

Foreword by the Supervisory Board

2011 was a year in which the pressure on museums in the Netherlands increased. The phrase ‘take a more commercial approach’ was used to justify considerable cutbacks in public resources for the cultural sector.

The traditional mix of public and private resources at the Van Gogh museum is atypical by Dutch standards. This experience shows that, in its policy of cutbacks, the government is basing its reasoning more on its own limitations than a sincere desire to develop a different framework within which museums have more freedom to procure their own income. To date the Supervisory Board has not been asked for any input in this debate. A wasted opportunity.

The members of the Supervisory Board met four times in 2011. The Board’s composition has not changed in relation to 2010. I would like to emphasise here how much the museum benefits from diversity within the Supervisory Board, whose members include a highly experienced individual from the USA. This diversity enriches debate.

Important topics on the agenda were: the implications of changing government policy, accommodation, the 2012 budget, the 2010 accounts, optimisation of the organisational structure, leadership and management, inspection and the museum’s vision for the future.

The Supervisory Board was able in various instances to advise on the far-reaching changes implemented by the museum’s directors in the organisational structure. The directors decided to configure the museum in three sectors – Museum Affairs, Public Affairs and Operational Management – in order to prepare the organisation for future developments, strengthen the museum’s position and improve operations.

In June, acting in consultation with the Board, Director Axel Rüger announced the museum’s plans for renovating its building on Museumplein: plans which will guarantee the public’s safety in the future. The Board is exceptionally pleased that a suitable solution has been found to the problem of how to exhibit the works while the museum is closed: the collection’s temporary relocation to the Hermitage Amsterdam where 75 top pieces will be on display from September 2012. This is the result of intensive

discussions with numerous parties. For we refuse to contribute to the track record of long-term museum closures in Amsterdam. A Building Commission has been appointed within the Board for the duration of the project, to allow for the effective monitoring of the risks associated with the challenging, large-scale projects facing the Van Gogh Museum over the coming years, and to support the directors in this regard.

The Supervisory Board was also involved in the self-evaluation which the museum conducted at the end of the year. This evaluation formed part of the old subsidy system, based on performance agreements, and served as input for the inspection commission when this body conducted an audit in December 2011. In the opinion of the Board the self-evaluation report on which this inspection is based is carefully conceived and executed, transparent and, above all, a reflection of the museum’s ambitions and perfectionism.

Naturally, financing, cost and benefit development, time planning and capacity are recurring subjects on the agenda of our regular consultations, and also during inspiring one-on-one conversations between member of the Supervisory Board and members of the museum’s Board of Directors and Management Team. We expect that attention to cost control and financing will necessarily increase over the coming years. As will attention to managing the building. The Board was also involved in the diverse acquisitions which the Museum was able to make. Our thanks are owed to the individuals and institutions who helped to enable such acquisitions possible. It was once again a pleasure for us to collaborate with the staff of the Van Gogh Museum in all these various fields. We keep each other on our toes and work together on producing successful results while respecting our different roles in this process.

On behalf of the members of the Supervisory Board James Cuno,
Robbert Dijkgraaf, Joanne Kellermann and Peter Tieleman,

Trude Maas – de Brouwer
Chairperson of the Supervisory Board

Foreword by the Directors

In this thoroughly redesigned Annual Report 2011 – the first ever entirely in digital form – we describe the milestones and special events of the 2011 financial year, with the help of illustrations. This complete makeover is one expression of the Van Gogh Museum's new visual identity, which was unveiled in June 2011.

More than 1.6 million people came to our museum in 2011, from every region of the globe. Only once in the almost forty years of our museum's existence, in 2006, did we draw a larger number of culture lovers to Museumplein. The year was also packed with museum activities. We set high standards, and the result was an excellent 2011 programme.

We opened the year with a colourful exhibition and closed it with an exceptional one. *Picasso in Paris, 1900-1907* took 450,000 visitors back to the early years of the talented Picasso. Our next exhibition was entirely different in character: in *Snapshot: Painters and photography, 1888-1915*, photography and painting came face to face. Both of these shows shed a unique light on Vincent van Gogh's times and contemporaries. A few works from our collection, such as the recently restored *Bedroom*, dazzled visitors to the Japanese exhibition *Van Gogh: The adventure of becoming an artist*, which attracted more than 600,000 Japanese admirers of Van Gogh.

The summer months in the Netherlands revolved around the exhibition *Van Gogh in Antwerp and Paris: New insights*, inspired by our research into Van Gogh's working methods and studio practice. In 2013 this complete research programme will be presented in the anniversary exhibition *Van Gogh at Work*, but we gave the public a first peek in 2011. The experiment was a success: more than 380,000 visitors were eager to peer through the lens of our research at Van Gogh's well-known and lesser-known works. The second volume of our collection catalogue, *Vincent van Gogh, Paintings 2*, which was published around the same time, allowed Van Gogh lovers to delve into the details. Another special literary moment was the Beijing Book Fair, where we signed a contract for the Chinese translation of *Vincent van Gogh – The Letters*, which will bring the artist's more than 900 letters to the Chinese market. In addition, our letters team saw its labours rewarded again in 2011. For the exhibition *Van Gogh's letters: The artist speaks*, the museum received the AICA Award 2011 for best exhibition of 2009.

As noted, our works are a popular object of research. Our collection is the core of our museum, and we enlarge it every year by purchasing various works of significant to the story we wish to tell our visitors. In 2011, generous support enabled us to acquire two relevant works by Camille Pissarro. Van Gogh affectionately called him père Pissarro, a fact that clearly shows how central Pissarro was to his artistic development.

A splendid complement to our own collection is formed by that of Hendrik Willem Mesdag and his wife Sientje Mesdag-Van Houten. Since 1990, that collection, the museum that houses it and the Mesdag home have been under the management of the Van Gogh Museum. After several years of renovation, the Museum Mesdag in The Hague re-opened in 2011 under its new name of The Mesdag Collection, and visitors could once again enjoy the restored house, the beautiful garden and the collection, now presented in a new format.

All these wonderful moments and activities could never have come about without the support of our partners. We also extend our gratitude to the many organisations, private individuals, businesses and foundations that, in 2011, once again made it possible for us to turn our ambitions into reality.

Let us begin by thanking our long-term partners: the Van Gogh Foundation, the BankGiro Lottery, Sompo Japan Insurance Inc. and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science of the Netherlands. We are also surrounded by valued partners who made our activities, purchases and exhibitions possible in 2011. We would like to thank the Annenberg Foundation, Canon Europe, Citroën Nederland, the City of Amsterdam, Gobierno de España/Ministerio de Cultura, J.E. Juriaanse Stichting, Linklaters LLP, the Mondriaan Foundation, Het Loo Palace National Museum, the Prince Bernhard Cultural Foundation, the Netherlands Institute for Art History, the Netherlands Cultural Heritage Agency, SEACEX/Sociedad Estatal para la Acción Cultural Exterior, Partner in Science Shell Nederland, SNS REAAL Fonds, Stichting De Gijselaar-Hintzenfonds, Stichting Harten Fonds, Stichting Pieter Haverkorn van Rijsewijk, the Turing Foundation, the Rembrandt Association and its Claude Monet Fund, Vranken Pomery, VSBfonds and the members of the Yellow House and the Van Gogh Museum Business Circle. Elsewhere in the Annual Report 2011, we describe in detail what forms of support were received from these partners.

The museum's accomplishments in 2011, as described here, crucially depended on the effort and support of a special group of people. With that in mind, we would also like to thank our staff, who achieved these results through their passion, determination, professionalism and flexibility, and the members of our Board of Trustees, who nurtured us with their wisdom and practical advice. We thank you all for your tireless dedication and support.

Axel Rüger
Director

Rik van Koetsveld
Managing Director

2009-2014 Strategic Plan

The new 2009-2014 strategic plan came into effect in 2009. The last period of subsidy from the Dutch government (2005-2008) had come to an end, together with the museum's policy plan that was linked to it. The start of a new policy period and a changed subsidy system meant that the time had also come for a new strategic plan for the Van Gogh Museum. The museum's mission statement has been restated and clarified in this plan. The vision sets out the situation the museum is aiming to achieve.

Mission statement

The Van Gogh Museum makes the life and work of Vincent van Gogh and the art of his time accessible to as many people as possible in order to enrich and inspire them.

Vision

1. The Van Gogh Museum is one of the most respected and most accessible museums in the world. It is innovative, trend-setting, dynamic, of the highest standard and professional in all its activities.
2. The Van Gogh Museum excels in:
 - a. preserving and managing, researching and presenting the art and objects entrusted to the Van Gogh Museum;
 - b. enlarging the collection by means of new acquisitions and loans.
3. The Van Gogh Museum reaches as many people as possible worldwide, including non visitors, and forges a strong bond with its audience by offering a stimulating and enriching experience.
4. The Van Gogh Museum has access to ample resources and support and maintains a wide national and international network of partners.
5. The Van Gogh Museum is an attractive employer where talent and ideas can be developed in a professionally challenging environment.

This vision will be achieved by realizing the following six strategic objectives:

1. We want to be an innovative museum.
2. We want to be a widely accessible museum.
3. We want to express quality in all parts of the museum.
4. We want to build up an extensive network of partners and supporters.
5. We want to make a visit to the Van Gogh Museum a stimulating and enriching experience.
6. We want to be an attractive employer.

In the years to come these objectives will form the basis for the choices the Van Gogh Museum will make with regard to its programme and activities. The complete strategic plan 2009-2014 can be found on www.vangoghmuseum.com

Over the course of 2009 the Management Team identified a number of key areas the museum will address in the future. These are the reorganization of the permanent collection, the further development of the museum as a knowledge centre, the expansion of the network of partners and supporters, and organizational development.