Patrick Bade | Vermeer and Peiter de Hoogh

- [Judi] So sorry for the delay everyone, Wendy's just trying to log into the meeting. So, welcome everybody. Welcome, Patrick. Just so that everybody knows, the Q&A is open to post your questions in and Patrick will answer them, will try answer them at the end if we have enough time. So Patrick, over to you.

- Thank you Judi, and I hope the luminosity of this amazing artist will cheer you a little bit in these dark times. Sometimes, people say to me, "If you could choose a work of art, any work of art in the world, what would you choose?" And I always say, well I'd choose a Vermeer, but that's the easy part, which Vermeer? That would be very hard, it might not actually be the famous Girl with a Pearl Eardrop, there are a good half a dozen Vermeer's that I would have a big problem choosing amongst. But, despite the fact that I love Vermeer so much, I don't actually...

Visual slides are displayed throughout the lecture

I must confess to you straight away, I don't really love talking about him and over my career, which stretches back over 40 years, I think I must've... I can't have lectured on Vermeer more than half a dozen times at most and the reason for that is firstly of course, there's so little known about him, even less than there is known about Frans Hals, we don't know who taught him, we can only guess at the artists that he met and who may have influenced him, we can only guess at his ideas and what he was trying to do with his art, we can only guess at the meaning of these very mysterious pictures.

And so, it strikes me in a way as chutzpah to even try and explain Vermeer, and I think of the famous quote of Keats, talking about unravelling a rainbow to try and demystify this mysterious artist. Of course, the mystery, the enigma of Vermeer and his paintings is part of his fascination for us. The first fact that we know, first secure fact is that he was born in 1632 in Delft, he was baptised as Calvinist, as we shall see later when he married, he converted to Catholicism. So, Delft seemed a good place to start and with this absolutely extraordinary painting of Delft by Vermeer, which is completely unlike any other townscape before the 17th century, or even any century right up 'til quite recently.
And look at the technique, and you know, from a certain distance, it just looks so incredibly real, when you do that very, very close, it looks like a slightly grainy, out of focus photograph and this brings me to what's called one of the great controversies of Vermeer, whether he painted his pictures with the use of camera obscura, a primitive form of camera and people take very fierce positions on this. I personally believe that the picture's clear, that he certainly looked at the world through a lens and that affected the way that he painted. So, what you have is a kind of optical truth and I think of another very famous quote of Claude Monet.

Claude Monet said that he wished he'd been born blind and had his eyes opened as an adult, and that he could paint the world in front of him without actually really knowing what anything

was and it's clear to me that Vermeer does something like this, and sometimes we look at the pictures, and we see these shapes, and we see these colours, and then you've got this extraordinary optical truth, but it's not always clear what is being represented and it's interesting to compare his townscapes with other people's, this is a contemporary drawing showing same buildings, which in some ways gives us more information about the buildings than Vermeer's painting does.

Here's another painting, I think a little bit earlier than Vermeer's of Delft, at the beginning of the 17th century by an artist with the wonderful name Vroom, Hendrick Vroom, and this is again a picture that actually gives us more information about the city, so that is clearly not what Vermeer is intending to do, that's not his primary concern, he's just recording a optical truth. Now, here's another artist who has sometimes been thought to have, thought to have used a camera obscura in his cityscapes, this is Canaletto in London in the 1740s, so nearly 100 years later.

We certainly know that Canaletto sometimes cheated by painting from prints, rather than from reality, and the evidence for that is that sometimes he gets the buildings back to front, but I think Canaletto certainly is interested in giving us as much information about the city as he possibly can cram into the picture and it's fascinating to compare the way that Vermeer and Canaletto paint the surface of the water, that Canaletto, it has a kind of formula, I mean, he's brilliant and amazing, and a real virtuoso, and of course we will get to him in a few weeks time. But I always have the impression that Canaletto is sitting in a gondola with his mobile phone in one hand and he's painting on kind of automatic with the other one, he's got this formula for painting the surface of the water, he's not really looking with the objectivity that Vermeer is looking at the surface of the water. Here's the only other...

No, not the only other, the only other townscape that we have of Vermeer, it's a street in Delft and I imagine that this was the opposite side of the street where he lived and again, this is the picture that looks to me like it was probably painted with the help, of a camera obscura and this completely objective painting of what was obviously already quite an old building, it's presumably a 15th or 16th century building that's crumbling, and he doesn't try to lick the surface, and tidy it up, he paints all the cracks in the walls and the crumbling cement, and it gives us a wonderful vignette of live in Delft, in the 17th century.

Again, this theme that we've thought about in several recent lectures of childhood and old age contrasted with one another, the old woman making lace or doing her needlework in the doorway and the children playing on the pavement outside, here in even closer detail. And another thing that makes me feel that this is a kind of photographic image is the view through that doorway, up that path, that, that is... Somebody trained in the Western tradition of perspective would explain the perspective into that pathway, there'd be a linear mathematical perspective to help you "walk up the path" so to speak, there's none of that here and it actually looks much more like it might do in a photograph.

For comparison, here is a Dutch 17th century artist called Berkheide, who was a specialist in

townscapes, he of course is, that's his primary concern, is to give us information about this city square, so it's a very different approach and I compare here Berkheide on the left-hand side and Vermeer on the right-hand side. And of course, another artist who we find some similar features, and I will come back to him at the end of this talk, is Pieter de Hooch, again, another artist I'm sure actually did use a camera obscura and again, you get a similar effect of looking through the door and up that garden path, with no linear, or very little linear perspective to help you.

Now, one of the important things to remember about Holland, then and now is that it's a tiny country, it's actually the size of Wales, a sort of flattened out Wales and in the 17th century, and today, it was the most densely populated and the most urbanised country in Europe. Sometimes people reproach the Dutch with the terrible fact that a larger proportion of their Jewish population was transported by the Germans to the death camps than in any other occupied country, that I would actually really put that on it's head, I would say in a country which is so flat and so densely populated, where the only possibilities of hiding people would be in attics or sometimes on farms, it is actually an incredible tribute to the courage of a great many Dutch people that so many Jews actually did survive the Second World War, that long occupation of four years between 1940 and the end of 1944.

So, in this map you can spot Delft is on the left-hand side, just next to that little shield with a lion on it and you can see how close it is to Leiden, and how close that is to Harlem, and how close that is to Amsterdam, and then you tracked all of these places are effectively within walking distance of one another. Somebody asked me at the end of last week, to try and characterise the art of these different cities, so again, it is amazing... And Amsterdam is a bit more difficult to characterise, because there were lots of different things going on in Amsterdam, but certainly, you can look at a painting and you can guess that it was painted in Utrecht or Leiden, or Delft, they have their very distinctive qualities and I'm going to try, and define the qualities of Delft today.

Delft had briefly been the capital of the Dutch Republic, that's where William the Silent, who lead the Dutch rebellion against the Spanish, he set up his... Let me see if I can enlarge your image, sorry I'm going to go back there. No, I can't do that, trying to... 'Cause it's a bit cropped at the bottom. Trying to fiddle with that, but it doesn't seem to want to... Oh, yes it does, that's better, that's better. So, this is the tomb of William the Silent, who was assassinated in Delft. So afterwards, I mean Delft was a prosperous city, and it was real cutting edge for science, and technology in the 17th century, and as we saw here, it was the capital of the lens industry, lens is tremendously important to progress, to the exploration of the world in all sorts of ways, in the 17th century.

There was a terrible event in 1654, paralleled recently, I'm sure you've read in the news about this appalling explosion that devastated the city of Beirut and it was exactly the same thing in Delft in 1654, it was a huge arms dump that was not properly looked after and it exploded, and it flattened quite a large section of the city and in fact, it's on that land, which had previously been an arms dump that the Delft pottery industry was developed from 1654 onwards. This is the

most famous Delft artist before Vermeer, Carel Fabritius, who was actually killed in that explosion, he as you might guess from this wonderful, wonderful self portrait, he was a pupil of Rembrandt, for me it's a great, great tragedy that he was killed at the age of 32, 'cause he's by far in a way, the best of all Rembrandt's many pupils, he's the only one who could paint a portrait that could seriously compete with Rembrandt in it's psychological insight and in it's painterly qualities, and just look at this, isn't this absolutely amazing?

The painterly surface that's really quite similar to mature Rembrandt, with all this scumbling and broken brushwork, and inscribing through the wet paint with a sharp instrument and so on, all the devices that Rembrandt does and used here with incredible mastery. This may be the last picture that he painted. So, he's a link between Holland's two greatest painters, between Rembrandt and Vermeer. And this is dated, I hope you can see it at the bottom signed, dated Fabritive 1654, so it's the year that he died and recently, it was examined in a laboratory, and they found traces of dents in the paint surface that had obviously been made while the paint was not yet dry and the supposition is that there was minor damage to this picture in the explosion that actually killed Fabritius himself.

Now, again frustratingly, we don't have any clear evidence that Vermeer and Fabritius had any contact with one another, other than a poem of the 17th century, which says rather obliquely that the genius of Vermeer arose out of the ashes of Fabritius, which might imply that Vermeer was a pupil of Fabritius, or learnt from him. But, this is a tiny picture of a bullfinch and it has something of that optical truth, that cool observation of reality that we're going to get with Vermeer. This is another, a very tiny painting by Fabritius, it's in The National Gallery and it's got quite odd perspective, and that has led some people to believe that actually, it's part of a dismembered peep box, these peep boxes were very popular in the 17th century, only one survived completely intact, this is in The National Gallery, it's by an artist called Samuel van Hoogstraten, I always enjoy watching children look into this and see how can something so simple really, be so fascinating, to even in the 21st century to children, you look through a little hole and through clever perspective, it gives you an incredible sense of 3D dimensionality.

So, this is a diagram that shows really how a camera obscura works, camera means room, so I suppose the original camera obscura were actually the size of a room, there's one in Edinburgh that you can walk into, but you could also get smaller models and it's thought that Vermeer may have had something like this to help him paint his pictures. We also have intriguing evidence of a connection between Vermeer and the most important scientist living in Delft, Antonie van Leeuwenhoek, who on the right-hand side you can see the microscope that was actually used by him. The evidence we have, again, it's very cadential, it's that after Vermeer died and his widow declared bankruptcy, all his possessions and his pictures were sold off, as with Rembrandt, there is an inventory of everything that Vermeer owned and that is as with Rembrandt, it's a kind of key document as it tells us quite a lot about him, more than we get from any other document.

So, we know that Vermeer was interested in the sciences and exploring the world, because he

painted these two pictures of a geographer, on the left and an astronomer on the right, the astronomer incidentally belonged to the French Rothschild's until... Oh God, I suppose it must be nearly 40 years ago, I can remember my excitement of going to Louvre, to see that when it entered the Louvre, it was hidden in underneath the floorboards of the Château de Ferrières during the Second World War, which was occupied by the Nazis, so it's kind of ironic to think of those Nazi jackboots trumping up and down on the floor with Vermeer right underneath their feet. Now, it seems to be the same man in these two pictures and there is speculations, always speculation, always speculation, your view is as good as mine or anybody else's, is this the same man? I'm not sure actually, could be I suppose.

This is a portrait of Leeuwenhoek and somebody has suggested that he actually posed for these two pictures for Vermeer. Now, you're thinking, "What is this? Doesn't look like a Vermeer." This is the most notorious forgery of the 20th century, probably of all time, it was painted by a man called van Meegeren in 1937 and it was immediately acclaimed as an early masterpiece by Vermeer and all the top experts agreed on this, and you think, "What?" Now, there are various... 'Cause it doesn't look 17th century, it doesn't look like any other painting by Vermeer, how could they be taken in? One thing is of course fakes age very, very badly, 19th century fakes, have a look at the 19th century, to me, this has almost something Art Deco about it, it really looks like it was made in the 1930s. But van Meegeren, I'm going to say van Meegeren, I'm sorry, I'm not even going to attempt my correct Dutch pronunciations any further.

But, he was a clever man and he knew that there was this... One of the mysteries about Vermeer is that there was no early work, or very little early work, so they didn't know where he came from, you suddenly get these mature pictures in the second half of the 1650s when he's in his mid to late 20s, so how did he get there? What was he doing beforehand? What was he looking at? Incidentally, as a slight excuse for these great experts who made such fools of themselves with van Meegeren, if you look at the bread, you can see it's painted, the light on the bread, it's got this sort of shimmery, almost Pointillist technique that is actually really very similar to the bread in the famous painting of the maidservant pouring milk, an early masterpiece that we'll get to in a minute. So, the van Meegeren story, he would, I think if the world, Second World War hadn't broken out two years later, he would probably have been exposed a lot quicker and this is the painting that actually exposed him...

God, it's an awful painting and you just think, "How did anybody for one second think that this was either 17th century, or by Vermeer?" But, it was sold to Hermann Göring, who didn't obviously know as much about art as he thought he did and it was at the private collection of Göring's collection, so at the end of the war, when Göring's collection, mostly of stolen art, much of it from Jewish collectors was ceased and suddenly, "A Vermeer! Where did this come from?" They traced it back to van Meegeren, he was arrested and as a traitor for selling a national treasure to a Nazi, and he could actually have been sentenced to death, he could've been executed. And he said, "No, no, no. Not a traitor, I'm a hero, because I duped the Nazis, I painted this picture."

And initially they said, "Oh, yeah sure, sure." But he actually painted another fake to demonstrate that he could do it. But you think of this, I'm like, "Look at..." I mean, that kind of rigid drapery of this woman taken in adultery looks completely Art Deco, the strange feature of van Meegeren's works, when you know his actual work, which is not a fake, he has a very strange way of depicting eyes, these rather sunken eyes and that should've been a giveaway. And the other dead giveaway about this of course is something we've discussed quite a lot in recent lectures, how he depicts the Middle East, 'cause by the 1930s, he actually really knows what the Middle East looks like and that's actually quite a convincing little slither of Middle Eastern townscape or landscape top right, and that should've been a dead giveaway that this couldn't be a 17th century painting.

Well, here is van Meegeren in his studio, this is quite an interesting photograph, because I've had various questions about what artists used, he was extremely knowledgeable about the materials and methods of the 17th century, so this actually gives you quite an interesting picture of what an artist studio might've looked like in the 17th century and the sort of things he might've used. Now, is this any less astonishing as a picture claimed, signed Vermeer? It's signed bottom left and it's quite a recent discovery, it's towards the end of the 20th century, this painting was spotted and initially, a lot of experts were sceptical, and understanding because it doesn't look anything like any other Vermeer that we know, it's a very macabre subject, it's a very Catholic subject. It's Praxedes, who was made a saint because she went around mopping up the blood from martyrdom's, mopping it up in a sponge and then squeezing it into a vase, so that's what you can see here and you wouldn't think a Dutch artist, or a Calvinist artist would be interested in such a subject, but of course, this is around the time, this is dated 1655 and that is after, just after Vermeer's marriage, he married a Catholic and he converted when he married.

So, it's actually a copy of a 17th century Florentine painting which you see left and my guess is that actually Vermeer didn't know the original painting and that the copy is painted from a print, and the clue here is of course that the colours are completely different, so he didn't really know what the original colours looked like. So understandably, a lot of experts thought, "No, no, no, no, this can't be a Vermeer." But actually when you look very, very closely, at the way the paint is applied, particularly the treatment of drapery, this is the earliest painting by Vermeer, which we knew about up to that point, Christ in the House of Mary & Martha, it's in The National Gallery in Scotland and if you compare the way the folds in the drapery, the application of paint, the slightly crumbly application of paint, and you can see also the colour, this mauvey colour, it's pretty well identical, so I personally am convinced that this slightly disagreeable painting is actually the first painting that we have of Vermeer.

So, we're up to the mid-1650s and this is the next, this is actually by Vermeer's standards, quite a large painting, Diana and Her Companions, again a very surprising painting. He's one of those artists who takes a little while to find himself and to define a style, he's trying very different things. I mean this, the Christ in the House of Mary & Martha and the Diana & Her Companions, they don't look like they're by the same artist, they look like they're by completely different artists, I think this is a very beautiful painting, a very moving paining and it has a quality, which I

see is very Vermeer, of stillness, a calmness and there's something very illusive about it, it's very enigmatic, we can't really know what is going on in this picture, apart from the obvious gesture of the handmaiden washing Diana's feet, we wouldn't know she was Diana of course if she didn't have a crescent moon in her headdress.

Next painting is another mystery, this dates from 1656, it's a brothel painting, you've seen an awful lot of those, you know how popular they were in the 17th century and very often brothel paintings had a biblical connection, because the story of the prodigal son, who lived this very lush life and wasted money in brothels before repenting. So, that's the excuse very often for painting these pictures. This again is quite a large picture, note that the vase, I talked about that last time, and you've got this gesture of putting coin into the girl's hand. Now, many historians think, all this is speculation, so I'm happy for you to reject everything I say today, that this is actually almost painted three years after his marriage, that is somehow a painting celebrating his marriage, that it's a self-portrait, this is a self-portrait on the left-hand side and that the woman who's having her breast fondled, and who's receiving the payment is actually Vermeer's wife, very, very strange idea, but maybe... Is this the only likeness?

From the front anyway, that we have of Vermeer? With this strange, kind of almost like a snapshot caught frozen smile, this is a detail from a later painting with a similar kind of expression. And of course, we do have, it's possible, very likely indeed that Vermeer knew this Rembrandt self-portrait with his bride Saskia, which is also a brothel picture and also probably referring to the story of the prodigal son. Now, finally you may breathe a sigh of relief, we've got to the Vermeer that we know and love, this is the first really characteristic Vermeer from the Metropolitan New York, I adore this picture, it's on my hot-list of half a dozen pictures that I have to choose from, sleeping maid servant, it's an extraordinary composition with the figure pushed asymmetrically to the left side and leaning on out to the left, it's one of only two paintings by Vermeer where we're in one space and looking through to another space, it's common with other Dutch artists, particularly Nicolaes Maes, and there is a suggestion, Maes was for a while in Delft, so presumably Vermeer knew him and it may be that Vermeer took this idea of looking through to another room from Nicolaes Maes.

And this is a painting by Hoogstraten, just to show you, I mean, in a country like Holland, which is so small and within a certain profession, I think it's highly likely that all these artists knew each other and knew each other's work. And this is a painting by Samuel van Hoogstraten, who also likes this device of looking from one room into another room and again, what's interesting in this picture on the right-hand side is that on the wall in the background, you will recognise, I hope from last week, a painting by de Hooch of a woman in a beautiful white silk dress. So, this painting by Vermeer of the sleeping girl, it has certain stylistic features that again, convince me that it is based on a camera obscura image, the compositional things, the way that the chair and the cushion on the right-hand side... You have to do a double take to actually see what they are, 'cause they're cutoff by the edge of the picture, they're intruding into the picture. These kind of odd juxtapositions of near and far that again are ambiguous, and not fully explained.

You find these features in the work of 19th century artists like Dürer on the right-hand side, who have of course seen photographs and used cameras. Now, one of the first of the supreme masterpieces of Vermeer, this is definitely high up my list of paintings to steal if I ever get the chance, the maid pouring milk, this dates from the late 1650s in the Rijksmuseum, such a simple subject, but endowed with such solemnity, such gravitas, when Sir Joshua Reynolds went to Amsterdam in the 1680s, he saw this picture, he didn't know who Vermeer was, nobody knew who Vermeer was in the 1780s, he was a completely unknown quantity, but Reynold's saw this and he was blown away by this picture, he dubbed the maid, the Sybil of The North, so he's implying a comparison with Michelangelo and the figures of sibyls in the Michelangelo Sistine ceiling, so he's recognised this extraordinary, timeless, monumentality that the figure has and that this painting is for me, also very fascinating, I am terribly aware of course that looking at a computer screen with images that are taken off the internet is not a very satisfactory substitute for seeing the real thing, but I do have some nice details here, look at this, isn't this amazing?

Look at the light on that blue material, top right-hand side, look at the light catching the ring of the milk jug and look at the light on the basket of the bread, and the technique, which is a kind of... It's a sort of proto-impressionist technique, even a kind of proto-pointillist technique, these little, tiny blobs of shimmering light. There are a couple of other Dutch artists where you can find a similar... This is Willem Kalf, who was a still-life specialist and if you look at the shimmering light on the silver here, and on the lobster, you can see a similar effect, and I think that again, this is possibly the artist reproducing this rather blurred, grainy effect of an image seen projected through a lens. Now, this is a intriguing detail, before I tell you, I wonder if you can guess what this object is for, it's in the background, in the background you see the floor of the maidservant pouring milk, you can see the Delft tiles along the floor, this is actually a foot warmer and in this painting by Jan Steen, you can see a similar foot warmer in use.

Now, oh dear, this might have to be the one, this is so wonderful. I always used to say, "If I could steal a painting from the Louvre, that this would be..." Somebody, a student did it actually, a couple of decades ago, but actually just as a kind of stunt and he stole it, and actually handed it in on the way out. It's a tiny, tiny picture, it's 9½in by 8in, or 24½cm by 21cm, a lace maker. Lace making, of course an important industry for Delft and for Holland, and the image of women making lace is very popular, it's painted by other artists, we've seen the Nicolaes Maes on the right-hand side, this is Caspar Netscher on left-hand side and it's usually also intended to be an image of female virtue and of virtuous hard work, and so on. But, it's so much more with Vermeer, this tiny picture, you've got this very, very... You're brought very, very close. But again, everything is full of light the picture, it's a most incredibly luminous picture, but everything is slightly out of focus and the most fascinating detail of course are all these threads in the foreground, so this is considerably enlarged from the size of the actual picture.

And we get of course, to the famous Girl with a Pearl Earring, she's in her way I suppose, almost as famous as the Mona Lisa, if you could say she's the Dutch equivalent of the Mona Lisa, and even more famous since Tracy Chevalier's popular novel, the Girl with a Pearl Earring came out in 1999 and was made into a movie, what to say about this picture? Well, first of all

the colour, the blue. Vermeer's blues are famous, and they have a sort of icy quality, that almost no other artist's blues have, how he achieves this? I think it's done with layering, I think he's certainly done with the use of ultramarine, which as you know is an extremely precious pigment, only found in Afghanistan, so it has to be mined in Afghanistan, it has to be brought halfway across the world, across the Middle East, across the Mediterranean, so by the time it gets to Holland, it's extremely expensive and it's sold in the most minuet quantities.

So, Vermeer is, I think that this effect he's got with the blue headdress, he's mixed ultramarine with an earth colour underneath and then there is a glaze, that's a transparent layer of ultramarine over the mixed lower layer and that's what gives this the incredible luminosity and icy blueness to it. Now, the other thing I want to talk about is the lack of linearity and this you particularly notice in areas of the face that are normally defined by artists through lines and I'm talking about eyelids, and rims, nostrils and mouths, and ears, so everything slightly out of... You're really, really closeup to the eye here, so you can see how he does it.

So, he's got this slightly melting quality, which I think is achieved by painting wet into wet, so unbelievable control needed to do that. This is a similar detail from a Flemish painting of an eye where you can see that the tear and the eyelid, everything is defined in a linear way as to compare to Vermeer. Again, Vermeer is not absolutely unique in this, there are other Dutch artists, particularly a very intriguing, mysterious artist called Mikael , who you see on the right-hand side has a similar, sort of slightly this soft, melting luminous technique.

Whoops. There's the detail of another portrait. And ooh, this looks slightly out of focus, nevermind, lots of you in North London really know this picture well, it's The Guitar Player. Now, we've now moved really into his late phase, well of course he didn't really have a late phase, 'cause he didn't live long enough to have one, but once you get to about 1670, this is early 1670s, his technique, it becomes smoother and a little bit glossier. Again, the theme is common enough, Netscher on the right-hand side, lots of similarities here, you think, "Oh, surely these artists knew each other's work." With you know, the gold frame picture on the wall behind, the white shimmering dress, but how conventional the Netscher looks by comparison, with the girl placed in centre, she's centred in the picture, what to me is so extraordinary about the Kenwood picture on the left-hand side is the way she is shifted to the left of the picture, she's actually cropped, she's cut off by the edge, left edge of the picture and that might not be so startling if she were looking back towards the centre or towards the right-hand side, but no, she's also, she's reacting to something that's going on outside the picture to the left, or to her right rather.

And again, this is something you don't really find, this kind of thing in Western art 'til the late 19th century and this again is a Dürer for comparison. The other thing I want to say about this picture and is true of course of the Girl with a Pearl Earring, so you have this optical truth, now, you feel that Vermeer is really set, he is not changing anything, he's not improving or glamorising, or whatever. But he gives this limited information, so I mean this girl, actually any of the paintings, any of the people in Vermeer's paintings, would you recognise them if you met them? Probably not. And here I want to make a comparison with Frans Hals, this woman you

would recognise, you'd recognise her anywhere, whatever she was wearing and I think there's a rather interesting idea here, that to get a likeness of an individual, you need an element of exaggeration, or even caricature, so Hals is so brilliant at catching the individuality of the person, this is something obviously that Vermeer is just not interested in doing this.

The other thing I want to point out here is the extraordinary way the pearls are painted, these are two pictures, you can go and study for yourself in London, those of you who are in London, the Kenwood picture on the left and the one on the right is the detail from a painting in The National Gallery. If you stand at the right distance, you have the most incredible illusion of light catching pearls, when you get really close to it, you can see how almost abstracted and rudimentary the technique is to convey that impression. Another picture, this is again, right up the top of my list of paintings to steal, so this is in The National Gallery in Washington, the Girl with a Red Hat. God, what an amazing picture, that red, talk about making a colour sing, he knows how to make a colour sing. Again, it's a painting when you get really close to it, there's a surprising lack of definition to the eyes, to the nostril, to the mouth.

And this is an interesting experiment, a black & white photograph of the lions head chair that she's sitting on, again, a very photographic effect with the tops of the chair just intruding, the bottom cut off, so it takes you a moment, "What is that? What are we looking at here?" And the way that it... And on the right-hand side, is actually a photograph of a camera obscura image of one of those chairs and you can see how similar it is to Vermeer's depiction. Now, to finish off with Vermeer, God, I'm going to run out of time soon I'm afraid. What do these paintings mean? And do we know all these Dutch genre paintings had moralising meanings, humorous meanings, do Vermeer's paintings have the same kind of meaning?

Is this a painting about the girls asleep, or women asleep like this one, a very often moralising pictures about people who are not doing their duty properly, it could be an image about the dangers of drink, you've got a wine jug there in the foreground. These are more pictures of, why many sort of women asleep. And as we know from last week, to understand the picture, you have to look at the pictures within the picture. Music, music is often the music of love, so I think both of these pictures by Vermeer in The National Gallery are paintings about love, and on the left, you've got a cupid holding up... Now, is he holding up a playing card, or is he holding up a letter? If it's a letter, it's a love letter and if it's a playing card, it's a painting about the fortunes of love.

On the right-hand side, this rather gentile lady is sitting in front of a brothel painting, by a Utrecht artist called van Baburen, Vermeer was of course a picture dealer, that's where he earned his money, rather than from his paintings and he seems to have earned this painting by van Baburen, which you see on the right, this is the Boston picture, which has been missing so many years after being stolen, looks like a very gentile gathering, man, two women, but the painting in the background is telling us something else. This painting that belongs to the Queen, another to the top of my list on my hit list, The Music Lesson, again, apparently a very gentile subject, this keyboard instrument, it has been identified as made by the important, Antwerp

musical instrument maker, Andreas Ruckers, it has an inscription on it in Latin that says, music accompanies pleasures, and sorrows...

And comforts you in times of sorrow, that's very, very true. And so, this painting again has a sub-theme about love and probably more about the pain, and sorrow of love, because the painting behind the man on the wall has been identified as a Roman Charity, which shows a man in chains being breastfed by a woman. Woman weighing pearls, so this is probably a vanitas picture about the futility of earthly possessions and here's an interesting comparison with a very similar subject by Pieter de Hooch and a point I hope I will have time to make in a minute or so, Pieter de Hooch in Delft in 1650s, early 1660s, we have no trace of evidence that they knew each other, but they must've done, they must've done and they paint such similar subjects. Pieter de Hooch's slightly older, who is influencing who?

We can't be sure. What's going on here? Something, I think there is a story to this picture, a man who's playing court to the young woman, she's looking out at us and laughing, she's accepting a glass of wine and the man to the left does not seem to be very happy, he's in a pose that people would recognise as representing melancholia, as you see in this print by Dürer. Is there a moralising side to this picture? Some very sharp-eyed historian has noticed that in the stained glass window, the figure at the top of that coloured bit, is actually based on an emblem of, virtue of temperance, so yes, this painting is probably has got a little moralising thing about drinking. The same in this picture, we've got the same window, with the same emblem in it. I'm not going to talk much about his final works, I mean, you could...

Somebody could do a whole lecture on this picture, it's Vermeer's most ambitious picture, the artist studio seems to be a kind of manifesto picture, reams have been written about what everything means in this picture, is this his actual studio? Is this him seen from behind? It was certainly a very important picture to him and after he died, his widow tried to prevent it being sold off with the rest of his possessions, which suggests that she regards it as very important too. And then this picture. Dear, my least favourite picture by Vermeer, I have to say this is in New York, in the Metropolitan... The Allegory of Faith, this seems to be a statement of his Catholicism, I find this amazingly unconvincing, I mean, to me the figure of fate, she always looks like she's laying a huge egg to me.

So, a quick... Now, only five minutes left to talk about other Delft artists. This is Emanuel de Witte, who is again a bit older than Vermeer and he was in Delft, but had left, he left Delft in 1651, went to Amsterdam, so I think Vermeer must've known his work, but this is pre-Vermeer really and he paints some of these interiors that seem to have some of the same qualities of calm, of Vermeer and Pieter de Hooch, he's more famous for his church interiors, which are incredibly beautiful, he's a clean artist who's fascinated by space, I suspect he also used a camera obscura, there are various features in some of his pictures. I think the way, that you know the broken light on the columns, on the left-hand side, coming through the windows.

Another feature to look at in his pictures, when you go around the world, are the dogs, he

clearly, he loved dogs as much as I do, I'm very happy to stand in the street or in the pub and watch dogs behaving like dogs, and doing doggy things, you can see that on the left-hand side here and there are an awful lot in all of the painting... In church interiors by Emanuel de Witte, you'll always find the doggy dogs doing doggy things. Again of course, this is Calvinist Holland, Calvinists don't believe in transubstantiation, they don't think that biscuit on the altar is actually the body of Jesus Christ, the church for a Calvinist is a meeting place, it's not a sacred place, so there's nothing blasphemous about showing a dog urinating in a church.

Ah, the wonderful Pieter de Hooch. This is a picture in The National Gallery, to me again, I'm convinced that there are features here, like the way the red shutter intrudes into the picture on the left and you can't see what it's attached to, this to me is a photographic feature and he can also, not quite to the degree of Vermeer, but to a remarkable degree, there is this optical truth. Now, this is intriguing because you can see this wall, which may have been observed through a camera obscura, but you see he's reconfigured it completely, so that wall has got different surroundings in these two pictures. This, I think a lot of French or Italian art lovers, or artists in the 17th and 18th century, they would have been very dismissive of pictures like these, 'cause they'd say, "What's the point to you know, all that skill being used to render a subject that's so low you know, of a stained crumbling wall, why would one want to paint something like that? V

Vermeer on the left, Pieter de Hooch on the right, I think it's very obvious these two artists were really close to one another at a certain point, around about 1660, the similarities, the subject matter, composition and so on, are too strong for it to be coincidental. This painting in The National Gallery, I used to use it very often with students on my first visit when they're talking about looking at pictures, looking for things in pictures, it's a very good example of pentimenti, pentimento is when the artist has changed his mind and because oil paint becomes transparent with age, things that've been changed or painted out, will slowly reemerge, so you can see in this picture that the seated man originally had a hat and that the maid was actually talking to a man who's been painted out, but his ghostly form is reappearing through the paint surface.

Now, many of you will have followed Kenneth Clark's Civilization series and I've quoted him before, and he talks about Pieter de Hooch, and he says how wonderful his paintings are, all bourgeois households in Delft. Then around... In the 1660s, he moved to Amsterdam and he paints much more grand interiors, much richer people that he says, as the paintings, the subject matter becomes richer, the paintings lose their beauty and their poetry. I don't think it happened immediately, this is clearly an Amsterdam picture, not a Delft picture and it's clearly a very wealthy household, because they've got these extremely expensive gilded tooled leather wall hangings in the background, but I think this is a ravishing picture, it's in the Leman Collection in the Metropolitan New York... I love the sort of semi-dimness of the light and the way the gilded wall hangings glow in the background. It is true, right at the end, that Pieter de Hooch does lose it, as I think you can see in this picture. And, ooh. I've run over by one minute according to my clock, so I'm going to come out and I'll see if Judi thinks it's time to answer questions. Ooh, 44 questions, goodness.

- [Judi] Are you going to go through them, Patrick? There's time.

Q&A and Comments:

- Yes. "Can you give the title of the painting, and the year?" No I can't, because the lecture would never end. "Any particular trend of painting the girl's face with slightly..." "Any particular trend of painting the girl's face with slightly non-existent eyebrows?" Not quite sure what that is asking. "Camera obscura, did for the artist?" It meant that you could... Well, you project an image onto a wall or a flat surface and you... It helps with perspective and it helps to give a truthful depiction of the world, that's what I think it's for. "A lot of churches for that size of city?"

No, I think they were everywhere, there were a lot of churches, think about it, in the square mile of the city of London, there were 50 churches by Christopher Wren alone in the 17th century. "A little bit about the camera obscura?" I mean, I think there have been TV programmes, whole books on the camera obscura, I think I'm going to leave that to you to... Again, I hope I've answered that question about how it would help the painter with perspective and with a truthful representation of reality.

Q: "Where are these paintings now?"

A: There are 11 paintings in America, Frick Collection, Metropolitan New York, there was one in Boston that's stolen, we don't know where it is and there are a couple of Vermeers in The National Gallery in Washington, there are five paintings in the British Aisles, one in Edinburgh, one in Dublin, one at Kenwood, one belonging to the Queen, two in The National Gallery, there are two in the Louvre, Rijksmuseum has several. Berlin, National Gallery has two, Dresden has two, Brunswick has one, Vienna has one, I think that's it, actually.

Q: What do I mean by linear perspective?

A: It's a system of creating an illusion of space that was developed in Florence in the 15th century... I mean, it came to be questioned in the 19th century, but it was a system that was used from the 15th century, up to the 19th century where you think of spaces being in a kind of box with a vanishing point, with lines that converge on the vanishing point and it's a means to try, and give you a convincing impression of space that you could walk into. Let me see, could I mention... I think I've just mentioned where each painting is now. Yeah, I did bring that point up about the nation, I feel very, very strongly that it's not right to condemn the Dutch for that, I think it's to do with the nature of Holland and the terrain, as I said, I think it's amazing that so many Jews were successfully hidden.

"I wonder how you..." I'm not an expert on birds, so I don't know how you know that's a male chaffinch, but I accept... Oh, bullfinch yes. I'm not sure that... I couldn't possibly disagree with you in any way about that. "Is the painting..." Yes, I think it is the one that's of the book, the Goldfinch. It's not difficult to turn a painting upside down. Actually, you know, I recommend the

book... Anybody who says they can't draw, you can actually, get that book, "Drawing with the Left Side of the Brain" it's amazing how you see the world differently in an image that's upside down. That was one of the tricks I always used to do with my students, when I was trying to get them to do a visual analysis of the composition, of the picture, I would take them to National Gallery and I'd say, "Give me an analysis of the composition." And they'd find it really difficult, and then I'd whip a postcard out of my pocket, and I'd hold it up to them upside down, and suddenly, easy-peasy, they could easily see the main lines and forms, and shapes of the composition.

"Were any of these in the collection described in the..." I don't know that, the answer to that. "In the fake, there's no modulation..." I know, it's just amazing, isn't it? How anybody was taken in by those fakes. Somebody's recommended the man who made Vermeer's about Han van Meegeren. "There was a play in a movie made with his story." Oh, well obviously, I don't know who the guy, 'cause there was a middle-man between van Meegeren and Göring, I don't know if the middle-man knew that it was a fake. "Do you think the streaks in a Vermeer could symbolically represent the three stages of life?" Yes, I think that's quite... A very possible, very possible, interesting interpretation. "There's a brilliant new drama film on the van Meegeren story, could you briefly explain..." Oh, I think we've been through that. "Tim's Vermeer is an interesting documentary by the magicians, Penn & Teller about how we see and the quests of professor Tim Jenison to learn about Vermeer's use of optics." I didn't see it, so I can't comment on it. "Vague eyebrows." Well, there's a lot of vagueness altogether, isn't there?

In the Girl with a Pearl Earring picture, a lot of things that are not defined. Yes, I know that the Vermeer, the Kenwood Vermeer has been stolen several times, I think not quite as many times as the Dulwich Rembrandt, which has been stolen five times. "The Girl with a Red Hat, he knows how to paint a woman." Yes, I know. Gosh, it's so amazing that picture, isn't it? "She may have had too much to drink, the girl." Yes, that's true of the sleeping maidservant. Yeah, well I shouldn't have confessed that about wanting to steal paintings, I could bring myself, I could get into trouble with that. "Is there a name for the person in the painting with the red hat? Could it be a boy, not a girl?" Interesting, hadn't thought about it. I'll have another look with that in mind. I like that. "Given the Dutch domestic pictures, perhaps a woman asleep suggests female drudgery."

Yeah, I don't know... Yeah maybe, why not? Why not? It's quite interesting. "Details of the chair looks like a dog's face." It's a lion in fact, it's not a dog, it's a lion, you're quite right. "Was the same black and red carpet on the table?" Yes, I mean, well we have the inventory of what Vermeer owned, that there are things that he certainly didn't own that are in the painting, see there was no way he owned the keyboard instrument in the Queen's Vermeer, that would've been a very, very expensive luxury object and it's certainly not mentioned in the inventory. But yes, you find with a lot of these Dutch artists the objects that they had, carpets, bits of furniture, bits of pottery, that will reappear and they're just used as props, and they reappear in several pictures. "Is the woman pregnant?"

I think most... Well, again it's something that's debated, remember that Vermeer's wife had 15 pregnancies, eight children survived. The most beautiful of all, I didn't show you today, you have to go and look it up, is the Woman in blue Reading a Letter and Van Gogh saw that, and loved it, and described it as a woman who is pregnant, but some recent historians have said, "No, these women aren't pregnant, it's just the look of the period." "Wondering about the longer term stability of these paintings, because of the cracks." Of course, that is always a consideration, but these days I imagine all Vermeer's are kept under the best possible conditions.

"Would his process have been to initially put down greater facial detail and then fade it to his satisfaction?" That is possible, we know that, that happened with Dürer for instance. Do I know that wall... How do I know? Well, you can see it for yourself in the pictures, it's the same wall, but it's got different surroundings. Notes from the Met state that the x-ray showed a painted over male figure." Yeah, there are lots of cases of that, of Vermeer obviously frequently changed his mind and painted things out. "Why are the pictures all on the left?" Interesting, I'll think about that, I'm not sure of the answer. "Are there any Vermeer's in private hands?" I don't think so, I don't think there are any more, there was that painting that Sotheby's sold, it must be about seven years ago, which was very contentious, and some people think it's a fake, and some people think it's only partly by Vermeer, and repainted by somebody else, as far as I know, that's the only one left that's in private hands, though I haven't seen Tim's Vermeer. I don't have TV, so I never watch things like that.

"Why did he die so young?" I don't think we know why he died young, we do know why he died bankrupt, because of the 1672 invasion of Holland by Louis XIV, which bankrupted an enormous number of old people and it took Holland quite a long time to recover from that financially. Right, I'd be very happy... Well, anybody who comes to Paris, I'll invite them around, and then I'll give you a lecture on all the stuff in my flat. "The book on drawing with the left side of the brain." Yeah, it's a funny book, actually all you really need are the first two pages of that book, the rest of it is kind of padding, but it really works if you try it, it's amazing. "One of the reasons that Holland lost more Jews was that unlike France, it was administered by the Gestapo."

Yeah, I mean, well France is enormously bigger and of course until 1942, there were large parts of France that were not occupied, so I don't really think that they're... I don't think it's fair to compare. Yeah, somebody else is making the same point, it's also to do with how the Netherlands was administered. Sorry, I don't actually get that one, or understand it. I think we're probably running out, aren't we? Do I need to stop now? Sorry? Shall I stop now?

- [Wendy] Yes, because we...

- [Judi] Sorry Wendy, we can't actually hear you.

- [Wendy] Oh, okay Jud. Well, I just wanted to say that if you just want to tell everybody that... I just wanted to say thank you to Patrick, of course Patrick, always a big thank you, all your lectures are always wonderful. We have another presentation in 45 minutes and I just want to-

- You want me to stop?

- [Wendy] If you don't mind, I just want to give the team a chance.

- No, no, no, no, no.

- [Wendy] Just have a cup of tea.

- Thank you for letting me go on so long.

- [Wendy] No, it's always a pleasure, it's wonderful, I'm just sorry that you know, it's so soon. It's just you know, really trying to figure out the times and accommodate Israel, and South Africa, and Britain, and America, so it's very tight, this turnaround. But it seems to work.

- Right good, thank you.

- [Wendy] Very, very much and we... Our next presentation is with Yehudit Sasportas, who's an Israeli artist who represented Israel in the 2007 Biennale, just for all those who would like to listen to her, she's a very interesting young woman. So, thank you Patrick, once again.

- Thanks, bye-bye.

- [Wendy] We will see you. Thanks so much. Take care, bye-bye.