

## Co-creation interview series: Q&A with Janine Prins

What are the innovative ways museums can present their collections to the public, in order to benefit all interested audiences and communities?

**RICHERS partner Waag Society experiments co-creation practices to start a dialogue with the public and come together to create great, new ideas!**

Its staff started moreover an interview series where several museums and team members of the RICHERS project are asked about their vision on co-creation within the heritage sector.

This time, Waag did a Q&A with Janine Prins, RICHERS member and anthropologist-filmmaker.



]

### **Who are you and what do you do within the RICHERS project?**

I am an independent anthropologist-filmmaker, currently affiliated with Leiden University and researcher-in-residence at Waag Society for the RICHERS project.

### **What does the term 'co-creation' mean to you, personally?**

An opportunity to discover new approaches by letting go of control and inviting others. For instance: instead of me deciding to make a film and directing it, I let others decide the means and content of communication and expression. The result is a collaborative effort, rather than authorial or institutional. I am curious what such interactive processes might bring in terms of innovative narratives and new communication technologies.

### **Why is heritage important for our society?**

It depends very much on how you define 'heritage'? I see it as something fluid, constantly being reinterpreted, remixed, reused both institutionally as on a personal basis. Like one of our research assistants from Moroccan descent, Ilias Zian, always says: «I need to know my past in order to design my future». And then, that contemporary remixing may become heritage in the future.

I believe that in increasingly culturally diverse societies the concept of 'heritage' itself needs some reevaluation. Think for instance about the heated debates in the Netherlands around Black Pete.

### **How could the implementation of new technology affect the heritage sector?**

In theory it could all become more accessible, playful and interactive. But technology in itself is not the game changer; people and socioeconomic structures are. And these rarely adapt with the same speed as technological changes. The heritage sector is in itself slow - a unique strength - so that is a nice challenge, to combine two different speeds or temporalities as it were.

### **What have you learned so far from the RICHERS project?**

To collaborate with professionals outside my own disciplines and most of all: how situational any approach needs to be, how little

we can generalise findings.

**Do you have any co-creation tips that you would like to share with others?**

In my view co-creation methods are rooted in an ongoing tradition since the 1940s, applied mostly abroad in so-called 'development' and 'aid' work where the 'haves' wanted to 'empower' perceived 'have nots'. This I find problematic. In our own society, including the heritage sector, it often takes the guise of consultation, rather than real equal creation.

So I would first make absolutely clear to all those involved to what extent you intend to actually co-create. How do you intend to define 'co-creation'?

And then, to really benefit from this method, recruiting seems key: carefully organise real diversity of perspectives. Allow enough time and preferably a variety of networks and recruiters.

A third 'tip' would be: do not seek compromises too quickly. Allow 'wild cards' and unruly multiple approaches; agree to disagree.

An open attitude is essential as well for entering such a process whereby you need to learn to view the world from other perspectives, before starting to generate something new together.

Keep updated about the outcomes of the co-creation process on the dedicated section of the [RICHERS website!](#)