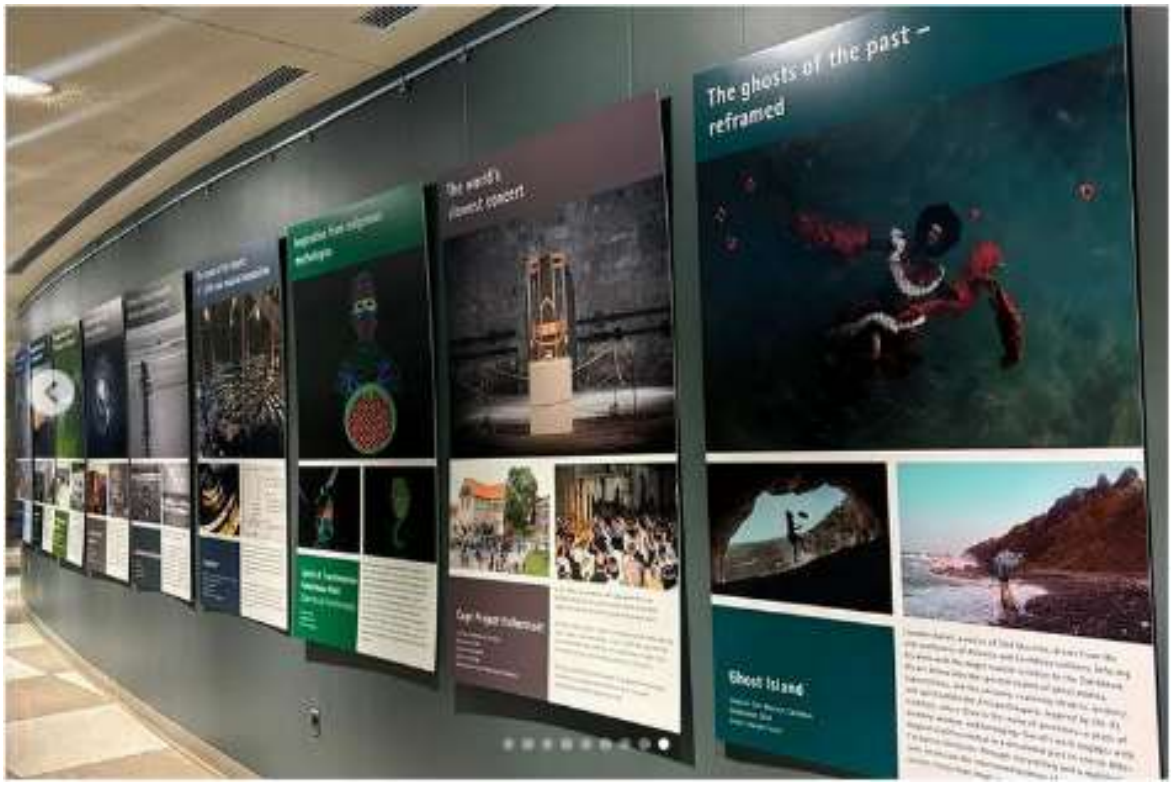
Good Ancestors: Art and Culture for Future Generations

Exhibition at the United Nations

UN General Assembly Building, Visitors Lobby, Gallery C, September 16th through 27th, 2024

This exhibition is part of the UN's Summit of the Future and the 79th session of the General Assembly



Good Ancestors: Art and Culture for Future Generations

In the early 21st Century, short-termism is ubiquitous – and yet the world has never faced so many complex challenges that require a long term perspective to solve.

We hope to hand over a planet to tomorrow's generations that is in a better state than the one we inherited. Unfortunately, on current trajectories that might not be the case. The continued progress, or even existence, of future generations is therefore not ensured. While social, economic and technological advances enable some of us to live longer and better lives, we have also created pathways to existential risks for humanity.

Rooted in indigenous (Haudenosaunee) philosophy, the Seventh Generation Principle emphasizes that decisions made today should be considered in the light of their impact on at least the next seven generations. This intergenerational responsibility must be applied to the decisions we make today. We are dependent on one another to create a peaceful, inclusive, just and sustainable world, not only across borders but also across time.

How can we be good ancestors towards future generations and leave a better world behind than the one we inherited?

The *'Good Ancestors'* exhibition invites you to journey across time, from the coast of the Indian Subcontinent to the depths of the Amazon, exploring art projects, cultural practices and traditions from across the world, deeply rooted in intergenerational thinking and our shared human experience.

Woven throughout the exhibition are universal themes of community, ritual, and care-guided by the belief that future generations must be central to all our actions today.

Through art and culture, we are reminded of our collective responsibility towards future generations, cultivating the awareness and frameworks needed to safeguard their rights. By embracing the idea of our far-distant descendants, we find a unifying force, one that transcends division and inspires collaboration. Safeguarding future generations may be humanity's most powerful legacy and the key to our collective existence.

Organised by the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of Jamaica to the United Nations, 2024

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The world's slowest concert

Cage Project Halberstadt

Location: Halberstadt, Germany
Established: 2001
Duration: 639 years
Artist: John Cage
Maintained by: John Cage Organ Foundation

In the 1980s, the composer John Cage wrote the piece ORGAN²/ASLSP (As SLow aS Possible), which as the title suggested, was not intented to be performed with haste.

In Halberstadt, a special organ in an empty church is now playing Cage's score – and remarkably, it won't reach the end until the year 2640. Powered by bellows, the organ plays a single chord for months on end, only changing once every few years.

The eerie, meditative performance is designed to encourage listeners to slow down and reflect on their roles and responsibilities within long-term time.