

National monument the Oude Kerk

In the centuries-old building, discover seven centuries of history and look at the world around us through the eyes of artists past and present. Throughout history, the Oude Kerk fulfilled numerous functions. In the first centuries of its existence, the building served as a harbour church where ships were baptised, where prayers were said for safe return and where numerous sailors found their last resting place. People believed, married and were buried - Rembrandt van Rijn buried his first wife Saskia here - but also traded and collected. The history of the Oude Kerk is inextricably linked to the history of Amsterdam.

Then and now

For centuries, the Oude Kerk has been a home to artists, architects, sculptors and musicians. Numerous works of art saw the light of day here, such as paintings by painter Emanuel de Witte (1617–1692). Many musical pieces sounded for the first time in this building, such as by the famous composer Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562–1621).

Until this day, we ask artists to create new work for the Oude Kerk. The commissions are developed specifically for this place and can only be seen here, once. With their work, artists explore the history, architecture and acoustics of this place, each time in new ways.

**Today's art,
tomorrow's heritage**

Heritage and contemporary art

For our exhibition programme and heritage highlights, visit oudekerk.nl/programme. Open the doors of the side rooms and learn more about the Oude Kerk's rich history and contemporary art commissions with the free audio tour.

Restorations

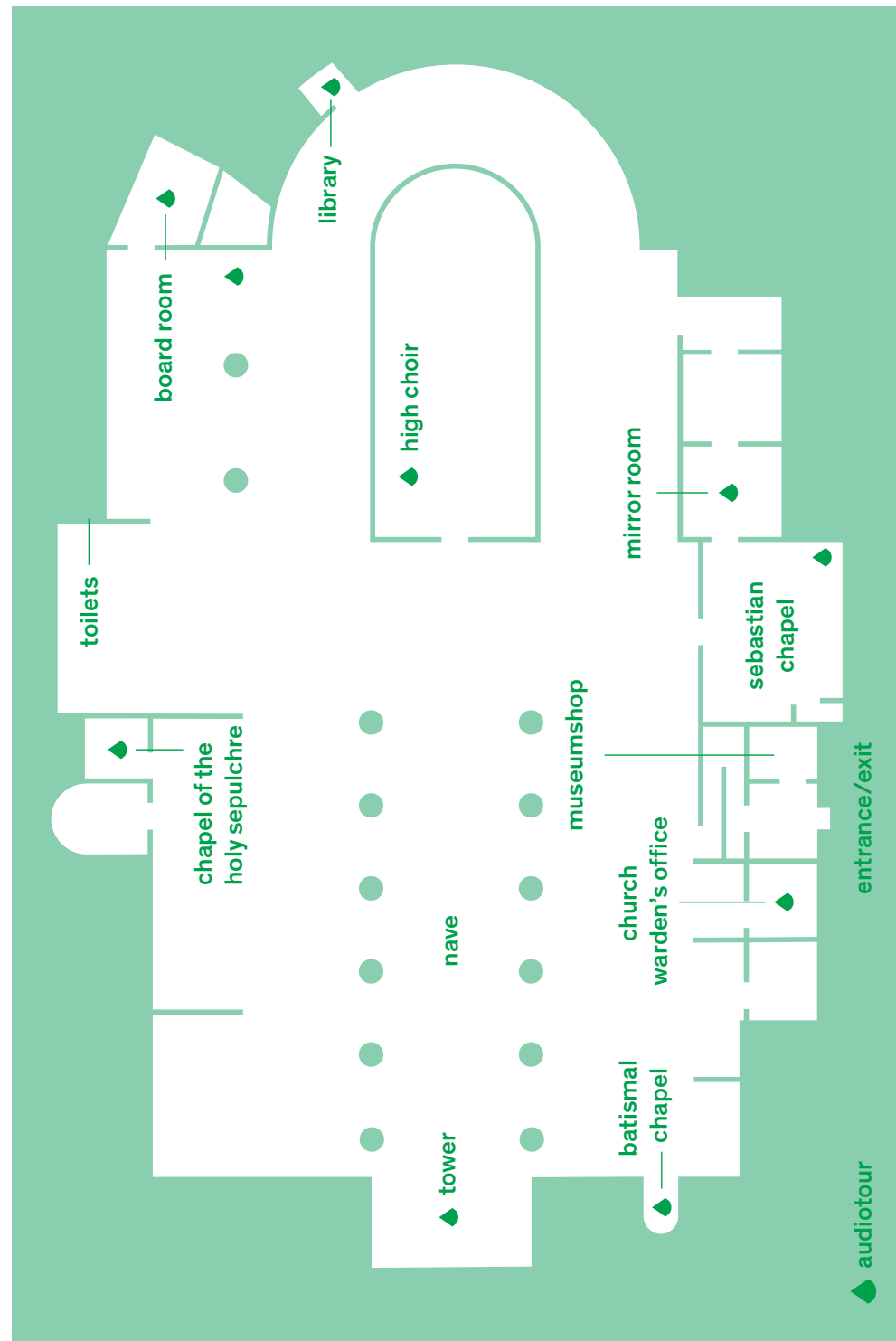
Heritage restoration is ongoing in the Oude Kerk to ensure that the monumental building can be passed on to future generations. At the moment, we are working on the stained-glass windows in the lady chapel and the wallpaper in the Mirror Room. More information on current restorations can be found at oudekerk.nl/restorations.

Support

The Oude Kerk is a national monument and a registered museum. Permanent partners are the Amsterdams Fonds voor de Kunst, the Mondriaan Fonds, the Vriendenloterij and the Vrienden van de Oude Kerk. With our friends, we share a love of art, heritage and music. Become a friend through oudekerk.nl/vrienden. The monument is maintained and restored with additional support from the National Cultural Heritage Agency.

Koffieschenkerij

In the former sacristy of the Oude Kerk, you will find the Koffieschenkerij with courtyard garden, a hidden oasis in the busy city centre, where you can enjoy the tastiest coffee/tea and cake. On presentation of your Oude Kerk entry ticket, you will receive a 10% discount on coffee and tea.



oude kerk

05 Nov 2022
19 Mar 2023

Ibrahim Mahama
Garden of Scars

ENG



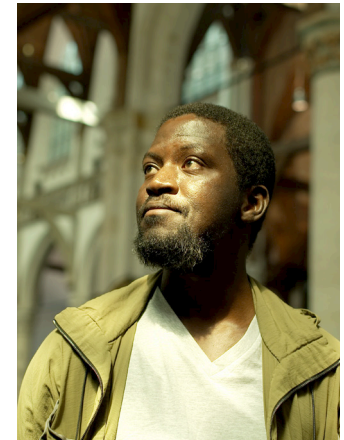
Maarten Nauw



Maarten Nauw



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Xinix Films

Specially for the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam's oldest building, Ghanaian artist Ibrahim Mahama developed the monumental installation *Garden of Scars*. In hundreds of sculptures as well as works on paper; Mahama explores a global history of trade routes, migration flows and globalisation.

Walk through *Garden of Scars* in the centuries-old church building and experience the connection between the history of the many Amsterdam residents buried here over time and the colonial past of Mahama's homeland Ghana. Mahama is particularly interested in the physical traces that history leaves in buildings and on objects.

Garden of Scars

Scattered throughout the entire floor area of the Oude Kerk are sculptural works in various forms. Large-scale drawings hang within the niches of the building. Sculptural bat forms are suspended from the ceiling beams. The sculptures and drawings are composed of a series of casts and overlays (rubblings). Mahama cast these from the tombstones in the Oude Kerk (1306) and the surfaces of centuries-old forts (of which some are Dutch) along the Ghanaian coast, such as Fort Elmina (1482), one of the oldest European buildings in West-Africa. These buildings bear the physical traces of a shared past. For Mahama, the fractured, cracked, scratched sculptures and drawings depict this history of damage and repair.

Shared history

The floor of the Oude Kerk consists of thousands of gravestones. They are connected to many life stories and memories that people identify with to this day. Mahama reflects upon the gravestones in the Oude Kerk and the shared stories attached to them. He questions the social and political aspects of the formation of this collective memory. The family histories of the merchants, sailors and mayors buried in the Oude Kerk are linked to the history of ancient (Dutch) forts along the Ghanaian coast. Settlements were built from the 15th century on the West African coast by traders from Europe, including the Dutch. Fort Elmina, for instance, initially served the gold trade and later played a significant role in the development of the Transatlantic slave trade. *Garden of Scars* makes this shared history visible and highlights the subsequent effects of this past, in contemporary global migration and the trade networks linked to them.

Comprehensive public programme

Subsequent to the presentation of *Garden of Scars*, we organize a comprehensive public programme linked to the themes of Mahama's work and current issues. Join us for these concerts, tours, performances and other activities. More information about the public programme can be found at oudekerk.nl/programme.

Read more

Colin Sterling (University of Amsterdam) spoke with artist Ibrahim Mahama and curator Marianna van der Zwaag about the installation and Mahama's artistic practice.



Ibrahim Mahama

Ibrahim Mahama (1987) has become an internationally respected artist in recent years. He lives and works between his hometown Tamale and the Ghanaian capital Accra. His work addresses important issues of our time, such as the cultural and social effects of international trade, migration, globalization and (post)colonialism.

Mahama studied painting and sculpture at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana. During his years of study, he embarked on a series of interventions and activities reflecting on themes of globalisation, labour and the circulation of goods. In 2019, Mahama represented Ghana at the Venice Biennale. Mahama founded the Savannah Centre for Contemporary Art (SCCA) in Tamale, which hosts workshops for schoolchildren and exhibitions of Ghanaian artists.

In 2020, he opened the sprawling Red Clay Studio complex, with exhibition spaces, research facilities and artist residences. In 2020, he was awarded the Prince Claus Award for his contribution to improving social conditions and developing culture in Ghana.

‘For me it was very interesting to be able to look at the memory of the space, in relation to the echoes of history, and connection to other spaces.’
Ibrahim Mahama