Kunstlicht Vol. 48, No. 1/2: Reframing Dutch Caribbean Art History

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Kunstlicht Vol. 48, No. 1/2: Reframing Dutch Caribbean Art History: Representation, Memory, and Decolonial Imaginaries.

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We are excited to present our open call for the first issue of 2027 under the title of 'Reframing Dutch Caribbean Art History: Representation, Memory and Decolonial Imaginaries' co-edited by curators Lusette Verboom and Josée Thissen.
The representation of Dutch Caribbean art in the Netherlands remains shaped by marginalised, preconceived and colonial frameworks. Visual art from the Dutch Caribbean islands is often overlooked or reduced to stereotypes, while institutions in the former colonising country engage only selectively with Caribbean narratives. The Caribbean has its own perspectives about its place in the transatlantic past and present. Within these narratives, visual art functions as an archive in its own right, preserving memories and perspectives that conventional historical accounts have often marginalised or overlooked.

As guest curators working from within the islands, we believe that Dutch Caribbean artists, curators, researchers and cultural institutions must make their work visible, bring their narratives to wider attention and claim space for creators whose practices have developed through the distinct yet interconnected cultures of our islands.

In the last decade, Caribbean-based artists have increasingly adopted critical perspectives that rethink and reimagine history, politics and aesthetics. Their work reveals particular ways of seeing reality and is able to transform how Caribbean communities understand and interpret their own conditions. It cannot be confined to conventional European art-historical frameworks because it emerges from different historical, cultural and aesthetic conditions. Through this artistic practice, the Dutch Caribbean contribute to the field of Global Caribbean Art History, in which memory remains an active part of the present.
For instance, aesthetic visions shaped by spirituality are rooted differently in Caribbean imaginaries than in Western aesthetic traditions. It requires a different interpretation, grounded in our own cultural and historical interpretations. The content of this art cannot be linked to a single national history. Its roots lie partly in the transatlantic past, while its forms and meanings have

also developed through layered colonial experiences and the interactions among the different peoples who came to inhabit our islands and continuing patterns of transmigration.

Dutch Caribbean artworks are created both alongside and in resistance to colonial histories and continuing colonising assumptions. They articulate narratives grounded in Caribbean experiences rather than in externally imposed categories. A close reading shows that these artworks may bear the marks of slavery, colonialism and capitalism, expressing resistance, imagination and agency, without being reduced to race-based affiliations. These intersecting forces are rooted in the region's colonial experiences.

For this issue of Kunstlicht, we are interested in examining traces of postcolonial rupture in the work of Dutch Caribbean visual artists, by bringing together historical, ethnographic and aesthetic perspectives emerging from local practices and strategies. A central question is whether the semi-independence established through the 1954 “Statuten” for the Kingdom of the Netherlands fulfilled the promises envisioned for the islands and whether its effects can be seen in visual artistic representation. We further seek contributions that ask how artists reimagine the presentation and perception of this history through a contemporary and decolonial lens. We welcome contributions on the following topics, as well as related questions: How can we interrogate the mechanisms through which power, privilege and violence become accepted or normalised within our communities and visual idioms? How—and within what limits—should we distinguish between art made by white and Black artists? How do the different positions of white Caribbean and white European artists shape their access to privilege within the Dutch Caribbean art worlds? To what extent does economic power affect that position, particularly when artists may be situated within histories of both colonisation and colonial privilege?

A closer examination of Caribbean visual art reveals the power of narrative. Can Caribbean art broadly, and Dutch Caribbean art specifically, be understood as creating new imaginaries at the intersections of race, history, social and cultural reference?

Through this issue, we seek not only to reclaim our histories but also to articulate a Caribbean-centred canon—one grounded in our own histories, cultural and aesthetic traditions rather than in externally imposed frameworks.

We invite scholars, writers, artists, and creative or cultural practitioners to submit contributions in the form of academic articles, reviews, interviews, visual works, hybrid essays, poems, and any other form that is fitting for the theme and the A5-format journal. We encourage contributors from all stages of their (research) practice to respond to the call for papers. We look forward to receiving your submissions, together with your CV or portfolio, by no later than November 12, 2026. For academic articles and written pieces, we invite you to submit an abstract of not more than 300 words. For visual or other experimental formats, we invite you to submit a proposal that does not exceed 1 A4 page. You can send your proposed contribution to redactie@tijdschriftkunstlicht.nl using “Reframing Dutch Caribbean Art History” as the subject line. All writers and contributors will be notified about the selection process before the end of the month. The issue will be published between May and June of 2027.

Kunstlicht is a volunteer-run academic journal and is not able to provide an author’s honorarium. Each contributor receives two free copies of the issue. Two – five years following publication,

papers will be submitted to the freely accessible online archive.

Lusette Verboom, Curator & researcher
Josee Thissen, Art historian

Reference:
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