Patrick Bade | Dutch Genre

- [Judy] Right Patrick, before we start, I'll let everybody know that we have a Q and A button that you can post your questions to, and Patrick will try and answer them at the end of the session. Once again, welcome to everybody and welcome Patrick, and over to you.

- Thank you, Judy, and welcome to everybody, and I wish you all the members of our ever expanding club a very happy new year. Before I get into the subject of today, which is Dutch genre painting, I want to just pick up on something that came up last week with Frans Hals. I was talking about this dispute between the British Marxist art historian John Berger and the very distinguished American art historian, Seymour Slive of Harvard, that John Berger asserted that Frans Hals in portraits like these was making fun and mocking wealthy and powerful people. And Seymour Slive said, no, this is ridiculous.

Slides are displayed throughout the lecture.

These people would not have commissioned portraits, they wouldn't have paid for them if they thought that Frans Hals was mocking them or criticising them. And in particularly this picture, this is a detail from the group portrait of the Regents who looked after the old people's home, where Frans Hals was for a long time believed to have ended his life. And whether he is, is he mocking or criticising this man? Is he drunk? Is he just very stupid or is he suffering from some kind of medical condition that Frans Hals has observed very accurately? Well, this was brought up at the end in the questions last time, and I thought, well, I do know somebody who could give me the answer to this. And that is Miriam Stoppard.

And she and I used to go quite often to the National Gallery and to exhibitions, and we always used to pool our knowledge. And it was very, very fascinating for me. She always had extraordinary, very interesting medical insights to a lot of these images. So I emailed her and I said, "Miriam, can you give me a diagnosis for this man?" And she's actually given me two possible diagnoses. She noted that one eye looked small than the other, and that is because of a dropped eyelid. And she said, this is a classic symptom of syphilis, but she said the asymmetry of the face could also be the result of a mild stroke on the left side of the brain. So it's an open question, but I think that the likelihood is that it was some kind of a medical condition and not Frans Hals trying to mock or attack the man.

Now, genre painting, Dutch genre painting. First of all, I suppose I should say something, what does that mean? What does genre mean? Genre, it has two meanings in art history. It's a French word of course, it means kind, a kind. So a genre is a type of subject matter, but if you're talking about genre painting, that means painting of low life or ordinary life. And this kind of painting became popular and collected outside of Holland, in the middle of the 18th century. So we've got two paintings here by Hogarth. They're two scenes from his series "Marriage a La Mode", and he's making a contrast between the palatial town palace of the Earl, the aristocrat on the right hand side, and the much plainer house of the new rich businessman in the city. And

what's interesting is these two men, they can both afford to buy paintings, but they buy very different types of paintings.

The Earl, of course, has been on the Grand tour, so he likes Italian paintings, and we can make out that these are martyrdoms and religious scenes and mythological scenes on the wall in the right hand side. And on the left hand side, we can see still lives and genre paintings, low life paintings. This was an, as I said, a new fashion. And initially it was particularly people who had made their own money in the city, who came from relatively humble background, who hadn't been on the Grand tour and who didn't really identify with all these pretentious Italian paintings. They could relate much more closely to the Dutch artists. Now, as these paintings were desirable, they were fetching lots of money.

They were highly collected from in the late 18th century through the 19th century. But very often the people who bought these pictures had no idea what they were really about. And a lot of research has been done on this over the last generation or so. We have a much better understanding of these paintings. We now know that they're not just simple, straightforward scenes of everyday life. They have very complicated meanings. This is a very famous example. It's by Gerard ter Borch. And it was at one time his most popular picture and it was much reproduced. And if you buy an old print of it, it will say on the print "The Parental Admonition." So the interpretation of this picture was that it's a young lady and she's getting a little kind of homily from her father and her mother. But recent understanding of this picture is really quite different. It's actually a brothel scene.

And the very respectable lady, respectable looking lady, drinking a glass of wine, is actually the madam of the brothel. We can see a bed in the background on the right hand side. And the man, of course is actually much too young to be the girl's father. He's a customer. And x-rays have shown that he's actually holding a coin between his fingers. So this is a financial transaction that is taking place in a brothel, quite a different meaning. So a lot of the original meanings were just forgotten, but sometimes they were deliberately disguised because people in the 19th century particularly, which is a rather more prudish, much more prudish century than the 17th century, they were uncomfortable with some of the lewder features of these pictures. This is a painting by Jan Steen of a christening feast, and it's in the Wallace collection. And this was cleaned, I don't know, maybe about 20 years ago.

The picture was cleaned and when it was cleaned, two details were revealed that had been deliberately painted out. To the right of the centre, you can see the proud father, and he's holding up his new baby, and there is a rather mischievous looking man standing behind. And you can see he's holding up his hand and raising two fingers behind the baby's head. So he's suggesting that he has put horns on the father, that the father is not the true father of the child. And the other detail that rather strangely got painted out and was revealed by the cleaning is the sausage, I suppose, a rather rude, phallic looking sausage. You can see the maid reaching up to grab hold of it, and she's looking out towards the view with a rather naughty expression of her face. She's a bit Barbara Windsor.

In fact, I think a lot of these paintings, for me, have a very "Carry On" feeling. This one does. This is also in the Wallace collection. It's a small picture. I don't think this reproduction quite does it justice because the colour is actually much more intense in reality. It's a really sparkling little picture. It's by Gabriel Metsu. And it's called "The Sleeping Huntsman". And it's got actually a very rude subtext indeed. The Huntsman has come home and he's drunk a lot of wine out of that jug you can see by his feet. And he's completely out for the count. And you can see he's loosely clutching his pipe, which hangs limply between his legs, which suggests the state of impotence that is caused by his drunkenness. And then you see, as if we're going to think of this as a "Carry On" movie, there's a kind of Sid James character who's looking out at the viewer, conspiratorially with a rather naughty look on his face.

And he is holding up a bird. And the Dutch for bird, like the Jennifer Bird is Vogel. Well, if you turn that into a verb, Vogel. I know we've got quite a lot of German speakers. I don't know quite how colloquial and quite rude your German is, but vogel is a very coarse term for having sex. So he's holding up this bird and he's having a little joke. And you can see the Barbara Windsor character on the left is looking at him and smiling. And behind her is a staircase to the bedroom. Yet another picture that hangs in the Wallace collection, that's called "The Music Lesson." But there's an awful lot more going on in this picture than just musical instruction. It's another picture where it's actually a deal being struck between the man and the girl. Music, in any case, in these Dutch paintings, usually has erotic connotations.

You know, think "if music be the food of love, play on." So, and another clue in this picture is the picture on the wall behind them. You always have to look at these and usually they're making some kind of comment on what is happening in the picture. And this is clearly an erotic scene because it's got a curtain that can be drawn across it, and we can see a sleeping nude woman. And the other element that really tells us what's going on is the key. Going to see quite a lot of keys in this talk today. Keys are very important. And when you get a key like that, it's hanging on a nail. It's the dead centre of the picture. Your attention's drawn to what's going on here. The key is, of course, the key to her virtue or her bedroom. And this is what they're negotiating over. So as very often, the meanings of these pictures were completely lost or misunderstood. This is a minor artist called Godfried Schalcken, and he particularly specialised in these candlelit scenes, which are again, in fact all brothel scenes.

But by the early 19th century, his pictures were very, very popular, in the early 19th century, that people didn't realise this anymore. And there was an Irish writer called Sheridan Le Fanu, who's regarded as great pioneer of the mystery or the horror novel. And in 1838, he published a novella with the title, "A Strange Event in the Life of Schalcken the Painter". So, he interpreted this nocturnal mood as being something ghostly and mysterious, not understanding there's nothing mysterious about it at all. They're simple brothel scenes that were immensely popular in Holland. Now, if you really want to get into the meaning of these pictures, those of you living in London, or I hope lots of you'll be able to visit London before too long. I would strongly recommend taking a specialist tour of the Harold Samuel Collection at Mansion House in the

city. Harold Samuel. He was later made a life peer.

He was also Lord Mayor of London. He was a Jewish businessman from a very humble origin in North London, who did very well for himself. And he spent his fortune collecting Dutch genre pictures. And you can book a tour, or you can book yourself into a tour of, and I used to do it quite often with my students, and they have very, very well-trained, very, very well informed guides. I remember in particular a Canadian woman who took us around, who was absolutely fascinating in deconstructing and interpreting all these pictures. Now you've got a totally new system of patronage in Holland in the 17th century. I suppose it's what we would take for granted today, but in earlier periods, say in Italy, in the Renaissance and also in the 17th century, patronage of course came from above. It came primarily from the Catholic Church and then from the court, and then from the aristocracy.

Well, Holland in 17th century is now Calvinist. So there is no patronage at all from the Church. They have a sort of a monarchy with the Princes of Orange, but nothing like the kind of elaborate court, and elaborate patronage you find in other European countries. And the same, the aristocracy is not dominant in Holland. It's the bourgeoisie, it's the merchants. And so you have a system instead of the patron going to the artist and saying, "I want this subject. It's got to be this size for this particular place." The artists are painting pictures and then they're selling to a middle man who sells them onto the collectors. And when the English diariest John Evelyn went to Holland in 1641, he was absolutely astonished that everybody was buying pictures and that farmers, wealthy farmers were building up picture collections.

So there are various consequences of this. One is of course, that when you walk into the 17th century Dutch room in any great museum in the world, any national gallery, you'll notice that the pictures are on a much smaller scale because they're built for the houses of the bourgeoisie and not for great palaces or great churches. Now, you'd think the system would be good for the artist because it allows the artist, theoretically, I suppose, more freedom. You don't have somebody like, you know, the Duchess of Mantua who was notoriously bossy trying to tell Leonardo da Vinci what to paint for her and so on. But oddly, the tyranny of the market was often much greater than the tyranny of the courts or the aristocracy or the church. So artists would become known for painting a particular kind of subject matter, and that's what the dealers wanted.

And the dealers would say, well, your, this is Aert van der Neer, he's very well known for painting moonlight scenes and winter scenes or moonlight winter scenes. And so he would go to the dealer and the dealer would say, "Well, you know, I can always sell your moonlight scenes. I can always sell your winter scenes." And so that's what he's stuck doing. So you have a degree of pigeonholing, specialisation, in 17th century Holland that we've never seen before. And you have an artist like Saenredam who paints nothing but these very beautiful, whitewashed Calvinist church interiors. That's what he does. And within landscapers you have landscape, special landscape artists who are known solely for painting landscapes. And within landscape you have artists who specialise, artists who paint woods and hills, artists who paint sand dunes. Artists like Philips Koninck who only, only paints these flat, extensive Dutch landscapes.

You've got Cuyp, who paints what I would call cowscapes. He paints landscapes with cows. He obviously enjoyed, well, I don't know whether he enjoyed painting cows, but obviously that's what sold and that's what he was stuck doing. And you'll find that also artists become known for a particular skill. This is ter Brugghen, I'm going to talk more about him later. And he was very famous for painting these fabulously shimmering white silk or satin dresses. And so very often in his pictures you will find a woman wearing one of these dresses. This is Nicolaes Muys and I talk more about him later too. And he obviously was very good at painting pots and he seems to have had several of these German-made, they come from the Rhineland, Westerwald cobalt blue stoneware vases.

And this is where I'm going to do a Blue Peter on you, because, can you see this? This is a German Westerwald blue stoneware vase, just like ones you see in the paintings of Nicolaes Muys. This is one I picked up earlier at the flea market. This is actually a 19th century one, but imitating a 16th century one. So all the grotesque detail on it, it's a bit more elaborate than a 17th century one would be. Where are we? Ah, yes. Now, within genre, again, there are sub genres. And I'm starting off with a low life painting. And the great master of low life painting was actually a Dutch Flemish artist. He went backwards and forwards between Holland and Antwerp called Adriaen Brouwer. These are really quite small pictures painted in very, a narrow range of rather earthy colours, but on this small format.

They're very freely painted, very painterly and a really kind of earthy humour. And usually you'll find somebody in some corner of his painting, not a corner here, of course urinating. But he was greatly admired. Rubens owned no less than 17 paintings by Adriaen Brouwer and Rembrandt owned paintings by him too. That's an interesting connection between the two greatest painters of the low countries of the 17th century. They both loved the art of Brouwer. So tremendously forceful on a small scale. Really, really expressive almost expressionist brush work. And something like this, for instance, looks a bit like a Goya. The other specialist in low life painting is Ostade, but he's slicker and smoother and much softer, I suppose, has a gentler view of peasants and low life. Now I'm going to concentrate just on four artists, and they are Jan Steen, Gerard ter Borch, Nicolaes Muys and Gabriel Metsu.

So here is Jan Steen. a rather sober looking self-portrait on the left hand side. But he often appears as a rather rambunctious character in his own paintings. He is enormously loved in Holland. I mean, nobody would dispute, of course Rembrandt is the greatest Dutch painter, but probably Jan Steen is the most popular painter of the Dutch tradition in Holland. He's born in Rembrandt's home city of Leiden in 1626. So he's a generation younger than Rembrandt. And we've seen this picture already. He's famous in Holland, much loved for his chaotic, merry household pictures, absolute mayhem going on with ill disciplined children and pets and mess everywhere. And my theory is that this was, the reason the Dutch loved these paintings so much is it's a kind of a safety valve in a way. Again, the English, oh, look at this, the floor, this is something he's very good at painting and obviously when he sold pictures to dealers or collectors, they said, "Oh, we love the way you paint eggshells."

The shells of boiled eggs have been cast on the floor very, very convincingly and very illusionistically. So yes, John Evelyn travelling in Holland in 1641. He was astonished by the orderliness and the cleanliness of the Dutch middle class households. And he said in the summer, people would rather sit on the pavement in front of the house. They didn't want to bring any dirt into the house. Everything had to be absolutely immaculate. And it was really, I think a religious thing, you know, for the Catholics, for prayer and holiness, you go to the church, but for the Calvinists you could communicate directly with God in your own home. So your home is a holy place. But obviously not in paintings by Jan Steen with all this carrying on. This is a 12th night picture. Of course 12th night is, what day is it today? It's the 3rd. So 12th night is in three days time. And it commemorates the epiphany, the three kings.

And it was the date of very noisy and drunken celebrations in the lowland. So this is a 12th night feast. We see in this picture, I've just today finished off a galette. You can see one here, a tart. In that tart there should be a little ceramic charm. And of course, the person who gets it becomes the king and wears the paper crown, as you can see with this little child being introduced to alcohol by its granny on the left hand side. And a lot of these pictures, I said, they have very, very elaborate meanings and you really have to be quite a specialist to break them down. I mean, you could, if you had, I can't tell you, I'm afraid, what every detail in this painting means, but I'm sure every detail means something.

And the research on deconstructing, reinterpreting these paintings, it depends sometimes on prints after the paintings where there'll be little poems and rhymes underneath it, explaining it. But very often, all the things going on in these paintings will refer to popular Dutch proverbs. I think there're very close connections actually between the English and the Dutch. And sometimes looking at these paintings where they're kind of, they're smutty. They're scurrilous. And at the same time they're quite moralising. I think of some of the more popular English newspapers. So everything here, the oyster shells, the cards, the dogs sniffing at the joint and so on. Everything will have a, and the monkey on top of the bed. These will all have specific meanings and many of those meanings will have their origin in Dutch proverbs. This is a painting where I think it's kind of easier to deconstruct what's going on. It's the doctor's visit. And you can see the maid is holding a urine sample.

Oh, I wish, I wish Miriam was in on this. I'm sure she'd have some very interesting things to say about this picture. You can see the doctor is taking the pulse and he's giving a very conspiratorial look to the maid. And I think we can guess what the nature of her malady is. She is pregnant, and I think the pregnancy is probably not a legitimate one. You can see the little boy in the corner with the bow and arrow that is referring to Cupid. And you can also see the pictures on the wall. There's a love scene, a big love scene on the wall. And interestingly, a painting which I've shown you before on the top right hand corner of "A Drunken Actor" by Frans Hals. I mean, Holland is a small country, densely populated country. And it's frustrating that we have so little information about all these artists, but very often there are clues in the paintings that they knew one another.

And I think it's very likely indeed that all the major artists of Holland in the 17th century were in contact with one another, knew each other's work. And this is the painting, that Jan Steen, not a very typical one really, that he made in a period that he spent in Delft. And of course Delft is the, I'm going to be talking about Delft next week. It's the city of Vermeer and Pieter de Hooch. So, I mean, it's almost inevitable that Jan Steen would've come into contact with these two. This is a rather more sober and serious painting by him. And it's quite hard to define. I mean, it seems to be a portrait of a prosperous man, but it's more than a portrait, you know, it's also a kind of social commentary. You see the very poor old woman and her child who are beggars who are soliciting financial help from this rather self-satisfied looking, wealthy man. Jan Steen also painted a number of more explicitly erotic pictures.

This one belongs to the queen. I'm not sure. It's probably in the current show at the Queen's Gallery. And it shows a woman preparing herself to go to bed. But ther're all sorts of interesting things here. The jewel box with the jewels hanging out of it, the musical instruments in the foreground, again, probably with gallant or erotic connotations, the little dogs. Dogs are incredibly important in Dutch 17th century paintings and have all sorts of meanings. Not necessarily the ones that we would expect. You know, we think of dogs, we think of faithfulness and, you know, positive aspects of dogs. But very often in Dutch paintings, dogs are there to suggest hanky panky and libidinous goings on. Here's another version of the same subject. And you see the chamber pot and the shoes that have been taken off. And this wonderful detail that she's been wearing these stockings all day.

She's now taken the stockings off. And you can see the marks left by the top of the stocking just beneath her knees. There you are. A better version of that. This is a surprising painting by Jan Steen of these young men playing bowls. It's in the National Gallery. And when you look at this, you think, I mean, it gives you a bit of relief from all the hearty jolly goings on. It's a painting which doesn't seem to have a particular elaborate meaning. For once we feel this is just something in real life that he has observed. And in a painting like this, you can see like so many of these Dutch artists, how wonderful he is at the observation of light and atmosphere, this beautiful pale silvery sunlight. This is another picture by him, which again, doesn't seem to have a particular moralising or joking meaning. It's a scene in a tavern. We know that he was himself a son of a beer brewer and tavern owner. And at various times in his life, most of these Dutch artists, by the way, couldn't really earn a living just by painting.

So you'll find that, you know, Hobbemma was a tax collector, Vermeer was a picture dealer. And Jan Steen at various points in his life ran taverns or was involved in beer brewing. Look at the very, you can see how Dutch artists love their dogs. So wonderfully observed the way this dog is looking up and obviously begging for a bit of food. Now this is a very unusual painting by Jan Steen. As I said, there's no patronage coming from the church. So any religious paintings you get in Holland, Rembrandt being a great example, are because the artists want to paint them and out of personal religious feeling. And this is the only major religious painting I know by Jan Steen. It's in the Rijksmuseum. And it's the supper at Emmaus.

Very different from the Caravaggio one I showed you earlier in this course, you know, which has it's dramatic chiaroscuro and it's very theatrical and it shows the scene the very moment when the two disciples realise, that the man that they've been eating with is the resurrected Jesus. And they're throwing their arms out, looks of absolute astonishment on their faces. In this, they seem to be in a kind of trance. And you can see that having revealed himself, Christ is now disappearing in the background. And a little boy serving wine seems to be completely unaware that anything is happening at all. But I think it's the most poetic, the most beautiful picture. I love it. And I love the detail as well, that you can see that Jesus was a rather casual and messy eater and also dropped his boiled egg shells on the floor.

Now we move on to Gerard ter Borch and he's born in 1617. And there you see his self-portrait on the left hand side, rather, rather grandly, rather smartly dressed showing himself as a patrician figure. He was very well travelled, unusually for this time. He went to Rome. He went to Madrid. He came to London. Not that you really would know that from his work, his subject matter is very, mostly, very typically Dutch subject matter. The painting on the right hand side, I wouldn't say it's his most beautiful painting, but it's a very important one historically. He was in Munster in 1648 when the Treaty of Munster was signed. This was the treaty, the end of the 30 Years War. And so this is a very fascinating document.

All these people individually posed for him. So all the signatories of the treaty from all countries in Europe, we know what they looked like at the time of the signing of this treaty. This is actually a tiny painting on copper and it belonged to, it was bought by the Marquis of Harford and given by Richard Wallace of the Wallace Collection to the National Gallery. But I think National Gallery very often loan it to the Rijksmuseum in Holland 'cause it's so important for Dutch history. Now he trained early on under an artist who specialised in guard room scenes with soldiers. And these can be very also very rambunctious with people urinating or fighting or you know, drinking or whatever. So this is by ter Borch, it's actually in the Victoria and Albert Museum, upstairs in the Jones Collection, which has got lots of, this was part of the Ionides Collection, which was a bequest to the Victoria and Albert Museum.

And it's unusual for ter Borch. It's not something, it's not a subject matter he continued with. And it's also for this type of subject, a very sober and restrained scene. This is probably his most famous picture. And as I said, these wonderful silk and satin dresses that he painted so often. What's going on here? It's really, again, it probably is a brothel scene 'cause that is a bed in the background. So you've got this slightly shy young man coming to the brothel and the girl, of course, we don't see her. We just see her back. Note also, the wonderful painting of the carpet. An oriental carpet would've been a very luxurious item. You wouldn't have put it on the floor, you wouldn't have walked on it, you would've draped it over a table. We'll see lots more of these of course, with Vermeer next week.

This is a very small picture again, in the Wallace collection of a young woman reading a letter. So this is one of the most popular themes in Dutch 17th century painting. No email then of

course. So we're all communicating with letters. So you see people writing letters, you see people receiving letters. You see people opening letters or reading letters. Those of you in London, when you can, go and see this in the Wallace Collection. The colour here is a bit, is not really quite right. The yellow in reality is much more singing, much more intense, as is the red. And he has this very characteristic silvery, grey blue. Again, you see the exquisitely painted carpet on the table. And this of course does make us think of Vermeer. Intriguingly, we have one little piece of evidence that ter Borch and Vermeer knew each other. There is a document that's surfaced in an archive in Delft that is jointly signed by ter Borch and Vermeer.

So we certainly know that they knew each other. Vermeer now is of course so great, so famous. His reputation has eclipsed all the others. And I wouldn't for a minute disagree with the fact that he is the greatest. But I think it's a pity that some of the artists, particularly ter Borch, have been so completely eclipsed by Vermeer. Ter Borch sometimes has, to some degree at least, the qualities that we also love in Vermeer. Here again, a comparison of the ter Borch on the left, the Vermeer. And I'd like to point out for Leslie Cohen that this Vermeer is in the National Gallery in Washington. And so we see many similarities here. And the difference, rather interesting difference is the way that the woman in the Vermeer looks out of the picture and engages the attention of the viewer. These paintings both dating from the 1660s.

And you can see the cost, this yellow jacket with the fur trimmings. We know that Vermeer or his wife owned this jacket because the one on the right hand side that appears in no less than eight different paintings by Vermeer. Again, I think something that ter Borch shares with Vermeer is a certain enigmatic quality. The anecdotal moralising element, which is so strong in Jan Steen and some of the other Dutch genre painters is understated with ter Borch as it is with Vermeer. And I think that lets us, that's good for our imagination. We can read what we want to in the picture. The Ts are not crossed, the i's are not dotted. And this, again, it's a young woman with, I don't know what she's reading. It looks more like a newspaper than a letter. Such a delicate picture, such an exquisite picture. It's believed to be a portrait of his sister. And domestic scenes of exceptional tenderness. This is good colour. And here you can see very well, this quite distinctive silvery grey blue that he likes to use.

He's generally likes quite a cool tonality. Not quite as icy as Vermeer can be sometimes, but nevertheless quite cool. And these scenes of great delicacy, great tenderness, I mean they really touch you without ever being sentimental or mawkish in the way the same kind of scene painted in the 18th or 19th century would've been very mawkish. This picture, I know it very well cause I see it every year in Munich. I just find this such a touching picture. Look at the expression on that dog's face as it's being lovingly de-flead by the little child that owns it. So now just imagine how this would've been painted by a Victorian painter. It really would've been too much. Whereas this is so restrained, so delicate. And in addition, there is some quite mysterious pictures of farm scenes, stables and so on where they have a sort of dignity, they have a gravitas, which is quite surprising in a scene of this nature.

And this astonishing picture, which, you know, could be 19th century, of a very rough, poor

courtyard with a knife grinder and his very poor family. And now it's of course the mother who's taking the fleas or the lice out of, the lice, I suppose, out of the little girl's hair. They're all painted with loving tenderness but no trace of sentimentality. Now I'm going to have to race ahead as I'm running a bit out of time. This is Nicolaes Muys. We've just had a big exhibition of him in London. He's also from Leiden. Same time as Rembrandt. You see him late in life on the left hand side with a French style baroque wig, looking rather grand. By the time he painted that, he'd ceased painting genre pictures. And he was a very successful fashionable portraitist. What he's famous actually for a group of pictures he painted in his middle period in Leiden of, particularly of genre scenes with illicit listeners.

Once again, look at the lovely Westerwald jug, the girl is holding in her hand. So there are whole group of these pictures where you are in, conspiring in a way with the illicit listener. And we're observing or hearing something that we shouldn't be. So as a young man, he went to Amsterdam and he was an apprentice of Rembrandt from 1848 to 1853. So for five years. And he picked up Rembrandt's middle period style. This is his largest painting. It's in the National Gallery. It's the passage in the New Testament where Christ says bring little children to him. So that's Muys on the left hand side. And you've got the related subject in the famous Rembrandt hundred guilder print on the right hand side. Ge's really absorbing Rembrandt and like Rembrandt in this period, he's interested in stories from the Bible, particularly the Jewish Bible. This is the, I think the rather horrible story of Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael.

And on the persuasion of his wife Sarah, Abraham casts out his concubine, Hagar and her son Ishmael with of course great consequences of the break between Judaism and Islam and so on. Traditionally believed. This is the same subject in an etching by Rembrandt on the right hand side. But I think obviously that Muys is very influenced by by Rembrandt. But he's like Rembrandt, when he looks at a story in the Bible, he wants to really think it through. He really wants to live it. And I think it's extremely touching, extremely affecting the gesture, the pose, the way Hagar is. She's so hurt by being cast out like this, that she can't even look at Abraham. She's turning her face away.

And there's a drawing which survives for this painting, which is evidence, I think of the way that Nicolaes Muys is really thinking about this story. And how the feelings of the people involved in this drama would be expressed in their pose, their gesture, their facial expressions. And you can see in this drawing he's experimenting yet he hasn't decided yet which way Ishmael's head is turning. Is he looking back towards Abraham or is he as in the final painting, of course, turning completely away from him. Rembrandt on the left. And that is a religious scene. Of course it's a nativity with Joseph in the background. And Nicolaus Muys very influenced by Rembrandt on the right. But this is a purely secular scene. It's a genre scene of everyday life in 17th century Holland. Like Rembrandt, Muys is particularly good at the extremes of childhood and old age. He paints both very lovingly.

And of course, Rembrandt and Muys are not alone in this, I think this is a characteristic of Dutch 17th century painting. This is Cornelisz Verspronc on the left hand side. And isn't this wonderful,

this is by an artist called Michael Sweerts. I want to talk a little bit more about him in the context of Vermeer, on Wednesday. This painting of an old woman, painted so sympathetically. And this is a Dutch thing. And when you compare it to the way that old women painted in Italy and Germany, you can see that they're painted with contempt, with dislike. This is Caravaggio on the left. It's Cranach on the right. They're grotesque, they're mocked, they're laughed at. But in Holland, and again I think it's very interesting that Holland was the first country in Europe to stop burning witches. The last witch to be burnt in Holland was 1607, Other countries continued, some of them even into the 19th century burning witches.

So Nicolaes Muys on the left hand side and Rembrandt on the right hand side showing the piety of old women. There's a little bit more going on in the Muys than the Rembrandt 'cause you can see that the woman is so lost in prayer that the cat is about to steal her dinner. This is another old woman praying. This is a vanitas picture. Very common. Somebody asked me, was it last time, or the time before, what was, oh yes, last time, what was the meaning of the skull in the Frans Hals' portrait of a young man and skull, which is very, very common in 17th century painting. It's a memento mori, it's a reminder of death. It's a vanitas symbol, as is the hourglass and as are the flowers, which very often are dropping the petals. And as is the candle. Muys likes to show old women working, busily working. The Dutch in the 17th century, the Calvinists have a, well, like the Jews of course, they have a very, very strong work ethic.

So this is something very positive. It's something that's celebrated, these old women working. These are paintings which are a bit critical because, well, the woman on the right hand side, she's reading, she's dropped off while reading the Bible. The woman on the left hand side has dropped off while doing the accounts. And significant in both cases is that the keys are hanging on the wall. This is the keys here. And the fact that they've fallen asleep. This is symbolic of dereliction of duty. Somebody who's not doing what they should be doing. And that's the case here too, of the lazy chamber maid who's not doing the dishes and she's fallen asleep. And of course the cat is getting dinner. This is the lace maker.

You can, in reality, when you stand in front of these paintings, he really gives you a lot of information about the technique of lace making. And I like the little child in its cage there who's thrown its toys out of the pram, so to speak. And again, very tender painting. This could be his wife and one of his children. Depends whether you think this is the same woman as this one, 'cause this almost certainly is his wife because he's included his self-portrait on the wall above her. And she's just given a swat to her older son for being too noisy and potentially waking up the baby in the cot. This enchanting painting is presumably somebody who's very close to the artist. She's too young to be his wife and she's too old to be one of his children. We know how old she is because on the hem of her skirt, we don't know who she is, there's no name.

But she was 15. It says "atatis 15". So this little girl at her needle work was 15 years old when that was painted. Oops. Now, I'm going to move on. I think 'cause I just want to say, oh, these are these illicit listener paintings. Again, there would be proverbs to go with this. And this is a kind of upstairs downstairs picture comparing the morals of the so-called respectable people

upstairs and what's going on in the kitchen. But I want to say, finish off very quickly talking about Gabriel Metsu. He's also from Leiden and it's assumed that he was taught by the erstwhile Rembrandt colleague, Gerard Dou. If you remember Rembrandt at the beginning of his career was painting very small pictures with very fine, quite sharp detail. And he was working with Dou on pictures like this. Then Rembrandt moves off to Amsterdam. Dou stays behind in Leiden and has a very successful career, earns a lot of money turning out these small, very licked, highly polished, detailed pictures. And certainly Metsu who paints this. These are again, small scale pictures, very highly finished, but not slick or bland. And they sparkle.

They have a wonderful kind of crispness to them. This is another one of these paintings of a woman reading a letter that she's just received. And there are probably all sorts of hidden meanings in this picture. There's certainly some significance to the maid raising the curtain to look at the sea scene on the wall behind the curtain. And we can sort of assume that the letter has an amorous content, as does this letter written by a young man. This is a tiny picture in the Wallace Collection. As we saw at the beginning with "The drunken Huntsman" Metsu can be quite louche, quite raunchy. And this is "The Bird", the old man offering a cock to the young girl who's not too thrilled about it.

That certainly has some kind of erotic connotations. And as with other Dutch artists, of course, he paints old age very lovingly, both men and women and children. I'm going to finish with this very charming painting. Lovable painting. It's in the Rijksmuseum, of a mother comforting a child who's not well. An exquisite picture with very beautiful colour, full of light and great tenderness. And as I said, no trace of mawkish sentimentality. So I'm going to come out of my share now and see if we have some questions. So I think, do I have to go into the Q and A?

- [Judy] Yes. Patrick, can you just scroll to the top? There are a few questions.

Q&A and Comments:

- Good. The bed looks like a table with items on it. I can't remember which bed? Is that the very first picture. Was that the ter Borch, the brothels scene. The beds in the 17th century, they had curtains and it was, I think maybe you didn't recognise what was the bed in that picture. "The music lesson" in the Wallace collection, that's by Jan Steen. The picture of the man from the old age home. His face shows the classic features of a bell. Is that bell's syndrome or something? I'm not quite sure. Jan Steen work that I saw in Hermitage Kitchen, was taken by contemporary artists, Jonathan Lehman, who painted a large work entitled Jan Steen Kitchen, Work is in Tate Britain Collection. Picture of the man shows, yes, Bell's Palsy, which is a facial nerve palsy, producing drooping eye. That sounds like a convincing diagnosis to me also. Sometimes following a viral infection. Common disorder.

Q: What is the name of the painter of the winter skating scenes?

A: That's Aert, A-E-R-T, van der Neer, N-E-E-R.

Q: Could you show the main stylistic difference between artists of Amsterdam, Flemish, and Utrecht.

A: Oh my God, that's huge. It's a whole lecture. Utrecht artists, Utrecht school were the ones who went to Italy and they picked up the influence of Caravaggio. And they often do candle lit scenes and they often do these half length scenes where the figures fill up the thing. Flemish, Rubens is the great Flemish figure. Flemish painting tends to be much more painterly. It can be on a larger scale. It's very richly coloured compared to most Dutch painting. With Amsterdam, I mean within Holland, the cities that have distinctive schools are Utrecht, certainly Leiden with these very highly finished paintings. Delft, I'll be talking about Delft next week.

Q: Cannot genre painting be defined more broadly to include any scenes of secular activity as opposed to mythological scenes that were painted in the baroque period?

A: Yes. Could that not have included Frans Hals? Yes and no. There are genre, I mean there has to be more than a portrait. You know, a portrait is another thing altogether. There are a few pictures by Frans Hals from the beginning of his career, which could be defined as genre scenes.

Q: How did Jan Steen construct his compositions? Were they staged or quick sketches?

A: I think they're, yes. I mean, he's not one of those artists where you look at them and think, I mean, very different from, mostly from Vermeer and Pieter de Hooch, and artists where you think that they were probably using a camera obscura. There's so much going on in a Jan Steen that I think there have to be, you know, elaborately constructed rather than observed from life. Jan Steen's painting with eggs on the floor. I'm not sure I get this. Steen's paintings with eggs on the floor. W

as that from the 17th century? Yes. They're all 17th century. I've only talked about 17th century today. And it's spelled yes, S-T-E-E-N. Same dog in all of them. Do you think so? I mean, it's a fun thing, a nerdy thing to do.

A fun thing to do is look, you know, look at all of Vermeer paintings and find the same bits and pieces turning up. Same pictures in pictures, same pieces of furniture, same carpets. So it's quite likely yes, that, I mean I don't think it could have been the same dog throughout his career 'cause the dog wouldn't live that long. But it's possible that he had a particular dog and painted it in many pictures. In Jan Steen's painting with one male and two females, the male is represented as unusually large.

Is that representative of his importance? Mm, not sure about that really. No, I don't, I'm not sure about that. How long did it take to paint some of the very, a long time is all I can say. You know, it's different for every person, this is a question that always flummoxes me. I mean there are

artists you look at, like Frans Hals and you think that looks like it's painted very quickly, but you know, it's a very individual thing. The girl supposedly in a brothel is in a white dress and a black collar, rather heavy clothes.

Q: Yes. Do you know of... Where can you see his work?

A: Well, I think Wallace Collection, I think they have some, I probably most, these fighting horsemen. I mean they're not very popular these days, but probably any collection within extent, well obviously the big Rijksmuseum.

Q: Are those magnificent Dutch floral paintings considered a sub genre of genre painting?

A: No, it's a totally different genre of flower painting. It's not a sub genre of...

Q: Did many people read at the time?

A: My guess is in Holland, probably quite a high percentage of people would've would've read in the 17th century.

I've seen some lovely paintings of harbours, boats, waterside. No, again, it's a totally different genre. The marine paintings. People like Willem van de Velde the Elder and the younger van de Velde. That is a totally separate genre. So that's genre with a small g rather than Genre Painting. Muys's "Christ Blessing the Children" was originally purchased by the National Gallery as attributed to Rembrandt. That is a very, very common fate for Rembrandt pupils in the 19th century.

You know that in the Wallace Collection that, I think I've said this before, there are 13 paintings in the Wallace Collection that were bought as Rembrandt and most of them have been de-Rembrandted. Could you please spell out the names of the Dutch artists as you introduce them? Yeah, I must admit I'm not very good at Dutch pronunciation or Flemish, but partly 'cause it's so difficult.

I remember when giving the 15th century Dutch painter, I can do it, but I need a glass of water afterwards. I hope that's correct. But it's all this ggg and heid and all that kind of thing is really quite difficult to do. Perhaps women really weren't so, oh, that's true. I mean that people aged much quicker in the 17th century. You know, the fact that Rembrandt looked so old, but actually died at the age of 63. I have a book that focused on the kinds of props they used for erotic symbolic connotations. Yes. And there were also, there were books at the time, emblem books which have been used by modern historians to interpret these pictures. What about the eyes always very expressive. Yes. They certainly can be. I'd love to discuss Bruegel. The only way to do that would be to do another course entirely, which I could do.

I mean, at the moment we're just going to go forward chronologically, but Bruegel of course is

16th century. So that would mean doing another earlier course. General measurement. Well, I mean, I can't say what the general measurements are, they're all different, but you know, they can be the size of your computer screen or you know, they can, but mostly they're just built to fit into a middle class house. Have you seen the book by Dutch rheumatologist on different rheumatological conditions in. No, it sounds fascinating. I don't know about that. Could you explain the costs of different colour paints and how that influenced artists? Yes. Or I can't really, that's a whole lecture. But for instance, next time I'm going to talk about ultramarine and lapis lazuli as that was the most expensive colour and it was a colour of course, that Vermeer liked to use. Why do you suppose the painting on the wall was covered by a curtain in one of the last paintings?

I'm not quite sure why the curtain, the one, the Metsu I showed you 'cause that's a marine painting. And I'm not quite sure why a marine painting would need to be covered by a curtain. But often it's because the paintings are erotic or sometimes because they're violent. The courtier Huygens, I hope I got that one right. Dutch pronunciation, Christiaan Huygens, he had very violent paintings that he had under a curtain and he liked to shock his visitors at the end of dinner by whipping back the curtain. I have a small tabajara painting by Adrian Van Ostade. Sorry, I was so rude about him just now. I thought it was an oil on board, but when it was cleaned, it was all on zinc. No, that is not common. Copper is very common. I wouldn't have said that zinc was a common ground for paintings.

That might not be a good sign actually. Would all of these be done with live models? Would they have done with. Not always with live models. Sometime, you know, from the Renaissance onwards, artists used dummies. Electron van Hoeck, got that right, I hope. There will be one, but it won't be for some time because that's 19th century. What ages were the artists you discussed at their peak? Well, usually artists in 17th century matured very, very young. Frans Hals and Vermeer being exceptions and I'll talk about that next week. And of course most of them didn't live that long. I mean, Metsu didn't reach 40. in the painting with a key on the wall. The girl playing a piano. It's not a piano, it would be some kind of plucked keyboard instrument. There's a prominent five, does this have? I'm sure it does, but I can't tell you, but I'm sure it does. My Dutch colleagues used to say Dutch was more of, yeah, well they say that about Germans always say that about Swiss German being very guttural. They are difficult languages.

Why were babies so often painted with, oh, I don't know. People ask me that. I just, I don't know what the answer is. I don't know what the answer. Why the single shoe? And again, yes, I should know the answer to that. 'cause it is clearly some. There are paintings. I mean, for instance, you know, in the famous Van Eyck in the National Gallery, the shoes have been taken off. They say to show you that this is a very sacred place, a holy place and you take your shoes off in a holy place.

But I think sometimes those shoes that have been thrown away with abandon in some of these paintings, I think they probably have a rather more raunchy meaning. Somebody has a little Ostade painting on copper, possibly a 19th century copy. Yes, that's true. These things were

very copied in the 19th century and they can be very high quality, the 19th century copies. Right.

- [Judy] That looks like that's all the questions, Patrick, thank you so much for that wonderful, wonderful talk. And thank you to everybody.

- Thank you. Thank you.

- [Judy] And we will see you all again soon.

- See you soon.

- Thank you.

- Wednesday. Vermeer.

- Yes.