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The Art of Diversification

How ethnographic museums in the Netherlands define and implement diversity within exhibition narratives.

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary museums increasingly use of the term diversity as a means of self-presentation, often using it as a symbol to align with current morality and societal values. The use of the term is extensively debated by policymakers and politicians, yet these institutions seldom provide a definition of diversity within their museological context. Consequently, this thesis seeks to examine how ethnographic museums in the Netherlands define and implement diversity within their exhibition narratives. Museums have been subjected to extensive research in the realms of visitor-studies, identity construction and decolonisation processes. Despite research into institutional diversity, there remains a gap in understanding how diversity is defined within in the overarching narrative and public perception of museums. To address this gap, this thesis uses a threefold approach that analyses textual elements, displayed objects, and spatial elements in the the exhibitions 'Colonialism and Rotterdam' and 'Out Colonial Inheritance'. Through this approach, the thesis aims to explore how ethnographic museum in the Netherlands utilise the notion of diversity within their exhibition narratives. Three sections have been chosen from each exhibition to illustrate how diversity influences the presentation of colonial history in both local and urban, as well as national contexts. This research adopts a structural and content-based approach, using empirical evidence that consists of interacting with the exhibition, photographing the elements and setting up visual plans for the layout. These methods provide new insights into the nuanced ways in which diversity is implemented. The study challenges the notion of labelling exhibitions with the term 'diversity' or proclaiming its value means its presence. The museum of Rotterdam centres its narrative on migration, utilising colonialism as the main driver for cultural diversity within the city. This approach highlights intercontinental migration, resulting in the fusion of foods, languages, and interpersonal interactions. Diversity shifts from a means to highlight uniqueness and differences among people to promoting unity and the acceptance of societal differences. Similarly, Amsterdam reflects these shifts but employs objects and spatial elements to convey them. Unlike Rotterdam's chronological structure, Amsterdam adopts a thematic approach, allowing a more fluid integration of contemporary and historical aspects. Rotterdam's chronological focus, while informative, limits the inclusion of more diverse examples. Both museums intertwine historical narratives with contemporary issues, advocating for decolonisation to address present-day issues. They emphasise the need to reevaluate historical memories. Furthermore, diversity presents itself in the need to reclaim and decolonise identities, evolving from a tool to highlighting uniqueness into becoming a unifying force in society.

KEYWORDS: Diversity, museum narratives, ethnographical museums, museum analysis, exhibition analysis, colonialism, identity, memory, narrative analysis

Contents

Chapter 1: Introductory Chapter

In contemporary societies, institutions like museums express commitment to addressing societal issues through diversity policies but often fail to provide a clear definition of diversity. This conceptual unclarity makes it difficult to determine whether institutions aim to bring people together or highlight unique features between distinct communities. Museums, as cultural institutions, are integral to this ongoing trend, reflecting the high value placed on diversity by societal norms. A notable example is the 2023 publication by the Dutch commission of UNESCO, *On(ver)vangbaar. De innovatieve kracht van the culture* [(Ir)replaceable. The innovative power of the culture]. This policy brief states, "Cultural diversity is a necessary condition for local, national, and international peace and security. [...] Cultural expressions in the Netherlands are very rich and diverse. However, not all cultural expressions and communities receive the same recognition and support."[1] In the context of decolonisation, ethnographic museums provide a space for creative forces and art to reveal new, undiscovered, or emotional perspectives on colonial legacies and remembrance, thereby contributing to diversity.

The emphasis on diversity and inclusion is not just a political priority but signifies a shift in the field of museology. Museums have evolved from traditional 'cultural authorities' to visitor-oriented institutions, marking a shift from 'old museology' to 'new museology'. [2] This shift illustrates how museums have reevaluated their relationship with the people and their communities. This highlights the role museums can play in, for example, tackling discrimination and inequality. Once perceived as 'elitists', museums now adopt inclusive language and enforce educational ideas, such as 'cultural empowerment', 'social re-definition', and creating dialogue.[3] Diversity within museology is often related to the cruciality of museums to decolonise. Modern ethnographic museums, idealised as museums for everyone and about everyone, are particularly challenged in this regard. Many of the items that belong to the collections of these museums are the result of colonial conquest. The origins of these items spark contested debates as a result. Some curators and directors defend the use of these items, provided they are placed in their appropriate context.[4] Catlin-Legutko, however, emphasises that the placing these items

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[1] Lisanne Bedaux, "Maak cultuurbeleid dat recht doet aan de diversiteit in Nederland," *Unesco Nederlandse Commissie*, 16 November, 2023, accessed December 21, 2023, https://www.unesco.nl/nl/artikel/maak-cultuurbeleid-dat-recht-doet-aan-de-diversiteit-in-nederland.; Nederlandse Unesco Commissie, *On(ver)vangbaar: De innovatieve kracht van the culture* (2023), 7.

[2] Vikki McCalla and Clive Gray, "Museums and the 'new museology': theory, practice and organisational change," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 29, no. 1 (2014): 20-21.

[3] McCalla and Gray, "Museums and the 'new museology'," 20-21.

[4] George Abungu, "Museums: Geopolitics, Decolonisation, Globalisation and Migration," *Museum International* 71, no. 1-2 (July 2019): 66-68.

within an exhibition space can strip them of their identity and cultural value. This results in a homogenised display of a community, essentially removing the notion of diversity.[5]

To address these challenges, exhibition analysis becomes a method to critically examine how museums construct narratives around their contested pasts and objects. Given the definition of diversity can vary, encompassing race, gender, or sexual orientations, it is challenging to operationalise this concept in museum practices beyond theoretical frameworks. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how museums construct narratives around their contested past and curated objects, and how they make use of their resources to resonate with the growing importance of diversity.

1.1 Research question

Given the gap in understanding how diversity manifests in ethnographical institutions with contested pasts, and the clear value of diversity by policymakers, it is crucial to explore what these institutions aim to convey to their visitors about diversity, particularly through their exhibitions. The research question is the following:

- *How do ethnographic museums in the Netherlands define and implement diversity within exhibition narratives?*

To concretely answer this research question and showcase how different museums utilise diversity throughout their exhibitions, this analysis questions how Wereldmuseum Rotterdam defines diversity and express it in its exhibition on colonialism and migration. This question is specifically applied to their exhibition *Colonialism and Rotterdam*, which focuses on the shared identity of a singular city. Additionally, to compare differences in museological approaches, this analysis also examines how Wereldmuseum Amsterdam defines and expresses diversity in its exhibition on the legacy of colonialism. Their exhibition *Our Colonial Inheritance* covers the entirety of the Netherlands and therefore requires a broader metanarrative compared to Rotterdam.

As these museums are both part of the ‘National Museum of World Cultures’, this comparative model questions how and if these museums, regardless of overarching institution, approach the colonial narrative they wish to share with their visitors differently. The differences in their approaches, alongside their equal share in objects of colonial descent, offers insights into how they use their resources to showcase how colonialism affects the Netherlands, its cities and citizens, while also reflecting on experiences of the colonised.

[5] Abungu, “Museums: Geopolitics, Decolonisation, Globalisation and Migration,” 69.

The narrative constructed by using different elements illustrates these approaches in museum that cover the same topic with different scopes and approaches. By analysing these narratives, it can be understood how museums create dialogues and discussions about diversity, helping visitors grasp the complex remainders of colonialism and its contemporary relevance.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Museums aim to tell a story and communicate meanings about the past and present. Through exhibitions museums can highlight different topics and stories. The narratives, or stories, constructed within these exhibitions often take the form of metanarratives, serving as the overarching theme. Much like literature, these narratives build on provided knowledge which creates a narrative that translates the past into a contemporary setting. Within a metanarrative, sub-themes, minor plotlines, and characterisations are present. Depending on the exhibition's format, these narratives may be straightforward or more complex, depending on the number of stories and perspectives that are included. Typically, an exhibition's narrative is structured chronologically, although it could also be implied, allowing visitors to explore and interpret.[6]

The importance of narrative in an exhibition is to ensure memorability and familiarising the visitor with the theme(s).[7] The story conveyed to visitors is the product of a collaborative effort involving multiple stakeholders in structuring the exhibition. Constructing a story in an exhibition aims to educate visitors with new information or perspectives, making sure they learn within a short period of time during their visit.

The storytelling methods in exhibition narratives resemble those in literature.[8] What sets museums apart as a spatial medium is the interrelated use of physical components to convey a message. The relationship between exhibition objects and their set up fulfils the narrative apparatus, or the narrative ideology. The space itself is a fundamental component to the process of making culture. Narratives within museums offer nuanced settings to reflect on objects, creating opportunities for new discoveries and enrichment for visitors. Additionally, exhibitions start with pre-existing knowledge and can therefore offer new perspectives by, for example, using space to disrupt stereotypes and common intellectual

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[6] Laura Hourston Hanks, "Writing Spatial Stories: Textual narratives in the museum," in *Museum Making: Narratives, architectures*, *exhibitions*, ed. Suzanne MacLeod, Laura Hourston Hanks and Jonathan Hale (New York: Routledge, 2012), 26-27.

[7] Philip Hughes, *Storytelling Exhibitions* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 57.

[8] Hughes, *Storytelling Exhibitions*, 3-8.

perspectives.[9] This display method presents a narrative by making use of all senses, creating immersive and personal experiences. Exhibition spaces are designed to facilitate a deep connection between the objects and visitors by highlighting the social and cultural contexts that give objects meaning. This method reevaluates traditional display techniques, making the entire spatial environment a part of the narrative, evoking emotions and encouraging new discoveries and reflections.[10]

The purpose of narrative exhibition analysis is to identify motivations and understand the messages translated by the museum through various characteristics. The key features are: (1) a fixed configuration of exhibition components which allows visitors to freely orientate themselves, (2) objects-centred storytelling as objects are a core component for story-telling and stimulating narrative meaning-making, (3) initiating socially-based meaning-making by letting visitors participate with one another, (4) interpretive frameworks connect narrative exhibitions and communities who interact with them, (5) narrative exhibitions allow for meaning-making processes by different communities, each interacting with the components and narrative in different ways.[11] These characteristics help to understand how museums use exhibitions to convey a specific narratives, highlighting topics of public interest, and providing insights into the context of a discourse, engaging audiences in contemporary issues.[12]

Research conducted by David Francis on different approaches to exhibitions in English museums reveals that narrative tools within exhibitions change how stories are interpreted. His findings indicate (meta)narratives can be influenced by varying voices and perspectives or by implementing narrative styles similar to novels. Narrative analysis shows how these techniques create more dynamic visitor experiences compared to traditional approaches. Additionally, analysing narratives in exhibitions highlights how varied narrative techniques can alter interpretations, situating exhibitions within a broadened socio-political context and discussion.[13]

1.3 Literature Review

Research on museum narratives has become more prominent after the shift to new museology. Understanding the significance of this research requires understanding and examining the role of

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[9] Marco Borsotti, "A Brief Journey through Definitions of Contemporary Exhibition Design: From Display to Narrative and Back," *The International Journal of Architectonic, Spatial, and Environmental Design* 14, no. 2 (2020): 60-61.

[10] Borsotti, "A Brief Journey through Definitions of Contemporary Exhibition Design," 61-62.

[11] Stephanie Jane McKinnon Lambert, "Engaging Practices: Re-thinking Narrative Exhibition Development in Light of Narrative Scholarship" (Master Thesis., Massey University, 2009), 35.

[12] Hughes, *Storytelling Exhibitions*, 17.

[13] David Francis, ""An Arena Where Meaning and Identity Are Debated and Contested on a Global Scale": Narrative Discourses in British Museum Exhibitions, 1972–2013," *Curator: The Museum Journal* 58, no. 1 (January 2015): 55.

ethnographic museum, which have been the subject of debates regarding their purpose and criticised for the heritage of the objects they acquire and put on display. The following section explores the role of museums in the process of decolonisation and their historical relationship with colonialism. Understanding how diversity policies are implemented shapes a broader understanding of how museums use the concept of diversity structurally. Given colonialism is central to ethnographical museums, their stance influences their surroundings as well as their visitors. Therefore, comprehending their impact on societal identities sheds light on how diversification affects the narratives they construct. Furthermore, while museums aim to highlight diversity, there is a risk that they, unintentionally, create a gap between different communities.

1.3.1 Decolonisation

Ethnographic museums have faced criticism regarding their societal role, particularly their colonial heritage and the conservation of objects of colonial descent. These criticisms have intensified discussions on the ethical use of contested heritage in museum contexts. In research, an emerging intersection between diversity and the ethical use of stolen heritage focuses on the relationship between decolonisation and adopting appropriate language and contextualisation practices. This approach aims to create a more nuanced understanding on the complexities of including items of colonial heritage in museum exhibitions. According to Moore, successful inclusion of diversity within the postcolonial setting would entail that a visitor of colour would not feel as though they are diversifying the museum.[14] The diversification and postcolonial emphasis on multiculturalism parallels the need for communities to reclaim stolen heritage.[15] However, the emphasis on decolonisation as a means of diversifying museums is contested as it involves more complexities than solely the issue of redistributing stolen heritage.[16] Brulon Soares argues that the focus on objects alone creates a gap, emphasising museums need to focus on their own role in connecting oppressed and minority communities to their past.[17]

Kimmerer's study on museum decolonisation aligns with the notion that the focus should not merely centre on the displacement of objects. Although, they acknowledge this may be difficult due to the lack of registered knowledge by European nations on the countries they colonised. To address this,

[14] William Boelhower, "Decolonization, diversity and accountability: The role of museums in democracies of the global north," *Atlantic Studies* (July 2023): 5-6.

[15] Boelhower, "Decolonization, diversity and accountability," 8.

[16] Bruno Brulon Soares, "The myths of museology: on deconstructing, reconstructing, and redistributing," *ICOFOM Study Series* 49, no. 2 (2021): 243-244.

[17] Soares, "The myths of museology," 254.

museums should provide additional points in exhibition narratives to expand insight into cultures.[18] These expansions intersect with the discourse on the role of museums recognising their role in a colonial framework.[19] Colonial representation stretches further than exhibitions and collections, extending to the buildings that house museums. According to Aldrich, this is particularly evident in ethnographic museums, where architecture represents the former pride of colonisers. These structures incorporate features and symbolism that is linked to their former colonies, resembling sentiments of the past; they reflect the nation's perceived success in bringing civilisation to their colonies.[20] Efforts have been made by museums to address their role in colonisation by removing some of the external features reflecting their colonial past.[21] However, a challenge presents itself, altering the exterior creates concern about the interior elements that still resemble the past. This creates friction between historians and those who advocate for the decolonised space.[22]

1.3.2 Diversity policies

The term 'diversity' has been subjected to criticism amongst scholars, often emerging from policies that are implemented by an institution. As previously mentioned, diversity is, when undefined, a broad term. Its extensiveness creates discourse on the use of the term, stretching across multiple scholarly fields. The first issue that arises revolves around the internal and structural diversity of staff within the cultural sector. Brooke, et al.'s examination of ethnic diversity in the United Kingdom's cultural fields reveal that policies aimed at creating a diverse workforce do not affect all fields equally. Museums, in particular, show to have the lowest number of ethnically diverse workers. This scarcity in numbers is particularly low concerning leadership and managerial positions.[23]

Malik distinguishes three phases in the development of diversity policy within the cultural sector: multiculturalism, cultural diversity and creative diversity. Despite the aim at depoliticising race, Malik argues that the idea of 'creative diversity' steers away from the structural issues of inequality. The concept of diversity, as an umbrella term, does not only distinguish inequality such as sex, class or disability.

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[18] Laura Phillips, "An Incomplete Glossary of Change to Activate Decolonising and Indigenising Practices in Museums," *Museum International* 74, no. 3-4 (July 2022): 125.

[19] Phillips, "An Incomplete Glossary of Change to Activate Decolonising and Indigenising Practices in Museums," 125-128.

[20] Robert Aldrich, "Colonial museums in a postcolonial Europe," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 2, no. 2 (July 2009): 139.

[21] Aldrich, "Colonial museums in a postcolonial Europe," 143.

[22] Ibid., 152-153.

[23] Roaa Ali and Bridget Byrne, "The Trouble with Diversity: The Cultural Sector and Ethnic Inequality," *Cultural Sociology* 17, no. 4 (November 2022): 496.

Using it as an umbrella term leaves little room for the complexities of possible intersecting inequalities.[24] Saha challenges this argument, stating that creative diversity could empower race-making by, for example, recognising niche communities. Consequently, diversity can serve as a way to broaden the market and audience of private and public institutions by addressing underrepresentation as bad for business.[25] However, while the push for diversity can increase the need to meet a more diverse demographic, a critical issue often overlooked by policies is equal rights. Zanoni contends that while the aim of most policies is to remove inequality, policies do not necessarily lead to fair representation or equal rights for minority groups. This manifests itself as structural inequalities, such as power relations, which are hardly addressed by policymakers. Additionally, the potential obstruction to resources for minorities are oftentimes forgotten by policymakers, begging the question how truly diverse these institutions are and what diversity means?[26]

Diversity's definitions and implications vary depending on the context they are placed in and to which national standards they adhere. In the Netherlands, there is a history of over twenty years in policymaking for diversity and the integration of cultural fields in the cultural scene. A significant contribution to cultural diversity policy was introduced by Van Der Ploeg at the start of the new century. This policy primarily advocated for a shift to a cultural democracy, emphasising the movement of art towards the audience. Additionally, it aimed to make sure policymakers explicitly took audience development into account. In 2011, Halbe Zijlstra's policy stated that culture was relevant to preserve traditions, developing identity, and fostering interpersonal connections. This approach aimed to enhance creativity and innovation with additional emphasis on the need for entrepreneurship to attract new audiences for participation.[27]

In the context of contested policymaking, decolonisation and diversification exemplify themselves clearly in linguistic diversity. The debate on inclusive language is related to the museum's role in constructing identities as contemporary multicultural societies shape language. Two perspectives are apparent in this debate. The first, necessitated by Western governments, is the need for a single national language.[28] Joseph and Blommaert acknowledge that, while the world is not divided into monolingual nations and states, the need to have a single national language is predominant. The rationale behind this

[24] Ali and Bridget Byrne, "The Trouble with Diversity," 497.

[25] Ali and Bridget Byrne, "The Trouble with Diversity," 497-498.

[26] Ibid., 498.

[27] Koen van Eijck, "Culture for Everyone: The Value and Feasibility of Stimulating Cultural Participation," in *Cultural Policy in the Polder,* ed. Edwin van Meerkerk and Quirijn Lennert van den Hoogen (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 197-198.

[28] Melanie Cooke and James Simpson, "Discourses about linguistic diversity," in *The Routledge Handbook of Multilingualism*, ed. Marilyn Martin-Jones, Adrian Blackledge and Angela Creese (New York: Routledge, 2012), 120.

perspective stems from the idea that language leads to a strong, stable and cohesive society. Joseph additionally argues that if a nation's aim is to construct a unified national language, they would explicitly marginalise groups who do not speak said language.[29] Implementing this perspective diversifies the approach museums need to take to implement the notion of diversity. Consequently, museums need to ensure that their exhibitions and textual communication are comprehensible to various communities, addressing the diversity through language. However, this is challenged when not all texts can be universally understood by everyone. Diversity policies, grounded in examples like these, face criticism, particularly the ones aimed at enhancing 'social cohesion' and 'integration', as they shift away from multiculturalism policies. According to Goodheart, the cause of these failed policies is that they enforced 'too much diversity'. Vertovec and Wessendorf describe the unfolding of these events as 'iconic issues of diversity'. Notably, the dependency on societal concerns, such as immigration and prioritisation of public resources, makes these cases of national concern.[30] Macdonald investigates the issue of 'too much diversity' in the museum sector by questioning if there is such a thing as "diversity-max".[31] Her findings show that museum exhibitions are limited on the degree of diversity by time, space and prior interests. The maximality of diversity implemented by museums is also challenged and limited by local politics and policies.[32] The concept of diversity becomes contested when questioning who should and should not be included in the narrative, and to what extent politics should influence these decisions. If a museum is aimed at, and presents itself as 'culture for all', then should politically or culturally contested groups be included? Therefore, Macdonald argues that bias in determining which audiences and communities exhibitions should target must go beyond popularised groups highlighted in diversity policymaking. Diversity and inclusivity policies should include underrepresented groups, such as populists, to genuinely represent diversity and create social cohesion.[33]

1.3.3 Identity Construction

As museums are often related to community diversity there has been substantial research into how they not only aim to attract different communities but aim to shape identity as well. The significance of diversity in museum studies, rooted in a multicultural society, forms the basis for Kaplan's discernment

[29] Cooke and Simpson, "Discourses about linguistic diversity," 120-121.

[30] Cooke and Simpson, "Discourses about linguistic diversity," 123.

[31] Sharon Macdonald, "Diversity Max*: Multiple Differences in Exhibition-Making in Berlin Global in the Humboldt Forum," in *Doing Diversity in Museums and Heritage - A Berlin Ethnography*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2023), 173-174.

[32] Macdonald, "Diversity Max*," 187.

[33] Ibid., 187-188.

that museums are integral in shaping national identities.[34] While there is no singular identity that can be referred to, museums create environments where stories can resonate with visitors, creating a sense of community and integration among different groups.[35] Museums serve as a place where people and cultures can come together, making them not only a place for intercultural dialogue, but also a site to negotiate differences.[36] However, the debate on how museums shape national identity through diversity and cultural connectivity creates tension, creating a sense of 'self' and the 'other'. This becomes particularly evident when examining ethnographic museums. As the 'other' is necessary to create an identity, the old and new form of these museums begs the question on how diversity presents itself. Are they still presenting otherness as diversity or has diversity taken a different shape in the confines of intercultural dialogue?[37]

This idea of separation between people and cultures is also referred to as 'differencing', something that is closely related, and often works alongside, diversity. Contemporary museums aim to create more space for differencing opposed to revising their approach to it. While closely related to diversity, differencing tends to denote the already existing distinctions. The initial emotional response to diversity suggests the aim to get rid of inequalities and differences between communities through a non-hierarchical approach. However, this perception is controversial as it associates itself with the accumulation of different groups such as those with different religions, automatically creating inequalities and a sense of hierarchy. Christian Reus-Smit refers to this paradox as the 'billiard ball model'.[38]

The acknowledgement by institutions of the challenge posed by the notion of othering as a paradox results in the emergence of a new paradox. Partridge and Chin challenge the implementation of diversity by questioning who benefits from diversifying and who may be forgotten?[39] As previously mentioned, the issue of segregation between the 'self' and the 'other' is a recurring trend in the aim to make diversity the pinnacle of a museum. Attempts are made, however, to dis-other themselves.[40] The concept of dis-othering relates back to the notion and need to decolonise and establish structural diversity. Ndikung and Alampi position dis-othering in curational troubling, emphasising critical thinking on how

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[34] Flora Edouwaye S. Kaplan, "Making and Remaking National Identities," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 165.

[35] Yizhu Chen and Aline Khoury, "Decolonisation of Past and Present Identities," *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* 554 (May 2021): 955.

[36] Sharon Macdonald, "Doing Diversity, Making Differences: Multi-Researcher Ethnography and Heritage in Berlin," in *Doing Diversity in Museums and Heritage - A Berlin Ethnography*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2023), 16.

[37] Macdonald, "Doing Diversity, Making Differences," 16.

[38] Ibid., 18-19.

[39] Jonas Tinius, "Dis-Othering Diversity: Troubling Differences in a Berlin-Brussels Afropolitan Curational Collaboration," in *Doing Diversity in Museums and Heritage - A Berlin Ethnography*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2023), 157.

[40] Tinius, "Dis-Othering Diversity," 158.

cultural institutions produce notions of cultural-otherness based on geographically-bound ideas. Internal discussion regarding the dis-othering within museums has also led to internal discourse among museum workers. The division centres on the meaning of diversity and diversity-work, giving rise to a repetitive paradox. Difference and differencing become an issue by making a clear distinction between communities and race. Moreover, it creates an obstacle by preventing inclusion of art or objects that embody non- or post-racial messages.[41] Regardless, the notion of diversity remains a pivotal point for institutions in shaping internal structures and the products they produce, highlighting the complexity of defining diversity in cultural institutions.

1.4 Innovative aspects

The literature review highlights a significant gap in current academic research. While diversity has been extensively researched across various fields using different analytical approaches, existing studies focus on specific dimensions such as racial, cultural, and community diversity. Gender, on the other hand, has received less attention within the field of diversity research.

This thesis departs from previous analyses into narrative structures as these often focus on visitor experiences and curatorship. Instead, its primary focus of lies in understanding how diversity is defined and implemented at the exhibition level. This shift moves away from traditional structural analytical approaches in museum studies towards empirical analysis of exhibitions. The empirical approach is innovative as it offers new insights into how museums utilise their resources across different mediums to construct narratives.

Scholarly consensus acknowledges the complexity of defining diversity and that the implementation of this term stems from changes in societal structures. The museum's societal role is multilayered as it encompasses identity construction, multiculturalism, memory, and discourse on decolonising ethnographic collections. In addition to visitor studies, academic analysis focuses on examining policies governing and regulating diversity implementation in museums. These analyses delve into how policy intersects with visitor experience, the use of selective language, and contextualising contested heritage. This research broadens this discourse by examining how cultural institutions implement diversity on an empirical level.

Through comparative analysis of two separate museums within a larger institutional framework, this thesis aims to provide new insights into how societies that value diversity navigate their contested pasts and make sense of multiculturalism and questions of identity.

[41] Tinius, "Dis-Othering Diversity," 168-169.

1.5 Sources and Limitations

The primary sources for this exhibition analysis consist of two selected museums: Wereldmuseum Rotterdam and Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, both part of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen [National Museum of World Cultures]. This organisation aims to broaden visitors' perspectives on world cultures and foster awareness of their own position as global citizens, emphasising and sensitising their audience to the ideal that despite differences, we are all inherently the same: human beings.[42] The analysis focuses on two specific exhibitions: *Kolonialisme and Rotterdam*, active from December 1, 2023, to November 3, 2024, and *Our Colonial Inheritance*, active from June 24, 2023, with an undetermined end date. These exhibitions were selected as both explore the colonial past of the Netherlands, with the Rotterdam exhibition focusing on how colonialism affected the city and its culture, while Amsterdam covers the broad national context. Given their colonial past, these museums' perspectives on their own position and collections could create bias. However, incorporating diversity offers opportunities to incorporate new perspectives on this contested past, enabling the museums to reflect on said past with new insights and therefore achieve their mission of emotionally connecting visitors to their narratives. Despite being part of a larger institution, each museum approaches the theme of colonialism differently and therefore needs to implement a different narrative structure that addresses diversity.

There are some limitations, such as the distance between the institutions. Consequently, the museum Rotterdam was visited more often than the museum in Amsterdam. During these visits, detailed notes were taken on memorable impressions, on the atmosphere, colours, sound, and the spatial structure. Additionally, everything was photographed to show positions of objects and the way elements interrelate to one another, facilitating later reflections and thorough analysis.

During these visits selections of objects were made of the large collection used throughout the exhibitions. For Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, exhibition texts were accessible online via mobile devices. This was not the case for the museum Amsterdam whereby all information in the exhibition was obtained from photographed plaques. This approach, based on personal observations and experience, might introduce a bias or overlook certain exhibition elements.

Throughout the on-site observations, notes were taken on noteworthy elements, beginning with the entrance to the exhibition and continuing with details on spatial characteristics (for example, benches, colours), object presentation (for example, behind glass or not, what objects are part of a section), and auditory environment (for example, background noise or music). A physical representation of the spatial elements was created to indicate the layout of objects and the interrelation of textual sources with the rest

[42] "Op de verschillen na, hetzelfde: mens," Stichting Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, accessed January 26, 2023, https://amsterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/nl/over-wereldmuseum-amsterdam/stichting-nationaal-museum-van-wereldculturen.

of the exhibition. Distinctive features, including standout objects, textual elements, and the overall exhibition were photographed for later reference. This comprehensive approach ensures an accurate translation of the exhibition into an academic analysis. By examining the different elements of text, objects, and space, the methodological analysis could incorporate all elements of meaning-making, serving as the foundation of the analytical approach.

With these considerations in mind, the methodological approach of the on-site observations ensures a thorough explanation of how museums implement diversity within the narratives of their exhibitions.

1.6 Methodology

Building upon the discussion in the previous chapter regarding sources, this analysis focuses on two exhibitions to examine how they define and implement diversity within their narratives. To address this question, a structured threefold model is applied to translate empirical findings into concrete and tangible evidence of diversity as depicted in exhibition narratives.

1.6.1 Textual Narrative Analysis

The narrative analysis for contemporary museums needs to be in-depth. This is required because museum texts are the result of extensive thought processes to fit the objects they are assigned to. As a result, this analysis needs to intertwine the interpretation of text and object.[43] To correctly approach narrative analysis, this thesis uses the model in Table 1, developed by Insulander, based on the work of Danielsson and Selander. Originally designed to investigate educational multimodal texts and their meanings in exhibition contexts, this model is designed for textual analysis within multimodal exhibition settings. It serves as a framework for understanding exhibitions as complex signs, particularly in relation to themes of migration and identity.[44] This model will be used with some modifications to suit the colonial context in the analysed exhibitions of this thesis; see Table 1.

[43] Louise J. Ravelli, "Making Language Accessible: Successful Text Writing for Museum Visitors," *Linguistics and Education* 8, no. 4 (1996): 369.

[44] Eva Insulander, "Representations of migration, borders and memories in exhibitions: a multimodal text analysis," *Museum and Society* 17, no. 10 (March 2019): 118-120.

	Multimodal text focus	Analysis of exhibition
General structure and setting	Orientation and sequence of present themes.	What is the metanarrative of the exhibition and how is the content arranged? What aspects are central? This will analyse content and how themes are arranged.
	What do the resources express?	
Interplay of textual parts	Proximity between writings and coherence with other semiotic resources.	What functions do different resources have? This will analyse how different resources are interconnected and interplay with one another, for example, panels, object descriptions, diagrams, flyers, etc.
	Conformity and coherence between concepts, descriptions and explanations.	
Figurative language and symbolism	Are there analogies or metaphors?	What value do the metaphors and analogies carry? What symbolism is present in the narrative? What function do they have in the exhibition?
	Symbolism that is identified by the institution or is hidden within the writing.	
Values	Explicit values	How are values and norms represented in the different features? What are the norms expressed?
	Implicit values	

Table 1. Analytical model for exhibition textual analysis.

The model is not used multimodally but is solely used for analysing exhibition texts and will therefore not be applied directly to any objects. This model is initially used to decipher the overall story the exhibition wishes to convey. Thereafter it is used to look further into how elements are correlated and positioned to one another, for example the object plaques and the introductory texts, if there are any hidden meanings or moral convictions that are harder to perceive. After using this model, the most valuable sections are used to present how the narrative is created and what implications are given. Alongside this model it is crucial to fill gaps left such as object and spatial analysis to ensure that there are higher rates of interconnectedness between the three aspects of analysis.[45]

1.6.2 Object analysis

This analysis aims to identify any objects placed in juxtaposition, objects that have been positioned and displayed to counter the overall narrative of the exhibition. This consideration counteracts objects in adjacency, a separate object or gathering of objects intended to catch the visitor's eye and convey an important story.[46] When these items are present, they are analysed to reveal what message they employ. Furthermore, when the possibility of engaging with an object arises, it alters the meaning within the narrative, distinguishing it from other objects opposed to being singled out or grouped together.[47] Additionally, each object is described by their visual and, if applicable, sensory features.

Iconographical analysis is conducted according to the parameters set by Panofsky's three levelled method. The first is pre-iconographical description, focusing on the primary or natural subject matter. The second is iconographical analysis which centres around culturally shared visual signs and connotations. The third step, iconological interpretation, aims to unravel "intrinsic meaning or content constituting the world of "symbolical" values."[48] However, as the nature of the sources are based on personal interactions and observations when participating, limitations are present. While incorporating a thorough methodology, the use of approaches such as iconography have their limits too. Panofsky's iconographic analysis has been argued to focus too much on the historical and cultural context, highlighting otherness. By focusing too much on symbolic and interpretive aspects the aesthetic experience can get lost.[49] As his method serves as the foundation to support the interpretation of objects, additional modes of analysis have been conducted to counteract possible loss of information. To create a better understanding of the objects

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[45] Ravelli, "Making Language Accessible," 376.

[46] Hughes, *Storytelling Exhibitions*, 37-38.

[47] Stephanie Jane McKinnon. "Engaging Practices," 40.

[48] Marion G. Müller, "Iconography and iconology as a visual method and approach," in *The SAGE Handbook of Visual Research Methods,* ed. Eric Margolis and Luc Pauwels (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2011), 286.

[49] Keith Moxey, "Panofsky's Concept of "Iconology" and the Problem of Interpretation in the History of Art," *New Literary History* 17, no. 2 (Winter, 1986): 271-272.

within their narrative this thesis will also use bibliographical and contextual analysis. This analysis will consider who the creator is and what background they have as well as the context of the object. This concerns time period, location, individuals that have been incorporated, and any other important features of the object. The first steps of analysis are to identify the symbolism of the pieces, what their cultural significance is and what they resembled in the literal sense but also regarding the metanarrative analysed through text. Thereafter additional information is gathered to deepen the analysis.

The relation these objects have in their space is also considered when this is of value in the exhibition. This consideration will be drawn from Newhouse's reflection on spatial awareness in exhibition design. The exhibition's layout and analysis are interrelated with objects in terms of juxtaposition and adjacency.[50]. Additionally sensory experiences such as, shape and size of the room, lighting, colour and sound influence have been taken into consideration if they affect overall narrative.[51]

[50] İpek Kaynar Rohloff, "Museum Gallery Layouts and Their Interactions With Exhibition Narratives and Space Use Patterns: An Investigation of YCBA, The MoMa and The HMA Galleries" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2009), 21-22.

[51] Rohloff, "Museum Gallery Layouts and Their Interactions With Exhibition Narratives and Space Use Patterns," 4.

Chapter 2: Wereldmuseum Rotterdam

In the upcoming chapter the question how Wereldmuseum Rotterdam defines diversity and expresses it in its exhibition on colonialism and migration is analysed through examining the exhibition '*Kolonialisme en Rotterdam*'. Firstly, an introduction to the museum and exhibition is provided whereafter the focus will shift to the analysis of three sections, namely 'Departure and arrival', 'Urban culture', and 'Streets and collections'. Each section is analysed according to the methodology as described in the introductory chapter, analysing textual sources, objects and spatial elements.

The Museum

The main aim of the Museums of World Cultures in the Netherlands, with the museum in Rotterdam being no exception, is to demonstrate to their audience how people all over the world are shaped by the very world they inhabit.[52] It aims to achieve this through the lens of the past and the present. The museum in Rotterdam particularly emphasises the city's role as Rotterdam's large harbour played a significant role in the infrastructure of imperialistic and global movement of people, objects and ideas.[53] The museum aims to transpire this role through their exhibitions and programs about the people, histories and cultures that shape the world.[54]

The mission of the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam aligns with that of all ethnographic museums that are part of the organisation Museum of World Cultures. This shared mission states "Besides the collection, we also share a common mission: to inspire open-mindedness and contribute to global citizenship."[55] The museum works to create a societal program that reflects the multicultural character of the city, with a central focus on its Rotterdam collection. By striving to show "the most diverse audience possible", the museum aims to demonstrate that people all over the world are connected.[56] Their collection supports this goal by actively involving their audience and stakeholders in expanding the narratives they currently have, highlighting the interconnectedness that exists between people. One of the programs they put together with stakeholders and city partners is Rotterdam United, which aims to connect artists, cultural and scientific organisations, and communities in the city.[57]

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[52] "Over Wereldmuseum Rotterdam," Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed February 12, 2024, https://rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/nl/over-wereldmuseum-rotterdam.

[53] Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, "Over Wereldmuseum Rotterdam."

[54] Ibid.

[55] "Missie," Over Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed February 12, 2024, https://rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/nl/over-wereldmuseum-rotterdam/missie.

[56] Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, "Missie."

[57] Ibid.

This mission has not always been present in the museum and the city of Rotterdam. In 1851 the building housed the Vereeniging der Koninklijke Yachtclub [Association of the Royal Yacht Club], directed by Price Hendrik. The Yacht Club transitioned to what is now the Maritime Museum which took over the objects that were accumulated in the building. The municipality took ownership of the building that is contemporarily known as the Wereldmuseum. In 1883 they decided to transform it into an ethnographic museum, officially opening in 1885 under the name Museum van Land- en Volkenkunde [Museum of Land and Ethnology]. The original collection was contributed by Dr. Elie Van Rijckevorsel, a member of the Yacht Club whose father and grandfather had influence in the city. The private collection was accumulated during his travels to Indonesia, Brazil and South America where he developed an interest in non-Western art. His efforts, and the collection of 900 items he owned, became the basis for the museum.[58] In the first half of the twentieth century the museum focused on anthropological research and participated in expeditions to New Guinea to record disappearing traditions to preserve them for future generations. In the second half of the twentieth century focus shifted to the countries of origins of the migrants in Rotterdam. To align with this new image, the exterior of the museum was changed to be less imposing: the building's exterior was painted in a shade of grey and they removed the grand stairs at the front of the building before replacing them with staircases from porch flats.[59] The objects the museum holds now represent 130 years of collecting by and for Rotterdam citizens.[60]

Exhibition 'Colonialism and Rotterdam'

The museum has an extensive website with information on the exhibition. According to the institution the exhibition shows how the global legacy of colonialism has contemporary influence on the city where local, national, and international histories come together. In the exhibition, five themes will be presented which show the city's history in relation to world histories by providing examples on how the past still has an impact.[61] The exhibition aims to achieve this by featuring conversations with six individuals from Rotterdam, each with a background in migration. These individuals represent several

[58] "Geschiedenis Wereldmuseum," Thema's, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed February 12, 2024, https://rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/nl/themas/geschiedenis-wereldmuseum.

[59] Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, "Geschiedenis Wereldmuseum."

[60] "Organisatie," Over Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed February 12, 2024, https://rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/nl/over-wereldmuseum-rotterdam/organisatie.

[61] "Kolonialisme en Rotterdam," Nu te zien, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed February 12, 2024, https://rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/nl/zien-en-doen/tentoonstellingen/kolonialisme-en-rotterdam.

generations, including first, second, and third generations.[62] Additionally, the exhibition includes a segment dedicated to initiating conversations about colonialism with children, facilitated through a storybook, *Op de rug van Bigi Kayman* [On the back of Bigi Kayman]. The story, authored by Hedy Tjin and Henna Goudzand Nahar, connects the Surinamese song Bigi Kayman to the history of the Brooskampers.[63]

The exhibition itself begins with a narrative introduction placed before the entrance to the exhibition, presented on a plaque. The introduction reads:

> Rotterdam's colonial past is connected to the global legacy of colonialism. Local, national and international histories come together and resonate in the city – in many ways. The colonial history of Rotterdam is part of a bigger story about European colonialism and its devastating effects on people and the natural environment in other parts of the world. There are traces of this global history in the city today: in its streets, buildings, in documents and objects. It is also reflected in the city's economy and prosperity, in social relationships, in the experiences of its residents, in old and new traditions. The people of Rotterdam live among all of this, and they pass on histories, some deliberately, others entirely unaware of the fact. Knowledge of colonial history can aid recognition of its traces in the city. Sharing stories creates space for new insights.[64]

Upon entering the exhibition there is no clear distinction between different rooms and no marker that indicates which part of the exhibition serves as the start of the narrative. However, the museum makes use of a numbering system to structure the narrative that runs throughout the space. *Colonialism and Rotterdam* is structured into five distinct themes that run throughout the exhibition space. These themes are ordered chronologically as follows: (1) Growth of the city, (2) Departure and arrival, (3) Urban culture, (4) Streets and collections, and (5) Attitudes and actions. These sections are addressed in the overall introduction which outlines the narrative constructed throughout the space. Additionally, there is a dedicated section of the exhibition specifically aimed at engaging children in communication and dialogue about colonialism, as mentioned in the introductory segment. Upon entering the space, it is

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[62] "Rotterdammers aan het woord," Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Tentoonstellingen, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed February 12, 2024, https://rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/nl/zien-en-doen/tentoonstellingen/kolonialisme-en-rotterdam/rotterdammers-aan-het-woord.

[63] "Met kinderen in gesprek," Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Tentoonstellingen, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed February 12, 2024, https://rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/nl/zien-en-doen/tentoonstellingen/kolonialisme-en-rotterdam/met-kinderen-gesprek.

[64] "A Global Legacy," Introduction, Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed February 28, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/b2942e55-2e62-45ef-9f60-715692e5af95/stop/b65cbac2-58e7-46a2-8de3-a156a122edd7/index/1.

unclear whether the visitor needs to start on the left or the right side, leaving the possibility of misunderstanding the complete picture.

The exhibition starts off with an introduction of what position Rotterdam served within colonial trade and how the harbour supplied wealth to the city, and how those who weren't directly involved with slavery and colonial trade still benefited from it. This continues in 'Departure and arrival' where the museum focuses on the further growth of the harbour and how this attracted more people and trade. Additionally, it lays the foundation for how people would need to migrate to Rotterdam, sometimes involuntarily. The arrival of migrants in turn brought along distinct cultures which fused with the Dutch and Rotterdam culture, as discussed in 'Urban culture'. Here the museum goes into how customs, tradition and cultural aspects adapted and were passed on.

Aside from the intangible aspects that were influenced, the exhibition highlights the physical effects colonialism had on tangible and historical sites within the city. The section 'Streets and collections' goes into further detail on how statues, street names and archival material within institutions reflect colonial perspectives. Additionally, this section presses on the importance of recognising these sources to avoid repeating colonial prejudice. Afterwards the concluding section of the exhibition, 'Attitudes and actions', delves deeper into the contemporary context. It reflects on how former racial hierarchical structures still affect current society on individual levels, but equally in the shape of institutional racism. Here, the museum aims to sensitise the audience and themselves in the narrative to combat these instilled prejudices while also acknowledging their existence.

Throughout the exhibition the visitor hears soft music that comes from the video that is played at the very start of the exhibition. There are little significant differences in spatial aspects except the colourful section that is dedicated to educating children.

The metanarrative of the exhibition explores the intersection of local, national, and international histories in Rotterdam, highlighting their impact on the physical environment of the city as well as its economy, relationships, and traditions. It emphasises understanding and acknowledging these historical remnants through new insights obtained through shared stories. By considering this past and its consequences, our contemporary behaviour and discussions on colonialism should be sensitised, recognising Rotterdam is still a multicultural city with diverse individual experiences.

2.1 Departure and Arrival

Within the second section of the exhibition, 'Departure and arrival', the museum shifts into an expansion of the economic trade during the colonial era as well as how the shifts within the colonial structure often led to (forced) migration of colonised groups.

The introduction of this section states the following:

> The quaysides of Rotterdam have seen many people come and go as a result of colonialism. Until the eighteenth century it were mainly sailors, merchants, colonisers, administrators and troops who left the Netherlands to travel to colonised regions. In the nineteenth century, more and more people were able to travel, thanks to the advent of steamships and shorter sea routes, so missionaries, scientists and tourists also embarked on long sea voyages from Rotterdam. More travellers were also arriving in Rotterdam and the number of nationalities in the city grew. When places colonised by Europe became independent, this prompted flows of migrants. Many people came to make a new home in Rotterdam, sometimes voluntarily, sometimes out of necessity, in response to changing global political and economic relations. They brought with them their own colonial histories, from other European colonised territories.[65]

Although this section's introduction does not explicitly use the word 'diversity', it becomes part of a narrative attempt to understand the city as a diverse one in the sense of inhabiting a diverse variety of ethnicities, with colonialism as the main driver for this type of diversity. The introduction text emphasises interconnectedness, as it discusses both the city's function as a port through which people left the Netherlands for trade and colonial purposes. It emphasises arrivals, both during the colonial era, but also after. This positions the city of Rotterdam as a nexus in a global web of migration, and as an effect that created a diverse city in terms of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This exhibition section showcases the multicultural and international movement of people, highlighting the diverse migration experiences and narratives. It emphasises how these diverse experiences intersected and influenced one another within the shared space of the city. However, it fails to create room to open discussions about the negative sides of this rapid development, particularly the victims who suffered as a result. This narrative is still included through the interplay between text and object, reflecting on the negative results.

Furthermore, the narrative of the exhibition's first two segments is structured chronologically, focusing on historical events and developments in Rotterdam overtime.

This section is dissected into three subsections, 'Chains of migration', 'Steamship link with Java', and 'Postcolonial migration'. The first section focuses on the way colonialism evoked movement of people across different continents and countries. It also highlights the practice of owning slaves, which had become illegal, often resulting in the registration of enslaved individuals as household servants. The museum presents this narrative through objects related to these practices, such as a family portrait with their so-called servant, photographs of individuals such as Dja Ogot who were forcibly taken from their

[65] "Departure and Arrival, Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed February 17, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/835b4220-a301-4698-bf7f-81f8c9ed4f0e.

village, and their belongings. These artefacts serve as physical reminders of the past and continue the legacy of those subjected to the period of slave or servant ownership.[66]

The second section, although containing fewer items, centres on the steamship connection between Rotterdam and Java with most passenger ships belonging to Lloyd. This connection played a pivotal role during the Indonesian war for independence, facilitating easy transports of troops across the sea. Objects in this section include photographs, models, and other items that are associated with this war, symbolising the eagerness and struggle for independence.[67]

The third section primarily addresses societal and political change from 1945 to 1980, as many colonised countries gained independence. As freed individuals searched for new work opportunities, Rotterdam became one of the largest migrant cities in the Netherlands. This wave of migration brought increased awareness and representation of the colonial narratives and memories of these individuals. Not only due to the variation in personal backgrounds, but also through their individual experiences with colonialism and migration. Migration serves as the common denominator here, ensuring that this section of the exhibition is constructed coherently. This segment includes flags, photographs, drawings and objects or models representing this period of change, signifying diversification in the historical progression.[68]

An object that stands out, despite its concealment within the physical layout is a photograph titled *Mohammad Hatta (second left, standing) and classmates; The Netherlands; 1927*.

[66] "Chains of migration," Departure and arrival, Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed March 15, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/835b4220-a301-4698-bf7f-81f8c9ed4f0e/stop/54ae0442-1122-49b4-8997-f3294cdcd8fa/index/2.

[67] "Steamship link with Java," Departure and arrival, Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed March 15, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/835b4220-a301-4698-bf7f-81f8c9ed4f0e/stop/b5fb036e-e4b9-4d19-a449-27cbc86772aa/index/3.

[68] "Postcolonial migration," Departure and arrival, Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed March 15, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/835b4220-a301-4698-bf7f-81f8c9ed4f0e/stop/4e26f613-f464-48ea-bb63-79954a127740/index/4.

Figure 2.1.1. *Mohammad Hatta (second left, standing) and classmates; The Netherlands.* 1927. Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, Colonialism and Rotterdam, Rotterdam. Reproduction BG24/85, International Institute of Social History.

Figure 2.1.2. *Mohammad Hatta (second left, standing) and classmates; The Netherlands.* 1927. International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam. BG24/85.

These individuals, alongside Hatta, are all members of the board of the Indonesische Vereeniging [Indonesian student association], later renamed Perhimpunan [Perhimpoenan] Indonesia, which held onto its core message of an independent Indonesia.[69] The use of this image highlights the exhibition's efforts to raise awareness about the diversity of experiences and their influence on the overall political landscape in the Netherlands. This association strove for the independence of Indonesia and although it is connected to the section 'Steamship link with Java', it serves as the base for what is discussed on migration movements after independence. The exhibition, however, fails to highlight that these organisations were often founded to fight against colonialism from within.

The narrative constructed around this association emphasises diversification in Rotterdam through migration and how this group resisted colonial oppression from within the country. However, the Perhimpoenan was also actively involved in international conferences to discuss anti-colonial struggles, a crucial aspect that is overlooked by the exhibition.[70] Additionally, the exhibition fails to mention the repercussions of Hatta's involvement with communist partners, which highlights a shift in contemporary history and acceptance of religious, philosophical and cultural diversity.

What sets the image apart from the other objects is its non-colonial origin, as it was taken in the Netherlands. This exemplifies how migration groups were present in the city and participated in

[69] "Mohammad Hatta (second left, standing) and classmates; The Netherlands; 1927," Departure and Arrival, Steamship link with Java, Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed May 30, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/835b4220-a301-4698-bf7f-81f8c9ed4f0e/stop/b5fb036e-e4b9-4d19-a449-27cbc86772aa/index/3/text/6de42089-b81d-407d-8c97-db47f8eddf25.

[70] Klaas Stutje, "Indonesian Identities Abroad International Engagement of Colonial Students in the Netherlands, 1908-1931," *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 128, no. 1 (2013): 153-154.

organisations. However, their presence and ideals were not fully welcomed, evidenced by the arrest of Hatta, Nazir, Sutan Pamontjak, Ali Sastroamidjojo, and Abdul Madjid Djojoadiningrat by the Dutch police in 1927. They were accused of inciting the public against the government as well as collaborating with communists to raise a rebellion in the Dutch East Indies.[71] Their arrest led to the publication of Hatta's trial speech, named 'Indonesia Vrij'. This speech became an important document for the nationalist movement. Additionally, Hatta served as Vice President in the fight for Indonesian independence when he left Rotterdam.[72]

Hatta's photograph, positioned amidst a selection of different items, fades into the surroundings. The photograph seen above depicts members of 'Perkoempoelan Anak Kapal', the Rotterdam sailor's association, celebrating that Sukrano, who fought for Indonesian independence, had been released from a Dutch prison.[73] Positioning these pictures together emphasises Rotterdam as a city that facilitates cultural diversity and highlights how these communities harboured their own identity in a new city. Their striving for independence reflects a need to set themselves apart from the Dutch in the historical context, therefore the inclusion of this picture emphasises the role of Hatta's photograph in showing how migration serves to diversify the city of Rotterdam.

The object sheltering Hatta's photograph from view is a sarong. This patterned pencil skirt, depicting steamships, aircrafts and soldiers, illustrates the Dutch military power in Java during the Second World War and the Indonesian War of Independence.[74] This object embodies the mentality and sentiment of the war, distinct in the fight for independence; a goal shared by Hatta. By using a traditional Indonesian garment and placing it alongside two images of resistance groups on Dutch soil, the picture of Hatta provides new insights into the continuous struggle, regardless of location. In the exhibition context, Hatta's photograph shows how Rotterdam facilitated migrants and created a more diverse city environment and identity while also acknowledging the opposite side to this struggle, namely the vicious war that went on in his homeland. Rotterdam, as a port, both brought in diversity but was also used to send troops to Indonesia during its fight for independence. The photographs together fill the textual gap

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[71] Yus Ariyanto, "Bung Hatta di Belanda: Belajar, Menulis, dan Dipenjara," Liputan 6, March 15, 2024, accessed June 3, 2024, https://www.liputan6.com/news/read/2023385/bung-hatta-di-belanda-belajar-menulis-dan-dipenjara.

[72] George McT. Kahin, "Memoriam: Mohammad Hatta, (1902-1980)," *Indonesia* 30 (October 1980): 114.

[73] "Photohraph of Perkoempoelan Anak Kapal; Rotterdam, Netherlands; 1931," Departure and Arrival, Steamship link with Java, Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed June 5, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/835b4220-a301-4698-bf7f-81f8c9ed4f0e/stop/b5fb036e-e4b9-4d19-a449-27cbc86772aa/index/3/text/5180a643-a006-4bfc-957f-fa1413cf167c.

[74] "Sarong; Java Indonesia; 1924-1942," Departure and Arrival, Steamship link with Java, Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed June 5, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/835b4220-a301-4698-bf7f-81f8c9ed4f0e/stop/b5fb036e-e4b9-4d19-a449-27cbc86772aa/index/3/text/a4d31538-4773-4a0f-9262-2fb8a20e197e.

by illustrating how rapid development had negative side effects; the same port that facilitated diversity also served as a means to send troops to suppress Indonesia's quest for independence.

Interestingly, this photograph sheds light on how cultural fusion and internal resistance took place in the Netherlands, suggesting it could be placed more prominently. Its connection to 'Steamship link with Java' fills some textual narrative gaps, focussing on the Dutch sending troops against the independence rebellion, while the photograph accentuates the resistance on Dutch soil. Addressing their international influence could have broadened the narrative's approach to the question of diversity within the historical timeframe.

To conclude, the section focuses on migration and how the new wave of migrants diversified the social and cultural landscape of Rotterdam. It underscores Rotterdam's role as a valuable nexus in a global migration network. This section of the exhibition effectively presents how intercontinental trade, colonial shifts, and travel development contributed to the diverse and multicultural city landscape. However, the narrative fails to look further into how these migrants were not always accepted into society and which challenges they faced. The narrative touches on forced migration and the harsh life of being under colonial rule but leaves room to go deeper into systemic resistance and discrimination.

The picture of Hatta shows the Indonesian students' need to keep themselves distinguished from their Dutch counterparts, embodying active resistance on Dutch soil. It illustrates the challenge of trying to dismantle a colonial structure from within and their stand for Indonesian independence. This object signifies how diversity in the Netherlands was not always accepted or perceives as positive. Hatta's arrest is overlooked while it reveals contribution to political and social movements.

The exhibition strategically uses this image to portray Rotterdam as a facilitator for multiculturalism and diversity, yet it overlooks the historical and ongoing struggles of these communities for equality. By juxtaposing this image with objects that resemble the repercussions of living in a place that violently fought against the ideal of independency, the exhibition creates a nuanced narrative on diversity that reflects the societal values and norms of its period. This aligns with the metanarrative by exploring how local and global histories intersect and highlights the significance of personal narratives in shaping diversity in contemporary Rotterdam.

2.2 Urban Culture

In the third part of the exhibition, directly after 'Departure and arrival' of case one, the exhibition moves on to 'Urban culture'.

> 'Typical Rotterdam' urban culture – public festivities, food culture and youth language – blends different practices from the colonial past with new customs. Culture is always changing. Encounters

between people lead to the passing on of customs and traditions, which are adapted to changing circumstances. New customs and traditions developed in colonial periods, too, when people were brought together from all over the world. Sometimes they were imposed by force, or born of necessity, to enable communication under colonial restrictions, and to pass on rituals. But they also came from people's resilience and creativity, as they shaped their daily lives. The customs that evolved in various colonial societies around the world continue to change in Rotterdam, as a result of encounters and exchange. The city's Summer Carnival, for example, features contemporary interpretations of African and Caribbean traditions of the past, including references to slavery. The past can still be found in the languages of Rotterdam, and new flavours and dishes are created in Rotterdam's cafés, based on food cultures old and new.[75]

As the title suggests, this segment focuses on the urban culture within the city, describing it as a blend of diverse cultures, many of which are rooted in the colonial past. The segment aims to curtly explain what culture is and reflects on how diversity in separate cultures merge into one. This convergence is largely attributed to socio-political circumstances. While the narrative is critical of colonialism, it also acknowledges that colonialism played a role in culturally diversifying the people of Rotterdam. To illustrate this, the museum uses examples such as the Summer Carnival, languages and foodways to show how current cultural traditions stem from the past.

This part of the exhibition is also divided into three segments: 'Fusion foods', 'Summer Carnival', and 'Hybrid languages'. In 'Fusion food', the focus is on the blending of different foodways into one as a result of colonialism. The text suggests that ingredients and recipes fuse to create new culinary experiences. The exhibition has three objects on display to support the textual narrative, representing Chinese-Indisch cuisine, the Surinamese cuisine, and Rotterdam's 'snackbars'.[76]

The section dedicated to the 'Summer Carnival' highlights the history and origin, emphasising how it inherently represents the Antillean community. However, contemporarily it has grown to include people with other nationalities and different cultural backgrounds. Carnival serves to critique established structures as the contemporary parade includes groups whose costumes refer to the history of slavery. This encapsulates how diversity is a dual notion as carnival is used to fight against a system, representing different mindsets. However, this mindset and the portrayal of shared history between separate groups unifies different communities, constructs the carnival parade as a diverse event. Objects in this section

[75] "Urban Culture," Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed February 19, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/f394198d-54e2-4459-a211-f8e84518388a.

[76] "Fusion foods," Urban culture, Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed March 16, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/f394198d-54e2-4459-a211-f8e84518388a/stop/929b0d06-fb66-4db8-a53b-d6e40e762360/index/2.

consist of photographs of the parade, costumes worn, and steel drums that are historically linked to the oil industry in the Caribbean.[77]

The third segment explores hybrid languages, reflecting how language diversity in Rotterdam is a result of colonialism. Language serves as a component of identity but changed as communities interacted with one another. While colonial policies were installed that favoured one language over the other, the languages that emerged from colonial encounters reveal creativity and resistance among the colonised. Alongside a letterbox and books there are also proverbs and other objects that showcase how these languages merged throughout history.[78]

Overall, these objects align with the main narrative of this section, exemplifying and explaining cultural interchangeability and how historical encounters diversified language and introduced new, or changed, cultural practices. The focus the museum has on pre-colonial influences because of migration creates gaps which could be filled with additional information and diversification. Aside from intercontinental migration there were also national movements of migration which affected the 'urban culture'. The effects on religious elements and the development of Rotterdam street language is not touched upon, streamlining the narrative in a position that only highlights the cultural changes in the city as a result of international influence.

Most of the objects in this section are relics of the colonial era, yet Benjamin Li's artwork *Tja Sieuw*, created in 2022, stands in juxtaposition. It focuses on themes of identity, interconnectedness, and heritage within the Chinese-Dutch community.

[77] "Summer Carnival," Urban culture, Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed March 16, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/f394198d-54e2-4459-a211-f8e84518388a/stop/36b49980-befc-4e95-a06e-9894ee781e6d/index/3.

[78] "Hybrid languages," Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed March 16, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/f394198d-54e2-4459-a211-f8e84518388a/stop/0fd072e5-b4cf-4071-bea2-daa4ae1a3f12/index/4.

Figure 2.2.1. *Tja Sieuw.* Artwork made by Benjamin Li, 2022. Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, Colonialism and Rotterdam, Rotterdam. Leased.

Figure 2.2.2. *Tja Sieuw.* Artwork made by Benjamin Li, 2022.

The artwork depicts the dish 'tja sieuw,' a Chinese dish with marinated pork, as a photo printed puzzle.[79] Benjamin Li, coming from a family of Chinese restaurateurs, draws upon the foundation of Chinese-Indisch restaurant culture that emerged in the 1950s after migrants arrived from independent Indonesia. By the 1960s, these restaurants started to cater to Dutch tastes.[80] Li uses white puzzle pieces to correspond with his age, adding one each year, creating a self-portrait through his puzzles. The increasing number of white pieces signifies the disappearance of these restaurants across the Netherlands and the declining presence of Chinese-Indisch foodways.[81]

The puzzle pieces symbolise the fusion of various cultures into one, the white pieces representing Dutch culture overtaking and erasing these dishes from the once coherent fusion. Whether this is harmful is debateable, as their disappearance may also signify cultural adaptation and integration. Each puzzle piece can be seen as an individual with their own identity, needing their differences to unite into a multifaceted image that highlights cultural fusion into a cohesive society. However, this raises debate in the diversity discourse, as the museum argues and emphasises both the value of individuals and their communal differences as well as the idea of unification.

Li's artwork aligns well with the exhibition's metanarrative, illustrating how historical colonial practices resonate with contemporary customs. Displayed alongside another piece by Li featuring a

[79] BySam, "Wat is cha sieuw of tja sieuw?," Aziatische recepten, August 8, 2019, accessed June 5, 2024, https://www.bysam.nl/cha-sieuw-tja-sieuw-wat-is-het/.

[80] Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, "Fusion food."

[81] Benjamin Li (@10000bl_), "Bejamin Li explains his puzzle artworks," Instagram photo, April 20, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CN4-4ZAl2Aq/?img_index=1.

collection of sugar packets, his artwork reveals how cultural intersections and personal experiences have shaped Rotterdam's current cultural environment. The Chinese-Indisch restaurants emerged as a result of post-colonial migration and illustrate how foodways adapted to Dutch tastes, creating new cultural practices and traditions while maintaining cultural resilience. Li highlights the ongoing challenges faced after these communities went through the hardships to establish a position within Dutch and Rotterdam society, where dominant forces obscure their visibility. As one of the few contemporary pieces, Li's work emphasises its relevance in a city that continuously changes, illustrating how foodways have become engrained into Rotterdam's identity across generations of migrants. This narrative bridges migration's historical roots to its current societal impact.

In conclusion, while colonialism affected cultural practices and traditions, it also unintentionally resulted in broader cultural diversity. The exhibition highlights various elements like language and foodways that have been influenced by creative residents and colonised people. Li's artwork serves as a metaphor for continuous change in cultural identity and interconnectedness, reflecting contemporary challenges migrant communities in Rotterdam.

While the museum highlights uniqueness alongside diversity, it also promotes a narrative celebrating fusion, a perspective subjected to debate. In addition to exploring the duality of diversity's definition, the museum leaves room to further exemplify diversity. They could achieve this by the introduction and merging of religions, such as Hare Krishna. Additionally, the exhibition's chronological structure limits its exploration of the city's characteristics such as street language.

2.3 Streets and Collections

The section 'streets and collections' starts off as all others do, with an introductory text that states the following:

> Colonialism left a material legacy in the city, including statues, archive documents and museum collections, and everyday items in people's homes. Objects that glorified or normalised colonialism. A racist worldview was part and parcel of colonialism. Politicians, the church and artists portrayed non-white as less 'civilised' than white people. Drawings and paintings romanticised colonised regions as uninhabited paradises, ready to be populated and 'cultivated' by Europeans. Museums around the world – including the Wereldmuseum and other Rotterdam museums – played a role in publishing this colonial image. However, there were also books, drawings and documents that made Rotterdammers aware of the violence and exploitation of colonialism. By learning more about the colonial past and

how it lives on today, we can recognise the colonial origins of images on the streets, at home and in museums. This can help prevent repetition of colonial prejudices.[82]

This part of the narrative focuses on the physical remnants of colonialism, contrasting with traditions as they are intangible. While traditions are intangible, statues, documents and museum collections serve as tangible remnants of the colonial past. The narrative raises awareness that everyday items in people's homes may carry the weight of colonial memory. For example, by having books or statues that represent colonial thoughts on racial differences or discuss the 'underdeveloped' lifestyle of the colonised. These items are often glorified and reflect the ideals of the colonisers, portraying non-white people as uncivilised. This portrayal suggests that diversity separates people, creating a distinct difference between non-white and white communities. Within the grand narrative this highlights cultural diversity from a new perspective compared to the section on urban culture which focuses on the fusion of different cultures. Whereas 'Urban culture' focuses more on the unification of these cultures, the section 'Streets and collection' reveals another layer of everyday confrontation with colonialism.

The streets and collection section is divided into three subthemes: 'Street names and statues', 'Museums and archives', and 'Rotterdam and living rooms'.

Throughout these subsections additional information is given to construct the narrative. 'Street names and statues' focuses on street names and statues in Rotterdam that symbolise or embody the colonial past. These monuments and street names came into existence during a period where the Netherlands was occupied with creating a snational identity, often through the glorification of colonialism. Such glorification is still discoverable in various statues and street names across Rotterdam. However, with the exhibition's extensive selection of objects it becomes difficult to connect them to the metanarrative as this focuses more on the role of intercontinental migration and the position of Rotterdam in the grand picture of colonialism. Additionally, these objects convey less of a personal and emotional connection to the contemporary identity of Rotterdam.[83]

The second theme explores how museums house (private) collections and archive objects that reflect the collective mentality throughout colonisation and decolonisation periods. These collections often contain images and illustrations that glorify colonialism, yet many of these have not been exposed to

[82] "Streets and collections," Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed February 21, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/80eb225a-d828-4b45-a29c-643bfb600f8f.

[83] "Street names and statues," Streets and collections, Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed March 25, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/80eb225a-d828-4b45-a29c-643bfb600f8f/stop/3592a2d0-0795-4faf-b375-8073b16d51a4/index/2.

the public. Objects such as lists with plantation names and photographs or artworks are included in this section.[84]

The final part delves into how individuals may possess similar objects in their own homes and are confronted with reminders of colonialism daily. An example of this is a set of playing cards which contains imagery of enslaved people receiving physical punishment. This segment also addresses that awareness was raised to the public about the effects of colonialism, usually through protest posters; however, individuals either chose to ignore them or represented the protestors as bloodthirsty and violent. Prints and illustrations are displayed in two glass cases in the middle of the room, alongside the work depicted in Figure 2.3.1.[85]

These subsections are spatially spread, requiring visitors to turn a corner to view all objects and plaques. This spatial arrangement evokes a sense of separation in the narrative, creating pauses between segments opposed to continuing the narrative.

'Streets and collections' highlights the process of decolonisation, emphasising the value of acknowledging a troubled past and recognising its presence in everyday objects. The museum itself is engaged in the process of decolonisation, shedding light on how stereotypes are created. While these stereotypes often highlight the differences and uniqueness between people and communities, they remain harmful. Museums have historically played a role in conserving these negative stereotypes through their collections and past exhibitions. However, the text aims to counter this by showing how people of Rotterdam became aware of the harm caused by these images. In the contemporary context, diversity shifts into a sense of unity, emphasising the recognition of shared humanity and steering away from stereotypical imagery. The narrative seeks to redefine diversity from the notion of separation to one of unity through the decolonisation process.

Most of the objects in the exhibition are displayed in glass cases, accompanied by plaques that provide additional information and present the textual narrative. One noteworthy object is *Memento Eurum Nomina (Kòrda nan Nòmber)* by D'Avellonne van Dijk, created in 2023 with gouache and acrylic on wood. This artwork is one of the larger and few contemporary pieces not in a glass case within the exhibition.

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[84] "Museums and archives," Streets and collections, Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed March 25, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/80eb225a-d828-4b45-a29c-643bfb600f8f/stop/aaf09ee6-399b-4e30-8d78-7b28431f76ab/index/3.

[85] "Rotterdam and living rooms," Streets and collections, Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed March 25, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/80eb225a-d828-4b45-a29c-643bfb600f8f/stop/15ff1c2b-8ba4-432d-8b46-3f00dc33e92b/index/4.

Figure 2.3.1. *Memento Eurum Nomina (Kòrda nan Nòmber)*. Artwork made by D'Avellonne van Dijk, 2023. Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, Colonialism and Rotterdam, Rotterdam. Leased.

The work is a quadriptych inspired by a traditional Roman Catholic altarpiece, created to honour heroes of the Curaçao resistance. This uprising, which lasted nearly a month, resulted in the liberation of more than half of the island's enslaved people. Van Dijk focuses not only on the leader of the resistance, Tula, but also his leading fellow combatants: Karpata, Pedro, Wakao and Louis Mercier. All four were tortured and executed for their fight for freedom and equality.[86]

Its size and contemporary nature is the primary factor that distinguishes this piece from the others. Inspired by an altarpiece, its position is meant to be separated, to traditional Roman Catholic church settings, symbolising the celebration of the resistance fighters as people who are to be worshipped. The artwork highlights the interconnectedness of cultures by shedding light on key figures from the Curaçao uprising through a traditional Roman Catholic artform. This section of the exhibition emphasises decolonisation and historical recognition, with the artwork embodying the museum's notion of unification.

Mounted on the wall, the artwork overlooks the older objects, offering a contested and contemporary view of the past. This modern interpretation is strategically positioned to reflect upon and critique its historical context. Items in the glass casings inform visitors how the people of Rotterdam were confronted with and became aware of the circumstances endured by enslaved individuals. Additionally, illustrations and prints depict the rise of rebellion against slavery. The artwork therefore reflects on past efforts that led to the current celebration of the resistance fighters and their rebellion. It signifies how the memory and legacy of resistance became increasingly more visible and recognised over time.

[86] "Memento Eurum Nomina (Kòrda nan Nòmber)," Streets and Collections, Rotterdam Living Rooms, Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed February 28, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/80eb225a-d828-4b45-a29c-643bfb600f8f/stop/15ff1c2b-8ba4-432d-8b46-3f00dc33e92b/index/4/text/2b1be5a5-8703-4723-bda5-630d68530f89.

The skewed white shutters on either side of the piece, while possibly incorporated for aesthetic purposes, ensure that the artwork is visible even if the shutters were to close. This symbolises the impossibility of hiding or obscuring the past and the heroism of the resistance fighters. This aligns with the exhibition's emphasis on the importance of decolonisation and the recognition of the past through tangible and intangible objects.

These resistance fighters fought for human rights and equality, conveying a message of unity and challenge colonial perspectives and racial hierarchies. While in colonial times the enslaved would be depicted as unworthy and treated inhumanely, the modern perspective achieves a new narrative by presenting the enslaved in the way Catholic saints are portrayed.[87] However, because history can be interpreted differently and carries different meanings for different people, this piece might contradict the text by portraying these figures as exceptional and distinct from the rest. This juxtaposition highlights the complexities within historical narratives and the multifaceted interpretations of the decolonisation process.

As mentioned in the introductory text, the exhibition aims to educate visitors about the colonial past and its ongoing influence, helping to recognise the colonial origins of imagery in public spaces, at home, and museums. This understanding can help prevent recurrence of colonial prejudices.[88] By incorporating a contemporary piece that merges religion and rebellion, the museum exemplifies the narrative it constructs. Roman Catholic art is prominent throughout Europe, hence by combining the element of resistance fighters, once deemed criminals by the Dutch, the museum illustrates a shift in contemporary reflections on colonial ideas. Additionally, just as households may display sacred religious figures, the resistance fighters are portrayed as saints who might have held similar societal roles if not for the hierarchy established in colonised regions.

The exhibition challenges visitors to reflect on historical injustices, using contemporary interpretations of the colonial past to underscore the evolution of societal values and the struggle for recognition. It reveals how colonial legacies influence contemporary notions of diversity by highlighting marginalised perspectives and experiences now reclaimed and celebrated. This section thus serves as a testimony to the power of history and art in forging understanding and unity, shifting the definition of diversity from separation to unification through decolonisation and recognition of shared humanity and world citizenship.

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[87] D'Avellonne van Dijk (@davellonne), "D'Avellonne van Dijk explaining her artwork Memento Eurum Nomina (Kòrda nan Nòmber)," Instagram photo, January 11, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/p/C192aLdIfsD/.

[88] "Streets and collections," Kolonialisme en Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, accessed February 21, 2024, https://tour.rotterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/app/tours/80eb225a-d828-4b45-a29c-643bfb600f8f.

2.4 Conclusion

The exhibition *Colonialism and Rotterdam* defines diversity through its exploration of colonialism and migration with a primarily text-driven approach. Structured into numbered (sub)sections and an open floor plan, the exhibition navigates the complexities of Rotterdam's colonial past, emphasising its influences on the city's development, culture, and contemporary society.

The textual sources in the exhibition have an explanatory function that guides visitors through the development of Rotterdam and emphasises the interconnectedness brought about by global movements, incoming and outgoing migration, and colonialism. Rather than explicitly using the term 'diversity', the exhibition subtly implies its presence through texts and objects. It adopts a chronological structure to highlight Rotterdam's colonial legacy, showcasing cultural diversity while also highlighting the limitations and challenges that come with a colonial past. The overarching narrative explores the intersection of local, national, and international histories in Rotterdam, highlighting their impact on the physical environment of the city as well as its economy, relationships, and traditions. It emphasises understanding and acknowledging these historical remnants through new insights obtained through shared stories. By considering this past and its consequences, our contemporary behaviour and discussions on colonialism should be sensitised, recognising Rotterdam is still a multicultural city with diverse individual experiences.

Three sections were selected and analysed, each delving into different aspects of Rotterdam's colonial past, illustrating how migration and cultural exchanges shaped the city. The first section analysed, 'Departure and arrival', examines the increase of diversity, especially after former colonies gained their independence. It frames colonialism as the main driver for migration, hence contributing to the multicultural and diverse identity of Rotterdam. The second section, 'Urban culture', emphasises this perception on colonialism by revealing that the quintessentially Rotterdam identity is a blend of colonial influences and contemporary customs. Despite colonialism's oppressive nature, it fostered creativity and resilience, leading to the development of new cultural practices suited for Rotterdam's environment, making the city a facilitator of diversity. The third section, 'Streets and collections', shifts focus to the tangible remnants of colonialism in Rotterdam, such as street names, statues, and everyday items in people's homes that still reflect colonial and racist worldviews. These items need to be acknowledged and understood to prevent the repetition of colonial prejudices.

To address how Wereldmuseum Rotterdam defines diversity and express it in its exhibition on colonialism and migration, several key insights emerge:

The exhibition provides a comprehensive insight into the complexities and ongoing impact of colonialism, framing diversity not solely the celebration of different cultures, but as a recognition of

historical injustices and the inclusion of varied cultural interactions. This approach acknowledging the processes and contributions that shaped Rotterdam's contemporary landscape.

Illustratively, the photograph of Mohammad Hatta and his classmates highlights the complexities of migration, cultural fusion, and political resistance, linking diversity with experiences, memories, and initiatives from the colonised regions that have shaped Rotterdam. However, the exhibition could better address the negative repercussions for Hatta and his comrades when they didn't assimilate into Dutch culture enough. What this does for the overarching narrative is it shows how migration not only diversified the city's culture and identity, but Hatta was still subjected to othering within Dutch society. The Indonesian culture was considered to be separate from the Dutch. Diversity within this context is seen as a means to highlight differences and uniqueness. Benjamin Li's 'Tja Sieuw' bridges historical textual narratives with contemporary art, representing cultural integration and the evolving notion of identity. This artwork demonstrates how post-colonial migration led to new cultural practices, illustrating interconnectedness and relating historical narratives to the contemporary issues of cultural preservation. Here the notion of decolonisation is introduced as migrant culture became engrained in the Rotterdam identity.

Furthermore, the exhibition text critically engages with colonial legacies in collections, street names and statues that glorify colonialism, reflecting past racist worldviews. The contemporary piece 'Memento Eurum Nomina (Kòrda nan Nòmber)' by D'Avellonne van Dijk honours heroes of the Curaçao resistance in a traditional Roman Catholic format, contrasting with the older pieces and emphasising the importance of honouring marginalised communities' histories. Van Dijk's work reclaims the pride of resistance fighters, aligning with the shift towards defining diversity as a unifying force. This juxtaposition highlights the evolution of societal values and the importance of learning from the past to recognise shared humanity and interconnected experiences. This piece shows further progress into decolonisation as it shifts colonial interpretations into new memories and reflections on the past. While colonialism is a driving force behind the multifaceted identity of Rotterdam, the process of decolonisation and critical reflection on the past introduces diversity as a means of unifying different cultures and identities into a unifying force in the city.

The exhibition's open layout allows visitor to explore and create their own narrative, though it can create confusion about where to start. Objects are placed in adjacency, creating cohesion but also making it hard to distinguish between them and understand their stories. While sectioning themes chronologically helps structure the exhibition, it limits deeper exploration into contextual narratives that offer different perspectives.

In essence, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam's exhibition on colonialism and migration defines diversity through nuanced exploration of historical narratives, cultural intersections, and identity formation in

Rotterdam.

Chapter 3: Wereldmuseum Amsterdam

In the upcoming chapter the question how Wereldmuseum Amsterdam defines and expresses diversity in its exhibition on the legacy of colonialism will be analysed through examining the exhibition *Our Colonial Inheritance*. Firstly, an introduction to the museum and exhibition is provided whereafter the focus will shift to the analysis of three sections, namely 'A profitable for whom?', 'Plundering the earth', and 'Slavery, resistance and resilience'. Each section is analysed according to the methodology as described in the introductory chapter, analysing textual sources, objects and spatial elements.

Wereldmuseum Amsterdam

The Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, originally part of the Koloniaal Instituut [United Colonial Institute's], established in1864, serves a centre for research and representation of colonial history and the evolution towards a global consciousness. Initially, the museum consisted of three departments: the museum of trade, tropical hygiene, and ethnology. Each of these departments had their own collection and their own exhibition space.[89]

The museum's collections trace their origins back 70 years before the founding of the United Colonial Institute, initiated by of botanist Frederik Willem van Eeden. He was tasked with gathering collections for what would become the Museum van Grondstoffen [Museum of Raw Materials] in 1864.[90] Many items were acquired through donations and acquisitions, notably incorporating the ethnographic collection of the Amsterdam Zoo in 1910.[91] During this period, the museum was temporarily known as the Indonesisch Museum [Indonesian Museum] but was renamed the Tropenmuseum after Indonesia gained its independence. More changes occurred in the 1970s and continued into the 1990s when the museum renovated to accommodate more interactive exhibitions, sound systems and replicas of villages.[92]

Today, the museum aims to utilise their objects as witnesses to many different personal stories, encouraging curiosity about global cultural diversity. Additionally, they state: "by actively involving our visitors and stakeholders in collecting, interpreting and the sharing of these stories, we broaden the awareness of underlying interconnectedness. By doing so we inspire an open worldview. And contribute

[89] "Geschiedenis Wereldmuseum Amsterdam," Over Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, accessed April 17, 2024, https://amsterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/nl/over-wereldmuseum-amsterdam/geschiedenis-wereldmuseum-amsterdam.

[90] Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, "Geschiedenis Wereldmuseum Amsterdam."

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

to world citizenship. That is our mission."[93] The museum emphasises that the value of its objects lies in sharing stories that remind us of our shared humanity, "What unites us are universal emotions […] celebrations, mourning, prayer, love and fighting." [94]

While the collection originated in the colonial era, it now includes contemporary art alongside art from the colonial period, which includes stolen art. In response, the museum launched a project in 2019 which focuses on the process of restitution of these stolen pieces. This process involves research in collaboration with communities and countries of origins. These investigations into the collection help convey the appropriate and correct stories to ensure accurate and respectful storytelling. The results of this research are published, allowing countries to request the return of the piece to be to their country of origin.

Exhibition 'Our Colonial Inheritance'

The museum's exhibition *Our Colonial Inheritance* portrays colonialism not solely as a historical phenomenon but as something that has shaped contemporary Dutch society. Focused primarily on the Dutch colonial history in Indonesia, Suriname, Curacao, Saint Martin, and other countries, the exhibition aims to share unfamiliar aspects of this colonial history. It achieves this by showing how colonialism continues to influence the present and explores the resilience, creativity, and resistance of colonised communities.[95]

There is a growing demand among the Dutch population to learn more about their colonial heritage its relevance to contemporary society.[96] The Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, once a colonial institution, acknowledges its historical in representing the colonies, still reflected in its architectural decor and collection of objects which represent the colonised as inferior.[97] Because of their past, the museum considers itself the appropriate location to facilitate dialogue and educate the public about the colonial

[93] "Missie," Over Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, accessed April 17, 2024, https://amsterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/nl/over-wereldmuseum-amsterdam/missie.

[94] Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, "Missie."

[95] "Onze Koloniale Erfenis," Nu te zien, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, accessed April 17, 2024, https://amsterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/nl/zien-en-doen/tentoonstellingen/onze-koloniale-erfenis.

[96] "Waarom Onze Koloniale Erfenis," Tentoonstellingen, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, accessed April 17, 2024, https://amsterdam.wereldmuseum.nl/nl/zien-en-doen/tentoonstellingen/onze-koloniale-erfenis/waarom-onze-koloniale-erfenis.

[97] Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, "Waarom Onze Koloniale Erfenis."

past. According to their promotional material, the exhibition focuses explicitly on the impact of the Dutch colonialism, highlighting the resilience, creativity and resistance of the colonial countries and people.[98]

The introductory text to the exhibition, see Appendix I, summarises the themes that serve as a foundation for the metanarrative are covered throughout the exhibition, specifically divided into the following eight subthemes: see Table 2.1.

Name	**Themes**
A profitable business for whom?	Economics, overseas trade routes
Plundering the Earth	Trade, produce, exploitation of resources, incorporation in contemporary society
Slavery, resistance and resilience	Resistance methods, focus on plants and life on plants
Racism exists, race is not	Race theory, colonial racial hierarchy, racism
On the road to freedom	Resistance fighters, timeline Indonesian independence
Words matter	Value of language, cultural merging and blending, education
Religion under pressure	Spiritual and religious traditions, imposition of religion, religious resistance
This is my home	Migration, objects of personal value, institutional racism, cultural assimilation

Table 2.1. Overview thematic structure Our Colonial Inheritance.

[98] Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, "Waarom Onze Koloniale Erfenis."

From of these eight, three sections were chosen for further analysis which build on one another: ‘a profitable business for whom?’, ‘plundering the earth’, and ‘slavery, resistance and resilience’.

At the start of the exhibition, visual screens accompany the introductory text, using videos to convey different messages on colonialism, as shown in figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1. Video footage at the start and finish of ‘Our Colonial Inheritance’. Amsterdam, 2024. Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

This initial display leads into ‘A profitable business for whom?’, where visitors are introduced to the economic and territorial aspects of colonialism. This section provides context on the value of transatlantic trade and the reasons behind colonialism. Visitors are met with information about the Dutch colonies and the dynamics of colonial and local rule through displays of objects from the colonies, marking the start of introducing the visitor to the colonial past.

Next, the exhibition moves to ‘Plundering the earth’, focussing on trade, consumerism, and environmental impact. It highlights how colonialism exploited natural resources, contrasting local practices which have less invasive ways of gaining the resources. The limited objects in this space as well as the use of transport crates, create an industrial and environmental atmosphere.

The visitor then enters ‘Slavery, resistance and resilience’, a small room with an interactive section in the middle. This room features old prints and colonial artifacts that represent life and resistance under oppression. Visitors can interact with musical objects and listen to different instruments used by the oppressed. While the first two sections provide context, this one focuses on the responses of the colonised to their oppression.

Continuing to ‘Racism exists, not race’, visitors find themselves in a large open space with smaller sections that explore the idea of racial hierarchy imposed by the colonisers. This section addresses verbal and physical violence, institutional neglect, and inequality. Objects related to racial identification and hierarchy are displayed, some hidden behind corners to encourage exploration.

Afterwards, visitors reach ‘On the road to freedom’, featuring an installation with faces of important figures who openly fought against colonialism, oppression and racism. This section is the smallest and only includes a timeline of Indonesia’s struggle for independence, showing the path to change and freedom.

‘Words matter’ follows, with walls scribbled with text, patterns, and symbols of different languages. A circular pattern guides visitors through the story of how language is one of many things that evolved during colonial times, affecting education and creating new languages. The exhibition explains the importance of language in expressing identity and maintaining colonial hierarchies.

‘Religion under pressure’ examines how colonialism impacted local spiritual practices. A central yellow room surrounded by white planks resembles the exterior of a house. Outside, the exhibition focuses on the religious practices with artworks and crucifixes, contrasting older and newer pieces that highlight differences between Christianity and local practices.

The closing section, ‘This is my home’, explores the experience of migrants moving to the Netherlands and how they stayed in touch with their ancestral homes. Through everyday objects and contextualising them, the museum makes the visitor aware of how the Dutch culture has integrated various cultural practices.

The exhibition concludes with more visual displays addressing different messages on colonialism, featuring interviews with descendants of those subjected to colonial rule. It encourages visitors to reflect on what they have learned and consider how they can bring about change. The exhibition provides a comprehensive narrative on the legacy of colonialism, urging visitors to confront historical injustices.

The exhibition’s metanarrative offers insights into the impacts of colonialism and the legacy of colonialism through a thematically built narrative. It highlights economic motivations, how transatlantic trade and colonialism exploited the environment and how resistance came because of poor conditions on plantations. It highlights freedom struggles, cultural fusion in language and religion, and the ongoing impact on migration and identity. The exhibition aims to encourage visitors to consider their roles in removing prejudice and addressing historical injustices by showing the colonial legacy of the Netherlands.

3.1 A profitable business for whom?

At the start of the exhibition there is a large room, coloured in blues, this part of the exhibition is titled ‘A profitable business for whom?’. The following explanation is presented to illustrate to the visitor what they will encounter in this section of the exhibition:

> By the end of the 16th century, the Dutch had begun to sail the oceans in search of products to trade, as did their European counterparts. Wherever they landed, whether in Asia, Africa or the Americas, they encountered well-established and prosperous economies. By the 17th century the trade in spices and other products was profitable. The Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie [Dutch East India Company or VOC] and the West-Indische Compagnie or WIC [Dutch West Indies Company] were two of the largest Dutch trading organisations. They founded a global network exploiting pre-existing trading networks. Violence and repression were inherent to the process the companies employed but was often met with resistance from the colonised. The business of profiteering was not only based on the transportation of commercial goods, but also on the exploitation of people. Captured, sold and traded in huge numbers, these enslaved people were traded like goods and treated like property. They were deprived of their rights and humanity. This was the system of slavery.[99]

As this section serves as the first part of the exhibition, this text serves not only as an introduction to this particular part of the exhibit, but it sets the stage for all the rooms that follow; it serves as a starting point of the narrative. While there is no direct reference to diversity, it is important to highlight that the two centuries that are highlighted in this segment are commonly known as the 'Golden Age' in the Netherlands, a time of prosperity and wealth. From this point onward the exhibition includes several other textual elements that construe an economic narration and clarify the relationship of the Netherlands with their colonies.

The first is 'Caribbean region' which focuses on the role of the WIC's triangular trade between West Africa, the Caribbean and North and South America. Ships would depart from Europe to Africa with weapons, gunpowder, iron and cloth. These goods were traded for enslaved Africans who were in turn transported to the Americas. Here the ships traded for rum, sugar, coffee, tobacco, and cotton to take back to Europe. Additionally, it notes that the WIC was authorised by the government to wage war and conquer territory, although they did not have a private army like the VOC.[100]

The second segment concerns Japan and China where the VOC took over the Portuguese trading position in trade in this part of the world. This trade mostly concerned shipping porcelain to the Netherlands as well as becoming an intermediary of trade between different Asian markets. This is the foundation for the continuing segments throughout the exhibition as this reveals how trade diversified the Dutch culture. While the main focus remains economical, the museum purposefully saves explanation on

[99] "A profitable business for whom?," Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

[100] "Caribbean region," A profitable business for whom?, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

how transatlantic trade influenced cultural and societal diversity in relation to cultural change for a later segment within the exhibition.[101]

The third subsection concerns Sri-Lanka which primarily functioned as a strategic location for slave trade as well as providing cinnamon. The Dutch were mainly based in Colombo and eventually traded their power and possessions to the British in 1796.[102]

The fourth section focuses on the role of the VOC in Indonesia and how their power there led to the expansion of an international trading network. Once again this serves as a foundation for future segments where the museum applies the concept of colonialism and cultural fusion to contemporary contexts.[103]

Other than exemplifying these cases, this segment of the exhibition additionally provides textual information on the control of colonisers and local rule, the use of violence by colonisers, and how natives resisted. This is exemplified by a segment on the genocide in Banda where 14,000 inhabitants were massacred. This took place after resistance of the Bandanese against Jan Pieterszoon Coen's demand to monopolise nutmeg.[104]

Overall diversity is implicated and retractable through including the major cases of colonial rule by the Dutch as well as showing how some of these cases were interlinked. This emphasis on diversity is rooted in the economic relationships that forged intercultural connections through trade and the movement of people, including the intercontinental shipment of enslaved individuals. The connection to the colonised lays the foundation for multiculturalism and diversity in Dutch society, influencing the import and export of produce. The museum presents factual numbers and information without implementing a particular angle. However, there is room to enhance diversity in the textual aspect of this section of the exhibition. Including perspectives of the colonised, such as those of the Bandanese registered in the publication *Hikayat Lonthoir*, would provide insights into colonised experiences and resistance against oppression. The Eurocentric perception and focus on colonial violence without expanding on their resistance strips the Bandanese of their agency, positioning them as possibly silencing them.[105] By focusing primarily on the colonial legacy of the Netherlands and the violent actions of the colonisers, the exhibition positions the Bandanese as victims, reinforcing the colonial hierarchy the exhibition aims to

[101] "Japan and China," A profitable business for whom?, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

[102] "Sri Lanka," A profitable business for whom?, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

[103] "Indonesia's international network," A profitable business for whom?, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

[104] "Violence and resistance," A profitable business for whom?, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

[105] Joëlla van Donkersgoed, "Shifting the historical narrative of the Banda Islands: From colonial violence to local resilience," *Wacana: Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia* 24, no. 3 (2023): 509-510.

step away from. [106] This approach, which fails to include the resistance movements against oppressors, confines diversity to cultural interconnectedness and undermines the personal experiences and memories of the colonised which are vital in the decolonisation process. While the museum addresses this narrative later in the exhibition, there is no guarantee that the visitor will read everything, exposing them to a limited narrative. Additionally, the exhibition does not cover all colonies, suggesting a selection to fit their narrative. These chosen examples are used throughout the exhibition, following a chronological story structure that is spaced out across different sections.

Figure 3.1.1. *Territory Dress*. Artwork made by Susan Stockwell, 2018. Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, Our Colonial Inheritance, Amsterdam. 7175-1a.

Within the installation and the object selection, there are notably more factors of diversity. The object that stands in juxtaposition compared to the rest is *Territory Dress* (2018) by British artist Susan Stockwell, as seen in the Figure 3.1.1. This piece distinguishes itself from the other objects in this section of the exhibition by being the only contemporary work. The maps used for this dress are former Dutch colonies, aligning with the diversity presented in the text. In this piece, all the colonies come together, sharing a common history of oppression by the Netherlands. The sleeves of the dress are dripping in red, symbolising blood, while the hole in the centre of the dress holds a ship with a sail made of an Antillean guilder banknote.[107] The combination of these two elements refers to the idea of the wealth accumulated from colonialism as blood money, suggesting that the Netherlands' prosperity during the 'Golden Age' was built on the blood of colonies. Additionally, the artwork represents the position of women in colonial times, where a woman's body was often regarded as someone's possession, similar to how maps define

[106] Van Donkersgoed, "Shifting the historical narrative of the Banda Islands," 509-510.

[107] "Territory Dress," A profitable business for whom?, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

property boundaries. Some of the other details that occur refer to Suriname and Java. These territories were often conquered by men; hence the use of a female model and traditionally female garment underscores the gender roles during that time. The hole in the stomach, revealing the colonial ship, could symbolise giving birth to colonial nations and the wealth that is derived from the colonies. Additionally, making use of a fashion item represents how fashion standards are rooted in Western ideals that stem from a long history of capitalism founded on colonialism.[108] The dress is likely modelled after a close-bodied gown worn by women in the West during the colonial period.[109] Such dresses were costly items, something that was only affordable to wealthy women, a wealth derived from the colonies.

The dress is the embodiment of the past shared through textual modes, incorporating gender diversity to signify another aspect of colonial trauma. This diversifies the narrative presented through the text and distinguishes it from other objects that are part of this exhibition section. It stands alone in its case as the sole contemporary item in the space.

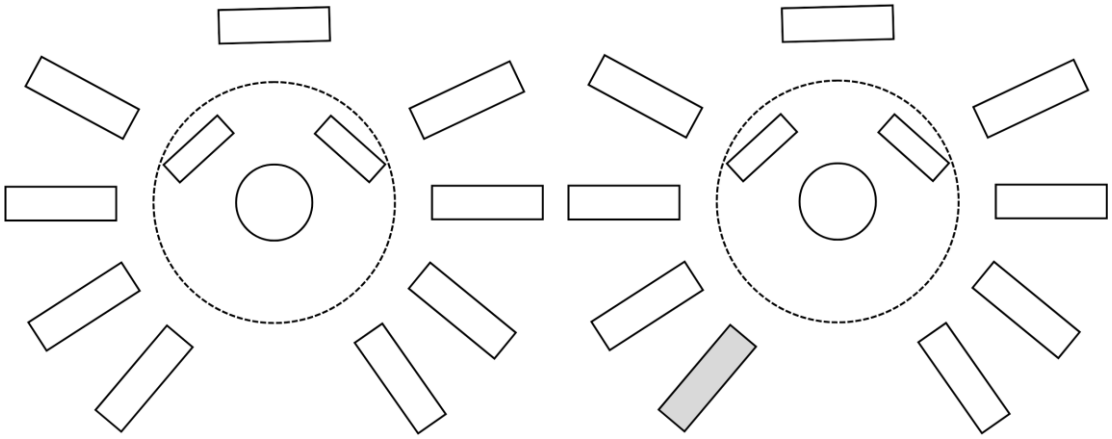

Figure 3.1.2. *Spatial layout 'a profitable business for whom?'*. Made May 7, 2024.

Figure 3.1.3. *Position of dress in spatial layout 'a profitable business for whom?'*. Made May 7, 2024.

Figure 3.1.3. indicates the placement of the item within the exhibition space among other items. The large circle in the middle represents the curtains that surround a circular glass case, while the surrounding squares depict glass cases that hold various objects. Notably, the objects that are in proximity of the dress are all of colonial origin. *Territory Dress* was specifically commissioned by the museum for

[108] Daan van Dartel, "Susan Stockwell's Territory Dress: Contemporary Art and Fashion in a Dutch Ethnographic Museum," *Provenance* 1 (2020): 71.

[109] Bárbara Rosillo, "Fabrics and fashion in clothing of the 18th century," *Datatèxtil* 39 (2019): 15-16.

this exhibition.[110] As a result, the dress holds a significant role in engaging visitors with contemporary issues and the legacy of colonialism within the narrative.

The space is mostly coloured blue, referring to the sea across which the ships of the VOC and WIC travelled for trade and to conquer land. Thus, the narrative that is constructed in this exhibition section primarily focuses on the trade that traversed between the colonies and the coloniser, forming the foundation for the overall narrative. However, the inclusion of objects adds diversity by incorporating a contemporary piece that reflects on the past and introduces gender diversity. This piece that stands out amidst the older objects that illustrate the relationship between the Netherlands and its colonised nations.

The purpose of the dress serves as a metaphor and the embodiment of colonial representation and its effects. It signifies how countries bled for the wealth of the Netherlands and how the male sex was the main perpetrator, although the entire population benefited from colonial endeavours. Additionally, the female figure symbolises a maternal figure, representing the Netherlands as the mother to these nations and the atrocities that occurred.

The chosen selection of colonies fits the traditional narrative, emphasising well-known cases that serve as the foundational examples for the other sections. It grounds the notion of diversity within economic relationships, which forged intercultural connections, facilitated trade, and involved the intercontinental shipment of enslaved individuals. While including several countries adds a layer of diversity, there is still room to explore these cases differently to avoid victimising communities or reestablishing a colonial hierarchy. However, this section does lay the foundation for the rest of the exhibition.

3.2 Plundering the earth

In ‘Plundering the earth’ the emphasis is mostly centred around the progression of past production and trade into a more contemporary setting. The exhibition analyses these products and our dependence on them through the narrative of colonial trade.

[110] “Territory Dress,” Susan Stockwell, accessed April 22, 2024, https://www.susanstockwell.co.uk/artworks/territory-dress.

Figure 3.2.1. *Vitrines showing food products containing palm oil, sugar and coffee*. Objects of Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, 2024. Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, Our Colonial Inheritance, Amsterdam.

Based on the economic introduction provided in ‘A profitable business for whom?’, the exhibition introduces the continuation of the trade of produce in ‘Plundering the earth’ as follows:

> Colonialism and slavery have shaped our tastes in the Netherlands, but also globally. Traders introduced new luxury products and delicious addictive flavours to Europe from colonised territories in Asia, Africa and the Americas. Coffee and tea, tobacco and cotton, sugar and salt, gold and tin: it would be hard to imagine life without them. Producing these commodities came at the price of environmental destruction. Mountains were excavated for minerals, forests felled, wetlands drained to make way for plantations. Our addiction to these products continues. We can trace our current environmental crisis back to such global patterns of large-scale extraction and exploitation of natural resources. Even within the conditions of the colonial system, some people continued to engage with the natural world in less exploitative ways. Maroons in Suriname and across the Caribbean used African and Indigenous knowledges to sustainably manage and care for their environment, including their small agricultural plots.[111]

The text primarily focuses on relating colonial endeavours of the past to present-day environmental issues. Products extracted during the colonial era remain prominent in the Dutch flavour palette to this day. It also presents a counternarrative suggesting that these exploitations were unnecessary, as locals managed sustainable ways of gathering produce. The exhibition implies that the oppressors could have traded not only in produce but also in knowledge about sustainable agriculture. However, by adding this the text sketches a clear distinction between the values of the colonised and the coloniser, reflecting on cultural differences and diversity. While trade brought variety to the products

[111] “Plundering the earth,” Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

available in the Netherlands, it came at a cost, making colonialism a driver of diversity in the flavour palette but also a force of destruction, causing irreversible damage to biodiversity across continents.

Narratively, the museum strongly connects the influences of past colonial trade to contemporary consumerism and environmental impact, yet it leaves out slave trade. Unlike the chronological structure used in Rotterdam, Amsterdam builds their exhibition thematically.

Figure 3.2.1. shows objects that exemplifies the addiction in Europe to products that are not native to the Dutch soil. This section highlights diversity primarily related to produce and sustainability. Native methods used to extract resources were far less invasive than the coloniser's destructive methods. Additionally, this section emphasises the diversity of land between colonies, with each nation being plundered for different resources.[112]

This same introductory text appears on both sides of the section, offering two entry points. This approach is similar to the first case division, showcasing resources that were taken through colonialism. The section begins with oil palms in Indonesia, brought from Africa in 1848 and planted at Bogor. These plantations required large parts of the rainforest clearances. Today, palm oil is used in thousands of everyday products, with Indonesia as its largest producer.[113]

A section on opium details how the VOC had a monopoly on its import, transferring the lease of sale to Chinese traders in Indonesia. By 1904, the colonial government established its monopoly. Opium, primarily used mostly by enslaved labourers to relieve intense labour pains, also bound contract workers to their plantation as they financed their addiction.[114]

Following this, the exhibition focuses on the produce harvested and sold via colonial trade, such as sugar, coffee, tobacco, and salt. These subsections highlight how enslaved people gathered these resources, forming the foundations of wealth for the Netherlands.[115] Additionally, there is a section on the use of gold in art and plants as sustenance for the enslaved.[116] The latter is illustrated by enslaved people using provision grounds to plant rice, cassava, ochre, and maize, starting their own trading communities.

While the exhibition shifts towards the untold stories of enslaved people, detailing how they set up their own means of production and trade, it also highlights their forced labour at the plantations and

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[112] "Plundering the earth," Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

[113] "Oil palms at the botanical garden," Plundering the earth, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

[114] "Opium," Plundering the earth, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

[115] "Sugar," Plundering the earth, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.; "Coffee," Plundering the earth, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.; "Tobacco," Plundering the earth, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.; "Salt," Plundering the earth, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

[116] "Gold and art," Plundering the earth, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.; "Planting to survive: provision grounds," Plundering the earth, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

excavation sites.[117] However, there is a lack of awareness on how the enslaved were used to destroy their own lands to provide for their oppressors in these inhumane circumstances.

The exhibition presents diversity in products and resources, contrasting between the sustainable local approaches with the destructive methods of the coloniser. The difference between resources of different nations across the world makes them highly valuable, showing how landscapes were diversified through exploitation. Notably, no specific time frame is constructed, missing the chance to convey that this is still an ongoing problem. Additionally, this section does not consider that these products might not have been used in the ways without the impact of colonialism.

The destruction of the land, often carried out by the natives under orders of the slave owners, is highlighted through two notable pieces of art in this section. While not directly mentioned, the theme is evident. Most of the other objects in this green room, symbolising nature, are displayed in shipping crates. This adds another layer to the narrative, emphasising that these products came from overseas and were, and are, harmful for the environment.

The standout pieces are the large artworks on opposite walls, juxtaposed with the 'crated' objects. These artworks create contrast and serve as visual presentations of cultural as well as the environmental impact of colonialism.

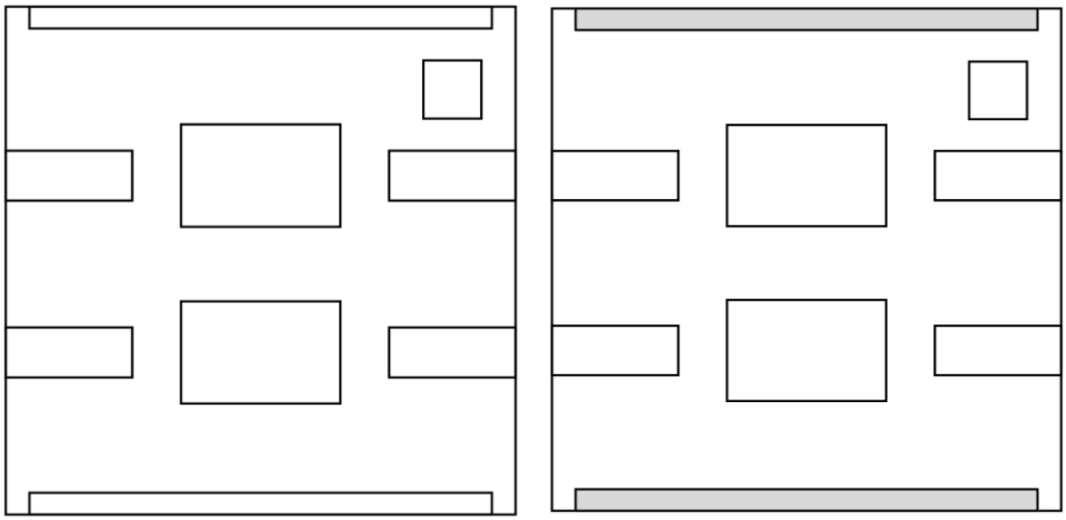

Figure 3.2.2. *Spatial layout 'plundering the earth'*. Made May 8, 2024.

Figure 3.2.3. *Position of paintings in spatial layout 'plundering the earth'*. Made May 8, 2024.

[117] Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, "Planting to survive: provision grounds."

The two are contrasted in colour, one using bright colours to accentuate a happy feeling while the other is grimmer and more daunting.

Figure 3.2.4. *Ruwan Tanah Air Beta, Reciting Rites in its sites*. Painting by Zico Albaiquini, 2019. Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, Our Colonial Inheritance, Amsterdam. 7224-1.

Figure 3.2.5. *Tales of the Gold Mountain*. Painting by Maryanto, 2012. Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, Our Colonial Inheritance, Amsterdam. TM-6503-1a.

These works each represent a different dimension of the narrative presented in the text. The first work, *Ruwan Tanah Air Beta, Reciting Rites in its Sites* by Indonesian artist Zico Albaiquini, depicts a botanical garden in Bogor that serves as a spiritual place where past and present come together. Albaiquini draws inspiration from the ruwatan, a purification ritual he asked to be conducted there. The garden and cemetery in the work date back to colonial times, with sculptures referencing the Sudanese and Hindu history of the location. President Soekarno, who is sitting in the pavilion, symbolises the Indonesian Republic. The need for this ritual implies a desire to purify the complex history associated with the site.[118]

The artwork reflects on tradition and the imposition of colonialism on the land and the culture, hence the need for purification. Notably, the vibrant colours, such as the trees painted red could signify the bleeding of the forest due to deforestation, while the orange hues might represent the national colour of the Netherlands. The botanical garden serves as a reminder of colonial trauma, as these gardens used to filled with medicinal plants that were used to fight diseases during overseas voyages.[119] Botanical gardens became physical representations of colonial power, as botany played a crucial role in establishing

[118] "Ruwan Tanah Air Beta, Reciting Rites in its Sites," Plundering the earth, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

[119] Sadiah Boonstra, "On the nature of botanical gardens Decolonial aesthesis in Indonesian contemporary art," *Wacana: Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia* 23, no. 1 (December 2022): 228.

plantations based on scientific knowledge to serve colonial economics.[120] The aforementioned crates are situated between these two works, guiding the visitor to the painting on the other side.

The second large piece on the opposite side of the room is *Tales of the Gold Mountain* by Indonesian artist Maryanto. This painting depicts the destruction of Ertsberg in Papua, the world's largest copper and gold resource in the world, caused by extensive mining.[121] The direction in which the mining objects on the left are swinging is uncertain; it is unclear if they are moving to the fore- or background. However, given the context of the artwork, the assumption can be made that as the mining persists, the nature in the background will become cluttered with rubble and debris.

Maryanto uses a gesso-style technique, scratching white lines on a black base, creating a desolate feeling.[122] This method reflects the process of mining, digging deeper to uncover precious materials such as gold. The artist's technique involves digging into the base until the artwork emerges. Unlike the hopeful tone of the artwork presented in Figure 2.3.4., Maryanto's piece holds a less hopeful perspective on the future and past. Both artworks criticise the destruction and exploitation of nature for its resources. However, the first work encountered upon entering the room conveys a sense of potential rectification and purification of the past. As visitors move through the exhibition's sections, learning more about the current use of these resources, they encounter the demoralising portrayal by Maryanto, illustrating the ongoing destruction of nature.

Within the overall narrative, this section builds upon the previous sections by illustrating how trade operated historically and how contemporary society continues to thrive on consuming products rooted in the colonial past. The exhibition aims to make the visitor aware that the current environmental crisis, excessive consumerism, and addiction to luxury products are outcomes of colonial violence and exploitation. While trade diversified the products available in the Netherlands, it came at a cost: colonialism became the driver of diversity in the flavour palette while simultaneously acting as a force of destruction, irreversibly damaging biodiversity. This colonial legacy persists in our daily consumables and the nature that still suffer the colonial impact.

Western consumerism and dependence on these products have become drivers of inequality stemming from the colonial era. Dietary habits and material possessions evolved through the exploitation of land, with the exhibition suggesting that this could have been avoided by implementing traditional methods. A counternarrative in the exhibition showcases how local communities sourced their products yet fails to acknowledge that the enslaved were forced to destroy their own land. While restoration efforts

[120] Boonstra, "On the nature of botanical gardens Decolonial aesthesis in Indonesian contemporary art," 228.

[121] "Tales of the Gold Mountain," Plundering the earth, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

[122] Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, "Tales of the Gold Mountain."

are acknowledged, this section subtracts diversity through the contrast between the two artworks on the walls. This sustains a traditional, educational approach focused on factual statements, but leaving out significant alternative narratives. This section also sheds light on why some enslaved groups resisted and how they also initiated smaller-scale resistance by, for example, establishing their own trading system and network.

3.3 Slavery, resistance and resilience

The third room of the exhibition, titled ‘Slavery, resistance and resilience’, is painted in a deeper shade of blue than ‘A profitable business for whom?’. This could symbolise a struggle to reclaim the seas and the skies from their colonial oppressors.

Upon entering the space, the visitor is met with a nonagon pyramid-like structure. The exterior of this structure consists of objects related to plantations and slavery, while the interior houses musical instruments that visitors can interact with to recreate the sounds that these instruments make.

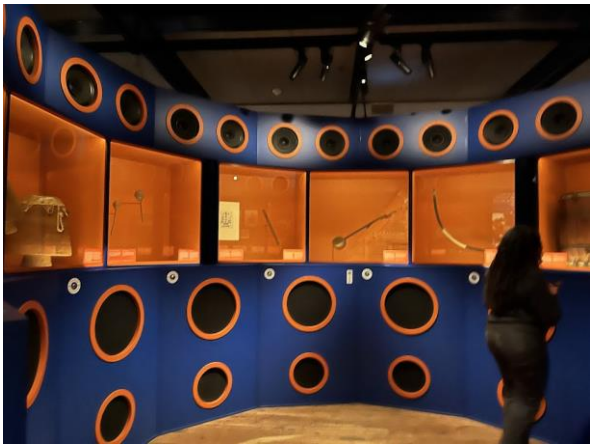

Figure 3.3.1. *Installation in ‘slavery, resistance and resilience’*. Our Colonial Inheritance Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, 2024. Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, Our Colonial Inheritance, Amsterdam.

Figure 3.3.2. *Inside* i*nstallation in ‘slavery, resistance and resilience’*. Our Colonial Inheritance Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, 2024. Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, Our Colonial Inheritance, Amsterdam.

The introductory section to this part of the exhibition starts as follows:

> Slavery as a system transforms people into property. Traders, owners and overseers were all implicated in the buying and selling of people and forcing them to labour without pay and under horrific conditions. They deprived them of their rights, including the right to family. The laws under slavery made it possible for owners to separate the children of the enslaved from their parents. It was a system of dehumanisation. The Netherlands was among the five largest slave-owning nations in Europe.

> Slavery was more widespread across Dutch colonial territories than most people realise and was not restricted to Suriname and the Dutch Antilles. People were also enslaved in the Dutch colonies in Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka and South Africa. The enslaved resisted constantly, in large and small ways. Indeed, there is a significant tradition of rebellion and revolts. Many people attempted to flee, despite the gruesome punishment that awaited them if they were caught. Some escaped temporarily to visit their family or partner on another plantation. Beyond physical escape, some found 'freedom', even if temporary, in rituals and festivals. Abolition did not end colonial dehumanisation and exploitation. Indentured labourers, employed to fill the labour shortage left by the emancipation of the enslaved, endured similarly appalling conditions. Today, the term 'modern slavery' is used to describe the legacy of centuries of exploitative and dehumanising work conditions of many people across the world.[123]

This segment particularly focuses on how people were used as workforces and resources for trade. The text emphasises how horrendous the circumstances were for those subjected to slavery and highlights the continues resistance against oppression, both in small and large acts, and what the repercussions of attempted resistance were. It also draws connections between the colonial past and contemporary issues, indicating that abolition of slavery was not the end of its effects. The legacy of colonial history, especially slavery, is still felt by communities today.

The exhibition's later discussion on modern slavery underscores a diversification between skin colour, race, traditions, and religion during the colonial period, which created hierarchy and differences between people. This historical segregation is still structurally reflected in modern society, facilitating modern racism as well as an unequal societal structure that results in modern slavery.

To convey the message of this section, the museum continues to explain how enslaved individuals were dehumanised. It emphasises that the issue was more extensive than commonly recognised. While there were laws that slave owners needed to abide by, these regulations were primarily designed to ensure the safety of the enslaved, creating the illusion that they were protected by law from being subjected to violent and inhumane circumstances.[124] This false sense of legal protection suggested a more equal situation than was the case. Nonetheless, slave owners could generally do as they pleased as these laws were used to ensure captivity and control over the enslaved people.

The most common way that people sought a way out of the troublesome life was by sharing songs and stories, which helped them maintain a sense of dignity in an environment of constant dehumanisation.

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[123] "Slavery, resistance and resilience," Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

[124] "Slavery on the plantation: exploitation and dehumanisation," Slavery, resistance and resilience, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

One example of rebellious attempts to escape and regain freedom is Berbice in 1763, where the enslaved, under leadership of Cuffy, revolted. Many of the locals fled and joined militant leaders, known as Maroons. Another example the exhibition includes is the Haitian revolution in 1795, led by Tula.[125] While these are important mentions of resistance, the museum offers little context and does not expand on the narrative of how these cases ended and what happened to the resistance fighters who are presented as heroes in their context.

Other means of resistance are also highlighted throughout exhibition's textual elements. One significant form of resistance was the use of music and dance as a means to preserve traditions and to create and maintain communities. These artistic expressions also serve to express freedom. For instance, Du feasts in Suriname saw enslaved plantation workers opposing the system of slavery through music, theatre and religious practices, implicitly critiquing their oppression through odo's, or proverbs. Another example is Tambú, a festival that was banned into the 20th century.[126]

The museum connects the historical context of slavery to the modern world, textually questioning whether slavery is over. While slavery has been legally abolished in nearly every country, millions of people still endure conditions of forced labour. Although not always direct legacies of colonialism, these situations serve as a reminder of the dehumanisation experienced during the colonial era. The construction of the World Cup stadium in Qatar in 2022, is cited as a contemporary example thereof.[127] There is no particular object that enforces this textual segment.

This section highlights the differences between colonisers and native populations, particularly through institutional laws. Once again, the introduction lacks a specific time frame, suggesting that resistance was continuous through various means and is still present in contemporary society. There is a connection drawn between the segregation of oppressors and oppressed and the unification of generational trauma, where colonisation serves as a foundation for modern racism and dehumanisation. Resistance, often not condoned by the oppressors, is portrayed without including the consequences and punishments that enslaved individuals faced when they revolted or attempted to challenge the system. This section makes use of interconnected textual elements more extensively, exploring the notion of freedom as an abstract concept and suggesting that traditions such as music and dance offer a sense of liberation rather than actual physical freedom.

[125] "Resistance and freedom," Slavery, resistance and resilience, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

[126] "Du feasts and Tambú," Slavery, resistance and resilience, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

[127] "Is slavery over?," Slavery, resistance and resilience, Onze Koloniale Erfenis, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.

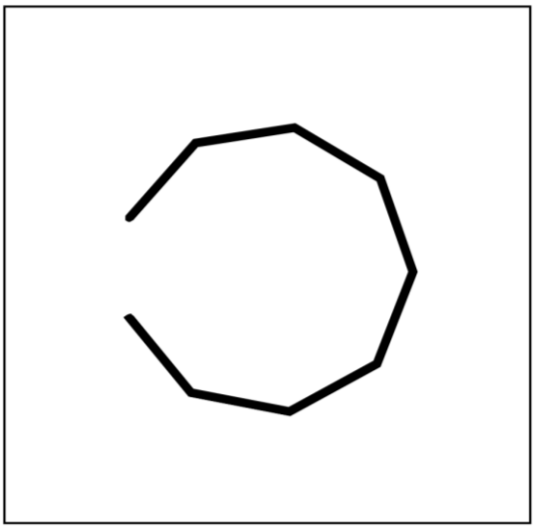
The term ‘modern slavery’ is an interesting choice in the exhibition, explicitly linking it back to historical contexts. However, the text also appears to differentiate slavery as a unique experience rooted in colonialism, hence the choice of words is questionable.

This section of the exhibition mostly consists of objects from the colonial period, including the two walls featured in the figures below.

Figure 3.3.3. Collection of colonial art mounted to exhibition wall. Our Colonial Inheritance Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, 2024. Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, Our Colonial Inheritance, Amsterdam.

Figure 3.3.4. Collection of colonial art displayed in exhibition installation. Our Colonial Inheritance Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, 2024. Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, Our Colonial Inheritance, Amsterdam.

These two walls are opposite one another, on the one hand you have a collection of works that represent and highlight the colonisers.



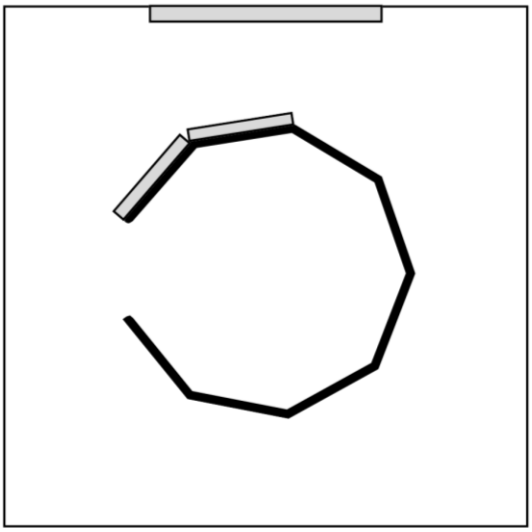


Figure 3.3.5. *Spatial layout ‘slavery, resistance and resilience’*. Made May 9, 2024.

Figure 3.3.6. *Position of objects in spatial layout ‘slavery, resistance and resilience’*. Made May 9, 2024.

Among these paintings and drawings, the colonised are depicted as enslaved servants of the oppressors, showcasing the wealth of the Europeans in these countries. The enslaved people are often shown in working conditions. One watercolour sketch that is primarily doesn't use the colourful material for the enslaved, incorporating racial differences within the artwork. Another piece on the wall represents all the different ranks in the Surinamese colonial society and highlights how material differences were reflected in the clothes they wore. On the opposite wall, there are additional works and items that are part of the colonised communities, including a drawing depicting a funeral on a plantation.

Additionally, these drawings are all centred on the life of colonised individuals, particularly within the context of plantations. Along the bottom row, there is a collection of items that were used by the colonised people, again, specifically in the colonial plantation setting. Some of the items are clothing while others are more everyday items. Furthermore, diversity is highlighted through the use of frames. The artworks in Figure 3.4.4. are unframes, whereas those in Figure 3.4.3. are framed, some of which are extravagant and expensive, symbolising the wealth of the colonists. Notably, the artworks that represent the lives of enslaved people on the plantations were not made by the locals but by white men, likely engaged in ethnological research. This perspective predominantly reflects the perspective of the colonisers, without showing the lived experiences of the enslaved and the harm that was done as a consequence of colonial actions.

The items described above illustrate how the museum aims to portray the differences and reasons as to why the enslaved resisted against their oppressors.

This section of the exhibition is mostly focused on the methods enslaved people used to resist against their oppressors, emphasising their efforts to assert their distinct identities through the use of resistance and cultural expressions like festivals. Colonialism in this regard makes oppressed communities long to assert their uniqueness and hammer on the value of their differences from the oppressor. There is attention to how structural inequalities led to the resistance of the enslaved and how racial differences are still embedded in modern practices, exploiting people based on historical hierarchies. The exhibition shifts the notion of modern slavery away from its colonial origins, presenting it as something that only takes place overseas. This portrayal might lead visitors to believe that differences, or diversity, among people serves as something that keeps them separated, although the overall narrative suggests that these differences helps enrich a diverse society through different levels such as language and foodways.

However, the museum misses opportunities to explore other narratives and could have diversified this topic by, for example, highlighting figures such as Laksamana Malahayati and her Inong Ballee army.

This was an all-women army that defended Indonesia against Dutch troops.[128] By presenting contesting artworks, the exhibition accurately depicts differences in social status and demonstrates how colonial art can still be glorify the coloniser's perspectives, leaving out many visually daunting experiences of the colonised.

3.4 Conclusion

To conclude, the overall narrative in the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam's exhibition, *Our Colonial Inheritance*, starts with the historical context of economic growth, trade routes and the resources traded overseas. The argument in 'A profitable business for whom?' relies on economic motivations and the consequences of colonialism. It expands on the involvement of slavery in the colonial equation before shifting to a period of resistance and revolt against the oppressors.

In 'Plundering the earth', textual elements connect colonial trade to contemporary consumerism and sustainability. While colonial trade diversified tastes and markets, it also had detrimental effects on the environment. The exhibition highlights less invasive traditional techniques used by Indigenous communities to defy the need for destruction. These sections serve as building blocks to delve into contemporary examples of colonial legacy, such as the fusion of language, foodways, religion, and cultural practices and traditions. They also create the groundwork for the section on 'Slavery, resistance and resilience'.

To understand how Wereldmuseum Amsterdam defines and expresses diversity, an analysis of *Our Colonial Inheritance* reveals several interrelated elements.

'A profitable business for whom?' sets the stage for the entire narrative, focussing primarily on factual and economic information about trade routes and the violent methods used to maintain control. The museum uses geographical, socioeconomic, racial, cultural, and gender differences in texts and objects to present various perspectives on colonialism. This section highlights the legacy of economic relations and trade, portraying them as the forger of intercultural connections and the cause of people's movement, which served as the root to multiculturalism and creation of identities.

By excluding mentions of how colonised communities resisted this invasion, the exhibition risks victimising these groups, installing a hierarchy of power similar to those seen in colonial times. The first item in the exhibition, *Territory Dress* by Susan Stockwell, is strategically placed at the start. Constructed from maps of former Dutch colonies, the dress symbolises socio-economic and gender diversity by

[128] Monique Doppert and Riekje de Haan, "Wanita Berani! Indonesische vrouwen tegen Nederlands kolonialisme," Publicaties, Cerita Fakta, accessed April 24, 2024, https://ceritafakta.nl/projecten/wanita-berani/.

representing the bloodshed of colonial wealth and the position of women during colonial times. The spatial positioning of the dress creates an interplay between the past and the present, revealing various layers of diversity and signifying the continuity of colonialism. It embodies and metaphorizes colonial representation and its effects, illustrating how countries bled for the wealth of the Netherlands and highlighting the role of men as main perpetrators, although the entire population benefited from colonial endeavours. This presentation frames the Netherlands as the maternal figure to colonial nations from the start of the narrative. The museum's use of thematic colours throughout the exhibition further immerses visitors in the thematic structure applied throughout the narrative.

In 'Plundering the earth', the narrative highlights how local communities have agricultural practices that are less harmful to the environment, countering the victimisation of communities, but rather glorifies native cultivation. These contrasting narratives offer multiple interpretations of how nature should and could be managed. Additionally, the idea of colonial legacy shifts to focus on the use of products, representing colonialism in relation to Western capitalism. This aspect of Dutch identity is portrayed as a significant negative consequence of the colonial legacy. Capitalism is depicted as the driver of inequality in identity, but the exhibition fails to mention that without colonialism, certain products like sugar, salt, tobacco, and coffee might not be as widespread as they are today.

Zico Albaiquini's and Maryanto's works are positioned opposite each other. Albaiquini's piece, located at the start of the exhibition, focuses on the spiritual and cultural aspects of colonial history in Indonesia, presenting the idea of decolonising natural sites to reclaim native identity. Many natural sites have been, and continue to be, affected by colonial influences. In contrast, Maryanto's artwork depicts the devastation caused by mining, emphasising the consequences of exploiting nature. While the colonial legacy is still visible in the consumerism in the Netherlands, it should be rendered invisible or eliminated in former colonies.

'Slavery, resistance, and resilience' prioritises the diversity of experiences among enslaved people and the various ways they resisted. The geographical diversity affects the selection of cases used in the narrative but overall emphasises the value of identity and the need to highlight the uniqueness of communities through their resistance against oppressors. The diversity of experiences based on cultural context bridges the historical context to contemporary issues of forced labour. The colonial legacy is the foundation of modern slavery; however, it is presented as something not commonly seen in the Netherlands but only present outside of the West. Today, the sense of identity and the need to diversify are still visible in festivals that enhance cultural identity. These festivals serve as a way to remember the struggle of the colonial era, bringing awareness to new perspectives and experiences, and decolonising traditional ideas about colonialism.

The exhibition includes two opposing walls, one highlighting the colonisers and the other focusing on the enslaved people. These walls represent the hierarchal power dynamics in the colonies, with the Dutch displaying wealth while the enslaved are shown struggling to meet their basic needs. The frames used for the colonisers' artworks are more grandiose compared to the limited frames on the pieces depicting the colonised, illustrating socio-economic differences. The museum could address how these artworks, including those depicting plantation workers, were created by colonisers and, therefore, still have a sense of glorification, excluding the hardships faced by enslaved people. Additionally, placing musical instruments used for resistance on the inside of the walls signifies the internal drive and use of traditions and identity to fight against oppressors.

The exhibition decisions balance a traditional narrative with contemporary elements through selected objects. Diversity is implemented through artworks that reflect racial, cultural, and geopolitical differences as effects of colonialism. By connecting these issues to contemporary, the exhibition emphasises that colonialism is not an issue of the past but a current one as well. Colonialism is presented as a negative force, yet the museum also suggests that racism and racial diversity, formerly used to enforce hierarchal differences, now highlight cultural fusion. This creates a paradox in the notion of 'othering' and 'dis-othering', leading to confusion. Diversity simultaneously highlights uniqueness of identities and the need to remember resistance while also serving as a means to unify people through decolonisation.

Interestingly, there is a notable contrast in academic discourse. Sociologists like Ulrich Beck argue that the emergence of a global society is characterised by the unique qualities that differentiate people. This challenges the convergence myth, which suggests cultures are increasingly becoming similar.[129] The museum strives to create a sense of world citizenship, yet their approach to colonial history, framed within a dual notion of diversity, could potentially have negative consequences. Similar to Rotterdam, where diversity is historicised, addressing stereotypes and rectifying colonial legacies requires contemporary actions. The exhibition finalises the exhibition with a section that features visual displays to encourage visitors to reflect on what they have learned and contemplate ways to bring about change. By offering a comprehensive narrative on the legacy of colonialism, the exhibition urges visitors to confront historical injustices head-on.

[129] Rosmarie Beier-de Haan, "Re-staging Histories and Identities," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 188.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Ethnographic museums in the Netherlands employ methods to define and implement diversity into their exhibition narratives, utilising text, object, and spatial analysis. Each museum uses distinct approaches in presenting diversity, each with its own challenges.

Colonialism and Rotterdam defines and implements diversity through its primarily text-driven approach within an open floor plan structured by numbered sections and subsections. This method allows for a multilayered exploration of Rotterdam's complex history under colonialism, focusing on local cases in a chronological structure. Textual sources guide visitors through Rotterdam's development, highlighting the interconnectedness fostered by global movements, migration, and colonial influences. The exhibition highlights the intersection of local, national, and international histories within Rotterdam, showcasing their impact on the city's physical landscape, economy, relationships, and traditions. It promotes understanding and acknowledgment of these historical legacies through shared narratives and insights, aiming to sensitise contemporary discussions and behaviours regarding colonialism, while recognising Rotterdam as a diverse, multicultural city with varied individual experiences.

Each section explores different aspects of Rotterdam's colonial legacy, showcasing how colonialism led to cultural diversity while also acknowledging its limitations and challenges. For instance, the 'Departure and arrival' section, which focuses on the city's economic growth, illustrates Rotterdam's increase in diverse nationalities following the independence of former colonies. This highlights colonialism as the main driver for migration and contributes to Rotterdam's multicultural identity. However, the exhibition predominantly portrays this diversity in a positive light, focusing on multiethnic contact as a driver of diversity while overlooking the negative effects of forced migration and the challenges faced by migrants. Hatta's photograph exemplifies Rotterdam's dual role in both fostering diversity through migration and being involved in historical conflict like the Indonesian struggle for independence. Rotterdam's port facilitated both cultural exchange and military, highlighting the adverse effects of rapid development.

'Urban culture' explores how colonial influences blend with contemporary customs to shape Rotterdam's identity. While acknowledging colonialism's oppressive nature, it emphasises the city's resilience and creativity in developing cultural practices, making the city a facilitator of diversity. However, it overlooks ongoing challenges faced by migrants, where diversity can lead to conflict and marginalisation. The exhibition's chronological and local structure also misses the opportunity to showcase modern changes, such as evolving street language or religious shifts. Benjamin Li's contemporary artwork further illustrates cultural fusion while challenging narratives by showing that these fusions are starting to gradually disappear from the public eye. His work connects historical narratives with modern art, symbolising cultural integrity and the evolving concept of identity. Li demonstrates how post-colonial migration has created new cultural expressions, emphasising

interconnectedness and linking historical stories to modern-day challenges in preserving cultural heritage. This exemplifies decolonisation and underscores migrant culture's role in enriching Rotterdam's identity and cultural landscape.

The 'Streets and collections' section shifts focus to tangible remnants of colonialism, such as street names and statues, highlighting their contemporary relevance. It contrasts previous sections by addressing how these remnants embody a racist worldview and stresses the importance of acknowledging them to prevent repetition of colonial prejudices. These remnants from colonial times glorify the past and contribute to a notion of diversity that emphasises uniqueness between people, often rooted in racist foundations.

The exhibition challenges visitors to confront historical injustices through contemporary interpretations of the colonial past, illustrating evolving societal values and the struggle for recognition. It demonstrates how colonial legacies shape modern perceptions of diversity, now reframing marginalised perspectives for celebration. The incorporation of van Dijk's work further contests this historical perspective by confronting colonial artifacts. Her work literally gazes upon the past, embodied in colonial artifacts, symbolising that demands attention and contributes to the decolonisation process. This shift emphasises diversity as a unifying force through decolonisation and shared humanity. Van Dijk's artwork underscores the importance of honouring marginalised communities' histories and reclaiming pride in resistance against colonialism, contributing to a redefinition of diversity as a unifying and empowering force. This juxtaposition highlights the evolving societal values and significance of learning from history to recognise our shared humanity. It signifies progress in decolonisation, transforming colonial interpretations new narratives and reflections of the past. Ultimately, decolonisation and critical reflection introduce diversity as a powerful tool for uniting diverse cultures and identities within the city.

The exhibition's open space design encourages visitors to explore freely, creating a sense of both cohesion and confusion. However, its primarily text-driven approach and adjacency between objects make it hard to distinguish individual stories. The exhibition requires a structured format to guide visitors, leading to a logical chronological approach. Yet, the limited time periods restrict the museum from delving deeper into complex contextual narratives that could offer diverse perspectives.

Wereldmuseum Amsterdam's exhibition, *Our Colonial Inheritance*, defines and implements diversity by offering a comprehensive view of Dutch colonial history, encompassing the entirety of the Netherlands. The exhibition begins with the economic foundations and consequences of colonialism, emphasising the motivations and impacts of Dutch trade and economic growth. Central are the portrayal of diverse experiences of enslaved people and their methods of resistance, connecting historical narratives to contemporary issues such as forced labour. It explores the struggles for freedom, cultural assimilation in language and religion, and ongoing effects on migration and identity. Moreover, the exhibition

encourages the visitor to reflect on their roles in combating prejudice and addressing historical injustices by examining the Netherlands' colonial legacy.

The section 'A profitable business for whom?' sets a foundational framework with economic and factual information about trade routes and control methods during colonialism. It utilises geographical, socioeconomic, racial, cultural, and gender differences to present diverse perspectives on colonial impacts. However, the section initially overlooks perspectives on resistance perspectives, particularly in the early stages of colonisation. The exhibition connects cultural context to contemporary issues, showcasing how experiences varied based on cultural backgrounds. It follows a traditional narrative by highlighting well-known cases, serving as fundamental examples that grounds diversity in economic relationships that fostered intercultural connections, trade, and the transportation of enslaved individuals across continents. While including multiple colonies adds diversity, there is room to present these cases differently to avoid victimisation or reinforcing colonial hierarchies. For instance, Susan Stockwell's *Territory Dress* offers a contemporary representation in juxtaposition by adding layers of socio-economic and gender diversity. This artwork bridges past and present, underscoring the enduring legacy of colonialism in contemporary contexts.

'Plundering the earth' connects colonial trade practices to contemporary consumerism and sustainability concerns, contrasting them with less invasive traditional methods of indigenous communities. Unlike Rotterdam, which is structured chronologically, this exhibition a thematic approach to cover the overall colonial history of the Netherlands. However, its narrative remains traditional by primarily focusing on the diversity of produce and resources extracted from various colonised lands, without addressing slave trade or how enslaved people were used to destroy their environments for the benefit of the oppressor. Additionally, the exhibition does not touch upon how this historical destruction continues to impact contemporary society today. Western consumerism's dependency on these products continue to support inequalities rooted in colonial exploitation. It suggests dietary habits and material possessions might have evolved differently if native methods had been used.

In this section, the exhibition addresses contemporary issues through selected artworks. Albaiquini aims for restoration through traditional rites that dismantle the colonial concept of botanical gardens to restore them to their former beauty, highlighting the need for decolonisation to reclaim native identity. Maryanto works opposes this sentiment by portraying the continuous destruction of nature driven by profit and force. This offers diverse perspectives on how nature is interpreted within colonial contexts.

'Slavery, resistance, and resilience' explores the diversity of slavery's international reach and the different cultural contexts of resistance. The exhibition focuses on modern-day repercussions of colonialism. It underscores how modern slavery are rooted in colonial laws. Despite ongoing fights against these injustices, the museum still fails to address what consequences were faced by resistance

fighters. Moreover, modern slavery is depicted as something that is primarily found outside the Western world. Festivals celebrating cultural identity serve as reminders of colonial-era struggles and promote new narratives through decolonisation.

The exhibition contrasts the wealth of colonisers with the struggles of the enslaved, using visual elements like frames to depict socio-economic differences and musical instruments to symbolise cultural resilience. The spatial design, with its pyramid structure and contrasting wall displays, reinforces the narrative of resistance and resilience, illustrating how internal motivations led to creative resistances against oppression. Thus, the exhibition connects enduring colonial legacies to contemporary issues.

The question is: how do ethnographic museums in the Netherlands define and implement diversity within exhibition narratives?

In Rotterdam, colonialism is portrayed as the driver for diversity through migration, multiethnic interactions, and cultural exchange. Rotterdam is depicted as a facilitator of diversity, shaping its identity through cultural fusion and the introduction of new traditions. Conversely, Amsterdam approaches colonialism through its economic relations, emphasising how trade and the movement of people, including enslaved individuals, created intercultural connections. However, Amsterdam also acknowledges Western capitalism as the driver of inequality and the culprit of colonial hierarchies. The diversification Dutch tastes due to trade contributed to the destruction of nature in colonised regions, shaping Dutch flavour and material identity. Addressing the need to decolonise these environments to help restore native identities.

Both museums bridge historical narratives with contemporary issues, advocating for decolonisation as a mean to resolve present-day issues. There is a need to reevaluate historical memories and reinterpret our reflections; for instance, modern slavery is often perceived as something that exclusively occurs outside the West, despite being rooted in colonial legacies. Reevaluating historical resistance, such as through festivals that historically served as means to fight against oppression by asserting uniqueness of identity, highlights the reclamation process. These festivals now serve as celebrations and remembrances of resistance, claiming the decolonisation of identity. Diversity, within the context of both museums, shift from merely highlighting uniqueness and othering becoming a unifying force, dis-othering ethnography within their societal context.

As this is the first attempt to analyse exhibitions in this format, there is room for future improvements and further research. Although the empirical approach offers a new method examining the meanings behind museum narratives through a multimodal approach, interviews with the museums could provide additional insights. While this analysis offers an extensive insight into how ethnographic museum in the Netherlands approach diversity, incorporating the museum in Leiden would complete the picture. The gap in understanding the value of exhibition narrative analysis in identity construction and memory

studies within the context of decolonisation can be closed by conducting further empirical research. As ethnographic museums play a crucial role in educating visitors about contested pasts, it would be interesting to compare how countries' social context influence the interpretation of diversity. Additionally, examining the overall narrative constructed by these museums could provide a broader understanding of how they use various tools to convey a comprehensive narrative beyond the selected sections.

A suggestion for the museums themselves is to continue to exploring ways to include fresh perspectives and introduce their visitors to new approaches to understanding the past. Navigating complex histories in contemporary society is no easy task.

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Appendix I

Introductory text *Our Colonial Inheritance*:

> We live in a world shaped in many ways by colonialism. The food we eat, the languages we use, the people who live in the Netherlands today, our views of one another and also our power relations – colonialism's legacy is everywhere. The Netherlands has a long colonial history. This history is one of overseas trade, but also of domination, oppression, and exploitation. For centuries, Europe's riches came at the expense of freedom, wealth, and wellbeing of many people elsewhere in the world. Our Colonial Inheritance shows how small numbers of colonisers were able to impose this exploitative system of rule and extraction onto a far greater number of colonised people. It explores the resilience of the colonised as they fought against the system. Many died. Some rebelled. They broke their chains to create a new life for themselves. In each gallery, you will see how people resisted the colonial system, creating new cultural, political, and economic possibilities in the face of oppression. Our colonial inheritance reflects on this long history and how it affects our lives today. This is a multi-layered, complex story that involves multiple perspectives. It is our common inheritance.