

# François Janse van Rensburg, MA

Archivist/librarian Wereldmuseum

Nationality: South African and Dutch  
Homepage: [francoisjansevanrensburg.nl](http://francoisjansevanrensburg.nl)  
LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/in/fjansevanrensburg](http://www.linkedin.com/in/fjansevanrensburg)  
Email: [francois.jansevanrensburg@wereldmuseum.nl](mailto:francois.jansevanrensburg@wereldmuseum.nl)



## Profile

I am a South African researcher and historian living and working in the Netherlands. Since 2026, I have been working as the archivist and librarian of the Wereldmuseum. I have over 8 years of experience with working in the museum sector in different roles, including as provenance researcher and curator with a focus on colonial collections in the Netherlands. My interests include researching the history of Dutch ethnographic collections and making museum archives more broadly available.

## Work experience

Since 2026 **Archivist and librarian** at the Wereldmuseum

2024–2026 **Provenance researcher** at the Wereldmuseum

- \* Research and documentation of objects and collections requested for restitution (listed under publications)

- \* Contributed to successful restitutions to Indonesia, Mexico, and the United States

2021–2024 **Senior provenance researcher** in the NWO project *Pressing Matter*, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

- \* Provenance research on colonial collections from different parts of the world, writing reports and publications on objects, presentation of findings to a broader public

- \* Supporting Dutch and international researchers

- \* Improving database records of the Wereldmuseum by linking objects, people, and documentation, with over 660 pieces of correspondence and 150 objects documented on TMS

2018–2021 **Junior Curator Southern Africa** at the Wereldmuseum

- \* Curator responsible for the Southern African collection at four museums, consisting of ca. 7000 objects and photos

- \* Researched, interpreted, and documented the collection with 1000 objects fully documented on TMS

- \* Several contributions to exhibitions (listed under exhibitions)

2018–2019 **Lecturer** at Leiden University, Bachelor African Languages and Cultures

- \* Designed and taught third year BA course on the shared history of South Africa and the Netherlands

- 2016–2018 **Tutor/lecturer** at Leiden University, Bachelor International Studies  
 \* Conducted workgroups, grading, and administration for courses including Global History, Economics of Africa, Politics of Africa, and History of Africa
- 2016 **Archival Intern** at the library of the Zuid-Afrikahuis  
 \* Wrote a research guide on the archives of the Netherlands-South African Railway Company (listed under publications)
- 2016 **Archival Intern** at the library of the African Studies Centre  
 \* Wrote inventories for personal archives in the African Studies Centre’s library collection (listed under publications)
- 2015 **Research Intern** at the Department of History of the Rijksmuseum  
 \* Assisted with research for the exhibition *Good Hope. South Africa and the Netherlands from 1600* (2017)  
 \* Assisted with finding objects and documents for the exhibition and transcribed and translated Dutch language historical documents from the Rijksmuseum’s Atlas Gordon  
 \* Published a chapter for the catalogue accompanying the exhibition (listed under publications)
- 2012–2014 **Research Assistant** at the University of Johannesburg, Department of Politics and University of Witwatersrand, Department of Political Studies  
 \* Assisted with qualitative research, editing and citations, and various administrative tasks
- 2010–2014 **Tutor** at the University of Johannesburg, Department of Politics  
 \* Led workgroups and marked tests, essays, and exams for Political Science courses at the Johannesburg and Soweto campuses

## Academic education

- 2023 **MA History (Archival Studies)**, Leiden University  
 \* MA thesis: ‘The Collection as Archive – Mozambican Collections in the Netherlands’ (listed under publications)  
 \* Courses on archival theory, colonial archives, and contemporary archival thought
- 2015 **MA History (Politics and Society in Historical Perspective)**, Utrecht University  
 \* MA thesis: ‘Poor Relief in the Dutch Republic and the Case of Berkel en Rodenrijs, 1745–1812’ (listed under publications)  
 \* Specialization in Early Modern History and Colonial History with a focus on colonialism, imperialism, and slavery
- 2010 **BA Politics [Honours]**, graduated cum laude, University of Johannesburg
- 2009 **B.Com. Economics (Trade and Development) [Honours]**, University of Johannesburg
- 2008 **BA Politics and Economy**, University of Johannesburg

## **Contributions to exhibitions**

### **(Semi-)permanent exhibitions**

- 2022 *Dieren Academie (2022)* at Wereldmuseum Leiden; as curator
- 2022 *Onze Koloniale Erfenis (2022)* at Wereldmuseum Amsterdam; responsible for the African section
- 2020 *Kruispunt Rotterdam (2020)* at Wereldmuseum Rotterdam; assisted with research and documentation of Congo collections and did acquisitions for the Cabo Verde section
- 2019 *Inspirerend Afrika (2019)* at Wereldmuseum Berg en Dal; responsible for the South Africa section and map interactives

### **Other exhibitions**

- 2025–2027 *Onvoltooid Verleden* at Wereldmuseum Amsterdam; contributed story lines and object selection
- 2024–2025 *Martial Arts (2024–2025)* at Wereldmuseum Amsterdam; contributed research and texts
- 2023 *Kolonialisme en Rotterdam (2023)* at Wereldmuseum Rotterdam; contributed research, exhibition texts, and object selection
- 2017 *Goede Hoop. Zuid Afrika en Nederland vanaf 1600 (2017)* at Rijksmuseum Amsterdam; contributed to research and editing of sources

## **Language skills**

Afrikaans (native), English (native), Dutch (high proficiency, I obtained the certificate State Exam Dutch as a Second Language in December 2025)

## **Digital skills and trainings**

Experienced with specialized software used at museums, including TMS and Adlib. Familiar with AtoM (Open Source Archival Description Software). I also completed the course Archiefwet (Archives Act) in March 2026.

## Publications

### Articles and book chapters

- 2025 *Article*. 'Three Problems in Provenance Research', in [Pressing Matter](#): Threads of Time #2, pp. 13-19.
- 2024 *Article*. 'Imagining South Africa Through Chinese Objects', in [Provenance #5](#), pp. 37-49.
- 2024 *Chapter*. 'South African Leather Dolls in the Royal Cabinet of Rarities', in Justine Rinnooy Kan and Sheila Reda (eds.), *The Lost Museum: Royal Cabinet of Rarities in the Mauritshuis*, pp. 145-148. Also available in Dutch.
- 2024 *Chapter*. 'Two Images of a House in Colonial Cape Town', in Wayne Modest and Wendeline Flores (eds.), *Our Colonial Inheritance*, pp. 100-104. Also available in Dutch.
- 2020 *Article*. 'Model Ox-Wagon: Prisoner of War Art and Pro-Boer Propaganda', in [Provenance #1](#), pp. 47-57.
- 2017 *Chapter*. 'Intermezzo 27: Mistaken Identity: The Face of a Symbol', in Martine Gosselink, Maria Holtrop, and Robert Ross (eds.), *Good Hope. South Africa and the Netherlands from 1600*, pp. 297-298. Also available in Dutch.

### Published restitution reports

- 2025 *Restitution Report*. 'Objects requested [...] for restitution to the United States of America and Ysleta del Sur Pueblo from the collection of NMVW/Wereldmuseum', [Colonial Collections Committee](#).

### Archival user's guides and descriptions

- 2017 *Archival user's guide*. 'The Archives of the NZASM: A Guide for Researchers', [Zuid-Afrikahuis](#).
- 2016 *Archival description*. [Personal archive] / Johann Frederik Holleman, ca. 1945-63, [African Studies Centre Leiden](#).
- 2016 *Archival description*. [Personal archive] / Frederik David Holleman, ca. 1939-1957, [African Studies Centre Leiden](#).

### Blog posts

- 2025 *Blog post*. 'An unremarkable pot from Lesotho – provenance research in practice', [Wereldverhalen](#). Also available in Dutch.
- 2025 *Blog post*. 'Seven ceremonial Objects of the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo', in Provenance research blog #2, [Colonial Collections Consortium](#). Written by Sofia Lovegrove. Also available in Dutch.

- 2025 *Blog post.* 'A Beaded Headdress from Mozambique', in Provenance research blog #3, [Colonial Collections Consortium](#). Written by Sofia Lovegrove. Also available in Dutch.
- 2021 *Blog post.* 'Kralenkleed uit Mozambique: Een Topstuk uit Zuid-Afrika', [Wereldmuseum](#).

### **Other publications**

- 2025 *Interview.* 'Een hoofdtooi uit Mozambique', in *RealMag* nr. 10.2, pp. 3-7. Interview by Selma Lagewaardt.
- 2023 *MA thesis.* 'The Collection as Archive – Mozambican Collections in the Netherlands', [Leiden University](#), pp. 1-93.
- 2015 *MA thesis.* 'Poor Relief in the Dutch Republic and the Case of Berkel en Rodenrijs, 1745–1812', Utrecht University.