



Universiteit  
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## **National Museum of Antiquities: exhibition of archaeological field-work in South Holland**

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## *National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden*

### *Exhibition of Archaeological Field-work in South Holland*

Early in 1975 it was decided that on the occasion of the National Dutch Monuments Year public attention should also be drawn to the many less-spectacular archaeological monuments in the Netherlands. This would also make known, outside specialist circles, the results of the various excavations which have been undertaken over the past fifteen years and dispel the legend that the Dutch Lowlands are a very poor region as regards archaeology.

Because of its location, the National

Museum of Antiquities (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden) has served as a collecting-point for the province of South Holland since its establishment nearly 160 years ago. By way of official recognition of this function the museum was recently made a 'provincial records office'. There was a desire on the part of various public authorities to somehow emphasize the museum's new status. The idea of organizing an exhibition for this purpose originated with Dr H. Sarfatij, Provincial Archaeologist, who, as it happened, was

celebrating the completion of his first five years in office, and he found an enthusiastic supporter in the author of the present paper. The third member of the operational team was the designer Aart Verhoeven, whose great experience of archaeology museums was essential to the success of the exhibition.

It was not possible to make a detailed project first of all, nor was that considered necessary. It sufficed for the team to agree on a number of ideas which were translated into directives

for the collection of material and the execution of the displays. These ideas may be formulated as follows: archaeological field-work must be represented factually, as a job divested of all its often false glamour, and shown to be a natural and necessary component of modern society. The professional and the amateur each has a valuable part to play in it. The exhibition was to show what happens, and how the work is done, under present conditions.

Eleven digs which had been undertaken in the last ten to fifteen years were selected and a 'news report' on each one was compiled in the form of photographs, maps, real finds and texts. In every case the discovery and notification of the 'find area' served as introduction (this is a phase of field-work in which the amateur can play an important part). At the same time reasons for undertaking the dig were provided. That such work is of interest to everybody was made clear and the contributions of archaeology 'fans' were made evident. The results of the digs were naturally the main exhibits. Where possible, photographs indicated what monuments are still to be seen on the spot.

The exhibition hall of the National Museum of Archaeology is not very big (6 by 32 m) but it is entirely modernized: clear, light grey walls, a suspended ceiling with floodlighting, and arrangements by which the windows can be masked by panels attached to wall rails.

The exhibition comprised twenty showcases (ten high and seventeen low), each 55 by 165 cm, and two high stands—all containing real objects. A reconstructed neolithic grave, two big ma-

quettes and the mediaeval pottery which filled one stand to the brim were the main attractions for young and old alike.

Furthermore, 147 square panels, each 55 by 55 cm, formed a frieze along the walls, along with sixteen others twice or four times as big. The contents of each panel were varied: photographs, maps or cross sections, texts and a few real exhibits. The maps were photographic copies of line drawings on which were stuck cards whose colour had been previously chosen according to a standard scheme. This made the maps attractive, intelligible and informative for a wide public. The very hard work involved was done entirely by the technical staff of the museum. The texts were drafted in a sober journalistic style, typed on an electric typewriter and enlarged to two and a half times the original size.

The eleven selected areas covered by the exhibition were demarcated by the familiar red and white surveyor's stakes—the symbol of a dig. Titles were made up by plastic letters fixed to the walls. The general intention of the exhibition, to show the everyday, unromantic reality of a dig in progress, was achieved.

Working with separate panels made a previous layout plan superfluous: only rather vague ideas about it had existed beforehand. The exhibition took form only during its installation. Thanks to the experience and ability of the designer, solutions—often unexpected and original—were found for all the problems that arose.

A sixty-page booklet accompanied the exhibition.

LEENDERT LOUWE KOOIJMANS

## Netherlands

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RIJKSMUSEUM VAN OUDHEDEN, Leiden.  
Exhibition: *Archaeologists at work in Southern Holland.*

Display showing many aspects of the dig at the abbey of Rijnsburg. Research work on a castle at Rotterdam and on the beginning of the Dordrecht section.

98  
RIJKSMUSEUM VAN OUDHEDEN, Leiden.  
View of the second half of the exhibition. To the left, a Roman encampment and a Roman fort with relics of sailing ships. To the right a panoramic view of the excavations of the Dordrecht site. A model of the town can be seen in a glass case.

