

Van
Gogh
Museum

Amsterdam



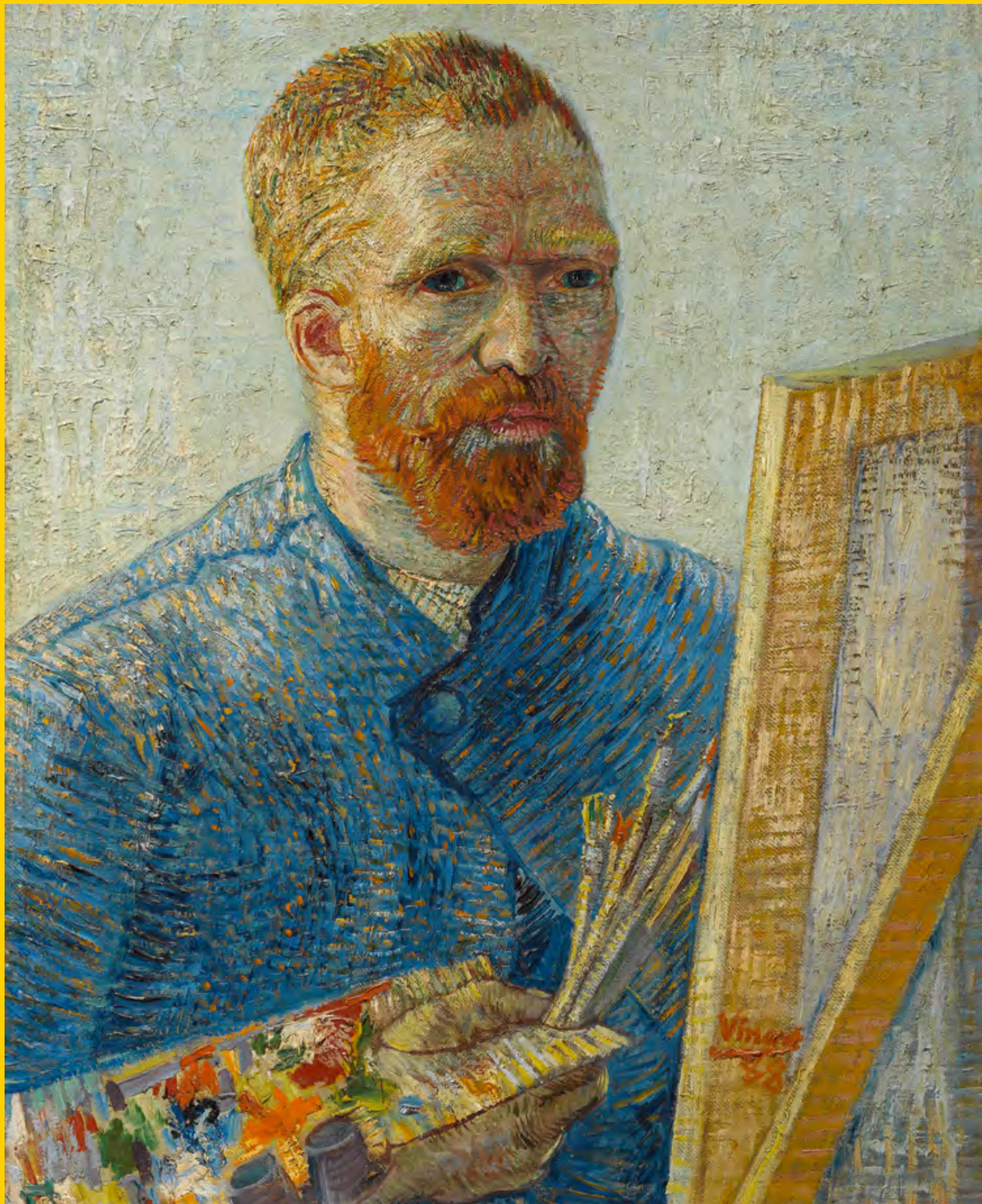
Vincent van Gogh, *The Langlois Bridge*, 1888. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Strategic Plan

2025 - 2028



Paul Gauguin, *Clovis Sleeping*, 1884, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam



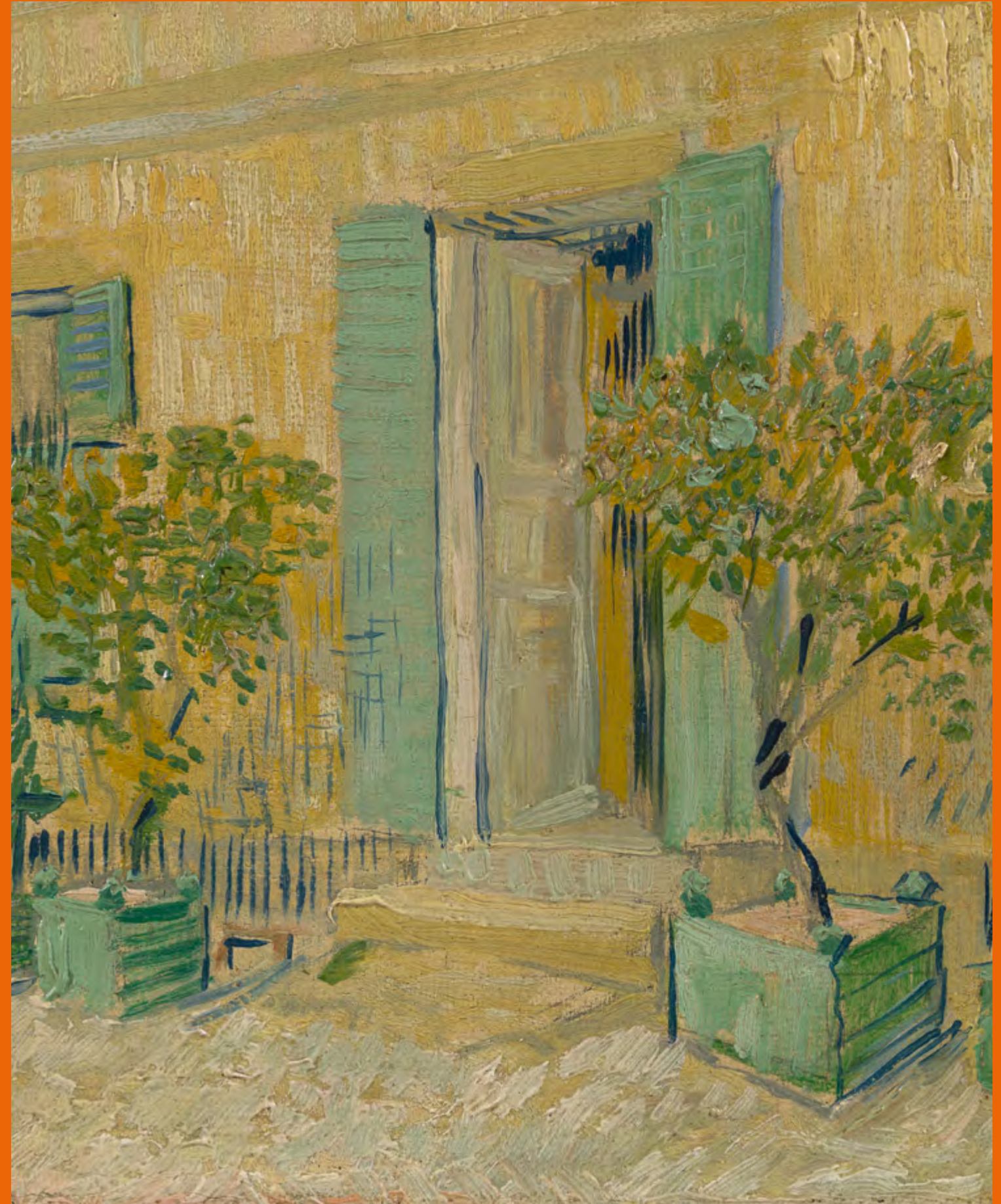
Vincent van Gogh, *Self-Portrait as a Painter (detail)*, 1887 - 1888. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

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01

Foreword



Vincent van Gogh, *Exterior of a Restaurant in Asnières*, 1887. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Foreword

Emilie Gordenker, General Director
Rob Groot, Managing Director

The Van Gogh Museum (hereinafter ‘VGM’ or ‘museum’) is among the most prominent museums of Western art in the world. It owes this status to its unique collection and expertise about Vincent van Gogh and his contemporaries. Van Gogh’s inspirational art and idiosyncratic life have fascinated and touched people all over the world for more than one hundred years. The museum also manages The Mesdag Collection in The Hague (hereinafter ‘TMC’), with a collection that is contiguous with the holdings in Amsterdam.

The previous Strategic Plan (2021–2024) precipitated critical decisions that have led to greater clarity for the organisation and its goal to be an inclusive museum that aims to inspire people with the life of Vincent van Gogh, his work and his time. A shift of emphasis over the past years privileges quality and inclusion over growth, without sacrificing the VGM’s leading position. A new target audience strategy aims to encourage more and a more diverse group of Dutch visitors to engage with the museum. The VGM established a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) team, which reaches out and connects to people who would not readily visit a museum. The results of the previous Strategic Plan are palpable: enthusiastic reviews of the refreshed presentation of the permanent collection, exhibitions and (outreach) programmes have led to more Dutch visitors and an increase in donors. There is a healthy balance between the artistic and commercial sides of the organisation, partly due to an internal merger that took place in early 2022, which brought the employees of the different branches of the organisation more closely together. The museum shops are achieving record turnover. The Van Gogh Museum’s 50th anniversary in 2023 was celebrated in great style. The museum treated the Netherlands and its residents to three impressive exhibitions, special activities and a grand anniversary party on the Museumplein, all of these in line with the reformulated mission, vision and strategic goals.

The current Strategic Plan 2025–2028 will continue the successful general direction of the previous period. In addition to carrying out its core mission of preserving, managing and presenting its internationally renowned collection, the VGM strives to bridge the gap between the past and the present. The VGM represents an extraordinary artist and his time, but it does more. It aims to involve, connect and surprise people – of all origins and ages – with its collection and activities. The museum does this by creating innovative exhibitions, acquiring important works for the collection, conducting research at the very highest international level, creating groundbreaking educational programming, embracing DEI and continuing the success of the Development Department and Commercial Group. The VGM aims to be an empathetic and inclusive employer, where everyone feels at home and collaborates in a positive and productive atmosphere. The VGM is extremely dependent on income from ticket sales and receives relatively much less subsidy than other state-funded museums, so it is essential that the museum is and remains a financially sustainable organisation.

The VGM has identified a number of focal points for the four years to come. The museum wants to establish its own Conservation Science Centre so that it can continue developing technical research on a par with internationally leading museums and can share this with its public. Mental health, a topic that is eminently suited to the VGM due to the special emotional dimension of Vincent van Gogh's work and life story, will be embedded in more of the museum's activities, such as educational programming and HR. The VGM aims to be a warm and inclusive employer so the internal culture change that has already begun will be given priority. The (museum) buildings that the VGM rents from the Dutch State are in poor condition, which makes renovating the buildings and financing this substantial project a matter of urgency.

The world has changed a great deal since the period of the previous Strategic Plan (2021–2024). The museum survived the COVID pandemic, but (geo)political developments in the Netherlands and abroad create uncertainty. Polarisation, intense demonstrations and protests that unwittingly involve cultural institutions, and uncertainty about the financial consequences of government policy may have a major impact on the museum in the coming period. We are confident that our organisation can cope well with these challenging times, but it will not be easy.

The museum's Board of Directors, Management Team and staff worked together on this plan in the knowledge that it will form the basis for the Activity Plan that is to be submitted to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science by 1 December 2024. This Strategic Plan provides the basis for the entire museum's departmental plans and policies over the coming four years.

02

Museum Profile



Museum Profile

Collection

The VGM houses the largest collection of Van Gogh works in the world, with 205 paintings, 500 drawings, nearly all of his letters (in excess of 800) and archive material relating to Van Gogh. The collection also features paintings, drawings and several statues from the period 1840-1920 by Van Gogh's friends and contemporaries, by artists who inspired him and by those whom he inspired. In addition, the museum is home to a unique, internationally acclaimed group of exquisite fin-de-siècle printed art as well as Japanese ukiyo-e woodcuts. The Mesdag Collection in The Hague is home to the extraordinary collection of 19th-century art assembled by renowned seascape painter Hendrik Willem Mesdag and his wife Sientje Mesdag-van Houten. Featuring many masterworks from the 19th-century French Barbizon School and Hague School, the TMC collection is an integral part of the VGM. The collections of both museums complement one another and offer an impressive overview of late 19th-century art.

The collection owned by the Vincent van Gogh Foundation

The collection was owned by Vincent van Gogh's brother, Theo van Gogh, up until his death in 1891. Theo's widow, Jo van Gogh-Bonger, subsequently took over management of the collection. Following her death in 1925, her son, Vincent Willem van Gogh ('the Engineer'), assumed responsibility for his uncle's works. In 1962, he reached an agreement with the Kingdom of the Netherlands to transfer control of the entire collection (the paintings, drawings and letters) to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation. In return, the State arranged for the Van Gogh Museum to be built, helping to ensure that the collection will remain accessible to everyone in perpetuity. The Van Gogh Museum opened in 1973. The 1962 contract between the State and the Vincent van Gogh Foundation stipulates that the State has the (ongoing) obligation to house and exhibit the collection and to ensure its safekeeping. The history of the Van Gogh family and the Vincent van Gogh Foundation are inextricably linked to

the collection and the museum. The Vincent van Gogh Foundation, which is the VGM's main stakeholder, is involved in all of the museum's activities, and the ties are warm and close.

The Mesdag Collection (TMC)

TMC is an integral part of the VGM and an important substantive addition to the collection of the VGM. TMC was conditionally donated to the State in 1903. Management of the collection was transferred by the State to the Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh (now: Van Gogh Museum Foundation) in 1990. TMC is owned by the State.

Other Parts Of The Collection

The VGM also has several sub-collections under management from the State, including the Andries Bonger Collection, as well as some works from the Nederlands Kunstbezit Collection (referred to as the NK Collection). The VGM has an active acquisition policy and has received a number of donations.

Presentation Of The Permanent Collection

The presentation of the permanent collection focuses on Van Gogh's development as an artist. The story of Van Gogh's life and artistry unfolds across all four floors of the building, introducing not only his paintings, but also his drawings and letters. Van Gogh is placed in the context of his time by combining his work with that of his precedents, contemporaries and followers. One aspect that few other museums present is the special, emotional dimension to Vincent van Gogh's work and life story, which touches and inspires a broad audience.

Research And Science Centre

The VGM has established itself as the international centre of expertise about Vincent van Gogh. Research into the artist, his materials and techniques has been a bedrock for the VGM for decades, and the museum is one of the leaders in combining art historical and technical research. Not only does the VGM research its own collection, it also explores all of Van Gogh's oeuvre, his life and related 19th-century art. Ambitious research projects lay the groundwork for exhibitions and publications. Indeed, the VGM is the institution with a worldwide reputation for the assessment of new discoveries about Van Gogh's life and work.

Exhibitions

Organising exhibitions is an integral activity for the VGM. Groundbreaking exhibitions receive (inter)national attention and contribute to the Netherlands' international reputation. Exhibitions lend the museum dynamism and attract repeat visitors, in particular local Dutch audiences. The VGM frequently organises exhibitions together with internationally renowned museums.

Visitors

The worldwide and continuing interest in Vincent van Gogh generates extraordinarily large numbers of visitors. Indeed the VGM is one of the most visited museums in the Netherlands. In 2023 the museum received over 1.6 million visitors and projections for 2024 are over 1.8 million. The museum not only attracts visitors from abroad, but more than 300,000 Dutch people annually. The strategy to privilege quality over quantity led to the decision to limit the number of available tickets in order to offer an optimal visitor experience. The upper limit of visitors has been established at a maximum of 1.9 million visitors, which is 20% less than the years before the COVID pandemic. Research shows that visitors experience the permanent collection as busy, but still navigable. This is reflected in a remarkably high Net Promoter Score (NPS). International interest in Vincent van Gogh is reflected in the many digital visitors from around the world. The VGM has around 10 million followers on various social media platforms, making it one of the most successful museums in this area in the world.

Revenue

The VGM receives relatively little subsidy compared to other (Dutch) museums and therefore has a remarkable capacity to generate its own income. Ticket sales contribute 38% of the income to the annual budget in 2023, making this the museum's main source of income. Commercial activities, merchandise, donations, gifts and sponsorships provide about 46% annually, and subsidy from the national government about 16%.

Positioning

National

The VGM has a unique position in the Netherlands, due to its highly focused collection. The museum occupies a very special place on the Museumplein in Amsterdam, between the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, and there are many (art-historical) links between the VGM and its neighbours. The VGM actively pursues collaborations with other museums throughout the country and, where possible, pioneers in various areas of the cultural sector. In relation to other museums, the VGM positions itself as a 'human' (menselijk) museum: as Vincent van Gogh – his work and life story – is at the core of the museum, it places more emphasis on the artist as a person than other institutions do. This translates into a personal and human approach to the stories that are told and the way in which it interfaces with visitors and stakeholders such as patrons and partners.

International

The VGM has an international reputation and punches above its weight. Although the size of the collection is modest compared to other large art museums, the high quality of the collection, the presentation, the temporary exhibitions, the research and expertise, as well as the educational programmes on offer are highly regarded internationally. Partnerships with major museums in Europe and the United States have been ongoing for decades, and there are numerous collaborations with other foreign museums and research institutes. Loans from the collection are in high demand for (inter)national exhibitions.

an Gogh
Van Gogh



03

Stakeholders



Mary Cassatt, *The Letter* from the series *The Ten*, 1890-1891. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

Stakeholders

The Van Gogh Museum is always keen to enter into dialogue with its stakeholders and to develop innovative activities and plans together with them. The following are the VGM's main stakeholders:

- Visitors to the VGM, Dutch, international and digital
- Those interested in (the art of) Vincent van Gogh and his contemporaries
- Vincent van Gogh Foundation
- Museum staff
- Dutch nation
- Amsterdam residents
- Dutch government, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and Dutch politics
- Province of Noord-Holland
- City of Amsterdam
- Central Government Real Estate Agency
- Societal organisations
- Education sector
- Cultural sector, museums in the Netherlands and abroad, art institutions, industry organisations, heritage institutions
- Cultural institutions on Museumplein
- Donors
- Van Gogh Museum Fund Foundation
- Commercial partners
- Collectors and the art trade
- Media
- Leisure sector
- Suppliers

In addition to these stakeholders, the museum has made it its mission to reach people who might not otherwise engage with the museum. In terms of DEI, the museum focuses on the following groups: local communities – such as Amsterdam residents and young adults from culturally diverse backgrounds – young people, seniors and visitors with accessibility issues, such as visual, auditory, cognitive impairments and sensory overload. This focus has led to positive results, and will continue to be the starting point for the continuation or development of new (outreach) programmes. Impact measurements are also being established in order to streamline and monitor the programmes.

VGM has a target audience strategy for Dutch visitors. Using a market segmentation adopted by the City of Amsterdam, marketing and communication focus on the so-called 'urban omnivores': young city dwellers, usually without children, who work full-time and lead active lives – who will be the visitors of the future. Other target groups, such as the 'informed culture-lovers', are naturally more than welcome in the museum.

The museum's staff is essential for carrying out the mission and for achieving the strategic goals set out in this document.

All employees, patrons and other (contractual) partners are expected to follow the Museum's Code of Ethics, which was established in 2021.



Photography: © Jelle Draper

04

Mission



Vincent van Gogh, *Sunflowers*, 1889. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Mission

The mission describes the Van Gogh Museum's main purpose:

The Van Gogh Museum inspires a diverse audience with the life and work of Vincent van Gogh and his time.

05

Core Values



Vincent van Gogh, *Portrait of Camille Roulin*, 1888. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Core Values

The VGM's core values function as an ethical compass for the museum and the entire staff. They indicate who we want to be as a museum, what we want to express and what our aspirations are. Taken together, the core values are the yardstick by which we measure all our activities – existing and new. The three core values keep each other in balance and reinforce each other where necessary.

The VGM has determined the following core values:

1. Authentic

Our origins and expertise about the life and work of Vincent van Gogh give us strong roots that let us be flexible. We harness the expertise that we have gained through decades of studying the collection to tell the intriguing story behind the art and artist with integrity, in all its colours and shades of grey. We cherish the beautiful, the real, the essential. We try to do everything with attention and care, and with an eye for detail. This means a high level of quality. Quality that feels intrinsic.

2. In Connection

In connection with Vincent van Gogh and his time

We strive to enhance the admiration many have for Vincent van Gogh's work with emotional involvement. We connect the artist's life story to his work. We also place Vincent van Gogh in the context of his time through his contemporaries and show how Vincent was far ahead of his time. We are also at the forefront. Times change, and so do we, by telling Vincent's timeless story in innovative ways that keep it relevant.

In connection with each other

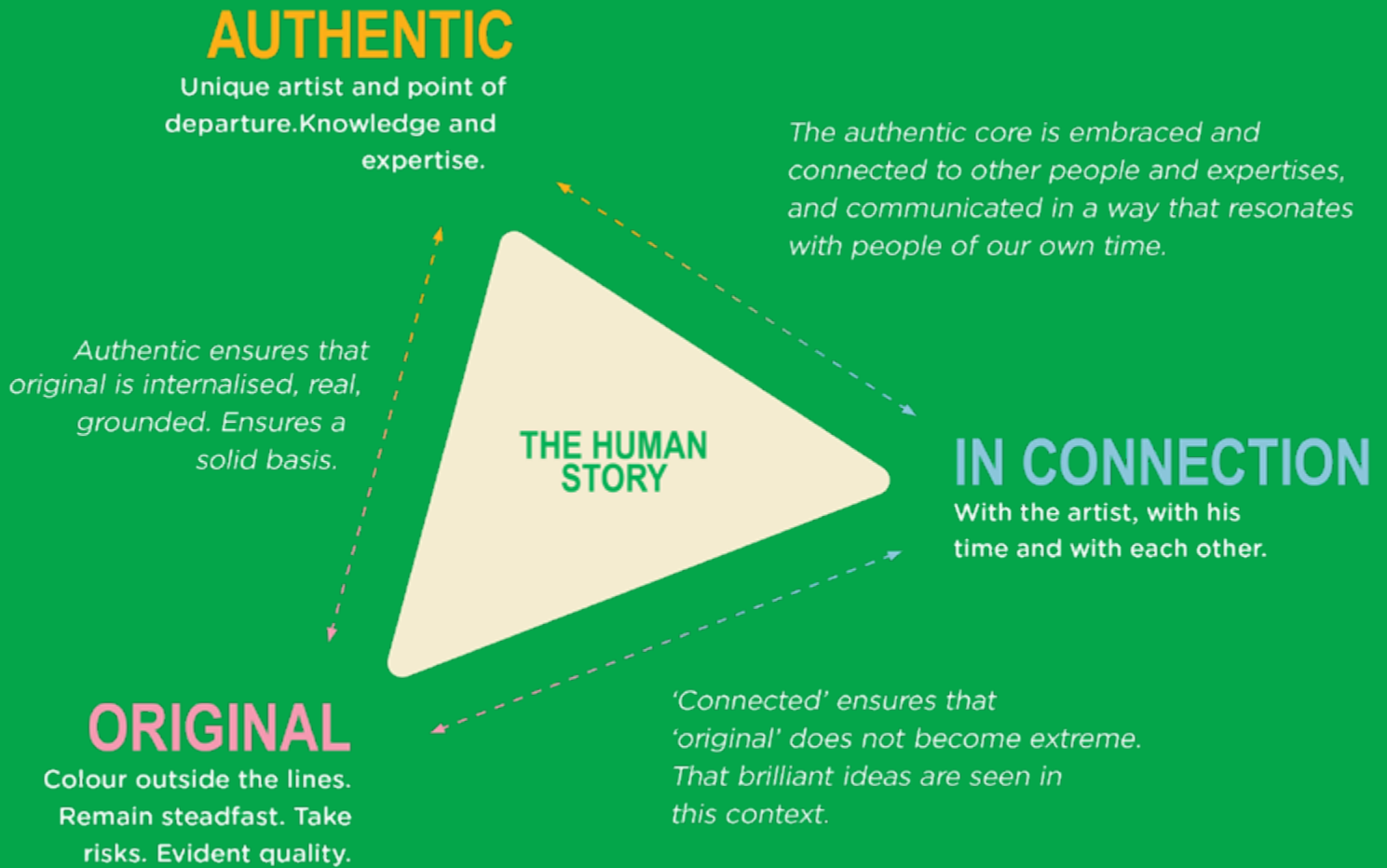
We look out for one another. We are open to others, to kindred spirits and to people with completely different and unexpected points of view, to enrich, inspire and even offer comfort to one another. We go the extra mile by relying on one another.

3. Original

We encourage people to colour outside the lines and reinvent themselves every day, precisely by being themselves. We want to be leaders. To be our colourful selves. To be headstrong. To be open to the world and embrace the differences. Not to accept the status quo.

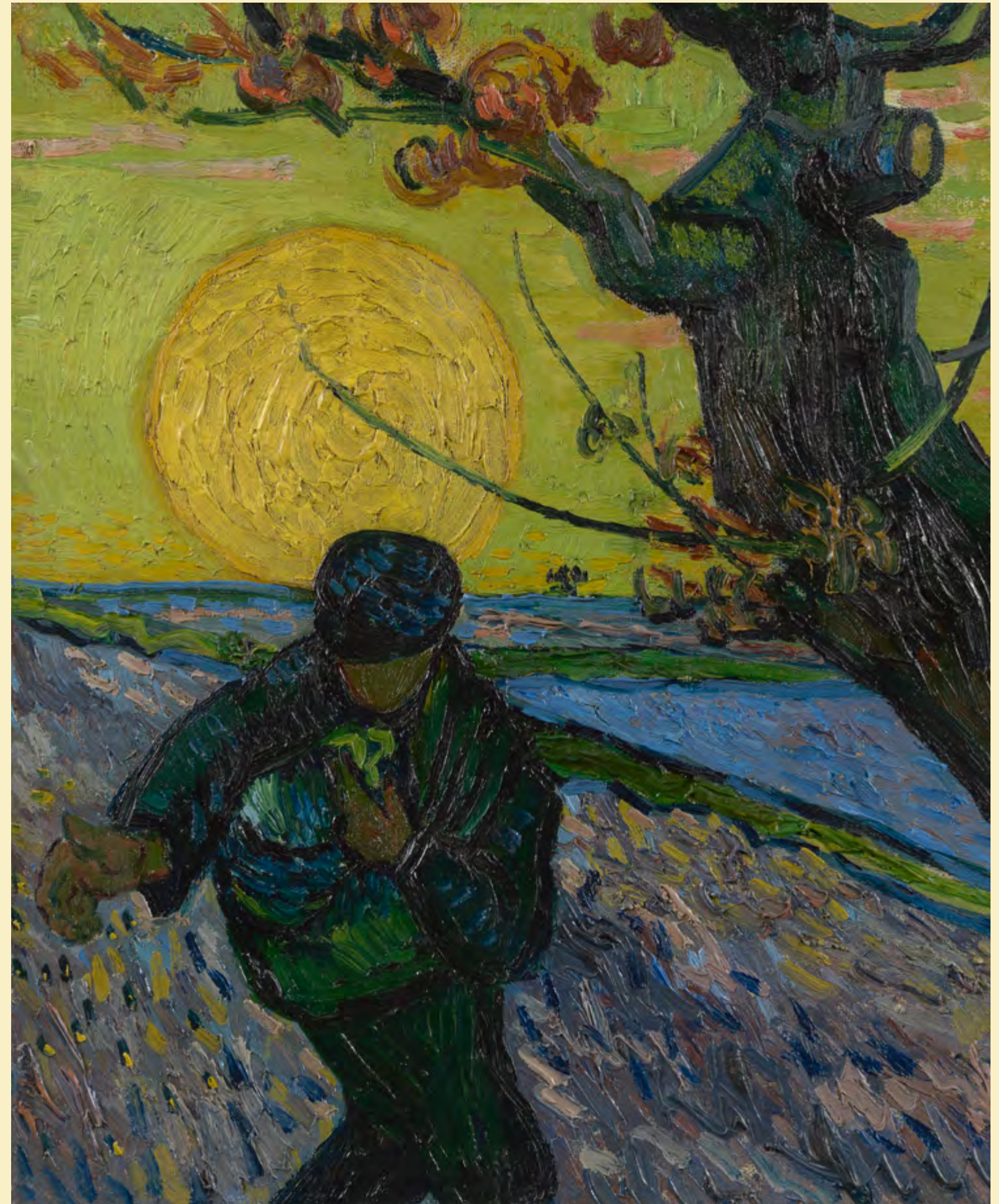
To take on new challenges and innovate to do what we believe in or to educate ourselves. It takes courage to do that. And perseverance. If things go wrong, keep going. Continue if others have doubts, but we are convinced.

The three core values keep each other in balance:



06

Vision



Vincent van Gogh, *The Sower*, 1888. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh, *The Harvest*, 1888. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Vision

The vision is our direction of travel, our point on the horizon. The current vision was revised after discussions with the entire organisation, and it now articulates our ambition more clearly.

Our main task is
to care for, display,
research and expand
the collection.

Our focus on Vincent van Gogh and his time makes us unique as a museum. We take the best possible care of the collection so that future generations can enjoy and learn from the art as much as we do, in a manner that suits their time. We see the walls of our museum as porous: we are open and absorb what happens in the world around us. We are a meeting place where dialogue happens. This is how we give ever more meaning to our collection.

We feel the responsibility to lead the way, to push boundaries in our own innovative way. This is how we continue to offer inspiration to our visitors, partners and staff.

07

Strategic Goals



Vincent van Gogh, *Carafe and Dish with Citrus Fruit*, 1887. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Strategic Goals

We have formulated three strategic goals that draw on the mission, vision and core values, and that identify priorities for the coming four years.

Each strategic goal leads to three concrete objectives.

The strategic goals and the underlying objectives provide direction for the entire museum, and underlie departmental plans and decisions about which activities to carry out.

Strategic goal 1: The Van Gogh Museum's core mission is to care for, display, research and expand the collection

Objectives

1. The collection is safeguarded

and expanded for future generations

The collections of the VGM and TMC are at the heart of the museum and are the basis for substantive, inspiring programming and related activities that make the museum a vibrant institution. The management and preservation of the collection for the future, including conservation, are among its core tasks and are in fact its raison d'être. We continually strive to expand the collection with top-drawer works from the 19th and early 20th centuries, which allow us to place Van Gogh's works in context.

2. The VGM is a centre of expertise that offers ever more insight into Vincent van Gogh and the art of his time

Over the past thirty years, the VGM has developed into the centre of expertise on the works and life of Vincent van Gogh thanks to its extraordinary collection, research programme, library and documentation. The museum has a long-standing tradition of excellent and innovative research about Van Gogh and his time. Our goal is to maintain and expand our international reputation. We want to develop art-historical and technical research further, actively seeking out collaboration with universities and other (private) parties. In order to expand research opportunities, we intend to establish a Conservation Science Centre, where specialists can conduct state-of-the-art technical research and where research data will be stored and managed in a sustainable and accessible manner.

3. The collection is presented and placed in context

We want to build a bridge between the past and the present and engage, connect and surprise people – of all origins and ages – with our collection and (educational) activities. We want to keep the collection up-to-date and relevant with an accessible approach for as diverse an audience as possible. The goal for the coming years is to continue the ambitious exhibition programme and (the making of) publications of international stature. With bolder and more experimental exhibitions, we want to broaden the Dutch public and increase the museum's social support base. The VGM will also continue to open up the collection, archives, oeuvre and life of Vincent van Gogh in a sustainable and innovative way by making the entire collection available in an environment accessible to everyone.

Strategic goal 2: The Van Gogh Museum is open and outward-looking

Objectives

1. The VGM is seen (inter)nationally as a unique museum

The VGM is a leading, internationally renowned museum that occupies a unique position due to its strongly focused collection on Vincent van Gogh and his time. The quality and size of the collection and the fact that Van Gogh's moving art and idiosyncratic life have fascinated and touched people around the world for decades. The VGM is among the most important museums of Western art in the world, due to its unique collection, high level of research, exhibitions of international stature, impressive publications and fresh educational programming, as well as the overwhelming numbers of fans on social media and successful commercial and development activities. We want to strengthen and develop our position as a leading (inter) national institution in all these areas. In the coming period we will continue to communicate about the collection and the many related activities to a broad, (inter)national audience. And in doing so offer inspiration to (digital) visitors, partners, and (museum) organisations, both nationally and internationally.

2. Every resident of the Netherlands feels that the Van Gogh Museum and The Mesdag Collection is a place for them

The VGM is a museum for everyone, and equally accessible to all, including digital visitors. Visitors from abroad are and will continue to be more than welcome, but we will continue to focus on engaging Dutch residents in the coming period. The target audience strategy and the associated marketing and communication strategy that have already attracted many visitors from the Netherlands are still effective. We will continue to focus on people for whom a museum visit

is not evident. Original (outreach) programmes will be developed primarily for, by and with the focus groups (see further Section 3 of this Strategic Plan). We want to make a personal, and hopefully a lasting impact on visitors and other stakeholders by putting Vincent van Gogh's inspiration at the centre of our work. We want to continue to learn from each other on an ongoing basis. We want to make a personal, and hopefully a lasting impact on visitors and other stakeholders by telling Vincent van Gogh's life story. There will be a new focus on mental well-being, a subject that fits our museum particularly well, due to the special emotional dimension of Vincent van Gogh's work and life story.

- ### 3. Employees and partners see the museum as an open, innovative and successful organisation
- The VGM aims to be an empathetic and inclusive employer, where everyone feels at home and collaborates in a positive and productive atmosphere. We are all working on an internal culture change, using our Culture Compass and core values as a guide. The museum is a meeting place where we engage in conversation and actively seek to connect with visitors and partners. In the coming period, we will innovate and stretch beyond our usual boundaries. We aim to develop novel, refreshing and ambitious activities in various fields, including digital initiatives, in order to (continue to) occupy a leading position in the museum world.

Strategic goal 3: The Van Gogh Museum is a sustainable organisation

Objectives

1. The buildings and facilities are future proof

Major investments in the buildings are needed in the short term in order to continue using the VGM in Amsterdam for its purpose: managing the collection and facilitating museum visits, as well as meeting (legally) imposed sustainability commitments. Our focus in the coming period is to prepare for the large-scale renovation to be carried out in 2028/2029. Our objective is also to future-proof other facilities, such as the ICT environment. The priority will be to find the balance between the (international) appeal of the collection and the large number of visitors on the one hand and the fragile collection and the limitations of the museum building on the other. We will develop a plan to ready the buildings and facilities for the future.

2. The VGM has a healthy (financial) business model

In the coming years we will continue to aim for a healthy business model, in which cost awareness as well as balanced expenses and income are fundamental. The level of VGM's subsidy, and in particular that intended to manage and maintain the buildings, is cause for (financial) concern. This is compounded by the need for a large-scale maintenance project planned for 2028-2029, which is a priority for the coming period. In the coming period we will also continue to expand existing (international) relationships and establish new long-term partnerships with private and commercial sponsors, all in line with our Code of Ethics. The sale of merchandise in the museum shops, online sales, licenses and wholesale are essential to the financial health of the VGM. A guiding principle for these commercial activities is that they contribute to the museum's mission, goals

and brand positioning. All of our employees are crucial to the success of the museum and our goal is to ensure that our working environment ensures that they can thrive and stay healthy.

3. The VGM maximises its contribution to a circular economy

We want to be a sustainable organisation that is proactive in counteracting climate change so that we make a positive impact on the environment and contribute to safeguarding the natural world and our surroundings. We are working on concrete goals established in our Sustainability Plan, which addresses issues such as CO2 emissions, energy, material use, circularity, waste management, climate adaptation, health, social engagement and collaborations. We will work out quantifiable measures to monitor these sustainability objectives and development goals.

08

Accountability and Procedure Followed



Vincent van Gogh, *Entrance to the Moulin de la Galette, 1887*. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Accountability and Procedure Followed

Accountability to society

The VGM realises its societal objective by creating, transferring and preserving cultural value. The VGM endorses and applies the guidelines of various cultural codes: Fair Practice Code, Cultural Diversity Code and the Governance Code for Culture. The VGM strives to be an outstanding employer and client in a context of sustainable, fair and transparent business in line with the Fair Practice Code. In recent years the VGM has been actively working with the Cultural Diversity Code, and in the coming period will formulate concrete and sustainable objectives with respect to the so-called four Ps, as used in the Cultural Diversity Code: Personnel, Public, Programme and Partners. The VGM complies with the provisions of the Governance Code for Culture and reports on this annually.

Procedure followed

This Strategic Plan was drawn up by the Board of Directors of the VGM and created in close cooperation with the Supervisory Board, the Management Team, the Works Council and the employees of the VGM. Several working sessions took place at different stages in the development of this Strategic Plan, when input was requested and provided. A substantial part of the plan derived from this input.

‘Let us do
our daily work,
whatever the
hand finds to
do, with all our
might...’

Vincent van Gogh to his brother Theo, Paris, September 1875

Colophon

The Strategic Plan 2025–2028 was written by the Board of Directors in close collaboration with the Supervisory Board, the Management Team and the Works Council.

We would like to thank the employees of the Van Gogh Museum who made a valuable and inspiring contribution to the plan.

Text

Van Gogh Museum Board of Directors

Editing and coordination

Babette Meerdink-Schenau

Text editing

VGM editorial office

Design

Reclamestudio Anytime

Image credits

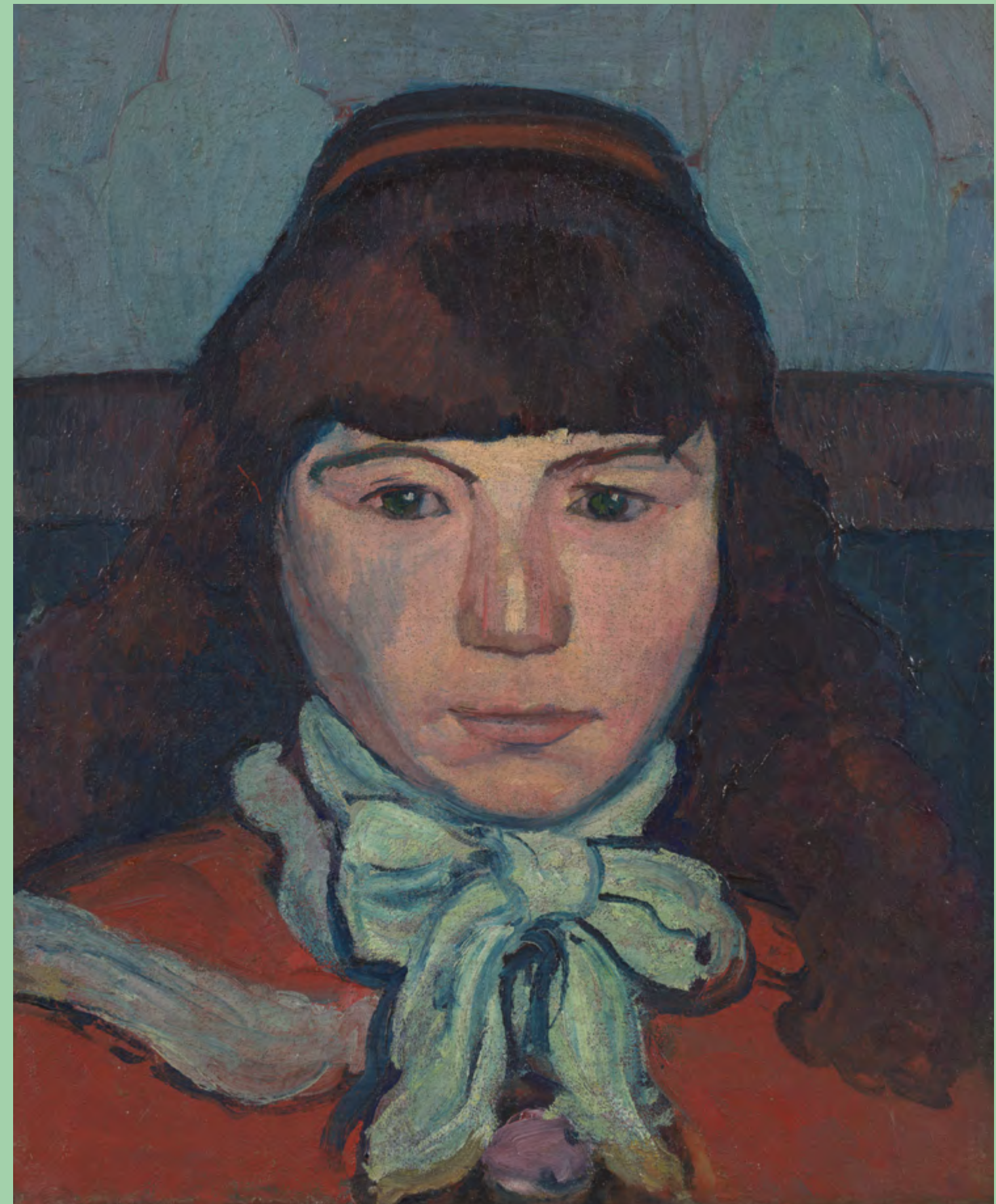
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Adres

Van Gogh Museum
P.O. Box 75366
1070 AJ Amsterdam
Museum: Museumplein 6
Office: Gabriël Metsustraat 8
T +31(0)20 570 5200
info@vangoghmuseum.nl
www.vangoghmuseum.nl

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Emilie Bernard, *Portrait of a Young Woman*, 1887. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

