

PRESS RELEASE

June 2018

The Most Beautiful City: Amsterdam Through the Eyes of Eberhard van der Laan

Exhibition in the Amsterdam Museum from 17 June to 4 November

From Sunday 17 June to Sunday 4 November the Amsterdam Museum is staging 'The Most Beautiful City: Amsterdam Through the Eyes of Eberhard van der Laan'. Eberhard van der Laan was working on an exhibition about his beloved city until shortly before his death.

In more than eighty photographs, paintings and objects from the collections of the Amsterdam Museum and the City Archives, Van der Laan shows how Amsterdammers in the past coped with the challenges that accompany rapid growth and economic boom. He hoped to initiate a big conversation about the future of the city. As a rare exception, the whole of the Amsterdam Gallery has been made available for this exhibition. This museum street in the Amsterdam Museum is open, free of charge, between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. every day.

The Expanding City

"We all have a huge problem – we live in perhaps the most beautiful and the finest city in the world," said Eberhard van der Laan (1955-2017). More and more people want to live and work in Amsterdam and in recent years Amsterdam has expanded dramatically. More residents, more tourists, more new builds. But with this come more crowded streets, more inconvenience and an overheated housing market.



Damsko Warrior!, Kamp Seedorf (2017)

In the exhibition Van der Laan looks back on the periods of rapid growth in the past. Never without growing pains – but with his favourite city as a result. The ring of canals, for example, would never have been dug in the early seventeenth century had there not been an acute housing shortage, and the Concertgebouw and the Vondelpark would never have been built without the economic boom in the nineteenth century. Van der Laan wants us to think about solutions for the Amsterdam of today and of the future by showing how Amsterdammers dealt with the challenges of a rapidly growing city in the past.

Van der Laan's Choice

As guest curator, Eberhard van der Laan knew exactly which story he wanted to tell, but making a choice from the city's enormous collection proved a difficult task. During his visit to the Amsterdam Museum's depot, which houses more than 90,000 objects, there were many paintings, statues and other objects that Van der Laan wanted to talk about. His final selection includes historical and contemporary objects. For instance, there are paintings and prints in the exhibition that tell us about the growth of the city in the Golden Age, but there are also photographs which show that tourism was already a cause for concern a hundred years ago. There are also modern-day objects like a 'no pot-smoking sign' to stop loitering teenagers. In the exhibition Van der Laan also honours city councillors like Floor Wibaut, Monne de Miranda and Jan Schaefer, who had a major influence on the development of the city of Amsterdam.

The Amsterdam Gallery

Since 1975 the Amsterdam Gallery, formerly the Civic Guard Gallery, has been a museum street, with no admission charge, where 450,000 visitors learn about the city's history every year. By staging the exhibition in this location, the Amsterdam Museum hopes that as many people as possible will experience Van der Laan's story. Ontwerpbureau Kossmann.dejong took up the challenge of creating a design for the exhibition. The collection is situated in the middle of scaffolding and billboards – symbolizing the fact that the city is never finished and always under construction.



*Tailback of Cars on Stationseiland,
Amsterdam City Archives Collection (1926)*

The exhibition is made possible in part by: Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds, Hemubo Almere B.V., Hillen & Roosen, Rabobank, De Nederlandsche Bank, Kennedy Van der Laan, Zadelhoff Fonds, Ajax, Amsterdam Marketing, JCDecaux, GVB, Stadsarchief Amsterdam and private sponsors. Media partners: AT5 and Het Parool. The Amsterdam Museum receives structural support from the BankGiro Loterij and Amsterdam City Council.

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