

Towards participatory collection management in museums with migration heritage collections: Insights from the Red Star Line Museum

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ABSTRACT

This workshop proposal outlines a hybrid session combining a concise presentation and a structured critical dialogue, focusing on the outcomes of Phase 1 of the Red Star Line Museum's project *Time to Let Go: Participatory Collection Management in Museums with Migration Heritage Collections*. (Oct 2024 – Sept 2025). The project explores pathways toward a more inclusive, needs-based model of collection care grounded in the principles of shared authority and participatory practice, aiming to develop a participatory collection management workflow and related deliverables.

Phase 1 consisted of two main components: (1) International research into best practices regarding participative working methods and collection management in migration museums and institutions across Europe; (2) A participatory action research trajectory with **an intercultural and intergenerational group of heritage community members with migration backgrounds**.

This trajectory titled *#OurMuseumLaboratory: Preserving and Sharing My Migration Heritage- My Needs,* guided participants through a simulated donation process - from initial outreach and personal heritage reflection to the imagined irrevocable transfer of ownership, registration, and eventual public representation. Another central theme was trust and reciprocity between donor and museum.

The core research question was: *What are participants' visions regarding the materiality of migration heritage, and their needs and conditions for preserving and sharing it in a museum context?* Using creative and trauma-sensitive heritage conversation methods co-developed with a creative therapist, participants engaged in monthly dialogues to articulate needs regarding preservation, care, visibility, registration, and donor-museum relationships.

The workshop will present key findings and emerging needs identified during Phase 1. Museum professionals are invited to critically reflect on these results through brainstorming sessions addressing thematic needs and questions emerged from the project. The session aims to foster sector-based feedback and critical knowledge exchange, collaboratively imagining the future of inclusive participatory collection management.

Workshop format: *The session starts with a 15-minute presentation on Phase 1's key insights. Participants are then split into small groups for a 10-minute brainstorming session focused on a thematic need from the project. Each group addresses a concrete thematic need that emerged from the project for 10 minutes. The participants formulate needs, challenges and practical solutions based on their own museum practice and briefly share feedback. Results are discussed plenary for 20 minutes.*

Conference contribution

This contribution offers a museum practice perspective and relates to the theme of 'class, gender and generations in migration exhibitions and collections.'

CV

Lisa Yolanda Lambrechts is a Belgian-Salvador art historian and heritage professional specializing in participatory collection management. She is currently a researcher at the Red Star Line Museum in Antwerp, leading the project Time to Let Go: Participatory Collection Management in Museums with Migration Heritage Collections. Her role includes organizing participatory action research, qualitative data analysis, and developing innovative participatory collection management models. Lambrechts holds degrees from Ghent University, the University of Amsterdam, and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Her work is grounded in a research-based, critical approach to museal representation and heritage practices, focusing on underrepresented narratives in art and history. She has experience with participatory projects and exhibitions at institutions such as the Rijksmuseum and the Royal Library of The Hague.