

# Volkenkundig Museum 'Gerardus van der Leeuw'

## Abstract

Until 2003, Volkenkundig Museum Gerardus van der Leeuw was an ethnographic museum in Groningen that was part of the city's university. The museum collection consisted of various subcollections, including the personal collection of Theo van Baaren and objects from the former Tropical Agricultural School in Deventer and the Prinsessehof Museum in Leeuwarden. After the museum closed in 2003, the collection became part of the University Museum of the University of Groningen.

## History of the museum

On the condition that a museum would be established to display his collection, religious historian [Theo van Baaren](#), who was a professor at the University of Groningen, donated his personal ethnographic collection to the university in 1968. Van Baaren named the new museum and its association after his predecessor, Gerardus van der Leeuw. Van Baaren never visited the countries from which he collected objects, but acquired his collection through his extensive European network of art dealers and Christian congregations. After the museum was established, Van Baaren's collection was expanded considerably. For example, the Prinsessehof Museum in Leeuwarden donated its ethnographic collection in 1970 to Groningen after deciding to focus on collecting ceramics. The municipality of Deventer donated the collection of the former Tropical Agricultural School in 1971 and businessman [Fred ten Houten](#) gave his ethnographic collection on long-term loan.

Together with the objects purchased by the Gerardus van der Leeuw Foundation, the above collections formed the core of the Gerardus van der Leeuw Ethnographic Museum, which opened its doors in 1978 on the Nieuwe Kijk in 't Jatstraat in the city of Groningen. During the museum's existence the collection was supplemented by purchases and donations. After several unsuccessful attempts to merge the ethnographic museum with other museums in Groningen, the Gerardus van der Leeuw Ethnographic Museum closed in 2003. Afterwards, the museum's collection was incorporated into the University Museum Groningen, where it remains until today.

## Provenance research

Several catalogues of the collection of the Gerardus van der Leeuw Ethnographic Museum were published. One of these is [Hoe het ging en verging](#) (in Dutch), which describes the so-called MG collection, the collection of objects that the museum accumulated during its existence. The book also contains an overview of all the temporary exhibitions held at the museum between 1978 and 2003. In addition to the MG collection, *Hoe het ging en verging* provides an overview of the CG collection, which was transferred to the ethnographic museum after the Cultural Anthropology department at the University of Groningen was closed down, and the A collection, which was donated by the Australian government in 1978.

The collection of the former Tropical Agricultural Museum in Deventer (the TD collection) has its own catalogue: [De collectie Deventer](#) (in Dutch). As well as an overview of the

collection the catalogue provides a wealth of background information about the former agricultural museum in Deventer. The original Van Baaren collection (the VB collection) is described in the book *The Collection Van Baaren*, which is unfortunately not available online. The ethnographic collection of the Prinsessehof in Leeuwarden is referred to as the PL collection and does not have its own catalogue.

The archive of the Gerardus van der Leeuw Ethnographic Museum (until 1995) is housed at the [Groninger Archieven](#). In addition to documents about the organisation of the museum and its place within the Faculty of Theology, the archive also contains descriptions of the collection. Alongside the sources described below, catalogues of the museum's various exhibitions are also available and can be found in the [RUG library](#) by searching 'Gerardus van der Leeuw'.

Theo van Baaren's personal archive also contains (limited) information about his collection. For example, there is correspondence with various dealers, museums, congregations and missionaries that directly and indirectly refer to purchases for his collection. This archive is also located in the [Library of the University of Groningen](#).

## Related Aids

- [Wetenschappelijk onderzoek in gekoloniseerde gebieden](#)
- [Wageningen University & Research](#)
- [Tropisch Landbouwmuseum](#)
- [Natuurhistorisch en Volkenkundig Museum Oudenbosch](#)
- [University collections](#)

## Primary sources

Archive:

*Regionaal Historisch Centrum Groninger Archieven, toegangsnummer 2924, Archief van de Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid van de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, inventaris nummer 2.01 Archive of the Gerardus van der Leeuw Ethnographic Museum until 1995. Includes descriptions of the museum's collection.*

<https://hdl.handle.net/21.12105/71742EE35A20452A834C2A27055FE38E>

Archive:

*Archive Theo van Baaren. Description of collection archive Theodoor Petrus van Baaren Theo van Baaren's personal archive that contains (limited) information about his collection.*

<https://www.rug.nl/library/collections/special-collections/collections/archives-inventories/baaren/cb-van-baaren>

## Secondary sources

Book:

*Schotanus, M., V. Arnoldus-Schröder, Nico de Jonge. Hoe Het Ging En Verging : 25 Jaar "Gerardus van Der Leeuw" (Groningen: Volkenkundig Museum "Gerardus van der Leeuw", 2003). Book and catalogue from 2003 which provides concise*

information about the history of the museum and an overview of the MG collection.

<https://search.worldcat.org/title/66693349>, [ISBN 9789080798915](#), [WorldCat 66693349](#)

Book:

*Arnoldus, G. De Collectie Deventer (Groningen: Volkenkundig Museum 'Gerardus van der Leeuw', 2003). Book and catalogue from 2003 which provides detailed background information about the museum of the former Tropical Agricultural school in Deventer. Also contains an overview of the museum's collection that was transferred to the Gerardus van der Leeuw Ethnographic Museum in 1972.*

<https://search.worldcat.org/title/66725336>, [ISBN 9789080083295](#), [WorldCat 66725336](#)

Book:

*Leertouwer, L. L., H. Witte, and R. Wassing. The Collection van Baaren. Edited by V. Arnoldus-Schröder (Groningen: Volkenkundig museum 'Gerardus van der Leeuw', 1998). Book from 1998 containing a description of the Van Baaren collection, which formed the foundation of the Gerardus van der Leeuw Ethnographic Museum.*

<https://search.worldcat.org/title/901427514>, [ISBN 9789080083271](#), [WorldCat 901427514](#)

Book:

*Baaren, Th. P. van. Portret van Een Kollektie : Volkenkundig Museum Gerardus van Der Leeuw, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (Groningen: Centrale Reproductie Dienst der R.U Groningen, 1974). 1974 book by Theo van Baaren, the founder of the Gerardus van der Leeuw Ethnographic Museum, about his collection.*

<https://search.worldcat.org/title/63510432>, [WorldCat 63510432](#)

Article:

*Honnef, Harmen G. 'Volkenkundig Museum Gerardus van der Leeuw, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.' Openbaar Kunstbezit Vlaanderen 12, no. 3 (1974). 1974 article from the Belgian magazine OKV (Openbaar Kunstbezit Vlaanderen, Public Art Collections), which describes the history of the Gerardus van der Leeuw Ethnographic Museum.*

<https://www.okv.be/archief/volkenkundig-museum-gerardus-van-der-leeuw-rijksuniversiteit-groningen>

---

## Relevant Data

TO BE FILLED

*first edited by Wiebe Reints as original\_author on 2025-05-13*

*last edited by Wiebe Reints as original\_author on 2025-12-22*