
Favourite Sites in Amsterdam

Martijn Sandberg describes and photographs his choice of five locations in the city of Amsterdam.

Dis-pe-reert Niet

At the Damrak on the daily journey between home and studio, my eye is continually drawn to the emblem that has functioned as a façade ornament on the corner of the Beurs van Berlage for more than a hundred years.

In combination with the past function of the building - trade centre - and in relation to financial crisis, the timeless maxim gains extra significance: 'Dis-pe-reert niet' ('Do not des-pair').

Homo Sapiens Non Urinat In Ventum

The portal between the Leidseplein nightlife area and the Max Eeuweplein is pompously accentuated by a classical looking façade, designed in 1991 by Zaanen Spanjers Architects.

On the frieze, supported by columns, the architect has carved an inscription: 'Homo sapiens non urinat in ventum' - 'A wise man does not piss into the wind'. A 'wisecrack', disguised in Latin.

Art In The Underground Stations

Under the city, the extraordinary Gesamtkunstwerk by Louis van Gasteren, Jan Sierhuis and others is located in Nieuwmarkt underground.

This is one of the public artworks of the Seventies and early Eighties endangered due to station renovation on the Underground Eastline. At present there is a notice hanging at different spots on the wall: "This artwork has been temporarily removed due to renovations".

Deze Muur Staat Er Niet

A few years ago I had a conversation with a staff member from Uytenga Architects about concealed texts in Amsterdam, relating to my own work 'stoned forever', which is integrated in brickwork in the Olympic Quarter. He said that there is a text in Morse code incorporated into the Droogbak (1989), a residential building by Uytenga: 'Deze muur staat er niet' ('This wall isn't here').

It is located close to the railway line. Rudy Uytenga later told me that this was his last opportunity to protest against the acoustic fence that had to be constructed for bureaucratic reasons.

Fence

The fence around De Nederlandsche Bank on the Frederiksplein is a true optical experience. While passing the building, a rhythmic, dynamic pattern appears and disappears in the trellis of the fence. The figures on the sides of the rails were designed in 1992 by artist Peter Struycken, a pioneer in the area of environmental art and generating computer-program based image, light and colour compositions.

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