

09-052

Dutch Museums and Cultural Diversity
Different cultures, mutual worlds

BOEKMANstichting

Studiecentrum voor kunst, cultuur en beleid



Herengracht 415
1017 BP Amsterdam
telefoon bibliotheek 020-624 37 39
fax 020 - 638 52 39
e-mail c.boekman@inter.NL.net

De uitleentermijn bedraagt 4 weken. Verlenging met 4 weken is mogelijk, tenzij de publikatie inmiddels is gereserveerd.

De uitleentermijn is verstreken op:

10 MAART 1999

05 JULI 1999
tot 4 aug.

24 SEP. 1999

16 OKT. 2000

28 MAART 2001

01 DEC. 2001

24 JUNI 2002

19 JULI 2002

5 september.

1 oktober

06 JUNI 2003

16 OKT. 2003

17 MAART 2005

Boekmanstichting - Bibliotheek
Horengracht 415
1017 BP Amsterdam
Tel. 6243739

Dutch Museums and Cultural Diversity Different cultures, mutual worlds

**Netherlands Museums Association
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science**

1998



Post-mortem portrait of Surinamese-Hindustani woman in sari

Content

Preface	5	3
Migration history and museums Jan Lucassen	9	
Dutch museums practice multiculturalism, the conquest of the barriers between 'we' and 'they' H.O. van den Berg	16	
Museums and intercultural policy: changing perspectives Riet de Leeuw	31	
Interculturele Museale Programma's/Intercultural Museum Programmes	37	
Notes	38	
Colophon	40	

A last farewell

Funeral and mourning rituals in the multicultural Netherlands **A photographic portrait by Marrie Bot**

The photographs in the project 'A last farewell' provide a penetrating image of the similarities and differences in the ways in which people from a number of population groups in the Netherlands handle death. They expose a world which nobody knows in its entirety and they expose many current clichés surrounding rituals relating to funerals and mourning.

Beginning in 1990, Marrie Bot attended more than a hundred funerals and recorded the rituals of Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and non-religious Netherlanders. In doing so she presented an image of traditional aspects as well as recently developed customs. In addition, she photographed the death rituals of the Surinamese-Creoles, Pakistani, Iranian and Surinamese-Javanese Moslems, Surinamese-Hindustani, Cape Verdeans and Chinese living in the Netherlands. With the permission of the next of kin, the photographer was involved in the family happenings from the moment that the deceased was washed and laid out until the last death and mourning rituals which were sometimes a number of years after the death. There is great diversity in the photographed rites and customs in the groups which she followed.

4



Granddaughter wants to give a farewell kiss to grandfather who is laid out at home



New rituals: goodbye to a friend who is laid out on his own bed

Museums and Cultural Diversity

The State of the Arts in the Netherlands

Dutch culture has been influenced right from the very beginning by foreign cultures: the Romans occupying the Netherlands in the first centuries AD, the Flemish refugees fleeing north at the end of the 16th century for religious reasons, or the Dutch who brought with them Indonesian traditions after their sojourn in Indonesia. The diversity of influences has increased during recent decades to an enormous extent, on the one hand because a growing number of people from the colonies - first Indonesia and, later on, Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles - came to settle in the Netherlands, on the other hand because labour migration got under way in which inhabitants from the Mediterranean regions came to supplement the labour potential of the Netherlands. In recent years, moreover, refugees from the endangered areas from all over the world have strengthened the multiformity of Dutch culture.

Museums can play an important role in dealing with this ethnic and cultural diversity of contemporary society. They do not only harbour the reminders of this multicultural history, but are also the places where the 'new Netherlanders' kept and ought to keep their own history. They are also the places where the newcomers can become familiar with Dutch history and culture.

Museums, as true 'generators of culture', can help society to develop the skills to handle this diversity. They do so by providing an insight into the interfaces between cultures that have been there of old (sometimes by looking through new eyes at familiar objects and stories), by showing how the different cultures influence and have influenced each other, and by starting the discussion on how to deal with the area of tension between preservation of one's own culture and integration with the new culture.

In recent years Dutch museums (supported by government policy) have taken this role more and more seriously. The result is a large diversity of initiatives, each in its own way trying to give the museum a place in the multicultural society.

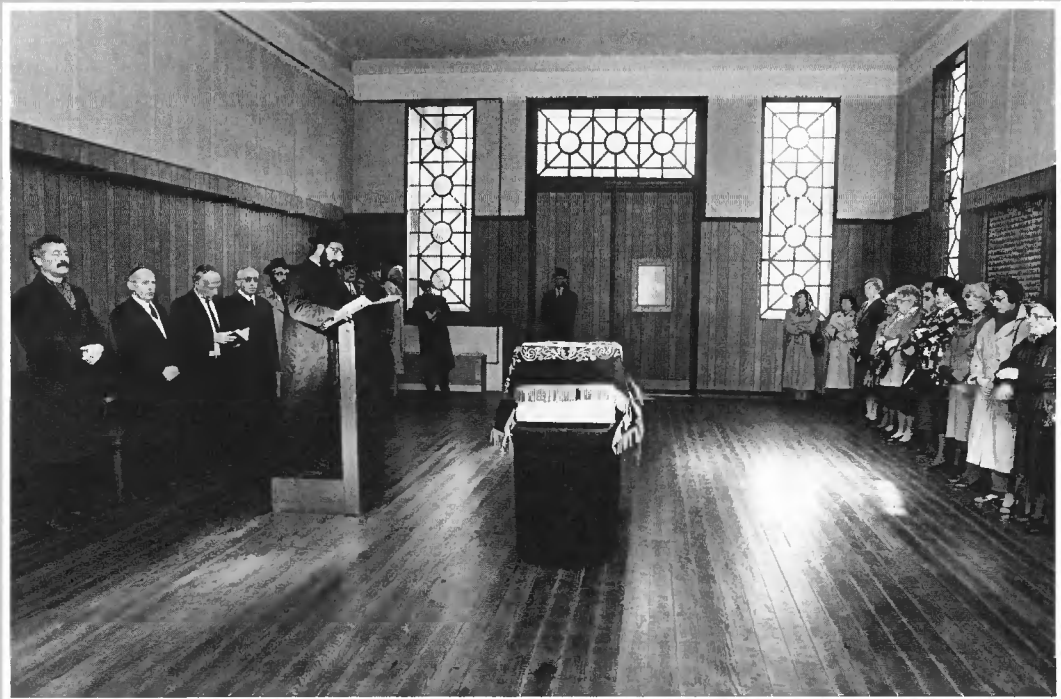
This publication gives a survey of what has been accomplished so far. Fortunately an ever increasing circle of museums is enlarging on these experiences, because for any museum with any collection whatsoever, the multicultural society is a palpable reality which requires a response.

Annemarie Vels Heijn
Director of The Netherlands Museums Association

6



Cape Verdean visit of condolence in a funeral parlour for two friends killed in a traffic accident



Memorial service in the aula of an orthodox Jewish cemetery

Compositions of the populations of the Netherlands and the four major cities per 1 January 1997

The Netherlands

Total number of inhabitants	15,567,107	
Total number of immigrants*	1,761,128	(11%)
Size of the largest communities (by country of origin)		
- Turkey	279,794	
- Morocco	225,377	
- Surinam	253,854	
- Netherlands Antilles and Aruba	68,877	
- Indonesia	217,459	

Four Major cities

Amsterdam:

Total number of inhabitants	715,148	
Total number of immigrants*	215,308	(35%)
Size of largest communities:		
- Turkey	29,964	
- Morocco	47,690	
- Surinam	64,721	
- Netherlands Antilles and Aruba	8,906	
- Indonesia	15,061	

Rotterdam:

Total number of inhabitants	589,987	
Total number of immigrants*	186,058	(32%)
Size of largest communities:		
- Turkey	35,799	
- Morocco	25,623	
- Surinam	45,211	
- Netherlands Antilles and Aruba	10,858	
- Indonesia	6,784	

The Hague:

Total number of inhabitants	442,159	
Total number of immigrants*	103,609	(23%)
Size of largest communities:		
- Turkey	22,501	
- Morocco	17,503	
- Surinam	38,593	
- Netherlands Antilles and Aruba	5,388	
- Indonesia	13,212	

Utrecht:

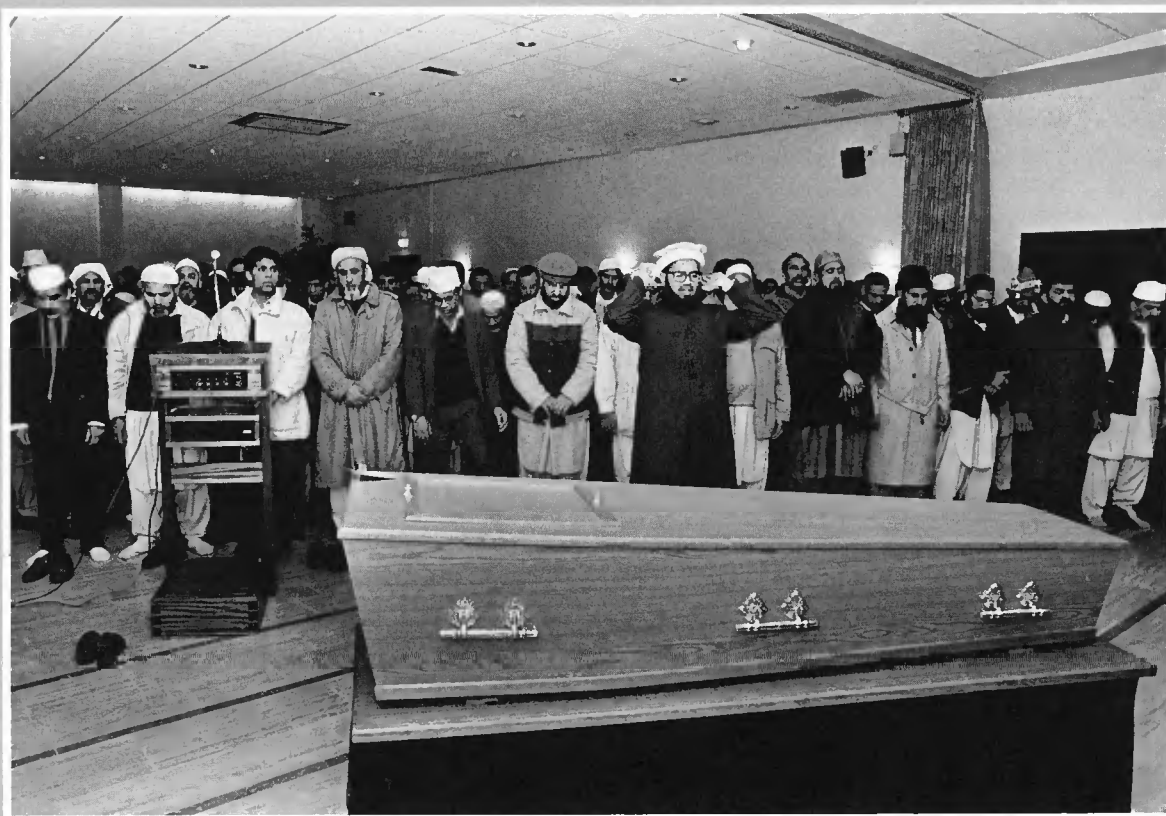
Total number of inhabitants	233,952	
Total number of immigrants*	36,696	(16%)
Size of largest communities:		
- Turkey	9,782	
- Morocco	18,230	
- Surinam	6,022	
- Netherlands Antilles and Aruba	1,191	
- Indonesia	3,446	

*

The calculation of the number of immigrants in these surveys is based on first and second-generation immigrants.

Immigrants of the first generation are defined as persons born outside the Netherlands having one or both parents who were also born outside the Netherlands. They are classified according to country of birth. Immigrants of the second generation are defined as persons born in the Netherlands having both parents born abroad. They are classified according to the country of birth of the mother.

Source: Statistics Netherlands, 1 January 1997



Pakistani during a joint prayer for the dead (salat djanazah) in a funeral parlour

Migration history and museums

Jan Lucassen

9

'Multicultural' is a concept easily used in the Netherlands nowadays and without a clear description it can be very treacherous indeed. The word as such offers no opinion on the nature of 'culture'. It may refer, for instance, to differences in religion, class, caste, gender and sexual disposition. In common usage it is usually focused on cultural differences as a result of immigration. More particularly, a society is called multicultural when indigenous and immigrant cultures exist side by side. 'Immigrant', too, is a treacherous concept. As a rule it does not refer to all foreigners or immigrants whatever their countries of origin, but to only a few groups which have been considered problematic. In common Dutch parlance it refers nowadays to Turks and Moroccans in particular.

This need to limit the meanings of general and neutral concepts such as multicultural, immigrant, and foreigner to such a definite negative sense, points to social tensions. The distinguishing criterion in this parlance is nationality. In the Netherlands the primary difference between 'we' and 'they', based on national instead of local or provincial boundaries, dates to the French period. In this period the Dutch unitary state was formed, which in principle implied constitutional equality for all inhabitants. This ideal of equality almost inevitably also led to the tendency to see all Dutch as equal when compared to non-Dutch people. And so the Dutch, the Dutch national character, and Dutch culture were, as it were, born; the content of these concepts have, however, changed regularly since those days.

In general, when attempting to define the Dutch national character, the emphasis was on psychological rather than on physiological elements. The history of the Dutch nation has long been conceived as the vicissitudes of a biologically homogeneous society, i.e. of a society in which immigration did not play a major part. Most people expressing an opinion on the Dutch national character implicitly based their opinion on one society, which had passed on its qualities and experiences from father to son and from mother to daughter since the early Middle Ages. This is apparent from the completely supposititious place that was until recently accorded to immigration in Dutch history.

Historical backgrounds

The past and present importance of immigration to the Netherlands has by now been realized. Since the late sixteenth century large numbers of new immigrants have arrived. The number of people born abroad was between six and ten percent during the Republic of the Seven United Provinces and this is in general a much higher percentage than at present. If, however, the second-generation immigrants were to be included as well - which is nowadays mostly done to determine the number of immigrants - it would even result in multiples of the above percentages. Most immigrants lived, as they do now, in the big cities. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries their number decreased¹, but after World War II it grew again to the level of a few centuries ago. The fact that the Netherlands had apparently such an appeal for immigrants for so long was mainly due to its relative wealth and its relative religious and political tolerance - 'relative' meaning that it was often in great contrast to the newcomers' regions of origin.

The Republic of the Seven United Provinces became a refuge to many who had been persecuted elsewhere for their beliefs. Among them were famous scholars such as the French philosopher, René Descartes, who lived in the Netherlands from 1628 to 1649, and the English philosopher, John Locke, who settled in the Republic from 1683 to 1689.

In the second half of the sixteenth century the changing fortunes of the Eighty Years' War caused a great influx of people from the Southern Netherlands to the Northern Provinces. Among the newcomers were important merchants and entrepreneurs, who were to exercise considerable influence on the development of the Dutch economy. The young university of Leiden, founded in 1575, counted several immigrants among its professors.

Almost a century later there was a second wave of Protestant refugees, the Huguenots, when Louis XIV, the Sun King, finally annulled their guaranteed rights in 1685.

Not only Protestant, but also Jewish refugees came to settle in the Netherlands. In Amsterdam, where most of the Portuguese or Sephardic Jews ended up, a relatively small new Jewish community arose with, in due course, its own synagogues. The persecution of Jews in Central and Eastern Europe caused new surges of refugees after 1635.

Besides these larger groups of refugees, a great many smaller ones made their way to the Netherlands. In the seventeenth century these included Polish Socinians, English Puritans and Quakers. In the first half of the eighteenth century, Baptists arrived from Switzerland, Poland and Prussia as well as Moravian brethren from Germany.

Political and religious refugees were also driven by economic motives. But there was continual permanent settlement by immigrants who came for economic reasons, in numbers far exceeding all refugees who came to the Dutch Republic. Besides, many foreigners temporarily filled the lower ranks of the army and the navy, and much seasonal work was carried out by foreigners.

In the nineteenth century the Netherlands received few refugees. The change came in the twentieth century, from 1933 onwards, when the persecution of the Jews in Germany forced Jewish refugees to head for the Netherlands, primarily because they had been classified as Jews by the Nazis.

After World War II the Netherlands was confronted with two kinds of immigrants, who came from various political backgrounds. First there was the immigration resulting from decolonization: the repatriates from the former Netherlands Indies, New Guinea, and Surinam. In addition there were also numerous political refugees, from Eastern Europe, but also from Uganda, Chili, and Greece.

Then there was the rapid economic growth which, particularly in the 1960s, led to structural shortages on the labour market. At first industrial firms looked for workers

in Italy and Spain, later in Yugoslavia and Greece, and from the mid-1960s they set their sights on Turkey, Morocco, and Tunisia. In the early 1970s the temporary nature of the labour migration, which had always been the aim of both migrants and government, and which had by and large been accomplished in the 1960s, disappeared within a short period. The return percentages fell dramatically, particularly for labour migrants from Turkey and Morocco.

Economic development has also attracted many 'ordinary' immigrants since the 1960s. Among them is a large group of immigrants of Chinese origin. Consequently the Netherlands, without exaggeration, may be called an immigration country *par excellence*, when compared with surrounding countries, and it has been so for centuries. This observation has far-reaching results for the picture of the development of the Netherlands, its inhabitants, and their culture.

The question is now how immigrants have helped to form Dutch culture. The answer to this means that we have to look at the nature of the settlement process of these new Dutch people.

The process of immigration and settlement

Three points have to be discussed briefly in the settlement process. Firstly, the length of the period between settlement and eventual assimilation or the forming of a minority, then the dominance of assimilation over minority forming, and finally the profound influence of the immigration process on Dutch culture.

The settlement process does not simply mean that the immigrants learn a foreign language and other customs and that the indigenous population get used to the foreign odd fish. From a historical point of view it appears that the immigrants and their descendants in the Netherlands, for two or three generations (and sometimes even longer), have lived in two different worlds, although to varying degrees, for fifty years or more.

In as far as can be ascertained - so up to and including the immigrants from the 1950s - it appears that, in the long run, assimilation is the rule, despite all the mutual difficulties, misunderstandings, and unpleasantness, and on the understanding that the government is not actively opposed to it. By 'assimilation' I mean the process by which the ethnic-cultural and social position of the group of newcomers and their descendants is, in due course, similar to that of the indigenous people in the receiving society. Complete merger is not necessary for this definition, the descendants of immigrants may have preserved typical characteristics of the first generation. It does mean, however, that assimilation in this sense implies that the members of a group see themselves first and foremost as members of the indigenous society and are also considered to be so.

From the fact that assimilation takes so long and that descendants of newcomers may indeed retain certain cultural characteristics, it follows almost automatically that this process does not leave the indigenous society unaffected. Interaction, hence continuous cultural changes in society due to immigration, are therefore typical of Dutch history. A striking example is the standardization of the Dutch language at the beginning of the seventeenth century under the influence of the immigrants from the Southern Netherlands.

Position allocation and position acquisition

This mutual process of exerting influence may also be framed as a question: in how far is the position of newcomers or their descendants acquired and gained by themselves or is it allotted or imposed by the established society? This is the question behind the role of position allocation and position acquisition respectively. Position allocation is done in the first place by the government (at first by local government but, since the

unitary state, notably by central government). The social interest groups and organizations can also play an important part, such as the craft guilds before the beginning of the nineteenth century and the employers and employee organizations since the end of that century. Cultural institutions such as museums also have their own input.

Position allocation by newcomers and their descendants as groups can take different forms. Religious organization is one of the best known, with as striking examples the *églises wallonnes*, the synagogues, the Lutheran churches that proved a haven of refuge for many German and Scandinavian immigrants, and recently the mosques and related institutions. Other forms are cultural associations, a group's own periodicals, and organized interest groups without direct religious ties, such as those of Polish, Slovak and Italian miners since the interbellum and those of the Dutch East-Indian Netherlanders since the 1950s. A recent example is the founding of special museums which have been (co-)founded by the emancipation of certain groups of immigrants, such as the Moluks Museum in Utrecht or the Surinaams Historisch Museum in Amsterdam.

In view of the nature of the settlement process we cannot recognize the descendants of the millions of newcomers from the last centuries as such. They do not form a minority: they do not link their being originally ethnically and culturally different (or being thus considered) to a systematic lower social position for assimilation was the rule. And so the chance that groups of immigrants and their descendants are seen as ethnic minorities and also consider themselves as such, is strongest in Dutch inhabitants who immigrated after World War II, and more particularly from the 1960s.

Dutch East-Indian, Moroccan, Turkish and Surinamese Netherlanders

The large group of immigrants, for instance, who came to the Netherlands in connection with the decolonization of Indonesia, cannot now - contrary to the early years - be systematically and significantly distinguished from the rest of the population when it concerns the distribution of scarce social goods: training, work, income or pleasant housing conditions. Neither do they marry exclusively among their own group. Although the Moluccans, who were politically and legally treated separately, have experienced important developments during recent decades, these conclusions cannot yet be applied to them to the same extent.

This also goes for the Moroccan and Turkish inhabitants of the Netherlands and this will cause hardly any surprise in view of the above. The low social starting position which the - male and often unskilled - members of both groups had in the 1960s as immigrant workers, is partly to blame for this. Both groups have, moreover, until now continually been 'supplemented' with new immigrants within the framework of family reunion (husbands had their wives and children come over) or founding a family (unmarried immigrants had marriage partners come over to the Netherlands). In many respects the Antillean and Surinamese immigration, which got under way on a large scale at the time of independence, may be characterized in comparable terms.

From a historical point of view the groups of immigrants that have come here for the first time since the 1960s have therefore not only been in the Netherlands for a relatively short time but their intake is by no means at an end. Assimilation in the sense used here is quite possible, but will need time: not necessarily more, but certainly no less time than their predecessors needed in the past. Hammering on about cultural differences is therefore premature, to say the least.

Active role of museums

In the process of position allocation to newcomers and their descendants, museums can take an active stand. Position allocation occurs when they try to circumscribe the

frame of reference of the visitors which they are expecting. It continues to be a factor in the choice of exhibition subjects, in the choice of relevant objects, in the exhibition concept and in the accompanying labels. Over and over again the curators and exhibition designers form a new idea for themselves of what 'the public', including newcomers and their descendants, may find attractive, and in so doing they are guided by their knowledge and experience. What does the museum staff assume to be known by 'the public' within the chosen target group? What should 'the visitor' from the Netherlands know, regardless of his or her country of origin?

In fact these questions all refer to the visitor's capacity for recognition, in this case based on historical baggage. It goes without saying that, depending on the type of museum and the nature of the exhibition, the question of historical baggage can be replaced by that of aesthetical baggage. Behind the question of what is generally known of history, lurks the question of what is most characteristic of Dutch history.

The historical surveys do not, on the whole, draw attention to immigration as being one of the essential characteristics of national development, and, therefore, it is clear how great the problem facing the museums actually is. If only they could be said to give an inadequate representation of the prevailing image of Dutch history, but the problem goes much deeper. The prevailing image of Dutch history does not fit the facts and needs to be adapted. Yet museums do not have to wait passively for the historians. They themselves can already start to think about the new insights provided by the migration history of the Netherlands, however piecemeal and slow, and form and shape it

This may be illustrated by a simple example. Imagine that historical museums want also to attract visitors with a Moroccan background and to involve them in the national history. The general question of what museums should assume is known to the visitors should then be divided into three sub-questions: what do they think the Dutch know about Moroccan history, what do they think the visitor with a Moroccan background knows about the history of the Netherlands, and above all: what does either know of the mutual relationships in the past

One may be brief about the first question: over and over again it appears that born and bred Dutchmen lack the most elementary historical facts. Recently this was again shown in a survey by the *Historisch Nieuwsblad* among parliamentarians (1996, 5, no. 6); the research among first-year students of Leiden University fitted perfectly with this (*de Volkskrant*, 17 February 1998). About the answer to the second sub-question one could hardly be more optimistic, as the same *Historisch Nieuwsblad* made clear the other day (1998, 7, no.3). Knowledge of Moroccan history should therefore not be supposed either among the Dutch. The answer to the third will speak for itself.

Historical exhibitions

One should, of course, wonder what curators and exhibition makers actually know about the mutual relationships between the Netherlands and Morocco in the past. In fact, they have been very intensive, to such an extent that they are certainly represented in Dutch museums. The only thing is, that nobody, of whatever origin, will expect that a common history will be presented.

One of these 'hidden' histories concerns Dutch historiography of the Barbary states. In local and national museums in the maritime parts of the Netherlands visitors can learn about naval battles fought sometimes with, sometimes against them; about sailors enslaved by the Barbary pirates; about the trust funds founded in all kind of places along the North Sea coast - from Zierikzee to villages in West-Friesland - to ransom the victims of these and other pirates. However, visitors will hardly realize that this refers to Moroccan-Dutch relationships and image forming! The Barbary states were none other than the present Maghreb, including Morocco, and especially the seaports Rabat-Salé and Tangier. In 1626 the notorious pirates nest, Rabat-Salé, freed itself for some time from the Moroccan realm as an independent republic. A salient detail is

that its pirates fleet had then already been headed for two years by Mourad Rais, the new name of the man who had left his native town Haarlem as the sailor Jan Jansz. Although he appeared to have a soft spot for his ex-compatriots by setting them free on various occasions, yet he refused to return to his native country. He remained adamant, even when his daughter visited him at Salé.

In the middle of the 1650s several squadrons, commanded by Admiral Michiel de Ruyter, had to be roped in to bring the pirates of Salé to reason. On one of these occasions the naval hero had his famous interview with the 'Sant' (marabout) Sidi Ali ben Mohammed ben Moussa, at Ileg, situated in the hinterland of Salé.

So the material is there, only it is not presented as common history. For museums whose staff are aware of their own contribution to position allocation, there are many more chances, also in this case. If we go a little further back in time, it appears that the Moroccan sultan was a great ally in the struggle of the Netherlands against Spain, that there was intensive mutual trade, and that both the Netherlands and Morocco received Sephardic Jews from the Iberian peninsula who maintained contacts amongst themselves. There had been contact between Morocco and the Netherlands since 1596, but especially through the exertions of the Sephardic merchant Samuel Pallache, ambassador of the sultan, a friendship treaty was concluded on 24 December 1610 in The Hague between the two countries: the first between Morocco and a European country since the Middle Ages and an example for the much later treaties between that country and England and France. By the treaty the Dutch acquired free admission to the Moroccan ports and protection against the pirates who had their home base there, while the Moroccans could thus get ships, guns, and ammunition. What had so far been impossible between traditional Roman Catholic and Islamic countries, appeared to be no problem for the merchants who had not long ago liberated themselves from Spain and had accepted the Reformation, without granting it the status of state church. And all this is only a random example

There are many opportunities like these for making exhibitions in which the Turkish state, history or culture plays a part, or for exhibitions of areas that had been colonized by the Dutch in the past. The same applies *a fortiori* to the settlement histories of different groups in the Netherlands.

It all depends on the way in which the makers of exhibitions want to understand the history of the Netherlands or parts of it: as a country of 'whites *par excellence*' (Lubach, 1868) or as a traditional immigration country.

The author

Jan Lucassen (1947) studied history at Leiden and obtained a doctorate at Utrecht. He was a secondary school teacher from 1972-1974 and lectured at the History Department at Utrecht from 1973-1988. He has been Research Director of the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam and is also occupying an endowed chair at the Free University in that same city.

On the Dutch national character

Anyone interested in developments reflecting on the Dutch national character may be referred to the following three works, each of which represent an important stage in this reflection.

Lubach (1868)

For a long time an attempt was made to give an ethnical basis to the Dutch national character, notably based on antropometry and linguistics. An early example can be found in the work by Douwe Lubach (1815-1902). The preface of his study dates from 1863, in which he did not only count the inhabitants of the Netherlands as Teutons, but within this group as the 'Kimbri-Frisian group'. Together with the English and the Scandinavians, the Dutch and Frisians were, according to him, the 'whites par excellence' in this world. Since the early Middle Ages, he wrote, 'the ethnological situation of our native country is subject to no other changes than that slowly continuing' national integration and that 'steady, slow mixing with foreign elements that can be counted in individual people'. By 'foreign elements' he meant (exclusively) other Europeans (notably pp. 388, 404 and 419-441) Lubach regretted that in his day the research into the 'physical' and 'psychological' character of the Dutch was still in its infancy.

Chorus, A. (1964)

De Nederlander uiterlijk en innerlijk: een karakteristiek. Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff.

Exactly a century after Lubach (Chorus's preface dates from 1963), Chorus comes with the following characteristic of 'the' Dutch: the Dutch nation as a whole has a certain outward appearance which clearly distinguishes it from southern nations, less clearly from northern nations like the English, the Germans or the Scandinavians. The psychological difference with these last nations is far more striking than the corporeal or physical differences (...) - (pp. 26). Chorus was the last in the line to put such emphasis on biological and psychological characteristics.

Romein, J. (1942)

Beschouwingen over het Nederlandse volkskarakter. Leiden: Burgersdijk & Niermans, Templum Salomonis. Jan Romein took a completely different road. He wrote in 1941: 'The whole prehistoric question, or rather the series of prehistoric questions, where the hunebed and bell beaker peoples came from and what has become of them, the whole question of whether we are real Teutons and if so, what this does mean, or whether we are a mixture of those even older substrata plus Teutons plus Celts plus Alpines, in short the whole tricky and, in my opinion, insoluble racial problem of the racial characteristic which may or may not be distinguishable, we may, in this connection, leave alone from now on, however interesting it may be as such. In the second place, it now begins to dawn on us where we have to search in order to study those similar ways of reacting - in other words our national characteristics - namely in the history of the Dutch people, since that has shown cohesion. Only there, but certainly there, we should be able to find it, in its origin and progress.'

The incentive

In his quadrennial cultural memorandum of 1996, 'Armour or Backbone', the State Secretary for Culture gave the Dutch cultural institutions, including the museums, the incentive of focusing explicitly on the sections of the population which had settled in the Netherlands in the 1950s: such as people from the Netherlands Indies, Chinese, Moluccans, Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese and Antilleans, followed in recent years by smaller groups of asylum seekers from every conceivable country in the world. The Netherlands has of old been an immigration country but, although the majority of those who came to the Netherlands after World War II have constitutionally become Dutch, and though the greater part of the second generation has, in the meantime, learned to speak Dutch, they are still faced with a systematic arrears of work, training, income and decent living conditions. For this reason all these sections of the population were given the same policy name: '(cultural) minority' and they are the subject of the 'minorities policy' based upon it. With regard to participation in the cultural institutions financed by the government, cultural minorities also lag behind when compared with the original Dutch population. The State Secretary's request to these institutions, which included the museums, was therefore to develop initiatives that would reduce these arrears. In so far as the museums came directly under government control, this incentive was immediately achieved; for the museums working under another authority, municipal, provincial or private museums, the State Secretary set up a special subsidized incentive scheme to promote projects that would involve the cultural minorities more closely in the museum. The incentives for the national museums and the criteria of the scheme were formulated broadly and openly. Special exhibitions, a different display of the permanent collection, new forms of marketing and promotion, visitor research, everything would qualify as long as its aim was to involve the 'new Netherlanders' as the recent immigration wave was called in policy documents, more closely in the museums. Now, five years after this incentive was given and the subsidy had been made available, we can look back on a multitude of initiatives by all kinds of museums. Thirty of these initiatives have now been described and evaluated. The results of their practices in multiculturalism will be presented for the benefit of all other museums and cultural institutions which have decided to have a greater impact on new inhabitants.

The State Secretary's incentive has led to a great number of diverse projects in which museums have practised one form or another of multiculturalism in their exhibition policy. Thirty-one of these projects have been evaluated: 9 in museums of old masters, 8 in ethnological museums, 5 in historical museums, 3 in religious museums, 2 in modern art museums and the rest in a museum of education, a nature information centre and a script museum. The target groups, mission statements, and various kinds of activities are very divergent: from part of a project for real citizenship to a contribution to the development of an identity of one's own, or the creation of a platform for intercultural debate, from the reaching of specific cultural minorities to the contribution to mutual understanding and tolerance, from rearranging the permanent display, making 'own' exhibitions to a special form of public relations and promotion. They are all practical exercises, in which one exhibition has tried from the very first to make a multicultural angle with the exhibition based on a multicultural perspective in all respects, while another has experimented with an adapted form of recruitment and guided tours. Some exhibitions or projects are already over, others are still going on. At this stage an evaluation cannot be anything but preliminary, based on impressions of makers and supervisors, discussions, remarks from visitors and observations from the researchers themselves. What follows below is therefore not the result of a completed research project, but gives an interim score of a search which is still progressing.

Dutch Museums practice multiculturalism, the conquest of the barriers between 'we' and 'they'

The world is on the move. It has been so for more than the last thirty years of this century, of course, but it looks as if we are more than ever conscious of the social and political problems caused by this movement. Since the hunter exchanged his bow and arrow for the plough and the livestock owner could fence his cattle behind barbed wire², settlement has become the standard procedure. The hunter and the nomad had a mobile social idea of the 'we' opposed to 'the others', after settlement the property of land was part of the 'ours' against 'their'. A world completely 'occupied' by settlement, swiftly feels threatened by everyone still moving in groups. For with the settlement not only cattle, but also culture was tied to the land. The barbed wire also enclosed the customs and habits, the common language, and particularly the prevailing law and the fight against crime with 'we' on one side of the fence and 'they' on the other. The identity of this 'we', however, is not unequivocal. There are as many fences as there are 'we's'. 'We' are my family, my relatives, the street, the neighbourhood, the circle of friends, the same music lovers as myself, who buy their clothes in the same shops, the inhabitants of a village or town, those who have the same social position, who speak my language, my countrymen, 'we' with the colour of my skin. 'They', the outside world, the neighbours, the other side, those who 'we' do not call friends, who are socially less or, on the other hand, more successful, who speak another language or have a different skin colour. The individual makes dozens of 'we', depending on personal and social circumstances or convictions.

Culture may be described as the expression and stratum of shared histories and memories. Museums play a role here; they tell the stories of 'we' and 'they' in all possible variations. It does make a difference whether pipes, stamps, ships, modern art, trophies of victory from colonial or other wars, classical musical instruments, animals, seals, water, or memories of authors, philosophers, defunct dynasties, or presidents are preserved. Almost every field of collecting represents a culture of its own, draws its own lines between the 'we' to whom the collection means anything and the 'they' to whom it has an opposite meaning or none at all. The arrival of a considerable number of new Netherlanders after World War II does not evoke the same questions for every collection. To the one they create a new public that may need to be addressed in their own way in order to draw them inside, but without the nature of the collection having to come up for debate. Anyone, for instance, wanting to promote the careful intercourse with nature and the environment, draws a world-spanning circle. From this perspective the nature information centre Ecomare, for instance, on the isle of Tessel, wants to explain to us what is living in and of water, in order to impress on everyone who is to influence the present and future fortunes of water, an awareness of the value and scarcity of water. The riches of a drop of water from the sea, the pivotal meaning of water in the circle of life, and keeping water clean and available is a

global and universal message and *ipso facto* multicultural. Ecomare wants to impress this message on the new inhabitants of the Netherlands - and on everybody else. The message may have to be translated for cultural minorities and told in a different way, the examples may have to be adapted, but the message remains the same. This is different for museums in which the circle drawn coincides with the indigenous Dutch population, against which the new Netherlanders cannot but feel as visitors to whom the message does not apply. The Golden Age is our national pride, also in the art of painting. Our national museums therefore show the leading residents of those days who played the tune (Rembrandt, *The Nightwatch*) as well as hundreds of paintings of the naval battles fought by Holland against England and later against Spain. These naval battles refer to events which had a historical significance to both countries, but the triumphs of our Admirals Michiel de Ruyter or Maarten Tromp have a different emotional value in the Netherlands than in England. The loss of the Armada (the invincible - ha ha! - fleet of Philip II of Spain) was a rewarding subject for the English as well as the Dutch painters, but is appreciated quite differently by the Spaniards. Especially museums that define 'we' based on a supposed national identity, have something to explain to the new inhabitants. For they are, and were, no part of the 'we', or worse they are, in the collection; the 'they' from whom the shown exhibits were stolen or they are portrayed as the 'they' who were justly beaten in the historical triumph of their new native country. Saint Paul's Cathedral is a monument of the English Established Church, but the visitor gets the impression, once inside, that they have actually landed in a war museum, where all the triumphal marches of the English army, from the Tudors to Thatcher (the Falklands) are shown. Anyone having seen this and other English monuments and museums, will no longer be surprised that Scotland wants devolution. The Scots are, in English museums, quite often the 'they' who were fought by the English princes and finally conquered in 1707. It took an Australian (!) Producer, Mel Gibson, to tell the story of the other side (*Braveheart*, 1997) and the Scottish pursuit of independence is financed for an important part by the Scottish actor, Sean Connery, who earned his millions in one of the most chauvinist English action films ever: James Bond, *In Her Majesty's Secret Service*³.

In the Netherlands and other West European countries the rise of the nation state in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has not only ensured fixed political boundaries, but the state has simultaneously made a rather successful attempt to let our cultural awareness run parallel with those boundaries by the institution and promulgation of one 'official' language, a uniform jurisdiction, one educational system for everyone, and social laws and measures only applicable to its 'own' inhabitants. Political identity was made into cultural identity through national anthems, mostly commissioned by the new central princes, and research was started into the national identity of culture and race. Learning and museums have been given - and played - a role in the making of this national identity. During his campaigns, Napoleon took with him more than a hundred scholars and scientists, painters, and artists who had to immortalize his triumphant campaigns, describe the conquered areas, ship cultural treasures and start on bringing about the cultural pacification of the country that was being annexed. And so every European country founded its ethnological, historical and art museums in which the grandeur of its own culture and its own dynasty was propagated and the home country itself could see which regions were part of the Empire. The art museums showed these triumphs on canvas and, in the open air monuments suitable to the occasion, were set up.

National museums have traditionally been involved in formulating what was characteristic of the state and population and therefore seemed extra handicapped in the new role which they have to play with regard to the new inhabitants. More than other museums, they played a role in the cultural pacification of the nation state, the province or the municipality. Although many countries in Europe try their best to rise above these anachronistic identities within the perspective of a multicultural world society, there are just as many countries which - exactly the opposite - are trying to construct a new national identity, such as diverse parties in the Czech Republic,



Surinamese-Javanese women in the ritual Moslem washing of a deceased person in a funeral parlour



After ritual washing the deceased is carried to the hall where she will be clad in a shroud

Slovakia, Chechenya, Croatia and Kosovo, Northern Ireland, the Basque Provinces, and northern Italy. From all these different historical contexts and with divergent handicaps, the museums, from a multicultural perspective of the future, have the task of putting the unquestioning acceptance of the dominant culture up for debate and of providing an opening to cultural minorities that have been subordinated socio-economically as well as culturally.

The world, meanwhile, has definitely become multicultural. An attempt has been made to disseminate human rights and fundamental democratic standpoints as universal values on an international scale. On a national and local scale the influx of a large variety of cultures asks for the recognition of their 'own' uses and customs, or causes a collision with the dominant indigenous culture. Much has been written about this subject, but its concrete elaboration for a multicultural museum policy is not available immediately. It is certain, however, that the break-through of an ethnocentric practice puts questions to all traditional p's of the museum organization: product, price, promotion, place and personnel.

The incentive is wide and clear: reach out from your museums to the cultural minorities, but the way in which this should happen must be devised by yourselves. That is the reason the scheme has given financial support.

The results so far

The collection, aims and target groups

The collection is traditionally the starting point and nucleus of every museum and, as such, very determining for the multicultural policy of the museum. The collection of an ethnological museum lends itself *ipso facto* for a new reflection on the relationship between the dominant indigenous culture and that of new inhabitants. In many cases ethnological museums have a colonial past. The collection was bought or stolen from countries that were part of the empire, the exhibition shows in which way native peoples were subjected and what people, animals and plants were found in the (ex)colony⁴. Under pressure of the third-world movement of the 1960s and 1970s, some ethnological museums have chosen for a 'non-value' display, in which indigenous peoples were exhibited as 'neutrally' as much as possible, preferably devoid of any influence from the 'pernicious' West. But this glorification of the 'noble savage' also came from the West and is, therefore, ethnocentric in a complex way: from shame about one's own past, this past is denied in the museum, which then looks for cultures from before the 'fall of colonisation'. Such cultures no longer exist and can therefore only be shown by omitting every expression of change. How do ethnological museums solve this problem?

The experience of the three largest Dutch ethnological museums in Amsterdam, Leiden and Rotterdam is that a multicultural starting point has major effects for the chosen themes, the display of objects and the accompanying story. Once thought out again, however, the new plan can be largely realized with the old collection. The two clichés have been bid adieu: that of the ex-colonial display in which the visitor is shown how 'great' the Netherlands once was in the past and which corners of the earth had at some time been under Dutch influence or were economically incorporated through trade relations, but also that of an anthropological 'pure' and 'unsoiled' culture from afar. The globalization of culture and hence its multiculturalism is the new starting point for these museums. The museums at Rotterdam and Leiden, for instance, now work on new permanent exhibitions based on the meeting of cultures. Voyages of discovery, colonisation, mission, slave-trade and tourism are a few of the themes which are to make the interaction of culture visible. Such a new angle requires especially a new display of the objects and a new story to be told with them, but the old collection mostly remains useful in the new design. The museums in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, through large and long-lasting exhibitions (up to 5 years), are also looking for forms of presentation that rise above the customary 'we' versus 'they'.

Historical museums have a rougher time with this incentive. The museum that has a definite town or city as its subject (for instance the Amsterdams Historisch Museum), collects objects that make the history of the city in question visible and alive. The new inhabitants have had no part in this history, because they have only lived there for a few decades. The incentive to fulfil a function for these new inhabitants as well, can only be implemented if the emphasis is shifted from the city itself to its inhabitants, or at least if it is complemented with this. If this is done, the visual history of the city is not limited to its physical boundary, shown in maps, buildings and paintings of prominent fellow-townsmen and women from the past, but attention is (also) given to the influence which present and past immigrants have had on its city life and to the previous history of all cultures now living there, including the newly arrived cultural minorities. What were the contacts between Amsterdam and the rest of the world? What has the arrival of large groups of immigrants including those from our own country changed in the life of that city? What do we find of this in stories, paintings and buildings and how does present-day Amsterdam compare to the previous history of the newcomers? Such an angle does not leave the collection undisturbed and makes it necessary to collect new objects and to put them in a new display. For the time being it would seem simpler to test this new angle in temporary exhibitions, in which the previous history and culture of the Turks and Moroccans is shown by means of photographic material and accompanying texts. That happened in two successful exhibitions 'Amsterdam 'daki' (Anatolia in Amsterdam) and 'I have an aunt in Morocco'. To a varying extent they were visited by large groups guided around in their own language and being shown their own immigration history. Both exhibitions have also led to a few purchases for the permanent collection in connection with the immigration history. The Hague immigration has also been described by means of a study commissioned by the municipal archives. This was the basis for the Haags Historisch Museum, the Volksbuurtmuseum and Museum De Gevangendoorpoort exhibitions which showed what the migrants had contributed to the Hague cultural life, and how much of that had already become quite commonplace in The Hague.

But what should a Bible museum do with its collection if it wants to choose a multicultural perspective? In this respect the Bijbels Openluchtmuseum (close to Nijmegen) has chosen the most radical solution: for some years now it has been the museum for the Jewish, Christian and Moslem religions. Replicas of the most important buildings tell the stories of each of these three traditions and discuss the differences and similarities existing between these three world religions in image and text, drawing meanwhile 120,000 visitors per year. In contrast to this, there is the much smaller Bijbels Museum in Amsterdam in which the Bible itself and its influence on our western culture are the focal points. Such radicalism for this museum is far more difficult because the private sponsors of the museum want the Bible as the specific central theme, and they simply stop their donations if excursions are taken into the other religions as happened when the Koran was exhibited.

Art museums, too, which focus on the work of a certain artist or movement in art, have the collection as an all-decisive starting point and will have to search for special forms of acquisition and education without having or wishing to put the collection itself up for debate. The Frans Hals museum had a relatively easy job, because Frans Hals made a large number of historical paintings of Haarlem and these 'treasures of Haarlem' could be used as an introduction to the history of the town for new inhabitants, within the framework of a real citizenship project. But if the collection of an art museum lends itself less easily to such a project, new forms of acquisition and involvement among cultural minorities in the existing collection will have to be sought, as was done successfully on a 'stories' project of the Haags Gemeentemuseum. Children from 10 - 15 years of age who had only lived in the Netherlands for a few years, were asked to write a brief story and to select a painting or object from the museum's storage rooms to accompany their stories. These stories, the selected paintings, a short explanation of why they consider that these particular paintings fit in with their stories, and sometimes a drawing of their own, have been exhibited. The personal bond - children,

in this case - of cultural minorities forms the line of approach and causes the existing collection to gain a new life in a completely different context. The project has been repeated, taken over by other museums, and has been developed for the future in collaboration with an art school.

In order to play a role for cultural minorities, collections sometimes have to be arranged differently, sometimes be elaborated, or sometimes only be presented or interpreted differently.

Sometimes a museum's own collection is 'forgotten for a moment', but eventually the collection remains a decisive factor for the nature and the feasibility of the multicultural incentive. For museums without a collection of their own, the pursuit of this target is therefore easiest, because the museum in that case acts as an empty exhibition area, almost an art centre. The next step is to approach a certain cultural minority and to ask them what they would like to see exhibited. Then the objects necessary to meet this wish are made and put into an exhibition. The practice of Dutch museums also provides examples of such exhibitions without previously determined collections. The Museum voor Volkenkunde in Rotterdam, for instance, organized an exhibition for children in which the different worlds from which the cultural minorities originated, were rebuilt: a living room in Morocco, a square in Indonesia, or shops with objects from various countries. In these worlds a search was then set out in line with 'precious objects' for children: a doll, a knife or a lamp. In this 'Enchanted World' the children were organized by twos in order to search in one of these worlds for the story that made the object in question 'precious'. In this way they were introduced step by step into the social world of faraway cultures and cultures of children from cultural minorities so that these would become 'familiar'. Selecting everyday objects in a domestic environment was deliberately chosen because the various subcultures in the Netherlands do go to school together, and sometimes play in the street together, but do not or hardly ever go to each other's houses. When the exhibition is over in five years time, it will be demolished and the objects given or thrown away. The museum incentive remains visible in the fact that the object is the starting point of every story, but the objects shown are not added to the permanent collection.

Many purposes are allowed, not all purposes are equal

There is a fairly vehement global discussion going on about the mission statement which a multicultural policy should pursue. Is it about assimilation and adaptation of the cultural minorities to the indigenous majority, is it about a place where one's own identity can be experienced in one's own circle, or is it about emphasizing an interplay between cultures from which new values will arise? In other words: are the traditional Dutch values considered to be universal and therefore imperatively imposed (assimilation), do we allow different cultural values to stand side by side (multiculturalism), or do we want to arrive at a new, intercultural system of values, based on mutual understanding and acceptance between indigenous Netherlanders and newcomers.

This discussion has reached a stage in which it is said that 'it depends'. The one value deserves defending because it does not tolerate other values by its side without loss of meaning and because it is of major importance for a large majority in society, perhaps even sacred, but at any rate dominant. Another value, on the other hand, will flourish more easily amidst other, even competitive values, while again, for other values it is good to put itself up for debate in mutual confrontation, expecting new values to be born from it. Tolerance and understanding of people of another race, belief, conviction or culture is such a central value, which is not compatible with intolerance, prejudice and suppression. Sometimes this value is used implicitly. In the ethnological museums it is emphatically propagated, especially by its educational departments. These museums explicitly aspire to breaking down the current prejudices between 'we' and 'they'. The Children's Museum of the Royal Tropical Institute goes furthest in this respect and has developed projects where the culture that is presented is not present among any of the target groups in the Netherlands. All children, indigenous

Netherlanders and children with a Turkish, Suriname, Moroccan, Chinese or Ghanaian background are tempted to replace themselves in the culture of the Highland Indians in Bolivia⁵. From a concrete object (cf. the 'precious object' in the Museum voor Volkenkunde in Rotterdam) the children present are carried along in a game and show of object, song, dance, language, image and sound in which they can imagine themselves being Highland Indians for three hours. The thought behind it is that identification with a culture that is so far and so foreign will help children to put themselves in any other culture so that they can understandingly deal with everything that presents itself as being 'different'. The museum in Rotterdam wants to break the dividing line between 'we' and 'they' by presenting Dutch culture, including the culture of the home country of cultural minorities. Through the 'precious object' these cultures are made mutually familiar.

Sometimes a central value which you want to disseminate such as, for instance, freedom of choice, combined in one exhibition with values that can stand very well together despite all their diversity. This happened in the 'Sluiers ontsluitend' (Veils unveiled) project of the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden. The aim of the exhibition was to show how beautiful and varied veils can be worldwide, how they were carried and which function the veil has within a certain culture. In that sense the exhibition was multicultural: veils from mutually competitive religions were all given a place. At the same time there was a discussion in the Netherlands (as was the case in France) about the question of whether Moslem girls were allowed to wear headscarves at public schools. The museum did not take a stand, but showed, in a last showcase, paper cuttings of advocates and adversaries and organized a discussion with Moslem youth about the veil and marriage. For this point an intercultural approach was chosen: the exhibition as a platform for discussion. But the umbrella value which the exhibition propagated was unequivocal in the end: every person has a right to array himself as he (she, in this case) wishes: open or closed, black or richly decorated, every veil has a meaning of its own in its own culture and everyone is free to choose for the meaning which he/she considers important. And this central democratic value was directly recognized by some of the more fundamentalist visitors, who criticized the choice of freedom that was emphasized in the variety presented.

The new display of the Bijbels Openluchtmuseum is multicultural per definition. The world religions are presented next to each other, and the visitor's attention is drawn to the differences and similarities, but an intercultural 'integrated' religion is an absurd aim. The initiatives in which cultural minorities themselves are given the opportunity to organize an exhibition (Zwolle) or even a complete museum (Moluks Historisch Museum, Utrecht and the Museum Suriname, Amsterdam) are also multicultural. The angle for these initiatives is clearly multicultural with every cultural minority organizing its 'own' museum embedded in its 'own' identity as the ultimate aim.

Recognition and identity (Taylor)

In the varied use of the three mission statements: adaptation to central values, affirmation of one's own identity and the development of new values, the 'policy of recognition' by Charles Taylor⁶ can be recognized. He, too, emphasizes that the issue is to determine which values are central in a democracy, such as that of the personal freedom of choice, and the tolerance and disestablishment of church and state based on it, and which values can give expression to different identities, which then can exist side by side. The dilemma between a universalistic starting point on the one hand and a cultural relativism on the other is solved by him through giving both their own place. The government's incentive (Taylor speaks of the 'public sphere') is to recognize the different individual and group identities within society, while holding on to values defined as universal, at the same time recognizing that these values are less than the members of a dominant culture themselves often think. Government support of 'own' museums or cultural centres may fit in very well with such a policy of recognition. We see this, for instance, in the centres established during recent decades for diverse Native American tribes in the United States and Canada, and in the Netherlands in the support of, for instance, the above-mentioned Moluks Historisch Museum and the



Surinamese-Javanese ritual of the dead: the distribution of the blessed meal at the end of the slametan sacrificial service for the deceased in his or her house



Surinamese Sanaatan-Hindu family performs a sacrificial service at home for a deceased woman, on the thirteenth day after the cremation

(very limited supported) Museum Suriname. The latter emphatically wants to describe the 'counter story' of the relations between the Netherlands and its former colony. For the historiography of these relations has always taken place from the white Dutch culture and consequently uses therefore either a colonial or a post-colonial standpoint. The colonial standpoint voices the - self-evident - ascendancy of the coloniser, while the post-colonial standpoint emphasizes the role of the Surinamese population as victims and the resulting shame from the colonizer. But both standpoints describe the story from the point of view of the white colonizer. The point of view of the colonized population is not discussed. The same criticism seems applicable to the - for the rest very impressive - film *Amistad*, by Steven Spielberg. Spielberg chooses for a dramatic line in which a colonial (slave trade speaks for itself) and a post-colonial (North America has forbidden the slave trade) standpoint are confronted and the film develops into a struggle between 'good' and 'bad' Americans. The slaves in the film do not really come to life, little or nothing is said between them and the main part remains for the whites. Although the film *Pocahontas* is less terse, due to a surplus of romanticism, Walt Disney seems to have made the better choice in this respect by choosing for two conflicting standpoints, that of the occupying whites and that of the Native Americans. Museum Suriname also aims at telling the 'counter story' of the Surinamese. With the help of volunteer researchers, the history of Surinam is told from the viewpoint of the Surinamese themselves. This leads to different pictures, pictures in which those who have left Surinam and come to the Netherlands, can recognize themselves. But this counter story also helps a second and third generation to an awareness of their double identity. For anyone leaving his country and having children elsewhere, all at once cannot answer many of the questions put to them by their children. Once emigrated, the past has become abroad and traditions that were moral guidelines or sources of inspiration, have become invisible for the children outside their own family. A museum or cultural centre 'of one's own' does not only tell a necessary counter story to the cultural majority, but also supports the cultural and moral identity of its own minority. Government support of such a centre provides a meaningful *recognition* for such a centre. This provides the counterpart with a function within the multicultural society as such, and the identity disseminated by such a centre does not become a closed subculture, but part of the discussion. The pertinent condition is that the 'counter picture' is carefully drawn and does not fall into a romantic glorification of its own history, leaving out all internal contrasts and violence in the Surinamese society.

Existing museums, however, can also offer a place to the counterpart and the crystallization of a cultural identity of its own by organizing temporary exhibitions. This was done in the above-mentioned two exhibitions in the Amsterdams Historisch Museum and the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde at Leiden, but also in the Haags Historisch Museum in the exhibition 'Simply The Hague', where representatives of diverse cultural minorities living in The Hague were given the opportunity to tell their own life stories and to give them form in a small exposition. Ten personal 'stories' were thus shown, embedded in their own past, but at the same time expressing their aspirations in their new dwelling place. A similar approach was used for a temporary exhibition 'Saudara', made by a guest curator from the Moluccan community, which went on tour after the opening in the Zeeuws Museum in Middelburg.

Identification: from object to experience, the museum as theatre

Every visit to a museum requires a certain form of identification: the visitor must recognize something in what he sees. What is strange must be made familiar because it connects the visitor's terms of reference. An object without a story is just an object, nothing more. The context of the object and the visitor's references should have points in common in order to evoke a meaningful sensation for the visitor, preferably the sensation wanted by the organizers of the object. Accompanying text and guided tours are the traditional forms in which context is provided. Photographs and video presentations which show the functions of the objects on display provide extra context, and most context is offered if the objects are embedded in an exhibition

design which enables the visitors to transport themselves to, and identify with, the 'story' which the objects tell. This extension from object to context is a general phenomenon in museum country but demands a specific implementation in a multicultural perspective. Children's museums have taken the lead in this respect. They emphatically aim at extension of the possibilities for identification by linking the objects to the personal living environment of the children, such as the choice for the 'precious object' (Rotterdam) as a first point of contact and by seeing to it that most objects can be touched (Hands on!). But there is more that can be done. The ethnological museums in Amsterdam and Rotterdam work with narrators/actors, who take the children along in the 'story' or who act as living informers during the guided tour. The Children's Museum in Amsterdam hires authentic Highland Indians who also speak Dutch, and who take the children along in a show of story, music and dance, in which the children themselves make masks in a studio, execute the music and dance of the Highlands in a workshop and cook Indian food. The authenticity of the experience is helped along by the facts that all objects are 'real'. Replicas are not or minimally used. The tour (or rather: the search) through the exhibition is guided by a computerized sound and light décor, which reinforces the sensation of the story, for instance the labouring in a silver mine, or the worship of gods. This has made the museum in fact a theatre, in which the objects are no more than a part, be it an important part. Not all museums go to this length, but most are actively looking for a re-enforcement of the identification possibilities by extension of sound and light decors or active participation of the visitors. The Afrikacentrum near Maastricht, for instance, has elaborated 'looking' with handling, listening and acting, in what is called a 'processing shop'.

Solid research data is not available, but it is the impression of everyone involved - the museum staff, the lecturers accompanying the pupils, and the children themselves - that the objects are coming to life far better than if they would have been merely shown. For cultural minorities there is also the specific attention to the context necessary to achieve the required identification and experience for the visitors. The most obvious way to provide this is a guided tour, to be conducted by a representative of the relevant cultural minority itself, in its own language. The guided tour subsequently appears to gain strongly in experiential value if the visitors are given the opportunity to exchange the feelings of that experience in mutual discussion. The guide should therefore not merely narrate, but also put questions to the visitors about the rituals and events to which the objects refer (veils, masks, paintings). In this way the exhibition is linked to the visitors' own history and identity, which they discuss among themselves. Besides, museums develop more and more programmes which open up the subject of the exhibition for discussions, lectures or even fashion shows or parties. The Haags Gemeentemuseum organized a debate on the western concept of art (see below), Museum Suriname organized a discussion on the image of Suriname and its inhabitants, and the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden organized debates on the meaning of the veil for modern Moslems and fashion shows of contemporary veils. The multicultural incentive to the museums in the Netherlands has thus led to increasing attention for the (required) experience for the visitors and has given a strong momentum to the use of theatrical means, interactive media and the development of the exhibition with a parallel programme of lectures and debate. A special variation of this theatrical enrichment of the exhibition is the opening party. The Museum voor Naïeve en Outsider Kunst, De Stadshof in Zwolle, for instance, drew large groups of cultural minorities for a summer exhibition devoted to one country by a special opening party with stands, food and music. This approach was a success, for some 1,500 to 2,500 came to that party from the Indonesian, South African, or Antillean communities who would otherwise never have visited the museum, but the link with the exhibition itself is only very limited. The Amsterdams and the Haags Historisch Museum have a similar experience in the parallel programme round the above-mentioned exhibitions. The Nederlands Fotoinstituut (Rotterdam) and the Princessehof museum (Leeuwarden) have also tried to interest specific target groups in their exhibitions by organizing a special festival day, a photo exhibition of a female Moroccan photographer and an exhibition on Moroccan Ceramics, respectively. The

target groups in question did indeed come to the festive day, and they looked at the exhibition on that particular day, but a lasting effect on the visitor numbers afterwards could not be ascertained. Music and dance seem an easier way to draw a multicultural public but do not automatically provide a lasting flow of visitors to the exhibition. There is, however, no better way to learn to stand than by falling. The incentive of a multicultural policy has undoubtedly given the museums an impulse in a development that had already started, namely from object to experience. Objects do not speak for themselves, but require additional touch, sound, light, film, video, interactive computer programmes and guided tours, forums, lectures and discussion, in order to bring to life the story that the object has to tell. The latter development is not exclusively the result of the incentive for a multicultural policy, but had been started earlier when developing educational programmes and children's museums. A multicultural incentive, however, compels the museum to deploy the experiences gained for the use of an adult, multicultural public.

A western conception of art: aesthetics versus functionality

One of the most difficult subjects for a museum that wants to become multicultural, is pure (= modern) art: the *l'art pour l'art*, in which a painting is no more, but also no less, than a painting, the photograph a photograph, devoid of its reference to the image or the context. The only context still in demand is that of art itself. In so far as one can speak of any reference, it is art history. P. Bourdieu, who most carefully analysed this conception of art sociologically, formulated in imitation of Kant the notion 'aesthetical disposition'⁷ for it. This is an artist's conception in which a strictly individual expression of the artist comes first, followed by an aesthetical experience of the spectator 'an sich' and für sich', without reference to any functionality. This conception of art is extremely western, both in its artist's conception and in the attitude of the spectator, but is not generally accepted there either, and is especially the characteristic of a cultural subculture which describes itself also as a 'cultural élite'. In the Netherlands the government also supports this conception of art by financing its development and there are museums which embrace this conception. Cultural minorities seldom belong to the kind of cultural élite holding this conception of art, and a multicultural policy based on such a conception is therefore very difficult to pursue. It is clear that this conception of art cannot and does not want to put itself up for debate. Doing so would imply sweeping away the foundation under its own pretensions. Although of western origin, this conception of art pretends to be universal and cannot moderate its functionalist or context-oriented demands without renouncing its own basic conditions. The only solution would seem to wait until a well-educated élite arises within the cultural minorities which can and will want to find themselves in the aesthetical basic conditions of what is also called art-art. In the meantime, however, it is possible to raise the matter of the colonial prejudices linked to this idea of art. The Haags Gemeentemuseum, for instance, organized after the Musée de l' Homme in Paris, a double-exhibition of Magic Masks from Africa and paintings and drawings by the Senegalese artist Iba Ndaye. Both exhibitions took place in the Royal Palace in The Hague, an exhibition centre which usually shows 'pure' art. On the one hand the Masks were emphatically shown in a rich context of ritual and magic, and thus made a stand against the easy way in which the West robs the art of Africa, South-East Asia or South America of its functionality. It only wants to talk about the aesthetical values of sculptures, masks and garments which in the culture where they came from, derive their meaning and therefore (!) their beauty from the daily or ritual functionality which they have over there. On the other hand the Senegalese Iba Ndaye was emphatically shown as an individual artist. In the accompanying catalogue and debate it was argued that the western art-art conception is ethnocentric by assuming straightaway that artists such as Picasso and Brancusi used African sculpture as a source of inspiration for their own individual artistic skills, while Iba Ndaye's inspiration by old European masters such as Goya and Rembrandt, is often labelled 'epigonism' by the art world in the Netherlands. The bizarre result of this ethnocentric conception of art is that objects which in fact belong to an ethnological museum

because their aesthetics are functionally linked to daily life are robbed of their functionality and exhibited in art museums, while artists like Iba Ndaye remain 'condemned' to ethnological museums because the art museums do not recognize his personal artistry. The exhibition was a success, also among members of cultural minorities although they, as might be expected, paid more attention to the masks that were shown while retaining their functionality, and focused far less on the works by Iba Ndaye. Interest for the debate was mainly among a (as yet very) small group of indigenous (- white) Dutch.

The Nederlands Fotoinstituut also had to establish that a pure art-photographic exhibition in collaboration and exchange with an art institution in Casablanca and made by a female Moroccan photographer, did not lead to a substantial number of visits made by Dutch people of Moroccan origin. The fact that the photographer was strongly city-oriented, while the cultural Rotterdam minority has its roots especially in the Moroccan country (Rif mountains), may have played a part, but the underlying conception of pure art that was not recognized, was certainly also a factor.

Multiculturalism is not a matter of 'just a second' or 'on your own'; effort and meticulousness

28

After what has been said above it may be clear that the incentive for a multicultural policy of the museums cannot be met in 'just a second'. In order to comply with the incentive in the proper way enormous efforts are needed, *qua* concept as well as *qua* organization and finance. Carelessness can lead to misunderstandings that will disrupt the message or cause the intended target group not to be reached or refuse to come. Recruiting visitors among population groups that read little or not at all requires promotion and recruiting that goes along another path than the traditional publicity approach. A press conference, posters, accompanying material for the press, flyers, and much free publicity in newspaper reviews and appearances in cultural programmes on radio and TV do scarcely or not at all reach the members of cultural minorities. A number of them has not enough command of the Dutch language to be informed through any Dutch-language medium. But the media in the original language of the country (the Netherlands has a few television stations that also provide for programmes in Turkish, Arabic or Surinamese), are only watched or listened to by a minority of the relevant population group. It appears to be most effective to involve a representative of the desired target group in the plan for publicity and recruitment from the very beginning of the exhibition, someone who can approach the relevant community especially in person, by word of mouth, from his or her network as an 'outreach worker'. This approach is also necessary to gain the confidence of the relevant target group. Often formal or informal opinion leaders have to give their sanction, before the relevant community has sufficient faith in the exhibition. For the organization of the exhibition or the parallel programme connected with it, direct contact with the representatives of the target group is also of major importance. Someone who accompanies the opening of the exhibition with a party and wants to invite an Antillean band cannot just invite any Antillean band. The appeal of such a party only works if it is recognized as a good band by the Antillean community. The museum itself will never think it up, but needs an expert and prominent person from the relevant cultural minority to do so. The commitment of these representatives can and should come up for consideration on several levels within the organization. When the exhibition is being organized the draft exhibition needs to be discussed with leading personalities of the relevant community. The first plan can be tested by a part of the target group or by representatives of 'self-organizations'. During promotion and recruitment outreach workers will open up important openings to the target group with a network of their own, and guidance during the exhibition should be done by guides from their own culture, preferably also in their own language. If, however, an exhibition is planned as part of a real citizenship, it should certainly not be guided by people in their own language, because acquiring command of the Dutch language is (also) an aim. The mistakes made indicate clearly how careful these projects should be approached. A photographic project was mentioned above in which a Moroccan

photographer did not succeed in making contact with the Moroccan community in Rotterdam, probably because of the conception of art which she used or because of her urban origin in Morocco (Casablanca). It is striking that a Dutch photographer did succeed in making photographs of funeral rites within various cultural minorities, probably because she worked from a much more anthropological and therefore a more functional angle (making an ethnological reportage) and introduced herself from that standpoint with great patience and care. This role - although it took much longer than originally expected - was indeed accepted by the relevant communities (see the photographs). A mistake made by the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde was not to research among the target group the connotation of the poetic Dutch title of the exhibition 'Veils unveiled'. Once translated it appeared that part of the target group conceived the title as being a summons to take off the veil, while the title merely wanted to denote that the exhibition was about the world behind the veil, and that any summons or standpoint was out of the question.

Experience has clearly shown, however, that an effective multicultural policy for museums cannot be made in just a few hours. It requires accurate initial considerations for the start of the exhibition, cooperation with more organizations at the planning stage, equipping and first test, promotion, guided tours and great care in the selection of the collaborating people. The result is that a multicultural policy can only be successful if the organization is prepared to consider itself incompetent on this point and to look for external expertise among the relevant cultural minorities. These experts should be given a recognizable and responsible position within the organization and not be deployed as a loose and non-committal adviser. If they are too non-committal there is a great chance that the exhibition will be a failure and that the experts in question, and therefore also the community which they represent, will be antagonistic towards the museum. A successful multicultural commitment also requires extra money. The necessary extra commitment and care cannot be realized without extra money. Exact amounts are difficult to name, but for an exhibition in a large and nationally recognized museum, where exhibitions are built with budgets varying from a few hundred thousand guilders to more than a million, an extra amount of a hundred thousand to two hundred thousand will be necessary to finance the extra personnel that must be hired. Smaller exhibitions in smaller museums may sometimes appeal with success to the disinterested assistance of cultural minority organizations in 'socio-cultural' or social work.

A first general conclusion: another way of thinking

The above pages offered a number of practical lessons, such as involving outreach workers, cooperation with representatives of cultural minorities and the incorporation of the object in theatre and music. They may be useful for anyone in a museum wanting to practice multicultural policy. But it is just as important, that the experiences which the Dutch museums have gained in the past five years with multicultural policy in some thirty projects and exhibitions, also shed a light on the way in which such policy would take shape in a general sense.

It should be put first and foremost that the contribution which museums can deliver for a cultural recognition of the cultural minorities as new inhabitants, is important, but limited. The efforts of the museums can never take the place of the necessary measures in the field of labour, income and education, to come eventually to a fully fledged equality of rights of cultural minorities.

From this postulated modesty it may be concluded first of all - in imitation of Charles Taylor - that all thinkable targets: assimilation into the dominant Dutch society, or attention for one's own cultural identity (multiculturalism), or mutual confrontation and debate to develop new intercultural values, are permissible, but that the choice for one of these targets depends on the value at stake. Values that occupy a central place in a democracy and are defended and disseminated are, amongst other things, tolerance, individual freedom of choice and the disestablishment of church and state. The latter implies also the disestablishment of church and government-funded museum. Whatever museums may organize, these values should in every exhibition be,

if not disseminated, then at least be guarded. An assimilation target can be used more specifically if museums want to play a role in real citizenship processes. The fully fledged admission of cultural minorities into the dominant (Dutch) society is helped by knowledge of the Dutch language, knowledge of the physical environment and (parts of) the history of the new homeland. To promote visits from cultural minorities to such projects, all the above-mentioned practical insights should be used, but the message *qua* contents and language is Dutch.

Besides universal values or assimilation targets there is a number of 'own' values of cultural minorities which can very well be supported by the government, which thus recognizes the diversity within a multicultural society. In this way a focus for one's own cultural identity or for the narrating of a 'counter story' can be offered. An important condition for this support for an 'own' identity is that the exhibitions or museums organized within that framework, are not in contrast with the above-mentioned central values, so that no intolerant 'enemy picture' is being propagated. It should, however also be prevented that the 'own' culture freezes into a romanticizing and historically false nostalgia. No single cultural identity is without dynamics and internal tensions and these should be visible in a government-supported initiative, be it an exhibition, a museum, or a cultural centre. Besides, the 'we' of a cultural minority is never unambiguous and never tells one story. The inevitability of the multi- and intercultural society on an international as well as local level, requires a re-definition of the 'we' from both sides. This re-definition inexorably exposes on 'our' side the political, ethnical or Euro-centric prejudices of a number of museums, in particular in ethnological and historical museums. Ethnological museums will have to redesign their displays radically and be given another story (context). In historical museums the story must be adapted, based on the history of all - present - inhabitants instead of the buildings and art treasures of the past, and the collections must be supplemented from a multi- and intercultural perspective with objects showing the recent immigration history.

From a purely intercultural perspective the values with which the objects are charged must be mutually confronted and discussed in a parallel programme. Regarding intercultural targets it is, in view of the nature of the debate, often too early to build, extend or buy collections, and temporary exhibitions will have to suffice in which the confrontation and the debate are made visible.

Assimilation with dominant values that are universal or considered necessary for the Netherlands, the showing and recognizing of a multicultural diversity and a platform for debate on new valuations of objects and cultural identifications, in all these forms the museum can contribute - modestly - to rising above anachronistic position-finding of the 'we' as opposed to the 'they' and provide a small pair of cutters to cut the barbed wire in between.

Hans Onno van den Berg, Cenario, with the collaboration of Maaïke Verberk
Hans Onno van den Berg (1947) studied political sciences at the University of Amsterdam. In 1975 he started his own research and advice consultancy under the name Cenario. He has specialised in policy-research in the fields of culture, arts, education and media. He taught for several years on cultural policy at the University of Groningen. Lately he focused on the implementation of do-it-yourself quality assessment and organisational development in cultural organisations.

Information about the museums and exhibitions mentioned in this article can be obtained by contacting the Netherlands Museums Association:
 phone +31-20-6701100, fax +31-20-6701101

Museums and intercultural policy: changing perspectives

A recently made intriguing photograph of Rotterdam shows the very symbol of the city, the Euromast, flanked by a mosque and a soccer pitch with Surinamese-Hindustani players. In actual fact there is no such mosque nor soccer pitch. The image has been manipulated by the Rotterdam designer Jos Stoopman. The photograph looks quite real, not only because of the medium used, but above all because the image so closely relates to the multicultural reality of the city. The question is whether in future these images will indeed symbolize Rotterdam.

The important role of culture in getting to understand and accept each other is becoming increasingly clear: culture as a driving force in the process of integration of old and new Netherlanders. Museums are becoming more and more closely involved in the debate on the cultural diversity of Dutch society. How these museums must and can prepare for the multicultural society is increasingly the pivot and touchstone in the process of change that is facing the museums.

In 1990, the then Minister of Culture, Hedy d'Ancona, took a clear position with regard to cultural participation by immigrants with the policy memorandum 'Opting for Quality': museums had to make an effort to reach these minority groups who were scarcely participating in museum visits.

In the cultural memorandum 'Armour or Backbone' (1997), the State Secretary of Culture, Aad Nuis, went one step further. This was necessary, for 'it is still hardly noticeable in public cultural life that the Netherlands has by now become a land of many cultures'. 'Intercultural' received special attention and was one of the seven basic thematic points of cultural policy. This was based on the conviction that, in this particular field of policy, a major contribution could be made to the promotion of mutual respect for, and insight into, 'other' cultures.

The basic consideration was quite explicitly the promoting of a richly variegated culture in which there is scope for different groups to have their own cultural expressions, the underlying idea being that a solid cultural self-confidence is the perfect basis for an open approach of the cultures of other people. The emphasis in the memorandum came to lie on promoting more interfaces and interplay between cultures and not having everyone safely - and perhaps slightly suspiciously - looking from the window of their own cultural bastions at 'the others', but stimulating cultural encounters and an intensive dialogue with a view to fruitful mutual interaction. 'Thus, an intercultural society may grow from a multicultural one, where diversity can strengthen unity and cultural encounter and confrontation can lead to the sharing of experience and new inspiration'.

It was strongly emphasized from the beginning that museums were the very places to play an important role. It is, after all, the museums which have available the cultural

heritage of very different origins and this can be offered to broad groups of society, including migrants.

Museums are not neutral places where value-free stories are told. True, they are in principle morally neutral ground but, in every display, norms and values are being transferred. For that very reason and also because museums have such divergent collections in store, they may be powerful instruments in the field of education and experience. The crux of organizing exhibitions, of ways of displaying and providing information, and of selecting themes and objects is the articulation of identity. Exhibitions represent identity, sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly, in which people can or cannot recognize themselves. 'When cultural 'others' are involved, exhibitions tell us who we are and, perhaps most significantly, who we are not. Exhibitions are privileged arenas for presenting images of self and 'other'⁸. It is the responsibility of the contemporary museum to show the continuity and differences in the aesthetical, historical contexts in which museum objects can be appreciated. Every museum should ask itself 'which history do we want to show, which mirror do we hold up to the public, which identity do we represent, from which perspective do we narrate our story'. And: should we not tell several stories or show different interpretations and appreciations.

Exhibitions can be a challenge by showing contrasts between what we know and what we do not know, what is new, so that we have to adapt our knowledge, and modify our categories of knowledge.

These insights into, and opinions on, the role and task of museums are greatly different from ten or fifteen years ago. The underlying basic assumptions of the traditional museum, closed in on itself with its task of collecting and preserving, can no longer be taken for granted.

Although the debate on the implications of the process of change for museums has been going on for some years, many museums seem hardly to be aware of the role which they can and must play in the multicultural society.

To provide extra momentum to the awakening awareness of the different kinds of museums, the Intercultural Museum Programmes project was started in 1997 at the request of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Netherlands Museums Association. Museums often find it difficult to give actual shape to the intercultural policy that fits with the possibilities of their collections. The IMP project acts therefore as a source of information and as an advisor to the museums.

The project also has the task of being an intermediary between museums and immigrant organizations. More and more often museums involve experts from migrant groups in the planning of intercultural exhibitions and as a *trait d'union* between the museums and community centres, socio-cultural associations, mosques, etc. It is of major importance to involve immigrant experts in the development of projects, for 'in meetings of the museum world on intercultural policy, there is a lot of talking, but the core of the matter, i.e. asking the immigrants themselves, is only briefly touched on', in the words of Edy Seriese, Director of the Indisch Wetenschappelijk Instituut in The Hague. Moreover, new Netherlanders should be able to 'see' from the personnel file that the museums do not belong exclusively to indigenous Netherlanders, so that migrants can feel at home there. In this field, too, the museums must be a reflection of a culturally diverse society. It is equally important, however, that the current museum staff are trained in specific knowledge and skills in methods of presentation and transfer and in promotion and public approach in the intercultural field. It is important that the museum shows its own commitment to immigrant groups, its preparedness to acquire knowledge in new cultural fields. Within that framework the IMP project manager organizes study meetings with experts from at home and abroad, international study tours to museums and exchanges with museum officers who have acquired a lot of experience with intercultural projects.

The IMP project is also meant to boost all kinds of new cooperative umbrella projects. By offering an integrated supply, in which museums, schools, scientific institutes, migrant organizations and socio-cultural associations work together, an active

IMP

optimum intercultural programme can materialize. The IMP project therefore acts as an intermediary between the different fields and organizations. It is, for example, engaged in designing Intercultural Museum Learning Routes in collaboration with one of the important organizations for educational development in the Netherlands, the Algemeen Pedagogisch Studiecentrum.

Education preeminently provides opportunities to bring children, indigenous or immigrant, into contact with the heritage of different cultures managed by our museums. In the large cities sometimes more than half the pupils are of diverse non-Dutch origin. For those children - often born in the Netherlands and therefore immigrants of a second or third generation - it is important to learn together how they can later on, with self-respect and mutual respect, give substance to an intercultural society. Special teaching methods can familiarize pupils with the cultural diversity of our society.

This interculturally coloured alliance between education and culture fits in with the broader mission statement of the policy document 'Culture and School' that was presented simultaneously with Aad Nuis's Cultural Memorandum 'Armour or Backbone'. With this policy document, launched together with the State Secretary of Education, Tineke Netelenbos, a high priority has been given to cultural education for children and young people in collaboration with schools. Culture is explicitly involved in the innovative operations taking place in education. In developing methods and educational equipment and in the training of teachers, cultural heritage in museums has been given a clear place. Both the museums and the schools are the beneficiaries, certainly if, by closer collaboration, the supply of museums can be better attuned to the wishes and needs of education. Although the Culture and Schools plan of action explicitly refers to the importance of developing intercultural projects, recent research shows that only a limited supply in this field has been developed and that the little that has been developed, is hardly used. Reason for the Culture and Schools project group to give priority to projects that do make the link with the multicultural society. The IMP project 'Intercultural Museum Learning Routes' goes along with this. It is intended for teacher training, based on the underlying thought that students who themselves have had intercultural museum education, will teach this as more of a matter of course when they stand in front of a class. The idea is that during intercultural learning, room will be made for the life stories (autobiographies and biographies) of pupils and teachers, and situations are created in which dialogue is shown to be more rewarding than conflict. Thus the Intercultural Museum Learning Route becomes a route through a museum which does not focus on the transfer by the teacher/museum guide but on the personal learning of the pupil/visitor. In a World War II Remembrance Centre the first question to the pupils might be: 'Do you have relatives which were victims of World War II, were there any relatives in the Resistance or (a very emotionally-charged question) were they among the perpetrators or would you characterize them as being bystanders, spectators?' It is this attention to the different perspectives which occupies an important place here. Only after this do the pupils, teacher or museum guide enter the exhibition, where the same questions will return when discussing parts of the collection. Together with three museums and a World War II Remembrance Centre, this exemplary project will be elaborated and, moreover, be made to qualify as re-training for museum staff.

Such projects are meant to create a structural collaboration between museums and schools, in which the immigrant groups, which would otherwise be so difficult to reach, are made to cross the threshold.

One of the basic points of the IMP project is that, for the coming years, a structural incorporation of intercultural policy is at stake. An increasing number of museums have gained experience in recent years with the presentation of intercultural themes. Too many museums, however, limit themselves to incidental projects or theme exhibitions, often aimed at a specific minority group, which does not always occupy a clear place in the structural presentation policy of that particular museum. However well-meant and valuable these exhibitions may be as an initial step, they no longer suffice.

It is striking to see that the debate on the possibilities of renewal in content has been outstripped by the discussions on how to recruit as many visitors as possible with non-Dutch backgrounds.

The discussion about intercultural collecting, a subject touching the museums to the core, has only just started, and started very carefully, while at this very moment permanent and tangible presence could be given to the history of migrants by admitting the immaterial and material culture to the museum collections.

It already appears to be difficult for museums, for instance, to exhibit the historical process of immigration. Jan Lucassen may - rightly, it is true - state that museums need not wait passively until historians have adapted the prevailing image of Dutch history. For the city museums of The Hague and Amsterdam and for the Museum voor Volkenkunde in Rotterdam, museums that are trying to portray the migration history of these cities, the necessary research is often wanting. An additional difficulty is, moreover, that the picture cannot be reconstructed fully on the basis of classical objects which museums are used to displaying, in order to outline 'Dutch history'. If museums want to present certain themes from the history of migration, then they will have to enter also the less well known terrain of photography, visual arts, music, ego documents and moving images, often especially on a popular level. Museums will then sometimes have to direct their collection policy to culture carriers which are dismissed as uninteresting or exclusively ethnological according to traditional museum ideas, but which possess great narrative potential and are indispensable for telling the story of immigration. The question of quality will certainly be put again, and the debate would gain in importance if it would focus on the question of whether more quality concepts would be conceivable, and what criteria they should have.

Museums should not wait too long for the interiors of the very first tofu bakery and Islamic butcher's have already disappeared. In Rotterdam the first ice-cream barrow of the Italian Angelo Betti, together with his ice machine, is still in the hands of the family. The moulds of the plaster sculptures with which the ice-cream vendors earned their keep in winter, and which came to be displayed on the mantelpieces of Rotterdam families, have also been preserved. This will, however, probably be the exception.

The IMP project wants to speed up the discussion on the various difficulties of intercultural collecting in collaboration with researchers, museum experts and experts from migrant groups.

Publicist and programme maker for Dutch TV, Anil Ramdas, a Hindustani of Surinamese descent, said in a debate on public participation and museums: 'I do not believe in the museums representing all those different identities. It is the cultural pluriformity itself which the museums should display. When I visit the Scheepvaartmuseum in Amsterdam with my children, I do not only want to see the story of the brave Dutch navigators with their lucrative trade with the Far East and the West in all kind of products. I also want to show my children what the stowage system of that same ship was like, when it carried slaves all hunched up in its hold.'

More and more museums take the initiative of screening the presentation of their permanent collection based on their awareness of offering groups of new Netherlanders points of acknowledgement and recognition. The emphasis is then put on another perspective from where an accompanying context or story relating to the objects can be told, which provides a more multi-faceted picture of Dutch history. Museums, as is also clear from Jan Lucassen's article, often have the actual objects, but do not use them to clarify many very interesting relationships in Dutch history between the different cultures. And sometimes the knowledge of how to do this is simply not there.

Such adaptations in the stories and in the selection and emphasis of the objects displayed, provide a far wider understanding of Dutch culture. Then it is no longer a matter of constructing a traditional, homogeneous picture, or of showing different fragments of pictures next to each other, but a matter of trying to shape the need for remembering in a mutual process as a joint history in which 'their' stories become 'ours' and vice versa. A history of old and new meetings of culture, of mutual

influencing, of the continuity of migration processes, of cultural customs that acquire new dimensions in changing circumstances. Then it becomes clear that culture is dynamic and keeps developing under the influence of other cultures. It may, in future displays, be less about a direct and unequivocal possibility of identification for the visitor but, by offering interesting and well-chosen frames of reference, there will be room for displays that drive on the intercultural debate and challenge both the indigenous and the immigrants. For there are, of course, diverging opinions and different positions between and among immigrant groups as well as indigenous groups, and these very differences could be employed in a positive way. Thus we can learn from headstrong young people, who create new forms of expression in the fields of pop music, theatre and visual art, in which all kind of cultural influences join together in a completely natural way, and where the question of for which group this may be meant, is disposed of as nonsense.

Of course, most immigrants are no longer newcomers at all. Intercultural policy should, therefore, not be aimed at keeping them in that position but should be aimed at providing a self-evident place for their heritage and their history in the museums. Used in this way 'intercultural' does not only mean exclusively programmes for and about immigrants, but indicates a quality characteristic for museums which programme their offer in such a way that it is attractive for immigrant as well as indigenous visitors; in this way intercultural means both sides: they and we.

When the integrated approach has been chosen, and multiculturalism is taking shape in museums, in education, in innovative processes in art and when it appeals to new groups then multiculturalism is no longer an individual 'problem', but can act as an obvious, authoritative element of innovative cultural policy.

Such policy needs more time than we might wish, but we hope that the IMP project means a positive incentive. In three years time we shall report our progress to the ICOM Conference!

Riet de Leeuw

Policy advisor, amongst others responsible for intercultural museum policy Cultural Heritage Directorate; Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Editor of 'Museums and Public Participation', Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague 1994 and 'Publiek in het jaar 2000, musea in de multiculturele samenleving', Nederlandse Museum Vereniging, Amsterdam / Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague 1996.



Chinese-Buddhist sacrificial ceremony at the end of a prayer ritual for a deceased woman

Interculturele Museale Programma's / Intercultural Museum Programmes

Interculturele Museale Programma's

wishes to stimulate museums to provide an active contribution to the design of our multicultural society. Integration as a reciprocal process and room for cultural diversity are the basic considerations.

Interculturele Museale Programma's

supports and initiates events that make a museum visit into a valuable and attractive experience for Netherlanders with divergent cultural backgrounds. In taking part in these events, new arrivals to the Netherlands and their children do not only want to become acquainted with the Dutch cultural heritage, but also with that part of their past which took place elsewhere.

Interculturele Museale Programma's

wants to promote a greater consciousness of the possibilities of an intercultural policy in the fields of exhibitions and collecting, public recruiting and education. In these areas, *Interculturele Museale Programma's* acts as the information point for projects at home and abroad, and for evaluation as well as target group research. This information can be acquired on request and certain parts can be consulted via the Web site of the Netherlands Museums Association (<http://www.museumvereniging.nl>).

Interculturele Museale Programma's

also acts as a discussion partner and adviser for new exhibition plans by Dutch museums and it organizes study conferences with experts from the Netherlands and from abroad. Within the multitude of organizations that are active in the intercultural field in the Netherlands, *Interculturele Museale Programma's* acts as an intermediary between museums, education, science, migrant organizations, and socio-cultural associations.

Interculturele Museale Programma's

also wants to contribute to the exchange of ideas between museum staff, researchers, and cultural critics in order to arrive at a vision on intercultural collecting and exhibiting.

Interculturele Museale Programma's

is a project by the Netherlands Museums Association and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. **For more information: Liane van der Linden (Project Manager), P.O. Box 74683, 1070 BR, Amsterdam. Tel. +31-20-6701 100, fax +31-20-6701101, e-mail: info@museumvereniging.nl**

Notes

- 1 Ongoing research by Marlou Schrover (Utrecht University) explains that the low percentages for the middle of the nineteenth century may be based *inter alia* on an underestimation in the census.
- 2 According to the Dutch historian Presser the colonisation of America was accomplished due to the invention of barbed wire. Without barbed wire the mutual relations between the Whites and the Native Americans would have happened in a completely different way, because the white livestock farmers could never have become settlers. (J. Presser, *Amerika, van kolonie tot wereldmacht*. 2 vols, Elsevier, Amsterdam/Brussels 1965).
- 3 The story goes that this political stance is also the reason why Sean Connery has not been knighted, while so many heroes of music and film have already preceded him.
- 4 In the 18th century the first negroes in the Northern Netherlands were exhibited in the Antwerp zoo.
- 5 The Children's Museum was given the European Museum Award 1996 for a previous exhibition 'Verhalen om niet te verdwalen' ('Stories to prevent getting lost') about aborigines for the way in which intercultural understanding and tolerance were promoted and because of the impressive multi-media approach for the benefit of children.
- 6 Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism, examining the politics of recognition*, ed. by Amy Gutman, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994
- 7 P. Bourdieu, *La Distinction, critique social du jugement*, Paris, 1979
- 8 Ivan Karp, 'Culture and Representation', in Ivan Karp and S.D. Lavine (eds.), *Exhibiting cultures, The poetics and politics of museum display*, Smithsonian Institution, Washington 1991, p. 15

Colophon

Dutch Museums and Cultural Diversity - Different Cultures, Mutual Worlds is published by the Netherlands Museums Association and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, within the framework of the 18th ICOM General Conference in Melbourne, Australia. The publication appears within the 'Intercultural Museum Programmes' project of the Netherlands Museums Association.

Text: Jan Lucassen, Hans Onno van den Berg, Riet de Leeuw
Translation: Lysbeth Croiset van Uchelen-Brouwer and Peter Thomson
Photography: Marrie Bot, Rotterdam
Design: Gijs Dragt, Zwolle
Printer: Drukkerij Rosbeek BV, Nuth
Production: The Netherlands Museums Association (Antoine Achten), Amsterdam
Intercultural Museum Programmes Project Manager: Liane van der Linden

Jan Lucassen's contribution is an adaptation of his article from the volume *Nieuwe Nederlanders en musea*, published by the Boekmanstichting and the Mondriaan Foundation (ISBN 90-6650-051-4). Part of this article was translated into English by Michael Wintle.

The contribution by Hans Onno van den Berg is a summary of the evaluation of intercultural projects by Dutch museums which was commissioned by the Mondriaan Foundation and the Netherlands Museums Association.


The photographs by Marrie Bot are taken from her book *A last farewell* (ISBN 90-61-770130)

The Netherlands Museums Association
P.O. Box 74683
1070 BR Amsterdam
tel. +31-20-6701100
fax +31-20-6701101
e-mail info@museumvereniging.nl

With special thanks to KLM Cargo



OCenW



In recent years Dutch museums (supported by government policy) have taken intercultural themes more and more seriously. The result is a large diversity of initiatives, each in its own way trying to give the museum a place in the multicultural society.

This publication gives a survey of what has been accomplished so far.

Netherlands Museums Association
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science