



# Editorial

## A Word from the New General Director

**T**he Rijksmuseum operates with a collection and a building that are quintessentially Dutch; more than any other European museum it is a national identifier. A museum at the heart of society must at the same time ask and reflect on questions which are engaging that society now. These issues are usually far more complex than they appear at first sight. Are things regarded as typically Dutch, actually as Dutch as all that? When we talk about 'our identity', who do we mean by 'our'? What are a museum's functions in today's society and in the midst of the debate about identity? It is for this reason that in the years ahead the question as to what defines the Netherlands will be pivotal in the museum's research policy. Defining the Netherlands' position in an international context stems naturally from this.

Scholarly and scientific research in the museum sheds light on the creation, function and history of the object. Learning about conservation practices, materials and techniques is therefore a logical spearhead of our policy – responding at the same time, as it does, to the public's interest in how objects were made. The recent establishment of NICAS, the Netherlands Institute for Conservation, Art and Science, addresses this need.

As one of the few museums in the Netherlands that still have the resources for research and a wide range of specialists, we are increasingly called upon to share knowledge with other collections. Collaboration with other museums, universities and companies in the Netherlands and beyond is essential and gives access to often specialist knowledge that complements ours or that the museum lacks. Our new Research Services Department is playing its part in this exchange, particularly in terms of digital collection information and research data, the basis of innovative research in the arts (e-humanities).

The Rijksmuseum also seeks international collaboration through joint research for exhibitions (such as *Late Rembrandt* with the National Gallery in London in 2015), and through joint research projects. In the past year, for instance, Memorandums of Understanding have been signed – under the aegis of NICAS – with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the J. Paul Getty Trust in Los Angeles. The collaboration with the Metropolitan Museum focuses on research into sustainability and art. We are working with the Getty Trust on scientific aspects and the art historical study of works of art.

Since the museum reopened in 2013, we have been actively building a structure for developing the talents of object-focused scientific and scholarly researchers, curators and conservators. In a short space of time, a young, passionate set of researchers has been established; they bring to the museum a dynamic that fosters innovative research. The aim is to offer, within the foreseeable future, a differentiated curriculum that covers the spectrum from the talented secondary school pupil to the specialist professor. It already includes the Rijksmuseum Junior Fellowship for talented secondary school students, collaboration in a number of Master's degree courses and the Rijksmuseum Fellowship Programme.

All the results find their way into the symposium programme, exhibitions, catalogues and, of course, the *Rijksmuseum Bulletin*, the 'flagship store' for our scientific and scholarly research. Knowledge of the past gives insights into the present, into where we come from and where we are going. The Rijksmuseum is proud to help shape this historical dynamic.

Taco Dibbits, General Director