

Amsterdam: A Design Capital Over the Canals
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Syllabus

Amsterdam's relationship with water has been an ongoing theme in the establishment of its civic image, urban structure, and architectural character. Its singular radial plan combed with canals confers a distinct spatial flavor nowhere to be found in the Northern longitudes. Commerce and finance provided the social framework where the Dutch upper class commissioned the physical settings largely accessible through navigation. The city's inherent openness to the sea made it a primary point of trade, promoting a built-in fluidity in absorbing cultural influences from faraway places. These factors determined a unique spatiality this class will examine.

Lesson 1. AMSTERDAM'S URBAN STRUCTURE UNDER THE 17th CENTURY

During the *Dutch Golden Age*, Amsterdam became a powerful economic engine, with banking and trade as the drivers of a much larger economy. The rise of a distinct painting tradition with an unprecedented photorealism catapulted this capital to the forefront of the European attention and political scene. It is in this era that Rembrandt lived and worked in Amsterdam. The renowned philosopher Spinoza was born in this city in the same century as well as other notable figures. This class will cover how its newfound wealth translated in architectural forms and what made those forms distinct from any other parallel experiences in the European capitals.

Lesson 2. THE AMSTERDAM SCHOOL

Bricks offered units of architectural identity for the Dutch capital. "The Amsterdam School" showcased its finest expressions with landmarks where brick treatments expanded the range of architectural expressions previously considered possible. The initiator of this movement was Eduard Cuypers, who trained the later protagonists of this period, Piet Kramer and Michel de Klerk among others. The work of Hendrik Petrus Berlage, and especially his 1905 Stock Exchange, was the pinnacle of a struggle between the Neo-traditional and the then incipient modernity. The talk will cover the dense events, characters, and buildings that determined the urban identity of Amsterdam.

Lesson 3. MODERNITY AND AMSTERDAM

The Netherlands as a whole has given birth to many protagonists of the Modern Movement, who were either of Amsterdam or spent time there. The De Stijl Movement, and entirely Dutch proposition, was of enormous importance on architectural culture worldwide. Its ideology and formal themes profoundly affected the architecture of the area. Cornelis van Eesteren, a central contributor to the movement took a leading post in the Town Planning Department of Amsterdam, promoting a

culture of modernity in the local authority. He was the architect of Amsterdam General Extension Plan. This class will survey the achievements of this heroic period in the country's design history.

Lesson 4. AMSTERDAM TODAY: RECENT TRENDS IN ARCHITECTURE

Amsterdam and design are synonyms among architects. Despite the city's relatively modest size, it continues to attract worldwide talents. Among its most creative architects are Ben Van Berkel of UN Studio, Eric Van Egeraat, MVRDV, and SeARCH – Stedenbouw en ARCHitectuur, among others. Despite this wealth of talent, Amsterdam has remained opened to the contributions of foreign architects. The restoration and expansion of the Rijksmuseum, possibly the most important institution in the city, was designed by two Spanish architect, Cruz and Ortiz, demonstrating the city's unbiased choice when it comes to architects' selection. The coverage of the current scene will conclude the course.