

Report by the Supervisory Board

General

The Supervisory Board (hereafter: SB) met five times during 2014. Besides the current business, such as finances and organisation, the start of the construction work on the New Entrance of the Van Gogh Museum (hereafter: VGM) on the Museumplein played a key role in talks with the Management Team. The purchase of *La Toilette (Lecture après le bain)* by Edgar Degas was possible only with the approval of the SB. Many other substantive matters were also discussed once during the annual planning and were subsequently delegated satisfactorily to the Management Team and its support team.

New Entrance

The possibility of a New Entrance on the Museumplein connected to the Kurokawa Wing was further investigated. With more than 1.5 million visitors per year, the museum is reaching the limits of its capacity at certain times. Particularly during the holiday periods, around public holidays and during certain rush hours, the pressure on the facilities is considerable and for many visitors a visit to the museum at such times is no longer experienced as optimal. The current entrance on the Paulus Potterstraat is not big enough for processing the large streams of visitors. Now that the other museums on the Museumplein have modernised their buildings to meet current needs, it is time for our museum to do the same. Following the first phase of further investigation, the SB approved a major plan at the start of 2014 for the building of a New Entrance.

As with the successfully executed Maintenance & Fire Security project in 2013, the building of the New Entrance will be carried out in close collaboration with the Central Government Real Estate Agency (CGREA).

By means of an ambitious time plan, the New Entrance will be opened in the summer of 2015. There were frequent meetings with the Management Team regarding the construction work. The most important aspects involved the available financing,

the effects of the New Entrance on operations in the short term and the long term, as well as the time planning. The permanent availability of the collection to the public remained an important basic principle for the SB.

Where necessary, individual members of the SB also provided support for the activities for the necessary fund-raising.

Financial Statements and Budget

The Financial Statements for 2013 and the Budget for 2015 were discussed in 2014 and approved by the SB. The SB was pleased to note greater transparency in the reporting method. The Financial Statements for 2014 were discussed at the meeting of the Audit Committee on 18 March 2015. At this meeting, the external auditors reported their findings on the audit of the Financial Statements for 2014. The Audit Committee passed on the Financial Statements to the SB with a positive recommendation. In accordance with Article 8(1)(b) of the Articles of Association, the SB approved the Financial Statements for 2014.

Membership of the Supervisory Board

The composition of the SB has changed in comparison with its form in the year 2014. Mr R.H. Dijkgraaf stepped down from the Board in May 2014 after a four-year term, partly due to his move to the US. We are grateful to Mr Dijkgraaf for his contribution and commitment to the VGM and the SB.

In addition, recruitment of a new member with a strong international museum profile was completed at the start of 2014 with the appointment of Mr G. Tinterow. Mr Tinterow is currently Director of The Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas. The SB places great store by this substantive and international contribution.

Ms A.J. Kellermann was reappointed to the SB in 2014 for a further four-year term.

Activities of the Supervisory Board

Working method

Besides the regular meetings, the Chair of the SB also held regular meetings with the General Director of the VGM. During these meetings, the items on the SB agenda were discussed, in addition to current business. In line with the Governance Code for Culture, regulations for the SB have been established. As well as the regular meetings where all members of the SB are present, two committees were also active, namely:

Audit Committee

The Audit Committee has been active since 2010 with its representatives Mr P. Tieleman and Mr R.H. Dijkgraaf (until his resignation in May 2014). Mr H.A. van Beuningen was appointed as member of the Audit Committee in 2014 as successor to Mr Dijkgraaf. The Audit Committee is involved in the financial reporting, budgeting and the quality of the financial organisation and reporting.

In line with the provisions of the Governance Code of Culture, the Audit Committee evaluated the functioning of the external accountant. After an extensive evaluation followed by a selection procedure, Mazars was appointed as new external accountant of the VGM starting with the report year 2014.

Building Committee

The Building Committee played an active role in 2014. This committee is involved with the large-scale and challenging housing projects of the VGM. Ms A.J. Kellermann and Mrs T.A. Maas-De Brouwer hold seats on this Committee on behalf of the SB. The Building Committee met regularly for the purpose of the New Entrance project. The executive of the Management Board was also regularly present at these meetings.

Employee representation

Members of the SB regularly attend consultative meetings between the Staff Council and the Management Team.

Strategic Plan 2014-2017

The Management Team has compiled a new strategic plan for the 2014-2017 period. The SB has subsequently approved this plan. Besides the core assignment of the museum, the focus for the coming years will lie with three strategic pillars: accessibility (including the building of the New Entrance, the new layout), reach (including web strategy and social media) and income (including new business models). The SB is pleased with the style of approach in this strategic plan. Good, clear main features and accordingly the space for advancing insight for concrete details.

Financial Operational Plan

The Management Team also compiled and carried out a Financial Operational Plan in 2014. This safeguards the link between the strategic objectives and an optimum, cost-effective arrangement of the business processes. The SB observed that this Financial Operational Plan has played a good role in the development of the business culture.

The SB observed that the VGM, the Management Team and the staff all contributed important efforts once again during the report year. This allows the museum to carry out its social mission well and with vigour.

The SB expresses its deep gratitude for this.

The input and involvement of the VGM organisation form a healthy basis for a challenging 2015.

Approved accordingly on 23 March 2015,

Mrs T.A. Maas-De Brouwer
Mr P. Tieleman
Ms A.J. Kellermann
Mr G. Tinterow
Mr H.A. van Beuningen

Foreword by the Directors

2014 - A year of major changes

1.6 million visitors

With great pleasure, we hereby present the online Annual Report for 2014. We look back on the past year with great satisfaction. This is primarily thanks to more than 1.6 million visitors that we were able to welcome to our museum in 2014, from every part of the world. This was substantially more than in the year before. We would like to thank all Van Gogh fans worldwide and everyone in our organisation who made these visits an unforgettable experience.

New interior at the Van Gogh Museum

November brought the spectacular presentation of the completely new interior and design of our permanent collection. This was the crown on a project on which many people have worked with great devotion in recent years. We are proud that the new presentation was welcomed with great praise and was discussed in detail in both the national and international press.

Exhibitions

Prior to this, we presented two special exhibitions this year. Firstly, the extremely well-attended '*Félix Vallotton: The Fire Beneath the Ice*' exhibition was on show in February. This was followed by the surprising photography exhibition '*The World of Van Gogh: photographs by Emmy Andriess*' from June to October.

Award-winning new website

The launch of our new website in August means that our online platform is also once again entirely state of the art. The new website is predominantly informative. The focus on the stories about Vincent van Gogh and his contemporaries gradually brings the online visitor closer to his world. We were surprised and delighted that the website won two important international awards immediately after the launch: the *Developer Award* for web design and an *honourable mention* from *awwwards.com*.

Awards for Touch Van Gogh app

Our museum also won awards in another field. The *Touch Van Gogh* app which the Van Gogh Museum launched in 2013 won as many as three awards. The app makes the results of complex technical research into Van Gogh's working methods accessible to the general public in a playful manner. For example, it can be used to discover how a painting appeared before a restoration, which paints were discoloured, or how the composition of a work of art is developed. The app won the *Heritage In Motion Award*, followed by the World Summit Award Mobile. Shortly afterwards, it won a 'Gold' award in the 'Best App' category of the International Design and Communication Awards (IDCA).

It gives great satisfaction that these new products, developed in response to the great interest in Vincent van Gogh, have been awarded by such well-known institutions.

New multimedia tour

We are also very pleased with the good responses with which the new Multimedia Tour has been received by our visitors. The tour was developed specially for the new presentation of the permanent collection. It is now possible to choose from three different tours, in as many as ten different languages. There is a tour that everyone can take at their own pace, a tour of the highlights and a family tour, to be enjoyed together.

Start of construction of new entrance building

Following careful preparation, we formally gave the starting signal for the construction of a new glass entrance building in April. The ceremony was performed by Stef Blok, Minister for Housing and the Central Government Sector, and Axel Rüger, Director of the museum.

The construction of the entrance building has been made possible partly through the generous financial support of the BankGiro Lottery, the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Municipality of Amsterdam, the South District of the Municipality of Amsterdam, Yanmar, the C. van Zadelhoff Fund Foundation, the Elise Mathilde Fund and other companies and private individuals. We are very grateful to all of them for their contributions.

With this new building, the main entrance to the museum will be moved from the Paulus Potterstraat to the Museumplein, where our fellow institutions are also located. This realises a long-cherished wish to be able to give our visitors an even better reception. That will be made possible by the extra 800 m² which will be created through the construction of the new entrance building.

At the time of publication of this Annual Report, the fundraising activities for the financing of the new building were complete and all our work is focused on the official opening in September 2015.

New Strategic Plan

The activities developed in 2014 were in line with our new Strategic Plan for 2014-2017. This is based on the strategic pillars of Accessibility (collection and building), Penetration (transfer of knowledge and dialogue with the public within the digital domain) and Income (including via VGM Consultancy, the Van Gogh Experience (working title), new products and fundraising).

Together with the Core Assignment, these form the basis of our policy. The Core Assignment of our museum is secured by the three sectors that make up our organisation: Museum Affairs, Public Affairs and Business Operations. We also regard the continuation and expansion of the partnerships with various parties as an important part of our Core Assignment.

Activities in 2014

The new interior of the museum

We are delighted with the enthusiastic reactions that we still receive to the new presentation of our permanent collection. The main theme in this new presentation is Van Gogh's development into one of the greatest artists ever. We tell a human story and show how Van Gogh wanted to express in his art the major themes of the human condition, such as fear, suffering, love and hope.

The accompanying texts and the new multimedia tour for adults and children show how Van Gogh used his distinct style of painting and use of colour to express these emotions. His works hang among those of his contemporaries and major sources of inspiration, so that this context clarifies Van Gogh's development and visitors 'see through his eyes', as it were.

We now not only exhibit Van Gogh's paintings in the permanent display, but also his drawings and letters. Key works from Van Gogh's oeuvre serve as eye-catchers in the colourful design by Marcel Schmalgemeijer and Mariëlle Tolenaar.

Myths about Van Gogh

The attention we devote to personal aspects of his life is also new. Visitors can learn all about this through letters which are read out, films and special information for families with children. In addition, all the myths surrounding Van Gogh – such as his suicide, illness and severed ear – are discussed in detail for the first time.

Impact on later artists

We also show the huge impact of Van Gogh on the first generation of artists after his death. This is reflected partly by expressive works such as those of Maurice de Vlaminck and Kees van Dongen from the museum's own collection.

Contemporary art

As a grand finale, a visit to the museum ends with a modern artist who was inspired by Van Gogh. From November, this was *Study for a Portrait of Van Gogh VI* by Francis Bacon, a temporary loan from the Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London.

Our special thanks go to the VSB Fund and the Rik van Koetsveld Fund, which helped to make the realisation of this extensive project possible with their generous contributions.

Felix Vallotton: The Fire Beneath the Ice Exhibition

The Félix Vallotton: The Fire Beneath the Ice Exhibition was on show from 14 February until 1 June. The title of the exhibition was drawn from the emotion that smoulders behind the cool detachment in the paintings and prints of Franco-Swiss painter Félix Vallotton (1865-1925).

Some 60 paintings on loan by international museums and private collectors, together with 40 prints from the collection of the Van Gogh Museum, show the tension and emotions in Vallotton's intriguing oeuvre, where nothing is what it seems. We are extremely grateful to the Swiss Pro Helvetia fund for their contribution to the realisation of this exhibition.

The World of Van Gogh: photographs by Emmy Andriess Exhibition

The centenary of the birth of Emmy Andriess (1914-1943) led our museum to present her exceptional photographs in the exhibition *The World of Van Gogh: photographs by Emmy Andriess*.

Armed with her camera, Emmy Andriess travelled to the places where Van Gogh had lived and worked. The exhibition of photographs by this pioneering photographer from the first half of the 20th century was on show at the museum from June until early October.

Online network

We are very encouraged by the exponential growth of the online network of the Van Gogh Museum. The fan base on Facebook increased from 200,000 to 500,000 and on Twitter from 75,000 to 100,000. Moreover, more than 4 million Van Gogh fans follow the museum via Google+.

Consequently, the museum holds a leading online position in the Netherlands, and with Google+ it even holds the number 1 position among museums worldwide.

The Mesdag Collection

In the Mesdag Collection in The Hague, which is managed by the Van Gogh Museum, the *How Does an Artist Collect?* exhibition closed on 12 January. This innovative exhibition presented the work of eight contemporary artists for whom collection plays an important role in their work. The exhibition was compiled by the 12 participants in the *Art of Making Art Exhibitions* course at the Van Gogh Museum. Our special thanks go to the 1818 Fund, which contributed towards the realisation of this exhibition.

Research

We once again invested a great deal in scientific research into the collection during the year. This was performed by a team of seven conservators and restorers. In 2014, the research focused mainly on the final section of the catalogue, the print collection and on authenticity investigations.

Research is also in progress for a publication on the lives of Vincent's sister-in-law Jo van Gogh-Bonger and her son Vincent Willem van Gogh. Both played a crucial role as the first guardians of the present collection of the Van Gogh Museum.

In 2014, research into the *Fin-de-Siècle* prints collection of the Van Gogh Museum was continued. That research will be published in 2016, via a new website devoted to this collection. The prints collection consists of about 1,300 sheets, largely made by artists of the so-called Nabis Group. We are very grateful for the contribution that the Vincent van Gogh Foundation pledged as part of this research and for the special website.

Finally, a preparatory study was conducted into the life and work of Hendrik Willem Mesdag. In the spring of 2015, this led to the publication of *Hendrik Willem Mesdag. Artist, collector, entrepreneur*. This book was published as part of the Mesdag Year, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the death of this artist.

New additions

We are exceptionally pleased to have been able to make important additions to the collection in 2014. These include a monotype by Edgar Degas, the painting *The Supper at Emmaus* (1894) by Maurice Denis and a series of woodcuts by Félix Vallotton. These acquisitions were made possible through the financial support of the BankGiro Lottery, for which we are very grateful.

Education

In 2014, we again had an ample and very varied range of products and services for adults and children. In addition to the Multimedia Tour and the award-winning app *Touch van Gogh* already mentioned, many activities were organised. We are also very happy with the new products developed in connection with the new presentation, such as the audio letters, many different forms of biographical information and the 'family walls', where old and young can increase their knowledge of Van Gogh from unexpected angles.

The public could also once again get to know Van Gogh and his art through tours, lectures and the free 'stories in the halls'.

Museum experts delivered monthly Sunday lectures and many workshops were organised for children and adults.

Through a treasure hunt or with *Vincent's Travelling Case*, children were able to discover the museum independently or with their families. Our museum also took part in the national Museum Youth University, through which children receive lectures from museum experts. The annual Family Days were once again held in 2014, in October.

The wide range of activities for primary schools include the entirely new theatrical tour *'Famille van Camille'*. There was also a varied programme for secondary schools, including the *Van Gogh on the Road* project for preparatory secondary vocational education, concerning the art handling and shipping of art works, in cooperation with art shipper Crown Fine Art. During the school holidays, special children's workshops were organised at the museum for After School Care services.

We are very pleased that the weekly Friday Night sessions, which offer a stimulating programme, were once again very well attended this year. The evening programmes include live music, modern dance, performances, tours, workshops, VJ presentations and a cocktail bar. The highlights included a performance by the Eefje de Visser band and a fashion show by couturier Mattijs van Bergen.

We are also proud that we were able to develop a growing number of activities both in and outside the museum to reach the elderly. Our museum participates in the programme set up by 12 museums around the Museum Plus Bus, an initiative that is supported by the BankGiro Lottery. Groups of residents from nursing homes or elderly people with a home nursing indication are taken to the museum free of charge, where they receive a warm welcome. The *'Art makes the Man: Senior Citizens meet Van Gogh'* programme, which is explained in the 'Partnerships' section, was also set up.

Publications

A catalogue was published for the *Félix Vallotton: The Fire Beneath the Ice* exhibition, in collaboration with the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. Also, *Vincent van Gogh: Ever Yours. His finest letters*, was published in Dutch, English and Norwegian.

We are very grateful to Mr Shigeru Myojin for his donation, which benefited the publication of the Japanese translation of *Ever Yours. His finest letters*.

Partnerships

Partnership with museums on the Museumplein

We attach considerable importance to cooperation with the other museums on Museumplein and are keen to expand this further. One example of this is PP10 BV, which provides the security for the Van Gogh Museum, the Stedelijk Museum and the Rijksmuseum.

The Turing Museumplein Bus was also the result of an initiative of these museums. This school bus collects pupils from the Amsterdam area free of charge for a visit to the museum. We are very grateful to the Turing Foundation for making this initiative possible.

The research project ‘*Tour Guiding is a Profession*’ was also launched this year, together with the Rijksmuseum and the Stedelijk Museum. The museums work together on this project with the teacher training courses of the University of Amsterdam, the Amsterdam Primary School Teacher Training Degree Course (UpvA) and the National Humanities and Social Studies Expertise Centre (University of Amsterdam, VU University Amsterdam, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences and iPabo University of Applied Sciences).

The Museumplein ticket, which was introduced in 2014, was also set up by the above museums, together with the Royal Concertgebouw and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. The combined ticket provides entrance to the three museums and a concert at the Royal Concertgebouw.

Other productive partnerships

Loans

We also have many other forms of shared efforts. The VGM participates in many loans between museums, for example, and has many alliances in the fields of research and exhibitions with fellow museums in the Netherlands and elsewhere.

The following (inter)national loans were among the highlights in this field. For the full list, we refer to the Loans review.

We received a large number of loans in 2014 from different (inter)national museums and institutions, for which we are very grateful.

We are also very pleased that we were able to contribute to the *Van Gogh. Repetitions* exhibition in the Philips Collection, Washington and later in the Cleveland Museum of Art in Cleveland. We lent them six works, including our public’s favourite *Portrait of Camille Roulin*.

We also lent two Van Gogh paintings, *Olive Grove and Undergrowth*, for the *Verso Monet. Storia del paesaggio dal Seicento al Novecento* landscapes exhibition at the Palazzo della Gran Guardia, which travelled on to the Basilica Palladia in Vicenza.

Farm and *Portrait of Leonie Rose Charbuy-Davy* by Vincent van Gogh are on long-term loan to the Rijksmuseum.

At the *Story of Brabant* exhibition, the North Brabant Museum was able to display four of Van Gogh’s works from our collection.

A very special loan was the exchange with the National Gallery in London, which, like the Van Gogh Museum, has a version of Van Gogh’s *Sunflowers* in its collection. In 2013, we were able to display the two versions together for a time. In 2014, the London public was able to see these paintings together for some months.

The Danish Ordrupgaard Museum in Charlottenlund borrowed nine paintings from our collection, including eight by Van Gogh and one by Emile Bernard. This was for the *Friction of Ideas: Van Gogh, Gauguin, Bernard* exhibition.

In the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt, three works from our museum were on show during the *Esprit Montmartre. Die Bohème in Paris um 1900* exhibition.

We contributed as many as 10 works to the *Van Gogh/Artaud. Le suicidé de la société* exhibition at the Musée d’Orsay in Paris, including Van Gogh’s iconic *Self-Portrait as a Painter*.

The Vincent van Gogh Foundation in Arles also received important loans, for the short and longer term, from the collections of the Van Gogh Museum and the Mesdag Collection. The loans involve 23 works, including *The Yellow House (the Street)* by Van Gogh.

Six paintings from our collection were on show in the *Émile Bernard (1868-1941), la peinture en colère* exhibition in the Musée de l’Orangerie in Paris.

As many as 17 items by Theo Colenbrander were loaned from the Mesdag Collection’s rich collection of pottery for the *Theo Colenbrander 1841-1930 – Dutch Design avant-la-lettre* exhibition of this artist’s work.

Universities and research institutes

The museum also works with national and international research institutes such as the University of Amsterdam, the VU University Amsterdam, the Tilburg Institute for Creative Computing, Cornell University and Duke University.

Art makes the Man

A completely new programme that began in 2014 was *Art Makes the Man: Senior Citizens meet Van Gogh*. This programme is aimed at visiting vulnerable senior citizens and inviting them to actively take part in experiencing art. Our initiative could not have been realised without the special partnership with the care organisation Cordaan, Vereniging De Zonnebloem, Viatore and Stichting Vier het Leven. From the second year, the Kröller-Müller Museum will also join the programme. The programme is supported by the RCOAK and Sluyterman van Loo senior citizens' funds.

Young artists

In addition, the VGM actively seeks contact with young artists, in order to offer them a platform for their art.

Van Gogh Year

Finally, we work with various partners on the organisation of the Van Gogh Year, to mark the 125th anniversary of Vincent van Gogh's death.

Entrepreneurship

Van Gogh Experience

In 2014 too, we were able to further develop cultural entrepreneurship. There are concrete plans for a Van Gogh Experience (working title) and talks have already taken place with various parties who wish to take up the experience.

Van Gogh Museum Enterprises

We are also encouraged by the results of the retail activities of Van Gogh Museum Enterprises, partly thanks to a strategic reorientation. We were able to expand our exclusive collection of Relievos this year. Nine of these advanced high-quality 3D reproductions are now available. The Relievos, which are produced in collaboration with Fuji Film, show the relief of every brush stroke by Van Gogh exactly as it is in the original.

Van Gogh Consultancy

We decided to extend the Van Gogh Consultancy pilot project by one year. The first year of the consultancy brought us many interesting openings. In the second year, we will make the business plan more concrete.

Partners, sponsors and other benefactors

Our online Annual Report provides more information on the above and all other activities that we undertook in 2014. Without the vital support of our partners, sponsors and other parties involved, we would not have been able to develop these activities in this way and on this scale.

Thanks to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, the museum has been able to inspire and enrich a broad (international) public since 1974 with the life and work of Vincent van Gogh and his contemporaries. The Vincent van Gogh Foundation is not only our most important partner in this, but also pledged to support the new entrance building with a generous contribution in 2014. Furthermore, the Foundation supports research into the museum's collection of prints.

The BankGiro Lottery supports the museum each year with a large contribution for new acquisitions. In 2015, the BankGiro Lottery also supported the museum with a generous contribution for the construction of the new entrance building. During the past year, the museum also received a number of contributions through 'earmarked fundraising'. With this, participants in the BankGiro Lottery were able to specify that the proceeds of their lottery tickets should be donated to the Van Gogh Museum. The BankGiro Lottery and the Van Gogh Museum jointly promoted the lottery ticket sales. These contributions will be for the benefit of the new entrance building.

In 2014, AkzoNobel was again a partner of the Van Gogh Museum's restoration studio and also supplied paints for the design of exhibitions in the museum via its Sikkens subsidiary. AkzoNobel also launched a paint line inspired by iconic works of Vincent van Gogh.

Canon Europe supports the Van Gogh Museum in drawing attention to projects in innovative ways.

Researchers from Partner in Science Shell Netherlands make a valuable contribution to the Van Gogh Museum's research in the group's laboratories. In the past, the results of this have led to various scientific publications and have contributed to exhibitions.

Thanks to Fonds Sluyterman van Loo and RCOAK, our *Art Makes the Man* project for the elderly was launched in 2014. With the support of these funds, we will be able to offer workshops for the elderly on location for the coming three years.

Stichting Lieve contributed to research into Vincent van Gogh's *Field with Irises* and the subsequent restoration. We also received an anonymous donation of €30,000 for the restoration of this painting.

The Eye Fund of the National Foundation for the Blind and Partially-Sighted facilitates *Feeling Van Gogh*, which enables us to offer workshops in the museum for the blind and visually impaired.

Via a named endowment fund, we received a financial contribution from an anonymous donor for educational programmes, projects and resources. Thanks to this contribution, we will be able to realise the *Van Gogh Goes to School* project.

With contributions from Nuon, events for Nuon's relations were organised.

The fact that our supporters include an increasingly wide network

of donors is invaluable to our museum. We would first like to thank the members of The Yellow House for their generous financial support and valuable advice.

The Patrons of the Van Gogh Global Circle also help the museum to remain accessible for its visitors, in both physical and educational terms.

The same applies equally to The Sunflower Collective, which was formed in the past year and forms a growing network of Supporting Friends. We are extremely grateful to them for this.

Finally, we would like to offer very warm thanks to the members of the Supervisory Board, the Advisory Board and the employees of the Van Gogh Museum and the Mesdag Collection. The support and confidence of our Supervisory Board and our Advisory Board were extremely important. Our employees also once again worked for the museum with great involvement, knowledge and energy in 2014. We would like to express our gratitude to all the staff for this.

We hope you enjoy reading our online Annual Report 2014.

Axel Rüger
Director

Adriaan Dönszelmann
Managing Director

Strategic Plan 2014_2017

Van
Gogh
Museum

Amsterdam



Books and reality and art are the same kind of thing for me.

Vincent van Gogh writing to his brother Theo,
11 February 1883

Management summary

The Strategic Plan of the Van Gogh Museum (hereinafter VGM) for the period 2014-2017 broadly outlines the museum's envisioned strategy and serves as guidance for museum policy and activities during the coming four years.

In this plan, the distinction has been drawn between the museum's Primary Objectives and the Strategic Pillars. Operational targets have been formulated for both.

The Primary Objectives concern the tasks that require constant attention at the museum, handled by the three sectors of the organisation: Museum Affairs (see 8.1), Public Affairs (8.2) and Operations (8.3). An additional element of the Primary Objectives is to continue to collaborate with a range of partners and where possible, to intensify and expand our partnerships (8.4).

The Strategic Pillars offer direction and focus to the VGM's objectives for the coming period. Activities envisioned by the sectors are required to comply with the Pillars. The Strategic Pillars have been drawn up based on the museum's mission, vision and core values, taking stakeholders and external influences into consideration.

- 1 Accessibility: the VGM has ensured optimal access to the collection and its buildings (9.1).
- 2 Reach: the VGM reaches as many visitors and non-visitors as possible, creating a dialogue with the public alongside a high degree of public involvement (9.2).
- 3 Income: the VGM secures additional income, partly through developing new business models and the continued professionalisation of fundraising activities (9.3).

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1 Foreword by the Directors

In 2009, the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science announced that, for institutions that form part of the country's fundamental cultural infrastructure (such as the VGM), the four-year subsidy system would be replaced with a long-term subsidy scheme. In order to be eligible, these institutions were asked to submit a brief policy plan to the Ministry containing performance targets. In this context, the VGM drafted the Strategic Plan 2009-2014.

The government's subsidy system has since been revised and the 'old' four-year subsidy system is once again in effect. In 2013, the VGM has welcomed Adriaan Dönszelmann as its new Managing Director, successfully completed a major renovation of the Rietveld Building and put plans into place for the construction of a new Entrance Hall on Museumplein.

The VGM is entering a new phase, which means now is the ideal time to present a new plan for the years ahead. This Strategic Plan broadly outlines the museum's envisioned strategy and serves as guidance for museum policy and activities during the coming four years (2014-2017).

This Plan builds on the foundations laid out in the Strategic Plan 2009-2014, which contained a newly-defined mission, vision and strategy as well as six strategic objectives.¹ However, the Plan remained fairly abstract and featured few concrete objectives. The new plan contains clearer objectives that can be more easily evaluated. In recent years, the museum has made significant progress in a large number of the areas identified as focal points in the previous Plan. For example, facilities have been improved, the organisation has undergone further professionalisation and the customer focus has increased. Other aspects still require attention, such as improving the museum's digital presence and accessibility of museum buildings, and sufficiently extending the museum's network of corporate and private supporters.

As such, these aspects form significant points of interest in the new Strategic Plan. The Directors have worked closely with the Supervisory Board and the Management Team to develop the Plan and discussed it with VGM employees during various consultation sessions. Feedback and additions arising from these sessions have been incorporated into this Plan wherever possible.

¹ The strategic objectives were: 1) To be an innovative museum 2) To be widely accessible 3) To express quality in all parts of the museum 4) To build up an extensive network of partners and supporters 5) To ensure that a visit to the VGM is a stimulating and enriching experience 6) To be an attractive employer.



Vincent van Gogh
The Sea at Les Sables-Meris-de-la-Mer (detail), 1888
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Vincent

2 Profile of the Van Gogh Museum

The collection

The VGM carries the name of one of the best-known artists in the world, and celebrated its 40th jubilee in 2013. The museum is one of the world's strongest cultural brands and in many ways, unique in its field.

To start with, the VGM houses the largest collection of Van Gogh works in the world, with 205 paintings including some of his most famous, iconic works, 500 drawings and nearly all of his letters (in excess of 800). The collection also features paintings and drawings from between 1840 and 1920 by Van Gogh's friends and contemporaries, by artists that had inspired him and by those whom he inspired. In addition, the museum is home to a unique, internationally-acclaimed collection of fin de siècle prints, with a specific focus on the Nabis artists. An exceptional element of the print collection is the Japanese woodcuts, ukiyo-e, collected by Vincent and Theo van Gogh. The VGM collection is regularly enriched with new acquisitions and works on loan.

Vincent van Gogh

Vincent van Gogh was a writer as well as an artist. Many of his surviving letters offer an unrivalled insight into his personality and fascinating life. Both the collection and Vincent van Gogh himself play a crucial role in the museum's activities and its image. His work and life story exude a special emotional dimension that never fails to touch and inspire

a wide Dutch and international audience, an aspect that few other museums benefit from at such a level.

Knowledge institute

Drawing on its rich collection, the VGM has grown into the leading knowledge institute on Vincent van Gogh. For 25 years, research into his life and works has been an integral part of the museum's policy. It is fundamental to a wealth of exhibitions, publications and educational programmes. The Vereniging van Rijksmusea (Association of National Museums) visitation committee qualified this as a distinctive element of the VGM.²

The VGM is a leading museum when it comes to research, certainly in the Netherlands. Even though the VGM's research activities will not receive government support in the coming period due to austerity measures, the museum will continue to stimulate an active research and publications programme in order to continue to make expertise on Vincent van Gogh and the art of his time available to the scientific world and the public at large.

Visitors

For several years, the VGM has achieved visitor numbers in the region of 1.5 million – in 2011, 1.6 million visitors even passed through its doors. Van Gogh exhibitions in other countries, such as those in Asia, also draw high numbers of visitors. This makes the VGM the second most-visited museum in the

Netherlands and ranks it as one of the top-25 most-visited art museums in the world. The museum also attracts an unusually young (the average age of its visitors is 32), well-educated and international public. 85% of the visitors to the museum every year travel from abroad.

Income

The VGM's income structure is unique. The large numbers of visitors generate 50% of the annual budget through entrance fees, making them the most important source of income for the museum. Commercial activities, merchandise and sponsorship contribute approximately 25% and in broad terms, the remaining 25% comes from governmental subsidy. The Dutch State provides this subsidy so that the VGM has sufficient means to fulfil the responsibilities bestowed upon it by the government – to manage and conserve the collections placed in the museum's care by the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Vincent van Gogh Foundation.

The Mesdag Collection

The former home of renowned seascape painter Hendrik Willem Mesdag (1831-1915) and his wife Sientje Mesdag-van Houten is located on the Laan van Meerdervoort in The Hague. Besides being a painter, Mesdag was a keen art collector. He commissioned the construction of a museum to house his extraordinary collection, which comprised innumerable masterpieces from

the 19th-century French Barbizon School and Hague School. In 1903, Mesdag donated his museum and collection to the Dutch State and since 1991, the Mesdag Collection (hereinafter: DMC) has been an integral part of the VGM. The collections of both museums complement one another and offer an impressive overview of late nineteenth-century art.

DMC closed in 2008 for major renovations before reopening to the public in 2010. The renovated museum complies with all current museum standards. Not to be confused with the Panorama Mesdag (an entirely different entity), DMC welcomes approximately 10,000 visitors every year. In addition to displaying the permanent collection at DMC, the VGM also regularly organises exhibitions at this location.

² <http://www.derijksmusea.nl/visitaties>



Vincent van Gogh
The Bedroom (detail), 1888
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

3 Trends and developments in the field

When drafting this Strategic Plan, close attention has been paid to trends and developments in the field that the museum needs to be aware of and where necessary, address in future activities.

Undiminished interest in Van Gogh

Vincent van Gogh's fame and by association, interest in the artist remains undiminished. This affords the VGM exciting opportunities to develop new projects, collaborations and revenue, but it also increases pressure on the collection, the organisation and the programme. This is due to the increasing number of loan requests, rising (insurance) values and resulting higher exhibition costs, and the demand on important (Van Gogh) works which are often sought in return for works the VGM requests from other museums for its own exhibitions.

This is at odds with the museum's Primary Objective: to manage and conserve the extremely vulnerable collection. To a certain extent, the Primary Objective limits the possibilities available to the VGM with regard to making physical use of the collection. In turn, this heavily influences the decisions the museum makes when considering future activities as well as the possibility of such activities.

Political developments

Recent governments and cabinet changes have shown that governmental policy on museums can be unpredictable and whimsical

in nature. For example, the subsidy system has been radically revised several times. A trend can also be observed of continued governmental withdrawal. However, governmental calls to increase collaboration and 'cultural entrepreneurship' remain strong. This was corroborated by the June 2013 letter to Parliament by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science in which she explained her vision for museums in the country.³

Digital developments

The importance of communication technology and social media in modern society continues to increase, as it does in the cultural sector. The numbers of VGM fans and followers on Facebook and Twitter have risen sharply in recent years. Early in 2014, the VGM had in excess of 76,000 followers on Twitter, 213,551 fans on Facebook and 3,867,086 followers on Google+. This trend is expected to continue.

Economic developments

Economic (in)stability both within Europe and worldwide, and the knock-on effect on tourism, affect the museum due to the fact that the large majority of visitors to the VGM travel from outside of the Netherlands. The economic climate also impacts the labour market. Rising unemployment is of particular influence, not only on purchasing power and spending behaviour but also on the supply and demand of personnel.

Socio-demographical developments

The Dutch population is aging and the immigrant population is growing steadily. This presents the VGM with the challenge of how to make the best use of the participation and involvement of these groups in cultural life. The VGM will have to address specifically their desires and requirements if they are to present an appealing museum programme.

Sustainability

The focus on corporate social responsibility and sustainable business continues to increase, both from the government (in the form of more stringent regulations) and consumers. Cultural institutions fulfil an important social function and as such, need to pay sufficient attention to these areas.

Museumplein

For the first time in many years, since 2013 all museums on Museumplein (the Rijksmuseum, Stedelijk Museum and Van Gogh Museum) are once again fully open. This has resulted in renewed, increased vitality on Museumplein and the designation of the square as the 'Cultural Heart of the Netherlands' – also including the Royal Concertgebouw and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.

Exhibitions

Rising prices for works by Van Gogh and his contemporaries on the international art market has resulted in a sharp rise in insurance values. In turn, this means that exhibition costs are rising even further while the Dutch Indemnity Scheme is increasingly proving to be far too limited to cover the rising costs associated with exhibitions featuring works borrowed from international museums.

³ Letter to Parliament by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, Strength through cooperation, 10 June 2013.



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

4 Stakeholders

In order for the VGM to be successful, it is vital that the museum is aware of the various stakeholders as well as their needs and expectations. These factors can then be taken into full consideration as the museum plans future activities.

The most significant stakeholders have been identified as:

- VGM museum visitors (domestic and international)
- People interested in Van Gogh who are not in the position visit the museum
- The Dutch government, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Dutch political sphere
- The Government Buildings Agency
- The Province of Noord-Holland
- The City of Amsterdam and the City District of Zuid
- The Vincent van Gogh Foundation
- Financiers and sponsors (so-called 'supporters')
- Commercial partners
- The media
- The tourist sector
- The education sector
- The cultural sector, art institutions, industry organisations
- Collectors and the art trade
- Suppliers
- Employees.

5 The Van Gogh Museum mission

The mission provides a general overview of what the VGM aspires to embody for all stakeholders. The mission forms the foundation for the organisation's vision, strategy and objectives. During drafting the Strategic Plan 2009-2014, the VGM formulated the following 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.

In light of the success and growth achieved in the previous period and in the belief that it remains firmly applicable to the coming period, the Directors wish to continue with this mission in 2014-2017.

This notion is strengthened by the extremely positive assessment by the Vereniging van Rijksmusea (Association of National Museums) visitation committee and the favourable responses of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Council for Culture following the museum's subsidy application for 2014-2017.

Concurrently, the VGM also aspires to shift the emphasis in the coming period and formulate more concrete strategic targets.

6 The core values of the Van Gogh Museum

The VGM is leading, excellent and inspiring. The core values function as an ethical compass and are at the heart of corporate culture at the museum.

Leading

The VGM is a leading player on the world stage when it comes to Vincent van Gogh. The museum is home to a unique collection of his paintings and prints. This collection, complemented by years of scientific research into the work of Van Gogh and his contemporaries, offers an unparalleled insight into Van Gogh's life and work in the context of his time. The VGM's unique position can be traced back to its genesis: a link with the Van Gogh family and the role the museum has been awarded as guardian of the heritage of Vincent van Gogh. In addition, the VGM presents itself as a forerunner in museum operations, research, education and exhibitions.

Striving for excellence

The VGM enjoys international renown and continuously strives for excellence. This is significantly linked to the outstanding passion and dedication of the museum's employees. The high quality of the organisation and activities at the museum was confirmed by the visitation committee. However, with success comes responsibility and the museum is determined to hold its own with other leading international museums in the coming years.

Inspiring

Since opening in 1973, the VGM has been devoted to making Van Gogh's life and work accessible to as many people as possible in order to enrich and inspire them. The museum continues to introduce different perspectives and themes to people all over the globe, to allow them to examine the world of Vincent van Gogh in new ways and through the emotions this evokes, even to reflect upon their own lives. For its part, the VGM always seeks enrichment and inspiration in what happens outside of the museum's walls. The museum is inquisitive, keen to explore and discover, and it wants its visitors and stakeholders to do just the same.

7 The vision of the Van Gogh Museum

The vision describes the ideal situation the VGM is seeking to realise. It is based on the museum's mission and core values, and it also takes external influences and the most significant stakeholders into consideration.

- 1 The VGM is one of the leading and most accessible museums in the world. It is inspirational and strives for excellence in all its activities.**
- 2 The VGM excels in carrying out its Primary Objectives, delivered by the sectors of Museum Affairs, Public Affairs and Operations, and to achieve this, collaborates with various parties.**
- 3 The main objective of the VGM is the management and conservation of the collection and making this accessible to as many people as possible. The VGM has ensured optimal access to the collection and its buildings.**
- 4 The VGM reaches as many visitors and non-visitors as possible, creating dialogue with the public alongside a high degree of public involvement.**
- 5 The VGM secures additional income, partly through developing new business models and the continued professionalisation of fundraising activities.**



Vincent van Gogh
Almond Blossom (detail), 1890
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

8 The Primary Objectives

In this Strategic Plan, the distinction has been drawn between the museum's Primary Objectives and the Strategic Pillars. Operational targets have been formulated for both. This distinction is designed to help clearly define the focus for the coming period.

The Primary Objectives concern the continuous tasks the museum has to execute, delivered by the three sectors of the organisation: Museum Affairs (see 8.1), Public Affairs (8.2) and Operations (8.3).

An additional element of the Primary Objectives is to continue to collaborate with a range of partners and where possible, to intensify and expand our partnerships (8.4).

8.1 Museum Affairs

Museum Affairs concerns activities related to the conservation, management and presentation of the permanent collection, exhibitions, the scientific function of the VGM, providing access to and publishing expertise both within the VGM and outside the museum, on a domestic and international level.

The unique, extremely valuable collection itself as well as exhibiting and providing access to the collection remains the most important aspect of all activities and thought processes at the VGM. The collection is key, leading and 'king': 80% of VGM visitors come to the museum to view the permanent collection. All museum activities are derived

from this or are a logical consequence of that fact and should correspond with the museum's mission and vision.

The coming years will see continued investment in conserving, managing and extending the collection. The VGM is also focused on maintaining its established scientific and research reputation; the VGM is, and will remain, the definitive authority on Van Gogh.

8.1.1 Collection management

Collection management has drafted a conservation plan outlining action required in the short, medium long and long term.

The collection survey - monitoring the condition of the collection - is a continuous, cyclical operation. Introduced in 2011, the Adlib Museum Plus collection database allows the museum to conduct the collection survey digitally. Below are the key points related to the conservation and management of the collection in the coming period.

Conservation and restoration

(Medium) long term plans will be drawn up for the conservation, restoration and utilisation of the collection based on the collection survey.

For each damage factor, existing operational agreements and procedures will be analysed to determine whether they are adequate to facilitate the effective conservation of the collection. All relevant departments will be

involved in this process and we will draw on expertise and best practices from within and outside the organisation. Procedures will be revised or implemented where necessary.

Security

The Emergency Collection Plan (Collectie Hulp Verlenings Plan) was implemented in 2013 and rehearsed based on various eventualities.

In the coming period, there will be a continuous focus on the guidelines concerning the safety of the collection in various circumstances. Training and refresher courses form an integral, evergreen aspect of this.

Collection registration

Since 2011, the collection has been registered in the Adlib Museum Plus collection information system. This basic registration will be complemented by the phased introduction of additional data about several sub-collections into Adlib Museum Plus.

The VGM is also working on the selection and implementation of a Digital Asset Management System (DAM). This system makes it possible to manage digital files and link them to the corresponding metadata in Adlib Museum Plus. Adlib Museum Plus and DAM are two core administrative systems at the VGM and as such, additional staff have been employed to carry out the implementation.

8.1.2 Library and Documentation

The VGM is home to a valuable historical book collection and research collection, accessible to researchers and other interested parties. The reading room function will be maintained and the library will work towards improving its (online) visibility and presence.

In relation to documentation, the coming period will see a heavy focus on digitisation. Now that the collection database is implemented and the Digital Asset Management System is soon to follow suit, priority is shifting to efforts further to digitise documents about the collection and other collection-related information, such as technical documentation. A digitisation plan will be drafted to outline the required action.

8.1.3 Presentation of the permanent collection

Providing access to the collection is the VGM's core business. In this area, the museum is keen to focus more closely on the desires and backgrounds of the various target groups and individual visitors.

An important aspect of this is the redesigned presentation of the permanent collection in the Rietveld Building, which will be revealed in the autumn of 2014. The new, more modern design will create a simpler, more logical and obvious link between the permanent collection and exhibitions, helping the two to form a single aesthetic union. Additional digital media will be developed further to enrich the presentation. See also 9.1.1.

8.1.4 Acquisitions

The VGM has drafted a collection plan outlining the areas that represent the focus of its collection activities and acquisition policy. However, it should be noted that the current art trading climate is characterised by extremely high prices and keen competition. Acquisitions are therefore only possible through additional external funding, which will be held in an acquisition fund. The target for the coming period is to realise an available sum of €10 million in the acquisition fund. A crucial aspect of this is the generous annual contribution from the BankGiro Loterij, with whom the VGM has entered into an agreement running through 2018.

8.1.5 Exhibitions (domestic and international)

The VGM has built up a solid reputation for its high-profile exhibitions and in the coming period, the museum will continue to organise an extensive, innovative programme of temporary exhibitions in the Exhibition Wing.

The exhibitions provide context for the permanent collection by delving deeper into various subjects, highlighting specific aspects or offering a broader perspective. As such, the exhibitions support the museum's mission. The programme for the coming period is based on the exhibition policy plan recently drafted by the VGM.

Presenting works in other countries forms a notable part of making the museum's

collection accessible. The relatively limited size of the collection means the VGM is not in the position to open museums in other countries. However, with the support of the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, the museum does frequently organise Van Gogh exhibitions in other countries. These exhibitions traditionally attract large numbers of visitors, providing people who would never be able to visit the museum in Amsterdam with the ideal opportunity to discover Van Gogh's works closer to home.

The VGM's international exhibitions strategy features a selection of priority countries which will be the museum's focus in the coming period.

8.1.6 Research

For 25 years, research into various aspects of the collection has been an integral part of the museum's policy. It is fundamental to a wealth of exhibitions, publications and educational programmes.

The museum stimulates an active research and publications programme based on the collections. The aim of this programme is to make expertise on 19th-century art in general, and in particular the life and works of Van Gogh and his contemporaries, available to the scientific world and the public at large. The museum strives to achieve an effective level of reciprocity between the (temporary) exhibitions and the publication of the latest scientific insights.

The move to include conducting research as a spearhead of museum policy is reflected in the organisation of the museum itself, which featured an independent Research Department from 2005 to 2011, before it was merged into the Art Department. This department is responsible for developing and extending the role of the museum as a source of (scientific) expertise. The current research policy plan runs until 2014, hence a new version will be developed in the coming period.

The VGM also believes it has an important role to play in training and providing work experience to talented young researchers and curators specialising in 19th-century art in general, and in particular the life and works of Van Gogh and his contemporaries. The museum feels that it should share responsibility for providing the required training to the next generation of Van Gogh specialists.

8.1.7 Education

The VGM is dedicated to inspiring and enriching as many people as possible and awakening an enduring interest in art, especially in Van Gogh. In line with current governmental policy, talent development forms an important spearhead of the museum's educational policy.

The VGM reaches a young audience: the average age of a visitor to the museum is 32 years old. Education is concerned with interpreting expertise and information about

Van Gogh and his time to a wide audience. Specific target groups have been identified within this audience. The various forms of multilingual information and programmes developed for the general public, including multimedia tours, are proving to be extremely popular.

Youth education

The VGM has developed a range of educational programmes for children aged 4-12 years old (primary education) and 12-17 years old (secondary education). These programmes will be developed further in the coming period. In 2010, the VGM also introduced free entry to the museum for visitors aged 17 and under.

In the coming policy period, the museum is obliged to meet the target set by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science of welcoming 41,000 pupils through its doors annually. The museum plans to achieve the required intensification of contact with schools by further developing a continuous learning path, complementing educational curricula and specific school requirements.

The VGM collaborates with numerous educational institutions. Until the end of 2014, children in the 6th, 7th and 8th years can travel to the Rijksmuseum, VGM and Stedelijk Museum for free using the Turing Museumpleinbus. The museums located on Museumplein are pursuing plans jointly to fund the bus service, securing its future after 2014. DMC is

participating in the Cultuurmenu, a collaboration between 19 heritage institutions in The Hague. The museum intends to prolong membership of the Cultuurmenu.

In 2013, the VGM launched a special programme for families with children aged between 4 and 12 years old, featuring 'Vincent's travelling case', guided tours and family days. This programme will be extended in the coming period.

Adult education

Since 2010, Education has concentrated on a strategy to provide interested parties with a service more specifically tailored to their needs. The approach takes factors including level of knowledge, style of learning and motivation into consideration, using multimedia, oral and hands-on teaching methods. Multimedia fulfils a permanent role in the museum's range of educational resources.

For example, the successful Letters multimedia tour has been developed for visitors, and for non-visitors, there's the Letters iPhone app (which achieved 150,000 downloads within 2 years after its launch). A new series of apps for non-visitors will be developed in the coming period. These resources will enable the VGM to form a closer relationship with people all over the world who are not in the position to visit the museum.

The free lectures (introduced in 2006) and workshops for adults will be developed into a broader programme geared towards life-long learners.

Another successful element is the Friday Nights at the Van Gogh Museum, a weekly platform that allows the museum to demonstrate how Van Gogh is still inspiring present-day generations of artists and culture makers. The target group for these events is local visitors aged between 20 and 35 years old. Each Friday Night currently attracts approximately 1,000 visitors; an increase to 1,250 is envisaged in 2017.

The VGM is one of the founding fathers of the MuseumPlusBus, an outreach project involving 12 museums that brings elderly people residing in nursing homes, or who receive homecare, to their museums. BankGiro Loterij contributions mean that this project will continue to run until the end of 2017 at the earliest.

The Dutch population is aging rapidly: in 2015, at least 3,000,000 people living in the country will be above 65 years old. As such, the VGM recognises the elderly as a significant target group and confirmed its commitment by signing the 'Ouderen en cultuur' (The Elderly and Culture) agreement in 2013, part of the long-range plan 'Lang Leve Kunst' (Long Live Art). In turn, the Sluyster van Loo Fund and RCOAK Foundation initiated their own

themed programme within this plan which saw institutions including the VGM invited to submit a proposal to encourage elderly participation. Several successful proposals will receive financial backing, drawn from a total budget of €1,000,000. 'Lang Leve Kunst' runs from 2014 to 2017.

The VGM also aspires to become the most accessible museum for disabled visitors in the Netherlands. Measures working towards achieving this goal will be taken in the coming period.

8.2 Public Affairs

The role of Public Affairs at the VGM is to reach the public to the best of the museum's ability, to provide them with high-level service, to connect with them and offer them new experiences. The VGM regularly conducts consumer research in order to fully understand its audience. The museum also enjoys impressive reach outside of the museum, both on a domestic and international level – connecting with those who are interested in Van Gogh but not in the position to visit the museum.

8.2.1 Communication

The VGM attracts repeatedly large-scale coverage in the (international) media, as recently illustrated by the presentation of Van Gogh's painting *Sunset at Montmajour*, discovered late in 2013. Van Gogh clearly remains a newsworthy subject. The museum is fully aware of this and is keen to make use

of this effectively and professionally. A new communication policy will be developed, focusing on corporate communication and a more pro-active press policy. Focal points include online visibility and the implementation of the web strategy.

8.2.2 Visitors

Over the past three years, the VGM has welcomed an annual average of between 1.4 and 1.5 million visitors. 2011 was an exceptionally good year, with 1.6 million people visiting the museum. The construction of the new Entrance Hall (see 9.1) will not only contribute to the museum being able to offer visitors a more comfortable welcome, but it also means that more visitors are expected to be able to visit the museum. The museum aspires to welcome an average of 1.7 million visitors annually by 2017.

Visitors' enjoyment of the museum is occasionally being compromised by the large crowds. The following measures are planned to help alleviate crowding issues:

- More focus on visitor distribution through advanced sales (physical and online) and price differentiation.
- Continued implementation of the new ticketing system.
- Continued implementation of time slots for individual visitors.

8.2.3 Visitor satisfaction

Years of research into VGM visitor satisfaction

combined with practical experience has resulted in a veritable treasure trove of information about visitors to the museum – both demographically and with regard to their desires and requirements.

The VGM believes that the relationship with the visitor can – and should – always be improved upon. Various measures have been (or will be) taken to address this. For example, the VGM recently became the first museum in the Netherlands to introduce large-scale customer orientation training for all its employees. All employees are also invited to work as a host/hostess at the museum twice a year. Work is underway on concretely defining the museum's target groups and adjusting policy accordingly. This will allow the museum better to cater for the wishes and requirements of its diverse range of visitors, from the Netherlands and beyond.

8.2.4 Marketing

Consumer/visitor research conducted by the VGM and TNS-NIPO for the VGM has provided the museum with a detailed understanding of its visitors. The results are being used at various levels within the organisation. The VGM will continue to conduct (or commission) consumer research in the coming period. The Marketing Department also refers to information sources including the museum's own systems, retail management solutions (NTSwincash) and the Museum Association's Museum Monitor to gain insight into the

character and motivation of the public and their numbers, inside the museum and beyond.

The VGM is a global cultural brand and with this in mind, further efforts are being made to strengthen the museum's brand positioning. In concrete terms, this means that the VGM is keen to present a more clearly defined identity to the public at large. Recent research indicates that the 'casual connector' profile best suits the VGM and the current brand experience. This profile is characterised by qualities including being accessible, popular and artistic/creative. In order to realise the envisaged improvements, the brand policy (identity) will be developed further and applied to all of the museum's products and services. Significant considerations include the choice of communication channels, marketing activities and educational programmes. As a result, a more consistent perception of the VGM will be created amongst its customers.

As part of the Marketing Department, Trade and Sales is responsible for all international B2B and B2C promotion. It keeps close track of the latest developments in the leisure market, analyses consumer behaviour and identifies opportunities and growth potential in order to proactively capitalise on trends in the market. Trade and Sales maintains contact with organisations such as Amsterdam Marketing and NBTC Holland Marketing – organisations responsible for the domestic and

international marketing of the Netherlands. Maintaining sound relations with leisure market retailers is an important aspect of Trade and Sales' work. Trade and Sales is determined to consolidate its retail activities and probe new markets. It will also focus on increasing ticket sales during the low season and off-peak hours as part of efforts to make optimal use of the available visitor capacity.

8.2.5 Commercial activities

VGM Enterprises B.V. (hereinafter: VGME) produces an extensive range of merchandise products inspired by the museum's collection. These products are sold in the museum shop, at the shop on Museumplein and in the webshop. The target for the coming period is to increase sales of these products, partly through a new retail policy and a redesigned shop in the new Entrance Hall. Future decisions in this area will be clearer and more well-defined. New commercial activities will also be developed in the coming period (see 9.3).

8.2.6 Fundraising

In 2010, the VGM began setting up a network of companies and as the year drew to an end, 12 Corporate Patrons had become members of the Van Gogh Museum Global Circle. This network will be extended further in the coming period. The museum also collaborates with partners including Shell and Canon on specific projects. And for private supporters of the museum, The Yellow House was established in 2009. Members of the network contribute

a fixed donation each year. The VGM is also looking to extend this network in the coming period. For other shifts of emphasis regarding fundraising, see 9.3.1.

8.2.7 Publications

VGM publications support and strengthen the museum's reputation as an internationally-renowned knowledge and research institute while also providing a valuable source of income. Innovative publication concepts will be explored in the coming years as the museum strives to reach readers the world over. E-books and digital publications relating to the museum collection are just two of the envisaged approaches.

8.2.8 The Mesdag Collection

As agreed with the VGM Supervisory Board, DMC will be evaluated in 2014. Following the assessment, a decision will be made regarding the future of DMC as part of the VGM.

8.3 Operations

Operations is responsible for the VGM functioning at the highest possible level with regard to the internal organisation and processes, personnel policy and sustainable business practices as well as ensuring suitable quarters for the collection and museum personnel in keeping with the museum's ambitions.

8.3.1 The internal organisation

In recent years, the VGM has made significant progress with regard to the further professionalisation of the internal organisation, for example with the implementation of the Organisatie Ontwikkel Traject (Organisation Development Plan). However, organisations are in a constant state of development and as such, there are still processes in need of improvement. The museum aspires further to embed this new structure in the organisation. In order to achieve this, it is vital that there is further clarification of what the core processes actually are and who is responsible for the various processes. Financial administration, cost-consciousness and quality awareness within the organisation are all subjects that will remain focal points in the coming period.

8.3.2 External museum profile

The VGM strives to improve the external profile of the museum as a professionally-run, enterprising, dynamic organisation with clear objectives; as an institution at which distinguished, expert work is conducted and where employees are afforded ample opportunity to further develop their talent.

8.3.3 Personnel policy

The VGM aspires to establish a workforce conducive to achieving its ambitions, with a permanent core and a flexible outer layer. Talent and skills are central concerns when searching new staff. The VGM also strives to create a diverse workforce in terms of

background, sex and age. The VGM is not in the position to compete with salaries offered in the commercial sector. In order for the museum to attract suitable employees it is consequently essential that the VGM clearly formulates and communicates what makes it an appealing employer. Developing talent and leadership qualities within the organisation also need to become a focus of the museum.

Research commissioned by the VGM into personnel satisfaction in 2011 returned positive results. Several of the recommendations made subsequent to the research have already been implemented. Personnel satisfaction will be gauged by another round of research in the coming period.

The new assessment system introduced by the VGM in 2013 means that employees are evaluated and assessed at least once a year. Implementation of this system will continue in the coming period, with adjustments being made as necessary.

The coming period will also see a particular focus on reducing absenteeism, in collaboration with the new Occupational Health Service which was contracted by the VGM in 2014.

8.3.4 CSR

The increasing focus on the environment and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a significant development for museums.

Museum visitors expect museums to perform well in this area. As a public, international, educational institution, the VGM recognises its responsibility and in 2011, the museum adopted an active Corporate Social Responsibility policy.

The museum's CSR policy is founded on three pillars:

- People: respecting people and the environment
- Planet: sustainability and minimising environmental impact
- Profit: taking a considered approach to continuity.

Initial steps to introduce a comprehensive CSR policy were taken in 2011.

The planned renovation of the VGM in 2012 was the ideal moment to carry out work related to CSR. For example, improvements were made to the climate control installations in the building to make them as sustainable as possible. Implementation of the CSR policy will continue and the museum aspires to receive BREAAAM certification early in 2014.

8.4 Collaboration

The VGM's domestic and international networks are extensive and varied. This is due to a number of factors including the renown of Van Gogh and his works, the wide range of appealing activities organised by the museum and successful collaborations with other parties at home and abroad. The

activities planned by the museum will help to consolidate and extend these networks in the coming period.

Fellow Dutch and international museums

The VGM is involved in numerous loan transactions and multiple collaborations with other Dutch and international museums, working together on organising exhibitions and conducting research. The VGM plans to continue on this course.

Joint promotions

Joint promotions are collaborations with third parties that benefit both the VGM and the third party by generating free publicity or having a positive effect on the perceptions of a shared target audience. Previous joint promotions have seen the VGM collaborate with Tedex Woman Amsterdam, the Dutch version of Sesame Street (when the show celebrated its 35th jubilee) and Amsterdam Museum Night. The VGM will continue to explore potential partnerships with parties such as these.

Research institutions and universities

The VGM will continue to collaborate with numerous Dutch and international research institutes and universities, such as the Netherlands Institute for Art History, the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, the Dutch Postgraduate School for Art History, the University of Amsterdam, the VU University Amsterdam (Master's Museum Curator

programme), the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, The Tilburg Institute for Creative Computing, Cornell University and Duke University.

Museumplein partners

For the first time in many years, since 2013 all museums on Museumplein (the Rijksmuseum, Stedelijk Museum and the VGM) are once again fully open. The VGM has a long tradition of collaboration with fellow institutions at this 'Cultural Heart of the Netherlands' – which also includes the Royal Concertgebouw and Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. The reopening of the museums has resulted in renewed, increased vitality on Museumplein and the VGM is keen to use this to its advantage.

Other (art) disciplines

Derived from the museum's mission to enrich and inspire people, the VGM is constantly on the lookout for young artists and fresh talent in a variety of (art) disciplines. The Friday Night at the Van Gogh Museum programme provides the ideal platform for these young artists to introduce their work while also illustrating the persevering relevance of Vincent van Gogh and his art, and how he is still inspiring the next generation of artists.

Van Gogh Europe

2015 marks the 125th anniversary of Vincent van Gogh's death. The VGM is working with a wide range of Dutch and international partners to develop 'Van Gogh Europe': an extensive programme of events throughout Europe exploring how Van Gogh has been a source of inspiration during the last 125 years. For example, a Van Gogh exhibition is planned in Mons – the European Capital of Culture in 2015.



Vincent van Gogh
The Yellow House (detail), 1888
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

9 The Strategic Pillars

The Strategic Pillars offer direction and focus to the VGM's targets for the coming period. Activities envisioned by the sectors are required to comply with the Pillars. The Strategic Pillars have been drawn up based on the museum's mission, vision and core values, taking stakeholders and external influences into consideration. The three Pillars are: accessibility, reach and income.

9.1 Accessibility

This Strategic Pillar has been formulated as follows:

The VGM has ensured optimal access to the collection and its buildings.

The VGM has ensured optimal access to the collection and its buildings.

The VGM's main objective is to ensure that as many people as possible have access to the collection. This involves not only making the museum's buildings accessible to visitors and employees in a physical sense, but also ensuring that the collection and information relating to it are accessible – in all possible forms – to people all over the world who are interested in Van Gogh but not in the position to visit the museum in person.

9.1.1 Accessibility of the collection

Providing access to the collection is the

VGM's core business. In this area, the museum aspires to focus more closely on the desires and backgrounds of the various target groups and individual visitors. An important aspect of this is the redesigned presentation of the permanent collection in the Rietveld Building, which will be revealed in the autumn of 2014. The following principles form the foundation of the VGM's approach:

- The presentation illuminates as many aspects of Van Gogh's life and works as possible, with a particular focus on his working methods and the artistic context in which his work was created.
- The presentation will be distributed more evenly throughout the entire building, encouraging visitors to explore all areas of the building.
- Works on paper, including letters, will be given a permanent place in the display.
- The presentation features an element of flexibility, in order to facilitate various displays and the loan of works.
- Create space for varying presentations.

The new, more modern design will create a simpler, more logical and obvious link between the permanent collection and exhibitions, helping the two to form a single aesthetic union.

The presentation will be further complemented by new digital resources. Alongside the standard means of exploring the collection, the VGM is keen to offer visitors a total experience: a more interactive, stimulating

visit to the museum. As such, the museum will develop further initiatives in the digital domain, focused on both the collection and museum visitors. Education is set to play a significant role. It is also important that access to the collection is improved for people around the world that will never visit the museum in person, such as via the internet (see 9.2.1).

Innovative forms of presentation away from the museum could also be considered, such as a Van Gogh Experience (see 9.3.2). Such an initiative would not impact the collection, helping to balance the demand for the collection with its limited availability and considerable vulnerability.

9.1.2 Accessibility of the building

New Entrance Hall

With approximately 1.5 million visitors a year, at certain times the museum reaches its maximum capacity. Pressure on museum facilities is especially notable during the school holidays, the holiday season and at certain peak hours, negatively impacting many visitors' experience. The current entrance on the Paulus Potterstraat is inadequate for effectively dealing with the large amounts of visitors to the museum.

Preparations are therefore underway for a new entrance on Museumplein, which is expected to open in summer 2015. The new Entrance Hall will dramatically improve physical access to the museum.

Office space

The combination of high overheads, the distance to the museum and the ratio of floor space to occupancy means that the current offices no longer satisfy the needs and requirements of the organisation. In the coming period, the VGM will be working together with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Government Buildings Agency to find suitable replacement office space.

9.2 Reach

This Strategic Pillar has been formulated as follows:

The VGM reaches as many visitors and non-visitors as possible, creating dialogue with the public alongside a high degree of public involvement.

The VGM reaches as many visitors and non-visitors as possible, creating dialogue with the public alongside a high degree of public involvement.

The VGM is dedicated to securing and improving access to the collection by providing information more specifically tailored to visitors and users. This effort includes developing (online) publications and educational programmes, both at the museum and elsewhere. In the coming years, the VGM will focus on achieving an innovative, attractive

positioning and establishing modern and efficient means of communicating with its public.

9.2.1 The digital domain

Dialogue with the public

The VGM strives to establish a stronger sense of community with its public. The large majority of (international) visitors only come to the museum once and the contact often remains too unilateral. In the coming period, the museum will make efforts to intensify this dialogue, consequently strengthening the connection with its audience and increasing the number of repeat visits. There will be a particular focus on Dutch visitors. The redesigned web strategy, the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and the Recreatex ticketing system will all play a significant role in improving dialogue with the public.

Emotional content

Van Gogh represents broad appeal to a wide range of people, of all ages. The VGM is keen to make better use of this so-called emotional content on a suitable platform, with innovative digital resources being pivotal to success in this area.

Web strategy

The VGM is developing a new web strategy as part of our continued drive to connect both virtual (online) and physical visitors with the museum.

This strategy is designed to help the museum reach a broader audience, improve customer relations and provide a firmer focus for commercial activities.

Designed in accordance with this web strategy, the new website will be launched in 2014 – providing the foundations for further improvements. The museum aspires to double the current amount of digital visitors by 2017 at the latest. The web strategy, and the attractive online content resulting from it, is also expected to lead to a higher percentage of repeat visitors (non-unique visitors).

Social media

The steadily increasing importance of social media provides the VGM with favourable opportunities to position the museum more emphatically as a knowledge centre and to optimise sharing and exchange of knowledge with the public. The VGM began using social media in 2007 and currently actively maintains pages on Google+, Facebook and Twitter. In 2013, the museum had more than 3 million fans on Google+, making it one of the leading players worldwide. It also had the most Facebook fans in the Dutch sector, and the most followers on Twitter. The ultimate objective is to further strengthen this position and to make optimal advantage of it to also strengthen the bond with this global fan base.

It is vital that the museum is flexible, constantly monitors the situation and is able to adjust accordingly at very short notice. Decisions made by Facebook, for example, are essential

factors affecting consumer acceptance and behaviour and consequently, for the museum's presence on the medium. An apt example of this can be seen in the sweeping changes Hyves has undergone in recent years. Mobile applications are a trend that the museum needs to capitalise on through the introduction of e-books, apps and mobile websites.

9.3 Income

This Strategic Pillar has been formulated as follows:

The VGM secures additional income, partly through developing new business models and the continued professionalisation of fundraising activities.

The VGM secures additional income, partly through developing new business models and the continued professionalisation of fundraising activities.

The VGM generates 50% of its income from ticket sales and approximately 25% of its annual budget comes from governmental subsidy. Combined with decreasing government funding, this strong dependency on ticket sales puts the museum in a vulnerable financial position.

The VGM therefore plans to develop new business models to strengthen its financial position and as such, extend its role as an

enterprising organisation. There will be a strong focus on the continued professionalisation and intensification of fundraising activities.

9.3.1 Fundraising

Fundraising is essential in order to facilitate additional museum activities such as securing major loans for exhibitions and organising educational and research projects. It also helps the museum to become less dependent on income from ticket sales, merchandise and subsidy.

Fundraising can also be used as part of collaborative brand activation efforts with partners to reach new audiences and improve the visibility of the museum.

The VGM approaches private individuals, companies, funds and other organisations who may be interested in providing support as a museum partner. The museum focuses heavily on developing and maintaining sound relations with these parties: after all, fundraising and 'friend raising' go hand in hand.

In the coming period, the VGM is keen to increase the number of long-term partners that support the museum by offering a substantial annual contribution. The VGM also aspires to increase the number of private supporters of the museum united in The Yellow House. In addition, the VGM recently launched a circle of friends called The Sunflower Collective, which features lower entrance requirements than The Yellow House or the

10 Conclusion

Global Circle. Alongside the direct (potential) income raised through such a circle of friends, it also represents a fertile source for future fundraising, acquisitions and larger donations. These friends also fulfil an important role as museum ambassadors.

Alongside companies and private supporters, (capital) funds also provide significant contributions to museum projects. However, the economic crisis has impacted the financial capacity of several funds, resulting in less money being available. The VGM is keen to maintain relations with (capital) funds already working with the museum and to attract new funds, both in the Netherlands and abroad.

9.3.2 Commercial income

The museum will extend its role as an enterprising organisation. Opportunities have been identified in developing and commercially marketing new services and products.

New products

Building on the successful sales of the current extensive range of merchandise products, the VGM is setting its sights on developing new products in the coming period.

The VGM already made significant progress in this field in the summer of 2013, when it became the first museum to produce high-quality 3D reproductions of Van Gogh's masterpieces. Introduced to acclaim in the Netherlands, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Los Angeles, these so-called Relievos are of such

a high quality that they resemble the original work very closely.

A limited edition of the Relievos was produced: each copy is numbered and verified by a museum curator. In the coming policy period, the Relievos will be further introduced to the Dutch and international markets.

PP10

The VGM collaborates with the Rijksmuseum in PP10 Ltd, the company responsible for security at both museums. The Stedelijk Museum has also recently decided to employ the services of this company. Potential opportunities to add to the services offered by PP10 will be explored in the coming years.

Van Gogh Experience

The VGM has recognised an evident demand in the market for 'experiences': products or programmes that offer their visitors a meaningful experience. The VGM aspires to develop a Van Gogh Experience, immersing the visitor in the world of Vincent van Gogh.

Van Gogh Museum Consultancy

The expertise and skills of VGM employees is highly acclaimed and often called upon by various external parties. This resulted in the notion of commercially marketing this consultancy. A small-scale pilot is currently underway and in the coming period, the VGM will decide whether to pursue the Van Gogh Museum Consultancy commercially.

The Primary Objectives and Strategic Pillars formulated in this Strategic Plan provide a framework for VGM policy in the coming years. Throughout 2014 and in the following years, this plan will be used as the foundation for the development of more detailed policy and activity plans at departmental level. In the coming period, the museum will primarily focus on securing additional income (through fundraising and the development of commercial activities), further optimising accessibility to the collection and its buildings, and developing the digital domain.

The available financial resources and capacity of the organisation will naturally be taken into consideration as these plans are elaborated upon and put into practice. Sound planning and clear agreements between the involved parties are vital for the success of the approach outlined in this Strategic Plan.

Colophon

The Van Gogh Museum Strategic Plan 2014-2017 was drawn up by the Directors in close collaboration with the Management Team.

We would like to express our gratitude to the museum employees who participated in the consultation sessions, providing valuable, inspirational contributions.

Text

Van Gogh Museum Directors

Editing and coordination

Eva Schieveld, Rosella de Koff

Copy-editing

Aggie Langedijk

Translation

David Nice

Design and printing

Bourne Design, Amsterdam
Drukkerij Tesink, Zutphen

Illustrations

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Address

Van Gogh Museum
Postbus 75366
1070 AJ Amsterdam
Museum: Paulus Potterstraat 7
Office: Stadhouderskade 55
T +31 (0)20 570 52 00
F +31 (0)20 570 52 22
info@vangoghmuseum.nl
www.vangoghmuseum.com

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**And then our future
will be better than
our past.**

Vincent van Gogh writing to his brother Theo,
Etten, 12 November 1881

Vincent van Gogh
The Harvest (detail), 1888, Arles
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam
Paulus Potterstraat 7
1071 CX Amsterdam
T +31 (0)20 570 52 00

info@vangoghmuseum.nl
www.vangoghmuseum.nl