

Amsterdam's Others

BY SCOTT BRADLEY

A Peter Tosh fairy tale. A beautified version of free chaos and simplicity. Legalized; not "Legalize it".

Amsterdam holds a mesmerizing sense of freedom and humour. A blend of love and desecration. Sometimes you're so happy you could dance the maze of lost streets, other times you want to puke on her shambled roads. You always take the good with the bad.

Down beside a canal, over a bridge and five minutes that way; stoned wandering through the red light district. Hookers perch themselves like mannequins in shop windows as tourists from around the world gaze at the chaotic, freaky funk that sits before them. Live sex shows and "coffee shops" fill in the space where hookers couldn't. Dealers fill in the space where others wouldn't. Every minute, like a clock, you hear, "Coca, ecstasy, acid; come on, it's good shit — look at it!" Like cobblestones they sit, part of the city's dream; members of the working class.

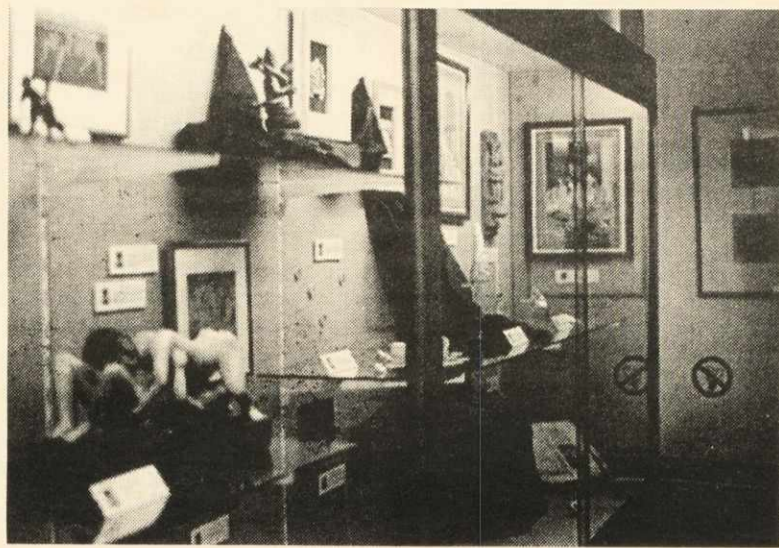
Ganja is as available as coffee and

cigarettes. It's an established memory in Dutch society.

The Hash Marihuana Hemp Museum marks the changing thoughts of this tradition and culture. A coffee shop provides ganja of all kinds, including Thai stick and Northern Light. These small, dimly lit cafes are scattered feverishly about the city. They are marked by the red, gold and green colours of the Rasta and Ethiopia. Reggae, mainly Bob Marley, plays feverishly inside their walls. They represent the tourist side of Amsterdam's finest hour. Why would locals buy when they can purchase seeds of an excellent strain and legally grow three plants?

The main drag bursts from Centraal Station and contains a plethora of madness. It has your food and money. Fries with mayonnaise are often lunch and dinner. It also has bank machines, pizza shops, a weird old building and a Hooters (Americans have to feel at home, don't they?). The sex museum is also on this strip. It provides an interesting look into a world of vibrating chairs, ten-foot penises, 1920's pornography, Marilyn's skirt lifting every minute, and erotic art. Not bad for five guilders or three Canadian dollars, eh?

Sandy side streets are the hidden masterpieces of enrichment. Newspaper stores are entwined in the walls of these paths and provide the necessities for rolling along. These paths allow you to



get lost and found in Amsterdam's enticement.

One of the greatest comforts of the city is Bob's Youth Hostel; a home, a place to sleep and get breakfast. I arrived there at ten o'clock, completely disoriented, to find people eating scrambled eggs and toast with butter and jam. At 10:30 it was time to pay to stay. I got

and the brilliant enchantment of her chaos. Amsterdam was a fairy tale of great happenings.

After four nights, it was time to leave. I wouldn't be back for a long time and in my head I thought it would be the last visit I would make. By the time I left, I was burnt, tired and once again disoriented. I headed down the main drag, dispirited and unable to put shit together. Silvia and Sandy had left early and I was unable to say goodbye. I was excited to start my five week journey of reality.

Through Europe and back it drew me. There was nowhere else I would rather be. I was back in Amsterdam's lost streets of madness. I wandered in a dream with three Austrian girls who also experienced the chaos and humour of uncertainty.

The circus of the unknown plays with time. Pieces never fall apart — they only come together. When all is said and done. You're never happy to leave. Amsterdam.



I line and started talking to an American girl from New Jersey. She was with a friend and an Australian who they had been travelling with; his name was Ray. This dude was a real character who confused bums and lost souls asking for change or selling drugs. We all ended up in the same dormroom with insanity and fifteen other lost travellers. I had only slept for an hour the night before on a red eye flight, so we went to a couple of coffee shops and came back to Bob's at two o'clock. We

stumbled around in the dark, looking for sleep. I laid down but it was too crazy trying to sleep. All I could think about was my amazement. A faint sound came from the room and someone started to snicker. Then another, until the whole room, stoned off the wall, broke into a hysterical laughter which lasted for an hour. Insanity had never been so insane. Everyone had released the tensions of life's struggle and freed the truth of Amsterdam's one motto: Do your own thing and whatever you're doing, don't take it seriously, because every little thing is going to be alright.

One night I sat on the street with Silvia and watched men enter hookers' shops. The street was so alive. There were fifty things happening at once — like a Kaleidoscope of events. The people who came from other cities were so easily adapted to the madness

A History of Mental Illness

BY MARC GODIN

As another season of intensity for abnormal behaviours draws closer our minds seem to turn naturally to thoughts of homicidal, sociopathic, chainsaw-hefting psychos. Well, my mind does, anyway. As I was thinking these thoughts, I started to wonder about what it must be like to be "crazy", and then I started wondering how people with mental illness dealt with life in times past. So I went to a library.

What I found is that we didn't always have the same ideas about insanity that we do now. In really ancient times, for example, like when we were really primitive (before we'd invented such civilized things as the atom bomb and biological warfare), we thought that if you were crazy it meant that you had a spirit trapped in your head. If it made you do bad things, it was thought to be a bad spirit. They even had a way to get it out of your head: they'd drill a hole through your skull. Perhaps the most amazing thing about this process — called trephination — is that the patients sometimes lived.

Time passed, and eventually we came to the cradle of western civilization, ancient Greece. Around this time there were two general ideas about lunacy: the popular divine intervention theory and the less popular natural causes idea.

If you remember your history and what you know about Greek

mythology, you'll know that the Greek gods were a very jealous, spiteful, mischievous crew. If a god or goddess had a bad day, or wasn't satisfied with your latest sacrifice, he or she was likely to make you mad. How? Well, in an interesting twist on tribal beliefs, a Greek god could send evil spirits to possess you.

There were other ways to go mad, according to the popular view. Mystical nymphs could drive men insane, you could be cursed by a magical spell or rite, or you could be accosted by the Keres, the spirits that the infamous Pandora released when she opened the box. There were even Keres for drunkenness and lust. I think I know a few students who have Pandora to thank for their weekends...

The "scientific" view of those days wasn't much better. In vogue at the time was the idea that our personalities were made up of four "humours" or fluids: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. Depending on the mix you might be a happy or sad person, quick to anger or easily frightened. Insanity was seen as what happened when your humours were off balance. Usually, argued Hippocrates and other doctors of the time, it was an excess of black bile that did it.

The Romans, as most conquerors do, just copied the beliefs of those they conquered, sometimes changing the names of gods so that they are pronounceable. The one big contribution of the Romans regarding insanity was Christianity. It could be argued that the whole religion is one great big lunacy, but there is more to the story than that. As the Roman Empire fell and Christianity grew, the world changed.

In the Dark Ages after Rome fell we saw the first hospitals arise where the dangerously insane could be taken care of. By and large, however, it was up to the families of the crazed to keep them away from the public. If someone didn't have a family they were ignored unless they were dangerous or too disruptive.

As Europe struggled towards the ultimate society, society's views on crazy people changed. They didn't want any. If you were from out of town when you went off the deep end, you would be shipped back. As the 14th century approached, the innovative method of whipping crazy people before sending them back was developed.

Christianity, by then, was beginning to be an increasingly important part of every day life, and as the Middle Ages progressed into the Exploration Age and beyond, we began to develop another idea. Crazy people were witches. In the 12th and 13th centuries, awareness of the devil reached new heights. Centuries of witch-burning followed, not slowing until the end of the 18th century. Of course, in order to be a witch, you didn't have to be crazy, just odd. Old women, strong women, and unusual men were burned because they didn't fit in.

A great place for culture

BY ANDREW COOK

The Dalhousie-Mount Caribbean Society is composed of students from Dalhousie and Mount Saint Vincent University who are interested in Caribbean culture. The society originated in the early eighties to provide Dalhousie's Caribbean students with a chance to socialize and celebrate their similar cultural heritages. Students from other universities such as SMU and TUNS are now also involved in the society's activities.

Biweekly meetings are held to provide support for students who attend universities in the metro area while living a great distance from home. The society holds many fun activities such as bowling, splatshot, partying and jamming to Car-

ibbean music as they dance the night away.

The major event of the year for the Caribbean Society is the Caribbanza. Members from the individual Caribbean Societies at each university gather in the McInnes Room of the Dal SUB for an evening of food, dance, drama and poetry. The activities are designed to portray different aspects of Caribbean culture. Anyone can go to the gala and tickets are available each year during the first two weeks of March.

The Dal-Mount Caribbean society is open to anyone and everyone. All you have to do is show up with a friendly smile and be sure to tune into CKDU Saturdays from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. for Baseline Reggae.

