

## HONORARY DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LETTERS

### PROFESSOR RONALD DE LEEUW

Professor Ronald de Leeuw is one of the most prominent figures in the international art historical world. He has taught art history in the most distinguished Netherlandish universities and has directed three of the greatest Dutch art museums. His hybrid career is exemplified by the two posts he holds. From 1996 Professor de Leeuw has been director general of the Rijksmuseum, and from 1994 has been Professor Extraordinary of Museology and the History of Collecting at the VU University Amsterdam.

Ronald de Leeuw was born at Rotterdam on 5 October 1948. He was educated in the Netherlands, at school at Schiedam, and at the Rijksuniversiteit, Leiden (1969-1976), where he took his doctorate in art history *cum laude*. His first appointment was as director of exhibitions at The Dienst Verspreide Rijkskollekties (The Netherlands Office for Fine Arts), The Hague (1977-1984), and then as chief curator at the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst (Netherlands Institute of Art History at The Hague in 1986. In 1986 he was appointed to the directorship of the Van Gogh museum, a post he held for a decade. During that period another collection was added to his portfolio, the Museum Mesdag in The Hague. In these years he was responsible for publishing the Penguin edition of the Letters of Van Gogh (1996), his most popular and successful book.

In 1996 he was appointed Director General of the Rijksmuseum, and in the year 2002 embarked on the ambitious project of building the New Rijksmuseum, for which he has received considerable public funding. The new installation of the collection that he has planned will emphasize the cross-cultural connections of the museum and the relationship between Dutch culture and the New World. Professor Ronald de Leeuw has held many distinguished honours. He was chairman of the international committee of the History of Art (CIHA) from 1997 to 2000; from 2005 he has been chairman of the committee on the History of Collection Mobility in Europe, which fosters cultural collaborations in Europe and beyond.

Professor de Leeuw's relationship with Australia began in 1994, when the museum he directed was the major lender to the exhibition, *Van Gogh, his sources, genius and influence*, which opened at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, and proceeded to Brisbane. De Leeuw then conceived the idea of the Rembrandt exhibition in 1997, one of the most successful exhibitions in the history of the National Gallery of Victoria. More recently de Leeuw was responsible for the loan exhibition of *Dutch Masters*, an outstanding and intelligent exhibition, with many masterpieces, including Vermeer's *The Love Letter*. In his career De Leeuw has given Melbourne three great Dutch exhibitions. His connections with the University of Melbourne were forged during this period. Because of his generosity towards Australia and art history in our country he is the holder of a visiting fellowship to the School of Art History, Cinema, Classics and Archaeology and to Queen's College, where he will be resident for three months from August to October 2006. During this time he will participate in the intellectual life of the department and forge collaborations for the future.