

Van
Gogh
Museum

Amsterdam

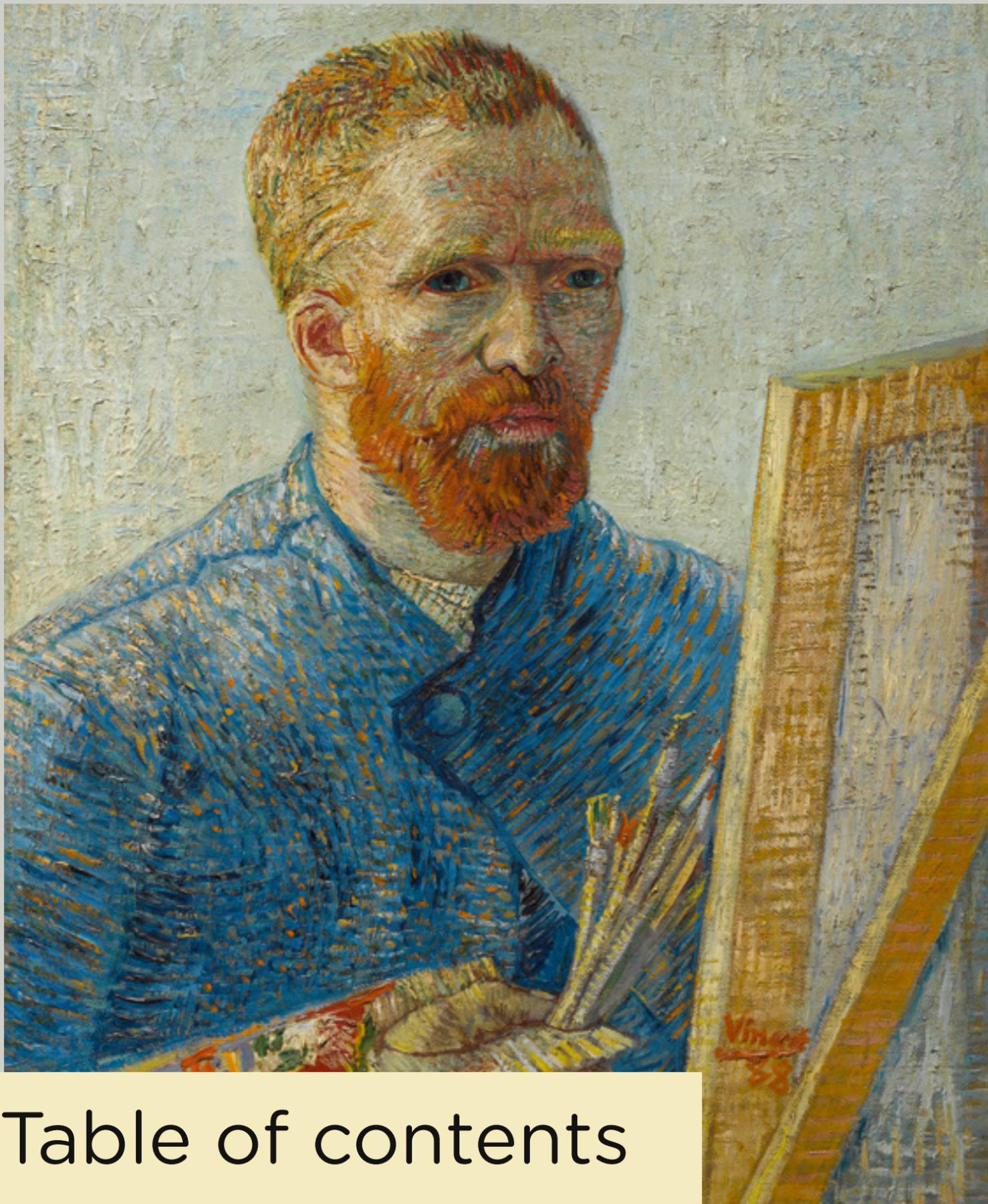


Strategic Plan

2021 – 2024



Vincent van Gogh, *Landscape with Houses (detail)*, 1890. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



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

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01

Vincent van Gogh, *Grapes (detail)*, 1887. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Foreword

Foreword

Emilie Gordenker, Director

The Van Gogh Museum (VGM) is internationally known as one of the most prominent art museums in the world. Its reputation is due to its unique collection as well as the in-house expertise about Vincent van Gogh and the art of his time. The museum has developed substantially in recent years - through ground-breaking exhibitions, significant acquisitions, research of the highest international standard, innovative educational programming, a solid commercial branch and a Development Department that can be benchmarked alongside the most successful cultural institutions in the US and UK. The past few years have been characterised by unprecedented attendance. As a result, the museum was regularly 'sold out'. The majority of the visitors (85%) came from abroad. The previous Strategic Plan (2018-2020) focused on the following topics: finding a good balance between the preservation and management of the art and the collection and the other activities undertaken by the museum, how to make a visit to the museum a pleasurable and unique experience, even in the face of crowds and a huge demand, and how to satisfy the enormous (worldwide) attention for Van Gogh and his time.

Recent developments relating to the coronavirus crisis

The global crisis resulting from Covid-19 and its national and international ramifications have serious consequences for the museum world and for the VGM. The VGM had to close to the public temporarily on 13 March 2020. The museum could not reopen until 1 June, but due to social distancing measures related to Covid-19, attendance dropped to a maximum of 10% of the usual number of visitors. At time of writing this Strategic Plan, it is unclear for how long these social distancing measures will continue and what the exact consequences will be for the VGM. We can assume that attendance will not reach the 2019 level for a considerable time. Although work started on this plan well before the coronavirus outbreak, it should ultimately not be seen in isolation from the new challenges that the museum faces in the coming years.

The coming years

Extensive internal discussions have led to the conclusion that the VGM must re-focus. The mission has been tweaked, not necessarily indicative of a major change of direction, but so that it better suits who we are now: an inclusive museum that wants to inspire people with the life of Vincent van Gogh, his work and his time. The new core values provide a compass that will guide our activities. The vision is our long-term view: a museum that is at the forefront of all activities undertaken.

In the coming years, the museum will increase its focus on the Netherlands: the Dutch public, local communities - such as Amsterdam residents with a bicultural background - and young people. We want to be an open organisation that radiates warmth and is outward-looking. We want to enter into dialogue with our stakeholders, to be surprised by them and come up with new ideas and insights jointly. We want to make clear choices in collaboration with these stakeholders. We will formulate target groups, which will help the VGM to determine which activities it will undertake and for whom. While we will focus on our Dutch audience, also digitally, we will not lose sight of

our international visitors and partners. The VGM wants to remain a renowned international research institution and to continue to collaborate with the international top of the museum world. The VGM must be ready for the future. We want to be a sustainable, caring and inclusive organisation: for each other, but also for the collection, the building, our visitors and our stakeholders. Finally, we will prepare for a milestone in the history of the VGM: its fiftieth anniversary. We will treat everyone in the Netherlands to a splendid party with special activities, on an international scale and in line with our mission, vision and core values.

This Strategic Plan sets the course for the years 2021-2024, in accordance with the period during which we will be evaluated on our performance by the Ministry for Education, Culture and Science (OCW). The museum's directors, the MT and staff developed this plan independently in order to set out our goals the years ahead, but in the knowledge that it will underpin the activity plan that the VGM will submit to OCW by 1 December 2020. This Strategic Plan is intended to be an overarching guideline for all departments as they develop their activities, providing direction to the entire organisation for the coming four years.

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Vincent van Gogh, *Small Bottle with Peonies and Blue Delphiniums* (detail), 1886. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Museum profile

Museum profile

Up until his death in 1891, control of the collection was in the hands of Vincent's brother, Theo van Gogh. His widow, Jo van Gogh-Bonger, subsequently took over management of the collection. Following her death in 1925, her son, Vincent Willem van Gogh ('the Engineer'), assumed responsibility for his uncle's works. In 1962, he reached an agreement with the Kingdom of the Netherlands to transfer control of the entire collection (the paintings, drawings and letters) to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation. In return, the State arranged for the Van Gogh Museum to be built, helping to ensure that the collection always remains accessible to everyone. The Van Gogh Museum opened its doors in 1973. The VGM also manages a sub-collection, owned by the State, on behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The VGM houses the largest collection of Van Gogh works in the world, with 205 paintings, 500 drawings, nearly all of his letters (in excess of 800) and archive material relating to Van Gogh. The collection also features paintings, drawings and several statues from between 1840 and 1920 by Van Gogh's friends and contemporaries, by artists who inspired him and by those whom he inspired. In addition, the museum is home to a unique, internationally-acclaimed collection of exquisite fin-de-siècle printed art and a collection of Japanese ukiyo-e woodcuts.

The Mesdag Collection (hereinafter: DMC) in The Hague is home to the extraordinary collection of 19th-century art assembled by renowned seascape painter Hendrik Willem Mesdag and his wife Sientje Mesdag-van Houten. Featuring innumerable masterworks from the 19th-century French Barbizon School and Hague School, the DMC collection is an integral part of the VGM. The collections of both museums complement one another and offer an impressive overview of late nineteenth-century art.

Vincent van Gogh

An aspect that few other museums benefit from at such a level is that Vincent van Gogh's work and life story exude a special emotional dimension that never fails to touch and inspire a wide audience. In addition to the collection, Van Gogh himself also plays a crucial role in the museum's activities and its image. The museum tells the story of Vincent van Gogh in his context, including his time, placing his constant inspiration in perspective.

The Mesdag Collection

The Mesdag Collection in The Hague is an integral part of the VGM, and represents a significant complement to the VGM collection. In 2018 and 2019, the DMC received 13,848 and 13,339 visitors respectively. In 2018 and 2019, two exhibitions were organised at the museum each year, as well as one publication.

Presentation of the permanent collection

The guiding principle of the permanent collection is to illuminate as many aspects of the life and work of Vincent van Gogh and his time, with a particular focus on his working methods and the artistic context in which his work was created. Approximately 30% of the VGM's entire collection of paintings is exhibited in the galleries. Works on paper are not often put on display due to their sensitivity to light.

Expertise

Drawing on its unique collection, the VGM has developed into the leading centre of expertise on Vincent van Gogh. Research is an integral part of museum policy. A range of ambitious research projects have been fundamental to a wealth of past exhibitions, publications and educational programmes, as will also be the case moving forward.

Exhibitions

Organising exhibitions both at the museum and at locations is an important part of the VGM's activities. Several impressive shows are planned for the coming years. Despite reduced financial means, the VGM will continue its ambitious, internationally-renowned programme, and will continue to organise at least three exhibitions every year. In addition to loans, works from the museum's own collection will be used in exhibitions, as well as works that are currently not on display in the permanent collection.

Visitors

Recent years were characterised by high attendance. In 2018 and 2019, the VGM received 2,161,160 and 2,134,778 visitors respectively. In the last two years, the VGM attracted visitors from more than 110 different countries. The largest group of visitors (16%) was Dutch. With 330,000 Dutch visitors in 2019, the Van Gogh Museum received the third highest number of Dutch visitors, after the Rijksmuseum and the Stedelijk Museum.

Social media

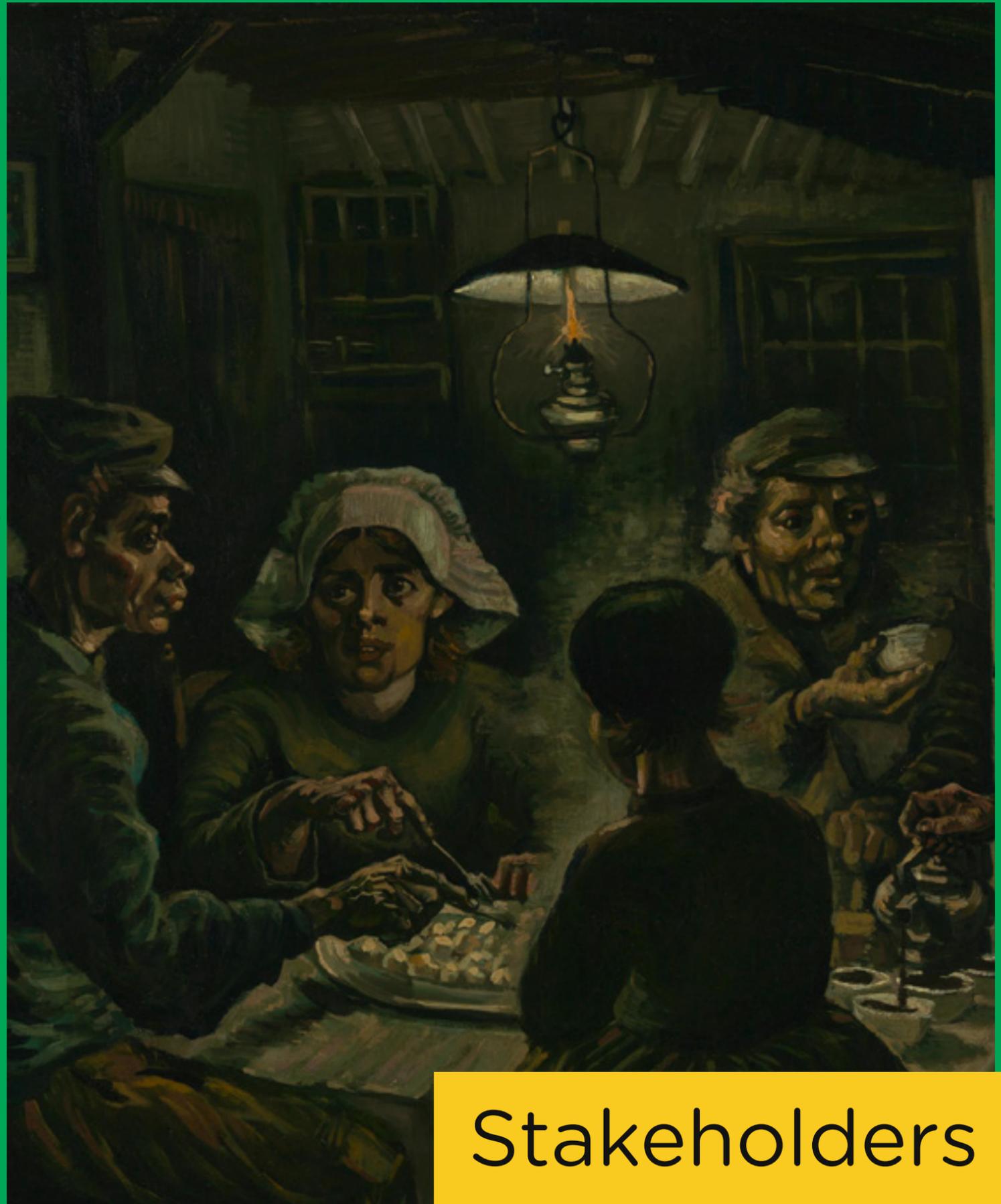
The Van Gogh Museum has millions of followers on social media, making it one of the most successful museums in the world in this regard. There are daily interactions with this loyal fanbase, in order to achieve maximum engagement. Social media is in essence *social*, it concerns interaction between people. And in an environment such as this, the international star Vincent van Gogh truly shines. At the time of writing this Strategic Plan (8 July 2020), the VGM had a total of 8,682,387 followers on social media (5,278,040 followers on Facebook, 1,733,039 follower on Instagram, 1,646,108 followers on Twitter and 25,200 subscribers on YouTube).

Income

The VGM is remarkable for the way it generates income. In 2019, the large numbers of visitors provided 50% of the annual budget through entrance fees, making ticket sales the most important source of income for the museum. Commercial activities, merchandise, donations, benefactions and sponsorship contribute approximately 35% of the income and in broad terms, the remaining 15% comes from governmental subsidy. These percentages are based on the consolidated accounts. In 2020, income will drop due to the temporary closure of the museum and the fact that the museum will be able to receive fewer visitors once it reopens. In 2021 and 2022, income is also not expected to return to the level of previous years.

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Vincent van Gogh, *The Potato Eaters* (detail), 1885. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Stakeholders

Stakeholders

In the coming years, the Van Gogh Museum is keen to enter into dialogue with its stakeholders to develop new activities and plans. The following parties have been identified as the most important VGM stakeholders:

- visitors to the VGM, Dutch, international and digital
- those interested in (the art of) Vincent van Gogh and his contemporaries
- the Vincent van Gogh Foundation
- museum staff
- the Dutch population
- the population of Amsterdam
- the Dutch government, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Dutch political sphere
- the Province of Noord-Holland
- the City of Amsterdam and the City District of Zuid
- the Central Government Real Estate Agency
- welfare organisations
- the education sector
- the cultural sector, museums in the Netherlands and abroad, art institutions, industry organisations, heritage institutions
- the other museums on Museumplein
- supporters
- Van Gogh Museum Fund Foundation (in formation)
- commercial partners
- collectors and the art trade
- the media
- the leisure sector
- suppliers



04

Vincent van Gogh, *Fishing Boats on the Beach at Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer (detail)*, 1888. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Mission

Mission

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

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

The previous mission, used by the museum for years, has been tweaked. The current mission is more concise, better reflects who we want to be, and is more appropriate for our time and our plans for the future. The VGM wants to emphasise that it aims to be an inclusive museum and be accessible to the broadest possible (inter)national audience. Growth in and of itself has been de-emphasised, but is encouraged as a strategic choice. There are no changes to the museum's core task: preserving, managing and expanding the collection of the VGM and DMC, as well as increasing expertise on and providing information about the collections.



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



Core values

Core values

The core values function as an ethical compass for the museum and all of our staff. They indicate who we want to be as a museum, what we want to radiate and what is necessary to achieve this. Together, the core values are the yardstick by which we will measure all our activities – existing and new. The core values keep each other in balance and strengthen each other where necessary.

The VGM has determined the following core values:

1. Authentic

Our origins and expertise on the life and work of Vincent van Gogh give us the roots to be flexible. We can also use the expertise we have gained through decades of studying the collection to tell the intriguing story behind the art and artist in an honest way, in all its colours and shades of grey. We cherish the beautiful, the real, the essential. We strive to do everything with attention and care, and with an eye for detail. This means a great deal of quality. Quality that feels natural.

2. In connection

In connection with Vincent van Gogh and his time
We strive to deepen the admiration many have for Vincent van Gogh's work so that there is emotional involvement. To this end, we connect the work with the story of the artist's life. We also consider Vincent van Gogh in his time by involving his contemporaries and showing that Vincent was far ahead of his time. We are also at the forefront. Times change and so we continually tell Vincent's timeless story in innovative ways to keep it current.

In connection with each other
We look out for one another. We are open to others, to kindred spirits and to people with completely different and unexpected points of view, to enrich, inspire and perhaps offer comfort to one another. By building on each other, you achieve more.

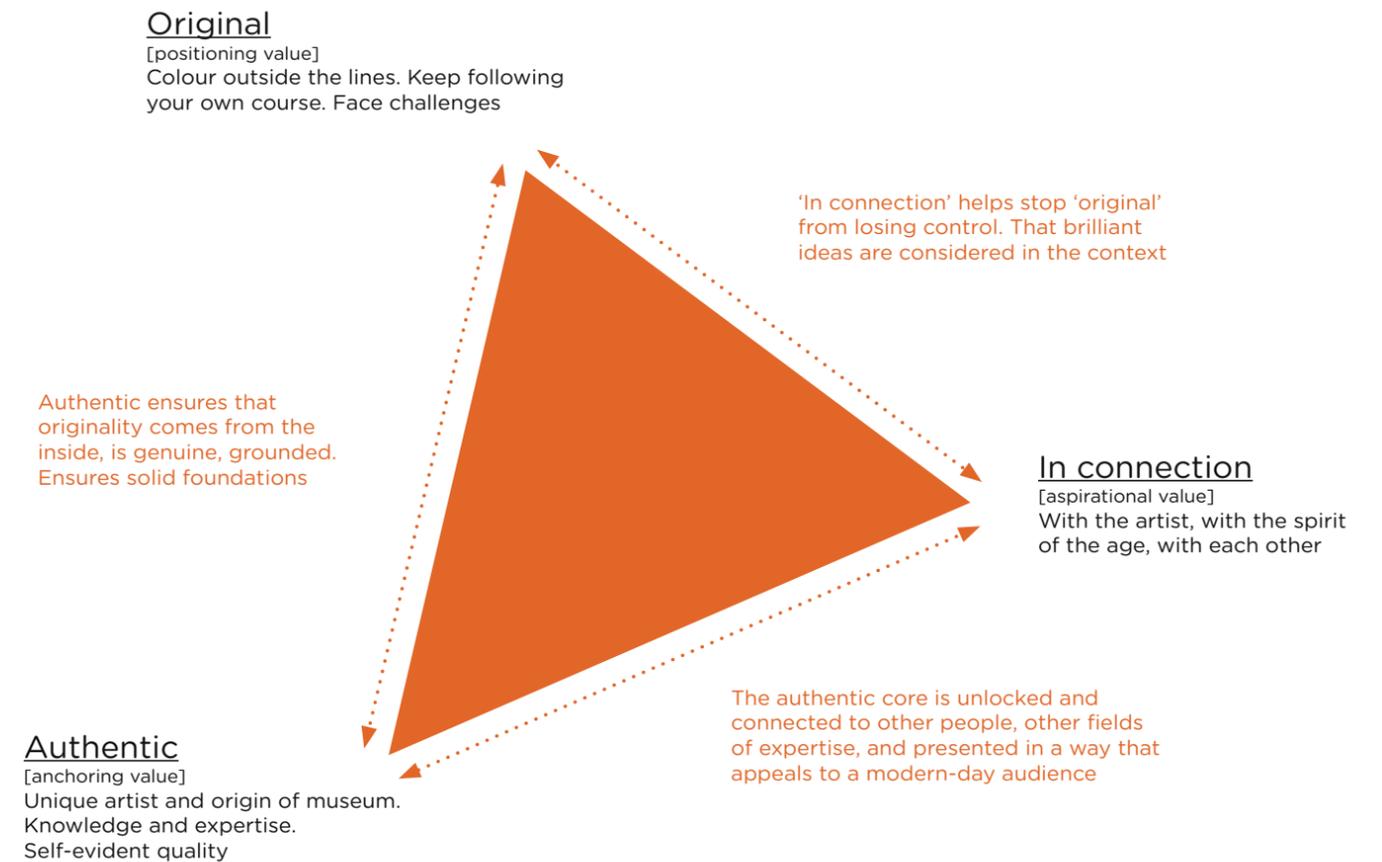
3. Original

We encourage people to colour outside the lines and reinvent themselves every day, precisely by staying themselves. We want to be exemplary in this.

Be your colourful self. Be headstrong. Look openly at the world and embrace the differences. Do not accept how things go or 'should'.

Take on new challenges and innovate. To do what you believe in or to educate yourself. It takes courage to do that. And perseverance. If things go wrong, continue. Continue if others have doubts, but you are convinced.

The three core values keep each other in balance:



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Vincent van Gogh, *Weaver (detail)*, 1884. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vision

Vision

The vision describes the VGM's ambition. It is based on the museum's mission and core values and takes into account external factors and our stakeholders. Our vision indicates where we want to go, who and what we want to be and how we want to be seen by our stakeholders. The vision is the dot on the horizon; where the VGM wants to be in the future.

The VGM has the following vision:

The Van Gogh Museum is at the forefront, is current and relevant.

We choose our own path, push boundaries and want to be an original example for – and especially with – others.

The VGM aims to take a leading position in its core competencies: research, exhibitions, educational programmes, publications, social media, access to the collection, development, but also in the areas of sustainability, how it functions as an employer, safety, management of visitors through our buildings, commercial activities and much more.

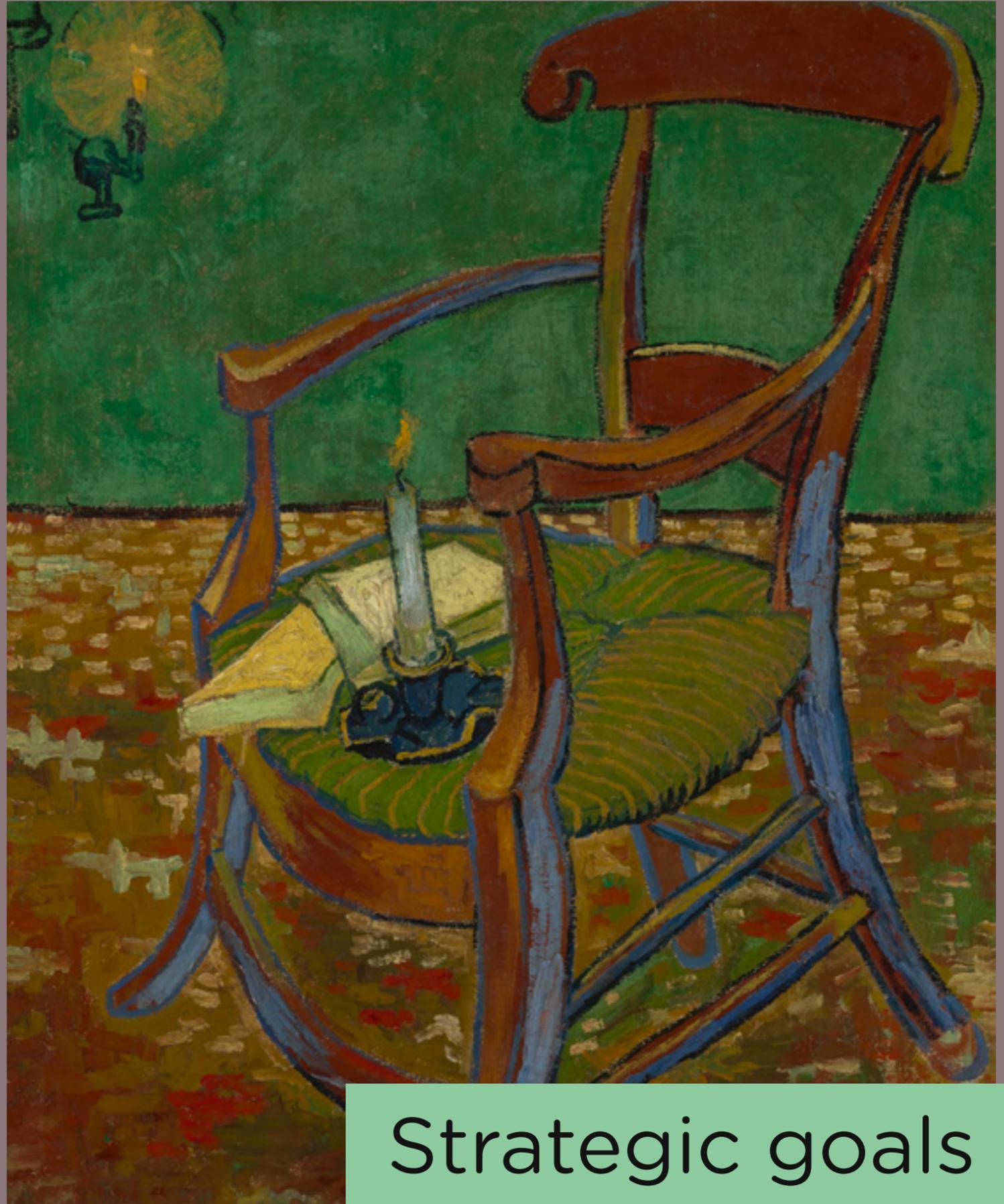
The VGM wants to develop its leading position further in the coming years. The VGM wants to set an example for the museum sector at home and abroad, without losing sight of its core values and mission.

Vincent van Gogh, *Farmhouse in a Wheatfield (detail)*, 1888. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



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Vincent van Gogh, *Gauguin's Chair* (detail), 1888. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Strategic goals

Strategic goals

Based on the newly formulated mission, vision and core values, we formulated strategic goals for the coming period. These strategic goals will provide clear direction for the choices that the VGM will make in the coming years and will form the basis for the activities of its various departments. This Strategic Plan runs parallel to the subsidy application 2021-2024 and the activity plan that will be submitted for it. Although this Strategic Plan is related to this, the new strategy and the formulated strategic goals have been written independently. Recent developments with regard to Covid-19, but also the upcoming anniversary that will take place in 2023, have been taken into account in the formulation of the strategic goals.

We have formulated 3 strategic goals (alongside our 3 core values). When defining the strategy, a distinction is made in three dimensions:

- Local (everything in the Netherlands, inside and outside of the museum)
- Global (everything outside of the Netherlands)
- Digital (everything through the digital channels)

The strategic goals are also at the heart of our own organisation.

1. The VGM is open and outward facing

The VGM wants to reorient and refocus, and wants to do this together with its stakeholders. We want to move away from 'broadcasting' to being a welcoming museum that encourages an exchange of knowledge and ideas. We want to enter into a dialogue with our stakeholders to create openness, and together come up with the right choices for our activities in the future. To this end, we want to identify new target groups specifically, and then work together with them in order to develop programming and products.

Own organisation

Inclusivity is embraced and encouraged throughout the organisation. There is equal treatment throughout the organisation and appropriate focus on diversity. We treat each other with respect and work together in an open and constructive fashion. Supporting each other, learning from each other and collaborating. We want to create an organisation that embodies this, that actively supports and achieves.

Local

The VGM wants to be a museum for everyone in the Netherlands, and play a central role in Dutch society. This is a conscious and independent choice, the importance of which is emphasised by the coronavirus crisis and the drop in numbers of international visitors, on which the VGM depends. Without losing sight of our international visitors, we want to sharpen our focus on Dutch visitors in the coming years. We want to use the resources at our disposal more effectively to encourage more Dutch visitors to come to the museum. We want to radiate that we are a warm and accessible museum. Our strategic focus is on achieving a diverse range of visitors and reaching new target groups.

In the coming period, target groups will be specified in more detail and a target group strategy will be formulated. The VGM wants to enter into lasting relationships with its stakeholders that are personal and effective. We want to determine our future activities in an open dialogue and in collaboration with all of our stakeholders: from researcher to commercial partner, and from outreach adviser to donor. The VGM is keen to continue investing in collaborations with local communities. We want to be relevant to, and part of, our diverse society. Engaging with the youngest Dutch generation is another priority. We want to invest in our youth: the visitors of the future, who we want to connect to us throughout their lives.

Global

The VGM is an international museum with an international reputation. This is reflected not only in our visitors, but also the great international interest in Vincent van Gogh and the VGM. The VGM is the leading centre of expertise on the works and life of Vincent van Gogh. We are keen to maintain and strengthen this international reputation. This means a continued focus on research, publications, organising internationally-renowned exhibitions, educational programmes, etc. We also want to collaborate with partners by creating new combinations of content, marketing and commerce. Content will always be central to the development of commercial activities.

Digital

Virtual visitors are just as important as physical visitors. The VGM is at the forefront when it comes to reach (engagement) via social media. But we also need to make the right choices in social media. We will focus on using the best channels to reach the chosen target groups at home and abroad, which we will specify in more detail in our target group strategy. We want to understand our target groups better. Social media is ideally suited to this, and also an excellent means of reaching the new target groups.

2. The VGM is a sustainable organisation

The VGM wants to be a caring and future-proof organisation: for the collection, for our buildings, for each other, for our visitors and for our stakeholders. This is also clearly reflected in our core values. We want to reach new audiences, including in the digital sphere, which is essential for the future. We seek new revenue models and sources of income, in order to become less dependent on ticket sales. To this end, entering into lasting relationships in the form of sponsorships and other commercial relationships is of great importance. The VGM wants to be a financially healthy, innovative and environmentally conscious organisation, and endeavours to be one of the most sustainable museums in the Netherlands and in the world.

Own organisation

The VGM wants to be streamlined and in harmony. The roles and responsibilities of all members of staff are clearly defined and have the support of the entire organisation. In the coming period, the organisation needs to be prepared for the 'VUCA' (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) world: a rapidly changing world with much uncertainty and ambiguity. As an employer, the VGM will have to anticipate this by creating an organisation with staff who are flexible and able to adjust quickly to a constantly changing society. The coronavirus crisis has emphasised the importance of financial stability. In order to remain a financially stable organisation, measures will need to be introduced and decisions made: this includes cost awareness and the effective use of our workforce and resources. Sustainability also means that we are innovative and environmentally aware. We will introduce *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs), using them as stepping stones towards achieving all of our sustainable ambitions. Clean energy, employership, inclusivity, CO2 reduction and collaborations with external partners are concrete concepts that can guide us.

Local

The VGM's primary task is preserving and managing the collections of the VGM and DMC. Properly performing this task and a commitment to the VGM's academic role remain the most important objectives for the years ahead. The VGM will continue investment in (scientific) research, restorations and the collection survey. Repeat visits are the most sustainable type of visit, and we are keen to encourage this by retaining our Dutch visitors after the coronavirus crisis. The VGM wants to maintain and further develop strong relationships with individuals, sponsors and the government. The establishment of the VGM Fund, which will operate as a support foundation for the VGM, will play a major role in this regard. The VGM wants to enter into lasting relationships with its sponsors, who will have the opportunity to sponsor the VGM for specific purposes. The growing number of visitors in recent years has made it clear that there are limits to how many visitors the building can accommodate, and that the flow of visitors through the building is not always optimal. Now is the time for us to prepare for the future, also with regard to our building. In the coming years, an accommodation plan for 2030 and beyond will be developed.

Global

The VGM is a prominent international museum and is keen to remain in this position through entering into lasting and global relationships with partner museums, cultural and scientific institutes, governments and educational partners. The Development Department will strengthen existing international relations and develop lasting relationships with private and commercial sponsors. To complement existing commercial sources of income, the VGM will also seek new sources of income by strengthening strategic collaborations with commercial (international) partners and starting new partnerships.

Digital

The digital realm is developing at lightning speed. Our fans all around the world demand good digital access to the VGM and that information about the collection is quick and easy to find. Making the IT domain future proof is a strategic focus in the coming years. We also want to offer the best possible service to our (digital) visitors and develop high-quality customer care for the website, social media and in general.

3. The VGM celebrates its 50th birthday in 2023

The VGM turns 50 in 2023. Time for a big celebration: local, global and digital. The VGM is celebrating its birthday, and a birthday includes a party, but in the Netherlands it is also time to treat others. The VGM wants to give something back to the Netherlands and to its people. The central theme of the anniversary year is therefore 'Van Gogh treats'. This will also help to consolidate the effort to appeal to our Dutch public for the longer term.

Own organisation

The entire organisation will be involved with the preparations for the activities in 2023, and look forward to the anniversary year with enthusiasm. This is therefore the ideal opportunity to thank and focus the limelight on all members of staff, our stakeholders and our partner institutions.

Local

The VGM wants to celebrate its 50th birthday in style. In 2023, the VGM will treat the Netherlands and its people to a year of celebrations. This means that special activities will be organised that everyone in the Netherlands and Amsterdam can enjoy and get involved with. Preparations have already started for prominent and pioneering exhibitions. All of the activities are in line with our core values, our mission and our vision.

Global

With inspirational and prominent celebratory activities, we want to draw the attention of the entire world. This is in line with our international pioneering role. The exhibitions planned for 2023 have international allure. We will also celebrate together with our local partners in the various countries and explore potential partnerships. We will involve other museums and cultural institutions with our activities, and we will enter into international sponsorships and commercial collaborations.

Digital

The anniversary offers an excellent opportunity to reach our (international) audience digitally. We want to tell our story on the (inter)national stage and share the story of Vincent van Gogh and his works. We can do this on by digital means, and reach our various target groups, wherever they may be.



Vincent van Gogh, *Boulevard de Clichy* (detail), 1887. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

08

Vincent van Gogh, *Congregation Leaving the Reformed Church in Nuenen (detail)*, 1884 - 1885. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Accountability
and procedure

Accountability and procedure

Social accountability

The VGM achieves its social objectives by creating, transferring and preserving cultural value.

The museum endorses and applies the guidelines of various cultural codes, such as the Ethical Code, Fair Practice Code, Cultural Diversity Code and the Cultural Governance Code. The Ethical Code is published by the International Council of Museums; it focuses on how the museum serves society and the professionalism of museum staff. The VGM strives to be a good employer and client in a context of sustainable, fair and transparent entrepreneurship, in line with the Fair Practice Code. In the past year, the VGM actively began working with the Cultural Diversity Code, as is clearly reflected in our new mission, core values and the strategic goals. In the coming period, we aspire – based on the steps already taken – to formulate concrete and sustainable objectives in e.g. the activity plan with regard to the so-called four Ps, as outlined in the Cultural Diversity Code: Personal, Public, Programme and Partners. The VGM observes the provisions of the new Cultural Governance Code 2019. Early in 2020, the directors and the Supervisory Board conducted a comprehensive examination of the current situation, which resulted in minor adjustments to the regulations in 2020.

Procedure

This Strategic Plan was drafted by the directors of the VGM and developed in close collaboration with the Supervisory Board, the Management Team, the Works Council and VGM members of staff. A number of constructive working sessions were held at various stages during development of this Strategic Plan and input was requested and supplied. This input had a significant impact on the substance of the Plan.

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

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

Colophon

This Strategic Plan was drafted by the Directors in close collaboration with the Supervisory Board, the Management Team and the Works Council.

We would like to express our gratitude to the Van Gogh Museum employees providing valuable, inspirational contributions.

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Van Gogh Museum Directors

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Vincent van Gogh,
The White Orchard (detail), 1888.
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Vincent van Gogh, *Garden of the Asylum* (detail), 1889. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



