Amsterdam Architecture City

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Welcome in Amsterdam

Featuring the 100 best buildings – from the world-famous Rijksmuseum to the brand-new Sluishuis in IJburg – this guide presents a diverse overview of Amsterdam architecture through the ages. From the striking canal houses on the seventeenth-century ring of canals to the most recent architectural gems. With a wide variety of building types, from unknown architects to internationally acclaimed starchitects, in all kinds of construction methods and architectural styles. Amsterdam is most famous as a city of canals and historical monuments, but it is also the city of Berlage's Commodity Exchange, Duiker and Bijvoet's functionalist Open Air School, the expressionist housing of the Amsterdam School, Brutalist post-war reconstruction projects, 1970s urban renewal and eye-catching new buildings in the former port and industrial areas. But the city is more than just buildings. Therefore, we also focus on the parks and public green spaces and the best places to eat, drink and stay. With anecdotes, quotes, interesting facts and historical details about the buildings and their immediate surroundings at the bottom of the pages, which together paint an even richer picture of the dynamics and characteristics of this unique metropolis.

Contents

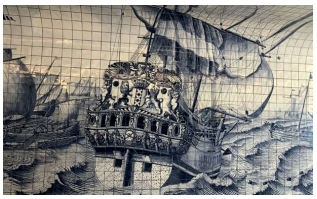
1 Central Station

Stationsplein 9-33
P.J.H. Cuypers, A.L. van Gendt
1876-1889
L.J. Eijmer (constr.); J.F. Vermeylen, G. Sturm, E. Gillet, E. Roskam, M.J. Noppeney, M. Van Langendonck (art); Benthem Crouwel (ren. 1996-2018)

Because of its prominent location on the IJ, the commission for the new Central Station was given to a famous architect, Pierre Cuypers (1827-1921), in 1876. The construction of Central Station also meant that there was no longer an open view of the waters of the IJ from the city's medieval centre. Cuypers designed the more than 300-metre-long brick building with its two characteristic towers next to the monumental entrance hall as a new gateway to Amsterdam. Like his almost simultaneously realized design for the Rijksmuseum 23, the station building features a rich decoration programme both in its interior and on the outside. The top of the facade bears the coat of arms of the client, the State of the Netherlands, with the coat of arms of Amsterdam right below it. Cuypers collaborated on the design with Dolf van Gendt, who had experience with the railways as a structural engineer. The 45-metre-wide roof over the tracks, designed by civil engineer L.J. Eijmer, was installed in 1889 as the final part of the construction. The station has been updated with renewals and expansions since its construction. Most recent is the underground connection to the metro network 75 by Benthem Crouwel.

Rotterdam becomes Amsterdam

In the Cuyperspassage on the west side of the station, designer Irma Boom (1960) designed an impressive more than 100-metre-long mural with over 70,000 tiles. It is inspired by the eighteenth-century tile panel *'s Lands schip Rotterdam en de haringvloot (the Warship Rotterdam and the Herring Fleet)* from circa 1700 by Cornelis Boumeester. On the stern of the ship, Boom replaced the coat of arms of Rotterdam with the Amsterdam



coat of arms with the three St Andrew's crosses. The title of the work is also 'Amsterdammed': Boom calls it *Zeezicht aan het IJ (Seascape on the IJ)*.

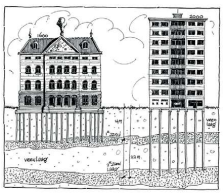
2 Oosterdoks Island

Oosterdokskade
EEA i.c.w. various architects
2001-2007

The Oosterdoks Island, or ODE, next to the Central Station 1 was completely taken up by a large PTT postal centre from the 1960s onwards. On the basis of an urban development plan by Erick van Egeraat (1956), following the demolition of this complex the site was filled with cultural and recreational functions in high building density: the 2007 public library (OBA) by Jo Coenen, the 2008 conservatory by Frits van Dongen, a hotel, shops, restaurants, offices and housing. An office building for booking.com was added most recently in 2023, designed by UN Studio. Underneath the entire island is a loading and unloading area and a car park. The delivery road at the rear against the railway yard is overbuilt. A bicycle and pedestrian bridge connects the Oosterdok with Nemo 4. According to the designers, the radial structure of the urban plan would represent a 'counterpoint to the ring of canals'.

Amsterdam, that great city...

Traditionally, all Amsterdam buildings were built on wooden piles because of the weak subsoil. These were driven deep into the peat layer until they reached the hard sand layer at a depth of 13 metres. For the Central Station 1, for instance, 8,687 wooden piles were sunk in 1881. As many as 13,659 wooden piles were used in the construction of the Royal Palace on Dam Square 5 in 1648, which were



imported from Norway especially for this purpose. There is also a well-known children's song:

Amsterdam, that great city, Which is built on piles;
If that city fell over one day, Who would be the one to pay?

History of Amsterdam

Around 1275, the construction of a dam in the Amstel River constituted a major step in the development of the town 'Ammestelledamme'. The dam was equipped with locks, allowing the city to grow into a major port with both an inland harbour (today's Rokin) and a seaport (today's Damrak). With the current Dam as its central trading square, Amsterdam was granted city rights in 1306. The population tripled to 3,000 around 1400. Besides being a city of trade, Amsterdam also became a religious centre with over twenty monasteries and a number of churches, of which the Oude Kerk ('Old Church', 1306) and the Nieuwe Kerk ('New Church', 1408) can still be visited.

With the fall of Antwerp in 1585 a time of unprecedented prosperity and cultural boom began for Amsterdam. Until then, Antwerp had been the most important port and trading city in the region, but with the Spanish conquest of the city and the mass exodus of its population, Amsterdam took over that position. Amsterdam became a centre of art, science and tolerance, attracting intellectuals, merchants and artists from all over the world; by 1600, one in three people in Amsterdam were immigrants. After the great successes of the first expeditions to sail the world's seas, the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (United East India Company, or VOC) was founded in 1602, which would grow into the largest trading and shipping company in the world. To emphasize Amsterdam's great might, the city council commissioned Jacob van Campen to build the largest city hall in the world – the current Royal Palace on Dam Square 9. In a period of less than a hundred years, the construction of the ring of canals enlarged the city by more than five times.

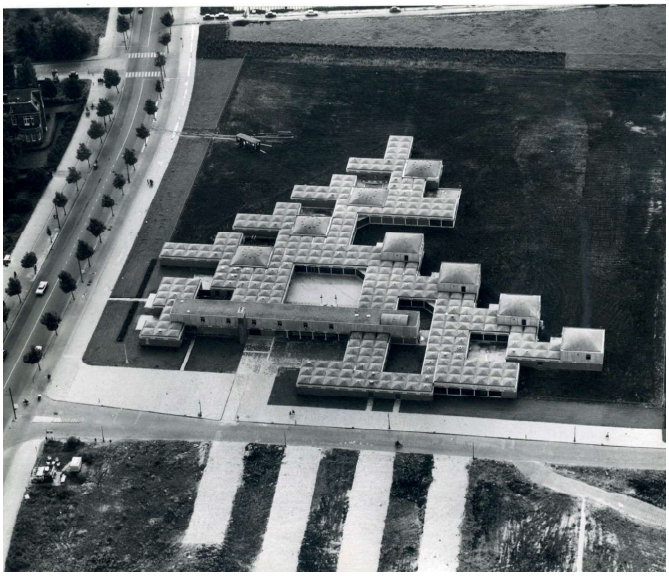
Densely populated and impoverished working-class houses around 1930 in the Zwarte Bijlsteeg.

In the centuries that followed, the typical crescent shape of the ring of canals continued to define Amsterdam's map. It wasn't until the mid-nineteenth century that Amsterdam would start building again. At that time, Amsterdam was thriving as an industrial city. The construction of the North Sea Canal in 1876 re-established the city's direct connection to the sea. Besides new residential areas outside the ring of canals such as De Pijp and those around the chic Vondelpark 59, the city also gained new cultural prestige with the construction of the Rijksmuseum 25, the Stedelijk Museum 27 and the Concertgebouw 29.

While the population doubled from around 250,000 in 1850 to 510,000 in 1900, the number of houses lagged considerably behind and the available housing became overcrowded. These social ills made Amsterdam a centre of Dutch social democracy at the beginning of the twentieth century. With a new administrative culture, this led to two major urban expansions: Plan Zuid 33 (1915) and the General Expansion Plan (1935). Amsterdam has since continued to play an important role in terms of progressive culture, tolerance and diversity, and as a cradle of social change, such as the policy of tolerance regarding soft drugs and same-sex marriage 13. Amsterdam's population has almost doubled again over the past hundred years to 920,000 in 2023. The number of housing units has quadrupled over this period from 120,000 in 1900 to 480,000 units in 2023.

Amsterdam in 1538. This map, made by Cornelis Anthoniszoon, is the oldest city map of Amsterdam. It shows the completed medieval Amsterdam (with city wall and gates).

53 Burgerweeshuis Ⓗ



IJsbaanpad 3
A.E. van Eyck
1955-1960
WDJ Architects (ren. 2016-2018)

With the Burgerweeshuis (Amsterdam Orphanage), designed in 1955 by architect Aldo van Eyck (1918-1999) to house 125 orphans, the architect aimed to bring back the human scale and individuality in architecture. Constructed as a labyrinth of pavilions in a complex configuration around patios, the orphanage became the first built manifesto of Structuralism in Dutch architecture.
The complex is composed of linked standard modules with domed reinforced concrete roof elements on a grid of 3.36 x 3.36 metres. Within this system, the different spaces vary, from communal inner streets to more private individual rooms. A configuration of a number of rooms together with a larger square space forms a ward, marked by a larger dome. The building had eight of these children's wards for different age groups. The older groups had a sleeping floor and an open outdoor space; the younger groups had an enclosed outdoor space (patio). By blending the private and collective, the architect created a sheltered environment for each individual child. In the interiors, many surprising effects were achieved with level differences, intermediate spaces, circular, sunken or raised sections and a diagonal focus of attention and activities. The different wards were connected by an inner street with the same rough materials as the exterior and lit with street lamps. In addition to the connected wards, the building contained larger halls for recreation and sports, a central kitchen, an infirmary, an administration area and some staff residences. The latter were located on the first floor, forming an elongated, natural canopy of the entrance area.
The interior of the building has since been altered several times. In 1986, major conversion plans were drawn up for the complex, including partial demolition. After an international campaign, the complex was preserved and the new Tripolis office complex 54 was developed next door, under the direction of the architect couple Aldo and Hannie van Eyck. After a new restoration led by architect Wessel de Jonge

(1957), the Burgerweeshuis has been the headquarters of a project developer since 2018.

62 Openluchtschool

Cliostraat 40
J. Duiker, B. Bijvoet
1927-1930

Open-air schools were built from the beginning of the last century to allow frail children to recover in the sun and the open air. In 1927, architects Jan Duiker (1890-1935) and Bernard Bijvoet (1889-1979) were commissioned to design an Openluchtschool voor het Gezonde Kind (Open Air School for the Healthy Child) in Amsterdam South. The school was built on a courtyard of a closed building block, as there was no place for a modern functional design in the Amsterdam School architecture of Plan Zuid 63. In the Openluchtschool, the ideals of modern architecture – light, air and space – were demonstratively manifested. The school ranks with Duikers Zonnestraal ('Ray of sun') in Hilversum (1931) and Brinkman & Van der Vlugt's Van Nelle Factory in Rotterdam (1931) among the highlights of New Building in the Netherlands.
The school consists of a four-storey square block of classrooms placed diagonally on the site. The basic square is divided into four quadrants around a diagonally placed central stairwell. The east and west quadrants

each contain one classroom per floor and share a south-facing open-air classroom. The north quadrant is built on the ground floor only and contains a staff room. The ground floor also contains a classroom in the west quadrant, the main entrance under the open-air classrooms and an elongated, recessed gymnasium that is pushed halfway under the classroom block because of its greater height.
The concrete columns are not placed at the corners but in the middle of the quadrant sides. This leaves the corners column-free and accentuates the open, floating character of the school. The floor slabs cantilever over the facade beams, producing a favourable distribution of forces. The columns and beams are narrower at the

top and towards the ends, respectively, demonstrating the distribution of forces in the structure. Apart from a low concrete parapet, the facades are entirely glazed and fitted with steel-framed pivot windows, allowing the classrooms to be opened up entirely. At the bottom of the concrete floors, heating pipes were poured along with the concrete. This system of heating from the ceiling down, chosen so as to be able to open the windows in winter, was only moderately successful and was replaced in 1955. Characteristic of Duiker's careful attention to detail are the coat pegs. These are attached to the heating pipes in the hall, which simultaneously heat the hall and dry the coats.
The gateway building on Cliostraat consists of a housing block to the right of the gateway and a handicrafts room above the bicycle storage and entrance. The relatively low and transparent building allows a good view of the school from the street.

In 1940, headmaster Piet Bakkum and Johannes Röntgen wrote the school anthem:

Open air school, open-air school
With your classes light and bright.
With your windows swinging open
to the side with much sunlight.
Open air school, open-air school,
with your classes near the sky.
With your gymnastics and crafts
and things to learn and try.
Here I like to go to school,
Here I am both serious and a fool.

74 Theosophical Society

Tolstraat 154-160
Brinkman & Van der Vlugt
1925-1927; 1928-1929

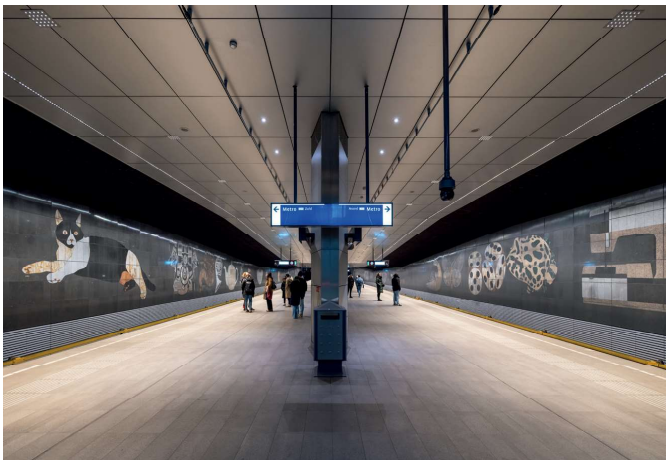
During the interwar period, Theosophy, a spiritual, philosophical doctrine based on core values from Western and Eastern religions, had a large following in the Netherlands. The Indian guru Krishnamurti (1895-1986) emerged as a new spiritual world leader, who from 1924 led international conferences in Ommen in the province of Overijssel. Many architects and visual artists, especially those with a modern orientation, were inspired by Theosophy. A meeting centre in the shape of a quarter circle was built in Amsterdam's Tolstraat in 1925. It was designed by Rotterdam architects Johannes Brinkman (1902-1949) and Leendert van der Vlugt (1894-1936), who would later build the world-famous Van Nelle Factory in Rotterdam. The auditorium, with 430 seats plus a 250-seat balcony, has a quarter conical roof with the apex above the stage. The building is made of concrete and finished with stucco. The administration building next door is a purely functionalist building, with strip windows in steel frames and white-plastered Cubist facades. From 1943, it has been used as a synagogue, arthouse Cinétol, a mosque, a public library and, since 2024, as arts centre De Appel.

Febo

The well-known fast-food chain Febo takes its name from Ferdinand Bolstraat, where founder Johan de Borst wanted to set up shop. He eventually ended up on Amstelveenseweg, but the name had already been registered. It started as a bakery shop, but after the first automat was opened in 1960, Febo started focusing on eating 'from the wall'. The 'croquette' is a favourite, but fries with mayonnaise are also a Dutch speciality. It inspired filmmaker Quentin Tarantino, who lived in Amsterdam for six months, to create a famous scene in *Pulp Fiction*.

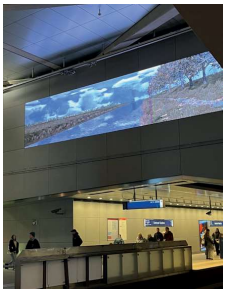
Vincent (John Travolta):
'You know what they put on French fries in Holland instead of ketchup?'
Jules (Samuel L. Jackson): 'What?'
Vincent: 'Mayonnaise.'
Jules: 'Goddamn!'

75 North/South Line



Station Noord, Noorderpark, Central Station, Rokin, Vijzelgracht, De Pijp, Europaplein and Zuid (existing railway station)
Benthem Crouwel
1996-2018
D. Claerbout, G. van der Kaap, M. Laaper, H. Liemburg, J. Tee (art)

After the dramatic process of building the first metro line through the Nieuwmarkt neighbourhood 7 in the 1970s, construction of a new metro line between Amsterdam North and the Zuidas 56 did not start until 2002. The extensive project had three main underground challenges: an immersed tunnel under the IJ and Central Station 1, a bored tunnel under the city's historic centre and a number of deep-bore stations in a densely built-up urban environment. The metro line consists of five underground and two above-ground stations, all designed by Benthem Crouwel, the architectural firm of Jan Benthem (1952) and Mels Crouwel (1952). The architects designed the different stations not as buildings, but as extensions of the public space. The specific solutions needed to fit the stations into the city were decisive for their individual character. Visual art, which was used differently in each station, also played an important role in the design process.



Weather Engine

In the high central metro hall under Central Station 1, a LED screen measuring 2.5 by 23.5 metres shows the impressive digital artwork *Weather Engine* by Belgian artist David Claerbout (1969). In a classic Dutch landscape, a figure, unfazed but dependent on the weather, is busy day and night doing all kinds of activities to take care of his surroundings. The artwork is connected to the internet to retrieve current weather data.