



Amsterdam

CRIS TOALA OLIVARES

CHASQUI

Amsterdam

A photographic journey through fifteen years
of a city that never stops evolving

Cris Toala Olivares | Chasqui

This publication is part of a limited edition of one thousand copies.

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Amsterdam

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Toala Pivares". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

Amsterdam 2026

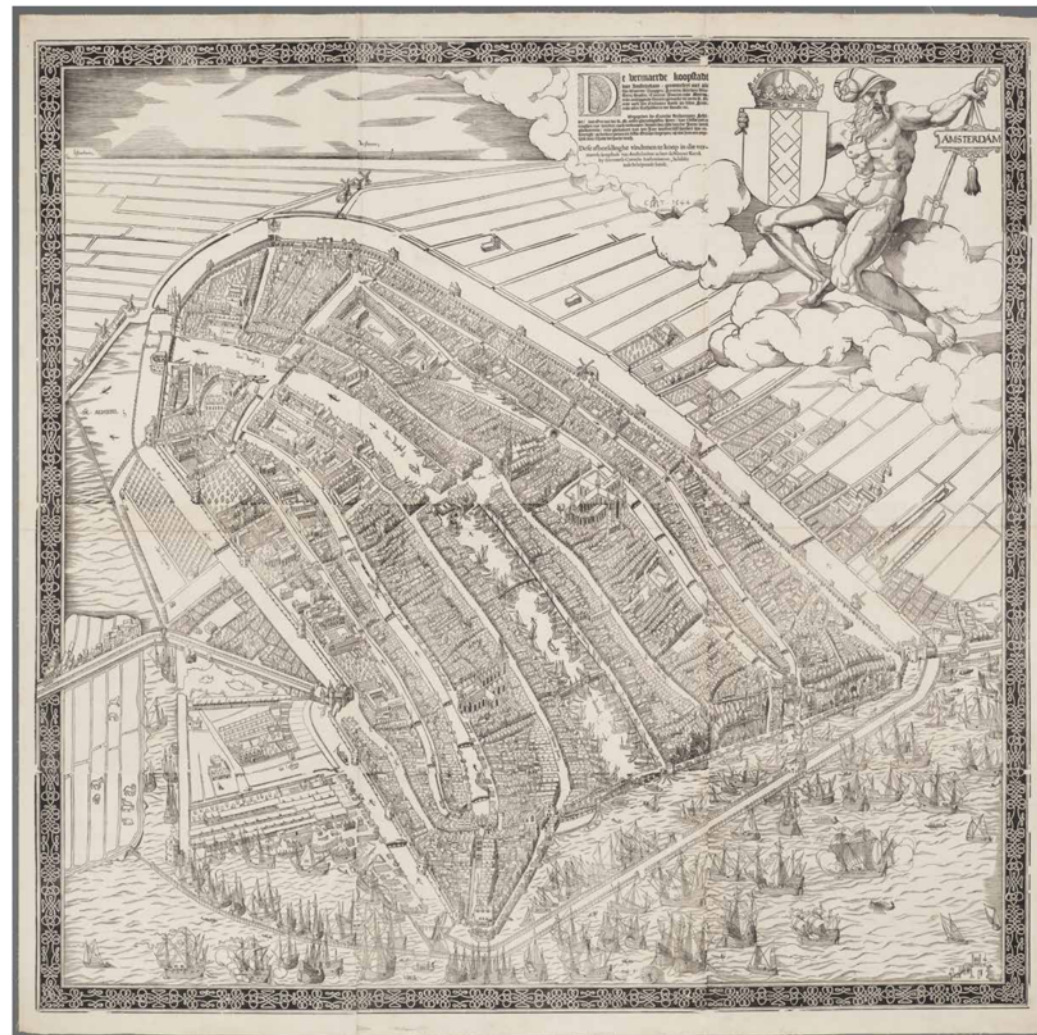


A hot-air balloon shortly after its ascent from the gardens of the Paleis voor Volksvlijt. Photographed from the roof of Reguliersgracht 142. Amsterdam, 8 July 1893. Jacob Olie

A city imagined before it was built







Third edition of the map of Amsterdam,
by Cornelis Anthonisz, Amsterdam.
1545-1553



◀ *Fourth edition of the map of Amsterdam,
by Gerrit de Broen Sr., Amsterdam.
1744–1750*

Invention

Amsterdam did not begin as an image but as an act of imagination. Long before it could be photographed, Amsterdam was drawn. Early maps by Cornelis Anthonisz in the mid-16th century, and later by Gerrit de Broen in the 18th century, reveal a city still in formation. It was measured, projected and carefully imagined against water. These drawings were not mere representations, they were instruments of construction, attempts to understand and shape a landscape that did not yet fully exist. The city was conceived through lines before it was built in brick. Land was negotiated, water redirected and space organized through vision as much as through labor. What we now recognize as Amsterdam emerged gradually from this tension between design, adaptation, geometry and unpredictability.

By the late 19th century, that imagined city had become visible in a new way. On July 8, 1893, from the roof of Reguliersgracht 142, Jacob Olie photographed an extraordinary moment: the aeronaut Léon Mary rising above Amsterdam in a balloon skimming the rooftops. For the first time the city could be seen from above, not as a plan but as a living structure. Olie's photographs do more than document the city; they reveal it in transition. Expanding, transforming, becoming. What had once been drawn was now real, yet still unfinished.

When I first encountered this image, I felt its force immediately. It suggested that Amsterdam is not fixed but a story being continuously rewritten through time, movement and experience. Inspired by this perspective I spent fifteen years moving through the city trying to understand its rhythm and growth. This book began there. It began with an early photograph from Jacob Olie. With drawings, maps and research of history, because Amsterdam has always been a city imagined before it was built.





◀ *Amsterdam as it may have appeared in 1275*

◀ *Grachtengordel, Amsterdam, January 16, 2013*

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**Amsterdam,
A city imagined
before it was built**

