

'Whose Gold Is This?' The Gold of the Dutch Golden Coach

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Abstract

This article focuses on the gold leaf of the Golden Coach, a gift from the Amsterdam population to Queen Wilhelmina in 1898, using the methodologies of object biography and object itinerary. It asks what makes the object: its final form and function, the separate parts and their materiality, or the context of users and related objects as part of a continuous process of meaning making? An exhibition at the Amsterdam Museum (2021-2022) exposed the Golden Coach's complex history along these three layers of interpretation, leading to its transformation from a national symbol to a colonial object and contributing to broader discussions of slavery and colonialism in the Netherlands. Here, the interaction between the immaterial origins of the carriage and its raw materials, such as the gold leaf, will be discussed. Advanced scientific research revealed a Surinamese origin of the gold. Why is it relevant that we know that now? And what does it mean for the future of the Golden Coach?

Keywords: gold, colonialism, royalty, provenance, object biography

In 2021, the Ghanaian artist Benard Akoi-Jackson (b. 1979), covered in gold paint, slowly walked the route that the Golden Coach took nine years prior through the centre of Amsterdam following the wedding ceremony of crown prince Willem-Alexander and Máxima Zorreguieta. Akoi-Jackson's performance was part of *The Golden Coach*, an exhibition at the Amsterdam Museum about one of the most controversial heritage objects in the Netherlands: the carriage used by the Dutch monarchy during ceremonial events since 1901. A video of Akoi-Jackson's gilded walk was installed in one of the period rooms of the museum, the so-called Regents Meeting Room, visualizing the core of the controversy. By bringing together ritual and ironic play in his reenactment of the coach's trajectory, Akoi-Jackson critiqued the purely festive function of the carriage and questioned its colonial legacy. Visitors listening carefully to the music of the video, the song *Gold* by South African musician Hugh Masekela, could hear: Ngeyakabani na legolide, 'whose gold is this?'



Figure 1: Performance by Bernard Akoi-Jackson, June 2021, Amsterdam Museum courtyard (Photograph courtesy of the Amsterdam Museum)

This article traces a biography of the Golden Coach, a gift of the Amsterdam population to Queen Wilhelmina in 1898. Using the lens of object biography to explore changes in classifications, theoretical frameworks, and debates surrounding objects (Alberti 2005: 567), I examine the symbolic role of this royal carriage in Dutch society. Disagreements fought out around the carriage, its visibility in a public space, and the emergence of its colonial legacy will be briefly summarized, followed by an account of the technical research into the gold leaf and its outcomes. In the conclusion, I aim to answer the question as to what makes the heritage object: its final form and function as a ceremonial carriage, the separate parts and their materiality including the provenance of its gold leaf, or the context of users, related objects, performances, and visitor views as part of a continuous process of meaning making? As one of the curators involved in this project, I developed the exhibition concept, researched the coach's history, commissioned art works, took part in the meetings of the curatorial team and with the various stakeholders, and initiated research into the origin of the gold.

Subalterns subjected to the Crown

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the tour taken by the Dutch Queen or King to the yearly opening of Parliament celebrated the alliance between the monarch and Dutch parliamentary democracy. In the past decade, however, the carriage transporting the monarch – the Golden Coach – has become increasingly controversial due to the painting on one of its side panels. This triptych, *Tribute from the Colonies*, shows a white woman on a throne, representing the Netherlands, receiving gifts from Black inhabitants of the Dutch East Indies and the Dutch colonies in the Caribbean. The exhibition at the Amsterdam Museum (June 2021 – January 2022), questioned whether and how the Golden Coach could continue as a national and royal ritual object.



Figure 2: The Dutch Golden Coach with the painting *Tribute from the Colonies* at the Binnenhof (seat of the Dutch Parliament) in The Hague, September 2014 (Photograph Wikipedia CC).

To find out more about the origins of the carriage, I turn to two sites in the late nineteenth century Kingdom of the Netherlands, where marginalized subjects laid the basis for the royal vehicle: the ones who came up with the idea for the gift and the ones who mined the raw material that would give the coach its name. In 1898, just after her eighteenth birthday, Wilhelmina would ascend the throne in the Dutch capital of Amsterdam as the first Queen of the House of Orange. The idea to give her a golden carriage arose a few years earlier within the Oranje Vriendenkring (the Brotherhood of Friends of the House of Orange) in the Amsterdam working-class neighborhood of the Jordaan.

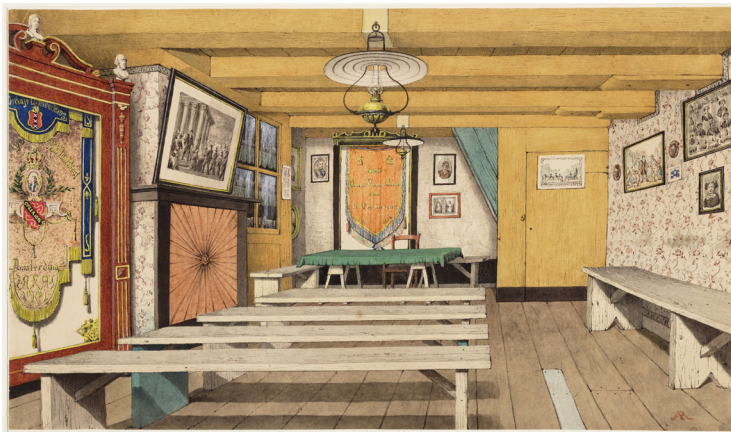


Figure 3: J.M.A. Rieke, (1851-1899) Meeting room Oranje Vriendenkring 1898 (collection Stadsarchief Amsterdam).

In their simple meeting room, a member of the Brotherhood enthusiastically described the gala carriage of an indigenous prince in the Dutch East Indies, which he had seen in the window of the Amsterdam coach manufacturer Spyker. Wouldn't such a golden coach be a suitable gift for the young queen Wilhelmina? (Rössing 1898). Gold has traditionally been the mineral associated with power and with royalty. Its rarity makes it precious, and because of its malleability, a small amount of gold can make a large area shine (Bernstein 2000: 52-4). Among the many carriages in the royal stables, one covered in gold was still lacking. Together with the Spyker coach factory, the Brotherhood began a campaign to raise funds from among the Amsterdam population. The call to donate money included a list of golden coaches of other European monarchs, emphasizing that the Netherlands could not lag behind in royal splendour.



Figure 4: Parade with gold miners in front of the Governor's Palace in Paramaribo, 1892 (Collection Wereldmuseum).

A few years earlier, in 1892, a parade float with gold miners had passed the palace of the Governor of the colony of Suriname in Paramaribo on the occasion of the twelfth birthday of Princess Wilhelmina. These Black miners may have been the ones to pan or wash the gold that would end up on the Golden Coach. Suriname had been occupied by the Dutch since 1667. From the beginning, the colonization of South America was motivated by the search for El Dorado, the mythical gold-covered native leader of the Muisca people in present day Colombia, indicating a realm of mineral wealth (Silver 1992). Governor Cornelis van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck, who co-owned Suriname together with the West-Indian Company (WIC) and the city of Amsterdam, initiated the first, unsuccessful, gold exploration expedition in 1687. After the legal abolition of slavery in 1863, the colonial government began looking for new economic possibilities. Stimulated by gold discoveries in neighbouring French Guyana, a new gold exploration was carried out with success in 1874, and gold production boomed for a short period around 1900 (Vletter and Hakstege 1998: 311-26).

A (colonial) story on wheels

The mining of the gold hints at the need to expand the concept of object biography, to delve or dig even deeper – for the raw materials. Object biography as a research method was first proposed by Igor Kopytoff. It refers to the narration of life-histories of objects, their production and exchanges and their meanings in various contexts. He asks, ‘What, sociologically, are the biographical possibilities inherent in [the object’s] status and in the period and culture, and how are these possibilities realized? Where does the thing come from and who made it?’ (Kopytoff 1986: 66-7). Essential in the plan for the Dutch Golden Coach was the intention to construct it out of raw materials from the entire Dutch Empire. The flax for the seats and the leather came from the Southern Dutch provinces, while the tropical teak wood originates from the Indonesian island of Java (Rössing 1898). Finally, the coach is covered in a thin layer of gold. Until 2022, the origin of the gold was unknown, as the archives of the Spyker factory, which switched to automobiles not long after the delivery of the Golden Coach, have been lost. Journalist J.H. Rössing, who published in 1898 a firsthand account of its origin, only mentioned that the gold did not come from the Indonesian island of Celebes. However, during my research for the exhibition, many Surinamese people, both in the Netherlands and in Suriname, told me they were convinced that the gold came from Suriname. While the elements of the coach were sourced from many different places, this article focuses on the mineral that gives the coach its name.



Figure 5: Nicolaas van der Waay, design drawings for the painting of the sides of the Golden Coach, both of which represent the Netherlands (collection Stadsarchief Amsterdam).

The coach can, in many ways, be read as a story on wheels. The decorations carved in the teak wood are full of symbols related to the House of Orange – for instance, dogs and lions symbolizing loyalty and strength, and cornucopias symbolizing wealth. The panels, painted by the Amsterdam painter and art teacher Nicolaas van der Waay (1855-1936), intend to show a harmonious relationship between monarch and subjects, both in the metropole and in the colonies. Until recently, remarkably little attention was paid to the colonial context of the Golden Coach. The popular story of the coach focused on its origins in the working-class neighbourhood of Jordaan, its elaborate decorations, and its ritual function (Leeuwen and Stofberg 2010). Susan Legêne highlighted the Golden Coach as an object central to the cultural

imaging of the Dutch political system. Legêne coins these objects, grand like the coach or small like a card game about Indonesia, as 'home-colonial' – so familiar that their colonial references went unnoticed for a long time. Objects like the Golden Coach thus contributed to the silencing and nostalgic idealization of Dutch colonialism (Legêne 2010).

The Amsterdam Museum commissioned fifteen artists to create works for the exhibition. Several of them expressed in their work that the harmonious story painted on the Golden Coach is false. AiRich (b. 1991), an artist of Surinamese descent, sees the Tribute from the Colonies panel as a misleading and toned-down version of history. For her, the inhumanity and coercion that were inherent to Dutch colonialism are missing. In her collage BLOODY GOLD, she transformed the panel into a slave ship and included the human misery.



Figure 6: AiRich, *BLOODY GOLD. TRIBUTE FROM THE COLONIES / WHAT ABOUT REPAIRING THE DAMAGE?*, 2021 (photograph courtesy of the artist and of the Amsterdam Museum).

At the end of the nineteenth century, the idea to gift the Golden Coach already received criticism. Comments from socialist and anarchist critics focused on the anti-democratic nature of the monarchy and the inappropriate efforts to source funding for the gift among Amsterdam's poor proletariat. The committee leading the initiative asked Amsterdam working-class families to contribute 25 cents (in Dutch, a kwartje), a considerable amount at that time. Socialist politician and writer Louis Hermans argued in his brochure *De Gouden Kwartjeswagen* (The Golden Quarter Chariot) that 'the phantom of hunger permeates the working-class districts' (Hermans 1897: 5). He considered the festive decorations of the slums for the inauguration a 'criminal mockery' and the offering of a coach to someone who already had some 150 coaches superfluous. He also lashed out at the Spyker factory for whom the Golden Coach would be a 'catchy advertisement' (Hermans 1897). For the factory, the project was indeed too big to fail. When fundraising among the Amsterdam population did not yield enough, two rich members of the Amsterdam elite who also served as commissioners for the Spyker factory donated large amounts for the completion of the Golden Coach (Wildt 2021: 43-5). These contributions were never mentioned in the popular histories of the coach. The symbolic significance of the 'collective gift' of the Amsterdam working class was important, especially in light of the

emerging anti-monarchist socialist movement, for whom the Jordaan neighbourhood was an important stronghold, just as it was for the Orangists (Petterson 2017).²

Royal rituals

For over a century, the main role of the Golden Coach has been a performative one and these performances were enlarged through mediatization of the images of the royal family in the Golden Coach through the streets of The Hague and Amsterdam. In analyzing the Golden Coach, the method of object itinerary is a useful concept to supplement object biography. Both concepts narrativize our relationships with objects, but an object itinerary focusses more on movement in space, rather than in time (Nisbet 2021: 5). It questions the role of performative interactions and the relation between movement and stasis of objects, including circulation through reproduction in other media (Joyce and Gillespie 2015).

For her inauguration in 1898, Wilhelmina used the simpler open carriage her mother had already commissioned for the occasion. The Golden Coach made its premiere in The Hague in February 1901 when it transported Wilhelmina and her German fiancée Hendrik (Heinrich of Mecklenburg) to their wedding ceremony, soon followed by a tour through Amsterdam where tens of thousands of the donors came to admire 'their' glittering Golden Coach.

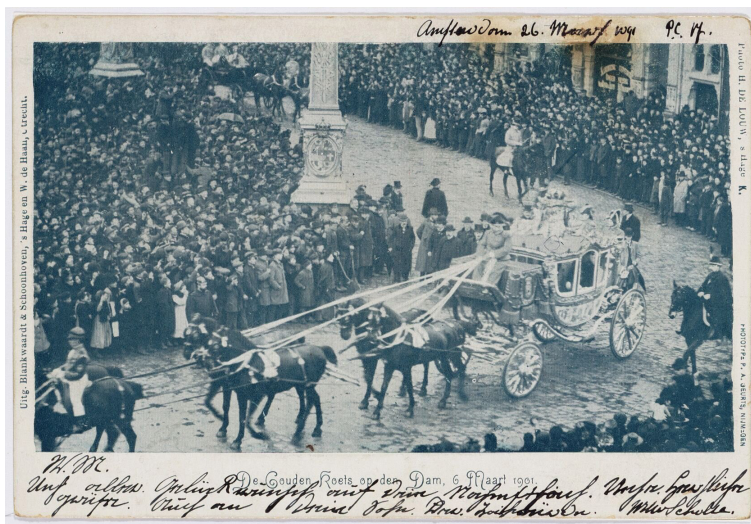


Figure 7: Postcard with the Golden Coach on Dam square, 1901 (photo H. de Louw, collection Stadsarchief Amsterdam).

Although the Golden Coach has been exhibited in museums, its primary role is that of an essential object for royal rituals, metaphorically elevated by its high windows, its suggestion of timelessness and the material it is made of (Stengs 2021). The Dutch collective memory of the coach is filled with images of the circuit at the opening of Parliament, a one-kilometre route from the Noordeinde Palace to the Binnenhof, accompanied by horsemen, other coaches, and military bands. In the 1920s and 1930s, the opening of Parliament was also an occasion for protests against the monarchy. These socialist and republican protests died down after the Second World War. Queen Wilhelmina had fled to England in 1940 and the royal stable master managed to keep the coach out of the hands of the German occupiers. After the liberation, the Golden Coach was used again at the inauguration of Queen Juliana in 1948. To stress its function as a symbol of the alliance between the royal family and Dutch democracy, that same year a nautical exhibition was organized, with the Golden Coach travelling across the country in the hold of a ship (Wildt 2021).

On 15 December 1954, Queen Juliana, accompanied by Prince Bernhard, rode to the

Binnenhof in the Golden Coach to sign the Charter for the Kingdom in the Ridderzaal. This meant a new relationship between the Netherlands, Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles, in which the overseas territories were given an equal place in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In her speech, Juliana said that the Charter was the result of a development that led to the definitive abolition of colonial relations. No one in the Netherlands or the Caribbean remarked that for this milestone the Queen might have done better to use another carriage than the one with the panel Tribute from the Colonies.

The Golden Coach as a target for protests

In the 1960s, protests against the monarchy revived and the Golden Coach itself became the target of action. In 1966, Crown Princess Beatrix married German nobleman Claus von Amsberg. Both the anti-authoritarian and republican protest movement Provo and groups within the Dutch Jewish community turned against this marriage.³ Provo activists waited for the moment after the wedding ceremony in the Westerkerk, when all the cameras of the international press were focused on the Golden Coach. Despite the security, they managed to throw a smoke bomb at the royal carriage. The photo with the Golden Coach surrounded by smoke became a distinctive image in its biography. In 2002, the demonstrations during the wedding of Willem-Alexander and Máxima had a similar cause. That year, demonstrators turned against the future monarch's choice of a marriage partner: Máxima Zorreguieta, daughter of a minister in the Argentinian dictator Videla's government. This time, the mayor of Amsterdam allowed the demonstrators to take a place next to the route for a peaceful demonstration, but the moment the Golden Coach passed, a paint bomb flew against the glass of the carriage. The white paint was immediately rubbed away, and another protest action could be added to the biography of the Golden Coach.

In 1966 and 2002, the coach became a target of protests, because it was the eminent symbol of the monarchy. Only around 2011 did the Golden Coach itself become the object of critique. Netherlands-based Indonesian activist Jeffrey Pondaag wrote a letter to one of the major newspapers together with the Surinamese activist Barryl Biekman and two parliamentarians from the Socialist and Green Left parties. They urged Queen Beatrix to stop using this 'wrong coach' or at least have the panel Tribute from the Colonies removed and placed in a museum.⁴ The government and the royal family did not respond to the criticism. On the contrary, in 2015, a major, years-long restoration of the carriage was started, with the aim of using the Golden Coach again for the opening of Parliament and other ceremonies.



Figure 8: Restoration of the woodcarvings of the Golden Coach (photo Arthur van der Vlies).

In the summer of 2019, the Amsterdam Museum asked the royal family to be allowed to exhibit the Golden Coach upon its restoration. As senior curator, I wrote a proposal for a polyphonic exhibition showing many different perspectives on the Golden Coach, including visitor research on the desirability of continued deployment of the Golden Coach in regard to the colonial representation on the side panel. We wanted to further the conversation about the future of what in recent years had become arguably the most well-known and controversial colonial object in the Netherlands, and contended that Amsterdam Museum's experience in addressing (de)coloniality made it the right place to have this necessary debate.⁵

Golden Age and Golden Coach

The timing for the request was exciting because of another issue in which gold played a role. In September 2019, the Amsterdam Museum decided to discontinue using 'Golden Age' as a synonym for the seventeenth century. The term was considered too one-sided and left no margin for counter-stories about people for whom the seventeenth century was anything but golden (Blanca van der Scheer et al. 2024: 139). This led to great outcry on social media and other platforms. Even Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte (himself a historian) defended the continued use of the term Golden Age. The royal family nevertheless agreed to the proposal for a multi-perspective exhibition on the Golden Coach. In our first meetings with the King's representatives, they stated that they would not request any control on the content or design of the exhibition, apart from the safety of the coach. A multidisciplinary team with curators and educators from different disciplines and backgrounds, including from the former Dutch colonies, set to work to create the exhibition. No room in the Amsterdam Museum, located in a former orphanage, is big enough to house the coach, so a special glass display case was built in one of the courtyards. It was thrilling to see the royal carriage lifted by a crane over the roof of the museum in June 2021, a few weeks after the end of the Covid-19 closure. The Golden Coach had been exhibited in museums before, but for the first time the narrative centered entirely on the biography of the coach.



Figure 9: Transport of the Golden Coach into the courtyard of the Amsterdam Museum, June 2021 (photo Amsterdam Museum).

When the coach descended into the courtyard, the image of heritage in limbo came to my mind. It was literally hanging in the air, but also figuratively. What would happen with this iconic piece of national heritage after a public absence of more than five years due to the

restoration? The attitude towards colonial relics and racist images in public spaces had been changing since a nationwide debate around slavery developed and the figure of Black Pete (the blackface-wearing helper of the Dutch folklorist figure Sinterklaas) caused significant controversy. The preparations for the Golden Coach exhibition coincided with protests led by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement following George Floyd's death in the United States. As one of the last images of the exhibition, we had chosen a photo of a young Black woman holding up a sign during a BLM demonstration in Amsterdam, which read: 'Fuck Golden Coach'. In the six rooms of the exhibition, we showed many different perspectives from the past and present. We intended to use the debate around the Golden Coach as a form of social justice work that can be done by museums (Huhn and Anderson 2021: 352). Narrative storytelling in videos and audio tours was an important tool of the exhibition. This is also one of the tenets of Critical Race Theory: including the personal experiences or stories of people of colour (Adams 2017: 291). This 'Black perspective' on the Golden Coach made some of the white visitors to the museum realize how painful the image of Tribute from the Colonies can be. The museum's intention was not to provoke identification with the storytellers, but rather to acknowledge how many (untold) perspectives there are on this national heritage object (Bonnell and Simon 2007: 69). The exhibition indeed ignited some uncomfortable conversations, but it also led to transformative insights, as became clear in the reactions. We did not shy away either from asking visitors for specific action, in our case to advise the King about the future of the Golden Coach (Stol et al. 2024).

Origins of the gold

A few weeks before the opening of the exhibition, we visited the restorer who was applying a new layer of gold leaf to the Golden Coach, together with researchers from the Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency. This inspired me to embark on a quest to uncover the origins of the mineral that gave the coach its name. As the archives of the Spyker factory and the gilding company are missing, we initiated a scientific process to investigate the oral tradition of the Surinamese gold. The Amsterdam Museum cooperated with the department of Earth Sciences at Free University (Vrije Universiteit) Amsterdam, Netherlands Institute for Conservation, Art and Science (NICAS), Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE), and Naturalis Biodiversity Centre in Leiden.⁶ Gold provenance studies have successfully employed the isotopic composition of lead to determine the geographical origin of gold artefacts (e.g. Bendall et al. 2008 and Baron et al. 2014). The Free University's advanced laboratories and analytical equipment to examine a variety of samples, including gold, could therefore provide clues into the geographical origin of the gold leaf (D'Imporzano et al. 2020). The Royal Stables were willing to provide a piece of original gold from the coach that had been removed during a previous restoration. To determine the geographical origin of the gold leaf, earth scientists at Free University would need to compare its chemical fingerprint to gold samples from mines that were active during the late nineteenth century. Biodiversity Center Naturalis was prepared to provide us with these samples, originally collected by the mining engineering department of the Royal Academy for engineers in Delft. The sample collection includes gold nuggets obtained from river sediments (placer gold), gold veins (lode gold), and gold ores (e.g. Kioe-A-Sen et al. 2016).

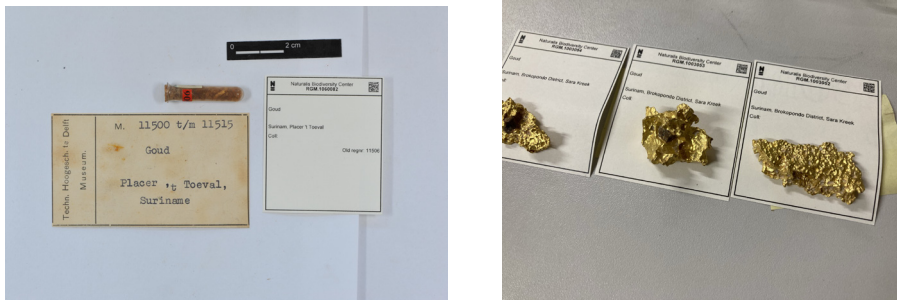


Figure 10: Gold samples from the Naturalis collection (photos by Annemarie de Wildt).

We decided to compare the gold leaf from the Golden Coach with samples from Suriname and South Africa, as the countries with strong colonial ties to the Netherlands that experienced gold rushes around 1900 (Joosten 2023). It would take lengthy research to develop and optimize the chemical procedure to determine the chemical fingerprint of the gold of the coach (Visser 2022). Never before had the origin of gold leaf been chemically examined, because it is extremely thin and the concentration of impurities, including lead, is very low. The recently introduced ultra-sensitive method to analyze lead in gold produces lead isotope ratios accurate to the fifth decimal (e.g. Standish et al. 2013). The composition of Pb (lead) isotopes in gold is an indication of their origin. The gold samples from Suriname and South Africa indicate the geological history of these regions (e.g. Kioe-A-Sen et al. 2016 and Pearton and Viljoen 2017). During geological processes such as the formation of mountains, hydrothermal fluids leach elements, including precious metals like gold, from rocks. After its deposition billions of years ago the gold absorbed small quantities of uranium and thorium and over the years, by radioactive decay, lead was formed in the gold. Looking through the lens of object itinerary, the gold leaf is 'geologies in motions' – the movement of minerals for utilitarian purposes (Joyce and Gillespie 2015).

A royal decision

Before the results of the gold research were known, the Golden Coach still stood in the courtyard of the Amsterdam Museum. Tens of thousands of visitors walked around it, debating the paintings and the coach's beauty, the pros and cons of a monarchy, and what the King should decide about its future use. Never before had the Golden Coach been viewed so intensively by so many people. Compared to the tours on the Opening of Parliament and royal weddings, it was now, in this situation of stasis, possible to view the carriage from all sides with one's nose against the glass, instead of a cursory glance from afar at a moving vehicle. As such, a large number of visitors gave their opinion.⁷ Some people felt that the panel Tribute of the Colonies should be replaced or painted over. A few wrote – apparently unaware of the fact that the gilding is a very thin layer of gold leaf – that the coach had to be melted down and the gold be returned to Suriname.

In January 2022, a few weeks before the closure of the exhibition, King Willem-Alexander announced in a special television broadcast: 'The Golden Coach can only ride again when the Netherlands is ready for it. And that is not the case now'. The King stated that achieving reconciliation and removing pain in people's souls is possible through listening to each other. 'Only if we take this road to reconciliation together can the Golden Carriage drive again on Budget Day, the day on which we celebrate our democracy and our solidarity as Dutch people'.⁸ This cautious and somewhat confusedly-worded decision led to social debate, but remarkably less intense than the debate surrounding the term 'Golden Age'. The year before the exhibition, the Black Lives Matter movement intensified the debate on racist images and statues and opened the eyes of many people in the Netherlands. And perhaps the way in which the Amsterdam Museum has conducted the conversation around the future of the carriage also played a role. For example, an article about dealing with disputed historical

monuments coined the word 'Golden Coach-method' as a productive way to handle contested heritage (Ekkelboom 2024). As a result of the royal decision, the Golden Coach remains in retirement in the royal stables.

The mystery of the gold is solved

On 12 September 2022, the retired Golden Coach made the news again because the mystery of the gold had been solved: the research of the Free University provided robust evidence for a Surinamese origin of the gold.

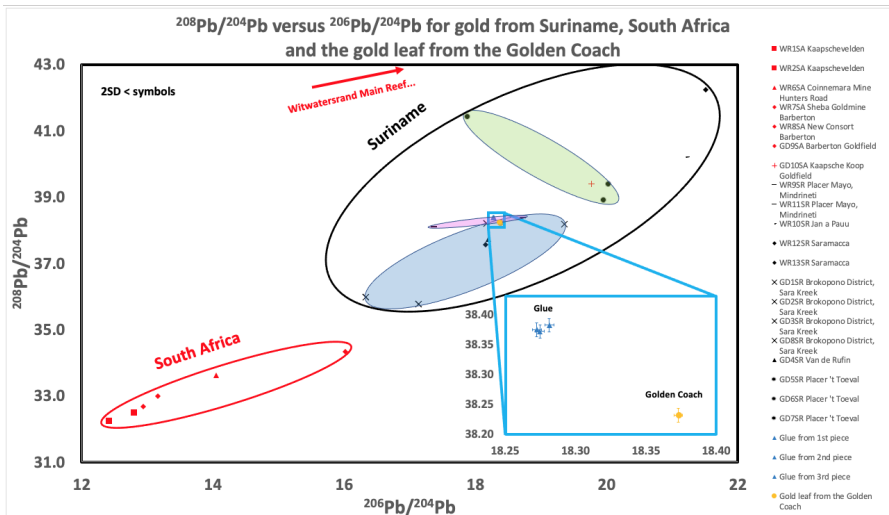


Figure 11: Results of the research by Reimer Visser, master thesis Free University Amsterdam, 2022.

The research showed that gold from the coach has very similar characteristics to a sample from the gold mine 't Toeval, at the foot of Brownsberg in the district of Brokopondo in Suriname, owned by Amsterdam investors at the end of the nineteenth century. The Golden Coach is connected with mining in Suriname in the period following the abolition of slavery. The news about the gold's origin further emphasized the colonial legacy of the Golden Coach. The methodology and the Pb isotope data for gold from Suriname and South Africa can be used in future projects to determine the provenance of other gold artefacts and to encourage more co-operation between museums and scientific research institutions.

Conclusion

The exhibition at the Amsterdam Museum was the first exhibition that centred the Golden Coach in all its aspects, from its immaterial and material origins to the way it changed from a national icon into a colonial object, culminating in the discovery of the Surinamese origin of the gold. The Golden Coach is a material relic from the late nineteenth century in its form, substance, and colonial ideology reflected in its paintings and the symbolic language. The raw materials it is made of directly originated in the extensive Dutch colonial empire: gold from Suriname covers wood from Java. The oppositions in Dutch society, between monarchists and socialists, between enthusiasts of traditional heritage and critics of the colonial past, are all embedded in this iconic object. While objects seldom change, society does. A museum is a place par excellence to contextualize the constantly changing meaning making in society around and about such a static object. The Amsterdam Museum employed many different

museological tools to illuminate and investigate the Golden Coach, such as artistic interventions, storytelling, historical and scientific research and audience research. The exhibition made the coach's biography richer than ever before, but also contributed to its culmination as a functioning royal carriage. The many discussions the exhibition yielded may have contributed to the ongoing debate in the Netherlands about slavery and the colonial past and even to the formal apologies for slavery issued by the government in December 2022 and by the King himself in July 2023.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

- ¹ Bernard Akoi-Jackson, 'A_GOLDEN[R]AGE...(?)', Amsterdam Museum The Golden Coach 2021. <https://www.goudenkoets.nl/bernard-akoi-jackson>, accessed 17 January 2024.
- ² The supporters of the House of Orange, especially in working class neighbourhoods like the Jordaan, expressed their support for the King (since 1898, the Queen), by decorating the streets with orange flags and arches.
- ³ The Dutch Provo movement (1965-1967) was an anarchist, countercultural protest group that used nonviolent, provocative actions to challenge the establishment. With the Dutch Jewish community, they shared an aversion to an alliance with a German, less than 20 years after the German occupation of the Netherlands.
- ⁴ Barryl Biekman, Harry van Bommel, Mariko Peters and Jeffry M. Pondaag, 'Majesteit, de Gouden Koets is een foute koets', NRC 16 September 2011. <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2011/09/16/majesteit-de-gouden-koets-is-een-foutekoets-12035444-a1014099>, accessed 29 July 2024.
- ⁵ The Amsterdam Museum is one of the Dutch museums that in the past decades has addressed the history and legacy of slavery and colonialism in exhibitions (e.g. The Dark Page of the Golden Age, 2013 and Black Amsterdam, 2016) and public programmes such as New Narratives. See also Blanca van der Scheer et al. 2024.
- ⁶ The gold research was made possible through a grant from the Institute for Conservation+Art+Science+ (NICAS).
- ⁷ In the exhibition visitors were asked to fill in comment cards with the question: 'what is your advice for the King?' The museum also toured the Dutch provincial capitals with a mobile research installation where people could leave their comments in writing, or on video or audio.
- ⁸ Het Koninklijk Huis, 'Toelichting van Koning Willem-Alexander over het gebruik van de Gouden Koets', 13 January 2022. <https://www.koninklijkhuis.nl/documenten/toespraken/2022/01/13/toelichting-van-koning-willem-alexander-over-het-gebruik-van-de-gouden-koets>, accessed 29 July 2024 (my translation).

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