

MARJOLIJN VAN EYS AND DELPHINE MOUSSEAU
PHOTOS BY CORNÉ HENRI BIBO
AND CHRISTELLE DE CAZENOVE



SECRET AMSTERDAM



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

THE TOMBSTONE OF CORNELIA ARENTS

19

Buried in the gutter

*Next to the English Church of the Begijnhof (Entry from Spuistraat or Gedempte Begijnensloot)
Please respect the calm of this private place*



In a small corner of this lovely square, one can easily pass by this stone marker, near the pavement on a low wall. However, this marker is a good illustration of the sometimes difficult co-habitation of the Christian faiths – Catholic and Protestant.

From 1150, the Convent, or 'Begijnhof,' was inhabited by pious unmarried Catholic women. While the church situated in its centre is one of the oldest in Amsterdam, it is nevertheless no longer Catholic: in 1578, at the time of the Alteration, the nuns had to relinquish it to the city, who gave it 30 years later to the English Reformed Church. They took refuge in the houses at Nos 29-31, and transformed them into a secret church. Even today this church holds Catholic services, including a mass in French.

Between the English Church and the lawn, on the side nearest the Begijnensloot, there are several slightly different stones. They mark the tombstone of Cornelia Arents, a superior of the Convent, who died on 2 May 1654, as mentioned on the stone mounted on the low wall.

This pure and hard-line Catholic refused to go along with her family's conversion to Protestantism and preferred to be buried 'in the gutter' than in the Protestant Church. In 1655 her wish was granted and her remains were moved to the exterior of the church.

Each year on 2 May, homage is paid to this principled woman by the placing of flowers on her tomb.



BOSSCHEHOFJE AND RAEPHOFJE

④

A living witness of two religions under the same roof

Palmgracht 28

Private premises open nearly every day of the week, please respect the calm of this place



The two adjoining *hoffes* (almshouses), the Bosschehofje (founded in 1648 by Arent Dirkz. Bosch, a rich grain merchant, and built to house Protestant women of the reformed faith) and the Raephofje, are little havens of peace right in the heart of Amsterdam. The one Protestant and the other Mennonite, they are a living testimony to the co-existence of the religions in the country.

To enter these *hoffes*, one should use the entrance door on the Palmgracht. It is more interesting to start by going through the Raephofje, by the door on the right, and then to cross the courtyard that gives you access to the Bosschehofje.

The large interior courtyard was divided for nearly 300 years by a wall and then by a hedge. The evolution of this separation reflects the recent evolution towards more tolerance within the Reformed Church. Crossing the courtyard, at the end one finds a road towards the Bosschehof, on the side of the Palmgracht.

After the war, these small dwellings became insalubrious: they were renovated in 1952-1953. Today, four ladies still live in two apartments upstairs and two apartments downstairs. The windows, with their small panes and window frames from the 18th century, have been preserved. There are more than 110 panes in all.

Leaving the Raephofje, note the stone with a turnip ('*raep*') and the initials and arms of Pietersz. Raep, the *hoffe*'s benefactor. Under the house numbers is an 'L' for '*Lidmaat*.' This told orphans collecting donations where to ring.

On the Dam Square, on the side of the Krasnapolsky Hotel, is a small and very pretty 18th-century building, recognisable by its lovely Renaissance gable. Looking above the loft window, one can see a carved stone representing a swede or 'raep'. This house was originally called 's Hertogenbosch' from the name of the town from which its first owner probably hailed, and from whom Pieter Adriaensz. Raep bought it. The prime location of this house, with a rentable value of 200 florins per year, was sufficient to fund the running costs of the Raepenhofje.

HOUSE OF GISÈLE

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‘An incredible shelter for the victims of Nazi terror’

Herengracht 401
Entrance on Beulingstraat
020-6235287
mail@401.org
Guided tours upon request



An incredible shelter for the victims of Nazi terror’ (*‘Ze bood onbaatzuchtig onderdak aan vervolgdgen van de naziterreur’*) is written on a copper plaque on the front of the house at number 401 on Herengracht. During the Second World War, this house had a very original hiding place, in a kind of piano.

Shortly before the war, the artist Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht (1912–2013) rented a small flat on the third floor. When the war broke out, she took in the German poet Wolfgang Frommel (1902–1986) and later Friedrich W. Buri, a 23-year-old Jewish teacher and writer, as well as Claus Bock, another German Jew, aged only 17.

One of the shelters where they could hide was a pianola – a large instrument with the functions of a piano but also a pneumatic system for playing songs recorded on paper rolls with holes, like a barrel organ. To create the hiding place, the owners removed the pianola system, leaving a hollow space behind the shutter instead. Gisèle’s next-door neighbours, the couple Miep and Guido Theunissen, also helped to hide the refugees.

They founded an art and literature circle. They named their refuge ‘Castrum Peregrini’ (the ‘Pilgrim’s Fortress’). It was largely thanks to Gisèle, an art lover, that they were able to survive the war. She was awarded the Yad Vashem Prize in 1998 for her actions.

In the early 1950s, Gisèle bought the entire house and donated it to the eponymous foundation. She married former mayor Arnold d’Ailly (1902–1967) in 1959 and lived in the building until her death.

It is possible to visit. The art society ‘Castrum Peregrini’ organises exhibitions, lectures and discussions. A visit is also possible to discover its history and link with the ‘Intellectual Playground’, a think tank gathering philosophers, political scientists and writers from around the world.

EMBASSY OF THE FREE MIND

25

A one-of-a-kind collection of esoteric books

Keizersgracht 123

020 625 80 79

Monday to Friday 9:30am–12:30pm and 1:30pm–5pm



The beginning of the 20th century saw the blossoming of private libraries. The wealth of publications and the improvement in the marketing of books enabled enthusiasts to build up documentary collections to support their academic research or to satisfy their taste for a particular subject.

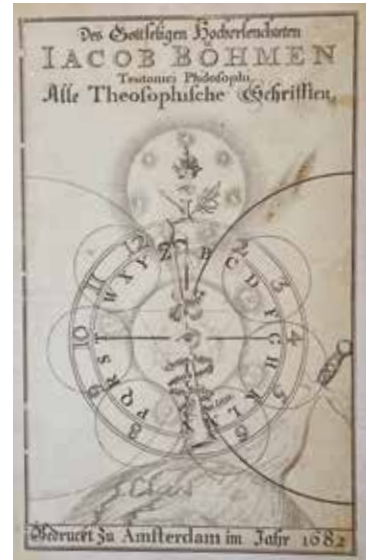
Born in 1941, Joseph R. Ritman built his fortune on the sale of plastic cutlery, starting with the market for meals served on airliners. This did not, however, prevent him from developing a great interest in spirituality.

It seems that he started collecting books when he was very young, after his mother gave him a copy of the 17th-century book *Aurora* by Jacob Böhme. His library is world-renowned. It contains 20,000 books and manuscripts specialising in Christian hermetic philosophy, more than a hundred manuscripts dating from before 1550, and about 5000 books dating from before 1800.

In 1984, Mr. Ritman decided to turn his collection into a public one, but as a result of his expenditure on books and in the world of arts, he ran into financial difficulties.

Even though his collection was considered to be part of the national heritage, a part of it was sold at auction in London by ING bank. Mr. Ritman sold his company, enabling him to buy them back.

In 2007, the Dutch State bought a third of his collection for 19 million euros. His merit in the world of literature has been rewarded with several prizes, including the silver medal of the Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) in 2002.



The presence of Mr. Ritman's collection is one of the reasons for the creation of a chair of hermetic philosophy at the University of Amsterdam.

THE GREEN MEN OF THE PASSAGE⁹ UNDER THE RIJKSMUSEUM

An expression of respect for nature's cycle of life

Rijksmuseum
Museumstraat 1
Trams 1, 2 and 5 stop at the Rijksmuseum



Before entering the Passage of the Rijksmuseum through its southern entrance, it is easy to miss the discreet carvings that frame the doorway at the base of the archway above the column capitals. You'll notice human faces which appear to be covered by masks of foliage. These singular-looking figures are known in European folklore as the 'green men'.

These representations were particularly fashionable in architecture at the end of the 19th century (those in the Rijksmuseum were completed in 1885 under the direction of the Belgian François Vermeulen). They were inspired by the religion of ancient Rome (see below).

Despite their pagan origins, these human heads covered with vegetation have remained, over the centuries, a symbol of rebirth and new beginnings, pointing to the perpetual cycle that renews each spring.

In this sense, the green man was most often depicted full-length and began to appear on the capitals of Gothic churches and cathedrals. He was portrayed as a 'king of the forest', a symbol of respect for nature and its cycle.

During the Renaissance and Baroque periods, masks of leaves and vegetation (which can be found in the sculptures of the Rijksmuseum) became widespread.

The head of the green man was then depicted on many secular buildings throughout Europe (particularly in the UK), and even as far away as Thailand, India and Nepal.

Sylvain, the spirit of the forests, at the origin of the green man

In ancient Rome, Sylvain (from the Latin 'Silvanus') was a protective deity of the forests (in Latin, 'silva'). He was described as one of the sons of Saturn, or of Faunus, a grandson of Saturn, with whom he was often identified. Like Faunus, protector of pastoral activities, Sylvain was a purely Roman god. He was the guardian of the forests and was also, apparently, the first to allow the separation of properties in the countryside. In this sense, he also evokes the creation of early rural communities whose religiosity was conditioned by distinct seasonal cycles (governed by Saturn, god of time) and survive today in popular religion.

THE OLD HOUSES OF BUIKSLOOT

③

Houses that were miraculously spared

Buikslooterdijk, from number 138 to the end of the road



In the 15th century, the village of Buiksloot was built on the Waterlandse Zeedijk, which protected the land north of the IJ from the sea. The village's wooden houses were home to agriculture and fishing workers.

Later, Buiksloot became an important traffic junction. A ferry was already in place to reach Amsterdam, and in 1622 a road was built to Purmerend. In 1660, a waterway was also built to reach the Noordhollandsch canal (it was extended in 1825).

In 1921, the former village was administratively incorporated into the city of Amsterdam and, in 1965, a large part of the dyke was demolished to reorganise road traffic in the north of the city. The polders that used to lie behind the dyke were replaced by the residential area 'de Banne'.

Surprisingly, some of the old houses in Buiksloot have been left untouched by these changes. The most interesting are at numbers 138, 174, 194, 200, 204, 214, 224, 280, 284, 330, 340, 390 and 402. Some of them still have their 18th-century wooden structure, supported by a brick base, and painted wooden bell-shaped gables.



NEARBY

The two pumping stations of Kadoelerbreek

④

Landsmeerderdijk 138

The two pumping stations in Kadoelerbreek are on the former site of a mill, whose purpose was to extract water from the polder by moving it up and down from one ditch to another. In 1875, the old system was replaced by a brick pumping station with a steam engine. The new electric installation was built in 1987.

Poplars along the dyke

Poplars are fast-growing trees that can reach 40 metres in height and live up to 200 years. They are very common along dykes in The Netherlands because they are an efficient way of removing water from the surrounding area: for every centimetre of trunk diameter, a poplar absorbs 3 litres of water a day.

SCHOONSCHIP

5

A floating neighbourhood of fully sustainable villas

Johan van Hasseltkanaal

Amsterdam Noord

Ferries available from the central train station, heading toward Buiksloterweg



In the Schoonschip district, 46 households were friends before they became neighbours. Most of the current owners consulted each other for more than 10 years to obtain building permits for their villas that sit on 30 water plots. The villas are generally made of wood, which retains greenhouse gases, although others are sometimes made of more energy-intensive materials like concrete. The inhabitants preferred to opt for renewable materials, with one of the owners having insulated her exterior walls (40 cm thick) with straw, which proved to be a real investment.

The villas were positioned to capture as much sunlight as possible, charging the 500 solar panels that line the roofs (a third of which are also covered in greenery), with each villa equipped with a solar water heater, battery and heat pump that use canal water to heat the home.

All houses have a thermostat, and cold and hot water storage. While the cold water is used to water the plants, the hot water is reused indoors, for the shower, for example. All houses have ecological toilets which use minimal flushing water and are equipped with an extra drain to transport the wastewater to a tank in the neighbourhood, where it ferments and, once the harmful substances have been removed, produces biogas. In each kitchen there is a shredder for green waste, which contributes to the production of biogas, including phosphate, which is scarce and used to produce manure. Lastly, the biogas is converted into electricity for domestic use or for fuel. The jetty serves as a storage facility for electricity and water pipes. The residents hope to be able to share their bicycles and electric cars in the future and have plans to plant a communal organic vegetable garden.



THE SPACE TO TAKE PLACE BENCH ①

The longest bench in Amsterdam

Bert Haanstrakade 30



The wide Bert Haanstrakade boulevard, named after the famous Dutch documentary filmmaker, runs along the sea to the north of IJburg. It is an ideal place to take a moment to rest and meditate on a public bench.

In 2008, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised a design competition to create a 100-metre-long bench, with every thousandth of it being donated to a public figure.

The Dutch embassies distributed this symbolic gift, making this unusual monument not only the property of the local people, but also of the whole world.

Designed by Claudia Linders, the bench is called *Space to take place*. It is made of thick steel wires painted red, allowing light to pass through. It represents the creativity of Dutch design, and its location illustrates the country's determination to reclaim land from the sea.

NEARBY

A hippopotamus in a lock ②

At the intersection between Paul Hufstraat and Vennepluimstraat

In 2004, the new IJburg archipelago received its first work of art: a life-size hippopotamus statue by Tom Claassen, curiously named Rhino. The artist, best known for his representations of giant animals (notably the elephants that can be seen along the A6 motorway at Almere), chose polyurethane to depict this pachyderm, which is 6 metres long and 3 metres wide. This material is used to absorb the shocks of boats that might hit it while passing through the lock. Depending on the water level, the work's visibility varies.



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SECRET

AMSTERDAM

Discover the historic location of Rembrandt's famous *Night Watch*, the origin of the invention of cognac, an incredible esoteric library and a sustainable floating neighbourhood. Decypher gable stones, make love quite legally in the open air, visit magnificent interior courtyards, ski in the heart of the town, or become an adept of the 'boat-in' – the Amsterdam version of the 'drive-in' – and eat a pizza in your own boat.

Away from the crowds and the stereotypes, Amsterdam still keeps her treasures so well hidden that they only reveal themselves to the inhabitants and to travellers who know how to wander off the beaten track.

An indispensable guide for those who think they know The Netherlands capital well or for those who want to discover the other face of the town.

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