

9 MAY 2012 - World's largest cannabis museum opened in Barcelona

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Four festive and magical days marked the opening of the world's largest cannabis museum in Barcelona, Spain. The Hemp Museum Gallery is a branch of the original Hash Marihuana & Hemp Museum in Amsterdam.

The new museum is located in the famous gothic quarter of Barcelona, within walking distance of the beach and the Ramblas boulevard. Ben Dronkers (Sensi Seeds, Hempflax, Hash Museum) purchased the wonderful 16th century Palau or Palace Mornau in 2001 and spared no expense or trouble to turn it into a world class museum. His vast cannabis collection of over 6500 pieces has finally been professionally catalogued and the original Hash Museum in Amsterdam has been thoroughly renovated and upgraded. Hats off to the extended Dronkers family: the results in both cities are spectacular.

The reopening of the Amsterdam museum and the grand opening in Barcelona coincided with the 2012 Cannabis Culture Awards. In Amsterdam, the awards were presented by former Dutch prime minister Dries van Agt, who received the award in 2009. Winners included Norwegian elder statesman Thorvald Stoltenberg, father of the current prime minister and member of the Global Commission on Drug Policy and Dutch psychiatrist and drug policy activist Fredrick Polak. Finally an award was presented to the legendary Lester Grinspoon. Because of his inability to travel a Skype interview with Ben Dronkers was shown at both ceremonies.

The Barcelona ceremony took place on May 9th, two days before the official opening of the museum. The event was dominated by Virgin founder Richard Branson, who accepted an award on behalf of the Global Commission on Drug Policy. The two hours the British *super entrepreneur* spent in the museum were one big media blitz; a notable difference with the Amsterdam ceremony, attended by only a handful of journalists. Branson promised to urge the Global Commission to issue a strong statement denouncing the repressive course Dutch cannabis policy has taken and stated that legal cannabis could solve Spain's economic crisis.

The two other winners in Barcelona were Todd McCormick and Fernanda de la Figuera, Spanish grower and cannabis activist since 1973. After the awards ceremony, the party went on for four straight days, with special openings for the press, locals, members of Spanish Cannabis Social Clubs and the general public. The museum is a magical place where even the most knowledgeable cannabis aficionado can learn something. The best places might be the small balconies at the front of the building, where you can sit and smoke cannabis, while looking at passers-by gazing up and taking pictures. Certainly one of those things you have to do at least once in your life...

Hemp Museum Gallery, Carrer Ample 35, Barcelona, Spain

<http://hempmuseumgallery.com>