Museon-Omniversum

Abstract

The Museon-Omniversum is a museum in The Hague that was founded in 1904 as an educational museum. From 1909 onwards, it held various exhibitions featuring its acquired collection, which is divided into three themes: nature, culture and technology. The museum's natural history and ethnographic collections include various objects acquired in a colonial context.

History of the museum

In October 1904, the ‘Vereeniging Het museum ten bate van het Onderwijs’ (Association for the Museum for the Benefit of Education) was founded by a group of educational reformers who were advocates of so-called ‘visual education’. This refers to education supported by the demonstration of objects, photographs or films. A few years later, in 1909, the Museum ten bate van het Onderwijs (Museum for the Benefit of Education) was actually established. The ‘Schoolmuseum’ (School Museum), as it became known to the public, was located on the Nieuwmarkt in The Hague and covered the subjects of geology, ethnology, biology and industry. The collection of the museum's first director, geologist Herman van Cappelle, formed the basis of the museum. Van Cappelle is best known for his research in Suriname. Thanks to various other donations, including from Queen Juliana, the Museon's collection of objects from Suriname is one of the largest in the Netherlands.

The Museon's collection of objects is divided into three sub-collections: nature, culture and technology. Objects acquired in a colonial context can be found across the whole collection, but predominantly in the natural and cultural collections. The Museon's collection plan for 2024-2028 includes a list of objects originating from a (former) colonial context, but the natural history collection has not been included in this inventory, even though it also contains objects collected in, for example, the former Dutch East Indies or Suriname. Some important colonial collections are the aforementioned collection from Suriname, mainly assembled by the first director, Herman van Cappelle; the collection of Congolese objects, which was largely compiled in 1935 from purchases and donations from the collections of the Rotterdam Zoo and the Colonial Museum in Antwerp. The objects date mainly from the late nineteenth century and originate primarily from the Vili, Cabinda, Congo, Yombe and Woyo ethnic groups. The Inuit collection was compiled by Niko Timbergen and later expanded with objects donated by a fellow expedition member. In addition, several North American objects from the former Tropenmuseum (now the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam) have been transferred to the Museon, including objects from the ethnographic collection of Artis. It is also important to note that large parts of the Museon's cultural collection were acquired in the 1970s and 1980s and are therefore not included in the collection of objects originating from a colonial context.

The museum has been a municipal museum since 1921, which means that the municipality of The Hague is the owner of the collection. In 1985, the museum was renamed ‘Museon’ and in 2022, it merged with the Omniversum, a wide-screen cinema also located in The Hague. For this reason, the official name today is ‘Museon-Omniversum’. For several years now, the Museon has been researching the colonial history of its collection. The Museon collection will also be made available via the Colonial Collections Datahub at a later date. Among other things, the wood specimens from the museum's natural history collection have been

examined and a korwar from Papua (coll. no. 54098) has also been studied. The korwar also contains human remains, as do other objects in the museum's ethnographic collection. In addition to the object collection, the Museon also holds a large collection of visual material, including a noteworthy collection of photographs from the 'South Celebes expedition' of 1905-1906.

Provenance research

The Museon collection is fully searchable via the collection website, which is structured in the same way as the Wereldmuseum collection website. As described above, the collection is divided into three themes: nature, culture and technology, but there is also a large collection of visual material. If you have any questions about the collection, please contact contact collectie@museon-omniversum.nl.

The Museon archive is managed by the The Hague Municipal Archives. The archive is divided into the period when it was an independent museum and the period after the Municipality of The Hague took over the museum. There is a separate access for the archives of the Municipal School Cinema. The Museon's Collection Plan 2024-2028 provides an overview of the collections in the museum. It also provides a list of what the museum describes as 'Collections with a colonial context' (p. 81). However, in most cases the numbers are approximations because the origin of the objects is often unknown.

Related Aids

- Civil servants in colonised territories
- Scientific research in colonised territories
- Artis Ethnographic Museum
- Naturalis

Primary sources

Website:

> *Website Museon-Omniversum The museum website. Here you find a short history of the organisation, annual reports and the collection policy.*
>
> https://www.museon-omniversum.nl/

Archive:

> *0538-01 Museum voor het Onderwijs (Museon) The Museon archive. divided into the period when it was an independent museum and the period after the Municipality of The Hague took over the museum. The accesses '2.3' and '4.2.5.4' concern the inventories regarding the establishment of the museum's collection.*
>
> https://hdl.handle.net/21.12124/013EA8543F1B42ADAD433E999DCA0729

Secondary sources

Catalogue:

> *Catalogus der verzamelingen van het Museum ten bate van het Onderwijs, 1914*

(Vereeniging "Museum ten bate van het onderwijs": 1914). Catalogue of the Museum ten bate van het Onderwijs from 1914. It has been written by the then director of the museum, Herman van Cappelle.

https://hdl.handle.net/11245/3.32171

Book:

Cappelle, Herman van. Het Museum Ten Bate van Het Onderwijs Te 'S-Gravenhage En Zijne Toekomst (Vereeniging "Museum ten bate van het onderwijs": 1913). Booklet written by the then director Herman van Cappelle. It conveys his vision on the future of the Museum ten bate van het Onderwijs.

https://search.worldcat.org/title/64272291, WorldCat 64272291

Book:

Cappelle, Herman van. Verslag van een studiereis naar Parijs, Bazel, Zürich en Luzern ten behoeve van het Museum ten bate van het Onderwijs verricht in Sept. 1913 (Vereeniging "Museum ten bate van het onderwijs": 1914). Report of a trip made by Herman van Cappelle to France and Switzerland where he visited several educational museums to provide inspiration for his museum in The Hague.

https://hdl.handle.net/11245/3.32971

Collection plan:

Museon-Omniversum. Collectie in een museum over actuele thema's: Collectieplan Museon-Omniversum 2024-2028 (Den Haag: 2024). Collection plan of the Museon (in Dutch). It provides an overview of the collection and goes into the museum's policy regarding objects from a colonial context.

https://www.museon-omniversum.nl/media/x4ljsuzz/collectieplan_2024-2028-def.pdf

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Relevant Data

TO BE FILLED

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