

PRESS RELEASE

Postcolonial?

The House of European History presents a new temporary exhibition which addresses Europe's colonial legacy



BRUSSELS — From 18 April 2026 to March 2027, the House of European History presents the exhibition *Postcolonial?* This exhibition invites visitors to reflect on the ways colonial history still shapes life today. Starting with the structural foundations of European colonialism, *Postcolonial?* explores how Europeans preserved power as their empires disintegrated, and how this affected newly independent countries. This history continues to condition our world today. Through contemporary artworks, historical objects and personal stories, *Postcolonial?* offers a necessary European reckoning with colonialism.

Following the Second World War, colonial power seemed to crumble. From 1945 to the end of the twentieth century, more than 80 colonies overcame European rule and declared independence. After decades or even centuries of resistance to brutal oppression, their victories appeared to mark a decisive break with the past. But appearances can be deceiving. How did the colonial matrix of power – the ideas, events, inequalities and injustices born of colonialism – continue to shape the modern world?

The exhibition *Postcolonial?* is divided into four sections. It begins with **'structural foundations of European colonialism'**, and its long history from the 1400s up to 1945, including examples of resistance by the colonised and the enslaved. It then moves to **'the end of empire?'**, examining how Europeans preserved power as their empires collapsed, while struggles for independence grew stronger and despite the Charter of the United Nations which established human rights. In **'between independence and true freedom'**, the exhibition shows the hope that liberation brought to newly independent countries, and the challenges of decolonisation. Finally, **'what now?'** turns to the present, showing how colonial history still shapes life today in multiple ways, with racial thinking underpinning structural inequalities in education, healthcare, housing, policing and politics.

The exhibition also comprises eight filmed **personal stories**, which explore the ways colonialism has shaped, and continues to shape, people's lives.

Throughout the duration of the exhibition, there will be activities fostering public dialogue, creative experimentation, and inclusive participation organised at the House of European History. This public programming is being co-created with invited artists, scholars, activists, and cultural practitioners. The objective is to extend and deepen the exhibition's ethical and pedagogical vision by amplifying decolonial voices.

Postcolonial? invites visitors to rethink what it means to be European, to look honestly at Europe's place in the world, and to imagine new ways of being and living with one another. The exhibition raises issues of representation and encourages a reflection on how the portrayal of history shapes the world we live in today.

Constanze Itzel, Museum director, explains:

"By addressing Europe's colonial history, the House of European History contributes to redressing imbalances in accounts about Europe's past. This history of violence, of genocides, of cruel exploitation both of people and of natural resources on a global scale is part of a European history which lasted four centuries."

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

EXHIBITION

Postcolonial?

18.04.2026 > 14.03.2027

House of European History

Rue Belliard 135, 1000 Brussels

<https://historia.europa.eu>

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OPENING HOURS

The museum is open seven days a week and entrance is free. An interactive tablet provides the museum content in 24 languages. Guided tours, resources for schools and special trails for families with children are available in French, Dutch, German and English.

PRESS CONTACT

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