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Reference

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Subject Call for Applications - Sharing Stories on Contested Histories 2023

Dear reader,

It is my honour and pleasure to bring the Call for Applications for the Sharing Stories on Contested Histories training to your attention. We look forward to working with a new group of young heritage professionals and academics from the Netherlands and the 24 partner countries of the International Heritage Cooperation programme (Previously: Shared Cultural Heritage) of the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE). This training is organised by the RCE in close collaboration with the Reinwardt Academy, the cultural heritage faculty of the Amsterdam University of the Arts.

When it comes to presenting contentious pasts, international heritage institutions are becoming increasingly aware of the need to become more polyvocal, engaging, diverse, (self)reflective and participatory. Inclusive, representative modes of sharing cultural heritage add relevance to our institutions and contribute to tackling broader societal issues. However, the desire to empathetically share contested histories can lead to a diverse range of challenges for heritage institutions.

The Sharing Stories on Contested Histories training aims to engage with these shared challenges by bringing together upcoming museum and heritage professionals and academics from different countries to reflect on how we engage with international cultural heritage topics that may be considered 'contested'. These challenges are not confined within national borders, and we believe that it is only by joining forces and learning from and with each other that we can fully benefit from the potential of cultural heritage to address societal challenges. Furthermore, joining in the programme will offer professionals a longstanding new international network with peers working in and studying this field of dealing with (difficult) heritage.

Within this context, the RCE invites emerging museum and heritage professionals and academics from the Netherlands and the partner countries of the International Heritage Cooperation programme to join the fifth edition of Sharing Stories on Contested Histories. The partner countries of the programme are Australia, Belgium, Brazil, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Morocco, Poland, Russia*, South Africa, South Korea,

Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

Training and selection details

The training will use a 'history from below' perspective and is centred around case studies from the global South (South Africa), North (the Netherlands), East (Indonesia) and West (Brazil).

The training consists of two parts:

Part one is a parttime online preparatory programme which will take place on a weekly base from 23 September – 3 November. The workload is approximately 10 hours per week consisting of one day per week contact (6 hrs) and individual preparatory work (4 hrs).

Part two is a fulltime on-site working programme from 12 – 17 November 2023 which takes place in Cape Town, South Africa. We expect participants to arrive in Cape Town on 11 November latest. Accommodation will be taken care of, travel expenses are for the participants.

The capacity of this training is limited to 25 participants, and the participant's group will be composed of one participant from each partner country and one from the Netherlands. The training is open to applications of young, upcoming museum and heritage professionals and academics. To apply for the training, candidates are invited to submit a motivation letter (500 words) and a resume to a.kok@cultureelerfgoed.nl before **28 June 2023**, 8 AM CET.

Full details of the application requirements and selection criteria can be found in Appendix I, along with further information about the training, the RCE, and the International Heritage Cooperation programme. Information about the current and past editions of the training is also available on our website: [English.cultureelerfgoed.nl](https://www.english.cultureelerfgoed.nl). Further questions can be directed towards Arjen Kok (project leader) a.kok@cultureelerfgoed.nl

I truly hope that this letter has triggered your interest and that you will take this training opportunity into consideration.

Kind regards,

Yolanda Ezendam

International Heritage Cooperation Programme | Programme Manager Collections
Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands

** Cooperation with Russian state institutions and organisations is currently suspended (see the letter of the State Secretary in appendix I, available in Dutch). However, we will consider applications from Russian heritage professionals and academics working in private and independent organisations or working independently*

Appendix I

International Heritage Cooperation

A worldwide heritage community, in which professionals connect, learn from each other and develop knowledge together. That is the mission of the International Heritage Cooperation Programme of the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE). This is not only because of the importance of ensuring that heritage is passed on to future generations, but primarily because heritage is valuable in a changing world. Heritage reveals who we are, where we come from and what we stand for. Without knowledge of the past, understanding ourselves and others is virtually impossible. Equally, heritage can contribute to identifying solutions for societal challenges, such as climate change, sustainability, participation and social inclusion. The challenges faced by society call for continuous development, the ability to respond to changing demands and circumstances and a shared quest for appropriate solutions. They call for curiosity, openness and innovation of a kind that are not confined within national boundaries.

The RCE is just one of many players within the worldwide heritage community. Yet the RCE has an important role to play in promoting international cooperation in heritage and the sharing of knowledge. In this context, societal challenges in which international cooperation offers an added value above national cooperation alone are central. Think, for instance, of issues such as the repatriation of colonial collections, the management of shipwrecks in foreign waters and urban renewal. Together with its foreign and Dutch partners, the RCE contributes to finding solutions for these (shared) challenges by bringing experts together and facilitating the sharing and development of knowledge. This enhances heritage conservation both in the Netherlands and in the partner countries. In doing this, the RCE is also fostering relationships with other countries and contributing to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals.

In order to achieve these ambitions, the RCE has established the International Heritage Cooperation programme. It continues the work achieved in the period 2009-2020 within the Shared Cultural Heritage programme. Although shared heritage remains relevant for the Netherlands, this new policy period will focus on the shared challenges we face. After all, every country faces similar issues in caring for its heritage. But because every country operates in a different context, with different issues and approaches, we can also learn from each other. This shift in emphasis is in line with the need in the partner countries and the Netherlands to ensure that international cooperation not only benefits our shared heritage, but also the shared challenges we face.

This ambition is reflected in the following goals:

1. Fostering connections, exchange, and cooperation in order to enhance heritage conservation in the Netherlands and in the partner countries.
2. Developing new knowledge and expertise together for the purpose of societal challenges where international cooperation offers greater added value than national cooperation alone.

3. Ensuring that knowledge and expertise developed within the programme are visible and accessible.

RCE

The RCE is closely involved in listing, preserving, sustainably developing, and providing access to the most valuable heritage in our country. The agency is the link between policymakers, academics, and practitioners, providing advice, knowledge, and information, and performing certain statutory duties. The Sharing Stories on Contested Histories training falls within the RCE's theme of Collections. Responsibility for the Netherlands' international cultural policy is jointly shared by the Minister of Foreign Affairs (BZ), the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (BHOS) and the Minister of Education, Culture and Science (OCW). In the International Cultural Policy 2021-2024, the RCE has been appointed as one of the executing agencies on the topic of cultural heritage. Other executive organisations are: National Archives of the Netherlands, DutchCulture, the Dutch Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage (KIEN) and the Dutch embassies in the 23 partner countries, namely Belgium/Flanders, Germany, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Spain, the UK, Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, China, South Korea, Australia, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, Sri Lanka, Suriname, the United States, Ukraine and South Africa.

Reinwardt Academy

The Reinwardt Academy positions itself as the knowledge-, research-, and training centre of cultural heritage in the Netherlands. This vocational university is located in Amsterdam and offers the only bachelor's programme on Cultural Heritage available in the Netherlands, as well as a master's programme on Applied Museum and Heritage studies. Additionally, the Reinwardt Academy is well-known for its contributions to the Dutch and international heritage field due to its role as a platform for (inter)national heritage professionals to exchange knowledge and experience.

Sharing Stories on Contested Histories Training

The training programme aims to strengthen an international working community of young, upcoming museum and heritage professionals and academics from the 24 partner countries and the Netherlands. Using case studies from different countries, the participants will explore the relevance of museums today. As a strategy to overcome grid-locked discussions and polarised bubbles, constructivist and empathic multivocal storytelling will be explored. Through activity-oriented assignments and workshops participants will experience the various concepts of exhibiting, storytelling, tour-guiding, and educational programming, and will get a new and immersed understanding of this way of exploring museum collections and their stories. As we will be working as professionals amongst professionals, there will be a constant flux of exchanging knowledge, ideas, and concepts. From this, a community of practice for peer-learning and co-creation will arise.

Theoretical approach

Most museums have long-established roots in traditional museum learning (education) and exhibiting (presentation), which is offered in a well-designed

environment (aesthetics). Too often this leads to a single voiced, grand narrative way of storytelling. However, museums have developed rapidly in the last few decades by becoming more inclusive, representative, and participatory towards their public. These ways of sharing cultural heritage and the linked histories have been successfully tested but are not yet a common practice. The deconstruction of underlying institutionalised power structures and working fashions is needed and a new and active working mode needs to be found. This development has its roots in 'New Museology' and strongly focuses on society, reflected in a maximum societal involvement in what museums collect and the way they present it. New Museology revolves around three key issues: representation, access, and participation. The key concept here is user-generated content: it is the users that, as participants in a specific community of interest, deliver content. This is also significant when topics related to contested heritage are considered. As these discussions are often heated and difficult, museums and heritage institutions can offer safe places for societal development. They provide spaces where discussions and debates can take place in a non-toxic and open way: 'contact zones'. These concepts also apply to the subject matter of topics and histories that are shared between countries and communities. In many cases these are disputed histories which require a dialogical and polyphonic approach. This training programme therefore focuses on researching polyphonic storytelling and communicating heritage through multiple interpretations.

Set up

The programme is case-oriented and practical in approach. Basic literature will be provided in advance. The programme is comprised of the following elements:

- Lectures will offer both theoretical reflection as well as case-studies.
- Practical and immersive workshops will lead to deeper insight.
- Fieldwork and excursions will offer interactive experiences
- Museum case studies will offer exploration and reality checks.
- Individual presentations will offer opportunities for sharing ideas and opinions.
- Teamwork will offer opportunities for co-creation.
- Literature will be provided for orientation and self-study.
- Questions addressed in this course include:
 - How do visitors perceive museums and museum collections in exhibitions in relation to contested histories/coloniality?
 - How can we involve visitors from culturally diverse backgrounds and place their needs at the heart of our museum work?
 - Which fresh methods of constructivist and emphatic interpretation can we use to engage visitors in the multiple perspectives of museum collections and stories?

The new training programme for 2023 will focus on international case studies, drawn from four countries: Brazil, Indonesia, the Netherlands, and South Africa. The case study museums will often be connected to marginalised communities who have complicated, delicate relationships with other groups or authorities.

The first weeks of the programme will consist of an online 'world tour,' in which we will have a virtual visit to each case study institution. We will meet the

curators and educators who are responsible for the museum and hear about its place in the community. They will give insights into their work to strengthen the position of their communities by opening lines of communication and contact with the rest of society.

In the second part of the programme the trainees will reflect upon the central dilemmas of the case studies and discuss potential approaches. In a process of intense and creative teamwork, they will prepare presentations for a final conference. The international teams cooperate to elaborate on transnational ideas on how to share stories on contested histories.

Results/Outcomes

The training programme is explorative in its nature, utilising innovative methods to achieve:

- An intercultural experience that opens new perspectives and expands the networks of the participants;
- An understanding how marginalized communities use the museum concept to promote their interests;
- A better understanding of exhibiting/storytelling and its emotional impact;
- A strong understanding of constructivist learning regarding open and multiple interpretations;
- A good understanding of concepts of empathy as a means to enable an open-minded and safe sharing of ideas;
- Insight into methods that enhance mutual tolerance through emotional networks;
- Insight on how to develop multi-vocal exhibiting and storytelling.

Requirements of participants

The capacity of the training program is limited to 25 participants. One participant will be chosen from each partner country and the Netherlands. In our selection procedure, we will aim to achieve a balance between museum and heritage professionals and academics from (vocational) universities. Selection is done by the RCE and the Reinwardt Academy according to the following criteria:

- The candidate works in the museum, heritage, or academic field in one of these countries: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Morocco, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia*, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Turkey, Ukraine the United Kingdom, or the United States of America.
- The candidate is proficient in the English language, both in written and spoken form.
- The candidate falls within the age range of 25 - 35.
- The candidate has a bachelor, specialist, or master degree.
- The candidate has at least three years of experience in the heritage or the academic field.
- The candidate can commit to the training period: 23 September - 17 November 2023. It is necessary for participants to free their agendas for

the dates of the training to ensure focused participation. Online meet-ups take place on a weekly base. Please check the preliminary outline below in the section *Time Investment*.

The course will be conducted in English, so participants need to have a good working understanding of the English language.

To apply for the training, candidates must submit a motivation letter (500 words) accompanied by a resume. The motivation letter should include a short reflection on the question: 'How can the training contribute to your professional growth?'

The resume should include the following details:

- First name
- Surname
- Address
- Email address
- Gender
- Date of birth
- Education
- Employer, if applicable
- Position in the organisation, if applicable
- Level of English [Reading, Speaking, Understanding]
- Work experience
- Location and time zone for the period of the online part of the training

Deadline

Applications must be received on **28 June** at the latest.

The results of the selection will be communicated **before 15 July 2023**.

Time investment

Part one of the course will be held online over 5 weeks and consists of a one day per week program. Due to the time differences the group is organized in two parts: West and East. Each part has two 1,5 hour team sessions. Every week the entire group meets in a 2 hours plenary session. The workload per week will average around 10 hours.

Kick-off 23 and 24 September

Session one: 28 and 29 Sep

Session two: 5 and 6 Oct

Session three: 12 and 13 Oct

Session four: 26 and 27 Oct

Session five: 2 and 3 Nov

West: (For candidates in Western Europe, Africa and the Americas) Thursdays: 15.00-16.30 (CET) + 18.30-20.00 (CET) and plenary session Fridays 12.00-14.00 (CET).

East: (For candidates in Asia, Australia and Eastern Europe) Fridays: 05.00-06.30 (CET) + 09.00-10.30 (CET) and from 12.00-14.00 (CET).

Part two of the course takes place in Cape Town, South Africa. The start is on Sunday 12 November, the course ends on Saturday morning 18 November. This

week offers an intensive programme with workshops, excursions, lectures and network meetings. Participants are expected to arrive on Saturday 11 November at the latest.

Costs

The course is free and the cost of residency in Cape Town is covered. Participants have to pay for the return ticket to Cape Town and for additional travel costs such as Visa and insurances.