



Cultural Heritage & Museums Organisations and initiatives Stories / Good practices Netherlands

## Cultural artefacts returned to Indonesia from the Wereldmuseum

# 288 Objects of Cultural value were repatriated from The Netherlands to Indonesia, following a request by the country's government. The objects are part of a wave of reparations for colonial activities and enterprises of European states.

The Wereld Museum in Amsterdam returned a centuries-old Buddhist Sculpture, a bejeweled armband, and many other artifacts to Indonesia on Friday [09/20/2024]. A ceremony was held that day to mark the return of the 288 pieces held at the museum.

The action was part of a pan-European effort to return cultural artifacts to form colonies in an attempt to make colonial reparations. The objects were taken from what was 'the Dutch East Indies', much of the Indonesian Archipelago, during the 19th century via colonial exploitation of the region.

In 2020 the [Dutch Council for Culture](#) created a repatriation report for cultural heritage objects taken against their will. The committee had a role in advising the government to take action on the Indonesian request. The Dutch minister for culture, Eppo Bruins, noted that the request could not be ignored [stating](#) that the objects should 'never have been in the Netherlands.'

This action represents a second wave of efforts from the Dutch government towards object repatriation since drafting that report. The [first](#) was the return of over 500 objects to Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Bali in 2023. The commission responsible for drafting the report acted as an advisory body for these diplomatic exchanges and continues to push for retribution for these objects.

## Key Takeaways

This statue of Brahma is among the works being returned to Indonesia. Image credits: The Art Newspaper

Museums are taking this as an opportunity to create critical museology based on de-colonial processes. The Wereldmuseum openly states on its website '[The museum has a colonial history](#)', citing awareness of coloniality and its ongoing impact. Regular exhibitions about coloniality exist, and non-European cultural contexts by international curators and artists have taken the spotlight.