

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 closure in 2013, 1,500 objects were restituted 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 language, geography and ethnology of the Dutch East Indies, in short: [the Indische Instelling](#) (Indies Institute)). From 1842 to 1864 civil engineers and colonial administrators were trained at the [Koninklijke akademie](#) (Royal Academy) in Delft. In 1864 the Royal Academy was disbanded and a new [Polytechnic School](#) (the predecessor of the current Delft Technical University) was established while the course for Dutch East Indies civil servants was moved to Leiden (along with the relevant object and library collection), where a more academic programme was set up. As a result of this policy the Municipality of Delft decided to establish the Indische Instelling.

As the object collections used to train students had been transferred to Leiden the Indische Instelling placed an advert in the Delftsche Courant newspaper asking for the donation of objects 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. By 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 [Prinsenhof Museum](#) in Delft. 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 as well as some that had been manufactured in the Netherlands.

After the closure of the museum, the former collection was opened up 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. A total of 1,500 objects were in any case returned to Indonesia and around 500 objects are still part of the collection of Museum Prinsenhof in Delft. The rest of the collection was divided among the National Museum of World Cultures Foundation and other museums in the Netherlands and abroad.

Provenance research

Following the deaccessioning of Museum Nusantara a website was created where all the objects of the former museum can still be viewed: [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 closure of Museum Nusantara its archive was transferred to the [Delft City Archives](#). The introduction to the archive also contains more information about the structure and history of the archive. Archive material relating to the Museum Nusantara collection (and its formation) can be found under '2.5.1 - Verwerving' and '2.5.2 - Registratie collectie'. The archive of the Indische Instelling can be accessed under the heading 'Gedeponeerde archieven'. This contains the collection of inventory cards of the Indische Instelling, which can provide relevant information for objects that were already in the organisation's possession at the time of the Indische Instelling.

Related Aids

- [Civil servants in colonised territories](#)
- [Wereldmuseum Leiden](#)
- [Wageningen University & Research](#)
- [Hoofdcursus Kampen](#)
- [Volkenkundig Museum Justinus van Nassau](#)
- [International Colonial and Export Exhibition 1883](#)

Primary sources

Website:

Collectie Nusantara Website with information about the former Museum Nusantara and an digital overview of the collection and how it was divided among various museums in the Netherlands and abroad.

<http://collectie-nusantara.nl/>

Archive:

NL-DtAD 1009 - Museum Nusantara Archive of the former Museum Nusantara. 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'.

<https://hdl.handle.net/21.12115/NL-DtAD203510482>

Secondary sources

Publication:

Herplaatsing Collectie voormalig Museum Nusantara Delft 2013 – 2018
Publication by Jos van Beurden about the deaccessioning of the Museum Nusantara collection. Includes an extensive overview of the various institutions where the collection ended up. Also contains information about previous deaccessioning projects in the Dutch heritage sector (in Dutch).

<https://www.materialculture.nl/sites/default/files/2019-02/Herplaatsing%20Collectie%20voormalig%20Museum%20Nusantara%20Delft%202013%20.pdf>

Book:

Wentholt, Arnold, and Volkenkundig Museum Nusantara (Delft). Nusantara : Highlights from Museum Nusantara Delft (Leiden, Delft: C. Zwartenkot Art Books; Stichting Nusantara, 2014). Book providing brief information about the history of Museum Nusantara and an overview of the collection.

<https://search.worldcat.org/title/880822331?oclcNum=880822331>, [ISBN 9789054500131](#), [WorldCat 880822331](#)

Book:

Leur, J.L.W. van. De Indische Instelling te Delft: Méér dan een opleiding tot bestuursambtenaar: 125 Jaar Verzamelen (Delft: Volkenkundig Museum Nusantara, 1989). A book on the history and background of the Indische Instelling in Delft and the origins of what would later become Museum Nusantara.

<https://search.worldcat.org/title/905471545?oclcNum=905471545>, [ISBN 9789071423048](#), [WorldCat 905471545](#)

Relevant Data

TO BE FILLED

first edited by Wiebe Reints as original_author on 2025-02-25

last edited by Abacus as translator on 2025-10-20