



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

OSK

NATIONAL
RESEARCH
SCHOOL FOR
ART HISTORY

EVALUATION 2018-2023

Contents

Preface	2
1. Evaluation method and procedures	3
1.1 <i>Composition of the assessment committee</i>	3
1.2 <i>Terms of Reference</i>	3
1.3 <i>Documentation</i>	4
1.4 <i>Working method</i>	4
2. National Research School for Art History	5
2.1 <i>Quality of the PhD education</i>	6
2.2 <i>Added value as a national forum for the discipline</i>	7
2.3 <i>Viability</i>	9
2.4 <i>Conclusion and recommendations</i>	10
Appendices	12
<i>Programme site visit OSK</i>	12

Preface

The committee felt honoured to be invited to evaluate five different research schools (ACLS, ASH, AHM, ASCA, ARTES) that operate under the umbrella organization AIHR and to assess the two national research schools (LOT and OSK) that are currently governed by AIHR. The committee, which consisted of many international experts across the full spectrum of the humanities, worked with great synergy and commitment. Though the complexity and scale of the task were slightly daunting, we were also very excited to have this chance to see the variety, quality, and innovative aspects of such an amazing faculty of humanities, which presented its cutting-edge research, forms of societal engagement, and interdisciplinary breadth in an atmosphere of great collaboration and openness.

The committee operated as a critical friend, in a spirit of collegiality and solidarity, showing support especially in these austere times of governmental budget cuts, reiterating the importance of defending the value of the humanities and the need to protect research time.

The site visit, which lasted five full days, with over 35 panels and meetings with more than 200 researchers and staff, proved to be very intense, as well as very productive. We carried out frank and challenging conversations, discussing issues including polarization in our academic culture, safety, both at home and in conflict-zone locations, and the rise of hate speech and harassment of academics and researchers online.

We encountered a vibrant, dynamic, and resilient faculty open to new fields of research, such as new humanities (digital, environmental, medical), and to alternative forms of engagement with societal stakeholders, civic partners, and the cultural sector. The city of Amsterdam proved not only to provide a beautiful setting but also to be an endless source of inspiration and collaboration thanks to its rich cultural sector, heritage, and sociopolitical fabric.

We received wonderful hospitality, and we want to thank the faculty's policy officer for all the care and attention, and the AIHR director and the dean of humanities for their exhaustive and crystal-clear clarifications and explanations, for making us feel at home, and for fostering an atmosphere of conviviality and critical engagement. We were very impressed with the site visit to the new *National Holocaust Museum* and the guided visit to the seven Humanities Labs.

Last but not least, it is very important to mention that we were shepherded with great professionalism, rigour, and kindness by our two secretaries. They taught us to attend carefully to the SEP protocol criteria and helped us through the different stages of preparation, reviewing, and reporting with great competence, much-needed efficiency, and considerable patience.

Finally, I would like to warmly thank my colleagues in the committee for their commitment, cordiality, and constructive cooperation throughout the whole process. We have all felt enriched by each other's expertise and approach, and we feel emboldened by seeing the humanities thriving so much.

Prof. Sandra Ponzanesi
Committee chair

1. Evaluation method and procedures

In 2024, the Executive Board of the University of Amsterdam (UvA) commissioned an evaluation of the National Research School for Art History (*Onderzoeksschool Kunstgeschiedenis*, OSK). This evaluation was part of an overall research evaluation of the university's Faculty of Humanities, comprising the overarching Amsterdam Institute for Humanities Research (AIHR), five underlying research schools (ACLC, AHM, ARTES, ASCA and ASH), and two national research schools that are currently coordinated by the faculty (OSK and LOT). To carry out the evaluation, the Executive Board appointed a committee composed of seven (inter)national experts in the relevant fields of study.

1.1 Composition of the assessment committee

The evaluation committee (hereafter: 'the committee') comprised the following external experts:

- **Prof. Sandra Ponzanesi** (chair), Professor of Media, Gender and Postcolonial Studies at Universiteit Utrecht, the Netherlands;
- **Prof. Johan van der Auwera**, Professor Emeritus of General and English Linguistics at the University of Antwerp, Belgium;
- **Prof. Stef Craps**, Professor of English Literature at Ghent University, Belgium;
- **Luca Forgiarini MSc**, PhD candidate at Utrecht University, the Netherlands;
- **Prof. Anne Goldgar**, Garrett and Anne Van Hunnink Professor of European History at the University of Southern California, USA;
- **Dr Francesco Mazzucchelli**, Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy of the University of Bologna, Italy;
- **Prof. Reetta Toivanen**, Professor of Sustainability Science at the University of Helsinki, Finland.

To do justice to the specificity of the various subject areas represented by the two national research schools included in the evaluation, three external experts were appointed as referees for each school. For OSK, the following referees provided written input on the documentation:

- **Prof. Dario Gamboni**, Professor Emeritus of Art History at the University of Geneva, Switzerland;
- **Dr Andrea Meyer**, lecturer at the Art History department of the Technische Universität Berlin, Germany;
- **Prof. Kitty Zijlmans**, Professor Emeritus of Contemporary Art History and Theory/World Art Studies at the University of Leiden, the Netherlands.

Drs. Leonie van Drooge and Dr Floor Meijer served as the committee's independent secretaries.

1.2 Terms of Reference

The committee conducted its evaluation in accordance with the Terms of Reference provided by UvA's Executive Board. These Terms were based on the evaluation criteria established by the deans of the Dutch humanities faculties (*Decanenoverleg Letteren Geesteswetenschappen*, DLG) for assessing national research schools in the humanities (version: 23 November 2023).

Under the Terms of Reference, the committee was tasked with evaluating both the quality of PhD education provided by OSK and its added value as a national forum for the discipline during the period 2018–2023. Additionally, at UvA's specific request and separate from the DLG evaluation criteria, the committee also assessed the research school's viability.

The evaluation focused on OSK's performance relative to its mission statement and stated goals.

The committee was asked to reflect on OSK's past achievements and offer recommendations to enhance its effectiveness in PhD education and its role as a national platform for the discipline going forward. In alignment with the Terms of Reference, the OSK evaluation was integrated into the committee's site visit to UvA's Faculty of Humanities.

1.3 Documentation

Prior to the site visit, the committee received the following documents:

- Terms of Reference for the evaluation (UvA, 2024);
- *Terms of Reference visitatie landelijke onderzoeksscholen* (DLG, 2023);
- Self-evaluation report of OSK;
- Report of the previous evaluation committee (2018).

1.4 Working method

On 7 October 2024, the committee convened for an online kick-off meeting to discuss the evaluation protocol and procedures, and to establish a clear division of tasks and the working method. In the following weeks, the committee members individually studied the documentation and formulated preliminary findings and questions. The committee also benefitted from

input provided by external reviewers, who conducted desk research and submitted their written assessments in the form of referee reports. The committee's secretaries compiled the members' preliminary findings into a collective document. During a follow-up online meeting on 14 November 2024, the committee discussed these initial impressions and further refined its approach.

The site visit took place from 24 to 29 November 2024. It started with an internal committee meeting and dinner on the evening of 24 November. Over the following five days, the committee spoke with representatives and stakeholders of the Faculty of Humanities. These interviews included meetings with OSK PhD candidates and management. The visit concluded with a plenary presentation of the committee's findings by the committee chair on 29 November. The schedule of the site visit is included in appendix 1.

Following the site visit, committee members submitted their written contributions for the evaluation report. The secretaries compiled these inputs and drafted the initial report, which was circulated among all committee members for review. The revised report was then sent to OSK for factual corrections on 7 February 2025. In close consultation with the chair and the committee, the secretaries incorporated OSK's feedback and finalized the report, which was subsequently presented to the Executive Board of the University of Amsterdam on 7 March 2025.

2. National Research School for Art History

The National Research School for Art History (*Onderzoekschool Kunstgeschiedenis*, OSK) is a national platform for collaboration in art history research and education in the Netherlands. It connects eight universities and nine museums and cultural organizations, including the Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh Museum, and the RKD (Netherlands Institute for Art History), promoting knowledge exchange between academia and the cultural sector. OSK's main focus is on training PhD candidates (and RMA students, who fall outside the scope of this evaluation), offering them courses and seminars to help them gain specialized knowledge and broaden their perspectives. Additionally, OSK promotes research in art history through six specialized networks (Architecture & Urban Planning, Studio Practices and History of Art Production, Applied Arts and Historical Interiors, Italian Studies, Modern and Contemporary Art, Early Modern Art). These networks, which consist of partnerships between the universities and actors in the field, organize symposia and workshops open to graduate students at all levels, as well as professionals, thus contributing to the professional development of OSK's members.

OSK is a mid-sized research school with 58 PhD candidates and an annual income of €78K in 2023. Its budget consists primarily of contributions from the participating faculties (so-called FOPOG-funds), which cover office costs and the salaries for the director, coordinator, and office manager. Additionally, flexible funding provided for each participating PhD candidate and RMA student pays for the training programme. Partner museums and institutions contribute through teaching, supporting visiting scholars, and providing access to collections and facilities. OSK's current governance comprises a supervisory board with a general board (which sets the mission and approves activities) and an executive board (responsible for daily operations). The academic director, coordinator, and office manager (0.2 FTE each) handle programming and administration. The education committee ensures teaching quality, while the PhD council represents candidates, proposing courses and (co-)organizing events.

The committee notes that OSK has undergone considerable transformation since the previous evaluation in 2018. After moving its base from Utrecht University to the University of Amsterdam in 2019, it has seen two new directors, with the current director taking over in 2022. This followed the upheaval of Covid-19 and the necessity for the research school to reduce its operations and take its educational programme online for most of 2020 and 2021. In the wake of Covid and after the appointment of the current director, OSK began a period of re-evaluation. Since this time, the policy paper *Rethinking the OSK* was presented, a mission statement for OSK was published, a PhD Council was formed, research 'sections' were renamed 'networks' and all published mission statements online, and aspects of the curriculum were revamped. The director also began a consultation with various stakeholders in OSK. These are developments for which OSK deserves recognition.

During the site visit, PhD candidates reported that the administration of OSK is very open to their input and eager to assist with their ideas. However, they asked for more transparency in decision-making and increased input of the PhD Council on future course topics. Given the fact that the PhD Council has been established only recently, it is to be expected that improvements to its functioning within the organization can still be made. The committee welcomes the school's intention to re-assess and further streamline the involvement of the PhD community and the PhD Council in the school.

2.1 Quality of the PhD education

OSK offers its PhD candidates a compact core curriculum consisting of two recently revamped mandatory courses intended to complement training courses offered in the home universities. *The Architecture of the PhD* is essentially a skills-course about researching and writing the thesis, while *Paradigms in Art History* deals with themes in art historical scholarship. In addition, OSK offers a diverse annual programme of elective courses – workshops, masterclasses, and Summer and Winter Schools – which are also open to RMA students. These content-driven activities cover topics such as materiality and the digital, as well as specific themes like *Arte Povera* (2019), *Disegno* (2022), *Text and Textiles* (2023), and, most recently, the *Curiosity Cabinet*. PhD candidates can also take part in events such as joint museum visits and have the opportunity to organize their own activities, including a joint OSK/NICA workshop and a five-day Writing Retreat.

The committee noted that the modules listed in the self-evaluation are diverse and reflect the full spectrum of topics and issues in art history. They range from important, well-established modules (structuring research, questioning structures and existing taxonomies) to offerings on current topics, such as digital art history, global art studies, the material turn, and the renewed interest in materials, tools, and techniques. The collaboration and exchange with museums and institutes, such as the RKD, the RCE (Netherlands Heritage Institute), and *Het Nieuwe Instituut* (Museum for Architecture, Design, and Digital Culture), are a significant asset to the programme. The Winter and Summer Schools in locations such as Florence, Paris, and Copenhagen seem to be of considerable advantage to PhD candidates. They offer possibilities for teaching on site in ways not possible at home. An upcoming Summer School on the cabinet of curiosities, taught by both an early modernist and a modernist, is an example of new ways of thinking about the curriculum.

In interviews with management and PhD candidates, particular attention was paid to the

recent modernization of the curriculum, particularly the *Paradigms in Art History* course, which has been updated to better align with contemporary art historical scholarship. The syllabus now incorporates contemporary theoretical frameworks, including transhistorical and postcolonial perspectives, addressing concerns raised in the previous evaluation about the course's outdated nature. The current course is taught in a more thematic, transhistorical, and transnational way, making it more relevant to a broader group of art history PhD candidates. PhD candidates with whom the committee spoke recognize and appreciate this modernization, though it was also suggested that the course could be extended beyond its current two-day format and be more closely linked to PhD thesis topics.

Expanding the currently small core curriculum with a third course is under consideration. A suggested approach could be to add a module focused on curatorial and conservation practices, the history of museums, and heritage conservation, examining these topics within shifting historical and political contexts. Such a module would align well with the stated goal of strengthening collaboration with museums and heritage organizations. During the site visit, the director expressed enthusiasm for the idea, suggesting it could be developed with direct input from curators or potentially organized by them. This, of course, would depend on the ability to bring in willing partners. Further opportunities to strengthen ties with museum partners could include expanding PhD internship options beyond existing programmes with the RKD, the Van Gogh Museum, and the Stedelijk Museum.

In general, PhD candidates seem satisfied with the curriculum offered. *Paradigms in Art History*, *Texts and Textiles*, and the RKD workshops were spoken of with great enthusiasm during the site visit. The other main module, *The Architecture of the PhD*, a practical course focusing on peer feedback and thesis development, was also well received. PhD candidates appreciate the course for its helpfulness in the process of working on the thesis, and particularly because of the practice of reading each other's work and being able to compare notes about writing. Both *The*

Architecture of the PhD and the self-organized *Writing Retreat* were also praised for facilitating bonding among PhD candidates. Increased PhD council involvement has, according to interviewed PhD candidates, led to tailored events and improved communication regarding educational needs.

While some PhD candidates would like to see more short-term, skills-based courses (e.g., workshops or one-day sessions), they overall value quality over quantity. Notably, they expressed a preference for a curriculum comprised of theory- and methodology-focused content that allows them to connect course content to their own research. In this respect, they also see potential in collaborating with other research schools, such as NICA and the Huizinga Institute. Those taking NICA courses noted that these offer sought-after broadness, although they are sometimes seen as too interdisciplinary. Joint NICA/OSK courses could offer a balance between interdisciplinarity and art history's specificity.

PhD candidates were less enthusiastic about courses shared with RMA students, feeling these were too specific in nature and thus less applicable to the PhD cohort as a whole. They were also sometimes seen as too easy for PhD candidates. The time commitment required for these courses might also be a factor in why PhD candidates do not always sign up. The committee believes joint events can be productive for mutual learning but emphasized the importance of offering courses specifically tailored to PhD candidates, taking into account their broader horizon of experience.

If offering more PhD-specific courses proves difficult due to financial or resource constraints, an alternative could be increasing PhD candidates' involvement in network activities. This would also address their expressed desire for more contact with senior scholars instead of just fellow PhDs, as PhD candidates mentioned their wish to receive guidance on art historical writing and university-level teaching from more experienced mentors. More activity of this sort is desired, and the committee would recommend finding ways to harness the energy of the PhD Council and PhD candidates to integrate them and their goals into

activities of the research networks. This would take some pressure off teaching yet might also help integrate PhD candidates better into the wider profession in universities and museums.

Finally, the committee signalled an ongoing development towards implementing mandatory 30 EC course loads for PhD candidates. While some partner faculties within OSK have already adopted this regulation, others – such as the Faculty of Humanities at UvA – remain hesitant, arguing that such a requirement may place undue strain on PhD candidates and detract from time dedicated to thesis research. This concern is particularly relevant for external PhDs, who often balance multiple responsibilities. While it is beyond the committee's remit to make a judgement on this matter, it recommends that the DLG carefully consider the potential benefits and drawbacks of mandatory course loads.

In conclusion, the committee highlights OSK's significant added value for PhD candidates (and RMA students). By connecting PhD candidates with a diverse range of scholars, museums, and research institutes, OSK creates an enriching environment that bridges theory and practice. The committee views recent efforts to modernize the curriculum positively, particularly the inclusion of transhistorical perspectives, socially relevant themes, and medium-focused courses. Further expansion of the core curriculum is encouraged to enhance variety and deepen collaboration with museums and other stakeholders.

2.2 Added value as a national forum for the discipline

The second function of OSK is that of a national forum for art history as a discipline, acting as a hub for collaboration between universities, museums, and heritage organizations. The committee is confident that OSK is uniquely positioned to connect academia with the art world, bridging theory and practice across education, research, curation, and conservation. This dynamic consortium enables scholars, including PhD

candidates, to engage with the professional field, while museums and institutes benefit from contact with researchers. A particularly valuable aspect is the annual invitation of leading international scholars as visiting fellows, which exposes PhDs and students to a broad range of current ideas and approaches. Although OSK's platform function may seem distinct from its teaching responsibilities, as noted earlier, the two functions are in reality deeply interconnected, as PhD candidates and some RMA students seek meaningful connections with the broader discipline.

The means through which OSK represents and serves art history within the Netherlands is chiefly the six networks, each with a distinct disciplinary focus. As part of the recent rethinking of OSK, these networks and their activities were re-evaluated. Within management, there was a justified sense that the networks were underutilized, with limited activities being organized. This restricted engagement and opportunities for PhD candidates. Moreover, network activity often relied on a small group of active individuals, resulting in inconsistency. To revitalize OSK's platform function, the networks were renamed from the term *sections* to embody the vision of a more connected group of scholars. The director initiated consultations with network heads and other interested parties about potential activities, leading to each network drafting a mission statement now available on the OSK website. At a minimum, each network is now expected to organize one workshop or conference per year, often themed around a particular exhibition, project, or publication. Additionally, OSK organizes joint trips to current exhibitions, which helps foster connections among members. During the site visit, the committee heard examples of how network activities have recently been revitalized, particularly by the Early Modern network. For instance, this network has conducted consultations to try to diversify from activities only touching on organizers' own research. As with OSK's teaching curriculum, the consultation considered new ways of thinking about the main research fields, resulting in identification of some of the issues now motivating art historical scholarship, such as

globalization and transhistorical themes. The network then organized small workshops around these topics, giving PhD candidates a chance to be involved as well. This seems to be a model for good practice in keeping the networks open to new ideas and abreast of current scholarship, and the committee recommends expanding it to other networks. Interviewed PhD candidates also highlighted the Early Modern network's *sectiedag* (which for consistency's sake should be renamed 'network day') at the Rijksmuseum, which included presentations around a topic, as particularly helpful and expressed a desire for more such activities. The PhD Council is eager to work with the networks to achieve these aims.

Given the tradition of specialized fields and the tendency towards specialization in art history, a key role of the networks should be to encourage and facilitate exchange between these areas. While there are examples of cross-network collaboration, such as a joint event by the Early Modern and Italian networks, the OSK self-evaluation report indicates that more efforts are needed to enhance cooperation across networks. The committee supports this view, noting that increased network activities would not only benefit PhD candidates but also foster greater engagement among senior scholars. One way to foster this cooperation, as the self-evaluation suggests, would be to hold an annual, biannual, or triannual conference for the whole art historical profession in the Netherlands, along the lines of the Association of Art Historians (AAH) in the UK.

The model of the successful conference in Amsterdam of the Historians of Netherlandish Art (HNA) in 2022, which was part-organized by OSK, is an example of what could be done. A national OSK conference could confer wider benefits because of a greater breadth of fields and in particular the representation of modern and contemporary art. This could be a good platform for the kinds of inter-specialty discussions OSK aspires to foster through the revitalization of its networks; it could also take advantage of the interest of PhD candidates in gaining experience, presenting their work, and interacting on a more equal footing with more senior scholars. Such a

conference could also be a launching pad for greater institutional connections between art history departments and museums. It would be useful to discuss the financial aspects of putting on such a conference with those already holding one, such as the AAH (<http://forarthistory.org.uk>), which could advise on a funding and organizational model. However, feasibility depends on securing additional funding.

The committee further notes that the networks' research priorities are currently defined by traditional divisions of genre, theme, period, and geography. Revitalizing the networks may require rethinking this structure to create stronger theoretical or thematic connections across networks within an overarching, programmatic framework. While developing a common research agenda may be infeasible given the breadth of the discipline, promoting exchange and debate across existing fields and subfields is important, allowing for the exploration of issues that span multiple areas. This approach could encourage cross-disciplinary, transhistorical, and transnational perspectives, showing how contemporary perspectives also work in/for historical periods. Such revisions also align with efforts to update the course offerings.

The committee's conversation with management confirmed that the director acknowledges the need to modernize these structures and is considering an inventory of broader, more contemporary topics, which may also prompt the formation of new networks. Furthermore, the director is open to fostering stronger interdisciplinary approaches, such as combining art history with technology or conservation science – although, in the committee's perspective, this should not be a reason for sacrificing disciplinary specificity in other events. An inclusive and interdisciplinary perspective on art history (e.g., visual material culture) was identified as a way to attract scholars from adjacent fields. A field where OSK may want to explore further connections is Artistic Research or Art-Based Research.

Steps have also been taken to enhance OSK's visibility and communication. The research school

now has an attractive website that clearly outlines its activities (though it would be helpful for individual research networks to list their activities on their own pages). Additionally, a weekly newsletter keeps members and students informed about art history-related events in the Netherlands. Both these initiatives make a good contribution to making OSK a meeting point for art historians, curators, PhD candidates, and students.

In conclusion, the committee found that OSK's activities help bridge academic research with professional practice, enriching the experience for both PhD candidates and the broader art history community. While the shift from 'sections' to 'networks' signals a move towards greater dynamism and inclusivity, the content, structure, and level of activity of these networks must evolve accordingly to reflect contemporary trends and foster cross-disciplinary collaboration. This approach will further enhance OSK's role as a vibrant hub connecting academia with the professional art world.

2.3 Viability

OSK has made considerable strides in the post-Covid years towards rethinking its activities and restructuring its governance and teaching. A new vision for renewal and the involvement of more stakeholders has improved the outlook for the school. Where viability is concerned, the chief problems are PhD numbers, human resources, and finance.

OSK works with only a small number of PhD candidates, simply because art history is not currently popular as a PhD subject. Most of the current PhD candidates are external, self-funded, and often working in museums, making them a silent and difficult-to-engage group. Since candidates are appointed by the universities, this issue is largely beyond OSK's control. As a means to make the programme more viable, the committee suggests that OSK consider making courses open to PhD candidates from neighbouring countries, in particular Belgium. This strategy is already successfully used by other

national research schools, such as LOT and OIKOS. Charging foreign universities for participation would increase income and help provide a critical mass for courses. Pooling resources with other national research schools such as NICA and Huizinga (e.g., joint workshops) is another potential avenue. However, competition for students, PhDs, and funding remains an underlying challenge.

One difficulty facing OSK is the uneven participation of member institutions in teaching. Teaching in OSK courses is remunerated through hours granted by home universities, as agreed upon by the DLG. However, some institutions, such as the VU, do not grant these hours. Given the pressures of staffing within universities for BA and MA teaching, commitments to OSK are seen as a low priority locally, and not every institution pulls its weight. As a result, the same people often teach OSK courses year after year, and introducing new perspectives to the curriculum can be challenging. This problem is difficult for OSK to solve on its own, especially with the current political climate and budget cuts that will likely add further to the teaching loads of staff at the home universities. One potential course of action could be to join forces with other schools and make a joint statement to the DLG regarding the fulfilment of obligations by all faculties. As a bottom-up initiative, OSK has already taken a step to refresh the curriculum by issuing a call for course proposals, which has yielded some results. Additionally, exploring alternative teaching formats, such as monthly theory seminars led by different instructors or PhD candidates, could also provide valuable opportunities.

During the period under review, OSK has remained within budget while reducing its financial surplus as required by the DLG. RMA students, although not numerous, remain an important source of income. The increase in their numbers (from 35 to 43 in the current year) helps boost the annual budget for the teaching programme. However, OSK's overall budget remains insufficient to significantly expand its full range of activities without further sources of income. Organizing large events, such as a national conference, remains financially

challenging. To secure more funding, OSK is actively exploring partnerships with museums and heritage organizations, though the current funding climate makes this difficult. However, given the importance of art history and art museums to the heritage industry and to the national image, lobbying for the discipline might be an effective way of protecting its position and potentially expanding activities.

Lastly, the committee would like to offer an observation regarding the composition of the PhD cohort and staff: It is crucial for OSK to reach out to a more diverse group of PhD candidates and master's students and to diversify its academic staff in terms of class and ethnicity (gender is deliberately excluded here, as OSK already follows a gender-sensitive approach). Relatedly, efforts should be made to better integrate self-funded PhD candidates. OSK could, for example, use a questionnaire to gather insights on what would work best for this group in terms of content, format, and scheduling, perhaps offering concise modules, online gatherings, or reading groups.

To sum up, OSK is financially stable, with a reserve fund to be reduced by 2027, ensuring its overall viability. However, the continuing underfunding, stemming from low numbers of RMA students and PhDs, along with challenges in securing sufficient participation from partner university staff, remains a concern. Expanding the pool of PhD candidates through collaborations with neighbouring countries, such as Belgium, could help enhance OSK's academic diversity and long-term sustainability.

2.4 Conclusion and recommendations

OSK has demonstrated significant resilience and adaptability during the 2018-2023 evaluation period. Following its relocation to the University of Amsterdam in 2019 and the challenges of Covid-19, OSK has undergone substantial positive transformation under new leadership. Key developments include the modernization of its curriculum to reflect contemporary art historical scholarship, the establishment of a

PhD Council, and the revitalization of its research networks. All of this was done while maintaining strong connections to museum practice. OSK's greatest strength lies in its unique position as a bridge between academia and the cultural sector, connecting eight universities with nine museums and cultural institutions. Despite operating with modest resources, OSK has maintained financial stability while implementing meaningful organizational reforms. While challenges remain regarding teaching capacity and funding, OSK's recent reforms and clear strategic vision position it well for continued growth and development in the coming years.

The committee offers the following recommendations:

1. Closely involve the Education Committee and PhD Council in the redesign of the curriculum, taking the needs and wishes of PhD candidates with respect to course content, duration, and format into account. Continue the practice of putting out calls for course proposals to involve new staff in course teaching.
2. Expand the core curriculum by adding a module focused on curatorial and conservation practices in collaboration with curators and museums. In general, strengthening ties with museum partners is advised as it could lead to increased PhD internship opportunities and support the organization of annual or biannual conferences.
3. Increase PhD candidates' involvement in network activities to connect them with senior scholars and integrate them into the wider academic and museum professions. The committee recommends using the Early Modern network's model of diversifying activities and involving PhD candidates in workshops around current art historical issues as a best practice for other networks. A more active involvement of the PhD community in the networks' activities can also help in revitalizing them.
4. If finances allow, consider organizing an annual, biannual, or triannual conference for the whole art historical profession in the Netherlands, along the lines of the Association of Art Historians (AAH) in the UK.
5. Consider opening up courses to PhD candidates from neighbouring countries, in particular Belgium, as a means to make the programme more viable.

Appendices

Programme site visit OSK

Thursday 28 November 2024	
14.00-15.00	OSK, panel 1 - Management & Board
15.00-16.00	OSK, panel 2 - PhDs
16.00-16.30	Committee meeting and break

COLOPHON

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the committee tasked with evaluating the **National Research School for Art History (OSK)** for the period 2018–2023.

It was commissioned by the Executive Board of the University of Amsterdam.

The report was written by the evaluation committee members, with editorial support from the secretaries.

AMSTERDAM, MARCH 2025