This is a level 3 Research Aid
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Museum Nusantara

Abstract

Museum Nusantara was a museum in the city of Delft that held a collection of predominantly Indonesian objects. After the museum's closing in 2013, 1500 objects were transferred to Indonesia. The rest of the collection was divided among museums in the Netherlands and abroad, including Wereldmuseum Leiden.

History of the museum

The collection of Museum Nusantara has its origins in the Instelling van onderwijs in de taal-, land- en volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië (Institution for education in the linguistics, ethnography and geography of the Dutch East Indies), or in short: the Indische Instelling (Indies Institute) Between 1842 and 1864, the Koninklijke akademie (Royal academy) was based in Delft, where both civil engineers and colonial administrators were trained. In 1864, the Royal Academy was split into the Polytechnic School (the predecessor of the current Technical University in Delft) and the educatrion for Dutch East Indies civil servants was moved to Leiden (and with it the relevant object and library collection), where a more academic programme would be established. Following this decision, the Municipality of Delft decided to establish the Indische Instelling.

Because the object collections that students were trained with had been transferred to Leiden, the Indische Instelling placed an advert in the Delftsche Courant newspaper asking for objects to be donated for an ‘ethnological collection’. The collection grew slowly through donations from teachers and former students, but also through the distribution of objects displayed at various Colonial World Exhibitions. Around 1900, the museum of the Indische Instelling had a collection of some 5,000 objects. The Indische Instelling was dissolved in 1901. From 1911, the collection was exhibited on an upper floor of the Prinsenhof Museum. After renovations in 1977, the museum continued under the name Museum Nusantara. In 2013, the Municipality of Delft decided to close the museum due to financial difficulties. At the time of closure, the Nusantara Museum collection consisted of more than 40,000 mainly Indonesian items: 18,000 objects, 16,000 photos and 8,000 books, magazines and articles. Most came from the Indonesian cultural region, but there were also items from other countries in Asia, Africa and South America or that had been crafted in the Netherlands.

After the closing of the museum, the former collection was offered to other interested parties. This deaccessioning was quite a challenge, as can be read in the postscript by Jos van Beurden. This publication also includes a comprehensive overview of the institutions where the former Nusantara collection ended up. At least 1500 objects were returned to Indonesia and around 500 objects are still part of the collection of Museum Prinsenhof in Delft. The rest of the collection has been divided among the National Museum of World Cultures Foundation and other museums in the Netherlands and abroad.

Provenance research

In response to the deaccessioning of Museum Nusantara, a website has been created on which all the objects of the former museum can be consulted: collectie-nusantara.nl. The collection page shows exactly which objects have been transferred to which museum. The website also offers more information about the history of the museum and the deaccessioning process. A detailed description of this process can be found in the publication *Herplaatsing Collectie voormalig Museum Nusantara Delft 2013 – 2018 Lering en vragen* (in Dutch).

After the closing of Museum Nusantara, its archive was transferred to the Stadsarchief Delft (City Archives of Delft). The introduction to the archive also contains more information about the structure and history of the archive. Archive material relating to the collection (and the formation of the collection) of Museum Nusantara can be found under 2.5.1 - Verwerving' and '2.5.2 - Registratie collectie'. The archive of the Indische Instelling (Indies Institution) is available under the heading ‘Gedeponeerde archieven’. This contains the collection of inventory cards of the Indische Instelling. These cards can provide relevant information for objects that were already in the possession of the organisation at the time of the Indische Instelling.

Related Aids

- *see also: Civil servants in colonised territories*
- *see also: Wereldmuseum Leiden*
- *see also: Wageningen University & Research*
- *see also: Hoofdcursus Kampen*
- *see also: Volkenkundig Museum Justinus van Nassau*
- *see also: International Colonial and Export Exhibition 1883*

Primary sources

Website:

Collectie Nusantara
http://collectie-nusantara.nl/
Website with information about the former Nusantara Museum and an digital overview of the collection and how it was divided among various museums in the Netherlands and abroad.

Archive:

NL-DtAD 1009 - Museum Nusantara
https://hdl.handle.net/21.12115/NL-DtAD203510482
Archive of the former Nusantara Museum. Archive material relating to the museum's collection can be found under heading ‘2.5’. The archive of inventory cards of the Indische Instelling is also available under ‘Gedeponeerde archieven’.

Secondary sources

Publication:

Herplaatsing Collectie voormalig Museum Nusantara Delft 2013 – 2018
https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2019-02/Herplaatsing%20Collectie%20voormalig%20Museum%20Nusantara%20Delft%202013%20%E2%80%93%202018.pdf

Publication by Jos van Beurden about the deaccessioning of the Nusantara Museum collection. Includes an extensive overview of the institutions to which the collection has been donated. Also contains information about previous deaccessioning projects in the Dutch heritage sector (in Dutch).

Book:

Wentholt, Arnold, and Volkenkundig Museum Nusantara (Delft). Nusantara : Highlights from Museum Nusantara Delft (Leiden, Delft: C. Zwartenkot Art Books; Stichting Nusantara, 2014).
https://search.worldcat.org/title/880822331?oclcNum=880822331, ISBN 9789054500131, WorldCat 880822331
Book with brief information about the history of Museum Nusantara and an overview of the collection.

Boek:

Leur, J.L.W. van. De Indische Instelling te Delft: Méér dan een opleiding tot bestuursambtenaar: 125 Jaar Verzamelen (Delft: Volkenkundig Museum Nusantara, 1989).
https://search.worldcat.org/title/905471545?oclcNum=905471545, ISBN 9789071423048, WorldCat 905471545
A book about the (pre)history of the Indische Instelling in Delft and the origins of what would later become Museum Nusantara.

Relevant Data

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