

# An exhibition that matters

What do people fleeing their country take with them as reminders of home? How does people's clothing express their pride in their roots? From July 13 the Tropenmuseum answers questions such as these in its new exhibition *Things That Matter*. Central to the exhibition is the museum's world-famous collection: objects of great personal significance that at the same time are inextricably bound up with the major social issues of today such as migration and heritage. The collection comes to life in video portraits and audio fragments that tell the personal stories of people in the Netherlands and from far beyond its borders. Like Dutch comedian and talk show host Jörgen Raymann, who talks about the mix of different religions in his family, or Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner on her fears about rising sea-levels and their impact on her island culture.

## Proud of your roots

Clothing is one of the most powerful ways of making a statement about who you are. Especially when it comes to vibrant *kente* and wax prints – textiles that say loud and proud 'I feel one with Africa'. Both textiles boast a rich tradition: *kente* is a royal textile from Ghana, while the wax prints made by Dutch manufacturer Vlisco have been popular in West Africa for one and a half centuries. For many, these materials came to epitomize African clothing. *Things that Matter* showcases both traditional designs and contemporary creations by young designers.

## The beauty of language

Playing with words and letters: in some cultures language is the most important art form. The countries of the Middle East are known for their creative use of language. The art of composition, but also the art of writing itself – calligraphy – are practiced at the highest level. And new forms are constantly being added, such as *calligraffiti*, which translates the classic penmanship to the street. eL Seed, a popular French-Tunisian *calligraffiti* artist with around 100,000 followers on Instagram, inscribed the entire pavilion devoted to Arabic writing.

## Rising sea levels

Climate change is having a radical impact: ice floes melting in the Arctic are submerging islands in the Pacific Ocean. But how do you retain your culture when your country threatens to disappear? This pavilion shows the stories you pass down to your children and which objects you cherish, based on the example of the Marshall Islands. Poet and climate activist Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner created a unique soundscape for *Things that Matter*. In it she tells us why the objects on show are so key to her culture and how that culture is on the point of disappearing. Should sea levels rise even further, these objects will constitute the last tangible relics of her culture. It prompts visitors to think about what climate change means and about sustainability and cultural heritage.

*The Things That Matter* exhibition will run for five years from July 13 and has been created thanks to the support of the BankGiro Loterij. The 'Festivities' pavilion was created in cooperation with Utrecht's Museum Catharijneconvent.