

# New Museology in Practice: A case study of *Baan Hollanda* - an information center of Thai-Dutch relation in Ayutthaya

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บทความ

## “พิพิธภัณฑ์วิทยาใหม่”: กรณีศึกษา บ้านฮอลันดา ศูนย์ข้อมูลประวัติศาสตร์ ความสัมพันธ์ไทย-เนเธอร์แลนด์ในอยุธยา

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บทความนี้นำเสนอประเด็นอภิปรายจากวิทยานิพนธ์ของผู้เขียนเรื่อง "บ้านฮอลันดา: การวิเคราะห์เชิงวิพากษ์" ซึ่งเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาด้านหลักสูตรปรัชญาดุษฎีบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาการจัดการมรดกทางสถาปัตยกรรมกับการท่องเที่ยว (หลักสูตรนานาชาติ) คณะสถาปัตยกรรมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

หมายเหตุ: ชื่อและบทคัดย่อของบทความนี้ ยึดการแปลคำ New Museology ว่า "พิพิธภัณฑ์วิทยาใหม่" ตามที่มีผู้แปลและใช้ในเอกสารเผยแพร่ภาษาไทยมาก่อน อย่างไรก็ตาม ผู้เขียนเห็นว่าคำแปลดังกล่าวอาจสื่อถึงหลักการและเป้าหมายของ New Museology ได้ไม่ครอบคลุม และเสนอว่าในอนาคตอาจจำเป็นต้องพัฒนาคำแปลที่สื่อความถึงลักษณะของการประยุกต์ใช้ในปฏิบัติการทางพิพิธภัณฑ์ได้ชัดเจนขึ้น เช่น คำว่า "การพิพิธภัณฑ์สมัยใหม่" เป็นต้น

This paper discusses how New Museology theory has been implemented into practice, based on a case study of *Baan Hollanda* Historical Information Center in Ayutthaya, Thailand. The author provides an overview of three basic parameters for New Museology according to Peter van Mensch, a prominent member of New Museology movement. These parameters includes community museology, inclusive museum, and “*lieux de mémoire*” or “place of memory”. Drawing on the author’s experience as a project consultant at *Baan Hollanda* from 2010, the paper discusses four aspects of New Museology which have been embedded in the development of the center: 1) audience-focused exhibition 2) radical transparency in curational practice 3) community participation and 4) design. Following these guidelines, *Baan Hollanda* has gained wider recognition as well as positive feedback from visitors, museum practitioners and museum professionals. *Baan Hollanda*’s success can serve to encourage other museum institutions in Thailand to move from museum theory to practice where New Museology is one of the strong alternatives.

**keywords:** New Museology, participatory museum, *Baan Hollanda*

## ABSTRACT

## บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้อธิบายการประยุกต์ใช้แนวทาง “พิพิธภัณฑ์วิทยาใหม่” ในการพัฒนาศูนย์ข้อมูล-ประวัติศาสตร์ *บ้านฮอลันดา* จังหวัดพระนครศรีอยุธยา ผู้เขียนนำเสนอภาพรวมของหลักพื้นฐานสามประการของแนวทางพิพิธภัณฑ์ใหม่ ตามข้อเสนอของปีเตอร์ ฟาน เมนช์ นักวิชาการที่มีบทบาทสำคัญของกระแสพิพิธภัณฑ์วิทยาใหม่ อันได้แก่ พิพิธภัณฑ์วิทยาที่ตระหนักในความสำคัญของชุมชน พิพิธภัณฑ์ที่เปิดกว้างสำหรับคนทุกกลุ่ม และมนิทัศน์ “สถานที่แห่งความทรงจำ” จากประสบการณ์ในฐานะที่ปรึกษาโครงการของ *บ้านฮอลันดา* ตั้งแต่ ค.ศ. 2010 ผู้เขียนอธิบายการประยุกต์แนวทางพิพิธภัณฑ์วิทยาใหม่เข้าไปผสมผสานในกระบวนการพัฒนาศูนย์ข้อมูลฯ ใน 4 ด้าน ได้แก่ 1) การจัดแสดงที่เน้นผู้ชมเป็นจุดศูนย์กลาง 2) ความโปร่งใสในการนำเสนอข้อมูล 3) การมีส่วนร่วมของชุมชน และ 4) การออกแบบ ซึ่งส่งผลให้ *บ้านฮอลันดา* เป็นที่ยอมรับในวงกว้างมากขึ้น ตลอดจนได้รับความเห็นในเชิงบวกจากผู้เข้าเยี่ยมชม ผู้ปฏิบัติงานและผู้เชี่ยวชาญด้านพิพิธภัณฑ์ ความสำเร็จของ *บ้านฮอลันดา* จะช่วยส่งเสริมให้สถาบันพิพิธภัณฑ์อื่นๆ ในประเทศไทยเห็นความเป็นไปได้ในการเปลี่ยนผ่านจากทฤษฎีสู่ปฏิบัติการ โดยมีแนวทางพิพิธภัณฑ์วิทยาใหม่เป็นหนึ่งในทางเลือกสำคัญ

**คำสำคัญ:** พิพิธภัณฑ์วิทยาใหม่, พิพิธภัณฑ์ที่ส่งเสริมการมีส่วนร่วม, *บ้านฮอลันดา*

## Introduction

As a museum professional, people often assume that I have had wonderful experiences in museums since childhood and such experiences inspired me to work in museums. In truth, it is the opposite; I never liked going to a museum after my degree in Art History. The museums I experienced were mostly collection-based museums, with objects being presented in chronological order and very short label text consisting of “name, material and place of origin”. It was dull and boring.

My perception on museums changed in late 2000 when I went to the Getty Center in Los Angeles for the first time. I strolled from gallery to gallery with an audio guide in amazement. Everything seemed perfect. The botanic garden was well kept and beautiful. Curators gave interesting talks throughout the day in various galleries. The café offered a variety of delectable food and drinks. Its interior was very well designed and decorated. The waitress was very kind and helpful as I could not speak English well back then. It was an experience I never had before in museum environment in Thailand.

In *Never Mind the Width, Feel the Quality*, a research done by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre Consultancy and Research explains that people visit museums and galleries in the hope and expectation that the visit will meet their various needs. (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre 2005, 9). It explains that the hierarchy of visitor engagement concerns motivation and the classification is grouped into four key drivers: social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual. It perhaps explains how I felt that day; my needs were all met. It was a unique and meaningful day.

The Getty was truly inspirational. I could not recall ever having had an experience like this in Thailand. That inspirational day led me to further my education in museum studies in Amsterdam at Reinwardt Academy. I hoped to bring this exceptional museum experience to Thailand. I wanted to design a museum that was able to entertain, educate, and inspire people.

At Reinwardt Academy, my school in 2001, I was fortunate to study with one of the avant-garde Dutch museologists, Peter van Mensch who was a prominent member of the New Museology movement. Reinwardt Academy was part of Amsterdam School of Arts founded by the municipality of Leiden to offer students a new style of museum training program. The school was a meeting point of different traditions of museology (Assunção dos Santos 2010, 9). Studies began with a theoretical museology model that comprises the foundations of museums and museology.

## Defining New Museology

As New Museology is a discourse around social and political roles of museums, there are various interpretations and approach toward such a theory. However, in this paper I focused on the definition by van Mensch who was the main influence on my practice. For van Mensch, New Museology stands for new practice and new theoretical concepts involving three basic parameters: community museology, inclusive museum, and “*lieux de mémoire*” or “place of memory”. (van Mensch 2004, 1)

*The first parameter*, community museology, relates to the French school of eco-museums, which is led by Hugues de Varine and George Henri Rivière. In fact, the progressive initiative constituting eco-museums has a long history with an emphasis on creating better conditions for local communities; the integral museum adopted in the Round Table of Santiago of 1972 in Chile; and the founding of the Movement for a New Museology (MINOM) in Quebec. Hugues de Varine was one of the key players for community museology (Assunção dos Santos 2010, 6).

Rivière and Varine conducted many experimental projects in rural communities in France. In a lecture on “New Museology, Communities, Ecomuseums” Peter Davis pointed out that Rivière and Varine’s main idea was to find ways to help local communities use their cultural heritage to strengthen

their identity, economy and enhance their quality of lives. However, Davis also noted that their focus was different: Rivière was interested in the disappearing cultural heritage in French rural society but Varine was more interested in democratization of museums<sup>1</sup>. Using the eco-museum as an example in the first parameter, I assume that van Mensch attempted to define 'New Museology' based on local community participation which involves sharing ownership and authority and using cultural resources for community development.

*The second parameter* van Mensch mentioned was the inclusive museum movement in Great Britain. In this respect he highlighted the work of Richard Sandell (Sandell 1998; Dodd and Sandell 2001) in which the museum is seen as an agent of social regeneration, having a role in improving individual's quality of life. Sandell (2003) suggested that museums could play a pivotal role in improving individuals and society. He stated that:

Recent research suggests that museums can contribute towards social inclusion at individual, community and societal levels. At an individual or personal level, engagement with museums can deliver positive outcomes such as enhanced self-esteem, confidence and creativity. At a community level, museums can act as a catalyst for social regeneration, empowering communities to increase their self-determination and develop the confidence and skills to take greater control over their lives and the development of the neighborhoods in which they live. (Sandell 2003, 45)

*The third parameter* included in the New Museology was the notion of *lieux de mémoire* which van Mensch highlighted on Maurice Halbwachs' work on "collective memory" (Halbwachs 1992). The issue of *lieux de mémoire* asks what right museums or institutions have in deciding which memories should

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<sup>1</sup> A summary of this lecture from August 2010 has been published as part of the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre's "Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums Learning Resources" and can be accessed at [https://www.sac.or.th/databases/ichlearningresources\\_th/images/LECTURE5.pdf](https://www.sac.or.th/databases/ichlearningresources_th/images/LECTURE5.pdf).

be amplified as every group of people within society has its own network of lieux de memoire and its own "reservoir of knowledge" about the past. (van Mensch 2004, 8)

Van Mensch added that these networks that carry non-institutionalized "collective memory" represented an alternative traditional concept of musealisation. I presume that the democratic debate of museum authority is nothing new. This discussion can be traced back to the first book on New Museology (Vergo 1989) which questioned the way museums make certain choices determined by judgment, value, significance and monetary worth. Vergo stated that:

The very act of collecting has a political or ideological or aesthetic dimension, which cannot be overlooked. According to what criteria are works of art judged to be beautiful, or even historically significant? What make certain objects, rather than others, 'worth' preserving for posterity? When our museum acquire (or refuse to give back) object or artefacts specific to cultures other than our own, how does the value we place upon such objects, differ from assigned to them by the culture, the people or the tribe from whom they have been taken, and for whom they may have a quite specific religious or ritual or even therapeutic connotation? (Vergo 2013: 3)

Moreover, the concept of New Museology is widely discussed by many museum theorists. The literature suggests that "*there are wild variances of expectation and belief in 'New Museology'* " (McCall and Gray 2013, 3) and "*different countries each have their own goal/focus on how to make their museum be more inclusive, more democratic, and more representative of diverse communities.*" (Krouse 2006, 169)

The similarity of the core ideas that do exist across most countries mainly revolve around the changing rules and attitudes of the museum from 'traditional', which is collection focused, and an authoritative move toward the 'new', which is more open, inclusive, representative and creative. (McCall and Gray 2013, 4)

Based on different sources and reviews mentioned above, I would like to conclude that New Museology is not a single concrete idea but comprises several ideological and social aspects. The phenomenon of New Museology is based around the new roles of museums as they shift from being a cultural safeguarder to creating social change, and decentralise decision-making among people. Museums are taking on more responsibility towards society and are moving towards having a role in improving people's quality of life. As there seems to be no practical guideline nor clear instructions to follow, to implement a New Museology approach into practice museologists and museum professionals need to improvise their own ways.

## From Theory To Practice

My chance to implement a New Museology approach in practice came in 2010, when I was hired by the Netherlands Embassy in Bangkok to be a museum consultant for their project in Ayutthaya, *Baan Hollanda*.

*Baan Hollanda* was to be an information center about Thai-Dutch relations. In 2004, the project was initiated by a royal visit by Queen Beatrix and Crown Prince Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands to the archaeological site in Ayutthaya where there used to be a trading station of the Dutch United East India Company (*Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*: VOC). The VOC was a chartered company established in 1602 to coordinate all Dutch trades in Asia.

Being involved as a museum advisor at *Baan Hollanda* project was like a dream come true for me. It was a chance to change something I wish to see changed in the world (especially Thailand); an ideal opportunity to change something that overcomes the entrenched negative attitude what Black said in which museums are known as "dry, dusty, elitist, unwelcoming, formal and boring" (Black 2012, 48) into a recreational one where visitors can learn through a leisurely experience. It might be a place somewhat like what Staiff described in his idea of re-thinking heritage interpretation. He suggests that



museums should broaden out and go beyond an educational paradigm. He acknowledges the embodied relationship of the object/place/monument with the visitors, “where the visitor and place, past and present, inner and outer, self and other, real and imagined all dissolve in the continuities of the lived body in motion.” (Staiff 2014, 51)

To develop a new museum that responds and is relevant to twenty-first century museum visitors, my main intention was to create a positive experience in museum visitation, and perhaps a new museum culture that exhibits multi-voices, representing ordinary people, and with a ‘freshness’ to the format of relationships within the organisation itself, and with the public. Some aspects of New Museology were embedded into practice as following:

- 1) *Audience-focused Exhibition*: providing different learning style exhibits.
- 2) *Radical Transparency in Curatorial Practice*: representing the unconvenient truth on minorities and “dark” history.
- 3) *Community Participation*: engaging and empowering local community involvement.
- 4) *Design*: the right environment, shifting an authoritative attitude towards becoming a friendly and inclusive environment.

### **Audience-focused Exhibition**

In the last 20 years, the argument among museum professionals that the twenty-first century museum should be people-centred has largely been won. (Black 2012, 15)

As van Mensch pointed out in second parameter of New Museology that museum movement shifted focus from collection based to people-oriented and more inclusive. I foresaw that *Baan Hollanda* would be a place to accommodate all ranges of people who are and who are not interested in history. Some audience members may come to this place because they love

to learn about history, but not all of them. They may come as a tourist who is looking for something to do; they may come to find a relaxing place after making merit at the temple nearby; they may come in as the last stop in a school trip after racing around historical park fieldtrip all day. My job was to weigh up the various dimensions of the content, perspectives, interest, expectations, energy, and efforts of all kind of audience members when they reached *Baan Hollanda*. I had to keep in mind the cliché, "*the exhibits are conceived as a series of layers, making information about the object accessible to visitors with different background and interests.*" (Serrell 2015, 7)

As New Museology involves the idea of inclusiveness and audience oriented, *Baan Hollanda*'s interpretation adopted this notion and demonstrated it by providing an interpretation platform that covered a range of learning styles. For example, an *analytical learner*, who learn by thinking and watching, prefers interpretations that provide fact and sequence idea. Different techniques were used to provide an easy but coherent understanding such as label that asks question "Why did the Dutch come to Siam?" This approach supports by several researches conducted in museum studies.

In *Planning For People in Exhibitions*, McLean says that labels should be designed to ask questions, encourage participation, attract attention, direct viewers and encourage comparisons (McLean 1993). Nina Simon, the well respected author of *Participatory Museum* shared the same view that the 'right' question is the question that you are truly interested in answering<sup>2</sup>. In *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*, Beverly Serrell however had many concerns about the text used to ask questions. Her observations on this type of label is that most questions were not real questions at all. She stated that "*they are*

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<sup>2</sup> See Simon's blogpost from April 28, 2009 on "Design Techniques for Developing Questions for Visitor Participation," published on the *Museum 2.0* website: <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2009/04/design-techniques-for-developing.html>.

*mock queries, because the asker (the writer, curator, exhibition developer, designer) is simply disguising the delivery of more information in a superficially user-friendly form. These questions are gimmicks and are not good pedagogy, ...*" (Serrell 2015, 182). She pointed out that the "why" question is a particularly obnoxious form of mock query that is most likely not visible to visitors, they are not visitors' questions but just the format that the asker would load information into. Nevertheless, she offered an exception, where "why" would work in two conditions 1) It is one which visitors would ask 2) When contradiction is seen and it raises the "why" question. In this case, *Baan Hollanda* development team strongly believed that the "why" question title was well suited to the presentation.

As for a *common-sense learner*, who learn by thinking and doing and prefer try-out theories and test for themselves, the exhibit provides this learning opportunity by Time-machine section where there is a reproduction of a telescope projecting on the ruin of the original building. The time machine scope presents the different theories of what the old building may have looked like in the past. It is open interpretation where visitors can decide for themselves which one is more accurate.

For those who are *imaginative learners*, that prefer learning by feeling, watching and listening, *Baan Hollanda* exhibits provide an opportunities to engage and observe by enlarging gigantic scale of old map as a background. It encourages visitors to survey all detail of face expressions of figures in the map. Last but not least, the *experiential learners* who learn by feeling and doing, enjoy imaginative trial and error, *Baan Hollanda* exhibits show a reconstruction of the archaeological site to accommodate this type of learners for their sense of wonder.

Many visitors refer to their positive experiences as following:

Fantastic. More than I had hoped for. The story is well told,... (*guestbook vol. 2*, February 19, 2016)



*figure 1* The time-machine exhibit presents different theories of how the building may have looked like. (source: *Museums in Thailand*, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Center, CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0: <https://db.sac.or.th/museum/images/Museum/1234/20151021132043JTQw.jpg>).

It is an excellent place that demonstrates the relationship in Thai – Dutch history, especially through the presentation of old maps. It explained the content in a clear-cut structure which makes the complicated content much easier to understand. (*guestbook vol. 3*, July 19, 2015)

### Radical Transparency in Curatorial Practice

As I discussed earlier, the second parameter of van Mensch's definition of New Museology suggests that it is necessary to represent socially excluded individuals or communities. In *Baan Hollanda*, although the core narrative of interpretation focuses on the historic, commercial and diplomatic relationships, the storytelling is also grounded in social change. For example, the exhibition

team embedded this element of New Museology through revealing a story of a person from a minority background, "Osoet", a female trader from the Mon ethnic group and her cross cultural marriage troubles as the wife of the Dutch station manager, Jeremias van Vliet.

Moreover, the third parameter is the issue of "*lieux de mémoire*" or "collective memory", *Baan Hollanda* highlighted this parameter by telling the story as authentically, honestly and realistically as possible. Therefore, the 'dark' side of history such as the treatment of the Dutch during World War II, when Thailand sided with the Japanese and more than three thousand prisoners were badly mistreated by the Japanese while being used as a labour-force to build the so-called "Death Railway" between Thailand and Burma, including the bridge over the River Kwai, is told along with the episodes of more glorious past events. Although this may seem to involve Japanese and foreign prisoners, Thailand was part of this bitterness. The team strongly believed that the presentation should be 'transparent' and 'inclusive'. Leaving out a certain history may constitute an act of disrespect to some people's memories and exclude the opportunity to learn a possible moral lesson from the past.

### Community Participation

Community is a vital element in New Museology practice. Although *Baan Hollanda* was a small operation with limited funds and personnel, the museum has had several programs to engage with local communities such as a Dutch Heritage Weekend in 2015-2016 when the museum hosted a special program to celebrate King's Day (the national day of the Netherlands). The museum worked with the local shipyard to host a special guided tour where visitors can wander around, and learn about the traditional method of ship-making and repairing.

Furthermore, in the following year the museum co-hosted a photography exhibition, "Ancient Ayutthaya Heritage," with Nirandorn Tongaroon, an

Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Architecture, Thammasat University, a regular visitor of *Baan Hollanda*. The work of Nirandorn has broadened the view on Ayutthaya in many levels. For locals, there were many places and perspectives that they have not seen or notice although some may pass these particular spots everyday. Nirandorn's work had provoked the curiosity and sense of discovery for many audiences including local residents. The aesthetic quality of the exhibition may provoke the sense of belonging, encouraging people to protect their own heritage before it disappears. It is a soft version of the museum to encourage the public to protect and conserve their own cultural heritage. Nirandorn expressed his experience of support from the museum that:

At first I was so happy that the museum management board allowed me to set up this exhibition. I never expected much: perhaps they would allow me to have a small space to display a few images, or give me a short period of time to run the exhibition, but I was overwhelmed by their involvement. During the preparatory stage, they told me that they had invited the new ambassador to preside over the opening ceremony. I was so honoured, nervous and glad at the same time. It really showed that the museum has given a high priority to community, for people's involvement.

Furthermore, according to McCall and Gray (2014), "*New Museology has been broken down to changes in 'value, meaning, control, interpretation, authority and authenticity' within museums.*" My take on this reflects on the change to redefine the relationship of the museum and public. One of the philosophies in the development of the *Baan Hollanda* project lies on building a personal relationship to create an enjoyable and stimulating learning experience. It aims at "*winning the heart and mind,*" as Black described, "*to transform the museum brand and the perceptions that the public at large have of museums, into one that more effectively projects the value of museums to society as a whole alongside a positive image of museum visiting as an enjoyable and life-changing experience*" (Black 2012). At *Baan Hollanda*, staff



figure 2 Mural paintings help create a pleasant environment for general visitors (source: Hatairat Montien)

and personnel were trained to treat visitors as their guests. Service mind and friendly attitude of museum staffs was highly prioritized in the museum policy.

## Design

Black discussed that museum experience is complex and largely intangible. If a museum wants to have visitor who come in and leave with a positive memory and perhaps recommend it to their friends, it is essential that the museum creates the right environment (Black 2012, 6). *Baan Hollanda* took this on board by creating a beautiful, stylish, attention to details for all possible elements. The space was designed to be where the educational lessons can be performed as well as being a space with in itself is aesthetically pleasing for general visitors. I believed this breaks traditional value of museum making in Thailand where in the past museum highly prioritized the collection and its interpretation but wholistic experience, which includes pleasant enviroment, hospitality and highly service mind of personnels.

## Feedbacks

To demonstrate how *Baan Hollanda* were received by the public with New Museology theory embedded, some data were collected over years. However, feedback from guestbook is not a scientifically organized survey. This is what from people who feel strongly enough to write in the book. This does, however, form an indication of pattern, the same words that describe their visit being used over and over. It is open-ended and voluntary. As a museum practitioner, these visitor guestbooks help me understand what the visitors think and feel about the presentations and services that we structured.

In summary, the number of visitors was steadily growing since 2014-2016, from average 587 visitors per month in 2014 to 829 visitors in 2015 and over 1000 per month in 2016 (*figure 3*). *Baan Hollanda* has received several awards. To name a few, in October 2014, the museum received an award from the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce in a category of tourism industry. Despite its small scale and far poorer “collection” than the National Museums and the Ayutthaya Historical Study center; and its smaller endowment than the Japanese settlement, *Baan Hollanda* received a certificate of excellence from *Trip Advisor* and was ranked number one in the category of museum in Ayutthaya in 2016-2017.

Throughout all guestbooks, the most common word that described visitors’ feeling and emotion is a Thai word “narak”, which means “lovely”, “cute” or “nice”, which I believe refers to *Baan Hollanda*’s overall experiences including the site, location (riverside area), interior decoration, and relaxing atmosphere in the cafe. Some people described their strong feelings using the word “love” or including simple illustration of a heart. The most common experience among the Dutch visitors at *Baan Hollanda* was that the museum made them feel at “home” away from home. Many Dutch visitors also commented that they have learned more about their own history at *Baan Hollanda*. For example:



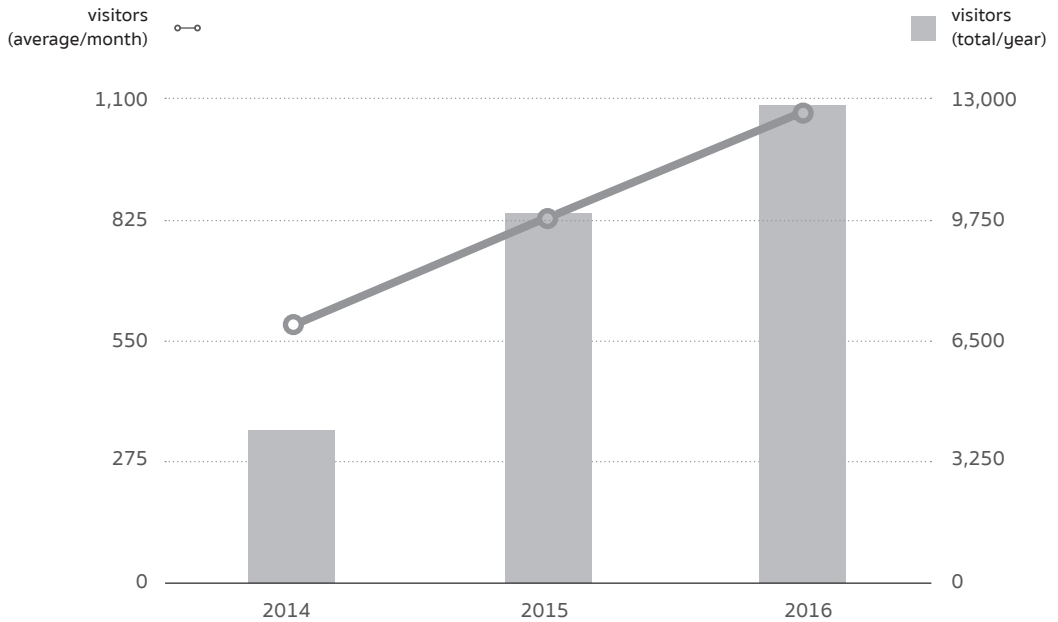


figure 3 Baan Hollanda's visitor statistics from 2014-2016

A piece of home away from home. Love it and will be back! (*guestbook vol. 2*, 22 November 2015).

Very interesting to learn some more about the VOC and the history of my own country here at *Baan Hollanda*! It was a great pleasure to be here. Dank u wel voor (*guestbook vol. 2*, 7 August 2015).

In sum, Thai, Dutch and other foreigners described their impression about the exhibition space and exhibition in a similar way. The word "informative", "well presented", "great exhibition design", "wonderful exhibit" and "interesting" were frequently used among English comments. Visitors showed their appreciation of the well presented storytelling, for example, "... *extremely well informed and well presented museum. It helps us to understand how life must have been in those times. Very interesting.*" (*guestbook vol. 1*, November 14, 2014).

This also includes a comment by a heritage and museum practitioner. Russell Staiff, the author of *Re-imagining Heritage Interpretation: Enchanting the Past-Future* (2014), wrote on the visitor's *Guestbook* about his in January 2016 that *Baan Hollanda* has embedded interpretation beyond the exhibition's walls and that this was evident everywhere and in every sense. He stated that:

I spent a lot of my professional life visiting and writing about heritage sites. It's thus a pleasure to have a museum that "ticks so many boxes" 1) the emphasis on the visual 2) the emphasis on experience over didacticism 3) a floor that excites anticipation 4) large second floor windows that connect the interpretation to the archaeology 5) an exceptional temporary exhibition 6) the design that extends to every aspect of the architectural experience (including the toilets) so that the interpretation is taken beyond objects and text panels 7) a café with a good coffee & Dutch snacks and 8) a lovely visitor book and stamp!" (*guestbook vol. 3*, January 27, 2016)

The cafe at *Baan Hollanda* is one among other things that visitors have mentioned in their experience on the visit. As well as the regular coffee and soft drinks, the museum also provides special menu of Dutch snacks such as *croket* (Croquette) and *bitterballen* (Dutch meatballs). Hospitality and friendly staffs are also well mentioned in the guestbooks. However, the majority of comments indicated that visitors had good experiences with all things combined, the exhibition, food & drinks, riverside scenery and knowledgeable and friendly staff.

Very lovely and cozy place. Thank you for creating and keep this place as a museum providing history between Thai and Dutch. Great jobs for all staff. (*guestbook vol. 4*, n.d.)

*Baan Hollanda* taught me that the VOC history is different from what I learnt at school. I learnt a lot about friendship and exchange of ideas, culture and more. Such a nice place, so much history, so much dedication. In fact

I fell in love with the place, with the Thai culture and with the staff of *Baan Hollanda*. (*guestbook vol. 4*, n.d.)

It was not only museum visitors that expressed their positivity about the holistic experience but also museum professionals. *Baan Hollanda* earned its reputation among museum professionals. In an interview with an anonymous museum professional in 2018, the interviewee commented that:

It is a sample of museum that everything is all connected from content, design and services. We rarely see any museum has all element combined and function in full circle. Some museums are lack of objects, some has good story but not well design, some has objects but no storytelling. Some has not interesting surrounding but this one has a shipyard neighbouring which is also quite interesting for the site context. Therefore, *Baan Hollanda* has it all. If this place continues to operate like this, there will be a lot of people benefit from its museology because this is a place that exercised the new museum concept. I often recommended it to my friends because this small place has got it all.

## Conclusion

Based on audience responses from visitor guestbooks, as well as multiple awards, and growth in the number of visitors during 2013-2017, *Baan Hollanda* under the *Baan Hollanda* Foundation, has demonstrated how New Museology works. I can recognise the factors that contribute to its success in two parts:

Firstly, there is the human factor, which includes high quality staff in the operation team, with a hospitality and service mindset, commitment and vision of the *Baan Hollanda* Foundation, museum professional supervision, as well as local and international networks. Secondly, the environmental factor, which includes design, visual condition, historical significance, and quality of information and interpretation.

In short, at *Baan Hollanda* I used New Museology framework as a guideline to create positive experience in museum visit. I believe that it is perfectly possible to embed New Museology theory into practice in Thailand and make a successful museum. Further, the outcomes of *Baan Hollanda's* implementation has helped bring a new perspective to museum development in Thailand. Considering the growing market of the museum industry in Thailand, *Baan Hollanda's* success can serve to encourage other museum institutions in Thailand to move from museum theory to practice.

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