

Vereniging Hendrick de Keyser, the historic houses association of The Netherlands, was established as a private initiative in 1918. A group of Amsterdam citizens realized that action was necessary in order to preserve the outstanding historic heritage of their city. The association which they founded, named after the leading sculptor and master builder of the 17th century 'Dutch Golden Age', was soon active across The Netherlands with the mission to take care of architecturally or historically important buildings and their interior.

The association aims to be the guardian of the architectural heritage of The Netherlands by acquiring, conserving, restoring and renting out historic properties. Buildings which it acquires have to meet strict requirements. They have to be fine examples of the architecture or the living history of a certain period. Much attention is given to the authenticity of the interiors.

'Hendrick de Keyser' strives to give, through its collection of historic houses, a complete overview of the architecture, building and interior history of The Netherlands. Its collection is rich in diversity and detail: from Dutch Renaissance to Art Deco, from Berlage to the modernist heritage of Rietveld and Postmodernism. The collection, which grows annually with some five to ten buildings, now encompasses 421 properties, among which small and large private dwellings, canal houses, manor houses, city gates, country estates, villas, farms, chapels, cottages and city halls, spread over 108 cities and villages. More and more properties can be visited by the general public. The careful conservation of the properties remains however the main objective.

The Vereniging has gained considerable expertise in restoration projects and is a leading organization in this field in The Netherlands. Historic layouts and interiors are conserved or restored, whereas modern additions are kept to a minimum. Respecting the historic integrity of a house is the starting point, not striving to maximize rental income. Restoration plans include research in archives and in situ. Increasingly, scientific research into historic decorative painting is being used to establish how a house or an interior used to look like.

We have recently introduced Museumhuizen: a series of characteristic examples of the history of Dutch housing where you can experience 500 years of living by visiting several stunning houses from our collection.

Vereniging Hendrick de Keyser is organized as an independent, non-profit charity. Its income, making costly upkeep and restoration projects possible, comes from the long term letting of properties, membership fees, legacies and donations, as well as public and private fund raising. Membership is open to all. The association now has about 4400 members for whom activities are being organized, among which lectures, visits to properties and guided tours, encouraging everyone to enjoy our national heritage.

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