



Cultural Heritage Agency
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

Assessing Museum Collections

Collection valuation in six steps



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Colophon

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Introduction

Value is a key concept within heritage care. Things that are perceived as valuable will be used and re-used, cherished or preserved, whereas things to which we attach no value are neglected, discarded or destroyed. But the precise meaning of ‘value’ cannot be captured in just a few words. In fact, it is a particularly tricky term that can mean very different things – from price, esteem and utility to outcomes, significance and revenue. When we talk about ‘valuing’ in relation to heritage we mean making reasoned, verifiable statements about its value. We need to elucidate the value assigned to heritage in order to guide the way we preserve, develop and use this heritage, as well as to engender public support for it. Until now such valuation has been almost the exclusive preserve of professionals such as art and architectural historians, archaeologists, archivists, librarians and historians. In museums, this task has chiefly fallen to curators, who tend to express valuation in scientific or culture historical terms. But the world is changing – politically, economically and socially – and so too is the way we view heritage and valuation. Ideas about *who* values heritage are also subject to change.

This is why the Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency (RCE) has developed a new six-step system for assessing museum objects and collections, one that allows scope for changes in valuation. So what is new about this method? The new-style valuation assumes that there is always a motive for a valuation, and that there are various possible perspectives from which to assess a collection. The method highlights new and current valuation criteria and

describes how value scores should be underpinned by arguments. The criteria identified – such as condition, ensemble value, provenance, artistic value, information value and perception value – are classified into four main groups. One relates to the item or collection’s formal features, such as provenance, condition and rarity or representativeness. By making an assessment against these criteria we arrive at a description, although not yet at a valuation. The other three groups of criteria relate to three value domains: culture historical (the traditional ‘expert values’), social and use value. Although these three groups are in principle of equal value, users may impose their own hierarchy if they so wish. In order to be considered part of cultural heritage, an item or collection must satisfy at least one ‘culture historical’ criterion.

The method outlined in *Assessing museum collections. Collection valuation in six steps* elaborates on earlier valuation methods and criteria. There are some significant improvements, however. The new method:

- can be applied at **different levels**: individual items, subcollections and entire collections
- can be applied to **different types of collections**: art history, cultural history, history, ethnology, natural history, technology, academic, maritime, etc.
- describes the **valuation process** step by step
- provides an opportunity to define a **reference framework** and to identify the stakeholders
- keeps the number of **criteria** to a minimum while still covering all relevant aspects of value
- considers not only culture historical values, but also **social and societal and use values**

- can be applied to both a **qualitative** valuation (a statement of significance) and a **semi-quantitative** valuation (a ranking such as ‘low’, ‘medium’, ‘high’)
- can be used to identify **development potential** (opportunities for value development).

Knowledge is indispensable for arriving at a meaningful valuation. The new method accepts that professionals – such as curators, collection managers, educational and PR staff and restorers – are not the only ones who possess knowledge about museum objects and collections. This knowledge is also held by others, by non-professionals such as members of the public, patrons, lenders, enthusiasts, tourists and ‘ordinary people’. In today’s world, ‘experts’ are no longer viewed as the sole authority on the value of heritage. Similarly, collection highlights don’t always occupy centre stage, but increasingly make way for the story and the people behind the object. It is therefore useful if the members of a valuation team come from different backgrounds and can contribute different kinds of knowledge. A multidisciplinary team can help to cultivate a more nuanced view of the collection.

This document makes a distinction between ‘value’, ‘criteria’ and ‘significance’. Value includes the historical, artistic, economic, emotional, scientific, social and community values that can be assigned to an item or collection. Each ‘value’ is determined by the degree to which the item or collection meets certain ‘criteria’. In other words, an item has artistic value if it is special by virtue of its style or design or if it represents an important artist or art movement. It is the *combination* of all these values – from historical to community value – that makes up the ‘significance’ of an item or collection. The notion of ‘intrinsic value’ does not appear in this new methodology. This is because an item does not have a fixed value that can be measured objectively. It is we, those who carry out a valuation, who assign value to an item or collection. Significance is something that is ‘made’.

Assessing museum collections sets out the new approach to valuation step by step. In this way those who use it will gradually arrive at a clear appreciation of the

value of an item or collection. You will discover as you go that valuing can at times be problematic. It can give rise to doubts and dilemmas or bring to light irreconcilable views. Take for example the contested heritage value of the Netherlands’ past as a slaving nation or the value of war monuments commemorating German victims. There is no doubt that there is plenty of fuel for discussion here. The final outcome of a valuation can be utilised in different ways. It represents the starting point and rationale for new decisions or actions. It answers the question that is asked about the items or collection at the start of the valuation.

It is important, finally, that the values assigned to items or collections are not set in stone. Ideas can change over time and a valuation is simply a snapshot. Several years down the track, and perhaps for a different occasion, a collection may need to be valued once again.

Why conduct a valuation?

Professionally managing a museum collection involves making choices. Which items should be exhibited? Which ones should be restored, given additional protection or even reallocated? A collection manager has to weigh up the various museum objects when apportioning budgets. The same applies when submitting a grant application or drawing up an evacuation list. The cultural value of museum objects plays a key role here. Nowadays increasing emphasis is placed on an item or collection's use value, emotional value and community value. Collection managers arrive at well-considered decisions by exploring, articulating and making a case for all these values. Communicating values also plays a vital role in engendering public support for the preservation of collections.

Valuing involves making reasoned, verifiable statements about the value of an object or collection in response to a question, on the basis of previously established and defined criteria, within an appropriate reference framework and for specific stakeholders.

Collection management is the strategic deployment of people and resources to ensure that the collection is optimally used, preserved and developed.

A step-by-step valuation

Assessing museum collections. Collection valuation in six steps is a practical guide for assigning value to items, parts of collections or entire collections. It is aimed at anyone engaged in the professional management

of a collection. By going through the process step by step, you can use the outcome to underpin your museum's remit, to communicate the significance of your collection and to better fulfil your professional role as collection manager. A valuation can also serve as a basis for collection policy and planning. It helps you to assess the relative values of museum objects and collections, to make decisions about interventions and to talk about conflicting interests. It can also make the stories behind the collection more accessible, boost visitor engagement with the collection and explain why museum items and collections deserve protection and care.

The Amsterdam flower market



From *Nightwatch* to Flower Market

The city of Amsterdam, its restaurants and hotels, benefit financially from places like the Rijksmuseum. This is because tourists who come to admire Rembrandt's *Nightwatch* may then go on to take a canal boat tour, to visit the Flower Market or the Anne Frank House.

Value in collection management – a model

Collection management – activities that are part of professionally managing a collection – falls into three categories: use, preservation and development (see the collection management triangle in Fig. 1). The *use* of a collection involves among other things exhibiting, lending or making reference to objects (e.g. reading an archival document). It also includes examining items for the purposes of presentation, loan or publication. *Preservation* covers activities relating to the management of items, such as registration, conservation and ensuring optimum storage conditions (e.g. storing drawings in an acid-free box, regulating the climate in a depot, keeping the collection dust-free). And *development* involves enriching the collection, for example through acquisition or further historical, art historical, anthropological or material research.

The value assigned to a collection plays a key role in these three activities.

In terms of use, a museum does something with this value, including it in the permanent display, in publications or in temporary exhibitions. Preservation limits an item's loss of value by counteracting its inevitable physical deterioration. Development, on the other hand, adds value in that more knowledge is gathered and then shared with other museums, art historians, researchers and the public at large. New insights can also lead to a reduction in value, for example, when an item believed to be authentic turns out to be a fake. A collection's

accessibility is vital in all of this. If you can't access the items, you can't do anything with them. This applies to both physical and virtual access (e.g. digitised photos on the internet) and to the knowledge associated with an item. Value therefore plays a greater or lesser role in all collection management activities. In fact, collection management is all about 'managing values'. Most important of all is articulating and communicating why items and collections are significant.



Figure 1. The collection management triangle

Financial and economic value

A collection valuation has no bearing on a collection's financial value. When an item is added to a museum collection, it is removed from the market place. Having the status of museum object implies that it is no longer a marketable commodity and therefore has no market value. Of course, it may be assigned a financial value – established by a registered valuer – for insurance purposes. While this insurance value does bear a relationship to the assumed market value, it is not

the same thing. A new situation arises if a museum decides to reallocate an item. If other museums are not interested in the object, selling it is a possible form of disposal, in which case it will re-enter the market and can be assigned a financial value. This publication does refer, however, to the criterion of economic value. This is not the financial value, but the extent to which an item or collection helps to generate revenue for the organisation, municipality or region.



Steam Tram
Museum Hoorn-
Medemblik. Photo
R. Korthof

Steam Tram Museum Hoorn-Medemblik

When mobile heritage is still 'active' and original rolling stock is still in use, it may have a high economic value. The Steam Tram Museum Hoorn-Medemblik organises special rides and events throughout the year that spotlight – and derive income from – the history of steam locomotion in the Netherlands.

Advantages

The method described in *Assessing museum collections. Collection valuation in six steps* builds on earlier valuation methods and criteria. There have been some significant improvements, however. The new method:

- can be applied at **different levels**: individual items, parts of collections and entire collections
- can be applied to **different types of collections**: art history, cultural history, history, ethnology, natural history, technology, academic, maritime, etc.
- describes the **valuation process** step by step
- provides an opportunity to define a **reference framework** and to identify the stakeholders
- keeps the number of **criteria** to a minimum while still covering all relevant aspects of value
- considers not only culture historical values, but also **social and use values**
- can be applied to both a **qualitative** valuation (a statement of significance) and a **semi-quantitative** valuation (a ranking such as 'low', 'medium', 'high')
- can be used to identify **development potential** (opportunities for value development).

Earlier valuation frameworks

Criteria for valuing museum items and collections have been developed in the Netherlands in the past. The first time was in 1984, when a valuation framework was drawn up in connection with the new Cultural Heritage Preservation Act (WBC). The Act aims to prevent privately-owned items of national significance from disappearing abroad. A list of significant items accompanies the Act and valuation criteria were drawn up at the time to determine whether a particular item or collection belonged on the list.

These criteria also served as a basis for the valuation criteria in the Delta Plan for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage, a major rescue operation for Dutch collections. Under the Delta plan, the State made vast sums available to deal with backlogs in collection management and preservation (such as unregistered items and poor storage conditions). As only the most important collections were eligible for subsidy, four categories were introduced to enable comparisons across collections in terms of value. Categories A and B were regarded as the top and 'subtop' of Dutch cultural heritage, C as supporting the museum's objective and D as not in keeping with the collection. The reference framework was the 'Netherlands Collection', a new concept to refer to all public collections in the Netherlands.

Another derivative of the Delta plan system was the Museum Inventory Project (MUSIP), carried

out from 1997 to 1999. It involved inventorying and valuing museum collections at subcollection level *for each province*. The main difference is that MUSIP valuations were conducted at the level of *individual institutions*, whereas the 'Netherlands Collection' was the reference framework for the Delta plan. Specific criteria based on these two methods were then developed for natural history collections, rail heritage, photo collections, among others.

Of more recent date are *Hulpmiddel voor de culturele waardering van historische interieurs* (Guide to the Cultural Valuation of Historical Interiors, 2010) and *Guidelines on Ways of Dealing with Religious Objects*, 2011), which were inspired in part by *Significance 2.0* (2001), an Australian valuation guide. Drawing up a statement of significance is central to that method. A statement of significance is a concise, reasoned summary of the values that an item or collection has for particular stakeholders. It is prepared in response to a question, on the basis of previously established and defined criteria, and within an appropriate reference framework. A key aspect of this statement is its focus on *why* something is of value. The final statement of significance articulates and substantiates these values in such a way that it can also be used directly as a communications tool, for example when submitting a grant application.

Who assigns value?

Knowledge is indispensable for arriving at a meaningful valuation. The knowledge required depends on the question being asked and the purpose of the valuation. Museums have in-house knowledge, with curators, restorers, presentation and exhibition staff, PR & marketing staff and registrars. But a good deal of knowledge can also be found outside museums – among collectors, visitors, patrons, enthusiasts and authors of books on cultural heritage.

Allowing different stakeholders to bring their own specific knowledge to a valuation will result in added value. These stakeholders could be professionals or non-professionals. 'Experts' are no longer seen as the only ones who should decide on the value of heritage. Increasingly, via the internet and other media, museums are asking the public – as groups or individuals – to document their own culture and history.

Working as a team on the valuation method outlined here can generate a greater wealth of information and produce a more nuanced outcome. This is because the collection is viewed from different perspectives. Case studies have shown that working as part of a multidisciplinary team helps to develop a shared view of the collection. Team members often come to the process with their own interests regarding the collection and end up speaking a 'common language'. A shared valuation process will also foster support for any subsequent decisions that might have to be made.

Suggestion. When carrying out a team valuation, you should appoint a neutral facilitator to guide the process as this will allow team members to focus on matters of substance. The facilitator can monitor progress and ensure that all the steps are carefully worked through. There is always a risk of straying off topic because of the complex issues involved and the scope for widely divergent views.

Suggestion. If a shared approach is required but you have neither the time nor the staff numbers to go through the entire valuation process as a team, you can start by filling in a few valuation forms together, as a trial. If there is agreement about the approach, you can then continue the valuation with fewer people, just one or two if need be.

Suggestion. If the museum staff do not have all the knowledge required to conduct the valuation, or if they would like an outsider's perspective, it is a good idea to involve outside experts and/or stakeholders in the process. This is particularly important if the reason for the valuation is to make reallocation decisions. It is important to identify which experts and stakeholders should be involved, what knowledge they should bring to the valuation and what their interest is in the collection. This will then make it possible to reconstruct retrospectively how the valuation was arrived at and from what perspective.

Experts from Amsterdam's Office of Monuments and Archaeology (BMA) were called in to help value the Willet-Holthuysen Museum collection. Their knowledge of the house's construction history and interiors proved a useful complement to that of the museum staff.

Suggestion. For a more comprehensive valuation of one or more items, it is useful to establish a folder of information on the items themselves and to gather as much background material as possible. Relevant sources include the object descriptions in the collection registration system, archival documentation relating to provenance and acquisition history, historical and art historical literature, exhibition and auction catalogues, restoration reports, data from material studies and information from the collection plan. Oral interviews with previous owners, manufacturers and current and former staff are another key source. Where necessary, you can supplement this information with a description of the item or collection based on a visual observation. Adding photos to the description (both overviews and close-ups of details) can be helpful. This folder should be linked to the object data in the collection registration system.

The valuation process comprises several steps that the team must go through to reach a useful outcome. For each step you can decide how detailed the information recorded on the worksheet needs to be, and what efforts you need to make to gather that information, depending on the reason, objective, time available and staff numbers. The instructions for completing the form describe and explain all six steps. Use the accompanying worksheet to go through them one by one and to record your results.

Steps in the valuation process

STEP 1:

formulate the motive and the question behind the valuation and record them on the valuation form

Carrying out a valuation is not an end in itself – there is always a prompt, a reason for doing so. This is usually because a decision or choice has to be made or because opportunities or threats have presented themselves.

Some motives for a valuation:

- a proposed acquisition
- to clean up all or part of a collection
- to finetune a collection profile
- to combine collections (e.g. following a merger)
- to draw up a collection plan
- to draw up a conservation plan
- to set up or reorganise a presentation or depot
- to promote collection mobility (reallocation and reassignment)
- to select a restoration method
- to mount a temporary exhibition

On the valuation form, specify as precisely as possible the motive for the valuation and the question being asked. Record this in the space provided at the top of the form.

The question will govern how you conduct the valuation. For example, it will determine the reference framework you choose (see step 2) and the criteria you apply (see step 3). The more precisely you word the motive and the parameters, the more useful the



Stained glass windows from the State collection

The Cultural Heritage Agency manages a collection of twentieth-century stained glass windows by both notable Dutch designers and unknown makers. Some of these windows are on loan to museums. The Cultural Heritage Agency wishes to bring the remaining windows to the attention of architects, designers, real estate owners and others so that they can be reallocated and made more accessible. It is important to establish their value as the statement of significance will provide information to aid with finding suitable new locations. An understanding of the values assigned to the windows, and by whom, will assist the process of finding the right location.

The whole seeks to represent the creation of things in glass, maker unknown, stained glass window, 81 x 138 cm, 1910-1919

outcomes will be. Moreover, the reason behind the valuation will determine which actions you need to take to reach a useful outcome and what form you can best present this in.



Abraham Willet's
collector's cabinet
in the Museum
Willet-Holthuysen

Focusing on the Willets

The twentieth century saw far-reaching changes to the interior of an Amsterdam canal house that has been home to the Willet-Holthuysen Museum since 1896. Most changes were to the detriment of the Willet's fine late-nineteenth-century interior. Thanks in part to a valuation, the history of the inhabitants is once again the museum's central focus. The formal rooms on the first floor have been given top priority. And yet the first success is not here, but on the floor above, where there was a small, nondescript white-painted room that served as an exhibition space. It used to hold modern display cases filled with memorabilia from the Backers, an Amsterdam regent family. When these items were given on loan for an exhibition, the question arose of whether the room should be returned to its former state after the exhibition. The answer was no. The new emphasis on the Willets had made a return of the Backers impossible. Thus the restoration of Abraham Willet's former collection room was prompted by a temporary exhibition elsewhere. The room is once again the attractive mini-museum of the last master of the house.



Illuminating Japanese prints

An exhibition of Japanese prints was what prompted Japan Museum SieboldHuis in Leiden to formulate a policy on light. SieboldHuis looks at the life and work of nineteenth-century physician Philipp Franz von Siebold, told through items which he himself collected in Japan and which form an official part of the collections of the National Museum of Ethnology, Naturalis Biodiversity Center and Leiden University Library. The staff first needed to establish what light dose would be acceptable for the especially light-sensitive Japanese prints. They then had to work out over what period of time they considered a loss of value to be acceptable. The outcomes, based on a valuation, were decisive. Some prints, which had been collected straight from the Japanese printers, had never been exposed to daylight or other light and therefore still retain their original colours. The information value of these examples is so high that the museum staff regard any fading as unacceptable. Exhibiting them is therefore out of the question. Prints that are in not such good condition are displayed in SieboldHuis with due caution. For these works the curators are prepared to accept a 'just noticeable' change involving 'a minimum loss of value over fifty years'.

Ladies performing music, Shunei, print in Japanmuseum SieboldHuis (from the collection of the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden), 145 x 32 cm, sine anno.

How do you restore a Van Gogh?

The floor and walls in Van Gogh's painting *The Bedroom* have faded considerably over the years. To find answers to a host of restoration issues, an exploration was made of the artist's purpose and of the values that the painting represents. This revealed that the aspect of colour was hugely important – it was chiefly through colour that Van Gogh sought to convey his emotions to the viewer. Interdisciplinary research has uncovered which contrasting colours he originally used. After the varnish was removed, the painting was not brought back to its original colours because other values, such as material authenticity, have prevailed. Repainting was not an option since it is not permissible to simply paint over the original paint. Old damage has been carefully eliminated, however. And in the choice of varnish, consideration has been given to Van Gogh's ideas on the subject and to what kind of varnish is safe for the paint layer, given the painting's current state. Work is being done on digital reconstructions to give viewers a true impression of how the original colours would have looked.



The Bedroom, Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), oil on canvas, 72.4 x 91.3 cm, 1888 Arles. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Stichting)

Head of Museum Affairs at the Arnhem Museum

Miriam Windhausen

‘**W**e valued the historical collection of the Arnhem Museum because it is going to be incorporated in the new Arnhem Heritage Centre, which will also house the Gelderland library. We have a broad collection that is largely the result of donations and bequests from the Arnhem nobility. This includes fine objects of national significance, such as Delftware and Asian porcelain, eighteenth-century silver and paintings from the Hague School. Our new guiding principle for the valuation was simple – Arnhem. Which items will best tell the city’s story in the Heritage Centre? The earlier dividing line in our collection – between historical and contemporary items – became blurred. Sometimes we were able to make a decision quickly. The two seventeenth-century views of Arnhem by Jan van Goyen will of course make the move to the new premises. They are of national significance because they are the work of such an illustrious landscape painter. But they are also important in regional terms. Here you can clearly see the natural topography of the city, hemmed in between the high moraine and the Rhine. And in the view of the city from the southwest you can see ferries and larger boats. They had chiefly a local function, for goods distribution and transit. But sometimes the choice was more difficult, such as with Melchior d’Hondecoeter’s Birds painting from 1678. We still have to make a final decision on that. That work has nothing to do with Arnhem, but it came to us in a bequest from the Brantsens, a prominent Gelderland family. And one of the things we’d like to do in the Heritage Centre is tell the story of the region’s nobility and why they built up collections. In short, it’s important when carrying out a valuation to take your time and to make carefully considered decisions. And a curator takes a different view from a publicity officer or a collection manager. The most important thing is to share your experiences. The result can be highly illuminating. ’

Miriam Windhausen and the ‘View of Arnhem from the southwest’ (1643) by Jan van Goyen



STEP 2:

decide what you are going to value, what reference framework you will use and who the stakeholders are. use the reference framework form as a guide if necessary.

There is no absolute yardstick for conducting a valuation. The value of an item or collection can only be judged in comparison with something else. That is why you always have to state what the item and collection is being compared with. In other words, what is your *reference framework*? Does an item have a high, medium or low value at the national, regional or local level, or within your own institution? What is the significance of an artwork in relation to the artist's complete oeuvre, or to other works from the same period, of the same style or from the same region? An item that is a highlight of your collection may have a more modest value at national level. The reverse could also be true – a national masterpiece may not fit the profile of your museum. By carefully wording the reason and question behind the valuation, you will arrive logically at an appropriate reference framework.

Stakeholders are people or groups who attach a special value to an item or collection, who have a current connection with it or a particular interest in it. For each item or collection, you may record on the reference framework form the people or groups who attach special value to or have a specific interest in it. This could be a group of volunteers who look after a particular part of a collection or friends of the museum who have helped fund an acquisition.

The reference framework determines what an item or collection is compared with or what perspective it is viewed from. This could be at an international, national, regional or local level, at the level of the organisation itself or from the perspective of a particular group or community.



Survivors of the Iconoclasm

The 'Survivors of the Iconoclasm' exhibition in Museum Catharijneconvent featured exceptional Utrecht sculptures from the fifteenth century. Although many artworks were lost in the Iconoclasm, a number of them survived the purge. Ninety sculptural masterpieces from Utrecht were selected for this exhibition. It goes without saying that this selection was based on a regional reference framework – Utrecht and its environs. The fact that some of the statues are also masterpieces at a national level is a bonus, but not the primary perspective for the exhibition.

Stone Head of a Woman, made by the Master of the Utrecht Stone Head of a Woman, first quarter 16th century



View of Schiedam belongs in Schiedam

Nico van Bekkum's 1936 watercolour *View of Schiedam* was added to the State collection in 1966 under the artists' subsidy scheme (BKR). In national terms it is of minor value, which is why the Cultural Heritage Agency decided to transfer the artwork to the Schiedam archive. There the townscape has a high regional historical value, which is one of the archive's collection criteria. The silhouettes of the mill and church tower of Schiedam are clearly visible on the skyline. The perspective used to make the valuation clearly showed that the watercolour was better suited to a collection with a regional character than a national one.

View of Schiedam,
Nico van
Bekkum (1936),
water colour,
37.7 x 54.5 cm,
1966

The reference framework usually follows on logically from the motive and question behind the valuation. However, this is not always self-evident and more thought may be required. It is then helpful to compile an inventory of those who attach value to an item or collection, and from what perspective. The reference framework form can be a useful guide here.

You can use this form to map out the various perspectives alongside one another – what you are

valuing, what you are comparing it with and for whom it is significant. This is likely to generate new insights that will suggest an appropriate reference framework. On the form, record whether the item or collection scores a 'low', 'medium' or 'high' within your chosen framework, and for whom. You should also record the reasons why you chose that particular reference framework. This will make it possible at a later date to identify why the valuation was conducted in this way.

Director of the Zoetermeer City Museum

Jouetta van der Ploeg

‘Our museum, which started out as a historical society, had been collecting everything under the sun since 1949. Anything connected with Zoetermeer and its environs – cobblers’ tools, drawings of the old village, TV sets, toys, blankets, linen bags, sugar packets and sporting logos of Zoetermeer companies. It was a mixed assortment, not based on any kind of selection policy. Eventually, both the museum and depot were at bursting point. It was high time to tidy up the collection, which meant first having to value it. But what reference framework should we use? A national viewpoint – that of the Netherlands Collection – wasn’t appropriate, as that didn’t fit the aim of our museum. We looked at what was important for Zoetermeer itself. And then we introduced our own hierarchy: a top collection, a core collection, a storage collection, and a collection to be discarded. That already cut things down considerably, eliminating objects in poor condition, pennants belonging to local sports clubs, duplicated items. When in doubt, the curator and I called in various experts on Zoetermeer history. They sometimes had better arguments for keeping an item than we did, or they had important information about the donors. All in all, four thousand items passed through our hands in this way. We spent an entire summer in the depot. The collection became more and more manageable and we were able to think about the direction we wanted the museum to take. For the first time, we drew up a clear mission statement and divided our collection policy into two themes. These are Village and Town, because of Zoetermeer’s status as a centre of urban expansion, and Mass culture and Interiors, because we want to present a picture of postwar Zoetermeer. Our exhibitions are also based on this classification. Thanks to the valuation and to our chosen reference framework, the museum now has a more robust profile. If I had an opportunity to do it all over again, I’d compare our collection with those in the surrounding region to see where there is duplication, especially in our local history subcollection.’

Jouetta van der Ploeg in an office with a cash register and time clock from the early twentieth century, donated by a former Zoetermeer businessman





A view of the
'The Presentation',
an exhibition put together
by Queen Beatrix in
the Stedelijk Museum.
Photo Stedelijk Museum
Amsterdam

Beatrix's choice

If you had to put together a 'national top 100' of postwar Dutch art, it is obvious what the reference framework would be – a national one. But in 2000 when the Stedelijk Museum (a museum of modern and contemporary art and design) invited Queen Beatrix, as guest curator, to mount an exhibition of her favourite pieces of Dutch art after 1945, the reference framework was above all a personal one.

STEP 3:

decide the relevant criteria for the valuation and define the valuation framework – record them on the valuation form

‘Valuing’ refers to the process of spelling out the values assigned to an item or collection by testing them against previously established and defined criteria. Before embarking on a valuation, you have to decide on the valuation criteria that are relevant to finding answers to the question you have asked. This publication and the associated valuation form categorise the most commonly used criteria into features and three main groups namely *culture historical*, *social* and *use*. Although these last three groups are in principle of equal value, an item or collection must satisfy one or more ‘culture historical’ criteria to be considered part of cultural heritage.

If necessary, the valuation team can rank these groups or the criteria within a group. Any such hierarchy will depend on the museum’s mission and objectives or on the question asked in the valuation. For a museum whose primary focus is entertainment rather than knowledge transfer, a collection’s perception value will probably carry greater weight than its culture historical values. A museum of art, on the other hand, will no doubt attach greater importance to artistic value than to information value. Two frames of reference were chosen for valuing the collection of the Arnhem Museum. The first was the regional or provincial level – what significance does the collection have for the Arnhem region and the province of Gelderland? The second was from the perspective of the Heritage Centre, which the Arnhem Museum has been part of since 2013 – what value does the collection represent in relation to the new Heritage Centre?

Suggestion. If you have problems deciding beforehand which criteria are relevant for you, you can start with the full set of criteria on the valuation form. As you work your way through them, you will soon discover which ones you can skip or which ones you would like to add. But don’t be too quick to add your own criteria. You may discover as you go that an item or collection can be assigned values that were not obvious at first glance.

Use the motive and question behind the valuation to decide which criteria you will base your assessment on. The valuation form sets out the most common criteria and groups them logically. There is space at the bottom of the form for you to add any additional criteria that apply specifically to your collection or institution. If you do add your own criteria, state clearly what you mean by them.

Suggestion. When working on the valuation as a team, it is useful to have a large version of the form to refer to. During discussions this will allow everyone to see at a glance what the valuation criteria are and which main groupings they fall under.

Suggestion. You could also include the valuation criteria on your institution’s acquisition form. Go over the list of criteria for each proposed acquisition. This will enable you to test each acquisition in terms of its significance for the collection.



Cooking stove, with components from Vulcaansoord, Terborg, sheet iron outer casing, cast iron ornamentation, 1880-1900

The story behind the stove

The Netherlands Open Air Museum (NOM) in Arnhem was offered a set of stoves by the Netherlands Stove Museum in Alkmaar, which was closing its doors. Because NOM already had its own collection of stoves, this called for a valuation of part of its collection. The outcome then placed the museum in a better position to decide which of its own stoves should be reallocated and which Alkmaar stoves might be added to the NOM collection. In the valuation, the NOM ranked the various criteria in terms of importance. At the top of the list came ensemble value, provenance value and economic value. Historical and artistic value were ranked as being of medium importance and information value as least important. The museum attaches considerable value to traces of use and repair, especially as its collection policy is geared towards everyday items that show clear signs of wear and tear. These can tell us something about everyday life in the past and about the story behind the object.

The valuation method outlined in this publication does not prescribe a particular valuation framework, as this will depend on the motive for the valuation, the question being asked, what is being valued and the reference framework – all of which differ in each case. It is you who must decide on the valuation framework, the ‘yardstick’ by which to assess your collection. To do so, you first need to outline in general terms (in the ‘low’, ‘medium’ and ‘high’ columns) which criteria an item or collection must satisfy to be assigned each of these labels. In other words, you decide what ‘low’, ‘medium’ and ‘high’ mean for you. This should be done for each chosen criterion.

Defining the valuation framework is vital in order for your organisation to develop a common approach to the allocation of scores. This is particularly important if different people are conducting the valuation, either as a team or independently of one another. But even if only one person is involved it makes sense to establish valuation parameters for the future. This will also make it possible at a later date to identify how you arrived at particular scores.

STEP 4:

assign value scores and support them with arguments – record this on the valuation form

The valuation form can be used in various ways. By filling out the form in its entirety, copying the text from the 'Argumentation' sections and arranging them in successive order, you will have a complete statement of significance. This statement is then a useful tool for communicating the significance of a collection, for explaining why an item would make a useful supplement to your collection or why you are applying for an acquisition or restoration grant. If, on the other hand, your aim is to set priorities for collection care, it is useful to have a general overview of the collection at the level of the various subcollections. Here, an indication of value in terms of 'low', 'medium' and 'high' is often enough to provide an overview of how value is spread across the collection.

It is problematic to attempt to fully quantify cultural value and then express it in terms of a single number. Some institutions do so by assigning weighting factors to the individual criteria and then adding up the weighted scores. This tends to give a distorted picture because weighting factors can differ for each item. For example, a badly burnt book with a high information value can be no less of a highlight than a painting in perfect condition with a high artistic value.

Record on the valuation form whether and to what extent the item or collection satisfies your chosen criteria and why. Additional questions have been added for each criterion on the form. A fuller explanation of the different criteria follows below.

Suggestion. You will often have some idea beforehand about whether an item or collection has a higher or lower than average value. If this is the case, you can assign a score for each chosen criterion and back it up with arguments. If you have not yet worked out your judgement in advance, you can start by answering the additional questions. You can then describe how the item or collection meets the criteria and assign a score.

Suggestion. The arguments accompanying the valuation are often more important than the score you give. Valuations are a snapshot: they are subject to change, dependent on the knowledge and background of the people conducting them, on the chosen reference framework, and on a moment in time. It is therefore important to record your arguments so that you and your successors can later find out how you arrived at a particular judgement.

Features

Once you have formulated the motive and the question behind the valuation, have decided on the scope, the reference framework and the stakeholders, and have selected and defined the criteria, the actual valuation can begin. You need to record the information you have about the items or collection in terms of four *features* – condition, ensemble value, provenance and rarity/representativeness. The information in the collection registration system is often a useful place to start. Is the item in a stable condition, is it suitable for use? Is it made up of parts that form a whole? Are there different items that have a strong association with one another? Is the provenance documented? Is the item or collection unique of its kind?

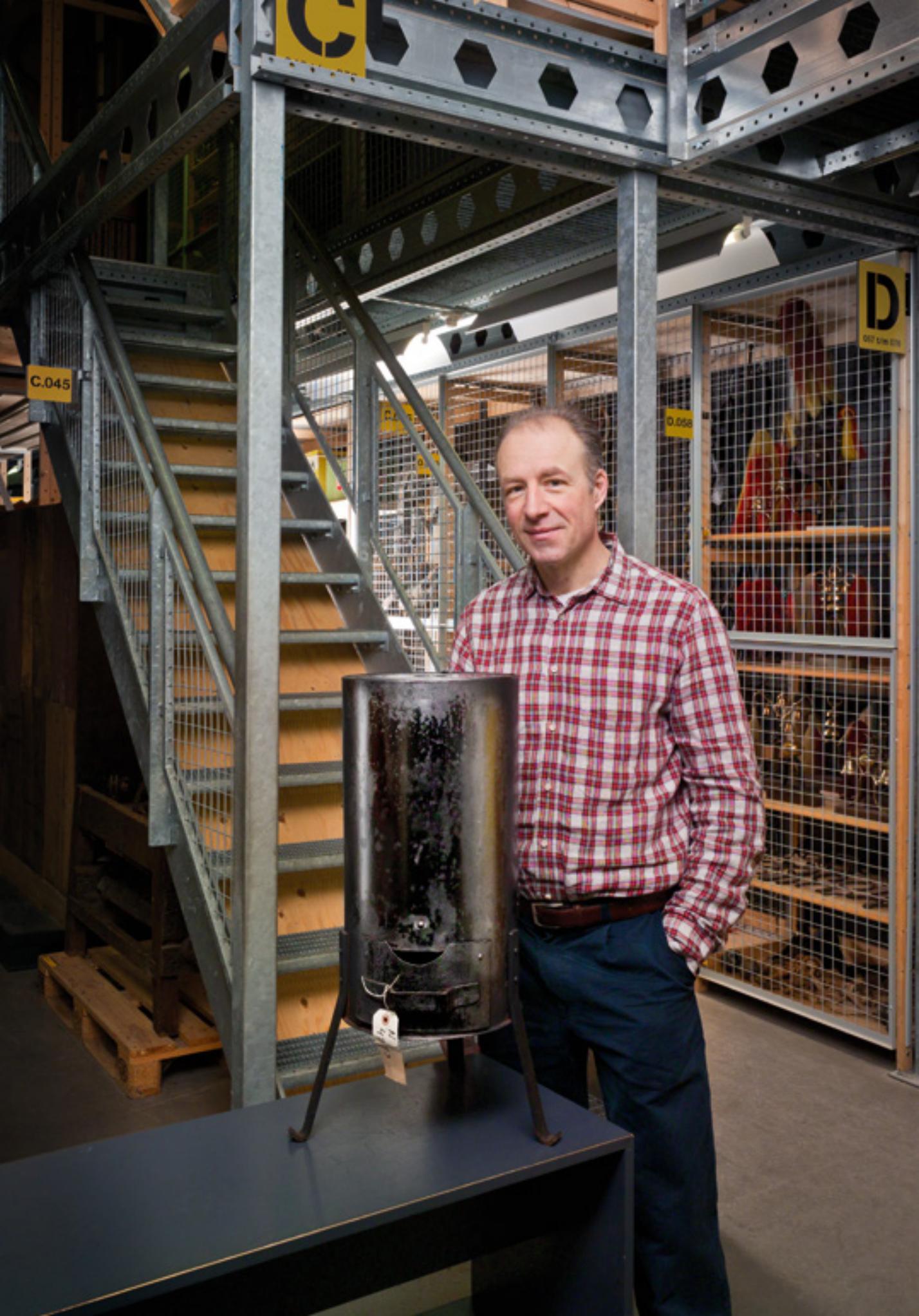
Of themselves, the outcomes say nothing about the value, although they may affect an item's valuation. You need the outcomes to determine the culture historical, social and use values of the item or collection. If the provenance is completely unknown, for example, it is often hard to establish the historical or artistic value.

The four features can strengthen or weaken the substantive values. A provenanced item is usually assigned a higher information value than an equivalent unprovenanced item, and an item with a high historical value and in excellent condition will be valued more highly than an equivalent item in poor condition.

Curator of domestic culture at the Netherlands
Open Air Museum in Arnhem

Hans Piena

‘As well as examining the ensemble, artistic or presentation value of items in the valuation, we also took a good look at signs of reuse, repairs and traces of use. These aspects are central to the collection because our museum is concerned with everyday life. So most of our objects have been used, such as items of clothing that were handed down from mother to daughter. There’s a lot you can learn from them – they’ve often been altered over the years and adapted to the latest fashion. The same applies to furniture, which was endlessly repaired and reused in order to save money. For some types, such as a particular eighteenth-century commode, there are no surviving examples. It’s obvious that some of our stoves were repaired professionally while others were patched up by the owners themselves, using a piece of tin secured with wire to cover a crack – nice details that really bring an item to life. But stoves have even more to say. They can tell us about the period in the late nineteenth century when separate kitchens became fashionable. Before that, many people lived in one room around a single stove. That’s where they boiled the baby’s nappies, heated food for the animals, boiled water for cleaning milk cans, and prepared food. When visitors see these signs of use, they find it easier to visualise that situation. This is what increases the value of the item. Or take our World War Two emergency stove. When coal ran out during the Hongerwinter, the Dutch famine of 1944, and it was freezing cold, the Germans ordered the city’s gas supply to be turned off. All companies that were able to work metal then made make-shift stoves. Everything went into these stoves – the hatch to the attic, books and finally even the bookshelves. Half the Dutch population used these stoves in their struggle to survive. When I see this one, it brings a lump to my throat – those times were harder than I can possibly imagine. ’



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Residues in pharmacy jars

Some items should not be cleaned because old traces of use need to be carefully preserved. These tell us something about an item's use, composition or history, and about its contents. One such example are the pharmacy jars in the collection of Museum Boerhaave whose chemical contents are unknown and whose labels are now illegible. Research into the composition of the medicine residues can produce both definite answers and added value. The same applies to the contents of funerary urns or the residues in antique Egyptian cosmetic flasks at the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities.

Pharmacy jar with inscription 'OL io Di APPARIT io', Italian earthenware, 1550-1650

On the other hand, the very fact that an item looks old and worn may enhance its perception value. Experience has shown that a valuation team will constantly switch back and forth between the features and substantive values in this step of the process. This enables them to adjust their thinking and finetune their conclusions, and eventually, to arrive at a well-considered final judgement. Because a valuation is not a static entity but can change over time, the result could be different in five years' time. Moreover, a different question may arise, leading to a different outcome.

(1) Condition

- Is the item or collection in good condition compared with comparable items or collections?
- Is the item or collection in good condition for the function that it fulfils – is it suitable for use?
- Is the item or collection intact or complete? What parts are missing?
- Is the item or collection in its original condition? If not, what changes have been made?
- Does the collection show traces of use?



Raku bowl,
maker unknown, stoneware,
ca. 1650 - ca. 1750

Restoration can sometimes enhance value

Although cracks or visible restorations usually reduce an object's value, the opposite is the case for a certain type of raku bowl in Japan, where restorations in fact boost value. These bowls do not need to have a smooth polish as it is their imperfections that lend added depth. The bowl in the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum collection reflects the 'hidden beauty' beneath the surface. It is an anonymous seventeenth-century imitation of the sixteenth-century Japanese raku bowls that were used in tea ceremonies. This type of bowl is valued for its special form, which lets you cup the tea in your hands, as it were. Simply turn the bowl in your hands until it falls naturally into place. The provenance of these bowls is of particular importance to the Japanese, and bowls that once belonged to famous tea masters are especially prized.

Collections and components that are in good condition tend to be valued more highly than ones that are not. A collection with exceptional integrity (undamaged, little or no wear, little or no discolouration) or one that is still mainly made up of its original materials may contain information that has not been preserved (or is barely preserved) elsewhere. On the other hand, past traces of wear and use may sometimes enhance culture historical values, such as historical value and information value.

Related terms:

state, intactness, material authenticity, material integrity



The company of Captain Frans Banninck Cocq and Lieutenant Willem van Ruytenburch, known as The Nightwatch, Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn, oil, 4.37 x 3.63 m, 1642

Condition of the Nightwatch

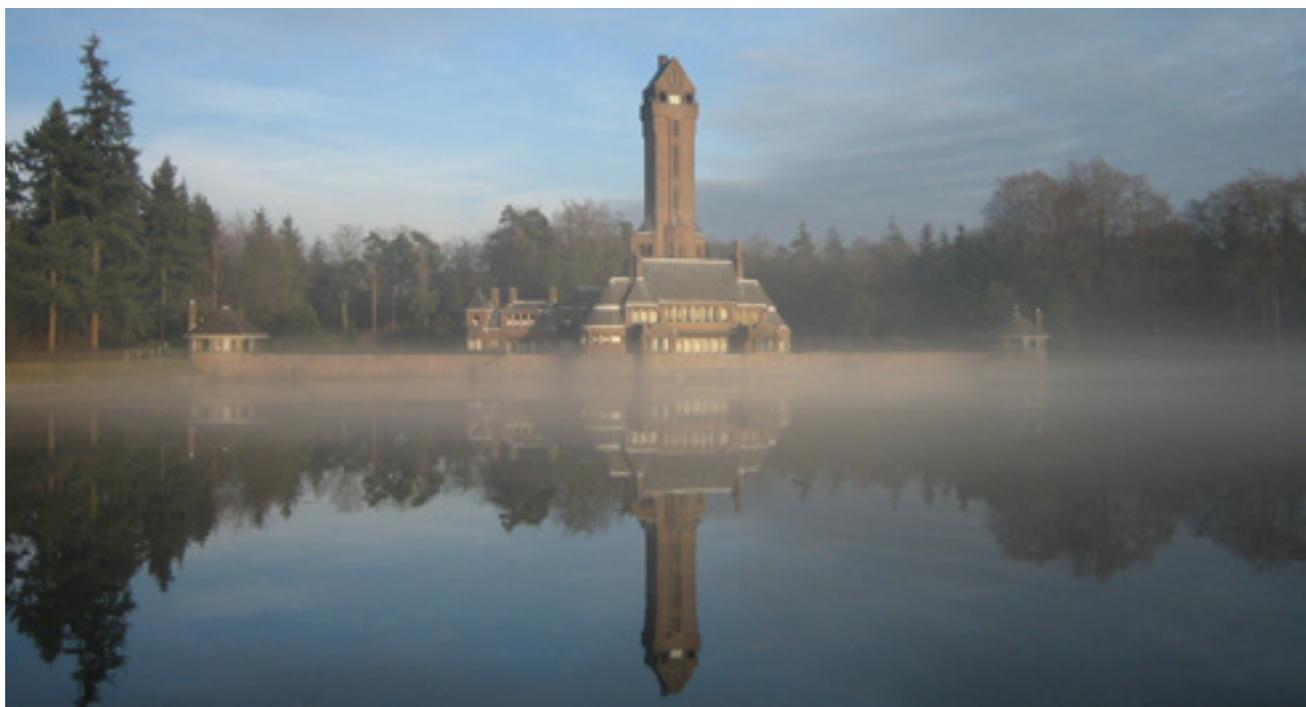
Rembrandt van Rijn's celebrated *Nightwatch* has had much to contend with over the years. The masterpiece that hangs in the Rijksmuseum today is not in its original form. Painted between 1639 and 1642, it was originally some 5 by 3.87 metres. Later, in 1715, the regents ordered large strips to be cut away so that the canvas would fit on the wall of the Royal Palace in Amsterdam. The painting now measures 4.37 by 3.63 metres. A replica and a watercolour were made of the painting and, although much smaller than the original, they give a good idea of the missing sections. Later, the painting incurred further damage. In 1975 a visitor attacked it with a knife and in 1990 someone else threw hydrochloric acid over it. In both cases the painting could be restored. These incidents have in no way detracted from the value placed on this militia painting. *The Nightwatch* represents numerous values, including historical, artistic, museum, economic and perception values. Moreover, the painting continues to enjoy a current value as an icon of national identity, even though it has suffered much as an object.

(2) Ensemble value

- Does it involve an ensemble?
- What is the link (relationship between items, relationship of the subcollection to other subcollections, relationship between items and documentation, relationship between the collection, buildings and setting)? Also bear in mind the relationship between tangible and intangible aspects such as sound and smell.
- Is the original ensemble intact or has the link between particular components been broken?

Related terms:

intactness, unity, cohesion, conceptual integrity, conceptual authenticity, contextual authenticity

**Sint Hubertus hunting lodge has everything**

The Sint Hubertus hunting lodge represents one of the most exceptional ensemble values in the Netherlands. The Krölller-Müllers, an art-collecting couple, commissioned architect H.P. Berlage (1856-1934) to design the building, its interior, furniture and annexes, the garden with its pathways and pond, as well as the surroundings. The result was a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a unified whole. A number of artists worked on the building alongside Berlage. Besides the cohesion between these various elements, there is also a link with the Hoge Veluwe National Park and the art collection housed in the Krölller-Müller Museum. The Sint Hubertus hunting lodge has a high ensemble value because everything is so precisely coordinated, has been kept together and still functions in its original setting. It also has a high artistic value because it exemplifies the development of Dutch style in the early twentieth century.

Sint Hubertus Hunting Lodge, H.P. Berlage, designed in 1914. The Hoge Veluwe National Park Foundation

The mystery of the salon paintings

Did they belong together or not – the four paintings by Ferdinand Bol (1616-1680) in the Peace Palace in The Hague and a fifth canvas in the North Brabant Museum? At first glance the stories they depict – armour-clad Aeneas, Moses in his bulrush basket and King Cyrus returning the temple treasures to the Israelites – seem to bear little relationship to one another. But nothing could be further from the truth. These paintings once hung alongside one another in the salon of a house on the Nieuwegracht in Utrecht, as revealed by an investigation carried out by the Cultural Heritage Agency in collaboration with the University of Amsterdam (and funded by NWO, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research). When Bol's paintings were restored, the nail holes, varnish remains and the way the paint layers were built up were examined in detail. So too were the history and construction history of the house, along with various archival documents. It was discovered that in the mid-seventeenth century widow Jacoba Lampsins commissioned Ferdinand Bol to paint canvases to cover the walls of her salon. The stories that he painted all relate to her wish that her three sons might occupy high positions in society, as well as to the battle within the Utrecht city council about the management of property belonging to the Catholic Church. Like so many ensemble works, they have become separated, resulting in what is known as 'orphan works'. By unravelling the mystery surrounding these Ferdinand Bol canvases, we now know that they once belonged together.

Jacobca Lampsins' salon with three of the five wall-size paintings by Ferdinand Bol, total ensemble surface area approx. 75 m², 1660-1663. Digital reconstruction
Jonathan Gratton



(3) Provenance

- Is the provenance of the item or collection known and documented?
- Who made/designed the item or collection?
- Who commissioned the making of the item or collection?
- Who has owned the item or collection?
- How was the item or collection used in the past, and by whom?
- What is known about the acquisition (purchase, gift, bequest, loan)?
- How reliable is the provenance information?
- How does knowledge about the provenance of the item or collection add to its significance?

Suggestion. Items and collections with a well-documented provenance are likely to be valued more highly than those which are less well-documented or not at all. Valuation is more difficult if little is known about the provenance. In such cases it is advisable to try to find out more about the provenance history before embarking on a valuation.

Related terms:

documentation, life story, biography, source, origin, pedigree

(4) Rarity and representativeness

- Is the item or collection unique of its kind?
- Are there (many or few) comparable items or collections?
- Are there exceptional features that distinguish the item or collection from others? For example, is it especially well documented?
- Is it an exceptional or special example of a certain type of item or collection?
- Is it highly representative of a particular period, place, style, movement, practice, theme, community?

The combination of certain authentic elements in an item or collection can increase its rarity value.



Reunited at last

The portrait of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia and its zinc frame have been reunited after more than a century. In 1907 Hague painter Sophie Hirschmann donated her portrait of the Tsar to mark the Second Hague Peace Conference, held in the Ridderzaal. The painting was supposed to hang in the Peace Palace, which was still under construction, but this did not happen because its zinc frame was too heavy. And in the meantime Tsar Nicholas II had donated another portrait of himself. Hirschmann's painting, without its frame, became part of the State collection in 1954. In 2010 a conservator at the Cultural Heritage Agency learned by accident that the painting must once have sported a magnificent frame. He felt that if the frame was still around, it had to be somewhere in the vicinity of the Ridderzaal. And indeed, that's where it was discovered – in the Ridderzaal attic. Since then, frame and painting have been reunited, thus restoring the original ensemble. The ensemble value has been enhanced, which in turn has boosted the historical value of both painting and frame. The zinc frame is also special because of the material from which it is made, which is unique for a frame.

Painter Sophie Hirschmann posing with her portrait of Tsar Nicholas II in a zinc frame, 1907.

Veenhuijzen Collection, Central Bureau for Genealogy, The Hague



Visitors viewing the
Panorama Mesdag,
Hendrik Willem
Mesdag, oil paint,
14 x 120 m, 1881

Panorama Mesdag

The *Panorama Mesdag* (1881) in The Hague offers a unique view of the North Sea, the dunes, The Hague and Scheveningen. Measuring no less than 120 metres in circumference and 14 metres in height, the Netherlands biggest painting is considered the most important work in Hendrik Willem Mesdag's oeuvre. The impressive canvases, arranged to form a cylindrical work, create a special experience and illusion for the viewer standing in the centre. Panorama paintings were very popular in the latter half of the nineteenth century, but only a handful have been preserved. The *Panorama Mesdag* is the world's oldest surviving panorama in its original location and is therefore a rare culture historical monument. It is listed as one of the top 100 UNESCO monuments in the Netherlands.

If an item or collection scores highly on one or more features, this can increase or reduce its culture historical values. The fact that an item is very old or rare usually enhances its historical value, as does a known provenance. But this alone does not automatically mean that it can be assigned a culture historical value, or that it is a heritage object.

Related terms:

uniqueness, exemplar value, prototype, type exemplar

Culture historical values

To be labelled as cultural heritage – in other words worth preserving – an item or collection must satisfy one or more culture historical criteria. We have identified three criteria: historical value, artistic value and information value. The *features* (condition, ensemble value, provenance and rarity/representativeness) can increase or decrease the values assigned on the basis of the substantive criteria. They also make it easier to compare items and collections with one another.



Detail of the walking cane with Johan van Oldenbarnevelt's initials, Museum Flehite, Amersfoort. Photo Ep de Ruyter



Johan van Oldenbarnevelt's walking cane, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, maker unknown, wood, ivory and iron, 96 cm, 1600-1625

Johan van Oldenbarnevelt's cane

Not all walking canes have value but the one that belonged to Dutch statesman Johan van Oldenbarnevelt certainly does. That cane is imbued with historical significance because Van Oldenbarnevelt used it to mount the scaffold shortly before he was beheaded. The poet Vondel even wrote a poem about it. The cane thus acquired a relic-like status. A number of museums, such as Museum Flehite in Amersfoort and the Rijksmuseum, also claim to hold the original. The latter even has two of them (one of which is on loan from the Amsterdam University Library). So which is the one true walking cane belonging to Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, the one he used to climb the scaffold in 1619? We will never know. The significance of all these canes lies not so much in the material objects themselves, with their contested authenticity, but in the historical events to which they refer.

(1) Historical value

- Is the item or collection associated with an important historical person, group, community, place, event or activity?
- Does the item or collection reflect an important historical period, process, theme, development, zeitgeist or way of life?

- Does the item or collection help us to understand a period, place, activity, industry, group, community, person or event, and if so, how?

Related terms:

biographical value, social history value, natural history value, scientific history value, technological history value

General director of the Rotterdam Museum. He has held the special 'History of Rotterdam' chair at Erasmus University Rotterdam since 1997.

Paul van de Laar

‘**T**he object with catalogue number 21063, better known as the white flag of surrender of Rotterdam, has an enormous historical value. Not that you can tell from its appearance – it’s simply a white bedsheet attached to a broomstick. But this was the flag held by sergeant-major Gerrit van Ommering at four o’clock on 14 May 1940, when Rotterdam surrendered to the Germans following the catastrophic bombing of the city. He carried it across the old Willemsbrug bridge towards the German troops on the other side of the Meuse river. You can also see it in old film footage. The Rotterdam Museum acquired the flag in 1980. Before that the Van Ommering family had kept it rolled up and stored in the meter cupboard. Van Ommering’s widow asked us to come and collect it. We were delighted because it obviously represents a highlight for our museum. The flag is also of great interest to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, for their national history department. But we’re the ones who have it! And we’ll leave the bloodstains as they are. Because when Van Ommering walked through Rotterdam with that flag, he stopped and used a torn-off strip to bandage up a wounded Dutch marine. That’s how the blood spatters got there. And they of course increase the flag’s perception value. Since we’ve had it here in the museum, there’s been all manner of speculation about its authenticity. Some people who have looked at old film footage claim that the flagpole is square, whereas the one on our flag is round. Others are convinced that this is a sheet from the Vroom & Dreesmann department store, and not one that was just grabbed from a nearby house. More than one white flag was used in Rotterdam that day, but we have no doubts about this one – it’s the real flag of surrender. The fact that this discussion flares up from time to time shows you just how special this flag is. ’



(2) Artistic value

- Does the item or collection have a special design, style or execution?
- Does the item or collection demonstrate special artistry, creativity or originality of idea, form or function?
- Is the item or collection a good example of a particular style, design, artistic movement or of the work of a particular artist, designer or architect?
- Is the item or collection original or innovative in its design?
- Does the item or collection show a high degree of creativity, workmanship or technical accomplishment in its execution?

Related terms:

art historical value, architectural history value, design value, workmanship, decorative value

(3) Information value

- Is the item kept because of the information that can be 'read' from it, such as archival documents, books and natural history specimens?
- Is the item or collection of interest for science, scholarship or research now or in the future?
- Does the item or collection contain specific elements or components that are of interest for science, scholarship or research?
- Does the item constitute a vital piece of evidence for a particular process, theory or discovery?

Related terms:

scientific value, research value, documentation value, reference value, archival value



Study for Counter-composition XVI, Theo van Doesburg, pencil, gouache, paper, 5 x 9 cm, 1924

Van Doesburg versus Mondrian

Theo van Doesburg's *Counter-compositions* represent a special artistic value. They are key works both in terms of Van Doesburg's oeuvre and in Dutch art history. The paintings with diagonals were a rebellious response to the work of Mondrian, who worked only with horizontal and vertical lines during this period. Van Doesburg exerted a major influence on the art movement De Stijl and in about 1923 he developed in a new direction, inspired by the architects with whom he collaborated. His compositions, which he called 'counter-compositions', acquired an element of movement through the use of diagonals. It led to a radical break with Mondrian, who resigned from De Stijl shortly afterwards.



The Peanut Butter Floor, Wim T. Schippers, first executed in 1962, purchased by the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam in 2010. Photo Lotte Stekelenburg

Peanut butter with humour

The artistic value of *The Peanut Butter Floor* by Wim T. Schippers has not gone unchallenged. Museum Boijmans van Beuningen's purchase of the artwork in 2010 sparked a minor commotion, with both the acquisition and the artist attracting a good deal of media attention. Opinions about the artwork's value were strongly divided. Director Sjarel Ex called it the most important purchase of the year. The artist Wim T. Schippers works in many fields, as a maker of radio and television programmes, a writer and a visual artist. His work is associated with the Fluxus movement, with pop art and conceptual art.

Humour and absurdity are a central aspect of his work. He likes to create confusion and to play with traditional ideas about art. *The Peanut Butter Floor* is a conceptual artwork that was first executed by the artist in 1962. The uproar that arose in 2010 did precisely what Schippers had been doing for forty years – getting people to think about what art actually is. Schippers also likes to show the light-hearted side of art. Viewed in these terms, *The Peanut Butter Floor* has lost none of its artistic value forty years after its debut.



Untitled, design for sgraffito, Jeroen Voskuyl, gouache, pencil and paper, 84.5 x 73 cm, 1954

Voskuyl's design sketches

The design sketches and drawings for artist Jeroen Voskuyl's sgraffito for the Geodesy Faculty building in Wageningen – designed by architect F. Röntgen in 1953 and now a listed building – are a useful source of information.

The artist's heirs donated the sketches and drawings to the Dutch State. Voskuyl died at a young age and little is known about his monumental work. The same applies to much of the monumental art from the Dutch period of reconstruction following the Second World War. By studying Voskuyl's design drawings and sketches, we can gain an understanding of various levels of the design process – not just how this specific sgraffito was created, but also the studio practices of this monumental artist. The sketches and drawings may even shed light on the studio practices of Reconstruction-period monumental artists in general, especially as there are few other sources available.

Social and societal values

Social and societal values are attributed on the basis of the current significance that an item or collection has for a particular group or community. They differ from ‘cultural history values’ in that they relate to the current (and not historical) meaning of items and collections. Social and societal values are tested against two criteria: *social* and *perception values*. ‘Social’ relates to the collective perception of a community group with a current attachment to a particular item or collection (e.g. an Orange association might have a special link with a Dutch royal collection or a particular faith community with its own religious heritage). ‘Perception’ relates



The attic church in Our Lord in the Attic Museum, restored in nineteenth-century style. Photo Co de Kruijff

Roman Catholic Amsterdam

The interior of Our Lord in the Attic Museum in Amsterdam has a community value because this Roman Catholic Church in the attic continues to fulfil a religious function for the Catholics of Amsterdam. Our Lord in the Attic is open to the public and is used for Masses, weddings and organ recitals. It therefore represents another social value – perception value.

to something that is experienced individually, but which acquires a collective character when shared by a large group.

(1) Social value

- Does the item or collection fulfil a current function for a particular community or group, and if so, how?
- Is the item or collection of special social, spiritual, religious, community or political significance for a particular community or group, and if so, why?
- Are there particular ideas, customs, traditions or practices associated with the item or collection for certain groups?
- Are there particular stakeholders who might step into action if ‘their heritage’ is at issue?

Suggestion. To determine social value, refer to the information that you have recorded on the reference framework form.

Once an object or collection ceases to have community significance for a particular group or community (in other words, it is no longer relevant), it has no social and societal value. It may, however, have a social history value or historical value (see historical value).

Related terms:

social value, community value, spiritual value, religious value, symbolic value, identity value

(2) Perception value

- Does the item or collection evoke a powerful sensory sensation (smell, sound, taste, touch, sight) in the viewer?
- Does the item or collection emanate a particular atmosphere? Does it evoke a particular memory, recognition or emotion? Does it radiate great age, or newness?
- Do many people regard the item or collection as particularly beautiful or ugly?

'Palazzo di Pietro', Pim Fortuyn's house in Rotterdam, Rotterdam City Archives Collection, Pim 362



Legacy or heritage?

The murder of politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002 sent a shock wave through Dutch society. Many described it as the first political murder since that of the De Witt brothers in the 17th century. It came as an added blow for his faithful supporters and followers, who saw him as someone who had given the people a voice. It was not just Fortuyn's political message that captured the popular imagination, but also his personality. After his death the question arose as to what should happen to his estate – his house and its contents, his archives and painting collection. These were viewed and valued from different perspectives by various professional organisations. The Rotterdam City Archives were interested in Fortuyn's papers that related to his role in local politics. The Rotterdam Museum acquired objects that characterised Fortuyn as both a local politician and an individual. But what was to be done with Fortuyn's home, whose decor reflected his dandyish lifestyle, and his personal effects? Fortuyn's admirers made attempts to turn his Rotterdam house, the 'Palazzo di Pietro', into a museum. But funding for this venture failed to get off the ground. Thus it was the stakeholders for whom Fortuyn's estate represented the greatest social and societal value who ultimately lost out. What remained of the house contents was auctioned off and became dispersed.

An item or collection's perception values relate to the degree to which it evokes sensations, emotions and associations. This can be caused by both tangible and intangible aspects. Perception involves an individual experience, which acquires a collective character if shared by a large group of people.

Related terms:

emotional value, sensory value, aesthetic value, associative value

Skull of a skeleton with burning cigarette, Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), oil on canvas, 32.3 x 24.8 cm, 1886 Antwerp. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Stichting)

Studio humour

The public's appreciation of artworks doesn't always match that of art historians. *Skull of a skeleton with burning cigarette*, painted by Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) in 1886, is an example of 'studio humour', intended as an ironic comment on the traditional teaching methods of the academy. The work had been on permanent display in the Van Gogh Museum for a long time but it was taken down when staff decided that it wasn't significant enough to be on permanent display. The public soon made its disappointment felt, which prompted the Museum to reinstate the much-loved artwork.





Plaster cast of the *Venus of Arles*, National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden, 18th century; copy of a Roman statue in marble, Louvre, Paris, 1st century AD. Photo Rijksmuseum van Oudheden

The value of plaster

There has been considerable change in the *culture historical* valuation of plaster casts made of sculptures since Classical Antiquity. Although many still regarded them as important in the early twentieth century, appreciation for this type of object began to decline from the 1920s onwards. The past two decades have seen a revival of interest, however, and they feature once again in various exhibitions.

The *educational* value of the plaster casts lies in their role within art education. They are also of interest because of their history of use. This means that the pencil marks added to casts over the years during drawing lessons are not allowed to be removed during conservation. They are viewed as traces of use and should therefore be preserved. Some casts also have *information value* because they reveal elements that have been lost from the original sculpture.

The plaster casts and copies gave rise to an *artistic* appreciation of the original statues in Europe. They were a means by which many people could bring classical culture into their homes and admire it.

Curator of the Classical World collection at the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden (RMO). He is also Extraordinary Professor in the field of Museum Archaeology at Leiden University.

Ruurd Halbertsma

Plaster casts of famous statues from Antiquity were popular for a very long time. Louis XIV, for instance, had copies made of the reliefs on Trajan's column in Rome. This was a way of demonstrating that he was on friendly terms with the Pope, that he had connections in high places. Archaeologists are still delighted with these copies because the reliefs have since been severely eroded by air pollution and acid rain – some faces are unrecognisable and the trumpets worn away. But you can still easily make them out on the casts. And for years they were used by art academies for teaching purposes. They were ideal for studying the muscular system – after all, not every young artist could afford to make a Grand Tour and view the originals. But in the final decades of the twentieth century many of the plaster casts were consigned to the junk heap. It was no longer fashionable to draw from them. Now the situation has changed again. We had an exhibition on plaster casts not so long ago. They were restored in front of the public, attracting many visitors. And drawing lessons have also made a comeback in our museum. I personally think the copy of Laocoön and His Sons is very special. Michelangelo was present when it was discovered in the sixteenth century, and he restored the missing arm. But unfortunately, he did it incorrectly. The arm was later found and put back in its original position, bent backwards. The cast shows Michelangelo's reconstruction. It therefore tells the story of the rediscovery, of how restorations were done at that time and of the changing values in sculpture – statues had to be whole then, not in pieces – and it tells us about the archaeologists who went in search of the missing arm. All in all, a fine illustration of the life of this statue. ,



On Mondrian's technique

Victory Boogie Woogie represents not only a high artistic value but also a high information value. Purchased by the Dutch state in 1998, the painting has hung since then in the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, a museum of modern art and design in the Hague, where it is the jewel in the crown of the Mondrian collection. A major study was launched in 2006 into the painting's genesis and condition. Some of this work was carried out under the public eye by the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag and the Cultural Heritage Agency. They traced the complete restoration history, examined historical sources and identified most of the materials used. The study also yielded remarkable findings about how Mondrian went about his work in the last years of his life. This knowledge is indispensable for the Mondrian Restoration Project, which the Gemeentemuseum will continue to work on in the years ahead. The published results of the research into *Victory Boogie Woogie* enable both the public and professionals to learn about all aspects of this international masterpiece.



Examining the *Victory Boogie Woogie*, Piet Mondrian, oil, paper, and adhesive tape on canvas, 127 x 127 cm, 1942-1944. On loan to the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag

Verkade pavilion boosts visitor numbers

Until a few years ago, the Foundation for the Preservation of Verkade's Cultural Heritage managed an extensive and varied collection on the history of Verkade, a family company headquartered in Zaandam. The Foundation's board, who felt that the Verkade legacy should be made accessible to the general public, strongly advocated a museum presentation. In 2009 the Zaans Museum took over the collection and built a separate pavilion for it. This was a fascinating supplement to the museum's collection, as the Verkade story fitted perfectly within the context of the Zaanstreek as a major industrial area. The Verkade pavilion, complete with a full chocolate-production line, proved a huge drawcard. As well as a high perception value, the Verkade collection has a high economic value. Since the addition of the Verkade pavilion, the number of visitors has jumped from 23,000 to 60,000 per year.



The Verkade Pavilion at the Zaans Museum attracts large numbers of visitors

Use values

Use values relate to the function and actual use of items and collections, from both a museum and an economic perspective. Use values should not be confused with potential use or usefulness, an aspect that forms part of development potential. (See the comment below on the difference between use values and usefulness.) Use values are tested against *museum* and *economic criteria*.

(1) Museum

- How often is the item used for presentation, education, research and reference purposes?
- Is it a highlight of the permanent presentation? A public favourite?
- How often does it appear in popular or academic publications?
- How important is it for the organisation's reputation?

(2) Economic

- Does the item or collection's use bring in additional revenue for the organisation?
- Does the item or collection's use generate indirect revenue for the neighbourhood, municipality, region or country?
- Does it attract additional visitors?

Celebrate on a Dutch East India Company ship

The 'Amsterdam', an exact replica of the famous Dutch East India Company ship that sank on its maiden voyage in 1749, is one of the main attractions at the National Maritime Museum. It is regarded as one of the museum's showpieces. For families with children in particular, the ship marks a high point in their visit. The ship itself has no historical value; it is a replica, after all. But because it attracts so many visitors and is available as an events venue, it can be assigned a high economic value, over and above its perception value and museum value.

Replica of the Dutch East India Company ship 'Amsterdam', Het Scheepvaartmuseum, photo Eddo Hartmann



Development potential

In addition to the valuation based on the various criteria, the valuation form provides room to describe an object or collection's development potential. Can its current assigned value be increased, and if so, how? Ways to do so include researching an item or collection's provenance, improving its condition through restoration, or placing it in a more

appropriate context. Objects about which little is known are sometimes kept because people believe that additional information might be unearthed through more extensive research, which will enhance the culture historical, social and societal and/or use values.



The cupboard laid bare

Acquired at an auction in 1943, a miniature cabinet in the Netherlands Open Air Museum collection was believed to have originated from the province of Friesland, perhaps the island of Ameland. It was dated to the seventeenth century. A recent study examined the different types of wood, layers of paint and varnish, pigments, patinas, stains and the marks left by tools. And what did they find? The nails were made after 1860 and pigments such as titanium white showed that the paint must have been applied after 1920. What had been viewed as a rare relic of the domestic culture of a seventeenth-century community proved to be the work of decorative painters and antique dealers from the early twentieth century. The cabinet's culture history value for the Netherlands Open Air Museum has therefore fallen sharply. On the other hand, however, its information value has risen. It is now a well-researched object that has been used to reveal the story behind many comparable items.

This '17th-century' miniature cabinet was revealed as the work of decorative painters and antique dealers from the early 20th century

Experiment from above

The stained glass window entitled *Flight*, which has been in the Cultural Heritage Agency's collection since 1952, was assessed as having a low value because so little was known about it. And not much more was known about the artist Piet Kraus (1909-1974) than that he worked in Dordrecht, was a drawing teacher and that a number of his works were added to the State collection under the artists' subsidy scheme (BKR). Research has revealed an unexpected story behind this window, however. It was made in 1949 following an initiative by the Foundation of Dutch Painters' commissioning committee. At the invitation of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, artists were given an opportunity to view the earth from above and to incorporate their impressions into their work. Because this was the first experiment of this kind, *Flight* today has a higher historical value. The story behind it lends it a certain perception value.



Vlucht (flight), Piet Kraus, stained glass window, 134.5 x 117 cm, 1952



The NS D 4088 baggage car is part of permanent 'Laden trains' exhibition at the Dutch Railway Museum. Photo Anna van Kooij

Baggage car NS D 4088

In 2003 a German rail enthusiast alerted the Railway Museum to a Dutch baggage car that had been spotted in Bucharest, Romania. Photos revealed that it was a three-axle carriage built by Werkspoor in Amsterdam in 1914. The factory plates were still in place. During World War Two the baggage car had been taken eastward, where it ended up behind the Iron Curtain. Following an on-site inspection, the museum decided to bring it back to the Netherlands. It would also be exhibited in its authentic condition, to show part of its history. In 2007 the original serial number – D 4088 – was uncovered under a layer of rust. It is a fine example of an object with immense development potential. It had little value in the Romanian context, but it has acquired a new significance now that it is part of the Dutch Railway Museum collection. The fact that we now know more about its provenance has boosted the baggage car's value.

In the 'Development potential' column on the valuation form you can indicate whether you think there is considerable, some, little or no potential for increasing the value of an item or collection.

- Can research into the provenance, the materials used or the history of use yield knowledge that will increase the culture historical, and/or use values?
- Can the value increase through research, restoration or placement in a more appropriate context?
- Does the item or collection offer possibilities for use that are not currently being exploited? For example, can it be used to tell a story as part of a presentation or for education purposes?
- Can a non-functioning object be made operational again (e.g. fixing a clock that has stopped working, making an installation move again)?
- Can the item or collection be made accessible in additional ways (e.g. online)?

If an item or collection has a high development potential, this means that there are excellent opportunities for enhancing its value, and that investing in value development would be worthwhile. High potential usually goes hand in hand with a relatively low valuation. Generally speaking, a highly valued item will have less development potential because the necessary research has already been done.

In the next column on the valuation form, describe what actions the museum must undertake to develop the value. This could involve improving the condition to increase the artistic and presentation value, or researching the provenance, history or manufacture.

There is a distinction between use values and usefulness. The use values relate to the actual, current use of an item or collection, whereas usefulness relates to its *potential* use. In the 'Development potential' column on the valuation form, you can record possibilities for increasing the use values, along with other values.

STEP 5:

processing the assessment

There are different ways that you can process the results of the previous steps. Depending on the motive and the question behind the valuation, the end result could be:

- a statement of significance
You can synthesise the results of the assessment, together with the supporting arguments, in a concise and reasoned summary that sets out the values of the item or collection for the various stakeholders, based on the question and within the chosen reference framework. You should also state how the item or collection relates in terms of value to the items or collections with which it is being compared. The statement of significance is a useful tool for communicating to others how and why an item or collection is significant.
- a value ranking or grouping
You can compare the value of items or collections that are assessed within the same reference framework. You can draw up a reasoned ranking or organise items or collections into value categories, such as highlights, core collection, adjunct collection, props or a somewhat cruder classification into museum and non-museum collection. Natural history museums, for example, usually make a distinction between scientific and educational collections. You can use this classification to determine how you will deal with the various parts of the collection, such as loan policy, storage conditions and the degree of physical deterioration that is acceptable.
- an investment plan
By comparing the current valuation with the development potential, you can set priorities for investing in value development. Where are there opportunities for value development? What activities will generate the highest increase in value? What activities present the greatest opportunities for increasing value?

Suggestion. Summarise the end result of the valuation. Bodies outside the museum – such as local authorities, arts councils, cultural consultancies, foundations and funding bodies – will find this more useful than a detailed multi-page report.

Curator of *Our Lord in the Attic* Museum

Thijs Boers

‘**H**ere, at *Our Lord in the Attic*, it all started with a seventeenth-century staircase. The stairs were showing serious signs of wear and eventually no-one dared use them any longer. We got so many visitors and this probably came at the cost of our heritage building. So we carried out a risk analysis for the whole museum – the building, the attic church and the objects. A study was also made of building’s construction history and the history of the inhabitants. This is what prompted the valuation of our collection. And what did we find? The actual building was unique for the Netherlands. No other seventeenth-century example was as well preserved as ours. But we didn’t want to enshrine it in a glass case and leave everything as it was. It didn’t take us long to decide: the building itself came first, which meant adopting a different approach to the collection. For example, a number of vulnerable paintings were hanging on the damp, cold wall on the northern side. Instead of finding a modern solution, we simply moved the paintings to a drier spot. In this way *Our Lord in the Attic* was transformed from a museum into a historic house. And that’s why a curator was appointed especially for the building, namely me. I found out more and more about the house – the technical details of its construction, the building materials, the inhabitants, the use of colour. Each of these individual discoveries was important for the major restoration project that will soon be completed. The attic church has been restored to its nineteenth-century appearance – that was the last time that the church still functioned as a church. The reddish-brown marbling from that period has been revealed on half of the altar, while the other half has been repainted to match. The other colour layers of earlier marbling are still underneath, which means it can be brought back to a different stage again. Because who knows? People may have access to entirely new information in two hundred years’ time. ’

Thijs Boers at the high altar
of the church in *Our Lord in the Attic*





STEP 6:

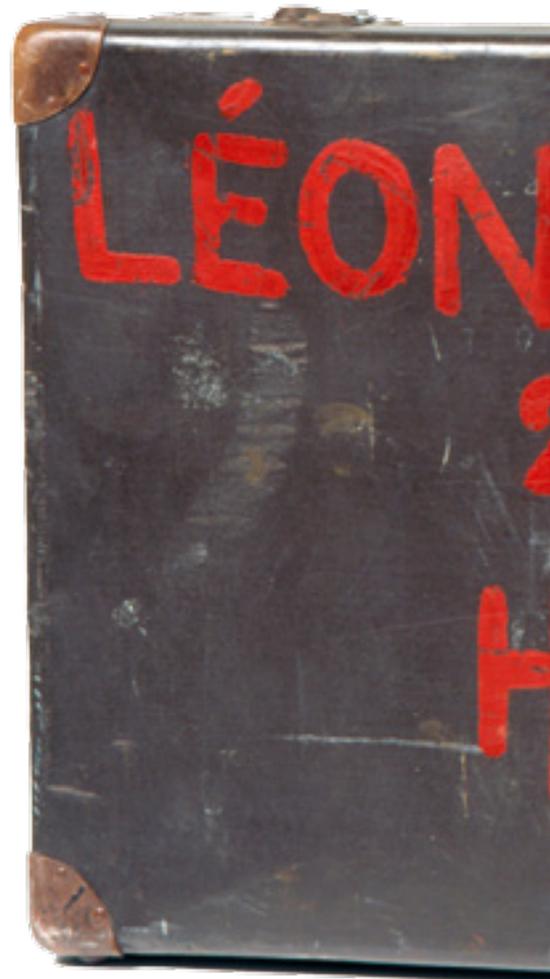
decision or action

Use the end product of the valuation as a starting point and rationale for new decisions or actions. You can use it to better substantiate the item or collection's value, to discuss its significance with users or the public, to increase accessibility or to decide on interventions. You can also use it when conducting a risk analysis, to set preservation and management priorities or to discuss conflicting interests.

A valuation is not set in stone – it can change over time. Because a statement of significance is drawn up on the basis of a specific, predetermined motive and question and within a particular reference framework, it has a limited validity and scope. You mustn't view it as an absolute indicator of significance, but as a tool containing information that may also be useful at other times. Although the main aspects of

an item or collection tend to be more or less fixed, it is important to remember that 'value' can change: it can increase, decrease or be further developed, for example, if new information comes to light.

When the question behind a valuation changes, or there is change in the composition of the valuation team, this may affect the outcome. It may then be necessary to review the valuation. Additional information or new knowledge about an item or collection may also affect the outcome.



Léon Cohen's suitcase

The emotional value of an item or collection can also change over time. The Jewish Historical Museum has a suitcase that belonged to Léon Albertus Alexander Cohen (1898-1980) as part of its current display. When Cohen, a Jewish Amsterdammer and a police inspector, was transported in spring 1943, he was permitted to take just one suitcase containing his belongings. He arrived in the Westerbork transit camp, where he became administrator of the staff barracks. When he and 900 fellow prisoners were liberated on 12 April 1945, he returned to Amsterdam – together with his suitcase. Thirty years ago there was little interest in items of this kind but the suitcase has since become an iconic image. This is because so many World War Two photos have been published of people waiting to be transported, suitcase in hand, many of whom did not survive the war. It is for this reason that these suitcases are now valued, collected and put on display.



Léon Cohen's
suitcase.
Jewish
Historical
Museum
collection

Curator of the Willet-Holthuysen Museum
and the Amsterdam Museum

Hubert Vreeken

‘**W**hen we completed the valuation at Willet-Holthuysen, there was just one possible conclusion – where feasible, we wanted to return the decor of the canal house to its nineteenth-century state, back to the time when the Willets lived there. We still had many objects from their estate that they’d ordered especially for their home – chairs, dinner sets, silver, porcelain, clocks, coffee tables, glassware. Only the interior textiles were a problem. We took two lines of approach. The first was restoration, which is very costly. We bought expensive runners, a typically nineteenth-century item, and laid them in all the hallways and on the staircase. Secondly, we did something that I call minimising intervention, searching for maximum effect with a minimum of resources. For the curtains, for instance, we bought material at the Albert Cuyp market and simply had them made. They’ve turned out very nicely – and are respectful of the Willets. After that, it was time for reflection. What else did we want to do? Our intention was to showcase domestic culture in the museum, not just present a house with things in it. So now our museum tells a story – about the inhabitants and the servants. You can get this sense of upstairs-downstairs through the table that is set in the chic dining room, with the dessert service, the candles that look as though they’ve just been extinguished and a napkin still lying on the seat of a chair that’s been pulled out. Above this room we’ve organised the old pantry so that it looks as though the housekeeper is still about. The narrow passageway that servants used to enter the ballroom – to replenish the wine glasses – has been opened up again. And in the kitchen we displayed a range of gifts over the Christmas period – skeins of wool, cheese, sausage, clogs. That was typical of Mrs Willet, who on these occasions would often donate presents to the parish to give to the Amsterdam poor. These would be collected in the kitchen and wrapped up. By making these modifications, both large and small, we are aiming to bring the nineteenth-century Willet household to life for visitors. ’





References and suggestions for further reading

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Glossary

Artistic value

An item or collection has artistic value if it shows artistry, creativity, technical accomplishment or originality of idea, form or function, or if it is a good example of the work of a particular artist, designer or architect. Other considerations are the degree to which the item or collection exemplifies a particular style, design or artistic movement.

Collection management

The strategic deployment of people and resources in such a way as to optimise the use, preservation and development of a collection.

Collection plan

A document that sets out the scope and composition of a collection, describes the policy with regard to that collection, and translates that policy into specific action items.

Condition

The state of an item or collection.

Culture historical value

The valuation method distinguishes three culture historical criteria: historical, artistic and information value. Values assigned on the basis of these criteria can be increased or decreased through the features. An item or collection that satisfies one or more culture historical criteria may be considered part of cultural heritage.

Development potential

Development potential is the extent to which there

are opportunities for developing the significance of an item or collection, for example by conducting further research or by improving its condition. This can enhance its culture historical, social and/or use values.

Economic value

Economic value does not refer to the financial value of an item or collection, but to the extent to which it generates revenue for the organisation, neighbourhood, municipality or region, or attracts additional visitors.

Ensemble value

The extent to which there is a relationship between an item or collection and the rest of the collection, the institution (museum) and the environment, or the relationship between the elements that make up an item or collection.

Features

Four features – condition, ensemble value, provenance and rarity/representativeness – that can be used to describe an item or collection. Assessment against these four criteria does not lead to a valuation, but can strengthen or weaken the substantive criteria (culture historical, social and use).

Historical value

An item or collection has historical significance if it is associated with important historical people, events, places, periods, themes or communities, or if says something about a particular historical period, process, development, theme, zeitgeist or way of life.

Information value

An item or collection has information value if information can be 'read' from it or if it contains elements that support scientific or scholarly research – now or in the future.

Museum value

Museum value is the degree to which an item or collection can be used today for presentation, educational and research purposes.

Perception value

The perception value of an item or collection is the degree to which it evokes sensations, emotions and associations in the viewer. It involves an individual experience that acquires a collective character when shared by a large group of people.

Provenance

The documented history of the origins, use and acquisition of an item or collection.

Rarity

The degree to which an item or collection is exceptional.

Reference framework

The framework in which an item or collection is valued. This could be international, national, regional or local, or within your own organisation or a particular group or community.

Representativeness

The degree to which an item or collection is representative of a particular period, place, style, movement, use, theme, community, etc.

Significance

The *combination* of various values – from historical to social – determines the significance of an item or collection.

Social and societal value

The current social, religious, political, community or spiritual significance that an item or collection has for a group or community. When this meaning is no longer current, we speak of social history value or historical value.

Social value

An item or collection has social value when an attachment exists between it and a group or community.

Stakeholder

A person, group or community that attaches a special value to an item or collection, or has a current attachment to or a particular interest in it.

Statement of significance

A concise and reasoned summary of the values of an item or collection for particular stakeholders. It is drawn up in response to a question, on the basis of previously established and defined criteria, and within an appropriate reference framework.

Use values

Values that relate to the actual current use of an item or collection.

Valuation framework

The framework in which a valuation is conducted. It comprises a combination of question, reference framework, criteria and stakeholders.

Value

The value of an item or collection is what makes it significant. The value is arrived at in response to a question, within an appropriate reference framework, tested against previously established and defined criteria, and for particular stakeholders.

Valuing

Valuing involves making reasoned and verifiable statements about the value of an item or collection, in response to a question, based on previously established and defined criteria, within an appropriate reference framework and for particular stakeholders.

Valuation form

The information on this part of the form is used throughout the valuation and can be copied each time to a new form.

Motive for the valuation: _____ Conducted by: _____

Question behind the valuation: _____ Date: _____

Reference framework for the valuation plus arguments: _____

use the reference framework as a guide if necessary

		Defining the valuation framework			
		Describe the conditions that an item, collection or subcollection must meet in order to be rated as high, medium or low under the different criteria.			
Criteria		Prompt questions	Low	Medium	High
Features	Condition (state, intactness, material authenticity, material integrity)	Is the item/collection in good condition, is it complete, is it in its original state, is it suitable for reuse?			
	Ensemble (completeness, unity, cohesion, conceptual integrity, conceptual authenticity, contextual authenticity)	Is the item/collection made up of parts which together form a whole? How? Is the whole complete?			
	Provenance (documentation, life story, biography, source, pedigree)	Is the provenance of the item/collection known, documented, reliable?			
	Rarity and representativeness (uniqueness, exemplar value, prototype, type exemplar)	Is the item/collection unique, internationally, nationally, within the collection? Is it highly representative of a particular period, place, style, movement, practice, theme, community?			
Culture historical	Historical (biographical, social history, natural history, technological history, scientific history)	Is there an association with a particular historical person, group, event, place, activity? Is there an association with a particular period, process, theme, development, zeitgeist or way of life?			
	Artistic (art historical, architectural history, design, workmanship, decorative)	Is the item/collection special in terms of its design, conception, execution, style, technique, creativity? Does it represent a particular style, movement, artist?			
	Information value (scholarship, science, research, documentation, reference, testimony, archival)	Is the item/collection kept because of the information that it contains and can this be studied?			
Social and societal	Social (social, spiritual, religious, political, symbolic, community, identity)	Does the item/collection fulfil a certain function for a particular group or community today? Are there groups that have a current special attachment to the item? Does it have a current social, religious, political, community meaning? Does the item currently play a decisive role in the identity of a group?			
	Perception (emotions, senses, aesthetic, association)	Does the item/collection evoke a certain collective experience? Does it emanate a particular atmosphere? Does it evoke emotions? Does it play on the senses in a particular way?			
Use	Museum (presentation, education, research)	Is the item/collection currently used for presentation, educational, research purposes? Does it play a special role in an exhibition? Is it the subject of publications?			
	Economic (working capital, financial, PR, spin-off, tourism, reputation)	Does the item/collection generate revenue for the organisation? Does it attract visitors? Does it play a decisive role in the organisation's profile and reputation?			
Additional	Fill in	Describe			
	Fill in	Describe			

*** Valuation**

The valuation score can be expressed in words, for example 'low', 'medium', 'high'. If a criterion does not apply, enter 'NA' (not applicable).

In the following box, give the arguments for the score.



What is the value of a museum collection or object?
Who decides this value and how?

Assessing Museum Collections. Collection valuation in six steps is a practical guide for assigning different kinds of value to items and collections. This publication is aimed at anyone involved in the professional management of a collection.

The Cultural Heritage Agency provides knowledge and advice to give the future a past.

