An Artistic Tour of Holland III-Delft

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This is the third of six documents based on my PowerPoint presentations on the arts in The Hague, Dordrecht, Delft, Leiden, Haarlem and Amsterdam during the late medieval and early modern period, which I prepared for my class, *An Artistic Tour of Holland, 1200-1700*, and offered through the Second Half Life-Long Learning Institute in Southeastern Massachusetts.

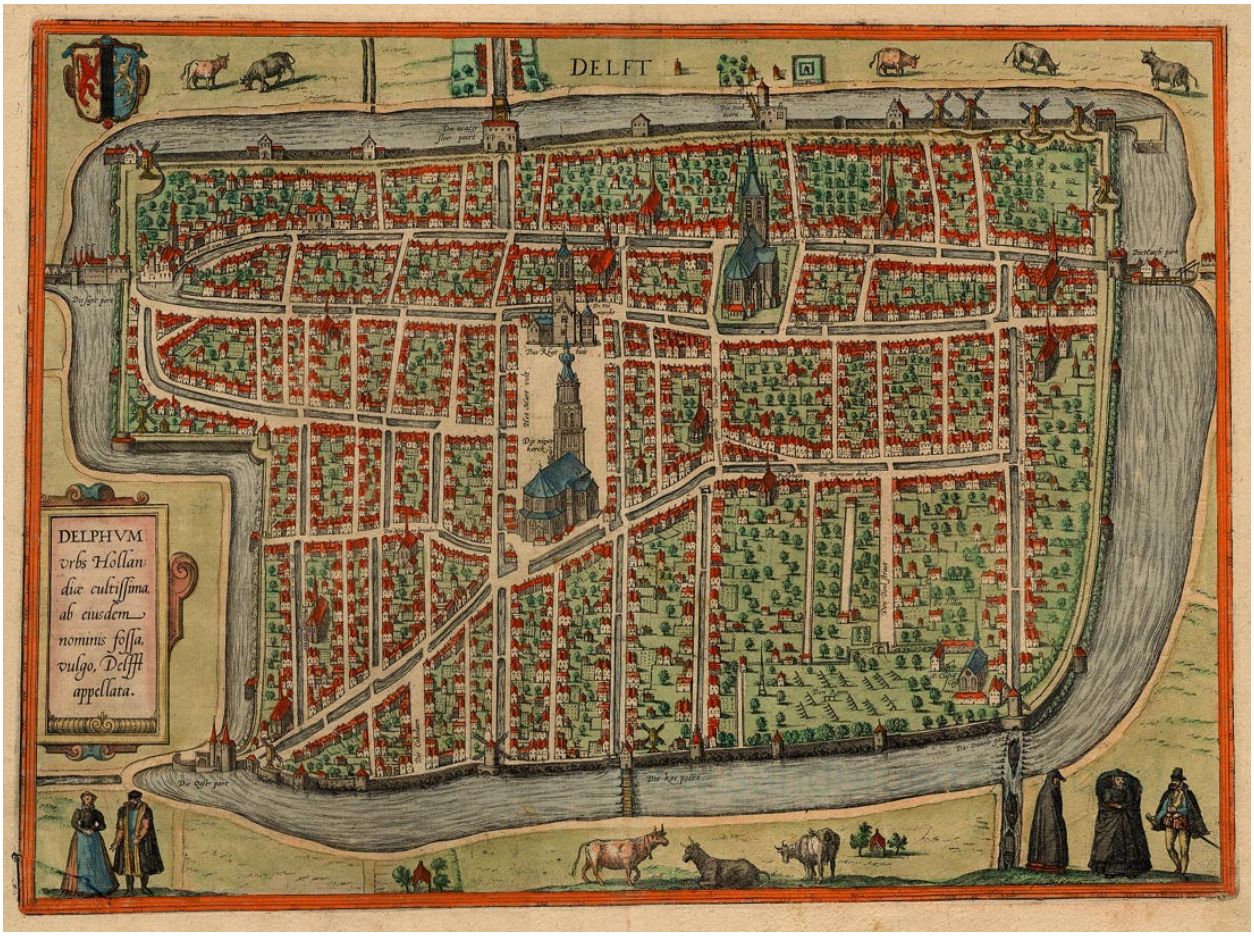
Dutch Art of its Golden Age (late 16th and the 17th centuries) is usually presented as a coherent and unique art tradition that was a product of the new bourgeois culture that dominated the United Provinces, better known in English as the Dutch Republic. One of the chief characteristics of the art of the Northern Netherlands, especially in the seventeenth century, was its focus on depicting contemporary life. This was a result of its patrons, who chiefly consisted of members of the manufacturing, commercial and administrative elite, the city regents and ordinary middle class consumers. The Dutch Republic was the most urban society in Europe and its urban elite dominated political power in its cities, its most urban provinces and in the Republic as a whole. They managed to free themselves from the personal rule of a monarch, the aristocracy and traditional religion. At the same time, the old aristocratic, religious, cultural and military values retained a strong influence and appealed even to some of those whose wealth came from trade and industry. Dutch art in its Golden Age was far from unified and can best be understood by examining it through the context of the history and traditions of its most important cities. Although Dutch cities were not very far apart, and the Republic's efficient transportation system made travel inexpensive, safe, and fast, the work of its famous artists was rooted in the patronage of their home town. Research has shown that at least sixty percent of art produced by artists in a particular town was bought by their fellow citizens.

The idea for the course and its chief source is Elizabeth de Bièvre, *Dutch Art and Urban Cultures, 1200-1700* (2015). Other useful sources are listed in the first document of An Artistic Tour of Holland c. 1500-1700 on The Hague.

Delft Today

The Provinces of the Kingdom of The Netherlands

George Braun and Frans Hogenberg, *Map of Delft*, 1580, West on top



The origin of Delft can be traced to the 10th century when several farmsteads were located on the fertile delta between the Maas and the Rhine. Watercourses that had dried up provided hardened beds with clay and sand provided firm ground for building in an otherwise marshy area. In order to drain the marshes further, canals were dug for drainage around the settlement. This lowered the soil level but provided more firm land for building. Peat was dug for fuel and the remaining soil could be used for meadows and the growing of barley and oats, which were useful for making beer but not for bread flour. The result was that the area was used for raising cattle, horses and dairy products. The river clays were also used for making pottery and tiles.

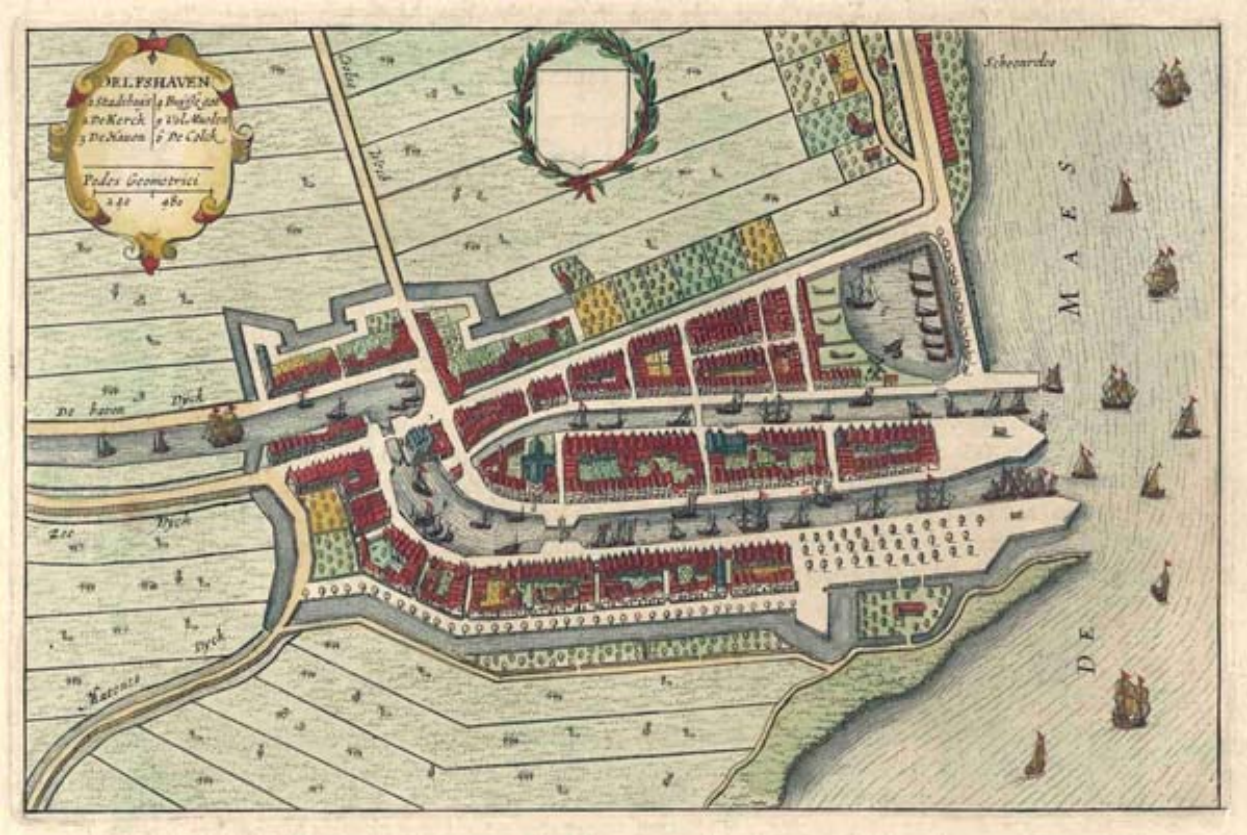
Seal of Delft 1299 and *Coat of Arms of Delft, 1620*

By the second half of the 12th century, Floris III, Count of Holland, gained control over some of the competing lords in his domains and introduced a bureaucracy that managed the hydrology of the region and raised taxes. In 1152 the territories of Aquitaine and England were connected through the marriage of Henry Plantagenet, who became Henry II of England, and Eleanor of Aquitaine. This encouraged overland trade between the two regions through the delta in Holland. Along this route the example of *villeneuves* (planned new towns) of Southern France were brought north. Floris III was married to a Scot and was well traveled. He encouraged the building of Delft as a new town with rectangular grid pattern of streets. This rectangular pattern was also applied to the surrounding countryside through the digging of canals for land reclamation. The oldest canal name gave the town its name, *delven*, to dig, became Delft. Unlike other towns in Holland, which were usually built on the coast or on a bend or junction of rivers, Delft was built around two main canals in the middle of a larger man-made and man-controlled polder. The canals still exist and are known as the Old Delft and the New Delft. The Old Delft was originally built as a connection between the Rhine and the New Maas.

Kaart Figurative of Delft, 1678, after Joan Blaue

The map of Delft was paid for by the city of Delft and supervised by Dirk Everts van Bieswijk. It is made of four copper engravings, together measuring 82.5 by 125.5 centimeters, set in an imposing sculpted frame. Historically, this is the most important early map of Delft. It is what the Dutch call a *vogelvlugt*, an aerial view and a theater stage in which the whole town can be seen with its buildings in isometric perspective. The drawing's three-dimensional perspective offers the illusion of a real brick and mortar town. It is not, however, a realistic view since it shows only the substantial buildings and leaves out the houses of the poor and outbuildings. The map is available at the Essential Vermeer website with active links for each picture and related links to Vermeer's neighborhood.
http://www.essentialvermeer.com/maps/delft/kaart.html#.Wk1bXiOZN0I

Johan Blaue, *Delftshaven, Toneel der Steeden*, 1649



When Count William II granted Delft a charter in 1246, he abdicated his feudal rights over the town, although he retained rights to the market place. The town was then governed by alderman appointed by the count but he had no role in their decisions once appointed. In 1340, the Count of Holland's fortified tower residence became the city's town hall. In 1355 Delft received the right to build a town hall but in 1359 the city's independence was challenged by Count Albert who destroyed its walls after a siege. Later in the century the city rebuilt its walls and in 1389 it was granted the right to build a new canal to the Maas for a harbor at Delftshaven. By 1400 it had a population of 6,500, making Delft the third city in Holland after Dordrecht and Haarlem. By the time Delftshaven was built, it had to compete with the growing harbor of Rotterdam and never achieved similar success.

Delftshaven is about ten km south of Delft on the right bank of the Nieuwe Maas. On August 1, 1620, the Pilgrims left from the port on the Speedwell. The VOC had warehouses and docks here. Piet Hein, one of the most famous commanders of the WIC was born here. Today it is a borough of Rotterdam.

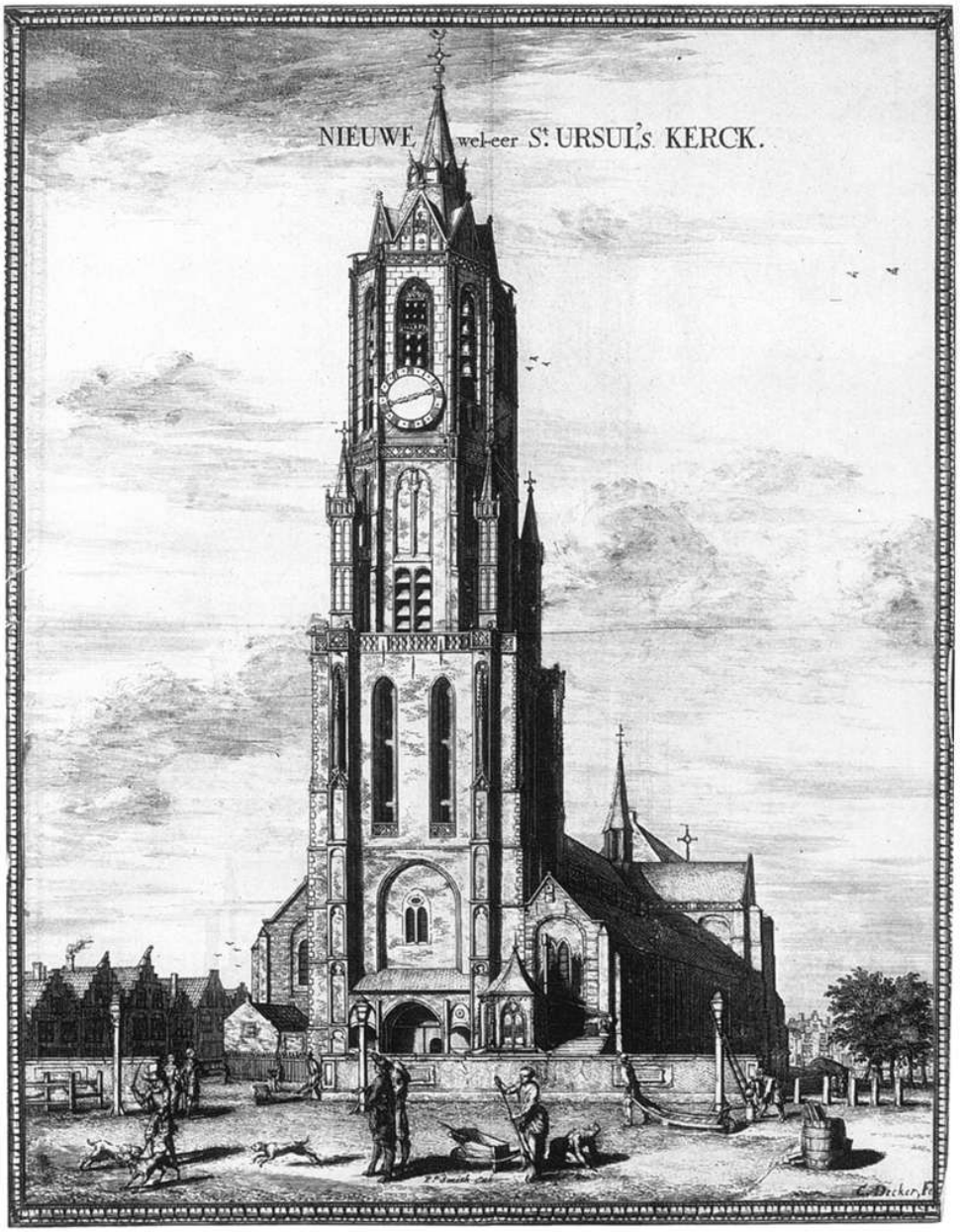
Johan Blaue, *Delftshaven, Toneel der Steeden*, of 1649, contains maps of many Dutch cities. A map of the Low Countries in 1649 can be found at the link below that allows you to explore many city maps of the period in both the northern and southern Netherlands during the period.

http://members.ziggo.nl/ekamper/blaeu/blaeu1649steden.html

Jan van der Heyden, *Oude Kerk in Delft*, c. 1660

The original parish church of Delft dates from about 1200 and was dedicated to St, Bartholomew, the patron saint of butchers and leather workers. Toward the end of the 13th century a new choir and aisles were constructed. The large tower was built between 1325 and 1350. The church was further expanded around 1400 and was rededicated to St. Hippolytus, a third century AD Roman theologian and martyr who better suited the religious notions of the newly arrived *Devotio Moderna* and the ambitions of the city. The church was further expanded in the sixteenth century. After a great fire the church was redecorated. In 1553 the Bishop of Utrecht came to consecrate eighteen new alters and chapels, many paid for by the town's guilds.

Coenraad Decker, *Nieuwe Kerk in Delft*, engraving, 1667



The Nieuwe Kerk was about 200 years younger than the Oude Kerk. It was built on the east end of the market square across from the Town Hall after a councilor repeatedly saw an apparition of the Virgin Mary across the square at the place of execution. The church was begun in the 1380s The north transept was a Lay Chapel with an image of the *Pieta* (an image of Mary with the dead Christ on her lap) that was much beloved by the *Devotio Moderna*. The church was dedicated to St. Ursala, who had been murdered in Cologne in 1380 during her return to England from a pilgrimage to Rome. In 1396 Count Albert provided the land for an elegant tower that was not finished until a century later. The east end of the square was where the artisans and guilds were located while the wealthy lived around the old church.

Nieuwe Kerk Delft Today

Carol Fabritius, *View in Delft*, 1652, National Gallery of Art, London

The church's importance is not just its architecture but the fact that William of Orange was buried here after his assassination in 1584. Subsequent Princes of Orange were also buried here, Prince Maurits in 1625, Prince Frederik Hendrik in 1647, and the 24-year old Willem II in 1650.

When Fabritius painted this picture in 1652, the notion that death spares no one, not even the most famous, was very much alive. Fabritius had moved to Delft only a few months before Willem's death to fulfill his commission. Fabritius died in 1654 during Delft's munition powder explosion and only four of his Delft period paintings survived. This work was painted right after he joined the Guild of St. Luke in Delft and the person in the painting is probably a self-portrait.

Fabritius was a master of perspective. A pensive individual creates a meditative and melancholy atmosphere. He sits behind a dark trellis with a lute and a large viola de gamba lies on a table without a bow. Surrounded by unused musical instruments he gazes at the brightly lit Church with the tombs of princes. It is a painting about the transience of life and melancholy. It is a small a remarkable work that has become very famous in part because of the painter's short life and accidental death.

Fabritius' view can still be seen. He created a wide angle image that greatly reduced the scale of the Nieuwe Kerk from where he was sitting. The difference in scale between the bridge in the foreground and the church is emphasized by the small woman standing in the street gazing at the church. These effects emphasize the melancholy mood of the painting. Fabritius was well acquainted with the science of perspective and lenses and this view is probably from a concave lens. Fabritius was interested in the illusionist possibilities of perspective lenses and used them in his other paintings. Tis painting may have been intended for a perspective box to be viewed through a peephole. No other Dutch cityscape combines the personal with the topographical as this painting. It stands apart from established iconographic traditions. It seems to reflect upon an unsettling period of Dutch history without a stadholder and perhaps a personal emptiness as well.

Daniel Vosmaer, *Explosion of the Powder Magazine in Delft,* 1654,
Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford

This was the worst urban disaster of the Dutch Golden Age. Eighty to Ninety thousand pounds of gunpowder exploded on 12 October 1654 at 11:20 a.m. The explosion was heard eighty miles away in Texel. A whole northeast part of the city was destroyed with over 100 dead. The two militia buildings were destroyed together with hundreds of houses. Roofs of houses and trees in nearby neighborhoods collapsed. The site of the explosion created a deep crater that filled with water from the river. Glass, porcelain and other objects fell from shelves throughout the city. The towers and fabric of the churches survived but there was a good deal of damage to art in the buildings.

Egbert van der Poel, *Explosion in Delft 1654*, Museum Het Prinsenhof, Delft.

Herman Saftleven, *View of Delft after the explosion of Gunpowder at the Arsenal on October 12, 1654*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

The explosion was the subject of many literary accounts and numerous paintings and prints. Vosmaer and Egbert van der Poel produced at least twenty oil paintings on the subject. The site became a tourist destination. The Winter Queen came to see the site for herself and other well-known people visited and commented on the disaster in their diaries and writings. Van Bleswijck, a contemporary historian of Delft, reminded his readers of the words in the Second Epistle of St. Peter the Apostle, 3:10: “But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works which are in it, shall be burnt up.”

Daniel Vosmaer, *Delft from an Imaginary Loggia*, 1663, Museum Het Prinsenhof, Delft

This large painting juxtaposes a whimsical imaginary Renaissance style loggia with an exceptionally realistic view of Delft. Vosmaer's point of view is on the southwest just outside the city's wall. The two windmills rising above the walls are the Gasthuismolen and Steckmolen. From left to right are the towers of the city's major buildings, the Nieuwe Kerk, the Oude Kerk, the Town Hall, and the Waalse Kerk. The latter is where William of Orange worshipped in his private chapel at the Prinsenhof. There was no major building at his view point. Vosmaer was well aware of perspective theory and he constructed his loggia so that orthogonal lines from his point of view would reach a vanishing point and provide a three-dimensional illusion. His imaginary logia was imaginary only in its location since it was based on the citizens' chamber in the Town Hall.

Daniel Vosmaer, *View of Delft from the Southwest*, 1615, Museum Het Prinsenhof, Delft

Vosmaer's fame was as a marine painter. He received many commissions from the VOC, which paid him handsomely. His ability to skillfully portray details also brought city commissions, as this panoramic view of Delft from the southwest with the Nieuwe Kerk on the left and the Oude Kerk on the right. There is also a pendant painting from the Northwest. They are the earliest independent cityscapes painted in the Netherlands. In the foreground he also painstakingly pictured many anecdotal details.

The western ramparts are dominated by the Jorispoort (St. George Gate), also known as the Watersloot Gate. Via the Buitenwatersloot, in the middle of the picture, the viewer is guided to the imposing city gate where the High Court of Delfland had administered justice since 1536. A prison, City Inn and the Meisjeshuis (Girls orphanage were later built near it. Between the water gate and the Nieuwe Kerk is the Town Hall, and beyond the Nieuwe Kerk is the tower of the Gasthuiskerk (Hospital Church). Outside of the ramparts on the right are the local timber yards and several ships are in the Kolk harbor, which also can be seen in Vermeer's View of Delft.

Vosmaer did bend reality by painting the Oudekerk and Nieuwekerk from much further away than the rest of the city so that the towers appear closer together. In the front we see pastures before the city and buildings on the waterfront. The inn on the right has a cloverleaf sign but there was no such named inn at the time. A woman rows and her companion punts toward the city with a boat laden with white cabbage. Figures walk along the quay, others sit in front of shops and a milkmaid milks a cow in the meadow. Such anecdotal scenes draw the viewer into the picture.

Daniel Vosmaer, *View of Delft from the* Northwest, c. 1615, Museum Het Prinsenhof, Delft

His second view of Delft has the exact same horizon and an identical milkmaid is on the right. The water in the foreground is the Delfts Vliet canal, which goes to The Hague and on to Leiden.

Adriaen van de Venne, *Trekschuit on the Vliet between Delft and The Hague*
c. 1625, British Museum, London

In the seventeenth century the Dutch built an extensive public water transportation system that connected all the major cities in Holland, and some in other provinces, that operated on set schedules and prices.

Today you can still take a boat on the Vliet from Leiderdorp to Delft.

Johannes Vermeer, *View of Delft,* c. 1661-62, Mauritshuis, The Hague

Vermeer's *View of Delft* is one of the most memorable cityscapes ever created. While drawing on Vroom's profile pictures that hung in the Town Hall, he came closer to the city and only painted its central core, allowing immediate access to the city across from its harbor. His contemporaries would have immediately noted the stillness of the scene since the Kolk was a busy location with ships going up and down the Schie Canal to Delfshaven, Schiedam and Rotterdam. Vermeer's two boats are at the quay and moored, with no activity on or around them. Except for the small transport boat in the front, the boats blend in with their background. The few figures also appear very still.

Vermeer's composition is less horizontal than Vroom's, which allowed him to include a dramatic sky stretching into the distance. Alternating bands of light and dark give his picture great weight and substance both in the sky and the city. Early morning light floods the city's interior and highlights the tower of the Nieuwe Kerk that suggests both spiritual and visual power. Other than *The Little Street*, he did not paint urban life or city architecture. The large scale of the painting suggests that it must have been a commissioned work but there are no

records of this. The first we know of the work was in a 1695 when it sold in Amsterdam for 200 gulden, more than any of the twenty-one Vermeer paintings in the auction.

Vermeer carefully depicted the Rotterdam gate with its twin towers and the Schiedam gate with its cupola. The facades on the Kethelstraat are accurate as well as the towers of the Oudekerk and Nieuwekerk. Contemporary maps and prints do show that he simplified the profile since the buildings were taller, narrower and set more closely together. X-radiography showed that he carefully adjusted the picture through manipulating the lighting. Many have argued that he simulated the effects that he had observed in by using a camera obscura, as he did in other paintings, to adjust the lighting to produce diffused images. The timeless dark weathered buildings suggest Delft's long history and the light on the Nieuwekerk perhaps refers to the tomb of William of Orange.

Johannes Vermeer, *View of Houses in Delft*, c. 1658, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

The colloquial name for this paintings is *Straatje van Vermeer,* Vermeer's little street. It is remarkable for its time as a painting of ordinary houses. *The Little Street* gives us a startlingly

framed view of a plain row of worn facades, rendered with meticulous attention to the mundane details that make up the history of these buildings. We notice cracks in the masonry, peeling paint, and water stains in the white wash that covers the brick halfway up the ground floor. We would never spend much time pondering these houses in the street, but Vermeer's scrutinizing eye has made them worthy of our attention. It is the occupants that seem to make them so, for we spot two women and children absorbed in their daily activities: small chores and simple games, from the look of it.

Johannes Vermeer Straatje, Vlamingstraat 40-42, Delft

According to recent research by Professor Hans Grijzenhout (see the Rijksmuseum website), Vermeer's famous picture was Vlamingstraat at what is now ns 40-42. His argument is based on a 1667 document that listed the assessment to be paid by the houses at this location for repairs to the street and canal. The current houses were built in the 19th century but the little gate on the right dates from Vermeer's time. The house on the right was owned by one of Vermeer's aunts, who supported herself and her five children by selling pens. The gate was called the Penspoort. Vermeer's mother and sister lived on the same canal. Thus, this unusual Vermeer painting had personal meaning for the painter. Although there has been some dispute about the location of the houses, experts agree that Vermeer's picture is not an exact realistic depiction of the actual houses, since he seems to have taken details from a variety of houses of this sort for this picture.

Pieter de Hooch, *Courtyard Scene in Delft*, 1658, Private Collection

By the late 1650s Delft had become a tourist destination for visitors who came to see the devastation from the 1654 explosion, the site of which the town government left as a memorial, and the tombs of the Princes of Orange. The center around the Oud Canal was a pleasant and well maintained urban area had neat houses with brick courtyards, which provided residents with quiet and pleasant semi-private places to relax and visit. This environment inspired some of Pieter de Hooch's finest paintings. A few friends have gathered under a wooden arbor supported by grapevines. The scene's quiet and peaceful mood is enhanced by the ordered and harmonious arrangement of architectural and figural elements, and interspersed with red, blue and white

throughout the setting. Particularly effective is the yellow satin sheen of the little girl's dress as she cuddles a small dog.

This vignette of love and caring is given a spiritual dimension with a plaque above her, which came from a former cloister that had been closed during the Reformation in the late 16th century and was placed above a residential entrance to the courtyard. It reads: "This is St. Hieronymusdale (St. Jerome's valley), yield to patience and submission, for we must first descend before being raised, 1614." The grapevines obscure many of the words but not "patience" and "submission." De Hooch emphasizes the importance of these virtues in the conduct of communal private life. Although the courtyard is private, it is not closed. The jacket and sword suggests that one among this group is a visitor. A figure in the window opposite suggests a neighborly presence.

Pieter de Hooch, *The Courtyard of a House in Delft*, 1658, National Gallery, London

Even though this work includes the same plaque from the cloister, it differs from the other painting in almost every detail. The architecture takes precedence over the figures in the painting. The decayed garden wall on the right contrasts with the well-preserved house on the left, where a passage provides a view of the street beyond with a freshly swept pavement. The painting demonstrates the imaginative nature of Dutch realism. Dutch artists selected discrete

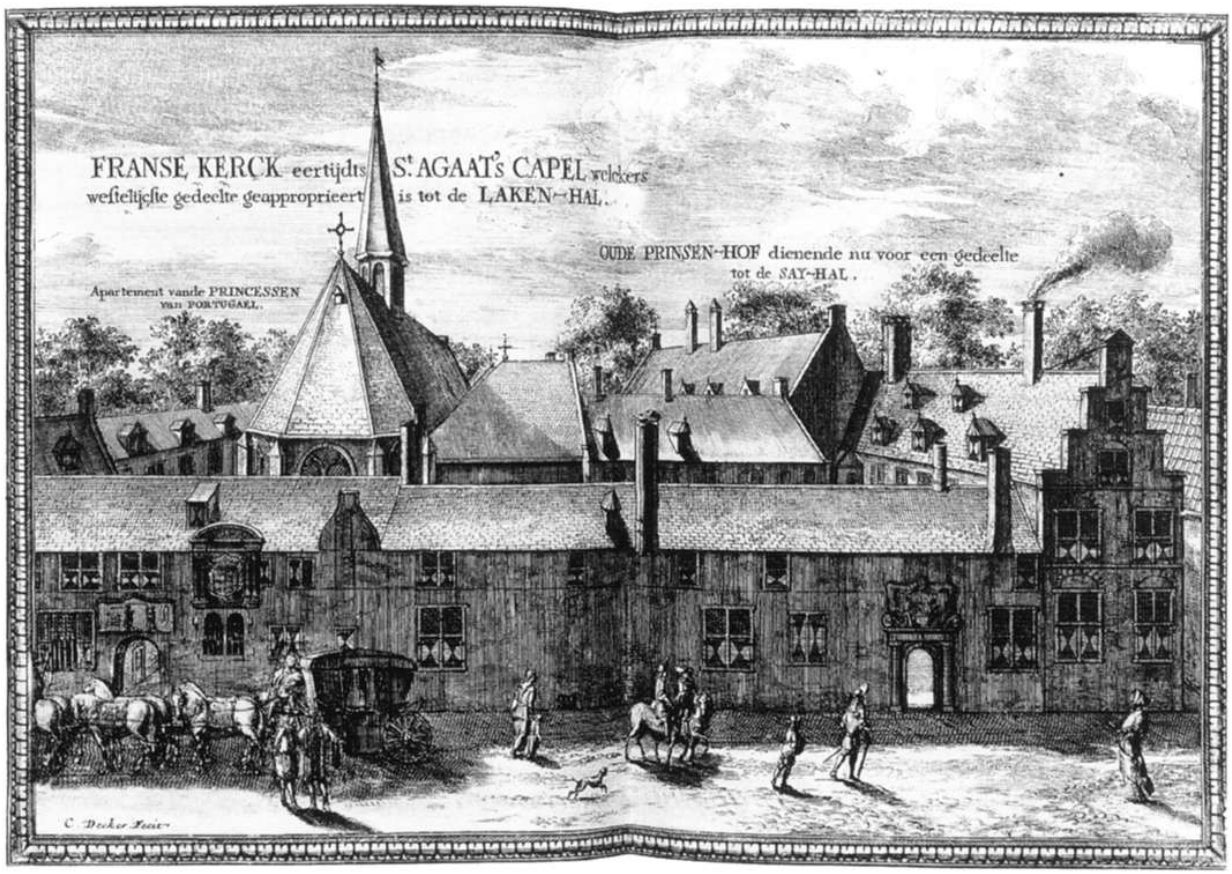
pictorial elements for thematic purposes. De Hooch manipulated the character of the city, its buildings, and even the remnants of former structures to create an image that offered moral guidance for personal and communal behavior.

Pieter de Hooch, *Portrait of a Family in a Courtyard in Delft*, 1658, Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der Bildenden Künsten, Vienna

In Amsterdam and Haarlem, the depiction of urban life focused on public spaces, such as the Dam or the Grote Markt, or on public buildings. In Delft there are few of such paintings. Instead, the focus is on its citizens—their hopes, their daily chores, their family bonds, and their private lives. In this painting de Hooch pictures three generations of a family in a semi-private courtyard

near the protective town wall and a wood-framed garden house. The family patriarch sits on the foreground with his feet firmly planted on the brick path that leads to the open door in the wooden wall that leads from their courtyard to the next. His wife sits next to him with a bunch of grapes from a fruit-bowl, an emblem of fertility and fecundity. A daughter sits with them and behind her are her husband and son. The couple standing on the left are probably the patriarch's son and his wife near a wall covered with roses, a sign of love, while she holds a peach, denoting love and sincerity. The tower of the Nieuwekerk suggests that the family is god-fearing and law-abiding. De Hooch was not troubled by topographical accuracy. The church tower was not near the walls. He was interested in picturing the semblance of reality. He was a master of portraying light and the texture of materials that lent realism to the scene. De Hooch's pictures represent respectable, moral, and conventional citizens of cities such as Delft who were comfortable within the walls of their town and happy with their domestic environment. The appeal of many of his paintings are their natural seeming naiveté.

Coenraet Decker, *The Convent of St. Agatha and Prinsenhof,* c. 1667-1680, Private Collection



In 1252 an elite convent was founded in Koningsveld, near Delft and in 1280 a Béguin community for women was founded by a wealthy donor. In the 14th century several other elite religious communities settled in the city. The largest of these was St. Agatha in 1380. It was founded by a Delft priest for "virgins who cherished a love of poverty." About twenty years later

it adopted the rules of the Third Order of Franciscan nuns. The order expanded rapidly and acquired the right to build a church and obtained tax exemptions. The Third Order allowed them to move freely between their convent and their properties outside of the walls. During the 15th century they prospered and had forgotten about their vows of poverty. They attracted wealthy women and grew to 125 nuns but declined in the 16th century and at the time of the Alteration they were down to sixty. Unlike the other six convents, their facilities were extensive and survived, although much altered. There was a large church, a chapter house, reception and living accommodations, elaborate guest accommodations, galleries, a library, refectory, kitchens, dormitories and formal gardens.

Of the six other convents in Delft, only one was a mendicant order. The others all adopted a more comfortable lifestyle. The number of these women's institutions was unusually large for a town of its size in the northern Netherlands. This suggests an atmosphere of female religiosity in the city that was also reflected in the women's cults that established memorials in both the Oudekerk and the Nieuwekerk. The roots of this religiosity was to be found in the *Devotio Moderna*.

Elisabeth de Bièvre observed that these women identified with the life of Christ, above all with his suffering, and that this was the road to salvation as explained in a contemporary text: "as the pelican feedeth his young with his blood, so feedeth Christ with his passion." She went on to note: "The sisters would be absorbed in visions of the Baby Jesus and would dream of Him as the Bridegroom waiting at the gates of heaven to receive each of them from their deathbed. These women, turning away from the harsh reality, found in their imagination the fulfillment of several of their most fundamental needs. By concentrating on Jesus as a child, their maternal feelings were met; by loving Jesus as a bridegroom, their eroticism was satisfied; and by embracing Christ's suffering, their compassion for the ill and suffering was facilitated at the same time as they came to terms with their own mortality. These were the visions that were constantly in their minds, whether they were dressing, breakfasting, attending to their weaving, writing or painting their manuscripts. The mixture of an emphasis on the proprieties of their daily behavior and a concentration on vivid mental images of the incarnation of God prepared the way for the integration of realism and symbolism in the visual arts of Delft for centuries to come, culminating in the works of Vermeer" (*Dutch Art and Urban Culture,* p.168).

Not long after the establishment of the St. Agatha convent, the town government invited the Bretheren of the Common Life from Deventer to establish a monastery in Delft. In 1403 the *fraterheren* (lords frater) established themselves next to the St. Agatha convent. Originally they followed the Franciscan third order rules but they became regular canons of Augustine a few years later. The General Chapter of the Delft monastery prospered and by the mid 15th century its Prior General supervised 25 monasteries. In contrast to the Brothers of the Common Life, the order now focused on biblical reading and manuscript illustration as a form of contemplation, rather than on the ideals of social service and education of the Bretheren of the Common Life. The monastery's library and grand architecture were supported by extensive landholdings and its members came from the upper classes. The monastery declined in the 16th century and in 1544

arson burnt its church with all its alters and art, the main building with the cells, the hospital, guesthouses, library, refectory and the dormitory for the female servants.

Master of the Spes Nostra, *Four Regular Canons of the Mt. Sion Monastery,* c.1500, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

During the second half of the 15th century the monasteries of Delft, both male and female, were widely known for their illuminated painted copies of religious manuscripts,

The four kneeling figures are dressed in the habits of St. Augustine. The buildings are similar to a written descriptions of the Mt. Sion monastery near Delft. In the center on the low brick wall are St. Mary and St. Elizabeth, who rests her hand on the unborn child, *Spes Nostra*, our hope for salvation. The open tomb holds a decomposed corps of a priest. The figures beyond the canons are St. Jerome and St. Augustine, the patron saints of Mt. Sion and the most important Church Fathers for the Bretheren of the Common Life. The inscription asks the passerby to pray for the dead and the inscription on the coffin reads, *Requiescant in pace*, may they rest in peace. The scenes in the courtyard are from Mary's life. Beyond the courtyard are elegant trees that suggest the refined life of Delft. Note the rectangular pattern of the architecture, which was characteristic of Delft's layout.

Master of Virgo inter Virgins, *Madonna and Child with Four Holy Virgins* c. 1495-1600, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

The Virgin sits in an enclosed garden, a symbol of virginity, surrounded by four virgins. They are identifiable from attributes on their necklaces that show their martyr symbols. They are St. Catherine, with a wheel and sword, St. Cecilia with an organ, St. Barbara, with a tower, and St. Ursula, with a heart and arrow. The women are luxuriously dressed refined young women. Two meditate on open books while the other two are more directly involved with the Christ child. St Catherine's mystical marriage is shown on the left. The holy women are enclosed in a tiled and fenced space and are perhaps a vision of the women on the left. The scene is remarkably uncluttered, geometric and with a deep perspective.

Maarten van Heemskerk, *Erythrean Sybil*, 1564, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

The early success of the visual arts in Delft diminished in the first half of the 16th century, perhaps due to the success of printing, which lowered the demand for illuminated manuscripts, and because of Delft's relative economic decline. However, in 1650 the master of the Nieuwe Kerk turned to the Utrecht painter, Jan van Scorel, for a large triptych that has been lost. The St. Agnes Convent also remained an important patron and commissioned Maarten van Heemskerk, who had been apprenticed in Delft, to paint a triptych that combined religious imagery with civic patriotism. The only panel that has survived has a donor on one side and on the other side is a woman in a landscape with towers that look like Delft behind her. She has a book of prophesies

in her hand. St. Augustine described her as belonging to the City of God. Her hand may salute Delft as the new *Civitas Dei.* Heemskerk painted another triptych for St. Agatha in 1564 but it was destroyed in the *beeldenstorm* of 1566. The Oudekerk commissioned a spectacular new alter in the early 1560s that was also destroyed by the iconoclasts.

Museum Het Prinsenhof

With the Alteration of 1572 and the closure of the convents and monasteries, many of the social and economic functions of the Church were taken over by secular institutions whose leaders were appointed by the town council. The convents and monasteries outside of the walls were destroyed during the revolt. The St. Agatha complex was converted as lodging and reception facilities for visiting dignitaries. In 1583 Prince William of Orange moved into it as his residence, in which he was assassinated in 1584. St. Barbara was turned into an orphanage. Another former convent took in plague victims. Another, with weaving and spinning facilities, was leased to a Flemish merchant and the weaving of tapestries began in another. In 1595, a group of Catholic facilities were razed to make room for a *beestenmarkt* and the buildings of the Canons of St. Jerome became a canon foundry. Others became private houses.

Egbert van der Poel, *Bonfires besides the Oude Delft Canal*, c. 1650,
Museum Het Prinsenhof, Delft

Egbert van der Poel was known for nocturnal pictures of fantasized burning villages but this one can be identified as burning barrels of pitch in Delft along the Oude, a few meters beyond the Gemeenteshuis of the Hoogheemraadschap, the regional drainage and dike authority. A carriage with open curtains stand in front of the building and another just crossed the bridge. The focus, however, is on the burning barrels of pitch that were used to enliven festivities that often included fireworks. In the right background looms the silhouette of the Oude Kerk. It has been suggested that this was a commemoration of the Peace of Munster in 1648 but there is no hard evidence for this.

Anonymous, *The Burning of the Town Hall of Delft*, early 17th century,
Museum Het Prinsenhof, Delft

On March 6, 1618, Delft's Town Hall was destroyed by fire. Hendrik de Keyser, who was working on the Nieuwekerk across the square at the time, was commissioned to build a new one, which was completed in 1620.

Around 1620, the population of Delft stabilized at about 25, 000, much smaller than Leiden, Haarlem, and Amsterdam. During the sixteenth century of 1537 and 1557 Delft's labor force was reduced by about 5,000. Shortages of imported grain and local rye damaged its beer industry. The iconoclast riots added another blow in 1566.

Hendrick de Keyser, *Delft Town Hall Proposal*, drawing, 1618-20

De Keyser's rectangular classical renaissance building was typical of Delft's orderly geometric layout

Jan van Compe, *Delft Town Hall seen from the Grote Markt,* c. 1745-55. Museum Het Prinsenhof, Delft

The Belfry, originally built in about 1300, was the only part of the building that survived the fire. It was built using Gobertanger limestone from Wallonia. Its clock face dates from about 1536. The façade has a Justitia statue, which was common on medieval court buildings, which were called The Steen in the Flemish and Dutch Low Countries. It was seen as a majestic palace with an authoritative Latin inscription, *AMAT PUNIT CONSERVAT HONORAT NEQUITIAM PACEM CROMINNA JURA PROBOS*, This house hates iniquity, loves peace, punishes crime, maintains the laws, and honors the righteous.

The tower has a prison underneath where Gérard Balthasar was kept before being executed for his assignation of William of Orange.

Delft Town Hall

Vierschaar (Tribunal where criminal court decisions are announced), Town Hall, Delft,

Pieter van Bronkhorst, *Perspectyf with Solomon's Judgement*, 1622,

Museum Het Prinsenhof, Delft

The Town commissioned this painting from Bronkhorst, a local painter, to hang across from the main entrance on the wall of the tribunal. There are two groups of military figures in the foreground with Solomon sitting in an open Loggia on the right. The eye of the viewer is led through a long colonnaded arcade to a central vanishing point. The space creating loggia and arcade both overlook a wide square surrounded by other commanding buildings. Solomon's imaginary setting mirrors the town hall and the city's square immediately outside.

The Town Hall displayed some religious paintings rescued from the *Beeldenstorm* with suitable civic and moral messages. The town council also commissioned a series of large tapestries that were hung in the town hall with moral and civic messages.

Michiel van Mierevelt, *Portrait of Prince Maurits in his Gold-plate Suite of Armor as the Captain-General of the States Armies*, c. 1613-20, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

As the Prince of Orange's prestige went up as the leader of the Revolt in 1572, he decided to accept the offer of St. Agatha as a residence. He led the revolt from Delft until his assassination in 1584. Delft became an important garrison town, especially after The Hague was laid in ruins by the Spanish. In 1577 the States of Holland moved to Delft and many noble families took up residence in the city. As a result, the arts began to flourish again, especially high class portrait painting, such as Mierevelt's painting of Prince Maurits. The town councilors ordered nine more portraits of the Princes of Orange during the early 1620s.

Hendrik de Keyser, *Funeral Monument of Prins Willem I*, 1616-21, Nieuwe Kerk, Delft

In 1616 the States General decided to commission a funeral monument for William of Orange. It was erected on the former high alter of the NIeuwe Kerk in Delft. Its columnar form celebrated the lost high alter of the Oude Kerk. Using the most expensive marble and bronze materials, the Prince sits with his back toward the softer marble image, which captures his features lying in state at the time of his death. It is the most magnificent funerary monument on the Netherlands.

Piet Hein Grave Monument, 1638, Oude Kerk, Delft.

Piet Hein was born in Delfshaven in 1577. The son of a ship captain, he had a colorful career that included being captured by the Spanish on two occasions and assigned as a galley rower. Freed in 1602 in a prisoner exchange, he was captured again and was imprisoned in Havana. In 1607 he went to work for the VOC and was involved in several campaigns in the East Indies. He married in 1612 and commanded his own armed ship. While he was in the Mediterranean in 1618 the Venetians forced him to join them in a naval battle with the Turks. He did not return home until 1623 and joined the West India Company, for which he led three expeditions as a vice admiral. In 1626 he was made Admiral and Captain General of Dutch naval activities in the Americas. In 1628 he captured a return fleet of Spanish ships with booty of 11 million guldens in gold. He died a year later in an action against Dunkirk privateers. His funeral and burial in the Oude Kerk in Delft on July 4th was a state occasion.

Hendrick Cornelisz Van Vliet, *Interior of the Oude Kerk with The tomb of Admiral Tromp*, 1658, Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio

Van Vliet was a prolific Delft painter known for architectural paintings and portraits. He received a commission to paint the Tromp monument in the Oude Kerk, which had just been installed and paid for by the States General. Tromp was the famous Admiral who defeated a much larger Spanish fleet at the Battle of the Downs in 1639. He was killed in 1653 in the Battle of Scheveningen in the first Anglo-Dutch War.

Joost van den Vondel, the most important Dutch poet and playwright of the period, wrote:

Here rests the hero Tromp, the brave protector
of shipping and free sea, serving free land
his memory alive in artful spectre
as if he had just died at his last stand
His knell the cries of death, guns' thunderous call
a burning Brittany too Great for sea alone
He's carved himself an image in the hearts of all
more lasting than grave's splendour and its marble stone

Bartholomeus Bassen, *Tomb of William the Silent in an Imaginary Church*, 1620, Szépmüvészati, Budapest

This painting was completed two years before the tomb was actually placed in the Nieuwe Kerk. It demonstrates the interest of perspective in Delft. It is set in an imaginary Gothic church in a centralized linear perspective, which is accentuated by the columns of the nave and crossing, as well as the vaults of the ceiling and the tiled floor. All details, wall monuments, flags, coats of arms and visitors receive equal painstaking attention and are spread like jewels in regular proportion and with recurring accents of color around the whole canvas. This tradition of architectural fantasy constructed with ruler and compass according to the rules of perspective was first formulated in Florence and brought north to Antwerp and further north by Hans Fredeman from Leeuwarden in the 16th century.

Gerard Houckgest, Nieuwe Kerk with Funeral Monument of Prince Willem I, 1650, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg

In this painting Houckgeest used a new bifocal perspective. The system created an accent on intersecting lines with two vanishing points. In the single vanishing point the eye leads toward a point in the distance but in the bifocal perspective the eye leads to the intersection, which of necessity is more in the foreground or middle distance. In the foreground two, two gigantic white columns caste an initial spell of awe on the viewer. Attention is then directed to the intersection of the floor tiles. The monument with black and white columns and a pediment catches the sunlight coming from the south crossing. While the monument is immediately identified by the viewer as that of William I, neither of the effigies are visible to the viewer to help with identification. Only the statue of Freedom is prominently displayed and privileged over the other three bronze statues on the tomb, Justice, Strength, Religion and Fame. Freedom is recognizable

by her hat and staff. In ancient Rome, freed slaves were given a hat for their shaved heads and were touched by a rod.

The disregard for traditional city freedoms were one of the chief causes of the revolt against the centralizing efforts of Charles V and Philip II. The fact that the Treaty of Münster had just been signed in 1648, in which Spain finally recognized the independence of the Dutch Republic, and the role of the Princes of Orange as military leaders had made the treaty possible. Both had symbolic importance in Delft. Moreover, the political instability that followed the unexpected death of William II in 1650 made the monuments in Delft all the more important for the Orange cause.

Emanuel de Witte, The Nieuwe Kerk in Delft with the Tomb of William the Silent, 1651, Museum Briner und Kern, Winterthur

De Witte was another painter who specialized in architectural paintings. His work is more dramatic with a play of light and shadow. He moved from Delft to Amsterdam in 1651. After the death of his first wife in 1655, he married a 23-year-old orphan. She and his adolescent daughter were convicted of theft and were exiled from the city. De Witte was forced to indenture himself to an art dealer and lost all his paintings. He was a gambler and hanged himself from a canal bridge in 1692, but the rope broke and he drowned. Since the canal froze, his body was not found until eleven weeks later

Delftware Display in a Delft Shop.

Delft became known for producing luxury goods in the 17th century. While it had some success in carpet weaving and silk production, its signature product became faience. After the sack of Antwerp in 1576, many Antwerp pottery manufacturers and artists moved north. By the 1670s there were thirty pottery workshops in Delft, each of which employed 40 to 50 people. At first it concentrated on tin-glazed pottery that imitated popular Italian majolica. Delft's investments and contacts with the VOC, the Dutch East India Company, saw it develop its signature blue and white pottery, which imitated Chinese and Japanese porcelain by applying several layers of clear glaze. From about 1615, the potters began to coat their pottery completely in white tin glaze instead of covering only the painted surface and coating the rest with clear ceramic glaze. They then began to cover the tin-glaze with clear glaze, which gave depth to the fired surface and smoothness to cobalt blues, ultimately creating a good resemblance to porcelain. At first several colors were used but by about 1620 cobalt blue became its main color.

During the early 17th century the VOC imported millions of pieces of Chinese porcelain, some of which were specially made in China with Dutch motifs. Chinese pottery, however, was expensive, and during the 1620s the supply was curtailed by political instability in China. Delft's potters seized the opportunity to produce a cheaper domestic imitation pottery. After much experimenting, they managed to make a thin type of earthenware which was covered with a white tin glaze. Although made of low-fired earthenware, it resembled porcelain amazingly well.

The Guild of St. Luke, to which painters in all media had to belong, admitted ten master potters in the thirty years between 1610 and 1640, and twenty in the nine years 1651 to 1660. The color pigments were milled in special windmills. The workshops needed a good deal of space and water. After the gunpowder explosion of 1654 destroyed many breweries, space became available to pottery makers looking for larger premises; some retained the old brewery names, e.g. *The Double Tankard*, *The Young Moors' Head*, and *The Three Bells.* The use of marl, a type of clay rich in calcium compounds, allowed the Dutch potters to refine their technique and to make finer items. The usual clay body of Delftware was a blend of three clays, one local, one from Tournai and one from the Rhineland.

Delftware ranged from simple household items--plain white earthenware with little or no decoration--to fancy artwork. Most of the Delft factories made sets of jars, the *kast-stel* set. Pictorial plates were made in abundance, illustrated with religious motifs, native Dutch scenes with windmills, fishing boats, hunting scenes, landscapes and seascapes. Sets of plates were made with the words and music of songs. When dessert was served on them and when the plates were empty, the guests started singing. The Delft potters also made tiles in vast numbers (estimated at eight hundred million over a period of two hundred years). Many old Dutch houses still have tiles that were placed in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Tulip Vase, 1700-1800, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam

Imari style vase, 1700-1720, Griekse A pottery, Museum Geelvinck-Hinlopen Huis, Amsterdam

After Japanese Imari ware had become popular in the late 1600s and early 1700s (when it too tried to fill the gap of the Chinese shortage), Delft began making their own 'Imari ware' copying the classic flower vase on a terrace surrounded by three panels with cranes and pine design. The Dutch were the only ones permitted to trade in Japan for three hundred years.

Delftware inspired by Chinese originals persisted from about 1630 to the mid-18th century alongside European patterns. Around 1700 several factories were using enamel colors and gilding over the tin-glaze, requiring a third kiln firing at a lower temperature.

Christian IV's toilet, Rosenburg Castle, Copenhagen, c. 1620

Delft tiles were widely used in Dutch houses and were a major export industry.

Qu*een Mary's 'Milk' Cellar* at Het Loo

Queen Mary and King William III Delftware, 1690, Gemeente Museum, Amsterdam

Jacob Woutersz Vosmaer, *Still-Life Flowers in a Fritillary in a Stone Niche*, c.1613, Private Collection

Vosmaer was a Delft painter who learned how to apply elegant refinement to flower paintings in order to please discriminating Delft patrons and established a strong tradition in this genre in the city. He started out as a landscape painter but discovered that he could be more successful as a flower painter.

Balthasar van der Ast, *Delft Blue Vase with Flowers near a Window*, c. 1650-57,

Anthaltische Gemäldegalerie, Dessau, Germany

Van der Ast, who was born in a flower production area near Middleburg, moved to Delft in 1632 and remained there until his death in 1660. He was a pupil and brother in law of the most famous flower painter in the Netherlands, Ambrosius Bosschaert. The latter was originally from Antwerp, but moved to Middleburgh to escape religious persecution. Like his teacher Ast delivered flower paintings to the court in The Hague and also found wealthy patrons in Delft. In this painting, he not only put his flowers in a Delft blue vase but also gave the viewer a glimpse of the city through the window.

Balthasar van der *Ast, Fruit Still-life with Shells and a Tulip*, c. 1629, Mauritshuis, The Hague

Anthonie Palamedesz*, Guardroom with Officer, Drummer, and Standard Bearer*, 1646, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Delft became a garrison town and there are many group paintings of the military from the period. In de Hooch's paintings there are many figures in military uniforms who visit the spacious houses in his pictures.

Leonard Bramer, *The Sacrifice of Iphigenia,* 1623, Museum Het Prinsenhof, Delft

One of the most popular Delft painters was Leonard Bramer (1596-1674). He had spent thirteen years in Italy and was primarily a history painter in Delft. His clients included Prince Frederik Hendrik in Rijswijk and Count Maurits van Nassau, as well as other wealthy buyers. He produced numerous drawings of ancient, biblical and contemporary literary sources. Many of these were done in series, such as those illustrating classical and biblical literary works, and were designed to be inspected close up while others were fresco paintings in houses. The wall and ceiling paintings no longer exist. He also produced modest sized oil paintings on panels, such as this one.

Christiaen van Couwenbergh, *Samson and Delilah*, 1632, Dordrechts Museum, Dordrecht

Van Couwenbergh was another popular history painter in Delft who had elite clients. He also worked for wealthy patrons at the court. This painting is based on a 1613 engraving after a famous Rubens painting. It was bought by the town council in Dordrecht and hung in its town hall. Van Couwenbergh moved to The Hague in 1647 to work on the Huis ten Bosch project.

De Bièvre argues that many contemporary sources mention that in the early 17th century the citizens of Delft were more serious, morally inclined, enjoyed a stable government, had a high level of civic pride and did not spend their wealth foolishly so that there would be more left over for their children. This allowed later generations to live comfortably on inherited wealth and sustain the formal magnificence seen in later architectural paintings, whose grandeur elevated the otherwise non-historical subject to the desired moral height of history painting in the same way,

Vermeer emancipated the subject of 'sparing and careful' single figures in a wealthy interior (p. 187). Pieter Claesz van Ruyven, who inherited his fabulous wealth from his brewer ancestors, never needed to work in his life and concentrated on buying paintings, including twenty elegant and polite paintings by Vermeer

Jan Steen, *Adolf Croeser and His Daughter Catherine Giving Alms*, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

This is a classic portrayal of class distinctions in the United Provinces.
Jan Steen, whose paintings generally picture disorder, produced this uniquely orderly composition of the wealthy Delft grain merchant, his 13-year-old daughter, and the poor seeking alms. Steen spent a number of years in Delft unsuccessfully running a brewing business before he became a full-time painter. Croeser was a burgomaster and stood surety for a loan for Steen. The Oude Delft canal is at a ninety-degree angle to the figures. Steen must have been aware of the impeccable material surroundings and the reputation for charity Delft enjoyed.

Pieter de Hooch, *Interior with a Woman Drinking with Men*, c. 1658, National Gallery, London

It was in Delft that the light, spacious and elegant interiors of burgher houses were first painted by de Hooch and Vermeer, Constantijn Huygens, the courtly secretary of Prince Frederik Hendrik, was impressed by the interiors in Delft's comfortable houses:

> "Parlours arrange at their most elegant
> As if you were in the middle of Delft; marbled halls
> And with that new material; what is it called?
> Cabinets,
> Display cases for a Prince, with plates and with leather."

Numerous commentators at the time noted the cleanliness and orderliness of the city with its geometric street plan and magnificent public buildings. Its reputation for cleanliness may have been encouraged by its brewing industry, which needed clean water. After the disastrous fire of 1536, Delft required all house roofs to be made of tile rather than thatch. Subsequently, it required that every house had to have a privy on the property, so that waste would not go into the canals. Streets were designed with a special gutter so that they could be swept. Waste was collected in special containers near canals so that they could be emptied in special barges. Special windmills were built to clean the canals. Delft required that all property owners were responsible for keeping the streets clean and became a national characteristic in the Republic.

It was no accident that Pieter de Hooch, who moved from Rotterdam to Delft, developed a new kind of picture that featured bricked courtyards and clean streets and that Vermeer also produced such a street view. Both brick and canals gave man-made shape and order to natural materials. In many urban paintings, such as in Vermeer's famous street scene, there are buckets, brooms, and people using them. Even Vermeer's view of Delft after the great explosion is sparkling clean. Delft perspective painting and portraiture were associated with the taste of a courtly, discerning and conservative public. We associate Delft with Vermeer but it is important to remember that he was not the best known painter in the city and the genre paintings for which he became famous were part of a larger innovation in painting that was labeled genre painting in the 19th century.

Balthasar de Monconys, a French diplomat and art connoisseur, noted in his diary of August 1663 that during his visit to Delft Vermeer had not been able to show him a single painting, but he had seen one in the house of a local baker. The baker was no ordinary baker since at his death he left an estate of 25,000 gulden, which made him one of the richest citizens of Delft. Vermeer's most important patron was the wealthy Pieter van Ruijven who owned twenty Vermeers but was not interested in showing them to people.

The first explicit recorded praise of Vermeer was by the heir to a wealthy Delft family when he went with a group of art connoisseurs, including Constantine Huygens the Younger, on an excursion to Delft in 1669. The group visited Vermeer and called him an "excellent painter." He was much impressed by his painting skills and his excellent use of perspective.

Vermeer was among a group of artists who favored modern subjects rather than the antique and the historical. In the nineteenth century, they were called genre painters. A contemporary of Vermeer, Gerard de Lairesse wrote that 'modern' painting was a relatively new invention, which had been developed in the northern and southern Netherlands during the 17th century. He made a distinction between the type of paintings produced for elevated people at court and those made for the bourgeoisie or common people of a lower social status He noted that subjects such as the manners and habits in the household appealed to the taste of the cultivated bourgeoisie. The rigid geometry of the paintings suggests their orderliness, discipline, and respectability.

Johannes Vermeer, *Lady and a Man a Virginal,* c. 1662-64, The Royal Collection, London

Paintings by Vermeer, of which there are only thirty-four, are difficult to date and any chronology has to be based on an interpretation of style and complexity of composition. A lady at the virginal was undoubtedly painted during the 1660s, but it is not possible to be more specific although there is at present a consensus of *c*.1662-4.

The composition is characterized by the rigorous use of perspective to draw the eye towards the back of the room where the figures are situated - the young woman rather surprisingly is seen from the back. The viewer is at first more aware of the jutting corner of the table, the chair and the bass viol than of the figures themselves, whose privacy is thereby protected. The back of the room is dominated by the virginal, comparable with those made by Andreas Ruckers the Elder, is like a grid of verticals and horizontals into which the figures are

carefully locked. Light is admitted through the windows on the left and fills the room, casting only soft, subtle shadows. A striking feature of the composition in this part is the mirror on the wall where the slightly blurred reflections include the young woman's face, part of the table and the legs of an artist's easel. The implication of this glimpsed easel is that Vermeer shares the same space as the figures he is depicting, but as a result of this artifice he is also, like the viewer, standing outside that space. In fact, Vermeer's composition is based on exclusion. Many of the elements, particularly at the back of the room, are seen only partially, as though indicating 'the appearance of the world as ungraspable'.

The inscription on the lid of the virginal, MUSICA LETITIAE CO[ME]S / MEDICINA DOLOR[IS], means 'Music is a companion in pleasure and a balm in sorrow.' It suggests that it is the relationship between the man and the young woman that is being explored by the artist, but what stage that relationship has reached is impossible to say. The fact that there are two musical instruments implies shared pleasures and a potential harmony, which is also indicated by the rapt expression on the man's face as he listens to the young woman or sings as she plays on the virginal. That some aspect of love is the presiding theme can be deduced not only from paintings by Vermeer's contemporaries, such as Metsu, but also by the presence in *A lady at the virginal* of the picture of Roman Charity (Cimon and Pero) by Dirck van Baburen on the wall in the background on the right. This is the story of how the imprisoned Cimon was nourished by his daughter Pero, symbolizing the ideal of Christian charity both physically and spiritually. It is known that Vermeer's mother-in-law, Maria Thins, owned such a painting and Vermeer did use another painting by this artist in the background of two of his other pictures. The vase on the table is placed below Roman Charity and so with regard to that picture may be an additional correlative for the young people in the room.

Beside the musical instruments and paintings, there is only a chair and two objects important to Delft, a luxurious tapestry on a table and an earthenware jug, referring to Delft’s pottery industry. Vermeer used more ultramarine blue than other painters of the period. Delft also encouraged Flemish tapestry makers to move to Delft. Tapestry and faience were Delft’s signature luxury products. Silk production also flourished in Delft. These three industries hired designers and painters and were crucial to the economic well-being of the city and promoted wealth and patrons for the arts. Such newcomers as Pieter de Hooch and Jan Steen adopted Delft’s genre style.

The mood of the interior by Vermeer is created as much by the careful selection of so few objects as by the confrontation of the two figures in whose plight, in the words of Lawrence Gowing, 'there rests, as gentle as the air itself, an allegory of liberty and bondage, an allegory, as the inscription informs us, of the pleasure and melancholy of love' “(Royal Collection website).

Johannes Vermeer, *The Procuress,* 1656, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden

This is the earliest known signed Vermeer painting. Until 1668, Vermeer did not date any other painting. The young artist seems to have been still dependent on well-established pictorial models and does not yet show the influence of the newer interior genre scenes of his contemporaries. It shows the influence of Caravaggio. It is half filled with a large rug over a table behind which half of the protagonists are hidden. Delft remained the only important center of rug and tapestry production in the northern Netherlands, providing work for many. Note the Chinese bowl on the extreme right -hand side of the table. Between 1602 and 1657 the Dutch imported millions of pieces of porcelain. Native Delft artisans began to e produce everything

from elaborate imitations of Chinese porcelain to the humble floor tiles seen in some of Vermeer's interiors.

There was not a large art market for quality paintings in Delft. Vermeer's father was an art dealer, who joined the Guild of St. Luke in 1631, and depended on local artists for his sales. He combined this business with inn-keeping. Estate inventories in Delft show that most of the bequests of poor households—the majority of the population—consisted of artisan goods but two-thirds had a few paintings listed. The paintings produced by the masters were overwhelmingly purchased by those estates in the top third by value. This was a much broader distribution of paintings than in other societies during the mid 17th century. Most of the named paintings in the Delft inventories were works by local painters. See John Michael Montias, *Vermeer and His Milieu: A Web of Social History,* Princeton University Press, 1989.

In 1641 Reynier Janz Vos, Vermeer's father, bought the house and inn called "Mechelen" on the Grote Markt, in center of Delft. The former Vos, who now called himself Vermeer, bought the building with 200 guilders in cash and two mortgages, one from a Haarlem brewer for 2,100 guilders and another for 400 guilders. The considerable sum of 2,500 guilders demonstrates that Reynier was a hard-working and trustworthy man.

Johannes Vermeer was born in 1632. By 1647 Vermeer must have begun his required six-year apprenticeship, which usually lasted from four to six years, with a painting master since he was accepted in the Delft guild in 1653. It is not known, however, with whom or where he studied. He was unable to pay in full the entrance fee of six guilders. He paid the remaining sum in 1655.

IN 1653, Johannes Vermeer and Catharina Bolnes married in Schipluiden, a small village south of Delft about an hour's walk away. The village was something of a Catholic enclave and the Jesuits were closely connected to it. Maria Thins Bolnes refused to give her consent in writing but "she would suffer the (marriage) banns be published and would tolerate it." Catharina was one year younger than Johannes. The young couple most likely went to live with Vermeer's family in the large inn bought by Vermeer's father called "Mechelen." Since Maria Thinn's own marriage to Reynier Bones (when he was a prosperous brick maker) had been very troubled, she considered very closely the marriage of her daughter.

Maria Thins' house on the Oude Langendijk was a couple of doors away from a Jesuit "hidden church. " It appears that Thins had already been involved with the Jesuits in her native Gouda. She divorced Reynier Bolnes and came into possession of considerable wealth.

Johannes Vermeer, *The Maid Asleep*, 1656-57, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

This work was only one or two steps removed from the *Procuress*. It is a low-life brothel scene of the kind that was very popular among Dutch burgers. The artist's palette in the *Maid Asleep* was warm but fairly somber. A rich oriental carpet delimits the foreground and creates a flat space of both paintings. However, the horizontal and vertical organization of the later painting's planimetric surface would become a hallmark of the artist's oeuvre, appears for the first time. In comparison to his contemporaries, Vermeer tended to minimize narrative and overt didactic messages.

In Nov. 30, 1657, Vermeer and his wife borrowed the sum of two hundred guilders from Pieter Claesz. van Ruijven, a wealthy Delft citizen and art collector who likely most likely purchased in the coming years more than twenty of Vermeer's works. This money may have been a kind of advance payment on the purchase of future works. Van Ruijven has been named

as Vermeer's only patron although he occasionally sold works to others. Van Ruijven was almost seven years older than Vermeer and seems to have had a personal bond with Vermeer that went well beyond the usual client/artist relationship.

Johannes Vermeer, *Girl Reading a Letter*, c. 1659, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden

Although this of subject was first painted by Pieter de Hooch and other predecessors, Vermeer purged the scene of its anecdotal character, concentrating on formal compositional values and rendering of light. From the beginning of his career, Vermeer was not so much an inventor but one who was able to elaborate current pictorial conventions in the light of his unique personal experience. He was unique among Dutch artists in his ability to incorporate the fundamental, moral seriousness of history painting into his representations of domestic life.

Johannes Vermeer. *The Milkmaid*, 1660, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Discussing Vemeer's *The Milkmaid*, Walter Liedtke pointed out that for "at least two centuries before Vermeer's time, milkmaids and kitchen maids had (or were assigned) a reputation for amorous predispositions. Netherlandish artists adopted this theme in works ranging in tone from coarsely erotic to slyly suggestive…"

In Liedtke's eyes, the maid's dubious social reputation, her "generous proportions," and her "warmth, softness and approachability are qualities not found in Vermeer's more refined young ladies." He noted that the milkmaid's naked arm, the footwarmer (whose smoldering coals would have not only warmed the maid's feet but another part of her anatomy beneath her skirt) and a tiny Cupid floor tile are so many signposts that point to a direction most can imagine."

Lisa Vergara wrote: "Reviewing his cast of female characters, we can easily see how often

Vermeer suggests through them the workings of the mind and the cultivation of the spirit that come together in the course of commonplace yet highly civilized activities. Not surprisingly, his women express habits of mind, hand, and heart akin to those we imagine the artist himself exercising as he planned and painted his pictures."

Mariët Westermann interprets Vermeer's "self-aware interiors, inhabited predominantly by these only apparently coquettish creatures," suggests that "it is women's capacity to think, rather than to obey religious or social canons, that brought Vermeer to paint them so often and with such deferential regard."

Johannes Vermeer, *Glass of Wine*, c.1661, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin

In about 1660, at the age 28, Vermeer turned to a new and more complex type of composition in which he explored the amorous relation between educated men and women. The box-like, three-dimensional effect of these pictures was the result of the artist's interest in perspective as an expressive means.

Vermeer also probably began to distance himself from his family of origin. He failed to name any of his children after his mother or father as was common practice of the time. His first two daughters, born before 1658, were named Maria and Elizabeth after his mother-in-law and her sister. Vermeer and his wife buried a child in the Old Church in 1661. The same document states that at the same time, Vermeer and his wife were living in the house of Maria Thins on the Oude Langendijk in Delft. At the time, the household included Vermeer, his wife, his mother-in-law, and three children, not counting an infant who had died, and at least one female servant. The house had a basement, a lower hall with a vestibule, a great hall, a small room adjoining the hall, an interior kitchen, a little back kitchen, a cooking kitchen, a washing kitchen, a corridor, and an upper floor with two rooms, one of which was taken up by Vermeer's studio.

Vermeer's family situation was unusual. Very few married men in the Netherlands lived with a parent or parent-in-law for an extended period of time. Vermeer's marriage too, must be considered exceptional in as much as he married outside his own family's religion and social class. He moved from the lower, artisanal class of his Reformed parents who lived on the Delft Square to the higher social stratum of the Catholic in-laws who instead lived in the so-called "Papast Corner," the Catholic quarter of the city.

Vermeer was elected for the first time headsman of the Guild of Saint Luke in Delft at the age of 30 for a two-year term. However, by this time many artists who lived in Delft had left for the more prosperous Amsterdam art market and so his election may have had less significance than once believed. He was the youngest artist to become headmaster since the guild was organized in 1611.

In the early and mid-1660s **Vermeer** painted a series of extraordinary pictures of single women in the corner of a room absorbed in their activity. Even their most striking passages of observation are always subordinated to the impression made by the whole composition.

Johannes Vermeer, *Young Woman with a Water Pitcher*, c. 1662-65,
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

This severe painting mirrors some of the chief of Delft's aesthetic and moral priorities. It is geometric with strong vertical and horizontal structure with a daringly large empty white wall. The curves of a young woman together with her pitcher and basin contrast with this rectilinear structure. Her ultra-white starched bonnet and blue mantel stand out against the white wall. Deep in thought, she welcomes the morning light and the pristine atmosphere of the town by opening the window, while reaching for the pure water and thus connecting the cleanliness of domestic

life with that of the town. The taste for expensive ultra-marine blue, made with expensive ground lapis lazuli can be linked to the cobalt blue used in the potteries

Johannes Vermeer, *Woman with a Balance,* c. 1663-64, National Gallery, Washington, D. C.

This is an evening counterpart to the *Young Woman with a Water Pitcher*. A diffused evening light falls on another gracious but older woman who appears to be pregnant. With a faint smile she seems absorbed in herself and the operation of a small scale. With a closed window, she ignores what is happening outside. On the greyish wall behind her is a dark painting of the final judgement. The small jewel box on the table has been replaced by an open treasure trove of strings of pearls, old chains, and loose pearls, boxes and weights. The table is partly covered by a

Delft blue cloth. Many interpretations have been offered but painting appears to be communicating something about contemplating the balance of a life of luxury and salvation.

Johannes Vermeer, *The Girl with the Pearl Earring*, c.1665, Mauritshuis, The Hague

Even more focused attention to color, light, and the act of looking comes out in this close up picture. The girl's primary colored blue and yellow headscarf, wound around her head in a Turkish manner, becomes, together with her wide open pearly eyes and intense gaze, the subject of the image, the more so as her face is the only 'object' that catches the light in a sea of surrounding darkness.

Johannes Vermeer, *The Art of Painting,* 1666-68, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

In 1665 Pieter van Ruijven and his wife Maria Knuijt left 500 guilders, a considerable sum, to Vermeer in their last will and testament. This kind of a bequest was very unusual and testified to the close relationship between Vermeer and Van Ruijven that went beyond the usual patron and

painter one. In his life-time the rich Delft burger had bought a sizable share of Vermeer's artistic output, most likely, more than half.

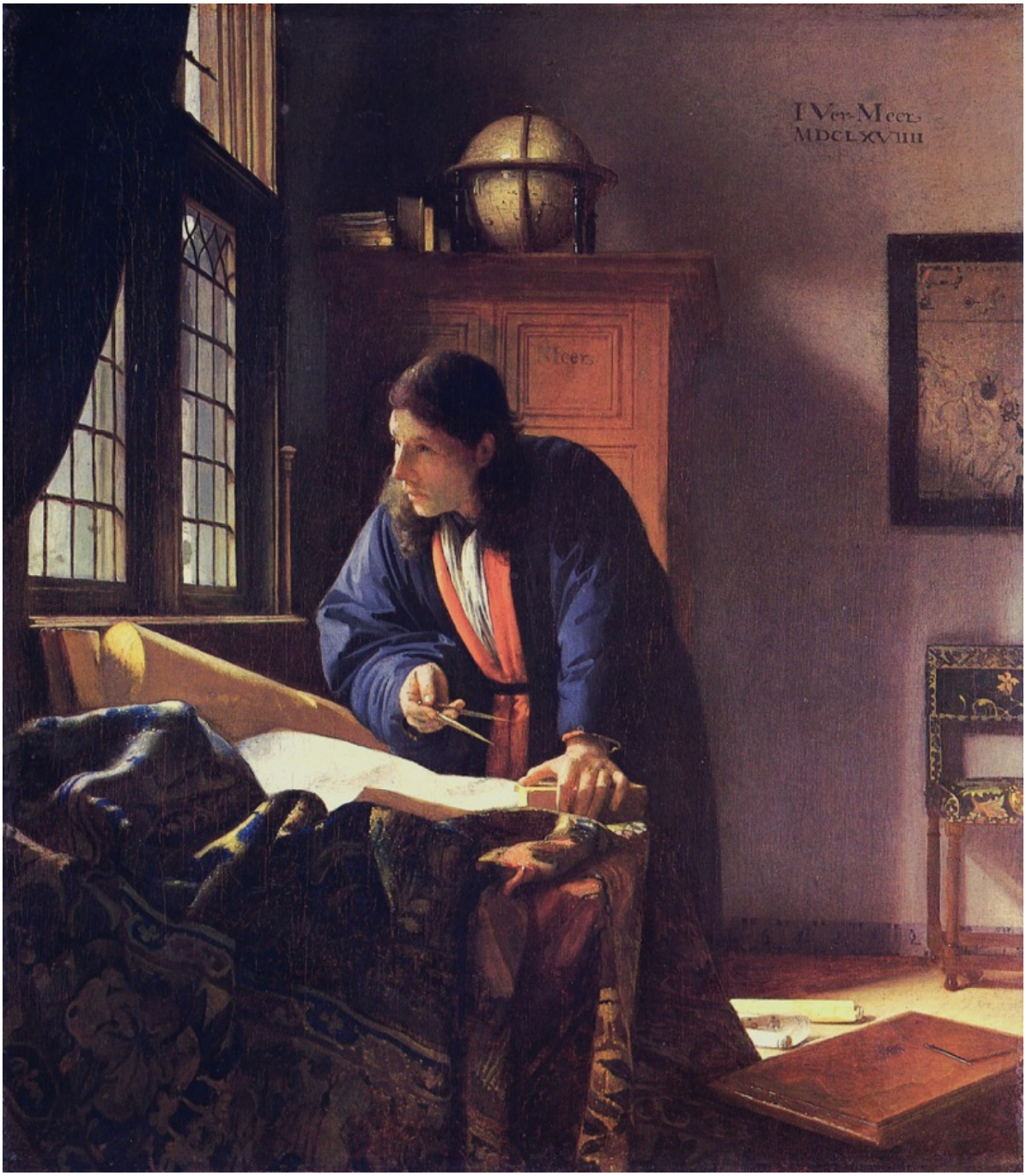
After his death in 1677, an auction was held at the Guild of St. Luke headquarters to sell 26 of his paintings but this painting was not included. The picture represented Vermeer's transition from his early allegorical and historical paintings using biblical and literary sources and scenes, which had been favored by court patrons, to depicting middle class, domestic environments in which the Delft bourgeoisie could feel at home. This was also done by other painters, such as Van den Eechout, Van Loo, Ter Borch, and Van Mieris, but these never emphasized light and open space as did de Hooch and Vermeer in Delft.

This painting appears to be set in a real Delft house. The room is made subservient to a particular interest in space and the fall of light. The visual vocabulary is made up of manufactured elements, which serve to elevate what at first appears to be realistic environment to a moral and intellectual height of history painting. The painter is wearing a 16th century costume seen from the back in the process of painting a woman in a modern dress, who holds a book and a trumpet, which identify her as Clio, the muse of history. Behind her is an historical map of the seventeen provinces that constituted the Netherlands before the revolt against Spain. The mask on the table refers to painting as the art of imitation. The painting shows a formula he used often of a single woman, at times with a male companion, in a domestic interior, which is made interesting by an emphatic use of perspective and lit from a window on the left. He was advertising his own brand of painting in this work.

Johannes Vermeer, *The Astronomer*, 1669, Musée de Louvre, Paris

Vermeer probably used a *camera obscura* to visualize perspective. He may have learned about lenses through his contact with a fellow Delft citizen, Anthonie van Leuwenhoek (1632-1723), who began his work with lenses as an apprentice to a cloth merchant in which magnifying glasses were important tools to judge quality. By the early 1670s Leuwenhoek had improved the magnification of lenses from between 15 and 30 to 250 times. His scientific work on microscopes was not based primarily on theory but on empirical observation. The latter was a very important methodology in the important Dutch role in Europe's scientific revolution in the seventeenth century and many artists were keenly aware of this work.

Johannes Vermeer, *The Geographer*, 1669, Städelsches Kunstinstitute und Städsgalerie, Frankfurt



The Astronomer and *The Geographer* are Vermeer's only paintings with single male figures and they reflect Vermeer's empirical scientific interests. As the home of one of the VOC chambers, Delft was the perfect city for a painting of a geographer using dividers, surrounded by papers, books and a wall chart showing the coasts of Europe and globe showing the Indian ocean.

Johannes Vermeer, *Lacemaker*, c. 1669-70, Musée de Louvre, Paris

In this small painting Vermeer ennobles the intricacy of silk embroidery and highlights strands of thread as pure color in the foreground. The visual concentration of this elegant young woman on her refined and colorful task invites the viewer to rival her attention to detail. Vermeer was a committee member of the Guild of St. Luke and embroiderers were members of the Guild and his father was involved in the silk business

Johannes Vermeer, *The Love Letter*, c. 1669-70, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Women reading and writing letters was an important subject among Dutch genre painters during the period. Vermeer did not give his pictures title and we have no documentation to account for the titles of his paintings. The titles were assigned later, especially by art dealers and museums.

Johannes Vermeer, *Lady Seated at a Virginal*, c. 1670-72, National Gallery, London

Many of the luxury items seen in Vermeer's interiors, such as the virginal seen in *The Music Lesson,* were economically out of reach of the artist. They may have been lent to him by affluent men of culture or clients such as Diego Duarte, a rich Antwerp banker, in whose important art collection was cited as "a young lady playing a clavichord." It was built by Johannes Ruckers. These rare instruments were sold for about 300 guilders, about half the cost of s painting by Gerrit Dou or Frans van Mieris. An average Dutch house might cost 1,000 guilders. In Delft, these instruments were owned by the official town musical school

Johannes Vermeer, *Lady Writing a Letter*, c. 1671, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

Johannes Vermeer, *Allegory of Faith,* 1670s, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

This late painting, c. 1671-74, is puzzling and different. It shows a single woman in front of an enormous painting of the crucifixion. Centrally seating on a platform, she stares at a freestanding wooden crucifix on a table with an open book and chalice next to it. Although she is dressed in costly silks, she seems unworldly and in a spiritual trance, with one foot on a globe and her hand on her heart. With *The Art of Painting* it is one of the larger Vermeer paintings.

Vermeer's painterly eyes were especially aware of color and texture in textiles. Note the close-up manner in which he renders the thread in the foreground tapestry. The individual knots are translated into spots of paint, making tapestry texture the model of his painting. Dots of light also appear on his architectural features, clothes, jewels, and other objects in many of his paintings.

We do not know if Vermeer became a Catholic after marrying the Catholic Catherine Bolnes. We do know that he lived next to the Jesuit House and Chapel and that they baptized their youngest son Ignatius, probably in tribute to the founder of the Jesuit Order, Ignatius Loyola. Delft was a fairly tolerant city. It had attracted fewer refugee immigrants from the south than other Dutch cities and thus had fewer committed Calvinists. The city had the first Jesuit mission in the Republic. In 1635, there were two large hidden churches in Delft and perhaps 5,000 Catholics out of a population of 24,000. Whatever his religious beliefs, we do know that he was a prominent member and leader of the Guild of St. Luke and a member of the civic guard. These positions were generally held by Protestants.

Vermeer was buried in the Oude Kerk in on July 20, 1675 after a brief illness. He left an impoverished widow and eleven children, ten of whom were still minors. Vermeer had probably painted very little in his last years. His death was described by his wife, "as a result and owing to the great burden of his children, having no means of his own, he had lapsed into such decay and decadence, which he had so taken to heart that, as if he had fallen into a frenzy, in a day or day and a half had gone from being healthy to being dead."