHE VERBIEST

To draw with light. That's the etymological meaning of the word "photography" and few artists have stayed as faithful to it as Dirk Braeckman. His photographs often resemble paintings, and he wilfully plays with the blurred border between the two art forms, as you'll notice in Museum M in Leuven, where 44 of his photographs from the past 20 years are on display.

A sofa, carpets, a table, drapes, naked women: if you describe what you see on a Braeckman photograph, you might think that they're portraits or still lifes. Quod non. True, some of the basic elements are recognisable as coming from daily life, but the Ghent-based photographer doesn't try to reproduce them. Instead, he uses them as part of almost abstract compositions.

Take the picture on the right: "T.N.-I.O-01". Yes, it's part of a naked woman's body, but would you call it a portrait? I wouldn't. I notice, of course, that it's a female body, but I'm more interested in the lines, the relation between the different areas, the tension between the different shades of grey. The abstract of the art is enhanced by the titles of the works, combinations of figures and letters: "C.O.-I.S.L.-94", or "N.P.-N.R.-05". They probably mean something to Braeckman – a location? a date? – but remain a mystery to the spectator. Braeckman is afraid that the reality behind the picture might be distracting.

Braeckman also takes photographs of other works of art. "G.H.-I.O-01", for example, shows a house. Not an actual house, but an image of a house projected on a television or a monitor.

"10.01.04-05" is a photo of a photo, taken in such a way that the reflection of the flash has bleached out part of the original image. The part that shows contains a couple of arms and legs. Looking for a meaning can be frustrating. Admiring the geometrical pattern isn't.

Braeckman, 53, almost always works in black and white, but the two ends of the spectrum seem to

interest him the least. Each of his photographs looks like a study in grey, like a rainbow of shades.

There are several works in colour in the exhibition, mostly monochromes. They look like his work in black and white, but then coated in one colour, like the golden "Alexia 2010".

Braeckman prints his photographs on several formats. In the upper room of Museum M, two monumental works cover the walls, but they are the exception. The most prominent format is 180 cm x 120 cm, or vice versa, dimensions that underline the painterly character of the photographs.

Braeckman's work is bathed in mystery, elusive at times, cerebral at others. It kind of keeps you at bay at first, distracted by the real-life elements that have been photographed. But as soon as the desire for finding a meaning evaporates, you're struck by an abyssal beauty.

If the exhibition has you longing for more Braeckman, I highly recommend the newly published book *Dirk Braeckman*, the first comprehensive overview of his work in print. ♦

Until 8 January

Museum M

Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28
Leuven

→ www.mleuven.be



© Dirk Braeckman Courtesy of Zeno X Gallery Antwerp

HALLOWEEN

Halloween in Ostend

Until 6 November

Across Ostend



© Toerisme Oostende vzw

America's favourite grisly holiday has been gaining momentum in Flanders over the past decade. And no place celebrates Halloween more than the coastal town of Ostend. Every year at this time the shopping streets are draped in cobwebs, Fort Napoleon turns into a haunted fort, and the whole city is buzzing with ghoulish activities. Come to the lighthouse on 26 October from 14.00 to 17.00 for a pumpkin carving workshop, or play games alongside ghosts and goblins at the funfair from 29 to 31 October. But whatever you do, don't miss the giant dragons and fire show during the Halloween parade on Friday night, 28 October (Thomas Van Loostraat and Jacob Besagestraat). The parade is followed by a spooky after-party for kids. See the website for the full list of events, and don't forget your costume! (*Robyn Boyle*)

→ www.halloween-oostende.be

MORE HALLOWEEN THIS WEEK

Aalst

Cupcake decorating: Workshop on the art of decorating cupcakes with a Halloween theme
OCT 26 19.00-22.00 at Cupalicious, Pieter De Bruynestraat 23
www.cupalicious.be

Hoboken (Antwerp province)

Moretusburg Halloween walk: Night walk through the Polderbos with fun and scary acts by Casa Louisa performers, followed by a party (ages 12 and up)
OCT 22 20.00 at Gildenhuis, Kapelstraat 296
www.casalouisa.be

Tervuren

Halloween walk: Three-kilometre walk through Tervuren Park with masked characters around every corner (ages 4 and up)
OCT 22 18.00-22.00 leaving from Marktplein
www.tervuren.be

EXHIBITION

Illuminated manuscripts have been used since Late Antiquity to give stature to documents by decorating text down to the smallest detail, often with gold and silver borders and elaborate illustrations. In Flanders, a rich collection of these manuscripts (miniatures) dating back to the Middle Ages have miraculously survived the region's tumultuous history. The most incredibly ornate Flemish miniatures hail from the 15th century and are recognisable by their attention to detail, especially in facial expressions, and by their soft colours; they almost glow. These small paintings pull you into a fantasy world where European legends and folklore come to life in the form of heroes, fairies and winged dragons. Don't miss the chance to view this unique collection, combining works from the National Library of France, before it moves on to its next stop in Paris. (RB)

→ www.kbr.be



Flemish Miniatures

Until 30 December

Royal Library of Belgium, Brussels

MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

Ghent

Transforming Landscapes: Works by Norway's Reulf Ramstad Architects
 Until NOV 4 at Sint-Lucas Architectuur, Hoogstraat 51
www.architectuur.sintlucas.wenk.be

Sint-Niklaas

België in kaart: Maps of Belgium from the last three centuries, showing the drastic evolution of the landscape over time
 Until NOV 6 at Mercatormuseum, Zamanstraat 49
www.sint-niklaas.be

Land van Waas: Collection of old archived maps of Waasland (East Flanders), for fans of cartography and regional history
 Until NOV 6 at SteM, Zwijgershoek 14
www.sint-niklaas.be

THEATRE

Bedrog (Betrayal)

19-22 October, 20.30 | 26-29 October, 20.30
 Monty, Antwerp | Kaaistudio's, Brussels



This Dutch-language version of the 1978 play by English Nobel Prize winner Harold Pinter comes from Antwerp Theatre Group STAN. It's the story of a classic love triangle: Emma has been cheating on her husband Robert for seven years with his best friend Jerry. The play is carried out in reverse chronological order, meaning the audience knows how it all ends and can therefore concentrate fully on the drama at hand. Thanks to stellar performances by actors Jolente De Keersmaeker, Robby Cleiren and Frank Verduyssen, even audience members with a menial understanding of the dialogue in Dutch can't help but be swept away by the lies, deceit, jealousy, adventure and underlying fight against routine and mediocrity that pervade all nine scenes. (RB)

→ www.stan.be

MORE THEATRE THIS WEEK

Antwerp

The Dresser: De Speling presents this play about the First World War by Ronald Harwood, starring Eddy Vereycken and directed by Jean-François D'hondt (in Dutch)
 OCT 20-22 20.30; OCT 23 15.00 at Fakkeltheater Rode Zaal, Hoogstraat 12
www.despeling.be

Brussels

The Glass Menagerie: The American Theatre Company presents this classic play by Tennessee Williams (in English)
 OCT 18-22 20.00 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23
www.atc.theatreinbrussels.com

Ghent

De bittere tranen van Petra von Kant (The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant): NTGent and Het Nationale Toneel perform in this 1971 drama by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, directed by Susanne Kennedy (in Dutch)
 OCT 22 & 25-29 20.30 at NTGent Schouwburg, Sint-Baafsplein 17
www.ntgent.be

PHOTOGRAPHY

Evy Raes is a passionate photographer with a mission: to document the dying aspects of different cultures. Her current exhibition shines a light on the old-fashioned interiors hidden behind doors across her native Flanders, places where time appears to have stood still for a century or longer. "I often stayed at my grandmother's place as a child, which had a traditional Flemish interior, and those images have stuck in my mind," Raes told Stichting Roeping, an organisation that gives out scholarships to budding talents. But instead of portraying these spaces as dismal and static, the 29-year-old focused her lens on the lived-in, cosy aspects – a *Leuvense stoof*, a blue-overcoated farmer at his kitchen table with a bottle of jenever, vintage wallpaper and requisite hanging crucifix, grey-haired clients in a classic-looking barber shop. Eight such life-size images are on display now through next month inside the train stations of Mechelen and Bruges. An even larger exhibition will follow in 2013, featuring portraits, more authentic interiors and personal anecdotes by Flemish celebrities. (RB)



→ <http://evyraes.wordpress.com/vlaamse-interieurs>

Evy Raes – Flemish Interiors

Until 30 October | 31 October to 13 November
Mechelen train station | Bruges train station

MORE PHOTOGRAPHY THIS WEEK

Leuven

Faces. 20 years of concert photography: Portraits of rock, pop and dance stars by Flemish photographer Alex Vanhee
Until NOV 12 at Het Depot, Kapucijnenvoer 47-49
www.hetdepot.be

Menen (West Flanders)

Gewoon Anders (Just Different): Unconventional works by Flemish photographer Sylvia Konior
Until NOV 10 at CC De Steiger, Waalvest 1
www.ccdesteiger.be

Torhout (West Flanders)

Closure: Photos of abandoned places by Flemish photographer Werner Engelen
Until NOV 10 at Cultuurcentrum de Brouckere, Aartrijkestraat 6
www.ccdebrouckere.be

WORLD

Brazilian Underground

27 October, 20.00-3.00
Vooruit, Ghent

Tom Zé (pictured) has been making alternative music since the '60s, his heyday as Brazil's bad boy. Best known for using unorthodox objects as instruments, Zé contributed to a new genre of music called Tropicália, an exciting fusion of American rock 'n' roll and Brazilian folk. He experienced a revival in the '90s after a meeting with American musician David Byrne and has been shaking up the world music scene ever since. Hear the so-called 'Brazilian Zappa' live during

Vooruit's Brazilian Underground party. Also featured are the equally experimental sound sculptor Fernando Sardo, blues guitarist Pedro Osmar and the very talented DJ Chico Correa, who knows how to blend traditional Brazilian rhythms with pulsating electronic beats. It's going to heat up real quick in the Vooruit. (RB)

→ www.vooruit.be/nl/event/2750



MORE WORLD MUSIC THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Balkan XL: Balkan music festival featuring concerts by Fanfare Ciocarlia, Sarah Chebaro and Orkestar Mladi Braka Kadrievi, plus a documentary and Balkan cuisine
OCT 21-23 at Zuiderpershuis
www.zuiderpershuis.be

Bierbeek (Flemish Brabant)

Wadokyo Taiko: Explosive Japanese percussion on giant drums
OCT 22 20.00 at CC De Borre, Speelpleinstraat 10
www.deborre.be

Koksijde

Baloji: Belgian-Congolese hiphopper also known as MC Balo
OCT 21 20.00 at CC Casino, Casinoplein 11
www.baloji.com

DUSK 'TIL DAWN

KATRIEN LINDEMANS

Bozar Electronic Weekend

28-29 October
Bozar, Brussels

Yes, it's gone cold and dark. But at the same time, it's too early in the year to be spending your weekend evenings under a blanket on the sofa. Dancing keeps you warm, and so does the company of hundreds of people. So put on those party boots and head to fine arts centre Bozar for their Electronic Weekend. Bozar wouldn't be Bozar if they didn't want to do more than just throw a big electronic party. There will be concerts – international headliners such as Modeselektor or Rustie – as well as audiovisual shows, soundscapes and lesser defined musical projects such as Brussels Up! Soundsystem. All of the above will take place in the lower rooms and corridors of Bozar, making the underground experience complete. Get swept away on Friday at the Horta Hall with a live set by Eskmo (US) or witness the album release of Glass Swords by Rustie (UK).

For video screenings, head to the Music and Projections Studio. To see some Belgian talent at work, the Fumoir is the place to be with Vlek Records starting at 22.00. The next day, Horta Hall stages the German electronic heroes of Modeselektor. The duo will present their third LP *Monkeytown*, released last month. For some of the best urban bass and lo-fi sounds, you might want to check out the five musicians of Brussels Up! Soundsystem at the Fumoir. If you're too tired or need a break from the bustling dance floor in the Terarken Hall, feel free to plunge into the red velvet seats of the Chamber Music Hall. On both days, the event starts at 20.00 and finishes around 3.00. Tickets for a day cost €15 in advance, €20 if you buy them at the door.

→ www.bozar.be



bite

ROBYN BOYLE

Speculoos from Borsbeke

I grew up eating windmill cookies in the US, but it wasn't until I moved here that I made the connection to the Netherlands and Flanders. Here these gingerbread-like biscuits are a centuries-old treat called *speculoos*, and they come in more shapes than just the windmill.

Originally, *speculoos* were made in elaborately carved moulds depicting saints and other religious motifs. Catholic monks baked them around Christmas time, making use of the spices and sugars introduced to the region by mediaeval crusaders. The spices can vary, but most recipes use a combination of cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger and cloves.

Over the past century, it has become more common in Flanders to eat *speculoos* year round, although sales go up significantly around the feast day of Saint Martin (11 November) and Saint Nicholas (6 December). At bakery De Smet in Borsbeke, this means a doubling of their usual output, from roughly 180 kg a week to 360 kg. All by hand.

When baker Wim De Smet and his wife Sandra De Backer took over this local family bakery 12 years ago, they carried over the *speculoos* tradition by following a 100-year-old recipe that uses nothing more than butter, sugar, flour, water and spices. There are no preservatives added. The dough is mixed in a

huge vat and left to rest overnight so that the spices have a chance to permeate the dough.

The only machine used is a small electric press that churns out the dough in the shape of little men and women in traditional folk dress. These go into the oven for 20 minutes and are allowed to cool. Then everything is vacuum packed and carefully placed into lovable orange and brown boxes.

Thanks to the packaging, the *speculoos* cookies keep their trademark crunch for up to eight months. They taste predominately of cinnamon and sugar, and have a distinct buttery quality that puts the store-bought version to shame. I like to dip mine into a cup of hot coffee.

Sandra (pictured) proudly points out that their *speculoos* recently received recognition as an official regional product by VLAM. No doubt the Flemish agricultural agency caught wind of the fact that people travel to Borsbeke from all over Flanders just to pick up a box or two.

The boxes also make for a nice gift, a way to give a taste of Flanders to someone abroad. That's why Wim and Sandra last summer launched a photo competition. They invited people to send in holiday photos of the *speculoos* being given away to locals in other countries. This resulted in a lovely collection of photos (on



© cuberidon-macaron.be

display in the bakery) from all over the world, and a very happy winner of a year-long supply of *speculoos*.

In addition to the biscuits, De Smet also sells *speculoos*-cake, -truffles, -vlaai (a kind of pie) and the most heavenly creation of all: *speculoos* dipped in chocolate.

→ www.bakatelierdesmet.be

📍 Provincieweg 80, Borsbeke (Herzele, East Flanders) 053.62.23.11

🕒 Tue-Fri, 7.30-12.30 & 13.30-18.30
Sat, 7.30-18.00; Sun & holidays, 7.30-12.30

💶 **Box of 92: €14 Box of 46: €7.75**

👉 Delicious, spicy speculoos biscuits made the old-fashioned way

Contact Bite at flandersbite@gmail.com

TALKING SPORTS

LEO CENDROWICZ

Six Days of Ghent still seeking rehabilitation

It's been five years, but one of the world's most prestigious cycling events is still trying to recover. It was 2006 that the then world champion in madison track cycling, Isaac Galvez, was killed during an indoor race. It took place at the Six Days of Ghent at the Kuipke velodrome in the city's Citadelpark: The 31-year-old Spaniard hit a railing after colliding with Flemish cyclist Dimitri de Fauw and died on the way to hospital.

The shocking death left everyone stunned, and the final day of the Ghent event was cancelled. But Galvez was not the only casualty from that day. De Fauw, the Ghent-born rider who collided with Galvez, committed suicide three years later, having suffered from depression following the accident.

Understandably, the organisers of this year's event – from November 22 to 27 – are keen to draw a line under the past. They say the Six Days, which this year will celebrate its 71st edition, still represents a remarkable sporting challenge for young and ambitious cyclists. In front of 4,000 cheering fans, the gruelling track endurance around a 167-metre track is a test of character.

Four years ago, British duo



Bradley Wiggins and Mark Cavendish took part in the Six Days, with Wiggins later winning two golds at the Beijing Olympics, and Cavendish claiming the green jersey in this year's Tour de France.

Local favourite Iljo Keisse has dominated the Six Days in recent years, winning four of the last five events. And even in 2009, the year he failed to win, the Flemish cyclist and his German teammate Roger Kluge were only pipped by Danish world champions Alex Rasmussen and Michael Morkov.

Yet the Six Days of Ghent is cursed again this year: Keisse (pictured) is banned from taking part thanks to a three-

year doping charge. The 28-year-old, who came fourth in the Madison in the 2008 Olympics, tested positive after that year's Six Day's event. He subsequently embarked on a lengthy legal battle and was initially cleared to continue cycling. But a final ruling this May by the Belgian Court of Appeals upheld the measure: he cannot ride in Belgium until next January.

It's hardly the fault of the Six Days of Ghent that it has been associated with bad news in recent years: We can only hope that new heroes will emerge, giving us new stories to tell so that it can rebuild its reputation.

→ www.z6sdaagse.be

THE LAST WORD...

Straight talk

"I get furious when I see how some of those responsible for policymaking, both inside and outside politics, wallow in the unbearable lightness of their own being, more concerned with self-marketing than policy."

Guy Vanhengel (Open-VLD), federal budget minister, following demonstrations at the weekend (see p3)

Light fantastic

"Beyonce is not the worst copycat. She sings and dances well, and she has good taste."

Choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, in the middle of a plagiarism scandal (see p11)

Take it or leave it

"This is a lottery ticket with a very high price."

Alex Trappeniers, entertainment lawyer, on the tough contracts being forced on contestants for the new VTM singing series *The Voice*

CSInsulted

"Our work is not valued. An example: For five days police were on the lookout for 'an off-road vehicle'. Within 48 hours, we were able to give them the make and date of construction."

Jan De Kinder pleads for more resources for the Brussels-based forensic institute NICC

NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #203

Feature

The Royal Museum for Central Africa has changed much since that name was applied in the early 20th century when the building was erected to house the treasures King Leopold II acquired in his personally ownership of the Congo. Now the most important research institution in Europe on Africa, the legendary building in Tervuren is getting a major overhaul

Living

Kris Peeters will represent Flanders' interests in this month's 10-day economic mission to China. We'll tell you what's in store for the minister-president, including a trip to a waste recycling plant, the opening of a new factory owned by Limburg's Punch PowerTrain and a tasting of pears from the very same province

Arts

Boekenbeurs turns 75 this year. We'll tell you how Flanders' biggest book fair got its start and what's in store for this year