

Design and architecture

— Sites to behold

Amsterdam's architecture dates back to the 14th century and when you imagine the city it's hard not to think solely in terms of canals, bridges and windmills. But the scope of design in the Dutch capital is wider and more diverse than the postcards might have you believe.

The brick-heavy work of the Amsterdam School, as espoused by Eduard Cuypers and his acolytes, is of particular interest, blending expressionism with art deco and art nouveau. At the same time, members of the movement were careful to apply socialist ideals that buildings should benefit all, not just the elite.

A respect for the city's architectural history has also led to the repurposing of structures that would otherwise have lain idle, themselves becoming a symbol of the city's pleasing juxtaposition of old and new. And there's plenty of modern and contemporary design to catch the eye too, from brutalist accommodation blocks to innovative solutions to the city's housing shortage.

Amphibious architecture High and dry



1 REM Eiland, Noord
Rigged up as a restaurant

Standing on 12-metre-tall stilts, the red-and-white chequered REM Eiland was erected in 1964 and then towed 9km offshore into the North Sea where it was anchored to the seabed. Its purpose was to house the pirate broadcasting station Radio and TV Noordzee but after government objections the station was dismantled by the Royal Dutch Navy a few months later. It eventually resumed broadcast as a legal station and was on air until 2006, when it was again dismantled.

In 2011 the boxy three-storey structure took up a new residence in the IJ harbour just north of the city and opened as a restaurant. It still features the original footbridges, signal lights and lifeboat, while the former helipad is now a terrace offering great (if windswept) views back over the city from just over 20 metres up.
*45-2 Haparamadam, 1013 AK
+31 (0)20 688 5501
remeiland.com*

Food channel
—
The original studio is now a private dining area

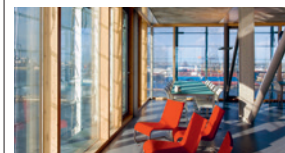


2 Silodam, Centrum
Housing block

Silodam was inspired by the 19th and 20th-century grain silos on the docks of Oude Houthaven just to the northwest of Centraal station. In 1995 Rotterdam-based studio MVRDV – also responsible for the Chanel shop (see page 80) and Tennisclub IJburg (see page 124) – was commissioned to design a dense living complex in the empty port. Finished in 2003, the monumental building looks like a stack of shipping containers servicing the surrounding silos.

The site houses 165 commercial and residential units of varying sizes, occupied by a cross-section of financial categories (and also, therefore, of Amsterdam's society). MVRDV created internal streets and central shared spaces, including a restaurant, library and viewing deck. There's also a small harbour for residents to moor their boats. Tours can be booked in advance.

*Silodam, 1013 AW
silodam.org*



4 Steigereiland, IJburg
Floating houses

With the city's housing shortage, architects have been looking to the water, developing practical but good-looking floating homes. Nearly 75 of them now dot the artificial island cluster of IJburg in the city's east. A network of aluminium-surfaced jetties work as footpaths and create a link between the two and three-storey dwellings, which range from social housing to high-end abodes.

One cluster was designed by Marlies Rohmer Architects, using glass and synthetic materials that resemble steel. The base is a hollow cement cube, which is poured in one go and takes into consideration heavy pieces of furniture such as pianos or bathtubs (a thicker slab of concrete on the opposite side acts as a counterweight). Once finished, the houses are pulled along the canals by barge to their destination.
*Haringbusdijk, 1086 VA
rohmer.nl*



3 Kraanspoor, Noord
Glazed look

Dreamed up by Trude Hooykaas, founder of OTH Architecten, on a bicycle ride (how very Dutch) in 1997, Kraanspoor faced numerous roadblocks, including objections from city hall. The 270-metre-long glass office building took a decade to complete and appears to float three metres above a decommissioned crane track on the IJ river.

Hooykaas wanted to preserve the area's industrial heritage while giving it a new lease on life. The building's façade is a wraparound transparent second skin of movable glass louvres that afford spectacular views of the IJ river.
Kraanspoor, 1033 SE

Old meets new
Updated greats

①
Canteen Building,
Eastern Docklands
Lofty ideals

As the name suggests, this was once the canteen building for the now defunct Royal Dutch Steamboat Company – but new life was breathed into the site in the early 1990s. The city council divided the original space into eight loft apartments, which it sold off for symbolic sums to artist squatters.

“We used old ship ladders to provide an individual entrance for each loft,” says Koen Crabbendam of Casa Architecten, who worked on the initial brief. The artists renovated the lofts themselves and owned the properties under the condition that they did not sell them for the first 10 years. Once the decade was up, some of the properties soon went for more than €1m.

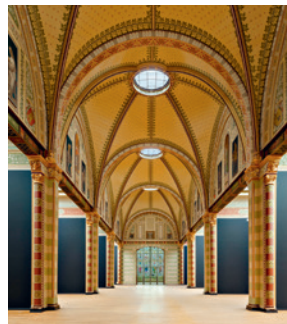
1-15 Levantplein, 1019 MA



②
Rijksmuseum, Oud-Zuid
Refreshing the past

Ten years of renovations to Pierre Cuypers' 1885 neo-gothic building were completed in 2013; the main hall is now an open courtyard by Seville architects Cruz and Ortiz. “There’s so much light now, it’s a whole different mentality,” says gallery director Taco Dibbits. Teams dug beneath sea level to find more space and height for the glass-roofed courtyard. “In the Netherlands as soon as you put a spade in the ground you need a sailor, not a builder,” adds Dibbits, referencing the trouble with building on reclaimed land.

Now a concave tier of Portuguese stone is overlooked by a pair of towering new minimalist porticos nudging up to the walls of Cuypers’ outspoken original. The interior design, lighting and staging of works was refreshed by Frenchman Jean-Michel Wilmotte. 1 Museumstraat, 1071 XX +31 (0)20 674 7000 rijksmuseum.nl



Ok you lot, you're going to have to breathe in



③
Gebouw 27E Marineterrein, Oost
Military planning

Dutch architecture bureau SLA was tasked with transforming this former military academy into a setting fit to host the EU Council during the Netherlands’ presidency back in 2016. Before that, the 13-hectare marine base had been closed for more than 300 years.

“There was a lot of mystery surrounding this site, particularly since it’s right in the city centre,” says Peter Van Assche, lead designer at bureau SLA. The façade was redesigned, each window gaining oversized wooden louvres abstractly representing European flags. Spread out over three floors, the building’s large, open spaces are now used as various types of workspaces that are either open to the public or rented out to start-ups.

Marineterrein, 5 Kattenburgerstraat, 1018 JA +31 (0)20 261 3656 marineterrein.nl

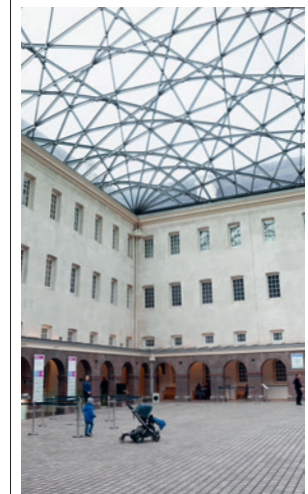
Crystal houses

Another notable façade by studio MVRDV (see page 105) is the Chanel shop on the PC Hoofstraat retail strip. The design team developed Venetian-made glass bricks and a transparent high-strength glue to build an extra storey on top of the brick original. mrvd.nl

④
Het Scheepvaartmuseum,
Eastern Docklands
Top of the charts

Daniël Stalpaert, who also designed the town hall (now the royal palace), used his trademark austere classical style for Het Scheepvaartmuseum (The National Maritime Museum). Built as a naval warehouse in 1656, it opened as a museum in 1973 and was renovated from 2007 to 2011; it was during this time that its courtyard was roofed with 1,200 pieces of glass. The design was inspired by compass lines on old mapping charts, with LEDs placed on each of the 868 “knots”.

1 Kattenburgerplein, 1018 KK +31 (0)20 523 2222 hetscheepvaartmuseum.nl



5
Stedelijk Museum, Oud-Zuid
Added extras

AW Weissman's Stedelijk Museum was completed in the Dutch neo-renaissance style in 1895 but various additions have been made to it over the years. The most ambitious was finished in 2012 by Benthem Crouwel Architects and took the form of a large white-and-glass wing known affectionately as the *badkuip* (bathtub).

"We wanted our design to include an urban-planning solution," says Mels Crouwel, founding partner at Benthem Crouwel. To achieve this the team reoriented the main entrance by 180 degrees to face Museumplein. "In doing so it created an active, common ground for the first time between all the square's cultural spaces," adds Crouwel.

10 Museumplein, 1071 DĴ
+31 (0)20 573 2911
stedelijk.nl

Key players
The city is a hotbed for graphic-design talent and the Stedelijk Museum has brought some big-industry names into its fold over the years. Alumni include Wim Crouwel, who designed the museum's branding from 1963 to 1985, and typographer Willem Sandberg.
stedelijk.nl



Residential
Living legends



1
The Pyramids, Westerpark
Three sides to every storey

The Pyramids are the highlight of Marcanti-eiland's redevelopment, started in the 1980s. Finished in 2006 by Soeters van Eldonk Architecten, these 50-metre-tall triangles imitate the shape of the industrial district and tap into HP Berlage's vision of the Amsterdam School.

The towers take the form of traditional gables, their stepped sides doubling as terraces, and house 82 apartments also designed by Soeters van Eldonk. The Pyramids' compact form allows for a large square on the half-sunken roof of an extensive garage, finished with ventilation pipes inspired by old-fashioned chimneys.

Jan van Galenstraat, 1051 KE



2
Nieuwendammerdijk, Noord
Triumphs in timber

These distinctive pretty houses, lining a long and narrow street in Noord, tell the history of a small village on the IJ river. They date back to the 16th century and were made of wood (unlike the typical Amsterdam stone canal houses) to ensure the dyke could hold their weight.

Constructed during the golden age of shipbuilding, trade and maritime transport, the embellished abodes were the homes of captains, fishermen, ferrymen and lock-keepers, not to mention wealthy families (number 202-204 was built for shipbuilding magnate de Vries Lentsch). The neoclassical houses at numbers 300 and 308 were home to doctor Johann Georg Mezger, one of the founders of physiotherapy. Princess Sophia of Nassau, wife of the Swedish prince and later King Oscar II, gave him land in Nieuwendam to thank him for treating her oldest son.

Nieuwendammerdijk, 1023 BT



De Oude Kerk

It may not be as grandiose as gothic cathedrals elsewhere but De Oude Kerk is nonetheless impressive (and also the oldest building in Amsterdam). Wood was the primary material used during construction to ensure that the foundation wouldn't overload and sink: a very real concern for a city built on peat swamps. The church was consecrated at the beginning of the 14th century and operated until 1951, when it was closed due to concerns about the integrity of the foundations.

Extensive restoration took place between 1955 and 1979, and again between 1994 and 1998. Today Oude Kerk is home to an art institution that allows installation artists to create works that fit the soaring wooden ceilings and cracked stone floorspace.
oudekerk.nl



Tricks of the trade
Visit the Museum Van Loon to see how the merchants lived in the golden era of trade. The Van Loon family (of Dutch East-India Company descent) has lived here since 1884 and opened part of the residence in 1973 to share its private collection with the public.
museumvanloon.nl

3
Betondorp, Oost
Concrete craftsmanship

This brutalist neighbourhood of 900 minimalist, art deco houses in the city's south was built in the 1920s as part of a construction experiment to address the country's rising brick prices and shortage of skilled workers. It was also a pilot project to determine the efficiency of varying low-cost building techniques for public housing.

Betondorp, which translates as "concrete village", was designed by a group of architects and construction companies to use 10 different concrete mixes.

The layout roughly follows the self-contained communities of the garden-city movement, meaning the detached houses with private gardens are single-family dwellings centred around a communal square. Sitting next to this concrete cluster are an additional 1,000 homes built of brick and designed by architects Jan Gratama and Gerrit Versteeg.

Brink, 1097 TW



4
Krom Boomssloot
warehouses, Centrum
Lots in store

The double warehouses of Krom Boomssloot were originally home to naval workers and located in an industrial shipping area. Shipbuilder and former city mayor Cornelis Pietersz Boom owned them, hence the name.

Some of the façades, wooden shutters and courtyards have been preserved from the 17th century and are now national monuments. Highlights include the 1980s art initiative Schottenburch (numbers 18 to 20) and the Armenian Apostolic church (number 22) but most are now apartments with hefty price tags.

16-22 Krom Boomssloot, 1011 GW



5
Oostelijk Havengebied,
Eastern Docklands
Warehouse renovations

The docklands' 19th-century warehouses were replaced with high-density residential developments between the late 1980s and early 2000s. Tour them on two-wheels, starting at the eastern peninsulas of Borneo and Sporenburg, which feature three-storey houses by urban designers West 8. Three sculptural blocks (look out for The Whale) stand in stark contrast to these low-rise waterfront dwellings.

Cycle along Stokerkade, looking across the canal to the diverse houses on Scheepstimmermanstraat, which were designed by their owners. Jo Coenen, known for Amsterdam's public library, designed KNSM-eiland, where large blocks flank a grand avenue overlooking the IJ. End further west on the adjacent Java-eiland with Sjoerd Soeters' contemporary take on the historic Dutch canal house.

The Whale, 224 Baron G.A. Tindalstraat



Amsterdam School
Prime movers

Between 1910 and 1930, the Amsterdam School movement dominated architecture in the city. However, architects who started out in the studio of Eduard Cuypers had been playing around with this style for a while: the exchange building, now called Beurs van Berlage, was finished in 1903, for example.

At the movement's core was the innovative use of cheap materials such as brick, wood and roof tiles. It valued the idea of integrating art disciplines through sculpture and intricate (and often curvaceous brick) details, as well as considered interiors.

The growing population and the housing shortage caused by destruction during the First World War also saw socialist, Catholic and Protestant housing corporations commission architects to build entire neighbourhoods such as Plan South and Plan West. Democratic and attractive, these were statements from the architects about beauty and art being accessible to all.

(Pictures 01 to 03) **Olympic Stadium, Jan Wils, 1928**

2 Olympisch Stadion, 1076 DE

(04 to 05) **De Dageraad, Michel de Klerk and Piet Kramer, 1919 to 1922**

PL Takstraat, 1073 KK

(06 to 07) **Beurs Van Berlage, HP Berlage, 1903**

243 Damrak, 1012 ZJ

(08 to 10) **Jeruzalemkerk, Ferdinand Jantzen, 1929**

14 Jan Majjenstraat, 1056 SG

(11 to 13) **Vrijheidslaan, Michel de Klerk, 1921 to 1923**

Vrijheidslaan, 1078 PJ



01



02



03



08



04



06



09



10



11



05



07



12



13

Museums
Windows on history



1
Museum Ons' Lieve Heer
op Solder, Centrum
Furtive votives

Religion in the Netherlands was not openly tolerated in the 17th century so discreet services had to be held in homes. Many attics concealed places of worship but few have been preserved. Ons' Lieve Heer op Solder (Our Lord in the Attic) was built by a Catholic merchant in 1663, spans four buildings and is cut into the top three storeys of canal houses.

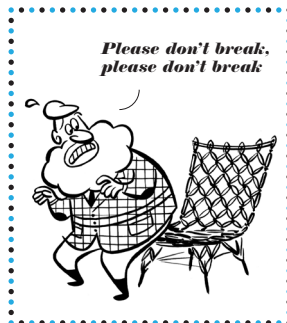
Historians have tried to return the church to its original design, including the mauve of the walls and balconies, discovered after stripping back layers of paint. While the audio tour, mandatory booties and reimagined living quarters may seem gimmicky, the paradoxical relationship between the church's concealment and opulence is striking.
38 Oudezijds Voorburgwal,
1012 GE
+31 (0)20 624 6604
opsolder.nl



2
Architectuurcentrum Amsterdam,
Eastern Docklands
Building on the past

The curving Architectuurcentrum Amsterdam (Arcam) building was designed by Renzo Piano and constructed as a pavilion for the Nemo Science Museum (see page 116) in 1997. When the site was assigned to exhibitions on architecture, urban-planning and landscape design in 2003, Dutch architect René van Zuur was enlisted to remodel it.

The existing floor and its triangular shape with five columns beneath were maintained. A wave-like case of zinc-coated aluminium was folded over the structure, while a wall of glass provided views of the docks. Two of the three storeys now house simple exhibitions on the city's design but catch the Crash Course on Friday afternoons, when staff run through nearly seven centuries of architectural history.
600 Prins Hendrikkade, 1011 VX
+31 (0)20 620 4878
arcam.nl/en



3
Stadsarchief Amsterdam
De Bazel, Centrum
Records rooms

Karel de Bazel designed this towering (by Amsterdam standards) chequered stone building in 1926 for the Dutch Trading Company. He wanted his design to outlast fickle trends rather than conform to any set style. Sadly the building's subsequent residents (which included a bank) altered his vision, inserting partitions and lowering ceilings.

In 2005 restoration architect Maartin Fritz was enlisted to reinstate de Bazel's intended timelessness and create a home for the city's archives. It opened as Stadsarchief Amsterdam in 2007 and holds extensive historical records on the top four floors (the most valued records are in the old basement bank vaults). There is also a free exhibition space that gives you a good idea of the building's design.
32 Vijzelstraat, 1017 HL
+31 (0)20 251 1511
debazelandsterdam.nl;
archieff.amsterdam





4
Nemo Science Museum,
Eastern Docklands
Find it

Nemo's copper-green hull, emerging from Oosterdok, is one of the boldest designs on the cityscape. Italian architect Renzo Piano called Amsterdam "a one-dimensional city" and this fuelled his vision to create an elevated piazza and observation terrace on the building's roof.

Piano's main challenge was using the IJtunnel as Nemo's foundation. The tunnel inspired his curved design: as it descends below the river the museum mirrors it, rising 22 metres above the water. Since its completion in 1997, Piano's design has housed the Netherlands' leading children's science and technology museum. Its interior focuses attention on exhibits by having minimal windows, straightforward orientation and neutral grey walls.

2 Oosterdok, 1011 VX
+31 (0)20 531 3233
nemosciencemuseum.nl/en

5
Museum Het Schip, Westerpark
Vessel for knowledge

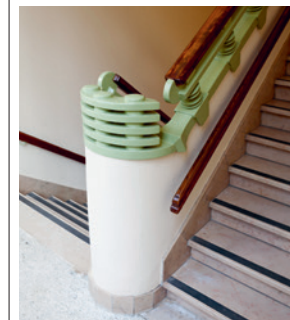
Museum Het Schip is perhaps the most iconic example of the Amsterdam School style, designed by Michel de Klerk and built between 1917 and 1921 (Eduard Cuypers discovered De Klerk at the age of 14 and took him on as a pencil sharpener).

Shaped roughly like a ship, the building has played host to a post office, primary school and residential block. De Klerk finished every detail with great care, believing that giving people somewhere beautiful to live would encourage them to climb the social and economic ladder. The building still has about 80 social-housing apartments but a large portion is now open to the public as a museum. To learn more about the building, its techniques and the building, arrive for the museum's 15.00 tour in English.

45 Oostzaanstraat, 1013 WG
+31 (0)20 686 8595
hetschip.nl



Collect 'em all
—
The museum houses 17,000 technological artefacts



Contemporary
Modern artistry

①
Cuyperspassage, Centrum
Underground movement

Beneath Centraal station is the Cuyperspassage pedestrian-and-cyclist tunnel that connects the city with the ferries to the north and services 15,000 commuters a day. The 110-metre-long corridor opened in 2015 and was designed by Benthem Crouwel Architects – who also designed Rai Car Park (see opposite) – and graphic-design luminary Irma Boom.

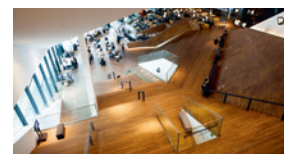
Before entering, stand on the line that separates pedestrians from cyclists; the contrasting colours and lighting make the tunnel appear to split in two. The walkway is covered in 80,000 Delftware tiles, 46,000 of which depict Boom's design of the warship *Rotterdam* and the Herring Fleet. By contrast, the cycle path is unmarked asphalt and metal grates. *Centraal station, Stationsplein, 1012 AB*



Changing skyline

Gaining approval for development projects within the city centre is near impossible because most buildings are under Unesco World Heritage protection. As such, city-planners and developers are looking to construct commercial, residential and public buildings in the outlying suburbs. Here are a few projects to keep an eye out for.

- 01 **Bridge to Noord, Eastern Docklands:** The prospect of a bridge that crosses the IJ has been town-planning fodder since the early 1900s. But more concrete plans are forming for a joint pedestrian-and-cyclists bridge stretching between Java-eiland and Noord.
- 02 **Sluisbuurt, Zeeburgereiland:** This highly controversial plan is for a new high-rise neighbourhood on an industrial island in the IJ harbour. Residential towers will stand at about 130 metres tall, blocking the view of residents in the Noord. Construction is set to begin in 2018.
- 03 **Houthavens:** Construction for this climate-neutral neighbourhood on a decommissioned industrial port in the west began in 2010. A school and its gym are already open and the entire project, which will include new islands for housing blocks, is slated for completion in 2020.



③
Rai Car Park, Zuidas
Ramped-up genius

Another noteworthy project from Benthem Crouwel Architects is the Rai Amsterdam Exhibition and Convention Centre carpark. The design of these two helix-shaped ramps draws comparison with the brutalist Marnixstraat Europarking complex but the co-founder, Mels Crouwel, says it came from the iconic principle of spiralling ramps. "We aimed to make it more fine and elegant," he says.

One downside if you're on foot: with a busy motorway beside it and only a narrow footpath, you may struggle to find yourself a good viewpoint. *Europaboulevard, 1078 RV*

②
Eye Filmmuseum, Noord
Moving imagery

This landmark on the IJ riverfront was designed by Viennese studio Delugan Meissl, a catalyst for the regeneration of the neglected Noord. Completed in 2012 it's almost sculptural, with a dynamic shape that looks different from every angle.

The architects began with the notion that film and architecture share fundamentals such as the interplay of movement, light and space. The exterior flows into an open and bright interior with the foyer at its heart; whichever part of the building you visit, you always return to this central space.

1 IJpromenade, 1031 KT
+31 (0)20 589 1400
eyefilm.nl



Bridges

Amsterdam has about 1,200 bridges, from 17th-century drawbridges to postmodern, minimalist crossings. Here are some favourites.

- 01 **Na-Druk-Geluk-Brug, Oud-Zuid:** Designed by René van Zuuk Architecten in 2013 as part of a wider regeneration in Amsterdam Zuid. Minimal detailing and stark white deliberately contrast with Jan Wils' 1928 Olympic Stadium and the industrial blocks to the south.
- 02 **Jan Schaeferbrug, Eastern Docklands:** Ton Venhoeven's bridge spans 200 metres and links the eastern Java-eiland with the city. Every five years, two entire sections weighing about 200 tonnes are removed by barge to allow the tall ships of Sail Amsterdam to pass.
- 03 **Borneo-Sporenburg, Eastern Docklands:** Two red walkways connect the Borneo and Sporenburg residential islands in the Eastern Docklands. Completed in 2000 by West 8, the higher bridge has impressive views of the marina and allows boats to pass while the lower, more accessible one mirrors it at the opposite end of the harbour.
- 04 **Magere Brug, Centrum:** The original Skinny Bridge dates back to 1691; the current, wider drawbridge is from 1931. It's thought to have been commissioned by two sisters who lived on opposite sides of the canal but no one knows whether "skinny" refers to their surname, physique or penny-pinching budget.

Visual identity
Style of the city



② De Gooyer windmill, Eastern Docklands
Grind house

Windmills are synonymous with the Netherlands and this octagonal former corn mill, called De Gooyer, was built in the 18th century. Its wooden frame moved between different locations until settling in its current spot in 1814.

Although the interior is closed to the public, you can still get up close thanks to the pub next door. Microbrewery Brouwerij 't IJ was founded by musician Kaspar Peterson in 1985 in the former bathhouse next to the mill. Stop by for a glass of organic beer and sit on the terrace to enjoy the view of De Gooyer.

5 *Funenakade, 1018 AL*



① Gable stones, Jordaan
Addressing an issue

Houses weren't numbered in Amsterdam until the late 19th century so *gevelstenen* (gable stones) were put above doorways to differentiate properties. Peaking in popularity in the 16th century, they were normally decorated with symbols of the inhabitant's profession or family sign, or occasionally an image from folklore.

The city has about 850 such stone artworks including some newer examples, mostly in Jordaan. Look out for the two men and a dog on Karthuizersstraat, which is based on the fable of Amsterdam's first settlers; the writing hand on Egelantierstraat shows what was once home to a schoolmaster.



Take it to the grave

A short cycle along the Amstel takes you to Begraafplaats Zorgvlied, a cemetery with a monolithic pavilion shaped like a tombstone and a newly built 16-metre-high crematorium with a tent-like superstructure ending in a glass-covered opening.



③ Amsterdamse Krulletter
Font of originality

The curling, gregarious swirls of the traditional Amsterdamse Krulletter were fathered by Jan Willem Joseph Visser. It first started to appear in the 1940s on the windows of the city's *bruine* cafés and was funded by Heineken as a form of advertising. Visser was inspired by the late cancellaresca style, which calligraphers practised during the Dutch Golden Age.

"The letters that Visser created bear the distinctive features of the Baroque quill," says Ramiro Espinoza, Argentinian type designer and author of *De Amsterdamse Krulletter* (see page 84). "They've resisted the test of time and have been appropriated by Amsterdam's citizens as a true expression of their culture."

Bars across the city bear Visser's signage, from the oldest tavern Café Karpershoek to the wood-panelled Café Hegeraad.



④ Police branding
Eye-catching by law

Rolled out more than two decades ago, the branding of the Dutch emergency services is iconic. The orange, blue and white 45-degree stripes started out on police cars and bikes but more recently the fire, ambulance and rescue services have adopted them.

"Our design hasn't aged despite changes in car models and technology," says Liza Enebeis, creative director at Studio Dumbar, the agency behind the look. "Our stripes can even be found on speed cameras and drones." They're so popular that a special task force has been set up to prevent members of the public illegally sticking stripes onto their own cars.

⑤ City crest
Cross purposes

Contrary to the implications from gimmicky tourist trinkets, Amsterdam's city crest of xxx is not in any way related to the capital's tolerant stance towards vices. Instead the symbolism falls on the opposite end of the spectrum, representing Saint Andrew's cross.

Why the city employed the emblem of a 1st-century apostle crucified on an X-shaped cross is unknown. However, a pair of pliers sporting the three letters were recently discovered during the construction of the metro line and have been dated to 1350, suggesting that xxx is one of the oldest known examples of city branding.

