

Amsterdam – between two worlds

During each chain course we try to define a 'story line', basically a *conceptual framework*, bringing coherence between the various activities and experiences during the course programme. Ideally, during the course week an *embodying process* takes place: participants become personally involved, 'enacting' this story line.

During the *Amsterdam course programme* two lines play a role:

1. A walk through the city, from its early beginning at the *Dam square* to, finally, the early 20th c. social housing developments in the '*Amsterdam School*' of architecture, trying to improve the working class living conditions ([article](#)).
2. The permanent tension and distance between 'two worlds': Eden (paradise) and outside, reality and ideal, depression and regaining happiness, black and white. During the walk(s) and the course programme participants are confronted with (artistic) examples of this tension and invited to express this in various forms (of art): sculpture, architecture, painting, poetry. More concrete these examples are:
 - Near to the chain office and course location in the Vredeskerk ('Peace Church', Maria Regina Pacis): the sculptural monument by *Thom Puckie*, in which he expressed 'Driven out of Eden', inspired by the 15th c. Sieneze painter Giovanni di Paolo ([article](#)).
 - Crossing the '*Wallen*' (Amsterdam prostitute quarter): a beautiful part of the city, poisoned by the current abuse ([article](#)).
 - The various monuments in the former *Jewish quarter* of the city ([article](#)).
 - Two '*Amsterdam School*' living quarters (*Dageraad* and *Het Schip*): the contrast between the 19th c. working class living conditions and the changes initiated by idealist architects and (socialist) housing corporations. With attention to the current *gentrification* process ([article](#)).
 - During a visit to the *Van Gogh Museum* examples of his work, expressing happy periods (*Yellow House*, *Bed Room*, *Almond Flowers*) and his depression (e.g. *Corn field with Crows*, painted shortly before his suicide). In a connected workshop participants were invited to express encounters during the city walks in a Van Gogh like painting ([article](#)).
 - A poem by *Anna Enquist*, city poet of Amsterdam, in which she expresses her own '*Werdegang*' from detesting the city (after the death of her own child in a tragic accident in the city centre) to reappraisal through the eyes of a grandchild: *De stad herboren* (*The city reborn*). During a walk in the *Vondelpark* a scene from this poem was 're-enacted' (the platan's branches) and - by pure luck - we noticed a 'rising bridge', at which moment the participants experienced another scene, sharing the feelings of the grandchild. Participants were invited to make a translation of this poem into their own language ([article](#)).