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**Keywords** Gender; Thematic exhibitions; Anthropology; Inner conflict

**Abstract** Can anthropological exhibitions be catalysts of social change and stay loyal to disciplinary standards? Are anthropological museum collections efficient materials for thematic exhibits? Do museums and collections have to transform to be contemporary, or can they say something valid and keep their characteristics at the same time? This review contributes to answering these questions by describing and analyzing the gender themed temporary exhibition of the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam. The present paper intends to critically evaluate a thematic temporary exhibition on gender. It does so by offering a theoretical, methodological, and institutional framework within which the problematics of such an anthropological exhibition could be contextualized and through which some critical observations could be made. We aim to offer an understanding that points to more general issues concerning the methodological challenges of thematic exhibitions and the potential conflict between museums as catalysts of social change and as scientific institutions.

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## Introduction

The concept of gender is one of the key topics at the center of current social, scientific, and public debates. Therefore, it is critical that museums, as socially responsible institutions, reflect on such an important issue. The present paper offers a detailed review of one such attempt: the 2019-2020 exhibition *What a Genderful World* on display at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide any kind of review of museum-anthropology, let alone the extensive literature on gender or the methodology of anthropology. However, we would like to reflect on these topics, as they provide the general framework that enables us to contextualize the exhibition and offer a ground for a critical reading. As young curators and researchers in anthropology, we aim to describe and analyze how an anthropological museum introduces the topic of gender to the general public and represents its collections and artifacts in a gender-themed exhibition.

With this intention in mind, the paper will first briefly consider some methodological and theoretical points in order to position and understand the exhibition. Secondly, we describe the exhibition in question by explaining its topics and tools. And lastly, we intend to identify its more problematic components and present our critical observations.

Using these points, we would like to offer a case study on the potential friction between exhibitions as instruments of social change and as presentations of museum knowledge, thus drawing attention to how their conflict might undermine the relevance, authenticity, and persuasive power of any display.

### **Theoretical and Methodological Setting**

The exhibition we intend to describe and critically evaluate, *What a Genderful World*, could be defined as a thematic anthropological exhibition intended to introduce general questions and claims on the topic of gender by describing and comparing examples from different cultural contexts. In the following, we briefly consider three characteristics as they pertain to this exhibit: thematic exhibition as a genre, comparison as a method, and gender as a topic from the point of view of anthropology. We do this without the intention of offering a complete review on these highly complex and vast topics; rather, we briefly introduce them in order to offer a ground for understanding the challenges of the exhibition and set the scene for its critical reading.

The method of comparison is one of the distinguishing elements of anthropology as a science.<sup>1</sup> Paradoxically, despite its importance, it was – and continues to be – perpetually challenged and criticized with calls for inductive research. As Franz Boas classically stated: “The comparative method and the historical method, if I may use these terms, have been struggling for supremacy for a long time, but we may hope that each will soon find its appropriate place and function.”<sup>2</sup> From our present perception, it is safe to say that this did not happen as the question of the comparative method is still not resolved in anthropological thinking.<sup>3</sup> The tension between the two methods, between generalization and particularization, as well as cross-cultural and culture-specific research, is highly debated and these two approaches are still presented as two contradictory scientific programs.<sup>4</sup> To very briefly summarize and even simplify this question, what is at stake here is whether we could find a base for comparison, and thus ground for universal anthropological claims, or whether we should confine ourselves to understanding cultures as relative systems in themselves. Concerning the cross-cultural perspective, what is always questionable is the way the comparisons are carried out, the scientific validity, the ground for comparison. This is certainly an issue that needs revision when taking a closer look at the *What a Genderful World* exhibition.

While tracing the problematization of comparison back to Franz Boas, we could link the question of gender as a topic for anthropology to one of his students, Margaret Mead, who famously showed how “the personalities of the two sexes are socially produced.”<sup>5</sup> Following Peggy Reeves Sanday’s argumentation, it was Mead’s work, as well as Simone de Beauvoir’s book, *The Second Sex*, that grounded the understanding of gender within anthropology.<sup>6</sup> Beauvoir introduced a structural analysis of gender relations and exposed how universal dichotomies based on horizontal categories of differences create a vertical asymmetry of power relations. However, in the last few decades, both rigid categorization and cross-cultural frameworks have been challenged from a particularistic perspective with claims concerning agency. Criticisms have also emerged, arguing that the previous approach undermined complexity, as well as claims regarding a systematic understanding of gender as part of given cultural systems.

The debate around collection-based and/or thematic exhibitions based on the material of anthropological collections is significant in museum theory and museum-anthropology since the 1960s or as others claim, since the 1980s, as anthropology and museums were hit by the crisis of representation.<sup>7</sup> Questions arose about who owns the material and immaterial knowledge stored by museums; about who is allowed to represent different cultures, and how they are allowed to do this; and about how museums (and anthropology) can reflect on their positions rooted in their genre and methods. Current debate in museum-anthropology still discusses questions about how to deal with the colonial past, about “institutionalized whiteness,” and about the contemporary relevance of anthropological collections.<sup>8</sup>

One very practical aspect related to the debate surrounding museum representation is the difference between two exhibition types: 1) thematic exhibits about contemporary issues that might be relevant, useful and interesting for visitors, and 2) presentation of the issues rooted in the museum collections, showing the original contexts and problematics around the objects. Both of these exhibition types challenge the problems associated with representation. Collection-based exhibits represent a more traditional approach; it is about how museums connect the objects they have with the knowledge and worlds of their source communities. Thematic exhibits deal with representation slightly differently, since they use objects in a totally new thematic context with new meanings that were not necessarily connected to the object in its original surroundings. The mere exhibition of the item misrepresents the object’s intention and function. In spite of the differences between the two methods, both cases pertain to curatorial decision-making and museological approaches to the interpretation of objects.

It is remarkable how anthropological and ethnographic museums, such as Tropenmuseum, interact with the current trend of social responsibility.<sup>9</sup> As a response to this call to action, many of these institutions create thematic exhibits in order to provide information and discuss contemporary social issues and debates for and with visitors. These instances– of using contemporary art to interpret museum collections, of making thematic exhibits, or starting collaborative projects, especially within European ethnology museums– are attempts to bring the collections closer to issues of contemporary societies. Despite this trend, issues of representation, particularly those associated with thematic exhibits, remain unresolved.

## Institutional Setting and General Outlook

*What a Genderful World* is a temporary exhibit (on display between Fall 2019 and Fall 2020) at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Tropenmuseum is one of the oldest colonial anthropological museums in Europe. The museum possesses a prominent collection, and admirably employs contemporary museum theory and research (mostly under the umbrella of the Research Center for Material Culture). In short, the Tropenmuseum represents a leading institution of our discipline.<sup>10</sup> Its temporary exhibits show a mixed pattern of classic themes (although usually presented from a new point of view), and current topics based on classic material. *What a Genderful World* belongs to the latest category.

The exhibition introduces the topic of gender from an anthropological perspective and encourages visitors to consider their relation to the theme; to position themselves and formulate their opinions. The exhibition is visually appealing, original, and— at certain parts— reflexively provocative. In addition to the artifacts from the museum's various collections, the display also uses contemporary art pieces, popular movie and music references, as well as interviews with public figures, in order to actualize the objects' message. The exhibition has a clear and didactic narrative, leading the visitors by a logical chain of thought through the topic of gender. It starts from a more general concept of sex and gender, zooming in until the very end with playful, non-binary, and fluid gender roles. Following this way of thinking, the main topics of the exhibition are:

1. What do you think?
2. Does your body determine your gender?
3. How do you become a gender?
4. How ought you behave?
5. Gender without borders?
6. Who has power here?
7. Playful with gender?

Each topic provides an introductory lead, as well as a few seemingly random examples that aim to help visitors consider the issue. Each section also contains an interactive game connected to the question in the title.<sup>11</sup> The leads consist of three parts: one introduces the main question or topic, the second raises a few provocative questions via some examples that foreshadow later parts of the exhibition, and the third presents a few questions to the visitors, concerning how they would relate to that certain topic.

The interactive games in each part provoke visitors to think, react, and position themselves somehow towards different topics. For example, in the section about bodily aspects of gender, one can leave their body imprint on a human-sized pin board game, or in the case of behavioral norms, visitors can pose in a photo booth as themselves, or reinterpreted as a man or woman.

The texts, labels, and interactive games play an important role in the exhibit. However, the most significant part of each topic's display is the exhibited museum objects, contemporary art pieces, and/or interviews and videos. According to the exhibit's curator, the overall goal of the exhibition was to provide information so that visitors could learn more about the topic of gender. Additionally, the curator hoped the exhibit would help viewers position themselves

towards the issue of gender in a meaningful way, as an initial step towards fighting indifference towards otherness.<sup>12</sup> Referring to the “culturally different,” the *Other* is a key topic in anthropology; therefore, linking this aim of the exhibit with an anthropological approach seems like a logical connection. As early as 1899, Franz Boas identified the educational value of anthropology and its ability to help individuals and collectives understand their own cultures by learning about others.<sup>13</sup>

*What a Genderful World* utilized anthropological theory and method, including the concept of otherness. The exhibition’s goals, which were associated with social responsibility, in addition to the preparation and presentation of the show, resulted in a slightly activist exhibition. Firstly, it was organized on a collaborative basis. Secondly, the curators approached the exhibition with a socially responsible attitude. And thirdly, the exhibit prioritizes shared knowledge, as well as negotiated interpretation and representation. Although the curators remain anonymous in the colophon, the cooperating participants were identified. Many individuals, organizations, and institutions contributed to the exhibition, including a group of Dutch residents, who are also involved in the broader gender discourse. This group, referred to as an advisory committee, includes openly LGBTQ\* influencers or public characters, activists, researchers, etc. Unfortunately, it is difficult to decipher the specific contributions of each participant, including their words, information, sources, and ideas that may appear in the exhibit. However, it is probable that their involvement in the project contributed to the activist tone of the exhibit. In terms of collaborative exhibitions, it is difficult to distinguish between the voice of museum workers and the voices of the involved and affected communities.<sup>14</sup> This friction between the different stakeholders- reinforced by the selection, presentation, and interpretation of objects in the display- is a recurring theme throughout the exhibit.

## Critical Reflections

The exhibition generally uses a comparative method, as it basically brings together examples from different cultures and societies in order to make general claims or raise different questions about gender issues. As a result, the exhibition does not introduce a detailed understanding of the objects’ particular contexts; rather, it connects them to a topic that is not necessarily inherent to their origins, form, or function. Rather than contextualizing and depicting the different social milieus associated with the objects, the exhibition instead incorporates a vast number of examples from different cultures, societies, and time periods.

The lack of proper cultural context creates a timewise synchronized narrative; the exhibit’s artifacts and cultural elements lose their diachronic character, their own relation to time. In many cases, the objects are presented in a way that disassociates them from a given culture and time period; instead, the pieces are displayed as part of a timeless present. This does not mean that certain pieces of information- for instance, the time and place of the object’s origin- are not given. Rather their interpretation links them to a narrative focused on a universalized, general concept of gender. The exhibit’s interpretative texts give the impression that the cultures in question still possess the same character, customs, and ways of life, and that their current gender relations are still based on the stories associated with their objects from the past.

Still, it is difficult to argue with this interpretive approach when it is used to compare the visible and the material. For instance, drawing a parallel between cultures that have different concepts of male and female clothing is a neutral comparison. Pointing out that, although men in Fiji wear skirts, other cultures consider this an inappropriate practice, is not an arguable statement; still it is also not a particularly strong one. This observation fails to meaningfully address the different contexts associated with gender and instead relies on a simplistic comparison.

Difficulties arise when the exhibit attempts to compare more complex cultural traits. For example, *What a Genderful World* draws a parallel between a two-spirited Zuni person from the nineteenth century and a contemporary British artist in terms of non-binary gender roles. Unfortunately, this comparison is problematic. Basing assumptions on the visual is a misleading track to follow as there is certainly much more to these roles than wearing different clothes than other people. In order to understand the purpose and power of these acts, what gives them meaning, we need to examine the local context in which we pinpoint the roles these two people have in their society. It is through this type of analysis that we can reach meaning; otherwise we might interpret foreign acts through our own culturally-based understandings. The way the exhibition uses the concept of identity to understand these two cases is an example of this misperception in action. Identity is an issue that becomes a primary concern in the time of the liquid modernity. Using non-binary gender identity as the basis of comparison of social roles seems like an ineffective approach to understanding examples picked from a variety of times, places, and contexts, including a Zuni religious role from hundreds of years ago.<sup>15</sup>

These examples, and many more, represent one aspect of how gender is interpreted and how cultural examples are treated in the exhibition. This way of thinking could be understood as parallel to the cross-cultural comparison offered by Margaret Mead as it intends “to reassure us that everything is normal somewhere in the world– or that sexuality is, and must be, culturally constructed.”<sup>16</sup> Still, the question remains: “what do such statements mean?”<sup>17</sup> Meaning is given to the cultural examples in *What a Genderful World* through a different approach, one that is similar to the way Beauvoir depicted gender relations. For instance, this tendency is exemplified in the way the exhibition interprets symbols. Because the exhibit addresses gender, certain anatomical parts, including the penis and the vulva, are thematized in a large section of the exhibition. As their interpretation lacks the aforementioned cultural context, they are presented in dichotomized fashion, through categories of visible and hidden, oppressive and repressed, powerful and weak. This universalistic reading certainly lacks the anthropological perspective on symbols, including claims about their multivocal, contextual qualities.<sup>18</sup> Instead, such comparisons are discharged in the service of creating a grand narrative on gender relations, thus giving meaning to the cross-cultural examples.

It is not only the symbolic and religious objects that are narrated from this dichotomous perspective but many other artifacts as well. For instance, a matrilineally inherited Indonesian headdress is described in the exhibit text as “awkward and painful to wear.” This statement is somewhat surprising as the label is located under the finely carved, richly decorated, highly aesthetic object on display. Unfortunately, the author of these words and the purveyor of this perspective remain unknown. Viewers are also not provided with a thoughtful examination of the object, its purpose and meaning, its original context. Providing a single, short sentence

that only considers the comfortability of the object is a way of reinforcing a victimizing narrative. Our only consideration here is the hardship the owner might have had to endure when wearing this luxurious object, not the numerous other factors associated with this object's creation, use, and meaning.<sup>19</sup>

*What a Genderful World* features cultures with very clear-cut gender relations and biased power relations, where there is little space left for the individual. It is obvious that gender and power relations, even in traditional patriarchal societies, are much more complex than the exhibit suggests.<sup>20</sup> Take, for example, a displayed drawing from Pakistan depicting the expected behavior of girls and boys. The interpretation of the cartoon suggests that these gender roles are characteristic of the Muslim world. However, the cartoon is over forty years old, and yet the exhibit attempts to relate this artifact to contemporary gender relations. Importantly, using this historic cartoon to represent the Islamic gender roles reinforces a cultural stereotype, and makes a very general statement on the nearly two billion people affiliated with Islam today. This kind of interpretation contradicts modern realities. For instance, in Indonesia, a country whose population is 80 percent Muslim, the Muslim experience is diverse and dynamic. Islamic feminists in that country continue fighting for equal rights today, and rapidly changing gender relations are increasingly shaped by consumerism and globalization.<sup>21</sup>

As the aforementioned observations suggest, *What a Genderful World* utilizes its examples in two different ways. One approach equates culture with a list of elements, as changeable cards in individual decks of knowledge and values. In this way, the cultural elements are not contextualized as historically, economically, ecologically determined factors; as a result, they lose much of their significance.<sup>22</sup> The other approach contradicts this by depicting culture as a set of heavy norms, biased relations, and universal gender hierarchies, where there is little space left for agency.

These two interpretive methods are connected by open questions that lead the visitor through the exhibition. They are "open" in the sense that they do not have one correct answer. However, they are not completely free thought exercises, because these questions certainly have culturally, socially, and religiously pre-set answers. It is clear that the exhibition aims to confront visitors with the concept of gender and to make them consider their own position on that topic. However, the activist sentiment of the exhibit is apparent in the tone and framing of these questions. For instance, the exhibit employs a non-judgmental attitude when discussing gender identities and all of the varieties thereof; yet that neutrality disappears in the analysis of the roles connected to them. In many cases, the text and interpretive labels of *What a Genderful World* seem to have been written by someone who had a certain opinion about freedom of choice related to gender identities.

It is possible to explore this observation in more depth. There is a section of the exhibition, called "Flexing Muscles," that is about physical power and weakness. The label states that men are often expected to be strong, although women are increasingly joining physically demanding entities like the military or wrestling teams. The installation shows a video about the experiences of a Bolivian woman, who attempts to earn society's respect by wrestling as a *cholita*, and displays other objects from Dahomey Amazons.<sup>23</sup> The label states many stereotypical and generalizing facts about men and women and their relation to physical

power. The exhibit subsequently asks: “So isn’t a display of strength sometimes feminine too?” This is just one of many examples where *What a Genderful World* poses questions to visitors that may not necessarily be viewed as open, or impartial; rather, the answers are pre-framed.

The leading questions of the exhibit signify a different tone. In most cases, the exhibition describes certain cultural elements in a neutral fashion. However, this standard speech is often challenged by a normative voice that intervenes in the interpretation. This normative voice demonstrates favoritism towards certain topics, themes, and conclusions; it reveals preference in terms of the exhibit’s perspective. There is an implicit, constant shift in the exhibit between neutral and oriented value, between factual statements and subjective opinions, between ethnographic description and normative interpretation, between statements of what *is* and what *should be*.

An example for this approach is a peculiar part of the exhibition, called “Facts and Figures.” This section features a variety of oppositional statements about gender-rights in different countries. Examples include: “In Pakistan the government makes gender equality more noticeable by employing women traffic controllers YET 21% of girls are married off before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday” and “Frida Kahlo, one of the most well-known feminists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century came from Mexico YET Mexican women in rural areas have limited access to contraception.”<sup>24</sup> The connection between these different facts, and the meaning of the contradictions between them, can be understood from the perspectives of the aforementioned normative standpoint. The authors of these statements have a certain vision of how gender issues should progress, and that value-judgment is present throughout the exhibit.

After encountering these oppositional statements, visitors enter the final room of the exhibit, where the perspectives of a gender-free world are considered. At this point, the exhibit’s two approaches towards culture and gender, paired with the open questions, paint a very clear picture. On one hand, visitors can see that the characteristics usually connected to different genders are only cultural constructions. On the other hand, viewers can learn that these gender relations are necessarily biased, unjust, and oppressive. The conclusion these two parts make, in addition to the open questions that lead visitors through the exhibition, is to offer one solution: a gender-free world, a clear wish for a change in society and culture.

Given the seemingly activist intention of *What a Genderful World*, it is important to consider the possible frictions that museums face when they attempt to act as agents of social change. Anthropology has explored the realm of gender-free cultures, such as Margaret Mead’s writing on the Arapesh gender relations. In terms of evaluation, Mead presented both the pros and cons of such a cultural pattern and did not appraise these relations as if they were completely ideal.<sup>25</sup> Arguably, an anthropological or ethnographic museum, as a scientific institute, should employ a similar anthropological methodology. In the case of the *What a Genderful World* exhibit, the Tropenmuseum intends to foster an ideal at odds with anthropological practice, which conflicts with its scientific mission.

The design of the *What a Genderful World* exhibition is especially peculiar for an anthropological museum, which have traditionally used scientific and ethnographic findings to self-reflect and criticize their own cultural relations. Yet, the exhibit *What a Genderful World*

clearly employs a Western perspective in order to advocate for a gender-free society, which all cultures should aim to replicate. Within the exhibit, numerous and diverse cultural systems are not understood in and of themselves, and whole societies and religions are not well contextualized. The purpose- and merit- of anthropology is that it presents an opportunity to encounter different cultural systems and use these experiences to relativize our own position. Unfortunately, this exhibit omits anthropological method and data, and instead, cultural concepts and objects are used to reinforce contemporary concerns reflective of our own society. There are many missed opportunities in this exhibit to explore the deeper and more complex anthropological questions associated with gender, sex, and identity. From a more radical anthropological standpoint, one could ask why 'identity' has not been considered a major issue or even a concept in many societies or why sex has not had an independent existence in many different cultural systems?<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusion

This review of *What a Genderful World* criticizes the exhibition for failing to contextualize its artifacts and topics, for the isolated presentation of objects, and for the forced application of narratives regarding gender and identity. All of these points for the problematic approach on religion can be summarized by Lila Abu-Lughod's comment on the gender debate:

*"In particular, such framings are abstracted from the geopolitical and historical contexts in which all our lives proceed; are deeply secular and assume the superiority of liberal secularism for solving problems women face in different parts of the world, despite its peculiar understanding of religion; and are simplistic about the dynamics of human social life, whether in analyzing social systems or the social and cultural construction of subjectivity, which has serious implications for our understanding of rights and choice, two key elements in the liberal political discourse of women's right"*<sup>27</sup>

From an anthropological and museological perspective, many aspects of the exhibit *What a Genderful World*, including its methodology, curation, and interpretation, are contentious. Unfortunately, it is unclear how these issues affect the experience of everyday visitors to the museum. The exhibition has received positive reactions in the popular press and is often praised for its brave choice of topic, for its endeavors to be socially inclusive, and for its appealing design aesthetics and interactivity. But for the fields of museum studies, museum-anthropology, and public history, this exhibit raises important professional questions about representation, methodology, and institutional mission.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Small Places, Large Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology* (London: Pluto, 2001), 5-6.

<sup>2</sup> Franz Boas, "The Limitation of the Comparative Method of Anthropology," *Science* 103 (1896): 908.

<sup>3</sup> Matei Candea, *Comparison in Anthropology: The Impossible Method* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Tim Ingold, *Key Debates in Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1996).

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<sup>5</sup> Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (New York: Morrow, 1963 [1935]) 310.

<sup>6</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage Books, 1952); Peggy Reeves Sanday, "Introduction," in *Beyond the Second Sex* ed. by Peggy Reeves Sanday and Ruth Gallagher Goodenough (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 1-4.

<sup>7</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Az értelmezés hatalma: Antropológiai írások.*, eds. Niedermüller Péter and Fejős Zoltán (Budapest: Századvég Kiadó 1994); James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 1986); Ivan Karp and Steven D Lavine, eds., *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington – London: The Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> We first heard the phrase used by Sumaya Kassim, writer and curator, at The New Museum conference in Stuttgart (Linden Museum, February 28-29, 2020). She referred to it as the general patriarchal, non-equal inner power relations characteristic for all museums, even the ones with no actual colonial past. For further reading about the concept see: Sara Ahmed, "A phenomenology of whiteness," *Feminist Theory* 8 (2007): 149-168; Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012); Teresa J. Guess "The Social Construction of Whiteness: Racism by Intent, Racism by Consequence," *Critical Sociology* 32 (2006): 649-673; James Clifford, "Museums as Contact Zones," in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997): 188–219; Robin Boast, "Neocolonial Collaboration: Museums as Contact Zones Revisited," *Museum Anthropology*, 34 (2011): 56–70; Iain Chambers et. al., eds., *The Postcolonial Museum: The Arts of Memory and the Pressures of History* (Surrey - Burlington: Ashgate, 2014); Tony Bennett, "Museum, Field, Colony: Colonial governmentality and the circulation of reference," *Journal of Cultural Economy* 12 (2009): 99-116; Clémentine Deliss, "Performing the curatorial in a Post-Ethnographic Museum," in *Performing the Curatorial* ed. Maria Lind. (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012): 61-75; Tony Bennett, "Civic laboratories: Museums, cultural objecthood and the governance of the social," *Cultural Studies* 19 (2005): 521-547.

<sup>9</sup> Since the Santiago Declaration of ICOM in 1972 (<http://www.minom-icom.net/files/023679eb.pdf>) social responsibility has been an official task of museums. The specification of social responsibility is varying according to the national museum policies, but generally all the practices rely on the role of museums in social change. For further reading see: Robert R. Janes, "Museums, social responsibility and the future we desire," in *Museum Revolutions: How museums change and are changed*, eds. Simon J. Knell et. al., 134-146 (Oxon - New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>10</sup>[https://www.tropenmuseum.nl/en/whats-on/exhibitions/what-genderful-world:](https://www.tropenmuseum.nl/en/whats-on/exhibitions/what-genderful-world)  
<https://www.tropenmuseum.nl/en/our-collection-0> and  
[https://collectie.wereldculturen.nl/#/query/786f6aa3-0a66-4e75-8fae-d02e59ec78df.](https://collectie.wereldculturen.nl/#/query/786f6aa3-0a66-4e75-8fae-d02e59ec78df)

<sup>11</sup> As observers, we would call these "games," but it is not stated anywhere who is the target group of these interactive elements and how their design and content was chosen. The most probable answer is that the whole exhibition was trying to motivate visitors to be self-reflexive, the structure of each topic was trying to provide as many different ways of perception as possible (counting the different levels of texts as different forms). Possibly these interactive parts were also one of these options for visitors who learn and think easier through doing than reading, hearing, or watching.

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<sup>12</sup> We owe a debt of gratitude to Wonu Veys for making time to talk about the exhibition in detail and to answer our questions.

<sup>13</sup> Franz Boas, "Anthropology," *Science* 9 (1899): 96.

<sup>14</sup> Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum* (Santa Cruz: Museum 2.0, 2010) and Bernadette Lynch "Museums Tied Up in Knots," in *Museum Participation* eds. Kayte McSweeney and Jen Kavanagh, 28–37, (Edinburgh–Boston: MuseumsEtc, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Pat Caplan, "Introduction," in *The Cultural Construction of Sexuality* ed. by Pat Caplan (London, New York: Tavistock, 1987), 11.

<sup>17</sup> Caplan, "Introduction," 11.

<sup>18</sup> Victor Turner, *A rituális folymat: Struktúra és antistruktúra*, trans. Orosz István (Budapest: Osiris, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> From an anthropological perspective it would have been interesting to consider how luxury and impracticality are cross-culturally interconnected.

<sup>20</sup> Marilyn Strathern, *Women in Between: Female Roles in a Male World: Mount Hagen, New Guinea* (London and New York: Seminar, 1972).

<sup>21</sup> Kathryn Robinson, *Gender, Islam and Democracy in Indonesia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); Sonja van Wichelen, *Religion, Politics and Gender in Indonesia: Disputing the Muslim Body* (London and New York: Routledge 2010).

<sup>22</sup> Maybe this general approach is the reason why the exhibition fails to reflect on its own cultural setting, its culturally determined position.

<sup>23</sup> Indigenous women from Bolivia, wrestling in their traditional costumes often against men.

<sup>24</sup> Inscriptions from the installation, using the original emphasis.

<sup>25</sup> Mead, *Sex and Temperament*, 313-318.

<sup>26</sup> Caplan, "Introduction," 24 -25.

<sup>27</sup> Lila Abu-Lughod, "The Debate about Gender, Religion, and Rights: Thoughts of a Middle East Anthropologist," *PMLA* 121 (2006): 1621.

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