

PhD Defence

Vincent Baptist

March 31, 2023

13:00 - 14:30



Painting of fairground with carousel along the quay of (presumably) Katendrecht, by Dolf Henkes (1961).
Source: Museum Rotterdam, inventory number: 91214, <https://museumrotterdam.nl/collectie/item/91214>.

Pleasure near the Port: Spaces and Legacies of Notorious Entertainment Culture in 20th - Century Rotterdam

Erasmus University Rotterdam, Campus Woudestein, Erasmus Building, Senaatszaal

Livestream: <https://eur.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=89d13f89-2dfd-43dd-84b8-afa8010597f6>

How did spaces of notorious entertainment disappear in Rotterdam throughout the twentieth century, and how have their legacies lingered on in the port city's changing spatial and cultural fabric? In contrast to Hamburg's Reeperbahn or Barcelona's Parallel Avenue, Rotterdam can nowadays not bow anymore on a single delineated space that has carried over the port city's quintessential maritime urban culture into the current era of global tourism and events. This thesis investigates three distinct pleasure neighborhoods of Rotterdam that were known for their culturally stereotypical and notorious profile within the port city, and which, all for different reasons, ceased existing in their original forms in the course of the twentieth century. Rotterdam's Zandstraatbuurt, Schiedamsedijk and Katendrecht all boasted strong links to sailortown culture and waterfront areas, which facilitated these spaces' daily

transformation into rowdy amusement areas. This thesis puts them into both broader and more nuanced research perspectives, by means of multifaceted and spatially oriented methodological approaches, and through connections to specific, interconnected urban-cultural themes: nostalgia, safety and gentrification. As such, they constitute rich historical case studies to fuel new research on the cultural identity of port cities and its pleasure culture specifically. In doing so, I employ the newly proposed term 'pleasurescapes' as a fitting conceptual tool to reassess the dichotomous character ascribed to port cities. Rotterdam's three main pleasure districts may no longer exist in their original form, but they have nevertheless sparked long-lasting legacies that have ingrained highly ambivalent views on the port city and its amusement.