

Touring Tilburg with Khris Soden

POSTED BY PATRICK ALAN COLEMAN ON MON, SEP 15, 2008 AT 11:33 AM



Yes, Tilburg is a real place in Holland, and for eleven days, it was the ghostly double of Portland—if you squinted your eyes juuuust right you could barely make it out.

As Khris Soden lead groups of tourists through the streets of Portland, he was actually following a route in Tilburg. The Tilburg map had been carefully laid over the map of Portland so that the two cities shared boulevards, buildings and sometimes, community characteristics.

Soden was completely in the zone, talking about the various stops on the tour as if they were real and present. It took some imagination to see the cathedral where the Hilton stood, but as Soden gestured towards the cathedral spires, I'll be damned if I didn't catch myself looking up at them in awe.

There were some lovely Tilburg/Portland synchronicities: The vacant Django's record store on Stark became a Tilburg punk club, Portland's Pioneer Place shopping mall became a tacky 90's style mall in Tilburg, and a Willy Week box became a statue of a man with a jug of piss.

It was certainly strange flipping through another cities tour book—holding up the picture of the Summer Palace in Tilburg, using the image to erase the Carl's Junior that stood in front of you—but there we were, looking like a group of delusional dupes, nodding our heads slowly as Soden described the palace, the fountain and the plaza.

One of the best moments in the tour happened as we passed the Central Library with Soden chattering away about the percentage of bicyclists in Tilburg. A group of young punks, leaning against a wall, sneered at our group as we passed. **Suddenly, one of them growled at us—"Fucking tourists."** And though most of us were Portland residents, not a single one of us could have protested.

Soden will be performing a similar tour in Tilburg. But this time, their streets will become ours. There's a kind of comfort in that for me. I'm not exactly sure why.

