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

For further information on this course, please contact the Lifelong Learning team  
Zara Kuckelhaus, Fleur Kerrecoe  
shortcourses@ice.cam.ac.uk or 01223 764637

To book  
See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 746262

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.
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.
Reading and resources list

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 *

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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
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Website addresses

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

- www.rijksmuseum.nl/en
- www.mauritshuis.nl/en
- www.nationalgallery.org.uk

Additional information

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 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