Curating cultures in European ethnographic museums. A study of the cross-cultural curation and preservation model of the Surinamese collection of the Dutch Wereldmuseum.

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Content

Introduction

This thesis focuses on the way the Dutch Wereldmuseum exhibits and preserves Surinamese objects that are located in its three museums in Rotterdam, Leiden and Amsterdam. The exhibition of objects in permanent and temporary exhibitions in European ethnographic museums has been a topic of discussion since 1980.[1] In his *Predicament of Culture,* anthropologist James Clifford already criticised museums for distinguishing cultures and communities in exhibitions.[2] In the 19th century, imperialist states in Europe took over the control of American, Asian and African countries.[3] They collected objects without the consent of the local inhabitants, and placed them in European museums, where curators labelled them in descriptive texts as 'different'.[4] Philosopher and historian Enrique Dussel (1934-2023) argued that objects were named this way because Europeans saw themselves as the more developed and living in the 'centre' of the world, viewing non-European countries as the underdeveloped 'other'.[5]

Since the 19th century, European ethnographic museums have been using 'non-Western' and 'Western' in text labels to describe objects and to highlight the differences between cultures and people.[6] Wayne Modest, director of the Wereldmuseum, argued that these words contain stereotypical images of individuals. They raise questions about who has the authority to determine who or what belongs to a specific group. Moreover, the terms do not indicate where the objects specifically come from.[7] As a result, some cultures are not represented in exhibitions, making the museum not inclusive.[8]

Since 2012, the International Council of Museums (ICOM), an international museum association, has aimed to make museums more inclusive by publishing codes and guidelines that museums can follow.[9] In 2022, ICOM modified its museum definition after discussions about the outdated 2019 version. The council approved a new version with increased

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[1] There is a great amount of literature about decolonisation in European ethnographic museums in the last thirty years. For example: Clifford, *The predicament of culture*; Clifford, *Routes*; Modest and Lelijveld, *Words matter*; Modest, Prlić and Augustat, *Matters of belonging*; Bennet, *Pasts beyond memory;* Stocking, *History of anthropology*.

[2] Clifford, *The predicament of culture,* 16.

[3] Headrick, ''The tools of imperialism'', 321.

[4] Ariese and Wróblewska, *Practising decoloniality in museums,* 11-12.; Clifford, *The predicament of culture,* 14.

[5] Dussel, ''The "world-system", 97-99.

[6] Modest and Lelijveld, *Words matter,* 13.

[7] The labels 'Western' and 'non-Western' are controversial. I will not use these to indicate objects, people or cultures.

[8] Modest and Lelijveld, *Words matter,* 14-15.

[9] International Council of Museums, ''Museums and inclusion.''

emphasis on diversity, accessibility and inclusivity.

> "A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing.''[10]

Given the critiques from scholars such as Clifford, Dussel, and Modest regarding the use of terms like 'other' and 'non-Western', and in light of the recent approval of the ICOM museum definition, it is important to examine how European ethnographic museums display their objects today. This examination seeks to determine whether people and cultures are presented equally and if every individual feels adequately represented.[11]

Museums that still present objects and cultures as 'different' or 'other' on display today, therefore need to change the arrangement of exhibitions and the accompanying text labels to ensure that all visitors feel respected and represented. The best example of a museum that adapted its display is the Belgian Africa Museum in Tervuren. Until 2015, it presented cultures and people as 'different' and thus was called the ''last colonial museum of the world''.[12] Belgian king Leopold II (1835-1909) dedicated this museum for the collection of Congolese objects and depiction of everyday life.[13] He flew in Congolese inhabitants to involuntarily live in a village specially built next to the museum. The living conditions were very poor, resulting in the death of seven inhabitants.[14] The museum received a lot of criticism by the public for how it portrayed Congolese culture. During a three-year renovation started in 2015, the museum acquired new objects, updated the exhibition design and rewrote text labels. It also added text labels that described how it acquired the objects and what their relationship is with Congo.[15] It also changed the name to ''Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika''.[16] The way this museum adapted its exhibition strategies, objects and accompanying

[10] International Council of Museums, ''Museum definition.''
[11] Modest, Thomas, Prlić and Augustat, *Matters of belonging*, 14.
[12] DeBlock, ''The Africa museum of Tervuren, Belgium'', 272.
[13] DeBlock, ''The Africa museum of Tervuren, Belgium'', 272.; Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika ''De menselijke zoo van Tervuren (1897).''
[14] Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika, ''De menselijke zoo van Tervuren (1897).''
[15] Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika''Geschiedenis en renovatie.''
[16] Ibid.

text labels due to critique by society serves as the example to follow for other European ethnographic museums.

At the same time, the Dutch Wereldmuseum also made modifications to its design and collection strategy to make the museum more inclusive. When the Afrika Museum was closed for renovation, the Wereldmuseum published its mission statement.[17] It described that the museum will create more cross-cultural exhibitions. According to the statement, these are exhibitions that are created in cooperation with national and international stakeholders.[18] How this collaboration looks like is not forthcoming in the statement.

In this thesis, I will explore the concept of cross-cultural curation in museological academic literature and examine its practical application through the case study of the Surinamese collection in the Wereldmuseum. In 1987, in the same period Clifford criticised European ethnographic museums, Kreps also criticised the Tropenmuseum and Volkenkunde for a lack of inclusivity of cultures.[19] This was because she found that the museum exhibited objects with accompanying text labels that described them as 'other' and 'non-Western'.[20] In 2005, Kreps advised ethnographic museums in America and Europe to arrange exhibitions in a cross-cultural way . She defines a cross-cultural approach to curation as a social practice that is based on collaboration between a community and the museum whereby they both respect the norms, values and traditions of their cultures.[21]

It is necessary to look into the Wereldmuseum's collection again to investigate to what extent it adopts the 'cross-cultural curation' approach according to Kreps' perspective. This is important because Kreps' publication about the Wereldmuseum is now 15 years old, the ICOM museum definition adapted in 2022 and the three separate museums became one overarching Wereldmuseum in 2023.[22] And finally, the Wereldmuseums' mission statement of 2017 remains too vague whether the museum applies cross-cultural curation according to what Kreps advised it in 2005. Therefore, this thesis aims to answer the question: To what extent does the Wereldmuseum adopt a cross-cultural approach to curation of heritage from Suriname in its permanent collection on display, according to Christina Kreps's perspective? By investigating the way how objects from Suriname are being presented in the galleries and

[17] In that time there were three separate museums consisting of Afrikamuseum in Berg en Dal, Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, Volkenkunde museum in Leiden.
[18] *Missie Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen,* PDF Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen.
[19] Kreps, *Museums and anthropology in the age of engagement*, 117, 124.
[20] Kreps, ''Non-Western models of museums and curation in crosscultural perspective'', 463.
[21] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 49-50.
[22] Wereldmuseum Leiden, ''Dekolonisatie.''

text labels of the museum, we can see to what extent it collaborated with the Surinamese community whereby they both respect the traditions, norms and value of their cultures.

To formulate an answer to the question, the concept of 'cross-cultural approaches to curation' will be first examined within the academic debate of curation methods in European ethnographic museums, after which the concept is then tested in practice at the Wereldmuseum. Kreps' 2005 book *Liberating culture* will be used as she described her arguments for the use of 'cross-cultural approaches to curation' in European museums. To explore what Kreps exactly means by 'cross-cultural approaches to curation', both Kreps' publications and the museologists, anthropologists and sociologists she refers to when she built her arguments will be examined. The examination of these texts will primarily focus on how museums and communities collaborate to create exhibitions to enhance community representation and inclusivity. Furthermore, I will also analyse sources published after 2005. Since there are twelve years between the publication of the mission statement and *Liberating culture,* it is important to investigate the extent collaboration has remained relevant after 2005 due to increased importance of museum's inclusivity, because of the new 2022 version of the ICOM definition. This is to investigate the extent the Wereldmuseum applies Kreps' perspective of collaboration or a different perspective.

Furthermore, I will analyse the display method of the Surinamese collection at the locations in Leiden, Amsterdam, and Rotterdam to determine the extent of collaboration with Surinamese communities, the so-called national and international 'stakeholders'. I will examine the description of the text labels and the objects' positions in the galleries. This is to determine to what extent the exhibitions lean more towards being 'object-centred', the extent the objects are isolated from their original context, or whether 'cultural conservation', the preservation of the object's cultural traditions, has been prioritised. By making this assessment, I will determine the extent of the inclusivity of cultures in the museum.

The text labels will be analysed by their word choice, based on Wayne Modest's publication *Words Matter*, in which Modest described alternative inclusive words for terms that could be considered offensive by communities. This publication is published by the Wereldmuseum itself, which makes it possible to see how far the museum has progressed in changing words that are considered offensive, unrepresentative or non-inclusive by the community. To determine whether the object's positions are correct and to investigate what the object's spiritual or religious nature is, I will only use literature about the use of the Surinamese objects. It was first necessary to carefully investigate who authored these works and the methodology of their studies. Many are often products of European colonial

oppression, in which the reports on the practices of communities are considered inferior. Therefore, for this thesis, I will only select sources that describe the community's utilisation of the objects.

The objects that I will analyse in this study will be divided into music, clothing, utensils, woodworking, and religious objects for readability purposes for this thesis. I will make these categories that will be based on characteristics that the object contains as described in the consulted literature about their nature. I will categorise these objects with precision, as museologist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett criticised European museums and scholars for placing objects into self-made categories. She argued that this practice imposes context onto objects, while it is often uncertain whether the objects were used in this manner in their original context.[23]

[23] Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination culture,* 25.

Chapter 1: Cross-cultural approaches to curation in European ethnographic museums

Around 1980, European ethnographic museums dominated communities in the way they collected and presented their objects as the communities could not participate in this process.[24] Once European imperialist states collected objects from their colonies and brought them to Europe to put them on display in museums, they were no longer used by communities for their original purpose, making them timeless as Europeans aimed to preserve the object's exteriors from decay.[25] Museums labelled them as 'unique', 'treasures' and 'artworks' and portrayed cultures and communities as 'different' and 'exotic'.[26]

Museologist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argued that these labels cause three negative consequences.[27] First, objects become rare because museums actively collect them. This increases the demand and raises their value. The collectors want to save the objects from decay, further enhancing their value. Secondly, museums categorise objects for the exhibition's theme, creating other contexts which are not applicable to these objects. Finally, the collected items are often everyday life objects that can wear out or be replaced easily. The collectors stop the circulation of these items to prevent their disappearance, which Kirshenblatt-Gimblett views as negative.[28] Additionally, no collaboration took place with the communities during the constructions of exhibitions. Museums decided how objects were labelled without consulting communities.[29] As a result, they increasingly voiced their discomfort with the European way of presentation, since the objects were, according to the communities, never intended to be 'artworks'. They demanded more authority in how their objects were displayed.[30]

This manner of curating is called 'object-centred', in which the museum solely focuses on ensuring that the object can, so to speak, be preserved forever.[31] Asian, African and American communities, on the other hand, have traditionally conserved customs and traditions associated with an object to ensure that the culture can live on, rather than its external features.[32] When a museum curates in a 'community-oriented' manner instead of an 'object-centred' manner, more attention is given to the social context of objects, including

[24] Clifford, *Predicament of culture,* 8.
[25] Alivizatou, *Intangible heritage and the museum,* 189.
[26] Gurian, ''What is the object of this exercise?'', 26.
[27] Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination culture,* 25.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 2.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 29, 149.
[32] Ibid., 147-148.

their spiritual and religious significance.[33] This means that because of a certain tradition of an object, it may occur that not everyone is allowed to come near to the object.[34] For example, in some cultures women are not allowed to see certain objects, and in others, some objects are believed to have the power to act upon people because they represent an ancestor or a living spirit.[35] Museologist Elaine Heumann Gurian believed that when people can see their culture's traditions in museums, they feel represented.[36]

Therefore, in 2005 in *Liberating culture,* Kreps argued that European ethnographic museums should detach themselves, or as she puts it, ''liberate'' from the European museum 'object-centred' practice that has caused cultures to be portrayed as 'different' and 'exotic'.[37] These traditional presentation methods are not inclusive, viewing cultures as underdeveloped, despite the fact that communities have always presented and preserved their own heritage in museums.[38] These methods those communities applied were never investigated because European imperialist states imposed their own practices, overshadowing the community's forms of curating.[39] According to Kreps, European museums should liberate themselves from this hegemonic European presentation and preservation style by adopting 'cross-cultural approaches to curation'.[40]

She contended that curation, an activity devoted to the care of objects, is a social practice.[41] This is based on anthropologist Philip Cash Cash's argument that there is always a fixed social relationship between humans and objects. Therefore, curation is a social practice, as it is a practice between objects and humans.[42] Thus, Kreps defines a 'cross-cultural approach to curation' as a practice that is based on collaboration between a community and the museum.[43] When curating a cross-cultural exhibition, the norms, values and tradition of a culture are respected, and the presentation style matches the nature of the object.[44]

Kreps argued that by collaboration museums obtain and acknowledge the integrity of objects. Depending on this integrity, museums use a presentation form that maintains this

[33] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 14.
[34] Ibid., 147.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Gurian, ''What is the object of this exercise?'', 25.
[37] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 145.
[38] Ibid., 145-146.
[39] Ibid., 63.
[40] Ibid.,145.
[41] Ibid., 5.
[42] Ibid., 49.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., 49-50.

integrity.[45] She described multiple traditions in which objects contain a living spirit or ancestor. According to this integrity, these objects need to be treated as if they are a spiritual force or human being, which means they cannot be placed in a closed cabinet. This often happens in European museums, but is akin to placing a living human being in a cabinet, which would be considered unacceptable.[46] Furthermore, museums want to preserve the objects' exterior with preservation techniques while the tradition of some objects entails that the spirit gains power after its object is dissolved.[47]

According to Kreps, in a museum where the community's values and traditions are at the forefront, the curator uses the 'cultural conservation' method. She defined this as the concept of conserving cultures and associated traditions while they are living.[48] It is the opposite of the traditional European conservation method in which the curators wait until a culture or tradition dies or becomes irrelevant. They then try to imitate the original context of the object in the exhibition.[49] With 'cultural conservation' it is important that communities participate in the preservation process in order to show what aspects embody this living culture. Therefore, the use of 'cultural conservation' in an European museum is an approach to reach 'cross-cultural curation'.[50]

Kreps' understanding of 'cultural conservation' is based on folklorist Mary Hufford's 1994 work *Conserving culture: a new discourse on heritage.*[51] The term emerged in the United States around 1960 when there was a need for rethinking the way American museums preserved and presented the community's heritage. In 1983, it shifted from an approach that was 'top-down', in which only the elite was able to make decisions about heritage to an approach that allowed the communities to make decisions for the presentation of their heritage.[52] In fact, she argued that the discussions about preservation strategies can be led by the people whose heritage is being conserved.[53] Kreps takes a different viewpoint, as she believes that 'cultural conservation' enables 'cultural hybridization', defined as the act of co-creation in cultural places like museums where communities and museums both try to resist

[45] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 153.
[46] Ibid., 147.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., 14.
[49] Ibid., 30.
[50] Ibid., 12.
[51] Hufford, *Conserving culture,* 2.
[52] Ibid., 2-3.
[53] Ibid., 3.

hegemonic forces.[54] She bases the meaning of 'cultural hybridization' on the definition of 'cross-cultural heritage management' as defined by museologist Anawares Galla, who argued that museums have to be responsible for the extent in which they listen to voices and opinions of the communities.[55] He argued that it consists of collaboration with communities in which museums have a good overview on the situation, expose all possible issues that come with this collaboration and be able to unite and reconcile all communities that exist in museums.[56] It is similar to Kreps' understanding of 'cultural hybridization' as they both want to integrate opinions, instead of mixing together.[57] More important is that within this approach museums and communities acknowledge and respect their existence and terms.[58]

Besides collaboration, museums can also gain the understanding of community's norms and values through comparative research that reveals the differences and similarities between cultures.[59] Kreps' use of this method is based on the arguments of Carol Ember and Melvin Ember. In their publication *Cross-cultural research methods,* first published in 2001, they argued that cross-cultural comparison shows which cultural aspects are universal and which are variable.[60] They suggest that it is possible to compare these because between cultures there are similarities and also unique aspects.[61]

According to Kreps, the purpose of her comparative study is to recognize curatorial differences and similarities between European and non-European museum practises.[62] By using this method, she found the existence of the misconception that museums in non-European countries did not collect and curate objects.[63] This misconception had contributed to the dominance of European methods of collecting and curating.[64] Kreps' critique to this model is based on Clifford's *Predicament of culture* in which he critiqued that European anthropological and museological academics determine by authenticity, value, and circulation which groups or things are worth integrating in universal history.[65] Kreps defended that in the European methods, objects are recontextualised by getting the label 'artwork' or 'special'.[66]

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[54] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 14-15.
[55] Galla, "Indigenous peoples, museums and frameworks for effective change'', 94.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 153.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 6.
[60] This thesis cites the second edition of the book, however Kreps used the first edition.
[61] Ember and Ember, *Cross-cultural research methods,* 1-6.
[62] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 6.
[63] Kreps, ''Non-Western models of museums and curation in crosscultural perspective'', 458.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Clifford, *Predicament of culture,* 12-13.
[66] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 30.

This is based on criteria such as provenance, location and date of creation and aesthetics appointed by European ethnographers, anthropologists and sociologists instead of the communities from whom it originates.[67] Kreps critiqued this recontextualisation because the religious and spiritual integrity of the object disappears when removed from its original cultures.[68]

In *Liberating culture,* Kreps argued that Indonesian and Pacific communities are indeed aware of museum practices, as her fieldwork revealed that they used forms of collecting, preserving and curating.[69] Their museum spaces were within community houses that, like European museums, presented objects on walls and shelves. These houses were owned by families or community members and not by the state.[70] The objects on display were items like baskets and fishing and hunting gear, which people used in their daily lives and could be found in homes, markets and shops. These objects were called *pusaka* when considered sacred.[71] The spiritual and religious integrity of a *pusaka* depended on the meaning assigned to it by a community member. It always stayed in one family, as the next generation inherits it when a family member dies.[72] This person was regarded as the curator and had full control over its presentation and preservation.[73] This person knew how to treat the *pusaka* due to mandatory training.[74]

Daily life objects that were not sacred could be perceived as ordinary which was reflected in how curators handled them and how local inhabitants perceived them. For these objects, it was more important to preserve and present the living culture by showcasing the contemporary community values and traditions.[75] Therefore, the presented objects were often borrowed by local inhabitants, and a broken one could be immediately exchanged for another.[76] These museums were visited primarily by people from outside the museum's region, as local inhabitants did not see a reason to visit a museum that displayed objects that they also had in their own houses.[77] In the Pacific, Kreps discovered that the preservation and

[67] Kreps, ''Curatorship as a social practice'', 313.
[68] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 50.
[69] Ibid., 46.
[70] Ibid., 52.
[71] Ibid., 36.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., 52.
[74] Ibid., 39.
[75] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 30.; Kreps, ''Non-western models of museums and curation in crosscultural perspective'', 463.
[76] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 30.
[77] Ibid.

presentation style matched with the style of the *pusaka* in Indonesian museums.[78] In *haus tambaran*, which served as a community's storage house, living relics of ancestors were exhibited. The head of the community, the curator, was responsible for the care of the objects. He performed rituals to ensure the fertility of animals, the growth of vegetables in the field, and the overall well-being of the community.[79]

Research into community's forms of collection and curation has highlighted the need for museums to look for possibilities to overcome the critique of their dominance of power over these communities.[80] According to Kreps, museums should adapt their policies to establish collaboration with communities.[81] First, she argued that effective collaboration occurs in museums that adopt a 'bottom-up approach', rather than a 'top-down approach'.[82] In a museum that works with a 'top-down approach', directors and curators who are unfamiliar with the culture of the communities, make decisions about the preservation and presentation on behalf of them.[83] This approach was also evident when communities wanted to consult objects. Conservator Miriam Clavir found that they had to send their requests for consultation directly to the museum director or the curator.[84] This method could be described as 'top-down', because the request is directed to the most influential person in the museum and is then sent 'down' to the person who will assess the request.[85]

On the contrary, a 'bottom-up approach' allows communities to participate in decision making about the presentation and preservation methods in the museum.[86] This 'society-oriented' approach enables 'cultural conservation' which combines skills of museum curators and community members who are familiar with the object.[87] Kreps argued that it is exactly this combination that makes cross-cultural curation a reliable approach.[88] While acknowledging that communities have their forms of presentation and preservation, the professionality of European curators cannot be forgotten and it would be, according to Kreps,

[78] Kreps, *Liberating culture* 61.
[79] Ibid., 61-63.
[80] Ibid., 2.
[81] Ibid., 3.
[82] Ibid., 115.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Clavir, *Preserving what is valued,* 36.
[85] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 115.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., 12.
[88] Ibid.

shortsighted to say that European conservation techniques cannot be used to protect heritage.[89]

Additionally, Kreps highlighted the importance of collaboration between curators and communities when the museum adapts or implements a protection policy, as this may affect the objects' spiritual or religious integrity.[90] Therefore, she favours policies that ensure collaboration, such as the ''bicultural policy'' implemented in the Pacific during her fieldwork. This policy allowed community members to speak on behalf of the objects. The community educated the museum about the objects' spiritual and religious integrity and advised them on making changes to their presentation.[91]

In the United States, the 1990 implementation of the ''Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act'' (NAGPRA) increased awareness for the repatriation and curation of ethnographic objects in American museums.[92] Museums that complied with the standards and procedures of the act received state funds, while it also protected the community's heritage. Therefore, both the communities and the museums could benefit from the act. The act not only facilitated cross-cultural exhibitions but also helped maintain good relationships between museums and communities.[93] However, it was no starting point for collaboration, as Kreps found that they were already working together before the establishment of the act.[94] Indeed, American museums sought to learn more about cultures by consulting communities about the nature and traditions of the objects displayed in the museums. They discovered that their objects contained living spirits and that the preservation methods of the museum did not align with their proper treatment. For example, museums originally put objects that contain a living spirit in a closed cabinet. After the collaboration, museums adapted to the community's traditions by removing objects from glass cabinets, to allow them to 'breathe'. Additionally, restrictions were placed on who was allowed to see the objects, with some visitors being prohibited from approaching them, because the tradition did not allow that.[95]

Although Kreps advocated in 2005 for using collaboration, it was already a discussion in academic debates when in the 1960's and 1970's the 'new museology' movement arose

[89] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 4.
[90] Ibid., 97.
[91] Ibid., 69.
[92] Ibid., 79-80.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid., 91-93.

that advocated for diverse opinions and voices of people within the museum world.[96] Members of the movement criticised museums for thinking too much about objects, instead, they wanted museums to be more oriented towards society and collaboration between groups.[97] In fact, Gurian already argued in 2001, before Kreps' publication of *Liberating culture*, that although museums were already established collaborations, they were simultaneously hesitant. In fact, some community members advocated for the return of the objects, but the museum raised concerns for the image of the museums as a neutral place.[98]

Kreps' argument for using collaboration is based on the work of anthropologist Micheal Ames (1933-2006), who criticised in 1992 the way ethnographic museums in 1980 used their dominance to curate exhibitions.[99] He critiqued that museums traditionally take neutral standpoints when societal issues arise. They mute criticism and are politically correct. According to Ames, this is possible because museums are seen by society as conservative and as places that only highlight the positive aspects of society. Furthermore, museums want to receive government funding and the museum going along with criticism of people could cause the government to stop sending the funds .[100] As a result, Ames poses questions as:

> ''Who owns history? What constitutes knowledge and who may constitute it? Whose interests should be served by its representation, and even who should rightfully staff and govern public institutions?.''[101]

Besides these questions, Ames found that visitors increasingly expressed themselves in the way they wanted to see the exhibitions. They wanted the museum to pay more attention to the community's 'native voice', because the presentation of the objects did not reflect their norms and values.[102] Simultaneously, museums became more interested in who their visitors were as people began to visit the museum more often.[103] The questions, along with increasing visitors' desire led to the integration of collaboration of the museum with communities.[104] Ames argued that within this collaboration, museums had to accommodate meetings and

[96] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 122.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Gurian, ''What is the object of this exercise?'', 32.
[99] Ames, *Cannibal tours and glass boxes,* 3.
[100] Ibid., 7.
[101] Ibid., 9.
[102] Ibid., 12.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid., 11.

dialogues between people, as he argued that mainstream museums were responsible for the equal representation of people.[105]

Ames further emphasised that museologists should conduct empirical examinations in order to recognise interests of various groups involved in the museum.[106] Thus, Kreps' effort to integrate the cross-cultural approach to curation into ethnographic museums aligns with Ames' argument that it is easy for scholars to criticise museums for their perceived shortcomings but much harder to propose practical solutions.[107] It is exactly what Kreps does in *Liberating culture* by first doing fieldwork in Canada, Indonesia and the Pacific and after proposing arguments for incorporating the 'cross-cultural approach to curation' in museums.

Although Kreps argued that collaboration is crucial for ethnographic museums, she dives not deeper into the conditions of establishing an equal collaboration. In 2003, museologists Alison Brown and Laura Peers already argued that an equal base of the relationship is crucial.[108] The quality of the relationship between museums and source communities - those from whom objects are collected by European imperialist states - depends on the political relationship the two have and the geographical distance between them. They found that they were both willing to participate, and collaborations were more effective when political conflicts were resolved or when the geographical distance was not too far.[109]

In addition to Ames and Clavir, Kreps' based the importance on integrating collaboration in museums on the work of anthropologist Miriam Kahn. She criticised museums for portraying 'non-Western' cultures as 'others'.[110] She found that from 1990 museums already adapted some of their policies to include diverse voices and perspectives.[111] She argued that hiring 'native' advisors and co-curators for the museum's board has, on the one hand, a positive impact on the equality of collaboration.[112] On the other hand, Kahn is cautious about this collaboration, because it involves making compromises about what to include and what to leave out.[113] The risk of incorporating multiple aspects is that it can lead

[105] Ames, *Cannibal tours and glass boxes*, 13.
[106] Ibid., 3.
[107].Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 6.
[108] Brown and Peers, *Museums and source communities,* 2.
[109] Ibid., 3.
[110] Kahn, ''Not really pacific voices'', 57.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid., 58.
[113] Ibid., 71.

to an incoherent exhibition.[114] Since values and traditions can differ within a single community, extensive research into the collective community's values is necessary to incorporate collective values.[115] It seems that, while Kahn sees benefits of collaboration in museums, there always remains an unequal division of authority and power in museums. According to Kahn, the museum will always remain biased.[116]

The critique by Kahn regarding collaboration had remained relevant in the museological academic field after Kreps' publication. In 2009, museologist Lisa Chandler also argued that multiple viewpoints in an exhibition can lead to fragmentation of information.[117] Through her case-study in an American museum, she concluded that although the museum collaborated with the community members, the public found that there was a lack of information on how this collaboration was established and which decisions were made for the exhibition.[118] This fragmentation happens in traditional 'object-centred' museums where, according to museologist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, objects are placed 'in situ' meaning that the object is part of a bigger context. In this situation, museums present a single decontextualized object and try to re-create the missing context with only one object of the whole context.[119] Instead of the 'in situ' approach, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett proposed the 'in context' approach, meaning that the object is placed within the original context with the use of text labels, programmes, lectures and performances that show how the objects relate to each other. [120]

Similarly, anthropologist Marilena Alivizatou expressed reluctance towards cross-cultural approaches to curation in 2012, due to the challenges of incorporating multiple perspectives of a community. She questions whether one community member can truly speak for the entire group.[121] Instead, she proposes 'participatory museology'.[122] In her view of this museology, community members are invited to the museum to collaborate on exhibition making. She favours on-site performances, as there is more attention for the traditions of a community when objects are removed from the exhibition galleries and substituted for

[114] Kahn, ''Not really pacific voices'', 71-72.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid., 72.
[117] Chandler, ''Journey without maps'''', 81-82.
[118] Ibid., 78.
[119] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination culture*, 19-20.
[120] Ibid., 21-23.
[121] Alivizatou, *Intangible heritage and the museum,* 192.
[122] Ibid.,, 190.

performances that exhibit the living culture.[123] As a result, the exhibition consists of multiple voices, opinions and narratives.[124] This resonates with Kreps' understanding of 'cultural conservation' that enables people to participate in exhibiting their living culture.[125]

Like Kahn, Chandler and Alivizatou, Kreps also posed challenges to incorporating multiple values and traditions for preservation and presentation. While responding to community's requests for changing the object's presentation can enhance their relationship with communities, it is challenging to make a single presentation and preservation policy for multiple objects with various traditions.[126] This view partly counters the argument of museologists Gillian Flynn and Deborah Hull-Walski who believed that museums should develop policies to incorporate multiple methods of care for objects that communities request for.[127] They suggested that to accommodate these communities museums should adapt terminology, modify storage methods, decide on access provisions, decide about the possibility of leaving offerings and ceremonial feeding, ensure privacy, adapt handling and usage practices and preserve ethnographic information.[128] However, they also note that not all cultures and communities view spiritual and religious objects in the same way, making general policies more difficult to apply.[129] Although Kreps agreed with this argument, she distanced herself from their belief that communities should request for the object's modification. Instead, Kreps argued that the requests of community members to the museum cannot be handled with a 'top-down' approach, as it implies a power structure in which museums have the authority to decide whether to accommodate these requests or not.[130] Rather, communities and museums should collaborate on modifying the policies, ensuring an equal and inclusive process.[131]

Collaboration, sharing authority and participation in European museums has remained relevant since Kreps published her ideas in *Liberating culture* in 2005. Seven years later after its publication, in 2012, Nina Simon focused on 'participation' in museology as well, exemplified in her publication *The participatory museum*.[132] She presented her arguments in

[123] Alivizatou, *Intangible heritage and the museum,* 190.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Kreps, *Liberating culture*, 14.
[126] Ibid., 97.
[127] Flynn and Hull-Walski, ''Merging traditional indigenous curation methods'', 31.
[128] Ibid., 31-39.
[129] Ibid., 32.
[130] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 115.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Simon, *The participatory museum,* chapter 1.

the time in which the equality of the participants in the collaboration was already established, thanks to increased focus on inclusivity in museums. Simon defined a 'participatory museum' as a place that offers a dialogue between museums and visitors in which they share, respond to and add content to the existing displays.[133] This approach blends the contributions of experts and non-experts, shifting from an exhibition that is made for people to one that is made together with visitors.[134] The aim of her participatory concept is to provide tools for museums to optimise collaboration. This is particularly relevant, because she argued that museums are visitor-oriented spaces where individuals form their own opinions and concepts during their visit, and where museums use visitors' input to shape programs and ideas.[135] Although Simon did not mention Kreps' investigations, this approach corresponds with her point of view for incorporating multiple viewpoints in a collaboration to co-curate an exhibition.[136] It shows that these are important concepts that museums and academics still used around 2012.

These discussions are still relevant in 2013, when museologist Mary Hutchison emphasised 'shared authority' in her 2013 article 'Shared authority'. It built further on Micheal Frisch's arguments to investigate its relevance and application in exhibitions. Frisch advocated for the acknowledgement of the agency of both scholarly museum professionals and communities, emphasising the equal collaboration and respectful dialogue. This inclusive approach leads to a more democratised history, making the exhibition relevant to more people.[137] Hutchison built further on Frisch's argument, defining agency as the active involvement of community and museum professionals in the development of exhibitions, including making graphics and audio.[138] While working as a museum curator, she found, like Kreps, that sharing authority effectively addressed the issue in scholarly discourse of portraying the community's agency as 'other' as sharing authority would remove the controversial and traditional 'they-us' relationship. She argued that both groups must participate and ensure an equal cooperation in interactions to reach shared authority.[139] In the context of exhibition making, this collaboration is reflected in a dialogue in which communities tell about their traditions associated with objects and in which museum

[133] Simon, *The participatory museum*, chapter 1.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Kreps, *Liberating culture*, 4.
[137] Hutchison, ''Sharing authority'', 143.
[138] Ibid., 145.
[139] Ibid.

professionals are consequently able to respond and discuss these stories. According to Hutchison, this allows the community to express their wishes regarding the object placement or the layout of the room.[140] Her approach resonates with Kreps' argument to prioritise collaboration, with Hutchison emphasising the agency of the involved parties.[141]

In the same year, arthistorian Kalliopi Fouseki and archeologist Laurajane Smith, found that museums often faced dilemmas regarding collaboration that involved multiple groups that have their own interests in the museum.[142] In their investigation, they found that museums had to accommodate various groups, such as, the represented communities, the organisations that funded the exhibition, and the public that wanted to visit the museum.[143] According to the communities, the museum's approach of accommodating all these groups led to a lower quality of the consultation process with the communities, resulting in disturbed collaborations and dissatisfaction with the presentation of their heritage in exhibitions.[144] Because the museum recognised that not all members within a community shared the same view on a topic, they were hesitant to rely on community consultation, as it would lead to a fragmentation of aspects.[145] Therefore, museums saw community consultation as a part of the process, not as the main methodology.[146] Fouseki and Smith found that communities do not just only agree with the option of a collaboration, they also have their wishes they want to see fulfilled.[147] This is reflected in the fact that the communities wanted the exhibition to reflect and acknowledge the consequences of their historical unequal treatment, while museums aimed to present a balanced exhibition that showed a collective image of the communities.[148] Fouseki and Smith described that these dilemmas arose, because museums were still 'object-centred', focusing on societal implications of the exhibition rather than focusing on the specific concerns of the communities. Therefore, Fouseki and Smith advocated for community consultation as museums' main focus in the form of ongoing dialogues and negotiations.[149] Next to listening to each other, the museum and communities should also

[140] Hutchison, ''Sharing authority'', 146.
[141] Ibid., 145.
[142] Fouseki and Smith, ''Community consultation in the museum'', 232.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid., 238.
[146] Ibid., 236-237.
[147] Ibid.,, 232.
[148] Ibid., 236-237.
[149] Ibid., 241-242.

actively engage in conversations. Through this approach, they both learn about each other's priorities and wishes, enabling more representation and inclusivity in museums.[150]

The engagement of people in museums is also a topic in museologist Bryony Onciul 2015 book *Museums, Heritage and Indigenous Voice: Decolonizing Engagement.* In this book, she built further on Clifford's concept of 'contact zones' in the museum. He defined this as places where people separated by geographical place or history come together to establish relationships.[151] Onciul did not critique Clifford's 'contact zones', instead, she used the concept to further elaborate her arguments. She suggested that 'contact zones' can occur in 'engagement zones'.[152] Onciul defined this as a place where communities with different historical and geographical backgrounds work together as equals, recognising the right to speak and the concept of sharing power in decision-making about community representation.[153] This approach is a continuation of Kreps' concept of cross-cultural exhibitions, as Onciul argued that 'engagement zones' eliminate the hierarchy of power that was prevalent in traditional European ethnographic museum practises.[154]

Furthermore, Onciul emphasised the dynamic nature of culture, arguing that the 'engagement zones' in museums are constantly changing, because culture itself is dynamic.[155] She explained that if an individual's norms and values change, these changes will affect the whole community and interactions in the 'engagement zone'.[156] Additionally, communities do not have fixed boundaries: people could identify themselves in more than one community and share similar norms and values. As a result, within an exhibition, a specific aspect might resonate with one community member but not with another one.[157] Onciul argued that because exhibitions are located in 'engagement zones' that are constantly evolving, collaborations to make an exhibition also evolve.[158] Kreps already acknowledged this dynamic characteristic of culture, noting that cultural traditions constantly change because people borrow or adopt new cultural forms.[159] She argued that the 'ecomuseum' is the best approach to maintain the evolving nature of culture.[160] The concept of the

[150] Fouseki and Smith, ''Community consultation in the museum'', 241-242.
[151] Onciul, *Museums, heritage and indigenous voice,* 78.
[152] Ibid., 82.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid., 82-83.
[155] Ibid., 85.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid., 86-87.
[158] Ibid., 86.
[159] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 118
[160] Ibid., 122.

ecomuseum was established in France in the 1970s by museologist Georges Henri Riviere, who believed that cultural norms and values were best expressed in a decentralised museum that organises exhibitions connected to specific traditions of a region.[161] Kreps contended that the ecomuseum's decentralised nature allows it to quickly identify and respond to changes, making it an effective approach for the dynamic nature of culture.[162]

Like Onciul and Kreps, anthropologist Nicholas Thomas also highlighted in 2019 that museums are not static but dynamic spaces that are constantly evolving.[163] He argued that museums need to be transparent about their colonial history of collecting and presenting, given they are, according to Thomas, the most influential institutions in the spreading of information.[164] Furthermore, he argued that co-producing exhibitions and fostering dialogues are now embedded within the museum culture.[165] He added that while museums collaborate with communities, they always must do their own research on the natures and traditions of the objects.[166]

Although ethnographic museums were already a topic of discussion since 1980, around 2019, museums became even more aware of their position in society.[167] Anthropologist Wayne Modest discussed in the same year the challenge of the ''double bind''.[168] He argued that, on the one hand, museums want to get rid of their colonial legacy by presenting objects through collaboration with communities and creating and publishing stories around them. On the other hand, the institution itself is a colonial product. The concept of the ethnographic museum originated when the European imperialist states sought to house the collected objects, a practice that continues in European museums today.[169] It shows that although museums established collaborations with communities to overcome the traditional imperialist position, they are aware of the presence of objects in their collection that were collected during colonial oppression.

In 2021, the focus has shifted from merely establishing and improving collaboration to using it in exhibitions itself amongst visitors. In the 2021 article ''Ethnography and exhibition design: Insights from the Moesgaard inaugural'', museologists Ton Otto, Jennifer

[161] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 122.
[162] Ibid., 123.
[163] Nicholas, ''The museum inside-out'', 34.
[164] Ibid., 27.
[165] Ibid., 33.
[166] Ibid., 31.
[167] Wayne modest, *Matters of belonging*, 10-11.
[168] Ibid., 13.
[169] Ibid.

Deger and George E. Marcus built on the extensive existing literature about collaboration in ethnographic museums. They argued that incorporating anthropology designs into museums can enhance collaboration, participation, and relationships among visitors .[170] According to Otto et al., anthropology design is an academic and professional field in ethnographic museology. It involves creating and conveying information through design, such as exhibition designs.[171] Its aim is to encourage people to reflect on their own values and practises and to discuss, critique and transform information by means of an exhibition that presents objects that are all related to the exhibition's theme.[172] The questions museum should answer when developing exhibition design is:

> ''(...) how to create an experiential space that can open up for ethnographic insights and reflections? And how to create exhibits that can generate feelings of alienation and identification concerning key human concerns (...)?.''[173]

In this sense, an exhibition is no longer the outcome of collaboration, but the means to foster collaboration. Otto emphasised that making the design requires collaboration between communities from whom the objects originate and museums for refining the theme of the exhibition.[174] Anthropology design makes the exhibition sensory and participative. Therefore, Otto argues that for this purpose it is important to choose an universal topic that can attract and unite people with various backgrounds.[175] In Otto et al's examination of this case study, it was evident that the anthropological design was reflected in the way the curators chose to mix various cultural traditions regarding the theme. It was also evident in the way they showed how each culture interacted with it. As a result, the space consisted of multiple experiences and reflections, as people would likely see their own experience in it. It aimed to open the discussion among visitors to engage with each other.[176]

Thus, co-production, collaboration and dialogues have remained relevant in the debate. Those are the part of the solutions proposed in the 2022 article ''Rethinking dialogues in museum spaces'' in which anthropologist Paride Bollettin elaborated on the challenge of

[170] Otto, Deger and Marcus, ''Ethnography and exhibition design'', 2.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid., 1-2.
[173] Ibid., 8.
[174] Ibid., 2.
[175] Ibid., 8.
[176] Ibid.

reorganising the ethnographic collection in *Centro Studi Americanistici ''Circolo Amerindiano''* in Perugia, Italy.[177] The collection presentation was considered outdated and required new curatorial approaches. In discussions about new approaches, Bollettin emphasised the agency of objects, noting that American Indian objects are considered entities that have social and cognitive aspects.[178] Unlike Kreps, Bollettin discussed that these objects have integrities which are understandable by community members across time creating a dialogue between generations.[179]

To accommodate the wishes of these communities and enhance the institute's research, in-depth collaboration was essential to incorporate all opinions and voices for the object's presentation.[180] Bollettin described that the museum acknowledged that not all objects could be viewed by anyone, but only by a select few. He argued that decisions in displaying an object should be made collaboratively.[181] This collaboration was also used to gather information about objects from which the spiritual or religious integrity was not known. Despite the benefits of collaboration for reorganising the collection, the communities also expressed resistance. They indicated that Perugia was too far and preferred engaging in collaborations in a place closer to home.[182] This article illustrates that in 2022, challenges persist in collaborative approaches. It presents a different perspective in the debate, highlighting that communities may not always want to participate in a collaboration, which is an aspect that Kreps did not discuss in her research.

Thus, collaboration in ethnographic museums has been a recurring theme in academic museological discussions since critiques posed to the traditional European presentation and preservation methods by scholars such as Clifford, Peers and Brown. The articles and books discussed in this chapter show that collaboration is seen as a solution to achieve community representation and inclusivity in the museum. Kreps argued that it is the cross-cultural approach to curation that allows the existence of multiple voices and viewpoints, without them blending together, that will help the museum achieve this inclusivity. However, Kreps' ideas were not new in the academic debate. Before the publication of *Liberating culture,* there were already scholars, such as Gurian, that advocated for collaborations in ethnographic museums. Since Kreps' book, the debate has evolved into the relevance of the degree of

[177] Bollettin, ''Rethinking dialogues in museum spaces'', 21.
[178] Ibid., 23.
[179] Ibid., 27.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid., 28.
[182] Ibid., 29.

quality of collaborations, which shows that communities feel the urge to speak up for the way their ideals are expressed in that collaboration and also in the exhibition, even at the level of its design. This makes it relevant to examine ethnographic museums in 2024, as collaboration is still an important topic. In the next chapter, I will analyse the exhibitions at the Wereldmuseum in order to investigate the extent the exhibitions are cross-cultural according to Kreps' perspective.

Chapter 2: Exhibition analysis of the Surinamese collection in Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Leiden

The exhibitions in the museum house objects from various communities and cultures, reflecting the diverse cultural landscape of Suriname. The Lokono or Arawak and Kari'na inhabit the Southern part of Suriname while the Wayana, Trio and Akurio live in the northern regions.[183] In literature, the term 'Caribs, a name given by Europeans, is often used to refer to people living along the coast.[184] The Dutch Republic also used the term 'Maroon' to describe enslaved African people brought to the Caribbean and South America to work on plantations at the end of the 16th century. After Suriname gained independence, Maroon communities continued to live in these regions and built families.[185] The cultural diversity of Suriname means that the museum must collaborate with the Surinamese communities that have different traditions, norms and values. It is important for the museum to approach this thoughtfully, in order to prevent the exhibition from becoming fragmented, as Alivizatou argued that multiple perspectives could complicate the object's presentation and preservation, highlighting the need for careful collaboration and curation.[186]

The presentation method of the Surinamese objects reflects the history of the three locations, showing differences in how collaboration is manifested. Traditionally, the presentation in Leiden has followed a systematic, investigative approach. Together with German physician and botanist Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796-1866), Dutch King Willem 1 (1772-1843) established the museums with the aim to develop and improve science and art through museums. This approach was further emphasised after World War II in 1945, focusing on portraying the culture of the objects as accurately as possible.[187]

The Wereldmuseum also houses the Research Centre for Material Culture (RCMC), traditionally located on the same site as the museum in Leiden. The RCMC aims to include scientists, artists, curators and activists in its research efforts.[188] Its work focuses on understanding the world in which various people coexist and live together to investigate how traditions give structure to individuals' lives. Despite the fact that the institute is part of the museum, the RCMC maintains as much independence and criticism as possible. It investigates theories that are relevant to the museum that can guide the creation of

[183] Putten, ''Tussen twee werelden'', 16.
[184] Gaspar, ''The Kari'na ceramic tradition through ethnographic collections'', 36.
[185] Buddingh, *A history of Suriname,* 103.
[186] Chandler, ''Journey without maps'''', 81-82.
[187] Wereldmuseum Leiden, ''Geschiedenis Wereldmuseum.''
[188] Research Center for Material Culture, ''About.''

exhibitions, public programs and educational initiatives. Its research also extends beyond the museum's immediate concerns, viewing the museum as a place where challenges and problems come together. The RCMC's research approach is collaborative in order to engage with communities and individuals. A key focus is providing a platform for historically disadvantaged groups, allowing them to voice their perspectives and contribute meaningfully to research and exhibitions. This collaborative approach ensures inclusivity in the RCMC's work.[189]

Today, the museum's affiliation with research and the University of Leiden, is evident in its presentation style. The museum prioritises a systematic approach to provide visitors opportunities to study the objects on display. Exhibitions are clearly divided into geographical regions, with Surinamese objects categorised under the Mid and Southern America department.[190] Objects are illuminated by spotlights to draw attention to them, and the presence of the benches in the exhibition space encourage visitors to stay longer and study them in detail (Fig. 1). The systematic approach is further evident in the way the object's information is structured. It has been displayed on the tablets that are positioned in front of the cabinets (Fig. 2). Visitors can select an object in the homepage and access details such as the title, description, originating culture, year of creation and further specifics like inventory number and the material. The accompanying texts provide context about the Surinamese community's use and appearance of the object. Sometimes it also includes information about who collected them. In traditional European exhibition methods, this information is crucial for determining an object's value, often depicting high-value objects as 'works of art'. Kreps criticised this process, as it removes objects from their original context.[191] The museum should be cautious to not overemphasise these values on the tablets, as visitors might perceive them as a 'works of art'.

The presentation of the objects is both 'object-centred' and focused on 'cultural conservation'. The extent the exhibition is 'object-centred' is reflected in the museum's use of words in the text label ''the Amazon''. These words can be criticised for being non-inclusive, as it uses the term 'indigenous' (Fig. 3). Modest described in his 2018 publication *Words Matter* that this word maintains the 'us' against 'them' concept, creating a division of groups and failing to specify who is part of it and who is not.[192] Although 'indigenous' is not a

[189] Research Center for Material Culture, ''About.''
[190] Wereldmuseum Leiden, ''Midden- en Zuid-Amerika.''
[191] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 50.
[192] Modest and Lelijveld, *Words matter,* 15.

forbidden word, the suggested alternative terms to specify people's place of origin for reaching inclusivity, instead of using 'indigenous'.[193] In the case of the "Amazon'' text, it is clear that it references people and communities from the Amazon area, as indicated by the heading. Therefore, 'indigenous' can be removed from the text label. It is highly contradictory that the museum uses this term, while Modest, the museums' director, advocated for the removal of these words from text labels in 2018.[194] It shows that the museum is still undergoing a transition towards community representation and inclusivity.

The 'object-centred' approach is further evident in the placement of objects in closed cabinets. As discussed in chapter one, this has been criticised by Kreps because it would detach the object from its context.[195] The Wereldmuseum did not make a distinction between objects with spiritual or religious significance, and those without. However, some objects require to be outside these cabinets due to their spiritual or religious integrity. Cross-cultural curation aims to respect traditions, norms and values, thus the museum should respect the required preservation by placing it outside the cabinet. On the other hand, museums have to deal with the safety of the object. Gurian already acknowledged this dilemma in European museums. ''Climate control, access restrictions, and security systems are all issues of concern to those who care for objects''.[196] Therefore, placing objects in closed cabinets prevents visitors from touching or using them, thus preserving them longer.

Despite the critique on this decontextualization, some objects can be appropriately placed in the cabinet since they do not contain a living spirit. The ''flute'' (Fig. 4) in the first part of the exhibition is one such example. As the text label describes that the flute is played by a man during pastime, it is unclear whether the flute can be presented in a cabinet or not.[197] According to the book *Musical and other sound instruments of the South American Indians* by Carl Gustav Izikowitz (1903-1984), flutes could indeed possess living spirits. He described that gods and demons come alive and speak when the player plays the flute.[198] Therefore, the flute can be presented in a cabinet, as it does not contain spirits when it is not being played.

[193] Modest and Lelijveld, *Words matter*, 15.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Kreps, *Liberating culture*, 50.
[196] Gurian, ''What is the object of this exercise?'', 31.
[197] Text label ''flute'', Wereldmuseum Leiden. Accessed on April 18, 2024.
[198] Izikowitz, *Musical and other sound instruments of the South American Indians*, 377.

The ‘’panpipes’’ (Fig. 4) are also allowed to be placed in a cabinet as both the text label and literature state that they do not contain living spirits.[199] The label describes that the player, usually a man, plays the pipes under the left arm and strikes it with the right hand, while performing a dance.[200] According to Izikowitz, panpipes are always played in pairs. [201] Furthemore, the Garland Encyclopaedia noted that the Wayana people dance and perform together while making music.[202]

Also textile objects are allowed to be placed inside the glass cabinet. According to the text label that describes the ‘’woman’s apron’’ (Fig. 5), women wore this apron, which often had beads arranged in a special pattern, during festive ceremonies.[203] Because the label does not explicitly mention anything about the apron’s integrity, it is necessary to consult literature for insights. Anthropologists Sally and Richard Price emphasised in their book *Maroon arts* the importance of different attitudes, patterns, hairstyle and jewellery to highlight individuality in Maroon culture.[204] Textiles, including the ‘’shawl’’ (Fig.6) were used during religious ceremonies, either hung in temples as sacrifice to their ancestors or used as decoration on coffins.[205]

In contrast, the museum presents the *maraka* ‘’rattle’’ and the ‘’drum’’ in a closed cabinet that should not be placed there. The text label for the *maraka* ‘’rattle’’ (Fig. 7) discusses that it consists of parrot feathers and stones, and is used by a *pijai,* which is a shaman.[206] It describes that the people from the Amazon area removed the stones from rattle just before the European imperialists collected them, in order to protect the spirits that hid inside the stones.[207] Although the text label does not elaborate on this spiritual integrity, Izikowitz stated that a *pjiai* could activate the souls of ancestors and gods in the stones to heal people from supernatural diseases.[208] The shaman could activate these during a ceremonial dance involving blowing smoke and singing and dancing.[209] When he rattled it, a certain kind of power was exerted to heal the person.[210] People believed that the rattles with feathers

[199] Izikowitz, *Musical and other sound instruments of the South American Indians,* 395.
[200] Text label ‘’panpipes’’, Wereldmuseum Leiden. Accessed on April 18, 2024.
[201] Izikowitz, *Musical and other sound instruments of the South American Indians,* 395.
[202] Olsen and Sheehy, *Garland encyclopedia of world music,* 185.
[203] Text label ‘’apron’’, Wereldmuseum Leiden. Accessed on April 18, 2024.
[204] Price and Price, *Maroon arts,* 61.
[205] Price, ‘’Maroon fashion history’’, 4.
[206] Text label ‘’rattle’’, Wereldmuseum Leiden. Accessed on April 18, 2024.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Izikowitz, *Musical and other sound instruments of the South American Indians,* 112
[209] Ibid.
[210] Davis, ‘’Physicians, healers, and their remedies in colonial Suriname’’, 5.

represented the souls of the shaman's birds.[211] According to the literature, the rattle contains a living spirit animal, therefore it should not be placed in a cabinet.

The accompanying text label of the ''drum'' (Fig. 8) clearly describes that the ''drum'' contains a spirit, because it states that the player must always ask permission from the spirit inside to play it, since not everyone is allowed to play it.[212] On the tablet, the museum uses the English term to present this item, stating that the Surinamese Kari'na community called it the *sambura.*[213] The text label of the ''seat'' (Fig. 9) also describes that it is associated with spirits of ancestors.[214] Richard and Sally Price elaborated on this fact by describing that chairs belonging to ancestors of a community retain the ancestors' spirit after their death.[215] Thus, the text label and literature provide further insight into the ownership of the specific chair, affirming that each individual had his own chair. Again, the museum's decision to place the ''drum'' and the ''seat'' in a cabinet and present it with English terms, therefore goes against Kreps' principles of 'cross-cultural curation', that emphasises collaboration and respecting the object's nature and its traditions.[216]

It seems that the museum did not take the object's spiritual integrity into account in the decision of their placement. This is evident from the fact that all objects are placed in a closed cabinet, despite the fact that the text labels describe that some objects indeed contain living spirits. In this case, the museum seems to prioritise the protection of the drum's and seat's appearance. In conclusion, in Leiden, there appears to be partial respect for the traditions, norms and values associated with the Surinamese objects. This suggests an unequal relationship in the collaboration, which is against Kreps' assertion that 'cross-cultural approaches to curation' consists of collaborations that are equal.[217]

According to the museum's website, historically, the focus of the museum in Amsterdam has been on collecting objects in the Dutch colonies and disseminating information about them, as well as representing colonial interests.[218] The initiative came from botanist Frederik Willem van Eerden, who started a small collection in his loft. It soon outgrew his house and he was able to expand in a larger building in Haarlem provided by the Dutch government. At this location, the objects did not contain any information about their

[211] Izikowitz, *Musical and other sound instruments of the South American Indians,* 105.
[212] Text label ''drum'', Wereldmuseum Leiden. Accessed on April 18, 2024.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Text label ''seat'', Wereldmuseum Leiden. Accessed on April 18, 2024.
[215] Price and Price, *Maroon arts,* 133.
[216] Kreps, *Liberating culture,* 49-50.
[217] Ibid., 3.
[218] Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, ''Geschiedenis Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.''

use or culture. The Haarlem location eventually became too small for the expanding collection. Simultaneously, Amsterdam's zoo Artis wanted to get rid of their collection, which led to the search of a new building in Amsterdam to house Van Eerden and Artis' collection. The new building was called ''Koloniaal Museum''. After World War II, the museum renamed it to ''Tropenmuseum'' and included more items from across Asia.[219] From the 1970's, the museum shifted its focus to presenting issues of underdeveloped countries. These exhibitions presented not only objects but also audio and recreations of living situations, showing how Asian people lived. In that time, this approach was regarded as innovative, as it was the first museum in the Netherlands using this approach. It required a renovation of the building to accommodate the new exhibition techniques.[220] This approach continued to evolve and is still evident in the Wereldmuseum now, as seen in the ''Our colonial inheritance'' exhibition.

While the presentation of objects in Leiden tends towards the traditional 'object-centred' approach, the Amsterdam exhibition emphasises 'cultural conservation'. The permanent exhibition "Our colonial inheritance" houses the majority of the museum's collection of Surinamese objects. Its aim is to demonstrate that colonialism is not merely a historical phenomenon but continues to shape contemporary society.[221] The exhibition focuses extensively on the impact of colonialism in Dutch present day society through the use of themes such as discrimination, racism, slavery and religion. Alongside objects, visitors encounter photographs, videos, three-dimensional objects and paintings. They also have the opportunity to listen to audio fragments, in which they can hear people that each have their specialisation in the presented themes. Carl Haarnack (founder of the Buka - Bibliotheca Surinamica), Lelani Lewis (chef and culinary activist of Caribbean cuisine) and Sherlien Sanches (museum educator on the Surinamese hero Kakoeisi) recorded audio excerpts for Surinamese objects.

The exhibition's dynamic approach enables dialogue and discussion among visitors. This strategy aligns with the viewpoint of Otto et al., highlighting how exhibition design can facilitate dialogue between visitors.[222] This strategy is especially reflected in the part dedicated to musical instruments, where visitors can listen to the music produced by the musical instruments (Fig. 10). To hear the music, the visitors have to press the button below

[219] Wereldmuseum Amsterdam, ''Geschiedenis Wereldmuseum Amsterdam.''
[220] Ibid.
[221] Text label ''Our colonial inheritance'', Wereldmuseum Rotterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[222] Otto, Deger and Marcus, ''Ethnography and exhibition design'', 2.

the object. For example, the text label accompanying the ‘’banjo’’ (Fig. 11) states that it was made by an enslaved person using calabash, a material that Surinamese communities used a lot.[223] The decision not to elaborate further on the sounds of the music in the text, may serve as an invitation for visitors to press the button and hear the music themselves. This strategy enables participation, dialogue and discussion, as people can hear it together. It enhances the exhibition’s inclusivity, by making it possible for deaf people to participate. Furthermore, the museum uses an inclusive vocabulary. For example, in the text label ‘’Caribbean region’’ the word ‘enslaved’ is used instead of the word ‘slave’ (Fig. 12). In addition, the term ‘exotic’ is substituted for the specific countries of origin (Fig. 12). However, the text that accompanies the ‘’cigars’’ states the word ’indigenous pipes’, which, as we observed in the Leiden analysis, should be substituted for a more specific word to enhance inclusivity of language.[224] In this case, the term could be removed, as it does not contribute to the spiritual and religious context of the cigars.

Similar to Leiden, Amsterdam shows objects that do and do not contain a living spirit or ancestor. This means that some objects can be placed enclosed and that some objects must be outside closed cabinets. However, almost all objects are located inside the cabinets. For example, for the *apinti,* a form of a drum, it is appropriate to be placed enclosed (Fig. 13). The text label of the *apinti* describes it as a drum traditionally played by men during festivals. He holds it between his legs while dancing. European imperialists feared the drum, as it could incite uprisings.[225] As the text label did not state the spiritual or religious integrity, consulting Richard and Sally Price’s book *Maroon arts* provided insight. Players used the *apinti* to convey proverbs, which are significant in the Maroon culture, symbolising competence and dignity. Proverbs were integral to formal conversations, with the sound of the drum serving as ’*apinti* language’, which is translated into the community’s spoken language.[226] They were used to comment on discussions and mark important occasions, such as the arrival of gods or ancestors.[227] Although the *apinti* hides a saying, there is no living spirit inside, therefore it can be placed in a cabinet.

Also in the case of the *angisa* (Fig.14) and *kotomisi doll* (Fig. 15), consultation of literature was necessary to determine whether the object can be placed in a closed cabinet or not. The general text label about *angisa* describes that it is a scarf hiding a saying (*odo)*

[223] Text label ‘’banjo’’, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[224] Modest and Lelijeveld, *Words matter,* 117.
[225] Text label ‘’*apinti*’’, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[226] Price and Price, *Maroon arts,* 257-258.
[227] Ibid., 240-241.

understood only by people familiar with the Surinamese language.[228] The scarf's shape follows clothing tradition, with each type of folding featuring a unique saying.[229] This particular *angisa* has the *odo: te mekanu e suku en payman, na tranga siki e tyari a nen,* which means ''when vengeance demands satisfaction, disease take the blame''.[230] Thus, the text does not mention anything about a spirit inside it. Researcher of Surinamese traditional clothing Ilse Henar-Hewitt (1922-1996), explained as well that through the binding the *angisa* could convey a secret spoken language or state of mind.[231] When the ends of the fabric are down, the woman indicates that she is angry or that she does not want to talk. When they are up, the woman indicates that she is calm.[232] The label and the literature agree on the absence of a living spirit, making it suitable to be placed in a cabinet.

The *kotomisi doll* (Fig.15), a woman who wears a *koto,* is also allowed to be placed enclosed, as it does not consist of living spirits. The consultation of the book *Surinaamse koto's en angisa* provided more information, as the text label does not mention anything about its integrity.[233] Henar-Hewitt explained that any woman wearing a *koto*, with or without shoes, is called a *kotomisi*.[234] Women wore different types of *kotomisi* to specific places, such as the church, market or a feast.[235] Like the *angisa,* the *kotomisi* hides a secret language, determined by the way the fabric is tied.[236] Therefore, it is appropriate to place it inside the cabinet, as there is no living spirit in it.

The discussed objects here include musical instruments and clothing, offering a partial glimpse into the traditions of the Surinamese culture. The Wereldmuseum also exhibits everyday utensils used for eating, demonstrating that these items hold cultural significance and traditions too. This makes it necessary to investigate whether they have a spirit inside them. For example, the text label of the ''calabash spoons'' (Fig. 16) states that those are utensils made from calabash, which is a strong material that stands up well to heat. In Surinamese language, it is also known as *kaabasi supun.*[237] Furthermore, it describes that the

[228] Text label ''*angisa,* scarves with a message'', Wereldmuseum Amsterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Text label ''revenge'', Wereldmuseum Amsterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[231] Henar-Hewitt, *Surinaamse koto's en angisa's,* 15.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Text label ''*kotomisi*'', Wereldmuseum Amsterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[234] Henar-Hewitt, *Surinaamse koto's en angisa's,* 31.
[235] Ibid., 35.
[236] Ibid., 31.
[237] Text label ''calabash spoons'', Wereldmuseum Amsterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.

spoons' makers scratched diagonally into the calabash to make the decoration.[238] The label does not elaborate on the traditions associated with these utensils, therefore consulting Richard and Sally Price's book was necessary to get more insights. They described that people use calabash to make different kinds of utensils, such as covered containers, bowls and cutlery. Larger containers often hold rice, flour, salted meat and fish.[239] Furthermore, they stated that the calabash tree produces green round fruit with a firm shell. When the fruit is ripe, it can be picked to extract the juice from the skin.[240] Traditionally, men processed these utensils but from the twentieth century on, women also started adding decorations.[241] Besides using calabash for utensils, the fruit of the calabash has medicinal uses. During childbirth, the juice of the calabash is smeared over the womens body to induce contractions.[242] Thus, the calabash contains no spiritual significance, making it appropriate to place the spoons inside a cabinet.

Consulting additional literature was also necessary for understanding the significance of the ''cigars'' (Fig.17). While the text label states that the cigars are made from tree bark and were used by Maroons to call upon the spirit *winti,* it does not provide further elaboration on this spirit. According to Hans Buddingh, *winti* is a spirit associated with elements such as, air, water, soil and forest.[243] It was invoked to protect community members and it only appeared when people followed traditional divine laws.[244] Buddingh also explains that cigars were part of wedding traditions, in which offering a cigar symbolises a proposal. Its acceptance was indicated by cooking and sharing a fish. If a boy wanted to marry a girl, he would inform his father, who would then offer a cigar to the girl's father. If the girl did not want to marry him, the father would refuse this cigar. If the girl agreed, the boy had to catch a fish and give it to her. By cooking the given fish, the girl indicated her willingness to marry him. The cooked fish was then sent back to the boy, who had to eat it.[245] This detailed insight from Buddingh clarifies that the spirit *winti* does not hide in the cigar itself, but is only invoked when the cigar is used, making it appropriate to place the cigar in the cabinet.

Besides calabash, cassava was also associated with traditions in Surinamese culture. The *sipari* (grate), *matapi* (press), *cassava sieve* and *cassava grater* (Fig. 18) were essential

[238] Text label ''calabash spoons'', Wereldmuseum Amsterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[239] Price and Price, *Maroon arts,* 206.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid., 207.
[243] Buddingh', *A history of Suriname,* 142.
[244] Ibid.
[245] Ibid., 155.

tools for cultivating the cassava plant to consume it. The text label of the *sipari* discusses that both men and women in the community used the *sipari* to remove the poisonous juice from the cassava.[246] Subsequently, the *matapi,* made and utilised by men, was used to extract the acid from the juice.[247] Using the *sieve* was a crucial tool in preparing cassava bread and traditional beverages.[248] Richard Price discussed the cassava processing procedure in his article ''Subsistence on the plantation periphery'' as well, describing how it was washed, peeled and grated using sharp inlaid stones. He also described that a *matapi* was used to extract the poisonous juice from the cassava, followed by mashing the pulp of the fruit with a mortar and pestle (*kassaba*). Lastly, the pulp was sifted through a sieve (*manan*) to form cakes that could be baked in the oven.[249]

The processing of rice is embedded in the Surinamese culture as well. The text label of the *rice spatulas* (Fig.17) states that these utensils were used by women for cooking, specifically to stir rice. It notes that while women own the spatulas, they are made by men.[250] Richard and Sally Price's book aligns with this information, confirming that the *spatulas* are owned by women and were indeed used for stirring rice and other foods preparations for ritual ceremonies.[251] They provided additional context about gender roles in Surinamese cooking and eating traditions. They described a strict division in labour in which women were responsible for cooking all the meals and serving them to the men. They brought the utensils and food to the house the man wanted to eat in, laying it out on the floor. The plates and cutlery, often made from calabash, were used primarily for food preparations, as people typically ate with their fingers. Women and men did not eat together. When he was done eating, she could start with her meal. She was not allowed to eat in his presence.[252] After each course, they rinsed their fingers with water.[253] Although the *sipari* (grate), *matapi* (press), *cassava sieve*, *cassava grater* and *rice spatulas* have extensive traditions associated with their use, there is no indication that they contain a living spirit.

As the previously discussed objects could all be placed in a closed cabinet because they do not contain spirits that need to 'breathe', the museum also houses objects that do contain spirits and therefore should not be enclosed. For example, the ''spiritual object'' (Fig.

[246] Text label ''grater'', Wereldmuseum Amsterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[247] Text label ''press', Wereldmuseum Amsterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[248] Text label ''cassava sieve'', Wereldmuseum Amsterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[249] Price, ''Subsistence on the plantation periphery'', 117.
[250] Text label ''rice spatulas'', Wereldmuseum Amsterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[251] Price and Price, *Maroon arts,* 134.
[252] Ibid., 132.
[253] Price, ''Subsistence on the plantation periphery'', 118.

19). Its text label describes that the object is a broom rubbed with *pemba doti,* which a white clay with spiritual powers. During religious ceremonies, specialists, like shamans, use the broom to remove negative forces.[254] Anthropologist Maria Gomes da Cunha found that *pemba doti* is indeed a medium to communicate with spirits.[255] This alignment between the text label and the literature shows that the museum should reconsider its decision of placing the broom in a closed cabinet, given the museum's acknowledged spiritual significance.

The spirit *winti* is associated with more object traditions, such as the ‘’ancestor figure’’ (Fig. 20). In its associated tradition, *winti* has a protective function which is described in the text label. It states that the ‘’ancestor figures’’ stood next to roads that lead to the village to protect its inhabitants.[256] While the label acknowledges their role in community protection, Buddingh further explained that ancestors serve as living intermediaries between *winti* and the community members.[257] Therefore, the ‘’ancestor figures’’ are living entities that have to be presented outside the glass cabinet.

Thus, the analysis of the presentation method at the Amsterdam location, presents a similar view as the museum in Leiden. It seems that the curators also did not take the object’s spiritual integrity into account in the decision of their placement, as almost all objects are placed inside the cabinets. It questions the degree of collaboration that took place to make this exhibition, especially because there are no explanations of collaboration in text labels. However, the answers to the questions of my interview with Wendeline Flores, curator of the exhibition, show a significant collaboration in the exhibitions’ construction.[258] Flores described that various advisory groups in education, accessibility and audience research were formed, each consisting of experts in their respective field. The education group included teachers and academics knowledgeable on educational programs. The accessibility group consisted of individuals skilled in creating strategies for including people with physical or visual disabilities.[259]

Flores and the advisory groups developed the exhibition’s first draft. General meetings brought all the groups together to discuss and refine ideas for the theme and scope. The first meeting was a brainstorming session on the subject, where they decided on research frameworks and practical matters related to the exhibition space. Subsequent meetings

[254] Text label ‘’spiritual object’’, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[255] Maria Gomes da Cunha, ‘’Clay and earth excavating partialities and relations’’, 368.
[256] Text label ‘’ancestor figure’’, Wereldmuseum Amsterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[257] Buddingh, *A history of Suriname,* 142.
[258] Wendeline Flores, pers.comm. Microsoft Teams, June 3, 2024.
[259] Ibid.

focused on writing texts and selecting objects. With the help of a design agency, they conceived the design of the walls.[260]

During the meetings, Flores presented her designs and texts to the groups, explaining her choices and receiving feedback to refine concepts. These discussions enabled Flores to find ideas that all advisory groups would agree with. The multiple perspectives of these groups helped her to understand why certain ideas should be implemented and why some were unsuitable. In addition to collaborating with the advisory groups, Flores worked closely with artists to explore possibilities for the placement of the artworks in the exhibition space.[261] In forming the advisory groups, diversity in expertise was a key consideration. The groups included experts on various topics, such as Surinamese culture, as well as those knowledgeable about colonial and post-colonial issues facing ethnographic museums in the Netherlands. This approach was intentional to ensure that the exhibition would not solely reflect Surinamese norms and values, aiming instead to create an exhibition that resonates with a broad audience. While in academic debates, the focus had been on the relevance of collaboration with communities in order to co-curate, the Wereldmuseum intentionally chose to move away from this to achieve their goal. It is an indication that the exhibitions are most likely not cross-cultural according to Kreps' perspective.[262]

Although the exhibition is permanent, Flores indicated that it will be evaluated every year and updated when it is necessary. She explained that this process is challenging due to the sensitivity of the subject matter and the time required to adapt the exhibition design. She emphasised that it is intended to be a place for dialogue that develops over time. This ongoing development is demonstrated in a collaboration that was established a year after the exhibition's opening. A group of Surinamese people from the diaspora criticised the exhibition for insufficient representation and inclusivity of the Surinamese community. In response, Flores invited them to engage in a collaborative process lasting several months, in order to implement changes. This collaboration started with getting to know each other and expressing mutual expectations. Together they visited the depot to identify which objects they wanted to see included in the exhibition. Flores asked them deliberate questions such as:

[260] Wendeline Flores, pers.comm. Microsoft Teams, June 3, 2024.
[261] Ibid.
[262] Ibid.

> ''What exactly is missing? Would you like there to be more objects or for the stories of the objects to be more profound? Are the stories true or are they stories you don't want to identify with?.''[263]

Based on their answers, Flores revisited the exhibition, adapted texts and added objects to reflect the group's input and improve the Surinamese community's representation.[264] This is a clear example in which the museum shared its authority with the Surinamese community, acknowledging its agency, according to Hutichson's arguments.[265]

Whereas in Leiden the extent of collaboration in curating the exhibitions remains relatively unclear, the interview with Flores shows evidence of significant cooperation in Amsterdam. As Flores pointed out, this collaboration respects the traditions, norms and values of the Surinamese culture. Consequently, it becomes increasingly evident that the objects in the closed cabinets are placed there for safety reasons, rather than due to a lack of awareness of the spiritual significance of the objects. It shows that the Wereldmuseum is caught in a dilemma of choosing the correct manner of presentation, while simultaneously meeting the security policies regarding the object's display.

While the collection in Amsterdam and Leiden have often changed locations, the collection in Rotterdam has remained in the same building from the start in 1851. Initially, the collection focused on maritime objects, earning the name ''Maritiem Museum''.[266] Eventually, the Rotterdam municipality took over and transformed it into an ethnographic museum, naming it ''Museum voor Land- en Volkenkunde''.[267] In the 20th century, the focus in the collection shifted to objects that were brought by immigrants who arrived in the port of Rotterdam. Reflecting the city's changing demographic and cultural landscape, the museum updated its policy in 2017 to better represent the cultural background of the Rotterdam population. It aimed to create a more inclusive and representative collection that mirrors the norms and values of the city's residents.[268]

In the light of the museum's history and the adjusted policy in 2017, it is therefore not surprising that the permanent exhibitions in the museum are focused on Rotterdam. It divides the Surinamese objects into two exhibitions: *Kruispunt Rotterdam* and *Kolonialisme en*

[263] Wendeline Flores, pers.comm. Microsoft Teams, June 3, 2024.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Hutchison, ''Sharing authority'', 143.
[266] Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, ''Geschiedenis Wereldmuseum.''
[267] Ibid.
[268] Ibid.

Rotterdam. Both exhibitions, similar to the Amsterdam exhibition ‘’Our Colonial inheritance’’, combine the history of Rotterdam with contemporary societal issues, such as diversity and inclusivity. The focus of the *Kruispunt Rotterdam* exhibition is on the city's trading position and the connection with countries in the world that comes with trading. The opening text describes that the objects collected in the Dutch colonies often arrived by ship in the port of Rotterdam.[269] In the last part of this text, it mentions ‘’Western collectors’’. In addition to the word ’indigenous’, Modest argued that ’Western’ also indicates a geographical and historical division of people. It distinguishes between developed countries and underdeveloped countries, making it a non-inclusive word. In this case, the curators could better use ’Europe’.[270]

In the exhibition, only one cabinet presents Surinamese objects. It is accompanied with a text label that has the name ‘’expeditions’’ (Fig. 21). This text consists of inclusive terms, such as ’local people’ and ’enslaved people’, as it clearly specifies what kind of people they are. ‘Local’ refers to the place of origin and ‘enslaved’ confirms that people were forced to work on plantations. However, also the term ’indigenous’ has been used. As we saw in the analysis in Leiden and Amsterdam, it is better to substitute this word for a more specific one. The changing use of non-inclusive and inclusive words, thus shows that the Rotterdam location is in a transition as well.

Similar to Leiden and Amsterdam, the objects are presented in an ’object-centred’ manner by placing them all in a cabinet, serving as a tool to prevent decay. The museum has placed the objects on a white, semi-transparent table. The table is in the middle of the room and visitors can walk around it. This allows them to see the side views and top views. They cannot see the bottom of the objects, due to the fact that the objects lay on the table. The cabinet combines objects that are allowed to be enclosed and items that are not allowed to be inside it. The text label belonging to the ‘’ornamental comb’’ (Fig. 22) describes that only men performed wood carving.[271] They had to learn and master the technique at a young age in order to provide his wife with household necessities later on.[272] Consultation of literature was necessary to investigate whether it also consists of spirits. As Richard and Sally Price found that hair combs were used as a gift that men gave to women, we certainly can say that there are no spirits in it, allowing it to be placed inside the cabinet.[273] On the other hand, the

[269] Text label ‘’A global connection’’, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[270] Modest and Lelijeveld, *Words matter,* 143.
[271] Text label ‘’ornamental comb’’, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[272] Ibid.
[273] Price and Price, *Maroon arts,* 134.

‘’goud rattle’’ (Fig. 23) is not allowed to be placed in an enclosed space. The text label accompanying this object already indicates that the rattle consists of stones that contain living spirits to help people curing illnesses.[274] Therefore, the object should be presented outside the cabinet

In the second part of the exhibition, the museum showcases contemporary artworks in the form of video’s, music and textiles. In this part, there is one work which is about Suriname (Fig. 24). There is a contradiction in the text label. It stated: ‘’Some objects stand out for their beauty, or because they are skilfully made. Others stand out for their unusual history or symbolism’’.[275] This text refers to the presented artwork, that has a sense of ’beauty’ and at the same time, a deep-rooted tradition. As we have seen in chapter one, stating that an object is valuable because of its beauty is a statement that belongs to a traditional European presentation and preservation methods. The text further states that it could be that objects stand because of their associated tradition.[276] The work focuses on the Surinamese vegetable *karela,* which at first glance seems to be an everyday object, but at the same time also a strange-looking object.[277] The deep-rooted tradition associated with the object is about Surinamese migrants who recognised this vegetable from their homeland in which they found comfort when seeing it, because of the familiarity.[278] It seems that traditional presentation methods and ’cultural conservation’ co-exist in this work by showing an artwork that is associated with cultural traditions. It reflects a new version of cross-cultural curation.

The focus of the other exhibition in the museum, *Kolonialisme en Rotterdam,* is on European colonial history and the impact of colonialism in Rotterdam. According to the opening text label, this history is also reflected in the city's streets and buildings. The exhibition intends to make inhabitants of Rotterdam aware that by living in this city they are part of colonial history.[279] The exhibition consists of five clearly stated themes: ‘’growth of the city’’, ‘’departure and arrival’’, ‘’urban culture’’, ‘’streets and collection’’ and ‘’attitudes and action’’.[280] The focus is on how Dutch imperialists took over Surinamese social life and

[274] Text label ‘’gourd rattle’’, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[275] Text label ‘’bittersweet memories’’, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Ibid.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Text label ‘’Colonialism and Rotterdam’’, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[280] These themes are the headliners of general text labels divided in the exhibition, as well as the main themes of the audio tour, available on tour.rotterdam.werelmuseum.nl.

political landscape during the 18th and 19th century. The text signs provide a lot of information about how that regime influenced Surinamese inhabitant's lives.[281]

In the galleries, there are not many objects on display that were maybe Surinamese communities. Instead, it displays prints, books and paintings made outside Suriname that have a connection with the Dutch colonial rule. The few objects that are made in Suriname are a ''bench'', a ''cooking bowl'', a ''bow and arrow'', a ''hair comb'' and an ''*apinti''*. These objects are placed in a space in the wall that is closed with glass (Fig. 25). Because the objects are placed in a cut-out of the wall, the visitor can only see the front and a little bit of the sides of the objects. These kinds of objects are already analysed in Leiden and Amsterdam. Based on these analysations, these objects do not contain living spirits, therefore it is appropriate to place them enclosed here. The fact that the objects here are enclosed could be for safety reasons to prevent children from touching it, as these objects are part of the children's area.

Having analysed the exhibitions in Amsterdam, Leiden and Rotterdam, I identify key aspects that should be taken into account in the consideration of placing the objects in or outside cabinets, which are safety, the presence of living spirits, and the preservation of original context. The analysis showed that these three aspects often conflict with one another in the exhibitions. It seems that the museum has placed objects in closed cabinets for safety reasons. For objects that do not contain living spirits, this is allowed. As Clifford argued in 1980, placing the object in a cabinet removes them from their original context. This method prevents decay, but also transforms the object into art pieces, detached from their cultural context.[282] In the case of the presence of a spirit in an object, the museum acknowledges this spirit in its texts, but it has decided to place the object inside a cabinet. Therefore, the museum puts more value on placing them in a cabinet for safety reasons. Ultimately, it is the museum's responsibility to balance these considerations and decide what is more important.

Another consideration that emerged from the analysis is the importance of addressing the traditions associated with an object in relation to its culture. In many cases, the text labels do not provide enough information about these traditions. The Wereldmuseum faces a decision regarding the use of these labels. On the one hand, providing more detailed information about the context of objects would prevent confusion and enhance the educational value in the exhibits. On the other hand, long text labels may discourage visitors

[281] Text label ''Colonialism and Rotterdam'', Wereldmuseum Rotterdam. Accessed on April 20, 2024.
[282] Clifford, *Predicament of culture,* 12-13.

from reading them due to the time required for it. The museum has to find a way of balancing offering enough information to educate and keeping the text interesting to maintain their engagement.

Despite the fact that the text label does not state anything about a collaboration, the interview with Wendeline Flores has showed that Wereldmuseum indeed establishes and stimulates collaboration with various groups, such as the advisory groups and Surinamese communities. It also tries to make visitors participate and start dialogues with each other through its exhibition design. This shows that the Wereldmuseum respects the Surinamese traditions, norms and values by co-creating exhibitions. They are caught up in a dilemma in which safety and security protocols do not resonate with the preservation and presentation of Surinamese objects. Ultimately, it is the museum's responsibility to balance considerations regarding this dilemma to decide what is more important.

Conclusion

This thesis tested Christina Kreps' theory of cross-cultural approaches to curation on the Wereldmuseum's presentation and preservation of the Surinamese objects. It has analysed the extent that the Surinamese community and the museum collaborated in the creation of the Surinamese exhibitions in the Wereldmuseum in Leiden, Amsterdam and Rotterdam. I have argued that Kreps' theory should be used for this research as she has criticised the museum in 1987 for being non-inclusive. In 2005, she advised the Wereldmuseum to use cross-cultural curation, defined as a social practice based on the relationship between humans and objects. She found that the museum's exhibitions were still focused on showing the appearance of the object, and preventing them from decaying. This approach decontextualized the objects, as the focus shifted to preserving the object's appearance instead of the objects' traditions. Kreps used comparative museological research to find out that communities in South-America, Asia and Africa, like European museums, have their forms of museology. Kreps advocated for the use of cross-cultural curation to 'liberate' European museums from the misconception that these communities did not collect and present their objects in museums. By recognising that European and traditional approaches to curating are similar but also different from each other, museums can make modifications in the presentation and preservation of objects to ensure community representation and inclusivity.

The gap in the research on cross-cultural exhibitions at the Wereldmuseum involved the ambiguity in the mission statement about the use of cross-cultural exhibitions. The Wereldmuseums' mission statement described that the museum aims to create cross-cultural exhibitions from 2017 on, but there was no statement about whether the museum follows Kreps' advice for this, or whether it applies a different perspective. The lack of clarity about the use of cross-cultural exhibitions at the Wereldmuseum was the reason to investigate the museum's contemporary curation and preservation methodology.

This thesis has placed Kreps' theory in the academic debate of collaboration, participation and sharing authority in European museums. I have found that Kreps is not the only scholar who wrote about the incorporation of collaboration in museums. The rise of the 'new museology movement', that advocated for more diverse voices in the museum, caused scholars, like Gurian and Kreps to publish new concepts. Kreps formulated her arguments in a time in which paying more attention to the communities was already further developed into establishing collaborations. Other anthropologists and museologists, such as Ames, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Kahn advocated for collaboration as well, but they also expressed that collaboration would lead to fragmented exhibitions, as curators had to make

compromises in what to include and what to leave out. Alivizatou and Chandler even argued against this co-curation, because of the compromises that had to be made. Although Kreps recognised these issues, she counter argued that a 'bottom-up' approach would avoid fragmentation, as this approach enabled co-creation. Thus, chapter one has shown that the elaboration of collaboration in museological discussions shifted over the years. This has been further exemplified in the examination of collaborative concepts published between 2005 and today, in which scholars, such as Hutchison, Fouseki and Smith and Otto et al. contributed to the academic debates. In these discussions, the participation of communities has been a recurring theme in which the scholars argued for the improvement of quality of the collaboration. Furthermore, communities raised their voice more in their decision to work together, as they also wanted to see their wishes fulfilled regarding the presentation and preservation of their objects. Besides participating with communities, museums also started to use its exhibition design to enhance collaboration between visitors.

The analysis has shown that the Wereldmuseum today is in the midst of a transition, in which they collaborate with communities and groups to co-curate the exhibitions. During the research, I have discovered how the objects are positioned in closed cabinets in the galleries. Furthermore, I have found the alternate use of non-inclusive and inclusive words in the text labels. In the galleries of the museum, all Surinamese objects are provided with explanatory text labels highlighting the original social, spiritual and religious contexts of the object. The labels describe how they look like, what they resemble or for what they were used for. These text labels are short, sometimes lacking information on the object's tradition. In addition, it has become clear that the European museum model is also present as objects were placed in closed glass cabinets. According to the literature provided in the thesis, this implies that the objects are taken out of context. The museum tries to re-create this missing context through the use of textual explanations. It confirms the traditional European 'object-centred' approach, in which the object's appearance is more important than the preservation of the traditions of the object. By using closed cabinets the museum also does not take into account the presence of living spirits in the objects.

It seems that the museum has been entangled in multiple dilemmas where, on the one hand, they want to accommodate the communities by adapting the way objects are exhibited, on the other hand, they also have to take into account the safety considerations of putting the objects in a cabinet. While the Wereldmuseum may have done a lot of research on the social, spiritual and religious contexts of the objects, the curators were not able to write down everything they researched. The reason for this could perhaps be that visitors stay more

engaged with the exhibition when they read short texts. In today's society, a museum is also an attraction for leisure, where there should be entertainment in addition to education.

These dilemmas do not only apply to the Wereldmuseum, but certainly also to other European museums. This thesis has shown that European ethnographic museums are places where colonial history, cultures and communities come together. I have argued that ethnographic museums should collaborate with communities in making exhibitions in order to enhance community representation and inclusivity. This collaboration involves the equal engagement and participation of both museum professionals and community members. However, accommodating communities and making compromises is difficult for European museums that have to deal with policies, such as providing access to see objects. If the tradition of an object only allows a select group to see, then this is not possible for museums to adhere to, because of the social importance of making museums accessible to everyone. Especially since 2022, when the ICOM museum definition with increased focus on inclusivity was published. Furthermore, other safety policies require objects to be placed inside a closed cabinet, although some spiritual objects need to be outside it, to be able to 'breathe'.

During the research, it has become clear that Christina Kreps' theory is useful to test cross-cultural curation in museums, but her theory also has limitations. As chapter one has shown, Kreps' theory built further onto collaborative concepts of anthropologists and museologists in the field, creating a well argumented theory to test in practice. However, Kreps' American identity must be taken into account. Despite her research aim to create more awareness of the curation methods of South-American, Asian and African communities in European museums, Kreps is an outsider to these communities and their cultures. Furthermore, Kreps' identity and the arguments she posed already indicate a degree of power imbalance. In fact, there always remains a 'we-they' relationship in this construction, because Kreps believes that 'they', the communities, should have more control over 'their' objects in 'our' museum. The point is to break free from this thinking, as she even indicates herself.

The methodology of this thesis has had its limitations too. This thesis has examined the extent of collaboration only with regard to the object's positioning in the galleries and the text labels. However, nothing was said about the collaboration in the text labels. Moreover, the interview with Wendeline Flores was useful, but it only applied to the exhibition in Amsterdam. Collaboration and engagement with communities is important for all departments of the museum, therefore for a complete answer to the research question posed in this thesis, communication, marketing and policy making need to be investigated as well.

The selection of the consulted literature on the usage of the objects can also be seen as a limitation. The results might have been different if other secondary literature had been available. It has been important to study the available literature well, since a lot of books and articles that explain traditions of cultures in South-America, Asia and Africa are often products of colonialism. In those books and articles, communities are not presented as human, but as topics of study. I have aimed to use literature that is academically argued with the help of academic sources. Finally, the period of my research also has shaped the outcome. As the three locations became one Wereldmuseum in 2023, they were still adapting text labels that mentioned the former museums' names to their new names. If my research period would have lasted longer, it would have been more likely to come to different conclusions.

However, this thesis has been a valuable addition to the debate on cross-cultural exhibitions, because of the analysis of relatively new exhibitions in the Wereldmuseum through Kreps' perspective of collaboration and participation. In this analysis, it has become clear that museums have to carefully consider the curation and preservation method of objects from communities from South America, Asia and Africa in European museums, as these are often in conflict with the museum policies in European countries. I believe museums and communities must make compromises. To achieve this, there first has to be an equal collaboration between European museums and communities.

The Wereldmuseum today is still in the process of transitioning from three separate ethnographic museums to one Wereldmuseum. These developments started in 2023 and are still continuing, as the process takes a lot of time. This also involves adapting policies. In order to gain complete and new insights, the Wereldmuseum should be re-examined when the elaboration of these new policies in the museum is completed. This new investigation would focus on the way how security and safety policy plans could be designed to ensure that the community's traditions, norms and values can be respected and that the safety of the objects can be still guaranteed.

Appendix A Interview Questions

Interviewer Josine Muller: Thank you for your time. I will start by introducing myself. I am Josine and I am currently studying Museum studies at the University in Leiden. I graduated with a Bachelors in Art History at the University of Utrecht last year. I am currently writing my thesis on the Surinamese collection at the Wereldmuseum. I will not record this, since my laptop is not working well, so I will make notes.

Wendeline Flores: Thank you for introducing yourself.

Interviewer Josine Muller: I will first say something about my research. The research concerns the presentation and preservation of the Surinamese collection in Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Leiden. In the mission statement, the Wereldmuseum stated that the exhibitions will be cross-cultural, which means that there are collaborations between national and international stakeholders. In recent years, there is more attention for inclusivity and diversity in museums, including the renewed ICOM museum definition of 2022. In my thesis, I will first investigate the concept of cross-cultural curation and test it in practice through the case study of the Surinamese collection at the Wereldmuseum. I will look at the degree of cooperation between those stakeholders. To do this, I will examine the text labels and the position of objects in the galleries. However, this is also a limitation because there is often not that much space in the galleries and labels to give full context and I expect that many important decisions regarding collaboration also happen behind the scenes. That is why I would like to ask some questions about the creation of the permanent collection of Surinamese objects. My first question is: What is your role in the creation of the ‘’Our colonial inheritance’’ exhibition?

Wendeline Flores: My specialisation is in the Afro Caribbean region, where I am the only curator in the department at the moment. I am working on the permanent exhibition ‘’Our colonial inheritance’’. At the moment, we are working on the revisions of the permanent exhibitions in Leiden, Rotterdam and Amsterdam, but I am only involved in the Amsterdam exhibition. We are updating the text labels, as they still contain words that were used twenty years ago, but are now considered as non-inclusive. Besides this, we are looking at changing objects. The revision is a process that takes a lot of time, like three or four years, as it involves a lot of collaboration with the stakeholders.

Interviewer Josine Muller: Thank you. My second question is: How does the collaborations with the stakeholders look like?

Wendeline Flores: I collaborated with three advisory groups that consisted of skilled people with expertise on education, accessibility and public research. We organised several meetings, with every meeting a ‘’check-in’’. In the first meeting we discussed a research framework and practical issues, in the second we thought of a concept and discussed the first objects. Consequently, we chose a design agency who helped us with the concept of the map. In every meeting, we discussed what we found, what the new plans are, exchanged feedback and implemented changes. During these meetings, we listened carefully to each other. It is about finding compromises. We also established collaborations with artists, because the artworks had to be placed in the galleries and needed accompanying text labels. The advisory groups consisted of people who are very skilled in their expertise. We intentionally chose to not only include Surinamese community members, as we wanted that the exhibition would be for everybody. So we also had people knowledgeable on colonial and post-colonial issues. We also had an online group with whom we collaborated. Those were people who knew the museum well. We asked them what they wanted to see in the exhibition, for example. The ‘’Our colonial inheritance’’ exhibition is a permanent exhibition, but we try to update it every year, because we see the exhibition as a living dialogue. After its opening, there was a group of Surinamese people who thought that there was not enough representation of the Surinamese community. We invited them to the museum to collaborate and discuss the objects they wanted to see changed. We asked them what, in their opinion, missed in the exhibition. Together,we also visited the depot to see which objects they wanted to see replaced. After this meeting, we revisited the exhibition, changed the objects and adapted the text labels.

Interviewer Josine Muller: Thank you very much for your elaboration. Do you want to receive my thesis when it is finished?

Wendeline Flores: Yes, please.

Illustrations

Figure 1. Gallery view of a bench in front of the cabinet with Surinamese objects, (Leiden, Wereldmuseum).

Figure 2. View of the homepage of the tablet in front of the cabinet with Surinamese objects, (Leiden, Wereldmuseum).

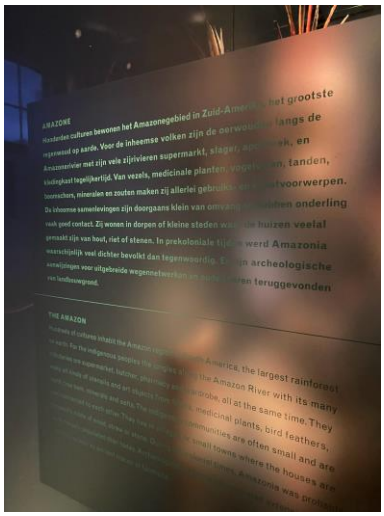


Figure 3. Text label ‘’The Amazon’’, (Leiden, Wereldmuseum).

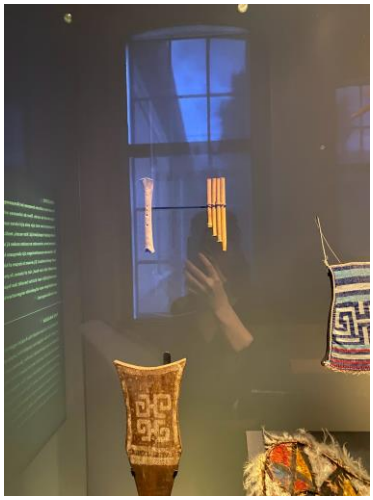


Figure 4. Maker unknown, Wayana, *flute* (left), 1850-1883, bone, 3,5 x 18,7 x 3,6 cm, (Leiden, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. RV-370-568), and: Maker unknown, *panpipes* (right) , 1900-1935, flute 19 x 4,7 cm ; skin 9 x 25 x 18 cm, (Leiden, Wereldmuseum, inv nr. RV-2352-115).

Figure 5. Maker unknown, Wayana, *woman’s apron*, before 1937, beads and cotton, 29 x 38 cm, (Leiden, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. RV-2352-40).

Figure 6. Maker unknown, Kari'na, *shawl,* before 1985, cotton, 114 × 49,4 cm, (Leiden, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. RV-5379-8).

Figure 7. Maker unknown, Kari'na, *rattle,* before 1912, wood, gourd, paint, 39 x 18 cm, (Leiden, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. RV-1817-198).

Figure 8. Maker unknown, Kali'na, *drum,* 1850-1883, wood, skin and liana, 20 x 35 cm, (Leiden, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. RV-370-562).

Figure 9. Maker unknown, Kari'na, *seat,* before 1912, wood and copper, (Leiden, Wereldmuseum).[283]

Figure 10. Gallery view of the musical instruments with under and below music boxes, (Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum).

Figure. 11. Maker unknown, Creole Surinamese, *banjo*, mid 19th century, calabash, sheepskin, wood, iron, 13 × 16,3 × 82cm, (Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. RV-360-5696).

[283] There is no inv. nr. available

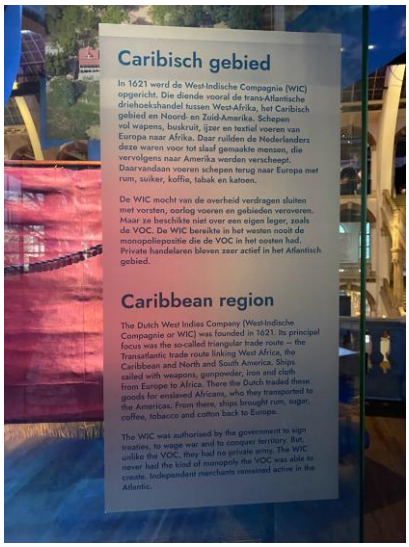


Figure 12. Text label ‘’Caribbean region’’, (Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum).


Figure 13. Maker unknown, Afro-Surinamese, *apinti* (right), first half 20th century, wood and animal skin, 49,5 × 43cm, (Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. RV-5379-16).


Figure 14. Maker unknown, Afro-Surinamese, *angisa* (most right), 1956, cotton, 16,5 × 30 × 22cm, (Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. TM-2480-2).

Figure 15. Maker unknown, Afro-Surinamese, *kotomisi doll* (left), 1900-1940, cotton, linen and coral, 37 x 32 x 27 cm, (Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. RV-2667-2).

Figure 16. Maker unknown, Surinamese, *calabash spoons*, before 1883, calabash, 3,8 x 12,2 cm, (Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. RV-370-381a).

Figure 17.

Below: Maker unknown, Arawak, *cigars*, 1850-1883, tobacco, 3 x 20 cm and 2 x 19,7 cm, (Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. RV-370-357).

Left: Maker unknown, Paamaka Marrons, *rice spatula,* before 1886, wood, 40,5 × 5,2 × 1,2cm, (Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. RV-1817-248) and: Maker unknown, Paamaka Marrons, *rice spatula,* before 1886, wood, 38,8 × 4,3 × 0,8cm, (Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. RV-581-19).

Figure 18. From left to right:

Maker unknown, indigenous, *matapi (grate),* before 1964, warimbo and reed, 173 × 13cm, (Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. TM-3462-1).

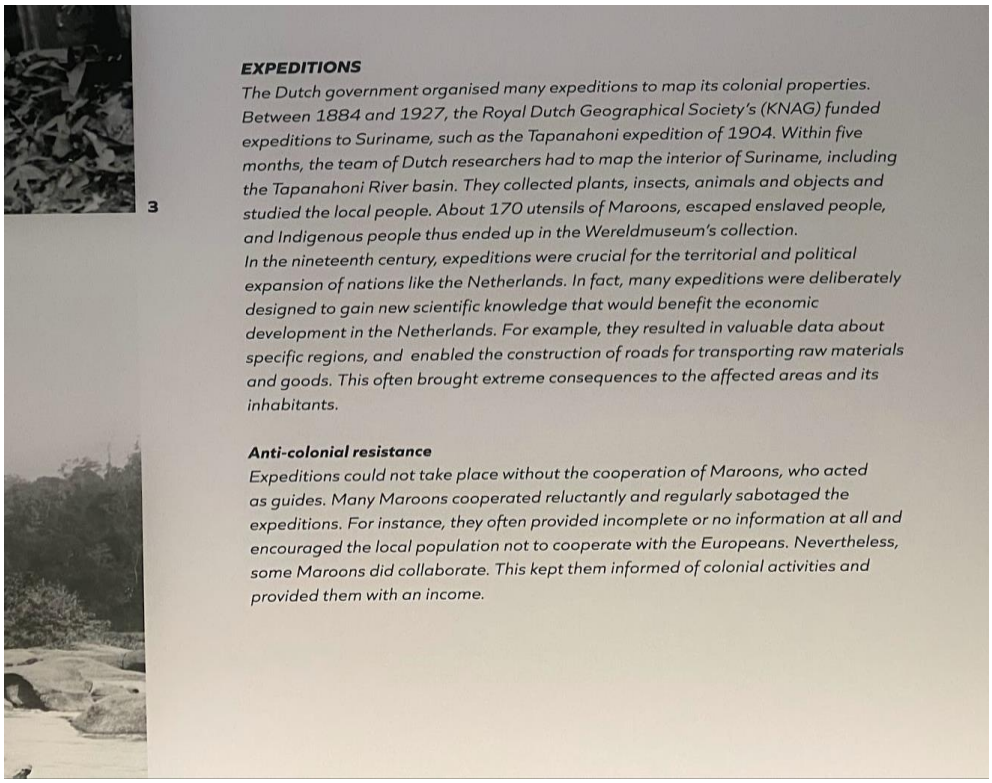
Maker unknown, Waiwai, Trio, *sipari (press),* before 1993, wood, stone and paint, 3,5 x 60 x 22,5cm, (Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. TM-5525-21).

Maker unknown, Wayana, *cassava sieve,* ca. 1937, reed, wood and fiber, 3,5 x 21,5 x 21,5 cm, (Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. RV-2352-66).

Maker unknown, Lokono, *cassava grater,* no date, wood and tin, circa 54 x 20cm, (Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. TM-3825-32a).

Figure 19. Maker unknown, Maroon/Surinamese Creole, *spiritual object* (right in the cabinet), early 20th century, wood, shells and clay, 5 × 11 × 52cm, (Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. TM-H-2965).

Figure 20. Makers unknown, Maroon, *ancestor figure*, 20th century, wood, pigment, plant and fiber, 89,2 × 14 × 9cm, (Amsterdam, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. WM-72012).



3

EXPEDITIONS

The Dutch government organised many expeditions to map its colonial properties. Between 1884 and 1927, the Royal Dutch Geographical Society's (KNAG) funded expeditions to Suriname, such as the Tapanahoni expedition of 1904. Within five months, the team of Dutch researchers had to map the interior of Suriname, including the Tapanahoni River basin. They collected plants, insects, animals and objects and studied the local people. About 170 utensils of Maroons, escaped enslaved people, and Indigenous people thus ended up in the Wereldmuseum's collection.
In the nineteenth century, expeditions were crucial for the territorial and political expansion of nations like the Netherlands. In fact, many expeditions were deliberately designed to gain new scientific knowledge that would benefit the economic development in the Netherlands. For example, they resulted in valuable data about specific regions, and enabled the construction of roads for transporting raw materials and goods. This often brought extreme consequences to the affected areas and its inhabitants.

Anti-colonial resistance

Expeditions could not take place without the cooperation of Maroons, who acted as guides. Many Maroons cooperated reluctantly and regularly sabotaged the expeditions. For instance, they often provided incomplete or no information at all and encouraged the local population not to cooperate with the Europeans. Nevertheless, some Maroons did collaborate. This kept them informed of colonial activities and provided them with an income.

Figure. 21. Text label ‘’expeditions, (Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum).

Figure 22. Maker unknown, Maroons, *ornamental comb* (number 12), 1904, wood and metal, 34,5 × 10 × 1,6 cm, (Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. WM-9768).

Figure 23. Maker unknown, Kari'na, *gourd rattle*, (most right object next to the box), 1904, gourd, paint and cotton, 36 × 15,5 cm, (Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum, inv. nr. WM-9923).

Figure 24. Gallery view of the installation Sarojini Lewis, *Bittersweet Memories,* 2020, film, (Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum, no inv. nr available).

Figure 25. Maker unknown, Kari'na, *bench*, before 1978, wood and paint, 27 × 157 × 28cm, (Rotterdam, Wereldmuseum, inv. Nr. TM-4440-224).

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