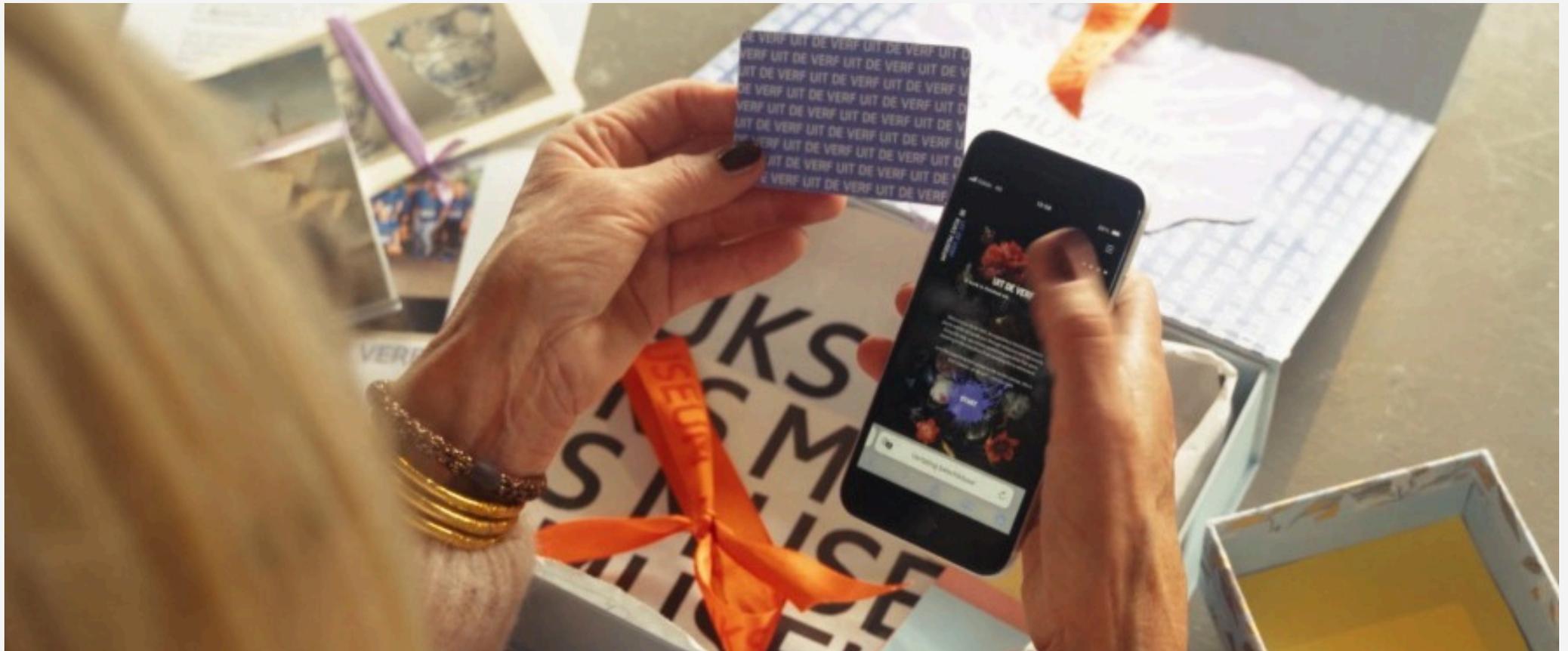


Guiding Older Adults in the Transition from Work to Retirement using Art as a Tool for Reflection

Master thesis Design for Interaction
in collaboration with the Rijksmuseum Innovationlab



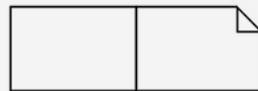
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RIJKS MUSEUM
UIT DE VERF

0.1 PREFACE

This project began with an exploration of how the Rijksmuseum could connect with older adults in the Netherlands beyond its physical walls. It eventually grew into *Uit de Verf*: a retirement gift experience that supports people in the transition from work to retirement by using art as a tool for reflection.

It has been a privilege to complete my design education at TU Delft with a project like this, developed within the context of the Rijksmuseum. Throughout my studies, I often found myself approaching design projects almost as if they were art projects: intended to touch and inspire people, carefully made, and shaped with an eye for detail. I aimed to create experiences that encouraged users to play, feel, think, create, follow, and discover.

What I stand for as a designer is making the world a little more beautiful by designing for the experiences, associations, and emotions that shape people's everyday lives. To me, this is sustainable design: positive memories and feelings last indefinitely; unlike material objects, they never need maintenance or replacement. During a lecture by an inspiring professor, I discovered that there is an actual name for this approach: a direction within design called *design for happiness and well-being*. This realisation genuinely excited me. Combined with my interest in art, it captures exactly where my motivation lies: **where art and design come together to support people's happiness and well-being.**

Although I am still at the beginning of my own working life, I was again surprised by how much there is to learn when you approach a topic with openness and genuine curiosity. Through the stories and experiences that others generously shared, I quickly built a rich and nuanced understanding of what it means to retire. These conversations offered both inspiration and direction, helping me design something that aligns with the needs of future retirees, as well as with the Rijksmuseum and the organisations involved.

I am grateful to everyone who helped me move this project forward, either by openly sharing their experiences, thoughts, and feelings about retirement, or by listening, thinking along, and supporting me through the challenges I encountered.

I am proud of the result, *Uit de Verf* offers a meaningful answer to the question of how the Rijksmuseum can connect with older adults beyond its physical walls. What I value most is that it introduces a new approach in which art plays an active role, not only to be viewed, but to help people organise their thoughts and emotions during a major life transition. At the same time, the concept contributes to making art more accessible and strengthens the use of the museum's digital collection.

This graduation report explains how *Uit de Verf* emerged and outlines its potential future. I hope you enjoy reading it, and I am always open to questions or further conversation.



Figure 1. Greetings from the Author Juliët Wagemakers

Statement on the Use of AI Tools

Parts of this thesis were written with the support of artificial intelligence tools for language refinement, structure improvement, and clarification of English phrasing. All conceptual, analytical, and design decisions were made by the author. The AI was used as an auxiliary writing and editing tool; the author remains fully responsible for the content, accuracy, and originality of this work.

KEY WORDS

Retirement transition, Future retirees, Purpose, Reflection, Design for Happiness and Well-being, Art-based Design, Museum Experience, Design forInteraction.

0.2 SUMMARY

This graduation project, *Connecting the Rijksmuseum with Older Adults in Transition from Work to Retirement*, explores how the museum can foster lasting engagement with people approaching retirement by supporting reflection, purpose, and connection through art. Conducted within the *MSc Design for Interaction* at TU Delft and in collaboration with the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the project follows a human-centred and context-driven design process.

The research unfolds across five phases. The **Discover** phase examined the context of ageing, purpose, and retirement through literature, a survey, and in-depth interviews with future retirees and professionals who use art in guidance and transformation. Findings revealed that while many older adults approach retirement with curiosity and optimism, they often struggle to translate their professional identity into a renewed sense of purpose and structure. The emotional dimension of this transition is rarely addressed, leaving a gap between the formal end of work and the beginning of a self-defined new phase. Farewell rituals within organisations typically mark retirement as a single event rather than a gradual transition, offering closure but little space for reflection or reorientation.

In the **Define** phase, insights were synthesised into a design challenge: *How might the Rijksmuseum support future retirees in meaningfully reflecting on their working life and rediscovering purpose through art?* A design vision was formulated that positioned art as a tool for reflection and emotional connection, bridging the personal and cultural dimensions of this life transition.

The **Design** and **Develop** phases transformed an initial conceptual idea—the *Retirement Experience*, an interactive reflective journey—into a refined concept called *Uit de Verf*. The concept unfolds through four sequential experiences forming one coherent user journey: (1) receiving a tangible farewell gift from the employer, (2) engaging in digital, art-based reflections that guide the retiree to explore personal themes and values, (3) co-creating a personalised symbolic artwork that becomes a meaningful memento presented at the farewell moment, and (4) establishing an ongoing connection with the Rijksmuseum and a community of other retirees.

Together, these steps turn a traditional farewell gesture into a reflective transition experience that blends personal meaning, artistic expression, and social belonging.

In the **Deliver** phase, research was conducted into implementation possibilities with employers, market potential, and the museum's role as facilitator. A user test with future retirees evaluated the emotional, reflective, and practical value of the concept. Results showed that *Uit de Verf* met the needs of all three main stakeholders: retirees experienced recognition and inspiration for their next life phase, employers found a meaningful way to honour employees and express appreciation, and the Rijksmuseum gained a new pathway to engage a currently underrepresented audience segment. Participants valued the personal, museum-connected approach as distinct from conventional farewell gifts.

The project concludes that design can play a guiding role in social transitions by connecting cultural meaning with personal transformation. *Uit de Verf* strengthens the Rijksmuseum's relationship with older adults by using art and reflection to support the journey from work to retirement, helping future retirees to pause, reinterpret their story, and enter a new life phase with awareness and purpose.

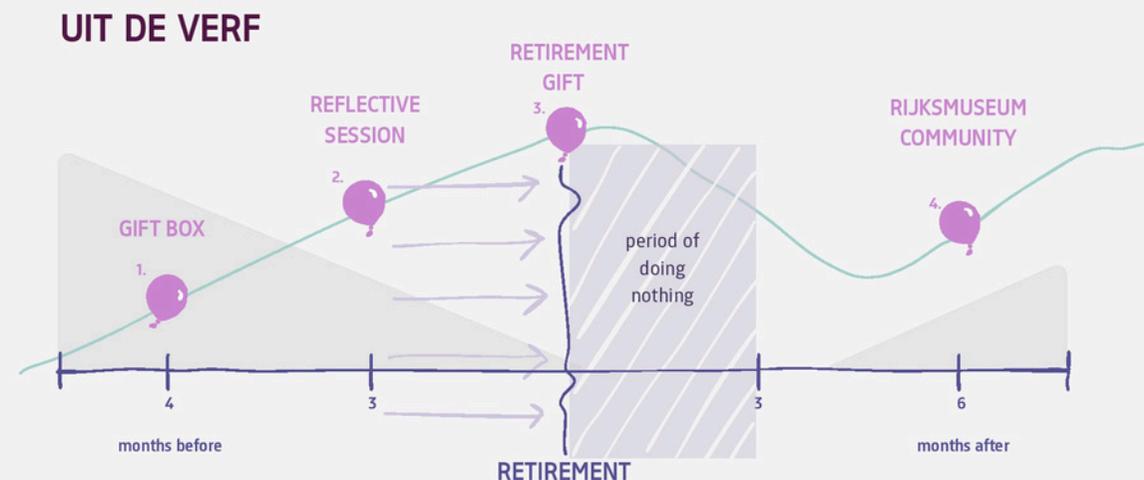


Figure 2. Abstract Visualisation of the Concept Flow: *Uit De Verf*

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0.4 CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE

The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam is considered the most prominent museum in the Netherlands, primarily known for its extensive collection of 17th-century Dutch paintings. Each year, the Rijksmuseum attracts millions of visitors and remains ambitious to continue growing. However, if visitor numbers keep increasing, the museum may eventually reach the physical limits of its building. Therefore, the Rijksmuseum aims to explore ways to expand its reach beyond its physical walls.

To support and sustain this growth, the Rijksmuseum continually develops initiatives and educational programs tailored to new, underrepresented, and specific target groups, including children, young adults, families, older seniors, internationals, and people with special needs. In doing so, the institution strives to serve the broadest possible audience. Despite being one of the museum's most important visitor groups, older adults in the Netherlands, are currently underrepresented in specific programming and outreach efforts. This project therefore focuses on finding new ways to connect the Rijksmuseum with older adults in the Netherlands.

Older adults often have more free time due to retirement, generally maintain good health, and possess relatively strong purchasing power. As the population continues to age, the number of older adults in the Netherlands will increase significantly over the coming decades. This group is not only growing but also changing. In terms of digital engagement, for example, they differ significantly from previous generations. These demographic and societal developments make it relevant for the Rijksmuseum to explore how it can build and maintain connections with this group beyond the physical museum walls.

0.5 RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis will explore how the Rijksmuseum can build and maintain connections with older adults in the Netherlands, while expanding its reach beyond its physical museum walls. It will answer to the main research question:

How can the Rijksmuseum build meaningful connections with older adults in the Netherlands to foster lasting engagement and support growth beyond its physical museum walls?

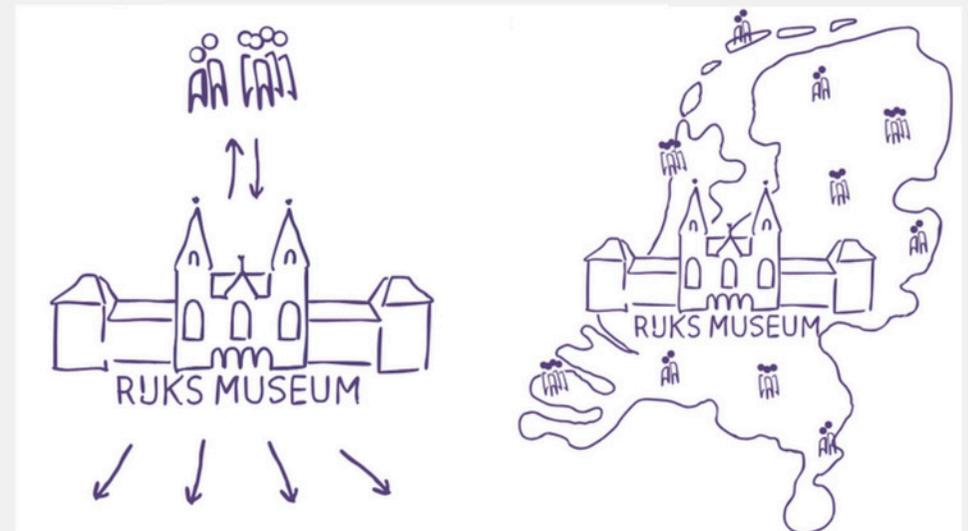


Figure 3. Visualisation of the research question

PART 1: DISCOVER

INSIGHT INTO THE CONTEXT AND TARGET GROUP

1. THE RIJKSMUSEUM
2. THE FUTURE RETIREES

1. THE RIJKSMUSEUM INSIGHT INTO THE CONTEXT

To design an intervention that connects older adults to the Rijksmuseum, it is essential to first understand the institution itself. This chapter outlines the Rijksmuseum's organisational context, based on desk research and conversations with staff across different departments.



1.1 MISSION AND VISION

According to the Rijksmuseum's official mission and vision statement (Rijksmuseum, z.d.-a), the institution is dedicated to telling the story of over eight centuries of Dutch art and history. Through approximately 8,000 objects displayed across 80 galleries, the museum offers a comprehensive overview of the nation's cultural development, connecting artistic achievements to broader European and Asian contexts.

Besides its formal vision and mission, the Rijksmuseum also applies an internal guiding concept known as **AKPIE**. This term playfully combines the initials of five core values that reflect what the organisation stands for: **Authentic, Quality, Personal, Innovative, and Simple** (from the Dutch Eenvoud). Together, these values serve as a shared compass within the museum, shaping both internal collaboration and external communication. They express the museum's ambition to remain genuine and human in its approach, to pursue excellence and innovation, and to keep things clear and accessible.

1.2 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

From internal conversations with colleagues, it has become clear that the Rijksmuseum operates through a structure led by the **Executive Board**, supported by the **Directors' Office**, which connects and coordinates all departments across the organisation. The museum is divided into three main sectors: **Audience**, **Collections**, and **Business**.

Each of these sectors focuses on a distinct yet interdependent part of the museum's mission. The **Audience Sector** centres on visitors, it oversees communication, development, and educational programmes that make the museum's stories accessible and engaging to a broad and diverse audience. The **Collections Sector** revolves around art and history, safeguarding, researching, and presenting the museum's holdings to ensure that cultural heritage remains meaningful and alive. The **Business Sector** forms the organisational backbone, managing finances, facilities, technology, and sustainability to ensure that the museum operates efficiently and responsibly.

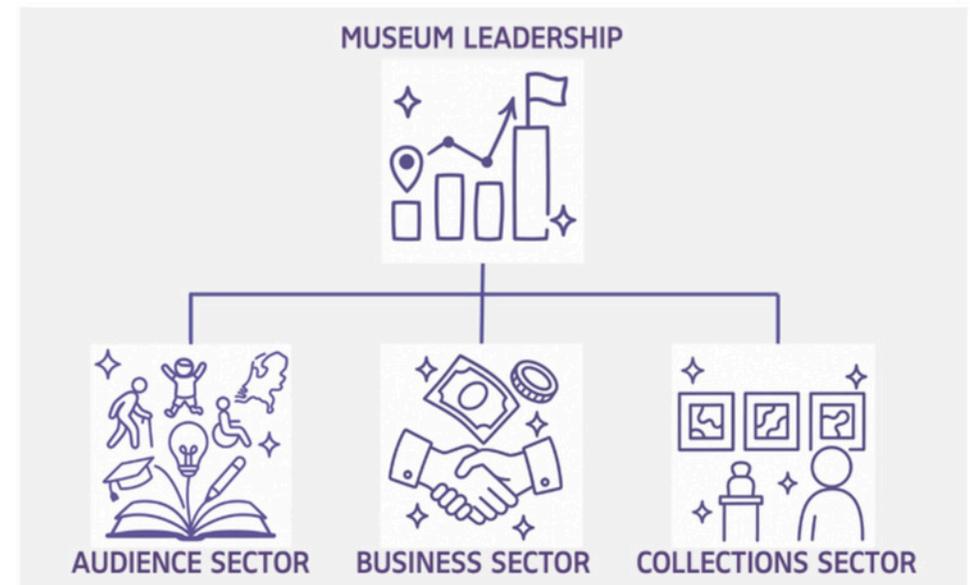


Figure 4. Visualisation of the Rijksmuseum's organisational structure

1.2.1 MUSEUM LEADERSHIP

At the top of the organisation, the Rijksmuseum is governed by the Supervisory Board (Raad van Toezicht), which oversees the museum's overall direction, financial integrity, and alignment with its public mission. The Executive Board (Directie) manages the museum's daily operations and is responsible for executing the strategic vision. It consists of the General Director, the Director of Finance and Operations, and the Director of Audiences.

Supporting the Executive Board, the **Directors' Office** and the **Directors' Secretariat** play a central coordinating and advisory role. The Directors' Office includes the unit for Strategic Planning and acts as the connective layer between departments, ensuring that long-term goals are translated into operational priorities across all sectors. Within this structure, accessibility, diversity, and inclusion are positioned at the strategic level, under the responsibility of the Directors' Office, to guarantee that these values are embedded throughout the organisation rather than confined to a single department.

Strategic Social Commitment

According to the Rijksmuseum Samen Toekomstbestendig: Diversiteit & Inclusie Actieplan 2024–2028 (Rijksmuseum, n.d.-b), the museum's strategic priorities centre on strengthening diversity, inclusion, and accessibility across all levels of the organisation. These ambitions align with the national Code Diversiteit & Inclusie—a self-regulatory framework developed by and for the Dutch cultural and creative sector, aiming to ensure that it reflects the full diversity of society (Code Diversiteit & Inclusie, n.d.).

The plan sets long-term objectives across four domains: **Programmes, Personnel, Public, and Partners**. In terms of Programmes, the museum aims to develop exhibitions and educational formats that appeal to currently underrepresented visitor types, including those seeking more emotionally engaging or socially relevant experiences. For Personnel, emphasis is placed on fostering inclusive leadership and diversifying teams through fair and objective recruitment practices, ensuring that different perspectives are represented in creative decision-making.

Regarding Public, the museum seeks to expand its reach beyond the Randstad region, deepening understanding of audience motivations and making participation more accessible to people from varied social and educational backgrounds. Finally, under Partners, the museum intends to form new collaborations around social and cultural themes, building networks that stimulate learning, innovation, and shared social responsibility.



Figure 5. Nachtwacht on Tour, image from Rijksmuseum

Initiatives such as Sensory-Friendly Evenings and Nachtwacht on Tour exemplify how these ambitions are translated into practice. The sensory evenings are designed for visitors who experience overstimulation from sound or crowds, allowing them to enjoy the museum in a calm and inclusive environment. Nachtwacht on Tour brings high-quality reproductions of The Night Watch to care homes across the Netherlands, offering residents who are unable to visit Amsterdam the opportunity to engage with one of the country's most iconic artworks. Together, these initiatives demonstrate how the museum extends its mission beyond the traditional museum experience and even beyond its physical walls, making art accessible to a wider and more diverse audience, a vision that directly resonates with the central theme of this graduation project.

1.2.2 AUDIENCE SECTOR

The Audience Sector focuses on people and forms the outward-looking heart of the museum. Together, the departments of Marketing and Communication, Development, and Public and Education make the museum's stories accessible, meaningful, and relevant to a broad and diverse audience.

Segmentation

The Rijksmuseum employs a behavioural segmentation model that categorises visitors not by demographics but by motivation and behaviour. As shown in Image 6, drawn from the internal Segmentation Report Rijksmuseum, groups include the Enthusiast, the Pleasure Seeker, and the Night Watch Visitor, among others. Each segment is associated with certain demographic tendencies. For instance, Enthusiasts, who make up 65 percent of visitors but only 9 percent of the general Dutch population, are typically highly educated, over 55 years old, and deeply interested in art. The museum's existing offer naturally aligns with the interests of this group, meaning that dedicated programming is not primarily aimed at further attracting them. Instead, current efforts focus on broadening accessibility and engaging new visitor types such as Pleasure Seekers, families with children, and young adults, who are generally younger, more diverse, and motivated by social experiences rather than in-depth learning.

According to the Diversiteit & Inclusie Actieplan 2024–2028 (Rijksmuseum, n.d.-b), further research between 2024 and 2028 will concentrate on understanding the needs and motivations of these underrepresented audience groups. The museum aims to make its exhibitions and programming more appealing to the types and demographics it currently reaches less effectively. In doing so, it plans to utilise external expertise and advisory panels more effectively, combining quantitative research with qualitative insights from focus groups. These measures reflect an ongoing institutional effort to deepen understanding of audience engagement and ensure that the museum remains relevant to a wider and more diverse public.

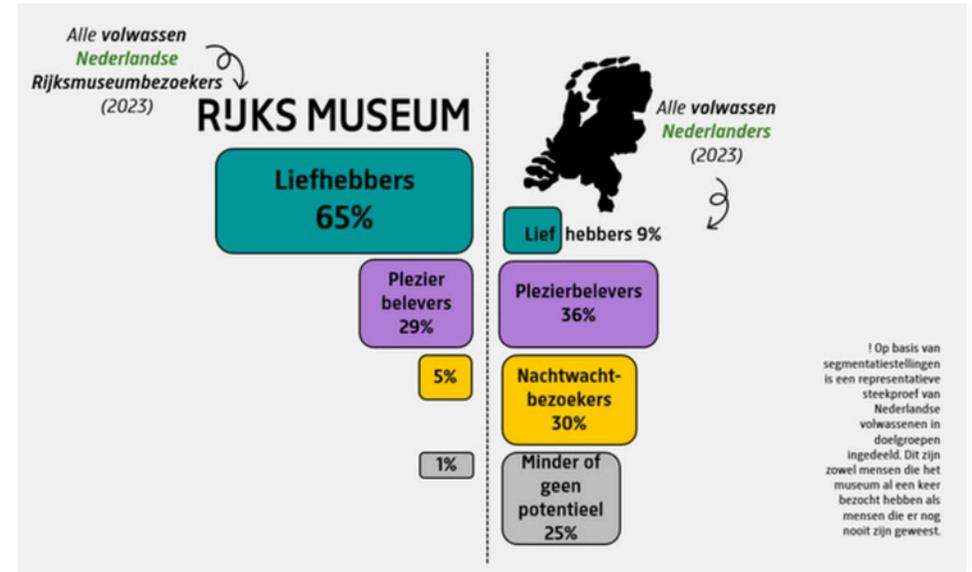


Figure 6. Distribution of adult Dutch visitors across behavioural segments, Rijksmuseum 2023 (Segmentation Report).

Education

Education is a cornerstone of the Rijksmuseum's mission. One of its explicit goals is for every Dutch child to visit the museum at least once during their school years, ideally encountering *The Night Watch* in person. The museum supports this ambition through a wide range of educational programmes, including sensory tours and interactive learning experiences. The *Teekenschool*, the museum's dedicated educational facility, offers workshops and creative courses for all ages, encouraging hands-on engagement with art.

Memberships

Membership programmes such as Friends, Next, and Patrons create a bridge between visitors and the museum's long-term vision. Each programme represents a different level of involvement, tailored to varying interests and capacities for engagement, and is coordinated by the Development Department.

Friends represent the broadest and most accessible group of members. For an annual contribution of approximately €60, they receive free access to the museum, regular newsletters, and invitations to previews and events. The programme is designed for those who wish to visit frequently and feel part of the museum's community, creating an ongoing relationship that extends beyond a single visit.

Next targets a younger demographic of art lovers and professionals who seek inspiration and connection through dialogue, networking events, and exclusive programming, for a contribution of €60 or €90 per duo. It serves as an entry point for long-term engagement, fostering a sense of shared cultural curiosity and a sense of belonging.

Patrons, by contrast, play a more substantial role through their financial and personal involvement. With an annual contribution of around €1,200, they often support specific exhibitions, research projects, or acquisitions and are invited to engage directly with curators, artists, and museum leadership.

These schemes go beyond transactional membership models; they foster a sense of community, belonging, and shared responsibility for the museum's future. Members are invited to events that promote deeper engagement with the collection and its stories. In doing so, the museum cultivates an enduring network of ambassadors who identify personally with its mission and help sustain its relevance across generations.

Donations and Bequests

In addition to memberships, the Rijksmuseum encourages donations and bequests, which support projects such as collection care, educational programmes, and the museum gardens. A striking example is the anonymous €12 million donation in 2023, which enabled the full restoration of the museum gardens (Rijksmuseum, 2024). The museum acknowledges that much of its collection and programming—from exhibitions to research—depends on external contributions, reflecting a long tradition of public generosity and private commitment.

Partnerships

Partnerships form an important bridge between the museum and the broader public sphere. Corporate sponsors and foundations — including *Philips*, *ING*, and the *VriendenLoterij* — provide essential financial and technical support for exhibitions, research projects, and public initiatives. While these collaborations contribute to the museum's social and educational ambitions, they are also mutually beneficial, offering partners public visibility and association with a leading cultural institution. A relevant example is *Nachtwacht on Tour*, made possible through the support of *Philips*.

According to the *Rijksmuseum Samen Toekomstbestendig: Diversiteit & Inclusie Actieplan 2024–2028* (Rijksmuseum, n.d.-b) and the *Jaarverslag 2023* (Rijksmuseum, 2024), the museum aims to continue developing a diverse group of partnerships that strengthen its societal relevance while ensuring organisational sustainability. In this sense, partnerships operate at the intersection of cultural impact and economic necessity — enabling the museum to pursue its public mission within a complex and interdependent network of stakeholders.

Together, the activities of the Audience Sector strengthen the Rijksmuseum's connection to society, ensuring that art, history, and heritage remain meaningful and accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds.

1.2.3 COLLECTIONS SECTOR

Collections and Exhibitions

The Collections Sector lies at the heart of the Rijksmuseum's mission. It is responsible for the preservation, study, and presentation of the museum's holdings, which together illustrate the richness of Dutch art and history. The collection encompasses departments such as Fine Arts, Prints, and History, ranging from medieval sculpture to twentieth-century design, with seventeenth-century masterpieces forming a central focus.

In addition to its permanent displays, the Rijksmuseum organises a dynamic programme of temporary exhibitions that connect the past to the present and attract both national and international audiences. These exhibitions vary in scale and theme — from major retrospectives of celebrated masters to smaller, research-driven projects that explore lesser-known narratives and underrepresented perspectives in art and history. Through this balance, the museum continuously renews public interest and stimulates dialogue about cultural heritage, identity, and representation.

Conservation & Science and Research Services

Beyond its public presentation, the Rijksmuseum also functions as a leading **research and conservation institute**, integrating art-historical scholarship with material and technical expertise. The museum's state-of-the-art laboratories facilitate interdisciplinary research, where conservators and scientists collaborate to study, preserve, and restore works of art.

One of the most prominent examples of this integration between research, technology, and public engagement is *Operation Night Watch*, in which Rembrandt's masterpiece is being examined and conserved in full view of visitors (see Figure 7). The project exemplifies the museum's leadership in **technical innovation, transparency, and international collaboration**. Such initiatives not only safeguard cultural heritage for future generations but also strengthen the museum's position as a global centre of expertise, contributing to the advancement of conservation science and the understanding of art.



Figure 7. Image from *Het Parool* (2023) *Operation Night Watch*

1.2.4 BUSINESS SECTOR

The Business Sector forms the organisational backbone of the Rijksmuseum. It is primarily responsible for the internal systems and resources that enable the museum's cultural and public ambitions to be realised. This includes managing finances, human resources, facilities, and digital infrastructure, as well as overseeing sustainability and safety operations.

Finances, Goals and Challenges

One of the museum's principal sources of income is ticket sales, which sustain a large part of its daily operations and directly link financial stability to visitor engagement. As a national museum, the Rijksmuseum also receives structural funding from the Dutch government to cover its core functions. However, government budgets are under increasing pressure, and fluctuating visitor numbers — particularly in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic — have highlighted the need for financial resilience and diversification.

While the museum's foundations are strong, these developments underscore the importance of responsible resource management, sustainable growth, and the ongoing pursuit of new ways to engage audiences and ensure long-term stability. The Business Sector, therefore, works closely with other departments, particularly the Audience and Development teams, to maintain a balanced financial ecosystem that supports the museum's social, educational, and artistic ambitions.

Innovation and Digital Transformation

Within the Business Sector, the Innovation Lab, part of the Automation Department, plays a key role in exploring and implementing new technologies that strengthen the museum's operations and visitor experience. It serves as an experimental environment for digital development, testing emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and immersive media. By fostering collaboration among technical experts, curators, and external partners, the Innovation Lab contributes to the museum's digital transformation, ensuring it remains future-oriented and accessible in an increasingly digital society. Example project?



Figure 8. Logo of the Rijksmuseum Innovationlab

Connection to this Project

This graduation project originates from within the Innovation Lab, aligning with its exploratory and forward-looking agenda. It aims to extend the museum's impact beyond its physical walls, developing innovative ways to connect with audiences already closely aligned with the institution, specifically older adults aged 55 to 70 years. In doing so, the project contributes to the Rijksmuseum's strategic ambition to deepen engagement with diverse audiences and to explore new, meaningful forms of cultural participation.

CONCLUSION INSIGHT INTO THE CONTEXT

Across the organisational structure of the Rijksmuseum, several insights emerge that are directly relevant to this project. The museum's strategic plans emphasise the need to **expand connections beyond the Randstad**, to reach a broader and more diverse public through inclusive programming and partnerships. The existing **segmentation model** provides a useful framework for future implementation, as it enables the museum to tailor its approaches to distinct visitor motivations rather than relying on demographic profiles. Moreover, the institution's commitment to **diversifying partnerships** highlights the potential for new forms of collaboration that extend the museum's social and cultural reach.

From the Audience Sector, it becomes evident that **older adults** are well represented among the *Enthusiast* group, a segment already closely aligned with the Rijksmuseum's focus on knowledge and art appreciation. However, much of the museum's current programming takes place **within** its physical walls, leaving limited opportunities for engagement with this group beyond the museum context. Given their existing affinity with the museum and its values, older adults (de liefhebber!) represent a particularly promising starting point for exploring new forms of connection outside the museum.

From the Business Sector, the emphasis on **financial resilience, sustainability, and innovation** underscores the importance of developing initiatives that not only strengthen audience relationships but also contribute to the museum's long-term stability.

The following chapter builds on these organisational insights by identifying and analysing specific **target groups and entry points** that are most relevant to the project.

1.3 TARGET GROUP EXPLORATION

CONNECT CONTEXT TO TARGET GROUP



While exploring and mapping the organisational context of the Rijksmuseum, valuable insights were gained into how the museum currently engages a broad public and connects with different audience groups. This also provided a deeper understanding of the museum's vision, mission, goals, and challenges.

These insights made it possible to identify opportunities that this project, focusing on older adults, could build upon or align with. Since the initial group of adults aged approximately 55 to 70 is broad and diverse, it was necessary to specify this focus in order to design a concept that responds more effectively to their needs and motivations.

To support this refinement, seven preliminary profiles were developed. Each profile represents a potential subgroup within the target audience and suggests a possible design direction, informed by themes identified across different departments of the Rijksmuseum. The full descriptions of these seven profiles are included in **Appendix B**.



1. Reaching those who never saw the night watch



2 Promoting awareness of cultural legacy



3. Celebrating museum membership at home



4. Connecting communities through volunteering



5. Supporting the transition to retirement



6. Engaging pleasure seekers creatively



7. Reconnecting with Indo-Dutch roots

Figure 9. Visualisation of the seven target group profiles

While all seven profiles highlight opportunities for connecting older adults with the Rijksmuseum, it was necessary to focus on a single profile in order to enable depth and design specificity. The Harris profile method is a decision-making tool that was used to compare the profiles across weighted criteria relevant to this project (Harris, 1976).

The criteria **desirability**, **feasibility**, and **viability** were drawn from following the principles of design thinking (Brown, 2009). Desirability for the target group, feasibility of implementation, and viability for the Rijksmuseum represent the classic innovation lens commonly used in design practice.

The criteria **potential for interactive design** and **contribution to social well-being** reflect the personal ambition and values underpinning this graduation project. As described in the prologue, this project is grounded in a desire to create meaningful, experiential interactions and to design in a way that supports well-being, belonging, and positive emotional impact.

Scores were assigned, normalised, and visually compared to support a transparent and systematic selection process. As shown in Figure 10, the fifth profile, **Supporting the transition to retirement**, emerged as the strongest and most promising direction.

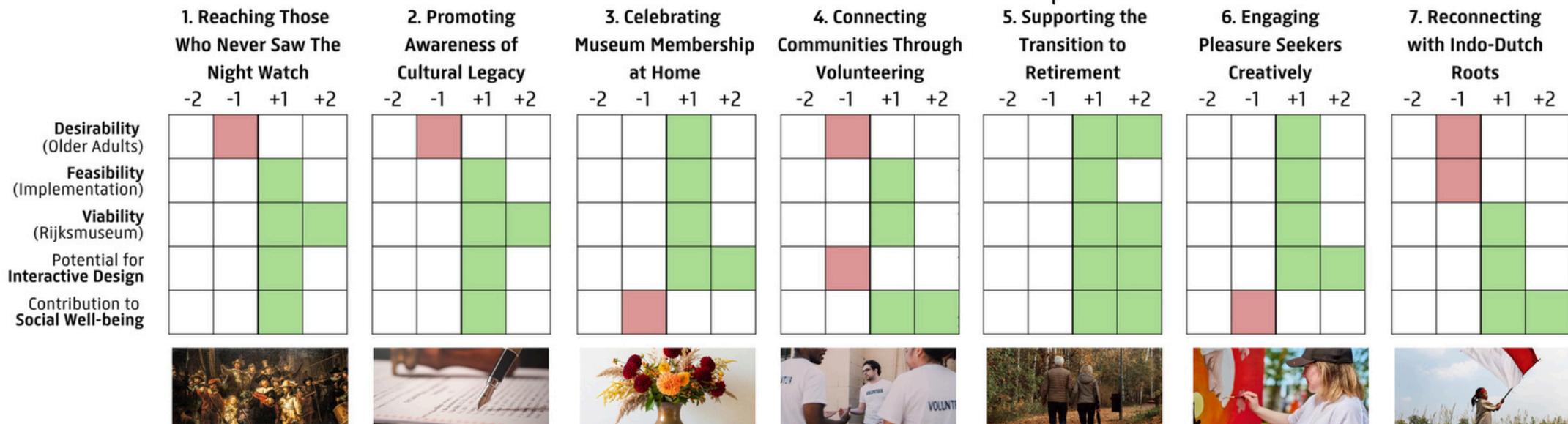


Figure 10. Harris Profile evaluating the seven target group profiles

Supporting the Transition to Retirement

According to the segmentation study (figure 6), the Liefhebbers segment within the museum audience consists largely of older adults who are highly educated and share a strong interest in art and culture. Many members of this group are partially or fully retired, giving them more time and flexibility to engage in cultural activities.

The theme of retirement sparked curiosity for the researcher and the supervisory board, since major life changes often create space for new insights and new beginnings. Retiring marks a moment when people gradually let go of familiar routines, work structures, social contacts, and professional identities. This shift can bring freedom and opportunity but may also raise questions about purpose, rhythm, and belonging.

This profile, therefore, highlights opportunities for creative and cultural activities that can support people in navigating this transition—such as workshops, cultural credits, or longer-term programmes in collaboration with the museum. Designing for this group aligns with broader themes of lifelong learning, identity, and well-being, and reflects the Rijksmuseum’s ambition to remain meaningful beyond its physical walls.

CONCLUSION TARGET GROUP EXPLORATION

As shown in Figure 10, the analysis demonstrated that the profile focusing on the transition from work to retirement scored highest across these dimensions. Although this profile does not directly align with the Rijksmuseum’s ambition to attract more underrepresented audiences to the museum, it strongly supports this project’s aim to foster engagement beyond the museum walls. The Liefhebbers group provides a relevant starting point, as it closely aligns with the museum’s existing audience base while also supporting its ambition to reach people nationally and outside the Randstad region. Moreover, the theme of retirement is broadly relatable, almost everyone who works will eventually experience this transition, making it inclusive by nature.

At the same time, the transition from work to retirement introduces a rich and complex context for design. It marks a unique life stage in which individuals adapt to new routines after years of structure and professional activity. What does retirement mean to people who are approaching this stage of life? How do individuals experience the transition from a structured working life to a new daily rhythm? Which new routines or activities become meaningful during this phase? What challenges do people encounter as they adapt to this new stage of life? What kinds of social changes are important throughout this transition? And what role might culture and art and particularly the Rijksmuseum, play in supporting this process? These questions are addressed in the following chapters.



The next chapter delves into this profile and its target group in greater depth through a mixed-methods approach, combining literature research, surveys, and interviews.

2. THE FUTURE RETIREES INSIGHT INTO THE TARGET GROUP

This chapter explores the target group of this project: future retirees, older adults in the transition from work to retirement. To understand their needs, relevant literature on ageing, health, purpose, and retirement are reviewed, and this was complemented by empirical research through surveys and interviews. Together, these methods provide both a broad and in-depth understanding of the social and personal dynamics that shape this life stage. The aim of this chapter is to build a research-based foundation for later design decisions by clarifying how future retirees approach retirement, what they value, and where opportunities lie for the Rijksmuseum to support this transition through art and reflection.



2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review provides a theoretical foundation for understanding ageing, health, and the transition from work to retirement. It synthesises insights from sociology, psychology, and health studies to outline the key factors influencing well-being in later life.

The literature review begins by outlining the demographic context of ageing in the Netherlands. It then explores definitions of health and well-being, followed by a conceptual model describing the phases individuals typically experience after retiring. This leads into an exploration of purpose frameworks, and finally, the chapter concludes with insights from longevity research in so-called Blue Zones.

2.1.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

As a result of the post-war baby boom and declining birth rates since the 1960s, the proportion of older people relative to younger, working-age populations continues to rise (CBS, 2023). According to recent forecasts, a 65-year-old in 2030 can expect to live nearly 21 more years on average (CBS, 2024) This increased life expectancy due to advances in healthcare means that future retirees not only live longer but also spend more years in relatively good health. This shift has significant societal implications, including financial pressure on pension systems and healthcare, as fewer working people are required to support a growing retired population (Van Solinge & Henkens, 2005).

While these demographic changes are often framed as a challenge, they also bring opportunities. Many of today's future retirees are healthier, more active, and financially better off than previous generations. This positions them as a demographic with growing cultural, social, and economic influence.

2.1.2 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

As life expectancy increases, public health organisations are placing greater emphasis not only on extending life, but also on improving the quality of life. This shift in perspective has expanded the understanding of health from a purely medical concept to one that includes mental, social, and emotional well-being (Huber et al., 2013).

The World Health Organisation (WHO, 1948) originally defined health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being.” More recently, Huber et al. (2013) reframed health as “**the ability to adapt** and self-manage in the face of social, physical, and emotional challenges,” highlighting resilience and self-direction. Their concept of positive health identifies six dimensions: bodily functions, mental functions and perception, spiritual dimension, quality of life, social participation, and daily functioning.

This broadened understanding is particularly relevant for the transition from work to retirement, as it shows that social participation and mental well-being contribute as much to healthy ageing as physical fitness.

2.1.3 THE TRANSITION TO RETIREMENT

Retirement represents one of the key transitions in later life, in which the various dimensions of health and well-being are put to the test. It is a period that challenges individuals to adapt physically, mentally, and socially, and to find new forms of meaning and structure once working life comes to an end.

In change management theory, a distinction is made between change, transition and transformation (Utrecht Business School, n.d.). **Change** refers to the visible event or intervention. In the context of this project, that would be the official act of leaving the job, the farewell, a single, observable moment. **Transition**, by contrast, describes the psychological and behavioural process that follows. It involves letting go of the old, adjusting to uncertainty and gradually embracing the new. While change marks the external shift, transition represents the inner journey of adaptation. The transition from work to retirement and, therefore, the inner process of adaptation, is central to this project. This process is further illustrated by the four-phase model described by Dr. Riley Moynes (2019):



Figure 11. Visualisation of “The 4 phases of retirement - Dr. Riley Moynes (2019)”

Dr. Riley Moynes (2019) describes four phases: the holiday phase of initial freedom; the loss phase, where individuals feel the absence of routine, identity, purpose and relationships; the trial and error phase, characterised by experimentation and searching for meaning; and finally, reinvent and rewire, where individuals discover a renewed sense of purpose.

During this process, many retirees begin to ask themselves: “How can I make my life meaningful?” and “What is my purpose?” According to Moynes, the people who reach the final stage, who are typically the happiest, seem to have found answers to these questions. These answers, he notes, almost always involve service to others.

Although these phases in reality may not always occur in a fixed or linear order for everyone, the framework offers valuable insight into the emotional and psychological dynamics that can arise during the transition into retirement.

2.1.4 PURPOSE AND IKIGAI

The search for purpose is explored more deeply in this section. The Japanese concept of Ikigai, often translated as “a reason for being,” suggests that perfect fulfilment arises from the intersection of what one loves, what one is good at, what the world needs, and what one can be paid for (Garcia & Miralles, 2017). When applied to retirement, the “what you can be paid for” dimension usually disappears. As visualised in an adapted Ikigai model (see Figure X), this reduces the overall space where people experience Ikigai and eliminates the areas of profession and vocation, which underlines the earlier described experience of loss.

In this adaptation, the overlap between “what the world needs” and “what you are good at” is renamed as contribution. This reinterpretation reflects the ways in which retirees can continue to feel relevant and valued, even in the absence of paid work. It aligns with Moynes’ conclusion that the happiest retirees are often those who are engaged in service to others.

But beyond the emphasis on service to others, it is equally important that future retirees stay connected to what they enjoy doing and what they are good at. These elements are just as essential for experiencing a fulfilled life after retirement.

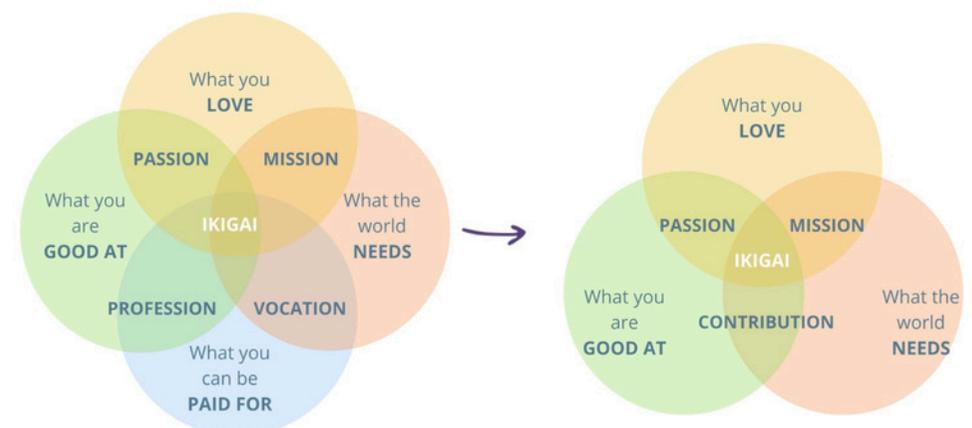


Figure 12. Original Ikigai Model (left) and Adapted Retirement Version (right).

2.1.5 LONG LIFE AND THE BLUE ZONES

Longevity research invites us to learn from people and places where ageing appears to go well. Dan Buettner's (2008) studies of Blue Zones—regions with unusually high numbers of centenarians—identify nine common lifestyle factors, which are grouped into four overarching categories: Move Naturally, Right Outlook, Eat Wisely, and Connect. The lifestyle principles most relevant to this project, besides purpose, include: Down Shift, Loved Ones First, Belong, and Right Tribe.

Down Shift: The practice of building moments of rest and stress reduction into daily routines. In Blue Zones, this includes time spent in nature, creative rituals, and slow, meaningful activities such as cooking or engaging with art.

Loved Ones First: Prioritising close relationships with family and loved ones. Maintaining emotional bonds with partners, children, or grandchildren helps preserve a sense of social identity and connectedness in later life.

Belong: Being part of a spiritual, religious, or otherwise value-driven community. Regular shared moments with others who hold similar beliefs or practices can provide continuity, shared meaning, and support through life transitions.

Right Tribe: Surrounding oneself with a close social circle that reinforces healthy behaviours. In Blue Zones, these lifelong peer groups offer a sense of belonging, accountability, and mutual care. Designing for lasting social connections aligns directly with this principle.

Together, these findings suggest that the target group also could benefit from a sense of belonging, shared rituals, and intentional slowing down in daily life.

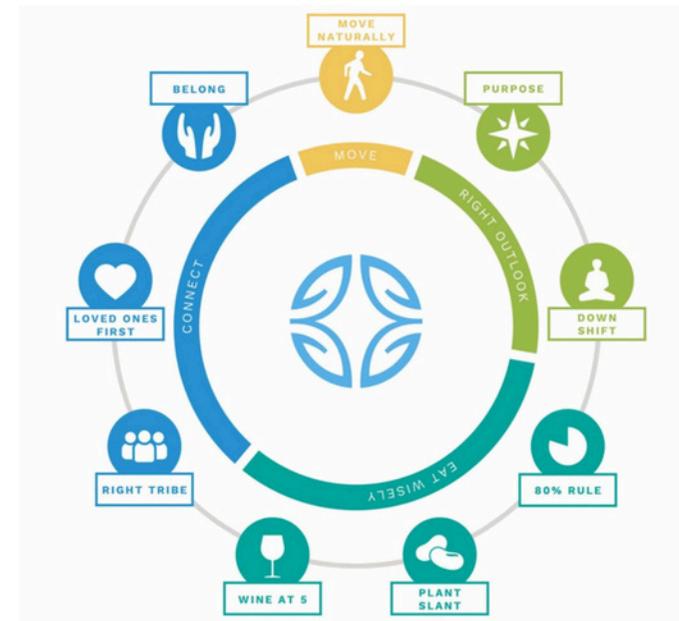


Figure 13. The nine common lifestyle factors of Dan Buettner's (2008) studies of Blue Zones

2.1.6 MEANINGFUL CLOSURE TO THE WORKING LIFE

While lifestyle and social context contribute to healthy ageing, research further highlights that a meaningful closure of the working life can strongly influence well-being after retirement.

According to the Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR, 2021), marking and acknowledging the end of working life, supports a smoother transition into the new life phase. In line with this, research by the Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (SCP, 2018) shows that retirees who experience appreciation and emotional closure report higher levels of life satisfaction in the early years of retirement. Together, these findings suggest that consciously marking the end of working life can contribute to greater well-being and life satisfaction after retirement.

Together, these insights point to the importance of farewell experiences that are both personal and positive. Designing for such transitions can thus support emotional well-being and a smoother adaptation to post-work life.

2.2 QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

To complement the literature review and interviews, a survey was conducted to gain broader insight into the experiences, needs, and attitudes of older adults in the transition from work to retirement. The aim of this activity was to collect a wider range of perspectives, identify general patterns, and contextualise the more qualitative findings from the interviews. The questionnaire, created in Google Forms, was distributed through several channels, including my personal network, the Rijksmuseum's internal communication platform, and direct outreach to museum visitors. Participants were encouraged to share the survey further, which helped extend its reach.

The survey was closed after reaching 105 responses. After filtering out five individuals who indicated that they had never worked or were unable to work due to other circumstances, 100 valid responses remained. Participants first read an introduction to the study and provided informed consent in line with the code of conduct, after which they proceeded to the questionnaire.

SURVEY RESULTS

2.2.1 DEMOGRAPHICS, AUDIENCE & SEGMENTATION

This first survey segment included demographic questions such as age, gender, work status, and living situation. The aim was to assess the representativeness of the sample and to provide context for interpretation. In addition, five statements from the Rijksmuseum’s audience segmentation model were used to match each participant to a visitor profile such as the Enthusiast (Liefhebber), the Pleasure Seeker (Plezierbelever), or the Night Watch Visitor (Nachtwachtbezoeker). This connection enabled comparison with the museum’s existing audience insights and supported potential future implementation within its structures.

As seen in image 14, the results showed a balanced gender distribution and a wide age range between 55 and 69 years. Most participants lived in the western provinces of the Netherlands and had completed higher education. The majority were still employed, with many expecting to retire within the next five years, while one-quarter were already retired. The segmentation results indicated that more than half of the respondents aligned with the Liefhebber profile, closely mirroring the Rijksmuseum’s own visitor base. (image 15)

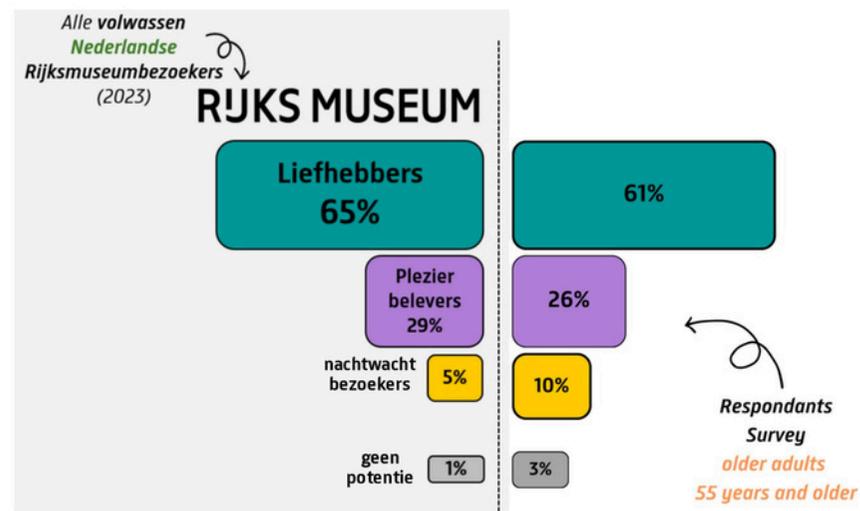


Figure 15. audience segmentation of Dutch adults in the Rijksmuseum on the left, compared to audience segmentation on surveys participants: Dutch adults above 55 years old

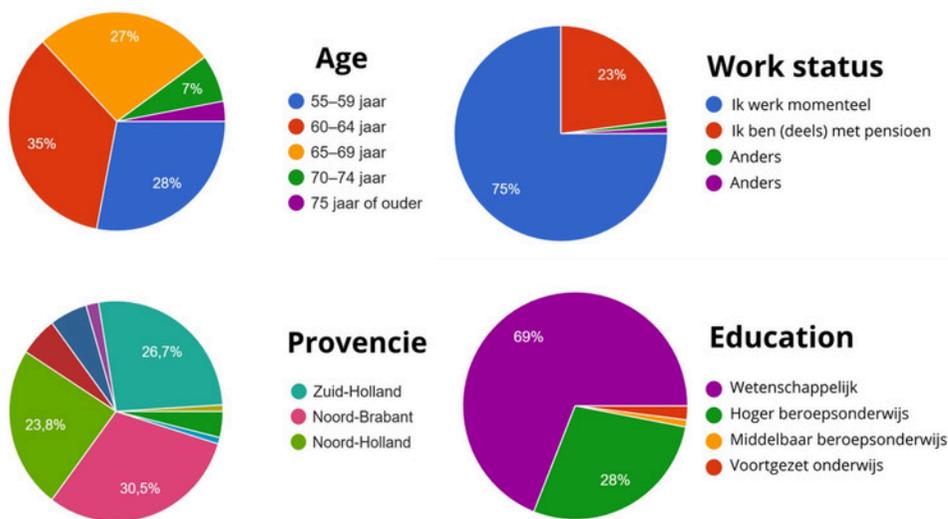


Figure 14. demographic survey output

Interpretation

The demographic composition suggests that the sample predominantly consisted of **highly educated individuals** from the **Randstad and nearby provinces**. This group is likely more culturally engaged than the average Dutch adult population, which is reflected in the very high proportion of respondents with a Liefhebber profile. The close alignment with the museum’s existing visitor segmentation indicates that the survey successfully captured the perspectives of people already inclined to visit the Rijksmuseum. At the same time, the divergence from the national population highlights the underrepresentation of less-engaged audiences. This bias is important to consider when interpreting the results, as insights are most directly applicable to the museum’s current and potential core audience rather than to the Dutch population at large.

2.2.2 RETIREMENT EXPECTATIONS & EXPERIENCES

This segment of the survey explored expectations and experiences surrounding the transition to retirement, as well as perceived differences between participants' own generation and the generation above. The open-ended questions aimed to uncover broader perspectives on ageing, lifestyle, and identity, helping to build a more nuanced understanding of how people approach this life phase.

The results showed that working participants expressed both anticipation and apprehension about retirement. While many looked forward to freedom and new opportunities, others voiced concern about the potential loss of structure, purpose, and social contact. In contrast, retired participants generally described the transition and subsequent phase as positive, characterised by pleasure, freedom, and new possibilities, with only a small minority reporting difficulties such as emptiness or loss.

When asked about generational differences, participants commonly described their cohort as fitter, more active, and younger in spirit than the generation before them. They also emphasised greater focus on mental health, personal development, and digital proficiency, along with a more gradual transition into retirement.

Interpretation

The findings suggest that the anticipatory phase of retirement is often more emotionally charged and complex than the retirement experience itself. In other words, concerns about loss of purpose or social contact tend to outweigh the actual challenges encountered afterwards. This highlights the importance of providing support during the transition phase rather than only focusing on life after retirement. At the same time, it should be noted that the survey included more working than retired participants, with some respondents still far from retirement and others already retired for many years. The results, therefore, served mainly to build a broader understanding of perspectives on retirement, while the follow-up interviews provided more detailed insights into lived retirement experiences. Moreover, participants' portrayal of their generation as open-minded, digitally fluent, and globally oriented reflects a broader cultural shift toward self-actualisation and lifelong growth.

2.2.3 PURPOSE AND MEANING

The third segment explored participants' sense of purpose and meaning in life through eleven 7-point Likert-scale statements inspired by the Ikigai framework. These items examined perceived well-being, direction, and the use of personal strengths and passions. Although the initial plan was to compare working and retired participants, this distinction proved less relevant, as many described retirement as a gradual rather than fixed transition. Consequently, the analysis focused on overall patterns within the group.

The results indicated that participants generally perceived their lives as meaningful and satisfying. Most respondents reported high life satisfaction, a sense of contribution, and adequate physical and mental health to pursue desired activities. A large majority valued ongoing personal development after their working life. However, a clear contrast emerged between those who felt they knew what brought them joy and those who reported having a well-defined sense of life's deeper value.

Interpretation

These findings suggest that participants generally perceive their lives as fulfilling, with strong emphasis on meaningful activity, contribution, and social connection. The high value placed on lifelong development indicates a generation that does not see retirement as an endpoint, but rather as a continued opportunity for growth and learning. At the same time, the contrast between knowing what brings joy and having a clear sense of life's value points to a certain ambiguity: while many participants recognise sources of everyday fulfilment, fewer articulate a deeper, overarching sense of meaning. This tension highlights both the strengths and vulnerabilities of the group: a solid foundation of satisfaction and activity, but also a need for reflection and guidance in connecting these elements to a broader sense of purpose. For the design context, this underlines the relevance of offering experiences that help participants articulate and connect their personal sources of joy to a deeper sense of meaning, supporting them in navigating the transition from working life to retirement.

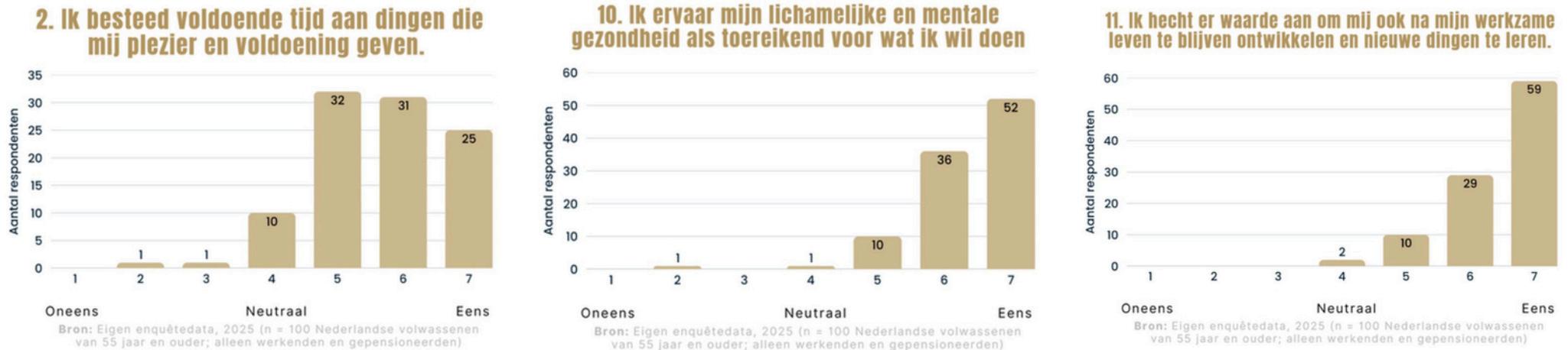


Figure 16. Results from the qualitative research

2.2.4 IDEA DIRECTIONS

The fourth and final segment included five statements on different elements of potential idea directions. These questions were intentionally short and exploratory, designed to capture participants' first reactions and associations rather than deep reflection. Each item was phrased as "To what extent would you be interested in..." and rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = no interest to 5 = strong interest with 3 = neutral.

The responses revealed strong interest in certain directions. Most participants were open to trying new things after their working life, with a clear majority expressing high enthusiasm. Similarly, there was considerable interest in low-threshold opportunities to contribute to others, as well as in meeting new people in retirement. The idea of using art and creativity to explore sources of energy and joy was also received positively, even though it was more specific than the other statements. By contrast, the statement about consciously preparing and guiding the transition from work to retirement generated a more divided response, with opinions ranging widely from low to high interest.

Interpretation

The results suggest that the target group is curious, socially oriented, and receptive to new experiences in later life. The divided response to a concept that would help the target group to consciously prepare for retirement should not be seen as a weakness but rather as a strength of the data: it indicates that participants were willing to respond critically and did not simply rate every idea positively. This lends credibility to the other results. Moreover, the fact that the most specific item, using art and creativity as a way to explore what gives energy and pleasure, still attracted strong interest from over 60% of respondents is particularly encouraging for the design context. It shows that while broad, generic directions such as "trying new things" or "meeting new people" are appealing, even more targeted cultural and creative approaches score higher with this audience.



Figure 17. Results from the qualitative research

2.2.5 SURVEY CONCLUSIONS

When combining the interpretations and results from the four survey segments, several overarching insights can be drawn, and conclusions can be made.

One of the most important findings was that retirement appeared less as a fixed boundary and more as a gradual, fluid transition. Besides that, there were more concerns and problems found in the expectations before retiring of the working people than there were actual ... reported by the experiences from retired people. Keeping in mind that I also reached more people still actively working. Therefore, the interviews should dive deeper into experienced challenges from retired people.

Compared to the generation above them, participants described their generation as more active, open-minded, and digitally skilled, with a stronger interest in personal growth. They expressed overall life satisfaction, with good health and good financial circumstances. Besides that, they expressed a great interest in trying out new things after retirement. A clear difference between everyday joy and a deeper sense of meaning became visible.

Testing different idea directions showed that participants were more interested in a concept centred on art and creativity, revealing what gives them energy and joy, than in one focused on creating awareness, preparation and guidance for the transition into retirement.

The survey indicates that this target group, highly educated, culturally engaged, and in good health, is both receptive and promising for initiatives by the Rijksmuseum, while their relative privilege should be kept in mind when considering wider applicability.

KEY FINDINGS

Retirement as transition: gradual, overlapping patterns of stopping earlier, reducing hours, or continuing longer.

Anticipation vs. reality: worries before retirement could be greater than challenges afterwards.

Generational self-image: active, curious, digitally skilled, internationally oriented.

Purpose & meaning: high satisfaction and growth mindset, but some ambiguity around deeper life value.

Idea directions: strong interest in trying new things, open to contributing and meeting new people; art and creativity stand out as powerful entry points.

Audience fit: aligns well with Rijksmuseum's visitor base; open to co-creation and reflective engagement, though not representative of the broader Dutch population.

2.3 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

To complement the quantitative survey, six qualitative interviews were conducted: four with retirees and three with professionals who use art or reflective practice within career coaching and organisational transformation. One of the participants was included in both groups, as she recently retired while also working as a career coach and internal change facilitator. Among the retirees, three were women and one was a man, representing different stages of the transition, from "about to retire" to "retired for seven years". This variety offered a rich view of how experiences and perspectives might differ or evolve over time.

The professionals were active in fields related to personal development and transition guidance, two of them integrating art as a tool for reflection and meaning-making. Their expertise provided valuable insights into how creative processes and structured reflection can support people approaching retirement.

The aim of the qualitative interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the retirement and to explore the general potential of art in transitions. As retirees were underrepresented in the survey, the interviews provided qualitative insights from "retirement experience experts." The conversations helped to test earlier assumptions, map a transition timeline, and validate literature in context.

2.3.1 RETIREES

One day before retirement

'This week, I received an email with the subject line "EXIT" about handing in my laptop.'

'I've been working part-time since I turned 67. Still, those few days of work give structure to my week. I can now fill in the rest of the days as I please. Monday is already culture day.'

10 months into retirement

'Retirement is very different from working life; working life is actually very easy.'

'When I was working, I went to museums more often than I do now.'

2 months retired

'For the first few months, I'm just going to do nothing. Although it's good to experience it for a while, I know it's not for me.'

'I suddenly spend a lot more time and attention on everyday things.'

7 years retired

'Exercise and health are so important, and helping others with that makes me so happy. I truly believe that my brain produces a chemical when I'm doing that.'

2.3.2 PROFESSIONALS

Three professionals were interviewed who each contribute expertise on career transition and personal development in later life. Two of them use art as a medium in coaching and transformation processes, while the third focuses on retirement transition from a human resources and organisational perspective. Together, their experiences offered valuable perspectives on how both creative reflection and structured preparation can help individuals navigate the transition from work to retirement with greater awareness and purpose.

The first professional applies visual art as a reflective instrument in executive coaching and leadership development. Through creative exercises, clients are encouraged to externalise their thoughts, uncover emotions, and reframe their professional identity beyond work. The process helps participants shift from goal-oriented thinking to more intuitive forms of self-understanding. According to this coach, art invites vulnerability and curiosity—two qualities essential for transformation.

The second professional works with art-based interventions in organisational transitions, helping teams and individuals navigate major changes such as mergers, role shifts, and retirement. She emphasised that art fosters dialogue and emotional connection, offering a non-verbal way to explore complex challenges and emotions often overlooked in rational workplace contexts.

The third professional, although not working directly with art, recently retired herself after more than twenty years in a consultancy firm. She is included here for her expertise in career guidance and the transition to retirement. Drawing on her own experience, she designed a pre-retirement trajectory within her organisation that encouraged reflection and dialogue between younger and older employees. Activities included personal reflection sessions, peer learning, and the organisation of meaningful farewell rituals. As she noted: “It is important to truly say goodbye to the working life before entering a new life phase.”

2.3.3 INTERVIEW CONCLUSIONS

Transition as gradual and personal

- Retirement is not experienced as a single event but as an ongoing process that unfolds over time.
- The “in-between” period where people for example start working less before retirement.

Loss and redefinition of structure

- Several quotes reflect how structure from work is suddenly gone, creating both freedom and disorientation.
- “For the first few months, I'm just going to do nothing”

Shifts in identity and meaning

- Some find meaning in new forms of contribution, such as volunteering or helping others. This connects directly to purpose and social contribution.
- Post-retirement life invites greater attention to small, daily activities — an increased sense of mindfulness or appreciation.

Insights of Professionals

The potential of art in career and life transitions

- Art can be used as a reflective instrument to explore identity, emotion, and meaning.
- Creative processes encourage intuitive and emotional understanding.

Art and dialogue as facilitators of transformation

- Art creates a non-verbal space for exploring and sharing complex feelings.
- Dialogue and shared reflection help people recognise common experiences and connect emotionally.

The importance of structured preparation and ritual

- Pre-retirement preparations and conversations between employer and employee, can support smoother transitions.
- Meaningful rituals, such as organised farewells, help people consciously close one life phase before beginning another.

CONCLUSION DISCOVER

The research shows that retirement is not a single event but a **transition**, marked by a period of **pre-retirement pressure** and a later phase of **post-retirement emptiness**. In both moments, people have limited mental space for new activities, yet they express a strong need for **purpose** and **community**.

The findings indicate that the most effective moment to intervene is **before retirement**, when individuals are still connected to their work environment and open to guided reflection. This phase offers the best opportunity to support **mental readiness** and to prevent a deeper emotional dip after the final working day.

Across the study, art emerged as a powerful medium for reflection. It can help people look back, reconnect with their strengths, and open up new perspectives, demonstrating the **potential of art in life transitions**. Together, these insights point toward designing an experience that activates purpose, strengthens connection, and begins well before the moment of retirement.

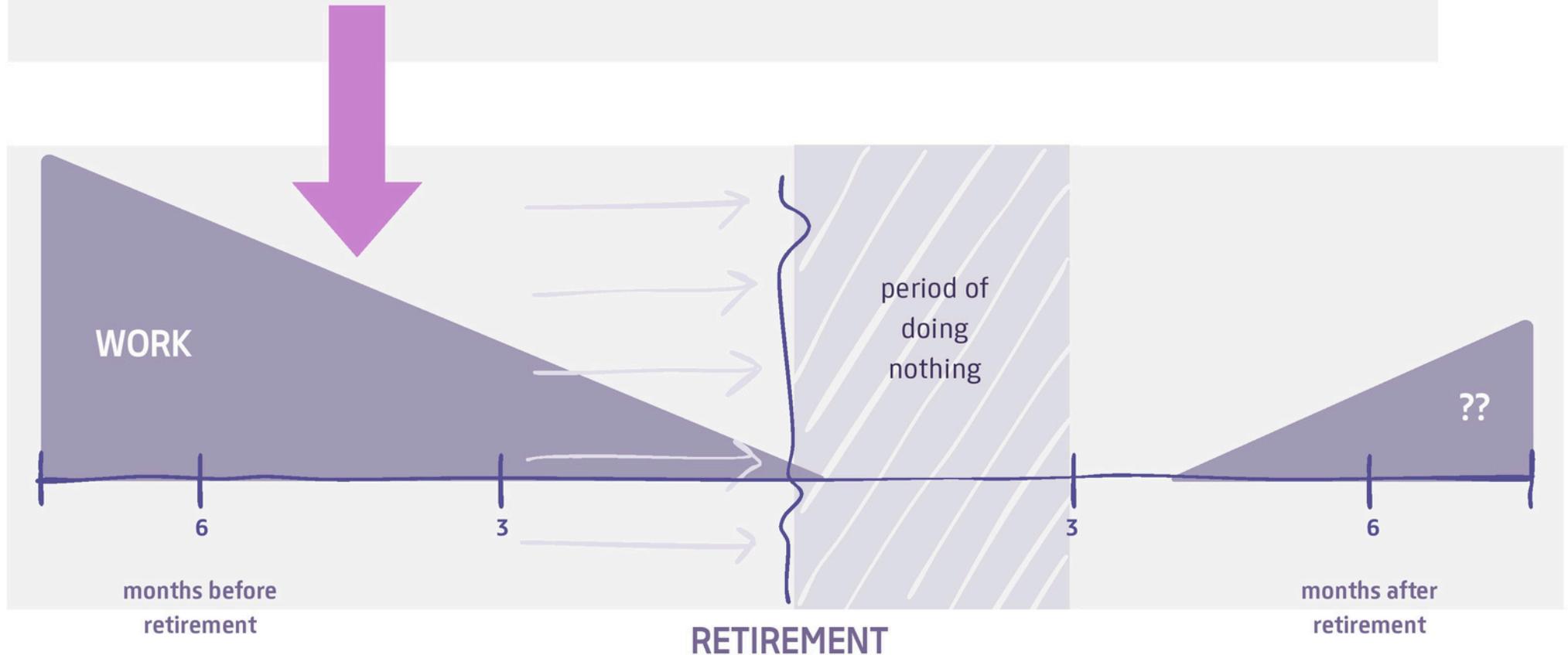


Figure 18. Visualisation of the main findings in the Discover phase

PART 2: DEFINE

SCOPE DOWN THE FOCUS

- 3. SYNTHESIZING INSIGHTS
- 4. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

3. SYNTHESIZING INSIGHTS



This chapter brings together the main insights from the discovery phase and translates them into a clear design direction. It moves from understanding the two sides of the context, the Rijksmuseum and the future retirees, to identifying the gap between them, and finally to building a conceptual bridge through a design vision and a design goal that guide the next phase of the project.



Figure 19. Visualisation of the two sides: the Rijksmuseum and the Future Retirees

3.1 THE DESIGN CONTEXT THE TWO SIDES

Rijksmuseum

The Rijksmuseum defines itself as an institution that connects people with art and history. As established in the context research, it increasingly seeks to extend this connection beyond its physical walls to reach audiences across the Netherlands. In recent years, reduced government funding has emphasised the need for resilience and diversification of income, making long-term audience relationships even more important. While inclusivity and attracting new visitor segments remain key priorities, maintaining strong connections with established audiences is equally vital for sustaining the museum's cultural and financial ecosystem.

Future retirees represent one of these key audiences. They are closely aligned with the museum's profile—culturally engaged, curious, and loyal—but are currently less involved in initiatives beyond the museum itself. Engaging this group more meaningfully offers the Rijksmuseum a chance to strengthen its social relevance, deepen existing relationships, and explore new ways of connecting people, art, and history across the country.

Future Retirees

Future retirees in the Netherlands are generally healthy, highly educated, and financially secure. Many remain active in the workforce and anticipate an active, fulfilling life after retirement. Yet, the transition from work to retirement represents a profound shift. After decades of professional structure and belonging, people must redefine their rhythm, identity, and sense of purpose. This phase can bring both freedom and uncertainty, prompting reflection on what truly matters and how to use one's time meaningfully.

This moment of change creates a need for experiences that invite self-reflection, recognition, and inspiration—helping individuals connect past experiences to future possibilities. Supporting this process can contribute not only to personal well-being but also to a broader sense of purpose and participation in society.



Figure 20. Visualisation of the design challenge and the design goal

3.2 THE DESIGN CHALLENGE

THE GAP

The exploration of both perspectives reveals a clear gap between the Rijksmuseum’s ambitions and the lived experiences and needs of the Future retirees. Despite their strong alignment in the museum and cultural interests, there are currently few touchpoints where these two worlds meet. The Rijksmuseum’s existing initiatives largely take place within the museum walls, while Future retirees in the transition to retirement spend much of their time outside this context. As a result, the museum’s potential to support this group through art and storytelling remains largely untapped.

Bridging this gap requires finding common ground where both can benefit. The Rijksmuseum holds a unique resource: its collection of art and stories that invite reflection and inspire new perspectives. For Future retirees, art could offer a way to reflect on life’s transitions and rediscover a sense of purpose. For the museum, this offers an opportunity to connect with a valued audience in a new and meaningful way, reinforcing its role as a place where art, people, and life experiences meet. This gap presents both a challenge and an opportunity.

DESIGN CHALLENGE: defines the problem space

How might the Rijksmuseum extend its impact beyond the museum walls to meaningfully engage Future retirees in the transition from work to retirement?

DESIGN GOAL: concrete design ambition

To create a meaningful solution for the Rijksmuseum to connect with Future retirees in the transition from work to retirement while strengthening the long-term relationship with this audience.

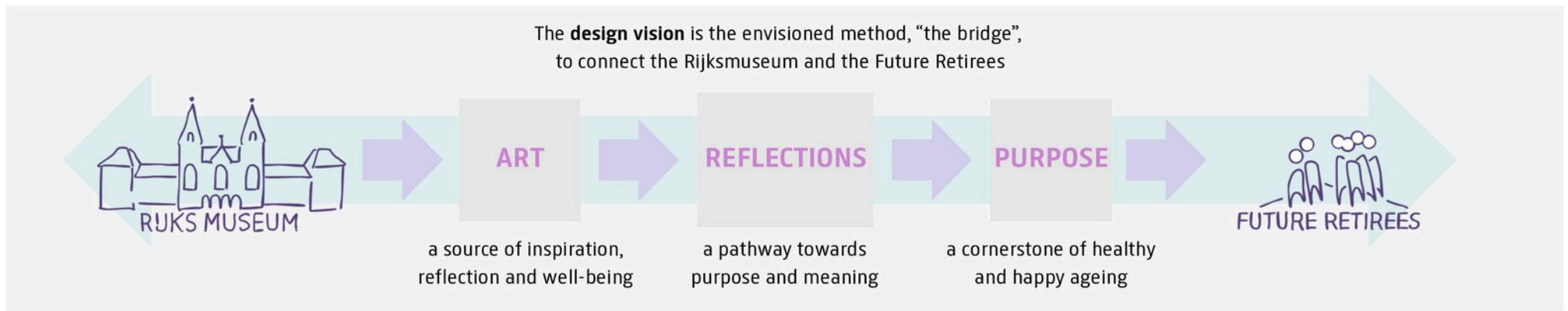


Figure 21. Visualisation of the Design Vision

3.3 THE DESIGN VISION THE BRIDGE

In addition to the insights regarding the client and the target group, the discovery phase revealed several key findings: **art** can serve as a source of inspiration or reflection, **reflection** can act as a pathway toward purpose and meaning; and **purpose** is a cornerstone of healthy and happy ageing. These elements can help connect the Rijksmuseum to the target group.

From the perspective of the target group, a sense of purpose is important to live a fulfilled life, and reflection is needed to find that purpose. Art can serve as a powerful tool for reflection, inspiration, and well-being, which offers a potential pathway to connect their needs with what the Rijksmuseum can provide. Conversely, from the perspective of the Rijksmuseum, the museum could use its art collection to create a reflection tool that helps the target group find their new sense of purpose in the transition to retirement.

For the Rijksmuseum, this presents an opportunity to use its collection not only to tell stories of art and history but also to enable personal reflection and growth. By transforming encounters with art into reflective experiences, the museum can help individuals connect their own life stories with those expressed through art—creating value that is both personal and cultural.

ART, REFLECTION & PURPOSE

Beyond aesthetic enjoyment, art sparks reflection and supports well-being. It inspires new perspectives, provides comfort, and acts as a mirror in times of change. With its world-class collection and expertise, the Rijksmuseum is uniquely positioned to make this potential accessible to future retirees.

Reflection is a crucial step in navigating life transitions. Besides that, reflection is the crucial step that connects art to the individual needs of the target group. Reflection allows individuals to pause, re-evaluate their values and experiences, and explore new directions. This process strengthens a sense of purpose and helps find meaning in past, current and future activities.

A clear sense of purpose is strongly linked to both well-being and longevity. It provides direction, motivation, and resilience—qualities that become especially important in later life. Purpose helps people to remain active, connected, and fulfilled while embracing new roles and possibilities after their working years.

DESIGN VISION: direction, intention, or guiding belief

*Connecting the Rijksmuseum to the Future Retirees,
by using ART AS A REFLECTIVE TOOL TO FIND PURPOSE*

3.4 CONCEPT DIRECTIONS

Throughout the research process, the numerous ideas that emerged were set aside to maintain focus on understanding the context first. Now that the research and synthesis have led to a clear design vision, four concepts were developed, all pursuing the same goal: using art as a reflective tool to help future retirees in the transition from work to retirement redefine their purpose. Each concept translates this vision into a different approach and format, situated within a distinct context.

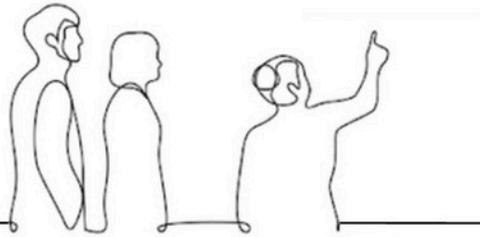


Figure 22. Museum Tour



Figure 23. Touring Installation

1. Museum Tour

This concept would take place within the walls of the Rijksmuseum. Instead of following a conventional tour that guides visitors through artworks and their histories, this tour would use art to guide participants through their own thoughts, feelings, and dreams. In this setting, art becomes a mirror for reflection to (re)define one's sense of purpose. The format could be experienced individually or in a group.

Pros: direct interaction with art; prompts visitors with reflective questions; encourages social connection; innovative and inward-focused experience.

Cons: limited to those who can travel to Amsterdam; challenges in reaching the broader target group; requires trained Rijksmuseum staff; resource-intensive and less financially viable.

2. Touring Installation

Similar to the Nachtwacht on Tour, this direction envisions a physical, interactive installation that travels across the Netherlands. The installation would use selected artworks as mirrors for reflection, meeting Future retirees in public spaces or at local events. While this could attract many beyond the intended audience, this “by-catch” may also create broader cultural value and visibility.

Pros: innovative and eye-catching; reaches a wide audience; strengthens brand awareness; demonstrates outreach and accessibility.

Cons: less targeted toward the intended group; requires high investment in logistics, planning, and staffing; limited potential as a sustainable revenue model.



Figure 24. Retirement Experience

3. Retirement Experience

An important moment in the transition from work to retirement is the farewell at one's workplace. This direction explores designing a retirement gift developed by the Rijksmuseum, offered by employers to employees. The gift could range from a physical artifact or keepsake to a symbolic experience or membership. The Rijksmuseum's art would support Future retirees in their transition by fostering reflection and a renewed sense of purpose.

Pros: clear and direct way to reach the target group; naturally integrated into an existing social ritual; flexible in format and scale, clear cash flow of selling a product.

Cons: shaped by requirements and conditions; employer expectations and HR practices would influence the design.



Figure 25. Museal Connection

4. Museal Connection

This direction considers collaboration with other museums across the Netherlands. Local museums would not only share art and stories but also function as gathering places for Future retirees, responding to ageing demographics with opportunities for social cohesion, stimulation, and personal growth. A designed intervention could contribute to this movement by offering reflective tools or programs for newly retired individuals.

Pros: highly accessible; rooted in local communities; potential to spark a larger cultural movement.

Cons: complex to coordinate across institutions; risks becoming more of a societal initiative than a concrete value proposition for the Rijksmuseum.

SELECTED CONCEPT

Among the four concept directions, **the Retirement Experience (3)** was selected as the most promising for this project. This decision was based on an evaluation in which the concepts were measured and compared in terms of their potential levels of desirability, feasibility, and viability. In this process, the second and fourth directions were set aside. The Touring Installation (2) required substantial logistical efforts, high investments in materials and staffing, and offered limited potential as a sustainable revenue model. The Museal Connection (4), while valuable in terms of social impact and accessibility, risked becoming a broad societal initiative rather than a concrete value proposition for the Rijksmuseum, making it difficult to position within the project scope.

This left the first and third directions as the more viable candidates, since both were more straightforward in organisational terms, more goal-oriented, and capable of generating value beyond their costs. The Museum Tour (1) offered a highly reflective and open-ended format, which is attractive for those approaching retirement and already aware of the need to redefine their purpose. It might also have appealed to other groups, such as young professionals at the start of their careers, who may similarly seek reflection. However, its reach would likely remain limited to individuals near the Rijksmuseum or those already inclined to visit, which conflicted with the project's broader ambition to connect with a larger segment of future retirees. By contrast, the Retirement Experience (3) directly addresses this gap by reaching individuals through the existing social ritual of retirement at the workplace. It leverages companies as distribution partners, creating a direct link to the target group while also offering the Rijksmuseum a new revenue stream. In doing so, it combines accessibility, scalability, and alignment with the project scope, making it a desirable, feasible, and viable direction for further development.

CONCLUSION

Chapter 3



With the Retirement Experience selected, the focus shifts to further developing this concept into a concrete direction. While the target group and the Rijksmuseum have already been examined in earlier sections, this concept introduces an additional stakeholder: **Employers**. As the purchasers and distributors of the retirement gift, employers play a central role in bringing the concept to life.

4. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

This project involves three main stakeholder groups whose interests and needs must be balanced to ensure the concept's success. In this chapter will be explained who the stakeholders are, how they interact, how they align conceptually, and finally what they require and wish for.



Figure 26. The three main Stakeholders

4.1 STAKEHOLDER OVERVIEW

This project involves three primary stakeholder groups whose interests and needs must be balanced to ensure the concept's success. This section introduces these groups, outlines their respective roles, and describes the value that the concept offers to each.

The Rijksmuseum (provider)

The Rijksmuseum acts as both provider and curator. For the museum, the concept establishes a new revenue model beyond traditional ticket sales, strengthens relationships with an important audience segment, and enhances its societal relevance by positioning art as a means for reflection and purpose.

Employers (purchasers and distributors)

Employers function as the purchasers and distributors of the farewell gift. For them, the product offers a low-effort yet emotionally meaningful way to support employees in their transition to retirement. It contributes to a positive organisational image, promotes employee well-being and motivation, and provides a practical and modular solution for structuring farewell rituals.

Future Retirees (end-users)

Future retirees are the primary end-users of the product. For them, it serves as a meaningful tool for reflecting on their working life, letting go of the past, and rediscovering a sense of purpose in retirement. It supports emotional well-being, offers personalisation, and results in a tangible and dignified keepsake marking this significant life transition.

4.2 STAKEHOLDER DYNAMICS & ALIGNMENT

This section explores how the Rijksmuseum, Employers, and Future retirees are interconnected through the product and how their respective roles align within the design thinking framework. Together, these perspectives illustrate how balance between desirability, feasibility, and viability ensures that the concept remains both meaningful and sustainable.



Figure 27: Stakeholder Activities and Their Connection Through the Product.

The three stakeholder groups are interconnected through the product developed within this project. The Rijksmuseum acts as the provider, designing and curating the concept while offering it as a purchasable product to the employers. The employers, in turn, function as distributors, acquiring the product from the Rijksmuseum and presenting it as a farewell gift to employees transitioning into retirement. Finally, the future retirees engage with the product as end-users, using it as a reflective tool that facilitates personal meaning-making and fosters a renewed connection with the museum.

As illustrated in Figure 27, these interrelated actions form a circular relationship in which all activities revolve around the product. Each stakeholder benefits while simultaneously contributing to the objectives of the others: the Rijksmuseum expands its social and cultural impact, employers support employee well-being and reinforce their organisational identity, and the future retirees experience a sense of recognition and continuity. Thus, the product forms a bridge that meaningfully connects all three stakeholders.

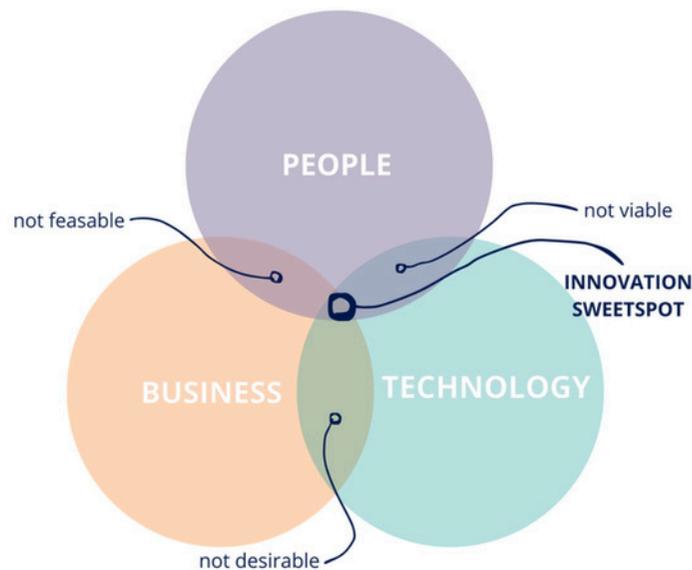


Figure 28. The Design Thinking Framework.

Following the principles of design thinking, the aim is to integrate the needs of people (desirability), the possibilities of technology (feasibility), and the requirements for business success (viability) (Brown, 2009).

The intersection of these three dimensions, where desirability, feasibility, and viability meet, is often referred to as the innovation sweet spot. It represents the point at which a concept becomes both meaningful and sustainable. As illustrated in Figure 28, when a design fails to align with one or more of these stakeholder requirements, the balance is disrupted, potentially weakening the overall value proposition. Therefore, identifying this intersection is essential for ensuring that the final concept simultaneously satisfies user needs, organisational goals, and practical implementation criteria.

To reach this balance, it is crucial that the requirements and wishes of all stakeholders are clearly identified, understood, and aligned, ensuring that no perspective is overlooked in the development of the final concept. The following section identifies the key requirements of each stakeholder group, providing the groundwork for the product development phase discussed in the next chapter.

4.3 STAKEHOLDER WISHES & REQUIREMENTS



1. The Rijksmuseum

Within this project, the museum's wishes and requirements relate to strategic goals. Specifically, the Rijksmuseum seeks to:

- 1.1 Strengthen engagement with older adults audience group.
- 1.2 Expand engagement beyond the museum walls.
- 1.3 Strengthen connections beyond the Randstad area.
- 1.4 Alignment with the museum's audience segmentation model.
- 1.5 Diversify partnerships to reach new audiences and contexts.
- 1.6 Support financial resilience by creating new income streams.
- 1.7 Contribute to long-term stability through innovation.
- 1.8 An independent product that requires minimal staff involvement.
- 1.9 A concept that is scalable.



3. The Employers

Employers seek solutions that integrate seamlessly into existing HR and offboarding processes while expressing genuine appreciation for long-term employees. Specifically, they require that the product or ritual:

- 3.1 Integrates into existing HR and farewell procedures.
- 3.2 Adapts to different team sizes and levels of formality.
- 3.3 Is reliable and logistically feasible, requiring minimal time investment.
- 3.4 Expresses gratitude and recognition meaningfully.
- 3.5 Respects diverse personalities and cultural backgrounds.
- 3.6 Helps managers mark retirements in a consistent yet personal way.
- 3.7 Reinforces positive internal culture and continuity despite employee transitions.
- 3.8 Creates farewell moments that are authentic and emotionally resonant.
- 3.9 Facilitates reflection and connection among colleagues.
- 3.10 Positions the organisation as one that values personal well-being.

2. The Future Retirees

Based on literature on healthy aging and transition design, future retirees benefit from experiences that:

- 2.1 Support mental and social wellbeing.
- 2.2 Strengthen adaptability and self-management.
- 2.3 Prepare for experiences of loss or disorientation.
- 2.4 Encourage exploration and experimentation.
- 2.5 Reinforce self-knowledge and sense of contribution.
- 2.6 Foster a sense of belonging and social continuity.
- 2.7 Create opportunities for shared rituals.
- 2.8 Encourage intentional slowing down and reflection.
- 2.9 Mark and acknowledge the end of working life.
- 2.10 Provide appreciation and emotional closure.
- 2.11 Provide personal relevance and aesthetic pleasure through art engagement.



PART 3: DESIGN & DEVELOP POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Building on the insights from the previous phase, this part focuses on developing and testing the selected concept: the Retirement Experience. This concept proposes a reflective journey that begins well in advance of retirement. Recipients receive a gift that invites them to engage in a series of art-based reflective exercises connected to the Rijksmuseum. Through this process, they gain awareness and perspective on their transition, culminating in a meaningful, personalised farewell gift presented at their retirement celebration.

The guiding research question for this phase is:

How can the Rijksmuseum use its art collection as a reflective tool to help Future retirees find a new sense of purpose in the transition from work to retirement?

Given the open and explorative nature of this question, Research through Design (RtD) was adopted as the methodological approach. RtD integrates design and research activities to explore possible futures through a cyclical process of making and evaluating, rather than testing fixed hypotheses (Stappers & Giaccardi, 2017).

Within this approach, iterative prototyping and testing were used to gain clarity on nine dimensions of the Retirement Experience.

The nine explored dimensions for this phase are:

**1. the user journey, 2. the social setting, 3. the location, 4. the format
5. structure, 6. the connection to the Rijksmuseum, 7. the interaction with art, 8. the interplay of reflection and purpose, and 9. the role of the gift.**

- 5. HOME EXPLORATION
- 6. MUSEUM EXPLORATION
- 7. DESIGN DECISIONS
- 8. LOOK & FEEL

5. HOME EXPLORATION



Figure 29. Prototype gift box with materials prepared for three sessions

The pre-retirement exploration conducted tests across multiple sessions on different days to simulate a longer-term engagement process. The participant, referred to as Participant 1, was still employed at the time of testing and expected to retire within the next two years. All sessions took place in the participant's home environment to ensure comfort and authenticity. Two of the sessions focused on the **overarching concept**, particularly the act of gift-giving and the farewell moment, while the remaining two sessions examined the **concept's content** and the use of art as a medium for guided reflection.

As shown in Figure 29, a prototype gift box was prepared containing materials for three reflective sessions: one focused on past work experiences, one on the present self, and one on envisioning the future. Only the first two sessions were conducted. This past-present-future structure was used as an initial framework to explore how reflection on different phases of working life might support the transition toward retirement.

5.1. PROTOTYPE TESTING

5.1.1 Concept and Gift Giving

To explore how the concept might begin as a meaningful farewell gesture, a first prototype simulated the moment of receiving a gift six months prior to retirement. A Rijksmuseum-branded gift box was prepared containing a personalised letter with a photograph of the team (framed as if it came from colleagues), and three numbered envelopes leading to later workshops. During the session, the researcher assumed the role of a manager presenting the gift, introducing the participant's approaching retirement and inviting them to open the box. The participant was asked to think aloud while interacting with the materials.



Figure 30. Gift Giving in Home Exploration

The participant reacted with visible pleasure and curiosity. The act of unboxing created anticipation and trust in the experience to come. The letter and photograph were read attentively, eliciting emotional engagement and a sense of appreciation. Some uncertainty arose about the order of the envelopes, but this did not hinder participation. The session revealed that the act of gifting itself strongly shaped the user's mindset: it generated joy, positive expectations, and willingness to engage. These findings stem directly from observation of the participant's behaviour and verbal reflections during and after the session. The researcher therefore concluded that elements such as personalisation, surprise, and clarity of sequence play an essential role in establishing an open and receptive starting point for the overall experience.

5.1.2 AI and Art

This test examined whether an AI chatbot could effectively guide the participant through art-based reflection on working life and personal values. A scripted prompt was developed and embedded in the chatbot in advance. Designed to run autonomously in a warm and supportive tone, the chatbot required no intervention from the researcher. The participant was asked only to introduce herself, after which the chatbot guided her through five reflective questions about her professional experiences. For each response, it suggested possible symbols, and the participant either selected one or proposed her own. In this way, five symbolic layers were gradually formed as the foundation for a personalised artwork.

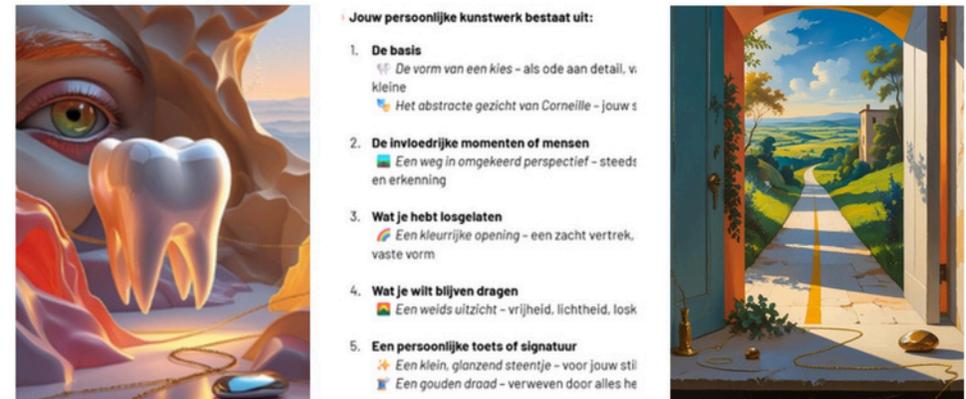


Figure 31. Art and AI in Home Exploration

At the first question, the participant spontaneously asked to use voice recordings instead of typing, which enabled a more natural exchange. She responded actively to the chatbot's suggestions, negotiated symbolic choices, and provided ongoing feedback. The non-human character of the interaction appeared to reduce social pressure, while the chatbot's patient and consistent tone created a safe atmosphere for reflection. The alternation between introspection and creative selection added both depth and lightness to the dialogue. Based on behavioural observations and post-session feedback, the experience was perceived as pleasant and refreshing. The resulting chat history not only generated meaningful input for creating a reflective artwork but also demonstrated potential for reuse, for instance as a personalised catalogue.

5.1.3 Create and Connect

This test explored how hands-on creation and social interaction could support reflection. Conducted on a separate day, the session involved two participants and used a variety of visual materials (e.g., posters, magazines, catalogues) for making collages. Participant 1 had completed earlier stages of the concept, while Participant 2 was new to the process. The goal was to assess whether creative exploration could elicit new perspectives and whether the activity encouraged personal expression. Participants were asked to create a self-portrait representing something about themselves and later discuss their work with each other.



Figure 32. Create and Connect in Home Exploration

Both participants became deeply engaged in the activity, occasionally chatting but mostly working in quiet concentration. Participant 1 created a symbolic collage reflecting her personal characteristics, connecting with earlier insights, whereas Participant 2 produced a literal self-portrait filled with small torn pieces of paper. The contrasting approaches briefly unsettled Participant 1, revealing sensitivity to comparison and a desire to “do it right.” Despite this, both described the activity as relaxing and playful and concluded the session feeling satisfied and surprised by the outcome: Participant 1 because of the visually meaningful result, and Participant 2 because of the process itself, enjoying the sense of freedom and being aware of letting go of his usual structured mindset.

These observations suggest that creative making effectively supported self-reflection and identity expression, even through different artistic approaches. The intuitive and meditative qualities of the activity contributed to a positive and meaningful shared experience.

5.1.4 Feedback and Final Gift

The final session simulated a retirement farewell moment to explore how a meaningful gift at the end of the experience would be received. With the researcher acting as a colleague, two retirement gifts were presented. The first gift consisted of an artwork and a small catalogue generated from the earlier AI-supported reflection session, including selected symbols, their meanings, and participant quotes. The second, unseen by the participant beforehand, featured a symbolic bouquet: an artwork composed of flowers representing qualities identified during the chatbot dialogue, accompanied by a letter explaining the symbolism.



Figure 33. Final Gifts in Home Exploration

The participant was asked to think aloud while receiving the gifts, followed by a short interview. The first gift evoked **recognition** and a **sense of authorship**: “This is my creation.” The catalogue added emotional depth by reintroducing her own words, enhancing authenticity. Although appreciated, the artwork’s style did not fully match the participant’s aesthetic preferences and was therefore likely to be displayed informally.

The second gift, by contrast, triggered **curiosity** and openness. The accompanying letter encouraged the participant to relate the symbolic flowers to her own traits, prompting reflection and acceptance of **compliments**. The use of floral symbolism added a cultural and emotional dimension, making the gesture feel **both personal and universal**. These findings are based on direct feedback and observations during the session.

5.2 FINDINGS HOME EXPLORATION

- A **gift** creates emotional engagement and sets a positive tone. (A1)
- **AI** can guide reflection and personalise the experience. (A2)
- **Voice recording** supports a natural and authentic flow. (A3)
- A **safe environment** should be ensured, both in how participants interact with AI and in how their personal data are protected. (A4)
- The **home environment** appeared suitable, offering comfort, focus, and a sense of privacy during reflection. (A5)
- **Creative elements** make the process light and meditative. (A6)
- A **social setting** can encourage connection and recognition, yet for personal reflections and comfort, moments of **privacy** may be preferred. (A7)
- A **connection to the Rijksmuseum** can be made through art or branding. (A8)
- An artwork created by or generated for the future retiree as a farewell gift stimulates **recognition**, fosters **pride** in one's achievements, and reinforces **self-appreciation**. (A9)
- Creating **personal symbolic meaning** to make a reflective artwork can be fun, personal and meaningful. Yet it can be challenging to generate a visually appealing AI artwork with. (A10)
- Using **universal symbolic meaning** stimulates understanding of art history, and therefore connects to the Rijksmuseum. It is also easier to generate a visually appealing AI artwork with. (A11)
- The **past–present–future** structure helps guide reflection, yet separating these into three individual sessions may be too time-consuming and demand too much effort from participants. (A12)

6. MUSEUM EXPLORATION

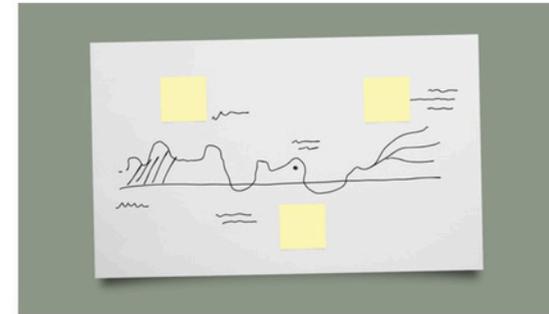


Figure 34. Gift folder containing the materials provided to participants.

The second test was conducted at the Rijksmuseum with three recently retired participants to explore how the art-based reflection process would function in a social group setting, and how the museum context, including the presence of original artworks, might shape the overall experience. In this session, the focus shifted from creating a tangible artwork or gift to formulating a meaningful personal message. The workshop was built around the metaphor of a personal exhibition: each life consists of stories, moments, and values that are worthy of being displayed.

Participants were festively welcomed at a reserved table in the museum garden, where each received a gift folder containing personalised materials: a printed invitation, reflective worksheets, and a selection of art postcards related to their chosen themes (Figure 34). This gesture was designed to evoke the ceremonial act of gift-giving central to the concept and to create a sense of appreciation and anticipation from the outset.

The session again followed a past–present–future structure, this time condensed into a single session and distributed across several steps. Figure 35 illustrates the steps taken during the session: Steps 1 and 2 focused on the past, Step 3 connected past, present, and future, and Step 4 centred on composing a meaningful message to one's future self.



Step 1. Participants created a visual timeline of their working life and identified three recurring themes that captured key moments or phases.



Step 2. For each theme, participants selected a printed artwork from the Rijksmuseum collection, forming a personal mini collection that visualised their professional journey.



Step 3. In the museum, participants again chose three artworks: one reflecting their current feelings in retirement, one representing their future aspirations, and one they would like to gift themselves for retirement.



Step 4. Finally, participants transformed an insights of the day they wished to cherish into a short written message for their future self. Paired with a Polaroid of their chosen artwork, this envelope went home with them.

Figure 35. Visualisation of the four steps in Museum Exploration workshop

6.1. PROTOTYPE TESTING

6.2.1 Looking Back – Your Life Line as Exhibition

Participants quickly produced timelines and distilled them into three themes, though some shared more stories than others. The activity was experienced as enjoyable and clarifying, offering for many the first holistic view of their working life and its transitions. Differences in family situation influenced how careers were framed, revealing the interplay between professional and personal spheres. Participants sought meaning both in the content and in the form of artworks, sometimes through narrative symbolism, other times through visual unity in color or style. Social interaction was lively and considerate: participants asked questions, drew parallels, but also tended to steer away from emotionally charged or painful topics.



Figure 36. Your Life Line as Exhibition

6.2.2 In the Museum – Mirror for Present and Future

Within the galleries, participants explored independently for about 20 minutes, searching for artworks that resonated with their current feelings, future aspirations, or a self-gift for retirement. Despite the crowds, they moved purposefully, often recognizing works from the first session and commenting on their real-life scale and context. Playful exchanges emerged (“this is my future, it’s worth a lot!”), reflecting both connection and lightness. Encountering original artworks created a stronger emotional impact than viewing reproductions, turning the experience into an embodied, goal-oriented reflection.



Figure 37. In the Museum

6.2.3 Closing Message – A Repertoire of Insights

The final writing exercise was meant to make the participants relive their. Participants composed short personal messages linking pride, release, and forward-looking intentions. Their reflections ranged from staying open-minded (P1) to exploring museum learning opportunities (P2) and maintaining active community involvement (P3). The group discussed the concept’s usefulness for “putting the story in order,” appreciating the diversity of perspectives and farewell traditions represented. The exercise effectively concluded the reflective arc, combining personal consolidation with social affirmation.

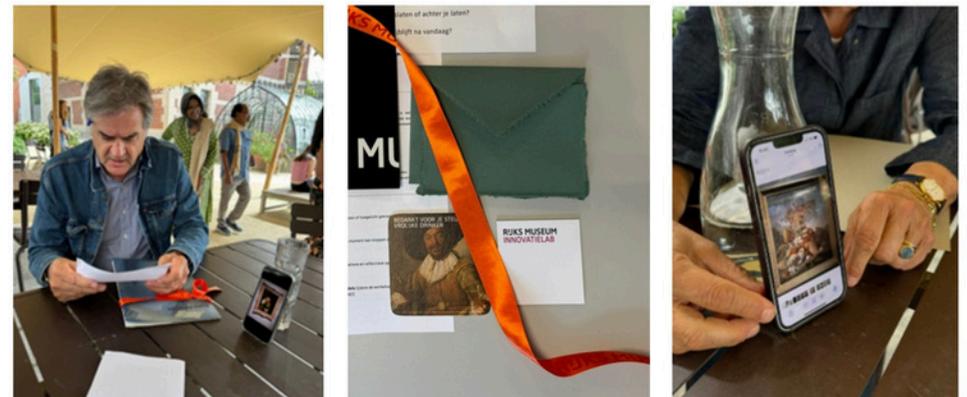


Figure 38. Closing Message

6.2 FINDINGS MUSEUM EXPLORATION

- Being personally welcomed at the Rijksmuseum and receiving the gift folder and materials had a positive effect, making participants feel acknowledged and special. (B1)
- Your *Life Line as Exhibition* proved to be a **powerful tool** for looking back on one's working life as a whole, providing an overall overview and a sense of **feeling heard and seen**. (B2)
- The atmosphere was relaxed and open; participants engaged with genuine interest and **connected through shared experiences**. (B3)
- Personal stories showed notable differences between professional and personal lives and in how retirement was experienced. **Sensitive topics were avoided**, which may have limited the depth of reflection. (B4)
- Participants connected with art through **emotional resonance** and **personal identification**, each finding space for individual interpretation and creative expression. (B5)
- **Both printed copies and physical artworks** worked effectively to match expressed feelings and summarised key themes. Although artworks in the museum appeared more powerful in scale and colour, the **crowded environment** was less suited for personal reflection sessions. (B6)
- **Recognising previously selected artworks** in the museum evoked personal relevance and strengthened participants' connection with the Rijksmuseum. (B7)
- The Rijksmuseum was positioned and perceived as a pleasant place of **gathering, inspiration, and reflection**. (B8)
- Selecting an artwork to **envision the future** and writing a message to the future self encouraged looking ahead with intention and optimism. This step could be slightly more concrete and purpose-oriented. (B9)
- **Moving through past, present, and future in one flow** felt natural and coherent, though the overall session time of three hours was somewhat tight. (B10)
- Generally, hosting the workshop for only three participants required **considerable preparation and effort**, and would ideally be facilitated by two people. (B11)

7. DESIGN DECISIONS

7.1 NINE DIMENSIONS

Based on both rounds of exploration, the nine design dimensions were revisited to refine the concept and guide final design decisions. Together, these dimensions outline the key considerations shaping the user experience, from timing and setting to interaction, structure, and meaning. References such as (A1–A12) and (B1–B9) refer to insights derived from the findings of chapter 6 and 7.

1. The user journey & 2. The social setting,

The first major decision concerns the timing and social setting of the experience. Testing with both working participants and retirees revealed that while reflection is meaningful for both groups, the social dimension is better suited to the post-retirement phase. Retirees showed greater openness and enthusiasm for group interaction, as they had more time, shared experiences, and a natural desire to form new connections (B2).

Reflective moments are often perceived as personal, more difficult or emotional topics may feel inappropriate or uncomfortable to address in a social setting, which can limit openness and depth. **Therefore, the design separates the private reflective journey before retirement from the socially oriented component after retirement, allowing each to occur at a moment when users are most receptive and motivated.**

3. The location & 4. The format

Findings from the exploratory sessions showed that digital interaction could effectively support personal reflection. Participants experienced AI as an engaging and responsive conversation partner, able to guide reflection, adapt to individual input, and create a safe and personal atmosphere (A2). Reflecting from home was valued for its comfort, privacy, and emotional ease, allowing participants to engage at moments that suited their mood and energy (A5, A7).

Based on these insights, **the reflective journey—previously guided through small, labour-intensive workshops—is redesigned as a digitally supported experience.** This approach reduces the need for facilitation and preparation, making the concept more independent and scalable, in line with the Rijksmuseum’s wishes. It also enables integration with the Rijksmuseum’s digital art collection, allowing meaningful engagement with art regardless of physical location.

5. The structure

How should the experience be structured, and how long should it last?

The past–present–future structure guided reflection well but proved too demanding when split into three sessions (A12). One long session, however, limited depth. A flexible format of one to three short sessions offers balance—depth with autonomy—as users decide their own pacing.

6. The connection to the Rijksmuseum

How can the Rijksmuseum be meaningfully integrated into the experience?

The museum connection operates on several levels: through branding, through using artworks from the museums (digital) collection, and via a post-retirement invitation to visit the museum and engage socially. This fosters renewed community and identification with the Rijksmuseum (B8).

7. Interaction with Art

How can participants meaningfully engage with art?

Reflection proved most engaging when paired with creative activity. Methods such as collage, labeling artworks, or co-creating AI images merged emotional and visual expression, keeping the process both deep and light (A6, A9–A11).

8. Reflection and Purpose

How can reflection through art support a renewed sense of purpose?

Art-based reflection fostered self-awareness and clarity on personal values. Envisioning the future and writing to one’s future self stimulated optimism and pride (B9), showing that such reflection meaningfully supports purpose during transition.

9. The Gift Element

What form should the gift take, and what role should it play in the experience?

The gift marks both beginning and conclusion. Initially it creates emotional engagement and curiosity (A1); later, the reflective output becomes a personalised farewell object—an artwork or catalog summarising one’s journey and achievements.

7.2 CONEPT FLOW

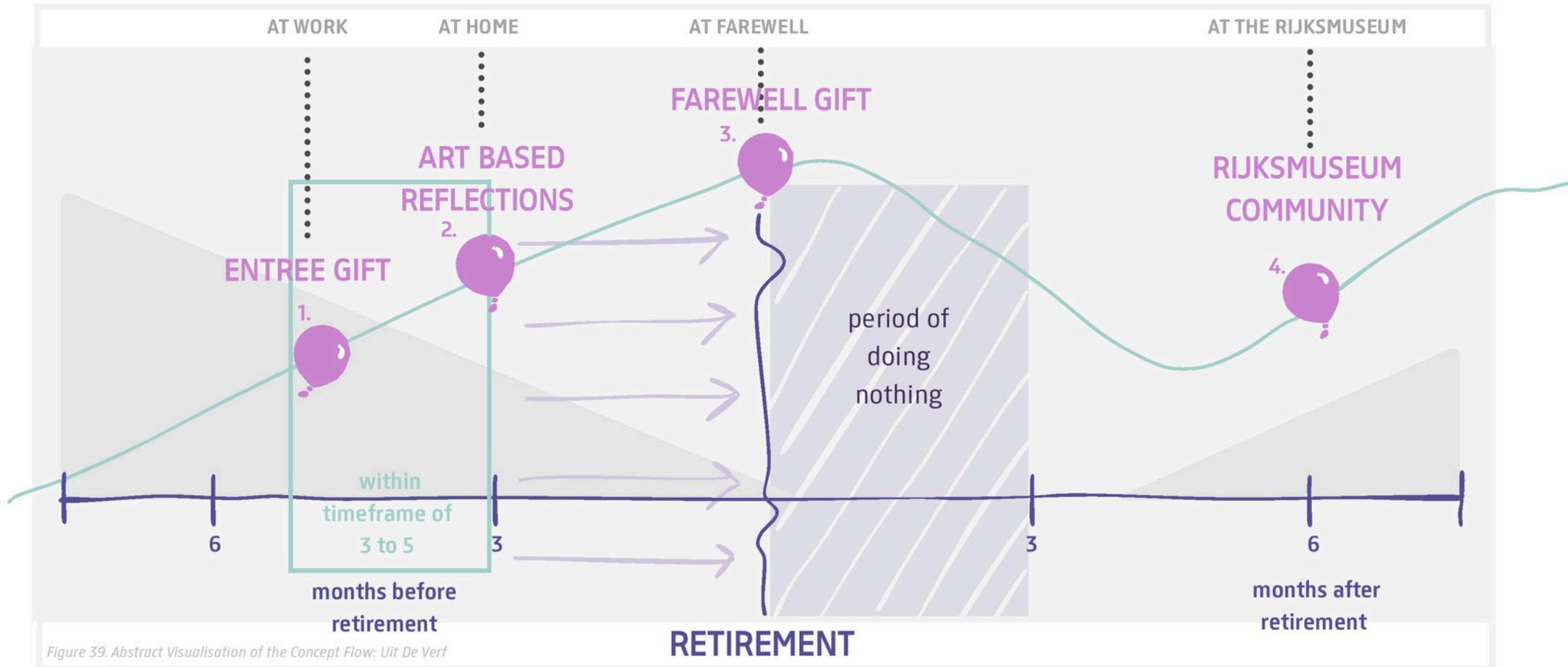


Figure 39. Abstract Visualisation of the Concept Flow: Uit De Verf

Returning to the guiding research question of this phase: **How can the Rijksmuseum use its art collection as a reflective tool to help future retirees find a new sense of purpose in the transition from work to retirement?** The design explorations helped clarify when meaningful interventions can take place and how they can support mental readiness.

Although the exact moment people shift toward retirement differs per individual, a consistent pattern emerged. In the final months before retirement, there is little mental space for new activities; people are busy handing over tasks and preparing to leave. The first months after retirement show the opposite pattern: more time, but limited clarity, structure, or headspace for new beginnings.

The final day of work is the one moment that is actively marked and celebrated, becoming the natural starting point of the transition.

As shown in Image 39, the concept builds on this pattern through four interconnected steps. A physical entrée gift invites participation, followed by a digital environment for art-based reflection. This leads to a personalised farewell gift that captures the individual's story, and finally, an event at the Rijksmuseum that introduces a renewed sense of beginning. Together, these steps aim to lift individuals into the transition on a positive note, reduce the depth of the post-retirement dip, and create a gentle but meaningful flow toward their new phase of life.

7.3 INTENDED EFFECT

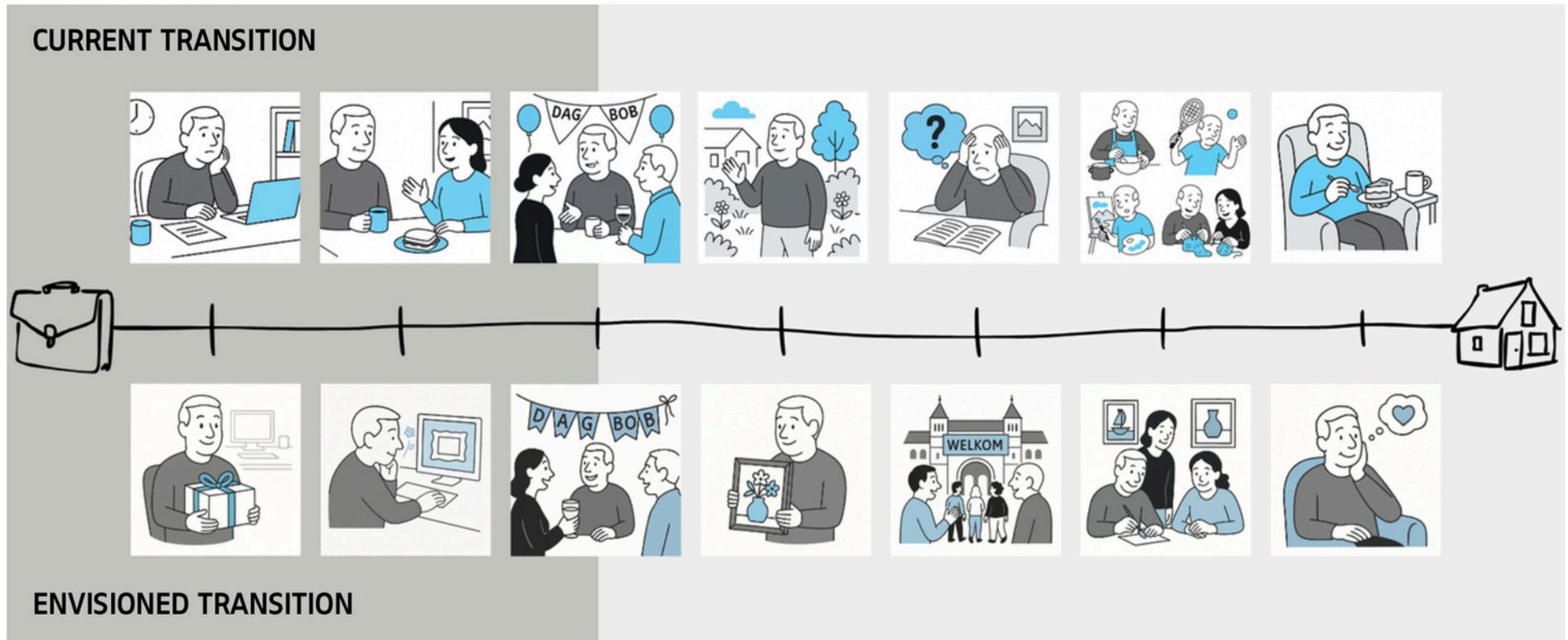


Figure 40. Current and Envisioned Transition to Retirement

In the current situation, the journey toward retirement contains only a few touchpoints. Most of the transition unfolds silently in the background, while daily work continues as usual. Colleagues may briefly acknowledge that retirement is approaching, but there is little space to address the personal impact of the change or the shift in identity that accompanies it. The main moment of recognition is the final day: a farewell speech, a drink, and a symbolic gesture of appreciation. Beyond this single moment, the broader transition—both professionally and personally—receives limited attention. Once at home, the initial sense of freedom fades quickly, and the lack of routine, connection, and direction becomes noticeable.

In the envisioned interaction, the journey begins earlier and unfolds with conscious attention. Several months before retirement, the individual receives a gift that gently marks the start of the transition. This early signal creates space to reflect on the past, recognise the present moment, and explore future possibilities before leaving the workplace. Through short, art-based workshops, the individual translates experiences, strengths, and hopes into a personal creation. This makes the farewell moment richer and more meaningful; colleagues do not only celebrate achievements but also understand the person behind them. After retirement, the journey continues with opportunities for cultural engagement, including a dedicated event at the Rijksmuseum where new encounters and shared experiences take place. The individual enters retirement with greater clarity, confidence, and connection, supported by personal insight and an early relationship with the museum's cultural environment.

7.4 INTERACTION VISION OF THE REFLECTIVE SESSION

Seventeenth-century seafarers often stood at moments of profound change. Their journeys, frequently depicted in the Rijksmuseum's maritime works, show how leaving the familiar and heading into the unknown required reflection, recognition, and direction. These practices offer a clear metaphor for navigating transitions today.

These three stages form the foundation of the reflective, art-based sessions. They guide participants from looking back, to recognising the present moment, to setting a meaningful direction for the future.

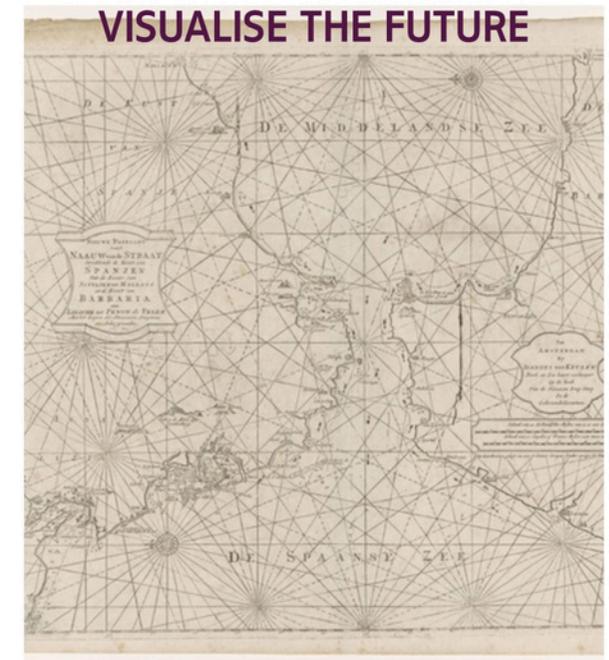
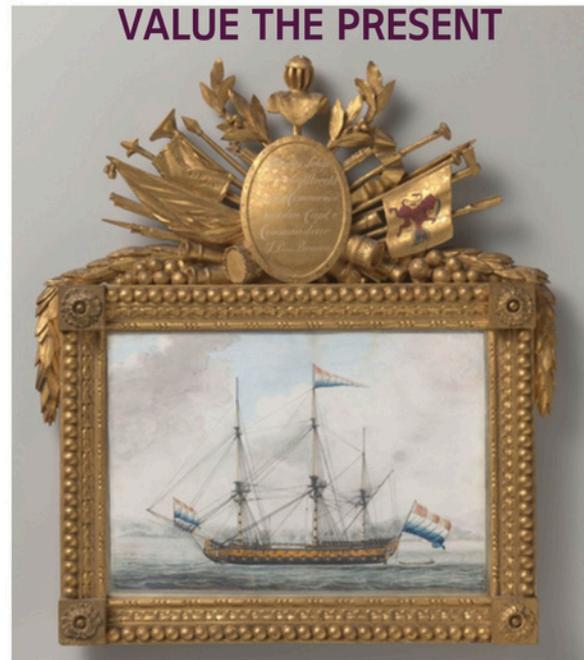
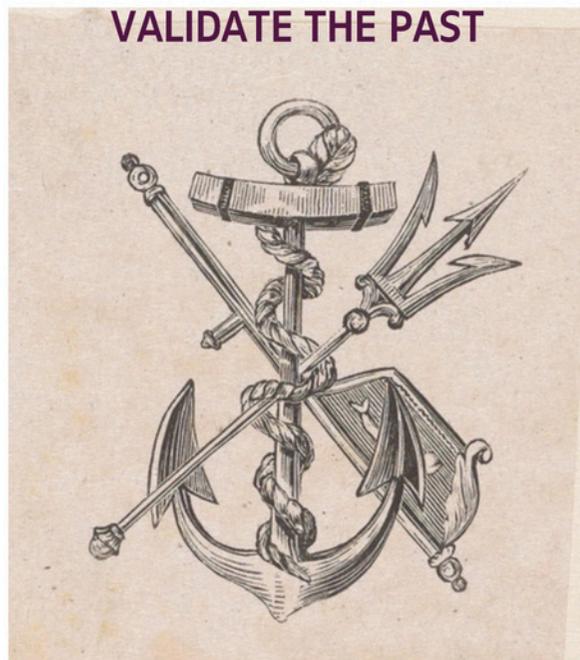


Figure 41. Interaction vision, translated from the original dutch VERANKEREN, VIEREN, VERKENNEN (artworks from the Rijksmuseums digital collection)

In the adventurous and demanding lives of sailors, there was also deliberate space for looking back on earlier journeys and victories, reflected in the many well-known sea songs and stories. Before setting off again, they took pride in their origins and said goodbye to their homes, families, and past with gratitude. They often left without knowing whether they would ever return, but carried a strong sense of where they came from.

Ships departures were major spectacles, drawing attention from the entire harbour. Both ship and crew were enthusiastically sent off. The ships were celebrated as well: all sails were raised, the full crew stood on deck, and they proudly showed what they were capable of before casting off. They let go of the shore and faced the open sea with their heads held high.

But the great ships and their crews would never set out unprepared. Long before departure, they spent months, sometimes years, charting routes, studying the surroundings, and define how they intended to reach their destination. They equipped themselves for the worst conditions and the possibility of unexpected storms. This clear sense of direction prevented drifting and gave purpose to the voyage, even when circumstances changed.

8. LOOK & FEEL

While the previous chapter concluded on how the experience should flow, this chapter explores how it should look and feel. It examines the visual and tangible identity of the concept. It starts with finally giving the concept a fitting name with symbolic meaning, then it identifies the tangible aspects of both the physical and digital layers. Attention is given to material qualities, colour palette, typography, and overall tone of voice, all of which aim to create an atmosphere that feels personal, warm, and connected to the Rijksmuseum's values.

8.1 A NAME THAT STICKS

Because the Rijksmuseum operates primarily in Dutch and the project focuses on the Dutch context, the search for a name was conducted in the Dutch language. This process involved exploring idioms and metaphors related to painting, such as *een palet aan emoties, in een lijstje zetten*, and *blanco canvas*. The intention was to find a name that connects to art without being overly literal or descriptive.

Eventually, the Dutch expression “*goed uit de verf komen*” felt immediately right. It implies emergence, clarity, and authenticity. Literally translated, it means “*to come out of the paint well*,” referring to a painting that turns out beautifully and lifelike. Figuratively, it describes someone using their talents to the fullest, feeling confident and aligned with who they are and what they want.

For clarity and visual strength, the name was shortened to *Uit de Verf*. The abbreviated form maintains the same association while becoming more of a statement and a call to action. The name is direct and memorable, easy to pronounce, recognise, and recall. It subtly links to painting and creativity while also symbolising transformation, effort, and expression, themes that define this experience. The name serves as both an invitation and a call to action: to step into a new phase, to explore who you are, and to give shape to that story. *Uit de Verf* carries a naturally positive and activating tone.



Figure 42. Exploration of name and logo



8.2 BRANDING

To align the visual identity with the Rijksmuseum's style, existing museum materials were examined. Typography plays a central role in this identity, characterised by strong letterforms, clear structure, and generous space for imagery. The Rijksmuseum uses a clean and minimal aesthetic that feels confident and timeless. Each of the museum's relationship programmes is distinguished by its own colour palette (see Figure 43), Uit de Verf should therefore visually integrate into the museum's ecosystem while introducing a fresh and expressive tone that reflects the novelty of the concept:

PATRONS	Black	communicates formality and tradition.
VRIENDEN	Green	conveys openness and friendliness,
NEXT	Pink	expresses youthful vibrancy.
BUSINESS CLUB	Blue	represents professionalism and corporate stability.

Within this structure, Uit de Verf required its own identity. From the early design stages, the colour purple appeared intuitively in sketches and visualisations. This choice later became deliberate. Purple had not yet been used within the Rijksmuseum's palette and holds strong symbolic associations. It combines the energy of red with the calm of blue, representing the balance between action and reflection that defines the experience. The colour feels warm, creative, and distinctive, dignified enough to fit the museum, yet vibrant enough to stand out as a gift.

RIJKS MUSEUM UIT DE VERF

Figure 44. Uit de Verf Logo



Figure 43. Rijksmuseum's relationship: Vrienden, Patronene, Business Club and Next (images from the Rijksmuseum)

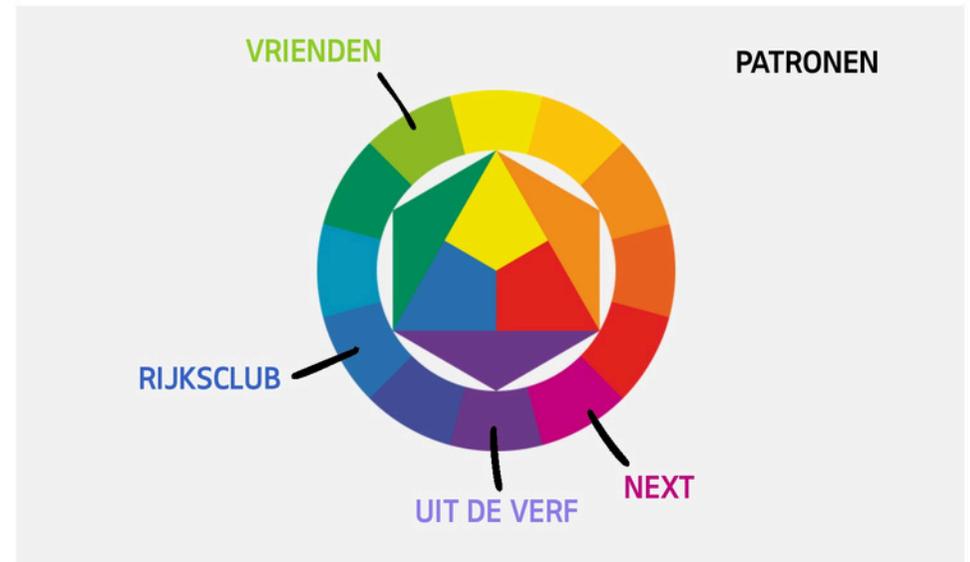


Figure 45. Colour Wheel

8.3 LOGO

The overall visual language follows the museum's clarity and restraint but adds a more expressive edge. The splash of paint and deep and bright shades of purple bring a sense of expression and celebration. The logo embodies this duality: one version aligns with the Rijksmuseum's typographic system, while another introduces a dynamic paint element that draws the eye. This flexibility allows the identity to feel both recognisable and new, firmly rooted in the museum's world yet clearly marking Uit de Verf as a distinctive and festive experience.



Figure 46. Uit de Verf branding



Figure 47. Uit de Verf Logo and Branding

8.4 THE GIFT BOX

As seen in earlier prototypes, the physical design of the gift box plays a crucial role in shaping the first impression of the experience. The box should convey appreciation and celebration, turning the start of *Uit de Verf* into a promising moment that sparks curiosity and excitement.

Several shapes and levels of narrative expression were explored, ranging from compact, minimalist boxes to more symbolic forms such as book-like or envelope-style designs, evoking the idea of opening a mysterious invitation or a new chapter in life. (see image 48) An earlier round-shaped box was dismissed due to postal impracticalities and cost considerations.

Opinions on the variations were gathered both internally at the Rijksmuseum and externally with potential users. In both settings, the modern and minimalist version was preferred, as it appeared most inviting and most aligned with the museum's visual identity. The final design strikes a balance between elegance and simplicity, reflecting the Rijksmuseum's AKPIE values of Authentic, Quality, and Simplicity.



Figure 48. Explored Gift Boxes

8.5 THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

In the digital layer, all elements of the experience come together. The environment was designed to feel fluent, immersive, and visually calm. A dark interface highlights the artworks and creates an intimate atmosphere, distinct from the look of everyday digital tools such as inboxes or agendas.

Artworks appear subtly in the background, and small playful animations guide participants through the reflective sessions. The interface combines clarity with emotional depth, using transitions and visual cues that evoke the quiet focus of a gallery space. The visual design supports reflection and engagement, allowing participants to navigate the experience at their own pace and in their own rhythm.

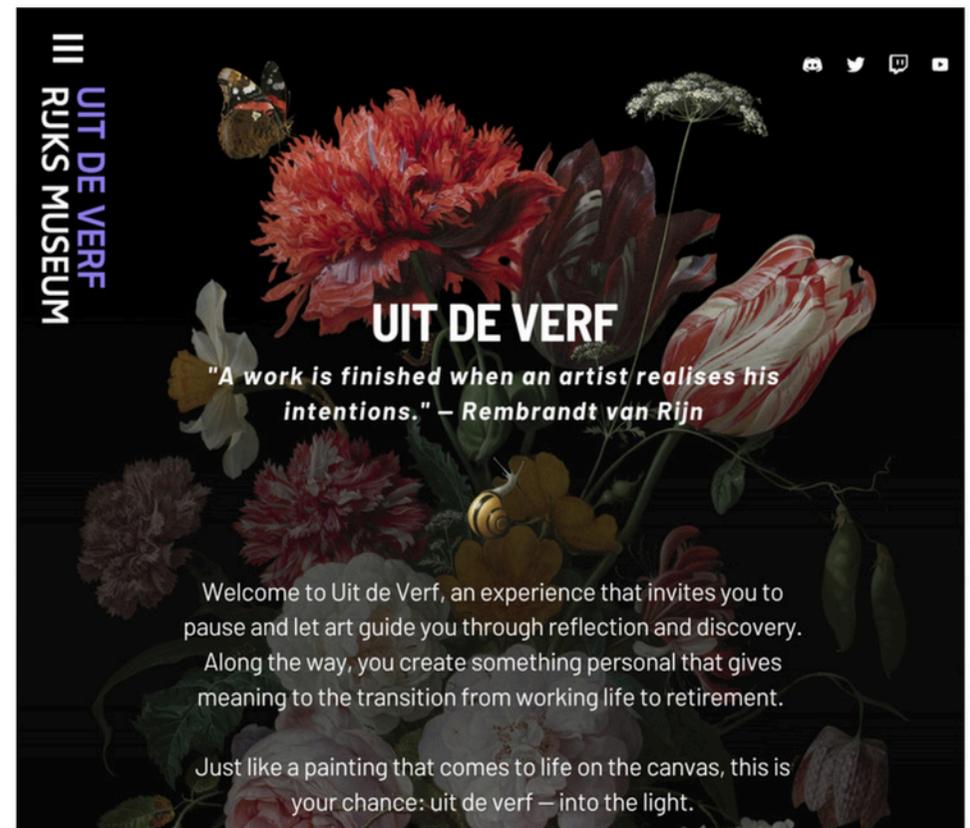


Figure 49. Digital Environment

PART 4: FINAL DESIGN

9. UIT DE VERF

10. DIGITAL LAYER

9. UIT DE VERF

Retirement is a profound life transition that many people find difficult to navigate. Although most organisations acknowledge this moment through farewell gatherings with gifts and speeches, these rituals often focus on the final day itself rather than supporting the broader transition surrounding it. As a result, the more emotional and challenging aspects of this life phase tend to be underaddressed.

Uit de Verf is a retirement gift experience that addresses this gap by using art as a tool for reflection. The concept takes the form of a **Product-Service System (PSS)** involving three key stakeholder groups: the Rijksmuseum, which provides and curates the experience; the employers, businesses in the Netherlands who purchase Uit De Verf as a farewell gesture for employees approaching retirement; and the future retirees themselves, who engage with it as end users. Together, these stakeholders each play a distinct role in enabling a coherent experience that unfolds across four interventions shaping the user journey:

Each intervention supports a different stage of the transition: the gift box creates early awareness, the reflective session guides personal reflection, the retirement gift provides closure, and the museum event supports new forms of connection.

By introducing awareness and reflection early in the process, Uit de Verf helps future retirees to better prepare for and adjust to this new stage of life. The experience encourages individuals to make sense of their working life, recognise their personal strengths, and begin shaping new sources of meaning and connection beyond work. In doing so, Uit de Verf supports a smoother and more balanced transition, helping to ease the post-retirement adjustment and foster long-term well-being.



1. UIT DE VERF
GIFTBOX



2. UIT DE VERF
REFLECTIVE SESSION



3. UIT DE VERF
RETIREMENT GIFT



4. UIT DE VERF
THE EVENT

Figure 50. Uit de Verf four moments of intervention (Images from Uit de Verf video)

9.1 USER JOURNEY

Have you ever wondered what it feels like to let go of something that has shaped your days, your identity, and your social relationships for most of your life?

Sushma, a 69-year-old business professional has worked in the ICT department of a large organisation for the last nineteen years. She loves her job and her colleagues, but soon she'll have to retire and leave them behind. Although her days are still full, her thoughts increasingly drift towards what comes next.



To support employees in this major life change, the organisation where Sushma works has purchased the Rijksmuseum Uit de Verf experience. A few months before retirement, Sushma's manager surprises her with the **Uit de Verf gift box**, creating awareness of the transition ahead. Like many other future retirees across the Netherlands, Sushma opens the box: This is the start of the Uit de Verf experience.

At home, in her own time and environment, she explores what's inside: a personal **welcome letter**, **access to a digital environment**, and **workshop materials** for the **Uit de Verf reflective session**; the core of this experience. The reflective session integrates artworks from the Rijksmuseum's collection and includes both digital and hands-on forms of engagement.

The session moves from **past** to **present** to **future**, therefore she starts with curating her own mini-exhibition inspired by her **working life**. Then she fills a vase with flowers representing her **strengths and qualities**, and finally she visually explores her **wishes and intentions** for this new life phase ahead.



While work continues, something feels slightly different now. Uit de Verf has helped Sushma validate and visualise what matters most to her.



A few months later, when the final day arrives, it's time to celebrate and say goodbye. Alongside flowers and cards, she receives the **Uit de Verf retirement gifts**: a unique artwork and a catalogue filled with her stories and creations, based on her Uit de Verf session.

After the farewell, Sushma's retirement has begun. While some days feel like a holiday, others feel quiet and empty. The gifts remind Sushma of her personal story, but they also remind her: this is still her story!

Soon, the **Uit de Verf event** at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam will take place. A social gathering to connect, share experiences, and get inspired. Retirees are invited into the Rijksmuseum's community, which connects people, art, and history.

Uit de Verf doesn't just mark the final day. It guides people throughout the whole transition from work to retirement. **Kom goed uit de verf met the Rijksmuseum's retirement gift experience!**





Figure 51. User Journey (images from Uit de Verf Video)

9.2 THE FOUR UIT DE VERF MOMENTS



Figure 52. Gift Box

1. UIT DE VERF GIFTBOX

Getting the Uit de Verf giftbox aims to create awareness of the upcoming transition and to support a meaningful start to the process. Its tangible nature makes the transition both visible and personal, and the act of gifting introduces a positive tone.

By legitimising the emotional side of retirement, this first moment offers recognition, care, and an invitation to pause. It gently motivates the retiree to continue to the next step, knowing the process will eventually lead to a personal farewell gift.



Figure 52. Reflective Session

2. UIT DE VERF REFLECTIVE SESSION

The Uit de Verf takes place during the final working months, a period often marked by mixed emotions.

Through the digital platform, participants work through three reflective components.

This phase stimulates emotional awareness, self-recognition, and curiosity about the future. By turning reflection into a hands-on creative act, it helps transform uncertainty into a sense of continuity and purpose.



Figure 53. Retirement Gift

3. UIT DE VERF RETIREMENT GIFT

Near the official retirement moment, the retiree receives a personalised outcome derived from their earlier reflections. This final piece is designed to mark closure and to formalise the transition from work to retirement.

Using the retiree's input, the Rijksmuseum curates a personalised artwork or printed catalogue that symbolically captures their journey. This may take the form of a still-life-inspired composition or a small magazine combining images and text. The product is delivered either through the employer or directly to the retiree.

The gift embodies recognition, closure, and a sense of pride. It transforms an internal reflection process into a tangible gesture of appreciation and shared farewell.



Figure 54. The Event

4. UIT DE VERF THE EVENT

After retirement, participants are invited to reconnect through a communal event at the Rijksmuseum. This final step aims to extend the experience into a new phase and emphasises that retirement represents a beginning rather than an ending.

The museum hosts a gathering for recent participants, which may take the form of an informal reception, a curated viewing moment, or a dedicated museum tour. Participants meet others undergoing the same life transition and rediscover art as a source of inspiration, connection, and renewed cultural engagement.

This moment fosters a sense of belonging and reinforces continuity, supporting retirees in entering the next chapter of life with curiosity and confidence.

10. DIGITAL LAYER

The digital layer connects and supports all parts of the concepts experience. It ensures that the experience can exist as a stand-alone product while maintaining the feeling of receiving a personal, celebratory gift. The design of this layer revolves around three main aspects:

The transition from the physical gift to the digital environment, described in 10.1, **the digital version of the reflective session**, described in 10.2, and **the transition from the reflective session to the retirement gift**, described in 10.3.

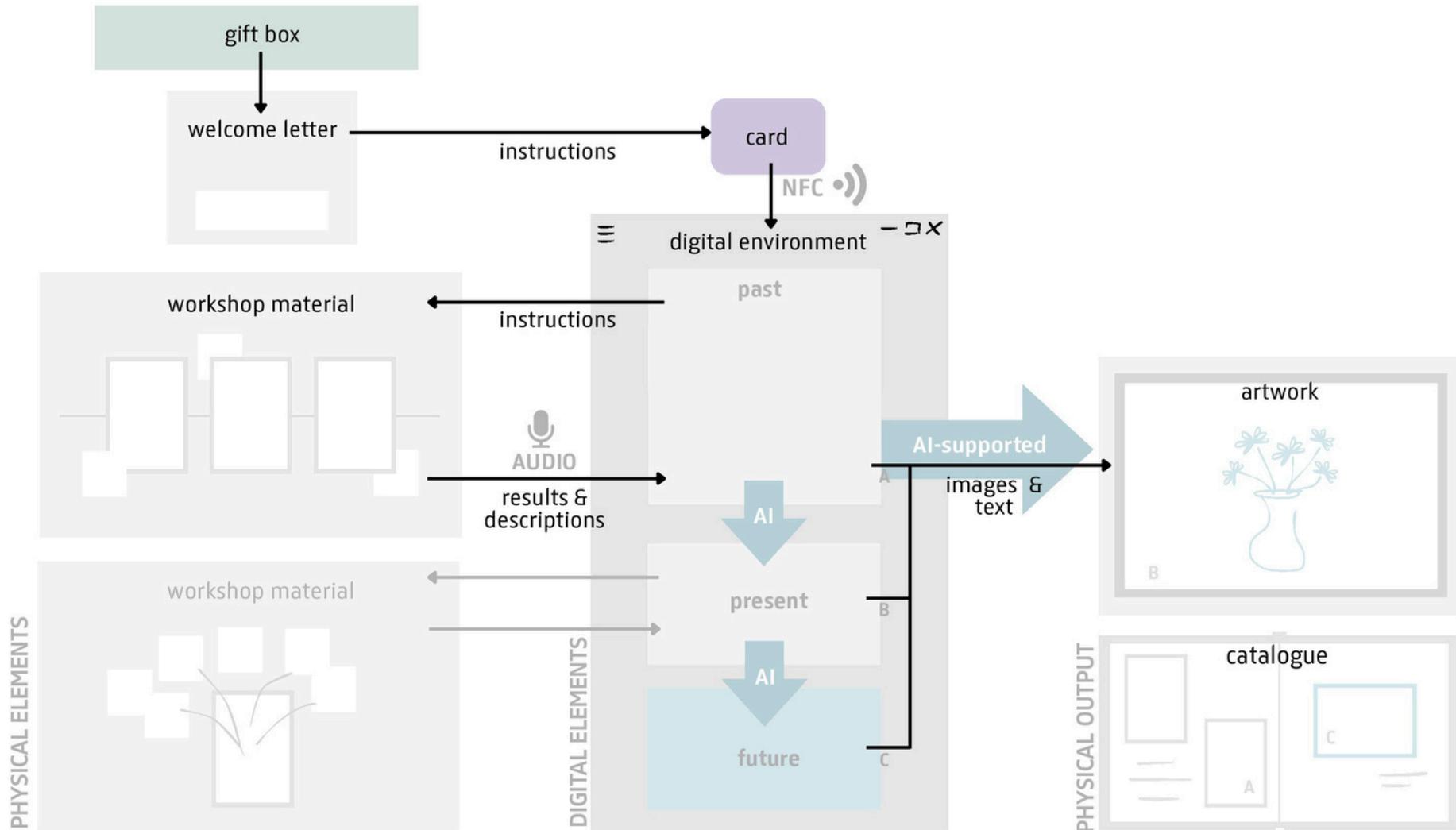


Figure 55. Digital layer and data flow of the concept

10.1 FROM THE PHYSICAL GIFT TO THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

The experience begins with a physical gift box, which sets the emotional tone of the product and makes the moment of receiving it personal and celebratory. Inside the box, a short welcome letter introduces the concept and the Uit de Verf card with NFC functionality. This card forms the bridge between the physical gift and the digital environment.

When the participant holds their phone to the card, the digital Uit de Verf environment opens directly. This interaction feels more immediate and special than receiving an e-mail or scanning a QR code with the camera. In this moment, a personal digital space is created and the participant's account is activated. If desired, they can later access the same environment on other devices. To ensure accessibility for older devices, the card also includes a QR code and a personal activation code as a back-up.

After the welcome letter, all further instructions are provided within the digital environment in a visually simple and intuitive way. Rather than navigating a website with multiple pages, the participant is guided step by step through the reflective session, with each action clearly prompted and easy to follow.

This approach keeps the transition from physical to digital smooth and coherent. The card offers a clear moment of entry, the digital environment takes over the guidance, and the overall experience remains focused, personal, and free from unnecessary complexity.

10.2 THE DIGITAL VERSION OF THE REFLECTIVE SESSION

Although an earlier fully digital prototype, described in Appendix C, relied entirely on conversational GPTs, the final digital session integrates AI in a more deliberate and restrained way. Only one part of the journey uses an AI host, whose role is limited to gently prompting participants and helping them articulate their vision for the future. The other stages balance digital interaction with hands-on engagement, focusing on visual exploration and a more tangible interaction with selected artworks from the Rijksmuseum's collection. This combination ensures that the experience feels like a personal exploration rather than a conversation with a chatbot.

Participants are encouraged to use the physical materials from the gift box during certain steps, for example the printed postcard-sized artwork deck. To ensure that the results can be captured digitally, each artwork in the box contains a small identifying number. Users can either select the corresponding number digitally or note it within the session. Participants can also add spoken notes to their creations and selected artworks. Compared to typing, this reduces friction and enriches the material available for interpretation.

This hybrid approach strengthens the sense of ownership by keeping creation in the participant's hands and preserves the emotional and imaginative qualities that emerge through tangible materials. At the same time, the digital environment ensures that all outcomes are stored in a structured and consistent way.

10.3 FROM THE REFLECTIVE SESSION TO THE RETIREMENT GIFT

As tested in Exploration 1, the reflective sessions provided meaningful input for creating the personalised catalogue. AI is able to interpret tone of voice, extract key phrases, and translate longer reflections into concise and expressive text. To transform the session outcomes into a coherent retirement gift, the collected material must be stored and structured so it can be interpreted by AI.

1. **Integration of Rijksmuseum artworks** provides clear visual inputs linked to authentic artworks, giving AI concrete material to connect personal choices to styles, symbolism, and composition principles.
2. **Voice recordings** offer richer and more spontaneous reflections, allowing AI to extract qualities, themes, and emotional nuances that strengthen the written and visual output.

This combination creates a layered dataset that AI can translate into both text and imagery. For example, when a participant selects a vase and expresses certain qualities, AI can draw on databases of symbolism and Rijksmuseum metadata to compose a still-life inspired by 17th-century painting traditions. In the same way, it structures the catalogue layout, turning spoken reflections into short text fragments that align with the overall narrative and visual style. Together, these capabilities allow the final gift to meaningfully reflect both the artistic and emotional depth of the participant's story.

A more detailed description of the early fully digital prototype and the associated considerations around AI safety, privacy, and data handling can be found in Appendix C.

10.4 SERVICE STRUCTURE

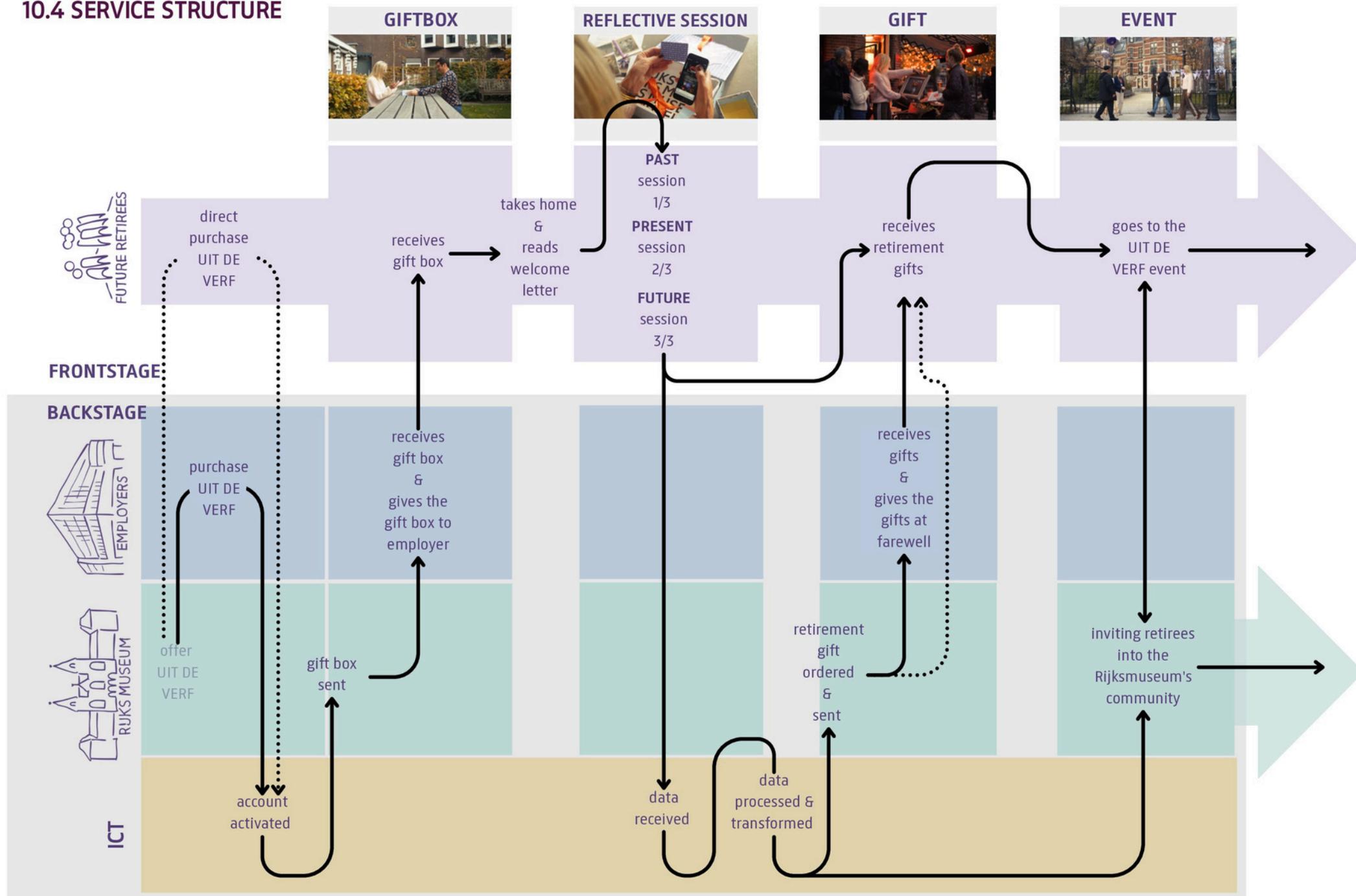


Figure 56. Service Structure

PART 5: DELIVER

11. IMPLEMENTATION

12. VALIDATION

13. CONCLUSION

14. RECOMMENDATIONS

11. IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter outlines how *Uit de Verf* can be realised in practice, both within the Rijksmuseum and through collaborations with external partners. It describes how the concept could be embedded in the museum's organisational structure, identifies suitable companies for partnership, and explains how the experience can be integrated into existing HR procedures. Together, these perspectives show that the concept is not only desirable but also feasible and scalable within real-world contexts.

11.1 INTERNAL IMPLEMENTATION

To understand how *Uit de Verf* could be embedded within the Rijksmuseum, several departments were consulted throughout the project. Initial conversations were held with the **Development Department**, where the concept was later presented during their monthly meeting attended by multiple sub-departments. The idea was received positively for its clarity, strength, and potential to reach audiences outside the museum's walls—an ambition central to the Rijksmuseum's current strategy. Within the **Friends Department**, the proposal prompted practical questions about event capacity, as the existing agenda is already dense. The team suggested that *Uit de Verf* might best be integrated with one of their current events, providing an accessible entry point for newly retired adults to explore possible long-term relationships with the museum.

The discussions also revealed a strong link with the **Partnerships Department**, which maintains corporate relationships and collaborations. Together, we explored the possibility of engaging existing partners such as KPN for a pilot phase, aligning with their shared interest in socially relevant projects. Parallel to this, contact was made with the **ICT Department**, which manages the museum's digital infrastructure, including the website, app, and online collection. The ICT team collaborates closely with an external digital partner responsible for technical development and maintenance. This existing collaboration provides a natural route for building and hosting the *Uit de Verf* digital platform.

In addition, the **Museum Shop** and online webshop, part of the Front Office, could support distribution. While the primary target channel remains business-to-business sales via corporate partnerships, the gift box could also be made available for individual purchase. Finally, the **Education and Public Department** could play a secondary role by integrating the concept into broader programming, such as podcasts or public discussions on art and reflection. Their involvement would not be operationally essential but could strengthen public awareness and cultural positioning.

Each department's role would therefore be distinct but complementary: ICT oversees technical development and maintenance, Partnerships manages sales to companies, Development and Friends maintain ongoing contact with future retirees and nurture long-term relationships, while the Museum Shop provides a channel for individual sales. This distribution of roles ensures that *Uit de Verf* can be embedded across the organisation without disrupting existing structures.

Challenges mainly concern coordination and workload, as the initiative crosses several departments with differing priorities and timelines. Maintaining alignment between internal teams and external collaborators will require clear ownership and phased implementation. Nevertheless, the existing organisational structure already provides a solid foundation for integrating *Uit de Verf* as a collaborative, cross-departmental initiative.

11.2 EXTERNAL IMPLEMENTATION

Exploring how Uit de Verf can be realised beyond the museum, through partnerships with companies.

11.2.1 MARKET POTENTIAL

From a business perspective, retirement represents a large and consistent social phenomenon. In 2022, approximately 84,000 employees in the Netherlands retired at an average age of 65 years and eight months. By 2024, this number had risen to nearly 93,000, with an average retirement age of 66 years (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [CBS], 2025). This steady and predictable transition creates a continuous stream of potential recipients for farewell gifts. While such gifts are often standardised, their symbolic function remains significant: they mark closure, convey appreciation, and express the connection between the employee and the organisation.

The question guiding this exploration was which sectors and types of organisations offer the most promising potential for Uit de Verf. Organisations with stable, long-term employment relationships tend to allocate larger budgets to farewell rituals, as confirmed in conversations with HR departments at the Rijksmuseum and PostNL. Such organisations are therefore more likely to invest in meaningful gestures that reflect recognition and care. The intended target group, highly educated professionals approaching retirement, closely aligns with the Rijksmuseum's Liefhebbers audience segment. Collaborating with companies that employ similar profiles strengthens both the conceptual and cultural connection between the museum and the end users. Moreover, organisations with geographically dispersed workforces could enhance the museum's national visibility when implementing the concept on a larger scale.



Figure 57. Business Services

According to recent data from CBS (2025), the Dutch labour market is dominated by service-oriented sectors, with business services, healthcare, and trade representing the largest fields of employment. Among older workers (55+), employees are relatively overrepresented in **healthcare**, **education**, and **government** (UWV, 2023; CBS, 2024). These sectors are characterised by long-term employment relationships and well-structured HR policies, making them especially relevant for initiatives surrounding retirement and recognition. Although such organisations may be modest in their budgets, they often place strong emphasis on social well-being and appreciation.



Figure 58. Healthcare, Education and Government

The **business services** sector adds potential through its scale, economic significance, and concentration of highly educated professionals. Large corporates and financial firms, in particular, combine stable employment structures with higher recognition budgets, making them attractive partners for early implementation. In addition, these sectors often operate nationally, supporting visibility and accessibility, an advantage for a museum-based initiative that aims to reach people across the Netherlands.

In summary, the most promising sectors for collaboration include **healthcare**, **education**, **government**, and **business services**. These fields combine long-term employment relations with structured HR systems and an intrinsic focus on recognition. They represent environments in which employees are likely to appreciate meaningful reflection at the end of their careers, and where organisations have both the motivation and capacity to facilitate such initiatives.

11.2.2 WITHIN COMPANIES

Current Corporate Context

Drawing on interviews with HR departments at the Rijksmuseum, KPN, and PostNL, as well as supporting desk research, three dimensions were defined to capture how organisations experience and manage retirement. The **financial dimension** involves pension arrangements and administrative procedures typically managed by HR and finance departments. The **organisational dimension** concerns workforce continuity, knowledge transfer, and succession planning. The **social dimension** encompasses how appreciation and recognition are expressed through farewell rituals and gestures. Together, these dimensions offer a framework for understanding how companies approach retirement as both a logistical and an emotional process.

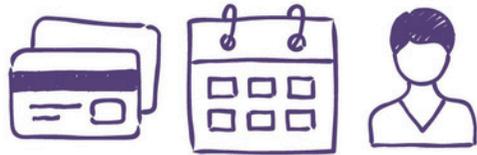


Figure 59. financial, organisational and social dimension

The *Uit de Verf* experience primarily engages with the social dimension, yet its implementation and sales process connect closely to the organisational one. For companies, it offers a structured and low-effort way to mark an important life transition while maintaining a consistent and meaningful approach across teams. This dual relevance makes the concept particularly suitable for integration within existing HR practices.

Across the HR departments consulted, retirement was generally described as a standardised process with limited distinction from other types of departure. Appreciation policies are often tied to years of service, resulting in modest symbolic gestures. The organisation of farewells tends to be both centralised and decentralised: budgets and procurement platforms are managed at the HR or procurement level, while managers and teams remain responsible for the personal execution of the farewell moment. In some cases, teams collect additional funds for an extra gift. Larger organisations such as KPN and PostNL operate central procurement systems that determine which gifts can be ordered, offering both efficiency and constraints. A new product such as *Uit de Verf* would therefore need to be approved at the policy level before it could appear in these systems.

Farewell Budgets and Scale

To understand the financial scope of farewell traditions, I explored how much organisations typically spend on retirement gifts and celebrations, and how many employees retire each year in companies such as KPN, PostNL, and the Rijksmuseum.

Desk research shows that large organisations tend to spend more per employee than smaller ones, largely due to formal HR policies. Larger institutions generally allocate €150–250 for retirement gifts, increasing to €300–500 for senior positions or long service. Smaller companies typically spend €75–150, sometimes relying on team collections for more personal gestures. Some organisations choose to give vouchers through platforms such as VVV, Bol.com, or Kadonation, to simplify HR administration. According to research by Kadonation (2024), the average retirement gift in the Netherlands is approximately €140, while for a regular farewell the average is around €90.

The insights gathered from HR representatives at KPN and the Rijksmuseum were in line with these findings. At KPN, a large organisation with around 10,000 employees, approximately 150 people retire each year, a number expected to increase to 250 in the coming years. Many employees have been with the company for decades—sometimes more than 40 years—which reinforces the motivation to make farewells more meaningful. The farewell budget at KPN is typically around €500 per person.

The Rijksmuseum, a smaller organisation with around 600 employees, follows an appreciation policy (*attentiebeleid*) in which employees with 10 to 20 years of service receive €150 for a gift and €300 for a farewell gathering. Shorter service periods correspond with roughly 30% less, while longer tenures receive about 30% more. However, no distinction is made between employees leaving for another job and those retiring, suggesting that the emotional significance of retirement is not yet formally recognised.

Both organisations also maintain jubilee traditions, where employees celebrating 12.5, 25, or 40 years of service receive an additional amount and a commemorative medal associated with the company.

Possible Implementation Models

Based on these observations, several possible implementation models can be identified. Each offers a different balance between scalability, control, and emotional engagement, depending on the organisation's structure and recognition culture.

Uit de Verf Fully Integrated

At a broader organisational level, HR departments recognised potential in embedding Uit de Verf as a structural part of the retirement process. In this model, the experience becomes a standard step in an employee's transition towards retirement. Rather than relying on individual managers to organise farewells, the HR department ensures that every departing employee receives a consistent and meaningful recognition experience. This model would position Uit de Verf as an integral component of the company's appreciation policy, guaranteeing equal attention and symbolic value for all retirees.

Uit de Verf as an Option in the Gift Portal

In many large organisations, farewell gifts are managed through central procurement systems or internal "gift portals." Once Uit de Verf is approved at the policy level, it could be implemented in two ways. In the first option, companies purchase a set number of Uit de Verf gift boxes in advance and include them in their internal shop, giving the Rijksmuseum predictable sales and production volumes. In the second option, the product is activated only when selected by a manager or team, creating more flexibility but less financial stability.

Uit de Verf at Retirement Events

A third possibility is to connect Uit de Verf to existing retirement events or gatherings. KPN, for example, hosts annual pension events that bring together all employees retiring within that year. Such moments provide natural entry points for presenting, selling or practivating the concept collectively. Incorporating Uit de Verf into these events would allow companies to celebrate and inform retirees while simultaneously offering them a personal and reflective gift experience. This approach combines efficiency with emotional resonance and could easily be adapted to similar events in other organisations.

In both of the two first cases, the adoption of Uit de Verf would depend on internal communication and awareness among managers and team leaders. They play a key role in shaping farewell moments and often value solutions that make these events more personal without adding to their workload. Clear information about the multi-step nature of the experience—starting before the retirement date and potentially continuing into the Rijksmuseum community—would be essential to support consistent implementation.

While the specific form of implementation will likely vary per company or sector, these three models show that Uit de Verf can flexibly align with existing HR structures and cultural practices. Whether fully embedded, offered through corporate portals, or introduced at retirement gatherings, the concept fits within organisational frameworks already in place while enriching the social dimension of retirement with emotional depth and cultural value.

11.3 FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

The future implementation of Uit de Verf will depend on close collaboration between the Rijksmuseum and a selection of corporate partners. A phased approach is recommended to ensure gradual growth, organisational learning, and consistent quality. Each stage combines technical development with organisational alignment and stakeholder engagement.



Figure 60.

Phase 1 – Prototype Development

Following the current concept validation, a functional prototype should be developed that integrates the physical gift box, the digital environment, and the catalogue experience into one coherent workflow. This stage will focus on usability, data security, and the tone of communication, ensuring that the experience feels personal yet reliable.



Figure 61.

Phase 2 – Pilot Collaboration

Once the prototype is operational, a pilot phase with one or two partner companies—such as KPN or PostNL—can be initiated. The pilot will test logistical flows, procurement procedures, and user interaction while gathering feedback from both HR managers and retirees. This step will provide insight into the practical challenges of ordering, delivery, and digital activation.



Figure 62.

Phase 3 – Evaluation and Refinement

The outcomes of the pilot should be carefully evaluated to refine both the product and the implementation model. Adjustments may concern inclusivity, onboarding materials for managers, or the communication strategy within companies. Parallel to this, the Rijksmuseum can explore technical hosting options and long-term maintenance of the digital environment.



Figure 63.

Phase 4 – Scale-Up and Integration

After successful piloting, Uit de Verf can be scaled up through broader partnerships and formal inclusion in corporate procurement systems. The concept could also be featured in the Rijksmuseum's webshop as an individual purchase, allowing employees or families to order it independently. Marketing and communication efforts should emphasise its dual value: a personal reflection journey and a cultural connection to the museum.

The phased implementation approach allows the Rijksmuseum to introduce Uit de Verf in a controlled and sustainable manner. It balances innovation with organisational feasibility and provides a foundation for long-term partnerships that extend the museum's reach and relevance beyond its physical walls.

12. VALIDATION

To determine whether the concept works as intended, this chapter presents its validation across the three main stakeholder groups: the Rijksmuseum, employers, and retirees. Their feedback provides insight into the concept's desirability, feasibility, and viability. The findings demonstrate how Uit de Verf succeeds in balancing personal meaning, organisational relevance, and institutional value, confirming its potential as a sustainable and emotionally resonant design.



12.1 RIJKSMUSEUM PERSPECTIVE



The Rijksmuseum's wishes and requirements for this project were mainly strategic. As an institution, it aims to strengthen engagement with older adults, expand its presence beyond the museum walls, and reach audiences across the Netherlands. At the same time, the museum strives to diversify its partnerships, create new income streams, and experiment with innovative yet scalable concepts that require minimal staff involvement. Within this context, Uit de Verf was evaluated as a potential tool to support these ambitions.

Requirements Validation

A traceability matrix was used to assess how the final concept fulfils the Rijksmuseum's strategic goals (see Table X). The evaluation was based on internal presentations, including the Development Meeting, and follow-up discussions with representatives from the Development, Partnerships, ICT, and HR departments.

Feedback and Interpretation

During the internal validation, Uit de Verf was recognised as a concept that fits naturally within the Rijksmuseum's mission to "reach everyone with art." The Development Department emphasised its innovative character and strong alignment with the museum's social role. The Partnerships Department saw clear potential for collaboration with existing corporate partners, while the Friends Department identified opportunities for connecting with older audiences through follow-up events. The ICT Department confirmed technical feasibility through existing digital collaborations.

The main organisational challenges relate to ownership, scalability, and internal coordination. Departments operate semi-independently, which means that collaboration between Development, Partnerships, and ICT would be essential for successful implementation. Furthermore, while the museum values the concept's independence, some form of brand guardianship would be necessary to maintain the Rijksmuseum's tone and quality.

Reflection Rijksmuseum

The validation confirms that Uit de Verf aligns strongly with the Rijksmuseum's strategic vision and offers a promising new way to connect art with social transitions. The concept demonstrates how innovation can serve both institutional and societal goals, though its success will depend on cross-departmental commitment and sustainable collaboration with external partners.

Requirement	Fulfilment
1. Strengthen engagement with older adults	★★★★
2. Expand engagement beyond the museum walls	★★★★
3. Reach audiences across the Netherlands	★★
4. Align with audience segmentation model	★★
5. Diversify partnerships to reach new audiences	★★★★
6. Support financial resilience through new income streams	★★
7. Contribute to long-term stability through innovation	★★★★
8. Independent product requiring minimal staff involvement while maintaining brand coherence	★★
9. Scalable concept	★★

Figure 64. Validation of Rijksmuseum wishes and requirements (full table in Appendix D)

12.3 EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE



From an organisational standpoint, employers seek solutions that express appreciation for long-term employees while integrating smoothly into existing HR procedures. *Uit de Verf* was evaluated as a potential addition to company farewell practices, offering both symbolic and practical value. The concept aims to complement existing attentiebeleid and procurement systems without adding administrative effort.

Requirements Validation

A traceability matrix was used to assess how the concept meets employer-related wishes and requirements. The evaluation draws from validation interviews with HR departments at KPN and PostNL, combined with insights from desk research on organisational structures and farewell budgets (see Table X).

Feedback and Interpretation

Both HR departments recognised *Uit de Verf* as a meaningful and distinctive addition to existing farewell practices. At KPN, it was described as a modern and emotionally engaging alternative to traditional gifts, particularly suited for employees with long careers. At PostNL, the concept was appreciated for its symbolic value but noted to require clear integration into existing procurement systems.

Across both organisations, HR managers valued the concept's low-effort implementation and its ability to convey genuine appreciation. The main challenges identified were ensuring inclusivity across different employee groups and raising awareness among managers so that *Uit de Verf* would actually be chosen and used consistently.

Reflection employers

The validation suggests that *Uit de Verf* is both viable and desirable from an employer's perspective. It fits existing HR structures, aligns with budgetary realities, and supports the growing emphasis on meaningful work transitions. Employers valued its ability to combine efficiency with emotional depth, indicating that the concept could strengthen organisational culture when properly implemented. To realise this potential, clear communication, pilot testing, and alignment with procurement systems will be essential next steps.

Requirement	Fulfilment
3.1 Integrates into existing HR, procurement, and farewell procedures	★★
3.2 Adapts to different team sizes and levels of formality	★★
3.3 Ensures reliability and logistical feasibility with minimal time investment	★★
3.4 Expresses gratitude and recognition meaningfully	★★★★
3.5 Respects diverse personalities and cultural backgrounds	★★
3.6 Helps managers mark retirements in a consistent yet personal manner	★★
3.7 Reinforces positive internal culture and continuity despite transitions	★★
3.8 Creates farewell moments that are authentic and emotionally resonant	★★★★
3.9 Facilitates reflection and connection among colleagues	★★
3.10 Positions the organisation as one that values personal growth and well-being beyond employment	★★★★

Figure 65. Validation of Employers wishes and requirements (full table in Appendix E)

12.2 FUTURE RETIREE PERSPECTIVE



The project initially centred on the perspective of future retirees. The design challenge was to explore how art and reflection could support people in the transition from work to retirement — a period often marked by change, loss of structure, and redefinition of identity. *Uit de Verf* was developed to offer a personal, positive, and reflective experience that helps individuals slow down, look back, and reimagine the next chapter of their lives.

Requirements Validation

A traceability matrix was used to assess how the final concept fulfils the psychological and social needs of future retirees as derived from the literature on transition design and healthy ageing (see Table X).

Feedback and Interpretation

Across test sessions and interviews, participants described *Uit de Verf* as a personal, reflective, and uplifting experience. They valued the balance between structure and openness, and the way art could express emotions difficult to articulate in words. The process was often described as calming, affirming, and thought-provoking.

Challenges mainly concerned the digital environment and level of guidance: some users preferred more concrete direction, while others enjoyed the freedom of interpretation. The desire to share the result — either with colleagues or family — suggests potential for adding a small social or ceremonial element in future iterations.

Reflection future retirees

The validation confirms that *Uit de Verf* meets its core goal of supporting emotional reflection and identity transition at retirement. It demonstrates how art can facilitate self-expression, recognition, and closure at a pivotal life moment. Future iterations could focus on expanding the social dimension and refining digital guidance, but the concept has proven its ability to make the transition from work to retirement both reflective and celebratory.

Requirement	Fulfilment
2.1 Support mental and social wellbeing	★★★★
2.2 Strengthen adaptability and self-management	★★★
2.3 Prepare for experiences of loss or disorientation	★★★
2.4 Encourage exploration and experimentation	★★★
2.5 Reinforce self-knowledge and sense of contribution	★★★★
2.6 Foster a sense of belonging and social continuity	★★★
2.7 Create opportunities for shared rituals	★★★★
2.8 Encourage intentional slowing down and reflection	★★★★
2.9 Mark and acknowledge the end of working life	★★★★
2.10 Provide appreciation and emotional closure	★★★★
2.11 Provide personal relevance and aesthetic pleasure through art engagement	★★★

Figure 66. Validation of Future Retirees wishes and requirements (full table in Appendix F)

13. CONCLUSION

This project set out to explore how the Rijksmuseum could connect with people in the **transition from work to retirement**. The central design challenge was to bridge the gap between the museum and future retirees by creating an experience that feels both personal and culturally grounded. Through the design process, this vision evolved into **Uit de Verf**: an interactive gift experience that guides older adults in the transition from work to retirement by using **art as a tool for reflection**.

The validation showed that the concept succeeds in addressing the needs and ambitions of all three stakeholder groups, albeit to different degrees. For the Rijksmuseum, *Uit de Verf* aligns strongly with its strategic goals of **innovation, social relevance, and engagement beyond the museum walls**. It provides a new model for collaboration with companies and introduces a sustainable revenue stream while maintaining artistic and emotional integrity.

For the future retiree, the concept fulfils its aim of **supporting reflection, recognition, and emotional well-being**. Participants described the experience as calming, personal, and meaningful. It helps users reconsider their professional identity and explore continuity between who they were at work and who they hope to become. In addition, *Uit de Verf* addresses a topic that is otherwise often overlooked in workplace practices, and the **impact of acknowledging this transition** resonated strongly with participants.

For employers, *Uit de Verf* offers a viable and **low-effort solution** for marking retirement in a meaningful way. It integrates into existing HR systems and farewell practices while enhancing the symbolic and emotional quality of the gesture. The concept supports positive organisational culture and strengthens the image of employers who value personal growth beyond employment.

Across these perspectives, the project demonstrates how design can translate institutional and organisational goals into human-centred experiences. The results confirm that cultural reflection can bridge structural and emotional distances — between an institution and its audiences, between work and personal life, and between past and future.

The broader contribution of this work lies in showing that museums can play an active role in life transitions by offering experiences that combine art, reflection, and ritual. Rather than functioning solely as spaces for observation, museums can become **facilitators of personal meaning**. For design, the project illustrates how reflective and symbolic engagement can transform cultural content into **life-relevant experiences**, enabling people to see themselves through art rather than only looking at it.

While *Uit de Verf* has proven **feasible** and **desirable**, its long-term success depends on further collaboration, testing, and refinement. Implementation will require **cross-departmental coordination** within the Rijksmuseum and **pilot partnerships with companies** to validate logistics, inclusivity, and scale. These next steps are discussed in the following chapter.

14. RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the conclusions, this chapter offers recommendations for future steps. It proposes how Uit de Verf could be further developed and implemented through pilot projects and partnerships, and suggests directions for long-term integration within the Rijksmuseum's programmes. Finally, it identifies opportunities for broader application of art-based reflection in other life transitions, extending the project's impact beyond retirement alone.

14.1 For the Rijksmuseum

Establish Ownership and Internal Alignment

To implement Uit de Verf effectively, ownership should be clearly defined between the Development, Partnerships, and ICT departments. A small cross-departmental team could oversee the product's further development, ensuring that design, communication, and digital aspects remain coherent and true to the Rijksmuseum's brand and mission.

Integrate into Strategic Programming

The concept directly supports the museum's goal of engaging audiences outside its physical walls. It is recommended that Uit de Verf be positioned as part of the museum's outreach and innovation strategy, alongside other programmes that use digital or social engagement to reach new audiences.

Collaborate with an External Development Partner

Given the technical and logistical complexity of the digital platform, collaboration with a trusted digital partner, already familiar with the museum's infrastructure, is advised. This ensures continuity, data security, and scalability while allowing the museum team to focus on content and curation.

14.2 For Collaboration with Companies

Pilot Partnerships and Phased Roll-Out

The next step should involve one or two pilot collaborations, ideally with organisations such as KPN or PostNL, where interest has already been expressed. The pilot would test the logistical flow, user experience, and procurement integration, generating data for refinement and business modelling.

Develop Clear Onboarding Materials for Managers

To ensure consistent use within companies, communication materials and onboarding guides should be created for HR departments and team leaders. These could explain the purpose, tone, and process of Uit de Verf and provide guidance on how to present it as part of a farewell ritual.

Ensure Inclusivity and Accessibility

While the concept resonates strongly with highly educated professionals, future iterations should be tested for inclusivity across education levels, cultural backgrounds, and job types. This could include simplifying language, adding voice-guided instructions, or offering alternative visual styles.

14.3 For Further Development

Refine and Test the Digital Experience

The digital layer should continue to evolve through iterative testing. Particular focus is recommended on usability, tone of voice, and the integration of Rijksmuseum artworks. Short user tests could explore how participants navigate reflection prompts and visual selection to ensure an intuitive and inspiring experience.

Expand the Social and Ritual Dimension

The validation revealed a strong desire among retirees to share their outcomes with others. Adding a social or ceremonial component, such as an optional closing event, printable reflection summary, or digital gallery, could reinforce the sense of belonging and community.

Evaluate the Long-Term Business Model

Once pilot results are available, a financial model should be developed to balance accessibility with sustainability. The pricing of Uit de Verf should align with existing corporate farewell budgets (€150–250) while generating a modest income stream for the museum.

Explore Broader Applications of the Framework

Beyond retirement, the conceptual framework of Uit de Verf, using art as a reflective tool to mark life transitions, could be extended to other contexts, such as jubilees, career shifts, or educational milestones. This would strengthen the museum's position as a facilitator of personal and social meaning through art.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A - APPROVED PROJECT BRIEF

APPENDIX B - TARGET GROUP EXPLORATION

APPENDIX C – DIGITAL PROTOTYPE AND AI FRAMEWORK

APPENDIX D - VALIDATION EVIDENCE RIJKSMUSEUM

APPENDIX E - VALIDATION EVIDENCE FUTURE RETIREES

APPENDIX F - VALIDATION EVIDENCE EMPLOYERS

APPENDIX G - INTERACTION VISION

APPENDIX H - EMPLOYERS AS STAKEHOLDERS

APPENDIX A - APPROVED PROJECT BRIEF





IDE Master Graduation Project

Project team, procedural checks and Personal Project Brief

In this document the agreements made between student and supervisory team about the student's IDE Master Graduation Project are set out. This document may also include involvement of an external client, however does not cover any legal matters student and client (might) agree upon. Next to that, this document facilitates the required procedural checks:

- Student defines the team, what the student is going to do/deliver and how that will come about
- Chair of the supervisory team signs, to formally approve the project's setup / Project brief
- SSC E&SA (Shared Service Centre, Education & Student Affairs) report on the student's registration and study progress
- IDE's Board of Examiners confirms the proposed supervisory team on their eligibility, and whether the student is allowed to start the Graduation Project

STUDENT DATA & MASTER PROGRAMME

Complete all fields and indicate which master(s) you are in

Family name	Wagemakers	7678		IDE master(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> IPD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DFI	<input type="checkbox"/> SPD
Initials	JSMM			2 nd non-IDE master			
Given name	Juliet			Individual programme			
Student number	4860047			(date of approval)			
				Medisign	<input type="checkbox"/>		
				HPM	<input type="checkbox"/>		

SUPERVISORY TEAM

Fill in the required information of supervisory team members. If applicable, company mentor is added as 2nd mentor

Chair	Helm, A.J.C. van der	dept./section	HCD-DCC	<p>! Ensure a heterogeneous team. In case you wish to include team members from the same section, explain why.</p> <p>! Chair should request the IDE Board of Examiners for approval when a non-IDE mentor is proposed. Include CV and motivation letter.</p> <p>! 2nd mentor only applies when a client is involved.</p>
mentor	Kroon, C.P.J.M.	dept./section	SDE-DIS	
2 nd mentor	Goettsch, E.			
client:	Rijksmuseum Innovationlab			
city:	Amsterdam	country:	The Netherlands	
optional comments				

APPROVAL OF CHAIR on PROJECT PROPOSAL / PROJECT BRIEF -> to be filled in by the Chair of the supervisory team

Sign for approval (Chair)

Name Aadjan van der Helm Date 8-5-2025 Signature Aadjan van der Helm

CHECK ON STUDY PROGRESS

To be filled in by SSC E&SA (Shared Service Centre, Education & Student Affairs), after approval of the project brief by the chair. The study progress will be checked for a 2nd time just before the green light meeting.

Master electives no. of EC accumulated in total _____ EC

Of which, taking conditional requirements into account, can be part of the exam programme _____ EC

★	YES	all 1 st year master courses passed
★	NO	missing 1 st year courses

Comments:

Sign for approval (SSC E&SA)

Name Lisette Boot Date 12-05-2025 Signature [Signature]

APPROVAL OF BOARD OF EXAMINERS IDE on SUPERVISORY TEAM -> to be checked and filled in by IDE's Board of Examiners

Does the composition of the Supervisory Team comply with regulations?

YES	V	Supervisory Team approved
NO		Supervisory Team not approved

Comments:

Based on study progress, students is ...

V	ALLOWED to start the graduation project
	NOT allowed to start the graduation project

Comments:

Sign for approval (BoEx)

Name Monique von Morgen Date 15/5/2025 Signature [Signature]

Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

Name student Juliët Wagemakers

Student number 4,860,047

PROJECT TITLE, INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM DEFINITION and ASSIGNMENT

Complete all fields, keep information clear, specific and concise

Project title Securing the future: Connecting younger seniors aged 60 to 75, with the Rijksmuseum beyond its physical walls to sustain senior engagement and support growth.

Please state the title of your graduation project (above). Keep the title compact and simple. Do not use abbreviations. The remainder of this document allows you to define and clarify your graduation project.

Introduction

Describe the context of your project here; What is the domain in which your project takes place? Who are the main stakeholders and what interests are at stake? Describe the opportunities (and limitations) in this domain to better serve the stakeholder interests. (max 250 words)

The Rijksmuseum, located in Amsterdam, is considered the most prominent museum in the Netherlands and is especially known for its collection of 17th-century Dutch paintings. Annually, the Rijksmuseum attracts millions of visitors and it has the ambition to keep growing. If the amount of visitors continues to grow, the Rijksmuseum will at some point reach the physical limits of their building. Therefore the Rijksmuseum wants to start considering ways to extend its reach beyond its museum walls.

To support and sustain the growth of visitor numbers, the Rijksmuseum continually develops initiatives and educational programs tailored to new, existing, and specific target groups—including children, young adults, families, and older seniors, as well as internationals and people with disabilities—ensuring the institution serves the broadest possible audience. Despite being one of the Rijksmuseum's most important visitor groups, younger seniors aged 60 to 75 remain underrepresented in current initiatives and activities. Therefore, this project focuses on them.

Younger seniors often have more free time due to retirement, maintain good physical and mental health, and possess relatively strong purchasing power. As a result, they increasingly engage in hobbies, lifelong learning, and cultural activities. But what challenges do younger seniors face, and how do they differ from previous generations in terms of interests, lifestyles, digital engagement, and expectations of cultural institutions? How can the Rijksmuseum build meaningful connections with this group to foster lasting engagement and support its growth beyond physical boundaries?

→ space available for images / figures on next page

Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

Problem Definition

What problem do you want to solve in the context described in the introduction, and within the available time frame of 100 working days? (= Master Graduation Project of 30 EC). What opportunities do you see to create added value for the described stakeholders? Substantiate your choice. (max 200 words)

As the population ages, there will be a significant increase in the number of seniors. However, the seniors of tomorrow will differ from previous generations in terms of interests, lifestyles, digital engagement, and expectations from cultural institutions. Despite this, younger seniors aged 60 to 75 are currently underrepresented in the museum's existing programs and initiatives. As the museum seeks to sustain and grow its visitor numbers while extending its reach beyond the physical boundaries of the building, there is a key opportunity to better understand and address the needs of this demographic. By doing so, the Rijksmuseum can ensure that this growing and important group remains engaged, continues to be an active part of the museum's visitor base in the future, and potentially expands its involvement over time.

Assignment

This is the most important part of the project brief because it will give a clear direction of what you are heading for. Formulate an assignment to yourself regarding what you expect to deliver as result at the end of your project. (1 sentence) As you graduate as an industrial design engineer, your assignment will start with a verb (Design/Investigate/Validate/Create), and you may use the green text format:

Design an interactive experience beyond the physical walls of the Rijksmuseum that strengthens the relation between younger seniors aged 60 to 75 and the Rijksmuseum

Then explain your project approach to carrying out your graduation project and what research and design methods you plan to use to generate your design solution (max 150 words)

This project plan integrates the Design Thinking methodology, aligning key phases with critical milestones to create impactful, user-centered solutions that enhance cultural participation for older adults aged 60-75. The approach emphasizes deeply understanding user needs, rapid prototyping, and continuous iteration to ensure the final outcome is both desirable, feasible, and viable.

The project will begin with comprehensive context research, including desk research, stakeholder mapping, and interviews with both younger seniors and museum staff to explore trends in aging, cultural participation, and interactive design. Insights from these stages will inform co-design sessions and creative workshops, where potential interventions will be identified and refined. Selected concepts will then be prototyped and evaluated through user testing, resulting in a validated design concept with clear recommendations for implementation.

Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

Name student Juliët Wagemakers

Student number 4,860,047

PROJECT TITLE, INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM DEFINITION and ASSIGNMENT

Complete all fields, keep information clear, specific and concise

Project title Securing the future: Connecting younger seniors aged 60 to 75, with the Rijksmuseum beyond its physical walls to sustain senior engagement and support growth.

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The Rijksmuseum, located in Amsterdam, is considered the most prominent museum in the Netherlands and is especially known for its collection of 17th-century Dutch paintings. Annually, the Rijksmuseum attracts millions of visitors and it has the ambition to keep growing. If the amount of visitors continues to grow, the Rijksmuseum will at some point reach the physical limits of their building. Therefore the Rijksmuseum wants to start considering ways to extend its reach beyond its museum walls.

To support and sustain the growth of visitor numbers, the Rijksmuseum continually develops initiatives and educational programs tailored to new, existing, and specific target groups—including children, young adults, families, and older seniors, as well as internationals and people with disabilities—ensuring the institution serves the broadest possible audience. Despite being one of the Rijksmuseum's most important visitor groups, younger seniors aged 60 to 75 remain underrepresented in current initiatives and activities. Therefore, this project focuses on them.

Younger seniors often have more free time due to retirement, maintain good physical and mental health, and possess relatively strong purchasing power. As a result, they increasingly engage in hobbies, lifelong learning, and cultural activities. But what challenges do younger seniors face, and how do they differ from previous generations in terms of interests, lifestyles, digital engagement, and expectations of cultural institutions? How can the Rijksmuseum build meaningful connections with this group to foster lasting engagement and support its growth beyond physical boundaries?

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Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

Problem Definition

What problem do you want to solve in the context described in the introduction, and within the available time frame of 100 working days? (= Master Graduation Project of 30 EC). What opportunities do you see to create added value for the described stakeholders? Substantiate your choice. (max 200 words)

As the population ages, there will be a significant increase in the number of seniors. However, the seniors of tomorrow will differ from previous generations in terms of interests, lifestyles, digital engagement, and expectations from cultural institutions. Despite this, younger seniors aged 60 to 75 are currently underrepresented in the museum's existing programs and initiatives. As the museum seeks to sustain and grow its visitor numbers while extending its reach beyond the physical boundaries of the building, there is a key opportunity to better understand and address the needs of this demographic. By doing so, the Rijksmuseum can ensure that this growing and important group remains engaged, continues to be an active part of the museum's visitor base in the future, and potentially expands its involvement over time.

Assignment

This is the most important part of the project brief because it will give a clear direction of what you are heading for. Formulate an assignment to yourself regarding what you expect to deliver as result at the end of your project. (1 sentence) As you graduate as an industrial design engineer, your assignment will start with a verb (Design/Investigate/Validate/Create), and you may use the green text format:

Design an interactive experience beyond the physical walls of the Rijksmuseum that strengthens the relation between younger seniors aged 60 to 75 and the Rijksmuseum

Then explain your project approach to carrying out your graduation project and what research and design methods you plan to use to generate your design solution (max 150 words)

This project plan integrates the Design Thinking methodology, aligning key phases with critical milestones to create impactful, user-centered solutions that enhance cultural participation for older adults aged 60-75. The approach emphasizes deeply understanding user needs, rapid prototyping, and continuous iteration to ensure the final outcome is both desirable, feasible, and viable.

The project will begin with comprehensive context research, including desk research, stakeholder mapping, and interviews with both younger seniors and museum staff to explore trends in aging, cultural participation, and interactive design. Insights from these stages will inform co-design sessions and creative workshops, where potential interventions will be identified and refined. Selected concepts will then be prototyped and evaluated through user testing, resulting in a validated design concept with clear recommendations for implementation.

APPENDIX B - TARGET GROUP EXPLORATION

1. Reaching those Who Never Saw The Night Watch

As shown in Figure 6, approximately 30% of Dutch adults have never seen The Night Watch in real life and could therefore be considered potential future Night Watch visitors. For this group, art and museums may feel distant, hindered by barriers such as cost, accessibility, or a lack of personal relevance. This profile highlights an opportunity to connect these individuals with the Rijksmuseum beyond its physical walls and, in doing so, potentially invite them in.

According to the Data & Insights Manager of the Directors' Office and Strategic Planning, this segment can be seen as “low-hanging fruit,” as only around 5% of current visitors belong to this group. Possible interventions include travelling installations, public campaigns outside Amsterdam, or collaborative initiatives in local community centres—initiatives similar to Nachtwacht on Tour. Such approaches align with broader themes of identity, belonging, and social participation.

2. Promoting Awareness of Cultural Legacy

As stated on the Rijksmuseum's website, “In everything we do we are vastly reliant on external donations and support” (Rijksmuseum, n.d.-b). This underlines the museum's strong dependence on private giving as part of its funding structure. Conversations with the Account Manager for Donations within the Development Department confirmed this reliance and provided a more personal perspective on the matter: “We are so grateful for all our donors—we would love to thank them personally, but in many cases we only find out after they pass away, and some remain completely anonymous.”

This illustrates how personal and sensitive the topic of cultural giving can be, particularly when it concerns posthumous donations. Raising awareness of the long-term impact of cultural heritage giving, therefore, presents a meaningful yet delicate opportunity. Interactive experiences or installations could help initiate dialogue around legacy and philanthropy. Such initiatives could focus on groups that are already connected to the museum through exclusive events, museum networks, or professional circles, while also inspiring a broader national conversation about cultural heritage and collective responsibility.

3. Celebrating Museum Membership at Home

Insights from conversations with the Vrienden team within the Development Department highlighted their role in maintaining close relationships between Patrons, Friends, and the Rijksmuseum. For these groups, the primary challenge lies not in acquisition but in deepening engagement and fostering a lasting sense of belonging. Staff noted, and this was also confirmed through personal observations, that many Patrons and Friends take pride in their membership. In some affluent areas of Amsterdam, being a Patron of the Rijksmuseum appears to function as a social norm or marker of cultural status.

This observation reveals an opportunity to further strengthen emotional connection and visibility within this community. Design directions could explore how Patrons might feel more acknowledged and how their affiliation with the museum could be meaningfully reflected within their personal environments. Exclusive showpieces, home art installations, or personalised offers could reinforce this sense of pride while inspiring peers to engage more actively with the museum.

4. Connecting Communities Through Volunteering

This profile is inspired by projects that create mutual benefit across usually separated groups in society, such as initiatives where students and older adults live together, reducing rent for students while providing companionship and practical support for seniors (Het Consumentenbelang, n.d.). These examples illustrate how collaboration can strengthen social cohesion and overall well-being.

Translated to the museum context, this idea suggests connecting two audience groups that could enrich each other through shared experiences. A possible design direction involves older adult Friends of the Rijksmuseum volunteering to share their knowledge of Dutch art and history with less-involved audiences. This exchange could address social issues such as loneliness and lack of purpose among retirees, while lowering barriers of cost, knowledge, and confidence for newcomers. Opportunities may include events, outreach through existing networks, or collaborations with community centres and volunteer organisations.

5. Supporting the Transition to Retirement

According to the segmentation study (Image 15), the Liefhebbers segment within the museum audience consists largely of older adults who are highly educated and share a strong interest in art and culture. Many members of this group are partially or fully retired, giving them more time and flexibility to engage in cultural activities.

The theme of retirement sparked curiosity for the researcher and the supervisory board, since major life changes often create space for new insights and new beginnings. Retiring marks a moment when people gradually let go of familiar routines, work structures, social contacts, and professional identities. This shift can bring freedom and opportunity but may also raise questions about purpose, rhythm, and belonging.

This profile, therefore, highlights opportunities for creative and cultural activities that can support people in navigating this transition—such as workshops, cultural credits, or longer-term programmes in collaboration with the museum. Designing for this group aligns with broader themes of lifelong learning, identity, and well-being, and reflects the Rijksmuseum's ambition to remain meaningful beyond its physical walls.

6. Engaging Pleasure Seekers Creatively

According to the Rijksmuseum's Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan 2024–2028 (Rijksmuseum, n.d.-b), the museum aims to develop exhibitions and educational formats that appeal to currently underrepresented visitor types. This profile builds on that ambition—extending it beyond the museum walls—and focuses specifically on connecting with pleasure-seeking audiences who enjoy art and culture but are less interested in in-depth learning. Instead, they seek enjoyment, inspiration, exploration, and personal enrichment. The challenge lies in identifying where to encounter these audiences and how to engage them in meaningful ways.

Opportunities include travelling exhibitions at cultural festivals, interactive projects, and experimental events—both inside and outside the museum. By engaging this group through more playful and accessible formats, the museum can strengthen existing connections while creating new forms of cultural value.

7. Reconnecting with Indo-Dutch Roots

During both the introductory tour as a new employee and a conversation with the Head of the Public sub-department within the Public & Education division, it became clear that the theme of the Dutch East Indies currently receives significant attention within the museum. The Rijksmuseum aims to present a complete view of history and is actively working on highlighting underrepresented narratives. Given that approximately two million people with roots in the former Dutch East Indies live in the Netherlands, this group represents a meaningful audience to engage with.

For this community, recognition and cultural connection are essential. Instead of expecting them to visit Amsterdam to explore this part of Dutch history and the museum's collection, the Rijksmuseum could take an outward approach—reaching out through travelling exhibitions, cultural gatherings, or storytelling initiatives. In doing so, the museum could help foster stronger connections to shared heritage while also strengthening community bonds and recognition within Dutch society more broadly.

APPENDIX C – DIGITAL PROTOTYPE AND AI FRAMEWORK

Early Fully Digital Prototype

To explore how the reflective session could take place digitally, three separate GPTs were developed, each representing one stage of the process: past, present, and future. These prototypes were used to test interaction, explore implementation possibilities, and push the level of realism by training the models with tailored data. The experiments also demonstrated that the AI could be effectively trained and was capable of generating expressive imagery. The idea of using objects such as vases as symbolic anchors originated from this exploration.

The approach showed several advantages. The sessions could be fully digital, participants retained creative freedom, and the models could be adapted or shared over time. However, there were clear limitations. Connecting the content to the Rijksmuseum's digital collection was technically complex, and generating consistently high-quality AI images remained challenging. At times, the chatbot provided too much information for the user, which reduced the sense of ownership.

Using three separate GPTs also made the experience repetitive. Instead of feeling like an artistic exploration, it shifted towards an extended AI conversation. The absence of physical elements was noticeable, since hands-on engagement stimulates a different form of creativity. These findings pointed towards the value of combining digital steps with small tactile components, and including more visual or interactive input such as selecting or arranging elements from the museum collection.

AI Safety and Implementation Considerations

Because the reflective sessions involve personal thoughts and emotions, the use of AI requires careful attention to privacy and data security. The early prototypes used public GPT interfaces to explore interaction styles, but these systems process data externally and cannot offer full control over storage or access. They are therefore not suitable for implementation within *Uit de Verf*.

A more secure approach is to embed AI directly within the *Uit de Verf* platform. In this controlled environment, all data remain within systems managed by the Rijksmuseum or an approved development partner. This allows the application of organisation-specific privacy protocols, compliance with GDPR, and a clear scope in which reflections are only used for the participant's session and the creation of the retirement gift. Access can be limited, storage encrypted, and retention periods defined with precision.

An embedded environment also ensures that the AI works with a curated and predictable knowledge base. Instead of drawing from the open internet, the model relies on datasets tailored to *Uit de Verf*, including tone-of-voice material, symbolic references, and a selection of annotated Rijksmuseum artworks. This creates more consistent behaviour and a culturally coherent experience.

The digital collection plays an important role in this setup. By linking the AI to artworks enriched with metadata such as style, symbolism, and period, user choices can be interpreted through authentic museum material. This supports both the reflective process and the visual direction of the personalised catalogue. In this way, an embedded AI system supports creativity while safeguarding participant trust and maintaining a strong connection to the museum's collection.



APPENDIX D - VALIDATION EVIDENCE RIJKSMUSEUM



Requirement	Design Feature / Response	Validation Evidence	Fulfilment
1. Strengthen engagement with older adults	The concept directly targets future retirees (ages 60–70), inviting them to engage with the museum through art and reflection.	Positive internal feedback: “A strong way to reach older audiences beyond exhibitions.” (Development meeting, 2025)	★★★★
2. Expand engagement beyond the museum walls	Hybrid experience: physical gift and digital reflection accessible anywhere in the Netherlands.	Acknowledged by Development Dept. as a way to connect with audiences remotely.	★★★★
3. Reach audiences across the Netherlands	Collaboration with national employers (PostNL, KPN) extends reach beyond the Randstad.	Pilot discussions with nationwide companies confirm interest.	★★
4. Align with audience segmentation model	Target group matches the <i>Liefhebbers</i> segment; tone and aesthetic consistent with museum branding.	Confirmed by Friends Dept. during review.	★★
5. Diversify partnerships to reach new audiences	Corporate collaboration model expands beyond traditional cultural and donor networks.	Partnerships Dept. identified this as a new form of engagement.	★★★★
6. Support financial resilience through new income streams	Business model allows per-unit sales to companies; potential webshop addition.	Internal stakeholders described it as “a promising hybrid of cultural and commercial value.”	★★
7. Contribute to long-term stability through innovation	Combines AI-driven reflection with art interpretation—first of its kind within museum context.	Highlighted in Development meeting as “strong innovation example.”	★★★★
8. Independent product requiring minimal staff involvement while maintaining brand coherence	Automated digital system; production and logistics outsourced; museum oversees curation and brand integrity.	Development team supported minimal staffing approach if externally maintained.	★★
9. Scalable concept	Modular design allows scaling through partnerships and webshop sales.	Feasibility confirmed by ICT and Partnerships departments.	★★

APPENDIX E - VALIDATION EVIDENCE FUTURE RETIREES



Requirement	Design Feature / Response	Validation Evidence	Fulfilment
2.1 Support mental and social wellbeing	Combines personal reflection with creative engagement through art.	Participants described the experience as <i>calming, inspiring, and personal</i> .	★★★★
2.2 Strengthen adaptability and self-management	Encourages self-guided exploration and personal choice in artworks and themes.	Users appreciated autonomy but occasionally sought more guidance.	★★
2.3 Prepare for experiences of loss or disorientation	Reflection on past, present, and future phases helps to reframe the transition.	Participants noted awareness of change, though not all addressed loss directly.	★★
2.4 Encourage exploration and experimentation	Use of symbolic elements and creative composition invites playful discovery.	Described as <i>refreshing</i> and <i>stimulating</i> ; some preferred more direction.	★★
2.5 Reinforce self-knowledge and sense of contribution	Reflective prompts highlight values, memories, and personal impact.	Seen as meaningful and identity-affirming.	★★★★
2.6 Foster a sense of belonging and social continuity	Can be shared with colleagues or family as a personal story or artwork.	Potential recognised, but sharing moments not yet fully developed.	★★
2.7 Create opportunities for shared rituals	The gift and reflective process mark retirement as a social and emotional event.	Described as <i>a real moment</i> rather than just a gift.	★★★★
2.8 Encourage intentional slowing down and reflection	Step-by-step questions and visual rhythm guide quiet contemplation.	Participants appreciated the slow, mindful character.	★★★★
2.9 Mark and acknowledge the end of working life	The concept formalises closure and invites gratitude for the past.	Universally recognised as an appropriate way to close a chapter.	★★★★
2.10 Provide appreciation and emotional closure	The artwork and catalogue serve as tangible symbols of recognition.	Described as <i>beautifully personal</i> and <i>emotionally rewarding</i> .	★★★★
2.11 Provide personal relevance and aesthetic pleasure through art engagement	Participants could connect with artworks that matched their tone and identity.	Positive feedback on visuals and tone; digital selection process to be refined.	★★

APPENDIX F - VALIDATION EVIDENCE EMPLOYERS



Requirement	Design Feature / Response	Validation Evidence	Fulfilment
3.1 Integrates into existing HR, procurement, and farewell procedures	Can be added to internal gift portals or aligned with existing pension events; minimal administrative effort required.	HR KPN and PostNL confirmed feasibility if approved in procurement systems.	★★
3.2 Adapts to different team sizes and levels of formality	Modular structure allows both individual and group use; tone adjustable through manager communication.	HR feedback confirmed flexibility, but pilot testing recommended to verify fit.	★★
3.3 Ensures reliability and logistical feasibility with minimal time investment	Outsourced production and digital automation reduce workload for HR and managers.	HR valued low effort but emphasised need for clear internal communication.	★★
3.4 Expresses gratitude and recognition meaningfully	Combines reflective storytelling with a tangible, museum-quality gift.	HR described it as “more meaningful and contemporary” than standard farewell gifts.	★★★★
3.5 Respects diverse personalities and cultural backgrounds	Encourages personal reflection through art-based interaction adaptable to individual tone.	HR saw strong potential, though inclusivity across education levels requires attention.	★★
3.6 Helps managers mark retirements in a consistent yet personal manner	Offers a ready-to-use structure supporting personal, authentic farewells.	Managers found this helpful but dependent on visibility in HR systems.	★★
3.7 Reinforces positive internal culture and continuity despite transitions	Frames retirement as a shared moment of appreciation within company culture.	HR noted alignment with company values around care and belonging.	★★
3.8 Creates farewell moments that are authentic and emotionally resonant	Blends reflection with celebration, fostering emotional closure.	Both HRs praised the emotional resonance and authenticity of the experience.	★★★★
3.9 Facilitates reflection and connection among colleagues	Enables discussion around personal meaning and shared legacy within teams.	HR considered this valuable but context-dependent.	★★
3.10 Positions the organisation as one that values personal growth and well-being beyond employment	Reinforces employer branding and care for life after work.	HR noted strong alignment with sustainable employability goals.	★★★★

APPENDIX G - INTERACTION VISION



An Interaction Vision describes the intended emotional and experiential quality of how people engage with a design. It functions as a guiding image that captures how an interaction should feel, beyond what it should do. By articulating this vision, design decisions can stay aligned with the desired user experience throughout development.

In this project, interacting with the concept should feel personal, reflective, and meaningful. It invites older adults to pause, look inward, and connect their life experiences with the symbolism of art. The interaction is guided yet open, offering direction without being prescriptive, so that individuals feel supported while maintaining autonomy in their reflections.

The Feeling of Releasing a Wish Balloon

The envisioned interaction can be compared to the act of releasing a wish balloon. Before letting it go, one often takes a quiet moment to write down a wish or message—a personal reflection carrying hope, gratitude, or intention.

The act combines thoughtfulness and **lightness**: it holds meaning, yet feels **free** and unforced. Watching the balloon drift upward evokes a sense of **letting go**, of being present **in the moment**, and of trust in what comes next.

This blend of symbolic reflection, tangible action, and emotional release serves as inspiration for how the interaction should feel—both **introspective** and **uplifting**, with a **touch of magic**.

Therefore, the intended interaction qualities are:

light, free, in the moment, introspective, uplifting and a touch of magic.

APPENDIX H - EMPLOYERS AS STAKEHOLDERS



In addition to the Rijksmuseum and the target group, Employers form a crucial third stakeholder within this project. They act as both the purchasers and presenters of the retirement gift, serving as the link between the museum and the retiring employee. Understanding their role is essential to ensure that the concept aligns with organisational realities and integrates naturally within existing workplace rituals.

To gain this understanding, an exploration was conducted into how companies currently approach the transition from work to retirement and what needs, wishes, and responsibilities they associate with it. Earlier interviews with Future retirees had already revealed how workplace practices shape farewell experiences; this was complemented with the perspective of employers. The exploration began with an examination of the Rijksmuseum's own attention policy for departing employees, followed by interviews with human resource professionals from PostNL, Rijksmuseum itself and .. TU Delft, and KPN.

The aim of this inquiry was fourfold:

To gauge interest and relevance, testing whether the concept resonates with the Employers and where openings for implementation might exist.

To identify opportunities and challenges across different sectors, exploring where potential for collaboration or adaptation may lie.

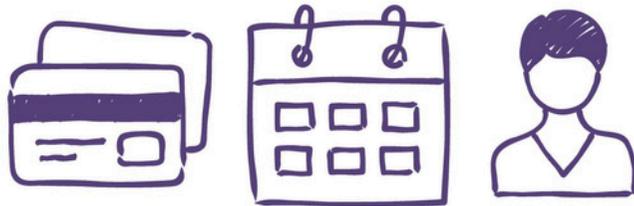
To map existing practices around retirement, farewell rituals, and company gifts, ensuring that the concept would align with these frameworks rather than conflict with them.

To raise awareness about the emotional and long-term impact of the farewell moment, drawing attention to research showing that a meaningful farewell can significantly influence post-retirement well-being.

Together, these insights will provide a deeper understanding of how the Rijksmuseum could position its offering within existing corporate practices, and how Employers could, in turn, become meaningful partners in connecting art, reflection, and purpose during this life transition.

RETIREMENT IN THREE DIMENSIONS

Based on the analysis of employer interviews and secondary data, retirement can be understood through three interrelated dimensions: financial, organisational, and emotional. Together, these dimensions describe how companies experience and manage the process, influencing how employees transition out of working life and how organisations express appreciation and continuity.



Illustrations from Allan Faustino

FINANCIAL DIMENSION

Businesses play a central role in the financial dimension of retirement. Throughout an employee's career, pension contributions are accrued to secure income after retirement. These arrangements are typically managed by human resource or finance departments, sometimes supported by external specialists. Public discourse on retirement often emphasises these financial aspects, such as pension schemes, benefits, and advisory services.

Although this project does not directly address financial preparedness, it is important to acknowledge its indirect influence. Financial considerations strongly affect when and how employees choose to retire. However, since these aspects are externally managed and fall outside the experiential scope of this project, they are not further elaborated in this report.

Within organisations, this dimension is primarily handled at a strategic and administrative level, coordinated between HR and finance departments in collaboration with external pension providers. Because this dimension lies outside the experiential and design scope of the project, no specific requirements or wishes were identified from this perspective.

ORGANISATIONAL DIMENSION

Beyond financial planning, Employers must also manage the organisational implications of retirement. When an employee leaves, companies must ensure a smooth transfer of responsibilities, which may involve training successors or redistributing tasks. Retirement therefore ties into broader issues of workforce continuity and organisational resilience. While this project primarily focuses on the personal and emotional aspects of retirement, it is essential to recognise that companies often approach it as a logistical process aimed at maintaining stability and productivity.

This dimension typically involves line managers and team leaders, who operationalise HR procedures and ensure that knowledge transfer and succession are managed effectively. The following requirements and wishes were derived primarily from these organisational and HR-related functions within companies.

Requirements

Integration into existing HR procedures for offboarding and employee farewell processes.

Flexibility to adapt the product or ritual to different team sizes and levels of formality.

Reliability and logistical feasibility—minimal time investment for HR or team leads.

Wishes

Tools or services that help managers mark retirement in a consistent yet personal way.

A concept that reinforces positive internal culture and continuity, even as employees transition out of the organisation.

SOCIAL DIMENSION

In addition to the financial and organisational dimensions, retirement also carries a strong social component. Many organisations maintain recognition policies, often formalised through human resource departments or company-wide agreements. These policies define when and how attention is given to employees—for instance during birthdays, promotions, or departures—and typically include guidelines on budgets and appropriate gifts.

Interviews with HR representatives revealed that most companies do not distinguish between employees leaving for another job and those retiring, even though retirement marks a more profound life transition. Farewell gifts and rituals, however, are not merely symbolic; they affirm the employee's value and transform the departure into a meaningful and positive experience. This social dimension offers a clear entry point for the Rijksmuseum, as it connects to the themes of recognition, reflection, and personal meaning.

This social dimension is coordinated by HR departments through formal recognition policies and budgets but is ultimately enacted at the interpersonal level, within teams and departments, where colleagues and supervisors shape the tone and experience of the farewell moment. The following requirements and wishes were identified from both HR perspectives and interpersonal practices within teams, where these policies are brought to life.

Requirements

A meaningful way to express gratitude and recognition for long-term service.

Marking the end of professional life and the beginning of retirement.

Sensitivity to diverse personalities and backgrounds.

Wishes

Farewell moments that are memorable, authentic, and emotionally resonant.

A product or ritual that facilitates reflection and connection among colleagues.

An opportunity to position the organisation as one that values personal growth and well-being beyond employment.

MARKET POTENTIAL

From a business perspective, retirement represents a large and consistent social phenomenon. In 2022, approximately 84,000 employees in the Netherlands retired at an average age of 65 years and eight months. In 2023, this number rose to 86,000 employees, with an average retirement age of 65 years and eleven months. By 2024, nearly 93,000 employees retired at an average age of 66 years and one month (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [CBS], 2025).

This continuous and predictable transition creates a steady stream of potential recipients for farewell gifts. While such gifts are often standardised, their ritual function remains crucial: they mark closure, convey appreciation, and symbolise the connection between the employee and the organisation.

Research question:

Which sectors and types of organisations offer the most promising potential for this product?

Before identifying specific branches, it is useful to first consider what characteristics of employees and organisations are most favourable for the intended target group.

- Employees with **longer tenures** tend to receive higher farewell budgets, as confirmed in conversations with HR departments at the Rijksmuseum and PostNL. This finding indicates that organisations with stable, long-term employment relationships are more likely to allocate resources for meaningful farewell gestures.
- The intended target group, **highly educated** professionals aligns closely with the Rijksmuseum's audience segment of liefhebbers. Collaborating with organisations that employ such profiles strengthens the conceptual and cultural connection between the museum and the end users.
- Organisations with **geographically dispersed** workforces provide an additional advantage: they can enhance the museum's national visibility and accessibility when implementing the product on a larger scale.

However, these opportunities exist within a clear tension. For the Rijksmuseum, partnering with large organisations is advantageous in terms of reach, scalability, and potential revenue. Sectors with structured HR policies and higher recognition budgets also offer favourable conditions for implementation. At the same time, smaller companies or institutions, where relationships are more personal and informal, may provide richer ground for emotionally meaningful and authentic experiences.

Balancing these two orientations **scale and intimacy**, will be relevant in determining the most suitable partnerships for developing and implementing the concept.

Employment Distribution in the Netherlands

According to recent data from the Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS, 2025), the Dutch labour market is dominated by service-oriented sectors, with **business services**, **healthcare**, and **trade** representing the three largest fields of employment. The business services sector is notable not only for being the largest sector overall but also for having the country's highest share of self-employment (45%), reflecting some of its flexible employment structures that include temporary agency workers and freelancers. Healthcare stands out not only for its size but also for its exceptionally high share of female employees (80%).

When examining older workers specifically, both UWV (2023) and CBS (2024) report that employees aged 55 and above are relatively overrepresented in **healthcare**, **education**, **industry**, and **government** sectors. In contrast, the **hospitality** sector and the **trade** sector, for example, have a younger demographic profile and higher staff turnover. The CBS notes that older employees with higher education levels are significantly more likely to remain active in the labour market, and that many 65-year-olds who continue to work do so within permanent employment structures.

Healthcare				Education				Government				Business Services				
-2	-1	+1	+2	-2	-1	+1	+2	-2	-1	+1	+2	-2	-1	+1	+2	
		■				■	■			■				■	■	highly educated employees
		■	■			■	■			■	■			■		long employment relationships
		■	■			■				■	■			■	■	large organizational scale
		■				■				■				■		nationwide geographical presence
		■	■			■	■			■				■		employee appreciation culture
		■				■				■				■	■	employee appreciation budget

Table XX: Overview of Dutch Employment Sectors with Indicators of Higher Education, Tenure, Organisational Scale, HR Policy Structure, and Geographic Reach.

These findings indicate that organisations in **education, healthcare, and government** tend to maintain long-term employment relationships, making them particularly relevant for initiatives related to retirement and farewell practices. These institutions may be more modest in their gift traditions but often place stronger emphasis on personal well-being and social recognition.

The **business services sector**, although diverse in nature, remains a significant field due to its substantial scale, economic importance, and concentration of highly educated professionals. Within this sector, some companies operate with flexible contracts and high employee turnover, whereas others, especially large corporates and financial firms, offer more structured HR systems and long-term employment relationships. These companies typically have higher budgets for employee recognition and development, making them potentially valuable partners for initiatives that address the transition from work to retirement.

Moreover, the sectors altogether have a good **geographically dispersed workforce**, which supports nationwide visibility and accessibility, an important advantage for a museum-based initiative seeking broad implementation.

In summary, several sectors emerge as particularly promising for potential collaboration. Healthcare, education, and government stand out for their long-term employment relationships, structured HR systems, and strong traditions of recognition at the moment of retirement. The business services sector adds potential through its large scale, economic importance, and concentration of highly educated professionals, especially within established corporate and financial organisations. Additionally, large service providers have a geographically dispersed workforce, providing nationwide visibility and accessibility. Together, these sectors represent environments where employees are likely to value meaningful reflection at the end of their careers and where organisations have both the structure and the motivation to facilitate such initiatives.

RIJKS MUSEUM
UIT DE VERF