

The Sublime in the Everyday: Johannes Vermeer 1632-1675 and the Delft School of Painting

In 1866 William Bürger, a pseudonym for Étienne-Joseph-Théophile Thoré (1807-69) published in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* his article called “Sphinx of Delft” about the mysterious painter called Vermeer, and so began the modern-day revival of Vermeer. However, this lecture will begin by tracing Vermeer’s origins, his early training and influences, and how he came to the genre of painting domestic interiors. The lecture will look at his earliest known paintings and how he gradually migrated to the genre of domestic set-piece paintings we know him for today. This lecture will also set Vermeer in the context of contemporaneous Dutch artists and contemporaneous Delft artists; tracing the early beginnings of the town of Delft, its rise in prosperity and the low points of the town also. We will see how Vermeer went from being referred to as ‘the excellent and famous Vermeer’ in 1669 to being declared bankrupt towards the end of his life in 1675. How did it all go so wrong, were the signs there at the beginning or was there some great disaster in his life that prompted his financial demise? Finally this lecture will look at the late 19th century and 20th century revival of Vermeer that became the cult of Vermeer, and why this cult of Vermeer endures to this day.

Short Bibliographic Reading List:

Brown, Christopher, **Dutch Paintings**, (National Gallery Publications Ltd, 1983)

Brown, Christopher, **Utrecht Painters of the Dutch Golden Age** (National Gallery, 1997)

Durparc, Frederik J., and Wheelock, Arthur K., **Johannes Vermeer** (Royal Cabinet of Painting, The Mauritshuis and The National Gallery of Art Washington, 1996)

Liedtke, Walter, with Plomp, Michel C., Rüger, Axel, **Vermeer and the Delft School**, (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001)

Mac Laren, Neil, revised by Brown, Christopher, **The Dutch School: 1600 – 1900**, (National Gallery Publications Ltd, 1991)

Spicer, Joaneath A. with Orr, Lynn Ferderle, **Masters of Light: Dutch Painters in Utrecht During the Golden Age** (Yale University, New Haven and London, 1997)