

Cultural Heritage Agency
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

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Subject Call for Candidates 'Training Sharing Stories on Contested Histories'

Dear Madam, Sir,

We are calling your attention to the opening of the application period to participate in the third edition of the training of Sharing Stories on Contested Histories. We look forward to working with a new group of heritage professionals from the 10 partner countries of the Netherlands within the Shared Cultural Heritage Program.

Although the Covid-19 pandemic created some hurdles, we are convinced that sharing stories on contested histories has become even more topical than before. The past year has shown an increased need for polyvocal approaches and inclusive practices in the cultural and societal world. The organizing committee therefore feels the urge for organizing the third edition of the training and invites everyone that fits the application requirements to apply.

The Netherlands Government attaches great importance to the past we share with other countries and what its traces can teach us about ourselves and our connections with these countries. This shared past is both rich as well as complex and its aftermaths are still discernible in our present-day societies. To increase the awareness and visibility of this shared past and to contribute to the sustainable preservation of its tangible and intangible traces, the Netherlands Government has initiated the Shared Cultural Heritage Program. Through this program, the Netherlands works together with Australia, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Suriname and the United States of America.

When it comes to presenting shared pasts, heritage institutions in the Netherlands have become more and more aware of the need to become more polyvocal, engaging, diverse, (self)reflective and participatory. Inclusive, representative and participatory modes of sharing cultural heritage and the therewith linked histories add relevance to our institutions and society at large. In the Netherlands, this awareness has resulted in an ethical rethink and change on working practices on collecting, designing exhibitions and setting up learning programs. It is a work in progress, however, which will highly benefit from exchanges of expertise with other countries.

Within this context, the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, part of the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, invites emerging museum professionals and academics from Australia, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Suriname, the United States of America and the Netherlands to join the third edition of the international training 'Sharing Stories on Contested Histories'. This training aims to bring together professionals and academics to reflect on the engagement with and presentation of shared cultural heritage topics that might be considered as being 'contested'.

Training and selection details

Because of the global Covid-19 pandemic, this edition of the training will be slightly different. We aim to accommodate as many trainees in Amsterdam as the Covid restrictions permit. Of course, holding into account that not all trainees might be able to attend in person due to travel restrictions. Therefore, the training will be fully blended, enabling trainees to participate both online and offline. Everyone will experience the entire blended program.

The Cultural Heritage Agency offers this training in close collaboration with the Reinwardt Academy, a faculty of the Amsterdam University of the Arts. The training will take place in the Netherlands, from 9-21 May 2021. It is recommended that the candidates that come to Amsterdam arrive the day before the training (8 May) to ensure attendance. During the training, which will be case oriented and practical in approach, the trainees will also work with professionals from several museums in the Netherlands.

The group of trainees will consist of two participants of the earlier mentioned partner countries plus two trainees from the Netherlands. Per country, there is a maximum of two participants, of which one emerging museum professional and one emerging academic from (vocational) universities. Selection is done by the Cultural Heritage Agency and the Reinwardt Academy on the basis of the following:

- The candidate works in the heritage or academic field in one of these countries: Australia, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Suriname, the United States of America and the Netherlands.
- The candidate has to be proficient in the English language, both in written and spoken form.
- The candidate falls within the age range 25 - 35.
- The candidate has a bachelor, specialist or master degree.
- The candidate has at least three years' experience in the heritage or the academic field.
- The candidate can commit to the training period: 9-21 May 2021. It is recommended that the candidate arrives the day before the training (8 May) to ensure attendance.
- The motivation letter of the candidate (500 words) and a resume have to be submitted before 27 January 2021, 8 AM (CMT+1).

The resume should include the following details:

- First name
- Surname
- Address
- Email address
- Gender
- Date of birth
- Education
- Employer organization
- Position in the organization
- Level of English [Reading]
- Level of English [Speaking]
- Level of English [Understanding]
- Work experience

The results of the selection will be communicated before 31 January 2021.

Tuition fees for the training, costs for accommodation (selected by the Cultural Heritage Agency) during the training and excursions as part of the training will be covered by the Shared Cultural Heritage Program of the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands. In addition, the Agency also covers travel expenses in the Netherlands to commute between accommodation and training location. Please note: costs for travel to and from the Netherlands, valid travel documents, visa and travel insurance will have to be covered by the participants or his or her organization.

Final decisions on the possibilities for in person or online participation are made in January 2021. Every applicant will be offered the maximum possible participation, but all decisions are based on the regulations and limitations as announced by the Dutch government and of the government of the partner country.

For more information about the Cultural Heritage Agency, our Shared Cultural Heritage Program and mentioned training, including set up and learning objectives, please see Appendix I. In case of any questions, do not hesitate to contact our Training Coordinator Iris Volkers : rce.sharing.stories@cultureelerfgoed.nl.

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

Sincerely,

The Cultural Heritage Agency
Jinna Smit
Program Director Shared Cultural Heritage

Appendix I

Shared Cultural Heritage

The Netherlands has a rich history in which connections with other countries have played an important role. As a maritime trading nation, colonial ruler and a land of migrants and internationally renowned artists and architects, the Netherlands has left its traces all over the world. In a similar vein, other nations and cultures have also left their marks in the Netherlands. These traces can be identified as shared cultural heritage.

The Netherlands Government supports the sustainable preservation of shared cultural heritage through collaboration with partner countries within the framework of its International Cultural Policy, 2017-2020. The Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed or RCE) is one of the executing parties of this policy, alongside the Netherlands Embassies in our partner countries and other Dutch organizations.

The Cultural Heritage Agency

The Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands 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.

Through its Shared Cultural Heritage Program, the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands works towards a sustainable future for the shared past. The Agency achieves this by means of international collaborations and knowledge exchange by which it endeavors to create favorable conditions for the sustainable conservation of shared heritage in an ever-changing society.

The Shared Cultural Heritage Program of the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands relates to ten partner countries: Australia, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, Sri Lanka, Surinam, United States of America and South Africa. In these countries, the Cultural Heritage Agency offers and seeks expertise within the themes: Collections, Built Environment and Maritime Archaeology. Capacity building and knowledge exchange takes place through training, advice and tools like road maps, manuals, guidelines and catalogues.

Within the theme Collections, the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands is offering the training 'Sharing Stories on Contested Histories'.

Collections

The Netherlands has a wealth of expertise in the field of museum collection management and conservation. The Cultural Heritage Agency looks after the State art collection and conducts research and disseminates knowledge of the movable heritage. The Agency offers practical solutions and instruments for daily use, which are based on real-life issues and experience. In the projects as part of the Shared Cultural Heritage Program, the Cultural Heritage Agency seeks intensive cooperation with collection managers, universities and other partners both within and outside the Netherlands.

In its international collaborations, the Cultural Heritage Agency usually pairs up with other Dutch institutions. This widens the areas of expertise the Agency can offer to the partner countries and it also enhances its capacity. Within the theme Collections, the Agency works with, among others, the Reinwardt Academy. The Training 'Sharing Stories on Contested Histories' has been developed by the Reinwardt Academy in close cooperation with the Cultural Heritage Agency.

Reinwardt Academy

The Reinwardt Academy positions itself as the knowledge-, research-, and training center in cultural heritage. This higher vocational college (in Dutch: HBO) is located in Amsterdam and offers the only Bachelor program on Cultural Heritage available in the Netherlands, as well as a Masters program on Museology. 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.

Training 'Sharing Stories on Contested Histories'

Most museums have long-established roots in traditional museum learning (education) and exhibiting (presentation), which is offered in a well-designed environment (aesthetics). Yet, too often this leads to a single voiced grand narrative way of storytelling. However, museums have developed rapidly in the last few decades to stay relevant by becoming more inclusive, representative and participatory towards their public. These fashions of sharing cultural heritage and the therewith linked histories have been successfully tested but are not yet a common practice. The deconstruction of underlying institutionalized 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 questions: 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 play a socially relevant role by offering safe places for societal and social development. Places where a in a nontoxic and open way discussions and debates can take place: 'contact zones'. These concepts also apply to the subject matter of shared cultural heritage. In many cases these are disputed histories which require a dialogical and polyphonic approach. This training program therefore focuses on researching polyphonic storytelling and communicating heritage through multiple interpretation.

Set up

The training program proposes to set up an international working community of young and upcoming heritage professionals from the ten partner countries and the Netherlands. Using a case study from a Dutch museum, the participants of this course will try to come to new strategies of storytelling, where multiple points

of view are offered on problematic or contaminated histories and cultural heritage.

The training is very much case oriented and as such practical in approach. Basic literature will be provided in advance. The program consists of: practice-based lectures, discussions and talks, fieldtrips to museums, workshops and training sessions, self-study based on selected literature. Online alternatives for all the elements of the program are being developed to ensure the trainees will be able to participate fully, whether they are joining the team in person or online.

In short:

- Various lectures will offer both theoretical reflection as well as case-studies.
- Practical and immersive workshops will lead to deeper insight.
- Museum visits will offer exploration and reality checks.
- Individual presentations will offer opportunities of sharing ideas and opinions.
- Teamwork will offer a strong sense of co-creation.
- Literature will be provided for orientation and self-study.
- Questions addressed in this course are for example: How do visitors perceive museums and museum collections in exhibitions in relationship to contested histories/coloniality? How can we put visitors with a wide variety of culturally diverse backgrounds and their needs at the heart of our museum work? Which fresh methods of constructivist and empathic interpretation can we use to engage visitors in the multi perspective stories of museum collections?

Goals and objectives

The program focuses on three main learning goals:

1. Both from a practical as well as a theoretical point of view, participants are going to explore the relevancy of nowadays museums. As a strategy to overcome grid-locked discussions and polarized bubbles, constructivist and empathic multivocal storytelling will be explored. Tolerance and an open mind are needed during dialogues where mutual understanding is at stake, especially when it is concerning contested cultural heritage and connected histories.
2. Through activity-oriented assignments and workshops participants will experience the various concepts of exhibiting, storytelling, tour-guiding and educational program and as such will get a new and immersed understanding of this way of exploring museum collections and their stories.
3. Because we will be working as professionals amongst professionals there will be a constant flux of exchanging knowledge, ideas and concepts. As such a community of practice for peer-learning and co-creation will arise that is influential, beneficial for all involved and through the use of new media interconnected and sustainable.

Results/Outcomes

The training program is explorative in its nature, setting front-edge methods to get:

- a better understanding of exhibiting/storytelling with an emotional impact;
- a good understanding of constructivist learning and as such be able to offer open and multiple interpretation;
- a good understanding of concepts of empathy as a means to come to open-minded sharing ideas;
- a better idea of methods that enhance mutual tolerance through emotion networks;
- insight on how to develop multi-vocal exhibiting and storytelling.

Requirements of participants

The capacity of this training is limited to 11 upcoming museum professionals and 11 academics from (vocational) universities. The aim is to include 2 participants from each shared cultural heritage partner country, including the Netherlands. Participants of this workshop-based training are required to actively participate and work in teams to elaborate, share, criticize and develop various ideas, concepts and products. It is specifically meant for high-potentials and (pre) midcareer middle managers in museums who are actively working in the line of Education, Exhibition Development and Audience Development.

The program is also aiming for the participation of some practice-based academics in the professional and academic field. By connecting field practitioners with practical academics from the various partner countries, the training will offer a working model where the produced knowledge and gained insights will be embedded in a more sustainable manner. All academics in this program are required to be in an open-minded learning mode themselves.

The course will be conducted in English, attendees do need to have a good working understanding of the English language. A selection procedure will be part of this specific training program. See the letter for details.

Key-lecturers

Lecturers and guest-lecturers form the Reinwardt Academy, staff from the Cultural Heritage Agency, and staff from selected museums will be engaged into offering the program as well as the invited academics from the various partner countries. Museums with relevant collections and specific stories to tell will be part of the program.

Time investment

The course will take up to 10 working days, starting on Sunday 9 May and ending Friday 21 May. It is recommended that the Candidates that participate in person arrive May 8th to ensure attendance. The expected total workload of this two weeks training program will be 90+ hours. Each day will have at least two day-parts (morning and afternoon). Some days might have (both informal and formal) evening sessions as well. All in all, participants must take into account that during this training some evenings need to be used to study and also to work together as a team on the assignment.

The repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic will by all means impact the set-up of our training. However, it is difficult to predict the international measures that will apply in May 2021. Therefore, the ultimate decision on whether the training will take place in Amsterdam, whether it will be fully online, or to what extent it will be a blended program, will be made in January 2021. All prospective candidates will then be informed.