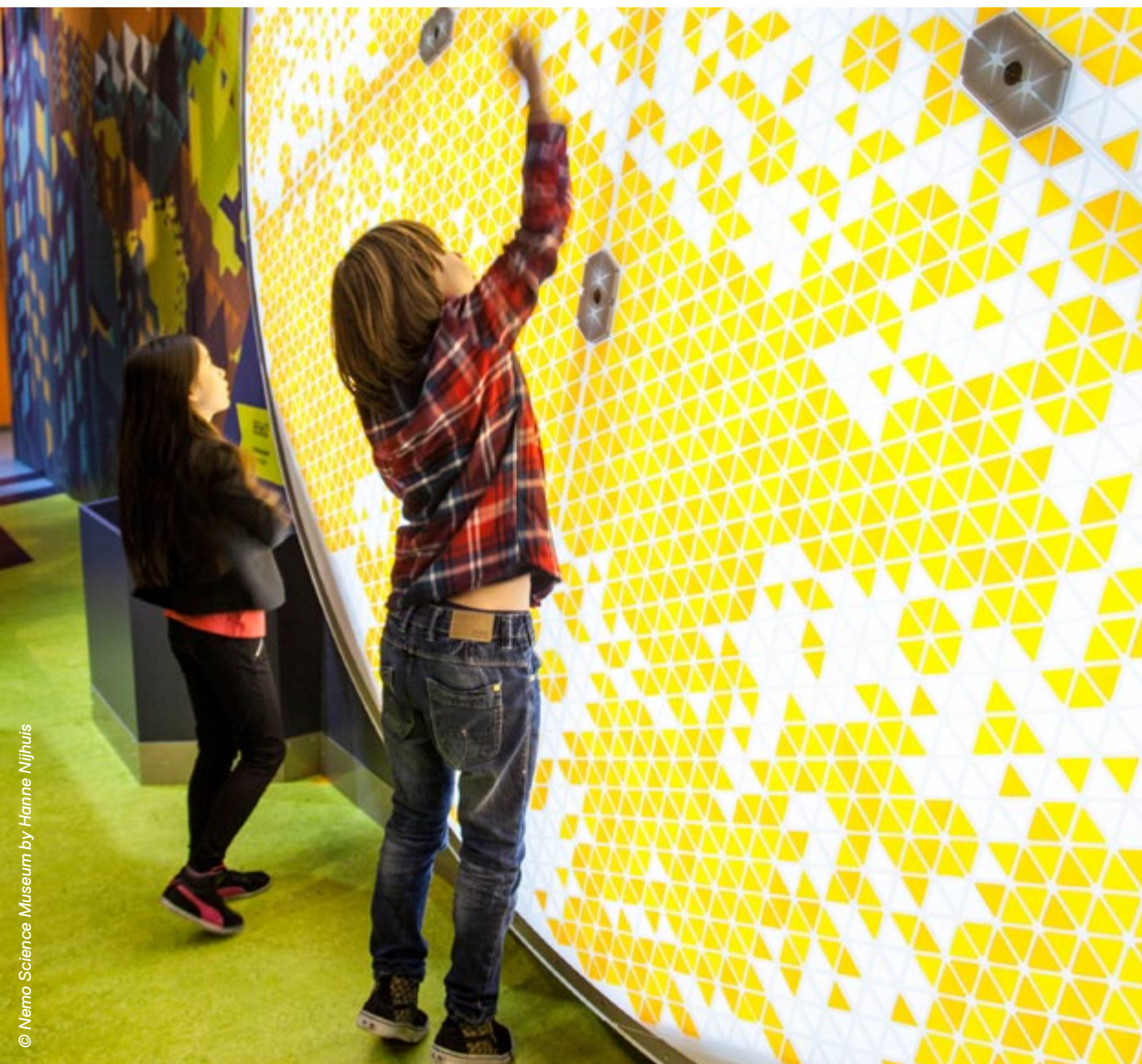


# The NL Factor

A journey in the educational world of Dutch museums

Margherita Sani



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# The NL Factor



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## Reasons for a journey

The interest in the core subject of this publication – i.e. education, and in particular education addressed to children in museums in The Netherlands – developed during my terms as juror of the Children in Museums Award. The Award was established in 2011 as a joint effort of the European Museum Academy and Hands On! International to acknowledge excellence and innovation in museum education and exhibits designed for children.

I joined the jury in 2014 and, since then, year after year, I witnessed the quantity and quality of the Dutch participation. On an average of 30 candidates a year, always four or five were from the Netherlands, so one out of six, which is a considerable number considering that the prize is not only European, but worldwide.

In addition to the number of Dutch applicants, I was also impressed by the quality of the activities presented, the innovation of the solutions, the freshness of the approach. But it wasn't until I heard Massimo Negri say, during the presentation of his recent book, *The great revolution of European museums*<sup>1</sup>, that in the museum world The Netherlands are now what the UK was until a decade ago, i.e. the leading country when it comes to innovation, that I felt confirmed in my impressions and realized that, yes, here there was something that deserved a closer look.

If there is something which puts Dutch museums so much at the forefront, at least when it comes to education and children's education, why is it so? What are the components which make up what, in the course of time, I started to call the 'NL factor'? In setting out on my research I was driven by this theoretical and academic interest, as much as by a concrete and urgent need to see all the projects I had read about and visit the museums with which I had only got acquainted via their application for the Award. In fact, during my judging visits I only had a chance to see a couple of Dutch contenders. Now, I wanted to see more, especially of those that had so strongly struck my imagination.

So, I embarked on a journey. And it was a learning, as well as physical journey, as I travelled in the country for two weeks during my summer holidays in August 2017. Of course I didn't manage to visit all the Dutch museums that had taken part in the competition, since they are spread all over the country and that would have taken a longer time. But I was able to see three-quarters of them and, most important of all, to meet their directors, curators, educators, heads of public programming. With these people, and with many more, I had interesting conversations trying to identify the gist, and then the outcomes of the 'NL factor'.

The result of my research is summarised in the pages that follow and precedes the gallery of the Dutch candidates in the Children in Museums Award since its inception, 2012-2017, organised by geographical location.

I could, and maybe should have inspected other museums too, but after all I needed to define clearly my area of reference and decided on those institutions which had competed to see their efforts in children's education recognised.

This means that, in the pursuit of the 'NL factor' I didn't look at conservation and collections management, but at education, exhibitions, design and, in general, what is broadly referred to as public policies and programming. I think I was able to detect something that goes well beyond these areas of museum work and touches the museum culture as a whole in the country. The findings were interesting and hopefully not only for myself.



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<b>National Maritime Museum, Amsterdam</b>	Jacqueline Visser
<b>Tropenmuseum Junior, Amsterdam</b>	Marielle Pals, Liesbet Reuben
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<b>GeoFort, Herwijnen</b>	Caroline Mönking, Nienke van Pijkeren
<b>Sound and Vision, Hilversum</b>	Bart van der Linden
<b>Naturalis, Leiden</b>	Caroline Breunese, Krista Leusink, Matthijs Vegter, Matthijs Graner
<b>Museum Het Valkhof, Nijmegen</b>	Annelies Koster, Odette Straten
<b>Maritime Museum, Rotterdam</b>	André den Braber, Rinske Jurgens
<b>Museum Rotterdam '40 -'45 NOW, Rotterdam</b>	Nina Aelbers, Anneke Harmsen
<b>Villa Zebra, Rotterdam</b>	Marjolein Roozen
<b>Gemeentemuseum, The Hague</b>	Jet van Overeem, Marita Smit
<b>Museon, The Hague</b>	Friso Visser, Hub Kockelkorn
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## Laying the foundations – The Delta Plan

Any discourse about museums in The Netherlands should, in my opinion, set out by mentioning an operation of unprecedented scale which affected the sector between 1990 and 2000 and which influenced all areas of museum work in the following years and up to the present day: the Delta Plan.

The Delta Plan for the Preservation of the Netherlands Cultural Heritage took its name from the Delta Project – *Deltawerken* – a giant flood control system built in the southwest part of the country and devised after the bursting of the dikes and the catastrophic North Sea flood which killed 1835 people and devastated 2070 square kilometers of land in 1953.

The Delta Plan for the Preservation of the Netherlands Cultural Heritage aimed to have the same sort of preventive and salvific effect in the heritage field. It all started when in 1987 the Audit Office made a report about the condition of the nation's cultural heritage, pointing out the bad state of conservation of parts of it. As a result, the Minister of Culture launched a plan to improve the conditions of the collections kept in Dutch national museums with big injections of money. An ambitious programme aimed at resolving the backlogs built up over the years in the registration and conservation of museum objects, historic buildings and sites, was launched in 1990 and concluded in 2000 with an overall additional budget of 150 million Euros.

Museums, especially national museums, were stimulated to make an inventory of their collections and assess their conditions, to develop preservation and remedial conservation plans and in particular to devise collection plans – i.e. plans stating museum policy with regard to collections – if they wanted to qualify for public subsidy. As a consequence, extensive campaigns for registering, documenting, moving and treating objects took place in all major museums, new staff were recruited, including young people who were trained in primary and basic operations for museum conservation. The Delta Plan also established strict criteria for the selection of items to collect and set priorities for the preservation of objects bearing a cultural interest. Objects were classified into four categories, starting from A (very important collections) to B (objects of lower quality, but having a representative value), to C and D, the latter considered as not relevant for the museum. The underlying assumption was that choices had to be made when it came to collection preservation in order to spend public money in a cost-effective way. This also opened the way to the idea of 'deaccessioning', which, however, in The Netherlands is understood and practised as an exchange of items between museums through donations and loans, rather than as 'disposal' or sale<sup>2</sup>.

The Delta Plan allowed museums to obtain an exact picture of the collections they had in stock, including their conservation conditions and, starting from there, to gain a wider picture of what the country's museum collections as a whole would comprise. This idea was later translated into the expression '*Collectie Nederlands*' and

constituted the starting point of policies on collections mobility, short and long term loans, etc. within the country as well as internationally, a subject area in which the Netherlands have led the way at European level since 2004<sup>3</sup>.

This stocktaking exercise proved to be very useful also for some important Dutch museums<sup>4</sup>, not only to assess the exact consistency of the patrimony, but also to promote its wider use.

Most of the people I interviewed didn't acknowledge an immediate connection between the Delta Plan and the subject of my research. Only one person ascribed to the Delta Plan, as a side effect, the idea that children's museums in The Netherlands – as opposed to the American model, the forerunner of children's museums worldwide – were clear that they should always make use of or be inspired by real museum objects when designing their educational offer.

For me, the Delta Plan has had a major impact on Dutch museums, not only on the way they care for their collections, but on the way they understand themselves and their mission. Soon after the Delta Plan was completed, input came from the Government to switch the focus from the preservation to the use of collections<sup>5</sup>, because, after all, it makes little sense to invest in preservation if not with the ultimate goal of benefiting the people in whose name collections are kept and protected.

And this sets the backdrop to Dutch museums' public engagement and to my research itself.



© Maritime Museum Rotterdam by Marco De Swart

## Policies and Politics

“Policies are important!” said to me one of my interlocutors. Indeed they are and to me they provided a relatively easy entry point to the Dutch museum system and its functioning. While in some countries cultural policies are implicit and need to be detected through actions, in The Netherlands they are explicit and published at regular intervals.

In 1993 the Cultural Policy Act<sup>6</sup> introduced the obligation for the Minister of Culture to present a policy memorandum every four years. In this document priorities are set and museums applying for public subsidies do it in compliance with the goals stated by the government. So, when looking at cultural policies in the country, we can avail ourselves of public and regularly published declarations of intent by the ministerial authorities, which, in my opinion, regardless having been issued by different politicians in the course of the years, seem to have a high degree of continuity.

The main focal points have shifted over time – more recently towards innovation, participation and entrepreneurship<sup>7</sup> – but education has always been high on the agenda.

Since the 1970s a lot of attention has been given to the educational and social role of museums and to the contribution they can make to foster the personal development of the citizens of today and tomorrow, including the new Netherlanders.

The integrity of museum collections was a priority in the years 1990-2000 with the Delta Plan, but since then the leading thread in museum policy in The Netherlands has been the use of the objects, with a focus on the public and in particular on young people and children.

In parallel with a greater emphasis on a public oriented approach contained in museum policies over the years, there has been a quantitative growth and an increasing professionalization of museum educators<sup>8</sup>. And although their status in the individual institutions could still be improved, their role is unanimously acknowledged and contributes essentially to the good quality of museum public programmes.

From the 1990s onward, museums were ‘privatised’ and cultural organisations in general were encouraged to become more independent, generate some of their income and look at their audiences as their ‘market’. In particular, they were prompted to cater for the needs of young people, seen as prospective consumers and citizens in whose hands the preservation of cultural heritage would lie in the future.

Two policy documents in particular should be mentioned here, both delivered by the Government under the guidance of Frederick van der Ploeg as State Secretary for Culture: ‘Making Way for Cultural Diversity’ (1998)<sup>9</sup> and ‘Culture as Confrontation 2001-2004’<sup>10</sup>, which advocated for a more active contribution of museums to education and made a plea for more attention to young people and their artistic expressions. Digitisation of collections, inclusion of ethnic minorities and the acquisition of a more entrepreneurial approach in the running of museums were also listed as priorities.

The importance of cultural education, talent development and social inclusion was once more reinforced in the Minister of Culture’s Policy letter ‘Culture moves’ of 2013<sup>11</sup>, as well as by her more recent letter ‘Space for Culture’ (2015)<sup>12</sup>, which contains the principles for cultural policy in the period 2017-2020. In the coming years, cultural institutions will be judged on quality, social values, participation and education, in particular of young people, to support creativity and identity building.

## Governance models: Autonomous and Accountable

When I started to plan my very tight and busy schedule to visit as many museums as possible during the two weeks I spent in The Netherlands, I automatically omitted to ask for appointments on Mondays, the typical closing day. To my surprise I found out that, being school holidays, the month of August is exactly the time when many museums are open for business seven days a week, to cater for children and their families in their free time. This denotes a visitor oriented approach, but also a degree of autonomy and flexibility which should not be taken for granted and which might be traced back to the big change which occurred in the sector about 30 years ago. Indeed, the biggest revolution in the museum field in The Netherlands came about at the end of the 1980s, more or less when the Delta Plan for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage was launched. In fact, both originated as a response to the already mentioned report by the Netherlands Court of Audit which had appeared in 1987 and had declared the malfunctioning of national museums. If the Delta Plan was put into action to address shortcomings in the areas of registration, preservation and conservation, it was thought that other measures had to be taken to allow national museums to run their operations more effectively and efficiently.

Legislation and provisions governing national museums, which were at the time part of the Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Culture, were considered as one of the obstacles to their better overall functioning and, as consequence, it was decided to grant them an autonomous status.

The process, which lasted from 1988 to 1994, was by no means quick or easy, as it had to take into account all the consequences of such a radical change: fiscal, budgetary, regarding the ownership and management of collections, the status of the personnel, etc. Moreover, it was done in constant consultation with the institutions concerned, to guarantee maximum acceptance and commitment.

Reading some of the reports which describe this major operation – although in an abridged form – I was struck by these aspects:

➤ The six-year – long process must have been sustained by a remarkable – at least for me – continuity in cultural policy if one thinks that ministers, politicians, maybe officers will have inevitably alternated during that period.

- > The step-by-step and open-ended nature of the procedure, which considered the pros and cons of different options and weighed the different alternatives before choosing which legal status museums should have (internal versus external autonomy; foundation versus public limited company).
- > A trial and error approach with the active involvement of six national institutions which tried out forms of internal autonomy at the outset of the process.
- > The continuous and constant consultation with the museum sector.

In the end, the decision was taken to transform the 21 national museums into foundations, i.e. into independent administrative bodies under private law, which take full responsibility for the management of the collections and the personnel, while the ownership of the collections and the buildings remain property of the State. The State continues to provide funds to national museums, which have the freedom to spend them as they decide to – however always within the framework of a four-year plan submitted to the Ministry. The museums are now responsible for exploitation activities. They are able, within certain limits, to carry over a surplus, but have to finance a deficit completely. At the same time, they have the freedom to hire and fire staff and create new job positions.

One of the outcomes of this process was the foundation of a new umbrella organization, the Association of National Funded Museums (*Vereniging van Rijksge subsidieerde Musea*), created to promote the interest of these museums and negotiate with the government and the trade unions.

Following central government, the provinces and municipalities also proceeded to give autonomy to their museums, so much so that public museums, in the sense of being a department of a municipality or a province, are now the exception. In the majority of cases, including those museums which call themselves ‘municipal’, in spite of being funded by the city, are run as foundations:

As a rule, like the nationals, museums belonging to the larger local authorities (cities, provinces) also entered into four-year funding agreements, which means that they too have to submit to their funders four-year plans clearly indicating objectives and performance indicators, against which they receive lump sums.

For all museums, national or local, this entails greater freedom, but also increased responsibility and accountability, the need to self-generate income (which on the average accounts for 50% of the overall turnover in 2016<sup>13</sup>) through the box office, shop, café and events, and to compete with other cultural organisations to access the funds available through the many public or private funds.

Privatisation or liberalisation as it is sometimes called, was undoubtedly a revolution in the museum field and in my opinion, represents the pre-condition for the innovation, flexibility, dynamism and creativity which characterise museums in The Netherlands and which I witnessed in the course of my research.



© Het Valkhof by Bart Nijs Fotografie

## Unity is strength

When entering the premises of the Netherlands Museums Association (*Museumvereniging*) in Amsterdam, I was welcomed by a large digital board showing data about museum visiting, percentages of visitors by provinces, age and other variables, bar graphs highlighting the most visited institutions, and so on. A dazzling overview of museum performances in the country with a daily update of information in real time, which gave me the idea that this organisation must be ‘in control’ and very much aware of what it is going on in the field.

Even when I was told that the data transmitted from the periphery to the central office of the Museums Association didn’t regard all museums in the country, but just the institutions adhering to the Museum Card (*Museumkaart*) – around 400 – that wasn’t enough to avoid the feeling that the Netherlands Museums Association must be a big player and an important component of the ‘NL factor’.

The Museums Association was founded in 1926 to represent and promote the interest of Dutch museums and to contribute to the development and professionalisation of the sector. It was named Netherlands Museums Association from the 1960s on, merged with the Museum Card Foundation in 2003 and with the Association of National Funded Museums in 2014. It provides institutional – not individual – membership, but offers the employees of member museums the possibility to join 10 sectoral committees to research and discuss subjects of common interest and pursue their professional development. In the 1990s the Museums Association became State funded, although operating at arm’s length. In those years government funding was also used to improve the quality of museums through an accreditation scheme started in 1999 and still in operation today, although run by an independent foundation.

Being a registered museum is a pre-condition for being a member of the Museums Association.

In 2004 the government decided to stop the funding of the Association, which was then receiving 500.000 Euros a year for its functioning. That was a time of big changes, in which the Museums Association decided to become an organisation independent of the government, in order to better lobby for museums, which, by that time, had largely become independent foundations and needed therefore a stronger and more active association to represent their interests and strengthen the sector. This created the premise for a win-win situation. On the one hand, museums needed a strong organisation to support them, promote a positive image of the sector to the public and put museum issues high on the political agenda. On the other, the Museums Association had to make its activities really relevant to the sector in order to generate income via membership fees and receive from museums the mandate to lobby for them, which, having become independent of the government, it could more easily do<sup>14</sup>.

In 2016 the Museums Association had an annual turnover of 1,5 million Euros, receiving 990.000 Euros from membership fees and 400.000 Euros from activities (annual conference, quarterly magazine, etc). Only 26.000 Euros State subsidies were received.

In recent years it produced important researches and publications, such as 'Agenda 2026'<sup>15</sup>, a study on the future of the Dutch museum sector, in order to identify developments and trends and help museums get ready for the future, and 'More than worth it'<sup>16</sup>, which focuses on the five core values of museums – collection, connecting, educational, experience and economic – and makes the public and all the stakeholders aware of the significance of museums for society.

A third publication, 'Tried and tested partnerships'<sup>17</sup>, is a clear example of how the Association acts when wanting to influence public policy affecting museums. In 2012 when the crisis had become evident in the museum field and a new liberal government looked more inclined to make heavy budgetary cuts to the sector, the Museums Association set up a commission – the Asscher-Vonk Committee – formed by museum directors and chaired by an academic, in order to anticipate the government's decisions and work out solutions that would be less penalising for museums and spring from the sector itself. A proactive approach, we could call it.

The conclusion of the Asscher-Vonk Committee<sup>18</sup> was that, in order to make a more cost-effective use of resources, museums needed to improve and increase cooperation, establishing partnerships among themselves, as well as with other sectors. And since many of them already did so, a second Committee was set up and a follow up report delivered, 'Tried and tested partnerships', to map examples of cooperation and joint initiatives which had been developed by museums to continue the provision of high quality services even in the time of financial troubles. The message sent to the government: "In times of financial uncertainty museums already know how to make the best use of resources and cooperation is the way to take" was so convincing and well received that the next Minister endorsed it in her

policy memorandum<sup>19</sup>, declaring the importance of cooperation among museums and making available an additional budget of two million Euros a year to encourage inter institutional alliances.

And to be coherent with what they were preaching, also the two then existing museum associations – the Netherlands Museums Association and the Association of National Museums – decided to merge, a process which was completed in 2014 resulting in the Museums Association (*Museumvereniging*).

In short, the message delivered to the museum community through this operation, quoting the director of the Museums Association<sup>20</sup>, was: "Prepare your vision of the future before the government decides for you, about you and without you" and also – and this could be considered the motto of the Netherlands Museums Association –: "Seek the power of the collective, don't go solo".

## Young people first

In the course of my conversations with museum professionals, I often heard the comment that children and children's rights are very important in The Netherlands. A statement like this could easily only voice a personal opinion of very passionate and committed museum educators, if it were not for the fact that it is backed up by statistics and other research data.

According to Eurostat<sup>21</sup>, among European countries, The Netherlands can boast the second lowest rate of NEETS (young people neither in employment nor in education or training) and Dutch children are regularly found to be the happiest in the world according to OECD better life Index.<sup>22</sup>

If this is the result of national policies which value young people and invest on their education and well-being, then the fact that a lot of attention is given to children and young people in Dutch museums is not surprising and could simply be considered as part of an overall, bigger picture, though no less important because of this.

In general, connecting pupils to cultural institutions is regarded as an important component of formal education, both in primary and in secondary schools. Collaboration between schools and cultural organisations is explicitly mentioned in a number of recent policy documents<sup>23</sup> and can rely on specific funds at central and local level<sup>24</sup>.

The main focus of public policies in this area concerns the quality of cultural education, the expertise of teachers, and the cooperation between schools and the cultural sector.

With the introduction of cultural education in the school curriculum<sup>25</sup>, schools were asked to provide for the development of artistic and creative skills and to liaise with cultural institutions, in order to offer extra-curricular activities in the artistic and cultural field.





© Villa Zebra

Cultural liaison officers were appointed by municipalities to support this encounter and reinforce the connection between schools and the cultural sector. Mocca<sup>26</sup> in the Amsterdam area is an example of how this can work locally. As an organization funded by the city of Amsterdam and the Ministry of Culture, Mocca acts as an intermediary between schools and the cultural sector, offering both parties expertise and training to develop joint cultural education programmes. It also facilitates transport between schools and cultural institutions by organising the *Cultuurbus* and *Cultuurboat*, a free service that brings elementary school children to museums, concerts and exhibitions. In upper secondary education (age 15-18) 'culture and the arts' ('ckv') is a compulsory subject which combines theoretical and practical elements and is focused on cultural participation.

As part of the programme, ckv-students participate in cultural activities and visit cultural institutions, thereby learning to make reasoned and informed cultural choices that are meaningful and of interest to them.

And when it comes to their private life, cultural consumption and participation is supported by tools such as the Culture Card, a pass which secondary school pupils receive to get reduced entrance fees for theatres, cinemas, museums, etc.

Although these policies ultimately result in increased participation and higher attendance in cultural events, even more important is the final objective they pursue, i.e. giving children and young people the opportunity to discover and develop their talents as creators or consumers, professionals or amateurs and create the pre-conditions for them to live a fuller, more aware and satisfactory adult life.

“The arts and culture are indispensable to the education and development of young people. A society that takes children and young people seriously provides them with a good cultural education (in the visual arts, dance, drama and music, media, literature and heritage) and ensures that it is universally accessible.”

“Cultural education contributes to knowledge transfer, personal development and participation in society. Cultural education enables young people to develop their talents, introduces them to art and culture, makes them aware of aesthetics and ethics, and teaches them to express their feelings and to assign meaning. Cultural education helps children and young people discover their own ways of learning and communicating, and as such it complements other knowledge domains and disciplines. Cultural education promotes historical awareness, contributes to the formation of an individual identity and encourages a creative, inquisitive attitude that benefits children and young people throughout their lives. Cultural education gives enjoyment and contributes to one's overall sense of well-being.”

“Cultural education encourages children and young people to develop into balanced and mature adults who are able to live well and find their place in a changing world.<sup>27</sup>”

### Investing in the audience of the future

The Netherlands prides itself of being a country where children's autonomy and opinions are valued and respected. And museums maintain that they never treat children in a childish way.

Young people are the future and public policies are there to support their growth as individuals and unlock their potential. And no matter what this potential is or can be, cultural education and familiarity with the places where art and culture are produced, where heritage is conserved and history is transmitted cannot but contribute positively to personal development.

Trying out new ways to turn children into more frequent and regular museum visitors therefore follows quite naturally from these premises.

In 2009 the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science asked the Netherlands Museums Association to find ways of making museums more attractive to children, starting from the assumption that free entrance or free transport to the venues could serve the purpose and increase the number of visits.

In order to put the assumption to the test and possibly find alternative and maybe more effective ways of reaching the objective, the Museums Association, together with two consultancy firms, carried out research along with seven pilot projects (funded by the Ministry) to experiment concrete measures to attract more children more often to museums.

In the end neither free admission nor free transport turned out to be decisive factors to persuade children to visit a museum unless the museum in itself is enjoyable, attractive and fun.

According to the 138 institutions studied, these are the most successful measures which museums should try to be more appealing to children<sup>28</sup>:

- > A special children's section in the museum (or a children's museum)
- > A varied programme of activities specially for children visiting with their families
- > Themed family and children's exhibitions conceived specially for children and families
- > Special activities organized during holidays or tied in with national events
- > Supporting children's activities (children's routes, mystery hunts, possibly in combination with interactive activities and websites or games)
- > Educational programmes for primary schools, including special teaching packages in preparation for the visit
- > A recognisable brand for children which collects all children's activities and products under one umbrella
- > Free admission for children up to the age of 12

With regard to the seven pilot projects, two proved successful and have now become permanent: The Museumkids platform<sup>29</sup> and Museum Inspectors. While the first is a website which provides information about museums and museum activities, games, etc. suitable for children and represents a very good resource for parents when looking for something to do with their offspring, the latter is a scheme which invites children to visit museums individually or with their families and assess their quality according to some agreed criteria. Through an app, children register to be inspectors, visit the museums and rate them on a scale from 1 to 10. Museums which score 7.5 or more and have been visited by at least 40 inspectors are considered to be 'Kidsproof' – approved by children – entitled to exhibiting the Kidsproof label, etc. In addition to votes, museums also receive comments and reviews from the children, which provide them with an additional channel through which they can obtain children's feedback and from which they can benefit. Each year the museum with most votes receives an award and likewise the child inspector who is most voted for his/her work becomes inspector of the year and receives a prize.



© Nemo Science Museum by Hanne Nijhuis

In addition to the recognition given by Kidsproof, quality provision in museum activities and education addressed to children is now acknowledged also by the Museum Education Prize, which has been operational since 2015. The prize is funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and is meant to connect museums and schools. Projects which have already been implemented are submitted and the best one is awarded 40.000 Euros, used to develop the idea further and make it available to other schools or museums. Innovative ideas and projects which still have to be implemented are awarded with 5.000 Euros for the winner and 1.000 Euros for the runner up.

The voting and awarding system of the Kidsproof scheme in itself is nice and surely generates a lot of action with children around museums, but what interested me in this story is the process which led to the creation of the Kids platform and the launch of the Museum Inspectors scheme: a ministerial initiative carried out in collaboration with the association of museum professionals, which set out from an assumption (free entrance to museums equals more visits by children) which was then proved wrong by experimentation and testing, but led to the introduction of new and different measures from what was envisaged at the start. This exemplifies a way of working which involves different levels of decision makers, presupposes their collaboration and shows an attitude to putting a number of alternatives to the test before making a final choice. This is a pragmatic approach which I frequently encountered in my exploration of the Dutch museum system.

## Tried and tested<sup>30</sup>. Valuing experimentation and productive failure

One feature of the Dutch museum system – and possibly of the overall cultural system in the country – is the inclination to try things out, see if they work and consequently adopt or reject them. This approach is clearly not only the result of a widespread mentality, but is enabled by an overall framework and by the presence – or maybe absence – of a regulatory system which allows organisations to try, fail and try again without fear of incurring sanctions.

Many examples of trial and error processes in Dutch museums were offered to me by my interlocutors in the course of my interviews. It is not an exception that in 2009 the Government offered money to an umbrella organisation such as the Netherlands Museums Association to try out new ways of engaging children and young people in museums starting from an assumption which was then proven wrong and abandoned in the course of the experimentation<sup>31</sup>. Likewise, Dutch museums have the possibility – and I would say the obligation – of prototyping and running their educational programmes, activities, formats, exhibition layouts, etc. through a number of tests with end users before signing them off and considering them final or permanent.

Valuing failures seems to be a current trend in the museum world if Trendswatch 2017, the yearly report published by the Center for the future of Museums of the American Alliance of Museums, identifies it as one of the features which characterize the museum field worldwide now and in the years to come.

“If you are creating things, you are doing things that have a high potential for failure, especially if you are doing things that haven’t been done before. And you learn from those things ... failure is another word for experience” is George Lucas’ quote which introduces the chapter entitled ‘Failing towards success: the ascendance of the agile design’<sup>32</sup>.

In many European countries museums are traditional, static and hierarchical organisations where little space is given to experimentation due to many very good reasons - lack of staff, space or money – but also to an organisational culture which discourages risk taking and to governance structures, business models and management practices which have not evolved to a point where failure is seen as a possible learning method which is productive and can show the way forward.

In the Netherlands, the acquisition of an autonomous status by national museums occurred at the beginning of the 1990s - in itself a trial and error process which started with experimentation and testing in six museums and museum services in 1989-1990 before being adopted – and gradually involved the majority of public institutions in the country. This can certainly be said to account for developing an organisational culture based on accountability and responsibility on the one hand, but also, on the other, on experimentation and risk taking, which generates the freedom to try, fail, try again and possibly be successful in the end.

## The Dutch touch – Conclusions

**The NL factor can be seen as a puzzle, with some big pieces representing its structural components and other smaller, but not lesser important ones, which have to do also with the characteristics of Dutch society.**

**Among the structural components are:**

- > A vision which values cultural education and encourages participation, in particular of children and young people. This vision emerges from memorandums and policy documents which stimulate, support and guide it, and show an amazing degree of continuity over the years.
- > A clear reference framework, where the government sets out its plans in a policy document issued once every four years, which serves as a basis for subsidy provision during that period. Both national and local authority museums refer to that four-year framework to shape their action plans and sign funding agreements respectively with the Ministry, Municipalities, Provinces, etc.
- > The presence of big players, such as the Museums Association, which provides services to its members, but, even more important, acts as an advocate for the sector with regard to the public opinion and to politicians.
- > The presence of large scale schemes – like the Registration Scheme - which raises the quality of the system as a whole, by requiring museums to fulfill a number of criteria in order to qualify for public funding, or the Museum Card, which gives free access to over 400 museums in the country, thereby aiming to promote repeat visits and to increase the bond between museums and their audience.
- > The introduction of a number of prizes and awards (Museum Education Prize, Kidsproof Museum Prize), which have a motivational potential, of course, but also represent a way for museums to showcase their activities both with regard to the public opinion and to peers, thereby increasing visibility on the one hand and generating an exchange of good practices on the other.
- > Governance models which, as a consequence of the privatization or liberalization process which started in the 1990s, have increased the responsibility and accountability of museums to their funding bodies, but at the same time have allowed them more freedom and flexibility. Freedom to use the funds they receive as they wish – however always within the limits set by their four-year funding agreements – but also freedom to renew their image and way of working, to engage new professional profiles, to try new solutions or create new alliances with other sectors and, as I already mentioned, to try and fail. Ultimately also freedom to hire and fire staff, an aspect which is of crucial importance in a labour-intensive organisation such as a museum.

In my opinion, this last component of the NL factor is also the most powerful. There is no doubt that transforming museums in foundations has deeply changed their way of working and the whole museum culture in the country.



But, as I mentioned, the NL factor is made also of different constituents, some of which simply reflect Dutch people's characteristics and attitudes, as generally understood: pragmatism, inventiveness, openness to new challenges and an inclination to share new solutions with others.

In the course of my study trip I was introduced to a Dutch saying “Beter goed gejat dan slecht bedacht”, which literally translates as “Better well stolen than badly invented”, meaning it is better to produce a good copy than a bad original. The saying was mentioned to me by a highly creative museum professional when illustrating her very original and groundbreaking museum solutions, which she presented as a counter example of the traditional Dutch saying. But the grain of truth in it can be, as I was told by other colleagues, that there is a widespread resistance among Dutch people to waste energies in re-inventing the wheel. And that there are indeed a number of opportunities for museum people – by participating in the committees of the Museums Association, for example, in conferences – to share experiences and learn from one another.

And when it comes to inventiveness, more than one person I interviewed mentioned the excellent quality of creative people in the country, on which museums can rely to produce exhibits, educational tools and devices in general. And I witnessed the team spirit and the very close collaboration which is established between museum people and external providers when producing something new. These two last features – creativity and making the most of what has already been invented – also belong to the NL factor.

So, in the end the NL factor is a combination of constituents of a very diverse nature and carrying different weights, which come together in a sort of mechanism or system of checks and balances where everything seems to work and to work well.

What I would like to mention as one last and less tangible constituent of the NL factor is lightness: an unassuming attitude, the light, non-academic way of approaching the public, the playfulness of some solutions and devices, without prejudicing the educational content.

The Dutch touch, although founded on solid ground, is in the end also a light touch.

## Footnotes

- 1 M. Negri, *La grande rivoluzione dei musei europei*, Venezia, 2016.
- 2 LAMO, *Leidraad Afstoten Museale Objecten (Guidelines for Deaccessioning Museum Objects)*, Museumvereniging, 2016.
- 3 One of the first conferences on collections mobility at European level, ‘*Museum collections on the move*’ was held on 28–29 October 2004 in The Hague.
- 4 Jaap van der Burg, *The Deltaplan, the way it worked*, Proceedings ICOM CC meeting, Edinburgh, 1996.
- 5 Frederick van der Ploeg, *Culture as Confrontation, (Cultuur als Confrontatie), Principles on Cultural Policy 2001-2004*, The Hague: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 1999.
- 6 The Cultural Policy (Special-Purpose Funding) Act came into force on 11 March 1993. It stipulates that the minister or state secretary for culture will have to set out the government's plans in a policy document issued once every four years.
- 7 In 2010 the Government set up a programme called Culture-Entrepreneurship (2012-2016), which gives advice and coaching to cultural organisations and artists to find alternative funding and delivers training courses to stimulate their entrepreneurship.
- 8 M. de Vreede; A. Vels Heijn ... [et al.], *Over Passie en Professie. Een eeuw publieksbegeleiding in de Nederlandse musea*, Cultuurnetwerk Nederland, 2010.
- 9 Frederick van der Ploeg, *Making way for Cultural Diversity*, The Hague: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 1998.
- 10 Frederick van der Ploeg, *Culture as Confrontation, (Cultuur als Confrontatie), Principles on Cultural Policy 2001-2004*, The Hague: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 1999.
- 11 Jet Bussemaker, *Culture Moves. The meaning of Culture in a changing society (Cultuur Beweegt: De Betekenis van cultuur in een veranderende samenleving)*. The Hague: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2013.
- 12 Jet Bussemaker, *Space for Culture (Ruimte voor Cultuur)*, The Hague: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2015.
- 13 *Museumcijfers 2016*, Museumvereniging, 2017.
- 14 As one of the many ways to raise the awareness of politicians with regard to museums and their actual way of working, the Museums Association has developed a one-day internship format, in which a politician is hosted in a museum and takes part in its daily activities, be they in the restoration workshop, in the education department, or at the box office.
- 15 Nederlandse Museumvereniging, *Agenda 2026. A study on the future of the Dutch museum sector*, 2010.
- 16 Nederlandse Museumvereniging, *More than worth it. The social significance of museums*, 2011.
- 17 Nederlandse Museumvereniging, *Tried and tested partnerships – Report by the Asscher-Vonk II Steering Committee*, 2013, English version January 2014.
- 18 Asscher-Vonk Advisory Committee, *Musea voor Morgen*, September 2012.
- 19 Jet Bussemaker, *Strength through Cooperation (Samen Werken, Samen Sterker)* The Hague: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2013.
- 20 Siebe Weide's presentation, *Better be prepared: museums learning from the crisis* at the 5<sup>th</sup> International conference of the Learning Museum Project, Bologna 20 September 2013.
- 21 Eurostat, *Statistics on young people neither in employment nor in education or training*, July 2017.
- 22 OECD, *Society at a glance 2016, A spotlight on youth, How do the Netherlands compare?*
- 23 Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, *Strength through Cooperation [Samen Werken, Samen Sterker]*. The Hague, 2013, in which the Minister underlines the importance of strengthening the educational mission of museums and stresses the importance of cooperation between museums and schools.
- 24 The Cultural Participation Fund [*Fonds voor Cultuurparticipatie*] – which funds the programme “Cultural education with quality 2013-2016”, to be continued in the period 2017-2020 <http://www.cultureducatiemetkwaliteit.nl>, and the National Centre of Expertise for Cultural Education and Amateur Arts [or LKCA [*Landelijk Kennisinstituut Cultuureducatie en Amateurkunst*]].
- 25 National Centre of Expertise for Cultural Education and Amateur Arts [*Landelijk Kennisinstituut Cultuureducatie en Amateurkunst*] (LKCA), *Basis for Cultural Education Guide for the future of school-based and extracurricular cultural education*, Utrecht 2017.
- 26 <http://www.mocca-amsterdam.nl/mocca-english/>
- 27 National Centre of Expertise for Cultural Education and Amateur Arts (LKCA), *Basis for Cultural Education Guide for the future of school-based and extracurricular cultural education*, Utrecht 2017, p.3-10.
- 28 Nederlandse Museumvereniging, *Children visiting museums. Investing in the audience of the future*, NMV, 2011, p. 21.
- 29 <https://www.museumkids.nl/>
- 30 The title of the chapter is borrowed from *Tried and tested partnerships – Report by the Asscher-Vonk II Steering Committee*, 2013, English version January 2014.
- 31 Nederlandse Museumvereniging, *Children visiting museums. Investing in the audience of the future*, NMV, 2011.
- 32 *Trendwatch 2017*, The American Alliance of Museums, Center for the future of Museums, 2017, p. 40.

## Is small beautiful?<sup>1</sup>

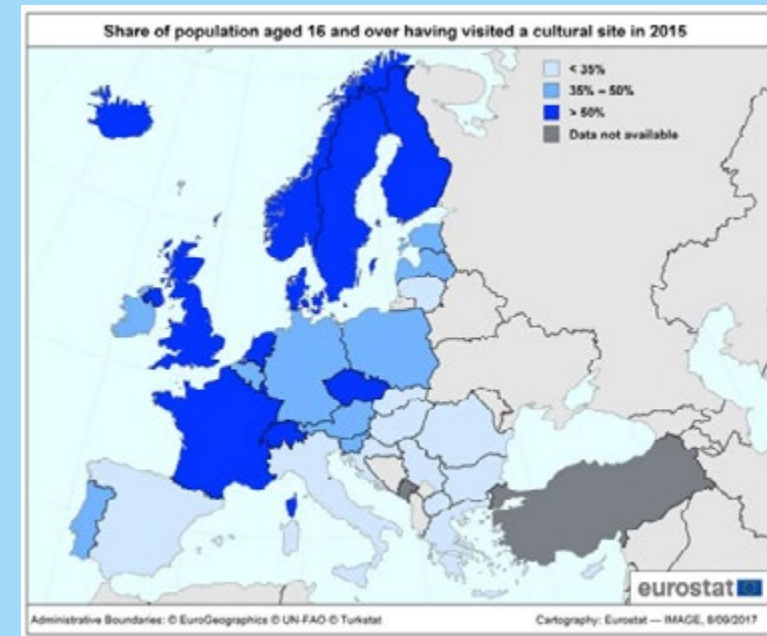
The Netherlands is a small country, compared in size with the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna (33.800 sq. km vs. 22.453 sq. km), but with a population which is more than four times as large, just over 17 million in the Netherlands as against 4.5 million in Emilia Romagna. The 503 inhabitants per square kilometer make it the most densely populated country in the European Union.

With regard to culture, The Netherlands score highly on the cultural index of the Eurobarometer, which measures how EU citizens behave in the area of culture. In The Netherlands, 58% of citizens actively participate in culture, the fourth highest rate according to the European rankings<sup>1</sup> and cultural participation is encouraged and supported by public policies and funds.

The arts and culture were introduced into the governmental portfolio in 1918, with the formation of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science (OKW). In the 1970s, in consideration of the benefits society could accrue from culture and in particular from cultural participation, responsibility was transferred to the Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Culture and culture was considered as part of the welfare policy. Now culture is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (*Ministerie van Onderwijs Cultuur en Wetenschap*), which was established in 1994.

Cultural policy is based on the arm's length principle, which means that the National Government, although being the largest patron of art and culture, distances itself from the cultural organisations it funds and acts more as a moderator than as a prime actor of cultural activities.

Public governance and public expenditure for arts and culture in The Netherlands is organised as a three-tier system consisting of central, provincial and municipal government, each level acting with a high degree of autonomy. The majority of Dutch museums are funded by municipalities, which contribute with 60% of the overall public expenditure.



There are currently 496 registered museums in the country, 420 of which members of The Netherlands Museums Association.

The Ministry of Culture funds 26 museums (an additional 18 museums of national importance are funded by the State via different ministries – for example the Ministry of Defence – all of which have been incorporated into foundations. It also subsidises supporting institutions which serve the entire museum sector. Among these is the Cultural Heritage Agency (Rijksdienst Cultureel Erfgoed), founded in 1875. The agency advises on the preservation and management of movable cultural objects, carries out research in that field, runs training programmes and courses, and manages State collections not housed in museums.

The central government prepares regulations and laws at national level, including the new Heritage Act (Erfgoedwet) which entered into force in July 2016 and replaced six laws and regulations in the field of cultural heritage. The Act regulates matters for movable and immovable heritage, as well as for national public responsibility for



museums and collections. More specifically it provides rules concerning: conservation and registration of public collections; financial relations with State financed museums; de-accessioning of objects from public collections; protection of public monuments and archaeology; restitution of looted art; finance and governance; and cultural heritage inspection.

In addition to subsidies provided by the different levels of government, cultural institutions are also financially supported by a number of funds, both public and private.

Among these: the Mondriaan Fund, a public cultural funding organization supported by the State (with a total budget of EUR 24.39 million per year for the period 2017-2020), which funds outstanding artists, cultural heritage and art organisations and projects; the Prince Bernhard Cultural Foundation, the largest private cultural foundation in the Netherlands, which stimulates the conservation of nature and culture by supporting over 3 500 initiatives, individuals and projects every year; the VandenEnde Foundation which aims to stimulate entrepreneurship and increase the interest of young people in culture, also through scholarships; the Bank Giro Lottery, a national cultural lottery run by a private enterprise, which has to give half of its earnings to cultural or social organisations (EUR 66,9 million in 2016) and in the case of museums often contributes to the acquisition of art works or museum objects; the Rembrandt Association, a private fund that funds acquisitions of art by museums; the Thuring Foundation, the VBS Fund and many more.

The cultural sector can also rely on a high number of volunteers which, in the museum sector, increased by 59% between 2001 and 2011. In 2015, the total number of volunteers in museums was 36.000 with 16% of the country's museums totally depending on them for their functioning.

1 Source: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [www.cbs.nl](http://www.cbs.nl).

2 Eurobarometer 2013.

# The NL factor in practice





The following pages provide space for the gallery of the Dutch museums which participated in the Children in Museums Awards in the years 2012 to 2017. Seven years during which 22 candidatures were submitted from The Netherlands, which is a high percentage if considered against the overall participation figures.

Two of these museums won the Award, the Tropenmuseum Junior in 2012 and GeoFort in 2016; one which is not a museum, but an archive, the Drents Archief, received a special commendation in 2013. Two or three others, in my opinion, could and maybe should have been winners, but as we know competitions are tricky and the final outcomes depend on one's own quality, as much as on the quality of the competitors in a certain year.

Therefore, all Dutch candidates are introduced further with a short text which doesn't always do justice to their work, since activities, and especially educational activities with a high degree of engagement, are difficult to describe just with words. Nevertheless, all these museums account for what could be considered both as an outcome and as an additional component of the NL factor: good practice.

It may be useful to single out the commonalities of these good practices, as they show up in the majority, if not in all candidates:

- > An approach to learning inspired by **constructivist theories**<sup>1</sup>, where the active role of the learner is acknowledged and encouraged.
- > An **inquiry based, discovery learning and experiential** approach, with some institutions referring to themselves not as museums, but as 'experiences' and labelling as 'experiences' some of their exhibitions.
- > The acknowledgement that the best way to learn is **learning by doing** and that experiencing something personally has more enduring learning outcomes. The acquisition of knowledge and understanding takes place through practical activities in which they are protagonists confronted with concrete tasks.
- > **Interactivity** as key, be it through the handling of objects, digital means or with people, i.e. museum guides or facilitators. In many cases interactivity is the combination of computer based and physical interaction, however with **technology as a tool** and not an end in itself.
- > The **differentiation of learning objectives and visitors' experiences**, so as to reflect diversity and take into account people's differences, an approach which derives from theories of multiple intelligences and different learning styles – such as Kolb's learning theory – introduced and practised in museums in The Netherlands already at the beginning of 2000<sup>2</sup>.
- > A **connection to formal education**, mostly in line with the curricula at different levels – primary and secondary school – and complementary to them in disciplines such as history, art, technology and technical education, in the latter case with a commitment/in an attempt to raise young people's interest in areas where they could develop a profession in the future.



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- > The setting up of **multisensory, immersive and theatrical environments** where the WOW effect is guaranteed, however, not to the detriment of sound and well-researched contents.
- > A **participatory and collaborative approach** with the end users, children and young people, who are involved at the planning stage of programmes, activities and exhibitions through advisory boards and focus groups, but also in the **testing and prototyping** phases which precede implementation.

### A good practice case study: 'You and the Golden Age' at the Rijksmuseum

All these elements are also present in the innovative programme which the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam has developed for children of primary school age (6-12 yrs.) and which takes place in the brand new educational centre, the Teekenschool. This building was designed by the architect Pierre Cuypers at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a place for art education. Both artists and art teachers were educated here. The opening of the Rietveld Art Academy in the '60s took over all its activities. The Teekenschool reopened in 2013 as part of the Rijksmuseum and was transformed into a modern centre for art education, focusing on 'Learning to watch by doing'.

The programme 'You and the Golden age' takes place in one of the three Ateliers and focuses on three important historical events of the Dutch 17<sup>th</sup> century, the so called 'Golden Age': Rembrandt van Rijn and his painting of the Nightwatch; the survival in



© Rijksmuseum by Bibi Veth

1596 of a ship's crew on Nova Zembla; and the daring escape from prison of Hugo de Groot (Grotius). Around these events a team comprising museum educators, historians, curators and theatre professionals created three stories and three theatre plays.

The programme starts at school, where teachers receive an extensive package of educational material to prepare the museum visit and pupils, by playing a computer game called 'Ranking the class', evaluate each other's personality to choose which 17<sup>th</sup> century character to become. Children prepare their visit from the perspective of the historical character they will personify and this character determines to which group they will belong during the process.

Once at the museum, the class is divided into three groups, according to the three stories related to the Golden Age. Pupils are welcomed by three 'researchers' from the Society of Historical Secrets – in reality professional actors – who guide them through the galleries, showing the real objects and paintings relating to the characters they have chosen, thereby connecting the collection to the stories they have learned at school and to the characters they will soon play on stage.

The final and most exciting phase takes place in the theatre-studio where the three groups enter a specially designed 'historical experience' with special effects. One group of children take shelter in a wooden shack, similar to the one the ship's crew built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to survive on Nova Zembla: they feel the icy wind and drops of melting snow on their faces, and hear the noises made by a polar bear on the roof. The Rembrandt-group steps into the 'head' of Rembrandt van Rijn, and sees through his eyes. The Grotius students experience his spectacular escape from prison in a giant book crate that wobbles and sways.

After half an hour of practice with their designated actors, the pupils gather in the specially built 17<sup>th</sup> century theatre. The grand finale is a theatrical show, with music, lights and special effects, in which the students 'become' their character on stage and play their story for their classmates.

This programme combines all the good practice features mentioned in the previous paragraph:

- > It is a typical example of learning by doing and pupils' active engagement.
- > It combines gaming, research activities, film, drama, physical experience.
- > It was developed in close collaboration with school teachers from whom came the requests to develop a museum educational activity that could actually replace part of the Dutch primary schools' curriculum and to use theatre as a medium.
- > It was produced by a multidisciplinary team which included a theatre company, historians, museum educators, text writers and a theatre designer to transform a museum space into a theatre-studio.
- > It creates a theatrical, multisensory setting where pupils immerse themselves in events of the past and bring history to life.
- > It was tested extensively with nine pilot groups of school children and their teachers before being launched and it is constantly assessed and reviewed to be continuously improved.

#### Footnotes

- 1 G. Hein, *Learning in the museum*, London 1998.
- 2 E. Hoogstraat, A. Vels Heijn, *De leertheorie van Kolb in het museum: dromer, denker, beslisser, doener*, Museumvereniging, 2006.



# Children in Museums Award Candidates 2012-2017

The candidates are presented following the alphabetical order of the city in which they are located. Texts have been drawn largely from the museums' applications.





1

## ARCHEON

ALPHEN AAN DEN RIJN

Archeonlaan 1  
2408 ZB Alphen aan den Rijn  
www.archeon.nl



### The museum

Archeon is an archeological open air museum consisting of 43 buildings reconstructed from archaeological evidence or from historical research.

They represent three different phases of Dutch history: pre-history, the Roman period 14 BC- 406 AD and the Middle Ages up to 1500 AD.

New facts and figures from science and research are used to innovate, improve and enlarge the collection.

Over the past ten years Archeon built and rebuilt:

- > The Roman wall of Castellum Albaniana from Alphen aan den Rijn
- > An early medieval house and a dug-in hut from Rijsenburg and Valkenburg
- > A Bronze Age farmhouse based on recent excavations near Geldermalsen
- > The Roman Villa Rijswijk, a farmhouse from 190-280 AD
- > Various household items and clothing, reconstructions and interpretations of finds from the pre-historical period.

The museum wants to offer its visitors the experience of daily life in the past in the Netherlands, by focusing on some 30 historical activities, including hunting, farming, housekeeping, crafts and trading demonstrated by the Archeo-interpreters.

Archeo-interpreters also accompany visitors in the exploration of the area and join them in some of the activities, such as canoeing, making music with Stone Age instruments, medieval long bow shooting and making candles from beeswax.

### Spaces and programmes for children and young people

The museum addresses its activities primarily to families, putting an emphasis not only on education, but also on experience and dialogue.

Living history and experimental archaeology are of course the main tools to offer visitors an enjoyable as well as educational day out, where the past is experienced directly and participation is encouraged and valued.





## 2 CHILDREN'S MUSEUM OF THE JEWISH HISTORICAL MUSEUM

AMSTERDAM

Nieuwe Amstelstraat 1  
1011 PL Amsterdam  
www.jhmkindermuseum.nl



© JHM Children's Museum, Amsterdam

### The museum

The Jewish Cultural Quarter is located at the heart of Amsterdam's old Jewish neighbourhood and comprises the Jewish Historical Museum, the Portuguese Synagogue and the Hollandsche Schouwburg/National Holocaust Museum. Every year, nearly 400.000 people visit these locations.

The Jewish Historical Museum contains objects, books, a video and DVD collection, photos, music and historical documents. It provides a unique picture of past and present Dutch Jewish life in permanent and temporary exhibitions. The Children's Museum of the Jewish Historical Museum is housed in a former synagogue in one of the four buildings which make up the Jewish Historical Museum.

As the word synagogue (house of gathering) suggests, the Children's Museum is designed as a house where the Jewish Hollander family 'lives' and where children meet. Through real objects, stories, short films, games and activities visitors can play an active part. Important values that originate in the Jewish tradition but have an indisputable universal meaning – like the Golden Rule, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you' – are used as a stepping stone to other cultures. This is how the Children's Museum communicates in a very playful and accessible way: it uses Jewish values, recognisable by all other children to explore other cultures and ways of life.

The Hollander family is introduced to visitors in the living room, and a puppet called Max the Matzo provides additional information. A painting of the extended Jewish family shows how diverse Jewish people are, as diverse as any other group. All individuals behave differently; a reminder to see the individual. In the study, the Torah is displayed. The importance of studying together and asking questions is explained in order to find answers to the question: what are we here for, on planet earth? In the kitchen, questions are asked about kosher food, different diets and the ideas behind them. Part of the experience in the kitchen is to bake a kosher bread. 'If walls could speak' ... in the museum a speaking wall tells the story of what the Obbene Shul – the synagogue which hosts the Children's Museum - went through in the course of time. Objects, film images, poems and the Hollander family's own memories tell the story of Amsterdam's Jewish community. Visitors are invited to write down their own personal memories. In the music room sounds of a ram's horn wake you up to take responsibility. Recently, on the occasion of the Children's Museum's tenth anniversary, the music room was expanded and a small theatre installation for children under six years old and inspired by the famous Dutch illustrator Fiep Westendorp was created on the museum's top floor.





### Spaces and programmes for children and young people

Many people associate Judaism with the Second World War, or with the situation in the Middle East and Israel. Sometimes that is all they know about the Jewish culture. And because making judgements is only human, prejudices and pre-conceptions are easily made.

In order to counter that, the Museum developed a method – 'I ASK' – to find a respectful way of encouraging visitors, including youngsters, to open up to things that are unfamiliar to them and that may even conflict with their views.

Museum guides and educators are trained to develop skills that allow them to connect with children's and visitors' views in a positive and constructive way. They make contact and ask visitors relevant questions so their ideas and opinions are expressed, also possible pre-conceptions. By choosing the right objects and by telling related stories the guide can enlarge visitors' knowledge in an open way so that the visitor feels invited to add new insights. Only if museum guides and staff can create an atmosphere in which visitors feels welcome, will they open up too. In such an atmosphere dialogue can flourish and a museum can be a place of civilization. The Children's Museum addresses the audience with simple texts, audio, visuals and participatory activities, and by doing so it has set an example for the rest of the Jewish Historical Museum.

Museum visits are also connected to the school curriculum, in particular with regard to history or art lessons but also in the context of religion projects and social awareness activities. The visit can be prepared in advance both by the teacher with a downloadable guide and by the children via the website. Dutch children usually learn about Jews and Judaism at school in connection with the Second World War. School books often talk about Jews in the past tense. The Children's Museum shows that the Jewish culture is alive and a Jewish Children's Museum is a perfect place to put the information they learn in school in a broader and contemporary context. It gives children an inspiring experience in which they also learn more about themselves.



## 3 NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM AMSTERDAM

Kattenburgerplein 1  
1018 KK Amsterdam  
[www.hetscheepvaartmuseum.nl](http://www.hetscheepvaartmuseum.nl)



### The museum

The National Maritime Museum is housed in 's Lands Zeemagazijn (the Arsenal), an historic building dating from 1656 and designed by Daniel Stalpaert as a storehouse for the Admiralty of Amsterdam.

The Arsenal was built in the Golden Age, when Amsterdam was the largest port and market place in the world. Goods from all over the world could be bought there. Today, over 350 years later, the Arsenal remains an imposing and impressive building with a great deal of character, which makes it the perfect location for The National Maritime Museum, housed here since 1973.

In 2007 the museum closed its doors for a major renovation and reopened in 2011. The museum has a rich and colorful collection of maritime artefacts, especially navigational instruments – including astrolabes, depth gauges, speed indicators, compasses – ship decorations, atlases and maps. A unique map of the world (1648) by Joan Blaeu, measures more than 2 by 3 metres. The map can will be on display until 30 September 2018.

There is also a large collection of maritime paintings, yacht models and a huge collection of photo albums dating from the early years of photography and portraying the lives of sailors and travellers to exotic destinations.

Moored outside the museum is a replica of the 'Amsterdam', a large vessel of the Dutch East India Company which sailed between The Netherlands and the East Indies, but sank in a storm in the English Channel in the winter of 1749. The replica was built between 1985 and 1990.

### Spaces and programmes for children and young people

#### The tale of the whale

The exhibition for children from the age of six shows how our image of the largest creatures that ever lived has changed through the centuries. In the 16th century they were thought to be fearsome sea monsters, then hunted for oil and meat, until the environmentalist movement put a halt to the whale hunt.

#### See you in the Golden Age

In the 17th century the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands was one of the richest and most powerful countries in the world, primarily thanks to seafaring and trading. But it was not just trade that flourished in the Golden Age: Dutch artists and scientists of the time are still world-famous today. The Republic was also known for its tolerance, something that attracted many people from far away.

In the exhibition, aimed at visitors over 10 years old, visitors meet characters who lived at the time, and hear their extraordinary stories.



### Port 24/7

In this exhibition, intended for visitors from the age of eight, one discovers all the things that go on in the port of Amsterdam and also learns about how the port grew through the ages from its humble beginnings as a port on the river IJ to become Europe's fourth largest port.

### Life on board

This is an interactive exhibition for the entire family to learn about everyday life on board ships over the centuries – from the era of the Dutch East India Company to the present day. Children and adults play the life size interactive board game and discover what life was and is like on a ship. Carrying a ship's bucket that holds a tablet computer, visitors visit six 'islands' featuring model ships, work clothes, souvenirs, and navigation 'instruments'. It is a fun way of learning about the ranks and stations on board – the titles given to the crew members, how clean the ship is kept, the food and drink on board, scurvy, and punishments for misbehaviour.



# 4 TROPENMUSEUM JUNIOR

## AMSTERDAM

Linnaeusstraat 2  
1092 CK Amsterdam  
<https://www.tropenmuseum.nl/nl/themas/tropenmuseum-junior>



© Tropenmuseum Junior, Amsterdam by Ivar Pel

### The museum

Tropenmuseum Junior (TMJ) is part of the Tropenmuseum, an ethnographic museum founded in 1864 to show Dutch overseas possessions. In the course of time, the focus of the Tropenmuseum changed from just documenting the cultures of the colonial possessions of The Netherlands, to those of other continents: Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean.

The museum was owned and operated by the Royal Tropical Institute – a foundation sponsoring the study of tropical cultures around the world – until 2014, when it merged with the Afrika Museum and the Museum Volkenkunde and became the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (Dutch Museum of World Cultures). Founded in 1975, Tropenmuseum Junior is the first children's museum in The Netherlands and one of the first in Europe. Its main target groups are children 6-13 and families.

Over the years, TMJ has developed its own museological and pedagogical working method which is held in high regard internationally and is an example to the museum field worldwide.

### Spaces and programmes for children and young people

Being part of a museum that focuses on world cultures, the TMJ's aim is to contribute to knowledge, understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity, to make the unfamiliar familiar, so that children discover differences and similarities, reflect upon their own perspectives and grow to be tolerant and respectful individuals and world citizens.

Every three and a half years the Tropenmuseum Junior sets up an exhibition which is a truly interactive and immersive experience for children. The museum allows itself two years to research and design a new exhibition and to accumulate the necessary resources. Well in advance, museum staff travel to the country which will be portrayed in the exhibition to meet people, buy artefacts – which will then become hands-on exhibits in the displays and be used to recreate the environment and the atmosphere of the country – collect stories and start a process not only of collaboration, but also of co-creation of content with local people and experts.

Every exhibition has a theme and over the years different countries and cultures have been portrayed through a special focus: for Ghana (Mysteries of the Palace 2000-2003) it was the theme of 'speaking in symbols' of the Ashanti culture; for Iran it was colours (Paradise & Co 2003-2006); for China (China's Qi 2009-2012) it was Qi, the energy that flows through everything and everyone; for Brazil (Mix Max Brasil 2012-2015) the culture of mixing – but also recycling, and so on.



In the 450 m<sup>2</sup> which make up the TMJ space, the culture of a country comes alive through a condensed version of reality, with the recreation of buildings, streets, squares and interiors of different kinds, but most of all through the active participation of children and the involvement of mediators, who have roots in the culture on exhibit, which adds to the authenticity of the experience. This staff are personally involved with the exhibition subjects and they add valuable knowledge and a personal touch to the programme. They play different characters, tell stories, dance, play music, guide and inspire the children to participate actively. They are trained in the use of collections, in combining stories and activities, in entering into a dialogue with children. Children in turn, take an active part in the exhibition by performing a number of tasks: they interact with the mediators and with each other, dress up, dance, sing, learn how to cook, in other words, for one and a half hour immerse themselves into another culture and learn by doing.

Each programme has a theatrical opening introducing the storyline. Children start their journey by entering a train, a plane, a transition that turns a museum visit into an immersive, theatrical experience of a different country and culture. The theatrical component is considered key to achieve empathy and identify oneself into another culture.

Personal mediation is what the Tropenmuseum Junior means by interactivity: there is no technology that can replace people, although it is used in the exhibitions and often in a very sophisticated way.

Technology and design are crucial aspects to create an experiential, engaging space which fosters participation and active involvement. And design, no matter how big the challenge of putting an entire country's culture on display is always high quality, visually appealing and powerful, as proved by the International Design and Communication Awards 2016 for the best scenography of a temporary exhibition awarded to the current exhibition, 'ZieZo Marokko'.



© Tropenmuseum Junior by Raymond Rutten

With each exhibition, TMJ produces a book which combines the function of exhibition catalogue, preparatory material for school visits and children's literature. Each child who visits the exhibition, as well as the teacher, receives one copy of the book in advance, so that preparatory work can be done in the classroom, extending the museum visit by 10-15 hours.

A yearly average of 40.000 visitors participate actively in one of the exhibition programmes, two thirds of whom are children up to 13 years of age.

As a producer of interactive exhibitions and multi-disciplinary programmes in cultural education, TMJ is regarded internationally as a unique, highly artistic and innovative museum, where innovation is not only technological, but part of a process which encompasses economical and organizational aspects.





## The seven main features of the Tropenmuseum Junior's methodology

**Tropenmuseum Junior puts itself the question: how do we define culture and cultural identity in a world of diversity and migration, and how can we match a complex and abstract theme such as 'cultural identity' to a child's perception?**

This challenging question is the main focus in reaching the main goal: to offer children the experience that culture and identity are by no means static, transformation is all around us. To this end, TMJ developed seven starting points aimed at encouraging open-mindedness and achieving a meaningful museum experience for children:

1. **reality:** present the theme in a holistic way and in an imaginative context to offer consistency and depth. Present the theme as a natural part of daily life, and integrate it in real stories about real life and real people;
2. **immersion:** illustrate the theme with strong storylines, a theatrical setting and immersive set design. The theatrical elements should condense reality and enforce the theme, audiovisual means should engage the children yet not distract them so much that they become passive viewers/observers;
3. **dynamism:** stimulate children mentally and emotionally. Inspire them into making the theme come alive with solo, duo and group activities that stimulate an active learning process. Offer an interdisciplinary approach, mobilizing children to use their physical, social and intellectual skills and involving all their senses;
4. **topical matters:** link (in)tangible heritage and collection to the theme and relate hands-on collection to everyday life and contemporary culture. Connect past and present;
5. **personal stories:** avoid commonplace ideas about culture or identity, be specific and use meaningful and personal stories which illustrate the general theme ('pars pro toto'), pay special attention to personal interaction. A well-trained team of exhibition staff is the most interactive medium: they transmit the content in a lively way and they guide and encourage children to participate;
6. **surprise:** breaking patterns opens paths to new experiences and new interactions. Stimulate and involve children with unexpected events;
7. **share:** make sure people relate to the world outside the museum, as a curator and as a visitor. Allow children to show and share their experiences to other visitors and stimulate them to connect their experiences to the world outside the museum.

## 5 NEMO SCIENCE MUSEUM AMSTERDAM

Oosterdok 2  
1011 VX Amsterdam  
[www.nemosciencemuseum.nl](http://www.nemosciencemuseum.nl)



### The museum

NEMO originated in 1923 in the Museum of Labour, a personal collection of the industrial artist Herman Heijenbrock focused on technology and labour, which was renamed in 1954 as the Dutch Institute for Labor and Technology. In 1997 the Institute was relaunched as newMetropolis, in a new building designed by Renzo Piano, where it is currently housed. In 2002 the name was changed to NEMO Science Center. In 2007 NEMO received the status of registered museum, hence the name was changed again in 2016 to NEMO Science Museum to reflect the integration of heritage into the visitor experience.

NEMO is an interactive, informal and accessible learning environment in which the general public is brought into closer contact with science and technology. Its mission is in fact 'to give people of all ages personal experiences of how fascinating, exciting and useful science and technology truly are'.

In developing its exhibitions and programmes, NEMO works closely with the scientific world, through advisory councils, research and meetings between scientists and the general public. Every year it organises the Weekend of Science - an event visited by 150,000 people - during which museums, research institutes, laboratories, universities, companies and many other organizations open their doors to the public at large.

In addition to several hands-on exhibits on scientific phenomena, NEMO displays a number of historic objects and instruments. It also owns and curates 17,000 technology objects organised in four core collections: Lighting, Electrical Engineering, Energy Generation and Storage and Technology at Home.



© Nemo Science Museum by Digi Daan

© Nemo Science Museum by Hanne Nijhuis



© Nemo Science Museum by Digi Daan

Nine of NEMO's interactive exhibits are also displayed at Schiphol airport. NEMO is a very successful family museum, which attracts almost 620,000 visitors annually (665,000 in 2017), making it the fifth largest museum in The Netherlands in terms of visitor numbers.

By means of the website NEMO Kennislink, it reaches another 3.2 million visitors annually. Kennislink's editorial staff try to bridge the gap between scientific research and everyday life by shadowing researchers and writing clear and accessible articles on their work.

The museum has a staff of 78 permanent and 61 temporary employees (2016).

### Spaces and programmes for children and young people

Imparting knowledge and offering inspiring visitor experiences with an integrated focus on learning is at the heart of NEMO's activities. The Education Department – called NEMO Science Learning Centre – has extensive expertise in informal science learning and teachers training. It not only develops the educational activities addressed to school children and family groups visiting NEMO, but also designs professional development programmes for teachers in collaboration with schools, universities and teacher training institutes.





NEMO is also a place where research on science learning is carried out. Since 2014 this type of research has been given a central and permanent position with the launch of NEMO Research & Development, a joint initiative between NEMO Science Museum and the University of Amsterdam. NEMO R&D is not only a research lab located at the very heart of the exhibitions, but a facility both for NEMO staff and university researchers, aimed at integrating research into the professional practice of the science museum.

Visitors themselves make a significant contribution to research by participating in NEMO R&D.

For example, they get to test new exhibition concepts, thereby contributing to improve the museum's educational offer. In return they get to experience the world of science in new ways, gaining an insight into the process of scientific research and the opportunity to meet scientists and ask questions. In addition, the changing research questions encourage visitors to reflect on their own knowledge, skills and the learning process.

The collaboration with the University of Amsterdam has supplied NEMO with new knowledge from psychological research (knowledge acquisition, proportional reasoning, misconceptions, exploratory behaviour and parental guidance) and insights into how behavioural researchers operate (concepts and tools to measure and enhance the effectiveness of prototypes).

**NEMO R&D therefore fosters a research culture within the organization that translates into:**

- > a more investigative attitude to visitor experiences among programme makers and educators
- > a new way of working that incorporates prototyping as an additional stage in the design of exhibitions and programmes
- > a research lab adjacent to the exhibitions equipped with cameras, microphones, computers and other facilities that enable research
- > simple measuring instruments that can be used during prototyping
- > a taxonomy of visitor experiences tool which can be used when developing programmes and prototypes, inspiring a greater differentiation of learning objectives and visitors' experiences

Indeed, one of the principles of the empirical research conducted in NEMO R&D is the mapping and appreciation of individual differences between visitors, with the aim of appealing to as diverse an audience as possible.

The taxonomy was used to set up 'Fenomena how science works', an exhibition on display on the first floor since 2015, which uses a variety of learning experiences that appeal to a wide range of visitors.

Throughout the period 2015 - 2019 this approach will be implemented also in other display areas.

## NEMO R&D:

- encourages a research culture within the organization
- generates new insights about informal learning
- contributes to the professionalization of staff
- offers starting points for a more rewarding visitor experience
- actively involves visitors in the development of new programmes
- offers visitors alternative experiences
- facilitates science learning research
- generates new research questions for science that arise from practical experience
- shows that NEMO is much more than a place to play and have fun
- communicates to the public, fellow institutions and stakeholders that NEMO not only prompts visitors to think about science and technology, but that NEMO itself is constantly moving on, a learning organization where innovation matters.



## 6 DUTCH RESISTANCE MUSEUM JUNIOR AMSTERDAM

Plantage Kerklaan 61  
1018 CX Amsterdam  
[www.dutchresistancemuseum.org](http://www.dutchresistancemuseum.org)  
[www.verzetsmuseum.org](http://www.verzetsmuseum.org)



### The museum

The Dutch Resistance Museum focuses on the memory of daily life during the Second World War and the resistance against the German occupation of The Netherlands, as well as the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies. It explains how people responded to the occupation by highlighting the dilemmas and choices they had to confront during a time of oppression, persecution and shortage. In doing so the Museum teaches the importance of freedom, tolerance and democracy. Within the Dutch Resistance Museum, the Dutch Resistance Museum Junior is a separate space designed especially for children, and illustrates the experiences of Dutch children during the Nazi occupation.

The Junior Museum shares the Dutch Resistance Museum's vision by showing different perspectives, the complexities, moral dilemmas and impact of the Second World War.

It opened in 2013, leading to an increase in visitors to the Dutch Resistance Museum of 40%.

### Spaces and programmes for children and young people

Education is key both in the Dutch Resistance Museum and in the Dutch Resistance Museum Junior.

The Junior Museum starts with a 'time machine' in an old-fashioned elevator. It takes visitors back to the war years and to a different world: a public square with four houses, a shop and a school somewhere in the Netherlands in the 1940s. Each house is home to a character, whose story is real and illustrated by authentic documents and artefacts. The four characters are: Jewish Eva, Nelly from a Nazi family, Henk from a family that adapted to the circumstances, and Jan, whose parents are active in the resistance. They represent history from the perspective respectively of the victim, the perpetrator, the bystander and the resistance fighter. Each of these children welcomes visitors to their home, where stories are illustrated through animations, audio fragments, authentic documents and artefacts which are hidden in period cupboards and drawers, on a pulpit, etc. The museum includes games that address Nazi propaganda, secret messages from the Resistance movement, false identity papers and the difficult choice of whether to go into hiding.

A section designed as a crashed airplane shows the worldwide impact of the Second World War. In the cockpit visitors fly digitally across the world to discover sites and childhood stories from all over the world.







© Dutch Resistance Museum by M. Soeters

The Dutch Resistance Museum Junior ends with a moment of reflection and a space where visitors meet Eva, Jan, Nelly and Henk as the old people they are today. An interactive display explains why their experiences of war are still important, discusses discrimination, the value of democracy and human rights and invites children to leave a message, triggering reflection and the discussion of moral choices. The Dutch Resistance Museum Junior was designed in consultation with a children's advisory group, the 'Verzetsbende' and was awarded with two important Dutch prizes, one of which is the "Kidsproof Museum prize" in 2015.

The Museum receives many groups from Muslim schools in Amsterdam, has an outreach programme for immigrant civic integration and a programme for children with impaired hearing.

# 7 DRENTS ARCHIEF

ASSEN



Brink 4  
9401 HS Assen  
[www.drentsarchief.nl](http://www.drentsarchief.nl)



© Drents Archief by J. Bender

## Museum

The Drents Archief is the only non-museum organisation to have submitted an application for the Children in Museums Award in 2013. In spite of being an archive, it received a special commendation for the innovative and creative programme which it presented, *Operation Sigismund*, which can in fact be an inspiration both for museums and archives.

The Archive sees itself as playing a pioneering role in the archival world by developing innovative educational materials and applications to show that the archive can be not only a quality learning environment, but also a place which offers a physical and emotional experience and where personal development can take place now and in the future.

The Archive's mission is to bring cultural heritage closer to people, contribute to their identity, make them conscious of the environment and of their own traces in the past. With a staff of 23 employees aided by 60 volunteers, the Archive is visited yearly by 17,000 people, out of which 7,000 are students.

## Spaces and programmes for children and young people

Education is a key priority at the Drents Archief, which was the first archive in The Netherlands to publish an education policy in 2001. One of the objectives stated in the plan was to turn the Archive from a storage depot to a keeper and promoter of the cultural heritage in Drenthe.



Since then, the Archive has worked to develop a structured educational offer for different target groups and different education levels in collaboration with schools and other heritage organisations in the area. And it has made extensive use of innovative and interactive tools to broaden its offer and make it more attractive and enjoyable for younger visitors.

The Archive offers young people the possibility to see old movies in the Studio, to play iPhones games while learning the history of their environment and to turn into archivists to discover the possibility an archive offers to reconstruct the stories of the past.

This is what *Operation Sigismund* is about: a combination of computer-based and physical interactions connecting pupils to their local heritage to reconstruct 18th century life, including the actions of Sigismund, van Heiden Reinestein (1740-1806) chamberlain and confidant of William V, stadtholder of The Netherlands, whose archive consisting of thousands of personal and political records, government documents and correspondence is held by the Drents Archief.

*Operation Sigismund* is set up in the Archive's basement, transformed into a theatrical setting where a class of maximum 24 pupils aged 10-12 goes on a 1.5 hour journey to reconstruct 18<sup>th</sup> century life, including the efforts of Sigismund to locate the lost seal of William V.

In one of the five specially designed basement rooms, the children find a fragment of Sigismund's diary, which suggests that he is aware of the whereabouts of William V's lost seal. The fragment of the diary is displayed in the centre of the room, along with a selection of (facsimile) records from Sigismund's personal archive presented in leather saddle bags and travel boxes, as though they had not been touched for ages. This is where the adventure starts. In the adjacent rooms, equipped with eight workstations, pupils log into the Digital Archivist system to get clues for solving the mystery and to collect materials to advance in their quest. The Scanner room is where pupils can access tools to carry out their archival tasks and the Archival room is where they need to place and catalogue records, where they can check and adjust the room's temperature and humidity, and where they are told the stories of Sigismund. The final clue for solving the mystery is hidden in an encoded message in one of the archival records.

In short, pupils play a 'serious' game which has the same rules of the archivist's profession and as such makes them work as true archivists on conservation activities such as the examination, documentation and preventive care of historic records in order to reconstruct Sigismund's story and to locate the abandoned royal seal. Instead of explaining how an archive functions, Drents Archief opted for offering children an opportunity to learn it directly through an experience which combines learning with narrative and game elements.



# 8 SCIENCE CENTRE DELFT

## DELFT

Mijnbouwstraat 120  
2628 RX Delft  
[www.tudelft.nl/sciencecentre](http://www.tudelft.nl/sciencecentre)



© Science Center Delft

### The museum

The Science Center Delft is part of the Technical University of Delft. It is designed to give to the general public an insight into what researchers and students at the Technical University do on a daily basis and on which subjects their research focuses.

The Science Centre Delft is unique in that its collection consists purely of open experiments and prototypes which result out of research projects carried out at the Technical University, including replicas of tools used by companies in their laboratory experiments, research equipment and graduation projects which are regularly changed to show the focus of current research.

All exhibits illustrate real, living questions and are built with the help of students and scientists.

The museum makes minimal use of information signs, but encourages visitors to investigate themselves, ask critical questions and show perseverance, in other words to develop a scientific mindset and acquire competences needed to do good research.

The Science Centre Delft is marketed as 'the most unfinished museum of the Netherlands', precisely because science itself is never finished.

### Spaces and programmes for children and young people

The museum involves visitors actively and let them take part in the research in the open workshops, where researchers share information on their discoveries to bring science to life for children and adults of all ages.

The education programmes and workshops for schools and the general public are all based on research and education conducted by the university. 'Design and build' is one of the main principles of the educational courses of the university and this applies also for the workshops of the Science Centre Delft. The public works in the Science Centre Delft – as much as possible – with the same instruments, materials and under the same work conditions as students, researchers and industry professionals.

The most exciting and inviting part of science and technology research is when the questions, working methods and conditions are real. In the Science Centre Delft the public is invited to think with the scientists in a creative, exciting and very actual atmosphere.







© Science Center Delft

The age-group under 18 and especially under 16 is an important target group for Science Centre Delft: 29% of the total visitors come in school groups and more than 50% of the incidental, unorganized visitors are under 18 years old.

But also young children from the age of six are challenged to get started as researchers themselves. Every Sunday there is a workshop where young children can experience science under the supervision of TU Delft. They can make an electronic circuit that enters the heart of a robot, or create their own glider and discover why it can fly. The workshops are suitable for children from six to nine years.

# 9 GEOFORT

HERWIJNEN

Nieuwe Steeg 74  
4171 KG Herwijnen  
[www.geofort.nl](http://www.geofort.nl) | [www.geofort.nl/en](http://www.geofort.nl/en)



© Geofort



### The museum

GeoFort is located in Fort bij de Nieuwe Steeg, a monumental fortress, part of the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie (New Dutch Waterline), a former military line of defence which operated between 1815 and 1940 to protect the country by flooding the land in case of enemy invasions. The New Waterline modernised and widened the existing Old Waterline already established in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The weak points along this protective ring of approximately 85 km were strengthened with forts – like the one which hosts GeoFort – owned by Staatsbosbeheer, the Dutch Forestry Commission. A few years ago, these structures were made available to private enterprises to be used for different purposes. Some of them were turned into museums like GeoFort.

GeoFort refers to itself not as much as a museum, but rather as an ‘experience’, which takes place partly indoors and partly outdoors, with a wide range of social, digital and observational activities.

The target group are families and children eight years old and older. Visitors follow an independent route through the different exhibition halls in the historical fortress and in the former barracks, where topics are presented using multimedia and interactive installations. Outdoors, one can play various orientation and navigation games and participate in different quests. It is also possible to play Minecraft or to participate in the GeoCraft project, to create a virtual version of The Netherlands, but on a real base made by using the coordinates of the Kadaster (Land Registry) and of the Rijkswaterstaat (Ministerial Infrastructure Authority).

GeoFort has a staff of 20 permanent and 5 temporary employees aided by 30 volunteers and was visited by approximately 100,000 people in 2017.

### Spaces and programmes for children and young people

Learning by doing and interactivity are at the heart of GeoFort, which makes the rather dry topics of navigation and cartography very hands on, social and fun.

GeoFort illustrates the world of maps, navigation, geographic simulations and other innovations in the field of geo-ICT, such as 3D simulations of floods, the impact of big data on our daily lives, with the objective to get visitors acquainted with the power and social relevance of geo-information and innovative geo-techniques.

In the different exhibitions, children must find answers and consult maps, discover the effects of an earthquake with their own constructions and find out where in the world earthquakes are more likely to happen; they learn how remote sensing works through satellite images, follow a geo-design workshop using digital open data and play a serious game trying to come up with a rescue plan for citizens in a water crisis scenario.

In short, they learn about the latest geo-innovations that contribute to important social spatial issues, such as water management, transition to renewable energy and sustainable landscaping and experience the power of spatial thinking. In fact, through the various activities proposed, GeoFort hopes to inspire young people to become ‘geospatial thinkers’.

Exhibits, serious games and educational activities are realised with the support of many businesses and companies, in particular from the geo-sector, as well as with educational partners.



# 10 SOUND AND VISION EXPERIENCE

HILVERSUM

Media Parkboulevard 1  
1217 WE Hilversum  
www.beeldengeluid.nl



## The museum

Beeld en Geluid – The Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision – is the audiovisual archive of the Netherlands, which collects, preserves and makes available to a wide public – media professionals, education and science experts and the general public – the audiovisual heritage of the country. It maintains and provides access to more than 70 per cent of the Dutch audiovisual heritage.

The museum's mission is to actively contribute to an open and free society by offering multiple perspectives on media, culture and technology and establishing a dialogue around them.

In particular, it focuses on presenting the impact and meaning of media culture, including its power to inspire and connect, but also to manipulate. The Sound and Vision Experience combines the newest technologies and the latest media developments in one public attraction, aiming to bring as many people as possible in contact with the Dutch audiovisual heritage, while at the same time taking them behind the scenes of the Dutch media world, in an attractive, innovative, interactive way.

When the museum opened in 2006 it was a pioneer, the first one to call itself an 'Experience'. Now it is in the middle of a process of renovation, which will be concluded in 2020.

The museum intends to be playful, educational but fun. Its target audience are families with children 8-14, but it also attracts older people who like to view old TV programmes. It is visited by more than 250,000 visitors a year, of which 17,000-20.000 are children.

## Spaces and programmes for children and young people

Learning about and through audiovisual media is an important focus for the Sound and Vision Experience. The education and the exhibition teams were merged into a 'Creation, Production and Promotion' unit in 2015 to develop educational as well as entertaining exhibits and activities for the public.

The learning experience provided by the museum is both personal and cooperative. On entering, visitors receive a ring with an RFID chip, which enables them to activate interactive exhibits, save the results for watching at home and personalize the content. At the same time, the museum encourages interactions and conversations between the members of the groups visiting, usually families.





The museum's main objective is to raise awareness on how media work and to promote 'media wisdom', that is the capacity of actively, but at the same time consciously and critically, take part in the complex and always changing world of media.

In recent years it widened its archival focus from media to multimedia, venturing from the core collection of radio and TV out to games and Internet culture. This is how the 'Let's YouTube' exhibition came about in 2017. The exhibition was innovative not only because of its subject, but also because of its dynamic nature, where content was changed monthly and the intensive public programming which accompanied it, aimed at capturing and interacting with the many social influencers and their young fanbase. An upcoming exhibition – targeted to young people 12-15 – will be on news and journalism to make visitors more aware of the impact news have on our lives, explain the mechanisms whereby they are perceived as reality, make young people aware of their hidden messages and of fake news.



# 11 CONTINIUM DISCOVERY CENTRE

KERKRADE

Museumplein 2  
6461 MA Kerkrade  
[www.continium.nl](http://www.continium.nl)





### The museum

Continium was established in 1989 as an industrial museum (Industrion) telling the story of the mining area of Kerkrade and of its industrial past, characterised by the production of ceramics and glass. In 2009 it was completely re-displayed and changed its name to Continium, meaning from the past to the present to the future, but also from science to industry and society.

Over the years Continium developed from a traditional museum into a dynamic and interactive centre for science, technology and society. The museum aims to be a Discovery Centre, where children, youngsters and especially family groups are stimulated and challenged to become responsible individuals aware of their own behaviour and of its consequences, in particular with regard to the environment and the wider world. Many of the interactive activities indeed stimulate children to make informed choices and to be aware of the consequences of those choices.

In 2015 Continium became part of the Museumplein Limburg organisation, which includes the Columbus earth theatre and the Cube design museum. As an organisation, Museumplein Limburg wants to make a contribution to social self-confidence, economic self-sufficiency and sustainability.

The museum has a staff of 50 permanent employees, 16 temporary staff and about 25 volunteers.

### Spaces and programmes for children and young people

Continium combines the traditional methods of a museum that aims at preserving industrial heritage and its historical collection, with the operational methods of a science centre. Science and technology are not only framed in a historical perspective, but also in the context of the visitors' daily and future lives. Continium aims to kindle enthusiasm for science and technology in children and young people and to offer them knowledge and understanding by presenting a coherent view of heritage, industry and science. It also stimulates children to discover the roles of science and technology in their everyday lives and thus contributes to enlarging their insight into the surrounding world for a better understanding of it.

This operational strategy is not only applied to exhibitions and workshops, but also to outreach projects that take place outside the Centre.

The Spark tech lab, for example, is a technology lab focused on production processes, set up in an old and authentic factory building about 70 km north of Kerkrade. The lab's target group is young people 4 to 15 years old who attend it for extra-curricular activities. There they find all the machines, tools and equipment needed to produce a technical product from scratch using raw materials. With the support of expert coaches, they take care of the entire process from conception and design to production and testing.

The museum is very committed to work with schools, which are always involved from the very beginning in the creation of programmes, but also with universities, which use the museum for talent development. Helping young people to discover their talents in science and technology for a possible future career is also one of the aims of Continium.





# 12 NATURALIS BIODIVERSITY CENTRE

LEIDEN

Darwinweg 2  
2333 CR Leiden  
www.naturalis.nl



© Naturalis, "T. rex in Town" exhibition

## The museum

Naturalis is the national institute for natural history in The Netherlands. It was founded in 1820 and has 200 years' experience in researching and collecting biology and geology. With a collection of 42 million plants, animals, fossils and minerals and a staff of nearly 800 people, Naturalis is one of the top five biodiversity institutes in the world. Together with universities and other partners it aims at solving groundbreaking scientific questions, but at the same time wants to get the general public interested in scientific issues and acquainted with the richness of nature.

Indeed, its mission reads: 'Naturalis Biodiversity Center wants to describe, understand and explain for the wellbeing of people and the survival of earthly nature'. The museum welcomes 400,000 visitors, five million visits to the website, and dozens of scientific publications each year.

Naturalis is known as an accessible museum (for a large target group, in particular schools and families). In 2016 a new exhibition about dinosaurs (T. rex in Town) was opened. A year later, in 2017, this exhibition was replaced by the current one 'Poison!' with real life animals. Meanwhile, Naturalis is in the process of renewing itself. In the summer of 2019 the new, bigger museum, showing all aspects of biodiversity on earth, is scheduled to open its doors.

## Spaces and programmes for children and young people

Besides being a science institute, Naturalis is known as an accessible museum for a large target group, in particular schools and families. The latter are considered as a key audience and programmes are designed so as to interest and engage all components of a family group: children can move freely, touch and do in order to understand, (grand-) parents can explain, read out, show the way and help the children to be confident.

Adults in the group are not considered merely as practical facilitators, but an effort is made to raise their own curiosity and wonderment. During the visit, all family members can talk, tell stories, give meaning, share knowledge and create shared memories.

Family activities are not limited to educational workshop areas, but take place in the whole museum and preferably with real objects. It is also possible to participate in actual scientific research and meet with scientists.

Scientists are curious and use many skills to find answers: they raise questions, observe, interpret, think critically, explain and present. The museum aims to create the conditions for its public to develop these same skills by stimulating curiosity, creativity and inquisitiveness.





In fact, its educational approach is inquiry based and rests on five principles, the Big Five of Education:

- > **Wonderment**, used as a pre-condition for learning.
- > **Real**, real objects, real situations in nature, real examples from research and real experiences are essential to bring abstract concepts – like evolution – to life.
- > **Relevant**. Topics must be relevant to stimulate motivation and engagement.
- > **Inquisitiveness**. Whenever possible, the public is engaged in actual scientific research to gain a better understanding of nature.
- > **Scientific literacy**, to support a real understanding of how scientific knowledge comes about and of its value.

All educational activities focus on asking questions, instead of just giving information and telling stories. 'Do and discover', for example, is a family self-guided activity where families are invited to select one out of about a hundred objects and take it into the museum for a journey of discovery guided by questions. The objective is not to obtain correct answers, but to acquire skills and a scientific attitude and mindset.

When it comes to learning about nature in The Netherlands, Naturalis wants to be a leading institution. Therefore, it develops training and coaching for its own staff and for teachers, it conducts research on all its products – some of which are meant for use in different learning environments, like schools, nature, home, the Internet - including prototyping and evaluation, to improve its educational practice.

When designing exhibitions, content developers and educational staff collaborate closely from the beginning of the project, to create in an ideal mix of fun and education.

## 13 ZEEUWS MUSEUM

MIDDELBURG

Abdij (Plein)  
4331 BK Middelburg  
[www.zeeuwsmuseum.nl](http://www.zeeuwsmuseum.nl)





### The museum

The Zeeuws Museum is a cultural history museum and the largest in Zeeland, *founded* by a learned society at *the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century*.

After a number of relocations, in 1972 it moved to its current premises, a former abbey dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century in the centre of Middelburg, which was also home to the provincial government.

The collection comprises paintings, decorative art, natural history, tapestries, archaeological objects, which are presented in a contemporary way with photos, videos and documentaries showing in the different rooms and produced by the museum in close collaboration with leading national and international artists, designers, film makers, photographers, scientists, researchers and other experts.

The museum reaches a diverse audience of citizens and (foreign) visitors to Zeeland. Special attention is given to two target groups: children and senior visitors.

The museum has a staff of 15 permanent and 11 temporary employees, aided by 26 volunteers.

### Spaces and programmes for children and young people

The Zeeuws Museum works closely with schools, in particular primary and secondary schools.

In consideration of the fact that the region of Zeeland consists of several islands and poses transportation problems for school groups, the museum created *ZeeuwsMuseum@School*, an outreach project to help children to discover and connect with their (local) heritage and history. Museum educators and schoolteachers developed *ZeeuwsMuseum@School* over an 18-month period while the museum was

closed for refurbishment. The project addresses the school curriculum and is aimed at delivering learning outcomes in an interactive and interdisciplinary way by introducing museum objects in schools.

A handling collection of 16 objects related to, but different from the museum collection was created and is loaned out to the schools, each object along with one or more boxes of material connected to it, including booklets, questions and other objects. The school can keep the object for as long as 3-4 weeks and use it to teach different subjects. During the school year, however, this activity is complemented with at least one visit to the museum, prepared in the classroom

Under guidance of a museum educator, the children share their knowledge, memories and associations and create new knowledge together. In this project the children in a primary school receive each year a different object in their classroom. The different objects are introduced, by using didactic approaches appropriate for the level of the children.

This same methodology is also being introduced into homes for the elderly, for whom travelling and transportation, as well as loneliness, is an even bigger problem. The introduction of these objects to older people's homes enables them to share their memories and stories and connect to each other.

For older students (14-16 yearsold), the museum makes available a Handworkshop, where they learn different crafts such as leather pleating, smocking, embroidering or woodwork under the guidance of craftsmen and handworkers. Woodwork workshops in particular are addressed to VMBO students of the department of Construction, Living & Interior of a local Lyceum.



# 14 HET VALKHOF

NIJMEGEN

Kelfkensbos 59  
6511 TB Nijmegen  
www.museumhetvalkhof.nl



© Het Valkhof by Bart Nijs Fotografie

## The museum

Museum Het Valkhof was founded in 1999. It is located at the edge of the historic Valkhof Park, which was once the site of a Roman encampment and, many centuries later, the residence of Charlemagne. Today, one finds a modern structure for art and archaeology, designed by the renowned architect Ben van Berkel, housing a major collection of Roman antiquities, Old Masters, and modern art. Visitors can choose their own route, meandering past exceptional archaeological finds, 17th century paintings, silverware, and modern paintings. The long glass gallery with its undulating ceiling offers a panoramic view of the grand river landscape beyond.

The varied collection of archaeological objects tells us about Nijmegen and the province of Gelderland throughout prehistory, Roman history and the Middle Ages. A central theme here is the presence of a Roman legion in Nijmegen and along the border of the Roman Empire in The Netherlands. In addition, several themes such as religion, death and burial customs, trade, and crafts shed some light on everyday life in Noviomagus at a time when it was the first and principal Roman town in The Netherlands.

The museum's extensive collection of Old Masters comprises paintings, prints, drawings, sculpture, and silverware, 'Discover Nijmegen' as a medieval commercial centre, its guilds, and the story of the Peace of Nijmegen (1678-1679).

The museum attracts around 90,000 - 100,000 visitors a year and has a staff of 38 employees.

## Spaces and programmes for children and young people

Working with original and historic objects is the unique selling point of the educational projects of Museum Het Valkhof. The museum offers a varied programme of educational projects for primary and secondary school children based on the permanent collections and temporary exhibitions. Children are allowed to work with original museum pieces – often 2,000 years old! – and hold them in their hands, which further stimulates their engagement.

Other activities to actively involve younger visitors are 'Workshops with fragments', 'Child Curator' and 'Valkhof Junior'. Each year, the museum organises an exhibition for families.

The Museum participated in the Children in Museums Award competition in 2012 with a science-based interactive and hands-on touring exhibition, called "High Tech Romans", produced in collaboration with Museon in The Hague, LVR-Landesmuseum in Bonn (Germany) and the science centre Technopolis in Mechelen (Belgium).







© Het Valkhof by Thijn van de Ven

Thanks to the collaboration of these four institutions, the exhibition combined the use of games, multimedia and hands on exhibits with beautiful original archaeological artifacts, displayed in a high tech and modern setting inspired by the ancient Roman world.

The objective of the exhibition was to inspire families and (school)children with the technology of the ancient Romans, in consideration of the fact that many of the solutions to everyday problems they developed are still in use today and have been a continuous source of inspiration.

The exhibition, produced in four languages (English, German, French and Dutch) provided visitors with 32 interactives to learn about ancient Roman facilities, machines and appliances and was built around these main themes: architecture, luxury, travelling, communication, water, machines, military, computing, arts and crafts.

# 15 MARITIME MUSEUM

ROTTERDAM

Leuvehaven 1  
3011 EA Rotterdam  
[www.maritiemmuseum.nl](http://www.maritiemmuseum.nl)



© Maritime Museum Rotterdam by Marco de Swart

### The museum

The Maritime Museum is located in the oldest and largest museum harbour in The Netherlands, where the port of Rotterdam once began. It was founded in 1873 by Prince Hendrik the Sailor and houses a collection of over 850,000 objects from Dutch maritime history from the end of the 15th century to the present day, a time span which other maritime museums in the country are unable to cover. Because of the size and quality of its collection, it is considered one of the best maritime museums in the world.

Next to the museum building and part of the museum itself, the harbour contains an exceptional collection of historic vessels and cranes which are maintained in working condition.

The maritime sector is deeply rooted in the Dutch culture and economy. The museum strives to show the innovative and entrepreneurial strength of this sector by using its knowledge and collections to translate stories from maritime practice into attractive and modern presentations for a largely non-maritime audience. Every year 200,000 visitors go on a journey through the maritime past and present in modern exhibitions for children and adults. The museum believes it can inspire young children and have a serious impact on their future in close cooperation with the maritime industry and schools.

In 2014 the Maritime Museum Rotterdam and Erasmus University Rotterdam founded the Centre for Modern Maritime History (RCMMH) to coordinate and stimulate research on the history of Dutch shipping since 1800. Research focuses on Dutch shipbuilding, the port of Rotterdam and its hinterland and the Dutch offshore industry. Courses on these topics are offered to students of Erasmus University who can use the collection of the Maritime Museum as a source for their research. Within the Centre, museum curators and academic researchers share their expertise and competencies. Results are accessible through the common research channels and contribute to the programme of the Maritime Museum as well.

### Spaces and programmes for children and young people

The museum aims to be a centre of knowledge about maritime progress, both in terms of history and contemporary developments. It does so by gathering knowledge through studies and research, and passing that knowledge on to a variety of target groups, engaging visitors of all ages with an experience that is both educational and fun. The museum develops educational programmes from junior school to academic level, working for and with the educational sector. It also provides programmes for special target groups and families. Every year it is visited by 15,000 pupils and students.



© Maritime Museum Rotterdam by Mike Bink

### Professor splash

When 'Professor Splash' was first launched at the beginning of the 1990s, playing in a museum was still a novelty. Since then the concept evolved and the exhibition was completely renewed for the fourth time in 2012 to provide a space for playing, as well as an exciting museum experience for children aged 4 to 12.

Children enter the world of the cartoon character Professor Splash and meet his multicultural friends. While staying at their home port at the Rotterdam Museum before taking off on new adventures, many things need to be done and children can help them in their tasks: sorting fish, loading and unloading ships, deciding on the next destination, etc. As they play, children learn about different kind of ships, what it is like to work in a port and how their food and toys come by ship to their home.

The renewed exhibition also showcases rare items from all over the world, for many children their first acquaintance with museum objects and the idea of collecting. Over the years, Professor Splash has been visited by over 1.5 million children.





### *The Offshore Experience*

The Offshore Experience opened at the Maritime Museum in December 2016 as the first exhibition about energy production at sea in The Netherlands, and one of the few in the world. It is meant for children aged eight and upwards, but is actually very appropriate for families and enjoyable by all. There is a growing demand of energy and the transition from fossil fuels to renewable sources poses new challenges. The museum decided to play its part in this scenario by organising an exhibition which could add a new area – that of technology education – to its educational offer for primary, secondary and vocational education. By engaging young people to explore real skills needed for working offshore it also aims to open up an area of interest for their future profession.

The adventure of the Offshore Experience is a truly immersive, multi-sensory and theatrical experience, which starts in a waiting room where visitors learn about energy and the energy footprint they themselves leave behind. With the QR-code on their entrance tickets, visitors subscribe to become offshore trainees, are informed on the dangers on board by a safety instructor, then with helmet and safety jackets, are given access 'by helicopter' to the platform.

Here a 360° film projection of the sea reproduces an offshore environment, with changing seascapes, windmills, ships coming and going, helicopters landing, etc. Models of the most advanced offshore ships demonstrate their capabilities and real offshore employees offer a glimpse into their lives at sea. Through nine interactive simulations – like parking a ship, landing a helicopter in stormy weather or putting a windmill in the right position – visitors can discover whether they are ready for a future in the offshore industry. A lift then takes them down to a deep sea level, to explore what is below an oil platform at a depth of three km.

The adventure ends in the future, where visitors vote for the best idea to produce sustainable energy at sea. Ideas come from companies and from schools through education and projects organized in collaboration with the museum. The educational programme attached to the Offshore Experience includes also engineering workshops and company visits, with the objective of contributing to a more technically skilled workforce in the future.

The exhibition occupies a space of 800 m<sup>2</sup> and will remain for seven years, although with continuous updates and changes. It was produced in close collaboration with over 50 industries which contributed with knowledge and objects to the exhibition and, together with 26 Funds financed two-thirds of the project.



# 16 MUSEUM ROTTERDAM '40-'45 NOW

ROTTERDAM

Coolhaven 375  
3015 GC Rotterdam  
www.museumrotterdam.nl



## The museum

Museum Rotterdam '40-'45 NOW has its origin in 1985, when a small private collection of Second World War objects was exhibited as the War and Resistance Museum of Rotterdam. Since then the museum has steadily gained a prominent social and educational role in the city. Growing co-operation with Museum Rotterdam, Rotterdam's city museum, culminated in a merger in 2015. In anticipation that same year the venue had reopened after a complete transformation under its new name: Museum Rotterdam '40-'45 NOW.

Museum Rotterdam '40-'45 NOW is a separate venue of Museum Rotterdam, sharing staff but with its own volunteers. The museum is set up with younger generations in mind. The people that lived through the war are becoming fewer in number every day. The museum aims to keep their stories alive for children and young people to discover, to unravel the history of the war, and to pass these memories on.

The collection consists primarily of objects documenting the Second World War in Rotterdam. Each object comes with its own story: from a sewing machine twisted by the raging fires of the Rotterdam Blitz to a wedding dress made out of parachute fabric, from a *hitlerjugend* knife, to a hidden radio used to listen to forbidden broadcasts. Instead of focusing on the larger, international context of warfare during the Second World War – a narrative which can be found in any history textbook – the museum has chosen to highlight personal experiences and the challenges of daily life in Rotterdam during the war.

The objects in the collection are organised along various thematic strands which guide visitors through the years. By exploring the personal stories connected to one or more of the objects, visitors share in the emotions of Rotterdam's citizens who experienced the Nazi invasion and destruction of the city centre, occupation, allied bombardments, and eventually liberation.

## Spaces and programmes for children and young people

The Experience is the basis of every visit to Museum Rotterdam '40-'45 NOW. This audio-visual spectacle puts visitors in the middle of war-torn Rotterdam in May 1940, with personal stories, vivid images and overwhelming sound. How does it feel when your life is shattered in one blow and your familiar surroundings lie in ruins? The Experience unfolds into several educational programmes, one of which is *Telling Stories* that uses the permanent exhibition.





### Telling Stories

The permanent exhibition and educational programme enable visitors to not only discover the story behind the objects, but to adopt the role of storytellers themselves. Rather than just providing information, the museum offers its collection for investigation. Visiting children become part of the storytelling process.

One grand curved glass showcase filled with thematically linked objects in a chronological order forms the centrepiece of the exhibition, while a graphic timeline on the wall opposite provides context. The main educational programme is designed around this showcase and is aimed at students and young people of 11-14 years.

Working in pairs, young visitors are assigned an object to research in order to produce their own mini documentary narrating its story. To learn more about their object, students use a special iPad application that unlocks textual and audio-visual information, photographs, audio and video fragments.

Next, the pair use an interactive table made of 16 large touchscreens as a workplace. Here they can do further research and edit and combine their historical imagery with the original material they produced with the iPad-app. At the end of this interactive and creative museum lesson, students can show their mini documentary and view those of their classmates. They all become part of the museum's permanent collection to be viewed by future visitors. Making these mini-documentaries has proven to stimulate creativity and interest in the past. The film clips demonstrate the youngsters' ability to pass on the small but touching narratives of the war years in Rotterdam. This way Museum Rotterdam '40-'45 NOW presents the Second World War from a personal perspective: a story from the past, told by Rotterdam's citizens from the present.



© Museum Rotterdam '40-'45 Now

## 17 VILLA ZEBRA ROTTERDAM

Stieltjesstraat 21  
3071 JV Rotterdam  
[www.villazebra.nl](http://www.villazebra.nl)



© Villa Zebra



### The museum

Villa Zebra is a children's museum of contemporary visual art for children aged 3 to 12, an art laboratory where art is displayed and children are stimulated to be curious and creative.

Besides exhibitions on site, Villa Zebra is also present in schools and with a Pop-up structure in neighbourhoods and festivals.

The museum has 12 employees that all work part-time and is aided by a group of some 50 volunteers and a group of interns fluctuating between two and ten.

### Spaces and programmes for children and young people

Villa Zebra's mission is to inspire and stimulate children and commit them to art in an active way. As an art-educational institution it develops and presents exhibitions, workshops and other activities that contribute to children's creativity and curiosity, which leads to discoveries and inventions.

Exhibitions are about ordinary subjects – Light and Day, Me, Myself and I or Mothers and Fathers – which are made special through art, especially interactive art with hands-on possibilities, which stimulates action and communication between visitors.

In the exhibitions, children and their parents make surprising discoveries based on challenging questions and assignments. Afterwards, children can work as artists themselves in the workshops.

Learning is seen as an interactive and social process, where children are enabled to see that there are different meanings, multiple interpretations and imaginations. In conversations and discussions, the museum staff practise the art of asking questions, collect several answers, raise new questions and so on.

In the planning, testing and prototyping of its exhibitions and activities, Villa Zebra is aided by an advisory panel of children 8-11 years old.

Villa Zebra wants to attract as many children as possible and transfer its expertise to teachers, parents, students, colleagues and institutions.





# 18 CHILDREN'S BOOK MUSEUM

## THE HAGUE

Koninklijke Bibliotheek  
Prins Willem-Alexanderhof 5  
2595 BE The Hague  
www.kinderboekenmuseum.nl



© Children's Book Museum

### The museum

The Children's Book Museum opened in 1994 as, at that time, one of the first museums in The Netherlands especially designed for children to help them discover and experience books.

The old Children's Book Museum provided an overview of children's and youth literature on the basis of 15 thematically furnished cabinets. This included not only books by famous writers, but also photographs, manuscripts, illustrations and objects by Dutch writers and illustrators. The museum also organised temporary exhibitions on children's literature.

The museum is part of the Literature Museum. Its archive preserves many important manuscripts and the originals of illustrated books.

In 2007, the Children's Book Museum temporarily closed for a large-scale renovation and reopened in 2010.

### Spaces and programmes for children and young people

Children can learn about youth literature in a playful way at the Children's Book Museum. All exhibitions and workshops at the museum stimulate the imagination and awaken the joy of reading.

The bright and interactive learning exhibition for very little children '*I am Frog*' brings to life the much-loved books by Dutch artist Max Velthuis. Stimulating interactive games enable children to experience the adventures of Frog and his friends. There's plenty to discover and do: treasure hunting with Bear, skating with Duck, pie baking with Pig, hammering with Rat and much more.

In the interactive exhibition '*Papiria*' children embark on an adventurous exploration through the world of books in order to defeat the greedy Ink-Gobbler, a threat against the literary land of plenty called indeed *Papiria*. Their mission is to create as many new stories as possible, because the more stories there are, the less Ink-Gobbler's is likely to triumph. During their journey, children meet authors, illustrators and story characters. Children are encouraged not only to experience the pleasure of reading, but also to explore their own creativity in writing stories, composing poems, making drawings, comics, etc. As a result, the collection of stories needed to defeat Ink-Gobbler grows.





© Children's Book Museum

At the end of their visit to the exhibition, children receive a special *Papiria* pass with a picture of their own story character and a personal login code. They can use this code to upload their character on the website that accompanies the exhibition: [www.papiria.nl](http://www.papiria.nl). On this website, children can participate in several online workshops and thus create (more) stories of all kinds. Children can collect their favourite contributions in a digital booklet, which they can then publish on their social media accounts to share with their friends. Like the museum itself, the website [papiria.nl](http://papiria.nl) offers children the opportunity to discover, experience, and create stories.

# 19 GEMEENTEMUSEUM DEN HAAG

## THE HAGUE

Stadhouderslaan 41  
2517 HV Den Haag  
[www.gemeentemuseum.nl/nl](http://www.gemeentemuseum.nl/nl)  
[www.wonderkamers.nl](http://www.wonderkamers.nl)



© Gemeentemuseum Den Haag - Wonderkamers



### The museum

Gemeentemuseum Den Haag in The Hague, built in 1935, is renowned as an Art Deco masterpiece by the celebrated Dutch architect H. P. Berlage. It is home not only to the world's largest collections of works by Piet Mondrian and De Stijl, but also to a rich collection of other 20th-century art and, in addition, of fashion, photography, decorative arts, design.

As a public modern and contemporary art museum, the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag is always looking for new ways to reach out to a wider range of major visitor groups and aims to be an open, creative and dynamic institution with a strong support base in society. This is achieved through careful stewardship and presentation of collection, a very active exhibitions policy – about 40 exhibitions are staged every year – innovative forms of public education and an acquisition policy directed at expanding the national art holdings of The Netherlands through the addition of outstanding and important works.

It has a staff of 120 permanent and 130 temporary employees, of which respectively 10 and 15 work in the Wonderkamers.

The museum is visited by over half a million visitors each year, among which 36,000 children and youngsters up to the age of 18.



© Gemeentemuseum Den Haag - Wonderkamers



© Gemeentemuseum Den Haag - Wonderkamers

### Spaces and programmes for children and young people

#### The Wonderkamers

The museum offers an extensive programme of children's activities, both in and out of school time. It issues a highly successful series of children's art books and accommodates a permanent exhibition space, called 'Wonderkamers' (2013), designed for those aged 9 to 18.

Wonderkamers is an interactive area of 1,400 m<sup>2</sup> which can be described as a life-size board game, with a large central space surrounded by 13 smaller rooms, each featuring a specific theme relating to fine art, fashion, architecture and decorative arts items belonging to the museum collections. The central area contains a Miniature Museum made of 200 galleries containing original miniature artworks. Thirty of these small galleries are empty and available for visitors to create their own exhibitions after playing the museum game.



The game begins with a film in which the museum director makes an urgent plea to visitors to help him complete an exhibition which is due to open in two hours and still has no exhibits in some of the galleries. Very soon in the video the director becomes a cartoon character and plays the fictional boss accompanying visitors around and telling them what to do. The underlying idea is that every museum visitor would like to be a curator for a day and create their own exhibition. This gives the museum game its natural content - the game as a metaphor for working in an art museum.

Visitors – very often a child and an adult, since the game is thought for families – are given a tablet and set off in pairs to the different rooms, where they have to perform certain tasks in order to collect points, which they can later swap for artworks to display in their own exhibition.

The 13 rooms which they visit led by the tablet – called the Wonderguide – contain authentic artworks and a number of interactive, both online and hands on games, by which visitors/players learn a lot about art, the museum and its collections with by designing, for example, their own Berlage building, dancing the Boogie-Woogie with a digitally animated Mondrian, trying to establish the price of an artwork or wearing an 18<sup>th</sup> century crinoline and doing the catwalk.

Towards the end of the game, players visit ‘The Depot’, an area which runs around the central exhibition space and displays thematic groups of items from the museum’s collections. Here they swap their points for virtual artworks, which they can then display exactly as they wish in their very own virtual gallery in the Miniature Museum. The visitor/exhibition maker is added in the virtual gallery in the form of an avatar and the exhibition is opened.

All this was the result of a pioneering technological work to create a complex and unique interplay of closely related and continually interacting elements like tablets, WiFi, film, lighting, wayfinding, augmented reality, exhibits and QR codes, and also to develop - specifically for the exhibition - a game server which manages the very complicated task of allocating the rooms and keeping track of all 35 tablets, however, always with the understanding that technology is a tool and not an end in itself.

The Wonderkamers is an educational project which puts children, young people, but also adults in touch with genuine artworks by using technologies, interactivity and computer games in a way which is quite innovative for an art museum. It is also a fun way to introduce them to the museum itself and to the collections displayed on the other floors of the building.

The Wonderkamers came about in its first version in 2005 following the director’s decision to produce something spectacular for teenagers. Listening to visitors’ feedback and suggestions, it was then transformed into the current version (2013) with families as the target group. This version took nearly three years to be completed and its launch was preceded by a two-month trial with a wide range of visitor groups. In 2018 it is expected to be changed again and for that reason Wonderkamers will be closed from 9 July until about 17 December 2018.

## 20 MUSEON

THE HAGUE

Stadhouderslaan 37  
2517 HV Den Haag  
[www.museon.nl](http://www.museon.nl)







© Museon

### The museum

Museon is the forerunner of all museum educational institutions in The Netherlands and itself a very special cultural organisation, unique of its kind and with a fascinating history.

It was founded in 1904 by a group of progressive educators, among which Jan Ligthart<sup>1</sup>, who had developed, and at the time was practising, a method called 'new education' based on the idea that children should be allowed to investigate for themselves and that in the classroom teachers should use things taken from real life, from nature and from a variety of other sources. In other words, as opposed to formalist education, 'education with life to generate life', an approach which inspired Maria Montessori and can be considered at the origin of the Montessori method itself. In 1904, also in consideration of the poor living conditions of many children in The Hague and of the unsatisfactory level of education they received in primary schools, Ligthart and others, among which Frist van Paaschen director of The Hague Journal<sup>2</sup>, founded 'The Education Foundation' (*De Vereniging ten bate van het Onderwijs*), followed a few years later by the opening of the 'Museum for Education', a school museum where teachers could take their class for a visit or to borrow objects.

In 1918 the museum opened in the basement the first didactic cinema, since, in the words of Frits van Paasschen, "a film is much more convincing than the lecture of a teacher".



© Museon

With gifts and loans and the fast-growing demand from education, the museum continued to expand and was forced to relocate a number of times. From the very beginning it embraced a number of disciplines: natural science, ethnology, history, geology, biology, etc. It also started to purchase specimens and artefacts and, after the Second World War, to organised field trips to collect objects in faraway countries.

In 1985 the museum was moved to its current premises – a new building next to The Hague Municipal Museum – designed by the Dutch architect Wim Quist to accommodate its main target groups: the general public, families and school groups. The museum now has 55 permanent and 20 temporary employees and is supported by 63 volunteers.



### Spaces and programmes for children and young people

The museum's commitment to education resides in the very name it acquired in 1985, Museon, a contraction of Museum and *Onderwijs* (education). Education, and in particular a combination of science, culture and heritage education, is Museon's core business.

Museon curators are educators as well as collection managers. They develop both exhibition concepts and the related lesson programmes. This continuity ensures maximum knowledge transfer and quality education. The specialists at Museon adopt an interdisciplinary approach to the development of new educational products and always encourage children to discover and 'do it themselves'. Inquiry based and discovery learning and an experiential approach are at the basis of Museon's educational programmes.

In addition to a permanent display and temporary interactive exhibitions on different subjects, such as Illusions, Knights and Castles, Natural Disasters and so on, which address families and make use of the latest technology and techniques to present objects from the naturalistic, historical and technological collections, the education offer consists of a series of activities, organised according to discipline, theme, age and school levels. The connection to formal education, sometimes in line with the curriculum, most of the time in addition and complementary to it, is explicitly mentioned in the activities' learning objectives. Special programmes are developed in close association with schools, teachers, universities and research is conducted in collaboration with other museums and with science related institutions.

The new permanent exhibition *One Planet* is inspired by the United Nations' 17 global Sustainable Development Goals which represent the major challenges facing mankind today. In this context, Museon plays a UN-approved pioneering role and aims to instigate visitors to positive action.

The interactive 17 displays, each examining a different Goal, are presented in combination with items from the Museon's educational collection. The exhibition focuses on the many kinds of action that can be taken to guarantee the sustainability of life on earth. From large-scale solutions to modest ideas that impact on a single square metre, *One Planet* makes it clear to visitors that they too have a part to play and encourages them to think further about the problems and help to solve them.

### Footnotes

- 1 R. Hisgen (et al), *The Hague, City without Walls, Haven for Free Thought*, The Hague, 2012, p.131.
- 2 H. Kockelkorn *De geschiedenis van het Museum voor het Onderwijs* (The history of the Museum of Education), The Hague, 1985, p. 7.

## 21 NATUURMUSEUM BRABANT

TILBURG

Spoorlaan 434  
5038 CH Tilburg  
[www.natuurmuseumbrabant.nl](http://www.natuurmuseumbrabant.nl)





### The museum

The Natuurmuseum Brabant opened in 1935, although under a different name – Natuurhistorisch Museum Tilburg – and in a different venue. In 1985 it moved to its current location, the former villa of the cloth manufacturer Guillame J.D. Pollet.

The building consists of three floors with permanent and temporary exhibitions. At the end of 2011, the adjacent coach house was also set up as an exhibition space.

The museum is about the lives of plants and animals and promotes the appreciation of nature, with special attention for the human perspective, through exhibitions and education. Some areas are dedicated to the landscape and the nature of Brabant.

The museum receives 80,000 visitors a year, 15,000 of which are children. The rest are families, which is the museum's main target group.

The museum is a foundation, which receives the main funding from the Municipality of Tilburg, but generates its own income for the 30% of its overall budget. It has a staff of 23 employees, aided by 35 volunteers.



### Spaces and programmes for children and young people

At Natuurmuseum Brabant education is an integral part of the Department of Public Activities, which develops all exhibitions, as well as educational activities. Education is not considered a separate and independent addition to the presentations, but an essential and integrated aspect of them. This means the education department is at the heart of Natuurmuseum Brabant.

The **OO – ZONE** - the Discover and Research domain for Nature – which opened several years ago, is a hybrid of an open museum depot featuring 2000 objects, an interactive exhibition and a laboratory. In the OO – ZONE visitors become researchers: children choose a character, who takes them on a quest to discover nature from a specific perspective. The artist, musician, architect and doctor all have a different view on nature and help children to understand the many facets of natural history and biology. By following an educational computer program and scanning a research pass, they can take objects from drawers and examine them at a workplace. An automated system of RFID chips and readers enables children to work independently in small teams. They can work at their own speed and make their own choices of topics and characters.

The latest exhibition – **BOS** – is an experience focusing on the seasons for children aged 4-8 and their (grand) parents. Children are asked to help a virtual tree grow by completing quests, collecting virtual objects for every completed task. The exhibition changes every season; wall and floor projections, lights, animals and tasks all reflect the atmosphere of the current season. These tasks are designed for the different age groups. Children transfer their virtual objects to the tree on the projection wall, giving the tree its appropriate look for the season. On the floor, children can change the projection by walking around and moving objects. Their natural curiosity is stimulated, they use all their senses and learn how to be part of nature. The parents take an active role helping children in carrying out the tasks and by taking part in the different activities.



# 22 MIFFY MUSEUM

UTRECHT

Centraal Museum  
Agnietenstraat 2  
3512 XB Utrecht,  
[www.nijntjemuseum.nl](http://www.nijntjemuseum.nl)



© Miffy Museum by Jean-Pierre Jans

## The museum

The Miffy Museum was realised between November 2013 and February 2016 to re-create the world of Dick Bruna's famous children character. Inspired by Bruna's picture books, the Museum provides 950 m<sup>2</sup> of exhibitions and facilities, designed specifically for small children to explore, learn and enjoy through play.

It consists of 10 rooms, each dedicated to a different subject and re-creating Miffy's world, including her house and familiar everyday experiences, such as going to the doctor and to the zoo. Here children can literally step into the world of Miffy and her friends.

'Miffy's house' is a children's size dolls house, where children do what they love most: imitate adults and role-play. In 'the museum' they explore the world of fine arts: play with colours and compositions, make artworks and even their own exhibition. At 'the doctor's' children get acquainted playfully with treatments and tests children normally undergo. In the 'Art room' they reflect artistically on their visit, make their own theatre play or, during school holidays, enjoy workshops and shows in visual arts, music, drama and dance.

The Miffy Museum is the only Dutch museum that specialises in two-to-six-year-olds. It is part of Centraal Museum Utrecht, but in many ways it operates as a separate institution.

## Spaces and programmes for children and young people

The museum's educational philosophy is summed up in its mission statement: "Children need to be given space and time to pursue their curiosity. Ideally, they should be able to explore and discover the world in a safe environment. Dick Bruna, the creator of Miffy, certainly thought so..."

... At the Miffy Museum children embark on a voyage of cultural discovery and engage in activities that help them develop their receptive and reflective skills. The approach is never prescriptive. It is always about having fun"

The Museum offers pre-school programmes, which take place in 'the doctor' and 'the zoo' areas and school programmes (4-6 yrs) taking place in 'the museum' and in 'the traffic square'. Workshops are available during weekends and every Sunday there is an interactive reading hour.

The museum has also developed programmes for children with special needs, e.g. visual, hearing impairment and autism and pre-school programmes for weak language learners.



# The Children in Museums Award



The Children in Museums Award was established in 2011 by the European Museum Academy and Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums to recognise internationally excellence and innovation in exhibits designed for children within the museum sector. Applications are welcomed from children's museums and from education, children and youth departments in museums and science museums, both long-established and recently opened.

The Jury is looking especially for the creative use of exhibitions and programmes with an innovative interpretative approach, which should be meaningful to the relevant age-group. The Jury will expect proof and examples of innovative approach and aesthetic qualities, open-ended learning programme, excellence that can be acknowledged by children.

Museums should:

- > Display creativity and innovation.
- > Encourage children's curiosity and stimulate their imagination.
- > Have well-researched and conceived content which is appropriately targeted and meaningful to the relevant age-group.
- > Show evidence of innovation, practicality of design, social values and attention to fine aesthetic qualities.
- > Have good management and adequate staffing to ensure that children's experiences are well facilitated.
- > Feature open-ended learning programmes.
- > Show evidence that children have been involved in the conception of the museum and that their opinions have been sought in its evaluation.

## The organisers of the Children in Museums Award

### European Museum Academy – EMA

EMA is a non-profit Foundation established to reflect museums at the international level, to promote research on museography and museology as a high cultural activity, to provide constructive criticism and promote discussion on new exhibitions and museums, and to disseminate museological knowledge and ideas among members of the profession. It aims to promote the conception and development of new as well as of traditional museums as tools of social change. EMA co-operates with Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums for this Award. EMA members of the Jury of the Award are also members of the EMA Pool of Experts.

[www.europeanmuseumacademy.eu](http://www.europeanmuseumacademy.eu)


 The logo for the European Museum Academy (EMA) features the letters 'EMA' in a stylized, handwritten font.

European Museum Academy

### Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums

Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums is a non-profit network of museum professionals with its office located in Graz, Austria. Currently the organization consists of approximately 120 members from 40 different countries. These range from large organizations to committed individual museum professionals. Hands On! aims to make museums and science centres relevant places for children, to professionalize the field of children's museums and to support the exchange of good practices and know-how among museum professionals in this area.

[www.hands-on-international.net](http://www.hands-on-international.net)


 The logo for Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums features the words 'hands on!' in a bold, lowercase font. The 'h' is pink, 'a' is orange, 'n' is green, 'd' is blue, 's' is purple, 'o' is yellow, and 'n!' is red. Below the text is a small red square followed by the full name of the organization.

## This research and publication was supported by

### NEMO - The Network of European Museum Organisations

NEMO was founded in 1992 as an independent network of national museum organisations representing the museum community of the member states of the Council of Europe. Together, NEMO's members speak for over 30.000 museums across Europe. NEMO's mission is to ensure museums are an integral part of European society by promoting their work and value to policymakers and by providing museums with information and opportunities for networking and cooperation.

[www.ne-mo.org](http://www.ne-mo.org)



### Netherlands Museums Association

The Netherlands Museums Association represents the entire Dutch museum sector and has over 400 members. It was founded in 1926 and looks after the collective interest of Dutch museums and offers services that contribute to the development of the sector in terms of professionalism and quality. We want to achieve this by supporting members in their aims for quality, reach and healthy finances. We will do this by looking after our members' collective interest, offering a forum for museums, offering museums services that assist in them in their day-to-day running of affairs and improve the collective image of museums.

[www.museumvereniging.nl](http://www.museumvereniging.nl)


 The logo for Museumvereniging features a stylized 'M' made of three grey lines. To the right of the 'M', the words 'museum' and 'vereniging' are written in a lowercase, sans-serif font.



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