Dissecting the system: Understanding The Museum in a changing world

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Understanding the dynamics of The Museum in a changing world

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Cover image by Rosaida Brahim

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PREFACE

The truth of the matter is that this thesis would not have been completed without the help of many, many people. A word of thanks on this page seems a paltry repayment for their support, but with it I begin to convey my deepest gratitude.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The museum is a space of unspoken rules. Granted, some, like purchasing a ticket and acquiring a locker to put away large bags or food or drinks, are well advertised and enforced. But once you have stepped over the threshold that separates the museum from the outside world, whether this threshold be unsuspectingly tucked away or lavishly decorated with expectation, you begin to acknowledge those unspoken rules. The brisk pace of your everyday gait slows into something calmer. Though no one has expressly prohibited talking, you only do so in hushed tones. Sometimes, the objects on display are not even roped off or encased in glass, but you know well enough to behave as though they are. In fact, no one would be surprised if you were to tuck your hands in your pockets or behind your back, just to show how little intention you have in getting close to some pedestalled antiquity.

The past couple of decades have given rise to attempts to shed the museum of a reputation marked by elitism and rigidity. This is a reaction to a series of shifts in society that we can earnestly begin to trace back to the 1960s, when it became harder to disregard critical voices (McClellan, 2007, p. 566). Since then, the museum has had to work around questions regarding their abilities to educate, the legitimacy of their collections, whether or not they are capable of recognising criticism, and more (Donald, 1991, p. 377). Furthermore, radical transformation in means of communication encouraged by the invention of the internet have made it possible for the people to talk to the museum and for the museum to talk to the people (Falk & Dierking, 2013, p. 122). In an effort to survive these shifts, the museum is becoming increasingly interactive.

While these new interactive forms allow museums to be more open – open to criticism, to change, to self-explanation – many of these interactions remain largely dictated by the museum itself (Grenier, 2010, p. 82). Disregarding the unspoken rules of the museum is at best unappreciated and at worst punishable. This is never so clear as when dealing with the museum and activism. Take, for example, the June 2021 protests that took place at the reopening at the Museum of the Home in London. The protests centred around the statue of Robert Geffrye

who, along with being the lord mayor of London, was prolific in the 17th century as a slave trader. The museum originally planned to remove the statue but was convinced otherwise by British MP Oliver Dowden who argued is historic importance, much to the consternation of the thousands of local residents that were in favour of its removal (Bryant, 2021). This is noteworthy for the following reason: The Museum of the Home claims to do everything in its power to create an accessible and diverse experience, but when faced with the opportunity to act on the principals it espouses, it backed down (www.museumofthehome.org.uk).

This thesis is not meant to serve as a criticism to the Museum of the Home. The Museum of the Home is just one of many examples of a museum that has stopped short of taking a definitive stance. Another example would be the Science Museum in London, which has recently faced a series of protests lead by climate activists. In August 2021 members of Extinction Rebellion physically glued themselves to the museum's railing, protesting the 'Our Future Planet' exhibition, which showcased possible green solutions to the climate crisis, but which was sponsored by the multinational oil and gas company Shell (Rawlinson, 20021). How does one justify the discrepancy between what is being preached and what is being acted on? What does it look like for a museum to actually take a stand? Do the protests have an impact?

These questions are some of the guiding themes that shape this thesis. At its core, it is an attempt to further discover the role of the museum in society as it continues to shift.

1.1: Objectives and Relevance

Shifts in society are somewhat difficult to discern, if not for the sheer quantity of them, then for their tendency to be vaguely defined. Repatriation, colonialism, racism, gender, sexuality – these reflect just a small sample of the issues that are at the forefront of societal scrutiny, and which museums need to navigate. While each of these warrant a whole avalanche of research of their own, the objective of this thesis is to target something more fundamental: to assess how the dynamics of the museum change with these shifts. This involves stripping

museums of their many layers until what remains is just the framework. To extrapolate a solid theory within the limitations of an MA thesis, it was decided to monitor select variables.

Often in Museum Studies, museums and their objects are depicted as an almost passive space; it is the individuals visiting the museum that are the ones who are reacting, and who therefore have the real power (Falk & Dierking, 2013, p. 141). However, in this thesis museums are recognised as being more than passive spaces. Indeed, they are active agents with the ability to exert power in the dynamic.

When looking at instances where museums are made to reckon with the effects of societal shifts, there seem to be a standard set of actors consistently reacting to one another: The Object, The Museum, The Activist, and the Public. These are the variables being assessed. To briefly introduce what will be expanded on in Chapter 2:

The Object – This is a variable where the name can be misleading. Often, The Object is indeed an artefact from a museum collection, and often it is a focus point in the relationships between other variables. In the example of the Museum of the Home, The Object would have been the statue of Geffrye. Another example is when the Royal Museums of Fine Arts in Brussels was approached in 2016 by a family recognising a painting as having belonged to their relatives, a Jewish couple who fled Germany at the onset of World War II (Rankins, 2022). Here The Object would be the painting, which renewed public interest in the discussion about looted Nazi art that has already existed for decades. But The Object does not always have to take the form of a specific, single item. In the example of the Science Museum in London, The Object would have been the whole 'Our Future Planet' exhibition.

The Museum – While specific museums will be discussed, the intention is that the conclusions drawn in this thesis will be applicable regardless of what is being displayed. It should not matter whether it is an art museum or an archaeological

museum being discussed; the many categories by which museums advertise themselves do not change the base role of The Museum as an institution. The administrational aspects of The Museum are similarly not addressed. The Museum has a complex anatomy but whether it has many employees or very few, whether it has a board of directors or trustees – these are all considered its appendages.

The Activist – Those who act in an effort to incite change in The Museum. The examples of activism mentioned above, taking place at the Museum of the Home and the Science Museum, both in London, are depicted in media as being associated with left leaning politics. Many of the examples in this thesis can be similarly found on the political spectrum, but this is not a rule. In the example of the Museum of the Home, MP Dowden's actions against the removal of the statue are, in terms of this thesis, considered just a feat of activism as those protesting the presence of the statue.

The Public – This is at once the largest variable and also the most difficult to assess. They consist of anyone who is not a part of The Museum or The Activist, but that is also the most concrete characteristic. The Public is not limited to the individuals who visit museums, meaning that there are countless of demographics to consider.

It should be emphasised that these variables are umbrella terms, and simplifications of reality. Within these groups there are different players that might be at odds with one another; in The Museum, the director might have a different view than the curator. In this same vein, the groups can overlap; The Activist can work for The Museum, and, depending on your interpretation of workplace hierarchy, would a security guard or a cleaner be considered part of The Museum or of The Public? But this simplification is done purposefully. No claim is made that this is an ironclad assessment of The Museum. Rather, the aim is to create a guideline that can be used as a starting point for further conversation.

The conclusions drawn in this thesis are meant to provide a foundation from which to build future research projects. By understanding the dynamics between variables, and through that being able to better understand the variables themselves, steps can be taken to improve critical communication between the different parties involved. If it turns out that such a thing is not feasible, then it would be better to reconsider the dynamics as a whole. The Activist should look elsewhere for someone to listen to their protestations, The Museum should edit their mission statements, The Public should find alternative sources of information, and The Object will remain The Object and have very little say in the matter. These are possibilities that further research can explore, building our understanding about what role museums play in society – understanding that the themes in this thesis can support.

1.2: Research Questions

<u>Central Question:</u> How can we observe and establish the relationships that are central to the museum?

The reasoning behind the asking of this question has been discussed in the previous sections. To reiterate: society has and continues to undergo sometimes radical shifts. This thesis seeks to understand how the dynamics between museums and other actors – identified and referred to as the variables The Museum, The Object, The Activist, and The Public – respond to these shifts. In answering this, we will better be able to understand what role museums play in society.

Several sub-questions have been decided in an attempt to define the parameters of this research. Answering them allows for a structured, concise blue print to support the central question.

<u>Sub Question 1:</u> What makes certain feats of activism acceptable, and others unacceptable?

The opening of this thesis alludes to the unspoken rules one follows upon entering The Museum. It explores how relations between the variables are shaped when inhibited by ambiguous restrictions, and who benefits from their existence.

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<u>Sub Question 2:</u> What is the role of The Object?

Of all the variables, The Object is the only one with no means of expressing itself. Its value is determined by how the other variables perceive it, and yet it seems so integral to the discussion that it would be unreasonable to consider it anything but a major player. This question serves to determine how The Object fits in the dynamic with the other variables, and whether it is justified to contribute as much influence to it as is done in this thesis.

<u>Sub Question 3:</u> How susceptible are these dynamics to change?

Part of understanding the dynamic between the variables is assessing how stable these relationships are. This question serves to determine whether we can predict the interactions between the variables with any confidence.

1.3: Methodology

There are three main methods employed throughout this thesis: the first is a literature review that has informed all levels of the research discussed; the second is a series of case studies; the third is an online survey and the subsequent analysis of its results.

Literature Review

Much of the literature used to create the foundation of this thesis comes from academic journals. The amount of literature written within the field of Museum Studies has grown exponentially in the last few decades, much of it critically exploring the complex power relations involved in both the creating and running of museums (Mason, 2011, p. 23). While these are invaluable sources,

there tends to be an almost isolated quality about them. In the time that has seen Museum Studies go from one theoretical paradigm to another, other disciplines have made similar but separate transformations. In an effort to move beyond this isolation, it seemed natural to draw from other established fields such as History, Archival Studies, Anthropology, and Archaeology. These, in turn, lead to the exploration of fields that did not immediately spring to mind, such as Education Studies, Gender Studies, Economics, Politics, Area Studies, and so on. This is not to say that Museum Studies neglects the topics these other disciplines specialise in. But there does seem to be dominating emphasis on ideas regarding power relations as termed by somewhat antiquated figures like Foucault. While the ideas that spring from such philosophies are not antiquated themselves, they also do not always allow for the exploration of other movements.

Case Studies

Five incidents of activism taking place in a museum were chosen in an effort to ground the theoretical into the practical. The guidelines for choosing these cases were as follows: they occurred in well-known museums; they received significant media attention; one does not resemble the other too closely; they occurred in Europe.

The first two criteria were important because they determined how much literature was available for the incident. All of the case studies, listed below (see Table 1.1 – Table 1.5), are of incidents that have occurred in the last five years. Therefore, very few articles will have been published in academic journals about them. The majority of sources will come from newspaper articles, blogs, official museum press releases, and the websites of the activist organisations. The benefit of the incidents taking place so recently is that it is more likely that they have been filmed and posted to social media platforms, giving access to primary sources. The third criterium was decided upon to determine whether similar results could come from different situations. The fourth criterium was decided upon because Europe seemed like a reasonable parameter. On the one hand, limiting the case studies to a single country would have been difficult because,

while feasible, the incidents would have been very similar. For example, in the United Kingdom the British Museum alone would have provided for five case studies, but they would have all revolved around one activist group and their protests against oil sponsorship money. As it were, one of those incidents was chosen for this thesis as Case Study 2. On the other hand, opening up the search world-wide could have meant that there was too much variation. While emphasis has been placed in section 1.1 on that this thesis aims to provide an outcome that will be applicable to The Museum as an institution and not to any one specific museum, it must also be recognised that there are enough differences between institutions in different regions that, at least in the beginning, a bit of spatial caution is warranted.

For each of the case studies, the variables are isolated and assessed on their own before being assessed as part of a whole. The following is an overview of the case studies, including what museum and activist group was involved, and a brief description of the incident.

Case Study 1	
Museum	Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal, Netherlands
Activists	*Unité Dignité Courage*
Date	10 September 2020
Brief Description	Members of a Pan-African activist group take a Kongo statue from its display and carry it out of the museum while giving a speech, livestreaming it to Facebook.

Table 1.1: Case Study 1

Case Study 2	
Museum	British Museum, London, United Kingdom
Activists	*BP or not BP?*
Date	4 May 2019
Brief Description	Activists organize an unofficial Stolen Goods Tour, where people are invited to lectures about disputed artefacts.

Table 1.2: Case Study 2

Case Study 3	
Museum	National Museum in Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland
Activists	Members of the Polish public
Date	April 2019
Brief Description	Members of the public protest en masse against the decision to remove three famous works of feminist art because they were deemed inappropriate. Emulating one of the art pieces, protesters eat bananas in front of the museum.

Table 1.3: Case Study 3

Case Study 4	
Museum	Louvre, Paris, France
Activists	*Libérons Le Louvre*
Date	13 March 2018
Brief Description	Activists stage a theatrical performance in the Louvre wherein they lie prone on the floor, protesting against the museum's continued partnership with oil companies. The museum blocked access to the room in which the protest was held for two hours.

Table 1.4: Case Study 4

Case Study 5	
Museum	Hermitage Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Activists	Hermitage Amsterdam
Date	3 March 2022
Brief Description	The Hermitage Amsterdam breaks off ties with the Hermitage State Museum in light of the escalation of the war between Russia and Ukraine.

Table 1.5: Case Study 5

Online Survey

In addition to the literature review and case studies, a survey was distributed online between 27 May to 3 June 2022. This survey was designed to investigate the participant's understanding of the role of the museum, how they experienced the museum, and how they react to reports of incidents about museum activism.

In order to keep the survey manageable, and to ensure that the quality of data did not diminish, it was only distributed in the Netherlands, and used the Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal and the Hermitage Amsterdam case studies to provide the reports to the participants.

The design of the survey, the details of how it was distributed, and the processing of the data is discussed in Chapter 4.

1.4: Limitations

First and foremost, it is important to acknowledge that there are structural and systemic biases that influenced the writing of this thesis. To recall a concept that has found its foothold in many different disciplines: critical reflexivity. At its most basic, reflexivity refers to a certain self- awareness (Nadarajah et al., 2022, p. 15). Regardless of the discipline, this self-awareness can and should be used to hold oneself accountable. Especially in a culturally sensitive discipline such as Museum Studies, it is necessary to question the very frameworks on which one's research is built. Applying critical reflexivity to this thesis might look like:

Acknowledging that the majority of the literature that informs not only this thesis but also the degree for which this thesis is written was published by western researchers funded by western institutions.

Acknowledging that much of the terminology used in this thesis, including the term reflexivity itself, is often unique to the English language and does not always have an exact counterpart in another.

Acknowledging that the importance placed on The Museum can differ between individuals within the same cultural background, let alone between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Social class, gender, wealth, education,

nationality - these are only some of the factors that inform a person's experience. And so on. Without this process, as Bartlett (1987, p. 17) suggests, assumptions made about the universality of the terminology we use or the experiences we have will inevitably lead to a skewed understanding of data. With this in mind, effort was taken to employ the concept of critical reflexivity throughout the writing of this thesis. However, despite those efforts it is impossible to completely eradicate the influence of all inherent biases, and this must be kept in mind throughout every chapter.

Another limitation is the case studies themselves. They were deliberately chosen because they touch upon a range of situations relevant within the parameters of this thesis. By assessing these particular case studies, both ethnographic and art museums are addressed; four different countries are represented; and the level of media exposure differs per case. And yet, while it was a conscious decision not to make strict distinctions between museum categories, there are many, including those professionally involved in museums, who do make a distinction and who would argue quite ardently that there is no one fits all discussion to be had. Furthermore, all four of the countries being represented - England, Poland, France, and the Netherlands twice over – are European. Other countries are involved secondarily; Case Study 1 and Case Study 2, for example, revolve around objections against the colonial origin of their museums' collections, and Case Study 5 is a direct response to the Russian war on Ukraine. Despite these international implications, and the fact that all these cases are heavily formed by their own unique settings, the scope is not global enough to be able to say with confidence that this thesis will reveal a universal trend as it hopes to do. A similar issue arises with the levels of media exposure each case received. Certain cases received much more attention, both national and international, than others. All the cases received at least some exposure, otherwise it would not have been possible to use them in this thesis, but this also means that there are cases that might have completely changed the outcome of this research, had they been accessible. Unfortunately, a selection had to be made from a series of cases that appealed to mainly western media outlets. However, maintaining the

aim of reaching a universal understanding is justified by the reasoning that The Museum is a Western creation, revolving around Western ideals, which will be elaborated upon in Chapter 2.

It was decided that the online survey would only be made available to participants based in the Netherlands, but that was the only parameter set in place in an attempt to get as wide a range of replies as possible. A conscious decision was made not to inquire about age, gender, income, sexuality or ethnicity because the analysis would not have been extensive enough to account for them. By neglecting them altogether, however, it seems as though The Public consists of a homogenous mass. In reality, it consists of a myriad of individuals who will have different reactions based on their background.

This is a limitation that is present throughout the whole of the thesis. The variables were categorised as they were in order to create theory that would be universally applicable. In doing so, however, it might have oversimplified them to the point where any resulting theory can only be applied to very narrow circumstances regardless of the original intentions.

1.5: Structure of Thesis

There are five remaining chapters in this thesis. Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical background that was used to frame the The Object, The Museum, The Activist, and The Public. Literature from various fields of study are used to define each of these variables separately. The chapter concludes with an assessment of how these variables, with characteristics patched together from different disciplines, can be used to describe a complex set of interactions.

Chapter 3 investigates five case studies, listed in section 1.3, that illustrate how the interactions between the variables can manifest. Each case study introduces an incident featuring a protest in a museum setting. The variables are identified and discussed, followed by an assessment on how they interact in that particular situation.

Chapter 4 elaborates on how The Public operates in the dynamic between the variables. As it was determined that literature and media reviews would not be suitable when The Public's point of view is often not broadcasted, this is a focus on communicating on a more individual level. Here, the surveys that were distributed to members of The Public are explained and assessed.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings from Chapters 3 and 4. This analysis offers the insights necessary not only to answer the research questions, but also to identify what further questions should be asked. Much like Chapter 2, this chapter addresses each variable separately before looking at how they interact with each other.

The thesis concludes with Chapter 6, which aims to summarise the research in three steps. The first is answering the research questions posed section 1.2. The second is assessing the quality of the research – what was done satisfactorily and what could have been improved. The third is determining if and how this can be used in future research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background

Many of the ideas discussed in this chapter have originated in the context of archaeological theory, and over a period spanning years were fleshed out with concepts from neighbouring disciplines like history, anthropology, linguistics, and archival studies. It did not take long before the realisation hit that even this is too narrow. In an effort to provide a more comprehensive inter-disciplinary approach, economic and political literature was also assessed. Still, there is a growing body of research that is increasingly easy to access, and it must be recognised that chapters such as this always have room to expand.

2.1: The Object

Up to this point and beyond, The Object has been and will be used to refer to the thing that is often the trigger leading to the interaction between different variables. This definition is purposefully vague; as will be seen in the various case studies discussed in Chapter 3, The Object can take many forms and a more succinct definition would exclude many of them. It would seem obvious that in the context of The Museum that 'thing' would refer to the objects that make an exhibition - that paintings are to an art museum what artifacts are to an anthropological museum and so on. But consider how these objects are valued. When a museum accepts a painting into its collection, does it also accept the frame? If a museum has a collection of hundreds of lithic objects, how many does it display? Are the descriptions a museum places next to an object part of that object or are they an object in and of itself? Or, alternatively, are they nothing of consequence? For all the freedom of the given definition, much needs to be clarified for it to mean anything.

In his book *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory,* Alfred Gell (1998) ponders at length many of the same questions that are raised in this chapter. For example, in his attempt to define art for the purpose of his research – much the same way that this is an attempt to define The Object – Gell not only asks himself what art is, but also what art is not. This is because such distinctions are relational – art is art because people consider it so (Gell, 1998, p. 22). But this

means that the status of art is also conditional on how people perceive it, and, over time, that status can shift and morph. This is vaguely reminiscent of those who discuss material culture in terms of having life cycles.

The notion that an object has a life cycle is neither new nor revolutionary. Indeed, it is a cornerstone in post-processual archaeological thought. The blueprint of an object's life cycle, as published by Schiffer (1972), is as follows: the raw materials are collected, manufactured, used, and eventually discarded. These stages of life are often interrupted by actions that can elongate the life cycle – for example, an object being used can undergo maintenance, or it can be repurposed. This model is a self-confessed oversimplification, but it is firm in its declaration that the life cycle ends the moment an object enters the archaeological record (see Fig. 2.1.1).
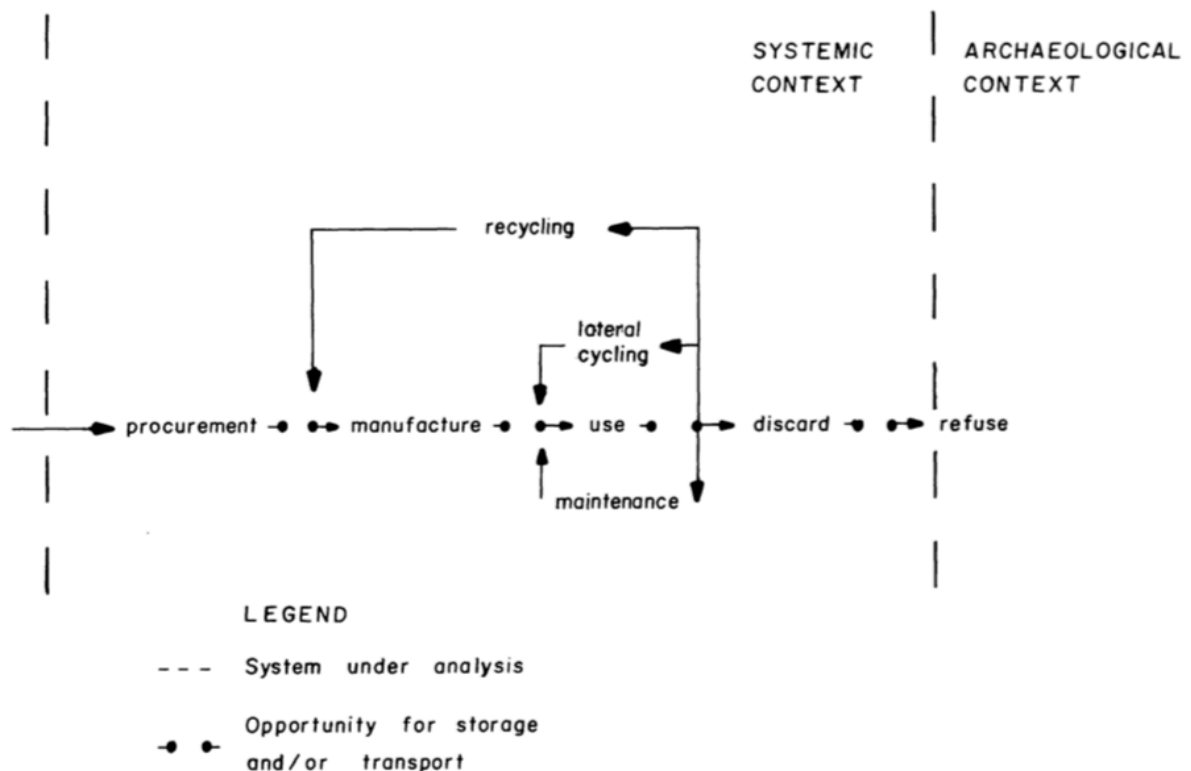

Fig 2.1. 1: Schiffer's (1972, p. 188) model of the life cycle of durable elements.

This model works with the understanding that an object is manufactured with a certain purpose, and that purpose defines the object. This definition is not

malleable; different people can perceive the same object in different ways, but this is a reflection of the people and not of the object (Holtrof, 2002, p. 54). Take the ceramic pot, the trusted but tired workhorse of the archaeological discipline. In the span of a thousand years, said pot can go from a kitchen utensil to a vessel carrying sustenance for the afterlife to a find-number in an excavation to a half-forgotten mantle piece in some rich person's solar. For all those transformations, and all the distance it might have traveled to complete them, the pot remains just that: a pot.

The Schiffer (1972) model is not the only one of its kind, but it is one that emphasizes the issues that many take with such schematics. This is partly to do with the notion of what drives object life cycles. In the Schiffer (1972) model, the object life cycle is driven by a series of predetermined stages creating a legible, linear narrative. But object life cycles are rarely as straightforward as archaeologists would hope them to be, or as these models would make them out to be (Holtrof, 2002, p. 51). Another approach is to look instead at the life cycle through the social relationships formed with and around the object, with the understanding that an object is not a static thing, and that linear narratives simply do not exist (Joy, 2009, p. 544; Shanks, 1998, p. 23). By doing so, the aforementioned pot becomes more than just a pot; it gains a unique identity.

The latter is much more in line with the objectives of this thesis, except that, as with much of archaeology, focus is placed on detangling the past. But if the object life cycle is indeed relational, and does not adhere to contrived stages where it suffers a final death, then it stands to be reasoned that these principles can also be drawn over to the present and future (Holtrof, 2002, p. 55; Joy, 2009, p. 545). To do so, the following needs to be established: an object has an identity that is shaped by its social relationships, and its life cycle will continue to develop as long as such relationships continue to be maintained, altered, or formed.

Of course, the concepts of object life cycles as discussed till now draw largely on archaeological experience. What if the object in question has never technically been a part of the archaeological record - if it had not been recovered from some excavation, but rather passed from one hand to another, until finally it

came to be exhibited behind glass? It seems that when they enter the museum objects undergo a similar transformation that objects being placed in the archaeological record do. As Bennett (1995, p. 129) put it, even though the objects might not undergo a physical transformation, they become a 'facsimile' of themselves. That this transformation is the object's final one is heavily implied. In response, emphasis is placed on drawing the same conclusions about an object entering the museological record as an object entering the archaeological record. It continues to form social interactions, whether it be with curators, researchers, or museum visitors, and has therefore not reached the end of its life cycle (Marcén Guillén, 2014, p. 131).

A moderately happy union between Gell (1998) and Schiffer (1972) can be found in Kopytoff (1986). Here, commodities are spoken of with the same focus on the relational as art is in Gell (1998) as well as the transformation of artifacts is in Schiffer (1972), except that Kopytoff (1986, p. 68) tends to discuss these in terms of value. Value, especially when paired with a term like commodity, evokes thoughts about economy. But while monetary value certainly plays a role in this assessment of commodities, so do cultural, political, and personal definitions of value (Appadurai, 1986, p. 13; Kopytoff, 1986, p. 67).

Even though Gell (1998) writes about art, Schiffer (1972) writes about artifacts, and Kopytoff (1986) writes about commodities, all three offer valuable insight in how to assess things when the main commonality is conceptualization. To summarize this insight and how it applies to this thesis: it is not so much a question of strictly defining The Object, but rather how to approach it. The value of the object is relational, and it is important to look at The Object's past, present, and possible future transformations to comprehend that value.

2.2: The Museum

Though museums are institutes organised in hierarchies, The Museum as assessed in this thesis is a single unit. This not only includes on site staff, but also those who have a more executive role. These are the limbs to the creature that is The Museum.

Much like The Object goes through a transformation when entering The Museum, so do its visitors (Marcén Guillén, 2014, p. 131). This is easier to measure in people than in inanimate objects, as it is directly tied to the belief that the role of The Museum is to educate, challenge, and support society, which is an outcome that can be investigated with tailored research. It is also reflected in the discussions of The Museum as a democratic space, which are increasingly dominant amongst museum academics. In these discussions, the democratic space is similar to what Elaine Heumann Gurian (2018, p. 34) calls the public space: a space where people can come together and interact without external pressure, forming new understandings and knowledge. The prevalent belief is that the transformations such a space can encourage should work towards the betterment of society (Sandell, 2002, p. 19). With those ambitions, it is not surprising that when these discussions are not about The Museum being a democratic space, they turn into a discussion about how to turn it into one. Evidence given to support The Museum's ability to be reshaped into a democratic space tends to revolve around looking at the ways in which The Museum has changed over time – how it continues to change and work towards becoming a more inclusive place (Fleming, 2002, 220; Lynch, 2021, p. 7; Sandell, 2002, p. 3). There is some difficulty in reconciling this capability for change with the idea that it should be impartial, which is a trait that is widely associated with The Museum (Lynch, 2018, p. 112; Serafini & Garrard, 2019, p. 75).

There is no argument here claiming that The Museum is incapable of changing to a more inclusive space. Instead, it the argument is that it is neither capable of being a neutral nor a truly democratic space (Lynch, 2021, p. 7; Sandell, 2002, 3). The following reasons are given: accessibility remains an issue, and the structure of The Museum does not allow for it.

First, while it would be a disservice to deny the strides made in regards to advancing accessibility in The Museum, it would also be a disservice to deny that more improvements can be made. While The Museum is supposed to, amongst other things, have an educative function, it often assumes that its visitors have a certain level of understanding of the concepts before they ever step over the

threshold (O'Neill, 2002, p. 34). Often, The Museum cannot easily accommodate for those with special needs, lacking the proper infrastructure in terms of the physical space as well as the content it houses (Cachia, 2013, p. 260). In further regards of the content, when The Museum addresses social issues, this can have a positive effect on marginalized communities as such representation can help legitimize those issues (Sandell, 2002, p. 6). But the same authority that The Museum uses to legitimize can also harm, excluding the narratives of the marginalised and thus othering them (Mpumlwana et al, 2002, p.246; Sandell, 2002, p. 8). This is rarely the intention, but the structure of The Museum makes it hard to avoid it.

For a long time, those who worked in The Museum as curators and researchers were mostly academics hailing from the upper middle class (Fleming, 2002, p. 214). This is changing as opportunities are being created for those who otherwise traditionally would not have been able to afford a career in The Museum (Lynch, 2018, p. 112). Still, the positions highest up in the hierarchy – such as that of the director – remain under the jurisdiction of the old order (Sandell, 2002, p. 220). Furthermore, even if The Museum was manned entirely by employees that consider themselves to be activists, they remain bound by the conventions of The Museum as an institution (Lynch, 2021, p. 8). As it stands, The Museum requires funding from various groups in order to survive and function (Barrett, 2011, p. 80). This also means that it often cannot challenge certain narratives lest it cost them this funding (Sandell, 2002, p. 19).

In sum, while The Museum can often appear to be a democratic space or even to be working towards becoming one, we must recognise that there are structural obstacles that need to be removed, or at least reformed, before such a thing is even feasible (O'Neill, 2002, p. 39). A significant one concerns the problem of funding. It results in The Museum needing to keep up its appearance as an infallible and impartial source of knowledge, all the while curating its output to attract certain sectors of the population and excluding others (Fleming, 2002, 215). Unsurprisingly, visitors are impacted by this, feeling as though they have to behave a certain way in The Museum, stinting the dialogue that is necessary to

enact the change The Museum claims it is capable of making (Fleming, 2002, p. 216; Gurian, 2018, p. 31; Lynch, 2021, p. 23). It is vital that such an image of impartiality not mask the aspects of control, hierarchy, and profit that are inherent to such an institution (O'Neill, 2002, p. 28).

2.3: The Activist

Marchetti (2016, p. 4) defines activism as "taking direct action in support of, or in opposition to, a social or political policy". There is no standard form of activism; it is a constantly changing effort to bring about social change (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012, p. 69; Hansson et al., 2021, p. 617). At the heart of activism, regardless of what form, is dialogue (Ryan & Jeffreys, 2019, p. 4; Valocchi, 2010, p. 3). But dialogue can be one sided, shut down, manipulated, and subdued – this is what happens when the definitions do not match up (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012, p. 76). This is to say, for dialogue to lead to a satisfactory outcome for all involved, they need to be talking about the same thing. By this reasoning, activism does not have to take the form of a large, public event. But a lot of the activism that makes its way into public awareness does take the form of a large, public event, where it takes on an almost theatrical component.

The multifaceted-ness of activism means that it cannot be discussed in absolutes. But here, a distinction is made between activism as confrontational or as collaborative (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012, p. 73). The two are intertwined, and often they form a cycle: sometimes, the performance is needed so that the dialogue can flow. If the conversation once more dries up, it may be time for another performance.

Response to these performances tend to vary. To understand these responses, it helps to look at real life examples. David Niven (2021) has written extensively about activism by athletes. There have been many athletes who have been involved in activism, but one of the examples that caused the most ripples was Colin Kaepernick who, at the cost of his NFL career, took a knee in protest against racial injustice and police brutality (Niven, 2021, p. 299). Racial injustice and police brutality have been issues the USA has struggled since decades before

Kaepernick. What's more, awareness of these issues and efforts to rectify them have existed just as long, largely by the marginalised peoples affected by it. Arguably, Kaepernick's actions received so much media attention, a significant amount of it negative, because they disrupted a space that many people feel should be kept separate from political and social commentary (Niven, 2021, p. 300). This is reminiscent of The Museum, a space which many also feel should be neutral and impartial (Lynch, 2021, p. 7). Disruption, then, is a tool that critical to the activist.

There is a tendency to associate activism with the political left (Schwedler & Harris, 2016, p. 3). But in this thesis, The Activist is an individual or group that takes action regardless of where they land on the political spectrum. The aim is not the focus, but rather the process is.

2.4: The Public

The Public is by far the largest and intimidating of the variables. It encompasses anyone who does form a part of The Activist, The Museum, or The Object – meaning that groups together individuals regardless of sex, age, or ethnicity. This is also why it is the hardest to understand, as generalizations have to gap multiple significant differences. This is an issue also found in literature regarding The Public; there is no one source that accounts for all the beliefs and convictions held by everyone.

This is not for lack of trying. Museums have long since invested time and resources in performing visitor studies, observing visitors and trying to characterize their behaviour (Hein, 1998, p. 108). The issue with visitor studies is that they ask targeted questions and are distributed only amongst those who come to The Museum. As established in the above sections, The Museum is not accessible for everyone. Indeed, one of the main points of criticism against the Museum is that they do not cater to the 'general public' (Fleming, 2002, 217). But what is the general public? Uneducated? Uncultured? This is sometimes how such criticisms come across. It is true, however, that the lack of accessibility is felt

most amongst marginalised groups, who often have to deal with such dismissive – and false – labels (Cachia, 2013, p. 260).

There is a tendency to discuss The Public in passive terms. Talk of The Museum transforming its visitors, and The Activists swaying public opinion, and The Object having power over those who behold it, often neglect to acknowledge the agency of members of The Public. It is not as though The Museum magically instils new values and ideas within people. The relationship between The Museum and The Public can encourage critical thinking, but does necessarily uproot long held beliefs (Sandell, 2002, p. 15).

Indeed, The Public is often aware of deficiencies in outreach efforts. There is an assumption that members of The Public are aware of certain concepts that are central to exhibits or messages, and when it becomes evident that this is not the case, it is very rarely rectified (O'Neill, 2002, p. 39). Perhaps this is why those who visit The Museum feel as though they need to act a certain way, and why museum goers only encompass a fraction of The Public (Fleming, 2002, p.216). As a result, The Public's perception of the other variables is largely shaped by mass media. When media is negative about the way an incident is talked about, public perception tends to be negative too, which is worrisome as The Public, while being kept out of the loop, can still greatly change how the incident is resolved (Ryan & Jeffreys, 2019, p.7).

2.5: Piecing Together the Puzzle

If a museum is characterised by its collection, why differentiate between The Object and The Museum? Likewise, if museums are for the public sphere, why separate The Museum and The Public? If it is also a place for discourse, why isolate The Activist?

This thesis is largely an exercise in abduction. The definition of abduction can vary – it is most commonly used in a way where abduction equals the Inference to the Best Explanation, where the researcher chooses a hypothesis that is most likely to uncover a relationship between variables (Hintikka, 1998, p. 507; Mcauliffe, 2022, p. 300). But this is arguably not how Charles Sanders Peirce, the

scientist and philosopher who introduced the term, meant for abduction to be used. Other interpretations of Peircean abduction emphasise that it is not necessarily about establishing that there is a relationship between variables, but rather about why that relationship exists, and how it functions (Gell, 1998, p. 14; Hintikka, 1998, p. 510; Mcauliffe, 2022, p. 303). In pondering this, the researcher is able to think of hypotheses that would otherwise not have come to mind. Abduction is intrinsically tied to two other means of reasoning, inductive and deductive, which together encompass the types of inference that are typically used throughout the scientific method (de Lourdes Bacha, p. 111). Abduction is a natural predecessor to the two; it builds a foundation that is refined through deduction, and broadly tested through induction (Mcauliffe, 2022, p. 303). It stands to reason that the conclusions drawn here can be a part of such a foundation.

This is where we return to the questions posed at the beginning of this section. That The Object, The Museum, The Activist, and The Public are all treated as distinct variables is because the idea that they each have agency on their own is taken as a foundational concept, supported by the theoretical frameworks discussed in previous sections. To simplify how this fits in with an abductive reasoning, we look at it in terms of a puzzle. For each case study the bigger picture – the protest – is known. So are the puzzle pieces – these are the variables. If the bigger picture is known and the puzzle pieces are all there, all that remains is to figure out how the pieces fit together to create that picture. The interaction between The Object, The Museum, The Activist, and The Public are central to the escalation to acts of protest – the nature of these interactions are what needs to be assessed.

Chapter 3: Case Studies

This chapter attempts to reconcile the theory with the practical through analysing five different case studies. These case studies were selected because they challenged the parameters set in the introduction of this thesis. They represent incidents where The Museum was forced to reckon with the other variables in circumstances where it was confronted with shifts in the societal status quo. Both art and ethnographical museums are used as examples, and though there are significant differences between the two, they are meant to encompass The Museum as an institute, regardless of their contents.

3.1: Afrika Museum

The incident discussed in this case study occurred on the 10th of September 2020. A group of pan-African activists entered the Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal. They did not raise the suspicions of the museum staff until giving a speech in front of a display case, touching and lifting a series of Kongo artefacts that were secured only minimally. At one point, one of the statues is removed from the display entirely, and taken out of the museum, where the activists march and continue the monologue. The incident ended with the activists being apprehended by the police, who took the statue back to the museum.

The Object

The Nationaal Museum van Wereld Culturen offers an online catalogue listing the pieces in their collection that members of the public can browse through (collectie.wereldculturen.nl). For each piece, basic information is given: a descriptive title above a series of photos, if and where it is on display, what culture it is from, its provenience, its inventory number, what medium it is, relevant literature, keywords, and the date of acquisition. When looking at the entry for The Object, it becomes clear that this is a rather bare-bones approach towards cataloguing.

The Object (see Fig 3.1.1), labelled simply as "Grafbeeld" (translated to "Grave Statue" in English) is a statue that measures forty-three centimetres in

Fig 3.1.1: The statue taken from its place in the Afrika Museum on 10 September 2020. Photo taken from collectie.wereldculturen.nl

height. It depicts a male figure, sitting cross legged, right hand on its hip, left elbow resting on the left knee so that its head can rest in its left hand. The figure wears a necklace and a headdress, but no other clothing is easily identifiable. It is part of the permanent exhibit in the Afrika Museum. It is attributed to the Kongo culture, and was made in what is now the Kongo Central region in the Democratic Republic of the Congo sometime before 1954. The Object, inventoried under the number RV-3152-1, is made entirely out of a single piece of soapstone. Most of the literature listed is over fifty years old, save for one article published in the 2020/2021 issue of *Metropolis M*, written about this very incident. The keywords listed for The Object are: objects; death and mourning; sculpture; grave statue. It was acquired by the museum on the 12th of July 1954.

Admittedly, this is a rather underwhelming entry. But when dissected, it leads to various points of interest. The Object is repeatedly referred to as a grave statue, but looking at the referenced literature it becomes clear that it has been identified as a *ntadi* (plural: *mintadi*). Typically, *mintadi* are found in the south of the Kongo region, made of soapstone, stand between twenty-five to fifty centimetres tall, and are depicted seated and with the head resting in one hand (Balogun, 1979, p. 63; Deurden, 1974, p. 63; Insoll, 2017, p. 181). The Object in the Afrika Museum fits that description like a glove.

While it is true that most are found in the context of burials, *mintadi* are more complex than an epithet of grave statue would suggest. They are pieces of art, made by craftsmen who followed tradition to the point where a *ntadi* is

recognisable as such whether it dates back to the 17th century or to the early 20th, which was when they stopped being used in funerary processes (Jewsiewicki, 2016, p. 16). That so many of the statues have been carved to hold the same pose, representing the wisdom and the readiness of the person, is an example of how the Kongo used the body to express a cultural language beyond spoken and written word (Martinez-Ruiz, 2009, p. 1). *Mintadi* also played a role in politics. Carved only for individuals in prominent positions, the souls of those individuals would pass on to the statue after death, leaving the latter generations of their family to take care of the statue, until a lack of an heir would cause the statue to be interred as grave goods (United States. Army Department, 1962, p. 209). Being in possession of a *ntadi* was thus a signifier of status, and gave one claim of being descended from illustrious individuals - something which, in times of uncertain leadership, made the suggestion of pedigree given by *mintadi* all the more appealing (Rohde, 1969, p. 12).

So labelling *mintadi* as a grave statue is an oversimplification. Their meaning did not revolve solely around death and mourning. Even after they stopped being part of funerary practices, they continued to represent much more. In 1981, for example, several *mintadi* were part of the Smithsonian Institution exhibition "The Four Moments of the Sun" in Washington D.C., which challenged the prevailing perception of Africa lacking in culture, which had gained strength in light of political unrest in, notably, the Democratic Republic of Congo throughout the previous decades (MacGaffey, 2016, p. 165). *Mintadi* therefore display an interesting duality. On the one hand, they truly are objects of death and mourning, closely tied to funerary rituals and ancestor veneration. On the other hand, they are also objects of status and a celebrated form of art that once offered political clout and which now show a global audience, under which fall the African diaspora, that Africa is and has always been a rich cultural landscape.

This particular *ntadi*, object number RV-3152-1, and The Object in this case study, has its own history. As lamented above, the known details of that history are paltry compared to its potentiality. Its provenience is unknown, and its

provenance incomplete. It was loaned to the Afrika Museum by the priests of *de Congregatie van de Heilige Geest* (from Dutch to English: The Congregation of the Holy Spirit) who supposedly bought it from an art dealer in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who in turn obtained it from unknown sources (van Walsum, 2020). This is where there is some confusion, as the online catalogue states that the date of accession of the *ntadi* was the 12th of July 1954, whereas it has been stated in various news reports that it was acquired by the priests in 1968 (van Walsum, 2020). Though the online catalogue is a primary source and therefore should take precedence over an article that is not entirely transparent with its sourcing, it raises an important issue. In 1954 the area where the *ntadi* was bought would have been part of the Belgian Congo. The Belgian Congo officially gained independence on the 30th of June in 1960, and underwent a series of fraught border and government transformations until it became what is currently the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1997 (Cole, 2006, p. 26). Legally, the status of the territory from whence the *ntadi* came from can play a large role in determining who has the rights to it (Merryman, 1985, p. 1889). Separate from the legality of the purchase, one must also consider the emotional aspect. Even if the priests were well within their rights to purchase the *ntadi* and take it to Europe based on the legal framework of the time, that does not mean that that legal framework accounts for the opinion or wellbeing of the community from which the *ntadi* was taken (Merryman, 1985, p. 1887). Of course, a layer of complexity is added by the mere fact that the aforementioned struggle of establishing an independent state means that policy regarding cultural heritage is not always immediately addressed.

Though this thesis does not concern itself with repatriation directly, the incident of 20 September 2019 has made it so that repatriation has become inescapably tied to the *ntadi*. What follows is an attempt to recreate the life cycle of the *ntadi* and all its transformations as it is at this point in time, based on what information is available.

The first transformation sees a piece of soapstone being carved into a statue by a craftsman. Traditionally, the craftsman is considered to be affiliated with the supernatural, and is able to imbue power into their creations (Rohde, 1969, p. 42). Here, the lack of information about the conception of The Object will always raise the question of its genuineness, and make it impossible to determine how many transformations it really underwent.

The second transformation presumably occurs when The Object is exchanged from the craftsman to the individual for whom it is made. The proper rituals are performed, and it becomes imbued with the essence of the individual (United States. Army Department, 1962, p. 209). It is now properly a *ntadi,* and when the individual dies he will continue to exist in some form as part of The Object.
A series of possible transformations occur as The Object passes from generation to generation. The Object passing to the care of the descendants of the individual who actually interacted with them is one transformation. This is, depending on cultural norms, a transformation that is likely to be genuinely associated with mourning. As the temporal distance between generations increases, the emotional connection to The Object may shift and take up a more general form of ancestor veneration. If indeed The Object was made to meet a demand for status symbols, mourning might never have been a part of the emotional connection. These transformations are therefore impossible to ascertain with the information available.

The next known transformation would be when the *ntadi* came into the possession of the art dealer. In the previous transformations, economic and social value certainly played a role in The Object's existence. In Kongo culture, the craftsman was able to accrue much wealth and status in return for their work (Rohde, 1969, p. 43). The descendants of the deceased took time and care to maintain it, presumably spending resources to do so. The reason why this transformation is notable is because it sees The Object's economic value become central to its identity, and the social value fade to the background.

Another transformation occurs when The Object is bought by the priests and brought back to the Netherlands. At this point, not only is the *ntadi* no longer used in a funerary context, but neither were these Catholic priests, or anyone in the new environment it was taken to, likely to believe that The Object was a material form of a deceased individual. Instead, The Object is demoted to a curiosity, a memento to the exotic.

This was followed by the acquisition of The Object by the Afrika Museum. One notable shift in this shift in circumstance is that The Object became visible to people regardless if they had ownership of it. To a certain extent, The Object once again embodied many of its previous identities. It was still a curiosity, it still maintained both economic and social value, and was considered important in both its artistry and its anthropology. But The Object is only one in a whole exhibition of objects, and it would not be drastic to say that these identities are represented almost by proxy.

According to Bennet (1995, p. 129), the previous would have been the final transformation. But if these transformations are formed by interaction, then The Object would undergo a transformation every time it was seen and contemplated by visitors. Sceptics, however, might only go as far as to recognise that the last notable transformation The Object underwent was when, on 10 September 2020, Mwazulu Diabanza made the radical decision to pick it up and use it to enforce his call for repatriation.

Puzzling over these transformations, steeped in conjecture though they are, is important. In much of the media output that came from this incident, the *ntadi* reads like a minor detail, a supporting character. By recognising its possibility for transformation, however, its past, present, and future potential is acknowledged.

The Museum

The Afrika Museum is located in the small village of Berg en Dal in the Netherlands. It has existed in several iterations: at its opening in 1954, The Museum took form in a villa; when the villa became too small to accommodate the growing number of visitors, The Museum was transferred to a building especially constructed for this sole purpose in 1958; in 2025, The Museum will have to move once again, as the priests of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, who own the buildings, decided not to renew the lease (Bormans, 2022; Witte 1975, p. 36; www.afrikamuseum.nl). If anything, the Afrika Museum is an excellent argument in favour of The Museum being defined by its exhibitions and not the space it takes up.

The priests of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit are integral to the history of the Afrika Museum. It was retired missionary Piet Bukkems who established the Afrika Museum in 1954, as a means for advertising the congregation's mission in Africa (Hans, 2020, p. 13; Witte, 1975, p. 36). The majority of the original museum collection was donated to the museum by missionaries that had been stationed throughout sub-Saharan Africa, and the Congregation of the Holy Spirit continued to be involved with the Afrika Museum, with the role of museum director being filled by a succession of several priests (Hans, 2020, p. 13; Witte, 1975, p. 36). Despite this, the move of the collection from the villa to its new building also marked the shift from teaching the public about the mission to offering a space to learn about African culture (Hans, 2020, p. 14). But in a time spanning over five decades, the concept of learning about different cultures has radically changed.

Throughout most of the Afrika Museum's existence, the dominant narrative was that of Africa being an exotic other - an uncharitable assessment might have compared it to a poorly refurbished cabinet of curiosities. It took over a decade for the museum to begin acquiring contemporary African art, a process that continues to be active to this day and beyond (Faber, 2009, p. 87). Alongside an increasingly diverse collection, the Afrika Museum has also diversified the topics addressed in both their permanent and temporary exhibits. Compare, for

example, their 1963 exhibition 'The stranger and his religion' to their 2022 exhibition 'The afterlives of slavery'. In the former, there is an assumption that there is a schism between what is African and what is Dutch. In the latter, an attempt is made to show that such a schism really does not exist; African and Dutch histories are intertwined, and have left their traces on present day life (www.afrikamuseum.nl). This illustrates the current mission of the Afrika Museum: to emphasise the commonality of humanity, regardless of cultural difference (www.afrikamuseum.nl).

A large driving factor behind this shift is that the Afrika Museum merged with other Dutch museums to form the National Museum of World Cultures in 2014, limiting the religious influence of the priests. Since then, the Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal, the Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde in Leiden, the Afrika Museum in Nijmegen, and the Tropen Museum in Amsterdam have shared a mission for academic exploration while maintaining their own individual identities (Hans, 2020, p. 15).

Still, the fact remains that nearly half the collection displayed in the museum has come from a religious organisation that was not only prolific in sending out missionaries throughout colonial Africa, but that continues to have ties to the museum (Hans, 2020, p. 16). The Afrika Museum openly discusses this history on its website, and recognises the wealth of possibilities in provenance research. Regardless, the day after the activists took the *ntadi*, the Afrika Museum released a press statement condemning the actions of the activists.

In this press release, the Afrika Museum makes several points. First, it was through the cooperation of the museum security and the police that the statue was returned safely to the custody of the museum. Secondly, the activists have done this before, and they keep doing it because they are convinced that the objects rightfully belong with the descendants of those who made it. Thirdly, the statue was not stolen, it was bought at an auction. Fourth, the Afrika Museum is pressing charges, but so are the other well recognised museums that have been affected, like the Louvre. Fifth, the museum supports the return of looted art, and has published guidelines for how to request a line of inquiry. Sixth, the Afrika

Museum really cannot determine matters of restitution, because the museum does not own the collections. (Afrika Museum, 2020).

To the first point, one might question what the activists intended to do to the statue. The wording of the press statement suggests that they would have harmed the statue had they not been intercepted. The second paints the activists as repeat offenders who are likely to strike again. The third, fourth, fifth, and sixth points shift responsibility away from the museum. It does not mention that, while it is true that a set of comprehensive guidelines on the return of cultural objects were published in 2019, that the process can remain a long, arduous, and emotionally fraught journey for the claimants (Stichting Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, 2019).

The Activist

Five individuals entered the Afrika Museum on the 10th of September 2020, all associated with the pan-African activist organisation *Unité, Dignité, Courage* (UDC). The organisation calls for the return of African arts and goods, through which the west has amassed and hoarded wealth, to the people of Africa (Diyabanza, 2020). They have done so by going to museums throughout Europe and grabbing artefacts from their displays, speeching and livestreaming the process to social media. Aside from the Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal, the organisation has also been active at the MAAOA museum in Marseille, and the Louvre and Quai Branly museums in Paris (Brown, 2020; Diyabanza, 2020; Nayeri, 2020). These acts are never physically violent; at the Quai Branly museum, the police watched for half an hour before making arrests (Diyabanza, 2020). Indeed, this was not really an attempt at theft, either. In the court cases that have already transpired, the activists have been charged with paying fines to the museums, but have not been given jail terms (Brown, 2020; Diyabanza, 2020; Nandram, 2021)

As is their wont, the film of the activists taking the *ntadi* from the Afrika Museum has been shared to social media. It is still available on the organisation's YouTube channel, where it has been viewed just under six hundred times (Udc

Unité dignité courage, 2020). The video, posted on the 16th of September 2020, is nearly twenty-three minutes long, and entirely in French. Though there were five activists involved, the video only focuses on one of them, a man wearing a black beret reminiscent of the uniform the Black Panthers used to wear in the USA throughout the 1960s (Elan, 2020). He spends the first ten minutes explaining where they are, and what their justifications are while touching and inspecting several small sculptures, before being handed the *ntadi* by one of his colleagues. He continues to talk to his audience watching from the screens as he takes the *ntadi* outside, taking a path leading down to the road, where he and his colleagues are eventually apprehended by police. The video ends with one police officer taking the statue from the reluctant activist, putting it in the police car, and handcuffing the group.

The activist being filmed, who also subsequently became the focus of media coverage, is Mwazulu Diyabanza. Born in 1978 in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Diyabanza has been exposed to activism since his youth (Diyabanza, 2020). He is also the head of the UDC, and is the face of the majority of their content available on the internet. When he speaks, either in his own name or in the name of the UDC, he lectures about how African cultural heritage came to be kept in European museums. About how it was stolen, taken to weaken and humiliate the community, and then further exploited and stripped of its identity for wealth. Even though Diyabanza explains that it is not stealing when he is just claiming back objects that were stolen from his people in the first place, he claims that the objective was not to take the statue, but to return it once he had made his point (Brown, 2020). Arguably, Diyabanza's speeches are mostly emotional, the narrative informed by what he believes he is owed as an African (Diyabanza, 2020).

Diyabanza has a presence on most major social media platforms, including YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. As of the 1st of May 2022, he has over 6500 subscribers on YouTube, 996 followers on Twitter, 8737 followers on Instagram, and 16529 followers on Facebook. This is a sizable audience of people who have specifically sought out Diyabanza and his message, and does not

include the thousands of others who have heard it through online, televised, or printed news sources.

The Public

The Public had access to information about the incident through several channels. As discussed above, the UDC live streamed their actions, and uploaded it across various social media sites in the following days. But the UDC operates mainly in French, meaning that those who do not understand French are dependent on translations not published by the organisation itself. So while the UDC targets a global audience, their work is not accessible for everyone.

In the wake of what transpired in the Afrika Museum, several national and international news outlets dedicated air time and article space to what happened. In many of the international articles, it was treated as a by-line in a story that revolved around the UDC's actions in more famous museums like the Louvre. Dutch news sources were more readily focused on what happened in the Afrika Museum, and a slew of similarly titled articles were published. Take this headline, from the Rotterdam based newspaper the *Algemene Dagblad*: "Activists steal wooden statue from Afrika Museum 'to bring back to Africa'" (in its original Dutch: "*Activisten stelen houten beeld uit Afrika Museum 'om terug te brengen naar Afrika'*"), which is notable for both its misreporting of what the *ntadi* is made out of and for suggesting that the UDC's aim was to steal it (van Gruijthuijsen, 2020). These are themes that repeat themselves; most headlines refer to the taking of the statue as theft, most articles gloss over the *ntadi*, and most articles speculate about the punishment in store for the activists. There are, of course, exceptions. Notably, *DeMorgen* calls Diyabanza "the Robin Hood of looted art" (Kool, 2020). Some use the more neutral 'take' instead of 'steal', but negative wording outnumbers the positive and even the neutral. If you were to type in the phrase 'Afrika Museum stambeeld', 'stambeeld' being the Dutch word for 'statue', in a search engine like Google, only one out of the five results displayed on the first page refrains from using the word stealing. On the second page, it is only one out of eleven results.

The *ntadi* is often also treated as a mere footnote. If it is not the materiality of the *ntadi* that is vaguely described, then its history is. In one headline, the *ntadi* is referred to as the diminutive, almost mocking 'beeldje' (in English: little sculpture), and this was the tone set for the entire article (Brassem, 2020).

Another source is the aforementioned press statement released by the Afrika Museum, although it has only been made available in Dutch and therefore is not truly accessible for those who do not understand the language, in the Netherlands or elsewhere. Though this press release does briefly mention the reason why the UDC took this action, it is clear in its condemnation.

Through comment sections, online news sources offer a glimpse into public opinion that is otherwise nearly impossible to explore without labour intensive, specific surveying. Depending on the source and their target audience, the comments have ranged from sympathetic towards the activists and their cause to dismissive. One poignant comment, written under an article published by BNNVARA by someone posting under the username 'Aart van de Aap':

> That bond with 'your country' is something I don't get. I think international. Internationally. I mean, I don't have that feeling that windmills and clogs and cheese have anything to do with me, for example. I didn't invent the clog. I don't even walk on clogs. I feel like a cosmopolitan.
>
> At their core, these black nationalists actually think just like nationalists. It's the black version of the FVD. They feel connected to their heritage. Just like the FVD voters feel like they strongly connect to their heritage and culture. But just because these members are black, we pretend like this isn't ridiculous.
>
> If a country has Dutch art, am I going to steal it? No, because I don't care. It's not my art. I didn't make it. It was never mine.
>
> No one gets what I mean.
>
> Do I care that they stole that statue? It doesn't actually matter to me. You do whatever.

The question is. Will it improve their life? Will it solve racism, if you steal statues and ban zwarte piet? Will it make racist cops disappear, like snow melting under the sun?

This will all probably be called 'racist' and 'white'.

("Activisten nemen beeld mee uit Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal - Joop - BNNVARA," 2020)

From the comment it can be assumed that 'Aart van de Aap' is: white; Dutch; male; critical of nationalistic politicking. Whether these assumptions are true can never be verified - such is the nature of anonymous commentary on online forums. But it does raise questions. How many of the opinions expressed in this comment have been shaped by factors we can only guess at? The apathy of this comment is not shared by all other white Dutch males, let alone by those who share only a couple or none of these labels. To illustrate, a comment from that same article from another user, posting under the username 'Eric Minnens':

Colonialism = criminalism

Criminalism has lasted hundreds of years. At that point it settles in the genes, yeah? The next criminal step is just a small thing: denial.

We, countries, museums, citizens too, are in retrospect, but also in actuality, in fact criminal. These activists make that very clear.

("Activisten nemen beeld mee uit Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal - Joop - BNNVARA," 2020)

This comment, as opposed to the previous, shows a willingness to empathise and understand the other's point of view. Both comments, in their original Dutch, can be found in Appendix A.

Ultimately, it has to be recognised that a topic that relates to uncomfortable subjects like the colonial past and present of a country is inherently divisive. When the population is as diverse as the Netherlands, we should expect the reactions to be just as diverse.

Overview

Despite the long history of *mintadi* in general and the curious history of this *ntadi* in particular, little attention has been given to The Object by the other variables. To The Museum and The Public, it was really no more than a footnote. Many of the sources that The Public had access to misidentified it, or dismissed it as just a little grave statue. Even The Activists used it as part of a narrative that could have used any other African artefact. For all of these variables, it was not about The Object itself but rather what it represented. For The Activists, it is the culture and the autonomy over that culture that feel they were robbed of. For the Museum, an attack on its integrity. For The Public, an assault against colonial history that many feel should be kept in the past. The Object, powerful in and of itself, is reduced to a symbol.

The Activists largely interact with The Public. This is likely their objective. Otherwise they were unlikely to have picked The Object as they did, seemingly at random, or The Museum, one of many. They wanted a large audience, because their message goes beyond this particular statue, beyond this particular museum.

The Museum has the least interaction with any of the other variables, even though they have the greatest access to any of them - possession of The Object, the means and reputation to appeal to The Public, and the upper hand when dealing with The Activist for many of the same reasons. The enormous amount of influence The Museum had on the narrative with just one press release, however, illustrates how much weight the name of an institution can carry.

The Public, much like The Object, is a relatively silent participant in this case. This is largely also because there is no one way to gauge public opinion or interest. Looking at comments posted underneath online articles offers very shallow insight, but these comments are anonymous and often moderated. Not to mention that there is a large portion of the population that does not go on the internet to post anonymous comments, or who decide not to interact with these topics on social media. With the other variables, it is all much simpler; The Object

has a long and intense history but no opinion, The Museum is increasingly expected to be transparent by The Public and The Activist, and The Activist campaigns their vision. But much of the discussion amongst The Public happens in private, behind closed doors, if it even happens at all.

In sum, The Activists and The Museum are given the biggest platform, even though The Object and The Public merit similar attention.

3.2: British Museum

This case study explores the activism of the organisation *BP or not BP?*, who have been protesting the involvement of oil and gas supermajor British Petroleum (BP) in cultural institutions since 2012. In the decade of their existence *BP or not BP?* have broadened their protests to include a myriad of social issues, but this particular case study looks at the two Stolen Goods Tour(s) that were organised at the British Museum. The first took place on the 8th of December 2018 and the second took place on the 4th of May 2019. Both tours saw hundreds of people attend speeches made by activists calling for the repatriation of cultural objects in the museum's collection.

The Object

The Stolen Goods Tour(s) did not revolve around any one single object in the British Museum. Instead, it focused on the British Museum's collection as a whole. It began with Hans Sloane (1660-1753), who managed to amass over seventy-one thousand objects throughout his lifetime alone, and the British Museum's collection has since grown to eight million (Delbourgo, 2017, p. xxi; Lindsay, 2014, p. 143). It is a self-proclaimed 'universal museum', and on its official website boasts that its collection encompasses the whole of human history (Alexander, 2020, p. 195; Burlingame, 2014, p. 393). This is where it also becomes important to acknowledge that both Hans Sloane's collection and much of its subsequent additions were acquired during a time when Great Britain was a colonial and imperial power (Delbourgo, 2017, p. xxi). Furthermore, because of

the different power dynamics at play, many of these objects were acquired according to the legal frameworks of that time, complicating the question of repatriation even with the passing of centuries (Alexander, 2020, p. 195). This is also something that is addressed in the Stolen Goods Tour(s), where specific objects were used to make an emotional appeal to the audience as to why the whole collection needed to be reviewed.

The following are some of the objects that were put centre stage during the first and second Stolen Goods Tours: the Gweagal Shield; the Hoa Hakanana'ia; the Parthenon Marbles; and various Iraqi artefacts that were, at the time of the tours, part of the Museum's "I am Ashurbanipal, king of the world, king of Assyria" exhibit (www.bp-or-not-bp.org).

One would think that recreating the life cycle of an object like the Gweagal Shield would be relatively straightforward. The shield (see Fig 3.2.1) is famous for having been present at Captain James Cook's landing in Botany Bay in 1770, marking the beginning of not only a violent encounter between the British and the Gweagal nation, but the British colonisation of the Australian continent as a whole (Keenan, 2017, p. 284). In reality, it is an excellent example of how an object can undergo countless transformations, and how those transformations are rarely easy to put down on paper.

Fig 3.2.1: The Gweagal shield, currently being kept in the British Museum. (Daley, 2016).

The first transformation would have been the construction of the shield from raw material. The shield is an example of an *elemong* shield, and is made out of red

mangrove bark (Attenbrow & Cartwright, 2014, p. 885; Nugent & Sculthorpe, 2018, p. 39).

According to Australian Aboriginal activist Rodney Kelly, who has an ongoing repatriation claim against the British Museum for the shield, the shield would have been passed down from generation to generation according to Gweagal custom (Keenan, 2017, p. 286). The passing of the object from one generation to another may signify a new transformation each time, becoming more pronounced as new cultural values are adopted as time goes on.

Another transformation would occur when the shield was picked up and used against Captain Cook in 1770. Another, when Cook would shoot the Gweagal man holding it, causing him to drop it on the beach. Another, when the shield was taken back to Britain and displayed as a curiosity from the colonies. Another, when it was seen as a symbol for the oppression of Australian Aboriginals by Australian Aboriginals themselves. Another, when it was seen as a symbol for the oppression of Australian Aboriginals by Western scholars (Nugent & Sculthorpe 2018, p. 35). Perhaps another transformation will occur, as Rodney Kelly intends, if the shield is returned to Australia and displayed with the intention of healing the wounds of colonialism instead of reminiscing about them (Keenan, 2017, p. 286).

The authenticity of the first transformations depends largely on the authenticity of the Gweagal Shield. Though the shield displayed in the British Museum definitely is an Australian Aboriginal shield acquired during the early years of British colonisation, there is no certainty that it actually witnessed that first encounter between Cook and the Gweagal people (Nugent & Sculthorpe, 2018, p. 36). The authenticity of the latter transformations are arguably less compromised, if only because, as mentioned in section 2.1, the aura of an object can be authentic regardless of its provenance. This is to say, even if it is not the particular shield it is claimed to be, that does not mean that it has not been, is not, or will be a symbol for colonial conquest, oppression, and healing.

While both Stolen Goods Tours prominently featured the Gweagal Shield, it only ever served as part of a larger narrative. But it illustrates that, if it is already difficult to assess a single well-known and well-researched object, how can we

expect to assess a museum collection exceeding eight million objects? In the context of this thesis, where being able to clearly define The Object is key, it seems as though the parameters set in place are poorly equipped to deal with this particular case study.

The Museum

The basics of the British Museum's collection have already been mentioned: it is eight million strong, but according to the Museum fact sheet only eighty thousand of those objects are ever on display (www.britishmuseum.org). The story of how many of these objects came to be part of the museum's collection is at times dubious - one page of the museum's website is dedicated entirely to what they call 'contested objects', and what many activists call 'stolen' (Alberge, 2019; Faloyin, 2021; Hatton, 2022; www.britishmuseum.org). This list of 'contested' and 'stolen' objects do not entirely correspond; the latter is much longer than the former. This is not surprising, considering the protocols the British Museum must follow when a claim for repatriation has the proper substantiation. The museum is quick to reassure visitors to the website that it takes such claims seriously, following a similar script for most of the object profiles. This script places the British Museum in a sympathetic but distant role - it will treat the claims with respect, recognising the emotional position of the claimants, while emphasising that the museum made sure to acquire objects only through the strictest legal means (Hatton, 2022). A cynic might say that this is a way for the museum to address the issue without implicating themselves.

A similar approach is taken by the British Museum when addressing divisive sponsors. The pressure of activist groups like *BP or not BP?* on various cultural institutions have resulted in those institutions severing ties with oil companies like BP in the last couple of years (Khomami, 2022). The British Museum, notably, is not one of them. The following is the introduction of a statement released by the museum in regards to their sustainability ethos:

> "Climate change is one of the most significant challenges facing
> our society. As a major UK visitor attraction, we are conscious of

the impact of our activity on the environment. We are committed
to reducing that impact and improving our sustainability
throughout all aspects of the British Museum's operation and
supply chains, from energy usage to waste management, from
buildings to programming, from our global collaborations to new
connections."

(British Museum, 2021).

A continued relationship with BP may seem at odds with this statement, but the
British Museum has defended it by citing the importance of sponsored funding in
maintaining permanent and planning temporary exhibits (Rea, 2019). According
to their sponsorship profile on the British Museum website, BP has been a
sponsor for over two decades, during which time they have funded the
construction of a lecture theatre and various international and national exhibits
(Montague, 2022; www.britishmuseum.org). This includes the museum's most
recent exhibit showing in 2022, "The World of Stonehenge", which has prompted
its own feats of activism (Montague, 2022).

The British Museum's reaction to the Stolen Goods Tour(s) echoes its
reaction to most acts of protest. There is a sentiment that can be found quoted in
articles as far back as 2016: "We respect other people's right to express their
views and allow peaceful protest onsite at the Museum as long as there is no risk
to the Museum's collection, staff or visitors" (Busby, 2019; Mills, 2022; ITV
news, 2016). Again, this is highly reminiscent of the museum's statements
regarding repatriation claims and calls to sever ties with BP - almost as though
through the barest of acknowledgements they are able to navigate around the
issues themselves.

The Activist

BP or not BP? was founded in 2012 to protest the oil and gas company
BP's sponsorship of the Royal Shakespeare Company (www.bp-or-not-bp.org).
Since then, the organisation has expanded its functions to protesting institutions
like, but not limited to, the British Museum and the Science Museum, who have

accepted funding from oil companies (Serafini & Garrard, 2019, 69). Their original manifesto, published to their site, includes the following statement:

> "The British Museum, Royal Opera House, and Science Museum have all chosen to put BP's money in their purse… BP is doing everything in its power to let not the public see its deep and dark desires - fossil fuel expansion and ecological devastation… and these cultural leaders have made themselves complicit in its crimes…"

(www.bp-or-not-bp.org)

This is notable because *BP or not BP?* addresses these various cultural institutions using very strong, explicit language. There is no mistaking their meaning: BP is engaging in criminal behaviour, and by taking their money, so are the British Museum et alia.

While the central target of the organisation is to tackle the museum's ties to BP, the history of not only BP as a company, but also the broader history of British oil and gas mining, makes it difficult to remove the human aspect of the consequences. A majority of the oil spills throughout the last century have seen the health of surrounding communities reflect the health of the impacted environs (Bond, 2013, 695). In his book *Life in oil: Cofán Survival in the Petroleum Fields of Amazonia*, American anthropologist Michael Cepek (2018) describes his experiences living with the Cofán people, whose relationship with their land has been perennially changed as a result of oil company Texaco operating a pipeline on it. The Cofán use the contaminated water to bathe themselves, to wash their clothes and utensils, and to process their food (Cepek, 2018, p. 8). Even their economy, which has come to be defined by an influx of inhabitants chasing the business the establishment of a pipeline can provide, sees an increase of profit when contaminated landscape needs removal (Cepek, 2018, p. 9). Though it is not Texaco that sponsors the British Museum, the way the company's operations critically impact all aspects of the Cofán community is telling of how the oil industry impacts the vulnerable. Indeed, the very origins of BP are reminiscent of this. Known as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company when it began purchasing land

during the early twentieth century in what is now Iran, it went about shaping the socio-economic landscape with a heavy hand in order to maximise profits and compete with other European oil conglomerates (Shafiee, 2018, p. 8). As a result, colonialism and imperialism are woven into the very foundation of BP.

For *BP or not BP?* this is a major point of exploitation. They list and expand on sixty-seven feats of activism over a period of ten years, emphasising that no single social issue exists in a vacuum (www.bp-or-not-bp.org). But how is an organisation like *BP or not BP?,* where the majority of members are white, middle class, and British, able to partake in an intersectional approach without speaking over the very groups they argue need to be heard (Serafini & Garrard, 2019, p. 71)?

BP or not BP? invites activists from various communities across the globe to speak at their events. At the first Stolen Goods Tour, only a few of the speakers were members of *BP or not BP?*. Other speakers included: Australian Aboriginal activist Rodney Kelly; campaigner Shahla, of Iraqi descent; Ahilapalapa Rands, who is of Hawaiian descent; and Ariana Davis, who is of Māori descent (BP or not BP?, 2018). The second Stolen Goods Tour had the following speakers: Rodney Kelly, who had also spoken at the first tour; Samir Eskanda, a British-Palestinian activist and musician; Iraqi activist Yasmin Younis; and Pedros Papadopoulos of Greek descent (BP or not BP?, 2019).

The organisation regularly updates their social media accounts, and publishes detailed written and filmed accounts of their protests on their official site. With ten thousand followers on Facebook, two thousand six hundred fifty-four followers on Instagram, and four hundred thirty-two subscribers on YouTube, they do not have a particularly large online following. However, their activism is regularly reported on in British media, and they often have direct contact with members of the public through their performances. In one of these performances, on the 8th of February 2020, they had one-thousand five hundred participants, a prime example of how views on social media are not always accurate indicators of influence or popularity (www.bp-or-not-bp.org).

None of the forms of protest *BP or not BP?* organise are physically violent. They do not touch the displays, which is why they have been allowed to carry out a decade's worth of actions. Instead, they are largely theatrical, with moments of absurdity and humour dispersed between the heft of the topics discussed. As much as their movement revolves around confronting those in a position to consolidate change, they also make sure to foster a network of solidarity.

The Public

Much of what *BP or not BP?* does is reported on in the British news, especially when it comes to their more elaborate performances. This is especially the case in regards to the British Museum's ties to BP as, in recent years, this has increasingly come under fire from various organisations. To the members of the public who keep up with general news segments on the British broadcasting channels, will have seen segments on these

Fig 3.2.2: Activist Rodney Kelly speaking in front of participants of the 2018 Stolen Goods Tour. Photo taken by Diana More. (www.bp-or-not-bp.org)

performances and summaries of their objectives. The members of the public who are more invested in the British cultural sector may be more aware of *BP or not BP?,* but will also be aware that there are various similar organisations calling for similar outcomes. Additionally, the Stolen Goods Tour(s) were not widely reported on by media outlets. Indeed, searching 'stolen goods tour British Museum' on Google will not provide the link to the appropriate *BP or not BP?* web page first. Rather, it will provide the link to an article detailing *Vice News'* new virtual 'Unfiltered History Tour', which offers listeners the history and circumstances of ten disputed artefacts in the British Museum (Miller, 2021).

Both Stolen Goods Tours had high attendance rates, with around three hundred participating in the second tour (Polonsky, 2019). It should be noted that members of the public were encouraged to join the tour (see Fig 3.2.1), differentiating it from *BP or not BP?* events that were solely performative. Despite hosting speakers from abroad, the event was held entirely in English. Short videos summarising the key points of the tour were posted to the organisation's various social media platforms, but whole accounts are not available. Transcripts of the speeches have not been published anywhere, nor has the event been filmed in its entirety. As a result, the experience was really only open to people who had heard of the event beforehand and to people who happened to be at the right place at the right time.

Even though there were members of the public who had been welcomed to join the tour, it is difficult to understand the range of reactions the public as a whole had to this event. The Stolen Goods Tour(s) were not as widely reported on as some of the organisation's other, more disruptive, performances, though it did receive attention on social media from those who follow the issues being discussed. So while a lot of the commentary available to assess tends to either be very supportive or very antagonistic, there is no real indication of the middle ground. Regardless, they do offer valuable insight; for example, *Daily Mail* published an article on their online website about one of the more flamboyant performances by *BP or not BP?*, where they brought in a replica of the Trojan Horse capable of hiding ten people (McManus, 2020). The article garnered nearly three hundred comments, the majority of which were critical not only of the performance but of climate change activism as a whole. BP offers stable employment to thousands, and green energy is too expensive for the working class, the protestors are lazy, we know the climate is changing but this will not do anything, they just hate capitalism - these are all sentiments written in the commentary on the article (McManus, 2020). At this point it should be mentioned

that *The Daily Mail* attracts a certain sort of reader; according to *The Guardian* columnist Owen Jones (2017), it is the sort that tends to be over the age of fifty and conservative. *The Guardian* is considered a more left-wing publication, but they do not give readers the option of commenting and thus we are left to trawl social media for responses to their articles. One response to a *Guardian* article reporting on The Stolen Goods Tour found on Twitter (see Fig 3.2.3) did not criticize the activists, but rather the British Museum for being ingenuine in their engagement with social activism (Nez, 2019).

Fig 3.2.3: A comment posted to Twitter in response to a Guardian article on the 2019 Stolen Goods Tour. (Nez, 2019)

This shows that the response to an incident like the Stolen Goods Tour can vary drastically, and that the responses are often linked to the different audiences that sources target.

Overview

   The Object plays a somewhat confusing role in the Stolen Goods Tours, even as they remain at the heart of the protests. This is mainly because, as mentioned above, the framework of this thesis assumes that there is one targeted Object. In an ideal situation this might be the case, making it easier to analyse how The Object fits in the larger narrative. However, a situation that is so clear-cut in its composition is unlikely. The Stolen Goods Tour(s) are an example of that. The statement of the protest – looted objects should be discussed and returned – is overwhelming when it comes to a museum with millions of objects in its collection. Choosing key points on which to focus – the Gweagal Shield, the Hoa Hakanana'ia; the Parthenon Marbles, and so on – make it more digestible.

   In the case of the Stolen Goods Tour(s), The Museum acts more like a venue than anything. It is inherently complicit in terms of the British Museum's

partnership with BP and its many objects of dubious origins, but there is a lack of interaction that gives the impression of a main character without any lines.

This case study highlights the dynamic that is possible between The Activist and The Public when there is direct communication. Conversation can foster community, empathy, and understanding, as is seen amongst those who attended the protest. At the same time, this case study also emphasises that without direct communication, the conversation becomes polarized, as is seen in the commentary of media sources that consciously report on the same incidents in different ways.

3.3: The National museum in Warsaw

This case study concerns the removal of three art pieces from their display at the National Museum in Warsaw in April 2019. The pieces were Natalia LL's *Consumer Art*, a film documentation of Grupa Sędzia Główny's *Part XL. Tele Game*, and Katarzyna Kozyra's *Pojawienie się Lou Salome* (Krakowska, 2021, p. 136). The pieces were removed because they were deemed to be indecent, but this decision was largely met with disapproval, and large demonstrations were organised to protest what was seen as an increasingly conservative regime's efforts to censor art and expression (Loughrey, 2019).

The Object

The Object consists of the three aforementioned art pieces that were removed from public viewing in April 2019.

Part XL. Tele Game (see Fig 3.3.1) is a 2005 performance piece by Sędzia Główny, an artist duo that was formed by Karolina Wiktor and Aleksandra Kubiak in 2001 (Krakowska, 2021, p. 235). Shown in the museum was a film adaptation of the project, wherein Wiktor and

Fig 3.3.1Performance duo Performance duo Sędzia Główny in their 2005 piece Part XL. Tele Game. Photo taken from http://artmuseum.pl

Kubiak, dressed identically and talking in monotone, went on live television and fulfilled whatever demands were set by callers (Kubiak & Wiktor, 2005). The majority of the callers were male, and their requests ranged from having the duo recite stanzas of the Polish national anthem, strip naked, and strike demeaning poses (Sliwinska, 2016, p. 139).

 Pojawienie się Lou Salome, or *Appearance as Lou Salomé* (see Fig3.3.2) as it is known in English, is a 2005 short film wherein the artist, Katarzyna Kozyra, is stiffly dressed all in black, holding a riding crop and walking two men in dog costumes on a leash. Throughout the course of the video, she leads the man-dogs around the grounds of a fine estate, and separates them with her riding crop when they simulate sex (Kozyra, 2005). Kozyra plays Lou Andreas-Salome, a late 19th and early 20th century author who wrote of topics like religion, psychology, philosophy, and sexuality. Her being a woman who was also a published, popular intellectual at a time when such a combination was still uncommon meant that her works would be interpreted as having an inherent quality that would lend itself for feminist literature regardless of what they contained. But Andreas-Salome was not forced into a feminist narrative, she consciously created one in her writings. There, the liberation of women revolves around the difference between the feminine and the masculine – not to reinforce the separation but rather to bridge it, and have the feminine spread to areas that have traditionally barred it (Del Nevo, 2012, p. ix). Meanwhile, Andreas-Salome was also a contemporary and a friend to popular figures such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, and Rainer Maria Rilke (Vickers, 2008, p. 4). It is Andreas-Salome's conviction of the strength of the feminine which is explored in Kozyra's performance: her Andreas-Salome is a dominatrix, who has total, unflinching control over the men in dog costumes, which have been constructed so they take the likeness of her contemporaries Rilke and Nietzsche (katarzynakozyra.pl).

Fig 3.3.2: Katarzyna Kozyra as Lou Andreas-Salome, keeping a canine Nietzsche and Rilke on a leash. Photo taken from katarzynakozyra.pl

Natalia LL's *Consumer Art* (see Fig 3.3.3) is significantly older than the other two pieces, having been created between 1972 and 1975, and is also better known to audiences across the globe. The project consists of photographs and films of women suggestively licking and eating foods like bananas, hotdogs, and creamy desserts (LL, 1975). It fits in with the existing trends of Western pop art that were dominant at the time, but is set apart from it by the landscape of austerity and conservatism that marked a communist Poland in the 1970's (Inglot, 2021, p. 202; Jakubowska, 2017, p. 7). This is best illustrated by the banana. Bananas have an impressively varied repertoire when it comes to how they are displayed in cultural

Fig 3.3.3: One image of Natalia LL.'s art project 'Consumer Art' (1972-1975). (Jakubowska, 2007, p. 242).

context; it is a fruit that is often used for comedic relief or as an indicator for the exotic, and its shape easily lends it to innuendo (Soluri, 2021). In *Consumer Art* the innuendo is very much part of the performance, but it is also just one aspect of it. At the time the project was created, what was then the People's Republic of Poland was just beginning to enter a phase where its citizens were able to buy products that had already become a staple in the West, but bananas remained too expensive to be anything other than a luxury good (Jakubowska, 2007, p. 247). Ergo, the same elements that add sensuality and banality to *Consumer Art* are also the ones that are most confrontational to the viewer.

Perhaps this is why protestors latched onto the banana as a way to express their disapproval of the removal of the art pieces – taking a selfie with one and posting it to social media under the hashtag *#bananowy* was a key aspect of the protest. The specifics of this are elaborated on in the section concerning The Activist, but for now it is interesting to note how the banana, which is only a character in one of the three art pieces, was chosen to be a symbol for a movement that goes beyond the context it was taken from.

The Museum

The National Museum in Warsaw was established in 1862 as a museum for the fine arts, but it was not until Poland gained independence from the Russian Empire in 1918 that it grew to an institution of national importance (Piotrowski, 2015, p. 138; www.mnw.art.pl).

The museum had a year pockmarked with controversial happenings in 2019. Not only did the director at the time, Jerzy Miziołek, remove the three contemporary, feminist art pieces, but he also oversaw large scale dismissal of museum staff (Sarzyński, 2019).

This particular museum is not one that is averse to risk. In 2015, for example, they held an exhibit that was curated almost entirely by children, for which they received both disparagement and acclaim (Patterson, 2021, p. 340). So, it is not surprising that by the time that long-time employees started being let go, the staff had already started objecting against the direction of the museum, leading to Miziołek stepping down from his position (Kosiewski, 2019).

It should be noted that the appointment of Miziołek as director of the National Museum in Warsaw came from the Minister of Culture, Piotr Glinski – who has also been accused of cutting funding for various cultural institutes that are critical of religion, nationalism, and himself as a statesman (Loughrey, 2019). The competition between candidates that is normal for such a role was absent, and Miziołek's lack experience with museum administration was as good as ignored by Glinski (Kosiewski, 2019). On top of this, the removal of *Part XL. Tele Game, Appearance as Lou Salomé,* and *Consumer Art* came after a summons from the Ministry of Culture, giving the impression of an administration working to control cultural expression (Scislowska, 2019).

These events cannot be separated; to argue that the removal of the three art pieces would have inspired a similarly large response if it had been an isolated event would be to simplify the situation. At the same time, none of the case studies used in this thesis occurred in a vacuum, so the reasons for why context is so heavily emphasized in this one should be reviewed.

Ultimately, Miziołek announced that the works of art would return to public display, but that they would be removed again when the museum underwent renovations the following month (Loughrey, 2019).

The Activist

The banana has been used in protest in Poland as early as 1968, when the political party in power at the time referred to those railing against state censorship as the 'banana youth'. By labelling them as such, they attempted to undermine the protesters as wealthy, frivolous, and incapable of representing the interests of the every-day man, who would not have been able to afford the exotic fruit. The targeting of the banana youth was tinged with antisemitism, and it was a young Jewish man who protested the state's rhetoric by spending his wages on a single banana and eating it slowly while walking towards the party's headquarters.

This is the narrative Joanna Krakowska (2021, p. 134), one of the organizers of the 2019 protest in front of the National Museum in Warsaw, claims is the origin story of bananas as a tool of activism. This, along with the subversion of eroticism used by Natalia LL in *Consumer Art*, is the what the organisers wanted to embody in their protest.

This came after the idea for a protest was conceived. Originally it was meant as a spur of the moment occasion; Krakowska invited friends via a hastily made Facebook events page two days before the fact. That it gained the attention of over thirty thousand members active on the social media platform came as a total surprise to her (Krakowska, 2021, p. 140).

A part of the protest was carried out on the streets in front of the museum, but an even larger part took place on social media (Krakowska, 2021, p. 141). People of all backgrounds, whether they were artists themselves, or politicians, or just regular members of the public, used the banana to symbolise their dissent (Krakowska, 2021, p. 140). Speeches were made and discussions were had, but the most memorable aspect of the event largely came in the form of selfies – photos where the person protesting is posing with a banana, sometimes seriously,

more often than not ridiculously (Loughry, 2019). The proof of these acts of protest are forever commemorated on the internet, easily found under hashtags that double as puns.

Interesting for this research is the sheer largeness of the protest. Thirty thousand people goes beyond our definition of career activists; many people who participated might never have even thought to apply the term to themselves. But following the parameters set in this thesis, the line between The Activist and The Public becomes blurred beyond recognition. With so many actively participating, it would be hard to distinguish anyone who was on the streets of Warsaw on that day as one or the other.

The Public

The Public learned of the removal of the art pieces through an interview with Miziołek, and learned of the occasion of the protest through a Facebook events page (Krakowska, 2021, p. 140; Loughrey, 2019).

To a wider audience, beyond those who got the call to arms, both the news and social media retained a pivotal role in awareness. Those who could not meet in front of the National Museum in Warsaw posted selfies with a banana to their social media, thereby participating in the protest while also spreading awareness (Krakowska, 2021, p. 140; Loughrey, 2019). Various international news channels picked up the story, several of them running articles with humorous titles, like this one from PBS: '*Protesters go bananas after artwork removed from Polish museum'* (Scislowska, 2019).

Perhaps the international audience should truly be considered The Public. The humor with which this protest was often dealt with abroad indicates a degree of emotional separation. Though the subscribers of the outlets reporting might generally be invested in the reasons why people were protesting in front of the National Museum in Warsaw, they are more likely to be mere spectators.

Overview

This case study is not as straightforward as the previous two. The Object should be clearly identifiable, because the protests were, in name, against the removal of *Part XL. Tele Game, Appearance as Lou Salomé,* and *Consumer Art* from public viewing. But the removal of these pieces is part of a chain of events that lead to the overflowing of tensions, and ignoring the other links would oversimplify the plight of those protesting and could even lead to mocking. Eating bananas en masse, publicly and disruptively, is likely to be twisted into something frivolous by those who are seeking to undermine. The Activists were not just protesting the removal of three art pieces, they were protesting what they viewed to be a form of censorship from a government that is increasingly encroaching on expression. It is entirely possible that the art pieces are therefore dispensable to the movement; even if they had not been removed, then another event could have triggered the same response.

A similar quandary is presented by The Museum. There is an expectation set by the parameters of this research that The Museum is one solid unit. But reports suggest that this is untrue. Miziołek faced much criticism during his tenure as director, including from the employees of the museum. When the decision was announced, Miziołek did not explain it in terms of The Museum, but rather that he himself did not agree with showing such works (Loughrey, 2019). This needs to be taken into consideration, especially since the division is so deep that Miziołek's tenure ended after only a year, caused at least in part by the internal criticism.

Lastly is the almost non-existent separation between The Activist and The Public. The protest did not take shape out of nothing; it was conceived by activists, but soon grew much larger than even the organizers could have hoped. There is a shift, where members of The Public stepped away from merely viewing The Activist to becoming a part of it.

3.4: Louvre Museum

This case study looks at the theatrical performance of the activist group *Libérons Le Louvre* at the Louvre Museum on 13th of March 2018. This is the briefest of all the case studies, and resembles the incident at the British Museum discussed in section 3.2 in that it revolves around the institute's ties to the oil industry. However, there are aspects of this case study which are not present in any of the others chosen for this thesis, which is why it was deemed justifiable to include it.

The Object

The Louvre is the largest museum in the world, but of all the famous works it displays, there is not one that can be identified as The Object. Instead, focus is placed on the theatrical performance of *Libérons Le Louvre,* wherein members of the group, dressed entirely in black, posed themselves on the floor, bodies so twisted as to resemble corpses. The only dialogue came from two of the activists outlining the negative impact of Total's actions on the environment and on indigenous peoples (Sansom, 2018). Though none of the art pieces in the Louvre collection can be considered to be The Object, the art of the activists and the art in the museum are not entirely at odds; in one photo taken of the performance (see Fig 3.4.1) we see one of the activists dramatically posed on the floor in front of Gericault's *The Raft of the Medusa,* their prone form echoing the tragic figures in the painting. This was done intentionally –

Fig 3.4.1: Fig3.4.1: A member of Libérons Le Louvre posing in front of The Raft of the Medusa in the Louvre Museum.

Photo from www.gofossilfree.org

the tragedy of Gericault's work echoing the possible outcome of climate change (Sutton, 2018).

Despite this interaction between the performance and the art, the attention is always meant to be on the activists.

The Museum

The Louvre has a history that is as interesting as any of the artworks it currently houses. The actual building is, in a sense, extremely malleable. It has gone through many transformations over a period of centuries – from a fortress in the twelfth century, to a series of royal residences remodelled by king after king, to an academy of art, to a museum that is ever expanding and changing (Gardner, 2020). The nineteenth century formed much of the Louvre as we see it today, but the last two decades have also included additions. Most notably, the Department of Islamic Art, which was built in one of the inner courtyards in 2012 (www.louvre.fr).

And yet, for all its malleability, the Louvre can also be rigid. Their response to *Libérons Le Louvre*'s performance was to block off the room for the two hours lasted, and released no comments or statements after (Sutton, 2018). This follows a pattern. In May 2022, the Louvre took legal action against a climate activist who smeared cake over the glass covering the Mona Lisa (Mufarech, 2022). In October 2020 the Louvre took legal action against Mwazulu Diyabanza, introduced in section 3.1 for his actions in the Afrika Museum in the Netherlands, for grabbing a statue from its display (Brown, 2020). In December 2015, fifteen activists were arrested by police because they tracked molasses on the museum's floors, mimicking an oil spill (Howard, 2015). Even in regards to incidents that were shocking enough to warrant official statements, there is always minimal interaction between the Louvre's staff and other parties.

The Activist

Libérons Le Louvre have been active for less than half a decade, but are prolific in their activism. The collective consists of and is backed by other climate

activist organisations, including 350.org and Greenpeace (Muñoz-Alonso, 2017). It is therefore part of a larger, international movement to rid cultural institutions of the influence from the oil industry. For *Libérons Le Louvre,* their specific target is the energy company Total, who have sponsored various projects at the museum in the last twenty years (Sutton, 2018).

This particular protest was their fifth, one in a series of performances (Massara, 2018; Sutton, 2018). The tone of these performances is serious and persistent, and the aesthetic is recognisable to those who are aware of their work. In that sense, no one can mistake *Libérons Le Louvre'*s work and who it is aimed at.

The collective is active on the social media platforms Twitter and Facebook. On the former, they have just under three hundred and fifty followers, and on the latter they have just under one thousand four hundred. These are not particularly large followings for such a group, but neither are they very active on these platforms. The latest post published by the collective itself was a tweet written in 2021 – a lack of output that will have its consequences on public visibility.

The Public

A lack of output from *Libérons Le Louvre* on social media, paired with the Louvre's lack of comments on their protests means that the protest did not receive much national or international coverage. The coverage that does exist was mainly published by other associated climate activist organisations and by publications that focus on the art industry.

Even the number of witnesses is limited, as the Louvre staff blocked off the room in which the performance took place soon after it began.

This means that, ultimately, the public had very little insight into the incident.

Overview

There is little real interaction between the different variables. The Museum communicates very little with either The Activists or The Public. Adding in The

Activists' lack of social media savvy, this means that The Public plays a miniscule role in this incident.

A truly noteworthy aspect of this case study is that of The Activist and how they create The Object. While the theatrical performance piece does tie in with the art on display, the art is only meant to enhance the performance. The performance would have meant the same in any other of the museum's rooms, because the art in the background had no actual connection to what the protests were hoping to achieve.

Until now, The Object has only been thought of as something that was already in existence, and that gained an additional meaning in interacting with the other variables in a certain context. While this specific incident seems too vague, too poorly documented to be a truly useful case study for this thesis, it suggests that the parameters by which The Object is defined in this thesis is much too rigid. Instead of The Object being something tangible, something that had a solid form before, during, and after an incident, it may also be something that can be generated during, and which may not exist before and after.

3.5: Hermitage Amsterdam

This case study explores the severing of ties between the Hermitage Amsterdam and the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, which was announced on 3rd of March 2022. As a result, the board of directors of the museum decided to close the exhibit *Russian avant-garde | Revolution in the arts* three months into a yearlong run.

The Object

The Hermitage Amsterdam does not have a permanent collection, and instead hosts temporary exhibits that last anywhere from several months to several years (Kramer et al., 2016, p. 288). These exhibits are constructed with objects loaned from different museums, but the majority of objects are loaned from the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg (Mishra et al., 2016, p. 41).

The Object in question is the exhibit *Russian avant-garde | Revolution in the arts,* which opened on 29 January 2022. It consisted of over five hundred objects reflecting the transformation of Russian avant-garde art throughout changing political landscapes, on loan from the State Hermitage Museum (Hermitage Amsterdam, 2022a). This is an example where there are not multiple Objects in focus, but where The Object consists of many smaller, separate parts. The exhibit was meant to run for a year, but instead was closed down when the Hermitage Amsterdam announced it was severing ties with the State Hermitage Museum on 3 March 2022 (Hermitage Amsterdam, 2022b). Exploring the transformations of this Object is therefore a short journey. The collection was assembled for the Hermitage Amsterdam and then was dismantled as a whole. It was conceived as fragments coming together under specific circumstances and was returned to that state after.

How this came about is relatively straightforward: the Hermitage Amsterdam severed ties with the State Hermitage Museum, and therefore the Hermitage Amsterdam had to return the objects it had loaned from the State Hermitage Museum. It is also unfortunate, because the exhibit explored Russian avant-garde art through periods of revolution; it displayed pieces dating to Imperial Russia all the way through Russia under Stalin (Hermitage Amsterdam, 2022a). Each of these periods saw the transformation of borders and nationalities – as a result, the exhibition does not simply consist of Russian art. For example, the press statement announcing the exhibit names two well-known artists: Kazimir Malevich and Wassily Kandinsky. Russia as it exists now does not have sole claim on these artists; Kandinsky was born in Moscow but raised in Odessa, where he also attended art school. Malevich was born in Kiev to Polish parents, thought of himself as Ukrainian, and contemporary Ukrainians claim him as such (Beskhlebnaya, 2016, p. 52). Both of these artists were born in the Russian Empire.

This is to say, what has been labelled Russian avant-garde is not solely Russian, and though the collection had to be returned to its place in St Petersburg, it should also be remembered that they are a testament to changing politics, identities, and

borders. Indeed, if anything, such an exhibit would provide plenty points of reflection in the current climate.

The Museum

The Hermitage Amsterdam is housed in the Amstelhof in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The Amstelhof is a building that already has a rich history of its own. It was originally built in 1683 to serve as a home for elderly women, and included the latest amenities (www.hermitage.nl). Over the centuries, the Amstelhof continued to serve variations of this purpose; in the second half of the twentieth century it was used as a nursing home, until it was officially declared unfit for such purposes, with the last residents being moved out in 2007 (Kramer et al., 2016, p. 287).

Even before the last residents had been moved, the Director of the Nieuwekerk had made the decision that the Amstelhof could be used to house the products of a partnership with the State Hermitage Museum, and this partnership has existed since 2004 (www.hermitage.nl). The Amstelhof underwent intense reconstruction between 2007 and 2009, and was repurposed as a state-of-the-art museum space (Mishra et al., 2016, p. 41). The Hermitage Amsterdam debuted in the Amstelhof in 2009, but before this it existed in a preliminary state in a small building nearby.

As a sister museum of the State Hermitage Museum, the Hermitage Amsterdam has acknowledged that there have been controversies and criticisms surrounding the Russian government under Putin, but has never directly engaged with them in public (Hermitage Amsterdam, 2022b).

According to the Hermitage Amsterdam's press statement, the invasion of Russian forces into Ukraine marked a point where not engaging was no longer an option, and as of 3 March 2022, they officially severed their ties to the State Hermitage Museum and shut down their latest collaborative exhibition (Hermitage Amsterdam, 2022b).

Given the museum's history of not engaging with the developments in Russian politics, severing ties with the State Hermitage Museum is quite radical. Perhaps,

in the format used to assess the previous case studies, the Hermitage Amsterdam is not only The Museum but also The Activist.

The Activist

The press statement given by the Hermitage Amsterdam made no mention of external pressures leading them to sever ties with the State Hermitage Museum. It appears to have been a decision that was made unilaterally, and with great cost. Severing ties with the State Hermitage Museum would also mean that any future exhibitions would not be able to depend on loans from their collection.

The wording of the press statement does not entirely close that door, however:

> "With the invasion of the Russian army in Ukraine, a border has been crossed. War destroys everything. Even 30 years of collaboration. The Hermitage Amsterdam has no other choice. Like everyone else, we hope for peace. Also for changes in the future of Russia that will allow us to restore ties with the Hermitage Saint Petersburg."
>
> (Hermitage Amsterdam, 2022b).

And this is understandable – its ties to the State Hermitage Museum were central to the identity and marketing of the museum. But it is also a reminder that actions such as these need to be met with a critical eye.

First, there is no explanation why it is the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 which pushed the museum into action. The war between Russia and Ukraine, though escalating significantly in the past year, has been ongoing since February 2014 (Kirby, 2022).

Second, this is not the only conflict Russia has instigated or been involved with since the opening of the Hermitage Amsterdam. The Second Chechen War, lasting from 1999 to 2009 (Higgins, 2019). The Russian-Georgian War of 2008 (Kingsley, 2022). Ongoing military intervention in civil wars in Syria and the Central African Republic (Chulov, 2022; Posthumus, 2022). Why were none of these conflicts a reason for the Hermitage Amsterdam to sever ties?

Thirdly, as of June 2022 the Hermitage Amsterdam has not changed its name. In their latest press statement, regarding the reopening of the museum with Van Gogh's *The Yellow House (The Street)*, it is written that the work is displayed by "The Amsterdam Museum" in the "building of the Hermitage" (Hermitage Amsterdam, 2022c). This is a degree of separation that is not otherwise visible; media advertisements continue to refer to the Hermitage Amsterdam. It seems impossible to forsake the Hermitage State Museum when its name, iconic and known around the world, is still prominently in use.

Finally, the restoration of ties between institutions depends on vague conditions. What "changes in the future of Russia" the Hermitage Amsterdam requires for a reunion is not known or explained.

In sum, it is a lack of transparency in motivation that makes it difficult to understand the actions of the Hermitage Amsterdam in terms of activism.

The Public

The Hermitage Amsterdam announced that it was severing ties with the State Hermitage Museum through a press statement, which can still be found on their website both in Dutch and English. It has also been referenced on their Instagram page, which has 26.2000 followers. A post acknowledging and condemning the situation in Ukraine was posted on 27 February 2022, and eighty-four comments were published, split between those who agreed with sentiments and those who did not. The following post on the account, published on 31 March 2022, also addressed the war but only in regards to the reopening of the museum. As of the date of completion of this thesis, no more posts have been published that mention the war or the split of the Hermitage Amsterdam with the State Hermitage Museum.

The decision to cut ties with the State Hermitage Museum was discussed on the Dutch news and in a handful of articles, but otherwise did not garner much attention.

Overview

  This case study is notable because the different variables do not carry out their expected roles. Indeed, it could even be argued that the only active variable here is The Museum. If severing ties with the State Hermitage Museum is a feat of activism, it is the Hermitage Amsterdam which plays the role of The Activist as well as The Museum. The Public had very little to say over the matter, and The Object was an unfortunate casualty of circumstance. While they are present, they are forced to be passive factors.

This is not to say that the dynamics in this case study are simple. Here, the Hermitage Amsterdam is split in two roles that are somehow at odds with each other. As The Museum, it has spent decades cultivating a relationship that, as The Activist, it has chosen to sever in the span of a moment. But it also visibly struggles to juggle between the two. The Hermitage Amsterdam severed ties with the State Hermitage Museum, but continues to bank on the Hermitage name for its repute and power to attract a public. The Hermitage Amsterdam condemned Russia's actions, but fails to go beyond that initial declaration. It was an action that was radical for The Museum, but too tame for The Activist. In trying to embody both roles, it satisfied neither.

Nor did The Public or The Object have to be passive. Reactions to the closing of the *Russian avant-garde | Revolution in the arts* exhibit varied, but members of The Public were not given a platform to discuss or express those reactions. Without it, those voices largely go unheard.

The Object, too, is silenced when it could have amplified the strength of sentiment. Severing ties with the State Hermitage Museum meant the dismantling of an exhibit that explored reactions to momentous and often controversial regimes as conveyed through material objects. The potential of such an exhibit, given the political situation at this time, to evoke thought and discussion could have been significant but was never allowed a chance.

Chapter 4: The Dilemma of The Public

It very quickly became clear that depending on academic literature, news sources, press statements, and social media pages were a poor means for understanding how The Public would react to the incidents described in these case studies. Access plays a large role in this.

Academia suffers from a general reputation of exclusivity, with poor communication between those who are part of it and those who are not (Massarani & Peters, 2016, p. 1166). This is reflected in the difficulty of attaining access to the output of the academic community. Academic literature often requires a subscription to a particular journal, or a payment for a single chapter or article. The majority of the sources used for this thesis were accessed through the Leiden University library catalogue, which is only granted to active students. Finding alternate ways to access them would have been an expense that many would not be able to justify.

Those trying to access news sources face comparable issues. In the past decade, more and more online news journals have come to depend on subscriptions for funding (Tobbit, 2020). Those who do not subscribe might eventually face a partial or whole pay wall. This is notable especially amongst journals that have established a reputation for high quality content, such as but not limited to *The New York Times, The Financial Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Times,* etc. As a result, these news sources have become increasingly more exclusionary, the majority of their content funded by and targeted to those who are highly educated and who have high incomes (Benson, 2019, p. 149).

Press statements from several of the museums affected in the case studies are available on the museums' websites, sometimes in several languages. But finding these press statements, or even knowing they exist, can be an awkward experience. Sometimes only press statements from a certain window of time will be available. Sometimes, the weblinks will not work. Sometimes, the museum will not publish their press statements on their websites, but will offer the contact information of their communications department, if they have one, or whoever is acts as public liaison if they do not. And if a visitor would wish to clarify those

press statements with whomever is behind the contact information, a reply, satisfactory or not, is never guaranteed.

Social media offers, at face value, a more open platform for members of The Public to engage with. Except, from the case studies we know that the social media activity around these incidents does not always reflect reality. The Stolen Goods Tour, for example, showed an amount of social media activity that was disproportionate to the amount of physical activity that actually happened – in other words, the impact of the incidents might be more significant than suggested by the *likes* and *retweets* they received.

In sum, there is no easy way to assess The Public's opinion or role in the case studies, let alone on the intricacies of how the different variables interact. An attempt was made to use the abovementioned sources in Chapter 3 in regards to The Public, but this largely seemed to fall short. Not only is there financial access to consider, but also the personal inclinations of those trying to gain access. None of the media mentioned till now is without bias, and this is reflected in who reads, watches, and reacts to it (Rauch, 2019, p. 23). Even without obstacles preventing access to these sources, the insight they would provide is likely too specific to a certain demographic.

It was felt that an attempt needed to be made to reach a larger, more varied audience and provide them all with the same set of questions. Ultimately, it was decided that a survey would be the best way to collect such data.

This chapter discusses why surveys were considered to be the best method of data collection, how the survey was designed, how it was distributed, and how the data was processed.

4.1: Choosing a Method of Data Collection

Upon deciding that The Public would best be mapped using a more involved methodology, the knee-jerk reaction was to conduct a survey using in person interviews to gather data. Interviews are an attractive means for collecting data because they allow for elaboration (Secor, 2010, p. 198). If the interviewer

has not posed a question clearly, they can explain. If an interviewee does not answer a question satisfactorily, the line of questioning can always circle back. But conducting interviews would have posed several logistical problems. Not only is it a labour, cost, and time intensive process to conduct the interviews, but also to process them (Rea & Parker, 2005). Collecting and analysing a large sample would not have been feasible for an MA thesis. Furthermore, one must take into consideration the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Though countries around the world are in various stages of dealing with the virus, and statistics dictate that COVID-19 related deaths and cases are declining on a global scale, as recently as in a press release given 1 June 2022 the World Health Organization continues to advise caution (World Health Organization, 2022). This would have added another layer of organisation, where the safety and comfort of both the interviewer and interviewee would have had to been ensured.

Both the strengths and the logistical difficulties of conducting in person interviews would come to define why it was not a fitting methodology for this thesis. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the aim was to expose a large, diverse sample pool with the same sets of questions. Getting lost in the narrative of a small sample of interviewees would not have achieved that.

The other option was to conduct the survey using an online questionnaire. Questionnaires do not allow for the same level of interaction as an interview would, but they are a tried and tested method of understanding large scale trends based on the data of a limited sample (Iarossi, 2006, p. 95; Rea & Parker, 2005). Questionnaires have been used in a myriad of different fields, and there are several ways in which it can be designed in order to deliver accurate results. Some of these cannot be implemented under the parameters of this research, such as testing and changing the questionnaire repeatedly, or distributing it via several platforms over an extended period of time. Nor would the questionnaire be available to those who have limited or no access to the internet (Rea & Parker, 2005). But the positives of the online questionnaire outweighed the negatives. The accuracy of the collected data can be increased by formulating clear and concise questions (Iarossi, 2006, p. 27). Distribution platforms are growing their databases

and their abilities to monitor participant quality (Palan & Schitter, 2018, p. 25). In only a few days, enough sample data can be gathered to deliver reliable results (Secor, 2010, p. 197).

In regards to ethical practices, questionnaires have both benefits and disadvantages. In terms of benefits, a disclaimer is often shown before the survey starts. The participant is allowed to cease involvement at any stage of the questionnaire, and there is less chance of ambiguous consent compared to methods like in-person interviews. Furthermore, while they are often anonymous, online questionnaires can be made using programmes that are transparent with how they use and store personal data.

In terms of disadvantages, distribution platforms will often incentivise participants using payment, so if it is unavoidable it is necessary to find a platform that is transparent with their financial policies (Iarossi, 2006, p. 150; Palan & Schitter, 2018, p. 25). That being said, monetary incentive would have little impact on the results of this thesis, as it does not aim to promote products or businesses.

In sum, it was determined that an online questionnaire would be the most effective manner of data collection available. Limited time meant that there was no real time for trial and error. The questionnaire needed to be understandable to a wide range of people, with questions that had a clear purpose in regards to this research.

4.2: Designing the Questionnaire

Designing the questionnaire happened in phases. The first phase consisted of determining the aim of the survey, which, as it has been established, is to reach a large, varied audience, provide them with the same questions and content, and then record the variation in their responses. But it also seemed prudent that the participants' understanding of what The Museum is, and what their experience with The Museum has been, should be questioned.

This was manifested in three main lines of questioning. The first revolved around what the participant thought the role of The Museum is in society. The second

revolved around the participants' experience with The Museum. The third revolved around how the participants' views and experiences translated into practice.

Preliminary research is important for having a well-structured questionnaire that will deliver informative results (Secor, 2010, p. 201). For this, the literature review in Chapter 2 provided a source of research for all three of the lines of questioning. The case studies in Chapter 3 also provided a source of research, but it also brought attention to a significant logistical problem.

The literature review deals with theories and concepts that are meant to be universally applicable. The case studies revolve around incidents that occurred throughout Europe. It is not feasible to conduct a survey with a questionnaire on either a global scale or on a European scale given the time, funding, and personnel limitations of this research. Given that two of the case studies are set in the Netherlands, it was decided that the questionnaires would be distributed there. Beyond this the questionnaire was designed for a random sample.

The questionnaire was created using Qualtrics. Conscious that it would only be distributed over the internet, it was formatted so that it would be clearly legible not only on a computer screen, but also on a tablet and smartphone.

In addition to the questions slides, the participants were given slides with explanation. The first slide included general information: the purpose of the survey, how the data would be used, what steps are taken to assure privacy, what institution it was affiliated with, how long it is expected to take, acknowledgement that the participant could decide to stop at any time, and an email address that could be contacted in case of inquiry. By continuing with the questionnaire, the participant was agreeing to be a part of the study. Every time a new section of the questionnaire began, it was marked by a slide explaining what was expected during that part. The questionnaire ended with a slide offering the participants sources if they wished to read more into the topics. These slides are an important part of maintaining strong ethical practices.

Question formulation is an important contributor to the success of a questionnaire. A question should be clearly written, keeping in mind not only how

it contributes to answering the research questions but also how well informed the participant is (Iarossi, 2006, p. 28). The three lines of questioning mentioned above all revolve around the participants' opinion. No in-depth information that could not be provided in a brief summary was provided. Effort was made so that the participant did not feel pressured to provide a 'correct' answer, as these do not exist in the context of this research, and the participant might otherwise be inclined to give moderated answers.

Basic information – age range, gender, and level of education – was requested at the start, but the participant was also presented with an option not to reveal those details if they so wished. These were straightforward and meant to serve simple demographic information when processing the data. The participants were not given questions regarding ethnicity or nationality, as it was determined that this thesis looked at The Public as a single unit, rather than different factions.

The first line of questioning, concerning what the participant thinks the role of the museum is in society, consists of six questions. The first question – "What do you think the purpose of the museum? – is a multiple-choice question where more than one answer can be marked. The answers provided have all been suggested in existing literature, but fall on a spectrum. On the one end of the spectrum, the museum is a static space where history is preserved, and on the other end of the spectrum, it is a space that explores and maybe even incites change. In the second question, the participant is given the same possible answers, except that it asks them what the museum is not. The rest of the questions in this section have a similar aim, but are formatted in a matrix table where participants are asked to mark to what extent they agree with a given statement (see Fig 4.2.1).

Fig 4.2.1: Matrix table for questions in section one of the questionnaire

The second line of questioning, concerning how the participant has experienced museums, consists of eleven questions. All but one, which asks how

frequently the participant has visited museums, are again formatted in matrix tables. These questions are organised in three groups, to make it easier for the participant to process. The first asks how they feel when they go to a museum in an attempt to understand whether the museum is a place they can engage (*When I go to the museum I feel welcomed. When I go to the museum I feel like I can approach the staff. When I go to the museum I feel like I have to act in a certain way.*). The second asks about what they think about the contents of museums in an attempt to determine whether they are able to engage critically (*When I go to the museum I do not always agree what is shown in their displays. When I go to the museum I do not question whether what is shown in their displays is correct.*). The last group of questions consists of a matrix table offering two statements aimed at determining whether the participant could understand that going to a museum might be an emotional experience, if not for them, then for someone else.

The third and last line of questioning, concerning how the previous sections translate into practice, consist of short summaries of the two case studies assessed in Chapter 3 set in the Netherlands. The information that was largely circulated in the press was provided, but the summaries offer only a brief overview of the incidents not only to prevent any biased wording but also to prevent the participant to be overwhelmed by detail. Each of the summaries is followed by a series of matrix questions asking the participant to mark to what degree they agreed or disagreed with statements about the incident. The aim of this section is to investigate whether there are identifiable links between assumption, experience, and practice (for example, for the questions posed for the Afrika Museum case study: if there is a high number of participants who strongly disagree that museums should take a stance on social or political issues, will there be a comparably high number of participants who strongly agree that the activists should be heavily punished for their role in the incident? Likewise, would there be a high number of participants who strongly disagreed with the Hermitage Amsterdam's decision to sever ties with Russia?).

The questionnaire was reviewed by five individuals who assessed whether the questions: were worded clearly, flowed, and made sense in regards to the lines

of questioning. If there were any grammatical mistakes, or if anything was unclear, or if anything seemed unfitting, a decision was made on whether to improve the question or remove it altogether.

The questionnaire originally consisted of fifty questions and was estimated to take the participants fifteen minutes to complete, but after these reviews the survey was streamlined to thirty-eight questions and was estimated to take participants seven minutes to complete.

A sample of five is not significant enough for it to be considered a full pre-test, where the numbers of the sample group tend to be around twenty to forty participants (Rea & Parker, 2005). Though a full pre-test would have been ideal, time restrictions made this unfeasible. Therefore, that first review was the only one performed before the questionnaire was distributed.

The complete final survey questionnaire, as well as the participant results, can be found in Appendix B1.

4.3: Distributing the Questionnaire

According to the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), the Netherlands has an estimated population of around 17.6 million. Of these 17.6 million, only a sample would have to fill in the questionnaire to make it possible to establish trends we can expect to see throughout the entire population (Ponto, 2015, p. 169). Various factors can influence the sample. Age, nationality, sex, proficiency in a particular language – these are examples of factors that can influence the sample size. The only restrictions for the participants in this study is that they lived in the Netherlands and that they were the age of majority, which in the Netherlands is eighteen.

This already reduces the size of the population this survey targets. The following figures are all gathered from the most recently completed CBS reports, from 2021 (www.cbs.nl). Per January 2021, the population of the Netherlands was 17.34 million, with around 3.3 million being under the age of eighteen. That leaves a population of 14.04 million that needs to be assessed.

A simple sample size can be calculated if the following factors are known: population size, which is 14.04 million; the margin of error, which is typically given a value of 5%; the desired level of confidence, which set at 85% for this survey; and the standard of deviation, which was entered at 50% (Iarossi, 2006, p. 98; www.qualtrics.com). The formula can be found in Appendix B2, but for ease the calculations were determined using an online sample size calculator. For a confidence level of 85% it was determined that the sample size needed at least two hundred and seven participants.

The questionnaire was distributed using Prolific. Prolific is an online platform through which researchers are able to attract participants for their studies. Prolific boasts of a participant pool of 130.000 members living in OECD countries, excepting Turkey, Lithuania, Colombia and Costa Rica (www.prolific.co). The platform allows for various pre-screening options, such as age, gender, nationality, ethnicity and student status (Palan & Schitter, 2018, p. 25). In an effort to keep to the parameters of a random survey, the only one implemented for this study was that all participants had to be situated in the Netherlands, and since nationality and ethnicity were not asked for in the questionnaire, this data is unavailable.

To use Prolific, researchers are required to pay money. The cost of services is dictated by how much the researcher is willing to pay the participants per hour; at the time this questionnaire was distributed, Prolific requires a minimum wage of six GBP per hour, but beyond this the researcher can dictate how much they are willing to compensate the participant. Participants are given a time limit to complete the questionnaire based on how long the researcher estimates it takes to complete, and compensation is given only once there is proof of completion. The participants are given this information – the rate of compensation and the time limitations - before taking the questionnaire, and by partaking they agree to those terms (Palan & Schitter, 2018, p. 26).

The questionnaire was active on Prolific between 27 May to 3 June 2022. A total of 260 responses were collected and recorded.

4.4: Predictions and Expectations

It was believed that there would be a significant link between assumption, experience, and practice. This link could be summarised as such: participants who think of museums as spaces where history is preserved will not experience going to the museum as very emotional, and will disagree with the antics of the activists and disapprove of the museum getting involved in politics. Likewise: participants who think of museum as spaces that shape our understanding of history will experience going to the museum as very emotional, and will think the antics of the activists as very valid and agree with the museum getting involved in politics. This is the extreme.

A more moderate link can be expected. There might be participants who think that the museum should be neutral, but who understand that going to a museum might be emotional to some, and who think that the activists should have found another way to protest. There might be participants who think that the museum should take part in political and social debates, but who do not experience going to a museum as emotional at all, and who think the museum should not remove controversial objects from display.

A questionnaire can leave much room for ambiguity. This research was conceived under the notion that the aforementioned link exists. So, while the data might end up revealing a more moderate or non-existent link, the extreme would be expected and even desired.

4.5: Processing the Data

The full data set collected from the survey can be found in Appendix B1. While 260 responses have been recorded, not every participant has answered every question. As such, this section will discuss in terms of percentages, referring to the percentage of the people who have answered a specific question.

Of the 260 respondents, 44% were male, 54% female, and 2% nonbinary. Up to 80% of the participants were between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, and have been to a museum more than ten times over the course of their life, suggesting that it is at least a somewhat regular occasion for them. 78% have

completed or at least have had experience with a university education. Data such as ethnicity or sexuality is otherwise not known, but these are just two examples of variables that would have been interesting to explore considering that many museums are changing the way they approach subjects concerning gender, sexuality, and race. Arguably, the aim of having a diverse sample of participants is not successfully met regardless of ethnicity or sexuality, as the majority of them are young and highly educated.

When asked about what the purpose of the museum is, the majority marked the following options: displaying objects of artistic importance, displaying objects of historical importance, preserving history, and educating visitors. Around 14% of participants thought that the purpose of the museum was to be a place that can be highly emotional, but story-telling and education were seen to be marked important by up to 74%. Likewise, while only 37% of participants think the purpose of the museum is to give an unbiased account of history, 40% think the museum is a place to interpret history, and only 2% think it should reflect the opinions of those working in the museum. Broadly, this suggests that the museum is a place where history is to be preserved and be recited, but where interpretation is not the purpose even though there is an awareness that what is being displayed is not unbiased. This seems somewhat contradictory; it is difficult to fathom how story telling can exist without emotion or interpretation.

This may be clarified in the analysis of the second question, where participants were asked what they thought was *not* the purpose of the museum. Displaying objects of artistic and historical importance were left unmarked, suggesting that even if not every participant thought that they formed the purpose of the museum, they are at least not contrary to it. Interestingly, 20% of participants thought it was not the purpose of the museum to give an unbiased account of history, but 24% of the participants thought it was also not the purpose of the museum to interpret history. 29% of participants thought that the museum is not a place for fostering emotions, but 32% of the participants said the same about it being a place for fostering neutrality. Significantly, 80% of participants

thought that the museum was not meant to reflect the opinions of those working in the museum. Overall the trends noted in the answers of the previous question match the trends seen in the answers to this question, emphasising that the museum is not a place for interpretation whilst also not being a place for neutrality. This continues to feel contradictory, but it is difficult to get conclusive statements from questions where participants can choose to mark or neglect as many answers as they like.

A more direct line of questioning follows. The majority of participants were neutral or leaning towards the negative when asked whether museums should take a stance on social or political issues. However, the majority also thought that the museum should be able to display whatever they want, and that they should not have to change their displays if they make people uncomfortable. This is more clearly contradictory, as a display that makes people uncomfortable is at least somewhat controversial, and if a museum were to make any decision, whether this decision is to take down the display or to keep it, they are arguably taking a stance.

What follows were a series of questions aimed at understanding how the participant experienced going to museums. The majority of participants agreed that they felt as though going to the museum warranted certain behaviour. When writing the question, the intent was to ask whether the participant felt the need to adhere to a special etiquette, but it may also be that the participant understood the question to mean an alertness or an inquisitiveness that is otherwise not expected in daily life. Despite this, 83% of participants agreed that they felt welcomed when they went to a museum, 71% marked that they felt comfortable in museums, and 68% felt like they could approach staff with their questions. Whether the participants mean to convey that they feel inhibited or encouraged in their exploration of the museum, for the majority this does not impact their comfort. When asked whether they agree with or question the content of museum displays, around 34% answered that they did not question the museum, and 37% answered that they did. However, what is notable is that a significant portion of participants marked neutral for these questions. If questioning the museum's displays is at one

end of participant engagement, and not questioning the museum the other, then it could be interpreted that the circa 28% participants that marked neutral are displaying detachment.

Lastly, the majority of participants answered that, while going to the museum was not an emotional experience for themselves, they could understand why it could be emotional for others.

Responding to the questions asked in relation to the Berg en Dal case study the majority of the participants agreed that the activists had a right to protest, but the majority also disagreed with the manner in which they carried out the protest. Whilst 40% agreed that the activists should be punished, only 1% thought that they should be punished heavily. As for the role of the museum, around 66% of the participants agreed that the museum reacted well to the incident. The majority also agree that the museum is the best place to keep objects like the *ntadi,* but that the museum should put more effort into finding out whether those objects were stolen, and return them if the evidence suggests they are.

Similarly, 38% of participants thought the Hermitage Amsterdam should have stayed neutral when presented with that particular case study, as opposed to the 45% who thought the museum should have stayed neutral. 42% of participants thought that the museum should have taken their stance in another way, and 42% percent disagreed, whereas only 37% agreed with the museum's decision.

The responses to the case studies suggest that the majority of participants think activism should be allowed, even when it contradicts what is generally considered an acceptable way of expressing discontent.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1: The Object

From the very beginning of this thesis, it was deemed important to determine the role of The Object. This was because even though The Object differed from the other variables in that it could not speak or protest or react in the same ways, it seemed like a constant presence. In section 2.1, several pages were dedicated to theory supporting the idea that The Object, while physically inanimate, was a complex thing with agency, and the ability to transform and inspire.

At a glance, the case studies seemed to support this. The *ntadi* was present in every photo the media put out in light of the protest in Berg en Dal. The Gweagal Shield, the Hoa Hakanana'ia, the Parthenon Marbles – these were the central focus of The Stolen Goods Tour(s) held in the British Museum, which drew in individuals from around the world. In the Hermitage Amsterdam, paintings were the medium to protest against war. On the streets of Warsaw, the removal of art triggered a massive public outcry.

As the case studies were studied more carefully, however, it also seemed entirely possible that this interpretation of the role of The Object may be exaggerated. In Berg en Dal, Diyabanza picked up the *ntadi*, but has said openly in interviews that his choice of cultural artefact is partly decided by how easy it is to grab (Diyabanza, 2020). The focus of UDC's livestream, and of the many articles written on the incident, is not the *ntadi*, but Diyabanza himself. Likewise, The Gwaegal Shield, the Hoa Hakanana'ia, and the Parthenon Marbles were an effective visual aid, but different speakers could have chosen different artefacts and the message would not have changed. The Hermitage Amsterdam dismantled their entire exhibit to emphasize their condemnation of Russia's escalating its conflict with Ukraine, when they could have made a similar point while keeping the exhibit together. In Warsaw, protests seemed more focused on the banana as a prop than the actual artworks that inspired the use of the fruit. A closer look at these examples cast doubt on the idea that The Object should be looked at as anything other than a very effective tool.

This further calls for a reassessment of The Object's value. Chapter 2 emphasised the political, cultural, and emotional value of The Object above the economical. The idea behind this was that even something that was not economically significant – perhaps as a specimen it is too common, or too fragmented, or simply not widely sought after – could be powerful and influential. The *ntadi* is a good example of this: it is made out of soapstone, which is not a particularly noteworthy sort of material, and many *minadi* have survived. And yet, the *ntadi* was made to contain the essence of a venerated ancestor, is an example of well-honed artistic craftmanship, was believed capable of offering protection, was a memento of colonial enterprise, and so on. On top of all that, Diyabanza ensured that it cultivated at least some association with a fight for decolonisation. A powerful and illustrious history, but would not necessarily fetch a high prize if put to auction.

But disregarding economic value entirely would be neglectful – not only of The Object itself, but also of the impact of manipulating it. The Amsterdam Hermitage removing the exhibition does not lower the economic value of the paintings, but it did significantly impact the revenue and therefore brought the survival of the museum itself into question. If the Afrika Museum and the British Museum had to consider returning all their contested artefacts, their revenue would also be impacted. In this way, The Object gains another sort of power, but even then we must question the difference between an object with agency and a commodity, and how big the schism between the two really is (Appadurai, 1986, p. 13).

Another noteworthy point of discussion is the origin of The Object. Placing emphasis on the object life cycle, while suggesting alternative definitions of value, also gives the impression that such value is cultivated with the passage of time. This was addressed in Chapter 2, where Gell (1998) and Kopytoff (1986) were, among others, used to fill out what would have otherwise been a largely archaeological line of thinking.

Instead, as is seen with *Libérons Le Louvre'*s performance, the circumstances can also *create* The Object. Somehow it is difficult to reconcile that performance with

The Object, as every other example is not only older but also intuits more solidly, more permanently.

The concept of permanence in the context of The Object is an interesting one to dissect, especially given the framework of this thesis.

The other Objects – the *ntadi* in the Afrika Museum, the colonial trophies in the British Museum, the iconic examples of feminist art in the National Museum in Warsaw, as well as the nationalistic interpretations of art in the Hermitage Amsterdam – suggest to the casual observer that permanence is something we can measure. After all, what is the difference between Natalia LL's *Consumer Art* and *Libérons Le Louvre*'s protest performance piece? Both of them are, in essence, a theatrical interpretation of generational disquiet. But where Natalia LL filmed and photographed her performance, *Libérons Le Louvre*'s performance was designed to be seen in its entirety exactly once. Ten years from now, a curious individual may still be able to search for and find *Consumer Art*. They will not be able to find *Libérons Le Louvre*'s performance.

Perhaps here it would be apt to insert the following expression: "out of sight, out of mind". This, however, rankles. If permanence is so fragile, then all it would take is to burn the *ntadi,* shatter the colonial trophies, bury the feminist art under something even more controversial, and scatter a collection of paintings that together supposedly tell a nationalistic narrative.

Furthermore, *Libérons Le Louvre*'s performance challenges the assumption often made in this thesis that The Object and The Museum are intertwined. This ties into the difficulty regarding permanence. It is simpler to assess The Object when the provenance and provenience have been documented, and there is even the possibility of visiting it in person. This is not to say that *Libérons Le Louvre*'s performance is an outlier – there are likely many other similar incidents, where an assessment such as the ones in this thesis cannot be made just because it is not properly recorded. As such, this thesis assesses but a few ways in which The Object takes form, and can only really speculate to the rest.

5.2: The Museum

One of the defining characteristics of The Museum as defined in this thesis is that it is a single unit. Employees and organisational boards are seen as extensions of this unit. The incident in the National Museum in Warsaw (see section 3.3), where mounting pressure grew amongst the staff until they took action against the directorship, challenges this. It raises questions about what separates this incident from the others that were assessed, why the staff felt the need to fight for this one but not for the others.

It also suggests that parts of The Museum can be removed and replaced. The resignation of Jerzy Miziołek did not bring about any other significant staff changes, beyond the interim director who took over the position. It also did not fully remove the threat of censorship; given the political climate of Poland in general, and how easy it can be for important positions to be filled with only autarchic vetting, such threats are to last. It highlights how dependent The Museum is on external support – in this case it was the support of the Minister of Culture, but similar claims can be made of the British Museum and the Louvre's refusal to break ties with their oil sponsors. Indeed, Miziołek's resignation comes across as performative, an action to appease the protestors without having to make systemic changes.

If such performance is a theme, it can also be identified in the incident with the Hermitage Amsterdam. Severing ties with the State Hermitage is a drastic action, but like Miziołek's resignation, it allowed for the shifting of blame. Except instead of it being *'We had an unsuitable director, who we got rid of',* it became '*It was the actions of Russia, who we got rid of'.* In other words, The Museum is not a stranger to the use of performative activism (Lynch, 2018, p. 111).

The incidents in the Afrika Museum, the British Museum, and the Louvre, on the other hand, seem comparatively honest in the way The Museum handled them. The actions of the UDC were condemned in the press by the Afrika Museum, The Stolen Good Tour(s) were allowed with no disruption by the British Museum, and the Louvre roped off the room where the theatre performance was taking place and did not mention it any further. These are straightforward

responses, but not conductive to conversation – noteworthy, because, as was established in section 2.2, dialogue is central to change.

5.3: The Activist

Even though it was stated in section 2.3 that it does not matter what the political affiliations of The Activist are for the parameters of this thesis, all the case studies that were chosen could be identified as aligning with what is understood to be Western left-wing ideologies. This does not mean that it is a debate between the political left and right. In the Afrika Museum incident, The Museum had a history of addressing repatriation and working to provide a transparent inquiry process. Likewise, the British Museum acknowledges climate change and discusses the effects it has on the cultural and physical landscapes. So it does not have to be a total clash between the two; protests can also occur when there is much they see eye to eye on.

Another point of interest is how broad the definition of The Activist is, especially when considering that political affiliation plays no role. When the National Museum in Warsaw had the three art pieces removed with the explanation that Miziołek did not agree with displaying such subjects, was this also not a feat of activism as defined in this thesis?

The merging between The Activist and The Object as seen in the incident in the Louvre further challenges the way the previous is defined. Until now, The Activist has largely been described as a reactionary variable. But *Libérons Le Louvre* offer very clear insight on how The Activist can produce talking points rather than only criticizing the ones developed by others. Some might recognise that such displays are, in simple terms, performances. But these performances differ from that of the Hermitage Amsterdam. The latter comes across as a means for avoiding difficult questions, whereas The Activist wants to bring them to the fore. The incidents at the British Museum, the Afrika Museum, and the National Museum in Warsaw offer similar insight, though these may be overwhelmed by the presumed direct nature of their methods. In all of these cases, The Activists are able to be a variable that creates rather than just confronts.

While there is merit to the statement that activism is confrontational, there is also merit to the idea that the confrontational aspect of activism is spurred from a feeling of neglect, where they cannot access the other conversation partner (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012, p. 72). Ultimately, they are defined by their actions in the perception of the public, as their attempts at dialogue are often not addressed.

5.4: The Public

To reiterate, the understanding at the beginning of this research is that The Public, while being the largest of the variables in size, was more a critical spectator than anything.

One of the issues that was identified early on was the diversity that The Public encompasses. By distributing an online survey that was not associated to a single exhibit, nor dependent on the participant at meeting requirements, it was hoped that a larger audience could be reached. Unfortunately, the participant sample of the survey was, contrary to intent, quite heterogenous after all. Not only did time and resource limitations mean that it was decided to only distribute the survey in the Netherlands, but the majority of participants were of a similar age and education. Still, the results of the survey delivered useful insights.

Firstly, the majority of participants did not think The Museum had to be neutral, and similarly the majority thought that activism regardless of the form it took should be allowed. This paints another view than the responses left on social media accounts or under articles would suggest.

Secondly, the majority of participants felt comfortable when visiting The Museum, even if they did have to moderate their behaviour. They also did not struggle with questioning the authority of The Museum, but were not emotionally invested enough to consider taking action.

The lack of demographic information known about the participants could mean that those who do not feel comfortable in The Museum did not engage with the survey in the same numbers. Either way, the results of the survey are not entirely consistent with what was observed using other sources, or what was expected based on the theoretical background. The uncertainty on how to

reconcile these different outcomes can only confidently be done through further
research.

5.5: When the Pieces Refuse to Fit

This assessment was done to puzzle together how the variables functioned
on their own as well as how they functioned together. This assumes that the
variables are distinctly separate entities. This does not seem to be the case.
Whereas there are case studies where the lines between variables are clearly
drawn, such as in the Afrika Museum case study, in the other case studies the
variables at times blur together. This does not mean that there is no distinction
between them at all, but rather their roles are more malleable than originally
thought.

The Object needs to be reconsidered as a variable. Every part of the
assessment has shown that The Object is in its own right powerful and valuable
beyond economic and political contexts. But in the context of this thesis, The
Object is not able to change or impact the narrative in and of itself. Though it
plays a significant role in the case studies, this role is as a tool. It should not be
assessed equally as the other variables, but rather it should be assessed on how it
is utilized by the other variables.

In regards to the other variables, they have shown to be more complicated
than their original definitions. The Museum largely works as a single unit, but as
seen in the National Museum in Warsaw, pressure can build up to the point that
internal conflict leads to cracks visible to whoever looks. The Activist seems to be
largely cohesive in the case studies, but not making distinction between the goals
of different groups results in a lot of the nuance of their plights to be lost. The
Public is too large a variable to study comprehensively without at least
recognizing that it will result in some sweeping generalizations. Whilst The
Museum and The Activist are shaped by their respective goals, The Public does
not even have to appear as a unified body. Here, again, the case study with the
National Museum in Warsaw could offer an exception, but that was arguably

more so a case of The Activist appealing to a large sector of The Public, than the entirety of The Public taking up arms.

Dialogue has been identified to be a central aspect of The Activist. Many of the protests discussed in this thesis are the result of The Activist not feeling as though they are being heard. *BP or Not BP?* has outright stated that they will continue their protests until the British Museum has ended BP's sponsorship of their exhibits. *Libérons Le Louvre* likewise mainly protest the Louvre's ties to oil. It is plausible that the first two would cease their protests if their demands are met. Admittedly, having the British Museum and the Louvre capitulate to those terms to stop the protests is no less a one-sided conversation than those institutes waving the protestors off. But dialogue does not have to lead to either extremes; instead, it could work towards a better understanding of each variable's motivations, and perhaps eventually towards a satisfactory conclusion. Some discussions are more sensitive to The Museum than others, such as those about repatriation and decolonization. The Afrika Museum, for example, is working towards a more transparent collection, and has made all the necessary information available to aid in repatriation requests. But this information is heavy in legal jargon, and is only the start to a long process for what is already an emotional issue. It is not difficult to understand why activists like Diyabanza would take radical action in a slow-moving conversation where he is otherwise at a disadvantage.

In all these cases, the least dialogue is conducted with The Public, most of whom learn about these developments from the media, and build their knowledge on sensationalised, sometimes even incorrect, information. The Stolen Goods Tour(s) are good examples of how open dialogue between The Activist and members of The Public help to explain why something that might not be emotionally charged for them is so important to others. The Museum, with their lack of accessibility, is an example of the opposite. Dialogue is most beneficial when it is open to everyone, not just the affluent and educated. But it must be recognised that part of the issue that it is extremely difficult to make the dialogue accessible to everyone,

when, as established, there is so much variability; the Stolen Goods Tour(s) worked so well mainly because they were done on a small scale.

This is not a reason to forgo dialogue. The Hermitage Amsterdam case study is an example of this: The Museum, making a unilateral decision to dismantle an entire exhibition in a suspiciously performative attempt at activism, cutting off a dialogue that could have contributed to the building of knowledge and to reflection.

If anything, this shows that while the puzzle pieces might not fit together perfectly, it remains important to understand how we can still create the bigger picture.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to get a better understanding of the dynamic of the museum in light of societal shifts to the point where a solid foundation for future research could be built. In an effort to meet this aim, four variables were identified as being constants in cases where the museum is confronted with these shifts, which often resulted in protests. These variables are The Object, The Museum, The Activist, and The Public. The assessment of these variables included interdisciplinary literature review of the theory concerning them separately, followed by an assessment of how they took shape in case studies from around Europe, and finally a survey in which the participants' understanding of these dynamics were ascertained.

Three research questions were posed in order to focus the parameters of this research. Here, they are answered.

Sub question 1: What makes certain feats of activism acceptable, and others unacceptable? Perhaps unsurprisingly, the form of activism also greatly impacts how it is received. Diyabanza received a court date for his brand of activism, although the intention behind it was just as theatrical as that of *Libérons Le Louvre* and *BP or Not BP?*'s efforts. The latter two received no punishment and are considered, at worst, to have been nuisances. The actions by the Amsterdam Hermitage, on the other hand, are, if not necessarily applauded, understood. The actions by The Public in front of the National Museum in Warsaw are celebrated. There is very little difference in the content of these feats of activism. In the discussion there was a suggestion of the absurd versus the respectable, but having bananas be the centre of attention is no less silly than dramatically lying on the floor of the Louvre. What seems to be a mark of acceptability is general mood; activism is acceptable as long as it is not too disruptive. The Louvre might not appreciate having to close one of their rooms for hours on end, but it does not drain the general goodwill that might be afforded to such a cause.

Sub Question 2: What is the role of The Object? The importance of this question lies in the realisation that The Object is not as easily defined as was initially thought. To a certain extent, this can also be seen in regards to the other variables,

as there is a certain malleability that the parameters of this research did not account for. The importance, or at least the prominence, of the variables can change depending on the situation. The difficulty with The Object is that such change is hard to account for considering that it is largely dependent on how others perceive it and therefore has little agency. The Object might have significant cultural, historical, economic, or political importance, but this does not translate to power. The Object only has as much power as is given to it, and therefore it might be more apt to consider it a tool for the variables to use rather than a variable itself.

Sub Question 3: How susceptible are these dynamics to change? Again we must consider the unexpected malleability of each variable. This malleability is demonstrated by the ability of the variables to take up the roles that were originally thought to be the jurisdiction of others. Whether this is true malleability is uncertain; there is always the possibility that it is a case of mimicry instead of transformation. Regardless, this is also what seemingly contributes to bringing about change. In the case study of the National Museum in Warsaw, it was the enormous pressure placed on The Museum by The Public taking up the mantle of The Activist which contributed to an act of censorship being rescinded, however temporarily.

This is the perfect introduction to the main question: *To what extent can we observe and establish the relationships that are central to the museum?* The reason why the sub-questions contribute to answering this larger one is that they explore whether these relationships can be fostered. The Activist is forced to consider whether their expression of discontent will be acknowledged and accepted. The Object's value is determined by those around it. The Public is often underestimated, and is difficult to mobilise. The motivations of The Museum are more complex than originally recognised. These reassessments make answering the main question difficult. While there is certainly reason to be optimistic in being able to establish the relationships that are central to the museum, it should also be recognised that more research needs to be conducted.

This thesis is brought to a close with some suggestions for that necessary future research. The first calls for a reassessment of classification as used in this thesis. It has already been acknowledged that the variables are umbrella terms. This was made clear when it became difficult to match the theoretical blueprints to what happened in the case studies. The Museum mimicking The Activist in the Hermitage Amsterdam incident, for example. Or The Activist equalling The Object in the Louvre incident. Or The Museum struggling within itself in the National Museum in Warsaw incident. But even though these examples create kinks in the classifications, this does not mean that it is entirely without merit. It is suggested that more case studies be similarly analysed so that the definitions of the variables can be improved upon.

The second concerns the manner in which the survey was designed and distributed. Online surveys like the one distributed for this thesis are a good way to reach a large audience, and the branches of questioning – what the participant thinks is the purpose of museums, how they experience museums, and how they apply this to real life situations – allow for comparisons to be made in a timely manner. But while the basic set up of the surveys is feasible, inquiries after demographic data should be considered. It is unreasonable to neglect such information under the guise of finding universal explanations, because it results in explanations that actually do not represent large swaths of the population.

Indeed, this is the case for much of this thesis. Future research should expand the parameters, accounting for the complexity that can be found within the variables. This means assessing case studies from around the world versus just Europe and interviewing different populations in an effort to truly understand the complex dynamics explored in this thesis.

In sum, this thesis offers the first drafts of a blue print to understanding the role of the museum in society. Implementing the suggestions proposed above would allow for further explorations that could lead to new avenues of thinking.

Abstract

Museums are faced with ever shifting societal norms, challenging what role it should play in discussing and shaping those norms. These challenges are expressed by protests, imploring and even demanding museums to make structural change. Much work has been done in Museum Studies to understand how museums are capable of weathering these demands, and even suggest that museums can lead the way in reform. This thesis is an attempt to better understand the reality of how museums respond to these shifts in order to construct a solid foundation that will allow for future research.

To do so, four variables have been identified that are consistently present in incidents were the museum is put to the test: The Object, The Museum, The Activist, and The Public. In order to better understand these variables on a theoretical, an interdisciplinary literature review has been carried out. To see how theory translates into practice, five case studies have been chosen wherein the variables are isolated and assessed: the first case study concerns the Afrika Museum in the Netherlands; the second case study concerns the British Museum in England; the third case study concerns the National Museum in Warsaw in Poland; the fourth case study concerns the Louvre in France; the fifth and final case study concerns the Hermitage Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Furthermore, an online survey was distributed focusing solely on The Public, as information from this variable's point of view was not easily found in academic literature. These methods allowed not only for understanding the variables when isolated, but also how they interacted with one another. Findings indicate that the role of each variables can only be defined in broad strokes, and that they are not always consistent. It is suggested that more research be done especially in the role of The Object, as this variable was the most difficult to clearly define. Furthermore, there is a lack of engagement with The Public that needs to be addressed; more comprehensive methods need to be utilised to bridge the chasm between museums and the audience they are trying to reach.

Word Count: 346

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Appendix A

The comments referenced in section 3.1. These are the comments in their original Dutch, taken from the article *Activisten nemen beeld mee uit Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal* published on the BNNVARA website.

Aart van de aap
11 sep. 2020 – 11:35

Die band met 'je land' snap ik niet zo. Ik denk internationaal. Internationalistisch. Ik bedoel, ik heb niet het gevoel dat bijvoorbeeld molens en klompen en kaas iets met mij te maken heeft. Ik heb niet de klomp uitgevonden. Ik loop niet eens op klompen. Ik voel mij cosmopoliet.

Deze zwarte nationalisten, denken in de kern eigenlijk gewoon als nationalisten. Het is de zwarte versie van het FVD. Ze voelen zich verbonden met hun achtergrond. Net zoals de FVD stemmers zich sterk verbonden voelen met hun achtergrond en cultuur. Maar omdat deze lieden zwart zijn, is het dan zogenaamd niet belachelijk.

Als een land Nederlandse kunst heeft, ga ik het dan jatten ? Nee, want het boeit me niets. Het is niet mijn kunst. Ik heb het niet gemaakt. Het was al nooit van mij.

Niemand snapt wat ik bedoel.

Vind ik het dan erg dat ze zo'n beeld jatten ? Eigenlijk kan ook dat me niet zoveel schelen. Je doet maar.

De vraag is alleen. Word hun leven er beter van ? Zal racisme afnemen, als je beelden jat en zwarte piet verbied ? Zullen racistische politieagenten dan ineens verdwijnen, als sneeuw voor de zon ?

Deze stellingen zullen vast allemaal 'racistisch' en 'wit' zijn etc.

↳ Log in om te reageren 👍 0   ⚑ Rapporteren

6 Reacties

Eric Minnens
11 sep. 2020 – 10:14

kolonialisme = criminalisme

Criminalisme heeft echt honderden jaren geduurd. Dan gaat het in de genen zitten hé? De volgende criminele stap is dan ook maar klein: ontkenning.

Wij, landen, overheden, musea, burgers ook, zijn in retrospectief, maar ook actueel, in feite crimineel. Dat maken deze activisten duidelijk.

↳ Log in om te reageren 👍 0   ⚑ Rapporteren

("Activisten nemen beeld mee uit Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal - Joop - BNNVARA," 2020)

Appendix B

B1
Complete Final Survey

This survey is part of an MA thesis written for the Faculty of Archaeology at Leiden University. The aim of the thesis is to assess the role of the museum in society.

The survey consists of three lines of questioning. The first relates to what you think the purpose of the museum is. The second relates to how you experience museums. The third relates to how you react to two case studies outlined in short texts. Previous knowledge of these case studies is not necessary to partake in this survey.

This survey is anonymous. There are three background questions concerning age, education, and gender identity, but you will have the option to not answer.

The survey should take around 7 minutes. Stopping the survey is possible at any time.

If you have any inquiries, please write an email to s1696467@vuw.leidenuniv.nl and a response will be sent out as soon as possible.

→

Q1

How do you identify?

Male

Female

Non-binary

None of the above

Prefer not to say

Q2

How old are you?

Under 18

18 - 24 years old

25 - 34 years old

35 - 44 years old

45 - 54 years old

55 - 64 years old

65+ years old

Prefer not to say

Q3

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Some primary school

Completed primary

Some Secondary school

Completed secondary school

Vocational or Similar

Some university but no degree

University Bachelors Degree

Graduate or professional degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, JD, MD, DDS etc.)

Prefer not to say

Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

The following are a series of questions that relate to what you think the purpose of the museum is.

→

Q4

What do you think the purpose of the museum is? It is possible to mark multiple answers.

To display objects of artistic importance	To reflect the opinions of those working in the museum
To display objects of historical importance	To educate visitors
To preserve history	To tell stories
To interpret history	To be a place that can be highly emotional
To give an unbiased account of history	To be neutral

Q5

What do you think is NOT the purpose of the museum? It is possible to mark multiple answers.

To display objects of artistic and historical importance	To reflect the opinions of those working in the museum
To display objects of historical importance	To educate visitors
To preserve history	To be a place that can be highly emotional
To interpret history	To be neutral
To give an unbiased account of history	

Q6

Please mark to what extent you agree with the following statements:

	I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neutral	I agree	I strongly agree
I think that the museum should take a stance on social issues	○	○	○	○	○
I think that the museum should take a stance on political issues	○	○	○	○	○
I think that the museum should be able to display whatever they want	○	○	○	○	○
I think that the museum should change their displays if it makes people uncomfortable	○	○	○	○	○

The following are a series of statements about how you experience going to the museum.

→

Q7

How many times have you visited a museum throughout your lifetime?

0-4

5-9

10-14

15 +

Q8

Please mark to what extent you agree with the following statements:

	I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neutral	I agree	I strongly agree
When I go to the museum I feel welcomed	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
When I go to the museum I feel like I have to behave in a certain way	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
When I go to the museum I feel comfortable	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
When I go to the museum I feel like I can approach the staff if I have questions	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Q9

Please mark to what extent you agree with the following statements:

	I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neutral	I agree	I strongly agree
When I go to the museum I do not always agree with what is shown in their displays	○	○	○	○	○
When I go to the museum I do not always agree with what they write in their displays	○	○	○	○	○
When I go to the museum I do not question whether what is shown in their displays is correct	○	○	○	○	○
When I go to the museum I do not question whether what is written in their displays is correct	○	○	○	○	○

Q10

Please mark to what extent you agree to the following statements:

	I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neutral	I agree	I strongly agree
Going to the museum is an emotional experience for me	○	○	○	○	○
I understand why going to the museum can be an emotional experience for others	○	○	○	○	○

This section will require you to read two texts. These texts will each outline a time where a Dutch museum has had to react to a political statement or situation.

The Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal, The Netherlands, shows traditional and contemporary African art. A lot of this art was collected by European missionaries who travelled through Africa to convert people to Catholicism. The Afrika Museum acknowledges this and aims to unite people by showing the diversity of African culture.

Unité Dignité Courage is a pan-African organisation that calls for the return of stolen African cultural items to Africa. The organisation has been linked to controversial actions in museums throughout Europe, most notably the Louvre in Paris.

On September 10 2020 five activists with Unité Dignité Courage came to the Afrika Museum and took a Congolese grave statue from its showcase. They took it outside and marched to the main road. There they were stopped and apprehended by police. The statue was returned to the museum unharmed, and the whole incident was filmed and streamed to social media.

The activists have said that they never wanted to steal the statue, only to use it to make their point. They would have returned the statue to the museum themselves. In a press statement, the museum said that they understand why the activists did it, but that they did not agree with their methods.

Q11

Please mark to what extent you agree to the following statements:

	I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neutral	I agree	I strongly agree
I think that the museum is the best place to keep the objects	○	○	○	○	○
I think that the museum should return objects if there is evidence they were stolen	○	○	○	○	○
I think that the museum should put more effort in finding out whether objects were stolen	○	○	○	○	○
I think that the museum reacted well to the incident with the activists	○	○	○	○	○

Q12

Please mark to what extent you agree with the following statements:

	I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neutral	I agree	I strongly agree
I think the activists had a right to protest	○	○	○	○	○
I think the activists had a right to protest the way they did	○	○	○	○	○
I think the activists should be punished	○	○	○	○	○
I think the activists should be punished heavily	○	○	○	○	○

Q13

Please mark to what extent you agree with the following statements:

	I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neutral	I agree	I strongly agree
I recall seeing this in the news	○	○	○	○	○
I have been given enough context to answer these questions	○	○	○	○	○

The Amstelhof is a building that was built in the 17th century, and it served as a care home for the elderly until 2007.

It was decided by the board of directors that the Amstelhof would be repurposed for a partnership with the State Hermitage Museum in Russia, and the building was renovated as a state of the art museum space. In 2009, the Amstelhof officially opened its doors as the Hermitage Amsterdam.

Throughout this partnership, the board of directors distanced the museum from the politics of Putin's Russia. Their reasoning was as follows: "...politics focuses on the reality of daily life, while our focus is on art treasures and movements that span centuries."

On February 24 2022, Putin launched an attack on Ukraine, escalating the the Russo-Ukranian war that has been ongoing since 2014. As a result, the board of directors of the Hermitage Amsterdam decided that they could no longer distance themselves from Russia's politics. On March 3 2022, the museum severed ties with the State Hermitage Museum.

The exhibition on Russian art, "Russian Avant-Garde | Revolution in the Arts" was subsequently closed to the public.

Q14

Please mark to what extent you agree to the following statements:

	I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neutral	I agree	I strongly agree
I think the museum should have stayed neutral	○	○	○	○	○
I think the museum should have taken their stance another way	○	○	○	○	○
I think the museum should not have made this decision without public approval	○	○	○	○	○
I think the museum made the right decision	○	○	○	○	○

Q15

Please mark to what degree you agree with the following statements:

	I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neutral	I agree	I strongly agree
I can understand why people would agree with this decision	○	○	○	○	○
I can understand why people would disagree with this decision	○	○	○	○	○

Q16

Please mark to what extent you agree with the following statements:

	I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neutral	I agree	I strongly agree
I recall seeing this in the news	○	○	○	○	○
I have been given enough context to answer these questions	○	○	○	○	○

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.

Your response has been recorded.

If you took this survey through Prolific, please enter the following completion code manually in the Prolific app: 44B66C0D

If you want to read more about the case studies mentioned in this survey, please refer to the following press releases:

The press release concerning the Afrika Museum:
https://www.afrikamuseum.nl/nl/over-het-afrika-museum/pers/poging-tot-ontvreemding-van-kongolees-grafbeeld-uit-afrika-museum

The press release concerning the Hermitage Amsterdam:
https://hermitage.nl/nl/pers/persberichten/hermitage-amsterdam-verbreekt-relatie-met-rusland/

B2

Results of Survey

These are the results of the survey discussed in Chapter 4. At times the totals will
not entirely add up, but this is to do with the manner in which they were rounded
in the programme.

Q1

Gender Identity	
Male	112
Female	138
Non-Binary	7
Prefer Not to Say	0
Total	257

Q2

Age	
Under 18	0
18-24	103
25-34	104
35-44	29
45-54	15
55-64	4
65+	2
Prefer Not to Say	0
Total	257

Q3

Education	
Some primary school	0
Completed primary	1
Some secondary school	1
Completed secondary school	38
Vocational or similar	15
Some university but no degree	47
University Bachelors Degree	90
Graduate or professional degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, JD, MD, DDS etc.)	65
Prefer not to say	0
Total	257

Q4
What do you think is the purpose of the museum?

Statement	Answers	%
To display objects of artistic importance	220	86
To display objects of historical importance	238	93
To preserve history	234	91
To Interpret history	103	40
To give an unbiased account of history	95	37
To reflect the opinions of those working in the museum	6	2
To educate visitors	232	91
To tell stories	193	75
To be a place that can be highly emotional	37	14

Q5
What do you think is NOT the purpose of the museum?

Statement	Answers	%
To display objects of artistic importance	0	0
To display objects of historical importance	0	0
To preserve history	2	1
To Interpret history	63	24
To give an unbiased account of history	51	20
To reflect the opinions of those working in the museum	208	80
To educate visitors	2	1
To be a place that can be highly emotional	76	29
To be neutral	82	32

Q6
I think the museum should be able to….

	Take a stance on social issues		Take a stance on political issues		Be able to display whatever they want		Change their displays if it makes people uncomfortable	
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**
I strongly disagree	32	13	58	23	10	4	60	24
I disagree	77	30	95	37	26	10	104	41
Neutral	81	32	66	26	54	21	49	19
I agree	62	24	35	14	110	43	36	14
I strongly agree	3	1	1	0	55	22	6	2
Total	255	100	255	100	255	100	255	100

Q7

How many times have you visited a museum throughout your lifetime?	
0 to 4	11
5 to 9	39
10 to 14	44
15+	164
Total	**258**

Q8
When I go to the museum I feel…

	Welcomed		Like I have to behave in a certain way		Comfortable		I can approach the staff if I have questions	
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**
I strongly disagree	1	0	3	1	3	7	2	1
I disagree	1	0	23	9	14	5	34	13
Neutral	40	16	29	11	56	22	45	18
I agree	162	64	137	54	137	54	130	51
I strongly agree	52	20	63	25	45	18	44	17
Total	255	100	255	100	255	100	255	100

Q9
When I go to the museum I do not…

	Always agree with what is shown in their displays		Always agree with what they write in their displays		Question whether what is shown in their displays is correct		Question whether what is written in their displays is correct	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
I strongly disagree	20	8	16	6	13	5	15	6
I disagree	57	22	65	25	92	36	84	33
Neutral	89	35	85	33	53	21	58	23
I agree	79	31	84	33	83	22	86	34
I strongly agree	10	4	5	2	14	5	12	5
Total	255	100	255	99	255	100	255	100

Q10

	Going to the museum is an emotional experience for me		I understand why going to the museum can be an emotional experience for others	
	Number	%	Number	%
I strongly disagree	27	11	3	1
I disagree	89	35	14	5
Neutral	60	24	14	5
I agree	75	29	180	71
I strongly agree	4	2	44	17
Total	255	101	255	99

Q11
I think that the museum…

	Is the best place to keep the objects	Should return objects if there is evidence they were stolen	Should put more effort in finding out whether objects were stolen	Reacted well to the incident with the activists

	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
I strongly disagree	7	3	7	3	7	3	1	0
I disagree	66	26	17	7	19	7	23	9
Neutral	77	30	46	18	36	14	61	24
I agree	73	29	98	39	114	45	125	49
I strongly agree	31	12	86	34	78	31	43	17
Total	254	100	254	101	254	100	253	99

Q12

I think the activists…

	Had a right to protest		Had a right to protest the way they did		Should be punished		Should be punished heavily	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
I strongly disagree	5	2	57	23	27	11	130	51
I disagree	5	2	83	33	73	29	79	31
Neutral	18	7	64	25	65	26	29	11
I agree	161	63	36	14	71	28	10	4
I strongly agree	65	26	13	5	18	7	5	2
Total	254	100	253	100	254	101	253	99

Q13

	I recall seeing this in the news		I have been given enough context to answer these questions	
	Number	%	Number	%
I strongly disagree	115	45	0	0
I disagree	89	35	15	6
Neutral	14	6	32	13
I agree	26	10	147	58
I strongly agree	10	4	60	24
Total	254	100	254	101

Q14

I think the museum…

	Should have stayed neutral		Should have taken made their stance another way		Should not have made this decision without public approval		made the right decision	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%

I strongly disagree	26	10	24	9	44	17	24	9
I disagree	89	35	72	28	98	39	56	22
Neutral	41	16	51	20	59	23	72	28
I agree	69	27	84	33	42	17	73	29
I strongly agree	29	11	23	9	11	4	29	11
Total	254	99	254	99	254	100	254	99

Q15

I can understand why people would…

	Agree with this decision		Disagree with this decision	
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**
I strongly disagree	3	1	6	2
I disagree	9	4	13	5
Neutral	14	6	19	7
I agree	170	67	183	72
I strongly agree	58	23	33	13
Total	254	101	254	99

Q16

	I recall seeing this in the news		I have been given enough context to answer these questions	
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**
I strongly disagree	98	39	0	0
I disagree	82	32	14	6
Neutral	15	6	34	13
I agree	43	17	144	57
I strongly agree	16	6	61	24
Total	254	100	253	100

B3

Calculating minimal sample size:

$$n = \frac{\frac{z^2 \times p(1-p)}{e^2}}{1+\left(\frac{z^2 \times p(1-p)}{e^2 N}\right)}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size

z = z score

p = target population

e = margin of error

(www.surveymonkey.com)