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Happy Hooker swaps Penthouse for Dutch B&B



Matthew Campbell in Amsterdam

THE “happy hooker” who was deported from America after writing a bestseller about running a New York brothel is “back in the bed business”, as she puts it, this time managing a Dutch bed and breakfast.

Xaviera Hollander has lost none of the frankness or sense of fun for which she became famous after the appearance in 1971 of *The Happy Hooker*, her account of life as New York’s most successful madame.

“I’m 65 and my boobs are hanging but I’ve just married this man 10 years younger than me,” she said in Amsterdam. “I’m having a great time.”

Some customers who are unaware of Hollander’s background may be taken aback by her humour, not to mention the erotic art and photography that adorns her walls.

“The art work provokes interesting scenes,” said Hollander. “One Italian married couple left . . . with the wife saying, ‘Get me out of here – it is pure pornography.’ he husband came back later with his mistress.”

Other visitors are attracted by the “happy hooker” connection, however. “I get lesbians on honeymoon, women meeting their lovers. I’m not involved in the hooker business any more but sometimes my guests will ask for a girl.”

The Happy Hooker, which sold millions of copies, chronicled Hollander’s progression from secretary at the Dutch consulate in Manhattan to upscale call girl. She speaks candidly in it about her enjoyment of sex and her belief that she was performing a social service. The book is still widely read, it seems.

“Young people often come up to me and say ‘I found your book in my grandparents’ house,’” said Hollander. “They used to say, ‘I found your book in my parents’ house.’”

Hollander, who went on to write a sexual advice column for Penthouse magazine, believes she was at the fore-front of the sexual revolution.

She compares running a brothel to managing a temp agency.

“When a banker calls to ask for a secretary who speaks four languages or a banker goes to a whorehouse and says, ‘I want a buxom redhead’, it’s the same kind of transaction.”

She named Frank Sinatra, the singer, as a client and Alfred Hitchcock, the film maker, was also a fan. “He was kind of odd,” she said of the latter. “He liked to get dressed up like a dead person. We’d pick up young girls, sometimes off the street. They’d walk into the room. He would raise his torso. The girls would scream. That’s how he got his enjoyment.”

As for Sinatra, “he was very cheap. Very crude. He made girls sign a document that he was not responsible for offspring. He did it his way”.

After battling with weight problems, Hollander’s latest idea is a Happy Hooker fashion label featuring “elegant things” for all sizes. “Trying to get some attention for women over 60 can be fun,” she insists.

Not content with that, she is also planning to bring The Happy Hooker to Broadway. “We’re going to make a naughty, frivolous, cheerful musical.” This week she is in Hollywood, promoting a documentary about herself that won the Philadelphia Independent Film Festival last month.

America has long since forgiven her, but on one trip across the pond, an overweight, ageing female immigration officer asked Hollander: “Are you up to any more monkey business?” She replied: “At our age and our weight I think we’d have to pay for it.”