



A SALUTE TO JENNY

January 2023, Jenny Reynaerts, at home on the couch watching the Dutch television programme *Tussen Kunst & Kitsch*, sees a self-portrait in pastel by Thérèse Schwartz. She immediately considers this an opportunity: this work might very well be a valuable addition to the Rijksmuseum collection. As an early self-portrait by one of the Netherlands' most famous female painters – one full of character at that – it falls perfectly in the scope of the *Women of the Rijksmuseum* research project. Working closely with her colleagues, Jenny wastes no time in setting all the necessary wheels in motion to ensure the portrait's acquisition. She also immediately devises a plan to share the portrait with the public. Just a few months later, Schwartz's self-portrait debuts as the showpiece in the presentation *Women on Paper*.

The events surrounding this important acquisition are reflective of Jenny's decisive approach and resolute vision. These qualities have served her well, both in her 2003 appointment as curator of nineteenth-century painting and in her role as chair of *Women of the Rijksmuseum*, a function she has fulfilled with flair since 2021. This special theme issue of *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* marks not only the four-year anniversary of this research programme, it also salutes our esteemed colleague Jenny on the occasion of her impending farewell.

With calls for museums to display a greater interest in the role of women in art and history growing ever louder, it was Jenny who unreservedly took up the challenge. It was her profound belief and motivation that looking at the past with one eye shut was simply no longer an option. It was time to unveil women's contributions and bring about a more balanced and inclusive representation in the Rijksmuseum's collection and presentation. To achieve this aim, Jenny set up a strategically designed research programme, focussing on female makers, the lives of women represented in the collection and female contributors in institutional and other roles.

Jenny knew all too well that the only way to bring about real change was through collaboration and by understanding the value of each individual's expertise. In setting up the project, she therefore unified colleagues throughout the entire organization, from educator to curator, from diversity manager to database specialist, from press officer to fundraiser. In keeping with Jenny's vision, it is precisely thanks to this collaborative spirit and the collective effort of many that the project thrives today. From the very start, Hendrikje Crebolder, the then director of development and media, was closely involved in the project. In 2022, their combined effort, in consultation with various private individuals, led to the establishing of the Women of the Rijksmuseum Fund. This initiative greatly contributed to the project's overall effectiveness and enabled its ambitions to grow. Jenny continually sought new opportunities for sharing knowledge with universities and other museums. With this in mind, she organized the annual Women in the Museum Symposium. While training young professionals, she valued their perspectives on women and gender, fostering an ongoing exchange that continues as they advance in their careers.

Under Jenny's inspired leadership, research has been conducted on more than 400 objects, resulting in the revision of 150 object texts. More than twenty publications, twenty-five podcasts (and an upcoming *Women of the Rijksmuseum* podcast series), an audio tour, a revisited guided tour, and four international symposia have addressed women's topics – all in just four years' time. Furthermore, no less than twenty acquisitions have been made with the support of the Women of the Rijksmuseum Fund. Last year, the exhibition *Point of View* presented a gender-based perspective on the Rijksmuseum's own collection. Now more than ever, women are visible in the Rijksmuseum's galleries.

Before long, Jenny will be passing the baton. At moments like this, the question arises: When will our work be 'done'? Jenny's response is straightforward: only when the project is no longer needed, only when women are represented on a permanent, self-evident basis, can our mission be described as complete. Because of you, Jenny, the *Women of the Rijksmuseum* project is now firmly anchored in the organization. We will continue to build on your accomplishments and remain permanently committed to the project's aims. Undoubtedly, your profound support and presence will be greatly missed by all. We thank you for your unceasing flow of ideas, your ever-listening ear, your sincere interest, tireless effort and your always refreshing, creative perspective.

Women of the Rijksmuseum colleagues