

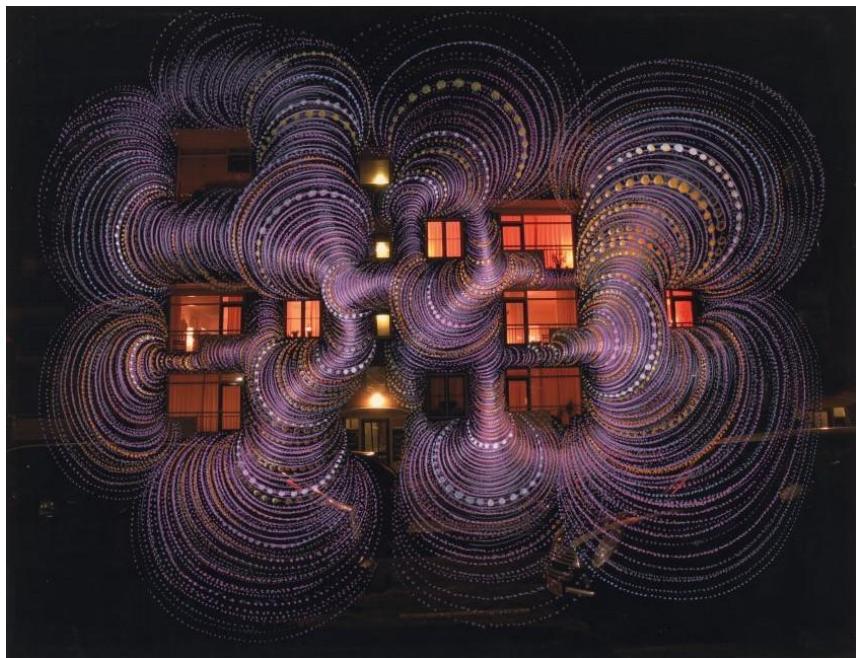
March 9 and 10, 2026 - Organized by the Women of the Rijksmuseum Team

WOMEN IN THE MUSEUM XL: THE (MUSEUM'S) FUTURE IS FEMALE

The phrase ‘the future is female’ has resonated across activist and academic circles since the second feminist wave (1960s-1980s), gaining renewed interest from the 2010s onward. This raises the question: what could the future of gender-thinking look like within the walls of the museum? This fifth edition of the Women in the Museum conference series offers an opportunity to reflect on what we have built together as a museum and academic community, and, most importantly, to consider how gender- and women-focused research can be sustainably anchored in a rapidly changing world.

In the spirit of looking back and moving forward, we will explore how knowledge is passed between generations, delve into the complex relationship between museums and (feminist) activism, and engage with different approaches to reframing historical narratives. One of the key questions running through the program is how museums – especially those working with historical (e.g. Early Modern) collections – can actively engage in today’s gender discourses.

To mark the fifth anniversary of the Women in the Museum conference, this year’s edition will offer a two-day programme combining thought-provoking plenary talks and hands-on workshops. Together, these sessions aim to equip participants with concrete tools to help drive change in their own institutions and professional practices.



Kinke Kooi, *Female View*, 2007.

Purchased with the support of the Knecht - Drenth Fund/Rijksmuseum Fund

DAY 1 - MONDAY MARCH 9, 2026

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT THE PATRIARCHY

The story of 'the patriarchy' is a powerful one. How do we begin to rewrite this foundational narrative? In her book *The Patriarchs: How Men Came to Rule*, Angela Saini explores how male dominance came to shape our societies and institutions, and how history itself offers alternative stories. This raises a pressing question for the museum field: how did our institutions become male-coded, and do alternatives exist? We will look at specific cases from museum professionals who are actively challenging this legacy from within the field.

09.00 – 09.45	Registration (& coffee/tea)
09.45 – 10.00	WELCOME and INTRODUCTION Janneke van der Wijk, The Director of Audiences at the Rijksmuseum Women of the Rijksmuseum Team
10.00 – 10.40	KEYNOTE: <i>The Fragility of Patriarchy</i> Angela Saini, journalist and Assistant Professor of Science Writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Autor of <i>The Patriarchs: How Men Came to Rule</i>
10.40 – 11.05	LECTURE: <i>Museums of Masculinity?</i> Stefan Dudink, Assistant Professor Gender & Diversity Studies at Radboud University Nijmegen
11.10 – 11.30	Q&A
11.30 – 12.15	A DIRECTORS' CONVERSATION: <i>The Past and Future of Gender Thinking</i> Caroline Campbell, Director at National Gallery of Ireland (Dublin, Ireland) Bart Rutten, Artistic Director, Centraal Museum (Utrecht, the Netherlands) Camille Morineau, Co-Founder and Director of AWARE: Archives of Women Artists, Research & Exhibitions (Paris, France)
12.15 – 12.30	WARMING UP WORKSHOPS Maggie Greyson and Hillary Spencer, Futurist and Disruptive Thinkers
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch break
14.00 – 15.30	THEORY INTO PRACTICE: WORKSHOPS (see p.4)
15.30 – 16.00	Coffee and Tea Break
16.00 – 16.30	ROUNDTABLE: THE FIRST RESULTS ENVISIONED
16.30 – 17.30	Drinks

DAY 2 - TUESDAY MARCH 10, 2026

LET'S CLAIM THE FUTURE

How can museums become engaging institutions ready for the future of (intersectional) gender-thinking? And what role can feminist activism – both within and beyond museum walls – play in this new phase? We will explore examples of museums, museum professionals, and artists who are actively rethinking their methods and approaches.

09.00 – 09.45	Walk in (& coffee/tea)
09.45 – 10.00	WELCOME Women of the Rijksmuseum Team
10.00 – 11.00	KEYNOTE: <i>Interrupting Empathy and Quality</i> Mark Miller, Artist, Cultural Producer and Former Director of Learning at Tate Britain (London, United Kingdom) & Q&A
11.00 – 11.20	LECTURE: <i>Seen Today, Remembered Tomorrow: From an Exhibition on Women Artists to a Long-term Change in the MSK's Gender Policy</i> Frederica van Dam, Curator at The Museum of Fine Arts Ghent (Ghent, Belgium)
11.20 – 11.40	LECTURE : <i>Walking in Circles: care, resistance, and the histories we pass on</i> Aimée Zito Lema, Visual Artist and First Rijksmuseum Artist in Residence
11.40 – 12.00	Q&A
12.00 – 12.30	PLEA: <i>The Fire of FemFuturism</i> Margriet Schavemaker, the General Director at the Kunstmuseum (The Hague, the Netherlands)
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch break
14.00 – 15.30	THEORY INTO PRACTICE: WORKSHOPS (see p.4)
15.30 – 16.00	Coffee and Tea Break
16.00 – 16.30	CLOSURE REMARKS Warda El-Kaddouri, Journalist and Assistant Professor at Open University of the Netherlands
16.30 – 17.30	Drinks

Workshop registrations are now open!

The link to book your workshops for both symposium days can be found in your ticket confirmation. Please note that you must select a different workshop for each day. Make sure to register as soon as possible, as places are limited. The deadline to register for a workshop is 5 March.

WORKSHOPS

XL Cross Stitching: Embroider Women in the Museum

Keywords: Stitching; Co-creation; Conversation; Reframing Art

Hosted by: Gerda Z. Leeffers, Textile Artist and Cultural Anthropologist by Stitchamos and Studio Koekoek

Join us for a hands-on workshop to launch the start of an XL cross-stitch artwork inspired by the women whose stories echo through the museums. Working in pairs, we'll stitch, share ideas, and let conversation guide the creative process as we connect through thread while building a *gesamtkunswerk* together. Step by step, we will transform women's histories into a bold, large-scale work of art.

Sketching the Museum of 2040

Keywords: Drawing; Design Thinking; Storytelling; Innovation

Hosted by: Evita Goettsch, Innovation Manager at the Rijksmuseum Innovation Lab

What will the museum look like in 2040, and how can sketching help you brainstorm about the future? This workshop, led by the Rijksmuseum Innovation Lab, focuses on a future-oriented design approach, and introduces the basics of drawing as a shared language to surface assumptions, align perspectives and support collective exploration.

Make Space for Change: Design Your Own Exhibition

Keywords: Curating; Exhibition Making; Storytelling; Visual Thinking; College-making

Hosted by: Rosemarie van der Tol, Narrative Designer at Kossmanndejong

How do you turn a story into a tangible and impactful exhibition? For the exhibition designers at Kossmanndejong story and space go hand in hand. During this workshop, narrative designer Rosemarie van der Tol will teach you how to bring gender and women stories to life in an exhibition with strong narratives and visual power. Be ready to think outside the box, experiment with collage making, and develop your strongest exhibition concept yet.

Photography workshop: Capturing Gender in Architecture

Keywords: Photography; Architecture; Close-looking; Spatial Narratives

Hosted by: Jonne Lucia, Photographer

During this photography workshop, the Rijksmuseum's architecture and garden form our starting point. With Polaroid cameras in hand, we explore how ideas of gender appear in the building's forms, symbols and details. After a short introduction about (documentary) photography, you will head out in small groups to observe closely, search for unexpected perspectives, and challenge the way the museum building is usually seen. The workshop encourages you to question, collaborate and push your way of seeing beyond the familiar.

Words Matter! Writing effective and inclusive labels for museum objects

Keywords: Label Writing; Exhibition Making; Reframing

Hosted by: Maartje Peijpe, Museum guide at Rijksmuseum

How can text labels give the visitor new perspectives on classical objects? And how can gender topics be smoothly intertwined? In this workshop, object labels in the new Rijksmuseum exhibition *Metamorphoses* serve as a starting point. We will analyze how they are written and the effects they produce. Participants will write and rewrite an object label while gaining an understanding of the Rijksmuseum's practical guidelines for effective inclusive label writing.

Disruption and Alternative Futures

Keywords: Disruption; Critical Thinking; Future Thinking

Hosted by: Hillary Spencer & Maggie Greyson, Futurist and Disruptive Thinkers

In this interactive session, Hillary Spencer will use “disruption” as a warm-up to help participants surface and challenge the assumptions shaping museum practice today. Futures expert Maggie Greyson will guide a participatory futures workshop where participants envision hopeful and inclusive futures, and turn those ideas into actions that feel achievable. Spencer and Greyson provide a different workshop each day. Join for one or both days!

Monday 09/03: We will use futures thinking to surface the beliefs and patterns shaping museums today, and experiment with new narratives for what museums could become (using the Causal Layered Analysis tool).

Tuesday 10/03: We will imagine the museum you want to see in the future and translate that vision into practical next steps you can begin immediately (using the Three Horizons Framework).

Playing from Prototiepe to Prototype: sixty-year transformation of an artwork

Keywords: Performing; Activism; Inclusion; Intergenerational Narratives

Hosted by: Iris de Leeuw, artist & Anouk Beckers, artist & Harm Stevens, Curator of 20th Century History at the Rijksmuseum

In 1966 the Speespak '66 ('spaze suit') challenged people to become 'Homo Ludens' ('playing humans'). This 'unisex' suit with unzippable trouser legs encouraged new forms of communication. In 2026 a new multimedia Speespak '26 will be launched as part of the publication SpeesBookLookPak ('SpazeBookLookSuit'), created by artists Anouk Beckers, Iris de Leeuw and curator Harm Stevens. Still for everyone, but now even more inclusive and consciously designed with all gender identities in mind. We invite you to join the artists in becoming one of the first to truly make this new Speespak your own, exploring intergenerational creation and activism through textile. Please note: this workshop offers "a staggering amount of komyounikayshun possibilities for everyone!".

The Future We Build: Advisory Board on Gender and the Museum

Keywords: Manifesto; Critical thinking; Co-creation; Writing; Next Generations

Hosted by: Rachel Esner, Associate Professor Modern and Contemporary Art at University of Amsterdam & Alicia Cartagena García-Alcaraz, Fulbright Fellow at Brooklyn Museum (New York) and PhD Candidate at Universidad de Murcia

How do you imagine the museum of the future when it comes to gender? In this workshop, you will co-write a manifesto that brings together a set of recommendations for incorporating gender perspectives and shaping the museum of the future. Through critical thinking, we will explore museums as spaces of equality, developing both visionary ideas and pragmatic guidelines.

[IN DUTCH] Maak een verhaal van geschiedenis...

Keywords: Storytelling; Podcasting; Facts & Fictions; Creative Writing

Hosted by: Hendrik Spiering & Mirjam van Zuidam, journalists and podcasters of NRC

Mirjam van Zuidam en Hendrik Spiering zijn de makers van de historische NRC-podcast Wilde Eeuwen (twee sezoenen). Ze vertellen hoe je motieven en emoties van historische personages in audio tot leven kan wekken en daarin toch de onzekerheid van historische kennis kan laten doorklinken.

Let op: deze workshop is in het Nederlands / Please note: this workshop will be held in Dutch

ABSTRACTS KEYNOTES AND LECTURES

Angela Saini - Keynote: The Fragility of Patriarchy

Even in twentieth-century feminist literature, male domination was frequently assumed to have been universal, possibly natural, with women's oppression stretching back into the mists of time. But what can be learned by interrogating the past? Drawing from the latest evidence in biology, anthropology, archaeology, and history, an entirely different picture begins to emerge, dramatically rewriting old preconceptions. Not only are there matrilineal societies scattered across the world to this day, from America to Asia, but patriarchy as we understand it is both far more recent and less stable than has been assumed. Art and sculpture through the ages, some of it stretching back to the Neolithic, reveals an empowering new vision of gender in history.

Stefan Dudink – Lecture: Museums of Masculinity?

If the future of the museum is female, what was its past and what is its present? There is a compelling case to be made for the argument that the modern museum emerged as a masculinized institution, and that this legacy has shaped museums up until the present day. There is a risk, however, of presenting the deep entanglement of the modern museum with masculinity in a too categorical way. Such a presentation does not allow us to see this entanglement as a product of history that, just as it emerged at one point in time, may also become undone again. How can we simultaneously acknowledge the masculinity of the modern museum and its historicity? Might embedding the history of the museum and masculinity in yet another history help? This lecture places the masculinized museum in the context of the history of nations and nationalisms. It explores how this contextualization can help explain the entanglement of the museum with masculinity, and to think about a future beyond it.

Mark Miller – Keynote: Interrupting Empathy and Quality

Museums and galleries have gone through multiple pivotal shifts over the past 10 years: navigating cultural policy and movements through multiculturalism, diversity, representation of the marginalized, values led practices, intersectional gender equity and equality, contentions surrounding identity politics, and positionality.

Could a step towards the deep integration of empathic practices serve as a foundational structural principle that support positive inclusive change in our cultural spaces, and underpin the navigation of concerns, emerging expectations, and potential role of the museum? This keynote reflects upon questions of traditional notions of quality, gender equality, and explores how active empathic practices could serve a source for realizing authentic intersectional approaches to public and artistic engagement within cultural spaces.

Frederica van Dam – Lecture: Seen Today, Remembered Tomorrow: From an Exhibition on Women Artists to a Long-term Change in the MSK’s Gender Policy

Since 2016, one of the policy priorities of the Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent has been to foreground the work of women artists. In 2018, this resulted in the exhibition *Ladies of the Baroque*, devoted to women painters in Italy. Over the past three years, the MSK has developed the research exhibition *Unforgettable. Women Artists from Antwerp to Amsterdam, 1600–1750*, in collaboration with the National Museum of Women in the Arts. This exhibition highlights women artists in the Low Countries, revealing the richness and diversity of their contributions to the period's visual culture.

The development of this project presented a range of challenges, from persistent gender bias and current geopolitical developments to a newly emerging tension between popularity and fatigue regarding women artists, affecting loans and media attention. However, these obstacles also provided valuable insights for the future and helped us answer the central question: how can we transition from temporary visibility to a permanent and structural presence of women artists in the museum?

Margriet Schavemaker – Plea: *The Fire of FemFuturism*

“We should all be feminists,” Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has stated, thereby affirming that feminism is fundamentally a belief in social, political, and economic equality between the sexes. It does not seek to privilege one group over another, but rather to correct historically marginalized positions. This raises the question: how do museums engage with intersectional feminist activism?

In her plea, Schavemaker reflects on her most recent co-creational exhibition project at the Amsterdam Museum, *Women of Amsterdam: an ode*, while also looking ahead to a major collaborative exhibition initiative. In the coming years, the Kunstmuseum Den Haag and Museum Arnhem, together with several other museum partners, will explore the historical and contemporary dimensions of 50 years of international feminist art.

At a time when women’s and queer rights are once again under increasing pressure, and when both younger and older generations of activists are returning to the streets, it is imperative to critically examine, present, and incorporate feminist activism within the museum sector and its collections—and to acknowledge and sustain its transformative force.

Aimée Zito Lema – Lecture: TBA