

MUSEUMS AND INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE: INSPIRING EXAMPLES

In this booklet you will find information on diverse types of collaborations that took place between museums and practitioners of intangible cultural heritage, with an eye on passing this heritage on to the future. The examples cover topics such as education, contemporary collecting, capacity building, documentation, research, and so on.

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Museum: Museum Hof van Busleyden

Location: Mechelen, Belgium

Project name: A contemporary city museum

Keywords: participation, intangible heritage communities

The Museum Hof van Busleyden is the result of a five-year comprehensive thought process in search of a new, inclusive, and widely supported new city museum of Mechelen. It was opened to the public in 2018 in a symbolic, historic palatial townhouse. It centers around the history, people and activities of Mechelen at the height of the Burgundian Netherlands era. Today, participation continues to be at the core of the museum's practice, and runs as a transversal line through all aspects of its current operations. Because of this active community involvement, intangible cultural heritage is a central feature of the Museum Hof van Busleyden. The museum regards the evolution of both the collection and its policy as an outcome of ongoing dialogue with the city's different communities that cherish and wish to safeguard this heritage.

An example of this approach are the participatory spaces in the museum's permanent exhibition rooms. Various Mechelen-based heritage practitioners and organisations are asked to present themselves and their ties to the city, such as a lace bobbin society and a local puppeteer. Their representation embedded in the historical collection functions as an actualisation of past city life that can be explored in the surrounding museum rooms, starting from the premise that the history of the city only becomes meaningful in its connections with current practitioners and audiences. Through these collaborations, the Museum Hof van Busleyden also fulfills an important safeguarding function for intangible cultural heritage that may be at risk.



© Museum Hof van Busleyden

Museum: Museo Internazionale delle Marionette Antonio Pasqualino

Location: Palermo, Sicily, Italy

Project name: A performance museum

Keywords: intangible heritage communities, participation

The Antonio Pasqualino International Puppet Museum was founded in 1975, under the umbrella of the Association for the Conservation of Folk Traditions. From the start, the museum has focused its collection on the preservation of Sicilian folk traditions, following social and economic transformations that threatened the safeguarding of traditional Sicilian puppet theatre, or *Opera dei Pupi*. This tradition is now the core subject of the museum, and is part of a collection of around 5000 marionettes, marottes, hand puppets, shadow puppets, theatrical machines and playbills from around the world. The active engagement of the International Puppet Museum in the preservation and promotion of folk traditions has led to the inclusion of *Opera dei Pupi* on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008.

The museum combines more traditional museological activities with a variety of practical and outreach initiatives on puppet theatre, aimed at increasing knowledge of this tradition and safeguarding it for future generations. These include organising educational activities such as workshops, conferences, seminars, and festivals such as the annual *Festival di Morgana*, and managing the Giuseppe Leggio Library and a multimedia archive. Close collaboration with practitioners of traditional Sicilian puppet theatre is a core feature of all these activities. Moreover, the museum brings the *Opera dei Pupi* alive by facilitating a programme of theatrical productions of new shows. Contemporary artworks created for these shows, such as set designs, puppets and theatrical machines, are subsequently added to the collection.



© Museo Internazionale delle Marionette Antonio Pasqualino

Museum: NAVIGO – Nationaal Visserijmuseum Oostduinkerke

Location: Oostduinkerke, Belgium

Project name: Shrimp fishing on horseback

Keywords: intangible heritage communities, participation

The National Fisheries Museum is located on the coast of the Belgian North Sea, and reopened with new buildings and exhibitions in 2008. It displays the history of the fishing industry and displays objects and artefacts relating to this practice: an original pre-World War II fishing boat, an aquarium, and paintings depicting historic fishing in general, and the local tradition of shrimp fishing on horseback in particular. This tradition was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2013. The craft of shrimp fishing is on display at the beaches of Oostduinkerke during the summer season, but is also actively integrated in the museum. Shrimp fishermen give workshops to children, and guided tours sometimes start on the beach and end in the museum.

During the years preceding the inscription of shrimp fishing on UNESCO's Representative List, the museum mostly functioned as a facilitator for bringing the different elements of this ICH practice together. The recognition of shrimp fishing in 2013 led to a renewed interest, as well as a number of requests from individuals wishing to become shrimp fishers themselves. To accommodate these developments, NAVIGO established a safeguarding committee, which gave rise to a co-creative project with the museum, the shrimp fishers, and the organisation Workshop intangible heritage Flanders. Through interviews with the fishers and questionnaires for the audience, the collection increasingly came to life, and interactive spaces emerged. Throughout this process, NAVIGO grew more and more into its current role as a community centre.



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Museum: Castello d'Albertis – Museo delle Culture del Mondo

Location: Genoa, Italy

Project name: Behind the glass they become objects

Keywords: intangible heritage communities, capacity building

In ethnographic collections from indigenous people in Africa, the Americas and Oceania, such as the one housed in Castello d'Albertis, intangible cultural heritage has always gone hand in hand with the object itself. Material culture and tangible objects are perceived as the embodiment of knowledge, of know-how, of rituals and performances, where objects stand as processes rather than a result per se. The museum continuously emphasises these connections through exhibitions, projects and workshops, reconnecting the collections with the artisanship they incorporate through videos, storytelling, and explanations of what lies behind the glass.

Over time, the Museo delle Culture del Mondo has developed a new attitude and understanding, based on responsibility and respect for

native communities and their cultures. To acknowledge their voices, both non-European and local migrant communities are actively included as cultural mediators in the work of the museum, such as in the development of exhibitions, through storytelling about specific artefacts, and the organisation of cultural programmes. This strategy combats stereotypes, prevents sacred or religious objects from being trivialised, and validates the beliefs and practices of native groups as central in the presentation of museum artefacts. In addition, the museum staff invited native specialists such as Hopi Native Americans to the museum, and actively engaged in fieldwork explorations of intangible aspects of their objects, such as creating feather headdresses among the Bororo in the Brazilian rainforest.



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Museum: Museum Rotterdam

Location: Rotterdam, the Netherlands

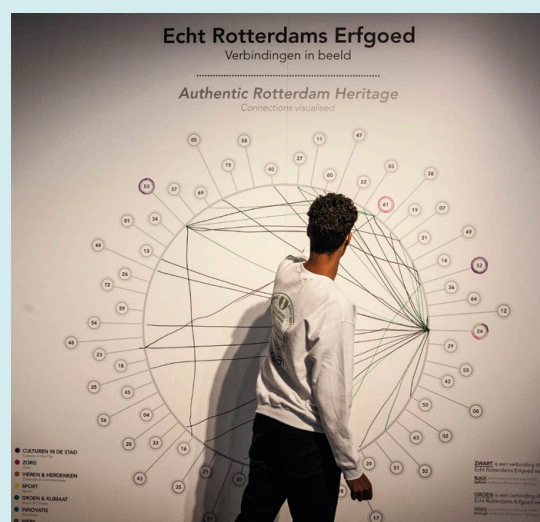
Project name: The Active Collection Centre: Authentic Rotterdam Heritage

Keywords: diversity, contemporary collecting

The Museum Rotterdam was founded in 1953 as the Historic Museum, by a bourgeois elite that wanted to educate Rotterdam's growing working class population that was attracted by the development of the city as a transit port. As of 2011, the museum is known as the Museum Rotterdam, to reflect its changing aims and ambitions. The contemporary superdiverse city, and not the past, has become central to the Museum's policies. At the beginning of 2016, the museum opened its new location in the historical heart of the city, adjacent to City Hall. Here, the story of Rotterdam – a city with a young heart and an old soul – is recounted in new ways.

Rotterdam's superdiverse cultural composition is one of the city's main challenges today. The stories and heritage of its inhabitants are one of the most defining characteristics of the city, and thus also of the museum. Within the Active Collection Centre, residents are invited to explore the contemporary heritage of the city and to create increased communication among citizens, using tools from urban anthropology. The term 'Active Collection' refers to heritage that is still functioning in the city, and the ongoing generation of meaning around this heritage.

In order to accomplish this task, the museum started to use storytelling as a tool for building 'bridges' of communication between its people. Personal experiences of diverse Rotterdammers, their stories, memories and feelings became an important tool, and living heritage became a thread connecting the social fabric of Rotterdam. Communities are thus not only the carriers of particular cultures and traditions, but are also co-creators and co-participants of the museum.



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Museum: Casa Lussu – Sistema Museale Armungia

Location: Armungia, Sardinia, Italy

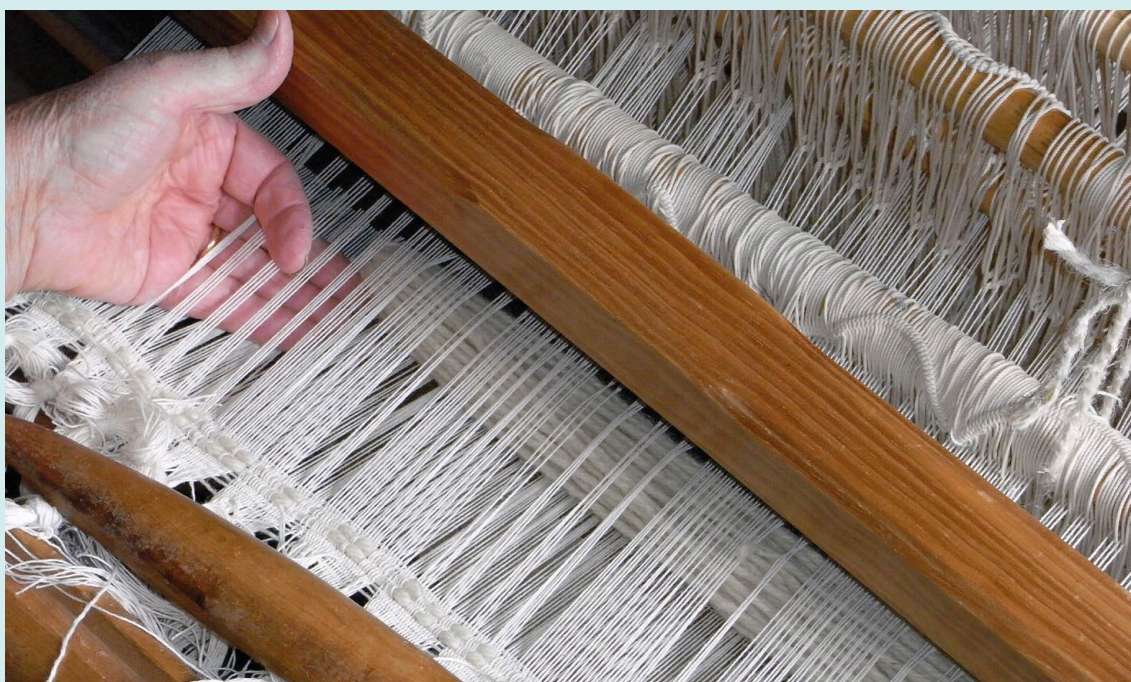
Project: Un caffè ad Armungia

Keywords: intangible heritage communities, sustainability

The Casa Lussu Association was founded by Tommaso Lussu and Barbara Candia in Armungia, in order to safeguard and promote the traditional craft of weaving on horizontal wooden handlooms. On a daily basis they study and research the production of textile fabrics (especially rugs), while also organising seminars, workshops, training courses and open days on handweaving and natural yarn dyeing. The Association has also produced a second working group on agrobiodiversity, and has combined these two fields by, for example, exploring the use of herbs for dyeing yarn. In order to make connections with the present, Casa Lussu has been re-interpreting traditional methods and decorative motifs, for example by applying a new sense of design and increased scientific knowledge, and by reaching out to other international production methods such as the Finnish handloom. In addition, the Association collaborates with graphic artists, other

craftspeople and the local community in order to take their own craft beyond the medium of textile.

Many of Casa Lussu's activities take place within the Armungia Municipality Ethnographic Museum. Since 2016 the Festival *Un Caffè ad Armungia* also takes place. The collaboration of the Association and the Museum sees local communities, associations, territorial operators and researchers meet in Armungia to discuss and formulate strategies towards the rebirth of small villages. The common idea behind this networking project is the resistance against depopulation and enhancing the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of territories. Following the 2003 Convention and the FARO 2005 Convention, intangible cultural heritage can be a strong force in the revival of small communities and more isolated, mountainous villages.



© Casa Lussu

Museum: Ecomusée du Val-De-Bièvre

Location: Fresnes, France

Project name: Windows on gardens

Keywords: contemporary collecting, intangible heritage communities

The Ecomusée du Val-de-Bièvre is committed to transmitting and promoting suburban heritage in and around Fresnes. The museum works with local residents to develop temporary exhibitions, based on researching and collecting objects and testimonies. These testimonies, often gathered through surveys and interviews, lead to increased knowledge of the territory for the museum.

They are recorded in the archives of the museum, and are integrated in the exhibitions by means of written excerpts. This method of participatory collecting is at the core of the Ecomusée, and allows for continuously experimenting with new forms of appropriation of the territory. The local inhabitants are regarded as custodians of knowledge and culture, and objects are valued for their contributions to a common history and heritage.



In 2019 and 2020, the Ecomusée du Val-de-Bièvre focuses on the particular suburban aspect of gardens, and especially their intangible cultural heritage dimension. Gardens can vary from bigger individual gardens to allotments and shared gardens. The exhibition explores the feelings inhabitants have towards their gardens and the idea of sharing them, by means of surveys, interviews, and the establishment of a collaborative herbarium. This collection gathers plants chosen by gardeners as representative of their plots, registering aspects such as their names for the plants and their particular interest in them. In addition, the Ecomusée collects and maps the emotional ties gardeners have to objects such as gnomes and wheelbarrows as garden decoration.

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Museum: Amsterdam Museum

Location: Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Project name: Conservation and restoration of intangible cultural heritage-related objects

Keywords: conservation, capacity building

The collection and activities of the Amsterdam Museum reflect many different areas of intangible cultural heritage. The museum often works with oral traditions and language, such as social interactions and conversations in neighbourhood shops, and the inclusion of foreign words in Dutch street language. Personal testimonies and interviews are often included in exhibitions, and the museum also runs the interactive website *Geheugen van Amsterdam* (Memory of Amsterdam), where the inhabitants of the city can share stories and memories. In addition, the museum also explores socio- historical subjects such as slavery, has investigated ritualised interaction such as football as a new religion, and takes a stance in contemporary discussions such as the Black Pete debate.

In order to preserve its material aspects of intangible cultural heritage, the Museum employs restorers that are trained in a variety of crafts. Occasionally the museum's restorers work with craftspeople and practitioners from outside the museum who can offer specialised skills and knowledge about specific objects, such as clockmakers, ceramists and cabinet makers. These current collaborations mark a change from earlier decades, when craftspeople were often reluctant to share their knowledge with outsiders, such as museum staff. The Amsterdam Museum continuously embarks upon new projects, such as the 2019 restoration of a street organ. New cooperative and communicative interactions between the restorers and outside craftspeople are ongoing, in line with the general openness of the Amsterdam Museum to working closely with the inhabitants of the city.



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Collaboration: Musée du Lötschental, Université de Neuchâtel & Universität Basel

Location: Neuchâtel, Switzerland

Project name: In the Valley of Images

Keywords: documentation, research and study



© Grégoire Mayor

The Musée d'ethnographie de Neuchâtel (MEN) was established in 1904 and in the historical tradition of European ethnographic museums, combines a cabinet of curiosities with artistic collections from non-Western regions of the world. In 2006 Grégoire Mayor, curator of the Musée d'Ethnographie, initiated and ran a video project on the tradition of mask carving for *Tschäggättä*, a traditional custom during the carnival week in Lötschental, in collaboration with the Musée du Lötschental, Université de Neuchâtel, and Universität Basel. The project consisted of documenting and archiving, through the medium of film, discourses and practices around mask carving and carnival traditions. In order to gain a temporal perspective on the evolution of these traditions

and to assess the impact of tourism, performances were filmed over the course of a decade.

During the process of filming, collaborations were developed with practitioners of mask carving and mask bearing, with the Museum of Lötschental, and with a craftsman who developed a scenographical presentation of the *Tschäggättä* for the museum. Interviews with carvers discussing sometimes conflictual aspects of the aesthetic of the masks lead to the establishment of a reflexive archive. Over the course of the project several issues occurred, such as having to make decisions for editing the video material that did not essentialise the tradition of mask carving and carnival, but instead reflected its complexity and dynamics.

Museum: Stadsmuseum Lier

Location: Lier, Belgium

Project name: Traditional lace-making (Lierse Kant)

Keywords: intangible heritage communities, documentation

The Stadsmuseum Lier opened its doors to the public in 2018. Intangible cultural heritage is a central feature of its practice, and the integration of this heritage in the collection occurs in close, participatory collaboration with practitioners and heritage communities. Choosing particular heritage practices to be integrated in the museum often stems from the needs of the collection, i.e. the identification of subjects or themes that are not yet part of the museum's set-up, but of importance to the city. The integration of a new heritage practice thus also goes hand in hand with mapping, documenting and managing information about the practice.



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The local tradition of lace embroidery (Lierse Kant) is now part of the permanent collection. At the beginning of the 20th century this embroidery was a booming industry. A lot of local manufacturers provided women with paid assignments. These women took the designs and materials to their homes in order to craft the embroidery. Since the Stadsmuseum only had a few objects related to this craft, and even less information, a collection and documentation process was initiated. To increase knowledge of the industry, the museum facilitated several days on which people, mostly descendants of former manufacturers, presented themselves to share their materials and stories. Afterwards, the museum made video portraits of the different embroidery communities that are still active in this heritage practice. The way people handle their craft objects is very specific and symbolises their relationship with lace embroidery. These videos are available in the permanent exhibition by means of a touch-screen, alongside a practical display where visitors can try their hand at embroidery themselves.

Museum: Fédération des Ecomusées et des Musées de Société

Location: travelling exhibition, France

Project name: *Sortons des clichés!*

Keywords: intangible heritage communities, awareness raising

The Fédération des Ecomusées et Musées de Société (FEMS) unites innovative non-profit heritage institutions that focus on social topics, the solidarity economy, and local development. The network specifically federates museums that place humans and their territory at the centre of their activities, with subjects such as the evolution of rural communities, urban cultures, sustainable development, et cetera. Many of these museums are closely aligned with an ethnographic approach to their subject matter. At the same time, the 2003 Convention has redefined roles and balances in the heritage field, leading to local populations and museum visitors to be increasingly regarded as active agents, rather than merely vis-

itors or spectators to existing collections. In 2011 FEMS initiated the travelling exhibition *Sortons des clichés!* to explore to a greater extent these ongoing dynamics of living cultural expressions, memory and transmission in the museums that are part of the network. Two photographers, Jean-Christophe Bardot and Olivier Pasquiers, were commissioned to realise a photographic series on themes suggested by members of the Fédération. The project has a documentary ambition, but also aims at producing a sensitive and distanced interpretation, which is neither the museum discourse nor that of the communities concerned. It is a space where different points of view on the intangible cultural heritage can meet and gain in reflexivity.



© Olivier Pasquiers

Museum: Musée gruérien

Location: Bulle, Switzerland

Project name: *La vie en ville/Lebendige Stadt*

Keywords: intangible heritage communities, awareness raising

The Musée gruérien has been studying and exhibiting the heritage of the Swiss district of Gruyère since 1917. Since 2012, the permanent exhibition *La Gruyère – itinéraires et empreintes* is on show at the museum. The museum's objects were collected in close collaboration with a range of specialists, and provide keys to understanding both the past and present of this region. The collection is not merely object-based and also incorporates many aspects of intangible cultural heritage, such as dress and costumes and regional culinary traditions. As a result, the Musée gruérien is now recognised as a contact point for expertise on local history, traditions, expressions, and arts and crafts. Practitioners are actively engaged in the museum's daily operations, through initiatives such as theatre performances and demonstrations of handicrafts.

In 2018, the Musée gruérien hosted the competition and exhibition *La vie en ville/Lebendige Stadt*, in collaboration with a local paper cutting association. The museum selected the theme of urban life, and this unconventional theme for paper cutting lead participants to submit innovative, non-traditional work for the competition. Based on historical research in its collections and documentation, the Musée gruérien was able to highlight to the participants many dynamic aspects of the techniques of paper cutting, such as the use of colour, and double-sided use of the paper. In addition, innovative possibilities for paper cutting, such as creating cartoons and using smartphone applications, came to the forefront throughout the project. This evolving approach to the tradition of paper cutting also reaches out to younger generations, and helps in safeguarding this craft.



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Museum: Gallerie degli Uffizi

Location: Florence, Italy

Project name: Botteghe artigiane

Keywords: education, intangible heritage communities

The Uffizi Galleries are renowned for their collection of artworks, with an emphasis on the Italian Renaissance. The museum's Education Department has been running a comprehensive and extended training programme on aspects of the museum's collection, aimed at transmitting traditional craft skills as a form of intangible cultural heritage, and their related methodologies to future generations. In a first phase, high school students acquire both historical and practical knowledge of the materials and environment of the Uffizi Galleries, including painting techniques, porcelain, restoration, semi-precious stones, sculpture, applied arts, and the art of designing and maintaining green spaces. In addition to this, the students visit companies with activities related to those of the museum, with the aim of deepening their business insight and gaining understanding of contemporary craft work.

In the second phase of the project, the students are hosted by artisans or artistic craft enterprises, where they can increase their skills and techniques in areas such as inlay and mosaic, and where they can learn more about materials such as ceramics, wood, textiles, stones, gold, leather and artisan perfumery. With this project the Uffizi Galleries are building an appreciation and recognition of the artworks in the city and

the museum among younger generations. The core aim is to make evident the cultural value of manual skill in artisanship, the centrality of these activities in the cultural and economic development of the region, and the risk of their disappearance in the light of an increasingly virtual vision of the future. This educational project thus contributes to safeguarding traditional craft skills and knowledge as central aspects of intangible cultural heritage.



© Uffizi Galleries

Museum: Texture – Museum over Leie en Vlas

Location: Kortrijk, Belgium

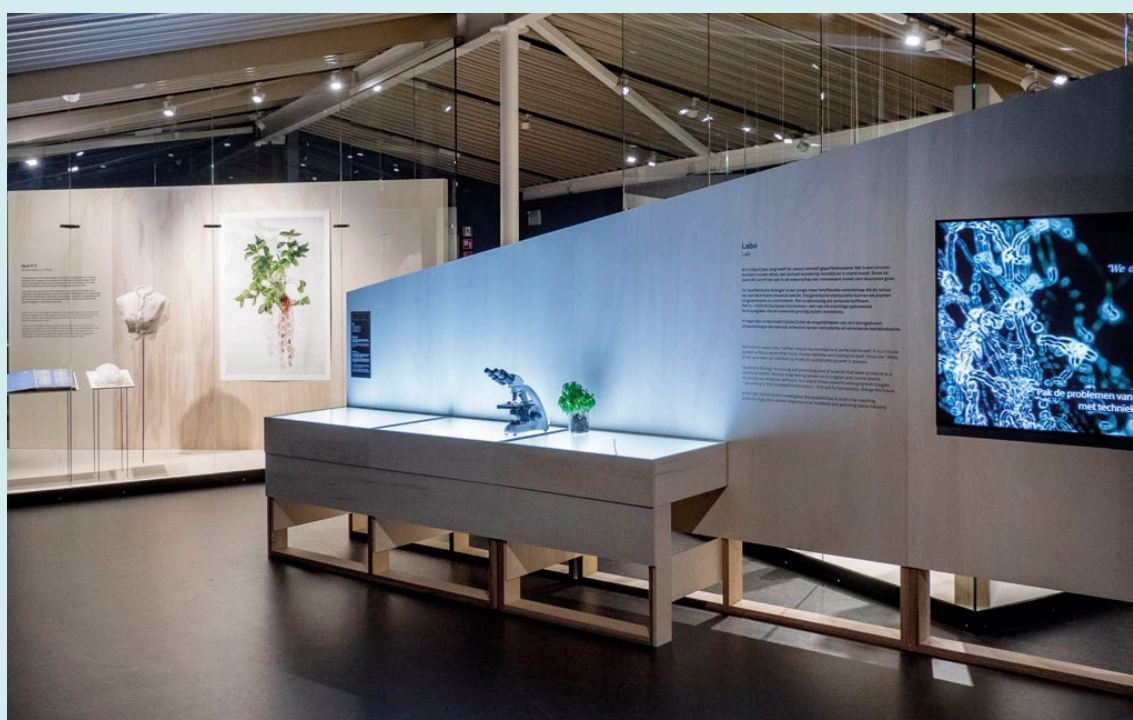
Project name: Biolace

Keywords: contemporary collecting, intangible heritage communities

The roots of Texture stem from the 1960s, when former flax and linen workers realised the importance of this regional heritage, and started collecting objects and stories for future generations. Societal challenges were met by establishing a recently renewed museum building and presentation. Research and oral history have gained a steady place. Entrepreneurship and craftsmanship are central themes, and a programme of participatory and creative collaborations constantly supplements the collection. For each collection theme, such as flax or textiles, dedicated ICH strategies are in place, such as a focus on the transfer and re-launch of textile technological knowhow.

The Biolace exhibition ran in 2018 and 2019, and projected visitors into an imaginative future where overpopulation, climate change and resource shortage challenge us to think in radically

different ways. In a hypothetical 2050 scenario, new organisms have been genetically engineered to produce textiles and improved food crops – all in one plant. Researcher Carole Collet combined design and science to explore efficient and sustainable alternatives. Biolace introduces four imaginary plants: Basil n° 5, Gold Nano Spinach, Factor 60 Tomato en Strawberry Noir. Their DNA has been reprogrammed so that their roots grow in a lace pattern. To these four plant themes, Texture linked unique historical pieces from the museum's traditional lace collection. The success of Biolace was ensured by working together with ICH practitioners such as the Kortrijk Lace Studio, which is housed in the museum and keeps regional lace heritage alive. At the same time, co-creations occurred, in which more traditional lace workers interacted with the project's futuristic vision of lacemaking, for example by using technological design software.



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Museum: Kenniscentrum Immaterieel Erfgoed Nederland / Nederlands Openluchtmuseum

Location: Arnhem, the Netherlands

Project name: CraftsLab (AmbachtenLab)

Keywords: capacity building, participation

The Dutch Open Air Museum is located in Arnhem, and reflects Dutch daily life from 1900 up to approximately 1970 in exhibits of traditional housing, clothing, traditions, crafts, and subsistence activities. In 2018 the Dutch Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage (Kenniscentrum Immaterieel Erfgoed Nederland) collaborated with the Dutch Open Air Museum to create the CraftsLab (AmbachtenLab). This CraftsLab provides a meeting space and experimental platform for craftspeople to meet artists, designers and crafts students. This interaction allows for exploring the possibilities of particular crafts, how various techniques derived from the crafts can function and have their place in today's world, and often give rise to ideas for innovation.

These interactive processes are filmed and photographed, and eventually displayed in the museum. Rather than showing finished products or heritage trajectories, these displays are intended to be starting points for discussion. Visitors are invited to walk along at certain times, and to join in the reflection. Because the CraftsLab is embedded in the Dutch Open Air Museum, this creates a unique context for the worlds of ICH and museums to meet. The craftspeople, artists, designers and students often work with museum staff who offer additional historical expertise on traditional housing, crafts, clothing, et cetera. Adopting the museum's framework for exploring the innovation of traditional crafts in contemporary settings, the CraftsLab succeeds in establishing strong links between the past, the present and the future. In 2019, the Dutch Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage started the CraftsLab project in several other crafts related museums in the Netherlands.



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