



Tropenmuseum

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Indies Images of the Colonial Everyday in a Multi-ethnic
postcolonial society: Interviews

Research report for PhotoCLEC – *Photographs, Colonial Legacy and Museums in Contemporary European Culture, IP2*

January 2012





Tropenmuseum

REPORT HERA PHOTOCLEC IP2

INDIES IMAGES OF THE COLONIAL EVERYDAY IN A MULTI-ETHNIC POSTCOLONIAL SOCIETY: INTERVIEWS

This report contains a systematic translation of interviews held with several institutions over the course of six months in the Netherlands. The intention was to come to a better insight into the photographic collections themselves, their composition, conditions and use, but also in the institutional validation of these collections.

Interviews

The Dutch research for Photoclec focused on the role of visual media in reconstructing competing colonial pasts, as present in institutional collections and personal collections, often added to those institutional collections in the course of time. All institutions that were interviewed have collections of colonial photography in common. They were selected on this basis. However, in retrospect, it appears that there are even much more institutions, be it museums or archives, that preserve these type of photographs. From municipal or other local archives to larger national institutions, and from smaller museums to the largest, all have photographic evidence of the colonial in their collections. The institutions selected for interviews are the most well-known for these collections, and show many similarities in their collections, but also specific characteristics, which has strongly influenced the way of perceiving and dealing with the collections themselves.

For the interviews, a semi-structured approach was adopted (see appendix I). Questions were formulated that would give insight into the collections. Respondents were asked to give a general description of their complete, and of their colonial collections, including numbers, the starting date of collections and their digitalization status.

Preservation methodologies during the course of the existence of an institution, elucidate the general ideas of value and are proof of the factual

attribution of value to colonial photographic heritage. Questions on how collections were and are preserved, and whether there is an official acquisition policy, just as active documentation practices, evidence a specific validation.

Very relevant are the policies that institutions adhere to when considering the status of the collection. How does the photographic collection fit in within the wider collection policy, and what appears to be the main attraction in such photographs; can a preference be noted towards a specific use of the photographic object? In what way is the contemporary enclosed within the colonial collection, i.e. how does the institution relate to the current post-colonial and multicultural society?

As with all museum or other public institutions, accessibility to collections is one of the main sources for research into the use and social relevance of colonial photography in a former colonialist society. What are such photographs used for, how, and in what context? How is the public aware of the existence of these images from the past? And are there any restrictions on the accessibility of photographic images?

These and other aspects of colonial photographic heritage were addressed in the interviews that were executed within the Photoclec project.

With many thanks to people from:

Foundation Tong Tong, Den Haag
Fotomuseum, Rotterdam
KITLV, Leiden
Legermuseum, Delft
Museum Maluku, Utrecht
Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden
NIOD, Amsterdam
Nusantara, Delft
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam
Wereldmuseum, Rotterdam

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January 2012

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Foundation Tong Tong

September 2011

Description collection

Foundation Tong Tong holds no collections on the Netherlands East Indies. It has its own archive on the foundation and the fair it organizes, including photography.

History of Collection

The Foundation Tong Tong is the oldest Indische cultural organisation of the Netherlands. It wants to stimulate Indische culture and knowledge on it and its people. It started in 1960 and was part of several initiatives by Tjalie Robinson, among which also a pasar malam (a cultural market, that has become an institute in the Netherlands) and a magazine, now known as Moesson. The foundation became a complete separate entity in the 1970s, remaining responsible for the fair. Today, there is hardly any contact between foundation and magazine, nor any similarity in content.

Colonial Photography

“Since colonial is such a burdened word, it might be sensible to keep definitions broad, but not mentioning it seems awkward and unjust. 15 years ago, the definition depended on the presence of white people. Photographs with Indische people was called Indische photography. In the 1960s and 1970s both collections neared each other”

Colonial photography for members of Tong Tong represents images from the colonial times, and not necessarily only the Dutch colonies. Questions arise: should people be in the picture, coloniser and colonised, how does one recognize something as colonial when it is only a landscape?

Institutional policy photography collection

Preservation & Accessibility

“Tong Tong publishes on history and daily life such as Living, Clothing, Repatriation. For Living, two people of Tong Tong and a photographer went to Java to photograph the past in the present. When taking pictures, living spaces were 'styled”.

Although Tong Tong does not have its own collections, it works with collections of other bodies, such as IWI (Indische Wetenschappelijk Instituut – Indische Scientific Institute), and of private people, for publications and exhibitions.

Exhibitions

“IWI was closer to people than several official institutions are, which made people come with

their stuff more easily. The possibility of a museum refusing material is also part of people's reluctance to donate photographs and other family-related objects. People believe museums do not validate family heritage as much”

Foundation Tong Tong organizes special photographic exhibitions for the annual fair with materials from IWI and private persons. The IWI collection is now part of the collection of the Tropenmuseum (and research subject for Photoclec). Exhibits are often accompanied by publications.

“For Tong Tong fair, tempo doeloe (nostalgia for the past) is not an issue. The fair is an intercultural happening, not organized along ethnic lines. Even though older people do not always appreciate the move to the contemporary, young people do. Photographs are essential in this, and exhibitions often treat a contemporary subject”

Projects

Publications and exhibitions.

Validation

Photography is essential in the work of Tong Tong, without it, the foundation could not perform its tasks.

Fotomuseum, Rotterdam

Februari 2011

"I find the preservation of photographic collections most important, not the exhibitions, although the museum thinks differently"

Description collection

Today, some 130 photographers' archives are stored within the museum, containing approximately 3,5 million images. The photographs document societal circumstances, phenomena, not events, which are included in the collections of the National Archive. Important Dutch photographers' collections were donated to the museum. The Fotomuseum collection archives professional photographic material that testify to the development of the Netherlands since the invention of the medium. Its earliest material comes from mid 19th century, and a large part can be found on the reconstruction period after WWII, the 1950s and 1960s. Several photographers worked internationally and portrayed historical events, though just a small part of the collection is about former colonies, and then mostly Indonesia.

History of Collection

The collection of the Fotomuseum was started by Flip Bool in 1989/1990, and was a direct cause of a lack of photographers' archives in the Netherlands. Part of collections were saved in institutions, but many photographs and negatives were thrown away. The predecessor of the museum, the Dutch photo archive (Nederlands Fotoarchief), had existed since 1982 and found storage in Bool's own home until 1989 when a separate building was assigned to the collections of 20 photographers. Important Dutch photographers' archives found their way to the museum, not in the least by Flip Bool's personal network strategies. The Fotomuseum holds some 100 albums as well. From 2011, the photographic collections of the ethnographic museum of Rotterdam, of which ownership also lies with the municipality, was transferred to the Fotomuseum, including the curator.

"Collecting photography is extremely difficult. Selecting, what to collect and why. It is largely a matter of subjectivity".

Colonial Collection

"Fotomuseum holds the best photography collection of de-colonisation there is"

The Fotomuseum does not specifically preserve photographs from the Dutch colonial period,

although it has some albums from that time. Since Fotomuseum does not collect Dutch East Indies as a specific category, colonial collections is not a preferred term; non-Western photography is used for material that originates in non-Western countries, including Indonesia, of which the museum holds very important archives of Cas Oorthuys and Charles Breijer. The latter went to Indonesia in 1947 and photographed and filmed for the Dutch government during this revolting period. Recently, some 'spare time' albums were purchased from this period from military people. "Albums are dying out, whereas they evidence the development of traveling, of tourism. Albums are a rich source cultural-historically".

Institutional policy photography collection

"cooperation between different photographic collections in the Netherlands should be improved, with a more clear division of tasks and subjects"

Objects are never purchased by the museum, and must be copy right free, with all rights remaining with the museum. Most materials are given on loan, or donated and from the generated income, part goes to the descendants of photographers. From 2003, a budget for contemporary purchases was secured from subsidiary instances, that fund complete photography projects (often for publications) and their acquisition.

For some areas, subjects were chosen to give focus to the collections. In science for example, ornithology is the main theme, and this collection is very important for knowledge on the development of nature photography and on the organization Natuurbescherming Nederland (Nature Protection Netherlands). "The choice for this theme is actually a rather arbitrary one". At the moment of the interview, a new collections plan was being developed.

Preservation & Accessibility

"Preservation of photographs is adamant for selection to be possible. What is not kept, will be gone. But, who selects and how is selection being done? Selection is a myth, and very probably not possible"

Except for the internet, where some 100,000 images can be consulted, the collections are relatively invisible.

Collections Care

The Fotomuseum holds the most advanced photographic storage facilities in Europe, with climate controlled rooms for every type of photographic object.

Registration and documentation

Two part time workers register and scan the complete photography collection. Extra people are hired on project base, such as for Geheugen van Nederland (www.geheugenvannederland.nl), a website that contains heritage collections of several Dutch institutions. This website also contains the institute's relatively small collection of photography on the decolonization of the Netherlands East Indies (Breijer collection). A temporary functions as conservation worker, whereas a curator is responsible for the collections and accessioning policies.

Exhibitions

A separate department produces exhibitions. In June 2011, a semi-permanent exhibit was opened, with possibilities for changes in photographic objects. Objects are given on loan, or reproduced for display or publication. Negatives are most common, with just a few prints.

Validation

"It was only in 1953, in the Prentenkabinet (Prints Cabinet) in Leiden, that photography acquired a different meaning than purely documentary. This means that until the 1980s, not many photographic archives existed as such"

The Fotomuseum acquires photographs as objects, with artistic and/or cultural historical importance.

"Collecting is as weaving: interlacing objects, or deselecting for better purposes". Photography has cultural- and photographic historical relevance. From the fact that Mondriaanstichting (Foundation Mondriaan) awarded two new funding proposals of the Fotomuseum, collecting photography seems to be in the picture.

KITLV (Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde – Royal Netherlands Institute for Southeast Asian and Caribbean studies)

February 2012

Description collection

“Collecting family photography is actually a quite recent phenomenon, because of growing interest in social history. Not only photographs from the elite, who were the main sources until the beginning of the 20th century, but from all layers of society are welcomed”

Of all collections, the photography collection is the largest. 130,000 photographs of a total of 250,000 photographic materials are digitized. 7,500 of these are glass negatives, the rest are prints. Most photographs are from the colonial period, from the end of the 19th century until 1950s. Focus are on former colonies, such as Southeast Asia, in particular Indonesia, and the Caribbean, in particular Suriname, the Antilles and Aruba. Modern photography has recently been introduced, but is still marginal. Subjects are family photography, ethnography, local and colonial government, landscapes and infrastructure, and clergy. Ethnography contains several studio portraits of locals, but mostly field photography, which came from different people, among whom missionaries who were very interested in local practices such as dance and ceremony. The difference with other institutions, such as the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, would lie in the differences of emphasis of institutions. KIT focused on the socio-economic aspects of colonialism, whereas KITLV stressed government and ethnography.

History of Collection

“Rouffaer was rather alone in his collection aspirations; [...] it was only later that others realised the importance of photographic collecting. [...] he hardly had money to collect and sometimes had his fortunate friends buy and donate material, as he did himself”

The KITLV was established in 1851, as a Royal institute for Language, Country and Ethnography of the Dutch Indies. This implied the east and west, but emphasis has always been on the East Indies. Collecting started 50 years after the opening of the institution, primarily by Gerrit Rouffaer, who can be found throughout the collections, because of his handwriting. He started the organization and cataloguing of the map and library collections. Rouffaer began a photography collection in 1904,

for which he stressed the importance of amateur photography for a greater understanding of daily life in the colonies. KITLV's oldest photograph is from 1856. The photography collection offers a description of the history of photography. Rouffaer collected from private persons, mostly from the Hague, where KITLV was located at that time. He also purchased from studios, such as Woodbury and Page. Since the east Indies world was rather small at that time, people related to the colonies, were often member of the association that was KITLV, which facilitated communication.

The second important man for photography at KITLV was Rob Nieuwenhuis, who was an employee and maintained great contact with the Indische community, who became solid suppliers of material such as family albums.

Collecting practices became less from the 1950s, when the Dutch left Indonesia. A large gap exists within the collections between 1960 and 1980.

Ethical questions are also raised concerning material from the post-war period, for perhaps it should remain in Indonesia.

Documentary photography is part of research trips, which contributes to contemporary collecting.

Colonial Collection

For KITLV, colonial photography is about the colonial period in the Dutch colonies.

Institutional policy photography collection

“There is a sort of policy, but not a very strict one, and acquisitions are quite incidental”

KITLV does not actively acquire new collections. Only rarely work of contemporary Indonesian photographers is collected, often based in projects. Currently, it has a focus on postwar photography, which is collected according to, although somewhat blurred, selection criteria. Photographs have to complement existing collections, but objects offered are seldom refused.

Preservation & Accessibility

“It is not common practice yet, but the intention is that with all acquisitions, relevant information is put into the database immediately”

KITLV had the first image bank of the Netherlands, going online some ten years ago. Its aims were accessibility, thus only images in low resolutions were offered on the web. KITLV's own website, as well as Memory of the Netherlands (www.geheugenvannederland.nl) offer access to these 130,000 objects. . KITLV will also take part in Europeana. In 2008 it received a subsidy for digitization, which lead to the awareness of the

unregistered state of many collection items. Much photographic material was not even numbered. KITLV now has all of this in order.

Prints can be bought online, with some issues surrounding copyrights and sensitivity.

Collections care

At the time of the interview, a new super depot was being built with a climate room and photography vault with temperature management for different requirements of material. Until 1983, when KITLV moved to Leiden, there was no climate control; conservation was underdeveloped. In the new housing in Leiden, there was a separate storage facility with climate control, though not per material. Physical accessibility of collections is quite controlled. Storage rooms are only open to special collections workers.

Preservation is not based on keeping for keep's sake. Goals for preserving material change throughout time. Photographs are preserved as sources of information, for (international) research purposes.

Registration and Documentation

The 250,000 images are documented, with information actualized by external researchers. New research results are often not transferred into the database. 2 ftes are working on the description of photographs, an anthropologist and a historian, who grow in their subject knowledge. In 2010, 30,000 photographs were described.

Exhibitions

KITLV offers photographs for use in exhibitions. Sometimes, these are produced in cooperation with ethnography or photography museums. Exhibitions are often organized accompanying publications. Exhibitions were held on photographers from Indonesia, or on photo studios.

Projects

It seems projects often depend on specific people and their enthusiasm. I wonder if it will endure in the long run; the importance of such initiatives must be well-supported by the management and others”

One of the full-time employees works on community building. People tend to find KITLV more easily than in the past, community building takes place. Rob Nieuwenhuis played a vital part in this accessioning of the source communities. KITLV organizes one photography day a year itself, and one with Bronbeek. There is also a close

cooperation with Museum Maluku. KITLV has photographs on FLICKR, but not yet on Wikimedia.

Validation

“The relevance of the photographic collection as heritage is increasing. This also has negative effects, for by defining objects as heritage, others are excluded. Less important people and places become sort of forgotten”

The importance of photography for institutions such as KITLV is no longer an issue. Photography can be a very useful tool to make collections and research visible in society. The photography collection of KITLV is mainly used for documentary value, in research and for publications. However, an increase in the validation of photograph as object is noted. Its indexicality, the latent messages. Since a lot of attention goes to specific subjects and less to others, history is written in a specific way.

Interesting is that recent political developments in Indonesia, which is being decentralized, lead to an increase in visits from representatives of specific Indonesian provinces. They seek specific material related to their region, and hope to receive digital copies. This happened after the Tsunami in Aceh, on Aceh government's request. Strange is the fact that similar images are in Jakarta National Archives.

Legermuseum (Army Museum) februari 2011

"I wrote an article in *Armamentaria* 44, 2010, where photographs are presented as objects in themselves. The article deals with the decolonization period and talks about photographs that have a specificity in form, or representation. I try to enter the mind of the photographer, describing what the photographs show and what they do not show; in what way did the photographer orchestrate the scene? In the article, the photograph was shown as object, which means it was printed with white borders and shades to have it rise from the page, and not cropped as part of the lay-out"

Description collection

"The soldiers were tourists in a way, and photographed everything that was mildly interesting: natives, camps, houses, sawahs, fruit trees, flowers, and the situation where they were stationed, leisure time"

The Army Museum in Delft preserves all collections related to the Dutch army. These are national property, of the Ministry of Defence. The complete photography collection of Legermuseum holds ...photographs, of which 4,000 are colonial in content. 52 photographs Suriname (two albums Army unit), 6 photographs Antilles (two are pre-War). There are 90 photo albums situated in the Netherlands East Indies; 20 are from before WW II, 60 are post-colonial. The earlier mentioned 4,000 photographs are part of these. Most albums are filled with military photographs, but sometimes also civil situations, ethnographic photographs and touristic photographs.

The military albums from the post-colonial period all seem chronologically arranged with the following elements: the departure and boat trip to the colony; the arrival, with the first oh's and ah's (tourist photos); soldiers' daily life; patrols and military actions (e.g. sabotages encountered, last honour), and finally, the return (through Suez). The army had its own photographers and sometimes press photographers went along. Part of those collections are at the Legermuseum, but also in the collections of other institutions (National Archive). The Legermuseum has prints, and few negatives, which came from the Press Bureau (Dienst Legercontacten) and are accompanied by vague texts.

History of Collection and acquisition

The collection of the Army Museum started with the collection of general Hoefer, who started assembling objects in 1913, mostly Dutch artillery. His collection was kept in Castle Doorwerth, until the end of WWII. All sorts of different materials were acquired through donations and bequests, but many were lost during the war. Whether and how much photography was part of these collections is unknown.

After the battle of Arnhem in September 1944, Doorwerth was severely damaged and collections as well, and perhaps partly stolen. After WWII the remaining collections were transferred to Leiden. Gifts and sometimes purchases at auctions (lately for example e-bay) filled the photography collection, according to criteria that are linked to a broad representation of military presence and actions. Donations came from former military people, their widows and other family members, or people accidentally finding this material for whatever reason.

The first colonial photographs are from the second Boni-Expedition to Celebes in 1905 and contain action images, which is quite rare.

A staff member checks the internet regularly on military objects (e-bay, marktplaats etc. are sources for example, for material from recent peace missions).

Colonial Collection

all photography made in the colonies, by either Dutch or native photographers, in the Dutch colonial period. Though the Legermuseum collection contains an album of solely ethnographic material, most photography has to do with the military in some way. Photography that is from after the colonial period but still refers to that period, may also be counted among the colonial photography.

Institutional policy photography collection

"Collecting depends on the staff member engaged with a specific topic, and most recently acquired photographs concern Dutch New Guinea, because of the researcher's interest"

Legermuseum has no specific collecting policy concerning photography. When interesting material is identified, it will be acquired when possible. Digital files are given in return. The museum does not acquire reprints, that are in other collections in the Netherlands. Sensitive photographs are preserved, but not accessioned.

Preservation & Accessibility

“Perhaps we should not be too careful with sensitive photographs. The reason of the existence of an army, of the armed forces, should be explicated. And people die in these circumstances, which is part of the institution of army. An impacting truth”.

Legermuseum collections can be accessioned through the internet site of the museum (www.legermuseum.nl), on www.Geheugenvannederland.nl and on www.indieinoorlog.nl. When available, specialist volunteers are consulted for documentation, as was the case with the latter project Heritage of the War. On the website, the collection can be searched, and themes are offered, such as the Netherlands East Indies and New Guinea. For sensitive images, each case serves an exception to the rule, and is decided on in discussion with colleagues.

Legermuseum is present on Flickr.

Collections care

“In the past, volunteers worked on documentation, but their descriptions did not fit Adlib standards, and are still lying around unused”

The Legermuseum has a photography storage facility that consists of 3 spaces, consigned to types of material: old prints, black-white and colour photography, each decreasing in temperature. Three climate zones and a small quarantine space for material to acclimatize. This vault was subsidized, an indication of the validation of the photographic material. The photography collection had always been part of the two-dimensional collections. At some time, paintings became three dimensional objects. Objects and photographs had different adlib systems, which have been integrated recently.

The Legermuseum has a photography registrar (and a documentalist on call; he works for the Ministry of Defence), researcher and curator who register and document photographic objects, in Adlib system. During the national heritage project of Delta Plan, hired staff registered the complete collection of 4,000 photographs. Some 2% of these are digitized, which happens on project base. New acquisitions should be digitized right after acquisition.

Exhibitions

For exhibits, original photograph is mostly not presented because of its vulnerability;

documentary value of objects is the primary objective. But for study purposes, or small scale presentations, the original photograph is used as object. Photographs are, as in many museums, second to objects when exhibitions are planned. “It can happen that the museum can show a photograph of something that no longer exists. That way, it is used illustratively, but it also has great meaning indexically”. Different military topics were exhibited in photography exhibitions, such as the Mobilization and May days (1940 when the Dutch were invaded by the Germans). Exhibitions on colonial topics are more rare.

Projects

Legermuseum publishes an annual bulletin on new research on its collections. The use of photographs in articles can differ. In an article on uniforms, a photograph of the Boni-expedition illustrated the uniforms worn, indicating an illustrative use. Another such example is a photograph (1962) of a Papua policeman using a German rifle from WOII, that contextualizes the story on the move of weaponry. These photographs support the content of an article or sometimes exhibition.

Validation

Photographs in Legermuseum function as objects, in publications or exhibitions, or as illustrations. Today, they are valued in a similar way as objects. Considering conservation aspects, they are even better valued than some objects. The value of photographs as part of an ensemble with other objects is also recognized as very important. Photographs and objects enhance each other's value: “Legermuseum has the camouflage suit of a killed Indonesian soldier and a photograph of that same suit in the hands of a Papua fighter. Another photograph shows a Dutch soldier wearing the suit. With research, the name of all parties and the event could be identified and reconstructed”.

Museum Maluku February 2011

“A scan or negative was fine; it was the image that mattered”

Description collection

“For Maluku Museum the most important is its relationship with its community”

Museum Maluku is a museum on Moluccan heritage and culture, and was established in 1990 from within that community itself. The photo archive is very important within the whole of the collection, which contains 13,000 images in total, and 800 registered objects. Approximately 5,000 of these are on the camp period, whereas some 2,000 can be considered colonial in character.

Photographs from 1898 until today are present in the collection. Main part deals with the so-called “woonoord” period, (1951-1970s), during which time Moluccans came to live in special areas in the Netherlands. Maluku often returns the original material, so current collections are made up from prints, scans and reproduced negatives. Maluku also has film collections.

History of Collection

“Maluku has conceptually existed since 1986, when prime minister Lubbers and reverend Metiarj discussed how to improve the visibility of the Moluccan community and how to undo some of the bad that happened when they came to the Netherlands”

Originally, the museum was called Moluccan historical museum, changing its name in 2008, to include the contemporary. Maluku collections were built from donations. Moluccan leaders have donated their archives from 1950s, as well as regular people with some connection to the islands. From the collection, the relationship between the Moluccas and the Netherlands can be deduced. There is little material on the 1960s for example, when there was hardly any contact between both places. In a few instances, photographs were acquired after exhibition or publication projects, and sometimes Maluku commissions photographs.

Colonial Collection

For Maluku Museum, all collections from before 1951 (the start of the camp period in the Netherlands) are colonial.

Institutional policy photography collection

Museum Maluku collects Moluccan material. All materials are acquired by one employee, and only duplicates are refused. Albums are scanned, and when requested, returned to the owner. Donors are interviewed for contextual information, often leading to lasting connections. Volunteers help with documentation. This is all part of an official policy.

Preservation & Accessibility

“A general assumption existed in the past, that people knew who were on the photographs. Later, an emphasis on proper registration was developed”

The photography collection of Museum Maluku is accessible through the website of Memory of the Netherlands (www.geheugenvannederland.nl) since 2003. Other projects that include Maluku collections are Vijf Eeuwen Migratie (five centuries migration) by the IISG (International Institute of Social History), Indie in Oorlog (Netherlands East Indies at war) and Erfgoed van de Oorlog (Heritage of War). In 2010, the largest part of the archives were digitalized, and implemented on the museum’s website. Thesauri for these were developed by Maluku itself.

The photographic collections are well-used by media, researchers and Marinjo, a Moluccan magazine that each edition publishes a photograph, to which people can react. Museum Maluku regularly publishes on its collection. Active research and new acquisitions are part of these projects. Existing collections are reinterpreted.

“One photograph was scratched. It turned out that the family had been ashamed of the person, and tried to erase his memory”. For Maluku photographic heritage, sensitivity is common. “one family did not want their mother’s photographs on the web, because it would give information on her ethnicity. [...] Maluku has succeeded in taking a non-political stance, and is objective enough in its approach”.

Collections care

Photographic material is conserved in numbered acid free sleeves and boxes and stored in a cool, dark space, though not climate controlled.

Registration and documentation

One person works part time registering and documenting the photography collection, in addition to other knowledge-oriented tasks. Interns and volunteers describe photographs as well. Three Moluccan elderly persons have

documented photographs, supported by their network. They acted as ambassadors, which made people donate as well.

Exhibition

A curator is responsible for exhibits. The permanent exhibit shows the story of the average Moluccan, whereas temporary exhibits displayed specific groups within this community (KNIL, Marine, New Guinea Moluccans), or treated current affairs. Photographs are used illustratively. In exhibitions with photography, Maluku always offers a venue for visitors to react or add information. Exhibitions can be organized with external specialists, after which collections can be acquired, but not necessarily.

Projects

For Memory of the Netherlands, an educational application was designed which is still used (2011). A traveling exhibition on the material is still for rent, as well as similar projects on specific themes.

Validation

“Especially in Moluccan cultures, with loads of networks, these type of collections are important. People immediately start talking when seeing photographs, recognizing people or situations”

The Maluku museum validates its photography collection on the basis of emotional and historical value, not the photograph as physical object. Objects were always considered less important than photographs, and were less present in Moluccan families.

Museum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden

February 2011

Description collection

All photographic image carriers, such as negatives, glass negatives, slides, positives and prints, amount to approximately 400,000 objects. Photographs dating from the post-colonial period are more numerous. Its content covers more than the tropical regions or the Dutch former colonies, including the Arctic area, Middle East, especially Iran, China and has a central focus on Japan. The Indonesia collection comprises over 100,000 items. From before 1920, there are 13,600 photographic materials. A mere 20 objects are from the (former) Dutch Caribbean; nearly 1200 come from Surinam, and almost 6700 from Indonesia. The remaining collection covers the rest of the world. In 1940, the total of photographic collections had grown to around 60,000, and after WWII, this rise continued when photographs from curatorial field trips grew.

History of Collection

"I think that because Leiden was the national museum, these rather untypical collections came into the museum's collection"

The First photographs can be dated back to 1860. The museum had an early interest in this medium. Until 1920 photographs were well used; they were more embedded within the complete collection of the museum, they were inventoried, work was being done on them. Information was rather scarce, but at least everything was registered. They did not have the extended description objects had, but they had an identity, were well kept/preserved and used - there were exhibitions, and they could be studied". From the 1910s, some family albums entered the collection. Before, collections mainly came from stationed diplomats, expeditions, research travels. After 1910 photographs were acquired or donated. Often family pictures, also because of the easier availability of photography, but also studio photography (e.g. Woodbury and Page, Japanese photographers from the Netherlands East Indies, Japanese studio's, cartes de visite with photos). Most photographs were donated or bequeathed; less were purchased or exchanged. Contemporary photography is collected following exhibitions. These acquisitions then are usually not based on art historical premises, but rather on a direct relationship with the exhibition concerned.

Colonial Collection

Institutional policy photography collection

"Within MV the photography collection is considered separately from other collections. Last year, 2010, a proposal was developed for a specific policy concerning the photography collection. This proposal was discussed by professionals on research, museum history, information and collection management. This resulted in some recommendations"

Before the Geheugen van Nederland project (see below), strategies on preserving photographic collections were absent. A committee "collection quality" advises on each request for acquisition which they discuss with the management team and board of directors, who then decide. This committee uses accession criteria, which have been aligned with other ethnographic museums in the Netherlands. For photography there is a collection profile, but this is not officially established yet. The photography collection profile is taken into account, as well as the regional profile that the proposed acquisition has a relation with. There is no active acquisition practice, donations and bequests come in at regular pace. People sometimes contact the museum with their work and ideas, which can be accessioned later.

Preservation & Accessibility

"During the Deltaplan in the 1980s/1990s, a large national Dutch heritage collection preservation plan, photographs were not taken into account. The whole Delta plan concerned state collections, and photographs were not considered to be state collections at that point in time. Photographs were documentation material"

At the time of Deltaplan in Leiden, a coordinator dealt with the photography collection administratively. The photography collection before 1920 was selected and designated a national collection. The selection of materials from the period 1920-1945 was just finished (2011), where emphasis was put on the museum's function as an ethnographic museum. 30,000 photographs have been selected. This means the rest of the photographic objects of that time will be preserved, but not immediately digitized or documented. Today, one person works on photography collections. Collections are accessible through the museum's own website, geheugen van nederland and the SVCN (ethnographic museums) website. Volkenkunde does not put its collections on all purpose social media sites such as Flickr; perhaps in the future for photographs the museum wants

direct reactions, but for now, social media applications are reserved for the museum's own website. The museum problematizes open, not monitored social media.

Collections care

“Researchers have access, but access is under control to avoid photos disappearing”
Preservation and conservation standards have been professionalized only in 2001 after the reconstruction of the museum. Now there are climate controlled rooms for different materials. From the Deltaplan onwards (mid 1990s), slides were already kept in cooling cells. Most urgent circumstances were improved, but the larger investments went into the conservation of objects. All material is now kept in acid free paper and other proper and monitored conditions. Accessioning has been general, i.e. preliminary renumbering according to series has taken place. The physical access to collections has some constraints. The current person responsible for the photographs works only 3 days/week.

Registration and documentation

Individual accessioning (documentation) remains to be done for most of the material. One person works on the collections, sometimes aided with extra help in projects. Documenting depends on projects (geheugenvannederland, exhibitions), volunteers (but mostly accidental and connected to important collections), or research. The work of volunteers is checked by registrars and documentalists, and sometimes information is added, also by curators. Documentation formats were devised in cooperation with the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam. The 300,000 photographic materials from after 1945 still need selection for either national status, or documentation status. This selection is done by curators; their list will be analysed and complemented by external second opinions, e.g. of a photography specialist. Comparison with other (ethnographic) museums will take place, to avoid doubles, as well as offering remainders to fellow institutions.

Exhibitions

Photographs in exhibitions are mostly used as illustrations, not as the specific visual medium. On the other hand, Museum Volkenkunde does also sometimes organize specific photographic exhibits.

Projects

For the period 1860-1920, Museum Volkenkunde has digitized and documented all 13.600 photographs for Geheugen van Nederland

(Memory of the Netherlands, website). These are not yet on the geheugenvannederland.nl site, but they are accessible on MV's own website.

Problematic with Geheugen van NL is that it is no longer active, i.e. no more additions, and that information on the site cannot be updated. However, the project made proper digitization and accessioning of photography possible. Together with Museon, Volkenkunde now is taking photographs back (restitution) to Greenland. The curator who worked at both institutions on the arctic cultures took interesting photographs from the 1960s onwards that ended up in both institutions. The photographs will be available on a special website with social networking facilities. The project is called “Roots2Share”, and possibilities for cooperation with other museums with similar collections are considered. MV is considering to use this platform is about the cultural heritage of Surinamese Indians in MV. Surinamese native Americans visited the Netherlands a few times. “Our ways of documenting are just part of the whole of meanings attributed to objects and other representations. The natives of Surinam helped re-documenting part of the collections, and this will go to Surinam (Paramaribo, and perhaps interior of Surinam) in some sort of an exhibition or other”. Volkenkunde organizes these projects mainly in the countries of origin, not so much with communities from those countries that are now in the Netherlands.

Validation

“From the 1920s onwards, photography became available for everybody; photographs lost their status and were increasingly considered to be of documentary value”

“Photographs are definitely used for content, important and well-known photographs. The collection until 1920s is a national, or state collection, as well as a selection of photographs until 1945, and hence are considered cultural material heritage. Is a matter of definition. Other parts of the collections are not considered as such officially, but Volkenkunde treats them as such, since they can still receive that status”.

NIOD – Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (Dutch Institute for War Documentation)

“Photography on the war in the Dutch East Indies was scarce, almost zero. There is more film footage than there are photographs. The photographs that are available, taken from 1945 onwards, give a more positive image on camp life, than was reality during the Japanese occupation. One has to keep that in mind”

Description collection

“Collections on Indische photography were probably formed by government information services, and needed to exude optimism. But film played a much bigger part in this. [I] found material in the archives with footage of killed Indonesians and war prisoners with fear in their eyes, that had been cut from a propaganda film”

The Indische photography collection of NIOD comprises 10,000 photographs, on a total of approximately 150,000 photographs. They contain images on the period of mobilisation in the Dutch East Indies, from the time the motherland was occupied in May 1940 until the Japanese Occupation (1942). On the period after that, no photography is available, except in propaganda magazines. Photography that is present is from September 1945/1946, the Bersiap period. It was only some ten years ago, that NIOD started collecting albums about the military interventions in Indonesia. These include the boat trip to Indonesia, a soldier's education etc. and are present in other collections as well. Photographs of the actual battle period are non-existent. Since photographs were spread through official press channels, most photography at NIOD is official photography, as for example the visit of Lady Mountbatten at internment camps. It holds one Japanese album, which was taken from a Japanese soldier.

History of Collection

NIOD was founded on May 8, 1945, directly following World War II. It was an initiative from two sides: one was initiated from London, including Dutch historian Loe de Jong, the other from the academic world in Netherlands. For the Netherlands East Indies the institute collected the Bersiap period, also called the After-time (Natiid), between 1945 and 1946. Photographs and other materials from the Police Actions (1947 and 1948/1949) were transferred to the Institute for War History. There has always been a separate

collection on the Dutch East Indies, the Indische Collection, that started in Batavia (now Jakarta) in 1945. This mainly concerned material from the Japanese occupation and includes much more moving images than photographs. For photography, propaganda magazines of that period are important.

New acquisitions mainly consist of family albums, that end in the early 1940s. As said, there is hardly any photography from the period after that. Albums not about war, are referred to other institutions. NIOD films are transferred to the (national) Image and Sound Institution.

Colonial Collection

Within NIOD, the separation between colonial and post-colonial is an artificial one, which means they collected and collect both periods.

Institutional policy photography collection

Preservation & Accessibility

NIOD collections can be found online at NIOD's website, at Memory of the Netherlands (www.geheugenvannederland.nl). The Indische collection at image bank World War II (www.beeldbankWO2.nl). NIOD collections are mainly used for publications, school books, regular books, newspapers, and documentaries.

Registration and Documentation

“Digitization is profitable, although it all depends on the terms used by the registrar, which are often subjectively interpreted. I am also concerned with the lack of cooperation between institutions with similar collections, which leads to different contextualisations”.

Two people work on the photography collection, with extra help from temporary workers during projects. All Indische photographic materials are digitized and accessible. Registration is basic: location, captions, and a search possibility in the text field.

Collections care

Climate-controlled storage rooms keep the collections on steady conservation levels. Around the 1980s, photographs were lent to people.

Exhibitions

Images can be loaned for exhibitions.

Projects

NIOD used to be present at Pasar Malam, with film material and several other places, where it was very popular.

Validation

Within NIOD, the 10,000 images of the Indische Collection are highly valued. Although limitations are bound: “when photographs are used, for example a photograph from a Japanese camp, more contextualisation is necessary, for it might be a photograph of a camp right after the capitulation of Japan, which makes a big difference!”

NIOD uses its photography illustratively; requests concern topics, not photographs in themselves. The collection has been divided thematically as well. The photographer is of secondary importance. Some photographs can be considered art, made by professional photographers.

Nusantara

July 2011

“I have no knowledge of any kind of policy on photographic collections in Nusantara. I refuse nothing and accept everything that is offered. It is not for this generation to decide what is important for the future”

Description collection

Nusantara holds 59 registered albums and 10,000 photographic objects, including those in albums. It has one album on the police actions and one from just after Indonesia's independence, dated 1950. Its collection started with educational material from its students, often including photographs as visual aids in education. Today, the collections can be divided thematically into mainly travel and family photography.

History of Collection

Nusantara is a museum that developed from the Indische Instelling in Delft. This institution, established some 140 years ago, educated young men for administrative work for the government in the Netherlands East Indies. These collections are part of the larger municipal collections of the city of Delft. At the time of the interview, Nusantara just opened after some time of refurbishment, unfortunately to be closed by the time of this report.

Colonial Collection

In Nusantara there is no definition of 'colonial collections'. The colonial time period is determinative in this respect.

Institutional policy photography collection

There has never been any sort of policy concerning the photography collection in Nusantara. Everything was and is accepted. The curator is responsible for the photography collections.

Preservation & Accessibility

“Nusantara collects and preserves to ensure nothing is thrown away”.

Nusantara's collection can be viewed online at <http://www.nusantara-delft.nl/>. There are meetings between members of SVCN (Stichting Volkenkundige Collecties Nederland, Association of Ethnographic Collections Netherlands) on accessioning strategies, meaning more practically the standards of registration and documentation.

Collections care

The photographic collections of Nusantara are conserved by the larger Archive of which they are part. Next year (2012) this archive will have a special cool cell for photography and film. Digitalized photographs are preserved in acid free paper and boxes and transferred to this general storage of the municipal museums, at Prinsenhof.

Registration and documentation

Registration is done on an irregular basis by volunteers, and by one registrar who also documents. During the last eight years, photographs were scanned, basic registered, and sometimes documented. Albums have been accessioned since 2006, for which all photographs were registered separately.

Exhibitions

In exhibitions, Nusantara photography collections are used illustratively, to contextualize objects on display. There have been and are photography exhibits, but always on material from an external photographer, specialized in a specific subject that touches the Netherlands East Indies. In the recent renewal of the permanent display, no photographs were used.

Projects

The museum has a large community that could be, but is not, involved with photographic collections and their documentation. In the larger archive is a so-called story table, where Delft people can leave their personal stories behind. “Specific areas of Delft have been researched through storytelling; there is a plan to do this for the Indische community, but this plan has to be developed by the curator”.

Validation

Although there never has been a photography policy in Nusantara, photographs are considered valuable objects. “There just never has been any specific attention to them”. The larger municipal archive preserves and uses the photographic collections, including those of Nusantara.

Rijksmuseum
Mei 2011

“For Rijksmuseum, quality of photographs is most important. The stories embedded in the photographs are important, but still secondary to its quality. A photograph must be special ”

Description collection

The Rijksmuseum has two departments that contain photographic collections, the internationally oriented Rijks' Prentenkabinet (collection prints, drawings and photographs from all over the world) and the Dutch History department. . Both collections show a connection to former colonies. The former places emphasis on the artistic qualities of works, although for the historic collections photographic quality is also a primary aim. For the Prentenkabinet, the history of photography is a main subject. The Dutch history collection has many family albums, of which a large part Indische albums The photographic collection of the Rijksmuseum holds 150,000 objects and 700 albums. “Colonial Photographs” about 20,000. The collection consists of prints and albums, and covers all photographic technologies. It also includes other objects that contain photographs, such as book illustrations. The Netherlands East Indies are also present in travel albums.

History of Collection

The Rijksmuseum started collecting within the private sector. Members of several societies, such as the archaeological society, who were interested in photography, donated their objects to the museum. Dutch History department collected all photography on Dutch photography, whereas Prentenkabinet collected internationally, photographs by important photography ‘schools’. Dutch East Indies were more part of the former collection. The museum acquires photography officially since 1996. From 2004 onwards, the acquisitions are mostly coloured photography, and digital photography.

Colonial Collection

“I am surprised the term is used in this project. I try not to use it. For me, photography from the former colonies is meant”

The interviewee of the Rijksmuseum was the only one who had a problem with the term “colonial photography”, because of its problematic and western-oriented connotations. Next to that, Rijksmuseum sees its photography collection that would be described by the term as including post-

colonial and contemporary material, as long as they pertain to the former colonies.

Institutional policy photography collection

Rijksmuseum has a written policy, in which collections of the Print and History department are considered one collection. Selection is critical, and on the basis of the existing collection in Rijksmuseum and other institutions. The first policies on photography were initiated by Wim Vroom in the 1970s. Before his time, photographs entered the museum collection randomly. The department of Dutch history already collected actively before 1989, with a photo assignment each year and retrospective collecting on subjects such as business and governance. Since 1996, an official policy dictates all acquisitions, with money coming from funds, and strict selection criteria. The photography curators write acquisition proposals for approval by the management.

Preservation & Accessibility

“Rijksmuseum looks at photography as a broad phenomenon; colonial photography is a fairly recently discovered category”

Two curators work on the photography collections of the Rijksmuseum. They register (in addition to regular registrars who work on the whole Rijksmuseum collection) and document photographs. Negatives and other sensitive materials were transferred to the Fotomuseum in Rotterdam, because of professional expertise. Photographs are used for exhibitions, publications, research and websites.

Registration and documentation

The 20,000 photographs from the former colonies have been digitized and registered. Half of 50,000 photographs from the albums were digitized as well.

Collections care

All collections are in climate-controlled storage rooms. All photographs are preserved in one space, which will change in the future. Since 2010, the museum has a fulltime photograph restorer-conservator.

Exhibitions

Several exhibitions were dedicated to the Netherlands East Indies, or contained photography from that area, such as the fairly recent ‘Meetings with Asia’. The exhibition on recent acquisitions from Surinam (with the then acquired earliest photograph from Surinam: 1846) led to more

acquisitions. Many of the photographs are loaned for exhibitions outside the Rijksmuseum. The museum always wants to exhibit originals; that is what a museum is for. This also often immediately clarifies a photograph's function. This approach was taken since the establishment of the Photographic Society in 1989, in which Rijksmuseum employees played a part.

Projects

On www.earlyphotography.nl, all 4,000 photographs from before 1860 have been assembled. Other projects concern publications. A separate fund makes it possible for young photo historians to perform research on a (collection of) Rijksmuseum photograph and publish in an annual publication. Other new research on collections is also published. Sometimes, external professionals are asked to do research and publish their findings. The Rijksmuseum would like to develop a project on the Netherlands East Indies, and on Surinam.

Validation

"Five albums of extraordinary quality on a planter's family on Sumatra were acquired. All albums together, give a fine insight into the plantation life of late 19th century. But the acquisition started with the quality of the photography".

The Rijksmuseum is mainly concerned with photography itself: how was it organized, executed, applied, who sees it and why, and what was the background for commissioned work. "The collections of Rijksmuseum show the western perspective, and this needs to be researched".

Tropenmuseum

March 2011

“Already before the second World War photographs were de-accessioned, that now would be considered important as photo-historical material. There were instances of photographic objects being given away to researchers because they were no longer of importance to the institute”

Description collection

Tropenmuseum’s photographic collection comprises over 500,000 items. This includes the recently acquired IWI collection (70,000 objects), which was central research material in the Dutch part of the Photoclec project. In December 2011, 200,000 objects are in the registration and documentation system TMS. Collection consists of prints, negatives, glass negatives, albums, light images and slides. Former Dutch colonial areas (Indonesia, and in a lesser extent Suriname and the Dutch Antilles) were, and are, main focus points within the photographic collection. Other geographical areas are also present, mostly from the time period after WWII. In the 1950s, photographs were acquired from commercial parties and embassies, and NGO’s. Nowadays, photographs from all over the world are accepted, if they fit within the wider policy of the Tropenmuseum.

History of Collection

Tropenmuseum’s focus in collecting has always been contemporary. The early collections of the Haarlem predecessor of the Colonial Museum and of the Artis Zoo, whose collections came to the museum later, contained photographs, although these were never identified individually. Photographs, as did objects, entered the museum mainly through donations. In the beginning of the museum in Amsterdam, around 1910, the *Photobureau* was part of the general secretariat, together with the library collection. It dealt with the whole of the larger institute of which the museum was part, documenting all kinds of events and other aspects of the institute. In 1965 there was a large fire in the Institute, that destroyed parts of the photo collection, including some of the oldest photographs. Since the 1980s, photography policy is based on two different forms of activating photography collections: to publish historical material, and to give non-Western photographers a podium for expression. It was only in the beginning of the 1990s, that the photography collection officially became part of the museum

collections. A recent resurgence of donations has increased attention for albums and photographs, but they are from the colonial period.

Contemporary collecting is hardly a policy subject, although discussions on this have been started again. This means a gap exists from the 1980s/1990s, although another form of updating collections, the reinterpretation of existing material, is common practice.

Colonial Collection

From the total of between 500,000 to 550,000 photographic objects in the museum collection, some 400,000 are considered colonial. There is no official definition of the term ‘colonial’ within the museum. One of the researchers puts it as follows: “Colonial photography concerns photographs that were collected in colonial areas and times, and has a colonial subject, for example governance. Collections on the history of the Colonial Institute are also part of the colonial collections”.

Institutional policy photography collection

Until the 1970s, the Tropenmuseum collected the contemporary, in object and image. It concentrated its accessions on the colonial enterprise. For photography, this meant collecting mainly governance, industry and the clerical. This included (ethnographic) representations in portraits, of people and colonials. In addition, family photography came in from the end of the 19th century.

As seen, photography only became part of the museum collections in the 1990s. Between the 1950s, when the colonial period ended, and the 1980s, when national awareness on the colonial period revived, there was hardly any interest in the colonial photography collections. The colonial past was not even of national interest, and today even considered subject to collective forgetting because of the negative political connotations. It was the foundation of the Dutch Photographic Society (Nederlands Fotogenootschap) in 1989 that invigorated the interest in photograph as collectible and the institution of photography at university. Also, other international relations came to the fore, such as development aid. Already in the second World War, photographs were de-accessioned; material that would now be considered important historical material. But the colonial era was itself deemed from the past, not contemporary, and hence not important anymore. For this de-accessioning, no policy existed, just a few guidelines.

It was from the end of the 1980s, beginning of the 1990s, with the implementation of a curator of photography, that photography exhibitions were

organized more regularly, with a specific space within the museum being assigned to these displays. Collecting became concentrated on historical photography from the former colonies Indonesia, Suriname and the Antilles, and secondly on contemporary material about these areas.

“A big re-evaluation of historical collections took place, but to the detriment of the development aid photographs of the 1970s, that are now being undervalued, although a change in attitude is emerging slowly”

Preservation & Accessibility

When documentation information is validated, the photographs are put on the internet where they can be viewed on the museum’s website and several other sites (GeheugenvanNederland.nl; svcn.nl; flickr.com)¹.

This year (2012) a book on the photographic collections on the Dutch East Indies will be published (“Photographs of the Netherlands East Indies at the Tropenmuseum”)

Collections care

When at the end of the 20th century, a committee, led by Elizabeth Edwards, advised positively on the photography collection, money was received from the ministry to professionalise conservation. Photographic material was scanned and registered for TMS, and the physical objects packed in acid free paper and boxes and placed in climatized storage facilities, which are only accessible to the photography documentalists.

Registration and documentation

All selected photographs are basically registered by a transfer of computer databases. They are additionally registered (124.000 objects) and documented (5,000 objects) by two documentalists and one registrar (2011).² The collection is divided into several categories based on quality, with the A-collection receiving full attention. Albums are digitalized integrally, with only selections of their photographs documented and with photographs that are included related to them.

Exhibitions

Photographs are used in exhibitions as illustrative material, but also as objects in itself in special

photographic exhibitions. An example is the exhibit on Kurkdjian, organised in 2011, which focused on the tropicality of colonial photographs.³

Projects

Concerning the relationship with stake-holding communities, Tropenmuseum has had some projects, among which the recent exhibition on photography by Leonard Freed, for which the Maluku (Moluccan) community has contributed massively in information. The museum does however not initiate or maintain long-term contacts, but is service-oriented.

Validation

Up until fairly recently, photographs were considered secondary to objects in museum display. Their main use was illustrative, although since the end of the 20th century, more photography exhibits are organized, that also emphasize photography as heritage and art historical object. Photographs are now discussed in terms of content, context and as a means of looking at the Other.

¹ the specialists of Tropenmuseum have some problems with photographic objects being accessible via social media, since they can be digitally enhanced, and thus lose vital information from a heritage point of view.

² From March 2012, two documentalists will work on the photo collection.

³ The influence of the composition of the image on the viewers of the image, which projected a tropical quality.

Wereldmuseum

February 2011

“Photographs in the Wereldmuseum were used as (Dutch) cultural heritage: the originals were exhibited, but also used for content or indexically, as a symbol or representation of specific circumstances or thoughts in 'the West'”

Description collection

The photography collection of the Rotterdam ethnographic museum Wereldmuseum comprises more than 120,000 images. These are mostly (original vintage) prints and negatives.

Photographic objects were donated, often integrally with objects and literature.

The first photographs date from 1860. Most photographs concern travel photography, from all over the world, including Europe, resulting into a global collection, not focusing on Indonesia. Most photographs are about topography, how landscapes defined human behaviour. There are many cityscapes, and portraits of locals. In comparison to other collections, Wereldmuseum contains much less

History of Collection

“It seems that Wereldmuseum collections were focused more internationally, instead of internally focused on the Dutch outside the Netherlands in their new environments”

The collections of the anthropological museum Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam, are owned by the municipality. In Wereldmuseum, the western origin of pictorial collections is the criterion for these collections to be part of the tasks of the curator pictorial collections. Non-Western pictorial collections are divided among regional collections. Photography was considered a Western invention, as were graphic arts, and are part of the pictorial collections curatorship.

Most photographic materials were actively collected around the time of the foundation of the museum in 1885. Acquisitions were noted in annual reports. From the 1920s, active collecting halted, and photography was used as illustration in lectures and exhibitions.

Photography was spread among different collections, i.e. library and museum. Registration never took place, until 1975. In 1982, photography became a separate museum collection.

Donors often were traders, that travelled the world from Rotterdam harbour. Often, they were members of the Royal Yacht Club and associated to the museum, and collected on commission, which

gave them status. Interesting notion is that New Guinea and Africa are least represented.

From 1986 -2000, contemporary photography was acquired, following exhibitions. These were mostly about non-Western photographers, indicating a change in thinking about photography as being a western phenomenon. The focus of these acquisitions were regional, especially Latin American photography and African photography. When museum management structure changed in 2000, all budgets were frozen, acquisitions stopped and finally the care for the photography collection will be transferred to the Fotomuseum in Rotterdam, including the curator, where it will contextualize the existing Dutch photography collections.

Colonial Collection

For Wereldmuseum, colonial collection refers to colonial time periods, without a limitation to the Netherlands, thus covering the whole world.

Institutional policy photography collection

In the beginnings of the museum, photography was considered an important part of the collection. Items were accessioned actively. From 1920s - 1980s the collection was used documentarily.

From 1986-2000 a very active photography curator redirected the photograph back to the status of a relevant object, with a matching policy that included criteria for new acquisitions. A special budget was assigned to photography collecting and exhibiting. Gaps in historical collections were filled, but the focus was on contemporary photography of non-Western photographers.

From 2000 onwards, photography was relegated back to a slumbering existence, functioning as illustrative materials in exhibitions and publications. In 2012, the transfer to Rotterdam Fotomuseum will be completed.

Preservation & Accessibility

Collections can be searched on the web, through the museum's own website and SVCN. It can be browsed on geography, culture and theme, though not separately from the material culture collection. 40% of the collection is digitized. Photographic prints can be ordered.

Collections care

“In the past, photographs may have been stacked on a pile, or stored in the atelier of the museum photographer. Library photographs were loaned to people”

Between 1885-1975 photographs were not conserved properly according to current standards.

Currently, all photography collections are stored in the same storage room, since 1982.

Documentation and Registration

“It never occurred that regional curators came to document photographs, as, unfortunately, is similar in other ethnographic museums”

The photography collection is documented by the curator, who is a 0,2 fte. and depends on exhibitions. She prefers to work cooperatively with regional curators, who had to document the anthropological aspects. The problem with the transfer of the collection to the climatologically better equipped Fotomuseum, concerns the documentation systems; they are not compatible, which means information can get lost.

Exhibitions

“I focused on aspects such as context, the why and social history of photographs: what happened with a photo, its current use, its reception throughout history in comparative perspective, instead of anthropological content information from photographs”

Wereldmuseum organized photography exhibitions from 1900, perhaps earlier. Until 1914, many were staged (there is a list). Between 1986 and 2000, exhibition policy stated two photography exhibitions per year were to be organized, which took place in a separate space. Topics were defined by the curator (e.g. Images from the Orient, or the Burton Brothers, photography from New Zealand). Subjects were historical and contemporary.

In 1986, Tukan Potret, on 100 years of photography in the Netherlands East-Indies was one of the first large photography exhibitions on this subject. It included a (sold-out) publication and had lots of (Indische) visitors.

Photographs can be loaned for external projects.

Projects

Wereldmuseum has no projects on its photographic collection.

Validation

“Quantitatively, the photography collection surpasses the material culture collection, but validation of the photography collection lags behind. This can be deduced from the fact that for every region there was a separate curator, whereas for the photography collection as a whole, there was only one person working on it”

It seems that a change of management can change the whole attitude towards a specific collection. Currently, with the photography collection not being active, and transferred to another museum, whereas usage is illustrative, it seems that for the Wereldmuseum, its photography collection is not a high priority today.

CONCLUSION

What exactly is colonial photography?

A Comparison of Dutch photographic collections

When comparing the interview results, a few remarkable aspects concerning the discourse on colonial collections came to the fore. Most importantly, it appeared that 'colonial collection' is not a standardised, or even institutionally defined, term. People and institutions hold different ideas on what it means to describe a collection as being 'colonial'. Some referred to a temporal characteristic, others to a spatial zone. Most often both were combined to identify those photographs that can be temporally and spatially placed within Dutch colonial time and place. Other museums however, have collections from other colonial empires, or from a different colonial period. The definition of the term colonial collections is a dynamic one, with people understanding the general meaning, but for which a detailed and shared explanation seems problematic.

Secondly, and very important in the light of this research, interviews results showed that appraisal of colonial photographic collections, or rather, of photographic collections in general, is a fairly recent phenomenon – with exception of photography museums and institutions. It can be deduced that until the 1920s, photography had a special quality, that made it an interesting medium to collect. It was only in the beginning of the 1980s, that photography regained this special status, having mainly been used documentary and illustratively in the period between those dates. National developments concerning photography played a large part in this re-evaluation of the medium.

The different characteristics of museum and institutions that have photographic collections, is very influential in their use and validation of the photographic object. Anthropology museums and historical institutions are more inclined to take the image, the subject of the photograph, as its main object of collecting, whereas the Fotomuseum, Rijksmuseum and, somewhat surprisingly, the Army Museum, look at photographs from an object-oriented point of view.

Another tremendously important aspect of collecting photography and of its validation, is the personal nature of these developments. For all institutions, working with and on photography collections depended on just a few people, who had their hearts and minds completely geared towards photography. If it hadn't been for them,

many photographic collections in the Netherlands would still be undiscovered within institutional and private spaces, or even have withered away in the course of time.

When interviews of similar institutions were compared, in this case the ethnographic museums, it appeared that even within those seemingly identical collections, with 'colonial collections', differences can easily be found. Rotterdam Wereldmuseum, for example, has a different collection of colonial photography than Tropenmuseum, the basis of which can be found in their institutional histories. Whereas the Wereldmuseum depended on Rotterdam's harbour and its businesspeople, Tropenmuseum received its collections from people working and living in the colonies.

Finally, when comparing all interviews, the thought arises whether it can be concluded that the Dutch formal collective amnesia of its colonial history, its 'colonial historical blind spot', can be found in the character of its photography collections. All interviews talk of a minimal interest in photography in the period right after World War II, up until the 1980s. Can it be that the developments around photography (and film!) as a technique are the main contributor to this, or could we state that Dutch colonial memory was only allowed back in its people's heads when the immediate pain and shame had become less sharp? There might be some evidence in the interview results.

APP. I: Questionnaire (in Dutch)



PhotoClec

Collectie Fotografie

Collectieomschrijving

- waaruit bestaat de fotocollectie?
- koloniale fotografie?
- Hoe groot is de collectie?
- Begindatum?
- Hoe is de collectie tot stand gekomen?
- Is de collectie gedigitaliseerd?
- Valt er iets algemeen te zeggen qua inhoud: wat voor onderwerpen hebben de foto's met name? (werk, wonen, portretten, etc.)

Beheer en behoud

- Hoe werd/wordt de collectie bewaard?
- Wat is het verwervingsbeleid?
- Met welk doel wordt er bewaard?
- Hoe wordt de collectie beheerd? (wie, wat, hoe?)
- Wordt de collectie geactualiseerd?
- Wordt de collectie actief gedocumenteerd?

Beleid

- Hoe ziet het (museum)beleid ten aanzien van de collectie eruit?
- Welke plaats neemt hij in binnen de collectie als geheel?
- Hoe wordt de collectie binnen de instelling/het museum beschouwd? Als onlosmakelijk deel, van de andere collecties, als aparte collectie?
- Worden ze gebruikt om hun inhoud (representatie/indexicaliteit) of als vorm van materieel erfgoed?
- Wordt er gestreefd naar een relatie met de huidige postkoloniale en/of multiculturele samenleving in Nederland?
-

Toegankelijkheid

- Welke exposities zijn er in het bestaan van de collectie tot stand gekomen? (data, gelegenheid, inhoud, lokatie, beoogd publiek, aantallen bezoekers)

- Worden de foto's voornamelijk gebruikt als illustratie materiaal in exposities van andere objecten of worden ze op zichzelf als fotografisch medium tentongesteld?
- Wordt er gestreefd naar meer bekendheid onder het publiek tav de foto's / de collectie?
- Bestaat er een actief beleid ten aanzien van de individuele foto's of de (deel)collectie?
- Is de collectie opengesteld voor publiek? Als er restricties zijn: welke? En waarom?
- Wordt er uitgeleend, kopieën verkocht? Aan wie en hoe?
- Wat wordt verder met de collectie gedaan? Dwz Welke projecten zijn er in verband met/door middel van de collectie tot stand gekomen? (data, gelegenheid, inhoud, lokatie, beoogd publiek, aantallen bezoekers)
- Wat was de doelstelling van de verschillende projecten?