Attachment 5: 5 years of Red Star Line Museum: looking back

*History*
The Red Star Line Museum is housed in the authentic hangars of the old Red Star Line shipping company. Between 1873 and 1934, nearly 2 million European emigrants boarded the ships of the shipping company on this spot. Before they could depart, in search of a better life in North America, they were interrogated and medically controlled in the current museum buildings. When the shipping company went bankrupt in 1934, the history of the company and the stories of its passengers disappeared from the collective memory.

In the 1990's, when the city renovation came to the Eilandje, the buildings were on the verge of collapse. In the same period, a renewed interest grew up amongst private collectors and the city's museums for the maritime heritage of the Red Star Line and other passenger lines that were active in the transport of emigrants.

The city administration viewed the museum, in addition to the Felixpakhuis and the MAS as the third 'cultural stepping stone' for the development of the neighbourhood. In 2001, the Flemish government began with the protection of the buildings, in 2005 the city purchased the building, and the preliminary plans were made for the restoration and opening up to the public.

 In 2007, the city approved the proposition of an international scientific advisory committee to open a museum about immigration and international mobility in the historic site of the shipping company. The seed for the concept of the museum 'Red Star Line|People on the move' was thereby planted. The former control buildings on the site and Antwerp as the port of departure would in this manner become 'lieux de mémoires', the symbol standing for the broad human experience of growing mobility, travel and migration.

A museum team worked out a comprehensive museum concept starting in 2008. The point of departure was to reveal the history of the Red Star Line and its passengers in a lively and recognisable way for a broad and diverse public in order to make it relevant again for today. In addition to research into the existing city and private collections, the team assembled its own museum collection and started it with systematic research into supposedly lost 'personal heritage' of previous Red Star Line passengers. To this end, there was intensive collaboration with (international) research partners, but also with the general public - primarily descendants and family of former passengers. The result is a museum where visitors experience the captivating stories of passengers in the authentic, historic control buildings. After the restoration of three years, the museum opened its doors on 28 September 2013 and the old hangars of the shipping company were given new life.

*Exhibitions*Since the Spring of 2014, the museum has organised temporary exhibitions that take the permanent collection and the passengers' stories further as well as also inviting the visitors to reflect upon contemporary migration:

* **Gaiska**
March 2014-May 2014

Theme: Art inspired by the museum's collection

* **Home sweet home**May 2014- September 2014

Theme: contemporary migration

* **Far from the war?**September 2014- April 2015

Theme: migration to the USA during WWI

* **I, gypsy**

September 2015-April 2016

Theme: Photography and migration

* **Ali’s Boat**

April 2016-August 2016
Theme: Art and migration

* **Cruise Away**

October 2016-April 2017

Theme: the cruises of Red Star Line

* **Breeze**

May 2017-September 2017
Theme: contemporary art installation around the theme 'coming home'

* **A little bit Belgian**

October 2017-April 2018

Theme: 6 Argentinians about their Belgian roots

*Prizes & recognition*The museum was positively received from the start by the (inter)national press and is a public success. In 2014, the museum was awarded the public prize of the Museum prize, the Flanders Tourism Award for Best Tourist Attraction and the Wablieft-prize for clear and accessible language.

In 2015, the museum received the label of quality by the Flemish Community of museum and it received an honourable mention during the European Museum of the Year Award. In 2016, the museum received the Flemish Culture prize for Cultural Heritage.

At the beginning of 2017, the mark of 500.000 visitors was passed.

In 2018, the museum submitted a request file to the Flemish Community in order to receive recognition as a regional museum. In June, this request received a positive counsel.