

***Holding on to the Past, Preparing for the Future:
Heritage and Depots in Times of Crisis and Transformation***

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Abstract

This lecture addresses two issues: the loss and reconstruction of built heritage and the preservation of artworks in museum storage facilities. The value of both movable and immovable heritage is often taken for granted. In times of crisis we are confronted with fundamental questions: is heritage more valuable than human lives? What is lost when we reconstruct buildings and entire cities? This conference takes place in a city that was almost entirely destroyed during the Second World War: only 15% of Warsaw's old center remained intact. Duindam will start by considering issues of authenticity, the ideology of heritage, and how reconstructions should be present in today's world.

The second part deals with a different kind of systemic transformation. Museums preserve many of the artworks in their possession in storage facilities, where they are temporarily invisible and inaccessible to the public. Furthermore, besides the artworks themselves, the inner workings of museums – the selection of what to exhibit and what to store away – are also concealed from the public eye. However, the notions of accessibility, knowledge production, and institutional authority are currently undergoing rapid change. The idea of opening up storage facilities to the public seems to be a response to these reassessments. But are we dealing with a paradigm shift towards a democratic, interactive model of the museum depot, or are institutions merely opening up their kitchens on their own terms to provide a semblance of openness in order to ultimately maintain their position of authority?

About David Duindam

Dr. David Duindam is a memory and heritage scholar and lecturer at the Department of Literary and Cultural Analysis at the University of Amsterdam. He studied philosophy and literary studies and was awarded a doctorate on the strength of his dissertation *Signs of the Shoah: The Hollandsche Schouwburg as a Site of Memory* on the establishment of a Holocaust Memorial Museum in Amsterdam. He is serving as the coordinator of the European research network "Digital Memory of the Shoah," and is organizing the international conference "Materialities of Postcolonial Memory" (7-9 December 2017, Amsterdam).