



Reinwardt Academy
Amsterdam University of the Arts

Hortusplantsoen 2 • 1908 TZ Amsterdam • The Netherlands

UNESCO Chair on Museum Collections, Repatriation and Interculturality

In 2025 the Reinwardt Academy has been awarded a UNESCO Chair on Museum Collections, Repatriation and Interculturality. The Chair focuses on research, education, and public engagement related to cultural heritage from colonial contexts, with special attention to museums.

International collaboration and knowledge exchange are central to this. The Chair fosters dialogue among heritage professionals worldwide – between Europe and Asia, Africa, and South America, as well as within those regions. As a connecting link between UNESCO, museums, and communities in countries of origin, the Chair contributes to the broader effort to decolonize museums. This involves a critical rethinking of Eurocentric perspectives and colonial structures, with the aim of making exhibitions and collections more inclusive – in the global North and the global South.

The discussion around the return and restitution of museum collections from the colonial era has gained momentum in recent years. More and more European countries are developing policies in this area and are returning heritage to the communities that created it. The Chair does not focus solely on physical objects, but also on intangible heritage – such as songs and Indigenous knowledge – that has been altered by colonial presence.



A UNESCO Chair is a university-based programme that promotes international inter-university cooperation and networking. It advances research, training, and programme development in higher education. It is a formal partnership between UNESCO and a research institution, where that institution commits to working on a specific area of expertise that aligns with UNESCO's goals.



Key Objectives

1. Investigating colonial and contested heritage and museum collections from international and multivocal perspectives
2. Education and training of current and future professionals in inclusive and international heritage practices
3. Promoting international dialogue on colonial and contested heritage



Team

- Chairholder: Dr. Mirjam Shatanawi (Colonial Collections)
- Dr. Csilla Ariese (Museology, Archaeology)
- Martín Andrade-Pérez (Intangible Cultural Heritage)
- Ruben Smit (Heritage Education)
- Britt-Marie Van der Drift (History, Caribbean)



Activities

Between 2025 and 2029, the Chair will pursue its goals through a broad approach involving the general public, students, and academics. Public events and (academic) publications will contribute to broader awareness. The training of heritage professionals will also be a key focus, emphasizing the identification, tracing, and management of colonial heritage.

- Research and academic publications
- Higher education courses and course development
- Training for museum/heritage professionals
- Knowledge exchange for young professionals
- Public engagement through seminars, lectures, workshops, and public events

Join us for
the official launch
on 20:00 November 13,
2025 with a keynote by
UNESCO Chairholder
Dr. Mirjam
Shatanawi.

Contact
us for general
inquiries about the
Chair and possible
collaborations.

RWA-Research@ahk.nl



Initial Partnerships

- La Fondation Nationale des Musées, Morocco
- Kemenbud (Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Indonesia)
- Rijksdienst voor Cultureel Erfgoed, The Netherlands
- Anton de Kom University, Suriname
- Surinaams Museum, Suriname
- Moslim Archief, The Netherlands



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