

Exhibition: Women of Amsterdam – an ode

December 14, 2024, to August 31, 2025, at the Amsterdam Museum

International Women's Day 2024 signaled the start of *Women of Amsterdam – an ode*. On that day, the Amsterdam Museum called on everyone to dedicate an ode to a woman who holds some significance for the city and share it via an online platform. The museum has already received hundreds of odes to women, and it's not too late to still make a submission. Many of the women about whom an ode was submitted are highlighted in the exhibition *Women of Amsterdam – an ode*.

Women of Amsterdam – an ode is a touching presentation that invites reflection and inspires making even more odes to and about women who deserve a place in the story of Amsterdam. The exhibition is on view from Saturday, December 14, 2024, to Sunday August 31, 2025, at the Amsterdam Museum on the Amstel.

Imara Limon, chief curator at the Amsterdam Museum: *"Without women, Amsterdam would not exist. Their presence has made the city possible, as well as shaped it. But the male perspective dominates the history books. The exhibition Women of Amsterdam – an ode seeks to change this, paying tribute to the vital role women have played in the city. For the 750th anniversary of Amsterdam, we are expanding on the city's history."*

On view

In the exhibition, visitors are introduced to more than a hundred women who have left their mark on the city over the centuries, from inspiring artists to influential entrepreneurs, and from tireless activists to dedicated figures in working-class neighborhoods. Women who have each contributed or meant something to the city of Amsterdam and its inhabitants are thrust into the spotlight, whether through an object from the collection or a personal item on loan. Their story, and why they mattered, is told.

In addition, an entire room of the exhibition is dedicated to women who have remained completely beyond our view. Inconspicuous, everyday women who are not mentioned in the history books but who nevertheless aided in shaping Amsterdam. While artists, activists, and entrepreneurs occasionally receive some recognition, women who are cleaners, maidservants, orphans, or undocumented are frequently just anonymous personages in the city's narratives. Their stories are given a place in the exhibition. Examples include the unknown fishmonger and a kettle scourer.

Contemporary art

Ten artists and designers were asked by the Amsterdam Museum to create a new work for the exhibition. They drew inspiration from women who made an impact on them, and therefore on Amsterdam.

With her work *I have five moms, I turned out great*, Tyna Adebawale (1982) makes an ode to motherhood. As a child, Adebawale grew up with five mother figures, all of whom played an equally important role in her life. Yet the work is mostly a tribute to her great aunt, one of her "mothers." A sound installation allows visitors to hear voices on Dam Square, a nod to the scores of native languages spoken there.

Sarah van Sonsbeeck (1976) created a light installation for the exhibition as an ode to Lau Mazirel (1907–1974), who was an Amsterdam lawyer and resistance member during the Second World War, in addition to being an early advocate of gay and women's rights.

With the installation *Partition #9 (sphere for Thea) 2024*, visual artist Charlott Markus (1974) dedicates an ode to Thea from Amsterdam, whom she met and befriended in 2017. Thea, born Theodore, underwent a long journey toward self-acceptance. Markus uses the installation to reflect on topics such as identity, equality, kindness, and truly seeing one another.

Çiğdem Yüksel's (1989) art installation offers a tribute to the HTKB (*Hollanda Türkiye Kadınlar Birliği*), the first association of women from Turkey in the Netherlands, established in 1975. The association did a lot for women, from sewing lessons to legal aid.

Additional artists and designers include Mounira Al Solh, Jan Hoek and Duran Lantink, Mina Abouzahra, and Yamuna Forzani and Céline Hurka. The exhibition design is by Studio L A, with illustrations by Hedy Tjin. In the exhibition, rooms with contemporary artworks alternate with those showing collection pieces. In this way, past and present are connected.

Design and illustrations

The exhibition was designed by Studio L A. The spatial interventions appearing in several rooms are based on designs by six female architects in Amsterdam, as an ode to their work: Vossius Gymnasium by Marlies Rohmer (1957), the Homomonument by Karin Daan (1944), Speelvijver Gibraltarstraat by Jakoba Mulder (1900–1988), an exhibition design by Afaina de Jong (1977), a sunken garden by Mien Ruys (1904–1999), and Silodam by Nathalie de Vries (1965). The illustrations in the exhibition were done by Hedy Tjin (1985).

Children and schools

The exhibition *Women of Amsterdam* has a special family route for children aged six and older, which includes an audio tour for kids. An educational program was developed for the exhibition for primary schools, pre-vocational secondary schools, and higher general secondary education/pre-university education. The curriculum consists of three parts: a introductory class at school, a museum tour, and a follow-up lesson based on a physical toolkit.

A gift on the city's anniversary

The project *Women of Amsterdam – an ode* and this exhibition build on previous projects by the Amsterdam Museum to increase the visibility of women in both the museum collection and stories about the history of Amsterdam. In 2018 the Amsterdam Museum, together with guest curator Els Kloek, presented the exhibition *1001 Women in the 20th Century*; since that same year, the museum has been working with women's groups in various districts of the city to collect stories of notable women in their area or neighborhood. This resulted in the neighborhood exhibitions *Women of Nieuw-West*, *Women of Zuidoost*, and *Women of Noord*.

For the city's 750th anniversary, the Amsterdam Museum seeks to expand on the history of the city through valuable stories about women. On March 8, 2024, International Women's Day, the museum sent out an open call for an ode—a letter, a poem, a song, a video, or a work of art—dedicated to a woman who is important to the city in some way, whether great or small. The ode submissions have produced this exhibition, plus a podcast series, a book to be published in 2025, and more.

Three museums under one roof

Due to extensive renovations, the Amsterdam Museum is temporarily housed at Amstel 51. The building is currently home to three museums: H'ART Museum, Museum van de Geest, and the Amsterdam Museum. In honor of 750 years of Amsterdam, H'ART Museum presents two anniversary exhibitions, a double experience that begins with a festive ode to Amsterdam as a city of art. Firstly, a collection of works by 75 artists, past and present, will be on view in *Happy Birthday Amsterdam* (December 4, 2024 – March 16, 2025). Secondly, *At Home in Rembrandt's Amsterdam* (working title, from April 9 to August 24, 2025), an exhibition with almost 20 paintings by Rembrandt. A combination ticket allows visitors access to all museums and exhibitions in the building.

The exhibition Women of Amsterdam – an ode will be on view from December 14, 2024, to August 31, 2025, at the Amsterdam Museum on the Amstel (Amstel 51).

The project is made in cooperation with: Alliantie Acties voor Zichtbaarheid, Amsterdam 750, Atria, Buurthuis Lydia, Café Saarein, Closed on Monday, De Blijfgroep, De Zaak Muurbloem, Fixdit, Geheugen van Oost, Municipality of Amsterdam (Diversity & Inclusion Department), Het geheugen

van West, Jeugdtheaterschool, Museumnacht Amsterdam, Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam (OBA), Pakhuis de Zwijger, PAN Asian Collective, Public Art Amsterdam, Read My World Festival, ROC Amsterdam Zuid, ROSE stories, Souk Amsterdam Arabic Festival, Soroptimist International, Amsterdam City Archives, Stadsdeel West, Stichting van Gisteren, Stichting lezen, Stichting Prismagroep, The Black Archives, University of Amsterdam, Via Rudolphi, VU Amsterdam, WBooks, and numerous additional partners in the city. The digital platform was developed in collaboration with Bravoure. Both the campaign and the project's special visual identity were developed by Isabelle Vaverka

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Note to editors, not for publication

For questions or inquiries, please contact Kim Koopman: k.koopman@amsterdammuseum.nl or 06 - 22 92 77 29.

Press preview

On Tuesday, December 10, between 9:00 and 11:00, we will host an exclusive preview for members of the press. If you would like to receive an invitation, please inform us by emailing k.koopman@amsterdammuseum.nl.

Images

The images featured here can be downloaded in high resolution using this link: <https://we.tl/t-BbDLvC7zfp>