

Natuurhistorisch en Volkenkundig Museum Oudenbosch

Abstract

The Natuurhistorisch en Volkenkundig Museum Oudenbosch (Oudenbosch Natural History and Ethnographic Museum) was founded in 1956 from the collection of natural history, archaeological and ethnographic objects of the Catholic Brothers of Saint Louis. This congregation opened a boys' boarding school in the village of Oudenbosch in the Dutch province of North Brabant in 1840. The objects that missionaries brought back from their travels to Southeast Asia and Africa were used to teach the boarding school pupils.

History of the collection

In 1840, the Catholic congregation of the Brothers of St. Aloysius Gonzaga was founded in the village of Oudenbosch in the province of North Brabant. The founders were [Willem Hellemons](#) and Johannes Huybrechts. This fraternity later became known as the Broeders van Oudenbosch (Brothers of Oudenbosch) or the Broeders van Saint Louis (Brothers of Saint Louis), named after the boys' boarding school in Oudenbosch, which was also founded in 1840. The main task of the congregation was thus to teach the pupils of the boarding school. Once the congregation also became active in the Dutch East Indies in 1862, missionaries brought collections of ethnographic and natural history objects back to Oudenbosch. These collections were used to teach the pupils in the boarding school. Not all of the ethnographic and natural history collections came from the Dutch East Indies. However, collections of Dutch flora and fauna were also assembled and the boarding school also received objects via the [Witte Paters](#) (White Fathers) – a Catholic society that was mainly active in Central Africa – from places including then Belgian Congo.

The objects that make up the collections in Oudenbosch mainly reflect the various interests of the brothers, which eventually resulted in the creation of a so-called 'physisch kabinet' (physical cabinet) and an 'Indisch museum' (East Indies museum). It took until 1956 before the various classrooms with their associated collections were merged into a single museum. In 1968 the museum moved to the building where it is still located today. It was only after this move that the museum became accessible to visitors from outside the fraternity. In 1985 the collection was transferred to the Stichting Natuurhistorisch en Volkenkundig Museum, the foundation that currently owns the objects.

Nowadays the focus of the museum's ethnographic exhibition alternates every five years between the former Dutch East Indies and the African continent. The current exhibition (2025) examines the Witte Paters and their links with Oudenbosch.

[image] *Natuurhistorisch en Volkenkundig Museum in Oudenbosch, 2011* ([G. Lanting](#))

Provenance research

The collection of the Natuurhistorisch en Volkenkundig Museum Oudenbosch is fully digitally registered but is not available online. Interested researchers can contact the [museum](#) for access to the registration system and the archive. A small part of the museum collection can be viewed on the website of [Erfgoed Brabant](#).

Related Aids

- [Christian missionaries in colonised territories](#)
- [Museums and collections](#)
- [Artis Ethnographic Museum](#)
- [Naturalis Biodiversity Center](#)
- [Nederlands Volkenkundig Missiemuseum](#)
- [Nijmeegs Volkenkundig Museum](#)
- [Wereldmuseum Amsterdam](#)
- [Wereldmuseum Berg en Dal](#)
- [Wereldmuseum Leiden](#)
- [Wereldmuseum Rotterdam](#)
- [Missiemuseum Steyl](#)
- [Volkenkundig Museum 'Gerardus van der Leeuw'](#)

Primary sources

Secondary sources

Website:

Website Natuurhistorisch en Volkenkundig Museum Oudenbosch Website of the Oudenbosch Natural History and Ethnographic Museum. You can find more information about the history of the museum in the dropdown menu under 'Museum'. The 'Collections' dropdown menu provides an overview of the various subcollections.

<http://www.nvmoudenbosch.nl/en>

Website:

Erfgoed Brabant - Natuurhistorisch en Volkenkundig Museum Oudenbosch Webpage on the Brabants Erfgoed website (in Dutch) displaying a small part of the collection of the Natuurhistorisch en Volkenkundig Museum Oudenbosch.

<https://www.brabantserfgoed.nl/page/4523/natuurhistorisch-en-volkenkundig-museum>

Video:

De collectie van het Natuurhistorisch en Volkenkundig Museum Short video (in Dutch) in which the chairman of the board of the Natuurhistorisch en Volkenkundig Museum Oudenbosch shows various parts of the museum's collection.

<https://museumtv.nl/tentoonstelling/natuurhistorisch-en-volkenkundig-museum-oudenbosch/>

Relevant Data

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