

# 'Happy hooker' relaxed at rise of Dutch Trump

ROBIN UTRECHT/EVERETT COLLECTION

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AMSTERDAM

NO ONE better embodies the fabled Dutch spirit of tolerance than Xaviera Hollander, mistress of the Happy House B&B in Amsterdam.

Famed as the "happy hooker" who once ran a brothel in New York, Hollander, 73, is now at the helm of a more sedate, if still bohemian, establishment but admits that over the years she has on occasion fallen back on her old prowess for catering to rarefied tastes.

In an interview last week she recalled how one of her customers, an investment banker, had enjoyed sitting in a dog basket while being whipped. Another regular was Conchita, a female wrestler who rented rooms in which to satisfy a niche market — an international clientele of men who derived pleasure from wrestling with her.

"I don't want people to think it's some sex bordello," said Hollander in a living room strewn with erotica and mementos of her libidinous heyday.

Most of her guests these days are tourists, businessmen or youngsters "who want to smoke dope", but she still gets the odd adventurer drawn by the "happy hooker" mystique.

After suffering two heart attacks she uses a chairlift to get upstairs but boasts with a mischievous grin and a nod at her breasts, "I'm not bad for my age, I've had nothing fixed. And I live with a man 10 years younger" — a reference to Philip, her husband. "We have a lot of fun," she added.

Far-right nationalists are on the march across Europe, but the Jewish, self-styled "dominatrix" in a flowing polka-dot kaftan does not expect Geert Wilders, the anti-immigrant firebrand and "Dutch Trump", to interfere with her "fun" and the city's permissive culture if he wins this week's elections.

"I quite like him," she said. "He's intelligent, witty — and sexy in his own way. But he won't be able to change anything. Abortion, gay marriages, dope cafes — we've got it all in this city and none of it is going away."

Holland takes pride in being one of the world's most socially progressive countries, the first to legalise gay marriage in



2001, a haven for pot smokers and legalised prostitutes.

Even though the majority of Wilders's supporters are provincial conservatives, he himself is not averse to change. On the contrary: in a characteristic Dutch twist that differentiates Wilders from Europe's other far-right leaders such as France's Marine Le Pen, his hostility to Islam is based on his fear that its followers are a threat to his country's traditional Dutch liberal values.

"Islam is an existential menace to our society and the more we have of it, the less free we will be," Wilders told The

Sunday Times yesterday during a campaign walkabout in the southern town of Valkenburg, flanked by a phalanx of burly bodyguards.

"We see gays as totally equal and are in support of gay marriage. On that issue we are very liberal indeed."

A local chemist had welcomed him with a sign in his window proclaiming: "Hey Geert, we sell organic hair dye — in your colour" — a reference to the politician's platinum hairdo. Others queued up to pose for selfies with him.

In multicultural Amsterdam, however, there is little

enthusiasm for him. Fears have grown that the city's free spirit will come under threat not from immigrants, but from the lurch to the right by the mainstream parties racing to catch up with the Wilders nationalist bandwagon.

"The establishment parties are spineless, shamelessly adopting the nationalist agenda," said Julia van de Graaff, an Amsterdam actress, citing as an example a conservative leader's call last week for children to be made to sing the national anthem and show respect for the royal family — all of which would have been



Xaviera Hollander says the policies of Geert Wilders, left, find little support in tolerant Amsterdam

unthinkable only a short while ago.

A whiff of marijuana hung defiantly over one Amsterdam square last week as tourists observed the granite triangle of the "Homomonument", the world's first memorial to victims of homophobia.

"There's no going back now," said Mike Uterwijk, 52, a tour guide. "Tolerance and openness are part of our national identity."

A reflection of the fragmented society is the alphabet soup of 28 political parties who will be vying for 150 parliamentary seats in Wednesday's vote. They range from a group whose distinctive selling point is its lack of a programme — it will ask members how to vote on every bill via the internet — to a Party for the Animals and 50Plus, a pensioners' group.

After leading the polls for much of last year, Wilders has been sliding of late and the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, the centre-right party of Mark Rutte, the prime minister, has taken back the lead with about 17%.

Even if Wilders were to win

the most votes, he is unlikely to enter the government, let alone lead it: every other big party has ruled out governing with him, appalled by his pledges to close mosques, ban the Koran and end immigration from Muslim countries.

As for Hollander, she is busy

on a sequel to *The Happy Hooker*, the memoir that served as a sex education guide for a whole generation and whose publication in 1971 resulted in her being expelled from America.

The new book about her life since then may be just as lurid.

She recalls a visit by a group of lesbians who were making a pornographic film in the shed — sorry, "chalet". A tourist came down to breakfast to find a naked woman on the patio.

"I think he was thrilled," said Hollander.

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