Legacies. Why Museum Histories Matter (Leiden, 13–15 Jan 26)

Leiden University, the Netherlands, Jan 13–15, 2026

Raphaël Gerssen

Legacies. Why Museum Histories Matter. A conference to explore the meaning of inheritance.'

In January 2026, Leiden University's Museum Lab hosts the international conference 'Legacies: Why Museum Histories Matter'. The conference reflects on museums with significant founding histories, broadly defined by their buildings, collections, commemorative functions, collectors or founders, that are currently engaged in some manner of institutional introspection, by way of exhibitions, acquisitions, restitutions, or renovations. International researchers and museum professionals from a range of institutions present their research and museum practices tied to museum legacies.

The three-day programme consists of twelve panels and four keynote speeches by Dr. Carole Paul (University of California, Santa Barbara), Monsignor Dr. Timothy Verdon (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence), Prof. Dr. Emile Schrijver (Jewish Cultural Quarter and National Holocaust Museum, Amsterdam), Prof. Dr. Andrew McClellan (Tufts University, Boston). Also see the full programme on our webpage.

To sign up for the conference, either for one or two days or for the full programme, please complete the registration form: https://fd24.formdesk.com/universiteitleiden/WhyMuseumHistoriesMatter

The number of spots for conference attendees is limited.

PROGRAMME
TUESDAY 13 JANUARY
9:00 – 9:30: Registration

9:30 – 9:50: Welcome and Introduction
• Welcome from Prof. Dr. Stijn Bussels, Academic Director LUCAS (Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society), NL

• Introduction from Dr. Laurie Kalb Cosmo, University Lecturer and Project Director, Museum Lab, Leiden University, NL

9:50 – 10:30
Keynote: Reflections on the History of the Public Art Museum
Dr. Carole Paul, Director of Museum Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, USA

10:30 – 11:00
Coffee Break

11:00 – 12:20
PANEL I – Monumental Legacies
Chair: Prof. Dr. Pieter ter Keurs, Emeritus, Leiden University, NL

• The Glyptotheque as a Site of Memory, Monumentality, and Transformation: Historical Identity and Contemporary Reflection of a Museum Institution in Croatia
Dr. Magdalena Getaldić, Glyptotheque of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, HR

• Obelisks and Totems: On Reframing Ethnographic Museums and Why Artistic Practice Matters
Irene Quarantini, Sapienza University, Rome, IT

• The Palatine Gallery: How Residents of the Pitti Palace Shaped Today's Museum
Ilya Markov, Leiden University, NL

12:20 – 13:20
Lunch (independently)

13:20 – 14:40
PANEL II – Reshaping Legacies: Italian Museums
Chair: Dr. Irene Baldriga, Sapienza University, IT

• Reshaping the Oldest Italian National Museum
Dr. Paola D'Agostino, Musei Reali Torino, IT

• Legacies Now: The Renewal of Institutional Inheritances at Five Museums in Rome
Dr. Laurie Kalb Cosmo, Leiden University, NL

• Two Centuries of Legacy, One Decade of Inclusion. Political Backlash and Strategic Reframing of Outreach at the Museo Egizio
Dr. Costanza Paolillo, New York University, USA

14:40 – 16:00
PANEL III – Founders' Legacies
Chair: Dr. Susanne Boersma, Leiden University, NL

• The Long Shadow of the Founder. Hero-Worship and the Construction of Continuity for a 'National Museum'
Dr. Joachim Berger and Darja Jesse, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, DE

• National Gallery in Prague throughout the 20th Century: The Case of the Morawetz Collection
Lucie Němečková, Documentation Centre for Property Transfers of the Cultural Assets of WWII Victims, Prague, CZ

• Leache & Wood: Rediscovering the Chrysler Museum's Lost Founders
Dr. Mia Laufer and Drew Lusher, Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, USA

16:00 – 16:30
Tea Break

16:30 – 17:50
PANEL IV – Unseen Legacies: Belgian Museum Buildings
Chair: Annemarie de Wildt, Former Curator at the Amsterdam Museum, Board Member of CAMOC, ICOM

• Inherited Workspaces: Rethinking Creative Practice at the Constantin Meunier Museum
Dr. Ulrike Müller, University of Antwerp/Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, BE

• Haunted Halls: Reclaiming Hidden Histories of the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels
Dr. Gerrit Verhoeven, University of Antwerp/Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels, BE

• Between Immersion and Reflection. Old Antwerp and Museum Mayer van den Bergh Performing the Past
Prof. Dr. Stijn Bussels, Leiden University, NL, and Prof. Dr. Bram van Oostveldt, Ghent University, BE

17:50 – 18:00
Day Closing
By Dr. Laurie Kalb Cosmo, Leiden University, NL

WEDNESDAY 14 JANUARY
9:00 – 9:10
Introduction
By Dr. Laurie Kalb Cosmo, Leiden University, NL

9:10 – 9:50
Keynote: Legacies – Gifts of Love, Sacred Trusts, Investments
Monsignor Dr. Timothy Verdon, Director of the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo/Museum of the Workshop of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence, IT

9:50 – 10:30
Keynote: Developing and Opening Amsterdam's National Holocaust Museum in a Politicized Era – Curatorial Challenges and Critical Choices
Prof. Dr. Emile Schrijver, Director of the Jewish Cultural Quarter and National Holocaust Museum, Amsterdam, NL

10:30 – 11:00
Coffee Break

11:00 – 12:20
PANEL V – Revealing Histories and Reclaiming Heritage
Chair: Dr. Laurie Kalb Cosmo, Leiden University, NL

• 'My Heritage - Your Heritage?!' Places of Jewish Heritage in Germany
Prof. Dr. Christiane Dätsch, Merseburg University of Applied Sciences, DE

• POLIN Museum i Warsaw: A Place Where Memory Meets Responsibility
Joanna Fikus, POLIN, Warsaw, PL

• How to Celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Museum Rietberg? Reflections on Researching and Curating the Institution's History
Esther Tisa Francini, Museum Rietberg, Zurich, CH

12:20 – 13:20
Lunch (independently)

13:20 – 14:40
PANEL VI – Eastern Europe: War and Recuperation
Chair: Dr. Seraina Renz, Leiden University, NL

• UNESCO and Museum Diplomacy: Geographies and Balances of Cultural Policy during the Cold War
Dr. Irene Baldriga, Sapienza University, Rome, IT

• Cultural Losses of Museums. The Polish Respond to World War II
Dr. Bartłomiej Sierzputowski and Elżbieta Przyłuska, Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Warsaw, PL

14:40 – 16:00
PANEL VII – Eastern Europe: (Post-)socialist Museums
Chair: Dr. Seraina Renz, Leiden University, NL

• Shaping the Contemporary Art Museum Identity through its Complex Heritage. The Example of the Museum of Fine Arts in Split, Croatia
Jasminka Babić, Museum of Fine Arts, Split, and Prof. Dr. Dalibor Prančević, University of Split, HR

• Collecting to Forget: The Legacy of the Museum of Atheism in Vilnius
Karolina Bukovskytė, Lithuanian Culture Research Institute/National Museum of Lithuania, Vilnius, LT

• Whose Ethnography? Ethnographic Collections and Museums in Central Europe
Dr. Marika Keblusek, Leiden University, NL

16:00 – 16:30
Tea Break

16:30 – 17:50
PANEL VIII – Revisiting Institutional Narratives
Chair: Prof. Dr. Wonu Veys, Leiden University/Wereldmuseum, NL

• The Imperial Gaze Materialised: The Ten Thousand Chinese Things Museum as Archive Yuansheng Luo, KU Leuven, BE

• Museum Histories in a Postcolonial Age: Collecting and Curating Netherlandish Art Legacies in the Global South

Dr. Laia Anguix-Vilches, Utrecht University, NL

• “You’re usually wrong”: Looking Back at the Anti-racism of the Past at One Museum
Dr. Deirdre Madeleine Smith, University of Pittsburgh/Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh, USA

17:50 – 18:00
Day Closing
By Dr. Susanne Boersma, Leiden University, NL

THURSDAY 15 JANUARY
9:00 – 10:20
PANEL IX – Modernist Legacies in the Americas
Chair: Dr. Stephanie Noach, Leiden University, NL

• Lourival Gomes Machado and the Legacy of a Certain Brazilian Modernism at MAM-SP
Dr. Ana Avelar, University of Brasília, BR

• Legitimating Modernism: Art History and the Formation of Museum Authority in the United States
Dr. Laura Braden, Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL

• (Re)Making the San Francisco Museum of Art Modern
Dr. Berit Potter, California State Polytechnic University Humboldt, Arcata, USA

10:20 – 10:50
Coffee Break

10:50 – 12:10
PANEL X – Crafts and Material Legacies
Chair: Dr. Lieske Huits, Leiden University, NL

• Donating Lace and Knowledge: Women and Early 20th-Century Historic Lace Acquisitions in the Belgian Royal Museums for Art and History
Julie Landuyt, Ghent University/Free University of Brussels, BE

• Crafts’ Networks and the National Museum of Capodimonte in Naples
Francesco Montuori, European University Institute, Florence, IT

• Preserving Heritage through Museums: The Case of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq
Chang Farhan Tahir, University of Duhok, IQ-KR

12:10 – 13:30
Lunch (independently)

13:30 – 14:50
PANEL XI – Colonial Legacies
Chair: Prof. Dr. Wonu Veys, Leiden University/Wereldmuseum, NL

• Founding Myths and Colonial Entanglements: The Japan Folk Crafts Museum and the Politics of Mingei
Anna Stewart-Yates, University of Oxford, UK

• A Forgotten History: The Former Colonial Collection of the Royal Museums of Art and History, Belgium
Anke Hellebuyck, University of Antwerp, BE

• Rethinking Narratives: The “Animals of Africa” in Bern
Sarah Csernay, Nordamerica Native Museum, Zurich, CH

14:50 – 16:10
PANEL XII – Prominent Figures and Entangled Histories
Chair: Dr. Susanne Boersma, Leiden University, NL

• A Contested Museum History: Scenography and the Placement of the Islamic Collection at the Berlin Museums
Dr. Zehra Tonbul, Ozyegin University, Istanbul, TR

• Entangled Objects and Memory Sites in the Museum: Re-imagining the ‘Modern’ Collection
Prof. Dr. Juliet Simpson, Coventry University, UK

• The Museum as a Battleground: Political Art at the Israel Museum, 1967-1977 Meital Raz, University of Amsterdam, NL

16:10 – 16:40
Tea Break

16:40 – 16:45
Introduction to Keynote
By Dr. Marika Keblusek, Leiden University, NL

16:45 – 17:25
Keynote: The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1909 – Towards a Machine for Looking
Prof. Dr. Andrew McClellan, Tufts University, Boston, USA

17:25 – 17:45
Closing Remarks
By Dr. Marika Keblusek, Leiden University, NL

Reference:
CONF: Legacies. Why Museum Histories Matter (Leiden, 13-15 Jan 26). In: ArtHist.net, Dec 3, 2025 (accessed Nov 17, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/51281>.