

Foreword by the Directors

2013. A spectacular and action-packed anniversary year

2013 was a spectacular and action-packed year for the Van Gogh Museum. The collection was temporarily displayed at another location, the Hermitage Amsterdam. After extensive renovations lasting seven months, on 1 May we reopened our doors to our public at our familiar location on Museumplein. The Van Gogh Museum marked this important moment with the grand anniversary exhibition *Van Gogh at work*. This exhibition, held in the year of the artist's 160th birthday, also crowned eight years of research into Van Gogh's studio practice. Equally spectacular was the disclosure a few months later of the discovery of a new painting by Van Gogh, *Sunset at Montmajour*.

Our temporary accommodation in the Hermitage Amsterdam was extremely successful. The presentation *Vincent. The Van Gogh Museum in the Hermitage Amsterdam*, displaying 75 works by Van Gogh, drew 665.000 visitors in seven months. Among these were remarkably high numbers of Dutch visitors, more than two and a half times as many as in a similar period at the Van Gogh Museum's own premises. Further confirmation that Vincent van Gogh is still extremely popular with Dutch people too.

We would like once again to express our great thanks to the director and staff of the Hermitage Amsterdam for their hospitality and enthusiastic collaboration. Sincere thanks are also owed to our network of supporters. The move to the Hermitage Amsterdam would not have been possible without the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, the City of Amsterdam and Amsterdam Marketing who supported us in the realisation and promotion of this unique project.

The anniversary exhibition *Van Gogh at work*, with which the Van Gogh Museum reopened on 1 May, showed how the artist learned his craft, from his first experimental drawings to his famous later work. The exhibition presented some 200 pieces, comprising 150 paintings, works on paper, letters and items used by the artist, such as original sketchbooks, tubes of paint and his only surviving palette, from the Musée d'Orsay. Top exhibits from the Van Gogh Museum's own collection combined with exceptional loans to illustrate how Van Gogh developed over ten years into a unique artist with an imposing body of work. The exhibition ran until 12 January 2014.

In association with this exhibition we organised the international symposium 'Van Gogh's Studio Practice in Context'. Twenty leading researchers from the Netherlands and other countries focused on a range of subjects relating to Van Gogh's studio practice and that of several of his contemporaries. The great interest shown in this multiple day symposium at home and

abroad underscored the role played by the Van Gogh Museum as the leading knowledge institute for Van Gogh's cultural heritage.

The symposium and exhibition formed the conclusion to long-running, innovative, multi-disciplinary research into the life and working methods of Vincent van Gogh. The Van Gogh Museum had conducted this project together with *Partner in Science* Shell Nederland and the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands. The results of this research were collected in the academic publication *Van Gogh's Studio Practice*. More than thirty researchers contributed to this pioneering publication, the first copy of which was presented during the symposium to Professor Hans Clevers, president of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW).

Research into Van Gogh and his art is of crucial importance to our museum. Not only in order to preserve the collection for this and future generations, but also to increase our knowledge of Van Gogh's life and work. On 9 September, after a year of intensive investigations, we were able to announce the discovery of a new work by Van Gogh, *Sunset at Montmajour*. The disclosure of the canvas became 'breaking news' worldwide.

A discovery of this calibre had never before occurred in the history of the Van Gogh Museum. It is extremely rare enough that a new painting can be added to Van Gogh's oeuvre. But what makes this discovery extra special is that this remarkably large painting may be regarded as a pivotal work in Van Gogh's oeuvre, from what many consider the high point in his career, his time in southern France.

We are also proud of our first series of Relievos. These three-dimensional reproductions of masterpieces by Van Gogh are of such high quality that they closely approach the look and feel of the original work. The technology employed was developed by the museum in collaboration with Fujifilm. The first series comprises reproductions of *Almond blossom*, *Sunflowers*, *The harvest*, *Wheatfield under clouds* and *Boulevard de Clichy*. The collection was launched in Hongkong on 15 July and later in the year in Taiwan and the Benelux, to great interest from the world press. The Relievos' successful introduction has created an important source of revenue and will contribute to the museum's strong financial basis.

The past year was otherwise dominated by activities to prepare for the construction of a new entrance building on Museumplein. The fulfilment of this long cherished wish was brought an important step closer on 13 February when we presented the concept design for this open and transparent structure. On 16 April 2014 work officially started on the building. The Van Gogh Museum itself is largely financing this construction

project. More than € 10 million of the required € 17 million is now available, thanks to the museum's own financial resources and funding from organisations such as the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the BankGiro Lottery, the City of Amsterdam, Stadsdeel Zuid, Yanmar, the Elise Mathilde Fonds and various foundations and private benefactors. We are maintaining the momentum of our fund-raising to secure the remaining € 7 million, using the concept design to illustrate our plans. We are delighted that the Van Gogh Museum and its new entrance building can count on the enthusiasm and support of so many donors and potential donors.

The Van Gogh Museum concluded another successful year with high visitor levels and a rapidly growing online fanbase. In 2013 more than 1.4 million fans of Van Gogh visited the museum's collection. Our temporary presentation in the Hermitage Amsterdam helped to keep visitor numbers the same as last year. The Van Gogh Museum's online network grew exponentially: the fanbase on Facebook rose from 75.000 to 200.000 and on Twitter from 50.000 to 75.000, while no less than 3 million Van Gogh fans were following the museum via Google+. This means the museum has a leading online position in the Netherlands and is even the number one museum worldwide on Google+.

In The Mesdag Collection in The Hague – the museum managed by the Van Gogh Museum – the exhibition *Imagining the Orient* was opened in June by the mayor of The Hague, Jozias van Aartsen. During the nineteenth century many western artists were driven by curiosity and a desire for exotic subjects to travel to mainly Islamic countries around the Mediterranean. Known as orientalists, they depicted the life and people there in paintings of busy streets and bewitching women. The exhibition brought together outstanding orientalist works, by painters such as the Netherlands' best-known exponent Marius Bauer and the renowned American artist John Singer Sargent. A combination of paintings, sculptures, works on paper and applied art presented the glories of the Orient.

On 14 December the exhibition *How do artists collect?* opened in The Mesdag Collection. This displayed the work of eight contemporary artists for whom collecting plays an important role in their work. The inspiration for this presentation was provided by Hendrik Willem Mesdag, who was both a painter and an avid collector of art. The exhibition was compiled by twelve budding curators from the course *De kunst van het tentoonstellen (The art of exhibition)* by the Van Gogh Museum.

In our online Annual Report 2013 you can read more about the

events mentioned above and all the other activities which we undertook in our anniversary year. A year which would have been very different in style and scope without the vital support of our partners, sponsors and other associates.

We are extremely grateful to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation and the BankGiro Lottery, our regular partners, for their continuing, generous support. Their partnership enables us to keep on developing new activities aimed at inspiring and enriching a wide public at home and abroad with the life and work of Vincent van Gogh and his contemporaries. We feel strengthened by this partnership, now and in the future.

The Vincent van Gogh Foundation supports, among other things, ongoing research into our print collection, thereby allowing us to open up this important collection to the public in a sustainable fashion. In 2013 the Bankgiro Lottery presented us with a significant sum once again and further pledged an additional € 4.5 million, spread over three years, for construction of the new entrance building.

Research into *Van Gogh's studio practice* was supported for years by our *Partner in Science* Shell Nederland, the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands and the Stichting De Gijsselaar-Hintzenfonds. The results of this research are of great value, both to our knowledge of the artist himself and our understanding of nineteenth-century artists' methods in general.

In December 2013 the Van Gogh Museum entered into partnership with Canon Europe. The museum is increasingly deploying innovative means to focus attention on its scientific and educational programmes. An innovative partner such as Canon Europe – market leader in the field digital imaging – will support us in the further development of these activities.

AkzoNobel has been partner to the conservation studio at the Van Gogh Museum since the museum reopened on 1 May. In its capacity as 'conservation studio partner' AkzoNobel intends to assist in the preservation of the cultural heritage of Vincent van Gogh and his contemporaries. Through the Sikkens brand AkzoNobel will also advise the Van Gogh Museum about innovative and sustainable paint products for the museum's interior and displays.

We also thank the members of the Van Gogh Museum Global Circle and the members of The Yellow House for their royal financial support and valuable advice. Such networks of friends and supporters are indispensable to the museum.

Finally, we thank the members of our Supervisory Board and the staff of the Van Gogh Museum and The Mesdag Collection. The support and confidence of our Supervisory Board meant a great deal to us during this enervating anniversary year. Our staff worked for the museum in 2013 with exceptional dedication, expertise and above all lots of energy. We wish to express our enormous thanks to the staff for this.

We hope you will enjoy reading our 2013 online Annual Report.

Axel Rüger
Director

Adriaan Dönszelmann
Managing Director