

## Still or sparkling? Dutch still-life painting in the Golden Age

**Start date** 11 October 2019 **End date** 13 October 2019

**Venue** Madingley Hall  
Madingley  
Cambridge  
CB23 8AQ

**Tutor** Dr Sophie Oosterwijk **Course code** 1920NRX006

**Director of ISP and LL** Sarah Ormrod

**For further information on this course, please contact the Lifelong Learning team** Zara Kuckelhaus, Fleur Kerrecoe  
[shortcourses@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:shortcourses@ice.cam.ac.uk) or 01223 764637

**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 (Netherlands). She obtained an MA in English Literature (Leiden) and in Medieval Studies (York) before completing a PhD in Art History (Leicester) and a second PhD in Middle English literature (Leiden).

She 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*. Her 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), *Mixed Metaphors. The Danse Macabre in medieval and early modern Europe* (with Stefanie Knöll: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), and more recently (with Sally Badham) a major survey article on precious-metal effigial tombs in medieval Europe 1080-1430 published in the journal *Church Monuments*. The latter project has since led to further articles and conference papers.

Sophie has taught at the universities of St Andrews, Leicester and Manchester, Sotheby's Institute of Art, the Royal Academy in London, WEA, U3A and other organisations. She has also for many years co-edited the journal *Church Monuments* and during 2011-2013 she was Coordinator of Tomb Monuments for the MeMO (Medieval Monuments Online) project at Utrecht University. She currently lives in the Netherlands and works as a free-lance lecturer and researcher.

A regular guest lecturer at Madingley Hall, Sophie has previously taught weekend schools on Early Netherlandish art in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (including Jan van Eyck, Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel), 'memento mori' themes in medieval and renaissance art, and Dutch portraiture, genre and history painting (Hals, Vermeer, Rembrandt) in the seventeenth century.

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## Course programme

### 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**      **Session 1: Still-life painting: history, development and variety**

22:00 Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Saturday

07:30 Breakfast

**09:00 – 10:30**      **Session 2: 'Ontbijtjes': Dutch breakfast pieces**

10:30 Coffee

**11:00 – 12:30**      **Session 3: 'Pronkstilleven': Dutch banquet pieces**

13:00 Lunch

14:00 – 16:00 Free

16:00 Tea

**16:30 – 18:00**      **Session 4: Memento mori: the vanitas still-life**

18:00 – 18:30 Free

18:30 Dinner

**20:00 – 21:30**      **Session 5: Art v. nature: Dutch flower still-life painting**

**21:30** Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Sunday

07:30 Breakfast

**09:00 – 10:30**      **Session 6: Trompe l'oeil: the art of illusion**

10:30 Coffee

**11:00 – 12:30**      **Session 7: Patrons, painters, status and symbolism**

12:45 Lunch

**The course will disperse after lunch**

## **Course syllabus**

### **Aims:**

Still-life painting was an important aspect of Dutch painting in the Golden Age, but as a genre it is often overlooked as rather 'dull'. Yet the variety of still-life painting produced in this period is astonishing, as is the level of illusion. This course aims to reveal the rich beauty and variety of Dutch still-life painting, introduce the many practitioners of this genre with their different styles and techniques, reveal its illusionistic character and explain the status that it enjoyed among patrons.

### **Content:**

The degree of naturalism that Dutch seventeenth-century painters achieved may no longer have the power to astonish us nowadays, but we still admire the subtly brilliant monochrome breakfast pieces of the Haarlem painters, or the colourful flower still-life compositions by artists such as Rachel Ruysch and Jan van Huysum, or the rich variety from the often morbid vanitas pieces to the sumptuous banquet pieces with their display of exotic produce and artefacts from faraway regions.

Yet how 'real' are these compositions: did these flower arrangements ever exist, do breakfast and banquet pieces really show us what people ate or the tableware they used, and how true are the colours used? Furthermore, what status did these works – and their creators – enjoy among patrons at the time, and what symbolism – if any – were they meant to convey? Were banquet pieces meant to censor or celebrate the apparent abundance of imported luxury goods, and how did patrons regard flower still-life paintings in a period when tulipomania ruined so many investors?

There is much more to Dutch still-life painting than just vases of flowers, tables laden with bread and cheese, or displays of oysters, lobster and Venetian glasses with wine. This course will tell us much about the art of painting and illusion as well as about daily life, trade, wealth and standards of living in the Dutch Republic.

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

The course will be in the format of PowerPoint lectures with some class discussion, both on issues raised by the tutor and questions asked by students. Students will be asked to consider questions as to how a work was made and what materials were used. Advice will be given about places to visit in order to see the works studied during the course.

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

- gain a better understanding of the development of still-life painting in the Dutch Golden Age and its earlier history;
- become acquainted with the wide variety of Dutch still-life painting, its practitioners and their styles and techniques;
- develop insights into the status of still-life painting and the symbolism it may contain.

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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 \*

<b>Author</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Publisher and date</b>
*Mariet Westermann	The art of the Dutch Republic, 1585-1718, republished as A worldly art: The Dutch Republic, 1585-1718	London: The Everyman Art Library, 1996.
Alpers, Svetlana	The art of describing: Dutch art in the seventeenth century	Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.
Harry Berger	Caterpillars: reflections on seventeenth-century Dutch still life painting	Fordham U.P., 2011.
Pieter Biesboer et al.	Pieter Claesz. Master of Haarlem still life	Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2004.
Timothy Brook	Vermeer's hat. The seventeenth century and the dawn of the global world	London: Profile Books, 2008.
Norman Bryson	Looking at the overlooked. Four essays on still life painting	London: Reaktion Books, 1990.
David Ekserdjian	Still life before still life	New Haven/London: Yale U.P., 2018.
Hanneke Grootenboer	The rhetoric of perspective. Realism and illusionism in seventeenth-century Dutch still-life painting	Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
Julie Berger Hochstrasser	Still life and trade in the Dutch Golden Age	New Haven/London: Yale U.P., 2007.
Norbert Schneider	The art of the still life: still life painting in the early modern period (transl. Hugh Beyer)	Cologne: Taschen, 1990.
Sam Segal	Flowers and nature. Netherlandish flower painting of four centuries, exhibition catalogue	The Hague: SDU Publishers, 1990.
Paul Taylor	Dutch flower painting, 1600-1720	New Haven/London: Yale U.P., 1995.
Angela Vanhaelen and Bronwen Wilson (eds)	The erotics of looking. Early Modern Netherlandish art	Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.
Arie Wallert	Still lifes: techniques and style. The examination of paintings from the Rijksmuseum	Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum / Zwolle: Waanders, 1999.

## Website addresses

Many museum collections can be searched online. For example, see:

[www.rijksmuseum.nl/en](http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en)

[www.mauritshuis.nl/en](http://www.mauritshuis.nl/en)

[www.nationalgallery.org.uk](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk)

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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, lunch and dinner will be provided as outlined in the timetable. 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:* 03 September 2019