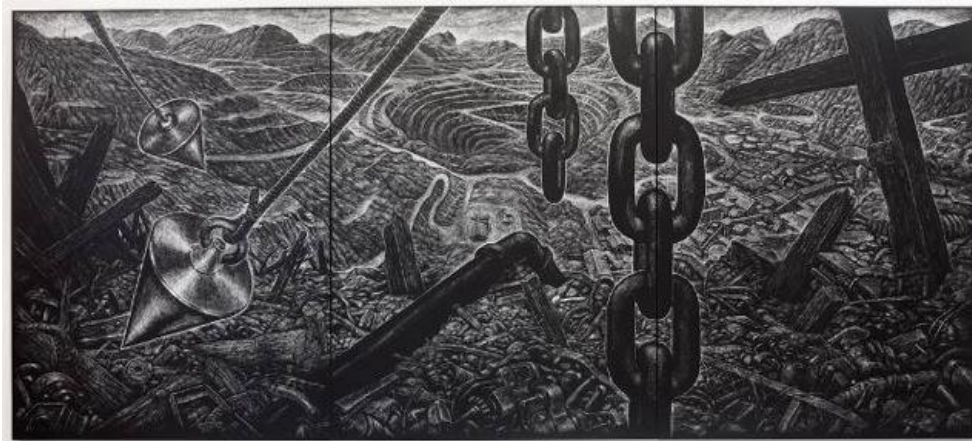


Global Earth Matters: Mining, Materiality and the Museum – Gold

Date: 1 – 2 November, 2016
Location: Gerbrandszaal, Research Center for Material Culture, Steenstraat 1, Leiden



Maryanto, *Tales of the Gold Mountain*, 2012, Collection NMW, TM-6503-1a

Materiality plays an important role in shaping our understanding of the world around us. **Global Earth Matters: Mining, Materiality and the Museum** is a series of seminars that seek to re-center scholarly interest in the *materiality* of objects, opening onto broader questions of labor and making, skills and craftsmanship, on issues surrounding the (exploitative) economies from which these objects emerge. Bringing together artists, academics and curators into interdisciplinary conversations, we want to push the conversation about museum objects beyond, while not excluding, questions of aesthetic quality or (cultural) use, to critically explore the relationship between the materials from which these objects are made and the social world within which they are created or function. What kinds of cultural values are ascribed to gold, for example, which makes it the mineral of preference for some objects and not others? What might a focus on the materials from which objects are made tell us about ideas of creativity and innovation or about the globally interconnected worlds in which these objects circulated? Beyond the objects themselves, what role did these minerals play in shaping earlier and contemporary geopolitical relations? What role does the mineral play in the *objectness* of the object? What hopes, dreams and desires did the discovery of these minerals offer, and in what ways did their discovery shape how we experience the world today?

Background

The technologies and economies associated with mining and mineral extraction have long been central to Europe's (colonial) expansionist and scientific projects, from the latter part of the fifteenth century through to the end of European empires in the mid-twentieth century. Indeed, while studies

of colonial economies, especially in the New World, have been dominated by narratives of the plantation and its associated dehumanized labour, it was also the promise of the *wealth of the earth*, in gold and other precious minerals, that fueled much of the early voyages of exploration, exploitation and conquest. The extractive technologies associated with such search for wealth, the mining and processing of gold and silver, copper and tin, and later bauxite, were formative in much of global geopolitical relations of the past, and this quest to exploit the earth's wealth continue to shape the contemporary world in which we live today.

But where do we find the records, the archives, of the world-making impact of mineral extraction? Though underexplored, this complex entanglement between mining and European colonial projects, between practices of mineral extraction and the world of consumable and luxury goods, or between the specific qualities of certain minerals and technological and artistic innovation developed for their exploitation and use, was a significant part of the history of many (ethnographic) museums. Taking its cue from the former *Colonial Museum*, the predecessor of the Tropenmuseum established 1864 to encourage interest in, and showcase the economic potential of the Dutch colonies, the series **Global Earth Matters: Mining, Materiality and the Museum** insert the materials back into exploration of the *work* of and the work on museum objects. We take those minerals samples collected and displayed by the Colonial Museum from the latter half of the 19th century as a starting point for thinking differently about museum objects and how they are bound up within broader material economies and relations. This will also give us the opportunity to explore histories of local craftsmanship that transformed the raw materials into works of art and design. How did local inventiveness, creativity and experimentation with minerals impact developments in arts, crafts, science and technology across the globe? Can we use the concept of 'mining' to make visible the craft knowledge and techniques embodied in museum objects and write new world histories of knowledge-making?

By retraining our gaze beyond a focus on cultural groups that museum objects are to represent towards a thinking of the materiality of the objects themselves within a broader economy of innovation and making, labor and imperial enterprise, we want to foreground the relationship between the materiality of mining practices and the diversity of cultural understanding about the earth.

Gold

After the successful workshop on bauxite and aluminum, the second seminar in the series focuses on the history and materiality of gold. The lure and luster of gold were important drivers in building empires based on conquest and slavery. How, we will ask, have the qualities and values attributed to gold contributed to 'worldmaking' and 'worldbreaking' processes? How do we understand gold – as it is mined, crafted, used as adornment and banked upon - in relation to glitter and gloom of global connections? Distinctive

features of gold such as malleability, durability and denseness allow it to be the perfect material for artistic crafting of jewelry and ornaments, whereas in the form of gold bars it appears an unchangeable intrinsic foundation for money matters. How is gold as the materiality of wealth and finance part of practices of display but also of concealment? How can we combine perspectives on political economy and cultural approaches in our analysis of linkages between sites of production and consumption?

Global Earth Matters is a collaboration between the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, Leiden University and the Research Center for Material Culture and is supported by Leiden Global Interactions.

Programme Global Earth Matters: Mining, Materiality and the Museum – Gold

Tuesday November 1, 2016 at Research Center for Material Culture, Leiden

10:00 – 10:15 Introduction by Sabine Luning (Economic Anthropology, Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology of Leiden University) & Wayne Modest (Head of Research Center for Material Culture)

10:15 – 10:45 Keynote: Elizabeth Ferry (Department of Anthropology, Brandeis University)

10:45 – 11:15 Discussion

11:15 – 11:30 Tea & Coffee

11:30 – 11:45 Natasha Ginwala (independent curator, researcher, writer)

11:45 – 12:00 Edouard Duval Carrié (independent artist & curator)

12:00 – 12:30 Discussion

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 13:45 Mirjam Shatanawi (curator of Middle East and North Africa, National Museum of World Cultures)

13:45 – 14:00 Discussion

14:00 – 14:30 Tea & coffee

14:30 – 16:00 Material Talks: discussing and viewing objects from NMVW collections (Grote Zaal, Museum Volkenkunde)

- **Fransje Brinkgreve** (curator of Indonesia, at National Museum of World Cultures)
- **Pim Westerkamp** (curator of Indonesia, at National Museum of World Cultures)

16:00 – 17:00 Possibility to visit museum exhibits

Wednesday November 2, 2016 at Research Center for Material Culture, Leiden

10:00 – 10:15 Introduction by **Sabine Luning** (Economic Anthropology, Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology of Leiden University) & **Wayne Modest** (Head Research Center for Material Culture)

10:15 – 10:45 **Keynote:** **Rosalind Morris** (Department of Anthropology, Columbia University)

10:45 – 11:15 Discussion

11:15 – 11:30 Tea & Coffee

11:30 – 11:45 **Patricia Pisters** (Media Studies, Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis, University of Amsterdam)

11:45 – 12:00 **Wouter Welling** (curator of Contemporary Art at National Museum of World Cultures)

12:00 – 12:30 Discussion

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 13:45 **Nii Obodai** (independent photographer)

13:45 – 14:30 **What's in My Phone? Workshop with Closing the Loop**

14:30 – 15:00 Discussion

15:00 – 15:30 Tea & coffee

15:30 – 16:00 **Display of Gold: group discussion about exhibiting gold at NMVW**

16:00 – 17:30 **Gold Rushes: film programme curated by Beeld voor Beeld**