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Museum Shops. An Anthropological Essay on Heritage Commodification Exemplified by Three Museums in Amsterdam

Museums are strange places.

Krzysztof Pomian: *Muzeum. Historia światowa*

In terms of mentality, culture, and organisation of society, the Netherlands
has always been very different from other European countries.

Piotr Oczko: *Pocztówka z Mokum*

In my opinion, the Netherlands is out of step with the rest of Europe also in the context of the organisation of museums. And this is what my essay is about – the fact that Dutch museums are at the forefront of the contemporary art of museum management. They operate in an atmosphere of intellectual and aesthetic revolt, create their own world, and propose a new language of museum expression and promotion. They deal with the commercialisation of culture in an imaginative way, not giving in to it, but using heritage commodification and planning (as well as controlling and managing these processes within the institution) as a remedy for the problems arising from museum marketing, which is exemplified by museum shops.

Why does Krzysztof Pomian think that museums are strange? Their strangeness stems from a paradoxical existence – they are both useless and indispensable. They produce nothing without which we cannot live, but civilise society [Pomian 2023: 5]. The word “museum” has always been

associated with art, science, and education. Today, too, the emphasis is on “the attractiveness for tourists and the indirect economic benefits of museums” [Pomian 2023: 5]. We live in the reality of general commodification of heritage, i.e. commercialisation and transformation of history into a tourist product available in the leisure sector. By commodification of heritage I mean the process by which products are created from historical resources to meet market needs. In this context, the past is not so much what we want to remember, but what we want to imagine [Tunbridge, Ashworth 1996]. Cultural heritage, understood as the use of the past for contemporary purposes, plays the role of a resource with an economic dimension. The growing demand for heritage is primarily a consequence of globalisation and the enormous increase in the economic importance of tourism [Purchla 2020: 28]. In this essay, heritage commodification is not the subject of my criticism, but it sets the framework for reflection on museums as institutions that shape our present attitude towards heritage.

The issue of museum shops – the subject of my essay – is part of the discussion about modern museum management, which contradicts the concept of the original, “clean” museum presented by Wojciech Gluziński [1980: 266–292]. In the idea of museum management there is some dissonance between the traditional *raison d’être* of museums (a cultural mission) and their marketing. “Museum management is defined today as the action of ensuring the running of the museum’s administrative business and, more generally, all the activities which are not directly attached to the specific fields of museum work (preservation, research and communication)” [Desvallées, Mairesse 2010: 45]. In the 1980s, Zdzisław Żygulski wrote that the museum is an institution that was not invented for profit [Żygulski 1982: 12]. I agree, but I also believe that there is no conflict between profit and the museum’s mission. The museum shop – in my opinion – combines the idea of a “clean” museum and the need for a museum management in contemporary times.

“The concepts of market launch and museum marketing, like the development of tools for museums that have resulted from businesses (defining strategies, focusing on the public/visitor, resource management, fundraising, etc.) has considerably changed the museums themselves” [Desvallées, Mairesse 2010: 46]. In the context of renting museum space to various entities (for weddings, concerts, conferences etc.), paid entrance to

the museum, the concept of blockbuster exhibition¹ or the sale of museum objects – museum shops are an idea for marketing this institution, which seems to be the minimum plan. Edyta Łongiewska-Wijas calls museum shop an “unused space of interaction” in Polish context. She argues that it is an unobtrusive object in reflection on the role of museums in contemporary society. In Polish research on museums, it is an element that is clearly unnoticed, or ignored [Łongiewska-Wijas 2018]. Unfortunately, I agree with this diagnosis. Therefore, I propose “the view from afar” at museum shops in Amsterdam to extract the essence in order to implement it not only in Polish museums, but also elsewhere.

Why do I base my reflections on examples from Amsterdam? Firstly, the museums there embody the idea of heritage commodification and planning in a way that, in my opinion, is a good implementation model. Between 2010 and 2021 I visited them as a guest (and museum shops as a customer) so many times that I can present their atmosphere based on my own experience. It was there that I got to know part of the Dutch culture. Not on purpose, but going with the flow of ordinary city life. This is the model I first experienced in Amsterdam and nowhere else. Museums are anatomical parts of the city’s body. They are associated with physiological functions. This results from the Protestant pragmatism of everyday life as the “organizer” of Dutch culture. The combination of social, economic and religious factors led to the Protestant ethic, which is manifested, among other things, in the Dutch approach to museums [Korzewski 2001; Weber 2020]. I have chosen three institutions that I know by heart, and this essay describes their museum shops: Rijksmuseum, Tropenmuseum (Museum of the Tropics), and Museum Ons’ Lieve Heer op Solder (Our Lord in the Attic Museum). Secondly, in terms of landscape and mentality, Amsterdam is related with such cultural clichés as: traditional pancakes, Old Amsterdam cheese, bicycles, canals, floating homes, coffee shops, marijuana, LGBTQ+, free love, and prostitution. This stereotype lacks the participation of museums in the creation of the identity of the city and the organisation of

¹ Andrea Tarsia: “An exhibition that captures the imagination and interest of a broad sector of the public, that somehow manages to be very relevant”. *What makes a blockbuster exhibition?*, <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/YAUxkfQOWgoe3Q> [accessed on: August 4, 2023]. This was the status of the exhibition at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam displayed from February 10 to June 4, 2023, all paintings by Johannes Vermeer. The myth of this painter made the exhibition a real blockbuster. Its commercial success is evidenced by the fact that the entire pool of tickets (450,000) was sold immediately, and on the black market you could buy a ticket for this exhibition for €150 [Oczko 2023: 40].

leisure time and lifestyle in Amsterdam, which balances the need to live in the proximity of paintings and pragmatism, uselessness and necessity. To prevent decay, a sad image, and low social trust, the museum must respond to reality [Batko, Kotowski 2010: 11–47]. The answer is not just new, digital technology [Krzyworzeka 2014]. My essay is an attempt to answer the question: What can we learn from Dutch museums in terms of dialogue between heritage and contemporary times? Don't fall into the trap of digital innovation, let's go shopping in museum shops in Amsterdam.

The term “museum shop” in Amsterdam has a double meaning. First of all, it is a space (a part of a museum) where various items are sold and services are provided (e.g. people are fed), which is frequently related to: (1) the general field the museum is devoted to or (2) specific artefacts that are in it, are its symbols, or have great historical or national value. Second of all, the term refers to shops that are located outside museums, but use the aesthetics of a pinacotheca. I recently experienced it in Poland, in a shopping mall. The clothes in the popular chain store have turned into a “Dutch pinacotheca.” Bosh and Vermeer on sweatshirts, T-shirts and dresses. This is a very Amsterdam model of a museum that connects with everyday life.

I was not the first to notice the similarity between Amsterdam's museums and streets. Zbigniew Herbert in *Still Life with a Bridle* – the most important Polish book on Dutch culture – mentions street cobbles and museum parquet floors side by side, writing about his daily urban peregrinations away from the banality of tourist agencies' offers [Herbert 1991: 3–17].

In Amsterdam, the category of a museum is blurred. The division into silence and the sacred of the museum room and the noise and the profane of the street is an intellectual manipulation. Museums are crowded like shopping streets. This drew the attention of Piotr Oczko: “The Dutch go to museums regardless of social class, aspirations, and education – for them, it is simply a way to spend time in an interesting way” [Oczko 2023: 42]. People are queuing for museums and paintings – they are patient but loud. In the streets, which are traditionally the domain of commerce, one-of-a-kind windows of antique shops and bookshops, bars, cafés and cheese shops, boutiques, bicycle and accessories shops, sex-shops, and perfumeries make up the street museum. In Amsterdam, window shopping is like a walk through a gallery with paintings depicting still lifes and genre scenes. Everything is well thought out and nothing there is accidental. An

old chair, a Gouda wheel, a raincoat, a bicycle bag, an anal plug in the foreground or in the background. What matters is the artistic ingenuity of the exhibition. Sellers are like painters, turning shop windows into original paintings, while people in the street behave as if they were in a gallery or a museum. They stop in front of them and they contemplate them. It seems that it is not a matter of fashion, the basic feature of which is variability [Finkelstein 1991: 130]. In this street pinacotheca, the structure of long duration is manifested – the Dutch disposition to live between paintings. In the seventeenth century, shops in Amsterdam surprised Peter Mundy, a visitor from Cornwall, with the number of paintings:

As For the art off Painting and the affection off the people to Pictures, I thincke none other goe beeyond them, there having bin in this Country Many excellent Men in thatt Faculty, some att presentt, as Rimbrantt, etts. All in general striking to adore their houses, especially the outer or street room, with costly peeks, Butchers and bakers not much inferiority in their shops, which are faithfully sett forth, yea many tymes blacksmithes, coblers, etts., will have some picture or other by their Forge and in their stall. Such is the generall Notion, enclination and delight that these Countrie Native[s] have to Paintings [Mundy 1925: 70].

Another modern example, but with medieval genealogy, is the Red Light District, where prostitutes work in the windows. It is the oldest part of the city – De Wallen. At night, it turns into a gallery of female acts. The act, as a study of the naked body, was born in antiquity, but flourished during the Renaissance and became one of the main themes of the Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Modern art [Słownik... 2003: 6]. In Amsterdam, naked women come out of red pictures/windows and invite men inside. Entrance to this “museum” is expensive. With the I Amsterdam City Card you can enter 70 museums in the city, but the red gallery is not a museum institution. Finally – a street gallery of paintings, the theme of which is the intimate life of Amsterdam, with focus on *gezelligheid*. This is the Dutch concept of cosiness combined with being together. A man sitting in a chair reading a newspaper, opposite a woman drinking coffee from an old ivory-coloured cup. The windows in Amsterdam are large, and the curtains lead a theoretical life – they do not change their peripheral positions (always at the picture frame, on the right, left or both sides). Windows with these curtains on the sides resemble old paintings, where curtains and carpets – in the *trompe-l’oeil* formula – covered (or exposed) a part of the painting to

evoke the illusion of reality. The similarity of the windows in Amsterdam to the paintings of Johannes Vermeer is not accidental. The street imitates the museum room with such paintings of the master as: *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window* with a green curtain to the right, occupying one-third of the painting's surface, or *The Allegory of Painting*, where a massive blue, yellow and red curtain falls heavily on a chair. In both cases, the curtains cover/reveal the ordinary life that is going on inside. And what signs of *gezelligheid* do the windows of today's Amsterdam exhibit? Rodney Bolt gives an example of a family that at dusk, instead of turning on the lights, light candles, brewing coffee and staring at the big window, sitting comfortably and absorbing the atmosphere of *gezelligheid* [Bolt 1995: 11–15]. Like in the paintings, people in these beautiful interiors constantly write and read letters or pour milk, but dress differently, in a modern way.

I am a stranger in Amsterdam. Fortunately, I'm not the only one brazenly staring into the windows as I walk the streets of this city. I was glad when Marek Orzechowski wrote: "The visitors notice windows with raised curtains or without curtains. They are eager to look inside when they pass by (which is not, to put it mildly, in good taste)" [Orzechowski 2014: 40]. How come? A tour of the gallery is not in good taste? Visitors look at the paintings in the street museum.

Amsterdam's windows – of similar dimensions, exposing ordinary, everyday family life (*gezelligheid*), naked women in red light or products – juxtaposed in a line drawn by a walk through the city, constitute pendants to Amsterdam's cultural identity. Thus, a walk through the city allows you to find a shaky balance between movement and contemplation, which we know from galleries or museums. Rebecca Solnit, studying the history of walking and thinking, concluded that walking is always aesthetic and philosophical [Solnit 2001]. The street pinacotheca is an example of this: we do not travel between points, but we see images that move us and make us think. We are in a "museum." In the religious attachment of the Dutch to things [Herbert 1992: 14], which is also manifested by shop windows overlooking the streets, there is an element of the museum temperament.

The museum shop in Rijksmuseum is located in the museum district at 1 Museumstraat. According to Deirdre Musk, addresses and street names there are related to the institution status [Musk 2020]. This address is also symbolic in nature. The Rijksmuseum is the most important and largest museum (number one) in all of Amsterdam (and the Netherlands). It is

located in a French castle-like neo-Gothic-Renaissance secular basilica designed by Pierre Cuypers (1827–1921), known for the design of Amsterdam Centraal station (in the same style) and many churches throughout the country. The Rijksmuseum dates back to 1798. It moved from the Hague to Amsterdam in 1808, and in 1885 it was located at its present address. It is a treasure trove of Dutch culture. The collection includes more than a million artefacts, the most popular of which are the paintings: *The Night Watch* by Rembrandt and *The Milkmaid* by Johannes Vermeer. The museum shop is an impressive place, which, in the context of heritage commodification, was best described Ben Coates: “Inside, the recent renovation project has aimed to restore some of its original grandeur while adding the kind of features now deemed essential for any major gallery: disabled access, a modern art wing, an oversized gift shop and an overpriced café” [Coates: 2017: 90].

Cyclists are satisfied with the renovation – a bike path crosses the ground floor along the central axis of the building. Bicycles constitute an important part of the Dutch cultural heritage – now there is no shortage of them in the Rijksmuseum, the temple of Dutch culture. The atrium, consisting of several floors, houses the largest museum shop I’ve had the chance to visit, combined with a café. It is a very elegant place, spacious, with white walls and furniture displaying various products of high quality, which can be divided into several categories: 1) living – home decoration (replicas, vases, tableware and cooking, pillow covers, Dutch artistic Christmas bulbs); 2) prints (postcards, posters, oleographs); 3) books (museum guides, exhibition books, collection books, picture albums); 4) stationary (notebooks, pencil sets, stationary boxes, agendas, calendars); 5) clothing and accessories (T-shirts, socks, scruffs, scarves, ties, jewellery, bags, wallets, umbrellas); 6) toys for children.

The range is not surprising compared to the offer of other European museums. All the items are in some way related to the nature of the institution. However, what is surprising is their high quality and the way they are presented, taking the guest/customer to a luxury shop, where the products are treated with religious reverence. The museum atrium resembles a church nave. On the Rijksmuseum website, the museum’s copywriter advertises items from the museum shop in the paradigm of heritage commoditisation, for example: living: “Bring a piece of Rijksmuseum into your home with these unique home accessories, inspired by artworks from the

collection” [<https://www.rijksmuseumshop.nl/en/living>]; prints: „Your very own Rembrandt or Vermeer in your living room, who wouldn’t want that? Here you can find reproductions of the most beautiful masterpieces of the Rijksmuseum” [<https://www.rijksmuseumshop.nl/en/prints>]; books: “Deepen your knowledge with our beautiful art publications. From cheerful children’s books to the latest exhibition catalogues, they offer a wealth of information and are a feast for the eyes!” [<https://www.rijksmuseumshop.nl/en/books>]; jewellery: “Looking for an unforgettable gift? Our varied jewellery collection offers something for everyone. For example, the new collection by the Dutch jewellery brand BIJJOSSE. Inspired by the painting *Children of the Sea* (1872) by Jozef Israels, handmade, and carefully designed” [<https://www.rijksmuseumshop.nl/en/accessories/jewellery>].

The shop is open from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm daily, but without a ticket to the Rijksmuseum you can only enter it from 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm, when the museum is closed. In a modern pavilion at 4 Museumplein, next to the Rijksmuseum, there is a museum shop where you can buy products from various Amsterdam’s museums. This shop is not as elegant as the atrium in the Rijksmuseum, but it allows everyone to enter, regardless of the museum ticket.

In the Rijksmuseum, the museum rooms, shop, café, restaurant, and garden form a spatial structure in which visitors/customers are expected to spend time in an interesting and enjoyable way, rather than just marvelling at the treasures of Dutch culture – the museum exhibits. On the menu, there is information in the rhetoric of heritage commodification and planning, which ensures that we are in the symbolic heart of the Netherlands:

At Het Café we only use the best local ingredients sourced in the Netherlands. Honest and pure. Dutch cuisine is certainly not dull and boring, on the contrary, it is exciting. We draw our inspiration from our environment, culture and history. We have specifically chosen the best Dutch suppliers such as the Heineken brewery, master blender Jacobs D.E. Holtkamp patisserie, A. van Wees de Ooievaar distillery and vanmenno bakery. Studio Linse’s interior design is referred to as “the design of nothing”. The ton sur ton palette matches perfectly to the wonderful architecture of Cuypers. All of the furniture is by Dutch designers Friso Kramer, Martin Visser, Gerrit Rietveld, Kho Liang Ie, Maartje Steenkamp and Wim Rietveld.



Photograph 1. *The Milkmaid*, Palymobil, inspired by Vermeer's work, €5.95, <https://www.rijksmuseum-shop.nl/en/playmobil-the-milkmaid>.



Photograph 2. Jug, inspired by Vermeer's *The Milkmaid*, €80, <https://www.rijksmuseumshop.nl/en/detail/index/sArticle/1811>.

The Tropenmuseum collects and exhibits ethnographic objects from different parts of the world, mostly from modern Indonesia. The Netherlands used to be a colonial power, and the Tropenmuseum today critically addresses this history. The museum denounces colonialism through its very modern, provocative, liberal offer, and is sensitive to socio-cultural diversity, minority rights, gender issues, and political and cultural correctness. It draws attention to what unites people, and not to what makes them different:

Each and every one of the objects tells a human story and makes you curious about the vast cultural diversity that enriches the world. They

tell us about universal themes like mourning, celebrating, decorating, praying or fighting. From Africa to West and Southeast Asia, from New Guinea to Latin America, in the Tropenmuseum you'll discover that besides the differences, we are all the same: human [<https://www.tropenmuseum.nl/en/about-tropenmuseum>].

The museum at 2 Linnaeusstraat, on the edge of the Oosterpark, is one of Amsterdam's architectural symbols, with decorations reminiscent of the Dutch colonial past. The museum inherited its premises from the Colonial Institute (Koloniaal Instituut). The offer of the shop in the Tropenmuseum is closely linked to the institution's guiding idea, which is focused on universal themes connecting people worldwide. The museum shop is part of the Dutch Museum Gift Shop network, which sells items online, including gender-free T-shirts with such signs as "THEY-THEM" and "THEY power".

What is also noteworthy is the museum's restaurant Café De Tropen, overlooking the breathtakingly large central atrium: "Enjoy a Moyee coffee on the terrace with a sticky toffee banana cake. In the evening you can dine with a menu that has been inspired by cultures and flavours from all over the world" [<https://www.tropenmuseum.nl/en/plan-your-visit/restaurant-and-shop>].



Photograph 3. Interior of Café De Tropen, <https://www.tropenmuseum.nl/en/plan-your-visit/restaurant-and-shop>.

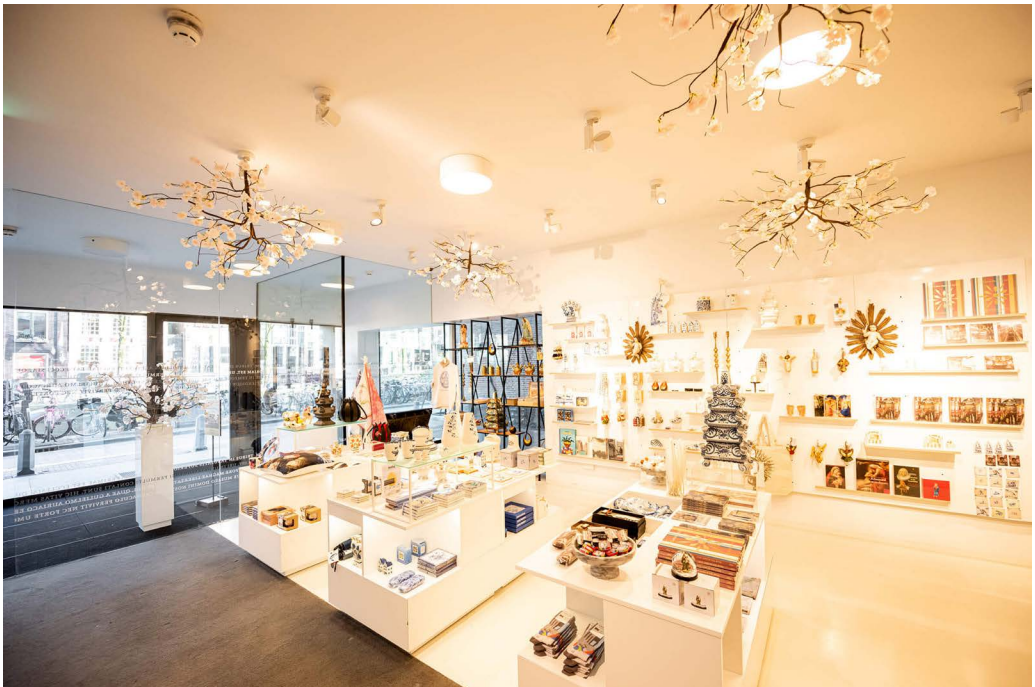
Important elements of the Dutch landscape during the Reformation were the so-called hidden churches, mostly Catholic. “In the villages they resembled barns, while in the cities they resembled tenement houses, warehouses, and granaries” [Oczko 2021: 281]. One of them has been preserved to our times and has housed the Museum Ons’ Lieve Heer op Solder (Our Lord in the Attic Museum) since 1888. The institution at 38–40 Oudezijds Voorburgwal is not conspicuous – after all, it used to be a hidden church. The modest entrance in a side alley heralds neither a museum nor a church. From the street, the place looks like a shop. In fact, we can only enter the museum through the museum shop; the secret stairs to the attic, where the institution is located, are hidden. The museum warns that we go upstairs at our own risk. „Stiletto heels, walkingsticks with a sharp point and umbrellas are not permitted due to possible damage to the original 17th century floors and objects in the museum” [<https://opsolder.nl/en/museum-visit/>]. The exclusive museum shop transcendently dazzles guests/customers – white walls, ceiling, floor, and furniture. Against their background, gilded replicas of museum exhibits. It resembles a devotional shop. On the first floor, there is a café, which offers an insane view of the street. Following the logic of a hidden church and heritage commodification, the museum shop and the café are the first places to which the institution invites its visitors/customers. You can shop and enjoy an espresso, have lunch without entering the museum/church proper.

The entry of this institution into the market may seem crazy or troublesome – the place itself is hidden in the urban fabric, it is located in the attic and has the form of a church. The museum, however, has found a good language for commodifying the heritage it preserves:

Do you want to marry in the most romantic church in Amsterdam’s city centre? You can! Our Lord in the Attic Museum’s church is a popular wedding location. No wonder, because the authentic old-pink interior, the subdued lighting and the extraordinary history of this 17th century church combine to provide the perfect atmosphere. We are always happy to work out with you how to make it the most beautiful day of your life. Champagne and cake afterwards? Wedding sweets? A reception with luxurious snacks? We have all kinds of options to discuss! [<https://opsolder.nl/en/weddings-and-rentals/>].



Photograph 4. Entrance to the Our Lord in the Attic Museum, <https://opsolder.nl/en/museum-our-lord-in-the-attic/>.



Photograph 5. The shop at the Our Lord in the Attic Museum, <https://opsolder.nl/en/practical-information/>.

Olga Tokarczuk wrote of Amsterdam that “the world here seems to have been made to human measure, it is in the HS size – Homo sapiens size. Comfortable, stable, and – in spite of the boggy ground ripped off from the sea – safe. It has an unforced atmosphere of peace” [Tokarczuk 2012: 87]. I can say the same about Amsterdam’s museums, which are precisely HS size, catering for people’s needs on different levels, with people spending their free time there – together, in an interesting way and in a cosy, safe space. Museum shops, cafés and restaurants lower the threshold of access to culture, inviting people to a museum whose offer surpasses other places in the urban landscape and represents a serious competition in the entertainment market. Amsterdam’s museum shops – large, spacious, elegant, beautiful, and stimulating the imagination – constitute a good implementation model in museums that fear losing their souls in the process of commodifying the heritage they protect. Products from museum shops should be in keeping with the museum’s field and the symbolic objects of the institution. The fact that most of the museum shops and restaurants in Amsterdam are open to customers regardless of the ticket does not lower the number of museum visitors, but shows that the institution is close to the people and an integral part of the city. And this is a good direction in contemporary museum management.

Brian O’Doherty criticizes the pathos that has entered the relationship between art, space and people in the history of museology. That is why museums generally resemble medieval churches. “The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light. The wooden floor is polished so that you click along clinically, or carpeted so that you pad soundlessly, resting the feet while the eyes have at the wall” [O’Doherty 1986: 15]. Museums in Amsterdam have proposed an alternative to the white cube. They enter into dialogue with the outside world, thanks to which aesthetic and commodity values are exchanged. The museum space is not devoted to the technology of esthetic. It is focused on *gezelligheid*.

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Sebastian Latocha**Sklepy muzealne. Esej antropologiczny na temat utowarowienia dziedzictwa na przykładzie trzech muzeów w Amsterdamie**

Artykuł w eseistycznej formie przedstawia 3 amsterdamskie muzea: Rijksmuseum, Tropenmuseum i Museum Ons' Lieve Heer op Solder nie pod kątem prezentacji ich historii i kolekcji, ale idei komodyfikacji i planowania dziedzictwa, którą wcielają w życie sklepy muzealne połączone z kawiarniami i restauracjami. Amsterdamskie muzea pozostają w cieniu głośnych stereotypów na temat tego miasta. Nie ma ich w czołówce najpopularniejszych muzeów świata, ponieważ sama Holandia nie stanowi czołowej destynacji turystycznej. Dlatego luźna atmosfera panująca w amsterdamskich muzeach – wyróżniająca się własnym stylem pomiędzy ochroną dziedzictwa, pragmatyzmem, etyką protestancką i egzystencjalną koncepcją *gezelligheid* – wymaga operacjonalizacji jako model implementacyjny w innych muzeach na świecie. Ponadto, sam temat sklepów muzealnych – w kwestii ich roli w komo-

dyfikacji i planowaniu dziedzictwa – nie stanowi w naukach humanistycznych i społecznych kluczowego przedmiotu refleksji. Niniejszy esej stanowi przyczynek do badań nad sklepami muzealnymi jako miejscami, w których odbywa się „wyjście” eksponatów z sali muzealnej i „wejście” muzeum na rynek. Autor zwraca uwagę, że pojęcie „sklep muzealny” w kontekście Amsterdamu ma podwójne znaczenie, podkreślając, że w tym mieście podział na sacrum muzeum i profanum ulicy jest płynny.

Słowa kluczowe: muzeum, sklep muzealny, komodyfikacja dziedzictwa, planowanie dziedzictwa, Amsterdam, Holandia

Abstracts

The paper presents in an essayistic form three Amsterdam’s museums: Rijksuseum, Tropenmuseum and Museum Ons’ Lieve Heer op Solder not in terms of a presentation of their history and collections, but in terms of the idea of heritage commodification and planning, which is embodied in museum shops combined with cafés and restaurants. Amsterdam’s museums are overshadowed by high-profile stereotypes about the city. They are not among the world’s most popular museums as the Netherlands itself is not a top tourist destination. Therefore, the relaxed atmosphere of Amsterdam’s museums – distinguished by its own style between heritage conservation, pragmatism, Protestant ethics, and the existential concept of *gezelligheid* – needs to be operationalised as an implementation model in other museums around the world. Furthermore, the very subject of museum shops – in terms of their role in heritage commodification and planning – has not been a crucial subject of reflection in the humanities or social sciences. This essay contributes to the study of museum shops as places where the exhibits “exit” the museum room, while the museum “enters” the market. The author points out that the concept of “museum shop” in the context of Amsterdam has a double meaning, emphasising that in this city the division between the sacred museum and the profane street is fluid.

Keywords: museum, museum shop, commodification of heritage, heritage planning, Amsterdam, Holland