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Eye presents *Eye(s) Open*
Exhibition with New Perspectives on Colonial Film Heritage



Still from *Tropenkolder*, 2025. © Riar Rizaldi

In the exhibition *Eye(s) Open – New Perspectives on Colonial Film Heritage*, eleven artists respond to the Eye Filmmuseum's collection of some 2,000 colonial-era films from formerly occupied regions in Indonesia, Suriname and the Antilles. The artists have created ten new works based on these films. In doing so, they expose colonial structures and practices and question the role of the camera in perpetuating power.

Eye(s) Open – New Perspectives on Colonial Film Heritage, 3 April – 6 September 2026, Eye Filmmuseum, IJpromenade 1, Amsterdam, eyefilm.nl/eyesopen

Anyone who looks around can still see the traces of the Dutch colonial past. That past manifests itself in everyday things such as the rubber of our car tyres and the chocolate sprinkles on our bread. But our visual memory, too, is saturated with it. Eye's archive contains films from the colonial period that bear witness to this history. These are images of regions as they were seen and recorded by the occupying power: historical documents that, from a Eurocentric perspective, contributed to the maintenance of an oppressive system.

Eye manages its vast international film collection as a 'Living Archive', open to reuse and to new interpretations by makers, thinkers and researchers. In the past, this has resulted in films such as *They Call Me Babu* (2019) and *Mother Suriname - Mama Sranan* (2023), as well as the exhibition *Péter Forgács – Looming Fire* (2013) at Eye Filmmuseum. Eye approaches film history as something that is never complete, but always in motion, shaped by new and complementary perspectives.

New Perspectives

In 2023, Eye issued an open call for an artist-in-residence position, which attracted responses from more than 80 makers around the world. Of particular note was the strong interest in the collection from formerly occupied regions in Indonesia, Suriname and the Antilles. As a pilot initiative, Eye therefore decided to support not one but ten projects, in order to examine this part of the collection through 'other eyes' and to offer exhibition visitors a diverse kaleidoscope of new perspectives and approaches that encourage dialogue.

Bregtje van der Haak, Director of Eye Filmmuseum: 'It is important to keep questioning the Eye collection. Who had access to a camera in the past, and who did not? How do we, as a film archive, also make visible what is absent? And how do we enrich the collection and make it more accessible to everyone? These are not abstract but highly concrete questions: they determine how we can understand our shared history.'

Participating artists

The eleven artists, from a range of countries, spent two years researching an eclectic array of often problematic images. In addition to the exhibition, the new works will be incorporated into Eye's collection.

The participating artists are **Paula Albuquerque** (Portugal/Netherlands), **Timoteus Anggawan Kusno** (Indonesia), **Esther Figueroa** (Jamaica), **Sabine Groenewegen** (Netherlands), **Eline Jongsma** and **Kel O'Neill** (Netherlands/United States), **Miranda Pennell** (United Kingdom), **Jameisha Prescod** (United Kingdom), **Afrian Purnama** (Indonesia), **Riar Rizaldi** (Indonesia) and **Mahardika Yudha** (Indonesia).

Highlights

The Indonesian artist Riar Rizaldi, for example, offers a new perspective on so-called phantom ride films, a genre from the early twentieth century in which a camera mounted on a moving locomotive records the passing landscape. In his film installation *Tropenkolder* – featuring rotating horn loudspeakers - Rizaldi uses re-enactment to bring to life the experience of a group of Javanese railway workers whose unseen labour made such films possible.

The Dutch artist Eline Jongsma and the American artist Kel O'Neill took an experimental approach, collaborating on the AI-based installation entitled *Dominion*, which depicts what never-filmed encounters between Dutch Catholic missionaries and the local population of the island of Flores might have looked like.

The multi-channel film installation *What We Inherit* by the British artist Jameisha Prescod adopts a more essayistic tone. It explores Black

Surinamese spiritual responses to illness and examines how colonial ideas about Black bodies have helped shape healthcare for Afro-Surinamese and Marron communities.

Guest curator Hicham Khalidi

For *Eye(s) Open*, Eye is collaborating with guest curator Hicham Khalidi, Director of the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht. According to him, the strength of this exhibition lies in the diversity of the participating makers – not only in terms of background and discipline, but also in the widely differing ways in which they invest existing images with new meaning.

Khalidi: 'By turning the images against themselves, the various contributions to this exhibition disrupt the totalizing lens of the camera and the archive's false promise of truth. In doing so, they create small openings for resistance.'

Publication

The *Eye(s) Open* exhibition is accompanied by a publication that brings together the perspectives of the eleven artists, alongside artistic and scholarly contributions reflecting on a violent history and its continuing impact in the present. This publication also encourages new research into possible collaborations with local Indonesian archives. H. Khalidi, J. Öfner, A. Sarroff (eds.), *Eye(s) Open – New Perspectives on Film Heritage from Colonial Times*, published by Eye Filmmuseum Amsterdam in collaboration with nai010 publishers Rotterdam, € 34.95.

Film, Talks & Events

For the film programme accompanying *Eye(s) Open*, five Eye on Art editions are being developed. These focus on the participating artists and their earlier work, as well as on themes such as provenance, AI and the collection.

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About Eye Filmmuseum

Eye is the national museum for film of the Netherlands, located on Amsterdam's IJ harbour. It manages more than 62,000 films from all genres. The collection represents an outstanding sample of film history, from classics and blockbusters to cult films. But Eye does not only focus on the past: it also closely follows the latest developments in film by organizing new acquisitions, programmes, and talks. The building is open most days for anyone who is interested in film and film culture. Our visitors are welcome in four cinemas, an [exhibition space](#), a floor dedicated to [educational activities](#), a [shop](#), and a [bar-restaurant](#).

Note for the press, not for publication

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