

Captured on the Gallery
Women and Galleries in the Former Dutch East Indies before 1945

History Thesis TU Delft
April 2022

Julia van der Ploeg 4573560
Supervisor M. Novas Ferradás

Abstract

The outcomes of the recently published research *Onafhankelijkheid, Dekolonisatie, Geweld en Oorlog in Indonesië, 1945-1950* unveil the practices of violent Dutch armed forces during the Indonesian National Revolution and colonial period. These new revelations prove that there is still a lot to learn about the complex social systems of different ethnicities, classes and genders in the former Dutch East Indies during the colonisation. In the early 19th century, the Netherlands colonised the former Dutch East Indies (now the Republic of Indonesia). Dutch families and individuals inhabited the former Dutch East Indies from colonisation until the Indonesian National Revolution. With the introduction of the Kodak camera for private use at the end of the 19th century, family life in the former Dutch Indies was choreographed, captured and documented through photographs. The galleries of the family homes, where domestic scenes are enlivened in the comfortable shelter by walls on three sides of the outside room, are often the backdrop of these photographs. Accordingly, “Captured on the Gallery” examines how Dutch and Indonesian women were portrayed on these galleries at the beginning of the 20th century. An image analysis based on preserved pictures by the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam provides insights into the gallery’s spatial features and how these concerned Dutch and Indonesian women. As a result of close examination, galleries can be considered a befitting place for the daily practices of both Dutch and Indonesian women. This result appertains to the gallery’s liminality that establishes a safe transitional space between indoors and outdoors. This liminal space allows women to simultaneously perform domestic work and connect with their surroundings. Moreover, pictures of the galleries prove that boundaries between Dutch families and their Indonesian domestic workers could dissolve and become explicitly pertinent. Altogether, the results of this research shed light on the ethnical, social and economic differences between Dutch and Indonesian women in the former Dutch East Indies.

Keywords: Galleries; Indonesian Women; Dutch Women; Domestic portrayal; Liminal space

Introduction

In photographs in prominently displayed albums, posing against the background of a veranda with white columns, or from avenues bordered by exotic trees, they looked at the viewer in the Netherlands with the rigid gaze of people who have to stand motionless for a long time.

Hella Haasse, 1992¹

In 1992, Dutch writer Hella S. Haasse published the book *Heren van de Thee* [figure 1]. This novel is widely known for the story of Dutch colonialist couple that lived on Java, the former Dutch East Indies, now the Republic of Indonesia. The novel is not merely focused on the colonialist lives but gives detailed descriptions of the surroundings of Java and the spatial features of the former Dutch East Indian homes. From all architectural elements, the gallery is often a backdrop for the story, which reveals the significance of this special place in the homes of the former Dutch East Indies. When I finished the book in December 2021, with the image of the gallery still vivid in mind, the gallery of Indonesian homes became an artifact of extremely interest. The recently published research *Onafhankelijkheid, Dekolonisatie, Geweld en Oorlog in Indonesië, 1945-1950* on the violence used by the Dutch armed forces during the colonial period and the Indonesian National Revolution, increased my curiosity.² These actual revelations acknowledge and unveil the systems of power between different ethnicities, classes and genders.

In the early 19th century, the Dutch colonized the Republic of Indonesia and founded plantations to grow crops for trade.³ The colonization confronted the Dutch and Indonesian societies, which raises questions about gender, ethnicities and class differences within one household.⁴ To provide insight in this complexity of social systems, this research is based on a comparative image analysis of the portrayal of Dutch and Indonesian women in the same space. This complexity can be explained by the framework of intersectionality.⁵ Even between heterogenous members of one group, women in this case, there are notable differences. Historically, women have always been considered inferior to men and Indonesian women have been racialized and considered inferior to Dutch women.⁶ Since the first officers of the Dutch East India Company disembarked around 1600, Indonesian women were introduced to the Dutch households as domestic workers, as workers on the plantations or as *njai*,

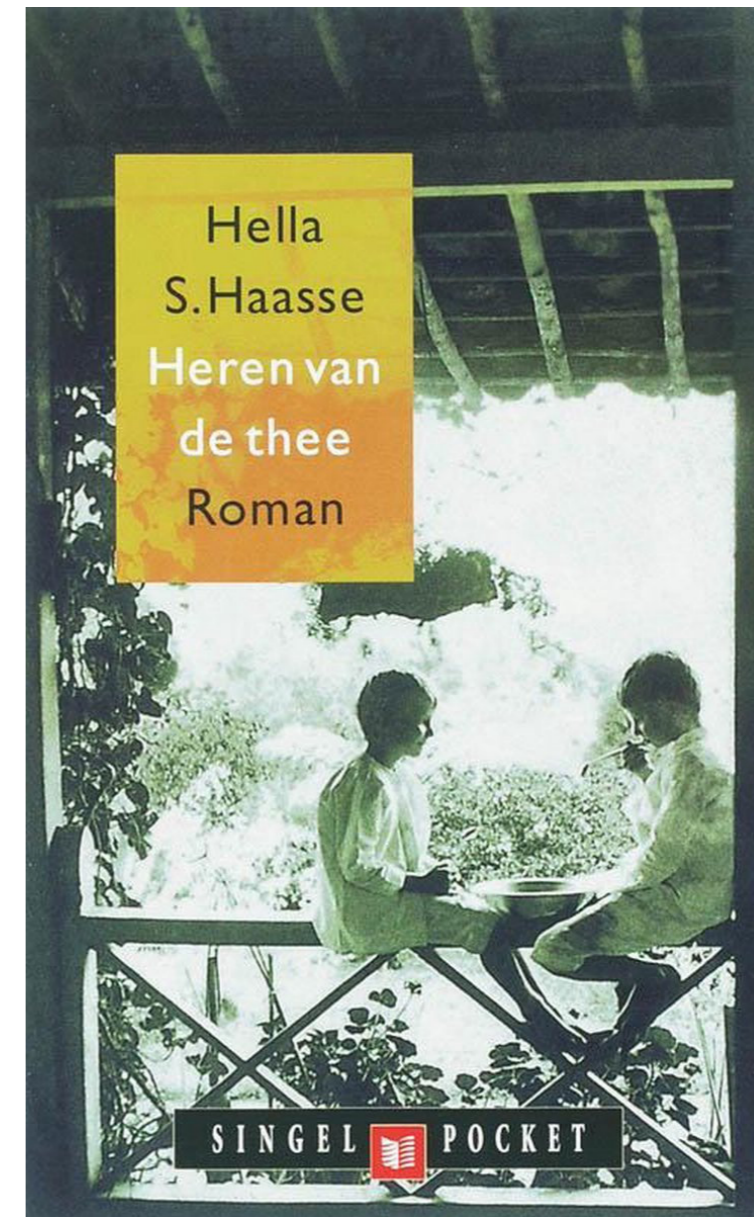


Figure 1: Book Cover *Heren van de Thee* with Two Boys Sitting on the Gallery. Picture made by the author.

¹“Op fotografieën in prominent uitgestalde albums keken zij, poserend tegen de achtergrond van een veranda met witte zuilen, of van lanen omzoomd door exotisch geboomte, naar de beschouwer in Nederland met de starre blik van mensen die lang onbeweeglijk stil moeten staan.” Translated from Dutch by the author. Hella Haasse, *Heren van de Thee* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1992), 20.

² Ministry of General Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Defense and Health Wellbeing and Sports (Mark Rutte, Wopke Hoekstra, Kajsa Ollongren and Maarten van Ooijen), ‘Eerste reactie op uitkomsten onderzoeksprogramma ‘Onafhankelijkheid, Dekolonisatie, Geweld en Oorlog in Indonesië, 1945-1950,’ February 17, 2022. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2022/02/17/eerste-reactie-op-uitkomsten-onderzoeksprogramma-onafhankelijkheid-dekolonisatie-geweld-en-oorlog-in-indonesie-1945-1950> Accessed February 21, 2022.

³ Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, *Women and the Colonial State: Essays on Gender and Modernity in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000), 17.

⁴ Locher-Scholten, *Women and the Colonial State*, 85.

⁵ Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 2.

⁶ Corrie van Eijl, “Het werkzame verschil: vrouwen in de slag om arbeid, 1898-1940” (Diss., University of Utrecht, 1994), 11; Frances Gouda, “‘Nyonyas’ on the colonial divide: white women in the Dutch East Indies, 1900-1942,” *Gender & History* 5, no. 3 (Autumn 1993): 319, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0424.1993.tb00183.x>; Locher-Scholten, *Women and the Colonial State*, 49-50.

a concubine of a Dutch man.⁷ The two groups lived together until the Indonesian National Revolution in 1945, when approximately 300.000 Dutch migrants fled to the Netherlands.⁸

This research is based on an image analysis of family photos as primary source. The photographs originate from albums that were left behind during the Indonesian National Revolution. More than thousand albums were collected and taken back to the Netherlands. The Tropenmuseum, one of the largest museums in Amsterdam with ethnographic collections from all over the world, created a digital archive of the “orphaned” albums to find the owners of the albums.⁹ Thus, this research is limited to these selected pictures taken by Dutch colonists. Indonesian women are never shot from their own perspective. Also, our contemporary perspective and assumptions of old photographs might limit the outcome.

In relation to secondary sources of information, previously published research will sustain the image analysis. Susie Protschky is a historian of colonialism and visual culture in Southeast Asia. Protschky researched the portrayal of women in the former Dutch East Indies in relation to landscapes instead of a domestic setting.¹⁰ Furthermore Sue Bridwell Beckham, historian of vernacular architecture, researched the liminal space of the front porch for women’s activities.¹¹ Besides these secondary sources, archival publications written in the early 20th century like *Ons huis in Indië* and *Van Vrouwenleven* support the qualitative review of the images. Above all, the outcome presents the inferiority of Indonesian women compared to Dutch women in domestic scenes. Also, by building on Bridwell Beckham’s theory, this research shows the dissolving and explicitly relevant barriers between women residing on the galleries.

Accordingly, this thesis sheds a light on the ethnical, social and economic disparity between Indonesian and Dutch women, in the aftermath of the slavery practiced in the former Dutch East Indies.¹² This research examines how Dutch and Indonesian women were portrayed on the galleries in the beginning of the 20th century based on the recordings preserved at the Tropenmuseum. The first chapter explains the spatial and social characteristics and relevance of the galleries in that period. The second chapter discusses the portrayal of Dutch colonialist women on the galleries. Meanwhile the third chapter elaborates on the portrayal of Indonesian women in this space. Lastly, the final remarks wrap up the outcomes of this research, which proves the inequality in the position of Dutch and Indonesian women, with respect to their homes or working places.

⁷ Gouda, ““Nyonyas” on the colonial divide,” 319; Reggie Baay, *De njai: het concubinaat in Nederlands-Indië* (Amsterdam: Athenaeum-Polak & Van Genneep, 2009), 11.

⁸ Wim Willems, “No Sheltering Sky: Migrant Identities of Dutch Nationals from Indonesia,” in *Europe’s Invisible Migrants*, ed. Andrea L. Smith (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002), 33.

⁹ “Foto Zoekt Familie,” Tropenmuseum, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.tropenmuseum.nl/nl/onze-collectie-0/foto-zoekt-familie>

¹⁰ Susie Protschky, “Seductive Landscapes: Gender, Race and European Representations of Nature in the Dutch East Indies in the Late Colonial Period,” *Gender & History* 20, no. 2 (August 2008). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0424.2008.00530.x>.

¹¹ Sue Bridwell Beckham, “The American front porch,” in *Housing and Dwelling: Perspectives on Modern Domestic Architecture*, ed. Barbara Miller Lane (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

¹² Anna van Hogendorp and Cornelia van der Hart, *Van vrouwenleven 1813-1913: ontwikkelingsgang van het leven en werken der vrouw in Nederland en de koloniën* (Groningen: Römelingh, 1913), 207.

The gallery *a setting for staging performances*

The term 'gallery', translated from the Dutch word 'voorgalerij', describes the open but roofed space in front of the house, sheltered by three walls that contribute to a cosy homely space.¹³ This specific place in the house often reoccurs on the pictures in the preserved photo albums. This indicates that the gallery was a significant place in the domestic as well as working life of the inhabitant of the former Dutch East Indies.

The gallery, that is particular for the former Dutch East Indies houses, derived from the fundamental *pendopo* of the traditional Javanese homes. To allow the southern wind to enter the building, the design of the *pendopo* is optimal. Next to this climate advantage, the *pendopo* was a meeting place.¹⁴ In the later built homes, this translated into the transition space where families could host their guests without entering the more intimate areas of the home.

In 1908 Johanna M.J. Catenius-van der Meijden wrote the book *Ons Huis in Indië* dedicated to all the housemothers living in the former Dutch East Indies. This book thoroughly explains how to furnish the galleries and the differences between galleries on different sides of the house. As already mentioned above, the gallery was a place to receive guests. However, receiving guests occurred only in front of the house; family activities happened on the back gallery, the standard living room.¹⁵ Some of the pictures preserved in the albums of Dutch families staying on Java show examples of a typical gallery, as a place for receiving visits, in front of the house [figure 2].

Like all the other pictures discussed in this thesis, most likely, a Kodak was used to take this picture. The Kodak is the camera introduced for private use at the end of the 19th century.¹⁶ Therefore it can be assumed that this picture was taken between 1900 and 1945. The column row on the right and the dark wooden doors leading to the interiors on the left define the transitional character of the gallery. The gallery in front is not supposed to be excessively furnished.¹⁷ Often there is a sitting corner with a round table with rattan chairs instead of the oak furniture of the dining or working rooms. They likely used rattan furniture because the outdoor climate could affect the more expensive oak furniture. Also, the palm plants in classic flowerpots and chandeliers are often recurring elements on the gallery.¹⁸ Catenius-van der Meijden claims that mats



Figure 2: *Characteristic Furnishing of the Gallery*. Source: archive of Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, <https://www.fotozoektfamilie.nl/nl/gallery/album/page/?iv=ALB-0815&page=428>. Author unknown, between 1900 and 1945, Album from a Dutch couple staying on Java.

¹³ Johanna M.J. Catenius-van der Meijden, *Ons huis in Indië: handboek bij de keuze, de inrichting, de bewoning en de verzorging van het huis met bijgebouwen en erf, naar de eischen der hygiëne, benevens raadgevingen en wenken op huishoudelijk gebied* (Semarang: Masman & Stroink, 1908), 36.

¹⁴ Arya Ronald, "Aspecten van de bouwcultuur van de traditionele Javaanse woning en zijn architectonische expressie" (Diss., Technical University Delft, 1992), 245.

¹⁵ Catenius-van der Meijden, *Ons huis in Indië*, 231.

¹⁶ Protschky, "Seductive Landscapes," 376.

¹⁷ Catenius-van der Meijden, *Ons huis in Indië*, 36.

¹⁸ Catenius-van der Meijden, *Ons huis in Indië*, 36.

are the authentic jewellery of the gallery; they need to cover the cold stone floors. Only in luxurious cases when the floor is marble instead of stone, it is unnecessary to use mats in the sitting corner.¹⁹ It is notable that the gallery lacks any personal belongings; there are no pictures, books or other private objects. Understandably, the family tidied up the gallery before taking the picture; however, it also indicates a more neutral space for receiving guests. When someone is on the gallery, you are on display for the public and more accessible to be approached.²⁰ Subsequently, an invitation by the resident to join the gallery is more evident because this place calls for engagement with the community and passersby.

Nonetheless, the gallery was not only for receiving guests. It was also the space that the women of the house could take up. Susie Protschky's research proves that there were strictures on women's movement in the former Dutch East Indies.²¹ Indonesian women were even more limited in moving around compared to Dutch women. Barely any travelling pictures show women solely; men always accompany them. However, European men were free to go wherever they wanted and were depicted on exclusively male activities, travelling around the former Dutch East Indies. Moreover, in the first half of the 20th century, Western women were devoted to the home, contrary to Indonesian women who ought to work according to *adat*, Indonesian traditions.²² Therefore in Dutch colonialist families, the house was conceived as the woman's domain while the husband performed a paid work to economically sustain the family.²³ The gallery was a perfect place to endure the domestic isolation, as it was not yet inside nor entirely outside. By residing on the galleries, women could be allowed to partially have a relationship with the outside world and community as well. The gallery is a domestic space, which is not interior and limited by four walls anymore. This private place engages with its surroundings and interrelates the outside and inside. Therefore, the street merges with the domestic spaces.²⁴ As a result, women felt less hidden as they took part in the bigger whole. Furthermore, the gallery also had excellent conditions for looking after the children playing outside while performing household chores simultaneously. Altogether, this makes the gallery an excellent case study for the portrayal of gender roles at that period. Not surprising, this place is where Dutch women and Indonesian workers were usually photographed.

The liminal character of the gallery also translates into the space that is on display. When one is on the gallery, it is about seeing and being seen. According to art historian Griselda Pollock, this distinguishes spaces of femininity from other spaces.

The spaces of femininity are those from which femininity is lived as a positionality in discourse and social practice. They are the product of a lived sense of social locatedness, mobility and visibility, in the social relations of seeing and being seen.²⁵

Pollock's description of spaces of femininity ties back to the earlier mentioned conditions of the gallery. The gallery is positioned in its surrounding community and therefore implies a sense of social locatedness. Also, the three walls that shelter the space, combined with the open facade towards the street, create a comfortable place to observe while being on display. Women would damage their respectability when publicly displaying themselves; this was unaccepted behaviour.²⁶ Again this shows how public spaces were the domain of men and how the domestic realm was assigned to women. Accordingly, on the gallery, women could experience the social activities they had to miss out on from afar.

The gallery as exhibit space is also apparent in Hella Haasse's book *Heren van de Thee*. She writes, "Whoever passed his house in the early morning light could see him sitting on the front gallery, with his 'three graces' as he would call them."²⁷ In this case, a male character showcases his 'three graces' to the public. This passage presents people's awareness of being displayed on the gallery. In consequence of this awareness, scenes of domesticity are staged and choreographed like a theatre performance. The gallery is an example of what Erving Goffman calls a 'front region'.²⁸ In the book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving states that the 'front region' is the place where one performs. In this case, the furnishing of the gallery would be the setting or decor for the play. Goffman makes an important remark, "The performance of an individual in a front region may be seen as an effort to give the appearance that his activity in the region maintains and embodies certain standards."²⁹ This statement implies that everything staged on the gallery might not represent one's true self. The reveal of one's true self is in the 'back region', the place where someone prepares the performance.³⁰ The staged performance taking place on the gallery also links to the idea of the gallery as a place for receiving guests. Guests are the perfect audience

¹⁹ Catenius-van der Meijden, *Ons huis in Indië*, 36.

²⁰ Bridwell Beckham, "The American front porch," 88.

²¹ Protschky, "Seductive Landscapes," 376.

²² Locher-Scholten, *Women and the Colonial State*, 49.

²³ Bridwell Beckham, "The American front porch," 90.

²⁴ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 406.

²⁵ Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *Gender Space Architecture: An interdisciplinary introduction*, ed. Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 161.

²⁶ Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," 163.

²⁷ "Wie in het vroege morgenlicht langs zijn huis kwam, kon hem in de voorgalerij zien zitten, met zijn 'drie gratiën' zoals hij ze noemde." Translated from Dutch by the author. Haasse, *Heren van de Thee*, 139.

²⁸ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), 66.

²⁹ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 67.

³⁰ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 69.

By capturing the staged performance on the gallery, colonial families could choreograph how they wanted to represent themselves. Not only could they choose how they represented their family, but the Dutch people also decided how they represented the Indonesian people in their family pictures. The Indonesian men and women working for the Europeans could not afford cameras. They could not capture their view of themselves and the world. Therefore, the images analyzed in the following chapters are all biased by a colonizer's point of view.

All in all, the gallery from the former Dutch East Indian homes obtained its spatial characteristics from the *pendopo* in traditional Indonesian buildings. Clear guidelines on furnishing the gallery make up a decor for choreographed domestic scenes. Accordingly, passersby or visiting guests compile the audience for these domestic scenes. Women are the main characters in the performance on the gallery. Due to strictures on displaying in public, women occupy the gallery to display and connect with the significant community.

Dutch women on the gallery

acquired wealth and dissolving boundaries in a liminal space

The stage-like nature of the gallery acts great as a backdrop for family pictures. Therefore, the search for photos of Dutch women on galleries in the Tropenmuseum archive was not difficult. It is important to be aware that Dutch colonialist families owned these albums and were thus the main protagonists of the pictures. Indonesian women appeared less often; the Dutch placed them as extras in their play.

The important theme of receiving guests on the gallery reappears in many preserved pictures. Hosting guests in the sitting corner with typical rattan furniture is a recognizable scene around 1925 [figure 3]. This celebrative family scene derives from a preserved album of a Dutch couple who lived in the city of Malang on Java. The couple took photos for personal documentation of the family life on Java. It is noteworthy that everyone can now access their photos on the Tropenmuseum platform, which the family did not intend when they took the pictures. The left lady is an older guest of the couple dressed in white. According to J.M.J. Catenius-van der Meijden, people did not dress in white because it appeared to be cooler; they dressed in white to show off their wealth.³¹ Catenius-van der Meijden argues it is pretty expensive to show up in spotless, neat white clothing every day. The two women also took advantage of raising their glasses to show their jewellery to the camera. Again, this portrays their wealth and status, just like the man shows off the chain of his pocket watch. Besides the act of raising the glasses, the two big bouquets also reflect the glorification of their family life captured on camera. Like these “staged decor pieces”, big gestures often reappear on Dutch family pictures that comprised images of welfare.

However, the size and spatial qualities of the gallery is not always an equal representation of the Dutch welfare. The city of Malang was a popular place for Europeans to settle because it was growing as a regional centre. Furthermore, Malang was a pleasant place to reside due to its comfortable, cool mountain climate.³² Therefore the city grew immensely in the first half of the 20th century. The municipality of Malang established city expansion plans to host the migration of the European population in the city. However, the houses had to be smaller and resembled more European houses for this plan. The galleries were not as spacious as before; they often changed into a veranda or even just a small terrace [figure 4].³³ The gallery’s spaciousness downgraded due to the European growth plan.



Figure 3: *Hosting Guests on the Gallery*. Source: archive of Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, <https://www.fotozoektfamilie.nl/nl/gallery/album/page/?iv=ALB-0904&page=3255>. Author unknown, 1925, Album from a Dutch couple staying in Malang, Java.

³¹ Catenius-van der Meijden, *Ons huis in Indië*, 78.

³² Arthur van Schaik, *Malang: beeld van een stad* (Purmerend: Asia Maior, 1996), 29.

³³ Van Schaik, *Malang: beeld van een stad*, 32.



Figure 4: *The Gallery in the City of Malang*. Source: archive of Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, <https://www.fotozoektfamilie.nl/nl/gallery/album/page/?iv=ALB-0904&page=3259>. Author unknown, 1925, Album from a Dutch couple staying in Malang, Java.

Another reoccurring practice in the preserved pictures is placing a picture in a picture. The picture of a person that could be deceased or residing somewhere else since colonial families often dispersed in different places.³⁴ Families commemorated relatives by making their pictures part of the captured shot [figure 5]. This custom of reminiscence derives from a typical Asian tradition of worshipping family members by placing pictures on shrines.³⁵

The gallery is a place that different classes and ethnicities could inhabit together, always following established hierarchies. Some preserved photo albums show the Dutch family with their Indonesian domestic workers together in one setting. One of these images [figure 6], shows the woman of the house (on the left) and an Indonesian household employee that worked for the Dutch family (on the right). The daughter of the Dutch family in the middle is the connecting factor between the two women. What stands out immediately is that the Dutch woman is dressed down compared to the festive scene and is not wearing any jewellery anymore. By doing this, the image of the Dutch woman resembles more the image of the Indonesian woman. An important note is that the social ranking of the husbands and fathers of Dutch women always determined their status.³⁶ Women in general were not considered in public life.³⁷ Their daily lives only revolved around the colonial practices of their husbands or their family.³⁸ Therefore Dutch women were confined to the domestic life at home, blurring their role as domestic workers. The conformity given forth by these three women on the gallery relates to Sue Bridwell Beckham's elaboration on Victor Turner's term "Communitas":

"Communitas" - the temporary but vital attachment that only people caught between cultural states can establish. The rules that apply to relationships and behavior in the structured environment on either side of the liminal space do not apply within it.³⁹

Thus, the gallery could become a place where different women could meet to explore commonalities. The gallery's liminal space, the transition between the public and the private space, had the perfect conditions for people to be free from the constraints of outdoors and indoors.⁴⁰

³⁴ Haasse, *Heren van de Thee*.

³⁵ Rosalind Morris, *Photographies East: the camera and its histories in East and Southeast Asia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009) 21.

³⁶ Gouda, "'Nyonyas' on the colonial divide," 323.

³⁷ Locher-Scholten, *Women and the Colonial State*, 159.

³⁸ Gouda, "'Nyonyas' on the colonial divide," 323.

³⁹ Bridwell Beckham, "The American front porch," 90.

⁴⁰ Bridwell Beckham, "The American front porch," 91.



Figure 5: *Pictures in a Picture for Commemorating Relatives*. Source: archive of Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, <https://www.fotozoektfamilie.nl/nl/gallery/album/page/?iv=ALB-0900&page=3141>. Author unknown, between 1900 and 1945, Album from a Dutch family staying in the former Dutch East Indies.



Figure 6: *Mixed Generations, Ethnicities and Class Together on the Gallery*. Source: archive of Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, <https://www.fotozoektfamilie.nl/nl/gallery/album/page/?iv=ALB-0904&page=3259>. Author unknown, 1925, Album from a Dutch couple staying in Malang, Java.

Nonetheless, not all class differences disappeared on the gallery. Since Indonesian women worked for Dutch families, there is a difference in power. Differences in the posture of both women prove that this underlying power system is still present on the gallery. Whereas in most of the pictures (even in the previous ones) Dutch women could relax and take on a more casual pose, Indonesian women had a more neat and tense posture. However, the hand of the little girl resting on the shoulder of the Indonesian worker is a sign that the two different classes lived closely together. This close connection between Dutch children and the household worker is also apparent in Hella Haasse's writing:

They were deeply attached to Engko (the Indonesian worker who took care of the children), who carried them all in the slendang (baby wrap) when they were little, and whom have taught them their first words in Sundaas, which they could speak before they even knew how to speak Dutch.⁴¹

In conclusion, for Dutch families the gallery was a perfect stage to expose their wealth to the outside world. When taking photographs the Dutch families exploited the accessible and open character of the gallery to show off their prosperous family life. However, the stage, being the gallery, was not always an accurate representation of the welfare of women. Dutch women could not obtain wealth by performing in public life. The status of their male relatives determined their wealth. In exceptional cases, the liminal character of the gallery contributed to the dissolving boundaries between the Dutch families and the Indonesian women that used to work for them. Nonetheless, the hegemonic representation of Dutch and Indonesian women together is influenced by the power difference derived from the employer-employee relationship.

⁴¹ "Zij waren innig verknocht aan Engko, die hen allemaal in de slendang gedragen had toen zij nog klein waren, en van wie zij hun eerste woorden hadden geleerd, in het Soendaas, dat zij spraken voor zij Nederlands kenden." Translated from Dutch by the author. Haasse, *Heren van de Thee*, 229.

Indonesian women on the gallery *subordinate labourers and cornerstones of the Dutch colonizers*

Whereas the Dutch photo albums document and commemorate the daily family lives of the Dutch colonizer families, they also reveal the intricate relationship between the Indonesian domestic worker and the Dutch “master”. The employer-employee relationship between Dutch families and Indonesian workers is loaded with ethnical and social inequality. The representation of Indonesian domestic workers in Dutch family photo albums presents a palpable segregation.

In the preserved photo albums of the Tropenmuseum’s archive, Indonesian women appear less often on photos than Dutch women. The reason for this was the class disparity between the Dutch families and the Indonesian workers. Since the Kodak camera was an expensive product, only the elite could afford to capture their domestic life and leisure time. This granted the elite even a little extra power, as they could decide how and when they would portray Indonesian women in photos. When looking through the preserved photo albums, it is striking that the gallery is where Dutch photographers decided to capture their Indonesian workers. Whereas Dutch women were usually portrayed on the gallery reposing in guests’ company, Indonesian women were repeatedly portrayed as busy working. For example, one of these pictures [figure 7] portrays two Indonesian women working on the gallery. This picture derives from an album of a Dutch couple that stayed on Java. Remarkably, the Indonesian women are sitting on a mat on the floor while working. This setting is a big contrast to the pictures of Dutch families posing on appropriate rattan furniture. Such a clear difference already manifests the Dutch’ view on the position of their domestic workers and their conditions when performing household chores.

Other pictures from this same album are circumstantial for explaining the devoted place of Indonesian women in Dutch households. Usually, Indonesian women, or domestic workers, do not appear on pictures of leisure time spent outdoors. More images [figure 8] show a group of Dutch people during an active day trip; their Indonesian workers are absent from this occasion. This absence substantiates that Indonesian women were merely introduced to Dutch families to perform tasks and work. The previous chapter proved that domestic workers were included in family life and often even had close relationships with their employers. However, the fact that the



Figure 7: *Indonesian Domestic Workers on the Gallery*. Source: archive of Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, <https://www.fotozoektfamilie.nl/nl/gallery/album/page/?iv=ALB-0815&page=398>
Author unknown, between 1900 and 1945, Album from a Dutch couple staying on Java.



Figure 8: *A Dutch Family on a Day Out*. Source: archive of Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, <https://www.fotozoektfamilie.nl/nl/gallery/album/page/?iv=ALB-0815&page=416>
Author unknown, between 1900 and 1945, Album from a Dutch couple staying on Java.

Indonesian women were only portrayed in the home and were not apparent in pictures of fun family outings proves the families' distance towards their domestic workers. The Indonesian women were bound to the home; even though this was not their home, it was their workplace. Since the Dutch homes were their workplaces, the Indonesian women also had different connotations to this place.

This different stance towards the home explains a difference in posture and attitude between Dutch and Indonesian women on pictures on the gallery. In one of the pictures preserved in the archive [figure 9], a Dutch woman practically looks down on the Indonesian household workers; they are subordinate labourers. Furthermore, this image shows how the camera's position influences the portrayal of women. In this case, the camera is at the eye level of the Dutch woman, which belittles the Indonesian women sitting down at a lower level.

The relationship of Indonesian women to the liminal character of the gallery connects to the idea of French ethnologist and folklorist Arnold van Gennep on 'rites of passages'.⁴² According to van Gennep, this concept can be decomposed into three parts: separation, transition and incorporation. The person subjected to this progression is first deprived of his or her social status. Later he or she starts transitioning in a liminal phase. Lastly, the person obtains a new status and reintegrates into society. Van Gennep's idea on 'rites of passages' can be related to the societal status' change the Indonesian population endured during the Dutch colonization. With the arrival of the Dutch in Indonesia, a new, dominant community confronted the Indonesian society and intruded on their rituals and practices. The native population became subaltern, and the Dutch colonizers prevailed.⁴³ With the introduction of Indonesian women in Dutch families as domestic workers, the Indonesian women entered a transitional stage. Transitioning from the social status they possessed before the colonization into the subaltern society. The liminality of the gallery is befitting the transitional stage of Indonesian women. This theory also explains why Indonesian women are often portrayed on the gallery. The gallery is the place that embodies their undergoing transition. To moderate this bitter transition, the gallery's betwixt nature is comforting and does not yet suggest the definite state of the 'rites of passages'.

⁴² Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), 11.

⁴³ Locher-Scholten, *Women and the Colonial State*, 85.



Figure 9: *A Dutch Woman and Indonesian Household Workers*. Source: archive of Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, <https://www.fotozoektfamilie.nl/nl/gallery/album/page/?iv=ALB-0939&page=4653>
Author unknown, July 1930, Album from a Dutch family staying in the former Dutch East Indies.

The photo album collection proves that Dutch families and their Indonesian domestic workers are often captured together in the same picture. However, in these photos, Indonesian women never join the activity of the Dutch family. For example, when the Dutch would host guests or sit down for the so-called *theeuurtje*, the familial ritual of drinking tea together. Indonesian domestic workers always assisted the Dutch families during these moments but never joined them around the table. As proves one of the preserved pictures [figure 10], the Indonesian woman in the back of this picture almost disappears behind the plant and the table. She stands close to the interior's door to assist the Dutch family at any time. The fragile and rigid posture of the Indonesian woman is in stark contrast with the lavish and grand posture of the three Dutch people. In this case, the Indonesian woman is portrayed as subordinate to the Dutch families, which happened regularly. Choreographing a scene like this displays the fundamental role that Indonesian women fulfilled in the Dutch household. Nonetheless, it also conveys that it was considered not appropriate for a domestic worker to attend family rituals.

The social, ethnical and economic gap between the Dutch families and Indonesian domestic workers is apparent in the intricate relationship between Dutch and Indonesian women. It was often the case that Dutch women arrived in Indonesia and did not know how to run a household in a tropical climate. Nor did they know how to speak the language or understand Indonesian traditions. This ignorance is why J.M.J. Catenius-van der Meijden wrote the handbook for Dutch housewives in the former Dutch East Indies. This book was not the only support for Dutch women. Generally, the clumsy Dutch women relied on their gracious Indonesian workers. They had to teach the Dutch how to run a household in the tropics.⁴⁴ This bond between a Dutch woman and a Indonesian domestic worker could be very affectionate and peaceful. However, for many Dutch women, there was often resentment and distrust towards Indonesian women; they consumed the love and trust of the Dutch children as *baboe* and served the love of Dutch men as *njai*. This felt threatening and evoked hostile attitudes towards Indonesian women.

This complicated relationship between different women relates to another theory on liminal places constructed by Homi K. Bhabha. Homi K. Bhabha is a critical theorist known for his contemporary postcolonial studies. Bhabha argues that the interconnections and interdependency of colonizer and colonized are contrived in a liminal place which he calls "The Third Space of Enunciation."⁴⁵ In this liminal space,

⁴⁴ Gouda, "Nyonyas" on the colonial divide," 329.

⁴⁵ Arup Ratan Chakraborty, "Liminality in Post-Colonial Theory: A Journey from Arnold van Gennep to Homi K. Bhabha," *Anadhyun: An International Journal of Social Sciences* 1, no. 1, (1996): 145-53, <https://www.rnlkwc.ac.in/pdf/anudhyan/volume1/Liminality-in-Post-Colonial-Theory-A-Journey-from-Arnold-van-Gennep-to-Homi-K-Bhabha-Arup-Ratan-Chakraborty.pdf>.

the colonizer objectifies the colonized and subsequently repulses this self-constructed stereotype of the colonized. Moreover, the difference in culture between the colonizer and the colonized is confronting the colonizer's identity. This confrontation invigorates the dichotomy of the colonizer's culture and identity that is placed in a completely different context. The ambivalent feelings of Dutch women (the colonizer) towards Indonesian women (the colonized) can be explained by Bhabha's theory. Considering the spatial features of former Dutch East Indies homes, the gallery would qualify as a liminal space to accommodate the effects of two confronting societies.

Indonesian women were often portrayed as subordinate labourers in the homes of Dutch families. The Dutch families that possessed a Kodak could control how and when they would capture Indonesian women. Furthermore, pictures of Indonesian women next to intimate family occasions prove that Indonesian domestic workers could not attend these activities. They merely had to serve the Dutch families. Van Gennep's theory relates to this transitioning position of Indonesian women, which was frequently illustrated on the gallery. Lastly, Bhabha's theory interprets the difficult relationship and interdependency of the colonizer and the colonized. He argues that social affiliation and segregation originate in a liminal space, an essential characteristic of the gallery.



Figure 10: *A Dutch Family and an Indonesian Domestic Worker*. Source: archive of Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, <https://www.fotozoektfamilie.nl/nl/gallery/album/page/?iv=ALB-0837&page=12733>
Author unknown, August 1917, Album from a Dutch family staying in Makassar.

Final remarks

This research examined how Dutch and Indonesian women were portrayed on the galleries based on the photo albums preserved in the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam (dating between 1900 and 1945). The gallery that derived from the traditional Indonesian *pendopo* is often reoccurring as a backdrop in the family picture albums. The gallery's spatial features and relation to the rest of the house make this the place to host guests. The most important condition of the gallery is the intermediate space. Following Pollock's principles, it is about seeing and being seen, which relates to spaces of femininity. It was inappropriate for women to display in public. The gallery provided a safe place at home, which allowed women to be on display and in touch with the neighbourhood. Therefore women, Dutch and Indonesian, were often captured on the gallery.

Dutch women did not have a social status of their own. Their husbands' and fathers' status determined the family wealth. Dutch people were well aware that the gallery was a place to be on display. Accordingly, the Dutch women exploited the open character of the gallery to show off their "acquired" wealth. Close examination of the family photo albums also proved that boundaries between the Dutch families and their Indonesian domestic workers could dissolve in the gallery's liminal space, but also become explicitly relevant.

In contrast to the portrayal of the affluent Dutch women, Indonesian women were often portrayed as their subordinate labourers. Indonesian women were not permitted to accompany the Dutch family's rituals and intimate activities. They were bound to the Dutch homes as their workplace and therefore acted differently in this space compared to Dutch women. The position of Indonesian women in society changed when the Dutch colonized the former Dutch East Indies. Conforming van Genneep's theory, the gallery's liminal character suited the transitional phase that Indonesian women endured at that time. Lastly, many preserved pictures illustrate the complex social relationship between Dutch and Indonesian women. Bhabha's theory on the meaning of liminal space explains these complex cultural systems between the colonizer and the colonized.

Altogether, this historical research is bound to a specific period and place and to limited people. However, it tells a broader history and talks about the lives of women worldwide. Regardless of the situatedness of the research, it brings to light more general ideas about spaces of femininity. Most importantly, this image analysis illustrates the importance of liminal places for women's daily practices. The gallery's conditions of seeing and being seen create a safe intermediary space for women to carry out domestic work and still be part of a bigger whole. This knowledge can also be taken out of the domestic realm and applied when designing urban spaces and public buildings. A lot more situations ask for a careful understanding of women's positionality in social practice and how this concerns the design of private and public spaces. Therefore it is important to research specific case studies, like the portrayal of Dutch and Indonesian women on galleries, to learn more about women in relation to their surrounding architecture.

Bibliography

Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999.

Bridwell Beckham, Sue. "The American front porch." In *Housing and Dwelling: Perspectives on Modern Domestic Architecture*, edited by Barbara Miller Lane, 86-94. London and New York: Routledge, 2007.

Catenius-van der Meijden, Johanna M.J. *Ons Huis in Indië*. Semarang: Masman & Stroink, 1908.

Chakraboty, Arup R. "Liminality in Post-Colonial Theory: A Journey from Arnold van Gennep to Homi K. Bhabha." *Anadhyun: An International Journal of Social Sciences* 1, no. 1 (1996): 145-53. <https://www.rnlkwc.ac.in/pdf/anudhyan/volume1/Liminality-in-Post-Colonial-Theory-A-Journey-from-Arnold-van-Gennep-to-Homi-K-Bhabha-Arup-Ratan-Chakraborty.pdf>.

Goffman, Ervin. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987.

Gouda, Frances. "'Nyonyas' on the colonial divide: white women in the Dutch East Indies, 1900-1942." *Gender & History* 5, no. 3 (Autumn 1993): 318-42. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0424.1993.tb00183.x>.

Haasse, Hella. *Heren van de Thee*. Amsterdam: Querido, 1992.

Hill Collins, Patricia and Sirma Bilge. *Intersectionality*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016.

Locher-Scholten, Elsbeth. *Women and the Colonial State: Essays on Gender and Modernity in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000.

Ministry of General Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Defense and Health Wellbeing and Sports. (Mark Rutte, Wopke Hoekstra, Kajsa Ollongren and Maarten van Ooijen) 'Eerste reactie op uitkomsten onderzoeksprogramma 'Onafhankelijkheid, Dekolonisatie, Geweld en Oorlog in Indonesië, 1945-1950.' February 17, 2022. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2022/02/17/eerste-reactie-op-uitkomsten-onderzoeksprogramma-onafhankelijkheid-dekolonisatie-geweld-en-oorlog-in-indonesie-1945-1950> Accessed February 21, 2022.

Morris, Rosalind. *Photographies East: the camera and its histories in East and Southeast Asia*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

Pollock, Griselda. "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity." In *Gender Space Architecture: An interdisciplinary introduction*, edited by Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Iain Borden, 154-67. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.

Protschky, Susie. "Seductive Landscapes: Gender, Race and European Representations of Nature in the Dutch East Indies in the Late Colonial Period." *Gender & History* 20, no. 2 (August 2008): 372-98. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0424.2008.00530.x>.

Ronald, Arya. "Aspecten van de bouwcultuur van de traditionele Javaanse woning en zijn architectonische expressie." Diss., Technical University Delft, 1992.

Tropenmuseum. "Foto Zoekt Familie." Accessed December 17, 2021. <https://www.tropenmuseum.nl/nl/onze-collectie-0/foto-zoekt-familie>.

van Eijl, Corrie. "Het werkzame verschil: vrouwen in de slag om arbeid, 1898-1940." Diss., University of Utrecht, 1994.

van Gennep, Arnold. *The Rites of Passages*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961.

van Hogendorp, Anna, and Cornelia van der Hart. *Van vrouwenleven 1813-1913: ontwikkelingsgang van het leven en werken der vrouw in Nederland en de koloniën*. Groningen: Römelingh, 1913.

van Schaik, Arthur. *Malang: beeld van een stad*. Purmerend: Asia Maior, 1996.

Willems, Wim. "No Sheltering Sky: Migrant Identities of Dutch Nationals from Indonesia." in *Europe's Invisible Migrants*, edited by Andrea L. Smith, 33-59. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002.