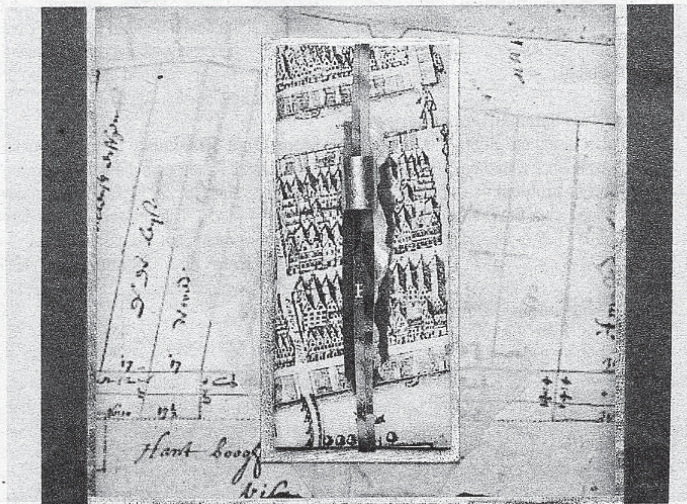


ART FEATURE

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Going Dutch

Van Riel and Wilcke's Amsterdam



IMAGINE you're out of town and someone asks you to describe Charlottesville. What images flash to mind? Monticello? The Downtown Mall? Thomas Jefferson? A view of the Blue Ridge? The Pavilion? Whether we realize it or not, we all carry an iconography of "home."

For Charlottesville artist Loes van Riel and former city resident Marijk Wilcke, their original home—and Wilcke's current one—is Amsterdam. Van Riel's and Wilcke's joint exhibition, "Amsterdam: A Personal View," on display at Angelo, offers each artist's visual meditation on what symbolizes the Dutch city.

Van Riel's three abstract pieces spring from having spent her childhood in the neighborhood where Rembrandt lived 350 years ago. Reflecting Rembrandt's own up-and-down life, his house—which he lost to bankruptcy in 1656—deteriorated for a quarter century before the city of Amsterdam turned it into a museum. Van Riel's multi-media assemblages use Rembrandt's biography to delve into how time inevitably changes everything through cycles of decay and renewal.

Beautifully framed (van Riel excels at presentation), each piece contains a red- and gold-rimmed rectangular recess in which carefully arranged bits and pieces—small gold-leaf cylinders, scrolled documents, scraps of historical records and architectural plans—express a chapter in Rembrandt's life. For instance, the gold-ringed scrolls lined up vertically

in "Rembrandt in Amsterdam No. 2" represent the payments Rembrandt received as commission from officers depicted in his famed "Night Watch."

But van Riel's exquisitely balanced works also contain off-kilter elements and ragged-edged snippets of gold and red, suggesting the way tragedy and violence often intrude on even the best-laid plans. His brilliant compositions may have won Rembrandt critical acclaim, but his personal life was fraught with misfortune, from the deaths of loved ones to financial disaster.

Marijk Wilcke's photographic collages are less complex and intellectually rich. Combining mostly black-and-white shots of Amsterdam's architecture, its famous canals, and other culturally relevant details, like bicycles and boats, Wilcke's pieces are hit-and-miss. In the miss column, her "Invited by Rumor," features a swan in the upper left corner, pigeons and a park bench in the center, and religious mosaics and sculptures above and on the left. The elements lack unity, and their squared transitions jar the eye.

On the other hand, Wilcke's "Door of Perception" forges relationships between similar shapes and creates abstract echoes from bicycle wheels and iron railings. Here everything successfully coalesces to form an evocative impression of Amsterdam. ■

"Amsterdam: A Personal View," featuring work by Loes van Riel and Marijk Wilcke, is on view at Angelo through the end of June. 220 E. Main St. 971-9256.