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You are holding the Institutional Plan 2026–2031 of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. This plan outlines the core directions for the Rietveld Academie for Bachelor education and preparatory trajectories and the Sandberg Instituut for Master education for the coming six years. It is a compass, a map, a tool and a guide. This Institutional Plan came into being with broad participation from the academy's community of students, teachers and staff and is open for activation by all.

RIET

SAND

INSTITUTIONAL PLAN
GERRIT RIETVELD ACADEMIE
RIETVELD ACADEMIE
SANDBERG INSTITUUT
2026-2031

BERG

VELD

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INTRODUCTION

Context

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie, comprising the Rietveld Academie for undergraduates and the Sandberg Instituut for postgraduates, is a unique environment for ideas, experimentation and radical imagination. We are an international art and design academy with deep roots in Amsterdam and connections that extend far beyond the Netherlands. Our diverse community of students, faculty and staff come from a variety of backgrounds, bringing a wide range of experiences and perspectives to the academy.

The world today is under pressure from climate change, social inequality, systemic collapse, technological disruption and political polarisation. Against this backdrop, the Gerrit Rietveld Academie is positioning itself as a space where artistic thinking and making can engage with and transform the world. We believe that art and design are essential forces in society, enabling us to see, sense and act differently. Art and design are not luxuries or afterthoughts, and imagination is not mere escapism. Rather, the ability to imagine alternatives is a radical act.

Mission

Our mission is to educate artists and designers who can question and critique the status quo, imagining and building alternative new worlds. We help these makers to understand that aesthetics and ethics are deeply intertwined, and that materials carry stories.

We believe that making is a way of knowing and being in the world: a practice grounded in materials, contexts and encounters. It involves thinking, observing, testing, failing and trying again, and rejects ready-made answers. Imagination has power, and art and design offer ways to think and see beyond dominant paradigms.

This is why we provide a space for exploration, offering students the freedom to seek, question, express, doubt and fail
(1) – resisting the logic of efficiency.(1)

Failure is described

by Jack Halberstam as a “productive act of critique” – a way to resist the logics of productivity, efficiency and optimisation that dominate our world. Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Duke University Press, 2011).

Our educational stance

At the core of our education is making – understood not as a solitary or mechanical act, but as a dialogue between mind, body, materials

and environment. Through this ongoing “conversation”, new possibilities emerge.

We are a community of thinkers and makers, dreamers and doers – students, faculty and staff – working together to imagine what doesn’t yet exist. Our students and faculty engage critically with existing systems and propose alternatives to the dominant current frameworks of economy, value, labour, technology, ecology, ethics and politics.

Our educational model supports personal growth, experimentation and deep exchange. Shared learning experiences, mentoring relationships and open dialogue allow our community to flourish.

Four interconnected directions – sustainability, inclusivity, accessibility and transparency – are the principles that guide our decisions and practices. These are not separate concerns, but rather preconditions for creativity and trust. They shape the organisational and pedagogical conditions under which artistic risk-taking can occur.

Accessibility and transparency involve reducing physical, financial, linguistic and institutional barriers, making decision-making processes visible, and fostering participation and belonging. Sustainability and inclusivity entail cultivating social, ecological and cultural practices that care for both people and the planet.

The institutional plan

Education lies at the heart of the Rietveld Academie and the Sandberg Instituut. Our bachelor’s and master’s programmes form the core of the academy, in constant dialogue with research and workshops that enrich and sustain them.

This structure shapes the academy as a living organism: rooted in education, nourished by research and workshops, guided by core principles and tested by external challenges – including the financial pressures in higher education, technological developments like AI, and the precariousness of the cultural field.

This Institutional Plan 2026–2031 outlines our direction and priorities for the coming years. It is both a framework and an invitation – an open call for dialogue within and beyond the academy.

Art and design are not only ways of representing the world, but also ways of relating to it and reshaping it. This belief in the essential role of art and design in times of change underpins our mission.

The following chapters articulate our values as an academy, and how these are reflected in our bachelor’s and master’s programmes. While the themes and issues addressed respond to the present moment, they are not prescriptive. The plan remains open to activation, testing and evaluation across the academy.



GERRIT RIETVELD ACADEMIE

CONTEXT AND BROADER DEVELOPMENTS

Field of practice

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie educates artists and designers for the broad field of visual art and design. Recent national and European sector analyses describe this field as both fragile and essential: fragile due to the ongoing precariousness of artists and institutions, yet essential to the democratic resilience of our society. Art and design nurture imagination, reflection and a multiplicity of perspectives, and are therefore vital to an open and humane democracy.

However, when viewed through the wider lens of the creative industries, a different picture emerges: one of strong economic value, rapid innovation and international competitiveness. Our graduates also work in this area. Rather than training students for specific professions or short-term labour market needs, we equip them with ways of thinking and making that enable them to recognise potential in materials, ideas, social contexts and futures where others cannot.

Graduates of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie contribute to cultural and societal change by promoting visual literacy, critical thinking and collaborative working. They are shaping new understandings of how art and design can engage with the transformations occurring in the world around us. Research consistently shows that our graduates find employment, often in hybrid professional roles combining artistic or design practice with other forms of work in education, research, curation, and cultural production or care.

Through our education and extracurricular initiatives, such as Life After Rietveld and Sandberg, students are actively prepared for professional life. They learn to navigate the complex ecosystem of artistic practice, funding, self-organisation and collaboration. To give students and graduates more experience of exhibiting their work and presenting to audiences, the academy organises various exhibitions, for example at the KunstRAI, Dutch Design Week, the Rietveld Pavilion, 8CM in the city centre, and Rietveld Uncut at the Stedelijk Museum.

Recent national research on international cultural cooperation further underlines the relevance of this field. International exchange generates artistic innovation and substantial economic and social value. In the Netherlands, for example, cultural collaboration adds €10.6 billion to the economy annually and plays a demonstrable role in social cohesion, well-being and raising awareness of important issues such as climate change, gender and inclusion. Almost 50% of

students in Dutch art education are international, reflecting the fact that our education plays a key role in global cultural circulation. For a small country like the Netherlands, internationalisation is not an add-on, but a condition for maintaining quality and relevance.

Financial reality

The professional field that we are training people for is becoming increasingly financially vulnerable. The visual arts sector in the Netherlands is characterised by low and unstable incomes, underfunded institutions, and limited social security for self-employed artists. Similar pressures are evident more broadly in higher professional education. As national priorities shift towards defence, climate and healthcare, for example, structural funding for the arts and small-scale, practice-based higher education remains under pressure.

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie has direct experience of these realities. During the previous institutional planning period, the academy was subject to enhanced financial supervision, leading to internal adjustments and measures to safeguard continuity. Now, with new government-wide cuts to higher education funding, we again need to make careful strategic choices. Our challenge is to maintain the quality and integrity of our programmes within tighter financial frameworks without compromising the principles that define our education: small scale, personalised guidance, collaborative learning and the pivotal role of workshops and experimentation. We are acutely aware that this will be difficult, and we must all be mindful of the precarious nature of the institution and the effort required to maintain it.

Position within the National Network of Art Education (KUO)

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie is part of a finely woven national network of institutions within the Dutch field of higher art education (KUO) that complement one another, ensuring a diverse, accessible and high-quality system. Each institution has its own orientation, scale and pedagogical approach. Within this landscape, the Rietveld Academie occupies a unique position as an institution that is internationally oriented, artistically autonomous and firmly grounded in experimental and interdisciplinary practices. Together with our KUO partners, we sustain a landscape in which diversity, experimentation and public engagement are core values. This collective ecology, in which all artistic disciplines are represented, enables the Netherlands to maintain a vital, forward-looking and democratically embedded art education system.

Our profile combines artistic autonomy with international connectedness, positioning the Rietveld not only as part of the Dutch KUO landscape, but as a key node in global cultural circulation. This role is further amplified by the fact that Amsterdam accounts for more than half of all Dutch international cultural activities. The academy therefore contributes to the national network and functions as a gateway to global cultural exchange. This position strengthens the visibility of Dutch art and design abroad, attracts international students and partners, and feeds back into the innovation capacity of the national KUO system. In a small country like the Netherlands, international orientation is what ensures that our collective art education system remains connected, relevant and competitive on a global stage.

Internationalisation

Since its foundation, the Gerrit Rietveld Academie has considered international orientation an inseparable part of its artistic and educational identity – not as a policy trend, but as a condition for meaningful art and design education. As early as the 1980s, the academy formulated this clearly: “Beeldend kunstonderwijs moet over de grenzen kijken. Bijvoorbeeld door het aantrekken van buitenlandse gastdocenten, uitwisselingen met buitenlandse opleidingen, internationale congressen, seminars en workshops.” “Visual arts education must look beyond borders – for example, by inviting guest teachers from abroad, organising exchanges with international institutions, and participating in international conferences, seminars and workshops.” (Gerrit Rietveld Academie, *Cijfers, Feiten, Activiteiten*, 1980–1987).

This early conviction has remained consistent throughout the decades. Internationalisation was never viewed as an external demand, but rather as an intrinsic aspect of artistic practice. It has enabled students and teachers to engage with multiple realities, learn from differences and locate their work within the international art and design field. In 1987, the academy reaffirmed this commitment in relation to its autonomy: “De GRA heeft tot dusverre geen spijt gehad van de beslissing zelfstandig te blijven... onze inschatting is dat schaalvergroting maar in beperkte mate tot onderwijskundige meerwaarde heeft geleid.” “The GRA has so far had no regrets about the decision to remain independent... our assessment is that scaling up has led to only limited educational added value.” (Gerrit Rietveld Academie, *Cijfers, Feiten, Activiteiten*, 1987–1991).

In recent years, internationalisation in higher education has come under pressure in the Netherlands. At the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam, we develop the intercultural competencies of future artists and designers in an international learning environment. For this reason, the international aspect has always been important in our art

education. We prepare students for an international professional environment and for the issues facing today’s world.

The international dimensions and perspectives of the academy are embedded in the bachelor’s and master’s programmes’ curricula and are closely linked to Amsterdam as an international ecosystem for art and design, as well as to the Dutch context, in which colonial history plays an important role, and to the Caribbean regions. The academy’s diversity is a strength, challenging students, teachers, workshop specialists and staff to engage with each other from different perspectives and histories, and encouraging constructive dialogue about the creative process.

English is therefore the language of instruction, serving not only as a practical necessity, but also as a shared space for dialogue. The academy is a multilingual environment where communication takes place through words, images, gestures and materials. Visual language is a form of speech in its own right. Over time, this has led to the emergence of what might be termed our “in-between” language: a shared, evolving idiom that transcends linguistic, visual and cultural differences. In the Image & Language department, we explore the academy’s approach to language as a means of communication, as well as a site of enquiry, imagination and artistic experimentation.

At the same time, we recognise that language can also exclude. The “secret language” of the arts, with its codes, references, and professional jargon, can be inaccessible to outsiders as well as to members of our own community. As a multilingual and international institution, we therefore aim to be attentive to the politics of language, making space for translation, misunderstanding and multiplicity, and cultivating a culture in which everyone can participate and be heard. This requires effort and consideration from everyone involved.

We recognise these qualities as both a strength and a responsibility. The international and multilingual nature of the academy is closely linked to Amsterdam’s status as a global hub for art and design, which has been influenced by colonial and migratory histories. In the coming years, the academy will further refine its internationalisation policy, focusing on accessibility and inclusivity. It will also seek more intentional collaborations with artists, art schools and cultural institutions in countries with which it shares historical and contemporary ties.

Networks and embeddedness

We believe that art and design cannot exist in isolation. In order to remain vital, we must be embedded in the city, the cultural sector and wider society.

That is why we seek collaborations that focus on connection, exchange and mutual learning rather than visibility or prestige.

We collaborate with institutions of a similar size and with shared values, both locally and internationally, to strengthen our collective resilience. These collaborations bring new perspectives to the academy, create opportunities for experimentation and research, and open up career pathways for our students and graduates in an increasingly uncertain professional landscape. This is work that will require greater attention in the coming years and is not easily achieved.

Our partners include art academies and universities in the Netherlands, as well as museums, artist-run initiatives, and social and cultural organisations – ranging from Amsterdam Art and CBK Zuidoost to Framers Framed, the Jan van Eyck Academie, Dutch Design Week and Goldsmiths, University of London. Each collaboration reflects our values and our position in the world.

Collaboration is never neutral. Every partnership involves responsibility. With whom do we align ourselves, and on what terms? Sometimes the answer is obvious; at other times, it requires deeper reflection.

For this reason, in 2025 we developed the *Ethical Framework for Partnerships and Collaborations*, which will help us assess our relationships carefully and transparently.⁽²⁾

The framework encourages continuous dialogue, ensuring that our connections – both within and beyond the academy – remain critical, reciprocal and regenerative. The framework is new to the academy, and we are developing our working practices around it.

(2)

The framework returns in chapter 2.4, where it is connected to the academy's wider approach to transparency.

Autonomy at different levels

Autonomy has long been a defining value of the academy, for its students and staff, and for the institution as a whole. While many art schools in the Netherlands merged into larger universities of applied sciences, the Gerrit Rietveld Academie remained independent. However, this autonomy is not self-evident. It is something that must be continuously learned, negotiated and sustained.

In our educational practice, we do not understand autonomy as isolation or individualism, but rather as a capacity that develops in relation to others within the shared spaces of learning, creation and dialogue. Autonomy is not innate, but something that must be learned. Students learn to find their own voice while recognising the presence, needs and perspectives of others. This balance between independence and interdependence, and between freedom and structure, defines both our pedagogy and our culture.

The same applies institutionally: as an autonomous academy, we operate within a framework of public responsibility and legal obligation.

Autonomy does not exempt us from accountability; rather, it requires us to interpret rules and structures critically and ethically to ensure they serve education and our shared community. In recent years, we have learned that autonomy requires structure in order to flourish. Both students and staff express a need for clear frameworks, transparent procedures and shared accountability. Therefore, the challenge for the coming years is not to choose between autonomy and certain policies, but to nurture a culture in which freedom and structure reinforce each other. This is a culture in which rules safeguard trust, clarity, and collective purpose, rather than stifling creativity and imagination. This is something we need to develop and learn together. Maintaining this balance is an ongoing process.

Technologies and artificial intelligence

AI is one of the major forces impacting art and design, as well as the ways in which we work, study, teach and learn. It is important to acknowledge that technologies are never neutral. AI, in particular, challenges notions of ethics, environmental responsibility, accessibility and inclusion, as well as imagination and the space for failure. As such, AI touches upon the core of our education and values.

In 2025, the Gerrit Rietveld Academie established an ad hoc AI working group to help shape the academy's approach to artificial intelligence. We are committed to developing our institutional position on emerging technologies such as AI, based on our pedagogical commitment to autonomy, responsibility (including environmental, ethical, accessibility and inclusion issues) and artistic freedom, rather than fear or hype. Expanding knowledge and fostering critical engagement are essential. To this end, the academy is developing a Technology Code of Conduct comparable to the Language Code of Conduct. This will address issues of authorship, ethics, accessibility, sustainability, and bias in digital and AI-based environments.

Technology and (visual) language are increasingly intertwined. Generative AI models influence how language and moving images are produced, translated, adopted and shared. The next update to our Language Code of Conduct and the new Technology Code of Conduct will explicitly address this relationship, with the latter also outlining principles for transparency, authorship and the responsible use of AI in educational and artistic contexts.

Although the IT department's guidelines provide a framework for the use of AI, it is important to emphasise that privacy is an ongoing and evolving concern, particularly in educational and student support contexts. The responsible handling of materials and data within the digital learning and working environment is crucial. The working group will help the academy convey a greater sense of urgency and

awareness regarding this issue. Key questions include: How consciously do we use technology? What are the practical implications of shifting from traditional materials to digital applications in terms of energy use, sustainability, inclusion, access and language?

Over the past few years, the Algorithmic Cultures research group has contributed to the wider discourse around AI from the perspective of art and design. The group has posed questions about how manifestations of artificial intelligence not only shape artistic production, but also the wider societal and political implications of these technologies. This includes considering what AI means for the creative field and society, not just in terms of skills and occupations, but also from a philosophical perspective, engaging with questions around ethics, authorship and human experience.

The academy acknowledges that new technologies are disruptive, but also bring new opportunities. Makers and users can collaborate to create innovative solutions, contributing to a more diverse and open technological landscape. AI is already deeply embedded in the academy's ecosystem, as are many different materials and techniques. Our students work with a broad range of techniques and technologies, including analogue and craft-based methods, digital fabrication, coding and AI, depending on the demands of the work. We believe it is essential to approach technological tools reflectively as well as functionally, in order to understand their implications, including their racist, stereotyping and discriminatory biases, as well as their aesthetics.

Challenges for 2026–2031

Alongside the ambitions set out in this plan, the Gerrit Rietveld Academie will need to address a number of significant challenges that will influence our work over the next few years. These challenges provide the context in which we must realise our mission, vision and four core values: sustainability, inclusivity, accessibility and transparency.

Financial constraints

Public higher education in the Netherlands is subject to continuous austerity and budgetary pressure. As a small institution, we are affected by generic cuts and the lack of compensation for rising costs. In the coming years, we will need to consolidate our ambitions within strict financial frameworks, relying on careful prioritisation and the creativity of our staff and students.

Precarity in the cultural field

We educate artists and designers for a vital yet fragile professional field. Many of our graduates face uncertain income, temporary contracts and limited institutional support. This precarity presents an economic, social and ethical challenge to our academy: how can we prepare students for an unstable field while affirming the societal value of artistic practice?

Limited societal recognition of art and culture

The role of art and culture in public life, both in the Netherlands and internationally, is under pressure. Funding is limited, public discourse often marginalises the arts, and political support cannot be taken for granted. In this context, our responsibility as an academy is twofold: to defend and articulate the public value of art and design, and to equip our students with the tools to operate critically and resiliently within and beyond the cultural sector.

Technological developments and AI

New technological systems, particularly generative artificial intelligence, are transforming society and the arts. While these developments create new possibilities for experimentation, they also raise profound questions concerning ethics, sustainability, authorship and bias. For institutions such as the academy, they raise questions around accessibility, inclusion and language. Our challenge is to ensure that students and staff can master such technologies when and if they need to, but, above all, to critically question them and perhaps even reshape them. By doing so, we affirm our responsibility to contribute to broader societal debates on the impact of technological systems and AI, all while maintaining the autonomous, imaginative and critical nature of art and design practice.

The Rietveld building and sustainability

The original Rietveld building (1967) is a national monument and an essential part of our identity. At the same time, however, it presents us with high maintenance and heritage preservation costs, as well as the need for

urgent sustainability measures. Ensuring that this building, together with our newer architecture and outdoor spaces, remains functional, future-proof and environmentally responsible will be a major task over the next decade and will incur significant costs.

These challenges demand commitment. They remind us that our financial, ecological, technological, professional and societal contexts both shape and constrain us, but they also sharpen our sense of purpose. By openly acknowledging these conditions, we reaffirm the urgency and necessity of our mission.

REFLECTION ON THE PREVIOUS INSTITUTIONAL PLANS

No institutional plan emerges from a blank page. Each new cycle builds on what has been attempted and what has failed. Experience over the past few years has taught us that change rarely happens in a straight line. It requires patience, care and the courage to acknowledge where intentions have fallen short. These reflections influence the choices we make now. We are keen not to overpromise, and we also outline the constraints and risks we face.

When working on this institutional plan, we also reviewed previous ones. Between 2012 and 2016, the academy worked with an institutional plan titled *Old building/Neue Bildung*. Between 2015 and 2022, an untitled strategic agenda was developed. Between 2017 and 2020, an institutional plan was created, but it had no title and it is unclear whether it was formalised. From 2020 to 2025 the institutional plan *Undefined, Unsolicited, Unsettling* was in place. This last institutional plan was the best known and most widely used by the academy. It is interesting to map the developments from 2012 until now, and also with an eye towards 2031, the span of the current institutional plan.

Over the past decade, the Gerrit Rietveld Academie and the Sandberg Instituut have undergone a series of profound shifts, both in how we understand our mission and in how we shape education, research, and community life. While each institutional plan reflects its time, together they trace a trajectory that leads us to the ambitions we now formulate for 2026–2031.

Bachelor–Master Balance

In 2012–2016, there was an explicit policy steering: “The bachelor’s intake will be reduced by 20%, while the master’s intake will be doubled” (*Old Building/Neue Bildung*, 2012, p. 7). This quantitative shift was tied to the national agenda *Focus on Toptalent*. Between 2015 and 2020, the balance was still being monitored, but innovation took shape through temporary master’s departments. Alongside the five regular departments, “two temporary master’s were developed each year, based on current questions and urgencies” (Strategische agenda 2015–2020, 2015, p. 4). By 2020–2025, the emphasis had shifted from numbers to complementarity, with master’s programmes serving as laboratories for urgent issues, with the bachelor’s as a broad experimental foundation.

Crucially, this was also the first time that the Rietveld and Sandberg had formulated a shared institutional plan. The 2026–2031 plan takes integration a step further with the bachelor’s and master’s education not as separate tracks, but mutually reinforcing levels within one institutional vision. This marks the historical transition from the Sandberg functioning as an external entity, to its physical integration on the campus, and now to a shared mission and vision for both Bachelor and Master education. The ambition for the coming years is to strengthen the interplay between the two levels, ensuring that they enrich each other to form a coherent educational ecology, while maintaining their own identities and pedagogical approaches.

Internationalisation

From 2012 to 2016, internationalisation was seen as an established fact: “The Rietveld Academie is a melting pot of cultures, with more than half of the students coming from abroad” (*Old Building/Neue Bildung*, 2012, p. 5 & p. 10). It was a reality to be managed rather than a strategy. By 2015–2020, however, this presence had been reframed as a hallmark of identity, although still somewhat implicitly. In 2017, the academy underlined the importance of maintaining a balance with local embedding: “an artacademy cannot flourish without sufficient grounding in the culture and society in which it is situated” (Concept instellingsplan 2017, 2017, p. 7). By the 2020–2025 institutional plan, the focus had shifted to inclusivity and equity, the question was no longer how international we were, but how inclusive and representative we could become. As this institutional plan clearly outlines, the academy’s international character remains one of its key characteristics.

Sustainability and Regenerative Thinking

From 2012 to 2016, ecology and sustainability were barely present, with housing and facilities taking precedence. By 2015, the values of care and creation had begun to resonate, although the concept of ecology remained implicit. In 2017, the construction of the new FedLev building was presented as a foundation for community and also as part of a broader ethos of connection: “Then and there, the entire community of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie will, for the first time in the history of our academy, truly come together” (Concept instellingsplan 2017, 2017, p. 1–2).

From 2020 to 2025, ecology became a major priority: “We take responsibility for our part in creating a humane and liveable world by

striving for a conscious relationship with each other and with material” (*Undefined, Unsolicited, Unsettling*, 2020, p. 11).

Over the next few years, the focus will gradually shift from emphasising the concept of sustainability and the potential implications of “sustainable education” and “sustainable artistic practices,” towards exploring the broader notion of regenerative education and regenerative artistic practices. This exploration of its implications should take place at the level of the curriculum and its content, the pedagogical approach, the relationships between students, teachers and the community, the organisation of the academy itself, the collaborations we engage in locally and internationally, and the kinds of artistic practices we aim to foster.

Educational vision

The 2012 plan described autonomy as the central value with the Basicyear providing a formative foundation for students to develop an autonomous attitude (*Old Building/Neue Bildung*, 2012, p. 42). By 2015, autonomy remained the anchor but was now reinterpreted as situated within context and reflection. By 2017, the academy was describing itself as a “mini-society,” emphasising reciprocity and exchange: “Exchange is the core of our education” (Concept instellingsplan 2017, 2017, p. 2 & p. 5).

By 2020, the vision had expanded to encompass collectivity and intellectual equality: “Learning is a collective process, grounded in the intellectual equality of student and tutor” (*Undefined, Unsolicited, Unsettling*, 2020, p. 11 & p. 15). Our educational vision for the future builds on these principles, while also responding to the evolving needs of students and teachers, and changing insights and perspectives on learning and teaching.

Workshops

Although not yet articulated in a shared vision, workshops were already acknowledged in 2012 as central to making. By 2015, they had been described as essential to experimentation and interdisciplinarity. The 2017 plan emphasised how the new FedLev building would physically unite workshops and departments, thereby reinforcing visibility and exchange. By 2020–2025, their impact had been defined more broadly with workshops being seen not only as places of production, but also spaces of research (*Undefined, Unsolicited, Unsettling*, 2020, p. 30). In the coming years, the shared vision of the workshops, as outlined in this plan, will be further integrated and put into practice.

Research

In 2012–2016, the Gerrit Rietveld Academie began investing more consistently in the role of research within existing educational programmes, developing distinct new initiatives such as LAPS (Lectorate for Art and Public Space) and the Creator Doctus. This was a period of growing nationwide focus on artistic research. By 2015, research was presented as contributing to the development of the field: “Besides education, research is an activity through which we contribute to the development of the field” (Strategische agenda 2015–2020, 2015, p. 5). The 2017 concept institutional plan gave research a prominent place and introduced the ambition of positioning the Rietveld as a research institution (Concept instellingsplan 2017, 2017, p. 12).

By 2020–2025, research had been named as a central activity: “Research is one of our three core tasks, alongside education and public manifestation” (*Undefined, Unsolicited, Unsettling*, 2020, p. 30 & p. 64). During this period (2020–2025) the established research group transitioned from LAPS to LASP (Lectorate for Art and Spatial Praxis) and was joined by two others (Algorithmic Cultures and Critical Inquiry, with Materiality emerging as a key focus area). Rietveld Sandberg Research (RSR) was also initiated at this time, when the scope of research (in content and reach) began to grow from its previous strong basis in the Rietveld Academie to also formally encompass the Sandberg Instituut. These developments will continue in the years ahead.

Technology

In 2012, technology was invisible and considered as infrastructure. By 2015, it was appearing obliquely in references to the creative industries. The 2017 plan began to highlight technological research themes: “Topical research themes include materiality and the chemical industry, or the relationship between (art) education and technological developments such as artificial intelligence and robotics.” (Concept instellingsplan 2017, 2017, p. 11). From 2020 to 2025, the issue was explicit: Program or be programmed. Students and staff had to learn to actively and critically relate to technology (*Undefined, Unsolicited, Unsettling*, 2020, p. 47). This brings us to the present day and the outlook for the future, where we realise that AI in particular will have a tremendous impact on education and the future of our students.

Positioning governance and graduates

The 2012 plan was strongly shaped by external frameworks and performance agreements. By 2015, the focus had shifted towards institutional cohesion: “The strategic agenda is intended to strengthen the institute as a whole, beyond its decentralized organization” (Strategische agenda 2015–2020, 2015, p. 3). In 2017, governance was presented in terms of community: “Our aim is an optimal mini-society that facilitates everyone” (Concept instellingsplan 2017, 2017, p. 6). Graduates received explicit attention: “We see it as our responsibility to strengthen the position of alumni in the early years of their careers and, where possible, to continue contributing to their artistic and intellectual development” (Concept instellingsplan 2017, 2017, p. 5). By 2020, the governance culture had become participatory, the plan was the result of collective authorship, shaped by sounding boards and broad consultation (*Undefined, Unsolicited, Unsettling*, 2020, p. 6–7).

For the period 2026–2031, transparency and shared authorship will be central, with the plan itself being produced collaboratively by an editorial group and sounding boards, with representation from across all parts of the academy’s community.

A closer look at the period 2020–2025

The Institutional Plan for 2020–2025 set out a number of key priorities, including strengthening social safety, diversity and inclusion, sustainability and ecology, as well as revising the staff appointment policy. In addition, it emphasised the importance of securing the academy’s financial position and deepening the connection between education, research and workshops.

Significant progress has been made in recent years. The framework for social safety has become more visible and accessible thanks to new codes of conduct, an expanded network of confidential counsellors and targeted workshops for staff and students. Diversity and inclusion have advanced through the extracurricular Unsettling platform, the embedding of non-Western perspectives in curricula and more conscious approaches to recruitment and selection. Regarding sustainability, the Urgent Ecologies platform has played an active role in integrating ecological thinking into teaching, research and organisational practice. Practical measures, such as changes to canteen policy, building maintenance and curricular projects, have also made the academy’s commitment tangible.

The revised appointment policy has been gradually implemented following a multi-year process. This has increased transparency and consistency in roles, contracts, and conditions, marking a structural shift for many staff members. Financially, the academy has transitioned

from a period of strain to greater stability, thanks to careful recovery measures and strengthened planning and control cycles.

At the same time, the academy continued to develop a specific pedagogical approach relating to the Gerrit Rietveld Academie community, comprising students, teachers, workshop specialists and support staff. Heads of the bachelor's and master's programmes updated the curricula based on contemporary discourses questioning historically dominant forms of knowledge and production. Teaching staff attended professional development training courses. The workshops developed a shared vision of their role within the academy as a space where students can work independently, experiment and reflect. Research has become more coherent and visible through Rietveld Sandberg Research, with new research groups and a shared vision and support structure. Simultaneously, the act of researching itself became more widely recognised as a valuable tool for students. Recent Graduation Shows once again demonstrated the richness and diversity of our artistic community, reflecting students' engagement with urgent social, political and ecological issues.

Much has been achieved, but challenges remain: sustaining and deepening the culture of inclusivity and safety; continuing the ecological transition of our buildings and processes; and balancing the autonomy of our educational departments with clear structures and governance. The expected cuts to our government subsidy in the coming years, combined with rising costs due to an increase in fixed-term contracts, higher wages, price indexation and social mandates, are putting considerable pressure on our budget. At the same time, income growth is insufficient. This forces us to make clear choices in the allocation of available resources. These outcomes and insights underpin the 2026–2031 plan, which focuses on four core areas to consolidate progress and address the challenges ahead.

Towards 2026–2031

This 2026–2031 institutional plan builds on previous developments, recognising what has been achieved and seeking to enhance our practices. However, as in 2012, this plan emerges at a time of national policy reflection. The Ministry of Education is once again asking higher education institutions, and art academies in particular, to reconsider their programme portfolios: what each institution does, and where their areas of specialisation lie. Meanwhile, the upcoming *Internationalisation in Balance Act* introduces new frameworks for recruiting international students, the language of instruction and balancing international and local access.

This institutional plan therefore sets out not only our internal direction, but also positions the Gerrit Rietveld Academie within the

broader national dialogue on portfolio management, internationalisation and the future landscape of art education. In this context, the academy reaffirms its position as a small-scale, international and experimental institution, committed to artistic freedom, research through making and fostering a deeply interconnected community of learning.

A chapter at the end of the plan is dedicated to translating these plans into actionable agendas spanning two years. This chapter also reflects on how these agendas, and therefore the overall work carried out over several years under the umbrella of this institutional plan, can be measured qualitatively and quantitatively.







1. MISSION AND KEY CHARACTERISTICS

The Rietveld Academie and the Sandberg Instituut together form an internationally recognised academy offering experimental art and design education in Amsterdam.

Our bachelor's and master's programmes aim to educate artists and designers who can challenge, deconstruct and reconfigure the status quo; embrace social responsibility; and imagine and develop transformative practices – so playing an active role in local and global art, design, theory and social discourses.

As a small, independent academy, the Rietveld is committed to art and design education that stimulates research and experimentation, and to a learning environment in which imagination, critical reflection and artistic skills come together.

(3)

Philosopher Ruha Benjamin, in her 2024 *Imagination: A Manifesto*, reminds us that imagination itself can be an act of resistance and

re-creation; it has the capacity to move beyond what is given. Ruha Benjamin, *Imagination: A Manifesto* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2024) and *The Imagination Playbook* (2024).

(3) Graduates are equipped to contribute critically and experimentally to communities, contexts and situations, or imagine and create these themselves through new forms of interaction and making meaning. The Gerrit Rietveld Academie operates within both national and international art and design education contexts, maintaining strong ties with the professional art and culture sector.

1.1. *Distinctive characteristics*

1.1.1. Small scale, spacious growth

“Small scale” is not just a logistical feature; it is also a pedagogical commitment. It enables personal development, experimentation and in-depth exchange. In this setting, shared learning experiences, mentoring relationships and dynamic dialogue between students, tutors and staff can flourish. Small-scale bachelor's and master's programmes can adapt to students' specific needs, interests and skills, ensuring a more dynamic and relevant learning experience. The community invests in joint and collective growth. The academy recognises the small scale of the institution as a strength and a prerequisite for art education.

1.1.2. Rooted and transnational learning

We are deeply rooted in Amsterdam, a city of cultural exchange, migration, resistance and experimentation. This location influences our subject matter, audiences and networks. The academy engages with social issues, contributes to cultural life and remains connected to the networks and communities that shape the city. At the same time, we are international: over half of our students come from outside the Netherlands. This promotes artistic innovation and reflection by introducing different voices and unheard perspectives. Within this international learning environment, students develop the competencies to engage critically and creatively with a complex world. However, being an international community does not automatically foster transnational learning; this must be encouraged and supported by incorporating cultural awareness into our curricula and embracing non-Western histories and knowledge.

1.1.3. Interdependent practices

The academy is a small-scale, physically interconnected environment where people's paths cross daily in the corridors, workshops, garden and canteen. This proximity fosters a culture in which learning, care and imagination are shared responsibilities across all roles, not just between students and tutors.

Education, research, workshops and operations do not exist in isolation, but form a shared learning community for students. Staff from all departments actively contribute to the pedagogical and artistic culture, both visibly and behind the scenes. This culture enables experimentation, trust, and risk-taking.

1.1.4. Extra-curricular

Our study environment gives rise to initiatives outside the departments' educational programmes. Examples of structural extracurricular initiatives accessible to all students include Studium Generale, Life After Rietveld and Sandberg, Unsettling,

Urgent Ecologies and library-organised programming. In recent years, new platforms have emerged from student initiatives in response to current issues. The academy creates open spaces where such initiatives can flourish independently, offering room for exploration and the potential to influence education in the future.

1.1.5. The art and design student

Rooted in a culture of experimentation and critical enquiry, Rietveld and Sandberg students navigate their own study path through a dynamic, interdisciplinary environment. Our admissions process determines whether candidates are suited to this type of art and design education. Students are encouraged to question, build and reimagine. They engage deeply with materials, concepts and contexts, often crossing disciplinary boundaries to explore new forms of expression. The process of creation is valued as highly as the outcome, and reflection and dialogue are essential components of artistic development. The bachelor's programme encourages exploration and discovery across media and subjects. At master's level, students enter with an existing practice and professional experience, as well as a sense of their position in the world and their discipline.



2. VISION: FOUR CORE DIRECTIONS FOR THE COMING YEARS (2026-2031)

While the mission defines our enduring commitment, the vision outlines how we will embody this commitment in the years ahead. It translates our values into a forward-looking framework that responds to current issues and future opportunities.

Looking ahead to 2031, we are committed to strengthening the academy as an open and responsive institution that is aware of its place in the world and willing to be changed by it.

While the academy focused on eight priorities in its 2020–2025 institutional plan, it now intends to develop in four core areas. While inclusivity and sustainability were part of the previous institutional plan, accessibility and transparency are being introduced as new core directions. In the coming period: These four interconnected core directions will guide our choices and actions. Technological systems and AI are a cross-cutting direction that runs through this institutional plan. While sustainability, inclusivity, accessibility and transparency are the guiding directions, technology cuts across all of them.

SUSTAINABILITY: aimed at embedding ecological awareness and long-term care in education, research, operations and community life. We will gradually shift from emphasising the concept of sustainability to exploring the broader notion of *regenerative education* and *regenerative artistic practices*.

INCLUSIVITY, DIVERSITY AND EQUITY: aimed at creating an environment where different voices and perspectives are actively supported and valued.

ACCESSIBILITY: this new core direction for the academy has been formulated because we want to improve the conditions so that studying and working at the academy is possible for a wide range of people, regardless of financial, cultural, social or physical circumstances.

TRANSPARENCY: is the second of the new core directions, aimed at working on and building trust through open communication, governance and decision-making at all levels of the academy.

These four areas are not isolated from each other or from the impact of technological developments, particularly AI. The core directions are interdependent: change occurs when all parts of the academy collaborate with each other. This systemic perspective, which is rooted in regenerative thinking, is something that we intend to develop further in the years ahead.

The following paragraphs set out the ambitions for each direction over the next six years. It is important to note that progress has already been made within some of these core areas, even though they were not prioritised in the previous institutional plan. However, they are all at different stages of recognition and implementation. The key point is that none of these four areas of work can be considered complete; they are all ongoing projects that will require hard work from everyone to make progress.

2.1. SUSTAINABILITY AND REGENERATIVE THINKING

Our aim is to establish a mindset and approach in which sustainability is not considered a separate issue, but rather an underlying principle of education, research, workshops, operations and community life. This is understood in the broadest sense, encompassing ecological responsibility, social well-being, fair working conditions and the long-term continuity of artistic practice. In the years ahead, sustainability will remain a guiding principle across all levels of the academy. It is an issue that requires everyone to continue learning, discussing and maintaining this focus.

2.1.1. Regenerative perspective

At the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, sustainability will be rethought from a regenerative perspective, with a focus on actively restoring, renewing and strengthening ecological, social and cultural systems. This means continuously considering how choices relating to materials and governance structures relate to the broader context of ecology, the economy, people and culture. We are committed to ensuring that the academy itself, in all its facets, remains a place where future generations of artists and designers can thrive.

Although the concept of regeneration is new to our vocabulary, it is not new to our practice. For many years, the academy has viewed education, research and creation as interconnected forms of engagement between people, materials and the world.

In our previous institutional plan (2020–2025), these ideas were expressed through values such as responsibility and care, and the creation of “a humane and liveable world”. These ideas implied a holistic and ecological awareness, recognising that every act of learning and creation occurs within wider social, material and environmental systems.

The regenerative approach builds on this foundation. It shifts our focus from merely reducing harm to actively contributing to renewal: of practices, relationships and environments. It connects our artistic and educational work with questions of continuity, shared responsibility and transformation. It recognises that art and design can help repair, replenish and reimagine the world around us. Regenerative thinking is not a single, unified theory, but rather a transdisciplinary field with roots in ecology, philosophy, indigenous knowledge, design, economics, agriculture and pedagogy. This developing field embodies a wealth of knowledge that we wish to collectively explore and learn from. (4)

(4)

On regenerative

theory and art education, a recent report was published that can be accessed here (in Dutch): www.atd.ahk.nl/media/the/docs/DAS_Graduate_School/DAS_RESEARCH/Regeneratief_Kunstonderwijs__spread__12_.pdf

In this sense, regeneration does not represent a departure from our previous vision; rather, it gives name and depth to a way of thinking and working that has long been a part of the Rietveld Academie and the Sandberg Instituut. The exploration of this shift will take place at all levels.

2.1.2. Curriculum and research

The curriculum explores sustainability not only as a theme, but also as a practical approach to making. Students investigate the origins of materi-

als, experiment with circular design and repair processes, and explore the use of natural dyes and bioplastics. These projects are often closely linked to workshops where material processes are central. Urgent Ecologies will continue to develop as a platform for ecological literacy, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and translation into concrete methodologies among departments, workshops and support staff. The academy will also invest in knowledge development in line with emerging ideas about regenerative education and research into ecological themes. Projects focusing on the sustainable and responsible use of materials and techniques will be developed further in the coming years. This will include researching the politics of material practices as well as fostering closer dialogue between Rietveld Sandberg Research, workshop specialists, and students. The academy will also encourage the development of critical perspectives on technological change, such as the ecological and cultural implications of artificial intelligence, in collaboration with students, researchers and external partners.

2.1.3. Workshops and material practices

The workshops play a central role in shaping sustainable practices. They are places where ecological awareness is inseparable from material choices and working processes. Several initiatives are already in place: since 2025, a dedicated student fund has supported the purchase of sustainable materials; a materials library, developed in collaboration with DesignLAB, Rietveld Sandberg Research and Urgent Ecologies, reveals the origins and impacts of materials; and on campus, plants are cultivated for pigment production and used in the textile workshop in accordance with water-based, ecologically responsible recipes. Across the academy, an advanced water purification system ensures that production processes remain in line with ecological responsibility.

2.1.4. Operations and resources

Sustainability also guides organisational choices. The three pillars of our operational policy are reducing energy consumption, transitioning our buildings to renewable energy sources, and minimising waste. Procurement policy emphasises environmental and safety standards in all contracts and purchases. As part of this effort, the permaculture garden on campus, which is already a green learning site, will be further developed. Another priority is strengthening financial planning and control: by building organisational knowledge, the academy can embed sustainability in daily practice and in long-term investment and funding strategies.

2.1.5. People and community

For the academy, sustainability also means caring for people. The past few years have shown that workload, temporary contracts and administrative pressure have a direct impact on the quality of education and the well-being of staff. Investing in staff well-being and development is therefore essential. This includes ensuring that job descriptions reflect realistic hours, creating opportunities for professional development – for example, through our popular *Teachers in Conversation* programme, which is the Rietveld's approach to the Basiskwalificatie Didactische Bekwaamheid (BDB, Basic Teaching Qualification) – and facilitating internal mobility. It also involves maintaining an integrated care and support system for both staff and students. Mental health, rest and mutual trust are recognised as crucial conditions for creative risk-taking. In this sense, ecological care and community care are deeply connected.

2.1.6. Graduates and professional practice

Our commitment to sustainability continues beyond graduation. We maintain a living relationship with our graduates, who act as guest lecturers, committee and panel members and contributors to public programmes. Our graduates pursue a

variety of artistic and social practices, both individually and collectively, in both commercial and non-commercial contexts, and within and beyond the cultural field. Their careers often unfold in hybrid ways, combining making, curating, writing, education, community work, entrepreneurship and technological or ecological innovation.

Arts and design education prepares students for a diverse and continually shifting professional field characterised by self-organisation, collaboration and critical engagement. Through the Life After... programme, students and graduates are supported in building collaborative and resilient careers. Graduates are seen as part of an ongoing dialogue: as individuals whose work contributes to the broader art and design landscape. The academy's job is to help sustain the conditions under which such practices can flourish. This is a role that we intend to develop further in the coming years.

2.2. INCLUSIVITY, DIVERSITY AND EQUITY (IDE)

The Rietveld Academie and the Sandberg Instituut are home to an international community of students and staff from more than 50 countries. Inclusivity is an ongoing practice that involves making space for different voices, perspectives and backgrounds, and ensuring that these differences are valued as part of our collective learning. The development of the Unsettling Framework for Action during the previous institutional plan period established inclusivity as a shared commitment connecting students, staff and departments, and offering guidelines for the curriculum, recruitment and staff training. In the years ahead, inclusivity will remain a central focus, as there is still much work to be done to embed it in the academy's structures, practices and community life.

At the academy, we understand diversity and inclusion as part of an ongoing process of reflection and justice. Diversity cannot be achieved through numbers alone, but by addressing the underlying structures that shape access, participation and recognition. Rather than stating that we will or should all work on IDE, we should focus our efforts on creating the conditions for IDE. While a lot of work

is being done at the academy, there is not yet a shared understanding of our goals, how these can be measured or understood in qualitative and quantitative terms, or where the problems lie. Creating a shared dialogue around this is an important step that we want to take.

In the light of recent research in the cultural field, we recognise the tension between the need to measure inequities and the risk of reducing people to categories.⁽⁵⁾ However, transparency about inequality remains essential. Equity and inclusion must be embedded in our institutional quality cycle. Each year, we will return to the question of what has changed, what remains uncomfortable, and what continues to be overlooked.

(5)

See for example
Jasmijn Rana en
Anouk de Koning,
*Diversiteit in de
culturele sector. Over
het ongerief en belang*

van meten, Boekmanstichting www.boekman.nl/tijdschrift-artikel/artikelen/diversiteit-in-de-culturele-sector

By approaching diversity as a shared and reflexive practice rather than a checklist exercise, our aim is to contribute to a cultural and educational field that is more just and self-aware: one that recognises difference as a source of knowledge, creativity and care.

2.2.1. Education and knowledge production

Over the past few years, the academy has worked to integrate inclusivity, diversity and equity into education. Curricula have been reviewed and now incorporate more diverse knowledge bases and perspectives. Teaching teams have become more representative of a broad spectrum of lived experiences, though this remains an ongoing process. In the years ahead, the focus will be on pedagogy and didactic skills, with a view to developing knowledge and practice of inclusive teaching through dedicated training for staff, teachers and workshop specialists. Courses and workshops on intersectionality, power structures and positionality will be expanded. Teachers can further develop their inclusive pedagogy skills through the Teachers in Conversation programme, which is supported by professional development hours and budgets.

A robust feedback culture is central to inclusive learning. Students and tutors are encouraged to collaborate when giving and receiving feedback. This practice is closely connected to social safety, which is understood in both physical and mental

terms. Inclusivity also shapes the academy's approach to research by raising awareness of ethical standards, promoting diversity of methods and voices that go beyond academic norms and Western canons, and creating opportunities for dialogue and critical exchange.

2.2.1. Admissions and recruitment

Admissions procedures are being critically reviewed to ensure broader access for students. This includes reflecting on which groups the academy reaches through its outreach programmes and orientation days, as well as its targeted outreach to secondary and vocational schools to attract students from a wider range of social and cultural backgrounds.

Staff recruitment has also been reviewed. A pilot project using the Zestor methodology has been trialled with the aim of creating more inclusive hiring processes. Measures include diverse hiring panels, accessible vacancy language and selection methods that emphasise competencies over CVs. These steps are complemented by improved onboarding procedures for new colleagues, as well as the evaluation of pilot projects to inform future practice. The aim is to create the conditions that encourage the growth of diversity among students and staff.

2.2.3. Community and culture

An inclusive academy also depends on community care. Spaces for addressing grief, conflict and uncertainty are deliberately created to allow for dialogue and repair. Such spaces include Unsettling and peer-support initiatives. Paying attention to rituals and language fosters a sense of belonging despite difference. In the years ahead, making these support structures visible to students and staff, and developing new ones where needed, will remain priorities. Priority will also be given to inclusive language in policy documents and communications will also be prioritised, ensuring that inclusivity is embedded not only in what we teach, but also in how we organise, govern and speak as an institution.

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility, which is outlined here for the first time as a core principle, is understood in the broadest sense. It concerns not only buildings and infrastructure, but also digital tools, financial conditions, and the international networks in which we operate. By dedicating the 2025 edition of Studium Generale to the theme of *Radical Accessibility*, the academy has made accessibility a shared topic of reflection across the institution. In the years ahead, accessibility must become a guiding principle in all areas of education, research, workshops and community life.

2.3.1. Physical and digital environment

Accessibility begins with the spaces in which learning and making take place. The academy has assessed the potential and limitations of its historic buildings, identifying priorities such as routing, barrier-free facilities, accessible toilets, clear signage and the creation of low-stimulus rooms. Digital environments are equally important: websites, registration forms, learning platforms and documents must be designed for universal use, paying attention to screen-reader compatibility, colour contrast and subtitling.

2.3.2. Learning diversity and mental health

Accessibility also means recognising the different ways in which people learn, think and engage. Training and tools are being developed to help teachers, workshop specialists and staff better support students with neurodiverse profiles or mental health needs. This includes specific programmes for first-generation students and students with neurodiverse learning styles. It also includes adaptations to the learning environment, such as attention to acoustics and lighting, the provision of space for different learning speeds and communication styles, and a recognition of the importance of mental well-being in academic life.

2.3.3. Financial accessibility

Financial barriers can prevent people from participating in education. The academy is therefore committed to keeping material costs transparent and affordable, and to offering grants or other forms of support where possible. Ensuring financial accessibility is key to enabling students from diverse backgrounds to enter and remain at the academy without facing excessive obstacles. We recognise that financial constraints can hinder participation.

2.3.4. Outreach and international exchange

Accessibility also means actively opening the Academy to those who are not yet represented in its community. We are developing outreach programmes to reach prospective students from Amsterdam and the Netherlands, particularly those from socio-economic backgrounds that are currently underrepresented. Accessibility has an international dimension as well. The academy is reactivating its participation in *Erasmus+*, not only for student exchanges, but also for staff mobility, joint curriculum development, and the exchange of workshop expertise. Strengthening these international connections reinforces the academy's identity as an open and outward-facing institution.

TRANSPARENCY

As a new core principle in this institutional plan, transparency is understood as being not only about sharing information, but also about cultivating trust. This involves making visible the processes behind decision-making, clarifying the intentions behind education and research, and creating space for dialogue about uncertainty and controversy. This has become a stronger focus within the academy in recent years, including through the development of the *Ethical Framework for Partnerships and Collaborations*. This framework promotes transparent consideration of who we work with, and the conditions under which we do so. It is part of a broader commitment to openness at all levels of the institution. In the years ahead, trans-

parency will remain a guiding principle in education, governance, operations and culture. Further optimising communication tools, including the intranet, newsletters and the website, is part of this process.

2.4.1. Education and research

Pedagogical transparency means clarity about the intentions of education and research. Why do we choose a particular teaching method? Who makes these decisions? Transparency in learning requires clear communication about objectives, evaluation criteria, roles and expectations. This can be achieved through curriculum descriptions and multi-year research plans, for example. In practice-oriented research, transparency also involves making processes, choices, doubts and positions explicit. The curriculum pays particular attention to ethical decision-making, governance, and the development of agency, enabling both students and teachers to participate critically in shaping learning processes. Reciprocal feedback between students and tutors is encouraged in order to foster a sense of shared ownership of education.

2.4.2. Decision-making and governance

Transparency requires clarity about who is making which decisions and why. Summaries of meetings that are accessible to all, visible overviews of responsibilities and bilingual policy documents ensure that information is shared in a way that is accessible to all. A transparent evaluation and decision-making system not only reports outcomes, but also makes considerations, alternatives, and motivations visible. The same applies to the allocation of resources: insight into priorities, costs, values and impact is integral to accountable governance. The aim is to invite staff and students to engage with budgets, strategic plans and institutional priorities in understandable, participatory formats. During the quality agreement period, a budget was allocated to student representation, and this will continue in the coming years. Further development of the job classification system will provide transparency regarding

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roles, tasks and responsibilities across staff departments.

2.4.3. Culture of openness

Transparency is more than structure; it is also a culture. The academy is committed to developing formats for open conversations about institutional changes and to fostering an accountable culture in which disagreement can be expressed safely and constructively. Transparency also means acknowledging uncertainty and ambiguity. Ethical transparency is equally important, making visible the relationship between research and institutional choices and power relations, as well as those directly involved. Increasing the visibility of the academy, its education, and its activities within relevant art and culture networks is also part of this commitment to openness.



3. EDUCATION

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie offers art and design education at bachelor's and master's level. The small-scale, experimental study programmes have a strong focus on autonomy, critical reflection, and the interrelationship between making and thinking. Education is available on a full-time or part-time basis, and can be supplemented with preparatory courses, temporary departments and research-based trajectories. The bachelor's and master's programmes complement each other to form an integrated educational environment: bachelor's students develop their skills as practitioners in dialogue with the world, while master's students seek to transform it.

The Rietveld Academie and the Sandberg Instituut are learning communities before they are organisations. We have learned that the strength of our programmes lies in shared authorship and the continuous exchange between departments, workshops, research and operations. In recent years, we have witnessed the deepening of our education and the strengthening of mutual understanding through peer learning, cross-departmental collaboration and joint reflection. This was especially evident during the period of the quality agreements, when additional funding was available for projects and initiatives. This resulted in numerous student-led projects, some of which were unable to continue at the same level after the funding period ended. We miss these projects and the shared learning they brought. In the coming years, we intend to continue investing in collective learning structures, such as shared study days, cross-academy projects like Studium Generale and Rietveld Sandberg Research programming, and the student representation platform developed in 2025.

3.1. Educational vision

The academy's overall educational vision is embodied in the following six core elements, which guide our students' studies.

3.1.1. Making at the core

(6)
This understanding resonates with anthropologist Tim Ingold's idea of "thinking-through-doing," and with architect Juhani Pallasmaa's insight that knowing, thinking and making are part of the same embodied and existential act.

Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (Routledge, 2013);
Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand: Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture* (Wiley, 2009).

At the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, making is central – not only as a skill, but also as a way of thinking, researching, learning and engaging with the world. Workshops, research groups and classrooms are spaces where material exploration, embodied knowledge and conceptual development go hand in hand.

In the bachelor's programme, this takes the form of learning by doing, whereas the master's programme emphasises learning by acting with a critical stance towards disciplines.(6)

Preparatory – Orientation course

Bachelor Fine Art and Design

– Rietveld Academie level 6

Basicyear – Architectural Design – designLAB – Fashion

– Graphic Design – Jewellery-Linking Bodies – TXT (Textile) – Ceramics – Fine Arts –
The Large Glass – Image and Language – Photography – VAV moving image

Part-time Bachelor Fine Art and Design

– Rietveld Academie level 6

DOGtime Foundation Years – DOGtime Expanded Painting –
DOGtime Unstable Media

Master Fine Art and Design

– Sandberg Instituut level 7

Fine Arts – Design – Dirty Art Department – Critical Studies –
Temporary Departments

Master Interior Architecture

– Sandberg Instituut level 7

Studio for Immediate Spaces

Creator Doctus / Professional Doctorate

(CrD/PD) – Rietveld Sandberg Research level 8

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3.1.2. Collaborative and shared learning

Learning from each other is at the heart of the academy. Students, tutors, departments, workshops, research groups, and support staff all contribute to a collective environment in which giving and receiving are equally valued. Heads of department and tutors – who are both artists/designers and trained educators – guide processes of artistic agency, encouraging students to be active, courageous and self-critical. Every perspective is recognised as part of shared learning.

3.1.3. Professional artists and designers

Tutors and workshop specialists bring expertise from various professional fields as they guide students, always with an eye for their potential and supporting their development and growth. As part of the curriculum, students also gain professional experience through internships, assignments and participation in projects and exhibitions. Cross-departmental programmes, in addition to educational programmes, prepare students for life after the academy.

3.1.4. Theory and practice

At both bachelor's and master's level, the creative process is approached from technical, conceptual and social perspectives. Research, reflection and experimentation are all integral to artistic development. Students learn to view creation as a practice in which research, reflection and experimentation are key components, as well as developing artistic skills. Theory and practice are also interwoven throughout the curriculum. This holistic approach to knowledge and learning forms the core of the educational programmes.

3.1.5. Agency and autonomy

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie educates artists and designers to be in control of their own careers, to be internationally oriented and socially aware. The academy encourages creative autonomy.

3.

Self-direction is a key component of the educational model which fosters the investigative, experimental, and critical capacities of students and staff. This type of education prepares students for professional practice, where the initiative generally lies with the artist/designer. Our approach to art and design combines autonomy with active engagement in the world.

3.1.6. Regenerative practices

Building on the earlier concept of engaged autonomy, the academy aims to further explore regenerative practices, emphasising interdependence, care, reciprocity and long-term responsibility over extraction or production. Regenerative practices demand autonomy not as freedom from constraints, but as the capacity to act meaningfully within them; to sustain, nurture and renew. Regenerative education is a form of learning that focuses not only on transferring knowledge or limiting harm, but also on actively contributing to the restoration, strengthening and renewal of social, ecological, and cultural systems.

This educational vision does not introduce anything new, but rather makes visible what has long been embedded in the academy's daily practice. Over the years, ways of teaching and learning have emerged through shared experience rather than formal description. By now articulating these underlying principles, we aim to achieve greater clarity and openness without codifying practices that thrive precisely because of their fluid and intuitive nature.

At the same time, we are looking at these long-standing practices through the lens of inclusive pedagogy – reconsidering who feels invited to participate, whose voices are heard, and how our shared ways of learning can remain open, equitable, and responsive to diverse experiences.

3.

3.2. *Educational programmes at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie*

The bachelor's programme at the Rietveld Academie emphasises exploration through making. Students begin with the Basicyear, developing their own voice within an environment of openness, independence and critical curiosity. The master's programmes at the Sandberg Instituut call for an approach to learning by contextualising one's practice and learning through action. Students arrive with an existing practice, which they develop by questioning disciplines and engaging with urgent social, political and ecological issues. The distinction is not absolute, but situational. Rietveld students practise becoming makers in dialogue with the world, while Sandberg students practise acting as practitioners who seek to transform it. Together, Rietveld and Sandberg form an educational ecology of in which exploration, experimentation, critical thinking, positioning and social engagement are interrelated.

3.2.1. Bachelor's programme

The bachelor's programme in Fine Art and Design consists of the Basicyear and 12 discipline-oriented departments. The Basicyear functions as a formative foundation. Students collectively explore the range of artistic approaches within fine art and design, situating their own ambitions and beginning to make choices about their educational path. This collective approach also establishes the basis for exchange and collaboration between departments in subsequent years.

The Rietveld emphasises that subjectivity always emerges in context. Education here involves exploring one's own perspective through dialogue with others, with the world, and with the histories and discourses of the medium. Consequently, the bachelor's programme focuses less on arriving at a defined position than on cultivating the conditions for one to emerge. This process is open-ended, pluralistic and attentive to the contradictions and responsibilities of art in society.

Each of the 12 bachelor's departments cultivates its own working methods, discourses and communities. Several of these departments are unique within the Dutch context, offering students the opportunity to specialise while remaining

3.

embedded in a broader artistic environment. Since 2002, the part-time programme DOGtime has provided working professionals with access to a rigorous and socially engaged art education. DOGtime offers a two-year foundation followed by two specialisations. Preparatory courses such as the Orientation and Preparatory Courses, introduce students to the academy and help applicants prepare for admission.

3.2.2. Master's programmes

At the Sandberg Instituut, the master's programmes require students to adopt an intentional approach to learning as active social and political agents. Students arrive with an existing practice and an understanding of their position in the field (which may extend beyond art and design); here, they are expected to develop and expand that position. Rather than replicating or specialising in existing disciplines, the Sandberg approach is about questioning and reconfiguring them. Master's students work closely with urgent social, political and ecological contexts. They are encouraged to engage with real-life situations, to utilise their practice as a tool for investigation and intervention, and to understand and take responsibility for the implications of their work. In this way, the Sandberg Instituut positions itself as an internationally oriented institution where research, pedagogy and practice converge and learning is understood to be a collective, critical and transformative endeavour.

The Master of Fine Art and Design at the Sandberg Instituut comprises four main departments: Fine Art, Critical Studies, the Dirty Art Department, and Design. A fifth department, the Studio for Immediate Spaces, leads to a Master's degree in Interior Architecture. Both master's programmes are full-time and small-scale by design. Each department offers its own perspective on current developments and issues in the field of art and design within a broader cultural and societal context.

Established in 2011, the one-off Temporary Departments are part of the Master of Fine Art and

3.

Design. Each department focuses on a specific theme or topic. The Sandberg Instituut developed this model in order to align the institute with the outside world by researching specific issues in art and society. The Temporary Departments introduce new ideas and perspectives from outside the institute, offering fresh insights into the discipline and opening up new approaches to education. Through these departments, we engage more explicitly with models of horizontal knowledge exchange, collaborative production and shared responsibility. They also facilitate reciprocal learning and exchange both internally, across programmes and departments, and externally, with partners, communities and cultural institutions.

3.2.3. Creator Doctus / Professional Doctorate (CrD / PD)

The Creator Doctus (CrD) programme, developed by the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, offers mid-career practitioners working at the intersection of art, design and research the opportunity to develop rigorous, innovative and practice-based research. Offering an alternative to the traditional PhD, the CrD emphasises artistic creation as both a method and an outcome. Outcomes may include artworks, exhibitions or performances, accompanied by a reflective report instead of a dissertation. As of 2026, two CrD trajectories have been completed. The third CrD trajectory will be conducted within the framework of the Professional Doctorate (PD) Pilot (2023–2030), a nation-wide pilot initiated by the Association of Universities of Applied Sciences in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The CrD/PD candidate will join the Gerrit Rietveld Academie community as part of Rietveld Sandberg Research and will contribute to the academy's research and educational culture through collaboration, exchange and teaching.





RSR

Research Bureau

Coordination, policy, communication, subsidy support
and management

Research groups and Projects

Professors (lectoren) and (Senior) researchers

Algorithmic Cultures
Art & Spatial Praxis
Critical Inquiry
Materiality

Third Cycle

CrD/PD candidates

RESEARCH

At the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, research takes place in classrooms, studios and workshops, as well as in conversations between students and staff. Research is therefore an integrated and embodied part of our educational vision. It is part of how we learn, how we teach, how we make, and how we imagine futures. We understand research as a shared cultural and institutional possibility and responsibility.

In recent years, the academy has reflected on the place of research in the educational programmes, through initiatives such as study days and a publication on the role of research in student practices. Research activities have become more firmly embedded as an integral part of the curriculum, as well as contributing to the broader fields of art and design, and to the institution's long-term development. With the introduction of the new professional and educational profile for Fine Art and Design in 2025, "research and reflection" is now articulated as a separate competency. This development supports our ambition to expand and strengthen understandings of research within the curriculum over the coming years, both in terms of method and output and across theory and practice.

Over the same period, Rietveld Sandberg Research (RSR) has taken shape, bringing together existing research initiatives into a single, coherent entity within the academy. The further development of the structure and organisation of RSR will be a key focus in the coming years. Given the relatively small scale of the academy, RSR operates at a scale comparable to a single, conventional lectorate (lectoraat). Therefore, an important priority is to develop a shared understanding and vision for the distinctive way in which the format of research groups and the role of the professor (lector) can be shaped and defined in alignment with the specific context of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie and the available resources.

For the period 2026–2031, RSR will continue to build and strengthen the connections between research and education, both through contributions to curriculum as well as supporting the diverse research practices among students and teaching staff. In addition, the central support structure that RSR provides will serve as a foundation for existing and new connections, collaborations and exchange with external partners as well as an increased focus on building knowledge and capacity to support subsidy/grant applications and trajectories for research and educational projects.

Rietveld Sandberg Research (RSR)

RSR is the academy's central research organisation. RSR comprises small-scale research groups led by professors (lectoren). The research groups as of 2026 are Algorithmic Cultures, Art and Spatial Praxis, Critical Inquiry and an emerging group for Materiality. In addition,

RSR facilitates projects and initiatives with researchers as well as collaborations with departments and platforms across the academy. The research groups and activities are supported by the Research Bureau, which handles coordination, policy and communication. The Research Bureau also initiates and supports external partnerships with educational and cultural platforms, offering guidance and support for subsidy applications and managing funded projects across the academy. The Research Bureau communicates all RSR activities internally and externally, and is working on strengthening quality assurance for research, subsidy policy, data management, and an ethical code.

The aim of Rietveld Sandberg Research is twofold. Firstly, RSR develops and supports a research programme organised around distinct thematic research lines or areas of focus, undertaken by research groups. The approaches and findings from these feed back into education and contribute to broader social and political discourses. Secondly, RSR aims to cultivate and strengthen the research culture throughout the academy, by supporting research-oriented practices across the educational community.

Over the next six years, Rietveld Sandberg Research will work to embed the research lines and activities more firmly and sustainably within the broader ecology of the academy. This includes connecting them to the bachelor's and master's programmes to support the development of "research and reflection" as a core competency as well as expanding the exchange and collaboration between RSR and the workshops as well as academy wide platforms such as Urgent Ecologies, Unsettling and Studium Generale. As part of this work, RSR will also engage with the core directions of sustainability, inclusivity, accessibility, transparency, as well as the cross-cutting direction of AI, inviting research groups to develop their own perspective on, or set of questions relating to these.

Rietveld Sandberg Research is guided by a set of shared principles that align with the core directions and educational vision. These principles provide an overarching framework for research approaches that respond to and enrich the specific context of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie and contributions to the wider field. As well as framing the areas of focus of the existing research groups, the shared principles enable areas of focus to evolve and new research lines to emerge over the coming years.

Situated and embodied knowledge

RSR foregrounds research that grows out of lived experience, local and marginalised perspectives, and bodily or material engagement. We recognise that knowledge is shaped by bodies, contexts

and tools. For this reason, we value knowledge produced both within and beyond traditional academic contexts, including work that emerges at the intersection of practice and theory. This principle understands researching and learning as something that develops through praxis, material engagement and critical reflection across different bodies and contexts. Making, material processes and embodied learning are therefore central to how knowledge is explored and shared.

Intersectional and planetary perspectives

RSR foregrounds research that grows out of lived experience, local and marginalised perspectives, and bodily or material engagement. We recognise that knowledge is shaped by bodies, contexts and tools. For this reason, we value knowledge produced both within and beyond traditional academic contexts, including work that emerges at the intersection of practice and theory. This principle understands researching and learning as something that develops through praxis, material engagement and critical reflection across different bodies and contexts. Making, material processes and embodied learning are therefore central to how knowledge is explored and shared.

Critical and radical pedagogies

RSR approaches research as a space for experimental learning and collective knowledge production. Research can open new ways of developing and reflecting on pedagogical approaches, as well as imagining and building new infrastructures for art and design education. We support research as a place to experiment with how we might learn differently together; to grow, question assumptions and take risks. This principle aligns with the educational vision, as it articulates the role of research in cultivating an environment of curiosity and experimentation that supports unconventional and adaptive forms of learning and inquiry.

Technology and the speculative

RSR supports research that engages critically and imaginatively with digital and artificial technologies. Speculative approaches allow researchers to reflect on technologies as agents in the production of knowledge, and to consider the ethical and political questions around how these tools are used and how they might be used differently. Such research contributes to wider conversations about the impact of artificial intelligence on professional fields and on society. This principle provides a framework for dialogue around AI, digital tools and media, across both practice and theory and within and beyond educational contexts.

Shared knowledge and reflexivity

RSR explores forms of public and professional engagement that prioritise the sharing and circulation of knowledge. These can range from collective authorship and community building to formats that are still emerging or yet to be invented. We support research that reflects on the politics of making knowledge public, questioning which knowledge is shared, how and with whom, and for what purposes. Research can also help shape and transform the institutional and social structures in which it takes place. This principle reflects the academy's commitment to learning as a socially engaged practice and to being an open, responsive and principled institution. It recognises that research does not only produce outcomes, but also contributes to shaping the institution itself.

WORKSHOPS

Vision and role within the academy

Learning across all programmes happens through an iterative process of making, researching and reflecting that connects ideas, materials and context. From the Basicyear onwards, students are introduced to this way of working, gradually deepening their understanding of materials, tools and conceptual frameworks.

The 25 workshops at the academy form a vital and distinctive part of this educational structure. They are spaces where ideas take tangible form, and where learning through experimentation, failure, and repair is possible. Making, conceptualising and reflecting are interconnected forms of thinking and doing, not separate acts. In these spaces, art education becomes material, embodied and exploratory.

Students are encouraged to work independently, to try, fail, and try again. Our educational approach recognises the value of failure as a productive act, and this is manifested in the workshops, which are spaces where students are not assessed. This makes it easier to embrace failure as a productive process.

The workshops are open and accessible spaces that invite students from all departments to collaborate, exchange knowledge and develop their own approach to materials and making. The workshops are interwoven with education and research, while remaining zones that connect the conceptual with the material, and individual practice with collective engagement.

Together, the workshops form an ecosystem that brings material, digital and conceptual practices together. These range from ceramics, textiles, glass and metalwork to sound, printmaking, coding, digital fabrication and virtual realities. Students from all departments are free to work across workshops and disciplines, developing their own artistic practices through independent exploration and guidance from the workshop specialists.

The strength of the workshops lies in their relative independence from the educational departments. They provide a space where students can experiment, explore, make mistakes and learn in their own way, free from pressure or expectation. This autonomy fosters an open learning climate that encourages experimentation, self-direction and personal development.

Since 2012, the vision and approach to the workshops has evolved considerably. While writing this institutional plan, we have been consolidating these developments and looking critically and honestly at the balance between education and instruction, and between workshops and departments. This process was not yet complete at the time of finalising this institutional plan.

Analog/Digital Film
Audiovisual Services
Bookbinding
CAD/CAM
Ceramics
Computer
Editing Studios
Fashion
Glass
Jewellery
Letterpress & Offset
Library
Metal
Photography
Printmaking Workshop
Printshop
Sandberg Medialab
Screenprinting
Sound Studio
Textile
Tool-o-theek
Weaving
Willem Rieder Film Studio
Wood
X-Lab

Regenerative practice and sustainability

The workshops reflect the academy's commitment to a regenerative approach to art and design education. Here, sustainability is not considered a separate concern, but rather a shared attitude of care and renewal, encompassing ecological, social and cultural aspects. Students and specialists investigate the origins of materials, their impact, and how they can be used responsibly or reimagined. This ranges from circular and repair-based practices and plant-based pigments to collaborations with Stadshout, which demonstrate long-term awareness of the ecological, energetic and ethical dimensions of production.

The workshops connect the conceptual ambitions of education with tangible regenerative practices, actively encouraging the conscious, responsible and unconventional use of energy, labour and resources. The Material Library, developed together with Rietveld Sandberg Research and Urgent Ecologies, supports this process by making visible the origins, use and consequences of materials.

Workshop specialists

Workshop specialists are artists, designers and makers with in-depth technical, material and pedagogical expertise. They play a key role in the academy's learning community, guiding students in translating ideas into form. They support experimentation, provide feedback, and foster a culture of safety, care and curiosity. They provide reflective guidance, often through one-to-one instruction and very much driven by the questions and ideas of the students.

Specialists maintain functional and inspiring spaces, coordinate workflow, and ensure that tools, materials, and machinery are well managed and accessible. They provide safety inductions, oversee procurement within budgetary constraints, and contribute to the academy's shared culture of experimentation and responsibility. They work with a high degree of autonomy within a broad framework, allowing them to adapt their guidance to the needs of each student.

Overview of workshops

Based on the belief that hands-on experience with materials is vital for students, a wide range of workshops has been developed over the years. Bachelor's and master's students may make use of these workshops.

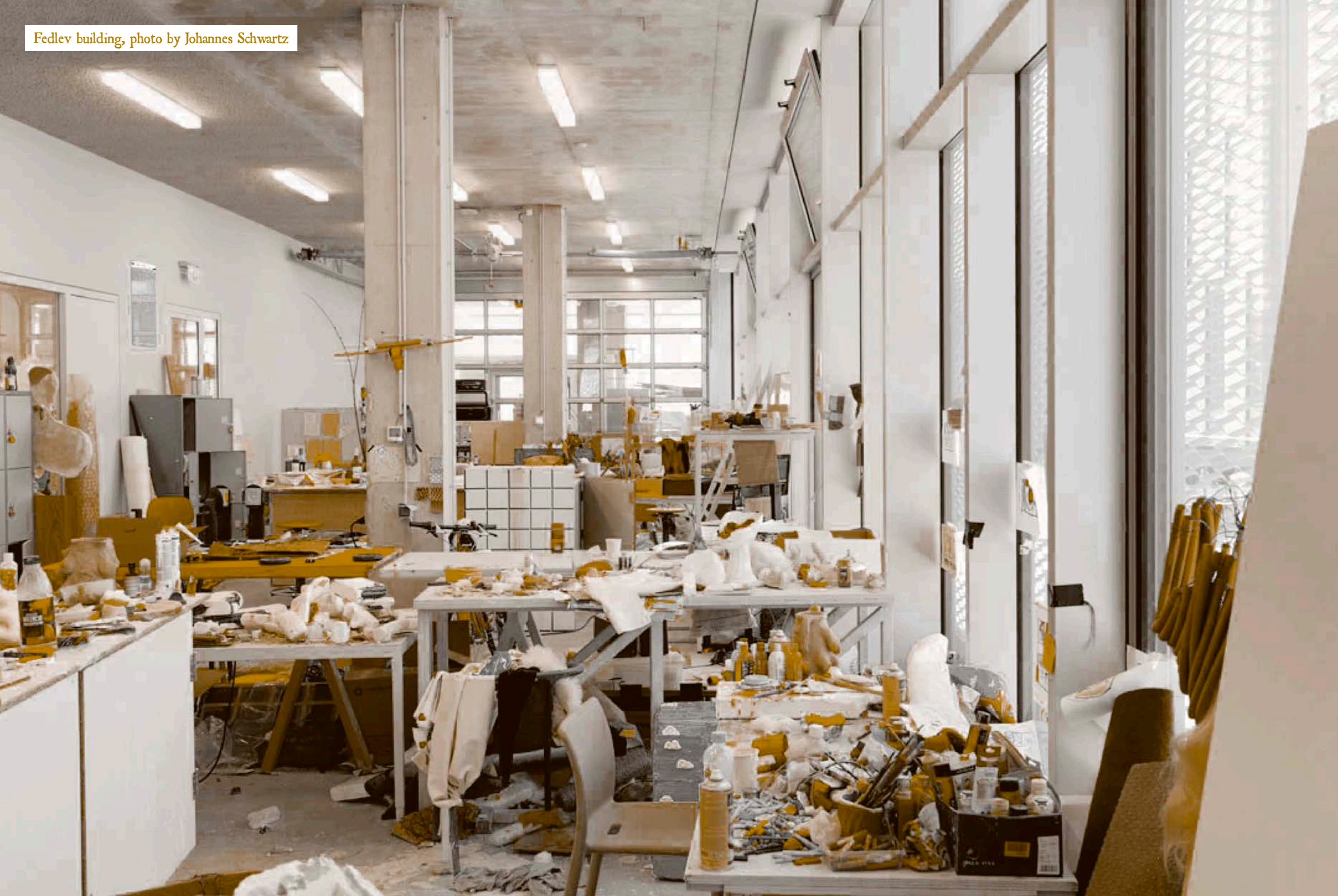
Some workshops are department-specific, while others are open to the whole academy. Department-specific workshops work closely

connected with educational departments, mostly by providing specific, technical instruction lessons. This is particularly the case for Glass, Fashion, Jewellery and Weaving. Department-specific workshops are also accessible (albeit to a more limited extent) to students from other departments.

Some non-departmental workshops have closer connections with certain departments. For example, the VAV department makes intensive use of the Assembly Studio, Sound Studio and Audio-visual Services. Similarly, the designLAB department makes extensive use of CAD/CAM, the Fine Arts department of the Metal and Wood Workshop, and Graphic Design of the Bookbinding Workshop.

The workshops are an essential part of the academy's educational offerings, where embodied learning, experimentation and craft converge.





HISTORY AND LOCATION

Founded in 1924, the Gerrit Rietveld Academie emerged from the merger of three existing Amsterdam schools specialising in arts and crafts. Originally established as the *Instituut voor Kunstnijverheidsonderwijs*, the academy was founded on the belief that artistic practice, craftsmanship and education are closely linked. From the 1930s onwards, the academy was influenced by modernist and socially engaged ideas, inspired by movements such as De Stijl and the Bauhaus. In 1967, it moved to its current location on the Frederik Roeskestraat in Amsterdam, into a building designed by Gerrit Rietveld for this specific purpose. Following its integration into the Dutch system of higher professional education in 1968, the academy was renamed the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in honour of Rietveld's legacy.

From the late 1960s and 1970s onwards, the academy increasingly embraced autonomous artistic practice, critical reflection and interdisciplinary experimentation. These developments have reinforced its reputation as a place where students are encouraged to develop their own artistic positions within a shared framework of creation, thinking and reflection.

Over the past few decades, the academy has grown both physically and institutionally, adding two buildings and developing its master's programme with the establishment of the Sandberg Instituut in 1995. Named after Willem Sandberg, former director of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and a key advocate for experimental, socially engaged art and design, the Sandberg Instituut was conceived as a postgraduate institute, founded to provide space for advanced artistic research, critical inquiry and self-directed practice beyond the bachelor's level.

During the experimental development phase from 1990 to 1995, the Sandberg Instituut was located at the Rietveld site. From 1995 onwards, the institute moved into its own premises on the Generaal Vetterstraat, enabling the development of its own identity and signature. In 1999 the institute moved to the Sint Nicolaasklooster on Prinses Irenestraat before returning to Frederik Roeskestraat in 2002 when the Benthem-Crouwel building was completed. In 2016, construction of the new Fedlev building commenced and the institute was relocated once again, this time to Overschiestraat. In 2019 Sandberg Instituut finally returned to Frederik Roeskestraat to dedicated spaces in the newly completed Fedlev building and the existing Benthem Crouwel building.

Since its inception, the Sandberg Instituut been characterised by small-scale, thematic programmes offering an environment in which artistic practice, theory, research and experimentation are closely intertwined, and where students are encouraged to position their work within broader cultural and societal contexts. Today, the Sandberg

Instituut has a strong identity as an internationally oriented master's institute, embedded within the broader architectural and pedagogical context of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie.

The buildings and garden of the academy

The Rietveld Academie and the Sandberg Instituut are housed in a unique ensemble of three buildings and a garden. Together, these form the academy's physical learning environment. This infrastructure is not merely supportive, but plays a central role in shaping the identity, history and visibility of the institution. The buildings and outdoor spaces are places where education, research, encounters and presentations converge, strongly defining the experience of students, tutors, and visitors alike.

Each of the elements forming the academy campus – the three buildings and the garden – has its own character and function. Together, they tell the story of the institution: a learning environment with a rich tradition and strong historical links to architecture and design. The academy's physical infrastructure is regarded as an integral part of the educational environment, with the architecture seen as supporting the educational vision of the academy.

The Rietveld Building

The academy's first building was designed by Gerrit Rietveld and completed in 1966. It was one of the first academy buildings in the Netherlands designed for both applied and fine arts, embracing innovation and spatial flexibility. It is the largest building Rietveld ever designed and symbolises the principles of the academy: openness, transparency and experimental freedom. Its construction featuring pre-fabricated concrete columns and glass façades created a revolutionary influx of light and spatial experience.

The building is of great architectural and cultural-historical significance, standing as an icon of modernist heritage. However, this status comes with responsibility: maintenance and sustainability upgrades are costly and complex, particularly as heritage values must be preserved. In the past, relocation was considered due to financial and maintenance pressures. However, owing to the involvement of the academy community ("Rietveld for Rietveld"), the decision was made to preserve the building and invest in its sustainable future and recognise its significance in representing a mentality.

Today, the Rietveld Building is once again at the heart of the housing strategy. A Conservation Management Plan has been developed to guide careful maintenance, sustainability measures and future use.

The challenge lies in combining heritage care with contemporary demands for sustainability, accessibility and educational functionality. Financial constraints continue to influence our vision for the future.

The Benthem Crowwel Building

In 2003, a second building was added. Designed by Benthem Crowwel Architects, the new building provided additional studios, workshops, and offices that allowed the academy to grow and reduced pressure on the Rietveld Building. The design is contemporary, with façades featuring thousands of cast glass elements, yet it still matches the clarity and scale of Rietveld's architectural principles.

The addition of this building also symbolises the academy's ability to renew itself and grow without abandoning its core. In the coming years, the focus will be on the efficient use of the space, the maintenance of installations and sustainability, so that the building continues to support education and research well into the future. Each year adjustments are made to reflect current needs, space usage and student numbers.

The Fedlev Building

The most recent addition is the Fedlev building, which opened in 2019 following an internal design competition among students and alumni. Studio Paulien Bremmer | Fedlev, in collaboration with Hootsmans Architectuurbureau, realized the building, which plays a connecting role within the campus: it links up with the existing buildings and opens up the site towards the central outdoor space. The third building was needed to accommodate the growing academy and to allow all departments to be housed at the same location, rather than renting spaces elsewhere.

The Fedlev Building houses the library, the woodworking workshop, most of the master's programmes, and the Theory Stairs auditorium, among other facilities. Its defining qualities are transparency and flexibility: spaces can be adapted for diverse forms of education, research and presentation. The architectural principles that guided its design were interaction, encounter and spatial openness.

The garden and outdoor space

The three buildings are connected by the outdoor space, which was originally designed by landscape architect Mien Ruys. Her design was characterised by an architectural approach, with carefully com-

posed plantings interacting with Rietveld's modernist buildings.

Today, the Garden Department (established in 2022) maintains and further develops the garden, combining the legacy of Ruys with contemporary insights from permaculture and regenerative thinking. The garden is not only a transition zone, but a learning environment and meeting place. Students use it for work, presentations and experiments.

The garden also contributes to sustainability and ecological awareness within the academy, with biodiversity, water management and the circular use of materials are embedded in the Garden Department's approach. In this way, the garden aligns with the academy's broader vision of ecology and interconnection.

FROM VISION TO ACTION

Our goals

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie has one overarching aim: to provide high standard education and research in an inspiring environment where there is space and time for making, questioning, building, failure and experimentation. Within this overarching ambition, we distinguish between two levels of goal:

General goal: to ensure that our education remains pedagogically strong and our research artistically relevant, with both remaining internationally recognised and societally relevant.

Specific goals: derived from our four core directions:

SUSTAINABILITY: to act and teach in ways that are ecologically conscious and regenerative.

INCLUSIVITY: to promote diversity and equal access, participation and representation across our community.

ACCESSIBILITY: to reduce physical, financial, linguistic and institutional barriers to learning and working.

TRANSPARENCY: to strengthen trust and accountability through clear communication and open governance.

Together these goals embody our aspirations as an academy: to be an institution that is autonomous yet responsible, experimental yet caring, critical yet regenerative.

Why we set these goals

Our goals are driven by conviction rather than compliance. We believe that art and design are not marginal, but central to a democratic and humane society. They cultivate imagination, empathy, and the capacity to envision alternatives, all of which are essential for democracy, resilience, and social transformation. By articulating these goals, we reaffirm our belief that artistic education is an act of care and of resistance: care for the world as it is, and opposition to the idea that it cannot be otherwise.

How we work towards them

The goals are the actions outlined in each of the four core directions. Each department, workshop, and research group will translate these shared ambitions into concrete steps: through curricular development, professional learning, community initiatives, and institutional policies. The *Two-Year Strategic Agendas*, which are described below, will help us to operationalise these ambitions by defining priorities, actions and indicators for each period between 2026 and 2031. These plans will take into account financial realities and limitations.

How we evaluate progress

Evaluation is a shared practice of reflection and learning, not an external check. The mechanisms for measuring and reflecting on progress are described further on in this chapter.

Work agendas

This Institutional Plan outlines the academy's long-term direction for the period 2026–2031. To ensure that our ambitions lead to concrete and feasible steps, the plan will be implemented through three consecutive two-year work agendas, which will be evaluated in qualitative and quantitative terms.

Two-year work agendas

Each work agenda links the four core directions of this plan – sustainability, inclusivity, accessibility and transparency – to specific priorities and actions. In this way, the six-year horizon is translated into practical and achievable steps. The work agendas are aligned with the budget cycle and form the basis for the academy's annual report. After two years, the results of a work agenda are reviewed in full, and this evaluation informs the next agenda. Financial reality is always considered when evaluating or formulating an agenda.

Process and participation

The work agendas are drawn up by the Executive Board (CvB) and the Management Team (MT). Input is provided by the education departments, staff departments, workshops, students, the Participation Council (MR)

and the Supervisory Board (RvT). This ensures that the agendas reflect the perspectives of the entire community and remain grounded in both daily practice and long-term strategy.

Tasks and responsibilities

CvB and MT: prepare the two-year work agendas in dialogue with the departments, staff, students, the MR and the RvT.

Participation Council (MR): advises on the agendas and monitors their implementation.

Executive Board (CvB): formally approves the agendas.

Supervisory Board (RvT): oversees process and outcomes.

Living document

The Institutional Plan is not a static text, but a document that is actively used and referred to. The two-year work agendas make the plan a living framework that is concrete, transparent and actionable. By connecting the ambitions of the Institutional Plan to the academy's daily practice, the plan remains visible and relevant throughout the six-year period.

Evaluation and insight

Towards a cyclical quality culture

Over the coming years, the academy will further strengthen the quality assurance system that connects our reflective culture with structured, cyclical processes. We are moving towards a cyclical quality culture not by replacing our existing practices, but rather by formalising them in a manner that aligns with our experimental and relational context. Our goal is not to measure more for the sake of it, but to improve our understanding: to translate the richness of art and design education into a language of quality that recognises both its measurable and immeasurable aspects.

Beyond numbers

The quality of our art and design education cannot be reduced to data points. Numbers alone cannot tell us

what matters: why some students thrive while others struggle, how inclusion feels in daily practice, or what artistic risk-taking means for learning. Following the principles of the Boekman Foundation's study on diversity and evaluation, our approach to quality will therefore combine quantitative indicators with qualitative understanding. Quantitative data – from the National Student Survey, graduate and staff feedback, and financial and participation data – provides necessary signals. However, it is only through dialogue, observation and reflective reporting that we can understand what these signals mean and how to act upon them.

Strategic agendas as learning instruments

The strategic agendas will guide our progress and form part of a cyclical process of evaluation, reflection, and adjustments where needed. For each agenda, we will define both quantitative benchmarks (e.g. output, participation, new initiatives, financial indicators) and qualitative milestones (e.g. changes in how we work and learn together, new collaborations). Each year, the Executive Board, together with the Quality Assurance department and the MT, will report on these developments to the Participation Council and Supervisory Board. These reports will be supported by narratives, case studies and examples from daily practice. The results will also be shared with the academy's community.

A regenerative approach to knowing

To "know" the quality of our education, we need to listen as much as measure. The external accreditation of our educational programmes takes place every six years. These are moments when multiple forms of knowledge – such as student surveys, interviews, peer reviews, reflection meetings, documentation and external feedback from critical friends and professional partners – are considered together. Over the next couple of years, we will further develop our internal cyclical quality culture in order to have valuable moments of reflection more often. This layered approach to feedback and evaluation enables us to trace changes not only in outcomes, but also in narratives, relationships and awareness.

Reporting as reflection

Our reports will therefore account not only for results, but also for the questions we ask ourselves along the way. Success will be defined not by perfection, but by the depth of our understanding and our willingness to act.

Concrete actions

At the time of writing this institutional plan, the first work agenda for 2026–27 had not yet been fully developed. However, clear goals were set and priorities identified when this plan and the budget for 2026 were made. These are listed below. The work agenda for 2026–27 shall be further detailed in the way described above.

DOMAIN	ACTIONS IN 2026	ACTIONS IN 2027
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Sustainability and regenerative thinking

Education	Implement BA competencies (research and reflection learning lines); introduce material- and supply-chain-aware teaching; develop shared criteria per study year; further develop graduate policy and preparation for the professional practice.	Further develop regenerative didactics; cross-department BA projects on repair and circularity; monitor material consumption per course.
Research	RSR: focus on material politics; further development of Material Library; communicate per research group how work relates to IP directions.	Strengthening of Materiality as a research line, further develop collaboration with Urgent Ecologies.
Workshops	Investigate function profiles and balance teaching/instruction; allocate teaching-support hours; hold Practicum Generale (2 x per year); continue developing materials library and pigment chains.	Embed cross-workshop roles; fully implement safety programme (chemicals/ATEX/equipment checks); establish goals for material use/re-use.
Operations	Reduce energy use, waste, and transition to renewables; launch fundraising/crowdfunding for the Rietveld Building; provide finance & control training for teams.	Decide on façade/MJOP maintenance plan; implement investment priorities; publish annual impact report (energy/waste).

DOMAIN ACTIONS IN 2026 ACTIONS IN 2027

Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity (IDE)

Education	Work on Inclusive Pedagogy Programme (for teachers and workshops); introduce explicit BA/MA assessment criteria; provide feedback-culture training for students and tutors.	Continue curriculum reviews on representation and positionality; start annual IDE audit across courses and assessments.
Admissions / Recruitment	Revisit BA/MA admissions procedures and recruiting strategies; continue with inclusive recruitment (competency-based, diverse panels, accessible language).	Evaluate and adjust; establish structural cooperation with secondary/vocational schools; improve onboarding for new staff.
Research	Strengthen ethical standards and plural methodologies; foster dialogue beyond Western canons.	Develop guidelines; co-create labs with partner institutions.
Transparency (IDE)	Gain insight into who we fail to reach and why; develop related goals and indicators.	Adjust goals based on findings.

DOMAIN ACTIONS IN 2026 ACTIONS IN 2027

Accessibility

Education	Provide training and tools for neurodiversity-sensitive teaching; strengthen study-skills and study-coach programmes.	Evaluate and scale; develop peer-support formats; launch Erasmus+ staff-mobility.
Operations (Physical / Digital)	Prioritise building improvements: routing, signage, accessible toilets, low-stimulus rooms; ensure accessibility of websites, forms.	Implement second tranche of building adaptations; carry out regular accessibility testing of digital environments.
Financial	Keep material costs transparent; offer micro-grants for materials or participation where possible.	Continue and evaluate; build partnerships for material sponsorship.
Outreach	Establish structural collaboration with regional secondary/vocational schools; targeted outreach to learners from other socio-economic backgrounds.	Scale up outreach programmes; evaluate reach and retention.

DOMAIN ACTIONS IN 2026 ACTIONS IN 2027

Transparency

Education	Publish learning objectives and assessment rubrics for BA/MA; promote reciprocal feedback between students and tutors.	Further professionalise the Examination Board.
Research	Develop multi-year research plans; ensure ethical transparency by making processes, doubts and positions explicit.	Expand internal communication and public dissemination of research (activities and outputs).
Governance	Provide accessible summaries of decisions; make all policy documents bilingual; better communicate what is taking place; (further) develop web/intranet pages on each core direction; develop working agendas and report on ambitions and progress.	Further develop function framework and annual tasking.

CONCLUSION

The academy’s learning environment, including its studios and workshops and the people who care for, clean, maintain and facilitate them, is fundamental to its functioning. Together, they make education possible, and every contribution is crucial.

This Institutional Plan sets out a shared direction for the period 2026–2031. It reflects who we are and articulates who we want to become. It is not a static blueprint, but rather a living document that is intended to be revisited, discussed and implemented at all levels of the academy.

Over the next six years, we are committed to building on the work already done while deepening our engagement with the four core directions:

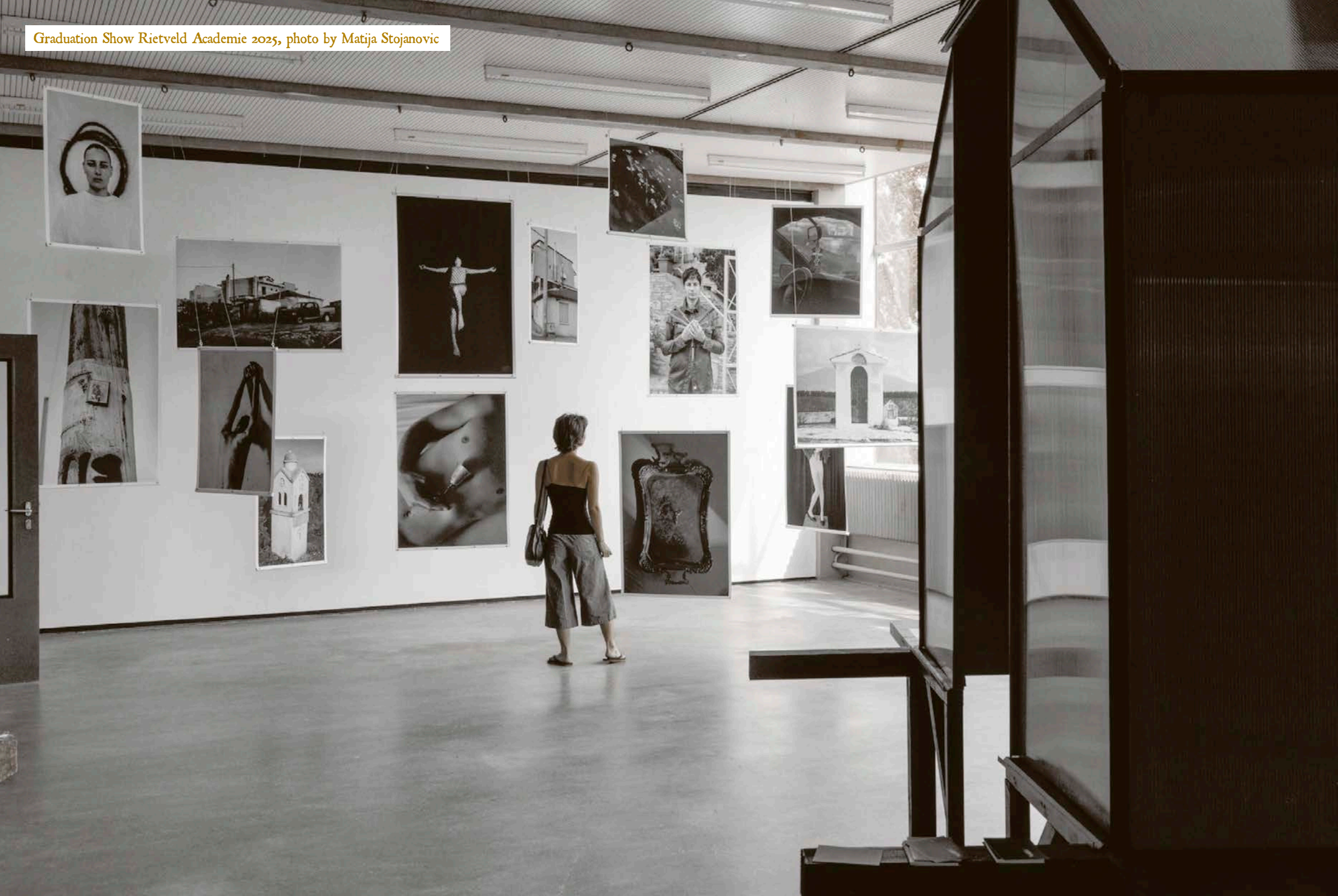
Sustainability, by embedding regenerative thinking in education, operations and everyday practice;

Inclusivity, by fostering cultural change through pedagogy, policy and shared accountability;

Accessibility, by removing barriers – visible and invisible – in infrastructure, language, care and curriculum;

Transparency, by cultivating trust through clarity, visibility and openness in decision-making.

We affirm that none of these directions exists in isolation. They are interdependent, and their implementation relies on collaboration across education, research, workshops and operations. The academy is not a neutral space – it is a collective, situated practice, shaped by all who participate in it.



PROCESS AND INPUT

The Institutional Plan 2026–2031 was developed through extensive reflection and dialogue, including a review and evaluation of the previous Institutional Plan. An editorial board and an internal sounding board group were assembled following an open call. The Participation Council formed the second internal sounding board group, the Supervisory Board the third, and the final, external sounding board group was the academy’s professional field advisory committee. Draft texts were discussed with staff and educational departments throughout the process, and feedback was incorporated into subsequent versions. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to this process.

Entitled *Undefined Unsolicited Unsettling*, the 2020–2025 institutional plan sets out the core values that the academy community continues to uphold. The document was therefore a natural starting point and basis for discussions about the strategic plan for the next six years. A number of themes run through both plans like a thread.

In the previous institutional plan, it was felt that a separate vision and mission needed to be defined for the bachelor’s programmes (Rietveld Academie) and the master’s programmes (Sandberg Instituut). However, several voices in the academy (from the participatory council, the editorial board and the management team) are now calling for a plan that symbolises greater unity. What do we stand for together? How can we support each other and our community.

Advice from an organisation-wide editorial board (October 2024–January 2025)

The desire for greater unity is also reflected in the process of writing this plan. As a first step, an organisation-wide editorial group formulated recommendations and advice for the Executive Board and the three directors (Management Team) regarding the mission, vision and future directions, using the institutional plan of 2020–2025 as a basis. The editorial group included representatives from the bachelor’s and master’s programmes, as well as staff members, researchers, stakeholders from the workshops and student representatives. The editorial group unanimously advised the Executive Board and the Management Team to formulate a joint vision and mission for the Gerrit Rietveld Academie this time around and drafted several text proposals. The Executive Board and the directors supplemented these texts, resulting in the first draft version of the Institutional Plan 2026–2031.

The editorial board consisted of: Joseefke Brabander (staff, Public & Projects, IT); Dorothe Orczyk (MA staff, policy); Maria Boog (staff, Student Affairs); Jens Pfeifer (Head of BA Glass); Judith Leysner (Head

of MA Fine Art, Unsettling); Flavia Dzodan (Research); Sarah Arnolds (Project Assistant Workshops); Elisabeth Klement (BA lecturer); Elio J. Carranza (MA lecturer); Andrea Otoya Covelli (student); Lea Cuvelier (student); Anne Julie Andersen (student) en Kadri-Ann Kivisild (student). Ruby Hoette (MA Director of Education) participated on behalf of the Management Team. The editorial board was led by coordinator Tessa Verheul.

Glossary

The editorial team advised the CvB and MT to include a glossary with the new institutional plan in order to explain the specific context of certain words in an accessible manner.

Feedback from an organisation-wide sounding board (March–May 2025)

Draft version 1 was shared with an organisation-wide sounding board. This group included representatives from the bachelor’s and master’s programmes, as well as staff members, researchers, stakeholders from the workshops and student representatives. The sounding board group provided valuable feedback on the first draft, which formed the basis for writing draft version 2.

Members of the internal sounding board group were: Anke Zedelius (MA staff); Tomas Adolfs (BA staff); Jeroen Kramer (Head of BA Basic Year); Anja Groten (Head of MA Design); Ben Zegers (Policy Officer); Pam Sikkink (Workshops); Marieke Gelissen (BA DOGtime tutor); Luis Lecea (MA lecturer); Sara Pezolesi (student); and Laura Quintero-Soekarnsingh (Unsettling staff). Miriam Bestebreurtje (BA Director of Education) chaired the meetings on behalf of the Management Team.

Draft version 2 shared and discussed (May–July 2025)

Draft version 2 was then discussed again with the sounding board group, as well as with the Supervisory Board, the Participation Council and the Field Advisory Committee. The text was also resubmitted to the editorial team. Members of the management team shared and discussed draft version 2 with their respective constituencies, at meetings

of the heads of bachelor's departments and the heads of master's departments, and the operations meeting. The management team and the Executive Board discussed the feedback from the various groups and decided what would be included in the drafting of version 3.

The members of the Participation Council at the time of writing this Institutional Plan were: Nagaré Willemsen (Chair, Unsettling); Floris de Vries (Participation Council Secretary); Clara Arnaud (student member); Jomel Goh (student member); Rasha Dakkak (BA Head of Graphic Design); Renjana Louise-Permadi (student member and subsequently Chair of the Participation Council); Stephanie ter Heide (workshop specialist); Sojourna Jon-Paul (student member); Uta Eisenreich (BA lecturer); August Kroon Andersson (student member); Arnoud Kortebout (Head of Facilities); Macarena Magaña Villar (student member); Agata Bar (Master Coordinator); Gervaise Savvias (student member); and Márk Redele (Research Coordinator).

The members of the Supervisory Board at the time of writing this Institutional Plan were: Judith van Kranendonk, Martijn Groep, Roosje Klap, Wayne Modest, and Jeroen van Kooten.

The Professional Field Advisory Committee consists of: Kurt van Belleghem (curator, writer, and publisher); Staci Bu Shea (artist, curator, and writer); Ilse van Rooij (artist and educator); Rosa de Graaf (art educator, Kunstinstituut Melly); Michel van Dartel (Professor of Situated Art, Design and Technology); and Aude Christel Mgba (curator and art historian).

FINAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CO-WRITERS: The Executive Board, consisting of Maaïke Lauwaert, and the Management Team, consisting of Miriam Bestebreurtje, Director of the Rietveld Academie for Bachelor education and preparatory programmes; Ruby Hoette, Director of the Sandberg Instituut for Master's education and Director Research; and Judith Kroon, Director of Operations and Workshops.

COORDINATOR AND LEAD WRITER: Tessa Verheul
WRITER GLOSSARY: Rosie Haward
FINAL EDITING: Jane Szita
GRAPHIC DESIGN: Alix Stria

Approval of Institutional Plan 2026–2031

Date of approval of text by the Executive Board, CvB,
 Management Team:
 November 20, 2025

Date of approval of text by the Participatory Council:
 December 8, 2025

Date of approval of text by the Supervisory Board:
 December 15, 2025

ABLEISM

The devaluing and systematic discrimination of people with physical, psychiatric, developmental or intellectual disabilities. This discrimination can be intentional or unintentional but often stems from the belief that people with disabilities need to be “fixed” in order to adapt to an ableist society. The Gerrit Rietveld Academie takes responsibility for accommodating the needs of those who are underrepresented and marginalised due to social and political attitudes towards disability.

ACCESS

In education, access refers to the degree to which students and staff are treated equitably, taking into account factors such as their background, language, economic privilege, race, sexuality, disability and gender. Increasing access may involve providing additional services or removing potential barriers. Examples include reducing course fees or reworking application processes, as well as adapting the curriculum and learning environment to make them more suitable for a variety of individuals.

ACCESSIBILITY

If institutions, buildings, vehicles, spaces, information, products and services are accessible then they can be used by everyone – with or without a disability – in a similar amount of time and with a similar amount of effort. However, accessibility is a subjective, cultural practice; it is not one-size-fits-all. Addressing the need for greater accessibility is one of the four core directions laid out in the Gerrit Rietveld Academie institutional plan, which aims to promote a fair and inclusive educational environment as well as better access to buildings and learning, along with the policies to support such changes.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Taking responsibility as an individual, group or institution. At the academy, this process is supported by an easily accessible social safety network which encourages the practice of “calling in”. This involves engaging with the individual compassionately and patiently, investing in their learning in order to hold them accountable and change their behaviour. This may involve an apology, recognition of the issue or taking action.

AGENCY

The capacity of individuals and collectives to make decisions and take actions that reflect their beliefs and values. Agency is dependent on one’s economic resources, structural conditions, access to power and other factors. The Gerrit Rietveld Academie aims to give its students and staff a greater sense of agency in terms of their work and study, and to provide opportunities to develop this at the academy and beyond.

ART AND DESIGN

ACADEMY

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie is one of a number of art and design academies in the Netherlands. As an independent educational institute, it specialises in art and design education at bachelor’s and master’s level. It offers students practical, collaborative and critical thinking skills to prepare them for a career in art and design.

ASSESSMENT

Students’ work is assessed each semester to ensure that their educational trajectory and the level of support they are receiving is sufficient. These assessments enable teaching staff to evaluate students’ progress and development, and to provide guidance and support to help them graduate.

AUTONOMOUS

In shaping the vision for art and design education in the coming years, the Rietveld and the Sandberg work together as one entity. They influence each other in a pedagogical dialogue. However, they also function autonomously, determining the trajectory of bachelor’s and master’s education as coherent, individual entities with their own focus and research. Each department is autonomous and develops its own curriculum, giving it flexibility to respond to student interests, as well as social, political, and cultural events and issues.

AUTONOMY

IN PRACTICE

The academy encourages students to be autonomous in their artistic practice. While each department may focus on a specific discipline, the role of tutors, teachers and workshop staff is to support students in realising their projects, which may span various topics, disciplines and media. This autonomy is essential for their development as creative practitioners and prepares them for professional life.

BASICYEAR

The first year of the four-year bachelor’s programme at the Rietveld Academie. The Basicyear offers a broad and challenging basis, introducing students to a variety of concepts, approaches and practices before they go on to specialise in one department.

CARE

In a general sense, care indicates concern for another being or thing. As a relational practice and collective responsibility, it refers to the various ways in which individuals, groups or institutions can support and accommodate the needs of others. For those experiencing systemic oppression, care practices may involve reflecting on and adapting existing care models to better meet their needs. There is no one correct method of care, but it encompasses everything done to “maintain, continue and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible”. As an institution, the Gerrit Rietveld Academie fulfils its duty of care by reducing barriers, maintaining transparency and accountability, and cultivating the capacity to be challenged.

COMMITMENT

As an educational institution, the Gerrit Rietveld Academie is committed to providing a well-rounded, high-level education to its students. It is also committed to providing a safe social and working environment in which its students and staff can flourish. The academy takes these commitments seriously and is continuously working to sustain and improve what it has to offer.

COMMUNITY

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie is a large community that extends beyond its walls to include everyone who has studied, taught, guest lectured or visited there. It is this community that keeps the academy as diverse, interesting, critical and relevant as it is, so it is important that it is nourished and supported. The opportunity for this community to grow and develop directly affects its ability to shape the future of art and design.

COMPETENCIES

The assessment framework follows national regulations for fine art and design education and is collectively formulated by Dutch academies. All accredited educational institutions are legally required to adhere to these regulations, ensuring that students attain and maintain a high level of competency.

CORE DIRECTION

The academy has set out four core directions for the next six years, which are sustainability, inclusivity, accessibility and transparency. These will serve as guiding principles for education, workshops, research and operations, emphasising the importance of interdependency and collaboration until 2031.

CORE VALUES

The academy's core values are shaped not only by management and policy, but also by the work of students, workshop staff and teachers. These values include fostering radical imagination, committing to the future of art and design, recognising their capacity as catalysts for change, and operating with transparency, unity and community.

CREATOR DOCTUS (CRD)

Creator Doctus is a third-cycle award for higher arts education developed at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie. The trajectory culminates in a body of artistic work or projects rather than a written dissertation. As of 2026 two CrD trajectories have been completed. The third CrD trajectory will be conducted within the framework of the Professional Doctorate (PD) Pilot (2023–2030), a nation-wide pilot initiated by the Association of Universities of Applied Sciences in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

CRITICALITY

The act of analysing and deconstructing existing models of education and art-making, as well as their historical and cultural contexts, in order to further understand and develop them. At the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, criticality is considered integral to the development of both visual and research practices.

CROSS-DISCIPLINARITY

Involving two or more areas of knowledge or practice. While each individual department focuses on its own discipline, there is a pedagogical focus on the interdisciplinary nature of student's work and how this can enrich the focal discipline. The Gerrit Rietveld Academie fosters an educational space where the overlaps and flows between topics and materials are encouraged, and the connections and disconnects between disciplines and departments are explored.

CURRICULUM

Curricula provide a solid foundation to ensure that students gain the necessary skills and experience as they progress through the course. Each department develops its own curriculum, which shifts and changes at the Sandberg Instituut to accommodate the interests and practices of students and teachers, as well as contemporary developments in the field, and social and political issues.

DIALOGUE

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie strives to foster an environment of dialogue, free from domination. It is a place where students, teachers, workshop specialists and staff can come together despite their differences, where all voices are heard, challenged and taken seriously. This involves being aware of existing power structures and inherited norms and creating opportunities for those whose voices have historically been marginalised. The academy offers various initiatives to encourage dialogue between students, staff, and management. These include a newly platform for student representation as well as the Participation Council. Making of all kinds is also valued as a dialogue with materials, technologies, histories, and futures.

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination refers to the unjust or harmful treatment of individuals or groups based on characteristics that are socially and politically significant, such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, migration background, or socioeconomic status. Discrimination can be direct, indirect, systemic, or structural, occurring through individual behaviours as well as through policies, practices, or norms that appear neutral but disproportionately disadvantage certain groups.

DIVERSITY

Diversity refers to the presence of people with a wide range of identities, perspectives, and lived experiences, including but not limited to differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, age, language, culture, migration background and socioeconomic position. Diversity is not only about who is present, but also about the variety of knowledge, ways of being and ways of making that people bring.

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie is committed to sustaining a diverse community by integrating inclusive practices into its curricula, recruitment and selection processes, everyday interactions, and institutional policies and infrastructure. The Unsettling Framework for Action has been developed further to support the long-term embedding of diversity, equity and inclusion in a meaningful and sustainable way.

ECOLOGY

The cross-departmental initiative Urgent Ecologies was launched in 2022. The initiative considers the relationship between humans, non-humans and their living environment, prioritising ecology and sustainability at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie. The initiative promotes ecological literacy across the academy through workshops, policy, professional practice and education.

EMBODIED EDUCATION

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie sees both material practice and research as processes of relational and embodied learning. This acknowledges that knowledge emerges not only from the classroom, but also from lived experience. It recognises that different bodies contribute to and shape knowledge and the academy in equally valuable ways.

EQUITY VS. EQUALITY

Equality provides the same resources or opportunities to all individuals, regardless of their circumstances.

Equity recognises that people face different challenges and systemic barriers. It ensures that each person receives the support, resources, and opportunities they need to thrive.

Embedding equity into institutional policies and practices creates a fair and just environment for all, moving beyond uniform treatment.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Executive Board is responsible for overseeing the running of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie and its daily operations, managing its public and financial interests, and overseeing the development of educational programmes, among other tasks. The Executive Board is supported by a management team.

EXPERIMENTAL

The academy actively encourages an experimental approach to art and design practice, as well as to pedagogy itself. Experiments take place on a material level as well as in research, policy and education, ensuring that the Gerrit Rietveld Academie remains a flexible and responsive place of learning.

FREE DEPARTMENTAL CHOICE

Students begin the bachelor with the Basicyear, during which they encounter and test out different disciplines and ways of making. They can then decide for themselves which department to continue their studies in. While their development is supported by workshop staff and teachers, they choose their own direction.

GERRIT AND WILLEM

The academy is named after the Dutch architect and designer Gerrit Rietveld (1888–1964), who designed the building which partly houses the academy. Willem Sandberg (1897–1984) was the former director of the Stedelijk Museum, after whom the Sandberg Instituut is named.

GERRIT RIETVELD

ACADEMIE

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie is the name used to describe both the Rietveld Academie for Bachelor and preparatory education and the Sandberg Instituut for Master education.

GRADUATES

Graduates of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie go on to enjoy a wide range of jobs, roles and experiences, including MA programmes at the Sandberg Instituut and other institutes worldwide, residency programmes, such as those at the Rijksakademie and De Ateliers, and careers as artists, designers, performers, architects and writers. They also become teachers, curators and members of collectives, and often return to the Gerrit Rietveld Academie to teach, run workshops or speak about their work.

IMAGINATION

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie is a place grounded in imagination, a way of giving form to what does not yet have a name. Students use their imagination and intuition as creative tools on a daily basis. The academy also considers art and design to be essential for developing radical imagination, a means of envisioning alternatives to the prevailing understanding of the economy, value, labour, ethics, and politics.

INCLUSION

Inclusion is the intentional practice of centring people who have historically been excluded due to systemic oppression, and of transforming our structures, processes, and spaces to ensure that everyone can participate fully, safely and equitably. At the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, inclusion means making space for multiple voices, fostering learning from and with difference, and adapting systems based on the needs, perspectives and experiences of those affected by exclusion. It is one of the four core directions specified in the institutional plan.

INDEPENDENT

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie is an independent art and design academy, and as such is not connected to or run by a larger institution or university. This gives it the freedom to determine its own structure and educational developments, within the boundaries of the WHW (Higher Education and Research Act) and other laws and regulations.

INDUSTRY

During their time at the academy students are prepared for life in the professional sphere. This preparation is integrated into their day-to-day education, through collaborations, project briefs, research and engagement with the local and international art and design communities. Students also develop these skills through internships and other work experience.

INSTITUTIONAL PLAN

Every six years the academy develops a new institutional plan, involving an organisation-wide editorial group which advises the Executive Board and Management Team. This plan gives shape to the mission and vision of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie over the coming six years, outlining themes and directions for the community and identifying areas that have been specifically selected for development. Each plan builds on the previous one, weaving lines of continuation. In this plan, the four core directions are sustainability, inclusivity, accessibility and transparency.

INTERDEPENDENCY

Across the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, education, research, workshops and operations are interconnected parts of a whole. Staff and students from across the institution contribute to its culture and its growth, their proximity a vital aspect of the ways in which pedagogy, solidarity and care practices develop and are maintained.

INTERNATIONALITY

Gerrit Rietveld Academie is an international academy, with students, staff and graduates hailing from diverse backgrounds, perspectives and nationalities, forming a wide network that extends far beyond the Netherlands. This focus on internationality is maintained alongside their presence and practices through ongoing discussions and considerations about how to adapt and develop the academy to accommodate international students, discourses and developments.

LANGUAGE

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie is an educational environment with over 50 nationalities represented among its students and staff. While English is the main spoken language, other languages make a key contribution to the variety and imagination of the community. They play a vital part in sharing cultures, practices and knowledge.

LEARNING

In education, learning refers to acquiring skills, knowledge and experience, whether individually or as a group. At the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, learning is expected of not only the students, but also the tutors, coordinators, heads of department, workshop staff, Executive Board and the institution itself.

LIFE AFTER RIETVELD AND SANDBERG

Life after Rietveld and Sandberg is a monthly extracurricular programme organised to prepare students and recent graduates for professional practice. It includes lectures from both experts in the field and Gerrit Rietveld Academie graduates, who share insights into their careers after studying, offering knowledge and advice to help recent and current students transition from study to professional life.

MANAGEMENT

TEAM

The Management Team consists of three directors: the Director of the Rietveld (Bachelor education and Preparatory courses), the Director of the Sandberg (Master education) and Research and the Director of Business Operations. The Management Team oversees the bachelor's and master's programmes, research, as well as the academy's financial and business operations, ensuring consistency and quality.

NETWORK

The academy is a web of interconnected support systems. Its various community structures are made up of staff, tutors, students and graduates, all of whom play a vital role in sustaining the network.

PARTICIPATION COUNCIL

The Participation Council of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie is a democratic body with the right to approve and advise decisions made by the Executive Board. The council aims to maintain high-quality education within an effectively and efficiently run academy. It promotes openness, transparency and deliberation within the institution, and is made up of 14 democratically elected members. Half of these are staff and half are students.

POLICY

Policy development provides workable frameworks for institutional changes and goals. These frameworks, including the institutional plan, play an important role in determining the desired changes of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie community and how these can be implemented based on research about and feedback from this community.

POLITICAL

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie considers art and design to be essential for questioning, reflecting on and shaping alternatives to dominant narratives. Politics influences educational institutions, their policies and the learning environment. It also affects how we make and think, and what we make and think about, as well as who is present in the institution and who is not. Therefore, the academy is political in its very fabric and is inherently, as well as explicitly, engaged with and affected by politics and the political.

POWER

In order to create an inclusive, accessible and respectful learning space, those in power must be aware of the consequences their power has for those they are responsible for. Hierarchies create insidious power dynamics that can be hard to identify, and which are often normalised. The academy strives for ethical transparency in its governance and decision-making processes regarding the allocation of power. The aim is to give those subject to power a greater sense of autonomy.

PROFESSIONAL- ISATION

Teachers, tutors and other staff members are offered various professional development opportunities. These include teachers' days, the use of sustainable employment hours and subsidies for further training and community development.

REGENERATIVE EDUCATION

A form of learning that not only focuses on knowledge transfer or limiting damage, but also actively contributes to restoring, strengthening and renewing social, ecological and cultural systems. It highlights the need to reflect, rework and renew. It emphasises interdependence and care over extraction and production.

RESEARCH

At the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, research is a fundamental part of the educational vision and embedded throughout the curriculum, connecting theory and practice. Research is understood as an embodied and situated process of inquiry and reflection unfolding across the academy through diverse methods and forms of output. The central research organisation, Rietveld Sandberg Research (RSR) supports and coordinates research groups that address specific themes connected to the curriculum, and fosters a shared research culture through projects and collaborations.

RESPONSIBILITY

All those involved in the Gerrit Rietveld Academie are responsible for themselves, each other and the world around them. This ensures that everyone is treated with respect and can reflect on how their actions affect others. The institution continues to explore ways of cultivating a learning environment in which different experiences, positions and forms of knowing can coexist. Some individual roles have greater responsibility for the community, such as those of the Executive Board and the Management Team members, who are responsible for staying present, engaged and self-reflective in how they respond to social and political issues and the community's concerns.

SAFETY

Safety involves creating a welcoming environment in which everyone is assured of dignity and respect, both from others and from the academy itself. It protects and maintains people's physical, psychological and social safety, ensuring that there are robust and accessible protocols in place to deal with undesirable behaviour. Progress has been made in developing social safety across the academy in recent years. This includes expanding the Social Safety team, developing a new code of conduct, introducing new policies to address workload, and creating new training programmes.

SMALL-SCALE

Small-scale education is not only a logistical choice, but also a pedagogical commitment. It enables personal development, experimentation and meaningful interaction, all while keeping the advantage of flexibility. In this setting shared learning experiences, mentoring relationships and a dynamic dialogue between students, tutors and staff can flourish.

SOCIAL

ENGAGEMENT

The academy aims to integrate social issues into each curriculum, offering students the chance to engage with their broader social context and consider how they and their work are affected by it, and vice versa. Rather than being isolated from the wider world, the academy is a microcosm of it.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

The academy is committed to the principles and practices of social justice. It aims to contribute to creating and maintaining an equal society, in which all groups are treated with respect and can live full, safe and happy lives. The academy acknowledges the need to pursue these aims within the localised space of the educational environment and continues to ask how it might need to adapt and change to fulfil them.

STAFF

The academy employs a broad range of staff who keep it running smoothly and provide a supportive and enjoyable environment for students and tutors alike. The staff includes, amongst others, administrators, cleaners, canteen staff, concierges, school counsellors, and many more.

STUDENTS

The academy has approximately 850 students, who are enrolled at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie and have committed themselves to the demands and rewards of higher education.

STUDENT-CENTRED

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie aims to centre the needs and wishes of the students regarding their education. Rather than assuming a top-down model of education, the institution also works with horizontal learning models. Only by listening and paying attention to students can a fulfilling, challenging and relevant curriculum be created that helps students to go on to lead a satisfying professional life.

STUDENT CHARTER

The Higher Education and Scientific Research Act (WHW) requires the academy to set out in a Student Charter the education, educational facilities, and rights and obligations of the student. The charter aims to give students clarity regarding what they can expect from the institution and what its responsibilities are towards them, and vice versa.

STUDENT-DRIVEN

At the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, students have many opportunities for students to get involved in the development of education and the institution itself. By encouraging them to think and rethink their position in their work and to speak up, the academy also offers them spaces in which to test out these positions and opinions. Students run their own research programmes and are members of student support groups and extra-curricular groups, which provide them with a variety of spaces to voice their ideas. In line with the general regulations, there are also student members on the Participation Council, in working groups and on the application and interview committees.

SUPERVISORY BOARD

The Supervisory Board controls, advises and supports the Executive Board. The board consists of five individuals who bring a wide range of expertise, including the fields of education, the arts, research, academia and finances.

SUPPORT

The academy has a robust culture of support from student councillors, mentors and the Social Safety team. This team includes the Social Safety coordinator, the school psychologist, the student councillor, and the confidential advisors. They can help with a variety of difficulties and problems ranging from work-related issues and mental health struggles to experiences of undesirable behaviour.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is one of the four core concerns on which the Gerrit Rietveld Academie will focus in the coming years, as set out in the institutional plan. The focus will be on improving the state of materials and conditions by promoting ecological awareness, social safety and wellbeing. The academy aims to actively contribute to restoring, renewing and strengthening ecological, social and cultural systems.

TUTORS

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie employs tutors who specialise in a wide variety of disciplines, skills and research areas. They share this knowledge with students through lectures, workshops, screenings, field trips and exhibitions.

TEMPORARY DEPARTMENTS

The Temporary Departments are a series of one-off, two-year, full-time programmes that lead to a master in Fine Art and Design. They run parallel to the five permanent departments at the Sandberg Instituut, allowing for a topical approach that reflects current social and political developments. Similar to a research master's degree, these programmes attract tutors and students from a variety of disciplines and different areas of expertise, allowing them to come together around one topic for a focused period.

TRANSPARENCY

Transparency is one of the four core directions laid out in the institutional plan. It is the practice of making institutional decisions and processes available and accessible to staff, students and the public. This includes intentions involving ethical governance, informed decision-making, open dialogue between students, staff and management, and pedagogical transparency. It is supported by initiatives such as the Ethical Framework for Partnerships and Collaborations.

UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie is a university of applied sciences, which designates it a higher education institution that follows a practical line of pedagogy. Often, universities of applied sciences are skills-based, however the academy combines skills-based learning with critical thinking and research.

WORKSHOPS

The Gerrit Rietveld Academie has 25 different workshops: Analog/Digital Film, Audiovisual Services, Bookbinding, CAD/CAM, Ceramics, Computer, Editing Studios, Fashion, Glass, Jewellery, Letterpress & Offset, Library, Metal, Photography, Printmaking Workshop, Printshop, Sandberg Medialab, Screenprinting, Sound Studio, Textile, Tool-o-theek, Weaving, Willem Rieder Film Studio, Wood, X-Lab. They are staffed by experts in their fields, who work to pass on their knowledge and techniques to students.





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