

## NEWS & EVENTS > Amsterdam: Idealised photos of colonial life in Asia

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# Amsterdam: Idealised photos of colonial life in Asia



## Kurkdjian & Co Photo Studio (1888-1936)

The photo exhibition, at the **Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam**, offers a different perspective on the idyllic image of colonial life in the Dutch East Indies.

***East Indies** is a term used by Europeans from the 16th century onwards to identify what is now known as Indian subcontinent or South Asia, Southeastern Asia, and the islands of Oceania, including the Malay Archipelago and the Philippines. [Source: Wikipedia]*

## Idealised images of an idyllically beautiful East Indies

Wind-rushed palms on the beach, workers happy and relaxed in the paddy fields, a contented population under a scorching tropical sun. **At Ohannes Kurkdjian's famous studio they left nothing to chance; in many cases the photographed scenes were entirely staged. Over a hundred photos offer**

an opportunity to take a critical look at image of colonial life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and how this has been interpreted over the years.

## Meticulously structured images

At Kurkdjian & Co they were expert at selecting, staging and manipulating. The meticulously constructed pictures present a world in which people worked hard, but without the blood, sweat and tears. The natives posing for the camera appear content and prosperous, yet also exotic and romantic. Life as colonial subjects almost seems to agree with them.

### *Different perspective*

*By examining how Kurkdjian & Co manipulated reality and by looking critically at the way the pictures are composed - reflecting the traditions of nineteenth-century Romantic painting - the show offers a different perspective on this idyllic image of Dutch East Indies. Photos sold by the studio can today be found in countless museums and private collections in the Netherlands and abroad.*

**Visit the exhibition website:**

**Idealised images of an idyllically beautiful East Indies**

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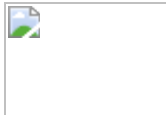
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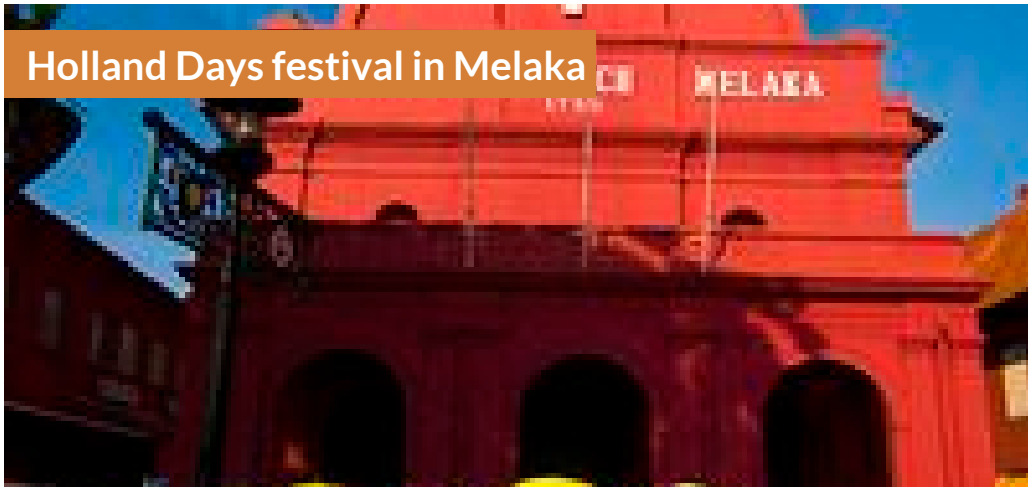
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