Beyond the Museum’s Ruins (online/Haarlem, 29-30 Oct 27)

Teylers Museum, Haarlem / Online, Oct 29–30, 2027
Deadline: Feb 1, 2027

Terry van Druten

Beyond the Museum’s Ruins. Power, Politics, and Institutional Practices within a Global Context.

At least since the 1960s, with the emergence of institutional and postcolonial critique and the ongoing reassessment of (art) history in a global context, museums have been called upon to reflect critically on their roles, collections, and methodologies. These developments have not only expanded the scope of museum practice, but have also exposed the extent to which museums are embedded in broader systems of knowledge production and power. In this sense, as Douglas Crimp articulated in his pivotal essay On the Museum's Ruins (1979), the museum is neither a neutral space nor a universal repository of culture, but an institution shaped by ideological and representational structures.

More recent debates reflect ongoing attempts to reformulate the role of museums in relation to diverse communities and global histories. Yet such efforts also raise questions about the limits of institutional change, particularly in a moment in which museums are increasingly drawn into political and national frameworks. While many Western institutions have adopted strategies of diversification and decolonization, debates over the structural entanglement of museums with colonial legacies have themselves become increasingly contested.

Parallel to these developments, museums in other geopolitical contexts – particularly in Latin America, East and Southeast Asia, and the Gulf region – have evolved along distinct historical, political, and institutional trajectories, giving rise to new conceptions of the museum, its public role, and its relationship to power. This raises urgent questions: what does it mean to be a museum within a global society while responding to local conditions? How should we understand the museum's role as a site where power, ideology, and knowledge production are negotiated? And how might museums critically engage with these dynamics while remaining embedded within them?

This Call for Papers invites contributions that critically engage with the theoretical and practical implications of the questions outlined above, addressing both historical and contemporary concepts and practices of the museum. Of particular interest are reflections that examine the museum as a site of tension – between public responsibility and political pressure, between global frameworks and local realities.
We welcome contributions from both scholars and museum professionals employing intersectional, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches. Possible topics include, but are not limited

to:

- Perspectives that challenge established (art) historical and museological narratives, and propose new connections between global histories, concepts, and practices of the museum;
- Critical reflections on the ideological structures of museums within national and global frameworks (e.g. in relation to Crimp's essay);
- Case studies of emancipatory, democratizing, or decolonizing museum practices;
- Alternative museological models, both historical and contemporary, including collection-building strategies and heritage practices within and beyond the West;
- Comparative analyses of museum methodologies across cultural and historical contexts;
- Assessments of the role and impact of global museum expansions and franchises, as well as emerging museum practices in Latin America, East and Southeast Asia, the Gulf Region, and beyond;
- Inquiries into gender, race, ethnicity, and intersectionality within museum contexts.

The papers selected through this Call will form the core program of the symposium. The event will also feature international keynote lectures by leading experts in the field (to be announced).

Submission Guidelines & Timeline
Submissions should include an abstract of max. 300 words and a short biographical note of max. 150 words.
Selected speakers will be allocated 20 minutes for their presentation, followed by a Q&A session.
To ensure the high quality of the sessions selected speakers will be required to submit a short working paper ahead of the symposium. These drafts will be shared among the panel members to stimulate in-depth discussion.
Following the symposium, selected authors will be invited to expand their contributions into full chapters for a peer-reviewed international edited volume.

Important Dates:
- 1 February 2027: Deadline for the submission of abstracts.
- 15 March 2027: Notification of acceptance and selection results.
- 1 August 2027: Deadline for the submission of short working papers / drafts (approx. 2,500 words).
- 29-30 October 2027: Symposium at Teylers Museum, Haarlem (hybrid format).
- 15 January 2028: Deadline for the submission of final, full book chapters (incorporating conference feedback).

Please send your abstract and bio in a single Word document to: symposium@teylersmuseum.nl with the subject line "Submission: Beyond the Museum's Ruins Symposium 2027".

Organizing Committee:
- Nathalie Zonnenberg, Open University (Assistant professor, Faculty of Humanities)
- Terry van Druten, Teylers Museum (Head of Art Collections)
- Rachel Esner, Research School for Art History (Director)

Scientific Committee:
- Pieter de Bruijn, Open Universiteit

- Caroline Drieënhuizen, Open Universiteit
- Laetitia Lai, Open Universiteit
- Trienke van der Spek, Teylers Museum

Reference:

CFP: Beyond the Museum’s Ruins (online/Haarlem, 29-30 Oct 27). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 22, 2026 (accessed Nov 10, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54332>.