



PERSBERICHT

The Amsterdam Museum to stop using term 'Golden Age'

As of today, the Amsterdam Museum will no longer be using the term 'Golden Age' to denote the period of the 17th century in the Netherlands. In the museum's view, this phrase does not adequately reflect the realities of this period. For some time now, the Amsterdam Museum has worked to increase its relevance for a larger audience. The museum sees its re-evaluation of the term 'Golden Age' as an important step in its ongoing efforts to provide room for different perspectives on this era. The museum will be removing the phrase 'Golden Age' in all its communications at all locations where it presents its collection, as well as changing the name of its semi-permanent exhibition 'Portrait Gallery of the Golden Age' in the Amsterdam Wing of Hermitage Amsterdam to 'Portrait Gallery of the 17th Century'.

The phrase 'Golden Age' was routinely used for decades in the Netherlands to denote the 17th century, when the Dutch Republic was a leading economic and military power. According to the Amsterdam Museum, this term stands in the way of its aim to become more inclusive and present multiple perspectives on history. Amsterdam Museum curator Tom van der Molen (who specialises in the 17th century): "The phrase 'Golden Age' occupies an important place in Western historiography – one that is strongly linked to national pride. However positive aspects associated with the term like prosperity, peace, luxury and innocence reflect only part of the historical reality of this period. The term glosses over the many negative aspects of the 17th century, such as poverty, war, forced labour and human trafficking." In addition, the Amsterdam Museum believes the phrase contributes to a situation in which the history of the Dutch 17th century is exclusively seen from the perspective of those in power, so that many stories are left untold. Van der Molen: "Every generation and every individual should be able to form his or her own story about history. That specific dialogue needs space – and the term 'Golden Age' limits this space."

More inclusive

The Amsterdam Museum wishes to emphasise that its disavowal of the term 'Golden Age' is a step in a wider process aimed at making the institution more diverse and inclusive – one that the museum embarked on a number of years ago together with people in the city. The museum wants to be a place that feels relevant and welcoming to everyone. That is why the Amsterdam Museum strives to provide room for people and stories that so far have been given no or insufficient exposure.

Besides distancing itself from the term 'Golden Age', the Amsterdam Museum will also be making changes to its presentation 'Portrait Gallery of the 17th Century'. On 29 September, the Amsterdam Museum will be organising a symposium for professionals from the field and the general public regarding which stories from the 17th century should be recounted, by whom, and how to approach this as inclusively as possible. On the same day, the museum will be opening the photo exhibition 'Dutch Masters Re-Viewed', about 13 people of colour who lived in or visited Amsterdam in the 17th and 18th centuries (selected by guest curator Jörgen Tjon A Fong). This exhibition is the first in a series of new perspectives presented by contemporary creators in the context of Black Achievement Month. Director of the Amsterdam Museum Judikje Kiers: "These are major steps in a long process. But we aren't there yet. Together with the people living in our city, we will continue to shed light on underexposed stories and perspectives in our shared past."

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