

# City Centre Campus

ISSUE 2 | MARCH 2015



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## Special Collections accessible to the public



Steph Scholten in his office

'It holds everything from scientific measuring instruments to Nobel prize winners' medals and an 18th century printing press. With more than a million items on 30km of shelves, we have one of the largest heritage collections in the Netherlands,' says Steph Scholten, director of heritage collections, who manages the University of Amsterdam's treasures, commonly known as the Special Collections.

The majority of items are actually paper-based: books, letters, prints, maps and so on. If you think that sounds dull, you're quite mistaken. Special Collections also manages the living archive of Arnon Grunberg, for example. 'We've put together a comprehensive retrospective based on his writing over the past 20 years. Meanwhile, the GrunbergLab was also being set up here as a site of innovative brain research by VU University Amsterdam and the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (INO). Arnon Grunberg's brain activity was measured while he was writing his latest short story, *Het bestand*. And during the exhibition, the brain activity of hundreds of readers was also

measured in the same way while they read *Het bestand*.'

### The World Keeps Turning

'We're showing a very special exhibition until 25 May. We're hosting the pop-up museum for De Wereld Draait Door (The World Keeps Turning) to mark

### CONSERVATION

The conservation of paper requires particularly strict climate and light conditions. An acid-free box is custom-made for each book. Tens of thousands of letters have also been stored in this way. Special Collections has its own restoration studio where specialists focus mainly on the conservation of items and carry out minor restorations, such as fixing the loose spine of a book.

## Further information

The University of Amsterdam is building its City Centre Campus in and around the Binnengasthuis premises, one of the UvA's four open city campuses. By clustering related academic disciplines, the UvA hopes to strengthen ties within the university and encourage collaboration both within the institution and beyond with companies, authorities and civil society organisations. The City Centre Campus will be the home base for the Faculty of Humanities (FGw) and the University Library.  
[www.campus.uva.nl](http://www.campus.uva.nl)

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### INTRODUCING...

## Hans Mulder Project leader for the renovation of the future Art History and Cultural Studies building

Hans Mulder is the project leader for the renovation of the former Vrouwenverband, the women's hospital on the Turfdraagsterpad. From this summer, Art History and Cultural Studies will be based in this building. Mulder has been involved in the renovation since 2010. 'My most important job is to monitor the planning schedule and finances. I'm delighted to be succeeding in that.'

'All eyes are on us, because this will be the first building to be completed at the Binnengasthuis premises.' For Mulder, what's special about this project is its location in the city centre, and the building itself, with all its stories. 'For example, we

discovered what is thought to have been the operating room, with large grips on the ceiling for hanging up equipment. The floor was lead-lined with concrete and wood, which suggests the presence of equipment such as x-ray machines.'

'We put a lot of time and energy into the construction of this historical building to secure its future. We also focused on sustainability, using double glazing, roof and wall insulation, and LED lighting. The latter happened in consultation with a local resident, who had proposed an alternative to strip lighting.' The enthusiasm with which everyone is working on this project is infectious, says Mulder. 'Every project ought to be like this one.' ■



Hans Mulder

the 10th anniversary of the TV chat show. Ten regular guests on the programme have chosen artworks from ten Dutch museums which we are exhibiting in ten rooms. Jan Mulder chose works from the Groninger Museum, Joost Zwagerman from the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, and Cecile Narinx, editor-in-chief of Harper's Bazaar, filled a room with fashion from the Centraal Museum in Utrecht. It's really worth a look,' says Scholten.

#### Contemporary themes

Special Collections, which is also part of the City Centre Campus, stages frequent exhibitions and these always come from an academic perspective. 'We want to make our wonderful collections accessible to a broad audience by using contemporary themes. And we want to show how important it is for us to preserve this heritage.' Half of the collection is housed in the renovated building at the Oude Turfmarkt, where Special Collections has been based since 2007, immediately next to the Allard Pierson Museum. The building also contains study rooms for research, spaces for teaching and presentations, a shop and a museum cafe. Paintings are also displayed all over the UvA, and parts of the collection are housed at the Artis library and in other places such as a small computer museum at the Amsterdam Science Park. ■

#### DIGITISATION

**Special Collections is working with Google to digitise 100,000 books from before 1870. The image bank is also being revamped. The book and image bank are freely accessible to everyone. It's anticipated that the digitisation of so many books will open up exciting new research opportunities.**

For more information, visit [www.bijzonderecollecties.uva.nl](http://www.bijzonderecollecties.uva.nl) or visit Oude Turfmarkt 129



Claire and Bob van Buren in their restaurant

## 'City Centre Campus adds value to the whole area'

**It's been 28 years since Claire and Bob van Buren opened Kapitein Zeppos, a brasserie in the little alley Gebed Zonder End, opposite the future Art History and Cultural Studies building at Turfdragsterpad 15-17.**

They took over the former bar/cafe Het Gebed, popular with students and staff from the Binnengasthuis, in June 1987. The hospital had just moved to the Academic Medical Center (AMC-UvA). Bob van Buren: 'The bar owner was making a heavy loss. The bar, a dark 1970s watering hole, was on the verge of going bust.' They knocked the place through and rebuilt it. 'We really had to start all over again, but luckily we had the UvA in the area,' says Claire van Buren. 'Within six months we had students coming in again. On Thursdays it was packed, and by the weekend they'd have gone home with their dirty laundry and it went back to being our bar. This was also when they were knocking

**'The students of then are the lecturers and professors of today. And our regulars.'**

Bob van Buren

down the hospital building. We found an old operating table on the street which we used for years to serve hors d'oeuvres on.'

#### Own identity

'From '87 through '92 we were the most popular student bar,' says Bob van Buren. 'But we were always careful not to be just a student bar. We wanted to maintain our identity and make it fun for everyone. That sometimes meant refusing people too. We had a sign on the door: no debating societies or stag nights.' Zeppos attracts a quieter crowd now. 'The students of then are the lecturers and professors of today. And our regulars. There are fewer students

now. Even though we offer them 10% off their bill.'

#### Good feeling

According to the Van Burens, who live above their bar, the City Centre Campus adds value to the whole area. Bob van Buren: 'We are local residents and business owners and have always supported the campus plans. The renovation opposite hasn't bothered me. Rebuilding is part of running a business. I did major rebuilding work in 2000 and I inconvenienced the whole neighbourhood. So I'd be the last to complain.' 'Claire and I would like to stick around for a while longer. Thanks to the new campus and other positive developments, I've got a good feeling about the future of the neighbourhood. Much more so than in 1987. Back then, I had to step over five junkies just to get through my own front door.' ■

## Vox-Pop Pop-ups on the Binnengasthuis premises

A theatre performance, literary café, debate, exhibition or music variety show. Anything's possible at Vox-Pop, the pop-up project being run by the Faculty of Humanities in temporarily vacant UvA buildings at the Binnengasthuis premises. Vox-Pop kicks off on 5 March with the Fokkens sisters, authors of the book 'Ouwehoeren'. The sisters will be reading excerpts from their memoir about working in Amsterdam's red-light district. The first pop-up theme, History of the City Centre, has also

inspired Art History students to set up an exhibition with 3D reconstructions of a number of 16th-century houses.

#### The Amsterdammer

From May, the pop-up theme will be Fashion in the City. Marte Rijdsdijk, project leader at Vox-Pop: 'Plans have already been submitted for this, including the screening of *Fashion in the Suburbs*, four films about fashion in the outskirts of various world cities. One example is the film *La Haine*, about the life of young people in the

outskirts of Paris. Their clothing is typical of street youths. And the film *Rockers* gives an insight into the daily life and clothing styles of reggae artists in the back streets of Kingston. There will also be exhibitions, such as one about the sense of identity of Amsterdam students.'

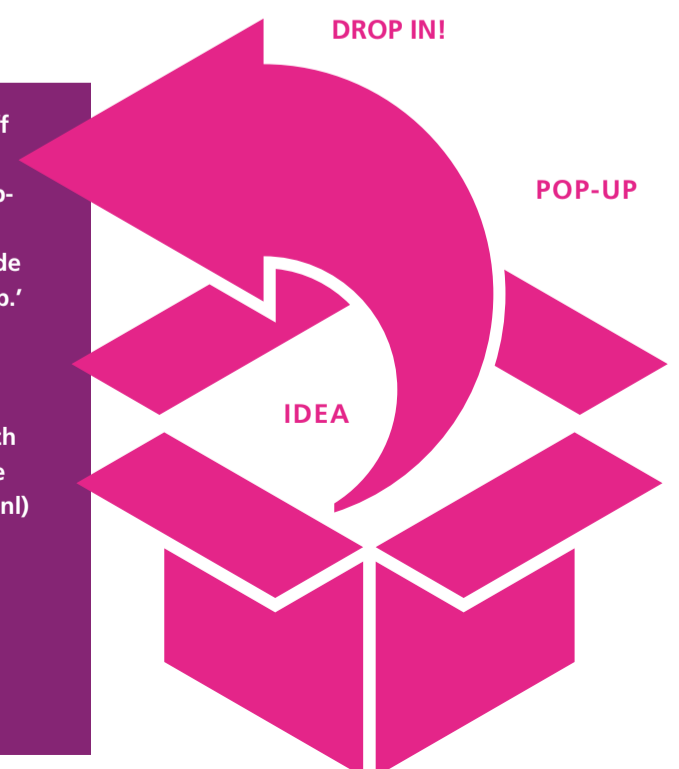
#### Suggesting ideas

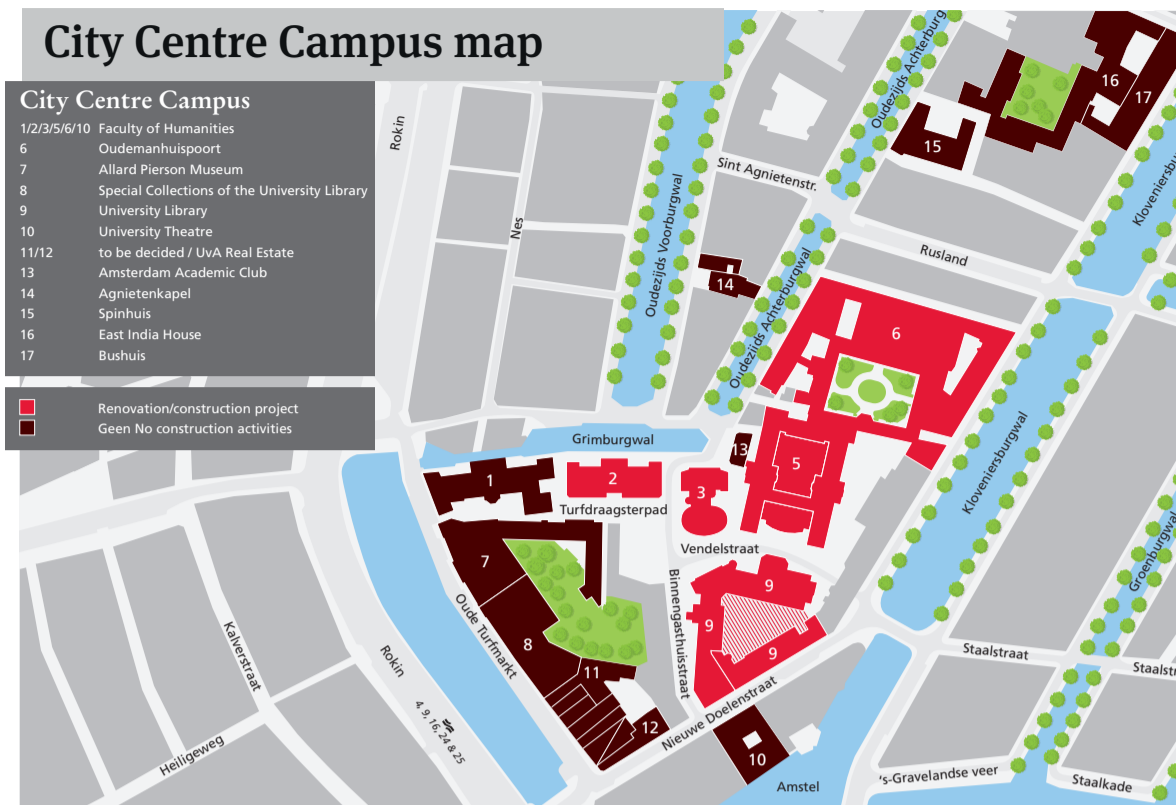
For now, the pop-ups will be located in two spaces above the student restaurant (entrance BG5, Oudezijds Achterburgwal 233-237).

Everyone – students, staff and local residents – can suggest ideas for pop-ups. 'We're working on a website which will provide full details about Vox-pop.'

#### Follow us on

[www.facebook.com/voxpopuva](http://www.facebook.com/voxpopuva) or get in touch with project leader Marte Rijdsdijk ([m.k.rijdsdijk@uva.nl](mailto:m.k.rijdsdijk@uva.nl)) for more details.





Planning schedule	Future Art History and Cultural Studies building	University Library
2015	Completion Opening	Technical detailing Archaeological investigation Stripping of existing buildings
2016		Construction
2018		Completion

The planning schedule for the other buildings is not yet confirmed.

**Further information**

If you have any questions or comments about the construction of the City Centre Campus, please contact area manager Chérie van der Meer on [omgevingsmanager-binnenstad@uva.nl](mailto:omgevingsmanager-binnenstad@uva.nl) or 06-2115 5032.

# ‘Historic unity has been preserved’

‘This summer we’ll be moving into a building which has had a lot of attention paid to it,’ says Madelon Simons, lecturer in Art History at the UvA. As a future user of the building, she has been involved from the start with the renovation plans for the former hospital on the Turfdragerpad.

It’s a special building, according to Simons. ‘You can see the construction of the roof from within, which is wonderful. So is the light that enters from the side with the three canals, and the view from the top over the roofs of the old city centre.’ Simons will herself be given a room on the second floor, looking out over the Binnengasthuisstraat. She will be sharing the room with a few colleagues. ‘I think it will be a real benefit here to have regular contact with colleagues from Cultural Studies and the study adviser, for example.’

## Special interest

Amsterdam’s buildings are an area of special interest to Simons. ‘I’m working with a group of students to create a database of the most interesting Amsterdam houses from the middle of the 16th century. It will include details about the archaeology, layout, inhabitants and 3D reconstructions.’

During the renovations Simons, along with other future users of the building, regularly met with the architect and visited the site, both at the start and now again as completion approaches. ‘The result is beautiful, and a great contrast to how it was when CREA was there.’

## High spaces

‘The layout of the building has been taken back to how it was at the start of the last century, when it was still a hospital with large, high-ceilinged rooms and a hallway to connect them. Over time, features such as mezzanines and partition walls were installed, but these have now all been removed. Doing so created large rooms with a height of 4.3 metres, which have subsequently been divided into smaller work-spaces. After all, we’ll be sitting, not lying down. That does mean the 19th century proportions have been subdued somewhat. I’m really interested to find out whether the high-ceilinged rooms won’t be too echoey.’ Art historians like to focus on details, says Simons, who is very appreciative of this renovation ‘in which the historic unity has been maintained and high-tech innovations haven’t been a dominant consideration.’

## Critical of the campus

Madelon Simons is however critical of the development of the City Centre Campus. ‘I don’t believe that clustering will deliver higher quality research and teaching. Collaboration in teaching doesn’t arise out of what may be chance encounters on campus; it’s a result of every good lecturer striving to improve the content of their work. I also worry that the small surface area of the campus and the forced efficient use of office spaces will actually drive people to carry out their research elsewhere. I’ll also miss the inspiration you can draw from a specialised art history library. In the Humanities library only a fraction of that specialist literature is immediately available.’ Simons also disagrees with the UvA’s view that the City Centre Campus is good for the city centre. ‘Humanities is leaving the Spuistraat and is leaving a big empty space behind in the west of the city centre.’ ■



Madelon Simons in the attic of the building

## Why the UvA is developing open city campuses

The UvA is building four open city campuses, with related disciplines brought together in one place. The UvA’s aim in doing this is to boost the quality of its teaching and research. This is to be achieved through the strengthening of links within the university and encouraging collaboration, both within and across academic disciplines, companies, the government and civil society organisations.

Bringing related disciplines together in one place also means we can use buildings more efficiently and improve their occupancy rates. Research and teaching facilities are also being renovated and brought up to date, and central meeting places are being created. This will strengthen the UvA’s competitive position and ensure it remains among the top national and international universities.

# The search for a happy middle ground

## Building in densely populated city centre requires firm agreements

**‘As neighbourhood residents we’re happy with the maintenance and renovation of historic buildings on the City Centre Campus. We realise that a big project creates disruption. That’s why we’re being careful to ensure that quality of life is maintained during the works. We’re trying to keep disruption to a minimum.’**

So says Tjeerd Kamper, a local resident from the Binnengasthuis area and a member of the residents’ association. The association regularly meets with area manager Chérie van der Meer to discuss the renovation of the building which will house Art History and Cultural Studies. Kamper has been involved from the start in creating what’s known as the BLVC

**‘A construction project in a densely populated city centre has a major impact.’**

Chérie van der Meer

plan. The plan sets out agreements on accessibility, quality of life, safety and communication during the work on the building.

### Different interests

According to Van der Meer, quality of life invariably suffers under large projects like this. ‘A construction project on this scale in a densely populated city centre has a major impact.’ Kamper agrees. In his experience, residents often draw the short straw. For example: ‘If we ask whether the noisiest works can start after 8am, the contractor will be most

concerned with cost issues, and the UvA with the importance of quiet for students and staff.’ According to Van der Meer, this shows how complex the situation is. ‘There can be such strongly competing interests, and that’s why it’s sometimes hard to find a happy middle ground. It’s a complicated process of give and take and it requires a lot of mutual understanding.’

### Two-way communication

One of the agreements in the BLVC plan is to have a single point of contact for all communication. ‘That has worked well with Chérie van der Meer,’ says Kamper. Van der Meer receives a lot of feedback from residents. At the UvA’s fortnightly construction meeting, any agreements not being adhered to are addressed. The municipality has a formal supervisory and enforcement role. Both sides agree that the experience will have been valuable for everyone. The lessons learned will certainly be included in the new BLVC plan for the library. One example is the need for agreements to be more workable for both sides. ■

### WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN THE DISCUSSION ABOUT THE BLVC FRAMEWORK FOR THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY?

Register with our area manager Chérie van der Meer on 020 525 7724 or by email on [omgevingsmanager-binnenstad@uva.nl](mailto:omgevingsmanager-binnenstad@uva.nl).



Local resident Tjeerd Kamper at the Binnengasthuis premises

## Wanted: stories

Any old stories to share? Email us! The Binnengasthuis premises and the Oudemanhuispoort have a rich history. We’d be interested to hear any old stories from the past. Do you have an interesting, moving or funny story you’d like to share with us? Email it to [omgevingsmanager-binnenstad@uva.nl](mailto:omgevingsmanager-binnenstad@uva.nl) and we’ll publish it in this newspaper or on our website [www.campus.uva.nl](http://www.campus.uva.nl)

### PUBLICATION DETAILS

The City Centre Campus newspaper is published by the UvA. The newspaper is distributed among local residents, businesses, students and employees at the City Centre Campus. UvA Real Estate Development 020 525 2443 [huisvestingsontwikkeling@uva.nl](mailto:huisvestingsontwikkeling@uva.nl) Editors: Real Estate Development department, UvA text: Frederieke Genevace Photography: Photo editor, Leonard Faustle Design: Designyard [www.campus.uva.nl](http://www.campus.uva.nl)

## HISTORY

# Every corner tells a story

When we bought this house in 2002 we felt like we were coming home, says Guy Weijer, who lives in the House on the Three Canals, a nationally listed building. Following a thorough restoration, in which he worked closely with Amsterdam’s building conservation office (Bureau Monumentenzorg Amsterdam), the building has been restored to its former glory. ‘It’s wonderful living here, and we even have a roof terrace. I was a student in the Oudemanhuispoort myself, so the antics of the students who go past every day are all very familiar to me.’

‘Every corner in the house tells a story’. Weijer has collected the stories of previous residents in a book. ‘But it’s really just for friends and people who have previously lived in this house.’ One of them is Gerke Postma, a famed antique dealer who sold the house to Weijer. People still turn up there expecting to see him. Or the Balkema family, who had a book store there and a clandestine printing press in World War 2. ‘I like the story of the person who lived on this spot in the 14th century, before the house was even here. His name was Jan de Sael, and he made soap. His house must have been a lot more modest.’

### Many styles

The many styles within the listed building have been added over the centuries, and they include 18th century staircase ornaments, tiles from the 19th century Amsterdam School, and Amsterdam’s only surviving 17th century stove. ‘The cellar, which used to be the kitchen, has a beautiful old brown flagstone floor. The tiles are from Norway

and were used as ballast on the ships. The Norwegians came here to buy things and therefore set off with lightly loaded ships. If you turn the tiles over, you see four little legs and they can be used as tables.’ Another fun detail is the tiling in what is now the kitchen, which depicts birds and other animals. ‘In those days,’ says Weijer,

‘people didn’t have much paper, so children learned to recognise things from tiles.’ ■

The 17th century House on the Three Canals is named after the canals surrounding it: the Grimburgwal to the south, the Oudezijds Voorburgwal to the west, and the Oudezijds Achterburgwal to the east.

