



HIGHER GROUND

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A HIDDEN CHAPEL IN THE HEART OF AMSTERDAM WITH A RICH HISTORY AND BEAUTIFUL ORIGINAL FEATURES? SOUNDS LIKE HEAVEN ON EARTH.



A stone's throw away from the busy Rembrandt Square, you will find the Swigters Almshouse. Amidst the gables along the famous Amstel River, a tiny, yet richly adorned, gate immediately catches your eye. In Latin it says: 'Blissful is he, who is gentle towards the miserable. The Lord will set him free on Judgment Day'. The Swigters Almshouse was built by Isaac Swigters, a former book and map seller. As a Roman Catholic, he believed that God would have mercy on him in return for his good deeds. By building a sanctuary, Swigters hoped for eternal life in heaven. In 1744, the Lord Mayors of Amsterdam granted him permission to build houses destined for 'thirty-five or thirty-six old, needy women of the Roman-Catholic Faith'. He asked stonemason Pieter Pantel to create an extraordinary gate using rich ornamentation in typical Rococo (Late Baroque) style. In 1751, the year in which Isaac Swigters died, his private home was added to the almshouse and transformed into a hidden chapel. His last wish was to build a chapel for elderly and infirm women who weren't capable of going to the Catholic Church by themselves. In this way, they could practise their faith close to home, yet hidden from public view. Owing to the fact that freedom of religion was anchored in the Dutch Republic's law, religions other than Protestantism were also tolerated. This made the city a unique melting pot; people from all corners of the world settled in Amsterdam.

After Swigters' death, the construction and maintenance of one of the smallest courtyards in the Netherlands was dedicated to the Roomsche Catholijk Oude Armen Kantoor (a charitable organisation based in Amsterdam). Needless to say, the 'one-bedroom apartments', with their extremely steep and narrow staircases, did not meet Dutch housing standards. The apartments were therefore restored and, throughout the years, the courtyard and its buildings have belonged to a number of owners.

Anne Paul Brinkman – antiquarian, interior designer and a well-known name in the art scene – is the chapel's current estate agent. One of Brinkman Fine Real Estate's clients had a sudden change of heart and decided to sell the property. In his opinion, most estate agents think only about the size of a property and not about its uniqueness and history. "I like to view a potential project or property through its unknown qualities. Selling houses is like selling art. It needs to tell a story."

"I have, in the past, told some clients that they'd bought the wrong house," he says laughing. "You can't just copy and paste your interior into any type of building. Each building has its own history and soul which needs to be reflected in the interior. You need to get to the bottom of that unique story." In the chapel, you'll find a tremendous number of striking features. For example, the authentic priest's staff, the phenomenal altar or the original gold leaf ornamentation. Brinkman's distinguished eye for detail and expertise in the field of art make him a one-of-a-kind estate agent. "Change is not always the key to success. Underneath that layer of dust, you'll find hidden features that will blow your mind." Our conclusion? If heaven is a place on earth, we've just found it.

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Page left A look at the shrine from the upstairs landing



THE CHAPEL
HAS ITS
OWN
ORNATE
GATEWAY



This page The entrance of the hidden chapel
Page left Red velvet chair by Made, red and green pillows by Palais, other pillows from H&M Home



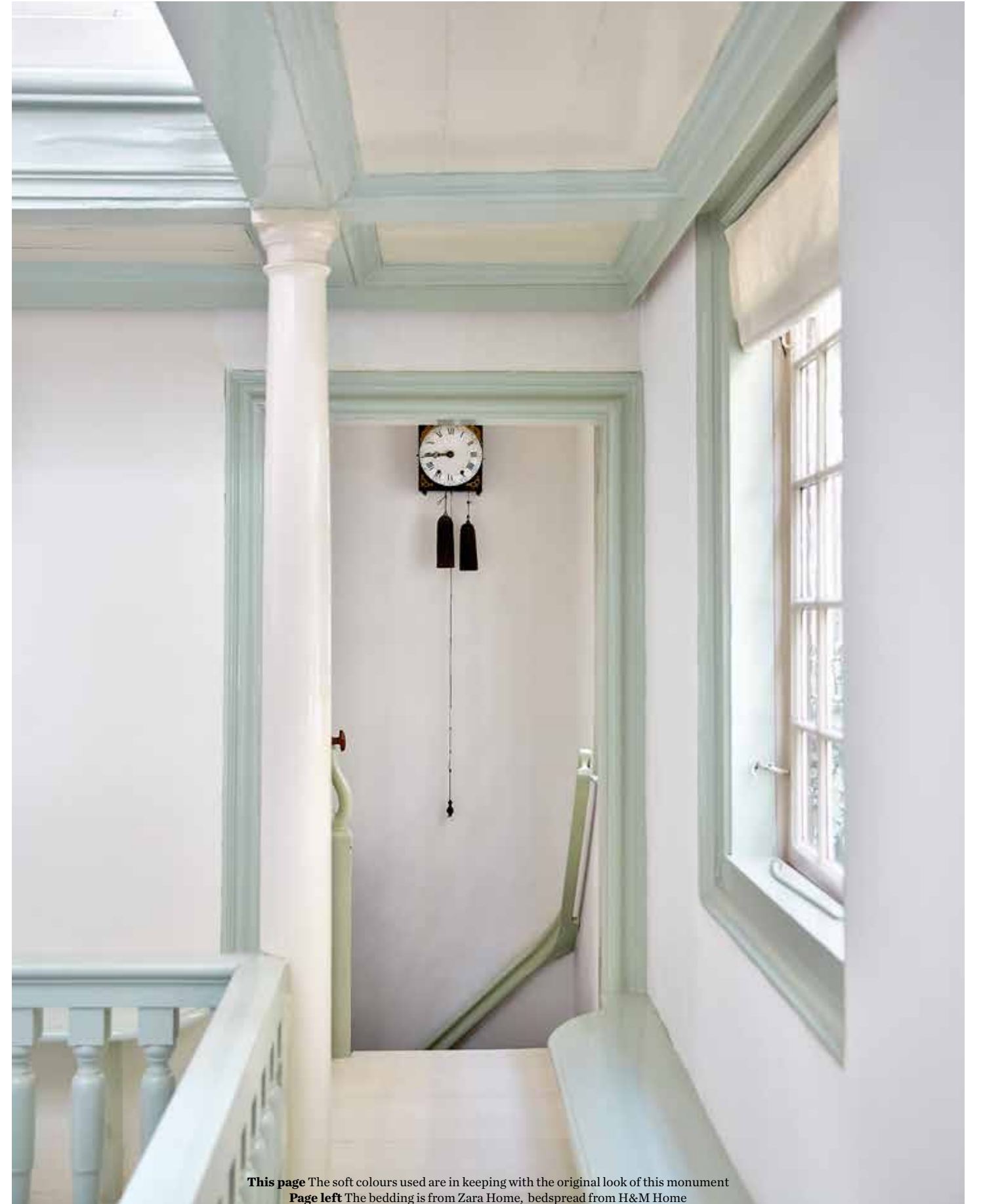
This page A view of the ceiling decorated in gold leaf
Page left A small and sweet kitchen houses all the essentials



THE
KITCHEN
WOULD NOT
LOOK OUT
OF PLACE IN
A VERMEER
PAINTING



IMAGINE
SLEEPING
ON
HALLOWED
GROUND



This page The soft colours used are in keeping with the original look of this monument
Page left The bedding is from Zara Home, bedspread from H&M Home

ORIGINAL
FEATURES
ABOUND
IN THIS
GORGEOUS
CHAPEL



This page The old shrine where the vicar used to hold his sermons
Page right The bathroom with a beautiful freestanding tub

