

## Satin, silk and sin: Dutch genre painting in the time of Vermeer

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<b>Start date</b>	12 April 2019	<b>End date</b>	14 April 2019
<b>Venue</b>	Madingley Hall Madingley Cambridge		
<b>Tutor</b>	Dr Sophie Oosterwijk	<b>Course code</b>	1819NRX055

**Director of Academic Centres** Sarah Ormrod

**For further information on this course, please contact** Head of Academic Centre Administration, Zara Kuckelhaus  
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**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

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### Tutor biography

Sophie Oosterwijk was born in Gouda, the Netherlands. She studied English at Leiden University and Medieval Studies at the University of York before completing her PhD in the History of Art at Leicester; she also has a second PhD in Middle English literature from Leiden. Sophie has published widely on her specialist research subjects: medieval iconography, medieval sculpture and tomb monuments, the image of the child in western art, and the *Danse Macabre*. Recent publications include two co-edited volumes entitled *Monumental Industry: The production of tomb sculpture in England and Wales in the long fourteenth century* (with Sally Badham, Shaun Tyas: 2010) and *Mixed Metaphors: the Danse Macabre in medieval and early modern Europe* (with Stefanie Knöll, Cambridge Scholars Publishing: 2011), and a large survey article on precious-metal effigial tomb monuments in medieval Europe (*Church Monuments* 30 for 2015); a monograph on the medieval *Danse Macabre* in Paris and London is in progress.

Sophie has taught at the universities of St Andrews, Leicester, and Manchester, Sotheby's Institute of Art, and other organisations. She was also a research associate with the MeMO (Medieval Monuments Online) project at Utrecht University (Netherlands) and is co-editor of the journal *Church Monuments*. A regular guest lecturer at Madingley Hall, she has previously taught weekend schools on Early Netherlandish art in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, on portraiture, and on the medieval culture of death. Her aim is always to study objects within their wider historical, social, cultural and religious context. In this course she will be exploring the art of the 'Golden Age' of her native country.

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## Course programme

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### Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	Introduction: life in the Dutch Republic
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Town and country
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	'Caravaggisti' and 'fijnschilders'
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Optical illusions
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Emblems and proverbs
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Family life
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	The art of seduction
12:45	Lunch

**The course will disperse after lunch**

## **Course syllabus**

### **Aims:**

This course aims to offer students a greater appreciation and understanding of Dutch seventeenth-century genre painting within its social, cultural and historical context. Comparisons between Vermeer's work and that of his contemporaries will allow students to become familiar with the variety of artists active in this period, the many types of genre painting they created, and with different interpretations of the scenes depicted.

### **Content:**

'Genre' is usually defined as 'scenes of daily life'. However, many of the scenes created by painters of this period are not just matter-of-fact observations of everyday life, despite the apparently faithful depictions of especially domestic interiors and family life that they offer the modern viewer.

It is especially the 'realism' of Dutch genre paintings that people have always admired. Yet many works create an *illusion* of reality in their seemingly realistic depiction of perspective, marble floors and luxurious fabrics. Many Dutch artists prided themselves in their technical skills, which collectors of the period greatly admired. The works of the Leiden 'fijnschilders' were especially sought after.

Other genre paintings are believed to contain a deeper meaning, often of a moralising nature. Jan Steen frequently used proverbs as themes for his paintings and included clear visual hints to enable viewers to understand the message he wished to convey. Other painters preferred to be less obvious, especially Vermeer whose works are often more ambiguous and less easy to interpret. By comparing genre paintings by different artists in this period, it is possible to gain some understanding of how contemporaries viewed these scenes of men, women and children at home, at work, and at leisure.

### **Presentation of the course:**

This course will be lecture-based around digital presentations by the tutor, but with questions between students and tutor as an integral part of each class: there will not be any formal group discussion, but students are encouraged to engage actively. Hand-outs will be used as background reading and as a basis for informal discussion.

### **Outcomes:**

**As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:**

1. develop a greater appreciation of the variety of genre paintings produced by Dutch artists in the seventeenth century;
2. increase their interpretative skills in analysing the possible meanings of Dutch genre paintings;
3. acquire a deeper understanding of how the work of Johannes Vermeer and his contemporaries fits into the art and culture of the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century.

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## Reading and resources list

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Listed below are texts that might be of interest should you wish to supplement your learning on the course. Any essential reading is marked with an asterisk \*

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Alpers, Svetlana	The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century	London, 1983.
Brown, Christopher	Scenes of Everyday Life: Dutch Genre Painting of the Seventeenth Century	London, 1984.
Chapman, H.P., <i>et al.</i> (eds)	Jan Steen: Painter and Storyteller	Exhibition catalogue, Zwolle, 1996.
Franits, Wayne (ed.)	Looking at Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art: Realism Reconsidered	Cambridge, 1997.
Franits, Wayne	Dutch Seventeenth-Century Genre Painting: Its Stylistic and Thematic Evolution	New Haven/London, 2004.
Giltaij, Jeroen, <i>et al.</i> (eds)	Senses and Sins. Dutch Painters of Daily Life in the Seventeenth Century	Exhibition catalogue, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2004.
Jongh, Eddy de	Questions of Meaning: Theme and Motif in Dutch Seventeenth-Century Painting	Leiden, 2000.
Muizelaar, K., and D. Phillips	Picturing Men and Women in the Dutch Golden Age: Paintings and People in Historical Perspective	New Haven/London, 2003.
Schama, Simon	The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age	London, 1987.
Sutton, Peter C.	Pieter de Hooch 1629-1684	Exhibition catalogue, London, 1998.
Sutton, Peter C., L. Vergara and A. Jensen Adams	Love Letters. Dutch Genre Paintings in the Age of Vermeer	Exhibition catalogue, London, 2003.
Waiboer, Adriaan, <i>et al.</i>	Vermeer and the Masters of Genre Painting: Inspiration and Rivalry	Exhibition catalogue, Yale U.P., 2017.
Westermann, Mariet	The Art of the Dutch Republic 1585-1718	New York, 1996.
Westermann, Mariet (ed.)	Art & Home: Dutch Interiors in the Age of Rembrandt	Exhibition catalogue, Denver/Newark, 2001.
Wheelock, Anthony, <i>et al.</i> (eds)	Johannes Vermeer	Exhibition catalogue, Washington/The Hague, 1995.

## Website addresses

Many museums offer useful information on paintings in their collections on their websites. A good example is the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, which offers a search programme and full details on many of its paintings, together with a commentary in English; it is also possible (after registration) to download images for free. See:

<http://www.rijksmuseum.nl>

Also worth checking out are the National Gallery in London, the Mauritshuis in The Hague and the Frans Hals Museum in Haarlem. See

<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/>

<http://www.mauritshuis.nl>

<http://www.franshalsmuseum.nl>

For information specifically on Vermeer and his work, with much detailed discussion of all his paintings, see:

<http://www.essentialvermeer.com>

Students may have seen the recent exhibition 'Vermeer and the Masters of Genre Painting' in Paris and then Dublin this year; it will also be held in Washington from 22 October 2017 until 21 January 2018.

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## **Additional information**

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### **Venue**

Details of how to find Madingley Hall can be found on our website:

<http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/who-we-are/how-to-find-the-institute>

### **Refreshments**

Tea and coffee and lunch will be provided. If you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies and have not already advised us, please inform our Admissions Team on [ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk) or +44 (0)1223 746262.

**Note** Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

*Information correct as of:* 01 March 2019