

THE SOFT
ATLAS
OF AMSTER-
DAM

Jan Rothuizen

The Soft Atlas of Amsterdam
Perspectives on everyday life

Nieuw Amsterdam

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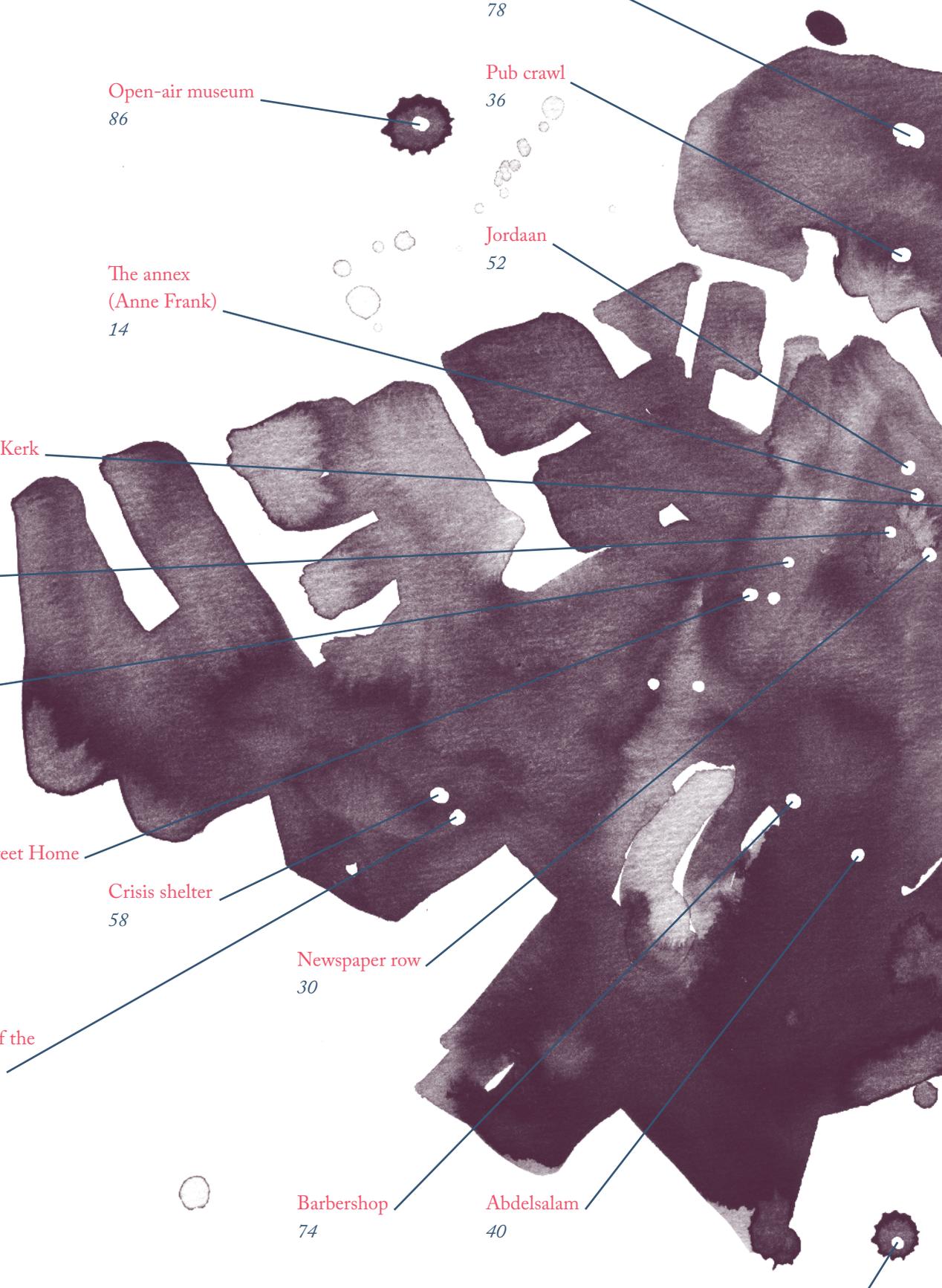
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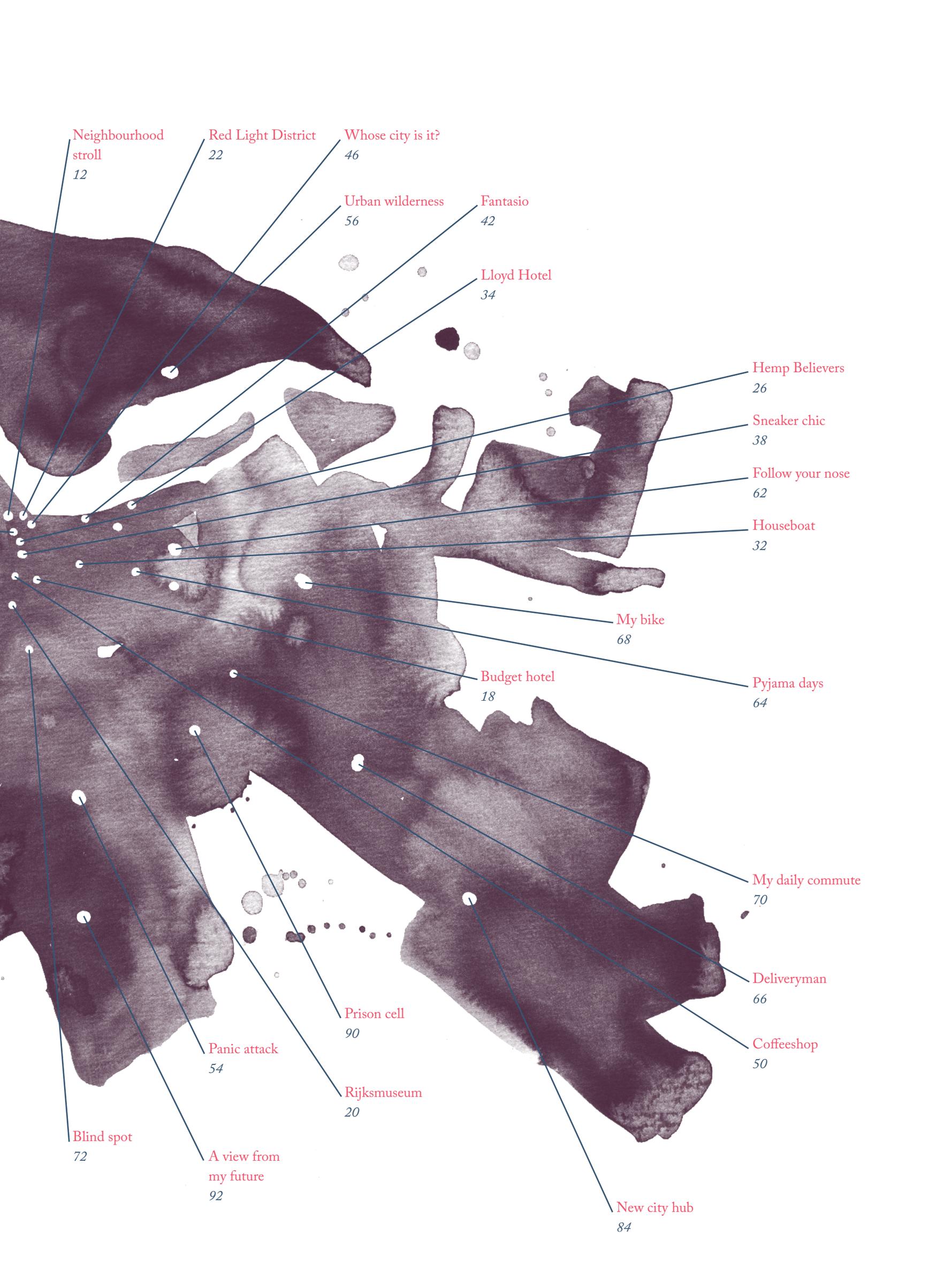
In memory of my dear friend and
Amsterdammer Wendela Scheltema



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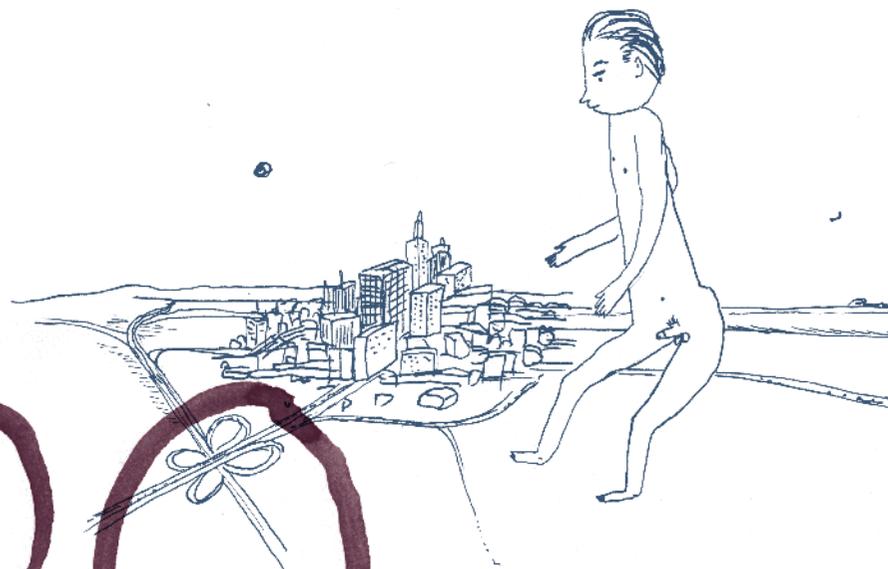
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INTRO DUCTION



As an artist, I learned that the confined space of a studio was not for me. The ideal way for me to be an artist, I realised, was to walk around city streets and meet people. I wandered around faraway cities like Cairo, New York, Shenzhen and Beirut before making my first book of drawings about my hometown, Amsterdam.

This was difficult at first: the city was such an integral part of me that I found it hard to see what I was looking at. I realised that 'my' Amsterdam was just a small part of the city; my routes, people and places tended to be the same. Since then, I do my best to make sense of my city, seeing it not only as a local but also as an outsider or tourist.

All those years of drawing Amsterdam has made me see it as a city in flux. The Amsterdam of my youth was a like a set of bad teeth, with gaps and cavities where houses once stood. Today, all those gaps have been filled and people look for ways to expand upward or to build on former industrial zones.

The title of this atlas refers to *Soft City*, a book written in 1974 by the British author and travel writer Jonathan Raban. His idea is that the city is where the solid concrete reality of buildings and asphalt meets the malleable, subjective experience and expectations of the people who live and work there. When I chose this title for my book I had no idea how appropriate the word 'soft' was for the Amsterdam that I have come to know from seeing it with new eyes, while still calling it home.

Jan Rothuizen
Amsterdam, 2023



ON



We're open... aren't we?

Of course we're open – always have been, for everyone. But for how much longer? Amsterdam continues to search for a formula where everyone is welcome and can be themselves in an open-minded city.

W

IN 20 YEARS AMSTERDAM NORTH WILL HAVE 47% MORE RESIDENTS



I BUMP INTO A FRIEND WHO IS DECORATING

SEXYLAND WORLD CULTURAL CLUBHOUSE

A TUNNEL WITH 'UNITED PAINTING PROJECT'

THERE USED TO BE GALLOWS HERE TO LHMUS TWIN

DEAD PERSON

THE ERITREAN COMMUNITY MEETS UP IN THE HEATED 'AMSTEL PASSAGE' (NICE AND COZY?)

THEIR LOGO



ON THIS BUILDING IT SAYS IN BIG 'GOD IS JESUS I DONT BUT

THE PAINTING PROCESS IS PART OF THE ARTWORK ITSELF

(THEY WORK WITH LOCALS WORLDWIDE ITS A SOCIAL ART PROJECT

THEY'VE GOT THIS SOFT ATLAS IN THEIR SHOP WINDOW

HOW MANY SALES CAN A PERSON TAKE?

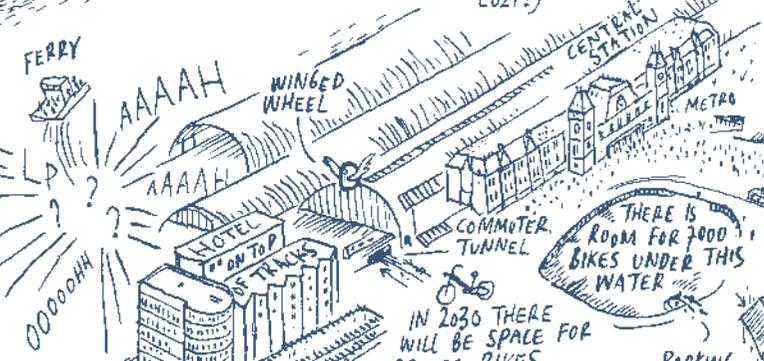
FILM MUSEUM - (LOOKS LIKE AN ANIMAL, BUT I'M NOT SURE WHICH)

FERRY

HELLO? AAAAAH AAAAAH OOOOOHH?

AT THIS INTERSECTION ANARCHY CREATES ORDER!

PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS FROM THE FERRIES AND BIKE PATHS WORK IT OUT FOR THEMSELVES SO KEEP LOOKING



WINGED WHEEL

CENTRAL STATION

METRO

COMMUTER TUNNEL

THERE IS ROOM FOR 7000 BIKES UNDER THIS WATER

SUPER-MARKET ENTRANCE

IN 2030 THERE WILL BE SPACE FOR 22,000 BIKES A WORLD RECORD!

NOW CLOSED MULTI-STORY BIKE PARKING

DANGEROUS CURVE

ISAW A DILDO & KAMILLE BAG (WHITE COTTON) WHERE THE NAME WAS CHANGED TO DILDO & CAMELTOE

THIS IS A WALK-THRU EXIT ALBERT HEIJN SUPERMARKET

CUYPERS THE 19TH-CENTURY CELEBRITY ARCHITECT, OVERPLAYED HIS HAND HERE, HE'D ALREADY STARTED BUILDING THIS CHURCH WITH AN 85-METER TOWER BUT THEN DIDN'T GET PERMISSION TO FINISH IT TOWER BE TOO

THE RAINBOW IS A HOMELESS SHELTER AND HAS ONE OF THE CITY'S LAST "USERS ROOMS" (FOR DRUGS)



PEOPLE LYING ON PIECES OF CARDBOARD

LUNCH: SANDWICH WITH SHRIMP AND SURINAMESE BEANS

BLEARY-EYED, SMILING TOURISTS ALREADY SITTING OUTSIDE THE COFFEESHOPS AT 9 AM

HERRING ON BROWN ROLLS

DILDO & CAMELTOE

UN-DUTCH BAROQUE DOMED CHURCH FROM THE 17TH CENTURY NOW A COMMERCIAL VENUE



CUSTOMERS ARE INSIDE FOR 10-15 MINUTES WOMAN RED LIGHT

THE CAT BOAT MORE LIKE A GIANT LITTER BOX



TALL CABINET WITH DRAWINGS AND STUFF I SHOULD THROW OUT BUT KEEP ANYWAY

I RENT FROM FOR A

RECENTLY I GOT A NEW STUDIO ON THE SINGEL SO NOW I WALK THROUGH THIS PART OF TOWN MORE OFTEN

TASTY & PRICY STACH HAARLEMMEPOORT OLD BUILDING

UNDER THE TRAIN TRACKS IS REPRO'S WHERE I HAVE MY PRINTS MADE

POST.NL I HAVE TO COME ALL THE WAY HERE TO SEND A PACKAGE

THE HAARLEMMEPOORT IS NICE ENOUGH BUT KIND OF DIRTY (SOMBRE)

DOES THIS FIT IN A LETTER SLOT? YOU TELL ME!

Neighbourhood stroll

Since remote working has become more common, most of us take some time to go out during the day to stretch our legs. This is one of my longer strolls from my workplace. I start at the Singel canal, amble through the city centre and head back to my studio.



WHAT IS THE ANNE FRANK HOUSE? A WAR MONUMENT OR A WRITERHOUSE?

"I BELIEVE I'LL NEVER FEEL AT HOME IN THIS HOUSE" SHE WROTE IN HER DIARY, ANNE LIVED HERE FOR TWO YEARS

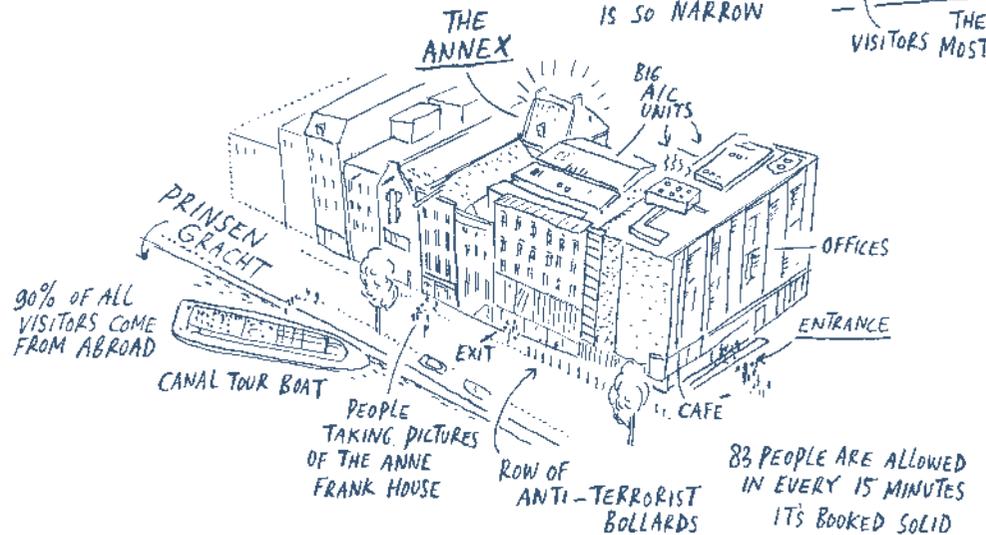
ABOUT 1.3 MILLION PEOPLE VISIT THE ANNE FRANK HOUSE EVERY YEAR

WHEN I'M THERE IT'S DEAD QUIET BECAUSE EVERYONE IS LISTENING TO THE AUDIO TOUR, AND MAYBE ALSO BECAUSE EVERYONE KNOWS HOW IT ENDS.

THERE'S OFTEN A BACKUP HERE BECAUSE THE PASSAGE BEHIND THE BOOKCASE IS SO NARROW

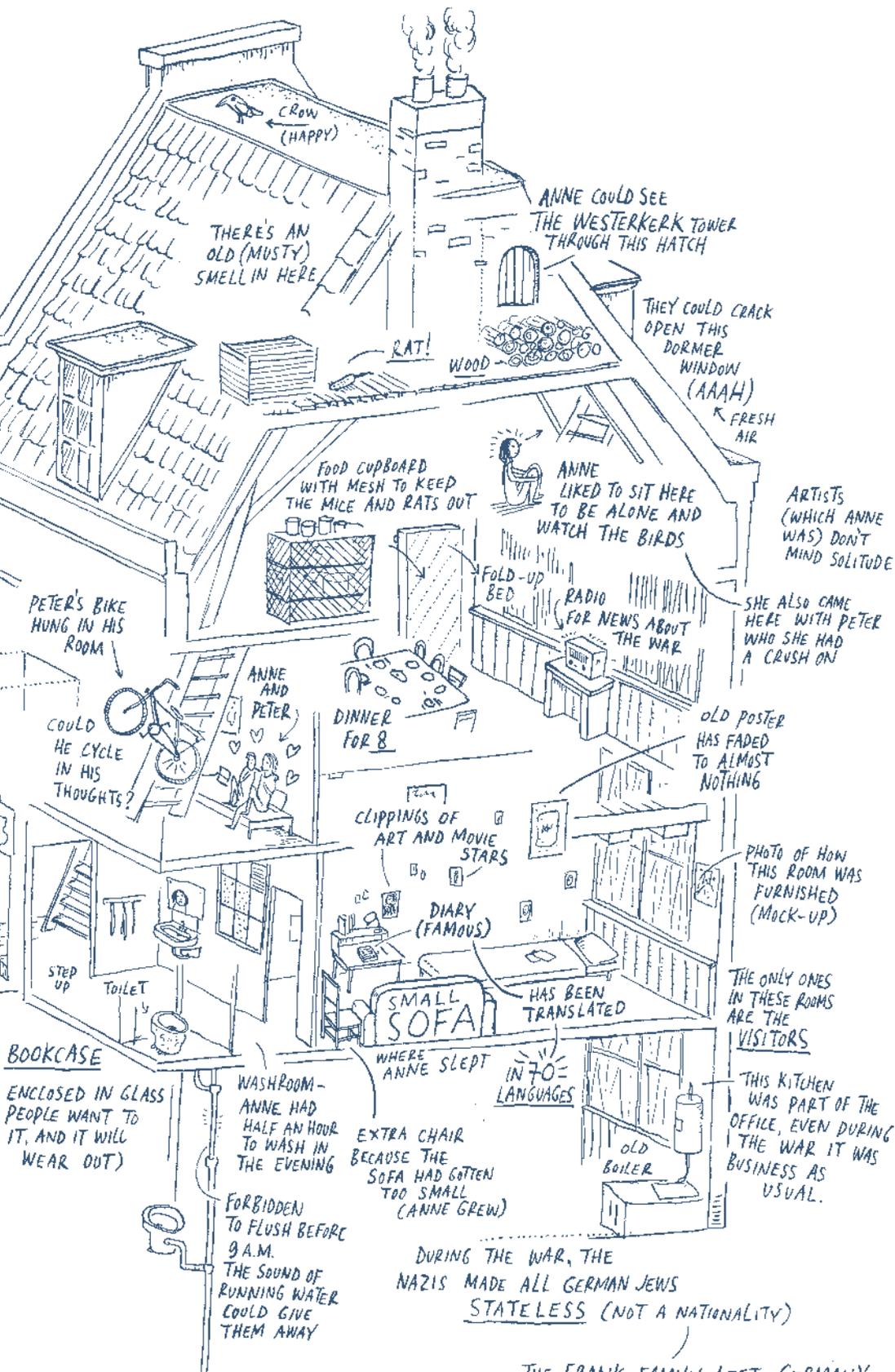
THE WORLD'S VISITORS MOST FAMOUS

(NOW IT'S BECAUSE TOUCH



The annex (Anne Frank)

Reading Anne Frank's diary, when I was about 25, was a personal, intimate experience. I believe her diary – alongside the Bible and Harry Potter – belongs to the ten most-read books because it's so incredibly well written. Had she lived, Anne Frank would be 93 today.



THE FRANK FAMILY LEFT GERMANY IN 1933 BECAUSE ANNE'S FATHER FELT UNSAFE LATER, FLEEING NAZI GERMANY BECAME MORE DIFFICULT. MOST COUNTRIES TIGHTENED THEIR BORDERS AND LET IN VERY FEW REFUGEES

THIS IS THE POINT

IT'S WHERE HOUSING SUPERVISOR PATRICK

PIERSON WORKS

HE IS THE LIFELINE BETWEEN RESIDENTS AND YMERE HOUSING CORPORATION BESIDES PASSING ON INFORMATION HE ALSO CHECKS ON WHAT RESIDENTS DO WITH THEIR HOMES.

(WHICH IS ALMOST A FULL-TIME JOB)

MOST OF THE HOUSES HERE WERE BUILT IN THE MID-1960s THIS WAS TO BE A GARDEN CITY BASED ON LIGHT, AIR AND SPACE. ONE OF THE ARCHITECTS WAS

CORNELIS VAN EESTEREN

THESE DAYS THIS OPEN STRUCTURE HAS GONE OUT OF FASHION. IT HAS TOO MANY UNDEFINED AREAS AND IT'S UNCLEAR WHAT'S THE FRONT AND WHAT'S THE BACK

THE ARCHITECTS AIM WAS TO DESIGN A NEIGHBOURHOOD WITH A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

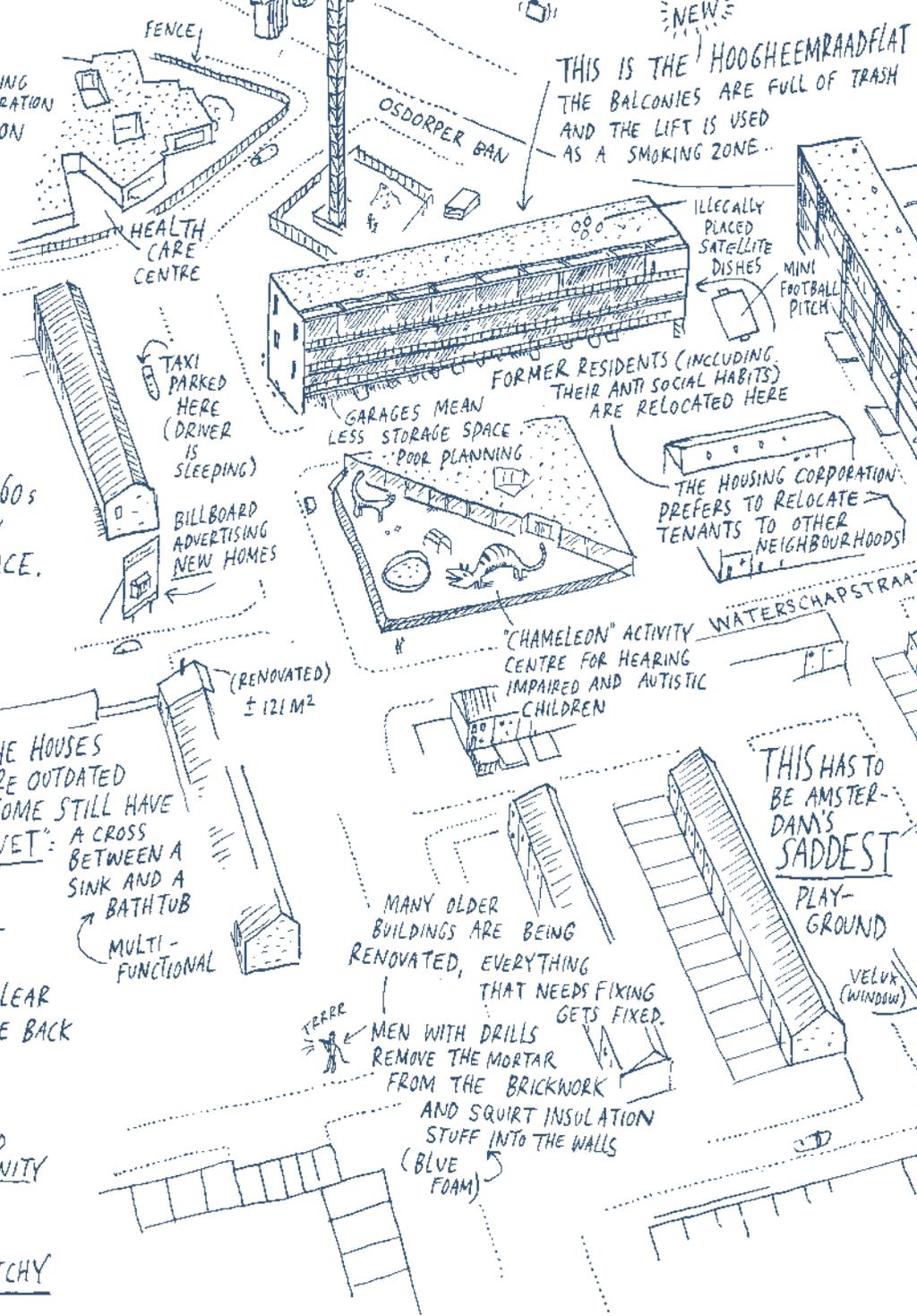
WELL THAT SOUNDS CATCHY

NEIGHBOURHOOD IN AMSTERDAM (WEST) OSDORP DISTRICT

43 YEARS OLD

FROM THE LOOKS OF THIS CRANE A TALL BLOCK OF FLATS WILL BE BUILT HERE (WITH VIEW OF THE CEMETERY)

THIS IS THE HOOGHEEMRAADFLAT THE BALCONIES ARE FULL OF TRASH AND THE LIFT IS USED AS A SMOKING ZONE...



FENCE

HEALTH CARE CENTRE

TAXI PARKED HERE (DRIVER IS SLEEPING)

BILLBOARD ADVERTISING NEW HOMES

(RENOVATED) ± 121 M²

MULTI-FUNCTIONAL

TERR

MANY OLDER BUILDINGS ARE BEING RENOVATED, EVERYTHING THAT NEEDS FIXING GETS FIXED.

MEN WITH DRILLS REMOVE THE MORTAR FROM THE BRICKWORK AND SQUIRT INSULATION STUFF INTO THE WALLS (BLUE FOAM)

ILLEGALLY PLACED SATELLITE DISHES

MINI FOOTBALL PITCH

FORMER RESIDENTS (INCLUDING THEIR ANTI SOCIAL HABITS) ARE RELOCATED HERE

THE HOUSING CORPORATION PREFERS TO RELOCATE TENANTS TO OTHER NEIGHBOURHOODS!

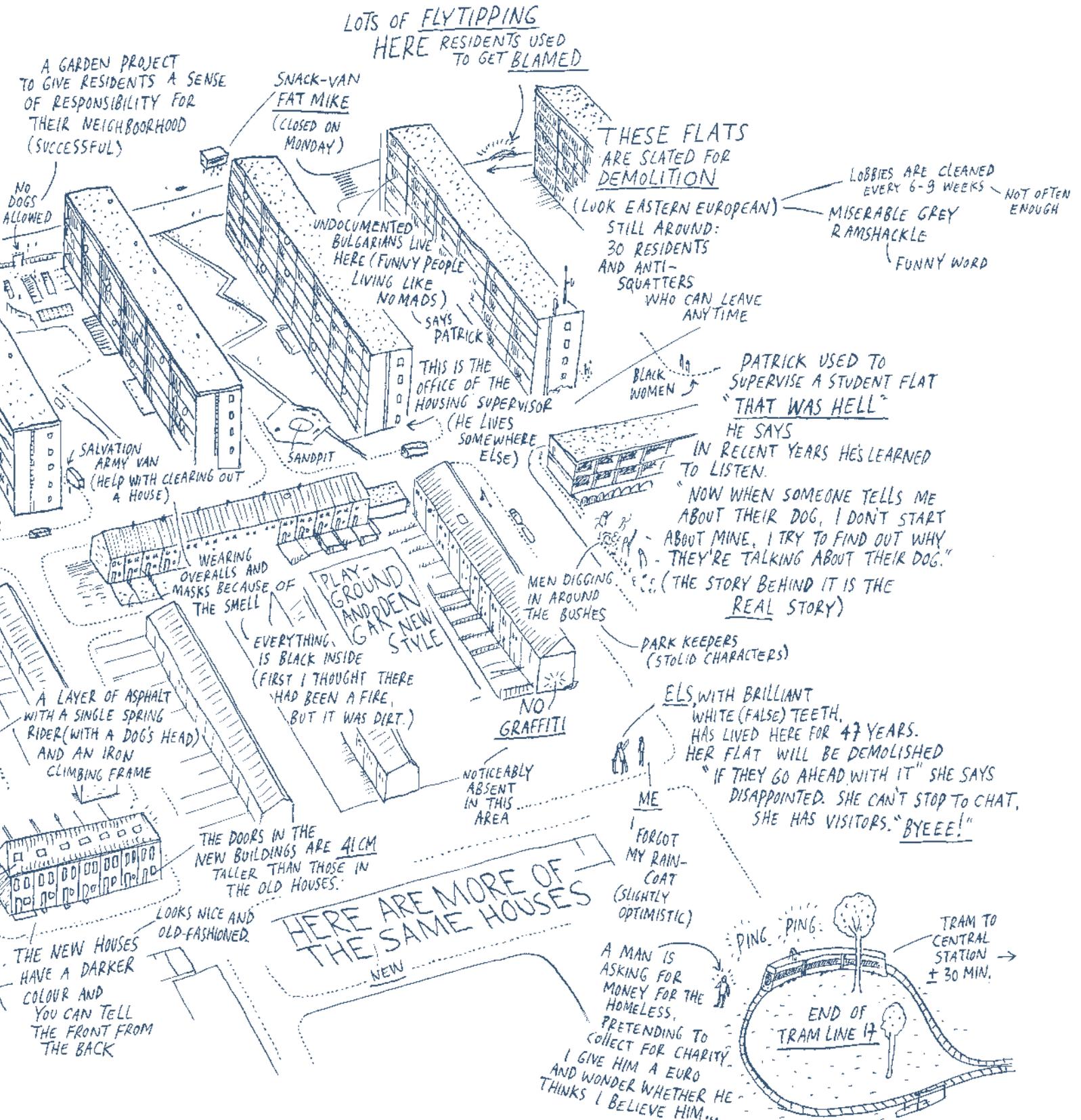
"CHAMELEON" ACTIVITY CENTRE FOR HEARING IMPAIRED AND AUTISTIC CHILDREN

THIS HAS TO BE AMSTERDAM'S SADDEST PLAYGROUND

VELUX (WINDOW)

The end of the (tram)line

This is where the tram circles back towards the city. Osdorp is one of the garden cities built on the outskirts of Amsterdam in the 1950s and '60s. At the time it offered a green, spacious alternative to the crowded inner city. Now long past its prime, it's currently getting a makeover.



INTERCOM

SUNDAY MORNING
9:45 AM

MOST GUESTS ARE IN THE
LOBBY DOWNSTAIRS CHECKING
OUT
THERE IS ONLY ONE
EMPLOYEE ON DUTY...
SO IT'S PACKED!

THIS IS ROOM: 408
OF THE: HANS BRINKER HOSTEL
(HOW BUDGET?) 29 EURO P.P.
THIS ROOM COSTS 178.- EURO
(FOR 6 PEOPLE)

SHE SPEAKS (ONLY) ENGLISH

(DRIED) SCOTCH TAPE

CHECK-OUT TIME
10:00 AM

EVACUATION PLAN
OF THIS 4TH FLOOR
(IT'S A COPY OF
A COPY) WITH
BALLPOINT
SCRIBBLINGS...

IN CASE OF
FIRE...
YOU ARE
HERE
SOMEWHERE

SOMETHING
ABOUT HAPPY
HOUR AND
BREAKFAST
BOTH IN THE
BASEMENT

LEFT BEHIND IN THE
BATH ROOM:
1 BOTTLE OF LISTERINE
TOOTHPASTE (ORAL B)
2-IN-1 SHAMPOO "FRESH BLUE"
PANTIES (BLACK COTTON WITH
WHITE DOTS)
2 TOOTHBRUSHES
(REGULAR)

TERRY'S
CHOCOLATE
COOKIES

MUSHROOMS
(STILL A LOT
LEFT)

18+

PRIVACY!
THIS LOCK IS A BLESSING
WHEN SHARING
YOUR ROOM
WITH FIVE
OTHERS.

THE BUNK BEDS
HAVE LETTERS
INSTEAD OF
NUMBERS...
(BUT NO
LADDER FOR
THE DISABLED
OR ELDERLY)

HOOK HOLDS
BED FRAME

CAPRI SUN
LEMONADE
(EMPTY)

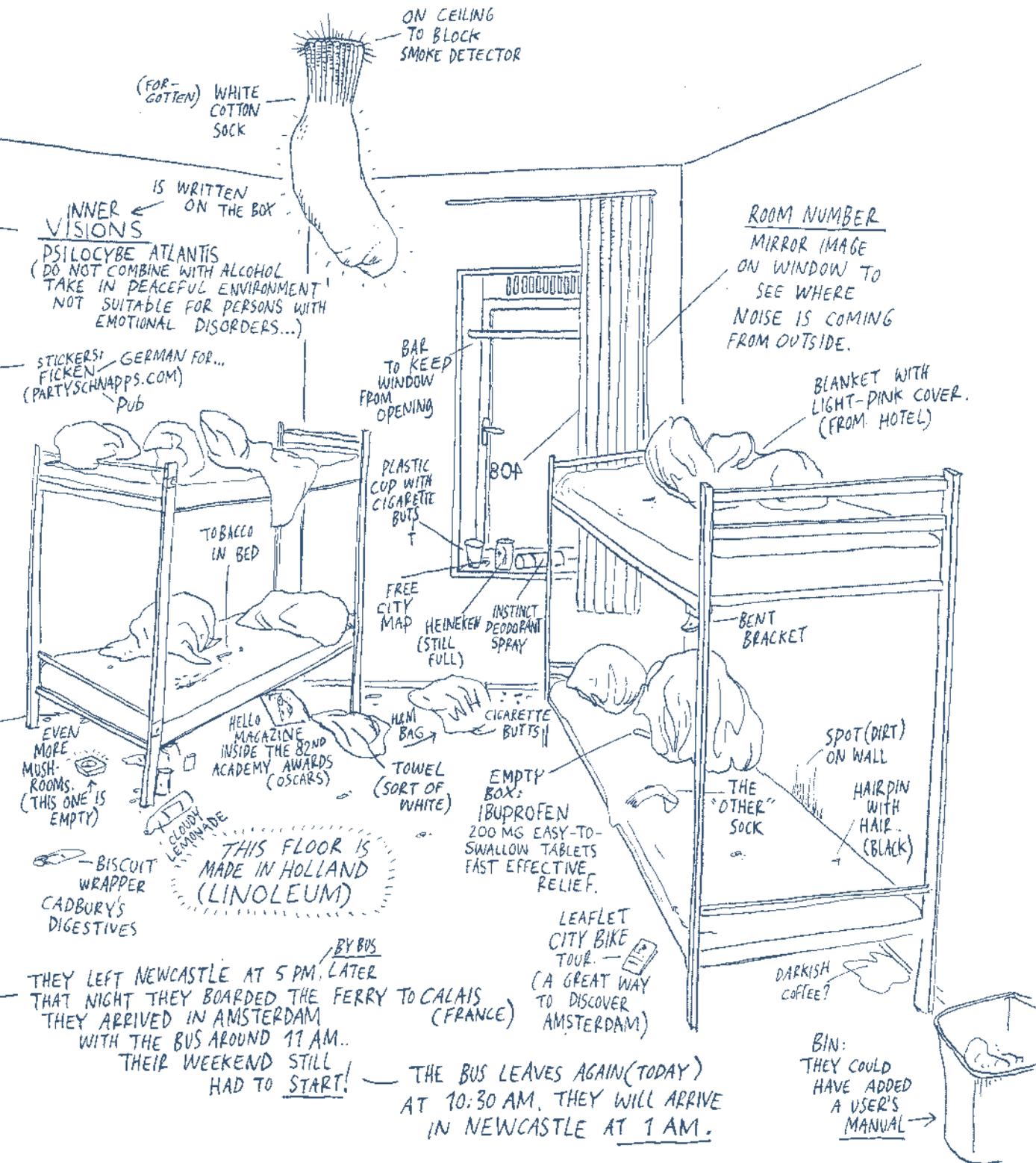
SIX PEOPLE FROM
NEWCASTLE STAYED
IN THIS ROOM FOR TWO DAYS.
HERE I FOUND THEIR
BOOKING SUMMARY
(ON THE BACK
OF SCHOOL PAPERS)

RECEIPT:
1 SM/BONDAGE
(ONE PIECE €19.99
19% TAX € 3.19)

WHAT COULD THIS
BE? HANDCUFFS.
(A SMALL CAGE..)

Budget hotel

Amsterdam is a favourite destination amongst twentysomethings. It's especially popular for stag parties, with young grooms coming here for a blow-out on their last night of 'freedom'. But the current mayor stresses that this doesn't mean people can leave their morals and decency at home.



THIS IS THE RIJKSMUSEUM BUILT IN 1885

THEN ONE OF HOLLANDS BIGGEST BUILDINGS!
IT TOOK 7 YEARS TO BUILD...

ARCHITECT PIERRE CUYPERS (1827-1921)
DIDN'T WANT THE BUILDING TO LOOK MODERN.
HE WANTED TO CREATE A WORK OF ART
TO CELEBRATE THE NATION'S GREATNESS.

IN 1885 THEY,
EXPECTED 250,000
VISITORS A YEAR

TODAY THEY HAVE
10,000 VISITORS
EACH DAY

IT'S MOST BUSY
BETWEEN 11 AM
AND 3 PM
MOST VISITORS
STAY 2 TO 3 HOURS

THIS BUILDING WAS
DESIGNED AROUND
THIS FAMOUS PAINTING
BY REMBRANDT

DAYLIGHT
FOR THE
NIGHTWATCH

FOR PEOPLE AND
GROUPS WHO HAVE LESS
TIME THERE IS THE
EXPRESS LIFT
(FOR 35 PEOPLE)
IN THIS TOWER

CRITICS COMPLAINED THAT
THE BUILDING LOOKED LIKE
A CATHOLIC CHURCH
EVEN THOUGH THE ART
IT SHOWED WAS 17TH-CENTURY
PROTESTANT

EVEN IN
1885 THIS MUST
HAVE BEEN
A OLD-FASHIONED
BUILDING

OLDISH, LIKE
A STALE CAKE
WITH TOO MUCH
FROSTING

THIS IS NOT THE
QUEUE FOR THE
MUSEUM
BUT FOR THIS
HOT DOG STAND.

THE JEWISH
BRIDE: AS A
FILMSTAR ON A
BILLBOARD

INSIDE
IS THE
LIBRARY

ASIAN
PAVILION

RESTAURANT

FLOATS LIKE A LOTUS
FLOWER

THESE LETTERS
WERE PLACED HERE IN 2004
PART OF THE CITY MARKETING
CAMPAIGN TO ATTRACT MORE
BUSINESS AND VISITORS
(TOURISTS)

THE LETTERS BECAME
A "SELFIE" ATTRACTION
ON ITS OWN



LATER IT BECAME
THE SYMBOL OF MASS TOURISM
(AND DECLINE OF THE CITY)

THEY WERE REMOVED
IN 2018

THE CITY LAUNCHES
THE "ENJOY AND RESPECT" CAMPAIGN
ABOUT WHAT IS ALLOWED
AND WHAT NOT IS ALLOWED
WHEN VISITING

IN 2023 "STAY AWAY" A
DISCOURAGEMENT CAMPAIGN, IS
LAUNCHED TARGETING MEN AGED 18 TO 35
FROM THE UK

THE BUILDING'S
ACHILLES HEEL
IS THE CYCLE PATH
UNDERNEATH.

THE CYCLIST UNION SAYS
AROUND 13,000 PEOPLE
CYCLE THROUGH THE
MUSEUM'S UNDERPASS EACH DAY
AND CLAIM THE RIGHT OF WAY!

ICE
CREAM STALL
WITH OLD-FASHIONED
FLAVOURS LIKE PARSNIP
AND SALSIFY

SURPRISE
FOUNTAIN!
FOR CHILDREN

OLDEST
TREE
HERE